

Nobleman's Jew – Jew as a nobleman

Jewish elites and Jewish nobility in the new age and in modern times

From the very beginning, the essential factor for a co-habitation of Jews as a pronouncedly different religious and ethnic group was to maintain the conditions of their contract with the God. However, on the other hand they had to, as well as anybody else, obtain a sufficient source of income to support themselves and their families. This depended mostly, and very often solely, upon the attitude of the people living around them, particularly if they had to be active in a diaspora. In medieval Europe, relationships between followers of Judaism and the secular and spiritual power, towns and nobility were fundamental.

Jews were always in contact with representatives of nobility but in the era when the world of Ashkenazi Judaism was being re-created (10th—11th century), these links were not most essential for them. Bigger groups of Jews lived only in towns, they were active in a long-distance trade, financial operations and payments in cash. Contacts with a local urban environment were most important to them in everyday conditions. Also feudal lords, who were able to secure protection to Jews, were found amongst debtors of Jewish bankers and money-lenders. After all, Jews were direct serfs of the monarch (*servi camerae ducis*) according to the privilege issued by Emperor Friedrich I Barbarossa in 1157.

Similar edicts can be found also in legal acts issued by Central European rulers: the Austrian Prince Friedrich II from 1244, the Hungarian King Bela IV from 1215, the Czech King Ottokar II of Bohemia from 1255—in Poland we can mention the Wielkopolska Prince Boleslaus the Pious in connection with the year of 1264. Jews continued to be perceived as suppliers of luxury goods from the Orient and providers of short-term loans called usury. A nobleman protected his Jewish serfs and it was in his own interest that the money they had lent was paid back to them. Feudals had to pay back their bonds even if they were threatened by a financial collapse. This was the reason why they often asked for a prohibition or at least restrictions of Jewish usury (*jüdischer Wucher*) where land was guaranteed. Fights between political and clerical power, between feudals and towns were mostly ended with a compromise within which Jews had to pay in various forms to every group of both the political and economic establishment.

The situation changed at the end of the Middle Ages. Having been influenced by many factors and also as a result of pressure applied by burghers and the church, monarchs started to expel Jews from their states. This was most prominent in Spain in 1492. They were expelled from the

Austrian principalities after 1420, from Styria and Carinthia at the end of the 15th century. Expelling Jews from Moravia started in 1426 and continued until 1514. Anti-Jewish activities organised by burghers took place in Silesia until the middle of the 15th century. Jews were expelled from towns which later belonged to the so called Austrian Silesia (Opava, Krnov, Teschen) in the first half of the 16th century. The Land Guild Diet in Wrocław eventually approved the ban on the residency of Jews, however, the feudals on the Biała estate near Prudnik and in Głogów provided protection to the Jews. The resilience of the nobility in the Czech Lands caused that the Hapsburgs managed to enforce the transfer of Jews only to a certain extent in the 16th century. Certain Prague districts were still reserved for them, they could be found on many noble estates (*Landjuden*) and in Moravia. Part of the Jews expelled from Central Europe moved to economically and territorially developing Poland. Here, they enjoyed the favours of not only Polish kings but also of tycoons who were interested in a fast colonisation of extensive territories of Eastern Ukraine annexed in the 14th century.

In those lands where the central control was weak, the Jews expelled from towns were more or less favourably received on noble estates. This was the case of Germany or of Vorarlberg. In the Czech Lands too the Jews resorted into the patronage of feudals who were keen to provide them with protection. The reason behind this was that Jewish financial resources enabled development of versatile economic activities and suzerain enterprise.

Over the following centuries and until the 19th century, these new circumstances caused a situation where relationships between nobility and Jews became most important for their existence. These relationships not only determined conditions of their presence in a particular place but also the right to reside itself. This was even despite the fact that Jews were still dependent upon other actors of public life mainly upon the state whose power kept increasing. The main framework of lives of both Jews and Jewish communities had been formed by relationships with a local aristocrat for over centuries even though only a few of them maintained the most immediate contact with noble courts.

Being accepted amongst nobility was the most apparent sign of success on the society ladder for those most enterprising Jews, who managed to find their way around in the „hostile” world, that in fact needed only their money, and for those Jews who could gather a large fortune. Firstly, this occurred only sporadically, however, in the 19th century this became a social phenomenon.

