

**KAPITEL 7 / CHAPTER 7⁷****THE THEORETICAL ASPECT OF THE STUDY OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE JEWISH THEATER: METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND SOURCE STUDY BASE****DOI: 10.30890/2709-2313.2024-31-00-019**

The problem of evolutionary processes in theatrical art is one of the most global in the theory and history of culture, in particular in theatrical culture. The result of solving such problems is the diagnosis and forecasting of cultural crises in theatrical culture, the search for ways out of them.

We propose to consider Jewish theatrical art as a center of a certain cultural knowledge. As a matter of fact, cultural knowledge is represented by various directions and schools. For our study, we chose three main historical periods, which were considered from different angles:

- the stage of the origin of the theatrical art of the Jews (from antiquity to the XVIII century),
- the stage of formation of the Jewish national professional theater (XVIII-XIX centuries) and the third stage is the development of the Jewish theater in the twentieth century. and in modern times.

At each of these stages, a corresponding level of cultural development can be traced, which indicates unstable processes in Jewish theatrical art, the presence of "peaks of development". The "peaks of development" of the Jewish theater coincide with the beginning of the activities of talented directors, playwrights, entrepreneurs, and actors:

- the first stage (from antiquity to the XVIII century) – the emergence of dramatic works in Yiddish, the main role is given to the work of playwrights;
- the second stage (XVIII-XIX centuries) – the appearance of the first theatrical groups, actors, directors, entrepreneurs;
- the third stage (the twentieth century and the present) – the work of directors, the emergence of theatrical unions, the role of cultural institutions and organizations in

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the activities of Jewish theaters. This stage can be clearly traced in modern society. It is in Odessa that Jewish theatrical groups arise only with the support of charitable organizations and sponsors. National groups work in the premises of the Children's Cultural Centers of the city.

Cultural changes have always been influenced by external and internal factors. External factors include contacts with carriers of other cultures (F. Boas, A. Kroeber) and natural and environmental factors (J. Steward). Internal factors include: demographic, geographical, religious, economic, political, and others (L. White, K. Geertz).

Evolutionary changes in Jewish theatrical art, in our opinion, took place under the influence of internal factors, namely: economic crises in society, political changes, geographical and demographic factors. We found confirmation of our research in the works of the scientist A. Radcliffe-Brown, who believed that "culture is always characterized by an internal tendency to change that ensures the restoration of the balance of socio-cultural systems" [1, p.76].

Cultural studies, like any other humanitarian science, uses different approaches to the study of cultural phenomena and considers culture through the prism of the dominant paradigm in a particular period of development.

The concept of "paradigm" appeared in the 60s of the twentieth century. thanks to the American historian and philosopher T. Kuhn. He drew attention to the fact that science always contains the value context of a specific historical period, and the paradigm was understood as "scientific achievements recognized by all, which, over a certain period, offer a model for posing problems and solving them" [2, p. 297]. We support the ideas of the philosopher T. Kuhn, but we believe that the definition of the term proposed by M. Najdorf is more suitable for our study: "The paradigm of culture is a cultural mechanism of motivation, which is based on the preservation of models and models for solving intellectual or practical problems for a given culture" [3, p. 61].

The study of the phenomenon of Jewish theater has led to the choice of both traditional paradigms of culture (anthropological and sign-symbolic paradigm) and specific ones (psychological paradigm, paradigm of everyday life). The paradigms we



proposed for the study of Jewish theater prompted the choice of study and analysis of the source base on the topic of research. Traditional "cultural paradigms" focus on the study of cultural phenomena and propose to consider the Jewish theater in the context of world and European culture, aim us at finding common patterns and the opportunity to emphasize the uniqueness of the chosen culture. "Specific paradigms" (psychological paradigm and paradigm of everyday life) allow us to analyze internal processes in culture (psychology, behavior, character, everyday life).

To trace the formation of scientific thought about the functioning of the phenomenon of Jewish theater and the possibility of its revival in the present, we analyzed many art sources. After analyzing the information obtained, we came to the conclusion that these sources can be divided into groups:

1. Memoirs. In our opinion, such literature allows us to get acquainted with the political, economic, and social situation of the period we have mentioned (from 1900 to 1945). Such literature includes the book by O. Azarkh-Granovska "Memoirs" [4, p. 198] – a historical and biographical story about the origin, development, and formation of the Jewish theater under the direction of O. Granovsky. The author examines the political situation, the problems of the development of the Jewish theater, and the repertoire policy of the theater. However, the facts are not always reliable and clear, sometimes do not correlate with documentary history, and are characterized by a high level of subjectivity.

