

PROCESSES OF IDENTITY RECONSTITUTION FOR DESCENDANTS OF JEWISH EMIGRANTS FROM THE BALTIC AND CENTRAL EUROPE IN POST-HOLOCAUST SITUATIONS

Carole Lemée

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the processes of identity reconstitution for descendants of Jewish emigrants from the Baltic and Central Europe, and with the current relationships they have with these regions. Considering their practices of identity reconnection which are part of identity re-registration processes, the attention is centered on the individual and collective identity economies existing in victims' families, and on the social interactions increasing in the context of the institutional politics concerning the Baltic and Central Europe. Many descendants of victims begin nowadays to come more and more to zones where their families lived, and not only to the extermination places. They try to find all that happened in the social history of their family before and during the Holocaust, and also what occurred for the Jews in these territories during the Soviet domination. They seek there the past and current presence of their cultural and historical heritage, which is also one of the important components of the European inheritance.

KEY WORDS: reconnection practices, historical identity, processes of reconstitution and re-registration, genocide and ethnocide, post-genocide and post-ethnocide situations, migration, memory.

ANOTACIJA

Straipsnyje aptariami žydų, emigravusių iš Baltijos regiono ir Centrinės Europos, palikuonių tapatybės atkūrimo procesai. Tiriama, kokias sąsajas tokie emigrantų palikuonys yra išlaikę su savo tėvų gimtinėmis. Atsižvelgiant į bendruosius tapatybės atkūrimo proceso ypatumus, atkreipiamas dėmesys į tai, kad šis procesas yra glaudžiai susijęs ir su asmeninės bei kolektyvinės tapatybės pasirinkimo principais, išlikusiais emigrantų šeimos gyvenimoje, bei visuomeniniais tokio pasirinkimo galimybių aspektais, naujai išskylančiais šių laikų Baltijos regiono bei Centrinės Europos šalyse. Pastebima, kad vis daugiau minėtų emigrantų palikuonių yra linkę grįžti ne vien į laikinąsias savo tėvų perkėlimo zonas, bet ir į jų tikrąsias gimtines. Jie domisi savo tėvų socialinės tragedijos istorijomis prieš holokaustą ir jo metu, jie nelieka abejingi ir visų žydų, gimusių ir gyvenusių tuometinės Sovietų Sąjungos teritorijoje, likimui. Jie stengiasi išsaugoti savo šeimos ir giminės kultūrinio paveldo istorines ištakas bei jo dabarties apraiškas, suvokdami jas kaip sudėtinę visos Europos kultūrinio palikimo dalis.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: atkurto ryšio (*reconnection*) praktikos, istorinė tapatybė, rekonstitucijos ir perregistravimo procesai, genocidas ir etnocidas, postgenocido ir postetnocido apraiškos, migracija, atmintis.

Dr. Carole Lemée

Department of Anthropology, University Bordeaux 2

Place de la Victoire, F-33076 Bordeaux Cedex, France

UMR Ades-Atotem, Centre national de la Recherche Scientifique –

University Bordeaux 3 - University Bordeaux 2

E-mail: carolelemee@yahoo.fr

This paper deals with the processes of identity reconstitution carried out by descendants of Holocaust victims whose families were native from Central, Baltic and Eastern Europe¹ and who are Ashkenazim². The aim is to be interested in the psychological, social and cultural relationships they

¹ The native territories of other Ashkenazi families were initially located in the Rhenish areas (France, German, Switzerland), and also a few centuries later in the Austro-Hungarian and Balkan areas.

² Sephardic Jews were also victims of the Holocaust.

currently have with these European regions. Considering their practices of identity reconnection, and among those a new form of tourism combining cultural, historical and memory aspects, the attention turns here to the individual and collective identity economies existing in victims' families. It also takes into account the social interactions increasing in the context of the institutional policies relating to the Baltic and Central Europe. The reconstitution processes are a part of socio-cultural, historical and identity re-registration processes resting on identity reconnection practices which happen in a triple context: post-migratory, post-genocide, and post-ethnocide. Therefore, the identity and otherness relationships established by the victim's descendants towards these European regions are based on the interaction of these three situations.

From the ethnographic fieldwork that I have carried out for almost 20 years in various areas of the world (in Yiddish languages, and in other languages) with survivors and direct or avuncular victim's descendants, this paper strives to consider the interactivity between several social aspects and to have a historical glance at the socio-cultural processes and practices studied. The key questions tackled in this article are the following ones. What do the concepts "*processes of identity reconstitution*" and "*processes of re-registration*" mean? When we consider the post-holocaust situations, why is it necessary to speak about post-ethnocide situations and not only about a post-genocide context? What does the migration of the ascendants allows us to understand in the anthropological approach of the social phenomena generated by the processes of identity re-registration? What is the current incidence of the institutional policies on the identity reconnection practices that more and more descendants establish now towards the Central, Baltic, and Eastern European regions? Which are the various processes involved in these socio-cultural practices? And what occurs today in the context of a tourism which can be called in French language "*culturo-memorie*". Which are its characteristics, and why it does not correspond to a practice of pilgrimage? Which are also the differences between the rebuilding processes and the reconstitution processes?

Relationships between anchoring and separation

From a general point of view, the relations of the immigrants and their descendants with the territories, from where the migration occurred, are always complicated and complex. It is a fact. But this parameter is even stronger, when the families had lived during several centuries in these areas. It is also even stronger, when the migrations were caused by social violence. The situation of the Ashkenazi Jews migrants from Central, Baltic, and Eastern Europe is connected with these two great factors. Indeed, these regions were the homeland of their ancestors. And within Judaism, their Ashkenazy identity is intrinsically tied to these territories. Furthermore, they were the geographical place of the extermination of the Jews during the Nazi period. And before the genocide, several of these areas were also places where various persecutions and important pogroms³ took place. Lastly, during the Soviet period, another social and identity violence against the Jews continued to occur⁴.

³ Refer to: BARON, Salo W. *The Russian Jews under Tsars and Soviets*. New York-London: MacMillan, 1976; HILBERG, Raoul. *La destruction des Juifs d'Europe*. T. 1-3. Paris: Folio, 2006 (new edition).

⁴ See: KOSTYRTCHENKO, Guennadi. *Prisonniers du Pharaon rouge: les répressions politiques contre les Juifs en URSS*. Paris: Actes Sud, 1998. Also see: MADIEVSKI, Samson. 1953: La déportation des juifs soviétiques était-elle programmée? *Cahiers du monde russe*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2000, p. 561–568.

