

**SCHOLARSHIP AS CULTURAL
REPRESENTATION**

**HUNGARIAN JEWISH FOLKLORE AND
ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE DENOMINATIONAL PRESS
(1884-1920)**

By

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Submitted to

***Central European University
Department of History***

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Central European History.

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Budapest, Hungary

2011.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis and the related research were only possible with the generous help from many people. First and foremost I owe gratitude to my supervisor, Michael Laurence Miller for carefully overlooking my research process and ruthlessly correcting my drafts. I would also like to thank the great work that my second reader, Carsten Wilke did with seemingly endless energy and enthusiasm. I am still obliged to Norbert Gleszer from the University of Szeged for raising my attention to this extremely interesting field of study many years ago.

Librarians at the National Széchényi Library and the library of National Rabbinical Seminary – University of Jewish Studies also deserve credits for making my research easier. Viktor Karády and Karl Hall from Central, European University, Ferenc Laczó (CEU – Friedrich Schiller University, Jena), Marie Crhova and Louise Hecht (Palacky University, Olomouc), Mirjam Thulin (Dubnow Institute of Jewish History, Leipzig), Brigitta Eszter Gantner and Géza Komoróczy (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), András Zima (Rabbinical Seminary, Budapest) provided me with useful suggestions during my work. Lively discussions with friends and fellow colleagues supplied the necessary motivation from time to time to continue my work. I am especially thankful for the support of Cecília Stenszky, Andor Kelenhegyi, Márton Ribáry, Magdaléna Starková, Dejan Lukić, János Tamás Németh and Danielle Morrisette among others. Anikó Molnár handled my administrative issues smoothly and with a lot of patience. Robin Bellers was always ready and helpful to proofread my work. I would also like to say thanks to my family for providing both moral and occasional financial support for me. Both were crucial in successful completion.

Abstract

The thesis deals with the emergence and significance of ethnography and folklore studies in Hungarian Jewish scholarship through folklore publications in the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*. After introducing key terms, like folklore, ethnography and looking over the structure of Jewish intellectual activity in Hungary, it goes on with an analysis concerning the significance and appearance of the term ethnography within traditional Jewish folklore studies. As it looks into the role of this development, it identifies the re-definition of community in a modernizing era as well as an attempt to form a coherent narrative based on European (and mainly German) conceptions of a “universal ethnicity” that does not confront with national or religious identity. Although the creation of the “ethnographic” discourse within Hungarian Jewish intelligentsia was successful, the *Szemle* itself lost its importance in the process for a time in 1919. The study concludes that the folklore-section of the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* was an influential part of the Central European Jewish folklore studies and ethnography thus making the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest one of the field’s recognized institutions.

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I. Introduction

This thesis will discuss ethnography as an aspect of Jewish thought in late dualist Hungary, by analyzing articles from three reviews belonging to different ideological tendencies *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* (Hungarian Jewish Review) and *Egyenlőség* (Equality – the journal founded in 1882 with the editorship of Simon Hevesi, later took over by Miksa Szabolcsi). The choice of topic comes from my interest in the special and also less-researched self-identification and community strategy to use ethnography (primarily as folklore studies) to embrace their cultural heritage in a changing world and society, where traditional life was in a decline. The fact that this side of Modern Jewish Hungarian academic thought, its possible sources and range received considerably low attention in Hungarian Jewish scholarship of the last decades further enforced my interest.¹ An opportunity for a short comparison with the similar attempts and processes of Jewish intellectual life in the surrounding area (Germany, France, England, Galicia, Russia etc.) can also be useful for the contextualization of Hungarian modern Jewish thinking.

My analytic framework presumes, in the first place, a great impact in Hungarian Jewish life from German-speaking territories. This can be justified by the dynamic connections from the first decades of the *Haskalah* and the partially common political framework, as Hungary was a separate but integral part of the Habsburg Empire after 1690. In Germany, the institutions of folklore developed quite early. The interest in oral culture was here primarily a product of the

¹ After the work of Sándor Scheiber: *Folklór és tárgytörténet* (Budapest: MIOK 1975-1984.), only a few authors happened to mention the importance of Jewish Folklore studies in my examined era. The most important contributions of the last two decades are the shorter summaries by Vilmos Voigt: *Magyar, magyarországi, nemzetközi. Történeti folklórisztikai tanulmányok* (Budapest: Universitas 2004), 109-118. a comprehensive study by Marianna Berényi (Marianna Berényi: “A zsidó népélet magyarországi kutatásáról” *Néprajzi Látóhatár* 14. évf. 3-4. szám [2005 március-április] 11-32.). Parts of the folkloristic-ethnographical approach have been recently analyzed by Katalin Fenyves: *Képzelt asszimiláció? Négy zsidó értelmiségi nemzedék önképe* (Budapest: Corvina 2010)

fast industrialization and urbanization starting in the 1830s. We can argue that this new urban lifestyle generated nostalgia for what was left behind in the countryside villages. The discovery of the “peasant” as the aesthetic focus-figure of national culture affected almost all areas of the humanities; its study coalesced into a separate discipline only in the end.²

Though folklore in Central Europe emerged together with nation-concepts in the first half of the nineteenth century, its role changed subsequently. Examining the people’s oral heritage as the part of a national culture was in the beginning a task for literature and linguistics and dealt mostly with the collection and chronological-philological analysis of folk-poetry, folk tales, and other texts.³ By the 1880’s, however, European ethnography approached popular culture in a broader sense, including on the built and material culture of the lower-status population (and, in particular, the peasants) and unifying its study with that of the oral tradition into a complex discipline dealing with folk-culture based on an ethnic (or multiethnic) approach.⁴

As in many other countries, urbanization influenced the Jewish population of Hungary – which was overwhelmingly rural prior to the 1880’s – to a large extent.⁵ At the same time, a second wave of immigration from Eastern Europe reached all of Central Europe after 1850 and provoked everywhere a quite similar range of sentiments among the already established Jewish population from rejection to idealization. Thus folklore had a double role in Jewish society: it meant speaking of one’s own past, as well as of the new immigrants as semi-aliens, that in a way embodied a living part of this past in the present age.⁶

² Paula E. Hyman: “Traditionalism and Village Jews in 19th-Century Western and Central Europe: Local Persistence and Urban Nostalgia.” In: Wertheimer, Jack (ed.): *The Uses of Tradition. Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*. (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America. 1992) 191-201.

³ Pertti Anttonen: *Tradition through Modernity. Postmodernism and the Nation-State in Folklore Scholarship* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. 2005), László Kósa: *A magyar néprajz tudománytörténete*. (Budapest: Osiris 2001.)

⁴ Pertti Anttonen *Tradition through Modernity. op .cit* 123-125.

⁵ In the sense of urbanization, we can also speak of a broader European and European Jewish tendency, the latter was shortly treated by Paula Hyman, “Traditionalism ... op. cit. p. 191-193.

⁶ Steven E. Aschheim: *Brothers and Strangers. The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923*. (Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press 1999), David A. Brenner

Numerous expressions of nineteenth century Jewry manifest a persistent attempt to define Jewish culture according to modern European expectations and values. In this regard I will treat the emergence of Jewish folklore both as a response to modernity and as a consequence of emancipation.⁷

The emergence of folklore studies touches upon a permanently problematic question: what exactly are the subject areas of the discipline? And, more centrally to our topic: what do folklore studies and ethnography mean to these authors within the framework of Jewish tradition?

In the following pages I will focus on six reasons that motivated involvement in folklore research and ethnography: the influence of a model of German Jewry and similar foreign models, the transformation of these models into the framework of Hungarian Neolog ideology, the changing of intellectual environment and a different attitude towards folklore studies after 1890, the background of Hungarian nationalism and its conception of ethnicity together with the options for a political recognition of Judaism, and finally the rabbinic approach of the Jewish tradition which differentiated between the supposed rational and irrational element, legal principle and local custom (מִינהג) inside it. For this I will examine substantial articles and publications concerning the connection of folklore studies, Judaism, and self-identification. Since there are certainly a lot more articles that I can possibly deal on a satisfactory analytical level, certainly the analyzed publications will consist of only the most important sources.

Marketing identities. The invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 1998.)

⁷ As there were many Jews fighting in the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution right from the victory over Josip Jelačić, liberal nationalist sentiment already had its political legitimization by the time of the Emancipation act.

1. The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Practice

In the period that we can now traditionally call the “transformation” of German Jewry, the unifying powers of assimilation and urbanization created a constant need within Jewish communities to redefine their own culture.⁸ The recently most influential scholar of the topic, David Sorkin suggests that this process can be defined as a Jewry’s separate road to becoming a “subculture” on the German scene. Sorkin argues that previous historiography in the field of Jewish emancipation could not reach a neutral position in the historical judgment of the phenomenon and so their perceptions can be used as proof texts to the process itself.⁹ Facing the different and often contradictory meaning of “emancipation” and “assimilation” in an either Nationalist, Liberal, Jewish or Christian frame of reference, Sorkin identifies a two-level process of subculture creation. Jewish enlightenment– somehow against most of the predictions – led to the birth of a separate Jewish “new Bourgeoisie” that viewed its situation through the special Mendelssohnian Haskala and its interpretation of the Jewish and European tradition. In the author’s account, political Haskalah goes hand in hand with a change in cultural thinking: it becomes modern and remains at the same time exclusively Jewish.

Sorkin’s concise and influential work strongly restricts itself to the case of German Jewry in a “narrow sense” (Imperial Germany) and not in any way attempts to generalize the conclusions. Though harsh generalization should of course be avoided, Central European history of the last decades is generally aware of the vivid and distinctive role of German culture in communicating “Western modernism” towards the East – a phenomenon that is especially true to the case of the Jews.¹⁰ Sorkin misses the chance to at least signify this dimension, which invites us to supply a comparison to the Hungarian case, mostly adding the

⁸ Hermann Bausinger: *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.) 1990. 1-33.

⁹ David Sorkin: *The Transformation of German Jewry. 1780-1840*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987.) 4-5.

¹⁰ Nils Roemer: *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press. 2005.)

main elements of cultural development to the well-researched field of political history. Significant contributions to Hungarian Jewish social history by Yehuda Don, Viktor Karády, Michael Silber and Zsuzsa Toronyi¹¹ (just to mention a few) can help to contextualize the historical scene I am working with.

That the interconnectedness of national Jewish cultures plays a great role in our topic is also obvious if we take a look at the immediate circumstances that made folklore appear in the two main journals of the Rabbinical Seminary (*IMIT Yearbook* and *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*).¹² While most of the elder contributors had been trained either at the Berlin Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judenthums, or at the Breslau *Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar*, almost every member of the younger generation – who were more involved in new projects like folklore research – had already been a student of the Hungarian Rabbinical Seminary founded in 1877. Both groups seem to have adopted different approaches in their publications. My thesis will suggest the possibility of a “generation gap” and aims to clarify the way this affected the viewpoint and the approach of Jewish tradition.

When we deal with phenomena connected to Jewish folklore studies we have to be aware of the different handlings of its content and interpretations and, first of all, distinguish Israeli folklore studies from the earlier European Jewish interest. Folklore studies in twentieth-century Israel generally accepts European folklore studies and ethnography as its predecessor and presents it as a conflict-less process of integration to Jewish studies.¹³ In fact the inception of ethnology as a new framework of mainly folklore studies came first as quite

¹¹ Silber, Michael K. (ed.) *Jews in the Hungarian economy* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press 1990.); Viktor Karády: “Jewish Enrollment Patterns in Classical Secondary Education in Old Regime and Inter-war Hungary.” in: Jonathan Frenkel (ed.): *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.) 225-252.; Toronyi, Zsuzsanna: “Történelem és Múzeum” (History and Museum) in: Brigitta E. Gantner– Gábor Schweitzer – József Schweitzer (eds.): *Új idea, új cél keresésére szorítanak bennünket. Tanulmányok a zsidó történetírásról* (Studies on Jewish Historiography) (Budapest: Universitas – Judaica 1999.) 145-170.

¹² The yearbooks and the Szemle are strongly interrelated in the sense of publishers, editors institutional affiliations, however we can see a slight difference in the personal profile of contributors.

¹³ See: Galit Hasan-Rokem: “Jewish Folklore and Ethnography.” in: Martin Goodman, (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002.) 956-974.

contradictory to previous concepts. When rabbi Max Grunwald founded the earliest association for “Jewish ethnography”, he announced in the simultaneously published first volume of his journal that the aim of this enterprise was to start collecting “folk art and folk tradition related to the Jewish religion”. Right in the same year, a call to collect ethnographic data and folklore from Hungarian Jews appeared in the *Szemle*.¹⁴ We can securely suggest that this call motivated by Grunwald’s enterprise.¹⁵

Only two years after the journal *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde* started in Hamburg, a Hungarian linguist and active Jewish community figure, József Balassa, made a similar appeal in the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, the academic quarterly of the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest, proposing the “ethnographical documentation of Hungarian Jewry”. Both the German and Hungarian initiatives provoked a debate among the “Wissenschaft”-related intellectuals, although not for the same reasons. Grunwald suggested an examination of the rabbinical texts in the light of recent Yiddish and German Jewish oral traditions; and when he was searching for the “*Volksgeist*” of the Jews through the multi-language folk-literature attributed to them, he meant to argue in favor of autonomous Jewish culture, Balassa imagined his project differently, as he centered it on the documentation of Jewish folk tradition in the Hungarian Kingdom, which ethnic differences he expected to “disappear” in the fast “magyarization process”. This is in fact a great shift from Grunwald’s original thoughts.

¹⁴ “The society. [...] aspires therefore to the most complete collection of all count on the Jewry and its confession regarding folk traditions and folk art products and and expects all who have interest in the peculiarity of Israel”/„Die Gesellschaft.[...] erstrebt deshalb eine möglichst vollständige **Sammlung aller auf das Judentum und seine Bekenner bezüglichen Volksüberlieferungen und Kunsterzeugnisse** und rechnet hierbei auf die Teilnahme aller die für die Eigenart Israels Sinn und Interesse haben.” (Max Grunwald: Anzeigen”. *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde*. Jahrg. 1. Heft. 1. [1898.] 1. – further referred to as MGJV, emphasis added). See: Cristoph Daxelmüller: “Hundert Jahre jüdische Volkskunde - Dr. Max (Meir) Grunwald und die ‚Gesellschaft für jüdische Volkskunde‘“ *Aschkenas* Jahrg. 9. Heft 1. (1999.) 133-143.; A. Rubin: “Hebrew Folklore and the Problem of Exile.” *Modern Judaism* vol. 25. no. 1. (February 2006.) 62-83.

¹⁵ Marianna Berényi: “A zsidó népélet...” op. cit. 12.

