

JEWISHNESS IN THE EYES OF OTHERS: REFLECTION OF THE JEW IN SLOVAK FOLKLORE

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The picture of the Jew in Slovak folklore is reconstructed by the author on the basis of songs, proverbs and sayings and folk narratives. The negative attitudes of the Slovak population towards the Jews prevail in the reflection and the tendency towards ambivalence is also met. The Jews are primarily perceived as “strange”, the number of signs not being large: religion, ethnonym, language, social status and occupation, love relations between Jewish boys and non-Jewish girls (Jew – a seducer). The objections are primarily of moral-ethical character. The ethnic dimension of the image is just a device for demonstrating religious and social barriers. However, through moral-ethical objections, ethnic distinctive features were also indirectly demonstrated there. Particular forms of anti-Semitism have not been recorded in Slovak folklore. Most attributes of the Jew in Slovak folklore has deeper European (Central European) roots.

1. The reflection of “other” ethnic groups in folklore constitutes an organic part of social memory. It is often characterized by distinct inertia, long duration and information gathering from various historical periods as well as by different measure of stereotyping of individual ethnic groups in the thinking of people. Here folklore represents a valuable source of information. It is primarily an expression of the attitudes, values, emotions, and interests of particular (in Slovakia chiefly peasant) social classes of a particular ethnic community. Through the eyes of its bearers, a sort of view “from the inside”, folklore enables the decoding of diverse characters and, particularly, hierarchization of the mutual relations of various ethnic or social groups, which are interesting especially in ethnically mixed regions.

Identification of individual “real” and “fictitious” signs of the images followed is often difficult. The analysis confirms that even the seemingly fictitious and simplified images (signs) have roots in the particular historical reality. Some causal connections can usually be traced here. At the same time, however, various facts or attributes of images in folklore are not arranged chronologically, they are layered regardless of concrete historical time, changes in time and the internal differentiation in the opinions of the population.

The meanings of individual signs in the images of “others” or “strangers” are encoded in folklore in several semantic layers. It is necessary to uncover them gradually and always in correlation with the particular historical reality which they reflect. The reflection of ethnic images in folklore represents at the same time a kind of closed world. It is delimited by a different measure of tolerance towards the “others” on the one side and the really existing barrier or barriers on the other side. Stereotypes and prejudices are parts of these barriers. This “world” is also a sort of retrospection. It is also documented by the Jew’s image. His attributes are commonly recorded in the contemporary topical repertoire in spite of the fact that this ethnic minority was on our territory drastically reduced due to the tragic events of the Holocaust.¹

2. In folklore the images of “others” are significantly determined by genres. The individual folklore genres show different frequency and different degree of inertia of the reflected attitudes as well as different measure of stereotyped images. The strongest is the reflection of stereotyping and prejudices in linguistic stereotypes² (e.g. “*you are as black as a Gypsy*”, “*that clock in Nitra is the liar’s Gypsy-like clock*”). In several semantic layers the images of “others” are reflected by folk song and oral tradition. From the point of view of the concentration of individual signs of the reflected images, the songs, proverbs and sayings preserve the attitudes and stereotypes for a relatively long period and they actually accumulate them in time.

These images are frequent, although less colourful, in anecdotes and humorous narratives (often depicted by one or two signs). They are less frequent in other types of folk narratives. In comparison with folk songs, e.g. a fairy tale shows greater tendency towards typification of characters, towards cyclization and simplification, for example caricature (creation of “figures” of a typical German: “*Der deutsche Michel*”,³ a Jew, a Gypsy, etc.). It may also lead to the accumulation or alternation of individual types of heroes (e.g. Gypsy – shepherd, shoemaker, poor man). The updated texts known from common repertoire often function as part of the image of the “others” or “strangers” (particularly Romanies and Jews). The principle of updating (targeting) of the same text in connection with various representatives of the “stranger” is quite frequent here. It mainly occurs in manifestations of “laughing culture” of the world upside-down as one of the modes of demonstrating “otherness” and “strangeness”.⁴

¹ During World War II more than 60,000 Jews were deported from Slovakia. Currently only about 3,000 persons declare their Jewish affiliation although the real number of people of Jewish descent is certainly higher.

² BARTOSZ, A.: *Wizerunek Cygana w folklorze*. In: Zbornik radova XXXII Kongresa udruženja folklorista Jugoslavije I, Novi Sad 1985, pp. 151-154.

³ HAUFFEN, A.: *Geschichte des deutschen Michel*. Prag 1918. HANAK, P.: *Der Garten und die Werkstatt. Ein kulturgeschichtlichen Vergleich*. Wien–Köln–Weimar 1992.

