

Jewish languages, Jewish music, and the anthropology of Judaism

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A title uniting topics and fields that are often dealt with separately may seem paradoxical. When associated, these topics are generally treated as legitimate but distinct chapters in a history of Judaism or a presentation of communities. The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of twenty years of research, which drawing on recognized scholarly traditions, has enhanced our knowledge of Judaism by bridging the gaps between fairly autonomous areas of research.

These last twenty years have witnessed intense scientific collaboration between French and Israeli researchers¹. They have been the stage for radical methodological changes as regards the various fields of Jewish music, a strengthening of a new perspective on Jewish languages, and reassessments, which as regards the ethnology of Judaism, have conferred upon this domain a long-deserved legitimacy.

Framed in this way, can the years between 1980 to the start of the 21st century be viewed as merely another mix of disparate ingredients? It is true that the fields mentioned above all experienced their own renewals, which will be described in detail below. But there is more. First of all, research on Jewish languages and Jewish music has led to substantial advances, which are clearly anthropological in nature. As shown below, these developments are likely to

¹ The first bilateral program began in 1980 and dealt with polyphony in Yemenite liturgy. In 1982, two other bilateral programs were created. One dealt with cantillation of biblical and post-biblical texts and the other with Jewish inter-linguistics. Each of these programs gave rise to a research seminar held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem that lasted for several years. In 1986 a fourth bilateral program was started dealing with Ethiopian Jews.

The French researchers involved in these programs were members of the Laboratoire de langues et civilisations à tradition orale, of the CNRS. The Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale also made an important contribution to the creation of the program on Ethiopian Jews. On the Israeli side, the participants in the various programs came primarily from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Jewish Music Research Center; Program on the linguistic oral traditions of the Jewish communities, Linguistics Department, Department of Romance Languages, Department of Folklore) and also from the National and University Library, Ben Zvi Institute, Bar Ilan University).

Within the framework of the program on Jewish inter-linguistics, an international scientific cooperation program brought together from 1993-95 French specialists from the CRFJ in Jerusalem, the LACITO in Paris, the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations, Nancy II University, UMR 7597 - History of Linguistic Theories (CNRS and University of Paris VII). The Israeli participants in this program were from the Hebrew University (Department of Hebrew, Department of Romance Languages, Linguistics Department, Center for the Study of Jewish languages and their Literatures) and from Bar Ilan University and the University of Haifa.

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interest fields other than those involved systematically during these twenty years. Beyond this, I will analyze and illustrate the ways in which renewed understandings gradually took shape as soon as a deliberately interdisciplinary approach was applied to the subject matter.

Since the 19th century, generations of researchers have dealt with Jewish music, Jewish languages or Judaism from an ethnological standpoint. A retrospective overview reveals movements of major importance. These guided specialists above and beyond the specifics of the subject matter. Historical concerns and methods of a philological kind characterize the first scientific era in terms of music or Jewish languages up to the 1940s. Jewish communities and culture were also surveyed and collected according to the spirit of the *Volkskunde*, in the perspective of the ethnography of European peasant cultures.

Nevertheless, the trends that characterized science in general in the nineteenth century and at the turn of the twentieth did not prevent models applied to the study of the Jewish world from diversifying. Indeed, the field of Jewish Studies emerged at this time. Known as the scientific study of Judaism, it was linked originally to the political status of Jews at the time in Europe. It clearly testifies to the way in which part of Jewish culture itself dealt with this issue as regards its varying geographical settings. The most fascinating point, as regards the subject of this article, is the impact of existing models of scientific thought, attitudes in the academic world towards Judaism as a subject of inquiry, models generated by the science of Judaism and finally by Jewish Studies, viewed as the intellectual and institutional distillation of issues in the socio-political sphere.

These features can be found up to the present day, although the high proportion of philological and historical models declined after World War II. The scientific study of Judaism has continued to operate at the dual pace of the scientific models and events that shaped Jewish cultures after 1945. Clearly, modern trends in history and linguistics, sociology and anthropology have found their own directions in the vast field of Jewish studies. The development of the latter has also been marked for instance by the emergence – dated geographically and sociologically – of minority studies, ethnic studies or gender studies. The creation of Israeli academic institutions after 1948 constituted a major turning point, which thereafter had its own repercussions on research devoted to the Jewish world.

Given this general picture, we can now examine the twenty years of musicological, linguistic and ethnological research which, carried out by French and Israeli associates, extended from 1980 to the year 2000 onwards. Three areas will be differentiated so as to better highlight their respective contributions. For each area, I will describe recent work as they integrate into the continuity of successive generations of researchers, before concentrating on the current day.

Jewish Music

Researchers who took an interest in Jewish music as of the 19th century acted for many years as historians. They retraced the appearance and the evolution of frameworks and forms of liturgy, and para-liturgical repertoires. They established the four main periods which prompted changes in Jewish music: the era in which the religious service was not based on rigorously defined texts and music; the era ranging from the beginning of the common era to the end of the first millennium,

which on the contrary was witness to a formalization of texts and music as well as a high degree of articulation between them; the era in which regional styles began to develop; and finally the era starting in the 18th century where learned religious music flourished and saw the harmonization of religious tunes, to a greater extent in some areas of Europe than in others.

Still very rare in the 17th century, musical scores were soon to flourish in the Jewish communities of Europe. In most cases these were written by cantors or rabbis, who both produced compositions and testified to their centuries-old roots. For many years, knowledge of Jewish music relied upon documentation which, although vast, was not literally speaking musical. It included the Biblical text, the Talmud and rabbinical literature, prayer books, the ordinances of various communities as regards liturgy or city or community records concerning wandering Jewish musicians. A major turning point took place in the early decades of the 20th century with the use of written material dating in most cases from the 19th century and then the advent of sound recordings. The former primarily record liturgical and para-liturgical traditions from the Ashkenazi world. Starting in the early 20th century, field surveys and recordings shed a great deal of light for a whole period, on the Jewish musical traditions of the Near East, North Africa and the Ottoman Empire.

