



Original text published in Polish:  
Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka,  
1989, vol. 44, no. 1, p. 89-101  
PL ISSN 0037-7511

KRZYSZTOF MIGOŃ

### **The Jewish book in Silesia. A research reconnaissance**

With its pivotal role as a tool in religion and culture, the Jewish book—both in the era of manuscripts and later, from the mid-15th century, in the era of print—was produced both in large numbers and in high quality (in terms of calligraphy, typeset, editorial and technical works etc.). Surrounded by care and attention, the collections were an important element of the spiritual life of Jewish communities<sup>1</sup>. Over time, this gave rise to Jewish bibliography and bibliology, leading to an impressive amount of bibliological writings<sup>2</sup>.

The pace of Jewish cultural life in the Diaspora varied depending on current economic and political situation, as well as on localisation, size and intellectual potential of individual Jewish settlements. The culture of Silesian Jews did not attain the level of that of the Sephardic Jews in medieval Spain and Portugal, in Renaissance Italy or 17th-century Netherlands. It did not have such form and size as in more prominent centres of German-speaking Jews ('deutschsprachige jüdische Gemeinden' in the standard terminology), especially in Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Berlin, or Prague. However, the culture of the Jewish book in Silesia, as a reflection of the religious, scientific and cultural life, did have certain interesting aspects and features that enhance our understanding of both Silesian Jews themselves, and their contribution to the intellectual life of non-Jewish communities.

The present study is focused on Jewish-related writings produced, collected and read in Silesia in a period between the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment. 'The Jewish book' therefore is understood as all hand-written and printed 'Judaicum' created in or imported to Silesia. The main categories of Judaica include: 1. *Hebraica*, i.e. manuscripts and prints in Hebrew, 2. manuscripts and prints in Yiddish, 3. books in other languages

---

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the basic literature on the subject, see relevant entries in *Jüdisches Lexikon*, vol. 1—4, Berlin 1927, and in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 1—10 (up to letter L), Berlin ca. 1930, as well in the Israeli, but published in English, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 1—16, Jerusalem 1967—1972. Cf. also *The Hebrew Book. An Historical Survey*, R. Posner, I. Ta-Shema, New York—Paris—Jerusalem 1975 (it is a supplemented copy from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*); *Das Buch im Volk des Buches. Jüdische Gedanken zur Buch- und Lesekultur*, ed. J. J. Petuchowski, Freiburg/Br. 1982.

<sup>2</sup> As a departure point in studies on Jewish books, see S. Shunami, *Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies*, 2. ed., Jerusalem 1965. Other bibliographies indispensable in studying old Jewish writings mainly include the following: J. Bartolomeus, *Bibliotheca magna rabbinica*, vol. 1—4, Roma 1675—169".\*; C. Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebraea*, vol. 1—4, Hamburg 1715—1733; J. Fürst, *Bibliotheca judaica*, vol. 1—3, Leipzig 1863; *Bibliotheca Judaica — Hebraica — Rabbinica*. Pinczower, vol. 1—6, Leipzig 1931 (reprint 1970); B. Priedberg, *Bibliographical lexicon of the whole Hebrew and Jewish German literature... printed 1475—1900 (with Hebrew letters)*, 3. ed., vol. 1-A, Tel Aviv 1951—1956. Also important for researchers are printed catalogues of the large Judaic collections, such as the Klan Library (*Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion. Klan Library. Dictionary Catalog*, vol. 1—32, Boston 1964) or the New York Public Library (*The New York Public Library. Reference Department. Dictionary Catalog of the Jewish Collection*, vol. 1—14, Boston 1960).



(in Silesia, almost entirely in German) related to Jewish matters. The latter group encompasses works on history, religion, culture, literature and languages of the Jews, as well as anti-Jewish publications. For historians and bibliologists, *Hebraica* form the most important group<sup>3</sup>. Auxiliary criteria to classify a work as a *Judaicum* include the identity of the author, editor, printer, bibliographer or the owner of a given collection.

\*

It may be assumed that books were already used by Jews who settled in Silesia in the 12th century, or perhaps even earlier. This is suggested by the cultic role of religious texts necessary to conduct prayers and services, as well as by manuscripts that had been produced in the 13th century outside Silesia and at some point found their way to the region.