⁴ BACHTIN, M. M.: *François Rabelais a lidová kultura středověku a renesance*. Praha 1975.

3. In the process of constituting but also strengthening and preserving of the images, stereotypes and prejudices, the individual folklore genres fulfilled simultaneously their special **functions**. For instance, oral narration mainly served in ethnically mixed or contact (border) regions as a sort of a channel for conveying information about the “other” (ethnic) group.⁵ On the other hand, some authors alert to taunting, mockery, various forms of derision in the areas on the ethnic border or amidst an enclave as to a special form of a kind of ventilation of inimical attitudes which are usually not manifested directly (K. Lück, D. Klímová). Simultaneously, the – incomprehensible – language of another ethnic group is perceived by neighbours as funny, similar to mumbling (K. Lück).

The present state of attitudes and stereotypes of “other” ethnic groups is reflected in anecdotes or humourous narratives (riddles) and from time to time also newly formed songs, which also fulfil a certain updating function. Researches signal that only these folklore types reflect unambiguously e.g. the growing antipathy, often promoted by the mass-media, of the majority Slovak population towards the Romanies.⁶

4. Investigations show that ethnic images and stereotypes in Slovak folklore are rather indistinct, less frequent in comparison with other European nations (the Poles, Hungarians, Germans, Danes, Finns, Swedes, etc.).⁷ Only the Romanies and the Jews are an exception. Both images show some common features within a wider Central European or European context. In Central Europe, e.g. the image of the Jew is most reflected in the folk culture and folklore of Poland, where the Jew appears predominantly as a representative of the “strange” (Bódi 1995, Mulkiwicz-Goldberg 1980, Stomma 1989, Rothstein 1986). The figure of the Jew is rather frequent particularly in taunting songs, humorous songs in German folklore.⁸ Apart from German culture, the figure of the Jew appeared as the most distinctive image of “the other ethnic group” in nineteenth-century Hungarian culture (Erdélyi 1862, Hanak 1992). On the other hand, the picture of the Romany appears to be at present most vividly depicted and most frequent in Slovakia (Krekovičová 1993, 1995).⁹

⁵ KILIÁNOVÁ, G.: *Život na hranici*. In: *Kontinuita a konflikt hodnôt každodennej kultúry*. Ed. by D. Ratica, pp. 90-108.

⁶ It is evident, particularly in connection with the negative accompanying events of the preceding transformation of the society after 1989, like the growth of unemployment and social problems of the Romanies.

⁷ This was also confirmed by researches of the folkloristic team of the researches from the Institute of Ethnology of SAV and the Department of Ethnology of FFUK in Bratislava within the grant project “Folklore as an ethnoidentifying factor of the Slovak nation in Central Europe” conducted in 1991-1993.

⁸ PETZOLDT, L.: *The Eternal Loser: The Jews as Depicted in German Folk Literature*. *International Folklore Review* 4, 1986, pp. 24-48. Also archival materials in: *Deutsches Volksliedarchiv*, Freiburg i. Br., item: “Jude”.

⁹ It is also illustrated by a number of proverbs and sayings with the topic of “other” ethnic groups in the collection of A.P. Zátarecký (Zátarecký 1897): Pole 4, Magyar 2, German 2, Gypsy 85, Jew 20.

The pictures of the Romany and the Jew were drafted in Slovak folklore in a similar way to a certain extent but simultaneously (chiefly in oral narratives) also as contrast. As for individual genres, it is primarily in sayings and partly in oral narratives that the images incline to the negative stereotype (Bartosz 1985). On the other hand, both pictures appeared as most vivid in folk songs, which is the cornerstone of our analysis. The findings will be completed by sayings, proverbs, narratives, or some other genres.¹⁰

The analysis of the portrait of the Jew confirmed the facts known from other milieus: perception of “others” was internally strongly hierarchized, self-stereotypes and heterostereotypes being mutually conditioned. The perception and evaluation of the “others” or “strangers” was determined by the position of the evaluator in the structure of society and the self-stereotype closely associated with it. The expression of this inner hierarchy of individual groups was also the existence of a certain scale of evaluations from the “other” to the “stranger”. The image of the “stranger” contained in this scale more negative signs and a higher extent of stereotyping. On the other hand, the image of the “others” was characterized by a greater number of particular signs of a particular group through which this otherness was demonstrated.¹¹

The image of the Jew in folklore has a smaller number of signs than the figure of the Gypsy: it has a higher measure of stereotyping, as well as a lower frequency in the repertoire (primarily in folk narratives and in anecdotes). It is also characterized by a lower degree of tolerance and by leaning towards a negative stereotype but also by less distinctive barriers. In principle it expresses a different attitude towards this group of the inhabitants of Slovakia on the part of the majority society and a different status of both ethnic groups in the social structure of the Slovak village. The Romanies were primarily perceived by the Slovak population as “others”. In the portrait of the Gypsy we observe a certain fascination by the “otherness”, almost the exoticism of this ethnic group. By contrast, the Jews were primarily reflected as “strangers”.¹²

