I. Rozprawy i analizy

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Lithuanian religious and ceremonial terms of semitic origin: the phenomenon of Azazel

The article deals with the so-called phenomenon of Azazel, i.e. the scapegoat icon, examples of which can be found in the *Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language* and in dialectal sources. Its relics are also traced in three-day Shrovetide rites before the Lenten fast, which begins on Ash Wednesday (Shrove Tuesday in Lithuania), and in the Easter feast from Pievėnai in Samogitia (the histrionic so-called "Easter Jews" vigil on the night before Easter). Using different methods of investigating cultural realia, i.e. cross-cultural comparison and linguistic analysis (based on the inner and external reconstruction (or historical) methodology), two main types of religious terms of Semitic origin registered in the *Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language* and dialectal sources are identified: (i) Hebraisms with neutral or hereditary connotation; and (ii) pejoratives or semantically modified words with an anti-Semitic background. The paper also explains the origin of the xenophobic elements of the Easter feast, the way it has been celebrated in Pievėnai until today.

Key words: Azazel/scapegoat phenomenon; religious terms; ceremonial terms; Hebraism; pejorative; semantically modified words

Introduction: a short prehistory of the origin and purport of the scapegoat or Azazel icon

The mythonym of Azazel or Hazazel (Azael, Azozel)[1] is traditionally explained as an appellative of one of the chiefs of the 200 fallen angels

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[1] The exact meaning of the proper name is ambiguous: 1. 'firm' + 'strong'; 2. 'the goat went away'; 3. 'complete removal'; 4. 'goat' + 'god' (see Klein 1987: 468; Šteǐnberg 1878: 346).

mentioned in Enoch VIII: 1, IX: 6, X: 4–6, LIV: 5 (or the Ethiopic book of one of the most important of the apocalyptic works, dating from the period of the Second Temple, i.e. 6th c. B.C.; cf. EJ VI: 442–443, XIX: 608–610). However, Azazel is also portrayed as the scapegoat: this function is indicated in the rabbinic literature, the Targum, and in Leviticus 16: 8–10 (cf. Davidson 1971: 63; EJ II: 763).

The so-called Phenomenon of Azazel or scapegoat hunt was initially associated only with the animal as a symbol of the elimination of bad luck caused by human depravity. George A. Barton (1918: 186) states that the part of the ritual when the goat was sent out into the wilderness to carry the sins of Israel, i.e. to cleanse the people of their sins, is very old (cf. also EJ II: 763; Harrison 1913: 45). This tradition of purification was also proper to IE communities, not only to Jews. In the Hellenistic world, there were also φαρμακός or scapegoat rituals, but in contrast to the Semitic tradition they customarily consisted in taking *a human being* as a scapegoat – "the one responsible for the difficulties and miseries of mankind" (Dougherty 2006: 20). Although the ritual of Magical Purification was unknown to Homer (cf. Harrison 1913: 44–45), it was common enough in historical Greece. For instance, according to Walter Burkert (1979: 64–66), the Greek city of Abdera was purified by *emptus homo*/ὠνητὸς ἄνθρωπος, i.e. a slave, who would walk around the city walls while Basileus and others citizens would throw stones at him (Cameron 2004: 181). These rituals were performed in the case of trouble or at a particular time of the year. However, in the Hellenistic world the scapegoat was usually not killed but expelled. Only in some places was it actually killed (EJ II: 763; cf. also Graf 2009: 76, 88). Romans also practised a similar method of avoiding disaster or finding those responsible for them, e.g., Nero accused the Christian community (*mali homines*) of the fire in Rome in 64 C.E. (Adkins and Adkins 2004: 325; Dunstan 2011: 540; Kuiper 2009: 162). The praetorian prefect Tigellinus accused the Jews of the misdeed and made them "the target of people's rage" (Malitz 2005: 69).

Later the scapegoat or the Phenomenon of Azazel transformed itself into ethnic cleansing (see Beker 2008: 90): in 1290 Jews were banished from England, in 1400 from Prague, in 1420, 1438, 1462, and 1473 from Mainz, in 1420–21 from Austria, in 1424 from Cologne, in 1440 from Augsburg, and in 1492 from Spain (EJ VII: 523). This finally deteriorated into the Holocaust.

