

Allosemitism and cosmisation

A fruitful combination?

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ABSTRACT • In this article, we explore the fruitfulness of seeing allosemitism as an aspect of cosmisation. We explore possible tropes such as creating order from chaos, embracing Christian identity and supersessionism, and legitimising the Bible's truth claims. Drawing from the Swedish press of the period 1770–1900, allosemitism and cosmisation are explored through the lens of three tenacious myths, all of which date back centuries: Blood Libel, the Wandering Jew and Israelite Indians. The 'Jew' as the Other is frequent in previous research. The combination of allosemitism and cosmisation gives us another way to explain the Othering of the 'Jew': expressions of allosemitism in a world-creating process.

Introduction

During the long nineteenth century (1776–1914), the *ancien régime* was gradually dismantled throughout Europe: European Jews were emancipated from the old order; science and scholarship gained prestige; old religious institutions were increasingly questioned; and an interest in folklore grew amongst scholars.¹ At the same time, technological advances in printing, as well as the world's first freedom of the press act from 1766,² made it easier to distribute newspapers (Holmberg 2000: 26–7). During this period,

newspapers became ever more common – they trickled down in society, and were read by an increasingly larger public.

Significantly, newspapers became mediators of myths about Jews and Judaism. Many myths about Jews and Judaism have circulated in Sweden, as they have elsewhere in the world. Many of them are still recurrent to this day, while others emerge in certain specific spheres. We will focus on three of these myths: Blood Libel, the Wandering Jew and the Israelite Indian³ in the Swedish press

- 1 We would like to thank Rebecka Dahlkvist and two anonymous peer reviewers for their constructive comments. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Daniel Andersson and the editors of *Nordisk judaistik / Scandinavian Jewish Studies* for their encouragement.
- 2 The history of the freedom of the press in Sweden has several periods of censorship, mainly 1784–1810 and 1812–44.

- 3 The myth of Blood Libel is built on the idea of Jewish murder of Christians to obtain sacrificial blood for ritual purposes. The Wandering Jew, Ahasverus, is condemned to wander the earth for eternity for not allowing Jesus to rest on his way to Golgotha. The myth of the Israelite Indian dwells on the idea that the Lost Tribes of Israel were the ancestors to Native Americans. 'Indian' is a contested epithet for historical reasons, and there is no consensus among Native American peoples as to



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during the period c. 1770–1900. Crucially, these myths are situated in a context characterised by modernisation, in which newspapers became mediators of both myth and modernity.

In this article, we aim to explore the potential fruitfulness of combining the concepts of allosemitism⁴ and cosmisation (explaining the state of the world, and thus ‘ordering’ it). This is done through the analysis of expressions of three myths: Blood Libel, the Wandering Jew and the Israelite Indian in the Swedish press during the period 1770–1900. A different choice of myths would certainly entail different aspects of the allosemitic aspects of cosmisation. However, the aim of this article is not to give a complete picture of all myths concerning Jews and Judaism that existed in Swedish society at this time, but to explore the potential of the theoretical approach mentioned above. As such, this is a tentative pilot study, which seeks to put into operation a hypothetical theoretical approach to the othering of the Jew. What role did allosemitism – not least its antisemitic aspects – and the press play in formations of a Swedish ‘cosmos’ during a period characterised by modernisation, the rise of nationalism, increased prestige of science and emerging race ideologies?

In allosemitism, we find a potential explanation of the state of the world, a puzzle piece used, in this instance by the press, to

what constitutes an appropriate collective designation (see Yellow Bird 1999). We predominantly use ‘Native Americans’ as a collective epithet here. However, Indians and indigenous people are used occasionally as well, interchangeably with Native Americans.

4 Allosemitism refers to the designation of Jews as Others which encompasses both antisemitism and philosemitism (the positive stereotyping of Jews; see e.g. Carlesson Magalhães 2019: 4–5)

explain the *cosmos*. Therefore, by analysing the way these myths were used, we will argue that allosemitism can be seen as an aspect of cosmisation, which is an integral part of every worldview, including that of modernity.

Othering the ‘Jew’

There are several theories and definitions of antisemitism – generally understood as a belief that Jews are bad by nature, and that they are themselves responsible for prejudices and persecutions that have plagued Jewish people for centuries (Ben-Rafael 2017: 276–9). Many Swedish scholars rely on the sociologist Helen Fein’s definition of antisemitism as persistent hostile structures in collectives, individuals and culture.⁵ A common objection is the grand scope of the definition and the lack of different levels (Rosengren 2007: 58–9), but when viewing antisemitism as a discourse, Fein’s definition is adequate. Zygmunt Bauman defines antisemitism simply as ‘*hostility to Jews and hostility to the Jews*’ (1998: 143). Bauman states that antisemitism is too narrow to grasp the full extent of the othering of Jews, so he suggests the use of allosemitism.

Along with philosemitism, antisemitism can be seen as part of allosemitism: ‘understanding antisemitism through the allosemitism hypothesis should be bound to an affirmation of Jewishness as a posture of permanent confrontation with the non-Jewish world; understanding antisemitism as rather circumstantial should lead to the underrating of antisemitism as such’ (Ben-Rafael 2017: 279). Allosemitism is in itself the designation of the ‘Jew’ as different – as the Other.

