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The Social Mobility of Estonian Jewish Intelligentsia Between the Two World Wars: Jewish Students at Tartu University

Abstract: Estonian Jewish community, historically tiny and scholarly neglected, constituted 0,4% of total interwar Estonian population. Relation between those two numerical indexes – ratio of Jewish population and students – displays that Jews outnumbered relatively any other ethnic student body at Tartu University in the given period. High regard of education, tendences of "over-schooling" and academic "over-achieving" had been traditonal elements in the build-up of Jewish social capital since the age of modernization. Prosopographic study of Jewish students at Tartu University, considering various biographical variables from the archive, aims to define and characterize the social mobility of Estonian Jewish intelligentsia.
Key words: Estonian history, Jewish history, 1918–1940

Socialna mobilnost estonskih židovskih intelektualcev med obema svetovnima vojnama: židovski študentje na univerzi v Tartuju

Izvleček: Med dvema svetovnima vojnama je zgodovinsko majhna in akademsko spregledana židovska skupnost v Estoniji obsegala 0,4 odstotka vsega estonskega prebivalstva. Razmerje med številčnostjo skupnosti in udeležbo v izobraževanju kaže, da je bil v tem času delež židovskih študentov relativno višji od deleža študentov katere koli druge etnične skupine na univerzi v Tartuju. Velik pomen izobraževanja, tendence po "nadizobraženosti" in akademskem "preseganju" so bili tradicionalni elementi v gradnji židovskega družbenega kapitala od začetka modernizacije. Prosopografska analiza židovskih študentov na univerzi v Tartuju, ki upošteva različne, arhivsko dostopne biografske spremenljivke, skuša opredeliti in podrobneje razložiti značilnosti družbene mobilnosti estonskih židovskih izobražencev.
Ključne besede: estonska zgodovina, židovska zgodovina, 1918–1940

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Introduction

Compared to other Eastern European regions with a large Jewish population and deep-rooted traditions, the Jewish community has never formed a prominent part of Estonia's society nor played a substantial role in its history. To be precise, the history of the Jewish presence in the pre-modern period is hardly attested at all. This, of course, has a number of geographical and political reasons. The development and vitality of the Jewish settlements were hindered by expulsions and restrictions till the 19th century, when modern historiography started to develop and explore the issues that were considered relevant. The Jewish absence or minor presence is reflected in a number of studies by both Estonian and foreign scholars. The overall situation of Jewish studies in Estonia and the Baltic States in general is outlined, for example, by Helker Pflug in an article on the Jewish community in Estonia. Pflug considers the current state of their development rather unclear and incomplete, distinguishing between three fields of research covered so far: a) general topics in Jewish history treated by Russian, Polish, or German researchers, vividly showing how many different and conflicting vantage points there can be; b) works by Baltic-German, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian researchers; these surveys, however, are often undertaken and presented as a side issue, within the framework of the national histories etc.; c) the topic of the Holocaust, treated predominantly by Latvians and Lithuanians.[2]

A clearer grasp of the situation requires a short introduction to the history of Jewish settlement in Estonia. Although occasional records of Jews in the Estonian territory do appear from the 14th century onwards, they are isolated cases, concerning mostly itinerant merchants. The unstable rule over Estonia throughout the pre-modern era – alternating between Polish, Swedish, and Russian – did little to change the restrictive policy and prejudiced attitude towards the Jewish presence. From the early 18th century onwards, after the war among the powers mentioned above, Estonia remained in the hands of Imperial Russia. The unsuccessful attempts at Jewish emancipation, as well as at emancipation in general, still restricted the Jews to a status which precluded their integration into society. The trammelling of the Jewish movement within the Empire resulted in the so-called legal Jewish settlement in certain "grouped-together" western provinces of Russia – the Pale of Settlement. This area excluded the provinces of Es-

[2] Pflug, 1998, 51.

tonia and Livonia, which covered the territory of present-day Estonia, so that the first influx of Jews into Estonia did not take place until the first half of the 19th century. Since the Estonian territory was beyond the Pale of Settlement, the composition and profile of the local Jewish community evolved in a different way, influenced by the traits of both Western and Eastern European Jewish communities.

