

Agnieszka Jeż

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1187-4200>

BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY: STRATEGIES OF CULTURAL WORK IN ZIONIST YOUTH ORGANISATIONS IN INTERWAR POLAND

Abstract

The article describes the issues I raised in more detail in my doctoral dissertation. I explore the clash between modernity and Judaic tradition, which accompanied the development of cultural practices and Zionist youth organisations in interwar Poland. Based on an analysis of press sources from this period, I examine two selected organisations, Hashomer Hatzair and Akiba. Each sought to build its cultural capital by relying, to varying degrees, on the selection and substitution of elements in a process described by Hobsbawm and Ranger as the invention of tradition. These processes were reflected in the cultural practices, particularly musical ones, that I present in this article.

KEY WORDS: Zionism, invented tradition, music, Poland.

Anotacija

Straipsnyje išsamiai aprašomos problemos, kurias kėliau savo daktaro disertacijoje. Nagrinėju modernumo ir judaizmo tradicijos susidūrimą, kuris lydėjo kultūrinių praktikų ir sionistinių jaunimo organizacijų raidą tarpukario Lenkijoje. Remdamasi šio laikotarpio spaudos šaltinių analize, tiriu dvi pasirinktas organizacijas – „Hashomer Hatzair“ ir „Akiba“. Kiekviena iš jų siekė kurti savo kultūrinį kapitalą, skirtingu mastu remdamasi elementų atranka ir jų kaita procese, kurį Hobsbawmas ir Rangeris apibūdino kaip tradicijų kūrimo esmę. Šie procesai atsispindėjo kultūrinėse praktikose, ypač muzikinėse, kurias pristatau šiame straipsnyje.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sionizmas, sukurtos tradicijos, muzika, Lenkija.

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Problem statement

The aim of this article is to present and compare cultural practices related to music and dance in two selected Zionist youth organisations in Poland in the

Agnieszka Jeż – curator librarian and researcher at the E. Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Poland

Agnieszka Jeż – meno mokslų daktarė, kuratorė – bibliotekininkė ir mokslo darbuotoja E. Ringelblumo žydų istorijos institute Varšuvoje, Lenkija

E-mail: agnieszka.m.jez@gmail.com

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years 1918 to 1939. This is a topic that has not yet been addressed on the basis of available source materials in Polish, primarily archival documents and the press. Sources in Jewish languages (Yiddish and Hebrew) have been partly utilised in a limited number of publications; however, they take into account only to a very small degree the specificity of the diaspora, including the influence of local culture, politics and social structure (Shahar 2018). These conditions, in turn, were of great importance for shaping the world-view and cultural background of young people, members of Zionist youth organisations. The organisations represented a broad spectrum of approaches, not only to Zionism itself in its various manifestations, but also to the dichotomous opposition between tradition and modernity.

This opposition concerned primarily attitudes toward Judaism, as well as social and moral issues. The period during which this generation transitioned from childhood to adulthood was a time of exceptional modernisation processes of a civilisational nature, which fundamentally transformed the existing social order. These changes brought, among other things, a growing sense of national identity based no longer on religion, but on modern nationalism, as well as a breakdown in the transmission of tradition due to the erosion of the existing patriarchal and post-figurative model of the family. In the Jewish community in Europe, some of these changes had already been anticipated to a certain extent by the *Haskalah*,¹ which prepared the ground for a more secular and modern culture. However, it was rejected by Zionists, as a path leading to assimilation and the loss of Jewish identity. This identity therefore had to be redefined, no longer on the basis of religion, but on new, secular concepts.

Political and cultural Zionism, originating in the 19th century, thus partially absorbed the modernising and secular trends of the *Haskalah*; however, the core of its doctrine was the emerging ethnic nationalism, opposed to assimilation and acculturation. As a modern and emancipatory movement, Zionism had to enter into dialogue with Jewish tradition, creatively transforming it and employing it for its own purposes. In the process described by Hobsbawm and Ranger as 'the invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm, Ranger 2012), Zionism relied on a selective appropriation of elements of tradition that supported the pillars of the nationalist narrative, while simultaneously rejecting elements of history and tradition that did not fit this discourse.

This narrative was based on the conviction of the right of return, that is, the historically justified resettlement of Palestine by Jews from the diaspora, referred to in accordance with tradition as the Land of Israel (in Hebrew *Eretz*

¹ *Haskalah* (Hebrew for 'enlightenment') was an intellectual movement among European Jews in the late 18th century advocating the adoption of Enlightenment ideals.