The proportion of true musical documentation would inevitably lead to another form of musicology, and then to an ethnomusicology of Jewish music. Sound became an actual component and took on its real role as of the 1920-30s. Old questions found new answers and new questions were raised. The issue of repertoires, their forms, specificity, their age and their evolution were re-examined. Musicology applied to Jewish music drew for many years on history, but changed in profile when sound could be placed behind the words. At that point, what could not be taken into consideration became feasible since living repertoires paved the way to a direct study of regional styles followed by a typology which, covering the entire Jewish world, accounted for variations and intersections between communities, their purpose and their spread. Supported by research on the initial musical motifs and an analysis of their resulting forms in liturgical repertoires, the first typologies were produced by A.Z. Idelsohn, who was both a historian and a musicologist, a field scholar and a theoretician of Jewish music.

The radical changes in the basic data were accompanied by a series of developments as concerns analysis and scientific tools. Now reconstituted in its component parts, the intrinsic complexity of Jewish music gradually emerged. It was clear that musical forms were in most cases tightly linked to texts. They had their own "raison d'être", their own structure, and the sound recordings or scores provided much more than prayer books could hint at. In addition, direct access to living traditions enabled research to deal with circumstances, customs and functions of music, the social actors, rituals, social and cultural dynamics.

Aside from field surveys, which grew rapidly as of the 1950s in Israel, and with the founding of specific institutions, research on Jewish music became clearly more ethnographic, in the sense that it was careful not to leave by the wayside the different elements entering into the cultural complexities subsumed by the notion of Jewish music. The number of monographs rose. Typologies of repertoires and styles evolved not only because the purely musical material was not the only factor taken into account, but also because researchers became aware that as a function

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of period and place, the dynamics linking music, text, language and ritual frameworks was not identical. Although the history of music remained as legitimate as before, it gradually drew on all of these developments. The work of ethnomusicologists shed light, over about fifty years, on the continuity in, and loyalty to a given tradition. Historians of music, analyzing the available notations concerning diacritical marks for the reading of the Bible, noted the impressive continuity of traditions over several centuries. Similarly, ethnomusicologists gradually revealed the common foundations of Jewish music across time and space, in addition to a concomitant variety between communities. Based on the relative autonomy of each of the textual, linguistic, musical and ethnographic facets, this variety nevertheless still shows the strong and necessary intertwining of these four pillars of Jewish music, supporting its continuity.

Extreme paradoxes characterize the beginnings of work conducted jointly by French researchers and their Israeli colleagues in the field starting in 1980. Jewish music is a discipline that is firmly established in Israeli university and research institutions. The study of Jewish music in France is virtually non-existent. Those who, on the French side, decided to take the leap were experts in the ethnomusicology of exotic orally transmitted music or dealt with ethnolinguistic research in Europe. This is the context in which two changes in perspective took place as regards data – both musical and textual.

On the one hand, the oral side of traditions was granted full legitimacy. It was presumed to have mechanisms and functions that needed to be discovered in their own right. The oral facet has its own logic, while entering into highly sophisticated relationships with the written facet. The liturgy and para-liturgical repertoires draw on the relative autonomy of the written and oral modes, since they suggest complex ties between them. Understanding the articulation between the oral facet and any other constituent of Jewish music can only gain from a clear-cut identification of the oral material.

On the other hand, the analytical approach to the oral tradition was deeply probed. The analysis of recordings should not depend on the various possible manifestations of the written features of the repertoires – selection of passages, changes in the text, written indications concerning the Biblical text, for example. The oral, musical and linguistic systems are presumed to comply with strong principles of economy. This would explain how whole corpora of texts and melodies have been preserved for centuries and millennia, guaranteeing, beyond community variations, the cohesion of the liturgy and para-liturgical music in time and space. Once identified, the principles of economy would testify to the type of over-arching musical and linguistic framework on which the repertoires are based.

The way these principles operated also needed to be specified; the ways in which they were actually used and developed to respond to needs, respectively the differentiation of sets of prayers or works and the active codification of this differentiation itself bound by constraints of memorization and transmission.

Case studies were carried out which validated the original hypotheses.² One dealt with polyphonic devices in the liturgical repertoires of Yemenite Jews, and the

² For the first, see the article published by S. Arom and U. Sharvit in volume 6 of *Yuval*, published in Jerusalem in 1994 as "Jewish Oral Traditions, An Interdisciplinary Approach." For

other with the reading of the Mishna in the Aleppo tradition. These studies reached conclusions that were designed to be didactic. There was a need to make available to students and researchers not only the finished product but also the components of a method that had been taught for several years in two separate research seminars, held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This method serves to transcend the variety of repertoires, while still enabling a fine-grained transcription of them. This is true for the repertoires and their differentiation, and for the variants, whether between or within communities. The full recognition now granted to the oral facet of the liturgy forced a reassessment of long-held beliefs concerning the written facet. Once and for all, there was a need to focus on the constitutive interweaving of the oral and written traditions, their modalities, and their "raison d'être". The analytic status of the accentuation systems of Biblical and prophetic texts in descriptions of Biblical cantillation traditions needed to be re-evaluated when implicit accentuations rules were discovered, in particular for the cantillation of the Mishna.

