

**RESEARCH ON THE LOCAL AND TRANSGENERATIONAL
HOLOCAUST-MEMORY IN HAJDÚDOROG**

CZS223

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

The Jewish population living in Hungary, despite the restrictive laws and hardships, fared well until the Nazi invasion on March 19, 1944, after which they suffered the most merciless and paradoxical devastation of the Holocaust. During this period, 440,000 Jews were deported from Hungary to the death camps of Auschwitz at a very exceptional speed (Brahman, 1997). After the Holocaust, it became accepted that Nazi Germany was responsible for the genocide of 6 million Jews, but it is crucial to emphasise the “systematically executed, practically Pan-European policy” aspect of the Holocaust (Laczó, 2019), which could not have been implemented without the cooperation of the Hungarians (Brahman, 1997). After the Second World War, the memory of the Holocaust was characterised by silence until 1989, after which a more open discourse began to emerge (Laczó, 2015, as cited in Mitroiu, 2015), but even today, after the Holocaust, remembrance has to face the problems of forgetting, silencing, denial, collective trauma, and the transgenerational impact of the Holocaust trauma (Assmann, A., 2016).

The aim of this research is to examine and interpret the local and transgenerational Holocaust social memory in a settlement in Eastern Hungary, named Hajdúdorog². This town has a population of about 9,000³ and is one of the six “Hajdú-towns⁴”, with which the town’s history is closely intertwined. The inspiration for my research came from an ongoing research project entitled “*Research on Transgenerational Holocaust-memory in Central Europe*⁵” by György Csepeli, Richárd Papp, Richárd Kiss, and András Surányi in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia⁶. Their research has led me to ask the questions of how the Holocaust occurred in my hometown, Hajdúdorog, and how the town preserves the memory of the Jews.

Hajdúdorog has played an important role in the history of the Jews and continues to play even in the present. The significance of the town is demonstrated by the fact that between 1869 and 1941, the Jewish population reached several hundred⁷, and in the years around 1880, a synagogue was built on the corner of Jaczkovics and Dohány Street, and a ritual bath was

¹ Part of the following text has been published in *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI. Ethnology Without Borders¹* in January 2024.

² Hajdúdorog is located in Hajdú-Bihar County, in the neighbourhoods of Hajdúböszörmény and Hajdúnánás.

³ https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepsz2011/nepsz_03_09_2011.pdf

⁴ Hajdúböszörmény, Hajdúnánás, Hajdúszoboszló, Hajdúhadház, Vámospércs

⁵ <https://www.tatk.elte.hu/kiemeltprojektek/holokausztemlekezet?m=537> <https://www.holocaustmemory.org/>

⁶ Within the framework of their research, they attempt to interpret Holocaust social memory in different localities, in the capital, in towns, and in rural areas, exploring the similarities and differences through focus group and individual interviews. As part of the project, documentary films are produced and used, among other purposes, to develop Holocaust education.

⁷ Hungarian Central Statistical Office. (1993). *The Jewish population by settlement (1840-1941)*. Budapest.

established next to it⁸. During these years, community institutions were also established, such as the Chevra Kadisha⁹, Talmud-Torah School, and Charity Association¹⁰. Due to deportations, Hajdúdorog has no Jewish population today, however, the tomb of Rabbi Samuel Frankel, an internationally renowned Torah scholar of his time who was also a prominent leader of the town's Jewish community¹¹, has become a pilgrimage place for the Jews, who return to visit it on an annual basis. They have established and maintained a guesthouse next to the cemetery for this purpose.

In Hajdúdorog today, the memory of the Jews is preserved by the remaining houses and the cemetery, but the unmarked houses and the absence of the memory of the ghetto raise questions. My research aims to explore the spatial representations and meanings constructed in narratives of local Holocaust memory and the former Jewish population, and the meanings of forgetting and the absence of memory. Furthermore, my research also seeks to answer the questions: Are there transgenerational differences, continuities of remembering and forgetting? What does the Holocaust represent today for different generations? Besides, this research will also examine how the Jews making the pilgrimage are preserving and reconstructing their past, what meaning the town has for them, and how they maintain the memory of the Jews who lived here.

Since there are no Holocaust survivors left in Hajdúdorog, and the number of people who still have memories of those times is decreasing, the living memory of the Jews is changing into a collective cultural memory, a memory that the people of Hajdúdorog could not live through but passed on through generations. To examine how the local memory of the Jewish community and the tragic events in Hajdúdorog have been preserved, and what contemporary meanings the disappearance of the Jews who lived once in the town has, I will apply a social-psychological and cultural anthropological approach. The tragedy of the Holocaust has already been explored in several studies, but it is important to understand and interpret Holocaust-memory empirically, through personal narratives within a smaller community and context. As this research is person-centred and based on intensive fieldwork, it allows me to examine both local and empirical depths of memory in Hajdúdorog. Moreover, a significant aspect of the research is that it attempts to examine both Jewish and non-Jewish patterns of memory and focuses on the narratives of the present bearers of memory rather than the victims. For data collection, I will

⁸ Radics, K. (Ed.). (1997). *A Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár Forráskiadványai* 29. Debrecen: p. 28.

⁹ Burial Association.

¹⁰ Harsányi, L. (1970). *Adalékok a Hajdúvárosok zsidóságának történetéhez*. Budapest.

¹¹ Based on an interview with a Jewish pilgrim (2023).

use qualitative social science research methods and interpret the data collected within a contemporary theoretical framework¹² of collective memory.

Since few documents record the history of the Jews in Hajdúdorog and no comprehensive study has been carried out on the events of the Holocaust and the past of the Jews, this paper aims to fill this gap and commemorate the innocent deported and murdered residents of Hajdúdorog. In addition, this study also attempts to address the lack that local events have never been examined from a Jewish perspective, and that there is no interpretive analysis of Jewish pilgrimage.

First, I will introduce the methodology used in my research, and then I will present a historical and economic analysis to understand the path to deportation, and social dynamics in Hajdúdorog. Afterwards, the places related to the Holocaust and the history of the Jews will be examined. Following this section, I will then present an analysis of the interviews with members of the community of the town, divided into four parts: General attitudes and stereotypes about the Jews, Local memory, Culture of Remembrance, and later the Local attitudes towards the pilgrimage. I will discuss the first three directions and compare and contrast the generational changes in memory and the inherited processes. Since I encountered numerous anti-Semitic narratives during the fieldwork, in the following part, I will try to interpret and understand contemporary anti-Semitism. In the final section, I shift the focus to the perspective of the Jewish pilgrims in Hajdúdorog, describing their place of pilgrimage and the local residents' attitude towards the pilgrims. Finally, I draw conclusions from the research and suggest new possible research directions.¹³

2. METHODOLOGY

The study of cultural memory comprises several disciplines, including history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, so it is essential to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of memory research. Considering cultural memory as a “transdisciplinary phenomenon”, it is worth emphasising the importance of using different research methods and perspectives. Erll and Nünning argues that cultural memory has three dimensions: material, social and mental, pointing out that according to anthropological theories, culture also can be divided into these dimensions, thus, when researching cultural memory, these boundaries need to be crossed, for

¹² Halbwachs, M., & Coser, L. A. (1992). *On collective memory*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.; Assmann, J. (2011). *Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*. Cambridge University Press; Nora, P. (1989). *Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire*. *Representations*, 26, 7-24. Assmann, A. (2016). *Rossz Közérzet az emlékezetkultúrában, Beavatkozás. Múlt és Jövő Könyvek*; more in the reference list.

¹³ Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

instance when examining the relation between material and its social meaning (Erlil & Nünning, 2008). Kansteiner interpreted that cultural memory is not the same as history. It is a collective phenomenon, produced at the individual level, which is always mediated, and it can be studied through its impact (Kansteiner, 2002). In the field of memory research, the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs brought a significant contribution when he introduced the concept of “collective memory”, in which he interpreted memory not at an individual level, but at a collective one, believing that individual memory is influenced by the socio-cultural context. According to Keightley, “Memory is a lived process of making sense of time and the experience of it. (...) It is a process of making sense of experience, of constructing and navigating complex temporal narratives and structures and ascribing meaning not only to the past, but to the present and future also” (Keightley, 2010, pp. 55-56).

Due to the complex and interdisciplinary character of cultural memory, I approached my research questions from a social-psychological and cultural anthropological perspective, applying different qualitative social science methodologies. This paper is based on a one-year-long fieldwork research. In contrast to other social sciences, ethnographic fieldwork is particularly important in anthropological research, as the long time spent in the field allows for a deep understanding of a phenomenon under study (Eriksen, 2010). Besides fieldwork, I managed a fieldwork diary, conducted archival research, spatial and symbol analysis, and applied various interview techniques. Since I was researching two different communities, the non-Jewish community of Hajdúdorog and the Jewish pilgrim community, I used similar methods to research them, but different approaches were given more emphasis. According to my sampling criterion, the first community included those who were born and raised in Hajdúdorog or have been living in Hajdúdorog for at least 50 years. In order to examine the transgenerational changes of the Holocaust social memory, I analysed three different generations: 1. +70 years, 2. 35-70 years, and 3. 18-35 years.

In the second, pilgrim Jewish community, I included those who identified themselves as Jewish, and those who came from other cities or countries to Hajdúdorog specifically for pilgrimage.¹⁴

2.1 FIELDWORK

Field research has always played a prominent role in qualitative research methods, allowing the researcher to examine a community, group, or social phenomenon in its daily context from a holistic perspective. As I spent a year in the field, I was able to observe an entire year-long

¹⁴ Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

cycle, including the chronological structure, which became relevant in the study of local pilgrimage. In ethnographic research, participant observation is the primary method, which allows the data collected after the observation to be interpreted and analysed. In addition, the researcher can record videos or take photographs and reflect on their experience (Rosenthal, 2018). Participant observation also allows for a deeper insight into the sociocultural context of the field (Eriksen, 2010). Conducting participant observation was not entirely possible due to the topic of the research, as this method involves being in the daily life of a community. However, this research is person-centred, with greater emphasis on the interview methods. Participant observation could be partially realised when studying the Jewish community that came to the town, but the time spent among them was limited.

As a first step of the fieldwork, to reconstruct and understand the town's local historical and economic context before and after the Second World War, I conducted archival research. Examining documents such as maps, municipal records, and documents that were produced relatively in the past for administrative purposes, allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of a given period (Rodriguez & Baher, 2006). In the framework of the archival research, I visited the local library, but I had to realise that there were very few documents remaining in the town. Since the past of Hajdúdorog is closely related to the past of the surrounding commonly named "Hajdú-towns"¹⁵, and several documents were not preserved in Hajdúdorog, I also searched for written and historical documents in Hajdúböszörmény's and Hajdúnánás' libraries and archives. Besides, I also visited the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives in Budapest. Additionally, I received documents from other people living in Hajdúdorog who were studying the past of Jews¹⁶.

The second step of my fieldwork was to contact the people of Hajdúdorog and conduct interviews. In order to find new people for interviews, I used different interviewing methods, such as the snowball method, semi-structured interviewing, person-on-the-street interviewing, focus group interviewing, and narrative interviewing. I also conducted interviews with the Jewish pilgrims, but due to language barriers, I had to apply different methods. I will discuss the interview methods in more detail in a later section.

¹⁵ Towns referred to as "Hajdú-towns": Hajdúdorog, Hajdúnánás, Hajdúböszörmény, Hajdúhadház, Hajdúszoboszló and Vámospércs.

¹⁶ Among the most relevant archives I found are municipal records, family photos, a photo of the former synagogue, and a list of deportees. After contacting the leaders of the Jewish pilgrims, they helpfully sent me maps from the 1800s, pictures, and other documents.