The oldest and most precious books in Hebrew in Silesia were four medieval hand-written codes which eventually became part of the collections of the Maria Magdalena church library in Wrocław. Three of them contained different parts of the Old Testament, and the fourth one included a *machzor* (a prayer book) in the Portuguese rite. The manuscripts were studied by scientists already in the 17th century<sup>4</sup>, and later they were described in detail by Carl Brockelmann in his catalogue of oriental manuscripts of the Wrocław City Library<sup>5</sup>. Only one of the texts survived World War II (manuscript M. 1106 of the Wrocław University Library)<sup>6</sup>.

In different periods, other Hebrew manuscripts appeared in Silesia, both within Jewish and Christian communities. In late 1960s, I estimated their number, based on bibliological documentation, at 52 for the period of up to the end of the 18th century. Most probably, this number should be multiplied, and detailed bibliographical and library studies could provide much more confirmed data<sup>7</sup>. Most manuscripts are irretrievably lost, but some information on certain texts do remain in catalogues, Hebraistic literature, or in letters. Some manuscripts from Silesia were later found quite far away. For instance, the collection of 27 (28?) Hebrew manuscripts of Spanish, Italian and French origin, owned by pastor Christian Gottlob Unger (1671—1719) of Luboszyce (near Góra Śląska), stayed in Silesia for mere two years. After Unger had died, they were purchased by Hebraist Christian Wolf of Hamburg; today, they are part of the Hamburg State and University Library<sup>8</sup>. Autographs of Andrzej Akolut (1654—1704), pastor in the post-Bernardine Church in Wrocław, and other manuscripts from his collection were moved to Saxony already in the 18th century. Presently, they can be found in the Saxon State Library and in the University Library in Leipzig. Auction inventories and catalogues of historic, now dispersed, Silesian libraries contain some, however scarce, information on Hebrew manuscripts. For example, pastor and professor Johann Friedrich Burg had a certain *Codex Hebraeus*, other evangelical priest Tscheggey a

<sup>3</sup> I. Sonne, *Bibliographie* (Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 4, Berlin [br.], col. 756).

<sup>4</sup> S. G. Wald, *Magazin für deutsche Geschichte und Statistik*, I, Leipzig 1784, pp. 90—108.

<sup>5</sup> C. Brockelmann, *Verzeichnis der arabischen, persischen, türkischen und hebräischen Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek zu Breslau*, Breslau 1903, pp. 45—48.

<sup>6</sup> More information on the manuscripts, see K. Migoń, *Rękopisy orientalne na Śląsku do końca XVIII wieku i ich właściciele* (AUWr. no 48, *Bibliotekoznawstwo* IV, Wrocław 1966 p. 44).

<sup>7</sup> At that time, my Judaic studies were only peripheral to the primary analysis of the history of the oriental book. See K. Migoń, *Recepcja książki orientalistycznej na Śląsku do końca XVIII wieku*, Wrocław 1969, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 122—124.



*Grammatica hebra*, and the library of the St. Elisabeth Church contained *Hebraica quaedam ex Iudaeorum Talmude, in Papyro*.

In the 19th century, old and valuable Hebrew writings came to Wrocław from the ancient University Library in Frankfurt am Oder (Viadrina), among them the frequently studied *machzor* from the 13th or 14th century (cat. No. Ms.or. I 1 [IV Fol. 89])<sup>9</sup> and parts of another *machzor* from the 15th century, originating from the Jesuit Library in Legnica (cat. No. Ms.or. I 2 [IV Qu. 110]).

In 1854, a Jewish theological seminary was created in Wrocław (Fraenckelsche Stiftung 'jüdisch-theologisches Seminar')<sup>10</sup>, whose library contained thousands books in Hebrew and Yiddish from all over Europe. Already in 1854, the seminary purchased a collection of Leon Saraval of Trieste, containing 63 Hebrew manuscripts and 6 ones in other languages, 48 Hebrew incunables and 1373 printed books from the 16th – 19th centuries.<sup>11</sup> In the following years, other valuable collections were bought, so that in late 1870s the seminar library listed nearly 14,000 volumes<sup>12</sup>. Apart from Hebrew manuscripts, it contained manuscripts in Yiddish<sup>13</sup> and other books of enormous value to the history and culture of the Jews (for example, *Consolacum as Tribulacoens de Israel* by Samuel Usque, Ferrara 1552, which was probably translated by afore-mentioned Unger in early 18th century, and which was already then described as *liber extremae raritatis*<sup>14</sup>). The library of the Wrocław Jewish Seminary, destroyed and dispersed, calls for a detailed study and description<sup>15</sup>.