These studies were prolonged in a variety of ways. The first step was to go beyond a strict differentiation between liturgical and para-liturgical repertoires, and a purely semiological description of text cantillation. The ethnography of repertoires clearly calls for differentiating texts that did not share the same fate because of their functions or uses. The semiology of different repertoires, i.e. the study of purely oral transmission resources, tends by contrast to imply a certain degree of similarity. This contradiction becomes superficial as soon as the question of the motivation behind each feature is raised. The second step was to broaden the angle of investigation to view the issues from a more anthropological perspective. Two textual ensembles operate: the written law and the oral law, according to the internal terminology of the Jewish culture. Their reading clearly makes use of identical oral parameters. However these parameters do not apply to written texts that appear to be similar. Historically, a distinction has always been maintained - technically and graphically - between the written mission of the former and the oral mission of the latter. This distinction overlaps the one existing between a set of texts destined to be transmitted as such - the Biblical text - and another set - the Talmud - which must be studied. The latter is designed to be a commentary of the former, both for legislative and educational purposes. In addition, although the parameters of the oral tradition for the cantillation of the Bible and the Talmud are by nature identical, their systemic organization varies as regards the oral presentation of each of these two textual collections. More recent research has focused on uniting the components mentioned above in a series of studies devoted to perspectives on reading and interpretative traditions.

Jewish Languages

Spoken and written for centuries in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora, Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, and Judeo-Arabic have been the subject of scientific investigation since approximately the middle of the 19th century. For many years, researchers primarily viewed these languages as conservatories of non-Jewish

the second see the work by F. Alvarez-Pereyre, *La transmission orale de la Mishna*, Editions Peeters, 1990.

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languages upon which Jewish languages were partially based. Specialists in German, Spanish and Arabic realized that the Jewish languages attested directly to historical strata of the languages they were interested in, since the gradual standardization of these languages had almost always eliminated even recollections of written or spoken dialectal variants, or the variety and development of their literary registers. Jewish languages were thus first and foremost studied because they constitute precious documentary evidence for other languages.

Aside from the uses it made of German, Spanish and Arabic in its relationships with non-Jews, Jewish culture created, in its different geographical locations, languages specific to it, for its own needs. All are written with the Hebrew alphabet. These languages were built up and expanded by amalgamating a Hebrew-Aramaic component found in all of them with features from the non-Jewish languages in their surroundings, which differed as a function of the region where the communities settled. For instance, eastern Judeo-Spanish added Turkish to Spanish and Hebrew-Aramaic, but it also contains some French, Italian and Greek. The variants of Judeo-Spanish used in North Africa contain Arabic features. Yiddish, in its Western, Central or Eastern dialects, added various proportions and forms of Slavic languages in addition to German and Hebrew-Aramaic.

The term "Jewish language" did not appear until the mid 20th century. As of the end of the 19th century and until the 1940s, when they were studied in their own right, the languages of the Jewish communities were not dealt with as a cohesive whole. A vast number of in-depth studies were devoted to specific languages.

As of 1870, eastern Judeo-Spanish was the focus of monographs or smaller-scale studies that did not necessarily dissociate literary or historical features from linguistic data or folklore. Starting in 1945 North-African Judeo-Spanish was given its rightful place in research. From a linguistic point of view, specialists in Judeo-Spanish dealt with the history and philology of the language, its ties with Old Spanish, pronunciation, particularities of morphology and syntax, loan-words from Turkish or French, and the role of Hebrew.

Traditionally, research on Judeo-Arabic has focused on attested medieval linguistic and literary varieties over a vast geo-cultural area, but has also dealt with modern dialects and literatures. The specialists draw a fairly clear-cut line between linguistic studies and those dealing with history or sociology. For the most part of the 20th century, the majority of studies concentrated on phonology and the lexicon, the use of Arabic by Jews in North Africa and the history of the Arabic language and its dialects as perceptible through the prism of Judeo-Arabic.

Quantitatively, Yiddish constitutes the major part of research on the languages of the Jewish communities. This is the outcome of the convergence of several factors. In addition to scientific interest in this language, Yiddish was a strong vector of modernity within the world of European Jewry, which led to a direct clash with Hebrew. Yiddish is doubly the focus of linguistic inquiry. Academic interest in Yiddish has prompted monographs and glossaries. Secondly, the standardization of Yiddish motivated by linguistic ideology and the socio-linguistic conditions of Yiddish in Central and Eastern Europe during the first half of the 20th century stimulated applied linguistics in the areas of spelling, grammar and the lexicon. In addition, the flourishing literary creativity in Yiddish, in a Jewish culture doubtless split between modernists and traditionalists but where culture is perceived as a continuum, tended to favor a highly interdisciplinary approach to language, history

and culture. Studies in dialectology provide a stunning illustration of this situation. They are very systematic in terms of the linguistic description of varieties, both in synchrony and in diachrony. They are very culturally-oriented as well, carefully restoring cultural density to linguistic data.

In 1940, the concept of Jewish language first emerged, although its usage remained restricted for a certain amount of time. Two crucial features prompted the languages of the Jewish communities to become, in the 1970s, Jewish languages. One feature resides in the academic realm; namely, the works of Max Weinreich, culminating in his *History of the Yiddish Language* published in 1973 in Yiddish and then in English in 1980. The second feature was the creation of Israeli academic institutions after the founding of the State in 1948, and the massive arrival of immigrants from the four corners of the world with what seemed to be their own languages.

Max Weinreich viewed Jewish languages as a homogeneous unit in terms of their beginnings and their organizational principles - identified as fusion and convergence. Language components drawn from the non-Jewish languages with which Jews communicated with their non-Jewish neighbors were associated with a Hebrew-Aramaic component to yield the languages of the Jewish communities. Beyond variations due to geography, beyond the varieties of non-Jewish languages encountered, beyond the structural differences that differentiate these languages, the shaping of each Jewish language followed implicit shared and convergent references. These references were themselves tightly connected to the cultural references common to all the communities despite the Diaspora.

