

A BRIEF SURVEY OF RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS ON THE JEWS OF SWEDEN

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JEWS were first allowed to settle in Sweden in the 1770s and in the 1870s they were granted general emancipation. Nowadays, they may be estimated to number about 16,500 individuals; their principal areas of settlement are in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö (which have their own Jewish communal organizations), while there are smaller groups mainly in Lund, Borås, Norrköping, Kristianstad, Helsingborg, and Örebro. There are three synagogues in Stockholm, two in Gothenburg, and one each in Malmö, Lund, Norrköping, and in a few of the other smaller settlements.¹

After the Second World War, Sweden granted refuge to several thousand Jews — a number of concentration camp survivors as well as others who fled Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland from 1968 to about 1972.

Until comparatively recently, little scholarly attention had been given to the history of the Jews in Sweden. It was only in 1924 that Hugo Valentin's extensive account appeared.² (Some years earlier, in 1919, he had published a history of the Young Men's Jewish Association of Stockholm, on the occasion of the centenary of the establishment of that association.³) Valentin (1888–1963) was a professional historian and a leading Zionist, and his compilation of many of the important official decrees and regulations concerning the position of the Jews in Sweden was published in the same year as his history of the Jews in that country and served as a companion volume.⁴ In the 1930s and 1940s, he published several other books on Jewish matters not directly connected with Sweden — for example, on Zionism and on antisemitism.⁵ In 1953, the *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* published his article on the rescue and relief of Jewish victims of Nazism in Scandinavia.⁶

In 1964, the year after his death, Valentin's *Judarna i Sverige* (The Jews in Sweden) was published in Stockholm; it was a revised and abridged version of his 1924 study, with additional material about later

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developments. In 1970, an article which he had written in 1948, on the history of the Jews in Sweden, was published in Stockholm in a book on the history of the Jews.⁷ It is to Hugo Valentin's pioneering and scholarly research that we owe our basic knowledge of the history of Swedish Jewry — including information about ethnic background, socio-economic status, cultural activities, aspects of organizational structure, and changing relations with the wider society — from its first settlement until the early 1960s.

Other authors, not professional scholars, have also written on aspects of Jewish life in Sweden. Coincidentally, 1924 was the year which saw the publication of Eskil Olán's book on the Jews in Sweden, an informative though uneven treatment of Jewish history and life in Sweden.⁸ As in the case of Valentin, Olán had published some years earlier a book which dealt (but only in part) with a subject of Jewish interest — the short-lived settlement of Jews at the end of the eighteenth century in the free port of Marstrand.⁹ On the whole, books and articles on Jewish matters by non-academics have been limited in their focus. They have been personal memoirs or secondary reconstructions and descriptions of Jewish individuals or families, or conditions of life at a particular time or place,¹⁰ or a history of a particular community or organization on the occasion of a special anniversary, or on the celebration of some significant event.¹¹

The quality of these various publications is not uniform, of course. A number of the fifty-odd biographies and memoirs tend to portray their subjects in unduly favourable terms, while in other cases there are authors who achieve a particularly balanced empirical treatment. An example of the latter is Carl Vilhelm Jacobowsky, whose extensive writings on the Jews in Sweden include two short pieces on the manorial life of Swedish Jews and on the Jews of Gotland. Another example is Bernhard Tarschys, who wrote a history of the Hevra Kaddisha of Stockholm on the occasion of its 150th anniversary.¹² Such studies give detailed information which Hugo Valentin's general histories could not easily encompass. The same is true of two popular books which appeared in 1986 and in 1989. Inga Gottfarb, with the use of archival material and published works as well as interviews, considers the persecution and genocide of Europe's Jews in the 1930s and the 1940s, the reaction of Sweden and of Swedish Jews, and the aftermath. Bertil Neuman looks back nostalgically to the years when an immigrant Jewish family settled in Sweden and ponders on the qualities of life that were lost in the course of achieving some success and integration.¹³ These two books reflect the interest which has recently developed in the general position of the Jews in Sweden — their sense of identity, their relations with the wider society, and their response to the plight of their co-religionists in other countries of Europe in the 1930s and the 1940s.

