

The Jewish Traveler and the Protestant Shoemaker: A Hans Sachs' Poem in Yiddish

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Abstract: *This article discusses a new finding – the first known Yiddish translation of a literary piece by the famous sixteenth-century Meistersinger Hans Sachs (1494-1576). The translation was copied, shortly after the original piece was printed in German, as part of a manuscript that includes various lists on various topics copied by a traveling Jew named Uri Ben Shimon. The examination of the translation and its context in the Uri Ben Shimon's codex are used as an example of inter-cultural exchange in the early modern German space.*

Keywords: Hans Sachs, Uri Ben Shimon, Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel, Translation, inter-cultural exchange, Yiddish, Old Yiddish.

Hans Sachs (1494–1576) is considered one of the most popular Meistersingers¹ of the sixteenth century. His prolific known catalog contains more than 6000 pieces, covering a range of genres, including *Meisterlieder*, fables, dialogues, comedies, tragedies, carnival plays, and religious texts.² Meistersingers, and particularly Hans Sachs, are often cited by scholars of Old Yiddish literature as contemporary sources of external influence. Israel Zinberg, for instance, mentioned the plays written by Sachs for the carnivalistic *Fastnacht* as influences for early Yiddish drama, and especially the *Purimshpil*,³ arguing that the works of Sachs probably “left a strong impression in the Jewish Ghetto”.⁴ Later Yiddish scholars have also mentioned Sachs in their writings, noting the influence of bible-themed German theatre pieces on the early Yiddish *Purimshpil*,⁵ and the similarities between the typical rhyme patterns of Old Yiddish poetry and that of Sachs and his contemporaries.⁶ Despite these oft-cited connections, however, no direct textual evidence that the readers and writers of Old Yiddish literature read, copied, or translated the writings of Hans Sachs

¹ For introductory and encyclopaedic information about Meistersingers and Meistergesang see, for example: Bert Nagel, *Meistergesang*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1971); Horst Brunner, ‘Meistersinger’, in *Lexikon Des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1971—1999); Franz-Josef Holznapel, ‘Die Deutschsprachige Lyrik des Mittelalters’, in *Deutsches Literatur-Lexikon. Das Mittelalter*, Band 4: Lyrik (Minnesang-Sangspruch-Meistergesang) und Dramatik (Berlin, 2012), p. 1–60.

² For a full bibliography of all known works by Hans Sachs, see: Niklas Holzberg and Horst Brunner, *Hans Sachs: Ein Handbuch* (Berlin, 2020). For studies on Hans Sachs see for example: Wilhelm Richard Berger, *Hans Sachs: Schuhmacher Und Poet* (Frankfurt, 1994).

³ Israel Zinberg, *Di geshikhte fun der literatur bay yidn*, vol. 6 (Vilnius, 1935) p. 347—349.

⁴ Zinberg, p. 349. Zinberg also mentioned Sachs' dramas as an influence on Yiddish dramas about Saul, David and Solomon (p. 378).

⁵ Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature*, trans. Jerold C. Frakes (Oxford, 2005), p. 363, note 77.

⁶ Jerold C. Frakes, *Early Yiddish Texts 1100 - 1750 With Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 2004) p. 729.

has yet been found. In this article, we present the first known piece of such evidence - a newly discovered Yiddish translation⁷ of Hans Sachs' piece *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* ("The Regiment⁸ of One Hundred and Fifty Birds").

This is the only text by Hans Sachs currently known to us in Hebrew script. Interestingly, it is not—as we might expect in light of the scholarly focus on the influence of Sach's dramatic pieces—a translation of a play, but rather of a poem, the majority of which is dedicated to a rhyming list of different kinds of birds. In the following, we briefly describe the content of the translation, and of the larger manuscript of which it is a part, placing it first within context of the other pieces in the manuscript, and second within the context of Sach's original text.

The scribe and the manuscript

The manuscript discussed here is Ms. Kaufmann A 520, the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. It includes 324 pages, containing a variety of texts that were copied by Uri Ben Shimon of Biella (or Biel or Biala) over a period of at least 30 years, between the 1540s and 1570s. The codex, mostly written in Hebrew, is filled with lists, tables and illustrations concerning matters of language and grammar, the calendar, and celestial bodies (see figure 1).⁹ Aside from Sach's poem, there are several other pages written in Yiddish, containing a recipe for ink¹⁰ and a series of short, rhymed proverbs.¹¹ The translation of Sachs' poem appears in the last five pages of the manuscript, of which the last two are partially torn.¹²

⁷ For the purposes of our discussion, which is more historic and literary than linguistic, we use the term "Yiddish" to refer to Germanic language written in Hebrew script, and do not distinguish between Yiddish and Judeo-German.

