



Humanwissenschaftliche Fakultät

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Suggested citation referring to the original publication:

Jewish Culture and History (2019)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462169X.2019.1658460>

ISSN (print) 1462-169X

ISSN (online) 2167-9428

Postprint archived at the Institutional Repository of the Potsdam University in:

Postprints der Universität Potsdam

Humanwissenschaftliche Reihe ; 571

ISSN 1866-8364

<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:kobv:517-opus4-435064>

DOI <https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-43506>

Yiddish in the Andes. Unbearable distance, devoted activists and building Yiddish culture in Chile

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ABSTRACT

This article elucidates the efforts of Chilean-Jewish activists to create, manage and protect Chilean Yiddish culture. It illuminates how Yiddish cultural leaders in small diasporas, such as Chile, worked to maintain dialogue with other Jewish centers. Chilean culturists maintained that a unique Latin American Jewish culture existed and needed to be strengthened through the joint efforts of all Yiddish actors on the continent. Chilean activists envisioned a modern Jewish culture informed by both Eastern European influences and local Jewish cultural production, as well as by exchanges with non-Jewish Latin American majority cultures.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 22 December 2018
Accepted 7 May 2019

KEYWORDS

Yiddish culture; Chile; Latin America; Yiddish culturism; Jewish networking

In 1933, Yiddish writer Moyshe Dovid Guiser arrived in the Chilean capital of Santiago.¹ Frustrated with the situation in Argentina where he had lived for the past nine years, Guiser decided to make a new start on the other side of the Andes. Why would a Yiddish writer leave bustling Yiddish Buenos Aires for Santiago de Chile, a city with a much weaker Jewish cultural life? The economic depression in Argentina and right-wing coup d'état of 1930, as well as the subsequent ambiguous attitudes toward ethnic minorities in Argentina, provide only partial explanations.² Using the actor model, this article examines the development of Yiddish culturism, that is, the valuing, protecting and managing of Yiddish culture, in Chile in the 1930s and its regional and international ties. I follow Meyer and Jepperson, who argue that ethnic cultures, in order to be seen as legitimate, construct actors with the capacity and authority for responsible cultural agency.³ I look at the activities of key figures who invested their efforts in developing Yiddish letters in Chile: Moyshe Dovid Guiser, Noyekh (Noah) Vital and Yankev (Jacobo) Pilowsky. Guiser and Pilowsky in particular aspired to be and indeed were recognized by Chilean Jewish ethnic leaders as important local culturists. Even though Guiser did not assume any positions of power in Chile, the leading Jewish organization *Círculo Israelita de Santiago* (Jewish Circle of Santiago, a *kehilla* of Santiago), acknowledging Guiser's importance, regularly supplied him with updates regarding its plans. Yankev Pilowsky was involved in nearly all Yiddish initiatives taking place in Chile, including managing fundraising campaigns, editing journals and coordinating visits by well-known personalities of Yiddish letters from Eastern Europe.

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This article explores the strategies employed by Chilean Yiddish actors to ground Yiddish culture in their new homeland and to differentiate themselves from their colleagues in Argentina. Based on archival and memoir research, this paper shows how immigrant Yiddish culturists attempted to root in Chile the Eastern European model of a modern and secular Jewish culture. I base my findings on documents from the personal archives of Yankev Pilowsky and Moyshe Dovid Guiser, preserved at the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. I also analyze Pilowsky's memoir *A yid oyf der velt* (*A Jew in the World*, 1970), which is a subjective account of his life and work, as well as a jubilee publication *Bagrisungen un opshatsungen tsu dem 60-yoriken yubileum fun Yankev Pilowsky* (*Greetings and Assessments for the 60th Birthday of Yankev Pilowsky*), published in 1959 by Pilowsky's fellow Yiddishists from Latin America, the US and Canada. Concerning Chilean Jewish history, I refer to Moisés Senderey's classic book *Historia de la colectividad israelita de Chile* (*History of the Jewish Community in Chile*) from 1956, which was published as part of celebrations commemorating 50 years of existence of the Chilean Jewish community. The book was sponsored by the *Comité Representativo de la Colectividad Israelita de Chile* (Central Representative Committee of the Jewish Community in Chile) and was a first attempt to write an official narrative of the Jewish presence in Chile.⁴ This anniversary publication acknowledged Chilean Yiddishist efforts, but placed them in the shadow of a Zionist movement and a Jewish contribution to Chilean society. As a case study showing how Chilean Yiddish activists sought to root Yiddish culture in Latin America, I use the Yiddish journal *Zid-Amerike* (South America), published monthly in Santiago de Chile between February 1935 and April 1936. Although the journal was short-lived, its defined Latin American focus and cross-border aspirations make it an important source for studying Yiddish culture in Chile. The temporal framework of the article centers around the 1930s, but in order to contextualize my arguments at times I venture into the 1920s and 1940s.⁵

The first section of the article offers a short overview of Chilean immigration history and suggests that it was Eastern European Jews, rather than the later more numerous German Jews, who laid the foundations of cultural and organizational Jewish life in Chile. I argue here that the demographic dominance of Yiddish-speakers during this initial Jewish settlement in Chile defined Yiddish as an important cultural reference in Chile of the 1930s. I then move to portraying the actors involved in the development of Yiddish journalism and literature, and analyze Chilean Jewish attitudes towards minority languages. The third section takes a closer look at transnational Yiddish networking between Chile and other centers, mainly Argentina, and argues that Chilean activists strove to develop a unique Latin American Yiddish culture. I suggest that Chilean Yiddish culturists needed to rely on international and regional networking to stabilize and develop their agenda in a numerically small community. As a case study to exemplify these efforts, I examine (in the fourth section) the literary journal *Zid-amerike*, which was the finest Yiddish literary publication in Chile in the 1930s and an example of the wide cultural and geographic focus of its editors. As a whole, this article elucidates the status of Yiddish in Chile and the efforts of local leaders to create, manage and protect Chilean Yiddish culture. It contributes to a better understanding of how Chilean activists shaped Yiddish culture in the context of migration, limited human capital and financial resources, as well as in the shadow of Argentina's bustling Jewish life.

Whereas Yiddish culture in the United States, Canada and Argentina has long been a fruitful research field, Yiddish cultural expression and transnational initiatives originating in minor centers such as Chile have not yet been properly studied.⁶ Yiddish cultural life in the biggest Latin American Jewish centers, such as Argentina, Brazil or Mexico, has been explored by scholars as both a space of fostering trans-Atlantic links with Eastern Europe, as well as an arena for defining hybrid Latin American Jewish identities.⁷ This article is a corrective intended to illuminate how Yiddish cultural leaders in small diasporas, such as Chile, worked to include themselves and their communities in the global structures of Yiddish culture. It has been widely evidenced that devoted Jewish individuals were instrumental in establishing strongholds of Yiddish culture in new and old Jewish centers.⁸ In Buenos Aires, these were Samuel Rollansky and Pinye Katz, in Warsaw Nakhmen Mayzel, in Vilna Max Weinreich and Zalmen Reyzen, and Chaim Zhitlowsky and Shmuel Niger in New York. Melech Ravitch, a Yiddish writer and member of this generation of Yiddish culturists, suggested that modern Yiddish culture could also be developed in countries with a small number of Eastern European Jews. Ravitch described Chile as ‘a remote watchtower of Yiddish literature, filled with loyal guardians of Yiddish culture.’⁹ Although incomparable with key Yiddish centers such as Warsaw, New York or Buenos Aires, the Yiddish scene in the Chilean capital of Santiago is a fruitful case study for showing how a group of Chilean culturists expanded the geographic borders of Yiddish culture. Despite Chile’s ‘vaytkayt’ (remoteness) and being ‘varvalgert’ (lost in the middle of nowhere) and ‘opgerish’ (separated), as Jewish Chileans often described themselves, Chilean Yiddish leaders strove to maintain dialogue with other Jewish centers and to define a unique Chilean Yiddish culture.

Eastern European immigration and the emergence of Chilean Jewish life

Unlike Argentina, Chile has traditionally been less open to European migrants. As a result, whereas in 1914 around 50% of all Buenos Aires residents and 30% of Argentina’s overall population were foreign-born, in Chile immigrants represented a mere 3% of the society in 1920.¹⁰ The Chilean demographer Héctor Gutiérrez estimated that, between 1902 and 1924, Chile attracted 124 times fewer Spaniards than Argentina and altogether only 0.5% of European immigration to Latin America between 1851 and 1924.¹¹ Even in the capital city of Santiago, immigrants represented just 4.8% of the population in 1920 (26,909).¹² Altogether, about 120,000 foreign-born inhabitants lived in Chile that year, mostly speakers of Romance languages, with the largest communities made up of Spaniards, Bolivians, Peruvians and Italians.¹³ At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, numerous Chileans made their way to Argentina and settled in the border provinces of Mendoza, Neuquén and Santa Cruz. A reverse migration (Argentina to Chile) was much less common.¹⁴ Yet, when Argentina was hit by an economic crisis during and after World War I, many Argentines made their way to Chile – among them many Jews.¹⁵ The first president of Santiago’s *Círculo Israelita*, Nehemia (Naum) Trumper, was born to an Eastern European family in a Jewish colony in Argentina. In 1920, 7,362 Argentine citizens lived in Chile, which was equal to 10% of the entire foreign population.¹⁶ The relative mono-culturalism of Chile had its repercussions in intensified acculturation, which was slower in countries with recent mass migration

experience, such as Argentina.¹⁷ This tendency also applied to Eastern European Jewish newcomers to Chile.

