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JEWISH FAMILY STRUCTURE IN THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH AT THE END OF THE 18th CENTURY: THE CASE OF RADOSZKOWICE*

Radoszkowice (Yid. Radoshkovitz) — a royal town in the Mińsk Voivodship (Great Duchy of Lithuania) had in the 18th century a numerous and important Jewish community. Two minute books (Heb. *pinkas*) from the Radoszkowice community are still preserved: the *pinkas* of the *kahal* dating from the years 1709–1872¹ and *pinkas* of the society of *Torah* studies (Heb. *hevra mishnayot ve-talmud Tora*) from the years 1764–1890². In the first *pinkas* we find a register of community inhabitants from the year 1795 and its supplement from the year 1800.

A special value of this source is that it contains detailed data concerning the number and structure of the Jewish population. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Jews were recorded in various registers: register of the poll tax and of other duties or urban registers or registers of inhabitants in private properties. Because of the way the taxes were collected there was no need to make special tax registers³: ca 1580 a lump sum for the Jewish poll tax was introduced. The lump sum was divided among

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¹ Jewish Theological Seminary in New York [further on: JTS], N^o 5536.

² Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, N^o 4'636.

³ In the early stage, starting from 1549 the Jews paid poll tax to the amount of 1 Polish *złoty* per each person for 1 year. In 1550 a register was made. Afterwards no more registers were made and taxes were collected according to old registers and receipts, despite the fact that according to royal edicts the poll tax was to be levied based on new registers.

communities by the Jewish Council of Four Lands and by the Jewish Lithuanian Council (after its separation in 1623)⁴.

The way of collecting poll tax from Jews was changed in 1764. The Convocation Diet decreed abolition of the lump sum⁵, cancelled the Jewish councils and introduced a census of the Jewish population as the basis for the new poll tax allocation. All Jewish lodgings and all the Jews were to be registered by their name and by their nickname: men, women, children aged above 1 year, as well as the servants. The first census was made in 1764–65 and recorded 587,658 Jews: 430,009 in the Polish Crown lands and 157,649 in Lithuania⁶.

The decree of 1764 ordered the making of a census every 5 years, but in 1768 it was changed to 20 years. Afterwards, a new census was ordered several times: in 1778, 1781, 1784, 1787, 1790. However the first census from 1764–65 was of the greatest importance: it was the only one which covered the whole state territory before the partitions, and — in comparison to the following censuses — was much more credible⁷. Apart from a few

⁴ In 1581 the value of the lump sum was set at 15,000 *złotys* for all the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in 1590 — 20,000 *złotys* for the Crown and 6,000 *złotys* for Lithuania. From then on the sum was growing bigger and bigger: in 1649 — 60,000 *złotys* for the Crown and 12,000 *złotys* for Lithuania, in 1661 — 105,000 *złotys* for the Crown and 12,000 *złotys* for Lithuania. In 1717, the last time before partitions, the lump sum rose to 220,000 *złotys* for the Crown and 60,000 *złotys* for the Lithuania. See R. Mahler, *Żydzi w dawnej Polsce w świetle liczb. Struktura demograficzna i społeczno-ekonomiczna Żydów w Koronie w XVIII wieku (Jews in Old Poland in Figures. The Demographic, Social and Economic Structure of Jews in the Crown in the 18th Century)*, "Przeszość Demograficzna Polski", Warszawa 1967, p. 132. Despite the fact that the lump sum became bigger and bigger its appointment was often criticised, first of all by the nobility at dietines. Already from the first half of the 17th century requests appeared that Jewish poll tax should instead be paid *per capita*. The reason was that the collected poll tax does not refer to the number of Jews. Attention was drawn to the fact that the taxes collected by the Jews for their own needs were in fact much higher. See A. Kaźmierczyk, *Sejmy i sejmiki szlacheckie wobec Żydów w drugiej połowie XVII wieku (Diets and Dietines of the Nobility Towards Jews in the Second Half of the 17th Century)*, Warszawa 1994, p. 60.

⁵ It was set up in such a way so that the Jewish elders would not gain profits from tax collecting. In fact, it must have been clear that income from the taxes would have been much higher if the Jews would pay the poll tax according to the register.