For the Azazel phenomenon or violence against Jews to become wide-spread, i.e. to erect borders between Catholics and confessors of Jewish faith, there had to be a way of making it licit through tales and whispering campaign (cf. Gaunt et al. 2010: 3). Two main examples of this are presented

in medieval written sources: (1) Jews were incriminated with killing Jesus (which incrimination was one of the ideological foundations of the Spanish *Reconquista*, whereby Spain was to be transformed into a new "Promised Land" or "God's Land"; see Beker 2008: 90); (2) there was a "blood libel" accusation buttressed by two notions: (a) that of Jews kidnapping and killing Christian children in order to use their blood in preparing their ceremonial Passover *matzot* food (this defamation caused many anti-Jewish riots; cf. Gaunt et al. 2010: 3); and (b) that of Jews being responsible for stealing and damaging the Holy Cross (and the Host or images of Christian saints) by beating it with a rod and driving nails into it to draw blood (see Anglickienė 2004: 45).

Lithuanian religious terms of Semitic origin

The scapegoat icon of Jewish guilt is also reflected in the data collected in the *Dictionary of Lithuanian Language* and in dialectal sources. Two main types of religious terms of Semitic origin are registered in the *Dictionary*: (i) Hebraisms with a neutral or hereditary connotation; and (ii) pejoratives or semantically modified words with an anti-Semitic background. The Hebraisms were mostly borrowed into Lithuanian via Polish language (cf. Kregždys 2014: 62), except two well-known words borrowed directly from Jewish sources:

(i) **mãcas** 'unleavened bread made from wheat which is permitted for use during Passover' < Y *mace* 'matzah, unleavened bread made from one of five species of grain – wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats – mentioned in the Torah, and the only bread which is permitted for use during Passover'; cf. OH *ṗesah* 'festival of the Passover held on the 15–21 of Nisan (10 March – 11 April)' ← OH *maccāh* 'unleavened bread' (Weinreich 1977: 199; Lötzsch 1992: 116; Brown et al. 2000: 1432; DCH V: 444, VI: 723; Klein 1987: 374; Wolf 1998: 62; cf. also Velikovsky 1952: 42; EJ XIII: 689–690; Kregždys 2016: 89);

(ii) **rãbinas / rẽbinas** 'head of the Jewish congregation' < Y *rebe* 'teacher' (Weinreich 1977: 326) ← MH *rabbīn* 'rabbi, teacher' (Jastrow 1903: 1442) ← OH *rav* 'chief' (Brown et al. 2000: 2220–2221; DCH VII: 388–389; Klein 1987: 601; also see Wexler 1987: 112, 1988: 131; Kregždys 2016: 90).

Hebraisms with a neutral or hereditary connotation

cherubìnas 'a winged celestial being (angel) of higher rank which appears in the Bible' (LKŽe)

← (M)Pol. *cherubin* ([M]Pol. *cherub*, MPol. *cherubim*) 'angel of higher rank which appears in the Bible etc.' ← Lat. *Cherub*, pl. *Cherūbim*, *Cherubin* 'higher rank of angels which is mentioned in the Old Testament' ← Gk. [late] χερούβ, pl. χερουβίμ/χερουβίν 'Cherub [a winged celestial being, flying above the Ark in the Tabernacle, form the throne of God with their outstretched wings]; angel [second in hierarchy rank], serves the Lord as a Pegasus' ← OH pl. *kərūḇīm* / sg. *kərūḇ* 'the living chariot of the theophanic God; possibly identified with the storm-wind; guard of the Eden; the guards of the garden of Eden; the throne of Yahweh Sabaoth; two cherubim of solid gold upon the slab of gold facing each other with wings outstretched above, so as to constitute a basis or throne on which the glory of Yahweh appeared etc.' ← Akk. *kāribu* 'a priest; a supplicant deity or genie' (SW I: 276; SPW III: 210–211; Lewis et al. 1958: 326; Lampe 1961: 1523–1524; Strong 1997: 525; Brown et al. 2000: 1210–1211; DCH IV: 459–460; Šteĭnberg 1878: 220; Klein 1987: 285; Sophocles 1900: 1164; Black et al. 2000: 149; cf. also EJ IV: 600–601; Davidson 1971: 86–87; Kregždys 2014: 65, 2016: 94, 2016a: 708; cf. Vasmer III: 239);

farizeùšas, *farizeušas* 'a member of a Jewish religious and political party or sect (during the Second Temple period; the group emerging as a distinct entity shortly after the Hasmonean revolt) with a pejorative sense of a zealot or dissembler' (LKŽe)