The correspondence of the first ethnographic society in Hamburg arrived in Budapest in the very years in which Hungarian ethnography and folklore research appeared in their own institutions. The “Folklore-section” of the National Museum and the young Ethnographic Society adopted an ethnically pluralistic but somewhat paternalistic program of research among the present and past ethnic groups of the Hungarian Crown and historical Hungary.¹⁶ The society was originally organized by different ethnic sections, which were partly dealing with minority groups such as ethnic Germans or Gypsies. In this sense the enterprise of the Rabbinical Seminary can represent some kind of complementary role to the society, as the latter had no Jewish section due to the official Hungarian definition of Jewry as being purely a religion. Nonetheless, the Hungarian ethnographical journal occasionally published articles and correspondence concerning Jewish topics, and a few Jewish folklorists (like *Sámuel Krausz*, *Mór Klein*, and to some extent *Ábrahám Hochmuth*) sporadically published their findings in the form of studies.

This occasional but persistent cooperation between Jewish centers and the starting remarks of Balassa in the *Szemle* also raise the question of the interrelation of Hungarian politics and Jewish collective identity. The post-emancipatory Neolog standpoint was not simply open to the idea of Magyar ethnic superiority, but even enthusiastic about it. During the celebration of the Hungarian millennium in 1896, Jews were active participants in the processions and rites, while their synagogue sermons (which were given mostly in Hungarian from the 1860s) also reflected upon the celebrations.¹⁷ An overall enthusiasm for the “beneficial assimilation” generates a picture of an environment quite different from that which Sorkin describes in his book. Jews in Germany consisted a smaller portion of total population than in Hungary (around 1% compared to 5,9% in the latter) and the population was urban and to an extent

¹⁶”A [Néprajzi Társaság] célja a magyar állam és a történelmi Magyarország *mai és egykori* népeinek tanulmányozása.” (Pál Hunfalvy: Elnöki megnyitó” [Presidential opening] *Ethnographia* 1. évf. 1. sz. (1889). 2-6.)

¹⁷ Anikó Prepuk: “A zsidóság a Milleniumon” *Századvég*, 5. évf. 16. szám (2000) 89-104.

Germanized already in the first decades of nineteenth century. Had these effects changed totally the nature of folkloric studies in Hungary? This is another important question to be addressed in my thesis.

The problem of the relation between the rabbinical tradition and the “folk habits” appears to be the central question of my inquiry. My sources are publications of rabbinic scholars with a German-Jewish educational background, mostly educated either in the *yeshivot* of Nikolsburg in Moravia and Eisenstadt or in the college for the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin. But at the same time many of them received secular university education and obtained doctorates in humanities before they finished their religious studies and became modern rabbis. Thus, these scholars had a dual – secular and rabbinical – education. In the years when they contributed to the Folklore publications of the *Szemle*, they were mostly young and ambitious intellectuals who brought their enthusiasm about a scholarly interpretation of Jewish tradition from the Moravian and German schools they attended before. Their will to distinguish between what is considered “authentic” and “superstitious” is clear, though the boundaries between the two were unsure or even undefined. The problem is not unique of the Hungarian case. A recent article¹⁸ argues that in the case of Western scholarship, Jewish folklore studies was a key instrument to reconstruct modern rabbinical culture, and so the tropes of the oral and local tradition cannot be separated easily from the term *minhag*.

My thesis will therefore argue that the discourse on folklore in modern Jewish scholarship can be viewed as part of a major strategy to rationalize Judaism especially for internal purposes. Folklore served as a framework that possibly offered a distinguished place for what was labeled irrational in contemporary Jewish tradition. Scholars like Lajos (Ludwig) Blau, Vilmos (Wilhelm) Bacher or Ábrahám Hochmuth were propagators of linguistic and in some

¹⁸ Dina Stein: “Let the ‘People’ Go? The ‘Folk’ and their ‘Lore’ as Tropes in the Reconstruction of Rabbinic Culture.” *Prooftexts*, vol. 29, no. 2. (Spring 2009), 206-241.

sense cultural “magyarization”. And so, when they were publishing Hungarian material discussing Jewish folk habits, “superstitions” or translated songs, this meant not only a scholarly explanation of tradition, but an attempt to make the cultural products and experiences – that were quite often their own - a part of modern Hungarian culture and, by extension, of modern European discourse.

My sources will mostly be articles published in contemporary journals that reached a wider or narrower audience – mostly literate and educated Jews. One obstacle to the research is certainly that we possess only limited information about the context of the publications. However, we can clearly see how the different journals took issue with the same topics, so that we can identify the main lines and patterns of scholarly conception of Jewish folklore at the time. I have neither the intention nor possibility to discuss the whole production of “Hungarian Jewish Ethnography” as one topic.

The method of my work will be textual analysis.¹⁹ Since I am mostly dealing with ethnographical texts, I have to analyze their relevance, make topical subgroups that can alter the style, genre and information provided in the text. On the other hand, I am aware of the fact that although the 1900’s are usually considered an age of literary scholarship, this does not necessarily mean a clear and informative argumentation style. There were no professional ethnographers in that time; and the people who wrote these articles came from diverse backgrounds (from economic journalists to rabbis) which can influence the way they dealt with the supplied data, often derived from their personal memory.

The thesis opens multiple perspectives for future research. I will concentrate on the application of positivist scientific practices as a strategy to forge new community identity manifested in the Hungarian Jewish denominational press. An emerging interest of both sociologists and

¹⁹ See: Paloma Gay y Blasco – Wardle Huon: *How to Read Ethnography*. (London and New York: Routledge. 2008.)

intellectual historians in Jewish history, as observed in interwar Hungary, points to the need for a more detailed research of the previous years. I intend to develop my thesis in this direction.

Despite the significant development made in this field in the past years, inquiries in my topic promise not only new contributions to the field of Hungarian Jewish Studies. I feel it is somehow more important and challenging that I can examine and describe an overall intellectual process's place and importance in Hungary and by this help to clarify my conviction that Hungarian Jewish history was not isolated and the term of "exclusivity" has only limited relevance in this case. An international comparison thus can help placing Hungary on the map of European Jewish Studies.

II. Using Ethnography

1. The Seminary and the founding of Magyar Zsidó Szemle

I am still proud of our Seminary. It was the first among all the institutions of its kind in the country. It still demands the knowledge of the Talmud; in the days of Bloch²⁰ it resembled the old-fashioned yeshivot nowadays it wears modern garb. It trained the seminarians to become a rabbi not only a preacher. If the intellectual activities of the students of American seminaries are greater, it is due to the economic conditions prevailing in the United States. Those institutions have rich sources of support whereas our millionaire coreligionists in Hungary are hardly aware of the existence of Etz Hayyim Association, the benefit society of our seminary. Yet next to the Etz Hada'ath, the tree of knowledge, must stand the Etz Hayyim²¹ the somber pine tree of life, of livelihood with its needle-shaped leaves.²²

These enthusiastic words are from a longer recollection written by the renowned Jewish folklorist, Bertalan Kohlbach in 1918. The institution he was talking about truly reached a renowned place in Europe by then due to its excellent connections with institutions of the kind both in Europe and overseas. His comparison with American rabbinical seminaries – although it might be a bit exaggerating- also signifies the direction and the imagined objective was to reach the status of the modern religious school or even to a Jewish University in Central Europe. In

²⁰ Mózes (Moses) Bloch was the first president of the scholarly board of Budapest Rabbinical Seminary from 1877. Born in Ronsperg (present Pobežovice), Moravia, Bloch had a thorough traditional Talmudic education in Moravian and Upper-Hungarian yeshivot (most importantly in Nagytapolcsány [Topolčany]). Péter Ujvári [ed.]: *Magyar Zsidó Lexikon*. (Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Szemle. 1929.) 129. further referred to as MZsL.

²¹ Reference to the two trees at the Garden of Eden (עֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע – Tree of the knowledge of good and evil and עֵץ חַיִּים – Tree of life) Gen 2:9.

²² Bertalan Kohlbach: "The First Decade" in: Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger (ed.): *The Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest. A Centennial Volume*. (New York: Sepher Hermon Press 1986.) 55-56.

fact the models were no longer Berlin or London but the Hebrew Union College in the United States. In 1918 there was already much to look back at but as the excerpt also signifies there were also emerging financial difficulties that – according to Kohlbach – were the cause of the lack of enthusiasm among Jewish upper-class to fund a community institution. Kohlbach himself was already an established scholar of Jewish folklore in Hungary. At a first glimpse popularity of folkloric studies in a well-known integratory and Hungarian nationalist and religious environment like the Rabbinical Seminary might be surprising. For the reasons we first have to take a closer look on the „roots” of this tree of knowledge.

The most significant center of learning for our case emerged in Breslau. A specific school on historical thought involved in *Wissenschaft*, was the company of intellectuals led by Zacharias Frankel. Often described as being “middle of the road”²³ between religious and secular education. The aim of Frankel’s historical criticism of rabbinical texts and the Bible is to justify God’s presence through modern instruments. The literary and scholarly journal, *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, became an example for Hungarian Jewish intellectual initiatives.²⁴

Modernization thus can be interpreted as being influential in every segment of society and produced a wider range of cultural responses. In addition to traditional Orthodox centers of Northern and Western Hungary, there was an emerging Hasidic influence from the Northeast. This region however was not involved in the religious controversies of the era until the „*psaq bes din*” of Michalovce in 1867. Traditional Western Orthodoxy however was heavily involved in education and depended on its connections to Moravia from where talented young students were

²³ Michael A. Meyer: “Two persistent tensions within *Wissenschaft des Judentums*” *Modern Judaism* vol 24. no. 2. 105.

²⁴ Michael L. Miller: *Rabbis and Revolution. The Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press 2010.) 150-151.

sent to continue their studies on a highest level. In the same time, Moravia was the place where these *bachurim* could meet with secular sciences and could occasionally master German.²⁵

The second source was in fact the influence of the circle of *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* from Germany. This movement was originally founded in 1819 by a group of Jewish intellectuals (including the young Heinrich Heine) who wanted to apply principles of modern literary scholarship and historical science to the Torah and all of the rabbinical texts thus establishing criticism for Jewish tradition. As the circle underwent multiple changes during the following decades it became influential in Jewish education and had an influence both on the forming of Jewish Reform movement. The founding figures of these initiatives were in fact closer to each other than one would assume. Abraham Geiger, who was the most important intellectual figure behind the Breslau school, started out as a *Wissenschaft* scholar and a contributor to the widely utilized journal *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* as well as Zacharias Frankel, the first head of Breslau Seminary. Although there was a great and identifiable contradiction between the traditionalist and religious *Wissenschaft* conducted by Frankel, and critical scientific studies that took place in the liberal *Hochschule für der Wissenschaft des Judenthums* in Berlin.²⁶ These influences together with the earlier effect of the Nikolsburg yeshiva, thoroughly altered the world-view of Hungarian Jewish intellectuals. The case of Nikolsburg might not seem that obvious than Breslau. Although for certain Hungarian scholars from the mid-nineteenth century, Nikosburg was the place when they engaged in

²⁵ One of the well-known examples of this controversy is Me'ir Avraham Munk who strongly opposed Neology as a scholar, but his appreciation of secular studies, like geography or linguistics was so high that he even educated his sons in this manner instead of sending them to yeshiva. See: Katalin Fenyves: *Képzelt asszimiláció? Négy zsidó értelmiségi nemzedék önképe.* (Budapest: Corvina 2010.) 164-165.

²⁶ Frankel had many correspondence with the liberal wing of *Wissenschaft* and especially with Leopold Zunz on their different approaches. Zunz's overwhelmingly critical view on Jewish history and called for its „emancipation from theology”, while Frankel saw the purpose of academic research in discovering the ”divine plan and truth” in Jewish religion and he saw *Wissenschaft* as a useful compulsory tool for traditional Jewish religious study. (Michael A. Meyer: “Two persistent tensions... op.cit.” 105-119.)

thorough secular studies besides traditional religious learning. After yeshivot of Upper Hungary, this was a gate for conducting modern Jewish studies.²⁷

The Rabbinical Seminary was then yet far from its American peers as it is still depended on decreasing funding from the state and occasional donations nonetheless doing its best to keep up with the latest findings and trends in Jewish scholarship and also competing with German speaking seminaries in Berlin or in Breslau.²⁸ On the other hand its close affiliation to Hungarian Neolog community right from the foundation made it a forbidden institution to most Orthodoxy and not only to Haredim yet still enjoying state-support and a renowned place in the Hungarian Jewish Neolog majority as it was the most important place to propose Hungarian patriotism and language among the Jewish religious intelligentsia.

Taking a closer look the affiliation and place of the Budapest Seminary is not at all simple. Kohlbach identifies a simple and successful shift in the first four decades from a traditional 'semi-yeshiva' to a modern theological institution. The reference to the then flourishing Jewish Theological Seminary however also bears connections to the traditional European Jewish scholarship dominated by German Jews. Modern Judaism in America was founded by German immigrants who started to develop their institutions at the earliest stage. Opening the JTS in 1886 was one of the most important landmarks in this process. By 1920 their institutional system became equally influential to its European counterpart.²⁹

Right around this time, Hungarian Neolog movement started to establish itself in a new way. Jewish reformers in Hungary had a traditionally good relation with the political elite since the 1840's and after 1867 the legal emancipation of Jews brought back an agenda that was proposed

²⁷ Meir Avraham Munk, and Ábrahám Hochmuth both attended this yeshiva for years. (Katalin Fenyves: "Képzelt..." op. cit. 53-55.

²⁸ Kinga Frojimovics: *Szétszakadt történelem. Zsidó vallási irányzatok a századfordulón.* (Budapest: Balassi 2008) 95.

²⁹ Arthur Hertzberg: *The Jews in America. Four Centuries of an uneasy Encounter: A History.* (New York: Columbia University Press 1997.) 265-66.

long ago to found a Jewish educational institution. This idea first occurred in 1806 and presented by a Bavarian Jewish *maskil* (a supporter of enlightened Jewish religious reforms) as a plan to educate all of the rabbis of Hungary according to a unified curriculum. This proposition was discussed and rejected many times before by the Hungarian assembly mostly due to financial difficulties within Jewish community. What finally created the opportunity to found the Rabbinical Seminary was a major reconciliation to Budapest Jewish community from king Francis Joseph to compensate the fine he assigned to them in 1850 for helping the Hungarian revolution. On the decision of the community, this money was devoted to establish the Seminary in Budapest. After many debates with the Orthodoxes – who from 1871 formed a separate denomination that was not accepting the Neolog system – the institution opened its gates in 1877.³⁰

In the first few years a steady admission system and scholarly board was established. Students from all over the country met with professors from Budapest, Germany and Moravia – most of them previously attended the Breslau Theological Seminary.³¹ The religious atmosphere there combined with a positivist approach of texts strongly topicized the interests expressed on classes. The rabbinical seminary functioned as a religious college, when the study of Talmud and Sulchan Aruch was part of the curriculum as well as their historical criticism, non-Jewish archeological and historical literature and homiletics. Most of the first wave of students were devoted and enthusiastic to learn Judaism in this modern way and among numerous initiatives they contributed to the foundation of an official academic journal of the Seminary, the Hungarian Jewish Review (*Magyar Zsidó Szemle*) in 1884.³²

³⁰ Kinga Frojimovics: *Szétszakadt történelem...* op. cit. 90-91.