Through the 1920s and 1930s, the increased stream of immigrants from Eastern Europe was a broadly discussed social issue in Chile. In 1929, a Jewish doctor named Mauricio Weinstein founded the immigration committee linked to the HICEM, but the prospects of a large-scale immigration from Eastern Europe were difficult.¹⁸ Several Yiddish activists warned in 1932 that Chile was in a desperate economic situation and unable to receive immigrants.¹⁹ The American Jewish Congress estimated in 1930 that just about 4,000 Jews lived in Chile, a number that, mainly due to German-Jewish immigration, grew to about 15,000–25,000 by the end of the decade.²⁰ A report by the German embassy in Santiago from June 1939 estimated that around 12,000 Jews were living in Chile and 8,000 new refugees had arrived in the last year.²¹ Irmtrud Wojak suggested that 13,000 German Jews had arrived in Chile between November 1933 and the end of 1939, almost 5% of all German Jewish emigrants.²² The statistics are far from being exact since, as a local ethnographer argued, '(...) as everywhere else, Jews are not very much loved here, it is natural that many of them prefer not to reveal their religion to census officials.'²³ The Jewish population in Chile probably never exceeded 25,000, whereas Argentina had the largest Jewish community on the South American continent, numbering around 230,000 by 1930.²⁴ The small size of the community had an impact on how it perceived itself within Latin America and within the Jewish world. Chilean Yiddish culturists sought to overcome the limitations imposed by demography and dreamt of a strong Chilean Yiddish culture.

In the 1930s, the Jewish presence was increasingly visible in Santiago and the neighboring port city of Valparaíso, but it was not welcomed by everyone. In 1937, a Jewish socialist politician Natalio Berman (the first Jew ever to be elected to Chilean parliament) was attacked by *La Nación* daily, which in an article titled 'Extranjeros en nuestro parlamento' (Foreigners in our parliament) suggested that the Jews were not 'proper Chileans.'²⁵ The rule of Arturo Alessandri (1932–1938) was a time of economic blossoming in Chile, but also of empowerment of rightist groupings, such as *Milicias Republicanas*. Particularly from 1935 onwards, the fascist *Movimiento Nacional-Socialista de Chile* used explicitly anti-Semitic rhetoric in its publications *Rayo* and *Trabajo*. Chilean national socialists wanted to 'save Chile from the economic yoke of international Judaism,' but cases of anti-Jewish violence were rare.²⁶ This political climate had an influence on how, in the late 1930s, many Jewish Chileans chose to muffle explicit manifestations of their ethnic belonging and did not enthusiastically support the efforts of Yiddish culturists.

Due to the immense and dramatic immigration from Nazi Germany, research on Jews in Chile has been focused on the German-Jewish refugees, who did not dominate the local Jewish community until the mid-1930s.²⁷ The foundations of Jewish life in Chile were laid by the Eastern European Yiddish-speaking immigrants. According to a Jewish communal leader Mauricio Boltianski in 1928, most Chilean Jews originated from Poland and Russia.²⁸ Consequently, before the mid-1930s, a significant portion of Chilean Jewish life was taking place in Yiddish. For instance, the books purchased at the beginning of the 1920s for the library of the *Círculo Israelita* were 80% in Yiddish and 20% in Hebrew.²⁹ Serving as presidents of *Círculo Israelita* were Russian-born Gregorio Melnik and Salomón Sack, originating from a *shtetl* near Vilnius.³⁰ Also, the first Zionist

meetings were conducted in Yiddish, rather than in German, Hebrew or Spanish.³¹ *Israel*, the biweekly of the Chilean Zionist Federation, was bilingual Yiddish and Spanish. The first Zionist congress organized in Chile in 1919 was conducted under Eastern European leadership and included personalities with clearly Slavic-origin last names, among others Jacobo Kuznezoff, Fabian Faivovich (from Bessarabia), Pablo Dvoredsky (from Minsk), Isaac Markovich and Micaelo Yudelevich.³² These demographic-linguistic tendencies constitute evidence of how Jewish social and political concepts such as Zionism were transferred to Chile thanks to the shared Yiddish language. Speaking Yiddish, Jewish Chileans could participate in a global Jewish political and cultural life, but at the same time it helped them to build a sense of ethnic Jewish identity on the Chilean terrain. Even though burgeoning Chile's Jews adopted Spanish and acculturated relatively quickly, Yiddish served as a tool for arguing their membership in global Jewish currents. The Eastern European share of Chilean Jewry was visible demographically much later as well. In 1954, 30% of all Jews in Valparaiso (the second largest city in Chile) were Eastern European, compared to 45% from Western Europe (Germany).³³

Joining forces: immigrant Yiddish culturists in Chile

The foundations of Yiddish print culture in Chile were laid by immigrants who crossed from Argentina rather than arriving directly from Eastern Europe. In the 1930s, Chile experienced an influx of Yiddish cultural activists from Argentina, including Noyekh Vital and Moyshe Dovid Guiser. Women were hardly visible in Chilean Yiddish journalism and literature in the 1930s. Rollansky's anthology of Yiddish writing in Chile does not mention any female writers active in Chile.³⁴ Initially, Yiddish printing in Chile suffered difficulties due to a lack of Hebrew letter-printing houses and professional printers. For instance, in 1925 the Zionist journal *Israel* printed articles in Yiddish using Latin letters instead of Hebrew characters. Only in 1930 did Noyekh Vital, who had previously worked for *Di Presse* and *Di Yidische Zeitung* in Buenos Aires, begin to publish the first Chilean Yiddish journal *Tshilener Yidisher Vokhnblat* (The Chilean Jewish Weekly). As Moisés Senderey noted, this was the first time Chilean Yiddish speakers could publicly express their opinions concerning local matters.³⁵ Yet, time would prove that it was extremely difficult to make a living writing in Chile. Most local authors and journalists had other side jobs, and many books were published out of the authors' own pocket. This was the case with *Fun Tshile* by Pilowsky, which appeared in 1937 'on the cheapest paper, with a too small font size and without a table of contents.'³⁶

In the 1930s in Chile, as in Argentina, Jewish culture developed both in Yiddish and in Spanish. Before the Yiddish journals appeared, *Nosotros*, a Spanish journal published between 1926 and 1930, was the main press organ of Jews in Chile. In 1935, the Zionist-leaning *Mundo Judío* began to appear in Spanish.³⁷ In 1932, Yiddish-language *Unzer Leben* appeared, followed by *Idische Prese* in 1934 and *Dos Yidische Wort* (La Palabra Israelita) in 1938.³⁸ At the same time, short-lived literary Yiddish magazines began to be published in Chile: *Bay di Andn* (By the Andes) in 1932, *Zid-amerike* in 1935 and *Pasifik* (Pacific) in 1938. Underlining the arduous task of maintaining Yiddish print outlets in Chile, its editors attempted both to provide cultural content which would attract Yiddish speakers, as well as to position themselves as devoted and significant activists. The *Yidisher Kultur-Tsenter* (the Jewish Cultural Center), maintained by the *Círculo Israelita*,

was the main venue for Yiddish aficionados in Santiago. Its library subscribed to Yiddish papers from the US, Argentina, Poland, France, Uruguay and Canada, and the Hebrew press from Palestine.³⁹

Language politics divided the Chilean community and global Jewish debates had their repercussions in Chile as well. Yankev Pilowsky remembered that pro-Zionist *Mundo Judío* often tried to combat the cultural efforts of Chilean Yiddishists and influence the politics within the *Círculo Israelita*. Even though Yiddishists in Chile were just a handful of activists, they were perceived as a certain threat by their more numerous Zionist opponents. These ambiguous attitudes were poignantly visible in 1935, when the *Círculo Israelita* invited to Santiago Yiddish literary critic Shmuel Niger. When Niger was supposed to arrive in Santiago, *Mundo Judío* ran a campaign against Yiddish and Yiddishists, describing Niger as a follower of a 'red [communist] assimilation.'⁴⁰ Similar problems arose the same year when Bundist Gina Medem arrived to fundraise for the Birobidzhan Jewish settlement in the Soviet Union. As Pilowsky recalls, *Mundo Judío* saw her as an agent of Moscow and all Jewish institutions refused to host her talk. Ultimately, Medem spoke in a club of Spanish republicans.⁴¹ In the case of Niger's visit, the Yiddishists were successful in convincing the Jewish leadership to support the Yiddishist wing of Jewish Chileans. Then-president of the *Círculo Israelita* and metallurgy businessman Salomón Sack personally covered Niger's expenses in Chile.⁴² The Niger case poignantly shows that Chile was involved in the transnational Jewish cultural debates. Analogous conflicts between the Zionists and Yiddishist activists occurred on a regular basis in Poland, Palestine and other countries. The conflict that erupted around Niger proves that Chile took part in the international Jewish cultural struggles.

