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Linguistic, cultural and history-related studies on Jews in Finland

A look at the scholarship in the twenty-first century

LAURA K. EKHOLM, SIMO MUIR AND OULA SILVENNOINEN

ABSTRACT • There has been a significant growth in volume and disciplines working on Jewish history and culture in Finland for the past fifteen years, yet no systematic overview of scholarly efforts have been available. This article aims to fill this gap. Our focus is on the disciplines of linguistics, cultural studies and history. Our overview covers monographs and articles that have appeared in academic publications since 2000, with a focus on Finland. Consequently we have left out Finnish research on Jews in other parts of the globe from our review. About half of the works introduced in this article have been published in Finnish and will now be briefly introduced to a wider Nordic scholarly community. The article consists of four parts. First we discuss Jewish studies and social history pursued in Finland. We then discuss studies focusing on antisemitism in Finland. The third part introduces the relevant literature on Finland's role in the Second World War and its responsibility towards the conflict's Jewish refugees and prisoners of war, after which studies on Finnish history culture and memory politics are presented. The final part presents biographies and general studies about the Jewish community in Finland.

Research on Jews in Finland

The first scholarly works on Jews in Finland were published in the mid-1980s. The issue of *Scandinavian Jewish Studies* (*Nordisk judaistik*) from 2000 gave an overview of studies carried out up to the end of the 1990s (Harviainen 2000; for an exhaustive bibliography of Tapani Harviainen, see Halén 2004). Since then, the opening of the Finnish Jewish Archives at the National Archives of Finland in 1998 has significantly improved research opportunities. The archives consist of material from the Helsinki Jewish community and the Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland as well as private archives and a large photo collection. In 2009, the Helsinki Jewish community and the National Archives of Finland published *Fenno-Judaica*, a virtual exhibition showcasing the collections (see the list of references for the website).

Regarding biographical information, also deserving of mention is Meliza Amity's genealogical database *Meliza's Genealogy*, which has proved indispensable to scholars. Amity has been conducting research on her own Finnish Jewish roots, and the database, now with information on more than 21,000 individuals, has been freely accessible on the internet since 2004 (see the list of references for the website).

Jewish studies and social history

The pioneering studies of the 1980s sought to place the Jewish community in the general context of Finland's history. More recent scholarship has shed light on the variety of activities within the Jewish community and analysed these activities within the framework of international Jewish studies.

Linguistic aspects

While earlier studies of the history of the Jewish community had focused on the general history and development of the political and social standing of Finnish Jewry, Jewish cultural life had remained almost unexplored.

Simo Muir conducted the first linguistic fieldwork in the Jewish community of Helsinki and collected data on spoken Yiddish. The doctoral dissertation *Yiddish in Helsinki: Study of a Colonial Yiddish Dialect* (2004a) analyses this material in the light of classical Yiddish dialectology and theories of language contact. Muir suggests that there is a distinct Helsinki Yiddish variety that is a unique combination of North-Eastern Yiddish (also known as 'Lithuanian Yiddish') subdialects. Moreover, Helsinki Yiddish reflects a discernible phonetic and lexical interference from co-territories of Helsinki Swedish. In addition, (Baltic) German and Russian loanwords are characteristic of Helsinki Yiddish. Muir's study demonstrates how Yiddish was spoken for much longer than was previously thought, as elderly persons continued to use Yiddish well into the post-war era, and that despite lingual assimilation, the language played a substantial role in the cultural and religious life of the community.

Muir's article 'Vanha juutalainen musiikki Helsingissä. Historiallis-lingvistinen katsaus' ('Old Jewish music in Helsinki: a historical-linguistic overview',¹ 2006) discusses, besides Jewish musical tradition, the linguistic characteristics of the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew, and shows how it reflects characteristics of the local Yiddish variety. 'Jiddisistä ruotsin kautta suomeen. Helsingin juutalaisten kielenvaihtoista ja etnolektistä' ('From

1 The English titles of Finnish texts are translated by the authors.

Yiddish via Swedish to Finnish: on the language shifts and ethnolect of Helsinki's Jews', 2009a) describes from a sociolinguistic point of view the language shifts that have taken place in the Jewish community of Helsinki as well as the subsequent bilingualism – and in some cases even trilingualism. Muir discusses, on the one hand, the factors that promoted the use of Yiddish, and on the other hand, the reasons that led to the displacement of the language. The second part of the article discusses the historic varieties of Jewish Swedish and Jewish Finnish, with examples from popular entertainment, and analyses the contemporary post-Yiddish Jewish ethnolect. A certain ethnolectal register is perceptible in interaction within the community. Muir has also written a review of the contact between Yiddish literature and Finland 'Fenno-Jidica. Suomi ja jiddisinkielinen kirjallisuus' ('Fenno-Jidica: Finland and Yiddish literature', 2004b).

