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**YIDDISH IN HELSINKI**  
**Study of a Colonial Yiddish**  
**Dialect and Culture**

by  
Simo Muir



HELSINKI 2004

Simo Muir

**Yiddish in Helsinki. Study of a Colonial Yiddish Dialect and Culture**

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND ABBREVIATIONS

### 1. TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLITERATION

For the transcription/transliteration of Yiddish I have applied a system, used by many Yiddish scholars (e.g. Herzog, U. Weinreich). However, deviating from this system, the diphthongs are indicated by *oi*, *ei*, *ai*, not *oj*, *ej*, *aj*, because this is of significance in the North-Eastern Yiddish pronunciation.

Names of political movements/associations and well-known Jewish figures follow the common spelling used in English publications. Finnish Jewish names appear in their usual form. The names of towns and *štetls* of the Russian Empire follow the Russian form of the name, except for capitals such as Warsaw, Moscow and Kaunas. In the transliteration of Russian I have applied a system where: ж – zh, з – z, с – s, ц – ts, ч – ch, ш – sh, Russian и – i, ы – y, й – i.

### 2. PRONUNCIATION OF FINLAND SWEDISH

The study contains many Swedish names and words. The standard Finland Swedish pronunciation in cases where the pronunciation differs clearly from the spelling are given in brackets, e.g. *journal* [sumá:l]. The pronunciation is in most cases adopted from *Svenk uttalsordlista* '[Finnish] Swedish Pronunciation Dictionary'. A general rule of pronunciation is that stressed vowels are rendered as long, or alternatively the following consonant geminates. The vowel *o* is often pronounced [u], *u* as central rounded [ɯ], and *å* as [o]. The consonant cluster *sj* is pronounced as the hushing sibilant [š], *tj* as the affricate [č] and *ng* as the post-palatal [ŋ].

### 4. ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations of Yiddish dialects are partly an adaptation from the system applied, for instance, in the Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazi Jewry.

Varieties of Yiddish:

BaY	Baltic Yiddish
BeY	Belorussian Yiddish

CoY	Courland Yiddish
CY	Central Yiddish
EsY	Estonian Yiddish
HeY	Helsinki Yiddish
NCY	North-Central Yiddish
NEY	North-Eastern Yiddish
PNEY	Proto-North-Eastern Yiddish
PY	Proto-Yiddish
SEY	South-Eastern Yiddish
SLY	<i>stam-litvišer jidiš</i> ‘Yiddish of Lithuania proper’
StY	Standard Yiddish
SuY	Suvalki Yiddish
ZaY	<i>Zameter jidiš</i> ~ ‘Samogitian Yiddish’
Other:	
BG	Baltic German
FS	Finland Swedish
HA	Hebrew-Aramaic
HS	Helsinki Swedish
MH	Modern Hebrew
MHG	Middle High German
NHG	New High German (Modern Standard German)
R	Russian
S	Slavic
L ...	example word from Latinized (Yiddish) sources
H ...	example word from sources written in Hebrew characters

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. PROLOGUE

### 1.1. Some Characteristics of the Helsinki Jewish Community

*Men iz zix cunoiŕgeloifn aher fun alte jidiŕe centren in amolikn txum-hamoiŕev un zix bazect in a gegent, vos hot maxmes gevise sibes kein jidiŕe tradicie nit derlozt oifkumen. Blonken deriber baltiŕe jidn arum vi neŕomes artilain, nakete un bloize, on a ŕum organiŕn baheft mit undzer nacionaler kultur, un hobn alein nit ongelebt kein lebnsŕteiger, zix nox biz ict nit bafrait fun zeir kolonialn xarakter.*

Jews gathered here from the old Jewish centres of the Pale of Settlement and settled in a region which has not for certain reasons allowed any Jewish tradition to arise. Therefore the Baltic Jews are like wandering souls, naked and bare, without any organic connection to our national culture, and have not developed any life-style, nor have they until now freed themselves from their colonial character.

Wilhelm Latski-Bertoldi, 1929<sup>1</sup>

The depiction of the Baltic Jews by the eminent Latvian Jewish socialist Wilhelm Latski-Bertoldi (1881-1939) in many ways characterises Jewish settlement in Finland. Due to the Jewish statutes in the Swedish constitution, no Jews were allowed to settle in Finland during Swedish rule (Jacobsson 1951: 87). In the autonomous Russian Grand Duchy of Finland (1809-1917) these statutes were in force, together with other Swedish laws. Finland considered the Swedish constitution as its privilege and regarded tampering with the laws as an offence against its rights. However, after Czar Nicholas I issued a statute concerning Jewish conscription in 1827, Finland received its first Jews; the 1858 statute guaranteed all former soldiers, including Jews, the right to settle in Finland (Harviainen 1987: 155). Jewish soldiers, some of whom were Cantonists,<sup>2</sup> were tolerated only because they were Russian citizens and thus under the protection of Russian officials. In 1889 the Finnish Senate sent a letter to the governors guaranteeing named Jews and their families permission to reside in Finland for the time being; they were granted a residence permit for six months at a time (Torvinen 1989: 60-61).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from Wilhelm Latski-Bertoldi's preface to Mark Razumni's collection of short stories *Hintergeslex* 'Back Allies', 1929, Riga.

<sup>2</sup> Soldiers that had been recruited under age and trained in Cantonist schools (see Chapter 1 §2.).

<sup>3</sup> If the person was guilty of a crime or fornication he was to be sent back to Russia (Harviainen



Image 1. Circum-Baltic countries between the World Wars. (Map drawn by Salla Jokela, University of Helsinki.)

The constant threat of deportation back to Russia cast a shadow over the lives of many Jews. The whole of Jewish existence in nineteenth-century Finland was characterized by temporality: officially, no Jewish congregation existed; prayer houses and temporary synagogues were situated in various places at different times.<sup>4</sup> Jewish settlement could not properly take root in Finland and create its own

1987: 157). Children could reside in Finland as long as they lived with their parents. After getting married or joining the army they lost their right to reside in Finland. New Jews were not allowed to settle in Finland. This system officially ceased only in 1917 but in practice already at the beginning of the twentieth century.

4

The first prayer-house was situated on Malmi Street 22 (in so-called Markoffsky's yard), after

culture; there were, as far as known, no Jewish cultural associations or journals in the nineteenth century. The community was also very poor due to the statutes which restricted the source of livelihood only to selling old clothes and small commodities (Jacobsson 1951: 101). Due to financial difficulties, the community failed to maintain a permanent Jewish school and therefore children had to attend local Christian schools, which helped to further early linguistic and cultural assimilation.

Though Russian citizens, the Jews in Finland, especially those born in Finland, identified strongly with Finland and had, one might say, a Finnish-Jewish identity. For instance, in 1893 approximately 70 per cent of Helsinki Jews were born in Finland (Jacobsson 1951: 259). The first Jewish journal in Finland, established in 1908, was called no less than *Suomen Juutalainen* 'The Finnish Jew' (see Image 2).<sup>5</sup> Ben-Zion Trok, a Hebrew teacher from Hämeenlinna, wrote in an article entitled *A briv fun Finland* 'A letter from Finland' in *Der fraind* 'The Friend' (St. Petersburg, 1906) that Finnish Jews considered themselves "half Europeans" and had strayed away from Jewish nationalism. According to Trok, very little Yiddish was spoken at that point and especially among girls knowledge of Judaism was alarmingly slight. He found that the parents were indifferent to the Jewish education of their children; the community was, however, strictly orthodox. Possibly the Cantonists and Nicholas' Soldiers who had not converted to Christianity during their military service did not want to make any external concessions when it came to their religious observance, though in practice they could not always live up to the standards of strict orthodoxy. They were also influenced by the modern world-view that they had adopted during their schooling and military service. Also, the generations that grew up in Finland are said to have obtained a good all-round education (Jacobsson 1951: 255). In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century the Finnish Senate debated the granting of civil rights to Finnish Jews. Eventually, they were given only when Finland became independent in 1917. After their emancipation the economic and social status of the Finnish Jews rapidly improved. The number of Jewish-owned shops increased and concentrated especially on the retail of ready-made clothes (Jacobsson 1951: 327-328; Torvinen 1998: 112). Many businesses flourished, families prospered – one may even speak of upstarts and nouveau riche. In 1934 an article in the journal *Hazohar* 'Zenith' gives a vivid description of the way of life of the Helsinki Jews:

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that on the fortress island of Sveaborg, then on Simo Street 10 and Vladimir Street 32 (*Makkabi* December 1943: 8). The first "actual synagogue" was situated in Langen's Villa in Siltasaari 1870, then again in 1903 on Malmi Street 22, and finally in 1906 in the purpose-built synagogue on Malmi Street 26 (*ibid.*). According to other sources (e.g. Weinstein 1956), the first prayer-house was on Sveaborg.

<sup>5</sup> This bilingual (Swedish-Finnish) journal came out in Viipuri in 1908 (only three numbers). The chief editor was Santeri Jacobsson. The journal concentrated mainly on the struggle for civil rights.





Image 2. The first Finnish-Jewish journal Suomen Juutalainen – Den Finske Juden ‘The Finnish Jew’, published in Viipuri in 1908. The journal was in Finnish and Swedish, as the title indicates. The editor-in-chief of the journal was Viipuri-born Santeri Jacobson, who strove hard for the emancipation of the Finnish Jews by lecturing and publishing articles concerning the awkward situation faced by the Jews in Finland. Israel Schur from Helsinki also wrote articles for this journal. Suomen Juutalainen appeared for only three months. It is interesting and noteworthy that Finnish Jews did not, as far as is known, publish any journals in Russian, a language with which many were familiar (Fennica, Helsinki University Library.)

*Es is gewen azait, erst nor mit einige jorn zurik, wen kimat jeder finnisher id hot gehat sain goldenem kalb, gröis oder klein, arum welchen er hot getanzt, in welcher er hot zicher starker gegläibt wi in dem ewigen Elohim. Er is gewen wi farkischeft un farblendt fun dem goldglantz un gelt hot fun em geschoten on a schir oif rechts un links un afilui fun hotelbalkonen. Men hot gelebt wi in Pompadurs-zäiten, nor far sich, far dem eigenem guf.*

There was a period, only a few years ago, when almost every Finnish Jew had his own golden calf, big or small, around which he danced, in which he believed more firmly than in God Almighty. He was bewitched and dazzled by the glitter of gold and threw his money in all directions, even from hotel balconies. People lived as they did in Pompadour's time, only for themselves, for their own bodies.

Hazohar no. 2. 1934<sup>6</sup>

Herman Morath, a Yiddish writer who lived in Latvia, in his travelogue *Idn in di baltiše meluxes* 'Jews in the Baltic States' (1928) gives an interesting insight into the life of the Helsinki Jewish community of the late 1920s.<sup>7</sup> Morath depicts the Helsinki Jewish community as highly urban, modern and wealthy, at least in comparison with the Jewish communities in Lithuania, such as Memel (Klaipeda) and Shavl (Siauliai). His picture reminds one of depictions of a *goldene medine* 'Golden Country' with wealth, tall modern buildings, stylish dressing etc. From the religious point of view, the men were divided into "pious" and "half pious", as Morath puts it. Ever-increasing assimilation, mixed marriages and general secularization were already being seen in the community (inf. #2). This state of affairs caused Rabbi Simon Federbusch<sup>8</sup> to pass a *takone*, a rabbinical statute, in 1937, which confined the rights of those married to non-Jews to attend synagogue services (ibid.). This statute was, however, later invalidated. According to Morath,

<sup>6</sup> The quotation here follows in the original Latinized form. Jewish clothes dealers fell into disfavour with the nationally-minded, especially the right-wing press from the mid-1920s to 1930s (Torvinen 1989: 112).

<sup>7</sup> Morath issued at least several short publications, for instance short stories and plays. Some of these have been collected in a book entitled *Naiste šriftn* 'The Latest Works', *Drukatava Globus*, Riga. The section of Morath's book that describes Helsinki can be found in Finnish translation by Tapani Harviainen in *Hakehila* no. 1, 1995: 30-35 and no. 2, 1995: 19-26. Other travelogues about Finland in Yiddish are Semarja Gorelik's *Ein vox in Finland* 'A Week in Finland' (*Dos judiše folk* no. 27 1906; translation into Finnish by Tapani Harviainen in *Taikamatto*, Suomen Itämainen Seura, Helsinki 1982) and Helene Chatskel's *Finland* (*Farlag "Naie jidiše folkšul"*, Vilna 1931).

<sup>8</sup> Simon Federbusch (1892-1969) was the rabbi of Helsinki 1931-1940, and was also the chief rabbi of Finland from 1933 to 1939 (Torvinen 1989: 224). Federbusch originated from Narol in Galicia (EJ vol. 6: 1202). He had been a member of the Polish *seim* 1922-1928 and was the chairman of the Zionist *Mizrachi* organization (1924-1930) (ibid.). In Finland he published a book that endeavoured to prove the falsity of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The book, written in Swedish, was entitled *Stons vises hemliga protokoll i sanningens ljus* 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in the Light of Truth' and was published in 1934. Federbusch had previously issued some literary publications in Poland (ibid.).

the Helsinki Jews spoke mostly Swedish, some Yiddish and Hebrew;<sup>9</sup> the young had difficulties in finding Jewish spouses from abroad, because they did not speak Yiddish.

The Turku Jewish community, in comparison with Helsinki, Morath found to be much more traditional and reluctant to adopt changes; the children were taught Torah in Yiddish using old methods.<sup>10</sup> It is a typical conception that between the World Wars Turku was a traditional Yiddish-speaking community as compared to the secularized and Swedish-speaking Helsinki community (*HaKehila* no. 5-6 2001: 48-49).<sup>11</sup> The Helsinki Jews, *helsingforser idn*, living in a “metropolis”, considered the Turku Jews *kleinštetldik*, provincial and backward, and called them slightly pejoratively *obuske idn* ‘Turku Jews’.<sup>12</sup> There was even a common joke among the Helsinki Jews that Turku Jewesses were hideous – *mieskaintn*.<sup>13</sup> The Polish Zionist Leo Motzkin also noticed, when visiting Finland around 1930, the differences between the Helsinki, Turku and Viipuri communities. He used a metaphor that the Finnish Jewish community is like a human body; the head is in Viipuri, the stomach in Turku<sup>14</sup> and the feet in Helsinki (Hartikainen 1998: 69). By this he meant that the intelligentsia lived in Viipuri. According to Hartikainen (*ibid.*), there is some truth in this; most university-educated Jews were from Viipuri. Viipuri Jews considered their community special in many ways, for instance they were proud of their community house Ahdus ‘Unity’ with its Yiddish

<sup>9</sup> Possibly a few people could communicate in Hebrew. One of the informants (#3, born 1909) said that in her youth she was able to read and speak Hebrew fluently. Judging from the few sentences that she uttered in Hebrew the pronunciation was of the Ashkenazic type.

<sup>10</sup> Turku is described in many contexts as a pious community known for its own *obuske nign* ‘Turku melody’, i.e. special tunes for the high holiday prayers (*HaKehila* no. 5-6 2001: 48).

<sup>11</sup> During Russian rule Jews were allowed to settle only in certain towns, i.e. Helsinki, Turku, Viipuri, Hämeenlinna, Tampere, Vaasa, Hamina, Sortavala, Suistamo, Impilahti and Kuopio (Harviainen 1987: 157).

<sup>12</sup> All these names are derived from the Swedish names for the towns. i.e. Helsingfors for Helsinki, Åbo for Turku and Viborg for Viipuri. The regular formations of these names would be *obuer* and *viborger* Jews. Helsinki Jews also called Turku Jews *zoiere ugerkes* ‘sourpusses’ (lit. ‘sour/pickled cucumbers’) or just *ugerkes*.

<sup>13</sup> Abraham Stillér, who met the American actor Herman Yablokoff in Helsinki in late 1950s, related that: “*Der jidišer jišev in Turku iz geven bavust mit di jidiše froien vos zainen [...] mieskaintn. [...] Ven fun Lite, Leland un Estonie un Poiln hobn zix untergelozt tates, mames mit texter, velxe hobn šoin gemegt hern klezmer špiln... zainen zei gevorn kales far di kantonistn, oder far di nikolajevske soldatn. [...] Der seixl iz dox mexajev, az di šenste hot men oisgexapt oifn veg; in Helsinki, Viipuri.*” ‘The Jewish community in Turku is famous for its hideous women. [...] When fathers and mothers with daughters of marriageable age sneaked [into Finland] from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland... the daughters became brides for Cantonists or Nicholas’s Soldiers. [...] It is obvious that the most beautiful ones were snatched on their way, in Helsinki and Viipuri’ (Yablokoff 1969: 676).

<sup>14</sup> Apparently the culinary habits in Turku had made an impression on the visitor. There were some culinary differences between the three communities. For instance, in Turku beet borsch was served with a “boat” of mashed potatoes (*inf.* #23).

library (ibid: 80).<sup>15</sup> According to one informant (#7) who grew up in Viipuri, the Viipuri Jews were culturally and nationally more aware than the Helsinki Jews and not as religious as the Turku Jews. The vicinity of St. Petersburg (approx. 100 km) must have exerted an influence on the community. Connections with Russia were cut off, however, after the Russian Revolution in 1917. A definite merit of the Viipuri Jewish community is that the struggle for emancipation began there, and the first Finnish-Jewish journal was established there. However, the Viipuri Jews were somehow looked down upon by the Helsinki Jews and were called pejoratively *viborske idn*. One notable thing that separated the Viipuri Jews from the Helsinki Jews was that they spoke more Finnish and thus adopted a different linguistic and cultural identity.

Already between the World Wars the younger generation of Finnish Jews came closer to the reformed and culturally assimilated Swedish Jews rather than to the Yiddish-speaking communities in the Baltic countries (on Yiddish and the Jewish society in Sweden, see Boyd and Erland 1999). For instance, Jewish young people took an active part in the Scandinavian Jewish Youth Organization S.J.U.F (*Skandinaviska judiska ungdomsföreningen*), which occasionally met in Helsinki. However, there were some connections with the Baltic communities. For instance, in 1930 the Jewish youth organization in Helsinki, the local *Makkabi* and the Jewish Song Association visited Tallinn (see Image 3).

During the Second World War Finnish Jews fought in the Finnish army against the Soviet Union and were not deported to concentration camps, in spite of the pressure from Nazi Germany.<sup>16</sup> Finnish Jewry thus avoided the Holocaust. However, eight refugees who were not Finnish citizens were deported (Torvinen 1998: 145-146). During the post-war era, supporting the young State of Israel gained a prominent position in the Jewish community of Helsinki. Jewish sports associations have also been especially active. The local sports association Makkabi claims that it is the oldest continuously functioning Makkabi in Europe (ibid.). It is noteworthy that the Jewish community in Helsinki is among the very few Jewish communities in Europe, of the former Russian Empire, that lived through the Second World War intact and has preserved its own unique culture and character until this day. Viipuri was not so fortunate; the town was ceded to the Soviet Union by the Moscow peace treaty of 1940 and finally in 1944.

<sup>15</sup> According to one informant (#7), the Viipuri Jews originated more from Russia proper and were better educated, also culturally, than the Jews of Helsinki and Turku, who originated from the small hamlets in the Pale of Settlement. This pattern of immigration is not, however, supported by Burstein's study of Jewish immigration in Finland (see Burstein 1978).

<sup>16</sup> This subject has been dealt in several books, for instance by Torvinen (1989) and Rautkallio (1987).



*Image 3.* Guests from Helsinki at a garden party organized in the grounds of the Jewish gymnasium in Tallinn in summer 1930. For the occasion the voyagers wore adjoining patches with the Yiddish text: *Helsingforser jidiše jugnd, Revl-raize* ‘Helsinki Jewish Youth – Tallinn trip’. (Courtesy of the Jewish Song Association in Helsinki.)

## 1.2. Yiddish in Helsinki

During the nineteenth century most Finnish Jews spoke Yiddish (Jacobsson 1951: 148; Weinstein 1956; Torvinen 1989: 31, 110; Harviainen 1991: 61; inf. #11). The Helsinki police records of the local Jewish settlers from the year 1901 state that the mother tongue of nearly all Jews then resident in Helsinki was Yiddish. In time Helsinki Yiddish created its own character, when different varieties of Yiddish, chiefly North-Eastern Yiddish, met in Helsinki. Essential to the process was the influence of Finland Swedish, During the nineteenth century Helsinki was chiefly a Swedish-speaking town, and it is natural that Jews adopted the dominant language (Harviainen 1991: 66). The same happened in Turku; the Viipuri Jews instead adopted Finnish, the main language of the town (Hartikainen 1998).<sup>17</sup> In general, Viipuri Jews considered that they spoke “pure Jewish” (Finnish: *puhdasta juudan kieltä*) compared to the Yiddish spoken by the Helsinki and Turku Jews, which was influenced by Finland Swedish (*ibid.*).

<sup>17</sup> Also Russian (which was generally spoken more in Viipuri than in Helsinki) played a greater role in the Viipuri Jewish community (Hartikainen 1998: 75).

Upon first hearing, the listener notices that Helsinki and Turku Yiddish, as well as Viipuri Yiddish, belong to the group of North-Eastern (Lithuanian) Yiddish dialects. A clear sign that this dialect has gained a foothold in Finland is that even the children (e.g. #12, #16) of Central and Southern-Polish immigrants speak the local variant of North-Eastern Yiddish. Also, one immigrant (#18, born in 1927 in Koziegłowy, central Poland) who came to Finland after the Second World War has partly adopted the local dialect. The general attitude to southern variants of Yiddish is negative – they are considered ugly and funny.<sup>18</sup> North-Eastern Yiddish, especially the Yiddish of the Vilna region, has enjoyed a certain prestige among the Yiddish intelligentsia and served as a basis for the Standard Yiddish pronunciation (Katz 1994: 205-207). On the other hand, a Lithuanian-born immigrant told that one can immediately notice the difference between the Vilna-type North-Eastern Yiddish and Finnish Yiddish (SKNA 16810:1<sup>19</sup>). He called Finnish Yiddish humoristically *japešer idiš* (the word *jape* is a pejorative name for a Finn).

Multilingualism has been characteristic of the Helsinki Jewish Community. Due to the small size of the community, this has been a necessity. Besides Swedish, some have had a good command of Russian, chiefly those who originated from Russia proper, e.g. St. Petersburg, and had received a Russian education. Some children attended Russian schools and gymnasiums in Helsinki. For instance, the Weinstein siblings who grew up in Helsinki during the 1880s and 1890s spoke Yiddish and Russian amongst themselves but were also fluent in Swedish (inf. #24). The Jewish market *narinkka* that existed for approximately sixty years in the centre of Helsinki was a favourable place for language contacts. Nils Wasastjerna (1872-1951) writes in his memoirs that “the language [of the *narinkka*] was a mishmash of Yiddish, Russian and Swedish” (1992: 115).

According to many sources, Yiddish was superseded by Swedish at quite an early stage, earlier than in Turku, and by Finnish in Viipuri (Harviainen 1991: 65; Torvinen 1989: 110-111; Hartikainen 1998: 75). For instance, in 1920 the general meetings of the Jewish congregation were, according to one source (*HaKehila* no. 2 1999: 29), held in Swedish, and when the Jewish Co-educational School (*Judiska*

<sup>18</sup> For instance, informants #16, a father from Poland; #9, a husband from Poland) told that Polish (Central) Yiddish sounds “ugly” in comparison with the “classical and literary” Lithuanian (North-Eastern) Yiddish. Informant #16 told an anecdote that mocks Polish Yiddish-speakers. It consists of a question and answer which are rendered with typical Polish Yiddish features, long vowels, strong nasals and specific intonation: “*Vi alt bist: ? Ix bin dra:cn, a ju:r cu fa:rcn*” ‘How old are you? I’m thirteen, in one year’s time fourteen’. The word *fa:rcn* is a hypercorrect form of *fercn* ‘fourteen’ and reminds one of the Yiddish verb *farcn* ‘to fart’. Informant #9 told that her late husband’s *kim* and *kik* ‘come’ and ‘look’ (cf. NEY *kum* and *kuk*) always amused her. In the *Idishe vort* conversation group the speech and reading of one Central Yiddish-speaker is frequently ridiculed and corrected by Helsinki Yiddish-speakers.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix A.

*Samskolan*) was founded in 1918, its official language, besides Hebrew, was Swedish. By contrast, in Viipuri the protocols and records of the congregation were kept in Yiddish until the Second World War (Hartikainen 1998: 75), and in Turku children were taught in Yiddish in a heder until the 1950s (inf. #22; inf. #23). Statistics, too, support the conception that Yiddish vanished in Helsinki at an early stage. In 1890 there were 583 Yiddish speakers in Helsinki out of 642 Jews; ten years later the statistics show a collapse in the number of Yiddish speakers, only 263 out of a total of 626 (Harviainen 1991: 67). In 1930 the number of Yiddish-speakers was as low as 77 out of 1050 members of the community (ibid.). This number immediately arouses suspicion; at least the bilingual (Yiddish-Swedish) speakers seem to be absent. Yiddish was not particularly a language which would have enjoyed public respect. Therefore it is very likely that many Yiddish-speakers did not state correctly their dominant language or mother tongue. The school inspection of 1929 gives contrary information to the official statistics, stating that the children were “semi-lingual”; they could not speak properly either Yiddish or Swedish (Nurmi 1998: 9). This testifies that there was still a considerable number of Yiddish-speakers in the 1930s. Other facts, too, testify to the fact that Yiddish still had a foothold in the Jewish community between the World Wars. The protocols of some traditional religious charity associations, so-called *xevres*, were written in Yiddish, the rabbis and clergy, mostly immigrants, spoke Yiddish, some Yiddishist associations which promoted the use of Yiddish were founded during the first years of Finnish independence, and Yiddish articles appeared in Jewish journals until the mid-1950s. The elder generation spoke Yiddish (besides Swedish) at least until the 1960s (inf. #24). According to Ohlström (1959: 25), the elder generation in the late 1950s had a Yiddish accent in their Swedish. Finnish came into the picture between the World Wars, especially when the language of the Jewish Co-educational School was changed by degrees from Swedish to Finnish, starting in 1933 (Torvinen 1989: 111). At present the elder generation is still chiefly Swedish-speaking.

Many have already declared that Yiddish has vanished in Finland. This echoes the universal assumption “we thought you were dead”, as Fishman (1985a: 208) puts it. However, a recent questionnaire (Lundgren 2002), conducted in the two Jewish communities of Finland, Helsinki and Turku, revealed quite surprising details about the knowledge of Yiddish among Finnish Jews. Of the 465 persons who replied, 9 per cent could speak and read Yiddish, 15 per cent could (only) speak it, 3 per cent could (only) read it and 41 per cent could understand some Yiddish but were unable to speak or read it (ibid: 36).<sup>20</sup> Thus approximately 68 per

<sup>20</sup> 905 persons received the questionnaire, 51 per cent (15 per cent of them from Turku) answered (Lundgren 2002: 11, 12). Of the persons who answered, 28 per cent were born before 1934, 46 per cent between 1935 and 1960, 25 per cent after 1961.

cent of the respondents over eighteen years of age had some knowledge of Yiddish. It is important to note that many elder and ill (even demented) persons did not answer (*ibid*: 11). These high figures can be partly explained by the similarity between Swedish and Yiddish and by the general knowledge of German among the elder generations. In spite of these astonishing figures, one very seldom hears Yiddish, besides one or two words, at official functions of the Jewish congregation of Helsinki. Often people do not even know who is able to speak Yiddish.<sup>21</sup> The present chairman of the community, Gideon Bolotowsky, has said that it just has not been the *mineg*, the custom, to use Yiddish. The community has been quite Zionistically-oriented, and knowledge and use of Modern Hebrew has been more fashionable. Mostly, people were indifferent when it came to Yiddish; they were not opposed to it, but neither did they support it eagerly (*inf.* #24; *inf.* #22). However, one informant (#20) told that his parents spoke Yiddish between themselves “unwillingly” because they had no other option. Yiddish was their common language; the mother came from Latvia and the father was Finnish-born. According to one childhood memory from the 1930s, a boy was ashamed that his mother lapsed into speaking Yiddish with acquaintances in the street, and, moreover, very loudly (Harviainen 1986: 16). Helsinki-born Jews looked down upon newcomers from Eastern Europe, just as emancipated German Jews looked down upon *Ostjuden* (see Smolar 2003: 79).

English has also gained a foothold in the community, partly because some newcomers (chiefly from Israel and Russia) do not understand Finnish or Swedish very well, partly because the rabbis have been foreigners. English seems to be the only common language among the members of the congregation. This fact is congruent with Fishman’s argument (1985: 19) that English has become the most widespread “Jewish language” of our time, at the expense of Yiddish and Modern Hebrew.

Recently, the general attitude towards Yiddish has changed in a more positive direction, partly due to the international interest enjoyed by the language. Some informants (e.g. #6 and #9) regret that they have not passed their Yiddish on to their children, and say that it is a “sin” that the younger generation do not speak Yiddish. In the 1990s Scholem Bolotowsky led a Yiddish literature group, and in 2000 a Yiddish conversation and two beginners’ groups which bear the name *Idishe vort*, literally ‘Yiddish word’, began to function upon Isak Kantor’s initiative.<sup>22</sup> The same year Yiddish was added to the agenda of the Finnish Bureau of Lesser Used Languages (FiBLUL),<sup>23</sup> the purpose of which is to promote and support historic

<sup>21</sup> For instance, some informants interviewed for this study were surprised when they heard that one of their acquaintances (for instance another informant) speaks fluent Yiddish.

<sup>22</sup> The author attended Bolotowsky’s group and, together with Isak Kantor, launched *Idishe vort*.

<sup>23</sup> Under the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL). Isak Kantor has acted as



minority languages in Finland, i.e. Sami, Finland Swedish, Roma, Russian, and Tatar. In March 2001 the Jewish Congregation, together with FIBLUL and the University of Helsinki, organized a “Yiddish – Language and Culture” seminar at the Jewish community centre, an event which attracted a large audience.

## 2. LITERATURE AND STUDIES ON FINNISH JEWRY

Finnish Jewish history has attracted some scholarly attention. Among the first articles on Finnish and Helsinki Jews are Rafaël Hertzberg’s *Mosaiska församlingen* ‘The Mosaic Congregation’ (in Swedish) from 1888 and W. von Willebrand’s *Judarnas rättsliga ställning i Finland* ‘Jews’ Juridical Situation in Finland’ (in Swedish) from 1906. The first extensive study, *Taistelu ihmisoikeuksista* ‘Fight for human rights’ (in Finnish) was published in 1951 by Santeri Jacobsson. It is an account of the aspirations of Finnish Jewry for emancipation. A few years later, in 1956, Jac Weinstein compiled a nearly hundred-page-long survey (in Swedish) about the Jewish community in Helsinki called *Minneskrift till 50-årsdagen av Judiska församlingen i Helsingfors synagogas invigning* ‘Commemorative Article for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Consecration of the Synagogue of the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki’. This was, however, never published in book form. The survey gives a good insight into the life of the community, especially the activities of various charity and cultural associations. Taimi Torvinen’s book *Kadimah – Suomen juutalaisten historia* ‘*Kadimah* – the History of the Finnish Jews’ (in Finnish), published in 1989, follows in Jacobson’s footsteps; it is an account of Finnish Jewish history from the viewpoint of political history. The other books mostly deal with the Second World War, the brotherhood in arms and the deportation of Jewish refugees to the Nazi concentration camps. These subjects are dealt with, for instance in Elina Sana’s book *Luovutetut, Suomen ihmishuovutukset Gestapolle* ‘The Extradited – Finland’s Deportations to the Gestapo’ (2003) and in Hannu Rautkallio’s book *Finland and Holocaust – The Rescue of Finnish Jews* (1987). Besides books, there are several shorter accounts of various aspects of Finnish Jewish history, for instance Tapani Harviainen’s article *Juutalaiset Suomessa* ‘Jews in Finland’ (in Finnish, 1998)<sup>24</sup> and Heikki J. Hakkarainen’s article *Judentum in Finnland* (2002). Max Jakobson deals with Finnish Jewish history in his book *Väkivallan vuodet* ‘Years of Violence’ (in Finnish, 1999). Of Master’s dissertations submitted to the University of Helsinki let us mention, for example, Marina Burstein’s *Det judiska bostads-mönstret i Helsingfors och migrationsströmmar genom Finland* ‘The Jewish Living Patterns in Helsinki and Migration Waves through Finland’ (in Swedish, 1978),

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the representative of Yiddish on the committee.

<sup>24</sup> See also Harviainen 2000.

Jukka Hartikainen's *Viipurin juutalaisen yhteisön vaiheita* 'The History of the Viipuri Jewish Community (in Finnish, 1998) and Jill Kotel's *Being Jewish in Helsinki, Finland Today* (2000). The author compiled an MA dissertation at the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), the University of London, on the theme *Jac Weinstein and the Jewish Drama Society in Helsinki during the Interim of the World Wars* (2000). Besides the aforementioned books, studies and articles there also some literary works, such as Boris Grünstein's autobiography *Jude i Finland, Galghumoristiska berättelser* 'Being Jewish in Finland, Humorous and Macabre Stories' (in Swedish, 1988<sup>25</sup>) and fictional family chronicles like Daniel Katz's *Kun isoisä Suomeen hiihti* 'When Grandfather came to Finland on Skis' (in Finnish, 1969) and Mindele London's *Kolmastoista tuoli* 'The Thirteenth Chair' (in Finnish, 2002).

### 2.1. Articles on Yiddish in Finland

No extensive studies of Finnish Yiddish have been conducted earlier, nor does Finland appear on any Yiddish dialect maps. There are, however, a few shorter studies and articles that touch upon the subject. Tapani Harvianen's article *Jiddišiä, venäjää, ruotsia ja suomea – Juutalaiset Suomessa* 'Yiddish, Russian, Swedish and Finnish – Jews in Finland' (in Finnish, 1991) deals with the subject on socio-linguistic grounds. Karmela Liebkind has written an article entitled *Jiddisch är en känsla* 'Yiddish is a Feeling' (in Swedish, 1991), about her personal experience of Yiddish. Norit Steinbock-Vatka has collected in her seminar work *Suomen juutalaisten puhekielen erityissanastoa* 'Special Vocabulary of the Spoken Language of Finnish Jews' (in Finnish, 1995) some Yiddish and Hebrew words that are frequently used by Finnish Jews. The nearest to a linguistic analysis of Finnish Yiddish is Jukka Hartikainen's seminar study *Tsum laxn! – Jiddišin kieltä Viipurissa*, 'Tsum laxn! – Yiddish in Viipuri' (in Finnish, 1997). This work consists of a transcription and translation of a recording made by a Viipuri Jewess. The study does not, however, draw any conclusions with regard to the dialect.

## 3. OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The current study has been limited to concern chiefly Helsinki for several reasons. Each of the historic Finnish Jewish communities reflects the social, cultural and linguistic characteristics of the towns. Especially crucial has been the co-territorial language, which in the case of Helsinki (and Turku) has been Finland Swedish. This is the fact that most clearly differentiates Helsinki from Viipuri, where the

<sup>25</sup>

A year later, in 1989, a Finnish translation was published.

main language has been Finnish. The difference in co-territorial language has also naturally been of marked cultural significance. The internal changes in the language hierarchy and development in the cultural life in Helsinki offer a complex enough field of study and starting-point for questions. Ongoing research on the Jewish community of Viipuri is being undertaken by Jukka Hartikainen. Turku, which shares the same co-territorial language as Helsinki, is also a cultural entity of its own and deserves a separate comprehensive study.<sup>26</sup>

From the initial stage of this study, both the historical and linguistic aspects of Yiddish in Helsinki have been of interest to the author. These two disciplines have gone hand-in-hand during the study. In order to understand where Yiddish stands in the context of Helsinki and Finland, much background research has had to be done, i.e. acquainting oneself with primary sources, for instance protocols of associations and the Jewish press. As has been mentioned, very little has been written on Yiddish and the cultural life of the community in general. The interviews conducted for this study have also supported and added to the historical and cultural facts. This dual interest has resulted in a monograph that consists of two parts, a socio-linguistic/historical part and a purely linguistic part, which are complementary.

The goals of the socio-linguistic and historical part of the current study are to investigate how Yiddish came to Helsinki and what manifestations it had in the social and cultural life of the community. One of the ultimate objectives is to understand to what extent Yiddish has been used at various periods in the community, and which factors influenced the choice of language and eventually led to the displacement of Yiddish. For the purpose of forming a picture of the origin of Helsinki Yiddish, the available data on the immigration of Helsinki Jewry will be superimposed with Yiddish language maps. Extracts from the Jewish press in Helsinki will provide us with information on the attitudes towards Yiddish (contra Hebrew and Swedish) in the period between the World Wars. These views will be discussed and explained in the light of contemporary political movements within Jewish society (e.g. Jewish Nationalism, Zionism and Socialism). The attitudes towards Yiddish also reflect on the activities of and developments in cultural associations and the curriculum of Jewish schools in Helsinki. The language of instruction in these schools naturally affected the linguistic development within the community and vice versa. At the end of the first part we shall discuss factors which led to the Latinization of Yiddish in Helsinki. The period dealt with in this study spans from the first headers of the 1860s to the Yiddish articles in the Jewish press of Helsinki in the mid-1950s.

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<sup>26</sup> Investigating the history of the Turku Jewish community is made difficult by the fact that the Finnish National Archive does not possess documents from Turku. Some of the documents are in the possession of the Jewish community of Turku and some in the care of private persons.

The linguistic part of the study aims to investigate the relation of Helsinki Yiddish to Yiddish dialects, chiefly North-Eastern Yiddish sub-dialects, and ascertain how the co-territorial languages, i.e. Finland Swedish, Finnish, Russian and Baltic German have influenced the dialect. The general description of the dialect has been compiled in the light of classical studies of Yiddish dialects, e.g. M. Weinreich (1923), Mark (1951), Herzog (1965), as well as recent works, e.g. Verschik (2000), Jacobs (2001). The study of Finnish Swedish influence on Helsinki Yiddish is based, for instance, on language contact theories by U. Weinreich (1970), Rayfield (1970) and Appel & Muysken (1987) and refers to descriptions of Finland and Helsinki Swedish by, for instance, Bergroth (1928), Reuter (1977, 1980) and Nyholm (1978). The study of New High German influence discusses the relation of Helsinki Yiddish to Germanized Yiddish, Modern German and co-territorial Baltic German. The linguistic section begins with a description of the system of Latinization utilized in Helsinki, partly because the study contains a large number of example words and phrases from these Latinized texts.

At the end of the study there is an index (Appendix A) of the informants giving some details of their background. Appendix B consists of samples of transcribed interviews. The samples have been placed in chronological order by the birth of informants in different decades, from the 1880s to the 1940s. Appendix C consists of Latinized texts from Jewish journals published in Helsinki.

#### 4. SOURCES

The opening of the Finnish Jewish Archive (*Suomen juutalaisten arkisto*) collection at the National Archives of Finland (*Suomen kansallisarkisto*) in 1998 has been one of the requisites for being able to write the historical part of the study.<sup>27</sup> The new collection has provided a great deal of material which has not been studied before. Among these are protocols and correspondence of the Yiddish cultural associations and records and protocols of the first Jewish schools in Helsinki. Unfortunately, there are very few documents from the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Another irreplaceable source of information has been the Jewish journals which are available at the University Library in Helsinki. The library also possesses some other smaller publications which have been useful for this study.

<sup>27</sup> The Jewish Congregation of Helsinki collected documents that had been kept in various premises and handed them over into the care of the Finnish National Archives where they were catalogued.

<sup>28</sup> Some of the oldest written documents are the chronicles (Yiddish *pinkes*) of the Jewish religious charity associations, such as *Bikur-Cholim* and *Chevra-Kadischa*. These are in the possession of the associations.

Besides this I have managed to obtain some documents which are in private possession.

The linguistic analysis is mostly based on oral sources. However, some literary sources have also been utilized. The Latinized articles in the journals serve as a very useful and valuable source because they possess many dialectal and other features characteristic of Helsinki Yiddish and thus support the observations made on the oral sources. The example words appear in cursive and phrases from texts written in Hebrew characters are preceded by a capital superscript<sup>H</sup> and those from Latinized articles by<sup>L</sup>.

The oral sources used for the linguistic analysis consist of twenty-four recorded interviews which are in the possession of the Finnish Language Tape Archives (*Kotimaisten kielten nauhoitearkisto*). One of the interviews was conducted in 1969 by the renowned linguists, Paul Ariste from Estonia and Pertti Virtaranta from Finland. This interview has not been analyzed earlier and serves as an invaluable source of Helsinki Yiddish spoken by earlier generations. Most of the informants interviewed by the author had not spoken Yiddish for a long time, as informant #7 put it: “*Ject hob ix šein geret azei fil jidiš ix hob nit geret mistome finf un cvancik jor*” ‘Now I have spoken more Yiddish than probably in 25 years’. In spite of this, the informants speak quite “pure” Yiddish; very little code-switching between Yiddish and Swedish, which is typical of the speech community, took place during the interviews. The fact that the author is Finnish-speaking might have influenced the situation to some extent. Most of the informants were born or have grown up in Finland and at least one of their parents was born in Finland. One informant immigrated to Finland from Poland after the Second World War, and four of the informants speak Viipuri Yiddish. Those who do not speak Helsinki Yiddish serve as an important contrasting source. Most informants are fluent in Swedish and Finnish. Also, the meetings of the Yiddish conversation group in Helsinki have provided much valuable data which support the observations made on the basis of the recorded interviews and written sources.

**PART ONE:**

**HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES**

# 1. THE ORIGINS OF HELSINKI JEWRY AND THEIR YIDDISH

## 1. PREFACE

Jewish settlement in Finland has its roots in the Russian recruitment policy of the nineteenth century. Before 1809, under Swedish rule, Jews were not allowed to settle in Finland at all. However, some Jews are known to have resided in the country before this (see Harviainen 1998: 291–293). The origin of the Helsinki Jews has attracted some scholarly attention. Halén has studied the military archives (period 1812–1840) of the Island Fortress of Sveaborg (Suomenlinna) off the coast of Helsinki (Helsingfors); Burstein has researched in depth the period 1840–1975, and Harviainen has compiled statistics on the data found in the records of the Passport Bureau of the Helsinki Police Force (the period 1868–1917). According to folk memory, Finnish Jews originate from Russia, which may in fact refer to the whole Russian Empire, including its western parts, for instance Poland and Lithuania. It is interesting – and also somewhat controversial – to note that many Jews came to Finland from Russia proper, beyond the Jewish Pale of Settlement.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, we shall study the available data on the origin of Helsinki Jewry and examine how it correlates with Yiddish dialect maps. This will provide some clues as to the origin of the Yiddish spoken in Helsinki and will also help to explain some peculiar features of the dialect.

## 2. RUSSIAN RECRUITMENT POLICY

In 1827, Czar Nicholas I ratified and confirmed a statute concerning the recruitment of Jews into the Russian army (Stanislowski 1983: 13–31). The draftable age was between twelve and twenty-five. Recruits under eighteen years of age were sent to Cantonist battalions with training schools until they reached the age of majority and could commence a full term of service, that might last up to twenty-five years. Initially, the recruitment statute guaranteed religious freedom to the soldiers; however, the reality was quite the opposite. The Cantonists (Yiddish:

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<sup>1</sup> Russian Jews were restricted (Decree of 1791) to living within the so-called Pale of Settlement (Russian, *Cherta osedlosti*), which included New Russia and the provinces annexed from Poland (Klier 1986: 75).

*kantonistn*), as the recruits were called, were under constant pressure to convert to Christianity; they were deprived of their ritual objects and books, and could not observe the kosher laws. They were not permitted to have any contact with local Jewish communities. The Cantonists were even forbidden to speak Yiddish, and had to correspond with their families in Russian. All means of pressure were employed, even physical torture, when trying to force the recruits to convert. Young children in particular, who may have been taken from their parents as young as eight years of age, were an easy target and were sometimes baptized hundreds at a time. According to Stanislawski, at least half of the recruits converted to Christianity (ibid: 25). Recruits of age entered military service directly. They were called *nikolajevske soldatn* 'Nicholas' soldiers'.

Jewish recruitment policy passed through different periods and developments in Imperial Russia. In 1856, Alexander II abolished the Cantonist system (Klier 1995: 332). The 1874 military reform introduced conscription that included the Jews; their service was divided into a term of active duty followed by service in the reserve (ibid: 334–337). However, there were various exemptions, for instance, a three-tiered exemption system for family reasons, and reductions in length of service due to a certain level of education (ibid: 335). Jews attempted to evade military service in every possible way; the hardships of the Jews in Czar Nicholas' army was still well remembered (ibid: 347). In Finland, all Jewish soldiers in the Russian army, i.e. Cantonists, Nicholas' Soldiers and later recruits (until 1917), are often inaccurately referred to as Cantonists. For instance, informant #16 referred to his father, who served in the Russian army during the First World War, as a Cantonist.

## 2.1. Jewish Soldiers in Helsinki

Helsinki received its first Jewish soldiers soon after the recruitment statute was passed. The first mention in the military records of Jews on the Island Fortress of Sveaborg, off the coast of Helsinki, dates back to 1831 (Halén 2000: 29). Helsinki also had a Cantonist school immediately opposite the Russian Orthodox Trinity Church in Union Street 38 (Bonsdorff & Smedslund 1969: 9–15).<sup>2</sup>

In 1858, soldiers who had completed their military service were granted the right to settle permanently in Finland with their families (Jacobsson 1951: 87). The Jewish soldiers in Helsinki, many of whom were Cantonists, had become estranged from Judaism, but had tried their best to fulfil their religious duties (Weinstein 1956; Guthwert 1969). Jewish soldiers in Sveaborg had the possibility,

<sup>2</sup>

The school was used only until 1832 or 1833 (ibid: 18). It remains unclear whether Jewish recruits under eighteen were trained in Helsinki.



at least at one stage, of obtaining kosher meat and maintaining contact with the local Jewish community (Guthwert 1969). At one point, there was also a prayer-house in Sveaborg (Weinstein 1956).

## 2.2. The Origin of the Jewish Soldiers in Helsinki

Halén's account of the Jewish soldiers of Sveaborg between 1831 and 1840 provides us with some information about the origin of the first Jewish soldiers in Helsinki. It is worth noting that the few mentions found in the military archives all refer to the government of Grodno in Belorussia; the kahals mentioned are Liubcha, Zelva, Ruzhany and Mosty (Halén 2000: 29–31). According to Klier,<sup>3</sup> soldiers were placed quite systematically; recruits from the same region were stationed on the same military base.

Burstein (1978) has classified the immigration of the soldiers and their families into three periods, according to the historical stages of the Jewish community in Helsinki. This study is based on the census of 1870 and the 1915 provincial register of Jewish settlers in Finland. During the pioneer period of 1840–70, 41 per cent of the soldiers came from the Baltic provinces/countries,<sup>4</sup> 33 per cent from Russia, 25 per cent from Poland and 1 per cent from other areas. During 1871–1900, 30 per cent of the soldiers came from the Baltic countries, 27 per cent from Russia, 21 per cent from Poland, 12 per cent from miscellaneous areas and 10 per cent from other Finnish towns. During the third period, between 1901 and 1918, the number of Russian emigrants increased; statistics show that 52 per cent came from Russia (one-third of them from St. Petersburg), 25 per cent from the Baltic countries, 13 per cent from Poland and 5 per cent from other Finnish towns; 5 per cent were of mixed origin.

Harviainen's statistics covering the period between 1868 and 1917 provide us with more detailed data than Burstein's account of the second and third periods. The statistics are based on the records of the Passport Bureau of the Helsinki Police Force. It appears that one quarter of the soldiers came from Lithuania and north-eastern Poland, one quarter from the governments of Novgorod and Tver, one quarter from the town of Shlisselburg, near St. Petersburg, and the rest from miscellaneous areas (Harviainen 1998: 297). The police records mention, among others, the following governments in the Pale of Settlement: Kovno (Kaunas), Vilno (Vilnius), Suvalki, Lomzha, Grodno, Vitebsk, Varshava (Warsaw), Kalish, and Petrokov (HPP).

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence with John Klier (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Burstein does not specify what countries she is referring to as the Baltic countries. Most likely, she means Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

and Petrokov (HPP).

In general, when examining the above data, it can be said that during the earlier period the soldiers came from the western governments in the Pale of Settlement, whereas towards the twentieth century, the number of immigrants from Russia proper increased.

### 2.2.1. Towns and Governments beyond the Pale of Settlement

The towns of Novgorod, Tver, Narva, Kronstadt and Shlisselburg<sup>5</sup> pose a problem, since they lie beyond the Pale of Settlement, in areas where Jews were not officially allowed to settle. How and when did Jews settle there, and where did they originally come from? Investigation of the soldiers' roots is made more difficult by the fact that the official records usually contain the word *hemort* 'place of residence' or *skrifningsort* 'place of registration', which may refer respectively to the place of birth or the place where the soldier was last registered. As Russian citizens, the Cantonists were officially registered in a Russian government, not in autonomous Finland. There are even cases where the same person at one point gave under *hemort* his place of birth and on another occasion his place of military service (Burstein 1978: 22). According to Burstein, the major Russian towns hardly served as primary emigration bases due to Russia's strict Jewish policy (ibid: 24). Therefore, it is most likely that the majority of soldiers were originally from the *štetls*, small Jewish towns and hamlets within the Pale of Settlement, and those who were registered in the aforementioned Russian towns had previously served there (or had been trained in a Cantonist battalion) and had been later transferred to Finland.

The fact that the registration places beyond the Pale were towns with important military bases supports the above argument, e.g. Narva, Kronstadt and Slisselburg<sup>6</sup> are strategically very important for St. Petersburg. The region of St. Petersburg is generally mentioned as having become a major centre for Nicholas' Soldiers soon after the conscription statute of 1827.<sup>7</sup> According to Ginsburg, the

<sup>5</sup> These towns are mentioned in the record of the Passport Bureau of the Helsinki Police Force (HPP). There are also miscellaneous towns in the government of Novgorod, e.g. Borovich, Staraja Russa, Valdai, and Vishnyi-Volotsk.

<sup>6</sup> The Jewish population of these towns in 1897 was as follows: Kronstadt 991, Narva 474, Novgorod 2048, Shlisselburg 179, (EE, vol. IX: 875; vol. XI: 522; vol. XI: 754; vol. XVI: 50). The source does not mention anything about the origin of the population but refers to congregations, which had been established recently, i.e. during the second half of 19th century.

<sup>7</sup> The soldiers lived in military bases, whereas their wives and children had to reside in towns (Ginsburg 1944: 20).

first Jews of St. Petersburg originated chiefly from Belorussia, for instance the towns of Mogilev and Shklov, and the Jewish community was run by former soldiers between 1850 and 1870. Jews who dwelt in town without proper authorization may have been sent to the army.<sup>8</sup> It seems that conscription, or being a soldier's child, were the only reasons for which a layman could be officially registered in the towns beyond the Pale of Settlement. As mentioned above, pursuant to the 1858 statute, soldiers who had completed their term of service were allowed to settle in the town in which they resided.

There is also some documentary evidence that indicates that the soldiers registered in the aforementioned Russian towns were born in the Pale of Settlement. For instance, Hirsch Stiller, who was born in Belorussia<sup>9</sup> in 1842 was caught by *xapers*<sup>10</sup> when he was ten years old and sent one thousand kilometres away from his home to a Cantonist battalion [in Novgorod] (Idestam-Almquist 1984: 29–30). At the age of twenty-one, he joined the army and served as a musician. In 1867, his regiment was transferred to Helsinki, where he died in the late 1880s. The police records show that his son Abraham Stiller, born in Helsinki in 1885, was registered in the government of Novgorod (HPP),<sup>11</sup> because the children of Jewish soldiers were registered in the same place as their parents. Another similar case is that of Chaim-Leiser Knaster, who was registered in Novgorod, according to police records, but as per family correspondence (CFK) he originated from the town of Prashka in the government of Petrokov in southern Poland.

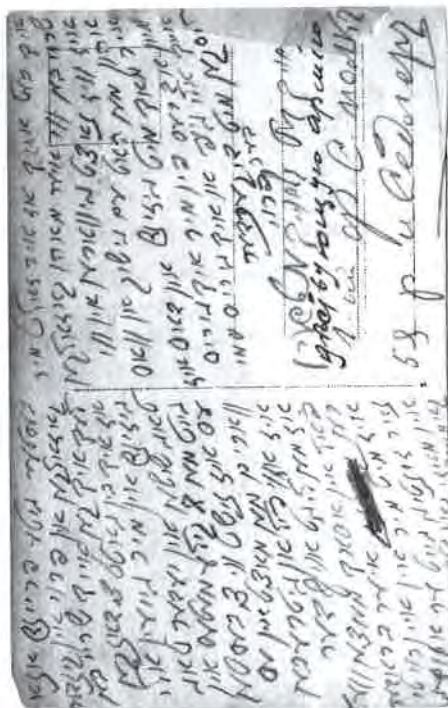
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8 Jews without proper authorisation (a so-called *pravozhitelstvo* 'residence permit') often resided in the surrounding towns and spent their days in St. Petersburg (Ginsburg 1944: 20). As early as 1825 some Jews lived in hamlets around St. Petersburg (*ibid.*: 18). The officials usually overlooked the fact that Jews lived in the region of St. Petersburg, because they themselves benefited financially from the situation.

9 It is mentioned that he had relatives in Krichev (Idestam-Almquist 1984: 30) that is situated near the town of Mogilev in Belorussia. Another source tells that Mr Stiller was caught in Krichev in 1867 when he was eight years old. He was sent to a local non-Jewish farmer in Kasterma. At 15, he joined the army in the region of St. Petersburg (Yablokoff 1969: 676). It seems that the author of the latter source had mistaken the year in which Mr Stiller's battalion was transferred to Finland with the year when he was kidnapped.

10 *Xapers* 'catchers' were men who were employed by the kahal to find and kidnap children and other people suitable for recruitment (Stanislawski 1983: 28).

11 Hirsch Stiller's name does not appear in the police records. Abraham Stiller's details are located next to his foster parent Josef Kafka's details.



*Image 4.* A photo-card of the soldier Josef Sedler, who served in the Russian army in Finland. The letter was written during the First World War and sent from the front. The censor has overscored one word. The transliteration below tries to follow the original as closely as possible. (Courtesy of the Jewish Congregation of Helsinki.)

*Bester gute fraind Ana Kazolken un froi un kinderlex. Ix ken aix šraiben az ix bin gott cu danken gizund. Un mir geien ali tog šišen, un jeder tog geit men 8 kilemeter. Un es iz ništ vi cu bešten, vorim men maet, un es iz azoi fil ongitreben az men ligt oif der pol un a sax menden veren #####. Aier broder iz mit mir in ein roti, nor zuntig geit er avek in muzikalne komande. Ich bet aix az ir zolt mir šraiben vi aier man Kazolken iz viznact givoren un vi ahin men hot em gešik un vos ir max mit gizund. Un dos iz main adres fun mir. Ix giris aix ale [?]. Un ix giris Šmulisken mit di kender, der froi. Ix bet glaix entfern.*

DEISTVUJUSHCHIUU ARMIU

1-II R. S. POLK

5 IA R. [ROTA] J. SEDLER

Dear good friend Anna Casulkin, wife and children. I can tell you that I am, thank God, in good health. We go to shoot everyday and we walk eight kilometres. It is unbearable because we have to march and it is so tiring that some men just lie on the ground and many men #####. Your brother is with me in the same troop but on Sunday he will join the musical company. I ask you most kindly to write to me to tell me how your husband Casulkin was denounced and where he has been sent, and how your health is. This is my address. My best regards to everyone. I send best wishes to Samuel and his children and wife. Please, answer quickly.

SERVING ARMY

1ST [?] REGIMENT

5TH COMPANY J. SEDLER

### 2.2.2. Courland

It is worth noting that according to existing records (see Burstein; HPP) very few Jews in Helsinki originated from Courland, the nearest “traditional” Jewish settlement to Finland. Courland was not actually part of the Pale of Settlement, and therefore had some regulations of its own regarding its urban Jewish population (Klier 1986: 84). Due to the special character of the region and its Jewish population, it may have avoided conscription, or the conscripts were simply sent to other locations. The 1901 records of the Passport Bureau of the Helsinki Police Force mention only one family from Courland, the Seligsons from the town of Tuksum (HPP). It is also important to note that there is no mention of Isak Seligson (born in 1843) ever having served in the Russian army, whereas over 90 per cent of the people in the 1901 records have a military background.

### 2.3. The Origin of Soldiers’ Spouses

Tracing the origin of soldiers’ wives is even more difficult than tracing the soldiers’ origin, since police records contain no data regarding spouses.<sup>12</sup> Some soldiers were married when they entered the service (Ginsburg 1944: 20). At the early stages of Jewish settlement in Finland, soldiers usually had to look for suitable spouses overseas. According to one legend, some soldiers solved the problem by writing to a rabbi in Lithuania (or St. Petersburg) and ordered a horse cart full of women (Harviainen 1998: 296).<sup>13</sup> Another source claimed that Russian officials arranged wives for the soldiers (Torvinen 1989: 26). Some Cantonists and soldiers had been able to stay in contact with their families in the Pale of Settlement, and when it was time to find a wife, the relatives arranged a *šidex* ‘match’ from the home village (inf. #11). In general, one could assume that a soldier tried to find a spouse among his own folk, i.e. someone who spoke the same dialect and shared the same customs.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.4. Other Jewish Settlers

The Jewish soldiers who stayed in Helsinki and came to form the local community employed Jewish rabbis and teachers at a very early stage (Weinstein

<sup>12</sup> They were registered in the same place as their husbands.

<sup>13</sup> There used to be a saying among Helsinki Jewesses, “I wasn’t taken off a wagon”, which meant that one had a good pedigree (Harviainen 1998: 296).

<sup>14</sup> For instance, *livak* (~ Lithuanian Jewish) culture differs in many respects from southern (e.g. Polish and Ukrainian) Jewish culture (see Herzog 1965).

1956). Quite often personal connections were used to find a suitable person for a vacancy; relatives and acquaintances were invited to Finland (inf. #11; inf. #16). As regards the language of the Jews, their teachers and religious leaders were important influences on their dialect and speech. The long-standing (1892–1924) rabbi of the Helsinki Jewish congregation, Schmuel Noson Bukanz, originated from Shad[ov] in the government of Kovno (HPP). Selig Schapira, a *melamed* ‘Hebrew teacher’, came from Dvinsk in the government of Vitebsk (ibid.), and Hirsch Itzchok Segal, a teacher and Torah scribe, was originally from Vitebsk (Weinstein 1956).<sup>15</sup> Between the two World Wars two prominent personalities in the congregation were Leibe Bolotowsky, a teacher and Torah scribe, who came from Vitebsk<sup>16</sup> (inf. #11) and Rabbi Simon Federbusch from Narol in Galicia (EJ vol. 6: 1202). All the aforementioned teachers and rabbis, except for Federbusch, came from the area of North-Eastern Yiddish.

Jewish immigration to Helsinki after 1917 was quite different from previous waves of migration. Internal immigration from Viipuri and Turku increased considerably during the inter-war period (Burstein 1978: 50–51). This culminated in the transfer of the majority of Viipuri Jews to Helsinki during the Second World War. In addition, Helsinki received a couple of hundred Jewish refugees from the Baltic States and Austria prior to the war (ibid.). Some of them settled permanently in Helsinki. The Austrian and European immigrants brought with them a slight German influence, for instance some young Yiddish-speakers learned German from the refugees accommodated by their families (inf. #11). As regards overseas immigration, approximately the same number of people came from Russia, Poland, the Baltic States and continental Europe (Burstein 1978: 50–51).

### 3. YIDDISH DIALECT MAPS

One of the aims of this chapter is to combine the data on the origins of Finnish Jewry with Yiddish dialect maps in order to find out which dialects and sub-dialects most probably played a role in the making of Helsinki Yiddish. Only data relating to soldiers originating from the Pale of Settlement are useful for this purpose, since the regions beyond, i.e. Russia proper, do not correspond to any Yiddish dialect maps.

<sup>15</sup> According to inf. #4, there was a Hebrew teacher in the 1910s by the name of Levik who originated from Latvia.

<sup>16</sup> Leibe Bolotowsky was invited to Finland by a *landsman*, a person originating from the same town, living in Helsinki (inf. #11).

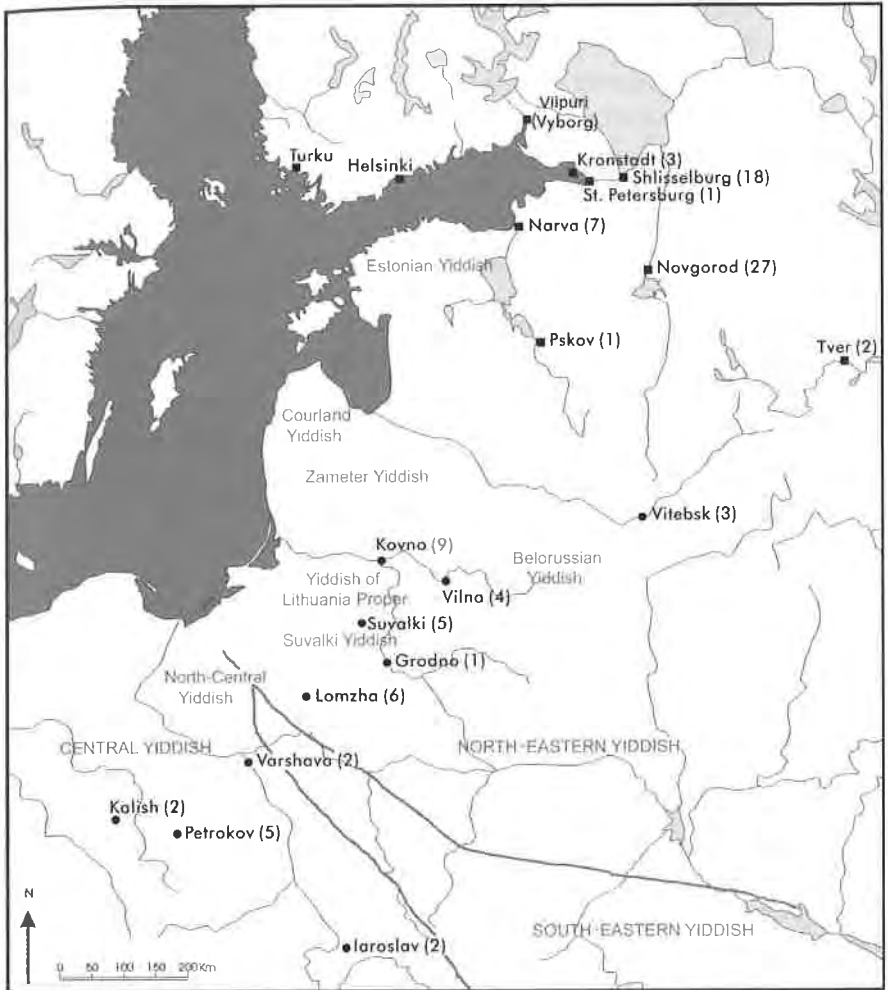


Image 5. Data of the origin of the Helsinki Jews (according to the records of 1901) superimposed with the geographical prevalence of the major Yiddish dialects and North-Eastern Yiddish subdialects. (Map drawn by Salla Jokela, University of Helsinki.)

The dots on the map (see Image 5) indicate government capitals within the Pale of Settlement from which some of the Helsinki Jews originated; the squares are towns beyond the Pale of Settlement in which some were registered. Numbers after the names indicate the percentage of families registered in the governments or towns, based on the 1901 police records (HPP); this is intended to give some idea of the distribution.<sup>17</sup> The boundaries of the major Yiddish dialects are based

<sup>17</sup> The information in this document seems to be in line with the general picture gained from other sources.

on Landau's and Wachstein's dialect map (1911) and Birnbaum's map (1915) (LCAAJ 1992a: 50, 52).

At the time, there were approximately one hundred households, of which 62 per cent were registered beyond the Pale of Settlement and only 38 per cent registered within the Pale of Settlement; of the latter group 75 per cent originated from the area of North-Eastern Yiddish. Based on the above data and other data quoted earlier, we may conclude that Helsinki Yiddish is a dialect heavily influenced by North-Eastern Yiddish. As a *mixed dialect* it belongs to the group of *colonial Yiddish* dialects (see Chapter 7 §1). The North-Eastern Yiddish sub-dialects worthy of consideration are the Yiddish of Lithuania proper, Zameter (~ Samogitian) Yiddish, Suvalki Yiddish,<sup>18</sup> Belorussian Yiddish,<sup>19</sup> Estonian Yiddish<sup>20</sup> and North-Central Yiddish.<sup>21</sup> Based on the map, we can see that Central Yiddish influence, too, has to be taken into consideration, whereas South-eastern influence seems to be non-existent. It is interesting to note that although hardly any Jews came from Courland proper, there were some who originated from Samogitia. In the past, Zameter (~ Samogitian) Yiddish and Courland Yiddish were a single dialect that gradually grew into two separate sub-dialects, because Courland became isolated from 1829 onwards and no new Jewish immigrants were allowed to settle there (Lemkhen 1995: 22; Jacobs 2002: 296).

#### 4. CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITIES

Although the parents and grandparents of many Helsinki Jews originate from *Lite*, i.e. the realm of Lithuanian (North-Eastern) Yiddish that extends well beyond Lithuania proper,<sup>22</sup> they seldom call themselves *litvakes* 'Lithuanian Jews' (or Jews speaking Lithuanian Yiddish). Only informants with close or recent contacts with Lithuania, for instance, who have one parent from Lithuania proper, are likely to call themselves *litvakes*. Finnish Jews even tell jokes and anecdotes about *litvakes* and the peculiarities of their Yiddish.<sup>23</sup>

18 These dialects are described in Mark's classification of Lithuanian Yiddish sub-dialects (Mark 1951).

19 Described, for instance, by U. Weinreich (1965).

20 Described, for instance, by Verschik (2000).

21 According to Herzog's classification, a transitional dialect between North-Eastern Yiddish and Central Yiddish (Herzog 1965).

22 The traditional speech territory covered Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belorussia, parts of northern Poland, and northern Ukraine (Jacobs 2002: 288). The term *Lite* generally covers the aforementioned geopolitical/ethnographic areas.

23 The anecdotes have to do with the so-called *sabesdiker losn*, where the sibilants *s* and *š* have merged into one sibilant (see Chapter 7 §3.2.5.). For instance, *litvakes* eat *gefilde fis* 'stuffed leg' instead of *gefilde fiš* 'stuffed fish', the traditional Sabbath dish (Hartikainen 1997: 6).



Helsinki Jews do not consider themselves Baltic Jews nor do they consider their Yiddish *baltiš(er) jidiš* 'Baltic Yiddish'.<sup>24</sup> One reason for this was the fact that very few Jews originated from Estonia and Courland, which belong to the northern area of North-Eastern Yiddish, called by Jacobs (2002: 295) 'Baltic Yiddish'. It is relevant to mention that the Jews of Estonia call themselves Baltic Jews as opposed to *litvakes*, although, technically speaking, they are *litvakes* (Verschik 2000: 403).<sup>25</sup>

Most often the informants considered their parents Russian Jews, regardless of their true origin, whether it be in the Baltic countries or northern Poland (all parts of the Russian Empire). It seemed that the Russian experience was still fresh in their memory; many Cantonists and Jewish soldiers had lost contact with their region of birth and relatives and had been partly Russified. Informants tend to divide Yiddish into two major dialects: Russian Yiddish, i.e. their own dialect, and Polish Yiddish, which is looked down upon.

Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe has also been classified on the basis of non-verbal cultural features, such as the seasoning of *gefilte fiš* 'Sabbath Fish' (Herzog 1965: 18–19). The borders between areas where fish is seasoned with sugar, so-called *poiliše fiš* 'Polish fish', and where sugar is not used (~ Lithuania, Belorussia), correspond to the major dialectal isoglosses (ibid.). In this respect, Helsinki belongs to the northern area where fish is seasoned only with salt and pepper. A local speciality is colouring and seasoning the broth with saffron (inf. #8).

## 5. SUMMARY

It is impossible to draw definite conclusions concerning the origin of Helsinki Jewry based on the available data, because of missing places of birth in the records. Nevertheless, it is highly probable that the majority originated from the Baltic countries, Belorussia, and North-Eastern Poland, whereas Polish immigrants were a minority, and Ukraine was almost completely absent from the records.

When comparing the available data on the origin of Helsinki Jews with Yiddish dialect maps, we learned that Helsinki Yiddish is most likely a fusion of different North-Eastern Yiddish sub-dialects with a slight Central Yiddish and

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There is also a saying in Helsinki, *a litvak mit a lox in kop* 'a stupid person', literally 'a *litvak* with a hole in the head' (inf. #23).

24 In NEY language names are generally masculine (e.g. *litvišer jidiš*), whereas in non-NEY varieties they are generally neuter (e.g. *litviš jidiš*).

25 Estonian Jews call their Yiddish either *estniš(er) jidiš*, 'Estonian Yiddish' or *baltiš(er) jidiš* 'Baltic Yiddish' (Verschik 2000: 403).

Courland/Zameter Yiddish influence. Thus it belongs to the group of colonial Yiddish dialects. A thorough genealogical study detailing the birthplaces of the soldiers registered in the towns beyond the Pale of Settlement might provide a more accurate picture as to the origin of Helsinki Jewry and the degree to which different dialects and sub-dialects are represented. However, there are further non-linguistic points (e.g. the prestige of a dialect) to consider when studying which speech varieties were deemed superior to others.

The Helsinki Jewish community is not an organic extension of the Baltic Jewish communities, even if it may seem so on the map. It is an independent settlement with a distinct character, and their strong linguistic identity also indicates this. Most informants did not regard themselves as *litvakes* or Baltic Jews, but Russian Jews or the descendants of Russian Jews.

## 2. POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS YIDDISH AND HEBREW

### 1. PREFACE

The Jewish language question arose during the period of *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, in the nineteenth century. Some enlighteners saw Yiddish as the only vehicle for acquainting the Jewish masses with secular knowledge, modern ideologies and secular literature, whereas others strived to modernize Hebrew for the very same purposes (Fishman 1993: 323). Both parties, i.e. the Hebraists and the Yiddishists, strove to establish their language as the national tongue of the Jews, which gradually led to a bitter language controversy. In 1903 the Hebrew teachers of the Zionist settlements in Palestine proclaimed Hebrew the only language of instruction in the schools; in 1905 the Jewish labour movement *Bund* declared Yiddish to be the language of the Eastern European proletariat (ibid.). The peak of the Yiddish language movement was the Chernovits language conference in 1908. The aim of the conference was to discuss various linguistic and cultural aspects. The discussion concerning the recognition of the Yiddish language as *the* national tongue of the Jews became, however, the central issue of the conference (King 1998: 42).