Israel). This term, despite its religious connotations, was not adopted by secular Zionism accidentally: it evoked associations with the Bible and pre-exile times, while also emphasising historical ties to the land as territory. The Hebrew Bible, interpreted as a cultural text of historical significance, served as a point of reference in the creation of a new tradition, all the more so because its familiarity in the Christian world made such symbolic reinterpretation possible beyond the Jewish community. Reference to the historical presence of Jews in ancient Palestine was intended to guarantee their moral right to return from dispersion and to resettle, regardless of the circumstances. Diaspora life was treated teleologically as a transitional stage, a kind of interlude, a life that had to be abandoned.

It is therefore not surprising that the cultural achievements and symbolic capital of the diaspora were largely consciously omitted in Zionist ideology, or even openly negated. The rich cultural heritage associated with religion, particularly Rabbinic Judaism, with its extensive literature and philosophy developed in Europe and other parts of the world, was rejected. Jewish diaspora languages were also rejected in favour of the modernised and continuously evolving contemporary Hebrew language, a process that was not without conflict, resulting in what became known as 'the language war' (Ben-Yoseph 1984). Jewish identity was reformulated through the forging of the concept of the 'new Jew', who would also be a 'new man', the negation of the figure of the diaspora Jew. This 'new man' was to be endowed with attributes previously reserved for the dominant surrounding society: strength, autonomy, agency, and a strong sense of self-worth.

At the same time, it was recognised that not everything should be rejected, lest the Jewish identity be entirely lost; rather, it needed to be reformulated. A sense of continuity of tradition remained important, even if sometimes illusory, and based on *ad hoc* constructs. Zionist rhetoric frequently referred to the dichotomous concept of the 'old-new'. This combination was crucial: that which was 'old' was necessary to justify continuity between the ancient people inhabiting Palestine and the contemporary Jews; that which was 'new' was to introduce qualities essential in a modernising world, such as secularity, gender equality and collective labour. By 'reinventing' the future country, it became possible to generate innovative, sometimes even utopian visions, while mentally severing the diaspora 'episode' (in Hebrew *shlilat ha-galut*, the negation of the diaspora). However, the idealised image of the new country and the new people, conceived in the diaspora, often failed to take into account political realities, and encountered significant obstacles in the Palestinian context.

Ideologues of Zionist youth organisations were aware that the vision of the future, despite its dichotomous nature, had to be coherent and convincing. Organisations developed their own strategies of cultural work, depending on their

world-view and their attitude towards tradition. These ranged from religious Zionism, on the one hand, to extremely left-wing positions that almost completely broke not only with religion but also with the Jewish tradition built around it, on the other. Even in the latter case, however, it was necessary to demonstrate continuity with the past, in order to legitimise the idea of the Jewish nation and its ancient origins. The more strongly elements of diaspora tradition were rejected, the greater the need to base the new Jewish identity on invented tradition.

A radical break with the previous Jewish identity, based primarily on religious unity, required the invention of new ideological content, and a significant transformation of the forms through which this content was to be expressed. These forms were connected with organisational practices implemented both in everyday life and during festive occasions. The latter were particularly important, as there was a clear awareness of the natural human need for ritual and for the structuring of time, which gives life rhythm and meaning.

For the purposes of this analysis, two Zionist youth organisations active in interwar Poland have been selected: Hashomer Hatzair and Agudat Ha-Noar ha-Ivri Akiba (hereafter Akiba). Both their attitudes towards tradition and modernisation, as well as towards social issues, differed significantly, although not radically. Cultural work, which constituted an important part of Zionist ideological formation, took place within similar frameworks: regular meetings, celebrations, summer camps and excursions. Within these frameworks emerged newly developed rituals forming the unique habitus of each organisation. These rituals reflected varying approaches to Jewish tradition and its rich representation in musical material. In addition to drawing selectively on the cultural capital of previous generations, the organisations created their own traditions, including new holidays, and a new repertoire of Hebrew songs.

Hashomer Hatzair

Hashomer Hatzair (Hebrew for 'the young guard') was one of the most significant Zionist youth organisations in the interwar period in Poland, as well as beyond its borders. Initially, the organisation focused on the scouting method of education, and on Jewish patriotism, the aim of which was not only settlement in the Land of Israel, but also a radical transformation of the mentality of all of society. Over time, Hashomer Hatzair became increasingly left-wing. A similar radicalising shift occurred in its attitude towards tradition, most of all Judaism.