The image of the Jew in folklore shows worse knowledge of real specific features of this minority. The barriers between the Jews and the rest were primarily psychological character: they were based on the lack of knowledge of Jewish habits and culture, on a certain mysteriousness of Jewish communities and their secluding

¹⁰ The songs come from literature, manuscripts of the Central song archives of the Institute of Musicology of SAV, Bratislava, and the Song archives of the Institute of Ethnology of SAV, Bratislava, as well as from the author’s own field researches (more than 80,000 songs).

¹¹ Such is the image of a Gypsy (Romany). KREKOVÍČOVÁ, E: *A Picture of a Gypsy in Folk Songs*. Human Affairs 3, 1993, pp. 170-190. See Note 9.

¹² As in Poland, for details see e.g. CAŁA, A.: *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej*. Warszawa 1987. Also numerous contributions in *Polska sztuka ludowa* 43, 1989 (authors: Fiderkiewicz, M., Pilichowska, B., Stomma, L.).

themselves from the world. There are adages that prove that the Jews and the Gypsies were perceived as special groups, e.g.: “Don’t meddle with the Jews and the Gypsies.” (XVII/37)¹³

Analysis of the material

5. The Jew’s image was drafted through the following attributes:

5.1. **Ethnonym.** The denotation of the Jewish minority appears in folklore as certain stereotype. The proclivity towards negative stereotype is stressed by occasional use of the word Jew as a swear-word: “You can name me even a hundred times ‘Jew’, just give me what I deserve.” (XVII/28)

Common familiar denotation “Židko, Židák, Židáčik, Židiak, Židzik” has a neutral and from time to time also a pejorative tinge. We also meet the addressing of a member of the Jewish community by his first name or surname (Marek, Glazer) or a specific first name which was perceived by non-Jewish as a sign of “Jewishness” (Áron, Izák, Icík).

The denotation *Jew* was simultaneously a synonym of an **innkeeper** or **merchant**, perceived positively (in case of a robbed Jew), neutrally but also negatively (in case of a Jew–usurer). The stereotype of a Jew–merchant can be elucidated by the following etiological legend from Zemplín, also known from Germany, Serbia and other Slavonic regions:¹⁴

Fortune of various nations

Travelling across the world, Jesus Christ hired a Ruthenian, a Magyar, and a Jew and told them to come below the village in the morning. The Ruthenian knitted “krpce” (a kind of peasant’s boots) all night, the Jew bandaged his head with a scarf and started to sway, had a breakfast, and only then he went to work. The Magyar, a Calvinist, got up in the morning, took bread and bacon and went to work. He came first, greeted “God bless you” and God gave him a fertile, fishy land. The Ruthenian was the second to come, he was told by God that the Magyar had already received the happiness, he gave him infertile land, where he had to work hard and even help the Calvinist. The Jew was the last: the Magyar had happiness, the Ruthenian had hard work to do, and the Jew only swindling; he bought matches, needles, various papers, colours, ribbons, knives and went from village to village to lie to people.

¹³ The cited proverbs are from the collection by ZÁTURECKÝ, A.P.: *Slovenské prislovia, porekadlá a úslovia*, Praha 1897. The numbers in brackets denote the particular chapter and the number of proverb.

¹⁴ POLÍVKA, J.: *Súpis slovenských rozprávok*. Martin 1930, IV., p. 546.

The negative denotation of the Jew was a synonym of an avaricious, profiteering, emotionless man: “*Such a love I can also find with a Jew.*” (III/670) We also meet the use of the denotation *Jew* in the opposition “Jew – Christian”.

The external changes of ethnic identity common in our territory mainly within the middle and upper classes (Chorváthová 1993) – in this case with the Jews – demonstrated by the change of the name are reflected in the adage: “Today Lajoš (i.e. Hungarian), tomorrow Ludvik (i.e. Polish) but he will always remain Lajzer (i.e. Jewish).” (XVII/25)

In the ethnonym a factor comes to the fore that the image of the Jew in folklore was not only an abstract portrait and stereotype. It contained several attributes of particular images and human fates (Goody 1987, Kandert 1994: 48). Although the denotation of the Jews was not in our milieu unambiguously negative (as is for example the case with the Gypsies), the ethnonym of the Jew inclines more to a neutral or negative, in a lesser degree to a positive attitude.