Yiddish has traditionally been assigned to L (low-culture) functions, i.e. everyday family, neighbourhood and other informal/intimate intra-group interactions, whereas Hebrew has been used for H (high-culture) functions, i.e. literacy-related functions in education, religion and "high culture" in general (Fishman 1987: 38; 1993: 321–322). In traditional Jewish society *lošn-koideš*, the Holy Tongue, dominated almost the entire domain of the written language, Yiddish totally occupying the position of the oral language (Weinreich 1980: 278–279). However, from century to century the area of Yiddish literature expanded in both quantity and subject-matter (ibid.). On the other hand, Hebrew (as a modern spoken language) began to occupy a tiny segment of the oral language.

Yiddish has been derided by Jews (as well as by non-Jews) from the time of the *Haskalah* as an uncouth, corrupt, ungrammatical and utterly laughable language (Fishman 1985a: 210). With the rise of Yiddishism the traditional diglossia in Jewish society began to disintegrate. The Yiddishists wanted to develop Yiddish into a language of an all-encompassing and distinctly modern

life-style (Fishman 1993: 323). Some scholars began to take Yiddish seriously and defended Yiddish against the arguments of the Hebraists, as Matisjohu Miseses did at the Chernovits language conference (King 1998: 42).

In this chapter we shall concentrate on the different attitudes encountered by Yiddish in Helsinki during the 1920s and '30s. We shall also incorporate relevant views on Jewish nationalism and Hebrew. The best available sources are local Jewish journals, especially the *Judisk Krönika* 'Jewish Chronicle', the organ of the Jewish Literature Society and *Hatchijo* [hatxíjo] 'Renaissance', the organ of the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*. First, however, we shall give a general account of the political orientation in the community during this period.

## 2. POLITICAL ORIENTATION

### 2.1. General Zionists

The general political orientation, in terms of the Jewish world of politics, among the members of the Jewish congregation in Helsinki was moderate; the majority belonging to the so-called *algemeine cionistn* 'General Zionists', Jewish centrists (inf. #2; inf. #11; Torvinen 1989: 128). Their main organ was the journal *Hatikwah* 'The Hope' (Torvinen 1989: 128); after the Second World War some still subscribed to a centrist Yiddish journal from France called *Di jidiše štime* 'The Jewish Voice' (inf. #24).

The attitudes and activities of the General Zionists followed the Helsingfors Programme, which Russian Zionists had compiled during their Helsinki summit on 4th-10th December 1906 (Goldsmith 1997: 94). Standing between two extremes, the most radical Zionist and socialist parties, the Russian Zionist movement sought and found a synthesis between political *Gegenwartsarbeit* (work in the presence) in the Diaspora and practical activity in Palestine (Zineman 1949: 36). The programme strove for political freedom and autonomy for the Jews and for the recognition of Hebrew and Yiddish as the national and vernacular languages, i.e. the right to use them in court, in schools and in other public institutions (ibid.:37-39; Goldsmith 1997: 95). The ideology did not thus oppose Yiddish but saw the future in the Hebrew language. The *Gegenwartsarbeit* in the Diaspora included not only political goals but also interest in modernized Hebrew education in reformed hederes and secular schools, as well as establishing athletics and sports clubs for the young (EJ vol. 16: 1049). The summit made a deep impression on the Finnish Jews – the founding of the sports club *Stjärnan* 'Star' (later *Makkabi*) and a reformed heder (see Chapter 4 §5.) in 1906 can be seen as a clear realization of the goals and ideals of *Gegenwartsarbeit*.



א גרופע רעלעגאטן צום העלוינגפארטער צוזאמענפאר אין יאר 1906.  
 פון רעכטס אויף לינקס שטייען: וול. זשאבאָבינסקי, א. גאלדשטיין, ב. יאָפּע,  
 א. האַרבעלעס, ארוו. א. זיידעמאַן, יצחק גרינבוים.

*Image 6.* Delegates to the third conference of Russian Zionists, which took place in Helsinki in 1906. The summit was held in Helsinki because conditions in Russia proper restricted meeting and the exercise of free speech. (Picture: Zineman 1949: 38.)

## 2.2. Revisionists

Approximately one third of the Jews in Helsinki were revisionists, right-wing Zionists (Torvinen 1989: 129). They had a political alliance called *Hazohar* [hacóhar] ‘The Zenith’, founded in 1934, led by Jonas Jakobson and Josef Leffkowitzsch (Lefko) (inf. #2; Hartikainen 1998: 85). The revisionists in Helsinki published a trilingual (Yiddish-Swedish-Finnish) journal called *Hazohar*. In the journal Yiddish was employed to transmit political propoganda in contrast, for instance, to *Hatchijo*, which published Yiddish poems. Some of the Yiddish articles were adapted from foreign sources. In *Hazohar* there were no discussion of the status or future of Yiddish. The leading figure of the revisionists, Vladimir Jabotinsky, himself a native Russian-speaker, responded to the Jewish language question without hesitation or emotional conflict; he saw Hebrew, the language of the Bible and the heder, as the national tongue (Stanislawski 2001: 164). Jabotinsky learned Yiddish, however, for practical reasons and occasionally gave his speeches in Yiddish, for instance when he visited Helsinki in 1939 (inf. #11).

Dissensions and clashes took place between the revisionists and general Zionists in Helsinki. The revisionists accused the General Zionist Association *Agudas Zion* of liberalism and salon socialism and Simon Federbush, the Chief Rabbi of Finland, of partiality (Torvinen 1989: 129).

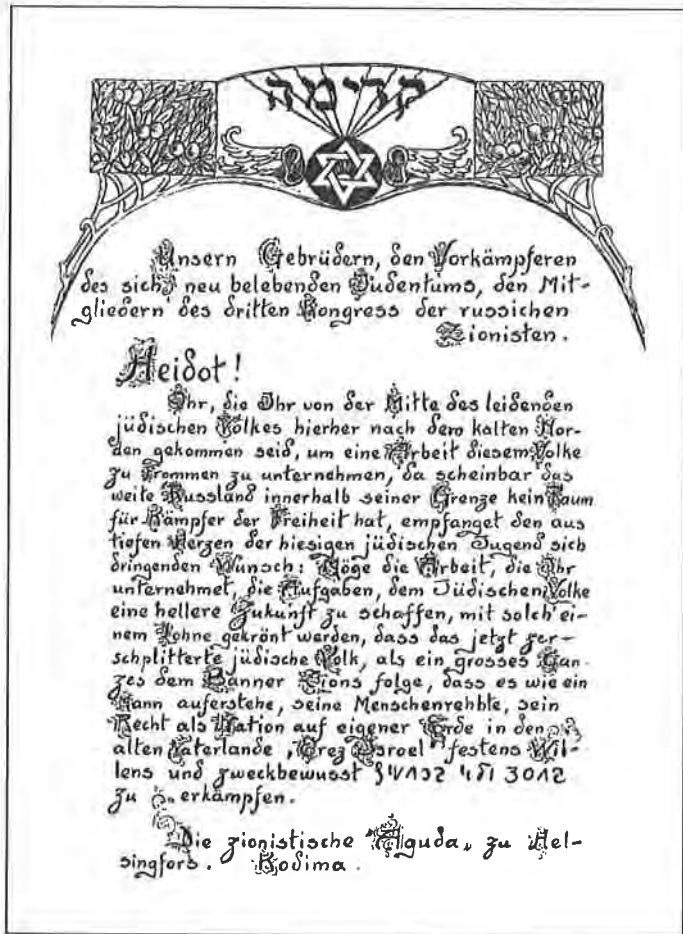


Image 7. The local Zionist Association *Kodima* (Forward) greeted the delegates to the 1906 conference of Russian Zionists with the above letter written in German. (The National Archives of Finland, SJA/K167.)

Simon Federbusch, who originated from Poland (see Introduction §1.1.), represented a small Orthodox Zionist party called *Mizrachi*<sup>1</sup>. He had been chairman of the *Mizrachi* movement in Galicia between 1924 and 1930 (EJ vol. 6: 1202). In Helsinki, as far as is known, there were no supporters of the *Mizrachi* movement.

<sup>1</sup> *Mizrachi* was founded in Vilna in 1902 (Stanislavski 2001: 164). It had been formed by Orthodox rabbis in protest against the acceptance of the cultural goals of the secular Zionists (ibid: 166).

### 2.3. Socialists

Some members of the Helsinki Jewish community embraced left-wing ideas. The Finnish Social Democratic Party, founded in 1899, found supporters among the Finnish Jews (Torvinen 1989: 79). They wanted to enlighten Jewish youth about the political situation in Finland and in 1906 arranged two meetings for them, where they encouraged them to fight for human and civil rights alongside the poor (ibid.: 80). At approximately the same time the Social Democratic merchant S. M. Rosenthal and the confectioner N. Bonsdroff from Helsinki, together with the merchant Hilel Zall and Santeri Jacobsson from Viipuri founded the Committee of the Emancipation Movement<sup>2</sup> in order to plead the cause of Finnish Jewry and to elevate the level of their culture (Jacobsson 1951: 337; Torvinen 1989: 80, 87). Some years later, between the World Wars, there were some individuals that embraced leftist ideas. For instance, Abraham Stiller, an influential and active person in the congregation, was a socialist and an enthusiastic Zionist (Smolar 2003: 27, 31). Some Helsinki Jews read socialist newspapers in Yiddish, for example *Forverts* 'Forward' (New York), *Der tog* 'The Day' (Vilna) and *Folksblat* 'The People's Paper' (Kaunas).<sup>3</sup>

Some of the largest leftist groups in the Jewish world were the Social Democratic *Bund* and *Poaley Zion*. The Jewish Labour *Bund* of Russia and Poland was founded in 1897. The Bundists opposed Zionism and the Hebrew language and espoused secular Yiddish culture in the Diaspora (Zineman 1947: 151; Goldsmith 1997: 82, 85). The *Poaley Zion*, the Labour Party, strove for autonomy in Palestine and in Russia, and developed a positive attitude towards Yiddish (Goldsmith 1997: 92). Finnish Jewry, however, lacked a strong socialist front and consequently there were no leftist associations besides the aforementioned Committee of the Emancipation Movement. The communities were very small and after having received Finnish citizenship in 1918 many Jews began to prosper and soon became members of the bourgeoisie (*Hazohar* no. 2 1937: 7; Torvinen 1989: 111).

However, the activity of some cultural associations had some leftist aspirations, for instance the Jewish Dramatic Society (founded 1922) performed manifestly socialist plays by Jacob Gordin and Sholem Ash (see Chapter 3 §6.2.) and during the sessions of the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo* (founded 1921) articles from the aforementioned socialist newspapers were read aloud (see Chapter 3 §5.).

<sup>2</sup> The source uses the Finnish name *Emansipaatioliikkeen työvaliokunta*.

<sup>3</sup> The names of *Forverts* and *Der tog* appear in interviews and protocols of the literature associations. According to Meir Schub (conversation, Vilna 2002), Finnish Jews prescribed *Folksblat*, which was published in Kaunas.

## 2.4. Assimilation

Assimilation was vigorous in the Helsinki Jewish community between the World Wars and interfered negatively with Zionist, cultural and religious activities. Some parents did not send their children to the Jewish school, and many, both young and old, were indifferent towards the renaissance of Jewish culture and embraced more cosmopolitan ideas. Finnish Jewry experienced a rapid rise in social status during the first decades of the twentieth century. After Finland gained its independence they could participate freely in the economic and social life of Finnish society. As mentioned in the introduction, the number of mixed marriages grew during the 1930s.

It is interesting to see how different the situation was among the Estonian Jews. They were granted cultural autonomy in 1925, which enabled them to establish a complete school system in the Jewish languages, both Hebrew and Yiddish (Verschik 1999a: 119). It is said that the Estonian Jews most closely approached Simon Dubnow's model of non-territorial Jewish autonomy (ibid: 120). Simon Dubnow was the leading figure of the *Folkists* who strove for an autonomist model for the Jewish people. They proposed a trilingual model for Jewish communities, i.e. good command of the official language besides Yiddish (as a language of culture) and Hebrew (as the language of tradition and liturgy).

## 3. ATTITUDES FAVOURING AND OPPOSING YIDDISH

It is quite peculiar that the Yiddish literature associations in Helsinki had Swedish journals and that discussions of Jewish nationalism and the role of Yiddish culture were held in Swedish.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is sometimes difficult to picture what the atmosphere really was like behind the "Swedish coulisses". As mentioned with reference to the political orientation, attitudes toward Yiddish were, generally speaking, moderate. There were many traditional Jewish families that took Yiddish for granted and did not even question the right of Yiddish to exist (inf. #22). The Yiddishist arguments, i.e. arguments favouring Yiddish, found in the articles were mostly advanced by those Jews who originated from the Pale of Settlement or by their children, who mastered Yiddish.<sup>5</sup> They were naturally able to read Yiddish newspapers from abroad.

<sup>4</sup> One reason for the lack of a Yiddish press was the fact that it was impossible to print with Hebrew letters in Helsinki (see Chapter 5 §1.).

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, we do not always know the names of these persons, since they appear under pseudonyms.



### 3.1. Nationalism versus Cosmopolitanism

There is an interesting dialogue in the *Judisk Krönika* (no. 9 1919: 2) concerning the role that nationalism and politics should play in the new Yiddish literature association which was about to be founded (i.e. the Jewish Literature Society, see Chapter 3 §4.). A person disguised behind the pseudonym Isch-Jehudi<sup>6</sup> suggested that a new Yiddish literature association should be founded for the young whose religious basis was becoming weaker and weaker, as was the case among other nations, and who were in great need of a national and cultural basis for their future lives.

Isch Jehudi considered that secular Yiddish culture should play an essential role in the national awakening taking place in Jewish society. Of interest is his parallel with other contemporary national movements. His view that the association should have a clear national and social goal was opposed by S. P-nt [Simon Pergament] (*Judisk Krönika* no. 10 1919):

A Yiddish literature association should awaken and satisfy interest in an area of world literature which is practically unknown and yet stands nearer to us than many others; a literature with which we are all more or less familiar. This offers us the possibility of aesthetic enjoyment of a special kind. [...] We should listen to their [Yiddish authors'] song depictions with the feeling of a man who in the autumn of his life listens to the fairy-tales of youth. [...] But I cannot accept that any national or social goals should be attached to it [the literature association]. A literature association must never be of national importance, a J e w i s h literature association must never be of social importance.

This expression of opinion shows that Pergament was afraid of the political aspect involved in the rise of Yiddishism, possibly the leftist, autonomist strivings that such an agenda might bring. Simon Pergament received an impetuous reply by Isch-Jehudi in the following issue of *Judisk Krönika* (no. 11 1919) in an article entitled *National skräck* 'National Phobia':

Especially strong is the "national phobia" among those persons when we come to the question of the national-cultural responsibilities of the Jewish people. These "Cosmopolites" who throw themselves head over heel into the arms of foreign cultures, forgetting that these cultures are to a great extent national. They lose their capability of clear thinking when talking about the actual value and meaning of Jewish literature, both the new [Yiddish] and the old [Hebrew]. Try to tell them that our literature is more than just presenting depictions, which can only awaken the impressions that we received in our childhood; memories of something that once was our own, but that when we have grown older and "wiser" has become strange to us. [...] The matter at issue here is J e w e s s e s and J e w s who wish to found a J e w i s h literature association, just as children of other nations found their literature associations.

<sup>6</sup>

Literally 'a Jewish man'. The person behind this name could be Israel Schur, who was the main initiator of the Jewish Literature Society founded in 1919.

“National phobia” could be interpreted – as Goldsmith put it – as unconscious anti-Semitism and self-hatred (Goldsmith 1997: 142). Assimilationists and cosmopolites generally viewed the flowering of Yiddish literature and culture as a passing phenomenon and scorned Yiddish as the language of pietism, lullabies and trash culture (ibid.: 175; Sandrow 1996: 135). Some intellectuals did not believe that a national culture could even be created in a “jargon” like Yiddish (Goldsmith 1997: 176). Simon Pergament did not oppose or hate Yiddish (for instance, he was active in the Jewish Literature Society and the Jewish Song Association) but was afraid of nationalistic strivings among the Jews. The debate in *Judisk Krönika* indicates that in some quarters there was a desire to believe that Yiddish language and literature could play an important role among the young members of the Helsinki Jewish congregation. These ideas seem rather utopian, taking into consideration the assumed state of Yiddish among the young (born at the beginning of the twentieth century), who generally spoke Swedish among themselves. However, this could also be an indication that their knowledge of Yiddish was better than is often assumed.

### 3.2. A Yiddishist Poem

On of the most Yiddishist contentions found in *Hatchijo* is a couple of poems entitled “Hebrew” and “Yiddish”, written under the pseudonym Schwejdell (*Hatchijo* no. 2 1923: 5). The pseudonym is quite interesting since it is a diminutive form of the word *šved* ‘Swede’. The name could be understood as an ironic description of an (assimilated) Finnish-Swedish Jew or someone who had Swedish connections.<sup>7</sup> The poem could be by Jac Weinstein, who resided in Sweden for several years around 1920. Weinstein wrote poems in Yiddish and sometimes later translated them into Swedish.<sup>8</sup> The two poems in *Hatchijo* belong to a collection called *Judiska Sonetter* ‘Jewish Sonnets’. Similar poems<sup>9</sup> were quite common at the time, and they probably inspired the author of our poems. It is interesting that this Yiddishistic poem appeared in Swedish and not in Yiddish, like many other poems in *Hatchijo*.

<sup>7</sup> The name could also refer to a Courland Jew. Jews from Letgalia province called the Baltic coastal Jews *šveidn* ‘Swedes’ or *šveidlex* ‘little Swedes’, possibly because there had been a Swedish presence in the area from the 1660s (Jacobs 2001: 302).

<sup>8</sup> For instance, his collection of holocaust poems, *Muter Roxl un ire kinder* ‘Mother Rachel and Her Children’. On Weinstein, see Chapter 3 §2 and §6.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, *Lošn hakoidiš* ‘Holy Language’, and *Jidiš lošn* ‘Yiddish’, by Eliezer Shindler and *Jidiš* ‘Yiddish’, by Abraham Liesin.

### Hebreiskan

Med bävan lyss jag till det språk, som klingar  
med dämpad klang ur fromma judars bröst.  
Ur synagogans välvda valv det svingar  
sig upp mot himlars höjd från jordisk höst.

Det är ett språk, som giver bönen vingar,  
ett heligt språk, som skänker själen tröst.  
Det är ett tusenårigt språk, som klingar  
med ständigt samma friska ungdomsröst.

Ej seklers tunga flykt dess klang gjort spröd.  
Det ljuder lika friskt som förr det ljud  
och skall förvisst i evighet så ljuda.

På det sjöng David psalmerna en gång,  
på det Halevi diktade sin sång,  
och nu dess ord i Bialiks dikter sjuda.

### Hebrew

With a trembling heart I listened to the language which rises  
With dampened sounds from the breast of pious Jews.  
From the arched vaults of synagogue it swings  
Towards heavens from the earthly autumn.

It is a language that gives a prayer wings,  
A holy language that grants the soul consolation.  
It is a thousand-year-old language that sounds  
Always with the same fresh young voice.

The centuries' long tough flight has not been able to break its sound.  
It sounds as fresh as it once used to  
And shall continue so for ever.

In it David once sung psalms,  
In it Halevi wrote his song,  
And now its words glow in Bialik's poems.

**Judiskan**

Ett jagat slakte bragte dig till världen  
 och närde dig i flykt från land till land,  
 och bitter galla var din kost på färdens  
 och grymma slag utav en djävulsk hand.

Du fick ej andas fritt på fält och gården,  
 Du fjättrades i gettots kvava band,  
 och där i gettots bann vid skumma härden  
 du växte fött utav en inre brand.

Du växte stark och stolt, från regler fri,  
 till böjligt stoff inunder skaldens hand,  
 till härligt språk för tankens symfoni.

I dig det jagda folket lagt sin själ,  
 sitt kval, sin sorg, sitt hopp, sitt ve och väl,  
 sitt sinnes längtan och sitt hjärtas brand.

**Yiddish**

A chased tribe brought you into the world  
 And fed you in flight from land to land,  
 And bitter gall was your nourishment on the way  
 And cruel strokes from an evil hand.

You were not allowed to breathe free on fields and pastures,  
 You were chained to the ghetto's fusty bond,  
 And there in the ghetto's bond beside the dusky hearth  
 You grew of inner fire.

You grew up strong and proud, free of regulations,  
 Into rich matter in a poet's hand,  
 Into wonderful language for a symphony of thoughts.

In you set the chased nation her soul,  
 Her pain, her sorrow, her hope, her misfortune and happiness,  
 Her mind's longing and heart's fire.

In the poem Hebrew is associated with religion and the past. It is considered a holy tongue and the language of poetry. Yiddish, by contrast, is linked with recent history and present experience. It best interprets the feelings and thoughts of millions of Jews. The poem has some things in common with Abraham Liesin's poem *Jidiš* 'Yiddish' published in 1922 (see Goldsmith 1997: 287). Both poems contain the genealogy of Hebrew and Yiddish and the idea that Yiddish, though from an "inferior" background (compared to the "holy tongue"), possesses its own kind of holiness and dignity.

### 3.3. "A Frustrated Yiddishist"

A rather sarcastic depiction of the attitudes of the Jews in Helsinki towards the Yiddish press and Jewish nationalism in general is found in a column called *Ett brev till min vän* 'A Letter to my Friend', written under the pseudonym Hanal<sup>10</sup> in 1923 (*Hatchijo* no. 8 1923: 6):

You want to know whether Yiddish newspapers or journals dealing with Jewish matters are read in Helsinki – unfortunately very few of my friends subscribe to a newspaper. Generally, Helsinki Jews say that Yiddish journals don't interest them, and what can you do about it? [...] The number of young people who would be inspired by Jewish nationalism, who would consider the renaissance of our people as part of their soul, is so low that your little son David could easily count them. The rest of the young are of the same sort as their parents, they are only interested in physical culture.

This view shows that the general attitude was quite indifferent towards Yiddish culture and Jewish nationalism. Similar views were presented by eager Zionists, who were concerned about their own goals (see *Hazohar* no. 2 1934: 7). The attitude towards sport is interesting because to this day sports clubs constitute the most active part of Jewish communal life besides religious observance. Jewish sport associations have been seen as one manifestation of nationalism and Zionism (Stanislawski 2001: 93).

## 4. SWEDISH VERSUS YIDDISH

The clearest case of a language debate in Helsinki are the articles in *Hatchijo* concerning the shift of official languages in the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*, which was founded in 1921 (1923– Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo*). Members who favoured Yiddish as the official language of the association were challenged by the Swedish-speaking majority. The situation is described as follows (*Hatchijo* no. 10 1923: 4):

<sup>10</sup>

This pseudonym most likely derives from the Hebrew abbreviation *HN"l* (*hanizkor le'eil*) 'the above-mentioned'.

The requirement of time has begun to influence even our association. With this the signatory chiefly means the recent change in the language question. In Finland the waves of passion billow high in this question, which is so important for peoples, and now it has reached us. It has eventually happened! Swedish is the official language. It is a wonder that there are still opponents to this. [...] Thanks to this change a major goal has been reached, i.e. the possibility for the non-Yiddish speaking members to take an effective part in the work of the association. Up till now the actual number of active members has not been more than ten. Every Sunday it has been the same persons who have given speeches etc. and most of the members have been absent. The goal of our association is to awaken interest in Zionism among local Jewish youth, but this was not so easy to accomplish, since many found it all too difficult to express their ideas in Yiddish.

This debate took place at the moment when the whole agenda of the Yiddish Literature Association was becoming more Zionistic. The original statutes of 1921 do not mention Zionism as its goal, only the dissemination of Yiddish literature, Jewish culture and history. As we can see, the signatory of the above article ignores the original goals and sees no use for Yiddish; he considers it merely a hindrance. This Zionist received an answer from Ben Jisroel<sup>11</sup> in the following issue of *Hatchijo* (no. 11 1923: 6):

The author of the article "Reflections about the Annual Meeting" expresses his joy that the association has changed its language from Yiddish to Swedish. He sees that the requirement of time has dictated such a change. I am forced to use the author's own words: "curious but true!" I am really surprised that a member of an association like *Hatchijo*, the goal of which is to disseminate knowledge of Yiddish literature and Jewish history among local Jews, does not understand that it is the requirement of time to learn Yiddish and Hebrew in order to be able to read the literature and history of one's own people in the original. [...] Perhaps the founders of *Hatchijo* added the paragraph about the language so that the members would learn Yiddish. Otherwise it would have been unnecessary to state the official language. The founder had indeed understood the requirement of time!!!

In the articles two political goals come into confrontation, a purely Zionistic one and a more Yiddishist-nationalistic one, and thus their views do not converge. For one group a language is only a means, while for the Yiddishists it is the essence of the agenda. The change of language was achieved by taking a vote, which explains the ease with which the decision was made. The vast majority of the members spoke Swedish by preference (*Hatchijo* no. 10 1923: 4). This change was also opposed by the newly-chosen chairman of the association, Leibe Boltowsky, who encouraged the members, in spite of the change, to continue giving readings and discourses in Yiddish (*Hatchijo* no. 10 1923: 7). The *Hatchijo* meeting of 21 October 1923 was visited by a Polish Jew called Mr. Fischer (a member of a local *Hatchijo*), who also criticized the activity of *Hatchijo* in Helsinki for using Swedish instead of Yiddish or Hebrew (*Hatchijo* no. 11 1923: 7).

<sup>11</sup> Literally 'son of Israel'.

## 5. THE HEBRAISTIC FRONT

Hebraists generally saw Yiddish as a linguistic hotchpotch and opposed the use and development of the language (Goldsmith 1997: 143). In the available sources there are no cases where Yiddish was seriously attacked. The Hebraistic views in the press were usually expressed when talking about the school, i.e. the Jewish Co-educational School (founded 1918; see Chapter 4 §5.), and its curriculum. Teaching Hebrew to the children was considered of primary importance, which was congruent with the goals of the Helsingfors Programme. According to Ben Odom<sup>12</sup>, there was no opposition to teaching Hebrew at the Jewish Co-educational School (*Hatchijo* no. 2 1923: 8):

The Hebrew language has become rooted among Jewish schoolchildren in Finland. Opposition to this does not exist – all are of one mind. But one has to consider how this situation will develop in a few years. Will the result of this holy work, to which many have sacrificed their time and energy, prevail? Yiddish is less known among Jewish youth. If they speak the language, it is modern Low German, which they create themselves. Hebrew must be made living among schoolchildren, not only at school but in everyday life, too. It is not as difficult as one might think. One can already now more or less speak Hebrew with a pupil. But the error lies in the fact that the children have not seen that Hebrew is a living language. Most of them have a very limited view of Hebrew. They see only textbooks in front of them. This is why Hebrew literature should be acquired and a journal ordered.

Ben Odom suggests that all efforts should be directed towards strengthening the use of Hebrew as a spoken language – Yiddish played only a minor role among the young. The notion of Yiddish is rather peculiar, as it is associated in their minds with Low German, rather than High German. It could be understood that those who speak the language strive towards literary German (see Chapter 9 §2.2.). Ben Odom concludes his article with the words: “Hebrew is our national language and every Jew who feels himself Jewish should know the language.” However, attitudes towards teaching Hebrew at the Jewish school were not at all so unanimous, as we can see from the following extract (*Hatchijo* no. 8 1923: 1-2):

The school has not yet won the trust of the whole congregation. One sign of this is that many parents do not send their children, especially their girls, to the co-educational school. By this they want to hint that the situation in the school is not as it should be. They are somehow afraid that their children will be infected. [...] Maybe the parents do not want to overburden their daughters with, in their opinion, unnecessary Hebrew.

These families were most likely assimilationist, seeing the teaching of Modern Hebrew as a waste of time and effort and wanting to secure better opportunities for their children by sending them to state schools. Similar voices were heard in

<sup>12</sup>

Literally ‘son of man’.

the 1930s, when some parents ceased sending their children to the Swedish-speaking Jewish Co-educational School, because they wanted to secure their children's future in Helsinki, where Finnish had gained more ground (Torvinen 1989: 111).

### 5.1. Famous Hebraists and Zionists in Finland

Despite Finland's remote position and the small size of the Jewish community, many famous Zionists and Hebraists visited Finland. One good reason for visiting Helsinki was the aforementioned meeting of Russian Zionists in 1906. In the aftermath of the 1905 revolution the conference could not be held in St. Petersburg and was thus organized in Helsinki. Among the delegates were prominent Zionist leaders, e.g. Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), Alexander Goldstein (1884–1949), Bezalel Jaffe (1860–1925) and Yitskhok Grünbaum (1879–1970) (Zineman 1949: 39). As previously mentioned, Jabotinsky visited Helsinki again in 1939 (inf. #11).

The Zionist leader Menakhem Ussishkin (1863–1941) and the pioneer of Modern Hebrew journalism, Nakhum Sokolow (1859–1936), are known to have visited Helsinki (ibid.). They spoke with alacrity on behalf of Hebrew (ibid.). Ussishkin was a member of the *Hovevei-Zion* 'Friends of Zion' movement and had been instrumental in founding the reformed heder movement (EJ vol. 16: 22). The famous Hebrew lexicographer, the "father of Modern Hebrew", Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, spent two months in Finland with his family (St John 1978: 283–284)<sup>13</sup>. During this time he had discussions with some members of the Helsinki Jewish community (inf. #11). Also, a lesser-known author of Hebrew pedagogy, Mr. I. J. Glas, visited Helsinki in October 1923 (*Hatchijo* no. 11 1923: 2). He spoke in favour of impartial Hebrew schools and asked for financial support for printing pedagogical material for Hebrew teaching.<sup>14</sup>

## 6. SUMMARY

In the Jewish press in Helsinki there were generally very few accounts of Yiddish, let alone cases where Yiddish and Hebrew were brought into confrontation. In most cases, Yiddish is brought face to face with Swedish, which constituted a serious threat to the existence of Yiddish. This moderate attitude towards Yiddish is congruent with the general political orientation in the community; the majority

<sup>13</sup> Ben Yehudah's brother-in-law lived in Finland at the time and invited the family for a holiday (St John 1978: 283).

<sup>14</sup> Other Zionists who visited Finland included Dr. Salkin, Leib Jaffe, Schalit and Zukerman (*Makkabi* December 1943: 9).



represented General Zionists who took a moderate attitude towards Yiddish, though they considered Hebrew to be the national language of the Jews. The organized leftist activity among the Helsinki Jewish community was minimal and consequently there were no serious language debates between Hebraists and Yiddishists. It seems that persons who supported Yiddish were also proponents of Hebrew.

There were some members of the community that embraced rather Yiddishist views. They considered that Yiddish language and literature had an essential role to play in the national awakening of the Jews, as any other national language would have in other nations. In 1919 they wanted to found a Yiddish literature society, but met with opposition due to the fear of political aspirations, possibly leftist ideas, that such activity would foster. The opponents considered the proliferation of Yiddish literature as a passing phenomenon, with no future and of no real national value. In spite of the opposition the association (the Yiddish Literature Society) was founded.

The leaders of Yiddish literature associations naturally fought against the use of Swedish, as we saw in the case of the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*. They stressed that a knowledge of Yiddish (as well as Hebrew) was essential for a knowledge of one's Jewish heritage. The young, especially the Zionist-orientated, opposed the use of Yiddish for practical reasons: some members' knowledge of Yiddish was too poor to take an active part in discussions. Thus there were no directly Zionist grounds behind these demands. The average knowledge of Hebrew among Jews between the World Wars was far weaker than their ability to communicate in Yiddish.

The positive attitudes towards Hebrew were often evinced when talking about the Jewish Co-educational School, where Hebrew occupied a central position in the curriculum.<sup>15</sup> Teaching Hebrew to the children was considered of primary importance. This was congruent with the ideals of the Helsingfors Programme and the reformed heder. However, some parents opposed the teaching of Hebrew. They had doubts about the necessity of the language and did not want to overburden their children with such a subject.

Though there were no fierce opponents of Yiddish, interest in Hebrew and Zionism grew before the Second World War, as informant #11 put it: "*Idiŝ iz epes unpopuler gevorn maxmes hebreiŝ*" 'Yiddish became somehow unpopular because of Hebrew'.

<sup>15</sup>

For instance, in 1933–1934 the first class had six hours of Hebrew per week compared to four hours of Swedish (JSH 1934).

### 3. JEWISH CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS RELATED TO YIDDISH

#### 1. PREFACE

During the first decades of the twentieth century Yiddish-speaking associations and groups promoting self-education became very popular in Jewish society. These associations reflected a general national awakening and expansion of Yiddishism, the Yiddish language movement, which strove to promote and reinforce the status and use of Yiddish. The Jewish labour movement *Bund*, for instance, attempted to create for its adherents a vibrant Yiddish cultural life which drew only indirectly from the religious tradition (King 1998: 44). This activity included musical, literary and dramatic societies. By 1910, in the provinces of Poland alone there were 360 amateur Yiddish theatre clubs (Sandrow 1996: 212).

In Helsinki several associations aimed at disseminating Yiddish culture were founded, especially after the First World War, when the life of Finnish Jewry became more stable with the granting of citizenship and equal civil rights. During this period, too, the Finns were actively founding associations aimed at disseminating Finnish culture. The Yiddish associations that existed in Helsinki included the Jewish Literature Club (founded 1906), the Jewish Song Association (founded 1917), the Jewish Literature Society (founded 1919), the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo* (founded 1921) and the Jewish Dramatic Society (founded 1922). Besides these Yiddishistic associations, which will be presented in this chapter, there were also other cultural associations, for instance the Jewish Chess Society (founded 1922),<sup>1</sup> the Jewish Academic Club (founded 1925)<sup>2</sup> and the Jewish Amateur Orchestra (founded 1937).<sup>3</sup> The Zionist associations in Helsinki included the national fund *Keren Kajemes* (founded 1918),<sup>4</sup> the youth association *Agudas Zion* (founded 1920),<sup>5</sup> the Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo* (founded 1923),<sup>6</sup> the Women's International Zionist Organisation

<sup>1</sup> *Hatchijo* no. 4 1923: 7. The society used the Swedish name *Judiska schacksällskapet*.

<sup>2</sup> *Hatchijo* no. 8-9 1925: 5. The association used the Swedish name *Judiska akademiska klubben*.

<sup>3</sup> *Makkabi* no. 7-8 1943. The association used the Swedish name *Judiska amatör orkester*.

<sup>4</sup> Torvinen 1989: 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Judisk Krönika* no. 4 1920: 5. *Agudas Zion* means 'Zionist association'.

<sup>6</sup> The society used the Swedish name *Zionistiska ungdoms föreningen Hatchijo* and the

WIZO (founded 1926)<sup>7</sup> and the Hebrew language club *Chug Ivri* [xug ivri] (founded 1926).<sup>8</sup> Especially active was the local youth sports association *Stjärnan* (founded 1906).<sup>9</sup> In this context we must not forget the traditional religious, chiefly charitable associations, so-called *xevres*, which have formed the important core of the activities of the Jewish community in Helsinki.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the philanthropic association for helping the sick and elderly, *Chevra Bikur-Cholim*, continued to keep its records and correspondence in Yiddish during the World Wars. In 1955 Jac Weinstein compiled a history of the association in Yiddish.<sup>11</sup>

As has been mentioned, in this chapter we shall concentrate solely on the activity of associations with a clearly Yiddish cultural agenda. This does not mean that Yiddish was not used in the other associations. It seems, however, that during the World Wars the use of Swedish constantly increased and most often the records and protocols of the associations (without a direct connection with Judaism or Yiddish culture) were kept in Swedish.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to cultural circles in the large Jewish centres, the activity of the Yiddishistic associations in Helsinki may seem minor and insignificant. On the other hand, it is quite surprising that in such a small community there were so many associations and journals. This cultural activity in Helsinki has not previously been studied and presented (besides the Jewish Dramatic Society, by the author in 2000) and will therefore be dealt with here in quite some detail.

## 2. THE JEWISH LITERATURE CLUB, FOUNDED IN 1906

The new school and synagogue building consecrated on 30 August 1906 offered the long-desired space for organizing cultural activities (Weinstein 1956). Consequently, an association called *Jidiše literatur klub* 'Jewish Literature Club' was founded the same year in order to disseminate knowledge of Yiddish literature

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Yiddish name *Cionistiše jugtfarein hatxijo*.

<sup>7</sup> Torvinen 1989: 114.

<sup>8</sup> Torvinen 1989: 113. According to the records of the association, the name was initially *Ha-klub ho-ivri*, then *Ha-moiadoin ho-ivri* and finally *Chug Ivri*.

<sup>9</sup> Weinstein 1956. *Stjärnan* is Swedish for 'The Star'.

<sup>10</sup> These were *Chevra-Kadischa* (1864), *Chevra Bikur-Cholim* (1879), *Chevra Hachnosas-Orchim* (1895), *Judiska Fruntimmers Vålgörenhetsförening* (1898) and *Chevra Gemilus-Hasodim veHachnosas-Kalo* (1904).

<sup>11</sup> The chronicle (written in Latinized Yiddish) was called *Historik zum 75 joringen jubileum* 'Chronicle for the 75th Jubilee' (Finnish National Archives, SJA/K 337). According to documents attached to the manuscript, Jac Weinstein gave a speech in Yiddish at the jubilee and read a festive poem entitled *Di menoire* 'The Menorah', which he had written in Yiddish for the occasion.

<sup>12</sup> The records of *Chug Ivri* were kept in Hebrew and Swedish.

and Jewish culture in general (ibid.).<sup>13</sup> Jac Weinstein acted as the chairman and also looked after the minutes. There were several members of the association who later became pillars of the Jewish cultural activities in Helsinki, for instance Noach Oberman, who, besides Jac Weinstein, acted as chairman of the Jewish Dramatic Society, and Samuel Rubinstein, who a few years later was one of the founder-members of the Jewish Song Association.

During the sessions of the Jewish Literature Club, Yiddish literature and poems and articles on Jewish history were read aloud. In addition, a drama section and choir were founded within the association (ibid.). The drama section performed, for instance, Sholem-Aleichem's light one-act comedy *Mazl tov 'Congratulations'* (1898) at a soirée arranged by the local women's beneficent association *Froiencimerfarein* in 1907 (JLK 1907a).<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, very few protocols of the association are available and therefore it is impossible to form a detailed picture of their activities. The society built up a collection of Yiddish books in a small library (called *Jidiše bibliotek* 'Jewish Library') which was situated on the first floor of the synagogue and school building (JLK 1907b; Weinstein 1956).

This cultural activity quietened down when war broke out in 1914 (Weinstein 1956). According to one source, the activities of the Jewish Literature Club gradually decreased due to "lack of material and spiritual resources" (*Judisk Krönika* no. 10 1919: 1).

### 3. THE JEWISH SONG ASSOCIATION, FOUNDED IN 1917

The Jewish Song Association, *Jidišer gezangfarein*, most often referred to by its Swedish name *Judiska Sångföreningen*, was founded on 20 October 1917 (*Sport och Nytt*, October 1927). The association continued the activities of the first choir founded in 1906 and has remained active until this day under the name *Hazamir* 'Nightingale' (from 1967). The initial goal of the association was to disseminate Jewish music, especially Yiddish folk-songs (ibid.). The founders of the association were Abraham Rubinstein, Hillel Schwartzman, Isaac Skurnik and Simon Pergament (later Parmet) (*Hatikwah* no. 8-9 1947: 12). At first there were problems caused by the uneven singing skills of the members and the lack of

<sup>13</sup> Another source states (*Makkabi* December 1943: 9) that the *Judiska Litteratursällskapet*, the Jewish Literature Association, was founded in 1908 and that its chairman was Jac Weinstein. This might be the same association, otherwise why would Weinstein have failed to mention it in his own article on the history of the Helsinki Jews?

<sup>14</sup> The play was performed by S. Seligson, S. Rubinstein, J. Sirowitsch and S. Sirowitsch (JLK 1907a). The *Froiencimerfarein* is more often referred to as the *Judiska Fruntimmers Vägghörelseförening*.

sheet music (*Sport och Nytt*, October 1927). With some donations and the provision of singing lessons for the members, standards soon picked up, and in 1921 there were already seventy-seven active and thirty-three passive members of the association (*ibid.*). Before the Second World War the choir had the following conductors: Simon Pergament, Isaac Skurnik, Isaac Manuel, Nathan Rubinstein and Adolf Fleischner (JSF 1997; *Hatikwah* no. 8-9 1947: 12).<sup>15</sup> The latter had been a choir director in the Vienna Opera. During the Second World War activities ceased for a period but began again in 1946 under the leadership of Nathan Rubinstein (*Hatikwah* no. 8-9 1947: 12).

The songs performed by the choir were chiefly arranged and composed by Simon Pergament, some also by Samuel Rubinstein. Simon Pergament (1897-1969), who had studied at the Music Academy of St. Petersburg, became an internationally recognized conductor (see Image 9). Between 1928 and 1932 he was the conductor of the Finnish National Opera. Pergament composed the music for the Finnish version of An-ski's *Der dibuk* 'The Possessed', performed at the Finnish National Theatre in 1934 (Koskimies 1972: 321). The artistic level of the Jewish Song Association was relatively high among the amateur choirs in Helsinki. After the Second World War the concerts were occasionally reviewed in local newspapers and received good reviews. For instance, in 1947 the main Finnish-Swedish journal *Hufvudstadsbladet* 'Capital' (30.11.1947) reviewed the thirtieth jubilee concert in the following way:

[...] Taking into consideration that the choir, with approximately ninety voices, has been recruited from a social group with little over a thousand members, the quality is extraordinarily good. The altos and basses have strength, the tenors are a little weaker, the sopranos slightly uneven in sound but with a melodious pitch. The capability of expression is considerable though the force does not impress. The possibilities that a large choir has to carry out a line without unnecessary breathing breaks has not been utilized in full, but otherwise the choir discipline is excellent. The permanent conductor, Isaac Skurnik, has a distinct and energetic grip, but occasionally there was a lack of a more concert-like refining of phrases. The folk-songs were undeniably the most successful. Psalm 137 by Charles Gounod, which was accompanied by a larger orchestral ensemble, achieved the right kind of expressiveness, but even Genetz's *Rauhan Maa* 'Land of Peace' and Törnudd's *Fridolin Dansar* 'Fridolin Dances' received a respectably good performance for an amateur choir. Samuel Rubinstein, the former conductor, performed plastically Grieg's *Sångarhälsningen* 'Song Greeting' (in his own arrangement) and Borenus' *Erinran* 'Memoir' (adapted to a Yiddish poem *Einzam* 'Alone'). Also *Zam'd un štern* 'Sand and Stars' – a highly dramatic song – with orchestra achieved an excellent effect under Matti [Moses] Rubinstein's harmonious and technical conducting; a short solo was performed with well-suited character by Herman Schaibel. In one of the folk-songs Bertha Guthwert gave a sample of her beautiful expressive voice in a short solo. [...]

<sup>15</sup> Simon Pergament 1917-1921 (*Sport och Nytt* October 1927), Adolf Fleischner in 1937 (*Hatikwah* no. 8-9 1947: 12).



Image 8. The Jewish Song Association at their fifteenth anniversary at Vita Salen 'the White Room' in Helsinki on 26 December, 1932. The concert was directed by Samuel Rubinstein (in the centre), Simon Pergament, Isaac Skurnik (first from right) and Moses Rubinstein. The soloists were Deborah Zall (soprano) and Herman Schaibel (tenor). The speech in honour of the occasion was delivered by Rabbi Simon Federbusch. (Courtesy of the Jewish Song Association in Helsinki.)

The choir organized an annual Hanukkah concert. Besides regular concerts, the choir solemnized various occasions, for instance in 1924 the consecration of the new Jewish school building (JSF 1924), in 1925 in honour of the inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (JSF 1925) and in 1944 a memorial service for the Jewish soldiers who perished during the war, held at the synagogue in the presence of President Carl Gustav Mannerheim (JFH 1944). The choir also performed abroad, for instance in Tallinn in 1930 (JSF 1930) and in 1946 in Sweden and Denmark (*Hatikvah* no. 8-9 1947: 12). The choir also performed for the Finnish radio channel *Yleisradio* in 1946 (JSF 1946).

### 3.1. The Use of Yiddish

Though the goal was to disseminate Yiddish folk music, the official language of the Jewish Song Association was Swedish (JSF 1948). Swedish was a common language among the members, especially because there were many young people in the association whose Yiddish was not very fluent. Also, most of the concert programmes were printed in Swedish, partly because the concerts were also attended by non-Jews. Only the programmes for concerts performed abroad seem to have been in Yiddish (see the Tallinn concert programme, Image 10).



*Image 9.* The conductor Simon Pergament (later Parmet) (1897-1969), who was one of the founders of the Jewish Song Association and its first conductor, arranged over one hundred Yiddish (and Hebrew) folk-songs for use by the choir. Pergament commenced his studies at the Conservatory of St. Petersburg in 1915 under Alexander Glazunov (OIM vol. 4: 546). He acted as opera conductor at the Finnish Opera 1928-1932 and later conducted several concerts in Europe. In 1955 Pergament published an analysis of Sibelius' symphonies (appeared in English in 1959). Pergament composed the music for the performance of An-ski's play *Der dibuk* at the Finnish National Theatre in 1934. (Courtesy of the Jewish Song Association in Helsinki.)

All the songs were transcribed, partly for technical reasons, partly due to poor literacy in Yiddish on the part of some members of the association. The vocalization of the transcriptions clearly follows the North-Eastern Yiddish dialect. The transcription styles will be discussed in Chapter 6 §4.

### 3.2. The Repertoire <sup>16</sup>

During the World Wars the repertoire of the Jewish Song Association consisted chiefly of Yiddish and Hebrew songs but also of some Finnish, Swedish and German songs.<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew songs included liturgical pieces, e.g. *Adoin oilom* 'Master of the Universe', *Beceis Jisroel mi'Micraim* 'When Israel Left Egypt', traditional songs for religious holidays, e.g. *Mo'oiz cur* 'Strong Rock', and Zionist songs, e.g. *Hatikvo* 'Hope' (Israel's national anthem *Hatikvah*), *Uro Jisroel* 'Hurrah Israel', but even classical music with Hebrew lyrics, e.g. Ludwig van Beethoven's *Hašomajim mesaprim* 'The Heavens are Telling' and Modest Mussorgsky's *Jehoišua bin Nun* 'Joshua son of Nun' (translated by a local teacher, Israel Schur). The Hebrew songs were sung, according to the transcribed lyrics and programme titles, with the Ashkenazic pronunciation.

The Yiddish repertoire also consisted of various genres. Folk-songs constituted the largest group, which included courtship, love and wedding songs, e.g. *Her nor du šein meidele* 'Listen, You Beautiful Girl', *Tif in veldele* 'Deep in the Woods', *Xackele* 'Ezekiel', lullabies and children's songs, e.g. *Amol iz geven a maise* 'Once There Was a Story', *Hob ix a por oksn* 'I Have a Couple of Oxen', and epic songs, e.g. *Cen brider* 'Ten Brothers', *A klein jidele* 'A little Jew'. Besides secular folk-songs, there were Hasidic-style songs, e.g. *Undzer rebenju* 'Our Rabbi', *Maxt der xosidl bimbam* 'The Hasid Sings Bimbam', and religious folk-songs and songs for religious holidays, e.g. *Der eiberšter* 'God Almighty', *Oi xanike* 'Oh Hanukkah'. According to one source, the folk-songs in the repertoire were the legacy of the Jewish soldiers and the Cantonists (JSF 1997). This might be partly true but is difficult to prove, especially when the notes contain no information as to the origin of the song. One wonders, however, why there are no real Cantonist songs about the lives and fates of the soldiers.

Besides folk-songs, there were Yiddish art songs composed chiefly by local musicians to lyrics by well-known Jewish authors, e.g. *Zamd un štern* 'Sand and Stars', composed by Moses Rubinstein to Shimen Frug's poem, *A vinterlid* 'A Winter Song', composed by Simon Pergament to Avrom Reizn's poem. There were also songs that were entirely local creations, for instance *Xanike-elegi* 'Hanukkah Elegy' by Moses Rubinstein to H. Oberman's poem and *Undzer jidiš*

<sup>16</sup>

The songs below have been collected from the concert programmes and notes which are in the possession of the Jewish Song Association. The names of the songs appear here in standard orthography for the sake of clarity. In the sources the names were written in various orthographies.

<sup>17</sup>

This repertoire was chiefly classical, consisting of composers such as Toivo Kuula, Selim Palmgren, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Johannes Brahms, Robert Schumann and Edward Grieg. The first two were Finnish composers.



*gezang* ‘Our Jewish Song’, composed and written by Simon Pergament.<sup>18</sup> The latter song was dedicated to the choir and was its theme song. The repertoire also included some classical pieces with Yiddish lyrics, e.g. Edward Grieg’s *Šlof kind maine* ‘Sleep, My Child’ (original words by Bjørnsmstjerne Bjørnson), Felix Mendelssohn’s *Šein feigele zing* ‘Sing, Beautiful Bird’ and a choral piece from Alexander Borodin’s opera “Prince Igor”. The repertoire even included a song by “the father of Finnish music”, Friedrich Pacius (1809-1891),<sup>19</sup> *Trinklid* ‘Drink Song’, translated by Josef Liebkind.

Besides giving regular concerts, the Jewish Song Association occasionally performed longer selections from classical operas, for instance in 1923 they performed excerpts from Tchaikovsky’s opera “Queen of Spades” in Swedish,<sup>20</sup> in 1925 four tableaux from Georges Bizet’s opera “The Pearl Fishers” in Swedish<sup>21</sup> and in 1930 seven songs from Felix Mendelssohn’s Psalm 95 in German.<sup>22</sup> Especially interesting in our case are scenes from Camille Saint-Saëns’ opera “Samson and Delilah”, performed in Yiddish in 1921 (JSF 1921; *Sport och Nytt* October 1927).<sup>23</sup> The music was arranged by Samuel Rubinstein, and the choreography was designed by the ballet dancer Sarah Jankeloff. The role of Delilah was sung by Rachel Salutskij and the role of Samson by Isaac Skurnik. They were accompanied by a “choir of Israelites” and a “choir of Philistines” and a group of women dancers. Sarah Jankeloff performed the solo dances. The excerpts from the opera included the following songs: *Der friling iz do* ‘The Spring Is Here’ (Philistine choir), “Dance of the Priestesses” (ensemble), *O, libliker friling* ‘Oh Lovely Spring’ (Delilah’s aria), *Jisroel, du main folk* ‘Israel, My People’ (Samson and the Israelites), *Ze main harc* ‘See My Heart’ (Samson’s and Delilah’s duet), *Dem himl a dank* ‘Thank Heavens’ (Philistine choir), “Bacchanal” (solo with ensemble).<sup>24</sup> Whether the translator of the songs was a local person remains unknown.

<sup>18</sup> Pergament wrote the lyrics in Swedish, which were translated into Yiddish by Noach Oberman.

<sup>19</sup> German-born Pacius (1809-1901), who was a composer and conductor, became a central figure in the rise of Finnish musical life.

<sup>20</sup> The performance (seven songs) was directed by Waldemar Wohlström. The role of Chloë was sung by Mirjam Drisin, the role of Daphnis by Berta Waprinisky and the role of Plutus by Herman Schaibel. The performance was accompanied by prima ballerina Senta Will from the Finnish Opera and a small ensemble. The performance took place at the theatre of the Polyteknikum (JSF 1923).

<sup>21</sup> The performance was directed by Waldemar Wohlström, the role of Zurga was sung by Herman Schaibel, the role of Leila by Mirjam Drisin and the role of Nadir by Isak (Isaac) Skurnik. They were accompanied by “pearl fishers”, “women”, “fakirs”, a choir of dancers with the solo dancer Vera Mitzner and a small ensemble. The performance took place in Vita Salen (JSF 1925b).

<sup>22</sup> The solo performers were Rachel Salutskij, Berta Waprinisky and Isak Skurnik. The musical accompaniment was strengthened by members of the Helsinki City Orchestra and the



Image 10. Programme in Yiddish for a concert by the Helsinki Jewish Song Association at the Jewish Gymnasium in Tallinn on 8 June, 1930. This programme is exceptional in the sense that it is in Yiddish; programmes for concerts in Finland were mostly in Swedish in the period between the World Wars. The repertoire for the evening consisted of the following songs: *Hašomaim veho'orec* 'The Heavens and the Earth', *Einzam mit main tiefen kumer* 'Alone with My Deep Worries', *Šein feigele – zing* 'Beautiful Bird – Sing', *Finiš lid* 'Finnish Song' (by Frederic Pacius; sung in Finnish), *A mol iz geven a maise* 'Once There Was a Story', *Unzer rebele* 'Our Rabbi', *Der rebele – der gabele* 'The Rabbi – the Deacon', *Unzer jidiš gezang* 'Our Jewish Song', *Zamd un stern* 'Sand and Stars', *Psalm 95* (sung in German), *Ale menšn tancendik* 'Everyone Dancing', *Elimelex* 'Elimelech' and *Beceis Jisroel miMicraim* 'When Israel Left Egypt'. (Courtesy of the Jewish Song Association in Helsinki.)

organist Paavo Raussi. The performance took place in the Vita Salen (JSF 1930).

23 The performance took place at Nylands Nationhuset (JSF 1921).

24 These songs correspond the original French titles respectively: *Voici le printemps*, *Danse des Prêtresses*, *Printemps qui commence*, *Hélas*, *Israël dans les fers*, *Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix*, *L'aube, qui blanchit déjà les coteaux*, *Bacchanale*.

After the Second World War the number of Zionist and Israeli songs in the repertoire increased.<sup>25</sup> Also, the Hebrew pronunciation was changed to Sephardic, for instance in a programme from 1954 all the titles of the Hebrew songs are in the Sephardic pronunciation (JSF 1954). The number of Yiddish songs remained quite the same but the classical pieces had disappeared from the repertoire; instead the Song Association performed, for instance, in 1946 a revue in Swedish called "*Litet solskjen på Din väg ...*" 'A Little Sunshine on Your Way' (JSF 1946b). The revue songs also became popular in the private matinées of the association.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. THE JEWISH LITERATURE SOCIETY, FOUNDED IN 1919

The idea of a literature society was launched by an article in *Judisk Krönika* 'Jewish Chronicle' (no. 9 1919: 2). The initiator, disguised behind the pseudonym Isch Jehudi (lit. Jewish man), wished that the society would also concentrate on social issues (see the discussion of the agenda of the association in Chapter 2 §3.1.). Those interested in founding a literature association were invited to listen to a talk on the subject "The Rise and Development of Yiddish Literature" by Israel Schur (ibid. no. 12 1919: 2). Finally, the Jewish Literature Society, *Jidiše literaturgezelsaft*, was founded on 6 November, 1919 (ILG 1919).<sup>27</sup> Israel Schur was elected chairman of the society.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Schur had immigrated to Finland from Lithuania in 1906 (see Image 11).

The association arranged both private and public lectures open to all members of the congregation, though the target group was the young and students (*Judisk Krönika* no. 23 1919: 8). The public lectures were held at Balder Hall on Aleksanteri Street 12. During the first seven months there were nine public lectures chiefly concentrating on biblical history (*Judisk Krönika* no. 9 1920: 5). During the same period the subjects of the internal lectures included the following themes (ibid.):

<sup>25</sup> Songs such as *Uri adama* 'Awake Land' (text by Benjamin Cohen), *Patiši* 'My Hammer' (text by Reisin-Levinson), *Šir habocrim* 'Song of the Vinedressers' (text by M. Shalem), *Im šahar* 'In the Morning' (text by Levi Ben-Ami) were added to the repertoire.

<sup>26</sup> Many of these revue songs and poems are attached to the scrapbook of the Jewish Song Association (JSF 1946a). Some of these songs were written by Josef "Keke" Liebkind, who also performed in the Jewish Dramatic Society.

<sup>27</sup> Known also in Swedish as *Judisk litteratursällskap*.

<sup>28</sup> Other persons on the committee were Vinocour (vice-chairman), Manelewitsch (1st secretary), Sirowitsch (2nd secretary) and Z. Strashevskij (treasurer) (*Judisk Krönika* no. 23 1919: 8).



*Image 11.* Israel Schur (–1949) originated from Verzhbolov (Lithuania) and came to Finland in 1906 in order to commence work as a Hebrew teacher in the newly-founded reformed heder. Schur was educated in many languages and was active in the cultural life of the Jewish community in Helsinki. In 1918 he became the editor-in-chief of the *Judisk Krönika* ‘the Jewish Chronicle’ and in 1919 he was among the founder-members of *Jidiše literatur-gezelsaft* ‘the Jewish Literature Association’. Schur also published books and articles, for instance *Mose och hans folk* ‘Moses and His People’ (1920), *Jüdische Erntebräuche im Altertum* (1934), *Versöhnungstag und Sündenbock* ‘Day of Atonement and Scapegoat’ (1935) and *Wesen und Motive der Beschneidung* ‘Essence and Motives of Circumcision’ (1937). (The National Archives of Finland, SJA/K191.)



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## Reformer.

I början av sistlidne år hava vi fått uppleva vår första stora dag. Det lagliga erkännandet av judenemancipationen i Finland, och i slutet av samma år hava vi fått uppleva vår andra stora dag: Stadslagen av städer för vår församling, enligt vilka städer det judiska församlandet skall registreras och registreras.

Öppet och frjligt kunna vi fastställa det faktum, att de personer, vilka utarbetat de omtalade städerna, ådagalagt en stor sakkunnighet och ett högt medvetande om det stora ansvar de påtagit sig vid sitt arbete. När vi äro vår församlingens nya städer, så vi med nöje och tillfreds ställelse kunna de nämnda personerna uppåtst påskänket gromligt och beundrat det så moderat och allsidigt som det sig låter göra.

För ett sådant jättearbete kunna och måste vi uttrycka vår största tackskänhet till de nämnda personerna och vårt fullständiga erkännande för deras verksamhet, som redan i detta nu börjat bära goda frukter: Så snart städerna fastställts och godkända av stadsrådet, begynte man inom vår församling diskutera många nödvändiga reformer. Detta är ett stort steg framåt.

Men en sak hava dessa herrens glömt, en punkt, som vi tro vara av lika stor vikt som alla andra i städerna utprägnade punkter: Frågan om kvinnans rösträtt inom församlingen och hennes rätt att deltaga i vårt samfundns verksamhet.

I våra nya städter talas endast om de mänberättigade i alla medlemmarna, och när församlingen genom annonsering sammankallas till ett allmänt möte, talar man alltid om "Människa" (fråtare sagt "Judiska") församlingens röstsökande medlemmar; de kvinnliga medlemmarna talar man intet ord om.

Vilken grund man ställt sig på och vilken ståndpunkt man intagit vid utarbetandet av städerna, är okänd, dessutom så alla kvinnor inom vår församling, både gifta och ogifta, ofrjellt betraktas vara församlingens medlemmar, vilket framgår ur de olika uttryck, som den fördes Israels församlingens kansli.

Möjligt nog, att man i denna fråga stått på den gamla (såvår icke gods) löfrens ståndpunkt, då vår församlingens kvinnor intet annat hade att göra, än att styra i hemmet eller i affären. Om så är fallet, måste man säga öppet ifrån, att man gjort ett misstag, som knappast åtgäras sig för våra dagar.

Det omtalade fallet är dessutom föränsvarit, då vi leva i ett land, där kvinnan har lika stora kommunala och borgerliga rättigheter, som mannen; där hon bekläder ansvarsfulla poster och där hon deltaga livligt och aktigt i samhällets ekonomiska, kulturella och statsliga utveckling.

Äro då våra judiska kvinnor oförsmögna till verksamhet inom vårt samfund? Vi säga på det bestämdaste: Nej!

Den som med öppna ögon följer med våra judiska kvinnoföreningars utveckling och mångsidiga arbete på de senare åren; den som iakttagit den iver och det intresse våra judiska kvinnor ådagalagt inom de olika församlingarna och de sippeliga resultat de åstadkommit, dem måste nog nollens vilens medge, att våra kvinnor visat förtärlighet för olika samhällsintressen och förädlats att kunna uppfylla sina förpliktelser mot samhället.

A andra siden hava vi nog i praktiken sett, huru ofta våra män pålagt uppgifter, som de knappast förtärligt sig på och som våra kvinnor skulle kunna uppfylla mera sanuets grannt och på ett bättre sätt. Vi äro övertygade om, att ifall kvinnorna inom vårt samhälle skulle få vara i tillfälle att deltaga och medverka i de olika grenarna av vårt judiska samhällsiv, skulle vi säkerligen hava åstadkommit mycket bättre resultat, än vi havt det tillfä dato. Och nu, då man talar om reformer och reorganisitioner, tro vi, att mångt och mycket skulle förverkligas snabbare och bättre, om också kvinnan skulle få avgiva sin röst.

ingen av oss tvivlar på, att vår församling är i behov av reformer,

Image 12. *Judisk Krönika* (1918–20, 1925) was the first Jewish journal in Helsinki and also became the organ of the Jewish Literature Society. The emblem of the journal is an adaptation of Ephraim Moses Lilien's print *Von Ghetto nach Zion* (see Stanislawski 2001: image supplement). Lilien was one of the most prominent exponents of Art Nouveau in the Jewish world. (Fennica, Helsinki University Library.)

- “The Future Prospects of Palestine” by Simon Pergament.  
 “Unconscious Actions of Human Beings” by A. Steinbock.  
 “Embryology” by Dr. S. Seligson.  
 “A Period of Unification among Jewry” by Israel Schur.  
 “Jews’ Influence on Technology” by J. Sirovitsch.

As we can see from the above, the agenda of the Jewish Literature Society went beyond mere literature and, judging by the themes of speeches, it was directed more at the university-educated.

Whether the language of the lectures was Yiddish or Swedish remains unclear. The protocols of the society were written in Yiddish. The society applied for financial aid from the Jewish congregation in order to collect the necessary books on Jewish literature and history. A collection of new purchases and books owned by the Jewish Literature Club served as a small library for the association (*Judisk Krönika* no. 5 1920: 4).

The journal *Judisk Krönika* (in Swedish) served as an organ for the Jewish Literature Society. Though the journal was in Swedish the protocols of the board were in Yiddish. Besides reports and advertisements of the society, the journal contained Jewish short stories and poems translated from Yiddish and German by members of the society. The journal also had a supplement called *Gan jeladim* ‘Kindergarten’ which offered Jewish literature in Swedish translation for children (see Image 28). It is interesting and noteworthy that the journal contained stories only from Hebrew sources. The members of the Jewish Literature Society thought it important to begin to publish books on Judaism and Jewish history (*Judisk Krönika* no. 5 1920: 5). Israel Schur distinguished himself in this field. How long the society functioned remains unknown.

## 5. THE JEWISH LITERATURE ASSOCIATION *HATCHIJO*, FOUNDED IN 1921

The Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*, *Jidišer literaturfarein hatxijo*, sometimes referred to by the Swedish name *Judiska Litteratursällskapet Hatchijo*, was founded on 20 February, 1921 (JLH 1921c). The Hebrew word *hatxijo*<sup>29</sup> means ‘renaissance’ and refers to the national revival that was taking place in Jewish society. The statutes of the association declared that the goal of the association was to teach the young (over fifteen years of age) Yiddish literature and Jewish history (JLH 1921i). Aron Schulman was one of the founder-members of the association and served as the first chairman (ibid.).<sup>30</sup> However, due to some

<sup>29</sup> Here in the Ashkenazic pronunciation.

<sup>30</sup> Other members of the board were Jacob Strascheffskij (secretary), Hirsch Strascheffskij (vice-chairman), Isak Gordin (vice-secretary), Salomo Katz (librarian) and Samuel Gornitz (JLH 1921c).

internal disputes Isak Gordin<sup>31</sup> became the chairman in October (ibid.)<sup>32</sup> and finally in December Leibe Bolotowsky,<sup>33</sup> who continued until September 1922 (JLH 1921j; CJH 1923).

At the very beginning there were approximately twenty members but already in October the same year fifty-seven names are found on the register (JLH 1921b). The members of the association were individually selected and were required to pay a fee; guests were not allowed to participate in the discussions (JLH 1921d; JLH 1921f). According to the statutes, the only official language was Yiddish (JLH 1921a). Protocols, annual reports and other documents were written in Yiddish. For those members who could not read or write Yiddish a course was organized in 1920 by Mr. Bassin (JLH 1921k; inf. #2).

The programme of the weekly meetings at the Jewish school consisted of discourses on Yiddish culture, Jewish tradition, history, philosophy and politics. Yiddish literature, for instance by Sholem-Aleichem, Dovid Frishman, Morris Rosenfeld, Jitschok Leibush Perets and Mendele Moicher-Sforim, was read aloud, and also articles from the newspapers *Forverts*, *Der tog* and *Der amerikaner*. At the twenty-five general meetings between September 1922 and September 1923 there had been seventeen discourses, three summaries and thirty belletristic, literary-historical and journalistic readings (*Hatchijo* no. 9 1923: 9). Justifying protocols, discussing and voting for various practical matters also took its share of the timetable. An idea of an own drama group arose among the members (JLH 1921h). Whether it functioned at this stage remains unknown. We do know that An-ski's *Der dibuk* 'The Possessed' was performed by members of *Hatchijo* in co-operation with the Jewish Dramatic Society in 1930 (CJH 1930). In January 1923 the association arranged performances by the German actor Meinhard Meur from the *Deutsches Theater* (*Hatchijo* no. 1 1923: 2). The members of *Hatchijo* also wrote poems, some of which were published in latinized form in the journal *Hatchijo* (see Image 14).

### 5.1. From Yiddishism to Zionism

From the very outset there were discussions about integrating the literature

<sup>31</sup> Both Rafael and Isak Gordin could not continue in their posts due to poor Yiddish (JLH 1921i).

<sup>32</sup> Other members in the committee were Rafael Gordin (secretary) Salomo Katz (vice-chairman), Strascheffskij (substitute), Simeon Tobiasch (treasurer) and Liebe Weizman (librarian) (JLH 1921i).

<sup>33</sup> Other members of the board were Moses Schulman (secr.) Hirsch Strascheffskij (vice-chairman), Jacob Strascheffskij (substitute), Abraham Rabinowitch (treasurer) and Aron Schulman (librarian) (JLH 1921i).

association with the local Zionist association (JLH 1921g).<sup>34</sup> This happened in September the very same year, i.e. 1921 (JLH 1921h). One reason for this might have been that these associations shared many activists. The statutes were emended and it was stated that the goal of the association was to make Jewish youth nationally aware and acquaint them with Zionism, Jewish history and Yiddish literature (*Hatchijo* no. 9 1923: 9). Finally, at the second annual meeting of the Yiddish Literature Association *Hatchijo* in 1923, after functioning for approximately two and a half years, the name of the association was changed to *Cionistišer jugntfarein hatxijo* 'Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo*' (CJH 1923; *Hatchijo* no. 9 1923: 8–9).<sup>35</sup> At the same meeting the official language was changed to Swedish (*Hatchijo* no. 10, 1923: 4). The reason for this was clear; the knowledge of Yiddish possessed by young people was very poor. For example, the Gordin brothers, Isak and Rafael, had to resign from their posts on the committee for this very reason (JLH 1922k). According to one account, only about ten of the more than seventy members actively laboured on behalf of Yiddish culture (*Hatchijo* no. 10 1923: 4). Some of the Zionists who came into the association with the merger could not participate in the discussions, since they could not express themselves in Yiddish (*ibid.*). The change of languages was opposed by the Yiddishists. A person disguised behind the pseudonym Ben Jisroel (lit. 'Son of Israel'), in an article in the journal *Hatchijo* (no. 11 1923: 6) reminded his readers that the association was explicitly founded to teach and promote Yiddish culture among the young, and stressed that both Yiddish and Hebrew were essential for them to be able to learn about their cultural heritage. Leibe Bolotowsky attempted to encourage young people to give lectures and readings in Yiddish in spite of the decision (*Hatchijo* no. 10 1923: 7).

All these changes began to alter the whole agenda of the association. Gradually Yiddish culture and Jewish history gave way to Zionism and politics. Some years later Yiddish was cast out as one of the official languages of the association – it was replaced by Hebrew and Finnish.<sup>36</sup> The activities of the Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo* came to an end in 1952 (Weinstein 1956).

<sup>34</sup> There were three Jewish youth associations in Helsinki at the time (CJH 1923). There had been a Zionist society during the period of Russian rule (Torvinen 1989: 114). *Agudas Zion* was founded on 22 February, 1920 (*Judisk Krönika* no. 4 1920: 5).

<sup>35</sup> Known in Swedish as *Zionistiska ungdomsföreningen Hatchijo*.

<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the statues contain no date.





