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Polin - Studies in Polish Jewry [electronic resource]: Vol. 27: Jews in the Kingdom of Poland, 1815-1918

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Notes: Annotation The Kingdom of Poland, also known as the Congress Kingdom or Russian Poland, was created by a decision of the Congress of Vienna as part of its attempt to set up a post-Napoleonic European order. It incorporated lands that for many decades had been the most important centers of Polish politics, finance, education, and culture, and which also had the largest concentration of Jews in eastern Europe. Because of these factors, and because its semi-autonomous status allowed for the development of a liberal policy towards Jews quite different from that of Russia proper, the Kingdom of Poland became a fertile ground for the growth of Jewish cultural and political movements of all sorts, many of which continue to be influential to this day. This book brings together a wide range of scholars to present a broad view of the Jewish life of this important area at a critical moment in its history. In the 19th century, tradition vied with modernization for Jews' hearts and minds. In the Kingdom of Poland, traditional hasidic leaders defied the logic of modernization by creating courts near major urban centers such as Warsaw and Lodz and shtiblekh within them, producing innovative and influential homiletic literature and attracting new followers. Modernizing maskilim, for their part, found employment as government officials and took advantage of the liberal climate to establish educational institutions and periodicals that similarly attracted followers to their own cause and influenced the development of the Jewish community in the Kingdom in a completely different direction. Their immediate successors, the Jewish integrationists, managed to gain considerable power within the Jewish community and to create a vibrant and more secular Polish Jewish culture. Subsequently, Zionism, Jewish socialism, and cultural autonomy also became significant forces. The relative strength of each movement on the eve of the rebirth of Poland is extremely difficult to measure, but, unquestionably, the ferment of so many potent competing movements was a critical factor in shaping the modern Jewish experience. Subject: History, Jewish Studies, Polish Studies]

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Other Authors: [Dynner, Glenn Editor](#)
[Polonsky, Antony Editor](#)
[Wodzinski, Marcin Editor](#)

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