The rise and the continuous gathering of speakers of Judeo-Spanish, Yiddish, and Judeo-Arabic as well as Judeo-Italian, Judeo-Persian or Neo-Aramaic in Israel as of 1948 radically changed the nature of Israeli scientific research, which at the same time was being equipped with universities and research centers. Jewish languages became a massive socio-linguistic reality even though their use tended to be restricted to the family in a country where integration takes place through Hebrew. Max Weinreich's works slowly made inroads among researchers, and by the end of the 1970s they deliberately turned to deal with the concept of Jewish language. At the same time many monographs or more restricted studies were published on individual languages. One common concern, motivating most researchers stood out in particular: the Hebrew-Aramaic component of Jewish languages, the sole one they have in common. This interest was paralleled by efforts to collect and analyze the linguistic traditions of Jewish communities as regards the reading of Biblical and Talmudic texts. Secondly, the translation of the Bible or prophetic texts also prompted studies. Institutionally, this resulted in the creation of long-term projects - such as the Program on Oral Linguistic Traditions of the Jewish Communities, and research centers - such as the Center for Research on Jewish languages and their literatures.

In the early 1980s, two Israeli academics brought winds of change to the study of Jewish languages by introducing the concepts of Jewish inter and intra-linguistics. This clearly marked the end of an era where different researchers had taken a restricted, autonomous interest in a given language in the name of specific concerns. This context paved the way for a bilateral collaboration between Israeli specialists and French researchers in addition to collaboration in music.

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In its initial phases, this collaboration did not purely target linguistics. The Jewish Interlinguistics Program was created in 1982, before P. Wexler's reflections on the topic were available in book form. That same year he published a prolegomenon of the same name on Jewish languages. For several years, the French-Israeli program focused on an interdisciplinary study of representative corpora of the Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish cultures. The immediate goal was to bring together the efforts of specialists in literature, linguistics, music and folklore to shed light, in one case, on a central feature of Hassidic marriage rites, and in the other, on several well known pieces from the repertoire of popular Judeo-Spanish songs.³

Purely linguistic exchanges began at the start of the 1990s, and have continued until this day. The first step was to bring together French experts on Jewish languages. Encouraged by some of the most influential members of Israeli research in this field, this association was facilitated by the completion of a number of studies conducted in France on Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish, by the beginnings of an overall re-examination of Jewish languages in French research institutions, and more generally by efforts at the CNRS to streamline the French milieu of Jewish Studies while making it less isolated. In less than ten years, studies and approaches developed in three directions: (a) the concept of Jewish Language, (b) collection and analysis of living linguistic and literary corpora; (c) interdisciplinary issues which characterize Jewish languages and the articulation between the linguistics of Jewish languages and general linguistics.⁴

The concept of Jewish language was the subject of a dual examination. The goal was to enrich its internal definition while at the same time assessing it in the light of models of linguistic structure in languages other than Jewish ones. What emerged is that the traditional multilingualism of the Jewish communities is not only a socio-linguistic reality, in which the use of several languages within communities can be explained by successive or concomitant contacts with non-Jewish speakers speaking a variety of tongues. Rather multilingualism appears to play a role in the formation of Jewish languages itself. Speakers of Jewish languages draw on the resources of non-Jewish languages to elaborate a palette of complementary linguistic tools which themselves form a dual dynamic: a) they enable an ongoing categorization and expressive development of the language by members of the Jewish community, promoting the life of this community; b) they enable Jewish speakers and communities to position themselves with respect to the non-Jewish world.

³ The results of these works can be found in two separate articles both published in volume 6 of the journal *Yuval* mentioned in note 2.

⁴ After the creation of the PICS Jewish Languages and Orality, in 1993 for a two year period, a one-day workshop was held at INALCO in 1994, devoted to the integration of Hebrew in Jewish Languages. The second international symposium dealing with the Hebraic component of Jewish languages was held at the University of Milan in 1995. Most of the Israeli and French researchers involved in the Jewish Interlinguistics Program took an active part. Within the framework of this latter program, two international colloquia took place successively in Jerusalem and in Paris, in late 1995 and early 1996 on the theme of Jewish Languages. They were followed on the same topic by the publication of volume XVIII (part 1) of the journal *Histoire, Epistémologie, Langage*.

In addition to the role played by multilingualism on both the linguistic and socio-linguistic levels, Hebrew and Aramaic, shared by all Jewish languages apparently mark this convergence described by Max Weinreich in a decisive way. This convergence is clearly qualitative. It goes beyond the direct and already fundamental impact of the Hebrew-Aramaic component as compared to other constituent parts of Jewish languages. In fact, the cultural referents shared by all the Jewish communities are transmitted through Hebrew and Aramaic. These referents, that affect all the components of the language, also induce the linguistic structuring which gives Jewish languages its appearance as a homogeneous linguistic group, beyond the obvious structural differences which differentiate Spanish, Arabic or German, or a given Slavic language, Turkish, or Greek.

Multilingualism and the unifying path of cultural molds: these are the arguments that support the hypothesis of the specificity of Jewish languages in comparison to other groups of languages - including, or primarily, Creoles - with which Jewish languages were at times compared. In fact, the multilingualism existing along initial forms of Creoles gradually disappears from use and gives way to the Creole alone. Speakers of Creoles turn these into languages where identities are blended, whereas Jewish languages are the guarantors of socio-cultural separation. Finally, Jewish languages are not 'genetically' related, but Hebrew and Aramaic are proof of a continuity and cultural community beyond all the differences between source languages.

