

Ashkenazi Jews in Early Modern Europe

by Predrag Bukovec

This article describes the history of Jews in Eastern Europe which has its beginnings at the end of the Middle Ages when Jews migrated from their former homes in Central Europe to Poland and Lithuania in response to a royal charter. It covers the period up to the last days of the Rzeczpospolita in the second half of the 18th century, concluding with the Second Partition of Poland.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. From the Beginnings until the 15th Century
2. The 16th Century
3. The 17th Century
4. The 18th Century (until the Partitions of Poland)
5. Appendix
 1. Bibliography
 2. Notes

Indices

Citation

From the Beginnings until the 15th Century

The beginnings of the immigration of Jews from France and Germany (the so-called Ashkenazim) to Eastern Europe are largely obscure. Clearly, up into the mid-13th century, there were only small groups of Jews in Eastern Europe. They were in contact with the Ashkenazi centres and probably also originated from there. However, these family groups do not seem to have left any traces. Bernard Weinryb quotes an exchange of letters from the 1210s in which the Rabbi Judah ben Samuel ("the Pious") (ca. 1150–1217) (→ Media Link #ab) of Regensburg informed Rabbi Eliezer ben Yitzhaq of Prague that Jews without religious education lived in the territories of what is now Poland and Russia: without the support of their fellow Jews from Central Europe, they would remain without a knowledge of the Torah and *Halakha* and without organised religious services.¹

▲ 1

The question of the early Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe and its cultural achievements is currently arousing great interest, above all among Russian Slavists:² some have sought to postulate a Jewish centre in Kievan Rus' during the late Middle Ages which supposedly had a leading role in the composition of certain Russian Church Slavonic documents (for example the Old Church Slavonic translations of the Book of Esther and the Book of Josephus).³ The goal of this ideologically motivated hypothesis (which has since been disproved)⁴ is to demonstrate the independence of early Russian literature from its South Slavic models.⁵

▲ 2

In contrast, Weinryb describes the Jewish immigration to Eastern Europe in the early modern period thus: "The thirteenth and particularly the fourteenth centuries should be regarded as the time of real Jewish settlement in Poland; in the twelfth century only a few individuals or small groups may have existed there."⁶

▲ 3

The real immigration to Eastern Europe⁷ began when the legal conditions for Jews improved considerably thanks to the charters issued by the Polish Duke Bolesław V (1221–1279) in 1264 and by King Kasimir the Great (1310–1370) (→ Media Link #ac) in 1334.⁸ In Lithuania, the Grand Duke Vytautas the Great (ca. 1350–1430) (→ Media Link #ad) created important privileges for the Jews of Brest-Litovsk and Trakai in 1388;⁹ and as a result an important Karaite community settled in Lithuania.¹⁰

▲ 4

These rulers hoped that Jewish immigrants, encouraged by such edicts, would be qualified labourers who would help with the reclamation of land and the development of trade and thereby benefit the royal exchequer; in return, the Jews received privileges that, for the late Middle Ages, were exceptionally generous: the royal protection, through which the Jews – in a sense – belonged to the royal treasury and thus occupied a special position in the population, and the right to self-administration in ritual and judicial matters through the local organisation of the *qahal* (Jewish community), which collected taxes and was a legal link to the king.¹¹ In addition, there was the freedom of movement, although this was restricted by the right of many free cities to refuse Jews residence (the so-called *privilegium de non tolerandis Judaeis*) because the local merchant guilds feared competition. As early as the 15th century, differences had emerged within the Jewish community in Poland between those living in the city and those from the countryside. Like their Christian neighbours, urban Jews lived in their own quarters, for example in Krakow's *Judengasse* (Jew Lane).¹²

▲5

The 16th Century

In the 16th century the Polish kingdom underwent two major changes. Firstly, in 1569, it became a multi-religious, multi-ethnic state as a result of its territorial expansion to the east through the union with Lithuania. Besides the Catholic Poles and Lithuanians, there were now Protestant subjects, for example in the Hanseatic cities (→ Media Link #ae), and a strata of Ukrainian Orthodox peasants in the eastern regions. Secondly, these new territories (above all those in today's Ukraine, including Podolia) were incorporated into the political structures of Poland-Lithuania. This was achieved as a result of the policy of colonisation pursued by the nobility (*szlachta*), who above all sought to enlist Jewish tax farmers (the so-called system of *faktorstwo*). These tax farmers also had the right to distil and sell alcohol (*propinacja*).