⁸ The word *regiment* in German carries multiple, interrelated meanings that made the commitment to a specific English translation here difficult. In the context of this particular text, the closest English analog is most likely "government" or "court." However, due to this term's ambiguity, we have decided to retain the use of the untranslated term *regiment* in our discussion. For more details see Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, 'Regiment', in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm Und Wilhelm Grimm* (Trier: digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, 01/23), <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB>.

⁹ The manuscript has rarely been mentioned in the research. For brief mentions, see in: Moritz Steinschneider, "Mathematik bei den Juden (1551—1840)", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Jahrg. 49 (N. F. 13), H. 1/2 (Januar/Februar 1905), p. 84; Max Weisz, *Katalog der hebräischen Handschriften und Bücher in der Bibliothek des Professors D. Kaufmann*, Frankfurt am Main 1906, p. 169.

¹⁰ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 170.

¹¹ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 172.

¹² Ms. Kaufmann A 520, the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, p. 320–324.

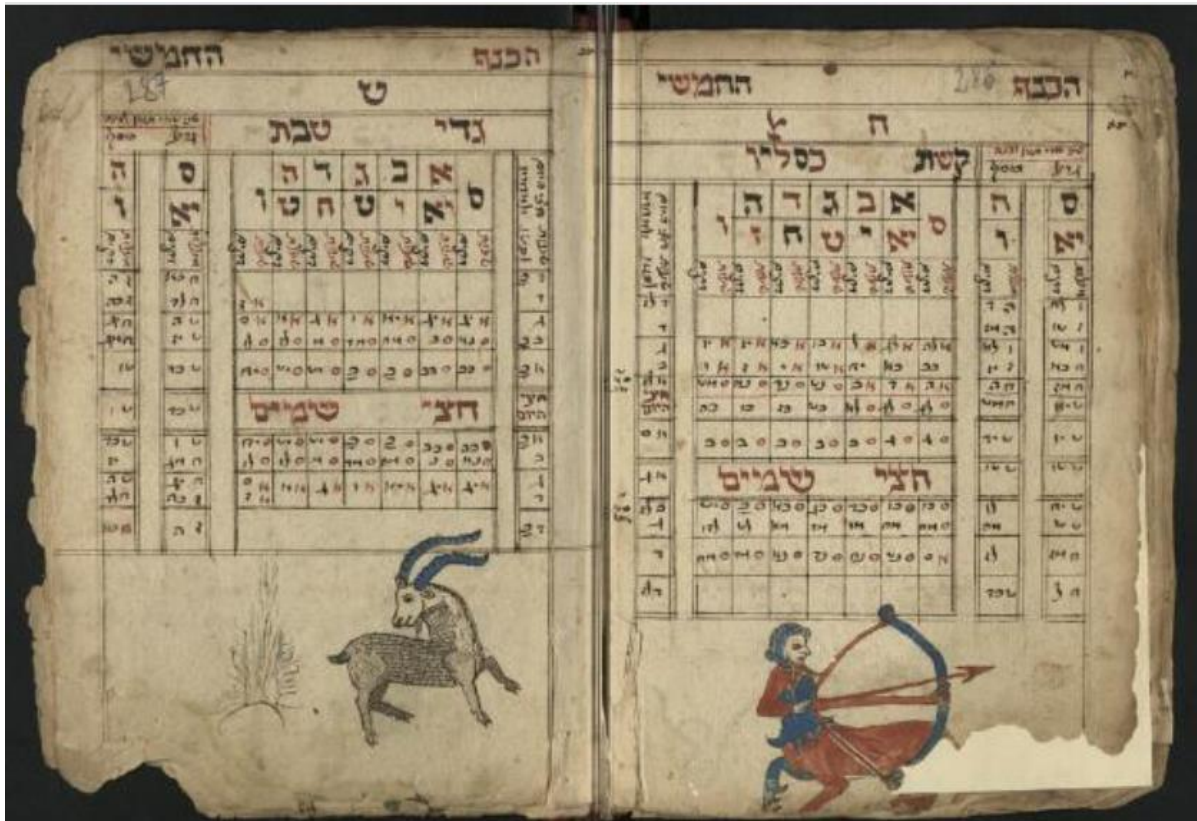


Figure 1: Ms. Kaufmann A 520

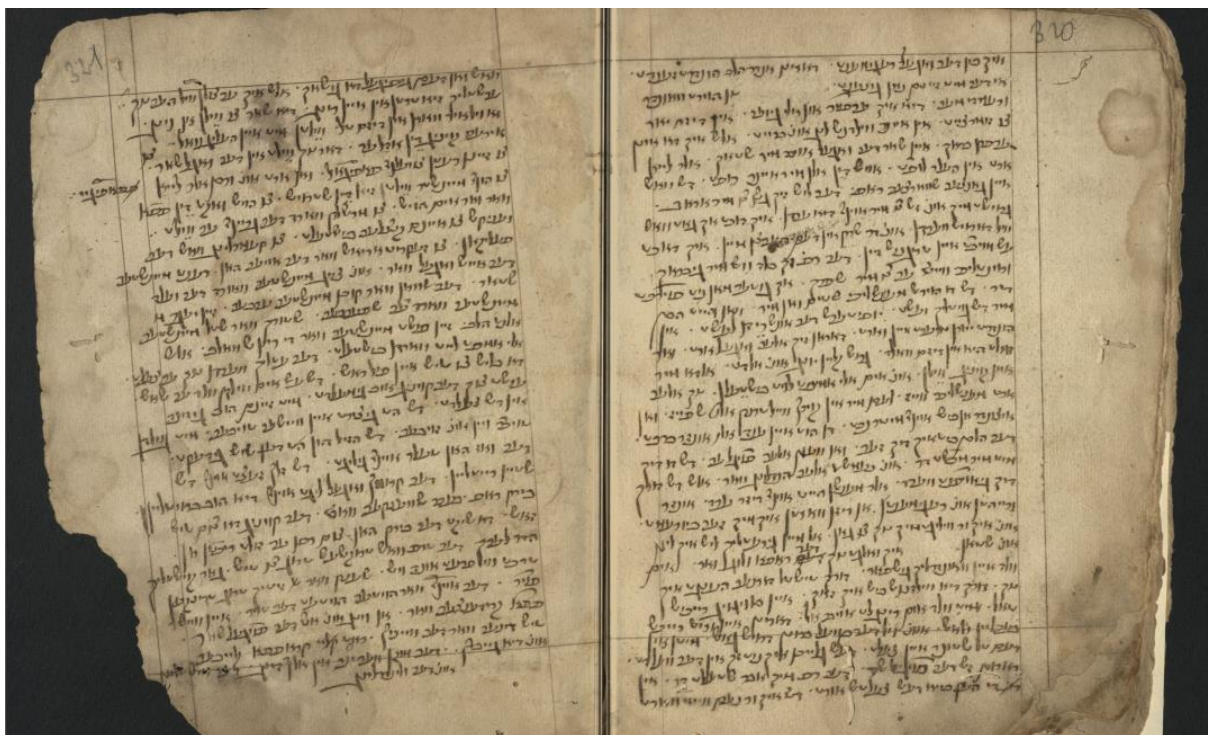


Figure 2: The first two pages of *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel*, Ms. Kaufmann A 520

Uri Ben Shimon is known primarily for his famous copy of the Scroll of *Yibus ha-Avot* (Ancestral Genealogy), a list of tombs of biblical and rabbinical figures ranging from Hebron in the south to Kefar Bar'am in the north, which functioned as a kind of illustrated guidebook for