⁶ Rafał Mahler suggests that the number should be bigger by the number of infants (6.35%) and hidden persons (20%). The corrected number would be approx. 550,000 of the Jews in the Polish Crown lands and approx. 200,000 in Lithuania, together approx. 750,000 (R. Mahler, *Żydzi w dawnej Polsce*, p. 154).

⁷ R. Mahler, *Żydzi w dawnej Polsce*, p. 135.

cases, the census of 1764–65 did not register the age of the people. Age was recorded again in 1791 census decreed by the Four-Year Diet in 1789, which ordered to put down also the sex, age and place of habitation of each person⁸. Only fragments of this census are preserved; some years ago Jacob Goldberg based his article about the Jewish marriage in the Eighteenth-Century Poland on them⁹.

Data contained in the *pinkas* of the Radoszkowice *kahal* are the result of the census ordered by the partitioning authorities. After the second partition (1793) the town of Radoszkowice became a part of the Mińsk province in Russia. Turbulent events, among them the Kościuszko Insurrection, delayed the introduction of changes in administration and jurisdiction in the captured territories. They were introduced not earlier than in 1795–96, together with reorganization of the territories seized in the third partition (1795).

Preparations to organize a regular administration in Lithuania began before the divisional treaty between Prussia and Russia was signed and before King Stanislaus Augustus' abdication. In order to investigate the demographic situation of the seized territories, the so-called "fifth inspection of souls", was organised. It was meant to be a census of people paying personal tax, first of all peasants, townspeople and Jews. The "inspection" was to bring materials for the new administrative division, which was based on the statistic principles (a province had to have 300–400 thousand men, and a district — 20–30 thousand)¹⁰. It was also the first step towards the tax unification of Lithuania with the Russian Empire.

⁸ *Volumina Legum*, Kraków 1889, vol. IX, p. 153.

⁹ J. Goldberg, *Jewish Marriage in Eighteenth-Century Poland*, "Polin" 10 (1997), pp. 3–39. Fragments of the 1791 census for the following territories survived: the Cracow province, the Wieluń territory, the Ostrzeszów district, and the Radziejów district (the last one however does not include the Jewish population). These territories included 15 towns (among them Kazimierz by Cracow) and 212 villages, in which 4,980 Jews were listed.

Another interesting article deals with the Jewish family in Courland. It is based on the 1797 census. See A. Plakans, J. M. Halpern, *An Historical Perspective on Eighteenth Century Jewish Family Households in Eastern Europe. A Preliminary Case Study*, in: P. Ritterband (ed.), *Modern Jewish Fertility*, Leiden 1981, pp. 18–32.

¹⁰ L. Żytkowicz, *Rządy Reprnta na Litwie w latach 1794–7 (Reprnt's Reign in Lithuania in the Years 1794–7)*, Wilno 1938, pp. 157–158.

The edict, which ordained the making of the census, was published on 2 June (4 July) 1794, and it was to be carried out during the year 1795. The following categories of people came within the census: clergy, all kinds of peasants, townspeople, Gypsies, people settled on somebody else's properties and Jews. Separately a census of noble landowners was to be carried out. The aim to embrace in the census all categories of people was to obtain exhaustive information about the new territories. Delegates of the nobility had to supervise carrying out the census, among others by collecting citizens' declarations. Declarations had to be filled — according to the example given — by landowners or administrators of the land properties¹¹; in towns it was imposed on guilds' elders and mayors, and as for the Jews — on the *kahals*. The information collected was to be arranged according to parishes and districts. The records were to be sent by 12 February 1796 to the Highest Lithuanian Government, in order to draw on this basis general statistic tables. As an eminent Polish researcher Leonid Żytkowicz has noticed, the registers were neither precise nor really exhaustive; the Government must have realized it, and in 1800 already a new supplementary revision was ordered¹².

