

Żydowski samorząd ziemski w Koronie (XVII-XVIII wiek): Źródła [Jewish Territorial Self-Government in the Crown in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Sources], ed. Adam Kaźmierczyk and Przemysław Zarubin, Cracow: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2019, 679 pp.

This pathbreaking book is a companion volume to *Sejm czterech ziem: Źródła* (Council of Four Lands: Sources), which was published by Jakub Goldberg and Adam Kaźmierczyk in 2011 (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe). The earlier publication is a collection of 255 documents in Polish, Latin and German (with some Hebrew language names, phrases and technical terms) pertaining to the highest institution of Jewish autonomy in Crown Poland, called in Hebrew *Va'ad Arba Aratsot* (VAA). The book under review presents 256 documents in the same languages. These relate mainly to the level of Jewish governing institutions beneath the Council of Four Lands, the Jewish *ziemstwo* (land or territory; Hebrew: *galil*) councils. Their name in Hebrew is *va'ad galil*, usually translated as regional council. The individual Jewish communities, each governed by its own local council (*kahal*), were the constituent components of the regional councils, which in turn sent representatives to the VAA. In the documents in both books, the VAA is typically referred to as the Jewish *kongres* or *sejm*, while the Jewish *ziemstwo* councils are called *sejmiki*.

Both books are organized into three sections: documents created by authorities of the Polish Crown; documents originating with the Jewish councils and translated into Polish for the benefit of Polish officials; and documents issued by courts and of miscellaneous origin. The earliest document in the Goldberg-Kaźmierczyk book about the VAA is from 1588; the first one in Żydowski *samorząd ziemski w Koronie* is dated 1603. However, in both books most of the documents come from the eighteenth century, dating especially from the reforms of 1717 until the abolition of the VAA in 1764.

The documents were transcribed according to the guidelines set out in *Instrukcja wydawnicza dla źródeł historycznych od XVI do połowy XIX wieku*, ed. Kazimierz Lepszy (Wrocław, 1953). This included modernizing the spelling in most cases and marking errors of grammar and syntax in the original documents. Each document is headed by a title and summary, rendered in both Polish and English, and an apparatus. The apparatus lists the archival source or sources where the document can be found, as well as, in the case of previous publication, where it has already appeared in print. In addition there are cross references to other relevant documents and to scholarly works that have been discussed in a given document. Where necessary, a document is followed by brief footnotes clarifying textual problems, identifying persons and places, and providing other essential information. Occasional Hebrew signature lines and other short annotations are reproduced and translated into Polish.

In both books there are, in both Polish and English, extensive introductions and helpful tables of contents listing each document by title. There are separate subject, name, and geographical indices. The subject index is wonderfully detailed. The geographic index gives the current country and administrative unit where the place in question is located, while the name index attaches essential identifying details to the names; for example *Iciek*, *Marek starosta kaliski*; *Icko (Icek) Lejzorowicz*, *arendarz grabowiecki*. The *samorząd ziemski* volume added a useful glossary of Old Polish terms. Both books would have benefited from maps delineating the geographical entities to which the documents refer. All in all, these are meticulously researched, skillfully presented, user-friendly volumes that will save researchers hundreds of hours of archive visits and make available to teachers and students material of which they would otherwise be unaware.

It is difficult to overestimate the value of both the *Sejm czterech ziem* and the *Żydowski samorząd ziemski w Koronie* books. Jewish autonomy institutions have been a central topic of Jewish historiography for more than a century. Historians have made no secret of their admiration for the capacities and sophistication of the arrangements for Polish Jewish autonomy. Scholars like Majer Bałaban, Simon Dubnow, Raphael Mahler, Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, Shmuel Ettinger, Jacob Katz and, especially, Israel Halpern published descriptions of the Jewish autonomous institutions and their organization and operations. These were based mainly on Jewish sources. The outstanding source collections were Dubnow's edition of the *pinkas*, or record book, of the Jewish

council for Lithuania, and Halpern's magisterial collection, which he called *Pinkas Va'ad Arba Aratsot* (PVAA), containing some one thousand documents either issued by or relating to the VAA. The vast majority of the PVAA documents were in Hebrew and Yiddish. There were, however, eighty-five in Polish, German or Latin. Later, Israel Bartal issued a revised edition of the Hebrew and Yiddish material only.