← (O/M)Pol. *faryzeusz* 'a member of a Jewish religious and political party or sect; Pharisee; prude' ← Lat. *Pharisaeus* 'a member of a Jewish sect of that name' ← Gk. φαρισαῖος 'Pharisee; eremite' ← MH *pārūš* 'a strict observer of the Mosaic Law, Pharisee' / (pl.) *pərūšīm* 'Jewish religious and political party or sect [during the Second Temple period]' ← ? OH *p̄āraš* 'make distinct, declare' ← Proto-Sem. **pVrVš-* 'make distinct' (SW I: 723; SPW VII: 38–39; SSt II: 356–357; Lewis et al. 1958: 1368; Jastrow 1903: 1222; Strong 1997: 507; Brown et al. 2000: 2010; DCH VI: 786; Orel et al. 1995: 430; Klein 1987: 523; CF. also EJ XVI: 30–32; Kregždys 2014: 65–66, 2016: 94, 2016a: 62–63) ∥ ¢ Bel. *faryséĭ* 'Pharisee' (Kolas et al. 2002: 652; Graecism – see Vasmer III: 202), etc.

Pejoratives or semantically modified words
with an anti-Semitic background

judõšius 'renegade; evil, devil' (LKŽe; see Grumadienė et al. 2005: 219) ← Pol. *judasz* 'renegade, faker, Pharisee; curmudgeon; devil etc.' ← NP Lat. *Jūdas* 'Judah, son of Jacob and patriarch of the one of the tribes

of Israel; the tribe of Judah, descendants of Judah; Jude or Judas, one of Christ's apostles' ← PN Gk. Ἰουδάς 'Judah' ← PN OH *Yəhūdāh* 'Judah, son of Jacob and Leah; tribe descended from Judah etc.' (SW II: 184; Lewis et al. 1958: 1015; Strong 1997: 231; Brown et al. 2000: 982–983; DCH IV: 117–121; also see EB II: 2617–2618; Williams 2007: 178; Kregždys 2014: 67, 2016a: 335) → Bel. *iudáš* 'knave' (Nosovič 1984: 724), Bel. dial. *iudaš* 'serpent' (Sciaškovič 1983: 571)

kabalà 'disaster; trap, intrigue' (LKŽe)

← (M)Pol. *kabała* 'apocryphal tractate of mystic and esoteric doctrine of Judaism; cartomancy; divination, sortilege; sorcerer's book; plot; ado, asperity' ← Y *qabole* 'Jewish mystic lore' / MLat. *cabbala* 'Cabbala [rabbinical mystic lore]' ← MH *qábbālāh* 'receiving, acceptance; tradition, traditional law; post-Mosaic Scriptures; Kabbalah, mystic lore' (SW II: 192–193; SPW X: 1; Weinreich 1977: 44; Lötzsch 1992: 98; Soldatov 2011: 725; Jastrow 1903: 1310; Podol'skij 1992: 592; Blaise 1994: 122; Klein 1987: 560; also see EJ XI: 585–692; Kregždys 2014: 72–73, 2016: 94, 2016a: 337) → Bel. *kabalá* 'ado; puzzle; trick, rubbish' (Nosovič 1984: 226)

rãbinas 'trickster'

← Y *rebe* 'teacher' (Weinreich 1977: 326) ← ≠ MH *rabbīn* 'rabbi, teacher' (Jastrow 1903: 1442) ← OH *rav* 'chief' (Brown et al. 2000: 2220–2221; Klein 1987: 601)

simoniokas 'a man of simony' (Skardžius 1998: 255)

