

What can Czech scholars tell us about our family history; a multi-layer review

alias Missing generation(s) of scholars and its recent renewal

Family history research evolved markedly. Family historians were already able to fulfil the significant dates on the family trees and to understand the family relationships; birth, marriages, death records are online today thanks to successful initiative to digitize the books at www.badatelna.eu. Another part of family history research is to analyse in more details the history of Czech (Czech, Moravian and Silesian) Jewish communities and to understand better the life of our ancestors in broader context.

A monumental work of Hugo Gold's team (1929, 1932, 1934) and two journals (Czech-Jewish Calendar and Yearbook of Society for Jewish history in CR) was a pioneering effort in modern Czechoslovakia waiting for generations of scholars to continue. However, the continuity was broken for another 60 years or so, except few periodicals.

This paper is aimed to summarize the postwar Jewish historiography and to present an effort of coming generation of modern Czech scholars to document the Jewish history of Czechoslovakia then Czech Republic in 1930ties, during shoah and after shoah. The main scope are the Jewish communities outside of Prague. The names of all cities and towns in Czechia were rendered in this paper in Czech language. Only Prague was retained in the English version.

Pre-war historiography

The prewar historiography was dominated by two volumes of encyclopedia edited by Hugo Gold, and by *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslovakischen Republik*, and *Česko-židovský kalendář*.

Full title of H. Gold encyclopedias was *The Jews and Jewish Communities of Moravia (Die Juden und Judengemeinden Mährens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart; Brno 1929)* and *The Jews and Jewish Communities of Bohemia (Die Juden und Judengemeinden Böhmens in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart; Brno-Prague 1934)*. The historic situation of Jewish settlements in Moravia was different - compared to hundreds and hundreds of towns and villages in Bohemia - in Moravia there were communities only in bigger towns since mediaval time. There are 342 entries for Bohemia and 53 entries for Moravia; In Bohemia's volume the size of individual chapter varies from half of page (Klatovy) to 22 (Kolin). In Moravia's volume the chapters are larger, between 6 (Stare Hobzi) to 50 (Brno). The authors of chapters were rabbis, local Jewish and non-Jewish historians, archivists, teachers, local museum directors, and chroniclers. Both volumes of Gold's encyclopedias are available online. H. Gold then published *Memorial book of lost Jewish communities in Moravia (Tel Aviv, 1974)*.

The *Yearbook of Society for Jewish history in CR (Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Juden in der Tschechoslovakischen Republik)* had been published since 1929 till 1938. The variety of subjects included the expulsion from Prague (1745-1748), Jewish music and

theatre, antisemitism, memoirs and biographies, and history of Jewish communities (Brtnice, Jičín, Jindřichův Hradec, Lednice, Kasejovice, Pardubice, Roudnice, Švihov, Telč, Uherský Brod). The authors were rabbis, archivists, university professors, historians. The Yearbook is available online : sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/titleinfo/2644300

Another periodical was **Česko-židovský kalendář** (Czech Jewish Calendar) (1881-1939) published by Czech-Jewish Academics. It covered several topics : antisemitism, Jewish schooling, biographies, eulogies, and also a couple of the historic reviews on Jewish communities (Breznice-Loksany, Kolin, Mlada Boleslav Roudnice, Pisek). The Calendar is available online : www.digitalniknihovna.cz/zmp/periodical/uuid:ae6ef6fc-435d-11dd-b505-00145e5790ea

Post-war historiography

Journals

Jewish Yearbook (**Židovská ročenka**) was published since 1953 as a quasi-continuum of Jewish Calendar. Besides the poetry, short stories, religious texts, memoirs and testimonies it also contained few chapters on history of Jewish communities (Ceske Budejovice, Pacov).

A systemic attempt to restore the scholarly work after the war was project **Judaica Bohemiae** initiated by State Jewish Museum in Prague in 1965. The authors were dealing with analysis of archival collections, Torah binders, documentation of cemeteries, genizot, onomastics and etymology, memoirs from the camps, book reviews, and few articles on the history of Jewish communities (Boskovice, Dolní Kounice, Hustopeče, Miroslav, Šafov, Tachov). The table of content of all issues till 2019 are available at : www.jewishmuseum.cz/sbirky-a-vyzkum/veda-a-vyzkum/judaica-bohemiae/judaica-bohemiae-bibliografie/

Bulletin of Jewish Religious Community (**Věstník Židovské nábožské obce**) has been published since 1945 till 1989 when it was re-named to Rosh Chodesh. The Bulletin - besides community news, parashot, calendar - also contained short articles about the history of Jewish communities. The content is not a subject of this paper.