Basing descriptions largely on material originating from Jewish sources necessarily led to viewing the VAA through a Jewish prism. Many questions about the VAA could be answered only partially, or not at all. Issues of the configuration of Jewish leadership, the relationship between the various levels of Jewish institutions, and the interface of the VAA with the Polish authorities were especially. Moreover, there was a tendency to emphasize the extent to which these Jewish institutions were indeed autonomous, being an expression of Jewish political power and administrative self-rule.

Two research ventures radically altered the source base for the subject of Jewish autonomy. In 1998, Judith Kalik discovered the lists of the Jewish poll tax assessments for Crown Poland, 1717–64. Based on these she published *Scepter of Judah: The Jewish Autonomy in the Eighteenth-Century Crown Poland*, elucidating, among other things, the leadership and structure of Jewish autonomy institutions. (However, see the review by Adam Kaźmierczyk in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 118, 2011, 3, pp. 577–83). The second enterprise was the painstaking collecting of Polish, Latin and German documents concerning the VAA from assorted archives and other sources. This began with Jakub Goldberg and continued in his joint project with Adam Kaźmierczyk, which culminated in the *Sejm czterech ziem: Źródła*. As Kaźmierczyk has demonstrated in various publications, this collection has the potential to clarify numerous topics in the history of the VAA and Jewish autonomy in Poland. A desideratum is a major study coordinating the material in the Goldberg–Kaźmierczyk collection with the Hebrew–Yiddish documents in PVAA. This would likely lead to significant changes in our understanding of the structure and functioning of the VAA.

As a large collection of Hebrew–Yiddish documents relating to the *ziemstwo* (*galil*) level of Jewish councils (Jewish *sejmiki*), *Żydowski samorząd ziemski w Koronie* is doubly important. Until now, relatively little has been understood about the form, authority, and functions of these councils; how they interacted with the communities for which they were responsible; and how they related to both the VAA and to Polish authorities.

The documents in *Żydowski samorząd ziemski w Koronie* provide basic information about these councils. We learn, for example, that each was headed by a *marszałek* (marshal; Hebrew: *parnas*), the chief executive and a *wiernik* (literally trustee; Hebrew: *ne'eman*, the treasurer-comptroller). The *wiernik*, who oversaw tax assessment, drew up the budget, kept financial records, made disbursements, and dealt with general financial matters, was often also referred to as *pisarz* (scribe). *Symplarze* (appraisers; Hebrew: *shamaim*) assigned the tax burden for each constituent *kahal*. The *syndyk* (agent, lobbyist; Hebrew: *shtadlan*) was

responsible for contact with the Polish authorities. The main communities each sent to their *ziemstwo* council representatives, called in Polish *starsi* (elders) and in Hebrew referred to variably as *alufim*, *ketsinim*, *roznim*, *negidim*. There was also a *szkolnik* (Hebrew: *shamash*, Yiddish: *shamess*) who served as the council's bailiff, performing routine administrative tasks. (This must be differentiated from the alternate application of the term *szkolnik/shamess* to the synagogue beadle.)

The basic duties of the council were to allocate the tax burden among the constituent communities, manage indebtedness, adjudicate disputes within and between communities, choose representatives of the *galil* to the VAA, and appoint the *galil* rabbi. The documents reveal how the officials and members of the councils were chosen and remunerated.

In addition to such basic information, there are documents that contain facts which are significant in and of themselves and useful as building blocks of larger research projects. For example: Document no. 68 gives an accounting of how much tax money was collected from the communities of Wielkopolska 1709–12, and to whom various sums were distributed. Document no. 20 establishes regulations for moneylending that set both limits and protections for Jewish moneylenders. Document no. 149 presents the budget of the Chełm-Belz *ziemstwo* for fiscal 1751/52, and documents nos. 76 and 78 list the salaries of both Polish and Jewish officials. In document no. 193 Marek Becalowicz, the marshal of the Ruthenian *ziemstwo*, gives a detailed accounting of his income and expenses for the years 1722–25, offering a glimpse into the range of activities he was involved in and the extent of his authority. Documents nos. 155 and 224 cite the obligations, in addition to tax commitments, that a sub-community owed the main community under whose jurisdiction it fell.

In the category of piquant phenomena, documents nos. 143 and 206 highlight the obligation to purchase citrons (*etrogim*) for the Sukkot holiday as a cogent symbol of the Maciejów community's subordination to the larger one in Luboml, which sold the expensive ritual fruit to them. Tantalizingly, one document (no. 17), a royal universal dated 4 May 1666, speaks of 'false news' about 'some sort of messiah', alluding to the excitement engendered in Poland by the news of the messianic pretender Shabbetai Zevi. Its language clearly implies that neither King John Casimir nor the Jewish officials looked kindly on what they considered a disruptive movement.