▲6

At about the same time, the crown, which had been relatively weak since the late Middle Ages, was largely stripped of its power as the key functions of legislation and financial policy were transferred to the parliament of nobles, the *Sejm*.¹³ Weinryb talks of a "fragmentation of power":¹⁴ the individual members of the *szlachta* took on the nominal sovereignty and the rights and duties of the king so that in their own territory they presided over a "state within a state"; these practically autonomous areas were only loosely held together by the *Sejm* in matters of common importance. Given that the nobles in the *Sejm* had the right to veto royal decrees (even during war), the *Rzeczpospolita* (to use the self-designation of Poland-Lithuania, a borrowing from the Latin *res publica*) was no longer capable of functioning. The fateful repercussions of this concentration on private self-interest and the resulting deadlock became evident in the second half of the 18th century when the *Rzeczpospolita* was destroyed and Poland partitioned.

▲7

In the 16th century, the landed nobility, who were primarily involved in the colonisation of the east, took over the royal privileges for the Jews:¹⁵ tax farming, which had been transferred to the Jews in Poland by King Sigismund I (1467–1548) (→ Media Link #ag),¹⁶ was administered from now on by the nobles on their own territory.

▲8

In the areas ruled by the members of the *szlachta*, the *shtetl* now emerged – Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe with their distinctive architecture geared towards Jewish religious law (*Halakha*). For example, in several regions they possessed the characteristic winter gardens (*kusha*) that could be easily used during the Feast of Tabernacles to construct a tabernacle. In addition, because Jews were only allowed to walk a short distance on the Sabbath (the Sabbath day's walk), synagogues were built close to residential housing.¹⁷

▲9

Jews in the countryside were accorded the role of intermediaries between the nobles and the Ukrainian and Polish peasants: within the aristocratic fiefdoms, they were responsible not only for tax collection, but also received the alcohol monopoly granted by the king.

▲10

As a result, the lion's share of the *Rzeczpospolita*'s income came from Jewish leaseholders who were accountable to the nobles. One important reason for this was the self-contained flow of money: the nobles got back a large portion of

the money they paid as wages to the peasants from the sale of alcohol because Jewish leaseholders had to hand over part of their profits to the nobles.¹⁸ Inherent to this role as an intermediary (i.e. the Jews' socio-political link to the landlords and their representation of the nobility vis-à-vis the peasants) was the danger that Jews in the countryside would be the target of social dissatisfaction and serve as a scapegoat due to their trade in alcohol, which was rejected by the Catholic clergy on moral grounds.¹⁹ In this anti-Jewish climate, which was particularly encouraged by the Catholic church in Poland, the number of blood libel trials (→ Media Link #ah) and accusations of desecration of the host (→ Media Link #ai) grew. Against the background of the mediaeval *Adversus Judaeos* motif, a superstitious population terrified of demons²⁰ blamed unexplained capital crimes (above all when they were committed at certain times in the church calendar, especially Easter) on Jews, who as a result often suffered a martyr's death. From early on, the Polish kings, for example Sigismund II August (1520–1572) (→ Media Link #aj) in 1557, sought to contain these incidents, albeit with only partial success.²¹

▲ 11

In 1598, for instance, a child's body was found near Lublin. This triggered an avalanche of blood libel trials,²² which continued in batches for the rest of the following century. In connection with this, the sources indicate increased Jewish migration from the central Polish region to the new territories in the east. There they received the relative protection of the landlords, who also possessed juridical authority.

▲ 12

The Jews' self-administration also underwent a change in the 16th century: the Jewish communities were increasingly led by a plutocratic ruling class, and tensions between the interests of the rich and poor developed that were to exist until the end of Poland-Lithuania.²³ This discrepancy was exacerbated by the decline of long-distance trade to the benefit of a large number of travelling merchants and other small traders.²⁴ On account of the constant high tax debts to the crown, the communities had to take up large loans from local monasteries, and the interest charged by the latter increased the impoverishment of the Jews. In order to represent Jewish interests in Poland, the Jewish communities throughout the country banded together to create the so-called Council (*W'a'ad*) of Four Lands in 1582; Lithuania received its own umbrella organisation.²⁵

▲ 13

At this time, the office of a Jewish representative (the *shtadlan*) at sittings of the *Sejm* was introduced. He could follow political decisions and was meant to prevent the passing of laws that could have a negative impact on the community. To do this, the *shtadlan* was present at the individual meetings of the *Sejm* and tried – sometimes using bribery – to influence decision making or at least convince a noble to use his veto.