5.2. The **language** of the Jewish minority was perceived as unintelligible. It was considered funny and reflected in its acoustic form.¹⁵ The linguistically mixed texts document that the Yiddish language was not understood in the surroundings; the texts are usually contorted in their Yiddish part:

Play me Jewish!
Irašar, Benbachar!’ That is Jewish...
(Kollár, 1834 I.:115)

Part of the verbal presentation of the Jews was the characteristic way of sighing, denoted as “*vajkanie*” (‘*aj, vaj*’). It belonged not only to the image of the Jew in the eyes of the “others”. It was also part of the Jew’s self-image and a specific sign of the Jew’s behaviour in anecdotes about the Jews also popular among Jewish people. Quasi-Yiddish text often has a form of refrain, occasionally with a pejorative tinge:

1. They baptized him on a muckheap
all Jews sighed oj,vaj
Oj, vaj, šumdy rumdy,
bom, bom, bom.
2. Chana was the Godmother
David went to say
Oj, vaj, šumdy rumdy,
bom, bom, bom.
(Veľké Zálužice, Zemplín, 1953)

¹⁵ Similarly as with the Romanies. KREKOVÍČOVÁ, E.: *Das Bild der Zigeuner und seine Reflexion in der slowakischen Folklore*. Slovenský národopis 43, 1995, pp. 348-364.

In accord with the texts mixed with Yiddish from other regions, where generally as much as 80% of such songs are associated with religion, the religious motifs prevail unequivocally in our material (Rothstein 1994:297).

5.3. **Sex differences.** In the image of the Jew – similarly as in the case of the Gypsy¹⁶ – there was a difference between the reflection of the Jewish men and women. The Jewish man occurs here more often. By contrast, the figure of the Jewish woman is rather indistinct. In the narratives there occurs (often with erotic motifs) an old, ugly man in contrast to a pretty young Jewess.¹⁷ Now and then the picture of a cheerful innkeeper's wife fooled over by robbers during dance is found – a motif known from folk ballads. A stupid Jewish woman is a target of ridicule in narratives or in sayings and proverbs:¹⁸

“Buttermilk is sold to Jewesses by the foot.” (V/1066)

The Jewish woman (but also the Jewish man) is also ridiculed in child folklore associated with joke culture accentuating obscenity “down”, “dirty” (Bachtin 1975). The addressee of such mockeries changed according to the circumstances. Many texts were not exclusively bound to the image of the Jew, but they expressed the above mentioned, usually negative, even unfriendly attitude to the “strange” in general. On the other hand, the following text that often occurred as part of the dance ‘*židovka*’ (*židovský*) was exclusively associated with a Jewess:

*Jewish woman, come with us,
I don't go, it's the sabbath day,
it was the sabbath day yesterday too,
and yet you danced.
Jewish woman, come with us,
I don't go, it's the sabbath day.
(Slatinské Lazy, Podpoľanie, 1972)*

Relations between the Jewish man and Jewish woman are often an object of derision, not rarely with an erotic tinge.

The Jew – man is depicted in songs and in the narratives usually as old, bearded, often laughing, or, sometimes dirty and smelly. The Jew and the devil are interchanged now and again in proverbs and songs.

Beside a rather rare motif of a stupid Jewish man or woman there is also a picture of a wise Jew in the narratives. The Jew is most often only a supporting figure,

¹⁶ See Note 15.

¹⁷ WA – manuscript archives from collections of Professor Frank Wollman in the Institute of Ethnology of SAV, Bratislava. The material was collected and recorded by the students of the Slavic seminar led by Professor F. Wollman between 1927 and 1943. The inventory number of the material is in brackets (WA 85/23, 1937: “Ako nocounik spau u Žida” (How a lodger slept in a Jewish house)).

¹⁸ POLÍVKA, J.: op. cit., 1931, V., p. 113 ff., also WA (1159/116, 1941).

who is, in spite of his accentuated shrewdness, mainly on meeting a Gypsy, a defeated figure. The Gypsy always beats him in a strife. In this sense the Jew functions in folk narrative, mainly in a cycle of anecdotes about Gypsies as a representative of the carnival “world upside down”. This point is remarkable in legal action of a peasant against a Jew, where the Gypsy helps the peasant win thanks to his wits.¹⁹

The Jew often has to pay for his conflicts with a peasant. He is punished for his avarice. This motive is rather frequent in numerous narratives and anecdotes but also in the legends about the Christ’s wandering the world, where the Jew either replaces St Peter or creates another figure of the event, usually justly punished by the Christ for his avarice and calculation.²⁰

5.4. Love relations. Love motif is an important component in the reflection of the Jew’s image in folklore. Particular motifs emphasize higher sexual potency of the Jew, which corresponds with the generally anthropological layer of the image of the “stranger” (Isaacs 1976, Kiliánová 1994). Jew’s love relations (often with erotic motifs) are a topic occurring in the relationship between a Jewish man and a Jewish woman (similar motifs are also found in the image of the Gypsy):

*1. A Jewish woman died, they cart her now
oraci, oremus.
The Jews will not follow her any more,
oraci oremus.
With the great bim bam gloriya,
oraci oremus.
(Podvysoká, Kysuce, 1959)*

Other motifs depict love relation between a Jew and a non-Jewish girl (woman), the Jew appearing also as a (successful) rival in love.