M. Fail's book "The Life of a Jewish Actor" [5, p. 98] is a significant contribution to the study of the evolution of Jewish theater, because it is the first to assess the activities of entrepreneurs, on whom many theatrical factors depended at that time. The author examines the formation and development of the Jewish theater in Ukraine, describes the events that took place around the Jewish theater, which hindered and helped the development of the Jewish theater.

In the book by the actor and director of the Jewish theater S. Mikhoels "Articles. Conversations. Speeches" [6, p. 557] the theatrical systems of A. Granovsky and E. Vakhtangov are analyzed; the period of acting work with A. Granovsky and his directorial work in the Jewish theater is recalled. In our opinion, this book is of great



importance from a scientific point of view, because it was written by a cultural figure who devoted many years to the development of Jewish theater and the creation of images of real Jews on stage.

Book-memoirs of the son of actress S. Ioffe - S. Kopelman "Filial heart" [7, c. 152], cites the "geography" of the country's Jewish theaters in the twenties; on the examples of Baku, Belarus and Odessa Jewish theaters shows the life and problems of Jewish actors; mentions the names of prominent Jewish actors and directors (O. Granovsky, S. Mikhoels, S. Ioffe, J. Kopelman, J. Mindlin, W. Schwarzer, E. Leuter).

To the memoir literature we attributed the memoirs of the Jewish actor B. Chemerinsky [8, p. 232] about being in a Jewish troupe. Among the famous actors, he mentions A. Fishzon and V. Zaslavskaya, J. Libert and C. Jung, P. Litman and Esther-Rachel Kaminska. Among the cities – centers of Jewish theatrical art, B. Chemerinsky names Odessa, Vilno, Vinnytsia, Warsaw, Berdichev and Mogilev.

The book directed by M. Loev "The Stolen Muse" [9, p. 243] is the author's artistic and documentary memoir about the Sholem Aleichem Kyiv State Jewish Theater. The book is especially valuable for the presence of photographs of fragments of performances, copies of stenographic versions of performances.

Thus, it can be considered that memoir literature is one of the main sources of information about the features of the Jewish theater, but there are certain subjective limitations, unfilled time gaps, and possible unreliability of facts.

2. Literature on the theory of theatrical art. To such literature we attributed the works of M. Beregovov [10, p. 647] From the history of the Jewish folk theater, in which the theatrical environment is described, a range of theatrical plays from the Western European repertoire (first of all, the German one, from where, according to the author, the Jewish theater arose) has been determined. Although M. Beregovsky collected exclusively musical plays, his research allowed us to get acquainted with the monuments of the ancient Jewish theater (scripts for the holiday of Purimshpil), which has come down to us.

In his works, N. Kornienko considers the theater as a part of artistic culture, which performs diagnostic and prognostic functions, and determines that "... Theatre is a



peculiar model of social consciousness, which includes both the theoretical level and the level of ordinary mass consciousness. This is a model with complex cells, internal movement, and its own laws." [11, p. 34].

The terms "theatricality", "improvisation", "badkhany", "spectacle" are inherent in the Jewish national theater, we find them in the theoretical studies of M. Yevreinov and A. Bakanursky.

For example, M. Evreinov believed that it was the "sense of theatricality,... the theatre owes its origin as a permanent institution" [12, p. 192]. In our opinion, theatricality is one of the features inherent in the Jews as a nation.

A. Bakanursky in his works describes the role of "badkhans" (Jewish jesters), whom he considers "... characters of marginal cultural forms associated with theatricality, spectacle and transformation" [13, p. 3-12]; reveals the concepts of "theatricality" and "spectacle" on the example of "playful existence of different ethnic groups" [14, p. 14], which it considers to be a continuous theatrical and playful act; defines modern Jewish culture as "an organic synthesis and at the same time a block system with different characteristics" [15, p. 32-36].

