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Hungarian Jewish
Orthodoxy from the
Emancipation to Holocaust

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Patriots without a Homeland

Hungarian Jewish
Orthodoxy from the
Emancipation to Holocaust

Jehuda
Hartman

Translated from Hebrew by
Shaul Vardi

BOSTON
2023

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Hartman, Jehuda, author. | Vardi, Shaul, translator.

Title: Patriots without a homeland : Hungarian Jewish Orthodoxy from the emancipation to Holocaust / Jehuda Hartman ; translated from Hebrew by Shaul Vardi.

Other titles: Paṭriyotīm le-lo moledet. English

Description: Boston : Academic Studies Press, 2023. | Series: The lands and ages of the Jewish people | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022033473 (print) | LCCN 2022033474 (ebook) | ISBN 9798887190280 (hardback) | ISBN 9798887190297 (adobe pdf) | ISBN 9798887190303 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Orthodox Judaism--Hungary--History. | Jews--Hungary--History--19th century. | Jews--Hungary--History--20th century. | Jews--Hungary--Identity--History. | Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Hungary.

Classification: LCC DS135.H9 H37413 2022 (print) | LCC DS135.H9 (ebook) | DDC 943.9/004924--dc23/eng/20220715

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022033473>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022033474>

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ISBN 9798887190280 (hardback)

ISBN 9798887190297 (adobe pdf)

ISBN 9798887190303 (epub)

Cover design by Ivan Grave

Book design by Lapiz Digital Services

Published by Academic Studies Press

1577 Beacon Street

Brookline, MA, 02446, USA

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www.academicstudiespress.com

Dedicated to my parents, Leah and Zvi,
with love and longing

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Preface

Hungarian Jewry as a whole has yet to receive the historiographic attention it deserves, despite the fact that in the latter part of the nineteenth century it constituted one of the largest Jewish communities of Europe. The reasons for this neglect include the linguistic and social isolation of Hungary in general, as well as uncertainty regarding the affiliation of Hungarian Jewry to Central and Western Europe or to the east of the continent. While this book concentrates on the Orthodox stream in Hungary, it also touches on the character and identity of all streams of Hungarian Jewry.

The study of Orthodox Judaism in Eastern Europe tends to focus on halakhic questions and on the ideological struggles with other Jewish streams, with an emphasis on the internal Jewish arena. This book seeks to examine the conduct of Hungarian Orthodoxy in the external arena, through its attitude toward the surrounding Christian world. Accordingly, the book will explore Orthodox positions concerning society, culture, and government; the response to the rise of the Hungarian nation-state and the extent to which it integrated in this arena; its attitudes toward the Hungarian people; and its response to the emerging phenomenon of antisemitism. All these subjects provide insights into how a large Orthodox community in Europe coped with the challenges of modernity.

Through the prism of rabbinical literature, memoirs, and the press, we will expose the changes that occurred in the perception and attitudes of different

Orthodox circles concerning the Hungarian majority society during the period from emancipation to the late Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry. The first part of our study will concentrate on various stages and aspects in the rapprochement of Orthodoxy to Hungarian nationhood. The second part will examine Orthodox attitudes toward antisemitism, which were in large measure associated with the above-mentioned process of rapprochement. Due to the diverse issues involved, I chose to adopt a combined chronological and thematic approach. The main thrust of our discussion will follow a chronological sequence, but occasionally a chapter will be devoted to a specific topic that deviates from that axis, in order to emphasize its importance and present it in a detailed and coherent manner.

Over the years I spent researching and writing this book, I often found myself thinking of my deceased relatives who lived through the events I describe. I had the sense that I was working on their behalf: My father and mother, Zvi and Leah Hartman; my mother's parents, Yisrael and Hannah Herskovits, who survived the Holocaust in Budapest; my father's parents, Chananya and Pessel Hartman, and their families in Slovakia, who perished. May their memories be a blessing.

This book is based on the doctoral thesis I submitted in November 2016 to the Senate of Bar-Ilan University. My thanks go to Professor Shmuel Feiner of Bar-Ilan University and Professor Guy Miron of the Open University for their important supervision of the research process. Thanks, too, to Professor Moshe Rosman for conversations that helped me to consolidate the direction of my research; to Dr. Michael Silver for his advice in delineating the research subject; to Professors Michael Miller and Adam Ferziger, who read my study and offered comments and suggestions; and to Professor Victor Karady of Budapest for our fruitful conversations during the writing process. I am also grateful to Dr. Chayuta Deutsch for her comments during the initial editing stage. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to the late Mrs. Lilly Stern, with whose assistance I learned the art of reading the Hungarian language. Thanks to Professor Stuart Cohen and David Weisberger for their useful comments. Lastly, thanks again to Professor Guy Miron, who accompanied me along the entire process from my initial steps in research to the completion of this book.

The publication of the English translation of this book in the United States will extend the circle of readers and expose them to lesser-known episodes in the history of Hungarian Jewry in modern times. I am delighted that this translation has been possible and am most grateful to Professor Ira Robinson who read the Hebrew book, encouraged me to translate it, and referred me to the Academic Studies Press. Special thanks to Shaul Vardi for preparing a professional, readable, and precise translation that manages to preserve the unique flavor of the traditional texts.

Thanks to the Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch Chair for Research of the “Torah with Derekh Erez Movement” for the grant partially supporting the writing and publication of this book.

I would like to thank my dear children Michal, Tzvika, Ariel, and Yair, and their families, for their interest and encouragement. Above all, thanks to my beloved Avigail, my wife and companion since my youth, for accompanying me devotedly as we advance along the paths of life.

Prologue

An Appeal to the Christian Public in Hungary

In an open letter addressed to the citizens of Hungary in 1944, while trains crammed with Jews sped east, a Jewish leader published a desperate plea to Christian society, imploring it to try to halt the horror:

Hungarian Jewry turns to Christian Hungarian society at the last moment, as its tragic fate is already an accomplished fact, and presents words of supplication. It turns to those alongside whom it has lived for a thousand years, for better and for worse, in this homeland in whose soil our ancestors lie buried. . . . We must reveal to the Christian-Hungarian society that hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews have been transported out of the country, in tragic and cruel circumstances without precedent in human history. . . . If it knew of them, Hungarian society would not look on these events without being horrified. It seems that the majority of Hungarian public opinion is unaware of these dreadful happenings, due in particular to the complete silence of the press. . . . We believe in the integrity of the Hungarian nation, which will not permit the annihilation of innocent people. But if our pleas for our lives fail to find an attentive ear, then our sole request of the Hungarians is that they end the expulsion and

the evil that accompanies the expulsion, and put an end to our suffering here, so that we might be buried in our country, in our homeland.¹

This passionate plea conceals a tragic naivety. While the mass convoys of Hungarian Jews were managed by Eichmann and his closest advisors, they were implemented by the local Hungarian police and authorities. It would not have been possible to locate hundreds of thousands of Jews scattered across thousands of different places of settlement in peripheral regions without the massive cooperation of official Hungarian bodies. The author of the appeal cited above was the eldest brother of my mother Leah, Dr. Fábián (Shraga) Herskovits, who composed it together with two colleagues. Herskovits was a Neolog rabbi with a strongly pro-Zionist orientation. Unlike most Hungarian Jews, he had refused to be swept along in the wave of Hungarian patriotism. Nevertheless, this patriotism is evident in his appeal. Even at this terrible moment, Herskovits and his colleagues believed that were the Hungarian people aware of the crime, it would still attempt to put a stop to it.

This book does not discuss the Holocaust, but it does seek to understand the conditions and background that led to the belief in the integrity of the Hungarian people reflected in the above appeal, even on the brink of annihilation. The study that forms the basis of the book focuses on Orthodox Judaism, but also illuminates to a large extent the attitudes among the Jewish population as a whole over a period of some one hundred years leading up to the destruction of Hungarian Jewry in the Holocaust. As we have seen, although the author of the above appeal was a fervent Zionist, even he had recourse to the Hungarian patriotic terminology that dominated his milieu.² Although the document was composed in the worst possible of times, the pitiful plea to be buried in the soil of the homeland, in Hungary, stands as a final echo of the “Hungarian symbiosis”—the unrequited love that was shared by so many among Hungarian Jewry.³

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- 1 Randolph L. Braham, *The Hungarian Holocaust* [Hungarian] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1981), vol. 2, 332–333.
 - 2 See Yehuda Friedlander, “Thought and Practice: Zionists and Opponents of Zionism among the Hungarian Rabbis from the First Zionist Congress (1897) through the 1950s” [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2007), 203–229. A collection of Herskovits’s sermons offers a full exposition of his Zionist views: Yehuda Friedlander and Kinga Frojimovics, eds., *Makor—Selected Sermons of Rabbi Herskovits* [Hungarian and English] (Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Levéltár, 2000).
 - 3 The expressions here are quoted from a critical article by Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), “Jews and Germans,” in his *Devarim be-go* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1982), 96–113.