5 For a thorough overview of the current state of the study of antisemitism in Sweden, see Kvist Geverts 2020.

A plethora of works focus on the Jew as Other. In his study of the Swedish comic press from 1900 to 1930, Lars M. Andersson (2000) illustrates the use of the Jew as a counter-image to the Swede. The use of the Jew is common, for example, in literature, pamphlets and political speeches and much more so throughout the long nineteenth century all over Europe (cf. Cheyette 1993; Ulvund 2021). Ronald Schechter raises the question of why Jews were discussed so much in parliaments, literature and media in France, when they were so few in relation to the majority. The same is true for Sweden: Jews were less than 0.08 per cent of the population in the nineteenth century (Zitomersky 1991: 82). Schechter concludes that the main reason behind this discursive use of the Jew as the Other is that Jews are 'good to think' (2003: 7). The 'Jew' was therefore used as stand-in for other issues, such as citizenship (cf. Edgren 2016). This is in line with the findings of Frode Ulvund, who picks up Schechter's argument; this suggests that Jews were ascribed unwanted characteristics to stand in as the 'anti-citizen' (Ulvund 2021: 61–3). Julie Kalman (2010) points out that the 'Jewish Question' changes over time, but that the continuity is 'striking': the 'Jew' explained why the world was not ideal (p. 193). The 'Jew' threatens the ordered world (p. 8), or 'cosmos'.

All these uses of the Jew as Other could be considered to be in line with cosmisation. By doing so, we suggest a theoretical approach to allosemism as being an aspect of, and fundamentally interrelated to, the grander process of cosmisation. We do not imply that other uses of the Jew as Other do not contextualise this use in a larger perspective, on the contrary. Our intention is neither to redefine nor criticise previous analysis of the Jew as Other, but to give our tentative explanation of the Othering of the Jew and suggest the

fruitfulness of applying the concept of cosmisation in combination with allosemism.

Cosmisation through allosemism

Allosemism can be seen as a way of structuring and explaining the world, as a process of cosmisation. Jews are, according to Bauman (1998), designated as representing chaos, while Christianity and modernity represent order, and order needs chaos to exist. As the epitome of the stranger among strangers, inherent to modernity, the 'Jew' bears the 'brunt of the notorious *Haßliebe*' (Bauman 1998: 150–1). Jews are unlike other Others, because, in a Christian worldview, they 'stared the truth in the face and yet refused to admit and embrace it' (p. 148). Jews were neither considered 'unknowing' nor 'uncivilised'. Therefore, the Jew bore a familiarity which Native Americans and other Others lacked (Schechter 2003: 247). The Jew was thus an *insider Other* – a perfect candidate to make a 'new' world familiar, and for a new *Zeitgeist*.

Myths cosmise and bring order to people's understanding of themselves and the world, and their place in it: they construct mental-cultural landscapes, and narratives, entailing a move from chaos to cosmos. This process was dubbed *cosmisation* by Mircea Eliade: 'Our world is always cosmos, while threats from outside are agents of chaos (Eliade 1959: 47). In an allosemic worldview, Jews are 'inside' agents of chaos – threatening Christian hegemonic truth-claims. Consequently, allosemism is a tool for explaining the world, the *cosmos*, giving Jews – from a Christian majority perspective – a cosmised place in the order of things. Myths explain not only the world, but people's imagined characteristics (pp. 86–8).

The Other is an integral part of cosmisation, according to Eliade (1991). In his version, the Other is an outsider – placed outside

the cosmos, or *microcosm*, where ‘we’ dwell (pp. 37–8). The Jew is both an insider and an outsider and thus placed within. The cosmising effect of the Other is thus ‘internalised’.

Modernity is two-fold: on the one hand, the modern world claims to harbour no chaos at all, while on the other, it claims to create order from chaos. Vito De Lucia dubs this the ‘mythology of modernity’, where science is, and has been, a grand part of this ‘control’ of chaos (De Lucia 2018: 394–6, 413). Thus, modernisation sees ‘itself’ as the epitome of cosmisation.

In a related fashion, from a social-science perspective, we may conceptualise cosmisation as a cultural, ongoing and reciprocal process whereby the boundaries – be they social or symbolic⁶ – between groups are articulated and the associated identities symbolically loaded (Barth 1994; Cohen 1985). From this analytical outlook, the Jew as different grants some sense of ‘normality’ to the world and as legitimising legislative differentiation and/or as asserting Christian superiority culturally, religiously and/or politically. Other scholars, such as Benedict Anderson (2006) and James W. Carey (2000, 2009), have shown the community-forming and world-creating capacity of the press, especially in the nineteenth century. The press’s perpetuation of the myths explored here is thus approached as a cosmisation grounded in the symbolic and social boundaries of Swedish nineteenth-century

society. And since, as Bauman states (1998: 151–3), modernity inherited the Jew as Other from Christianity, it is reasonable to discuss the role of the Jew in a ‘cosmos’ characterised by both modernity and Christianity; Sweden, during the long nineteenth century, incorporated both.