Monography

The survivors abroad organized in The Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews have published 3 volumes of essays named **The Jews of Czechoslovakia** (New York/Philadelphia 1968). They wanted to preserve the Jewish history and to present manifold aspects of the period 1918-1939. Two of three volumes were to survey the life and activities of Czechoslovak Jews before the war. Volume III covers the years of shoah and the attempts of the surviving Czechoslovak Jews to rebuild Jewish communal life in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia (and Slovakia).

The monography is indexed by names and by places.

Encyclopedias

This paper is not aimed to be a vocabulary of the post-war scholars and researchers but one cannot avoid to mention some of the names. Since 1980ties Jiří Fiedler (of blessed memory) collected enormous amount of data on Jewish sights mostly in Bohemia and partly in Moravia. Fiedler then published an encyclopedia named **Jewish sights of Bohemia and Moravia**, firstly in English (Sefer; 1991) and then in Czech (Sefer; 1992). There were 132 entries in the encyclopedia with around 5-10 places listed under each entry/bigger town; 810 places altogether. High number reflected the fact that the Jews in Bohemia lived scattered in many places; around 1200 towns and villages; Fiedler's notes became part of general encyclopedia of towns in Czech Republic (Mesta a Mestecka v Cechach, Morave a Slezsku, in Czech, 1996) where almost every entry had section on Jewish community and history.

Fiedler never published re-edition of encyclopedia but decided to continue this work in Jewish Museum of Prague (JMP). One can order an individual entry in electronic version from JMP; places have abt. 10-15 pages each. It summarizes a lot of information using variety of resources (vital records, Censi, house registers, synagogue seats, minutes, etc.). Another historian from JMP published bilingual encyclopedia **Jewish Monuments in Bohemia** (Rozkošná, ERA; 2004) and several booklets on the Jewish communities in Bohemia as well. There are 318 entries alphabetically ordered in the encyclopedia.

Fiedler's counterpart in Moravia, Jaroslav Klenovsky, started a bit later; he published first book in 1993 about Jewish community in Brno. Klenovsky picked up different strategy; he avoided encyclopedia style and wrote individual booklet on each town. That made each booklet much more informative, esp. in terms of family history details. Within period 1993-2020 he published booklets on 30 towns in Moravia. Each booklet contain brief history of local Jewish community, old maps and old pictures, number of families, names of rabbis, famous townmen, list of houses, lists of shoa victims and survivors. When Klenovsky finally published bi-lingual encyclopedia **Jewish Monuments in Moravia and Silesia** (ERA; 2001), there were 80 entries altogether.

Conferences and Proceedings

The Jews and Moravia

The conference The Jews and Moravia has been organized since 1994 in Kromeriz by local district archives. 149 authors at 25 conference so far presented their papers.: One third of speakers are presenting their papers regularly. Having the name of archivist publishing a paper about place/family name of our interest can help to get in contact and to get more information. The authors are archivists from regional archives and district archives, researchers from JMP, historians from regional and district museums, university professors

and high school teachers. The conference proceedings are available in university libraries and in major bookstores.

The topics are : History of Jewish communities; Jewish schools and education, synagogues, antisemitism, Maccabi and sport, sionistic youth movement, refugees from Galicia (1914-1918).

The places covered : Batelov, Bohumín, Boskovice, Břeclav, Brno, Bučovice, Dolní Bolíkov, Frýdek, Frýdlant nad Ostravicí, Holešov, Hranice, Ivančice, Jihlava, Kojetín, Krnov, Kroměříž, Lipník, Lomnice, Loštice, Markvarec, Michálkovice, Mikulov, Moravský Krumlov, Olomouc, Olšany, Ostrava, Písečné, Pohořelice, Prostějov, Přerov, Příbor, Rousínov, Rožnov, Slavkov, Slavonice, Staré Hobzí, Šternberk, Strážnice, Třebíč, Uherský Ostroh, Valašské Meziříčí, Velké Meziříčí, Vizovice, Vsetín.

