

Episode 19 – Bukovina Jews

Hello, I am Adrian Iosifescu, your host of the History of the Romanian Jews podcast and this is episode 19 where we will be discussing the history of Jews in Bukovina.

You just listen to folk music from Bukovina. A link to the this song is provided in the Notes.

Location

Bukovina is the name of a region between the Eastern Carpathians and the upper Dniester, was part of Moldavia Principality from Dacian times, from the first century our era, until 1775, when it passed to the Austrian Empire as a result of the Kutsug-Kainargi peace treaty.

After World War I Bukovina was again incorporated into Romania and in 1940 the northern part was incorporated into the Soviet Union and later Ukraine, while the southern part remained in Romania. The capital of Bukovina is , Cernauti in Romanian, Czernowitz in German, Chernovtsy in Ukrainian.

Historical Dacia

The period of the first settlement in the borders of the present-day Romania can be determined from the course of the Jewish emigration from Palestine and their dispersion in other lands. With the destruction of the second temple many Jews moved to the commerce centers of Asia Minor and Greece for which much evidence can be found in the Talmud and the Midrasch as well as to the coastal cities of the northern and western Black Sea. The inscriptions found there confirmed the presence of Jews in Thracian Chersonese, ancient Greek colony in the land of Thracians and in the coastal cities to the north and northwest of the Black Sea such as Anapa located on the northern coast of the Black Sea near the Sea of Azov, Pantikapaion, an ancient Greek city on the eastern shore of Crimea (the present day Kertsch). This is supported by written evidence such as the writings of the Greek geographer Strabo stating that in the first century before our era there was hardly a city in the world in which Jews couldn't be found or the words of Philo Iudaeus, the Jewish leader of the Alexandrian Jewish delegation to the Roman Emperor Caligula, stating that Jews lived on the most inaccessible bays of the Black Sea, facts also confirmed by the inscriptions found there. In the first century before our era, before the Roman conquest of the Dacian kingdom, many Jews settled in the area of the Black Sea, along the Danube region going east all the way to the mouth of river Bug, the old city of Pontic Olbia, part of the Dacian kingdom at that time, now in Ukraine.

The Romanian historian Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu asserted that already in the time of the Hasmonean dynasty which ruled in Judea between 140 and 116 before our era, Jews were present in the Romanian lands and supports this theory with the Jewish coins from the Macabi period which he found in Hotin in present day Bessarabia.

All historians agree that Jews certainly had already settled in the Danube region during the Roamn occupation of Dacia.

In 270 our era the Romans left the land on the north bank of the Danube to free Dacians/Goths while they remained on the south bank of the Danube. They called this province, "Aurelian

Dacia” to differentiate it from the area they had withdrawn from, which had the full name of “Trajan Dacia.” It is probable that a considerable number of Jews remained in the North, in the Trajan Dacia and that they were well treated by the Dacians/Goths.

We know that the Jews on the south side of the Danube, in Roman Aurelian Dacia, lived under the Christian Byzantine Emperor, because Theodosius I issued an order to the prefects to stop the persecution and disenfranchisement of the Jews and to protect their synagogues. In the 6th century Justinian built fortresses on the north side of the Danube, among them one at Turnu-Magurele called the “Jew tower”, which points to the presence of Jews in the area. Later, the persecution of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire under Leo III de Isaurier in the 8th century who gave the Jews the choice of either accepting baptism or leaving the land forced the Jews to emigrate and many crossed the Danube and found protection with the Khazars who occupied at that time the Trajan Dacia lands and who had converted to Judaism in the 8th century.

Benjamin of Tudela, a medieval Jewish traveler who travelled in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the 12th century reports about Jewish settlements. He found 50 Jewish families living in Macedonia on the Spercheios River in harmony with the Wallachians who call the Jews brothers.