One central function embedded in the perpetuation of myths about Jews in the Swedish press of the nineteenth century is that of a process whereby religious and cultural identities were mediated in relation to Others (cf. Jansson 2021: 3–4). With much of Sweden’s population being literate, the anchoring of myths in the press media – an accessible, public sphere – becomes a prominent force in shaping the general cultural and religious *imaginaire*. The press thus becomes an important arena for understanding the mediation of myth-making processes historically and the occasional longevity of some of the myths under consideration.

Material and method

These myths are selected on the basis of their potential as cosmising modern/Christian society. Blood Libel and the Wandering Jew can be seen as mostly related to modernity, whilst the Israelite Indian connects empirically to Christianity. To explore these myths as allosemantic expressions of cosmisation, we have made use of an online database of Swedish newspapers. The database is searchable; to find the material we have used several different search phrases: *jude barnamord* (Jew child-murder), *jude ritualmord*~ (Jew ritual murder), *Jude mennisko-offer*~ (Jew human sacrifice), *israelit indian* (Israelite Indian), *förlorade stammar* (lost tribes), *indian jud** (Indian Jew*), *Jerusalem + skomakare* (Jerusalem + shoemaker), *vandrande juden* (the wandering Jew), and *evige juden* (the eternal Jew). Some searches give tremendous

6 The construction of symbolic boundaries often refers to human processes of categorising the world, making them conceptual in nature. Social boundaries are, in contrast but relatedly, objectified differences in a social setting, such as unequal access to resources. Symbolic and social boundaries are consequently related in that the latter become socially manifest when the former reach some level of group-level orthodoxy (Lamont and Molnár 2002: 168–9).

amounts of false hits, such as *vandrande juden* and *indian jud**, while searches such as *förlorade stammar* mostly give true hits. Combined, these searches have resulted in a little over 120 different articles, adverts and notices that have been analysed with a textual approach. Some articles are almost identical but published in different newspapers, which was common in the nineteenth-century press (Byrman 1998: 133). These 120 articles are but a fraction of the total number of articles discussing Jews or Judaism. Many discussed emancipation, religious freedom and immigration from tsarist Russia. Furthermore, the database used is not complete. Many tabloid-like newspapers, which were often the most antisemitic, as well as many rural newspapers, are missing (Kungliga biblioteket 2021). This makes the results incomplete. However, the intention is not to give a complete picture of these myths in the Swedish periodical literature during this period, but rather to explore the fruitfulness of applying allosemitism as an aspect of cosmisation. Myths are important for cosmisation, and hence these three myths are ideal for studying this aspect of allosemitism.

The fact that many articles and notices are derived from the foreign press does not matter: they were still published in Swedish newspapers and read by a Swedish public, and were thus part of the Swedish cosmos. Hence, it is of value here to conceptualise the textual presence of these myths in Swedish society as sources which, in part, enabled discourses to form through the populace's engagements with the newspaper medium (cf. Frosh 2007). As such, their very presence facilitated a cosmising potential, which manifested through expressions of allosemitism. Furthermore, Sweden was not peripheral during this time when the world became more global. Neither do we focus on whether these articles reflect the opinions of single authors or



Fig. 1. Ahasver, etching by Hermann Struck (1876–1944), c.1915. Struck was a German Jewish artist famed for his etchings. This etching is very much a contrast to many of the stereotypical and antisemitic images that exist of the Wandering Jew. It is very similar to many of his other works, entitled 'Old Jew'. For more on Hermann Struck and this and similar works, see Rajner and Klein 2017. Photo courtesy of Leo Baeck Institute.

of the newspaper as a whole. Texts have their own place in discourse, disengaged from the intentions of original authors, contributing to the cosmos produced in periodical literature.

Blood Libel

One of antisemitism's most enduring myths is Jewish ritual murder, or Blood Libel. It was common in the twelfth century – a time when the blood of Christ was central to Christian spirituality and can thus be seen as a projection of Christians' own 'apprehension about consuming the blood of Christ during Holy Communion onto the Jews' (Wyrwa 2018: 35; for more on the symbolism of blood, see Soyer 2019). It evolved from being an accusation

against all Jews to an accusation against certain ‘cults’ within Jewish communities, often connected to ‘Talmudic mysteries’, rabbis and *schochtim*. Blood Libel most often surfaced during times of social conflict, and in the late nineteenth century in Germany, ideas about the Jews’ and Christians’ inability to coexist peacefully were sources of lively debate (Erb 1995: 75–8). In 1824, *Norrköpings Tidningar* refuted both current and medieval accusations (31.7.1824: 2). In the early 1840s, the Damascus affair rekindled the Blood Libel debate in, for example, France (Kalman 2010: 112) and England, but not in Sweden. It was only during the late nineteenth century that accusations of ritual murder came to be frequently condemned in Swedish newspapers.

