

## 15. ABSTRACT

At the turn of the 19th-20th century the different Jewish groups in Hungary had to face many challenges. They had to reconcile the demands made by modernity and the majority society with their own group interests. The changing environment endangered the survival of the group and questioned its basic values. There were big differences in the modernisation strategies of the Jewish groups examined (Neology, Zionists). Religion, as the primary determinant of value, shifted from the community sphere to the private sphere and lost some of its importance. History became the new model for interpretation of the world, that could be manifested at community level. Cultural memory based on shared history became the most important adhesive force of the group. The press, the most important attitude-shaping communication media of the period, played a major role in preserving and strengthening memory.

In my research I analyse the attitude of the different Jewish trends to history, how they built up their cultural memory and collective consciousness through historical events, and what place this occupied in Hungary at the turn of the 19th-20th century. Without clinging to the past it is not possible to build up memory, and without a shared memory there can be no group cohesion. Cultural memory is directed at fixed points in the past, it becomes symbolical and remembering clings to these points. In the words of Assmann “cultural memory transforms the factual past into memorable past and thus into myth.” The attitude to the past then becomes the basis of the self-definition of the remembering group. When it remembers, the group represents the most important formations of the past, projects them to the present and becomes certain of its own identity. A national or religious celebration is an ideal occasion for such representation. Cultural memory does not spread by itself, it has to be built up consciously and is in need of careful channelling. A role is played in this by the narrative branch of historiography, where the past is evoked in order to orient the present, and the narration appears as a basic operation of historical consciousness. And the collective memory determines the collective consciousness.

In addition to memory and collective consciousness, I also directed my attention to the attitude of the different Jewish groups to modernity. To what extent were they affected by the secularizing and individualising environment, and what strategies did they elaborate in face of these phenomena? To what extent were the traditional group values lost or transformed as a consequence of modernisation, and in what way did the loss or transformation of values endanger the survival of the group? To what extent did religion, as the vehicle of traditional values, lose ground in the Jewish groups I examined?

According to Sarah Abrevaya STEIN, among Jewry in the Modern Age the press was at once the manifestation and the mechanism of change. The papers of Neology and the Zionist movement showed a very different picture of the questions raised. This arises from the attitude to modernity and the national ideal. The Neology paper *Egyenlőség* [Equality] and the Zionist *Zsidó Szemle* [Jewish Review] can both be regarded as *consciously modernising*. They reinterpret religious traditions as a function of modern categories. But the national ideal is a dividing line between them: Neology aligns itself to the dominant national ideal merely as a denomination, but the Zionist movement, while retaining its loyalty, cultivated its own Jewish national ideal.

*Egyenlőség* [Equality] was launched in 1882 as a social weekly paper, edited by Mór Bogdáni, then by Miksa Szabolcsi, and later by Lajos Szabolcsi, with close ties to the Pest Israelite Community. Right from the start the paper repeatedly set out its main aims. Together with a stand against anti-Semitism, these were to demonstrate and strengthen the belonging of the Jews to the Hungarian nation.

The collective consciousness of the Zionists was based on unity, the unity of the Jewish people and opposition to assimilation. In their opinion there is no specifically Hungarian Jewish cause, only a universal Jewish cause. They subordinated their view of history to these conceptions. They took most of their historical references from the ancient world when there was not yet a Jewish state, and updated them. They emphasised the folk character and the opposition to assimilation in all of the Jewish holidays. They applied the 19th century romantic and basically secular concept of the nation to the remote past, in order to show the present through this past endowed with modern ideals. They thought that the guarantee for the survival of the Jews was the creation of a Jewish national character and Jewish national memory. By emphasising national self-awareness they wanted to create new group boundaries that would prevent assimilation. The ideology of a “national religion” built on a modern, secular basis aroused strong antipathies in the other two groups examined. They accused Neology of assimilation and Orthodoxy of hypocrisy. However, because of the position they took against assimilation, they tried to draw closer to the “*galiciáner*” [Galician] or “*pólisi*” [Polish] Jewish masses. Their most important communication organ was the *Zsidó Szemle* [Jewish Review].

The Zionist paper was launched in January 1910. It was edited at first by József Schönfeld and later by Lajos Bató. In the first issues it outlined the basic issues and the strategy to be followed. It condemned the Jewish groups opposed to it – official Neology and the central Orthodoxy.

*Múlt és Jövő* was launched in 1912, edited by Dr. József Patai and published by the OMIKE. It is a cultural Zionist monthly paper into any of the political or religious trends, but its declared aim was to spread Jewish culture, whatever its source.