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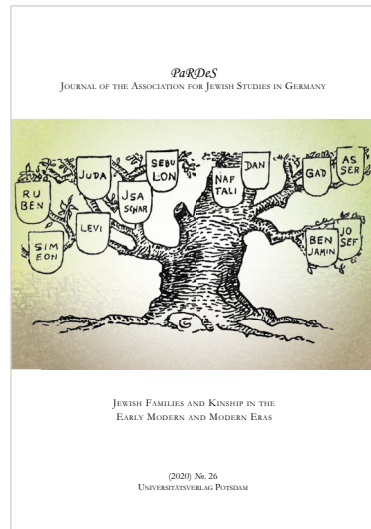
Jewish Families and Kinship in the Early Modern and Modern Eras

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Arthur Czellitzer (1871–1943) and the *Society for Jewish Family Research*

by Mirjam Thulin

Abstract

In 1924, the Berlin ophthalmologist Arthur Czellitzer (1871–1943) and like-minded members of the local Jewish community founded the *Society for Jewish Family Research*. A year later, the *Society* launched the journal *Jüdische Familienforschung* (Jewish Family Research), edited by Czellitzer. The *Society* was an outstanding platform of professional academic and amateur researchers and promoted a type of Jewish genealogy and family history that was shaped by the historical-medical discourse of the time. The concepts and methods of both the biological sciences and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* shaped and defined the academic approach to family research and history in Czellitzer's and the *Society's* work. The *Society* soon became the leading international association for the academic Jewish genealogical research. Despite of its brutal end in 1938, Arthur Czellitzer's and the *Society's* works, the issues raised, and the methods they created shape Jewish family research and genealogy until today.

1. Arthur Czellitzer: A Biographical Sketch

Arthur Czellitzer was born on April 5, 1871, in Breslau to Siegfried Czellitzer (1840–1908), the owner of a local confectionary factory, and Malvine Schlesinger.¹ He remained an only child. Confronted with the rising anti-Semitism and the

¹ Arthur changed his name to Czellitzer for his family and himself in 1920, probably because it was an easier spelling. His other family, however, kept the old name. This sketch of Czellitzer's life draws upon his handwritten "Lebenslauf," compiled for admission into a Masonic Lodge (probably the *Bnai Brith*), Leo Baeck Institute New York|Berlin (hereafter LBINY), AR 302 (Arthur Czellitzer Collection), Box 1, Folder 12; see also: Horst A. Reschke, Czellitzer Arthur, M.D., LBINY, MS 330; Ernst Gottlieb Löwenthal, "A Jewish Geneologist," *Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain Information* 26, no. 5 (May 1971), 12; "Czellitzer, Arthur," in *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933–1945*, vol. 1, eds. Louise Forsyth, Werner Röder, Dieter Marc Schneider, and Herbert A. Strauss (Berlin: de Gruyter 1980), 119. The life data of Malvine (Malwine) Schlesinger Czellitzer could not be determined.

social exclusion of the educated Jewish middle class during his school years in the 1880s, Czellitzer lost his “faith in God” and found refuge in the natural sciences, particularly biology and medicine.² As he himself put it in a handwritten resume in 1902, he remained Jewish because he felt a “certain sense of honor and inner belonging” to the Jewish people.³ At the same time, Czellitzer began to take interest in family research. Over the years, he was able to trace his own family back to 1640, when they lived in the Upper Silesian city of Biała (German Zülz).

After graduating from high school, Czellitzer studied medicine. He completed his first semester in his hometown of Breslau and in April 1890 moved to Munich to continue his studies.⁴ Part of this change of location may have had to do with his early involvement in the fraternity *Alemannen*, which he disliked quickly after joining. Moreover, he was not alone in relocating for his studies; other of his friends from Breslau in their early studies decided to continue studying in the Bavarian capital. Besides Breslau and Munich, he also studied one or two semesters in Freiburg. Shortly before Czellitzer completed his medical state examination in March 1895, he moved to Paris for half a year of additional medical training. For his exams and doctorate, he returned to his hometown and earned his medical degree as medical doctor at the University of Breslau.

