

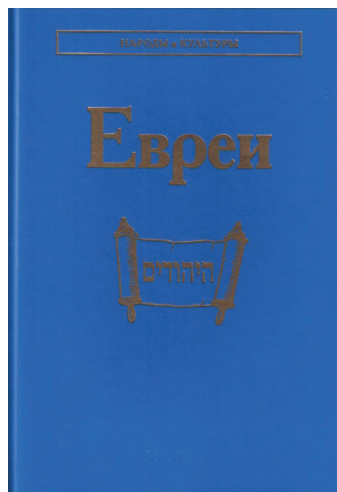
REVIEW ESSAY

JEWES IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE, THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

T.G. Emelyanenko & Y.E. Nosenko-Shtein
(eds.). *Evrei*. Moscow: Nauka, 2018. 783 pp.
In Russian.

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Abstract: The aim of this essay is to present a comprehensive review of the collective monograph *Evrei* (The Jews), published in 2018 in the series *Narody i kul'tury* (Peoples and Culture). The authors give an overview of the modern developments in Jewish studies to acquaint the reader with the background of the reviewed monograph. Every chapter of the monograph is analyzed in detail, taking into account the most recently gathered ethnographic materials, such as the data recorded by Alexander Novik in Priazovye and Crimea in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and the newest publications on the subject, such as a paper by Evgeniya Khazdan on Jewish traditional culture, published in 2018.

Keywords: ethnography, Jewish culture, Jewish history, Jewish studies, Jews of Eastern Europe, Jews of Russia, Judaism, review

The collective monograph *Evrei* (The Jews) was published in the series *Narody i kul'tury* (Peoples and Cultures), founded in 1992 (editor-in-chief V. Tishkov, executive secretary L. Missonova), which, to a degree, is an important event for ethnographic Jewish studies in Russia and – we would go as far as saying – in Europe. With the available research potential (first of all, the workforce capacity) and the unfailing interest towards Jewish topics expressed by

researchers working in various academic fields (for example, in Hebrew studies and semitology), it is the ethnology of the Jewish people that turns out to be the least developed field of the study of the humanities in the entire complex of knowledge. In Russia as well as abroad (first of all, in Israel, the United States, Germany, France, Italy, and other countries), quite a few papers on Jewish studies get published every year (Veidlinger 2009; Cohen 2011), but most specialists' academic interests are focused on the issues of history, ancient texts, language, literature and religion, as well as politology and sociology, while studies dedicated to the wide spectrum of ethnographic topics barely ever appear, with the exception of narrowly localized publications focused on specific communities. In the history of Russian ethnographic Jewish studies, starting from the nineteenth century, an important part has been played by papers by local lore researchers, dedicated to various topics of the religious life, festive ritualism, everyday culture, and professional work of Jews living in Russia (note, for example, the expeditions organized by Semyon An-sky). However, regrettably, many materials gathered by local lore researchers and based on primary sources, namely the field surveys of life in specific Jewish communities, either remain completely unknown to the academia or are published with considerable abridgements and many years after their documentation. Over the last decades, we have observed an increase of interest in the study of the languages and culture of the Jewish population of the former Soviet Union (we should especially note the activities of the Sefer Center and the Center for Slavo-Jewish Studies of the Institute for Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) that both organize yearly complex expeditions with the goal of documenting materials about the Jews and also creating a thesaurus of data about the people that have made an exceptionally large contribution to the history of Europe and other continents) (Amosova 2018).

In this vein, the publication of the volume *The Jews* is very important and timely. The authoring team led by editors-in-chief T. Emelyanenko and Y. Nosenko-Shtein has managed to display, at a highly professional level, a wide palette of history, religious views, cultural diversity, language, and identity of the Jews of the former Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, modern Russia and its neighboring countries (the former Soviet republics, etc.). The large size of the edition (69.5 standard quires, only the volume *Russkie* (The Russians) is larger (Aleksandrov & Vlasova & Polishchuk 1997; Vlasova & Tishkov 2014) has allowed them to include a broad variety of topics, traditional for the *Peoples and Cultures* series. As a result, the book, as a planned synthetic work on the Jews' ethnography, is informative, content-rich, and exceedingly relevant for the academic community.

In terms of structure, the collective monograph (28 authors have worked on it) is a detailed overview of different topics of history, languages and dialects, traditional culture, rituals, marriage relations, folk beliefs and secret knowledge, calendar feasts, folklore, folk art, and professional culture, modern ethnocultural processes in the former Soviet Union and abroad, outlined in 16 chapters, along with an introduction, a conclusion, a glossary, and highly informative illustrative materials, including a colored inset.

