

Involvement of Jewish Minority to the Cultural Development of Bacau

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Abstract: During more than six centuries of existence, Bacau benefited both from the favorable socio-economic and political context, and from the interrelationships with the other communities, from the harmonious combination of these two elements resulting both the growth and development of the locality and the position in the local and regional hierarchy. The main beneficiaries of the progress made were of course the inhabitants, the city representing a living environment for them, as well as the essential factor in the functional dynamics and in the urban landscape. The sum of the histories of the communities that contributed to its secular existence, Bacau is in fact the binder and the proof of the perfect communion between them and the Romanians. Each community that contributed to the existence of Bacau actually contributed to the definition of the complex identity of the locality. Through its own cultural values, each community, with its own religion, history, with its own traditions, holidays and symbols, through its own way of being has expressed its vision of the world, of man and of relations with fellow human beings in a specific language, which it distinguishes it from both the majority population and the other communities. Over time, the Jewish community has contributed not only numerically to the growth of the population of Bacau, but also economically and culturally. Personalities with remarkable intellectual capacity honored Bacau both in the religious field and in the field of science and art. Their impact on the evolution of Bacau was extremely strong, largely due to the economic evolution of Bacău at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.

Keywords: Cultural Development, Personalities, Jews, Rabbi, Bacau

1. Introduction

Motto:

The cities bear in them, all the virtues and all the sins of those who built them. [1]"

The memory of time engraves the destiny of any city through the living environment specific to each era. The Moldovan city, marked by the vicissitudes of a contradictory history, rarely reveals its past, so rare are the direct testimonies of those who became involved in their urban development. This is also the case of Bacau... with a dark and bright past at the same time through its contradiction [2]. The emergence and development of the city is consistent with the variety of historical, geographical, social and economic circumstances specific to each era [3]. It is said that if Bacau did not exist, it would have to be invented and placed at the confluence of two rivers, Bistrita and Siretul.

There is a Bacau of Bacovia, a Bacau of the late and the desolate of the soul, of the neuroses, of the rains, of an unanticipated space in which one hears the very cry of matter. [4]. There is, however, also a Bacau of the lights and shadows of history. It brought him glorious moments, full of intense life and chosen joints.

2. Material and Methods

In order to obtain information, I repeatedly visited the Jewish Community of Bacau, where some wonderful people facilitated my access to the library and to the various materials needed during the documentation stage. Using the interview method, I had interesting discussions with Mr. Hainrich Brif, the president of the Jewish Community of Bacau, and I had information about the values of its representatives.

I also obtained the agreement to access information from the County Directorate of National Archives, Bacau branch, both online and at the reading room. We have synthesized the information obtained and obtained very valuable details both about the Jewish community in Bacau as a whole and about its illustrious representatives, in detail.

3. Results and Discussions

From the precious gallery of the Jewish personalities who were involved in the cultural development of Bacau, the rabbinic family Safran (Schafran, Shafran), Betsal'el Ze'ev Rabaz Şafran (Figure 1) and his son from the second marriage, Alexandru-Iehuda Şafran (Figure 2), stand out.



Figure 1. Betsal'el Ze'ev Rabaz Şafran.

Originally from Galicia, Betsal'el Ze'ev Rabaz [5] (1867–1929) settled in Romania at the age of 20 and became a rabbi in Sculeni. Two years later he took a position in Stefaeş ti, and in 1905 he served as rabbi of Bacau, a position he held until the end of his life. Shafran's sons were rabbis and educators, initially in Romania and later in Israel, Europe, and America. Rabaz was hailed as a halachic authority and was consulted by the remarkable rabbis of the time, including the Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, Avraham Yitshak Kook, and Me'ir Shapira of Lublin.

He believed that the text of the Torah should be understood rationally and that it was continually renewed by those who studied it.

The fruit of his work was published in three parts in 1930, 1951 and 1979, respectively. In 1992 the texts were republished in a single volume.