In the 14th century Jews are mentioned in old Greek colony of Tyrars (Cetatea-Alba in Romanian, Akkerman in Turkish, Bihorod in Russian), where the Dniester flows into the Black Sea, as living in a special quarter of the city under the rule of the Tartars who tolerated the Jews and traded with them. A Karaite community existed in Cetatea Alba because it was close to the Crimea where there were many Karaites. Karaites believe that all of the divine commandments which were handed down to Moses by God were recorded in the written Torah without any additional Oral Law or explanation, unlike mainstream Rabbinic Judaism which regards the Oral Torah, codified in the Talmud and subsequent works, as authoritative interpretations of the Torah, A Torah scroll from the 16th century found at Cetatea Alba has the following inscription: “In the assembly of the land of Karman in a community of Karaites”. Further proof of Jewish presence in Cetatea Alba is the headstone from 1527 on which is etched a eulogy in Hebrew.

The Romanian historian Prof. Jancu Nistor says that in the first half of the 14th century, the Jews lived in the Danube principalities and especially in Moldavia.

Moldavian Principality

Jewish merchants passing through Bukovina are mentioned from the 13th century, and Jews settled there from the 14th century. In 1408 they were granted the right of freedom of movement and commerce along the Moldavian trade routes. The Jewish population increased steadily, and maintained close commercial links with the Jews of Poland/Lithuania, being mainly occupied in the transit trade and purveying of alcoholic beverages.

Jewish communal life in Bukovina, part of the Moldavian Principality, developed along the same lines as in the other communities of the Ottoman Empire. From 1710 to 1834 Bukovina Jewry had an independent ḥakham bashi, who held hereditary office and was responsible for

collecting the taxes imposed on Bukovina Jewry. Another office of the Jewish leadership was that of rosh medinah (head of the region). From the end of the 17th century the growing Polish-Jewish element imparted a distinct Ashkenazi character to Bukovina communities.

A small population of mostly Sephardi Jews lived in the area as well. They were largely engaged in commerce and they came to Bukovina at the invitation of the Ottoman government.

Austria occupation

Austria concluded on July 1771 a defensive pact with Turkey, in which it obligated itself to help Turkey maintain control of Moldavia and Walachia. In 1772 Austria together with Russia and Prussia carried out the first division of Poland, as a result of which Galicia fell to Austria. The goal of Austria's foreign policy became the acquisition of the lands bordering on Galicia, some of Principality of Moldavia. When the peace treaty of Kutschuk Kainardschi between Russia and Turkey was ratified in 1774, Russian troops left Moldavia and Austrian troops without giving any reason, moved into their place. The Austrian General Gabriel Freier von Spleny marched into Czernowitz and by October 1774 all of Bukovina was occupied by Austrian troops. Bukovina became an official possession of Austria and incorporated into the province of Galicia, in accordance with the terms of the 1775 treaty signed in Constantinople by Austria and Turkey.

The 1776 census recorded the Jewish population of Bukovina as 2,906 people. Immediately following Austrian annexation this population started to grow due to an influx of Jews from Galicia proper.

In 1780 there were 1069 Jewish families living in Bukovina. Estimating the number of people per family to be 4, we can assume the total number of the Jewish people to have been about 4,000.

During the rule of Maria Theresia, who's attitude towards Jews was far from friendly, Jews were generally not allowed to settle in Bukovina.

With the ascent of Josef II (1780 - 1790) to the throne, the situation of the Jews improved. In 1782 Josef II abolished the law by which Jews had to wear a yellow badge and pay the poll tax. He issued the "Toleranzpatent" through which he gave Jews the right to engage in handicrafts and attend schools and universities. At that time a large number of Jews in the eastern provinces of the Austrian Empire earned their livelihood from the manufacture and trade in wine and alcoholic beverages. When a ban on their owning taverns was enacted, these people lost the means of earning a living and became paupers. Josef II decided to settle a significant number of these people as farmers on land which would have to be donated for this purpose by each village or rural district. Each village or rural district, according to its size, had to provide a proportionate number of Jewish families with land and seed for the first sowing. This brought Jews from the small towns to the rural areas and into Bukovina. During the years 1780 - 1790, small Jewish farms first appear in Bukovina.

But with the ascendance of Francis I (1792 - 1835) to the throne, harsher laws pertaining to the Jewish population were enacted. During his rule and despite the harsh anti-Jewish laws, many Jews in the Austrian empire attained prominence in commerce, industry, banking and transportation. From 1816 Jews could settle in Bukovina only if given individual residence permits. Still during this period many Galician Jews settled in Czernowitz.