▲ 14

The 17th Century

The migratory movement from Central Europe begun in the late Middle Ages continued in the 17th century. The migration within Poland-Lithuania towards the east of the country also persisted. In addition, many Jews moved from Austria and Bohemia (parts of the Habsburg Monarchy) to Hungary.

▲ 15

With hindsight, one can talk of a century of decisive change for the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe because these three migratory movements created the distribution of population that would largely remain in place up into the 20th century. The communities stabilised and East European Jewry ensured its leading role within the diaspora; Vilnius in Lithuania (Polish: Wilno; Yiddish: Wilne) became a renowned centre for the study of the Talmud, whose writings were read even in far away Central Europe. The Jewish opposition to the Orthodox monopoly on the leadership of the *qahal* that would later develop was not yet evident in the 17th century.²⁶ Nevertheless, one can still see a certain degree of alienation of officials from the daily life of the population as a result of a legalism maintained by some scholars, which was connected to emphatic sermons on repentance and punishment.

▲ 16

The political situation in Poland-Lithuania became critical in the first half of the 17th century. Whereas the Thirty Years'

War in Germany came to an end in 1648, this year saw an escalation of violence in the eastern part of Poland-Lithuania. The relationship between the religious and social groups on the *szlachta* estates had always been tense; now the conflict exploded between the Polish-Catholic nobles, the Jewish leaseholders and the Ukrainian-Orthodox peasants in a Cossack rising led by their Hetman Bohdan Chmielnicki (1595–1657) (→ Media Link #ak).

▲ 17

The different religious faiths of those involved gave the social conflict an additional edge. Under their new leader, the Ukrainian Cossack rebels, who had originally been a self-organised militia formed to defend the Crimea against the raids of the Tatar Khanate, turned against the feudal system in the new territories of Poland-Lithuania and against the dominant position of the Polish landed aristocracy and the Jewish leaseholders, who in their eyes were the representatives of the feudal system. The rising, which between 1648 and 1656 caused massive devastation, reached a first climax as early as April and June 1648 when the Cossacks destroyed many Polish villages and cities. Many members of the non-Ukrainian or non-Orthodox population were barbarically murdered; others were forced to convert to Orthodoxy. In addition, many Jews in this region were enslaved by local traders and sent as part of the slave trade to the Ottoman Empire or at least to the Ottoman territories, which at this time included Podolia (→ Media Link #am)(see below). One could therefore find increasing numbers of Ashkenazim in the trading centres of the Ottoman Empire, where the Sephardim and Romaniotes (Byzantine Jews) had already settled.

▲ 18

Because the province of Podolia fell to the Sublime Porte as a result of the Polish-Ottoman Wars of 1672–1699, further connections to the Ottoman Empire developed. This short intermission was not only important because it simplified the migration of Jews into the heartland of the Ottoman empire (for example, in this period the number of immigrants to Palestine increased), but also because Podolia acted as a cultural bridgehead across which the Messianic tension of the Sephardic Jews in the Ottoman Empire could be transferred to Eastern Europe. Podolia was especially important for the Messianic movement of Sabbateanism, although its extent has not yet been thoroughly investigated. The threatening and traumatising news of the situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe certainly helped lend plausibility to the teachings of Shabtai Zvi (1626–1676) (→ Media Link #ao), who on 31 May 1665 was proclaimed by his prophet Nathan of Gaza (1643–1680) (→ Media Link #ap) to be the Messiah.²⁷

▲ 19

The Sabbatean movement apparently emerged from a complex interaction of Messianic trends among the former Marranos (Sephardim who had converted to Christianity and returned to Judaism in the Ottoman Empire) and the Kabbalic impulses of the Jewish mystic Isaak Luria (1534–1572) (→ Media Link #aq) – an interaction which had a powerful effect under the impact of the catastrophic events of 1648. Sabbatean ideas also came to Poland-Lithuania via Podolia.²⁸ At any rate, the Kabbalah, on which Sabbateanism drew, offered the Sephardim (and a small number of Ashkenazim) ways of interpreting the suffering inflicted upon them by the Cossacks.