← (M)Pol. *symonjak* 'a man of simony' ← MLat. *simoniacus* 'ditto' ← Gk. [late] Σιμωνιανός 'follower of Simon Magus' ← PN Gk. [late] Σίμων 'Simon the Magician' ← PN OH *Šim'ōn* 'second son of Jacob and Leah [← "he who was heard"]; tribal name; Jew with foreign wife' (SW VI: 538; Linde V: 497; Niermeyer 1976: 972; Lampe 1961: 1233; Sophocles 1900: 989; Strong 1997: 432; Brown et al. 2000: 2515; DCH VIII: 470–471; Gil' and Maler 1989: 78; also see EB IV: 4536–4559; Kregždys 2014: 68–69, 2016: 94, 2016a: 575–576; cf. Moszyńska 1975: 208) → OBel. *simoniiak* 'a man of simony' (GSBM XXXI: 264; Bulyka 1980: 174)

Lithuanian ceremonial terms of Semitic origin

Shrovetide carnival or Lith. *Užgavėnės*

Next to the terms of the Jewish religious system or cultural realia, anti-Semitic relics can also be traced in three-day Shrovetide rites before the Lenten fast, which begins on Ash Wednesday (Shrove Tuesday in Lithuania; Sužiedėlis 1976: 131), and the Easter feast from Pievėnai in Samogitia (the

histrionic so-called "Easter Jews" vigil on the night before Easter). Shrovetide carnival or *Užgavėnės* is a traditional holiday, one of the merriest events in Lithuania, which escorts winter.

According to Simas Sužiedėlis, Shrovetide mummers, i.e. feast partici-pants

in costumes of the *Jewish peddler*, the tramp and the cunning gypsy, the pretended beggar, the doctor who was rarely seen in the village, the uniformed soldier begin roaming from early morning. The maskers would make speeches, sing derisive songs, act out the story of the decrepit old bachelor trying to woo a fair young maiden, splash and spatter single men and women because they had not found mates. In Samogitia the groups of makers would haul around on a sledge an effigy in woman's clothing called More or Kotre. (Sužiedėlis 1976: 132)

They are its retinue and symbolize purely negative personages.

One of these mummers' name is *Maselis*. The authors of the *Dictionary of Lithuanian Language* (LKŽe) present it as a Lithuanian inherited word with unknown origin (cf. also Fraenkel 1962–1965: 413): Lith. *maselis* 'a man dressed in the clothes of Shrovetide mummers', in Šeduva (Radviliškis district). The lexeme is used in the area of eastern Highlanders of Panevėžys.

The *Dictionary of Lithuanian Surnames* (Vanagas et al. 1989: 171, 172) also lists the surname *Masẽlis*, used in the same area. On the one hand, the authors claim that the word comes from the Polish Christian name *Maś* : *Mateusz* 'Mathew' or Germ. *Maaß*, *Maas* (← *Thomas*). However, a possibility cannot be rejected that Lith. *Masẽlis* is also related to the Yiddish proper name *Masel* (cf. the surname *Sam Massell, Jr.* [EJ XIII: 667], *Iosif Massel*, born in Vilna province [JE X: 694]), from WY *massel/maššel* 'luck, success; constellation' (Lötzsch 1992: 115–116), and that from MH *mazzāl* 'planet, constellation; success, fortune" (Stern 2000: 129; Jastrow 1903: 755). In that case, Lith. *maselis* 'a man dressed in the clothes of Shrovetide mummers' should be attributed to Hebraisms borrowed into Lithuanian, related to the Yiddish proper name *Massel* (cf. also Kregždys 2015: 26–27).

The "Easter Jews" feast in Pievėnai

On the night before Easter, the natives of Pievėnai (a village in Samogitia, Tirkšliai subdistrict, Mažeikiai district municipality) celebrate the so-called "Easter Jews" feast. According to officials of the local municipality (MRS 2015), "the custom is unique in Europe and has survived in Pievėnai until today".

Domantas Pipas (TM 2015), who visited the village of Pievėnai, reports that a group of lads in uniform stays all night in the local wooden church

of the Holy Cross, built in 1788 (see Jovaiša 2014: 186), in order to ensure the proper way of the Easter procession. On that special night, young local men (the guards[2] of the Holy Cross) act against "Easter Jews", i.e. natives who wear masks and are dressed in clothes of orthodox Jews, and try to get into the church so as to preclude the evening mass. The guards also prevent them from stealing the crucifix, which is placed in the middle of the church. Pipas claims that the locals do not know the origin of the tradition. He also adds that

most Lithuanians today are unaware of this outdated tradition. [M]any of those who are aware of it, [. . .] regard it as a relic of the past and an outdated remnant of old-world fascist mentalities. For them it is out of step with modern times. However, those participating do not see it that way. For them it is simply a local tradition derived from the Bible that is not meant to offend or demonize anyone. [They believe that] "Easter-Jews are tempting believers" [and . . .] "are equated to devils. And this scenario is taken out of Jesus' Crucifixion (from the Bible).