Family history presented : L. Askenazy (Těšín), R. Bacher, Bäck family, L. Beer Ebner (Prostějov), L. Blum (Brno), M. Böhm (Přívoz), I. Buchsbaum (Přívoz), J. David (Kroměříž), A. Donath (Kroměříž), F. Ehrenstamm (Prostějov), Otto Eisler (Brno), R. Feder, A. Fischl, B. K. Fisera, J. Gartner, E. Graf, Groag family (Olomouc), Gronner brothers (Ostrava), A. Grünfeld (Jihlava), H. Haas, A. Hilf (Ostrava), J. Hoitasch (Hodonín), H. Iltis, T. Klein, T. Kohn (Olomouc), W. Kohn (Prostějov), L. Kohn-Zerkowitz (Hranice), Kohn family (Frenštát), S. Kolisch (Koryčany), J. Kulka (Holešov), Kwasník-Rabinowiczov family (Boskovice), E. Lichtblau-Leskly (Hrušov), Lichtenstern family (Koloředo), H. Lorm (Mikulov), H. Löw (Koloředov), Löw-Ber family (Boskovice), Mahler family (Jihlava), Paul März-Meretz (Uherské Hradiště), Nagl family (Telč), J. Neumann (Prostějov), Neumann family (Radvanice), V. Oppenheimer, F. Redlich (Hodonín), Reiss family (Strážnice), A. Roth (Ostrava), I. Rottberger (Prostějov), A. Rysavy (Ostrava), Schach - Shabbai ben Meir ha Kohen (Holešov), S. Scharf (Orlova), A. Schön (Uherský Brod), Z. Shek (Olomouc), M. Spielmann (Kroměříž), M. Spitzer (Hranice), Steinhardt family (Valašská Bystřice), Moritz Steinschneider (Prostějov), W. Stiasny, M. Strassmann (Ostrava), B. Tauber, H. J. Tauber, A. Ticho (Brno), J. Wechsberg (Ostrava), Wechsberg family, Weinberger family (Znojmo), R. Weissenstein (Jihlava), I. Welisch, P. Winterstein-Gafni (Brno), M. Zweig (Prostějov)

The Jews in Bohemia

The conference The Jews in Bohemia has been organised as a joint effort of Jewish Museum of Prague and several district archives - one after another : in 2006 (Liberec), in 2008 (Nýrsko), in 2010 (Tachov), in 2012 (Trutnov), in 2014 (Teplice), in 2016 (Kadaň), and in 2018 (Třeboň). 56 authors presented their papers at 7 conferences so far.

The topics are : history of Jewish communities listed below; war refugees from Galicia (1914-1918); refugees from Germany after 1933 and from Austria in 1938; antisemitism; cemeteries; businesses in German-speaking areas / then Sudetenland.

Places (in Czech) covered : Bezručovice, Bílina, Český Krumlov, Chomutov, Chrudim, Duchcov, Havlíčkův Brod, Jablonec, Kladno, Klatovy, Litvínov, Most, Nýrsko, Pardubice, Planá, Postoloprty, Sobědruhy, Staré Město (Janštejn), Stříbro, Tachov, Teplice, Trutnov, Turnov, Udlice, Žacléř.

Family history presented : Ascherman family (Kolín), Böhm family (Kladno), Z.Feldman (Kolin), Glaser family (Velim), L.Hartman (Kdyně), Heisler family (Chrast), Heller family (Kolín), Katz family (Jistebnice), A.Löwy (Planá), Mandelik family (Ratboř), H.Polacek (Kolín), K.Fischer Pollak (Karlovy Vary), Spitz family (Most), B.Steiner (Zbraslavice), Stross family (Libava Udolí),

Local initiatives

The Conferences The Jews and Morava and The Jews in Bohemia are more concerned with history of communities and noted personalities before the war while period of shoah is more reflected by the research and publications of local museums and district archives.

The local historians, archivists, chroniclers, people from NGOs, teachers consider Jewish heritage and Jewish culture as a part of national heritage and inner part of it which is almost impossible to separate. This attitude explains the format and amplitude of all research activities in the field of Jewish studies in the country. Since the state archives and museums are well structured and organized it secures continuity and stability of all those initiatives.

The booklets produced by different institutions (see below) have one in common - they combine the chapters on pre-war history of particular community and information what happened to individual families and their members during shoah. Each booklet/book contains extensive bibliography which enables further study. The list below is far from being complete; it is aimed to present the Jewish studies at different level and the variety of interested parties. The date of publication are here to show to continuing interest within last 25 years.

Booklets produced by **local NGOs** : Čkyně (2006), Libochovice (2008), Louny (2017) Šumperk (2004), Loštice (2012), Tábor (2010), Úsov (2010); and more for sure.