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This interest is also reflected in both undergraduate and graduate studies in Swedish universities since the 1960s and in two symposia — one held in October 1986 at Uppsala University on historical perspectives of Jewish life in Scandinavia and the other in December 1989 at Lund University on the identity, integration, and ethnic relations of Jews in Swedish society. Some two dozen papers and reports have been written (but not published) by mainly undergraduate students on a variety of subjects connected with Swedish Jewry. The majority of the studies are concerned with the Jewish situation in Sweden since the 1870s, while David Fischer of Uppsala University deals with Jewish organizational life in Stockholm over a period of two centuries.¹⁴ Many of the students have shown a particular interest in the events of the 1930s and 1940s, the period of the persecution and genocide of European Jews, from the point of view of the effect on Swedish Jews as well as of the reaction of Swedish society and the Swedish authorities. One author has produced four seminar papers at Gothenburg University as part of her preliminary dissertation work on German-Jewish refugee children admitted to Sweden, while others have encompassed a wide range of subjects, including Jewish rural pedlars and the Jewish theatre.¹⁵ Two students at Uppsala University, one at Stockholm University, and one at Lund University, chose the subject of antisemitism in Sweden.¹⁶

As for published doctoral dissertations, I was able to trace four which are concerned wholly or partly with 'the Jewish question' in Sweden: 1) Tomas Hammar on immigration policy, the control of aliens, and the right of asylum in Sweden from 1900 to 1932, Stockholm University, 1964; 2) Hans Lindberg on Swedish refugee policy under international pressure, 1936–1941, Stockholm University, 1973; 3) Magnus Nyman on opinions in the Swedish press and on discussions about minorities in the period 1772–1786, Uppsala University, 1988; and 4) Heléne Lööw on National Socialism in Sweden from 1924 to 1950, Gothenburg University, 1990. Two other doctoral dissertations have focused more particularly on Swedish Jewry and on questions of Jewish identity: Hans Gordon and Lennart Grosin on the Jewish patterns of adaptation in historical and psychological perspective, Stockholm University, 1973 (reprinted, Gothenburg, 1976), and Julian Ilicki on the changing identity of the younger generation of Polish Jews who came to Sweden in the period 1968–1972, Uppsala University, 1988.

A further four doctoral students at Swedish universities (who had not completed their studies in May 1990) are engaged in historical research which is primarily focused on the Jewish population itself. Two of them, Mirjam Sterner Carlberg and Ingrid Lomfors, are in the Department of History at Gothenburg University and they are both concerned with Jewish refugees — those who settled in Borås at the end

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of the Second World War and the German-Jewish refugee children who came to Sweden in 1939. One student at Stockholm University, Anna Besserman, is concerned with the Eastern European Jewish immigrants who came to Sweden from 1860 to 1914, while another at Umeå University, Stephen Fruitman, is preparing a thesis on cultural Zionism in Sweden. The chief rabbi of the Stockholm Jewish community, Morton H. Narowe, is engaged in writing a doctoral thesis for the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York on the history of Zionism in Sweden from its earliest days until about 1933.

More than 40 scholarly papers, articles, and sections of books dealing with Swedish Jewry have been published in Sweden since the 1960s.¹⁷ Some of the articles have appeared in the semi-annual journal of the Scandinavian Society for Jewish Studies, *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies*, which has been published in Åbo, Finland, since its first number appeared in 1975. In the December 1975 issue, Helmut Müssener deals with German-speaking Jewish refugees who came to Sweden after 1933; in the March 1981 number, Bertil Maler commemorates the 250th anniversary of Aaron Isaac's birth. (Aaron Isaac, an engraver from Mecklenburg, was granted permission by King Gustav III in 1775 to settle in Stockholm with his family and is considered to be 'the father of Swedish Jewry'.) In that same March 1981 issue, Morton H. Narowe reports on Zionism in Sweden, and he also contributes to the August 1984 number with an article entitled 'Blau-Weiss in Stockholm, 1916-1925'. (Blau-Weiss was a Jewish youth club founded in 1916; it was Zionist in orientation.) In the October issue of 1984, Anna Besserman writes (in Swedish) about the Jewish community of Stockholm and the Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the decades before the First World War. In the first issue of 1988, Jaff Schatz examines the ethnic identity of former Jewish Communists of Poland living in refuge in Sweden, while in the second issue of that same year, Stephen Fruitman writes about cultural Zionism in Sweden.