Data collection was carried out for several years in Israel, North Africa, France, Turkey and in Greece. It focused on Judeo-Arabic, Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, and Judeo-Greek. The prime goal of these studies was to enrich the available oral database. The linguistic, socio-linguistic and ethno-linguistic goals were no less ambitious because of the constant shift of group identities. Surveys of Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Spanish provide particularly vivid illustrations of the paths taken by the Hebrew and Jewish referents in shaping the structure and uses of Jewish languages. More than the written data or other forms, the oral data recorded *in situ* provide an unprecedented in-depth view. This was also true for an understanding of the impact of the Diaspora situation in the definition of Jewish languages and for their use.

The data collected for Yiddish and Judeo-Greek led to several novel findings. An analysis was conducted first to form an idea of the situation of Yiddish in Israel, in order to carry out systematic surveys. This decision represented in itself a kind of a revolution in the sense that in general, the non-Ashkenazi communities had attracted more attention from researchers in the preceding decades. The field studies conducted in Yiddish-speaking environments for linguistic and literary purposes could nevertheless base themselves on data gleaned from studies of the Hassidic communities in ethnomusicology.

Beyond the data collection what emerged was a living oral culture. The analysis of this culture demanded the convergence of linguistic, literary, ethnological and musicological resources. This led to a detailed examination of the continuity over time of the bases of European Yiddish culture, and its modes of manifestation. It formed a new foundation for the historical and cultural cartography of Hassidic communities, for past eras but also for what these communities became before and after 1948, in Palestine and then in Israel. All this nourished in its own way a

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renewed approach to studies of the Yiddish world, both epistemologically and methodologically.

Within the framework of a historical study of the Greek language, studies concerning the Romanian Jewish communities were launched. The representative of ancient Jewish settlements in the Ottoman Empire, Greek-speaking and observing fairly specific rituals, these communities differed both from the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. Studies of this group, which are being actively pursued, provide prime data in two areas. As is the case for German, Spanish or Arabic with Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Greek provides invaluable information for historians of the Greek language, its dialects and its registers. What had already been identified through recourse to written linguistic information – which went back several centuries – could be buttressed by oral sources, in an even broader historical continuity. The study of the oral reading of the Bible in the Romanian communities was to have a dual impact. A tradition of Hebrew reading, presumed to exist but yet undocumented, was shown to exist, enriching field data collected since the early 1950s. Furthermore, the Romanian liturgy could be studied directly via surveys that are ongoing in Israel and in Greece. An overall perspective on this linguistic material helped identify the paths hewed by memory in these communities, loyal as much to the Jewish culture and its foundations as to the Diaspora experience in Greek-speaking lands.

Bilateral interest in Jewish languages in general has recently taken a new tack. Shared interest in the Hebrew-Aramaic component and translations of the Bible into various Jewish languages has vastly assisted the emergence of a more systematic examination of the interdisciplinary issues characterizing the target linguistic group. This development could not have taken place without closer ties between general linguistics and the linguistics of Jewish languages. Indeed, approaching the Jewish languages from the perspective of common linguistic issues introduced a genuine typological approach. This was initially prompted by the seminal contribution of the work of Max Weinreich and quietly applied in discussions on the concept of the Jewish language. The introduction of typological concerns is a change that can eliminate several paradoxes. Jewish languages as such have been virtually ignored in general linguistics whereas progress in the conceptual tools of sociolinguistics and in theories of linguistic description have benefited directly from studies of Jewish languages, with all of this taking place in a certain epistemological silence. At the same time, researchers on Jewish languages hesitate to tackle the central issues in general linguistics. This distance appears to negatively affect both the linguistics of Jewish languages and general linguistics. Efforts are being made to bridge this gap.

Anthropology of Judaism

No bilateral programs have been instigated in this field. Nevertheless, frequent exchanges have at times brought together Israeli and French colleagues working on epistemological issues, as though, beyond individual efforts conducted by one individual or another, a need was felt to work together to overcome obstacles and pitfalls, which, although not necessarily specific to anthropology alone as applied to Judaism, were clearly problematic, more immediate, and more urgent.

These difficulties are indeed present as regards Jewish music and Jewish languages. This is the case, as mentioned above, for the traditional avoidance of

general linguistics and the linguistics of Jewish languages. This avoidance has never been dealt with head on. By contrast, recent developments in the linguistics of Jewish languages have brought certain central issues to a state of maturation, such that the relationship between the linguistics of Jewish languages and general linguistics has been viewed in a different light. Similarly in the area of Jewish music, no striking epistemological developments have emerged, even though recent works have led researchers to take a fresh look at their subject and their field. If one needed reasons or pretexts for discussions of an epistemological nature, Jewish music and its investigation would clearly provide several prime topics. Earlier a case was made for instance, for the fact that oral traditions tend to be primarily or exclusively analyzed in terms of the written facet of these same traditions.

In general, epistemological preoccupations prompt efforts to trace evolutions in a field, its models, its tools and concerns. More specifically, an epistemological view helps account for the way in which scientific objects are constructed.

To understand why epistemological questions have not taken on such importance in the case of Jewish music or Jewish languages, an addition feature must be taken into consideration. In both fields, there is a general consensus that the historical continuity of cultural phenomena, the geographical dispersion of the communities, their Diaspora experience and their bond to a common set of texts and rituals constitute dimensions without which it would be difficult to deal correctly with specific cases. By contrast, two series of phenomena have led to a much more complex situation for anthropology. The first has to do with the weight of criteria affecting definitions of what constitutes a genuine topic in anthropology, regardless of specialization. The other is connected to the impact of questions as to the possibility of even envisaging an anthropology of Judaism.