This publication contains contributions aimed at two groups of issues which we consider to be the most important from the whole complicated network of relationships which in the modern times connected members of aristocracy and the confessors of Moses' faith. The first part of the presented contributions concerns mutual relationships of social groups that we are observing. We particularly stress the role followers of Judaism in the economy of the feudal nobility state. The second part focuses at possibilities, ways and results of the social increase of Jews.

The theses by the authors of the first contributions can serve as starting point for the analysis of the topics belonging to the first group; Helmut Teufel and Pavel Kocman state that „*this relationship was developing in time and could have differed from estate to estate and from one noble family to another [...], however there were tendencies and trends in this development which were common for the same land*”. We could also point to tendencies which were common for the whole of Central Europe or even for a larger area. One of such tendencies was that in early modern times state control could not directly determine the life conditions for Jews and the supervision over them anymore. In Moravia, after they had been expelled from royal towns, Jews *de facto* remained only in aristocratic towns and the position of the monarch as their ultimate master came to an end for some time. The situation was similar in neighbouring countries, e.g. in Germany. The process got developed most considerably in the Kingdom of Poland where sovereignty over Jewish serfs was officially handed over into the hands of their owners in 1539. Here, we can find a direct reference that the nobility “in its towns and villages owns its Jews” and therefore also their taxes and benefits belong to the nobility.

A temporary resignation of the state control from the role of a direct master of Jewish serfs conditioned another phenomenon of their transition under the sovereignty of nobility, which was common for many countries. Nobility took up all the Jews expelled from towns willingly and allowed them to settle on its estates. Chronologically, this corresponded to the time when, in the second half of the 15th century, a feudal large-estate was formed as a homogeneous economic complex focused at the extensive production of crops intended for sale. By expelling Jews from towns, burghers themselves brought them into the arms of a much more competent competitor—the aristocracy.

Across the whole of Central Europe of the modern times, the aristocracy successfully subjugated town centres when it firstly limited their privileges and their chances for economic activities and eventually it made them dependent upon nobility also formally. Aristocracy took over the role of Jewish masters and Jews played the role of “court Jews” for less or more important feudals. The situation was similar also in the east, as the now-classic works by Moshe

Rosman and Gershon D. Hundert explain. The approval of Jewish activity in every dominion was based upon the economic capability of the Jews. In this way, the Jews became more and more reliant on the aristocracy in this hostile environment.

This reliance demonstrated itself on the two levels where most contacts between the two groups occurred: it was the relationship between feudal masters and serfs and the economic co-operation. The aristocracy, as feudal masters of the Jews, made practically all decisions concerning the lower political and judicial administration which also meant the right to govern even the internal life of a Jewish community, e.g. operation of Jewish communities. In those regions where these communities could be active, e.g. in Moravia or in Poland, the privileges set by the masters defined also the most fundamental issues such as the structure of an administration within the Jewish communities; manorial nobility was also a body of appeal for Jewish courts. In Poland, these issues regulated frequent instructions for the Jewish communities on private estates. The Jews as well as other serfs had to pay various taxes to its masters either as individuals or jointly for the whole community, however these were often higher (sometimes up to two-fold). The Jews also handed over various benefits in kind the amount of which depended upon local conditions. Under feudal dependency, the aristocracy successfully introduced a duty of unpaid serf labour all over Central Europe. The aristocracy demanded compulsory labour from the Jews, however, it was willing to accept its remuneration. In Moravia, the Jews lost their personal freedom in fact. For their masters, they were only part of the economic inventory as well as small-holders and if a third party deprived "their" Jew of life or part of property, they could sue. A special surcharge for a legal protection (*Schutzgeld*) was a clear sign of this feudal dependency.

The reason why the aristocracy accepted and tolerated the Jews on its estates was clearly motivated by profit. Consequences forced this social group, which was expelled from other places, to be exceptionally economically active. Therefore, this was a reciprocal profit which led to a simple dependency: care and financial resources in return for protection and a chance to perform that limited amount of activities which the Jews were allowed to carry out. These covered mainly the right to distil and tap spirits, particularly hard liquor, and the right to collect tolls.

The involvement of the Jews in arranging to sell everything that the estate was able to produce (grain, wool, etc.) was equally important, although less visible. Gradually, under the pressure of the state control, various types of tenancy arrangements were banned and practically only distilleries remained. Of course, it would be misleading to talk about a genuine co-operation: the Jews were partners to the aristocracy only on the economic level, this was not an equal relationship.

