

Wissenschaft des Judentums in Europe: Comparative Perspectives

Veranstalter: European Association for Jewish Studies (EAJS); Christian Wiese, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main

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The Twelfth Summer Colloquium of the European Association of Jewish Studies (EAJS) was held at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (OCHJS) at Yarnton Manor from 23 to 26 July, 2012. The colloquium aimed at bringing together scholars from different fields in Jewish Studies as well as archivists to discuss new trends in the historiography on *Wissenschaft des Judentums* / Jewish Studies in Europe before the Holocaust.

After a warm welcome by the EAJS representative Garth Gilmour (Oxford), CHRISTIAN WIESE (Frankfurt am Main) reflected upon the purpose of the colloquium, emphasizing that, since Julius Carlebach's edited volume on *Wissenschaft des Judentums: Anfänge der Judaistik in Europa* (1992), much had changed in research on *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In recent years, Wiese pointed out, a new generation of scholars has entered the field of Jewish Studies, developing new perspectives and methodological approaches; furthermore, the opening of the archives in Eastern Europe provided rich material for a re-assessment of previous research results.

The first panel on the „Beginnings of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Italy“ started with CRISTIANA FACCHINI (Bologna), who analyzed the conditions under which *Wissenschaft des Judentums* developed in a Catholic surrounding. Exploring the life and works of main figures of the Italian *Wissenschaft* such as Samuel D. Luzzatto, Elija Benamozegh and David Castelli, the paper pointed to the specific character of Jewish Studies in the Italian context. ASHER SALAH (Jerusalem) dedicated his talk to another outstanding Italian scholar, Marco Mortara. As a

prolific and meticulous correspondent, Mortara established contact with most of the key figures in German speaking *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Thus Salah emphasized the crucial role of the written correspondence of Jewish scholars for future research. CHIARA ADORISIO (Rome) then went on to portray the relationship between the Parisian librarian Salomon Munk and the Italian Jewish scholar Samuel D. Luzzatto, thus presenting another illuminating scholarly correspondence. Containing the philosophical dialogue between both correspondents, their letters written between 1850 and 1864 highlight the strong influence exerted by German *Wissenschaft des Judentums* on its Italian counterpart.

In his keynote lecture delivered at the end of the first day of the colloquium, ANDREAS GOTZMANN (Erfurt) discussed the challenging impact the new paradigms of history and historiography developed by Jewish scholars had on the identity of Jewish communities in nineteenth-century Europe. He identified two main pathways that emerged in the face of the prevailing historical system of interpretation: Whilst one group of more progressive Jews followed the academic standards in defining a society, people or religious and cultural tradition via historical thinking, an alternative was to stand aside and continue transmitting Jewish knowledge in a traditional manner. Eventually, history and scholarship (in the German sense of *Wissenschaft*) became the driving forces of Jewish modernization in the era of emancipation and acculturation. Subsequently, the acceptance or denial of the scientific ideal was also a reason for the – partly schismatic – division of Judaism into a Reform, an Orthodox and a Conservative current.

The second day started with a session on „*Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Eastern Europe“. In his keynote address, FRANÇOIS GUESNET (London) discussed the epistemological shift occurring in modern Jewish scholarship and the new definition of the Jewish scholar that emerged during this period. Guesnet emphasized that, for the sake of a better understanding of the impact of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Eastern Europe, future research should take a closer look at individual scholars, at institutions as well

as at Jewish historiography in Eastern Europe. In the following, MICHAL GALAS (Kraków) characterized the activities of influential scholars such as Markus M. Jastrow, Samuel A. Poznanski, Izaak Cylkow and Moses Schorr, who were associated with the Great Synagogue in Warsaw. Galas highlighted the link that existed between synagogue/ religion and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the Polish context. KERSTIN ARMBORST-WEIHS (Mainz) analyzed the development of Jewish scholarship in the Russian Empire at the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Even though Simon Dubnow had called for the establishment of an historical institute already in 1891, it took more than a decade until the Jewish Society for History and Ethnography (JSHE) was eventually founded in 1905. The JSHE succeeded in publishing a Russian quarterly, organized public lectures and brought together a large collection of artifacts reflecting Jewish life of Jews and Judaism.

In the third panel devoted to the „*Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the Habsburg Empire“, BJOERN SIEGEL (Hamburg) discussed the role of the Viennese rabbi Adolf Jellinek in the Austro-Hungarian capital. Jellinek took various approaches to introduce the ideas of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to the local Jewish community, for instance by establishing a *Bet ha-Midrash*. One of the outcomes was an intensification of the ongoing debates regarding the necessities of modern Jewish education and the ethos of modern Jewish scholarship. MIRJAM THULIN (Frankfurt am Main) examined the establishment of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Hungary by looking at the long lasting controversies over the rabbinical seminary in Budapest. As Thulin pointed out, it took almost seventy years until the so-called *Landes-Rabbinerschule*, the Budapest rabbinical seminary, was opened in 1877 and the institution developed into one of the main centers of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Central and Eastern Europe. As FERENC L. LACZÓ (Jena) showed, new literary and historical societies continued and supported modern Jewish scholarship in Hungary in the course of the twentieth century. Focusing on the Israelite Hungarian Literary Society (IMIT *Évkönyvek*), a major institution

of Jewish scholarship in the Horthy era, Laczó emphasized that the articles of the IMIT yearbooks allow a profound insight into contemporary discussions on the nature of Jewish(-Hungarian) identities.