One book, by Steven Koblik, an American historian resident outside Sweden, deserves special mention. It is entitled *The Stones Cry Out. Sweden's Response to the Persecution of the Jews, 1933-1945*. A version of the book first appeared in Swedish translation in Stockholm in 1987, while its more documented form was published in English in New York in the following year. The volume includes a reprint of the author's article, 'No Truck with Himmler. The Politics of Rescue and the Swedish Red Cross Mission, March-May 1945', which had appeared in volume 51 of *Scandia* (1985). In his book, Koblik examines in some detail the attitudes and policies of the Swedish authorities with regard to the persecution of the Jews in the 1930s and 1940s as well as the reaction of the established Lutheran church. He also considers the response of Swedish Jews and their relations with their Gentile fellow-citizens.

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Another book which deals in part with the relations between Jewish and non-Jewish Swedes is Sven B. Ek's *'Nöden' i Lund. En etnologisk stadsstudie*, first published in Lund in 1971; a revised edition appeared in 1982. Nöden was a poor district in the town of Lund and in some of the chapters the author described its Jewish residents and their relations with the larger Gentile population there. (The subtitle states that the book is 'a study in urban ethnology'.)

The question of Jewish refugees has been given some attention in the different articles dealing with the Jews in Sweden. The Polish Jews who sought asylum in Sweden since 1968 were the subject of a report by Leo Kantor at a symposium on adult education; his contribution was included in a volume of the symposium's proceedings, published in 1984.¹⁸ In that same year, a book on social work and immigrants was published in Stockholm; it contained an article by Mirjam Sterner Carlberg on social work among refugees and survivors, including Jewish victims of concentration camps who came to Sweden after the Second World War.¹⁹

Various articles on the Jews in Sweden reveal a particular interest in the question of Jewish ethnic identity. Max Engman and Harald Runblom contributed a paper at the 20th Congress of Scandinavian historians on immigrants in Scandinavia after 1850, part of which gave specific attention to the Jewish population; it was printed in 1987 in a volume of the proceedings of the session of that Congress dealing with the question of national and ethnic minorities in Scandinavia.²⁰ Swedish scholars in the field of Jewish studies have greatly valued Hugo Valentin's research, and the 1982 volume of *Historisk Tidskrift* includes an article by Grzegorz Flakierski on Jewish identity and the Jewish question in the correspondance between Valentin and Eli Heckscher; the latter was a world-renowned economic historian and a member of the Swedish Jewish community.²¹

In addition, publications on ethnic minorities in Sweden sometimes include sections on the Jews of the country. This is so, for example, in the case of the book by Karl-Olov Arnstberg and Billy Ehn.²² The authors deal with the subject of the Jews in sections of the first two chapters of their volume. Finally, I might cite my own article in the *Scandinavian Journal of History* (volume 12, no. 3, 1987), 'Assimilation or Particularity? Approaches to the Study of the Jews as an Historical Minority in Sweden'.

As mentioned above, there was a conference at Uppsala University in October 1986 on historical perspectives of Jewish life in Scandinavia. The proceedings were published in 1988,²³ and the volume includes contributions on the following subjects: the history of the Jews in Sweden, by Sven Tägil; the Jewish population of Sweden from 1780 to 1980, an ethno-demographic study, by Joseph Zitomersky; press debates and decisions toward increased tolerance (in admitting Jews

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into Sweden), 1775–1782, by Magnus Nyman; antisemitic picture propaganda in the rabid Swedish radical press, 1845–1860, by Lena Johansson; Jewish contributions to Swedish cultural life around 1900, by Gunnar Broberg; antisemitism in Sweden, 1880–1930, by Mattias Tydén; antisemitism, assimilation, and Jewish ‘exceptionalism’: discussions among Jewish intellectuals in Sweden at the time of Hitler’s accession to power in 1933, presented by Svante Hansson; and Julian Ilicki on identity transformation among younger Polish Jews in Sweden after 1968.