Jewish Chile also intertwined with Eastern Europe via immigrant Jewish authors. One of the key Eastern European immigrants in Chilean Yiddish culture was Moyshe Dovid Guiser (1893–1952). Born to a poor family in Radom in central Poland, Guiser moved to Warsaw in 1921. He immersed himself in the Varsovian Yiddish literary scene, was close to the avant-garde group *Khaliastre*, and with his poem 'Yerid' debuted in the Warsaw Yiddish journal *Ringen*. This journal was a gate through which Guiser and numerous other talented young writers entered the world of Yiddish literature. In 1924 Guiser moved to Argentina and in 1933 to Chile, where he edited a number of local Yiddish publications and ran a printing house.⁴³ Guiser was a left-leaning supporter of the Jewish national movement and demanded that Yiddish literature be 'national in its form and social in its content.'⁴⁴ Many of his poems were realist portrayals of poverty and exploitation, particularly in the context of Jewish migrations. Writing about these often painful issues in Yiddish, Guiser had more freedom than if he were to write in Spanish. Choosing Yiddish was thus also a move that allowed him to express ideas that would not have been welcomed by the mainstream general and Jewish societies in Chile.

The Chilean Yiddish culture was developed also thanks to a number of lesser-known personalities who further embedded Chile in global and regional Yiddish cultural networks. One of the first Eastern European Yiddish writers to settle in Chile was Yankev Pilowsky. Born near Vilna in 1898, Pilowsky arrived in Buenos Aires in 1924 but left the same year for Santiago, where he later made a living as a merchant. Pilowsky arrived in Latin America after having published numerous texts in Yiddish in Eastern Europe and been actively engaged with a secular Yiddishist cultural group *Kultur-Lige*. As Pilowsky's son recalled, 'my father broke with religion and became a Yiddishist: a fervent partisan of

Yiddish culture and a writer in this language.⁴⁵ Later on, he published his texts in *Di Presse* in Buenos Aires, *Der veg* in Mexico City, and other periodicals in the US, Canada, Argentina, Uruguay and Mexico. From 1930 onwards, Pilowsky was among the first editors of the *Tshilener Yidisher Vokhnblat* and of another weekly, *Idishe Prese*, between 1934 and 1936. He was a *progresista* (a left-winger), affiliated with *Faraynikter Progresiver Yidisher Gezelshaft* (United Jewish Progressive Society).⁴⁶ Argentine Jewish activist Moisés Senderey described Pilowsky as a man with a mission. Yiddish journalist Mordechai Ginzburg from Montreal called Pilowsky a ‘citizen of the Yiddish language’ and a ‘gain’ for the *santiaguino* Jewish life.⁴⁷ In 1932 together with another more veteran Chilean Jew, Moyshe Rizenberg, Pilowsky founded the first Chilean Yiddish literary periodical, *Bay di andn*. Two years after Pilowsky, in 1926, Noyekh Vital arrived in Santiago from Argentina. Vital had migrated in 1905 from Russia to Argentina, where he had been active as a Yiddish writer and editor, mainly for the Buenos Aires Yiddish daily *Yidische Zaitung*. In Chile, together with Guiser and Pilowsky, he co-founded the *Tshilener Yidisher Vokhnblat* and later (with Guiser) the literary journal *Zid-amerike*. In the 1930s, Vital served as a secretary for the *Yiddisher Kultur-Tsenter* and co-established the Union of Polish Jews in Chile.

In 1930, Yoysef Goldshayn (José Goldchein) also arrived in Santiago, born in Polish Bolimów in 1901. Goldshayn immigrated to Argentina in 1923, cooperated with local Yiddish periodicals such as *Folks-shtime* or *Undzer Fraynd*, and left for Santiago de Chile seven years later. In Santiago, he published in the *Tshilener Yidisher Vokhnblat*. Another Yiddish writer, Itzhok Blumshteyn (Isaac Blumstein, born in Poland in 1897), arrived in Argentina in 1928, where he regularly published in the *Yidische Zaitung*. In 1936, Blumshteyn left for Santiago where he, like other Chilean Yiddishists, worked for the weekly *Tshilener Yidisher Vokhnblat* and *Dos Wort*. When Guiser, Blumshteyn and Goldshayn arrived in Chile, Pilowsky, Rizenberg and Vital were able to count on a relatively strong group of *santiaguino* Yiddish culturists. They attempted to develop Yiddish literary culture in Chile, which was for them a personal and collective statement about cultural and ethnic belonging. It showed that there were people for whom Yiddish mattered and who networked internationally for its benefit in Chile. Yiddish symbolized for them the Jewish peoplehood, which they saw as the highest value that needed to be preserved, developed and adapted in the Latin American environment. Pilowsky wrote that publishing his first book in Chile was exceptionally moving for him. ‘I looked on Yiddish letters with a gaze of the *yeshive-bokher* I once was.’⁴⁸ In 1935, Pilowsky could already proudly proclaim that

Chile recently ceased to be an invisible point on the map of the Jewish world. A point which was marked in red only not to forget about it when it came to collecting from it the “cooper money.”

Recently, though, the index finger stays for a longer while when indicating Chile. Chile is now a Yiddish *kibets* [community] which is familiar with the Yiddish life in all its forms. Chile is a part of every cultural development which happens on a “Jewish street.” Chile became a destination for more and less important Jewish artists, whose destiny is to follow its people, to give them their light and to receive from them new inputs and transfer them to other parts of the Jewish world, whose territory is the entire globe.⁴⁹

Chilean culturists and trans-Andean cultural connections

Sharing the same language and a similar history, also in its cultural framework Chile was strongly linked to Argentina. Yet, the actual contact between people was initially difficult. The *Transandino* train linking Chile and Argentina began to operate in 1910, after which the passage of people and ideas between the two countries became easier. The Jewish-Argentine parliamentarian Enrique Dickmann, arguing in favor of *Transandino*, underlined that this train connection contributed to 'the exchange of people as well as to the general progress' and was the only way to enable contact between the Pacific and Argentine coasts.⁵⁰ Chile shared with Argentina 'a presumed whiteness' of its Spanish-origin majority population and often silenced its indigenous groups in the public sphere.⁵¹ These demographic conditions pushed Chile much closer culturally to Argentina rather than to its more indigenous-populated neighbors like Bolivia or Peru.

Chilean Jews networking with their Argentine counterparts thus relied on an already existing cultural exchange between the two countries. Chilean Yiddish activists always perceived Chile as being linked to its 'big sister' on the other side of the Andes. Samuel Rollansky was convinced that Chilean Yiddish writers preferred to publish their works in Buenos Aires rather than in Santiago.⁵² The dependence of the Chilean cultural scene on its Argentine counterpart is also visible in the biographies of Jews who lived transnational lives between Argentina and Chile. When the poet Moyshe Dovid Guiser left for Chile, he continued to work for *Di Presse* daily in Buenos Aires. Guiser was seen in Buenos Aires as a key representative of Yiddish print culture in Chile. In 1938, the IWO Institute in Buenos Aires asked Guiser to send it (as well as the main YIVO headquarters in Vilna) copies of both the Yiddish and Spanish-Jewish publications printed in Guiser's printing house.⁵³ Living in peripheral Chile, Guiser needed to coordinate his cross-border activities. In those pre-online money transfer days, Moyshe Dovid Guiser enlisted the help of his sister Sara Guiser de Grodstein, who collected his royalties from Argentine publishers.⁵⁴ Guiser promoted Chilean Yiddish writing abroad, especially in Argentina. In 1935, for instance, he established contact with S. Feierstein from the journal *Der Shpigl* in Buenos Aires. Feierstein assured him that his journal would print reviews of Chilean Yiddish *tuers* (activists) Pilowsky and Rizenberg.⁵⁵

In Argentina, the development of Yiddish culture in Chile was explicitly welcomed and supported. Wolf Bressler, editor of the Buenos Aires daily Yiddish newspaper *Morgnzeitung*, appealed to Moyshe Dovid Guiser in 1935: 'Chilean Jewish *kibets* [community], which grew so significantly in recent years, is already developing its cultural needs (...).'⁵⁶ Despite Pilowsky's complaints of Chile 'being behind a *mehitsa* [separation wall] of the Andes' and 'forgotten by everyone,' the Argentine Jewish press regularly reported on Chile.⁵⁷ Even though initially the movement of people was rather difficult, printed editions circulated between Argentina and Chile quite easily. The Argentine Yiddish writer Berl Grinberg read a review of his poetry volume in the Chilean Yiddish press.⁵⁸ Buenos Aires Yiddish writer Haim Finkelstein wrote that he could at first only read books written by his Chilean colleague Yankev Pilowsky before being able to meet him *en face*.⁵⁹ *Zid-amerike* in Santiago wrote that the warm welcome of their editorial efforts by a key Buenos Aires Yiddishist, Yankev Botoshansky, filled them with happiness.⁶⁰ Yiddish journalists from Buenos Aires regularly travelled to Chile; in 1935,

for example, these were Mordecai Stoliar of the *Yidishe Zaitung* and Salomón Resnick representing *Judaica*. In the 1940s, Pilowsky regularly travelled to Argentina for the congresses of progressive and Yiddishist IKUF (Yidisher Kultur Farband).