In the *pinkas* of the Radoszkowice *kahal*, among the lists of annually elected officials and decisions of the *kahal*, we can find a list of the community inhabitants from the year 1795¹³. The list has a title: "Register of number of persons from the new lustration, which was [ordered] by Her Highness Lady Empress, in the month *kislev* this year 556 — number of persons from among householders of our community — may Lord protect it!, which was delivered to a lustrator, and we have copied it letter by letter in this *pinkas* and here it is". Pages are divided into numbered sections. Each of them presents a list of inhabitants of one house (sometimes the number of the house is put next to the entry). 91 houses were registered in the town, among them 3 were empty. Separately, in unnumbered sections, people living outside the

¹¹ Many of those lists probably survived in family archives. I have found one of them in the Archive of the Platers of Antuzów (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych — The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, N^o 133).

¹² L. Żytkowicz, *Rządy Repntna*, pp. 168–171.

¹³ JTS 5536, pp. 46v, 45v–42, 41v.

town were mentioned (35 households). These places were probably called *svivot* (Polish *przykahatki*) — settlements which had no community status and were dependent on the Radoszkowice community; here are also mentioned solitary taverns, mills etc., which were objects of leasing. The geographical distribution of these places, sometimes even at a considerable distance from Radoszkowice, excellently indicates area of influence of the Radoszkowice community.

In each section a head of the family is listed in the first place, and beside his name, age and occupation is given; in the case of persons living outside the town instead of occupation the place of their habitation is recorded. Members of a household were listed by names, their kinship with head of the family as well as their age was recorded. On the list we can find people whose age varied from 1/4-year-old infants to 88. The only unregistered persons were the servants.

In total, in the Radoszkowice community 408 persons were listed: 180 men (132 in town and 48 living in the outskirts of the town) and 228 women (156 in town and 72 in the outskirts of the town¹⁴). This number is close to that from the 1764 census (455 Jews were then recorded in Radoszkowice)¹⁵. After the correction suggested by Raphael Ma h l e r¹⁶ this number grows up to 575 persons.

In the *pinkas* of the Radoszkowice *kahal* we find also a supplement of the census made in 1800¹⁷ which recorded 26 Jewish families. Generally they are young people, who probably married between 1795 and 1800.

On the base of the census of inhabitants of Radoszkowice Jewish community from 1795 we can make some observations concerning numbers and structure of Jewish families at the end of the 18th century.

The structure of the Jewish population according age and sex is shown in tab. 1.

¹⁴ The number of 73 women is mistakenly given by the scribe (JTS 5536, p. 41).

¹⁵ S. Stampfer, *The 1764 Census of Lithuanian Jewry and What It Can Teach Us*, in: S. Della Pergola, J. Even (eds.), *Papers in Jewish Demography 1993 in Memory of U. O. Schmelz*, Jerusalem 1997, p. 118.

¹⁶ See footnote 6.

¹⁷ JTS 5536, pp. 37–37v.

Tab. 1. Age distribution of Jewish men and women in Radoszkowice

	MALE	FEMALE
up to 4 years old	6	20
5-9	7	22
10-14	14	26
15-19	8	13
20-24	12	24
25-29	21	17
30-34	22	19
35-39	20	22
40-44	21	16
45-49	10	21
50-54	15	5
55-59	4	3
60-64	4	6
65-69	9	6
70-74	4	6
75-79	1	1
80-84	—	1
85-89	1	—
age not specified	1	—
TOTAL	180	228

We can see clearly the lowering of the number of boys; in the first five age-groups the number of the boys is much smaller than the number of the girls (the possible variation is $\pm 80\%$) and it should be 104-108 against 100 girls. The reason for the lowering is the system of poll-tax collection in Russia. The tax was levied only upon all men of any age. The existence of children, particularly of infants, was quite easy to hide, as opposed to e.g. the heads of families. It makes it difficult to define the number of children in a family, their age and sex as well as the age of the mother at the first childbirth.

The list shows also the relationship between age and the position in the family. The children were maintained by their parents, quite often also after they had got married. The heads of

the family were adults. The youngest head of the family is 20 years old, but the average age is approx. 43 years (the average age of the wife of a family head is approx. 38 years). The men usually retained their position till their death, while the greater part of old women, mostly widowed, remained in the households of their children. Some widows, however, enjoyed the position of family head.

The number of married and unmarried people according to their age is shown in tab. 2.