In 1988, a seminar was held in Uppsala on racism and the law in Scandinavia. Heléne Lööw made a contribution on racism and racist organizations in Sweden which partly dealt with antisemitic attitudes and policies towards Swedish Jewry. She also participated in a conference in Copenhagen in October 1989 on Hitler’s refugees in Scandinavia and her paper on xenophobia and counter-reaction in 1933–1945 is scheduled to appear in the published proceedings of the conference, edited by Hane-Uwe Petersen.

In December 1989, a symposium took place at Lund University on the subject of ‘Jews in Swedish Society: Identity, Integration, and Ethnic Relations’. The four participants were Joseph Zitomersky, who presented a paper on ‘Ambiguous Integration: Patterns of Residence, Occupation and Activity of the Jews in Sweden, 1780s–1980s’; Anna Besserman, whose paper was about the views of the Low Church Revival Movement on Jews and Judaism; Julian Ilicki, whose subject was ‘Secular Jewish Identity — the Example of the Younger Polish Jews in Sweden’; and Jaff Schatz, whose contribution was entitled ‘Ethnicity, Politics, Generations: Reflections Concerning Jewish Strategies of Emancipation’. These four papers are scheduled for publication in Lund in the series sponsored by the Center for the Study of International Conflicts, CESIC Studies in International Conflict.

Finally, the most recent scholarly effort in the field was Julian Ilicki’s paper entitled ‘The Younger Generation of the Jewish “Post-March 1968” Emigration Wave after Fifteen Years of Residence in Sweden’, delivered at a symposium held in London on 24 February 1990. His article will be published in London in a collection of the symposium papers, under the auspices of the Faculty of Law and of the Social Sciences of the Polish University In Exile.

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NOTES

¹ Institute of Jewish Culture, *Judarna i Sverige — en kort presentation* (The Jews in Sweden — a short presentation), Lund, 1986, p. 12, and my own demographic research.

² Hugo Valentin, *Judarnas historia i Sverige* (The history of the Jews in Sweden), no. 5 of the Publications of the Jewish Literary Society, Stockholm, 1924. Sweden's Jewish Literary Society sponsored a publication series in the Swedish language of works of fiction and of non-fiction from 1920 to 1932; these included translations of foreign authors.

³ Hugo Valentin, *Israelitiska Yngliga Föreningen 1819–1919. En historik till 100-årsdagen* (The Young Men's Jewish Association 1819–1919. A history on its 100th anniversary), Stockholm, 1919.

⁴ Hugo Valentin, *Urkunder till Judarnas historia i Sverige* (Documents on the History of the Jews in Sweden), no. 6 of the Publications of the Jewish Literary Society, Stockholm, 1924.

⁵ For his major works on general Jewish questions, see Hugo Valentin, *Zionism*, Stockholm, 1933; *Antisemitism i historisk och kritisk belysning* (Antisemitism in an historical and critical light), Stockholm, 1935; *Kampen om Palestina* (The struggle for Palestine), a publication of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm, 1940; *Judarna under det andra världskriget* (Jews during the Second World War), another publication of the same Institute, Stockholm, 1944; and *Det judiska folkets öde. Forntid — nutid — framtid* (The Jewish People's fate. Past — present — future), Stockholm, 1944.

⁶ Hugo Valentin, 'Rescue and Relief Activities in Behalf of the Jewish Victims of Nazism in Scandinavia', in Koppel S. Pinson, ed., *Studies in the Epoch of the Jewish Catastrophe* (*YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, volume 8) New York, 1953.

⁷ Hugo Valentin, 'Judarnas historia i Sverige' (The history of the Jews in Sweden), in Stefan Hahn, A. Brody, and Wulff Fürstenberg, eds., *Judarnas historia* (The history of the Jews), Stockholm, 1970.

⁸ Eskil Olán, *Judarna på svensk mark. Historia om israeliternas invandring till Sverige* (Jews on Swedish soil. The history of the Jewish immigration to Sweden), Stockholm, 1924.

