



**Anna Michałowska-Mycielska**

# **THE JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**AUTHORITY AND SOCIAL CONTROL  
IN POZNAŃ AND SWARZĘDZ 1650-1793**

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Anna Michałowska-Mycielska

# The Jewish Community

Authority and Social Control  
in Poznań and Swarzędz, 1650–1793

Translated by  
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## FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book was written in several stages. Its first version was my doctor thesis written under the guidance of Professor Antoni Mączek, which I defended in 1999 at the Historical Institute of Warsaw University. It became a starting point of the book titled *Między demokracją a oligarchią. Władze gmin żydowskich w Poznaniu i Swarzędzu (od połowy XVII do końca XVIII wieku)* which was published in 2000. Its English translation titled *The Jewish Community. Authority and Social Control in Poznań and Swarzędz, 1650-1793* was published in 2008. It was a modified version of the Polish text, taking into consideration the comments that had been made by its reviewers and a few new archival discoveries. It also tried to take into account the needs of a non-Polish reader, less familiar with the realities of the ancient Commonwealth.

The book predominantly relies on the archival sources produced by two Jewish communities in Wielkopolska – in Poznań and Swarzędz – which are ample and very well preserved compared to those of other Commonwealth's communities. It also features broader phenomena characteristic of the way the Jewish self-government functioned at the local level. It is also worth underscoring that the state of estates, where individual estates exercised separate rights and were differently organized, was a very good ground for the growth of such self-government.

This second English edition of the book is largely due to the unflagging interest in the history and culture of the Polish Jews. That interest is not a mere fad, but a phenomenon that has become a permanent feature of historical writing. There is also a noticeable trend for scholars, who are increasingly better prepared in terms of research tools and language, to focus on that area of study. Which translates into a new perception of the place and role of the Jews without whom the socio-economic landscape of the ancient Commonwealth would have been highly incomplete and sparse. It is becoming more widespread in Poland, too, as evidenced by the emergence of various museums which feature/underscore the presence

of Jews in local communities. As the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, recently opened in Warsaw, best demonstrates.

*Anna Michałowska-Mycielska*

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

In this book the simplified transcription of Hebrew and Yiddish words has been adopted. In Yiddish texts – the rules of YIVO have been followed, and in the Hebrew texts – the modified transcription of *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. The Hebrew letters *alef* and *ayin* have not been marked at all except where they may stand for a long vowel – then two transcribed vowels are separated by an apostrophe. No distinction is made between *teth* and *taf*, *kaf* and *kof*, *samekh* and *sin*. The letter *he* is represented as *h*, and *het* as *h*, *khaf* as *kh*. The letter *tsade* is represented as *ts*. When it discharges the function of *mater lectionis* at the end of the word, the letter *he* is represented as *h*. *Sheva* is featured as short *e* only if it is preceded by a conjunction or pronouns which are written jointly, the only exception was made for the words which already function in the English language and are transcribed otherwise (*tefilah*). The capital letter is used only in the first word of the title of a published work. In order to make them adequately legible, the article, preposition, conjunction and the relative pronoun are written jointly with the word they are followed by and are separated by a hyphen (*mi-she-oved*).

The only derogations from the adopted rules have been allowed in the terms which operate in the English language and are transcribed otherwise (e.g., bar-mitzva or challah).

Due to the specificity of this work's subject matter there is a large number of Hebrew and Yiddish terms. This is why they have been printed in antique (if not in italics for editorial reasons), including those that have not been assimilated by English. In the Index at the end of the book (with the names of things, people and geographical places) marked in bold are the pages where explanations are offered of the most important terms related to the discussed subject matter.



## INTRODUCTION

This book features the mechanisms underlying the operation of Jewish communities and the policies pursued by community authorities in early modern times. The communities featured are Poznań and Swarzędz. Although authority was mainly exercised in a community by the kahal and its officials, the rabbi, brotherhoods, and craftsmen's guilds were also involved in the community's management. The purpose of this work is also to highlight the mutual interdependencies between all of these groups.