³¹ From the beginning, the Seminary consisted of an upper gymnasium and a college part (commonly referred to as "lower- and upper divisions"). Among others Breslau was the *alma mater* of Wilhelm Bacher, David Kaufmann. Others like József Bánóczy received a classical Hungarian university-education. (Imre Benoschovsky: "The Second Era" in: M. Carmilly-Weinberger (ed.) *The Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest*. 68-92.)

³² Kinga Frojimovics: *Szétszakadt...* op. cit. 92.

The initiators of the periodical were two professors from the Seminary, Vilmos Bacher and József Bánóczy. As every recurrent academic publication of the era, the *Szemle* accepted a large amount of publications from students and other intellectuals (rabbis, teachers, journalists) who were not closely affiliated with the school. The attempt and the scale of the publications already show that the prospective rabbis were also trained to be acceptable as scholars of secular knowledge and thus also fit to attend to other universities.

The *Szemle* resembled German and English Jewish periodicals also in its structure of publications and topical division. In the first issue, the editors included a short statement of objectives that took up the task of establishing an *atelier* of Jewish academics in Budapest:

*We are living together with our compatriots of other faith for almost a thousand years on the soil of this country and the question is whether do they understand us? Thus we are not afraid of their understanding but more of their misunderstanding. Our beliefs, ambitions, objectives and complaints are not avoiding clarity – quite on the contrary: they are desperately trying to find it.*³³

After the emerging anti-Semitic sentiments in Europe, one of the most emphasized duties of the Wissenschaft scholars was to scientifically argue against various accusations against the Jewish religion, explain the seemingly problematic excerpts from the Talmud or simply presenting parts of the tradition that was considered expressing the morality of Judaism. It is clear that the journal was partially directed to non-Jewish intellectuals who were seeking explanations to their questions. This work was especially important for the sentiments raised during the blood-libel of Tiszaeszlár around the Talmud and its supposed „barbarism” were still part of the public speech in Hungary two years after. The founders of *Szemle* thus sought a public organ similar to German Jewish journals that was to effectively argue against these accusations.³⁴

On the other hand, Bacher and Bánóczy also felt the lack of public interest towards Jewish scholarship within the community and thus aimed to make their work an enlightening piece to communicate recent results and topic in Western Jewish studies:

³³ „Olvasóinkhoz” (Editorial) *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* vol. 1. no. 1. (January 1884) 1-2.

³⁴ Nils Roemer: *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. 92-100.

*Our other goal is the practice and distribution of Jewish Studies in commonly accessible way. We all know that this discipline could only rarely find interest so far in the Hungarian academia. Whoever wanted to write anything about Jewish Studies in our country could only rely on foreign literature as well as the interested public. And now here we create the opportunity for the first time to end both anomalies and our journal will be the permanent organ of Jewish Studies that is speaking in Hungarian.*³⁵

In the period after the emancipation linguistic assimilation of Hungarian Jews was accelerated in urban environment and reached certain rural areas as well. The most important Jewish journals – weeklies as well as monthlies – started out in the 1880's in Hungarian language for they could already find sufficient public who spoke Hungarian as a mother tongue. On the other hand, adaptation of Jewish Studies in Hungary was an integrated part of the Neolog 'quest' to show the merit of Jewish culture and present it as an intact part of European civilization and Hungarian culture accordingly. The intellectuals of the Rabbinical Seminary found the way to support these efforts by making their own contribution to Jewish Studies and present it to Hungarians as a modern and understandable cultural phenomenon.³⁶

The editors were communicating in a situation that was perceived as a crisis as they feel the whole situation and proper place of Jewish community in Hungary left undecided and vague even after the emancipation.

*The situation of our **religious government** cannot be more confused, our **social status** is still a subject of attacks and sieges. To what extent is it our fault and to what extent is it a product of circumstances is a question outside of our interest. ... One can be sure, that foundational corrections are necessary here, and the „Magyar Zsidó Szemle's top priority is to make some of these corrections.*³⁷

By emphasizing separation of “religious government” from the somehow weberian term of „social status” the two authors also duplify their perception of the “crisis of Hungarian Jewry”. As almost twenty years passed since the official Emancipation act, the editors still felt a great gap between the social status of Jews and that of other religious denominations. Although post-emancipatory period

³⁵ „Olvasóinkhoz” (editorial) 1.

³⁶ Miklós Konrád: „A neológ zsidóság útkeresése a századfordulón” *Századok* 136. évf. 6. sz. 1335-1370.

³⁷ „Olvasóinkhoz” (editorial) 2. emphasis added.

is presented as one of the most favourable for the two laws defining Hungarian Jewry's basic social and legal status as well as individual and collective rights.³⁸

2. Between History and Folklore Studies

While it is possible to consider the enormous amount of publications in the *Szemle* as a continuous flow, dividing the authors who dealt with folklore studies into two different generations is helpful for technical reasons. This chapter will distinguish a first generation of authors active before the journal's official folklore-section emerged in 1899, and a second generation occurring as authors of the section.

The years after 1867 are an interesting era where optimism and general insecurity mixed to make an interesting and volatile attitude among Jews concerning the future. A founding generation of rabbinic scholars thus could start their careers in Budapest with great state support, albeit in a precarious Jewish religious and educational system.

As the struggle for emancipation in Hungary went hand-in-hand with the struggle for political and legal autonomy of the Hungarian nation from the Habsburg Monarchy, Jews adopted elements from the Hungarian nationalist agenda quite early.³⁹ The first generation that was involved in the foundational period of the Seminary believed to face a "community crisis",⁴⁰ and many Jewish

³⁸ After the Emancipation act of 1867 a half decade of social stability was followed by the Dreyfus-affair and – more importantly – with the 1878 recession and the Tiszaeszlár blood libel. Quite in a contradictory way this still was a hopeful and enthusiastic period according to Jewish intellectuals in Hungary. After these heavy experiences a certain group of Neolog intellectuals took up the mission of achieving the status of „religio recepta” – or acknowledged religion – at the state. This effort brought many newspapers to life including the weekly *Egyenlőség*, and the *Szombati Ujság*. - Nathaniel Katzburg: *Fejezetek az újkori zsidó történelemből Magyarországon*. (Budapest: Osiris 1999.) 123.; Kinga Frojimovics: *Szétszakadt történelem*. op. cit. 230-243.; Jacob Katz: *A House Divided. Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe*. (Hanover NH: Brandeis University Press 2002.).

³⁹ Kinga Frojimovics: *Szétszakadt történelem*. op .cit. 11-15.

⁴⁰ The community crisis of the 1880's is often explained as a process of secularization [Fearing for the imagined results of this process rabbis called the Jewish youth not to turn its back to religious tradition.] Debating these statements Ámin Auspitz, a law school student from Nagyvárad argued that secularization did not begin within the youth of the 1880's: „I should ask here that a youngster who does not meet anything but cold indifference towards religious matters at home, at the house of his parents and who has not forgotten the Hebrew alphabet only because he has to get through his religion classes at elementary school and gymnasium ... then where he

intellectuals saw the young institute as a guarantee of preserving and modernizing post-emancipatory Hungarian Jewish culture – both desirable at the same time. We can distinguish two groups of seminary teachers during the first years: those who returned to Budapest from a Moravian Jewish gymnasium and those who finished their studies in yeshivas of upper Hungary.

Raised in Jewish communities of the Carpathian basin in the time around 1840, the rabbis, teachers, lawyers or journalists of the first two decades in the history of Rabbinical Seminary had met with a long standing and vibrant community life in Moravia. As we already mentioned the influence of the historical-philological model of Wissenschaft in Zacharias Frankel's the Breslau rabbinical seminary there remains the question of how folklore studies and eventually ethnography became part of their fundamental experience? As the question is nearly left untouched,⁴¹ I will approach the problem by examination of original sources.⁴²

Between 1884 and 1899 (when the Folklore-section started) more than eleven longer or shorter studies dealt with popular customs, religious rites and habits that were not part of their philologically-oriented understanding of Judaism. The authors of this first generation mostly bore the influence of the Breslau school. The so-called "Bohemian-Moravian school"⁴³ primarily turned to history in order to explain any part of the Jewish heritage. this is a common characteristic of the third quarter of the 19th century, the age of "historicism" Unlike Abraham Geiger, Leopold Zunz, Zacharias Frankel who was a Bohemian, by the way and their circle trained students who besides

will be supposed to get into closer touch with his religious affiliation? Certainly never at the university or academia." (Ármin Auspitz: "Miért nem vallásos az új nemzedék" *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* 4. évf. [1887.] 431-433. – further referred to as MZsSz) Auspitz' criticism –of the Jewish educational system as being monolithic and old-fashioned also mentions that the religious leaders of Jewish communities are almost all "people of the past", and that it is hard for an ambitious young rabbi or lawyer to ever make it to have a considerable influence in this environment. And thus their only choice is to distance themselves from religion.

⁴¹ On newer considerations of the topic of Jewish folklore studies and ethnography together with their institutionalization in Germany see: Adam Rubin: "Hebrew Folklore..." op. cit. ; Christoph Daxelmüller: "Hundert Jahre jüdische Volkskunde." op. cit.; on Hungarian scholarhsip see: Marianna Berényi: „A zsidó népelet magyarországi kutatásáról.” *Néprajzi Látóhatár* vol. 14. no. 3-4. 11-32.

⁴² Two essential sources can serve as an aid to Hungarian Jewish scholars's and writer's biographical data. The first one is József Szinnyei's general collection (Szinnyei József: *Magyar írók élete és munkái*. [Budapest: Arcanum Adatbázis Kft. 2000.] - <http://mek.niif.hu/03600/03630/> 2011. 05.30.)

⁴³ Most of the founders of *Szemle* got their rabbinical qualification from Moravia either from the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau or from the Nikolsburg yeshiva. (Vilmos Bacher, Dávid Kaufmann, Ábrahám Hochmuth)

learning religious homiletics also got involved in secular studies. The leading figures of the Seminary, like Dávid Kaufmann, Vilmos Bacher, Meyer Kayserling Czech-educated German rabbicame from the Prague Theological Seminary.⁴⁴ For the Hungarian case, there is one more important person in the circle Solomon Rapoport, chief rabbi of Prague. Three later scholars of the Seminary, which I will call the Bohemians, began their work under his guidance and all three were to some extent interested in folklore studies. The first was Ábrahám Hochmuth and the second Mór (Moritz) Klein.⁴⁵ Another significant group of authors consisted of young students, who had just finished their studies in a yeshiva, a gymnasium or both, highly motivated and enthusiastic about unifying their Jewish and secular studies. The fourth distinguishable group that played a significant role in the early times were rabbis from all over Hungary as well as Hungarian-born rabbis officiating in Germany, Austria or Western Europe. This colorful bunch of authors tried to form a network of Jewish intellectuals willing to cooperate in publishing texts of a considerably international interest and quality.

One of the main research areas of the first years was history. This is not a surprising development if we consider the importance of historical studies in the era's academic romanticism and literary scholarship. In addition, after the Emancipation act, the Jewish scholarly elite considered the collecting of historical sources and the writing of monographs as one of its most important tasks. Historians of the era followed guidelines worked out by second generation *Wissenschaft* scholars such as Heinrich Graetz which enabled them to find common ground to Biblical and Hungarian Jewish history. The British-style "popular antiquities" completed an image of Jewish culture that simultaneously gave proofs of continuity (thereby legitimizing the popular interpretation of tradition) and of change (showing that Jews were, at the same time, equal members of Hungarian

⁴⁴ MZsL. 73. (Vilmos Bacher); 456. (Dávid Kaufmann) 457. (Meyer Kayserling)

⁴⁵ MZsL 374. [Ábrahám Hochmuth]; 489. [Mór Klein]; József Szinnyi: Magyar írók élete és munkái. [Budapest: Hornyánszki 1891-1914.; Budapest: Arcanum Adatbázis Kft. 2000.]; <http://mek.niif.hu/03600/03630/html/index.htm>. Klein spent one year in Prague, while Hochmuth was a regular student of the university there.

nationality and culture). Historical identity therefore was paradigmatically justified by continuous research.⁴⁶ Topics of contemporary folklore first appeared in connection with Biblical history transformed by Aggadah, the Talmudic genre of rabbinical narratives and debates on non-legal matters.⁴⁷ The first study written on the subject by Mór Klein can be considered as one of the earliest appearances of folkloristic topics in the journal, followed by many others of its kind.⁴⁸

Following extant definitions by Western Jewish Studies, Klein stated that Aggadah is mostly important for teaching moral values in a commonly understandable form:

*Hebrew words of the holy scriptures served as a comfortable nest to Aggadah. Like the rose of Jericho in tales this unique literary product that roots, flowers and blossoms everywhere in the Biblewhile it holds together joyful events of folk-life as ivy it provides resistant material to the defending fence of the Torah.*⁴⁹

These metaphorically rich sentences were about to describe Aggadah in a way that is commonly understandable. While Klein describes the Torah as the house and Mishnah and Gemara as its fence, Aggadah is the ornament and the “protective material” at the same time. This kind of definition resembles *Wissenschaft* views of rabbinical tradition, where every form of scripture and

⁴⁶ The journal had a section dedicated to the publication of documents from Hungarian Jewish history (*Kútők*), which edited by Sámuel Kohn, historian and then chief rabbi of Budapest. Accordingly, Biblical studies formed the most significant part of the section „*Tudomány*” (Academic publications – not strictly ‘science’ in this context.) Kohn also continuously published his findings concerning the „shared early medieval history” of Hungarians and Jews and about the Sabbatarian sect among the Szeklers in Transylvania in the seventeenth century. Kohn together with Lajos Venetianer, rabbi of Újpest was also a great advocate of the „Khazar-Jewish idea” and linked it with the hometaking of Árpád. (András Zima: „Cult or spirit?...” op. cit. 244-245.; Attila Gidó: *On Transylvanian Jews. An Outline of a Common History*. [Working Papers in Romanian Minority Studies 17.] [Cluj-Napoca: Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2009.]) 9.