In the following five years, Czellitzer worked at different university hospitals in Breslau, Paris, Heidelberg, again in Breslau, and finally in Strasbourg. The periods abroad were the most formative times for his professional career and focus. In Paris, he worked under Louis Émile Javal (1839–1907), *Directeur Honoraire* at the *Laboratoire d’Ophtalmologie*, and began to specialize in this field. Today, his teacher Javal is considered the father of orthoptics. He was a descendant of a wealthy Jewish family from Alsace, a close friend of the writer Emile Zola (1840–1902), and supported the rehabilitation of Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935) during the second trial in 1899.

² The quote, “Gottesglauben,” see his handwritten “Lebenslauf” from 1902 in LBINY, AR 302 (Arthur Czellitzer Collection), Box 1, Folder 12.

³ The quote, “ein gewisses Ehr- und inneres Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl,” see his handwritten “Lebenslauf” from 1902 in LBINY, AR 302 (Arthur Czellitzer Collection), Box 1, Folder 12.

⁴ On his studies in Munich and how this shaped his concept of “Jewish identity,” see Keith H. Pickus, *Constructing Modern Identities: Jewish University Students in Germany, 1815–1915* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 123–125.

Following his highly advanced training under Javal, Czellitzer had hoped for an academic career in Strasbourg, where he felt this was still possible for a Jew. In 1900, however, his habilitation degree was made impossible because another young aspiring ophthalmologist earned his habilitation and subsequently filled the only position available for years. Therefore, in May 1900 Czellitzer settled in Berlin and opened an ophthalmic practice that soon became successful. In 1905, he married Margarete Salomon (1883–1969); the marriage produced three children.

During the First World War, Czellitzer served as the head of the department of ophthalmology at the military hospital in Warsaw, in the rank of a lieutenant. After the war, he returned to his ophthalmic practice in Berlin. In October 1938, he had to close his practice due to the anti-Semitic legislation of the Nazis. Two years earlier, the Nazi regime had already forced him to discharge his non-Jewish staff and to close the prosperous eye clinic he had owned since 1907.

Already in July 1938, the Czellitzer family escaped from the Nazi terror in Germany to Breda in the Netherlands, a small town between Rotterdam and Antwerp. In 1940, the family attempted to escape via France to England. On July 13, however, in the Belgian city of La Panne, West Flanders, located only 14 miles from Dunkerque, France, Czellitzer was arrested because he had a German passport. His wife Margarete and the three daughters were able to continue their flight to England. After two weeks, upon their arrival on British soil, Margarete and the children were arrested, also because of their German passports. Margarete spent 15 days in the dreadful women's prison of Holloway in London before she and the children could continue their escape to the US. Eva Marion Czellitzer Asher (also Evamarion and Eva Malvine Marion Asher, 1905/06–?) became a naturalized US citizen in 1944; Rosemarie Czellitzer (1907–1999), later Americanized and married as Rosemary Stevens, was an MD in Sarasota, Florida; the last child was Ursula Czellitzer (1910–1972). Margarete Czellitzer and Rosemary Stevens in 1961 and 1972, respectively, donated their father's papers to the LBI New York|Berlin.⁵

While his wife and daughters were safe in England, Arthur Czellitzer was released from the Belgian prison after a week and managed to get back to

⁵ Fred Grubel, *Leo Baeck Institute New York: Catalog of the Archival Collections* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 32.

Breda. After two and a half years in solitude in Breda, he was arrested on April 19, 1943, by the Nazis and transported to the Dutch camp of Westerbork. From there, he was sent on July 13, 1943, to the Sobibor death camp in Poland, and was murdered there only three days later, on July 16, 1943.