Very often, anthropologists study exotic groups of people living in well-circumscribed areas, and possessing an oral culture. Or, on the other hand, they deal with peasant societies that are also localized in space. These groups are viewed as repositories of folk inheritances and rarely studied in terms of their relationships with the non-peasant sectors of the areas in which they live, and are approached with the classic methods of ethnography. Recently, urban anthropology has made a place for itself, as has the anthropology of migratory phenomena. In these frameworks, Jewish culture is difficult to analyze. In addition, although ethnology has assigned a place to ancient civilizations, Judaism cannot be reduced to ancient Judaism, regardless of the value of work devoted to the latter. If a sequel must be envisaged to ancient Judaism, anthropology finds itself facing several obstacles.

Can it be argued that historical continuity and the massive presence of written material make Judaism the subject for the historian rather than for the anthropologist? Historians have developed techniques to study groups whose basic characteristics do not really correspond to the canonical ones which characterize the typical anthropological topic. How, in addition, should the anthropologist position him or her self as regards religious belief? Is Judaism a primitive religion? A system of more or less seamless beliefs? Although the data give a negative response to these questions, how can religious continuity be dealt with in anthropology, and how can we avoid setting this feature apart from the rest of the culture? A dual stricture appears to have also impeded the emergence of a true anthropology of Judaism. The first is an apologetic coloration - the pretext that

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since most of the specialists of Judaism are themselves Jews, it seems doubtful that they can impose the distance required for their subject. The second is concerned with the fact that the foundations of science - namely understanding of facts - is inapplicable to Judaism as to all the monotheistic religions because these religions define the individual in terms of his/her genuine commitment to the constitutive relationship between transcendence and immanence; making scientific knowledge of Judaism a failed endeavor from the outset.

These points have been the topic of increasingly productive debate, in the context of symposia on Jewish Studies in general, or during seminars that brought together Jewish anthropologists among themselves.⁵ The most explicit formulation of the difficulties encountered is found in a volume including all the major figures in the controversy over an anthropology of Judaism within the bilateral framework.⁶ The book does not stop at an enumeration of the difficulties. It attempts, on the contrary, to deal with them directly and without skirting the issues. The relationships between Judaism and anthropology are presented, in terms of work in Jewish Studies as well as outside of this field. The issue of the feasibility of an anthropology of Judaism is tackled, as is the key issue of distance as regards the subject. Case studies bring the more general debates to life and test the innovative hypotheses put forward. The overall approach of the volume is designed to redefine the Jewish world in a general anthropological perspective, exploring its intellectual, institutional, and ideological dimensions.

Multidisciplinarity

As mentioned at the outset of this article, French-Israeli studies conducted since 1980 have resulted in a series of publications in the field of Jewish languages, Jewish music and the anthropology of Judaism. It would be accurate to say that challenges specific to each of these fields were the targets. The anthropology of Judaism was riddled with a series of unresolved debates. Rarely confronted directly, these debates were also unrelated to each other. This situation, taking precedence over topics in anthropology, did not prevent them being analyzed. It did however make the value of the results less substantial. Flourishing and productive, the linguistics of Jewish languages turned towards cross-field perspectives. This enabled it to gradually enter into a stronger interaction with general linguistics, whereas the latter remained fairly unresponsive as regards the issues generated by Jewish languages. In the field of Jewish music, the processing of the abundant oral material led to changes in theoretical perspective. Once accepted, these changes reoriented the overall vision of the structural phenomena at hand.

A closer look shows that these three types of innovations had one thing in common. They all emerged from an evaluation aimed at identifying the conditions in which the given fields developed, and the features of their formative issues. This

⁵ See in particular the book published in 1990 by the Editions du CNRS, *Les Etudes Juives en France. Situations et perspectives* (edited by F. Alvarez-Pereyre and J. Baumgarten). In 1992 and in 1993, an Israel-Canada conference in anthropology was held at Bar Ilan University, and then a French-Israeli workshop held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which provided the opportunity for thematic discussions in the field of anthropology.

⁶ See *Le corps du texte, pour une anthropologie des textes de la tradition juive*. This volume was published in 1997 by the Editions du CNRS; editors: F. Heymann and D. Storper-Perez.

assessment took into account intellectual and institutional factors, modes of existence of the field over time and in space, research models and methods, past and ongoing work. This type of approach is by nature epistemological but its end goal is practical. This is because the studies themselves became the locus of innovations, as the need became apparent. These innovations only take on full meaning if they are accompanied by an ability to situate them accurately in a retrospective understanding of the fields involved. Finally, it is undeniable that progress in one field contributed to the comprehension of others. There was an effort to overcome the typical barriers which, mainly caused by academic frameworks, led too often to forget that cultural data are inscribed in a continuum. Reconstructing this dimension as regards musical, linguistic or ethnological data, ultimately came down to creating a dual perspective—interdisciplinary, and concerned with discovering the internal logic of the culture. This is the context for future developments, and teaching which, extending certain existing findings, will give them unexpected impact.

In Max Weinreich's words, Jewish interlinguistics should tightly link a rigorous study of linguistic mechanisms and an account of the most salient features of Jewish culture in action. This double requirement should not be viewed as two facets that research can separate for greater facility. On the contrary, the goal is to perceive to what extent rituals, reference to legislative principles and observance, study as an obligation, and the way in which it has deeply forged a collective attitude towards the world, in an explicit manifestation of the respective role of Jews and non-Jews, have primarily built and revitalized the basic pillars of the dispersed communities, overtime.