It is by no means accidental that Wielkopolska (Great Poland) has been chosen as an example. This region, important in demographic and cultural terms, was the area of the earliest Jewish settlement in Polish lands. Jerzy Topolski described Wielkopolska's unique socioeconomic structure.<sup>[1]</sup> Agriculture and industry shaped the area's economy (with the grange catering to the domestic market rather than to exports across the Baltic Sea, with nobility more inclined to invest, with highly developed sheep breeding and textile industry, woolen cloth production in particular, and with a high share of urban population, a positive trade balance, and a high share of pecuniary rent in peasants' performances to their lords). Wielkopolska was mainly inhabited by medium nobility and there were no large magnate estates, typical of the eastern regions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Owing to Wielkopolska's specificity, the nature of Jewish settlement in this region was distinctly different from that in other regions: Jews mainly settled in towns,<sup>[2]</sup> taking up such typical urban occupations as trade and crafts. Hence jobs which had been stereotypically associated with the commonplace understanding of a Jew's role, such as an innkeeper or arrendator, accounted for a small percentage of professions taken up by the Wielkopolska Jews.<sup>[3]</sup>

Last but not least, quite a large number of surviving source materials regarding Jewish communities come from the Poznań and Swarzędz communities. They are mainly handwritten community books, which are called *pinkasim*, of which only a few have survived until today and which are therefore unique and priceless.

Their relative profusion allows us to observe many aspects of a Jewish community's internal life. Moreover, the Poznań and Swarzędz communities maintained relations and, using these communities as an example, one may keep track of how the principal community and its branch operated. When Jewish sources are compared with those produced by the municipal, *starosta's*, or voievode's institutions, one may get a broader picture of the environment in which the authorities of a Jewish community operated.

This study covers a period of 150 years, beginning in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century until the Partitions of Poland. I am aware that the dividing line set in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is controversial. The reason why I opted for it was the chronological scope of the source materials. In my opinion, the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century does not constitute a qualitative turning point in the operation of Jewish institutions. Some phenomena, such as indebtedness or centralization, had been evolving gradually over the entire period, even though their starting point may be traced back to earlier times. On the other hand, the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was certainly a turning point, not only due to the fact that Polish Jews began to live in three separate states with different political systems, but also due to new trends that became manifest in Jewish society, namely the Haskalah and Hasidism, both of which had their impact on the following century.

Moreover, I am not inclined to perceive the examined period as an era of crisis, mainly for this reason, e.g., that it is difficult to conceive of a crisis that would persist for 150 years. This is why the approach taken by many studies, one that emphasizes crisis phenomena, oligarchy, and abuses of power by officials, seems to be only partially right. Moreover, most of those phenomena affected the Commonwealth's entire society, even though they manifested themselves in different ways and their scope differed as well. Many of the practices which seem repellent by today's standards, such as the buying of positions and titles or the existence of informal patron-client relations, were typical of early modern political life in which a borderline demarcating the private from the "public" was perceived

quite differently than it is today. A Jewish community operated within the framework of a more general model of the exercise of power, as evidenced by the fact that it had many similarities with the system that prevailed at the time in towns and among Polish nobility.

I am aware that some issues are discussed briefly, only in so far as the community management is concerned. Hence such important aspects of the community life as charity, schools, or religious life are treated as if they were of secondary importance. Still other problems, such as relations with town authorities and townsmen, or cooperation between the communities and central Jewish self-government (between the provincial council of the Wielkopolska Jews and the Council of Four Lands), were not raised at all. I am aware that many aspects of a Jewish community's life call for further studies, also based on the source materials coming from other regions of the Commonwealth.

This book is a modified doctoral dissertation and was also published in Polish.<sup>[4]</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to all those who contributed to its improvement, but first of all to Professors Jakub Goldberg, Adam Teller, and Jerzy Tomaszewski. I particularly value the longstanding tutelage and help offered by Professor Antoni Mączak. It is to his memory that I dedicate this book.