Tab. 2. Married and unmarried Jews according to age and sex in Radoszkowice

	MALE			FEMALE		
	unmarried	married	widowers	unmarried	married	widows
5-9	100%			95.5%	4.5%	
10-14	79%	21%		92%	8%	
15-19	25%	62.5%	12.5%	15%	85%	
20-24	17%	83%		4%	96%	
25-29	9.5%	90.5%			100%	
30-34		95.5%	4.5%		100%	
35-39		100%			95.5%	4.5%
40-44		100%			100%	
45-49		100%			95%	5%
50-54		100%			80%	20%
55-59		100%			66.6%	33.3%
60-64		100%			100%	
65-69		100%			66.6%	33.3%
70-74		100%			33.3%	66.6%
75-79		100%				100%
80-84		100%				100%
85-89		100%				
TOTAL	13.9%	85%	1.1%	23%	71.2%	5.8%

Married people occur already in the age group 10-14 years (among women we may find a girl aged 9 who is already married; this fact lowers the statistics). The number of married people grows rapidly after this. All women aged 25 and all men aged 30 are married. The relatively high percentage of widowers (12%)

among men aged 15–19 indicates a high mortality of women, who probably were dying during their first childbirth. In other age groups, widows appear but among men who marry again practically no widowers appear.

Marriage was considered a desirable and natural state for a man. This conviction was reflected in the fact that in majority of the Jewish communities only adult, married men had all the citizen rights (among others the right to vote and to be elected)¹⁸. In Ashkenazic Europe only the married men had the right to wear the *tales* for prayer.

Average marriage age in the Radoszkowice community was 16.5 year for men and 15.6 for women¹⁹. Generally in the Jewish community we can observe the practice of getting married quite early. The first reason there was an attempt of avoiding pre-marriage sexual relations. Therefore the perfect marriage age was considered 18 years in the case of boys and 16 in the case of girls²⁰. The other factor was that the young were getting married while the parents were still alive (the average life span was then much shorter!), which enabled the young couple to use the economic support given by their parents. The policy of getting young people married was an important factor in the family strategy, particularly the economic calculation connected to it.

The contemporaries held various opinions on early marriages. The good sides of it were often noticed and a model of ideal family life was appreciated. On the other side it was a subject of criticism by the *maskilim* and the reformers, both the Jewish and the non-Jewish ones, who suggested introducing a ban on too early marriages (usually they wanted to forbid marrying girls under 12 or 14 years and boys before 16 or 18 years of age)²¹.

¹⁸ A. Michałowska, *Między demokracją a oligarchią. Władze gmin żydowskich w Poznaniu i Swarzędzu (Between Democracy and Oligarchy. The Authorities of the Jewish Communities in Poznań and Swarzędz)*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 88, 164. Accordingly urban law favored the married men.

¹⁹ The method of calculation of average marriage age was invented by John Hajnal, *Age at marriage and proportions marrying*, "Population Studies" 8. 1953, pp. 129–130.

²⁰ J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis. Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, New York 1993, p. 116

²¹ The issue is treated by Jacob Goldberg, *Jewish Marriage*, pp. 13–17. The sixth volume of *Materiały do dziejów Sejmu Czteroletniego (Materials to the History of the Four-Year Diet)* by A. Eisenbach, J. Michalski, E. Rostworowski, J. Woliński (eds.), Wrocław 1969, includes a number of reforms' projects concerning, among others, too early marriages among Jews.

The Radoszkowice list shows also the age gap between the spouses. Among 146 couples 26 (approx. 18%) are those, in which the wife is older than the man²². The difference oscillated between 1 and 10 years; the most common difference was 1 or 2 years. There are 6 couples where the spouses are of equal age (approx. 4%). Most common are the couples in which the husband is older than the wife (114 cases, that is 78%). The age gap oscillates from 1 to 35 years. The average comprises families, in which the husband is 1–5 years older than his wife. As a regularity it may be noticed that the gap is rather small in the first marriage, while a big age difference appears in the successive marriages of the men.