In places related to the past and present of the Jews, I applied the method of spatial and symbol analysis. This involved visiting and examining community spaces and preserved Jewish houses. In addition, in order to find out about the role of Hajdúdorog in the lives of the Jews who make pilgrimage here, and to visit and understand the significance of the place of pilgrimage, I reached out to the leaders of their guesthouse. Engaging with the visiting Jews proved to be a difficult task and required a lot of time. In the town, I approached the local caretaker of the Jewish cemetery, but neither he nor the town's residents could not help me get in touch with them. Finally, I managed to contact them via a Hebrew-language website and arrange a meeting. They welcomed and guided me around their guesthouse, and showed me the places they consider essential, such as their newly built mikveh¹⁷, the Jewish cemetery, and their pilgrimage site, the tomb of their Rabbi Samuel Frankel. After discovering that the surrounding towns are also places of pilgrimage, I visited the local caretakers of the Jewish cemeteries in Hajdúböszörmény and Hajdúnánás, who provided information about the pilgrims and guided me around the cemeteries. Visiting and analysing the pilgrimage sites of the neighbouring towns was necessary in order to gain a deeper understanding through a comparative analysis of how the Jews preserve the memory of my hometown, and how important Hajdúdorog is in their lives.

From the beginning, I have kept a fieldwork diary of all the time spent in the field, which provides a valuable tool for reflecting on and analysing qualitative data and for gaining a fuller understanding of my research role and my impact on the researched communities.¹⁸

2.2 INTERVIEW METHODS

In the transgenerational analysis of the residents of Hajdúdorog, I applied diverse interviewing techniques, incorporating the six research questions developed by György Csepeli, Richárd Papp and his fellow researchers. The main interviewing technique I used was semi-structured interviewing, which gradually deepened and allowed my interview partners enough space to share information or stories they considered important. Depending on consent, I recorded the interviews and later transcribed them for further analysis, or I made handwritten notes. The research questions had four different directions. With these questions, like György Csepeli and his fellow researchers, I have attempted to examine the different memory strategies. Related to

¹⁷ *Ritual bath.*

¹⁸ *Parts of this chapter have been published in the Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders.*

their studies¹⁹, I also aimed to discover what motivation might be behind the remembrance and the forgetting, the current significance of the Holocaust in the town, and the connection between Holocaust remembrance and contemporary anti-Semitism.

Mainly I used the snowball method to find interview partners. Almost all of those who were willing to be interviewed were able to recommend potential new interview partners, and often they even provided a phone number. My parents also recommended me possible participants. When I had the opportunity, I tried to form focus groups, however, I only managed to form mini focus groups of 2-3 people. Focus group interviewing is a useful qualitative method because it enables the researcher to uncover collective opinions, group norms, and group processes. Furthermore, this type of interviewing provides an opportunity for members to formulate normative assumptions and collectively reflect on their previous ones (Bodor, 2013). In some cases, I conducted narrative interviews with my respondents. In narrative interviews, the respondents have maximum freedom to express their perspective on a topic or tell their life story in a long narrative without the researcher interrupting the interview with questions (Rosenthal, 2018).

In most cases, interviews with members of the older and middle generations took place at their homes. In general, interviews with the respondents of the younger generation took place at an agreed location. After a series of interviews, I noticed that my interview partners had similar opinions and perspectives, thus, I thought it would be more effective if I could interview more randomly selected people. That was when I started conducting person-on-the-street interviews. Before the interview, I asked about their age and how long they had been living in Hajdúdorog, therefore, I only interviewed people who met my sampling criteria. The person-on-the-street interviewing method proved to be a useful way to talk to more open people with different views. It was especially members of the older generation who were reluctant to talk about the Holocaust and Jews, and it was mainly from them that I received rejection. There have been cases where I have been told, *“Go to the library, they surely have books on this topic”* or *“You must have learned, why don’t you read history textbooks?”* (here and from now, the text in italics means that I am quoting directly from my interview partners). In many cases they hesitated *“I cannot help you, I do not have enough memory of them, I was not alive at that time”* but they could be convinced to give an interview after an introductory conversation.

¹⁹ Csepeli, Gy., Papp, R., & Surányi, A. (2023). *A hiány jelenvalóléte – A holokauszt intergenerációs helyi emlékezete a ma élő magyarok körében*. DOI: 10.56233/SZABADPIAC.2023.1.7

In interviewing the Jews visiting Hajdúdorog, I asked them questions such as “What does Hajdúdorog mean to you personally? What are your experiences during the visit? How do you remember the Holocaust?”. With these questions and more, I was looking for answers to how they preserve the memory of Hajdúdorog and the memory of those who were deported from the town.

In order to meet and interview the visiting Jews, I asked for the help of the people of Hajdúdorog, but even after months, no one could give me any information on how to contact them. Some of them said “*they cannot be contacted*”, “*they won’t talk to me*” and some even warned me to be careful with them. Finally, I was able to contact the leaders of their guesthouse in Hajdúdorog, who were happy to answer my questions. Due to language restrictions and to avoid misunderstandings, I conducted e-mail interviews. It is worth noting here that the language barrier in the e-mail interviews was overcome by using a translator, therefore the text later quoted from them was generated with the help of a translation program.²⁰

2.3 RESEARCHER’S POSITION AND ETHICAL ISSUES²¹

I carried out my research following the code of ethics defined by the American Anthropological Association (AAA)²². In my fieldwork, I have ensured the anonymity of my interview partners, even though there was no specific request for it, as I consider that the result of the research will not be affected by the lack of this information about my respondents. During my research, I became aware of stories that were not requested to be withheld, but I only partially disclosed them in order to avoid future potential conflict situations.

A special feature of ethnographic fieldwork is that the researcher is involved in the research on a personal level, not just a professional one (Eriksen, 2010). Defining my research role has been an interesting aspect of my research, as it has often had an impact on my research findings. In researching the memory of the people of Hajdúdorog, I aimed to develop an etic perspective as I was a member of the community I was researching. The etic perspective means that the researcher takes an analytical view of the community and aims to describe and explain phenomena as an outside observer (Eriksen, 2010). As I grew up in Hajdúdorog, I am a member of the community I research, however, as my studies have taken away from the town for more than 10 years, there is a certain dichotomy in my research position. Being part of the community

²⁰ *Parts of this chapter have been published in the Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders.*

²¹ *This chapter has been published in the Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders.*

²² <https://americananthro.org/about/anthropological-ethics/>

and knowing some of them made it easier in those cases for me to build trust with my interview partners and those people also were more open to being interviewed. Therefore, in some cases, the interviews were like conversations, however, there were cases where I stayed in the role of a researcher.

Among my respondents were some who openly shared anti-Semitic narratives with me. For these interviews, my role as a researcher was not fulfilled. The motives behind my asked questions were interpreted as my lack of knowledge on the topic. Moreover, because of my young age relative to them, and their view of university education that *"they don't tell me the truth in university, and they also don't want to hear the truth in my research"*, a role was created in which I got into the role of the "clueless" and they were the "knowledgeable". In this role, they thought that since I did not have the *"truth"* they would "enlighten me", share with me, and teach me the *"knowledge that not everyone has found out"*. They also believed that this *"knowledge"* could only be accessed by those who *"already figured out how the world works, can read between the lines, and don't believe everything"*. I have been told that *"they [Jews] make me do this research with ulterior motives"* and that *"they [professors] don't want to hear the real opinions of the people"*. In one case, my interview partner was convinced that I was being made to do this research by the *"Zionist clandestine power"*. One of my respondents, who told anti-Semitic narratives, contacted me again the next day of the interview and requested me to *"make my answers more appropriate because I am afraid for your future"*.

In examining the Jewish community of pilgrims, I sought to develop an emic perspective, from which I could discover their views. When an anthropologist is researching a community from an emic perspective, it means that they seek to learn about the community from the „native's point of view", and thus to learn how the members of the community understand and experience life. (Eriksen, 2010, p. 40). In my research role, I could not become a member of the community, I remained an observer as I did not speak their language, the pilgrimage lasted only a few days, and as a woman, I was not allowed to participate in their rituals²³ and prayers. However, despite the language barrier and the more private commemoration due to the war situation²⁴ I was welcomed and trusted. Building shared trust was developed during the email exchange before the pilgrimage. It is interesting to note that the role of the researcher-informant altered, as the past of Hajdúdorog is important to them and they have been researching the history of the Jews

²³ „A ritual is a stereotyped sequence of activities ... performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests." - Turner, V. (1972). Symbols in African Ritual. *Science*, 179, 1100-1105.

²⁴ *The Israeli – Hamas Conflict*, 2023.

in the town for years, they asked for help with their research, thus, I became to some extent a research partner for them.

My alternating roles as a researcher, friend, clueless, informant, research partner, have had different effects on me and on the research. The fact that I was considered a research partner by the pilgrim Jews, and we helped each other with information to put together the pieces of the Jewish past, established trust between us, and there was no hierarchy in our relation in which I was in a subordinate or superior position to the community I was researching. On the other hand, I personally felt uncomfortable being forced into the role of “clueless” by my interview partners, who held anti-Semitic views, but I attempted to keep my personal beliefs, feelings and thoughts outside the research and approach these people from a cultural relativist perspective. Cultural relativism is both a theoretical premise and a methodological rule, which aims to ensure that the researcher understands the research community as objectively as possible and that they do not compare them to their own moral standards (Eriksen, 2010).

3. LOCAL HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In order to understand the contemporary memory of the Holocaust, it is crucial to have knowledge about the local Jewish past, how the deportation occurred, what places played an active role in the history, and which places still preserve traces of the former Jewish community. In addition, the past of the Jews of Hajdúdorog is also important in order to gain a more profound understanding of the Jewish pilgrim community, who return every year and seek to discover their connections to Hajdúdorog.

As a result of Joseph II's reforms and positive policies for the Jews, the number of Jews in Hungary began to grow in the 19th century (Brahman, 1997). The Jews who came to the Hajdú-towns were mainly resettled from the nearby Szabolcs County, and their numbers increased. In 1840, there were 40 Jews in Hajdúdorog, which had increased to 357 by 1869, with many of them already renting land. The Jews living here also started on the path of assimilation, they spoke the Hungarian language in their homes, participated in the 1848-49 War of Independence, and made donations. By 1868, a Jewish community religious community had been established, whose president was Lipót Harstein, and a temple had been built (Harsányi, 1970). As Jews had no access to land until the middle of the 19th century, they were forced to make a living from trade, industry, and banking, and thus they played an important role in the economic life of the countryside (Deáky et al., 1994). Among the Jews in Hajdúdorog, there was already a pharmacist and were large farmers, but they were mainly present in the trade sector, including spice and grocery merchants, haberdashers, tavern keepers, and bankers (Harsányi, 1970).

Around the 1880s, they built a synagogue at 20 Jackovics Mihály Street as their old temple was already small for their numbers. Next to the synagogue, a new building was constructed above the ritual bath, providing guest rooms for traveling poor people. On the road, Újfehértói Street, a Talmud-Torah school, a kosher slaughterhouse, and a rabbi and cantor's residence were built in one block (Harsányi 1970). In 1850, József Spiró became the rabbi of the town, followed by Samuel Frankel who died in 1882²⁵. (Halmos, 2003).