The motif of the Jew–philanderer, which we find in broadside ballads as well as in wedding repertoire, is very frequent in folk songs but less in the narratives. The song texts depicting the Jew as a lover who buys love of non-Jewish women, are greatest in number. The contrast Jew – peasant often occurs in this connection, emphasizing non-peasant occupation of the Jew as well as his higher social status.

The motif of the sale of girls to the Jew(s) is quite frequent:

*1. You should have better sold me,
mum, to the Jews*

¹⁹ “Cigan-fiškaris” – GAŠPARIKOVÁ, V.: *Katalóg slovenskej ľudovej prózy zo zberov F. Wollmana I.*, NÚ Bratislava 1992, No. 543.

²⁰ POLÍVKA, J.: op. cit. 1931, V., as well as many texts from WA.

*rather than
marry me to Johnny.
2. The Jews would have
paid a lot,
mum, you have
me just, announced.*
(Nesluša, Kysuce, 1960)

5.5. **Social status, occupation, craft.** From this perspective, the Jew's image in Slovak folklore has been contoured at two basic levels:

1. **Dominant particular occupation of the Jews**

2. **The Jews as a social class.**

5.5.1. A rather frequent motif in folklore is that of non-peasant occupation of the Jews. Inn-keeping and trade is most frequent, other occupations, like doctor²¹ or baker²² occur sporadically in the narratives.

“A Jewish girl has scales immediately in her hands and a Jewish boy a pen behind his ear.” (XVII/23)

“An inn without a Jew, a church without a priest.” (IV/124)

“The fair will be without one Jew.” (III/229)

The contrast **Jew innkeeper – peasant** occurs here again, the relatively frequent being the topics of alcohol, peasant–drunkard, who wasted his property on the drink in the Jew's inn. He is often a usurer. This stereotype is a basis for surviving prejudices of the inhabitants of Slovakia with respect to the Jews. In connection with this, the saying “When in need, one turns to the Jew” and its mutations is widely spread not only in Slovakia but also in Poland and in Ukraine (Rothstein 1986).

The motifs of the Jew–shopkeeper are found both in the narratives and in songs. The relations between the majority population and the Jew were primarily business-like. The Jew–shopkeeper is reflected in folklore in all social strata – from poor pedlar, who buys everything: women's hair, feather, leather, arriving to a village on a cart selling pepper or other trifles, up to a rich man. Jewish pedlars are objects of derision (often of children) and one should not trust them.

*When you meet a Jew in the wood,
ask him what he brings*

²¹ “Kristus pán a žid” (Jesus Christ and a Jew). POLÍVKA, J.: op. cit. 1930, IV, p. 13.

²² “Kristus Pán a Peter. Pán Ježiš odmeňuje pohostinstvo” (Jesus Christ and Peter. Jesus Christ rewarding for hospitality). Polívka, J.: ibid. 1930, IV, p. 15.

*whether pepper or money,
or black pepper,
be careful what is said,
what he says to you.*
(Liptovská Lúžna, Liptov 1941)

The Jew is a good salesman and he buys everything:
“The Jew doesn’t give anything what is unsure.” (IX/367)
“A Christian in crowns, Jew in hellers (pennies) (becomes rich).”
(Sečovce, Zemplín, Chorváthová, L., manuscript)

“She had hair, a Jew took it.” (I/214)

Or: “We shall give you to the Jews for combs.” (XIX/1) – commentary:

Pedlars sold or exchanged various goods for home articles in villages. During the first arranging of a woman’s hair after the wedding, covering the bride’s head with the ornamental wedding headgear, they cut off part of the girl’s plait of hair, for which the Jew gave a comb in the town or a kitchen trencher and a rolling-pin.
(Kosová 1974)

5.5.2. The Jewish minority was perceived as a strange group by peasantry in the social sense very significantly. **The Jews were in their eyes simultaneously representatives of the socially higher classes of society.** Here are the roots of several negative stereotypes, the figure of a Jew or a Jewess served as an instrument for expressing the negative emotions and attitudes of peasants towards the “authorities” as a whole (ethnic attributes were here only secondary).