Introduction

Jews reached the Danube Basin as early as the third century, in the wake of the Roman legions; at the time the area formed the Roman province of Pannonia. Jewish artifacts have been found in archeological excavations undertaken in Roman settlements and army camps in the region, some of which are displayed at the National Museum in Budapest.¹ The arrival of the early Magyar tribes in the area in the ninth century was followed by the establishment of a stable monarchy, creating a new incentive for Jews to move to the “Land of Hagar,” as the region was referred to in medieval rabbinical texts.² In 1526 the Ottomans conquered most of the Kingdom of Hungary; they would continue to occupy the area for over 150 years. The country declined during this period and many of its inhabitants emigrated. By the time the Habsburg dynasty took control of Hungary in the mid-eighteenth century, fewer than ten thousand Jews remained. From this point forward, however, the Jewish community began to grow.

1 Sandor Scheiber, *Jewish Inscriptions in Hungary: From the Third Century to 1686* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983).

2 In Hungarian, the Hungarian nation is referred to solely by the term “Magyar,” and Hungary is known as the “Land of the Magyars” (*Magyarország*). In English and many other languages, the parallel term “Hungarian” is also in use. The two terms are broadly synonymous, although “Magyar” is sometimes regarded as conveying a stronger ethnic connotation, whereas “Hungarian” has rather a political and civil sense.

The overwhelming majority of the Jews of Hungary, who numbered almost one million at the beginning of the twentieth century, arrived from the mid-eighteenth century onward in two waves of migration, from west and east.³ The first wave originated in the German-speaking lands—Moravia, Bohemia, Austria, and Germany and largely consisted of immigrants from a relatively prosperous background, who held liberal attitudes on religious matters and were culturally and socially open-minded. Many of the new arrivals settled in urban areas in the center and west of Hungary (Upper Hungary or Oberland), and like their coreligionists in Central and Western Europe underwent processes of profound acculturation and assimilation. The second wave of immigrants came mainly from Galicia, which was a far less developed region. Most of these Jews were less prosperous, more conservative with respect to matters of religion and tradition, and maintained an affinity with Hasidic circles. They settled primarily in rural areas in the northeast of the country (Unterland) and included certain groups that tended toward cultural and social separatism and disapproved of modernity.

From an early stage, therefore, the Jewish presence in Hungary was characterized by a division into two broad groups with contrasting characteristics—a division that was largely a product of Hungary's geographical location between west and east. Jews in western Hungary tended to adopt a modern lifestyle, while those in the eastern provinces were more inclined to adhere to conservative norms. These distinctions intensified over time, creating a rift within the Jewish population. In 1868 the Hungarian authorities convened a Jewish Congress to discuss the formation of a national umbrella body to represent the Jewish public. However, fundamental and unbridgeable disagreements emerged between the two factions. The Orthodox chose to withdraw from the Congress, and Hungarian Jewry split into two main streams, Neolog and Orthodox, each of which established its own national organization. Thus social, economic, and religious differences were formalized and institutionalized.⁴

3 See Michael Silber, "Hungary," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 2, Table 1: Number of Jews in Hungary—911,227 according to the 1910 census. Komoróczy gives a figure of 938,438 Jews for the same year; the difference is due to the exclusion or inclusion of figures for autonomous regions such as Slovenia-Croatia. See Géza Komoróczy, *History of the Jews in Hungary* [Hungarian] (Budapest: Kalligram, 2012), vol. 2, 1119.

4 Michael Silber, "The Roots of Division in Hungarian Jewry" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1985); Yaakov Katz, *The Unhealed Breach: The Secession of Orthodox Jews from the General Community in Hungary and Germany* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1995).

The Neolog movement, a uniquely Hungarian phenomenon, developed from the mid-nineteenth century in the Oberland regions. Faithful to the ethos of integration, the Neologs sought to adapt the institution and style of the synagogue to the prevailing esthetic spirit of the surrounding society, without infringing basic halakhic principles and without altering the prayer book. Although the Neolog movement did not in principle deviate from traditional rabbinical practice, it abandoned any attempt to coerce the public into observing the religious commandments, was less strict regarding halakhic demands, and sought to eliminate the cultural differences between its members and the majority society, while at the same time maintaining their religious identity.⁵ The Neolog approach was advanced by middle-class Jews, primarily for pragmatic financial and social reasons, rather than on the basis of an intellectual critique of the Halakhah. The rabbis and spiritual leaders who inclined toward the Neolog approach did not develop a distinct theology, nor did they go as far in their innovations as the Reform movement in Germany. The commitment among the Neologs to the observance of the halakhic way of life is broadly similar to that found in the Conservative movement in the United States in the early twentieth century.

In 1871 the minister of education and religions approved the regulations of both factions. However, some communities preferred to maintain their preexisting arrangements; these later formed an intermediate stream known as the Status Quo.⁶ The schism became the key distinguishing feature of Hungarian Jewry and had a profound influence on its conduct for decades to come. It also constituted a formative experience for Hungarian Orthodoxy: in the nineteenth century, in particular, an extensive rabbinical literature developed, including polemical works and halakhic rulings, as part of the effort to justify and perpetuate the schism.⁷

Differences also emerged within the Orthodox stream, particularly from the latter third of the nineteenth century onward, between those living in the Unterland, who showed a tendency to insularity and religious conservatism

5 On the emergence of the Neolog stream, see Katz, *Unhealed Breach*, 53–59.

6 On the development of the Jewish religious streams in Hungary and their conduct from the schism through 1950, and for a description of their distinctive social, economic, demographic, and organizational characteristics, see Kinga Frojimovics, “The Religious Streams in Hungarian Jewry (Orthodox, Neolog, and Status Quo) between 1868/1869 and 1950, Socioeconomic, Demographic, and Organizational Characteristics” [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 5763).

7 For an extensive review of the rabbinical literature presenting justifications for the division, see Ben-Zion ben Meshulam Shraga Jakobowitz, *Remember the Days of Old* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: private publication, 5746), 4 vols.

(Eastern Orthodoxy) and those in the Oberland, who adopted a more open variant of Orthodoxy, including a measure of integration in Hungarian culture (Western Orthodoxy). Ultra-Orthodoxy constituted an extreme separatist minority within Eastern Orthodoxy that utterly rejected modernity and was opposed to any tendency to integrate in surrounding society.⁸

The period addressed by this book begins in the year of emancipation (1867), when Orthodoxy in Hungary embarked on a process of integration in Hungarian society and culture, and ends in 1944, when this chapter came to a tragic end. The intervening seventy-seven years were a period of dramatic change for the Hungarian state, and equally so for its Jewish inhabitants. Our goal here is to explore the attitudes among the different shades of Hungarian Orthodoxy toward their country, including such aspects as the national leadership, Hungarian nationhood, the people, Christianity, and antisemitism.⁹ The narrative combines a thematic approach with chronological order, in an attempt to highlight the key findings while allowing an understanding of their linear development over time.

Our period began with a clarion call of joy and hope and ended in a still, small silence. The titles of works describing this period, such as “From Emancipation to Catastrophe” or “The Politics of Containment and Exclusion,” accurately summarize the underlying course of history.¹⁰ The entire community indeed plunged from the status of a minority favored by the leadership to a community denied the most basic of human rights. Almost all the Jews of Europe experienced a very similar decline; the distinction of the Hungarian Jewry would seem to lie mainly in the high point from which it began. The community participated in the shaping of Hungarian nationhood and played a key role in its economic, industrial, commercial, and cultural development. With hindsight, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Hungarian Jews, who comprised around five

8 On the emergence and character of ultra-Orthodoxy, see Michael Silber, “The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition,” in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 23–84.

9 Following the Treaty of Trianon (1920), large areas of territory and substantial populations were transferred from Greater Hungary to the neighboring countries. As part of this process, approximately half the Jews in Hungary came under the sovereignty of other countries; most of these Jews belonged to the Orthodox stream. Following the Vienna Awards of 1938 and 1940, further border adjustments were made and many Jews again became citizens of Hungary. This book focuses primarily on the Jews who lived within the Hungarian state in the period 1867–1944.

10 T. D. Kramer, *From Emancipation to Catastrophe: The Rise and Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000); Vera Ranki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999).

percent of the total population of the country, had little if any influence over their own fate; they were tossed around by far more powerful historical forces. I seek to examine the period from their perspective: to examine the events through the eyes of Hungarian Jews of the time, and to explore their feelings, thoughts, and responses to the reality in which they lived. Although the status of the community began to decline after the First World War, its members believed until the last moment that in their country things would be different: here it would not happen. And when it did happen here, they were left stunned and astonished. Accordingly, this study also seeks to understand why they were so surprised; how could they stand on the edge of an abyss without seeing it? How did they fail to notice the slope even as they descended it?