The Jewish serfs represented a very important source of income for the feudals, therefore the aristocracy resisted monarchs and their frequent efforts to expel Jews very successfully. On the other hand, the aristocracy could and did resign from services provided by the Jews any time. The Jews could have been expelled from estates, particularly when the landlord was able to replace them with another group which generated the same or even a higher profit.

The prevalence of economic factors is best demonstrated by the fact that even clergymen, including bishops, representing the sovereign power of the Catholic church, did not renounce the financial resources generated by Jewish activities. Jan Al Saheb analyses this phenomenon on the example of mensal and church dominions belonging to Bishops of Olomouc in the 16th—17th century, which covered one tenth of the whole territory of Moravia. Bishops of Olomouc were sovereign clerical and land authorities and they represented the authority which claimed the need to punish followers of Judaism for the deicide which their predecessors committed. Therefore they signed many anti-Jewish synod edicts. They also were in the vanguard of Moravian Estates and in their name they opposed the efforts to expel the Jews from the country. The Bishop of Olomouc was a feudal master to a large group of the Jews and he used the same methods of protection as other feudal aristocrats. The Jews could also be found amongst creditors of individual Bishops of Olomouc. The Jews or Jewish families were active in almost any bigger town of bishop dominions. Also several Jewish communities existed here before the ban; independents Jewish communities were present only in Kroměříž and in Osoblaha in the 16th and 17th century. The clerical power was also prepared to protect the Jews in constant disputes with burghers, however its tolerance was changeable and with every change on the episcopal seat, the Jews had to seek re-confirmation of the right to reside and of the existing privileges.

The situation was no different in other territories, even in the case of tycoons who were knowingly and over a long period of time applying a strategy which preferred income from their Jewish serfs. There was a range of factors which could totally de-value “Jewish money”. Feudals did not really care about their serfs’ destiny. Respect for Jewish bankers grew in accordance with their financial possibilities and this was the same on the side of the most wealthy aristocratic families. Hana Legnerová deals with this issue in the Czech environment.

The Thirty Year’s War was a very important moment in the history of Central Europe. During the war and after its end, both monarchs and feudals had to acquire money to renew their estates devastated by the war. The impact of the state control and the role of the monarch, as a sovereign master of the Jews, increased again. Central authorities started to issue decrees concerning all Jews. Their aim was an effort to fill the permanently empty state treasury. This could be achieved also through taxation of the Jews.

The privileges which were awarded to people under the reign of Ferdinand II and which were applicable to the Czech Lands meant conditioned toleration of the Jews in return for the so called *Harač*, a tax paid to the state, the height of which was at first 12,000 goldens and in 1748 as much as 300,000 goldens. In Moravia, the Renewed Land Ordinance from 1628 contributed to a deeper reliance of the Jews on the aristocracy. In the following period, we can observe two trends within the country: the concentration of property in the hands of the nobility estate (when the knight estate ceased to exist in fact) and the concentration of the most populous Jewish communities in the property of three dynasties (the Dietrichsteins, the Liechtensteins and the Kaunitz Dynasty), the church was represented by the Bishop of Olomouc. We can observe the same phenomena in Silesia approximately one hundred years later which was caused by the fact that a formal ban for the residency of the Jews was valid there. Nevertheless, they started to settle here during the Thirty Year's War, mostly in villages and under the protection of local feudals, who— when facing the economic disaster—stopped respecting the existing law.

Janusz Spyra deals with the same topic in his contribution in more detail and he illustrates how the behaviour of the most significant actors in the society was followed by others. The Piasts of Teschen were amongst the first in Moravia who got inspired during the Thirty Year's War and they started to take the Jews under their protection in return of high fees. They protected their serfs even despite the intervention of the imperial office. In the 1840s, owners of estates, which were called *status minores*, started to employ the Jews. Regular aristocracy followed their example in the second half of the 17th century. When Charles IV issued the Toleration Act in 1713 which cancelled all previous acts, Jewish tenants became regular phenomena. Therefore, the Jews could be found both on rich aristocracy estates and also with owners of several villages and in Wrocław bishops courts.

