

EAJS CONFERENCE GRANT PROGRAMME 2018/19

MAIN CONFERENCE REPORT

Political Jews. Rhetoric and politicization among Jews in Enlightened and Revolutionary Europe (18th-19th centuries)

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 14 May 2019

Convener: Davide Mano, *Centre des recherches historiques*, EHESS Paris

Event rationale

This research workshop, entitled “Political Jews. Rhetoric and politicization among Jews in Enlightened and Revolutionary Europe (18th-19th centuries)”, was designed to bring a group of scholars from different European universities together to deal with the topic of Jewish political cultures in Enlightened and Revolutionary Europe. The proposed programme was intended to enhance knowledge on Jewish pathways to political building and citizenship through a reassessment of two relevant aspects that have not attracted sufficient scholarly attention: rhetoric and politicization. The project was motivated by the general need to enhance scholarship on Jewish emancipation in Enlightened and Revolutionary Europe. The workshop was also designed to further encourage readings of Jewish history in the transition from the Early-Modern to the Modern period through interdisciplinary approaches. Among its main goals it also was intended to foster new Jewish scholarship in France and in particular at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* in Paris.

Event Programme

Overview: The workshop convened an international and interdisciplinary group of 11 scholars from France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and Holland, including 4 historians (Jean-Marc Chouraqui, François Guesnet, Davide Mano, Nils Renard), 2 sociologists (Silvana Greco and Danny Trom), 2 philosophers (Silvia Richter and Ivan Segre), a literature scholar (Tsila

Radecker) and a philologist (Saverio Campanini). This intense one-day meeting took place at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS) in Paris on 14 May 2019. The event was organized by Davide Mano in collaboration with the staff of the *Centre des recherches historiques* of the EHESS. It was attended by a total of 30 people. The workshop generated a discussion about Jewish rhetoric strategies and processes of politicization - Jewish emancipation being considered as a throughout process involving multiple phenomena, such as communication, modernization and secularization. The invited scholars dealt with the political history of European Jews from the Enlightenment to the Napoleonic period, through the presentation and discussion of relevant case-studies, as well as through the adoption of textual analysis and linguistic investigation.

Programme, introduction: The workshop started with my welcoming greetings and introductory remarks. I introduced the host institution, the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, founded in 1947 as the place in France for research in social sciences, considered as a full epistemological field and as an area of interdisciplinary exchanges for the study of man in society. I recalled some of the outstanding scholars, such as Fernand Braudel, Germaine Tillon, Jacques Le Goff, Françoise Héritier, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, and many other, who taught and worked at the Ecole. And I also presented the Group of Jewish studies of the EHESS, founded at the end of the 1980s by Nancy Green, Jacques Revel, Maurice Kriegel and Sylvie-Anne Goldberg. I finally explained the image chosen for the cover of the workshop's programme, a detail from a Hebrew manuscript from early-19th-century Italy, revealing a version of the *Mi sheberakh la-melekh*, the blessing for the king, ending with the blessing to Napoleon "Emperor of the French and King of Italy".

Sessions and speakers: The 11 papers presented were grouped into 3 themed sessions. Each speaker had 20 minutes for his/her own presentation, while a 30-minute discussion was programmed at the end of each session.

Session 1 was entitled "A Jewish revolutionary? New perspectives on Moses Dobrushka". The session centered on the reexamination of the historical figure of Moses Dobrushka, alias Franz Thomas von Schonfeld, alias Junius Frey, this mysterious figure of the late 18th century - a Hebrew literate in Moravia, a partisan of the Frankist sect in Offenbach, an enlightened rationalist and freemason in Vienna, and an active member of the Jacobin party in Strasbourg. I recalled that the first study on this complex and paradoxical figure was presented by the

renowned scholar Gershom Scholem some forty years ago (in May 1979) and precisely at the EHESS in Paris (!).

The first lecturer Saverio Campanini, professor of Hebrew language and literature at the University of Bologna and a renowned specialist in Jewish mysticism and Christian Kabbalah, offered a meticulous inspection into Gershom Scholem's reconstruction of Moses Dobrushka's life history. Campanini deeply analyzed Scholem's standpoints as regards politics and revolution and retraced Moses Dobrushka's paradoxical pathway from Frankism to enlightened thought and Jacobinism, reassessing his personal dialectical encounter with the political revolution.

The second speaker Silvana Greco, professor of Sociology of Judaism at the Freie Universität in Berlin, presented Moses Dobrushka's revolutionary work *Philosophie sociale* published in Paris in 1793. According to Greco, this very political book calling for radical change and social reorganization should be described as a founding opus of modern sociological thought and, as a consequence, its author Moses Dobrushka should be regarded as "a sociologist *ante litteram*". The third lecturer Ivan Segre, a Talmudist and a philosopher in Paris, offered an extensive reflection on the meaning of "revolution" in traditional Judaism by taking as an example the history of codification in Judaism. If revolution is defined by the act of radical codification, Moses Maimonides - the foremost medieval codifier - and his "Mishne Torah" - the essential halakhic code that paved the way to Jewish law systematization - should be regarded as radically revolutionary from a Jewish point of view.