With regard to the pogroms and to the Destruction of European Jews⁵ during the 2nd World War, we are confronted with violence forms categorized in political sciences like “extreme”. The concept of extreme violence indicates a social phenomenon that is “*beyond violence*”⁶. This phenomenon is characterized by the disproportion and the unbounded radicalism of violence and leads particularly to massacres or to the massive destruction of populations. While the genocide⁷ refers to the intentional and systematic destruction of an ethnic, racial, religious or national group in whole or in part⁸, according to Raoul Hilberg the word “pogrom” refers to a “*brief explosion of violence of a community against a Jewish group living among this community*”⁹. In this framework, it is important to be aware that even after the Second World War and the genocide, a pogrom still occurred in Kielce¹⁰ (in Poland), when 200 Jewish survivors¹¹ returned at home.

The history of Jews from Baltic, Central and Eastern Europe is thus very marked on the one hand by a deep attachment to these areas, as they are the place of their own social and cultural history, the cradle of the specificity of their traditions. And their sociocultural traditions founded the Baltic and Slavic Yiddish culture¹². But this culture was almost entirely destroyed in its material aspects (architectural buildings, religious and secular works, books, etc.) by the Nazis and their accomplices during the Second World War. Such a destruction occurred also for the other regional Yiddish cultures (Rhenish, etc.), and in a general way for all the Jewish culture¹³ in the territories governed by the Nazis.

Their intent was to destroy the Jewish culture and its history, by making disappear it completely. In this context, it is necessary to take into account that the ethnocide¹⁴ against the Jewish culture and all its expressions (religious and secular, and their territorial patterns) started already since 1933 in several places¹⁵ at the time of the public and spectacular destruction of books written by fa-

⁵ Like the historian Raoul Hilberg, I prefer to use the term “Destruction of the Jews of Europe” instead of the words “Holocaust” or “Shoah”. See: HILBERG, R. (...) 2006.

⁶ Expression created by Jacques Semelin. See: SEMELIN, Jacques. *Purifier et détruire. Usages politiques des massacres et génocides*. Paris: Seuil, 2005.

⁷ This neologism was created by the Polish lawyer Rafael Lemkin in 1944 in *Axis rule in occupied Europe*.

⁸ The legal definition suggested in 1948 by the United Nations Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide is: “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group”.

⁹ FRIEDLANDER, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of the Persecution 1933-1939*. New York: Perennial, 1998, p. 553.

¹⁰ The 4th of July 1946.

¹¹ Thirty seven Jews were massacred and eighty others seriously wounded.

¹² It is possible to distinguish four historic cultural great zones before the Diaspora migration in other European regions. The Rhenish areas (French, German, Swiss), the areas formerly Austro-Hungarians including Balkans, the Baltic and Slavic areas, and the Flemish areas.

¹³ The Nazis did not distinguish the Ashkenazy and Sephardic cultural components within Judaism.

¹⁴ This term appears in: LEMKIN, Rafael. *Qu'est-ce qu'un génocide?* Paris: Rocher, 2007 (1944), p. 308. For Lemkin this word is synonym of the word “genocide”, he proposed “Another term could be used for the same idea, ethnocide, from the Greek ethnos, nation, and from Latin side”. It is later that the word “ethnocide” started to be employed in order to speak specifically about the intentional and systematic destruction of the culture, thanks to the new contributions of the anthropologists Robert Jaulin and Georges Condominas at the end of the years 1960. See: JAULIN, Robert. *La paix blanche. Introduction à l'ethnocide*. Paris: Le Seuil, 1970; CLASTRES, Pierre. *De l'ethnocide. L'Homme*, Vol. XIV (3-4): 1970, p. 101–110.

¹⁵ On 10 may 1933 in Berlin, and after also in Bremen, Dresden, Frankfurt am Main, München, and Nurnberg.

mous Jewish authors¹⁶, and beyond this event the ethnocidal process was also continual through the expulsion of the Jews from the activities connected with the culture, arts, and teaching. Thereafter, an important acceleration occurred in 1938 during the *Kristallnacht* (“the Night of broken Glass”)¹⁷ which marked a decisive change¹⁸ in the unfolding of the ethnocidal¹⁹ violence. During this event, two hundred and sixty seven synagogues were destroyed or burned, and many thousands of homes and stores were heavily ransacked and plundered. Later as soon as Poland was invaded, the ethnocide became daily, and it was the same processes later in the other territories of Central, Baltic, and Eastern Europe. Thus, in this historical framework, by “ethnocide”, I mean the destruction of the Yiddish / Ashkenazy²⁰ material and immaterial culture on the soil of its territorial origins.

From an anthropological point of view, it is necessary to note an important aspect having a major incidence in the current processes of identity re-registration in which several descendants of the Ashkenazy victims are involved. The process of the ethnocide carried out by the Nazis against the Jewish culture is opposite to what was mainly studied by the anthropologists in non-European populations and territories where the ethnocidal logic was generally combined with an acculturation, even naturalization²¹. Indeed, in these extra-european cases, the ethnocidal goal was a cultural conversion through oppression, while in the case of the ethnocide carried out by the Nazi, it was refused for the Jews, through a social exclusion totally closed, to participate in any form of culture and history.

The eradication of the Jewish culture and of its history as a whole represented for the Nazis a form of cultural eugenism in the context of the *Rassenpflege* (i.e., “race guardianship”) policies. It is an aspect sometimes forgotten or not enough mentioned in several analyses about the Holocaust, whereas it was a very central point in the “*völkisch*” (racial) ideology and practices²², because of the dialectical relation that the Nazis established between the culture and the race. The conceptual keyboard of all their theories and actions rested on this ideological posture. Therefore, it is not possible to discern the importance of the ethnocide in the whole of the destructions against the European Jews and the importance of its specific consequences in the daily life of the Ashkenazi survivors and their direct or avuncular descendants, if one does not take into account these aspects.

Thus, the intention of a complete cultural and identity eradication touched in an incommensurable way the Ashkenazy culture among the other socio-historical components of Judaism, as the territories annexed by the Nazis and the Germanic regions were the heart of the various regional Yiddish cultures. On this subject, we must be also aware that formerly the term “*Ashkenaz*” was the medieval Hebrew name for the Germanic-speaking regions²³ and for the Jews from these areas. Moreover, the word “*yiddish*” is related to the Germanic idiom “*jüdisch*” meaning “*jewish*”.

