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The Modernization of the Jewish Community of Brody from the Second Half of the 19th Century

This study traces the processes of modernization in the Jewish community of Brody from the second half of the 19th century until the beginning of WWI. Special emphasis is placed on the social and cultural changes within the community as compared to general regional trends, with particular attention to Lviv as the central city in the region and as the one which most clearly exhibits the formation of the basic political, social, and cultural trends which characterized the process of modernisation in Galicia.

The acculturation process of Galicia's Jewish populace into the general Polish environment received further impetus after Galicia gained autonomy 1867, due to proactive educational, political, and cultural initiatives undertaken by the Poles. At the same time, Jewish intellectuals who were carriers of German culture in Galician communities diminished in numbers. However, these processes were neither uniform nor single-staged ones. The Polonisation of the Brody Jewish community, for instance, progressed much more slowly than it did in other Eastern and Western Galician towns, and engendered more resistance. The Brody Town Gymnasium, for instance, was the last one to adopt Polish as its language of teaching – the last German language maturity examination took place there in 1914.

As a result of the disintegration of traditional society, the Jews of Brody – similarly to the Jewish community of Galicia as a whole – were confronted, in the second half of the 19th century, with an expanding array of different identities to relate to. Thus, in the late 19th century, various ideological trends emerged there, such as national movements, which provided an opportunity for the identification of Jews with both the Polish nation and Jewish national movements (Zionism in particular); Socialism; and Orthodoxy, which outlined the ideological premises of a traditional Jewish society.

The personal biographies of three representatives of the Brody Jewish community of the same generation may be referred to as an example of the different processes of modernisation: Josef Roth, Nathan Michael Gelber, and Hermina Naglerowa. At the same time that Roth gained popularity as an author and as one of the creators of the myth of the Habsburgian reign as a golden epoch in the history of the Jewish people, historian Nathan Michael Gelber adopted the ethos of Zionism and emigrated to Israel, and Hermina Naglerowa became a notable Polish writer, identifying herself exclusively with the Polish nation.

The Jewish community of Brody responded to the new challenges of modernity by dividing and creating new factions. The purpose of this study is to conduct an analysis of these groups. Civic intellectuals and

the economic elite tend to display a relatively high sensitivity to change; therefore these two groups were chosen as principal groups for this study. In addition, a group of Brody Gymnasium students from the period ranging from 1890 to 1914 was identified as featuring the most intensive changes among the various groups.

The business elite in Brody underwent a process of modernisation as wide-reaching as that of its civic intellectuals. However, local businessmen, unlike the middle stratum of the Jewish community, maintained relatively close contacts with Vienna, testified to by the number of 'Ritter von...' titles obtained by them. Underlying the social inclination of this group towards German culture and its loyalty to Austria were also the economic considerations which caused resistance, to the Polonisation of the town and to the national movement alike. Nevertheless, descendants of these businessmen, born in the early 20th century, already conducted their correspondence in Polish.

This study will also examine social, cultural, political, and religious factors that may have influenced the creation of new identities and the replacement of old ones.

Thus, this study focuses on the process of seeking out and developing new identities that took place within the Jewish community in Brody (on the linguistic, national and religious levels) and on the Polonisation of the Jewish populace as an example of the search for a new identity. An analysis of biographies of members of the town's intellectual, religious, and economic elite, for example the Austrian author Joseph Roth, is used to showcase the identity crisis faced by Eastern Galicia's Jews in the late 19th /early 20th centuries.

This study will also examine, separately, the attitudes of local Jews to Emperor Franz Joseph I, their glorification of his personality, and further personifications of the Habsburg myth - with the Emperor as its pivotal figure - in the context of the processes of modernisation within the Jewish community.

This study is based both on archival materials, including the archives of the Jewish community of Brody, and on the author's collection of work, memoirs, biographies and periodicals of the time.