The works of such well-known theatre critics as A. Volynsky, B. Gorin, Z. Zilbertzweig, I. Ioffe, M. Kagan, V. Levitina, K. Oysländer, V. Sladkopevtsev, I. Shyper, expanded and deepened knowledge about Jewish culture, determined the "chronotope" of Jewish theater and the "fact" of the existence of Jewish theatrical culture. In the works of Ivanov V. we found interesting details of the theoretical views of the director of the Jewish theater A. Granovsky, who proves that in addition to the system of the traditional theatrical system (K. Stanislavsky), there was an original national system of the Jewish director A. Granovsky, which deserves attention and can be used in modern theater pedagogy.

Thus, it can be determined that the theoretical materials contain evidence of the reflection of everyday life on theatrical culture in general and Jewish culture in particular, the peculiarities of the reflection of general theatrical principles in Jewish theatrical culture.

3. Publications in the press and archival materials. For such a specific object of



study as the Jewish theater, such information sources as newspaper publications, biographies, biographies, and personal archival materials are important. Information about the existence of the Jewish theater in Odessa is contained in newspaper publications, such as: "Bulletin of the Odessa City Administration", "Spectator", "Divertissement", "Life of Art", "Young Guard", "Odessa Herald", "Odessa Leaflet", "Odessa Review", "Odessa Word", "Stage and Life", "Theater", "Theater and Spectacles", "Theater and Art", "Theater Review", "Theater Week", "Black Sea Commune", etc. Archival documents from the funds of the State Archives of Odessa Region tell about the history of theaters in Ukraine, about the existence of the Odessa Theater Trust, which also included the Jewish theater.

From archival documents, one can learn about the existence of the Berezil Union in Odesa under the leadership of director L. Kurbas. It is known that Odesa actors sent a letter to Kurbas with a request to come themselves or send a director to create the Berezil studio in Odesa. The actors of this studio were Jewish. We have found and analyzed a lot of archival materials, from which we can get a significant amount of information about the existence of Jewish theaters in Odessa and their tours, photographs of the Jewish theater collective; materials that were found in the Museum of Jewish Culture in Odessa, publications in Yiddish.

The most profound and unique study of the history of Jewish theater in recent years has been the book by actor and director Faust Mindlin "The History of Jewish Theater. Actors and Destinies" [16, p. 252], which can be attributed to archival and memoir literature, because its author is a descendant of Jewish theater actors, and many materials in the book are used from personal archives (letters, photos, posters, etc.).

Faust Petrovich himself, during the presentation of his book in 2016, says: "*When I delved into history, I understood. How interesting is it, what is the stage language, the way of being, what were the director's decisions, what were the most interesting acting achievements. What a skill to be both a performance theater and a theater of experience. A Unique Way of Being.*" The author's parents were actors of the Jewish theater, and his grandfather was the director of the Jewish theater, including the Odessa theater.



4. Fiction. The analysis of this significant and weighty material gives us the opportunity to more thoroughly and deeply understand the traditions, way of life, everyday life of the small-town Jews, to identify common features among different representatives of this people: appearance, movements, language, stress, humor, artistry, because all this directly affects the formation of both domestic and theatrical Jewish culture.

One of the most famous Jewish playwrights and writers, Sholem Aleichem [17, p. 606] He wrote a large number of works of fiction, from which you can learn about the creation of Jewish acting troupes. In addition to Sholem Aleichem, such writers as I. Babel, M. Gorky, V. Grossman, M. Leskov, and G. Polyanker chose the Jewish theme in their works. Jews became the main characters of works of fiction by such writers as M. Gogol, A. Chekhov, V. Korolenko, etc. These works tell about different historical periods of the life of Jews, create different images of Jews – funny, greedy, cowardly, that is, mostly have a negative connotation.

M. Gorky and M. Leskov prove that "... We have reason to consider the Jews our friends, we have something to be grateful for – they have done and are doing a lot of good on the paths that the best Russian people have taken" [18; p. 5], and condemn manifestations of anti-Semitism.

5. The reference literature included encyclopedias and dictionaries, with the help of which certain ideas about the historical and artistic significance of spectacles in the culture of the Jewish people were formed. For the same purpose, information was used from some Internet sites, from interviews with actors and directors of Odessa theaters, representatives of the city department of culture, etc., with the help of which certain ideas were formed about the theatrical art of Jews in general and about the activities of the national Jewish theater in Odessa, about its significance in a peculiar cultural context.