Jewish pilgrims. However, there has not yet been any detailed discussion about his biography and intellectual profile. An examination of this manuscript suggests new information regarding Uri.

Yibus ha-Avot, written 1537, was copied by Uri 1564 while living in Safed. In the colophon of the manuscript Uri states:

I copied this manuscript letter by letter from a manuscript made in 1537 and since I myself was in most of the above places and saw that his words are accurate, and all his words were truth I also believed the rest and copied everything with great urgency. And it was on Thursday on the Fast of Esther in the year 1564 here in Safed may it be built speedily in our days.¹³

Uri's origin is unclear and various hypotheses have been put forward regarding the identity of the city of Biella (ביליא), ranging from the city of Biel/Bienne in the canton of Bern in Switzerland, to the city of Biella in northern Italy, or one of the cities called Biala in Poland.¹⁴

The newly discovered manuscript discussed here contains new information about Uri's biography. The colophons indicate the time and place at which various components were copied. These indicate his presence in Germany around the years 1543-1545. Thus, a colophon which appears at the end of a long table of leap years and calculations of the new moon states:

And this I found in the house of the late Eliezer ben Moshe Auerbach known as Lieberman in the holy community of Pfreimd on Friday, the first day of Adar A in the year 5303 (1542/3)¹⁵ for the sixth millennium.¹⁶

Another colophon at the end of a copied grammatical table reads:

This grammar key completed [...] On Thursday night, *Parshat ozi v'zimrat yah* (God is my strength and song), the year of *ma tov u-ma naaim goraleu*"u (How good and how pleasant is our fate). The writer Uri son of R. Shimon May he live long and happily from Biella. Written here the village of Gochsheim in Schweinfurt.