▲ 20

The 18th Century (until the Partitions of Poland)

The trends of the 17th century continued into the 18th century. The debts of the Jewish communities acquired massive proportions; the tax debt of Jews in Poland-Lithuania came to roughly three million *złoty* and accounted for a monstrously big portion of the communal budget.²⁹ The communities were barely able to cover their other expenses, for example the maintenance of the Jewish school system (boys between five and twelve years old had to attend the Jewish primary school, the *Cheder*), the payment of rabbis and other communal officials,³⁰ and the upkeep of charitable institutions; the corruption of the local authorities and the associated bribes for state organs at the local and supraregional levels also had to be taken into account. The preference given to wealthy community members in the setting of tax debt exacerbated the impoverishment of the other Jews. The solution was to introduce or increase communal taxes: thus, when a noble accepted a bid from a prospective Jewish leaseholder, the leaseholder had to pay a license tax to the community; in addition, a so-called basket tax on kosher meat was introduced. In order to regulate migration, a tax on settlement was put in place. However, even these measures were not enough to put the communities' finances in order after Poland-Lithuania introduced a tax reform in 1764 that increased the financial difficulties of the Jewish communities.

▲ 21

The centralisation evident in the 16th and, to a certain extent, the 17th centuries, which guaranteed Jewish representation in the form of the Council of Four Lands and the Lithuanian *Wa'ad*, was reversed in the 18th century. The loss of power by both synods was accompanied by a further regionalisation and the consolidation of local communities.³¹

▲ 22

Despite the disastrous consequences of the Cossack rising for the Jews, the Jewish population continued to increase significantly in the 18th century. During the Polish-Lithuanian tax reform in 1764, investigations revealed that roughly seven percent of the *Rzeczpospolita's* population were Jews,³² who can be broken down first into urban and rural residents and then by income group. On the *szlachta* leaseholds, Jewish servants and indeed many sub-lessees lived in addition to the wealthy leaseholders. The cities contained a small upper class of merchants, who were even admitted to the guilds and the municipal administration in the Russian Empire after the partitions; on the other hand, the majority of Jews were small traders or practised specific crafts (above all, as cobblers, tailors³³ and tanners).

▲ 23

Although there had already been blood libel trials against Jews in earlier centuries, their number now increased considerably. One must take into account the fact that the intellectual heritage of Humanism and the Renaissance, as well as Absolutism and its modernising implications, had not yet altered the feudal system of Poland-Lithuania. This situation, which was underpinned by poverty, a lack of education and a superstitious worldview, repeatedly produced Jewish blood libel trials; one can assume at least 20 trials in the first 60 years of the century.³⁴ The affliction became so great that in 1763 Jewish emissaries complained to Pope Clement XIII (1693–1769) (→ Media Link #as) in Rome and called upon him to intervene in their homeland. Pressure from the Pope and King August III (1696–1763) (→ Media Link #at) curtailed the number of trials, which had been fomented by the local clergy, who shared the population's worldview.³⁵

▲ 24

Among the Jews of Eastern Europe, one also finds a worldview shaped by such existential angst. There prevailed a perception of living in a hostile world full of demons, against whom one tried to guard oneself through various magical practices and amulets. Many so-called *Ba'alei Shem* (masters of the name [of God]) worked as healers and magicians with apotropaic powers. Using a combination of common magical rituals and elements of the 16th-century Kabbalah, they offered their services to the population. The founder of Hasidism (→ Media Link #au), Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov (acronym: Besht) (ca. 1700–1760) (→ Media Link #av) also acted as such a miracle worker.

▲ 25

A similar crisis to that of the Cossack pogroms in the 17th century arose in 1768 during the *haidamaky* rising of Ukrainian peasants in the east of the country. The intermediary position of the Jewish leaseholders in the Polish feudal system again led to Jews being used as a blank screen onto which social tensions were projected and the position of the Jewish communities became increasingly precarious.

▲ 26

In 1727 the Tsarina Catherine I (1684–1727) (→ Media Link #aw) expelled Russia's few Jews.³⁶ Not until the Partitions of Poland (1772, 1793 and 1795), (→ Media Link #ax) when the majority of the former Polish-Lithuanian Jews became subjects of the Russian Empire, did the tsarist policy towards the Jews undergo a change, which had become unavoidable for pragmatic and economic reasons. In the spirit of Enlightened rule, Tsarina Catherine II (1729–1796) (→ Media Link #ay) attempted to end the discrimination of Jews, whom she saw as an urban merchant class that should receive their civil rights.³⁷ An imperial decree of 1791 limiting the right of abode for Jews to particular parts of western Russian (the Pale of Settlement) meant that the Jews of Poland, Lithuania and today's Ukraine and Belarus remained confined to this area up into the 20th century.

▲ 27

Predrag Bukovec, Vienna

Appendix

Bibliography

Alekseev, Anatoly A.: Who is Responsible for the Massacre of the Innocents (Mt 2,16)? An Old Slavonic Apocryphal Tale, in: Christfried Böttrich et al. (eds.): Josephus und das Neue Testament: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen, II. Internationales Symposium zum Corpus Judaeo-Hellenisticum 25.–28. Mai 2006, Greifswald et al. 2007 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 209), pp. 513–518.