During our period, and even before it, most of the Jews of Hungary moved into the modern world and attempted to integrate in it. An examination of their attitudes toward their surroundings, on the issues of the state, the people, nationhood, Christianity, and antisemitism, forms the basis for examining the extent of their integration in modernity. For centuries, traditional Judaism in Europe advocated separation from the non-Jewish world. It built protective walls around itself, developed its own distinct culture, and nurtured a separate way of life. Orthodox Judaism considered itself the heir and successor of this traditional Judaism, while the Neologs sought to move out from the isolationist way of life and integrate in society at large. The spirit of modernity, which advocated the integration of all those living in the country and the removal of the barriers that divided them, presented a threat to religion and tradition; accordingly, Orthodoxy opposed this tendency and its response was far more nuanced and reserved. In the following chapters I will attempt to gauge the extent to which the Orthodox integrated in the modern state and the extent to which it remained faithful to the traditional attitudes. I will do so primarily through an examination of Orthodox attitudes on two key issues: Hungarian nationhood and antisemitism. Though these two issues are interrelated and connected, they nevertheless constitute separate aspects. Traditional Judaism had developed firm opinions on both issues, and accordingly we will ask to what extent Hungarian Orthodoxy maintained these approaches, and to what extent it adopted new, modern approaches. Had a form of Modern Orthodoxy already emerged in Hungary by the end of the nineteenth century?

A Jewry of Extremes?

In 1925, the president of the Jewish National Fund, Menachem Ussishkin (1863–1941), declared during a visit to Budapest: “I came here to understand

and study Hungarian Jewry, because there is no Jewish public in the world that presents a greater mystery than this one. This Jewry combines extreme contrasts—on the one hand, there is no more assimilationist a group than its liberal wing, and on the other it includes circles that utterly reject modernity.”¹¹ Ussishkin’s comments reflect a widely held view that Hungarian Jewry was comprised of two polarized groups, the Neologs on one side and the Orthodox on the other; enthusiastic modernizers against its sworn adversaries. The historian Shimon Dubnov (1860–1941) expressed a similar view:

The dispute between the religious reformers and the ultra-Orthodox that erupted in Hungary in the 1840s has continued. In the meantime this religious dispute has been further complicated by political differences and hatred between assimilationist supporters of Magyar identity and separatists. Here the two ends clashed: Ossified and pious opponents of any progress, on the one hand, and free enlightened Jews eager to embrace Magyar culture, on the other; and there was no intermediate group between them such as the Neo-Orthodoxy in Germany. Rebels against the light from the school of the “Chatam Sofer” (Rabbi Moshe Sofer, 1762–1839) and deniers of Jewish nationhood from the circle around Lipót Löw¹² could not unite in any field of public action. This explains the gravity of their war and the stubbornness of the feuding parties.¹³

Thus Hungarian Jewry was portrayed as comprising two extremes, without an intermediate group: fanatical opponents of modernity on the one hand, and liberal-Neolog assimilationists on the other. The rift between the two sides accentuated this sense and created the impression of a dichotomous schism between two poles. These two extreme groups indeed existed, and were prominent within Hungarian Jewry, particularly prior to the First World War. However, like any other human group, the Jews of Hungary included a spectrum

11 *Zsidó Ujság* (ZsU), December 12, 1925. The *Zsidó Ujság* (Jewish Newspaper) was the most important Orthodox newspaper in the interwar period. It was founded in 1925 in Budapest by Lipót (Arye Lev) Groszberg (1869–1927), the editor of the *Allgemeine Jüdische Zeitung*. After Groszberg’s death, the weekly newspaper was edited by his son Jenő Groszberg (1896–1980), a student of the Shevet Sofer, who was ordained to the rabbinate at Pressburg Yeshiva and served as a rabbi in Budapest.

12 Rabbi Leopold (Yehuda Leib) Löw (his first name in Hungarian was Lipót) was one of the prominent Neolog spokesmen at the 1868 Congress that led to the division.

13 Shimon Dubnov, *World History of the Jewish People* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 5714).

of opinions and approaches. In this study I will challenge the dominant dichotomous description and note the presence of a significant intermediate Orthodox group that favored integration and modernity alongside loyalty to its heritage. This group underwent acculturation, but not assimilation, and indeed constituted a Hungarian variant of Neo-Orthodoxy.

The dichotomous discourse is also apparent in the studies of Jacob Katz (1904–1998), a historian of Hungarian origin, though in a less emphatic manner than in the case of Dubnov. Katz's essay on the identity of post-emancipatory Hungarian Jewry, which in part examines the Orthodox sector, tends to conflate the religious and organizational divide in the community with an ideological divide concerning Magyarization: "Linguistic assimilation notwithstanding, the Orthodox acculturation was strictly limited. . . . Orthodox Jewry was committed to the pre-emancipatory image of Judaism accommodating itself to the changing circumstances only as far as compelling agencies exacted it. . . . They could respect the laws of the country in which they lived but scarcely identify with its nation."¹⁴ The Neolog stream, Katz argued, integrated willingly and from the outset; the Orthodox stream avoided integration to the best of its ability, and when it showed signs of integration, this was due to the absence of any alternative. Katz bases his argument in part on the letter sent by Rabbi Chaim Sofer (1821–1886) to Rabbi Shimon Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) in Frankfurt. In the letter, which will be discussed in greater detail below, Sofer negated any concept of loyalty to an alien people, as distinct from loyalty to the governing powers. In accordance with this approach, most Orthodox Jews in Hungary did not participate in Magyarization, or at most did so in a partial manner. Katz's essay "The Uniqueness of Hungarian Jewry" also creates the impression that Orthodoxy was broadly united in its attitude to Magyarization: "At one end stood those eager to assimilate, in the middle the relatively moderate Reform stream evolved, and at the other end, separated from the two former groups, the Orthodox managed their lives in communities that had a starkly conservative character. Some of the ultra-Orthodox led their lives under the guidance of Hasidic rabbis. . . . The latter were completely separated from Gentile society and apathetic toward events outside their own world."¹⁵ According to this approach, there were extreme assimilationists who sought to distance themselves from Judaism; next came the Neologs, who integrated in

14 Jacob Katz, "The Identity of Post-Emancipatory Hungarian Jewry," in *A Social and Economic History of Central European Jewry*, ed. Jehuda Don and Victor Karady (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 13–31.

15 Jacob Katz, "The Uniqueness of Hungarian Jewry" [Hebrew], *Molad* 6, no. 32 (December 1974): 193–198.

general society while maintaining a distinct Jewish conscience and identity; and at the far end stood Orthodoxy. While delineating the dividing line between Orthodoxy and the Neologs, Katz appears to have blurred the distinction between Western and Eastern Orthodoxy.¹⁶

The historian Shulamit Volkov argues that “the main fault line in Jewry runs between those who were willing to participate in the ‘modernity project’ and those who were not willing to do so.”¹⁷ In light of this comment, I will seek to challenge the dichotomous approach and to propose an alternative fault line in Hungarian Jewry. In place of a line dividing Orthodox and Neolog, I will suggest a new border: between those who rejected modernity and those who accepted it. I will show that from the Emancipation onward, there developed in Hungary, between the two poles, an expansive Modern Orthodoxy that has to date not received sufficient attention. This circle saw no contradiction between adherence to tradition and integration in the state. The Orthodox saw themselves as distinct from the Neologs, and indeed in terms of their religious outlooks and traditional way of life significant differences continued to exist between the two streams. In terms of their attitude to the surrounding world, however—to the nation, state, people, and religion, and to secular education—this Orthodoxy was much closer to the Neologs than to ultra-Orthodoxy. Accordingly, I will suggest that the fault line in Hungarian Jewry should be positioned between those who rejected modernity as a matter of principle, and those who, to a lesser or greater degree, adapted to it and lived in peace with it.¹⁸

Modernity

Modernity is a broad and multifaceted concept. Many different attempts have been made to define and describe it. In the latter half of the twentieth century, researchers tended to regard modernity as a uniform phenomenon manifested in similar ways even in radically different societies. In the 1990s, the sociologist

16 Frojimovics, who examined the emergence and development of the various streams following the division, also tends to regard Orthodoxy as a monolithic group in terms of its attitude toward modernity. She refers to “the struggle between the camps that supported modernization, on the one hand, and tradition, on the other” (Frojimovics, “Religious Streams,” 383).

17 Shulamit Volkov, “The Modernity Project of the European Jews: Division and Unification,” in *Zionism and the Return to History—A Reevaluation* [Hebrew], ed. Shmuel Chai Eisenstein and Moshe Lissak (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1999), 279–305.

