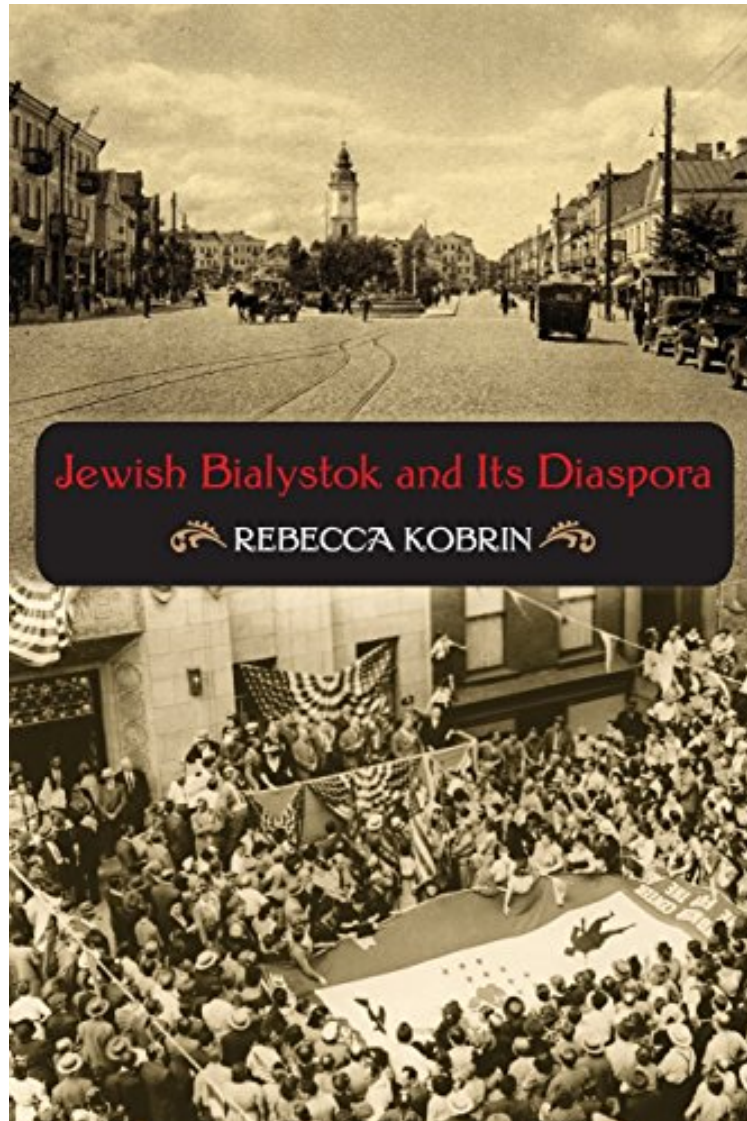


[Free pdf] Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora (The Modern Jewish Experience)

Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora (The Modern Jewish Experience)

Rebecca Kobrin

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Rebecca Kobrin : Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora (The Modern Jewish Experience) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora (The Modern Jewish Experience):

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora By buddylak Two of my Great Grandparents left in their early teens in the 1880s. As I had little family tradition about Bialystok and did not even know that it had been the great wool textile city of the Pale. The greatest revelation was the role that the well developed organized network of Bialystok landsmenshaften played in Jewish Bialystok's social and economic development from

1920 to 1947. Another surprising fact was the extent of the sacrifice that the Jewish workers of Bialystok were willing to offer in order to honor the Sabbath by choosing work in the non power loom sector at half the wages offered in the power loom sector. As an economist I would have appreciated a more numerical approach to the demographic, social and economic development of the city. A few tables and charts would have made me much happier.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By MR PETER A SNOW
Excellent book well researched and fascinating

5 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Bialystok as a Model of the Litvak Situation from a Jewish Viewpoint
By Jan Peczkis
Although this work is centered on the Jews of Bialystok, it is useful to the reader for understanding the situation facing Jews in Russian-occupied Poland. Less attention is devoted to Bialystok in the resurrected Polish state (1918-1939), the German-Nazi Holocaust (1939-1945), and the post-WWII period (1945-on). The author also provides an impressive account of the Jewish diaspora in nations as separated as Argentina and the USA. Although Jewish-Polish relations are not the main subject of this work, I approach it from that viewpoint for purposes of this review. It is clear that Jewish separatism, and anti-Polishness, were a cause, and not consequence of Endek enmity against Jews. Shortly after the Partitions, while Bialystok was under Prussian rule, the following happened: "While the native Polish population remained steadfastly loyal to their 'Polish province,' as Prussian officials dejectedly admitted, Jews embraced German culture." (p. 25). Then Russian rule began. The following separate paragraphs are quotations that show how the Jews had lost touch with Polish national aspirations, and had become an unwitting and witting tool of the Russian rulers over Poland: In place of national affiliation, then, these Jews--like those in Odessa, Warsaw, and St. Petersburg--viewed themselves through an urban regional lens. They were loyal Bialystokers, first and foremost, ambivalent and uncertain whether to identify themselves as devoted Russian subjects or as Jews of the Polish nation. (p. 25). Once Polish nationalist agitation intensified in the 1830's, though, the tsarist government...encouraged Jews, who despite their ambivalent relationship to the Russian state, were viewed as more loyal than Poles, to settle in Bialystok in order to diminish Polish revolutionary fervor. (p. 28). Moreover, the Polish rebellion of 1863 cemented Russian authorities' support for Jewish settlement and industrial expansion in Polish lands...an influx of Jews and new economic opportunities would help eliminate Polish nationalist fervor. (p. 29). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, approximately fifty thousand Jews lived in Bialystok, drawn to the town by its central position along the Russian railway system and tsarist authorities' support of Jewish settlement in Congress Poland as a means to quell Polish nationalist agitation. (p. 21).--End of paragraph quotes--