This first morning session was followed by a lively 30-minute discussion, with plenty of questions and remarks. Debate was mostly animated by two distinguished senior scholars from among the audience, prof. Maurice Kriegel (EHESS) and prof. Giulio Busi (Freie Universität Berlin). Participants generally highlighted the need for a new critical review of the scholarship on Moses Dobrushka.

Session 2 was entitled "Jewish politics or political Jews? Perseverance, self-defense and intercession". It centered on Jewish political knowledge and forms of action through the investigation of three topoi: perseverance, self-defense and intercession.

The session was opened by Danny Trom, a political sociologist at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and one of the most interesting voices in contemporary French scholarship. Trom explained his definition of Jewish politics as "the quest of the least bad solution" by going back to some of the reflections he developed in his most celebrated book "Persévérance du fait juif", published in 2018.

I myself contributed with a paper on the centrality of Jewish self-defense as a political communication tool, through several examples taken from the Italian context throughout the Early-Modern period. In particular I analyzed a document from late-18th-century Tuscany concerning Jewish political opinion and participation in the first Republican institutions.

The third lecturer François Guesnet, a reader in Modern Jewish History at University College London and a prominent scholar of Eastern European Jews, delivered a most appreciated paper on Jewish intercession in the Russian Empire around 1800. Guesnet centered his speech on the role of Jewish negotiation and of Jewish collective as a political reality in the making.

This second session was also followed by a lively discussion, with plenty of questions raised by scholars and colleagues from among the audience. A vibrant debate also developed between the workshop's speakers (Campanini, Trom, Greco, Guesnet, Mano, Chouraqui).

Session 3 in the afternoon was entitled “Jewish politicization and republicanism: Assessing the individual and the collective” and included four contributions focusing on different contexts and developments of Jewish emancipation throughout Europe, as well as on Jewish experiences of politicization and forms of republicanism in Germany, Holland and France.

The first lecture by Silvia Richter, professor of Jewish philosophy at the Humboldt-Universität in Berlin, offered a comparative analysis of the discourse on Jewish emancipation in Prussia (Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*, 1781-1783) and in France (Honoré Gabriel Victor de Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau, *Sur Moses Mendelssohn, sur la réforme politique des Juifs*, 1787).

The second speaker Tsila Radecker, an independent scholar from the Netherlands, focused on Jewish first emancipation during the Batavian Republic and the establishment of a new community, the *Naye Kille*, in Amsterdam between 1797 and 1808, following Republican ideals and promoting assimilation.

The third lecturer Nils Renard, a reader in French at the ELTE Collegium in Budapest and a PhD candidate at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, presented his research on Jewish soldiering in the Grande Armée through the case of Jakob Meyer's diaries (1808-1813).

While the last lecturer Jean-Marc Chouraqui, professor of Jewish history at the Université d'Aix-Marseille, offered a major contribution on the place of Republicanism in the discourse of the French rabbis all through the 19th century. Chouraqui focused his speech on processes of francization of the Jewish cult under the Consistorial system, as well as on the building of a new messianic ethos personified by the *Republique française*.

This last session stimulated a lively debate too, with intense exchanges between the workshop's speakers (Guesnet, Chouraqui, Mano, Radecker, Richter, Trom).

I finally offered some concluding remarks by highlighting the workshop's achievements and the importance of interdisciplinarity in approaching Jewish political cultures and emancipatory processes.

Summary of discussions

Redefining the Revolutionary transition in Jewish historical perspective. This scientific event offered a major contribution in illuminating a very particular period in history, full of contrasts, paradoxes, blurring identities and emerging cultures, during which European Judaism was deeply transformed, as much as general social and political thought, philosophical and religious references. From the personal history of Moses Dobrushka to the collective history of Jewish emancipation, participants shared materials (texts and sources) and knowledge (scholarship and reflections) related to Jewish experiences of politicization and emancipation in Enlightened and Revolutionary Europe.

Reconstructing the Jewish past in a comparative perspective. The workshop offered a close look at the rhetorical uses of the Jewish fact as well as at the effects of politicization on the lives of the Jews in France, Italy, Russia, Holland and Germany. It encouraged comparative readings and confrontations around the central question of Jewish politics.

Reconsidering the tension between the collective and the individual. A number of papers demonstrated the importance of the constructions of the Jewish individual and collective, and in particular their transformations during the Enlightened and the Revolutionary periods.

Reassessing Jewish emancipation as a multiscale phenomenon. This workshop encouraged new readings of Jewish emancipation and significantly contributed to a more precise definition of the emancipatory process. Most of the papers considered it as a complex and diversified phenomenon on the European scale involving multiple issues, both internal and external to Jewish societies, such as secularization, politicization, negotiation, public discourse, membership, blurring of identities, religious and national ethos.

