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## CONTRIBUTION TO THE GENEALOGY OF JEWISH FAMILIES IN THE TERRITORY OF VOJVODINA

**Abstract:** The Jews are a specific national community that almost disappeared during the Holocaust. Genealogy is extremely important to the Jewish people because it brings together generations separated by the Holocaust. Genealogy can also help greatly to compile as accurate list of Holocaust victims as possible in terms of numbers and identities of victims. The primary historical source for genealogical studies of the Jews is the Vital Records kept by rabbis in Jewish communities and rabbimates. Secondary but very important genealogical sources are censuses, more specifically, censuses of Jews during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as other documents produced primarily during the Holocaust.

**Keywords:** Jewish genealogy, Vojvodina, Srem, Banat, Bačka, vital records, historical sources

Except for brief historiographical references to the origins of some famous Jewish families or individuals, there is almost no published research on Jewish genealogy in our country. Moreover, we can say that genealogy is generally not sufficiently represented in the scientific scene in Serbia and that it mainly “lives” only in the work of amateur historians who deal with it in the context of their own origins.

Just like for other nations, the primary historical source for genealogical studies of the Jews is the Vital Records. The Jewish community was organized into small communities and rabbimates on the territory of today’s AP Vojvodina, i.e. the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until 1918 and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes / Yugoslavia since that year. The organizational division by rabbimates seemed to be characteristic only of the area of Srem, i.e. the former County of Srem. Considering the territory of Srem as a geographical area that more or less coincides with the area of County of Srem, there were rabbimates of Vinkovci, Vukovar, Ilok, Sremska Mitrovica, Ruma

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<sup>1</sup> Радован Сремац, Музеј наивне уметности (Шид), Србија

and Zemun. Smaller places did not have their own communities or had branches and belonged to these rabbinate, and therefore did not keep their own registers but were registered in the registers of their rabbinate. The boundaries of rabbinate do not seem to be strictly respected, so some families from “border” places registered one child in one rabbinate, another in another one, etc. In the territory of Bačka and Banat, there were Jewish Communities, and they seemed to have much less territorial jurisdiction than the rabbinate in Srem. According to the list of preserved Jewish Vital Records for the Bačka area, it is noted that most places had their records, not just large city centres such as the rabbinate centres in Srem. This complicates genealogical research to some extent because of the amount of Vital Records and their territorial alienation. Of course, as the administrative organization of certain Jewish communities in Bačka and Banat changed over time, some communities disappeared and fell under nearby large communities, while some cities split off and established their own Jewish communities and began keeping their own vital records.

As for the archives in the territory of Bačka and Banat, the situation with the Jewish Vital Records is as follows<sup>2</sup> – The Sombor Historical Archive holds vital records for the following places: Jewish Community of Sombor, Jewish Community of Kula (to which the following places belong: Kula, Vrbas, Crvenka, Kljajićevo, Kruščić, Sivac, Savino Selo, Ruski Krstur, Bačko Dobro Polje, Kucura, Kosančić, Feketić, Topola, Ravno Selo, Despotovo, Lalić), then separate communities in Apatin, Sonta, Kucura, Kruščić, Savino Selo, Ruski Krstur, Ravno Selo, Svetozar Miletić, Čonoplja, Kljajićevo, Novi and Stari Vrbas. The Archive of Vojvodina keeps transcribed vital records for the following places in Bačka: Ada, Apatin, Baračka, Bačka Palanka, Bačka Topola, Bački Brestovac, Bački Monoštor, Bačko Petrovo Selo, Bečej, Bogojevo, Doroslovo, Žabalj, Jankovac, Kljajićevo, Kula, Kupusina, Novi Sad, Prigrevica, Ravno Selo, Ratkovo, Riđica, Svetozar Miletić, Sivac, Sonta, Srpski Miletić, Stapar, Subotica, Čonoplja and Čurug; and places in Banat: Bela Crkva, Vršac, Zrenjanin, Kanjiža, Martonoš, Mol, Novi Bečej, Novi Kneževac, Novo Miloševo, Pančevo, Riđica, Senta and Torda. The archive in Pančevo holds only the Jewish Vital Records for the Jewish Community of Pančevo. The Senta Archive holds records for the places of Kanjiža, Mol and Bečej. The Historical Archive in Subotica holds Jewish Vital Records for Subotica and the Zrenjanin Historical Archive for Zrenjanin. As for Srem, the Srem Historical Archive in Sremska Mitrovica holds Jewish Vital Records for Rabbinate of Sremska Mitrovica as well as for the Erdevik Jewish Community (within the Rabbinate of Ilok), while the Historical Archive of Belgrade holds records for Rabbinate of Zemun (both Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities). In addition to these Jewish

