

The anthroponymy of Białystok during Prussian Administration

Located in the north-east part of Poland, Białystok, the capital of a province, was founded in 1692 by Stefan Mikolaj Branicki.¹ It was built up, like many Polish cities, to be a base of supplies for a magnate seat. Białystok developed together with the expansion of the castle, then a palace of its patron-hetman Jan Klemens Branicki.²

The foundation of the city was accompanied by numerous privileges, tax exemption and liberties which were inviting to serfs from other estates, different free people, middle class men from royal cities and yeomanry of Podlasie.³ Also, more and more Jews arrived there in great number. In the 3rd quarter of the 17th century they composed almost half of the inhabitants of Białystok.⁴

After the last partition of the first Polish Republic, as a result of diplomatic agreement Białystok became a part of Prussia (1796). Some decisions were made in Berlin to locate administrative authorities of the provincial level in the city, and after 1796 also of department level of the newly-established province of Prussia. Białystok became the administrative centre of New East Prussia.

From a provincial city with a small political and economic significance, Białystok gradually transformed into an important administrative centre.⁵

In April 1802 the owner of Białystok, Izabela from the Poniatowskis Branicka (hetman Jan Klemens Branicki's widow), leased out, and later sold the town to Prussia.⁶

The appearance of Prussian officials and a Prussian garrison in the city resulted in the necessity of providing for their needs. The market considerably expanded. Natural factors of market economy became the driving force of the development of the city. Prussian authorities took care of increasing the production in the governed region. As a result, professional and economic activities of the city dweller increased. A germanizing policy in New Eastern Prussia did not take place. People who were interested in the mercantile and service situation of the market

started to arrive to Białystok. The number of the city dwellers increased considerably.

According to J. K. Branicki's stock account of the years 1771 and 1772 there were 545 people professionally active, in 1799 there were over 600 of them, but in the same year about 200 Prussian officials in the Civil Service and court administration arrived.

The number of craftsmen increased. These included bricklayers, carpenters, tile-stove setters, potters, glass dealers, chimney-sweeps, and others. A lot of people who were arriving to the city, worked as wage-earners, they were called day-labourers/ journeymen, domestic workers or "without a profession".

The change of economic conditions caused merchant trade to be partly taken over by factors. It resulted in a process of pauperization of some professional groups.

Prussian authorities tried to create suitable conditions which could promote the economic development of Białystok in order to make as much profit as possible, which was obtained by means of taxes. A little group of very poor people was exempted from taxes paying.

Thanks to the scrupulous attitude of Prussian officials, lists of tax-payers from the years of 1799 and 1806 were preserved. The registers included not only the name and the surname but also a tax-payer's profession. The list of 1806 in addition included the confession. In fact, believers of Judaism paid higher taxes than Christians.

Prussian tax registers and other documents which are included in the archival group "Kamera wojny i domen" (the name of the department of the territorial administration of department level, which was established in Białystok)⁷ are an excellent source which allows to reconstruct the social relationships in Białystok at the end of 17th c.

These documents are also a valuable source of anthroponymical material. Lists of names and surnames together with information of social and economic nature allow the reconstruction of the functioning of the anthroponymical system of real time against a broad cultural background.

During the Prussian administration Białystok was inhabited by three ethnically dominant groups of people: Jews, Poles and Germans. One of the ethnically largest groups of the inhabitants of Białystok were the Jews. On 14th April 1797 Fryderyk Wilhelm II issued a document entitled "General decree on Jews in the provinces of Southern and New Eastern Prussia", which, among others items, included instruction for using name and surname by Jews: "Da die bishrige Art, nach welcher ein Jude den

bei der Beschneidung ihm gegebenen, und den Vornahmen seines Vaters führet, auch sich allenfalls nach einem willkührlichen Nahmen von seinem Wohnort, oder Gewerbe beilegt, viele Verwirrungen macht, und zu Unterschleifen Anlaß giebt, so soll jeder Schutz-Jude, außer seinem Vornahmen, gleich den Christen einen Geschlechtsnahmen annehmen, sich mit demselben in allen seinen Geschäften nennen und schreiben, und dieser Geschlechtsnahme von seinen Descendenten männlichen Geschlechts unveränderlich beibehalten und fortgeführt werden.⁷⁸