### Hatchijo 2 år.

Den 22 februari 1923 hava två år förflutit sedan den kväll då på initiativ av några intresserade ungdomar Judiska Litteraturföreningen „Hatchijo“ (senare Zionistska Ungdomsföreningen „Hatchijo“) grundades. Händelserna under dessa två år hafva sig ännu i ganska godt minne, varför det syna mig vass oöfodigt att skriva en historii öfver denna korta period. En liten öfversikt av verksamheten vore dock av nöden. — Början var, liksom vid alla nya försäkr., svår. De stannar, som ligen på vägen, undanröjdes dock anslutningen och föreningens verksamhet blev en något öfverdrifad succéerad öfver på utvecklingens bana. Dock har det givna perioder lyckligtvis korta, då detta accelererade framstaktande varit ersatt av en, fastän liten, deklination. I oss två års arbete av den handfulla ynglingen, som beslutat säcka den judiska ungdomen i Helsingfors, har haft de mest vittgående följder. Unglingarnas beslut, som i början möttes av allmänhetens misstroende, blev nämligen igen fastare. De kastade sig genast i arbetet att giva ungdomen, vilken förut svävat i största okunnighet om vårt folks spörsmål, en inblick i måstän alla judiska problem. Detta bevisas av de talrika möten och föredrag i olika rummen, föreningens arrangemang, och av det intressa föreningens medlemmar nu visa vid arbetet för föreningen. Den förste grundsten till föreningens bibliotek lades

genom anskaffandet av ett 60 tal inbunden böcker. Det viktigaste av föreningens ägärdar under det senaste året är också ligen utgåvandet av organet „Hatchijo“. De 10 nummerna visa att ledarna för företaget strävat att giva tidningen allt värdefullare, och att de däri lyckats förtäffligt. Visserligen har det funnits lidningar, vilka ej fallit vissa personer i smaken. No 2 och 3, på vilka jag tyckte, vore byggade av den gamla stanska viljan: „Volontem-dokument, poliitem-trubnet“, (i som ej av fri vilja går med oss, skolen bliva tvungna dörrtill). En strömvind, som ville soppa rent och skapa något nytt och ideligt

• • •  
Tvä år hava förgått för „Hatchijo“, som blivit så kärt för oss, ett tredje år mörkträr. Med ett nytt år komma alltså nya förhoppningar, strävanden och även nya resultat. Naturen, livet och allt, som därmed är förbundet, är ju en ständig utveckling, ett oändligt strävande framåt. Ofta är det så, att en tanke, en idé, varom man drömt, men som man ej trott att skulle kunna bli förverkligad, efter en mycket kort tid blivit en faktum. Vi zionister behöva ju endast tänka på Herzels „judenstat“, som man trodde vara så utopisk, men som blev det lilla frö, från vilket det stora trädet Zionismen växt. — Å andra sidan kan något som lidit

(Forts. i 4 sid)

*Image 13. Hatchijo started as the organ of the Jewish Literature Association Hatchijo in 1922 and continued as the organ of the Zionist Youth Association Hatchijo. The journal contained local news, news from the Zionist front, and poems written in Yiddish and Swedish by members of the association. Hatchijo ran until 1925. (Fennica, Helsinki University Library.)*

## 5.2. The Journal *Hatchijo*

Soon after the founding of the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*, the idea of publishing a journal, to be called *Hatchijo*, was born (JLH 1921e).<sup>37</sup> There were disputes as to which language the journal should be published in. After a vote was taken, Leibe Bolotowsky and Aron Schulman were commissioned to edit a Yiddish journal, in January 1922 (JLH 1922b). However, the project was a

37

The first editors were to be Hirsch Strascheffskij and Aron Schulman (JLH 1921e). It seems that they failed to produce any issues.

failure. One of the major hindrances was the fact that in Finland at that point it was impossible to print large amounts of text in Hebrew letters (*Hatchijo* no. 11 1923: 6; see Chapter 5 §1.). Finally, the association decided to publish a Yiddish-Swedish journal (JHL 1922c). The first issue of *Hatchijo* came out on 22 May, 1922 in a hectograph copy and subsequently monthly in printed form (CJH 1923). What the very first Yiddish-Swedish issues looked like is unknown due to the fact that no copies appear to have survived. From 1923 onwards the journal was published in Swedish but it contained some Latinized Yiddish poems. The journal was edited during the early years by Simeon Gornitz, Salomo Katz, Hirsch Stra-scheffskij and Aron Schulman (ibid.). The articles dealt with local news and activities, with news from the Zionist front and from various Jewish communities. The journal also contained some memoirs, poems and short stories written by members or translated from foreign sources. With the excessive interest in Zionism the journal began to contain more and more Zionistic articles. The journal also became the organ of the sports association *Stjärnan*. *Hatchijo* was published until 1925.<sup>38</sup>

### 5.3. The *Hatchijo* Library

The idea of opening a library arose in May 1922 and soon thereafter actions were taken to implement the plan (CJH 1923; BCJH 1923). A circular was sent to parents in order to collect the necessary funds. In June 1922 the first shipment of unbound books arrived from Poland, at the cost of 1050 Finnish marks, and it took until December before they were in covers (BCJH 1923). The *Hatchijo* library opened its doors in January, 1923 (ibid.).<sup>39</sup> The library was open to all members of the Jewish congregation (*Hatchijo* no. 3 1923: 1). More books were gradually ordered and some received as donations (*Hatchijo* no. 7 1923: 5). At the beginning of 1923 the library possessed ninety-one books in Yiddish (fifty-nine fiction, nine poetry, six literary criticism, one fable, four biographical and twelve history books).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The Helsinki University library has annual volumes from 1923 to 1925. The University Library has enjoyed the right of acquiring free copies of every item published in Finland. Therefore the library should have all the numbers of the Jewish journals.

<sup>39</sup> The library was called, after the changes that took place within the association, *Bibliotek far dem cionistišn jugntfarein in Helsingfors hatxijo* 'The Library for the Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo* in Helsinki'.

<sup>40</sup> Among these were books by (*Hatchijo* no 7 1923: 5-6): An-ski: "Collected Works", Chaim N. Bialik/Ravnitski: *Di jidiše agodes*, Simon Dubnow: "Jewish History", Theodor Hertzl: *Altneuland*, Jehoash: Fables, Mendele Moicher-Sforim: "Collected Works", Hersh D. Nomberg: "Stories", Max Nordau: "Paradoxes", "Stories", Avrom Reisen: "Collected Works", Morris Rosenfeld: "Collected Works", Sholem-Aleichem: "Collected Works", Nachum Sokolow: "Writings", Zalman Wendroff: "Stories", Journal *Der amerikaner* (1923).

## In main cholem.

fun I. M. G - cz.

*Ich se in main cholem:  
Die sun laicht antkegn mich  
Mit ire schtraln tu ich sich  
Zu ir zubindn,  
Zuschmidn sich oif eibig . . .*

*Der tog hot ongeheibn finster  
wern.  
Schpazirndik nebn breg jam,  
Zwischn di felsn,  
Se ich di sun, si sinkt, si sinkt  
Ach wi wait is si fun mich.*

*As oif jenem sait fun festungsinsl  
Bisn helft dertrunken in jam  
Mit a wildn gelechter,  
Oif ire lipn lacht si  
Un winkt zu mir mit a ironischn  
wunk*

*Du host gecholemt?  
Du host gehoft?  
Nit daine bin ich!  
Un bahaltn hot si sich  
Hinter di heiche went fun fes-  
tungskirche  
Un obgesondert in der finster  
zwischen di felsn mich über-  
gelosn.*

*Image 14.* The members of the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo* (later Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo*) wrote poems in Yiddish (and Swedish) which were published in Latinized form in the journal *Hatchijo* under various pseudonyms. The themes of the poems were chiefly Neo-Romantic and Zionist. Some of the poems were symbolic, like the poem by Israel Mones Gurwicz *In main cholem* 'In My Dream': 'I see in my dream: / the sun is shining on me./ With her rays / I bind myself to her / chain myself forever ... / The day begun to grow darker / As walking along the sea-shore / between the rocks / I see the sun, she is sinking, sinking / Oh, how far away she is from me / Having reached the other side of the fortress island, half sunken in the sea / with a wild laughter / on her lips she laughs / and winks at me ironically / You had a dream? / You hoped? / I'm not yours! / And she hid herself / behind the high walls of the fortress church / and vanished in the dark / leaving me between the rocks.' (Fennica, Helsinki University Library.)



*Image 15.* Leibe Bolotowsky (1888-1943) was invited to Finland during the First World War to work as a Torah scribe and Hebrew teacher. He had received a traditional yeshiva training in his native town of Vitebsk. Mr. Bolotowsky became an active proponent of the Yiddish language and Yiddish culture in the community. He opposed the shift of language from Yiddish to Swedish which took place in the youth association *Hatchijo*. Bolotowsky was the first librarian of the *Hatchijo* library and imported Yiddish and Hebrew books to Helsinki (*Hatchijo* no. 8 1923: 10). (National Board of Antiquities, Sig. 1/1 -50.)

Besides “jargon” books, the library ordered a Hebrew literary journal called *Hatkufo* ‘The Period’ (BCJH 1923).<sup>41</sup> In 1925 the number of books had increased to 162 volumes, including a collection of Yiddish plays (*Judisk Krönika* no. 2 1925: 21).<sup>42</sup> The library with a reading room was situated on the first floor of the synagogue. A Latvian Jewish writer called Herman Morath who visited Helsinki in 1928 was rather impressed by the library. According to his description, the library possessed a few thousand books by Jewish authors, both classics and modern works (Harviainen 1995: 19).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Donated by Sender Leffkowitzsch (BCJH 1923).

<sup>42</sup> Donated by Mrs. A. Oberman (BCJH 1923).

<sup>43</sup> According to Torvinen, a Jewish library with a reading room in the synagogue building was

און גיר פיינען גדולן קליין, און ידען ווען גיר ווערטן ווערן און צו זען און טאפן.  
 רען ווערן צום קענען זיך ניט: איך פארען אנט קיין יאזשע יח יכר.  
 גיר פאלק געפערט לינדערען ווערן אריינס אפיער אטורטאר, אהרן ווערן וואס  
 עס ווערט געשריבן און בוד אטורטאר ווייז גיר ניט; ווערן גיר פאלק ניט  
 צו אונזערע 13 זעלען א יאזשען האבן: עס איז נישטא קיין אפיער ביהאטורק.  
 ווערען אטורטאר 13 בודערען בוד אפיער קארן און פערט פיסטאר, 13 באקען  
 ליר עס בוד אפיער אטורטאר איז פערט אריינס און 13 לודע בוד צוויי פאלקען  
 פערט אפיער ווערן פערט אפיער און עס פאלק בודעטען 13 זעלען קענען ווערן  
 פארען 13 זעלען און רייפן ווערן פערט אפיער פערט, אהרן ווערן צו  
 פערט אפיער און: גיר פאלק ניט קיין היכר, צאל נערט קיין אנטורטאר  
 עס איז קיין ווערן אפיערען 13 זעלען און אהרן עס קענען עס ניט  
 אפיערען ווערן עס ניטען ניט אפיערען און און 13 קענען צו היכר באקען  
 גיר און גיר פאלק ניט, בודיער ווערען זיך צום 13 אונטן, דערען  
 אט אפיער: עס איז אפיער זיבן און אטורטאר, און אפיער אפיער 13 זעלען  
 אפיער היכר פאלק אפיער פערט און פערט 13 אפיער אפיער פאלק און  
 אפיער היכר אפיער און פערט אפיער. גיר בודען און, און און פערט  
 זעלען 13 זעלען ווערן קענען און אפיער פערט און 13 אונטן זעלען  
 13 זעלען און פאלק אפיער היכר אפיער, זעלען אפיער ניט זעלען  
 און אפיער און פאלק אפיער פערט און ווערן.

פערט אטורטאר פערט און

Image 16. Second page of a Yiddish circular sent to Jewish households in 1922 explaining the necessity of a Jewish library in Helsinki. The letter says: “*Mir hoben gehert reidendig vegen a greiser judisher literatur. Ober vegen vos es vert gesriben in der literatur veisen mir ništ: vaile mir hoben ništ di meglixkait tu lezen a judišen bux: Es iz ništo kein judiše bibliotek.*” ‘We have heard of a great Yiddish literature, but what the literature is about we do not know, since we do not have the possibility to read Yiddish books – we lack a Jewish library.’ (The National Archives of Finland, SJA/K382).

Most borrowers were not members of *Hatchijo* because, according to Leibe Bolotowsky, who was the librarian (1922–23) and had been one of the main initiators of the library, only a very few members could read Yiddish (BCJH 1923). It is also interesting that all borrowers (twenty in total) during spring 1923 were men (*Hatchijo* no. 7 1923: 6). Fiction generally took preference over non-fiction and Sholem-Aleichem was the most borrowed author (ibid.). Later on most Yiddish books in the *Hatchijo* library were sent to Israel;<sup>44</sup> only a few of them remain in the Jewish library in Helsinki.

opened in 1925 (Torvinen 1989: 113).

44

The books were most likely sent with the books donated by the *Ahdus* Association of Viipuri in 1956 (Hartikainen 1998: 65). According to Isak Kantor, who functioned as the librarian of the Jewish library in Helsinki, the books were sent in the early 1970s.

## 6. THE JEWISH DRAMATIC SOCIETY IN HELSINKI, FOUNDED IN 1922

The Jewish Dramatic Society in Helsinki, *Jidiše dramatiše gezelsaft in Helsingfors*, often referred to by the Swedish name *Judiska Dramatiska Sällskapet*, was founded in January 1922 (JFH 1930).<sup>45</sup> Its main aim was to “develop dramatic art among its members and simultaneously through performing plays in Yiddish to acquaint the Jewish community with Yiddish theatre and to awaken interest in it” (JDS 1926). Jac Weinstein was one of the founder-members and also became the chairman (ibid; see Image 18).<sup>46</sup> He also directed plays, some of which were his own works. A second force in the Jewish Dramatic Society was Isaij Davidkin, who was later chairman of the congregation during the period 1951–63 (inf. #11).<sup>47</sup> He also directed plays and performed in them; he was vice-chairman of the society in the 1930s (JDS 1933). He is remembered for his talent as an actor, such which “one seldom comes across among amateurs” (*Judisk Krönika* no. 5, 1925). Hanna Taini-Leffkowitz (née Schlimowitsch), a well-known actress from the Swedish theatre in Helsinki (*Svenska Teatern*) and a movie star of the film company *Suomi Filmi*, performed with the Jewish Dramatic Society in her youth. Josef Liebkind, who was a member of the Jewish Dramatic Society, later acted in some Finnish films (#20). He also wrote revue songs in Swedish to be performed at various events.<sup>48</sup>

Due to lack of documents the only complete picture of a regular routine is to be found in the annual report of the congregation for 1930. The Dramatic Society then had twenty-one members,<sup>49</sup> and the board had convened nine times; there

<sup>45</sup> The Jewish Dramatic Society and plays by Jac Weinstein were the subject of an MA dissertation (Jac Weinstein and the Jewish Drama Society in Helsinki during the Interim of the World Wars) written by the author in 1999 at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Some of the information in this study is new and does not appear in the original MA dissertation. The play *Der cebroxener špiگل* is analyzed in an article by the author in *HaKehila* no. 1–2 2001.

<sup>46</sup> During the 1930s Noach Oberman acted as chairman (JDS 1933). Secretaries of the society were Abraham Rubanowitsch in the 1920s (JDS 1926) and Leibe Bolotowsky during the 1930s (JDS 1933). During the 1930s the financial matters were looked after by Salomon Jalowitsch (ibid.)

<sup>47</sup> Isaj Davidkin immigrated to Finland in 1917 (*Makkabi* no. 9–10 1943: 6)

<sup>48</sup> See footnote 26.

<sup>49</sup> Here is a list of thirty performers gathered from various sources, such as Jewish journals and theatre programmes: Salomon Altschuler, Robert Berman, Leibe Bolotowsky, Scholem Bolotowsky, Josef Casulkin, Isaij Davidkin, Hanna Drisin, Abraham Eckert, Sara Fiedler, Cecilia Hammermann, Mikael Hammermann, Roma Hammermann, Salomon Jalowitsch, Mr. Kantorovitsch, Feige Kjisik, Hjalmar Knaster, Sara Knaster, Rakel Krapiffsky, Josef Liebkind, Ms. Nemeschansky, Aina Obermann, Abraham (Grischa) Rubanowitsch, Nina Rubanowitsch, Hanna Schlimowitsch (Taini), B. Schulmann, M. Schulmann, Ljuba Schwarzmann, Rosa Schwarzmann, Hirsch Strascheffsky, Golde Weinstein.

had been five general meetings and three performances (JFH 1930). The performances normally took place in the assembly hall of the Jewish Co-educational School (*Judiska Samskolan*) which functioned as a community centre for the Jewish congregation. Occasionally, when a play was included in some other programme, for instance the annual festival of the Zionist Youth Organisation *Hatchijo*, larger halls were rented. The plays were said to have been very popular – “everyone went there!” – except children who stayed at home, as was the custom in those days. Their popularity might also have been the reason for renting larger halls; the assembly hall of the Jewish school was not very large, and the stage was quite small and possibly not very well equipped. The Jewish Dramatic Society is known to have visited Viipuri, Turku and Stockholm (JDS 1931; inf. #2). The performances were of some financial significance to the community. According to charters, with the excess revenue the Jewish Dramatic Society was able to contribute to various cultural and charitable purposes in the congregation (JDS 1933). In 1926, for instance, it supported the Rabbi Fund with 10,000 Finnish marks<sup>50</sup> (JDS 1926). Among other beneficiaries were the Jewish Co-educational School, *Keren Kajemes* and the Jewish Women’s Charitable Organization (*Judiska Fruntimmers Valgorenhetsforening*) (JFH 1930). The activities of the Jewish Dramatic Society terminated with the outbreak of the Second World War (Weinstein 1956). There were, however, some individual theatre performances directed by Jac Weinstein after the war (inf. #11; inf. #15).

### 6.1. The Use of Yiddish

Although the statutes of the Jewish Dramatic Society state that the aim is to perform plays in Yiddish (JDS Stadgar), some performances in Swedish also took place. Some of these plays and revues were written by Jac Weinstein. Whether any plays in Hebrew were performed is unknown. The statutes of the association (written in Swedish) do not state any official language. It seems from the documents that the association has left behind that during the 1920s, under Jac Weinstein’s direction, correspondence was conducted in Swedish and during the 1930s, under Noach Oberman’s direction, in Yiddish.

The fact that the Dramatic Society needed to resort to transcriptions of the Yiddish plays indicates that the literacy of the members was quite poor. Many members of the Dramatic Society were more fluent in Swedish than Yiddish (inf. #2). The transcriptions followed North-Eastern (Lithuanian) Yiddish pronunciation (see Chapter 6 §4. and Chapter 9 §2.2.).

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<sup>50</sup>

Aproximately 2680 €.

## 6.2. The Repertoire

The repertoire of the Jewish Dramatic Society in Helsinki chiefly comprised socialist plays criticizing the bourgeois life-style and plays portraying changes taking place in Jewish society. The dramatic society performed popular plays by well-known Yiddish writers, such as Jacob Gordin, Sholem-Aleichem, S. An-ski and Sholem Ash. As was mentioned above, plays were also especially written for the Jewish Dramatic Society by Jac Weinstein. Since most of the documents of the society have disappeared, it is impossible to form a complete picture of the repertoire. Fortunately, the local Jewish journals, mainly *Hatchijo* and *Sport och Nytt* 'Sports and News' published reviews of some of the plays.

The Jewish Dramatic Society performed at least three plays by Jacob Gordin: *Got, menč un taivl* 'God, Man and Devil', *Der fremder* 'The Stranger' and *Der jidišer kenig Lir* 'the Jewish King Lear'. Jacob Gordin (1853–1909) is known as a reformer of the Yiddish theatre and an author of the Golden Age of the Yiddish theatre (Sandrow 1996: 132). Through his plays, Gordin wanted to teach moral values that were directly congruent with his socialist views (ibid.: 158). Consequently, in his play "God, Man and Devil" (1903) the main protagonist, Hershele Dubrovner, owner of a prayer-shawl factory, is destroyed by avarice. The play was performed in Helsinki in the mid 1930s, directed by Erich Hirschfeld, a Viennese director who had fled to Helsinki together with other Austrian refugees (inf. #11). Isaij Davidkin played the role of Hershele Dubrovner and Scholem Bolotowsky the role of a young worker who is killed in the sweatshop (ibid). The moral of Gordin's adaptation of Shakespeare's King Lear, "The Jewish King Lear" (1892) is that old morality has to give way to enlightenment; the loving daughter in the play goes to university whilst the ungrateful children remain hypocritically pious (Sandrow 1996: 158). This play was performed under Jac Weinstein's direction in the assembly hall of the Jewish Co-educational School on 5 December, 1925 (*Judisk Krönika* no. 5 1925). Gordin's play "The Stranger", performed in Helsinki on 26 April, 1930 (JFH 1930) is not considered to be among his best. The plot is an adaptation of Alfred Tennyson's "Enoch Arden" (Zylberberg 1931). Gordin criticized his own version as being a *nariše melodrame*, a silly melodrama (ibid.). He is said to have written it to please the taste of the audience. However, this play must have met with some echo in Finland because it was performed again as a guest show, directed by Jac Weinstein at the *Ahdus* House in Viipuri on 17 January, 1931 (JDS 1931).

Sholem-Aleichem (Sholem Rabinovitsh, 1859-1916) is perhaps the best-known and most widely-read Yiddish author. Besides novels and short stories Sholem-Aleichem wrote many plays, which have become among the most popular



in the Yiddish theatre.<sup>51</sup> In his plays he often combines difficult themes with humour and irony, turning chaos into comedy. His play *Cezeit un cešpreit* 'Scattered and Dispersed' (1905), which was performed in Helsinki in 1927 at the anniversary celebration of the Sports Association *Stjärnan* (*Sport och Nytt* no. 10-11 1927), is an allegorical panorama of the Russian-Jewish bourgeoisie at the turn of the century (Sandrow 1996: 182). The theme, based on the crisis in a Jewish family in a changing world, is similar to that of *Tevje der milxiker* 'Tevye the Dairyman'. The performance was directed by Jac Weinstein. The eloquent review of the play by Mr. J. (Josef Leffkowitzsch)<sup>52</sup> is the longest available of the Yiddish plays performed in Helsinki and contains accounts of the performances of many amateurs in the Jewish Dramatic Society. The following review is quoted almost at full length:

The play proceeded well and the only thing one reacted against were the coulisses for [the play] *Kyska Susanna* 'Virtuous Susanna'. The two chattering women, Malke and Pesl (Ljuba Schwarzman and Rakel Krapifsky) did not fit into the castle-like milieu, with pillars and gilded garlands. The piece was held together by Isaj Davidkin as Meir Shalant, who made an excellent figure of the wealthy merchant. Thanks to variations in the voices the performance was natural and especially the laughing scene in act II indicated that Mr. Davidkin's acting inclinations go beyond that of an amateur. There is no exaggerated woo of effects, but a well-weighed and well-studied role. Ljuba Schwarzman as his wife Malke, was all too monotonous, on the whole giving the tone of a lesson learned by heart. The friend Pesl, though, succeeded better by varying her voice resources to some extent. That is why their little gossip moment in act I did not get the right patina, but seemed somehow gramophone-like. However, when two women of their calibre get together the mimicking makes more neck-breaking *salto mortales* and the danger of the chinwags getting overheated is certainly greater than the fear of the eventually approaching dead moments. I doubt Sholem-Aleichem meant Malke to be so soporific, but neither was his Malke of a latitude with frightening numbers. The son Matvei (Abraham Rubanowitsch) tasted what it is to be a man of the world who succeeds in climbing up the ramp, but what seldom works out well in real life. The manual gestures were over-emphasized. But in the name of fairness, one has to admit that the role was not very rewarding and the gentleman's poor qualifications reflected more on the author than on the actor. His friend Davidke (Josef Liebkind) did not perform so badly, but why the constant grin on his face? Cecilia Hammerman as Flora was enchanting and energetic in the short time she spent on the scene – and in front of the mirror. Mikael Hammerman as the callous Zionist Chaim performed convincingly, except during a moment of stage fright in the first entry that affected the vocal chords and made the first lines somewhat weak. The hot-blooded matchmaker Beni (Abraham Eckert), wearing a prayer-shawl received entry applause, but he looked like God had altogether taken his hand off him. The rehearsed fussing about was somehow irritating. Otherwise the play was good and one got quite a natural impression of the poor Sate who tries to do business with "declaration d'amour". The daughter Chane performed by Nina Rubanovitch, was enchanting, especially in the crying scene of act I and Mashe (Hanna Drisin) raised dust with laudable enthusiasm.

<sup>51</sup> For instance, *Šver cu zain a jid* 'Hard to Be a Jew' and *Dos groise gevins* 'Jackpot'

<sup>52</sup> According to inf. # 2.



*Image 17.* Cover of the programme for a performance of S. An-ski's *Der dybuk* (*Der dibuk*) 'The Possessed' by the Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo* on 17 March 1930 in the theatre of *Koitto*. *Der dybuk* is one of the most famous Yiddish plays, which was, for instance, made into a Yiddish film in Poland in 1937. Even earlier, in 1934, the play was performed in Finnish by the Finnish National Theatre. Unfortunately, only the cover is left of the programme for *Hatchijo*'s performance and consequently the names of the actors remain unknown. We do know, however, that *Leibe Bolotowsky* played the role of *badxn*, the wedding jester. (Courtesy of the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki.)

S. An-ski (Solomon Zeinwill Rapaport, 1863-1920), committed to Jewish nationalism and ethnography, wrote his play *Der dibuk* 'The Possessed' as a result of his expeditions throughout Russia in the years 1912-14 (Sandrow 1996: 168). The play is a product of centuries of Jewish beliefs and storytelling, Jewish mystical

thought and Hasidic culture; the plot revolves around a tragic love story with strong mystical components (Sandrow 1996: 217). The Finnish version was performed in 1930 at the annual festival of the Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo* in the theatre of Koitto (CJH 1930; see Image 17). The actors were members of *Hatchijo*, some of whom were also active in the Jewish Dramatic Society. Leibe Bolotowsky performed the role of the *badxñ*, the wedding jester (inf. #11).<sup>53</sup>

Sholem Ash (1880-1957) wrote historical plays and portrayed contemporary Jewish life (Sandrow 1996: 183). His first play, *Mitn štrom* 'With the Current', takes place during the era of Jewish emancipation. A yeshiva scholar leaves his wife, child and pious studies in search of a new kind of Torah; after seven years of fruitless quest, love for his wife and child revives and he returns home (Sandrow 1996: 183). The play was performed by the Jewish Dramatic Society on 1 June, 1924, directed by Jac Weinstein (*Hatchijo* no. 4 1924: 5). According to a critic, the choice of Mr. Davidkin for the role of the Talmudist failed because he lacked the nervousness of a Talmudist (ibid.). The critic was very pleased about the choice of the play in the repertoire of the Jewish Dramatic Society "after a series of farces and plays of dubious content – from both personal and outside sources".

### 6.2.1. Jac Weinstein's Plays and Revue Songs

Jac Weinstein wrote plays, chiefly satirical comedies, in both Yiddish and Swedish, for the Jewish Dramatic Society. Six of his plays survive; unfortunately, there are no reviews of these plays in the Jewish journals and thus the exact dates of performances remain unknown. His play *Der cebroxener špigl* is a satirical one-act comedy with four scenes which take place around a free-standing mirror in a wealthy home. The satire in the play is directed at the Jewish community and Jewish trading in Helsinki during the early 1920s, especially the life and loose morality of the nouveau riche. The play included popular Swedish revue songs by Ernst Rolf (1891-1932), for instance *När jag är ute är min gumma inne* 'When I Am Out Is My Missus In'. A three-act play called *Familie Dobkin* 'Dobkin Family' is a satirical depiction of a bourgeois Jewish family living in Helsinki. The main protagonist, Chaim-Leib Dobkin, an unscrupulous businessman, tries to gain acceptance in the eyes of his pious father and status within the congregation by giving donations to religious associations. Unfortunately, only parts of the play survive.

<sup>53</sup>

*Der dibuk* was also performed nine times in the Finnish National Theatre (Suomen Kansallisteatteri) in 1934. The play was directed by Eino Kalima, Emmi Jurkka carved a reputation as Leah. The first director of the Jewish choir in Helsinki, Simon Pergament, composed the music for the play (Koskimies 1972: 321).



*Image 18.* Jac Weinstein (in the centre) with his wife Rebecca (on the right) and his sister Jenny Vinocour (on the left) at a WIZO jubilee held in the assembly hall of the Jewish Co-educational School. Jac Weinstein (1883-1975) played a central role as director and playwright of the Jewish Dramatic Society and contributed in many ways to the communal and cultural life of the Jewish community in Helsinki. Jac Weinstein had attended, besides the Jewish School (founded in 1893), local Swedish and Russian schools and enrolled in the University of Helsinki where he eventually graduated as a lawyer. In his free time Weinstein wrote plays, revues, poems, lyrics for songs, articles, short stories, essays, memoirs and chronicles in Yiddish and Swedish. His articles were published in the Jewish journals, for instance *Judisk Krönika* and *Judisk Ungdom*, as well as in the main Finnish-Swedish newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet*. (The National Archives of Finland, SJA/K193.)

Weinstein's two-act comedy *Friš, gezunt un mešuge* 'Completely Crazy',<sup>54</sup> is written in the style of a *šund* 'trash' melodrama. The events and changes in the play are synthetic and the lines extravagant and pompous. The plot evolves around a *šidex*, a match, which is one of the basic themes of the Yiddish theatre.<sup>55</sup> The groom's plan is to marry in order to buy his uncle's business with the dowry. A similar theme can be found in Sholem-Aleichem's short story *A maise mit a grinhorn* 'A Story with a Greenhorn', where a greenhorn marries in order to start up a business.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Literally Lively, Healthy and Crazy.

<sup>55</sup> Arranged matches were very rare in Finland by the 1920s (inf. #1.).

<sup>56</sup> The story is found in: Sholem-Aleichem, *Ale verk fun Šolem-Aleixem, Monologn* (New York, 1925).



Image 19. The Jewish Dramatic Society in Helsinki used this stamp on its letters during the 1930s. The name of the society appears in both Yiddish and Swedish: *Jidiše dramatiše gezelsaft* – *Judiska Dramatiska Sällskapet*. The emblem consists of three images, i.e. a lyre, an owl and the face of a *štetl* Jew, which may be interpreted to representing classical theatre art, wit and Yiddish folklore. (The National Archives of Finland, SJA/K382.)

The play *Di nekome* ‘The Revenge’ is a light one-act comedy about a jealous wife who suspects her husband of unfaithfulness because he seems to disappear regularly. The wife is urged by her best friend to take revenge by having an affair with a ladies’ man. In the plays “Completely Crazy” and “The Revenge” there are no clear references to the local Jewish community.

It is interesting that the themes of the two plays available written in Swedish, *Radio* and *Två kvinnor* ‘Two Women’ (or *Pendylen* ‘Pendulum’), contain nothing specifically “Jewish” like the Yiddish plays, even the names in the plays are ordinary Christian names. In the case of “Two Women” the protagonists are Christians living in Paris. The play is a psychological three-act drama which evolves around a death and depicts the consequences that the will has on those concerned. “Radio” is a one-act comedy about a family which acquires its first radio.

Jac Weinstein also wrote revue plays and lyrics for single revue-type songs performed at various events. His play *Miljonern* ‘Millioners’, performed on 31 January, 1930 is featured as a revue comedy (JFH 1930). The revue songs *Vignlid* ‘Lullaby’ and *Šolem alexem her grosist* ‘How Do You Do, Mr. Wholesaler’ follow the theme of “The Broken Mirror”; they are satirical songs about the Jewish clothes business in Helsinki. Weinstein also wrote humorous songs with witty rhymes, for instance *Latkelid* ‘Pancake Song’ and *Gut purim aix* ‘Happy Purim to You’.



*Image 20.* The assembly hall of the Jewish Co-educational School (*Judiska Samskolan*) on Ruoholahti Street 3 served as a community hall for the whole Jewish congregation in Helsinki. This hall was also the “home stage” of the Jewish Dramatic Society. In this picture, taken in 1926, the curtain is decorated with the Star of David and with the emblem of the Jewish Dramatic Society. (Helsinki City Museum, Photograph Collection, 26448.)

### 6.3. Yiddish Theatre in Helsinki after the Second World War

After the demise of the Jewish Dramatic Society, Yiddish theatrical performances were occasionally arranged by local and visiting amateur and professional actors. Even before the society was founded wandering actors came to Finland from the Baltic countries and other places (inf. #11). Among them were one-man theatres which performed sketches and monologues. Performances in Swedish were also arranged by foreigners; for instance, before the Second World War Walter Fuchs from Sweden performed and directed revues with local reinforcements (inf. #14).

On 21 January, 1948 the actors Josef Glikson and Zipore Fajnsilber visited Helsinki with the poets Rachel Korn and Mordechai Husid (Chosid<sup>57</sup>) (JFH 1948a). They performed songs and short theatrical pieces (for the programme, see Image 22). Mr. Husid gave a lecture on modern Yiddish poetry and Rachel Korn gave a reading of her own poems. The very same year the (former) Viipuri WIZO

<sup>57</sup>

See Chapter 5 §4.1.

organized a performance of Jacob Gordin's *Mirele Efros* in the assembly hall of the Jewish Co-educational School (JFH 1948b). The play was directed by Ester Steinbock, then living in Tampere, Finland.<sup>58</sup> *Mirele Efros* has been, together with "God, Man and Devil" one of Gordin's most popular plays. In the early fifties a group of young theatre amateurs performed Jac Weinstein's play *Bobe Dobe* 'Grandmother Dobra', under the direction of Hanna Taini. The leading role of grandmother in *Bobe Dobe* was performed by Rosie Geronik (inf. #15).<sup>59</sup>

According to the famous American Yiddish actor Herman Yablokoff, who performed in Helsinki around 1960, there was an amateur theatre club run by Mikael Kagan (Yablokoff 1969: 682). At Kagan's request Mr. Yablokoff left a copy of one of his plays, *A gast fun Jisroel* 'A Guest from Israel', to be performed by the amateur club the following Purim (ibid.).

## 7. SUMMARY

The conference of Russian Zionists held in Helsinki in 1906 and the newly-built synagogue with premises for assembly contributed to the proliferation of Jewish cultural and political activities in Helsinki. Yiddish cultural associations aimed at self-education and Zionist organisations functioned side by side and were shared by many activists, as was natural in a small community like that of Helsinki. There were some enthusiasts for Yiddish language and culture, for instance Jac Weinstein, Israel Schur and Aron Schulman, who took the initiative in founding Yiddish literature associations, i.e. the Jewish Literature Club (1906), the Jewish Literature Society (1919) and the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo* (1921). The interest in Yiddish language and literature inspired these associations to set up Yiddish libraries, to organize Yiddish courses for their members and to attempt to establish Yiddish journals.

The ever-increasing linguistic assimilation turned out, however, to be one of the main detriments of the Yiddish literary associations in Helsinki. The immediate period after the First World War, when most of the Yiddish cultural associations were founded, Jewish young people already spoke Swedish among themselves. Many of them were bilingual but practically illiterate in Yiddish. This was a problem, especially in the endeavours to establish Yiddish journals. Consequently, all attempts made by the literary associations to maintain Yiddish journals failed.

<sup>58</sup> Ester Steinbock had been the driving force in the *Ahdus* Theatre Society in Viipuri, *Viborger Ahdus teatergesellschaft* (Hartikainen 1998: 80–81). *Mirele Efros* had been performed earlier in Viipuri (Hartikainen 1997: 7).

<sup>59</sup> According to inf. #15, other performers were Boris Rubanowitsch and Bella Schwartzman.

**Judiska Dramatiska Sällskapet**

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**Program**

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Lördagen den 20 november 1926 kl. 1/2 8 e. m.

**Premier**

**Der gröiser moment**

Drama i 3 akter av Sch. Goldfarb.  
Regi: Jac Weinstein

PERSONER:

Sidni Brand . . . . .	Roma Hammermann
Emma, sain vaib . . . . .	Aina Obermann
Selig } seiere kinder . . . . .	Isaij Davidkin.
Robert } . . . . .	Josef Liebkind.
Sem, seier chaver . . . . .	— — —
Klatschko, a schochente . . . . .	Ljuba Schwartzman.
Etel, ihr tochter . . . . .	Rosa Schwartzmann.
Waldros, a richter . . . . .	Abr. Rubanovitsch.
Sofia, sain froi . . . . .	Golde Weinstein.
Nelli, seier tochter . . . . .	Nina Rubanovitsch.
Maxwill, advokat . . . . .	Hirsch Strascheffsky.
Rabiner . . . . .	Sal. Jalovitsch
A wechter . . . . .	Josef Casulkin.
A dinst . . . . .	Sara Knaster

Dekorationer av konstnären Al'Antilia från  
Kansan Näyttämö.

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D A N S.

*Image 21.* Programme of the Jewish Dramatic Society for its première of *Der gröiser moment* 'The Big Moment' by Schmuël Goldfarb. The première took place on 20 November 1926 and was directed by Jac Weinstein. (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 116:14. Reproduced by permission.)

In addition, political developments affected the activities of the literary associations. The interest in Zionism as a political phenomenon superseded the interest in Yiddish that offered nothing much more than cultural activities. This we saw, for instance, in the programmatic and linguistic change that took place in the youth organization *Hatchijo* in 1923, when it changed its name from the Yiddish Literature Association to the Zionist Youth Association. Its activities could not continue solely in Yiddish because the knowledge of Yiddish possessed by many members was inadequate for maintaining discussions.



*Helsinki*

**DETTA** är vad vi hungrat efter!  
och väntat på i många år!

**Det berömda judiska skådespelarparet**



*Josef Glikson*

har, för att bereda vår judiska  
menighet tillfälle att få njuta  
av deras överallt erkända  
konst, uppskjutit sin avresa  
till Amerika på tvenne veckor,  
och uppträda hos oss i Judiska  
Samskolan lördagen den 24  
januari och tisdagen den 27  
januari.



*Zipora Fajnsilber*

Dessutom medverkar den i hela judiska världen kända diktaren

*Dessa eminenta judiska konstnärer  
presenteras av den hos oss från tidi-  
gare välkända, numera i Stockholm  
verkande judiska kulturledaren*

**MORDCHAI HUSID**



*Rachel Korn*

med uppläsning  
av sina egna  
berömda alster.

*Skratt • Lärar*

*Humor • Alloaz*

Vänd, läs programmet...

Image 22. An advertisement for the visit of the actors Josef Glikson and Zipora Fajnsilber and the poets Rachel Korn and Mordechai Husid (Chosid) in Helsinki in 1948. The advertisement is headed: "This is what we have been longing and waiting for for many years!" The activities of the Jewish Dramatic Society ceased upon the outbreak of World War II, and it took years before the Helsinki Jews could hear a "Yiddish word" on the stage. For the programme see Image 36. (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 116:14. Reproduced by permission.)

Yiddish remained still one of the official languages of the association for some time.<sup>60</sup> Also, the fact that in 1930 the association performed An-ski's *Der dibuk*

60

Later on, according to the statutes, the official languages were Hebrew, Finnish and Swedish (CJH Stadgar). Unfortunately, the statutes indicate no date. This was most probably after the Second World War, when the use of Finnish became more widespread among the young.

and that the Jewish Dramatic Society performed at its annual feast indicates that the general attitude towards Yiddish was a moderate one. Occasionally even the protocols were written in Yiddish. Among the young there were devotees of Hebrew, but the use of the language in protocols and minutes did not succeed beyond the activities of the Hebrew club *Chug Ivri*.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, until the 1950s the Jewish journals of Helsinki do not contain any poems, let alone articles in Hebrew.

The theatrical and choral activities had the longest life-span of the cultural associations in Helsinki (the Jewish Song Association to this day), mainly because they had a social purpose at various celebrations and events. It is noteworthy that between the World Wars the majority of the elder members of the community born at the end of the nineteenth century spoke Yiddish as their everyday language. The Jewish Song Association has preserved Yiddish folk-songs in its repertoire at every stage in its history. The repertoire of the Jewish Dramatic Society was unique because it consisted not only of popular Yiddish theatrical pieces but also of plays written by one of its directors, Jac Weinstein. These plays were chiefly satirical comedies, like his play "The Broken Mirror", which depicted the life of nouveaux riches Jews in Helsinki. The repertoire also contained lighter revues, which were fashionable in the Finnish-Swedish circles of Helsinki. Jac Weinstein even incorporated some popular Swedish revue songs into his Yiddish plays. It is quite surprising that the Jewish Dramatic Society performed several distinctly left-wing plays, such as Jacob Gordin's drama "God, Man and Devil".

After the Second World War cultural activities in Yiddish diminished considerably. One of the main reasons for this was that the majority of the active young members within the community were Swedish-speaking. Only a very few of them were fluent in Yiddish. Moreover, Yiddish culture was not fashionable as compared with the modern Hebrew and Israeli culture that was on the rise. However, Yiddish theatrical pieces, for instance, were occasionally performed until the 1960s.

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The protocols and records of the Hebrew club were written in Hebrew and Swedish.

## 4. JEWISH SCHOOLS AND THE ROLE OF YIDDISH IN THEIR CURRICULUM

### 1. PREFACE

The instruction in heders and yeshivas reflected the traditional Jewish diglossia – Yiddish was a medium to teach Hebrew, not an end in itself.<sup>1</sup> Beginning from the second half of the nineteenth century, changes began to appear in the traditional Jewish educational system. The old-fashioned teaching methods and curriculum of the heders were generally opposed by Jewish enlighteners. Also, Russian school officials and reformists considered the traditional educational system to be harmful to the children and a hindrance to the progressive evolution of Jewish society; they tried to interfere in various ways, for instance a regulation from 1854 required that all *melameds*, Hebrew teachers, must be proficient in Russian and a law passed a year later required that within twenty years all rabbis and *melameds* should be graduates of state rabbinical seminars or of middle and secondary public schools (Klier 1995: 222-224). These demands caused the heders to disappear from “view”. The conservative parents were satisfied with the traditional system and defended and protected the *melameds* (ibid.: 231). At the same time as the traditional Jewish educational system was supervised and targeted, the Russian officials developed a system of state-run Jewish primary and secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> These schools were founded to be a rival to the heders and yeshivas. The headmasters of these schools were non-Jewish, as were most of the teachers of secular subjects (ibid.: 225). All teaching in these schools was conducted in Russian. German was also used at one point, for instance to teach Jewish prayers (ibid.: 222). Yiddish was allowed to be used only in preparatory classes and in the

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<sup>1</sup> Jews also often had some command of the co-territorial languages, for instance Polish, Ukrainian, Belorussian etc. The knowledge naturally depended on the individuals’ education, profession and contacts with the non-Jewish population.

<sup>2</sup> The school system, which corresponded to the general Russian state school system, had three tiers: Jewish primary schools, Jewish secondary schools and rabbinic institutes (Klier 1995: 222-224). The latter corresponded in some respects to the Russian Gymnasiums. The two-year curriculum of the Jewish primary schools consisted of the following subjects: religion, Hebrew, Russian, German, arithmetic, calligraphy, geography and history (ibid.). The three to five-year curriculum of the secondary schools consisted of, besides religious subjects, Russian, geography, history and handicrafts (ibid.).

case of an emergency (Abramowicz 1999: 124). The school supervisors wanted to keep the *melameds* far away from these schools (Klier 1995: 223).

The traditional Jewish diglossia began to disintegrate with the growth of Yiddishism, as secular schools were founded where Yiddish was the general language of instruction as well as a normal subject. The earliest Yiddish day schools were founded in America around 1910 by local members of the Jewish Socialist Labour Party *Poaley Zion* (Goldsmith 1997: 92–93). Soon secular Yiddish schools became popular all over the Jewish world, for instance in Lithuania the Yiddish school movement started under German occupation after 1915 (Abramowicz 1999: 313).<sup>3</sup> In Tallinn, which is the nearest Jewish community to Helsinki, Yiddish became the language of instruction (besides Hebrew) in the Jewish Gymnasium in 1930 (Verschik 1998: 83).

The constantly altering social and economic status of the Jews in Finland made the organization of teaching very difficult for the Jewish community in Helsinki during the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The Finnish Senate, which generally took a negative attitude towards the Jews residing in the country, offered no financial support. Only in 1918, soon after Finland gained its independence and Jews received Finnish citizenship, did the Jewish school (*Judiska Samskolan* ‘Jewish Co-educational School’) receive official status, and financial support from the government. During the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century teaching of Hebrew and Judaism was organised in heders and privately by local *melameds*. There were several attempts prior to 1918 to found a Jewish secondary school, the first in 1893. All these schools functioned only for a short period. Consequently, many Jewish children had to attend local Christian schools.

In this chapter we shall concentrate on the Jewish school system in Helsinki until the early 1930s and the role of Yiddish in the curriculum. We shall also discuss how the language of instruction in the schools affected the general linguistic development in the community and how different attitudes and political orientations are seen in the choice of language.

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The German occupiers demanded that children of different nations had to be taught in their own mother tongue. This led in part to the development and spread of Yiddish primary and secondary schools (Abramowicz 1999: 313–115).

## 2. PRIVATE TUTORS AND HEDERS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

From the very beginning of Jewish settlement in Helsinki there were private teachers who taught children Hebrew and religious subjects. In the 1860s and '70s there were three such teachers in Helsinki who all originated from Russia, where they had received religious schooling (Weinstein 1956). Cantonist soldiers, many of whom had been kidnapped to serve in the Russian army even as young as eight, were naturally not so well educated in Jewish matters and consequently were unable to teach their children adequately (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 30.5.1965). The situation for girls was different, since their mothers, born and grown up in the Russian Jewish communities, were able to pass on their knowledge to their daughters (ibid.). In 1870 a heder began to function in Langén's Villa (Siltasaari Street 3-5, Villa no. 32) which also served as a synagogue for the community (Weinstein 1956). This heder was supported by the community and was chiefly intended for the children of the poor (ibid.). One of two private heders was situated in Malmi Street 22 and was called after its teacher Hirsch Itzchok Segal, a Torah scribe who originated from Vitebsk (ibid.). The heder was depicted in the following way by Jac Weinstein, who had attended it in his youth:

The heder which was situated in a wooden building in Olin's yard on Malmi Street 22 consisted of a big room with a long table along the window and benches on both sides of it. Besides the end of the table, where Rabbi Hirschl-Itsche Segal had his seat, hung on the wall a *kančik*, the essential nine-tail whip, which consisted of flattened leader straps with knots on the ends. It hung there more as a warning symbol than as an object of punishment for disobedient pupils. An old bookcase, which had its back legs missing, leaned wearily against the wall next to the door. The loosely hanging hinges witnessed that the case had once long ago also had doors. On the top shelf of the bookcase stood a long row of big volumes with beautiful backs and on both lower shelves stood smaller books, like Bibles and prayer-books with and without covers. The wall logs in the heder room which glowed through the ragged wall paper had split and in the gaps hung bits of petrified resin, which sometimes seemed to me like yellow witch teeth and sometimes, when the sparing sun fell on the walls, like glittering tears. Behind the heder room the rabbi had his own room. Yes, this is how the interior of my heder looked, as I remember it even today.

Alter, a Heder Memoir<sup>4</sup>  
by Jac Weinstein

The other private heder was run by Isroel-Selig Schapiro (ibid.). There is no doubt that the language of instruction in these heders was Yiddish; the boys learned to read Hebrew and to translate the text into Yiddish, to recite by heart the most important prayers and psalms and to chant biblical texts (ibid.). In addition, the curriculum consisted of other religious subjects (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 30.5.1965).

<sup>4</sup> The short story is written in Swedish.

There is no mention of any secular subjects being taught in these heders.

### 2.1. Jewish Children in Local Schools

Already in the early period of Jewish settlement in Helsinki some Jewish children attended local (Christian) schools in the town. For instance, in the 1860s one family living on the fortress island of Sveaborg sent their two eldest children to a French school in the town (Wengeroff 1913: 154). Besides this, children were taught various secular subjects, for instance Russian, by other soldiers and workers on the island (*ibid.*). However, studies at local schools often came to an end because the soldier's children were Russian citizens and the state schools did not have any statutory obligation to teach their children (Nurmi 1998: 7). There was also a Christian school for Jews in Helsinki, which did not function for long due to its aspiration to convert the pupils to Christianity (Torvinen 1989: 63).

### 3. THE JEWISH SCHOOL IN HELSINKI, FOUNDED IN 1893

From the 1880s Jewish children in Helsinki began to attend on a more regular basis the local Swedish and Russian schools (Weinstein 1956). They could not, however, receive instruction in Judaism at these schools. Hence the community sought to establish its own secondary school where secular subjects would be taught besides Hebrew and Judaism (*ibid.*). In 1892 a committee<sup>5</sup> was deputized to make preliminary preparations, and local school authorities were consulted for the curriculum (*ibid.*; *Hufvudstadsbladet* 30.5.1965). After the parents had promised to take their children away from the state schools the community appealed to the Senate for an official permit for the school (Weinstein 1956). The Senate rejected the petition on 1 June 1893, because it considered that it was not their duty to support the local Jews, since they were Russian citizens (*ibid.*). The community was given a free hand to organize teaching for their children "as far it would not commit a breach of law and good manners" and the supervision of the school came under the jurisdiction of the local police authorities (*ibid.*)<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the disappointing response from the Finnish Senate, the Jewish School in Helsinki, *Judiska skolan i Helsingfors*, opened its doors on 15 September 1893 (*ibid.*). The official emblem of the school bears the Hebrew name *Talmud-toiro d'Helsingfors* 'Talmud-Torah of Helsinki' (JS 1902).<sup>7</sup> In casual

<sup>5</sup> Moses Rosenthal was the chairman of the committee (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 30.5.1965).

<sup>6</sup> In spite of some attempts, I have been unable to locate any documents concerning the Jewish school in the archives of the Helsinki Police Forces.

<sup>7</sup> The word *talmud-toire* generally refers to a community heder or school for poor children (VLVJ: 306).

speech and in some documents the school was commonly called in Yiddish as *Jidiše škole* 'Jewish school'.<sup>8</sup> The school was first located on the premises of Vladimir Street 12 (nowadays Kaleva Street) but moved in 1895 to Vladimir Street 49 (Weinstein 1956).<sup>9</sup> At first the school had sixty-one pupils, fifteen of whom were girls (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 30.5.1965). The school was supported by the Jewish community and many pupils were free students. Their number was, however, reduced in 1896 to only ten, due to financial difficulties (JS 1896).

The curriculum of the school was quite advanced and reminds one of the programme of state-run Jewish primary and secondary schools in Russia. The curriculum of the Jewish School of Helsinki consisted of, besides Jewish subjects, Swedish, German, Russian, Finnish, arithmetic, calligraphy and at one point gymnastics, music and handicraft (*ibid.*; see Tables 1 and 2). The school had at first three classes (the first of which was preparatory) but a fourth was added as the curriculum expanded (Weinstein 1956).

### 3.1. The Teaching of Religious Subjects

The teaching of religious subjects constituted a large part of the curriculum at the Jewish School in Helsinki, as we can see from the timetables for the second and third classes. The first class was comprised almost entirely of Hebrew teaching and translation from Hebrew (JS 1897: 7).<sup>10</sup> The teaching was conducted at first by the local heder teachers Isroel-Selig Schapiro, Hirsch-Itschok Segal and David Rubin (Weinstein 1956).<sup>11</sup> Rubin taught for only one year and his place was taken by Dr. Leopold Ginsburg, who also became the headmaster of the school in 1894 (*ibid.*). Ginsburg, who originated from Grodno, had himself attended a government-run Jewish school in Nikolaev.

Since the teachers of religious subjects were the same as in the heders we can presume that the language of instruction continued to be Yiddish. An article in *Nya Pressen* (29.6.1893) reports that the languages of instruction at the school were Swedish and Hebrew, and when necessary – Russian. In practice Hebrew in this context means Ashkenazi Hebrew, more precisely Hebrew texts translated

<sup>8</sup> This name appears in protocols and letters (written in Yiddish) concerning the school. In Yiddish the word *škole* (< Russian *shkola*) often refers to secular schools.

<sup>9</sup> The school records mention moving expenses in June 1895 (JS 1902).

<sup>10</sup> The programme consisted of two levels, the first level (four hours) included the basics of Hebrew, the second level (five hours) the basics of religion, translation from Hebrew, writing (?) and arithmetic (JS 1897).

<sup>11</sup> Rubin had graduated from the Rabbinical Seminar of Zhitomir.

and explained in Yiddish.<sup>12</sup> At the time Hebrew was chiefly read and written like Latin in the Christian world (Stampher 1993: 133). Hebrew was an inseparable part of daily life, especially for men, who were supposed to be able to read the daily prayers. In the Jewish community every layman had some command of Hebrew, whereas in the Christian world knowledge of Latin was often the privilege of the clergy, scholars and the upper class.

Besides learning Hebrew, the Jewish children in Helsinki must have been instructed in reading and writing Yiddish, since many who attended this school were able to conduct correspondence in Yiddish and some, like Jac Weinstein, even to compose literature. Teaching children to write letters in Yiddish with the help of manuals was part of the curriculum in some heders in Lithuania (Abramowicz 1999: 75).<sup>13</sup> In 1896 the records of the Jewish School in Helsinki mentions “fifty books, Jewish” (JS 1902), which might refer to Yiddish books, since *judiska* ‘Jewish’ in Swedish can also mean Yiddish.

In January 1896 the *melameds* Schapiro and Segal were relieved of their duties because their teaching abilities were placed in doubt (JS 1896). In their place the school committee wanted to find a teacher who would have, besides Hebrew, a good command of Russian and German. Between 1896 and 1899 there were several Jewish teachers working at the school.<sup>14</sup> It is highly possible that they taught religious subjects in Russian. This argument is confirmed by the fact that in 1897 the school purchased religious education books in Russian as well as parts of the Bible in Russian translation (JS 1900).<sup>15</sup> There is some evidence that children who attended this school mastered Russian to some extent.<sup>16</sup> Possibly German, too, was used at one point; parts of the school report from 1897 were written in German (JS 1897).

<sup>12</sup> Moses Guthwert who attended this school could read Hebrew with Ashkenazic pronunciation moderately well (Muir 1999: 20).

<sup>13</sup> Yiddish literacy and writing skills were taught during the nineteenth century with books called *brivnštelers* ‘letter writer’ (EJ, vol. 6: 433). In 1926 there appeared a *brivnštelers* by Abraham Leon Dor and there were several reprints of it until 1882 (*ibid.*). Gradually these works acquired the character of reading textbooks, and occasionally included even some elements of arithmetic and geography.

<sup>14</sup> The school bookkeeping presents in 1896 the following names: Mr. Kaplan, Josef Zebba and Mr. Gutman; in 1899: Mr. Rutstein, Mr. Liebkind, Mr. Zesne and Mr. Åstrow (JS 1902).

<sup>15</sup> The records also mention Pentateuchs, books of the Prophets, the Psalms of David, daily Hebrew prayer-books, Talmud and Hebrew grammars (JS 1900). Whether these were accompanied by Russian translation remains unclear.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, Jac Weinstein was fluent in Russian. This is clear from his memoirs (e.g. *Mina nittio dagar* ‘My Ninety Days’), which describe his time in St. Petersburg and Raivola (in Karelia).





*Image 23.* Group portrait of the teachers, board of directors and pupils of the *Judiska skola i Helsingfors* ‘the Jewish School in Helsinki’, c. 1895. The school, which was commonly called in Yiddish *Jidiše škole* (Jewish school), was founded in 1893. The curriculum was very advanced and soon challenged the traditional heders. In the middle of the picture poses the headmaster Dr. Phil. Leopold Ginsburg, beside him the *melameds* Isroel-Selig Shapiro (right) and Hirsch Itzhok Segal. On the far left in the top row stands Jac Weinstein, second from him Moses Guthwert (see Appendix B §1). (Helsinki City Museum, Photograph Collection, M34381.)

An interesting marginal note concerning the use of Yiddish in the Jewish school is that according to the available documents in the Finnish National Archives the protocols were first written “unofficially” in Yiddish on loose papers and then translated into Swedish and transferred in careful handwriting into bound books. This suggests that the common language of the Jewish teachers and school board was Yiddish.

### 3.2. Russian, German, Swedish and Finnish

Besides Hebrew, the range of languages in the curriculum of the Jewish School in Helsinki included Russian, German, Swedish and Finnish. From the timetables of 1896-1897 (see Tables 1 and 2) we can see that in the second class Russian, German and Swedish were each taught two hours per week. Two hours of Finnish were added to the programme in the third class, and the amount of German was raised to three hours at the expense of Russian.

During the academic year 1896–97 the teaching of Swedish, Finnish, geography and calligraphy was conducted by local Finnish-Swedish teachers in Swedish.<sup>17</sup> Possibly also music, gymnastics and handwork, which do not show on the timetable of 1896-1897, were also taught in Swedish. There is no evidence that Finnish was used as the language of instruction except in the Finnish classes. The school published its own journal (Weinstein 1956), but unfortunately no issues are available to indicate which language it was written in and what the contents were.

**Table 1. Second Class**<sup>18</sup>

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9.00-10.00	Bible reading	Bible reading	Bible reading	Bible reading	Bible reading	Bible reading
10.00-11.00	Russian	Arithmetic	Russian	German	Arithmetic	Jewish history
11.00.-12.00	Prophets' reading	Calligraphy	Prophets' reading	Calligraphy	Religion	Bible revision. <sup>19</sup>
12.30-13.30	German	Swedish	Geography	Swedish	Geography	
13.30-14.30	Bible reading	Religion	Bible reading	Prophet's revising	Prophets' revision	
14.30-15.00	Jewish history	Hebrew grammar	Grammar exercise	Hebrew grammar	Grammar exercise	

Due to several changes in the curriculum and teaching staff, it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions as regards the language(s) of instruction. This is especially difficult in the case of religious subjects taught by immigrants. It seems, however, that during the initial stage the instruction was conducted in Yiddish. After 1896 instruction took place most likely in Russian and partly in German. During the whole existence of the Jewish School most secular subjects (except Russian and German) were taught in Swedish by local Finnish-Swedish teachers.

<sup>17</sup> These were Mr. Kumlander and Nina Tallberg (calligraphy) (JS 1897). During the first years the school had the following teachers: Karl Långman, Ellen Ullner, Nina Tallberg and Anna Årt (the three women taught without wages) (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 30.5.1965). In 1896 Karl Långman had to resign and his position was taken over by Mr. Kumlander (JS 1897).

<sup>18</sup> JS 1897

<sup>19</sup> The timetable in Swedish has *rep.* which is probably an abbreviated form of *repetition*, revision or oral examination.

Table 2. Third Class<sup>20</sup>

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9.00-10.00	German	German	Russian	German	Religion	Religion
10.00-11.00	Bible reading	Bible reading	Bible reading	Bible reading	Talmud	Bible reading
11.00-12.00	Religion revision	Prophets' reading	Calligraphy	Prophets' reading	Calligraphy	Jewish history
12.30-13.30	Hebrew grammar	Grammar exercise	Hebrew grammar	Grammar exercise	Prophets' reading	
13.30-14.30	Jewish history	Swedish	Finnish	Swedish	Finnish	
14.30-15.00	Talmud	Geography	Grammar exercise	Geography	Grammar exercise	

### 3.3. Financial Difficulties

Financing the activities of the Jewish School in Helsinki had been a problem from the very beginning. To ease the financial burden of the school a charitable organization called *Rättvisa åt judarne* 'Justice for Jews' was founded by forty-five non-Jews from the prominent circles of the town. They organized a soirée on 15 September 1894 which became an important social event and was visited by many influential persons, some of whom even visited the school.<sup>21</sup> The subvention collected by this event was a major encouragement and enabled the school to continue for some time without financial problems. However, the 1889 statute of the Senate, which even further restricted the residence permits and means of subsistence (Torvinen 1989: 61–62), began seriously to affect the life of the community in the mid-1890s (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 30.5.1965). Money which had been directed to the school had to be used to maintain the social aid for the poor and elderly, and parents also started taking their children out of the school to work and earn money (ibid.).

The school administrators sought help from abroad, even from Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, but received only temporary succour (ibid.). Finally, in 1900, the community was forced to close down the school (Weinstein 1956).

<sup>20</sup> JS 1897.

<sup>21</sup> Among these were Estlander, Federley, Gordie, Heikel, Hertzberg, Klarich, Lille, Mechelin, Merikanto, Montgomery, Neovius, Rein, Reuter, Runeberg, Svahnlung, Wrede (Weinstein 1956).

According to one source, the school finished not only for financial reasons; many religious families opposed the modern aspirations in the curriculum and interfered in the running of the school, with fatal consequences (*Judisk Krönika* no. 2 1918: 2). Had the parents agreed on the curriculum, they would have also found the means for its maintenance (*ibid.*).

#### 4. HEDERS AND PRIVATE TUTORS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

##### 4.1. Afternoon Heder, Founded in 1900

After the first Jewish school was closed, the approximately sixty remaining pupils continued in state schools, and the teaching of religious subjects was arranged in only one heder (*ibid.*; Weinstein 1956). Rabbi Mones Gornicz was the *melamed* of the heder.<sup>22</sup> The teaching took place in the afternoon and lasted for two hours (*ibid.*). The children found it difficult to endure the traditional heder teaching methods after spending the day in a modern school (*Judisk Krönika* no. 2 1918: 2). Due to this, the children's standard of Jewish knowledge declined (*ibid.*). The situation was described in the following way by Ben-Tsien Trok, a Hebrew teacher from Hämeenlinna, Finland:

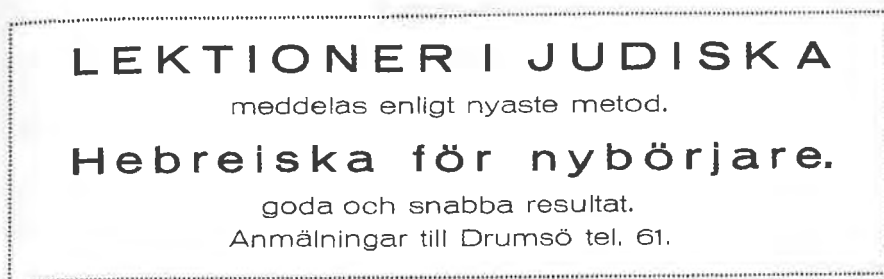
*Di politiše lage fun finlender jidn iz afile nit kein glencende un zeı hobn dervail zix nit vos cu barimen mit zeier birgerrext. Ober vi dos iz zainen zeı fort finlendiše toišvim un zeı kukn fun oibn arop kimat mit faraxtung oif di geirim-melomdim vos zainen do gor on a bodn unter di fiš. Es faršteit zix fun zelvst az di geirim-melomdim oder lerer zainen bai zix štark aropgefaln un zeı hobn kein šum vert in di oign fun zeiere eigene talmidim, velxe kukn oif zeı vi fremde un biz cu a geviser madreige vi oif nit-gebetene un nit-gevinčene orxim. Darum iz nit kein vunder nit ven der limed in xadorim geit zeier šlexıt un di zeider-jinglex lernen zix zeier veinik ois di jidiše limudim.*

The political situation of the Finnish Jews is not at all glorious and they cannot for the time being boast of their civil rights. However, Finnish Jews are residents of Finland and they look down, almost with contempt, on the foreign *melameds* who live here without a floor under their feet. It is self-evident that the foreign *melameds* or teachers have lost their courage and do not have any respect in the eyes of their own pupils, who look at them as outsiders and to a certain extent as uninvited and unwanted guests. Therefore it is not at all surprising that the teaching in the heders goes badly and that the heder boys do not learn much of the Jewish subjects.

*Der fraint* no. 14 1906.

<sup>22</sup>

Gornicz' short biography published in *Hatchijo* (no. 12 1923) mentions that he was invited to Finland by the congregation c. 1900.



*Image 24.* Cantor Morduch Schulman's advertisement in *Hatchijo* 1923 (no. 10), which reads: "Yiddish lectures given according to the latest methods. Hebrew for beginners, good and quick results. Enrolments at Drumsö tel. 61." (Fennica, Helsinki University Library.)

Consequently, parents began to employ private tutors and eventually the heder ceased to exist (*Judisk Krönika* no. 2 1918: 2).

#### 4.2. Yiddish Heders for Girls

In Helsinki there were at least two heders for girls at the beginning of the twentieth century (*Der fraint* no. 14 1906). The main aim of these heders was to teach Yiddish to girls whose knowledge of the language was poor.<sup>23</sup> According to Ben-Tsien Trok, the use of Yiddish in homes had declined (*ibid.*). He adds that the girls' general knowledge of Judaism was alarmingly poor. Probably one of the aims was to teach Yiddish literacy so that the girls might be able to read sacred books, for instance prayer-books, in translation. Where these small probably very informal institutions were situated remains unknown.

#### 4.3. Private Tutors

Wealthy parents had always relied on private tutors. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were several private tutors in the city who taught children, mostly boys, besides Hebrew traditional Jewish subjects and Yiddish literacy (*inf. #2*). These tutors were also employed when a boy was preparing for his Bar Mitzvah. Some of these tutors were also employed by the congregations, for instance the cantor Morduch Schulman (*Hatchijo* no. 10 1923: 10) and prayer leader Chaim Blum (JFH 1915). Mr. Schulman even advertised in the local Jewish journal *Hatchijo* (no. 10 1923) that he gave private lessons in Yiddish and Hebrew (see *image 24*). Other tutors were Rabbi Abraham Schwartzman (*inf. #2*),

<sup>23</sup>

These method of instruction of these groups that taught Yiddish literacy to girls carried the name *sure-grizl*, literally 'a bit of a line' (EJ, vol. 6: 433).

Rabbi Salomo Manelewitch (*ibid.*), and Rabbi Mones Gornicz (*Der fraint* no. 14 1906). These men had rabbinical training but were not practising rabbis in the community (inf. #2). Torah scribe Leibe Bolotowsky, who originated from Vitebsk, arrived in Finland during the First World War and worked as a private tutor (inf. #11). Mordechai Kantor, who had received traditional yeshiva training in his native town of Janov (South-Western Poland), also gave private lessons in Jewish subjects.<sup>24</sup> It is most likely that all the above immigrant teachers taught in Yiddish.

### 5. THE MOSAIC SCHOOL IN HELSINKI (REFORMED HEDER), FOUNDED IN 1906

Finally, during autumn 1906, a new Jewish school was opened on the first floor of the recently consecrated synagogue building on Malmi Street 26 (Weinstein 1956). All this was made possible with the aid of the Jewish Colonization Organization in St. Petersburg (*ibid.*).<sup>25</sup> The organization had set the founding of a school as a condition for the donation towards the synagogue and school building. The school was officially opened on 18 November 1906 by Rabbi Schmuël Noson Bukanz and became called in Swedish *Mosaiska Skolan i Helsingfors* ‘the Mosaic School in Helsinki’ (MSH 1906a; MSH 1906c).

The intention had been to set up a reformed heder, a so-called *xeider mesukan*, such as had become popular in Eastern Europe (*Judisk Krönika* no. 2 1918: 2). This had also been one of the conditions set by the Jewish Colonization Organization (*Der fraint* no. 14 1906). These schools were part of a modern Hebrew school movement fostered by the *Hovevei Zion* ‘Friends of Zion’ societies and aimed at spreading knowledge of Hebrew (Goldsmith 1997: 95). The Mosaic School in Helsinki is mentioned as having been a “pure Hebrew school”,<sup>26</sup> meaning that the instruction was conducted in Hebrew (JÅF 1929: 6). Whether this applied to all subjects remains unknown. According to the protocols, Hebrew was taught by the “natural method”, i.e. teaching *ivrit beivrit*, Hebrew in Hebrew. In the previous heders and schools Hebrew had been taught by using a translation technique, where the Pentateuch was translated word by word into Yiddish and memorized as such; grammar or productive use of Hebrew was not considered essential. By contrast, in the new school the pupils were taught grammar and were required to do writing exercises (MSH 1906c). Reading

<sup>24</sup> At the beginning of the 1920s Kantor got married and settled in Turku (inf. #16).

<sup>25</sup> The Jewish Colonization Organisation was a social organisation, supported by Jewish charities abroad (Abramowicz 1999: 26). It is possible that the Organisation had put some requirements on the curriculum of the school.

<sup>26</sup> In Swedish *rent hebräisk skola*.

material constituted of new-fashioned primers and textbooks besides biblical texts.<sup>27</sup> The curriculum also included Jewish history, religion, the geography of Palestine, Russian, German, arithmetic and calligraphy (*ibid.*). What is quite striking is that the school protocols do not mention Swedish or Finnish at all. This might be a result of the so-called Years of Oppression, during which Russian officials strove to increase the use and teaching of Russian.<sup>28</sup> Even the school protocols were written in Russian, whereas in all the other schools they were kept in Yiddish or Swedish.

According to the plan, the syllabus was supposed to consist of four years, so that the children would obtain a good Jewish-national upbringing and a versatile knowledge of Jewish subjects (MSH 1906c). In the initial stage the pupils were divided into two main groups, i.e. those who studied only in the Jewish schools and those who also attended state school (MSH 1906). The morning from 9 am to 1 pm was reserved for the first group (divided into two classes) and the afternoon from 5 pm to 7 pm for the second group. However, this turned out to be difficult for the children who attended state schools, and some slight changes were made to the day programme (MSH 1906d/e/f). During the first term the school had sixty-four pupils, of whom forty-six were boys and eighteen girls (MSH 1906d/f). The pupils were between seven and fourteen years of age.

The school had at first two teachers, Israel Schur and Rabbi Mones Gornicz. Schur had been especially invited from Verzhbolov (now Virbalis, Lithuania) by the school committee (MSH 1906a).<sup>29</sup> He was trained to work as a teacher in a modern heder. Schur also became an active member in the cultural life of the community, establishing the journal *Judisk Krönika* (1918) and founding the Jewish Literature Society (1919). In addition, he published academic articles and studies on Judaism (see Image 11). Mones Gornicz, for his part, represented old-fashioned teaching methods; he was a traditional *melamed* trained in a yeshiva. However, he was known in the Jewish community of Helsinki as a good pedagogue and the school committee employed him on the condition that he learn the “new methods” from Schur (MSH 1906b). Both teachers’ mother tongue was Yiddish, so most probably they resorted to Yiddish when necessary.

<sup>27</sup> The books had been purchased from St. Petersburg by Israel Schur (MSH 1906b).

<sup>28</sup> The first period of oppression was during 1899-1905, the second during 1908-1917. The general intention of the Years of Oppression was to deprive Finland from its autonomy.

<sup>29</sup> The committee members were M. Rosenthal (chairman), S. Leffkowitzsch (vice chairman) and D. Abramowitzsch (secretary). The protocols were written in Russian by Mr. Abramowitzsch.



*Image 25.* Façade of the synagogue and school building designed by the architect Jac Ahrenberg. The Mosaic School in Helsinki (reformed heder, founded in 1906) was located on the first floor. Picture from the cover of Hersz Frydberg's epical poem in Yiddish, *Der heiliker xasan-hajovl*. (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 26228. Reproduced by permission.)

However, the Mosaic School in Helsinki failed to provide a wider range of subjects for financial reasons and for this reason could not continue for long (Weinstein 1956). How long the school actually functioned remains unknown – at most for a couple of years.<sup>30</sup> The school tried to seek means to support its activities and applied for financial aid, for instance, from the Ministry of Education (MSH 1906i). Other factors that had impeded the activity of the school were the age gap between pupils and the fact that some children continued in the state schools at the same time (*Judisk Krönika* no. 2 1918: 2; MSH 1906e). According to one source, the general attitude among the Helsinki Jews had been against these kinds of modern heders, even before the founding of the school (*Der fraint* no. 14 1906). The same source considers this a quite controversial situation – the community wanted to be as European as possible, but when it came to religion and education, it was strictly orthodox and traditional.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The available school protocols run only to December 1906.

<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, many parents and children looked down on the traditional teachers, which





*Image 26. Melamed Mones Gornicz (1870-1923) originated from Grodno, Belorussia. He arrived in Finland c. 1898 to become a teacher of Hebrew and Judaism (Hatchijo no 12 1923). He taught in the heders and schools that functioned between 1900 and 1918. In 1918 he became one of the teachers in the Jewish Co-educational School.*

## **6. THE JEWISH SCHOOL, FOUNDED IN 1912**

A new day school, referred to in documents as *Jidiše škole* 'Jewish School' or *Talmud-toire* 'Talmud Torah', was founded on 15 November 1912 (JFH 1912b). The school commission proposed that it start with one class and the pupils should not attend any other schools (JFH 1912a).<sup>32</sup> The commission also recommended

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made the teaching very difficult.

<sup>32</sup> The memorandum is in the form of a discussion between Mr. Weinstein, Mr. Engel, Mr. Bonsdroff, Mr. Schur and Mr. Leffkovitsch.

that religious education should be organized for children who attended state schools and for those who were working. The teachers were Rabbi Mones Gornicz, Rabbi Salomo Manelewitsch and Israel Schur, who each taught two hours per day (JFH 1912b). The curriculum and the language of instruction are not mentioned. We may presume that Gornicz and Manelewitsch, responsible for religious subjects, taught in Yiddish. Mr. Schur possibly pursued the same kind of curriculum as in the previous reformed heder, thus teaching mostly in Hebrew.