Cultural and political activity

In bringing the Yiddish language into scholarly discourse, Muir opened up the cultural, social and political roots of the Jewish communities of Finland, setting them in the context of East European Jewish history. Despite their small size, the Jewish communities in Finland enjoyed numerous associations in popular education and entertainment. Besides linguistic characteristics, Muir's 'Yiddish in Helsinki' (2004a) describes how internal Jewish politics influenced language choices in the educational system and cultural scene of the Jewish community. Traditional Yiddish-language religious schools evolved into modern coeducational schools with an emphasis on Zionism and teaching modern Hebrew. Despite Helsinki's lack of an organised Jewish political left, such as the Jewish labour party Bund, which would have advocated the

use of Yiddish, various associations nevertheless promoted the use of Yiddish (e.g. choir, theatre and literature associations). Muir also analyses the role of Yiddish in the Jewish press and discusses the reasons behind the frequent Latinisation of Yiddish.

Muir's article 'The Kalevala centennial jubilee as a bone of contention between Hebraists and Yiddishists' (2009b) discusses the Jewish language strife in the Finnish context. This article centres on the 1935 *Kalevala* centennial jubilee and the invitation of the Hebrew translator of the *Kalevala*, Saul Tchernichowsky, to Helsinki. Muir demonstrates how the Finnish right-wing cultural elite could identify with the aspirations of Zionists in reviving the Hebrew language and building a national home in their ancient country of origin. However, the organisers did not sympathise with the 'cosmopolitan' Jewish left, with its Yiddish language, and consequently the translator of the *Kalevala* into Yiddish, Hersh Rosenfeld, was not invited to the festivities. Moreover, the article discusses the development of the Zionist movement in Finland hand in hand with the rapid Finnification process taking place in the Jewish community in the nationalistic atmosphere of the 1930s.

Laura Ekholm's and Simo Muir's article 'Name changes and visions of a New Jew in the Helsinki Jewish community' (2016) continues to explore the Zionist movement and the Finnification process in the Jewish community by analysing name changes between 1933 and 1944. Ekholm and Muir consider the name changes in the light of anti-semitism, the general Finnification underway in Finnish society, and Jewish national aspirations. The name changes reflect not only the political and ideological visions of Zionism, but also a willingness among Finnish Jews to distance themselves from Jewishness as a politically marginal 'foreign element' in

Finnish society. The article is partly based on a previous study published in *Historiallinen aikakauskirja* (Ekholm and Muir 2011).

Economic and social history

The economic history has generally provided a more diversified picture of the economic and social standing of the Helsinki Jewish community. Laura Ekholm's article 'Heikinkadun juutalaiset vaatekauppiat. Juutalaiset tekstiilialan yrittäjät 1900-luvun alun Helsingissä' ('The Jewish clothiers of Heikinkatu street: Jewish entrepreneurs in the garment trade in early-twentieth-century Helsinki', 2005) examines Jewish textile entrepreneurs in the interwar period.

Ekholm argues that great economic differences existed within the Jewish community of Helsinki. Whereas most of the Jewish garment trade was limited to small-scale businesses, some Jewish merchant families were quite influential. An analysis by Samuli Skurnik and Daniel Pasternack of the early-twentieth-century business activities of the businessman Moses Skurnik emphasises Skurnik's activities as an investor and offers interesting perspectives on the early years of the Finnish stock exchange (2007).

Laura Ekholm's doctoral dissertation *Boundaries of an Urban Minority: The Helsinki Jewish Community from the End of Imperial Russia until the 1970s* (2013) uses the history of the Helsinki Jewish community as a case study for studying changing ethnic boundaries in the urban context of twentieth-century European history. Her point of departure is the multilingual and culturally manifold character of nineteenth-century Helsinki as a provincial capital of imperial Russia combined with the fact that the Helsinki Jewish community was one of the few in Eastern Europe that was not destroyed in the Holocaust, making it possible to study the

community from one generation to another.