¹⁶ Books of non Jewish famous writers registered by the Nazis had on black lists were also burnt.

¹⁷ Beetwen on 9 to 10 November 1938.

¹⁸ See: FRIEDLANDER, S. (...) 1998.

¹⁹ As the relative adjective to the genocide is “genocidal”, I employ the term “ethnocidal” for what refers to the ethnocide.

²⁰ As Julien Bauer indicates: “Often, *Yiddish* is regarded as synonym of *Ashkenaz*”. See: BAUER, Julien. *Les Juifs Ashkénazes*. Paris: PUF, 2001, p. 56.

²¹ See: JAULIN, R. (...) 1970; CLASTRES, p. (...) 1970.

²² See: ROSENBERG, Alfred. *Der Myrhus des 20. Jahrhunderts*. München: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1935 (1930); PAUL, Gustav. *Rassen und Raumgeschichte des deutschen Volkes*. München: Lehmanns Verlag, 1935; SCHEIDT, Walter. *Rassenkunde*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1930; ZINNER-BIBERACH, F. *Führer, Volk und Tat. Geschichte und Gestalt der neuen Nation*. München: Kroner-Verlag, 1934.

²³ KATZ, Dovid. *Grammar of the Yiddish language*. London: Duckworth, 1987, p. XVII; KATZ, Dovid. *The Unfinished Story of Yiddish*. New York: Basic Books, 2004, p. 20–24.

Another anthropological observation is essential in this historical context. In the case of the Nazism, the undertaking of the ethnocide against Jews preceded the genocide, and then was parallel to it. In these circumstances, the destruction of the Yiddish/Ashkenazy culture is not the consequence of the genocide, thus of the mass murders. The fact that these murders led to the disappearance of several million people who could not transmit any more the Yiddish language and culture, their traditions and practices, is an aspect being added to all that was besides destroyed directly by the ethnocide²⁴. So, the enormous genocide should not make one forget the gigantic dimension of the ethnocide. In other words, the victims suffered because of the two greater forms of violence which can exist in the social life, so that the survivors, their descendants and also the members of their families who were expatriated, doubly undergo the consequences of all these acts of material, immaterial and human annihilation since the end of the war until today.

For this reason, the traumas caused by the various forms of extreme violence (the pogroms, the genocide, and the ethnocide) and by the other forms of anti-Semitic violence endured in Central, Baltic and Eastern Europe at different periods are always present consciously and unconsciously through several generations. In addition to this last point, the fact that members in the rest of local populations took part directly in various persecutions against Jews, or had often a passive behaviour during these acts, is also very present in the mind of the victim's descendants. These facts often lead to the expression of mistrust towards the current inhabitants of these regions.

This mistrust can sometimes lead to the projection of global prejudices saying for example "all the Poles are always anti-Semitic". Several interlocutors affirm like Rivka:

I do not want to go to Poland, the Poles are anti-Semitic. With the people, it is as if it would be not enough that the death camps were in Poland. [Rivka, survivor, emigrated in the United States after 1945; ethnographic situation in 2004 in New York]

Such thoughts are obviously increasing, when the international media and institutional authorities give news on current anti-Semitic acts in these parts of Europe²⁵, and also when a political rise of nationalism happens there. In this framework, it is easily to understand that the fear of anti-Semitism does not facilitate the human and psychological relations they have with these regions and their populations.

The transplantation and the attachment of the ascendants to their native territories

In order to have a better understanding about the reconnexion practices and the re-registration processes in which many descendants are involved, it is necessary to consider the question of the migration of their ascendants. This aspect referring to a large part of the history of the Ashkenazy people is not homogeneous because the migrations occurred at different periods. And they were also caused by various factors.

Many migratory movements from the Baltic, Central and Eastern areas occurred before the Destruction of Jews, between the end of the 19th century and the Second World War. Other movements, rarer, occurred during this event. Immediately after the war, many Jews emigrated to North

²⁴ See: LEMEE, Carole. Réappropriation culturelle dans les mondes yiddish. *Ethnologie française*, Vol. 37 No. 3, 2007, p. 493–499; LEMEE, Carole. En creux et en plein. *L'Autre*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2007, p. 27–43.

²⁵ Concerning the forms of anti-Semitism since the years 2000 in fifteen European countries, see: GERSTENFELD Manfred & TRIGANO Shmuel. *Les habits neufs de l'antisémitisme en Europe*. Barbatre: Café Noir, 2004.

America, England, and to Palestine²⁶. During the long Soviet period, according to Pauline Peretz²⁷ 1,3 million Soviet Jews, who were victims of discrimination²⁸, left the USSR between 1948 and 1991. Finally, after the release from the Soviet domination, the migration movements were again very important. Contrary to what it is possible to imagine, these movements were not only to Israel, but also to Germany. Indeed, between 1991 and 2009, more than 200.000 Jews of the former Soviet republics emigrated in Germany²⁹.

The migratory movements having occurred before the Second World War show us very clearly the attachment of the Jewish migrants to their native regions. These movements depended in certain cases on anti-Jewish actions even on pogroms. In other cases they had mainly economic reasons, even if anti-Semitic persecutions counted as well. These migrants on their arrival for example in France or in the US³⁰ had generally created societies linked to their local or regional origins. These associations are called “*Landmanshaftn*” in the Yiddish language, “Societies of Fellow Immigrants” in English, and “*Sociétés d’originaires*” in French. They were constituted around the identity and cultural Jewish membership to their “*shtetlekh*”³¹ and towns in Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, etc. For example, in Paris in 1905, there were ten *Landmanshaftn*. In 1918, in this town, they were sixteen including the famous association “*Fraynd fun Varsha*” (created in 1910), and their number increased much between the years 1920 and 1930. My interlocutors who are old and survivors, evoke often these associations and the important role they had in their life and in the socialization of their children before the Second World War in the new countries.

Formerly, these associations maintained a Jewish cemetery thanks to their financial benefits. They practised also interest-free loans for their members, and had life and burial insurance for them and their families. After the Destruction of Jews during the Second World War, many of these *Landmanshaftn* published *Yizkor-bikher* (memorial books). There are books devoted to the former homes in Europe and to the Jews from these *shtetlekh* or towns who were assassinated during the genocide. It is in these memorial books that the local victims of the genocide are named and remembered. And we have to note here that beyond their commemorative aspect, they also allow the victim’s families, the academic researchers, and other people to learn several aspects about the social and cultural life of the Jewish communities in Baltic, Central, and Eastern Europe before their destruction.