In the 19th century, book collections were also gathered by other Jewish institutions. The Qahal library, established in 1844, contained even hand-written documents<sup>16</sup>. The most valuable Jewish manuscripts and prints were presented, along other times, at the exhibition *Jews in the history of Silesia*, hosted between the 3rd of February and 17th of March 1929 in the Silesian Museum of Craft and Antiquity<sup>17</sup>.

After World War II, a number of Hebrew manuscripts was found in the Wrocław University Library, of unknown or uncertain origin, presumably Silesian. These were

---

<sup>9</sup> G. Richter, *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Breslau*, Leipzig 1933, s. 1; R. Kohnowa, *Zbiory rękopisów wschodnich w bibliotekach wrocławskich (Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, 1954, no 3, p. 250).

<sup>10</sup> Basic literature on the seminar can be found in: *Katalog der Druckschriften über die Stadt Breslau*, H. Wendt, ed., Breslau 1903, pp. 293—295. See also: *Das Breslauer Seminar. Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar (Fränckelscher Stiftung) in Breslau 1854—1938. Gedächtnisschrift*, G. Kisch, Tübingen, ed., 1963.

<sup>11</sup> *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de littérature hébraïque et orientale de feu M.r Léon Vi Saraval*, Trieste 1853. See also M. Steinschneider, *Die Saravalsche Bibliothek in Triest* (Serapeum, 1853, vol. 14, pp. 280—284, 294—298).

<sup>12</sup> *Das jüdisch-theologische Seminar Fränckelsche Stiftung zu Breslau*, Breslau 1879, p. 56. See also B. Zuckermann, *Katalog der jüdisch-theologischen Seminar-Bibliothek. Fraenckelsche Stiftung*, vol. 1, Breslau 1870.

<sup>13</sup> S. Loewinger, B. Weinryb, *Jiddische Handschriften in Breslau*, Budapest 1936, s. 4—8 (copy from *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* 1936).

<sup>14</sup> B. Mark, *Cenny egzemplarz Samuela Usque 'Consolacum as Tribulacoens de Israel'* (Biuletyn ŻIH, 1953, No. 2—3, pp. 236—239); Migoń, *Recepcja...*, p. 171.

<sup>15</sup> *Das Breslauer Seminar...*, pp. 15—16, 165.

<sup>16</sup> *Bibliothek der Synagogen-Gemeinde zu Breslau Catalog*, Breslau 1861, pp. 125—128.

<sup>17</sup> *Katalog der vom Verein „Jüdisches Museum Breslau“ in den Räumen des Schlesischen Museums für Kunstgewerbe und Altertümer veranstalteten Ausstellung Das Judentum in der Geschichte Schlesiens*, Verfasst von Erwin Hintze, Breslau 1929, especially pp. 29, 30, 44—47, 128, 130, 140—144, 488—502, 503—509, 575.



mainly new manuscripts, from the 19th and 20th century (e.g. cat. No. 1949 KN 46, 104, 232—235, 1288).

In the past, there must have been much more manuscripts containing commentaries to religious texts, trade notes<sup>18</sup> and other daily registers, or perhaps mainly dictionaries and grammar books for the Hebrew language. There have survived scholarly excerpts and notes from late 16th century, concerning the Hebrew Grammar by Michael Neander, written by a student of St. Elisabeth gymnasium Kasper Micner<sup>19</sup>. The latter example of historic scholarly and Hebrew texts goes beyond the subject of Jewish book as such.