Thus, the Concise Jewish Encyclopedia states that "... The Hebrews did not have the original theatrical art of the same way as other ancient peoples, especially the Greeks and Romans." The Great Soviet Encyclopedia does not contain the article "Jewish Theater" at all, and such significant phenomena of theatrical art of the early



twentieth century as "GABIMA" and "DERZHET" are attributed to the outstanding successes of the Soviet theater and the "wise national policy of the CPSU". In the theatrical encyclopedia, an article about Jewish theater also exists, but the term itself is not defined.

In the studies of Soviet scientists, the history of Jewish theater is reduced to several manifestations of Jewish culture, which in no way explains the fact of the emergence of a significant phenomenon in world culture – Jewish theatrical expressionism. Thus, we can conclude that there is a deliberate restriction of information about Jewish culture in general and theater in particular.

6. Scientific literature of historical direction, in which historians (E. Grinberg, I. Kotler, M. Panchuk, M. Polishchuk, S. Zipperstein) paid attention to the historical development of the Jewish ethnos, to factual material related to political and socio-economic changes in different historical periods. The issues of the cultural phenomenon of the Jewish ethnos were ignored. An example is the book "Essays on the History and Culture of the Jews of Ukraine" [19, p. 440], which is a fundamental publication that covers the history and culture of Jews who lived on the territory of modern Ukraine from ancient times to the present day. [20].

The book by the English historian and journalist P. Johnson "The Popular History of the Jews" is considered one of the best works on the history of the Jewish people, in which the author uses rich historical material and reveals the role and place of Jews in world culture. An interesting source of the historical trend is the works of J. Josephus "Jewish Antiquity" and "Jewish Wars".

Publications on the History of Jewish Theatre in Recent Years (E. Binevich [21], R. Brodavko [22], V. Karp [23], O. Ksendziuk [24], I. Milikovsky [25], V. Proskuryakov [26]) testify to the fact that Jewish theatrical art has deep roots, its own history, centuries-old traditions,

Especially valuable in this regard is the book "The History of the Jewish Theater in Lviv. Through thorns to the stars!" by T. Stepanchykova [27], who was the first in Ukrainian theater studies to thoroughly investigate the history of the origin, formation and development of Jewish professional theater in Lviv. The authors show the



development of Jewish theater in the regions of Ukraine and allow us to compare the stages of development of Jewish theater in the spatio-temporal environment, as well as show a systematic approach to the study of Jewish culture.

This includes foreign literature in Yiddish and English. In the books of such authors as: Biagle David «Power and powerlessness in Jewish history», Levin Meyer «The story of the Jewish way of life»; Pessin Debora «The Jewish people», Soloff Mordecai «How the Jewish people grew up», Shurer E «A history of the Jewish people in the time of Jewish» The historical facts of the emergence, settlement and adaptation of the Jewish people in different countries of the world are considered.

7. Sources of biblical subjects. Issues related to the prohibition of theatrical art are found in biblical literature. One-sided coverage of such issues does not allow us to imagine the whole "picture of the world" of the Jewish ethnos. Jews who do not belong to the "Orthodox group" and whose interests must also be taken into account are ignored [28]. Therefore, the information from these sources is very limited and indirect to cover the stated problem.

8. Literature of the psychological direction. The idea of the "national character" of the Jews, the identification of their character traits, the model of relationships with other peoples and in their environment can be found in the literature of the psychological, or rather, ethno-psychological direction (A. Baronin, V. Bokan, W. Wundt, P. Gnatenko, D. Matsumoto, D. Ovyaniko-Kulikovskiy, A. Shvetsova). Such studies distinguish between concepts that are often replaced by each other: "nation", "ethnic group", "national minorities", "national spirit". We extrapolated their findings to Jewish national culture.

For example, Wundt **believes** that "the object of the psychology of peoples is myths, language, and rituals, which are also objects of historical research. They are not a fragment of the creativity of the people's spirit, but this spirit itself" [29, pp. 41-49].

II. Gnatenko defined that "the national character is not an eternal substance, but changes in the process of historical and socio-political conditions of the people's development" [30, p. 107]. In our opinion, it is among the Jewish people that there is a tendency to develop theatrical art along with changes in society (revolution, Soviet



power, war, "Stalin's dictatorship", oppression and destruction). Thus, ethnopsychological sources allow us to investigate the influence of ethnic characteristics on Jewish theatrical culture.

Conclusion

The scientific, fiction and methodical literature analyzed by us showed blank spots in the study of the culture of the Jewish people. He has no fundamental scientific works, and almost all links of the culture of the Jewish people have been little studied.