With respect to the potential of these documents to complement or shift the perspective of existing Hebrew-Yiddish material, we can use the example of documents relating to figures who appear in both the PVAA and the volume under review. The rabbi of the Cracow community and *ziemstwo* from 1731 was David Szmelka. He is mentioned in the PVAA in only two footnotes. Halpern observed laconically that Szmelka's contentiousness and certain 'family matters' led to his removal from the Cracow rabbinate. Majer Bałaban had earlier noted the (in Bałaban's opinion, unproven) conversion of the rabbi's brother, Joshua, to Christianity as a putative 'family matter', and briefly described a few controversies Rabbi Szmelka was involved in. The *samorząd ziemski* collection

contains nine documents that enable tracing the course of the struggle over Szmelka's rabbinic tenure. (These were a key element in Adam Kaźmierczyk's thorough analysis of this whole episode ('Konwersja, jichus i walka o władzę w ziemstwie krakowsko-sandomierskim w latach czterdziestych XVIII wieku'), where, *inter alia*, he put forth proof of Joshua's conversion and the shadow it cast over his brother, Rabbi David.) The *samorząd ziemski* collection offers analogous material for examining the careers of other notable Jewish leaders, some highlighted in the PVAA such as the royal factor and Poznań rabbi Naftali Ickowicz (ben Yitshak) Kohen, and the doctor and *parnas* of the VAA, Abraham Izaak (Yitshak) Fortis.

Analysing this collection as a whole yields some distinct themes. Most of these documents represent a response to some conflict or problem. The most common cause of strife was taxation. A typical complaint was that a main community was imposing an unfair tax burden on one or more of its sub-communities. Conversely, main communities would assert how difficult it was to collect tax money from their hinterland (as long as it was the Jewish *ziemstwo's* responsibility to both allocate and collect the taxes; after 1717, collection was the purview of army units). Communities sometimes abused tax collectors, who also faced dangers on the roads. Often powerful nobles extended their *protekcja* to communities in towns they ruled over to ease these communities' tax burden or exempt them altogether. The Podolian governor (*wojewoda*) Stefan Humiecki, for example, demanded the recognition of the communities under his aegis as a separate fiscal unit to get them a more favorable tax allocation and tighten his control over them. One of the innovative interpretations of these documents by the editors is to point out how main communities like Cracow and Poznań sought to separate administratively from the rest of their *ziemstwo* so as to shed the responsibility for taxing the sub-communities, with all of its attendant headaches.

Other types of conflict centered on the issue of which main community had jurisdiction over which sub-communities; disputes between rabbis and their *kahal*; disputes over debts; and battles over the choice of rabbis and Jewish *ziemstwo* leaders. The conflict was so intense in Wielkopolska in 1687 that rebels violently ousted the *starsi* (no. 167). Another source of conflict was occasionally a suspicion of corruption in appointments or misappropriation or embezzlement of public funds. There were also confrontations with Polish officials, Church representatives, and powerful noblemen.

A fundamental aspect of Jewish autonomy reflected in these documents is the extent to which the Jewish councils were an integral part of the Polish administration. The simple fact that so many of these documents were translations of Jewish documents into Polish for the benefit of Polish officials bespeaks the intention of those officials to supervise Jewish affairs closely. The contents of the documents demonstrate how deeply the King, royal officials, and noble landowners were involved in the routine operations of the Jewish councils. Setting up rules for collecting and disbursing tax monies, the King and treasury officials also often

sought to protect the Jewish councils and individual Jews from rapacious officials, violent elements, and competing authorities. There are many examples of Jewish authorities combining with Polish lay or clerical ones to enforce rulings or oppose moves by recalcitrant communities or individuals. Over time, there was a growing tendency for Polish officials to intervene directly in budgetary matters, in the appointments of rabbis and Jewish leaders, and in relations between the main and sub-communities and intra-Jewish controversies. In some cases, a Polish official dictated where and when the Jewish *sejmik* would meet, in the presence of his representatives.

An instant classic, *Żydowski samorząd ziemski w Koronie* is a treasure house of information, data, and themes. Kaźmierczyk and Zarubin have presented researchers with a wonderful gift. It will serve as a foundation for myriad projects for many years to come.

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