Starting from the 15th century, studies on the Hebrew language were predominantly an indispensable basis for the so-called *philologia sacra*, which enabled reading, understanding and interpreting of biblical texts, and which over time started to serve as a departure point for secular Oriental studies<sup>20</sup>. They could be a manifestation of the then fashionable polyglotism, and need not have meant a particular interest in Jewish matters. However, in Silesia we can see a group of protestant priests who used their knowledge of Hebrew to broaden their Judaic knowledge. This is confirmed by bibliological documentation for both manuscripts and printed books<sup>21</sup>. We should mention here probably the best preserved Wrocław Judaist manuscript in German, found in the collection of Johann Sigismund Haunold (1634—1711), *Miscellanea curiosa: Selecta iudaica, das ist Auserlesene Jüdische Sachen... von Friderico Alberto Christiano*<sup>22</sup>. The text covers selected aspect of Jewish religion and habits, and contains interesting illustrations and knowledgeable Hebrew commentaries by Andrzej Akolut<sup>23</sup>. Other Judaic texts include manuscripts-autographs of Silesian Hebraists connected with Sabataj Bas and his print house in Brzeg Dolny<sup>24</sup>.

Hebrew printing industry dates back to the 1st half of the 16th century; Chaim ben Dawid Schwarz of Prague and Dawid ben Jonathan operated in Oleśnica between 1529—1532, Andrzej (Samuel) Helicz started printing in 1535 r., and his brother Paweł (Aszer) operated between 1543—1547 (?) in Psie Pole near Wrocław and probably in Legnica between 1548—1550<sup>25</sup>. The first of the above-mentioned print houses produced a *Pentateuch* in 1530, existing only in two copies: in Bodleian Library in Oxford, whereto it was moved in the beginning of the 19th century together with the entire collection of David Oppenheimer, and in Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The

---

<sup>18</sup> For instance notes by Abraham Tikin of Głogów (end of the 18th century). Manuscript 143 ŻIH in Warsaw.

<sup>19</sup> Manuscript in the Department of Old Books of the Wrocław University Library, Catalogue Number 4 N 475,2. See Migoń, *Recepcja...*, p. 112.

<sup>20</sup> J. Reyhman, *Les débuts des études orientales à l'époque moderne: de la „philologia sacra” à la science profane* (Actes du XIe Congrès International d'Histoire des Sciences, vol. 2, Wrocław 1967 p. 291).

<sup>21</sup> Migoń, *Recepcja...*, pp. 108—136, 170—171.

<sup>22</sup> Manuscript R 678 in Wrocław University Library, pp. 720—894.

<sup>23</sup> See reproduction in: *Katalog der vom Verein...*, tab. XIX.

<sup>24</sup> Migoń, *Recepcja...*, pp. 170—171.

<sup>25</sup> B. Kotowski, *Zarys dziejów drukarstwa na Dolnym Śląsku* (Sobótka, 1948, R. 2, pp. 235—236, 239—241); B. Kotowski, *Polski słownik biograficzny*, IX, pp. 362—363; K. Migoń, *Drukarstwo orientalne i hebrajskie na Śląsku w XVI—XVIII w.* (AU Wr., No 364, *Bibliotekoznawstwo*, VII, Wrocław 1978, pp. 75—81); *Drukarze dawnej Polski od XV do XVIII wieku*, vol. 1: Małopolska, part 1: *Wiek XV—XVI*, A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, ed., Wrocław 1983, pp. 380—385; G. Münch, *Die jüdische Druckerei in Oels* (Jahrbuch für schlesische Kirchengeschichte 1874, Jg. 53, pp. 52—56).



document was studied by Johann Gerard Pagendarm, a pastor from Pasikurowice in the Trzebnica district, who described it in his *Dissertatio academica de codice Iudaeorum Olsnensium Ebraeo* (Jena 1730)<sup>26</sup>.

The Psie Pole print house produced a 16-page *Elemental oder lesebüchlen...*, dated 21th of April, 1543, intended as a help in learning to read German-Jewish text written in Hebrew alphabet. Most probably, only one copy has survived (in the Wrocław University Library, catalogue number 4 E 263); in 1929, a facsimile was published, and the document was presented at the exhibition *Jews in the history of Silesia*<sup>27</sup>. It has been comprehensively studied, from the analyses by Brann and Stif to Madeja<sup>28</sup>.

In his accounts on the history of Wrocław printing industry, Johann Ephraim Scheibel states that the Jews from Oleśnica had also established a print house in Brzeg Dolny (in German: Dyhernfurth) in 1535<sup>29</sup>. This information, however, is not confirmed by any sources known to us; also, no prints from such house have survived.