On 25 December an association called *Tiferes boxurim* 'Pride of the Youth' was founded in order to awaken literary interest among the schoolchildren (TB 1912). The lectures were arranged by local teachers (ibid.). The chairman of the association was Leopold Gornicz (ibid.).<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, there is no detailed information available concerning the agenda; the Hebrew name of the association suggests, however, that the aim was to teach Hebrew literature.

From the very start this community-supported school encountered financial problems. In 1913 an association called *Xevre talmud-toire* 'Talmud-Torah Association' was founded in order to raise funds for the school (JFH 1913a). This school functioned for only two terms and eventually closed in spring 1913. There is no detailed information concerning the reason which led to its failure.

### 6.1. Another Attempt

During autumn 1913 the Jewish congregation started to plan a new school and sought a teacher (JFH 1913b). Rabbi Bukanz travelled to Kovno (Kaunas) and found a suitable teacher, Mr. Dimont (JFH 1913d). The congregation received twenty-six enrolments and eventually the school started in autumn 1914 (JFH 1913b/e). According to a residence petition, Mr. Blum was another teacher besides Mr. Dimont (JFH 1915). What the curriculum of the school was like remains unknown. The next autumn 1915 the Finnish Senate refused to continue Mr. Dimont's residence permit (ibid.). It remains unknown what happened after this – most likely the school could not continue.

## 7. THE JEWISH CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL, FOUNDED IN 1918

After Jews were granted civil rights in 1918 Jewish children were able to attend the state schools freely. However, the Jewish community wanted to secure proper Jewish education for their children and consequently the Jewish Co-educational School, *Judiska Samskolan*, opened on 15 November 1918 in the premises of the

<sup>33</sup> Isodor Zall was the secretary and H. Schwartzman the treasurer (TF 1912)

synagogue building on Malmi Street 26 (Nurmi 1998: 8; JSH 1922: 4).<sup>34</sup> In 1922 the school obtained its own building on Ruoholahti Street 3. The founders of the school outlined a “Swedish-Hebrew school” where instruction in (Modern) Hebrew would occupy a central position in the curriculum (JSH 1922: 3; JSH 1934: 5). At first the school actually had two independent sections, a “Swedish section” under the headmaster, John Slüter’s supervision and a “Hebrew section” headed by Usiel Levik. These two sections were, however, combined as a single unit at the end of the first school year (JSH 1922: 4). The official language of the school, besides Hebrew, was Swedish and the instruction of secular school subjects was conducted by local Finnish-Swedish teachers. At school festivities speeches were given in Swedish and Hebrew. Yiddish was not officially on the curriculum of the school. It was not taught as a normative language, as in many Jewish schools in Jewish communities all over Eastern Europe. Actually, the word *Yiddish* does not appear in any school documents or annual reports. However, Yiddish folk songs were taught at one point.<sup>35</sup>

The curriculum of the school was quite advanced and followed the general trends of the time. Besides the humanities, there were sport, health education and handicraft. However, the number of Jewish subjects was quite substantial in the curriculum, for instance in 1924 Hebrew, religion and biblical history constituted one-third of the preparatory school (three grades) curriculum and nearly one-quarter of the actual grammar school (six grades) curriculum (JSH 1924: 16, 31).<sup>36</sup> Languages occupied a central position in the curriculum; besides Hebrew, the pupils were taught Swedish, Finnish and German. Even English was added to the programme around 1937 (JSH 1937: 8).

### 7.1. Yiddish and Hebrew

During the first decades the teachers of Hebrew, Judaism and biblical history were Jewish immigrants, at the very beginning from East Europe (chiefly from Baltic countries and Belorussia), later from Austria and Palestine.<sup>37</sup> It seems that although the official language of the school was Swedish, the instruction of

<sup>34</sup> The school was called in Hebrew *Beis-seifer ivri* ‘Hebrew School’.

<sup>35</sup> The year report of 1932 (JSH 1932: 9) mentions song book called *Jüdische Volkslieder*.

<sup>36</sup> Preparatory school thirty-four hours of total ninety-eight hours taught during a week and grammar school forty-two hours of hundred and eighty-seven hours (JSH 1924: 16, 3).

<sup>37</sup> Among these teachers were Usiel Levik (JSH 1922: 8), Mones Gornicz (ibid.), Leibe Bolotowsky (inf. #8, inf. #11), Abraham Hurvitz (JSH 1924: 10), Sara Polotzky (JSH 1925:5), Salomon Manelevitsch (ibid), Osias Gottesman (JSH 1931:7), Israel Schur (ibid.:6) and Zalman Aronzon (*Hatikvah* no. 5-6 1948: 14). Student Isak Nemeschansky acted as a substitute for Schur during May 1931 (JSH 1932: 3). According to the available information, he seems to be the only “local” (non-immigrant) teacher of religion before the war.

Hebrew and religious subjects was initially carried out to some extent in Yiddish. According to Boris Grünstein (1988: 21), who attended the school from 1923, the only Hebrew teacher in the school at that point, Mr. Usiel Levik from Latvia,<sup>38</sup> mastered neither Swedish nor Finnish and therefore taught in Yiddish. Some foreign teachers taught only for one or two terms and it is self-evident that they could not have taught in Swedish. Even the protocols of the school board were conducted in Yiddish between 1918 and 1922.<sup>39</sup> The school inspection of 1929 states that the children were “semi-lingual”, they could speak neither Yiddish nor Swedish properly (Nurmi 1998: 9). According to the inspector, the situation was especially bad in the preparatory school classes. Judging by the school inspection of 1929, it seems that many pupils were Yiddish-speaking or bilingual when they entered the school. Yet, according to the school statistics of 1931 (JSH 1931: 16), only fourteen children out of a total of ninety-five pupils reported officially (!) their mother tongue to be *other* than Swedish.

It is very likely that some of the many Jewish teachers who worked in the school during the 1920s and early '30s (some for very short periods) taught mostly in Hebrew.<sup>40</sup> There are controversial memories and conceptions as to what is meant by “teaching in Hebrew”. According to some, the teachers did not use any other language than Hebrew, according to others the teachers taught in Yiddish because otherwise no one would have understood. Probably the use of Hebrew as the actual language of instruction increased in the higher classes. Rabbi Simon Federbusch, who was fluent in Hebrew, started to teach Jewish history at the school for the fifth and sixth classes soon after arriving from Poland in spring 1931 (JSH 1931: 3). However, it remains unknown how strictly these teachers kept to Hebrew and how often they had to resort to Yiddish (or possibly to German) in order for the children to understand. There is some doubt with regard to the standard of the pupils’ ability actually to speak Hebrew, for instance Grünstein (1981: 21) says he was hardly able to speak Hebrew, even though he received a scholarship for being the best student of Hebrew.

According to the annual reports, all the books used for teaching the Jewish subjects were in Hebrew. The titles of these books, for instance *Hasofo* ‘The Language’, *Korous Hoivrim* ‘Jewish History’, indicate that the pronunciation taught followed the Ashkenazic tradition.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> In the book the name appears as Mr. Lewi. The school reports do not contain any such name, so most likely it is Mr. Usiel Levik that Grünstein is referring to. Levik was Hebrew teacher from 1918 until 1930. According to informant #3, Levik originated from Latvia.

<sup>39</sup> The protocols are in the possession of the Jewish School in Helsinki.

<sup>40</sup> Footnote 37.

<sup>41</sup> Some of these books, as the above mentioned, are to be found in the Library of the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki.



*Image 27.* Board members and teachers of the Jewish Co-educational School in Helsinki (founded 1918) in 1930 in the schoolyard on Ruoholahti Street 3. First row from the left Salomon Manelewitsch (religion), Aron Vinocour, John Schlüter (headmaster), Isak Pergament, Usiel Levik (Hebrew), Astrid Hagman (German), Astrid Schnitt (gymnastics), Jac Weinstein, M. Standertskjölt; standing from the left Valter Groudstroem (Finnish), Oskar Nylund (biology and geography), Ivar Westman (Swedish), Holger Klingstedt (geography), H. Lindberg, Erik Falk (mathematics), C. Ramsdal, Tor Ljungberg (mathematics), Victor Sjöberg (music), Edvin Rönnholm (gymnastics), Albin Nyman (German), Jacob Hirschovitz. (Courtesy of the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki.)

## 7.2. From Ashkenazic to Sephardic, from Swedish to Finnish

In 1932 the school employed its first Hebrew teacher from Palestine, Mr. Noach Aminadar Bentowim (JSH 1932: 8). Mr. Bentowim was born in Palestine and had received a diploma from the Hebrew Teacher Training College (*ibid.*). After his arrival the pronunciation of Hebrew was changed in stages, starting from the first class, from Ashkenazic to Sephardic, which had been chosen as the norm for Modern Hebrew. Teachers of the old generation, like Manelewitsch and Schur, continued to teach the upper classes. At this point Mr. Schur was able to teach in Swedish also.

The next year another major change was introduced – the official language was changed from Swedish to Finnish. This change, too, was carried out in stages, starting from the first class; according to the plan, the school was supposed to be totally Finnish-speaking by the academic year 1941–42. This change was made

even though only two pupils declared Finnish to be their mother tongue.<sup>42</sup> There were several reasons for the language shift. The matter was brought up for the first time at the General Meeting of the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki in 1930 (Torvinen 1989: 111). The reason for this was that the state school officials had unofficially let it be understood that they would not support for much longer a school that belonged to a “minority within a minority” (inf. #11).<sup>43</sup> The Finnish-speaking population in Helsinki was gradually growing, and in any case the 1920s and '30s were a time of language war in Finland. A movement called *Aitosuomalaisuus* ‘True Finnishness’ vigorously strove to weaken the position and prestige of Swedish in official and everyday life (Torvinen 1989: 111). There was the concern felt by parents that their children’s poor knowledge of Finnish would have a harmful effect on their future opportunities of making a living. Some parents had already been reluctant to place their children in the Jewish school, where they did not learn enough Finnish (ibid.). On the other hand, some parents began taking their children to local Swedish-speaking schools because they wanted to secure a Swedish schooling for their children (Liebkind 1991: 102).

## 8. SUMMARY

The Jewish school system in Helsinki followed quite closely developments taking place in other (colonial) Jewish centres in the Russian Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The Jewish School in Helsinki, founded in 1893, followed the principles of the state-run Jewish primary and secondary schools, which were founded as rivals to the traditional *heders* and *yeshivas*, where the language of instruction was Yiddish and the curriculum consisted solely of religious subjects. In Helsinki, too, there had been such *heders* from the very beginning of the Jewish settlement there. In the Jewish School in Helsinki most secular subjects were conducted in Swedish: initially religious subjects were taught in Yiddish, but as soon as suitable teachers were found the language was changed to Russian. The progressive curriculum of the school did not, however, please the traditional and religiously-minded parents, and since there was also a shortage of money, the school was closed down after only seven years. After this the community fell back on a traditional *heder* system.

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<sup>42</sup> At that point eighty-nine of total hundred and five pupils reported Swedish as their mother tongue, twelve reported “other language” and only two Finnish (JSH 1934: 19).

<sup>43</sup> The Congregation did not receive anything on paper concerning this matter.



Image 28. Gan jeladim was a monthly children’s journal in Swedish published by Judisk Krönika. The aim of the journal was to acquaint children with Hebrew literature. (The National Archives of Finland, SJA.)

The next modern aspiration in the school system was the founding of a reformed heder (i.e. the Mosaic School in Helsinki, founded in 1906) where teaching was conducted in Hebrew. Founding and supporting these schools was part of the Helsingfors Programme, which most Finnish Jews embraced. However, this school, too, was closed down after functioning for a very short period, due to financial problems and the fact that the school failed to provide a versatile curriculum. For instance, neither Swedish nor Finnish was taught in the school. It

is likely that some parents considered teaching (Modern) Hebrew unnecessary; in their eyes it might hinder their children's futures and livelihood in Finnish society. There had been at least two other attempts to found a Jewish school in Helsinki prior to 1918, and both had failed. The community was too small to provide alternative schools and every time that the school was closed down the children were forced to attend the local Swedish or Russian schools. This was one of the major factors that led to an early language shift from Yiddish to Swedish in the community. According to one source, some girls born in the 1890s could no longer speak Yiddish. Nevertheless, Yiddish prevailed, because children, mostly boys, attended afternoon *heders* where everything was taught in Yiddish. Children of wealthy parents were taught by private tutors. There were also special *heders* for girls where they were taught chiefly Yiddish literacy. These small institutions were the only schools in the history of the Helsinki Jewish community where Yiddish was the core subject of the curriculum.

Finally, in 1918, the Jewish community opened a new school, the Jewish Co-educational School, which was able to survive; it has continued its work until the present day. From the very beginning, one of the main aims of the school was to teach (Modern) Hebrew. The school was Zionist-oriented like its predecessor, the reformed *heder* founded in 1906. At this time, in other parts of the Jewish world, Yiddish primary and secondary schools were being founded. One of the main reasons for not founding such a school in Helsinki was that many families were already Swedish-speaking and the majority of Helsinki Jews fostered Zionist ideas (see Chapter 2 §5), in other words there were not many families who would have supported a "leftist" Yiddish school. At first, however, religious subjects were taught in Yiddish due to the fact that all teachers of religion and Hebrew were Yiddish-speaking immigrants. The school statistics and inspections by the school authorities indicate that especially in the preparatory school there were many Yiddish-speaking children, some of whom were unable to speak Swedish properly. After attending the school for some years their Swedish naturally improved. In 1933 the official language was changed from Swedish to Finnish as a result of outside pressure. The school was very dependent on state support and had to make concession in this matter. This marked the beginning of another language shift which is still under way.

Although a Yiddish grammar or secondary school was never founded in Helsinki, and according to the available data there was never any intention to do so, Yiddish has been part of the curriculum of all Jewish schools in Helsinki, as a kind of "hidden subject". All the teachers of religion and Hebrew were immigrants, before the Second World War chiefly from the Baltic provinces and Belorussia. These *melameds* were invited to Finland because there were no Finnish teachers of these subjects, partly due to the fact that it was impossible to



obtain Jewish higher education in Finland. Because of these Yiddish-speaking immigrant teachers, children (born at the beginning of the twentieth century) whose parents spoke Swedish at home could understand and speak Yiddish to some extent. This ability was further strengthened by the fact that the majority of the elder generation spoke Yiddish, and the language was widely used in religious services and at social events.

## 5. YIDDISH PRINTING IN HELSINKI

### 1. PREFACE

The first Jewish-owned printing-house in Finland able to produce texts in Hebrew characters, *Kirjapaino Nopea*, was established in Helsinki on the threshold of the Second World War, in 1938. Prior to this, the Helsinki Jewish community had to resort to other means of printing, chiefly hectograph copying and printing Yiddish in Latin characters. On occasion the services of the Baltic printing-houses were sought: the funeral brotherhood *Chevra-Kadischa* had contacted a printing-house in Riga, and at least one individual, Mordechai Chosid, had a book printed in Vilna.<sup>1</sup> This situation raises several interesting questions, for instance, why was a Jewish printing-house founded at such a late stage, and if it was possible to print Yiddish at the beginning of the twentieth century, would there have been more journals in Yiddish rather than in Swedish? One would have thought that if the community had really wanted to print material with Hebrew characters, the means could have been found. There were printing-houses in Helsinki able to produce books with a small amount of Hebrew text, but for some reason their services were employed only for minor items.<sup>2</sup> The printing of journals consisting of several pages would have possibly required the acquisition of a new expensive font library and definitely a skilled type-setter able to set Hebrew letters with sufficient speed and to proof-read Yiddish. All this might have been possible to arrange but far too expensive for a small group of Yiddishists without proper financial means, and it would have been a risky business for the printing-house. Printing Yiddish in Latin characters or switching over totally to Swedish, as happened with the journal *Hatchijo* (see Chapter 3 § 5.2.), only exacerbated the already poor literacy in Yiddish among young people born at the beginning of the twentieth century. The

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<sup>1</sup> The 1936 statutes of the Viipuri Jewish Community were printed in Tallinn at *Trükikoda "Libris" Tallinn* (Hartikainen 1998: 72, 96).

<sup>2</sup> The first book in Helsinki with Hebrew text, Aaron Gustav Borg's *De indole et Initis Chaldaeae dictionis in Libris Veteris Testamenti*, was printed in 1842 at Frenckell's press (Berlin 1976: 37). From E. Steiniĵ's Hebrew grammar printed at Frenckell's press in 1899 one can see that there were some problems with composing the pages, because in many places the Hebrew words are unevenly set. The earliest books with Hebrew words were printed in Turku in the seventeenth century, for instance Simon Paulinus' *Grammatica Hebraea* 1692 at Johan Winter's press.

situation developed into a vicious circle, where poor literacy was partly enforced through the lack of Finnish journals in Yiddish, and because of poor literacy any attempts to establish and maintain Yiddish journals failed. For instance, of the Viipuri-based Yiddish journal *Ahdus* 'Unity'<sup>3</sup>, which was aimed at the whole of Finnish Jewry, only one hectograph-copied issue remains, from April 1933 (Hartikainen 1998: 80). In September the very same year another attempt was made; the Estonian journal *Naie cait* 'New Era' was founded in order to bring Estonian and Finnish Jewry closer together (Verschik 1998: 84). This journal ran for only one year. Also, a Kaunas-based leftist newspaper called *Folksblat* 'The People's Paper' had a special Friday supplement for Estonia and Finland in the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> This supplement contained articles and news of special interest to Jews in these two countries and letters sent in by the readers. *Naie cait* and *Folksblat* seem to have been the only Yiddish journals closely related to Finland ever printed in Hebrew characters.

The problems related to Yiddish journals were not merely a linguistic matter. The small size of the community also impeded the activities of the Jewish press. According to Verschik, this was the main reason for the problems of the Yiddish press in Estonia (Verschik 1998: 84). In Helsinki, for instance, the Swedish-language (partly in Finnish) journals *Judisk Krönika* 'Jewish Chronicle', *Stjärnan* 'The Star', *Zionistiska Månadsbulletiner* 'Zionist Monthly Bulletin', *Sport och Nytt* 'Sport and News', *Judisk Tidskrift* 'Jewish Periodical', *Hatikwah* 'Hope' and *Makkabi* each ran for only a couple of years.<sup>5</sup> However, individuals who could read Yiddish fluently continued to order Yiddish newspapers from abroad, among others *Forverts* (New York), *Der tog* (Vilna) and *Undzer vort* (Paris). Finnish Jews also wrote actively for foreign journals.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Here in the Latinized form. In Standard Yiddish 'unity' is pronounced [axdes], in Ashkenazi Hebrew [axdus].

<sup>4</sup> According to Meir Shub (conversation, Vilnius 2002). Shub, whose relative worked for the paper, told that in Estonia and Finland there were too few Yiddish readers to maintain journals of their own. This is the reason why the supplement was produced. According to Shub, there was another, Zionist, newspaper called *Di jidiše štime* 'The Jewish Voice' which had some subscribers in Finland. Unfortunately, at the time of this study there were no issues of these newspapers available.

<sup>5</sup> *Judisk Krönika* 1918–20, 1925; *Stjärnan* 1922–26; *Zionistiska Månadsbulletiner* 1927; *Sport och Nytt* 1927; *Judisk Tidskrift* 1928; *Hatikwah* 1935–36, 1946–48; *Makkabi* 1942–43. At least *Judisk Krönika* had to finish due to financial difficulties (*Judisk Tidskrift* no. 1 1928: 1). *Stjärnan* was an organ for *Judisk Idrottsförening* 'Jewish Sports Association'; *Zionistiska Månadsbulletiner* was the organ for *Zionistiska Landsorganisation* 'Zionist Land Organisation' (ibid.); *Hatikwah* (1935–36 was the organ of *Berith hanoar haivri*; *Hatikwah* (1946–48) was called "Jewish journal in Finland"; *Sport och Nytt* was a youth journal with an emphasis on sport and local news; *Judisk Tidskrift* was a cultural and Zionist journal; *Makkabi* was the organ of sports association *Makkabi* (or *Maccabi*).

<sup>6</sup> According to Jacobsson (1951: 350), Abraham Engel and Israel Schur wrote articles in Yiddish and Hebrew to foreign newspapers at the beginning of the twentieth century. The files

Possibly by the 1920s the community was already so accustomed to employing and reading Swedish that there was no real incentive to find means for printing with Hebrew characters. Moreover, the initiative to establish Yiddish journals came from a few “idealists”. It seems that there was no broad interest in Yiddish newspapers, as we read from Hanal’s column in *Hatchijo* (no. 8 1923: 6): “Generally Helsinki Jews say that Yiddish journals don’t interest them, and what can you do about it? ”

This chapter presents different stages of Yiddish printing in Helsinki, both in Hebrew and Latin characters, and thus also provides a general picture of the development of printing with Hebrew characters from the first item found, from 1906 to the 1950s.

## 2. FROM LITHOGRAPHS TO HECTOGRAPHS

The earliest printed documents at hand are a synagogue seat ticket, a *Kaufbrief* ‘Contract’, from 1906 written in German in Hebrew script,<sup>7</sup> and the programme *Böner vid invigningen af synagogan i Helsingfors* ‘Prayers for the Consecration [Ceremony] of Helsinki Synagogue’ (30.8.1906) with some lines in Hebrew. The two-page handwritten *Kaufbrief* was produced using the lithographic technique. The parts of the programme in Hebrew were, however, printed with proper characters. Both documents were printed at Frenckell’s printing-house in Helsinki, which had produced the first book containing some Hebrew text in Helsinki in 1842.<sup>8</sup> Most likely the *Kaufbrief* was printed by other means for technical reasons. Possibly there were not enough letters to set the *Kaufbrief*. In 1919 *Chevra Bikur-Cholim* had a diploma printed in Yiddish at the *Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seuran kirjapaino* ‘the Printing-House of the Association for Finnish Literature’. This document, too, was produced using the lithographic technique.

In 1922 the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo* began to publish its own journal (see Chapter 3 § 5.2.). The first issue of *Hatchijo* came out in May and was printed using the hectographic technique. Unfortunately, there is no copy available of this first issue.<sup>9</sup> The fact that it was a hectographic journal, not a proper printed one, speaks in favour of the assumption that its language was mostly Yiddish.

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of Finnish documents in the YIVO archives in New York contain some newspaper clips in Yiddish, for instance articles written in the 1950s for *Di cionistiše štime* (Paris) by H. N. Silberberg and Chaim Schapirstein (YIVO166/74). According to inf. #16, Mordechai Kantor wrote for *Forverts* in New York.

7 The contract is written grammatically and orthographically in correct German as far as possible with Hebrew letters (see Image 29).

8 See footnote 2.

9 These hectograph-journals or blueprints were unofficial publications and are thus not included in the Fennica Collection at the University Library in Helsinki.

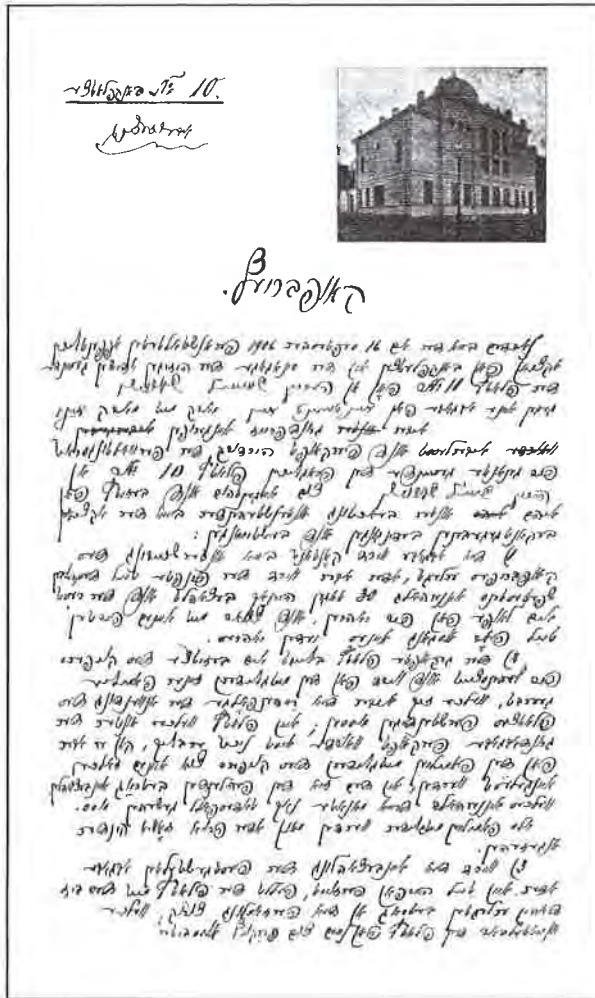


Image 29. Front page of *Kaufbrief* 'contract' for a seat in the newly-built synagogue in Helsinki in 1906. The contract is in grammatically and orthographically in pure German (as far as possible with Hebrew letters). The first four lines read: *Nachdem bei der am 16. September 1906 veranstalteten öffentlichen Aktion von bankplecten in der sinagoge der hisigen judischen gemeinde des platc No\_\_ fon / an \_\_\_\_ gegeben eine abgabe von \_\_\_\_ Mark.* 'After the open release on 16 September 1906, of seat places in the Synagogue of the Helsinki Jewish community, has \_\_\_\_ donated \_\_\_\_ marks for place number \_\_\_\_.' (Courtesy of the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki.)

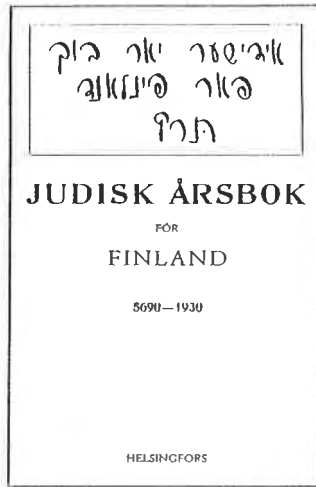


Image 30. Opening page of *Idisher jor bux far Finland TaRaC* 'Jewish Year Book for Finland 5690 (1930). Only the cover contains Yiddish, otherwise the book is in Swedish. (Courtesy of the Jewish Congregation in Helsinki.)

The May issue of *Hatchijo* possibly remains the first and only Jewish journal in Helsinki printed using the hectographic technique. In 1917 the Zionist group *Zeire Zion* in Turku began to publish a hectographic journal called *Cukunft* 'Future',<sup>10</sup> and in Viipuri in 1933 the *Ahdus* Association released the aforementioned *Ahdus* journal. These hectographic journals were difficult to read because they were pale copies of handwritten texts, not always the easiest style to read. No typewriters were used, most likely because there were none available.<sup>11</sup> Possibly due to these facts, the editors of *Hatchijo* were compelled to print a Swedish journal, which, however, included some poems in Yiddish.

Besides lithographic and hectographic techniques Yiddish texts were inserted as separate "images". For instance, on the cover and opening page of *Idisher jor bux far Finland TaRaC* 'The Jewish Year Book for Finland 5690 (1930)',<sup>12</sup> the title in handwritten Yiddish is added to the page (see Image 30). Otherwise the book is entirely in Swedish.

<sup>10</sup> The YIVO archives in New York (YIVO 166/74) possess a microfilm of the first issue.

<sup>11</sup> The first letter written with a typewriter among the correspondence of Helsinki Jewish congregations is from 1929.

<sup>12</sup> Printed by *Ab. Surdus* in 1929.



Image 31. Cover page of the first number of the trilingual *Hazohar* 'Zenith' in 1934. *Hazohar* has remained the most longlasting (1934-1939) partly Yiddish journal in Helsinki and Finland. Josef Leffkowitz (Lefko) acted as the editor-in-chief. (Fennica, Helsinki University Library.)

### 3. YIDDISH IN LATIN CHARACTERS

The second possibility, after resorting to various copying techniques, was the Latinization of Yiddish. This had happened in other parts of the Jewish world, but not always due to difficulties related to printing with Hebrew letters, as in Finland. In the 1920s the most radical developers of Yiddish orthography dreamed of Latinization. One of the main arguments was that Yiddish as a European language

did not need the Semitic ("Asian") alphabet; also, the reformation of Yiddish script would reinforce the language spread in America and Europe, where Yiddish literacy was dying out much faster than spoken Yiddish (Estraikh 1995: 230; see Chapter 6 § 1). The Latinization of Yiddish never received support in major Jewish centres. In Helsinki this seemed to be the only possibility of printing Yiddish (in large amounts) in general, and also it made Yiddish comprehensible for a wider readership, whose familiarity with Hebrew characters was rather poor. It seems, however, that Latinization was not considered as an ideological issue, especially because no systematic standard transliteration was developed (the system of Latinization used in *Hazohar* will be dealt with in Chapter 6).<sup>13</sup> For instance, in *Hazohar* Yiddish served as a medium of propaganda; supporting Yiddish as a language and culture was not in the interests of the right-wing Zionist organization.

The first journal to employ Latinization in Helsinki was *Hatchijo*, established in 1922. However, this journal contains only poems in Yiddish, no articles. In addition, on the pages of *Hatikwah*, founded in 1935, we can find one Latinized Yiddish poem and one short article.<sup>14</sup> The trilingual (Yiddish, Swedish and Finnish) *Hazohar* 'Zenith',<sup>15</sup> established in 1934 and edited by Josef Leffkowitzsch (Lefko), remains the only partly Yiddish journal published in Helsinki; it contained several Yiddish articles. For the first few years the cover page and approximately half of the articles were in Yiddish, while later the Swedish and Finnish component grew.

Latinization naturally made it easier to print a trilingual journal; Yiddish could easily appear side by side with Swedish and Finnish. Only one issue of *Hazohar* (no. 4 1939) contains an article printed in Hebrew characters. This article, obtained from a foreign source, is reproduced in *Hazohar* using some kind of copying technique. Also, the journal *Hatikwah* 'Hope' (in Swedish), established in 1946,<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The Yiddish journals could have used a Swedish-type phonetic orthography, such as Jac Weinstein had developed for the use of the Jewish Dramatic Society in Helsinki. This system will also be dealt with in brief in Chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Hatikwah*, edited by Isaac Nemeschansky, was an organ for *Berith Hanoar Havri* and appeared for at least two years (1935–36). The journal was printed at A. Nummelin's printing-house (A. Nummelins *Boktryckeri*). The first issue contains one Latinized article entitled *Jugendfarein Hazoir Hazijomi* 'The Youth Association *Hazoir Hazijomi*' by L-n, the third issue contains one poem – *Jidischer jugent, wu bistu?* 'Jewish Youth, Where Are You?' by Sami Bélinki.

<sup>15</sup> The name *Hazohar* [hacóhar] derives from Hebrew *cohar* 'zenith, brilliance'.

<sup>16</sup> *Hatikwah* was a general Jewish journal that came out between 1946–1948 (printed at *Keskuskirjapaino*). In the number 1–2 1946 there is a poem called *Di schverd fun Bar Kochva, Varsche april 1946* 'The Sword of Bar Kochva, Warsaw April 1946' by Elchonon Indelman (a Hebrew teacher in the Jewish school at the time) and in number 3 1947 there is a poem called *Pesachdik gefes* 'Passover Vessel' by the same author. In the same number there is a Yiddish article called *Di neie idische Gemeinde in Tampere* 'The New Jewish Congregation in Tampere' by H. Szafirsztajn.



and the bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) journal *Judisk Ungdom* 'Jewish Youth', established in 1954,<sup>17</sup> occasionally contained some Latinized articles and poems. *Hatikwah* also contained some Yiddish short stories by Sholem-Aleichem and Jitschok Leibush Perets, translated into Swedish by Yvette Shoback.

In the period when *Hatikwah* and *Judisk Ungdom* were established, it would have already been possible to print using Hebrew characters, but for some reason this possibility was not exploited. At this point the readers were already well acquainted with Latinized Yiddish, even to such an extent that some grew up to think that Yiddish was generally written in Latin letters. Most likely Yiddish was not included in the initial agenda of these journals because they were printed in a regular press instead of the Jewish press, where printing of Yiddish on a large scale was possible. The Yiddish congratulatory dedication in the first issue of *Hatikwah* (no 1. 1946: 17) testifies to the fact that *Keskuskirjapaino* possessed the facility to print with Hebrew letters to a certain extent.

There were other publications besides the journals that contained some Yiddish in Latinized form. For instance, the song-book *Schirim* (1937),<sup>18</sup> published by the Scandinavian Jewish Youth Association (*Skandinavisk Judisk Ungdoms- förening S.J.U.F.*), contains not only Finnish, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian songs but also some lyrics of popular Hebrew and Yiddish songs in Latinized form. In 1943 the Jewish congregation of Helsinki published a catalogue of Hebrew family names (*Katalog över hebreiska släktnamn*),<sup>19</sup> where Hebrew equivalents are given for family names of German origin and for traditional Jewish/Yiddish forenames. This catalogue served its purpose only in Latinized form, because it was intended to be a practical guide for everyone and especially because it gives the "right" Latin spelling for the names.

## 4. PRINTING WITH HEBREW CHARACTERS

### 4.1. Items Printed Abroad

In 1930 the local Jewish funeral brotherhood *Chevra-Kadischa* had its statutes printed in Yiddish and Swedish. The book consisted of two parts: the Yiddish section (*Takones far xevre kadiše in Helsingfors*) was printed in Riga by the printing-house *Splendid*, and the Swedish section (*Stadgar för judiska begravning*

<sup>17</sup> *Judisk Ungdom* published by the Sports Association *Makkabi*. The chief editors were Isak Kantor (period 1954–55) and Scholem Bolotowsky (period 1955–56). The journal was printed at Frenckell's printing house (*Frenckellska Tryckeri Aktiebolaget*).

<sup>18</sup> Printed at *Helsingin uusi kirjapaino*.

<sup>19</sup> Compiled by Israel Schur and Mordechai Chosid.

*föreningen Chewro Kadischo*<sup>20</sup> in Helsingfors) at F. G. Lönnberg's press in Helsinki.<sup>21</sup> Both parts were neatly bound together to form a single book. This exhibit well depicts the state of affairs; for some reason printing Yiddish with Hebrew letters on a larger scale was not yet possible in Finland.

In 1937 Mordechai Chosid (also Husid) had his collection of short stories *Formen in bren* 'Forms in Fire' printed by Kleckin's printing-house in Vilna. Mordechai Chosid was born in Sekuran, Bessarabia in 1909 (LNJL: 741). He was initially invited to Viipuri in 1930 to assist the local Hebrew teacher, but the very same year moved to Helsinki.<sup>22</sup> Already while pursuing Hebrew studies in Vienna, Chosid had participated with success in Yiddish literature competitions.<sup>23</sup> From then on he continued to send poems, short stories and articles to numerous Yiddish literary journals all over the world (LNJL 1060: 741). His short stories in the book *Formen in bren* have been dated between 1931–35. The stories take place in Bessarabia, in the landscape of his youth, in Vienna where he studied, and some even in Finland. It is interesting that Chosid had employed a Finnish Jewish artist, Samuel Besbrosvanni (1908-1992), from 1941 Sam Vanni, to illustrate the cover. Vanni became known as the most eminent exponent of Finnish abstract art and received the honorary title of academician in 1962. Most likely, printing the book abroad was the only alternative facing Chosid. Commissioning the printing of the book from Kleckin also naturally opened a broader market for sales. Boris Kleckin founded his press around 1910 and it became a major house of Yiddishist publications. Besides Yiddish literature it printed, for instance, YIVO-related academic publications, lexicons and journals.

<sup>20</sup> The name usually appears in the form *Chevre-Kadischa*.

<sup>21</sup> A copy of the book can be found in the Finnish National Archives (SJA/K 334).

<sup>22</sup> According to informant #7, Chosid was invited to Viipuri to become a private Hebrew teacher alongside Hirsch Bortnowski, because there were too many pupils for one teacher. According to Max Jakobson (conversation 2003), Chosid, who was his private Hebrew teacher, moved with the Jakobsons to Helsinki in 1930. Jakobsons had rented a flat for the use of Chosid in a yard building on Lönnroth Street 33. In Helsinki Chosid functioned as a private teacher of Hebrew and Jewish subjects. In 1944 Chosid emigrated to Sweden (LNJL 1960: 741). According to inf. #7, he had a Nansen Passport and probably emigrated together with the Viennese refugees during the war. Chosid visited Finland in 1948 accompanied by the actors Josef Glikson and Zipora Fajnsilber and the poet Rachel Korn (JFH 1948a). In 1950 Chosid emigrated to Montreal, where he became a teacher at the Jewish People's Schools and continued to write in Yiddish and Hebrew (LNJL 1960: 741). Among his publications are *Doires šraien mix ariber* 'Generation Crying Over Me' (1969), *Šoin trogt main kroin* 'Shadow Carries my Crown' (1975) and *Štoib un eibikait* 'Dust and Eternity' (1981).

<sup>23</sup> In 1928 he won first prize in a literary competition organized by the Kishinev journal *Undzer cait* 'Our Time', with a short story entitled *Teg un next* 'Days and Nights' (LNJL 1960: 741).



*Image 32.* Cover of Mordechai Chosid's collection of short stories *Formen in Fire* 'Forms in Fire' (200 pages), which he wrote in Helsinki in the period 1931–35. The book was printed in Vilna in 1937 by the printing house Kleckin. The cover is by Finnish-Jewish artist Samuel Besprosvanni (Sam Vanni 1908–92), who became known as the most prominent exponent of Finnish abstract art. (Original in the possession of the author).

#### 4.2. The Printing-House *Nopea*

The Jewish-owned press *Kirjapaino Nopea* 'Printing-House *Nopea* [Quick]' – in Yiddish the press was called *Bux drukeraï Nopea – Helsinki* 'Printing-house *Nopea* – Helsinki'<sup>24</sup> – was founded in 1938 by Meier Leinson and Samuel Rubinstein (Landgren 1995: 257). In May 1943 *Nopea*, which had until then functioned as a general partnership, was registered as a limited company.<sup>25</sup> At that point its managing director was Meier Leinson<sup>26</sup> and its chairman Fanny Rubinstein. The press was situated on Lönnroth Street 32.

<sup>24</sup> In Hebrew *Defus Nopea – Helsinki* 'Printing House *Nopea* – Helsinki'.

<sup>25</sup> According to the information provided by *Patentti ja rekisterihallitus* 'National Patent and Register Board'. The official name became *Oy Kirjapaino Nopea* 'Printing House *Nopea* Ltd'.

<sup>26</sup> Later on, the company was taken over by his son Salomon Leinson.



Image 33. A *ketube*, marriage contract in Aramaic, printed by *Nopea* in Helsinki in 1947. *Nopea* produced all kinds of documents and items necessary for religious observance, such as Hebrew calendars, kosher cachets and marriage contracts. (The National Archives of Finland, SJA/K197.)

The printing-house was initially founded in order to produce programmes for cinemas.<sup>27</sup> Thus Hebrew printing was only a secondary source of subsistence. According to Salomon Leinson,<sup>28</sup> who started work in the firm in 1966, *Nopea* was the only printing-house in Scandinavia able to do hand-setting of Hebrew letters. This seems to be partly true; for instance in Sweden *Di štime (fun der šeires-hapleite in Švedn)* ‘The Voice (of the Holocaust Survivors in Sweden)’ was distributed in copies of typed pages in Hebrew letters. In addition, Latinization was used, at least in minor publications, whereas in Denmark publishing Yiddish texts in Hebrew letters was possible.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Correspondence with Salomon Leinson, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> Correspondence with Salomon Leinson, 2002. According to Salomon Leinson, no archives or models are left of the production of the Printing House *Nopea*.

<sup>29</sup> A scrapbook of The Jewish Song Association (*Minnesbok*) contains a page of *Di štime*



*Image 34.* The cover of Hersz Frydberg's book *Bimdiniois hahareigo* 'In the Countries of Slaughter' (74 pages), which is collection of threnodies in Hebrew written in memory of his relatives who perished in the Holocaust. The book starts with a poem in Yiddish: *X'hob gevolt a šufef zain* 'I Wanted to Participate'. The name of the book refers to Chaim Nachman Bialik's Hebrew poem *Be'ir hahareigo* 'In the City of Slaughter', which was written after the bloody pogrom in Kishinev in 1903. Bialik's work was one of the most popular Hebrew poems at the beginning of the century (Stanislawski 2001: 185–184), and it is very likely that Frydberg used it as a model when composing his own work. Frydberg's *Bimdiniois hahareigo* is a rare example of Hebrew literature written and printed in Finland, perhaps the first of its kind. (Original in the possession of the author.)

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(January 1948). The book also contains programmes printed in Latinized Yiddish. At least Altschul & søn printed Yiddish with Hebrew letters in Copenhagen.

The material that the printing-house *Nopea* produced for the use of the Helsinki Jewish community comprised chiefly Hebrew calendars (with Yiddish explanations),<sup>30</sup> marriage contracts in Aramaic, announcements and various invitation cards in Swedish, Finnish and Yiddish (both in Hebrew and Latin characters), pamphlets (at least in Finnish), sheet music and lyrics of songs in Yiddish and Swedish, as well as kosher cachets and matza wrapping papers etc.

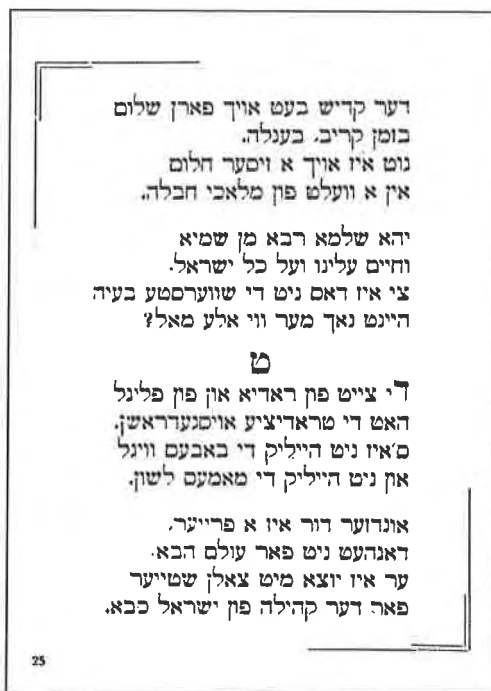
Besides this, *Nopea* printed some books, including Hersz Frydberg's two collections of poems, i.e. *Bimdinois hahareigo* 'In the Countries of Slaughter' (1946) in Hebrew with one Yiddish poem and *Der heiliker xasan-hajoivl* 'The Honorary Jubilant' (1956) in Yiddish. Hersz Frydberg (1895-1967) originated from Galicia, Poland, where he had attended a yeshiva, and in 1930 emigrated to Viipuri (Hartikainen 1998: 56; inf. #16). After the war he settled in Helsinki and later moved to Israel. Frydberg was an active amateur Yiddish poet. Besides his aforementioned books his poems were published in at least the Viipuri Yiddish journal *Ahdus*. Frydberg's books were typeset by Zalmen Beilinki from Turku.

The printing-house *Nopea* was a pioneer Hebrew press within the Jewish community in Finland. However, it seems that it did not print many books or any newspapers in Yiddish or Hebrew. One natural reason for this was that the Yiddish readership was much reduced in the 1950s and '60s, and there were not many who were able to write full-fledged literary Yiddish. Also, it seems that *Nopea* did not possess very good facilities for printing Yiddish or Hebrew in that sense (i.e. the font library was not extensive); for instance, on some pages of the aforementioned *Heiliker xasan-hajoivl*, which is only forty-four pages long, characters of slightly different sizes were used.<sup>31</sup> The printing-house *Nopea* functioned until December 1986.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, it is difficult to compile a bibliography of the items printed at *Nopea* because very few of its products are available. Some items are kept in the Finnish Jewish Archive at the National Archives of Finland; also the YIVO Archive in New York has some interesting documents printed by *Nopea*, besides the books by Frydberg.

<sup>30</sup> According to Salomon Leinson (correspondence 2002), the last *luax*, Hebrew calendar, by *Nopea* for the congregation was printed in 1986, when the firm closed down.

<sup>31</sup> This is hardly a mistake since the difference in the font size is conspicuous. The book *Bimdinois hahareigo* (74 pages) was printed with much larger letters.

<sup>32</sup> The company went bankrupt on 17 December 1986 (according to the information from *Patenti- ja rekisterihallitus*). The company did not keep up with developments in printing technology and therefore was no longer proficient and competitive (inf. #16). It is interesting that the Hebrew textbooks *Hagesher I & II*, compiled by Josef Carmi in 1959, were printed at *Offset OY Helsinki*, not at *Nopea*. The books were printed using offset technique; the print quality is very poor, especially in the second part.



*Image 35.* A page from Hersz Frydberg's epic poem *Der heiliker xasan-hajoivl* 'The Honorary Jubilant' (44 pages), which was written in honour of the jubilee year of the Helsinki synagogue in 1956. This poem describes the synagogue building and the community in many ways. On page 25 we find the following lines: "*Di cait fun radio un fun fligl / hot di tradicie oisgedrošn. / S'iz nit heilik di bobes vigl / un nit heilik di mames lošn.*" 'The era of radio and wings / has threshed out the tradition. / No more is holy grandmother's cradle / no more holy mother's language [Yiddish]'. Frydberg's *Der heiliker xasan-hajoivl* is, along with his *Biminois hahareigo*, a rare exhibit of Jewish printing in Finland. (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 26228. Reproduced by permission.)

## 5. SUMMARY

The lack of a Hebrew press had a negative impact on the printing of Yiddish in Helsinki and in Finland in general. The printing-houses in Helsinki could not produce longer texts with Hebrew letters, or this was too expensive for the customer. The Yiddish literature associations ultimately had to resort to journals in Swedish and the Latinization of Yiddish.

**PROGRAM**

**lördagen den 24 januari 1948 klockan 19,30:**

I tejl:

1. Forwort		M. HUST
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N u m e r n :

1. Draj matones	fragment fun J. L. Perez	Zipore Fajnsilber
2. S' tut wej	Mordche Gebirtg	" "
3. Kol nidrej	" "	Josef Glikson
4. Lech lcho	Sch. Schajewitsch	" "
5. Gewen amol a hojs	Dora Tejtelbojm	Zipore Fajnsilber
6. Di dame mitn hintl	Kadja Molodowska	" "
7. Majn erschter deposit	Majsche Nadir	Josef Glikson Zipore Fajnsilber
8. Schusterlech	Duet	Josef Glikson

II tejl:

1. Fragment fun "Di goldgreber"	Levi Margacjer - J. Glikson	
	Scholem Alejchem	Elke di almoe - Z. Fajnsilber
2. Der Chelemer schojmer	J. Aschendorf	J. Glikson
3. Moll Fejtel dem chasens	Scholem Alejchem	Z. Fajnsilber
(Maja bruder Elje macht kwen)		
4. Motele	Mordche Gebirtg	Duet
5. Menachem Mendl emigrant	M. Nudelman	J. Glikson
(Menachem Mendl in Paris)		
6. Jidl mitn lidl	bearbet un farhajntzaltikt	J. Glikson
Berl mitn bas	fun J. Aschendorf	Z. Fajnsilber

*Loenne oförglömliga kvällar  
i äkta "Yiddisch" miljö . . . .*

*Image 36.* A programme for a theatre soirée with the visiting actors Josef Glikson and Zipore Fajnsilber in 1948. This document, printed by *Nopea*, shows that the Latinization of Yiddish was continued though printing with Hebrew letters was possible by then. Most likely this particular announcement was in Latinized Yiddish and partly in Swedish in order to attract as large an audience as possible. The last two lines in Swedish say: "These two unforgettable evenings in a genuine 'Yiddish' milieu..." (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 116:14. Reproduced by permission.)

The handwritten hectographic journals did not enjoy any degree of success because they were difficult to read, especially for the young, whose Yiddish literacy was poor. Poor literacy, together with the generally decreasing knowledge of Yiddish, was the second reason for switching to Swedish. A journal in Yiddish printed in Hebrew characters would also have had difficulties in continuing to exist, as we see



in the case of the Estonian journal *Naie cait*. The general ideological and linguistic development that took place in the Literature Association *Hatchijo* (i.e. changing into the Zionist Youth Association *Hatchijo* with Swedish as its official language) is also seen in the linguistic spectrum of their journal. The journal, which continued in part as a cultural review, no longer contained any Yiddish articles, only a few poems.

The only (partly) Yiddish journal to have a longer life-span was the Latinized *Hazohar*, perhaps because the journal was a Zionist journal dealing with highly topical questions and providing interesting articles from foreign sources. The decision to use Yiddish was probably influenced by the fact that the journal was aimed at the whole of Finnish Jewry. Yiddish was a neutral language, because the Jewish community in Viipuri spoke Finnish rather than Swedish. Also, the adoption of borrowed articles was easier. In *Hazohar* Yiddish was used solely as a medium of propaganda; it did not have any cultural goals, as was the original purpose of *Hatchijo*.

For practical reasons and out of necessity, the Latinization of Yiddish, undoubtedly without any ideological background, became the norm in Helsinki. Latinization was used even after the founding of the printing-house *Nopea*, when it became possible to print with Hebrew letters. At that point, however, Yiddish articles were quite rare in the journals, which were chiefly in Swedish. An entirely Yiddish journal, printed in Hebrew characters, would have had an extremely limited readership. The fact that these readers were already accustomed to ordering journals from abroad would have further weakened the sales of a Finnish Yiddish journal. Also, the general attitude among the young was becoming more and more anti-Yiddish.

The few Yiddish publications at hand, especially with Hebrew letters, are chiefly works of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, such as Herz's Frydberg and Mordechai Chosid. It is interesting that Helsinki-born Jac Weinstein, who was very active in writing poems and plays in both Yiddish and Swedish, did not publish any books at *Nopea*, or any other printing-house for that matter. His poems were chiefly published in Latinized form in the Jewish journals and occasionally in celebratory and jubilee publications.

**PART TWO:**

**LINGUISTIC STUDY**

## 6. THE LATINIZATION OF YIDDISH

### 1. PREFACE

Difficulties related to printing with Hebrew characters was one of the main reasons that led to the Latinization of Yiddish in Helsinki, as we saw in the previous chapter. Latinization became the norm and was used even a couple of decades after the founding of a press (i.e. *Nopea* in 1938) capable of producing large amounts of Yiddish text in Hebrew characters. Latinization of Yiddish in general has remained a marginal phenomenon, despite some attempts to introduce it as a universal system. Hebrew letters have been an inseparable part of the identity of the Yiddish language from the very beginning. Thus the Yiddish-speaking masses in Eastern Europe (as well as elsewhere later) were accustomed to read and write Yiddish with *jidiše oisies*, the Jewish/Yiddish letters. The Yiddish writing system came to utilize some Hebrew consonants as vowels, since the Hebrew alphabet was originally a purely consonantal writing system which did not contain any vowels.<sup>1</sup> In the Yiddish orthography the Hebrew-Aramaic component preserved its original spelling.

Yiddish spelling has gone through several phases. The so-called *old-Yiddish orthography* which had ruled for centuries had to make way for reforms during the first half of the nineteenth century: the *maškit* font which had been used for Yiddish in particular was replaced by standard Hebrew square letters, and other changes included complete diacritical signs attached to the texts (Katz 1993: 77–78). This orthography, which preserved some archaic features, competed with a *daičmeriš orthography*, a spelling system influenced by New High German (NHG) (ibid.). This orthography was congruent with the general endeavour to Germanize Yiddish promoted by the adherents of *Haskalah*. A new phase began in 1913, when Ber Borochof, one of the masterminds and developers of modern Yiddish philology, in his article *Vegn der ortografie fun forikn artikl* 'On the Orthography of the Previous Article' (1913)<sup>2</sup> proposed a *new orthography* based on phonetic principles rather than historical conventions (ibid.:87). The widely-

<sup>1</sup> A system of diacritical signs was developed to stabilize learning and reading the language. This system developed in Tiberias over one thousand years ago became the standard (Katz 1993: 72).

<sup>2</sup> In Š. Niger (ed.) *Der pinkes, jorbux far der gešixte fun der jidišer literatur un šprax, far folklor, kritik un bibliografie*, B. A. Kleckin, Vilne 1913.

used Germanized spelling did not correspond to the pronunciation of Yiddish. Zalmen Reizen, who later became one of the leading figures in YIVO in Vilna,<sup>3</sup> developed an orthography based on these principles and set them out in his Yiddish grammar published in 1920 (*ibid.* 90). The new Yiddish orthography became popular, especially in Yiddish literary circles; the Germanized orthography continued longer in use in the Jewish press.

During the first decades of the twentieth century discussions took place concerning the Latinization of Yiddish. One of the earliest champions was Yankev Sotek, who published articles about Latinization (in Latinized Yiddish) in various Rumanian Jewish periodicals (Gold 1977: 327). He also advocated Latinization at the Yiddish Language Conference in Chernovits in 1908 (*ibid.*). In 1909 Ludwig Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto, proposed the Latinization of Yiddish in a blueprint (EstraiKh 1999: 116). The first attempt at a Romanized publication was apparently *Ynser Šrift* 'Our Literature', which appeared in New York in 1912 (Gold 1977: 327-328). Only one issue of this literary journal appeared.

Probably the longest discussions concerning Latinization were held in the Soviet Union, where other radical innovations were introduced into Yiddish orthography in the 1920s and '30s. These included the naturalization of Hebrew-Aramaic words (i.e. introducing phonetic forms) and the abolition of word-final consonant letters characteristic of Hebrew spelling (EstraiKh 1999: 126). The aspirations at Latinization were part of a wider discussion about orthographical reform, which also included the Latinization of Russian, Belorussian, Georgian and other languages (*ibid.*: 130). In 1930 Ajzik Zaretski, the leading Yiddish linguist in the Soviet Union, published an article in *Ratnbildung* 'Soviet Education' (no. 12: 43-61) entitled *Latinizacje fun der jidišer šrift* 'Latinization of the Yiddish Spelling' (the title of the article was written in the new orthography), which presented six arguments in favour of Latinization: (1.) The Roman alphabet is international; (2.) It is easier to integrate mathematical formulae and quotations from Western languages into a Latinized text; (3.) The outlines of the Roman letters are finer and more distinct than Hebrew characters; (4.) The Roman alphabet is better adapted to Yiddish; (5.) The Roman alphabet is ideologically closer to Communism; (6.) It would be easier to purge Yiddish from Hebrew words (*ibid.*: 129). As we can see, here were strong ideological grounds as well as practical reasons. One of the main aspirations of Soviet language planning was to de-Hebraize Yiddish, i.e. to liberate Yiddish from the "bondage" of Hebrew, which was linked to religion and Zionism. According to Zaretski, Talmudic and biblical expressions would vanish from Yiddish along with Latinization

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<sup>3</sup>

The *Jidišer visnšafilexer institut* JIVO (Jewish Scientific Institute) was founded in Vilna in 1925.

(ibid.:129). Some proposals for orthography were put forward, for instance Boris Larin's system was based on the Czech alphabet (ibid.: 128-129). In the Soviet Union any suggestions of Latinization became politically suspicious after the decision in 1933 that further efforts to replace the Cyrillic alphabet were to no purpose (ibid.: 130).

At the same time there were efforts towards Latinization outside the Soviet Union. In the mid-1920s some claimed that the reform of Yiddish orthography would revive the use of the language in America and Europe, where Yiddish literacy was dying out much faster than the spoken language (ibid.: 127). In 1923 there appeared in Vienna one number of a periodical called *Unhoib* 'Beginning', which was aimed at Jewish youth in Western Europe who understood Yiddish but had never had the opportunity of learning it (Gold 1977: 328).<sup>4</sup> At least three issues of a Romanized periodical called *Progres* appeared in Warsaw c. 1931, and an anthology of Yiddish poetry, intended for "assimilated Jews and the backward masses", appeared in Chernovits in 1934 (ibid.: 329). According to Komoroczy,<sup>5</sup> Latinization was used in Hungary to print comedies and parody literature in Yiddish for assimilated German-speaking Jews. In addition, some Jewish newspapers in Hungary published series in a mixture of Yiddish and Hungarian that parodied the orthodox way of life and *Ostjuden* in general.

The last major Latinized publications came out after the Shoah (ibid.). These included several books and periodicals published by and for displaced persons. The reason for resorting to Latinization might have been the fact that most Hebrew type had been destroyed by the Nazis or that the intended reader did not know the Hebrew script (ibid.).

### 1.1. The Latinization of Yiddish in Helsinki

In Helsinki there were, most likely, no ideological grounds for the Latinization of Yiddish that appeared in some Jewish publications; the change-over from Hebrew characters to Latin letters happened rather for practical and technical reasons. The change also helped in a situation where Yiddish literacy, especially among the young, was alarmingly low. It is interesting that the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*, whose aim was to publish a Yiddish-Swedish journal, did not resort to Latinization in its journal *Hatchijo* (established in 1922), except for a few poems.

<sup>4</sup> An article in the single issue of *Unhoib*, written by Tirski, proclaims that adoption of Latinization would permit Jews to "scotch once and for all the charge that Yiddish is a 'jargon'" and would thus induce non-Jews to have more respect for Yiddish (Gold 1977: 328).

<sup>5</sup> Correspondence with Szonja Komoroczy 2003. Komoroczy is completing a doctoral dissertation at Oxford University on Jewish printing in Hungary.

This only happened on a large scale in the revisionist journal *Hazohar* (established in 1934). For this right-wing Zionist group Yiddish did not play an important role; all three languages (i.e. Yiddish, Swedish and Finnish) were used to reach as broad a readership as possible. *Hazohar* became, however, a trail-blazer since the more moderate culture-orientated journals *Hatikwah* (established in 1946) and *Judisk Ungdom* (established in 1954) utilized Latinization in occasional articles, though printing with Hebrew letters was already possible.

The fact that no consistent system of Latinization was employed indicates that the matter was not considered an important one. There were, however, some basic principles and interesting phenomena in the Latinization used in Helsinki, to be discussed in this chapter. Besides looking at journals we shall briefly examine some phonetic systems of transcription utilized by the Jewish Dramatic Society and the Jewish Song Association. Latinization was chiefly used in printed items; during this study no handwritten Latinized documents were found in archive material.<sup>6</sup> However, one informant (#23) told me that his father used to write letters to his parents in Latinized Yiddish.

In this study we shall not examine documents printed in Hebrew characters. They are very few in number. For instance, items published by Hersz Frydberg follow the principles of the modern literary standard. The variety of styles in the handwritten documents is very wide and examining them does not serve the purpose of this study. Latinized texts, especially articles in *Hazohar* have served as important and valuable data for the linguistic analysis of Helsinki Yiddish, besides the oral sources.

The extracts and sample words from the Latinized texts in the following chapters are preceded by a superscript capital L, e.g. <sup>L</sup> *göirl* 'destiny'. Correspondingly, sample words transcribed from sources written in Hebrew letters (very few in number) are preceded by a capital H, e.g. <sup>H</sup> *samantrede* 'meeting'.

## 2. LATINIZATION IN THE JOURNAL *HAZOHAR*

Latinization in the journal *Hazohar*, edited by Josef Leffkowitzsch (Lefko), followed in many respects the Germanized Yiddish orthography which was still popular, especially in the Jewish press. Even before *Hazohar*, a similar system had been utilized in Latinizing poems in *Hatchijo*. Most Helsinki Jews were familiar with German, which they had learnt at school, and they subscribed to Yiddish journals from abroad. Both factors furthered the adoption and use of

<sup>6</sup> However, one typed letter sent by the Central Committee of Jewish Congregations in Finland to a Zionist group in Viipuri in 1934 was in Latinized Yiddish (*Dem Firer fun di Zionistn in Wiborg Her Jakob Bassin, Helsingfors dem 23 maj 1934*).

German-type orthography. The Latin letters enabled the orthography to be much closer to German than was possible with Hebrew characters, for instance the vowels *ä*, *ö*, *ü* and *y* were available. However, there were phonetic features in the orthography which on the one hand refer to the new standard Yiddish spelling and, on the other hand, to characteristics of North-Eastern Yiddish. There is slight variation between the articles and even inconsistency within a single article. There were three Yiddish writers who wrote for the journal; two of them were born in Finland and one originated from Poland.<sup>7</sup> The journal also borrowed articles from foreign sources. These articles seem to be Latinized (transliterated) more systematically, i.e. they follow more consistently the *daičmeriš* orthography. One principle difference between the Latinized Yiddish in *Hazohar* and German orthography is that in the Latinization nouns within sentences are not written with initial capital letters as in German.

To begin with, let us take a look at the Latinization of some Yiddish/Hebrew consonants. In many respects they follow German orthography. Sibilant *šin* (ש) appears as *sch*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *herscht* 'rules', or as *s* before *t* and *p*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *steit* 'stands', <sup>l</sup> *sprach* 'language'. The voiced sibilant *zajen* (ז) appears as *s*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *asoi* 'so',<sup>8</sup> and the affricate *cadek* (צ) as *z*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *sozialist* 'socialist'. The letter *cadek* may also appear, according to the German model, as *t*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *deklaratie* 'declaration' (cf. NHG *Deklaration*), or as *tz*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *gesetzen* 'laws' (cf. NHG *Gesetzen*). The voiced affricate *tes šin* (טש) appears as *tsch*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *fartaitschen* 'interpret'. One reason for not utilizing the Czech-type letters *š*, *z*, *c* and *č* in these cases was that they were not familiar to the Swedish-speaking public; Finnish orthography, did however use some of them (and still does) in loan-words.<sup>9</sup> The fricatives *xes* (ח) and *xof* (פ) appear in *Hazohar* as *ch*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *choiw* 'debt', <sup>l</sup> *licht* 'light'. The Latinization strives systematically to use *w* for Yiddish *cvei vovn* (וון) and *veiz* (װ), e.g. <sup>l</sup> *ownt* 'evening', <sup>l</sup> *aweire* 'sin', but occasionally succumbs to using *v* instead, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *krivde* 'injustice'.

As distinct from German orthography, the Latinization in *Hazohar* uses *f* for Yiddish *fei* (פ) instead of *v*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *folk* 'a people' (cf. NHG *Volk*). Also the consonant cluster *kuf samex* (קפ) is most often rendered simply as *ks*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *wuks* 'growth' (cf. NHG *Wuchs*), but occasionally, in accordance to the German model, as *x* and *chs*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *existens* 'existence', <sup>l</sup> *nechste* 'next'. There seems to be no

<sup>7</sup> These were Jonas Jakobson, Benami (Josef Lefko?) and Hersz Frydberg. Frydberg came from Poland (see Chapter 5 §4.2.).

<sup>8</sup> The equivalent *ss* for sibilant *s* appeared consistently in an article by Hersz Frydberg.

<sup>9</sup> The voiced sibilant *zajen šin* (זש) is "absent" from the Latinized articles in *Hazohar*. In one case the sound is rendered as *s*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *blonsen* 'to wander' (cf. StY *blondžen*; see Chapter 7 §3.2.5.).

logic in these forms, for instance ‘existence’ also appears many times in the form <sup>l</sup> *eksistens*.

One of the flaws in this system was that *s* could stand for *s*, *z* and *š* (before *t* and *p*), e.g. <sup>l</sup> *soine* ‘enemy’ (StY *soine*), <sup>l</sup> *asoi* ‘so’ (StY *azoi*), *steit* ‘stands’ (StY *šteit*).

## 2.1. Features in Common with Germanized Yiddish Orthography

One of the most characteristic features of Germanized Yiddish spelling is the use of so-called *štumer ajen* ‘silent e’ before *n* and *l*, imitating the German endings *-en* and *-el* (Katz 1993: 78). In *Hazohar* the use of “silent e” is very consistent, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *derzeilen* ‘to tell’ (cf. StY *dercei’ln*), <sup>l</sup> *artikel* ‘article’ (cf. StY *artikl*). The letter *e* may also appear after *i*, according to the German model, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *tief* ‘deep’ (StY *tif*), <sup>l</sup> *representiert* ‘represents’ (cf. StY *reprezentirt*). This is not, however, as common as before *n* and *l*. Another similar phenomenon is the use of *štumer hei* ‘silent h’ in places where *h* appears in German orthography, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *zehn* ‘ten’ (cf. StY *cen*), <sup>l</sup> *johr* ‘year’ (cf. StY *jor*). However, in *Hazohar* the use of “silent h” is not at all as common as the use of “silent e”.

The appearance of Germanized verbal prefixes is also a very distinctive feature of the *daičmeriš* orthography (Katz 1993: 88). In *Hazohar* the prefixes *ant-*, *ba-*, *far-* and *der-* may appear in the Germanized forms *ent-*, *be-*, *fer-* and *er-*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *entscheiden* ‘to decide’, <sup>l</sup> *beteiligen* ‘to participate’, <sup>l</sup> *ferwandlen* ‘to transform’, <sup>l</sup> *erfilen* ‘to fulfil’. The Yiddish prefix *op-* may occasionally appear as *ob-* (cf. NHG *ab-*), e.g. <sup>l</sup> *obsogen* ‘to refuse’. The use of the above forms is not, however, very systematic and frequently phonetic forms also occur alongside the Germanized ones, even on the very same line, as in the sentence <sup>l</sup> *hot di zionistische organisazie farloren dos recht zu figuriren vi a fertreter* ‘the Zionist organisation lost the right to act as a representative’. The negative adjective prefix *um-* appears, as a rule, in the *daičmeriš* form *un-*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *unschuldig* ‘innocent’ (cf. StY *umšuldik*), <sup>l</sup> *unobhengig* ‘independent’ (cf. StY *umophengik*).

There are several other orthographical features that follow the conventions of Germanized Yiddish spelling. Some variants of Germanized Yiddish spelling use geminates. The orthography of *Hazohar* refrains from using them but sporadically slips from the system, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *rettung* ‘salvation’, <sup>l</sup> *finnische* ‘Finnish’ (geminates do not appear in the Hebrew-Aramaic component). Word-final voiceless plosive *t* is rendered in some words, in accordance with the German model, as voiced *d*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *jugend* ‘youth’ (cf. StY *jugnt*), <sup>l</sup> *toisend* ‘thousand’ (cf. StY *toiznt*). Also, the adjective/adverb ending *-ik* is quite systematically rendered as voiced *-ig*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *richtig* ‘right’ (cf. StY *rixtik*), <sup>l</sup> *haintig* ‘today’s’ (cf. StY *hai’ntik*). The adjective suffix *-lex* appears frequently in the Germanized form *-lich*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *geferlich*



'dangerous' (cf. StY *gefērlex*). The subject ending *-niš* is rendered as *-nis*, according to the German model, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *farstendenis* 'understanding' (cf. StY *faršténdeniš*).<sup>10</sup> Certain words are systematically spelt in the Germanized forms, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *mensch* 'human being' (cf. StY *menč*), <sup>l</sup> *arbeit* 'work' (cf. StY *árbet*), <sup>l</sup> *ewig* 'eternal' (cf. StY *ei' bik*).

## 2.2. Specific New High German and Swedish Features

There are some characteristics of German orthography in *Hazohar* which it would be impossible to indicate with Hebrew characters. The most striking of these is the use of the vowels *ä*, *ö*, *y* and *ü*. The occurrence of these vowels is, however, very sporadic and unsystematic and the cases seem to be unintentional slips. The letter *ä* is attested, for instance, in the words <sup>l</sup> *länder* 'lands' (cf. StY *lénder*; NHG *Länder*) and <sup>l</sup> *anständig* 'respectable' (cf. StY *ónštendik*; NHG *anständig*). In both cases the Swedish equivalent is spelt identically to the German one, i.e. *länder*, *anständig*, which helps to explain the unexpected occurrence of these forms. The occurrence of *ö* may also be partly explained by the existence of similar forms in German and Swedish, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *unmöglich* 'impossible' (cf. StY *úmmeglex*; NHG *unmöglich*; FS *ómöjlig*), <sup>l</sup> *lösung* 'agreement' (cf. NHG *Lösung*; FS *lö'sning*<sup>11</sup>). Similarly, *y* appears in international words which are spelt identically in German and Swedish orthography, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *system* (cf. StY *sistém*; NHG *System*; FS *system*), <sup>l</sup> *symbol* (cf. StY *simból*; NHG *Symbol*; FS *symbol*). It is interesting that the (loan-)words <sup>l</sup> *rysten* 'to equip'<sup>12</sup>, <sup>l</sup> *hybsch* 'pretty'<sup>13</sup>, appear with the letter *y* instead of *ü*, as in German spelling (cf. *rüsten*, *hübsch*). The letter *ü* appears only once in *Hazohar*, i.e. in <sup>l</sup> *würde* 'value' (cf. StY *vert*). In a few cases the spelling is closer to Swedish orthography than to German, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *atmosfär* (cf. StY *atmofer*; FS *atmosfä'r*, NHG *Atmosphäre*), <sup>l</sup> *rusten* 'to equip' (cf. FS *rusta* [*ræsta*]).

Vacillation between the orthography of Yiddish, German and Swedish is understandable, since the languages share much common vocabulary. Normally, when using Hebrew characters, this would not be even possible to such an extent. There is a case where one word occurs in all three variants: i.e. <sup>l</sup> *kampf* 'combat' (StY *kamf*), <sup>l</sup> *kampf* (cf. NHG *Kampf*), <sup>l</sup> *kamp* (cf. FS *kamp*).

<sup>10</sup> The only example found in the material. The ending *-nis* often appears in handwritten documents (in Hebrew characters).

<sup>11</sup> In StY *ópmáx*, *héskem*.

<sup>12</sup> In StY *farzórgn*.

<sup>13</sup> In StY *hips* 'considerable'.

### 2.3. Phonetic Features

Though the Latinization in *Hazohar* strives to follow the conventions of Germanized orthography, there are phonetic features which resemble the new (phonetic) orthography. For instance, occasionally the “silent e” is omitted, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *wilen* ~ *wiln* ‘want’, <sup>l</sup> *spiel* ~ *spil* ‘game’. A very distinctive feature which differentiates the Latinization of *Hazohar* from German orthography is the phonetic realization of the diphthongs *ei* (ʷ) and *ai* (ʷ) (on Yiddish vocalism, see Chapter 7 §3.1.). In Yiddish orthography this difference has been designated with various diacritical signs.<sup>14</sup> In Standard German these phonemes have merged into a single diphthong, i.e. *ai*, which is spelt *ei*. On the pages of *Hazohar* the distinction between these two diphthongs is systematic (with only a few “mistakes”), e.g. <sup>l</sup> *glaich* ‘straight’ (cf. StY *glaix*; NHG *gleich* [glaix]), <sup>l</sup> *frai* ‘free’ (cf. StY *frai*; NHG *frei* [frai]), <sup>l</sup> *alein* ‘alone’ (cf. StY *alein*; NHG *alein* [alain]) <sup>l</sup> *klein* ‘small’ (cf. StY *klein*; NHG *klein* [klaɪn]). This distinction also follows the vocalism of North-Eastern Yiddish.