Atamuk, Solomon: Juden in Litauen: Ein geschichtlicher Überblick, Konstanz 2000.

Ben-Naeh, Yaron: Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century, Tübingen 2008 (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 22).

Bukovec, Predrag: Jakob Frank und der Frankismus, in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2012-03-07. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/bukovecp-2012a-de> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-2012030730 [2012-03-07].

idem: East and South-East European Jews in the 19th and 20th Centuries, in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2012-04-16. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/bukovecp-2011-en> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-2012041222[2012-07-24].

idem: Sephardische Juden in Europa nach 1492, in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz [forthcoming].

idem: Das 4. Makkabäerbuch und Flavius Josephus: Die rezeptionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung des slavischen Josephus, in: Zeitschrift für Slavistik 57 (2012), pp. 3–24.

Dubnow, Simon: Geschichte des Chassidismus, Berlin 1931, vol. 1–2.

idem: Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes, 2nd ed., Jerusalem 1971, vol. 2.

Elior, Rachel: Der Ba'al Schem Tov zwischen Magie und Mystik, in: Karl E. Grözinger (ed.): Die Geschichten vom Ba'al Schem Tov: Schivche ha-Bescht: Teil 1, Wiesbaden 1997 (Jüdische Kultur 2), pp. XXXV–LV.

Golczewski, Frank: Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa?, in: Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt et al. (eds.): Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa, Frankfurt am Main 2005 (Kieler Werkstücke: Reihe F: Beiträge zur osteuropäischen Geschichte 8), pp. 13–28.

Goldberg, Jacob: Juden in Polen und Litauen: Warum und auf welche Weise geht man ihrer Geschichte nach?, in: Stefi Jersch-Wenzel et al. (eds.): Annäherungen: Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur in Mittel- und Osteuropa, Leipzig 2002, pp. 15–30.

Grözinger, Karl E. (ed.): Die Geschichten vom Ba'al Schem Tov: Schivche ha-Bescht: Teil 1, Wiesbaden 1997 (Jüdische Kultur 2).

Guldon, Zenon / Kowalski, Waldemar: Jewish Settlement in the Polish Commonwealth in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century, in: ChaeRan Freeze et al. (eds.): Jewish Women in Eastern Europe, Oxford 2005 (Polin 15), pp. 307–321.

Koestler, Arthur: Der dreizehnte Stamm: Das Reich der Khasaren und sein Erbe, Bergisch Gladbach 1989.

Liszkowski, Uwe: "Politökonomie des Wodkas": Die jüdische Schenke im polnischen Feudalismus, in: Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt (ed.): Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa, Frankfurt am Main 2005 (Kieler Werkstücke: Reihe F: Beiträge zur osteuropäischen Geschichte 8), pp. 141–153.

idem: Aufgeklärter Pragmatismus am Beispiel der Judenpolitik Katharinas II, in: Eckhard Hübner et al. (eds.): Rußland zur Zeit Katharinas II: Absolutismus, Aufklärung, Pragmatismus, Cologne et al. 1998 (Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas 26), pp. 315–336.

Löwe, Heinz-Dietrich: Die Juden in Osteuropa: Sozioökonomische Strukturen und politische Verhaltensmuster, in: Trumah 7 (1998), pp. 9–34.

Morgenstern, Matthias: Art. "Orthodoxie, III. Judentum", in: RGG⁴ 6 (2007), col. 708–712.

idem: Tora-Kommunikation und interreligiöses Lernen in Konstantinopel/Istanbul im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert, in: Theologische Quartalschrift 189 (2009), pp. 277–288.

Niendorf, Mathias: "Litwaken": Stationen jüdischen Lebens in Litauen (1388–1944), in: Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt (ed.): Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa, Frankfurt am Main 2005 (Kieler Werkstücke: Reihe F: Beiträge zur osteuropäischen Geschichte 8), pp. 101–126.

Rest, Matthias: Die russische Judengesetzgebung von der Ersten Polnischen Teilung bis zum "Polozenie dlja Evreev" (1804), Wiesbaden 1975 (Veröffentlichungen des Osteuropa-Institutes München 44).

Sand, Shlomo: Die Erfindung des jüdischen Volkes: Israels Gründungsmythos auf dem Prüfstand, Berlin 2010.

Sharot, Stephen: Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic: A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements, Chapel Hill 1982.