The study outlines the Jewish history as an integral part of local urban history, and analyses when and how 'Jews of Finland' became 'Finnish Jews'. The study uses occupational status as an operational tool to analyse changes in the social position of the community by examining how many in the community were entrepreneurs or self-employed, whether Jews were categorised as Jews or by their profession. Supported with the findings of this empirical material she analyses and contextualises different aspects of what has been written down as Finnish-Jewish history.

Ekholm's article 'Mellan öst och väst. Finland judiska historia under 1800- och 1900-talet' ('Between east and west: Jewish history in Finland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', 2016) discusses Jewish history in Finland between Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. The economic historian Rita Bredefeldt adopts a comparative approach to the emancipation processes of Jewish minorities in Sweden and Finland in her article 'De judiska minoriteterna i Sverige och Finland – olika men ändå lika' ('The Jewish minorities in Sweden and Finland: different but alike', 2013). The article is based on her book *Judiskt liv i Stockholm och Norden*, in which one chapter is dedicated to Finland (Bredefeldt 2008).

Studies of antisemitism in Finland

During the past fifteen years the previously favoured idea that there was never any notable antisemitism in Finland has been questioned. When the historian Eero Kuparinen in 1999 completed the first complete Finnish-language presentation on the history of antisemitism, the review of the situation in Finland was cursory. The second edition, *Antisemitismen musta kirja* ('The Black Book of Antisemitism', 2008), focuses

more on Finnish antisemitism. According to Kuparinen, antisemitism in Finland was negligible compared to many other European societies in the 1920s and 1930s owing to the small size of the Jewish community, as well as 'the social standing of the Jews [which] gave little reason to envy their position in society' (Kuparinen 2008: 277).

The literary scholar Karmela Bélinki provides an overview of antisemitic tones in Finnish literature in her book *Shylock i Finland: judarna och Finlands litteratur 1900–1970* ('Shylock in Finland: Jews and Finnish Literature 1900–70', 2000). Historian Nils-Erik Forsgård analyses antisemitic rhetoric in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Finland in his book *Alias Finkelstein. Studier i antisemitisk retorik* ('Alias Finkelstein: Studies of Antisemitic Rhetoric', 2002). Forsgård reviews antisemitism as a counter-enlightenment movement against modernisation and the emancipation of various subgroups. The book describes how conspiracy theories casting Jews and Freemasons as devastating forces in European societies were used in Finland. According to Forsgård, antisemitic propaganda was typical of small right-wing groups on the margins of Finnish society.

Jari Hanski's doctoral dissertation *Juutalaivastaisuus suomalaisissa aikakauslehdissä ja kirjallisuudessa 1918–1944* ('Antisemitism in Finnish magazines and literature, 1918–44', 2006a) covers over 400 magazines, periodicals, novels and school books. Hanski distinguishes between general antisemitic stereotypes that circulated internationally and specific claims targeting the Jews of Finland. Hanski states that the majority of Finns found the Jewish question unimportant and had a neutral attitude towards Jews. He refers to the older literature on Jews in Finland and concludes that 'there were no rich Jews in Finland, which also diminished the possibility of antisemitism' (2006a: 321–2). The

study is also published in book form, entitled *Juutalaisviha Suomessa 1918–1944* ('Hatred of Jews in Finland', 2006b).

Simo Muir has distinguished three different modes or literary tropes on sidestepping antisemitism in the Finnish scholarly literature in 'Modes of displacement: ignoring, understating, and denying antisemitism in Finnish historiography' (2013). Ignoring is the most widespread trope while the studies mentioned above fall into the category of understating the phenomenon or defining it in such a narrow way, for instance brutal violence against Jews, that one can rule interwar Finland out of the phenomenon. In Muir's typology denying antisemitism in Finnish research literature has been rather reactive. This becomes especially clear in case studies where light is shed on the history of such institutions as the University of Helsinki.