Around 1875, modern forms of anti-Semitism had already reached our country, and in 1882 a Jew was accused of blood libel in Tiszaeszlár, a town near Hajdúdorog. By 1890, the Jewish population in Hajdúdorog had increased by 105% in 10 years, presumably because the town remained peaceful and safe for the Jews, therefore they moved here from the surrounding areas (Harsányi, 1970). In everyday life, they became more and more integrated with the other residents of the town, they also attended the funeral of Kossuth Lajos in Budapest, helped their fellow Christians in the struggle to establish the Greek catholic Bishopric of Hajdúdorog, and among them was the first martyr of the town, Ignác Gál (Harsányi, 1970).

There was already a Jewish doctor in the town, Mór Rittersporn, who graduated as a doctor in Vienna and from 1854 to 1901 was the town's prominent and respected chief physician. His son Dr. Miklós Rittersporn, followed in his footsteps and had four daughters with his wife Malvin Wohl (Harsányi, 1970). The Figure 1. in the annexes shows the Rittersporn family. In the picture, from left to right, Malvin Wohl, their four daughters, and Miklós Rittersporn can be seen. It is not known when this picture was taken²⁶. One of my interview partners maintained contact with the descendants of the Rittersporn family for many years and even showed me some letters. In 2019, one of Rittersporn's grandchildren visited the family's old house, and a video record was also made of the event.

According to some of my interview partners, mainly from the older generation, the residents, including the Christian ones, lived in peace with the Jews in the town. Many of them recalled with warm hearts that they could buy on credit from the Jewish merchants, emphasising that they were not afraid that the residents would not give them their money: *"They gave money for wheat on credit, for green wheat"*, *"Lázár Lajos was a shopkeeper, and he even used to say to*

²⁵ According to *Jews on pilgrimage to Hajdúdorog*.

²⁶ . One of my interview partners who showed me the picture remembered the Rittersporn family in the following way: *"On the corner of Jaczkovics Street and Dohány Street is the house of Miklós Rittersporn, who was a Jewish doctor in the 19th century. The Rittersporn parents had four daughters, but it is not known how they were rescued, but all four daughters escaped. The doctor and his wife were deported from their home to Auschwitz in June 1944. They never came back, they died in Auschwitz, and one of their daughters was responsible for the inherited fortune. It is not known how the four girls escaped to America. Their descendants are still living in America today."*

children, “Come here, do you want some candy?” “The population loved the Jews, they plowed together as if nothing was wrong”, “..but it was interesting, no one went to court claiming that the Jews deceived them, because they didn’t deceive anyone, yet this still became their fate”.

However, alongside the peaceful coexistence, there was also the memory of when Jewish children did not go to school on Sabbath, their schoolmates broke the windows of the synagogue with stones. One person remembered that his grandmother told him that her schoolmates stuffed bacon in the mouth of her Jewish schoolmate and put coins in their hands. My interview partner considered these acts as “*childish anti-Semitism*”, suggesting that these actions were more like a childish prank.

The Nazi invasion of Hungary took place on March 19, 1944, with one of the main aims being to resolve the “Jewish question”. This was the time when Obersturmbandführer²⁷ Eichmann Adolf and his commandos arrived in Hungary to organise the deportation of the Hungarian Jews (Deáky et al., 1994). From April 5 onwards, Jews had to mark themselves with a yellow star, which later prepared and facilitated their deportation, as they were easily identifiable (Brahman, 1997). In Hajdúdorog, the Jews were ghettoised in May 1944, in a small area in and around the synagogue. After a few days, Jews were brought from Hajdúszovát and Józsa. The leader of the Jewish community was Dr. László Hercz, the president of the Jewish Council, but after a short time, he was sent to labour service together with 50 other men. Unmarried and childless mothers between the ages of 18 and 30 worked in the field on the outskirts of the town, without payment. There was no violence against the Jews by the local authorities, and there were no food shortages, thus life in the ghetto was bearable. The gendarmes from other places were brutal with the Jews, subjecting everyone, including women and young girls, to humiliating body searches and examining every suitcase while telling the Jews “Why do you need this? You will be smelling the violets from the bottom soon enough”. The Jews were transported to Debrecen on June 17 (Harsányi, 1970).

Of the 360 people deported, only 60 returned. After the war, the religious community was unable to be revived (Harsányi, 1970). According to a local municipal record, anti-Semitism and blood libels continued to prevail in the town. The record preserves that the Hajdúdorog municipality discusses a rumour circulating in the town that “Jews are catching children, killing

²⁷ *Military rank.*

them, and stuffing sausages from them”, but they are afraid to announce that this is a fake rumour.²⁸

The last rabbi of Hajdúdorog was Abraham Citron. In 1957, only three Jews were living in the town (Harsányi, 1997). In the summer of 1957, Samuel Reichmann sold the synagogue, which by then was used for storing products²⁹, and the population scattered the pieces of the building. This meant the end of the religious community in Hajdúdorog^{30,31}

4. MEMORY PLACES – PLACES OF MEMORY³²

Maurice Halbwachs (1992) distinguished between individual and collective memory and understood memory as a process of reconstructing the past, rather than reliving it. He also differentiated between history and memory and did not consider history as memory. He interpreted memory not as the result of brain functions but as a socially determined process. According to him, even individual memories are created through social interactions, and thus the ability to remember is a collective creation (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992). He argued that “Collective frameworks are, to the contrary, precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society” (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992, p. 40). This means that memory requires “collective frameworks” through which the past can be reconstructed, and that the loss of this framework causes forgetting (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992). Jan Assmann also argued on the theory of Halbwachs that collective memory needs a spatial and temporal binding, a time to which memory can be linked: “Memory needs places and tends toward spatialization. (...) Group and place take on a symbolic sense of community that the group also adheres to, when it is separated from its own space, by symbolically reproducing the holy sites” (Assmann, J., 2011, p. 25).

Pierre Nora argued that history “belongs to everyone and to no one” and “its claim to universal authority”, and “memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects...” (Nora, 1989, p. 9). Pierre Nora introduced the concept of “lieux de mémoire”³³ to social sciences. He stated that “These lieux de mémoire are fundamentally remains, the ultimate

²⁸ *Municipal Record, Hajdúdorog Committee Meeting, May 20, 1946.*

²⁹ *According to the memory of one of my interview partners.*

³⁰ *According to an archival document on the History of the Tempe of Hajdúdorog. Author and date unknown.*

³¹ *Parts of this chapter have been published in the Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders.*

³² *This chapter have been published in the Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders.*

³³ *Due to the complex meaning of this expression, the original term will be used in this essay.*

embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it (...) Lieux de mémoire are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are lieux in three senses of the word material, symbolic, and functional” (Nora, 1989, p. 12; 1998, pp. 18-19). I consider the places associated with the Jewish community and the history of the Jews in Hajdúdorog as “lieux de mémoire” and I analyse them from the perspective of Pierre Nora’s theory, but first I will present how the places are remembered by the members of the three generations.

Members of the older generation were able to determine exactly where the former synagogue and the ghetto were, they could locate Jewish houses, both existing and no longer existing ones, and they know that there is a Jewish cemetery in the town. My interview partners from the middle generation could also name the cemetery, several could name the synagogue, and some Jewish houses that no longer exist, in addition to Jewish houses that still exist. Members of the younger generation could recall significantly fewer Jewish-related places. In this group, they could only name the cemetery and only one person could remember the former synagogue. As we can observe, generations have been able to mark spaces in relation to Jews to varying degrees. The reasons for this can be better understood by analysing these sites.

4.1 ABSENCE

In this section I would like to analyse a place that no longer exists in its material reality, but as “lieux de mémoire” carries on the memory of the past. This place is the synagogue, which I mentioned earlier that was built in the late 1880s and was demolished in 1957³⁴ (Harsányi, 1970). As members of the older generation were alive in 1957, according to them, they were children when the synagogue was demolished, therefore the individual and collective memory described by Halbwachs are combined in their remembrance.

The synagogue’s role in Judaism is significant, as it became a place of gathering and a symbol of the community (Fernando, 1990). In Hajdúdorog, the synagogue was in a central position, and it was the most representative of the Jewish presence in the town, thus it was a symbol of the whole Jewish community. With the demolition of the synagogue, the Jews disappeared from the town, thus the Jewish community was also symbolically destroyed. The pieces of the synagogue, according to my respondents, were scattered by the population, and a private house stands on the same site now. Decades later, one of my interview partners found the synagogue’s

³⁴ According to an archival document on the history of the Temple of Hajdúdorog. Author and date unknown.

Tablets of the Law by accident at a family home that was being used as a sidewalk. My interview partner recalled the event like this:

“On the corner of Jaczkovics Street and Dohány Street was the synagogue, which was demolished in the late 1950s or 1960s. I was going somewhere on my bike, and a friend stopped me to check some spoons to see if they were silver. I went into the house to look at the spoons, and I came out and I stepped out on the doorstep, and I’m going crazy I said, this is a Jewish stone here, but it’s dug into the ground, as a sidewalk. I don’t know why I recognised it as Jewish, but thank God the writing was on the side down, so it wasn’t worn. I say to him, where did this stone come from, the Jewish cemetery? He says no, when they demolished the synagogue, we took it. He was just a boy at the time, he must have been 16 or 17. The stone must have weighed 80 kilograms. There was a ritual bath behind the synagogue. Now it’s a private residence. I told him: Give me the stone, that’s all that’s left from the synagogue. Then I paid for the stone, and he said: Let’s take it, let’s get a shovel. We dug it up, and we even had a drink after it. After this, I took it to the museum.”

The narrator of this story still vividly and emotionally recalls the discovery of the last piece of the synagogue. The story illustrates the difficulties of preserving the memory of the Holocaust and the past, and how the process of forgetting can occur. The reference to the Tablets of the Law as “Jewish stone” shows a lack of knowledge of the Jewish religion and that those who used the Tablets of the Law as a sidewalk were not aware of the significance of the “stone”. The Tablets of Moses, instead of being a valuable object that preserved the memory of Judaism, served only a practical purpose. However, the narrative also reveals a desire and a sense of responsibility to preserve and protect the values of the past. The Tablet of the Law was taken to the local museum; however, it was later moved to Israel. While the original Tablet of the Law was able to be found in the museum, the Jewish pilgrims, according to one of my respondents, used to visit it, but now that only the copy is in the museum, they no longer visit it. For the pilgrim Jews, the surviving original Tablet of the Law also functioned as a “lieux de mémoire” as the only remaining part of the synagogue symbolised for them the whole former synagogue, the former Jewish community, and the past of the Jews. However, the replica of the Tablet of the Law is no longer a “lieux de mémoire” for them as it is no longer linked to time or space or the former community. For the people of Hajdúdorog, however, it continues to function as a “lieux de mémoire”, as it is located in the local museum and given symbolic meaning again within the framework of the exhibition about the town’s past. The Figure 2

shows the original Tablets of Moses, which was photographed after it was excavated, and the Figure 3 shows the replica in the Museum. The last surviving piece of the synagogue has been found in good condition, regardless of its use, and even the writing has not been severely damaged.

The location of the synagogue and the ghetto is unmarked. Members of the older generation have individual memories, which means they have experiences, thus communicative memory of the synagogue. According to Jan Assmann (2011), “The communicative memory comprises memories related to the recent past. These are what the individual shares with his contemporaries. A typical instance would be generational memory that accrues within the group, originating and disappearing with time or, to be more precise, with its carriers. Once those who embodied it have died, it gives way to a new memory” (Assmann, J., 2011, p. 36). For the older generation, even though the site remains unmarked, and the synagogue no longer exists, for them, the place of the family home remains a “lieux de mémoire” because they can link the memory of the synagogue and ghetto with the site. Even among the members of the middle generation, some have a memory of the synagogue, which they heard about mainly from the older generation. The younger generation has almost no memory of the synagogue, as they have not heard or learned about the former synagogue, and as the site is also unmarked, they no longer have “collective social frameworks” to reconstruct the past.