Booklets published by **Jewish community** in Brno and in Karlovy Vary, resp. : Olomouc (1998), Slavkov 1998), Tovačov (1996), Třebíč (1995), Úsov (1993); Karlovy Vary (2002).

Booklets produced by **local municipality** or **regional** governments : Brandýs nad Labem (2009), Česká Lípa (1998), Holešov (1999), Hranice (2005), Dolní Kounice (2002), Jablunkov (2004), Jemnice (1994), Kladno (2010), Klatovy (2010), Kolín (1992), Kroměříž (1996), Kyšperk (2001), Mnichovo Hradiště (2011), Nymburk (2011), Pardubice (2006), Rousínov (2005, 2008), Soběslav (2010), Štěnovice (2011), Třešť (2002), Vodňany (2012), Vyškov (2009).

Booklets on Jewish communities produced by **local museums** : Brno (1993), Cheb (2004), Dačice - Slavonice (2002), Ivančice (2007), Jihlava (1998), Karlovy Vary (2018), Kladno-Slaný (2002), Marienbad (2006), Mikulov (2000), Milevsko (2005), Prostějov (1997), Rokycany (1996), Tachov (2017, 2012), Týn nad Vltavou (2003), Velké Meziříčí (2007), Zlín (2010).

By **district and regional archives**: Jihlava (2002), Kojetín (2009), Koloredo-Frýdek (2006), Mikulov (2000), Podbořany (2001), Polička (2004), Příbram (2015).

Jewish studies at Czech, Moravian and Silesian Universities

Quite a few of the universities in the country have Jewish studies in their curriculum, and their students of different faculties and departments picked up Jewish history and related topics for their Diploma thesis or PhD.thesis. There are some examples enlisting the names of community and relevant university :

Brno, Bučovice, Holešov, Jevíčko, Jemnice, Ivančice, Ivanovice, Kojetín, Kroměříž, Ledec nad Sázavou, Uherský Brod (**Masaryk's University, Brno**);
Brandýs nad Labem, Český Těšín, Kolín, Kosova Hora, Karlovy Vary, Mladá Boleslav, Praha-Smíchov, Rychnov nad Kněžnou, Třebíč, (**Charles University, Prague**);
Heřmanův Městec, Hluboká nad Vltavou (**University of Pardubice, Pardubice**);
Poběžovice, Tábor (**Western Bohemia University, Plzeň**);
Čkyně, Budějovice, Tábor, Třebíč (**Southern Bohemia University, České Budějovice**)
Hranice, Opava, Přerov, Úsov (University in Ostrava).

Due to its character the thesis contain extensive bibliography which can deepen further knowledge of interested parties. The supervisors are often the speakers at the conferences and authors of the booklets mentioned above.

Some of the students of Charles University participated under the auspices of prof. Ebelová in large scale project to edit and publish **Jewish Censi 1783 and 1793**. Their effort resulted in 9 volumes of Censi published within 2002-2006; 2 books of Census 1783 and 7 books of Census 1793 for 16 regions outside of Prague, and 1792/1794 for Prague, respectively. The whole set is online at: pvh.ff.cuni.cz/soupisy.htm

Cemeteries

There are still 353 Jewish cemeterie in the country. Some were documented before the war, e.g. by K.Blan - the collection of handwritten tombstones from 30 cemeteries is available at the Archives of Jewish Museum in Prague. Also some of above mentioned periodicals (primary Judaica Bohemiae) dealt with this topic.

Since 1990ties several individuals and institutions launched independent campaigns to document what remained. The results - lists of tombstones - are accesible for free (based on work volunteers and/or public funding) while some are available upon request.

Almost a complete list of tombstones in 73 cemeteries in Moravia ara available at: cemeteries.zob.cz

Some of the links refer to www.chewra.com, which also covers number of cemeteries in Bohemia. Another NGO that is mapping the Jewish cemeteries in rather large scale can be reached for inquiries at tamus.tachov.org/

Conclusion

The interest of Czech researchers and intellectuals increased significantly within last 25 years. The whole generation of Czech historians and archivists grew up. They lecture and publish the articles and books about Jewish culture and history including shoah in different formats, they organize special conferences, and educate their students, they present their findings to the public.

Jewish studies in Czechia became a multi-layered scene of individual and institutional initiatives which became a decent heir of generation of pre-war scholars and historians.