In 1838, *Aftonbladet* published an article directly claiming a ritual murder had been committed in Düsseldorf in Prussia. It wrote: ‘Several Jews still harbour the unfortunate and abominable belief that it will bring them good fortune in trade and other businesses, and even grant them eternal bliss, to possess Christian martyr blood’ (*Aftonbladet* 21.2.1838: 3, all translations of the source material are by Jens Carleson Magalhães). Even though *Göteborgs Dagblad* republished the article (7.3.1838: 2), it did not stand unchallenged for long. In a letter to the editor, published in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* (GHT), an anonymous writer challenged *Aftonbladet*’s claims and presented proof that it was based on false information (GHT, 12.3.1838: 2).

A few months later, *Aftonbladet* published another article telling the story of how Jews crucified Christian children during the Middle Ages (25.6.1838: 3). As Andersson (2000: 174) points out regarding the anti-semitic tabloid-like newspaper *Folkets Röst*, to publish antisemitic material like this would not have been possible were it not for an

underlying antisemitic tendency in Swedish society at the time.

Publishing such accusations mediated an image of Jews as chaotic Others. As Bauman (1991: 15) states, modernity produces order, and thus Jews as Others were, in an allosemantic worldview, chaotic – maintaining ‘abominable’ superstitions. Kathryn McClymond suggests that Blood Libel accusations were not only justifications of antisemitism (and in some cases pogroms) but a way for the majority to define their own values (2016: 105). Blood Libel was thus used to define values that were unfit for the modern world – cosmising the



Fig. 2. Copper engraving depicting Blood Libel, Jewish ritual murder to obtain Christian sacrificial blood for religious rituals, by Raphael Sadeler II (1584–1632) in ‘Six Children Killed in Regensburg’ from *Bavaria Sancta: The Life and Martyrdom of Holy Men and Women*, vol. III, by Johann Matthias Kager (1575–1634) from 1627. Wikimedia Commons.

modern world as orderly through the use of antisemitic myths.

Furthermore, denouncing these popular stories produced order in itself (especially in the late nineteenth century, as we explore below). Modernity exposed myths as 'medieval superstitions': in the hardline denunciation of the Blood Libel myth, 'chaos' was subdued and 'order' – in the sense of a scientific and modernistic approach to the world – prevailed. The refutation of Blood Libel became in itself a cosmising factor in the cosmisation process of the press – granting science and scholarship functions of realising order.

Antisemitic 'fiascos'

The term *ritualmord* (ritual murder) first appeared in Swedish press in 1891. The fact that Jews were blamed for ritual murder was often used as proof that people in other countries, especially farmers, were simple-minded and uneducated, and, therefore, still believed in old 'medieval' myths. Newspapers were dumbfounded that even professors in Austria were not above these 'absurd' accusations (Örebro Tidning 21.11.1892: 3). In 1892, *Norrtejlbladet* wrote that such accusations were absurd, and exposed the 'religious persecution and race hate, that still exists in our time' as a 'shame for Christians'. Christianity at large, which was said to be the 'religion of love', was exposed as harbouring 'hate and bloody persecution at heart' (*Norrtejlbladet* 20.7.1892: 2). Here, modernity – not Christianity – is the propellant of order, dissolving unenlightened superstitions and thus cosmising an orderly world.

Swedish newspapers eagerly reported on trials against Jews accused of 'the usual lie of ritual murder', as Östersundsposten put it (21.11.1903: 4). *Engelholms Tidning* proclaimed scientists and scholars had proved

that ritual murder never even occurred during the Middle Ages and only existed in the 'imagination of simple folk' (13.9.1900: 4). *Mönsteråsbladet* thought it most plausible a Blood Libel accusation was a 'cock-and-bull story made up by German antisemites to further inflame Jew-hatred' (24.1.1903: 3). Once again, science and modernity are seen as forces of order and structure – cosmising the present as modern and ordered.

Even *Göteborgs Aftonblad*, a conservative newspaper with clear antisemitic tendencies, denounced ritual murder in 1903. Here, an article stated that antisemitism was strong in all social classes in Germany and in shifting form, from the infamous racial theorist Houston Stewart Chamberlain's intellectual antisemitism to 'the elementary passions ...where a part of the Christian population firmly believed the Jews' committed ritual murder' (*Göteborgs Aftonblad* 15.8.1903: 1). The article in itself depicted Jews as controlling Germany through newspapers, banks and so on (pp. 1–2), even using the antisemitic catchphrase 'a state within the state' (see Katz 1971). Even though the article reproduced these antisemitic so-called 'facts', Blood Libel was deemed an antisemitic superstition.

Antisemitism was often presented as propagated by uneducated and superstitious people. In reality, antisemitism gained a strong foothold in the upper classes and in academia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Weber 2003: 115–19), and was not a phenomenon widespread only among the 'lower classes' and 'farmers'.