In Jewish Latin America of the 1930s, there was a certain sense of being united by shared Jewish goals, and these voices came from both Yiddishist and Zionist circles. In 1935, Shmuel Wasserman reported to Santiago in Chile that progressive Jewish schools in Argentina were facing financial problems due to the ambivalent attitude of local Jewish leaders.⁶¹ In 1935, the *Tsentrale Veltlekh-Yidishe Shul-Organizatsye* (Central Secular Yiddish School Organization, the TSVISHO) from Buenos Aires invited Guiser to regularly contribute to its new children's journal *Kinder Velt* (it is not certain whether the journal appeared at all).⁶² Guiser was perceived in Argentina as a cross-border actor who could contribute to the transfer of knowledge, ideas and experiences. In 1935 the TSVISHO in Buenos Aires wrote explicitly of Guiser's familiarity with Jewish Argentine and Yiddish cultural activism. Its representative wrote, 'I don't need to elaborate about the importance of this journal. You are not a *fremder* [literally "a foreigner"] and certainly understand the matter very well.'⁶³ Moyshe Dovid Guiser's involvement in Jewish education dated back to his time spent building Yiddish life in Argentina and continued after his emigration to Chile. Guiser was instrumental, for example, in establishing in 1932 a Yiddish school in La Plata, Argentina.⁶⁴

International Yiddishist networking was a strategy to promote and stabilize Yiddish literary publishing in Chile. It took place during regular visits of Yiddish actors and writers and Jewish political leaders. Yankev Pilowsky often claimed that, in the early 1930s, he himself was 'the cultural institution of Jewish Chile.' When guests from Europe were visiting Argentina, many of them were invited to perform in Chile as well. The visitors approached Pilowsky asking him to act as their host and manager, to organize shows and sell tickets or books.⁶⁵ In 1935, Warsaw actors Zygmunt Turkow and Ester Perlman arrived in Santiago for shows.⁶⁶ That same year, the *Círculo Israelita* invited US Yiddish literary critic Shmuel Niger, who was in Argentina at the time.⁶⁷ In his memoirs, Pilowsky imagined himself as the only stronghold of Yiddish in Chile and the first address at which all guests from Europe arrived. For instance, Hersh Gilishanski, who in 1938 came to conduct a fundraising campaign for the YIVO, in Pilowsky's perception spent more time at Pilowsky's home than at his hotel. Yankev Mayzil, an emissary of *Kultur-Lige* publishers from Warsaw, allegedly spent every evening with Pilowsky singing Jewish folk songs and drinking quintessentially Chilean *cola de mono*.⁶⁸ Such intimate meetings contributed to Pilowsky's feeling that a shared passion for modern Yiddish was a firm basis on which transnational Yiddish culture could be built. The activist was convinced of a 'national debt' which Chilean Jews needed to pay off by supporting the YIVO, and thus contributing a 'Chilean brick' to the elevation of this 'fortress of Yiddish culture.'⁶⁹ Pilowsky's numerous articles on Warsaw's *Literarische Bleter* or Vilnius's YIVO underlined that European cultural production was essential for Jewish Chileans to remain in touch with Old-World Yiddish currents.⁷⁰

Despite Pilowsky's self-proclaimed title as sole Chilean Yiddish cultural leader, Moyshe Dovid Guiser assumed a similar role of a local representative of Yiddish culture. The Yiddish circles in Poland perceived Guiser as a representative of the Yiddish word in Chile and encouraged his Yiddishist cultural activism efforts. In 1937, the Circle of Jewish Writers and Journalists in Białystok wrote to Guiser that his publications were 'strangely'

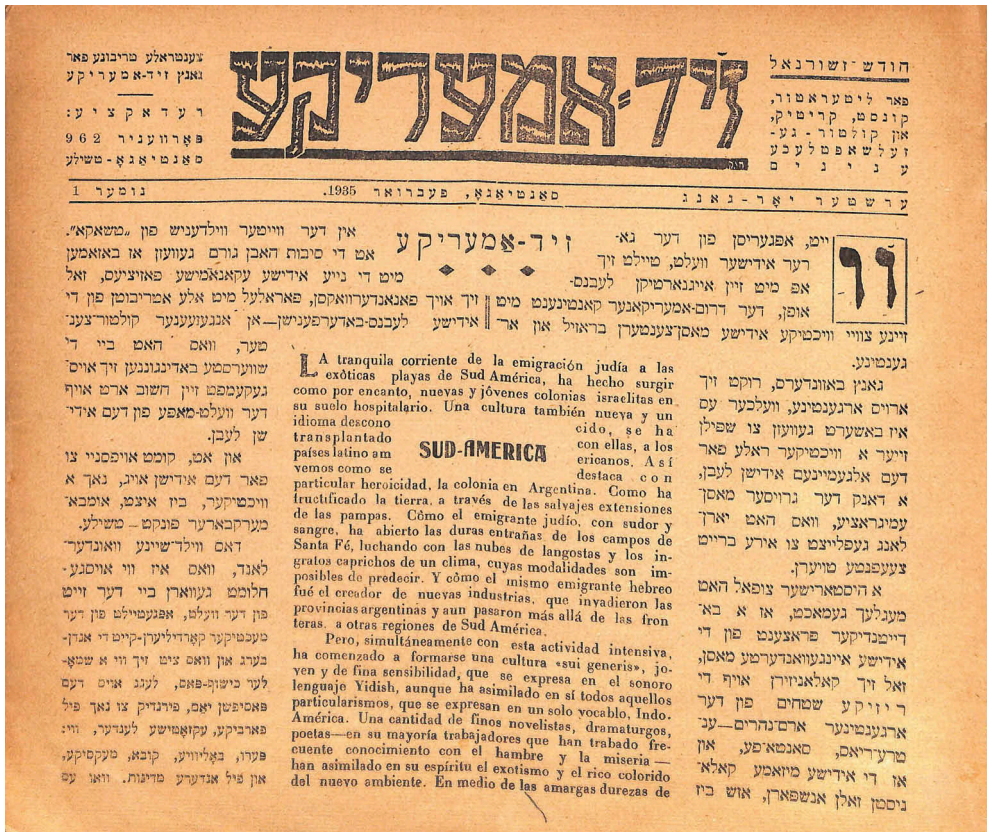
missing from their library.⁷¹ In 1934, Guiser personally wrote to YIVO (the Jewish Scientific Institute) in Vilna and invited its representative Hersh Gilishanski to visit Chile during his fundraising tour in Latin America. Answering his call, YIVO asked Guiser to 'prepare a surface' for Gilishanski's campaign. L. Krutsmán of YIVO expressed hope 'that also Chile will play its part in supporting the Jewish Scientific Institute.'⁷² Mentioning Guiser's engagement in an earlier (1932) Zalman Rayzen fundraising tour in Argentina, YIVO praised Guiser as a devoted fighter for Yiddish culture in Latin America and a pioneer of the Yiddish word in Chile.⁷³ In 1936, the YIVO in Vilna asked Guiser to organize a fundraising campaign to be headed by Buenos Aires Jewish ethnic leader Salomón Reznik. Flattering Guiser, they wrote that they knew about his 'fascination with YIVO and with Yiddish culture.'⁷⁴ During both YIVO campaigns, local activists and foreign fundraisers also cooperated with Mauricio Boltianski, then president of the *Círculo Israelita* in Santiago, who offered to let the campaigners use the *Círculo's* building free of charge.⁷⁵ The appreciation letter sent from Vilna to Boltianski underlined 'critical times for our [Jewish] nation' and underscored that 'even in remote Chile the Jewish intelligentsia and cultural activists acknowledge the importance of our [YIVO's] work.'⁷⁶ These interactions were evidence of global Yiddishist networking spanning from Eastern Europe to Latin America. The YIVO in Vilna hoped to cooperate with Chilean activists in the future and made sure it had loyal agents in Chile as well. At the same time, the international Jewish involvement with Vilna was for Jewish Chileans a platform for constructing ethnic pride and a source of recognition from the intellectual center of Yiddish culturism.

Yiddish cultural life in Chile was in competition with the growing power of Zionism. Some local Zionist activists believed that Yiddish campaigns were a danger to the Zionist camp. For instance, in 1937 Zionist Leib Schussheim from Buenos Aires took a stance against the Latin American jubilee campaign of the Warsaw *Literarische Bleter* journal, in order to not decrease the income from the Eretz Israel campaign.⁷⁷ The growing popularity of Zionism already in the 1930s was not easily accepted by many fervent Yiddish culturists. Buenos Aires Yiddish journalist Yankev Botoshansky wanted to continue building Yiddish culture and Yiddish schooling in Latin America, instead of 'digging a grave for himself' – a phrase he used to describe abandoning the ideals of secular Yiddish culture.⁷⁸ Guiser was not that pessimistic and was able to combine Zionism with a strong loyalty to the wounded Yiddish culture. Later in life, he became a supporter of left-wing Zionism and participated in numerous congresses of the *Federación Sionista de Chile*. Also, his *Zid-amerike* positively informed readers about Zionist activities in Chile.