The fourth panel on „*Visions and Values in Wissenschaft des Judentums*“ centered around the emphasis Jewish scholarship in early and mid-nineteenth-century Germany put on the tension between Jewish tradition, contemporary historical experience and the concepts and values embraced by the modernizing trends of Jewish scholarship. As a start, CÉLINE TRAUTMANN-WALLER (Paris) introduced the autobiography of the founder of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* Leopold Zunz. His „*Buch Zunz*“ combined personal memories with data of contemporary and historical events. This idiosyncratic document demonstrates Zunz’s passion for numbers and his interpretation of the link between personal experience, Jewish history, and historical events in the surrounding world. GEORGE Y. KOHLER (Beer Sheva) then discussed the reception of Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism by the representatives of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In contrast to Gershom Scholem’s famous statement according to which Kabbalah and mysticism had been neglected or even eclipsed by contemporary Jewish scholarship, Kohler was able to show that scholars such as Leopold Löw and Abraham Geiger were far from underestimating the significance of Kabbalah for the understanding of historical and contemporary Judaism. Moreover, already in 1835 Abraham Geiger pointed out that Kabbalah was „the true jewel of our science“.

A further element that is essential for the understanding of the history of modern Jewish scholarship is the relationship between *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and Oriental Studies. In his paper presented during the fifth panel on „*The Intersection of Wissenschaft des Judentums and Islamic Studies*“, DIRK HARTWIG (Berlin) analyzed the development of Oriental Studies in Germany up to 1900 and the contribution of Jewish scholars to the creation and growth of academic Islamic Studies in Europe. OTTFRIED FRAISSE (Frankfurt am Main) focused on the prominent Hungarian scholar Ignác Goldz-

ther and his motivation to research Islamic theology by carefully examining Goldziher's lecture on the „Essence and Evolution of Judaism“ delivered in 1887. Fraisse showed that, by adapting Darwin's theory regarding evolution and by following Maimonides' reasons of law, Goldziher had developed a distinctive model of scientific evolution of tradition that both combined and represented his (Jewish) religious and academic motivation for scholarly research.

The sixth panel of the colloquium addressed the „Wissenschaft des Judentums in the Early Twentieth century“ and drew the attention to the various developments within Jewish scholarship around one hundred years after the emergence of the „Verein für die Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden“ in 1819. In her presentation, KERSTIN VON DER KRONE (Berlin) gave an account of the new institutions, projects and methodological approaches characterizing Wissenschaft des Judentums after World War I. At that time, a new programmatic debate about the nature of Jewish scholarship unfolded in Germany, inspired by scholars such as Ismar Elbogen, who for the first time called for a critical reflection on the history of modern Jewish scholarship. NICOLAS BERG (Leipzig/ London) focused on a crucial external element that became increasingly relevant for the discipline around 1900, namely the challenging variant of anti-Semitism that tended to argue in academic – historical, theological, social and economic – terms. By examining the reception of Werner Sombart's „Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben“ from 1911, Berg illustrated the complex reception of this classic of anti-Semitic literature among Jewish as well as non-Jewish intellectuals and showed how Sombart's book made use of the contents of the writings and ideas of Wissenschaft des Judentums, transforming it into an anti-Semitic argument.

In the seventh panel, the colloquium looked at the „Material Cultures of Wissenschaft des Judentums“. EVA MARIA JANSSON (Copenhagen) introduced the David Simonsen Archives in Copenhagen, which is today part of the local Royal Library and one of the biggest collections of an individual scholar of Wissenschaft des Judentums. As Jansson

pointed out, Simonson was in contact with at least 50 percent of the European Wissenschaft des Judentums scholars. The archive preserves nearly 29.000 letters and is currently being digitalized. ZSUZSANNA TORONYI (Budapest) presented the complex history of the Hungarian-Jewish Archives in Budapest, sited in the building of the Dohanyi Street Synagogue and the Jewish Museum. Toronyi explored the evolution of the Judaica and archival collections in the museum within the context of the development of Jewish ethnography and art. By introducing the Aron Freimann and the Judaica Collection named after the former librarian of the city library in Frankfurt am Main, RACHEL HEUBERGER (Frankfurt am Main) drew the attention to another essential archive and book collection, today located in the main library of the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. The digitalization projects of the Hebraica and Judaica Division of the University library such as „Compact Memory“ and „Judaica European“ have become most useful tools for research in many disciplines of Jewish Studies.