The Jews are mentioned in this connection in songs as being robbed or the rich Jews as victims of robbers. Robbers were often condemned for their deed:

*To hell with you, hey boys,
you are no heroes
when ten of you want
to beat one Jew.*
(Bartók, SLP I.: 115)

Perception of the Jews as a ‘false’ upper class is reflected in the dance *židovka*, *židovský* but also some narratives, which underline that the Jews achieved their status only thanks to money. *The Jewish dance* was popular mainly in western and eastern Slovakia (Důžek 1990). It is a parody of the dances of the upper classes. It is one of the newer figurative dances extended from the second half of the nineteenth century. The perception of the Jews as a ‘false’ upper class has its roots in feudal views of the Magyar nobility (Hanak 1992) but also the Polish nobility (Bódi 1993) and in their evaluation of the Jews. This image of the Jews survived in

the upper and middle classes in former Hungary through the nineteenth century and probably penetrated into the peasant milieu. The dance was linked with several texts extraordinarily frequent in the material (*Šla židovka kolem krámu*,²³ *Židovka, podže k nám*, etc.)

The attitudes towards the Jews as a 'false' upper class are also well illustrated by citations from the narratives: "What would be a Jew without money?" or "Jesus Christ knew that a Jew always wants money".²⁴

5.6. **Religion.** Beside the social dimension of the Jew's image in Slovak folklore, this different religion occurs as the most important attribute. In this sphere we find the most strongly proclaimed barrier as well as the greatest number of objections against the Jews. The opposition **Jew-Christian** often appears.

This opposition is closely connected with the self-image of the Jews. It has no narrower regional or national roots but belongs to the generally valid attributes of Jewry. It is primarily the Christian church that participated in its spread, strengthening and emphasizing the differences of the Jewish religion outside the Jewish milieu. These motifs are most frequently met in 'semi-folk' songs – legends often spread through fair prints. This class is at least of Europe-wide character. Particular forms of reflections of the special religion of Jewish communities in individual national folklore repertoires are, however, another problem. In the Slovak milieu, an inclination towards negative stereotype is evident on the one hand; on the other hand, positively tuned motives of the new-born Jesus' Jewish descent are evident in songs (carols in particular):

*The New year is coming, the son of God:/ is lying in the crib,
rejoice at the birth of little /:Jesus:/
beautiful little Jesus, clear in the sun /:hear us:/
and give us a prolific new peaceful year.*
(Krekovičová 1992:75)

The Old Testament legends about the wise King Solomon²⁵ reflect the positive image of the Jew, but not all of them. His opposite is the negative character of Judas from the New Testament.²⁶

The reflection of Jewish religion occurs in Slovak folklore in several intertwined layers.

²³ The song is also popular in Moravia. VETTERL, K. - HRABALOVÁ, O.: *Guberniální sbírka písní a instrumentální hudby z Moravy a Slezska z roku 1819*. Strážnice 1994, pp. 132-133.

²⁴ WA (104/11, 1940).

²⁵ "O Šalamúnovi a chudobnom človeku" (About Solomon and a poor man). WA (107, 1936). POLÍVKA, J.: op. cit. 1930, IV., pp. 8-11.

²⁶ POLÍVKA, J.: ibid. 1930, IV, p. 29.

5.6.1. **Jewish rituals and manifestations of religious specifics evaluated as “different”** or also as a target of derision or as a “punishment”. The prohibition on eating pork with the Jews is evaluated as “strange” (ironically): “Precious as a pig in the house of Jews.” This motif also occurs in several etiological legends about the reason why the Jews do not eat pork:

*A Jew fattened a pig, when it perished, he shouted to heaven asking God to take him too. He was punished by being changed into a pig and he was carted around all over the world. He ate twelve breads and drank a high tub of water a day.*²⁷

The appearance of the Jews is different in connection with religion (beard as an inseparable part) and the difference of individual attributes of the Jewish faith is accentuated: “He is waiting for him like the Jew for the Messiah.” (IX/76) The “other” assumes here at the same time the attributes of the “foreign” with a predominantly negative flavour. The Jewish religion has its own “God” or the “Jewish Christ”. We again find ourselves in the “upside-down” carnival world (Bachtin 1975), where one can make fun of anything and of everybody. Nothing is saintly:

1. When I was coming down from the heaven,

I called in hell,

the Jewish Herod

/:was baking potatoes there:/

2. I told him

to give me one

and he said to me

/:to dig some out:/

3. I told him

that I have no hoe

and he said to me,

/:that I have two hands:/

(Kubrá, Trenčín, 1973)

Mockeries of the Jewish religious rituals or their parodies occur in several songs – mostly in false macaroni texts. The narratives about the Jew who was not able to say: “Jesus, Maria, Joseph” are quite frequent.