The Jewish community began to develop with the illegal immigration from the territories of Poland, Lithuania, and Courland (Jewish settlement areas), consisting mainly of craftsmen like shoemakers, tailors, whitesmiths, and petty merchants. Moreover, there was a number of Jewish students and professors, which steadily increased from the 1802 re-opening of Tartu University onwards.[3] However, it was the Jewish soldiers, the so-called cantonists or Nicholas' soldiers, who established the first permanent Jewish settlements in the Estonian territory. They were garrisoned in the major urban centres, starting with the capital Tallinn (congregation established in 1830).[4]

In 1865 a law was passed granting residence rights outside the Pale of Settlement to first-class Jewish merchants, licensed craftsmen, and specialists with higher education. Thus Jewish communities, besides the one already existing in Tallinn, came to be established in other major historical urban centres of Estonia as well, starting to fill the vacant position of the middle class. Constant immigration during the period of 1867–1897 increased the number of Jews in Estonia approximately six times.[5]

During the upheavals in the early 20th century and Estonia's ensuing struggle to break away from the Russian Empire, the local Jews chose to support the Estonian cause both financially and with manpower.[6] Estonia's emergence from World War I and its aftermath as an independent state meant changes also for

[3] Hiio, 1999, 131. Also: The main attraction for the Jewish students at Tartu University appeared to be the Medicine Faculty (famous across the Empire), almost the only faculty whose diplomas could be useful to Jews after graduation. Moreover, the living costs in Tartu were lower and the town itself situated closer to the Jewish centres. As a result, the majority of the Jewish students studying in Tartu came from German-speaking areas. This changed only in the 1880's with the general Russification policy, which established Russian as the official language of the university, Liebmann, 1937, 40–41.

[4] Liebmann, 1937, 37–45.

[5] Berg, 1995, 42–43; Liebmann, 1937, 46.

[6] Liebmann, 1937, 109, 112.

the Jewish minority. The borders with Russia and Latvia cut off the Estonian Jewish community from the Jewish centres there. The community became less mobile, the only exceptions being the migration of students coming to study at Tartu University – mainly from Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland – and small-scale emigration to Western Europe and Palestine (Estonia also received some refugees from Central Europe, but only in the late 1930's).[7] However, the rights of ethnic minorities were protected by the law of cultural autonomy from 1925. This law was the first in the world to provide such extensive rights, which led to assertions that Estonia came closest to Dubnow's model of non-territorial Jewish autonomy in Europe.[8]

This was the situation faced by the Estonian Jewry in the novel era of Estonian independence, within the redefined borders of Europe. Building up a new civil society demanded much effort and required, apart from the immediate military capability that helped lay the foundations of sovereignty, also the mobilisation of intellectual resources to secure its continuation. In the latter task, all people – native Estonians as well as other ethnic groups – took an active part. The background, composition, and aspirations of the Estonian Jewish élite (restricted to the student population for the purposes of this study) will be addressed in the subsequent sections.

The article is based on materials stored in the Estonian Historical Archives (Tartu) and the Archives of Tartu University, which include the biographical information on all students enrolled at Tartu University within the examined period. The published database is contained in the four-volume *Album Academicum Universitatis Tartuensis*[9] (for the purposes of this article, an electronic database was made accessible to the author by the permission of the copyright holders).