Before the Second World War and after this event, the *Landmanshaftn* did not only constitute forms of social solidarity that the migrants had between them. They were also important cultural homes where the local Jewish identity of such or such place in Central, Baltic or Eastern Europe continued to be produced in a renewed way and to be transmitted, from now on in the zone of

²⁶ The declaration of independence of the State of Israel read by David Ben Gourion, was May 14th, 1948.

²⁷ See: PERETZ, Pauline. *Le combat pour les Juifs soviétiques*. Paris: Colin, 2006.

²⁸ To refer to the alarming report and the recommendation produced by the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe in 1974. See: Conseil de l’Europe. *Situation de la Communauté juive de l’Europe en Union soviétique. Rapport – Débats – Recommandation*. XXVe Session: Strasbourg, January 1974.

²⁹ BELOZEROVA, Liaz & LANTHONY, Antoine. *L’immigration des Juifs d’ex-URSS*. <http://www.nouvelle-europe.eu/geographie/est-ouest/l-immigration-des-juifs-d-ex-urss-en-allemande.html> (last consultation 10 09 2009)

³⁰ Refer to: WEISSER, Michael K. *Brotherhood of Memory: Jewish Landsmanshaftn in the New World*. Basic Book, 1986.

³¹ Plural of “shtetl”, a word meaning “village”. To discover the sociocultural life, which existed in the *shtetlekh*, refer to: PERETZ, Yitshokh L. *Les oubliés du shtetl. Yiddishland*. Paris: Plon, 2007 (1947); ZBOROWSKI, Mark & HERZOG, Elisabeth. *Olam. Dans le shtetl d’Europe centrale avant la Shoah*. Paris: Plon, 1992 (1952); ERTEL, Rachel. *La bourgade juive de Pologne*. Paris: Payot, 1986; HOFFMAN, Eva. *Im Shtetl. Die Welt der polnischen Juden*. München: DTV, 2003.

transplantation. The migration was indeed experienced like transplantation in one “*Elsewhere*”. And the cultural productions (books, newspapers, etc.) show us that the continuation of the cultural identity was not generated by nostalgia for the world left behind. In the artistic fields for example, we can observe a presence of an important production categorized by the specialists as “modern”³². In a general way, beyond this fact, the continuation of the cultural identity was linked to the will to restart a sociocultural life deeply articulated around their local or regional identity. This major aspect, combining mobility and cultural anchoring, rested on the conception of “no return” and this process occurred in a perception of the time which was thus not directed by sentimental memory longing for things of the past.

In this way, their aspirations were directed towards the present and the future, and were not focused on the past. The form of cultural resistance that they had, was associated with a very strong projection in the future. It also corresponded for many Ashkenazy migrants to the choice of a *Yiddishland*, in a Diaspora situation. In this framework, the *Yiddishland* was not in their mind something belonging to the past, but something to build. These migrants in their native territories had indeed mostly decided to remain in Europe³³, and not to leave for Palestine or later for *Israël*, compared to other Ashkenazim who chose the Zionism direction. David Fishman notes about the intellectuals from Eastern Europe who wanted to continue to have a diasporic Jewish life: “they shared a common consciousness of representing a third path in Jewish life between Zionism and assimilation, between those who affirmed Jewish nationhood but denied its viability in the Diaspora and those who affirmed their attachment to Russian society³⁴ and culture but denied the principle of Jewish nationhood. These intellectuals often referred to themselves as Diaspora Nationalists (in Yiddish, “*Golus-nationalist*”)³⁵.

Before and after the “transplantation”, several of the diasporic migrants defined their identity through the concept “*yiddishism*”. They presented themselves as “*yiddishist*” people. In this context, the word “*yiddishism*” refers to the idea that “Yiddish language and culture occupy the centre of Jewish identity”³⁶, so that the Yiddishists affirmed that “the Yiddish language was the cementing force that united the Jewish people and would ensure its continued existence”³⁷. Itzhak, one of my interlocutors, affirmed also:

As the Yiddish is a transnational language and the culture too, the Yiddishland could also be transnational through our presence in several countries. This territory could exist in our actions in various places, everywhere. [Itzhak, Bundist³⁸, arrived in Israel after the Second World War and after 1947, ethnographic situation in 2003 in Israel]

³² See: HARSHAW, Benjamin. *The Meaning of Yiddish*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

³³ Concerning the history of the political and cultural concept “Yiddish nation” refer to: GOTTESMAN, Itzik Nakhmen. *Defining the Yiddish Nation*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press; 2003.

³⁴ At the end of the 19th century, the Russian empire included Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine and territories of present-day Poland.

³⁵ See: FISHMAN, David. *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005, p. 62.

³⁶ GOTTESMAN, I. N. (...) 2003, p. XIII.

³⁷ DAWIDOWICZ, Lucy. *From that Place and Time: a Memoire 1938-1947*. New York, 1989, p. 7.

³⁸ To refer to the “General Jewish Labour Bind of Lithuania, Poland and Russia” often called “the Bund” founded in Vilno, 1897.

From the broken times to the processes post-genocide and post-ethnocide

In all the migration situations, it is in general always difficult for migrants to transmit verbally, for example in the form of accounts, what deals with the life they had just left and with its history. Especially, when they are not in nostalgic attitudes. And it is all the more obvious, when the social universe left behind was marked by various forms of discrimination and that new forms of discrimination occur in the arrival territories. It was for example the case of many Jewish emigrants arrived in France before the Second World War. Often, they were confronted with xenophobia, when it was not directly with anti-Semitic attitudes. And a fact is incontestable, between the late Nineteenth century and the Second World War, while the Ashkenazy migrants worked to keep in everyday life their Yiddish culture inside their new countries, they transmitted very little verbally to their children the history linked to their native lands. On a side, their children were not disconnected from the Yiddish culture. They lived it for example on a Parisian mode, and it was permanently updated. That, even if the children had a passive practice of the Yiddish language. Indeed, they listened and understood relatively well, but generally they dialogued mainly or only in the language of the host country³⁹. And on another side, they thus did not know almost the history of their parents and relatives before they arrived in France or in other countries, except some allusions to the anti-Semitic persecutions in the native territories.