The introduction (T. Emelyanenko, Y. Nosenko-Shtein, V. Tishkov) and the short chapter 1, “The Study of Ethnography and Folklore” (V. Dymshits, Y. Nosenko-Shtein) present, in a very precise way, the goals that the authoring team had set before them, and describe the stages of the study of Jewish people in European countries, including Russia, starting from the 1820s (with the main focus on the work of German and Russian researchers).

In the substantial chapter 2, “Ethnic History from Antiquity to the Collapse of the USSR”, the authors (I. Tantlevsky, G. Zelenina, I. Barkusky, Y. Snopov, Y. Suchkova, A. Sinelnikov) have managed, considering the publishing limitations on wordage, to fulfill a very difficult task – to present the main stages of the history of the Jews, including their ethnogenesis, the settling of the Israelites in Canaan, the monarchic period, the Babylon banishment and the Persian period, the Hellenistic age, the early Roman period, the Middle Ages and the early modern period (the Jews of the East, the Jews of the Western Europe: the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim), the ethnopolitical history of Russian Jews before 1917 (with a section dedicated to the early data on Jews in Eastern Europe), the Soviet period (1917–1991) (with a very solid analysis of the events that took place in times of the revolution and the Civil War, the migration of Soviet Jews in the 1920s, the creation of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Judaism in the 1920s and the 1930s, the Holocaust, the post-war years, the Thaw, the relative liberalization (1953–1967) that followed the death of J. Stalin, and the new wave of crackdown in the Soviet Union (1967–1985), the Perestroika, and the collapse of the Soviet regime (1985–1991)).

This chapter includes a highly interesting section dedicated to the *Knaanites* – the Jews of Eastern Europe in the period of Kievan Rus’ (written by I. Barkusky). In the light of the still-ongoing discussion on why medieval Jewish sources before the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries referred to the Slavic countries using the term Knaan (Canaan), the thorough explanation of the folk etymologies with references to the studies by O. Belova, V. Petrukhin, and M. Chlenov looks very convincing (see Belova & Petrukhin 2008; Chlenov 2014). Here one can recall the mass media’s interest in the topic; for example, the documentary film *Predki nashikh predkov: Khazary. Po sledu pisem tsaria Iosifa* (Our Ancestors’ Ancestors: Khazars. Tracing King Joseph’s Letters), shot by the All-Russia

State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company and shown on the *Kultura* channel (Ancestors 2018), telling, among other things, about the medieval traveler Benjamin of Tudela (late twelfth century) and alluding, through the researchers' academic commentaries, to the image of biblical Canaan, said to become "a servant of servants to his brethren" (Gen. 9:25), and connecting this biblical phrase and the term to the medieval stereotype defining the Slavic peoples as slaves – *sclavus*, 'slaves'; such nominations and views, though, have been documented since antiquity (p. 66).

Since a book titled *Tiurkskie narody Kryma: Karaimy. Krymskie tatory. Krymchaki* (The Turkic Peoples of Crimea: Karaites. Crimean Tatars. Krymchaks) was published in the *Peoples and Cultures* series in 2003 (Kozlov & Chizhova 2003), the authors have only given concise data on the Karaites (p. 83), whom it would be appropriate to describe as Judaists, according to the long-standing tradition. However, it is not entirely clear why in the section "Karaites in the Russian Empire" the authors of the reviewed collective monograph do not even mention the 2003 publication (one can only learn about it from the list of books in the series at the end of the volume). It is equally unclear as to why there are no facts given concerning A. Firkovich – an iconic figure for the Karaite people. Except that he was a collector of ancient documents and preserved a collection of Karaite manuscripts, an unprepared reader learns absolutely nothing – there is nothing on the dates of his life and death, references to any of his works, let alone the Firkovich Estate – an iconic ethnographic museum in Chufut-Kale (Bakhchisaray) and the symbol of the Karaite identity. For an ethnographic study, it is also odd that apart from the references to historical papers, mentioned practically in every publication dedicated to the Karaites, the collective monograph has no reference to field materials, while over the last decades there have been many studies conducted every year in Chufut-Kale by research teams of ethnographers, philologists, archeologists, etc., from the universities and museums of Simferopol, Sevastopol, Saint Petersburg, Kiev, etc. It would have been useful, in writing a complex book on ethnography, to mention that since the 1990s, there have been, along with all-time archeological and archeographic expeditions, conventions of Karaite youth. As envisioned by the organizers, the latter are to promote the meetings of Karaite young men and women from Crimea, Lithuania, western Ukraine and other centers, including far-abroad countries, for creating new families and preserving the ethnos which is in danger of assimilation. In many academic centers (such as the MAE RAS – Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the RAS) field materials on this topic are preserved by the Saint Petersburg department of the RAS Archive and are available for researchers (MAE Archive 2004).