Slezkine, Yuri: Das jüdische Jahrhundert, 2. Aufl., Göttingen 2007.

Sokolowa, Alla: Architectural Space of the Shtetl-Street-House: Jewish Homes in the Shtetls of Eastern-Podolia, in: Trumah 7 (1998), pp. 35–85.

Tyloch, Witold: Die Judenschutzbriefe von Boleslaw dem Frommen von Großpolen und von Kasimir dem Großen, König von Polen, in: Kairos 22 (1980), pp. 114–119.

Weinryb, Bernard D.: The Beginnings of East-European Jewry in Legend and Historiography, in: Meir Ben-Horin et al. (eds.): Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman, Leiden 1962, pp. 445–502.

idem: The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800, Philadelphia 1982.

Notes

- ¹ Cf. Weinryb, Beginnings of East-European Jewry 1962, p. 498.
- ² Above all Anatoly Alekseev.
- ³ Cf. Alekseev, Responsible 2007. This short overview of his theses on early Russian literary history contains references to his longer investigations of the topic.
- ⁴ One the state of the research, cf. Bukovec, Das 4. Makkabäerbuch 2012.
- ⁵ The significance of the question of the origin of East European Jews for ideologically motivated reconstructions of history is also evident in the debate on the possible origins of the East European Jews among the Khazars, a Central Asian Turkic people who converted to Judaism in the early Middle Ages. This topic reached a wider public through Arthur Koestler's (1905–1983) work *The Thirteenth Tribe* and was recently taken up by Shlomo Sand. For a rebuttal of this thesis, cf. Weinryb, Beginnings of East-European Jewry 1962. Opponents of the Khazar thesis, particularly in Israel, have even conducted genetic studies on Jews with East European roots. Cf. the newsletter of the Israeli embassy in Germany from 31.01.2006: (http://nlarchiv.israel.de/2006_html/01/Newsletter%20vom%202006-01-31a.htm#g4) [22/02/2012].
- ⁶ Cf. Weinryb, Jews 1982, p. 27; cf. also Dubnow, Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes 1971, p. 271.
- ⁷ *ibidem*, p. 270; Löwe, Juden in Osteuropa 1998, p. 10; Rest, Die russische Judengesetzgebung 1975, p. 13.
- ⁸ For a summary, cf. Tyloch, Judenschutzbriefe 1980.
- ⁹ Cf. Atamuk, Litauen 2000, p. 18.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Niendorf, Litwaken 2005, p. 105. The Karaites are a Jewish denomination that emerged in the 8th century. Their religious teaching emphasises the rejection of the Talmud as a second, oral source of revelation and thus the exegesis of the Hebrew bible is reinforced. Their relationship to the Rabbinic Jews has consisted of phases in which the heterodoxy of the other was emphasised, but also periods of reconciliation concentrating on the common Jewish heritage. For Istanbul in the early modern period, cf. Morgenstern, Tora-Kommunikation 2009. Karaites of Turkish descent or Altay speakers still live in Eastern Europe, particularly in Lithuania.
- ¹¹ Cf. Rest, Die russische Judengesetzgebung 1975, p. 17.
- ¹² It was, however, damaged by a pogrom in 1494 and the Jews of the city retreated to the suburb Kazimierz, where a Jewish quarter then developed that was later termed a ghetto.
- ¹³ The Polish word *sejm* initially only meant "assembly" (cf. the Old Church Slavonic съѣмъ = assembly); here it means the parliament of nobles. The Polish parliament is still today called the *Sejm* and that in Lithuania the *Seimas*.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Weinryb, Jews 1982, p. 7.
- ¹⁵ Cf. Rest, Die russische Judengesetzgebung 1975, p. 15.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Dubnow, Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes 1971, pp. 381f.