During the Second World War, these children, like their parents or grandparents, if they lived in a country such as France, were also enormously touched by the anti-Semitic persecutions. Either they were deported⁴⁰, or they were hidden in order to escape the deportation⁴¹. Among the 75.721 Jews deported from France, the Poles were about 26.000, the Russians about 4.500, the Hungarians about 1.200, the Romanians about 3.300, the Germans about 7.000, the Austrians about 2.500. And among the 11.000 children deported, approximately 7.000 had foreign parents⁴². The surviving children were most generally orphans, and they had very often also lost a great part of the elder members of their families, if not the totality. The situations that I studied inside the “*Assize Court*”⁴³ of Bordeaux during the trial against Maurice Papon (The French higher official responsible for the service of the Jewish Questions at the prefecture of Gironde between 1942 and 1944)⁴⁴ show it very clearly. For example in this context, the victims Eshter Fogiel (family from White Russia and Latvia) and Therese Stopnicki (father from Poland) were the only survivors in their direct families in France. So, many members of various generations who had migrated from Baltic, Central or Eastern Europe disappeared because of the deportations and also because of other forms of maltreatment⁴⁵ perpetrated in various European countries.

In such a context the transmission of knowledge referring to the social history before the genocide was not done any more in many families. And it was not at school (in France or elsewhere) that this knowledge on the social and cultural Jewish history from the Central, Baltic, and Eastern

³⁹ See: LEMÉE, Carole. *Parenté, mémoire, langue et culture*. Strasbourg: European Council, 2000.

⁴⁰ In France, according Serge Klarsfeld, 75.721 Jews were deported, among those 11.000 children. There were 74 convoys for the deportation from this country, between 1942 and 1944, mostly to Auschwitz, otherwise it was to Sobibor, Kaunas and Revel. See: KLARSFELD, Serge. *La Shoah en France*. Vol. 1-3. Paris: Fayard, 2001.

⁴¹ See: LEMÉE, Carole. *L'ombre du passé*. Paris: Hachette-Edition No.1, 1998.

⁴² These estimations result from the work carried out by the Association of Serge Klarsfeld, *Les fils et filles de déportés Juifs de France*.

⁴³ The criminal court in France.

⁴⁴ The trial was held at the Assize Court of Bordeaux between October 1997 and April 1998.

⁴⁵ Several Jews died in the camps of internment in France and elsewhere, other Jews were assassinated in the context of executions, etc.

Europe was transmitted. Besides, the books dealing with it were very rare until the end of the Twentieth century⁴⁶. It was the same concerning the television productions (films, etc). In other words, on the one hand, the transmission of the autobiographical memories could only be carried out with many difficulties because of the genocide and the destruction of many old documents where autobiographical elements could have been consigned. On the other and, the transmission of the historic-semantic memory was also very difficult. The notion “autobiographical memory” refers here to the memories that people have because they lived themselves the facts⁴⁷, and the notion “historic-semantic memory”⁴⁸ created by the anthropologist Maurice Bloch⁴⁹ refers to the memories that people have thanks to all that they received through transmissions carried out by other people.

Until recent times, in the case of the descendants who had never lived in the native territories of their ascendants, the main source in the acquisition of the historic-semantic memories relating specifically to the sociocultural Jewish life in Baltic, Central and Eastern Europe before the Destruction, rested generally on literary works published abroad. As other interlocutors (in various countries), Jeanne explains:

I started to read Yiddish literature translated into French, when I was adult, because it was the only place where I could find elements informing me about what had been the regions where lived the family of my parents and my ancestors, and about the past life there. [Jeanne, born during the Second World War; ethnographic situation in France, 1999]

After 1945, the children and teenagers born in post-migratory situation and themselves survivors of the Holocaust (called *Shoah* in Israel⁵⁰ and in France⁵¹, and *Khurbn* in Yiddish) had to start again a social life, to build a family, and to rebuilt themselves psychologically and also often physically (because of the multiple deprivations, and/or physical wounds). The different survivors, deported and non deported Jews, were engaged in re-building processes of themselves and of their identity as an individual human being and as a citizen. So, they were involved in “restoration” processes, because they had to restore their personal life and to re-establish their social presence in the society after the dramas. As these processes occurred always for them in very traumatic situations, psychologically by necessity they could not to reopen the wounds endured in the past. But such an attitude did not mean that they did not agree to speak about the facts they had just lived during the Second World War⁵². At least, they agreed to speak outside their families. Indeed, one of the psycho-sociological conditions of their re-establishment in the society precisely consisted in trying to give some summary accounts of the experiences lived in the context of the separation from the other people/citizens during the period of the Nazism. But in the immediate post-war period, the

⁴⁶ See: LEMEE, Carole. Atminties perdavimai “peršokant” per kartą ir jos įtvirtinimo procesai. *Lietuvos Etnologija*, Vol. 3 (12), 2003, p. 61–77.

⁴⁷ See: TULVING, Endel. *The Organization of Memory*. New York: Academic Press, 1972.

⁴⁸ This term concerns the semantic memories dealing with historical facts, while the semantic memory can concern a lot of aspects which do not refer only to historical topics.

⁴⁹ See: BLOCH, Maurice. *Cognition, Memory and Literacy*. London, 1997, p. 61.

⁵⁰ Since the law of Knesset on the 18th of August 1953.

⁵¹ Since the years 1990, the French State and also the population mainly use this term. It was introduced in France by Claude Lanzmann with his film “Shoah” (1985).

⁵² See: WIEVIORKA, Annette. *Déportation et génocide*. Paris: Hachette, 1995 (1992); LEMEE, C. (...) 1998; LEMEE, C. (...) 2000; LEMEE, C. (...) 2003.

majority of people were not “ready” to hear such accounts⁵³. This fact quickly led to a deep social silence concerning all the questions linked to the Destruction of European Jews.

Inside their families, the situation was different. Often, the survivors did not give accounts of their past social experiences because they sought to protect their children. All my interlocutors explain that they did not want to transmit the least form of suffering to the following generation through narrative descriptions of the dramas underwent during the period of the Nazism. Relating to the situations with members belonging to the same generation as them or with older survivors, they affirm that they often did not feel the need to speak about their experiences during the Destruction because they relatively had lived the same dramas and events. They also insist on the fact that they had need to project beyond these still recent tragedies in their life.