The chapter “Language and Onomastics” (the sections “Jewish Languages” by A. Polyan and “Onomastics of the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe” by A. Beyder) is written with exceptional professionalism. It quite thoroughly presents a description of Jewish idioms, spoken in the past and currently on different continents, and an analysis of onomastics data, which is a thesaurus of sorts, with materials for further linguistic, ethnological, and historical studies. For example, the paragraph dedicated to surnames presents – very clearly, with flawless references – the system of Jewish anthroponymicon. Only two of the author’s statements raise questions, in the description of the adoption of hereditary names in Galicia, according to the state laws, from the end of the seventeenth till the middle of the nineteenth century: “the fraction of ‘humiliating’ names is miniscule (Beider 2004: 27–39)” (p. 195) and “there is an opinion that the Austrian officials, responsible for the assignment of surnames, took bribes for their work. The legend states that there were even precise price-currents with special tariffs. ‘Beautiful’ surnames ... were the most expensive ones. ... The statistical analysis of adopted surnames clearly demonstrates the impossibility of such a ‘price-current’: the most expensive surnames turn out to be the most widespread, and the wealthy Jews did not constitute a majority in the community” (p. 196). In the former, the author modestly gives no example that would serve as an illustration (considering the plenty of examples in other cases), and as for the latter, it is possible to argue with the author. The ‘legend’ is passed down much too persistently from generation to generation in the Jewish families in Russia, Germany, Austria, etc.:

*You know, I met one of your famous academics here. I have long heard about him. And here there was a conference, a man comes to me, offers his hand and introduces himself: *Arsch!* You can’t help but laugh! He said that their family came from Galicia, and when the Austrian officials started giving surnames to all of the Jews, they demanded money. Who paid them, became *Goldfinger* or something of that sort. And his great-great-great-grandfather refused to pay the officials. So, they wrote him down as *Arsch*. They accepted the surname and never changed it – it was their conviction, against all odds.*

(This interview with a German Jew was recorded in Pristina, Kosovo, in August 2008. The interview was conducted in Albanian and German. MAE Archive 2008: No. 1861)

Along with that, we would also like to note the following. The paragraph “The Origin of Yiddish” has a scrupulous selection of references to almost every statement or conclusion of the author, but the introductory paragraph of the section “Yiddish” has no references to any paper by previous researchers; however, the

statement that “Yiddish belongs to the Germanic group of the Indo-European languages” is followed by: “about 70 percent of its vocabulary are Germanisms, about 20 percent are Hebraisms (lexemes of Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic origin), about 10 percent are Slavonisms, Romanisms, etc.” (p. 179). Considering that in the twentieth century, most researchers wrote about 80 or more percent of German vocabulary in the corpus pool of Yiddish, it would have been appropriate for the author to include a reference to the source of this statistic or to refer to his own calculations.

The chapter “Calendar Feasts” (S. Amosova, M. Kaspina) is written very thoroughly, which is expected of a collective work with the main focus on the ethnographic aspect. The study generalizes the vast materials gathered by the predecessors and presents the field materials gathered by the authors themselves on the enormous territory from the Baltic states to Moldova, from western Ukraine to the central regions of Russia and Caucasus. This approach marks a high level of the problematics’ analysis.