Bailifs of Teschen and Opava-Krnov cameral estates used the services of the Jewish tenants frequently. It is rather remarkable that, when the Teschen ancestry of the Piast Dynasty died out, the Hapsburgs became the owners of their property (the so called Chamber of Teschen). On one hand, cameral officers were bound to adhere to the anti-Jewish edicts issued by the monarch as a representative of the state power but on the other hand they tried to secure for him as a private feudal the highest possible income. The Chamber of Teschen used to rent the right to tap hard liquor to the Jews with the Hapsburgs' approval on their estates summing up to tens of villages.

The Toleration Act from 1713 meant that the principle of limited toleration was introduced. Under this principle, an unlimited number of Jewish families could reside in the territory in return for a sufficient (the so called toleration) tax paid to the state. The so called "*Familiants*"

Act was another step which was valid in the Czech Lands and was introduced in 1726. Only a father of a family, "*familiant*", received the right to reside here under this act. A number of Jewish families, which was not to be exceeded, was set in this way. The position of the *familiant* was inherited from father to the eldest son (other sons were not allowed to get married), vacant positions were allocated through a stated bureaucratic procedure.

Similar edicts were introduced in Austrian Silesia in 1752. This increased the state control once again and the state set legal and economic conditions for the existence of the Jews. Agreements with aristocrats, for whom they still represented an important source of income, were most important for the Jews in their everyday life. It was exactly for this reason why the aristocracy consistently resisted the efforts for their expulsion from the country (the last time it was after the lost Silesian Wars in the middle of the 18th century). The aristocracy had to share potential income from the Jewish serfs with the state much more now. On top of that, the demands from the state treasury kept growing. This gave rise to frequent interventions of masters in support of their "own" Jews and to concerns that excessive fiscalism will threaten their interests.

Extensive literature sources have already studied the position of the Jews in nobility dominions and mainly on large-estates; we can mention early work by Helmut Teufel in connection with Moravia, in connection with Silesia it is for instance work by Israel Rabin and also work by Moshe Rosman concerning the areas of Eastern Poland. Also publications of various scope confirm the important role of the Jews in individual regions and dominions. These, however, resort only to a description and mapping of the activities conducted by the Jewish serfs. The analysis of the Jewish contribution to the economy of a dominion is limited only to identifying the share of alcohol production income on the overall income of the dominion. For instance some works by Jakub Goldberg represent an attempt to illustrate general mechanisms.

Barbara Kalinowska-Wójcik defined a specific target in her paper where she attempted to state a quantitative contribution of the Jews to the economic situation of a feudal dominion. She collected data from unusually detailed and complex archive documents of the Pszczyzna estate covering an extensive time-scale. This estate belonged to a group of the so called free Silesian estate manors and it corresponded to large dominions in Moravia and Bohemia, therefore it can be used as a textbook example in this context. In the middle of the 17th century, one Jewish family resided in Pszczyzna under a special protection of the local nobility and acted as the "court Jews". This meant that this family was entitled to own a house in a town and could offer various special services—among others also to deliver luxury goods. Over ten Jewish families resided in the whole of the dominion and they made their living by typical activities such as letting a pub with the right to sell hard liquor, to collect tolls, carry out small-scale trade, etc. Even in this case,

joint participation in the sale of local produce from the dominion was important. The author performed a detailed analysis showing that the proportion of the Jewish contribution to the economy of the Pszczyna country estate (precisely to the income in cash) kept growing from 3.2% in 1666 to 22,2% in 1710. Similar trends could have been observed across the whole of Central Europe in proportion to decreasing income from grain sales on the nobility's large-estate. Only between 1752 and 1769, the income of feudals in Austrian Silesia from hard liquor *arenda* rented to the Jews grew by 50%. Over the most of the 18th century, the Jews were active in letting pubs, organising sales of agricultural produce and in trade, unless they encountered resistance from towns and guilds.

The situation changed during the reign of Joseph II. Shortly after he assumed the power of co-reigning in 1765, central offices in Vienna started to support the so called commercial activities—i.e. such activities which could bring economic profit to the state, e.g. trade with the East. Also the Jews could participate and they could also organise deliveries to the continuously growing army. The benefits from this politics of the state went also to the feudals since the Jews could trade in all sorts of produce from feudal estates to a considerable amount now. A group of Jewish factory-owners and entrepreneurs, who appeared at the end of the 18th and in the first half of the 19th century, came mostly from a group of tenants in nobility businesses. Toleration patents issued for various lands of the monarchy during the reign of Joseph II (1780—1790) maintained the principle of a limited toleration of the Jews as well as their subordination to noble masters but on the other hand they made enterprise easier, mainly as far as investments into manufacturing enterprise were concerned.

