

The Gay Science of Folklore: Introduction

I. Ost und West in 1913: The Two Schools of German Science

Ismar Elbogen & The Science of Judaism

Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung
(1913, 1924, 1931)

the last great work of this school

ha-Tefillah be-Yisrael (1924, 1972)

Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History (1993)

A. Restorative

1. "The Turn to History in Modern Judaism" (1994)

Immanuel Wolf: depict Judaism from an historical standpoint
then philosophically,
rescue its inner essence and idea

2. Leopold Zunz

literature as key to understanding of Judaism
literary history = primary discipline

B. Revolutionary

1. from belief to critique
2. from experience to analysis
3. from subject to object
4. from Hebrew to German

C. The Politics of Emancipation

1. Judaism, not the Jews

must prove that Hebrews not inferior to the Greeks
(Friedrich August Wolf)
that Judaism nor merely a prelude to Christianity (Hegel)
but also: essence of national spirit = literature (Herder)
therefore emphasize Bible, Prophets, Rabbinic lit., liturgy
essence, not ephemera
YAHADUT = ideal concept;
vs. YEHUDIM = messy, ethnic hodgepodge

2. Civil aspirations, not national

turn Judaism into object of research
deny it any dynamic role in modern society
thus enable social integration of German Jews

D. Ethnography as Nation-building

1. The Polish School

1. Positivism: self-knowledge as basis of new secular identity
2. Volf Segal: 1st collector of Yiddish folktales
3. source of a normal, earthy, **urban** culture

Lehman: LENDER, GEGNTN, SHTET UN SHTELEKH

2. The Russian Narodniki

1. cult of the Russian peasant (Gogol, Tolstoy et al.)
2. peasant commune = model society (Narodniki, revolutionaries)

IV. Folklore and Self-Understanding

A. The FOLK

1. J. L. **Cahan**: Peasantry; di breyte, tsurikgeshtane folksmasn
(*Shtudyas*, 135)
“secular”
2. **Anski, Prylucki**: those who still preserve the old way of life
patriarchal society
religious songs = most culturally specific
3. The **Marxists**: the productive element; laborers;
though it may not originate w/them
4. The **YIVO**: the Yiddish-speaking nation

B. The LORE

1. Schipper, Cahan: spiritual vs. material culture
folktales, folksongs = pride of place
beliefs, customs
folk sayings, Purim-shpiln
vs. folk costume, architecture, handicrafts
food
Cahan: vunder-mayselekh = authentic core
love songs take pride of place
[“TSVEY TAYBELEKH” , Cahan #110]
Ruth Rubin’s collections, recordings
[**Prylucki’s ecstatic into to Yidische folkslider I (1911)**]
2. Anski: utilitarian vs. aesthetic folk-creation
utilitarian: folk medicine; superstition
aesthetic: pure literary creation

Anski's Expedition (1912-14)

only the most backward regions; hasidic heartland

source of new, neoprimitive art → Góberman's "Motifs" (1901)

Jewish Artistic Heritage Album

[ENGEL'S NIGGUN]

3. Vanvild/Lehman: privilege songs of the underworld

[HARSHL, *Pearls*, 179; B:1]

Vanvild's *Bay undz yidn* (1923)

Lehman: children, thieves & other deviants

3. Yudl Mark (1951): folklore vs. ethnology

folklore = only verbal production

only in Hebrew & Yiddish

ethnology = all the rest; the old way of life

5. B.K.-G.: everything borne by EE Jews,

no matter in what language it's in

C. The GREAT/LITTLE TRADITION (Lowenstein)

1. Great Tradition

uniting factor

written in books

enshrined in the law

written in Hebrew-Aramaic

portable

Elbogen: LITURGY

2. Little Tradition

learned through family. community

greatest emotional attachment

mediates Judaism for most Jews

SHTEYGER, MINHAG

Prylucki: PURIM-SHPIL

Mark Kiel, "Vox Populi, Vox Dei: Peretz The Centrality of Peretz in Jew. Folkloristics
Polin 7 (1992): 88-120.

D. Terms of Tradition, or Folklore as a System of Self-understanding

1. MIKRA/MISHNAH; Written vs. Oral Torah

Ma'aseh b...: both exemplum & legend

considered historical, true

only fictive genres clearly marked:

mashal: le-mah hadavar dommeh?

hyperbolic narratives: מיאבד ילי

about distant lands, seas

2. East European Ethnography (Weinig & Khayes)

mapping a living culture

must reject romantic nationalism
pan-Germanic concept of the Volk
“objectified nationalism”
subject for research, not a movement in society

3. Elbogen’s Blueprint for Reform

the evolution of Jewish liturgy culminating in the present
greatness of the Spanish Period
the antiquity & centrality of the synagogue
Jews = liturgical community

**Noyakh Pryluckis zamlbikher far yidishn folkor, filologye un kultur-
geshikhte I (Warsaw, 1912)**

co-edited w/Shmuel Lehman
1st attempt to publish Yiddish folklore in Yiddish
public forum for young zamlers, esp. teachers
who live amongs unmediated Jewish folk life
where patriarchal life is still intact
turns his apartment into a folk archive
[destroyed in September ‘39]
Prylucki = chief ideologue of Folkspartey

A. Restorative: The new science of man

omnibus disciplines

1. VÖLKERKUNDE (1775) = statistics + geography
2. Nationalkunde
3. VOLKSKUNDE (Josef Mader, 1787) = subset
FOLKLORE (William Toms, 1846),
the Comparative Science

Brothers Grimm

precede founders of Wissenschaft by a decade
introduce the comparative method
annotation of tales = diffusion of same theme
among languages, nations
demonstrate the universality of folklore forms, themes