However, we would also like to mention some unfortunate mistakes. For example, there is the description of the feast of Sukkot (“Sukkot is described in the Torah as the feast of the new harvest, which lasts a week from the 15th till the 22nd day of the month of Tishrei” (p. 325). Along with Shavuot and Pesach, Sukkot is one of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals, related to the cycles of the agricultural year and the pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14–17, 34:22; Lev. 23:34–36, 39–43; Num. 29:12–38; Deut. 16:13–15). On the feast of Sukkot, King Solomon brought about the consecration of the Temple of Jerusalem. On the last day of the feast, they start to pray for rain in the synagogues. The Bible dictates to celebrate Sukkot in the following way: “You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress” (Deut. 15:13) (p. 325). Paying enormous attention to the religious aspect of the feast and quoting many memoirs and records of lore researchers, gathered in Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and Russia, the authors, for some reason, do not give the translation of the names of herbs and fruits significant for the tradition:

In the Book of Leviticus it is said concerning the feast of Sukkot: ‘And you shall take for yourselves ... the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days’ (Lev. 23: 39–43). This instruction is probably related to the agricultural nature of the feast and the motive of the growth of fertility. In the later Jewish tradition these herbs are called arba minim (Hebrew for ‘four species’). They include etrog (a species of citrus), a bough of myrtle, the willow, and lulav (a palm frond).

Among the ceremonies and rituals of the feast, the memoirs and tales describe the custom of blessing the etrog, lulav, and other herbs. (p. 327)

Actually, *etrog* is the citron, not just “a species of citrus”. It can be found out not only by consulting an available Jewish encyclopedia, but even by a simple search in the popular, if not always academically faultless Wikipedia. And there are special studies of the citron in the Jewish tradition in the academic informational field (such as Novik & Domosiletskaya 2019).

The chapter “The Material Culture of the Jews of Eastern Europe” consists of the following sections: “Crafts” (M. Hakkarainen), “Settlements, Houses” (E. Kotlyar), “Cemeteries” (V. Dymshits), “Traditional Clothing” (V. Dymshits), and “Food” (D. Vedenyapina). In such a structure of the chapter and in the collective monograph in general, the section dedicated to cemeteries somehow drops out. According to the logic of the treatment of the material, it would have been more accurate to place that section in the chapter that has a subsection “Funerary Rituals: Concepts of Death” (S. Amosova, M. Kaspina) and, on the whole, to create another block of paragraphs focused on cemetery culture and the cycle of commemoration. Speaking of which, Jewish commemoration ceremonies are summarized in the section “Concepts of a Dead Person’s Soul” (p. 296), which does not completely correspond with its contents.

The abovementioned section, “Traditional Clothing”, is a high-quality description of the complexes and specific elements of clothing of the Jews of the Near East and the diaspora in other parts of the world. This analysis begins with antiquity, the mentions of clothing in the books of the Old Testament and the pictures on Assyro-Babylonian monuments are taken into account. Though there are many references to biblical texts, this paragraph (as well as the introductory part, dedicated to the Jews’ ethnogenesis) does not mention the texts of the PhD (candidate) dissertation and the following monograph by I. Bogoslovskaya, *Odezhda narodov bibleiskikh stran (po drevneegipetskim istochnikam XVI – XI vv. do n. e.)* (The Clothing of the Peoples of Biblical Countries (With the Data from Ancient Egyptian Sources of the 16th–11th Centuries BCE)) (Bogoslovskaya 1995). These studies are just dedicated to the differences between the clothing of the Shasu tribes, the residents of Canaan, etc., and others, which contradicts the conclusion given in the collective monograph: “The clothing of the Jews in antiquity ... was not different from the clothing of other Semitic peoples of the Near East” (p. 241). Both authors (V. Dymshits and I. Bogoslovskaya), by the way, are from Saint Petersburg, and the texts of I. Bogoslovskaya’s dissertation, its synopsis and the book itself were quite available during the preparation of the volume *The Jews*.

Jewish clothing is the topic of the sections in chapter 11, “Non-Ashkenazi Ethnic and Ethnocultural Groups: Georgian Jews” (K. Lerner, T. Emelyanenko), “Bukhara Jews” (T. Emelyanenko), and “Russian Judaists” (A. Lvov, N. Semchenko). The clothing and jewelry of the Bukhara Jews are analyzed at a very high level, very conclusively and in great detail (pp. 481–503); the section offers plenty of illustrative materials (mainly the late nineteenth–early twentieth-century photographs kept at the Russian Ethnographic Museum (REM) and the MAE, and the pictures of actual Bukhara exhibits from the REM, as well as the photographic prints by the section’s author). This fact demonstrates that T. Emelyanenko has conducted a great deal of research for writing this part of the collective monograph (here one should also mention that in 2012 this author presented her doctoral dissertation on the topic *Traditional Clothing of Bukhara Jews: The Problems of Ethnocultural Identity*).