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⁹ Eskil Olán, *Marstrands historia* (The history of Marstrand), 3rd edn., Gothenburg, 1917.

¹⁰ See, for example, Olof Aschberg's four volumes of memoirs: *En vandrande jude från Glasbruksgatan* (A wandering Jew from Glassworks Street), vol. I, Stockholm, 1947; *Återkomst* (Return), vol. II, Stockholm, 1947; *Gästboken* (The guest book), Stockholm, 1955; and *Gryningen till en ny tid. Ur mina memoarer* (The dawn of a new age), finalized by Ture Nerman, Stockholm, 1961; Moritz Tarschis, 'Zionism i Sverige. Minnen av en sionist från hans 35 åriga verksamhet' (Zionism in Sweden. Recollections of a Zionist from his activities of 35 years), *Judisk Tidskrift*, vol. 15, 1942; M. Ivarsson and Abraham Brody, *Svensk-judiska pionjärer och stamfäder. En person-, släkt- och kulturhistorisk krönika med Norrköping som blickcentrum* (Swedish-Jewish pioneers and earliest forefathers. An individual, family and cultural-historical chronicle, with Norrköping at focus), Jönköping, 1956; and Åke Bonniers, *Bonniers. En släktkrönika, 1778-1941* (The Bonniers. A family chronicle, 1778-1941), Stockholm, 1974.

¹¹ For example, Wulff Fürstenberg, *Kalmar mosaiska församlings tillkomst och äldsta historia jämte Växjö-och Oskarshamnsförsamlingens tillblivelse* (The founding and earliest history of the Kalmar Mosaic community, including the establishment of the Växjö and Oskarshamn communities), Stockholm, 1980; C. Vilhelm Jacobowsky, *Göteborgs Mosaiska Församling 1780-1955. Minneskrift till 100-års dagen av synagogans invigning 12 oktober 1855* (The Gothenburg Mosaic community 1780-1955. A commemorative publication on the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the synagogue on 12 October 1855), Gothenburg, 1955; Harry Rubinstein *et al.*, *Mosaiska Församlingen i Malmö, 100 År 1871-1971* (The Mosaic community in Malmö, 100 years: 1871-1971), Malmö, 1971; Naima Thankus, *et al.*, *Mosaiska Församlingen i Göteborg. 200 år 1780-1980* (The Mosaic community in Gothenburg, 200 years: 1780-1980), Gothenburg, 1980.

¹² C. Vilhelm Jacobowsky, *Svenskt-judiskt herrgårdsliv* (Swedish Jewish manorial life), Stockholm, 1967, and 'Judarna på Gotland' (The Jews of Gotland), *Gotlandica*, vol. 4, Visby, 1973; Bernhard Tarschys, *Chevra Kaddischa. Israelitiska sjukhjälps- och begravnings-sällskapet under 150 år* (Hevra Kaddisha. The Jewish Help for the Sick and Burial Society across 150 Years), Stockholm, 1944.

¹³ Inga Gottfarb, *Den livsfarliga glömskan* (Life-threatening forgetfulness), Höganäs, 1986; Bertil Neuman, *Något försvann på vägen. En svensk judisk familj — historia, humor och kultur* (Something got lost on the way. A Swedish Jewish family — history, humour and culture), Stockholm, 1989.

¹⁴ David Fischer, 'Judiskt organisationsliv i Stockholm 1776-1984' (Jewish organizational life in Stockholm, 1776-1984), unpublished Licentiat thesis, Uppsala University, Department of Theology, 1986.

¹⁵ The four papers are by Ingrid Lomfors at the Department of History of Gothenburg University and they are all concerned with the Jewish refugee children who came to Sweden from Germany; they were presented between 1987 and 1989. Jerry Lantz and Ing-Marie Nilsson, when at the Department of Ethnology of Stockholm University, were the authors of a 1980 paper on Jewish rural peddlars in Sweden, while Sara Saks of the Department of Theatre and Film of Stockholm University presented a paper in 1981 on the activities of

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the Jewish amateur dramatic society in Stockholm in the first half of the twentieth century.