This facilitated new initiatives for the Jewish entrepreneurs with sufficient capital and central authorities supported the whole process. The result was a decreasing reliance of the Jews on the aristocracy, which too underwent a significant transformation leading to its further differentiation. On one side, a stratum of numerous higher aristocracy was created, on the other there was a stratum of lower aristocracy which was becoming poor and which, for instance following the Napoleonic Wars, practically ceased to exist in Teschen Silesia. Even here, the Jewish families were concentrated in courts belonging to large aristocratic dynasties. In the first half of the 19th century, burghers and the self-government of these seats rented various sources of income to the Jews if this could generate any profit too. This resulted in another differentiation of economic relationships between the Jews and the nobility. Some of them, mostly bankers and large-scale entrepreneurs, became an indispensable group for certain areas of life, e.g. for financial operations.

Mainly people who organised financial or economic activities, e.g. also abbesses leading institutions for noblewomen, used their services. The purpose of these charitable institutions

was, generally speaking, to provide for girls from poor noble families. Running such an institution was not possible without a connection to a Jewish banker. Tomáš Krejčík points to this fact in his study *Banker and Abbess* in which he analysed almost twenty institutions for noblewomen.

In the second half of the 19th century, emancipation of the Jews in the Austrian Monarchy was taking place. The relationship between the aristocracy and the Jews was formed on the level of co-operation, but only if it was profitable for both parties, and already under the shield of equal rights. The system of a limited toleration of the Jews, however, continued in central Polish lands, which according to the decision of the Congress of Vienna constituted the Polish Kingdom within the Russian Empire from 1815. Despite the measures of Russian authorities to rid the aristocracy without land of privileges, the estate of aristocracy was plentiful and it determined the form of public life. The Jews here had no political rights and their economic activities were very limited here. Amongst others, activities of Jewish publicans and small rural trade were suppressed. The Jews were not allowed to settle in towns either. Only Jewish *jurydyka*—type settlements remained, however, it was necessary to pay for them to their owners.

In the second half of the 19th century, the Jews were active much more in newly arising industrial centres, often in connection with bourgeoisie whose origin was other than Polish. The co-operation of the Jews and the aristocracy in the countryside can be detected in this period too. Dariusz Złotkowski analyses this phenomenon in southern areas of the Polish Kingdom and discusses the situation in his study. The study concludes that at least in this region rich in iron ore such a co-operation was transformed in the following way: the aristocracy rented for cash, consequently spent to finance their expenditures, the right to excavate the iron ore and at the same time the right to lumber trees to manufacture the ore further.

In the modern times, mostly momentary benefits affected the relationships between the aristocracy and the Jews in Central Europe. However, it used to happen that feudals attempted to convert the confessors of Judaism to their religion. The aristocracy, mainly its higher strata, enjoyed the role of godparents certifying the act of conversion. It was exceptional if the Jews belonging to a particular master were baptized under duress because the baptized paid as Christians less money to their masters and therefore they did not generate enough profit. However, a varied range of close ties still existed and they cannot be fully described here. Barriers between both groups were huge indeed but they were not unsurpassable.

There was a small but still very ambitious group of the Jews for whom the world of aristocracy set an example which was worth following. This is indirectly presented in the study by Jan Doktór who analyses the movement and doctrines of Jakub Frank from Korołewka (1726—1791), who acted as the third Messiah after Šabtaj Cvi a Baruch Rus and who asserted a

need to connect all religions initiating from Abraham: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. His activity resulted in a mass conversion of his followers to Catholicism. Some of the convertites were ennobled either immediately or later. After the baptism, the Frankists wore aristocratic clothes and aristocratic culture was important to them despite the fact that they secretly maintained their original religion. The fascination by Polish gentry demonstrated itself in the image of salvation, asserted by Frank, in a very unusual way. He was stating that nobilitation had to precede spiritual salvation and all this was based upon overturning the social hierarchy. The Frankists were to assume the position of the aristocracy and become new masters and the aristocracy was to assume the position of the Jews. Let us add that recently some works re-discussing the topic of nobilitation of the Jews in Poland have appeared.

