
Summary

This book represents the results of expeditions to Latgale (Eastern Latvia) organized by the “Sefer” Center in 2011–2012. The main subject of the research is Jews in the imagery of their non-Jewish neighbors. The expeditions were carried out in those towns where Jews represented a significant part of the pre-WWII population, and where they played a significant role in the cultural and economic life: Preili, Kraslava, Daugavpils, Rezekne and others. A large number of interviews were conducted with the older representatives of the local population (Russians, Latvians (Latgali-ans), Belorussians and Poles). The goal of the interviews was to obtain an image of the towns (which can be called shtetls), as reflected in the stories of the locals. “Oral history”, memories of ethnic neighbors, the idea of the Jew as “the Other”, non-Jews’ view of Jewish traditions, language, appearance, religion and places of worship — all of that gives an insight into a multi-ethnic society in the first half of the XXth century.

The book consists of two parts. The first part is composed of annotated publications of the expedition sources, in which the texts of the interviews are published with authorial comments. The second part contains articles based on oral, archival and literary sources, dedicated to the history of Jews in Latvia in the XXth century, to the image of Jews in literature, etc.

The research was carried out by folklorists, social anthropologists and historians specialized in the study of ethnic stereotypes, cultural contacts and transformation of the traditional community in the face of modernization. The research team included students and research fellows from the State Republic Center of Russian Folklore (Moscow), the European University at Saint-Petersburg, the University of Tartu, Daugavpils University and the University of Latvia (Riga).

I. Publications

The publication **“Ethno-cultural stereotypes of Jewish character in contemporary Latgale”** by *Mikhail Alekseevsky* gathers texts that contain stereotypical sayings about Jewish character, and about the differences between Jews and other ethnic groups from the point of view of the non-Jewish population (such as intellect, slyness etc.).

Daria Tereshina

**“Many Jews... were tradesmen”:
memories of Jewish shops and itinerant peddlers
in Latgale before WWII**

In the publication texts about the main occupation — trade — of Jews in Latgale before WWII, including memories and stereotypes about it are analyzed.

Svetlana Amosova, Yulia Andreeva, Vladislavs Ivanovs

**Jewish religion, religious practices and synagogues
in the stories of elderly Latgalians**

The material is dedicated to the non-Jews’ idea of Jewish religion, its difference from Christianity and to their view of Jewish religious practices. Also the perception and description of synagogue buildings is represented.

Mikhail Alekseevsky

**The view of the Jewish funeral ceremony
in the stories of Latgalians**

The particular attitude to the Jewish way of burial and stereotypes about Jewish funerals are analyzed in this publication. The funeral ceremony is one of the most noticeable phenomena in the life of the Jewish community. Non-Jewish neighbours describe the ceremony in detail and many stereotypes are associated with it (Jews bury the dead “at a run” without a coffin, Jews are buried in a sitting position, etc.)

Marina Geht, Viktors Andruškevičs

Narratives about Jewish holidays

The publication contains memories related to Jewish calendar holidays and other celebrations. Folk names of Jewish holidays, common in Latgale, as well as stereotypes and superstitions are analyzed.

Svetlana Amosova

**“They will catch, kill, remove the blood
and put it in the matza”:
stories about blood libel in Latgale**

The story of blood libel — ritual murder of non-Jews in order to obtain Christian blood for matza and for other goals — is widespread in Latgale. The publication contains examples of such stories in the memories of the locals.

Yulia Andreeva, Maria Vyatchina

**Kosher cooking and “khazer”
in memories of the non-Jewish population of Eastern Latvia**

The publication deals with the idea of a specifically Jewish meal (kosher), preparing food in Jewish houses and the differences from non-Jewish food preparation. Additionally, folk explanations of the reasons why Jews do not eat particular foods are represented.

Svetlana Prosina

**Clothing, appearance, smell:
common characterizations of Jewish appearance**

The specifics of Jewish appearance and its difference from the appearance of non-Jews are represented in the publication. It also tells about Jewish tailors and traditional Jewish clothes.

Marina Geht

The perception of Jewish languages

The publication tells about the perception of Jewish languages — Yiddish and Hebrew — by Russians and Latvians. The specific features of Jewish speech such as softness and the guttural 'r' are represented in the texts of the interviews.

Maria Vyatchina, Vladislavs Ivanovs

**About the Jew-kolhoznik, Nix Fershtein
and the Russian folk consort: jokes about Jews in Latgale**

The publication contains a collection of jokes about Jews, which were told during the interviews and are connected with various common situations and stereotypes.

II. Articles

Inese Runce

**The government's attitude to the Jewish communities
in Latvia in the 1920s and 1930s**

The article tells about government policy of independent Latvia towards Jewish communities in the 1920s and 1930s and also about the changes in that policy during these two decades.

Karīna Barkane

**Observance of Jewish traditions in Latgale in the Soviet period
(second half of the 1940s — beginning of the 1960s):
between archive documents and memories**

The author uses both oral (interviews, memories) and documentary (archive) materials, analyzing the features of the preservation and functioning of Jewish tradition in Latgale from the 1940s to the 1960s and describing the transformations that took place in Jewish society during this period.

Elīna Vasiļjeva

Images of Jews in Latvian literature

Jewish images constantly appears in Latvian literature and culture of late XIX — early XX century. The attitude to the Jew in fiction is determined by the personal views of the writer and by the specifics of a particular historical period. Many stereotypes reflected in the oral stories collected during the expeditions also appear in the pages of literary works.

Didzis Bērziņš

**Social memory of the Holocaust in popular literature
of the Latvian SSR: analysis of some significant examples**

The article tells about the features of the social and historical memory of the Holocaust in Latvia and the destiny of Jews during WWII in the literature of the Soviet period.

Valentīns Lukaševičs

Image of Jew in Latgalian lore

In this article the author analyzes how the Jews are portrayed in a number of early XX century Latgalian texts — both belle-lettres and political and cultural essays. Most of the texts are rather reserved towards the Jews, acknowledging their economic importance, expertise and “virtues” in the field, but seeing them as substantially culturally different and strange, and some texts even balance on the verge of being antisemitic. On the other hand, confronting these texts with the real-life experience shows broader diversity of views and attitudes.