The Latinization of the diphthong *oi* (vowel 44, Proto-Yiddish \*ou; see Chapter 7 §3.1.) is not very consistent; at times it appears in the standard form *oi*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *oig* ‘eye’, <sup>l</sup> *moire* ‘fear’, and at times in the North-Eastern Yiddish (Vilna-type) form *ei*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *weil* ‘nice’, <sup>l</sup> *asei* ‘so’. It is interesting that occasionally *oi* is even rendered as *öi*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *gröis* ‘big’, <sup>l</sup> *göirl* ‘destiny’, which is a typical feature of Courland Yiddish vocalism. Some NHG loans have preserved their original spelling with the diphthong *au*<sup>15</sup> which does not occur otherwise in the Germanic component of Yiddish in *Hazohar*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *erstaunlich* ‘amazing’, <sup>l</sup> *zuschauer* ‘spectator’.

There are several other phonetic features which point to the influence of North-Eastern Yiddish (these features will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 7). The word-initial *ji* (ʷ) is rendered with a single *i*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *id* ‘Jew’ (cf. StY *jid*), <sup>l</sup> *idisch* ‘Yiddish’ (cf. StY *jidiš*). Hence, Theodore Hertzl’s ideal of the *Judenstaat* may appear, in the articles of *Hazohar*, in the form <sup>l</sup> *idenstaat*. In order to avoid hiatus, *j* has been inserted between diphthongs and vowels, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *sejer* ‘very’ (cf. StY *zei’er*), <sup>l</sup> *newijischer* ‘prophetic’ (cf. StY *nevüšer*).

Some other NEY features are: the sporadic occurrence of the personal pronoun <sup>l</sup> *em* ‘him’ (cf. StY *im*), the diminutive plural ending <sup>l</sup> *-lach*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *kelblach* ‘little calves’ (cf. StY *kelblex*), *schepselach* ‘little lambs’ (cf. StY *šépsellex*), and the occasional adjectival suffix <sup>l</sup> *-lach* besides the *daičmeriš* <sup>l</sup> *-lich*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *erlach* ‘honest’ (cf. StY *érlex*), <sup>l</sup> *natirlach* ‘natural’ (cf. StY *natírllex*).

<sup>14</sup> The most used of these is a line (*pasex*) under the two *jod* letters or under the preceding consonant.

<sup>15</sup> The NHG *au* corresponds to StY *oi* (vowel 54, see Chapter 7 §3.1.)

It is interesting that the preposition *oif* 'on' and converb *oif-* appear in the standard forms and the writers of *Hazohar* do not succumb to using the North-Eastern forms *af* (preposition) and *uf-* (converb). There is also a feature deriving from the spoken language; the reflexive pronoun *zix* 'oneself' is frequently attached to the verb, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *hertsach* 'sounds' (cf. StY *hert zix*), <sup>l</sup> *fregtsach* 'a question arises' (cf. StY *fregt zix*).

#### 2.4. The Hebrew-Aramaic Component

The Latinization of the Hebrew-Aramaic component in *Hazohar* is not uniform; on the one hand there is a tendency to render the words in the Whole Hebrew<sup>16</sup> form (Ashkenazic pronunciation), while on the other hand phonetic (Merged Hebrew) variants frequently occur. The Latin spelling of some new Zionistic concepts follows the Sephardi Hebrew pronunciation.

The Whole Hebrew forms follow to some extent the traditional principle of preserving the original spelling of the Hebrew-Aramaic component. They also show the consciousness of a specific component of the Yiddish vocabulary. In many cases word-final vowels have preserved their Ashkenazi Hebrew pronunciation rather than the Yiddish *-e*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *jerido* 'decline' (cf. StY *jeride*), <sup>l</sup> *neschomo* 'soul' (cf. StY *nešóme*), <sup>l</sup> *poschut* 'simply' (cf. StY *póset*), <sup>l</sup> *kowoid* 'honour' (cf. StY *kóved*), <sup>l</sup> *poieil joizei* 'result' (cf. StY *poiel-joi'ce*). Some words follow the Sephardic pronunciation, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *schechina* 'divine presence' (cf. StY *šxíne*), <sup>l</sup> *chanuka* 'Hanukkah' (StY *xanike*), <sup>l</sup> *galuth* 'Diaspora' (cf. StY *góles*). The latter word often appears in the Ashkenazic form <sup>l</sup> *golus*, too.

Represented among the phonetic variants, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *sibe* 'reason' (cf. StY *sibe*; AH *síbo*), <sup>l</sup> *koiches* 'strength' (cf. StY *koi'xes*; AH *koi'xois*), are dialectal forms, for instance, the diphthong *oi* (vowel 44) is often rendered as *ei* or even *öi* (see Chapter 7 3.1.5.5.). A good example of this is the word *destiny*, which appears several times in the articles and with many variants, i.e. <sup>l</sup> *goirl* ~ *goirel* ~ *geirol* ~ *geirl* ~ *göirl* (cf. StY *goirl*). The form <sup>l</sup> *geirol* is a dialectal variant of Ashkenazi Whole Hebrew *goirol*.

The Latinization of some Zionistic concepts and names follow the Sephardi/Modern Hebrew pronunciation, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *Histadruth* 'Organization' (cf. MH *histadrút*), <sup>l</sup> *chaluzoth* 'pioneers (fem.)' (cf. MH *halucót*), <sup>l</sup> *hachschara* 'training' (cf. MH *haxšará*), <sup>l</sup> *aliya* 'immigration to Palestine/Israel' (cf. MH *alijá*). The latter word exists in Yiddish in the form *alie* and means a call to read a lesson

<sup>16</sup> M. Weinreich uses the term *Whole Hebrew* for the language of the running Hebrew texts read by a speaker of a Jewish language (whose everyday language is not Hebrew) and *Merged Hebrew* for the Hebrew component in any of the Jewish languages (1954: 85).

from the Torah in the synagogue. The use of *y* (instead of *j*) in the name <sup>1</sup> *Keren Hayessod* 'Fundamental Fund' indicates that the Latin spelling of the word has been adopted from a foreign source.

Looking at the articles in *Hazohar*, it seems that Latinization did not affect the use of Hebraisms in any diminishing way. All three writers use the Hebrew-Aramaic component freely, one might say to a normal extent. Hersz Frydberg, who had attended a yeshiva, uses in his only article in *Hazohar* (no. 3-4 1937), even some talmudic/biblical expressions, e.g. <sup>1</sup> *umeis hoeilom* 'nations of the world',<sup>17</sup> <sup>1</sup> *eile gibureicho Jisroeil* 'these are your heroes, o Israel', <sup>1</sup> *asoro harugei malchuss* 'ten [men] murdered by the kingdom'.<sup>18</sup> The Latinization of the Hebrew-Aramaic component in Frydberg's article follows most consistently the Ashkenazi Hebrew pronunciation rather than the purely phonetic forms. There are also some other features that are slightly different from the other articles, for instance the systematic use of *ss* for sibilant *s* and initial *ji* (in words type *jidiš*).

## 2.5. Compound Words

Yiddish orthographies have traditionally written compound words separately (Katz 1993: 133). However, the German convention of joining compound words together gained support both among the philologists of YIVO and Yiddish language planners in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and '30s; in their eyes words written together had the gloss of a European, scientific and technical style (ibid.: 116). In *Hazohar*, compound words tend to be connected with a hyphen, e.g. <sup>1</sup> *shtadlones-politik* 'shtadlanut politics', <sup>1</sup> *partei-firer* 'party leader', or written together, e.g. <sup>1</sup> *nationalfersammlung* 'national assembly' <sup>1</sup> *weltorganisazie* 'world organization'. Expressions belonging to the Hebrew-Aramaic component are joined together with a hyphen, e.g. <sup>1</sup> *soine-isroeil* 'anti-Semite' <sup>1</sup> *din-wecheschbon* 'accounting', or written separately, e.g. <sup>1</sup> *umeis hoeilom* 'nations of the world', <sup>1</sup> *Neir Tomid* 'eternal light'<sup>19</sup>, but not joined together without a break. (For an example of the system of Latinization used in *Hazohar*, see Appendix C §1.).

<sup>17</sup> Here in the North-Eastern Yiddish influenced form, a more standard form would be *umois-hooilom*.

<sup>18</sup> Ten Jewish scholars murdered by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in 135 CE (VLVJ 1999: 236).

<sup>19</sup> Especially one in the synagogue.

### 3. APPROACHING NEW ORTHOGRAPHY – *HATIKWAH* AND *JUDISK UNGDOM*

The Latinization of the few Yiddish poems and articles in the journal *Hatikwah* 'Hope'<sup>20</sup> (1946–48) followed the principles of the new (phonetic) orthography. The journal also contains, besides news from the Zionist front, cultural articles (in Swedish), some of which dealt with Yiddish language and literature. There were also Yiddish short stories translated into Swedish. The orthography used by Elchonon Indelman<sup>21</sup> in his poems is very systematic and contains few inconsistencies. The use of consonants and consonant clusters is almost identical with *Hazohar*, with a few exceptions: *tsvei vovn* (וו) and *veiz* (װ) are Latinized with *v* instead of *w*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *vos* 'what', <sup>l</sup> *churve* 'ruin'; the sibilant *šin* (שׂ) is always Latinized with *sch* (not with *s* before *t* and *p*), e.g. <sup>l</sup> *schtromen* 'currents', <sup>l</sup> *schtraln* 'rays'.<sup>22</sup> The orthography has abandoned many conventions of the Germanized spelling, for instance it does not use "silent e" or "silent h", e.g. <sup>l</sup> *sibn* 'seven', <sup>l</sup> *jor* 'year', cf. the Germanized forms *\*siben*, *\*johr*. Also the verbal prefixes follow the phonetic spelling, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *farblibn* 'stayed', *bahalt'n* 'to hide', cf. the Germanized forms *\*ferbliben*, *\*behalten*. The word-initial *ji-* is spelt in accordance with the standard language, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *jidisch* 'Yiddish', <sup>l</sup> *Jisroel* 'Israel' (not *\*idisch*, *\*Isroel*). The orthography does not use any geminates. The text Latinizes the diphthongs *ei*, *ai* and *oi* ending with *j*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *sejde* 'grandfather', <sup>l</sup> *rajsn* 'to tear', <sup>l</sup> *tojre* 'Torah'.

There are no North-Eastern Yiddish forms evident in the poems of Indelman; one reason for this is that he most likely originated from Poland,<sup>23</sup> a second being that the orthography is simply very faithful to the standard language. Also, the Hebrew-Aramaic component is Latinized according to the pronunciation of the standard language rather than the Whole Hebrew form, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *gojrl* 'destiny', <sup>l</sup> *tane* 'Tanna' (cf. Whole Hebrew *\*gojrol*, *\*tano*). Compound words are connected with a hyphen, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *parmet-bleter* 'parchment pages', <sup>l</sup> *fajer-funken* 'sparks'. (For an example of the system of Latinization used in *Hatikwah*, see Appendix C §2.).

<sup>20</sup> The full name of the journal is *Hatikwah, Judisk Tidskrift i Finland* 'Jewish journal in Finland'. There had been a journal under the name *Hatikwah* in the period 1935–36; it was the organ of *Berith hanoar haivri*.

<sup>21</sup> Elchonon Indelman arrived in Finland soon after the Second World War and became a Hebrew teacher in the Jewish Co-educational School (*Hatikwah* no. 1-2 1947: 8).

<sup>22</sup> There is no example word available beginning with *schp-*.

<sup>23</sup> He has dated his poem *Di schverd fun Bar-Kochva* 'The Sword of Bar Kokhba' – Warsaw, April 1946 (*Hatikwah* no. 1-2 1947: 10).

The Latinization of the two Yiddish stories and one poem in the journal *Judisk Ungdom* 'Jewish Youth' (1954–56) by Jac Weinstein,<sup>24</sup> takes a step backward to the Germanized spelling and follows the Latinization of *Hazohar* in many respects. The use of consonants and diphthongs is principally the same with a few amendments: *v* is used instead of *w*, as in the Latinization in *Hatikwah*; the orthography does not employ *j* in order to avoid hiatus, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *seiere* 'their' (cf. \**sejere*), <sup>l</sup> *geiendig* 'going' (cf. \**gejendig*). There is, though, a clear striving towards a more phonetic (standard) orthography. The "silent h" is almost absent and the use of "silent e" is much less than in *Hazohar*. Also, the verbal prefixes are mostly phonetic, and geminates are very scarce. The Hebrew-Aramaic component follows quite elaborately the Yiddish pronunciation instead of Whole Hebrew. There is also a clear endeavour to render vowel 44 as *oi* according to the standard spelling, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *poilisch* 'Polish' (cf. NEY *peiliš*), <sup>l</sup> *oign* 'eyes' (cf. NEY *eign*). However, dialectal NEY forms occur sporadically, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *leifn* 'to run' (cf. StY *loifn*), <sup>l</sup> *rabeisai* 'gentlemen' (cf. StY *raboi'sai*), but no cases of *öi* are found. (For an example of the Latinization system used in *Judisk Ungdom*, see Appendix C §3.).

#### 4. PHONETIC SCRIPT

The Jewish Song Association (founded in 1917) and the Jewish Dramatic Society (1922–39) used a transliteration/transcription of Yiddish (as well as Hebrew) which differs in many respects from the Latinization employed in the journals. The main reason for using phonetic script was the poor literacy in Yiddish of the younger members of these associations. Typed (Latinized) texts were also easier to read than handwritten texts in Hebrew characters. Also, it was more practical to attach lyrics to music in Latinized form than in Hebrew characters (running in the opposite direction). The transcription styles used by these two associations differ from each other; the system used by the Jewish Song Association seems to have been partly adopted from foreign song-books, whereas the system of the Jewish Dramatic Society is based more on Swedish orthography.

The transcription used by the Jewish Song Association utilizes some diacritical signs in its system (unfortunately, not all of these are possible to reproduce with the current word processor): *šin* (שׂן) appears as *š* or *s* with a vertical line through it; *zájen* (ז) as *s*, occasionally as *s* with a dot underneath; *tes šin* (טשן) as *tš*; *zájen šin* (זשן) [ž] appears occasionally as *ž*, but more often as *s*. Otherwise, the consonant system follows the conventions of the Latinization

<sup>24</sup>

*A chasen-schochet sucht a stel* (no. 1 1955: 8-9) *Feter Jankl derzeit a chelemer geschichte...* (no. 3-4 1955: 10, 11, 20, 21) and poem *Dos alte lid* (no. 1 1955: 5).

employed in *Hazohar* and *Judisk Ungdom* (i.e. *ch* for Yiddish *xes* (ח) and *xof* (ח) and *z* for Yiddish *cadik* (צ)). The diphthongs *ei*, *ai* and *oi* appear as *ei*, *aj* and *oj*.

There are some dialectal features in the song transcriptions, for instance the North-Eastern Yiddish *ei* (vowel 44, StY *oi*) appears systematically as *ei*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *beire* 'Creator' (cf. StY *boire*), <sup>l</sup> *heich* 'high' (cf. StY *hoix*). Even the Belorussian Yiddish (North-Eastern Yiddish sub-dialect) diphthong *ui* (vowel 54, StY *oi*; see Chapter 7 §3.1.5.6.) occasionally appears as *uj*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *ujston* 'to take off' (cf. StY *oi'ston*). The preposition *oif* 'on' appears in the North-Eastern form *af* and the verbal prefix *oif-* as *uf-*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *ufher* (cf. StY *oi'fher*) and occasionally even hypercorrectly as *eif-*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *eifgelebt* 'revived' (cf. StY *oi'fgelebt*). Though the systems were intended to be as phonetic as possible, some song transcriptions insert the "silent e", possibly due to the requirements of the melody, i.e. to facilitate the singing of the word. The transcription system of Hebrew (both Ashkenazi and Modern Hebrew) uses more diacritical signs than the Yiddish. Analysis of the Hebrew transcript does not, however, fall within the scope of this study. (For an example of the system of transcription used by the Jewish Song Association, see Appendix C §4.).

The director of the Jewish Dramatic Society, Jac Weinstein, wrote the scripts of his plays in Hebrew characters but transcribed them. They were then distributed among the actors in typed form. Probably some of the available transcriptions of plays by other authors were also made by Jac Weinstein. The system is similar to the Latinization used for Weinstein's articles in *Judisk Ungdom*, with the general use of consonants and diphthongs. It is interesting that Weinstein uses *w* for Yiddish *v* in the transcription, and *v* in the Latinization some twenty years later in *Judisk Ungdom*. The system of transcription is more phonetic in some respects than the Latinization: the use of "silent e" is minimal, and the use of *sch-* before *p* and *t* also makes the reading slightly easier for a person not very accustomed to the conventions of German spelling. The system takes a radical step towards Swedish orthography by frequently using Swedish *å* [o] for Yiddish *o*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *shå* 'hour' (cf. StY *šo*), <sup>l</sup> *ånsågn* 'to announce' (cf. StY *ónzogn*), and sporadically Swedish *o* [u] for Yiddish *u*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *kokn* 'to look' (cf. Yiddish *kukn*), <sup>l</sup> *wo* 'where' (cf. StY *vu*). There is only slight inconsistency in the use of *å*, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *balkån* ~ *balkon* 'balcony' (cf. StY *balkón*), <sup>l</sup> *dåch* ~ *doch* (cf. StY *dox*), whereas in most cases Yiddish *u* appears as *u*. This original system was tailored for Swedish-speakers and must have looked quite strange, for instance, to Finnish-speaking Viipuri Jews.

It is interesting to observe the conflict between phonetic and standard forms in the system. The diphthong *oi* (vowel 44) appears systematically in the North-Eastern Yiddish form *ei* but the preposition *oif* and the prefix *oif-* in the standard form rather than the dialectal forms *af* and *uf-*. A very striking feature is the

systematic use of the Courland-type diphthong *öi* rather than the Vilna-type form *ei* in some texts, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *šöis* ‘lap’ (cf. StY *šois*; NEY *šeis*), *töign* ‘to suit’ (cf. *toign*; NEY *teign*). There is one case where the diphthong appears as *öü*, i.e. *glöüben* ‘believe’ (cf. StY *gleibn* ~ *gloibn*; NEY *gleibn*). Weinstein is very consistent in the use of *ei* and *öi*; they do not appear side by side in the same texts as they do in the texts of *Hazohar*. The use of *öi* seems to have been a very deliberate decision, especially because there are many hypercorrect forms, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *öif* ‘on’ (cf. StY *oif*; NEY *af*), <sup>l</sup> *öif kumen* ‘to rise’ (cf. StY *oi’fkumen*; NEY *úfkumen*). The reasons for this phenomenon will be discussed further in Chapter 9 §2.2. (For an example of the system of transcription used by the Jewish Dramatic Society, see Appendix C §5.).

## 5. SUMMARY

Most printed Yiddish texts in Helsinki appeared in Latinized form. The Latinization in *Hazohar*, which of the Jewish journals in Finland had the most Yiddish articles, came to follow the conventions of Germanized Yiddish spelling, adopted during the *Haskalah*, which was still popular at the time, especially in the press. The most common features of the Germanized Yiddish spelling were the use of “silent e” and “silent h”, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *sogen* ‘to say’ <sup>l</sup> *johr* ‘year’, cf. StY *zogn*, *jor*. Among other features were Germanized verbal prefixes, geminates and German-type spelling of certain words. The spelling of Hebrew-Aramaic words in *Hazohar* is interesting because the Whole Hebrew pronunciation has been partly preserved, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *neschomo*, cf. StY *nešome*. The reason for this is probably that the Ashkenazic pronunciation was considered more literary than the Yiddish pronunciation. The conventions of German orthography and the traditional Hebrew pronunciation, which do not reflect spoken Yiddish, do, however, confront the phonetic tendencies of the new Yiddish orthography that arose in the 1920s. Occasionally, the silent letters are dropped and, for example, the verbal prefixes appear in the standard Yiddish form. There are also dialectal features. The most persistent North-Eastern Yiddish feature is the change *oi* > *ei/öi*, e.g. *goirl* > *geirl/göirl*. The availability of the letters *ä*, *ö*, *y* and *ü* made it possible to follow more closely the German orthography than was possible with Hebrew letters. This was reinforced when the Swedish counterpart was spelt with the same letters e.g. <sup>l</sup> *system* (cf. NHG *System*; FS *system*). The tendency towards a more phonetic script became stronger towards the 1950s; in *Judisk Ungdom* the use of silent letters was minimal and Hebraisms were spelt phonetically. It is interesting that the letter *w* gave way to *v* (this was possible because the system did not use *v* for *f*, as German does in some cases). During the same period the use of *w* in Finnish orthography (chiefly in names) fell out of fashion. The closest to a



“fully” phonetic orthography appeared only in *Hatikvah*; the system did not, however, solve the problem as to how to differentiate *s* from *z*.

The Jewish Song Association and the Jewish Dramatic Society made use of transcribed texts. However, the system used in these texts was not uniform and there is some variety in them. Some systems used special diacritical signs, for instance a dot under the *s* to denote Yiddish *zajen* and *š* for Yiddish *šin*. The Jewish Dramatic Society frequently used Swedish *å* to denote Yiddish *o*. It is interesting that none of these diacritical signs appeared in the journals. The use of a system of Latinization close to German orthography in *Hazohar* and *Judisk Ungdom* may be explained by the fact that it was familiar to readers who knew German; using a more phonetic system with various diacritical signs, such as those used by the Jewish cultural association, would have probably been too radical a departure.

The inconsistencies between the articles and even within a single article are comprehensible because the authors had not received secular schooling in Yiddish. Similar vacillation in spelling would have probably occurred, had the journals been printed in Hebrew letters. These inconsistencies and unintentional “slips” make these texts an invaluable source for a linguistic and dialectological study; of especial interest are the dialectal forms of diphthongs. The following analysis of Helsinki Yiddish is based chiefly on the oral sources. However, some references will be made to the Latinized texts in cases of dialectal pronunciation, loan-words and morphological deviations.

## 7. A DESCRIPTION OF HELSINKI YIDDISH

### 1. PREFACE

It is evident that Helsinki Yiddish (HeY) belongs in the group of North-Eastern Yiddish (NEY) dialects. This is due to historical facts rather than geographical location. Helsinki is quite isolated from the actual realm of NEY; the Gulf of Finland has acted as a barrier to a natural interaction with the Jewish centres of the Baltic countries, e.g. Tallinn (only approx. 70 km. from Helsinki) and Riga.

Bin-Nun divides Yiddish dialects into root-dialects (*die Stamm-Mundarten*), i.e. the historical dialects and sub-dialects of Jewish Eastern Europe, and colonial dialects (*die Kolonial-Mundarten*), i.e. the numerous new formations all over the world where Jews have settled (1973: 106). According to this distinction, HeY is a colonial dialect, not an actual NEY sub-dialect. In this sense one could compare it, for instance, with the varieties of Yiddish that were spoken in other Cantonist settlements all over the Russian Empire.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that Helsinki Jews call their Yiddish either *litvišer idiš* 'Lithuanian Yiddish' or *rusišer idiš* 'Russian Yiddish', the former referring to the actual character of the dialect (i.e. NEY) and the latter to the history of the community and its connection with Russian Cantonist centres. On the other hand, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (§4.), Helsinki Jews seem to divide Yiddish dialects into two main groups – "Russian Yiddish" (~ NEY) and "Polish Yiddish" (~ Central Yiddish). The Jewish settlers in Helsinki came from quite a vast area and therefore it is obvious that various dialects/sub-dialects have confronted each other in Helsinki. The available data shows that the majority of the immigrants spoke a variety of NEY sub-dialects and only a minority Central Yiddish (CY) (see Chapter 1 §2.2.).

The mechanisms of linguistic development related to dialect contacts include *accommodation* and eventually *focusing*, formation of a unified dialect (Trudgill 1986: 1-38, 96-97). Focusing takes place by means of *reduction* of the available forms; the process involves koinéization, which consists of the *levelling* out of minority and otherwise marked speech forms and of *simplification*, which involves a reduction in irregularities (ibid.:107). The result of the process is a historically mixed but synchronically stable dialect which contains elements from the source dialects but also *interdialect forms* that did not exist in them (ibid.:

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<sup>1</sup> I have not come across any studies of the Yiddish spoken in other Cantonist centres.

108). In Helsinki the aforementioned Yiddish dialects have been in contact for over one hundred and fifty years, and it is therefore obvious that a considerable amount of levelling and simplification must have taken place. This has mostly taken place between the dominant NEY sub-dialects; those who originated from the domain of CY had to accommodate themselves to the language of the majority. Though we can talk about somewhat uniform HeY, it contains some stylistic variation, chiefly reflecting different NEY sub-dialects. Even after focusing, new dialects are known to continue to retain a relatively high level of variability, at least for a few generations (*ibid.*:108).

According to Trudgill (1986: 60), *mixed dialects* are varieties where accommodation is taking place but has not gone to completion.<sup>2</sup> Peltz, in his article *Spoken Yiddish in America: variation in dialect and grammar* (1990), discusses contacts between North-Eastern and South-Eastern Yiddish (SEY) in Philadelphia. He describes the case of a mixed dialect where distinctly NEY forms appear alongside SEY forms, e.g. NEY *ópgecolt* ~ SEY *úpgecolt* 'paid', NEY *lebm* ~ SEY *leibm* 'life' (*ibid.*: 60-62). There is only one similar case (*inf.* #18) of a mixed dialect among the interviews conducted for this study. The informant came to Finland from Central Poland after the Second World War. In her speech NEY variants occur alongside CY forms in successive sentences, e.g. NEY *gevei 'nt* ~ CY *gevoi 'nt* 'lived', NEY *beis (ja:kof)* ~ CY *bais (ja:kof)* 'House (of Jacob)', NEY *milxóme* ~ CY *milxúme* 'war', NEY *fun* ~ CY *fin* 'from'. The informant was aware of this and said that she has tried to change her "Polish Yiddish" to "Lithuanian Yiddish".

According to Peltz, children of immigrants (in the case of Philadelphia) who had extensive contact with their parents and grandparents and did not marry into families speaking another dialect retained the characteristic speech of their ancestors (*ibid.*: 71). In our case, even those informants (*inf.* #9; *inf.* 12#; *inf.* #16) whose one parent came from Central Poland clearly speak the local HeY, though, for instance, informant #12 identified her Yiddish as "Polish Yiddish". These three informants have, however, retained a few minority dialect features, e.g. occasionally they render the vowel 44 (StY *oi*) as CY *oi* instead of NEY *ei*, e.g. *azoi* 'so', *poiliš* 'Polish'. They do not, however, succumb to using the stigmatized Polish Yiddish features (in the opinion of HeY-speakers), i.e. *u* for *o* as in the above word *milxóme* > *milxúme*, or *i* for *u* as in the above example *fun* > *fin*. There are also some NEY minority forms that are more characteristic of some informants than others, e.g. informant #11 very often renders the vowel 54 (StY *oi*) as *ui* rather than *oi*, which is a more common variant in HeY. This may be

<sup>2</sup> On the lexical level the process has usually progressed furthest, because accommodation first begins on the lexical level (Trudgill 1986: 25, 59-60).

partly explained by the fact that the informant's father originated from Vitebsk, where the realization of the diphthong is *ui*.

The dialect contacts may lead to hyper-correct forms, which are described by Trudgill as forms that represent attempts to adopt a more prestigious variety of speech which through over-generalization leads to forms that do not occur in the target prestige variety (Trudgill 1986: 66). Hyper-corrections are sometimes seen either as temporary or as affecting only individuals; they may, however, give rise to large-scale linguistic change or result in interdialect forms that become an integral part of a particular dialect (ibid.: 78). Not many such cases have been recorded in the speech of HeY speakers. One informant (#16) occasionally uses the hyper-correct form *azui* 'so' instead of NEY *azei* (cf. StY/CY *azoi*). This variant was originally formed by a CY-speaker trying to imitate a typical Vilna-region/Belorussian feature (i.e. *oi* > *ui*; see 3.1.5.6.):<sup>3</sup>

“correction”	<i>hoiz</i> > <i>huiz</i> ‘house’
hyper-correction	<i>azoi</i> > <i>azui</i> ‘so’

It is interesting that this hyper-correction is used in the Swedish and Finnish spoken of the Helsinki Jews. The local Jewish journal *HaKehila* even has a column called *Azui! näin meillä* ‘this is the way we do it’.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a description of HeY and to investigate how it corresponds with and deviates from various sub-dialects of NEY and CY. Finland Swedish (FS) and New High German (NHG) influence will be briefly mentioned in this chapter when justifiable but will be discussed in more detail in the following two chapters. Volume 1 of the Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry (LCAAJ), completed in 1992, has served as an important source for this study. The earliest dialect map in this work is based on the classification of Yiddish dialects by Landau and Wachstein, published in 1911 (LCAAJ 1992a: 50). Two-thirds of the informants interviewed for the atlas itself were born between 1890 and 1900 (LCAAJ 1992b: 104). This poses a problem for us, because these maps and many studies of Yiddish dialects depict a rather late situation when taking into consideration the fact that the first immigrants who came to Finland were born at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Therefore notions and theories of proto-dialects, especially Proto-North-Eastern Yiddish (PNEY), are of importance for us. It is highly possible that HeY has preserved some features which have vanished from the original domain of the NEY.

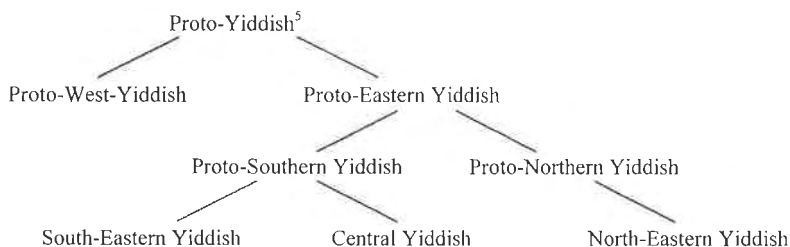
<sup>3</sup>

The following hyper-correct forms have been attested in the speech of informant #18 (originally a CY-speaker): *höiz* ‘house’ (cf. CY *houz*, HeY *hoiz/huiz*), *frei'tik* ‘Friday’ (cf. CY *frá:tik*, HeY *frai'tik*).

The example words used in this chapter have been transcribed partly with some simplification, i.e. the geminates, long vowels and frequently occurring *ä* (allophone of *e*), have been left out, because there is some variation in the occurrence of these features. However, in the sample texts all these features have been presented (see Appendix B). The stress marker ['] has been left out from unisyllabic words; after *ä*, *ö*, *ü*, *u* and diphthongs the stress marker appears after the vowel of the diphthong, e.g. *vei'nen* 'to cry'.

## 2. YIDDISH DIALECTS

Uriel Weinreich has developed a method to describe the etymological relations of phonemes in the Yiddish dialects and has reconstructed a proto-dialect, Proto-Yiddish (PY), which would be the common ancestor of CY, SEY and NEY (Herzog 1965: 161).<sup>4</sup> Below is a depiction of different stages in Yiddish dialectal development:



### 2.1. North-Eastern Yiddish Sub-dialects

In our case it is relevant to pay attention to the division of PNEY into various sub-dialects of NEY. Yiddish linguists have grouped these sub-dialects each in their own way. Mark (1951) has divided them into three main groups, i.e. *stam-litvišer jidiš* 'Yiddish of Lithuania proper' (SLY), *zameter jidiš* ~ 'Samogitian Yiddish'<sup>6</sup> (ZaY), *suvalker jidiš* 'Suvalki Yiddish' (SuY). Mark's study concentrates, however, chiefly on the territory of Lithuania proper and omits other areas which belong to the domain of NEY, for instance Courland and Belorussia.

<sup>4</sup> In his article "A retrograde sound shift in the guise of survival: An aspect of Yiddish vowel development", in: *Miscelánea homenaje a André Martinet, Estructuralismo e historia, La Laguna II*: 221-267.

<sup>5</sup> Slightly altered version of the description by Herzog (1965: 162).

<sup>6</sup> Yiddish *Zamet* corresponds to Lithuanian *Zemaitija*. However, the geographical territories are not identical (Jacobs 2001: 296).

M. Weinreich considers *kurlender jidiš* 'Courland Yiddish' (CoY) as a separate dialect because of the archaic features it has preserved (1923: 197). ZaY can be seen as a transitional dialect between CoY and SLY. Belorussian Yiddish (BeY), for its part, is often considered a sub-type of SLY (Bin-Nun 1973: 104).<sup>7</sup> Jacobs (2001: 295) uses the term *Baltic Yiddish* (BaY) to depict the northern part of the NEY domain, i.e. ZaY, CoY and Estonian Yiddish (EsY) in contrast to the southern and eastern parts of NEY, i.e. SLY, SuY and BeY. The Northern/Baltic part of NEY has maintained more archaisms than the other parts of the NEY domain, e.g. retention of vowel length and front-rounded *öi* (ibid.: 290). The co-territorial languages of BaY have been different than in the case of SLY, SuY and BeY; what is essential is the absence of the Slavic languages, whereas Baltic German (BG) and Lithuanian influence is important.

Besides the aforementioned sub-dialects we are obliged to take into consideration CY, especially of the southern part of Poland, which has served as one of the emigration bases of the Helsinki Jews, and also North Central Yiddish (NCY; described by Herzog 1965), which is a transitional dialect between NEY and CY. For instance, the government of Lomzha, where some soldiers originally came from, belongs to the realm of this dialect. For the distribution of all the aforementioned dialects, see the map in Chapter 1 (Image 5).

### 3. PHONOLOGY

#### 3.1. Vocalism

Before we proceed to the definition of the HeY vowel system, let us first briefly examine the vocalization and its development in NEY, PNEY, CoY and CY. Special attention has to be paid to vowel length and certain diphthongs. Against this background it will be easier to define the characteristics of HeY.

The vowels described in this chapter are accompanied by two digits, which suggest the value of the phonemes and their historic origin. This system was introduced by U. Weinreich in 1958 (Herzog 1965: 161) and has been adopted by many Yiddish linguists since. The first digit refers to the presumed vowel quality in the original proto-system; the second digit refers to the original shortness, length, or diphthongal situation in PY:

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<sup>7</sup> Bin-Nun calls SLY and ByY *litauisch-weißrussisches Jiddisch* (1973: 104).

FIRST DIGIT	SECOND DIGIT
1 a	1 originally a short monophthong
2 e	2 originally a long monophthong
3 ĭ	3 an original short monophthong
4 o	4 the nucleus of an original diphthong
5 u	5 (in the e-series only) a vowel (apparently a close e) with special distribution.
	6 (in the a-series only) long a. <sup>8</sup>

For example, phoneme 52/53 (historic *u:/u*) is realized as a long *i:* in CY, e.g. *hi:n* 'chicken', and as a short *u* in NEY, e.g. *hun*; phoneme 42/44 is realised as *oi* in CY, e.g. *hoizn* 'trousers' and as *ei* in NEY, e.g. *heizn*.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.1.2. The Vocalism of NEY

#### 3.1.2.1. Loss of Length

The most striking feature of NEY vocalism is the loss of length (see Tables 1 and 2). The loss of vocal length, which is a recent development (Mark 1951:440), has been considered a Slavic influence, for instance by Wiener and Sapir (Herzog 1965: 200). However, U. Weinreich has proven this to be quite unlikely because in several areas Yiddish has preserved the length feature whereas the co-territorial language has not and vice versa (*ibid.*). For instance, CoY has preserved, besides other archaisms, the differentiation between short and long vowels (Weinreich 1923: 199; see Table 3). Hence, CoY differentiates between *i*<sub>31</sub> and *i:*<sub>32</sub>, *e*<sub>21</sub> and *e:*<sub>25</sub>, *u*<sub>51</sub> and *u:*<sub>52</sub>, *o*<sub>41</sub> and *o:*<sub>12</sub>, *a*<sub>11</sub> and *a:*<sub>16</sub>, e.g.:<sup>10</sup>

VOWEL	SLY	COY
31/32	<i>bin</i> 'am'; <i>bin</i> 'bee'	<i>bin</i> 'am'; <i>bi:n</i> 'bee'
21/25	<i>esn</i> 'eat'; <i>erev</i> 'eve'	<i>esn</i> 'eat'; <i>e:rev</i> 'eve'
51/52	<i>zun</i> 'sun'; <i>zun</i> 'son'	<i>zun</i> 'sun'; <i>zu:n</i> 'son'
41/12	<i>zok</i> 'sock'; <i>zog</i> 'to say'	<i>zok</i> 'sock'; <i>zo:g</i> 'to say'
11/16	<i>zalc</i> 'salt'; <i>zal</i> 'hall'	<i>zalc</i> 'salt'; <i>za:l</i> 'hall'

In our case it is important to note that ZaY, as a transitional dialect between SLY and CoY, has also preserved to some extent the length feature (Mark 1951: 439).

<sup>8</sup> This was introduced by Verschik (1999: 271). There is only a minimal distribution of *a*<sub>16</sub>, e.g. *ka:s* 'anger', *gra:pn* 'small pot'.

<sup>9</sup> The system is described, for instance, in LCAAJ 1992a: 11-12, and Katz 1983:1021.

<sup>10</sup> Examples from Herzog (1965: 197), Weinreich (1923: 200) and Mark (1951: 439).

Also, the vowel in an open syllable is usually pronounced longer than a vowel in a closed syllable, e.g. *li:be ma:me* 'dear mother' (ibid.).

**Table 1. Stressed Vowel System of NEY<sup>11</sup>**

$\dot{i}_{31/32/33}$		$u_{51/52/53}$
$e_{21/25}$		$o_{12/13/41}$
	$a_{11}$	
$\dot{e}i_{22/23/24}$ 42/43/44	$ai_{34}$	$oi (ou, au)_{54}$

**Table 2. The Stressed Vowel System of PNEY<sup>12</sup>**

$\dot{i}:_{32}$	$\dot{i}_{31}$	$u_{51}$	$u':_{52}$
$e':_{25}$	$e_{21}$	$\ddot{o}\ddot{u}_{42/44}$	$o_{41}$
		$a_{11}$	
$\dot{e}i_{22}$		$ai_{34}$	$au_{54}$

### 3.1.2.2. Unrounding of Vowel 42/44

Besides taking note of vocal length it is important at this stage to pay some attention to the realization of vowels 42/44 and 54. NEY  $ei_{42}$  is a result of the unrounding of PNEY  $\ddot{o}\ddot{u}_{42}$ . However, this  $\ddot{o}\ddot{u}$  diphthong has been preserved in CoY<sup>13</sup> (M. Weinreich 1923: 201; see Table 3), in EsY (Verschik 1999: 274) and sporadically over the domain of NEY, e.g. in the Lomzha region in North-Eastern

<sup>11</sup> As presented by Herzog (1965: 162).

<sup>12</sup> As presented by Herzog (1965: 163).

<sup>13</sup> The pronunciation of vowel 42/44 in CoY has been a matter of debate between M. Weinreich (1923) and Kalmanovitsh (1926). The former favours the form  $\ddot{o}i$  and the latter insists on  $\ddot{o}\ddot{u}$  (Verschik 1999: 270).



Poland (Herzog 1965: 179) and in North-Western Belorussia (Weinreich 1965: 86; LCAAJ 1992a: 81). There has been speculation, as to whether the *öü* diphthong in CoY is due to the influence of dialectal German. Yet this has not been proven (Herzog 1965: 163). In ZaY vowel 42/44 is realized as *eu* (Mark 1951: 440).

**Table 3. The Stressed Vowel System of CoY<sup>14</sup>**

i:32	i31		u51	u:52
e:25	e21	öü42/44	o41	o:12/13
		a41	a:16	
	äi22/24	ai34		au54

### 3.1.2.3. Half-fronting of Vowel 54

NEY *oi*<sub>54</sub> is the result of the half-fronting of *ou*<sub>54</sub>, which is a result of the raising of PNEY *au*<sub>54</sub>. CoY has preserved this phoneme as *au*, ZaY as *ou* (Weinreich 1923: 200; Mark 1951: 440). In parts of Belorussia and the Vilna region vowel 54 occurs as *ui* (LCAAJ 1992a: 86).

### 3.1.2.4. Lowering of Vowel 22/24

In CoY *ei*<sub>22/24</sub> occurs as *äi*. It has been debated whether the lowering of *ei* to *äi* is a Baltic German influence or the result of a push-chain caused by the retention of *ei*<sub>25</sub>, from which *ei*<sub>22/24</sub> was to remain distinct (Verschik 1999: 271). The diphthong *äi* has also been registered in Shuchin, Northern Poland (Herzog 1965: 177).

### 3.1.3. The Vocalism of CY

When observing the vocalism of CY (see Table 4), it is important in our case to pay attention to the existence of the distinction between long and short vowels. However, the vowels have undergone major changes, for instance vowels 51 and 52 have fronted to *i/i:* and vowel 12 has been raised to *u:*. The fronting of vowels

<sup>14</sup> As presented by Verschik (1999: 271).

51 and 52 and the following raising of vowel 12/13, has been considered quite an early development in Proto-Eastern Yiddish, dating back to the fourteenth century (Herzog 1965: 165).

### 3.1.3.1. Diphthongization of Vowel 25

The diphthongization of PSY  $e_{25}$  probably followed the lowering of  $ei_{22}$  to  $ai_{22}$  (Herzog 1965: 165). However, this typical feature of Southern dialects occurs sporadically throughout the realm of NEY, where the normal distribution is  $e$  (LCAAJ 1992a: 74).

**Table 4. The Stressed Vowel System of Central Yiddish<sup>15</sup>**

$i:_{32/33}$ $52/53$	$i_{31/51}$	$u_{12/13}$	$u:_{12/13}$
$ei_{25}$	$e_{21}$	$o_{41}$	$o:/ou_{54}$
		$a_{11}$	
		$a:_{34}$	
	$ai_{22/24}$		$oi_{42/43/44}$

### 3.1.4. The Vowel System of EsY

According to Verschik, EsY is a sub-type of CoY, which has preserved archaic phonological features, such as the distinction between long and short vowels and the quality of certain diphthongs (1999: 265). In EsY vowel 54 is realised as  $ou \sim au$ , vowel 42/44 as  $öü$  and vowel 22/24 as  $ei \sim äi$ . EsY has front-rounded vowels  $ü$  and  $ö$ , which are due to German influence (Verschik 1999: 272-273). Though the distance between Helsinki and Tallinn across over the Gulf of Finland is less than one hundred kilometres, their Yiddish dialects and the origin of the Jewish population are not closely related, as one might expect.

<sup>15</sup>

As presented by Herzog (1965: 162).

### 3.1.5. The HeY Vowel System

Table 5 shows the vowel system of HeY. The table has been compiled on the basis of the information gathered from the interviews conducted for this study. On the one hand, looking at the diphthongs, HeY seems to be rather close to SLY. However, the long vowels and sporadic occurrence of certain diphthongs, e.g. *äi*<sub>22/24</sub> and *öi*<sub>42/44</sub>, remind one of CoY and EsY.

**Table 5. The Stressed Vowel System of Helsinki Yiddish**

<i>i</i> <sub>32</sub>	<i>i</i> <sub>31</sub>		<i>u</i> <sub>51</sub>	<i>u</i> <sub>52</sub>
<i>e</i> <sub>25</sub> (~ <i>ei</i> )	<i>e</i> <sub>21</sub>	<i>ei</i> ~ <i>öi</i> <sub>42/44</sub>	<i>o</i> <sub>41</sub>	<i>o</i> <sub>12/13</sub>
		<i>a</i> <sub>11</sub>	<i>a</i> <sub>16</sub>	
<i>ei</i> <sub>22/24</sub> (~ <i>äi</i> )		<i>ai</i> <sub>34</sub>	<i>oi</i> ~ <i>ui</i> <sub>54</sub>	

The HeY Yiddish sound system also contains some Finland Swedish (FS) phonemes. Some of these phonemes occur sporadically; others have established themselves as frequent allophones (*ä/ä:*). Table 6 presents these sounds beside the actual phonemes of HeY.

**Table 6. The Stressed Vowel System of Helsinki Yiddish with FS Influence**

<i>i</i> <sub>32</sub>	<i>i</i> <sub>31</sub>	<i>ü/ü:</i>	<i>u/u:</i>	<i>u</i> <sub>51</sub>	<i>u</i> <sub>52</sub>
<i>e</i> <sub>25</sub> (~ <i>ei</i> )	<i>e</i> <sub>21</sub>	<i>ei</i> ~ <i>öi</i> <sub>42/44</sub>	<i>ö/ö:</i>	<i>œ/œ:</i>	<i>o</i> <sub>41</sub>
		<i>ä/ä:</i>			<i>o</i> <sub>12/13</sub>
			<i>a</i> <sub>11</sub>	<i>a</i> <sub>16</sub>	
<i>ei</i> <sub>22/24</sub> (~ <i>äi</i> )			<i>ai</i> <sub>34</sub>		<i>oi</i> ~ <i>ui</i> <sub>54</sub>

### 3.1.5.1. Front-rounded Vowels

The HeY vowel system possesses front-rounded  $\ddot{u}/\ddot{u}:$ ,  $\text{u}/\text{u}:$  and  $\ddot{o}/\ddot{o}:$  (lowered to  $\text{æ}/\text{æ}:$  before  $r$ ), which according to the available literature do not occur in PNEY or in NEY sub-dialects, except for EsY, which has front-rounded  $\ddot{u}/\ddot{u}:$  and  $\ddot{o}$  due to German influence.<sup>16</sup> In most cases the front rounded vowels in HeY appear due to *mild interference*<sup>17</sup> from FS in words common to Yiddish and Swedish (Germanic words and internationalisms), e.g. *sistém* > *süsté:m* ‘system’ (cf. FS *system*), *tip* > *tü:p* ‘type’ (cf. FS *typ*), *gubérnator* > *güvärnä:r* ‘governor’ (cf. FS *guvernör* [gʷ-]), *literatür* > *literatü:r* ‘literature’ (cf. FS *litteratür* [-tʰ:r]), *religiöz* > *religiö:s* ‘religious’ (cf. FS *religiös* [-ö:s])<sup>18</sup>, ‘engineer’ *inženiér* > *inšenjæ:r* (cf. FS *ingenjör* [inšenjœ:r]). These words may also sporadically appear in their original Yiddish form. The data do not contain any examples with short  $\text{æ}$ .

We cannot rule out the possibility of New High German (NHG) influence in the cases of  $\ddot{u}/\ddot{u}:$  and  $\ddot{o}/\ddot{o}:$  (cf. NHG *System*, *Typ*, *religiös*), whereas  $\text{u}/\text{u}:$  and the allophonic  $\text{æ}/\text{æ}:$  are clearly FS sounds. However, according to the available data it seems that front rounded vowels seem to appear more often when the Swedish counterpart has them (see Chapter 8 §2.1.2.).

Front-rounded (unstressed)  $\ddot{o}$  has been registered in some Hebrew-Aramaic words, such as the plural of ‘religious feast’ *jöntoi’vim* (StY *jontoi’vim*) and in the word *bä’göd* ‘garment’ (StY *béged*) (see §3.1.6.). The instances are, however, too scarce to draw any further conclusions. No cases of  $\ddot{u}/\ddot{u}:$  in words of other than Germanic origin (or general internationalisms) have been registered. The FS  $\text{u}:$  has, however, been encountered in some Hebrew names which have adopted the common FS pronunciation, e.g. *rʷ:ben* ‘Ruben’, *rʷ:t* ‘Ruth’.

### 3.1.5.2. Lowering of $e$ > $\text{ä}/\text{ä}:$ before $r$

The frequent lowering of  $e$  to  $\text{ä}/\text{ä}:$  before vibrant  $r$  is one of the most characteristic features of HeY, and its distribution is audible in all components of the vocabulary, e.g. *lä’rnen* ‘to teach’ (StY *lérnen*), *dä’räx* ‘way’ (StY *dérex*), *ä:r* ‘he’ (StY *er*), *mä:r* ‘more’ (StY *mer*). The lowering of  $e$  is most likely due to FS influence (see Chapter 8 §2.1.1.). This feature distinguishes HeY from Finnish

<sup>16</sup> In Brajnsk (East Poland) there has been recorded a front-rounded  $\ddot{u}$  ( $y$ ), which is probably due to the influence of dialectal Slavic (Herzog 1965: 198, 229).

<sup>17</sup> The word is changed on the model of a cognate in a language in contact, without effect on the content (U. Weinreich 1970: 50).

<sup>18</sup> In the available data there are no cases of short  $\ddot{o}$  due to FS influence, however, short  $\ddot{o}$  appears in the word *befö’lkeruŋ* ‘population’ (cf. StY *bafelkerung*, NHG *Bevölkerung*).

influenced Viipuri Yiddish. One informant (#6) originating from Viipuri said that this feature of HeY “disturbs” him.

There are some instances of the lowering of *e* > *ä* in other NEY dialects, for instance in Northern Poland; in Shuchin the word *ferfl* ~ *farfl* ‘pellets of dough’ is realized as *färfl* (Herzog 1965:196)<sup>19</sup>; also in EsY *e* is lowered to a short *ä* according to the BG model, especially in proper names, e.g. *berta* > *bärta*, *perlman* > *pärلمان* (Vesrchik 1999: 277). The fact that in HeY this feature is so penetrating and the fact that Viipuri Yiddish does not have this feature advocate FS influence.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.1.5.3. Lowering of *e* > *ä* before *x*

Similarly to the previous point, *e* is lowered to a short *ä* before fricative *x*, e.g. *näxtn* ‘yesterday’ (StY *nextn*), *pläx* ‘bold’ (StY *plix/plex*). It is possible that this feature is somehow related to the above phenomenon (see Chapter 8 §2.1.1.). No cases of long *ä*: have been registered before *x*. Some kind of lowering of *e* before *x* occurs in CY (as well as in SEY) with sporadic distribution (LCAAJ 1992a: 58), e.g. *lexl* > *läxl* ‘hole’, *šlexl* > *šläxt* ‘bad’. However, this can hardly account for the phenomenon in HeY.

There are also sporadic cases of lowering *e* > *ä/ä*: in other instances in HeY, e.g. *xévre* > *xä’vre* ‘brotherhood’, *mélex* > *mä’läx* ‘king’, *émes* > *ä’mes* ‘truth’, *béged* > *bä’göd* ‘garment’, *ben* > *bän* ‘son’, *beit knéset* > *beit knä*: ‘set synagogue’<sup>21</sup>. As with *ö* (see §3.1.5.1.), these cases are quite rare and therefore it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions. In some cases there might be a question of sound assimilation, e.g. *méläx* > *mä’läx* and *jontöi’vim* > *jöntöi’vim*.

### 3.1.5.4. Vowel Length

HeY has partly preserved the vowel length feature, which has disappeared from SLY. The length feature in HeY is most likely a co-influence of several factors. Possibly the SLY that the first settlers spoke in the 1830s bore within itself remnants of historical vowel length. We also have to remember that some immigrants came from the domain of ZaY, where, according to Mark, the distinction between short and long vowels was still audible between the World

19 In the Iasi district in Bessarabia *e* is also realized as *ä* before *r*, e.g. *verem* > *värem* (LCAAJ 1992a: 59).

20 Some VyY speakers in Helsinki sporadically render *e* as *ä* before *r*, which is possibly a later influence of HeY.

21 Sephardic form, the Ashkenazi Hebrew form would be *beis knéses*.

Wars (Mark 1951: 439). Also, CY influence cannot be ruled out. The preservation of vowel length has partly been attributable to the influence of co-territorial FS, Finnish and BG, which maintain the distinction between long and short vowels. The length feature in HeY is, however, a faltering system. The vowels may be pronounced in the speech of one and the same person occasionally short, occasionally long, e.g. *di:nen* ~ *dinen* 'serve', *jo:r* ~ *yor* 'year', *zu:n* ~ *zun* 'son', as can be seen in the sample texts (see appendix two). According to Jacobs (2001: 303), the distinctive length feature in CoY was also a system in collapse, with occurrences of free variation.

On the other hand, the length feature in HeY has been clearly influenced by FS (see Chapter 8 §2.1.3.). There seems to be a tendency to pronounce vowels in stressed syllables long, even in cases where it violates the historical distinctive length feature, e.g. *bin* ~ *bi:n* '(I) am', *bi:n* ~ *bin* 'bee' (cf. CoY *bin* '(I) am, *bi:n* 'bee), *zun* ~ *zu:n* 'sun' and *zu:n* ~ *zun* 'son' (cf. CoY *zu:n* 'son', *zun* 'sun').

### 3.1.5.5. Vowel 42/44

In HeY vowel 42/44 is most often realized as *ei* according to the SLY model, e.g. *azei* 'so' (StY *azoi*), *mei're* 'fear' (StY *moi're*). However, sporadically it may occur as *öi*, e.g. *geköi'ft* 'bought' (StY *gekoi'ft*), *pöiln* 'Poland' (StY *poiln*). Only very seldom does this diphthong appear as *öü*. It is interesting that this diphthong is also sporadically visible in the Latinized Yiddish texts printed in Helsinki, for instance in the pages of *Hazohar* and transcriptions used by the Jewish Dramatic Society e.g. <sup>l</sup>*schöis* 'lap' (StY *šois*), <sup>l</sup>*gröis* (StY *grois*) (see Chapter 6 §2.3. and §4.).

The origin of the recessive *öi*<sub>42/44</sub> in HeY is slightly unclear. It is not likely that *öi* ~ *öü* is merely a CoY influence, since very few immigrants originated from Courland proper and moreover another characteristic CoY diphthong *au*<sub>54</sub> is nearly totally absent from HeY.<sup>22</sup> As we saw above (§3.1.2.2.), there are remnants of *öi*<sub>42/44</sub> in other parts of the NEY domain besides Courland and Estonia. The diphthong in HeY could be a remnant of PNEY, because as mentioned earlier, the first Jewish settlers came to Helsinki as early as the 1830s. BG and FS were possibly conducive to the existence of *öi*<sub>42/44</sub> in HeY (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9 §2.2.). It is interesting and quite peculiar that the ZaY variant *eu*<sub>42/44</sub> has not been registered at all in HeY.

<sup>22</sup>

Diphthong *au*<sub>54</sub> was registered in the speech of some informants who had difficulties in keeping German separate from their speech.

As mentioned above, a couple of informants, whose one parent originates from the realm of CY, may render vowel 42/44 as *oi*. These cases are, however, rather scarce.

### 3.1.5.6. Vowel 54

In HeY vowel 54 is realized most often as *oi*, but sporadically also as *ui*, e.g. *hoiz* ~ *huiz* 'house' (StY *hoiz*), *oi'slernen* ~ *ui'slernen* 'to learn' (StY *oi'slernen*). It is noteworthy that in the written (Latinized) sources cases of *ui* are extremely scarce. Sporadic cases of *au*<sub>54</sub> have been recorded in the data. It seems, however, that these cases are due to mild interference from NHG and FS, e.g. *au'gust* 'August' (NHG *August*, FS *augüsti*), *automátiš* 'automatically' (NHG *automatisch*, FS *automátiskt*).

### 3.1.5.7. Vowel 22/24

HeY realizes vowel 22/24 as *ei*, e.g. *zei* 'they' (StY *zei*), *šein* 'beautiful' (StY *šein*). However, a few cases of the realization *äi* have been recorded, e.g. *mäi'nen* 'to mean' *úfgécäixnt* 'written down'. The realization *äi* is typical of CoY, EsY and has been attested in the Stuchin region in North-Eastern Poland (Herzog 1965: 177). The occurrence of *äi*<sub>22/24</sub> in HeY is most likely due to BG influence, though CoY influence cannot be ruled out (see Chapter 9 §2.2.).

### 3.1.5.8. Vowel 34

Vowel 34 is realized in HeY as *ai*, e.g. *šai'le* 'question' (StY *šai'le*), *frai'tik* 'Friday' (StY *frai'tik*). The sporadic realization *äi*, e.g. *va:ršai'nlix* 'probably' (StY *varšai'nlex*), *cväig* 'branch' (StY *cvaig*), is especially interesting because we cannot find any similar cases in the available literature on Yiddish dialects. The vacillation *ai* > *äi* could be due to BG influence. This will be further discussed in Chapter 9 (§2.2.).

### 3.1.5.9. Diphthongization of Vowel 25

In some words vowel 25 is occasionally diphthongized to *ei*, as is the case with *redn* > *reidn* 'to speak', *flegn* > *fleign* 'used to', *švédiš* > *švei'diš* 'Swedish'. This is a typical CY feature but sporadic cases have been registered all over the NEY area (LCAAJ 1992a: 74).

### 3.1.5.10. General Remarks on HeY Diphthongs

As we see from above and in the summary of diphthongs below (Table 7), HeY seems to follow Vilna-type Yiddish (SLY) in the realizations of vowels 42/44 and 54. There are two possible explanations for this: 1) the majority of the immigrant spoke a Vilna-type dialect, 2) the status of Vilna-type Yiddish was higher than the sub-dialects with archaic diphthongs, not to mention CY, which has been clearly considered inferior.<sup>23</sup> Most likely both factors have acted together.

Table 7. Summary of Diphthongs

	22/24	42/44	54	34	PRESERVATION OF LONG VOWELS
CY	aī	oī	o: ~ ou	a:	+
SLY	ei	eī	oi ~ ui	ai	-
ZaY	ei	eu	ou	ai	partial
CoY	äi	öü ~ öi	au	ai	+
HeY	ei	ei ~ öi	oī ~ ui	ai	partial

### 3.1.6. Unstressed Vowels

Phonematically unstressed *e*, the schwa vowel, has a tendency to developing towards central *ə*, but in the transcriptions in this work, especially in the sample texts, the objective has been to present it as accurately as possible and therefore in these positions occur the vowels *e*, *i*, *ä*, *ö* and *u*, e.g. *gezúnt* ‘health’ (cf. *gəzúnt*), *givé:n* ‘was’ (cf. *gəvén*), *kei’xäs* ‘strength’ (cf. *kei’xəs*), *bä’göd* ‘garment’ (cf. *bégəd*), *gefúnun* ‘found’ (cf. *gefúnən*). Also in FS speakers try to find suitable approximate values for unstressed vowels.

Unstressed *e* before *r* and *x* is frequently lowered to a short *ä*, as stressed *e* before *r* and *x* (§3.1.5.2. and §3.1.5.3.), e.g. *zei’jär* ‘very’ (StY *zei’er*), *dä’räx* ‘way’ (StY *dérex*).

<sup>23</sup> This has come up in several interviews (see Introduction §1.2.).



### 3.2. Consonantism

#### 3.2.1. The Quality of *l*

In HeY there is generally only one lateral, a soft alveolar *l*. HeY does not differentiate between alveolar *l* and palatalized *l*, as some dialects do (Katz 1987: 31-32), for instance in North-Eastern Poland and North-Western Belorussia (LCAAJ: 107).<sup>24</sup> In this respect HeY is similar to EsY and CoY, which have a soft alveolar identical to that of BG (Verschik 1999:276). The HeY *l* sound and the loss of palatalized *l* is most likely due to FS influence.

#### 3.2.2. The Quality of *r*

The *r*-sound in HeY is a lingual *r*, not uvular, as in some parts of the NEY domain and many Yiddish dialects. Also in this respect HeY is similar to EsY and CoY, which have a lingual *r* under BG influence (Verschik 1999:276; Bin-Nun 1973: 98) The stabilizing of lingual *r* in HeY is most likely due to FS influence.

#### 3.2.3. Voiced Consonants in Word-final Position

It is characteristic of NEY dialects that the voiced consonants *b*, *g*, *d*, *v*, *z* and *ž* remain voiced in word-final position (Mark 1951: 434), unlike in CY, where they undergo devoicing (*b* > *v*, *g* > *k*, *d* > *t*, *v* > *f*, *z* > *s*, *ž* > *š*), e.g. *reid* > *reit* 'speech', *briv* > *brif* 'letter'. HeY seems to follow the NEY pattern in this case; however, occasionally slight devoicing has been recorded, for instance, with word-final *v*, e.g. *briv* > *brif* 'letter' (in all instances). Swedish has supported the preservation of voiced consonants in word-final position.

#### 3.2.4. The Quality of *x*

In HeY *x* is pronounced as an alveolar fricative, not as a velar uvular fricative as generally in Yiddish. In some words *x* may be pronounced even as a glottal voiceless fricative *h*, e.g. *éxet* > *éhet* 'also', *xále* > *hále* 'Sabbath bread'. This is most likely due to FS influence, because FS lacks an alveolar fricative.

<sup>24</sup>

In the earliest recording (#1) used for this study a slightly palatalized *l* is still audible.

### 3.2.5. *Sabesdiker losn*

In HeY only occasionally does one come across cases of *sabesdiker losn*,<sup>25</sup> i.e. absence of the sibilants *š*, *č* and *ž* (Mark 1951: 436), e.g. *mišpóxe* > *mispóxe* ‘family’, *cúčepen* > *cúcepen* ‘to cavil’, *blónžen* > <sup>l</sup> *blonsen* [blónzen] ‘to wander’. *Sabesdiker losn* has historically been a characteristic feature of NEY. This phenomenon has been an object of mockery even among Finnish Jewry, for instance Viipuri Jews had a saying which was rendered deliberately with the sibilant *s* instead of *š* – *sei’ne síkses* ‘beautiful non-Jewish girls’ (cf. StY *šei’ne šíkSES*) (Hartikainen 1997: 3). In this respect HeY follows the pattern of southern dialects and StY. According to Mark (1951: 438), *sabesdiker losn* had vanished in Lithuania to a great extent between the World Wars. In HeY the absence of *sabesdiker losn* may be partly due to CY influence. Also the co-territorial FS differentiates between *s* - *š* and *c* - *č*, which possibly furthered the development in HeY. However, *ž* and *z* do not exist in FS, thus due to mild interference *ž* is sometimes realised as *š*, e.g. *žurnál* > *šurná:l* ‘journal’ (cf. FS *journal* [šur-]), *režisór* > *rešisæ:’r* ‘director’ (cf. FS *regissæ’r* [reš-]) and *z* is realised as *s*, e.g. *zúmer* > *súmer* ‘summer’ (cf. FS *sommar*), *modernizirn* > *modernisí:rn* (cf. FS *moderniséra*).<sup>26</sup> The change *ž* > *š* has been attested also in Slavic words, e.g. *pážar* > *pášar* ‘fire’, *žédne* > *šédne* ‘greedy’. There are other changes that take place in HeY sibilants due to FS influence, these will be discussed in Chapter 8 (§2.2.5.) The developments in Viipuri Yiddish might be quite different regarding the above phenomena because Finnish lacks (generally speaking) the sounds *š*, *z*, *ž*, and *č*.

It is important to note that HeY does not follow the pattern of CoY, which has partly preserved *sabesdiker losn* in words of non-Germanic origin (Jacobs 2001: 302). Some other changes have taken place in CoY due to BG influence; according to Weinreich (1923: 203), *ž* is generally realised as *z*, e.g. *žargón* > *zargón* ‘jargon’, *kíržner* > *kírzner* (also *kiršner*) ‘furrier’, and *š* may be pronounced *s* in words where the German counterpart has *ss*, e.g. *kušn* > *kusn* ‘to kiss’ (küssen), *kišn* > *kisn* ‘cushion’ (cf. NHG *Kissen*). There is also an interesting distribution of Hebrew-Aramaic and Slavic words with confusion of *š* ~ *s*, e.g. *saša* > *šaša* ‘Sasha’, *sider* > *šider* ‘Siddur’ (ibid: 202-203). In HeY a couple of similar cases have been recorded; e.g. the word *mistóme* ‘probably’ is occasionally pronounced *mištome*.

<sup>25</sup> Refers to *šabesdiker lošn*, lit. Sabbath language.

<sup>26</sup> There are sporadic cases of *z* ~ *s* in the realm of NEY (LCAAJ: 96).

### 3.2.6. Prosthetic *j*

NEY dialects have a tendency to add a prosthetic *j* in order to avoid hiatus between vowels (Katz 1994: 206). This feature is also typical also of HeY, e.g. *refüie* > *refüje* 'remedy', *hanóe* > (*h*)*anóje* 'pleasure'.

### 3.2.7. Diphthongization before *ng* and *nk*

In HeY very few cases of diphthongization before *nk* and *ng*, e.g. *bénken* > *béinken* 'to yearn', *bréngen* > *bréingen* 'to bring', have been recorded, and therefore this feature cannot be said to be characteristic for HeY. According to the maps in the LCAAJ (1992a: 60) this feature is predominant in Belorussia (with sporadic distribution in the realm of NEY, e.g. Vilna) and the Ukraine.

### 3.2.8. Word-Initial *ji* > *i*

In NEY word-initial *ji-* is rendered *i-* (Mark 1951:434). This is also a typical feature of HeY, e.g. *jídiš* > *ídiš* ~ *ídeš* 'Yiddish', *jingl* > *iñl* 'boy', *jínger* > *íjer* 'younger'.

## 3.2.9. Finland Swedish Features

### 3.2.9.1. The consonant cluster *ng* > *ŋ*

In HeY the consonant cluster *ng* is pronounced as a single post-palatal *ŋ*-sound as in FS, not *ng*, e.g. *zíngen* > *zínen* 'to sing', *baštélungen* > *baštélunjen* 'orders'.

### 3.2.9.2. Geminates

In HeY all consonants frequently geminate in intervocalic position, which is most likely due to FS influence (see Chapter 8 §2.2.7.), e.g. *ókoršt* > *ókkoršt* 'just now', *béser* > *béssär* 'better', *farhei'ratet* > *farhei'rratet* 'married'. In EsY, due to Estonian influence there is a similar tendency, but only with the clusters *k*, *p* and *t* (Verschik 1999: 277).

## 4. MORPHOLOGY

### 4.1. Grammatical Gender

#### 4.1.2. The North-Eastern Yiddish Gender System

Yiddish is historically a three-gender language like German, e.g. *der tiš* ‘the table’, *di hant* ‘the hand’, *dos ferd* ‘the horse’ (see Table 8). NEY has, however, developed into a two-gender dialect by abolishing the neuter gender. The NEY feminine gender has developed three sub-categories, i.e. 1) true feminine, 2) intermediate gender and 3) mass gender (Herzog 1965: 103; see Table 9).

According to Wolf (1969: 116), in the NEY gender system formal categories correlate strongly with semantic categories. Concrete non-count nouns belong to the mass gender, e.g. *di gelt* ‘money’, *di fleiš* ‘meat’ (StY *dos gelt*, *dos fleiš*); nouns referring to males are masculine and nouns referring to females respectively are feminine. The rest of the nouns are distributed between masculine and feminine, which is quite unmotivated. However, if the word falls in the feminine its further sub-classification is again motivated: if it is abstract it belongs to the true feminine gender, otherwise it is likely to belong to the intermediate sub-gender. Neuter nouns, which display an explicit resemblance to the canonical form of masculine nouns, may be assigned to the masculine gender, for instance the final *-er* of *fēncter* ‘window’, *toi’er* ‘gate’ is identified with the masculine suffix *-er*, e.g. *der lérer* ‘teacher’, *der šrai’ber* ‘writer’ (Herzog 1965: 106, 109).

Jacobs (1990: 85-87) introduces the concept of intermediate masculine gender analogical to intermediate feminine and the concept of empty category where gender can be assigned neither semantically nor morphologically and becomes the subject of (regional) variation. For instance, the following “empty nouns” lack both semantic and formal marking: *der brik* ‘bridge’, *der tiš* ‘table’, *di fus* ‘leg’, *di vant* ‘wall’ (cf. semantically-assigned gender, e.g. *der man* ‘man’, *di tóxter* ‘daughter’; formally-assigned gender: *der plónter* ‘confusion’, *di fráge* ‘question’). Jacobs (ibid.: 97) suggests the following model of gender assignment for NEY (quoted here directly from Jacobs 2001: 239):

1. Is the noun [+count]? if NO, then assign it mass gender (e.g. *di váser* ‘water’, *di broit* ‘berad’).
2. If YES ([+count]), is the noun [+singular]? If NO, then assign it to noun-plural status.
3. If YES (i.e., noun is [+singular]), is it marked for biological sex [+sexus]? If NO, then ask a follow-up question: Does the noun contain any formal marking (phonological/morphological)? If NO, then assign to the class of EMPTY nouns, which ultimately receive intermediate masculine or intermediate feminine gender; here the gender assignment is ad hoc, open to regional (within the NEY area) gender reinterpretation. If, however, the

[-sexus] noun does contain formal marking, then use that as a non-ad hoc basis for gender assignment, e.g. nouns ending *-er*, are assigned masculine gender, nouns ending in *-e* are assigned feminine gender.

4. If, however, the noun is [+sexus], then gender assignment is based on the biological sex, overruling noun-endings.

#### 4.1.3. Helsinki Yiddish Gender System

HeY generally follows the NEY gender system. This is supported by the two-gender system of the co-territorial FS. However, the neuter definite article *dos* may be sporadically encountered, e.g. *di ~ dos fleiš*, *di ~ dos vort* 'word'. These scarce instances can be regarded as due to CY, StY and NHG influence, c.f. StY/CY *dos fleiš*, NHG *das Fleisch*; StY/CY *dos vort*, NHG *das Wort*. Some NHG loans of the neuter gender may appear with the genuine article (sometimes even pronounced as *das*), e.g. *dos šikzal* 'destiny' (NHG *das Schicksal*), *dos ópfer* (NHG *das Opfer*). The neuter *dos* may remain uninflected in the dative case, e.g. *fun dos váser* 'from the water' (StY *fun dem váser*).

In HeY neuter nouns that do not fall in the category of feminine mass gender may be either masculine or true feminine or feminine intermediate gender, e.g. *der ~ di mol* 'time' (StY *dos mol*) *der ~ di vort* (StY *dos vort*). There is also vacillation in the gender assignment of masculine and feminine words that do not provide any clear derivational affixes, e.g. *di ~ der prográm* (StY *di prográm*), *di ~ der šul* 'synagogue' (StY *di šul*). In both the aforementioned cases the gender might change in the speech of one and the same person, which is, according to Mark (1951: 452), a typical feature of NEY-speakers. In HeY feminine nouns which contain formal marking (e.g. *-e*, *-ung*; *milxóme* 'war', *badínung* 'service') and would according to the above gender assignment model (§ 4.1.2.) belong to the true feminine gender, may, however, inflect as intermediate feminine gender (see below § 4.2.1.2.2.).<sup>28</sup>

The data collected for this dissertation do not provide enough comparative material to conduct a detailed study of gender assignment in HeY.

<sup>28</sup> Wolf (1969: 124) discusses the case of *súke* 'Sukkah' as possibly belonging to the intermediate feminine gender in NEY.

## 4.2. The Case System

### 4.2.1. Noun Modifiers

#### 4.2.1.1. Masculine Noun Modifiers in Helsinki Yiddish

Generally speaking, in HeY there are no major deviations in the conjugation of masculine noun modifiers. However, there is one aspect that deserves some attention. In post-prepositional position zero forms take preference over regular reduced forms of nasal prepositions, e.g. *fun\_ tatn* (cf. *fúnem tatn*) ‘from the father’, *fun\_ nadn* (cf. *fúnem nadn*) ‘of the dowry’. This is a typical phenomenon in NEY (Wolf 1969: 120).