Another account on Brzeg Dolny from 1760s seems more reliable. Drawing on a presently non-existing document from the Wrocław archive, Israel Rabin, a historian of Brzeg Dolny's Jews, claims that in ca. 1660 local Jews 'hetten die hebräische Buchdruckerey in mittung'. This information might be confirmed by a 2-page print found by the Rabbi in the Wrocław Jewish Seminar Library, with the Avinu Malkeinu prayer from 1668. The Rabbi was confident that the date was correct because it had been indicated with capital letters in a Biblical verse<sup>30</sup>.

Brzeg Dolny became famous as a centre for Jewish print thanks to a local print house established in 1689, which operated for 145 years, till 1834. It was created by Sabataj Bas (Schabtai Bass, Sabbatai ben Josef Bass, Bassista, Meszorer, b. in Kalisz, 1641, d. in Krotoszyn, 1718<sup>31</sup>), a bibliographer, editor and printer, who aside Silesia was also active in Greater Poland, Bohemia, Rhineland and the Netherlands. In 1680 in Amsterdam, he published a work entitled *Sifte jeszenim* (Labia dormientium, or 'Lips of those who sleep'), a bibliography of Hebrew writing encompassing 2,000 works<sup>32</sup>. A founding work for Hebrew bibliography<sup>33</sup>, it was immediately noticed by the most

---

<sup>26</sup> A photocopy of the title page of the Pentateuch can be found in M. Brann, *Geschichte der Juden in Schlesien*, vol. 5, Breslau 1910, before p. 151.

<sup>27</sup> *Katalog der vom Verein...*, p. 14, sec. 30.

<sup>28</sup> M. Brann, *Die Hundsfelder Druckerei*, Breslau 1878; N. Stif, *Philologische Schriften*, vol. 3, Wilno 1929, s. 517; J. Madeja, *Elementarze i nauka elementarna czytania i pisania na Śląsku, w wiekach XVIII i XIX* (1763—1848), vol. 1, Katowice 1960, pp. 58—61.

<sup>29</sup> J. E. Scheibel, *Geschichte der seit dreihundert Jahren in Breslau befindlichen Stadtbuchdruckerei*, Breslau 1804, p. 75.

<sup>30</sup> I. Rabin, *Aus Dyhernfurths jüdischer Vergangenheit*, Breslau 1929 (Sonderdruck aus dem 'Breslauer Jüdischen Gemeindeblatt', 1929, No. 2).

<sup>31</sup> Extensive biographical entries can be found in for example *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (vol. 3, Berlin [br.], col. 1154—1157) and *Jewriejskaja Enciklopedija* (vol. 3, S. Petersburg, ca. 1900, col. 877—380). Recently I have contributed his short biographical note in *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens*, 2. Ausg., vol. 1, Stuttgart 1986, p. 253. Ibidem, more literature on the subject.

<sup>32</sup> See for example L. Oelsner, *R. Sabbatai Bassista und sein Prozess*, Leipzig 1858; M. Brann, *Das bibliographische Handbuch des Schabtai Bass in der lateinischen Übersetzung Clanners*, Breslau 1882.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. A. Drabkin, *Bibliografija* (*Jewriejskaja Enciklopedija*, vol. 4, S. Petersburg, ca. 1900, col. 462). Brann calls Bas the creator 'der wissenschaftlichen Bücherkunde unter den Juden'. See his *Geschichte und Annalen der Dyhern- further Druckerei* (*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 1896, Jg. 40, p. 477).



important scientific journal of Middle Europe, the Leipzig *Acta Eruditorum*<sup>34</sup>. Several scientists, including Silesians Johann Friedrich Clanner and Christian Gottlob Unger, translated the work into Latin, supplemented it and commented on it<sup>35</sup>. It also became a basis for a monumental bibliography of Hebraist Christian Wolf *Biblioihec Hebrae* from Hamburg (4 volumes, 1715—1733), which outshone the fame of Bas.

Residing in Amsterdam from 1684, Sabataj Bas studied printing and was apprenticed to a bookshop. Most likely, it was there where he started thinking of establishing his own print house. Choosing Silesia was no accident: Bas claimed that apart from Prague there were no Jewish typography in Eastern Europe and that his business would not harm any printer<sup>36</sup>. We should add that he must have taken into account potential marketing of his products in Poland, and counted on Silesian Hebraists to help him with editorial work.