Prussia did not hide its unfavourable attitude towards the nation. Jews, who were under special control of the country, had to follow strict principles and rules of the formal usage of their names and other personal terms. They commonly used, when they were giving their personal data, either their real names, which they had been given during the ceremony of circumcision, or the names of their fathers, or their nicknames, which generally were connected with a place-name or with a practised profession. The problem was that they did not use the names in a homogeneous way. This, in turn, caused chaos in official documents, especially on registration cards and in keeping financial records.⁹

In the list of the inhabitants of Bialystok made by Prussian authorities in 1799 and in the tax record of 1806 made by Hasforth the following way of the nomination of Jews was predominantly used: name + father's name + name of practised profession e.g. *Leizer Abram* a tailor, *Marcus Abram* a barber, *Wolff Abram* a baker.¹⁰

Taking into account the great popularity of some names, this model of identification very poorly fulfilled the criterion of individualization. The most common names were: *Abram, Abraham, Aron, Baer, Borach, Chaim, Dawid, Hirsch, Israel, Isaac, Jude, Jankel, Josel, Lejser, Leib, Lewin, Moses, Marcus, Schlaum, Schmul*. Considerably big number referred to the practised job and the place of living, that is to a particular street as an individualizing factor; in the record by Hasforth – a person's confession is an additional one. To give a few examples with the name *Abraham*: *Aron Abraham* a brewer, *Benjamin Abraham* a bar keeper, *Cchaie Abraham* a merchant, *Fedalge Abraham* a colonial merchant, *Feibel Abraham* a tailor, *Isaac Abraham* a dealer in leather, *Isaac Abraham* a tailor, *Isaac Abraham* a furrier, *Isaac Abraham* rabin, *Jankel Abraham* a brewer, *Judel Abraham* a tailor, *Leib Abraham* a dealer in grain, *Leib Abraham* a dealer in salt, *Leib Abraham* a bar keeper, *Lewin Abraham* a dealer in salt, *Lewin Abraham* a furrier, *Marcus Abraham* a dealer in flour, *Nosson Abraham* a tailor, *Oscher Abraham* a tailor, *Owsch. Abraham* a haggler.¹¹

We deal with recurrence of the same groups of names: *Isaak Abraham* – three times, *Leib Abraham* – three times, *Lewin Abraham* – twice. In such cases a practised profession was very helpful.

Naming patterns which were different from this type of identification of Jews were less frequent: patronymic formations derived with the suffix *-owicz*, e.g. *Jonc Moszkowicz* a merchant, *Benj. Janowicz* a brewery worker, *Leib Hirszowicz*, or with the suffix *-ski*, e.g. *Szłomskij*.

The other (or coordinate as to the number of people) section of the population of Białystok at the end of the 18th century consisted of Poles. They had surnames formed with the help of the suffix *-ski*. The root of these surnames most frequently contains names of places of the territory of the Podlasie province, e.g. *Stanisław Poplawski* (< *Popławy*), *Michael Ciechanowski* a shoemaker (< *Ciechanowiec*), *Adam Zablocki* (< *Zabłocie*), *Jan Białkowski* (< *Bielki*), *Fabian Piekarski* (< *Piekary*), *Franz Sosnowski* (< *Sosna*), *Dominik Borowski* (< *Borowo*), *Thomas Kozłowski*, widow *Kosłowska* (< *Kozłów*), *Albricht Kudricki* (< *Kudry*), widow *Hryniewicka* (< *Hryniewicze*).