Chapter 9, “Folklore of the Jews of Eastern Europe”, is written very thoroughly. It consists of two sections: “Narrative Folklore” (V. Dymshits) and “Traditional Musical Culture” (E. Khazdan). It is very pleasing that the collective monograph pays so much attention to the spoken folk tradition and musical culture of the Jews, since over the last years, folkloristics has been leaning more towards anthropology in the world’s academic practice, and the study of folklore in its classical meaning has been replaced by research at the intersection of different fields of humanities.

In the section “Narrative Folklore”, the author of the text justly remarks that “the phrase ‘Jewish folklore’ has something suspicious in it for the romantic concept of spoken folk tradition. The Jews of Eastern Europe were definitely not suitable for the role of traditional preservers of folklore. First, they were mostly residents of cities, second, all of them were literate, with not just the ‘holy’ and edifying books available to them, but the simply entertaining ones as well, both in Ancient Hebrew and in Yiddish” (p. 345). It took some time before the Jewish intelligentsia, educated at the best universities of Europe and inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and emancipation, stopped being ashamed of the place where they came from, with their idioms, solidified cultural stereotypes and ‘display of superstitions’ (for which it took folk songs, legends and fairy tales), and in the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries began perceiving them, under the influence of Romanticism and Symbolism, as the undoubted cultural heritage of their ancestors. Regrettably, the paragraph “Fairytale” in this section is too laconic; the author merely brings up the importance of the borrowings from the folklore of Germans, Belarussians, Ukrainians, etc., in this genre. The fact that traditional texts in Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic are one of the sources of the Jewish fairytale is described very concisely (p. 346).

Finally, it is completely incredible for the reader that the author, while speaking of fairytales, does not reference the classical work of V. Propp (in this case it is not criticizing – it is not necessary to pass the well-known passages from article to article – it is just an observation!).

The structure of the abovementioned section, “Narrative Folklore” (pp. 345–363), does not look fully clear to the reader. For example, the chapter title, “Folklore of the Jews of Eastern Europe”, is followed by the section title “Narrative Folklore” (it is also reflected in the table of contents). The section is, as it seems, divided into paragraphs – we mentioned “Fairytales” as one of them. However, the paragraph “Folk Book in the Culture of the Jews of Eastern Europe” is followed by what looks like another section (or paragraph), “Narrative Folklore in Spoken Popular Tradition” (feel the difference), which, in turn, contains paragraphs such as “Magical Fairytales, Fairytales for Children”, and others. Without a doubt, the author of the text and the editors-in-chief should have given more attention to the structure of the collective monograph.

The section “Traditional Musical Culture” is written very professionally. Its author, Evgeniya Khazdan, is an acknowledged authority on the subject hardly studied by specialists, since it demands multifaceted knowledge – in the field of music as well as religious studies and ethnology. In the West, researchers who work in the field of ethnomusicology have to have two educations, as a rule – usually a diploma (preferably at the MA level) of a conservatory, and a PhD degree in the field of ethnology or cultural and social anthropology. In Russia, as well as in the republics of the former USSR, such criteria have not yet been established. That is why we can rarely encounter a specialist of the level of E. Khazdan. In the West, by the way, due to a variety of reasons, very few academics study Jewish musical tradition. Therefore, the possibilities of studying this topic – in Russia and in the West – are practically equal. Such a solid section on musical culture is a credit to the collective monograph.

E. Khazdan traces the musical culture of the Jews who lived on the territory of the former Russian Empire, analyzing the features specific to each group that had formed due to the contacts with neighboring peoples. There are extremely few publications for the author to rely on, as since the mid-1930s there has been a gradual withering of the study of Jewish tradition in the USSR, because of the inner political reasons. In the years that followed the Second World War, there was an unspoken ban on the research on Jewish folklore, traditions, etc. The scarce publications on the musical folklore of the Jews of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, which got published in the West and in Israel, were secretly exported out of the USSR as manuscripts – such was the case, for example, with the works of the folklorist Moshe Beregovski (1892–1961) (Beregovski 1968;

Beregovski & Lerner 1970), who had gathered song lyrics and tunes in the field for many decades (p. 365). The situation with the research of Jewish musical folklore had radically changed with the start of democratic transformation in the USSR in the mid-1980s, but a considerable part of the cultural heritage had been completely lost by that time.

E. Khazdan analyzes the connection between musical traditions and conducting of rituals, rich in religious meaning. The author focuses more on this topic in her other work (Khazdan 2018). “One of the most important mechanisms that form the cultural memory in Jewish tradition is the consistent, systematic return to the main text and its actualization” (ibid.: 55).