<sup>2</sup> The list does not include the Jewish Vital Records kept by the civil registry in the municipal, city and local administrations. Unfortunately, lists of Vital Records from their holdings are not available on the websites of most archives in Serbia. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to colleagues from archives for providing me with the requested information.

Vital Records kept by rabbis in Jewish communities, it is worth mentioning the state registers for Bačka and Banat which were kept from 1895/1896.

Jewish Vital Records have been kept in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy since 1851/1852, or since the official establishment of a Jewish community/rabbinat if it happened after 1852. Jewish Vital Records older than 1851 are unknown at this time. The archive in Sombor holds the birth records for Savino Selo since 1770, Kucura since 1776 and Kruščić since 1780. However, these are the births of community members subsequently recorded at the time the community was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more specifically the census of families in those places.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there is information that the Jewish community in Ratkovo (formerly Parabuć) kept regular birth records since 1776, but those records have not been preserved today.<sup>4</sup>

The language and alphabet of the records depended on the languages of the official administration in the area, mostly German and Hungarian, and Serbian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Hebrew language, more specifically Yiddish, is used very rarely and it most often spells only names and dates according to the Hebrew tradition and calendar. The registers generally contain the same columns and data, and the differences are only in the quality of the work done by the rabbis. It is worth mentioning that a rabbi from Sremska Mitrovica stated the date of the parents' wedding and which child was in order at each birth registration at the end of the nineteenth century. He would often add the place and date of birth of the child's parents.

The biggest problem with Jewish genealogy research is personal names. The reason for this is the fact that in almost all cases one person had two or three names, and they were often recorded in the records under the nickname. The most common form of the name is German, and even more so, by the law of 1787, Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were required to carry German surnames. The second name, which was most commonly used in orthodox communities, was of Jewish origin, while the third, depending on the community in which they lived, was of Slovenian, Serbian or Croatian origin and most often represented a nickname. Certainly, all three forms of names generally had the same or at least similar meaning, while in some cases the meaning of those names was not the same. Here are some examples of dual names, not as rules, but to make it easier for researchers to find information. Examples of male names: Ashel Anshel – Asir Šandor, Avram – Adam – Adolf, Eliezer – Lazar, Emil – Milan, Friedrich – Miroslav, Hajim – Živko, Julius – Djula, Leopold – Ladislav – Lav, Mayer – Marko, Moritz – Moses, Pinkas – Bernat – Petar, Salamon – Meshulam, Wilhelm – Wolf – Vilim, Yechiel – Cvi – Herman – Hersch, etc; examples of female names: Franci – Fanny, Frida – Miroslava, Golda – Zlata, Johana – Hani, Josefina – Pepi, Leonora – Lencsi – Helena – Etel – Jetty – Ivana, Miriam – Mira, Rohel – Ružica, Sharlotta – Loti etc. A good example of this is the

<sup>3</sup> Historical Archive in Sombor, Fund no. 9, Collection of vital records.

<sup>4</sup> Ujvari Peter (ed.), *Magyar Zsidó Lexikonban*, 1929, p. 684.