In other words, on the Thursday night of the weekly Torah portion that includes the verse "*ozi v'zimrat yah*," which is the weekly Torah portion *Beshalach*, in the year 5305¹⁷ (February 1st, 1545), Uri stayed in the town of Gochsheim in the Schweinfurt district of Bavaria.

¹³ The National Library of Israel Ms. Heb. 8°6947, colophon at the end of the scroll, p. 3 (the scroll is made of three sheets of parchment sewn together. The reference refers to each sheet as a page).

¹⁴ Shlomo Zucker, "*Yibus ha-Avot* or '*Elle Masat*', the Holy places Scroll", *Ariel: Journal for the Knowledge of Eretz Israel*, 122-123 (1997), p. 207, note 2. [Hebrew]. Rachel Sarfati, who examined the illustrations of the scroll, suggests that, considering the similarities between the scroll and the Italian painting tradition, Uri's origin is from the city of Biella in Italy. See Rachel Sarfati, "The Illustrated Manuscripts of '*Yibus ha-Avot*,'" MA Thesis, Tel Aviv 2009, p. 8, note 16. [Hebrew]. It is important to note that Uri's claim that he is the one who copied the scroll is not certain, and it is possible that the copying work, especially of the illustrations, was commissioned by him or - less likely - that the copied scroll was purchased by him and after purchasing it he added the colophon, which is written with writing instruments and ink different from those of the scroll itself. See Zucker, p. 192. If indeed Uri was not the one who drew the illustrations, then nothing can be determined about his origin based on them. The textual parts of this edition were published in 1920, without the illustrations and with a few copying errors. See Avraham Moshe Lunz (ed.), *HaMe'amer: Travel Letters, Lists of Graves, Approbations, Regulations, Memories, Privileges and More from the Middle of the Fifth Millennium Onwards*, third volume, Jerusalem 1920, pp. 213-209. [Hebrew].

¹⁵ The year should be 5304 (1543/4), which was a leap year and in which the first day of the month of Adar A indeed falls on a Friday.

¹⁶ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 148.

¹⁷ The numerical value of the marked Hebrew word *goraleu*, plus the thousands digit 5, is 5305

As noted above, in 1564 Uri lived in Safed, where he copied *Yibus ha-Avot*. The manuscript that concerns us also states, in a text probably written in 1567, that by 1563 he was already living in Safed. In discussing the date of the *shmita*¹⁸ he states, in a note in the margin of the page:

And according to this calculation, the year 5326 (1566), the past year, was a year of *shmita* according to Rabbeinu Tam. And according to Rashi the year 5325 (1565) was a year of *shmita* [...] and we in Safed and in all *Eretz Israel* did the year of *shmita* in the year 5323 (1563), neither according to Rashi nor according to Rabbeinu Tam, but we did so according to Maimonides.¹⁹

From his descriptions of his stay in Germany,²⁰ along with the Yiddish texts in the manuscript, we may safely assume that Uri was of Ashkenazi origin. We do not know, however, when he settled in the Land of Israel or whether he was born in the Land of Israel and left it for Germany, where he traveled in the 1540s before returning to Safed.²¹ We know that in the first half of the 1560s he lived in Safed, where he was in the year of *shmita* of 1563 and where he copied, as mentioned, the scroll of *Yibus ha-Avot* in 1564. There is no way to determine whether he left the Land of Israel after that.²²

Throughout the manuscript there are several mentions of dates, but without indications of locations. Most of these mentions indicate the 1540s,²³ and a few mentions indicate the 1550s,²⁴ the 1560s²⁵ and the 1570s.²⁶ Thus, the manuscript before us includes texts that were copied and written over several decades, and apparently both in the Land of Israel and abroad.

Ms. Kaufmann A 520 reveals the profile of Uri as a Jewish traveler who, during his years of activity in German cities and other places between the 1540s–1570s, collected and copied literary materials that reflect the varied intellectual interests of the copyist of the Yiddish translation of Hans Sach's poem.

The source and its translation

¹⁸ *Shmita* (Sabbatical year) is a recurring practice in accordance with the Jewish law, wherein every seventh year, the land must be left uncultivated. See: Exodus 23: 10–11; Leviticus 25: 2–7; Deuteronomy 15:1–6.