As we have seen, revulsion against Blood Libel accusations was the norm in the Swedish press around the turn of the century, which described the accusations as medieval superstition and antisemitic fables. However, the press still held antisemitic views in many other ways (Andersson 2000). Therefore, the best explanation for this approach is a

modernistic scholarly interest. In several notices and articles, the writers refuted the idea of ritual murder on the basis of scholarly and scientific research. Thus, newspapers could at the same time refute this particular antisemitic myth while mediating other antisemitic notions, such as the stereotype of the Jewish capitalist. Another aspect is how newspapers denounced accusations of ritual murder as a way to ridicule superstitions of ‘unenlightened’ people – cosmising Sweden as modern and other countries as chaotic and backwards.

The fact that superstition such as Blood Libel flourished was proof that the world was not ideal. Just as Kalman states that the ‘Jew’ could explain such flaws (2010: 193), the denunciation of Blood Libel countered these flaws by furthering the scientific and scholarly approach to the world – cosmising a modern world.

Doomed to wander

In contrast to the Blood Libel myth, the Wandering Jew does not bear the same obvious negative hallmarks. However, it is a Christian myth, degrading Jews as cursed – condemned to be rootless – and ‘proof’ of Jewish violence against Jesus (Shagrir 2018: 334). The Ahasverus myth has its roots in medieval Europe, and has been a recurring theme in European Christian literature for centuries (Edelmann 1965: 111) and is known in Sweden from at least the 1600s. In Sweden, much attention was given to Ahasverus’s profession, ‘the Shoemaker of Jerusalem’, and the myth became popular in literature, folklore (af Klintberg 1965: 115–19) and the press of the late eighteenth century (Nyman 1988: 123).

Göteborgska Nyheter published two articles in 1781 (10.2: 2–3; 17.2: 2–3) reciting the story of Ahasverus, denouncing it as a

fable. According to the second article, many imposters claimed to be ‘this Jew’, and a fraud with ‘some insight in the old history and the eastern languages could persuade the simple-minded’ (17.2.1781: 2). They wrote that only simple-minded folks fell for imposters’ fraudulent claims to be the Wandering Jew, while the ‘more enlightened’ saw through such charades.

In a speech – derived from Örebro Bildningsförening, a society for *Bildung* – published in *Örebro Tidning* in 1857, Ahasverus was portrayed as a myth (21.2.1857: 3–4). Many who denounced the story as a myth promoted the idea that only simple-minded people and farmers could believe such fables. It is clear there was a line drawn between the ‘enlightened’ and the ‘simple’. In this Swedish cosmos – in line with international thinking – clear differences existed between the enlightened few and the dim-witted masses. The myth of the Eternal Jew became a demarcation between education and science on the one hand, and myth and folklore on the other. The denunciation of the story as a myth is in line with the advancement of science and scholarship, as we have seen with Blood Libel, furthering the use of the ‘Jew’ as a tool for cosmising science – and with science, modernity – as a propellant of structure and order.

Generally, when the Swedish press mentioned the Eternal Jew in the nineteenth century, it was Eugene Sue’s novel *Le Juif errant*⁷ (1844) that was being discussed or for sale. A few cases of the story can be found in the material. In many instances, the Wandering Jew was used as a metaphor for a person travelling from place to place.

7 *Den evige juden* in Swedish, *The Wandering Jew* in English.

An alluring threat

Ahasverus was popular amongst the populace and sightings were not entirely uncommon (af Klintberg 1965). In 1839, *Aftonbladet* reported a sighting of the Eternal Jew in France:

A few days ago, in Marseille, a crowd gathered around a faded old man, whose ice-grey beard fell beyond his chest. His clothes were those of a beggar, he nevertheless leaned on his staff and gazed on the gathering crowd with a majestic pride. When two police sergeants came and demanded to see his passport, he answered them: *I am the Eternal Jew and thus I need no passport.* The French police did not appreciate this answer ... and brought the Eternal Jew to the police station without any respect. ... Oh, such times, when not even the Shoemaker of Jerusalem himself can walk free! (*Aftonbladet* 17.8.1839: 4, italics in the original)

The shoemaker was a sensation whenever a 'sighting' occurred; for example, in a letter about a party in Skatelöv outside Växjö, Småland (*Nya Wexjöbladet* 15.2.1887: 3). Notices like these bear no hallmarks of negative stereotypes, but rather a streak of curiosity and mysticism. However, scepticism was the main attitude in the press towards these sightings, and this remained the case from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

Furthermore, the Wandering Jew was often used as a synonym for a stranger or someone travelling for a living. In 1906, a stranger claiming to be from Karlskrona, who only spoke Swedish, was seen going over the border between Sweden and Finland near Karesuando. The day after, a postman sighted him heading south (*Varbergsposten* 12.4.1906: 4). The stranger was not directly perceived as the mythological Jew, but enough so for the