The Figure 4. in the annexes depicts the former synagogue. When and by whom the picture was taken is unknown³⁵. This is the only surviving photograph of the former building, its history and appearance are not preserved in any written document. On the top of the synagogue, the Tablets of Moses, which was found later, is clearly identifiable. My respondents described the synagogue as a large building with coloured windows, which was used as a seed store during and after the Second World War. One of them told a story about the period when the building was demolished: *“There was a waitress on the corner of the Bocskai building, she was a Jewish woman, and she cried, I asked her: Why are you crying? She answered: “If they were to tear down your temple, wouldn’t you cry?”*. My other respondent reflected on the story and asked: *“It’s a shame because if the Greek Catholic church or the Roman Catholic church were demolished, wouldn’t you cry?”* The reply was: *“Of course I would”*. These narratives suggest that for the Jews who survived the Holocaust and returned home from Auschwitz, the loss of

³⁵ It can be found in the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, where the synagogue of Hajdúdorog can be seen together with the ones of Hajdúszovát and Hajdúnánás. I colorized the black and white image afterwards with a program.

their synagogue was also painful. During the interviews, it was noticeable that my interviewees began to approach the events of the past critically³⁶.

As part of the space and symbol analysis, I also examined the public spaces and monuments of Hajdúdorog. In the public space of the town, there is only one monument commemorating the Second World War. The Figure 6 shows the monument on which the names of the victims of the war are listed. A close examination of the list reveals the names of Jews who died during the war, but there is no indication that they did not die in the conflict as soldiers but were victims of genocide against the Jews. This memorial also shows the absence and silence of Holocaust remembrance.³⁷

4.2 ANALYSIS OF LOCAL MEMORY SPACES AND SYMBOLS

In this section, I would like to present some of the existing local memory places. The first of these is the house of the previously mentioned Dr. Miklós Rittersporn and his wife, where they lived together with their four daughters³⁸. Their house is located opposite the place of the former synagogue, on the other side of the street. This house was also part of the ghetto during the Holocaust. After the Holocaust, the house was taken over by the municipality, and over the years it was used as an office, dormitory, storehouse, and then, in the framework of the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of Christianity, it was opened as a Museum of Local History in August 2000.³⁹

From the outside, there is no indication that the house was once part of the ghetto or that its owners lost their lives during the Holocaust. Inside the museum is a memorial plaque, a photo of the Rittersporn family, and a copy of the Tablets of the Law. The exhibitions present the past of Hajdúdorog, archaeological finds, and ethnographic objects. There is also a high emphasis on the history of the town's Greek Catholic roots and a monument commemorating Jesus on the cross. It is important to note here that the vast majority of the population of Hajdúdorog today is Greek Catholic, and Christianity plays an essential role in the identity of the town. The

³⁶ I also received a map of Hajdúdorog in 1893 from the Jewish pilgrims, which is illustrated in the Figure 5. The site of the former synagogue is marked on the map with a Star of David, in the same place that my respondents had indicated based on their memories. The former building was located in the centre of Hajdúdorog, as the image shows. It is interesting to note that the growing Greek Catholic identity of the town is already visible in these times, as the Greek Catholic Church was also located in the centre.

³⁷ Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

³⁸ According to one of my interview partners Dr. Miklós Rittersporn and his Wife Malvin Wohl and 2 of their 4 daughters were deported to Auschwitz, where the parents lost their lives, but fortunately, their 4 daughters survived and escaped to the United States of America.

³⁹ <http://hdmuvhaz.hu/helytorteneti-gyujtemeny/>

museum's opening ceremony can be interpreted as Arnold van Gennep's rite of passage concept, as the house, previously Jewish-owned and bearing Holocaust memories, is transformed, on a Christian celebration, into a new role in society, serving new purposes. In this "rite of passage", the Jewish house is reintegrated into society in a role that can be associated with positive events in the people's minds (Gennep et al., 1960). The museum, while still representing the memory of the Jews, and the exhibition serves to preserve the Jewish history of the past, their memory has become marginalised.

The majority of the older generation referred to the house as a former Jewish house and ghetto, which means that for them the house is still a "lieux de mémoire" linked to the memory of the Jews, as the house is still associated with Jews through the physical space that remained, and the symbolic meaning attached to it. For the older people, therefore the house has not been given a new identity and significance. Members of the middle generation were still aware that the house was Jewish owned. For the younger generation, even though the house remained physically preserved, it no longer carried the memory of the Jews and was defined in its new role as a museum. The Figure 7 shows the surviving Rittersporn house in its present state. It has undergone transformations since the Second World War, both in terms of its role and its appearance. One of my interviewees recalled with sadness that the original fence and terrace of the house had been demolished. Another respondent mentioned a legend surrounding the house: that a fountain was buried in the garden of the house, but no evidence of this has ever been found. After asking others if they had heard of this, one of them reflected on the story and suggested that the case of the missing ritual bath had been changed over time into the buried fountain legend.

The other existing house that also has complex memory layers is the house in Újfehértó Street, which functions as a private house. This house is shown by the Figure 8. It is on the same block with another family house which is proven to have been bought from a Jewish owner. The house has the unique feature that it was referred to as a Jewish house by many of the older generation and also by many of the middle generation, but some of my interview partners said that it was certainly never Jewish-owned. Those who said it was a Jewish house were convinced, and often used the argument that *"it must be a Jewish house because it typically looks like one"*. In the end, I have not been able to prove either side's claim with an official source, and pilgrim Jews have been also trying to find the answer for years, even to this day, therefore I was unable to discover whether it is the house or the building which might existed earlier that made the place a "lieux de mémoire" for the older and middle generations. No one of the younger generation

has named this building in connection with the memory of the Jews, but during the interviews, they also could not name any other Jewish houses.

The Figure 9 shows the white house next to the house in question in the Figure 8, that, according to the documents, was bought from a Jewish owner. One of my Jewish pilgrim interviewees told me that the house is special to them because the rabbis lived here before the war, but Samuel Frankel, whose tomb became a place of pilgrimage, did not live here. Records show that the rabbi's house, the kosher slaughterhouse, and the Talmud Torah School were located on this street, on the same block. The pilgrim also said that the former slaughterhouse still exists today, behind the white house, but the location of the school is in question, as is the past of the house next to it.

The building in the Figure 10 was also inhabited by Jews in the past and has survived intact to the present day. Today, it is a Local Library and House of Culture. According to narratives, the house was visited by Jewish pilgrims who came here. There is no indication, either inside or outside the building, of the fate of the Jewish residents. Several members of the older generation still remembered the house, but none of the younger generation named it, even though the material remains. Presumably, the absence of a mark on the building contributed to the memory being forgotten.

As we have seen, many aspects can influence the way places are remembered. Based on the experience of the generational interviews, members of the older generation were able to list places associated with Jews, even those that no longer exist or are unmarked, but members of the middle generation had more limited knowledge of them, and members of the younger generation mainly could only name the cemetery. The way the memory of places has changed over the generations has been influenced by multiple factors. The lack of marking of places, the lack of knowledge, and the meaning change of places all may have contributed to that members of the younger generation no longer have a collective social memory of places related to Jews. Since the cemetery has a specific role, I will discuss it in a later section.⁴⁰

5. GENERAL ATTITUDES AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT JEWS

In this section, I present and analyse how the members of the three different generations answered the questions “Who are the Jews?” and “What were the causes of anti-Semitism?”.

⁴⁰ *Parts of this chapter have been published in the Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders.*

With these questions, I intended to examine how my respondents define the Jews, and what their general attitudes and stereotypes towards Jews are.

Among the older generation, many defined Jews as *“those who were born Jewish”* and *“those who are Jewish by descent”*, thus they viewed Jews as an ethnic group. Others, however, categorised them as a *“religious community”*. Someone thought *“Well, I can’t define who the Jews are, a Jew is someone who identifies themselves as a Jew”*, implying that it is one’s personal internal choice. Others said that: *“They dressed differently, they wore hats, they ate kosher”*. However, there were definitions that included stereotyped views: *“The Jews were merchants, they had their customs, they had their eating habits, they had their meals”*. Someone described the Jews as *“They are extraordinary people, who are achieving their goals in everything they do all around the world. They are all-achievers, who can do everything and smart people. They are this kind of people, that’s the way God created them. That’s all”*. Another respondent defined the Jews as *“Those who wear hats and don’t work, but still live, Jews never worked”*.

The reasons behind the persecution of the Jews were described by several people as political, with several mentioning the Germans and Hitler, as one of my interviewees said: *“I don’t know, obviously it’s always been in the politics, the first they tried to settle they were usually not allowed by the municipalities. I don’t understand it either, I think it was intensified by the Second World War, and Hitler’s action may have cruelly intensified hatred against Jews. To this day, I still cannot understand it, it was the genocide of world history. They were people too”*. According to a different narrative: *“It was a bad decision by the leader of the time, a wrong decision to exterminate the Jews. Maybe because Jews don’t like to work. The Jews were merchants, and they did not consider it work, and that’s why they thought they weren’t working. Hungary is an agricultural country, not an industrial one, and they thought that Jews just came and went, and they did not think of merchanting as a work. The Jew was born to be a merchant; they were good merchants; they had a talent for it.”* There were also narratives that included Jewish stereotypes for example: *“They were persecuted for their wealth, they had shops, they were honest, they gave credit for goods, they also traded eggs, they were helpful, they also had legal knowledge”*; *“Well, because they were successful in everything, I’m thinking more of the past that they were successful in everything, and that’s what made Hitler dislike the Jews. People were jealous and that’s why they persecuted them. I’m sure of it. Hitler was envious too”*.

Members of the middle generation also mentioned categories such as religious or ethnic groups: *“A Jew is someone whose roots are Jewish”, “they are a religious group it is well known”, “those who practice the Jewish religion, those who respect Jewish traditions”*. One of my respondents said that: *“According to the law, a Jew is someone who identifies themselves as a Jew, but I think that someone who is a child of Israel by blood”*. Stereotyped responses such as Jews are *“those who have ringlets”* also emerged. The lack of knowledge of the Jewish religion is indicated by the way someone defined the Jews as *“They consider themselves by Jesus the most special people in the world”*. However, anti-Semitic views also emerged in this age group. More people used negative, inappropriate words to describe them. They defined Jews as, for example: *“They are stateless people, they have no country, they would like to come to our country, the Jews never had a country. They feel superior, they can rape your child, they can kill your child because they think they have the authority to do so, but you can’t hurt their children. There are more of them than of the Hungarians”, “those who recognise no one but themselves as superior”, “they are the cause of all trouble”, “they are (vulgarity) immigrant people who are always looking for a new homeland”, “the Jews are (vulgarity) flowers.”*

There were stereotypes that they were persecuted because of *“their money, because they were clever, they were smart, they were good merchants”*, and therefore *“people envied them”*. The *“Nazis”* and *“Hitler”* have been cited by several respondents as the causes of Jewish persecution: *“That’s a question for Hitler, because he wanted to kill them all, not the people turned against them! Well, this is history!”*; *“Well, then the Nazis considered themselves superior”*. Anti-Semitic narratives also appeared in these responses. Some narratives stated that the reasons for anti-Semitism were that *“the Jews are in powerful positions, they steal the world’s money”*. One of my speakers questioned the accuracy of the Holocaust events: *“A theatre was put on, the big dogs escaped, the little ones were deported, the big ones got a free ticket to America”*. Someone interpreted the events of the Holocaust as a kind of deserved punishment for what the Jews had received for *“conspiring and robbing, plundering people”*. Other thought that *“they were bad people, they must have done something bad, that’s why they were taken away”*.