## CHAPTER ONE

# OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF JEWS IN POZNAŃ AND SWARZĘDZ

The Poznań community is one of the oldest Jewish communities in the Polish lands. The oldest reference to Jews living in Poznań (Pozna) comes from 1379.<sup>[1]</sup> Legend has it that a synagogue was built in that town in 1367, first referred to in source materials in 1449. The first mention of the cemetery comes from 1438.<sup>[2]</sup> Another Poznań legend, which most probably dates from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, tells about the host profaned by the Poznań Jews in 1399. It seems that in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Poznań was the only place in Poland where a group of Jewish scholars were active. The community flourished in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when it consisted of more than 1500 inhabitants. It follows from an inspection carried in 1565 that Jews lived in 50 houses of their own, 43 tenement houses and 4 houses that were owned by the community and connected with two synagogues. In 1578, the Poznań Jews paid 1058 złoty (zł.) in poll taxes and ranked as the second largest group of Jewish taxpayers after the residents of Kazimierz (near Kraków).<sup>[3]</sup> During this period, Poznań was a Jewish center of Wielkopolska and its rabbis were held in high esteem.

The Jewish quarter was situated in the northern part of Poznań and bordered on the back alley of Żydowska street. On its other sides it was delimited by Wroniecka Street as well as the buildings along Szewska and Przed Dominikanami Streets. Information about the number of houses located inside this area is offered by a text of a contract that the town authorities concluded with the community authorities in 1558. Jews were allowed to own 83 houses (30 more than under the previous contracts), but at the same time they were prohibited to live in galleries and town walls.<sup>[4]</sup> The Jewish quarter was not a ghetto in the strict sense of the word as it was not surrounded by a wall. Nor was a prohibition observed that Christian houses situated close to the Jewish quarter were not to be rented to Jews. Synagogues were

built in the very center of the quarter, and the most important ones were the Old Synagogue (built at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and then refurbished several times) and the New Synagogue (built at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; construction was completed before 1618).<sup>[5]</sup> The Poznań pinkasim also mention the High Synagogue as one of the three main community synagogues. Apart from these synagogues, the Poznań pinkasim also refer to the Synagogue of Young Men (beit knesetbahurim), the Synagogue of MendelAbmsh, and the Synagogue of Nehemiah. Just behind the Wroniecka Gate there was a Jewish slaughterhouse (the so-called Jewish *kutlof*) for which the community paid the town authorities an annual rent.

Due to a very dense and wooden development, the Jewish quarter was frequently ravaged by fires (e.g., in 1590 and 1613) which would usually spread all over the town. They resulted in protracted and costly litigation which was initiated by the town authorities that usually demanded on such occasions that Jews should be completely expelled from Poznań.<sup>[6]</sup>

Due to the overpopulation of the Jewish quarter, the community authorities were looking for ways to address this problem and they asked the town authorities to find a new area for Jewish settlement. They invoked the example of Lwów (Lviv) where two Jewish communities existed, one inside the town limits and the other one on its outskirts. Although the request was unproductive, the case eventually reached the King, and a special royal commission examined the problem. The commission's report of 1619 lists all the houses in the Jewish quarter and their inhabitants. This source is highly valuable and more reliable than censuses conducted for tax purposes. The report mentions 3130 Jews living in Poznań (including 335 people outside the Jewish quarter) and that one house was inhabited by an average of 21 people.<sup>[7]</sup> Overcrowding was great and sometimes several dozen people lived in only a few rooms.<sup>[8]</sup>

In 1621, Zygmunt Grudziński, the owner of the nearby Swarzędz (Grzymałów, Schwersenz, Shverzents), concluded an agreement with the authorities of the Jewish community in Poznan, whereby Jews were allowed to move into his estate.<sup>[9]</sup> Initially, Swarzędz was a village, and

in 1638 it was promoted to a town. Owing to a tolerant attitude of its owner, the town became a refuge for people who, for a variety of reasons, including the religious ones, were not able to enjoy a full range of freedoms in Poznań. When the agreement was concluded with the Poznań community, the number of potential settlers was very high due to its overcrowding. Soon, many Jews moved to Swarzędz which is only 10 km away from Poznań. A dense network of small plots was delineated in the northern area of the town. Grudziński built 32 houses for Jewish settlers at his own cost and allowed Jews to build as many houses as they wanted, promising to provide them with land and timber. He also gave them land and timber to build a synagogue and other community buildings (a poorhouse, houses to accommodate the rabbi, cantor, shames, a school and mikvah).<sup>[10]</sup> A privilege vested the Swarzędz Jews with full freedom to pursue various occupations in trade and crafts, on a par with Christians, and they were also allowed to elect their own authorities.