Although Kobrin does not use the term Litvak (Litvak) migration, she alludes to it: "...Russia's uneven industrial development forced millions to move from small towns to large cities. As one can see vividly in the example of nineteenth century Bialystok, the dramatic movement of Jews within the western areas of the Russian Empire..." (p. 7). Jews came to account for 76% of Bialystok's population in 1897 before dropping to 48.4% as part of Poland's Second Republic. (p. 26). When the Polish state was resurrected in 1918, the Jews clearly sought special privileges--ones that would maintain and enhance their intense separatism. Through the League of Nations, they demanded special government-supported Jewish schools. (p. 289). Instead of conforming to the Polish nation as a minority group, Jews, through the Minorities Treaty, tried a role-reversal by trying to force the Polish nation to conform to them by recognizing Yiddish on an equal footing with Polish in public and official matters. (p. 137, 140). The Bialystok-area Jews then came out in open insubordination against the Polish nation, arrogating to themselves the privileges of a Judeopolonia (my term), that is, a fully sovereign Jewish nation on Polish soil. Jewish leaders demanded a plebiscite to determine whether Bialystok should remain part of Poland, or whether it should be part of Lithuania, the Soviet Union, or even its own special zone. (p. 138). This act of sedition enjoyed broad support among influential and foreign Jews: "Yiddish newspapers also argued unswervingly against Poland, claiming the annexation of Bialystok was illegal, given that less than one-third of the city's residents were Polish." (p. 138). "Emboldened by the absolute support of migr philanthropists, the Yiddish press in Bialystok continued to question Polish sovereignty..." (p. 146). Local Kehilla leaders urged that Jews resist the draft into the Polish Army by providing false identification papers. (p. 139). The Polish reaction to the violation of their nation is not difficult to imagine.

The mass migration of East European Jews and their resettlement in cities throughout Europe, the United States, Argentina, the Middle East and Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries not only transformed the demographic and cultural centers of world Jewry, it also reshaped Jews' understanding and performance of their diasporic identities. Rebecca Kobrin's study of the dispersal of Jews from one city in Poland--Bialystok--demonstrates how the act of migration set in motion a wide range of transformations that led the migrants to imagine themselves as exiles not only from the mythic Land of Israel but most immediately from their east European homeland. Kobrin explores the organizations, institutions, newspapers, and philanthropies that the Bialystokers created around the world and that reshaped their perceptions of exile and diaspora.

In addition to original and illuminating research, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* is to be commended for its lucid style of writing. Kobrin knows how to tell a story, arousing the readers curiosity from the very first page. (*Studies in Contemporary Jewry*) Kobrin's wide-ranging analysis draws on huge and impressive variety of sources and many of the

scholarly debates that her work relates to are very well explained . . . [This book] is a rare contribution to contemporary debates about migration (H-Judaic) This thoughtful, strikingly original work of scholarship possesses the added value of being readable (and, one hopes, appreciated) by an audience beyond specialists in the field. . . . In sum, this book's contribution to Russian, east European, American, and 'diaspora' studies is truly extraordinary. Vol. 70.3, Fall 2011 (Slavic) This well-researched and innovative study is both an account of the history of Jewish Bialystok and of the way its diaspora was mobilized to support Jewish life in the town from abroad. . . . It . . . provides a new way of examining the relation between East European Jewish emigrants and the lands from which they set out to make new lives elsewhere. Vol. 70.2, April 2011 (The Russian) This ambitious study is rigorous and highly impressive in its scope and methodology . . . There is no doubt that Jewish Bialystok and its Diaspora is a field-shaping study, which crosses quite a few disciplinary borders marked by Jewish history, diaspora and migration studies and transnational communication, as well as memory and identity studies. 12.1 2013 (Journal of Modern Jewish Studies) Rebecca Kobrin is to be commended for her stimulating and thought-provoking study. (Shofar) This excellent study very forcefully and convincingly shows that 'many early twentieth-century East European immigrant Jews saw the pain of exile not only in relation to ancient Zion but in reference to East Europe', demonstrating that 'Jews have always harbored a complex web of longings for many real and imagined homelands'. Autumn 2013 (Journal of Jewish Studies) Kobrin's well-written, well-researched book [provides] a valuable resource for scholars and students alike. . . . Recommended. (Choice) Carefully researched and clearly written, this book offers a rich picture of a transnational Jewish community. Kobrin's novel approach to the study of Jewish history is significant for scholars committed to understanding the complex threads that wove together the early twentieth-century Jewish world. (American Historical) [T]his illuminating case study sheds useful comparative and conceptual light, first and foremost on the notions of transnationalism and colonialism and the relationship between homeland and diaspora. (Austrian History Yearbook) Challenges and refines long-standing assumptions about Old World/New World dynamics generally and Jewish immigrants to America in particular. . . . Original and smartly conceived, grounded in careful, extensive research and thoughtful analysis. (Jeffrey Shandler Rutgers University) An imaginative and original work. It offers an intriguing argument that in the first half of the 20th century, diaspora Jewish identities were defined through a constant, dynamic process of interaction between the place of origin and the several sites of immigration. (Derek Penslar University of Toronto) A work of truly extraordinary scope, driven by admirable intellectual ambition. It is exhilarating to come across a work of such imagination and originality. (Jonathan Frankel author of Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews) About the Author Rebecca Kobrin is Assistant Professor of Jewish History at Columbia University. She is author (with Adam Shear) of an exhibition catalog, From Written to Printed Text: The Transmission of Jewish Tradition.