The Dolny Brzeg print house has been extensively described in literature. The most comprehensive studies include those by J. Landsberger and M. Brann from the end of the 19th century<sup>37</sup>; there are also several interesting publications from the beginning of the 20th century<sup>38</sup>, and recently there appeared new works by Herbert C. Zafren<sup>39</sup>, as well as Moses Marx's inventory of prints issued in Brzeg Dolny during Bas's lifetime<sup>40</sup>. The print house's working routine and its production, and mainly its range and influence has been described. Brann found the names of the print house's employees in the period when it was headed by Bas (1689—1711) and hired at least 20 men. Later, the number of employees increased as the charter of Frederick the Great of 1st August 1744 allowed for printing on 5 presses, with each operated by two typesetter and two printers. Additionally, the house employed type casters, moulders, bookbinder, proofreaders, ritual slaughterers and servants<sup>41</sup>.

The repertoire of Bas's print house mainly included religious literature in the Hebrew language: The Pentateuch, commentaries to the Bible, excerpts from Talmud, liturgical texts, prayers and Sabbath rituals and others, as well as philosophical and legal writings. There were also publications in German but with numerous Hebrew phrases and printed in Hebrew type, so that they resembled Yiddish, e.g. an official newspaper *Dyhernfurth Privilegierte Zeitung* from the 1770s<sup>42</sup>. Despite the Brann's and Marx's

---

<sup>34</sup> Rec. in vol. 1, 1682, pp. 201—204.

<sup>35</sup> For more detail, see Migoń, *Recepcja...*, pp. 170—171.

<sup>36</sup> Brann, *Geschichte und Annalen...*, p. 517.

<sup>37</sup> J. Landsberger, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Buchdruckerei in Dyhernfurth und des jüdischen Buchhandels* (Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums, 1894—1895, Jg. 39, pp. 120—133, 187—192, 230—238); Brann, *Geschichte und Annalen der Dyhernfurth Druckerei*, pp. 474—480, 515—526, 560—574.

<sup>38</sup> M. Herda, *Dyhernfürth. Kulturhistorische Beiträge zur Geschichte des Ortes Dyhernfürth*, Wohlau 1913; *Geschichte der Stadtgemeinde Dyhernfürth, Kreis Wohlau. Festschrift zum 250-jährigen Jubiläum der Stadt*, O. Koch, ed., Wohlau 1913; Rabin, *op. cit.*; M. Grünwald, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinde Dyhernfurth*, Breslau 1881.

<sup>39</sup> H. C. Zafren, *Dyhernfürth and Shabtai Bass. A Typographic Profile* (Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev, C. Berlin, ed., New York 1971); H. C. Zafren, *More on Dyhernfürth* (Studies in Bibliography and Booklore, vol. 10., Winter 1971/72, No. 1—2, pp. 62—68).

<sup>40</sup> M. Marx, *A Bibliography of Hebrew Printing in Dyhernfürth*, 1689—1718 (Studies in Jewish Bibliography...).

<sup>41</sup> *Geschichte der Stadtgemeinde Dyhernfürth...*, p. 122.

<sup>42</sup> The paper was presented at the above mentioned exhibition in 1929 (see footnote 17).



efforts our knowledge of the print house's production is not complete; it still requires systematic research—searching bibliographies, catalogues and libraries.

The Bas's print house attracted Jewish scholars from Germany, Bohemia, Poland, Lithuania and the Ukraine. The Brzeg Dolny print house must have sold its books in those countries as in the 17th—18th century Poland there were practically no Jewish print establishments, with very few ephemeral exceptions<sup>43</sup>. Prints produced by Bas and his heirs were carefully edited and approved by scientific and religious authorities, which made them the more valuable for orthodox buyers. For instance, printed in 1692, commentaries by Dawid Ha-Levy and Abraham Gombiner to the first part of Shulchan Aruch ('Set table', practical notes on the basis of the Talmud written by Józef Karon, 1488—1575) were attested by 21 learnt Talmudist from Moravia, Prague, Wrocław, Głogów, Leszno, Kalisz, Poznań, Kraków, Szydłów, Lublin, Brześć, Wilno and Żółkiew. In Louis Lewin, we find interesting information on books that were printed between 1824—1828 in Brzeg Dolny with a fake publisher address—Lissa (Leszno); with this falsification, books could be exported to the Grand Duchy of Posen<sup>44</sup>. The printing activity of Bas and later printers from Brzeg Dolny has not been studied in detail. This will be no easy task but trade and auction catalogues, as well as old library inventories and the preserved collections should enable discovering many prints from Brzeg Dolny.