A psychological dimension of the existing barrier comes to the fore in the religious domain. It is conditioned by the lack of knowledge of the Jewish religion and rituals and the accompanying Christians’ fear of the Jews probably spread by the official church.

²⁷ This motif is also known in France, Germany, Poland, Ukraine. POLÍVKA, J.: *ibid.* 1930, IV., p. 40.

5.6.2. The motif of the **Jews who crucified Jesus Christ** is found in folklore: “He flew at me like the Jews at Jesus Christ.” (III/849). This topic is relatively frequent in legends and in broadside ballads.

We learned the so-called “Judas game” from the Slovaks from Hungary. It was associated with the boys’ visiting the houses on Easter Saturday:

*And what did you, Judas, do,
when you betrayed your Lord
to the Jews?
And you must be burnt in the hell
with Lucifer the devil
there to be, there to be.
(Lami 1984: 177–178)*

E. Horváthová (E. Horváthová 1986:185) mentions the so-called burning of Judas, i.e. the residues of oil from eternal lamp in Catholic churches on Easter Saturday in some regions of Slovakia.

5.6.3. Rather strong objections against the Jews occurred in connection with the opposition **Jew – Christian** concerning **moral-ethical norms** (Krekovičová 1993): “The Jew sells everything, even his soul.” (XVII/34) “Jewish usury devours Christians.” (XVII/35) “What is a Jew for? To lie to people. What is a Christian for? To stop him.” (XVII/29) In this connection the role of the Jews in negative social phenomena rejected by Christianity (alcoholism, usury, prostitution or criminality) is emphasized. In all these motifs the attribute of **the Jew–the guilty** is concentrated:

*Oh, Jewy, Jewy,
a news will be delivered to you,
/:for your lies,
I will send you to prison in Brno, Brno.:/
(At the wedding, Liptovské Sliače, Liptov, 1967)*

“Other” religious affiliation is automatically associated with the Jew’s greater sinfulness: “The priest’s property and the Jew’s soul, all is taken by the devil. (According to the people’s experiences, both are dishonest).” (IV/57) The alternation of a Jew with a devil or the actions of both as allies mentioned above, also incline to such an attitude towards Jews:

“A Jew took him and the Jew was taken by the deuce, both were taken away.” (XVI/17)

“He runs away from it like a Jew (a devil) from the cross.” (IX/332)

“Where a Christian builds a church, the devil and the Jew add an inn.” (IX/123)

Beside the image of **the Jew–the guilty** in folk narratives, where the motif of the parsimonious Jew is very frequent, the topic **the Jew–the victim** is met even

more often. The Jew appears very often in the narratives as a defeated person, often without his own culpability.

The fact of the different religion of the Jews (“non-Christianity”) served here as a tool for apologizing the evident injustice applied with respect to the Jews.

5.6.4. In proverbs of several European nations the motif of the **Christened Jew** comes to the fore as well. The motif has an unambiguously negative, even anti-Semitic flavour with the Poles, Ukrainians, Croats, and Czechs (Rothstein 1986). Slovak proverbs reflect such a case in accord with the opposition sinful **Jew** – **good Christian** positively: “A Christian Jew, a tamed wolf”. (XVII/31) The most negative attributes in the Jew’s image are found in the area of religious differences. They are primarily demonstrated by the moral-ethical objections against the behaviour of the Jews (**the Jew—the guilty**). However, the Jews often appear in the role of victims. Generally speaking, the strongest barrier with respect to the Jews was the religious barrier.

5.7. **The Holocaust.** In spite of an uncertain time retrospection of the Jew’s image in Slovak folklore, there are also found sporadic responses in folk songs to the tragic events of the Holocaust and the persecution of the Jews during World War II are also found in folk songs. The point is the topical or updated song creation which was probably developed in that period or immediately before and which expresses the solidarity of the inhabitants with the fate of the Jews. The material known so far does not allow for generalization.

*Hitler is coming /:from Germany,:/
taking the Jews /:into his pocket,:/
Hitler is coming /:with an engine,:/
taking the Jews /:in rows:/.
(Trebišov, Zemplín, 1936)*

One such example is the updated parody of the melody of the vaudeville *Slováci sme od rodu* (We are Slovaks by descent). The refrain of the song (*Rež a rúbaj do krve*) was addressed according to the contemporary political situation and opinion (to the Czech, Magyar, Jew).

*1. The train is arriving from Žilina,
Šaňo Mach is sitting in there,
all Jews and Slovaks
are scared of him, etc.
(Čičmany, Trenčín, 1973)*

The sympathy of the majority society with the persecuted Jews was more unambiguously reflected in reminiscence narratives.