Zid-amerike, international networking and the making of Chilean Yiddish culture

As Chilean Yiddish culturists perceived it, a respectable Jewish community should be involved in Yiddish literary circulation and literary criticism. In February 1935, Moyshe Dovid Guiser and Noyekh Vital, with a certain degree of support from other local Jewish leaders, established a literary journal called *Zid-amerike*. Its first issue proclaimed that it would be a monthly focusing on literature, art, criticism, culture and social issues. *Zid-amerike's* cover page was written in both Yiddish and Spanish, following a pattern

characteristic of other publications targeting both Jewish and non-Jewish readers. The reader might assume that both text versions would be the same, yet there were stark differences between the Yiddish and Spanish editions. *Zid-amerike's* Spanish editorial proclaimed that, thanks to Jewish immigration, the Yiddish culture previously unknown there had been 'transplanted' into Latin America. The text underlined the immense contribution of Jews to Latin American industries and agriculture, and spoke of Jewish devotion and hard work which enrooted them into a new American way of life. This flattery was a strategy of legitimizing Jewish presence in Chile. The Spanish editorial underlined the creativity and Europeaness of Yiddish literature that had grown from 'German castles, the Pyrenees, Italy, old and legendary Prague' until it reached Eastern Europe. The Yiddish version first of all underlined the remoteness of Latin America from the main Yiddish center in Eastern Europe and the 'coincidental' immigration to Argentina, but also its current status as an important Jewish center. The Yiddish text projected Chile as an unexpected and exotic place of Jewish settlement. These two diverse editorials follow Liliana Feierstein's argument about Jews adopting diverse language versions in order to target different readerships.⁷⁹



Zid-amerike, cover, February 1935.

The editors of the journal *Zid-amerike* exoticized themselves when describing Latin America. For instance, the Chaco region in Argentina, where only a few Jews settled, was presented as a 'vayte vildenish,' a remote wilderness. Chile was pictured as a 'wild and beautiful country of wonders.' The unusualness of Chile was increased by its proximity to

'even more colorful and exotic countries.'⁸⁰ Such renderings were based in the fact that, although edited in Latin America, the literary journal maintained a dialogue with communities in Poland, Romania and the US. When Guiser writes 'and now comes to the Jewish attention (...) the until now unnoticeable point – Chile,' he clearly implies that the centers of 'Jewish attention' are located outside of Latin America. When Guiser travelled to New York in 1950, he was outwardly *Latino-exoticized* by US Jews. In a radio interview with Guiser, American journalist B. Schwartz proclaimed that Guiser's poems 'breathe[d] South American wilderness.'⁸¹ Writing about Argentine Yiddish singer Jevl Katz, *Zid-amerike* praised him for being able to 'track down the exotic specificity of South American life.'⁸² The 'exotic setting' in which Chilean Yiddishists needed to carry out their activities strengthened the significance of their effort as a sign of the utmost devotion and perseverance. In order to underline this effort, Noyekh Vital wrote that in the capital city of Santiago there lived fewer Jews than 'those residing on a few Buenos Aires streets.'⁸³ Underscoring the small size of the Chilean community, he rendered maintaining *Zid-amerike* as an unusual achievement. By emphasizing the exceptionality of the Chilean environment, Guiser and Vital imagined themselves as unique defenders of Yiddish culture. The existence of Yiddish culture in Chile, despite being 'one of the most remote corners of the world,' was for *Zid-amerike* a tremendous cultural endeavor, even 'a heroic effort' which, as its editors desired, should be appreciated all over the Jewish world.⁸⁴

The *Zid-amerike* journal – as its name implies – was supposed to become an all-South American Yiddish platform. Guiser planned that the journal would 'culturally serve the entire continent' and become a 'spiritual bridge between all dispersed Latin American Jewish communities.' Like many other Jewish literary journals, *Zid-amerike* promised to have a broad focus and to include translations from foreign languages as well. *Zid-amerike* wanted to uncover the richness of Yiddish letters in the small centers of Central America and become a nexus of literary exchange. For instance, the second volume featured a long article on Jewish communities in Panama, Colombia, Costa Rica and other countries on the Pacific coast.⁸⁵ In the same issue, Noyekh Vital analyzed Argentine Yiddish literature.⁸⁶ The journal was reaching far outside of its borders, and instead of focusing only on Chile, it attempted to reflect 'an international Jewish life.' The international aspiration was expressed, for instance, in reviewing books published in diverse corners of Latin America, such as Yitskhok Reisman's *Geshikhte fun yidn in brazil* (History of Jews in Brazil, São Paulo 1935). Guiser explicitly wrote that '*Zid-amerike* was established in a small and remote county, but it is supposed to serve the entire Jewish world.'⁸⁷ As the journal proclaimed, it was a platform that could publish both Argentine Yiddish 'lions' such as Pinye Katz or Yankev Botoshansky and young Latin American Yiddish poets, all in a free and open atmosphere and without any revenue interests.⁸⁸ When Shmuel Niger came to Argentina in 1935, Noyekh Vital proclaimed in *Zid-amerike* that the New York literary critic was in fact 'a guest of all Latin American Jewry,' and that also in Chile was felt 'the festive atmosphere' surrounding Niger's arrival.⁸⁹ Whereas *Zid-amerike* wanted to be Latin American in terms of its content, various Argentine papers such as *Der Shpigl* were available in other countries of the continent, but without aspirations of having a broader Latin American focus. This pattern is evidence of how small diasporas attempted to achieve a wider impact and recognition, and from their inception perceived themselves as regional rather than only national cultural venues.

Zid-amerike became an international hub for a network of Yiddish culturists who reciprocally supported one another. For instance, Yehuda Leib Gruzman printed Guiser in his *Shpigel* in Buenos Aires, and Guiser printed Gruzman in *santiaguino Zid-amerike*. *Zid-amerike* regularly printed texts by its editors Moyshe Dovid Guiser and Noyekh Vital. It also published authors whom Guiser and Vital knew from Buenos Aires. This included men of letters such as Shmuel Wasserman, Israel Helfman, Aharon Brodsky, Pinkhas Bizberg and Moisés Mendelson. *Zid-amerike's* section for literary criticism had a strong Latin American focus and reviewed mostly books that appeared in Argentina. By focusing on Yiddish letters in Latin America, activists on both sides of the Andes mutually legitimized and canonized each other, contributing to the emergence of a Latin American Yiddish culture, partially independent from external Jewish centers. Yet, *Zid-amerike* also managed to recruit key Yiddish personalities from outside the continent to contribute to the journal and thus define it as professional, globally networking and successful. For instance, the fifth issue featured a text by the New York-based Yiddishist Shmuel Niger about Chaim Zhitlowsky as well as Aaron Leieles's text on Yiddish writer Yosef Opatoshu.⁹⁰ *Zid-amerike* printed almost only contemporary authors, with almost no attention paid to the pioneer classics of Yiddish literature such as Mendele Mocher Sforim or Yitskhok Leybush Peretz. This decision further underlined its future-oriented approach and desire to strengthen an independent and young Latin American Yiddish culture.

Zid-amerike received a rather sad diagnosis concerning Yiddish culture in Chile, yet with a certain level of hope. As the journal reported, the *Yidisher Kultur-Tsenter* in Santiago was supposed to be a poor institution, with just a few tables and books and without a permanent location. Describing the *Tsenter*, Guiser complained about the low number of activists, yet underlined their devotion to the cause. Guiser's text rendered the marginality of Yiddish culture in Chile as a painful beginning, as a difficult stage which needed to be passed through in order to enjoy a future greatness.⁹¹ *Zid-amerike* complained in 1935 that 'in more than 30 years of Jewish settlement in Chile, the local Jews did not produce any writer, any poet, in either Yiddish or Spanish – not even a journalist. The intellectual poverty of our youth is truly nothing but sad.'⁹² A year later, the journal wrote: 'A Chilean Jew is not aware of the meaning of what is being created here [in the field of Yiddish literature].'⁹³ *Zid-amerike* criticized the 'cultural passivity' of Jewish *santiaguinos*, especially the young generation, and debated possible solutions. Indirectly referring to his own influence, Guiser suggested in 1934 that the *Yidisher Kultur-Tsenter* expanded its activities. A new drama section was opened, Yiddish courses for youth were created and the library moved to the building that also housed a Spanish-speaking Jewish youth club. These measures were intended to help attract the Jewish youth back to Yiddish. Yet, as *Zid-amerike* complained, the lectures on Yiddish language were attended by a small number of people and hardly any youth.⁹⁴ It seems that many more preferred to go to football games by local Maccabi, where they could socialize in their preferred way. Spanish-Jewish journals also complained about the 'apathy' of Chilean Jews.⁹⁵ Despite these obstacles, the editors of *Zid-amerike* perceived their journal as a fresh platform for strengthening and organizing the Chilean Jewry. As the journal wrote, 'until now everything has been done in a chaotic way, by coincidence and without organization (...) the *Yidisher Kultur-Tsenter* in Santiago waits for its new builders.'⁹⁶