17. ^ Cf. Sokolowa, *Shtetl-Street-House* 1998, p. 71. Her work on the architecture of the *shtetl* is extremely informative and easy to follow thanks to the illustrations.
18. ^ The income rose for the royal treasury from 0.3% (1564) to 40.1% (1789); cf. Liszkowski, *Politikonomie des Wodkas* 2005, p. 142.
19. ^ Slezkine, *Jahrhundert* 2006, p. 6, correctly recognises the mechanism of the licensing system and the awkward position of the Jewish leaseholders: "... jüdische Pächter und Gastwirte ermöglichten es den polnischen Landbesitzern, aus ihren Leibeigenen Profite herauszupressen, ohne die Rhetorik patriarchalischer Gegenseitigkeit aufzugeben." ("Jewish leaseholders and innkeepers made it possible for Polish landowners to squeeze profits from their serfs without abandoning the rhetoric of patriarchal reciprocity" [transl. by C.G.])
20. ^ See Elijor, *Ba'al Schem Tov* 1997, pp. 46–50. Elijor sees the central achievement of Hasidism for many Jews to be turning "outdated ideas on their heads" (p. 53) and replacing an "all-encompassing demonic" with an "all-embracing godly immanence" (p. 55).
21. ^ Cf. Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* 1971, p. 384f.
22. ^ *ibidem*, p. 389.
23. ^ Cf. Golczewski, *Jüdische Welten in Osteuropa* 2005, p. 19; Rest, *Die russische Judengesetzgebung* 1975, p. 35; Weinryb, *Jews* 1982, pp. 73f.
24. ^ See Rest, *Die russische Judengesetzgebung* 1975, pp. 22f.
25. ^ *ibidem*, p. 18.
26. ^ On the concept of Jewish "Orthodoxy", which – as a contrast to the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) – was first used in the German-speaking territories at the end of the 18th century, see Morgenstern, *Orthodoxie* 2007.
27. ^ On this, cf. Bukovec, *Sephardische Juden* [forthcoming].
28. ^ On this, cf. *idem*, *Jakob Frank und der Frankismus* 2012.
29. ^ Cf. Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* 1971, p. 449.
30. ^ In addition, certain members of the community were rewarded by freeing them from taxation; this has been proved, for example, using the documents on the Besht in his hometown of Międzybórz. Cf. Grözinger, *Ba'al Schem Tov* 1997, pp. 11f. The archive has only been accessible to Western researchers since the fall of the Iron Curtain.
31. ^ Cf. Rest, *Die russische Judengesetzgebung* 1975, p. 22.
32. ^ Cf. Guldon / Kowalski, *Jewish Settlement in the Polish Commonwealth* 2005, p. 307. The data from the tax registers is on p. 313.
33. ^ According to Goldberg, *Juden in Polen und Litauen* 2002, p. 21, 30% of Jewish craftsmen in the 18th century were tailors.
34. ^ See Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes* 1971, p. 442; Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus* (1931), p. 37. These traumatic events had an impact upon literature; one example is the trial for ritual murder in Zhitomir of 1753 (H157/J167 according to the count in Grözinger, *Ba'al Schem Tov* 1997; H stands for the younger, Hebrew version of the *Shivchei haBeShT*, the hagiography of the Besht, and J for the Yiddish version; both were edited in Grözinger's book), in which Jews were sentenced to gruesome death penalties after the three-year-old child of the noble Studzhinski was found dead and Jews received the blame.
35. ^ Cf. Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus* 1931, vol. 1, pp. 38f.
36. ^ Cf. Liszkowski, *Judenpolitik Katharinas II.*, p. 316.
37. ^ On Catherine the Great's policy towards the Jews, see Bukovec, *East and South-East European Jews* 2012.

This text is licensed under: CC by-nc-nd - Attribution, Noncommercial, No Derivative Works

Translated by: Christopher Gilley
 Editor: Matthias Morgenstern
 Copy Editor: Lisa Landes

Indices

DDC: 296

Locations

Austria-Hungary DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075613-0) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075613-0)
Austria DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4043271-3) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4043271-3)
Belarus DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4079143-9) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4079143-9)
Bohemia DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4007467-5) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4007467-5)
Brest-Litovsk DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4090086-1) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4090086-1)
Central Europe DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4039677-0) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4039677-0)
Crimea DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4033166-0) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4033166-0)
Eastern Europe DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075739-0) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075739-0)
France DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4018145-5) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4018145-5)
Germany DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4011882-4) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4011882-4)
Grand Duchy of Lithuania DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4499060-1) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4499060-1)
Hungary DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078541-5) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078541-5)
Kievan Rus' DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4073393-2) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4073393-2)
Krakow DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4073760-3) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4073760-3)
Lublin DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4036418-5) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4036418-5)
Ottoman Empire DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075720-1) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075720-1)
Palestine DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4044381-4) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4044381-4)
Poland DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4386758-3) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4386758-3)
Poland DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4046496-9) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4046496-9)
Prague DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076310-9) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076310-9)
Regensburg DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4048989-9) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4048989-9)
Russia DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076899-5) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076899-5)
Trakai DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4060601-6) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4060601-6)
Ukraine DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4061496-7) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4061496-7)
Vatican City DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4062404-3) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4062404-3)
Vilnius DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4066228-7) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/4066228-7)

Citation

Bukovec, Predrag: Ashkenazi Jews in Early Modern Europe, in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2012-03-07. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/bukovecp-2010-en> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-2012030712 [YYYY-MM-DD].