Stern family settled in Srem and southern Bačka. According to censuses and registers, genealogy in the first three generations looks like this: Herman (according to censuses Adam) had children Lazar, Filip, Michael and David. Lazar had children: Hani, Herman, Ester, Anton Shandor, Gerson, Moritz and Albert, while Philip has children: Herman, Moniko, Fani, Moritz, Shandor, Adolf, Moses, Salamon and Terezija. According to family stories that have been confirmed by historical sources, the genealogy looks like this: Josef Yechiel Zvi had children: Yitchak Eliezer, Pinchus, Shalom and David. Yitchak Eliezer had children: Chye, Jechiel Cvi, Esther, Ascher Anchel, Gashi, Moshe and Abraham Lieb, while Pinchus has children: Jechiel Cvi Mani, Fradel, Moshe, Shandor, Abraham Yide, Moshe, Shlomo and Reizel. So the same number and arrangement of people, just different forms of names.<sup>5</sup>

Due to historical events that took place in some European countries, the borders of the countries have repeatedly changed and certain areas and cities have changed state government and ethnic and religious administration several times. All these events resulted in frequent changes in the city names and regions, as well as the first and last names of their inhabitants, which must be taken into account when researching individual families and their origin. As mentioned before, since 1787 Jews have almost necessarily carried German surnames. In the area of Bačka during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a Hungarianization of the Jewish names, while in the territory of Srem, the names of the Serbo-Croatian origin were increasingly used. A peculiar exception is a Sephardic families in Zemun Rabbinate, whose names are written in the spirit of Ladino. Also, family names of immigrants from the Eastern European area are recognizable by their “Slavic-Russian” form.

The reasons for the migration of Jews to the territory of present-day Vojvodina during the period between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were primarily economic, i.e. trade. However, an analysis of vital records, in more than half of married couples found that the groom left his place of birth or residence after marriage and moved to live with his wife after marriage. This is especially noticeable in the Srem area. In the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the prohibition of permanent settlement of Jews was still in force, this practice could be justified by the reason and the way to facilitate settlement in the area of County of Srem. However, as this practice continued during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the question arises as to whether it had any other, socio-cultural note.<sup>6</sup> Because of

<sup>5</sup> Radovan Sremac, *Židovske obitelji u Iločkom rabinatu / Jewish Families in Rabbinate of Ilok*, Ilok town Museum, Ilok 2018, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> One of the reasons could be to preserve the Jewish home of those families who remain without male members. However, there were very common situations where the son-in-law moved into the house with his wife where her brothers lived. Perhaps this was a common practice created as a result of the so-called law *Familiengesetz* (valid until the Emancipation Act) passed 1726/1727. According to which only the oldest son from a Jewish family was allowed to marry in the country where he was born

this situation, researchers of the origin of a particular Jewish family should consider that the place of residence of a family was actually the place of birth or residence of the wife/mother and not the father of the family.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the Jewish Vital Records, there are also numerous censuses available to Jewish genealogy researchers, some of them specifically related to Jews. These censuses are kept in Serbian and foreign archives, primarily in Budapest and Vienna. The oldest censuses are those in the Hungarian National Archives, in the holdings *Acta Judaeorum: Conscriptioes Judaeorum* for the period 1725–1775, and which include places in present-day Serbia. A little later is the general census of taxpayers (by counties) of 1828, which, in most cases, states if the person is Jewish. However, this is not a census of residents of a place, but census/lists of property owners in that place and to which he paid taxes. Therefore, care should be taken as it is not uncommon for residents of one place to have possession in another place. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century censuses mentioned above, and this one from 1828, can be found digitized on the Internet.<sup>8</sup> A large number of censuses of Bačka Jews are kept in the Archive of Vojvodina in the holdings number 2. *Bács-Bodrog County* as well as the Historical Archive of the City of Novi Sad, the fund no 1. *Magistrate of the Free Royal City of Novi Sad*.<sup>9</sup> The Hungarian State Archive contains a very useful detailed census of Jews in the County of Srem, beginning in 1842.<sup>10</sup> There are similar censuses in the fund *County of Srijem* at the Croatian National Archive.<sup>11</sup>

and then stay there, while the younger sons who wanted to start a family had to move out. This law was mainly promulgated for the Austrian and Czech-Moravian provinces of the empire in order to “relieve” them of the Jewish population, causing the migration of Jewish youths from the said provinces to Hungary and its northwestern counties (Nyitra, Pozsony and Trencsén).