Conclusion

6. Although the image of the Jew in Slovak folklore is characterized by a variety of means of expression, the number of major signs through which the Jews were perceived by the majority population of Slovakia as “other” or “strangers” is rather low. In the wider territorial comparison, we can also reconstruct in the presented image of the Jew, important elements, found in various national repertoires, of Central European or pan-European layers of the image.

6.1. General anthropologically reflected stereotype of the “strange” (opposition **clean – dirty, sexually normal – sexually more potent, or handsome – ugly, wise – stupid**, etc.) The principle is the assignment of always worse properties to “them” rather than to “us” (Isaacs 1976, Kiliánová 1994).

6.2. Perception of the Jew through different religious affiliation, constructing the image on the basis of the opposition **Jew – Christian**, which is at least of Europe-wide character (Webber 1992). It again inclines towards a negative image and its roots are in the activities of the church.

6.3. A wider Central European layer is the perception of the Jew as a “**false**” **upper class**. Its roots are in the feudal attitude of the nobility (Poland, former Hungary) towards the Jews. Such an evaluation of the Jew has also been accepted by burghers (former Hungary – Hanak 1992) and its reflection has also been recorded among peasants in villages (*Jewish dance*). The Central European character of the image is confirmed by the popularity of the *Jewish dance* in Moravia, Bohemia, Poland, and Germany (so-called *Judentanz*).²⁸

7. In addition to the wider determined attributes of the Jew, we can also preliminarily speak about some signs specific to the Slovak territory.

7.1. Apart from the abstract portrait of the Jew, folklore reflects the level of **concrete images** based on particular personal experience (denotation of the Jews by particular names). It is based on the differentiation between individual members of Jewish society with both good and bad qualities.

7.2. Although the image inclined more towards the negative stereotype, the material did not contain any direct elements of anti-Semitism (Jelinek 1993). The tendency toward negative stereotyping of the image of the “strange” is accompanied by a tendency to **ambivalence**, although this is less evident. The negative stereotype of the Jew in folklore culminates in the image of the Jew–the guilty. On the other hand, the tendency towards ambivalence is to some extent presented through the image of the Jew–the victim as well as through several positive or neutral attributes (wise Jew, evaluation of the Jew–innkeeper, rejection of the Holocaust, taunting of the Jew or Jewess without negative emotions, positive relation to the Christened Jews, etc.).

²⁸ NOWAK, J.K.: *Wesele góralskie od Żywca. Widowisko ludowe*. Warszawa – Żywiec 1993, pp. 76, 85, 96.

7.3. Through its tendency towards ambivalence the material proves – in contrast to some other nations of Central Europe – a higher degree of **tolerance** to the Jews on our territory, as towards “other” ethnic groups in general (including the Gypsies – Romanies – Krekovičová 1993, 1995). This is connected with a specific quality of ethnocentrism in Slovakia (Chorváthová 1993) characterized by its weakened reflection of Slovak ethnic identification.

7.4. On the other hand, the image of the Jew confirms and underscores some **barriers**. The religious barrier appears to be strongest. The **social** barrier can also be regarded as important (mainly in relation to the Jews with a higher status). The reflected objections are primarily connected with the prevailing non-peasant occupation of the Jews but also with a certain intolerance of non-Magyar nations living in former Hungary to the Jews after 1867, when the Jews as a religious community were awarded more rights than the other non-Magyar nations through the never fulfilled minority law of 1868 (Salner – Rychlík 1995). The objections are most strongly reflected in the **moral-ethical** field.

7.5. **The ethnic dimension of the image** – although of little importance at first sight – is on the one hand only **a means for demonstrating potential religious and social barriers**. On the other hand, however, through **moral-ethical objections**, ethnic differences were simultaneously demonstrated. Perception of **ethnic signs** is evident through **language** and **religion** in agreement with the self-image of the Jews. Trading and innkeeping, i.e. their prevalent occupation, can be added to their important attributes.

7.6. The contrast Gypsy – Jew in Slovak folklore, chiefly in anecdotes, underlines the social dimension of both images as well as their hierarchic place in the thought of the people. The Jew appears here as a member of the upper social class whereas the Gypsy as a representative of the lowest social class. The image of the world “upside down” is precisely the opposition of the **victorious Gypsy** versus the **defeated Jew** or the **Jew as a victim**.

7.7. The overwhelming majority of the songs and child folklore belongs to taunting songs and forms of folk humour which are usually rather unmerciful to other groups of village society as well (e.g. to girls, youngsters, spinsters, shepherds, etc.). They do not always necessarily express antagonistic attitudes just towards the Jews or Gypsies (Romanies).

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