18 There was also a small group of Zionists (Neolog and Orthodox, see chapter four below) who do not fit into either of Dubnov’s polarized groups. According to the method proposed here, this circle will be placed together with those who lived in peace with modernity.

Shmuel Noach Eisenstadt (1923–2010) coined a new term in the study of modernity—“multiple modernities.” Contrary to the prevailing approach, he emphasized that divergent patterns of modernity developed in different places and societies.¹⁹ In this spirit, I will attempt below to sketch a profile of the unique characteristics of modernity as these developed in the Orthodox community in Hungary.

The sociologist Peter Berger (1929–2017) distinguishes between two key dimensions of modernity: the social dimension (including political, industrial, economic, and technological aspects) and the dimension of the consciousness of the individuals and groups that comprise society. In our context, “consciousness” refers to the attitudinal and conceptual worlds of ordinary people, as distinct from theoreticians or philosophers.²⁰ I will focus below on this dimension of consciousness, attempting to capture the different shades of modernity reflected in the thought and behavior of Orthodox Jews in Hungary between the Emancipation and the Holocaust.

Modernity literally means contemporary—occurrences in the present, regardless of their content and essence. In this sense, modernity is a chronological term. However, the term “modernity” as used today has an additional meaning that embodies a value judgment favoring the cultural changes that have characterized recent generations and a positive attitude to innovation and change as crucial factors encouraging human progress. In this sense, modernity is an attitude and a mode of thought. Modernity is associated with specific themes and ideologies, such as rationalism, critical thought, individual liberties, and so forth. A government interested in encouraging processes of modernization will take practical steps, such as investing in education, establishing institutions that will act to promote these ideals, encouraging citizens to engage in more productive employment.

Modernity presented particularistic Jewish tradition with challenges and difficulties, as an external construct that emerged in the “Gentile” world. Moreover, the recognition that change and innovation are positive phenomena that advance and improve humanity; the focus on the present and future, in place of adoration of the past; and the belief in the strength of humans and liberation from cognitive enslavement—all these tendencies are alien to the traditional approach that sanctifies the past and regards it as the key to life in the present.

19 Shmuel Noach Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute, 2010).

20 Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).

In addition to the inherently problematic encounter with the external and the new, there were also doubts regarding the specific content of modernity.²¹ In any case, a tendency to integration in the external world is always a hallmark of modernity.

Modernity has several key features. The idea of progress assumes that the new will be better than the old; it is this idea that imbued modernization with a quasi-messianic hue of salvation. Modernization also implied secularization and the reform of educational institutions and systems. In the Jewish context, we can suggest that modernity had two facets. The first was internal, relating primarily to the renewal and reinvigoration of the religious systems and their suitability for the demands of time and place. This facet also included reference to Zionism and other forms of Jewish nationhood. The second facet concerned the attitude toward the external non-Jewish surroundings: society, the state and nation, other religions, and secular education. Accordingly, modernization among the Jews occurred in two arenas: in the internal Jewish arena, where the most pressing questions centered around religion and tradition; and in the external arena, concerning in particular the measure of identification, integration, and containment of the surrounding culture. Within the Jewish arena, Orthodoxy faced an assault from the advocates of enlightenment and secularization; indeed, opposition to such trends was the very purpose of its creation. In the external arena, there was greater room for creative and innovative interpretation. Many observers have discussed the Orthodox positions in the field of religion. I will seek here to concentrate on the manifestations of modernity in the external arena, rather than on secularization or halakhic and religious changes. This approach highlights modernization as a process of merger with the surrounding society and the replacement of particularistic Jewish values by general and universal ones.

Modernization arrived in Hungary at the time when its gates opened to Jewish integration—later than it did in Germany and Western Europe. The Jews not only integrated in the processes of modernization, but to a large degree shaped and created them. They were full-fledged partners in the development of industry, commerce, banking and finance, agriculture, the press, and culture.

21 In his study of the attitudes of German Jews toward modernization from the eighteenth century onward, the historian Michael Meyer seeks to define Jewish modernity: “Does it even exist, or is there no such thing as a distinct Jewish modernity, but merely a process of the expanded participation of Jews in the modernization of the societies in which they live? If this is the case Jewish modernity becomes a companion or result of integration, which is the more fundamental process, and which we may equally term Westernization or Europeanization.” See Michael Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), 28–38.

I will consider below the extent to which Orthodox Jews in Hungary identified with the Hungarian state, language, culture, people, and nation. The sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) emphasized rationalism as the most prominent feature of modernity: the use of logic, rather than of a given faith system, to interpret reality.²² Equipped with this insight, we will gauge here the extent of innovation and rationalism in Orthodox discourse on the subjects of exile and hatred of Jews—issues on which the tradition had adhered to a clear set of attitudes for many centuries.

Orthodoxy

Jacob Katz regarded Orthodoxy not as a direct continuation of premodern traditional society as it saw itself, but as a new and dynamic phenomenon that emerged in response to the collapse of the ghetto walls and the threat modernizing trends posed to the status of tradition.²³ Loyalty to tradition among the Orthodox is regarded as the product of a conscious choice by its adherents, at a time when many were abandoning tradition and given the opportunities that had become available to Jews in the new era. The insight that Orthodoxy is indeed an innovation is based on its sociological, ideological, political, and organizational attributes, all of which distinguish it from traditional society.²⁴ On the verge of the modern era, traditional society faced processes and phenomena that endangered its very existence. Those loyal to tradition found themselves in

22 See Max Weber, *Rationality and Modernity*, ed. Sam Whimster and Scott Lash (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

23 Katz asserts that the Orthodox claim to be no more than the continuers of ancient, traditional Judaism “is no less than fiction.” Jacob Katz, “Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective,” in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 2, ed. Peter Y. Medding (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 3–17. The first observer to express this view clearly was the historian Moshe Samet, “The Response of the Halakhah to Modernization” [Hebrew], *Deot* 36 (5729): 22–24. In his introduction to Samet’s book *The New is Prohibited by the Torah—Chapters in the History of Orthodoxy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 5765), 8, the historian Immanuel Etkes suggests that this insight is the product of the interaction between Samet and his teacher Jacob Katz. See also Yehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira, eds., “Responses to Modernity in Eastern Europe,” in *Zionism and Religion* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1994), 21–32. Earlier, Ben-David attributed modern characteristics to Hungarian Orthodoxy, emphasizing the growth of the institution of the yeshiva: Yosef Ben-David, [Hebrew], *Zion* 17 (5712): 101–128.

24 Katz tends to focus on the social aspects, whereas Samet emphasizes changes in halakhic rulings. For a detailed discussion, see Yosef Shalmon, Aviezer Ravitzky, and Adam Ferziger, eds., *Jewish Orthodoxy: New Aspects* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), 297–344; Samet, *The New is Prohibited*; and Katz’s books mentioned above.

a minority, or were afraid of being such, and responded either by attacking the existential threat or by adopting a defensive position.²⁵

Many researchers involved in the study of Orthodoxy in general regard it as a post-traditional and reactionary response to modern trends concerning education, reform, and secularization emphasizing the tension and contradiction between the traditional world and modernity.²⁶ Orthodoxy is regarded as a closed, detached entity: an enclave within the Jewish world preoccupied with halakhic debates and ideological struggles against other streams of Judaism. As a result of this approach, research into Orthodoxy in general, and its Eastern European wing in particular, has focused mainly on the internal Jewish realm. In this study I seek to examine Hungarian Orthodoxy in its external context, through its attitudes to society, culture, and government. Our study will explore the Orthodox response to the rise of the Hungarian nation-state, and consider the extent to which it integrated in this state, its positions toward the Hungarian people and its religion, and its response to antisemitic phenomena. On a broader level, we will review the conduct of Orthodoxy within the modern world and consider to what extent it was rooted in specific circumstances of time and place.

Under the influence of the Catholic imperial court in Vienna, and contrary to the inclinations of the ruling Calvinist elite, there was no separation between religion and state in Hungary. Every individual was required to register as a member of a specific religious community and to pay taxes to its institutions. This explains why, after the schism of 1868, there was a clear separation between the Jews who were affiliated with the different streams. I will refer here to any Jew who was a member of the Orthodox community by the term “Orthodox.” This label does not define the extent to which that individual was strict in the observance of the religious commandments or actually maintained a religious lifestyle. For various reasons, Jews who did not scrupulously observe every religious commandment also chose to affiliate with the Orthodox community; the communities themselves were not permitted to select or reject members. Accordingly, one might find a community that was careful to ensure that the laws of Kashrut were followed in its religious institutions, but turned a blind eye to the religious practices of its members in their homes. In some rare instances, individuals who did not maintain a religious lifestyle were even appointed as the heads of Orthodox communities.