2. Biological Sciences, Genetics, and Genealogy

Already as a high school student, Czellitzer began to trace his own family history, mainly as part of his interest in both genetics and genealogy.⁶ Today, there is no question that genetics, genetic genealogy, and historical genealogy are different and distinct disciplines. When Czellitzer studied in Germany and France and worked as a professional physician and amateur genealogist in Berlin, however, the borders of these spheres of knowledge were not well defined. Czellitzer was interested in what is today called the “biological sciences,” a mixture of today’s medical discipline, (European) ethnology and (cultural) anthropology, and biology including genetics, genetic genealogy, and heredity research.⁷ In fact, Czellitzer’s interest in the biological sciences was fundamental. In his work as a physician, he participated in contemporary academic discussions. He was an active member of the *Deutsche Zentralstelle für Personen- und Familiengeschichte* (German Center for Genealogy), founded in Leipzig in 1904, and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Vererbungswissenschaft* (German Society for Genetics), founded in 1927; both associations still exist.

Like many biological scientists of his time, he was interested not only in the biological characteristics of individuals but also in their genetic transmission. Subsequently, the heredity of biological characteristics became a major research question for him, and family trees a method to examine and present the various lines of heredity. First in his medical practice, then in his eye clinic,

⁶ On his early interest, see: Arthur Czellitzer, “Zum Geleit!,” *Jüdische Familienforschung* 1, no. 1 (1924/25): 1–5, here 1.

⁷ There is a lot of research conducted on the participation of Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists alike, in the debates in the contemporary biological sciences and anthropology, and on questions of the “Jewish race”; see particularly Joachim Doron, “Rassenbewusstsein und naturwissenschaftliches Denken im deutschen Zionismus während der Wilhelminischen Ära,” *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 9 (1980): 389–427; most recently: Stefan Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen: Der deutsche Zionismus im Feld des Nationalismus in Deutschland 1890–1933* (Goettingen: Wallstein, 2016), 113–143. With regard to mainly non-Zionist scientists like Czellitzer, see Veronika Lipphardt, *Biologie der Juden: Jüdische Wissenschaftler über “Rasse” und Vererbung 1900–1935* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2008).

he began to study the role of genetics in eye diseases on the basis of his patients' family histories. He was convinced that when analyzing the heredity of eye diseases one should take into consideration the maternal along with the paternal line, an unusual approach at the time, as well as more distant family members.⁸

Czellitzer's estate includes a list of all the lectures he gave between 1896 and 1937.⁹ It shows that Czellitzer first discussed his research results in 1908 at the *Gesellschaft für Soziale Medizin, Hygiene und Medizinalstatistik* (Society for Social Medicine) when he presented his "Sippschaftstafeln" (kinship charts) as a new and crucial method for heredity research. His approach and methods were fiercely debated in professional journals when he published his results in the journal of the *Society for Social Medicine*, edited by the prominent physician, social hygienist, and eugenicist Alfred Grotjahn (1869–1931).¹⁰ The article shows that in his medical writings he focused on the contemporary theoretical literature in heredity research and medical and genetic studies. As was common in general eugenics, particularly among European eugenicists, Czellitzer also supported the idea that heritage groups were formed generationally.

3. The Society for Jewish Family Research and Its Network

Based on his background, Arthur Czellitzer was predisposed to become the driving force behind the *Society for Jewish Family Research* when it was created in 1924. Jewish family research had been institutionalized for the first time before the First World War, when in 1913 the journal *Archiv für jüdische Familienforschung, Kunstgeschichte und Museumswesen* (Archive for Jewish Family Research, Art History, and Museology), edited by Viennese rabbi Max Grunwald (1871–1953), was started. The journal was a supplement to the

⁸ On Czellitzer as physician and biological scientist, see Lipphardt, *Biologie der Juden*, 140–141, 207–210; Bernd Gausemeier, "Auf der Brücke zwischen Natur- und Geschichtswissenschaft: Ottokar Lorenz und die Neuerfindung der Genealogie um 1900, in *Wissensobjekt Mensch: Praktiken der Humanwissenschaften im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Florence Vienne and Christina Brandt (Berlin: Kadmos 2008), 137–164, here 155–156; see Bernd Gausemeier's article in this issue.

⁹ LBINY, AR 302 (Arthur Czellitzer Collection), Box 1, Folder 1.