These aspects, briefly evoked here, contributed to the fact that the second and the third generations born after the war, mostly received very few transmissions about the social and cultural history of the Lithuanian, Polish, etc. Jewish worlds from where their ascendants were originated, and only little verbal transmission about the facts relating to the Destruction. Indeed, the “*judeocide*”⁵⁴ perpetrated by the Nazis and their accomplices was a long time like a “memory screen”⁵⁵ toward the former social history of the European Jews. If the survivors were engaged in processes of rebuilding after the traumas, their descendants, in particular the third generation born after the war, are currently engaged in processes of identity reconstitution. Indeed, they are generally not committed in processes of rebuilding, insofar as they were not themselves victims of the genocide. But as descendants, on the one hand of migrants, and simultaneously on the other hand as descendants of genocide victims, they suffer from not knowing enough about the history of their family before the Destruction. Who were they? How did they live? Therefore they are involved in processes of reconstitution concerning what was formerly the social and cultural history of the members of their family in their native territories, and after in their arrival in other countries. In these circumstances, we have thus to observe that these processes of reconstitution do not touch only the episode of the genocide.

These processes take place in a processing whole, in which they have fundamental role. This consists for the descendants in being re-registered qualitatively in the long time of a sociocultural history, in which the genocide and the ethnocide are no more like a memorial screen, and simultaneously in being re-registered qualitatively inside the space of the kinship which was terribly touched by the genocide. These two aspects, the qualitatively re-registration in the continuity of a sociocultural history and the re-registration inside the kinship through questions and researches carried out (about the members of their families who had lived before and during the genocide), are intrinsically dependent.

The (re)discovering carried out by the descendants and the processes of re-registration

Nowadays, an important movement of cultural and historical discovery is carried out by the descendants⁵⁶. This phenomenon occurs while it is frequent to read or to hear that the culture and

⁵³ See: WIEVIORKA, Annette. *Déportation et génocide*. Paris: Hachette, 1995 (1992); LEMÉE, C. (...) 1998; LEMÉE, C. (...) 2000.

⁵⁴ See: MEYER, Arno J. *La solution finale dans l'histoire*. Paris: La découverte, 2002 (1990).

⁵⁵ See: LEMÉE, C. (...) 2003.

⁵⁶ See: SHANDLER, Jeffrey. *Adventures in Yiddishland. Postvernacular Language and Culture*. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2006; LEMÉE, Carole & GALAY, Daniel. Des traumas aux processus de réinscription. *Face-à-face*, 2003, No. 5. http://www.ssd.u-bordeaux2.fr/faf/archives/numero_5/articles/lemee/lemee.htm; LEMÉE, Carole. L'intérêt actuel pour la culture yiddish et ses musiques. Entre découvertes et redécouvertes dans et hors des mondes ashkénazes. *L'ethnomusicologie de la France*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009, p. 363–385.

the language Yiddish would have died or would have been completely buried by the *judeocide* perpetrated during the Second World War⁵⁷. The descendants are engaged in sociocultural processes in which they seek elements relating to the Yiddish/Ashkenazy culture and its singularity through its geographical location, but also through the “*mameloshn*” (the native tongue, the Yiddish language) and its geographic cultural variants⁵⁸. These elements are referred to the “own identity”, in other words all that is singular within larger groups (non-Jewish, and Jewish). These aspects to which the identity is linked constitute historical and cultural bases that the descendants, born between the Thirties and the Nineties, are now discovering or rediscovering.

Thus, the (re)discovery movements concern various aspects relating to what the Yiddish worlds had been before the Destruction of Jews in Central, Baltic and Eastern Europe. But these movements concern also the Yiddish social spaces and productions in post-migratory situations. Indeed, the descendants are in search of information and elements referring to their identity roots and to their family history localised in several territorial spaces of the Diaspora. They need consciously and unconsciously to reconstitute what was the former family history and more largely the history of the Ashkenazy people in the long time and this process happens in the framework of a double otherness. On one side, in respect to the other cultural and identity components of Judaism (the *Sefarady*, the oriental Jews, etc), and on the other side in respect to the non Jews. This research activity is obviously carried out for themselves at personal levels, and also at collective levels as they are members of micro and macro Ashkenazy groups that they represent.

The processes of reconstitution we can observe in the life of many migrants’ descendants, whatever their origins are, have in the case of the descendants of the Ashkenazy victims a specific dimension. In a certain way, they are like a remote answer to the annihilation led by the Nazis specifically against Jews. Therefore, compared with other social situations, these processes are not only like those occurring often after migrations and/or after events linked to an identity/cultural repression. As already underlined, the annihilation perpetrated by the Nazis was not confined only on the human destruction of Jews, but also on the radical and systematic destruction of their culture and of their history. In these circumstances, the combination of the genocide and the ethnocide led to the attempt of the most radical obliteration that can exist against an identity and historical presence. These levels were thus deeply touched, and it is from all that had not been destroyed by this immense devastation, and simultaneously in reaction to this absolute identity negation, that the processes of identity reconstitution currently occur several decades after the facts in the daily life of the direct or avuncular victim’s descendants.

From an anthropological point of view, we have to note the important role of the avuncular victims’ descendants in these processes. Indeed, in many cases, all the members of the nuclear family disappeared during the genocide. It means, there remained after 1945 only uncles/aunts or cousins who could survive, or who lived abroad. But it means also, when there are still survivors in the families, the widened family is like the nuclear family in the perceptions and representations of my interlocutors. Thus, whereas the memory of Holocaust contributed formerly to create something like a memorial screen, putting in a no man’s land several aspects dealing with the sociocultural history of the victims before the genocide, it is nowadays from what it remained after

⁵⁷ See: ERTEL, Rachel. *Dans la langue de personne*. Paris: Seuil, 1999.

⁵⁸ The Yiddish language has important regional variations in Europe, which concern the pronunciation and also the addition of words or expressions (for example transformed Slavic idioms) because of the processes acculturation having happened with the languages mainly spoken in the native European territories. Therefore it is possible to identify the territorial origin of people (or of their family) according to the Yiddish who they speak.

the Destruction at human and material levels, and also from what was saved (at the same levels) or was localised elsewhere during this event, that the discovery and reconnection is carried out by the different descendants.