A significant amount (8000 guilders) was contributed by the Poznań community for the construction of houses and a synagogue in Swarzędz, on condition, however, that the Swarzędz Jews would repay 2100 guilders a year. As a branch community, Swarzędz depended on the Poznań community from the beginning, which provoked frequent disputes that were then lodged with the Council of Four Lands for settlement.

The middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a dividing line in the history of the Commonwealth and the Jews living in its territories. Its eastern regions were destroyed by a Cossack uprising and passage of the Russian troops, and central and western regions were affected by the Swedish invasion and operations of the Swedish, Brandenburg, and Polish troops. The developments of 1648 in Ukraine made the Jewish population of the Commonwealth even more sensitive to any threats. In August 1655, about one thousand Jews from Poznań and its vicinity applied to Emperor Ferdinand III for permission to emigrate to Silesia. In the absence of any reply, the Jews crossed the border. Once they found themselves in Silesia, they repeated their plea by describing their tragic plight after the Swedish troops had invaded Wielkopolska.



Ferdinand III allowed them to stay in Silesia, demanding at the same time that they settle in several locations.<sup>[11]</sup> Some of them sought refuge in Western Europe, mainly in the German and Dutch Jewish communities, which were very friendly towards the émigrés from the East.<sup>[12]</sup>

In the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, at the time of the Swedish wars, the Poznań community was decimated by hunger and epidemics, and then, after Jews and protestants had been accused of collaboration with the Swedish, the city fell victim to pogroms staged by townsmen and military units. It was then that the number of Jewish families living in Poznań fell from 2000 to 300.<sup>[13]</sup> How much the Wielkopolska and Kujawy voievodships were ravaged in those days is best reflected by the results of the inspection carried out in 1659-65.<sup>[14]</sup> They include data about the number of Jews and rents they paid. The inspectors frequently offered pre-war or previous census data which clearly show the degree of destruction and depopulation.

After the Poznań community had been devastated in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its debts continued to grow. In 1653, the town council closed the community slaughterhouse in order to make the community authorities pay its overdue taxes. In 1655, all the Torah scrolls were deprived of their embellishments, as they were either pawned or hidden to prevent their attachment by creditors. In 1656, King Jan Kazimierz warned Jews that they would be deprived of their synagogue for “manifest friendliness towards the Swedish” and that it would be handed over to the Franciscans whose monastery had been burnt to the ground by the Swedish. But it was no more than a threat.<sup>[15]</sup> The plague of 1661-62 dealt the final blow, which was particularly severe in Wielkopolska.

The wars waged in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century raised the hostility felt by the Polish population to Jews, and after the war operations were over, townsmen frequently took steps to have Jews expelled from their towns or moved to other parts of town. They also leveled various accusations against Jews, e.g., charges of ritual murder. Jews sought protection of the authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical. This is why the Council of Four Lands dispatched Yakov, son of Naftali of



Gniezno, to Rome. It is unlikely that he was received by the Pope, but he was handed a letter by the head of the Dominican Friars addressed to the Polish provincial asking him to protect Jews from unfair accusations.<sup>[16]</sup> In 1659, a crowd led by the Jesuit college students raided the Jewish quarter in Poznań, plundering and destroying it. In the aftermath of those events, Jan Kazimierz ordered the offices of *ofstarosta* (holder of a royal land grant) in Poznań and Kalisz to protect Jews against anti-Jewish attacks and to make every effort in order to provide them with greater protection (1660).<sup>[17]</sup> Despite that, similar events soon followed suit: in 1662, at the time of the great fire in the Jewish neighborhood, the crowd broke inside the synagogue and plundered it. In 1663, too, in the absence of the militia that had left the town, the Jewish houses and stores in Poznań were robbed and many Jews were wounded. In 1687, anti-Jewish riots broke out instigated by the students of the Jesuit college.<sup>[18]</sup>