¹⁰ Arthur Czellitzer, "Sippschaftstafeln, ein neues Hilfsmittel zur Erblichkeitsforschung," *Medizinische Reform* 16 (1908): 573–578, 604–605, 624–629. On Grotjahn, see Paul Weindling, "Medical Practice in Imperial Berlin: The Casebook of Alfred Grotjahn," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 6 (1987): 391–410.

yearly report of the Jewish Museum in Vienna. Sadly, due to the First World War, these beginnings of (academic) Jewish family research were nipped in the bud.

The *Gesellschaft für jüdische Familienforschung* (Society for Jewish Family Research) was founded in Berlin after Czellitzer published an article about his views on family research in a local Jewish community newspaper.¹¹ In response, like-minded members of the community approached him, and after only a few meetings, the *Society* grew out of this group.¹² In 1924/1925, the Society launched the journal *Jüdische Familienforschung: Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für jüdische Familienforschung* (Jewish Family Research: Newsletter of the Society for Jewish Family Research), edited by Czellitzer.¹³

The first aim of the *Society* was to collect Jewish family documents. From the beginning, Czellitzer intended to establish a special archive from both his own material, collected since his youth, and material the *Society* would collect. The *Society* sent out several announcements requesting information and material on families and their histories.¹⁴ Another related objective of the *Society* was to establish itself as an expert platform. It thus answered genealogical requests from members or readers of its journal. Furthermore, the *Society* aimed to play a public role not just through its journal but also by organizing public lectures.

The board of the *Society* was led by Czellitzer himself; Jacob Jacobson (1888–1968), head of the *Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden* (General Archive of the German Jews), himself an enthusiastic genealogist, acted as vice chairman.¹⁵ With Jacobson by his side, Czellitzer utilized the synergistic effects of

¹¹ Most issues of the *Gemeindeblatt der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin* can be viewed online, accessed June 9, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/gemeindeblattderjued>. Unfortunately, the issue with Czellitzer's article is missing.

¹² On the foundation of the *Society*, see Czellitzer, "Zum Geleit!" 1–5.

¹³ Almost every issue of the journal can be viewed online, accessed June 9, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/judischefamilien>.

¹⁴ Statements on the concept and aims of the *Society* are preserved in its documents, part of which is kept at the LBINY, AR 302 (Arthur Czellitzer Collection), Box 1, Folder 4.

¹⁵ On Jacobson, see Jennifer Herold, *Jacob Jacobson: Der beste Genealoge seiner Zeit* (Berlin, Leipzig: Hentrich and Hentrich, 2019). Among Jacobson's major genealogical works are Jacob Jacobson, *Die Stellung der Juden in den 1793 und 1795 von Preußen erworbenen polnischen Provinzen zur Zeit der Besitznahme* (Breslau: Koebner, 1921); Jacob Jacobson, *Jüdische Trauungen in Berlin, 1723–1759* (Berlin: J. Jastrow, 1938); Jacob Jacobson, *Die Judenbürgerbücher der Stadt Berlin, 1809–1851: Mit Ergänzungen für die Jahre 1791–1809* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962). A large part of his written estate is kept at the LBINY, AR 7002 (Jacob Jacobson Collection).

both archives and expert knowledge in the Berlin area. Jacobson focused on collecting not only documents about the history of German Jewish communities but also genealogical material and personal estates. The third most important board member was secretary Albert J. Phiebig (1908–2004).¹⁶ By the time the *Society* was founded, Phiebig was still a teenager but already a passionate genealogist like Czellitzer and Jacobson. He later became a lawyer and worked until 1933 in public service; eventually, he managed to emigrate to the US. The other five board members were the treasurer, vice treasurer, and the committee members (among them the only woman, Mrs. Frida Ledermann). Like Czellitzer and Phiebig, they had no professional training as historians, but backgrounds in architecture, medicine, and engineering.

In 1935, Czellitzer published a list of the *Society* members in the journal.¹⁷ Although the association was a Berlin-based group, the member list shows how it had expanded over the years. It is a veritable who's who of contemporary international Jewish family research and also a window into Czellitzer's personal network. It demonstrates how much the Jewish family research network reached beyond the confines of Berlin and even Germany.