⁴⁷ [Roman characters:] „The word "aggadah" (Aramaic, "agada") means primarily the recitation or teaching of Scripture; in a narrower sense it denotes the exegetic amplification of a Biblical passage and the development of a new thought based thereupon. Like the formula "maggid ha-Katub" (= "the Scripture teaches"), frequently found in the ancient writings, the noun "aggadah" (plural, "haggadot") probably had at first a general application, but at an early date was restricted to denote a nonhalakic explanation. (Isidore Singer, J. Theodor: „Midrash Aggadah” In: Cyrus Adler et. al. [eds.] *Jewish Encyclopedia* [New York: Funk and Wagnalls 1901-1906.] further referred to as

JE <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=587&letter=M&search=midrash%20aggadah#1905#ixzz104zGHMpO> – accessed on June 1 2011.) Aggadah was a distinctive subject of examination in Jewish mythological studies from the beginning. (see: Eli Yassif: “Jewish Myth between Text and Ethnography. On Michael Fishbane’s Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking” *Jewish Quarterly Review* vol. 96. [Spring 2006] no. 2. 252. (http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jewish_quarterly_review/v096/96.2yassif.html - accessed June 3. 2011))

⁴⁸ Mór Klein: Az agáda (The Aggadah) *MZsSz* vol. 2. (1885) 1-8.

⁴⁹ „A szentírás héber szava meleg ágyul szolgált ama különleges irodalmi terméknek mely miként a mesebeli jerikói rózsza a szent iratok talaján mindenütt gyökeret ver, virít és gazdag színvegyülekben diszlő bibmókat hajt...s míg egyrészt a népet derűs jelenségeit repkény módjára fonja körül, addig másrészt a tóra „védő kerítéséhez” is szolgáltatja az ellentálló anyagot.” (ibid. 1.)

commentary was treated in the mirror of modern genres. The Aggadic stories, that were originally a way to support arguments in the Gemara debates, are presented here partially as folklore, but also as an integral part of the religious tradition. This categorization resisted the attempt to reduce these phenomena to elements of mere secular culture.

Such attempts were made in Germany. Whether one calls it “Jewish renaissance” or “cultural turn”, the discovery of Jewish visual and textual heritage and its study with the methodology of nineteenth-century history or archeology undoubtedly served a double purpose. On the one hand, it was part of larger attempt to “modernize” community life, religious practice and Judaism itself, understood then as a cultural phenomenon. On the other hand, it assured to memory its distinctive role even inside the new strategies. The “mitzvah of nostalgia”⁵⁰ was born. It produced well illustrated accounts such as Kohut’s book on Jewish built memories in Germany, the movement for the preservation of the *Judengasse* in Frankfurt-am-Main, and many historical societies.⁵¹

In the Hungarian case, Jewish population was overwhelmingly rural before the mid-nineteenth century, with only a few “traditional” Jewish urban settlements in the western part of the country. The memories to be processed were mostly connected to village-life. But before these processes even started, a dual perception of cultural memory can already be discovered in their previous works. The way how Jews conceptualized time in the modern world reflects on the change of their memory system too. Aggadah and rabbinical tradition in general came to be understood more and more in a dual system, as emphasizing the distant origin of the tradition and its timelessness at the same time.⁵² When Mór Klein tries to give a modern and short explanation of why Aggadah is important, he reflects on a time concept that does not seem linear and positivist at all: it is certainly linear, as it implies accumulation in time, but it relies on non-hierarchic and anonymous creation.

⁵⁰ Arnold Eisen: *Rethinking Modern Judaism. Ritual, Commandment, Community*. (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press 1998.) 156-187.

⁵¹ Nils Roemer: *German Jewish...* op. cit.

⁵² Nils Roemer: „Between hope and despair. Conceptions of time and the German-Jewish experience in the nineteenth century.” *Jewish History* 14. (2000.) 345-363.

*The Aggadah reminds us of a world-renowned dome, which is built continuously through the centuries, and from certain parts of it we can conclude the talent and taste of its makers. The mastermind who built it and the brickmaker who supplied raw material for it in this sense are equally important.*⁵³

So Aggadah is at the same time “a dome” of authoritative moral teachings and an model of equality based on proficiency. Its time-related and timeless specialties are equally important: the first supplies the authoritative legitimacy to the otherwise rightful moral teaching it includes. The reason why this collection of tales from the Talmud was reintroduced into Jewish scholarship is almost obvious. Originally published in 1863, Ernest Renan’s *The Life of Jesus* attempted a complete reappraisal of Christianity and – as it turned out – of Judaism too. Renan was the first to formulate the thoughts about Jesus that now may seem quite obvious to us:– Coming from the Jewish tradition, he can be viewed as a Jew and as a father of Christianity at the same time.⁵⁴ Klein mentions Renan as the one who first called Jesus an “aggadist” insisting on his moral teaching with the help of stories.⁵⁵ Renan – just as the less known Richard Andree and his *Volkskunde der Juden* published in 1881⁵⁶ – was foundational when he assumed the existence of a separate Jewish cultural discourse. Traditionally well-known yet neglected sources such as the Aggadah gained quite an importance in these times.⁵⁷

However ethnography and historic approach (*Kulturgeschichte*) were were two very different approaches to tradition. Whereas Graetz, Krochmal and *Wissenschaft* in general treated it as a sub-discipline of history, other authors thought differently, most significantly Adolf Jellinek, the

⁵³ “Az Agáda egy világra szóló dómra emlékeztet, melyen századok során át építettek, s melynek egyes részei következtetés engednek vonni az építészek tehetségére és műízlésére, része van benne úgy a lángésznek mely a tervet megállapította éppúgy, mint a téglavetőnek ki a nyersanyagot szolgáltatotta.” (Mór Klein: Az Agáda. op. cit. 4.)

⁵⁴ In his own words: “Undoubtedly Jesus emanates from Judaism but he emanates from it as Socrates emanated from the schools of the Sophists, as Luther emanated from the Middle Ages, like Lamennais from Catholicism, like Rousseau from the eighteenth century. A man belongs to his race and his age even when he reacts against his race and his age.” (Ernest Renan: *The Life of Jesus. [The Origins of Christianity I.]* [New York: C. W. Dillingham Publisher 1890 - <http://books.google.com/books?id=yX-ftbY4oXcC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false> – accessed June 3. 2011.] 373.)

⁵⁵ “Renan respects the influence of Aggadah so much, that he identifies it as the main source of Jesus’s inspiration and considers him, besides the authors of apocalypses, and apocrypha, as an aggadist.” (Mór Klein: “Az Agáda” op. cit. 3.)

⁵⁶ Richard Andrees: *Zur Volkskunde der Juden*. (Bielefeld – Leipzig: Velhagen&Klasing 1881.) (electronic edition: Frankfurt am Main: Univ-bibliothek 2010. <http://www.judaica-frankfurt.de/id/893757>)

⁵⁷ As Klein observed, many among his colleagues dealt with this source matter around the 1880s; he gave Zunz, Krochmal, Rapoport, Jellinek, and Graetz, among others, as examples (Mór Klein: “Az Agáda I.” op .cit. 3.)

moderately reformist preacher of Vienna-Leopoldstadt Tempel. His already mentioned work presenting the “Jewish tribe” as an integral part of the German nation in general reached a wide audience in Europe. His definition of tribe (*Stamm*) in relation with and distinction from people (*Volk*) is expressed in his main work as follows:

*Judgments about the meaning and the uniqueness of peoples and tribes must rest on this unique and secure foundation, and be subjects to hypothetic discretion, also, the sympathies and antipathies are to be abandoned and have to give their way to the dignity of scientific evidence.*⁵⁸

Positivist definitions and methodology are backed with a strong reference at Jellinek. His mentioning of the Jewish tribe, that was later used by Graetz but only when discussing ancient times, brings up the issue of timelessness once again. Proposal for a Jewish tribe is not simply a reutilization of an ancient concept; it tended to justify Jewish equality not only legally but in terms of the most exact nature sciences. As German nationalist discourse admitted separately coexisting tribes, Jellinek sought inclusion in the German *nation* as a distinctive Jewish *tribe*:

*What are those sources that the ethnographic researcher can use in order to apprehend and portray a tribe in its innermost core with the same certainty, what are those experiments in natural sciences that can ? These are language, religion, literature, historical developments, character traits and customs.*⁵⁹

Although Jellinek was ever praised and appreciated in the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, his ideas firstly about the rejection of subjective Romanticism, secondly about the cultural-ethnic definition of his Jewish tribe stood far from the self-definition of Hungarian neology and the rabbinical Seminary as “Hungarians of the Israelite (or Mosaic) faith”. Any kind of examination of their own “*Charakterzüge und Sitten*” in the above mentioned form would have been surprising in this

⁵⁸ „Auch die Urtheile über die Bedeutung und die Eigentümlichkeiten von Völkern und Stämmen müssen auf dieser einzigen sichern Grundlage sich erheben, und dürfen nicht mehr dem hypothetischen Belieben, den Sympathien und Antipathien preisgegeben sein, sollen sie auf die Würde wissenschaftlicher Evidenz Anspruch machen können” (Adolf Jellinek: *Der jüdische Stamm. Ethnographische Studien. [Studien und Skizzen I.]* [Wien: Herzfeld&Bauer, 1869,— Frankfurt am Main: Uni-Bibliothek 2008. <http://www.judaica-frankfurt.de/content/titleinfo/275091> [accessed on June 2. 2011]) 4.

⁵⁹ „Welches ist nämlich der Stoff, den der Ethnographische Forscher benutzen kann um einen Stamm mit jener Sicherheit, welche Experimente in der Naturwissenschaft] nach dessen wahren und innerstem Kern zu erfassen und zu schildern? Die Sprache, die Religion, das Schriftthum, die geschichtliche Entwicklung, die Charakterzüge und die Sitten.” (Adolf Jellinek: *Der Jüdische Stamm...* op. cit. 5-6.)

environment. Nonetheless, Jellinek received an extended necrolog in the first issue of the 1894 volume.⁶⁰

The author filled most of the space by describing the rich religious and active political life of the passed rabbi of Vienna-Leopoldstadt emphasizing the fact that though he was a reform-rabbi, he reached a common understanding with other Jewish denominations. His most famous and celebrated work however only received a few lines in the article:

*His work of lasting merit, the “Jüdischer Stamm” (sic!) is a real monument of ethnographical presentation, to this belongs “Der jüdische Stamm in nichtjüdischen Sprichwörtern” (The Jewish tribe in non-Jewish proverbs) an outline made with the same security and sharpness, that sheds light on how the most different nations as Germans, French, Spanish, Hungarians, Poles, Russians, Romanians judge the **descendants of ancient Hebrew people**.*⁶¹

It is clear that for rabbis and Jewish scholars in Hungary, Jellinek was important due to his cultural views. But they also regarded his concept of the tribe as only effective and working in Austria, Germany or the Moravian lands and as not applicable to Hungary. Furthermore, Meyer Kayserling, a renowned second-generation *Wissenschaft* scholar,⁶² even replaced Jellinek’s term “tribe” by the expression “descendants of the ancient Hebrew people”. At this point, interest in Jellinek’s work conflicted with the strong belief that ascendance is the only point that Jews in general have in common besides their shared religion. No doubt that Kayserling as a German regarded *Der jüdische Stamm* as an important work, but also very gently distanced himself from the ethnographical thoughts of his Viennese colleague.

⁶⁰ M(eir) Kayserling: „Jellinek Adolf” MZsSz vol 11. (1894.) 1-8.

⁶¹ „Maradandó becsü műve a »Jüdischer Stamm« a mely az ethnographiai előadásnak valóságos monumentuma, ehhez csatlakozik »Der Jüdische Stamm in nicht jüdischer Sprichwörtern« ép oly biztonsággal és élességgel készített rajz, a mely megvilágítja, hogy mily szempontból ítélik meg a régi héberek ivadékait a legkülönbözőbb nemzetek u. m. a németek, francziák, spanyolok, magyarok, lengyelek, oroszok és románok.” (M. Kayserling: „Jellinek...” op. cit. 7. –emphasis added)

⁶² The German-born rabbi (Hannover, 1829) accepted a place as a German preacher in Budapest in 1870. He was involved in the early research of Spanish Jews’ philosophy and religious literature. His outstandingly rich collection on this topic was immediately purchased after his 1909 death by Hebrew Union College, and moved to their library in Cincinnati, Ohio. Today it is part of the collection of American Sephardi Federation at the Center of Jewish History, New York. - Gábor Schweitzer: „Meir Kayserling” In: *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Kayserling_Meir (accessed June 3, 2011).; Cecil Roth: „Meyer Kayserling” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (cited by the Jewish Virtual Library) http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0012_0_10920.html (accessed on June 3 2011)

Despite not accepting directly Jellinek's concepts, this first generation had great interest in the culture definitions made by German Jewish scholars. There were attempts from Neolog intellectuals to interpret the global mission and meaning of Jewry in civilization as a process that all individual Jews can contribute to while still preserving their well-guarded identity as Hungarians both in ethnic and national terms. An 1885 article on "The Cultural Mission of the Jews" clearly signified a serious consideration:

*Following the history of Jewry is particularly interesting for us ... for this people even in the most different eras, in the most distant countries, in its state of happiness and unhappiness, in the East just as in the West always remains the **same people**; its ancient religion, peculiar spirit and original worldview maintains it as one and the same.*⁶³

Similar excerpts could easily be found anywhere, insofar as the author describes Jewry as an intact people that survived centuries not only with an ancient religion but also with a unified worldview and spirit. Though strongly resembling Abraham Geiger's historical view, this quote, due to a Neolog rabbi from Szentes, is even more surprising than the earlier enthusiastic reception of Jellinek's concepts connected to the Jewish tribe. The article however is written in favor of Magyarization. With the then popular work of Mommsen (The Fall of the Roman Empire) and its picture of the Jews as Kardos argued that modernity was the age of a "second hellenization" when the mission of the Jewish people is to assimilate to the language, be a full citizen and a useful part of the accepting nation and in its high cultural state and usefulness help to the given nation's progress. The author criticised that while the famous Calvinist minister, Pál Király translated certain excerpts of Mommsen's work, yet he did not compare the role Jews played in Hungary at the time. The parallel with the age of hellenism seemed obvious to Kardos so much so that he expressed it directly:

⁶³ „Különösen érdekelhet bennünket...a zsidóság történetét végigkísérni, mert ez a nép a legkülönbözőbb korszakokban, a legtávolabb eső országokban, boldog és boldogtalan állapotában, keleten úgy mint nyugaton mindig **ugyanaz a nép** marad, egynek és ugyanannak tartja fenn ősi vallása, egynek és ugyanannak tartja fenn ősi vallása, sajátos szelleme és egyedi világnézete.” (Albert Kardos Dr.: *A zsidók kulturális hivatása*. In: MZsSz vol. 8. [1891] 20.)