25 For a summary of the different perceptions of Orthodoxy in the research literature and disputes concerning its origins, see Roni Beer-Marx, *Fortresses of Paper—The Newspaper Ha-Levanon and Jewish Orthodoxy* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2017), 19–23.

26 Shalmon et al., *Jewish Orthodoxy* offers a detailed discussion on the question of the position of Orthodoxy between tradition and modernity.

An article published in 1898 in the Hungarian-Jewish religious journal *Tel Talpiot* complained that “in some Orthodox communities, most of the stores remain open on the Sabbath and the women do not visit the ritual bath.”²⁷ In 1926, a religious query was presented to Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Ehrenreich (1887–1942) concerning a community “most of whose members are evil and sinners before the Lord—are they allowed to be called Orthodox? . . . After all, Orthodoxy itself has to date not supervised personal lives within the community, and in several communities there are individuals who profane the Sabbath.”²⁸ These instances are not representative, as most Orthodox Jews maintained a halakhic way of life, but for our purposes here all the above will come under the term “Orthodox.” Orthodoxy as whole was united in its opposition to the Neolog movement and accepted the authority of Halakhah and rabbinical leadership. In the 1870s and 1880s, the general trend among Hungarian Orthodoxy was characterized by a sympathetic approach toward ultra-Orthodoxy, although most Orthodox individuals were far more moderate in their religious behavior and beliefs than the leading zealots.²⁹ On overtly religious and traditional questions, it appears that the authority of the more extreme rabbis was accepted, whereas on other matters a different approach was taken. The more moderate Western Hungarian Orthodox did not oppose the militant line adopted by the ultra-Orthodox. An example of this is Rabbi Chaim Sofer, who was arguably the most prominent spokesman of ultra-Orthodoxy, yet in 1879 was chosen to serve as the rabbi of cosmopolitan and modern Budapest, whose Orthodox Jews were more moderate and Western in their character. Sofer’s extremist views did not present an obstacle to his appointment as the chief rabbi of the city. From the early years following emancipation, a silent agreement appears to have taken hold whereby neither side criticized the other, presumably in order to maintain a united front against the more “dangerous” Neolog adversary and, above all, in order to preserve the separate status enjoyed by Orthodoxy, which was regarded as a bulwark against the threats facing religion.

During the period between 1867 and 1944, Hungary underwent significant geopolitical and demographic changes that had a particularly profound impact on the Jews. This reality presents a methodological problem to anyone examining the history of the Jews of Hungary during this period. Following the Treaty of Trianon (1920), approximately half of the Jews of Hungary came under the

27 *Tel Talpiot* (1898): 83.

28 Rabbi Chaim Yehuda Ehrenreich, *Treasure of Life* [Hebrew], vol. 2, 49 (private publication).

29 Adam Ferziger, “The Religious Zealot as a Halakhic Arbiter—Rabbi Chaim Sofer,” in *Religious Zealotry* [Hebrew], ed. Meir Litvak and Ora Limor, (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2007), 85–112.

sovereignty of other countries; in the late 1930s, many of these once again came under the control of Hungary following the Vienna Awards. Accordingly, it is not unreasonable to ask: who is a Hungarian Jew? Let us take the example of a Jew from Munkács in Carpathian Ruthenia who was born and raised in Hungary, but found himself a citizen of the newly created country of Czechoslovakia. This Jew maintained his Hungarian language and culture, and was even regarded by the authorities as an agent of Magyarization. Are we to include him in the history of the Jews of Hungary, or will his Czechoslovak citizenship place him and those like him in the category of the Jews of that country? Some writers use the catch-all phrase “Hungarian-speaking Jews” to refer to all the Jews within the Hungarian cultural sphere, regardless of the changing political boundaries. This approach encompasses all the Jews of “Greater Hungary,” even after the changes introduced following the Treaty of Trianon. In this study I will focus mainly on those Jews who remained within the sovereign territory of Hungary throughout the historical changes, although I will also relate in some instances to Orthodox Jews who lived in the countries that assumed sovereignty over various areas and who regarded themselves as Hungarian Jews and responded to developments inside Hungary. Orthodox positions in Hungary were expressed by various bodies: the “Autonomous Executive Committee of the Jewish Orthodox Faithful in Hungary and Transylvania” (the Executive Committee), the rabbinical leadership, the press, and the Orthodox public (whose views are more difficult to ascertain). However, organizational discipline and the adversary stance against the Neologs usually dictated a uniform position. In most cases, differences of opinion can only be inferred from indirect allusions.

Hungary in the Modern Era

The Dualist Period

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the whole historic territory of the Hungarian kingdom came under the control of the Habsburg Empire, after a period of over 150 years when most of its territory had been occupied by the Ottomans.³⁰ Austria’s centralized system of government and its efforts to impose the German language created frustration in Hungary, strengthening the aspiration for political independence. The outcome of this process was a revolt

30 On the consequences of the Ottoman occupation, see Paul Lendvai, *The Hungarians* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

against the Austrians (1703–1711) led by Ferenc Rákóczi (1676–1735), which ended in a compromise whereby the land-owning nobility regained its rights and former rebels who accepted Habsburg patronage were pardoned.³¹ The second quarter of the nineteenth century, known in Hungarian historiography as the Reform Era (*reformkor*), was marked by a process of modernization and the development of a national revival movement. The Hungarian national movement was influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution and European Enlightenment, and for the most part it had a liberal orientation.³² The dominant elite sought to revive the Hungarian language, which until this time had served only as a spoken language, to nurture Hungarian culture, to advance the political goals of a nation-state, and perhaps even to gain independence. These aspirations reached their peak in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 (known in Hungarian as *szabadságharc*—the “Freedom Struggle.”) The revolt against the Habsburgs was led by Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894) and formed part of the European Spring of Nations; it was suppressed in 1849 with the assistance of the Russian army.³³ The failure of the revolution led to a period in which Emperor Franz Joseph I imposed harsh policies on Hungary. In 1867, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (*Ausgleich* in German and *kiegyezés* in Hungarian) was reached. Hungary was granted a large degree of autonomy within the empire, but foreign affairs and defense continued to be managed from Vienna. Despite a reality of quasi-independence, the desire for national self-determination had not been satisfied. In the same year the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was founded, and the Dualist period began.

The protracted desire for national self-realization and independence intensified national sentiments and fueled the vision of a Magyar nation-state. Constant discussion of patriotism, loyalty to the homeland, the dissemination of the Hungarian language, and other components of national identity became a dominant strand in public discourse and a prominent theme in the press and in literature. A majority of the residents of Hungary were not ethnic Magyars but members of diverse minority groups—Romanians, Slovaks, Germans,

31 This period in Hungarian history is described in detail in Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Frank Tibor, *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 100–120; Peter Hanák, *One Thousand Years: A Concise History of Hungary* (Budapest: Corvina, 1988), 77–81; Lendvai, *The Hungarians*, 145–154.

32 On the Reform Era, see Lendvai, *The Hungarians*, 191–205; Hanák, *One Thousand Years*, 97–109.

33 On the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, see Sugar et al., *History*, 209–233; Hanák, *One Thousand Years*, 114–121.

Ruthenians, Serbs, and Croats—who did not speak Hungarian.³⁴ This reality heightened the desire to emphasize the Magyar component, but at the same time impeded its dissemination.³⁵ In 1850, for example, only 41.5 percent of Hungarian residents declared that their mother language was Hungarian; this figure increased to 46.6 percent by 1880.³⁶ The dominant aristocracy sought to unite the multiethnic and multifaith nation under the Hungarian national flag and to strengthen the Hungarian component of its character. To this end, it invited the minorities to join the national body through a process of Magyarization, based on adoption of the Hungarian language and culture, identification with national goals, and the abandonment of manifestations of non-Hungarian ethnicity (*magyarosodás*).³⁷ The hope was that this process would secure a Hungarian majority in the country, thereby legitimizing their efforts to impose Magyar culture throughout its territory. In these circumstances and times, Hungarian nationalism had a liberal character: an all-embracing form of nationalism that sought to extend the boundaries of the nation. Jacob Katz observed that “the Hungarian national movement represented a special shade of nineteenth-century European nationalism. Its unique features include its rapid rise, the creation of national consciousness almost ex nihilo, the extreme nature of the demands presented to its followers, yet at the same time a far-reaching openness to accept newcomers to its ranks.”³⁸

“Historical Hungary” belonged to the Habsburg Empire with a largely German administration, though this did not apply to Hungary, where Latin and Magyar remained the language of administration till the early nineteenth century. The processes of modernization shaped in Germany and Austria had a profound impact on Hungary.³⁹

34 Hungary at the time included all of Slovakia and Transylvania, parts of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, and the Burgenland province, which is today part of Austria.