Hanoch Einich (1887–1959), the first son born of Rabaz's first marriage (to the daughter of David Marmar of Tarnopol), was a rabbi of Bivolari for 12 years, then was employed as a rabbi in Bucharest, a position he held kept it until 1950 when he moved to Israel. In addition to editing his father's response, Hanoch published in 1933 a pamphlet with quotations from his father's sermons and statements. An anthology of Hanoch's writings, *Keta'im mi- yetsirato*, was published in 1960 by his son David.

From the second marriage of Rabaz (with Finkel, daughter of Abraham Josef Reinhartz of Iasi), Menahem, Alexander-

Judah, and Joseph were born; all were born in Bacau. Menahem (1900–1980) was the rabbi of Ploiesti from 1940 to 1952, when he moved to Israel and worked as a high school teacher in Tel Aviv. He obtained a doctorate in philosophy;

Josef Şafran (1911–1995) was also a rabbi in Iasi between 1940–1944, when he moved to Palestine. He earned a doctorate in philosophy. He eventually settled in New York in 1957, becoming a professor of education at Yeshiva University, where he published studies on the history of Jewish education in English and Hebrew.

Alexandru-Iehuda Şafran (often Alexandru or Alexandre) [6] was born on 1910, September 12, in Bacau.



Figure 2. Dr. Alexandru-Iehuda Şafran.

He studied Judaism with his father, and by the age of 11, Alexander had become his private secretary and was intensely involved in the work of writing books and writing "answers" (rabbinic analyzes and precepts) to the questions of many scholars in of Judaism everywhere. At the age of 19, he was already certified as a rabbi and had finished high school with excellent results at the Ferdinand I High School in his hometown. According to the requirements of the European Jewish community in 1930, he attended in parallel both the Israelite Institute for Advanced Theological Studies in Vienna (Vienna Rabbinical Seminary) [7] and the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Vienna, receiving his doctorate in philosophy in 1934, and at the end of his studies, receiving the authorization of a rabbi from the Israelite Seminary. In 1934 he also obtained the title of Grand Rabbi from the Israeli Consistory in Brussels. Because of his father's death at the end of 1929, he was determined to succeed him as rabbi in Bacau, so he refused to stay in Brussels. In 1935 he returned to Romania and became the rabbi of his hometown. He also became a Zionist Mizrahi and participated in the Zionist congresses of 1937 and 1939. In 1936 he married in Bacau a cousin of his, Sara Rheinharz, a graduate of the University and Academy of Fine Arts in Iasi, with he had two children: Esther and Avinoam, both professors at the University of Geneva [8].

After the death of Chief Rabbi Jacob Itzhak Niemirower, on February 4, 1940, at the age of only 29, he was elected from 8 candidates. of law in the Romanian Senate. Being under the age of 40, stipulated by law, in order to be accepted as a member of the Senate on the prelate's bench, a special derogation was needed from the High Court of Cassation of

Romania. In February 1940, Șafran was elected chief rabbi of Romania, a position he held until 1948. He also became a member of the Romanian Senate as a leader of the Mosaic religion.

His erudition and recognized merits were decisive for his appointment as Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Geneva in 1948, a position he held until 1997 [9]. He fought for the protection of Jews in Romania during the Holocaust and, as an active supporter of Zionism, rejected the pressures of communist religious infiltration among Jews in Romania in the post-war years, for which he was dismissed and expatriated.

Attached to the Romanian language and culture, he was an active promoter of the dialogue between Judaism and Christianity. Rabbi Alexandru Șafran returned to visit Romania for the first time in almost half a century, in 1995 (a year after the death of the former Chief Rabbi, Dr. Moses Rosen, (the limited sympathy between the two being notorious).

The fame enjoyed by the great rabbi Alexandru Șafran is due, at the same time, to his incomparable qualities as a writer, theologian, scholar, philosopher, historian and his spirit as an organizer. More than 200 books, studies, essays, articles, papers, translated into several languages are proof of unanimous recognition. The best known of these, in the order in which they appear, are: "La Cabale" (The Kabbalah; 1960 [Eng. trans. 1975]), "Israël dans le temps et dans l'espace (Israel in Time and Space; 1980 [Eng. trans. 1987]), "Sagesse de la Cabale" (The Wisdom of the Kabbalah; 1986, "A Cinderhoo from the Flames," and "Memoirs."

