

Jeke

Categories: Other

Name given to German Jews resettled to the ghetto from the West. Among the Eastern Jews, “Jeke” had a pejorative meaning: light irony coupled with a sense of superiority. A “Jeke” is a Western Jew, whose life and attitude have little in common with Jewish tradition, because he has adopted the German lifestyle. His behavior, thinking, morality, and his view of law and customs acceptable in society are very different from those of the Eastern Jews, who are more flexible in their approach to life and know how to adapt to different situations.

In the ghetto, the meaning of “Jeke” has changed a little: from disregard to J compassion. The contrast between the East and the West expressed through the concept of “Jeke” ceased to denote a grotesque character, becoming a cultural reference instead.

Even the phrase “Jeke the fool” or street songs like Jeke mit der teke (The Jeke with a briefcase) are not meant as expressions of contempt. More often this phrase emphasizes that the Western Jew hurts himself by his activities. And it would be better for him to learn orientation from a “local” Eastern Jew.

Oskar Rosenfeld

Resources

Entsiklopedia geto Lodzh, “Yediot beit lohamei ha-getaot,” April 1955, No. 9-10, p. 33.

Encyclopedia, p. 102-103.

Tags

folklore language of the ghetto Jews from Reich and Protectorate

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