Some of the younger generation described Jews as a *“religious community belonging to a distinct ethnic group”*, but some just considered them a *“religious ethnic group”*. Someone said that: *“Actually, I would describe the Jews as an ethnic group who lived all around the world, and they had a Jewish religion that they followed”*. One person mentioned that he first

encountered the word “Jew” from a friend who shamed him for not buying him a drink in the pub.

For the causes of anti-Semitism, one person said that “*they didn’t want this kind of mindset to spread*”, but there were also views with stereotypes that “*they were feared, they had too much influence because of their wealth, and (vulgarity) people were afraid of them*”. One of my respondents thinks that the reason for the persecution of the Jews was “*because of their religious views, they were different from Christians, so to speak, so they were disliked, and they started to hate them, I guess, and that’s what led to the persecution of the Jews, I think it is still the case*” but she highlighted that she believes that “*we are much more accepting now, I think their ‘dislike’ now is because of old memories: what we read in the history books and what we learned about how everybody hated them. We still use the word ‘Jew’ as ‘Uh you are such a Jew!’ and it’s still used as a negative adjective, and I believe it’s ingrained*” but finally she added that “*even though I don’t know what the Jews are really like*”.

From the above-mentioned responses, it can be concluded that all three generations had difficulties defining what Jewish identity is. Members of all three generations referred to Jews as an ethnic group and as a religious community. According to Eriksen (2010), the term “ethnic group” nowadays is understood to mean “a people”, and in social anthropology ethnicity “simply refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive”, and he says that these groups or categories are created through interaction with each other, that the identity of one group is created by defining what they are not in relation to another group (Eriksen, 2010, p. 5). To explore the identity of the residents of Hajdúdorog and how they define their identity as people from Hajdúdorog, I asked them, “Who are the people of Hajdúdorog?” In response to this question, the first thing that came to the minds of my interview partners was that “*the people of Hajdúdorog are Greek Catholics*”, but there were also answers that the people of Hajdúdorog are “*agricultural people*”. Here it is worth pointing out that the Greek Catholic identity of the people is so strong that even a person who follows the Reformed Church has said that the people of the town are Greek Catholics. Eriksen (2010) says ethnicity is also “the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them” (Eriksen, 2010, p. 23), which means that those who identify themselves as culturally different from one another have a heightened sense of distinctiveness. This process in which “Us-Them” categorisation takes place is what Eriksen (2010) called “contrasting”, but Eidheim’s term “dichotomization” also refers to this (Eriksen, 2010, p. 33). In the relation between the people of Hajdúdorog and

the Jews, the “Us-Them” categorization also appears in both the older, middle, and younger generations, for instance: *Greek catholic* (Us) - *Jewish religion* (Them), *agriculturalist* (Us) – *merchants* (Them).

Furthermore, members of all three generations hold stereotypes about the Jews, such as Jews being “*wealthy*” and “*people were afraid of them*”. Eriksen (2010) states that “stereotyping refers to the creation and consistent application of standardised notions of the cultural distinctiveness of a group” (Eriksen, 2010, p. 29). He believes ethnic stereotypes are carried by both dominant and dominated groups but points out that there are always individuals who do not carry stereotypes or who are exceptions to stereotypes. It is also crucial to mention here that stereotypes are not social reality, and thus do not describe reality. Mauritius and Copperbelt, mentioned by Eriksen (2010), argued for the existence of stereotypes that they simplify the complicated “social universe”. Stereotypes allow people to classify people into different “kinds of people”, help define group boundaries, and are also used to legitimise power relations. Stereotyping also helps to determine the position of one group in relation to another (Eriksen, 2010). Stereotyping is also connected to racism. According to Eriksen “racism, obviously builds on the assumption that personality is somehow linked with hereditary characteristics which differ systematically between “*rac*es”, and in this way, race may assume sociological importance even if it has no “objective existence” (Eriksen, 2010, p. 6). He also mentions “new racism”, which is based on cultural differences, but both have the same purpose: to affirm the hierarchy in society (Eriksen, 2010). Among the most frequently mentioned stereotypes were those concerning the appearance of the Jews, in addition, there is often a stereotype that Jews are merchants or people in positions of power, and that “*they don’t work*”. The reasons for anti-Semitism also included stereotypes with positive and negative connotations, such as “*Jews were persecuted for their wealth*” and “*Jews were envied*”. Besides stereotypes, members of the middle generation also carry anti-Semitic narratives.

Social Identity Theory (SIT), pioneered by Tajfel and Turner (1979), explores the dynamics of social groups and how motivations at the individual level affect relations between groups. According to SIT theory, people categorise the social world to simplify reality. Individuals categorise themselves into groups. “Ingroup” refers to the group to which the individual belongs, and “outgroup” refers to other groups (Harwood, 2020). Tajfel and Turner (1986) state that “from a social-psychological perspective, the essential criteria for group membership, as they apply to large-scale social categories, are that the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 15). Tajfel and

Turner (1986) suggest that social categorization is a “cognitive tool” that allows individuals to classify the social world around them, but also to define their own position in society. In the process of identification, the individual also determines whether they are similar to another group i.e. “better”, or different i.e. “worse” than other groups. They believe that “individuals strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity” and “strive for positive self-concept”, so in order for the group to which they belong to appear positively in ingroup-outgroup comparisons, social groups need to distinguish themselves from each other. The ingroup-outgroup comparison aims to achieve the superiority of the ingroup over the outgroup at some level (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, pp. 15-16). One method of associating positive feelings with the ingroup is to hold negative beliefs about the outgroup, which ultimately leads to prejudice and discrimination (Harwood, 2020). In this case, the residents of Hajdúdorog belonged to the ingroup (Us) category, and the Jews to the outgroup (Them) category, which also shows that Jews were often associated with negative beliefs⁴¹.

6. LOCAL MEMORY

In this section, I analyse their answers to the question “How did the deportation take place in Hajdúdorog?”. This question attempted to examine their knowledge about the deportation.

Members of the older generation generally had a lot of accurate information about the deportation process. They were aware of the events regarding the Jews, such as the wearing of the yellow star, ghettoization, and transportation by cattle wagon. One person recalled memories of the deportation in this way:

“They were listed, and they were taken away, although the Jews were needed here in the countryside because it would have brought industrialisation to the rural areas. They were engaged in trading, and it would have been good for the countryside if more Jews had been living here. They were gathered up by the regulation, and first, they were listed, they were marked with a yellow star, and they had to wear it, and then, I don’t know where the ghetto was, but they were no longer living at home, they even took the closet with them. They were like homeless people, they looked like them. In the end, they were transported by cattle wagon. They did a very wrong thing by taking away the Jews, and nobody could do anything about it. There were also Jews who converted to Christianity to avoid being ghettoised, but there were few because they did not have time to convert.

⁴¹ Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

Not everyone thought of it, the action was fast. Some people even changed their name when they had the time, but they didn't have much time."

Moreover, one of my respondents reflected not only on the situation at that time but also on their personal experience and feelings during the Holocaust:

"I don't know, I was a kid, we were just terrified. (...) The gendarmerie - that's what it was then - and then you had to do what they were ordered to do. The gendarmerie enforced their will, as required by the law of the time. It was prescribed that Jews were to be gathered up, and we didn't know then that they were to be taken to Auschwitz and strangled in gas chambers. They did not know what would happen to them. Everyone was afraid of the powers of the time. Hitler did not look on them kindly".

One of my respondents wondered during the interview how it was possible that no one was helping the Jews:

"But I don't know how it couldn't be protested against, the word of power was so strong. The gendarmerie implemented the regulations prescribed for the country. The executive also did its duty very strictly, no one could be hidden. The executives who carried out this order were very well paid. They didn't dare to object, it wasn't like this in the old days, the gendarme was such that they even beat the man up. The gendarmerie took very strong action to enforce the law. They were very tough on people, they were beating people up. The executive was strong, that's why they were able to do it".

Someone recalled how their father was asked by a Jewish person to look after his jewellery, but he did not dare because of his children:

"All I know is that there was a ghetto here. I don't know so much, but I have only one memory, I heard from my father that a Jewish man came to him and asked him to let him give his valuables to him, and if he came back my father would give them back to him, and if not, my father could have them". But my father refused to do that, because he had four children, and he was afraid for us if this information got out. That's all the memory I have."

With regard to the period after deportation, many pointed out that the population removed furniture and valuables from Jewish houses: *"The population went after [the deportation], and they scattered what they [Jews] had left"; "the good houses have been cleared out by the leaders, the smaller ones by the resident"; "The synagogue here was also demolished, it was on Jaczkovics Street, and a private house was built in its place".* Another of my respondents

told me that his grandfather had been asked to help bring furniture from a Jewish house because he was the only one who had a horse, but he had refused because he did not want people to think that he was taking the furniture for himself:

“I know from my father that my grandfather had a horse, and someone went to him, and that was when the Jews started to be taken away, or had already been taken away, and many people tried to pack up the stuff that was left. Somebody asked my grandfather to help him transport something, and he asked what, and then he said that: “I don’t help transport those things, people may think that I am taking the Jew’s property and their furniture”.

The middle generation’s memory of deportation varies. One person could recall that there was a ghetto in Hajdúdorog, and he heard from his mother that his grandmother cried when she said goodbye to the Jews at the station: *“My mother told me that my grandmother wept when she said goodbye to them at the station. Before the Holocaust, the residents helped each other”*. Some of them remembered the deportation process approximately accurately. Many people did not know that there had been a ghetto in Hajdúdorog, they thought that Hajdúdorog was too small a town to have one. One of my interview partners emphasised that he has no individual memories of the Holocaust and questioned the reliability of history: *“I was not alive at that time, and history is written by the regime of the time, so I don’t believe in it”*. Another respondent answered this question by asking me, *“Who knows what was here 60 years ago?”* suggesting that we cannot know for sure what happened.

Most of the younger generation did not know anything about how the deportation happened in the town, with one of them imagining it as *“I guess they were tricked into going to a good place, a good place to work, there’s a train station so I guess they took them by train, and they arrived where the others did”*. Although they were not familiar with the local events, they had a general knowledge of the events of the Holocaust.

The responses in this section show that members of the older generation who lived through the tragedy of the Holocaust and the deportations as children still have living memories, can recall the exact processes and context of the events, and are still emotionally involved in the tragedy. Even today, members of the older generation are still perplexed by the tragedy and do not understand why and how it could have happened. The fact that no one could help the Jews is explained by fear. Members of the middle generation had noticeably less knowledge of the events of the deportation. Their replies included anecdotes told by their parents, but many were critical of the credibility of history and past events. Several members of the younger generation

knew nothing about the local events, one of them made assumptions about how the tragedy took place in the city based on their general knowledge. The findings of this section show similarities with the research conducted by György Csepeli and Richárd Papp. In the narratives of Hajdúdorog, there is also a local and general shifting of collective social responsibility, but there are instances where respondents reflect on the local perpetrators, for example, the prominent and important role of the local gendarmerie.