Among the members were Arthur's cousin Fritz Czellitzer; the scholar Ismar Elbogen; the secondary school teacher Josua Falk Friedländer, Erich Mühsam's brother Hans; the department store owner, philanthropist, and publisher Salman Schocken; the physician and writer Felix Theilhaber; the genealogist Max Markreich; the publisher Felix Kauffmann; the scholar Guido Kisch; Julius Brann, son of the scholar Markus Brann; and the rabbis Bernhard Brillung, Eduard Duckesz,¹⁸ Leopold Lucas, Arnold Tänzer, Emil Schorsch, Adolf Kober, Isak Unna, Fritz Leopold Steinthal, and Paul Lazarus, to name just a few of the more prominent associates.¹⁹

¹⁶ Phiebig's estate is kept at the LBINY, AR 352 (Albert Phiebig collection).

¹⁷ "Verzeichnis der Mitglieder und Mitarbeiter nach dem Stand vom 31.4.35 [sic]" (Index of members and contributors as of April 31, 1935). The type-written original that had been pasted into vol. 11, no. 39, is also preserved as an extra copy at LBINY, AR 302 (Arthur Czellitzer Collection), Box 1, Folder 3.

¹⁸ Interestingly, the Duckesz family, like the Czellitizers, escaped from Nazi Germany to the Netherlands in 1938. Eduard Duckesz (1868–1944) was imprisoned in 1943 in Westerbork, like Arthur Czellitzer, together with his daughter and son-in-law. The latter were transported to the Sobibor camp in the same year and killed soon upon their arrival, like Czellitzer. In 1944, Eduard Duckesz was transported from Westerbork to Auschwitz and murdered there.

¹⁹ For better readability, I left out the life data of the members.

In addition to the individual members, several distinguished institutions of contemporary Jewish life and scholarship can be found on the membership list of the *Society*. In Berlin, the libraries of the Jewish community and the Reform Congregation, Jacobson's *Gesamtarchiv*, the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Academy of the Wissenschaft des Judentums), the *Independent Order of the Bnai Brith* (UOBB), and the *Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle* (Central Welfare Office) of the Jewish community belonged to the association. Outside Berlin, the *Society* included the *Samson Schule* in Wolfenbüttel, the library of the *Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar* (Jewish Theological Seminary) in Breslau, the Jewish communities of Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, Munich, Nuremberg, and Heidelberg, the city library of Frankfurt am Main, the Jewish library of Leipzig, and the student body of the *Israelitische Lehrerbildungsanstalt* (Israelite Teachers Seminary) in Wuerzburg.

Across Europe and internationally, there was a great number of members in the Netherlands, which included the *Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana* in Amsterdam. In Austria, the predecessors to Czellitzer's *Society*, rabbi Max Grunwald and the founding circle around the Jewish Museum of Vienna were members, among others. Further to the East, the *YIVO Institute for Jewish Research* and prominent scholars from Czechoslovakia like Hugo Gold, rabbis Heinrich Flesch and Shlomo Lieben, as well as the Jewish community of Prague, were among the members and subscribers to the journal. In Palestine, intellectuals like Moses Calvary, Abraham Schwadron, Josef Meisl, Heinrich Loewe, rabbi Joseph Unna, the library of the *Hebrew University*, and the newspaper *Davar* supported Czellitzer's project. In the US, the member list included scholars like Moses Marx and Alexander Marx, the *New York Public Library*, the *American Jewish Historical Society*, and also *Dropsie College* in Philadelphia.

The memberships of Julius Brann in Hamburg and the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau point to a particular relationship of Czellitzer's, as his professional Jewish family research network largely overlapped with his own Jewish (family) network. He was a cousin of Markus Brann, and through this part of his family well connected to modern Jewish scholarship in the form of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.²⁰ Succeeding Heinrich

²⁰ I have not yet been able to trace the exact family relationship. Czellitzer called Brann in his letters sometimes "Vetter" (cousin), which can also point to a more distant family relationship. The cordial tone in the letters and the references to Czellitzer's mother, however, suggest that she was the familial link and that the men were real cousins.