Outcomes

The EAJS Conference Grant Programme enabled the organizing team to accommodate eight invited scholars from outside Paris, to cover their travel expenses and to offer two coffee-breaks and a lunch.

European networking. The workshop provided a unique occasion for scholars to meet. The event has broadened the academic networks of all participants.

Discussion and interdisciplinarity. This academic event succeeded in stimulating a lively discussion and exchange between scholars from different backgrounds. The discussions across the workshop confirmed the importance of approaching Jewish political cultures in an interdisciplinary perspective.

Jewish scholarship in France. The workshop successfully promoted Jewish scholarship in France. The event also enabled the EHESS to build new relationships with scholars who work on Jewish history in Europe. It also helped to reinforce the name of the EHESS within the international network of Jewish studies.

Project for a new meeting. Participants suggested the opportunity to gather a second workshop in 2021 to further advance academic reflection on Jewish political thought and cultures in a comparative and multidisciplinary perspective.

Outputs

A publication is planned in “*Zutot. Perspectives on Jewish Culture*”, a journal publishing small but incisive contributions. Irene Zwiep and Avriel Bar-Levav, coeditors-in-chief of the journal, have proposed me to edit a thematic number. This number will draw together key papers presented at the workshop, and will provide an important resource for the history of European Jewries in Enlightened and Revolutionary periods. I have accepted to take responsibility over this editorial project and in the coming months I will set a timetable for proofreading. All the participants of the workshop agreed to prepare their papers for publication.

Final programme of the event

International workshop

Political Jews. Rhetoric and politicization among Jews in Enlightened and Revolutionary Europe (18th-19th centuries)

Paris, Tuesday 14 May 2019

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 54 Boulevard Raspail - 75006 Paris

9,00 – *Welcome* by Davide MANO (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris)

9,15-10,45 – Session 1: *A Jewish Revolutionary? New Perspectives on Moses Dobrushka*

Saverio CAMPANINI (Università degli studi di Bologna), *Scholem's Dobrushka: The Political Career of a Frankist*

Silvana GRECO (Freie Universität Berlin), *What Scholem didn't (want to) see: Moses Dobrushka as a founder of sociological thought*

Ivan SEGRE (Independent scholar, Paris), *Revolution in Judaism: A Philosophical Perspective*

10,45-11,00 - *Coffee break*

11,00-12,30 – Session 2: *Jewish Politics or Political Jews? Perseverance, Self-Defense and Intercession*

Danny TROM (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris), *Jewish Politics or the Quest of the Least Bad Solution*

Davide MANO (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris), *Against Calumny: Jewish Self-defense in the Italian States (18th Century)*

François GUESNET (University College London), *Constitutio in actu? Jewish Intercession in the Russian Empire around 1800*

12,30-14,00 - *Lunch*

14,00-16,00 – Session 3: *Jewish Politicization and Republicanism: Assessing the Individual and the Collective*

Silvia RICHTER (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), *The Discourse on Jewish Emancipation in Prussia and France in the 18th Century - Similarities and Differences*

Tsila RADECKER (Independent scholar, Hilversum), *Emancipation, Politicization and Identity. The Rise and Fall of the Naye Kille in Amsterdam (1797-1808)*

Nils RENARD (ENTE Budapest/ENS-PSL, Paris), *Being a Jewish soldier in the Grande Armée: the Trip through Europe of Jakob Meyer during the Napoleonic wars (1808-1813)*

Jean-Marc CHOURAQUI (Université d'Aix-Marseille), *The Influence of the Ideology of Emancipation on the Discourse of the French rabbis (19th to Early 20th Century)*

16,00 – Conclusive remarks by Davide MANO

Publicity

The event was publicized through the following channels:

- 1) Event page on the Calenda website: <https://calenda.org/617265>
- 2) Event page on the EHESS website: <https://www.ehess.fr/fr/journées-d'étude/political-jews>
- 3) Event page on the CRH website: <http://etudesjuives.ehess.fr/2019/04/09/political-jews-rhetoric-and-politicization-among-jews-in-enlightened-and-revolutionary-europe-18th-19th-centuries/>
- 4) The mailing list of the EHESS
- 5) The mailing list of H-Judaic
- 6) Event pages in Academia.edu, Facebook and Twitter personal accounts

A workshop poster (see attachment), a brochure and further research materials were printed and distributed during the workshop's day.

Budget

The EAJS grant was the only fund for the workshop. This event costed 2,292 GBP out of the 2,500 GBP bestowed. The provisional cost included the participation of a 12th scholar, but she revoked her participation for professional impediments. I could not find any substitute in due time. This explains why I did not spend the entire sum bestowed.

Paris, 14 June 2019

Davide Mano (EHESS Paris)