Whereas at the outset the religious formation of its members, often raised in traditional families, constituted part of their cultural capital and was reflected in everyday practices, by the second half of the 1920s this was no longer concei-

vable. Even if individual religious practices were not formally prohibited, those who wished to continue observing the principles of Judaism had no place within the organisation. It is important to note that total commitment to group life was expected: meetings were held frequently (several times a week, sometimes even daily), and Saturdays were devoted to excursions, bonfires, the consumption of non-kosher food, writing, and playing musical instruments: in short, activities that in multiple ways violated religious prohibitions within Judaism.²

The strong component of rebellion, which Hashomer Hatzair adopted from German youth movements (especially *Wandervogel*³), was a factor that supported the rejection of tradition. On the individual level, this often resulted in a complete break between young people and their families, who did not accept such changes, as well as the abandonment of educational paths (choosing *aliyah*⁴ instead of higher education), rejecting employment, property and previous social networks. It is therefore not surprising that such choices were not always easy for young people. The leaders of the organisation were well aware that in order to balance these difficult life changes, it was necessary to introduce positive pull factors into the ideology. A sense of participating in an exceptional historical moment, the mission of breaking centuries-long stagnation, the often utopian vision of a country built from the ground up, and finally peer relationships that replaced earlier familial and social bonds, all of these were intended to compensate for hardships, and foster pride in being a pioneer.

One of the most powerful attractive elements within the organisation was music and dance. These functioned both as spontaneous activities undertaken by young people in their free time, and as organised practices forming part of institutional rituals. While in informal settings the youth could sing a repertoire familiar from, for example, Polish schools or assimilated households,⁵ in formal contexts the focus was primarily on Hebrew-language songs created specifically for the Zionist movement, later referred to as *Songs of the Land of Israel*.⁶ These

² All the aforementioned activities are prohibited on the Sabbath by religious law (in Hebrew *halakha*).

³ *Wandervogel* (German for 'migratory bird') was a youth movement that emerged in Germany in the late 19th century, encompassing numerous youth groups. Its members were pioneers of German scouting. The movement drew on the romantic rebellion against bourgeois morality and established authorities.

⁴ Emigration to the land of Israel.

⁵ The fact that this was indeed the case is attested to by handwritten songbooks containing songs not only in Hebrew, and often entirely unrelated to Zionism. These documents are available, among other places, in the collections of the Yad Yaari Hashomer Hatzair Research and Documentation Centre in Givat Haviva, Israel.

⁶ *Songs of the Land of Israel* (SLI, in Hebrew *Shirei Eretz Israel*) was a category defined *ex post facto* that refers to songs created and performed in the Palestinian *yishuv*, and later in the State of Israel, which became part of the canon of the Hebrew 'national song'. This repertoire com-

were taught during weekly gatherings, and accompanied evening cultural events and festive occasions.

Interestingly, this repertoire also included *contrafacta* of religious Jewish music, Hasidic nigunim. In Hashomer Hatzair, however, these were subjected to modifications that removed their more explicit religious connotations. The changes usually concerned the lyrics, and sometimes also the melody (frequently shortened). All references to religion were eliminated and replaced with neutral expressions.⁷ Undoubtedly, the most important song in the organisation was 'Techezaknah',⁸ which had the status of an organisational anthem. It was used to open and close major ceremonies and regular meetings. The widely known Zionist song 'Hatikvah'⁹ occupied a more ambivalent position: it was performed, but with the increasing left-wing radicalisation of the movement, it came to be associated with more centrist and right-wing factions of Zionism, and was therefore gradually marginalised.

Festive rituals in Hashomer Hatzair

Celebratory practices in the organisation underwent a significant transformation from the time of its founding. It was in this sphere that the most visible break with the past occurred: all holidays observed in traditional Judaism were detached from their religious context, and consequently (with certain exceptions) significantly marginalised. Instead, attempts were made to return to agrarian symbolism, and the associated original sources of celebration, while simultaneously emphasising associations with cultivation, and, by extension, with the possession of land. Thus, not only was participation in religious rituals in their sacred dimension abandoned, but also part of the rich vocal repertoire traditionally associated with them. In place of this repertoire, new songs were introduced, namely the aforementioned Songs of the Land of Israel (SLI). Their thematic content was linked to this substitute, 'invented' imaginary. For instance, instead of the ritual framework connected with the holiday of Passover, the repertoire celebrated spring and the awakening of life, which on a symbolic level was intended to represent national rebirth. Holiday periods were also used for various rites

prised Hebrew-language songs whose themes were connected with the land of Israel, and which contributed to the formation of the symbolic capital of the Jewish community in Palestine (Regev, Seroussi 2004).

⁷ This was the case, for example, with the song 'El yivne ha-Galil' (God will Rebuild Galilee), which was transformed into 'Mi yivne ha-Galil?' (Who will Rebuild Galilee?).