*The picture drawn by Mommsen may not be applied so authentically to the picture of German Jews, while it clearly it resembles the features of Hungarian Jews. It especially fits to us, let us write this down proudly, tell it to everyone with self-confidence, and do not get tired of constantly repeating it until makes its way to domestic public opinion, that **just as the Jews of the Hellenic period had a great part in hellenizing the East, the Jews of Hungary have a great part, and will have even greater in the future, in Magyarizing the nationalities living under the rule of Saint Stephen's crown.***⁶⁴

In Hungary and in Europe in general, this era clearly ruled by a discourse of “civilizing missions” that was in most cases an argument in favor of colonization in distant continents, but also often applied to “inner colonization” too. Acknowledging the fact that cca. two thirds of the kingdom’s population were non-Hungarian nationals, Magyar nationalists initiated a large-scale program of language teaching, unified patriotic education in every corner of the country. Hungarian Jewry was willing to help this cause and apparently was the only population identified with the magyarizing policy in some purely non-Hungarian territories (e.g. present Northern Slovakia or Southern Transylvania).⁶⁵

Like in many cases, the Jewish claim to be the “spearhead” of Hungarian liberal nationalist ambitions was a self-conscious response to the emerging Hungarian “empire concept”. This concept built exactly on the above mentioned language assimilation process – certainly overestimating the numeric impact of the Jewish minority – and with some obscure *malthusian* methodology, predicted

⁶⁴ *“...a Mommsen festette rajz talán nem illeszthető oly híven a német zsidóság képére, mint a mennyire a megszólalásig találó a magyar zsidók vonásaira. Különösen talál és ezt írjuk ki büszkén, mondjuk el önérzetesen ismétlésébe pedig soha bele ne fáradjunk mindaddig, amíg az a hazai köztudatban általánosan meg nem gyökerezik **hogyan valamint a hellenkori zsidóknak jelentékeny részük volt a kelet hellenizálásában úgy a magyarországi zsidóságnak is nagy része van és még nagyobb része lesz a szent István koronája alatt élő nemzetiségeknek magyarosításában.**”* (Albert Kardos, Dr.: A zsidóság...” op. cit. 21. – emphasis in the original.)

⁶⁵ The most reliable data we possess come from the 1910 census. Although data from 1880 and 1890 already informed about the languages used in Hungary, they only contained information from the uncertain social group “Bürger”- while 1900 and 1910 data informed on the total population. The figures show a gradual decrease of Hungarian as first language (from 6 403 687 people out of a total population of 13 728 662; in 1880 7 356 874 out of 15 133 494 in 1890 and to 9 938 134 out of 18 214 727 in 1910). The data did not count figures for Croatia and Fiume. In 1880, 58,48% of the Israelites indicated Hungarian as their most commonly used language (second choice is German with 34,56%), whereas in 1910 76,89% of Jews reported to speak Hungarian as the first language (mother tongue) (German: 21,62%; it is notable though that in the time in question, Yiddish was officially regarded as a corrupted dialect of German, and Yiddish first language-speakers were automatically counted among them). Cited by: Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér: *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig.* (Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the Second World War.) (Budapest: Osiris 2006.) 146-147.

not only the Magyarization of the Carpathian basin, but also the “takeover of the Hungarian language and economical power in the streets of Sofia after one decade”.⁶⁶

Hungarian Jewry already had its ambitious yet still open cultural concept and self-identity by the time of the “Jewish renaissance” in Hungary. Cultural elements that have traditionally been rediscovered by German Jewry had their own meaning in the Hungarian context. The Aggadah, Jewish moral and cultural values and a distinctive culture were not only arguments in favor of self-determination but, as I suggest, also fitted into the already known particular cultural mission Hungarian Jews believed to conduct. History thus was not a sufficient justification in this period: as most of the modern cultural concepts Hungarian Jewry needed a historical (in-time) definition as well as social-ethnographical (out-of-time) self-identification. These two elements were intended to convince the new generation – that was presented in the journal as getting in “crisis” by the 1880’s in terms of identity and religiousness.⁶⁷

The “first generation” of the authorship of *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* had a dual commitment: having finished traditional or modern school in Moravia or Germany, they remained open to outer influences, yet they always gave their own, very distinctive framework to the bottom line and to the context.

3. The Ethnographic Conception

The comparison with “hellenism” therefore was not an exaggeration in the era. On the contrary, there were still over-optimistic feelings among Hungarian Jews about the “dual benefits” of

⁶⁶ „Sooner or later, Bulgaria will also have to accept Hungarian supremacy [...] and Hungarian words may soon be heard in Sofia too”. wrote Pál Hoitsy in his book published in 1902. Cited by: Iván Bertényi, ifj.: „A magyar birodalmi gondolatról. Az első világháború előtt.” (Of the Imperial Concept in Hungary. – Before the First World War) *Kommentár* vol. 2. (2007) no. 4. 405-56. [40.]; For earlier concept of the relationship between nobility and Jewry see: William O. McCagg: *Jewish Nobles and Geniuses in Modern Hungary*. (New York: Columbia University Press 1986.) 75-109.

⁶⁷ “For this purpose I would find it appropriate to figure out a way, how to get university- and academy-students more involved into the Jewish community with which thousands of trained and educated members of the society could be taken back to the Jewish case” (Ármin Auspitz: “Miért nem...” op .cit. 433.)

cooperation in legislation, economic and cultural life. After the successfully opposed blood-libel of Tiszaeszlár, these sentiments continued to prosper. Unfortunately, the picture became yet more complex in the 1880's.

From the 1840's Hungarian nobility periodically met with the question of the Jews. Although we can safely state that anti-Jewish sentiments never completely became part of Hungarian public speech before 1920, anti-Judaist and anti-Semitic accusations were maintained by various political parties due to different interests and reasons.⁶⁸ The political debates and scientific opposition to the accusations were fairly reflected by the appearance of a stronger political profile, although it was not the main reason behind the shift towards an ethnographic adaptation. In Europe, the racial-ethnic-psychological distinctions became an intact part of the elite-positivist worldview that slowly spread towards Eastern Europe. It was not the social-political abstractions created by anti-Semites and Christian-Socialists accordingly that troubled Jewish apologetic intellectuals in the first place. It was rather the common collective projections and paired mental images that created the utmost resistance. However, these phenomena and reactions varied in place and their time of occurrence.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The National Anti-Semitic Party was active in the first half of the 1880's, and dissolved shortly after, while the Christian-Social movement started right after the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (see: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html - accessed: June 4. 2011). Party principles were social-conservative and though anti-Jewish sentiments were not in the main focus, their newspapers constantly battled against the „Jewish capital” and „destructive Jewish spirit”. Their most popular paper, *Allam*, became the greatest debating enemy of the Jewish weekly, *Egyenlőség*. These debates escalated around the voting for the reception of Israelite religion in 1895. The political Catholic movement split until 1907, when a liberal, filo-Semitic „Christian Socialist Party” and a continuously anti-Semitic „Catholic People's Party” was formed. – Jenő Gergely: „Bevezetés. A magyarországi pártstruktúra és főbb jellemzői (1867-1990.)” (Introduction. Party-structure and its main characteristics in Hungary between 1867 – 1990.) In: Gyula Mérei – Ferenc Pölöskei (eds.): Magyarországi pártprogramok 1867 - 1919. (Magyarországi pártprogramok I.) – (Hungarian party-programmes between 1867 and 1919.) (Budapest: ELTE – Eötvös Kiadó 2003.) 12-13.

⁶⁹ During the urbanization of Habsburg Lemberg, for instance, Jews concentrated in certain living quarters. Both passers-by and non-Jewish residents shared the preposition that this quarter is „dirty in every manner” and explained this phenomenon specifically with the collective preferences of Jews: “*The most miserable of all streets was the Jewish street...This dirty, shabby, smelly little people (Völkschen) thinks of all of nice, clean Christendom as unclean.*” (Kratzer: Briefe... cited by: Markian Prokopovych: *Habsburg Lemberg. Architecture, Public Space and Politics in the Galician Capital. 1772-1918.* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press 2009. emphasis in the original) 100-101.

These collective perceptions of Jews seemed even more persistent. As prejudices are also part of self-perception, when they are accused of barbarism, usury or filthiness, modern Jewish communities always worked out some response. As a result, the German Jewish scholarly system developed one of its main concerns, which was defence of the community. From retrospect one might be tempted to ask: why did the Jews receive Richard Andrees's work (including a chapter on the race-element within Judaism) in a positive tone, and why did they attack Arthur Rohling savagely? This rhetorical question already suggests that the answer lies in the clear difference between ethnography and contemporary anti-Semitism.⁷⁰ While contemporary modern Jewish circles generally accepted arguments based on ethnicity or race and its shared "collective manners", they strongly rejected any kind of consideration that would paint that picture all black.

Application of race-science and physical anthropology by anti-Semitism did not make the situation of German Jewry any easier. They needed to face these accusations and occasional persecutions – especially around the time of German unification, the heyday of strong national sentiments. Hungary, on the other hand, offered a very different framework. Since the Austro-Hungarian compromise in 1867, Jewry achieved emancipation in Hungary and became a significant part of the educational system, cultural life and commerce. The aura of security, however, was balanced by two groups of problems. First as Jews in Hungary historically lived in rural areas, and villages, mass urbanization and the change of environment demanded a radical reconsideration of self-identity.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Andree's work (*Zur Volkskunde der Juden...* op. cit.) intended to be the concise history and description of world's Jewish people. It builds on the Christian presumptions that Judaism and Jewish people are one intact unit, that though slightly mixing with other races always preserves its peculiar collective traits. Arthur Rohling wrote his little pamphlet entitled *Der Talmudjude* provoking a trial against himself as well as a humiliation as he was expected to argue about the Talmud with the most renowned Jewish rabbis and scholars of the time. (Nils Roemer: *Scholarship...* op. cit. 83-84.)

⁷¹ This was an overall phenomenon in Europe, however only a few people dealt with the nature of the problem as a Hungarian case study. Paula Hyman, describing an earlier period in the history of French Jewry, already supplied us with some suggestions to link interest in ethnographical definitions with shaken lifecycle and environment. In parallel, concentration of traditional Jewish population in Budapest's seventh district also created the non-Jewish image of "mass migration by Ostjuden" with all its well-known narrative elements. (Paula Hyman: *Traditionalism...* op. cit. 196-201.) On a later and more explicit manifestation of these

The second problematic area is strongly related to the first. Jewish intellectuals were already worrying about the “non-religious attitude” of the younger generations. By the 1890’s these processes accelerated. The sole religious self-identity strategy and religious-historical narrative slowly lost influence. A certain circle of non-affiliated Neolog Jews, who were authors and editors of the weekly *Egyenlőség* founded in the year of the Tiszeszlár blood libel, started to set up a plan for a stronger, *Jewish Hungarian* identity and pride. As the circle of the Rabbinical Seminary was simultaneously working in the “Israelite-Hungarian Literature Society”⁷² – also following German examples of *Lesevereine*, soon they became subject of irony and malicious comments from *Egyenlőség*. Its editor, Miksa Szabolcsi and his circle, condemned the “obsolete thoughts” and the “publicly inaccessible scientific language” of the society.⁷³

Apart from lesser debates within the community, years passed in silence on the surface after the Hungarian Millenium celebrations which left a feeling of acceptance and optimism in the Jewish communities of Hungary. In 1896, during a spectacular march through Budapest when Hungarians celebrated the one thousand years of residence in the Carpathian basin, chief rabbi Sámuel Kohn was also present together with the most distinguished members of the community among the *crème de la crème* of Hungarian elite.⁷⁴ Furthermore, after many years of struggle both by the Neolog community and Szabolcsi’s *Egyenlőség*, Parliament voted for the reception of the Israelite faith into

sentiments see Cécile Tormay’s presentation of “Galician boys with locks” as the masses of the Hungarian revolution of 1918. (Cécile Tormay: *Bujdosó könyv. Feljegyzések 1918-19-ből* [Refugee-book. Diaries from 1918-19.] vol. 1. [Budapest: Enter 1998.]) 16.

⁷² On the presence of folklore studies in the yearbook see: Beáta Dömötör: *Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat Évkönyvének Néprajzi vonatkozású írásai*. (Ethnographic works in the Yearbooks of the Israelite Hungarian Literature Society). http://www.vallasforum.hu/tanulmanyok/Domotor_Beata_Az_IMIT_neprajzi_targyu_irasai.pdf - accessed June 4, 2011.

⁷³ In the beginning of 1897 one journalist in the paper still kindly responded to great interest towards the Literature Society’s published books and gave any possible information directly from the president of the society, József Bánóczy. A bit more than two years later, Adolf Soltész however expressed his despair about the dull and immobile society meetings: „*though the assembly hall of the Jewish community was full, but those who were present were mostly scholars and writers. Besides from this picture showed to the outside, the old sleepiness once again lay over the session.*” (Adolf Soltész, Dr.: „Az Izr. Magyar Irodalmi Társulat ülése” (Session of the Israelite Hungarian Literary Society) *Egyenlőség* March 19 1899. 9.