Whereas the synagogue and the family have traditionally been identified as the building blocks of a culture without a homeland, now we can add Jewish languages. This shared foundation concretizes the fundamental points of reference that led to transcending the objective differences between features of non-Jewish languages that became active parts of Jewish languages. On a deeper level, Jewish languages can be seen as a critical locus where the social and cultural features of endogamy and exogamy in Jewish communities are built up: alongside the synagogue and its rituals, texts that are transmitted and studied, as well as alongside the family, laws of purity, marriage and the attitudinal system.

This anthropological finding clearly emerges from studies carried out within the bilateral framework over the last 20 years. What was termed the 'naturalization' of non-Jewish linguistic features via Hebrew and Aramaic, the growing recognition of Jewish languages to transmit sacred texts and their commentaries, but also to play an integral role in the process of interpretation, the way in which, systematically, Jewish languages formed a prime filter and a sounding board for the assessment and shaping of the Diaspora, all this gives them a decisive role. This role cannot be detected until a thorough linguistic analysis has been conducted of the linguistic data. This role cannot be assessed if the language data are not viewed with the eye of the sociolinguist or the ethnolinguist. Here, the convergence of work conducted on Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Greek is astounding, since in most cases different sociolinguistic levels have been analyzed in each language, for communities which, in time and space were in contact with specific societies and cultures.

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In the early 1980s, researchers from a range of fields working on a Judeo-Spanish folk song or on Hassidic marriage, bet that interdisciplinary approach would pay off. The guiding principle behind these works was the conviction that although the tools of each field are irreplaceable for the respective analysis of musical, literary, linguistic and ethnographic data, in depth comprehension of repertoires or rituals requires an overall perspective on these same features. This overall view is not immediately apparent. It emerges sketchily and becomes sharper as each specialist integrates into his or her own work what other specialists have discovered about the same subject. The overall view hence does not arise from simply combining work conducted separately. It stems from a gradual maturation of results acquired and challenged at each stage of inquiry. In this type of dynamic the researcher is no longer alone in dealing with a subject of the caliber defined traditionally by one field. He finds himself dealing with a subject whose internal logic is likely to emerge more clearly because of the multidisciplinary, careful efforts of several specialists. In the 1990s, these principles remain fully relevant and productive.

Dealt with originally as a ritual dance that forms one of its high points, the Hassidic marriage was described on the basis of ethno-musical and linguistic data. The marriage was seen as a crossroads, an intersection of the most characteristic features of this community, and the broader spiritual dimensions of which the union of the couple is a part. At a later stage of joint research, the ritual was reexamined in a 4-way literary, ethnographic, linguistic and musicological perspective that expanded upon the original findings. In addition, this work, like others on the Yiddish language and literature conducted at the same time, made unprecedented use of the rich oral documentation. This material had been collected in part for many years. These data collections were reexamined and systematically analyzed in a multidisciplinary perspective. They immediately impacted on knowledge of the Hassidic communities in time and in space as much as they sharpened perspectives on the day-to-day ethnology in which Jewish culture develops in different places. The more long-term effect was on another level, and was equally decisive.⁷ It provided a new angle on the continuity over time of Yiddish culture. This was difficult to achieve as long as the oral data were not analyzed directly, or while these same data were not set within a conceptual continuity with written material. Specialists up to then had focused primarily on written material.

The multidisciplinary perspective and research into the internal logic of the culture were also applied to the liturgy of Jews from Ethiopia. Work began in 1986, and led to an Anthology of Beta Israel liturgy, in 3 CDs, a volume of musical and textual sources, and a volume of scientific analysis (a series of chapters devoted to its literary, linguistic, ethnological and musicological features).

After years of clandestine immigration to Israel of a small number of individuals, the Ethiopian Jewish community was brought from one day to the next to Israel in the well-known Operation Moses and Operation Solomon, at the end of 1984 and in the Spring of 1991. In 1986, taking advantage of the fact that the religious leaders of this community who arrived in late 1984 were together for two or three years in

⁷ See *Le Yiddish, Langue, culture, société*. This work was published by the Editions du CNRS in 1999; editors: J. Baumgarten and D. Bunis.

a rabbinical seminary, a representative sample of Ethiopian Jewish liturgy was collected from them. The purpose of this collection was, at this stage, to preserve a fast-disappearing heritage. For years, the Ethiopian Jews had no synagogue in Israel where they could pray according to their rituals. The gathering of religious leaders was temporary. Their later dispersal would make recordings much more difficult to carry out. The new generation of Ethiopian Jews was not raised in the traditions of its forefathers and its integration into Israeli society motivated it in other directions.

Later on the plan to extend the collections by a data analysis slowly gathered momentum. Several factors intervened more or less directly. Israeli society had been required to come to terms with immigrants who fit more difficultly into the social mold, since their Jewish identity remained problematic in the eyes of the religious authorities in Israel. Some Israeli research institutions had shown an interest in a historical study of Ethiopian Judaism or a socio-anthropology of this new immigration. France, which had a long tradition of Ethiopian studies, did not neglect the opportunity to enter into a bilateral framework, supporting demands for greater Franco-Israeli cooperation.

