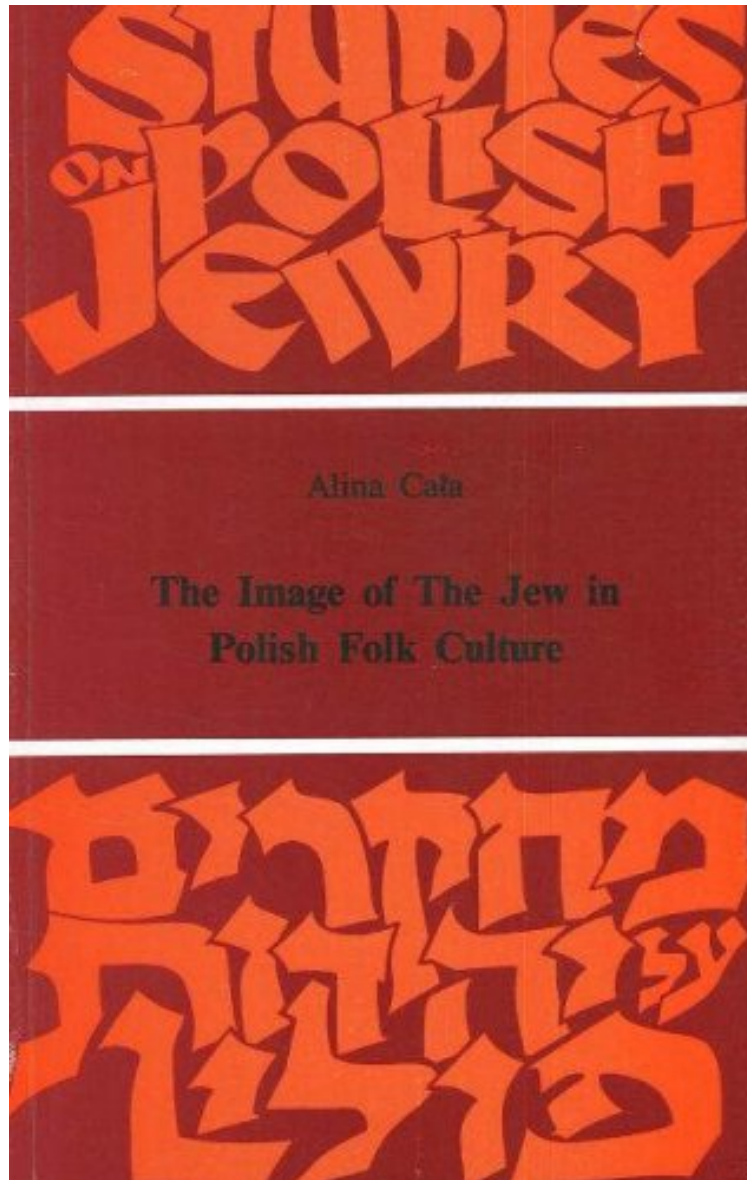


[Mobile ebook] The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture (Studies on Polish Jewry)

The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture (Studies on Polish Jewry)

Alina Cala

*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#5419553 in Books 1995-08-01 Original language: English 5.51 x .71 x 8.46l, #File Name: 9652239003236 pages | File size: 40.Mb

Alina Cala : The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture (Studies on Polish Jewry) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture (Studies on Polish Jewry):