⁸ Hebrew for 'strengthen'. The lyrics of the song derive from the poem 'Birkat ha-am' by Chaim Nachman Bialik; the melody is an adaptation of the Russian workers' song 'Maïskāi pesnīā.'

⁹ Currently the national anthem of Israel.

of passage, in this case, examinations in the knowledge and scouting skills taught in the organisation (including the songs that had been learned).

Traditional religious exegesis was replaced by a narrative ideologically embedded in the national discourse. The Exodus of the ancient Hebrews from Egypt was interpreted as an act of liberation from foreign domination and a step towards sovereignty.¹⁰ From the traditional religious rituals typically performed on this occasion, almost nothing remained in Hashomer Hatzair except for the name *seder* (Hebrew for 'order'), which was applied to the festive gathering held on the evening of the holiday. This gathering was intended to be spent collectively within the organisation, rather than, as in traditional Judaism, within the family circle.¹¹ This shift proved significant, and carried a deep symbolic meaning as the detachment of youth from a ritual that strongly emphasised the family hierarchy and reinforced the post-figurative transmission of religious tradition. The organisational celebration was meant to demonstrate not only a new way of celebrating, but also the new position of young people within the structures of a transforming society: no longer alongside the family, but among peers. The song repertoire did not differ significantly from that performed on other occasions. This was hardly surprising, given that the celebration focused on national liberation, while themes related to the Palestinian homeland, its natural environment, and the developing settlement movement were universal in the SLI repertoire.

Instead of the religious context of the holiday of Shavuot,¹² it was celebrated in a manner modelled on the settlers in Palestine as a harvest festival (Chag ha-Bikurim). Climatic differences (and thus differences in harvest times) meant that in Poland these 'harvests' took on a more metaphorical meaning, that of national maturation. This also provided an opportunity to emphasise connections with the Land of Israel, and with the *chalutzim* (pioneers) working the land there. The song repertoire frequently drew on agrarian themes, as in the song 'Saleynu al ktefeynu' (With baskets on our shoulders),¹³ associated with the joyful completion of the harvest.

¹⁰ Various authorities were invoked in this context: 'Recall your youth in your parental home, recall the celebration of Passover, that national festival of freedom, which pours hope into life!' This is a quotation from a short story by the writer Mendeleyev Sforim, published in the movement's periodical (Sforim 1918, 114).

¹¹ 'There was also a festive seder, at which much was recited and songs were joyfully sung' (anonymous 1938a, 15).

¹² The religious significance of this holiday was associated with the giving of the Torah to the Chosen People, while its second aspect, Chag ha-Bikurim (the festival of harvest/first fruits), referred to the harvest and the offering of the first fruits.

¹³ A song with lyrics by Levin Kipnis and music by Yedidia Admon, characterised by a lively, syncopated rhythm. The song also appeared in the propaganda film *Palestine in Song and Dance* (1931).

The festival of Hanukkah became an occasion to affirm human strength and agency, as well as victory in battle, rather than a miracle resulting from divine intervention. Thus, references were made to the biblical Maccabees as heroes and national liberators, serving as models for contemporary Jews. The festive, playful character of the holiday was also utilised: celebrations included singing, dancing and recitations, and friends and family were invited. Interestingly, as sources indicate, some traditional Hanukkah songs in Yiddish were retained and used to enrich the celebrations. They were incorporated into performances, 'living pictures', or other artistic forms, particularly in earlier stages of the organisation's development. These remnants of repertoire often played a special role as musical, symbolic representations of the 'old world' of the diaspora, in contrast to the new world being shaped by pioneers in Palestine, which in turn was represented by Hebrew songs. In this way, the framework of festive rituals was 'deconstructed', infused with new content (secular and national instead of religious), with traditional songs assigned new roles.¹⁴

This transformation was most evident in the case of the Sabbath, which in traditional Judaism constitutes the most important weekly holiday, closely tied to ritual and liturgical practices both in the home and in the synagogue. In Hashomer Hatzair, the Sabbath was not observed in a religious manner; nevertheless, there was a perceived need to distinguish Saturday within the weekly cycle, and to emphasise the right to rest. Accordingly, secular rituals of an educational and integrative nature were created, featuring cultural programmes in which singing and dancing occupied a central place. At the same time, explicitly counter-cultural elements were not avoided: activities traditionally prohibited on the Sabbath, such as long excursions in nature and playing musical instruments, were deliberately undertaken.

