

Summary

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Formation of modern identities among Jewish intellectuals of the city of Brody in the 19th century

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PhD thesis

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The thesis explores the process of creating modern identities, using as an example biographies and works of five Jewish writers from the town of Brody (Joseph Roth, Herminia Naglerowa, Joseph Ehrlich, Leo Herzberg-Fränkell and Hermann Menkes.) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Moreover, the thesis analyses the way in which local conditions of Brody's urban environment and general public factors influenced the articulation of these identities in the late imperial period. Their crisis and even partial stigmatization after the collapse of the Empire are analysed as well. The dissertation examines how the writers constructed their own identities through their texts and how these constructs had been changing according to the challenges of the time.

The first chapter is dedicated to the writers of the ghetto-literature (Menkes, Ehrlich, Herzberg-Fränkell) and first modern identity among the Jewish intellectuals in Galicia, especially in Brody. The second chapter is dedicated to the formation and functioning of memory and identity in the condition of rising national movements, like Polish romantic nationalism (Naglerowa). The third chapter is dedicated to Joseph Roth's identity crisis and its impact on the design of personal memory and narrative art.

Life and works of the mentioned five authors articulate the aggravation of internal contradictions in their mixed identities. It is clear that the depth of the crisis was different in each case. While the Polish-Jewish national identity could be integrated, even in the difficult conditions of the twentieth century, as evidenced by Naglerowa's example, the tripartite Austrian identity as special phenomenon disappeared after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. Each component of the tripartite identity was in jeopardy: First, the Austrian political identity lost the object of its identification, the Austrian (or Austro-Hungarian) Empire itself. Second, the Nazis' objected against the right of Jews to present German culture as their own. Accordingly, the Jews' German cultural identity came into crisis. Third, the Jewish religious-ethnic identity was stigmatized when belonging to the Jews became a social stigma.

Joseph Roth's creative works before his tragic death depicted that the crisis may be so deep and destructive that a person cannot create new schemes of identification. Roth's reflections were the most vivid. He recollected that most Austrian Jews after the collapse of their Empire could have become patriots of their national states. Still, Roth's biography clearly illustrates the complexity of the situation and the level of challenges that affected the identity of educated Jews from Central and Eastern Europe.

This research demonstrates that the Jewish mixed identity resulted from modernization, assimilation, emancipation, secularization and integration of Jewish intellectuals in Brody in the liberal imperial political system. The phenomenon of tripartite identity was possible only in a liberal supranational Empire and did not survive in the conditions of nationalistic ideologies.

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