**Table 8. The Definite Article Inflections in StY**

CASE	SINGULAR			PLURAL
	MASCULINE	NEUTER	FEMININE	
NOMINATIVE	<i>der</i>	<i>dos</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>di</i>
ACCUSATIVE	<i>dem</i>	<i>dos</i>	<i>di</i>	<i>di</i>
DATIVE		<i>dem</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>di</i>
AFTER PREPOSITION		<i>dem, -n/-m</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>di</i>

#### 4.2.1.2. Feminine Sub-Genders in HeY

##### 4.2.1.2.1. True Feminine in Helsinki Yiddish

In HeY the true feminine article *di* does not generally inflect, e.g. *mit di kále* ‘with the bride’, *nox di máme* ‘after mother’, *mit di iyere tóxter* ‘with the younger daughter’. In this respect the system follows the pattern recorded in the north (governments of Vilna, Kovno and Courland) and south-west (central Poland and parts of Galicia), where the accusative and dative inflections have merged into a single category<sup>29</sup> having the form of the former accusative (Wolf 1969: 129-133). Hence the inflection of the true feminine follows the pattern:

<sup>29</sup> Mark calls this the “objective case” (1951: 454-455).

Nominative	<i>di... -e</i>
Accusative	<i>di... -e</i>
Dative	<i>di... -e</i>
Dat. post-preposition	X <i>di... -e</i>

Occasionally, one may come across full dative inflection, type *mit der kále*. Similar vacillation has been recorded in the aforementioned NEY regions where the merger has taken place (ibid.: 133). This variation in HeY might be also due to the influence of the speakers, who originate from areas where the merger has not taken place, e.g. Belorussia and North-Eastern Poland (ibid: 131). However, the full dative inflection occurs in HeY almost as a rule in some prepositional expressions, for instance *in der heim* 'at home', *fun der heim* 'from home', *in der caít* 'during the time', *af der velt* 'in the world'. These can be taken as fixed expressions and therefore remain intact.

In HeY the attributes of indefinite true feminine nouns always appear with the suffix *-e* regardless of the case, e.g. *a júñe meidl* 'a young girl', *fun a júñe freiln* 'from a young lady'.

Table 9. The Feminine Sub-genders in NEY<sup>30</sup>

	INTERMEDIATE	TRUE FEMININE	MASS GENDER
NOMINATIVE	<i>di alte tir</i>	<i>di alte froi</i>	<i>di alte gold</i>
ACCUSATIVE	<i>di alte tir</i>	<i>di alte froi</i>	<i>di alte gold</i>
DATIVE	<i>der alter tir</i>	<i>der alter froi</i>	<i>di alte gold</i>
PREPOSITIONAL REDUCED FORMS	<i>af der alter tir</i> but <i>afñ tir</i>	no reduction	no reduction

#### 4.2.1.2.2. Intermediate Gender in Helsinki Yiddish

In HeY, as in NEY in general, the definite article of an intermediate noun may occur after a preposition in a masculine-type reduced form, e.g. *af di bet* > *afñ bet*

<sup>30</sup>

This is a normative formulation of the NEY case system, which closely follows the paradigm of StY (Herzog 1969:117). The examples translate as follows: *di álte tir* 'the old door', *di álte froi* 'the old lady', *di álte gold* 'the old gold'.

'on the bed', *cu di tir* > *cum tir* 'to the door'. After nasal prepositions, especially after *fun* 'from/of' and *in* 'in', the definite article is very often dropped, e.g. *in štot* < *in di štot* 'in the town', *fun dire* < *fun di dire* 'from the flat'. Wolf has come to the conclusion that this is a case of a reduced article rather than a prepositional phrase (1969: 124).<sup>31</sup> In these cases the zero forms *fun* (cf. *funem*) and *in*\_ (cf. *inem*) are obligatory with intermediate nouns (ibid.: 120).<sup>32</sup>

When accompanied by adjective attributes the intermediate gender inflects after prepositions as true feminine, e.g. *unter di turkiše krig* 'during the Turkish war', <sup>l</sup> *kegen di letzte chalerje* 'against the last cholera'. It is, however, peculiar and quite characteristic of HeY that intermediate feminine accompanied by adjective attributes may follow the masculine declension, e.g. <sup>h</sup> *cum rextn tir* 'to the door on the right', *cum erštn velt-milxóme* 'to the First World War'; after nasal prepositions, <sup>h</sup> *fun rextn tir* 'from the door on the right', *in erštn velt-milxóme* 'in the First World War'. There are no similar cases in the available literature. These forms could be understood as an extension of the masculine-type reduced forms of prepositions encountered with intermediate nouns, one step towards the masculine.

Also when the article is stressed, acting as a demonstrative pronoun "that", it may occur as masculine in intermediate nouns, e.g. *in dem medíne* 'in that country', *fun dem kléinem štot* 'from that small town' (c.f. *\*in (di) medíne*, *\*fun di kléine štot*). Such forms are not at all scarce in HeY. Hence, in HeY the intermediate gender conjugates as follows:

Nominative	di... -e
Accusative	di... -e
Dative	di... -e
Dat. post-prepositional (non-nasal)	X di... -e / Xn... -n / X dem... -n
Dat. post-prepositional (nasal)	X di... -e / X... -n / X dem... -n

In HeY the dative forms of indefinite intermediate nouns show a similar deviation in the conjugation as do the definite forms, e.g. *in a idiše kehíle* 'in a Jewish congregation' *mit a štolcn háltun* 'with a proud attitude'. Thus the conjugation of indefinite nouns follow the pattern:

<sup>31</sup> Wolf compares *in štot* to prepositional phrases, e.g. *in vilne* 'in Vilna', and to reduced forms, e.g. *in štub* 'at home'. The fact that the omission of the definite article is permissible only if there is no intervening articles, supports the latter alternative, thus *in štot* > *in der groiser štot* 'in the big town', not *\*in groiser štot* (1969: 123).

<sup>32</sup> According to Wolf, reduction after non-nasal prepositions ought to be considered a criterion for the intermediate gender because there are areas where reduced forms might be exceptionally feminine with regard to nasal prepositions (1969: 124).



Nominative	a... -e
Accusative	a... -e
Dative	a... -e
Dat. post-prepositional	X a... -e / X a... -n

We see that the reduced forms of definite articles in post-prepositional position serve as a “hole in the fence”, through which the intermediate nouns obtain full masculine dative forms, which concerns definite as well as indefinite articles. From the available data we can also draw out some occasional mixed forms, e.g. *far dem idišer kehile* ‘for the Jewish congregation’ (cf. HeY \**far dem idišn kehile*, StY *far der jidišer kehile*), *cu di rúsišn badínung* ‘to the Russian service’ (cf. HeY \**cu dem rúsišn badínung*, HeY \**cu di rúsiše badínung*), in which the feminine-type conjugation is blatantly confronted with the masculine-type conjugation. The illogic of these utterances can be explained or at least understood, because HeY tolerates both conjugation patterns with intermediate words, i.e. *cu di rúsiše badínung* ~ *cu dem rúsišn badínung*.

#### 4.2.1.2.3. Mass Gender in Helsinki Yiddish

In HeY mass nouns most frequently occur as feminine, but, as we saw earlier, they might occasionally be neuter. When feminine they follow the NEY system, in which the inflectional forms of the article and adjective are in all respects identical to the plural (Wolf 1969: 127), e.g. *mai’ne kontánte gelt* ‘my cash’, *far grei’sé gelt* ‘for a large sum of money’. The verb followed by a mass noun is in the singular (ibid.).<sup>33</sup> The conjugation of mass nouns is as follows:

Nominative	di... -e
Accusative	di... -e
Dative	di... -e
D. post-preposition	X di... -e

#### 4.2.2. Pronouns

##### 4.2.2.1. Merger of Accusative and Dative Forms

In HeY, as in many parts of the NEY domain, the accusative forms of the first and second persons singular and third person singular feminine have fallen together

<sup>33</sup> The available data do not provide any examples.

with their historical dative forms (Wolf 1969: 142), resulting in the first and second person *mir* and *dir* and in the third person feminine *ir* (cf. with Table 10). Examples, *er hot mir gebétn* ‘he asked me’, <sup>H</sup> *ix volt dir af di hent getrogn* ‘I would carry you in my arms’, *ix hob ir gezé:n* ‘I saw her’.

**Table 10. Pronouns in StY**

	ACCUSATIVE	DATIVE
1 <sup>ST</sup> PERSON	<i>mix</i>	<i>mir</i>
2 <sup>ND</sup> PERSON	<i>dix</i>	<i>dir</i>
3 <sup>RD</sup> PERSON (F)	<i>zi</i>	<i>ir</i>
3 <sup>RD</sup> PERSON (F)	<i>im</i>	<i>im</i>

However, due to either CY, StY or NHG influence one may occasionally come across more standard usage of the pronouns.

#### 4.2.2.2. The Relative Pronoun “it”

Yiddish generally refers to nouns with personal pronouns according to the gender, i.e. *der* – *er*, *di* – *zi*, *dos* – *es*. However, in HeY occasionally the inanimate pronoun *es* is used to refer to nouns of the masculine and feminine genders, e.g. <sup>H</sup> *tut ois di kápe un git es* ‘takes off the jacket and gives it’. This is possibly due to NHG influence.

### 4.3. Verbs

#### 4.3.1. Past Participles

In HeY past participles ending in *-t* seem to take preference over the forms ending in *-n* (*-en*), e.g. *gerúfn* > *gerúft* ‘called’, *gehéisn* > *gehéist* ‘was called’ and even *geförn* > *gefórt* ‘travelled’, *gehált* > *gehólt* ‘kept’. Herzog’s maps show that the *t*-forms prevail more in the realm of NEY (1965: 143-144). However, according to Mark, ZaY has preserved past participles ending in *-n* (1951: 457). It is possible that the above cases in HeY are simply analogical forms with the past participles of regular verbs ending in *-t*. The Swedish past participle forms always ending in *-t*, e.g. *rópat* ‘called’, *fárit* ‘travelled’, possibly support the development in question.

### 4.3.2. The Auxiliary Verbs *hobn* and *zain*

NEY is known for using the auxiliary verb *hobn* 'to have' with all verbs when forming the past tense, unlike other dialects that use the auxiliary verb *zain* 'to be' with certain verbs, usually intransitive (Mark 1951: 457; Herzog 1965: 143). However, the use of *hobn* as the only past tense auxiliary is not universal throughout the NEY territory. In HeY the use of the auxiliary *hobn* is quite common, e.g. *er hot gefórn* 'he travelled', *zi hot gevén* 'she was'. Some speakers, however, frequently use *zain* in such cases, i.e. *er iz gefórn*, *zi iz gevén*, for instance informant #16, whose father originated from central Poland.

### 4.3.3. The verbal prefix *ce->cu-*

According to Mark (1951:433), the verbal prefix *ce-* appears as *cu-* in NEY. This feature is frequently audible in HeY, e.g. *cežúzet* > *cužúzet* 'confused', *cebróxn* > <sup>H</sup>*cubróxen* 'broken'.

## 4.4. Nouns

### 4.4.1. Noun Plurals

In the data analyzed there are some cases where strong nouns have formed a plural analogical to regular nouns, e.g. *hoiz* – *hoi'zer* 'house, -s' (cf. StY *hai'zer*), *vort* – *vortn* 'word, -s' (cf. StY *vértér*). Also in the Hebrew-Aramaic component, there were some occasional masculine plural forms analogical to the plurals of Germanic and Slavic words, e.g. *bóxer* – *bóxers* 'young man' (cf. StY *bóxerim*), *xei'der* – *xei'ders* 'heder, -s' (cf. StY *xádorim*).

## 5. LEXICON

The Jewish immigrants who came to Helsinki from various parts of the Pale of Settlement and Russian Empire brought with them different types of vocabularies. For instance, the ZaY lexicon has historically included many Hebraisms and some Lithuanianisms, whereas SLY has had more Slavic loans, especially Polish words (Mark 1951: 439, 442). CY vocabulary is naturally quite different from the lexicon of the NEY sub-dialects. Over time HeY formed its own vocabulary, to which new loans from Swedish and NHG were added. Swedish words have generally been applied to depict nature and everyday commodities as well as geographical places and official institutions, while German words refer to modern concepts, terms and innovations. Also, some English nonce borrowings have been

recorded in HeY, for instance *miting*<sup>34</sup> ‘meeting’, *hibru* ‘(Modern) Hebrew’. Though there is some variability in the grammar of HeY, the lexicon is more restricted to variation.<sup>35</sup>

The following paragraphs will deal with the characteristics of HeY vocabulary i.e. Hebraisms, general NEY features, Courlandisms, Lithuanianisms and Russian loans. FS and NHG impact on the HeY lexicon will be dealt with in Chapters 8 and 9.

### 5.1. Hebraisms

There is a clear difference in the use of Hebrew-Aramaic (HA) words between different generations of Helsinki Jews. In the speech and writings of those born in the period 1880-1900 the number of Semitic loans is much higher than of those born in the 1920s and '30s. This is partly due to the fact that the first generations born in Helsinki had the possibility of attending heders where the teaching was conducted in Yiddish. The decline in the HA vocabulary is understandable, since children born in the 1920s and '30s attended the Swedish-speaking co-educational school and were mostly taught in Swedish. The Modern Hebrew taught at the school seems to have had an infinitesimal influence on the vocabulary of HeY,<sup>36</sup> though slight interference is occasionally audible in parts of the traditional Hebrew component of Yiddish, e.g. *lemóšl* > *lemašál* ‘for instance’ *šábes* > *šabát* ‘Sabbath’. Occasionally, even the Modern Hebrew taught in the Ashkenazic pronunciation (until the 1930s) is audible, e.g. *sou'fer* ‘Torah scribe’ (StY *soi'fer*; NEY *sei'fer*), *sxous* ‘merit’ (StY *sxus*).<sup>37</sup> The fact that there was no yeshiva in Finland and very few children were sent abroad to study in Jewish institutions also affected the use of HA words in the downward dissection.

Many HA words were replaced by their Germanic Yiddish counterparts or NHG loans and occasionally by Swedish or Russian words. Besides the aforementioned reasons the general tendency in the Yiddish world to use Germanic words must have also had influence on developments in Helsinki.

<sup>34</sup> Possibly also from Russian *miting* ‘mass meeting, demonstration’.

<sup>35</sup> For instance, the members of Idishe vort (Yiddish discussion group in Helsinki) respond to unfamiliar words, especially of Slavic origin – *dos iz ništ idiš* ‘that is not Yiddish’.

<sup>36</sup> One of the most frequently used words deriving from Modern Hebrew is *kípe* ‘kipphah, cap’ (Hebrew *kipá*) along with the Yiddish variants *jarmúlke* and *kapl* (old style silk cap in the shape of a forage).

<sup>37</sup> According to the available data (oral sources and transliterations of Hebrew texts), the Hebrew letter *ì* [xoilom] was pronounced as *ou*.

Instances where HA words are replaced by FS and NHG counterparts are found in Chapters 8 and 9 under the respective categories.

## 5.2. General North-Eastern Yiddish Features

The following list presents typical NEY variants or the pronunciation of some common words in HeY. These variants are contrasted with StY forms found chiefly in the Modern English-Yiddish-English dictionary by U. Weinreich (1977).

*a* indefinite article before a word beginning with a vowel; variable with the more standard *an*, e.g. *a armé ~ an armé* 'an army'. According to Veinger (1926: 189), this is a feature typical of the government of Lomzha. The same feature has been registered in EsY (Verschik 1999: 281).

*af* 'on' (see Mark 1951: 433); cf. StY *oif*.

*azétike* 'such'; variable with the more standard *azélxe*. According to Mark (1951:442) this is a typical SLY form.

*bálabos* 'master of the house'; cf. StY *bálebos*.

*gevélt* past participle of the verb *veln* 'to want'; variable with the more standard *gevólt*.

*ei'be ~ eib* 'if' (see Mark 1951: 433); cf. StY *oib*.

*ei'xet ~ éxet* 'also' (see Mark 1951: 434); cf. StY *oix*.<sup>38</sup>

*em* 'him' (see Mark 1951: 433); StY and CY form *im* occurs occasionally.

*éver* 'ear' (see Mark 1951: 436); cf. StY *oi'er*.

*holt hobn* 'to like'; cf. StY *lib hobn*.

*ímicer* 'someone' (see Rabak 1964: 615); cf. StY *émecer*.

*je* 'yes' (see Mark 1951: 434); cf. StY *jo*.

*jétvider* 'everyone' (see Rabak 1964: 615); cf. StY *jéderer*.

*kam* 'just' (see Herzok 1965: 207); cf. StY *koim*.

*kámat* 'even'; variable with the more standard *kimat*.

*míglax* 'possible' (see Rabak 1964: 615); cf. StY *méglax*.

*uf-* verbal prefix (see Mark 1951: 433); cf. StY *oif-*.

*vai'le* 'because' (see mark 1951: 433); variable with the more standard *vail*.

*cuvíšn* 'between'; variable with the more standard *cvišn*.

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The additional *-et* does not occur so much in HeY, though according to Mark (1951: 434) it is widely used in NEY, especially attached to prepositions and verbal prefixes (con-verbs).

The double diminutive suffix *-ele* is pronounced as *-ale* according to the ZaY model (Mark 1951: 440), e.g. *mei'dale* 'girl', *iyale* 'boy'.

### 5.2.1. Southern Features

The following words occur, on the contrary, in the Southern form:

*ject* 'now'; cf. NEY *ict*. This might also be due to NHG influence.

*ništ* 'not' takes preference over NEY *nit*.

*curik* 'back'; in Hey there are no cases of *karik* which is used in some areas of NEY alongside *curik* (see Mark 1951: 434).

### 5.3. Words and Phrases in Common with CoY

As we have seen, very few Helsinki Jews originate from Courland proper. However some do come from *Zamet* (~ Samogitia). M. Weinreich, in his classical work on CoY from 1923, listed the special vocabulary of the dialect, including some Low Germanisms. Some of the words and sayings<sup>39</sup> on the list are found in HeY. It is, though, highly possible that these words entered HeY from another source. The distribution of some words may have gone beyond CoY borders, as certain remarks by Weinreich indicate; others appear as general NHG loans in Yiddish.

*den* 'then' < NHG *denn*; cf. StY *dan*. This word is most likely a general NHG loan in HeY.

<sup>L</sup> *dik un štik* 'nice and fat'.

<sup>L</sup> *gehéft* 'yard' < Low German *Geheft* (PW: 222), NHG *Gehöft*; cf. StY *hoif*. This could also be a NHG loan that has undergone delabilization.

*jápe* 'Finn' (adjective *jápešer*) < CoY *jápe* 'Lett' (contemptuous) (M. Weinreich 1923: 221; OJŠ: 168). Could derive from Low German *Japper* 'one who gasps, one who opens his mouth wide, one who gapes, windbag' (PW, vol. 1: 316)<sup>40</sup> or Polish *japa* 'mug, phiz' (< German *Japper*). The Lithuanian word *japas* has principally the same meaning as in Low German but can also be translated as 'idler, dirty and untidy person, mischievous person' (LKŽ, vol. IV: 293). The HeY word *jápe* has been characterized as a "purely" Finnish Jewish word (Steinbock-

<sup>39</sup> The list incorporates some sayings, though this study does not generally deal with sayings.

<sup>40</sup> Also 'figure in the old town city hall in Königsberg which during timing spreads its mouth wide open and sticks its tongue out' (PW, vol. 1: 316).

Vatka 1995: 9)<sup>40</sup>, which indicates that the word is strange to some Yiddish-speaking immigrants. The word is still used in the Finnish and Swedish of the Helsinki Jews. The Finnish slang words *jä'ppi*, *jä'pi*, *jä'bä*, *jéppe* 'boy, fellow' (SSS: 360, 384, 387) or Finnish Swedish slang word *jáppe* 'boy, chap', hardly explain the existence of the above word in HeY.

<sup>L</sup> *krapírn* 'to die' < NHG *krepieren*; cf. StY *krepírn*, *pei'gern* (of an animal).

*pápe* 'father', < NHG *Papa*; cf. StY *táte*. Could also derive from FS *páppa*.

*toi'belox* 'deaf person, disobedient child' (literally 'deaf ear').

*u:r* 'clock' < NHG *Uhr*; cf. StY *zei'ger*. This word is most likely a general NHG loan in HeY.

*xóxem balai'le* 'silly person' < Ashkenazi Hebrew *xóxom balai'lo* 'wise at night'. Also recorded in the Lomzha region (Weinreich 1923: 223).

Only *jápe* appears as a "pure" Courlandisms; all the other words and phrases could derive from other sources.

#### 5.4. Lithuanianisms

In the data used for this study, oral and literal sources, no Lithuanianisms have been encountered, which is rather depicting of the situation. One would expect to come across some words, since some Helsinki Jews originated from the realm of ZaY, i.e. the government of Kovno (Kaunas), where distribution of Lithuanianisms has been widespread (Lemchen 1995: 14). The mother of one informant (#20) came from Mitau (now Jelgava, Latvia), but no Lithuanian (or Latvian) loans were recorded in the interview. Possibly, some words were once used in HeY but have vanished over time. The only way to find out would be to go through a list of Lithuanianisms with the informants.

#### 5.5. Russian Loans

It is interesting and quite peculiar that the time the Cantonists and other Jewish soldiers spent in Russia and at Russian army bases in Finland has left only slight traces in the Yiddish spoken in Helsinki. The soldiers learned Russian during their schooling and military service. However, their knowledge, especially literacy, seems to have been limited (Harviainen 1991: 61). There were few families which

<sup>40</sup> Also *hónte* 'loose-living woman, slut' has been characterized as a "purely" Finnish Jewish word (Steinbock-Vatka 1995: 22). This word appears in Stuchkoff's dictionary (OJŠ: 692) in the form *xónte* and *xóne*.

were Russian-speaking because the parents had grown up in Russia proper and received a Russian education. We also have to remember that the children of the soldiers attended Russian-speaking schools and the Jewish School in Helsinki (1893-1900), as well as the Mosaic School of Helsinki (founded in 1906), where Russian was taught and used as a language of instruction to some extent. Some young people who had attended the Russian schools in Helsinki even spoke Russian amongst themselves, for instance the Weinstein siblings (born in the 1880s) spoke Russian besides Yiddish (inf. #24).<sup>41</sup>

It is highly possible that the Russian loans were more widespread and later diminished with time.<sup>42</sup> One reason for this might be that Russian became extremely unpopular after Finland gained its independence in 1917, and speaking the language openly in the street was avoided (#17; Grünstein 1988: 16). Some informants say that their parents knew Russian well but never spoke the language; some parents even expressed detestation towards the language. Some informants were conscious of the Russian component and might have noted that a particular word is Russian and translated it into Yiddish or Finnish.

Some Russian loans may have entered HeY via colloquial FS, Finnish or Helsinki slang, which is according to Paunonen, a kind of pidgin which was originally used in conversation between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking working class people from the second half of the nineteenth century on (SSS 15-16). Helsinki slang has (had) many Russian loans. Tandefelt, who has studied multilingualism (Finnish-Swedish-Russian-German) in Viipuri, supposes that many Russian loans in Viipuri Swedish were adopted from colloquial Finnish (2002: 178). Viipuri German also had some Russian words that belonged to the common stock of Russian loan-words in Viipuri (ibid.: 211).<sup>43</sup> Tandefelt's list (ibid.: 224-233) of Russian words in colloquial Swedish and Finnish in Viipuri includes some words that are found below, e.g. *datscha*, *dwornik*, *lafka*, *maroschina*, *massina*,<sup>44</sup> *paltto*, *papiross* and *tvarogg*.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Informant #7 to this day speaks Russian with her sister, who attended a Russian gymnasium in Viipuri. The informant herself went to Finnish school in Viipuri.

<sup>42</sup> The Russian loans in Helsinki slang begun to diminish before the Second World War (Tandefelt 2002: 213).

<sup>43</sup> For some reason Tandefelt omits Viipuri Yiddish from her study. There is an ongoing study of Viipuri Yiddish by Jukka Hartikainen.

<sup>44</sup> In Viipuri *massina* (< R *mashina* 'engine, car') means a 'motor' (Tandefelt 2002: 227), in HeY *mašine* means chiefly a 'car'.

<sup>45</sup> In Vyborg *tvarogg* (< R *tvaróg*) means especially a small pie filled with curd cheese (Tandefelt 2002: 232).



- dáče** ‘villa, summer house’ < R *dácha* > colloquial Finnish *dátsa*, also in StY.
- dostáven** ‘to deliver, to enable’ < R *dostávit*’; cf. StY *ópbrengen*, *dermiglexn*.  
**dvórnik** ‘janitor’ < R *dvórnik* (m); cf. StY *strož*.
- jágde** ‘berry’, especially ‘bilberry’ < R *iágoda* ‘berry’, also in StY. The word ‘bilberry’ in Yiddish has the following variants: *čérnice*, *švárce jágedes* (OJŠ: 226; RES: 640). The word *jágde* is also known in Courland (Weinreich 1923: 220).
- jólke** ‘Christmas’ < R *iólka* ‘spruce, Christmas tree’. This word may be a HeY innovation. The first syllable of the Russian word *iólka* bears resemblance to the Swedish word *jul* [jʉ:l] ‘Christmas’ and *jólke* might thus be some kind of word game. The StY Yiddish word *nitl* is not used in Helsinki.
- kamité** ‘committee’ < R *komité* (StY *komité*). This is a pejorative form of HeY *komité*, and is pronounced strongly palatalized.
- láfke** ‘shop’ < R *láfka* > colloquial Finnish *láfka* (SSS: 542), also *bud*, *gešéft*, *butik*; cf. StY *krom*, *kleit*.
- maróši** ‘ice cream’ < R *morózheno*, also *aiz*; cf. StY *áizkrem*. The word might have entered HeY via colloquial Finnish (or FS), i.e. from *márošš*, *mároosi* (SSS: 625).
- mašine** ~ **mašín** ‘car’ (also ‘engine’) < R *mashina*, FS *maskín* [maši:n] ‘car/engine’. Also *auto* (NHG/Finnish), occasionally StY *oi’to*.
- narínke** ‘market’ < R *na rýnke* ‘in the market’. The word most likely entered HeY from the colloquial Helsinki Finnish/Swedish word *nárinkka*, which denotes the Jewish clothes market in Helsinki.<sup>47</sup> Later the word developed in Finnish into *nárikka* meaning ‘cloakroom’ (ibid.: 697) or simply a ‘clothes rack’.
- pagóde** ‘weather’ < R *pagóda*. The StY word ‘*véter*’ is used more often.
- paltó** ‘coat’ < R *pal’tó* > colloquial Finnish *pálttoo*; cf. StY *mantl*.
- papirós** ‘cigarette’ < R *papirósa* > colloquial Finnish *pápirossi*; also in StY.
- pol** ‘floor’ < R *pol*. The word *pol* has some distribution in South Belorussia (U. Weinreich 1965: 95). This seems to be the only word used for ‘floor’ in HeY from among the variety of available Yiddish words, e.g. *podlóge*<sup>48</sup>, *dil*, *brik* (ibid.: 96).

47 Jews in Finland were allowed (until 1917) to trade mainly with small merchandise, e.g. used clothes, tobacco, berries etc. In Helsinki the Jews had their own clothes market *narinkka* (*di ídiše narínke*) which was situated in Kamppi, near the synagogue.

48 Two informants, one Helsinki-born (#14), the other originating from Poland (#18), had a disagreement as to what “floor” is in Yiddish. The Helsinki-born man insisted on using the word *pol*, arguing that *podlóge* is Polish.

*pašár* 'fire' < R *pozhár*; cf. StY *sréife*.

*pašárnik* 'fireman' < R *pozhárnik*; cf. StY *fáier-lešer*.

*própuške* 'residence permit' < R *própusk*; cf. StY *pravožitelstve*.

*(disvíteli) slúžbe* '(military) service' R (*deistvítel'naia) slúzhba*, also *krígsvärn* (FS *krígsvärn*); cf. StY *dínung*.

*tvárovóg* 'curd cheese' < R *tvórovóg*; cf. StY *tvórex*.

*vakzál* ~ *vokzál* 'railway station' < R *vokzál*. Also in StY

*studín* 'jelly' > R *stúden* 'jelly'; cf. Yiddish *štúding* (OJŠ: 225), StY *pečá*.

*škóle* 'school' < R *shkóla*. The word *škóle* has traditionally meant in Yiddish a secular school (EJH: 517). Also Germanic *šúle* (NHG *Schule*) has been registered in HeY.

*časke* 'cup' < R *cháška*; cf. StY *kúbik*. The Germanic word *tas* (NHG *Tasse*) is used more often.

*čemadán* ~ *čemodán* < R *chemodán*; cf. StY *valize*. The Swedish word *kápsék* (FS *kápsäck*) is used more often.

## 5.6. The Impact of Finnish.

HeY contains very few Finnish loans. In the interviews Finnish words occur only in momentary borrowings, not as frequently used loans. Finnish-influenced Viipuri Yiddish, on the other hand, was subjected to a greater range of Finnish loans. Viipuri Yiddish and its lexicon are, however, beyond the scope of this study.

## 5.7. Differences in Helsinki, Viipuri and Turku Yiddish Vocabularies.

There are slight differences between the vocabularies of HeY, Turku Yiddish and Viipuri Yiddish. A comparative study can be conducted only after extensive studies of Viipuri and Turku Yiddish are available. The greatest difference naturally concerns borrowings from the co-territorial languages, i.e. FS loans in HeY and Turku Yiddish and (possible) Finnish (and Russian) loans in Viipuri Yiddish, but there have also been other local variations. One such kind of local variation concerns the word for a 'prayer-house'; in HeY a room for weekday prayers is called *mínjen* and in Turku *štíbl*. The former word refers to the minimum number of ten men required for reciting collective prayers (Hebrew *mínjan* 'number/quorum') and the latter is a word used especially for a Chasidic prayer-house.

## 6. SUMMARY

Though HeY, due to historical factors, falls into the category of so-called colonial dialects (“mixed-dialects”), it is clearly a NEY dialect. HeY allows a certain amount of variation within NEY boundaries but has remained hostile towards distinctive CY features. The “Lithuanian Yiddish norm” has been predominant in HeY. This also reflects the idea entertained by the speakers that their Yiddish is superior to the southern dialects. No typical CY features regarding vowels, e.g.  $u_{51/52} > i/i$ , and diphthongs, e.g.  $ai_{34} > a:_{34}$ , have been registered in HeY.<sup>48</sup>

HeY has many features in common with SLY. This is congruent with the fact that, according to the available data, the majority of Jewish settlers in Helsinki originated from the areas dominated by SLY. The diphthongs of HeY reflect typical SLY features, i.e. phoneme<sub>42/44</sub> is pronounced as *ei*, phoneme<sub>54</sub> as *oi ~ ui*. Also, the loss of vowel length, characteristic of SLY, has been partly preserved in HeY. The nearly complete absence of *sabesdiker losn* from HeY can be accounted for by the general development in NEY (as well as the consonantism of CY, where there is no confusion between hissing and hushing sibilants). FS has placed its imprint on the pronunciation of sibilants in HeY; due to FS interference, voiced *ž* may be pronounced as devoiced *š* and voiced *z* as devoiced *s*. In morphology HeY follows quite closely general NEY features. The gender assignment has been affected by the loss of neuter gender. The feminine gender has three sub-categories, i.e. true feminine, intermediate gender and mass gender. The reduced masculine definite forms after nasal prepositions occur as a rule in the zero form, e.g. *fun tatn* (cf. *fínem tatn*). In HeY, the true feminine definite article *di* does not inflect as in SLY (also in CoY). In HeY the intermediate gender has taken one further step towards the masculine, i.e. the reduced forms of the articles may also occur when the noun is accompanied by attributes, e.g. type *cum rextn tir* ‘to the door on the right’ (cf. *\*cu di réxte tir*). In the nominative these words normally occur as feminine, though occasionally masculine forms are also encountered. The mass gender follows the general NEY pattern. In the pronoun system the accusative forms of singular personal pronouns have emerged together with the dative forms. HeY generally employs the auxiliary verb *hobn* with all verbs when forming the past tense, as is characteristic of NEY, though occasionally *zain* is used by some speakers when appropriate, cf. *ix hob gevéen ~ ix bin gevéen* ‘I was’. Past participles are frequently formed with the suffix *-t*, which is also a typical feature of SLY.

There are, however, features which point to BaY (e.g. CoY, ZaY and EsY) influence, i.e. the partial preservation of vowel length and the recessive diphthong *öi ~ öü*<sub>42/44</sub>. Both phenomena may, though, be historical remnants of PNEY rather

<sup>48</sup> Except one informant (#18) born in Poland.

than direct influence from BaY. In both cases the cause may lie in PNEY. According to available data, migration from Courland and Estonia to Helsinki was minimal, though some immigrants came from Samogitia. The fact that the characteristic CoY diphthong *au* ~ *ou*<sub>54</sub> has not entered HeY further supports the above argument. (The possible BG and FS influence on HeY *öi* will be discussed in Chapter 9 §2.2.). The partial preservation of vowel length is most likely a synergism of many factors, as we can see from the chart below. The only influence acting counter to the existence of vowel length is SLY:

	ZaY	CoY	NHG
	↘	↓	↙
←SLY	<b>HeY Vowel Length</b>		
	↗	↑	↖
	CY	FS	Finnish

Lexically, HeY differs slightly from SLY, which has a considerable number of Slavic words; HeY has taken the same course as BaY, by replacing the Slavic component with NHG and FS loans. This development in HeY is, however, an independent phenomenon, since loans from Low German, BG and Lithuanian are almost non-existent in HeY. The consonantism of HeY is generally close to BaY in the case of *l*- and *r*-sounds. However, in this case FS influence seems more plausible.

As mentioned above, clearly CY influence in HeY is hardly existent, even though some Jews originated from central Poland. The only features which might have some connection with CY are vowel length, sporadic neuter forms (with the definite article *dos*) and inflected reflexive pronouns. In this case, too, we have to take into consideration other possible explanations, i.e. the influence of StY and NHG.

## 8. THE FINLAND SWEDISH COMPONENT

### 1. PREFACE

Helsinki Yiddish (HeY) has been subject to some degree of interference from Finland Swedish (*finlandssvenskan*; hereafter FS), which has been the co-territorial language of the Helsinki Jews. Swedish, a Germanic language, has intermixed quite naturally with Yiddish. The similarity of languages also facilitated the shift from Yiddish to Swedish, which happened relatively early – many born in the 1920s and '30s could no longer speak Yiddish (inf. #2). Finnish influence on HeY seems to be reflected only through FS. According to Reuter (1971: 240; 1977: 21, 26), FS differs phonetically from High Swedish by reflecting Finnish influence and having preserved some archaic features. FS lacks the accent *gravis* (with the exception of some dialects) and the vowels in open stressed syllables that are rendered long in High Swedish may be pronounced short (Reuter 1980: 222). On the other hand, Helsinki Swedish (*helsingfors-svenskan*) has historically shown more High/Literary Swedish features than dialectal FS, for instance long vowels have been pronounced long in stressed syllables (Nyholm 1978: 40, 42-43).<sup>1</sup> Finnish relatively late gained a foothold in the Jewish community of Helsinki, chiefly after the Second World War, when the use of Yiddish was already marginal.

During the nineteenth century Helsinki was practically a Swedish-speaking town. The Finnish population begun to grow only towards the end of the nineteenth century and chiefly in the northern and eastern parts of the town inhabited by the working classes (Paunonen 1991: 21-24).<sup>2</sup> Jews lived mostly in the centre of Helsinki, which remained Swedish-speaking relatively long (Burstein 1978: 28, 34; Paunonen 1991: 24). Swedish also preserved its prestigious position well into the twentieth century. It is also important to note that the Swedish spoken by the middle class in the nucleus of the city differed from the Swedish spoken by the working class living on the outskirts of Helsinki,

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<sup>1</sup> In High Swedish, vowels in stressed syllables are usually pronounced long (or alternatively the consonant geminates); however, due to dialectal FS, there has been a tendency in the language of the Helsinki working class to pronounce vowels short in stressed syllables, cf. *tá:la* – *tála* 'to speak' (Nyholm 1978: 42-43). The historical shortness was present in medieval Swedish and has disappeared from the Swedish of Sweden, but has been preserved to some extent in Finland Swedish (*ibid.*)

<sup>2</sup> In 1870 only 25.9 per cent were Finnish-speaking, in the 1890s the percentage had already risen to 45 per cent (Paunonen 1991: 24).

beyond the so-called *Pitkäsilta* (Fin.) ‘Long Bridge’ (Nyholm 1978: 41). The Swedish spoken in outer Helsinki reflected more dialectal features (*ibid.*). The Helsinki Jewish community living in the centre of the city naturally adopted the Swedish spoken by the town bourgeoisie.

HeY has also been influenced by modern standard German, i.e. New High German (NHG), which was taught at both the Jewish and the state schools. The NHG influence demonstrates itself chiefly lexically and morphologically, whereas FS has also had a very strong phonetic impact. This chapter concentrates on FS influence on HeY.

### 1.1. Bilingualism in the Jewish Community of Helsinki

Most Yiddish-speakers in Helsinki have been bilingual (or trilingual), at least the generations born in the early twentieth century. They learned Swedish at school, some at home, and from people with whom they have been in contact. Swedish is the language of command of most of the informants interviewed for this study. Their use of Yiddish has been limited to the home environment and to the congregation and therefore their vocabulary has not been so extensive. The fact that Yiddish was not introduced as a normative language in the Jewish school founded in 1918 had a negative impact on the development of Yiddish and the use of the language in Helsinki.

The situation was the opposite for the generations born during the nineteenth century; especially for those who did not enter state schools Yiddish remained their language of command and they might have managed with a very limited knowledge and vocabulary of Swedish or Finnish. There are many anecdotes relating to the poor command of Swedish or Finnish. One of these is the story of a man who arrives at a tavern in Naantali and orders “*káksi pai’stettua bei’ce far mir ja hévoselle havrei’*” (inf. #22). This utterance combines all three languages, i.e. *káksi pai’stettua* (Finnish) ‘two fried’ *bei’ce far mir* (Yiddish) ‘eggs for me’ *ja hévoselle* (Finnish) ‘and for the horse’ *havrei’* (Swedish) ‘oats’.<sup>3</sup> Some Yiddish speakers perceived the Finnish alveolar fricative *s* (which is actually between *s* and *š*) as a hushing sound and replaced it with their hushing sibilant *š*. This sounds rather amusing in the ears of native Finnish-speakers and has been imitated when quoting the speech of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, as in the following tag from the Jewish community in Turku: “*šá:ra šá:ra néná: krá:pi:, éttä šínä šórmuš ná’ke.*” ‘~ Sarah Sarah scratches her nose that the ring would be seen’ (inf. #23).

<sup>3</sup> In Swedish ‘oats’ is *hávre*, in the above utterance the stress is on the last syllable, i.e. *havrei’*. This is most likely a dialectal Finnish partitive inflection of the word, e.g. (Fin.) *kau’ra* ‘oat’ > *kau’roi* ‘oats’ (partitive).

Grammatically too, the sentence is incorrect Finnish.<sup>4</sup> The immigrants had, of course, difficulties in learning new languages. However, the general opinion is that the newcomers learned Swedish relatively quickly and well, at least at the beginning of the twentieth century when, Swedish was already spoken by some families and used on daily a basis by most Helsinki Jews at work, at school etc.

Nearly all the informants interviewed for this study have a relatively strong FS accent in their Yiddish, but no Yiddish accent on their Swedish.<sup>5</sup> They have subjected their Yiddish to the phonetic rules of FS, though the actual first mother tongue of some informants was Yiddish. The most obvious explanation for this is the influence of Swedish-speaking schools and the environment. On the other hand, the FS accent in HeY and interference in all aspects of language is the result of much longer contact between Yiddish and FS, starting from the 1830s.

A typical linguistic history of the informants interviewed for this study is that their parents were Yiddish-speaking unilinguals (immigrants with some knowledge of Russian or Polish)<sup>6</sup> or Yiddish- and Swedish-speaking bilinguals, the informants themselves being trilingual (Swedish-Yiddish-Finnish) and their children Swedish- and Finnish-speaking bilinguals and their grandchildren Finnish-speaking unilinguals.

## 2. PHONIC INTERFERENCE

### 2.1. Vowels

Some FS vowels have established themselves in HeY as regular allophones, i.e. *ä/ä*: for *e* and *ö/ö*: for *e* and *o* (to a very minimal extent), and are audible in the whole vocabulary, whereas other vowels, such as front-rounded *ü*, *ɥ* and *ø* (*æ*) and their long variants occur only due to mild interference in words that are common to both languages.<sup>7</sup> Besides the above phenomena, FS vowels (marked bold in Table 7)<sup>8</sup> occur naturally in Swedish loan words.

4 The sentence would read in modern Finnish as follows: "*Saara Saara raapii nenää, että siinä sormus näkyisi*" 'Sarah Sarah scratches her nose, that the ring would be seen'. Word *siinä* might also refer to *sinä* 'you' (instead of *siinä* 'there'), i.e. "...*että sinä näkisit sormuksen*" '...that you would see the ring'. Word *kraapii* 'scratches' is a dialectal form (cf. standard *raapii*), typical of Western Finland.

5 Except those who originate from Viipuri or Poland.

6 The Cantonists trained in Russian schools and the soldiers in general must have obtained a working knowledge of Russian. Their spouses might have had some knowledge of the co-territorial languages (Polish, Belorussian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian) of their native region.

7 In FS some vowels may be pronounced in a slightly different manner when long.

8 The two digits after some vowels are explained in Chapter 7 §3.1.

Table 7. Rounded, Unrounded, Central and Back Vowels in HeY<sup>9</sup>

i:32	i31	ü/ü:	u/u:	u51	u:52
e:25	e21	ö/ö:	œ/œ:	O41	O:12/13
	ä/ä:				
		a11	a:16		

Table 8. Rounded, Unrounded, Central and Back Vowels in Finland Swedish<sup>10</sup>

i/i:	ü/ü:	u/u:	u/u:
e/e:	ö/ö:	œ/œ:	o/o:
	ä(:)		
		a(:)	

### 2.1.1. The allophone *ä/ä:*

In HeY *ä* appears as a frequent allophone of *e*. As we saw in Chapter 7 (§3.1.5.2 and §3.1.5.3.), *e* is lowered to *ä* before vibrant *r* and fricative *x*. The allophone *ä* may also appear in other miscellaneous instances.

In FS short *e* is pronounced before *r* as short *ä* (Bergroth 1928: 35). The frequent lowering of *e* to *ä* before vibrant *r* is also one of the most characteristic features of HeY, and its distribution is audible in all components of the vocabulary, e.g. *lärint* 'teaches' (StY *lernt*), *dä'rax* 'way' (StY *dérex*). The *ä* may be lengthened to long *ä:* in some words, e.g. *ä:r* 'he' (StY *er*), *mä:r* 'more' (StY *mer*). The verbal prefix *der-* is often rendered as *dä:r-ä:r-* in HeY, e.g.

<sup>9</sup> A similar table is presented in Chapter 7 §3.1.5., where Finland-Swedish sounds are superimposed with the HeY stressed vowels. In this table the diphthongs are omitted.

<sup>10</sup> A slightly adapted and simplified version of the table in Reuter's article *Finlandssvensk uttal* (1977: 22).



*dä:rmónen* 'to remind', *ä:rcei'ln* 'to tell', (cf. StY *dermónen*, *dercei'ln*). This is an analogy of FS prefix *er-*, which is pronounced *ä:r-*, e.g. *ä:rsetta* 'to compensate', *ä:rtappa* 'to find, catch' (SU: 62). In Finnish-influenced Viipuri Yiddish these features are almost completely lacking.<sup>11</sup>

Vowel *e* is lowered to a short *ä* before fricative *x*, e.g. *näxtn* 'yesterday' (StY *nextn*), *pläx* 'bold' (StY *plix/plex*). This feature is similar to the previous phenomenon of lowering *e* > *ä* before *r*; in HeY *x* is an alveolar fricative rather than a velar/uvular fricative, as generally in Yiddish, in other words *x* is pronounced in quite the same place as HeY *r*. However, the sound *x* is lacking in FS, and thus the ultimate cause of *e* < *ä* before *x* remains slightly unclear.

There are also sporadic cases of lowering *e* > *ä* in other instances. In some cases *e* is pronounced as *ä* after fricative *x*, e.g. *xévre* > *xä'vre* 'brotherhood', *kei'xes* > *kei'xäs* 'strength'. The allophone *ä* has also been recorded in the following words: *émes* > *ä'mes* 'true', *imecer* > *imäcer* 'someone', *begged* > *bä'göd* 'garment', *ben* > *bän* 'son', *mélex* > *mä'läx* 'king', *beit knéset*<sup>12</sup> > *beit knä:sset* 'synagogue'. The cause of these cases also remains unclear.

There are rare cases where *ö* appears as an allophone of unstressed *e*, e.g. *begged* > *bä'göd* 'garment', and *o*, e.g. *jontóvim* > *jöntöi'vim* 'religious festivities' (StY). The unstressed vowels were dealt with in Chapter 7 §3.1.6.

### 2.1.2. Mild Interference and Front-Rounded Vowels *ü, u, ö* (*æ*)

Due to so-called mild interference,<sup>13</sup> front-rounded vowels *ü/ü:*, *u/u:* and *ö/ö:* (*æ/æ:*) may appear in vocabulary common to Yiddish and Swedish, e.g. *süstém* 'system' (StY *sistém*, FS *system*), *tü:p* 'type' (StY *tip*, FS *typ* [tü:p]), *guvörnæ:r* 'governor' (StY *gubérnator*, FS *guvernör'r* [gü-]), *literatü:r* 'literature' (StY *literatür*, FS *litteratür'r* [-u:r]), *religiö:s* 'religious' (StY *religiëz*; FS *religiö's*).<sup>14</sup> The front-rounded *ö* has historically had three different realizations in FS, i.e. an open *æ* before *r*, as in FS *hör* 'hear', a half-open short *ö* as in FS *trött* 'tired' and a closed long *ö:* as in FS *röd* 'red' (Bergroth 1928: 35-36). This is also audible to some extent in HeY, for instance *ö* may be pronounced before *r* as more open, e.g. *amatæ:r* 'amateur' (StY *amatör*, FS *amatör* [-æ:r]), *rešisæ:r* 'director' (StY *režisör/režisér*, FS *regissö'r* [rešisæ:r]).

<sup>11</sup> One informant (inf. #6) occasionally uses *ä*, probably because she has moved to Helsinki while quite young and has since spoken Swedish.

<sup>12</sup> The form *beit knä'sset* reflects Modern Hebrew pronunciation (cf. Modern Hebrew *beit hakneset*), in Yiddish the word appears as *beis knéses*.

<sup>13</sup> The word is changed on the model of a cognate in a language in contact, without influence on the content (U. Weinreich 1970: 50).

<sup>14</sup> In the data there were no cases of short *ö* as a result of mild interference from FS. There are cases where *ö* appears due to NHG influence.

In some instances, front-rounded *ü/ü:* and *ö/ö:* may also appear due to NHG influence, especially in cases where the word is common to German and Swedish, e.g. FS *typ* 'type' – NHG *Typ* (HeY *tü:p*), NHG *religiös* – FS *religiö's* (HeY *religiö:'s*). However, these sounds do not seem to occur when only the German counterpart has a front-rounded vowel, e.g. HeY *finf* 'five' (cf. NHG *fünf*; FS *fem*), HeY *grin* 'green' (cf. NHG *grün*; FS *grön*), HeY *cvelf* (cf. NHG *zwölf*; FS *tolv*).

### 2.1.3. Vowel Length

As was discussed in Chapter 7 (§3.1.5.4.), HeY has to some extent preserved the distinction between short and long vowels. The present situation is quite confused, sometimes vowels may be pronounced short, as in the Yiddish of Lithuania proper (SLY), sometimes long, e.g. *jor* ~ *jo:r* 'year', *lérer* ~ *lé:rer* 'teacher'. The length feature in HeY has clearly been influenced by FS. According to Swedish pronunciation rules, with some exceptions in FS, the vowel of a stressed syllable is pronounced long or alternatively the following consonant geminates (Reuter 1977: 30; on gemination see §2.2.7.). Even vowels that should be pronounced short in certain words may be rendered long, e.g. *gas* > *ga:s* 'road', *bin* > *bi:n* '(I) am', *zun* > *zu:n* 'sun'. Thus the vowel opposition between words like *zu:n* 'son' – *zun* 'sun', *kaas* 'angry' – *gas* 'street', *bi:n* 'bee' – *bin* '(I) am' has been disturbed.

However, in some instances vowel length may be of significance for the recognition of a word in HeY. Sometimes the informant as an interlocutor could not recognize a word that was rendered with a short vowel, as in the words *tip* 'type' and *téme* 'theme'. This is most likely due to mild interference from FS, because in FS *typ* 'type' is pronounced *tü:p* and *téma* 'theme' *té:ma* (cf. HeY *ti:p/tü:p*, *té:me*). Therefore we may suggest that in certain words, especially in vocabulary common to Yiddish and Swedish, the long vowel is obligatory. Vowel length in FS loans is also retained.

## 2.2. Consonants

In HeY some consonants and consonant clusters have been substituted by FS sounds (on FS consonantism see Reuter 1977: 26-30). Some Yiddish sounds, such as palatalized *l*, uvular *r*, fricative *x* and the voiced sibilants *z* and *ž*, are absent from FS.

### 2.2.1. The Quality of *r*

In HeY *r* is pronounced as in FS, in other words as a lingual, alveolar vibrant, not as a uvular *r*, as in many variants of Yiddish. In this respect HeY resembles EsY and CoY (see Chapter 7 §3.2.2.).

### 2.2.2. The Quality of *l*

The *l* sound in HeY is identical with FS alveolar lateral *l*. In this respect too, HeY resembles EsY and CoY (see Chapter 7 §3.2.1.).

### 2.2.3. Post-Palatal Nasal *ŋ*

Most likely due to FS influence the consonant cluster *ng* is pronounced as a post-palatal *ŋ*-sound, as in the words *ingl* > *iŋl* 'boy', *lénger* > *léŋer* 'longer'. In other variants of Yiddish the cluster is usually pronounced as *ng*.

### 2.2.4. The Quality of *x*

In HeY the *x* sound is pronounced more towards the front than the back of the mouth, in other words it is an alveo-palatal sound rather than a velar or uvular *x*. FS does not have any counterpart to a *x* sound and probably therefore the HeY-speakers' *x* is "weaker" than is usual in Yiddish. There are even cases where fricative *x* merges with fricative *h*, e.g. the word *xónte* 'wanton' is pronounced *hónte*. Viipuri Jews call their former community house as *áhdus* 'unity'; the word ought to be pronounced *áxdus*<sup>15</sup> (cf. Whole [Ashkenazi] Hebrew *áxdus*, StY *áxdes*).

### 2.2.5. Mild Interference and *š* > *s*, *z* > *s*, *ž* > *š*, *c* > *s*, *x* > *k* and *g* > *j*

Due to mild interference from FS, there are various consonant shifts in the vocabulary common to Swedish and Yiddish. Hushing sibilant *š* may be replaced by *s*, e.g. *štel* > *stel* 'place' (FS *stá'le* [sté-]), *šver* > *sver* 'difficult' (FS *svár*). These cases might also, of course, be due to *sabesdiker losn* (see Chapter 7 §3.2.5.). The voiced sibilant *z* may be replaced by devoiced *s*, e.g. *zúmer* > *súmer* 'summer' (FS *sómmar*), *modernizírn* > *modernisírn* 'to modernize' (FS *moderniséra*). The affricate *c* may be replaced by *s*, e.g. *pelc* > *pels* 'fur' (FS *päls*

<sup>15</sup> The pronunciation follows the Whole (Ashkenazi) Hebrew model; in Yiddish the word is pronounced as *áxdes*.

[pels]), *komplicírt* > *kompmissi:rt* ‘complicated’ (FS *komplicérad* [*kompmiss-*]). The vacillation *c* > *s* has also been attested in the following cases: *gecíttert* > *gesíttert* ‘trembled’, *draicn* > *drai’sse:n* ‘thirteen’. This is most likely due to FS influence because in FS similar vacillation occurs, e.g. *potentiell* [*potenciel* > *potensiel*] (SU: 145). Voiced *ž* may be replaced by devoiced *š*, e.g. *žurnál* > *šurnál* ‘journal’ (FS *journal* [šur-]), *režiser* > *rešisæ:r* ‘director’ (FS *regissö'r* [reš-]). Fricative *x* may be replaced by plosive *k*, e.g. *xarákter* > *karaktér* ‘character’ (FS *karaktér*), *víxtik* > *víktik* ‘important’ (FS *viktíg*). Also the change *g* > *j* has been attested in a few words, e.g. *generácie* > *jenerašú:n* (FS *generation* [jenerašú:n]), *relígie* > *relijú:n* (FS *religió:n* [relijú:n]).

### 2.2.6. The Vacillation *o* > *u*

Due to mild interference, vacillation between *o* > *u* (*o:* > *u:*) occurs in some words, e.g. *módern* > *múdern*, *telefón/telefó:n* > *telefu:n*. Even in FS there is vacillation between *o* > *u*, e.g. in the words *anekdót* [*anekdót:t* > *anekdú:t*] ‘anecdote’ and *epók* [*epók:k* > *epú:k*] ‘epoch’ (Reuter 1977: 23).

### 2.2.7. Gemination

Gemination is very characteristic of HeY and presumably takes its premises from the aforementioned (§2.1.3.) phonetic rule in Swedish language concerning stressed syllables. In Estonian Yiddish, for example, gemination is attested only with *k*, *p* and *t* (Verschik 1999: 277). In HeY gemination occurs with most consonants, for instance *ókoršt* > *ókkoršt* ‘just now’, *záxen* > *záxxen* ‘things’, *kóšer* > *kóššer* ‘kosher’. In Hey a consonant after a stressed diphthong may also geminate, e.g. *maxlei'ke* > *maxlei'kke* ‘disagreement’, *farhei'ratet* > *farhei'rratet* ‘married’. In Helsinki Swedish a voiceless consonant may geminate after certain sonorous consonants (Nyholm 1978: 54); this is also audible in HeY e.g. *hélssinki* > *hélssinski*, *únter* > *úntter* ‘under’, *éltter* > *élttter* ‘age’. According to Reuter (1977: 32), it is typical of Helsinki Swedish that toneless consonants are pronounced long after a long vowel. This feature has also been attested in HeY, e.g. *histori:kken* ‘stories’, *beit knä':sset* ‘synagogue’ (cf. StY *beis knéses*).<sup>16</sup> The latter two features are typical of the so-called educated FS spoken in Helsinki and Turku (ibid.).

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The word *histori:kken* is adopted from Swedish *historik* (pl. *historiker*) ‘story, history’ (StY *gešixte*, -en). The form *beit knä':sset* reflects Modern Hebrew pronunciation (cf. Modern Hebrew *beit hakneset*).

### 2.3. Intonation

The interviews used for this study are not the best possible material for the investigation of intonation, because they are chiefly monologues lacking the tempo and expressiveness of a casual conversation. Rayfield notes that intonation patterns are imitated directly but also indirectly through imitation of constructions, carrying with it certain features of stress (1977: 72). Bergroth describes FS speech as monotonous and less nuanced compared to the Swedish of Sweden (1928: 30). Possibly some of this is true for HeY also.

## 3. GRAMMATICAL INTERFERENCE

### 3.1. Borrowing of Function Words

Borrowing of function words (conjugations, prepositions etc.) is considered as part of grammatical interference (Rayfield 1977: 64; Weinreich, U. 1970: 30). In HeY occasional use of different groups of function words has been registered. For instance, FS prepositions *från* 'from' and *av* 'of' (cf. StY *fun*) have been attested in the speech of the informants, e.g. *fron rúslánd* 'from Russia', *a lá: 'rer a:v ivrit* 'a Hebrew teacher'. The colloquial form *o* of the FS conjugation *och* 'and' occasionally replaces the Yiddish form *un*. A few cases have been recorded where the personal pronoun *zei* 'they' has been replaced by Swedish *dom*<sup>17</sup>, e.g. *far dom* 'for them', and the interrogative pronoun *vémen* 'who/m' by the shorter FS *vem*, e.g. *far vem* 'for whom'.

The use of the following interjections is quite frequent: *no* 'well' (FS *nå*; StY *nu*), *altsó* 'so' (FS *alltså*, StY *heist es*), *ju:* 'yes' (coll. FS *jo* [ju:], StY *jo*, NEY *je*), *nej* 'no' (FS *nej*; StY *nein*).

### 3.2. Borrowing of Constructions

#### 3.2.1. The Suffix *-t* in Adverbs

According to U. Weinreich (1970: 33), a bilingual may transfer a morpheme from one language to another in order to replace zeros. The bilingual HeY-speaker may add, in accordance with the FS model, the suffix *-t* to an adverb, e.g. *speciél* > *spesiélt* 'specially' (FS *spesiélt*), *relatív* > *relatív* 'relatively' (FS *relatív*). This seems to apply, however, only to words that are common to Yiddish and Swedish, hence forms such as *\*šnelt* 'quickly' and *\*hércléxt* 'cordially' have not been attested.

<sup>17</sup> In Finland variant *de* 'they' is more common.

### 3.2.2. Omission of the Definite Article

FS influence might explain the occasional omission of the definite article in unexpected places. In Swedish definiteness is expressed by definite articles and suffixes, for instance the definite form of *församling* 'congregation' is (*den församlingen*). As we saw in Chapter 7 (§4.2.1.1.), omission of the definite article is common in NEY, especially after nasal prepositions, e.g. *fun* 'from' and *in* 'in'. However, in HeY the article may also be left out after non-nasal prepositions, for instance *cu* 'to' and *af* 'on', e.g. <sup>H</sup> *prográm cu \_ algemeiner ferzamlung* 'agenda for the general meeting' (cf. FS *prográmmet för almä'anna mö'tet*<sup>18</sup>, StY *prográm far der algeme'iner farzámlung*), *zei zai'nen do af \_ besei'lom* 'they rest here in the (Jewish) cemetery' (cf. FS *dom vilar här på begrávninsplatsen*, StY *zei zai'nen do oifn [afn] besei'lom*). An instance has been recorded where a word in direct object position occurs without an article, e.g. <sup>H</sup> *men hot šusti'rt \_ protokól* 'the protocol was confirmed' (cf. FS *man justerade protokollet*, StY *men hot baštétiht dem protokól*), <sup>H</sup> *forzicender kac hot oifgegeben \_ reduvisning far dem komité* 'Chairman Katz gave the account to the committee' (cf. FS *ordfö'rande Katz gav redovisningen åt komitétet*, StY *forzicer kac hot oifgegebn dem barixt far dem komitet*). It might be possible that all the above cases are more frequent with the common vocabulary of FS and Yiddish. In this context it is relevant to mention that no full Swedish definite forms, of the type *församlingen*, have been recorded in the data.

### 3.2.3. The Uninflected Masculine Definite Article

A few cases have been recorded where the masculine definitive article does not inflect at all in the dative and accusative, for instance <sup>H</sup> *rede fun der forzicender* 'speech of the chairman' (StY *réde fun dem förzicer*), <sup>H</sup> *oncunemen der protest* 'to accept the protest' (StY *óncunemen dem protést*). It is possible that this is a result of FS influence, since in Swedish nouns and adjoining definite articles (*den*, *det*, pl. *de*) do not inflect in grammatical cases. With feminine nouns this feature is not visible because the feminine article *di* is rarely inflected in HeY (see Chapter 7 §4.2.1.2.1.).

### 3.2.4. Word Order in a Subordinate Clause

Yiddish and Swedish have similar word order regarding the rule of placing the inflected verb in second position within a sentence. However, the place of

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The phrase *almänna mötet* 'general meeting' may appear without the definite article *det* if it is considered to be one word or established expression, otherwise the article appears.

negation in a subordinate clause is different, since in Swedish it comes before the inflected verb and in Yiddish after it. This may interfere with the Yiddish word order, e.g. HeY <sup>H</sup> *mitglider velxe nit hoben becolt* ‘members who have not paid’ (cf. FS *médlemmar som inte har betálat*, StY *mitglíder velxe hobn nit bacólt*), <sup>H</sup> *perzonen velxe nit geheren cu* ‘persons who do not belong to’ (cf. FS *personer som inte hör till*, StY *perzónen velxe gehérn nit cu*). This feature has been attested only in written sources.

### 3.2.5. Use of the Imperfect *var*

Some informants quite comfortably use the NHG imperfect of the verb *sein* ‘to be’ (i.e. *war*, pl. *waren*), e.g. *er va:r do* ‘he was here’, *ven di kínder va:rn klein* ‘when the children were small’. At first sight this may seem to be a pure NHG loan, but the existence of a nearly identical form in Swedish, i.e. *var* (does not inflect in number), most likely prompted its use in HeY. It is interesting that the imperfect occurs frequently only with the verb ‘to be’, whereas imperfect forms of other verbs are very rare and usually in the singular.

### 3.2.6. Adjective Formation with the Suffix *-ske*

A couple of adjectives have been registered with the ending *-ske*, which derives from Swedish adjective suffix *-sk* (the weak form of the adjective). In HeY adjectives formed with this suffix have a humorous and pejorative meaning, e.g. *viborske* ‘Viipuri-’ (cf. FS *víborgska*), *óbuske* ‘Åbo- (Finn. Turku)’ (cf. FS \**å’boska*), *linderske* (*xóxmes*) ‘(witticisms/jokes) of the family Linder’ (cf. FS *Línderska*). The regular Yiddish formations of the above words would be *víborger*, *óbuier*, *mišpóxe linders/fun der mišpóxe linder*. On the use of these adjectives, see Introduction (§1.1.).

### 3.2.7. The Diminutive of Forenames

Among HeY speakers, diminutives of Yiddish forenames ending in *-u* and *-e* are very common, e.g. *mei’er* > *mei’kku* ‘Meir’, *šólem* > *šóssu* ‘Sholom’, *mindl* > *mínkku* ‘Minna’, *xáne* > *hánsu* ‘Hannah’, *faívl* > *fai’kku - fálle* ‘Fybush’, *nóxem* > *nóppe* ‘Nahum’, *ícik* > *íssi* > *íssu* ‘Isaac’ (see also Smolar 2003: 56).<sup>19</sup> These diminutives are used especially by the generation born in the 1920s. These types of diminutives most likely derive from Helsinki slang influenced by Finnish.

<sup>19</sup> Smolar lists the following familiar forms of forenames: Polle, Poju, Joju, Pingi, Poka, Plállä, Bonzo [Bonco], Jonka and Pinu.

#### 4. LEXICAL INTERFERENCE

The interviews conducted for this study contain relatively few Swedish loans. One of the reasons for this is that the informants strived to talk as “pure” Yiddish as possible. The interview situation was a little strange for them, because the interlocutor (i.e. the author) was Finnish-speaking – they did not feel comfortable using Swedish occasional loans or to switch over completely to Swedish, which often happens when talking with their acquaintances. For instance, code switching often takes place in the conversation group *Idishe vort*<sup>20</sup> and on-the-spot borrowings frequently occur. The written documents utilized in this study, especially the protocols of the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*, contain some Swedish loans.

It is difficult to determine which FS words found in the data have established themselves as integrated loan-words and which are mere nonce-borrowings.<sup>21</sup> With some groups of words it is easier to believe that the word has been integrated, for instance items that are new to immigrants or typical of/unique to Finland. In the Yiddish of Lithuania proper, for instance, many commonplace words were borrowed from Polish-speaking neighbours (Mark 1951: 442).

The lexicon of Swedish and German overlaps in many cases, and therefore it is occasionally difficult to unravel which language a loan-word is from, for instance *fest* ‘celebration’ (FS *fest*, NHG *Fest*), *kápe* ‘robe’ (FS *káppa*, NHG *Kappe*), <sup>u</sup> *förnuftig* ‘sensible’ (FS *förnúftig*, NHG *vernünftig*). This kind of *linguistic neutrality*<sup>22</sup> may be achieved, according to Appel and Muysken (1987: 126), between two closely related languages by words that are phonetically identical or very similar in both languages. It seems that these *homophonous diamorphs* are easily transmitted to HeY (see, for instance, §4.2.).<sup>23</sup> There is a partly parallel phenomenon in EsY, which has borrowed Germanic words (Low German, Baltic German, NHG and Swedish) occurring in Estonian (Verschik 1999b: 13).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The group was founded by Isak Kantor and the author in Helsinki in autumn 2000.

<sup>21</sup> The problem of distinguishing between code switching and borrowing has been dealt with, for instance, by Weinreich (1951:13) and Appel and Muysken (1987: 172-173).

<sup>22</sup> Linguistic neutrality refers generally to the similarity in structure between two languages which enables, for instance, code switching (Appel and Muysken 1987: 129).

<sup>23</sup> This is visible in this study whenever a loan word is followed by both FS and NHG sources.

<sup>24</sup> Estonian and Germanic languages have had a long history of contact and therefore there are many of Germanic borrowings, though Estonian is typologically quite different from these languages (Verschik 1999b: 13).



#### 4.1. Mild Interference from Finland Swedish

##### 4.1.1. Common Germanic Vocabulary

Swedish and Yiddish have a substantial common vocabulary and therefore the effects of mild interference from FS on the HeY lexicon are quite extensive. Besides international words (see §4.1.2.), there are words of Germanic origin that overlap in FS and Yiddish. This phenomenon has previously been dealt with briefly earlier in this chapter under the section concerning phonic interference (§2.1.2.). Below are some more examples:

*kónsnü:r* 'artist' < FS *kónstnär*; cf. StY *kínstler*.

*íñefü:r* 'ginger' < FS *íñgefära*; cf. StY *íñgber*.

*pa:r* 'pair' < FS *par*, NHG *Par*; cf. StY *por*.

*pels* 'fur' < FS *päls* [pels]; cf. StY *pelc*.

##### 4.1.2. International words

We have already seen that there are vowel and consonant shifts in many international words due to mild interference from FS (§2.1.2. and §2.2.5.). In addition, some structural changes may take place, e.g. the suffix of the word may change slightly or completely; also the stress of the word, which in Yiddish is usually on the penultimate syllable, may move to the last syllable. The following patterns may be derived from the data:

StY > HeY	StY > HeY	GLOSS
-ie > -í:	<i>enérjie</i> > <i>enärší:</i>	energy
-ie > -ú:n (ó:n)	<i>fúnkcie</i> > <i>fujkú:n</i>	function
-ie > -í: -	<i>famílie</i> > <i>famí:l</i>	family
- > -um	<i>cénter</i> > <i>céntrum</i>	centre
-er > á:rie	<i>bibliotéker</i> > <i>biblioteká:rie</i>	librarian
-er > -æ: 'r	<i>akompánier</i> > <i>akompanjæ: 'r</i>	accompanist
-et > -é:	<i>komitéét</i> > <i>komité:</i>	committee
-ei' > -é:	<i>armeí'</i> > <i>armé:</i>	army

#### 4.2. Family Relations

There is a clear FS and NHG co-influence in some words denoting family relations, e.g.: *kuzi:n* ~ *kuzi:ne* 'cousin' < FS *kusín*, NHG *Kusine* (f.);<sup>25</sup> cf. StY *švesterkind*. There is some vacillation in the use of these words: some use the FS-type *kuzín* for both masculine and feminine, whereas others differentiate between NHG *Kusine* and *Vetter*.

*ónkkel* > (old) FS *ónkel*<sup>26</sup>, NHG *Onkel*; cf. StY *féter*.

*pápe* > FS *páppa*, NHG *Papa*; variable with more standard *táte*.

*tántte* > FS *tant*, NHG *Tante*; cf. StY *múme*.

#### 4.3. Everyday Commodities

The largest group of FS loans discernible from the data collected for this study are words denoting everyday commodities, especially food products. This group is naturally exposed to regional influence and varieties.

*braks* 'bream' < FS *bráxen*, NHG *Brachs/en*; cf. Yiddish *leščš* (OJŠ: 247; RES:231), EsY *breks* (Verschik 1999b: 9).

*strö'mmij* 'Baltic herring' < FS *strö'mming*, NHG *Strömling*; cf. Yiddish *saláke* (RES: 496).

*bö'klij* 'smoked Baltic herring' < FS *bö'ckling*, NHG *Bückling*.

*lijon* 'cowberry' < FS *língon*; cf. Yiddish *brúslíne* (OJŠ: 226), *brúklénes* (Verschik 1999: 10).

*bló:bär* 'bilberry' < FS *blå'bär*; cf. Yiddish *čérnice*, *švárce jágedes* (OJŠ: 226).

*kané:l* 'cinnamon' < FS *kanél*, Finnish *káneli*, NHG *Kanel*, Yiddish *kanei'l* (OJŠ: 243); cf. StY *cimring*.

*ká:kke* 'cake' < FS *káka*; cf. Yiddish *kuxn*, *lékax*.

*buljój* 'chicken soup, broth' < FS *buljóng*, R *bul'ón*; variable with more standard *joix* ~ *juix*.

*sült* 'jam' < FS *sylt*; cf. Yiddish *varénie*.<sup>27</sup> This word also exists in Low German (*Sült*) but there it means 'prawn'.<sup>28</sup>

*snw:s* 'snuff' < FS *snus* [snʉ-]; cf. Yiddish *šmek tábik*.

<sup>25</sup> *Véter* (m.)

<sup>26</sup> In modern FS the word *farbrór* is more common than *ónkel*.

<sup>27</sup> The word *ai'ngemaxc* is used in Helsinki to denote prunes stuffed with almonds cooked in sugar with pieces of lemon and cinnamon.

<sup>28</sup> Finnish *sýlty* also means 'prawn'.

*kápsək* 'suitcase' > FS *káppsäck* [-sek]; also *čomodán*; cf. Yiddish *valize*.

*kop* 'cup' < FS *kopp*; variable with *časke* (see Chapter 7 §5.5.) and *tas* (see Chapter ) §5.1.); cf. Yiddish *kúbik, krug*.

Due to mild interference, the following two words are pronounced in the FS manner:

*káffe* 'coffee' < FS *káffe*, NHG *Kaffe*; cf. StY *káve*.

*te*: 'tea' < FS *tee*, NHG *Thee*, Finnish *tee*; cf. Yiddish *tei*.

#### 4.4. Miscellaneous Loan Words

The words classified in this section appear in both written documents (chiefly protocols) and conversations concerning the activities of associations and, for example, schools and military service. These words appear beside their more standard Yiddish equivalents. Words marked with the superscript <sup>H</sup> have been recorded in documents written in Hebrew characters.

<sup>H</sup> *grátis* 'for nothing' < FS *grátis*; cf. Yiddish *bexínom, umzíst*.

<sup>H</sup> *handelsbitrede* 'shop assistant' < FS *hándelsbiträde*; cf. Yiddish *gešéft-gehílf, šikjingl*.

*historík:k* 'survey, story' < FS *historík*; cf. Yiddish *gešixte, íberblik, mai'se*.

*krígvärn* 'armed forces', 'army' < FS *krígvärn*; cf. Yiddish *militériše maxt, ánše-xail, armei*'.

*la:g* 'law' < FS *lag*, Finnish *láki*; variable with StY *gezéc*.