¹⁹ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 82.

²⁰ Uri may have visited other places in Germany, such as the town of Günzburg in Bavaria. In the manuscript he describes a method for calculating the cycles of the years and months and the birth of the new moon, and writes that "with good luck I will start writing a book that was told to me by Rabbi Yechiel of Günzburg" (Ibid., p. 157). After seven pages he ends with the words "And all this account I received from Rabbi Yechiel, may God bless him, who lives in the city of Günzburg" (Ibid., p. 163). In a later manuscript Uri describes this method of calculation, and in it he notes that Rabbi Yechiel, from whom he learned it, is no longer alive and that he immigrated to the Land of Israel and died in Safed: "And I will write another account for you to calculate the cycles of the years and months, from the birth of the moon. And I heard it from Rabbi Yechiel Günzburg who came to *Eretz Israel* and died in Safed may it be built speedily in our days amen" (Halberstam Solomon Joachim Chayim Ms. 321, p. 24b). Rabbi Yechiel Günzburg died in Safed in 1557 or sometime before. See David Magid, *History of the Ginzburg Family*, St. Petersburg 1899, p. 187. [Hebrew]. Uri also mentions in the manuscript the city of Regensburg in Bavaria, when he states that a certain unit for measuring wine is used in that city, but it is not known whether he got the information from a visit to the city or he heard of it in some other way (Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 170).

²¹ The second option is less likely. On page 173 of the manuscript, it is written: "Ben Shimon who was born in Biala". Since the manuscript contains no references to Uri's father, while the mention of his own name is common throughout the manuscript, it seems to us that the intention is that Uri ben Shimon was born in Biala and not that Shimon, whose son is Uri, was born there.

²² Avraham Yaari claimed that Uri stayed in Venice in 1575, where he printed *Yibus ha-Avot*, but this claim is not substantiated, and it is not clear on what basis it was made. See: Avraham Yaari, *Emissaries of the Land of Israel*, Jerusalem 1997, p. 248. [Hebrew].

²³ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 86, 93, 232, 304, 313.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 140

²⁵ Ibid., p. 82

²⁶ Ibid., p. 83.

The poem *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* was first printed in 1531 in Nuremberg as a small eight-page booklet.²⁷ It is a poem about a man who roams the wilderness and meets a talking raven. The raven tells him that he has met him exactly on the night when all the birds arrange a feast to pick their king and his court. The man is invited to participate in the banquet. He leaves his belongings and follows the raven until they arrive at a valley filled with birds. At this point, the poem presents a long list of different birds, describing their roles in the bird's court, or their behavior during the banquet. For example, the sparrowhawk is described as the court hunter²⁸ and the pelican is described as a chamberlain.²⁹ In the end, after the description of the different birds, the birds make too much noise, and the policeman (who is a chicken) instructs everyone to leave. The speaker remains alone in the woods. In the morning he finds that his belongings are gone. In the last line the speaker signs as Hans Sachs, Shoemaker.³⁰

While *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* contains comic and even carnivalesque³¹ features, it should not be understood as one of Sachs' famous *Fastnacht* plays. Admittedly, the birds elect their king and his court on a special holiday,³² during a grand feast, and there are humoristic and light elements in the text, however, the main emphasis in the poem is the list featuring all the names of the birds. Although *Das Regiment* gives the birds ability to speak, and sorts them by human roles and occupations, Sachs never elaborates on the connection between the birds' qualities and their roles. Therefore, it is hard to treat the poem as an animal fable.

In many respects, Sachs' poem is close to *Ein kurtzweilig gedicht, von namen, art und natur aller vögel* (An Entertaining Poem on Names, Species, and Nature of all Birds), a poem that was printed anonymously in 1554 in Straßburg. This poem presents a description of different kinds of birds. It opens with a narrative introduction in which the speaker describes how he wandered in the wild and enjoyed the beauty of the nature around him. Then he fell asleep and found himself in a beautiful paradise surrounded by birds. When he awoke, he decided to write a poem about these beautiful creatures.³³ Although the composition is presented as an "entertaining poem", most of the text is dedicated to a precise description of dozens of different birds and their characteristics. Unlike *Ein kurtzweilig gedicht*, which contains detailed descriptions of the shape and features of different birds, Sachs' poem seems more like a playful showcase of the poet's ability to create different rhymes regarding different animals. However, both Sachs' poem and the anonymous *Ein kurtzweilig gedicht* are close in their incorporation of as many different birds' names as possible.

