Adam Teller, *Money, Power, and Influence in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania: The Jews on the Radziwiłł Estates*, Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2016. 360 p. ISBN 978-080-4798-44-0

Money, Power, and Influence in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania: The Jews on the Radziwiłł Estates is a recently (2016) published book by Professor Adam Teller. It should be noted that the book is only new to English-speaking readers: the Hebrew version first appeared in 2005.¹ In the preface, Professor Teller admits that after the first Hebrew version, he ‘felt somewhat isolated academically, rather like a voice in the wilderness’. However, new trends in regional Jewish history, and the demands from an English-speaking audience, convinced him that it was time to re-publish a slightly revised version in English, and in this way contribute to the fast-growing field of studies of Jewish economic history in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The book deals with Jewish economic activity on the Radziwiłł estates in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 18th century. It is divided into six chapters, which can be separated into two different parts. The first three chapters deal mainly with demographic trends among Jews, the policy of noblelandowners towards Jewish settlements, the general urban landscape, and the economic institutions on the estates. Its main conclusions are that the landowners, members of the Radziwiłł family, were keen to bring Jews to their estates and to urban locations; the growth of the Jewish population corresponded well with the growing wealth and power of the Radziwiłł family; and the Jews became major wealth creators for the family’s private towns, and instrumental in the complex administrative system that the family had set up.

The next three chapters, which are the main part of the book, analyse different sectors of Jewish economic activity in the *latifundia*: estate and monopoly rights leases, together with trading activities. The uncommon leasing of estates to Jews is described in an almost micro-history approach, through the story of two Izckowicz brothers, Szmojło and Gdal, and their unrivalled success with the members of the Radziwiłł family. Teller describes skilfully the relationship between the two sides, showing how personal affections and economic opportunism could have put Jews almost at the same table with the mighty Radziwiłłs. Leasing monopoly rights (*arenda*), as the most common Jewish economic expertise in the *latifundia*,

¹ *Kesef, ko’ah ve-hashpa’ah: Ha-yehudim be-’ahuzot bet Radzivil be-Lita’ ba-me’ah ha-shemonah-’esreh* (Jerusalem, 2005).

is described perhaps the most widely of all sections. Teller steers readers through the complex practices of leasing out Radziwiłł estates but keeping the monopoly rights and giving them out through general *arendas* which could then be outsourced in parts, competition between lessees and the mechanism of *aukcja*, the involvement of the community, etc. The last chapter follows up with analyses of how Jews adapted to the changing macro-economic scene in 18th-century Europe (the greater need for timber products, less agriculture), and the demands of the Radziwiłł family to supply estates, and to market its own production within the local economy.

Even though Teller writes about Jews and their economic activities on the Radziwiłł *latifundia*, we can sense that through this book we know much more about how the whole economy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania functioned on a daily basis, and how important the Jews' role in it was. It included connecting the peasant and their products with the market, marketing the production of the *folwarks* to residents of estates (albeit through the form of alcohol) and for export, conducting freight transport on major rivers, collecting various taxes, taking care of inns, etc. Many of these issues are often neglected in Lithuanian historiography, so we still lack a clearer idea of how the day-to-day economy functioned in towns and villages and on estates. Now there is much progress, especially from foreign scholars (like Teller and David Frick²) on the socio-economic history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which should also be followed up and maintained by local historians.

It should be noted that the author uses several interesting theoretical and methodological approaches for his book. First of all, he successfully combines a type of micro-history storytelling about the Iczkowicz brothers with a statistical approach in other parts of the book (albeit primitive, due to the available data). This makes the text lively, about people and their decisions, but at the same time rich in material and analysis. Secondly, the author chose for his conceptual basis institutional economists and institutional economic historians via the school of New Institutional Economics (NIE). It is debatable whether his argument for this framework (it opposes the assumptions of Neoclassical economics) is valid for historical research, especially in the pre-capitalism era. However, his point, based on the conceptual use of the NIE and historical findings, accounting for the rise of Jewish economic activity and its scale to the socio-economic scene of the grand duchy, its main actors and their agenda, the general economic framework in which certain actions can be taken, rather than attributing this to some mystical skills of entrepreneurship, like Yuri Slezkine,³ is very significant. I see it as the main conclusion of the book, which seems important and relevant to future research on the issue.

² D. Frick, *Kith, Kin, and Neighbors: Communities and Confessions in Seventeenth-Century Wilno* (Ithaca, NY, 2013).

³ Y. Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford, 2006).

While there are a lot of positives, we should also mention some questionable points. An obvious issue for a Lithuanian-speaking reader is that there is a complete absence of Lithuanian historiography used. On one hand, it would have supplemented the storyline (on issues of the Radziwiłł latifundia, the legal system, the Jewish economic role in society, and specific issues like the peasants' revolt in the Szawle ekonomia, etc). On the other, it shows the state of local historiography, which is neglected even when the object of the research is local. Of course, it should be admitted that there might be no special reason, just the language issue. However, as the author states in the preface, he sees this book as an attempt to enhance the knowledge of Polish (*sic!*) history, totally excluding the specificity of Lithuania. Once again, it proves the enduring notion in Polish, and for that matter Western, historiography, that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and Jewish history in it, is seen as one socio-cultural space.⁴

In my view, this could be one of the reasons why the author does not really take into consideration the legal state of the grand duchy, and the influence of the Third Lithuanian Statute on Jewish settlements, economic activity, cooperation with Christian counterparts, etc. The uniform legal system could have been a major difference compared to Polish cases. As an additional issue, I think, the author does not take into account the factor of inflation, and its impact on the increasing revenue from various economic activities, like *arenda*, in the first half of the 18th century. Of course, the rate of inflation is still unclear, because of the lack of research, but at the same time general conclusions (on the significant rise in income) would require some caution because of this. Another issue that I thought could have been expanded was the analysis of the main economic ideas at the time, and their influence on the magnates (in this case, the Radziwiłł family). To me, at least, it seems that some of the Radziwiłł decisions, which eventually involved Jews as well, were very much in line with the ideas of Physiocrats and their school. It would be very interesting to expand on whether this influence was real, and based on the certain knowledge that the Radziwiłłs received from this economic theory, which emphasised wealth creation based on land production.

Despite these minor issues, Adam Teller's book *Money, Power, and Influence in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania: The Jews on the Radziwiłł Estates* definitely enriches the social and economic history of the Grand duchy of Lithuania, and broadens our view on Jewish involvement in the day-to-day economy, and should be a strong stimulus for future research on the issues raised.

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⁴ J. Verbickienė, *Žydai Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės visuomenėje: sambūvio aspektai* (Vilnius, 2009), p. 23.