

Jørgen Knudsen

Georg Brandes and Jewishness

Georg Brandes (1842-1927), the Danish critic of Jewish origin and European renown, believed that the notion of a special Jewish identity was both irrational and stupid since all forms of nationalism excluded most people from the community and was a potential source of conflict.

Brandes' refusal to acknowledge his own Jewish identity has to be seen in the context of the anti-Semitism of the day which worked to ignore his work and to denounce it as non-Danish. Although understandable, Brandes' refusal was contradictory since he was convinced - in line with Taine - that national background played an important role in the formation of personal character.

Much of Brandes' writing around the turn of the century was in support of oppressed minorities - Armenians, Poles, Danes in Southern Jutland - and among these he also wrote about the persecuted Jews in Rumania, Finland and Russia. When Herzl in 1896 sent him his book, hoping for support for the Zionist cause, Brandes refused. He was afraid that a new Jewish nationalist cause would be just as destructive as the existing ones had proved to be. The turning point for Brandes -as for many other progressive Jews of the time -was the Balfour Declaration of 1917. He welcomed this concrete opportunity for providing a refuge for the persecuted East European Jews. ." change of mind was naturally welcomed by leading Zionists.

For Georg Brandes his Jewish descent was a tragedy. He felt misunderstood by the persistent focus on his descent rather than on his central message.

Arthur Arnheim

The Life of Samuel Jachja/ Albert Dionis and the Privileges to Jews given by King Christian IV

Research about early Danish Jewish history has already established the unique role played by Samuel Jachja- or Albert Dionis as he was called in official contacts with the Danish kings. In this essay his life and

work are presented and his importance for the privileges given by King Christian IV to the Sephardic Portuguese Jews of Glückstadt and the Ashkenazi Jews of Altona is discussed.

Samuel Jachja was born into a Marrano family from Portugal but after several moves he came to Hamburg in 1605 and later to the newly established town of Glückstadt. He was involved in the establishment of Jewish community life and several commercial ventures, including the sugar trade and mint coinage. In 1630 Jachja reached the peak of his influence. He was responsible for the ideas that were laid down in a trade agreement between Spain and Denmark which aimed at making Glückstadt the centre of trade between Spain and Northern Europe. The attempt to oust Hamburg from its position as the leading commercial centre did, however, not succeed. In the 1630s Jachja became active in diplomatic work for the claimant to the Danish throne, Prince Christian, who wanted to improve relations to Hamburg.

This study argues that the privileges given by the Danish king in 1619 and 1630 to the Portuguese Jews represented a break with the traditional treatment of Jews inherited from German Imperial jurisprudence. In principle the German system gave the Sovereign the right to protect Jews or expel them at his pleasure. The privileges extended by the Danish king gave the Jews rights and protection to an extent unseen in this part of the world. The privileges given by King Christian IV in 1640 to the Ashkenazi Jews of Altona, though not as far reaching as the privileges to the Portuguese, represented great progress. Especially remarkable was a promise -also figuring in the earlier privileges to the Portuguese -securing that no collective punishment would be practiced against the Jews.

Karen L. Chamberlain

The Stay of the Danish Jews in Sweden, 1943-45: Refugee Life in Sweden

As part of a student group project within the field of Danish history at the University of Roskilde, Karen Chamberlain and her fellow students interviewed 33 Danish Jews who had lived in Sweden in 1943-45 as refugees. The students also consulted various sources in the Danish and Swedish national archives and the archives at the Danish Resistance Museum (Frihedsmuseet) to draw a general picture of refugee life in Sweden and look at the role of the institutions that were involved in organizing refugees as they arrived in Sweden such as Det danske Flygtningekontor (the Danish Refugee Office).

Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson

We Do Not Need 70,000 Jews

"We do not need 70,000 Jews" proclaimed a Danish policeman to a young Austrian Jewish journalist on his arrival in Copenhagen in 1938. Robert Breuer (1909-1996) was one of the many Austrian Jewish refugees who sought asylum in Denmark after Anschluss but were not permitted to stay although they had obtained legal visas at the Danish consulates in Austria and Switzerland. The Danish Justice Department had decided to close the border and make the admission for Jews impossible" Breuer managed to get to England in 1938 and in 1940 to the United States. He later wrote a story about his flight, entitled *Nacht über Wien*.

This study includes a Danish translation of his stay in Denmark as well as an analysis of the documents, found in the Danish national archives, relating to Robert Breuer and other Austrian refugees. The article discusses the restrictive Danish policy towards Jewish refugees in the late 1930s. The Danish authorities did not per se classify Jews as political refugees and they could therefore be denied refugee status. Vilhjálmsson argues that the overall feeling among Danish officials in the Justice Department and of the Foreign Secretary, responsible for immigration and refugees, was pro-German and in some cases clearly anti-Semitic.

Jens André Herbener

A Danish Secular Scholarly Translation of the Hebrew Bible

In 1992 an authoritative Danish State Church translation of the Christian Bible was published. As always, the translation was initiated and supervised by Det Danske Bibelselskab (The Danish Bible Organization) and as intended this translation has replaced the old 1931 translation of the Old Testament and the 1948 translation of the New Testament in most Danish State Churches. However, a new secular scholarly translation with footnotes aimed at teachers, researchers, and lay persons interested in religious history is much needed to replace the last Danish and by now outdated 1910 secular scholarly translation. This state of things informed the criticisms of the 1992 translation in the journal *Faklen* which has been instrumental in initiating a new purely secular scholarly translation of, in the first place, the Hebrew Bible.

This initiative has to be seen in the light of the fact that a secular scholarly translation necessarily is irreconcilable with an authoritative church translation because a secular scholarly translation cannot be strictly bound to translate the pre-Christian Hebrew Bible on its own original premises and at the same time consciously take into consideration later traditions and dogmas be they Jewish, Christian or Muslim.

The coming translation is a completely secular project and its main purpose is to present the Hebrew Bible on its own cultural and religious terms.

Lone Rünitz

A Necessary Policy: A Reply to Arthur Arnheim

Lone Rünitz' article is a reply to Arthur Arnheim's article in the last issue of RAMBAM where he challenged the passivity of the leadership of the Danish Jewish Community during the German occupation. She argues that the Danish Jewish leadership acted in accordance with a long established policy, reflecting the Danish government policy of non-resistance and cooperation. The Danish Jewish leadership consciously sought to keep the Jewish community out of the public eye in order to ensure the goodwill of the Danish government and the public in general. Consequently, the Jewish leadership already in the early 1930s admonished the community to avoid criticisms of the internal affairs of Germany and of Danish government policy concerning refugees. The Danish Jewish leadership also discouraged German Jewish refugees from seeking asylum in Denmark while the Jewish community at the same time helped those Jewish refugees who did come economically. Rünitz concludes that seen in this light the Jewish leadership did act, in their own words, wisely.