Press sources preserve descriptions of such secular *kabbalat shabbat* (Hebrew for 'welcoming of the Sabbath'), in which Hebrew newspapers were read in place of biblical texts, and Songs of the Land of Israel were sung instead of customary prayers:

And now the *parshat nigunim* and *shirei ha-Aretz*. Every conversation and every topic discussed during the meeting was filled with *nigunim* and songs. Each song was analysed and explained before we sang it or after it had been sung [...] And when we sang these songs, they became images [...] Images floated in space, images from ordinary days of important epochs [...] And this is not a metaphor, it happened to us many times while singing (anonymous, 1933a, 18).

¹⁴ In drama performances of this kind, the stage was typically divided in two: one group of actors represented the 'diaspora Jew', enacting the typical occupations of small-town Jews in Central Europe and singing songs in Yiddish, while the other group portrayed pioneers in Palestine, whose labour was accompanied by Hebrew songs (Halina 1934, 4).

This description evokes a new ritual that retained references to tradition in its formal structure, while filling it with new content: the term *parasha*, which traditionally refers to a weekly portion of the Pentateuch, here denotes a 'portion' of songs and texts from newspapers, treated with seriousness and subjected to a kind of communal exegesis, evoking experiences of an almost mystical character. Not everywhere, however, was the process of inventing tradition approached with such creativity. Complaints appeared not only among the organisation's opponents, but also within its own ranks, regarding the lack of ideas for communal Saturday activities, which consequently began to resemble ordinary weekdays.¹⁵

While traditional holidays were significantly impoverished in terms of their original religious roots, the most solemnly celebrated event in the organisation, Lag BaOmer, was completely detached from its religious context. It functioned as the organisation's flagship celebration, also referred to as 'the holiday of youth'. This day was used for spring excursions outside the city, combined with ceremonial marches accompanied by singing and performed in organisational uniforms. Although fire is an attribute of this holiday in its religious dimension, bonfires during Lag BaOmer excursions did not derive from tradition, but constituted an important element of ritual practice similar to scouting customs. Hence, the motif of fire as a focal point uniting the community appeared particularly in songs accompanying the *hora* dance.¹⁶

Within the new symbolism of Lag BaOmer, we can discern ritualised expressions of transition from tradition to modernity. This was symbolised, for example, by processions of groups through the city accompanied by singing: loud manifestations of identity in the public sphere and in a predominantly Christian environment, expressions of rebellion against the traditions of the older generation, and declarations of distinctiveness.

Agudat Ha-Noar ha-Ivri Akiba and 'the middle way'

A different approach to tradition was represented by the second organisation examined in this study, Agudat Ha-Noar ha-Ivri Akiba (Hebrew for the Hebrew Youth Association Akiba). It was a secular organisation associated with centrist

¹⁵ 'The Sabbath has become an ordinary day; it has nothing to do with being together. It is abandoned in favour of work, whether this is actually necessary or not, work in the vineyard, cleaning, even labour in the warehouses. Everyone observes a "Sabbath for themselves" on their preferred day' (Shpizman 1959, 471).

¹⁶ The motif of fire appears in songs such as 'Sovevuni', 'Hora medura' and 'Chanita'. Natan Gross derives the circular hora form from dances performed around a bonfire, both in the pastoral prototype of the dance and in its Palestinian adaptation: 'The bonfire determined the dance circle, just as it later shaped the lyrics of the songs and the circle of ideas that arise in the course of the dance' (Gross 1946, 13).

Zionism, which distanced itself from both left-wing ideological positions and right-wing nationalism, as well as from religious Zionism. Unlike Hashomer Hatzair, Akiba never developed into a movement with a strong countercultural component or a radical approach to the question of tradition. Instead, it attempted to pursue what might today be described as ‘a middle way’, to a much greater extent than the *shomrim* (members of Hashomer Hatzair).

Whereas Hashomer Hatzair made use primarily of the formal framework of traditional rituals in order to fill them with entirely new content, Akiba did not intend to abandon tradition; on the contrary, it regarded tradition as the foundation of the Jewish identity.¹⁷ Reconciling such an approach with processes of modernisation posed a significant challenge, and often required solutions of a somewhat balancing, even precarious, nature.

An effort was therefore made to separate religion itself from traditional practices and gestures, relegating it to the private sphere of the organisation’s members. At the same time, certain practices of a clearly religious nature were deliberately maintained, although they too had to undergo a degree of adaptation to modern life. The initial period of the organisation’s formation was marked by numerous tensions, particularly surrounding the development of festive ritual practices. The leaders were aware that many members came from traditional, religious backgrounds, and that some of them had no intention of abandoning their customs and beliefs.