Muir's case study on the faith of the orientalist Israel-Jacob Schur sheds light on the atmosphere in Finnish academia in the 1930s (Muir 2007). Muir demonstrates how anti-Jewish sentiment led to the rejection of Schur's doctoral dissertation at the University of Helsinki in 1937. A year later, Schur had submitted a new version of his study to the Åbo Akademi University, but this time he was not even granted the right to defend his work. Muir analyses both cases in his article 'Rejection of Israel-Jacob Schur's doctoral dissertation at the University of Helsinki (1937) and at the Åbo Akademi University (1938)' (Muir 2009c; see also Muir 2009d and 2009e).

In April 2008, the rector of the University of Helsinki, Ilkka Niiniluoto, established a working group to investigate the unfolding of events in Schur's case. In their subsequent report, the working group was able to identify no antisemitic motivation among the scholars advocating the rejection of Schur's thesis. Although some procedural faults were

acknowledged, the rector found no reason to pursue the case further (Alho *et al.* 2008).

In response, a group of scholars specialised in religious studies, Finnish orientalism and the 1930s scholarly community composed a collection of essays entitled *Hyljättiin outouden vuoksi. Israel-Jakob Schur ja suomalainen tiedeyhteisö* ('Rejected because of Strangeness: Israel-Jacob Schur and the Finnish Scholarly Community', Muir and Salomaa 2009). The articles analyse and contextualise such ideological disputes and motivations in the scholarly community of the 1930s. In her review of the essays, published in *East European Jewish Affairs*, Hana Worthen (2010) concludes by asking whether the University of Helsinki is still unable to address the racial attitudes prevalent in Finnish society and academia in the 1930s.

Malte Gasche's and Simo Muir's article 'Discrimination against Jewish athletes in Finland: an unwritten chapter' (2013) examines the discussion in the press of two cases of antisemitic discrimination in the late 1930s. The first case deals with the manipulated results of Abraham Tokazier's hundred-metre sprint at the first track meeting of the Olympic stadium in Helsinki in 1938. The second case analyses the collective dismissal of Jewish athletes from a tennis club in the Helsinki region in 1939. The article also addresses the silence and unease surrounding these two incidents in postwar Finnish historical culture.

Denying antisemitism has been an integral part of argumentation that aims to distance Finland as a nation from anything that has to do with the Holocaust. The approach of the historian Hannu Rautkallio has been most explicit in this tradition. His *Holokaustilta pelastetut* ('Rescued from the Holocaust', 2004) sought to show that Finland, far from having been a partner in the Nazi genocide and atrocities, had been a protector of not

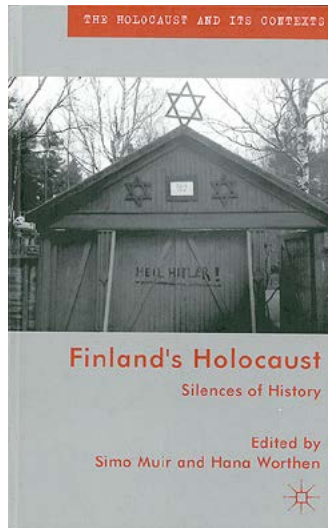
only its own Jewish minority, but also of non-Finnish Jews residing in Finland.

The Second World War and the Holocaust

Rautkallio's *Holokaustilta pelastetut* was a counter-narrative that aimed to dismantle an influential work published the previous year, in 2003. Elina Sana's *Luovutetut. Suomen ihmislouvuutukset Gestapolle* ('Handed Over: Finnish Deportations into the Hands of the Gestapo', 2003) re-examined the deportations of civilians and prisoner-of-war exchanges between Finland and Germany during their common war against the Soviet Union in 1941–4. Sana's central claim was that through these actions, the Finnish authorities contributed to Nazi policies of terror and genocide on a wider scale than had been previously believed.²

In 2013 Simo Muir and Hana Worthen edited an anthology *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History*. Two articles discuss the manifold debates Sana's work generated on Finland's role in the Second World War. Karin Kvist Gevert (2013) has compared these debates in the Swedish-language press in Finland and in Sweden in her chapter 'Negotiating the dark past in the Swedish-language press in Finland and Sweden'. Jouni Tilli (2013) covers the debate around Elina Sana's above-mentioned work 'Elina Sana's

2 Elina Sana (then Suominen) was the first to publish a book in 1979 relating the faith of eight Jewish refugees whom Finland handed over to Germany. Also then Rautkallio had published a counter-argument trying to show that Finland had nothing to do with Nazi crimes against humanity.