Emancipation of sorts was finally enacted in 1848 after the unsuccessful revolution of that year, in which Jews had taken a prominent part. The federal constitution of March 4, 1849 separated Bukovina from Galicia and made it an autonomous duchy whose internal affairs, as defined by the constitution, would be regulated by a Diet or Regional Parliament. These internal affairs were defined as those concerning public buildings paid for by government funds, charitable institutions, churches and schools, maintenance and housing of the army and any other functions assigned to Bukovina parliament by the federal government. At the head of the Autonomous Duchy of Bukovina, was a President named by the central government.

After 1848, many Jews left farming since they saw no possibilities of success in that endeavor because of the unfavorable rules for leasing and parceling out the land. They were lured to the cities where they thought it would be possible to find work.

Franz Joseph I reaffirmed with the decree of February 26, 1861 Bukovina as an independent duchy with its own coat of arms and a regional Parliament consisting of 31 members, Bukovina Bishop and 29 elected representatives (10 of them from the class of the large land owners, 7 from the cities and chambers of trade and commerce, and 12 from the rural districts).

Largely as a result of these political changes, Bukovina experienced a tremendous population growth and the Jewish population of Bukovina increased even faster than of the population in general.

In 1850 the total population of Bukovina was 380,826 inhabitants, including 14,581 Jews (3.83% of the total population).

In 1857, the total population was 456,920 inhabitants, an increase of 20%, while the Jewish population numbered 29,187, 6.38% of the total population, at an increase of 100%.

In 1869 the total population was 511,964 an increase of 12% since 1857. The Jewish population was 47,754 an increase of 63% since 1857.

By 1880 the total population numbered 571,671, an increase of less than 12% over 1869. The Jewish population numbered 67,418, an increase of 41% since 1869. In the period 1850 -1880, the total population grew by 50% while The Jewish population more than quadrupled.

By 1880, on the average, one of every 11 inhabitants of Bukovina was Jewish. By 1880 Jewish inhabitants were to be found in all parts of Bukovina and only 11 villages in the province did not include Jewish inhabitants.

According to the census of 1880, the Jewish population has a large presence in the main cities of Bukovina:

City	Total Residents	Jewish Residents	% Jewish
Chernivtsi	45,600	14,449	31.7
Suceava	10,104	3,750	37.1
Wiznitz	4,165	3,795	<u>91.9</u>
Siret	7,240	3,122	37.1
Kimpolung	5,534	799	14.4
Waschkoutz	4,277	781	18.3
Sadagura	4,836	3,888	80.3
Storozhinets	4,852	1,601	32.8
Gura Humorului	2,957	963	32.5
Boyany	5,227	781	14.9

Vatra Dornei	3,980	494	12.4
Unter Stanestie	2,727	690	25.3
Putna	691	80	11.5

In the following years the Jewish population of Bukovina continued to grow as is evident from their number:

In 1880,	67,418
In 1900,	96,135
in 1910,	102,900
in 1914,	120,000

In Czernowitz, the Jewish population continued to grow too, but their percentage as part of the population did not change.

In 1890 out of 54,171 residents, 17,359 were Jewish (32.04%).

In 1900 out of 67,622 residents, 21,587 were Jewish (31.92%).

In 1910 out of 87,235 residents, 28,613 were Jewish (32.10%).

This increase in the Jewish population of Bukovina can be attributed to immigration of Jews from Galicia, Russia, and Romania where Jews had far fewer civil rights and economic opportunities and where they were often subject to harassment and expulsion

In the second half of the 19th century Jews in Bukovina tended increasingly to prefer a secular education, in which the Czernowitz community led the way. They also took part in the political and social life of Bukovina, in general tending toward assimilation into Austro-German culture and identification with its aspirations.

Hasidism took roots in Bukovina; a branch of the Ruzhin dynasty of *zaddikim* made Sadagora a center of Hasidism in the region. Another dynasty originating in Kossow settled in Vizhnitsa.