When quoting this article please add the date of your last retrieval in brackets after the url. When quoting a certain passage from the article please also insert the corresponding number(s), for example 2 or 1-4.

Export citation from: HeBIS Online Catalogue [↗](http://cbsopac.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/DB=2.1/PPNSET?PPN=291013473) (http://cbsopac.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/DB=2.1/PPNSET?PPN=291013473)
WorldCat [↗](http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/779885271) (http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/779885271)

Link #ab

- Judah ben Samuel ("the Pious") (ca. 1150–1217) VIAF [↗](http://viaf.org/viaf/76303715) [↗](http://viaf.org/viaf/76303715) (http://viaf.org/viaf/76303715) DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/119012154) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/119012154)

Link #ac

- Kasimir III of Poland (1310–1370) VIAF [↗](http://viaf.org/viaf/62340685) [↗](http://viaf.org/viaf/62340685) (http://viaf.org/viaf/62340685) DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/118560425) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/118560425) ADB/NDB [↗](http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118560425.html) (http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118560425.html)

Link #ad

- Vytautas of Lithuania (ca. 1350–1430) VIAF [↗](http://viaf.org/viaf/69228615) [↗](http://viaf.org/viaf/69228615) (http://viaf.org/viaf/69228615) DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/11876957X) (http://d-nb.info/gnd/11876957X)

Link #ae

- The Hanseatic League (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/european-networks/economic-networks/margrit->

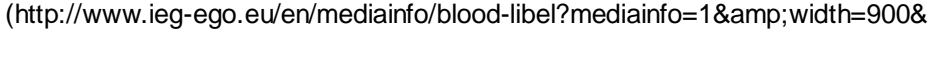
schulte-beerbuehl-networks-of-the-hanseatic-league)

Link #ag

- Sigismund I of Poland (1467–1548) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/18018610>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118797158>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118797158.html>)

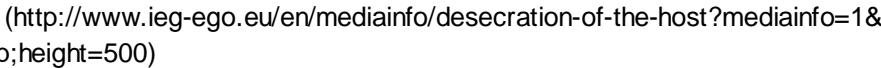
Link #ah



-  (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/blood-libel?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
Blood Libel

Link #ai






-  (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/desecration-of-the-host?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
Desecration of the Host

Link #aj

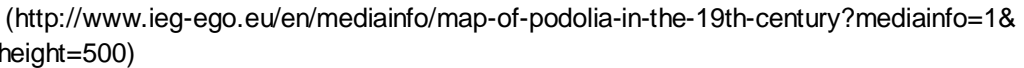
- Sigismund II August of Poland (1520–1572) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/804948>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118614193>)

Link #ak





- Bohdan Chmielnicki (1595–1657) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/10636972>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118520504>)

Link #am

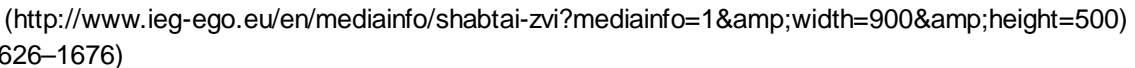


-  (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/map-of-podolia-in-the-19th-century?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
Map of Podolia in the 19th Century

Link #ao

- Shabtai Zvi (1626–1676) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/3267035>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118793926>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118793926.html>)



-  (http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/shabtai-zvi?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500)
Shabtai Zvi (1626–1676)


Link #ap

- Nathan of Gaza (1643–1680) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/2363327>)





Link #aq

- Isaak Luria (1534–1572) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/46882085>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/119264528>)

Link #as

- Pope Clement XIII (1693–1769) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/27106709>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/123610311>)




Link #at

- August III of Poland (1696–1763) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/35247491>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118505092>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118505092.html>)





Link #au

- Hasidism (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/crossroads/religious-and-denominational-spaces/yeshayahu-balog-matthias-morgenstern-hasidism>)

Link #av

- Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov (acronym: Besht) (ca. 1700–1760) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/50250080>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/127444548>)

Link #aw

- Catherine I of Russia (1684–1727) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/48180588>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/11872116X>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11872116X.html>)

Link #ax



- (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/karten-der-teilungen-polens?mediainfo=1&width=900&height=500>)
Maps of the three partitions of Poland in the 18th century

Link #ay

- Catherine II of Russia (1729–1796) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/49493819>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118560565>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118560565.html>)



<http://www.ieg-ego.eu> ISSN 2192-7405