In 1667, the Jewish community negotiated with the voievode the amount that it was to pay for protection guarantees and asked him to intercede with many of its creditors. In the years to come Jews asked the voievode to issue a ban that would prohibit begging by the poor who were not the community residents in the Jewish quarter as it was so impoverished that it had to turn to other communities for assistance. In 1675, the Poznań community asked the German and Czech communities for help, but that plea did not help it raise any major funds that would be sufficient either for charity or to bail out the Torah scrolls pledged as a security for the repayment of debts. The community's grave economic situation and growing debts were accompanied by a decline in intellectual and cultural life.

The number of the Jewish population and its distribution in Wielkopolska of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is provided by the poll tax register of the years 1674-76.<sup>[19]</sup> Of 52 cities, where the poll tax was paid by Jews, their largest concentration was in Poznań, where in 1676 it was paid by 917 Jews (accounting for 32.3% of all residents). A larger number of Jews lived only in Kazimierz near Kraków (1210 in 1676) and Lwów (918 in 1662).<sup>[20]</sup> Swarzędz, with its 119 taxpayers who accounted for 19.9% of all residents, was

the seventh largest Jewish center in the Poznań voievodship. Such towns as Kalisz, Leszno, Grodzisk, Wronki, Krotoszyn, Piła, Międzyrzecz, Łobżenica, and Skwierzyna also had large Jewish communities.

The main occupation of the Poznań Jews was trade (in wool, linen, silk, furs, and spices), both local and with other lands. Many regulations issued by town authorities tried to limit the activity of Jewish traders, e.g., they were prohibited from door-to-door selling and retail trade was limited only to the days when a market was to be held. Other restrictions were also imposed.<sup>[21]</sup> In crafts, the most common among the Poznań Jews were tailoring, animal slaughter, shoemaking, and goldsmithery.

The Wielkopolska Jews played a very important role in the trade of the Commonwealth with the West. The main trade centers of the time were Leipzig and Wrocław, but also Frankfurt an der Oder. Out of 632 Jews who in 1681-99 attended the fairs in Leipzig, 249 came from Poznań, 149 from Leszno, 105 from Kalisz and 50 from other towns of Wielkopolska (such as e.g. Grodzisk, Jarocin, Kępno, Krotoszyn, Międzyrzecz, Rawicz, Wronki or Wschowa). Generally speaking, the Wielkopolska Jews accounted for 87% of all Jews who went to the Leipzig fair in those days.<sup>[22]</sup> The Jews of Kalisz, Leszno, Krotoszyn, Poznań and Działoszyn maintained particularly animated trade contacts with Wrocław. After 1684 the Wielkopolska Jews even had their own synagogue in that town, and after 1694 they had their own fair shames who helped them do their business.<sup>[23]</sup> The Jewish merchants from Poznań frequented the fair held in Frankfurt an der Oder,<sup>[24]</sup> but they also went to the fairs held in Gdańsk, Toruń, Gniezno and Lublin.

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at the time of the Northern War, the Wielkopolska Jews suffered serious losses. They were due to epidemics, fires, and the contributions of subsequent passing or stationed troops rather than direct war operations. The occupation of Poznań by the Swedish in 1703-9 and a large scale plague which broke out in 1709 resulted in high mortality (estimated at nearly 9000 people<sup>[25]</sup>). The damage brought by the troops of the Tarnogród

confederates, who seized the town in 1716 when the Saxon troops were stationed there, but also the fire which consumed the High Synagogue and beit midrash (1717), added to their plight. Rabbi Yakov, son of Icchak, composed his own penitential prayer (selihah) to commemorate the misfortunes of 1716-17, which was recited in synagogues on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of Av (on that day Jews were persecuted in 1656 and Poznań was occupied by the confederates in 1716, which event opened a whole string of disasters).<sup>[26]</sup>