Unfortunately, the ignorance of the locals does not change the anti-Semitic origin of "Easter Jews" feast in Pievėnai. No doubt, the background of the festival is a prolongation of the "blood libel" accusation against the Jewish community of stealing and damaging the Holy Cross by beating it with a rod and driving nails into it until blood is drawn.

Conclusions

Four major conclusions can be proposed:

1. Lithuanian religious and ceremonial terms of Semitic origin are to be divided into two main groups: (i) Hebraisms with a neutral or hereditary connotation; and (ii) pejorative or semantically modified words with an anti-Semitic background.

2. Lith. *maselis* 'a man dressed in the clothes of Shrovetide mummers' should be attributed to Hebraisms borrowed into Lithuanian, related to the Yiddish proper name *Massel* ← WY *massel*/*maššel* 'luck, success; constellation', which originated from MH *mazl* 'planet, constellation; success, fortune'.

3. The "Easter Jews" feast in Pievėnai is anti-Semitic due its origin. The background of the festival is a prolongation of the medieval "blood libel"

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[2] Four teams of the guards are dressed in differently-coloured uniforms: the red colour signifies the blood of Christ, green symbolises regeneration and hope, blue implies the ascension of Christ, and white represents the shroud in which his body was wrapped (Kajackas 1998: 51).

accusation against the Jewish community of stealing and damaging the Holy Cross by beating it and hurting it with nails so that blood is drawn.

4. Stereotypes from ancient and medieval times (lies, the blood libels, defamation, etc.) and ignorance of the locals contributed to the emergence of cultural borders between the Jewish community and the citizens of Lithuania.

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Abbreviations

Akk. – Akkadian
Bel. – Belorussian
dial. – dialectal
Germ. – German
Gk. – Greek
IE – Indo-European
Y – Yiddish
Lat. – Latin
Lith. – Lithuanian
MH – Middle Hebrew
MLat. – Medieval Latin
MPol. – Middle Polish
NP – *nomen proprium* (proper name)
OBel. – Old Belorussian
OH – Old Hebrew
OPol. – Old Polish
pl. – plural

Pol. – Polish
Proto-Sem. – Proto-Semitic language
sg. – singular
WY – West Yiddish
← – developed from
→ – developed into
≠ – discrepancy of semantic value
¢ – discrepancy of morphological structure
* – reconstructed form

Litewskie terminy religijne i obrzędowe semickiego pochodzenia – przypadek Azazela

Autor artykułu omawia tzw. „fenomen Azazela", upadłego anioła, któremu poświęcano kozła ofiarnego. Przykłady można znaleźć w *Słowniku języka litewskiego* i źródłach dialektologicznych. Relikty „fenomenu Azazela" odnajdujemy w trzydniowych obrzędach ostatkowych przed Wielkim Postem (który na Litwie rozpoczyna się we wtorek przed Popielcem), a także w uczcie wielkanocnej z miejscowości Pievėnai na Żmudzi (inscenizowane, teatralne czuwanie z powodu tzw. „wielkanocnych Żydów" w noc przed Wielkanocą). Dzięki zastosowaniu różnych metod badania realiów kulturowych, takich jak komparacja międzykulturowa czy analiza lingwistyczna, zidentyfikowano dwa główne typy terminów religijnych semickiego pochodzenia zamieszczone w *Słowniku języka litewskiego*: (1) hebraizmy z konotacją neutralną lub dziedziczną; (2) pejoratywy lub słowa z pierwotnie antysemickim wydźwiękiem, semantycznie zmodyfikowane. Artykuł tłumaczy również pochodzenie ksenofobicznych aspektów uczty wielkanocnej, tak jak jest ona praktykowana w Pievėnai do dnia dzisiejszego.

Słowa kluczowe: Azazel; kozioł ofiarny; terminy religijne; terminy obrzędowe; hebraizm; pejoratyw; słowa zmodyfikowane semantycznie