⁷⁴ For more on Millenium celebrations and Jews see: Anikó Prepuk: „A zsidóság a Milleniumon” (Jews at the Millenium) In: *Századvég* vol. 5. (2000) no. 16. 89-104.

the state-protected group of historical religions. This was quite an achievement considering that the system was designed for the protection of Christian churches. Exactly because of this and for the legalization of mixed Jewish-Christian marriages, the act received attacks from two sides: the Catholic Church (and especially the Catholic Christian-Socialists) and the Autonomous Orthodox Jewish community who feared of thousands of apostates marrying non-Jews. Although their presumptions proved unjustified, the attacks forced the Neologs to further enforce their specific identity. In fact, their intellectual elite only partially followed the discourse of *Egyenlőség* about full identification with the Hungarian nation and remaining only distinctive by religion. In the 1890's, there were more and more articles discussing different definitions of being Jewish, or preserving certain non-religious cultural elements. A longer review article treated a book written by Théodule-Armand Ribot, a pioneer of French practical philosophy and physical anthropology – both novelties and curiosities in that time. After presenting Ribot's views on "the Semitic race" and Jews in particular, the anonymous author concluded that:

If religion would have been the only decisive factor in the characteristics of Jewry and Christianity, then we observed quite the contrary of what we actually observe nowadays. Jews are guided by the religion of the Old Testament (religion of the God of vengeance) and the Christians are guided by the Gospels that suggest love and humiliation until the limits in a way that one should offer the other cheek after being slapped on one. Yet the Jews are humble almost to the level of this commandment, while Christians are often haughty, aggressive and extremely rigid in their laws. If the only guiding force would be the faith, Jews should be all very arrogant, while Christians should be humble – although we experience quite the opposite⁷⁵

Our author made this comment after he praised Ribot's proposal for the "embetterment of races" via controlled marriage and expressed his enthusiasm for early eugenics.⁷⁶ Following his words, "the Jewish race is one of the oldest civilized nations which did not mix with any other race".⁷⁷

⁷⁵ "Ha csupán a vallás határozta volna meg a zsidók és keresztények jellemét éppen az ellenkezőjét észleltük volna annak amit tényleg észlelünk. A zsidókat az Ószövetség (a bosszúálló Isten vallása) vezérli. A keresztényeket az evangélium vezérli, mely a szeretetet és az alázatosságot a végtelenségig ajánlja, úgy, hogy másik orcánkat is oda kell nyújtatunk ha az egyiket megütötték. Azonban éppen a zsidók alázatosak, szinte a sajátágos parancsnak való engedelmességig, míg a keresztények gyakran gőgösek, erőszakosak, és mértéktelenül szigorúak törvényeikben. Ha egyedül a hit tanításai formálták volna a népeket, az izraeliták ugyan ám erőszakosak lennének; míg a keresztényeknek alázatosoknak kellene lenniök, holott éppen az ellenkezőjét tapasztaljuk." (Anonym: „A zsidó nép” [The Jewish People] MZsSz vol 14. (1897) 9.

⁷⁶ "[After applying eugenics,] birthrates will be growing and median age will increase. This will necessarily create circumstances very similar to China, only more civilized, with more intelligence, better taste and without

Early utilization of the race-concept by Jewish self-identification is well-researched and documented in the French case. We might regard the article as a late but conscious adaptation of distinctive French ideas. Non-Jewish race-theorists, like the German historian Andree or Ribot, who had not made anti-Semitic comments were thus not only acceptable for scholars in Jewish studies, but served as examples to follow in particular cases. Similarly to their French coreligionists, racial arguments and identity served the purpose of the already mentioned “self-defense”, an improved “shield of Judaism”⁷⁸ against anti-Semites, on their own ground. Although the anonymity of the author suggests that this was already a slippery ground in the 1880’s, we can still regard it as an important place of origin for ethnographical thinking.⁷⁹

Publications like this exemplify most how the intellectual climate was rapidly changing around the older, Romanticist generation of rabbinical scholars. The emergence of ethnographic thought, then more heterogeneous, influenced the *Szemle* and its environment from two sides. The first was the institutionalization of Hungarian ethnography and folklore-studies in 1889, with the founding of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, and by starting their journal, *Ethnographia*, the following year. The journal dedicated many of its articles to explain the main concepts of the discipline that were still very young and therefore not widely acknowledged. While folklore studies had its stable status as a romanticist national discipline, not all of the related researchers understood the usefulness of this new field.⁸⁰

In the second issue of the journal, the folklorist, Lajos Katona, attempted to clarify the society’s aims and views. He used an apologetic tone as he tried to identify the exact place and duty of the

all those awful riots and massacres that make this empire least heavenly of all empires such an ugly place.” (ibid. 8.)

⁷⁷ ibid. 9.

⁷⁸ Expression quoted by Nils Roemer. (Nils Roemer: *Jewish Scholarship...*” op. cit.

⁷⁹ For more on French Jews and race concept consult: Lisa Moses Leff: “Self-definition and Self-defense. Jewish Racial Identity in Nineteenth-century France.” *Jewish History* vol. 19. (2005) no. 1. 7-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20100943> - accessed June 4. 2011.

⁸⁰ In Hungary, the Ethnographic Society greeted with cool reservation. Its purpose, focus and methodology was so unclear that geographer Lajos Lóczy suggested that it is useless, for geography can do any kind of research in that field. (László Kósa: *A magyar néprajz tudománytörténete* [Budapest: Osiris 2001. - <http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/neprajz/magyar-neprajz-080903-91> - accessed June 5 2011.)

discipline, while he strongly differentiated between *ethnology*, *ethnography* and *folklore*. He regarded *ethnology* as an umbrella term, and the two latter as subfields.⁸¹

Among scholars who were previously involved in Jewish folklore studies we can only find one person, Sámuel Krausz, also publishing articles in *Ethnographia*.⁸² Presenting the foundation of Grunwald's society and following a short introduction to the first volume of *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde* in this journal,⁸³ motivated József Balassa to make a similar appeal to Hungarian Jewish public. Another significant scholar who dealt with Jewish folklore, Dávid Kaufmann, became involved in Grunwald's journal quite early as besides being rabbi of Hamburg, he was the only contributor to the first issue of the *Mitteilungen* with a short study on the etymology of Jewish surnames.⁸⁴

As already mentioned, József Balassa issued his call for the first time in the IMIT Yearbook. In it he proposed a collection of similar data from every Jewish community in Hungary based on a unified and simplified questionnaire. Although its enthusiastic tone was not a novelty, Balassa received criticism on his objective, as certain respondents found it too big to deal with, and wrote that this would be a work for generations, not only a single enterprise:

... József Balassa intends to circulate [questionnaires] for the sake of better ethnographical comprehension of Hungarian Jewry. What is more, Balassa would like to achieve goals that cannot be achieved even with the most dedicated will. He would like to enquire on the place of origin of Jews, in what languages did they speak, record sayings, proverbs and what is more, excerpts of conversations, communicate differences in rites, and further stretch the examinations to specific preferences in eating habits, clothing, lifestyle and collect folkloristic material. (Mr. Balassa – if anyone answers – when would you like to read through and

⁸¹ "Folklore therefore fits into the framework of ethnology with the sum of its subjects detailed below. [...] German Volkskunde, that is generally used to express both, in this form it only means only the former, while it can signify the latter in the term **Kunde vom Volke** made as an analogy to expressions like Erdkunde, Pflanzenkunde etc. [...] to folklore only a narrower field of folk-spirit belongs – in fact and firstly the oral tradition." (Lajos Katona: "Ethnographia, ethnologia, folklore." *Ethnographia* vol. 1. [1890] no. 2. 78-79. emphasis in the original.)

⁸² His studies and lesser publications appeared in *Ethnographia* continuously from volume 7. (1896) until volume 22. (1911) with 15 larger or lesser publications.

⁸³ Sámuel Krausz: "Zsidó néprajzi társulat Hamburgban" (Jewish ethnographical society in Hamburg) *Ethnographia* vol 9. (1898) no. 5. 326.

⁸⁴ David Kaufmann: "Zu den jüdischen Namen" *MGJV* (Alte Folge) Jahrg. 1. (1898) Heft 1. 116-120.

process all this material?) Probably even the Hungarian Academy of Sciences does not possess sufficient funding for this.⁸⁵

In his reply in the following year's issue, Balassa explained his motives once again and attempted to give a more details on the collection plan.

*One of the critics (in Magyar Zsidó Szemle) thinks that the work is unnecessary, the other (in Egyenlőség) considers it too big and difficult and that one could barely undertake such an enterprise. The two very contradictory reflections further convinced me of the necessity of my call.*⁸⁶

Oppositions to the project thus remained clearly on a technical level, nevertheless Balassa interpreted them as signs of the lack of knowledge about Jewish popular culture in Hungary. As he argued for a possible fast linguistic and national assimilation into the Hungarian nation in the IMIT Yearbook,⁸⁷ he called this work necessary because of the shortage of time in which these habits could still be observed. His argument not only intended to underline his urge to collect all elements of the distinctive Hungarian Jewish culture, but also a prospective account of “what the Hungarian nation will win” by assimilating Jews in cultural terms. As he suggested, this can also be an exercise to involve the younger generation, local teachers and rabbis into a community activity that is both fruitful and enforces elements of positive identity.

*And we have the strong conviction that the work initiated will not be an effort in vain and every single answer will be one candle to shed light on the recognition of domestic Jewish ethnography, an by this of its past and present.*⁸⁸

After the committee to supervise collective work on ethnography had been founded, there was strong enthusiasm for completing the work. According to annual reports by the committee, many completed questionnaires were returned in the first years.⁸⁹ The results were continuously published

⁸⁵ “...Ez még hagyján, de Balassa sokkal többet akar, mint amit a legbuzgóbb akarat mellett el lehet érni. Honnan jöttek az egyes községekbe a zsidók, mikor, milyen nyelveket beszéltek, szólásokat, közmondásokat, sőt, párbeszéd-töredékeket (Balassa uram mikor akarja mindezt – ha megírják – átolvasni és feldolgozni?) gyűjteni, ritusbeli különbséget feltüntetni, az életmód, étkezési szokások, ruházkodás területeire kiterjeszkedni, folklorisztikus anyagot gyűjteni.” Schwartz Gábor Dr.: “Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat Évkönyve.” (Yearbook of the Israelite-Hungarian Literary Society) MZsSz vol. 16. (1899) 85.

⁸⁶ József Balassa: “A magyar zsidóság néprajza” (Ethnography of the Hungarian Jewry) MZsSz vol 17. (1900) 8.

⁸⁷ “We believe and hope that only a few decades will elapse and Jews living in Hungary will be Hungarians in the terms of language and national sentiments” (József Balassa: “A magyar zsidóság néprajzi felvétele” [Ethnographic registration of Hungarian Jewry] IMIT Évkönyv vol. 6. [1899] 15.

⁸⁸ József Balassa: “A magyar zsidóság néprajza” op. cit. 10.

⁸⁹ Miklós Rékai: “Válasz egy régi felhívásra” (Answer to an old proposal). *Ethnographia* vol. 110. (1999) no. 1. 24-33. See the questionnaire in the appendix.

in the *Szemle* between 1900 and 1904. To collect these in one place, the journal opened its separate section entitled “Folklore”.

4. Writing Hungarian Jewish folklore studies

As the editorship passed from Vilmos Bacher and József Bánóczy to Lajos Blau and Ferenc Mezey⁹⁰ in 1891, a shift in scientific focus followed. As a scholar educated in *oberlander yeshivot*, mainly in Pressburg, and later conducting parallel studies in the Rabbinical Seminary and Budapest University, Blau was a typical representative of scholars of what we can call the “second generation” of the Budapest Seminary. He was also a member of the above mentioned Folklore Committee and, after conducting thorough research on *masoretic* texts, he became interested in biblical folklore quite early.⁹¹

The first appearance of the Folklore-section was in the first issue of 1900 and until its closure in 1919 it published 107 studies and minor publications written by 19 authors.⁹² It normally occupied the last part of the issue and counted only a few pages. As with the form of Grunwald’s journal in the first years its topics covered the oral tradition and mostly published collected proverbs, sayings and poems. Blau occasionally enriched the flow of publications with his own studies. In the first years, the Folklore-section followed the principles of *Wissenschaft* scholars. The *Wissenschaft* typically examined the question of folklore studies as being historical (Biblical folklore and subject-history). According to this viewpoint, every data or element that can be found in the Torah, Talmud

⁹⁰ The latter resigned from his position in 1885, until then the *Szemle* reduced from a monthly to a quarterly publishing frequency under the sole editorship of Blau. (Ludwig [Lajos] Blau – Herman Rosenthal: “Magyar Zsidó Szemle” *JE* <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=63&letter=M&search=wilhelm%20bacher> accessed: June 6, 2011.)

⁹¹ On the former see: Lajos Blau: *Masoretische Untersuchungen*. Strassburg: i. E. K. J. Trübner 1891; Ludwig Blau: “Massoretic Studies” *Jewish Quarterly Review*. vol. 8. no. 2. (January 1896) 343-359.; on the latter: Blau Lajos: “Zsidó bűvészet” (Jewish magical practice) *MZsSz* vol. 13. (1896) 43-53.; “Vázlatok a zsidó varázslásról” (Sketches of Jewish wizardry) *MZsSz* vol. 18. (1901) 69-80.; “Zsidó exorcizmus” (Jewish exorcism) *MZsSz* vol. 19. (1903) 332-338.

⁹² János Oláh: “Zsidó néprajzi írások a Magyar Zsidó Szemlében” (Jewish ethnographical publications in the Hungarian Jewish Review) - <http://www.or-zse.hu/resp/olah2007/olah-neprajz-mtud2007.htm> accessed June 6, 2011.

or *masoretic* texts tells something about ancient folk-life as a subject of examination.⁹³ Subject history, on the other hand, is a historical discipline tracing certain narrative forms to their inception. The latter was a very popular genre in Jewish folklore for a long time due to its peculiar position in Jewish tradition and by referring to a large amount of texts.⁹⁴ We can add that though culture became a frequent term in modern Jewish studies, the Jewish tradition was only barely familiar with this exact expression. Instead of the modern Hebrew world ‘culture’ (תרבות – *tarbut*), popular customs are more frequently identified as *minhagim* - מנהגים. In this regard, they were substantial parts of the *masoretic* tradition. The most appropriate term used by the traditional approach is the “chain of tradition” (שלשלת הקבלה), which imagines a continuous line of customs, beliefs and rites through generations and is the basis of authority in traditional Judaism. The historicism of the *Wissenschaft* challenged this approach by applying historical criticism to these sources and also by using non-Jewish literature for its examination.⁹⁵

The publications of the first years mostly remained within the framework of this historicism while dealing with data from the ethnographic questionnaires. From 1901 onwards sayings and proverbs were continuously published, first by Ábrahám Galgóczi, then many others.⁹⁶ The authors rarely included substantial information on the origin of these collected proverbs, or any other circumstances (e.g. specified informants), therefore it is hard to properly contextualize these publications. Galgóczi, for instance, only included a short introduction to his bi-lingual collection of 138 proverbs. In this, he explained the overall purpose of collecting proverbs but, at the same time, reflected on their linguistic specificities.

⁹³ Asher D. Biemann: “The Problem of the Tradition and Reform in Jewish Renaissance and Renaissancism.” *Jewish Social Studies (New Series)* vol. 8 no 1. (January 2001) 57-87. In the *Szemle*, see e.g.: Sámuel Krausz: “Szamárkultusz” (Donkey-cult) *MZsSz* vol. 17. (1900) 120-128.; Dávid Kaufmann: “A kutya jutalom. Deut 23:29” (The dog-reward. Deut 23:29) *MZsSz* vol. 3. (1886) 107-108.

⁹⁴ Zsuzsanna Toronyi: “Útmutató néprajzi gyűjtemények értelmezéséhez: Zsidó Néprajzi Múzeum” (Guide to the interpretation of ethnographic collections: Museum of Jewish Ethnography) *Néprajzi Értesítő. Annales Musei Ethnographiae* vol. 88. (2007). 49-61.