Taking advantage of the destruction of the Jewish quarter, the authorities of Poznań prohibited the rebuilding of more than 86 Jewish houses<sup>[27]</sup> in 1717; it was also then that an order was issued to fence in the Jewish quarter. Despite those measures, the number of Jewish houses was growing, as evidenced by the inspection carried out in 1728 which recorded 102 buildings that were owned by the Poznań Jews.<sup>[28]</sup>

In 1736, the Poznań Jews were accused of the ritual murder of a two-year boy, a son of the Poznań townsman Wojciech Jabłonowicz. At the time of the trial in the aftermath of injuries sustained during tortures, darshan Arye Leib Kalahora<sup>[29]</sup> and shtadlan Yakov, son of Pinkas, died martyrs' deaths. The community leaders managed to flee, but in their place a few community members were arrested. Eventually, the case was examined by a tribunal in Warsaw. After the arrested Jews had solemnly vowed their innocence, they were let free in the middle of 1740. At the time of the trial the Poznań community sought the assistance of many communities, even abroad,<sup>[30]</sup> and it took steps asking the King to intervene. All that contributed to the community's high expenses and debts.<sup>[31]</sup>

It was in the same ill-fated year of 1736 that Poznań was grievously afflicted by the flood which destroyed, among other buildings, the synagogue and many houses in the Jewish quarter.<sup>[32]</sup> The events of the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially war damages, plunder and damage from troops, as well as the consecutive floods and fires, brought about a general decline of the town. Increasingly more Jews began to leave Poznań, heading for Swarzędz and other destinations. From then on Leszno gradually began to play a dominant role among

the Wielkopolska communities, as its prosperity and population continued to grow. Eventually Leszno became the site of the “main synagogue of Wielkopolska.” In 1764, fire destroyed 3 synagogues and 76 houses in Poznań, taking many lives.

Under the reforms that were to improve administration and finance of the Treasury of the Commonwealth, in 1764 the convocation parliament repealed the lump-sum poll tax levied on Jews and dissolved the Council of Four Lands, the central Jewish institution responsible for tax apportionment among individual communities and its collection. The poll tax was replaced by a tax which was to be paid based on the census of the Jewish population. The first such census was carried out in 1764 and 1765, at a different time in individual regions. As it turned out later, it was the only census covering the territory of the entire Commonwealth.<sup>[33]</sup> In each community the census was conducted by a commission consisting of four auditors: three representing the local community (the rabbi, pamas and shames) and one nobleman. The register was to be sworn in in the presence of a commissioner, who was to set a tariff for the entire voievodship, land or district (Polish *powiat*).

The census covered all people aged more than one, both men and women. It recorded 430,009 Jews living in the Crown (including 32,642 in Wielkopolska) and 157,649 Jews in Lithuania. A total of 1951 Jews were registered in Poznań and 1024 in Swarzędz.<sup>[34]</sup> As the census was conducted for fiscal purposes, its data were subject to manipulations and this is why they need to be corrected (increased by the number of children aged less than one and unreported individuals). Rafał Mahler claims that infants accounted for 6.35% and unreported people made up 20% of the entire Jewish population.<sup>[35]</sup> When corrected by those estimates, the Jewish population in Poznań would be equal to 2649 and in Swarzędz to 1390 people, while the population of Jews in the entire Commonwealth should be estimated at 750,000 (of which 550,000 lived in the Crown and 200,000 in Lithuania).<sup>[36]</sup>

More censuses were conducted after 1765. According to these censuses, the Jewish population in Poznań was as follows: in 1775,1560 people; in 1778,1611; in 1781, 1827; in 1784,1836; in

1787, 1896. Mieczysław Kędelski is of the opinion that compared to 1764, the censuses of 1775-87 are much less credible. By comparing the number of children recorded in 1778 (based on the name list of Poznań Jews) with the figures from 1764, he concluded that in 1778 the census failed to list 400 children and 80 infants.<sup>[37]</sup> Granted that the rate of omissions is constant for all censuses (i.e., the same as in 1778), the Jewish population in Poznań would be as follows: in 1775, 2140 people; in 1778, 2200; in 1781, 2500; in 1784, 2520; and in 1787, 2600.<sup>[38]</sup>