35 According to the 1910 census, the number (and in parentheses the percentage) of the non-Magyar national groups were: 2,948,000 Romanians (16); 1,946,000 Slovaks (10.7); 1,903,000 Germans (10.4); 1,121,000 Ruthenians, Serbs, and Croats (6.1); and 938,438 Jews (approximately 5 percent). See Nathaniel Katzburg, *Antisemitism in Hungary 1867–1914* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1969), 195.

36 Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina Osiris, 1999), 36.

37 On the trend of Magyarization, see Sugar et al., *History*, 255–254, 261–264; Kramer, *Emancipation*, 21–23. The extensive use of the term *magyarosodás* in its various declensions, and of the related verb, are evidence of the intense preoccupation with this concept.

38 Katz, *Uniqueness*, 195.

39 On the influence of German culture on the Jews of Hungary, see Guy Miron, “Zionism and Jewish Nationhood in Germany: On the Special Path between Center and East,” in *Zionism in Its Various Regions* [Hebrew], ed. Alon Gal (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 5770), 281–339; Guy Miron, *The Waning of the Emancipation Era* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2011), 11–22; Michael K. Silber, “The Historical Experience of German Jewry

The ethnic minorities were disappointed that their national identity did not secure any recognition in the dualist kingdom. They maintained an affinity with the ethnic compatriots in the neighboring countries, and most of them rejected the demand for Magyarization. By contrast, many Jews enthusiastically joined the project of acculturation and assimilation, showing a particularly high level of loyalty to the state. Katz noted that “a conscious assimilation whose aim is total inculcation in surrounding society is an extremely common phenomenon among Hungarian Jewry.”⁴⁰ Researchers refer to an unwritten contract between the dominant elite and the Jews—the “social contract of emancipation”—based on the granting of equal rights in return for Magyarization.⁴¹ The Jews were expected to adopt the native language and culture, to abandon manifestations of separatism, and to adapt in order to enable cultural merger with the Hungarians. From the Jewish perspective, the length of time that passed until they received equal rights under the law and the protracted and difficult struggle this entailed served only to intensify the desire and need to demonstrate their patriotic sentiments. The process of Magyarization played an important part in shaping the character and fate of Hungarian Jewry in the modern era. The trust placed in the Hungarian state by broad circles in the Jewish population did not dissipate even when its attitude changed following the First World War, and more sharply still from the late 1930s.

In the 1840s, as part of the public discourse in Hungary concerning the reforms needed in order to advance the state, the question of the emancipation of the minorities was also raised. In 1840 the parliament enacted a law removing almost all the restrictions placed on the right of Jews to live in the cities of Hungary and opening up new possibilities for employment. The law sparked a process of urbanization among the Jews, who began to play a growing role in the nation's economy. Many Jews joined the struggle against Austria in 1848–1849, and this became a formative experience for them. Kossuth and the other leaders of the revolt repeatedly praised the Jews for their enthusiastic willingness to fight for Hungary's independence.⁴²

and Its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary,” in *Toward Modernity—The European Jewish Model*, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick: Transaction Books and Oxford University Press, 1987), 107–157.

40 Katz, *Uniqueness*, 195.

41 See Kati Vörös, “A Unique Contract: Interpretations of Modern Hungarian Jewish History,” *Central European University Yearbook* 3 (2002–2003): 229–255.

42 Komoróczy, *History*, vol. 1, 1163–1169. In a chapter entitled “An Army Belt in Place of Tzitzit,” Komoróczy describes the mobilization of the Hungarian Jews to the struggle for independence and the acknowledgment of their contribution by the leaders of the revolution. The title of the chapter is drawn from a letter by the German-Jewish scholar Leopold Zunz published in the

During the struggle the leaders of the revolution granted the Jews emancipation, but this was nullified by the Austrians a few weeks later after the revolt failed. The Hungarian parliament again granted emancipation to the Jews after the formation of Austro-Hungary in 1867, as part of the promise of equal rights for all the citizens of the dual monarchy.⁴³ The compromise with Austria led to rapid modernization and economic development, and the newly emancipated Jews played a significant role in this process. The path to equality was completed in 1895, when the Jewish religion was granted an equal status to that of the other non-Catholic religions (the Law of Reception). Earlier, in 1874, the Austrian parliament granted equality to the non-Catholic Christian sects and to Judaism; the law was applied retroactively from 1867 in all the countries under the Austrian crown, with the exception of Hungary.⁴⁴ It is worth noting that the Jewish religion never enjoyed a similar status in Germany.

The winds of modernization that emerged in Western Europe arrived late in Hungary. The country's economy continued to be based mainly on outmoded agriculture organized in a feudal structure.⁴⁵ Much of the land was owned by a relatively large nobility that accounted for over five percent of the population. The largest estates were owned by the high aristocracy (magnates), while most of the remainder were under the control of the "gentry," the medium and low-ranking nobility. The aristocracy had a substantial representation in parliament, in the army, and in public administration, and exerted a strong influence over the nation's politics. The ruling elite sought to introduce extensive reforms in order to bring Hungary up to the level of the developed nations of Western Europe.⁴⁶

The restrictions faced by Jews in the economic and social spheres had largely been removed by this time and the Jewish public was playing an increasingly

American newspaper *Israel's Herald* on April 30, 1849. Reporting on the participation of the Jews of Hungary in the national struggle, Zunz remarked "our brothers in Hungary are wearing a military belt in place of tzitzit." Komoróczy, *History*, vol. 1, 1163–1169, and particularly 1166.

43 The law XVII. tc., 1867 was approved at the beginning of December by both houses of the Hungarian legislature. See Katz, *Unhealed Breach*, 103.

44 Rachel Manekin, *The Jews of Galicia and the Austrian Constitution—The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Politics* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2015), 58–59.

45 Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

46 On the modernizing trends, see, for example: Sugar et al., *History*, 256–260; Michael L. Miller, "Going Native: Moritz Jellink and the Modernization of the Hungarian Economy," in *The Economy in Jewish History*, ed. Gideon Reuveni and Sarah Wobick-Segev (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 160–162. On the socioeconomic conditions in Hungary in this period, see Janos, *Politics*; and on the role played by Jews in the economic sphere, see Michael K. Silber, "A Jewish Minority in a Backward Economy: An Introduction," in *Jews in the Hungarian Economy 1760–1945*, ed. M. K. Silber (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 3–22.

prominent role in the modernization process in Hungary. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, almost the entire Jewish population of Hungary had lived in small communities in rural areas. A century later, significant Jewish populations had developed in the main cities, and particularly in the capital, which was home to the backbone of the country's middle class. In 1920, the Jewish population of Budapest was over 200,000, accounting for about one-fourth of the total population of the city.⁴⁷ The proportion of Jews prominent in the economy, commerce, law, and culture rose sharply around the turn of the century. Jews underwent a rapid process of linguistic and cultural rapprochement to Hungarian society and increasingly identified with its values. In some instances this process led to assimilation and conversion.⁴⁸

In terms of social structure, language, liturgy, and lifestyle, the Ashkenazi Jews of nineteenth-century Europe can be divided into two groups: Eastern Ashkenazis (in Poland, Lithuania, Galicia, Romania, and northeastern Hungary), and Western Ashkenazis (Germany, Moravia, Bohemia, Northern France, the Netherlands, and Western Hungary). As can be seen, this division creates a "border" within Hungarian Jewry, which, as noted above, appeared mainly as the result of two waves of immigration that occurred over a relatively short period of time.⁴⁹ The immigrants in the first wave came mainly from the west, and settled in the western regions of Hungary, while the second wave came from the east and settled in the rural districts of northeastern Hungary. The rapid pace of immigration prevented the merger of these two groups and the creation of a uniform Jewish identity. The fact that there was no significant Jewish population in the center of the country further encouraged geographical isolation and the perpetuation of the distinct character of the two groups. It should be emphasized that the northeastern regions of Hungary were in general less modern and less developed in economic and cultural terms than the west; similarly, the Jews of this region maintained a distinct character in their socioeconomic status and their attitude to modernity. In these areas a conservative, insular, and sometimes extreme form of Orthodoxy developed, influenced by the Hasidic courts in nearby Galicia and Ukraine. This unusual pattern of demographic, social, and

47 Randolph Braham and Nathaniel Katzburg, *History of the Holocaust in Hungary* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1992), 12.

48 Miklós Konrád, "Conversion and Identity" [Hungarian], *Századok* (2010): 3–46; Miklós Konrád, "Jews and Converted Jews in the Dualist Period" [Hungarian], *Történelmi Szemle* (2007): 373–402. Both these articles by the historian Miklós Konrád discuss the phenomenon of conversion in the Dualist period.