Affiliation to Christianity (mainly to the Catholic religion in the case of Austria) was the main condition for a social rise in Central Europe over a long period of time. The first Jewish aristocrats began to appear as late as during the era of absolutist enlightenment when Maria Theresa, whose empire was exhausted by long-lasting wars over Silesia, gradually reviewed a range of rules which used to be unchangeable before. It was Jewish businessmen who played an exceptional role in the increase of Jewish elites in the Czech Lands and who co-operated with the state on the rental of tobacco industry monopoly during this period. We can list baron Diego d'Aguilar (probably 1699—1759) who maintained the Jewish religion only secretly and also the families of Dobruschka and Hönig who had family and business links to many others. All of them came from Bohemia where the most influential and the richest Jewish communities from the monarchy could be found.

Israel Löbl Hönig (1724—1808) was the first aristocrat of the Jewish religion in Austria. In 1783 Israel played an important role in the transfer of the tobacco monopoly into the hands of the state. He moved to the services of Joseph II who appointed him first Lower-Austrian councillor and on top of that also director for joint state monopoly of bank pensions, tolls and tobacco overhead costs in the following year. On 2 September 1789 he was ennobled as the very first inhabitant of the Hapsburg monarchy and received the predicate Hönig von Hönigsberg. The second ennobled person Joachim Popper (1721—1795), also known as Chajim Bresnitz, also came from Bohemia, specifically from Prague. He too was a member of the famous tobacco consortium where he was appointed the main intendant and in 1772 he was even appointed Mayor of the Czech Jews. Nobilitation on 1 April 1790 epitomized the climax of his career.

Hönig's and Popper's nobilitations were a breakthrough for the development of the aristocracy in the Hapsburg empire. Merits to the state gradually started to prevail over the affiliation to the Christian, primarily Catholic, religion and monarchs expressed their appreciation with aristocratic titles as often as they needed such a kind of assistance. This was

demonstrated at the turn of the 18th and 19th century under the reign of the Emperor Franz II (I) which was preceded by costly wars with France. During this time, families of large-scale businessmen and bankers, the Arnsteiners (Arnsteins), the Eskeles, the Herzs and the Rotchilds received their titles and it was Franz II who promoted the first people of the Jewish religion to free noblemen (Bernhard Eskeles and Rothschild brothers) on 29 September 1822.

Mainly the work by Jan Županič can be used to study the history of nobilitations of the Austro-Hungarian Jews. Until 1918, approximately 450 nobilitations of the Jews, respectively the Jewish convertites were realised in Cisleithania, in Hungary another approximately 350 families received an aristocratic title which roughly corresponds to the ratio of the Jews in the monarchy (approximately 4.5 percent of the total population). 10,414 people received aristocratic title in the Hapsburg monarchy between 1701—1918. However, if we take into account confirmation of aristocracy in Galicia, Lombardy-Venetia, Bukovina and Dalmatia, the share of the Jews on the nobility in the monarchy will drop and it will still decrease even if we add estate promotions of already ennobled families to the aforementioned 10,414 people, which will bring us to the number of 12,414. To understand the whole issue, we need to take into account that more than 85% (10,572) from the overall number of 12,414 registered estate promotions concerned promotions to lower nobility and most of the Jewish nobilitants belonged to this group. The number of Jewish barons corresponded to the ratio between the lower nobility and newly ennobled free masters (i.e. 1:15) which means that 65 from the 444 Jewish nobilitations in the western part of the monarchy were for barons. Entrepreneurs (businessmen, bankers and factory-owners) represented the biggest group amongst the people of Jewish religion—294 from 444 (66%) awarded titles. If we limit the list of those who were ennobled to the people of the Jewish religion, then we will get to the number of 200 people out of which again 131 (66%) were entrepreneurs between 1848 and 1918. This is logical, since entrepreneurs had the biggest freedom. Compared to state employees, artists, scientists, lawyers and attorneys, they did not have to take into account attitudes of those around them, which often resulted in stepping out of the Jewish community or to the conversion in the atmosphere of constantly increasing militant anti-Semitism.

