Yentl

Several names with the same root *gentil* were used by Jews in various Romance countries. Since the Middle Ages, Gentile was a common name in Italy. Gentel appears in medieval documents from Spain. Migrants from these countries came to the Ottoman Empire and as a result ג׳ינטיליה and ג׳ינטיל were common names in that area. Gentil, Gentile, Gentila and Gentilia appear in medieval sources from southern and northern France, while ינטיל and יינטיל are quoted in Hebrew documents from England dating from the 13th century. Note that English Jews mainly originated from northern France. In old French, the adjective *gentil(l)e* meant *noble*. The use of the similar names in France, Italy and Spain could either be due to migrations between these countries or independent events. The last possibility should not be neglected since the independent creation (or borrowing from local Christians) of a name with such attractive meaning could actually have taken place. It is unclear from what Romance country this name was brought to Germany. In France, before the 11th century the Latin "*G*" before *"e"* and *"i"* was pronounced /g/. During the 11th–12th centuries, after the phonetic shift, the initial sound became /dzh/ before being finally shifted to /zh/ during the 13th century. If Gentil came to Germany before the 11th century from France, then its initial phonetic form likely was /gentil/. Due to the influence of local German-speaking Christians, that form would be transformed to /yentil/.

From the second half of the 13th century onward, the form Yente appears in Christian and Jewish sources. That form is related to the old French adjective *gente (*noble, beautiful), from the same root as *gentille*. The names Genta and Gente, based on the name Yente, were quoted by French medieval documents, as was the form יינטא, present in a document of 1248 from England. Brought to Germany from France by Jewish migrants, this name could enhance its popularity partly due to the existence of the similar name, spelled Jenta, in the corpus of Christians from southern German-speaking areas; cf. the reference to Christian Jenta in 1289. Some authors suggest that Yente resulted as the hypercorrect back formation of Yentl based on the belief that Yentl was a hypocorism using the diminutive suffix *-l*. This theory cannot be valid since at that time the suffix *-l* was not used by Jews yet. The derivation Yente < Yentl could actually have taken place, but much later and in Eastern Europe rather than in Germany. Jewish migrants from Germany brought both Yentl and Yente to the Slavic countries.

Variation scheme
Gentil [first stressed syllable]
    Yentil [shift /g/>/y/]
        Yentl [disappearing of unstressed vowel]
            Yendl [voicing /t/>/d/ between two resonants]
Genta
    Dzhenta [the French shift /g/>/dzh/]
        Dzhente [reduction of unstressed vowel]
    Yente [shift /g/>/y/]
        Yent [apocope].

Derivation scheme
Yentl
    Yente [-e]
    Yentle [-(l)e]
        Yenle [simplification of consonantal cluster]
    Yentli [-li]
    Yentlkhen [-khen]
Yentl, Yente
    Yentlin [-lin]
    Yentkhe [-khe]
    Yentele [-ele]
    Yentke [-ke]
    Yentshe [-tshe]
Yendl
    Yendle [-e]
    Yendkhe [-khe]