The influence of Bas's print house extended beyond Jewish communities. Professors of *linguarum orientalium*, mainly pastors interested in linguistic and biblical studies, cooperated with his print house and purchased Hebrew books. When Bas ran into business troubles in 1702 (he was ordered to limit his travel and book selling activity), an Orientalist Andrzej Akolut, Wrocław Inspector for Evangelical Churches, interceded for him; therefore, Bas perceived Akolut as his patron<sup>45</sup>. With the support of Christian Orientalists, interested in disseminating Hebrew books, Bas also had a right to sell his books outside trade fairs<sup>46</sup>.

The most eminent Hebraists of the turn of the 18th century, including Kaspar Neumann, Daniel Springer, Christian Unger, Samuel Weinisch, and most probably Christian Gryphius, Johann Ernst Stieff, Johann David Raschke and others, had different ties to Bas's printing house. At Bas's, Neumann and Springer printed their texts<sup>47</sup>; Unger probably prepared his *Index typographicus Dyrrhenfurtensis*<sup>48</sup>; Weinisch collected over

---

<sup>43</sup> Only in Żółkiew there was a more important print house, established in ca. 1693, by Uri Febus Halevy, who also came from Amsterdam. See *Drukarze dawnej Polski od XV do XVIII wieku*, issue 6: *Małopolska – Ziemie Ruskie*, Wrocław 1960, pp. 257—258.

<sup>44</sup> L. Lewin, *Hebräische Drucke und Drucker aus Grosspolen* (Soncino-Blätter. Beiträge zur Kunde des jüdischen Buches, 1925—1926, vol. 1, pp. 173—174).

<sup>45</sup> Brann, *Geschichte und Annalen...*, p. 565.

<sup>46</sup> Herda, *op. cit.* 76.

<sup>47</sup> In 1690, Neumann published a Hebrew speech on the crowning of Joseph I as the King of the Romans. After the death of Emperor Leopold I in May 1705, Springer wrote a panegyric entitled *Des Adlers Weg d.i. Verzeichnüß derer grossmächtigen Thaten... Leopoldi des Grossen*. Bas printed the Hebrew, Chaldean (i.e. Arameic) and Jewish-German (i.e. Yiddish) parts, and Baumann in Wrocław produced the German text. On Springer, see Migoń, *Recepcja...*, pp. 121—122.

<sup>48</sup> F. Babinger (*Die türkischen Studien in Europa bis zum Auftreten Josef v. Bammer-Purgstalls*, 'Die Welt des Islams', 1919 vol. 7, pp. 119—120) writes that Unger published the text in print but such publication is not known. Perhaps he refers to a text entitled *Index librorum rabhnicorum, Dyrenfurti in Silesia impressorum*, later found in *Catalogus bibliothecae Jachmannianae* (Wrocław 1758), item 4481, supposedly a manuscript, now missing. On Unger, see Migoń, *Recepcja...*, pp. 122—124.



200 Hebrew prints, with many from Brzeg Dolny<sup>49</sup>. The issue of contacts between Jewish and Christian communities related to common bibliological interests certainly deserves more research.

\*

The present attempt to characterise the history of the Jewish book in Silesia shows how much effort is needed to fully describe phenomena that formed the bibliological culture of the community of Silesian Jews in the old age. The Jewish typographical repertoire needs further research, as do the routes and mechanisms of book trade. Inventories should be developed of libraries and their content, questions must be asked about the reception of books, about the reader and readership. Despite scarce source documentation, many aspects can still be uncovered and described. This effort is by all means worth a try as it will broaden our knowledge on the material and spiritual culture of Silesian Jews, thus giving more insight into history of Silesia and historical bibliography.

translated by Katarzyna Hussar

---

<sup>49</sup> *Catalogus bibliothecae... a Samuele Weinisio... publica auctione A. 1767 distrahendae*, Wrocław 1767, items 4263—4487. On Weinisch, see Migoń, *Recepcja...*, pp. 125—126.