Jewish Students At Tartu University
The Issue Of "Over-Schooling"

One of the most distinctive features of Jewish education in Central and Eastern Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries was the "over-representation" of Jews in higher educational institutions and in certain professions, compared to their relative proportion in the total population. Since education has been a promi-

[7] Berg, 1995, 43–44.
[8] Verschik, 1999, 120.
[9] Album Academicum Universitatis Tartuensis I–IV, 1994.

nent vehicle of social mobility throughout the modern period, Jewish acculturation was a fundamental condition and motivation for schooling efforts. Investment into higher education was a prerequisite for achievements in various walks of life:[10] university education was the only way to attain respect and honour, creating a spiritual aristocracy that money and high birth could not buy. Jews accordingly did their best to educate their children at universities.[11]

According to the census of 1922, Estonians represented 87.7% of the total Estonian population, and Jews only 0.4%. The census of 1934 yields similar results, with ethnic Estonians representing 88.2% of the total population, Jews 0.4%, Germans 1.5%, and Russians 8.2%.[12] Considering that 21,177[13] students attended university between the years 1918 and 1944, with 835 (4.0% of the student body) of them Jews, 805 (3.8% of the student body) Russians, and 1,573 (7.4% of the student body) Germans (Table 1), the Jews were over-represented more than 10 times in comparison to their share in the population, and the German students 5 times. The Russian students, by contrast, were under-represented almost by half, while the proportion of the Estonian students was in balance with the proportion of ethnic Estonians.[14] During the years of independence, the ratio of the Jewish students never dropped below 4%.[15]

Table 1

Nationality	Number of students (1918–1944)	Percentage of students	Percentage of the population (census 1934)
Jewish	835	4.0	0.4
Russian	805	3.8	8.2
German	1573	7.4	1.5
Other	17964	84.8	89.9
Total	21177	100.0	100.0

[10] Karady, 2004, 100.
[11] Löwy, 1992, 31.
[12] *Eesti arvudes* 1920–1935, 1937, 12.
[13] *Album Academicum Universitatis Tartuensis I*, 1994, 34.
[14] Lindström, 2001, 29.
[15] Hiio, 1999, 150–151.

The large number of Jews at university was influenced by several factors. On the one hand, the zealous pursuit of education was dictated by the internal rules of the Jewish community. On the other hand, the increase of Jewish students was connected with the larger societal changes – the emancipation and the abolition of various discriminatory restrictions. Thirdly, Tartu University stopped imposing the *numerus clausus* in 1919. And finally, many of the Jews enrolled in the 1930's were citizens of Latvia, since the more heterogeneous society of Latvia and Riga showed more hostility to minorities.[16] While ethnic minority students still hesitated to enrol at the newly established Estonian university in 1919, the situation changed radically in the very next year. If the number of Estonian students had risen four times by the December of 1920, it was 4.8 times for the Russians, over 10 times for the Germans, and over 11 times for the Jews.[17]

This tendency corresponds to the relatively high number of Jews attending higher education institutions throughout Central Europe. Over the years, however, the number of ethnic minority students dropped. The diminishing number of the German students was connected with the aging of the population, including the women. The same trend, reinforced by steady emigration, is evident in the case of the Jews. The number of the Russian students likewise dwindled for several reasons: they were the children of former Imperial officials and officers, who were gradually leaving Estonia. Furthermore, their peculiar social composition did not permit a new student "offspring" (rural people from the border regions).[18] The Estonian students, on the other hand, showed a gradual increase. Out of 1,000 Estonians, there were 2.75 university students in 1934, 2.7 in 1936, and 2.91 in 1939. For the Germans, the numbers were 14.56, 10.21, and 8.69; for the Jews, 21.65, 13.3, and 15.56; and for the Russians, 1.63, 1.1, and 0.97.[19]

The Origin Of The Jewish Students

Judging by the data, slightly more than half of the Jewish students at Tartu University had their origins outside Estonia. The same holds true of the Russian students, while the majority of the German students were of Estonian origin. The latter fact is not surprising, considering the Germans' long-time presence in the area

[16] Lindström, Hiio, 1997, 30.
[17] Karjahärm, Sirk, 2001, 22.
[18] Karjahärm, Sirk, 2001, 51.
[19] Ibid., 54.