One particularly problematic issue was the observance of the Sabbath, which in traditional Judaism is governed by numerous restrictive regulations. The question arose as to how these rules should be applied, for example, during summer camps. One member of the organisation wrote:

At our camps [...] we tried to introduce religion. And so candles began to be lit on Friday evening, and prayers were recited *betzibur* [Hebrew for ‘publicly’]. But when it came to refraining from cooking on Saturday, it was difficult to implement; or when it was necessary to extinguish a lamp in a shed to avoid a fire, it was hard to go and find a ‘*shabbos goy*’, and when holding an electric lamp in one’s hand, one could turn it on without even realising it [...] thousands of transgressions lie in wait for a person at every step, and even being aware of them, one cannot avoid the consequences of the question: why do you not observe all the commandments? And since it is impossible to observe all of them, consistency is therefore impossible’ (anonymous 1933b, 78).

¹⁷ As Simon Herman observed, Judaism is not ‘merely’ a religion (analogous, for example, to Christianity), but rather a religious civilisation of a particular people, reflecting its history and the fate of individuals. As the author further argues, the Jewishness of even the most non-religious Jews cannot be separated from religious associations, and there is no entirely ‘secular’ Judaism (Herman 1977, 36).

What appears significant is that, despite abandoning orthodoxy, members of Akiba most likely did not perceive themselves as breaking with tradition. On the contrary, they consistently emphasised how crucial it was for their Jewish identity. The elements they wished to preserve from tradition were referred to as 'the basic form', which was to remain unchanged. Establishing a connection with the historical continuum was therefore much easier in Akiba than in the countercultural Hashomer Hatzair, as it relied on a shared and largely internalised reservoir of Jewish cultural capital.

The preservation of this 'basic form' was intended to guarantee intergenerational continuity, while any modifications, assumed not to be overly radical, were understood as inevitable adaptations in response to changing social, political and cultural conditions. Members of Akiba thus understood tradition in a dynamic and agentive manner (in line with Jerzy Szacki's conceptualisation¹⁸): they felt authorised to authenticate, that is, to determine the authenticity of, practices drawn from historical and cultural resources, and to decide what constituted 'the basic form', the core transmitting the essential and unchanging values of Judaism.

Festive rituals in Agudat Ha-Noar ha-Ivri Akiba

How did these assumptions function in practice? Although the organisation was secular, efforts were made to create conditions in which religious members would feel comfortable. This included, for example, a prohibition on smoking and writing on the Sabbath, as well as the provision of kosher meals. 'We do not interfere in people's private lives. The Sabbath, however, must be organised in such a way that it does not offend the feelings of a religious Jew,' the organisation's press stated (Ohrenstein 1935, 575). Holidays retained their religious character without the need to impose additional ideological reinterpretation; they were sometimes combined with visits to the synagogue, and during summer camps special rooms were designated as *beit ha-midrash* (Hebrew for 'house of study/prayer') (anonymous 1938c, 429).

The festive repertoire was also preserved, particularly the beloved Hasidic songs. As was mentioned earlier, these were also sung in Hashomer Hatzair, as it was difficult to avoid their absorption, given the religious background of

¹⁸ Jerzy Szacki distinguishes three approaches to tradition that have predominated at different times in the scholarly discourse on this issue: the first is termed the functional approach (focusing on the act of transmitting a given community's spiritual goods from one generation to another); the second is the object-oriented approach (associated with a shift in attention from how these goods are transmitted to what these goods are, i.e. what is being transmitted); and the third is the subject-oriented approach (concentrating on a given generation's relationship to the past, its acceptance of inheritance or its protest against it) (Szacki 1971, 97–98).

some members, and the undeniable appeal of their melodies. However, whereas in Hashomer Hatzair Hasidic *nigunim* were typically subject to substantial modifications to fit the organisational habitus, in Akiba they retained both their original form and their religious context. In a certain sense, members of the organisation drew inspiration from Hasidic communities, due to the profound ideological commitment of their members to religious practice, their fervent faith, and their often demonstrative joy, while at the same time remaining aware of the deep ideological divide and the fundamental divergence of goals.

Due to this attachment to traditional religious forms, the repertoire in Akiba preserved many songs belonging to the liturgical tradition, especially traditional Sabbath *zmirot*, usually sung in the home and synagogue during the *kabbalat shabbat* ceremony. Efforts were also made to ensure that the content of these songs was understood by all participants, for example by providing introductory explanations. 'During the festive meal, the historical background of the individual *zmirot* was discussed, and we also learned a number of new melodies,' wrote one member of the organisation (anonymous 1938b, 401).