In the paragraph “Songs” the author gives an explanation for the main differences between the Jewish traditional song and the main corpus of the folklore of Eastern Slavs. For example, in a traditional Jewish community, men and women could not sing together due to the active Talmudic ban for men’s listening to women singing. Furthermore, Jewish songs are mostly one-voiced, soloistic. It can be explained by the fact that in Jewish culture, there were no situations that would unite people in permanent groups, as it happened in the peasants’ everyday life among the Slavs, where people were united for working together in the fields, at spinning during winter evenings, at the plaiting of wood wool, etc.

Chapter 10, “Folk Art of the Jews of Eastern Europe” (V. Dymshits) encompasses the sphere of everyday life, enormous in its contents and complexity. The author analyzes the iconography and symbolism of Jewish art, ritual utensils, printed and handwritten books, furnishings of synagogues, artistic textiles (that he calls “synagogal objects of fabric”), “synagogal jewelry” (not the exact term either!), “house jewelry” (one has to read the entire text to understand – it stands for jewels produced at home), “relief sculptures of grave stelae” (it means the decorations of grave monuments). It is perfectly obvious that this chapter could have been the central one in the collective monograph – exactly because of the clarity of the currently and possibly available materials. However, it is a rather crumpled text, badly proofread by the author himself. We will just give a fragment of the beginning of the chapter as an example: “The art language of the folk art of the Jews of Eastern Europe has formed by the **influence** of a variety of differently angled impulses and **influences**” (emphasis ours) (p. 378). The content is not far behind the shape: many explanations offered are shallow. For example, while explaining the symbolism of the eagle (and an entire paragraph is dedicated to this!), V. Dymshits does not give any references to the previous researchers, and the reader has to fully trust the author’s opinion. But even these things are not what depletes and over-simplifies the contents of the chapter. It has practically no illustrations! One can, of course, accept this

in a philosophical tractate. But how can one speak of ritual utensils and not give a single picture of them? Or what should the reader imagine while reading the paragraph on the Jews' jewelry? Or, likewise, on graveside stelae... This is not a matter of some exclusive materials for which it is very difficult to supply illustrations. Everything that the author talks about is very well represented in the museum collections of the REM and other collections, in Russian and foreign synagogues, at Jewish cemeteries, etc.

Chapter 12, "Professional Culture", consists of two sections: "Book Culture" (S. Yakerson) and "Education" (A. Lvov). The section dedicated to the Jewish book as a phenomenon provides an analysis of the genesis of the writing system and book-printing, with specific subsections about the state of affairs in the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries and about Jewish book-printing on the territory of the Russian Empire. Close attention is given to the topics of the books of the traditional Jewish library. The chapter is very informative in general, despite the intended brevity of the exposition.

The collective monograph *The Jews* as a whole is a complete work of like-minded researchers, who completed the task set in a highly professional way. The publication was planned very skillfully from the beginning, and the best specialists working on different problems of Jewish Studies, including Hebrew Studies and semitology, were invited as authors. The published volume is well-structured, which is in no small part a credit to the editors-in-chief. The book became a true collective monograph and not a collection of articles on Jewish Studies, as it often happens with a large number of researchers at work.

However, we would also like to turn our attention to some flaws or mistakes of the authors of the collective monograph.

The Jews in the Russian Empire / the Soviet Union / modern Russia have been known as good craftsmen and merchants, businessmen and financiers, who made up a large percentage of the population in towns and, to a lesser degree – and only in some districts – in villages. Thanks to their commercial operations, covering the entire country in a well-developed network, trade, banking, service industry and specialized education have flourished. For a long time – until the industrial revolution at the end of the eighteenth century – crafts had been one of the bases, the economical foundation (along with agriculture) of the existence of a major part of the humanity. Jewish craftsmen supplied with goods a good part of the population of the huge country, most of whom were peasants. Therefore, in a book dedicated to the Jews of Russia, one expected to find a substantiated analysis of their professional activities, with multiple examples and statistics. But the section dedicated to crafts looks entirely disproportionate to the size of the publication (pp. 201–207). Crafts as the economical basis of society in certain periods of history would obviously

