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**Beyond the Trauma:
New Perspectives for Preservation,
Management and Museum Representation of
Jewish Cultural Heritage in post-Soviet Cities**

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Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
Vita	xii
Publications.....	xiii
Abstract	xvi
Introduction.....	1
Stating the Problem	2
Aim of the Thesis	5
Main Arguments	6
Research Questions.....	9
Jewish Heritage Landscape	9
Research Design and Methodology.....	16
Structure of the Thesis.....	18
Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework	21
1.1 Cultural Heritage, Collective Memory and Public Space	21
1.2 Jewish Cultural Heritage and Jewish Space	34
1.3 Jewish Museums: Polyphony of Forms and Functions.....	46
1.4 Concluding Remarks	57
Chapter 2 <i>Patrimony vs Heritage</i> or from <i>late Soviet</i> to <i>post-Soviet</i>	58
2.1 Historical Background of Cities under study.....	59
2.1.1 Chişinău.....	59
2.1.2 Odessa.....	64
2.1.3 L'viv.....	68
2.1.4 Minsk.....	75
2.2 Legal Definition of Heritage and Institutional Framework.....	77
2.3 Renewal of Jewish Community Life.....	80
2.4 Concluding Remarks	89

Chapter 3 Jewish Architectural Landscape: Visibility, Condition, (non)Recognition	91
3.1 Chişinău: Invisible Jewish Landscape	91
3.2 Odessa: Choosing between a Synagogue and a Museum	101
3.3 L'viv: International Cooperation for Jewish-themed Public Space..	110
3.4 Minsk: Loss of Jewish 'Identity' at the Historical City Center	127
3.5 Concluding Remarks	134
 Chapter 4 Jewish Burial Landscape: from Destruction to Instrumentalisation	138
4.1 Chişinău: a Half Ruined / Half Preserved Jewish Cemetery	138
4.2 Odessa: Voids instead of Cemeteries	142
4.3 L'viv: Bulldozers and a Lapidarium	143
4.4 Minsk: Merge of Burial and Memorial Landscapes.....	148
4.5 Concluding Remarks	149
 Chapter 5 Jewish Memorial Landscape: New Life of the Old Monuments....	150
5.1 Chişinău: Marking the Pogrom, Marking the Holocaust.....	150
5.2 Odessa: Reconciliatory Approach to the Holocaust	166
5.3 L'viv: from grass-roots Monuments to International Design Competition	169
5.4 Minsk: the Holocaust and the Great Patriotic War	173
5.5 Concluding Remarks	177
 Chapter 6 The Urban Museum Scene and Judaica on Display	179
6.1 Chişinău: Absence of Judaica.....	180
6.2 Odessa: Competing for Jewish Symbolic Legacy.....	190
6.3 L'viv: Judaica in the Storage	197
6.4 Minsk: the Jews and the Partisans	213
6.5 Local 'Alternative' Jewish Museums: Comparative Overview	216
6.6 Concluding Remarks	230
 Conclusion	232
Main Findings	232
Recommendations Based on the Research Results.....	243
Limitations	245
Further Development	246
 References	252
Archival Materials	252

Documentaries	253
Interviews conducted by Anastasia Felcher	253
Interviews conducted by Nicolae Misail	255
Literature.....	257
Appendix I	276
Survey of Built Heritage.....	276
Chişinău	277
Odessa	291
L'viv	296
Minsk.....	309
Appendix II.....	316
Survey of Cemeteries and Lapidariums.....	316
Chişinău	317
L'viv	322
Minsk.....	326
Appendix III.....	327
Survey of Memorials and Monuments.....	327
Chişinău	328
Odessa	331
L'viv	333
Minsk.....	335
Appendix IV	343
Survey of Museum Exhibitions	343
Chişinău	344
Odessa	349
L'viv	354
Minsk.....	363

Abstract

The thesis is based on three starting points. The first is on the acknowledgement of the lamentable condition of buildings of Jewish-related heritage in cities with a multicultural past across the present-day former Soviet Union. The second is on the acknowledgement of a slow process of gradual recognition of these traces as examples of tangible heritage and a provisional resource for heritage commodification. The third is the on the acknowledgement of 'heritage', 'memory' and 'space' as phenomena that are subject to manipulation on various levels.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the understanding of what constitutes national heritage in the newly-appeared independent states has conformed to correspond with the interpretations and values of national histories. In managerial terms some immovable heritage of ethnic minorities has been returned to the symbolic successors of previous owners. This defined provisional sources of funding for partial renovation of this heritage, as well as its use. The remaining sites, the majority of which are monuments protected by the state, most frequently stay unattended. In order to design policy recommendations to improve the situation, a complex understanding of factors that influence heritage protection, interpretation, and promotion in the post-Soviet space is needed.

Within this state of affairs, the thesis aims to analyze agency behind 'top-down' policies and 'down-up' grass-roots initiatives towards (non)interpretation of Jewish-related heritage sites in Chişinău (Moldova), Odessa and L'viv (Ukraine) and Minsk (Belarus). This selection of cities is chosen to reveal the multiplicity of factors that determine apparent similarity in heritage condition and management in the post-Soviet space, but instead reveal diverse dynamics of interaction between heritage and politics; heritage and nationalism; heritage and civil society, etc.

The methodology utilized here includes archival search, participant observation, media and expert opinion analysis, as well as examination of museum exhibitions. The fieldwork included data collection on the actual condition of Jewish heritage in the cities under discussion and interviews with various agents. Elite interviews were analyzed as basis for authoritative heritage discourse before discussing actual heritage projects in these cities.

Based on interdisciplinary analysis, the thesis provides an embracing overview of the broad spectrum of agency behind Jewish heritage-related initiatives (or their absence). It then offers recommendations for the advancement of managerial strategies.