and their dominant position in society for centuries. Traditionally residing in Estonian towns and numerous rural manors, the German minority formed a contrast to the other newcomers, such as the Jews and Russians. However, a look at the students' place of birth in terms of urban vs. rural background (Table 2) shows that the Jewish students were overwhelmingly urban, which is a significant indication of upward social mobility in the modern period.[20] In the course of their historical migration, voluntary or forced, the Jews tended towards areas with educational, business, or trade opportunities, which were often cities. It is true that the families of many Jewish students stemmed from the predominantly rural area of the Pale;[21] this can be attributed to the residence restrictions having been lifted quite recently, by the law passed in 1865 and the collapse of the Pale system in 1917. After these developments, however, the parents (or even the more remote ancestors) of the Jewish students gradually started to move to major centres like Riga, Tartu, Tallinn, and – to a lesser degree – to the smaller Estonian towns.

Table 2

	Place of birth	Urban	Rural	Not known	Total
Jewish	Count	805	25	5	835
	% within nationality	96.4%	3.0%	0.6%	100.0%
Russian	Count	667	138		805
	% within nationality	82.9%	17.1%		100.0%
German	Count	1214	358	1	1573
	% within nationality	77.2%	22.8%	0.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	2686	521	6	3213
	% within nationality	83.6%	16.2%	0.2%	100.0%

Historian Lauri Lindström, for example, concludes that people born outside Estonia had a stronger tendency to enrol at university, possessing also the neces-

[20] The Estonian Jewish community was considered the most urbanised in Europe, Mendelsohn, 1987, 254.

[21] Until 1882, most of the Jewish students at Tartu University came from Curonia (present-day Latvia), the nearest Jew-populated area. In Hiio, 1999, 123.

sary mentality, level of education, and financial means. Higher education was available to all of them on an equal basis, regardless of ethnicity – Estonian, Russian or German.[22]

Examination of the students' place of birth vs. place of secondary education helps to trace the migratory patterns within the specified time frames. The Jewish students at Tartu University again reveal an urban background or motivation to move to bigger urban (and thus educational) centres. The overwhelming majority of those born in Tallinn or Tartu, or probably their parents, chose to remain in their respective cities. By contrast, less than half of the Jews born in the smaller Estonian towns attended the local secondary schools, the majority opting for the two centres instead. Interestingly, Russian-born Jews moved to the Estonian towns bordering on Russia (with the historical presence of Russians), while the Jews originally from these border towns gradually moved to Tallinn, etc. The secondary schools in Tallinn and (to a lesser degree) Tartu were also favoured by the Jews of St. Petersburg origin, while the reverse order, motivated by geographical proximity, applied to those born in Riga.[23] We may thus conclude that the generations of the Jewish students and their parents reveal an upward mobility – a gradual and remarkable search for better social avenues in the major centres. Their original inhabitants, logically, preferred to stay and obtain their education there. By contrast, the Russian students were probably not motivated to migrate to urban centres to gain better educational opportunities. Many of those born in Russia or smaller Estonian towns did not move to Tallinn or Tartu but to Eastern Estonian towns, or, if born there, attended the local schools. This underlines the fact that the Russian community traditionally lived in certain areas, while the Jewish one was more dispersed and not influenced by any "regional loyalty". Of the larger ethnic minorities in Estonia, only the Russians and Swedes had historical areas of permanent (and rural) settlements.

The Early Age Of Schooling

A good education was considered an important factor in competing for status and career. Outstanding performance at school guaranteed entry into various so-

[22] Karjahärm, Sirk, 2001, 55.

[23] By 1930, the majority of foreign students at Tartu University were citizens of Latvia: 92 out of 125. Two thirds (66.3%) of these 92 were Jewish, studying mostly law (49.2%) or medicine (27.9%). Ibid.

cial markets. This applied especially to the Jewish students, whose schooling efforts had traditionally aimed at admittance to Gentile society. Moreover, their access to public sectors, such as the public services, was limited by numerous restrictions, which in turn promoted competition for the liberal professions. This pattern survived into the era of non-discrimination policy (such as the interwar period in Estonia), continuing to act as an educational advantage in securing future positions in society. The Jewish students at Tartu University graduated from secondary schools at a noticeably earlier age than the German or Russian ones, and, moving on without delay, were also the youngest to enrol at university.