The last day of the colloquium opened with the eighth and last colloquium panel on „Wissenschaft des Judentums and Identity“. In his keynote lecture, CHRISTIAN WIESE (Frankfurt am Main) explored the mutual perceptions and debates characterizing the encounter between Wissenschaft des Judentums and the emerging Jewish nationalist (and later Zionist) movement in Europe from the end of the nineteenth century to the rise of National Socialism in Germany. Beyond the well-known Jewish national and Zionist statements, according to which Wissenschaft des Judentums was the gravedigger of Judaism and an obstacle for its national and spiritual survival, Wiese described the increasing ambivalence inherent in the relationship between Jewish nationalism/Zionism and Wissenschaft des Judentums; this relationship allowed anything from polemical dissociation and cautious rapprochement to enthusiastic identification. The question regarding Jewish identity was also the main topic of the presentation of TALLY GUR (Haifa), who spoke about Jewish Studies in Germany between 1967 and 1989. Gur emphasized the complex and difficult relationship between the tradi-

tion of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the emergence of Jewish Studies in post-war Germany, addressing the phenomenon that Jewish Studies since the 1960ies has been mainly taught and represented by non-Jewish scholars with different disciplinary backgrounds.

The concluding discussion centered around the trans-regional/ transnational element inherent in networks of modern Jewish scholarship, the need to further explore and ensure the accessibility of archival collections as well as the future task, on the one hand, to come to a more precise analysis of the way *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was embedded in differing European cultures that prompted varying religious and historical interpretations, and, on the other hand, to better assess the overarching themes dominating modern Jewish scholarly discourse during the last two centuries.

Conference Overview:

Welcome

Christian Wiese, Garth Gilmour

The Beginnings: Wissenschaft des Judentums in Italy

Cristiana Facchini: The Challenge of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in a Catholic Country: The Italian Case

Asher Salah: The Intellectual Horizons of Rabbi Marco Mortara, a Representative of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in 19th-Century Italy

Chiara Adorasio: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* between Italy and France: Samuel David Luzzatto's Letters to Salomon Munk in Paris

Keynote Lecture

Andreas Gotzmann: Scholarship and Faith in the Founding Years of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*

Wissenschaft des Judentums in Eastern Europe

Keynote Lecture

François Guesnet: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Eastern Europe: Successes and Failures of a Complex Relationship

Michał Galas: Preachers and Scholars. The Great Synagogue in Warsaw as Center of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*

Wissenschaft des Judentums

Kerstin Armbrorst-Weihs: Jewish Scholarship in Russia: Historical and Ethnographic Research as Pillars of a New Jewish National Consciousness

Wissenschaft des Judentums in the Habsburg Empire

Björn Siegel: A „Community“ within a Community? Adolf Jellinek and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Habsburg Vienna

Mirjam Thulin: Instituting *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Hungary: The Case of the Landes-Rabbinerschule in Budapest

Ferenc L. Laczó: Faith Enlightened? Jewish History, Identity, Values and Contributions in the Hungarian Variant of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the Horthy Era

Visions and Values in Wissenschaft des Judentums

Céline Trautmann-Waller: The Buch Zunz or: *Wissenschaft des Judentums* from an Intimate View

George Y. Kohler: „The Jewel of our Science“ – *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and Kabbalah Research in 19th-Century Germany

The Intersection of Wissenschaft des Judentums and Islamic Studies

Dirk Hartwig: An Antidote for Orientalism? German-Jewish Attitudes towards the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad

Ottfried Fraise: Interlacing „Darwin“ and „Hegel“ through Maimonides – Ignác Goldziher's Idea of Intercultural Evolution in Judaism and Islam

Wissenschaft des Judentums at the Beginning of the 20th Century

Kerstin von der Krone: Between History and Re-Orientations. Revisiting Modern Jewish Scholarship in the Early 20th Century

Nicolas Berg: „For pure Knowledge Resentment is a Veil“ (Ludwig Feuchtwanger). Werner Sombart and *Wissenschaft des Judentums*

Material Cultures of Wissenschaft des Judentums

tums

Eva-Maria Jansson: David Simonsen and his Archive in Copenhagen

Zsuzsanna Toronyi: Collections of the Hungarian Jewish Museum related to Wissenschaft des Judentums

Rachel Heuberger: Aron Freimann and the Hebraica and Judaica Collection of the Frankfurt University Library

Wissenschaft des Judentums and Identity

Keynote Lecture

Christian Wiese: Wissenschaft des Judentums and Jewish Nationalism. Mutual Perceptions and Debates

Tally Gur: Non-Jews and Jewish Studies in Post Second World War Germany 1967–1989

Concluding Remarks

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