In summary, we may name the following characteristic features of a Jewish family in Radoszkowice: the woman's as well as man's early age of getting married, the high percentage of people getting married, the small age gap between spouses in the first marriage, high proportion of wives older than their husbands, the low proportion of widows getting married for the second time. All these features allow to classify this type of family as an "Eastern type" of family²³.

The next thing to be noticed in the Radoszkowice list is the size and the composition of the household. We may encounter households numbering from 1 up to 8 persons. The majority are households numbering 2 (approx. 38%), 3 (approx. 23%) and 4 (approx. 18%) persons. The average household numbers 3.3 persons. The majority are two-generation households (52%). One-generation households comprise 38.2% and three-generation 9.8%.

The above-mentioned numbers appear, however, to have been influenced by the lowering of the number of children which seems to be indicated by a comparison with Polish urban families. In the towns of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the majority were two-generation families. However, the average size of an urban family was 8–10 people, while the patricians' families

²² According to Jacob Goldberg, the percentage of couples in which the wife is older than the man is approx. 10%, the highest being in the township of Kazimierz (15%). The author explains it by the fact that in Kazimierz it was easy to find a bridegroom for a girl. In smaller towns and villages however the couples in which the wife is older than the man was 9%. J. Goldberg, *Jewish Marriage*, p. 25.

²³ The distinction between the "European" and "Eastern" model of marriage was introduced by J. Hajnal, *European Marriage Patterns in Perspective*, in: V. Glass, D. E. C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History. Essays in Historical Demography*, London 1965, pp. 101–144.

were even bigger. The size of the family became smaller according to the social and financial status (in the case of the poor strata the family numbered a maximum 3–4 people, usually consisting of 2–3 people, single persons were also often to be found)²⁴.

According to the typology given by Peter Laslett²⁵, the following patterns of Jewish families in Radoszkowice may be singled out:

I. households of single persons — in the Radoszkowice register we can find only 3 persons living alone (among them 2 widows specified as “poor”) i.e. about 2% of all households. The percentage of single persons makes a major difference between townspeople’s and Jewish families; in the Polish towns single persons made a rather substantial group of inhabitants²⁶.

II. nuclear families (with children or without children) — they constituted the predominant model of the Jewish family in Radoszkowice (about 71% of households); this category embraces also widows and widowers living with children.

III. enlarged families — enlarged by relatives, ascending, descending and collateral. In Radoszkowice they comprise 6%. The “enlarging” person is usually a widowed mother or mother-in-law.

IV. compound families (2 couples at least) — they make a common pattern in Radoszkowice (approx. 21%). The second couple — next to the householders — were in most of the cases a son with his wife (or a daughter with her husband). It was connected to the widespread phenomenon of a young couple remaining in the house of its parents or the parents-in-law (see below). As the second couple a brother with his wife, a grandson with his wife or parents are also encountered.

²⁴ M. Bogucka, *Rodzina w polskim mieście XVI–XVII wieku: wprowadzenie w problematykę (The Family in the Polish Town of the 16–17th Century: Introduction)*, “Przełąd Historyczny” LXXIV, 1983, vol. 3, pp. 495–505.

²⁵ P. Laslett, *Characteristics of the Western Family Considered over Time*, in: P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations*, Cambridge 1977. The modified model of Laslett is used by Cezary Kuko, *Kobieta samotna w społeczeństwie miejskim u schyłku Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej (The Single Woman in Urban Society in the Decline of the Nobleman’s Commonwealth)*, Białystok 1998 and by Michał Kopyński, *Studia nad rodziną chłopską w Koronie w XVII–XVIII wieku (Studies on a Peasant Family in the Crown in the 17–18th Century)*, Warszawa 1998.

²⁶ According to Maria Bogucka, in Old Warsaw — on the base of the 1659 register — the percentage of single people (both single and single with children) was approx. 39%. *Rodzina w polskim mieście*, p. 497.

The second pattern of the Laslett typology — non-family households (without couples) — are absent in the Radoszkowice register of 1795.

The Radoszkowice list supplies also data concerning household heads. In the majority (118 households, 96%) the household heads are men. The householders are aged 20–88, while most of them are mature men (the average age is 45), mostly married (only one unmarried and one widower are recorded). In 5 households (4%) the heads are women. All of them are widows, their age ranges from 35 to 71 (the average age is 58).