The process of a sociocultural, identity and historical “re-registration” within the membership group rests on a combination of three processual factors. The first relates to a *re-connection*. It concerns the access for the young generations to knowledge about the sociocultural history of their ascendants. This access is particularly favoured by the accounts of life, by the literature, the cinema, the music, the travels on the native lands of their ascendants, etc. Recently, it is also favoured thanks to all that is on line on Internet sites. Indeed, more and more websites are devoted to the genealogical and historical research and information intended for the descendants of migrants and/or for direct or avuncular descendants of the genocide’s victims. The American website “*museumoffamilyhistory.com*” is a good example of such new cultural productions. Its contents illustrate well what I underlined some lines higher. Indeed, the main axes announced on the first page are: “Eastern European Jewry; From the Pale to the Golden Land: how our families came to America; Living in America: the Jewish experience; The Yiddish World; The Holocaust; World Holocaust Memorials”.

The second processual factor relates to the appropriation. It concerns the work of emphasizing significance, and the reconstitution action. The third concerns the “re-chaining” process, that descendants can or can not carry out starting from the significances they establish. When the “re-chaining” occurs, it comes to temporarily complete the whole of the “re-registration” process. The concept of “re-chaining” concerns the establishment of a positive otherness linked to the cultural and identity markers that the ascendants had formerly. This, not in order to reproduce them, but to continue a social identity work with them, while being registered in a creative continuity. A reversed filiation is established. In this context, the juniors qualitatively recognize the heritages of their elder in the kinship, and later they emphasize this action. It is thus a positive otherness that is not imposed, but created and wanted by the descendants, and it occupies a central place in their identity strategies.

Their intention is to combine what they live, carry out and are in their present time with what preceded during several generations, in order to have the feeling to reposition themselves in continuity. The concept of “re-chaining” or of “processual reconnexion” is the same, and thus refers to qualitative work consisting in making efficient the bonds that connect the descendants to the sociocultural identity and to the history inherited in the filiation. These links exist, they are one “already there”, but they take indeed their full social effectiveness only when they are the subject of appropriations on each generational level, throughout a genealogical continuum. Thus, what makes difficult the whole of these processes for the descendants is not only the fact that the genocide led to the disappearance of many generational links in the kinship, it is also the fact the Nazi had wanted to destroy completely the Jewish culture in order to leave any trace and testimony of its history.

As the destruction caused by the ethnocide was considerable and weighs enormously in the identity processes of reconnexion that are currently undergoing several descendants of victims, it is easy to understand that the local, national, or international communitarian policies and all the other actions, which try to make people discover the Yiddish culture in post-migratory situations constitute an important support in the step of a reconnection by the descendants. But we have to note that this step is first of all personal. It is always the fact of a person, and not of a collective.

The (re)discovery movements involving the re-registration processes not only take place within families through processes which are specific to these social spaces, but also in close interaction with what happens apart from them. Firstly, it occurs in Jewish Community contexts on local, na-

tional and international levels. If one takes the local example of Bordeaux in France, a city where the Jewish community is mainly Sephardic, the cultural centre *Yavne* is engaged these 5 last years more and more in actions directed to the discovery of the Yiddish/Ashkenazy inheritances through Yiddish lessons, conferences, travels in Poland dependent on the visit of the death camps, etc. And its actions are generally supported by the Jewish Agency⁵⁹. Secondly, the (re)discovery movements occur in the framework of institutions such as museums or foundations having a national and/or international importance linked to the promotion and the safeguard of all the Jewish culture, or in the context also of the promotion of policies or normative decisions adopted by the Council of Europe⁶⁰, by UNESCO⁶¹, also by “Task force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research”⁶², etc. or in the context of an important cultural and artistic production and its use in connection with Yiddish traditions, such as the “*Klezmer* music”, or literature, or theatre, or graphic arts, etc. Thirdly, the (re)discovery movement also occurs in the context of a growing media interest for the social and cultural history of Ashkenazim who constituted thus the major part of the victims during the Destruction of Jews.

Today it is the genocide and the full consideration of its deep consequences, not only on a human and social level but also on cultural, which leads Jews and non-Jews to be interested in the historical and cultural identity of Ashkenazy through their history which spreads in the long course of time. Indeed, the Ashkenazi identities, more than other Jewish identities, are today (re)defined through the prism of the Holocaust, and also through what people learn about what had been lived or practised before the destruction of European Jews. This occurs in a globalized world movement, in which Judaism is also (re)considered by the non-Jewish through this event and its consequences. This general movement allows us to understand what carries out more and more to a very strong increase of the reconnexion practices, in logics of identity (re)definition identity fed by internal and external dynamic, and as well centrifugal as centripetal synergies. Consequently, in such a general context, it is very important to note that the cultural policies which are spread in museums and Foundations, have currently a major role in this effervescence at different levels, like in France “*la Fondation du Judaïsme français*” (created in 1974, “*Musée d’art et d’histoire du Judaïsme*” (created in 1998), “*Mémorial de la Shoah*” (created in 2005), “*Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah*” (created in 2000)⁶³. It is the same for all the decisions adopted by the great international authorities like the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the Task force, etc. and as it is for all that occurs with the cultural production and consumption of film, music, etc.⁶⁴. In the cultural field, many festivals of Jewish music many concerts and festivals of Yiddish music like the Klezmpolitan Festival in Paris (created in 2005) take a place more and more important.

Thus, it is in all these synergistic contexts that several descendants start to travel in the zones where their ascendants and/or ancestors lived before the migrations. These voyages are much more

⁵⁹ Created in 1929.

⁶⁰ In 1996, the recommendation No 1291 relating to the culture Yiddish, and in 2000 the world congress devoted to the Yiddish culture and language. Concerning the recommendation No. 1291, see: <http://assembly.coe.int/MainF.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta96/FREC1291.htm>

⁶¹ The Universal declaration of UNESCO on cultural diversity, adopted on November 2, 2001.

⁶² Created in 1998 on the initiative of Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson, the Task Force currently has twenty-seven member countries: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States.

⁶³ Its main budget comes from the spoliation of the Jews of France, thus from financial restitution of the goods which had been despoiled.