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Examining the Blood Libel, Jews as Christ Killers, "Monuments to Hitler", etc. By Jan Peczkis For a long time, Jews in Poland recognizably held a higher place than the village peasant--that is, most Poles. Notwithstanding the contempt for him as a trader, "The Jew could be in authority both in the rural community and in the nobleman's manor. He was a source of information, gave advice, and acted as go-between." (p. 19). In time, Polish peasants began to compete with Jews in business. During the pre-WWII period, supporters of the economic boycott of Jews sang this ditty: "Don't buy from the Jew, but from your own./ Take a knotty cane, and chase the scabby Jew from Poland./ Why should they be lords in Poland? Let them rather be horses for Arabs in Palestine!" (p. 59). In evaluating this book, which examines Polish attitudes towards pre-WWII Jews, a number of cautions are in order. To begin with, Alina Cala, the author, has verbalized Polonophobic whoppers in various contexts. Her strong Judeocentric bias is obvious in this book. For instance, she would have the reader believe that Poland's Jews did not generally assimilate because they were "not permitted" to do so. (p. 220). This is generally untrue. Jews did not assimilate by choice--because of strong anti-assimilationist tendencies among Jews themselves--for example, the Yiddishist movement. She implicitly denies that Jews shot at Polish forces during the 1920 Polish-Bolshevik (pp. 226-227), even though foreign observers corroborated this fact. Cala's entire approach is questionable. Her survey of 184 interviewees (p. 10) does not include a reproduction of the questionnaire she used, making it impossible to tell if she was not asking leading questions. The people she surveyed all came from southeastern and eastern Poland (p. 9), which are the most backward regions of the nation. Finally, her interviews took place in 1975-1978 and 1984 (p. 9), which means that her interviewees were elderly people decades removed from their experiences with Jews. Since it is human nature to dwell on negative experiences and perceptions more than positive or neutral ones, this delay tends to accentuate the apparent extent and severity of anti-Semitic responses. Could the elderly state of many of the interviewees itself have influenced the nature of their responses to her questions? Even so, it is obvious that peasants had very mixed perceptions of Jews. There often was praise for Jews for such things as their devoutness and their industriousness (e. g., p. 51). Poles valued the wisdom and fairness of certain rabbis. (e. g., p. 147). As for the "Jews are crooks" notion, many of the respondents saw crookedness as a product of the occupations that the Jews had been performing (and now Poles do crookedly) rather than a Jewish vice itself. (pp. 25-28). Quite a few respondents had very positive opinions of the State of Israel and the achievements of its erstwhile mostly-Polish Jews, with some respondents repudiating their earlier belief that Jews do not make good farmers and soldiers. (pp. 105-106). Cala alleges that 53 of her 184 interviewees expressed the opinion that Jews used human blood in their mysterious rites. (p. 128). However, apart from the problem of Cala potentially asking ambiguous or leading questions, these beliefs are not scrutinized. For instance, just how intense were these beliefs? Some Poles used blood-in-Matzoth tales to scare their children. (pp. 56-57). In contrast, 12 respondents said that such stories were untrue (p. 130), with one expressing realization that Jews abhor blood, and that only "bad people" spread such tales. (p. 75). One tale tells of Jews drawing the blood of victims by rolling them inside a barrel containing nails driven into its sides. (p. 129). [Interestingly, when I was a little boy, my aunt told me a similar story, but the perpetrator was a witch, not a Jew.] Jan T. Gross has cited this book, most recently in his GOLDEN HARVEST, to attack Poles. Instead, it is obvious that belief in the blood libel was far from a mainstream opinion among Poles. Pointedly, there is no evidence, certainly none presented by Cala or Gross, that Poles who believed in the Jews' conducting of ritual murder thereby felt authorized or excused to do harm to Jews. Cala takes a literal approach to blood-libel tales. What if they are myths--nonliteral elements intended to verbalize deeper truths, in this case the bitterness of Polish-Jewish economic rivalry? Perhaps "Jews steal our children" is a metaphor for "Jews are depriving us of our future", and "Jews drink our blood" is a metaphor for "Jews are consuming our livelihoods". Jews were not the only targets of blood-theft tales. For instance, some Poles believed that a black "Volga" travelling over the Polish provinces in 1976 was out to get Polish blood for Germans ill with leukemia. (p. 188). In fact, and not mentioned by Cala, blood-theft (and organ-theft) tales occur in the folklores of peoples all over the world. For instance, some Third World peoples believe that westerners consume the blood of, or harvest the organs of, Third World peoples. See the Peczkis review of Bieganski: The Brute Polak Stereotype in Polish-Jewish Relations and American Popular Culture (Jews of Poland). Now consider deicide. Cala alleges that, "Most of the respondents believed that the Jews were responsible for the death of the Son of God." (p. 115). However, she cites no numbers and, again, does not tell how the question was asked. In addition, the degree of presumed responsibility is not differentiated. Were Jews supposed to be completely responsible for the death of Christ, largely so, or only so to a minor extent? Some respondents realized that Jews themselves take credit for the Crucifixion of Christ, as in the Talmud. (p. 113). Pointedly, there is no evidence, certainly none presented by Cala or Gross, that Poles who believed in the Jews' deicide thereby felt authorized or excused to do harm to Jews. In fact, at least some respondents believed that Jews would be forgiven by Christ, at His Second Coming, for having rejected Him. (p. 119). Jews displayed open enmity towards Christianity, as during their Purimshpiels. They rented a Christian for the role of Haman, whom they spat on and beat. (p. 81, 113). This was a common occurrence: See the Peczkis review of Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World). Other than the foregoing, Cala's study is entirely one-sided. Did you know that Jewish prejudices against Poles were as strong as Polish prejudices against Jews, if not more so? Read the extensive, free online book by

Mark Paul, titled: TRADITIONAL JEWISH ATTITUDES TOWARD POLES. Interestingly, Jews had prophecies that foretold their destruction during the Holocaust. One of them was purportedly a Talmudic statement that, when the partridges die out, the Jews will follow. Indeed, the severe 1941-1942 winter killed the partridges. (p. 117). Only 29 respondents believed that the Holocaust was God's punishment for the Jews' sins. (p. 190; Then again, not a few Jews, and rabbis, believed likewise.) Rescue or killing of fugitive Jews was not predicted by attitude towards Jews. Some anti-Semites rescued Jews. Cala realizes that the GL-AL Communist bands killed fugitive Jews despite a professed severe enmity towards anti-Semitism. (p. 212). The "Poles approve of what Hitler did" is a common staple of Polonophobes and of Jewish memoirs. Cala found only, at most, 12 of 184 respondents expressing "approval of the Nazi extermination program." (p. 201). [Were they approving the Holocaust per se, or were they expressing approval of the consequences of the Holocaust, such as being freed from Jewish economic dominance?]. Only 2 respondents expressed the much-mythologized desire that Poles should construct a monument to Hitler. (p. 201).

The subject in the title of this book has not been taken up too often. Polish historiography and ethnography have avoided delving into the problems of Polish-Jewish relations, probably because it was (and still is) an emotional subject, painful for some and irritating to others. The last half-century has not afforded many opportunities for a dispassionate exchange of opinions as the last war brought about the extermination of the Polish Jews and put an end to the discussion once and for all. The history of the towns and economy of Poland cannot be written without discussing the activities of Jews. Closely connected with this problem is the question of the Jew's place in the social hierarchy and consequently - mutual attitudes. This study is an attempt to present the picture of intergroup contacts as it has been preserved in people's memory. It is also an effort to reconstruct the model of behaviours towards a community seen as alien.

Language Notes Text: English (translation) Original Language: Polish