The Yiddish translation of Sachs' poem, as it appears in Uri Ben Shimon's manuscript, is extremely close to the source, to the extent that it is a near transliteration of the German source into Hebrew letters. Thus, for instance, the line "Der faßhan teller auffgelegt"³⁴ ["The common pheasant set the plates"], is translated as "דער ואז האן טעלר אויף גיליגט",³⁵ and the lines "Der winthals und auch der widhop/ Die waren des königs hoffnarren,/ Theten einander oft an plarren"³⁶ ["The Eurasian wryneck and the Eurasian hoopoe/ that were the king's jesters/ often yelled one at each other"] is translated directly as "דער ווינד הלש אוני אויך דער ווידהפלא / דיא ווארען

²⁷ Holzberg and Brunner, *Hans Sachs: ein Handbuch*, p. 88, 489.

²⁸ Hans Sachs, *Das Regiment der anderhalbhundert Vogel* (Nuremberg, 1531), p. 2.

²⁹ Sachs, p. 2.

³⁰ Sachs, p. 7.

³¹ We are using the term as it is used in relation to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. For carnival and carnivalesque in Bakhtin's work see: Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana, 1984).

³² Sachs, *Das Regiment der anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p. 1.

³³ *Ein Kurtzweilig Gedicht, von Namen, Art und Natur aller Vögel* (Straßburg, 1554), p. 1–4. For more information about lexicography of birds' names in sixteenth century German see: Hugo Suolahti, *Die Deutschen Vogelnamen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 2000).

³⁴ Sachs, *Das Regiment Der Anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p.3.

³⁵ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 321. All the translations are ours, unless stated otherwise.

³⁶ Sachs, *Das Regiment Der Anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p.4.

”דעש קויניגש הוף נארען/ טעטן אן אננדר אופט אן פלערן”.³⁷ As these examples show, the translation keeps to the rhyme scheme of the original poem. Moreover, the names of the birds are kept in their Germanic names, and there are no signs of Hebrew or Aramaic words throughout the translation. In some cases, this reflects the fact that many bird names are common in both German and Yiddish. For example, the turtledove is “türteltaub”³⁸ in the original and “טורטלטיוב”³⁹ in the translation. Similarly, the bat⁴⁰ is “fledermauß”⁴¹ in the original and “ולעדן מויז”⁴² in the translation. However, this adherence to the language of the original also holds true in the cases of names that seem less obvious, or more archaic. One such example is the mention of parrots. Sachs uses two different words for parrots, both of which also appear in the translation. The first is *papagey*⁴³ (in the Yiddish translation: פאפיגאיי),⁴⁴ which, during the sixteenth century, was already typical term.⁴⁵ The second is the more archaic *sittich*⁴⁶ (זיטיק).⁴⁷ In both cases the Yiddish translation follows Sachs’ terminology.

Despite the clear proximity between the source and the Jewish translation/transliteration, a comparison between the two does reveal a few minor changes. In Sachs’ poem, the raven explains to the speaker that he and the other birds can talk with him, because this is their special holiday, and therefore Jupiter gave them the ability to speak.⁴⁸ The Yiddish version skips the two lines dedicated to the explanation. In this version, no reason is given for the raven’s miraculous ability to speak with humans. This phenomenon reflects a relatively common tendency to “domesticate” translated texts in Yiddish from the period by changing terminology that refers to non-Jewish, (i.e. Christian or pagan) concepts.⁴⁹

Other important differences between the German source and its Yiddish translation appear in the opening and closing lines of the poem. Hans Sachs’ *Das Regiment der anderhalb bundert Vögel* opens with the poet, the speaker in the story, who invites his audience to hear the wonderful thing that happened to him (“Nun höret wunder-fremde mär/ Die ich erfur on all gefär”).⁵⁰ The

³⁷ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 322.

³⁸ “Die türteltauß thet trawig klagen“ [The turtledove sadly moaned] (Sachs, *Das Regiment Der Anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p.6).

³⁹ “דינאן טורטלטיוב טעט טראיעריג קלגן” (Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 324).

⁴⁰ The Bat appears also in *Ein Krutzweilig Gedicht*, see *Ein Krutzweilig Gedicht, von Namen, Art Und Natur Aller Vögel*, p. 21. And see also

⁴¹ “Mit dem hofgsind das nachtmal het/ Ein fledermauß in leuchten thet“ [With the servants of this dinner/ Shined a bat] (Sachs, *Das Regiment Der Anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p. 6).