49 In 1700 there were 4,071 Jews in Hungary; in 1910—938,438. Komoróczy, *History*, vol. 2, 1116.

religious polarization within a single country mitigated against cooperation. When the minister of education and religions convened a Congress of rabbis and communal representatives in 1868, with the goal of forming a national representative organization, the participants were unable to reach agreement. The Orthodox representatives withdrew from the Congress and decided to establish a separate and autonomous Orthodox organization, which received governmental approval in 1870. While Hungarian Jewry had essentially been divided since the waves of immigration of the eighteenth century, it was now formally split into essentially two rival national organizations, which would continue to wage an acute ideological struggle for decades to come. Any person in Hungary who declared himself a member of the Jewish religion was obliged by the authorities to belong to one of these two streams. Even those who left Judaism, or moved from one stream to the other, were required to continue to pay their dues to their original community for five years.

Katz claims that “Hungarian Jewry was a young community, and this explains most of its prominent features.”⁵⁰ He does not comment further on this claim. It may be that the schism in the Hungarian community can be explained by the young age of the national community, which had not yet consolidated a shared tradition and unifying past, as was the case, for example, in the regions that would later become part of Germany. The separatist efforts of Rabbi Shimon Raphael Hirsch and his supporters in Germany encountered fierce opposition even from their fellow Orthodox rabbis, who regarded the ongoing unity of the community as a value they were not willing to relinquish. Such positions were not heard in Hungary. A further difference is that from the beginning of the last third of the nineteenth century, after emancipation, the relative weight of Orthodox Judaism in Hungary was significantly greater than in Germany.⁵¹

50 Katz, “Uniqueness,” 193.

51 Breuer estimates that from 1848 German Orthodoxy gradually declined, so that after the First World War it accounted for only 10–20 percent of the total Jewish population in Germany. See Mordechai Breuer, *Portrait of a Community: Orthodox Judaism in the German Reich 1871–1918—A Social History of a Religious Minority* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1990), 12. Until the First World War, the Orthodox accounted for approximately 52 percent of Hungarian Jews; after the war, and following the loss of Hungarian lands, this figure fell to 31 percent. In 1941, after some of the lost territories were returned to Hungary, the Orthodox accounted for almost 60 percent of the Jewish population of the country. See Gyula Zeke, “After the Rupture,” in *Seven Decades in the Life of Hungarian Jewry* [Hungarian], ed. Bányai László (Budapest: Felelős, 1990), 152; Braham and Katzburg, *History of the Holocaust*, 17. In Koerner’s two-volume study of Hungarian Jewry drawing on photographs from the period, a substantial portion of the photographs show figures whose appearance suggests an affiliation to the Orthodox community: Andras Koerner, *How They Lived: The Everyday Lives of Hungarian Jews (1867–1940)* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015), 2 vols.

Orthodox figures in Hungary looked in alarm at the disintegration of religious frameworks in Western Europe and Germany, and the Orthodox community in the country felt itself large and strong enough to launch a comprehensive struggle against the trends of innovation and reform. And so, as we have seen, two rival camps emerged in the country, more or less equal in size, and pursued a mutual struggle for many years. In Germany, by contrast, the liberal community was more dominant and Orthodoxy sought mainly to defend itself and maintain its remaining strength. While there were secessionist communities in Germany, such as that of Hirsch, in many other communities liberals and Orthodox cooperated under a single framework.

Prior to the schism, tension was already apparent within the Orthodox camp in Hungary between residents of the Oberland and the Unterland. Conservatives in the Unterland strongly opposed the tendency among their fellows in the Oberland to permit sermons in languages other than Yiddish, as well as their laxer attitude toward secular education and even attendance at public schools. The ultra-Orthodox approach was based on the prohibitions imposed by the Chatam Sofer, which were interpreted in a distinct manner in the Oberland. The son of the Chatam Sofer, the Ktav Sofer, inherited his father's leadership position and headed the rabbinate in Pressburg in the Oberland; even he was accused of failing to follow his father's instructions with sufficient strictness.⁵²

Rabbi Chaim Sofer of Munkács, the prominent ultra-Orthodox stronghold in the Unterland, claimed that in order to gain popularity, the Orthodox stream was willing to accept even Jews who profaned the Sabbath in public. He also alleged that wealthy but unobservant Jews were being appointed to leadership positions in the independent Orthodox organization. Sofer preferred a small and devoted group to one whose numbers were swollen by accepting "riffraff."⁵³ However, in 1879 Sofer was appointed chief rabbi of the Orthodox community in Budapest, thereby joining the community he had previously criticized. The tension between Orthodox circles in the Unterland and Oberland had deep cultural and socioeconomic roots, but against the background of the rivalry with the Neolog movement, and particularly following the schism, the Orthodox attempted to maintain a united façade and to obscure their internal differences as far as possible. A rare example of open criticism was the attack by

⁵² Katz, *Unhealed Breach*, 84–91.

⁵³ Yosef Zvi Sofer, *The History of the Sofrim—The History of R. Chaim Sofer and His Descendants* [Hebrew] (London: Yitzhak Yaacov Sofer, 1962), 119; Yosef Zvi Sofer, *150 Sofer—Correspondence of R. Haim Sofer* (London: Yitzhak Yaacov Sofer, 1962), 140–160 (letters 124–130).

Viador, the editor of the Budapest-based Orthodox newspaper *Zsidó Híradó*,⁵⁴ against the newspaper *Allgemeine Jüdische Zeitung* (General Jewish Newspaper, hereinafter *AJZ*), which was also published in Budapest and written in German using Hebrew letters. Viador accused the newspaper of waging a war against the Orthodox stream under the guise of criticism of the National Representative Office of the Orthodox stream in Budapest. Viador referred disparagingly to “the newspaper with the Hebrew letters”; the *AJZ* was intended mainly for readers in the Unterland and addressed them in the usual language in that region.⁵⁵

The polarization between the Orthodox and Neolog camps reflected Hungary’s geographical location in Central Europe, between east and west, and the differences between the Jews in the two distinct areas of the country. The “Unhealed Breach” (the term used by Katz as the title for his book on the subject) became the defining feature of Hungarian Jewry, influencing its character and conduct until the Holocaust.

Most of the studies on the schism tend to focus on its ideological and religious dimensions.⁵⁶ The sociologist Victor Karady, one of the most prominent contemporary scholars of Hungarian Jewry, adopts a demographic and sociological approach, focusing on the socioeconomic background to the schism.⁵⁷ He divides the map of Hungary at the turn of the twentieth century with a diagonal line running from the northwest to the south east, and then argues that most of the Jewish communities to the south of the line belonged to the Neolog stream, while most of those to the north identified with the Orthodox camp.⁵⁸ According to Karady, socioeconomic parameters of modernity, such as a low birthrate, falling infant mortality, high divorce rates, urbanization, and higher education are all stronger to the southwest of the line,

54 The weekly newspaper *Zsidó Híradó* (Jewish News—hereinafter *ZsH*) was the leading Hungarian-language Orthodox newspaper during the monarchy period. Founded in 1891, it defined itself as the mouthpiece of the Orthodox Jewish community. The editor’s real name was Dániel Weisz, but he wrote under the nom-de-plume Viador. Weisz arrived in Budapest in the early 1870s and was appointed Chief Secretary of the National Orthodox Office. He was an enthusiastic advocate of Magyarization.

55 Viador, “The Chief Rabbi of Máramarossziget,” *ZsH*, October 5, 1899.

56 Slomó Köves, *The Jewish Rift: From Hamburg to Michalovce* [Hungarian] (Budapest: Noran Libro, 2009); Jakobowitz, *Remember*; Silber, “The Roots”; Katz, *Unhealed Breach*; Frojimovics, “Religious Streams.”

57 Victor Karady, “Religious Divisions, Socio-Economic Stratification and the Modernization of Hungarian Jewry after the Emancipation,” in *Jews in the Hungarian Economy*, ed. Michael K. Silber (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 161–184.

58 Karady then goes on to offer a more nuanced review of the situation in each province. The Status Quo stream was small and diffuse and cannot easily be defined in geographical terms; for the purpose of the schematic division, it has been included together with the Orthodox camp.

and explain the division between the Neolog on one side and the Orthodox on the other.⁵⁹ The same diagonal line also broadly delineates a socioeconomic (and to an extent ethnic) division within the Hungarian population as a whole, as well as within the Jewish community, which was naturally influenced by its surroundings. This line, which roughly corresponds to the distinction between Oberland and Unterland, also delineates the secondary division within the Orthodox camp between those who were more receptive to modernity and adopted its progressive innovations in various fields (Western Orthodoxy) and those who were more conservative and insular, and whose ways of life changed little (Eastern Orthodoxy). Western Orthodoxy had a character similar to that of Ashkenazi communities further west, particularly in Germany, while Eastern Orthodoxy showed Hasidic influences and had a more Eastern European character. It is important to add, however, that there were Jewish individuals and communities in the west who had a more “eastern” character, and vice versa.