According to Jeffrey C. Alexander (2014), cultural trauma “occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways”. In his view, by constructing trauma, we can share in the suffering of others and, at the same time, take moral responsibility (Alexander, 2014, p. 1). Jeffrey C. Alexander (2014) understands the Holocaust as a moral universalism that has become a universal symbol of human suffering and radical evil. He believes that the Holocaust has to undergo a powerful shift in meaning in order to become a traumatic event for all of humanity. After the events of the tragedy, there was no symbolic extension of the event, and people could not empathise with the suffering Jews, as they were represented as a mass, and were depersonalised. The post-war period was dominated by the “progressive narrative”, in which the events of the Holocaust were seen as just one of the atrocities committed by the Nazis. Later, this “progressive narrative” was replaced by a “tragic narrative”. In the tragic narrative, the degree to which atrocities committed against the Jews are judged has increased, and along with it, it became separate from other Nazi crimes, making it a unique event, without precedent. This allowed the Holocaust to become a symbol of radical evil, and moral guidance (Alexander, 2014, pp. 66-148). Also present in the narratives of my respondents is the moral universalism of the Holocaust, that “*they did a very wrong thing by taking away the Jews*”, or that the Holocaust “*was the genocide of world history*”. The story of the grandfather’s refusal to assist in the removal of Jewish furniture has been passed down through the family for generations, also become a moral guide for family members.

In the story of the father’s refusal to help a Jew preserve his values, cognitive dissonance is present in my respondent’s narrative. The theory of cognitive dissonance was developed by Leon Festinger in 1957. According to the theory, there is consistency between what people know and believe and the way they behave, but there are cases where inconsistency arises. Festinger (1957) calls this inconsistency “dissonance”, which causes tension in people. Since tension is not comfortable, people will seek to reduce this tension, or in other words, dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance occurs when, for example, new information is incompatible with one's knowledge and beliefs. The term "cognitive" refers to "knowledge" of what one knows about oneself and the outside world, how one behaves. The theory posits that "The presence of dissonance gives rise to pressures to reduce or eliminate the dissonance" (Festinger, 1957, p. 18). In the story, my respondent's source of dissonance is that his father did not help the Jew because his father put his own and his family's interests first, but my respondent also feels sorry for the Jew who needed help. The narrator interprets the story and reduces their cognitive dissonance, by validating his father's action by stating that he was afraid for them, his four children, and that he did the right thing by protecting them⁴².

7. CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE

In this section, I examine the culture of remembrance by asking the following two questions: "Have you talked to your family/friends/schoolmates/teachers about what happened during the Holocaust?" "Should we remember what happened in the town and the Holocaust?"

The older generation is characterised by the fact that they did not talk about the Holocaust and did not learn about it in school. One of my interview partners highlighted the fear that surrounded talking about the Holocaust and the lack of education on this topic: *"There was no talk of the Holocaust in the family, all we knew was that they were wagoned in and taken away. They were never taught in school, never, they were even afraid to say the word 'Jews', that they had a bad end. It was no subject matter"*. Another person also referred to the fear of talking about this topic: *"There was no talk, people were afraid to talk about it, they were threatened, they were afraid of being taken away, they were afraid of reprisals. There was no interest in the family to talk about it"*. One of my respondents said that: *"No, no, it wasn't talked about in my time. I don't know when it became clear to me about Jewishness, Jewish persecution. I have no idea when it started to be talked about because it was never a topic at that time"*. Another narrator reflected on the question: *"No, it wasn't mentioned anywhere, especially not in school. I don't know, somehow it was never mentioned here in Dorog, not in textbooks, not in any way, I don't know why, I still don't know"*.

In general, members of the older generation felt that the events of the Holocaust should be remembered, because *"of course, it should be remembered so that it is an example for everyone not to make such bad decisions"*. Some respondents also said that *"we should remember how*

⁴² Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

many people died” and again recalled that *“they were loved, they were good people”*. According to other participants: *“Of course, we have to remember, they were people too. They were thinking a level or two higher”*; *“We should, we are all human beings”*; *“Of course, we should remember, why shouldn’t we remember how many people died. If we had those children, there would not be so few of us in Hungary. Everybody had a business, they all worked, they were loved, they were decent people. If people didn’t have money, they gave credit, they weren’t afraid of not being given it back”*. Someone concluded that *“it could have happened to me”*.

In the middle generation, there was a person who referred to the Holocaust as *“taboo”*. Other respondents said that: *“It was not talked about it; it was not a topic in the family”*; *“It was never mentioned, because it didn’t happen in our interval”*. Although several speakers said that they did not talk about what happened, one person said that *“of course, people would have talked about it, it’s not a secret, it’s a real thing”*. According to one person, people were afraid to talk about the Holocaust: *“I guess people were terrified of being thrown out of work, they weren’t allowed to talk about anything”*. Someone highlighted that he learned about it at school: *“There was no talk about it with the family but at school. Didn’t you go to school? Everybody learned about it, didn’t they?”* When I asked if we should remember, one answered *“We can’t hide it, we have to learn from it”*, but someone answered, *“No, because it’s a sad thing, and sad things are enough to be remembered by those with whom they happened”*. Others said that: *“At some level, we have to remember”*. Again, there were anti-Semitic answers to this question. Someone had a feeling of duality and thought: *“I feel sorry for them, but on the other hand I don’t feel sorry for them because they’re (vulgarity), they’re taking over the whole world, every powerful man is a Jew. Where’s the big money? At the Jews!”*. One of my respondents thought that whether we should remember that *“Yes, we need to remember, but we need to remember again. What the Germans did was not enough at the time, they should have done more effectively because they were multiplying again and robbing the whole world again”*.

Unlike the previous two generations, members of the younger generation claimed to have talked about the Holocaust with their friends and partners. One respondent said that she had learned about it at school, but also criticised the education system, saying that *“I think we could go into it a bit more, hear about it in a more interesting way, and give concrete examples of what happened”*. Another interview partner told me that his friend had visited Auschwitz, and my other respondent had been there personally not so long ago because she was interested. They also said that the Holocaust should be remembered. One of them pointed out that, *“Yes, because it caused a lot of trauma among the families in Hajdúdorog”*. There was someone who thought

that “*I would put up a memorial with a symbolic meaning, but no one can appreciate anything in Hajdúdorog*”, but he also wondered whether forgetting or remembering would be better: “*Once a wound is healed, it is no good tearing it open*”. One of them clearly stated that it should be remembered because “*innocent people were taken away in a disgusting way.*”

In general, the older generation did not talk to their friends and family about the Holocaust, nor did they learn about it at school. The reason given was fear of reprisals. From the response of the older generation, we can see that the aforementioned moral universalism of the Holocaust is also present here, they believe that the Holocaust should not be forgotten and must be remembered so that it never happens again.

Some members of the middle generation also referred to the Holocaust as a “*taboo*” subject, but others had learned about the tragedy at school and talked about it even outside school. The question of whether we should remember the Holocaust has been approached in more varied ways. Here too, narratives have emerged that this tragedy must be remembered and learned from to avoid a repeat. However, there were some people who did not think that remembrance was necessary, but there were also strong anti-Semitic attitudes. It is worth pointing out that cognitive dissonance is also present in anti-Semitic narratives. They simultaneously feel hostility towards Jews, but at the same time, when they think of the Holocaust, they feel sorry for them. In their response, the negative image and antipathy towards Jews are contrasted with the empathy they feel for the people who died in the tragedy. That they do not want to feel sorry for them, they try to justify it with their negative image of Jews. This correlates with the theories mentioned by Wistrich (2016), that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism also serve as a kind of relief for people because they can feel that the Jews deserved what happened to them, so they no longer need to feel responsible, guilty, or sorry for them (Wistrich, 2016).

According to the younger generation, they have talked to friends, parents, and grandparents about the Holocaust and generally believe that the tragedy should be remembered. This indicates that a sense of responsibility was also inherited and passed down through the generations⁴³.

8. GENERATIONAL CHANGES AND INHERITANCE PROCESSES OF MEMORY

Jan Assmann distinguishes between two types of collective memory, one is the above-mentioned communicative memory, which involves remembering recent events, where contact

⁴³ Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

between members of the group plays an important role, and where members of the group pass on their memories. The other type is cultural memory, by which he meant institutionalised memory, in which, memory “focuses on fixed points in the past, but again it is unable to preserve the past as it was” (Assmann, J., 2011, p. 37). This means that in this memory the past becomes “symbolic figures” that help to remember, for instance, he also considers myth a symbolic figure. In cultural memory, history also becomes a myth. While communicative memory is spontaneous, cultural memory has carriers and needs to be controlled. (Assmann, J., 2011).

According to Aleida Assmann (2016), with the deaths of those who lived through the Second World War, their memories turned into cultural memories. However, he believes that cultural memory is not a passive collection of memories, but an “active functional memory”, in which the past can be relived and learned (Assmann, A., 2016, p. 12). However, Aleida Assmann (2016) also states that trauma leaves memory gaps in communication between generations. The author distinguishes four types of forgetting: “1. dialogic forgetting, 2. remembering in order to prevent forgetting, 3. remembering in order to forget, 4. dialogic remembering” (Assmann, A., 2016, p. 237). By dialogic forgetting, he meant the period in which those who experienced violence and suffering forget, in other words, silence the events of the past to begin reintegration. After the Second World War, collective silence was an international practice to create peace in Europe. All responsibility for the crimes committed during the war was placed on the Germans (Tony 1992, as cited in Assmann, A., 2016, p. 241), and in the process of forgetting, not only individual suffering but also the crimes committed were silenced, thus European societies reintegrated by forgetting the Jewish victims. Dialogical forgetting was then replaced by “remembering in order to never forget”. Since dialogic forgetting was not a solution to the trauma, remembering took over after a period of latency. Remember in order to forget refers to a period in which the memory of a traumatic event is maintained in order to move beyond the trauma, and “dialogical remembering” refers to a shared memory between the perpetrating countries (Assmann, A., 2016).

In the previous sections, I examined and analysed the memories of the three generations in Hajdúdorog. The first section looked at people’s general attitudes towards Jews and stereotypes. The replies show that positive and negative stereotypes are present in the narratives of all three generations but remain unreflected. Similarly to the findings of György Csepeli and Richárd Papp (2023), classic anti-Semitic narratives are still present in the narratives, for example that the Jews are “*merchants*”, “*clever people*”, “*wealthy people*”, “*they were envied*”, which were

used with positive connotations even by those who reject anti-Semitism. However, there were also anti-Semitic narratives in the responses of the middle generation. The phenomenon of categorisation, stereotyping and contrasting, or dichotomization described by Eriksen (2010) appears in the answers. In addition, the replies also show the ingroup-outgroup comparison proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1986).

In the session on deportation, the conclusion was that the older generation still remembers the tragic events and is still perplexed by what happened, and cognitive dissonance appears in some family histories. The Holocaust appears in the narratives as a symbol of radical evil, as Jeffrey C. Alexander (2014) has elaborated. The Germans and Hitler are often cited as responsible for the Holocaust, but some narratives also include the role of the local gendarmerie. The middle generation is already starting to forget, and the younger generation is no longer aware of the local events of the deportation. The middle generation is critical of the past.

Members of the older generation are aware of the memories of places associated with the Jewish past. They can recall exactly where the synagogue and the ghetto were, and which houses were once lived by Jews. Members of the middle generation were also able to name places, but many places had been forgotten, and for the younger, the only place left was the Jewish cemetery. Due to the lack of markings on the houses and the lack of discourse between generations, as concluded also György Csepeli and Richárd Papp (2023), the places are no longer associated with the former Jewish community of town for the younger generation.

For members of the older generation, the Holocaust was not a topic of conversation in or out of school, which they believe may have been caused by fear. They agreed that the Holocaust should be remembered and not forgotten: *“Of course it must be remembered to never happen again, because innocent people have been killed”*. However, there were some from the middle generation for whom this subject remained *“taboo”*, but there were also those who learned and talked about it. However, they were more critical of the issue of remembrance, with some preferring to forget it: *“No, because it’s a sad thing, and sad things are enough to be remembered by those with whom they happened”*, and anti-Semitism even appeared in their narratives. Members of the younger generation are more open to the subject and talk about it outside of school. They also believe that the tragedy of the Holocaust should be remembered.