⁴² “מיט דעם הוב גוינד דש נכט מול העט/ איין ולעדן מויז אום לייכטן טעט” (Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 324).

⁴³ Sachs, *Das Regiment Der Anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 321. It is important to mention that Uri ben Shimon writes on the manuscript the word פאפיגאל, but marks it as a mistake and writes on the gloss the word פאפיגאיי instead.

⁴⁵ See Suolahti, *Die Deutschen Vogelnamen*, p. 1–2.

⁴⁶ Sachs, *Das Regiment Der Anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 321.

⁴⁸ “Wann heut hab wir das götlich Fest/ Jupiters der uns reden lest” [Because today we have a divine celebration of/ Jupiter (he) has let us speak].

⁴⁹ See for example Claudia Rosenzweig’s discussion on the translation methods of Elye Bokher in Bovo d’Antona: Claudia Rosenzweig, ‘The Widow of Ephesus. Yiddish Rewriting and a Hypothesis on Jewish Clandestine Forms of Reading’, *Aschkenaz* 1, no. 25 (2015) 98–99; Claudia Rosenzweig, *Bovo d’Antona by Elye Bokher: A Yiddish Romance: A Critical Edition with Commentary*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture; v. 49 (Leiden, 2015) 176–188. And see also: Iris Idelson-Shein, *Jewish Translation in Early Modern Europe: Between the Bridge and the Barricade* (Philadelphia, Forthcoming) Chapter 3. The practice of changing the names of Greek and Roman gods can be found also in later Maskilic translation into Hebrew. See for example David Zamosc’s translation of Johann Gottfried von Herder’s ‘Das Kind der Sorge,’ which appeared in *Agudat shoshanim* (Breslau, 1827) and was recently discovered by Iris Idelson-Shein. For details: Iris Idelson-Shein, #576, “Ha-yeled ve-ha-de’agah”, Iris Idelson-Shein, Ahuvia Goren, Magdalena Janosikova, Tamir Karkason, and Yakov Z. Mayer (eds.). “Jewish Translation in Early Modern Europe: A Bibliographic Database.” <https://www.jewtact.com/database> (accessed September 2022).

⁵⁰ Sachs, *Das Regiment Der Anderhalbhundert Vogel*, p. 1.

Yiddish version contains these lines as well,⁵¹ but adds three additional lines, which serve as a new opening to the poem:

איך בין דער ואגעלר רעגמענט
דאריין אנדרהלב הונדרט זענדט
אידער מיט זיינס נמן גנענט.⁵²

[I am *the Birds' Regiment*
Within (me) are a hundred and fifty
Each presented with its own name.]

Curiously, the narrator of these lines is not the poet but the textual composition, that presents itself in the first person. These lines do not appear in any of the sixteenth-century German printed editions of the poem known to us.⁵³ They are the only lines in the poem that are not written in couplets and seem to constitute the translator's original addition to the source. The Yiddish translation also does not contain the last line of Sachs' poem, in which he signs his name and presents himself as the speaker of the poem.⁵⁴

Although these two changes are minor, they emphasize certain features in the text. In its self-presentation, the poem declares that its purpose is to present a hundred and fifty different birds by name, and therefore marks the list of birds as the most important ingredient in the text, much more than the story of the speaker's wonderful experience. Moreover, the identity of the speaker of the poem is less clear, since the name of Hans Sachs does not appear in the Yiddish translation.

The poem in relation to other texts in the codex

The Yiddish translation of *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* is an example of a direct and almost immediate inter-lingual transmission of knowledge in Europe. Uri ben Shimon most likely added the Yiddish translation to his manuscript during the 1540s, which is very close to the first printing of the poem in German (1531). We cannot know who the actual translator of Hans Sachs' poem was—whether Uri translated the poem himself or copied it from another source, already written in Yiddish. We can assume, however, that Uri did not consider the inclusion of the poem exceptional or unique. Other materials in the manuscript are accompanied by a colophon or an introduction noting the importance of the copied text, or its source, but Uri apparently felt no need to make such additions here.⁵⁵ It is just another text, added at the end of the codex, perhaps merely because the copyist found it interesting.

At first glance, the appearance of *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* in Ms. Kaufmann A 520 seems odd. This is the only literary poem in the manuscript, which contains mostly lists, tables and illustrations. The habit of adding short Yiddish texts on the margins or front or back pages of codices is common, and can be seen in the case of Uri Ben Shimon, who added a Yiddish recipe for ink elsewhere in the manuscript.⁵⁶ However, reading Hans Sachs' poem in the context of the entire manuscript suggests some common features between the poem and the other materials that interested Uri ben Shimon, and were characteristic of his intellectual scope. Like the calendric and the grammatical treatises in the manuscript, *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* also provides its audience with a long and elaborate list. As noted above, although the poem suggests a full narrative, told in a first-person voice, most of the piece is dedicated to a long and rhymed list of different birds.