Luovutetut and the politics of history'.

One of the most important consequences of Sana's work was that Finland's memory of political problems with the Holocaust were noticed abroad too. Sana's results were publicised outside Finland, and the US-based Simon Wiesenthal Center directed an enquiry to the president of the republic, asking whether Finland would investigate the issue raised by Sana. As a result, the

Finnish government funded a research project to clarify the issue of wartime prisoner exchanges and deportations of civilians from Finland.

The project resulted in several works that contribute to our knowledge of Finland's interaction with the Holocaust and Nazi atrocities. This research supported the compilation of a database of every known Soviet prisoner-of-war death in Finnish custody, and addressed the issue of prisoner mortality. Most of the results were published in two collections of articles. The central findings in regard to the treatment of Soviet Jewish prisoners of war were that, as a rule, they were treated no worse than other prisoners. Their mortality rate, while very high, was somewhat lower than the mortality rate of ethnic Russian prisoners, who suffered losses of roughly 30 per cent in Finnish prisoner-of-war camps (Westerlund 2008a, 2008b).³

In his work *Salaiset aseveljet. Suomalais-saksalainen turvallisuuspoliisiyhteistyö 1933–1944* ('Secret Comrades-in-Arms: Finnish-

3 A Swedish version of the database is accessible at <<http://kronos.narc.fi/startsidan.html>> (accessed 30.5.2016).

German Security Police Cooperation in 1933–44’, 2008; published in Estonian in 2009, and in German in 2010), Oula Silvennoinen explored Finland’s relationship to Nazi policies of genocide and systematic mass murder. This study brought to light the long-time German-Finnish security police co-operation, culminating in the activities of a previously unknown detachment of the German security police, the Einsatzkommando Finnland, in Finnish Lapland. This unit had been, along with the better-known Einsatzgruppen elsewhere on the German–Soviet front, part of the campaign of ideological and racial war against the Soviet population. Actively supported by the Finnish security police, the unit engaged in the mass murder of mainly Soviet prisoners of war deemed either ideologically or racially undesirable communists and Jews. (Silvennoinen 2008, 2009, 2010)

The most recent work to emerge from the field of study concerned with prisoners of war has been Ida Suolahti’s doctoral dissertation, *Yhteinen vihollinen, yhteinen etu. Sotavankien luovutukset ja vaihdot Suomen ja Saksan välillä jatkosodan aikaan* (‘A Common Enemy, a Common Cause: Handing-over and Exchange of Soviet Prisoners of War between Finland and Germany during the War in 1941–44’, 2016). Suolahti presents a compelling case, with the conclusion that Soviet Jewish prisoners in Finnish custody generally were treated no better or worse than those of Russian nationality. An exception to this rule is formed by those prisoners handed over to the Einsatzkommando Finnland (Suolahti 2016).

The other results of the research project raised a range of new topics for historical research. The Holocaust has remained at the centre of all new works published since the conclusion of the project in 2008. The war-time position of Jews in Finland has

nevertheless been of importance and interest to all these studies. In addition, the historian Antero Holmila has contributed to this growing body of research with a general non-fiction work on the Holocaust. Holmila’s *Reporting the Holocaust in the British, Swedish and Finnish Press, 1945–1950* (2011) analyses press coverage of the Holocaust in the British, Finnish and Swedish press. His *Holokausti. Tapatumat ja tulkinnat* (‘The Holocaust: Events and Interpretations’, 2010) was aimed at the general Finnish reader.

Michael Jonas’s study *NS-Diplomatie und Bündnispolitik. Wipert von Blücher, das Dritte Reich und Finnland* explores Nazi Jewish policy as a part of German foreign relations with Finland through Wipert von Blücher, the German wartime ambassador to Finland (Jonas 2010, published in Finnish the same year).