⁹⁵ Norbert Gleszer – András Zima: “Scheiber Sándor, a Löw-hagyaték gondozója.” (Sándor Scheiber, curator of the Löw-heritage) *Hacofe* vol.2. (2010) no. 1. - <http://www.or-zse.hu/hacofe/vol2/gleszerzima-seiberlow2011.htm> - accessed June 4. 2011.; Assaf Yedidya: “Orthodox reactions to »Wissenschaft des Judentums«” *Modern Judaism* vol. 30. no. 1. (February 2010) 69-94.

⁹⁶ Ábrahám Galgóczi: “Zsidó közmondások” (Jewish proverbs) *MZsSz* vol 18. (1901) 81-87.

[The proverbs] are capable of providing a picture of popular speech manner, and thinking ... sayings in jargon look quite well, if they appear before the reader in Hungarian costume and well-brushed.⁹⁷

He also provided further information about the method of organizing certain findings:

*These excerpts do not show the cream of Jewish wisdom – the collectors put them down as they came into their mind – and we intentionally did not make any selections.*⁹⁸

Galgóczi therefore did not alter his collected questionnaires in any form. He provided notes exclusively to generally unknown expressions. His collection was the first appearance of an otherwise popular published genre of Jewish folklore studies. In his *Jüdischer Sprichwörter*, Jellinek had already dealt with proverbs and sayings concerning Jews in different non-Jewish languages. Grunwald himself started his journal with continuous and numbered publications of this rich material. As we can clearly see from the author's introduction, the content of proverbs was an informative sign of the "folk-spirit" to these researchers.

Although we can only find a limited number of annotated publications in this genre, smaller explanations are often used. Major collectors in the journal were Lipót J. Bató, and Lajos Kun, sometimes with a contribution from Ede Vadász, otherwise the most fruitful author of the history of the Folklore-section. Their explanations tried to contextualize proverbs with parallel Hungarian or Latin examples, and where this was not possible, they shortly explained situations when they were recorded. Original Yiddish expressions appeared in a phonetic Hungarian transcription:

Ven man smirt för man. – (*Lucri bonus est odor ex re qualibet. Juvenalis XIV. 204.* – (*The wheels roll easier if greased*). (Hungarian proverb with a reference to bribery); *Ein goldbeladener Eschel übersteigt die höchsten Berge.* (A donkey stacked with gold climbs the highest mountains. – same reference in German).⁹⁹

This excerpt shows the influence of subject-history as it attempted to trace the possible origins of an element in various forms, but, at the same time, it dealt with contemporary material. What is common in these articles and what allows an interpretation of a unified narrative, is the recognition

⁹⁷ *ibid.* 81.

⁹⁸ *ibid.* 81.

⁹⁹ "*Ven man smirt för man*" – (*Lucri bonus est odor ex re qualibet. Juvenalis XIV. 204*) – (*Könnyebben forog a kerék, ha kenik.*) (*Ein goldbeladener Esel übersteigt die höchsten Berge*). "Lajos Kun: "Zsidó közmondások" (Jewish proverbs) *MZsSz* vol. 19. (1902) 243. proverb no. 336. – comments in non-italic are my own.

of own rural culture that can be explained as part of general popular culture. Parallel to this, it was an attempt to domesticate and rationalize their own culture. Jargon (in the given context this refers to the Yiddish dialect spoken in the northern and northeastern part of Hungary) was still considered inferior to Hungarian. Accordingly, the role of own culture is emphasized by the personal memory references in these publications. There are notes accompanying some published proverbs that gave information about the sources if only in a few words.

Stike jófe besaasz hadróse – (in Upper Hungary, the shames shouts this before the predication (sic!) – Staying silent under the predication is good. *Lav mit e x.* – (In Pápa, children say this if they want to swear on something that is not true [lav and alef are the letters of the word *x* – no in Hebrew]).¹⁰⁰

Accompanying the series of similar proverbs, folk-poetry also appeared quite early in the paper. Popular poems and songs were the specific subject of folklore studies even if they were not strongly connected to the oral or written tradition. The modern influence of popular genre-poetry occasionally infiltrated into the folkloristic publications. Nevertheless its importance was equivalent to other genres. Translations of many songs and poems are mostly published by Arnold Kiss, the later chief-rabbi of Pest. Kiss usually translated Eastern European Yiddish idylls. On the other hand, we can count with the simultaneous appearance of various Hungarian folk-poems in the context of Jewish folk-culture which were translated into Yiddish. The presentation of these interactions was to contribute to the idea of “diffusion” in Hungarian ethnography, with which certain Hungarian folklorists (e.g. János Jankó) attempted to signify the importance of between national folk-cultures.¹⁰¹ The most famous of the collected pieces, “*Szól a kakas már*” was discovered in these years and is still an intact element of Jewish public culture and identity in Hungary nowadays. The common feature in this was that the songs always referred to some aspects of religious thought and life in their Yiddish translation. A possible reason for this can be the probable involvement of

¹⁰⁰ Lajos Kun: “Zsidó közmondások” (Jewish proverbs) op. cit 171.

¹⁰¹ László Kósa: *A magyar néprajz...* op .cit. 123-126.

yeshiva bachurs as the authors of these collected songs. At the same time it signified the aspect of the inseparable sacred and profane in the field of Jewish folk-tradition.

*Forest, Forest how high are you!
My dear rose, how far are you
If I could cut the forest
I would see my dear rose*

*Gólesz, gólesz vi grajsz biszt du,
Sch'ine, sch'ine vi weit biszt du!
War des golesz nicht saj grajsz gewesen,
War de sch'ine nicht saj weit gewesen!*¹⁰²

Folk-poetry therefore not only transformed the lyrics from Hungarian to Yiddish, but also changed the meaning from secular to religious. As parallels between lovers and man's connection with God are common in Jewish tradition, the examples were already present for that.¹⁰³

Following the flow of collected folklore material in the first issue, Blau wrote an editorial to further clarify what his journal could consider for publication and what it could not. After laying down unified rules for transcription from Yiddish or German (every word has to be transcribed to phonetic Hungarian, it is forbidden to "Germanize" any Yiddish phrase) his arguments explained his viewpoint on certain moral issues raised against Jewish folklore studies.

*This work does not oppose any kind of religious convictions and sentiments. We can identify ourselves as Jewish Hungarians or as Hungarian Jews. Can speak a good Hungarian like a civis from Debrecen, or a bad Hungarian like an anti-Semite aristocrat, these do not alter the fact that our fathers partially did not speak Hungarian, and that they used German-Jewish language between themselves.*¹⁰⁴

Blau thus identified the significance of folklore research in acquiring information from the recent past. This approach was similar to what the generation of Simyon An-sky thought about their duty as a researcher and collector. Similarly to earlier Central-European examples, Russian-Jewish

¹⁰² The Yiddish transcription reads: "Goles, goles [living in the diaspora] how hard are you/Sechinah [divine presence], sechinah how far are you/If only the goles were not so hard/If only the sechinah were not so far!" (Miksa Pollák, Dr.: "Zsidó dalok" [Jewish songs] MZsSz vol 18. [1901] 287-289.

¹⁰³ Obviously Hungarian Jewish folklore studies took its part in collecting Yiddish folk songs, which became one of the best documented folk song collections in the world by the end of the twentieth century. (Eva Metzger: "The Lullaby in Yiddish Folk Song." *Jewish Social Studies*. vol. 46. no. 3-4. [Summer-Autumn 1984] 253-262. [253]).

¹⁰⁴ "Ez a tudományos munka nem ütközik semmiféle felfogásokba, és semmiféle érzelmekbe. Vallhatjuk magunkat zsidó magyaroknak és magyar zsidóknak, beszélhetünk magyarul jól, vagy rosszul, mint a debreceni civis vagy mint az antisemita főúr, az mind nem változtat azon a tényen, hogy apáink részben nem beszéltek magyarul, és hogy egymásközt a zsidó-német nyelvet használták." (Lajos Blau: "Tájékoztató" [To whom it may concern] MZsSz vol. 18. [1901.] 147.

ethnographic collecting trips and publications always counted with the image of an intact and contemporary Jewish folk-life with distinctive features as well as observable cultural elements.¹⁰⁵

Blau, as the editor of *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*, had a strong conviction that as culture has to be a part of community identity its image has to emphasise distinctiveness. He still regarded ethnographic material based on a selection, according to the judgment whether it proved irrational or rational in the positivist sense. A further aspect was that of moral values expressed by the texts. Following the *Wissenschaft*, Hungarian Jewish scholars strongly believed in the notion of “folk-spirit” (apparently a heritage of *Herderian* Romanticism) and their selection of texts were sorted to a large extent because of moral decisions. If it seemingly opposed the moral system, they labeled it irrational, while in any other case it was adapted to the rational cultural conception. Though he explained that superstition is not in any sense exclusive to rural culture, and it has to be fought regardless of which social environment it appears in.

*We can defend ourselves from these perilous superstitions if we free them from their fashionable robes to see them in the nudity of past times. However the most reliable shield against every aberration of heart and sense is thinking paired with a faith in God.*¹⁰⁶

According to his study of Jewish sorcery, in which he examined contemporary practices of magical rituals in the light of Jewish traditional texts, he concluded that this was apparently a feminine practice that appeared parallel to many other cultural contexts. This drives our attention to the aspects of folklore in terms of gender. While the authors of this section until 1919 were male without exception, they often treated topics that belonged to traditional duties of Jewish women. As their language differentiated between areas of male and female practices, this line was drawn always somewhere between religious texts and oral, or vernacular language literature.

¹⁰⁵ Russian scholars in folklore studies suggested that ethnography should be handled as an inquiry aimed at the recent past and also helps to raise community (or in their case national) awareness. Simon Dubnow also made this notion part of his concepts later on. (Jeffrey Veidlinger: *Jewish public Culture in the late Russian Empire*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2009.) 256-257.

¹⁰⁶ “E veszedelmes babonák ellen úgy vértézhajjuk fel magunkat, ha divatos köntösükből kivetköztetjük és a múlt idők meztelenségében szemléljük őket. A legbiztosabb páncél azonban a szív és az elme minden eltévlekedésével szemben a gondolkodással párosult Istenhit.” (Lajos Blau: “Vázlatok...” op. cit. 80.)

In Blau's article, we meet the notion of women being more willing to embrace "irrationality". Though he condemned these practices in the present days, he also tried to strongly separate scholarly examination from moral judgment. His argument was that it was useful to know also weaknesses and the immoral part of the past in order to prepare and defend ourselves against it. This was a point which could also be used against anti-Semitic sentiments.¹⁰⁷

The editor's approach also signifies how it was important for the folklore-section right from the very beginning to gain public awareness and reach wider publicity. Though articles on folklore studies and ethnography truly simplified the style of scientific writing, the reduction of the journal issues from 12 to 4 and the fact that Blau remained the sole editor justify our suspicion that quite the contrary happened. An example of this development is the work of Ede Vadász, who contributed to the folklore-section of the journal for seventeen years.¹⁰⁸ First and foremost he was interested in documenting popular customs, and he first published questionnaires responding to Balassa's proposal. In 1904 he published a poem entitled "Eldorado of Hasidim" which he noted he remembered from his childhood, when the rabbi of *Komárom* visited his town.¹⁰⁹

By examining the topic of urban bourgeoisie's custom of awarding certain "bris-tokens" to the circumcision of the newborn male child, Vadász exceeded the rural research scope of contemporary folklore studies, and got into an area that will later be labeled "urban ethnology".¹¹⁰ His usual topics

¹⁰⁷ Nils Roemer: "Scholarship..." op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ Though being a journalist, in traditional Jewish terms, Vadász possessed quite a *mejukhes* (family line of distinctive rabbis). One of his uncles was Ksav Sofer, son of Mose Schreiber the great rabbis of Pozsony (Pressburg). He had family connections with the Fischmann-Lipsitz and Wahrmann families, both influential in Hungarian Jewish life. (János Oláh: "Zsidó néprajzi írások..." op. cit. - <http://www.or-zse.hu/resp/olah2007/olah-neprajz-mtud2007.htm> - accessed June 6, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ "I heard this song in my childhood (around 1852-55) at the age of 10-12 in Balmaz-Ujváros (Hajdú county) when rabbi Azegl Kmarner (Komárom) visited the town. Two sources reminded me to its lyrics, namely Mór Davidovics dr. a Budapest resident originally from Máramaros-Sziget, and the Lorbeer brothers from Munkács eventually three people of a classical origin." (Ede Vadász: "Eldorado of Hasidim." MZsSz vol. 21. [1904] 41.) On the importance of "self-informant authors" see: Jeffrey Veidlinger: Jewish Public Culture... op. cit. 256-258.

¹¹⁰ In his concise publication he wrote that this custom is apparently a Christian adaptation but the tokens bear Hebrew words instead of the original pictures of saints. He also wittily commented on the phenomenon by stating that with the tokens "...wie es sich Christelt so Jüdelte es sich auch." ("As one is baptized so one can be also »Jewtized«.) – Ede Vadász: "A brisz-yetton" MZsSz vol. 27. (1910.) 23-24.

covered certain customs surrounding the *Sukkot* (children's games, the magical practice of single girls with the *esrog*, a specific fruit imported to use only on this holiday).¹¹¹

His publications on customs surrounding childbirth reached a comprehensive and analytical level on the field of contemporary popular culture. As he attempted to treat a phenomenon outside of Hungary, he explained that this was necessary because of the fast decline of Jewish folk-life in Hungary.

*I would like to start this article by emphasizing that during my presentation of often superstitious Jewish customs, I do not rely on the milieu of our Jews. At us, Western Jews, many customs already disappeared due to the fast change of our world-view. Maybe due to the constant »struggle of life«.*¹¹²

Following his expressions, we meet with a changing image of Eastern Jews in ethnographical treatment. As the immigrations from Russia started after 1904, many of the negative sentiments considered forgotten, reemerged in the public space. The dual opposition of “caftan and cravat” generated conflicts between the newly arrived and already resident Jewish and also non-Jewish population. A mass-immigration to America saw Jews reach Germany as a station, and accordingly affected Austria-Hungary, further enforced by a steady and persisting inner immigration of Galician Jewry to Budapest and Vienna.¹¹³ In that time, ethnography and a demonstration of shared tradition could have been a community-strategy to decrease tensions and also a long-term attempt at defining Eastern Jews in terms of modern Jewish cultural phenomena.