Alexandru Șafran has also carried out an impressive teaching activity at various universities in Israel, Europe and America.

Through his entire activity, Alexandru Șafran established himself in the contemporary consciousness as a promoter of Romania's image in the world and one of the most representative personalities of world Judaism and, especially, of the Jewish population in Romania. We keep the memory of the general assembly of 1997, June 19, when His Eminence Dr. Alexandru Șafran was awarded the badge of honorary member of the Romanian Academy, on which occasion he presented the speech "Perception of Deity in Kabbalah, in philosophy and science", a ample and documented exposition of the ways in which God was understood and a subtle analysis of the crisis of contemporary man, which has moved away from divinity.

In honor of His Eminence, a chair of Jewish thought was established at Bar Ilan University, and two festive publications were published. He also published the autobiographical work in English, *Resisting the Storm: Romania, 1940–1947* (Jerusalem, 1987), which has been translated into many languages. Șafran died in Geneva and was buried at Bene Berak in Israel [10].

Another well-known representative of the Jewish minority was Solomon Marcus (Figure 3), the man who throughout his life continually harmonized mathematics with poetry, humor, and theater.



Figure 3. The Mathematician Solomon Marcus.

The one about whom, on March 17, 2016, immediately after his death, Razvan Teodorescu declared for News.ro that "he was part of the extremely rare lineage today in Romania, of multidisciplinary scholars. What this admirable mathematician has done for the relationship between science and the arts, his preoccupations with mathematics and linguistics, mathematics and art, mathematics and history are in a way unique. He was a living intelligence, he was, in a way, the most critical member of the Academy, he was a man of the city, he cared a lot about what culture means in Romania and his words always mattered to us [11]".

He was born in Bacau, on March 1, 1925, in a family of Jewish tailors. "From an early age, I had to learn to live with dictatorships of all kinds, with the difficult years of the war, with restrictions on expression, with violations of freedom of thought. You realize what it's like to be chased by another child at the age of 7, who shouts after you, "Me, Jew, why did you kill Jesus Christ?" There were times with prohibitions that put you in very humiliating situations, you felt like a non-citizen, you felt that you were not a real human being", said the famous mathematician in an interview with The True newspaper on September 26, 2015, when he did a retrospective of the 90th birthday. After graduating from Ferdinand I High School in his hometown, he attended the Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Bucharest, where he later obtained a doctorate in mathematics. He taught at the Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Bucharest.

At university, I realized that I had approached mathematics through the eyes of literature and theater, and then I approached linguistics through mathematics. All the wonders I experienced with poetry are also found in mathematics. I didn't play on stage, but I was influenced by the connection between math and theater. I even managed to set up the Romanian school of mathematical theater [12].

Although his main field of research has been mathematical analysis, mathematics, and computational linguistics, he has published numerous books and articles on various cultural topics, from poetry, linguistics, semiotics, philosophy, or the history of science and education.

The landmarks that best define Solomon Marcus... A mathematician in love with poetry, theater and humor. Everything is a spectacle, nothing is vanity. You just have to be more discriminating with the help you render toward other people. And Solomon Marcus knows. He has been swinging for a lifetime between the rigors of linguistics, the lyricism of repetitive theorems and structures of improvisation.

Solomon Marcus lived all of them. War, famine, dictatorships of all kinds. Even so, he did not lose his sense of humor, this quality that does not save everyone, concluded the reporter of the newspaper *The true* in the mentioned interview.

Professor Solomon Marcus is the author of numerous interdisciplinary studies of books on the use of mathematics in theatrical analysis, in the natural and social sciences, in linguistics, and so on. His works have been translated in many parts of the world. He has published over 50 volumes in Romania and about 400 articles in scientific or specialized journals. His work has been quoted over 1000 times.

Since 1993 he has become a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy. In 2001, the mathematician Solomon Marcus was elected a full member of the Romanian Academy.

He was the brother of Marius Mircu (Figure 4) and Marcel Marcian (Figure 5).