Writing about European matters embedded *Zid-amerike* in the wider Jewish context. *Zid-amerike*'s European focus referred mostly to the activities of YIVO and the general Yiddishist movement. *Zid-amerike* described the YIVO fundraising campaign in 1934 as a great success for Chilean Jewry. This campaign was presented as an event that connected Chile with the international networks of Yiddish culture, and the Chilean Jewish financial assistance was referred to as 'family support.'⁹⁷ Against the backdrop of the 1934 campaign, a Society of Chilean Friends of the YIVO Institute was established. The Society answered the YIVO call to gather and preserve all Jewish materials produced in Chile and began sending *Zid-amerike* to Vilna.⁹⁸ In order to make the journal comprehensible also to European readers, Spanish-origin words in Latin American Yiddish were at times explained.⁹⁹ Among many Yiddishist causes, *Zid-amerike* celebrated the 70th birthday of American activist Chaim Zhitlowsky, along with the 10th anniversary of YIVO's establishment. *Zid-amerike* invited Polish-Jewish authors to contribute to current debates concerning Yiddish language and literature. For instance, issue no. 4 (June 1935) printed a text by Gabriel Weisman concerning the de-hebraization of Yiddish orthography.¹⁰⁰ General European political matters were not analyzed in depth, although many *Zid-amerike* issues opened with an editorial on the situation in Europe. Jewish-related European problems covered by the journal included, for instance, Hitler's rise to power and the Jewish economic devastation in Poland. These topics clearly embedded *Zid-amerike* in analogous discussions taking place in other Yiddish centers, thus marking the journal's international outreach and interests.

The reviews section showed the broad scope of the geographic interests and transnational ambitions of *Zid-amerike*. It included books printed in Argentina, but also in the US, Brazil, Colombia and Europe. *Zid-amerike* reviewed, for example, the works of Shmuel Niger and Yankev Glatshetyn. Issue no. 5 celebrated 25 years of Yoysef Opatoshu's literary work.¹⁰¹ The reviewed periodicals included, among others, New York avant-garde editions *In zikh* (edited by Leieles) and *Studio* (edited by Lamed Shapira). *Zid-amerike* reported about the world YIVO conference in Vilna and the International Congress for the Defense of Culture in Paris. Writing about these events, *Zid-amerike* inscribed itself into both the world literary culture and the global Yiddish culture. When actors Nathan and Sara Ginter visited Santiago in 1935, *Zid-amerike* praised their international careers and stressed that amateur Chilean Yiddish actors who joined them for the shows managed to keep up with the touring professionals.¹⁰² Inviting vagabond actors to perform in *Círculo Israelita*, Jewish Chileans argued that they were involved in the same Jewish cultural networks that united Buenos Aires, New York and Warsaw.

Zid-amerike perceived itself not only as a venue which included Chile in the Jewish debates, but also as a platform from which to present Latin American culture to Jewish audiences in Chile and beyond. *Zid-amerike*'s third issue presented a long discussion around a new anthology of Chilean poetry *Antología de poesía chilena nueva* (1935).¹⁰³ Reviewing a Spanish-language publication suggested possible connections between various national literatures and underscored Jews' belonging to Chile. The fact that one of the two editors of the anthology (Volodia Teitelboim) was Jewish proved that Jewish immigrants and their descendants were already enriching the Chilean arts and engaging in intercultural debates.¹⁰⁴ At times, Guiser and Vital themselves translated Chilean poetry into Yiddish.¹⁰⁵ *Zid-amerike* printed translated texts by Maria Bravo, Vicente Huidobro, Pablo Neruda, Baldomero Lillo, Ángel Cruchaga Santa María and Augusto d'Halmar. In so doing, it was hoped that other Chilean writers would be impressed by *Zid-amerike* and would

promise to send their texts as well.¹⁰⁶ Printing the Yiddish versions of Chilean poems was an attempt to proudly expose Chilean culture to other Yiddish centers, but also marked the Jewish familiarity with their immediate cultural surroundings in Chile.

Zid-amerike also offered its readers an overview of Chilean history and suggested that the Yiddish and Chilean cultures were complementary. Guiser and Vital believed that Latin American Jewish culture should be informed both by Jewish history and literature and by local input. For instance, in 1935, Moyshe Rizenberg analyzed the inquisition in Chile, while his other article dealt with colonial Jewish history in Pacific America.¹⁰⁷ Rizenberg historicized the Jewish presence on the continent, describing Jews as its veteran inhabitants and thus legitimized the Jewish right to feel Latin American and Chilean. Marcos Weinstein's text on the expulsion of Jews from Spain further rooted Chilean Jews in Iberian and Ibero-American history.¹⁰⁸ *Zid-amerike* appreciated all things Yiddish in Latin America. When a book on the history of the Jewish people appeared in Colombia, *Zid-amerike* was pleased that 'even in remote lands, with just a handful Jews, something Jewish sprouts.'¹⁰⁹ Chilean editors praised the fact that the book informed the non-Jewish public about the Jews and thus helped to combat anti-Semitism.

In July 1935, *Zid-amerike* was proud that, unlike any other Latin American Yiddish literary weekly, it managed to survive more than half a year. Noyekh Vital still wrote that the financial situation of the journal was good and that it had many Chilean Jews as subscribers.¹¹⁰ In Argentina, every similar editorial effort (*Shtraln, Argentine, Doyrem-amerike, Oyfsnay*) had quickly collapsed. Yet, also *Zid-amerike* ceased to appear after 14 issues in April 1936. The closure was not in any way announced.

Conclusion

Looking at the development of Yiddish culture in Chile allows for a better understanding of how transnational Jewish cultural transfer functioned in its minor centers. The Chilean Jewish community was young and small, even for Latin American standards. In the 1930s, German-Jewish immigrants tremendously influenced Chilean Jewish demographics, while it was Polish, Russian and Bessarabian Yiddish speakers who founded local Jewish institutions and maintained positions of power in local Jewish institutions. Many Eastern European Jewish immigrants quickly acculturated within the Chilean mainstream middle-class society, whereas a minority argued for intensified Jewish involvement with Yiddish and global Jewish issues. As Samuel Rollansky argued, the mid-1930s were a period when *santiaguino* culturists had 'begun to attract the attention in the broad Jewish world.'¹¹¹ Within the transnational polity of Yiddishland, Chile was a peripheral location, yet it boasted a group of devoted activists who strove to maintain contact with major Yiddish currents in Eastern Europe, Argentina and the US. The peripherality of Chile and the small number of Yiddish speakers rarely discouraged local culturists, who attempted several times to establish local Yiddish literary outlets and thus mark their links to other Yiddish centers.

The case of Yiddish culture in Chile sheds light on processes of Latin American Jewish cultural transfer, which to some extent occurred independently of transatlantic ties. The efforts of Chilean Yiddish activists were a future-oriented regional project rather than only a reinterpretation of Eastern European models. With just a few Yiddish men of letters active in Chile, Chilean culturists maintained that a unique Latin American Jewish culture existed and needed to be strengthened through the joint efforts of all Yiddish actors on the continent. The

Chilean Yiddish journal *Zid-amerike* took pride in being temporarily the only Yiddish literary journal in Latin America. Chilean Yiddish culturists believed that Latin America could serve as a safe haven not only for immigrants, but also for the Yiddish culture. They argued that only a united Latin American front could provide for a stable Latin American Yiddish culture. Far from ethnic isolationism, Chilean activists envisioned a modern Jewish culture informed by both Eastern European influences and local Jewish cultural production, as well as by exchanges with non-Jewish Latin American majority cultures.

The development of Yiddish culture in Chile was a project conducted by a handful of activists who needed to engage a wider public and involve communal leaders. Moyshe Dovid Guiser, Yankev Pilowsky, Noyekh Vital and a group of their colleagues formed a team of cultural and social activists who jointly as well as individually ventured new attempts to found, manage and maintain Yiddish journalism and literature in Chile. Chilean Yiddish journals such as *Zid-amerike* were designed to showcase Latin American Yiddish culture and foster dialogue with other Yiddish centers. Although usually short-lived, these journals were witness to a specific time in Chilean Jewish history and informed their readers about the power of transnational Yiddish culturism, which sprouted roots even in minor Jewish centers. Jewish migrations expanded the Yiddish culture and planted its emissaries also on the Pacific coast.