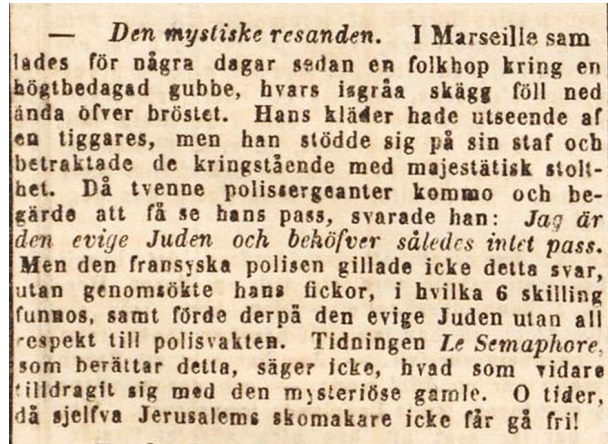


Fig. 3. 'Den mystiske resanden' (the mysterious traveller), cutting from *Aftonbladet* 17.8.1839, p. 4. Svenska dagstidningar, Kungliga biblioteket.

article to be entitled 'The Wandering Jew', within quotation marks. Here, the insider Other of Ahasverus was used to project strangers' aura of mystery while at the same time granting them the familiarity of Ahasverus.

Wanderers in general were met with scepticism during the 1800s. Their nomadic lifestyles were seen as a threat to the stability of society; for example, peddlers were seen as a threat to *sedlighet* (respectability) (Runefelt 2019: 183). In the modern cosmos, modern man had a fixed home. In this context, Ahasverus was to become a threat to modernity. This does not, however, explain the fascination for the Eternal Jew (af Klintberg 1965; Nyman 1988). Could there be some form of allurements encapsulated within this myth? If we conceptualise the Wandering Jew in the context of modernity and the associated progressivist notions of civilisation and increased urbanisation, to name but a few aspects, he can also be seen as an expression of philosemitic appreciation. Consequently, Ahasverus becomes a mythological representation of the freedom of the road: a contrastive image to some aspects of modernity. At the same time, Ahasverus's nomadic lifestyle was a curse, for, being a Jew and thus

a civilised Other (in contrast to the Native American ‘savage’, see Schechter 2003: 238), he was doomed to travel for eternity, and thus he was, conversely, also contrasted with modernity. Hence, the myth is two-fold, expressing a longing for nomadic freedom – an idea perhaps grounded in the prospect of increased global mobilisation of the times – while seeing the very same freedom as a curse for ‘civilised man’. Ahasverus thus becomes a counter-image to the main narrative of modernity, questioning the cosmisation of a stable modern society through the use of an allosemantic myth.

The Israelite Indian

The idea of Israelites as ancestors to Native Americans took form as early as the sixteenth century. The idea was that all or some of the ten Lost Tribes of Israel – said to be exiled from the kingdom of Israel after its defeat at the hands of the Assyrians in the eighth century BC – had somehow made their way to America. Lost Tribes of Israel enthusiasts claimed that Native Americans were either descendants of the Lost Tribes or at least had been in contact with them. Imagined similarities between various indigenous groups and Jewish history, culture, religion, beliefs and so on were popular ideas supported by a wide range of people from different spheres and backgrounds. In the nineteenth century, such assertions were often accompanied by claims of territorial rights: Indians, Evangelicals and Jews alike presented this idea as an argument for their own right to America, often described as the Promised Land (Dougherty 2017: 5, 17–20, 28–9). The idea that had survived for centuries could not withstand the emergence of the social sciences, and by the first decades of the twentieth century, it had mostly lost its appeal (pp. 216–17).

Material regarding this particular myth is scarce, and the notion of the Israelite Indian does not seem to have received much attention in the Swedish press. The idea was, clearly, more widespread in the United States. However, the attention it received, as one of several different theories on the Lost Tribes of Israel, can shed some light on the cosmising potential of the myth and the insider Other.

Lost Tribes

The earliest source, from 1773, tells a story about a traveller in North America who found, ‘amongst the Indians’, a ‘Jewish Nation, who hold themselves as descendants of Naphtali Tribe’. It was said that their religion and religious services differed very little from ‘the Jews in Europe’: ‘One cannot fathom how these have become so widely separated from their brethren, and why they are not, like them, living off trade’ (*Dagligt Allehanda* 19.11.1773: 1). Here we see the stereotype of the Jew as a trader shining through – a familiar stereotype for Europeans.

After 1825, Native Americans were often made to look antique in white American print cultures. It was argued that Indians were vanishing and would inevitably be banished to the pages of history. ‘Graves, artifacts, and the Israelite past’ were often implicitly associated with them, thereby forcing an ‘aura of antiquity’ upon living people (Dougherty 2017: 191–2). In the 1830s, a shift from ethnographic and prophetic to material evidence took place. No longer were only cultural similarities taken as proof of the Israelite Indian, but also artefacts and features in the landscape, such as burial mounds. Burial mounds and other ancient structures ‘proved’ their Semitic origin (pp. 196–200).

In 1786, it was reported that remnants of a city had been discovered near the Ohio

River, with walls, canals and guard towers. This was deemed odd, because the 'Land ... [had] never been populated by others, than wild Nations'. It was speculated that either the skills had been forgotten by the indigenous people or an unknown people had built the city (*Dagligt Allehanda* 15.8.1786: 1). This pejorative attitude towards Native Americans was long maintained by American archaeologists (Trigger 1980). Placing Israelites in this context explained the findings. Even though allo-Semitism mediated a stereotype of Jews as different and chaotic, they were not considered 'wild' or 'barbarian'. Therefore, placing a civilised people – Jews – in America, granted a 'scientific' explanation for these archaeological finds.