Graetz (1817–1891) in this position, Brann was a history professor and librarian at the Breslau Seminary.²¹ From around 1909, Czellitzer was the main reviewer of any publication on Judaism and medicine, biology, genetics, genealogy, and family history for the mouthpiece of the seminary, the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Monthly for History and Wissenschaft des Judentums) that Brann edited for twenty years. In the preserved correspondence between the cousins, which covers (with gaps) the years between 1909 and 1920, Brann initiated their professional exchange on Jewish genealogy by asking Czellitzer to review Ignaz' Zollschan's (1877–1948) book *Das Rassenproblem unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der theoretischen Grundlagen der jüdischen Rassenfrage* (The Problem of Race with Particular Focus on the Theoretical Framework of the Jewish Race Question), first published in 1910.²² Whenever Czellitzer was researching the history of his own family, he asked Markus Brann for advice and often Brann was able to put him in touch with experts, local historians, and rabbis who could provide Czellitzer with useful information.

4. Promoting Academic Jewish Genealogy

Both the conceptions and methods of the biological sciences and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* shaped and defined the academic approach to family research and history in Czellitzer's and the *Society's* work. Accordingly, the articles in the *Society's* journal reflect the search for appropriate topics in family research, suitable methods, and the search for and apt presentation of scientific evidence, as well as the formats of the texts and images. Since the journal urged every researcher to participate and put her or his results in the form of a text, it is interesting to see how either the author or the type-setter designed the printing of the family trees, which authors added to their texts in fold-out tables, tabular forms, tables with small or even minuscule font sizes, or in note form. Moreover, the journal covered a wide range of subjects. Apparently, Czellitzer and the *Society* board accepted most submitted texts, regardless of length and style. The news from the *Society*, as well as the "Suchblatt" (search

²¹ The correspondence between Czellitzer and Brann is held at the Archive of the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, Markus Brann Archive, Arc. Ms. Var. 308/265.

²² The book appeared in five editions until 1925. Most recently on this work in the context of Zionism and racial discourses, see Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen*, 137–143.

form), a template for genealogical questions and answers on individual families, served the purpose of an interactive but also organized and standardized exchange between the members and readers of the journal.

In general, the Jewish family research and history represented in the *Society* and the journal focused on European Jewish genealogy; Sephardic and even American Jewish history were rare topics. The categories used for the journal's indices show the knowledge and classification system Czellitzer applied to the still new field. Besides an alphabetical author index, he filed the journal articles under "Persons and Names," "Lists of Names and Documents of Genealogy in Geographical Order" (subdivided into "Germany" and "Foreign Countries"), "Research on Jewish Names," "General Jewish Genealogy" (including "Methods and Sources," "Relationship to History and Sociology," "Relationship to Race and Hygiene," and "Other Topics"), and reviews. Moreover, there was a special index for the search form. The classification system that was applied first in the index for the first ten volumes of *Jüdische Familienforschung* in 1934 shows again the context of genealogy at the time, moving between history, heredity research, genetics, and the biological sciences.

Sadly, with the dissolution of the *Society* by the Nazis and the discontinuation of the journal, we cannot predict how the *Society* would have further developed the field of family research. When in 1938, in the last issue of the journal, Czellitzer indexed the issues between 1935 and 1938, however, we can see that not much had changed in the classification. The only exception was that the subject index was divided into "Persons and Names," "Cities and Countries," "Methods and Sources of Family Research," and "Other [Topics, M. T.]." Thus, for the last four volumes, Czellitzer synthesized some of the formerly more detailed categories.

As might be expected, Czellitzer had introduced the *Society's* main guidelines in the very first article of *Jüdische Familienforschung*.²³ In this piece, he promoted a positive and proud sense of togetherness and belonging and claimed a common biological and genealogical fundament of the Jews.²⁴ His editorship shows that he was deeply engaged not only with questions of Jewish genealogy and "race," but also sought to contribute to the methods and practices of the biological sciences and family research and history in general.

²³ Czellitzer, "Zum Geleit!" 1–5.

²⁴ Lipphardt, *Biologie der Juden*, 141.