The organisation's press also mentioned other prayers sung in the synagogue during Jewish holidays, such as 'Kol Nidre'¹⁹ and 'Akdmut Milin'.²⁰ In the case of the latter, the author of one article expressed regret that the song no longer held the same significance within Akiba as it once had, and that it was gradually being forgotten. This observation suggests that for individuals raised in a religious environment, celebrations in Akiba could be associated with a certain impoverishment of ritual and the loss of forms to which they had been emotionally attached, including beloved songs that carried deep symbolic meaning. Hence, attempts were made to transplant them into the organisational setting, although not always successfully.

In the case of other holidays, however, members of Akiba appear to have succeeded in achieving the desired balance between modernity and tradition. This was evident, for example, during the celebration of Passover, which, like Hashomer Hatzair, was observed not within the family, but within the organisational community, but with the use of the traditional religious ritual. 'Our aim was to forge, through collective effort, new and beautiful forms based on tradition for a holiday as powerful as Passover is for every Jew [...] When we recited

¹⁹ Kol Nidre (Aramaic for 'all vows') is a declaration annulling religious vows, chanted by the hazzan and the congregation before the evening Ma'ariv service on the eve of Yom Kippur. Initially, it concerned the annulment of forgotten or unfulfilled vows; later, during periods of forced conversion to Christianity, it came to apply to vows made under coercion.

²⁰ Akdamut Milin (Aramaic for 'introduction to the words') is a religious poem and liturgical hymn written in Aramaic, sung once a year at the festival of Shavuot.

the *Haggadah* together and intoned the traditional songs, our joy was immense' (anonymous 1937, 365).

This joy was also linked to a sense of unity with the nation, both in its present and its past, resulting from the performance of the same rituals at the same time, a symbolic participation in the national community, and continuity with those who had preserved tradition for generations and affirmed their Jewish identity. 'We believe that in this way we will create our own original Akiba style of life,' the same article concluded.

In addition to preserving traditional elements, efforts were made to enrich festive practices with new components corresponding to contemporary needs. An interesting initiative was the 'Festival of Song', the organisation of which was proposed during the holiday of Shavuot by the editorial board of the journal *Ceirim*.²¹ The idea was that the event could become cyclical, and widespread throughout the Akiba movement:

We call out to all *Tzeirim* [Hebrew for 'youth'] of the movement. We approach everyone with a new idea! We are creating a Festival of Song! Let our song resound throughout the entire movement on a single day [...] After all, one day must be devoted to the song that accompanies us every day. On Shavuot we will celebrate our holiday. Do we need to make plans? Our treasury of songs is so rich, their source so inexhaustible! (anonymous 1935, 212).

As far as is known, however, such a festival was not established on a broader scale, although Shavuot undoubtedly provided an excellent opportunity for communal singing. In addition to religious songs, the core repertoire of Akiba, like Hashomer Hatzair, consisted of the secular Songs of the Land of Israel. Although they did not function within a quasi-religious framework, they occupied an important place, not only in ritual practices, but also in leisure activities, and a great importance was attached to their learning.

The most important songs in the movement were 'Techezaknah' and 'Hatikvah'. Both had a very high status, although their functions differed. 'Hatikvah' functioned as a national anthem, and was always performed on official occasions, including those attended by representatives of the Polish authorities; in such cases, it was sung immediately after the Polish national anthem. The functions of this song were particularly significant: ideological (reinforcing a sense of identity), integrative and communicative. Public performances of 'Hatikvah' constituted a declaration of belonging to the Jewish nation, addressed to all listeners, including, frequently, non-Jewish audiences.

²¹ The inspiration appears to have been a regular Polish event of the same name, initiated in 1924 as the Festival of Polish Children's Song.

Hora: one dance, many organisations

One of the elements of formative cultural work that united all Zionist youth organisations was the *hora* dance. Paradoxically, it combined both modern and traditional tendencies. Among the former was the rejection of the existing dance culture, including partner dances, which were associated with bourgeois culture, and, by extension, with assimilation. The *hora*, by contrast, was based on a simple and easily learned, repetitive sequence of steps, which made it accessible to all participants, and endowed it with a distinctly egalitarian character.

The circular formation of the *hora* symbolised equality and unity, as well as coeducation, concepts of considerable importance in Zionist ideology. At the same time, its form referred to traditional folk dances, including Hasidic dances, which likewise expressed similar symbolic meanings: brotherhood, communal cohesion and joy. Even if this resemblance was coincidental, young Zionists (including those associated with left-wing movements) were aware of it, as is evidenced in written sources.

Thus, despite their ideological distance from orthodox Hasidic religiosity, they were able to identify elements within it that resonated with their own values and experiences.