Notes

1. I follow the YIVO standards when transliterating Yiddish words. Yet, when a person, publication or institution itself adopted a distinct, widely-known local Romanized spelling, I follow this form. For instance, I use Guiser instead of Giser, Pilowsky instead of Pilovsky and Rollansky instead of Rozhansky.
2. Federico Finchelstein, *La Argentina fascista. Los orígenes ideológicos de la dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana 2008), 76–96; Daniel Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y antisemitismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Javier Vergara, 2003); Dovid Rock, *La argentina autoritaria: Los nacionalistas, su historia y su influencia en la vida pública* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1993).
3. John W. Meyer and Ronald L. Jepperson, "The Actors' of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency," *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 1 (2000): 104–6.
4. Comité Representativo, established in 1940, was a secular umbrella organization representing Jews before Chilean authorities. Jewish progressives accused the Comité of being undemocratic and exclusive. The 1956 book almost entirely omitted the existence of Jewish socialist and communist groupings. See Valeria Navarro-Rosenblatt, "The Untold History: Voices of Non-affiliated Jews in Chile," in *The New Ethnic Studies in Latin America*, eds. Raanan Rein, Stefan Rinke, Nadia Zysman (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 133; Navarro-Rosenblatt, "Construcción de una memoria histórica: La celebración del cincuentenario de la Colectividad Israelita en Chile," *Revista de Historia y Geografía* 38 (2018): 69–91.
5. The Holocaust has redefined the politics of Yiddish culturism in Latin America, and thus 1939 serves as a closing caesura of this article. In the 1940s and 1950s, following the war which almost erased Eastern European Jewry, and with a new State of Israel on the map, the role of Yiddish in Latin America decreased and Zionism became more and more popular. Although Yiddish publishing flourished in Argentina in the 1950s with hundreds of books being published, including as part of two major publishing projects *Dos poylishe yidntum* and *Musterverk fun yidisher literatur*, Hebrew and Zionism exercised a strong influence on communal life. Despite new circumstances, in both Argentina and Chile the Jewish progressives continued their Yiddish cultural work in the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. See Alejandro Dujovne, *Una historia del libro judío. La cultura judía a través de sus editores, librerías, traductores, imprentas y bibliotecas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2014), 90–119;

- Malena Chinski, "Un catálogo en memoria del judaísmo polaco: La colección *Dos poylishe yidntum*, Buenos Aires 1946–1966," in *Marginados y consagrados: Nuevos estudios sobre la vida judía en Argentina*, ed. E. Kahan et. al. (Buenos Aires: Lumiere, 2011), 213–38.
6. Günther Böhm and Moshe Nes-El wrote numerous studies on Jews in Chile, yet hardly ever referred to Eastern European immigration or to Yiddish. Nes-El in his unpublished (available at www.moshe.nes-el.com) article 'Los inmigrantes rusos en Chile (judíos y cristianos) y su actividad en la relación con la revolución de 1917' authoritatively states that 'the only link which the immigrants maintained (with Eastern Europe) were their family members.' Böhm claimed that 'there was no contact between Central European Jews, assimilated into the language and culture of their countries of origin, and the new immigrants who spoke only Yiddish and escaped miserable life and persecutions in the Tsarist Russia,' Günther Böhm, "Documentos relacionados con la primera comunidad judía de Chile 1909–1914," *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora* VIII (1983): 48.
 7. Perla Sneh ed., *Buenos Aires Idish. Temas de patrimonio cultural 19* (Buenos Aires, CPPHC, 2006); Sneh, "Ídish al sur, una rama en sombras," in *Partenecia y alteridad: Judíos en/de América Latina: Cuarenta años de cambios*, Haim Avni et. al. ed. (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2011), 657–76; Roney Cytrynowicz, "The Yiddish Side of Jewish Brazil: Cultural Endeavors and Literary Heritage," in *Splendid, Decline, and Rediscovery of Yiddish in Latin America*, eds. Malena Chinski, Alan Astro (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 15–41; Ariel Svarch, "Four Jews, Five Identities: Representation, Popular Culture, and Language Politics in the Making of Jewish-Argentines (Buenos Aires, 1920–1950)" (Ph.D. thesis, Emory University, 2016); Tamara Gleason Freidberg, *Di Shvue, los bundistas en México y su participación en la comunidad judía* (Mexico City: Palabra de Clío, 2016).
 8. Emanuel Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish Culture: The Story of the Yiddish Language Movement* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997); Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011).
 9. Melech Ravitch in *Bagrisungen un opshatsungen tsu dem 60-yoriken yubileum fun Yankev Pilowsky* (Santiago, 1959), 39.
 10. Haim Avni, *Argentina y las migraciones judías. De la Inquisición al Holocausto y después* (Buenos Aires: Milá, 2005), 194.
 11. Héctor Gutiérrez, "La inmigración española, italiana y portuguesa: Chile 1860–1930," *Notas de Población*, Año XVII, 48, diciembre, Santiago de Chile, CELADE-CEPAL 1989.
 12. Censo, 1920, Población chilena y extranjera con distinción de sexo, en 1920, 282.
 13. Censo 1920, Nacionalidad de los extranjeros en 1920, con distinción de sexo, por departamentos, 289.
 14. In 1914, around 35,000 Chileans lived in Argentina. Alejandro Paredes, "Migración limítrofe en Argentina y Chile," in *Argentina, Chile y sus vecinos*, vol. II Argentina y Chile en la region, ed. Pablo Lacoste (Mendoza: Caviar Bleu, 2005), 19–54.
 15. Moisés Senderey, *Di geshikhhte fun yidn in Tshile* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial 'Dos Yidische Wort,' 1956), 85.
 16. Censo 1920, Nacionalidad de los extranjeros con distinción de sexo 1920, por departamentos, 289.
 17. Samuel Rollansky, "Yidische shtimungen bay di andn-bregn," in *Tshilenish. Antologye* (Buenos Aires: Ateneo Literario en el IWO, 1972), 14.
 18. HICEM, established in 1926, was a combined endeavor of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Jewish Colonization Association and EmigDirect.
 19. Senderey, *Historia de la colectividad israelita de Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial 'Dos Yidische Wort,' 1956), 112.
 20. American Jewish Yearbook followed the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; in its yearbook from 1939/1940, it estimated that 15,000 Jews lived in Chile, while in 1945/1946 this estimate increased to 25,000.
 21. Günther Böhm, 'Judíos en Chile,' un Informe Confidencial de la embajada alemana en Santiago, de junio 1939, *Proceedings of the 11th World Congress of Jewish Studies*,

- Division B. The History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem 1994, World Union of Jewish Studies, 334.
22. Irmtrud Wojak, *Exil in Chile. Die deutsch-jüdische und politische Emigration während des Nationalsozialismus 1933–1945* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1994), 1347, 56–57.
 23. Gualterio Looser Schallemborg, “Los judíos en Chile,” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris* 20 (1928): 430.
 24. Victor Mirelman, *En búsqueda de una identidad. Los inmigrantes judíos en Buenos Aires, 1890–1930* (Buenos Aires: Milá, 1988), 5.
 25. Moshe Nes-El, *Estudios sobre el judaísmo chileno* (Jerusalem: Ediciones de Revista Oriente y Occidente, 2009), 163. Besides Berman, Ángel Faivovich and Marcos Chamudes also achieved this position in 1937.
 26. Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las derechas. The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890–1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 150–5, 167–71; Emiliano Valenzuela, *La generación fusilada: Memorias del nazismo chileno (1932–1938)* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria de Chile, 2017), 158–161.
 27. Irmtrud Wojak, *Exil in Chile. Die deutsch-jüdische und politische Emigration während des Nationalsozialismus 1933–1945* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1994); Enrique Brahm García and Jorge Montes Arraztoa, “Obstáculos jurídicos y consulares a la inmigración judía durante el gobierno de Arturo Alessandri 1932–1938,” *Revista de estudios histórico-jurídicos* 35 (2013): 523–45; Vicente Antonio Hernández Ferrada, “Refugiados indeseables en Chile antes y durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. El carácter antisemita de los nazis y nasis chilenos y sus aliados en la derecha liberal y conservadora, BA thesis, Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano; Eva Goldschmidt Wyman, *Escaping Hitler: A Jewish Haven in Chile* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press, 2013).
 28. Looser Schallemborg, “Los judíos en Chile,” 430–1.
 29. Senderey, *Historia de la colectividad*, 55–65; Moshe Nes-El, “La Inmigración Judía a Chile durante 1929–1939,” *Colloquio* 4, no. 7 (1982): 73–88.
 30. Senderey, *Historia de la colectividad*, 89; Yankev Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt* (Tel Aviv: Farlag L. Kanai, 1970), vol. 2, 75–76.
 31. Senderey, *Historia de la colectividad*, 70.
 32. Senderey, *Historia de la colectividad*, 74.
 33. Senderey, *Historia de la colectividad*, 237.
 34. The anthology focuses on four major Chilean Yiddish culturists: Pilowsky, Guiser, Vital and Blumshteyn.
 35. Senderey, *Di geshikhhte*, 117–8.
 36. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 106–7.
 37. Active until 1978. The weekly temporarily had a Yiddish supplement.
 38. *Dos Yidische Wort* evolved as a continuation of *Tshilener Yidisher Vokhnblat*. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 236. In the 1940s *Dos Yidische Wort* began to include Spanish and from the end of the 1960s appears in Spanish only.
 39. “Barikht fun der tetigkayt fun yidishn kultur-tsenter,” *Zid-amerike* 14, 53; Yankev Pilowsky, “Der Circulo tor nit farvandelt vern in a klub far yehidim,” *Tshilener Yidisher Vokhnblat*, 1931, undated clipping, Pilowsky Archive, NLI, 1405/21, Briv fun Tshile.
 40. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 74–75.
 41. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 84.
 42. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 81.
 43. Yankev Botoshansky, “Moyshe Dovid Guiser, der umruiker un aktiver, fort avek,” *Di Presse*, October 8, 1936, n.p.
 44. Moyshe Dovid Guiser, “Di shrek farn emesn vort,” *Zid-amerike*, no. 3 (April 1935): 50.
 45. Jorin Pilowsky quoted in Maxine Lowy, *Memoria Latente. Una comunidad enfrentada por desafío de los derechos humanos en Chile* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2016), 28.
 46. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 174.
 47. *Bagrisungen un opshatsungen*, 12–14; 42–44.
 48. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 107.