⁵¹ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 320.

⁵² Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 320.

⁵³ See also: Hans Sachs, *Sehr Herrliche Schöne und Warbaffte Gedicht*, vol. 1 (Nuremberg, 1570), p. CCCCXXVa.

⁵⁴ "So spricht Hans Sachs Schumacher" [So spoke Hans Sachs, shoemaker], Sachs p. 7.

⁵⁵ For example: Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 9, 69, 78, 87, 120, 141, 148, 154, 157, 163, 244, 314.

⁵⁶ Ms. Kaufmann A 520, p. 170.

Moreover, through one minor change, the Yiddish version of the poem emphasizes its list-like character even more. In the added three lines at the beginning of the Yiddish transition, the composition declares itself, in the first-person, as a list of one hundred and fifty birds. The text is presented as a list, a piece whose purpose is to present the names of many different birds. In its Yiddish version, *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* functions as another textual piece that reflects Uri's interest in texts that organize knowledge, whether scientific, grammatical, astronomical or biological. The same tendency is also apparent in his well-known copy of the Scroll of *Yibus ha-Avot*, another list-like composition.

Conclusion

This newly discovered evidence of the fact that Jewish readers—or at least, one Jewish reader—were aware of a poem by Hans Sachs almost immediately after its initial publication is particularly interesting in light of the recent emphasis in the study of cultural history on cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge, the role and importance of cultural mediators, and the multiplicity and malleability of cultural identities.⁵⁷ Recent studies in Jewish history have revealed new expressions of knowledge transfer in Ashkenazi Jewish communities in the early modern period, and evidence that contemporary scientific and medical,⁵⁸ religious⁵⁹ and literary⁶⁰ materials were consumed, read and translated in Jewish communities.

Previous scholarly discussions about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Yiddish literature have tried to find evidence of influence between Hans Sachs and Yiddish literary pieces. This newly-found translation of *Das Regiment der anderhalb hundert Vögel* allows us to shift the discussion from the ambiguous notions of general cultural influence towards the study of actual instances of inter-cultural exchange. If previous scholars emphasized the possible connections between Hans Sachs and early Jewish dramatic pieces for Purim, the examination of this piece finds Sachs' poetry in an entirely different literary field, more similar to taxonomic list-like texts than to drama.

This Yiddish translation is an illuminating example of the position of Jewish readers as early modern European readers. The short poem, written by the well-known Protestant Meistersinger, was copied only a few years later in a Yiddish translation. The poem appears next to many other eclectic materials: lists, illustrations, calculations, diagrams and informative materials. It was not copied as an outlier, to be read on a special carnivalistic occasion, but as just another textual piece amongst the many collected over the years by a curious Jewish traveler.

⁵⁷ For example: Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York, 2006); Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, 2006); John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull* (Oxford, 2013); Natalie E. Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, 2012).

⁵⁸ For example: Iris Idelson-Shein, 'Rabbis of the (Scientific) Revolution: Revealing the Hidden Corpus of Early Modern Translations Produced by Jewish Religious Thinkers', *American Historical Review* 126, no. 1 (2021): 54–82; Magdalena Jánošíková, 'United in Scholarship, Divided in Practice: (Re-)Translating Smallpox and Measles for Seventeenth-Century Jews', *Isis* 133, no. 2 (2022): 289–309.

⁵⁹ For example: Rebekka Voß and Marion Aptroot, eds., *Libes Briv (1748/49): Isaak Wetzlars Pietistisches Erneuerungsprogramm des Judentums. Textedition, Übersetzung, Kommentar Und Historische Beiträge* (Hamburg: Buske, 2021); Rebekka Voss, 'A Jewish-Pietist Network: Dialogues between Protestant Missionaries and Yiddish Writers in Eighteenth-Century Germany', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 112, no. 4 (2022): 731–63.

⁶⁰ For example: Marion Aptroot, 'I Know This Book of Mine Will Cause Offence...': A Yiddish Adaptation of Boccaccio's Decameron (Amsterdam 1710)', *Zutot: Perspectives on Jewish Culture* 3 (2003): 152–59; Iris Idelson-Shein, 'Kill the Hen That Crows Like a Cock: Animal Encounters in Old Yiddish', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 71, no. 2 (2020): 321–44.