Overall, the patterns of remembrance in Hajdúdorog are also characterized by the lack of discourse, in which past events are silenced and suppressed, and the memory of places is also

gradually forgotten over generations (Csepeli, Papp, & Surányi, 2023). It is important to highlight that anti-Semitic views were only present in the responses of the middle generation.⁴⁴

9. CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM⁴⁵

The hostility towards Jews in Europe can also be traced back to the Middle Ages, in which the teachings of Christianity also played a role. The social situation of Jews improved from the 18th century onwards, but it did not bring a change in people's attitudes, and later 19th-century liberalism was not enough to prevent the Holocaust in Hungary. The defeat of Nazi Germany in the Second World War and the Soviet occupation brought an end to open anti-Semitism in Hungary, but later reappeared around 1990 (Kovács & Szilágyi, 2012).

Contemporary anti-Semitism can be categorised into 3 types. The first form of anti-Semitism is that in which stereotypical images and negative external and internal characteristics long present in society are associated with the Jews. The second form is the denial of the Holocaust, the genocide of the Jews, and the passing of responsibility. The third form includes anti-Israel views, in which the judgement of Israel is generalised to the whole Jewish community (Kovács & Fischer, 2020).

All three forms of anti-Semitism can be found among the respondents of Hajdúdorog. The first form of anti-Semitic stereotypes, also appeared in the answers of my interview partners, numerous people from all generations used these terms in the aforementioned way, without reflecting on it (Csepeli, Papp & Surányi 2023), while the members of the middle generation already held genuinely anti-Semitic views. The second form was also present, as several of my speakers from the middle generation questioned the veracity and accuracy of historical events. There were also conspiracy theories about Israel, that "*when the World Trade Center collapsed, no Jews went to work that day because they got the information from Israel*" and that the "*Russian-Ukraine war is also caused by the Jews*" and that the Jews are "*a criminal organization*".

Kovács and Szilágyi (2020) identify several reasons and motives for anti-Semitism, such as "education, sense of subjective deprivation, xenophobia in general, political frustration, ideological/political beliefs" (Kovács & Szilágyi, 2020, p. 18). When I asked my speakers with anti-Semitic views about their sources of information, and how they could be sure of the

⁴⁴ Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

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authenticity of this information, they pointed to internet websites, a man with a doctorate but not accepted by academia, and that it was spread by word of mouth. It is important to note that members of the older generation did not hold anti-Semitic views, nor did members of the younger generation, only members of the middle generation. The older generation has positive memories of Jews, and generally, they do not understand why the persecution of Jews happened. However, members of the middle generation who hold anti-Semitic views are absolutely certain that their information is true, and they do not question the reliability of their sources.

10. REMEMBRANCE FROM JEWISH PERSPECTIVE⁴⁶

In this section, I present the analysis of the Jewish community that makes pilgrimages to Hajdúdorog. Jewish pilgrims come to Hajdúdorog all year around, but every autumn hundreds of people from all over the world make a pilgrimage to the tomb of Samuel Frankel. First, I examine the place of pilgrimage, then I present the interviews conducted with the visiting Jews to gain a deeper insight into their perspectives. Finally, I discuss the general attitude of the people of Hajdúdorog towards the Jewish pilgrims.

10.1 PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE

The memory of the dead is situated between communicative memory and cultural memory as it “represents a universally human form”, however, it can also be considered as cultural memory, as rites and institutions are formed in the process of commemorating the dead (Assmann, J., 2011, p. 25). Jan Assmann (2011) distinguished between two forms of memory of the dead: “retrospective” and “prospective”. By retrospective, he meant a more natural, universal form of remembrance, whereby the community maintains the memory of the dead, and by prospective, he meant the “achievement” or “fame” by which the dead became special and unforgettable (Assmann, J., 2011, p. 46). According to K. Schmidt (1985) remembering the dead is “establishing the community”, because when a community remembers its dead, it is affirming the community’s identity, and according to Reinhart Koselleck (1970), remembering the dead provides identity for the survivors (Assmann, J., 2011, p. 47).

According to Jan Assmann, places have an important function in the creation of collective memory (Assmann, J., 2011). For the Jewish pilgrims, this place is mainly the cemetery and the tomb of their respected Rabbi Samuel Frankel. The first documented event about the Jewish

⁴⁶ This chapter has been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

cemetery is from 1826 when Jews requested a cemetery plot, not for their property, but for use only, later, on 22 April 1862, they made a request to enlarge the cemetery⁴⁷. According to Jewish pilgrims, there are currently more than 200 graves in the cemetery.

This cemetery is the resting place of Samuel Frankel, whose tomb has become a place of pilgrimage. The people I interviewed were Jewish pilgrims from Israel. According to Jewish pilgrims, Samuel Frankel was a holy tzaddik Rabbi, and *“He was a truly righteous and highly esteemed by many Jews of his generation. In his lifetime, many Jews were saved through his blessings and prayers”*. One of the pilgrims highlighted the importance of the Rabbi in the community then, and now:

“He was particularly known for his nobility and purity of character; he never agreed to hear anything derogatory about anyone else. He was renowned as a genius in the Torah, a holy and extraordinary Jew. After his passing, his gravesite became a place of prayer for thousands of Jews from the region and beyond, who would come to pray at the grave and find salvation in whatever they needed”.

According to narratives, pilgrims come from Israel, Germany, America, New Zealand, and other parts of the world. One of my interview partners highlighted the impact of the Holocaust on the pilgrimage site: *“After the Holocaust, his memory was somewhat forgotten, and for many years, his gravesite was abandoned”*. An interview in one of the brochures I received from them also recalled the post-Holocaust era: *“The truth is that my grandfather experienced the horrific events of the Holocaust during World War II, and because of this, it was very difficult for him throughout the years to return to his birthplace, Hungary, as it would stir up all the painful memories”*. From these narratives and descriptions, it is shown that despite the significance of the Rabbi’s tomb, the trauma of the Holocaust has made it forgotten for years.

The importance of Hajdúdorog is also shown by that 30 years ago, Rabbi Rosenfeld, a descendant of Samuel Frankel, founded a movement of “Darag Hasidism” in the Israeli Bnei Brak. The community’s teachings are based on Tzaddik Rabbi Samuel Frankel’s book titled “Amri Shefer” and members of the community make a pilgrimage to the Rabbi’s grave every year on the day of Hilula (end of October, beginning of November)⁴⁸. One of my interview partners told the history of the pilgrimage like this:

⁴⁷ According to the archival document of the request.

⁴⁸ The day of the anniversary of the death.

“About thirty years ago, a descendant of Rabbi Shmuel Frankel opened a community in Bnei Brak, Israel, and named the community after his ancestor. The community is called “Darag Hasidism” led by Rabbi Rozenfeld, whose mother is a descendant of the righteous Rabbi Shmuel Frankel. In the community, many study the teachings of Rabbi Shmuel Frankel [Amrei Shefer], and they connect to his figure. Since the community’s establishment, pilgrimage to his grave has been renewed every year on the day of his Hilula [which falls at the end of October or the beginning of November], led by a group of Jews from the community. Over the years, the pilgrimage to the grave has grown, and more and more Jews, descendants of the righteous man and others who have heard of him began to come to the grave on the Hilula day and throughout the year”.

According to them, *“Those who come to pray at the site testify that they feel they are standing next to the grave of a holy person, and their prayers there ascend directly to heaven”.* They also mentioned that *“There are many stories of people who requested various things at the site and were immediately saved”.*

The Figure 11 shows the grave of Samuel Frankel. As the photo indicates, every year a lot of pilgrims come to the tomb to light a candle, place their wishes, and pray. During my field visit, one of the pilgrims guided me around the cemetery and showed me the Rabbi’s tomb, then pointed out that the shelves next to the tomb contained books on the Rabbi’s teachings. The concrete garage above the Rabbi’s tomb was rebuilt 10 years ago, and about 5 years ago a guesthouse was purchased which is located next to the cemetery and has been developing ever since. Last year a mikveh (ritual bath) was built in the guesthouse. One of my respondents told me about the development of the pilgrimage site and how the pilgrimage takes place:

“About ten years ago, the tent over the grave was rebuilt. About five years ago, a building was purchased at the site to serve as an accommodation and resting place for the Jews who come to pray there. Since the acquisition of the accommodation building, the site has developed more and more. On the Hilula day, hundreds of people began to arrive, with Jews preparing meals and festive meals on the spot, all free of charge for the benefit of the worshippers [following the tradition of the righteous man]. Last year, a mikveh was also built at the site. Throughout the year, Jews regularly come to the place, where cakes, cookies, sweets, and both cold and hot drinks are served to them.”

According to the mayor of the time, the municipality helped in the construction of the Ohel⁴⁹ over the tzaddik Rabbi's grave. This Ohel can be seen in the Figure 12. What makes the Ohel special is that for the request of the mayor of the time from the architect, the Ohel bears the marks of the former synagogue in its appearance. The two towers and the round window of the Ohel are characteristic features of the former synagogue, thus the Ohel not only fulfils its original function but is also an important symbol and memory carrier for the pilgrim Jews.

Jews on pilgrimage can stay in the guesthouse, and various festive foods are cooked to welcome the Jews who visit. When I asked what the town means to them, one of them said: *"Regarding the question of the significance of the city for us, the answer is simple: We feel that this city is holy because of the righteous man who lived and is buried here. We feel a personal connection to the righteous man, so we make an effort to come and pray at his grave and prepare food for others who come to pray"*. How special the town and its past are to them is also shown by the fact that they have been researching their past, former Jewish buildings, and Jewish items for years.

As I mentioned, they also visit the town's nearby, Hajdúböszörmény and Hajdúnánás, but in my experience, Hajdúdorog plays a more significant role in their lives. During their visits to Hajdúböszörmény and Hajdúnánás, they spend less time in those towns, and the fact that they opened, and they are constantly developing the guesthouse here is a sign of Hajdúdorog's special role compared to the other towns. This year⁵⁰ only 40-50 people arrived in Hajdúdorog because of the current war situation. They showed me the guesthouse, the mikveh, the cemetery, and the grave of Samuel Frankel. There are also well-designed brochures on the pilgrimage of which I have been given some. The memory of Hajdúdorog also is a significant element in these brochures, as they tell about the history of the Jews of Hajdúdorog, include picture of the former synagogue, but also tell about the post-Holocaust period and the recent past and development of the pilgrimage. From the narratives of the Jewish pilgrims, it can be assumed that their visit to Hajdúdorog is an important commemoration of their respected Rabbi and for their past. They have both communicative and cultural memory, as they hold various commemorative rites, and maintain the memory of the Rabbi through printed brochures⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Name of the building raised above tzaddik's tomb.

⁵⁰ The field visit took place in autumn 2023.

⁵¹ Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

10.2 LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS PILGRIMAGE

The local attitude of the people of Hajdúdorog towards the Jewish pilgrims was diverse. Some people did not even know that Jews used to return to Hajdúdorog. One of my interview partners told me that she knew that pilgrims, “*young boys with hats and sideburns*” used to come back and that she heard from her friend that “*the Jews brought a house, but they are supposedly expanding and that they are buying another house too*”. As a demonstration of the negative attitude towards pilgrims, I have heard several people refer to pilgrims as “*the crows*” and “*the crows are marching*”. Moreover, a respondent said that “*they come with 66 buses*” and that “*there are never any women with them*”, moreover she highlighted that “*they have even made a sauna [I corrected her that it is a ritual bath] yes, ritual bath with lots of (vulgarity)*”.