*militä:r* 'soldier' < FS *militä'r*, NHG *Militär*; variable with StY *zélner, soldát*.

<sup>H</sup> *redovisning* 'account' < FS *redovisning*; cf. Yiddish *baríxt, xešbn*.

*sámmantr:de* 'meeting' < FS *sámmanträde*; cf. Yiddish *asífe, farzámlung*.

<sup>H</sup> *skulkassa* 'school fund' < FS *skólkassa*; cf. Yiddish *škóle-káse*.

<sup>H</sup> *stadgar* 'statuets' < FS *stádgar*; cf. Yiddish *takónes, gezécn*.

*te:vliŋ* 'contest' < FS *tä'vliŋ*; cf. Yiddish *fármest, kónkurs*.

#### 4.5. Loan Verbs

In the data collected for this study there are not many verbs deriving from FS. Verbs are generally borrowed slower than nouns (Appel and Muysken 1987: 170-171).

*lénnen* ‘to leave’ < FS *lä'mna* [lém-]; cf. StY *íberlozn*.

*ríjen* ‘to telephone’ < FS *rínga*; cf. StY *ónklingen*.

It seems that FS verbs ending in *-era* easily identify with the group of Yiddish *ir*-verbs, e.g.:

<sup>11</sup> *prenumeríren* ‘to subscribe’ < FS *prenumeréera*; cf. StY *abonírn*

<sup>11</sup> *šustírn* ‘to confirm’ < FS *justéera* [šə-]; cf. StY *baštétíkn*.

#### 4.6. Adjectives

There are even fewer cases of FS adjectives in HeY than of verbs; only a couple of cases have been attested, i.e. <sup>1</sup> *föruftig* ‘sensible’ (FS *föruftig*, NHG *vernünftig*, StY *sei'xldik*), <sup>11</sup> *nonšalant* ‘nonchalant’ (FS *nonchalánt*, StY *glaixgíltik*).

#### 4.7. Toponyms

Names of geographical locations to a large extent follow the FS model; there is a great deal of mild interference in the names of places outside Finland.<sup>29</sup> The names of *štetls* and towns from which the families originate are often remembered in their Russian form, which appears on the official documents. Here are some examples of names influenced by FS:

*amé:rika* ‘America’ < FS *Amérika*; cf. StY *amérike*.

*bélgien* ‘Belgium’ < FS *Belgíen*; cf. StY *bélgie*.

*helsínjfors* ‘Helsinki’ < FS *Helsingfors*.

*í:srael* ‘Israel’ < FS *Ísrael*; variable with more standard *isróel*.

*karélska né:set* ‘Carelian Isthmus’ < FS *Karélska néset*.

*nó:denda:l* ‘Naantali’ < FS *Ná'dendal* [no:-]. Naantali was a very popular summer resort among the Helsinki and Turku Jews and was also called by them humorously *Judendal* (inf. #16).

*ó:bu* ‘Turku’ < FS *Á'bo* [ó:bu].

*ví:bor* ‘Viipuri’ < FS *Víborg* [ví:borj].

<sup>29</sup>

However, Finnish towns may also appear in their Finnish form, especially if the interlocutor is Finnish-speaking, as is the case with the interviews conducted for this study.

#### 4.8. Loan Blends

In HeY some names of institutions and associations are called by their Swedish names with Yiddish attributes, thus forming a type of loan blend,<sup>30</sup> e.g. *téxniše lä'rovärk* 'College of Technology' (FS *Tékniska lä'roverket*), *ídiše sonjöföre:nij* 'Jewish Song Association' (FS *Júdiska sångföreningen*).

#### 4.9. Loan Shifts

An example of a loan shift<sup>31</sup> is the Yiddish word *farzámlung* 'meeting', which has extended its meaning to 'congregation' under FS influence (FS *försámling*), for instance *ídiše farzámluj*<sup>32</sup> 'Jewish congregation' rather than of StY *jídiše gemei'nde*.

#### 4.10. Loan Translations<sup>33</sup>

The Yiddish preposition *cu* 'to' is frequently used in the manner of FS *till* 'to', for instance <sup>h</sup> *men hot telefonírt cu her bolotovski* 'a telephone call was made to Mr. Bolotovski' (FS *man telefonérade till herr Bolotóvski*, StY *men hot telefonírt her bolotóvskin*), *forn cu ó:bu* 'travel to Åbo' (FS *å'ka till Å'bo*, StY *forn in/kein ó:bu*).

### 5. SUMMARY

The more than one hundred years of co-existence with FS, and several generations of bilingual speakers, have given HeY its own distinctive character, which deserves to be recorded and studied. It is interesting that a large proportion of the phenomena, phonetic, morphological and lexical, dealt with above are connected with the linguistic neutrality between Swedish and Yiddish. The common vocabulary affects vowel and consonant shifts, lengthening of vowels, loss of definite articles, changes in adverbs and various lexical modifications.

HeY has adopted the FS vowels *ä/ä:*, *ü/ü:*, *ɥ/ɥ* and *ö/ö:* (*æ/æ:*). The vowel *ä/ä:* has established itself as a regular allophone for *e*, especially when it precedes vibrant *r* and fricative *x*, whereas front-rounded *ü*, *ɥ* and *ö* and their long variants

<sup>30</sup> A compound word of which one element is native, the other borrowed (Rayfield 1970: 60).

<sup>31</sup> A word in one language changes its meaning under the influence of a word in another language, which is partly synonymous with it (Rayfield 1970: 60).

<sup>32</sup> Often pronounced as *fā:rzamluj*.

<sup>33</sup> In a loan translation a word or a phrase is reproduced exactly, element by element (Weinreich 1970: 51).

appear mostly due to mild interference in vocabulary common to Yiddish and Swedish or in FS loan-words. The controversies over vowel length in HeY were already discussed in the previous chapter. Due to the influence of FS pronunciation laws, vowels which should be rendered short might be lengthened, e.g. *zun* > *zu:n* 'sun' (cf. Courland Yiddish *zun* 'sun' – *zu:n* 'son'). The distinction between long and short vowels seems to have lexical importance only in words common to Yiddish and Swedish (and German), e.g. HeY *ti:p/tü:p* – FS *typ* [tü:p] (NHG *Tüp*) and, of course, in FS loan words.

In HeY *r* and *l* are pronounced identically with FS. Due to mild interference there are many consonant shifts in the vocabulary common to Yiddish and Swedish, especially in the sibilants, e.g. *š* > *s*, *z* > *s*, *ž* > *š* and *c* > *s*. Also, vacillation between *x* and *k* is characteristic, e.g. *xaraktér* > *karaktér* 'character'. Gemination, which is typical of FS, has heavily imprinted its stamp on HeY and is possible with all consonants. Even gemination after sonorous consonants and gemination of toneless consonants after long vowels, which are typical features of Helsinki Swedish, are audible in HeY.

In the data collected for this study there were not many morphological changes under FS influence. As we have seen some function words have been borrowed, though they occur very seldom. It is highly possible that FS influence explains the occasional loss of the definite article; however, this seems to be more frequent with words common to both languages. The occasional uninflected masculine definite articles further testify to FS interference on the HeY article system. The use of the imperfect form *va:r* 'was' is quite striking, and as discussed above, it possibly reflects a co-influence of FS and NHG. Other structural deviations in HeY are the use of the suffix *-t* in adverbs and the place of the negation in subordinate clauses.

The lexical influence of FS on HeY is quite obvious and prominent. It can be divided into two categories, i.e. the Germanic and international words common to both languages affected by mild interference, and "pure" FS loan-words. The common words pronounced in an FS manner constitute largely the FS accent in HeY pronunciation. As was discussed above, it is difficult to judge which words are mere nonce-borrowings and which have been integrated as real loan-words. In the data collected for this study FS words appear chiefly in conversations concerning household matters.

## 9. THE NEW HIGH GERMAN AND BALTIC GERMAN INFLUENCE

### 1. PREFACE

When considering the influence of modern German on Yiddish one is soon confronted with the controversial term *daičmeriš*.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, this term is understood as denoting words from New High German (NHG), which were adopted in Yiddish during the nineteenth century and are today out of fashion, and not being regarded as good style (Katz 1993: 167). New loans superseded many everyday words. Some of the German loans of nineteenth century have established their position in modern Yiddish, both in literature and normal speech, whereas others have become fossilized relics and remind one of the Yiddish press and *šund* (~ trash) literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (ibid.). Then there is a third group of words for which there is no equivalent in old Yiddish. These words have been opposed by some philologists, and attempts have been made to introduce neologisms in their place. The whole question of what is *daičmeriš* and what is not is a very subjective and emotional matter, often approached on shaky scientific grounds (ibid.: 168).

NHG words entered Yiddish in various ways and for various reasons. The main cause was the Jewish enlightenment movement *Haskalah*, which arose in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and spread over the whole of Eastern Europe. The proponents of *Haskalah*, the *maskilim*, eagerly studied German literature; later Jewish university students also became acquainted with German literature. German (besides French) was the absolute cultural language of the era. Besides German lexical borrowings, Yiddish orthography as a whole was refashioned after the German model. In the last decade of the nineteenth century the socialist and Zionist movements distributed propaganda brochures in heavily Germanized Yiddish, partly due to the fact that they were translated from German (Schaechter 1977: 52). Also, the heavily Germanized Yiddish press relied on the German press as a source (ibid.). The modern era demanded new words and concepts, often adopted from German. At times Eastern European Jews were in direct contact with Germans, for instance during the First World War under the German occupation of western and south-eastern parts of Russia (ibid.). One has

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<sup>1</sup> The word derives from Yiddish *daič* 'German'

to remember, too, that German- and Yiddish-speakers lived in close proximity, for instance in Latvia, Estonia and Austro-Hungary.

The adoption and popularity of NHG loans has been said to indicate how Eastern European Jews held their Yiddish in contempt and esteemed German much higher (Katz 1993: 172). According to Schaechter (1977: 52), Modern Literary Standard Yiddish was shaped with a set of invisible NHG criteria; German acted as a hidden standard for Yiddish

Among the first to enter the anti-Germanizing battle were the classics of Yiddish literature, especially Sholem-Aleichem. The actual “war”, which attacked all spheres of language, from orthography to morphology, started after the Yiddish language conference in Chernovits in 1908 (Katz 1993: 171). In the front line were such figures as Noach Prilutski, Zalmen Reizen, Ber Borochoy, Max Weinreich and Solomon Birnboim, the latter two of whom were the most radical. For instance, Prilutski and Reizen attacked words which had not established their place in the popular language and in literature, whereas the more radical Weinreich and Birnboim, who had grown up in a German-speaking environment, adopted a much more ideological attitude towards the question of emulating the Yiddish of the pre-*Haskalah* period (ibid.: 177-178). Borochoy, who also struggled vigorously against *daičmeriš* Yiddish, understood that some words enrich the Yiddish language, but stressed that they would need to be adapted to the phonetics and grammar of Yiddish (ibid.: 174). The anti-Germanizing battle continued until the Second World War, especially against the language of the Yiddish press. However, in the 1990s there were still disputes among Yiddish philologists concerning the position of NHG loans in modern Yiddish (ibid.: 205-208).

The aim of this chapter is to discuss different aspects related to NHG influence on Helsinki Yiddish (HeY), i.e. language contacts and attitudes towards German, differences between the NHG component in the press and in the spoken language as, well as linguistic features.

## 2. CONTACT WITH GERMAN

Modern German clearly impressed its mark on HeY, as we have already seen from lexical items in earlier chapters. The NHG influence came from various directions. The Germanized Yiddish press and general German influence on spoken Yiddish can be seen as an internal influence. An external influence can be considered school German and contacts with German speakers in Helsinki.



## 2.1. School German

As we have seen, even the curricula of the Jewish co-educational schools, which were founded in 1893 and 1918, included German, not to mention the state schools. There was a German school in Helsinki (founded in 1881), but, as far as is known, hardly any Jewish children attended that school, whereas some Jewish pupils had graduated from the Russian schools in the town. Bilingual (Yiddish-Swedish) children learned German with ease.<sup>2</sup> Some pupils switched their faltering Yiddish over to fluent school German, both written and spoken. Their spoken Yiddish was often passive, and they were not taught any Yiddish grammar and could barely even read Yiddish with Hebrew letters. One informant (#18) was aware that she used German loans and explained the situation as follows:

*Als kind in der heim ven x'hob gerét jidiš, x'hob ix nit geként daič. Un špeter hob ix zix gelérnt daič un ject bamérk ix az es kumt di dai'če vérter ba mir eix.*

As a child at home speaking Yiddish, I did not know any German. Later on I learned German and now I notice that even I use German words [when speaking Yiddish].

We do not know exactly what type of German pronunciation was taught at the schools, especially during the second half of the nineteenth century. For instance, the Jewish School in Helsinki (1893-1900) had had foreign teachers in charge of German instruction.<sup>3</sup> The German Gymnasia in Old Finland had been under the supervision of the University of Dorpat (Tartu, Estonia) and some of the teachers had a Baltic background (Hösch 1997: 51-53). It is quite likely that there was some Baltic German (BG) influence on the German taught in Finland.<sup>4</sup> However, this naturally depended on the teachers' background and education.

## 2.2. Contact with Baltic German

German was not a co-territorial language of the Helsinki Jews in the same sense as it was for Estonian Jews.<sup>5</sup> The German-speaking community in Helsinki was very small; in the 1870s it constituted only 1.8 per cent of the population (Nyholm

<sup>2</sup> However, some informants told anecdotes as to how they mixed Yiddish with German in class. For instance, informant #6 told me that once he had to translate the phrase "the peasant eats pork" and he said half mistakenly "der pujär ist xazer" instead of "der Bauer isst Schwein"; he was told off by the teacher for mixing Yiddish with German.

<sup>3</sup> Where they came from remains unknown.

<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, according to Tandefelt (2002: 176), German teachers in Viipuri tried to correct the pupils' BG pronunciation.

<sup>5</sup> On Baltic German and Estonian Yiddish see Verschik 1999a, 1999b and 2000.

1991: 24).<sup>6</sup> Historically, the community was not a very homogenous group; it consisted chiefly of Russian Germans (originating from the Baltic countries or other parts of the Russian Empire), Baltic Germans (immigrated directly from the Baltic countries) and so-called *Reichdeutschen* (Sentzke 1972: 15-17).<sup>7</sup> The Russian Germans are said to have led an isolated life, i.e. they did not associate to any degree with the German immigrants (ibid: 18). Taking into consideration the origin of the German colony, BG must have played a substantial role in the German spoken in Helsinki, as it did in Viipuri; the small German colony in Viipuri spoke chiefly BG with some features from St. Petersburg German (Tandefelt 2002: 176).<sup>8</sup> Interestingly enough, the BG spoken in Helsinki has not been studied.

The NHG diphthongs *eu* and *äu* [oi] were pronounced in the area of BG as *öü* or *öi*, and NHG *au* [au] as *au* or *ou* (Deeters: 1939: 134; Lehiste 1965: 57, 61). BG historically made a difference between Middle High German long *e*: and the diphthong *ei*, which were pronounced respectively as *ei* and *ai* (see Mitzka 1923: 23; Hinderling 1981: 128). The diphthong *ei* was rendered alternatively as *äi* (Lehiste 1965: 60; Bin-Nun 1973: 98). Kiparsky's notion (1936: 208) that BG speakers do not differentiate between the diphthongs *ai*, *äi* and *ei* leads one to understand that there was free variation in the pronunciation of the aforementioned diphthongs.

According to one Helsinki-born German-speaker interviewed for this study,<sup>9</sup> NHG *eu* was commonly pronounced as *öü* in the German-speaking community in Helsinki, e.g. *höüttə* 'today' (cf. NHG *heute* [hoitə]). The informant recalls that NHG *ei* was frequently lowered to *äi*, e.g. *mäin* 'my' (cf. NHG *mein* [main]), *va:ršäinlix* 'probably' (cf. NHG *wahrscheinlich* [-šain-]).<sup>10</sup> It is claimed that

<sup>6</sup> The total number of inhabitants of Helsinki in 1870 was 32, 113 (Nyholm 1991: 24). The German-speaking population of Helsinki was nearly the same size as the Jewish colony. In 1870 there were 270 Yiddish-speaking persons in Helsinki (Harviainen 1991: 67).

<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of the period of Finnish autonomy the Russian official and military machinery brought in the Russian Germans along with it (Sentzke 1972:15). As industrialization proceeded, experts in various fields were recruited from Germany (ibid.: 16). Gradually, merchants and craftsmen, who originated chiefly from the neighbouring countries (Russia, Baltic countries, Sweden, but also Germany and Switzerland) also immigrated to Finland; they came form the nucleus of the community (ibid.:17).

<sup>8</sup> In 1930 there were 439 German-speakers in Viipuri, they constituted 0,6 per cent of the whole population (Tandefelt 2002: 170).

<sup>9</sup> The interview was conducted by Benjamin Langer and Simo Muir in Helsinki in 2003. The informant was born in Helsinki in 1925. Her mother was a native German-speaker born in Helsinki and her father originated from Lübeck but had relatives in Helsinki. The recording is in the Finnish Language Tape Archives (SKNA 16958:1).

German teachers in Finland (before the Second World War) instructed their pupils to pronounce NHG *ei* always as *äi*. However, the available literature does not mention or discuss this argument. According to Nyholm (1978: 51), German influence on Helsinki Swedish was chiefly lexical, and was noticeable especially in the language of the bourgeoisie and in elevated style.<sup>11</sup> The BG pronunciation is still audible in some family names and loan-words, e.g. Reuter [röi'ter], Creutz [kröic], *terapeu't* [terapöi't] 'therapist', *preu'ssisk* [pröi'ssisk] 'Prussian'.<sup>12</sup> The BG-type pronunciation is also occasionally heard in some Jewish family names, e.g. Manteuffel > *mántöifl*, Weinstein > *vai'nštäin* ~ *väi'nštäin*.

They HeY *öi*<sub>42/44</sub> could be a remnant of the influence of Proto North-Eastern Yiddish (PNEY) and/or Courland Yiddish (CoY); the lexical influence of local (Baltic) German also has to be taken into consideration. On historical grounds, the CoY influence on HeY cannot have been very significant because according to the available data very few Jews originated from Courland, although some came from Samogitia, however. The exclusively CoY diphthong *au* ~ *ou*<sub>54</sub> is almost completely absent and the occurrence of *äi*<sub>22/24</sub> is also quite scarce.<sup>13</sup> HeY also lacks morphological and lexical items characteristic of CoY. The *öi*<sub>42/44</sub> in HeY is audible in the whole vocabulary, e.g. in the HA component *göirl* 'destiny' (StY *goirl*), *töi're* 'torah' (StY *toi're*), as well as in Germanic words, e.g. *köifn* 'to buy' (cf. NHG *kaufen*, StY *koifn*), *glöibn* 'believe' (cf. NHG *glauben*, StY *gleibn* ~ *gloibn*). The diphthong is clearly affixed to some NHG loan-words, e.g. *cöi'gnis* 'school report' (cf. NHG *Zeugnisse*, StY *cai'geniš*), *ü:berhöi'pt* ~ *i:berhöi'pt* 'generally' (cf. NHG *überhaupt*, StY *iberhoipt/ bixlal*).

Due to BG and the pronunciation of some German loans in Finnish/Helsinki Swedish (FS, HS), the diphthong *öi* must have enjoyed some degree of prestige. A very interesting document in this respect is a part of Sholem-Aleichem's play *Cezeit un cešpreit* 'Scattered and Dispersed' transcribed for the use of the Jewish Dramatic Society in Helsinki.<sup>14</sup> Some members of the society could not read Yiddish in Hebrew characters and were therefore given the "correct"

<sup>10</sup> The informant herself spoke "this way" until she went to school and started to learn German, later on studying at university to become a German teacher.

<sup>11</sup> Viipuri Swedish and Finnish also contained some loan-words from German. Tandefelt has listed some of these words in her study of multilingualism in Viipuri (2002: 219-220). However, only one word in this list shows clearly a BG pronunciation, i.e. *Ouflouf* 'plum soufflé' (cf. NHG *Auflauf*).

<sup>12</sup> See SU: 146, 183. Nowadays the diphthong *öi* has been superseded by *oi* due to school teaching.

<sup>13</sup> The diphthong *au* seems to occur in some loan-words, such as *šaušpiler* 'actor' (NHG *Schauspieler*) and *auto* 'car' (NHG *Auto*, Finnish *auto*, StY *oito*). With some informants who shift between German and Yiddish the diphthong *au* occurs more often.

<sup>14</sup> The play was performed in 1927 (*Sport och Nytt* no. 10-11 1927).

pronunciation in a Swedish-style transcript.<sup>15</sup> In this document nearly all the *oi*<sub>42/44</sub> (occasionally even hypercorrectly *oi*<sub>5,4</sub>) diphthongs are transcribed as *öi*, e.g.:

*Der ruach weis zei wäs zei tuen dā! Wischen nit āp di schtiwel afile, raisen sich öf di gārglen un röichern un röichern un röichern. Oisgeröichert sālñ sei schön wern!*

The devil only knows what they are up to here! They do not even brush off their boots, they speak loudly and they smoke and smoke and smoke. I wish they would choke in their smoke!

According to the above document and other similar ones,<sup>16</sup> the *öi* realisation of *oi*<sub>42/44</sub> seems to have been the norm in the Helsinki Yiddish *Bühnensprache*, if one may speak of such. The prestige of *öi* might also be one of the reasons for the partial preservation of the sound in HeY. There is also an interesting description of the state of Yiddish among the young in the early 1920s; an article in the journal *Hatchijo* (no. 2 1923: 8) states that: "The young are not so familiar with Yiddish; if they speak the language they speak Modern Low German, which they themselves develop."<sup>17</sup> Possibly the person behind this utterance found some features in local Yiddish, e.g. *öi* (NHG *eu* [oi]) and *ei/ai* > *äi* (NHG *ei* [ai]), which reminded him more of BG (which he would then incorrectly call Modern Low German) rather than Modern High German. These features could have been the diphthongs that we are now referring to.

Also, *äi*<sub>22/24</sub> might have enjoyed some prestige due to BG. It is quite interesting that the diphthong *äi* occasionally appears in HeY as a realization of *ai*<sub>34</sub>, e.g. *cväig* 'branch' (StY *cvaig*), *filäi'xt* (NHG *vielleicht*) which is not, according to the available literature, common in CoY or any other Yiddish dialect. The vacillation *ai* > *äi* could be local BG influence; there is no way to prove that it was FS influence. The pronunciation taught in school may also explain the sporadic occurrence of the diphthong *äi*. The diphthong is, with a few exceptions, mostly affixed to certain NHG loan-words, e.g. *va:ršäi'nlix* 'probably' (NHG *wahrscheinlich*), (*um*) *fä:rcäi'unj* 'excuse me' (NHG *Verzeihung*). The school norm could also explain the sporadic lowering *ei*<sub>22/24</sub> > *äi* which occurs chiefly in words common to NHG and Yiddish, e.g. *täil* 'part' (StY *teil*, NHG *Teil*), *mäinen* 'to mean' (StY *meinen*, NHG *meinen*).

<sup>15</sup> In the transcript *ä* corresponds to Yiddish *o*.

<sup>16</sup> There are several documents like this, for instance songs written by Jac Weinstein for the dramatic society. See, for instance, the programme for a play called <sup>1</sup> *Der gröisser moment* 'The Big Moment' (image 21).

<sup>17</sup> "Det judiska språket är den judiska ungdomen mindre bekant. Om det talar detta språk, so är det en modern platt-tyska, som den själv skapar."

### 2.3. Austrian Refugees in Helsinki 1938–44

There was a brief episode when the Helsinki Jews came into very close contact with German speakers. This happened when a couple of hundred Austrian Jewish refugees arrived in Helsinki in 1938; they stayed until 1943 (Torvinen 1989: 119, 156). During this time they were accommodated by Jewish families. One informant's (#11) wife learned to speak German quite fluently from the people living in their house. Some of the refugees were active in the community, for instance Erich Hirschfeld directed Jacob Gordin's *Got, menč un taivl* 'God, man and devil' in the Jewish Dramatic Society (inf. #11). In 1937 Adolf Fleischer was temporarily conductor of the Jewish Song Association in Helsinki (*Hatikwah* no. 8-9 1947: 12). The presence of the Austrian refugees possibly left some marks on HeY, though the period of time was very short. It is, however, difficult to point to any specific features which would derive from their German.

### 2.4. Attitudes towards German

Helsinki Jews became familiar with German literature at school and some even ordered German journals.<sup>18</sup> Articles in German, adopted from foreign sources, appeared in the local Jewish journals, chiefly in *Hazohar*. Among Helsinki Jews German has been considered a *Kultursprache*. None of the informants expressed any kind of dislike towards German; possibly the close relationship between Swedish and German has something to do with this.

Attitudes toward Yiddish have been, and still are today, more mixed; on the one hand, Yiddish is considered a unique language which cannot even be translated into another language and, on the other hand, *fardorbn daič* 'corrupted German', an ungrammatical and uncouth jargon. After the Second World War the popularity of German at the Jewish school diminished as it did generally in Finland. English became popular in the schools; the Jewish Co-educational School (founded 1918) had already begun to teach English in 1937 (JSH 1937: 8).

## 3. Differences between the Spoken and Written Language

### 3.1. Knowledge of (School) German among the Informants

There are clear differences between the amount of German influence in the speech of HeY speakers and between different generations. Especially among the younger generations German influence seems to be stronger. Sometimes it is

<sup>18</sup> For instance the German Jewish journal called *Jüdische Rundschau*. This journal was also used as a source for Jewish journals published in Helsinki.

difficult to say which is general German influence on Yiddish and which is code-switching between German and Yiddish. Some informants found it difficult to speak Yiddish continuously because they had not spoken the language for decades, even for thirty or forty years. German, however they had spoken more for work purposes, for instance. During the interview, they were aware of the code-switching and tried to correct their speech as they went along. Informant #22 (born in 1939) was aware, for instance, of the diphthong vacillation between Yiddish and German in his speech, but said that he could not help it:<sup>19</sup>

*Ix miš zei'er fil 'eix' – 'aux', af doič zогt men 'aux'. Un ix zog zei'er oft ven ix red idiš 'aux', af idiš heist es 'eix'.*

I confuse *eix* with *aux* a lot, in German it is *auch*. And often when I speak Yiddish I say *aux*, in Yiddish it should be *eix*.

One informant (#24, born in 1947) told me that he started to speak Yiddish after he learned German and had spent time in Germany. His Yiddish is a kind of fusion of North-Eastern (Lithuanian) Yiddish and Modern German, as he himself puts it, which does not, however, represent general HeY, for instance syntax, verbal formations (not in the extract) and diphthongs (*ai* > *oi*, *ei/ai* > *äi*) are more Germanized; also occasional southern features are present (e.g. *vos* > *vus* 'what', *zai'nen* > *zänen* 'are'):

*Erštns hob ix gelérnt jideš, vail di éltärn hobn gerét kedei' di kindär zoln nit farštei'n vos zei zogn. Mámelošn bai unz iz gevén švei'diš. Unt in main júgent hob ix natírlíx a sax jideš gehért, az di bóbes un zei'des un di élttere generácie zei hóben ále ídeš gerét, švei'diš un jidiš azei' mit anánder. Unt me ken zógen, hob ix, bin ix oifgeváksen in a halb jidiše miljei'. Unt in di jidiše škóle hot men natírlíx hebrei's gelérnt. Unt az ix hob gelébt in Doi'clant hob ix natírlíx zei'er gut daič oix gelérnt. Unt azei hob ix bemérkt az in mitn in di áxciker jóren, dus ále di eleméntten zénen bai mir gevén forhánttn, dos jidiš vos ix hob gehért in di kinderjoren, dos hebrei's vos ix hob gelérnt un dos daič vos ix hob gelérnt. Ot azái' hot zix gekúmen fun zix alái'n, vi men zогt "jidiš ret zix".*

First of all I learned Yiddish because my parents spoke Yiddish so that the children would not understand. The mother tongue in our family was Swedish. And in my youth I heard a lot of Yiddish when my grandparents and the whole elder generation spoke Yiddish, Swedish and Yiddish together. One could say that I grew up in a half-Yiddish environment. And at the Jewish school we were taught Hebrew and as I lived in Germany I also learned German very well. So in the mid-80s I noticed that I had all the elements at hand, the Yiddish I had heard in my childhood, the Hebrew and German I had learnt. This is how it started by itself, as it is said, "Yiddish speaks by itself".<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The informant refers to Yiddish *oix* 'also' (SLY pronunciation *eix*) and German *auch*.

<sup>20</sup> The informant refers to the saying, "jidiš redt men nit, jidiš redt zix" 'You do not need to speak Yiddish – it comes out by itself, naturally.'

According to the informant Yiddish was still widely spoken in the Jewish community in the 1950s and '60s. The utterance, "My parents spoke Yiddish so that the children would not understand" is an often heard cliché; in many cases it could be interpreted as meaning that the parents frequently switched between Yiddish and Swedish in normal conversation amongst themselves. This account shows that in theory there have been many potential Yiddish-speakers among the younger generations but they were not encouraged to speak and use the language.

### 3.2. The New High German Component in the Jewish Press of Helsinki

As was mentioned previously there was a tradition of the Yiddish press being heavily Germanized. This is also true of the Latinized Yiddish articles in the Jewish journals of Helsinki (on the other hand, the HA component in the Helsinki Yiddish press is rather rich). There are features which do not appear in normal speech. Helsinki Jews ordered journals from abroad, from Eastern Europe and America, and were thus familiar with newspaper language.

The German-type orthography, especially in *Hazohar* (dealt with in Chapter 6) gives a strong German character to the text and Latinization allows even orthographically and phonetically correct German forms to make their way into Yiddish, which would not be possible with Hebrew characters, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *fölker* 'nations, people' (StY *fëlker*), <sup>l</sup> *länder* 'countries' (StY *lënder*),<sup>21</sup> <sup>l</sup> *persönliche* 'personal' (StY *perzénlexe*), <sup>l</sup> *würde* 'value' (StY *vert*). Also, the diphthong *au* appears in loan-words, such as <sup>l</sup> *schauspiler* 'actor' (StY *aktjór*), <sup>l</sup> *zuschauer* 'spectator' (StY *cúkuker*). According to Borochof (1913: 68), German loans should principally adopt themselves phonetically and orthographically to Yiddish. In HeY some of these loans preserved their original pronunciation as well as the spelling.

Especially due to the nature of the texts which are political and deal with social issues, there are quite a number of direct loans and concepts taken from Modern German, e.g. *Klassenkampf*, *Klassenhass*, *Gleichwertigkeit*, *Gemeinschaft*, *Menschheit*, *Plebiszit*, just to mention a few. German adjectives constitute another larger group of loan-words, e.g. *wirksam*, *erfolgreich*, *hoffnungslos*, *schauderhaft*, *denkbar*. Also, words such as *immer*, *dieser* and *vielleicht* frequently appear in the articles. These particular loans were popular in the press and political circles, but in today's Yiddish they are considered archaisms (Katz 1993: 191, 205). Besides German words that do not occur in everyday spoken HeY, there are some morphological features which do not appear in the normal speech, e.g. sporadically the preposition *cu* 'to' and the feminine definite article *di*

<sup>21</sup> Only an orthographical feature.

appear in the contracted form <sup>l</sup> *zur*, and the preposition *in* ‘in’ and the neuter definite article *dos* in the form <sup>l</sup> *ins*, forms which are alien to Yiddish. One natural reason for this is that the people who wrote the articles were more familiar with literary German than with the grammar and spelling of Yiddish, and were therefore fairly inconsistent with their Yiddish. The occasional exclusively German forms did not, for instance, seem to bother the editors of *Hazohar*. Also, the correspondence sent from the Helsinki Jewish community (1923–43) written in Yiddish with Hebrew characters (though there is more diversity) also show a fair amount of German influence in general style, vocabulary and orthography. The same is true for the protocols (1921–22) and poems written by the members of the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo*.

#### 4. THE NEW HIGH GERMAN COMPONENT IN HELSINKI YIDDISH

In our study of German influence on HeY we shall chiefly concentrate on the most common phenomena that occur in the interviews and literary sources, i.e. we shall omit some marginal features in both written and oral sources. Often in the oral sources a particular marginal feature is characteristic of only one informant.

The influence or cause of a particular feature might come directly from NHG or indirectly from *daičmeriš* Yiddish (commonly used NHG features in Yiddish), in most cases possibly both.

##### 4.1. Phonetic Aspects

###### 4.1.1. Vowel and Diphthong Shifts

Besides the occurrence of NHG phonemes in occasional loan-words, the mild interference of German has resulted in some changes in the vowels and diphthongs in the common vocabulary of Yiddish and German. For instance, the vowels *ü/ü:* and *ö/ö:* have been attested e.g. in the words *aingefürt* ‘instituted’ (StY *ai’ngéfirt*), *büró:* ‘bureau’ (StY *bjurò*, FS *byrá* [büró:]), *befö’lkerung* ‘population’ (StY *bafélkerung*), *francö’:ziš* ‘French’ (StY *francoi’ziš*). In the previous chapter (§2.1.2.) we presented words with similar vowel shifts that might have been a result of FS influence. In the data collected for this study there occasionally appear diphthong changes, e.g. *oi*<sub>54</sub>/*oi*<sub>42/44</sub> > *au*, *ai*<sub>34</sub> > *oi*, e.g. *au’gust* ‘August’ (StY *oi’gust*), *automátiš* ‘automatically’ (StY *oitomátiš*), *doič* ‘German’ (StY *daič*), *noincn* ‘nineteen’ (StY *naincn*). In the case of *au*, FS influence cannot be ruled out, cf. FS *automátiskt* ‘automatically’, *au’gusti* ‘August’. The relationship between diphthong *au* and CoY *au* ~ *ou* has been discussed in Chapter 7 §3.1.5.5. The German-type pronunciation seems to occur more often in new loans, often modern concepts or innovations, e.g. <sup>l</sup> *persönlich* ‘personal’ (cf.



NHG *persönlich*, StY *perzénlex*) *au'to* 'car' (cf. NHG *Auto*, Finnish *au'to*, StY *oito*). These words were alien to the traditional Yiddish that the generations of immigrants brought to Finland.

#### 4.1.2. Mild Interference

Due to the mild interference<sup>22</sup> of NHG or the indirect influence of *daičmeriš* Yiddish, the following words which belong to the common vocabulary of Yiddish and German, are occasionally pronounced and even spelt in the German way:

StY	ORAL SOURCE	WRITTEN SOURCE
<i>nor</i>	<i>nu:r</i>	<sup>L</sup> <i>nur</i>
<i>un</i>	<i>unt</i>	<sup>L</sup> <i>und</i>
<i>harc</i>	<i>härc</i>	<sup>L</sup> <i>herz</i>
<i>menč</i>	<i>menš</i>	<sup>L</sup> <i>mensch</i>
<i>árbet</i>	<i>árbait</i>	<sup>L</sup> <i>arbeit</i>

#### 4.1.3. Non-apocopate Forms

Some feminine words may occasionally appear in non-apocopate forms, i.e. they appear with a final unstressed *e*, e.g. *úrzax* > *úrzaxe* 'reason' *špráx* > *špráxe* 'language'. A. Similar phenomenon has been observed in EsY (Verschik 1999: 275).

### 4.2. Morphological Influence

#### 4.2.1. Neuter Gender

HeY follows the general North Eastern Yiddish (NEY) gender system in the sense that neuter gender is absent. However, as we saw in Chapter 7 (§4.1.3.), the neuter gender may occasionally appear due to NHG and/or Central Yiddish (CY) influence. In some cases the neuter definite article *dos* in HeY is not inflected as

<sup>22</sup> The word is changed on the model of a cognate in a language in contact, without effect on the content (U. Weinreich 1970: 50).

in CY and StY (i.e. *dem*), but it appears uninflected as in NHG, e.g. *iber dos šikzal* ‘about the destiny’, <sup>l</sup>*fun dos waser* ‘from the water’. In one case the neuter definite article was attached to a word which, according to StY, is masculine: HeY <sup>l</sup>*dos waffen* ‘weapon’ (cf. StY *der vofn*).

#### 4.2.2. The Imperfect Tense of German *sein*

The use of the imperfect tense of German *sein* ‘to be’ (*war, waren*) has been clearly adopted from NHG, though Swedish may have something to do with the phenomenon as was discussed in the previous chapter (§3.2.5.). Some imperfect forms, besides *va:r – va:ren*, were attested in the data but only with informants who switched frequently from German to Yiddish. There were also informants who did not use the imperfect tense of *sein* at all.

#### 4.2.3. Verbal Prefixes

Both in the spoken and written language there very frequently appear German-type verbal prefixes. They appear alongside their corresponding Yiddish forms, even in the same sentences, e.g. <sup>l</sup>*hot di zionistische organisazie farloren dos recht zu figuriren vi a fentreter* ‘the Zionist organization lost its right to function as a representative’.<sup>23</sup> These can be both NHG or Germanised Yiddish influence. Here is a list of the most frequent cases, both stressed and unstressed prefixes:

StY > HeY	ORAL SOURCE	WRITTEN SOURCE
<i>ant- &gt; ent-</i>	<i>entsuldik</i> ‘excuse me’	<sup>l</sup> <i>entscheiden</i> ‘to decide’
<i>ba- &gt; be-</i>	<i>bevündern</i> ‘to amaze’	<sup>l</sup> <i>bewegung</i> ‘movement’
<i>der- &gt; ä:r- (NHG er-)</i>	<i>ä:rlei’bniš</i> ‘permit’	<sup>l</sup> <i>erschainung</i> ‘phenomenon’
<i>far- &gt; fä:r (NHG ver-)</i>	<i>fä:rhei’ratet</i> ‘married’	<sup>l</sup> <i>ferbunden</i> ‘connected’
<i>ce- &gt; cer- (NHG zer-)</i>	<i>cerbróxn</i> ‘broken’	<sup>l</sup> <i>zerstererisch</i> ‘harmful’
<i>ón- &gt; án-</i>	<i>ängenem</i> ‘pleasant’	–
<i>óp- &gt; áb-</i>	<i>ábsixt</i> ‘intention’	<sup>l</sup> <i>obsogen</i> ‘to deny’

23

The latter word represents newer vocabulary in Yiddish and is probably thus in a *daičmeriš* Yiddish form.

This prefixes *er-* and *fer-* are most often pronounced [ä:r-] and [fä:r-] due to FS influence.

#### 4.2.4. Vacillation between the Verbal Additives *zix* – *mix*

In NEY reflexive verbs are followed by the uninflected verbal additive *zix*; in CY they may be followed by forms inflected according to person, i.e. *mix* ‘myself’, *dix* ‘yourself’, *zix* ‘him/her/itself’, *undz* ‘ourselves’, *aix* ‘yourselves’, *zix* ‘themselves’ (Katz 1987: 125-126). In HeY these inflected forms occur sporadically, due to NHG and/or CY influence, e.g. *hob ix mix gilä'rint* ‘I learned’, <sup>1</sup> *musen mir uns aktiv beteiligen* ‘we have to participate actively’.

#### 4.2.5. The Demonstrative Pronoun “it”

Yiddish generally refers to nouns with personal pronouns according to gender, i.e. *der* – *er*, *di* – *zi*, *dos* – *es*. However, in HeY occasionally the inanimate pronoun *es* is used to refer to nouns of the feminine gender,<sup>24</sup> e.g. <sup>H</sup> *zi tut ois di kape un git es* ... ‘she takes off her jacket and gives it...’, <sup>H</sup> *zi nemt arunter fun fus di šux un varft es*... ‘she takes off her shoe and throws it...’ This is probably NHG influence. In Swedish, nouns are referred to with demonstrative pronouns which are identical with the definite articles *den* and *det*.

#### 4.2.6. The Conjunction “that”

Occasionally the NHG influenced form *dos* (cf. NHG *dass*) appears in place of Yiddish *az* ‘that’, e.g. *hob ix bemérkt, dos* ‘I noticed that’, *cu zen, dos* ‘to see that’.

#### 4.2.7. The Adjectival Suffix *-lix*

The Yiddish adjectival suffix *-lex* ~ *-lax* may occasionally be pronounced *-lix* in accordance with the German model. This feature seems, however, to be more frequent in NHG loan-words, e.g. *zélbsterštendlix* ‘obviously’, <sup>L</sup> *wirklich* ‘actual, real’.

<sup>24</sup> There were no examples with masculine nouns.

#### 4.2.8. Negation *un-* instead of *um-*

The negative prefix *-um* is most often pronounced and written according to the German model *un-*, e.g. *ummíglax* ‘impossible’ (StY *umméglex*), <sup>L</sup> *unophengik* ‘independent’ (StY *umophéngik*).

#### 4.2.9. Adjectives Ending in *-loz*, *-ful*, *-raix*, *-bar*, *-zam*, *-haftik*, *-virdik*

German-type adjectives which end in *-loz*, *-ful*, *-raix*, *-bar* and *-zam* are quite common and productive in HeY, e.g. *árbecloz* ‘unemployed’ (NHG *arbeitslos*), <sup>L</sup> *zohltraich* ‘numerous’ (NHG *zahlreich*), *vúnderbar* ‘wonderful’ (NHG *wunderbar*), <sup>L</sup> *schiksalful* ‘fateful’ (NHG *Schicksalsvoll*), *ei’nzam* ‘lonely’ (NHG *einsam*), *mánhaftik* ‘masculine’ (cf. NHG *mannhaftig*), <sup>L</sup> *libenswirdig* ‘loveable’ (NHG *liebenswert*). These have been generally considered *daičmeriš* (Katz 1993: 185-191). For instance, Mark (1978: 228) considers *-loz* acceptable in cases where it is more convenient than the prefix *on-*; the suffix *-bar* and *-zam* are not, according to him, acceptable in standard language, though he admits that some such words have consolidated their position.<sup>25</sup> As mentioned above (§3.2), such adjectives are very common in the Helsinki Yiddish press, as was the case in the Yiddish press of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Possibly, Swedish also influenced the popularity of the aforementioned type of adjectives. The Swedish counterparts are: *-lös* (e.g. *árbetslös* ‘unemployed’), *-full* (e.g. *bety’delsefull* ‘meaningful’), *-rik* (e.g. *fiskrik* ‘teeming with fish’), *-bar* (e.g. *únderbar*), *-sam* (e.g. *énsam* ‘alone’), *-haftig* (e.g. *mánhaftig* ‘masculine’), *-várd* (e.g. *ä’lskvárd* ‘loveable’).

#### 4.2.10. Vacillation between *um* and *kedei*

The German *um* ‘in order’ frequently replaces the Yiddish variant *kedei*, e.g. *um cu kénéen* ‘in order to be able’, <sup>L</sup> *um cu farteiln* ‘in order to distribute’.

#### 4.2.11. The Preposition *nox* instead of *in* (and *kein*)

Occasionally, the Yiddish preposition *nox* ‘after’ is used like German *nach* ‘after, to’, e.g. *forn nox amérika* ‘to travel to America’ (StY *forn in/kein amérike*).

<sup>25</sup>

These are *dankbar*, *gangbar*, *ummitlbar*, *einzam*, *arbetzam*, *oifmerkzam*.

#### 4.2.12. New High German *es gibt*

In expressing that something exists, German *es gibt* is sporadically used instead of Yiddish *s'iz farán*, *s'iz do* 'there is/are', e.g. *es gibt in finland vü'xaxer* 'there are beavers in Finland', *es gibt menčn* 'there are people'.

### 5. LEXICAL INFLUENCE

HeY contains many NHG loans; one could say that the anti-*daičmeriš* campaign never reached Helsinki. The discussion concerning German loans has been very heated; there are parties that accept them with certain conditions and limits, and purists who would like to jettison them all (Katz 1993:166-191). Here we shall not enter the discussion as to which words are acceptable and which are not (some of the words listed below may even be accessible in modern StY). We look from the perspective of the Slavic and HA component, i.e. how Germanic words have superseded many words and expressions that derive from these sources, both in the spoken and written language.

There are many reasons for the replacement. First of all, the co-territorial languages have not supported the existence (and development) of the Slavic component. Also the low prestige enjoyed by Russian, especially after 1917, has had a negative impact on the Slavic component as a whole. Secondly, the standard of traditional Hebrew teaching has not been very high; the lack of continuous Jewish schools (until 1918) and the absence of yeshivas in Finland have definitely diminished the use of HA words. Then, as we have discussed earlier, in this chapter there are many reasons why the German component has gained ground in HeY and many ways this has happened. The German loans have not, of course, totally replaced more traditional words; they occur side by side, some words more frequently than others. In Soviet Yiddish language-planning there was a deliberate tendency to de-Hebraise Yiddish, or de-archaize it as it was referred to in Soviet Yiddish vocabulary (Schacchter 1977: 56). In HeY this tendency was adopted from once "stylish" Germanized Yiddish (especially in the Yiddish press) and, on the other hand, it was a natural result of contact with NHG. In many cases German loans enjoyed more prestige than workaday Yiddish words.

In respect of Slavisms, HeY clearly differs from the Yiddish of Lithuania proper (i.e. SLY). According to Mark, there were many Slavisms, especially Polish loans, in SLY (Mark 1951: 439, 442). In HeY Slavisms have been largely replaced by German and Swedish loans. In this respect HeY is closer to CoY and EsY, where German loans play an important role in the lexicon (Verschik 1999b: 7; Jacobs 2001: 303). However, the Low German and Lithuanian loans found in these dialects are nearly totally absent from HeY. In this respect HeY displays its own unique lexical development. As we discussed in the previous chapter (§4.),

the Swedish and German vocabularies overlap in many cases and it seems that in some cases Swedish has acted as a mediator between German and Yiddish.

In the following lists the StY equivalent is presented; in some cases the equivalent is variable in HeY with the NHG loans, and these cases are mentioned in the list.

### 5.1. NHG Loans Superseding the Slavic Component

The following list consists of NHG loans, which have superseded or take preference over words deriving from Slavic languages (mostly West Slavic). It is possible that some Slavic words in the list have never existed in the variants of Yiddish spoken by the Jewish settlers in Finland.

*foi'xtlix* < 'stuffy, damp'<sup>26</sup> NHG *feuchtlich*, FS *jüktig*; cf. StY *dúšne* 'stuffy' < S.

*intressánt* 'interesting' NHG *interessant*, FS *intressánt*, StY *interesánt*; cf. StY *čikáve* < S.

*kasét* 'cassette, tape' < NHG *Kassette*, FS *kassét*; cf. *tášme* < S, *lénte* < S.

*lánzam* 'slowly' < NHG *langsam*, FS *lá'ngsamt*; cf. StY *pavólje* < S.

*lánvailik* 'boring' < NHG *langweilig*; cf. StY *núdne* < S.

*pápe* 'father' < NHG *Papa*, FS *páppa*; variable with StY *táte* < S.

*rai'ze* 'journey' < NHG *Reise*, FS *résa*; cf. StY *jázde* < S.

*šú:le* 'school' < NHG *Schule*; variable with StY *škóle* < S.

*ta'nte* 'auntie' < NHG *Tante*, FS *tant*; cf. StY *múme* < S.

<sup>11</sup> *tas* 'cup, mug' < NHG *Tasse*; cf. StY *kúbik* < S.

*taš* 'pocket' < NHG *Tasche*; cf. StY variable with *kéšene* < S.

*u:r* 'clock' < NHG *Uhr*, FS *ur*; variable with StY *zei'ger* < S.

### 5.2. NHG Loans Superseding the Hebrew-Aramaic Component

The following list consists of NHG loans which have superseded or take preference over words deriving from HA. Many of these words are frequently used adverbs, some new concepts.

*é:re* 'honour' < NHG *Ehre*, FS *ä'ra*; variable with StY *kóved* < HA.

*filáixt* ~ *filáixt* 'maybe' < NHG *vielleicht*; cf. StY *éšfer* < HA.

[*um*] *fä:rcäi'uy* 'excuse me' < NHG *Verzeihung*; cf. StY *antšuldikt*, *zai/zait mir moixl* < HA.

<sup>26</sup> Speaking of air being stuffy.

- fū:rvánte** ‘relatives’ < NHG *Verwandte*; cf. StY *kroi’vim* < HA.  
**generació:n** ~ **jenerašú:n** ‘generation’ < NHG *Generation*, FS *generation* [jenerašú:n]; cf. StY *generácie, dor* < HA.  
**höi’ptzax** ‘main thing’ < NHG *Hauptsache*; cf. StY *iker* < HA  
**hä’rlax** ‘delightful’ < NHG *herrlich*, FS *hä’rlig*; cf. StY *mexájedik* < HA, *xiés* < HA.  
**ímer** ‘always’ < NHG *immer*; variable with StY *tómid* < HA, *álemol, šténdik*.  
**mó:nat** ‘month’ < NHG *Monat*, FS *mā’nad*; variable with StY *xoides* < HA.  
**šikzal** ‘destiny’ < NHG *Schicksal*; variable with StY *goirl* < HA.  
**štát** ‘state’ < NHG *Staat*, FS *stat*; cf. StY *medíne* < HA.  
**štúnde** ‘hour’ < NHG *Stunde*; variable with StY *šo* < HA. In some variants of Yiddish the word *štunde* denotes ‘lecture’ (OJŠ: 329); cf. StY *léckie, štúr* < HA.  
**um** ‘in order to’ < NHG *um*; variable with StY *kedei’* < HA.  
**únter** ‘during’ < NHG *unter*, FS *únder*; cf. StY *beis* < HA, *bešás* < HA.  
**uņefū’r** ‘approximately’ < NHG *ungefähr*, FS *ungefā’r* [uņe-]; variable with StY *arúm*, cf. StY *bérex, an érex* < HA  
**va:ršāi’nlix** ‘probably’ < NHG *wahrscheinlich*; variable with StY *mistóme* < HA.  
**vilkómen** ‘welcome’ < NHG *willkommen*, FS *vālkómen*; variable with StY *bórxhabo* < HA.  
**vā:rt** ‘worthwhile’ < NHG *wert*, FS *vārt*; cf. StY *kedai* < HA.  
**ū:berhöi’pt** ~ **i:berhöi’pt** ‘generally’ < NHG *überhaupt*; cf. StY *bixlal* < HA.  
**zogár** ‘even’ < NHG *sogar*; cf. *afile* < HA.

### 5.3. Other Common NHG Loans

Here is a list of other common NHG loans in HeY:

- álzo** ‘then, so’ < NHG *also*, FS *alltsā’*; cf. StY *iz, bexei’n*.  
<sup>1</sup> **befor** ‘before’ < NHG *bevor*; variable with StY *ei’der*.  
<sup>1</sup> **desto** ‘so much the’ < NHG *desto*, FS *désto*; cf. StY *alc*.  
**féter** ‘cousin’ < NHG *Vetter* (see ‘cousin’ Chapter 8 §4.2.); cf. StY *švēsterkind*.  
**geráde** ‘just’ < NHG *gerade*; variable with StY *ókorš*  
**hä’rclix** ‘hearty’ < NHG *herzlich*; variable with StY *hárcik*.  
**íberal** ‘everywhere’ < NHG *überall*; variable with StY *úmetum*.  
**másnvaiz** ‘in masses’ < NHG *massenweise*; cf. StY *a máse, a velt, a jam*.  
**röi’te kröic** ‘Red Cross’ < NHG *Reute Kreuz*.

*śá:de* 'pity' < NHG *Schade*; cf. StY *śod*.

*cöi'gnis* 'school report' < NHG *Zeugnisse*; cf. StY *cai'geniš*.

Also the verbs:

*zix erínern* 'to remember' < NHG *sich erinnern*; variable with StY *gedénken*,  
*zix dermónen*.

*forberai'ten* 'to prepare' < NHG *vorbereiten*; variable with StY *cúgreitn*.

*caign* 'to show' < NHG *zeigen*; variable with StY *vaizn*.

#### 5.4. Idioms

The following three idioms influenced by NHG are quite common in HeY: *in ále hínzixtn* 'in all respects' (NHG *in allen Hinsichten*), *af áza vai'ze* 'in such a way' (cf. NHG *auf diese Weise*, StY *oif áza oifn*), *un zo vai'ter* 'and so on' (cf. NHG *und so weiter*, StY *un azoi' vai'ter*).

#### 6. SUMMARY

In HeY a clear NHG influence is to be seen, especially on morphology and vocabulary. There are various reasons for the German influence. First of all, there was a clear tendency in Yiddish towards Modern German in the nineteenth century, during the era of *Haskalah*. These aspirations were especially visible in the Jewish press. Helsinki Jews actively ordered newspapers from abroad, even from America. Also, their own Yiddish press was heavily Germanized, for instance the journal *Hazohar*. The new waves also reached Helsinki through immigrants, visitors, guest speakers, politicians, etc. School German has been beyond dispute the strongest external influence. Most children who attended both state schools and Jewish schools learned German. What kind of pronunciation they were taught remains unclear, for instance, what was the role of BG? The influence of the co-territorial BG, though the community was very small, has to be taken into consideration. The BG influence on FS is audible to this day in certain loans. Most likely, the prestigious diphthong *öi* in local German and FS has been a contributory factor to the existence of HeY *öi*<sub>42/44</sub>. The origin of the diphthong in HeY remains slightly unclear; it could be a remnant of PNEY and/or Courland Yiddish influence. The diphthong vacillation *ei*<sub>22/24</sub> ~ *äi* and *ai*<sub>34</sub> ~ *äi* might be due to local BG influence, but school German may also have something to do with it. Both *öi* and *äi* are affixed to certain NHG loan-words. The anti-*daičmeriš* campaign, which grew in strength during the first decades of the twentieth century, had little effect on HeY; Yiddish was not taught as a normative



language and so the use of Yiddish became gradually marginal and unfashionable and thus enjoyed little attention.

The phonic influence of NHG on HeY is chiefly due to mild interference. Front-rounded sounds *ü/ü:* and *ö/ö:* that occur in many NHG loans were part of the vocalism of HeY due to co-territorial FS. Vowel and diphthong shifts, e.g. *daič* > *doič* 'German', *ai'ngefirt* > *ai'ngefü:rt* 'instituted', take place in words which are common to Yiddish and NHG. The front-rounded vowels *ü/ü* and *ö/ö:* seem to occur most often when both the German and the Swedish counterpart has them (cf. NHG *Typ*, FS *typ*, HeY *tü:p*), not so frequently when they are present only in the German counterpart (cf. NHG *fünf*, FS *fem*, HeY *finf*; see Chapter 8 §2.1.2.). The German pronunciation seems to be linked to new concepts and innovations, e.g. *perzö'nlix* 'personal', *auto* 'car'. Some words may be pronounced in the NHG way, either indirectly due to Germanized Yiddish or directly due to German influence, e.g. *menč* > *menš* 'human being', *nor* > *nu:r* 'only'.

The German influence on the morphology of HeY is obviously clearer and stronger than FS influence. The neuter definite article *dos*, which is unknown in NEY dialects seems to appear more frequently with German loans and does not inflect in the same way as StY. The occurrence of the imperfect tense of *sein* 'to be' is another major morphological feature of NHG influence. The German-type verbal prefixes and adjective prefixes and suffixes exert wide influence on HeY and give a general German tone. The function words *um* 'in order to' and *nox* 'to' are used very frequently instead of their Yiddish variants *kedei* 'in order to' and *in/kein* 'to'.

The lexicon of HeY has taken its own course. There has happened a kind of re-lexification where especially the Slavic and HA component has been superseded by NHG loan-words. Historically the Slavic component in HeY must have been prominent, because most Helsinki Jews originated from areas dominated by Slavic languages. Also, Yiddish words of Germanic origin seem to take preference over Slavic and HA words. The cause of this might be general NHG influence within Yiddish or the fact that the linguistic environment of Helsinki did not support or increase the use of Slavisms. The use of Hebraisms was partly affected by the lack of a yeshiva in Finland; very few children were sent to yeshivas overseas. Words adopted from NHG enjoyed more prestige than their Yiddish counterparts. Similar lexical development has taken place in CoY and EsY. HeY, however, differs from these dialects in the sense that there are hardly any Low German or Lithuanian loans.

## CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation is the first study of Helsinki Yiddish or Finnish Yiddish in general. Besides the analysis of Helsinki Yiddish, this study deals with many topics that have not been touched upon previously, for instance the Jewish press and Yiddish printing in Helsinki, the role of Yiddish in Jewish schools and Yiddish cultural activities in Helsinki. The literary and oral data studied for this work has revealed that the manifestations of Yiddish language and culture have been much more polymorphous than earlier studies of the Jewish community in Helsinki have indicated. In this study we have seen that the use of Yiddish did not “terminate” during the first two decades of the twentieth century – on the contrary, cultural activities were especially lively in the period between the World Wars; even in the mid-’50s some Yiddish articles appeared in a youth journal (*Judisk Ungdom*) and plays were performed in Yiddish by the younger generation.

The Jewish community in Finland has its roots in Czarist Russian recruitment policy; the first Jewish soldiers arrived in Helsinki soon after Czar Nicholas I confirmed a statute concerning the recruitment of Jews in 1827. The Jewish settlers in Helsinki, i.e. Jewish soldiers, some of whom had been kidnapped as minors and sent to be trained in so-called Cantonist schools, their spouses, teachers and clergy, originated, according to the available data, mostly from the governments surrounding Vilna, i.e. Lithuania, North-Eastern Poland and North-Western Belorussia. The analysis of Helsinki Yiddish supports this view. By estimation, only one quarter came from Central and Southern Poland. The investigation of the origin of the soldiers’ wives is made difficult by the fact that the early registers contain no information on their places of birth. We can presume that they came chiefly from the same regions as most of the men because often family and other private connections were used to find suitable spouses. The immigrants settled on the fortress island of Sveaborg (Suomenlinna) off Helsinki, and in the town itself, which was at the time mostly Swedish-speaking. Russian, too, played an important role in the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland. The nineteenth century and the turn of the century was a Yiddish-Russian-Swedish phase in the history of the Jewish community in Helsinki, the beginning of the twentieth century a Yiddish-Swedish phase, and in the mid 1930s commenced a Swedish-Finnish phase which is ongoing. It is understandable that there has been a considerable degree of multilingualism in the community. Most informants interviewed for this study are trilingual, having a rather good command of

Yiddish and Finnish besides Swedish, which is their strongest language.

Yiddish was superseded by Swedish at quite an early stage in Helsinki and enjoyed a rather low status. This is seen in the form of the official language, i.e. Swedish, in the organs of the congregation, in the school, in many associations and in the Jewish press, which was chiefly Swedish-language. In the 1930s most members of the Jewish congregation reported Swedish as their mother tongue, though many were fluent in both Yiddish and Swedish. In Viipuri the situation was the opposite: Yiddish remained the official language of the community until the Second World War. In Turku, too, Yiddish was used longer in communal life; for instance, the language of instruction in the heder was Yiddish until the early 1950s. Several reasons for this state of affairs were discovered during this study. Cantonists who had laid the foundation for the Jewish community in Helsinki were deprived of their parents at an early age and therefore had a poor knowledge of Judaism (possibly also of Yiddish); during the long period of training in the Russian provinces they inevitably adopted the prevailing (secular) outlook on life. Mothers, on the other hand, who often came straight from the *štetls*, showed greater readiness to instruct their daughters in matters concerning Jewish law and customs and naturally spoke Yiddish with their families. The children had the opportunity to attend local schools, where they learned Swedish and Russian and became familiar with Finnish society. The fact that the community failed to maintain a continuous Jewish school before 1918 was one of the reasons that led to early linguistic and cultural assimilation. In any case, the community was so small that one could not remain a unilingual Yiddish-speaker and make a living. The community was not a traditional Jewish community, although in religious observance it was strictly orthodox; rather, by the First World War it had rapidly become an urban, bourgeois and in many ways modern community. This is visible, too, in photographs taken at the time (available in the National Archives of Finland): men appear dressed in European clothes and bareheaded, women do not wear *šeitls* 'traditional wigs' or head-covers. When Zionism began to flourish in Jewish society, the Jewish community in Helsinki became affiliated with the bourgeois Russian Zionists. Slowly, interest in Modern Hebrew began to increase and the status of Yiddish declined further still. Left-wing Jews, who would have been the potential proponents of secular Yiddish culture, were in the minority. A study of the Helsinki Jewish press of the 1920s shows that there was no language debate between the advocates of Yiddish and Hebrew in Helsinki. Some, though, did oppose the excessive use of Swedish at the expense of Yiddish. Assimilation began to accelerate in the period between the World Wars, and mixed marriages became common after the Second World War. In this context, Yiddish was simply out of fashion, as some informants put it. Against this background, it is quite surprising and slightly controversial that Yiddish prevailed for so long. One has to

remember that the community was not a homogenous group of “descendants of Cantonists”; new Yiddish-speaking immigrants arrived between the wars, and some even after the Second World War.

Though Swedish had gained a foothold in the community at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were some cultural and religious associations that maintained the use of Yiddish and even promoted it. These associations were founded in the wake of Yiddishism. The Jewish community in Helsinki, though in a “periphery” like Helsinki kept in close touch with the political and cultural developments that were taking place in other Jewish centres. Many members of the community subscribed to Yiddish journals and were thus well aware what was happening abroad. Especially lively was the activity of the Jewish Dramatic Society (1922–39) and the Jewish Song Association (founded 1917). The dramatic society performed not only well-known Yiddish plays but also many of its own works, written by Helsinki-born Jac Weinstein. He was one of the most enthusiastic proponents of Yiddish in the Jewish community in Helsinki and had been active in the first Yiddishist association, called the Jewish Club (founded in 1906). The repertoire of the Jewish Song Association included only a few songs written in Helsinki. They did, however, perform classical operatic pieces in Yiddish, like Saint-Saën’s “Samson and Delilah”, accompanied by ballet choreography. There were some left-wing (*Bundist*) tendencies in the activities of the Jewish Dramatic Society and the Jewish Literature Association *Hatchijo* (1921–23). Many plays performed by the drama group had a socialist content and at the meetings of *Hatchijo* left-wing newspapers were read aloud. This is interesting, because otherwise there were no left-wing political associations in Helsinki between the World Wars, not to mention communist activity. The literature associations in Helsinki failed to produce their own Yiddish newspapers due to the fact that it was impossible to have them printed in Helsinki and because literacy in Yiddish was very poor among the young. For these reasons they had to resort to publishing in Swedish. It is interesting that the only newspaper which continued to appear partly in Yiddish was the trilingual *Hazohar* (1934–35), the organ of the right-wing Zionist Alliance in Finland. To be able to do this, the editors needed to resort to the Latinization of Yiddish. The printing-houses in Helsinki did possess Hebrew characters but for some reason their services were not employed. Before the founding of the Jewish Printing-House *Nopea* (1938), which published the first literary works in Yiddish and Hebrew in Finland, some associations and individuals had turned to Jewish presses in Vilna and Riga. The Latinization system in *Hazohar* was based on Germanized Yiddish spelling with features from New High German and Swedish orthography. The orthography of the Yiddish poems and articles that appeared in other journals during the 1940s and '50s was closer to modern phonetic orthography. The occasional dialectal

forms, which are unintentional "slips", have been important for the linguistic analysis in this study and have supported the conclusions reached on the basis of the oral sources.

In this study the Jewish schools in Helsinki, from the first *heders* to the Jewish Co-educational School founded in 1918, have been listed and described for the first time in one presentation, and analyzed in the context of the Russian Jewish school system and modern Yiddish schools. We have seen that the school system in Helsinki followed quite closely developments in the Russian Empire, especially in the towns of Russia proper. The main objective was, however, to understand the role played by Yiddish in the Jewish schools in Helsinki. In Helsinki and in the other Jewish communities of Finland there were never any modern Yiddish primary and secondary schools. Despite this, Yiddish played some role in all schools that have functioned in Helsinki, even in the Jewish Co-educational School (*Judiska Samskolan*). One of the main reasons for this was that the teachers of Hebrew and religion were all Yiddish-speaking immigrants until the 1930s. This is one of the facts that explain why Yiddish had a longer life-span in Helsinki than one would expect or than the official statistics on "mother tongue" tell. Many of the parents of the children at the Jewish Co-educational School already spoke Swedish at home. The children heard Yiddish, however, in their grandparents' home, at the synagogue and at social events. Yiddish would have vanished earlier in Helsinki, had there not been these immigrant teachers and rabbis, and, of course, a few new settlers from Eastern Europe.

During the more than one hundred and seventy years of Jewish presence in Helsinki, the Yiddish language has developed into a distinct local dialect. The co-territorial Finland Swedish, or more precisely Helsinki Swedish, has been crucial in this development. Finnish has had very little impact on Helsinki Yiddish, because historically Helsinki has been a Swedish-speaking city and the Jews adopted the dominant language. Jews lived in the centre of the city, which remained Swedish-speaking for a relatively long time, as compared with the outskirts of the town. Helsinki Yiddish and Turku Yiddish differ in this respect from Viipuri Yiddish, which was influenced by Finnish (and Russian). The fact that children of Polish immigrants adopted "Finnish Yiddish" testifies to the fact that there is and has been a distinct local variant. Also, many informants from Viipuri consider Helsinki Yiddish to be different from their own Yiddish.

According to general Yiddish dialectology, Helsinki Yiddish can be classified as a colonial dialect, because geographically it lies beyond the traditional domain of Yiddish (both East and West Yiddish) and because it is a mixture of other dialects and sub-dialects. Therefore, Helsinki Yiddish cannot be considered a natural continuation or branch of Eastern European Yiddish dialects, as may appear from the map. Despite the fact that Helsinki Yiddish has

historically been a mixed dialect, it is, as we have testified, a quite uniform North-Eastern Yiddish-type dialect; phonetically, there are hardly any typical Central Yiddish features. Of the North-Eastern Yiddish sub-dialects, Helsinki Yiddish is, according to its vocalism, closest to the Yiddish of Lithuania proper, or so-called Vilna-type Yiddish. This might be the result of the fact that a substantial number of immigrants came from the governments surrounding Vilna. Secondly, Vilna-type Yiddish has enjoyed a prestigious status among the Yiddish dialects; Helsinki Jews consider their "Lithuanian" or "Russian" Yiddish superior to "Polish" Yiddish. During the dialect contact process a considerable amount of levelling and simplification has taken place. Stigmatized "Polish" Yiddish features (e.g.  $u > i$ ,  $o > u$ ) are completely absent, and even distinct ZaY features (i.e.  $ou_{54}$ ,  $eu_{22/24}$ ) have not been recorded in the data.

From the geographical point of view, one would expect that Helsinki Yiddish would reflect more Baltic Yiddish (e.g. Courland and Estonian Yiddish) features. As we have seen, there are only a few phonetic features that point to this area, chiefly the diphthongs  $öi_{54}$  and  $äi_{22/24}$  and the partly preserved distinction between long and short vowels. However, Lithuanianisms and Low German loans, the characteristic features of the Baltic Yiddish lexicon, are, according to the available data, almost totally absent from Helsinki Yiddish. This can be partly explained by the fact that very few immigrants came from Estonia or Courland. As we have discussed,  $öi_{54}$  may be a historical remnant of Proto North-Eastern Yiddish or a Baltic German influence rather than a (mere) Baltic Yiddish influence. Also,  $äi_{22/24}$  could be a Baltic German influence. Baltic German pronunciation has enjoyed some prestige in Helsinki Swedish, as is still audible in some loan-words and names until today. Also, the distinction between long and short vowels might derive from other sources; it could be a historical remnant of Proto-North-Eastern Yiddish or a Central Yiddish influence. School German may also explain some of the above features in HeY, such as the diphthong shift  $ei/ai > äi$ . This phenomenon occurs chiefly in words common to New High German and Yiddish.

Morphologically, Helsinki Yiddish reflects, as we have testified, chiefly North-Eastern Yiddish features, especially Vilna-type Yiddish. An interesting deviation from the inflection pattern of noun modifiers is that the definite article and attributes of the intermediate feminine appear as in the masculine, e.g. *fun dem klei'nem štot* 'from that small town' (cf. *\*fun di klei'ne štot*). There are no such cases in the available literature. Some features which may reflect Central Yiddish influence, for instance the sporadic occurrence of the neuter definite article *dos* and the inflection of the reflexive pronoun *zix*, though New High German or Standard Yiddish impact cannot be ruled out.

Finland Swedish influence is especially strong on the phonetics of Helsinki

Yiddish. Due to mild interference, many vowel and consonant shifts occur frequently. Helsinki Yiddish has adopted from Finland Swedish the front-rounded vowels *ü*, *ʉ*, and *ö* (*œ*). Also, the development of the sibilants has taken its own course due to Finland Swedish influence, similar to the case of Baltic German influence on Courland Yiddish. Due to mild interference, there are also many other changes in the international words common to Yiddish and Swedish. Some sounds have established themselves as regular allophones. The lowering of short *e* to *ä/ä:* before *r* is one of the most characteristic features of Helsinki Yiddish. The Helsinki Yiddish *l* and *r* and the consonant cluster *ng* ( $> \eta$ ) are pronounced identically, as in Finland Swedish. These are features that make Helsinki Yiddish sound different, even in the ears of other North-Eastern Yiddish-speakers.

As mentioned above, Helsinki Yiddish has partly preserved the distinction between long and short vowels; this has, however, been disturbed by Finland Swedish; all stressed vowels may be rendered long or, alternatively, the following consonant geminates. However, long vowels seem to be compulsory only in common words which have a long vowel in Swedish. Geminata may take place in other instances, too. Compared to the phonetic influence from Finland Swedish, the morphological interference is far less. The most common feature is the borrowing of function words. The lexical influence is, however, visible. Words borrowed are mostly connected with everyday commodities. Verbs and adjectives have been the slowest to enter the language.

The New High German influence on Helsinki Yiddish has come from different directions; partly from *daičmeriš* Yiddish, partly from school German, and partly from local Baltic German. In many cases it is difficult to determine from which source a particular feature derives. The New High German influence on Helsinki Yiddish is mostly morphological and lexical, not so much phonetic. However, due to mild interference, some words, often modern and new expressions, are pronounced according to the German model. The morphological features include Germanized verbal prefixes, adjectival endings and borrowed function words. Of especial interest is the sporadic use of the imperfect tense of the German verb *sein*. Imperfect forms of other verbs are really scarce. The lexical influence from German is very strong. Many words denoting new innovations and concepts were borrowed from German. New High German words have also superseded many Hebrew-Aramaic and Slavic words common in Yiddish. In this sense Helsinki Yiddish differs from Vilna-type Yiddish, where the Slavic component is prominent. The course that Helsinki Yiddish has taken reminds one of Courland and Estonian Yiddish, where the Slavic component is small. Instead of Low German, Baltic German and Lithuanian loans in these sub-dialects, Helsinki Yiddish has adopted many New High German words (though often with a Baltic pronunciation) and Swedish loans. As we have seen, the

linguistic environment did not support the use of Slavisms, and secondly, the general attitude towards Russian grew in a negative direction between the World Wars.