While we understand “race” today as a social construct, this was not the case in Czellitzer’s lifetime. Particularly after the First World War, Jewish biological scientists like Czellitzer were busy struggling against the overwhelming anti-Semitism that was very much shaped by racial biology.²⁵ Czellitzer’s mission was to turn racial biology around and use it as a deterrent against racism. At the same time, the discussion about a “Jewish race” also shaped intra-Jewish debates. By the end of the 1920s, for example, Czellitzer was involved in a debate about the future of the Jewish people, decreasing Jewish birthrates, and questions of intermarriages with Israel Koralnik (1901–1950), director of the *Department of Statistics at the Society for Handicraft and Agricultural Work among the Jews of Russia* (ORT), and Felix Theilhaber (1884–1956).²⁶

When in the late 1920s the *Jüdisches Lexikon*, a central publication of German Jewish scholarship, was prepared, Czellitzer was asked to write the major entry on “Genealogy.”²⁷ Probably thanks to his close contacts with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, he was able to define the subject according to his ideas and views. Moreover, he promoted the concept of “Jewish genealogy” along with “Jewish family research.”

²⁵ On the history of the term “race” in the context of Jewish history in the 19th and 20th centuries, the following studies are essential: Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Mitchell B. Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Christian Geulen, *Wahlverwandte: Rassendiskurs und Nationalismus im späten 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2004); Christine Hanke, *Zwischen Auflösung und Fixierung: Zur Konstitution von “Rasse” und “Geschlecht” in der physischen Anthropologie um 1900* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007); Lipphardt, *Biologie der Juden*, 17–20, 313–315; Amos Morris-Reich, *The Quest For Jewish Assimilation in Modern Social Science* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 34–50; Amir Teicher, *Social Mendelism: Genetics and the Politics of Race in Germany, 1900–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

²⁶ Anne-Christin Saß, *Berliner Luftmensch: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in der Weimarer Republik* (Goettingen: Wallstein, 2012), 353–355. On Theilhaber’s views, see also Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen*, 142–144, 150–157.

²⁷ Arthur Czellitzer and Leon Julius Silberstrom, “Genealogie,” in *Jüdisches Lexikon*, eds. Georg Herlitz and Bruno Kirschner (Berlin: Juedischer Verlag, 1928), vol. 2, col. 1008–1011. The entry echoes in many ways Czellitzer, “Zum Geleit!” It should be noted that the abbreviation naming Czellitzer’s co-author is “L. Z.” There is, however, no author by this abbreviation listed in any of the five volumes of the *Jüdisches Lexikon*. It is my conclusion, therefore, that this was a typo, and the abbreviation should be “L. S.,” which suggests Leon Julius Silberstrom as the co-author. Silberstrom was a Berlin chemist, who wrote several entries in the *Jüdisches Lexikon*. Interestingly, he does not appear in the list of members of the *Society* from 1935.

The article began with an overview of the historiography of Jewish genealogy until his time. Czellitzer compared the interest in Jewish family research to the studies that existed on European nobility. He justified the general interest in the topic with a certain class consciousness and mentioned the Indian caste system as well as ancient families of priesthood as examples that traditionally also paid great attention to questions of descent, even though these families might have been neither rich nor important. Czellitzer traced the interests in family history and genealogy among the Jews back to the Bible. He referred to the passages that listed the *toledot* (Lists of Generations), and pointed to the *Sefer Ha-Yuchassin* (Book of Descent) in the book of Ezra. Subsequently, Czellitzer described how family and family relations figured in post-Biblical literature, such as genealogies of priesthood in Josephus and the traces of genealogical tables that could be found in the Talmud. He boldly stated that after late antiquity instead of the “aristocracy of the blood” the relatively new “aristocracy of the spirit” became more and more important among the Jews.²⁸

It was only in the 16th century that the interest in family history became vital again, according to Czellitzer. By then, family trees, genealogical tables, and kinship charts gained popularity, the ultimate goal of which was to track one’s own descent back to the *Tanaim* and even King David. With regard to such frivolous aims, Czellitzer dated serious research on Jewish families and genealogy to the 19th century, when academic standards and verifiable arguments became principles of family research. He also identified the “vital connection to their family” as a benchmark that motivated Jewish family researchers.²⁹ Enlightenment, emancipation, and the spatial separation of families in the modern era, however, had torn apart the family bonds again and thus also the research interest in the modern era, he argued.