Jews took an active part in Bukovina's industrial and commercial development, initiated timber and cement industries, and were prominent in railroad construction and banking. A number of these preeminent Jewish industrial and financial magnates were awarded Austrian titles. Most owned large estates. The status of Jewish artisans also improved, and certain trades, such as tin-smithing, were exclusively Jewish. The relative prosperity of the Jews provoked frequent nationalistic outbursts especially amongst the Ukrainian, in Romanian 'Ruthenian', and Romanian population of the region.

After the incorporation of Bukovina into Romania in 1919 the situation of the Jews declined, since Romanian Jews had not yet been legally emancipated like the Austrians and because of the virulent antisemitism of the local Romanian and Ukrainian populations.

However, there was an up-surge of communal, in particular Zionist, activity among Bukovina Jews. The Bund gained ground among the growing Jewish proletariat. Among Jews active in politics was the Zionist leader and member of the Romanian senate Meir Ebner .

In the summer of 1940, Romania gave in to German pressure and transferred Bessarabia and part of Bukovina to the Soviet Union, northern Transylvania to Hungary, and southern Dobruja to Bulgaria. When the Romanian army retreated from these areas, its soldiers murdered many Jews, particularly in northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, accusing them of Soviet collaboration; they also threw Jewish travelers from moving trains. For example, on June 30, 1940, 52 Jews were murdered in Dorohoi by a retreating Romanian regiment.

The incorporation of northern Bukovina into USSR in 1940 brought new economic and political hardship to the local Jewish population, and Jewish cultural and social life came to a total standstill. The Jews in the northern sector had to conform to the general pattern of Jewish existence under Soviet rule. On June 18, 1941, 3,800 "bourgeois" Jews of the region were deported to Siberia.

When in July 1941 northern Bukovina was occupied by the Germans and the Romanian armies, the German and Romanian soldiers proceeded to massacre the Jewish population. The yellow badge was introduced, their personal belongings were looted, and all professions and crafts were prohibited to Jews. Forced labor was imposed. On Oct. 11, 1941 a ghetto was set up in Czernowitz; 40,000 Jews were deported from there, to be followed shortly by another 35,000 Jews from the surrounding areas, to the death camps in Transnistria.

In 1941 the new governor announced his decision that all the Jews of Cernăuți must be deported to Transnistria. After talks with the governor, the latter agreed that Traian Popovici, the new mayor of Cernăuți under Romanian administration, would be allowed to nominate 200 Jews which were to be exempted. Unsatisfied with the modest concession, Popovici tried reaching Antonescu himself, this time arguing that Jews were of capital importance to Cernăuți economy and requested a postponement until replacements could be found. As a result, he was allowed to expand the list, which covered 20,000 Jews in its final version.

Traian Popovici is honored by Israel's Yad Vashem memorial as one of the Righteous Among the Nations, an honor given to non-Jews who behaved with heroism in trying to save Jews from the genocide of the Holocaust.

In 1945 a few thousand non-Bukovinian Jews were allowed to repatriate to Romania. The more liberal attitude of communist Romania permitted emigration to Israel from the south, where very few Jews remained. The majority of the Jews who continued to live in the cities of northern Bukovina were mostly not local inhabitants but Jews from the rest of the former Soviet Union who tried to improve their lives by moving closer to the western parts of their homeland.

The Jews of Bukovina experienced a cultural flourishing situation through the contribution of Jewish cultural institutions and through the intense contribution of Jewish cultural figures, writers, painters, sculptors, musicians. The Jews of Bukovina had a special situation given the assimilation with Germanism in the years before the union with Romania, a situation that continued even after. Yiddish had an important place. In addition to well-known names such as Itzik Manger, Paul Celan, Rosa Auslander and others, there was a significant number of lesser-

known cultural figures, who contributed to the affirmation of Jewish culture. Each Jewish writer had a style and themes of their own in which they wrote, and together they give a picture of Jewish cultural concerns between the wars. As in the case of the press, the undeniable literary quality of these can be seen, in whatever language they wrote. Cultural development was brutally interrupted in the years before the war, when anti-Semitism became state policy.

A remarkable son of Bukovina was Paul Celan.

Paul Celan born Paul Antschel in 1920, was a Romanian-born French poet, Holocaust survivor, and literary translator. Celan is regarded as one of the most important figures in German-language literature of the post-World War II era and a poet whose verse has gained an immortal place in the literary pantheon. Celan's poetry, with its many radical poetic and linguistic innovations, is characterized by a complicated and cryptic style that deviates from poetic conventions.