The Language Of Secondary Education

In this respect, there are several points that need to be stressed. Firstly, speaking the native language of one's country of residence was considered a bonus, since it facilitated communication and was generally advantageous. For the majority of the Jews, the language of secondary education was Russian – this, of course, reflects the situation throughout the period covered by the present study. Under tsarist Russia, the only acceptable secondary school level languages in Estonia were Russian and German, while Estonian-language schools only emerged in the later period of the Empire.

Jewish secular education began in the Republic of Estonia.[24] Jews, as elsewhere in Europe, were multilingual. With the Jewish minority in Estonia being so tiny, they usually commanded four languages: German (the language of education and the local nobility), Russian (the official language of the Empire), Estonian (the local language of the majority), and Yiddish. Before World War I, Russian and German were considered prestigious, while Yiddish enjoyed no such favour, having gained in popularity only in the recent years.[25] These trends are clearly visible from the processed data. There is a striking difference between the situation during World War I and the early years of Estonian independence on the one hand, and the period after 1926 on the other, when the Jewish community already enjoyed cultural autonomy and state-supported Jewish schools. Another noticeable phenomenon is the decline of the former official language – Russian, although it continued to exercise considerable influence in the early

[24] Verschik, 1999, 118.
[25] Ibid.

years of independence. Surprisingly, German language education showed no simultaneous decline:[26] on the contrary, it spread to the point of overtaking the position of Russian. Under the Empire, the parents would thus have brought up their children in a spirit of state loyalty, instructing them in the Russian language, which was also the best avenue to communication and opportunities; when this factor disappeared, they adjusted to the local conditions and the new reality. This trend is further highlighted by the increasing number of Jewish students attending Estonian secondary schools. The increasing preference for Estonian, Jewish, and even German schools at the expense of Russian ones is evident from other studies as well.

Table 3[27]

1923–24	Jewish	Estonian	Russian	German	All
Elementary	263 (50%)	16 (3%)	132 (24%)	126 (23%)	534
Secondary	43 (11%)	10 (2.6%)	284 (73.7%)	48 (12.7%)	385
All	306 (33%)	26 (3%)	416 (45%)	174 (19%)	919
1934–35	Jewish	Estonian	Russian	German	All
Elementary	229 (64%)	45 (12%)	31 (9%)	53 (15%)	358
Secondary	123 (44%)	63 (23%)	33 (11%)	61 (22%)	280
All	352 (56%)	108 (17%)	64 (10%)	104 (16%)	638

Another interesting fact is that Jewish students born outside Estonia were relatively more willing to change Russian language education for the languages of greater current interest, such as Estonian or Yiddish.

The Father's Occupation

Of the Estonian minorities, the Russians, Swedes, and Latvians mostly inhabited the borderlands, while the Germans and Jews lived in the cities. The Estonians, Russians, and Swedes favoured agricultural occupations. The Germans and Jews,

[26] The decline of German at the end of the 1930's has other reasons than the creation of new borders. The German community dwindled because of the low birth rate and, finally, the German withdrawal from Estonia in 1939, Karjahärm, Sirk, 2001, 51.
[27] Verschik, 1999, 121.

on the other hand, could be found in industry, trade, banking, insurance, and the liberal professions (such as physicians and lawyers). They owned a large share of the industry and finance capital. Their financial security and the value which they placed on education is evident also from the education statistics.[28]

The father's occupation is of great significance in terms of social mobility, since it determines the family's social stratum, and consequently its access to the available resources in society. The present study reveals the traditional pattern of Jewish occupation. Barred from state and civil service, as was commonly the case with Central European Jews, they concentrated overwhelmingly on the positions of merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen and other professionals. The percentage of affluent entrepreneurs and renters is not remarkably high, as this niche was monopolised by the local ruling class, the Germans. Since the latter (as well as the Russians) were not barred from civil service, they are relatively better represented there than the Jews.