There were various reasons behind the nobilitations: apart from „standard” merits, which meant service for the state—either on the civilian or military level—merits in art, science, industry (economic development) and humanitarian area were appreciated more frequently in this way. It was the last area, charitable work, which offered a wide spectrum of ways how to “deserve” an aristocratic title. Until 1884, there was a relatively low number of direct nobilitations—this meant awarding the nobility as a result of charitable activities through the highest verdict or the highest decree. It was more common to acknowledge outstanding

individuals with an order (mostly the Order of the Iron Crown) which allowed the receiver of the honour to apply for nobilitation. In the times, when the state almost did not care about social policy, this area was a mutually profitable business—a form of investment which was not re-valued in financial capital but in a noble title. Care for the poor in the monarchy mostly rested on the shoulders of private people, the state itself was active only in the smallest possible way.

One of the most famous examples of nobilitation is connected to brothers Wilhelm and David Gutmann who went all the way of social ascent from small-scale businessmen in the ghetto of Lipník na Moravě through the title of the knight up to the ownership of one of the biggest industrial and financial companies in the monarchy. It is these two brothers who are in the centre of attention of Aleš Zářický who also elaborates on the question if and to what extents the Gutmann brothers could be ranked amongst aristocracy.

If the doubts and reservations concerning Wilhelm and David Gutmann are justified, the following generations of the dynasty were clearly ranked amongst aristocracy. Also, its members achieved a stunning career; Elsa, Wilhelm (knight) von Gutmann's daughter, can serve as an example. As the study by Václav Horčíčka informs, Elsa converted to Catholicism in 1899 so that she could marry Hungarian Baron Géza Erös de Bethlenfalve. At the same time it is interesting that she did so even though her father was the president of the Jewish community in Vienna between 1892—1893 and that his family originally chose a rabbi career for him. However, Elsa became a widow in 1908 and shortly before WWI, she started a relationship with the hereditary prince and heir of the Liechtenstein throne Franz of Liechtenstein. Nevertheless, such an incommensurable marriage was out of the question during the life of Franz's elder brother, the ruling Prince Johann II. For this reason Franz married Elsa secretly in 1919 and he officially married his long-term partner only when he was enthroned in 1929. When, following Franz's death in 1938, Franz Joseph II became the new Prince of Lichtenstein, Elsa moved to Switzerland where she was safe from the Nazis in spite of her Jewish origin. To prevent the confiscation of Elsa's property, the Prince and Elsa signed an agreement of purchase in January 1939. Later the Gutmann family accused the Prince that he took advantage of the situation and that he acquired Elsa's property for a mere fraction of its real value. The former Princess of Lichtenstein died near Zurich in 1947.

Austria (Austro-Hungary) was very liberal in awarding aristocratic titles indeed. The attitude of the second largest "German state", the Kingdom of Prussia, was totally opposite. Although both countries were parts of the Holy Roman Empire over many centuries and later parts of the German Confederation, we can find considerable differences in their customs, among others in the attitude to religious issues and in the attitude to inhabitants with a different religion. While Jewish nobilitations were conducted without major obstacles in Austria and from the turn of the

18th and 19th century onwards, Prussia was reserved towards its Israelite subjects. The study by Jan Županič discusses the subject in detail. Although the economic position of the Jews and Jewish convertites was much better in many ways in Prussia compared to Austria and many of them belonged to entrepreneurs of a truly European standard, only very few of them received an aristocratic title.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Ferdinand Moritz Delmar (1781—1858) was the first ennobled Prussian Jew who until his conversion used the name Salomo Moses Levy. His nobilitation (awarding the estate of a free master) from 1810 did not come as a result of a decision made the Prussian king but as a result of an unscrupulous pressure of the French Ambassador in Berlin who was Delmar's protector. Any other Jew or Jewish convertite was not ennobled in Prussia for more than half a century. The situation partly changed after 1866 when, following the annex of Frankfurt am Mein, the local banker Baron Wilhelm Karl von Rothschild (1828—1901) became a Prussian citizen who was also summoned to the Prussian Chamber of Deputies for a limited period. Abraham Oppenheim (1804—1878), an undercover commercial councillor, became the second Prussian aristocrat of the Jewish origin and the first of that religion in 1868. He came from an influential financier family from Cologne and he was an owner of an important private bank. Thanks to the marriage with Charlotte Beyfus (1811—1887) he became closely related to the Rothschild family. In 1864 and in 1866 he did a considerable financial service to Prussia for which the King Wilhelm I promised him an aristocratic title. However, it took more than two years before the promise was fulfilled and Oppenheim received the title of baron only at the beginning of 1868.