Mordecai Noah's project to build a Jewish homeland, named Ararat, on Grand Island near Buffalo in New York state (Weingrad 2007: 75–6) gained some attention in Sweden as well. The articles describing Noah's project are interesting in several ways. In the case of the article in *Stockholmsposten*, on the one hand Noah's ideas of Native Americans as the ten Lost Tribes of Israel were emphasised, while on the other, Judaism and the 'Jewish Nation' were described as more or less static – linking 'Orthodox and Heterodox' to 'Pharisees and Sadducees' (*Stockholmsposten* 10.11.1825: 4). Both points show signs of legitimising the Bible as indisputable, trans-historic truth.

An interest in the Lost Tribes is obvious in the late nineteenth century. In 1885, reports in several newspapers claimed they had been found in the United States, for example:

in the Tennessee mountains, a cavity was found, with a Hebrew inscription above the entrance. Upon closer examination of the cavern, they found it expanded into a grand amphitheatrical room, holding more

than 5000 skeletons of warriors dressed in copper armour and all resting on their heavy shields. These were evidently remains of men who had been slain in battle and brought here to be buried. Several manuscripts in a copper chest close by contained an explicit story about the wanderings of the deceased, through which story it was proved that they had in front of them the skeletons of the missing tribes of Israel. (*Westmanlänningen* 23.12.1885: 3)

This theory was popular, but many others subsided. Some claimed the Lost Tribes were Afghans; others Romani; some even suggested Danes were descendants of the Daniites (*Aftonbladet* 6.2.1892: 1). Also,

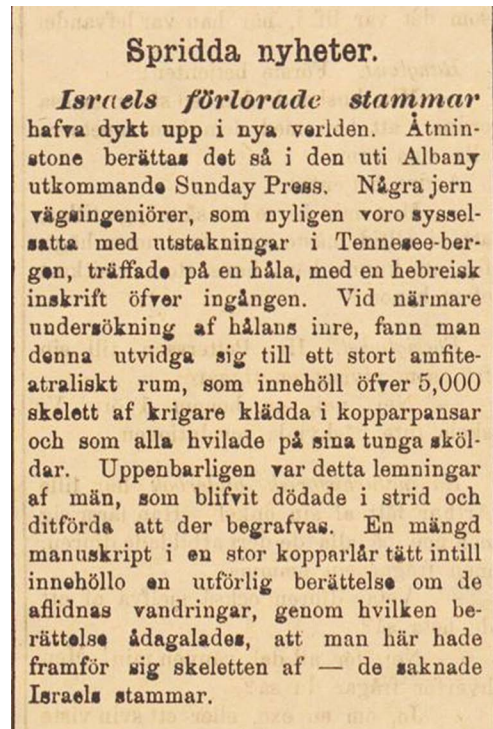


Fig. 4. 'Spridda nyheter' (disperse news), cutting from *Hudiksvalls Allehanda* 24.12.1885, p. 3. This notice, with slight differences, was published in many newspapers at the time, such as *Nya Skånska Posten* (18.12.1885), *Arbetarens Väns veckouppplaga* (8.1.1886), and *Westmanlänningen* (23.12.1885). Svenska dagstidningar, Kungliga biblioteket.

linguistic 'similarities' were seen as proof of the links between Judaism and Native American peoples (*Aftonbladet* 9.1.1838: 3; *Stockholms Dagblad* 13.4.1842: 1). Such speculations encouraged the belief that Native Americans were descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel.

Not everyone was eager to support these theories, however, and sometimes all were dismissed by referencing historians from the United States (*Göteborgs Aftonblad* 1.8.1896: 3). In 1902, *Aftonbladet* wrote that scholars had finally given up on the 'will-o'-the-wisp of fantasy' and started serious research on the ancestry of Native Americans (12.4.1902: 6). From being very popular, the myth slowly lost prestige in North America after 1850 with the increasing professionalisation of knowledge. More and more associated with Mormonism, the Israelite Indian was dismissed as fantasy (Dougherty 2017: 216–17), which is also apparent in Sweden. The Israelite Indian was often condemned as superstition, alongside Mormonism as a whole (*Hembygden* 27.2.1885: 1).

Nonetheless, many sought answers in North America. The weekly paper *Figaro* mentioned a discovery in a short notice and stated that if it turned out to be true, it would injure the Swedish pride, because it was thought Vikings, 'our ancestors, were the first white men to set foot on the American mainland' (*Figaro* 20.10.1885: 2). Jews may have been considered inferior and different, in antisemitic discourse, but were nonetheless included amongst 'civilised' peoples. This points to a tension between 'scientific' and cultural-ideological discourses in the Swedish press. The irrefutable prestige of science seemingly induced some strain *vis-à-vis* the cultural importance of being 'first' in new lands. But Jews, albeit not 'indigenous' to Sweden in the way the Vikings were perceived to be, at least offered a cultural link to the New World through these supposed

findings. The Israelite Indian served the purpose of being familiar: 'no doubt comforting for visitors to the New World and armchair tourists alike' (Schechter 2003: 239).