<sup>7</sup> According to the vital records of all Jewish communities in the Srem (except Vinkovci), a total of 1338 families were enumerated, of which the exact origin could be established for 720 or 54% of cases. Looking at the borders of the present states, most of the Jews in Srem have Hungarian roots. Slightly less than half of the families come from places in present-day Serbia, primarily Bačka. Then, 9% of families come from cities in Croatia, 7% come from Slovakia, followed by Romania with 3%, and the Czech Republic and Ukraine with 2%. This situation applies to the entire 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when migration was most intense. Details: Radovan Sremac, “On the Origin of Jewish Families in Srem”, in: *Proceedings of Historical Archive Srem from Sremska Mitrovica*, no. 18, 2019, pp. 98–112.

<sup>8</sup> It is a website [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).

<sup>9</sup> For Jewish-related material in these funds, see: Olga Andrašić and Fedor Fišl, *List of archival material on Jews in the Fund Bács-Bodrog County in Archive of Vojvodina*, Jewish Community, Novi Sad 2011; Olga Andrašić and Fedor Fišl, *List of archival material on Jews during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Fund 1 Archive of the City of Novi Sad: Magistrate of the Free Royal City of Novi Sad*, Jewish Community, Novi Sad 2015; Olga Andrašić and Fedor Fišl, *List of archival material on Jews during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Fund 1 Archive of the City of Novi Sad: Magistrate of the Free Royal City of Novi Sad: 1800–1849*, Jewish Community, Novi Sad 2017.

<sup>10</sup> MOL, Helytartótanácsi Levéltár, C-55, Departamentum Judaeorum.

<sup>11</sup> HR-HDA-31 County of Srijem.

Although it is not the primary genealogical source, it is worth mentioning material from the Croatian State Archive in Zagreb from the fund *Ministry of the Treasury of the Independent State of Croatia. Office for Confiscated Property of the Department of Monetary, State Property and Debts of the Ministry of the Treasury (PONOVA) (1941–1945), collection: Files of confiscated assets (DKI cards)*.<sup>12</sup> These are declarations of property that all Jews in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia were legally required to file with the authorities beginning on June 5, 1941. The applications contain personal information for the applicants themselves as well as for their family members, then the time and manner of their family moving to the territory of the Independent State of Croatia, etc.

The Jews are a specific national community that almost disappeared during the Holocaust. The Holocaust has severed family contacts in the sharpest and worst way possible and has created a gap between several generations. This is precisely why genealogy for Jews is extremely important. On the one hand, it connects today's generations with their ancestors which they have never heard of in most cases, even though it is only two to three generations back. Genealogy, on the other hand, can help greatly to compile as accurate list of Holocaust victims as possible in terms of numbers and identities. Also, Jews, as an extremely progressive nation, were very often the bearers of social development in society, and these qualities, knowledge and aspirations were often brought here from their origins. Therefore, research into the origins of Jewish families may, to some extent, explain some of the social processes that have taken place in our midst.

Радован Сремац

#### ПРИЛОГ ГЕНЕАЛОШКИМ ИСТРАЖИВАЊИМА ЈЕВРЕЈСКИХ ПОРОДИЦА НА ТЕРИТОРИЈИ ВОЈВОДИНЕ

**Сажетак:** Јевреји су специфична национална заједница која је скоро потпуно нестала током Холокауста. Генеалогичка је изузетно важна за Јевреје јер спаја генерације које су раздвојили ужаси Холокауста. Такође, генеалогичка може у великој мери да помогне у састављању што тачнији списак жртава Холокауста у погледу броја и идентитета жртава. Примарни историјски извор за генеалогичка истраживања јеврејских породица су матичне књиге које су водили рабини у јеврејским општинама и рабинатима. Секундарни, али веома важни генеалогички извори су пописи становништва, тачније, пописи Јевреја током 18. и 19. века, а затим и други документи настали првенствено током Холокауста.

**Кључне речи:** Јеврејска генеалогичка, Војводина, Срем, Банат, Бачка, матичне књиге, историјски извори

<sup>12</sup> HR-HAD-1076.