When Ethiopian Jewish liturgy became a genuine research topic, other factors needed to be taken into account to define a promising but complex field. Ethiopian society includes Christian, Moslem, Jewish and animist⁸ groups. The religious culture of Ethiopia is highly inflected by a type of Christianity whose Jewish sources and references have long been clearly quantitatively and qualitatively perceptible. The history of the Jews of Ethiopia remains a scientific enigma. The history of Ethiopian Christianity has undergone major changes in recent times. The hypothesis of a strong articulation between Jewish and Christian liturgies has been formulated on the basis of works in ethnomusicology, without however the truly musical features or the liturgical texts having really been defined or studied. Although Christian liturgy has been the topic of systematic publications that define most of the corpora, the equivalent does not really exist for Jewish liturgy. Several comparative surveys, dealing with music in the two liturgical traditions, suggest that beyond certain similarities, as regards peripheral features of the musical system, basic structural traits differentiate the two liturgies on this level. However, the same corpus of biblical texts serve as the basis and cardinal reference for these two liturgies, in the same liturgical language – the *ge'ez*. In both cases it is a translation into this language of the Greek text of the Bible, known as the Septuagint.

Four types of studies have been conducted successively or jointly. One was a study of the ethnography of the liturgy, the second a musicological and ethnomusicological analysis of musical corpora, a third an analysis of the liturgical texts from the standpoint of their literary structure and the fourth, a study of the sources and content of these same liturgical texts.

Highly African in its essence, the liturgical music of the Ethiopian Jews is based on the implementation of the principle of 'centonization' well known to specialists of Medieval Music, and prototypical musical cells. Highly economical from a

⁸ A bilateral French-Ethiopian program has just been launched by UMR 8099 Langues-Musiques-Sociétés of the CNRS and University of Paris V, for a systematic collection of Ethiopian musical traditions.

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structural point of view, these resources allow for an impressive variety of forms which initially defied all attempts at elucidation.

The ethnography of liturgy highlights the crucial role of religious leaders, their knowledge and skills, and their ability to memorize the entire liturgical repertory. The form of Ethiopian Jewish liturgy was not unknown, but sound recordings carried out in 1986 and completed in 1989 restored prodigious amounts of sources to an emasculated liturgy. Prayer books for the annual cycle and for the life cycle were then drawn up as regards their structure and part of their content.

The literary structure of the prayers adheres to a few basic features, which shape the relationship between soloists and the choir during the performance of the liturgy. The principle of repetition, alternation and a close tie between repetition and alternation form the architecture of each prayer, while at the same time categorizing these prayers textually. These same principles are found in the musical features of the liturgy, and in the sophisticated interweaving of these same literary and musical resources.

Whereas the Christian and Jewish liturgical sources are quite identical, these groups use them very differently. This is true from several points of view. The choice differs on several points, both as regards content and form. The text structure of the sources also differs, and the finished product, the prayers, does not present the same general format, the same types of expansions, or the same purposes. Whereas Ethiopian Judaism is based on striking and highly codified ritual sets without the theories having been made explicit or written down, and does not have an Oral Law as defined by historical Judaism, close examination of the prayer texts reveal two key features, absent from the Christian liturgy. One feature is legalistic formulations that draw highly on the authoritative discursive processes found frequently in the five books of Moses. The second is interpretative processes, supporting content that differentiates the Christian and Jewish spiritual worlds.

Careful day to day work, the gradual integration of data and partial results have highlighted systematic processes of differentiation between Christian and Jewish liturgy, beyond a historical proximity which specialists, for their part, have learned to better assess during the process of writing the Anthology. It is worth stressing here that the hypothesis of such a differentiation is corroborated by the awareness of it on the part of the clergy of both religions.

This overview ends with a description of current perspectives, which should form the guidelines for future bilateral research, and an integral part of their fields of reference.

In addition to studies that researchers from both countries have devoted to musical heritage, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and its Center for the Study of Jewish Music have encouraged a policy of collection of Jewish musical traditions in France. Extending beyond the French framework to other countries in Europe, this initiative has led to a considerable increase in available documentation, but also to the publication of several monographs. I have already mentioned progress in studies dealing with the cantilation of biblical and post-biblical texts, aimed at examining traditions of reading and studying the basic texts of Judaism. Current research is oriented in the long term to forming a topography of these traditions in an anthropological perspective. Several liturgical and para-liturgical repertoires are

also being studied, with growing multidisciplinary contributions – in particular a study dealing with psalmody, which goes beyond the sole framework of Judaism.

In the field of anthropology, the overall structure and pace of studies remains affected by the lack of a bilateral program. This has not prevented, in addition to epistemological concerns, studies to be carried out with high heuristic value. One particular study was devoted to the immigration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel and another dealt with the Jews of Bukovina.⁹ Neither deal with the field the ethnologist classically encounters: a remote spot often viewed as a locus of epistemological inquiry. On the contrary, multiple dialogues must be established. These substitute for the physical referents, and symbolic pillars of identity need to be detected. Revealing these pillars is in turn constructed through the writing process, which, for the two studies mentioned here, has made a considerable contribution to furthering anthropological discourse.

As regards Jewish languages, the French-Israeli collaboration has seen its field of reference expand somewhat. Its future missions will doubtless remain focused on data collection and the publication of monographs. Without these, the transversal issues will lose their substance. The timeliness of these issues remains total, whether it involves the Hebrew-Aramaic component of Jewish languages or the use of Jewish languages as translation languages. Nevertheless, the interest for these issues must become sharper and more defined. In turn, the impact in the long term is predictable, if we consider what has been given such little consideration up to now; i.e. a more generous vision of the relationships between general linguistics and the linguistics of Jewish languages. These relationships may indeed be seen from now on as the broader perspectives for specialists in the field, who must deal more explicitly now than in the past with typological and comparative issues in linguistics.¹⁰

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⁹ See L. Anteby, Ph.D. awarded in 1996 by University of Paris V, and F. Heymann, Ph.D. awarded in Autumn 2001 by the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

¹⁰ This is the context for the preparation of a large volume of articles, entitled *Linguistic des langues juives et linguistique générale*, forthcoming, Editions du CNRS.