This study is a contribution to research on circum-Baltic Yiddish and circum-Baltic languages and cultures in general. In addition, the study provides new information on colonial Yiddish dialects. On a local level, the study helps us to understand the multiculturalism and multilingualism of Helsinki. Many studies have totally ignored the presence of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish community in Helsinki, which has been nearly as large as the local German-speaking community. On the other hand, while working on this study it was discovered that no one has studied the Baltic German spoken in Helsinki. The field-work conducted for this study has proven that now is the very last moment to conduct this kind of research on historical minorities living in Helsinki.

During the field-work for this study much material was collected, some of which is not included in this dissertation because the subjects go beyond the objectives set at the outset. This material includes, for instance, proverbs and sayings, poems and many other documents and letters in Yiddish. This material provides an interesting source for future articles which will shed further light on Yiddish culture in Finland. The literary works of Mordechai Chosid, Hersz Frydberg and Jac Weinstein provide an interesting episode in Finnish literature history, one which is deserving of further study. Other interesting themes for research are the Jewish press in Finland, the history of early Zionism and Revisionism in Finland, and the rapid social and economic rise experienced by the community at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yiddish loans in colloquial Finnish and Swedish and Helsinki slang have not been yet studied. A doctoral thesis by Jukka Hartikainen on the history of the Viipuri Jewish community and Yiddish culture is in preparation. The history of the Jewish community in Turku also deserves to be studied. At the moment there are still some elderly members of the community who could provide invaluable information. On many topics, now it is the very last moment to do field research.



## APPENDIX A: INDEX OF INFORMANTS

### 1. INTERVIEWS

All of the twenty-four interviews, except for #1, were conducted by the author in Helsinki and Turku (#10, #19) during the period 1998-2003. The interview with Moses Guthwert (inf. #1) was conducted by the renowned linguists Paul Ariste and Pertti Virtaranta in Helsinki in 1969. The total running time of all interviews was approximately 20 hours. The recordings are in the possession of the Finnish Language Tape Archives (*Suomen kielten nauhoitearkisto*), with the exception of recordings #2, #6 and #15, which are in the possession of the author. The names of birthplaces (outside Finland) in the index are in the form given by the informant. In cases where the informant did not remember or know exactly where one of the parents was born, only the name of the country appears. The present names and countries of the towns are listed under Index of birthplaces (1.3.).

Besides the actual dialect interviews, there were two other recorded discussions which provided historical and linguistic information for this study. The first is a discussion (in Yiddish) with eleven Yiddish-speakers living in Turku, conducted by the author and Mikaela Hasán in 2001. The recording is in the possession of the Finnish Language Tape Archives (SKNA 16810: 1). The second interview (in German) was with a native German-speaker, born in Helsinki in 1925. This interview was conducted by the author, together with Benjamin Langer in Helsinki in 2003. The recording is in the possession of the Finnish Language Tape Archives (SKNA 16958: 1).

#### 1.1. The Structure of the Interview

The subjects dealt with in the interviews are listed below:

- Date and place of birth.
- Origin of informant's parents/grandparents.
- What school(s) the informant attended.
- How and where the informant learned Yiddish.
- The informant's ability to read/write Yiddish.
- The informant's general knowledge of languages.
- The family's attitude towards Yiddish, political orientation.

- The informant's picture of the general attitude towards Yiddish in the community.
- The informant's opinion of Viipuri/Turku/Helsinki Yiddish, whether differences exist, if so what?
- The informant's idea of the factors that led to the displacement of Yiddish.
- Memories of Jewish/Yiddish cultural life in Helsinki/Viipuri/Turku.
- The informant's role in the Yiddish-speaking associations.
- Memories of Jewish holidays, wedding customs, etc.

## 1.2. Index of Informants

INF. NO.	MALE/ FEMALE	BIRTH YEAR BIRTH PLACE	FATHER'S/MOTHER'S BIRTH PLACE	OTHER LANGUAGES <sup>1</sup>	OCCUPATION	SKNA <sup>2</sup>
#1	M	1884 Helsinki	Lomže/Moskva	FGHS	Merchant	8388:1
#2	M	1905 Vaasa	Vaasa/Poland	EFGS	Engineer	3
#3	F	1909 Petrovici <sup>4</sup>	Petrovici	FHGRS	Clerk	16748:1
#4	M	1910 Helsinki	Vitebsk/Helsinki	EFHGS	Musician	16679:1
#5	F	1910 Helsinki	Helsinki/Helsinki	FGS	Clerk	16748:1
#6	M	1913 Viipuri <sup>5</sup>	Petrovici/Poland	FSR	Merchant	-
#7	F	1914 Jekaterinostav <sup>6</sup>	Kobrin/Kobrin	FERS	Teacher	16677:1
#8	F	1917 Helsinki	Helsinki/Helsinki	FGS	Clerk	16747:1
#9	F	1920 Helsinki	Radava/Helsinki	FGS	Clerk	16751:1
#10	M	1923 Viipuri	Polock/Tampere <sup>7</sup>	FGRS	Merchant	16440:1
#11	M	1922 Helsinki	Vitebsk/Helsinki	EFHGRS	Engineer	16442:1
#12	F	1924 Helsinki <sup>8</sup>	Poland/Helsinki	FS	Saleswoman	16810:1
#13	F	1925 Helsinki	Lomže/Helsinki	EFGS	Chef	16745:1
#14	M	1925 Helsinki	Helsinki/Lomže	FSG	Merchant	16750:1

<sup>1</sup> English, Finnish, French, Hebrew (modern), German, Polish, Russian, Swedish.

<sup>2</sup> *Suomen kielten nauhoitearkisto* (Finnish Language Tape Archives), archive code.

<sup>3</sup> Interview mostly in Finnish.

<sup>4</sup> Moved as a small girl to live with her uncle in Viipuri, during the Second World War moved to Helsinki.

<sup>5</sup> Moved to Helsinki before the Second World War.

<sup>6</sup> Parents moved to Viipuri in 1917, informant moved to Helsinki in 1938.

<sup>7</sup> Went to school in Kaunas.

<sup>8</sup> Moved to Turku before the war.

#15	F	1925 Turku <sup>9</sup>	Turku/Turku	EFHGS	Teacher	-
#16	M	1926 Turku <sup>10</sup>	Janov/Turku	EFSG	Merchant	16441:1
#17	M	1926 Helsinki	Narva <sup>11</sup> /Ukraine <sup>12</sup>	EFSGR	Merchant	16749:1
#18	F	1927 Kozeglovi <sup>13</sup>	Kozeglovi	FPS	Saleswoman	16746:1
#19	F	1930 Viipuri <sup>14</sup>	Viipuri/Lithuania	FSG	Saleswoman	16811:1
#20	M	1936 Helsinki	Vyborg/Mitau	EFGHS	Correspondent	16955:1
#21	M	1937 Turku <sup>15</sup>	Turku <sup>16</sup> /Mažeik	EFHS	Teacher	16440:2
#22	M	1939 Turku <sup>17</sup>	Turku/Kovne	EFFrGHS	Merchant	16678:1
#23	M	1946 Turku <sup>18</sup>	Golina <sup>19</sup> /Turku	EFHS	Engineer	16856:1
#24	M	1947 Helsinki	Helsinki/Helsinki	EFGHS	Engineer	16855:1

### 1.3. Index of places of birth

NAME GIVEN BY THE INFORMANT	PRESENT FORM	PRESENT COUNTRY
Golina	Golina	Poland
Janov	Janów	Poland, in vicinity of Częstochowa
Jekaterinoslav	Dniepropetrovsk	Ukraine
Kobrin	Kobryn	Belorussia
Kovne	Kaunas	Lithuania
Kozeglovi	Koziegłowy	Poland
Lomže	Łomża	Poland
Mažeik	Mažeikiai	Lithuania
Mitau	Jelgava	Latvia

<sup>9</sup> Moved to Helsinki when thirteen years old.

<sup>10</sup> Has lived in Helsinki since the war.

<sup>11</sup> The family moved from Viipuri to Narva over 115 years ago.

<sup>12</sup> Parents came from Ukraine, town unknown. Mother went to a Russian school in Helsinki.

<sup>13</sup> Came to Finland in 1945.

<sup>14</sup> Informant's parents moved to Turku during the war, informant was sent to a foster family in Sweden. After the war the informant returned to Turku where she has lived until today.

<sup>15</sup> Lived in Helsinki since the 1980s.

<sup>16</sup> Father attended a yeshiva in Lithuania.

<sup>17</sup> Moved to Helsinki in the 1960s.

<sup>18</sup> Moved to Helsinki after graduation.

<sup>19</sup> Moved to Helsinki in 1924 when six years old.

Moskva	Moskva (Moscow)	Russia
Narva	Narva	Estonia
Petrovici	Petroviči	Russia
Polock	Polack	Belorussia
Radava	Radowo	Poland
Tampere	Tampere	Finland
Vaasa	Vaasa	Finland
Vitebsk	Vicebsk	Belorussia
Turku	Turku/Åbo	Finland
Viipuri	Vyborg	Russia

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## APPENDIX B: EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEWS

This appendix contains five samples of the interviews conducted with Helsinki Yiddish-speakers. The first sample is from the recording made by Paul Ariste and Pertti Virtaranta in 1969 with Moses Guthwert (born in 1884). The rest of the samples represent different decades, starting from the second decade of the twentieth century until the late 1940s. The themes of these extracts are chiefly autobiographical or relate to the history of the Jews in Helsinki or the use of Yiddish.

### 1. A BRIF FUN CVEI RABONIM (INF. #1)

The following transcription is based on an interview conducted in 1969 by the renowned Estonian linguist Paul Ariste, assisted by the well-known Finnish linguist Pertti Virtaranta. This is a historical recording, because it seems to be the first documentation made of Finnish Yiddish and the only sample of Yiddish spoken by the generation born in the 1880s. This recording has not been, as far as is known, analyzed previously. Mr. Moses Guthwert (or Meische Gutferd, as the name appears in the official police records of 1901) was born in Helsinki in 1884. His father originated from the government of Lomzha and his mother from Moscow. In his youth Mr. Guthwert attended one of the local heders and the Jewish School in Helsinki (founded in 1893; see image 23). Mr. Guthwert belongs to the generation which was already fluent in Swedish but preferred to speak Yiddish whenever possible.

#### A brif fun cvei rabonim

Ix bi:n gebóren gevóren in Hélsinǵfors axcn húndert fi:r un áxcik. Main táte iz gikúmen... ä:r iz a lómžer, fun Lómžer gubérne. Main múter iz ain... fun Moskóvie, fun Móska.

– Vi zainen zei aher gekumen?

Vo-zol ex aix zogn. Main fóter i gikúmen durx dem, me ot em ópgigebm als militä:r. E:r ot gedí:nt in Fínland zibm jo:r. Dos iz givé:n únter di túrkkíše kri:g. Di ríxtike kri:g i givé:n, álzo di ríxtike kri:gs-sait iz givé:n finf jo:r, álzo vi me

zagt af rúsiš *disvíteli slú:žba*<sup>1</sup>, óber är ot gedí:nt cvei jo:r léjer biz hálbe di túrkiše... Hot er gedí:nt zi:bm jo:r in Finland. Un az är i gikúmen in Finland als militá:rman, iz er dox ein un cváncik jo:r alt. I:r veist vi me git op in, ba di rusn.

– Vos hot ir dortn?

Dos hot er gekrógn a bri:f fun cvei rabónim, hot er gekrógn a bri:f. In bri:f šraibt men azei', dár ä'ršter rov šraibt azei'... dos heist dár:ri bri:f, *bejad habóxor*, in dem hant fun dem bóxer, *reb Jei'el*, álzo Jesie:l, *hanilkod beánšei xáil*, dár:ri vélxer iz gicvúnen gevóren cu gein in kri:gs.

– In milxome?

Ništ in milxóme. Damólc ništ givé:n kin... in kri:gs i dos. *Ki hu: is ä'räx*, är iz a menč, *bedä'räx hajo'sor*, vos geit in dä'räx hajo'sor, in dem ríxtikn veg, jí:ras ašém... I:r veist? Ix daf aix ni dercei'ln. Un *múfleg batei'ro! Hu jei'ssev bevei's hamédreš*, dos heist är zict šténdik in bei's-amedreš, *al hatei'ro veál havei'do*, är lárnt di tei're un di:nt Got. Je, *hašém jisboräx*, álzo Got, *jíttelei leiv šólem*, Got zol er gebn a fri:d in harn, [...] är zol kénen dí:nen Got in *ánšei xail*, álzo in kri:gsvärn vi me zagt dos, je. Un ahä'r i dos *jein álef óder rišn*, dos iz óder rišn, álzo i:r veist dox, der lécter mó:nat, veist *óder rišn, talá: lepáx*.<sup>2</sup> Alein iz är a radžiro:ver, un dár:ri rov hot gehei'ssn Ji'ssoshor Ká:no, dár:ri rov zain vos hot gešríbn... Ject i do nox a, vi ir zet a cvei'te, a cvei'ter rov. Zagt er azei', der cvei'ter rov, zagt er, är hot gizé:n vi dár:ri rov hot gešríbn, är heist reb Šímen-Árje Ká:no, heist e:r. Hot er gešríbn – ó:ber vos er hot gešríbn iz nox cu vei'nik gešríbn af main tatn. Daf šem nox mä:r, zagt er. Az är iz azá *bóxer haxóšuv, hamúfleg vejókor*, a tájerer eí'deler man unt, un a múfleg batei're, zagt er. Un nox zagt er, er zol xášvešolem ni dafn esn kin maxóles asúres, je.

– Aier tate iz geven a frumer jid?

Ä:r i givé:n, dos muz ix aix zogn, är i givé:n a frúmer óber är niš givé:n kin, vi zol-x aix zogn, azá heix azei', vi me zagt es... Ä:r i givé:n a míteler menč, a klúger menč, a klúger menč är givé:n.

– Ven iz er mekaber gevorn?

Ä:r iz gištórbn, ix-l aix zogn, a momént, är iz gištórbn givórn dem ärštn finftn nai'nen húndert axt un cváncik un do mekáber gevórn afn idešn besei'lom do. [...]

Un dos iz fun cvei rabónim vos zei šrai'bm, Ä:r ne:mt cvei mo:l, dár:ri rov, är zol xášvešolem nit dafn esn... Hob ix gifrégt ba tatn, i:r veist dox, bi:n ix dox a inl givé:n: “Hóstu gegésn amó:l maxóles asúres in der kri:gs?” Je, i:r veist. Hot är mi:r gizógt: “Ei'nike mo:l bešás ix bi:n givé:n in di, go:r a jújer soldá:t, iz mi:r aroi'sgekumen cu esn cvei mo:l maxóles asúres”.

– Xazer?

<sup>1</sup> The actual military service (Russian).

<sup>2</sup> Year 1871.

Nein, niš kin dó:veraxer. I:r veist, fleiš. Hob ix gifregt dox: "Vi hóstu giként lebn durx, a menč muz dox lebm, me ken dox mit di o... Ject zogt er: "Me flegt gebm ba di i:dn do: in Fínland. Bi:n ix givé:n un ix fleg ba zei esn. Ó:ber maxóles asúres iz mi:r aroi'sgekumen cu esn in militá:r cvei mo:l." Azei' hot er, zogár, hot afile main táte mi:r dercei'lt.

Un dos iz úntergešribn fun a rov fun Lómže mit a štempl álsdiņ. Un dóssi givé:n, álzo dos iz húndert jo:r alt óto dá:r. Dos iz far mir... halt ix óto dos. Ix hob šem gevélť avéggebm. Mi:r hobm do áza, ix veis, a biblioték, vos fervá:rt di álte zaxn, óber main zu:n, ix hob a zu:n in O:bu, zol er gezúnt zain, lozt er mir nit un zogt ä:r, nox main ptíre vet ä:r es némen bai zix. Zol er blai bm, ix veis, do:rt n.

## 2. IN IDIŠŠE ŠKOLE HOBN MIR TAKE GIHAT FAINE LÄRÄRS (INF. #8)

Inf. #8 was born in Helsinki in 1917. She is among the very few Yiddish-speakers (interviewed for this study), both of whose parents were born in Helsinki. In her youth she attended the Swedish-speaking Jewish Co-educational School (founded in 1918). She was active in the Yiddish-speaking Jewish Dramatic Society run by Jac Weinstein. Later on, after marriage, she moved to Turku, returning to Helsinki in the 1990s. The interview was conducted by the author in Helsinki in 2000.

### In idišše škóle ho:bn mi:r táke gihát fai'ne lä'rärs!

Ix bin gebórn do: in Hélssinki nai'nce:n húndert zibece:n. Un ix bin di jínste fun main familie. Un dos iz givé:n di rúsiše cait cvišn di, Fínland iz givé:n, nox nit givé:n, Fínland iz nox geve:n úntter Rúsland. Nai'ncn húndert áxce:n hobn mi:r, zai'nen mi:r givé:n a ei'gene land, štot, jo:. Mai'ne élttärn zai'nen eíxxet gebórn in Fínland, bei'de. Main múttär in jo:r áxce:n ein un áxcik, un main fóttär iz givé:n a jo:r jínjär, cvei un áxcik, ó:ber di élttern zai'nen gekúmn, ó:ber main bóbe un úrbobe zai'nen gekúmn fun Rúsland. Zei ho:bn do:, ze zai'nen do: af besei'lom.

– Fun vanen zainen ze gekumen?

Ix vel es ni, fun, ix gleib az dos iz, ken zain fun Vilna. Š. veist alc béssär fun mir, azei' di histori:kken un main švéstär. Mi:r zai'nen nor cvei fun fi:l kíndär, un main brúdar iz geštórbn, gefállen in milxóme, in, un men hot em nit gefúnun, do:rttn af *Karé:lska né:set*,<sup>3</sup> dem nai'ncntn of jú:ni ein un fércix, jo:. Un ä:r hot geblíbn do:rttn af di rúsiše zait. Un main švéstär, vos zi iz gebórn naincn húndert

<sup>3</sup> The Isthmus of Karelia (FS).

ce:n, zi iz geštórbn ganc jun, nu:r fi:r un cváncik jo:r. Dámolt hot men nit gehát penesellí:n, men hot nit gevúst. Un dan leb ix nu:r mit main élcte švéstär, in di Sa:ra *hem*<sup>4</sup> do:rt. Zi: iz ganc klo:r un zi iz nai'ncik jo:r, un zi iz ganc, ganc klo:r. Zi dá:rmónt sax béssär di áltte záxxen vi i:x. Zi vet veisn álcdir fun di mišpóxe. Ot azei', azei' iz es. [...]

– Fun vemen hot ir zix gelernt jidiš?

Ix hob gihä':rt ven main ónkkel<sup>5</sup> hot gešpróxn mit zai'ne bekánte un dámals ven di rabónim zai'nen gekúmn bai unz in där heim in Hélssinki. Un dámals ba main švígär-fotär álle mo:l di rabónim un di, vos zogt men, vi heisn di ándere, mešulóxim, zeí hobbn álle mo:l gekúmn cu unz cu esn, un dan hot men gehä':rt. Dámals hot, ale gest, vos zai'nen gekúmn cu haltn a fó:rtra:g, ho:bn girét ídeš. Óber ject, fa:r derfár farštei' ix nit, únzer rabí:n af éngliš, álle re:dn éngliš. Ó:ber dámols hóbn ále mí:tuñen, ále gevé:n af ídeš. Óbär oi'sgilárnt hob ix nit, azei' vi du há:rst. Ject iz zéjär módärn in Amé:rika cvišn di iné:re cu lä'rnen väi'ttär jidiš, hob ix gihä':rt, má:r vi fríär. [...] Ix hob cvei kíndär. Main zu:n izt axt un fúfcik jo:r, un ä:r lebt nox in Túrku, ó:ber zai'ne kíndär zai'nen, tóxtär in Í:srael un P. in Lóndon. Unt mai'ne kíndär fa:rštei'n gó:rništ ken vort ídiš, go:rništ ken vort ídiš, nit main tóxtär... No, mi:r hobbn dox nit mit main man girét in där heim, mir hobbn dox nit girét ídeš, mir hobbn girét švei'diš. Un zeí zai'nen gigáñen a švei'diše šúle in Túrku.

– Ober, mit der mamen hot ir geret švediš oder jidiš?

Švediš, švediš, no:r švei'diš. Ó:bär ject zait i:r, du bist óngifangen mit di kurzn, hob ix...mi:r baštímt mit, cum bai'špi:l, mit Š:s vaib B.. Kenstu i:r? Kenstu B.? Jo: 'B., vei'stu vos, mir reidn, zoln mir reidn idiš!' Un B., jédär mo:l ven zi kliñt cu mi:r un ix kliñt cum Š. do:rttn reidn mir cvišn zix idiš. Un náxtn hob ix eix gizógt, mi:r hobbn gihát Víco-zícung, un mir zai'nen givé:n, main švestär gihát eí'xet do:rtn... Un mi:r zai'nen ná'xten givé:n zeks dá:men. Hob ix gizógt: 'Kénen mi:r nit reidn idiš cvišn unz, ject ven s'iz givé:n, a dank di:r, azei módärn. Óbär do:rt iz eins froi, vos hot kein mo:l nit gihä':rt in där heim, zi hot nit holt, zi farštei't nit idiš, nit azei' gu:t. Ix hob nit bekómen di fo:rum. [...]

– Kent ir epes derceiln fun aiere kínderjorn?

Ix bi:n gigáñen in ídiše škóle, in *Ruo'holahdenkatu*.<sup>6</sup>

– Ver zainen geven di lerer?

Dä:r réktor iz dámals givé:n a Šlü:tär, un ä:r iz givé:n únzer finišše lä'rär eí'xxät. Un, mi:r ho:bn, in ídišše škóle ho:bn mi:r táke gihát fai'ne lä'rärs. Di zélbe lä'rärs zai'nen givé:n in álle finišše lüsé:ums un álle, zeí'är, a Nü:man, a Nü:länd un fa:rši'dene, un álle zeí zai'nen givé:n zeí'jär gebíldete, di grúppe fun

<sup>4</sup> 'Home' (FS). The Jewish old people's home in Helsinki is called Sara hem 'Sara Home'.

<sup>5</sup> Lived, after her farther died, with her uncle, who originated from Vitebsk.

<sup>6</sup> Ruoholahti Street (Finnish).



di lä'rär in idiše šüle. Un ále mi:r zai'nen dox gigáŋen zúntik in škóle, un nit šabát, un zúnttik zai'nen mi:r gigáŋen in škóle.

– Vos hot ir zix gelert zuntik?

Álodiŋ vi a, vi in mítevox, jo.

– Gedenkt ir a Šur?

Jo, dos iz main hebré:išše lä'rär, Ísrael Šu:r, jo. Zain zu:n iz ei'xxát gefáln in kri:g, un me hot em ei'xxát nit gefúnun. Un ä:r hot azei', iz givé:n azei' švä:r fa:r em. Ä:r givé:n a fai'ner menč, Ísrael Šu:r, dos iz give:n. Un Lé:vik iz givé:n a hebré:išše lä'rär un Manelé:vič givé:n a hebré:išše lä'rär.

– Oif velxer šprax hobn zei gelert? In švediš oder in jidiš?

Švei'diš, in švei'diš.

– Oix Manelevič? Er štamt nit fun Finland?

Nej, nej. Aronó:vič ho:bn mi:r gihát. Ä:r iz givé:n fun di injär... Ä:r iz fe:rhei'rrat mit Éŋels a tóxter. Zei zai'nen laŋ avéggefo:rn in Norvé:gen, gleib ix, un fun dánet... Ä:r iz givé:n fun di injäre, Aronó:vič, un gehei'rrat mit Lúci Eŋel. Ó:ber di elt..., Šu:r iz givé:n eine fun di elt... mištóme fun di éltre, Šu:r, Manelé:vič un Š:s fótär.<sup>7</sup> Ven ímäcer fun zei i, zai'nen givé:n krank, hot ä:r akút, no vi zogt men, gegé:bn ei'xxát far unz di lekció:nen in hebré:iš, ven ímecer iz gevé:n oi'fgenomen. [...] Alein iz ä:r dox give:n a šoif... vi zogt men...?

– A soifer?

Jo, vos šraibt di tei'res. Ä:r iz givé:n ei'xxet a biznisan, natírlax, niš giként zicn do:rttn in šu:l un maxn... [...] Ä:r hot gilézn mit di bóxrim, di bármicves oi'sgilärnt zain [Š] fótär. Un ále bóxrim zai'nen gekúmn cu unz in der heim, Bú:ris Grí:nštein, hóstu gihä:rt fun Bú:ris Grí:nštein? No, álle di bóxrim in main... Hob ix oi'sgilärnt ále bróxes un mítgizuŋen. Ix bin eix givé:n cvelf, zei zai'nen givé:n drai'sse:n, drai'ce:n. Álle bróxes un ni:gn, un a teil fun máfti:r ei'xxet. [...].

– Gedenkt ir Žak Vainštein un Di jidishe dramatiše gezelšaft?

Ju:, ix hob mítgešpi:lt ein mo:l do:rttn. Ix bi:n givé:n a amaté:r un är hot givé:n dem rezišše'r. Un es iz givé:n a komedí: fun a... in idiš, natírlax. Un mi:r hobn gihát do: a šaušpi:ler Hánna Tai'ni-Lefkó:vič. Un men hot ir gebétn cu zain dem, ein fun di hau'pt-rolln. Ó:bär nein, zi hot nit geként, nit gevólt. Hot ä:r mir gebétn, ken ix. Dä:r ro:l iz gevé:n a, vi zogt men a *mállinukke ikkunassa*<sup>8</sup>, vi zogt men a... Un ix bin give:n ganc azei' vi a *mállinukke*<sup>9</sup>. Un ix hob gehát a po:r replí:kn in francó:ziš. Un zain, Vai'nšteins švéstär hot geként francó':z zei'jár gu:t. Hot ä:r gezógt: 'A, F. du muz oi'slärnen di francó'ziš fun main švéstär, francó':ziše vórtten. Zi hot... *Žö ne komprande: ...Žö...* ix gedénk nit, épes vos,

<sup>7</sup> Leibe Bolotowsky.

<sup>8</sup> 'A dummy in a shop window (Finnish)

<sup>9</sup> 'Dummy' (Finnish).

hob ix gehát a po:r vórtten cu zó:gen, mösjö:, un... No, ále mir zai'nen gefó:rn in Ó:bu. Ix bi:n farlóbt gevó:rn, un dortn gezésn main kúmendike famílie am eršn... Un ix bi:n gevé:n a mei'dele fun cvei un cváncik jo:r un gesítárt. No, iz do:rttn gevé:n a šaušpí:ler fun Švei'diše teá:tár. Hot ä:r gezógt: 'Oí, oí froi'len K. i:r hot gimáxt fun dem francö':ziše šprax áza oí vei! S'i:z gevé:n gut, alc hot gut oí'sgize:n, ó:ber di francö':ziše šprax hot ir í:bärgileigt.

### 3. KANTTONISTN – AZEI HOT MEN ZEI GERUFT (INF. #11)

Informant #11 is one of the most fluent Yiddish-speakers that I met during my fieldwork. He was born in Helsinki in 1922, his father originated from Vitebsk, mother was born in Helsinki. He attended in his youth the Jewish Co-educational School in Helsinki. From there he continued in a Swedish-speaking gymnasium. He is fluent not only in Swedish and Yiddish but also in Hebrew, German and English, and has some knowledge of Russian. The interview was conducted by the author in Helsinki in 1998.

#### Kánttonistn – azei' hot men zei gerúft

Mai'ne múttár iz gebórn gevórn in Hélssinki axcn húndert zeks un áxcik. I:r fóttár vai'tter iz gekúmn als a zélner, jidiše zélner, dí:nen in dem kai'sers armé:. Hot men em far'síkt vai't fun zain heim. Ä:r gebórn gevórn in Kóvno áxce:n húndert... es muz zain gevé:n áxce:n húndert fi:r un fércik. Un ä:r givé:n zéxcen jo:r ven men hot em gixápt in militá:rn di:nst un gebráxt im in Hélssinki in Svéaborg. Un do:rttn hot men em ui'sgilámt cu zain a šnai'der. Azei' hot men gimáxt mit di júje idiše bóxerim, vos me't ginúmen in ar:mé: in di kai'serlix caitn. Dä:r ábzixt iz givé:n, dos zei zoln dínen a láje cait un zei zoln ništ ho:bn kein kontákt mit zéjere hei'men. Un do: zai'nen ništ givé:n i:dn in dä:r cait. Es iz no:r givé:n di jidiše soldá:tn. Di ä'ršte zai'nen gikúmn šein in áxce:n húndert zibn un cváncik in Nikolai' der ä'ršte caitn. Un ä:r ei'gentlax hot dos ai'ngefü:rt in Rúsland, vail ä:r hot givólt, dos di klei'ne faršídene étniše grupn mit faršídene kultú:r, mit faršídene špraxn, mit faršídene religió:n zoln faršvínbn ve:rn un álle zoln vä:rn rusifici:rt un álle zoln ónne:men dem órttodoksn glöi'bn, zéjár provoslávner glei'bn. Un dóssi givé:n di mei'nuj mit di...ó:ber di jidiše soldá:tn hobn dos ništ gimáxt. Zei hobn gemúzt dínen cváncik biz finf un cváncik jo:r. [...]

Nu, zei zai'nen gevé:n di ä'ršte i:dn do, di zélner, men hot zei gerúfn kánttonistn, vail di šu:ln vu zei hobn zax gilá'nt hot men gezógt, hot men genánt šu:ln far kánttonistn. Azei' hot men zei gerúft. Zei zai'nen gekúmn fun far'šídene kanttó:nen, faršídene gé:gent in Rúsland.

– Fun Vilne, fun Vaisrusland?

No, eix fun arúm Novgoró:d un fun di šteln. Main fruis föttär ódär main fruis zeí'de, ä:r i givé:n fun di: gé:gentn. Im hot men ui'sgilärnt cu zain a šóršteinköimär, pucn šóršteiner, pucn zei, vail dámolc hot men gehei'ct mit eivn, gröi'sse eivn un mit holc. Un men hot gemúzt pucn ofn dax, vu di reix iz aruí's. Un men hot gemúzt ui'smujärn jédes jo:r ofnai' kímat. Vail men hot gehei'ct in vinttär, in zúmmär vai'tter gištánen kalt. Iz, zai'nen di ci:gl cerbróxn gevó:rn un zai'nen ništ givé:n azétike hícebeštendike ci:gl vi haint cu to:g, vail... normá:le ci:gl hot men gehát. Zei ho:bn ništ gihálttn éfšä:r ein vinttär, éfšer cvei vinttär, hot men gemúzt zei vai'tter ui'smujärn. Un em hot men ui'sgilärnt cu zain a mújärer fun eivn un fun haltn di šóršteiner rein. Un azei' hot men zei gilä'rnt. Ándere hot men ui'sgilärnt cu zain a šúštär, fa:r tíšlärš, hántverkker, kédei zei zoln dínen di láje cait in armé:. Un armé: hot dox gemúzt hobn vä:r es repari:rt, vä:r es maxt ven es ve:rt cebróxn, un náje klei'där, náje ši:x, náje štívl un unifórmn fa:r di ofici:rer un ándere zaxn. Ho:bn di ídiše zélner, zai'nen gizéssn un ho:bn do:rtm giárbet fa:r zei. Un nox cváncik, finf un cváncik jo:r, óder šein a bisl friär amó:l, zai'nen zei bafrai't givó:rn un nox Rúsland cu fo:rn curí:k hot men ništ givólt. Vail troc dem hot men gimäi'nt do: i béssär. Un dé:rn ox ho:bn zei ništ gihát kontákt mit zéjere ei'gene. Efšä'r zai'nen zei ništó afn zelbn ort, éfšer i dó:rtm givé:n pogrómen cuvíšn un me hot zei farjógt in ándere štétlen un ze:rbrént zéjere hai'zer un zéjere heimn. S-zai'nen gevé:n álemo:l fá:rfołgunen in Rúsland únter di caitn.

Un in di ä'ršte jo:rn fun áxce:n húndert fü'nfcih zai'nen do: gevé:n a po:r jídiše xásenes un famíljen. Éssi gikúmn múttärs fun di zélners vos ho:bn gedí:nt do:. Un zei ho:bn givúst az zei ho:bn a íñl, cvei íñlax, éfšer drai, ä'rgecvu: in Fínland. Un zei zai'nen gevórn almónes, de:r man i gištórbn óder me hot em avéjejógt fun dorf, óder zei zai'nen álein geblíbn, ho:bn éfšer gihát a tóxtér vóssi givé:n šein in a éltter cu xásene ho:bn. Un azei' hot men gimáxt šídax. Zei gikúmn mit di tóxtér ahä':r un épes a jídiše zélner vósi šein bafrai't fun armé: – hot men gimáxt a šídax. Un azei' zai'nen úfgištánen famílies. Vi mi:r veissn, vos mi:r ho:bn dos úfgecäixnt, di ä'ršte do:-gebórene kind fun a xásene givé:n a meidl, axcn húndert ein un fúfcik. No ja:. Un azei' iz main zeí'de, hot eix main múttärs bóbe, zi gikúmen ahä':r cu zuxn í:re íñlax, í:r íñl, ein hot zi gihát do: un zi hot amó:l gehát a tóxtér vos zi hot mítgebraxt. Ven zi hot zax anídärgišlogn do:, iz zi: givó:rn a békär. Zi givé:n di ä'ršte vós hot gimáxt do jídišše Breit. Un ništ no:r fa:r jí:dn, hot zi gimáxt eix fa:r russn, ó:ber fa:r di fínnen in štot hot zi ništ giként maxn, dos hot zi ništ gihát ä:rlei'bniš, zi hot no:r gihát ä:rlei'bniš cu fa:rkei'ffn fa:r jídn in što:t, fa:r zélner vos zai'nen bafrai't givó:rn, un efšä:r zéjere famíljen un russn, dos heist azétike vos ho:bn gihä':rt cu di rúsiše badínu:ng do:. Di oficiéle Rúsland hot dox gihát do: a gävärnœ':r un arúm em a gánce büro: un

azei' vai'tter un ofici:rn un zéjäre familjen. Un far zeï hot eix main zeï'de ven är bafrai't givó:rn hot er giként árbetn als šnai'der, óbär eix bašrént, no:r fa:r russn. Un fun russn hot är giként némen baštéllugen un fa:r zeï néjen klei'där. Un main múttärs, main vaibs zéide, är hot giként rei'níkn di šórñstöine no:r in azétike hui'zer vos hobn gilébt rúsiše familjen, vos ho:bn gehä:rt cu di rúsiše fá:rvalttug un vósi gihä:rt cu militä:r eix, zélbstfarštendlix, dem kránkkenhuiz vóssi givé:n do:, eib du kenst Hélssinki, *Hie'talahden tóri*<sup>10</sup>, auf Lönrø'tsštra:s, *Lönrø:tin-kadulla sie'lä hállin vie'ressä, míssä ne pu:talot vie'lä on. Se óli sótilassaira:la*<sup>11</sup>, dóssi givé:n a kránkkenhoiz fa:r zélnär. Un fa:r dom<sup>12</sup> hot är gihát ä:reï'bniš cu... Hot eix, vóssi haint der muzé:um fun štot Hélssinki, vu es hot gevei'nt dámolc Karamzi:n, vóssi givé:n de:r rúsišser gævärnø'r in Héliñki do:. in zain huiz hot er giként rei'nigen di šóršteiner. Álles hot gimúzt, gihát a e:reï'bniš. Un azei' hot men gilébt do:.

Zeï ho:b ništ giként gríndn do: a fá:rzámlug, oficiél, a kehíle, vail zeï zai'nen ništ give:n finiše bírger. No:r zeï ho:bn gihát cvišn zix hot men gimáxt xévre kadíše, dos hot gimúzt zain vail men, ménššen štarbn. I:z, in a ídiše kehíle on a xévre kadíše iz ništo:. Xévre kadíše givé:n dos ä'ršte vos me hot gegríndet un geéft a pínkkes un fa:ršrai'bt di mitglíder fun Xévre kadíše, dóssi di ä'ršte úntterla:ge vos mi:r hobn í:ber di jí:dn un di, de:r pínkkes, de:r tó:gbug vos zeï ho:bm gefí:rt dámolc in ónfañ, af jídiš gešríbn, dóssi givé:n gešri:bn af ídiš. Mi:r ho:bn dos ópgefotografi:rt un gešíkt in muzé:um in Ísro:l. Es ligt nox bai unz in seif, de:r originá:l, di ä'ršte pínkkes fun Xévre kadíše. Un äi'gentlax iz Xévre kadíše un Xévre bíkur xei'lim, dos heist kránkken kásse, zai'nen givé:n fa:rei'níkt. Óbär dámolc plúci:k áxee:n húndert fínf un zíbeci:k iz givé:n a maxlei'kke, a štraik, vóssi víktigär, cu co:ln fa:r a famí:lje vos do:rtn iz givórn an almóne, un vos zi hot, nitó:gídx, nixt Breit cu to:n ven der man i gíštórbn. Ódär cu co:ln fa:r ei'när vos är iz krank un muz ho:bn hilf fun medicí:nen un azei' vai'ttär. Un zeï zai'nen givé:n fa:rei'níkt. Un plúclug hot zax Xévre bíkur xei'lim, iz ui'sgitrettn fun Xévre kadíše un hot gigríndet a ei'gene xévre, Xévre bíkur xei'lim bazúnder. Un fun di klei'ne gelt iz givé:n genú:g af bei'de plúclug. Got hot gibénçt, me hot a mícve giként to:n do: un a mícve giként to:n do:. Jo:, laixt iz dos zixär ništ givé:n dámolst.

Dámolst ho:bn di jí:dn cvišz zix ale girét jídiš ódär rúsiš, zélbstfarštendlix eix, óbär jídiš in huiz, hot men girét jídiš. Šu:l i givé:n, di ä'ršte štíbelax zai'nen givé:n ä'rgecvu: in di: kazä'rne<sup>13</sup>, in di: rúsiše kazä'rme i givé:n di e'ršte štíbele

<sup>10</sup> 'Hietalahti Market' (Finnish).

<sup>11</sup> 'On Lönnroth's Street, there next to the halls, there where the wooden houses still exist. That was a military hospital.' (Finnish)

<sup>12</sup> 'Them' (Swedish)

<sup>13</sup> 'Barracs', StY *kazárne*, FS *kasern* [kasärn].

far a mínjen, dósi givé:n no:r fa:r ménär. Un de:rnóx iz givé:n šein familjes gikúmen. Ó:ber dénstmo:l hot di rúsiše armé: gedújen a šu:l, vóssi givé:n do:rttn vu di márkplac, afn cveittn zait fun dem bri:k Siltasá:ri in, *no míkäs se on sie'lä se Sö'rnäisissä tori?*<sup>14</sup> (*Hakaniemen tori*<sup>15</sup>) Jo: *Hakaniemen tóri* in, do:rt vu haint šteit *Métallityöväen li:ttö*<sup>16</sup> un af ander zait *Mérihotelli*.<sup>17</sup> Genau' do:rttn vu - *Mérihotelli* iz, i givé:n amó:l a hílcerne huiz, fun štein ä'ršte štok un cvei'tte štok i givé:n fun holc. Un dos hot cúgehä:rt cu ei'när familje Laņé:n, men hot es gerúfn dámolst Laņé:ns villa. Un inem cveittn štok fun Laņé:ns villa hot di rúsiše armé: gedújen a teil vu: fun dem, vu men hot aingeriktet a šu:l, a béit knä':sset, áxce:n húndert cvei un zéxcik. Un das hot eksistí:rt bis nai'ncn húndert zeks, ven dá:r jéctiker šu:l iz fá'rttik givó:rn. Punkt genui' dem šábes, dem zúntik vet zain zvei un nai'ncik jo:r fun dem to:g vos men hot dos ai'ngiveint, dem drai'ssikstn au'gust noi'ncn húndert zeks. Un fun dos iz arui'sgikumen špétär a ídiše kehíle. Ó:bär ä'ršt in nai'ncn húndert axcn ho:bn mi:r giként dem kehíle grindn, vail äršt in naicn húndert axcn ho:bn mi:r bakúmen fíniše mítbirgeršaft, äršt ven Finland iz bafrai't givó:rn un Finland iz zélbštendik givó:rn, ho:bn mi:r bakúmen fíniše bírgeršaft.

#### 4. IDIŠ IZ DOX A ŠPRAX (INF. #21)

Informant #21 was born in 1937 in Turku. His father was also born in Turku, mother originated from the town of Mažeik (now Mažeikiai, Lithuania). In his youth he attended a Swedish-speaking school and an afternoon heder, where the language of instruction was Yiddish until early 1950s. He has lived quite a lot abroad, for instance in Sweden, Israel and England. He moved to Helsinki in mid 1980s. The interview was made by the author in 1998 in Helsinki.

#### Ídiš iz dox a šprax

Ix bi:n gebórn in Túrku. Main fóter iz eix gebórn in Túrku, un main múter iz gebórn in Mažeik, Lite. Un zeí zai'nen gehei'rat nai'ncn húndert zeks un drai'ssik, un gikúmen in Túrku, óder O:bu, azei' vi es zogt in švei'diš, di nómen iz in švei'diš. Unt zeí zai'nen givé:n religié:ze jí:dn. Mi:r hobn gehít azei fi:l vi méglaç, di religié:ze, fa:ršídene la:gn, azei' vi es šteit gešribn in di finf bíxer fun

<sup>14</sup> 'What is that market place called in Sörnäinen?' (Finnish).

<sup>15</sup> 'Hakaniemi market place' (Finnish).

<sup>16</sup> 'Union of metal workers' (Finnish).

<sup>17</sup> Lit 'Sea hotel' (Finnish).

Moi'she rabeinu. Un ba unz in štub ho:bn mi:r gerét ganc fi:l špraxn, mi:r hobn gerét hebréiř, gerét idiř, gerét finiř, řvédiř, un mit main řvéster hob ix girét éjliř. Main múter hot giként eix rúsiř. Main fóter iz giřtórbn in naincn húndert ein un zibzik, un main múter iz giřtórbn in naincn húndert nai'ncik. Ix leb do: alei'n, main řvéster lebt in Éjland.

– Ir hot tomid geret jidiř mit di eltern in der heim?

Je, ix bi:n cufrídn az mi:r ho:bn dos fó:rgezet vail idiř iz dox a řprax. Es helft eix in farřtei'n daič un amo:l a bisl in afriká:nsk, řvei'diř un hóllendiř, vail es hot a po:r énluxe klájen, vār'tter vos zai'nen uřefā'rt di zélbe vi idiř, un az ei'ner ret daič un az er ret ruik, zol men zogn, flémiř ken ix étvos farřtei'n, vail es klijt ábisl in di zélbe sti:l.

– Vi azoi hot men aix gelert idiř, leienen idiř?

Ix gleib, az vos ix ken errínern, main fóter hot gelézt, gehát ídiře bíxer. Un ix hob amó:l ábisl azei' gix gikúkt... ó:ber ix gidénk az main fóter iz givé:n zéjer aktív in der gemei'nde un givé:n in fa:rshídene organizácies, un e:r hot geřríbn rédes, un protokóln hot er oft geřríbn in ídiř. Un ix hob gifúnen álte bri:f un protokóln vos er ot geřríbn, nox zain tóit, un dan epes iz gevórn di intrése mé:rer, óber... Ix hob dúrxgile:zn ábisl, ix hob giként le:zn zain stil. Óber azei' ven ix bi:n givé:n juj hob ix azei' gix... M-ot mérer gerét un diskutí:rt. Ix hob niřt gihát cait, ix hob niřt gihát íntres cu afile... Mi:r hobn gihát fa:rřídene bíxer, mir obn gihát in finiř, mir obn gihát in řvei'diř...un in ídiř eix. Un main fóter hot gilā'nt in a jeříve. Ó:ber ix hob dos zéjār gix, azei' gix dúrxgikukt, ix ken niřt zogn az ix hob dos gilézn, rixtik gilézn. Ó:ber main fóter i giřtórbn, me ot óngifajen cu órdenen di zaxn un me ot gitei'lt di řtu:b. Hob ix gefúnen in a po:r késtlax, ávekgileigt álte heftn, protokóln un bri:f un drořes vos er hot, er flegt reidn in řu:l un cuzámenzicužen, hot er geřríbn in ídiř un ábisl in hebre:iř un in ídiř. Ā:r hot girét cum pářřat-ařvu:a un ven si:z givén di jontei'vim hot er gerét ábisl zaxn, religié:ze zaxn, vos hot gihát cu ton mit di jontei'vim. Iz, dos hot er geřpó:rt vaizt ois un avégilegt. Ix hob dos kei'nmo:l niřt gizé:n vail ix bi:n niřt givé:n di gánce cait, ix bi:n avégifo:rn. Ix hob niřt gilébt in Túrku di gánce cait. Ix bi:n givé:n ávek, ix bi:n gevé:n in řveidn, ject bi:n ix do: kimát fúfen jo:r. Fa:r dem bi:n ix givé:n in řveidn, in Éjland un in Isró:el, ix hob niřt gilébt mit di éltern di gánce cait. Iz oft do: vos hot passi:rt veis ix niřt, vail ix bi:n givé:n ávek. Hob girét in telefó:n cu há:m vos zei maxn un me ot geřri:bn bri:f, óber dos iz givé:n azélxxe kúrce zaxn. Az me lebt af a plac jéde to:g zet men, há:rt men, veist men mérer, óber ven men iz ávek a po:r jo:r veist men niřt vos es tut sax.

I:z, gekúmen curik hot men gezésn říve. Ná:dem, nox dem, hot men óngifajen kukn vos es iz do:. Si givé:n fi:l zaxn far mi:r, hob ix niřt gidénkt az main fóter hot gihát. Éřřer hot er cúgikeift, hot er gikrógn únter di cait vos ix bi:n givé:n in oi'sland. Iz, hob ix gifúnen do:rtn in a keřtl a po:r klásern, vos do:rtn

givé:n ínnevenik, protokoln un er hot geršribn faršidene rédes, ven me ot gihát a bármicve, givé:n a xássene, a jubilé:, flegt e:r reidn. Un ä:r flegt zicn ahei'm un ä:r flegt šraibn di rédes. Un glaixcai'ttik ven er flegt šraibn flegt er kuk to:n in xúmesh, in tánax un in épes recití:m a pósuk óder cvei fun tánax in zain réde, vail er flegt reidn oft in oficiéle, da:n, ix red fun naincn húndert drai'ssik, fá'rcik, fúfcik, ven menčn hobn farštánnen jidiš.

Haint, az du vest reidn idiš haint, éfšer ce:n prosént ken farštei'n. Di jugnt ken ništ farštei'n, i:z véstu reidn cum vant. Oib du redst a cváncik mínut, zeí veln hobn cait cu zicn, az zeí farštei'n górníšt, éfšer a cvei drai vā'rtter, vos iz ivrit fun di réde. Óber ven ix reid idiš veln zeí górníšt farštei'n, axúc vos ix hob zix, fang o:n 'geä':rtte froi'en un ménner'. Nu, 'frau'en' iz in doič 'froi'en', kénen zeí farštei'n, un 'men' un 'män', dos iz énlax cu švei'diš. Axúc fun dos, oib ix zog 'máztov' óder 'lexai'm', azélxxe vā'rtter vos ále farštei'en. Ó:ber di ínhalt fun di réde veln di jugnt in hai'nttikn do:r, menčn cuvíšn, zol men zo:gn, fufcn biz fá'rcik jo:r – éfšer cvei procént veln farštei'n. Un fun di áltte, éltère menčn vos zai'nen do:, zol men zo:gn, í:ber zibcik, zeí veln farštei'n idiš. Óber az men geit in únzer zále dortn un me hot a cúzamenkunft un zicn a drai húndert mečn, éfšer drai'ssik menčn veln farštei'n. Un éfšer nox a cváncik veln farštei'n a po:r zacn, a po:r vā'rtter vos kumt in cuvíšn. Ó:ber ix hob mei're az cvei húndert un fúfcik menčn veln šlofn do:rttn, vail zeí veln ništ farštei'n. Óder zeí šlofn óder zeí veln gein aroi's. Haint darf men reidn óder finiš, afile švei'diš, di švei'diš iz givé:n, di procént... Ix bi:n gigájen in a švei'díše škóle. Iz afile du redst švei'diš, haint i:z di procént arúnter. Far cváncik jo:r curík iz givé:n uje fá'r fúfce:n procént fun Fínland hot girét švei'diš, haint iz a helft éfšer, zibn kómma zeks, kómma axt procént. Un haint iz dos azei', az dos iz do speciéle térritories vu me ret švédiš, nit úmetum in Fínland ret men švédiš. Ein zax vos iz éfšer aruf táke iz di rúsiše šprax, iz aruf a bisl, vail mir ho:bn cu to:n mit Rúsland un Estónie un Lituei'nie un Látvie. Ó:ber azei' iz di idiš arúnter un di švei'diš arúnter. Un az in finiše škóle haint lézen zeí gā'rner éngliš fríer vi švei'diš. Ix farštei' fárvos, di gánce velt, a gréssere procént reidn éngliš, di švei'diš iz éfšer gut far di Skandináviše Lénder, óber di, óber az a júne meidl óder a inl, a bóxer, az er daf bašlín vos er vel némen, A, B, C [ei, bi:, si:]<sup>18</sup> vélxe šprax axúc fun finiš, er daf veíln vel er némen éngliš, vel er némen francó':ziš, vel er némen daič óder vel er némen éngliš. I:z, gleib ix az greíssn, di gréste teil veln fríer némen éngliš, nox finiš veln zeí némen éngliš. Un ná:dem az di B [bi:] šprax meín ix zeí veln ništ némen švei'diš, zeí veln némen óder, ject iz EU [e: u:] ject vet kúmen EU, veln zeí némen óder daič óder francó':ziš. Éfšer francei'ziš vail in Bélgien, Hólland vos i do:, un Šveic, do:rttn ret men fráncei'ziš. Un francó'i'ziš hot ábisl latei'niš in *it*, in zix. Itá:lien, Špá:nien

18

Refers to the Finnish school system, where the first foreign language is A, second B etc.

un Portugál: l hot ábisl latei'niš. Ná:dem hot ir vai'tter in Dárom-Amé:rika do:rttn i do: Argentí:na, un Brazíl, do:rttn ret men eix špániš. Iz, éfše:r veln zei némen dos eins fun di bei'de. Ject ken zain, sidó ject problé:men, ó:ber s-ken zain, az a teil némen ject japá:niš, xíniš, vail zei ho:bn, miljó:nen menčn reidn. Iz, haint hot di cait, caittn zai'nen gebítn, me ot gebítn, di cait iz ništ vos iz givé:n mit fúfcik jo:r curik. Dan hot men ništ gevúst azei' fi:l fun Japán un ništ fun Ši:n, gómišt gevúst azei' fi:l fun Rúsland afile. Un me ot ništ girét ve:gn EU [e: u:] un álle di mai'sses, vos iz ject, di lécte drai fi:r jo:r ret men. I:z dos mein ix az a júŋe menš... Naincn húndert fúfcik zéxcik ven Isró:el gevó:rn a štot, štat, zai'nen fi:l menčn fun Fínland í:bergiheibn zax cu Isró:el. Dan givé:n a grei'sse alijá:. Dan iz dos givé:n vixtí:k cu lénnen hebré:iš. Di famí:lien vos ho:bn gitráxt az zei veln fo:rn ávek fun Fínland, un veln zax bezécn in Isró:el, zei ho:bn intresí:rt sax cu lá'men hebré:iš, ništ ídiš, hebré:iš, ivrít. Ó:ber es ken zain az bai zei, di eltern di po:r, di júŋe po:rn vos zai'nen gifó:rn in Isroé:l, hob:n fa:rštánnen jídiš vail ba zei in der heim, éfše:r zai'nen di éltern fun Poiln oder fun Rúsland.

## 5. HOB IX FIL IDIŠ GIHÄRT, OBER NIT GIRET (INF. # 23)

Informant #23 was born in 1946 in Turku. His father originally came from Poland, but grew up in Helsinki; mother was a born in Turku. The informant spoke Swedish with his parents, Yiddish he learned from his grandparents and from other acquaintances. In his youth he attended a Swedish-speaking school and an afternoon Hebrew school, run by Israeli teachers. After graduation he moved to Helsinki. The interview was made by the author in 2002 in Helsinki.

### Hob ix fi:l ídiš gihä'rt, óber nit girét

Ix bi:n geboi'ren in jo:r zeks un fircik in Túrku, in Ó:bu. Main máme iz geboi'ren in O:bu. I:r mútár iz eix geboi'ren in Ó:bu unt i:r fóter kumt fun Lítve. Main táte un zai'ne éltern kúmen fun Poiln, fun a plac vos heist Golí:na, óber ix veis nit vu dos i:z. Main táte hot e:rcei'lt mi:r, hot mi:r e:rcei'lt, az ä:r, az zei ho:bn gekúmn mit a fárd un a vogn af ein to:g cu Váršše. Azei' muz dos zain fúfcik biz húndert kilomé:ter. Ó:ber ven men zuxt Golí:na ne:r<sup>19</sup> Váršše iz do: me:r vi cváncik plécer, Golí:na o Galí:na.

– Mit zei hot ir geret jidiš?

Ni, nu:r švei'diš. Main máme hot gevé:n in a švei'dišše škóle un main táte iz gevé:n do: in Hélsinki in di švei'dišše, ídišše škóle biz vánet es iz givé:n a švei'dišše, špráxxike škóle.

<sup>19</sup> 'Near', cf. Yiddish *nóent*, Swedish *när*, German *in der Nähe*, *nahe bei*, English *near*.



– Zei zainen gekumen in Helsinki eršt?

Je. Main tátes famílje iz gevé:n do:. E:r iz givé:n zeks jo:r alt. Lemóšl ä:r hot nit geként rei'den poi'liš, pei'liš me:r nit. Er hot dos alc...

– Er hot gekent jidiš?

Jidiš je, óber kein pei'liš nit.

– Ober mit aix hot er geret...?

Švédiš, švei'diš. Dos iz geve:n zain štárkkeste šprax, nit gut ó:ber štárkkeste.

– Ven zainen zeí gekumen in Finland?

In fi:r un cváncik. Ä:r hot no:r gelä'nt, ix mein, fi:r ó:der finf jó:ren.

– Fun vemen hot ir gelert aier jidiš?

Ix hob gihä:rt ba main zeí'de un, zeiden un bóbes. Azei' nit... ix veis nit... Ix bin givé:n farinteresirt in jidišše muzí:k. Hob ix fi:l ídiš gihä:rt, óber nit girét. Ix hob nit azei' fi:l gerét, óber tómid ven zeí ho:bn girét iz dos givé:n in ídiš. Main bóbes fun bai'de zaittn ho:bn geként švé:diš, me:r ó:der vé:nik, ó:ber gerét eix šve:diš.

– In Obu iz geven a xeider?

Je. Ix bin gigáñen in xeí'der. Ix bi:n fun di ä'ršte generació:n, vos ho:bn gehát a lé:rer fun Isroél. Si givé:n jéde cvei'tte jo:r iz givé:n a nájer lé:rer. Óber maí'ne, main máfti:r baim rav Drizú:n.<sup>20</sup> Un ä:r hot girét no:r jidiš. Ä:r hot nit ge... ä:r hot éfše:r geként cvánci:k vértter finiš.

– Vos far a šprax hobn di lerers genuct?

Hebre:iš, nu:r hebré:iš.

– Ir kent redn hebreiš?

Azei' vi ídiš. Óber ix leien béser ídiš vi hebré:iš. Un ix šraib nit hebré:iš, nit ídiš.

– Kent ir andere fun aier dor vos redn flisik jidiš?

Nein. Ix mein G.B.<sup>21</sup> iz der ei'nciker. Es gíbt, éssi do: a sax, a sax fun main éltter vei'ssen fi:l ídišše vā'rttär, óber kénnen nit reidn a gánce miš... vos heist dos?

– Mišpat?

Je.

– Vi alt zait ir geven ven ir hot ongefangen cu gein in xeider?

Fun zi:bn jo:r alt. Ix bi:n givé:n, ix bi:n nit zíxxer, ix mein ix bi:n givé:n zeks jo:r alt, hot men óñefañen in Túrku, in Ó:bu mit a gan jeládim, mit a kínder gártnen, vi heist es. Un .... dos iz gekúmn a lé:rerin fun Isró:el. Un zi hot gihát a man, un e:r iz givé:n der lé:rer in xeí'der. Un zi iz givé:n di:, vi heist dos, ganénet fa:r di klei'ne kínder. Un ven mi:r ho:bn óñefañen di: normá:le škóle ho:bn mi:r

<sup>20</sup> Dryzun was a Hebrew teacher in the Turku heder, and later the Rabbi of Turku.

<sup>21</sup> Informant #24.

óngefajen mit di, mit dem xei'der. Dos iz nit givén a xei'der vi amólíke jo:m. Dos iz me:r givén a škóle fa:r hebré:iš. Me hot nit gelei'nt kein, me hot gelei'nt nit tei're ó:ber me hot gilä'rint fun di jontei'vim un azélxxe zaxn.

– Iz dos geven jedn tog?

Nein, ix mein dos iz gevén ein ó:der cvei mo:l in vox, nox dem škóle.

– Vifl kinder zait ir geven?

Dos ken ix nit erinern.

– Meidelex oix?

Je, jéje. Mir ho:bn, ix bin eí'ne fun di gréste doi'res in Turku, di zeks un fércik geboi'rene. Es iz me:r vi ce:n. Álco ce:n in dos, mein ix, in mai'ne élttern.

– Vi hot ir zix gelert leienen jidiš?

Ix hob, main táte hot bakúmen cai'tunen in ídiš. Ix hob fa:rzúxt cu lei'enen. Ó:ber ven dos i:z, ken ix dos nit zo:gn.

– Aier tate flegt redn jidiš mit zaine eltern?

Je, ó:ber nit, ä:r-t, ä:r hot nit geként šraibn jidiš mit hebré:iše oi'sies. Ix veis, az main zeí'de iz gevén in Dai'čland ba main tántte, main zeí'de hot gešríbn in ídiš, mit jidiše eí'ssies, hot main táte gešríbn mit latai'niše buxštá:vn, ó:ber jidiš. Di bri:vn **hob ix nit**, óber main zeí'des bri:v hob ix nox. Ä:r šraibt zeí'**jär, zeí'jár**, vos heist **dos kä'siala**<sup>22</sup>... Dos iz, zeí'er šein [...] zaine bri:v, ó:ber ix **ken dos** nit lei'enen.

– Axuc di caitungen hobn zeí gelei'ent jidiše bixer?

Nein, nit bai unz.

– Vos far a meinung hot aier tate, bobe-zeide gehat vegn jidiš als a šprax?

Main táte, no ä:r hot... ídiš givén a gútte šprax vail ä:r hot, ven ä:r iz givén in Isrá:el, hot ä:r geként reidn ídiš, geként gein in a kafé: arain un baštélln af jidiš. Un ä:r hot, vi heist dos, ä:r hot nit gehát, gehót, gehát li:b az in Isrá:el hot men nit gevólt reidn jidiš. Er iz immer givén in ka:s az menčen šrei'en az nit jidiš, ret hebré:iš.

– Fundestvegn er iz geven a cionist?

Nein, ó:ber, nit kain cionist, ó:ber gehólt az jidiš iz a šprax fa:r ji:dn. In Isró:el ken men reidn hebre:iš óber muz, men muz eix jidiš kénen.

22 'Handwriting' (Finnish).

## APPENDIX C: SAMPLES OF LATINIZED TEXTS

This appendix contains some examples of Latinized articles and poems published in local Jewish journals and transcriptions/transliterations of a song and part of a play performed by the local song and theatre associations. On the system of Latinization and the journals, see Chapters 5 and 6.

### 1. THE JOURNAL *HAZOHAR*

The article *A nationale schande!* 'National Shame!' by Benami 'Son of My Nation' (Josef Lefko?) was published in *Hazohar* (no. 2 1934: 7).

#### **A nationale schande!**

Es is gewen azait, erst nor mit einige jorn zurik, wen kimat jeder finnischer id hot gehat sain goldenem kalb, gröis oder klein, arum welchen er hot getanzt, in welcher er hot zicher starker geglöibt wi in dem ewigen Elohim. Er is gewen wi frakischeft un farblendt fun dem goldglantz un gelt hot fun em geschoten on a schir oif rechts un links un afluui fun hotelbalkonen. Men hot gelebt wi in Pompadurs-zaiten, nor far sich, far dem eigenem guf. Di finnische iden, weile nefasches mit warime idische herzer, hoben gevis nit farsamt zu spenden gelt far di pogromirte polnische un ruische iden. Sei hoben eich gegeben far Erez Israel, ober altz hot getrogen un trogt noch ad hajom a charakter fun zdoko. Nit aus idischem patriotism, eich nit aus nationalen plichtsgefil git men gelt far idische zweken, sondern als nedowo. Es is noch haint faran a sach iden, welche betrachten blois als filantropie dos bojen fun a eigenem land oder helfen a cholutz, welcher fort dos land bojen. Un gerade wegn chaluzim viln mir do reiden.

Nor mit einige jorn zurik, wen mir zionisten hoben geret un agitiert as unsere jugentliche soln sich forberreiten far Erez Israel un durchmachen a haschara, hoben sejere tates un mames oftmol beshuldigt uns as mir fardrejen sejere unschuldike kinder di kep. Ober haint mit ot-ot knape einige joren speter hoben di selbe tates un mames a taine zu uns wos men bakumt aseu wenig sertifikaten. Staits mir finnische iden hoben recht oif a gresern zol sertifikaten, wail mir sainen jachsonim, mir hoben gegebn fil gelt far Erez Israel u.a.w. Un wen mir hoben schein jo bakumen di zwei-drai sertifikaten un es is boruch-ha-schem gelungen zu gefinen a jugentlichen, welcher iz bereit zu foren nach Erez Israel, is wi behandelt

di idische gesellschaft ot diesen oisgeweilten chaluz? Men bahandelt em erger wi a meschulach. Kein farstendnis far sain mission nit nur mezad einzelne iden, nor wos mer erstaundlich mezad der gemeinde. Anstot zu ferwandlen in a nationale simche jede raise fun unzere chaluzim ferwandelt men dem injan „chaluz“ in snorer gelt farn chaluz-nebach un dos eif a miesen art. Men fargiftet di sele fun dem unbamitelten chaluz, welcher darf sain unser stolz un unser kowed.

Di chaluz-frage is nit kein private angelegenhait, di gemeinden sainen blutik farinteresiert in dem as unsere jugentliche, welche hoben do kein perspektiven nit un gehen do zum fardarb, solen kenen bazaiten oiswanderen nach Erez Israel. Dos fodern di interesn fun unsere gemeinden. Wen nit – dan musen di gemeinden alein sorgen farn existens fun ire jugentliche do.

Men ret fil wegen finanzielle schwirigkaiten in der gemeinden, men klogt sach privat wegen schlechte zaiten. Dos is nit ganz richtig. Unsere gemeinden sainen ekonomisch wait nit baim obgrund, es is noch faran a ganz genugender zol iden, welche tanzen arum ganz hybche goldene “kelblach”. Es felt nit der “geber”, es felt nor der rozen un di kraft ba di “nemer”.

Benami

## 2. THE JOURNAL *HATIKWAH*

The poem *Pesachdik gefes* ‘Passover Vessel’ by Elchonon Indelman was published in *Hatikwah* no. 3 1947: 9. On the system of transliteration, see Chapter 6 §3.

### **Pesachdik gefes**

Ch’tu tfile ton tog ajn tog ojs,  
 es sol geschen der groijser nes;  
 gefinen ch’sol a scherbl fun  
 majn mames pesachdik gefes;

Es sol a schimer ton ojfsnaj  
 ot jene schejnkajt fun amol,  
 es sol a finkl ton di sun  
 in umet-tunkl fun majn tol.

Jerusche-teplech, rajch bamolt  
 mit himl-lejter un mit bloj

fun malech's schvebndikn trot,  
bahojcht fun blojen kindhajt-toj!

Vu sajt ir izt, ir kejlím – fun  
majn elter-bobn dos geschank?  
Ajch hot bavojnt majn kindisch harz,  
majn suchndiker schpil-gedank.

Vu is majn blojer lejter, vu  
majn malech's schvebndiker trot?  
Zi vet noch nidern zu mir  
in tol majn kinderischer got?

Ch'tu tfile ton tog ajn tog ojs,  
es sol a finkl ton zu mir  
Fun churve-groj a scherbl fun  
majn mames jomtevdik geschir.

### 3. THE JOURNAL *JUDISK UNGDOM*

The preface, *Fun a brif zu di idische gemeinde in Helsingfors im 1935* 'About a Letter sent to the Jewish Congregation in 1935', to an article entitled *A chasen-schochet sucht a stel* 'A Cantor and Slaughterer Seeks Post', by Jac Weinstein, appeared in *Judisk Ungdom* no. 1 1955: 8-9. The system of Latinization used in the article is discussed in Chapter 6 §3.

#### **Fun a brif zu di idische gemeinde in Helsingfors im 1935**

In juli 1935 is in unsere gemeinde getroffen a nais. Men is gebliben on a chasen-schochet!... Herr Joffe hot farlosn sain stel bai uns un men hot, farsteit sich, bald gemust schafen a naiem schatz-veschub. Denstmol is es nit geven schver zu krign chasonim un schochtim. I Poiln sainen sei geven oif jeden schrit un trit. Hot det fervaltngrat anonsirt in idische zaitungen in Warsche, as di idische kehile in Helsingfors sucht a kvalifizirten chasen-schochet, velcher glaichzaitig sol sain a guter moiél un a bal kreie. Lang hot men nit gedarft varten un es hot sich ongehobn kumen brif fun ale ekn in Poiln. Un fotografies – a ganzer bilderschatz! Un jedvider is farsteit sich geven der grester un der bester fachman. Als damolstdiger sekretar in der gemeindefervaltnung hob ich durchgegangen ale brif,

velche mer oder veiniger sainen geven geschriben loit selben schablon. Nor oif ein brif hob ich sich obgestelt vail er hot sich oisgezeichen durch sain lebediger formulirung un sain un sain tif jidischen humor. Der brif is geven geschriben fun einem a chasen-schochet Jankef Dovid Zwaigl fun Nescheve in Poiln. Leienendig dem brif hob ich gesen for maine oign a lebediger tip fun Scholem Aleichems erzelungen. Oifn konvert hob ich ongeschriben „Scholem Aleichem” un farbahalten es bechaderei chadorim as es sol nit farloren gein. Tomer vet sich in zukunft gefinen a zufal, ven men vet kenen farefentlichen dem inhalt fun dem brif un retn es fun ferloren gein.

Oib der schraiber fun dem brif is ibergekumen dem groisen churben, vos nain jor speter is ibergegangen dem poilischen judentum, vil ich em sogn: Boruch Haschem! Oib er is umgekumen in dem kamf fun der Warschever getto, sol er hobn a lichtigen gan-eiden! Vail ich gloib as er, fun di charaktäristik fun sain person vos er hot gegeben in sain brif un trots dem humoristischen inhalt, is geven einer fun di toisende groise helden in dem letzten tragischen kamf.

Mit der ainlaitung ibergeb ich dem leser dem inhalt fun dem brif asoi vi er geschriben gevoren fun dem schatz-veschub Jankef Dovid Zwaigl fun Nescheve dem 18 august 1935.

Jac Weinstein

#### 4. THE JEWISH SONG ASSOCIATION

The transcription used in the accompaying song is discussed in Chapter 6 §4. The music for Shimen Frug's poem *Samd un stern* 'Sand and Stars' was composed by Moses Rubinstein (see Chapter 3 §3.2.).

##### **Samd un stern**

Es šaint di levone, es glenzn di štern,  
di nacht švebt af a berg un af tol.  
Dos alitške bichele ligt far mir ofn,  
ich leien es tojsende mol.

Ich leien di tajere heilige verter,  
mir hert sich a štime: Ich šver,  
majn folk du vest sajn vi di štern in himl  
vi samd afn breg fun mer!

Ribeinešeileilom, es vert nit farfaln  
 fun dajne havtochós kein einziges vort.  
 Mekujem mus vern dajn heiliger viln,  
 alz kumt in sain zajt un af sajn ort.

Un eins is šein take mekujem gevorn,  
 dos fil ich, dos veis ich gevis...  
 Mir sajnen gevorn vi samd, vos is hejker,  
 vos jedere tret mit di fis.

Jo, Gotenju, emes, vi samd un vi šteiner,  
 zušpreit un zuvorfn af šand un af špot.  
 Nu ober di štern di lichtige klore,  
 di štern, di štern, vu sajnen sei, Got!  
 (S. Frug)

## 5. THE JEWISH DRAMATIC SOCIETY

The style of transcription used by the Jewish Dramatic Society is discussed in Chapter 6 §4. Sholem-Aleichem's play *Zuseit un zuschpreit* 'Scattered and Dispersed', from which the following extract comes, was performed by the Jewish Dramatic Society in 1927 (see Chapter §6.2.).

### **Zuseit un zuschpreit**

Masche:

(dreit sich arum in schtub, schtelt in árdnung di mebl, ramt un redt zu sich alein)  
 A schtub! Drausig mál a tåg darf men nách sei ramen. Oisramen sál es sei... Un kinder! Nu kinder... Men sol sei gedicht seien un sol sei schiter oifgein! Fårt awek der balabás kern sei iber di ganze schtub háre-káre. (Schtelt awek a schtul un zubrecht a fisel) a brách far a brách!.. Lás es sain a kapáre far mir un far kál jisroel, sei háben genug!.. Bese fun ale is Matweitschik, mitn káp sál er ánleigen. Tåg un nacht nár geknapt sich... Un a Flárine.. S'sál öif kumen a oischapenes! Támer wil di balabáste amál schenken a kleidel ain alt zu apár schich, lást si nit.. Si meg take kein mál nit farmegen, kein mál! A schtikel glik wás di barische schelt sic ain amlá. Di kapáre sál si sain far di barische in einem mit dem kleinem Saschke, far saschet sál er wern! Mir zuschniten apár naie kaláschen... Ángeröichert wi in a bád! (Efent a fenster un traibt arois dem röich mit'n

handtuch) Dâ fârt awek der balabâs öif ein tâg, klaiben sich zuneif aherzu ganz kekele-kâl, fun der welt bâcherim. Der ruach weis sei wâs sei tuen dâ. Wischen nit âb di schtiwel afile, raisen sich öif di gârglen un röichern un röichern un röichern. Oisgeröichert sâln sei schön wem! (Traibt arois di röich mit'n handtuch, fartschepet awas, wâs falt arunter un geit zubrâchen) Abrâch far a brâch! (farkerndig di shtiklach fun pâ!) Lâs si sain di kapâre far mir un far kâl jisrâel, s'is bai sei dâ genug. (Men ruft Masche, Masche!) Ich gei! Ich gei! S'is avade Flârine mit ire hâr. Draï scho darf men schein af di fis beschas si farkemt sich... A mensch hât bai sei a vert fun a hunt. Es meg öif sei kumen a chlere öif ale balabatim! Men sâl fun sei a mâl pâter weren, liber Gât! (Arois)



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