Through familiarity, the Israelite Indian as the insider Other helped cosmise a more globalised world in which the 'new' was placed within the 'old' framework. The insider Other was used as a tool by the press to emphasise familiarity. Historical continuity is important in a Christian cosmos (Eliade 1991: 170–2) – therefore, placing the Lost Tribes in North America further proved the Christian narrative of trans-historic truth.

'New' World - 'New' Covenant

The myth arguably served as an important force in the mental construction of the new land. In hypothesising a historical lineage between the Israelites and the indigenous peoples of North America, the legitimacy of the Bible was, in a sense, transferred to the North American continent and thus legitimised as trans-continentially applicable from a 'scientific' perspective. For, as Eliade (1959: 29–32) suggests, the appropriation of new land entails a re-enactment of cosmogony, and for a land to be conceived as inhabited, it has to be inhabited 'by us'. Thus, by arguing for cultural diffusionism and continuity of Judaeo-Christian history by way of historiography, the European Christian identity was anchored in the New World. Its inhabitants and the ensuing future of the land consequently became symmetric with the history of the Old World.

Maybe the fascination for the Israelite Indian lay in a subliminal projection of insecurity in the authority of the Bible. Furthermore, the cosmisation effect of placing the Lost Tribes in North America was not just a way to protect the notion of the Bible as the only truth but also to legitimise the presence of

Christianity on the continent. Some claimed the Bible proved an Israelite migration to America, which explained all the similarities in customs, language, food laws and more – even placing Phoenicians in Guatemala to provide further proof (*Dagligt Allehanda* 13.10.1848: 3–4). Israelites, and especially the Lost Tribes, represented ancient Judaism and thus the ancient origin of Christianity. Also, with the dominant supersessionistic tendencies in Christian theology before the mid-twentieth century, reflecting the Christian idea of the ‘new’ covenant replacing the ‘old’ (Hughes 2012), if Native Americans were in fact of Jewish origin, their religious traditions were a form of derailed Judaism, which could legitimise missions to convert indigenous people to Christianity – the ‘new covenant’. The Christian/modern cosmos needed to be cemented as the producer of order. Therefore, myths about Jews showed that the ‘new’ covenant brought order, whilst the ‘old’ conferred only chaos.

Conclusion

The idea of allosemitism suggests a struggle between chaos and order, whilst cosmisation entails a transformation from chaos to order. How has the combination of these concepts been fruitful, then?

As many have shown, the ‘Jew’ is used as stand-in for several different issues (e.g. Bauman 1998; Andersson 2000; Schechter 2003; Kalman 2010; Edgren 2016). What does the cosmisation concept bring to the table? It confers contextualisation and the placement of allosemitic expressions in a grander perspective of explaining the state of the world. For, as Bauman suggests (1998: 144), the Jew as different can be seen as a threat to the ordering of the world; hence allosemitic expressions can be seen as somehow explaining the state of the world.

We chose the period 1770–1900 as an example. During this period, the Swedish press became mediators of the mythology of modernity, portraying cosmising myths of how modern – and in some instances, Christian – society was based upon order. In line with scientific and scholarly advances, combined with a lack of antisemitic political parties in Sweden (Tydén 1986), during the nineteenth century, these myths were increasingly questioned, much of the reason being the professionalisation of knowledge.

The fact that the Jew was used as a stand-in is in line with the Blood Libel accusations. The real demarcation was between ‘enlightened’ and ‘superstitious’. The accusations were condemned as rural, unenlightened and foreign superstitions that did not belong in a civilised modern society. Science and scholarship combated ‘medieval’ superstitions to prove that the world was ordered.

The fact that Ahasverus was popular among the populace (af Klintberg 1965) but met with scepticism in the press indicates a discrepancy between popular notions and the press. This could be because the press media wanted to define themselves as producers of enlightenment, questioning myths and legends. We suggest that the Wandering Jew could also be seen as questioning modernity – wandering contradicted the ideal of domiciled modern man. Further studies of these aspects of the Wandering Jew could be fruitful, using the concepts of allosemitism and cosmisation.

Allosemitism expresses a certainty that the Jew is different, often representing chaos in a Christian world order. Allosemitic myths explain the state of the world, reassuring people that the Bible’s truth claims are just that – true. By placing the insider Other, in the form of Israelite Indians, combined with supersessionism, ‘we’ – white Europeans – inhabited America ‘first’ – going even further

back than Vikings. Indian Israelites also further a narrative that civilisation at large has its base in the Bible – thus explaining the Native American civilisations as derived from ancient Israel. This could be explored further using this theoretical approach.

Hopefully, we have convinced you, the reader, of the potential in combining the insider Other of the allosemitic 'Jew' with the world-creating process of cosmisation. Further use of this theoretical approach would increase our understanding, not only of allosemitism and its constituent parts (philosemitism and antisemitism) in cosmisation, but also of the role of the press in mediating and creating a cosmos. ■

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