In the case of 80 householders the occupation was listed. The biggest number (22) comprise bar-keepers, then there come 7 tailors, 6 butchers, 5 maltsters, 5 tavern-keepers, 4 shop-owners, 4 teachers (*melamed*), 3 physicians, 3 salt-dealers, 2 ritual slaughterers (*shohet*) and 2 goldsmiths. The single entries are grain-dealer, arrendator, retail trader, haberdasher, wholesaler, boiler smith, soap boiler, printer, furrier, *mirochnik*²⁷, *shames*²⁸, cantor, wine producer or dealer and wood-dealer²⁹. In the case of three householders the entry reads “poor”. What is interesting on the list of inhabitants we do not find any rabbis, probably due to the tax-exemption they usually had the right to³⁰.

Among women householders one baker, one salt-dealer and three poor ones are found.

A popular institution among the Polish Jews, noticeable also in the Radoszkowice register, was the “father’s table” (Yid. *kest*), a custom of supporting young couples by their parents. This system helped early couples, when the young people were not economically independent. The “father’s table” lasted usually from 2 up to 8 years³¹. As Jacob Goldberg has noticed, in

²⁷ *mirochnik* (Pol./Ruth. *mirocznik*) — the person whose duty was to measure out vodka, salt, flour, kasha etc. in the tavern.

²⁸ *shames* — a person hired as helper for the *kahal*, charity supervisors, judges, synagogues etc.

²⁹ *pachnik* — from Pol. *paczka* (a bundle of wood for shingles).

³⁰ The rabbis were exempted from both regular taxes and extra taxes (state as well as communal ones). In 1661 King John Casimir exempted all of the rabbis from paying personal taxes. See J. Morgensztern, *Regesty dokumentów z Metryki Koronnej i Sigillat do historii Żydów w Polsce, 1660–1668* (*Registers from the Crown Metrica and Sigillata Concerning the History of Jews in Poland, 1660–1668*), “Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego” 67 (1968), pp. 67–108, N° 156.

³¹ J. Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, p. 314

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth it lasted longer. The reason was that the marriages of the Polish Jews were usually concluded earlier than the marriages of the German Jews, among which the *kest* lasted usually 1 year³². Young couples were supported either by their wife's parents or their husband's parents.

In Radoszkowice, we encounter single young couples in 21 households, while in 4 households two young couples are listed. It is difficult to establish whether the young were living at the parents or at the parents-in-law, as in all the cases the scribe used the term "son" (meaning probably also "son-in-law"). The term "son-in-law" is found in the register twice only. In the first case he is listed as a single person (apparently his wife, the householder's daughter, was already dead). His daughter, listed as a granddaughter of the householder is also mentioned. In the second case, a son-in-law is listed together with his wife, but she seems to have been his second wife. In one case a grandson with his wife is mentioned. What is rather strange, in two households sons with their fiancées are listed.

We have to stress that our considerations do not cover all of the issues connected to the structure of the 18th century Jewish family in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The results are seriously restricted by the custom of hiding the number of children. It makes conclusions concerning the size of family and the number of children in a family uncertain (according to the register families with children make approx. 62% of all the families, a percentage clearly too low). In the Radoszkowice register the servants, making an important part of each household, were not included³³. This also makes the numbers included in the registers lower than they were in reality.

³² J. Goldberg, *Jewish Marriage*, p. 27. In the memoirs of Salomon Maimon we find information that his future mother-in-law offered the young couple 6 years of *kest*.

³³ Other registers from the same period, for instance 1794 register from the city of Grodno concerning both Jews and non-Jews, seem to indicate it as well. See J. Urwanowicz (ed.), *Spis mieszkańców Grodna z 1794 r.*, in: A. Woltanowski, J. Urwanowicz (eds.), *Grodno w XVIII wieku. Miasto i ludność, na tle trendów rozwojowych od średniowiecza do 1939 roku (Grodno in the 18th Century. Town and Population against the Trends of Growth from the Middle Ages to 1939)*, Białystok 1997, pp. 61-171.