In the late nineteenth century, the civil status of Jews in Hungary was significantly better than in most other parts of Central and Eastern Europe, including consistent support for the Jews from the liberal-aristocratic ruling elite.⁶⁰ The first generation after emancipation confidently anticipated that the vestiges of social exclusion would soon disappear. The Jewish public regarded the Tiszaeszlár blood libel of 1882⁶¹ as an anachronistic remnant of medieval times that would soon be completely eliminated by progress and modernity. The antisemitic party that operated in Hungary at the time, without any particular success, was also seen as a temporary and even ridiculous aberration.

Certain sections of the population disapproved of the involvement of Jews in the two key processes that left their mark on the Dualist period and changed the character of Hungary: rapid economic development, leading to a transition from a traditional feudal society to a modern industrialized and capitalist one, on the one hand; and the shaping of Hungarian nationhood, on the other. These processes began as early as the mid-nineteenth century, but intensified dramatically following the Compromise, which granted considerable autonomy to the country. Hungarian Jews played an extremely active role in both processes, had a profound influence on economic life, and identified with the goals of the nation-state. The successful entry of Jews in key

59 Karady, “Religious Divisions,” 176–179.

60 Rolf Fischer, “Anti-Semitism in Hungary 1882–1932,” in *Hostages of Modernization: Studies on Modern Antisemitism 1870–1933/39*, ed. H. A. Strauss, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 863–864; Miklós Konrád, “Jewish Perception of Antisemitism in Hungary before World War I,” *Jewish Studies at the CEU* 4 (2004–2005): 177–178.

61 See chapter seven below.

domains in economic and cultural life, their migration to cities from which they had previously been excluded, and the arrival of growing numbers of Jews from neighboring countries eager to benefit from Hungary's economic growth all sparked a counter-reaction. From the mid-1890s, conservative and clericalist tendencies became apparent, leading to the emergence of more active antisemitic organizations. The waves of antisemitism in neighboring European countries in the same period also influenced anti-Jewish sentiments in Hungary. Again, however, the Jewish community did not perceive this new wave as a threat and did not take organized action to oppose it.

From the Jewish perspective, the period between emancipation and the First World War was influenced by two apparently contradictory trends: on the one hand, political and economic progress, social integration, and growing influence in shaping modern Hungary; on the other, the emergence of new threats to the status of the Jews in the form of modern political antisemitism. In this period, however, the status of the Jews was not undermined. Antisemitism remained confined to certain social circles, while the authorities supported the Jews and promoted a policy of tolerance and inclusion.

The Trianon Period

During the First World War many Jews served in combat roles in the army; one-third of the Hungarian officers killed in action were Jews.⁶² During the first two years of the war, the sense of euphoria and enthusiasm among the Jews remained unchanged. Over the next two years, however, as rumors began to emerge concerning military defeats and as the economic situation deteriorated, allegations were made that the Jews were evading military service and engaging in profiteering. These accusations intensified when a Bolshevik group exploited the chaos that followed military defeat and seized power for a brief period, introducing a reign of terror. The group was headed by Kun Béla (1886–before 1940), who like many of the leaders of the group was of Jewish origin. The failed Communist coup led to an anti-Communist counter-coup whose targets included Jews, who had now become identified as Communist revolutionaries.⁶³

According to the terms of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), the dual monarchy was abolished and Hungary underwent significant changes. Approximately two-thirds of its territory was ceded to the neighboring countries, and out of

62 Fischer, "Anti-Semitism," 885.

63 On the traumatic events in the first two years after defeat, see Lendvai, *Hungarians*, 356–372.

an original population of twenty million, only some nine million remained within its borders. Of all the countries defeated in the war, Hungary paid the heaviest price. During this period Hungary was a sovereign nation-state that managed its own foreign affairs and defense, in contrast to the Dualist period, when it had constituted an autonomous entity within the Habsburg Empire. The interwar years were dominated by a sense of acute national frustration at Hungary's downfall and the humiliating conditions of the Treaty of Trianon. A "culture of defeat" developed that blamed the liberal policies of the Dualist period for the crisis, thereby identifying a turn to right-wing politics and Christian conservatism by way of the solution.⁶⁴ The difficult economic and social conditions, which were influenced both the Hungary's domestic situation and by the global crises of the late 1920s and early 1930s, exacerbated the sense of distress.⁶⁵ Since the Jews were identified with liberalism, democracy, and capitalism, significant circles held them responsible for the defeat and the harsh conditions that followed.⁶⁶ The "Jewish Question" gradually came to occupy a central place in public and political discourse.

The Jewish population also underwent profound demographic changes. As a result of the ceding of territories to Hungary's neighbors, approximately half the former Jewish population no longer lived under its sovereignty. Prior to the First World War Hungary had a Jewish population of 938,438, of whom only 473,310 remained within the Trianon borders.⁶⁷ Hungary after Trianon broadly tessellated with the Oberland; its Jewish population lived in the cities, almost half of them in Budapest.⁶⁸ The internal composition of the Jewish population also changed significantly. Before the war, a majority of Hungarian Jews had belonged to the Orthodox stream, including a significant ultra-Orthodox presence, particularly in the northeast of the country. After Trianon, less than one-third of the Jews of Hungary defined themselves as Orthodox.⁶⁹

64 Miron, *Waning*, 25–28, 210–213.

65 Sugar et al., *History*, 319–338.

66 The most prominent critic of liberalism, which he regarded as the underlying cause of the grave postwar crisis, was the historian Szekfű, who also argued that liberal policies had led to a superficial and meaningless form of Magyarization. Szekfű was one of the leaders of "intellectual" antisemitism in the 1920s, though he largely retracted these positions in the following decade.

67 According to the 1910 and 1920 censuses, respectively: Komoróczy, *History*, vol. 2, 1119–1120.

68 In 1920, Budapest had a Jewish population of 215,512, accounting for 23.2 percent of the total population of the city and 45.5 percent of the Jewish population of Hungary as a whole: *ibid.*, 1122–1123.

69 According to the 1910 census, 51.9 percent of Jews belonged to the Orthodox stream; the figure for 1920 was just 30.9 percent: Zeke, "After the Rupture," 152.

The vast majority of the ultra-Orthodox population was concentrated in the Unterland—Carpathian Ruthenia, Slovakia, and Transylvania; these areas came under Czechoslovakian and Romanian sovereignty and the Jews ceased to be Hungarian citizens. The Treaty of Trianon thus left most of the extreme and anti-modern Orthodox sector outside the country's new borders. The Neologs now became the dominant religious stream; the Zionists also strengthened their standing somewhat, although their influence was less than in pre-Hitlerian Germany. The remaining Orthodox population was dominated by the modern and Western-leaning community in Budapest. These Orthodox Hungarians integrated in the Hungarian state and culture and generally agreed with the political culture of the Neolog movement, despite the religious divide. The paradoxical outcome of this situation was that precisely as the spirit of emancipation was waning, the political culture that favored integration gained strength among the Jews. Hungary under Trianon was still home to a strong Orthodox presence, but this had a far less conservative and extreme character. In the period 1938–1941, Germany returned to its ally Hungary some of the lost territories of “Greater Hungary,” in a series of agreements known as the Vienna Awards. As a result, the Jewish population grew to around 750,000, and Orthodoxy once again became the dominant force.⁷⁰

The Treaty of Trianon transformed Hungary from an expansive multiethnic country with a large population to a smaller monoethnic state in which the Jews were left as the only “others.” The attempts to foster Magyarization ended, as they were no longer necessary. As the only significant ethnic minority in the country, the Jews lost their importance in the struggle for Magyarization and no longer enjoyed the support of the authorities. The religious and social differences between Christians and Jews, and in particular the economic status of the Jews, which had been less prominent features during the Dualist period, now appeared more significant, provoking sentiments of rejection and jealousy. The influential status of Jews in commerce, industry, medicine, law, and the press, and their “disproportionate” presence among academics and students, had been clear even before the First World War. At that time, however, the Jews had been regarded as part of the Magyar nation, and accordingly this prominent presence had not provoked widespread antagonism. Moreover, the transfer of large areas to foreign sovereignty led to a flood of Hungarian refugees from these areas, who moved into the sovereign Hungarian state after losing their positions in the civil service, army, and economy. The newcomers created competition in the labor market, which was already facing a profound depression. The

70 In 1941, 59.6 percent of Jews identified as Orthodox: *ibid.*