¹⁶ At the Department of History of Uppsala University, Håkan Broman presented two papers: one in 1984, on antisemitism in the Diet in 1815; and another in 1985, about the literary feud concerning the Jews. Also at Uppsala University, Mattias Tydén was the author of a paper on Swedish antisemitism from 1880 to 1930; it appeared in a revised version as no. 8 of Uppsala Multiethnic Papers in 1986. At Stockholm University's Department of History, Monica Algeborg presented a paper (circa 1979) on antisemitism in Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s, while at the Department of History of Lund University, Lars Andersson is presently engaged in preparing a paper on antisemitism in Sweden from 1910 to 1945.

¹⁷ See the bibliographic data compiled by Hilde Rohlén-Wohlgemuth, *Svensk-judisk bibliografi. Facklitteratur 1951-1976. Skönlitteratur 1900-1976* (Swedish Jewish bibliography. Non-fiction: 1951-1976, Fiction: 1900-1976), and *Svensk-judisk bibliografi II. 1977-1986* (Swedish Jewish bibliography II. 1977-1986). The former is no. 1 of the series of Publications of the Scandinavian Society for Jewish Studies, Stockholm, 1977, and the latter is no. 6 of the series, Stockholm, 1987. The same compiler has provided further listings in the June 1979, March 1981, and August 1983 numbers, as well as in the first 1985, and the second 1986 issues of *Nordisk Judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies*. That journal has also printed in its second issue of 1989 a bibliography of Jewish studies in Scandinavia by Björn Dahla and Nils Martola. The Scandinavian Society for Jewish Studies published in 1983 as the third number in its Publications series a compilation by Julian Ilicki of Jewish studies at Scandinavian universities and institutions of higher learning. The Resource Center for Jewish Education and Culture in Scandinavia at Lund in 1976 also published a *Bibliography of Research in Jewish Studies in Scandinavia, 1970-1975*.

¹⁸ Leo Kantor. 'Polska kolonin i Sverige ur differentiella perspektiv' (The Polish colony in Sweden considered from a different perspective), in Jan Wit Wojtowicz, ed., *Vuxenutbildning i utveckling. Problem — trender. Rapport från symposiet 'Socio-pedagogiska aspekter på den Sverige-polska minoritetens bildningsbehov'* (Adult education under development. Problems — Trends. Report of the Symposium 'Socio-Pedagogical Aspects of the Swedish-Polish Minority's Educational Needs'), Linköping, 1984.

¹⁹ Mirjam Sterner Carlberg, 'Socialt arbete bland flyktingar och överlevande', (Social work among refugees and survivors), in Haluk Soydan, ed., *Socialt arbete och invandrare* (Social work and immigrants), Stockholm, 1984.

²⁰ Max Engman and Harald Runblom, 'Invandrare i Norden efter 1850', (Immigrants in Scandinavia after 1850), in Gunnar Karlsson, ed., *Nationale og Etniske Minoriteter i Norden 1 1800- og 1900-tallet. Rapporter til den XX nordiske historikerkongres*, vol. II (National and ethnic minorities in Scandinavia during the 19th and 20th centuries. Reports of the 20th Congress of Scandinavian Historians), no. 19 of the Research Series of the Historical Institute of the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, 1987.

²¹ Grzegorz Flakierski, 'Rötter. Den judiska frågan i brevväxlingen mellan Hugo Valentin och Eli Heckscher' (Roots. The Jewish question in the

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correspondance between Hugo Valentin and Eli Heckscher), *Historisk Tidskrift*, vol. 102, no. 2, 1982.

²² Karl-Olov Arnstberg and Billy Ehn, *Etniska minoriteter. I Sverige förr och nu* (Ethnic Minorities in Sweden. Past and present), Lund, 1976, 2nd edn, 1980.

²³ Gunnar Broberg, Harald Runblom and Mattias Tydén, eds., *Judiskt liv i Norden* (Jewish Life in Scandinavia), no. 6 of *Studia Multiethnica Upsaliensa*, Uppsala, 1988.