⁶⁴ See: LEMEE, C. (...) 2009.

than a memorial undertaking or a pilgrimage. They correspond indeed to a step of research and setting in history, associated with a discovery of the Ashkenazi culture in its roots. In the framework of the re-registration processes, and among other cultural practices the victims' descendants have, many of them begin more and more to come to visit zones where their families lived, and not only to the places where the ascendants (on direct genealogical lines, or avuncular) were mostly exterminated. It is a new step for them. I call in French language "*historico-mémoriel*" this new tourism form, because it is based on the interest towards cultural and historical aspects specifically tied to the history, identity and memory of the Ashkenazy worlds in the Baltic and Central Europe. It allows the descendants, even on the native soil of their ancestors extensively or totally destroyed during the 2nd World war, to complete all that they try to find and to reconstitute from another source the social history of their family before and during the Destruction, and also to discover what happened to the Jews during the Soviet domination. In this approach which does not concern a pilgrimage, but an identity and historical personal research, the descendants seek there the past and current presence of their genealogical cultural and historical heritage, which is also one of the important components of the European inheritance. They position their identity and their place, destroyed by the Nazis and attacked during the Soviet period too, in Europe where they raise the anthropological question of the relationship between the singular and the global.

During these discovery travels, the descendants are not only confronted with the history of the Holocaust, but always with several periods in which they seek the place of the Jewish worlds, and what occurred in the field of the relationships between Jews and non Jews. These travels are different from those where the destination is a death camp. In certain cases, they are associated with participating in workshops, such as the learning the Yiddish language, of musical traditions, etc, or they lead to these new practices. These cultural practices are intrinsically dependent in the will of a reconnection to what, in their representations, is associated to the cultural roots of their family identity or more largely of the Ashkenazi in the Central, Baltic, and Eastern Europe. Very often, it is even via the inscription in a workshop or in a festival that the young people are going to find the traces of their families in the regions of origin. This intermediary is still an important aspect, from a psychological point of view. It creates a kind of preliminary link between the descendants, the former world of their ascendants and the present of the global societies in these regions. Indeed, it is still difficult for descendants to come without a kind of local accompaniment. Finally, we have to note that what is very important in the approach of the young descendants is the research of historical identity, and that they feel a responsibility towards it. They are indeed more and more conscious, as the last survivors are dying, that the transmission of history concerning the periods before, during and after the Holocaust will be carried very rapidly now on their shoulders.

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BALTIJOS IR CENTRINĖS EUROPOS REGIONO ŽYDŲ EMIGRANTŲ PALIKUONIŲ TAPATYBĖS ATKŪRIMO POSTHOLOKAUSTINIAI PROCESAI

Carole Lemée

Bordeaux 2 universiteto Antropologijos departamentas, Prancūzija

Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariami žydų aškenazių, emigravusių iš Baltijos regiono ir Centrinės Europos, palikuonių tapatybės atkūrimo procesai. Tiriama, kokias sąsajas tokie emigrantų palikuonys yra išlaikę su savo tėvų giminėmis. Atsižvelgiant į bendruosius tapatybės atkūrimo proceso ypatumus, atkreipiamas dėmesys į tai, kad šis procesas yra glaudžiai susijęs ir su asmeninės bei kolektyvinės tapatybės pasirinkimo principais, išlikusiais emigrantų šeimos gyvenimo, bei visuomeniniais tokio pasirinkimo galimybių aspektais, naujai išskylančiais šių laikų Baltijos regiono bei Centrinės Europos šalyse. Pastebima, kad vis daugiau minėtų emigrantų palikuonių yra linkę grįžti ne vien į laikinąsias savo tėvų perkėlimo zonas, bet ir į jų tikrąsias gimtines. Jie domisi savo tėvų socialinės tragedijos istorijomis prieš holokaustą ir jo metu, jie nelieka abejingi ir visų žydų, gimusių ir gyvenusių tuometinės Sovietų Sąjungos teritorijoje, likimui. Jie stengiasi išsaugoti savo šeimos ir giminės kultūrinio paveldo istorines ištakas bei jo dabarties apraiškas, suvokdami jas kaip sudėtinės visos Europos kultūrinio palikimo dalis.

Rekonstitucijos procesas yra suvokiamas kaip sudėtinė visos sociokultūrinės, istorinės atminties ir tapatybės atkūrimo proceso dalis; jis šiuo metu yra aktualus daugeliui aškenazių. Toks sociokultūrinės atminties atkūrimo procesas yra trejopas. Tai postmigracinis (*post-migratory*), postgenocidinis (*post-genocide*) ir postetnocidinis (*post-ethnocide*) procesai. Iš esmės visa tai vertintina kaip žydų aškenazių materialiosios ir nematerialiosios kultūros totalaus naikinimo nuo pat jos ištakų faktas. Šiame kontekste identiteto „tapatumo“ ir „skirtingumo“ sampratos yra tiesiogiai susijusios su visais šiais trimis veiksniais, žinomais konkrečiose jų tėvonijose. Be to, čia yra svarbios ir sąmoningo ar nesąmoningo (verbalinio ir neverbalinio) tapatybės apsisprendimo aplinkybės, galėjusios turėti įtakos jų tėvams tuometinėse gimtosiose Baltijos regiono, Centrinės bei Rytų Europos šalyse. Globaliu aspektu istorinio ir kultūrinio žydų identiteto teritorijos apima didžiules geografines plotumas, kuriose bendrame judėjų tapatybių kontekste (greta žydų safardų, žydų jemenitų) daugiau ar mažiau išryškėja ir žydų aškenazių identitetas. Žinant, kad konkrečios Baltijos regiono ir Centrinės Europos šalys yra identifikuojamos lokalinės vietovės, kur formavosi ir buvo puoselėjamos jų tėvų kartos kultūrinės ir istorinės identiteto šaknys, minėti žydų emigrantų palikuonys mintyse šias žemes dažnai tapatina su sąlyginės Žydų žemės (*Yiddishland*) įvaizdžiu. Beje, toks įvaizdis nebūtinai turi būti tiesiogiai siejamas su jų identiteto tėvyne.

Žydų aškenazių identitetai gerokai labiau negu kitų žydų identitetai šiuo metu yra atkuriami holokausto istorinės atminties kontekste. Tokia istorinė atmintis jiems yra svarbi tam, kad galėtų giliai suvokti visos Europos žydų tragiškos lemties esmę. Be to, tai yra būtina ir stengiantis nepasiduoti visuotinės tautinės bei istorinės globalizacijos procesui, kur judaizmas yra nuolat veikiamas įvairiausių kitų kultūrinių bei istorinių identitetų.