Conclusions

In both organisations, the decisive factor shaping ideological cultural work was the attitude towards tradition. This, in turn, influenced the form of practices, including the musical repertoire accompanying festive rituals. In Hashomer Hatzair, changes were of a revolutionary nature: the influence of Judaism was programmatically rejected, and connections with the cultural legacy of the diaspora were significantly weakened. At the same time, however, alongside intensive processes of social modernisation, the organisation developed new rituals that drew on agrarian symbolism and a selectively treated history of ancient Palestine. The traditional repertoire was marginalised, or adapted through substantial transformations that effectively erased its original religious meaning. By contrast, the ideological strategies of Akiba may be described as a form of 'middle way'. Although formally defined as a secular organisation, it not only preserved certain traditional practices, but also made them a central instrument in the construction of identity. By maintaining these practices, it emphasised continuity with the diaspora environment, and expressed acceptance of the gradual evolution of the movement. The repertoire of songs performed on festive occasions in Akiba re-

tained many traditional prayers, which continued to be performed in their original religious context. Interestingly, despite these divergent approaches, members of both organisations internalised a strong conviction that they were realising the only possible path towards shaping a new Jewish identity. This conviction was not undermined by the evident paradoxes inherent in their respective positions: on one hand, the coexistence of a secular organisational framework with religious practices in Akiba; on the other hand, the almost complete rejection of Judaism and cultural continuity in Hashomer Hatzair. In both cases, one may observe, to varying degrees, processes of the invention of tradition, and its adaptation to specific ideological frameworks under the conditions of dynamic social and cultural transformations that were reshaping Europe on the eve of the Second World War.

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Agnieszka Jeż

TARP TRADICIJOS IR MODERNUMO: SIONISTINIŲ JAUNIMO ORGANIZACIJŲ KULTŪRINIO DARBO STRATEGIJOS TARPUKARIO LENKIJOJE

Santrauka

Šio straipsnio tema – kultūrinės praktikos, kurios buvo žydų jaunimo, susijusio su sionistinėmis jaunimo organizacijomis tarpukario Lenkijoje, formavimosi proceso dalis. Kiekviena iš šių organizacijų, kurių buvo daug, siekė įgyvendinti savo sionistinius idealus. Skirtumai buvo susiję su požiūriu ne tik į socialinius klausimus, bet ir į tradicijas bei judaizmą. Atsižvelgiant į jų priimtas politines-kultūrines orientacijas, šiose organizacijose buvo formuojami tiek reikšmingi ritualai (dažnai sukurti per išgalvotų tradicijų procesus), tiek kasdienės, įprastos praktikos. Jos struktūravo visą jų jaunųjų narių gyvenimą, dažnai atsiribojant nuo šeimos namų tradicijų. Muzika atliko lemiamą vaidmenį šioje veikloje, veikdama tiek kaip kasdienio, spontaniško laisvalaikio elementas, tiek kaip naujai sukurtų ritualinių praktikų komponentas. Esminę šių ritualų dalį sudarė vadinamosios Izraelio žemės dainos, sukurtos pagal poetų ir sionistinės ideologijos šalininkų žodžius, kurių teminis dėmesys buvo skiriamas Izraelio žemei (hebr. *Eretz Israel*). Be šio repertuaro, įvairios organizacijos taip pat naudojo tradicinę medžiagą, arba patirdamos didelius teksto (ir melodijos) pakeitimus, arba išsaugodamos juos nepalietus ir funkcionuojančius pirminiame religiniame kontekste.

Iš daugelio organizacijų pasirinkau dvi, kurios skyrėsi savo požiūriu į tradicijas. „Hashomer Hatzair“ buvo kairiųjų pažiūrų organizacija su stipriu kontrkultūriniu komponentu, tariamai visiškai nutraukusi tradicijas. Tačiau, kaip rodo šaltiniai, ji išlaikė tradicinių ritualų liekanas, kuriomis remdamasi kūrė naujas praktikos formas. Kitokį požiūrį į tradicijas taikė antroji organizacija „Akiba“. Judėjimo ideologai ypač pabrėžė diasporos religines tradicijas, ir nors organizacija buvo pasaulietinio pobūdžio, buvo svarbu išsaugoti ankstesnius ritualus ir kartu su jais kultūrinę tęstinumą kaip „Akiba“ narių tapatybės žymenį. Tačiau tam reikėjo pritaikyti senesnes praktikas prie modernaus, pasaulietinio judėjimo principų. Nuolatinė įtampa tarp modernumo ir žydų tradicijos kiekvienoje grupėje skleidėsi skirtingai. Šiame straipsnyje siekiau nustatyti tiek panašumus, tiek skirtumus, kurie kartu formavo sudėtingą sionistinės ideologinės formacijos tarpukario Lenkijoje vaizdą.