In the Prussian sector the surnames of Polish noblemen's surnames ending in *-ski* underwent the process of germanization, namely they turned into analytical forms of the type "von" + a place name, e.g. *Bronski von Bronki*.¹² In Białystok that phenomenon, as a matter of fact, did not take place because most townspeople were the bearers of the majority of surnames ending in *-ski*. Some of them could have indirectly descended from poor noblemen, or even from peasants who had moved to the prospering city. Surnames of the type: *von Kaczerowski* registrar's assistant of the Regency, *von Metelski* Polish a solicitor, *von Lassowski* manorial commissioner, *Jan von Rudkowski* a forest inspector, showed the noblemen's descent and higher social position.

In 1809 Białystok became part of the Russian territory, so the process of the germanization of Polish surnames was stopped.

Patronymical formations with the suffix *-ewicz//owicz* were also frequent, e.g. *Theodor Antolewicz*, *Georg Jaroszewicz*, *Jan Luckiewicz* a potter, *Maciej Michalowicz* a shoemaker, *Joseph Hollobowitz* a glazier, *Simon Zdanowicz*, *Nicol Pietraszkiewicz*, widow *Gruszewicz*. Names derived with different patronymical suffixes occurred, e.g. *-(cz)uk*: *Jacob Weilesczuk*, *-ejko*: *Jacob Dubejko* a farmer, *-ka*: *Pauk Woronka* a shoemaker.

Among the anthroponyms of Białystok at the end of 17th century we find relatively few names of East-Slavonic origin, e.g. *Joh. Naumowicz* (< East-Slavonic name *Naum*), *Paul Dubejko* (< East-Slavonic *dub* "oak"),

widow *Archipowicz* (< East-Slavonic name *Archip*). The Russian population more often lived in villages and towns which were established much earlier than Bialystok.

An ethnic group of nearly an equal number as the Jews were the Poles of Bialystok at the end of XVIIIth century.

In tax registers an official wrote down a surname on the basis of oral information, and that was why the same name could have appeared in different phonetic and spelling variants. The more official registered personal data, the higher variantability of names was, e.g. *Dubzejiko*, *Dubzejiko*, *Dubeyko*; *Josobick*, *Josobek*, *Jasobeck*, *Jozabik*; *Kudrijck*, *Kudrycki*; *Zubricki*, *Żubricki*, *Zabrick*.

The organization of the territorial administration, as mentioned above, caused the arrival of 175 officials from Prussia to Bialystok (according the list of 1799). The Prussian garrison (it included the headquarters and four companies of the battalion of riflemen commanded by von Wallenitz and one squad from the Bosnia regiment commanded by von Gunter) was stationed here.¹³

So the stock of Bialystok anthroponyms was enriched by a considerable number of surnames of German origin, e.g. *Fischer* a clerk of the Camera, *Kruger* a secretary of the Camera, *Norchert* a secretary of the Regency, *Knorr* a keeper of records of the Regency, *Stehller* an adviser of the Regency, *Winkelmann* a tax-collector, *Schlesinger* a commissioner of the Land register, *Bandorf* a messenger of the Camera, *von Klingsporn* a secretary of the Camera, *Wasenberg* a calculator of the Regency, *Weck* a director of Post Office, *Wassensleben* a forest adviser, *Ludvig Willand* a blacksmith, *Sushenguth* a carpenter, *Johan Linker* a baker and an innkeeper, *Gottfried Klein* a shoemaker, *Schleger* a chemist, *Paul Korbuth* a cooper, *Martin Riehmman* an ironworker, *Falk* a tinsmith, *Appelbaum* a printer, *Laubach* a messenger of the Regency, *Reinhardt* a financial councillor of the Camera, *Koeller* a translator of the Land Register, *Schultz* a calculator of the Camera, *Erdmann* a calculator, *Krebs* a register, *Plett* an official on architecture matters.

Finally it is worth pointing out that the period of Prussian sector and then of the Russian one was the time of setting in order surnames of the inhabitants of Bialystok (of Polish surnames in general) in respect of the law.

References

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