It is intriguing to explore the possible impact of the father's occupation on the faculty choice of the Jewish students. For example, the children of "professionals" – in this case mainly doctors, dentists, etc. – chose the Faculty of Medicine. The offspring of entrepreneurs and renters (real estate owners), on the other hand, flocked to the Faculty of Law, perhaps in order to provide help in running ventures and businesses. An interesting fact is that students from craftsmen's and traders' families clearly opted for the Medicine Faculty. This can be partly explained by the large number of female students in this category, among whom the study of medicine has enjoyed traditional popularity.[29] More than half of the female Jewish students whose fathers were listed under the category of "professionals" pur-

[28] Karjahärm, Sirk, 2001, 22.

[29] The growing interest of the female Jewish students in Tartu University was satisfied in 1879 by the decision of the Russian State to grant them residence rights in Livonia. Their number peaked between the years 1915 and 1918, when 45.0% of all female students at Tartu were Jewish, Raudsepp, 1999, 208. This was because the Jewish students from the private University of Mikhail Rostovtsev (a medicine-based institution in Tartu) transferred to Tartu University. Nevertheless, students from the first group (two Jews and three Russians), who started in 1905, did not possess full student rights but were called "auditing students". This system was one of the first in the Russian Empire. In the middle of the second decade of the 20th century, 47.0% of the female auditing students were Jews (most of them from abroad), while 40.0% of the enrolled students were represented by Russians, Estonians, Latvians, and Baltic Germans, Tamul, 1999, 100, 108, 117.

sued the study of medicine, while this background did not have the same effect on the male students. The father's influence is evident also among other minority groups, with the sons of German priests studying theology or farmers' children making up a significant segment of agronomy students. Generally speaking, the parents of Jewish, Russian, and German students seem to have exercised similar influence on their choice of faculty, with no significant deviations.

The Choice Of Faculty

The table showing the students' choice of faculty reveals familiar patterns prevailing over the course of time, with the Jewish students concentrating on law and medicine. (Table 4) Compared to the Russian and German students, the percentage of Jews is proportionally the highest. There are several reasons. Firstly, the previous tsarist system of limiting Jewish students in Russia to the fields of medicine, pharmacy, and later law[30] persisted through inertia even after those restrictions had been lowered. Secondly, these fields of study traditionally ranked high among the Jews, as well as among other nationalities,[31] so that the number of students was on the increase from the late 1880's onwards. At the end of the 19th century, more Jews chose to study law and medicine, thus forming a professional bourgeoisie in contrast to a commercial one.[32]

Thirdly, medicine and law were at the time still considered the most prestigious and best paid professional fields. The popularity of law and economics went hand in hand with the increased career opportunities in different walks of life. In addition, these fields allowed students to live and work outside Tartu during their studies, which was not so easy, for example, at the Faculty of Medicine. As for the natural sciences and philosophy, most of the graduates could see their fu-

[30] Hiio, 1999, 147.

[31] The large representation of Jews in various professions, after the abolition of access restrictions and the emergence of new job markets, is particularly evident in Central and Eastern Europe, where they gained almost absolute dominance in some occupational spheres. In connection with these countries, Karady refers to the "dual structure" of professional opportunities. This means that while positions in the public services (state administration, the army, the judiciary, etc.) were largely closed to Jews, the liberal professions (i.e. those of lawyers, physicians – dominant already in the previous eras –, architects, musicians, journalists, scholars, and artists) attracted them in great numbers, Karady, 2004, 92–93.

[32] Hiio, 1999, 128.