Svante Lundgren’s work *I hjältens tid. Berättelser om mod och civilkurage under Förintelsen* (‘In the Time of Heroes: Stories of Bravery and Civil Courage during the Holocaust’, 2006) tells of the efforts of two central figures, Ragni Karlsson and Atos Wirtanen, in helping Jewish refugees in Finland (on Atos Wirtanen, see also Lundgren 2003). Simo Muir’s article ‘The plan to rescue Finnish Jews in 1944’ (2016) investigates what Jewish leadership in Finland knew about the ongoing genocide of European Jewry and how they reacted to the information they received mainly via Sweden. The article focuses on the plan to evacuate Jewish refugees and after the Ryti-Ribbentrop Agreement in June 1944 the entire Finnish Jewry to Sweden with the financial assistance of the US War Refugee Board. The article also discusses the postwar silence around this clandestine rescue operation that became unnecessary with Germany losing ground in the north (*ibid.*).

As now seems clear, the position of

Finnish Jews cannot be understood without knowledge of Finland's shifting fortunes during the Second World War and, especially, the constantly evolving contemporary German *Judenpolitik*. This has led to the understanding that Finland is no exception in the general history of the Holocaust. Rather, Holocaust and genocide studies provide a valid scholarly framework also for interpretations of Finland's relationship to the genocide of European Jews.

Finland's history culture and memory politics

Even if Finnish history culture has for decades ignored Finland's connections with the Holocaust, new research has not shied away from exploring these links or from commenting on the state of public understanding of history. In *Yad Vashem Studies*, Oula Silvennoinen (2009a) has explored Finnish problems with its own *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. More studies have followed. The *Scandinavian Journal of History* (vol. 36, no 5) published a special issue on the histories and memories of the Holocaust in Scandinavia in 2011 with Antero Holmila and Karin Kvist Geverts as guest editors. The issue contains an overview of the Holocaust in Finnish (Holmila and Silvennoinen 2011).

Antero Holmila's account 'Varieties of silences: collective memory of the Holocaust in Finland' (2012) discusses the lack of interest on the Finnish side in the Holocaust.

Between 2011 and 2014, the Academy of Finland funded a research project named Cultures of Silence: Evolution of a Finnish Version of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The project produced as one of its main outcomes an anthology, mentioned above, entitled *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History* (Muir and Worthen 2013). 'What is particularly interesting is how Finland's

curious in-between position of the general East-West divide gives this collection a nation-transgressing character in terms of historiographical significance: whilst research on Western European collaboration is marked by stories of Nazi challenges to democratic institutions and bureaucracies, studies on the "wild East" tend to emphasise trauma, physical destruction and, above all, the presence of the Red Army. *Finland's Holocaust* forces us to operate in the intersection of this analytical binary', writes Rebecca Wennberg (2014: 214) in her review in *Holocaust Studies*. The anthology comprises ten essays written by scholars of cultural studies and historians of which most, as Jonas Ahlskog has noted in his review 'Att skriva om en historisk berättelse' ('Of writing about a historical story', 2013), deal with the history of Finnish history-writing, not the actual processes during the war years. For instance, John Sundholm's contribution 'Stories of national and transnational memory: renegotiating the Finnish concept of moral witness and national victimhood' (2013) discusses the problems of leaving the Nazi genocide out of a collective historical memory. Hana Worthen's account critically analyses Finnish theatre scholars. Worthen first analyses the alarming continuity in the writings of a Finnish author, the literary intellectual and director general of the Finnish National Theatre, Arvi Kivimaa. Kivimaa's works on *Kultur* and humanism, from praising National Socialism in the 1930s and the 1940s to promoting global humanism in the 1960s, have been reconceptualised and interpreted by Finnish scholars. Kivimaa himself wanted to understand his work in the post-war era, not in the context of the implications of art and racially essentialised ideology in the Nazi era, notes Worthen (2013). Similarly, Ilona Salomaa's chapter discusses the development of Finnish academic nationalism and its racist inflection of early



The Blaugrund family and their Danish guests at a summer house in Finland in 1947. Courtesy of Nena Kafka, Helsinki.

Finnish folklore (Salomaa 2013). Antero Holmila (2013) explores the strategies in the Finnish memory culture to maintain an outlook according to which Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers were an elite troop training for the sake of Finland without any connection to Nazi brutalities. Oula Silvennoinen's article 'Beyond "those eight": deportations of Jews from Finland 1941–1942' (2013) sheds light on Finland's war-time legislation and the bureaucratic process relating to non-Finnish Jews in the country over the war years. The article specifically focuses on four individual cases where the Finnish authorities handed over people who by the Nuremberg laws were considered as Jews, adding new destinies to the publicly known figure of eight Jewish refugees handed over to Germans by the Finnish authorities.