For his own time period, Czellitzer presented conversion, intermarriage, and religious indifference as reasons that precluded a strong interest in family research. In his eyes, these developments cut off the connection to the past, to family papers, relics, and the knowledge about and interest in family relations.

²⁸ Czellitzer, “Genealogie,” 1009. It should be added that the lexicon article reads partly like Paul Josef Diamant, “Sinn und Zweck der jüdischen Familienforschung,” *Archiv für jüdische Familienforschung, Kunstgeschichte und Museumswesen* 1 (1912): 2–5. This need not suggest plagiarism, as Czellitzer and Diamant were friends.

²⁹ Czellitzer, “Genealogie,” 1009 (“lebendiger Zusammenhang mit ihrer Familie”).

For Czellitzer, studies by historians like Max Grunwald, Markus Brann, David Kaufmann (1852–1899), Simon Hock (1815–1887), and Max Freudenthal (1868–1937) marked the beginning of serious academic family research and genealogy.³⁰ Finally, he pointed to his *Society*, its aims, and perspectives. These sections of his article read almost like an advertisement for the association. Apparently, the editors of the *Jüdisches Lexikon* were keen to support Czellitzer’s visions and ideas for Jewish family research and history in the form of “genealogy.”

5. Epilogue: The Legacy of Early Academic Jewish Genealogy

By the mid-1930s, Jewish genealogy had just gathered momentum in regard to its topics, sources, organization, and research methods. After 1933, Czellitzer was eager to promote among German Jews a positive “sense of family” and enthusiasm about their ancestry. His booklet *Mein Stammbaum: Eine genealogische Anleitung für deutsche Juden* (My Pedigree: A Genealogical Guide for German Jews) was meant as an example to find an optimistic new meaning of Jewishness and Jewish descent in the current situation.³¹ The rise of the Nazis and the Shoah, however, brought a brutal end to Jewish life in Europe, and to the thriving activities of Jewish family research. Czellitzer had hoped that during his escape from Germany he would be able to transfer his Jewish genealogical archive to the still young Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Therefore, he hid all his collected papers with a non-Jewish friend in Tilborg before he was sent to camp Westerbork. The Nazis, however, discovered the collection. All his studies and notes, the family chronicles and trees he had created and collected since the late 1890s, were confiscated and burned by the Nazis. Arthur Phiebig successfully saved a part of the archive that included family trees with some of Czellitzer’s data.³²

After the Shoah, it took Jewish family research and history – now mainly referred to as “Jewish genealogy” – decades to catch up with the state of knowledge of Czellitzer and his *Society*. Interestingly, the setup of the later genealogical institutions resembled the *Society* board and membership,

³⁰ Czellitzer, “Genealogie,” 1010.

³¹ Arthur Czellitzer, *Mein Stammbaum: Eine genealogische Anleitung für deutsche Juden* (Berlin: Philo, 1934).

³² Lipphardt, *Biologie der Juden*, 141. On the Phiebig collection at the LBINY, see Frank Mecklenburg’s article in this issue.

demonstrating a phenomenon we can observe in genealogy in general and Jewish genealogy in particular even today: Genealogy is not only part of history, but is a field that attracts many amateurs. Then and now, it is hard to draw a line between a genuinely academic (Jewish) genealogy and genealogical interest and research as performed by non-professional academics and historians. Certainly, it is one of the merits of the *Society for Jewish Family Research* in general and Arthur Czellitzer in particular to have set the tone of being open to everybody interested in the topic. For some researchers, the very fact that Jewish genealogy sits at the intersection of history, genetics, and the biological sciences is relevant even today. Therefore, the large circle of people who are interested in Jewish genealogy remains as diverse as it was then. Czellitzer and his companions would be pleased to see how Jewish genealogy is flourishing today.