Table 4

	Faculty	Theology	Law	Medicine	Philosophy	Natural Sciences	Veterinary Medicine	Agronomy	Total
Jewish	Count		274	266	79	159	37	19	834
	% within nationality		32.9%	31.9%	9.5%	19.1%	4.4%	2.3%	100.0%
Russian	Count	7	214	195	76	189	41	83	805
	% within nationality	0.9%	26.6%	24.2%	9.4%	23.5%	5.1%	10.3%	100.0%
German	Count	93	372	411	193	385	39	79	1572
	% within nationality	5.9%	23.7%	26.1%	12.3%	24.5%	2.5%	5.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	100	860	872	348	733	117	181	3211
	% within nationality	3.1%	26.8%	27.2%	10.8%	22.8%	3.6%	5.6%	100.0%

ture as schoolteachers,[33] and, according to the data, the Faculty of Natural Sciences gradually gained ground.

To sum up, the society élite drew most of its members from the medical and legal professions. The Jewish striving for these positions exemplifies their strong – judging by relative numbers, the strongest – desire for upward mobility. The lists of real estate owners show that lawyers and doctors owned a considerable share of the property in towns. They were also the founders of the first Estonian banks.[34]

The significant absence of Jewish students from theology suggests that there were no completely assimilated Jews who would have taken this course in order to excel in the Protestant religion. The scheme was to adopt the host culture but maintain a distinct Jewishness. The same applies, with minor exceptions, to the Russian students. The absolute predominance of Germans (93%) among the theology students hints at the German cultural influence which once determined the Estonian position at the edge of Western Christianity. However, the overall low enrolment in theology (3.1%, the lowest among the faculties) reflects the high degree of secularisation and the declining social importance of religious studies. As for the Faculties of Veterinary Medicine and Agronomy, the high level of Jewish urbanisation diverted attention from them, especially from the lat-

[33] Lindström, Hiio, 1997, 38.

[34] Eesti haritlaskonna kujunemine ja ideed 1850–1917, 1997, 167.

ter. The opposite applied to the Russians, whose settlement pattern and history were well-suited to the need for agriculture specialists.[35]

A Change Of Faculty

Another interesting aspect is the number of students who changed the faculty of their first choice in the course of study. The percentage of the Jewish students who did so is the highest – 24.2%, followed by 21% of the Germans and 18.4% of the Russians. Changing the faculty could be interpreted in various ways. Generally, it could be agreed to spring from dissatisfaction, leading to a more congenial choice of study. Although such changes of mind may be attributed to the unclear interests of young people, they could also represent calculated attempts to seize the fields of prospective opportunities – the studies which would guarantee affluence and respect. These "respected and safe ways" evidently included the Faculties of Law and Medicine, which were least prone to changes. The less stable natural sciences and philosophy, on the other hand, witnessed a lot of intellectual migration. A similar trend is evident among all ethnic minorities, but the Jews stand out in this "searching mobility". In regard to gender, men emerge as the more active in changing faculties. This is true of the Jews and especially the Germans, while the Russians are more equally balanced.

ATTENDANCE AT SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES

The aspect discussed above leads to a related topic: the students' repeated attendance at other universities, which means changing not faculties but schools. This is certainly linked to the geographical mobility of the students or their families before, during or after their studies at Tartu University. However, it may also reflect their academic excellence – applying for and receiving scholarship from abroad – or the available family resources. A look at the table (Table 5) reveals that one third of the German students attended other universities as well, while the other groups were limited to 14.5% of the Jews and even less – 11.3% – of the Russians. For the Baltic-German nobility, the education of their children evidently had to include at least a temporary stay at a German university. The students took advantage of the different semester system in Germany and spent the

[35] Vähemusrahvuste kultuurielu Eesti Vabariigis 1918–1940. Dokumente ja materjale, 1993, 15–16. Karjahärm, Sirk, 2001, 21/22.