demand a more careful analysis. Clearly, such brevity was not the idea of the author of the section (M. Hakkarainen), but rather was dictated by the editors' strategy. On the whole, such a situation is characteristic of other volumes of the *Peoples and Cultures* series as well. It is not quite understandable why this section does not use illustrative materials, which could have enriched the contents significantly. For example, at the MAE RAS and at the REM they keep quite rich collections of photographs and prints of the photographers who worked with the Jews of Belarus and Ukraine, as well as Central Asia and Caucasus, at the end of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century (such as the photographs of Jewish workers from the village Mezherichi, the town Shepetovka, etc., taken by Z. Yudovich). These collections are a wonderful treasury of facts of everyday life, which has preserved the Jewish people's life on the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the future generations. The inclusion of the materials of the photographers who had worked in the field would have allowed the authors to present a much more precise image of the household and trade activities of the Jews (among whom, for example, there were many weavers, laborers, and representatives of other professions in Belarus and Ukraine) (Novik & Golant 2018).

The collective monograph contains only scant information on the history and functioning of Jewish communities in Russia. Of course, this topic would have demanded colossal efforts from the authoring team and participation of other specialists. But for a volume that aspires to be a complex ethnological description of the Jewish people, such a chapter (not even a section) is absolutely necessary.

Rather superficial is the writing on the creation of Jewish kolkhozes in the late 1920s and early 1930s (the section "Jews in the USSR (1917–1991)" by Y. Snopov and Y. Suchkova). The conclusion given in the collective monograph, "the events related to the collectivization and industrialization led to the migration of Jews from the kolkhozes, which were getting poorer, to the cities" (p. 114), can be argued with. In Ukrainian Cis-Azov region, for example, in the Zaporizhia Oblast, following the order of the party leaders, they created kolkhozes where Jews worked. These kolkhozes were quite prosperous. The dissolution of this kind of collective enterprises was due not to the Jews' unwillingness to work on soil, but rather to the command of the party, who began to see these nation-based kolkhozes (there were also Bulgarian, Albanian, Czech, etc.) as a threat to the Soviet regime. The change in national politics led to the liquidation of Jewish kolkhozes in the European part of the USSR. The field materials gathered in Hesel Velvele (Melitopol) in 1998 by one of the authors of this review, Alexander Novik, together with Y. Ivanova and I. Uvarov, and preserved in the archives of the MAE RAS prove exactly this and contradict what is said in the collective monograph *The Jews* (MAE Archive 1998: No. 1726).

The attitude of the Soviet Jewish community on the brink of the Second World War is not outlined very clearly. The enormous losses among the Jews can be explained in no small part not just by the suddenness of Nazi Germany's attack on the USSR, but also by the unwillingness of many leaders and functionaries of Jewish communities, as well as people of authority, the intelligentsia, etc., to acknowledge the threat coming from the Third Reich. This is also stated in the narratives recorded during fieldwork on the territories occupied during the Great Patriotic War (MAE Archive 1998: No. 1726).

There are some very unfortunate errors in the book. For example, in the chapter "Non-Ashkenazi Ethnic and Ethnocultural Groups", in the section "Georgian Jews" (K. Lerner & T. Emelyanenko), in the paragraph "Birth and Circumcision", the following phrase rings quite odd: "The mother's father or elder brother usually stood godfather to the firstborn child. On the eighth day they performed the rite of initiation – the circumcision" (p. 429). Considering that the section itself is written with obviously a good grasp of the material, such phrases and nominations ("godfather") are a sign of a cursory check of the text.

The lack of attention for details reveals itself in the diversity among the descriptive texts for the photo-illustrative data published in the book. Obviously, the large size of the monograph and the considerable number of authors who worked on it have contributed to the fact that some illustrations come with the author's name and the date of the photograph, while others lack this information or only have fragments of it.

In several sections of the collective monograph (for example, in chapter 7, "Folk Beliefs and Knowledge", the section "Traditional Medicine" by N. Kireyeva) there are very few references to field research and field data archives, which is seemingly obvious when one writes on such a topic. There are quite numerous references to the available literature in the text, but, with the exception of the works by O. Belova, most of it was created at the beginning of the twentieth century.

To conclude, it is important to note that the new volume of the *Peoples and Cultures* series, dedicated to the Jews, is a long-awaited work of an authoring team that has spent many years studying the Jewish people and Jewish culture. By the way, it is the only monograph in the series whose title is written on the cover not just in Russian and in the Cyrillic script, but in the idiom as well. The book is already in high demand among Russian and foreign researchers, as well as all the other interested readers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was funded by grant 19-18-00244 of the Russian Science Foundation.

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