49. Yankev Pilowsky, "Niger-der gast fun Tshile," *Idishe Prese*, July 19, 1935, 1.
50. Pablo Lacoste, "El Ferrocarril Transandino y a construcción de la cordillera como espacio social, (1893–1947)," *Entrepassados. Revista de Historia de la colectividad* 24–25 (2003): 191.
51. On this subject, see Paulina Alberto, Eduardo Elena eds, *Rethinking Race in Modern Argentina* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
52. Rollansky, "Yidishe shtimungen bay di andn-bregn," in *Tshilenish*, 11.
53. IWO Buenos Aires to Guiser, 19.1.1938, Guiser Archive, NLI (National Library of Israel), box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed. IWO is the Argentine abbreviation for YIVO (Yidisher Visenshaftlekher Institut, the Jewish Scientific Institute), a Yiddish authority established in 1925 and based then in Vilna in Poland. In 1928 the Argentine branch of the institution was established in Buenos Aires.
54. *Di Presse* editor to M. D. Guiser, 6.7.1947, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 16, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-mem ad-tav.
55. S. Feierstein to Guiser, 11.2.1935, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed.
56. Wolf Bressler to Guiser, 1.10.1935, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 16, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-mem ad-tav.
57. Yankev Pilowsky, "Moyshe Dovid Guiser tsvish undz," *Idishe Prese*, 1936, undated clipping, Pilowsky Archive, NLI1405/21, Briv fun Tshile.
58. Berl Grinberg, "Bagrisungen un opshatsungen," *Zid-amerika* 1 (February 1935), 16.
59. *Bagrisungen un opshatsungen*, 35.
60. "Epitetn," *Zid-amerika* 3 (April 1935), 68.
61. Shmuel Wasserman, "Nishto keyn naves in Buenos Aires," *Zid-amerika* 11 (December 1935): 252–253, 255.
62. Tsentrale Veltlekh-Yidishe Shul-Organizatsye in Argentine to Guiser, 2.6.1935, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 16, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-mem ad-tav.
63. Tsentrale Veltlekh-Yidishe Shul-Organizatsye in Argentine to Guiser, 2.6.1935, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 16, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-mem ad-tav.
64. Eduardo D. Faingold, "Educational Attitudes and Language Choice at the Birth of a Progressive Yiddish-language folks shule in Argentina," *International Journal of Jewish Education Research* 7 (2014): 55–76.
65. Pilowsky, *Yid oyf der velt*, 55–57.
66. "Zygmunt Turkow in Chile," *Zid-amerika* 6 (July 1935): 125.
67. "Sh. Niger in Chile," *Zid-amerika* 6 (July 1935): 126.
68. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 110–115.
69. Yankev Pilowsky, "Der YIVO un zayn bedaytung," *Idishe Prese*, undated clipping, 1935, Pilowsky Archive, NLI, 10405/21, Briv fun Tshile.
70. Yankev Pilowsky, "Vegn A. L. Schussheims artikel kegn di zamlung far di literarishe bleter," *Idishe Prese*, undated clipping, 1934, Pilowsky Archive, NLI, 10405/21, Briv fun Tshile.
71. Koło Literatów i Dziennikarzy Żydowskich w Białymstoku to Guiser, 6.8.1937, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed.
72. L. Krustman YIVO to Guiser, 21.9.1934, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed.
73. YIVO to Guiser, 2.11.1934, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed.
74. YIVO to Guiser, 18.8.1936, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed.
75. Yankev Pilowsky, "Niger – der gast fun Tshile."
76. YIVO to M. Boltianski, 3.1.1936, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed.
77. Pilowsky, *A yid oyf der velt*, 111; Pilowsky, "Vegn A. L. Schussheims artikel."
78. Yankev Botoschansky to Guiser, 3.9.1935, Guiser Archive, NLI, box 15, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-alef ad lamed.
79. Liliana Ruth Feierstein, "The New Midrash: The Jewish Press in Argentina," in *The Pressa: International Press Exhibition Cologne 1928, and the Jewish Contribution to Modern Journalism* vol. 2, ed. Marten-Finnis, Susanne (Bremen: Ed. Lumière, 2012), 567.

80. "Zid-amerike," *Zid-amerike* 1 (February 1935): 1.
81. "Der 98 radio simpozyum fun altveltkhehn yidishn kultur-kongres, zuntik dem 21. november 1950, gevidmet M.D. Guisern," Guiser Archive, NLI, box 16, Itkatvut nikhneset. Me-mem ad-tav.
82. "Jevl Katz der parodist und folks-zinger in Tshile," *Zid-amerike* 14 (April 1936): 52.
83. Noyekh Vital, "Tsum zekstn numer zid-amerike," *Zid-amerike* 6 (July 1935): 124.
84. "Zeks numer zid-amerike," *Zid-amerike* 6 (July 1935): 121–2.
85. Moyshe Rizenberg, "Yidn in doyrem-amerikanishn pasifik," *Zid-amerike* 2 (March 1935): 26–28.
86. Noyekh Vital, "Di yidishe literatur in Argentine," *Zid-amerike* 2 (March 1935): 35–36.
87. "Far di vos fregen," *Zid-amerike* 2 (March 1935): 43.
88. Noyekh Vital, "Tsum zekstn numer zid-amerike," *Zid-amerike* 6 (July 1935): 124.
89. Noyekh Vital, "S. Niger un di yidishe literatur," *Zid-amerike* 4 (May 1935): 73.
90. Shmuel Niger, "Dr. Chaim Zhitlowski," *Zid-amerike* 5 (June 1935): 98–99; Aaron Leyeles, "A fertl yorhundert-salut (tsum yubiley fun Yooysef Opatoshu," *Zid-amerike* 5 (June 1935): 110.
91. "Der Kultur-tsenter in Santiago," *Zid-amerike* 1 (February 1935): 18–19.
92. Novitus, "Antologia de Poesia Chilena Nueva," *Zid-amerike* 3 (April 1935): 51.
93. "Iber di shveln fun nayem yor," *Zid-amerike* 12 (January 1936): 8.
94. "Vegn dem yidish kultur-tsenter," *Zid-amerike* 1 (February 1935): 19.
95. "Der Mundo Judío begrist zid-amerike," *Zid-amerike* 13 (March 1936): 24.
96. "Es iz shoyntsayt," *Zid-amerike* 3 (April 1935): 69.
97. "Shtil in Santiago," *Zid-amerike* 1 (February 1935): 19.
98. "Fraynt fun YIVO in Tshile," *Zid-amerike* 1 (February 1935): 20.
99. For instance, in Guiser's poem "Der blonder gautsh," *Zid-amerike* 7 (August 1935): 152–153.
100. Gabriel Weisman, "In geyeg far reformirn di yidishe shprakh," *Zid-amerike* 4 (May 1935): 81–84.
101. Moyshe Dovid Guiser, "25 yor fun yooysef opatoshus shafn," *Zid-amerike* 5 (June 1935): 103.
102. "Di aktiorn gast," *Zid-amerike* 4, 92.
103. Novitus, "Antologia de Poesia Chilena Nueva," *Zid-amerike* 3 (April 1935): 51.
104. Later in life, Teitelboim became a communist activist and a parliamentarian.
105. "Fun der modernen zid-amerikaner poezye," *Zid-amerike* 3 (April 1935): 55.
106. "Bagrisungen," *Zid-amerike* 4 (May 1935): 91.
107. Moyshe Rizenberg, "Di inkvizitsye in Tshile. Der fal fun Fransisco Maldonado da Silva," *Zid-amerike* 3 (April 1935): 62. Moyshe Rizenberg, "Oyf di shpure fun farshvundene yidishe yishevim in Tshile," *Zid-amerike* 9 (October 1935): 198–200.
108. Marcos Weinstein, "Der girush sefarad gezen durkh shpanishe oygn," *Zid-amerike* 9 (October 1935): 206–207, 209.
109. "Influencias del judaismo de Eduardo Weinfeld," *Zid-amerike* 4, 90.
110. Noyekh Vital, "Tsum zekstn numer zid-amerike," *Zid-amerike* 6, 124.
111. Rollansky, *Tshilenish*, 12.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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