What seems by now to have been established is nevertheless an enduring interest in the Holocaust-era experience of Jews in Finland, and a small but committed research community. In this vein, Laura Ekholm's article 'Suomenjuutalaiset. Sopivaksi, vaan ei näkyväksi' ('Jews in Finland, made suitable but not visible', 2014) reflects the role of history-writing in the making of 'national minorities', using the Jews of Finland and their war-time efforts as an example. While war-time joint struggles become the momentum for gaining a place in national historiography, they also mute and distance the Holocaust from the history of Jews in Finland.

Simo Muir's forthcoming book *Ei enää kirjeitä Puolasta* ('No More Letters from Poland', 2016 forthcoming) will synchronise what we know of war-time Finland and the destinies of Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland. Muir has reconstructed the history of one Polish Jewish family from 1939 to 1949. He combines archival sources, letters sent back and forth between Helsinki and the ghettos and oral history, following on the one

hand the life of one branch of the family in Helsinki, and on the other hand the almost complete destruction of most of the members of the large family in Poland. Finally Muir describes the chaotic years after the war and the attempts to unite the remaining family members in Helsinki.

The Jewish community and beyond

For the centenary of the synagogue of Helsinki in 2006, the Jewish community of Helsinki compiled an illustrated history of Jews in Finland under the name *LeChaim! Images from the History of Jews in Finland* (in Finnish and English). The book sheds light on the social and cultural life, livelihood and religious practices of the Jewish community since the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century (Kantor *et al.* 2006).

Another approach is the questionnaire study undertaken by Svante Lundgren in the early 2000s entitled 'Suomen juutalaiset. Usko, tavat, asenteet' ('Jews in Finland: Beliefs, Customs and Attitudes, 2002). All members of the Jewish communities of Helsinki and Turku above the age of 18 received a questionnaire in the spring of 2001. The questions were modified from a similar project conducted by the Jewish communities of Gothenburg and Stockholm in the late 1990s. The results of Lundgren's questionnaire support an image of present-day Finnish Jews as an integrated, well-educated upper-middle-class community. Over half of the respondents identified themselves as equally Finnish and Jewish. According to the study, Finnish Jews also tend to be more conservative in terms of religious customs and traditions than the communities in Sweden.

The theologian Elina Vuola is currently conducting research together with the classical philologist Dora Pataritza on Jewish women in Finland, bringing gender into

Finnish Jewish studies. They seek to construct the identities of women who follow Orthodox Jewish traditions and segregatory practices in the synagogue yet at the same time belong to highly educated social strata that support gender equality in a secular sphere.

There have been several projects, seminars and open lecture series that seek to rediscover the diversity of Finland's past before independence and the Cold War. One concrete example of such efforts is the National Biography project. The Finnish Literature Society published in 2010 a collection of two hundred biographies under the name *Moninainen Suomi* ('Manifold Finland', 2008–10; see *Kansallisbiografia II* in the list of references). The goal was to give a voice to otherness by collecting biographies of individuals belonging to ethnic, religious and sexual minorities as well as immigrant groups. Many of the new entries describe the lives of individuals previously unknown in Finnish society at large, but whose work has nevertheless been important to the communities they represent. Among these biographies are those of several Finnish Jews, rabbis, community leaders, eminent merchants, cultural personalities or otherwise outstanding individuals.

The entries written by Moshe Edelman recount the lives of three eminent rabbis in Finland: Naftali Amsterdam (1832–1916), Schmuël Bukantz (b. 1857) and Simon Federbusch (1892–1967). Tapani Harviainen wrote an entry for Scholem Bolotowsky (1922–2002), a sexton of the synagogue in Helsinki and a long-serving community leader. Laura Ekholm's entry describes Mejer Oppenheim (1831–93), who came to Finland as a soldier, as most Finnish Jews did, and became a merchant and the first ombudsman of the Jewish congregation in Helsinki. Ekholm also wrote an entry for Moses Skurnik (1880–1934), an influential

businessman and benefactor of the Jewish community.