In the following years, Jewish individuals were ennobled only very rarely. For more than one hundred years (1810—1918), only 55 people of the Jewish origin or religion were ennobled. The main reason was a low number of Prussian nobilitations but also the nobilitation politics played its role: unlike in Austria, state employees and entrepreneurs did not represent a majority between those who were ennobled. The share of entrepreneurs did not exceed 15 percent; most of the ennobled came from large-estate owners who were followed by state employees and only very few people of the Jewish origin were amongst them (mainly amongst state employees). We presume that King Wilhelm II was truly striving to reform the conservative Prussian elite, however, due to a lacking concept and a well-developed plan he did not manage to implement his idea. Moreover, the Prussian Herold Authority (*Heroldsamt*), the highest institution in the matters of aristocratic law, was a strong opponent of Jewish nobilitations. The Prussian King did not share the anti-Semitist views of his officers but, on the other hand, he did not moderate their attacks either. Although the number of Jewish aristocrats increased compared to the previous era (20 people of Jewish origin were ennobled under the reign of Wilhelm II), their share

amongst the Prussian elite remained insignificant. On top of that, only two genuine Jews received aristocratic titles—in 1903 this was banker Max Goldschmidt-Rothschild (1843—1940) and in 1912 large-scale industrialists Friedrich Gans (1833—1920). The other ennobled were convertites. Despite this, the nobilitations attracted a lot of attention and they became a very gratifying topic of newspaper articles and society gossip.

Under the reign of Wilhelm II, aristocratic titles could have been obtained mainly for “excellent merits” but this term could be interpreted rather widely (including “humanitarian and patriotic activity” similar to Austria). Apart from officers, state employees, scientists and artists who were ennobled for state service, the Prussian King awarded orders and titles to people who, through financial gifts, establishing foundation and contribution to public welfare, contributed in those areas where the state was short of money.

The Holocaust and the Nazi period meant the end of the social and economic increase of the ennobled Jewish families both in Austria and Prussia and in Germany generally. Miloš Hořejš discusses this topic in his paper where he closely looks at the example of the Morawetz family. The Morawetz family were an influential entrepreneurial family whose three generations were involved in the textile industry in the Úpice area in the Podkrkonoší region. In the first half of the 20th century, Richard Morawetz (1881—1965) was a leading personality of this family. Apart from business, he was also interested in politics and culture. When the Czechoslovak Republic was established, Morawetz played an important role in organisation of the national economy. He also maintained close ties with the family of the first president T.G. Masaryk and he was a close friend to his son Jan. He used the capital gathered in the textile enterprise to purchase amongst others also plots of land and a chateau. In February 1914, he became the owner of a large estate of Světlá nad Sázavou, which he gained from the inheritance of Josef Oswald II, count Thun-Hohenstein-Salm-Reiferscheidt (1849—1913). It is not impossible that the social increase of the family would be shortly codified in a nobilitation, however, this did not happen due to the disintegration of the monarchy. Two years later, Morawetz expanded his estate by another purchase. It is rather interesting that together with the estates he had purchased he also acquired a guardianship of Catholic churches, yet – one must admit that he looked after them as duly as he did after the Jewish Community in Světlá. The area of his estates got considerably smaller as a result of the first land reform. Unlike others, who were affected in the same way, Morawetz did not renounce the republic and he maintained close links with its political representatives. In the 1930s, it was becoming clear to the Morawetz family that Nazi Germany represents a major threat to them. Immediately after the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was announced at the end of March 1939, Richard and his family managed to escape and after a

lengthy journey they settled in Toronto, Canada, where he also died. His property in the territory of former Czechoslovakia was aryanised and it was not handed back after 1945

As a matter of fact, Richard's destiny heralded the end of the world of the Jewish elites from a major part of Central Europe, who either emigrated or became victims of the Nazi racist policy. Their property, built up over several generations, was then confiscated (if it was not sold). Not even new regimes ruling in this territory after 1945 rectified the injustice and original owners never got their property back.

Translated by Marie Sandersová