Marius Mircu [13]- pseudonym of Israel Marcus, (June 9, 1909, Bacau - September 4, 2008, Tel Aviv, Israel) was the brother of Solomon Marcus, reporter, editor, writer and Jewish-Romanian historian. He attended high school in Bacau and law school in Bucharest, graduating in 1936. From school he began to be a reporter for *Gazeta* and continued until 1938. During the anti-Semitic governments (the government of Octavian Goga, the National-Legionary State, the regime of Marshal Antonescu) he was elected president of the Association of Young Jewish Writers and Artists from Romania. After the war, he was the first journalist to write about the Pogrom of Dorohoi, the Pogrom of Iasi and the Transnistrian camps, but unlike later nationalist commentators, either Romanians or Jews, and in agreement with another direct witness to the facts, namely Matatias Carp, Marius Mircu do not attribute the crimes committed to an alleged "specific Romanian historical anti-Semitism" related to "the identity of Romanians", but to an "interruption of civilization" by the disappearance of the rule of law and democracy in Romania during the war, after a decade of xenophobic propaganda following the great economic crisis of the 1930s [14]. Between 1942-1987 Marius Mircu headed the archive-documentation section of the Jewish Community of Bucharest and the F.C.E.R. (Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania). Between 1946-1949 he was general secretary of the Nation (led by George Calinescu). He was the first director of the Museum of Jewish History (1982-1987), established on the initiative of the chief rabbi of the Jewish communities in Romania, Dr. Moses Rosen.



Figure 4. Israel Marcus.

Marius Mircu was a member of the PCR illegally, through the perseverance of Ury Benador, and pasted manifestos in Bucharest. After August 23, he was with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej for a while, working at the PCR headquarters in Aleea Alexandru 23. He continued to work in the party apparatus. Then he was marginalized, being hired at a Technical School of Librarians to finally become an editor of the magazine "Philately". He emigrated to Israel in 1987. There he collaborated on the radio station Kol Israel (Voice of Israel), where he presented a series of 200 episodes dedicated to the history of the Jewish press in Romania. Marius Mircu wrote more than forty books, under a pseudonym or under his real name, Israel Marcus. In everything he wrote, Marius Mircu is the quintessential reporter, the "special envoy" and the intermediary. The journalist is not a historian, he is a subjective chronicler. He leaves no responsibility for history, he takes it upon himself. A journalist, a reporter is the age of the facts he reports, he takes part in the events he reports (and appropriates them).

Solomon Marcus' brother, Marcel Marcian [15], was born in Bacau on September 25, 1914. He graduated from the Elementary School of Commerce and then the Higher School of Commerce from Bacau and completed only two years at the Commercial Academy of Higher Studies in Bucharest. He held various civil servant positions and, in parallel, collaborated with older publications ("Children's Universe", "Journal of Popular Sciences and Travel", "Bacau", "Bacau Current", "Children's Journal", etc.) and newer ones ("Romanian Life", "Literary Romania", "Contemporary", "Star", etc.). He wrote prose (especially for children), printed in almost twenty titles, but also theater ("Boots and teddy bears") and memorialistic (portraits of teachers: Constantin Damian, Mișu Gheorghiu, Panait Topliceanu, in "Ateneu").



Figure 5. Marcel Marcian.

The artistic work ("coherence, with atmosphere, perfume and meaning" - Irina Petras), was little commented on, but

even less the contribution to the knowledge of the Bacovian biography and the collaborators of the "Cultural Athenaeum". Marcel Marcian published only such articles in the "Athenaeum" (1971-2003); the last, in contradiction regarding the "identity between Clement-Bacau and George Bacovia", said Professor Ioan Danilă at the commemoration of the centenary of Marcel Marcian, in September 2014.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Jewish people of culture have brought very useful behavioral traits to the cultural sector: innovative spirit, perseverance, concern not to close in a narrow sector, but to take the prestige of our country abroad. Despite the fact that they lived through hard times and very "delicate" periods, the honoring of their memory will be permanent.

The gallery of Jewish cultural personalities is so numerous that I will continue to present them in the following articles.

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