However, there are also positive attitudes. According to a narrative, in around 2018, when he was working as a postman and delivering a mail to their guesthouse, the pilgrims welcomed him and even offered him food and drink. According to him, there were women, men, and small children who even tried out his bicycle. He emphasised that he cannot say anything bad about them and that he looks back on that day with pleasure. When I asked him what this pilgrimage could mean for the Jews who come here, he said that he thinks “*this is rather a trip for them*”. Another of my respondents believes that the town is not prepared for the Jewish pilgrims, and recalled a time when Jews who came here wanted to buy souvenirs of the town but could not find any. He also pointed out that there is a group of people who do not look kindly on the pilgrimage.

In light of the above, the attitude of the people of Hajdúdorog towards the pilgrims varies widely, from positive to anti-Semitic. Overall, the people of Hajdúdorog do not have enough knowledge about why and for what purpose the Jews come here, and what the town means to them. The presence of the pilgrims and meeting them did not help the people of Hajdúdorog to develop a more positive attitude, but occasionally led to new forms of anti-Semitism in the town⁵².

11. CONCLUSION AND DIRECTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this research, I examined the transgenerational and social memory of the Holocaust in an eastern Hungarian settlement, Hajdúdorog⁵³. During the research, I focused on three

⁵² Parts of this chapter have been published in the *Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders*.

⁵³ The research was based on one year of intensive fieldwork using qualitative social science methods for data collection. The collected data was later interpreted from a cultural anthropological and social-psychological perspective.

generations (1. +70, 2. 35-70. 3.18-35) to understand and interpret the depths of the local Holocaust-memory, and I followed similar research methods as György Csepeli and Richárd Papp. A special feature of this research is that it focuses on the narratives of the present-day bearers of memory, rather than the victims, and also seeks to interpret the memory of the Jews who once lived in the town from the perspective of the Jewish pilgrim community. In the analysis, I sought to answer the following questions: Are there transgenerational differences, continuities of remembering and forgetting? How do the Jews making the pilgrimage preserve their past, and what meaning does the town have for them?⁵⁴

The records and the archival documents show that the history of the Jews in the town dates back to the 19th century. As the community grew, a synagogue, a cemetery, and a Talmud Torah school were also established. The events of the Second World War also destroyed the coexistence in Hajdúdorog finally no Jews left in the town (Harsányi, 1970). Today, only a few remaining houses and the cemetery preserve their memory, however, the memories of these places related to the Jews are still alive in the memories of the elderly. Members of the older generation still remember places, houses related to Jews, and the site of the former synagogue. For them, these memory places and places of memories have become “*lieux de mémoire*”⁵⁵. For the middle generation, however, many places have been forgotten, and for the younger generation, the cemetery is the only place that symbolises the Jewish community that once lived in the town, due to the lack of markings and the lack of knowledge passed down. The research shows that generational changes in the local memory of the Holocaust are also determined by the lack of discourse through which memories could have been transmitted.

I approached the study of the memory of the residents of Hajdúdorog from four different directions. The first part examined the general attitude of the community towards the Jews. Similarities could be found in the answers of the three different generations to the questions “Who are the Jews?” and “What were the causes of anti-Semitism?”. Different categorization patterns, such as Jews being an “*ethnic group*” or “*religious community*”, were present in the responses of all three generations, and they all hold positive and negative stereotypes of Jews,

⁵⁴ In my methodology, I have used semi-structured interviewing, focus group interviewing, person-on-the-street interviewing, and narrative interviewing. Besides, I also visited places related to the Jewish social memory, of which I made visual documentation. I kept a fieldwork diary throughout the fieldwork. In the research process, my research position altered several times due to my belonging to the community, which helped me to explore deeper layers of memory.

⁵⁵ Nora, P. (1989). *Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire*. *Representations*, 26, (Special Issue: *Memory and Counter-Memory*), 7-24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>

which were left without reflection. The narratives of members of the middle generation included not only stereotypes but also strongly anti-Semitic expressions.

The second session of questions focused on the memory of local deportations. While members of the older generation had clear memories of the deportation process, accompanied by strong emotions, members of the middle generation could also recall stories from their parents. Some stories were passed down in the family as moral guides, while others still cause cognitive dissonance for the bearers of the memories. In the answers, there were some who put the responsibility on the Nazi Germans, but there were also some who reflected on the role of the local gendarmerie. There were also many narratives about the wrongness of the events of the Holocaust and what society would be like today with the presence of Jews. Several members of the middle generation also expressed their criticism of the authenticity of history. The younger generation is no longer aware of how local events took place and has tried to reconstruct memories based on their general knowledge of the tragedy.

In the third section, I was looking for the answers to the following questions: “Have you talked to your family/friends/schoolmates/teachers about what happened during the Holocaust?” and “Should we remember what happened in the town and the Holocaust?”. Members of the older generation did not talk about what happened during the Holocaust, either in school or outside. For this reason, many cited fear of reprisals. Among the replies from the middle generation, there were also some who referred to the Holocaust as a “*taboo*” subject, but there were also people who felt it was natural to talk about it. Many of the younger generation were also talking about the Holocaust outside of school and were critical of Holocaust education. The older and younger generations generally agreed that the Holocaust must be remembered so that it never happens again. However, people of the middle generation were already divided on this issue. There were those who believed that it should be remembered, but there was a re-emergence of strongly anti-Semitic narratives, and there were also those who believed that the Holocaust should not be remembered. Cognitive dissonance appeared in several of the responses of the middle generation, which carried anti-Semitic narratives.

The results of this research show similarities with the findings of György Csepeli and Richárd Papp. The problem of forgetting and the lack of transgenerational discourse, where memory is not passed down through the generations, also appeared in Hajdúdorog. For the younger generation, many places of memory and local events have been forgotten. Memory patterns show that members of the younger generation also carry negative and positive stereotypes, but also feel a responsibility to remember the horrors of the past. A special feature of the research

is that it has also succeeded in revealing anti-Semitic narratives, which so far have been found only in the narratives of the middle generation. The narratives of members of the middle generation also contained forms of modern anti-Semitism. Many denied the gravity of the Holocaust events, expressed their antipathy towards the state of Israel, and also recounted several conspiracy theories about Jews. The presence of anti-Semitism in the middle generation raises further concerns about the transmission of these types of narratives.

I have also examined the perspective of the Jewish pilgrims arriving in the town, and, as a fourth line of the research, I also examined the attitudes of the local population towards Jewish pilgrims⁵⁶. According to the pilgrims, Samuel Frankel was a truly righteous Rabbi, renowned for his nobility and his knowledge of the Torah. They feel their prayers at the tomb go straight to heaven, and they attribute several miracles to visiting the place. The importance of Hajdúdorog to them is shown by the fact that they are also researching their past and have established a guest house next to the cemetery. The attitude of the inhabitants towards the pilgrimage was also very variable. Some were positive about it, but some were not aware of the pilgrimage. However, there were also negative, anti-Semitic attitudes. It can be seen that the residents of the town are often unaware of the presence of the pilgrimage, nor of the significance of the town and of the Rabbi who once lived here for the Jewish pilgrims.

Since the town's past is closely linked to the past of the other nearby Hajdú-towns, it would be worthwhile to continue the research in the region. A special point of the research in Hajdúdorog was the study of the Jewish pilgrimage, thus it would be beneficial to extend the research to Hajdúböszörmény and Hajdúnánás, as the pasts of the towns are intertwined and all three are significant places for pilgrims. In connection with the study of Jewish pilgrimages, the town of Bodrogkeresztúr would be an interesting place to explore. Bodrogkeresztúr is a town in the southeastern part of the Tokaj Hills, about 60 km from Hajdúdorog⁵⁷ and the pilgrimage has not yet been studied from anthropological and social-psychological perspectives⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ *The tomb of the former Rabbi of Hajdúdorog, Samuel Frankel, has become an international pilgrimage place for Jews, where hundreds of people from different countries arrive every year.*

⁵⁷ <https://bodrogkeresztur.hu/>

⁵⁸ *Parts of this chapter have been published in the Antro-pólus Special Edition, 2023/1-2, Conference Proceeding of XI Ethnology Without Borders.*

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ANNEXES



Figure 1. Rittersporn Family
Source: Received from one of my interviewees, 2023



Figure 2. The Original Tablets of Stone
Source: Photo of the finder of the Tablets of Stone. (Date unknown).



Figure 3. Replica of the Tablets of Stone
Source: Received from the Museum of Local History, 2023.



Figure 4. Former Synagogue, Colorized.
Source: "Hajdúnovát, Hajdúnánás, Hajdúdorog, zsinagóga," MILEV. Retrieved November 18, 2023, from <https://collections.milev.hu/items/show/29920>

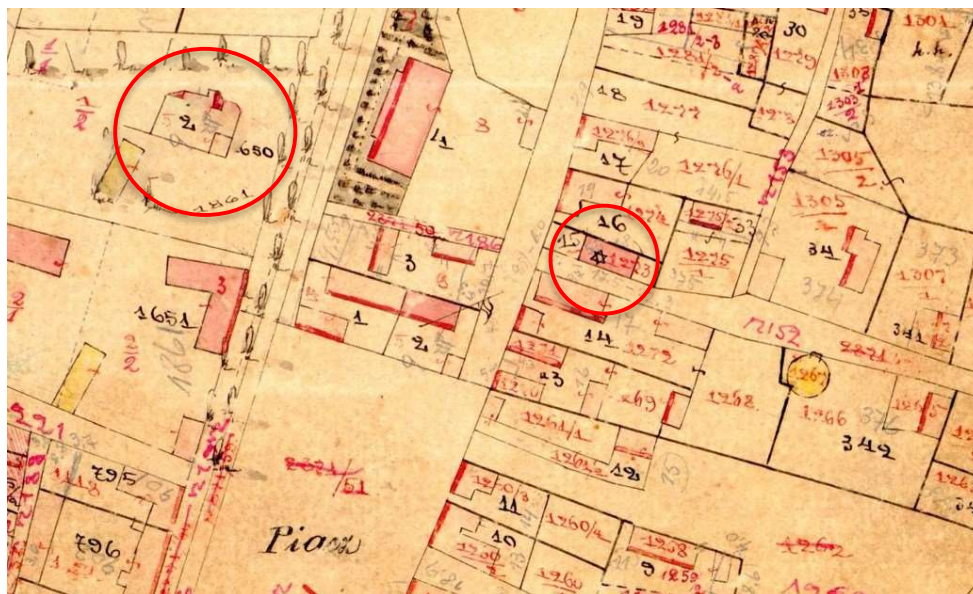


Figure 5. Map of Hajdúdorog, 1893
Source: Received from Jewish pilgrims, 2023.



Figure 6. Memorial to the victims of the Second World War in Hajdúdorog
Source: Author, 2023



*Figure 7. House of the Rittersporn Family
Source: Author, 2023*



*Figure 8. The house which origin is unknown, but the respondents considered to be a Jewish house, currently a private residence.
Source: Author, 2023*



Figure 9. Evidentially a Former Jewish House, currently a private residence
Source: Author, 2023



Figure 10. Former Jewish House, currently operating as the Local Library and House of Culture
Source: Author, 2023



Figure 11. Tomb of Samuel Frankel
Source: Photograph received from Jewish pilgrims, 2023.



Figure 12. Jewish Cemetery and the Ohel of Samuel Frankel
Source: Author, 2023