Although never discussed in the *Szemle*, the effect of cultural conceptions initiated by the German journal *Ost und West* could have influenced local scholars to some extent.¹¹⁴ In Hungarian Jewish society, there was a strong distinction between Eastern and Western Jews. The difference from the German case is that Hungarian Jewish intellectuals still had their personal memories on traditional

¹¹¹ Ede Vadasz: “Szükesz” (Sukkot) *MZsSz* vol. 25. (1908) 378-381.

¹¹² Ede Vadasz: “Születés körüli szokások” (Customs around childbirth). *MZsSz* vol. 25. 1908, 381.

¹¹³ Steven E. Aschheim: “Brothers and...” op. cit. 145.

¹¹⁴ Founded by the youngest generation of *Wissenschaft*, *Ost und West* was revolutionary in suggesting enforcement of a transnational ethnic identity. The strategy of the *Ost und West* in Germany was to appeal to Western Jews who were sympathetic to the case of Eastern Jews and forge strongly gendered narrative of identity that can unify the “Western parvenu” and the “Eastern intellectual nationalist” (David A. Brenner: *Marketing identities...* op. cit. 21-53; 139-158).

life, and it could not be treated as simple nostalgia. Possible solidarity could find ground in a shared and closer past. In fact, scholars writing about Jewish folklore studies were mostly born and raised in the *Oberland* of an earlier population of mainly Western Jews. And thus their memory and culture always preceded that of the newcomers in terms of presentation.¹¹⁵

Around 1910, we can see a unification process of our discipline. As Hungarian ethnography slowly solidified its structure of institutions after a major reorganization,¹¹⁶ the idea of founding a Jewish Museum in Budapest was proposed in the Yearbook of the Literary Society. The author called for donations regarding any kind of memorabilia for the purpose of a museum that might demonstrate the “cultural distinctiveness” of Hungarian Jewry in the field of archeology, history, religion and ethnography as it could express “proof of spiritual efforts” and “honorable greatness” of the community.¹¹⁷

This notion of distinctive Jewish identity was neither specific, nor new in the field of Jewish cultural discourse. The idea of a representative collection of religious artifacts provoked substantial debates around the Millenium.¹¹⁸ The distinctive sensitivity of the Hungarian Neolog Jewry made it extremely difficult back in the 1890’s to collect anything that exceeded the limits of religious self-identification. In 1910, however, the very same ideas met with full support and met surprisingly limited criticism. In a list of desired subjects of exhibition, the section on ethnology mostly contained religious instruments that at this time were only used by Hasidim and were banned by Neolog religious institutions. The museum-founders’ distinction was further manifested in presenting *oberlander* heritage in the section on religious life, while specific religious instruments of *unterlander* Jewish culture enriched the “Folklore, ethnography” collection.

¹¹⁵ Zsuzsanna Toronyi: “Útmutató...” op. cit. 51-52.

¹¹⁶ After the Society went bankrupt, nature scientist and ethnographer Ottó Herman took over its leadership from Antal Herman in 1892. An enforcement of ethnical nation-concept and a more Hungarian-centered consideration of ethnography followed this change. (László Kósa: *A magyar néprajz...* op. cit. 127-130.)

¹¹⁷ “Felhívás a Zsidó Múzeum ügyében” (Proposal in the case of the Jewish Museum) *IMIT Yearbook* vol 17. (1910). 340-343.

¹¹⁸ Zsuzsanna Toronyi: “Útmutató...” op. cit. 53.

As a steady definition of ethnography settled down with the functioning Jewish Museum by 1911, the *Magyar Zsidó Szemle* published less and less articles on folklore studies and apparently, only two or three permanent contributors remained.¹¹⁹ The topical division therefore narrowed itself exclusively to contemporary popular customs. Though there were less and less publications, they were longer and more informative than the simple data-publications of the 1900's. Publications covered the "Superstitious application of prayers" presenting Talmudic fragments on different profane applications of *Shemone Esre*.¹²⁰ Vadász continued collecting data according to the original plans of the folklore committee. As most of the collectors passed away during the decade, and there were not enough successors willing to continue the work, Vadász was left almost alone in publishing findings about Jewish gastronomy of Hungary, or on specific "Jewish streets" in Budapest.¹²¹ The journal was running out of money and contributors, partially because of the war, and the folklore-section slowly died out and finally ceased to exist in 1919. At the same time however, comprehensive folklore publications were published in the IMIT Yearbook, most often by Bertalan Kohlbach, an influential Neolog rabbi in Temesvár. Though his work never appeared in the *Szemle* prior to 1920, his approach to comprehensive Biblical folklore became decisive in the following years.¹²²

III. Conclusion

It is obvious that much more can be said in this extremely rich field of study. In my thesis I restricted my scope only to the most important material from the journal. As we have seen, the framework of universal ethnicity materialized in descriptions following the rules of the scientific

¹¹⁹ Ede Vadász (1910-1918) Ede Rosenberg (1911) Miksa Weisz (1916). Bernát Mandl (1918) and Izidor Goldberger (1918.)

¹²⁰ Miksa Weisz: „Az ima babonás alkalmazása. Simmus Semóne Eszré” *MZsSz* vol 31 (1914) 54-59.

¹²¹ Ede Vadász: „A zsidó konyhából” (From the Jewish kitchen) *MZsSz* vol. 33. (1916) 50-54.; „Zsidó utcák, zsidó-terek Budapesten” *MZsSz* vol. 33. (1916) 169-173.

¹²² For these studies consult: Bertalan Kohlbach: *A zsidó folklórrol* (On Jewish Folklore studies) edited by: János Oláh. (Budapest: Gabbiano Print, 2007.)

examination of popular culture. This process was a consequence of a rapidly changing environment, society and conflicts of tradition and modern self-identification, a battle of change and continuity.

Whether we examine Jewish historiography, or similar work in other disciplines, it is clear that German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was the primary source of these modern self-identifications, and community strategies. Rabbinical seminaries of Central Europe were the intellectual cradles of interest towards distinctive features of Jewish culture in general. After the founding of Budapest's Rabbinical Seminary, its main example was the religiously conservative 'Theological Seminary' in Breslau led by Zacharias Frankel. We can say without exaggeration that the journal of the Seminary achieved international recognition with its work on the field of Biblical studies, history and folklore studies. The work of Adolf Jellinek, in which he described German Jewry as a characteristic tribe of the nation, also had its effect on the consideration of ethnography in Hungary. As we know, the institutionalization of Hungarian ethnography generated an ambiguous connection with Jewish scholarship. The Rabbinical Seminary had an uncommonly good relation with official academia, as most of its rabbis finished a university degree in humanities simultaneously with their theological studies. Nevertheless, there were still conventional barriers between them. The primarily religious definition of Hungarian Jewry ("Hungarians of the Israelite confession") and related sensitivity made it impossible to include research on Jewish popular culture within the framework of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, which was organized by sections representing nationalities.

Following definitions of this Society, Jewish scholarship also differentiated between the terms folklore and ethnography in the genre of publications. Despite having their recurrent topics, we cannot easily place Jewish ethnography or folklore in Hungarian intellectual history. Articles in the journal reflected on both the notions of *Wissenschaft*, and their own reflections on self-identity.

As I hopefully justified in the chapters above, a significant shift towards a more distinctive cultural image appeared with the second generation of publishers in *Magyar Zsidó Szemle*. Following the

influence of a call by Rabbi Max Grunwald, an attempt to ethnographically register Hungarian Jewry was launched. This led to a change in the image of culture by the end of the 1900's as circles of the Rabbinical Seminary proposed and realized a Hungarian Jewish Museum, with a folklore collection. Influences towards this Jewish universal cultural thought were successfully internalized by Hungarian Jewry and it became both a substantial part of their self identity, and, at the same time, a strategy to follow.

Further research should concentrate on more accurate elaboration of these terms. Jewish ethnography and folklore studies emerged simultaneously everywhere in Central and Eastern-Europe between 1890 and 1910. Elaboration of how the notion of ethnicity made its way into Jewish thinking in Central Europe is yet to be done, and exactly because of reasons and connections with scholarly life an examination like this can also provide new ideas to the research of Hungarian Jewry.

Theodore Herzl once called Hungarian Jewry the “dry bough of Zionism” due to its Conservative attitude. The imagined “Jewish conservatism” in Hungary proves to be true with an examination of Jewish folklore discourses. Though its initiative came from Grunwald, who was partially working outside the *Wissenschaft* and opposed some of their ideas, Hungarian Jewry succeeded to internalize it in a softer and more traditional way. Despite lesser conflicts with Miksa Szabolcsi and others from *Egyenlőség*, their self-definition as “Hungarian by nation, Jewish by religion and culture” managed to receive public recognition. Their rabbinical methodology also raised them on the European level of Jewish Studies. Although their concepts were mostly specific, they also managed to get the interest of international scholars.

The era after the First World War brought substantial changes to the nation-concept, and political situation of post-Trianon Hungary, where their nation concept demanded reformation. Ethnography

and folklore, however, still remained within the circle of the most important fields of Neolog Jewish studies in Hungary. But this would be a prospective subject for another study.

Abbreviations

JE = Jewish Encyclopaedia

IMIT Yearbook = Az Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társulat Évkönyve

MGJV = Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Jüdische Volkskunde

MZsL = Magyar Zsidó Lexikon

MZsSz = Magyar Zsidó Szemle

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Appendix

Questionnaire prepared by the Ethnographic Committee of the Israelite Hungarian Literature Society. (Taken from: Rékai, Miklós: "Válasz egy régi felhívásra" [Answer to an old proposal]. *Ethnographia* vol. 110. (1999) no. 1. 24-25.)

M. N. MUZEUM NÉPRÁZSI OSZÁLYA 78. sz. m. 190		
A felelő neve: _____ lakóhelye: _____ állása: _____ Kelt: _____	KÉRDŐÍV A MAGYARORSZÁGI ZSIDÓSÁG NÉPRÁZSI FELVÉTELE CÉLJÁBÓL Kiadja az IMIT •Folklore bizottsága.	A helység neve: _____ Megye: _____ Járás: _____ Lakosság száma: _____ A zsidó lakosság száma: _____ Milyen vallású a többi lakosság: _____ Milyen nemzetiségű a község lakossága: _____

ÚTBÁIGAZÍTÁSUL.

1. Az egyes kérdésekre adandó feleletek a megfelelő rovatba irandók; ha erre a célra maga a rovat nem elég, a felelet külön lapon is beküldhető, megjegyezve az ív és a kérdés számát.

2. Ha a felelő egyik vagy másik kérdésre kielégítő feleletet nem adhat, az illető rovat üresen hagyandó. Egyáltalán nem kívánjuk, hogy minden egyes felelő minden kérdésre kimerítő feleletet adjon; mindenkitől csak annyi felvilágosítást kérünk, a mennyit adhat.

3. A kitöltött kérdőívet szíveskedjék az IMIT titkári hivatalához címezve Budapestre (VII., Nefelejcs-utca 56. sz.) küldeni. Ugyanott kérhető új kérdőív is.

1. Eredet. Mióta laknak zsidók az illető községben? Honnan vándoroltak oda az első zsidó családok s mely vidékekről szaporodott azóta leginkább a zsidó lakosság? Vannak-e a bevándorlásnak okirattal vagy szájhagyomány-nyal támogatható bizonyítékai? 2. Nyelv. Milyen nyelven beszél a község zsidó lakossága: a) egymás közt, otthon a családi körben; b) a más felekezetű lakossággal érintkezve? Ha a zsidóság nyelvének dialektikus színezete van, meg kell jelölni, hogy milyen: zsidós német, lengyel vagy spanyol zsidó jargon, vagy talán más keveréknelv.	Ha a felelő kedvével foglalkozik a zsidóság nyelvével, gyűjtsön minél több összefüggő szöveget (elbeszélést, tréfát, adomát stb.) a kiejtés hű feltüntetésével. Gyűjtse össze a jargon jellemző sajátosságait, minél több példával megvilágítva. Lehetőleg teljesen összegyűjtendők: a jelenző családi és egyéni nevek, a gúnynevek (egymás közt; más felekezetűekkel szemben és viszont); továbbá a szólások (köszöntések, szidalmak, tréfás mondások, egyes jellemző kifejezések), közmondások. A nyelvi anyag, ha elég gazdag, külön is beküldhető a község megjelölésével.
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3. Ritus. Milyen ritust követ a zsidó lakosság: askenázi, szefárd vagy pedig kevert ritust? Milyen az egyházi szónoklat nyelve? Magyar, mióta az?

4. Babonák. Összegyűjtendők az illető közösség zsidósága körében elterjedt babonák és babonás cselekedetek, lehetőleg híven feljegyezve saját szavaikat. A babonák vonatkozhatnak állatokra s más természeti jelenségekre is és gyakran összefüggnek a mindennapi élet cselekedeteivel. Ide tartozik a varázslás, időjósítás és egyéb babonás jóslás is. — Álmok magyarázata és a velük összefüggő babonák.

5. Szokások. Melyek az illető zsidóság feljegyzésre érdemes szokásai?

Ilyen érdekes szokásokat megfigyelhetünk a mindennapi élet legkülönbözőbb alkalmainak. Figyelembe veendő különösen: a születés, nevelés, gyermeki élet, gyermekjátékok, mulatságok, eljegyzés, menyegző, betegség, haláleset, temetés, halálózás évfordulója. Ünnepi szokások otthon és a templomban.

Részletesen leírandó az illető szokás: a cselekedeteket kísérő szavak híven feljegyzendők.

6. Költészet. Van-e az illető zsidóságnak sajátos költészete? Népdalok (lehetőleg daltanukkal együtt irandók le), purimdalok, gyermekversek, bölcsődalok, jargon-imák, adomák, masal, lácza. Vannak-e magyar nyelvből jargonra fordított költemények? Továbbá mondák és regék, gyermekmesék, állatmesék, szellemekről és ördögökről szóló mesék, helyi mondák.

A népköltészet e termékeinek minél pontosabb és teljesebb összegyűjtését kérjük, mindig ügyelve a szöveg hű és pontos feljegyzésére. (Egyes értékesebb gyűjtések kiadásáról az IMIT igazgatósága esetleg külön is gondoskodni fog.)

7. Tárgyi néprajz. Kérjük az illető zsidóság körében használatos néprajzi tárgyak leírását. Ide tartozik a népviselet (ruházat), házi berendezés, sajátos bútorkészítések és szerszámok, játékszerek. Kérjük a sajátos ételek felsorolását is, lehetőleg készítésük módjának leírásával.

A néprajzi tárgyak egy-egy jellemző példányának beküldését is szívesen fogadjuk. Érdekesebb és fontosabb tárgyak beszerzéséről vagy lefényképeztetéséről az IMIT igazgatósága alkalom adtán gondoskodni fog.