Simo Muir studies the lives and work of three Jewish literati: the Hebraist, newspaper editor and religious scholar Israel-Jakob Schur (1879–1949), mentioned above; the Yiddish poet Mordechai Chosid (1909–88); and the author of Yiddish plays, Jac Weinstein (see also Muir 2011). Muir has also contributed to a biography of Josef Lefko (1904–2001), a central figure in Finnish right-wing Zionism and a long-standing chairman of the Jewish community in Helsinki. An entry by Max Jakobson describes his mother, Helmi Jakobson (née Virtanen, 1892–1975), the first known Finnish convert to Judaism. Fluent in several languages, including Yiddish, she became especially active in the Zionist movement in Finland.

Future trends

In recent years there has been several published memoirs. Rony Smolar's (2003) entry about the Stiller family also offers insight into the early years of the Jewish community in Helsinki, contain oral histories and family stories of the Helsinki Jewish milieu. Samuli Skurnik's family research *Narinkkatorilta Kiestingin mottiin. Juutalaissuvun selviytymistarina* ('From Narinkka Market Place to the Pocket of Kiestinki: A Tale of a Jewish Family's Survival', 2013) recalls the family history of three generations. The book is rich in details describing the early-twentieth-century business endeavours of the Skurnik family, especially Moses Skurnik. The third part recalls the war-time history of his father, Leo Skurnik, a medical doctor that was honoured with a German Iron Cross – which he refused – for his achievements in saving lives on the front line during the Second World War (Skurnik 2013).

The ambassador and Russian expert René

Nyberg has recently published a double-layered history of his family, *Viimeinen juna Moskovaan* ('Last Train to Moscow', 2015). The book reviews the story of Nyberg's Jewish mother, who fell in love with a non-Jew. For an upper-middle-class Helsinki Jewish family who cherished aspects of modern Jewish life such as sports, a daughter marrying a non-Jew was not an option. The reaction of the family was harsh and not resolved without the police. The second layer of the bibliography tells the story of the mother's cousin from Riga, who managed to escape the town after the German occupation on the last train to Moscow. A Russian translation of the book is on its way and it will most likely be translated into other languages in the near future.

The common time frame of the studies cited in this article has been, with a few exceptions, the interwar period and the Second World War. The future will doubtlessly see a shift towards the post-war period and the early years of the Cold War period.

There has been no research on antisemitism in Finland during and after the Cold War. Zionist aspirations in Finland are yet another theme that deserves more scholarly attention, including the readiness for Aliyah among Finnish Jews.

A wider scope, covering Jewish families, professionals and cultural and political societies in Scandinavia and Finland rather than communities in the various Nordic countries, would undoubtedly yield new insights into Nordic Jewish studies. ■

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Her doctorate, *Boundaries of an Urban Minority: The Helsinki Jewish Community from the End of Imperial Russia until the 1970s* (2013), examines the history of the Helsinki Jewish community. The study examines occupational status to analyse changes in the social position of the community. On the basis of this empirical material she analyses and contextualises different aspects of what has been set down in writing as Finnish Jewish history.



Simo Muir is an adjunct professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Helsinki and a postdoctoral research fellow in the project *Performing the Jewish Archive* at the University of Leeds. Muir received his MA in Yiddish Studies at SOAS, University of London, and his doctorate in Yiddish linguistics at the University of Helsinki in 2004, and has published widely on Jewish history in Finland, Jewish-Finnish relations, and latent antisemitism in Finland in the 1930s. Between 2010 and 2014 he was a researcher on the Finnish Academy-funded project *Cultures of Silence*, which focused on the Finnish historiography of the Holocaust. Muir is a contributing co-editor of Finland's *Holocaust: Silences of History* (2013).



Oula Silvennoinen is an adjunct professor of European history at the University of Helsinki. He was awarded his doctorate in 2008 for a work (*Salaisiet aseveljet*; translated into German as *Geheime Waffenbrüderschaft*, 2010) exploring the unknown co-operation between the Finnish and German security police in 1933-44. Other research interests include the history of policing, radical nationalism and the history of the Holocaust. His most recent work, together with Marko Tikka and Aapo Roselius, is *Suomalaiset fasistit* ('Finnish Fascists: Heralds of the Black Dawn', Helsinki 2016, translations into Swedish and Estonian under way). He currently blogs at <<http://demokratianvoimavirrat.fi/>>.



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