Celan was born into a German-speaking Jewish family in Cernăuți, Bukovina, a region then part of Romania. His father, Leo Antschel, was a Zionist who advocated his son's education in Hebrew at the Jewish school *Safah Ivriah* (meaning *the Hebrew language*). Celan's mother, Friederike (Fritzi) Antschel née Schrager, was an avid reader of German literature who insisted that the Austrian German be the language of the household. In his teens, Celan became active in Jewish Socialist organizations and fostered support for the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. His earliest known poem is titled *Mother's Day 1938*.

During the German/Romanian occupation of Cernăuți in 1941 Celan was pressed into labor, first clearing the debris of a demolished post office, and then gathering and destroying Russian books. While Celan was away from home, in June 1942, his parents were taken from their home and sent by train to an internment camp in Transnistria, where two-thirds of the deportees eventually perished. Celan's father likely perished of typhus and his mother was shot after being exhausted by forced labor. Later that year, after being taken to a labor camp in Romania, Celan received reports of his parents' deaths. Celan remained imprisoned in a work camp until February 1944.

Upon the emergence of the communist regime in Romania at the beginning of 1948, Celan fled Romania for Vienna, Austria. Like the poet Heinrich Heine before him, Celan then emigrated to Paris in 1948. In that year his first poetry collection, *Der Sand aus den Urnen* ("Sand from the Urns"), was published in Vienna. His first few years in Paris were marked by intense feelings of loneliness and isolation, as expressed in letters to his colleagues, including his longtime friend from Cernăuți, Petre Solomon. Celan became a French citizen in 1955 and lived in Paris.

Celan was awarded the Bremen Literature Prize in 1958 and the Georg Büchner Prize in 1960. Celan drowned in the river Seine in Paris around 20 April 1970.

Another Important personality of Bukovina was the writer, Aharon Appelfeld.

Aharon Appelfeld born Ervin Appelfeld in 1932, in Jadova, in Bukovina region of the Kingdom of Romania. In an interview with the literary scholar, Nili Gold, in 2011, he remembered his home town in this district, Czernowitz, as "a very beautiful" place, full of schools and with two Latin gymnasiums, where fifty to sixty percent of the population was Jewish. In 1941, when he was nine years old, the Romanian Army retook his hometown after a year of Soviet occupation and his mother was murdered. Appelfeld was deported with his father to a forced labor camp in

Romanian-controlled Transnistria. He escaped and hid for three years before joining the Soviet army as a cook. After World War II, Appelfeld spent several months in a displaced persons camp in Italy before immigrating to Palestine in 1946, two years before Israel's independence. He was reunited with his father after finding his name on a Jewish Agency list in 1960.

In Israel, Appelfeld made up for his lack of formal schooling and learned Hebrew, the language in which he began to write. His first literary efforts were short stories, but gradually he progressed to novels. Appelfeld was one of Israel's foremost living Hebrew-language authors, despite the fact that he did not learn the language until he was a teenager. His mother tongue was German, but he was also proficient in Yiddish, Ukrainian, Romanian, Russian, English, and Italian. With his subject matter revolving around the Holocaust and the sufferings of the Jews in Europe, he could not bring himself to write in German. He chose Hebrew as his literary vehicle for its succinctness and biblical imagery.

Awards and honors:

- 1975 Brenner Prize for literature.
- 1979 Bialik Prize for literature (jointly with Avot Yeshurun).
- 1983 Israel Prize for literature.
- 1989 National Jewish Book Award for Fiction for *Badenheim 1939*
- 1998 National Jewish Book Award for Fiction for *The Iron Tracks*
- 2004 Prix Médicis (foreign works category) for his autobiography, *The Story of a Life: A Memoir* (2003)
- 2011 National Jewish Book Award for Fiction for *Until the Dawn's Light*
- 2012 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize for *Blooms of Darkness*: at the time, Appelfeld was the oldest ever recipient of the prize

This concludes our discussion of Bukovina Jews.

Until the next episode of this podcast, be well.