Table 5

	Study at other universities	Yes	No	Total
Jewish	Count	121	714	835
	% within nationality	14.5%	85.5%	100.0%
Russian	Count	91	714	805
	% within nationality	11.3%	88.7%	100.0%
German	Count	529	1044	1573
	% within nationality	33.6%	66.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	741	2472	3213
	% within nationality	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%

summer holidays there. It was also the destination of most state grant recipients, because of their command of the language and the high level of German scholarship.[36] This long-standing trend can be considered natural, given the historical connections between Germany proper and its eastern province. However, the link between the change of university and the year of the first registration shows that most transfers from one institution to another occurred during World War I and its aftermath, that is, during large-scale emigrations. This applies to Jews and Russians. The local Baltic Germans, on the other hand, being a well-established national group in Estonia, were not affected so much by the war events which set numerous other groups in motion. The table shows that the German students' attendance at universities abroad rose in the early years of Estonian independence and remained fairly stable until the onset of World War II. The Jewish and Russian students, on the other hand, remained relatively inactive in this regard.

Participation In Student Organisations

The participation in student organisations (Table 6) by the Jews, Estonians, and the other two most prominent groups at the university – the Germans and Russians – yields important insights into group identification. At Tartu University, the Jewish students were by far the most organised group. The period of Estonian

[36] Lindström, Hiio, 1997, 39.

Table 6[37]

Nationality	Organised	Percentage	Men	Percentage	Women	Percentage
Estonians	8004	56.8%	5847	61.3%	2157	47.3%
Jews	401	64.2%	289	66.7%	112	58.3%
Germans	706	56.9%	612	59.1%	94	45.6%
Russians	206	26.8%	174	35.6%	32	11.4%

independence saw the foundation of seven Jewish student organisations, most of them with their own colours and coat of arms.

Toomas Hiio, a specialist on historical student societies, has observed that "if in 1926, the members of the three [Jewish] organisations [Academic Society, *Limuwia*, *Hacfiro*] constituted 49.0% of all the matriculated Jewish students in Tartu, then in 1937 the number was already 82.70%".[38] All the Jewish student organisations together represented 64.20% of the Jewish students at Tartu University. Evidently, the distinct group of Jewish students felt an increasing need to group together. This applies to the female Jewish students as well, in contrast to the imbalance between the male and female Russian students.

The Jews, besides being highly organised, were also active in the social causes. The student layers of Estonian Jewry were permeated by the Jewish political and intellectual movements of the 1920's and 1930's: Zionism was gaining popularity, and Tartu University saw the establishment of Jewish fraternities supporting Palestinophile ideas. Several pro-Zionist organisations, not necessarily only student ones, were established already after the February revolution in 1917, for example *Schoschana Zion*, *Hechawer*, *Achdut*, and *Hechaluz*.[39] Among the most prominent ones was a corporation called *Hasmonea*, founded in 1923, which propagated the idea of Zionist revisionists and drew upon the Basel Programme. One of the reasons for the highly organised state of the Jewish student body obviously lay in the historical Jewish collective spirit, fostered by a common consciousness and cultural identification.

[37] Lindström, 2001, 75.
[38] Hiio, 1999, 159.
[39] Dohrn, 1998, 40.

To conclude, the Estonian Jewish intelligentsia, as well as the rest of the Jewish community in Estonia, was a highly urbanised minority whose members, newcomers to the area, were highly educated people, successful merchants, and a respected segment of society. The community had this character almost from the very start, in contrast to, for example, the situation in the Pale of Settlement, which excluded the Estonian area. Since the Republic of Estonia ensured extensive minority rights throughout its pre-war existence, this urbanisation brought the Jews unhindered social, cultural, and economic opportunities. This bears comparison with the Jewish situation in Western and Central Europe or anywhere else where no restrictive laws were in force. However, the Estonian Jews never completely blended into the society (as was the case in many Western European states): they retained their Jewish identity and distinctiveness. All this, combined with the preservation and continuation of the social and traditional patterns, which helped them survive and gain momentum after the abolition of the basic discriminatory measures during the modernisation period, worked to their advantage even later.

The Jewish students' attempts to gain a better start in striving toward higher education and future achievements in society are reflected in the empirical variables treated in the body of the article. Compared to the other minorities, such as the Germans and Russians, the Jewish students stand out in this respect as the more active and enthusiastic social agents. This is also exemplified by the exceptionally high degree of Jewish membership in student organisations.

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