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the debts of the Poznań community grew enormously. In 1774, after the Poznań kahal had declared its insolvency, the state authorities decided to intervene and address the problem of Jewish debts. A special royal commission was set up to calculate and cut those debts, but it failed to come up with any solutions as to their repayment.<sup>[39]</sup>

The Good Order Commission (Komisja Dobrego Porządku), which operated in Poznań in 1779-84, tried to normalize the situation of the local Jewish population by verifying earlier legislation and by issuing a number of new regulations. Jews were prohibited from building houses outside the Jewish quarter. Their trade was confined to specific hours of the day and week; the market square and major streets were reserved for Christian merchants; and Jews were prohibited from trading in some goods and they were strictly banned from pursuing door-to-door selling. The influx of Jews to Poznań was put under control: they were required to have the appropriate “decency certificates” issued in their previous place of residence; they were prohibited from engaging in trade in Poznań; beggars were not admitted at all into the town and, instead, they were given alms before the town gates. It was also then that the amount of annual tax payable by Jews and the rent for the Jewish cemetery were set. The foregoing measures were accompanied by nullification of all claims on account of earlier taxes and debts.<sup>[40]</sup>

It was also then that two censuses were conducted. The one commissioned by the Permanent Council (Rada Nieustająca) and carried out by the Poznań council in 1777 recorded 1572 Jews, but

the figure was offered by the authorities of the Jewish community.<sup>[41]</sup> The other census taken in September 1789 along with the census of the Christian population registered 1771 Jewish residents in Poznań, accounting for 25.97 % of its total population (6820 people) living both in the town and in its suburbs.<sup>[42]</sup>

At the time of the Four-Year Diet, when the drafts of reforms regarding the Jewish population were developed, the Poznań Jews became involved in the political revival and sent their plenipotentiaries to Warsaw.<sup>[43]</sup>

At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the Partitions, Wielkopolska came under Prussian rule.<sup>[44]</sup> After the First Partition, the Prussian authorities issued a regulation on March 1, 1773, whereby all Jews whose assets were worth less than 1000 thalers were ordered to leave the territory of Prussia by May 1 of the same year. The regulation concerned land owners, because expulsion of so many people would result in the depopulation of towns and a decline in trade. Restrictions were also imposed on Jewish marriages, which now required a permit from the Prussian authorities.

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In May 1793, Prussian authorities launched a survey on the status of towns, and 251 towns situated within the territories annexed as a result of the Second Partition were sent questionnaires asking about a town's location and development, town authorities' organizational structure, finances, the religious and occupational structure of its population, crafts and trade, educational and health systems. The survey produced a population census<sup>[45]</sup> according to which Jews lived in 92 towns of the former Poznań and Kalisz voievodships. In Swarzędz 1373 Jews were recorded, accounting for 54.7% of all residents. Poznań was then probably a major Jewish center in Wielkopolska as evidenced by a high number of Jewish craftsmen and vendors, even though the census does not quote the total number of its Jewish residents. Zofia Kulejewska-Topolska offers the following data in her work about the population of Poznań: living within the town walls were 4560 Christians and 2355 Jews, and outside the walls, 5020 people, for a total of 11,935 people.<sup>[46]</sup> Accordingly, in 1793 Jews accounted for 19.73% of Poznań's total population.



After the Third Partition (1795), the General Judenreglement (General Jewish Regulation) was adopted (1797), whereby only rich Jews and merchants were allowed to live in towns and poor Jews (the so-called *Betteljuden*) were forced to leave the country. Those Jews who had not lived in the lands annexed at the time of the First and Second Partitions before the army marched in were ordered to leave Prussia in six months. Jews were prohibited from engaging in crafts controlled by guilds, and they were also prohibited from door-to-door selling and practicing usury. Without a permit issued by the authorities, Jews could not change their domicile or job. The jurisdiction of rabbis was revoked and Hebrew was banned from community and merchant books. Jewish self-government was confined mainly to its religious functions.

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