

## **Jewish Areas of Commerce in Transition 1772–1850**

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At the center of this study are Jewish merchants in the region of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita), extending from Witebsk and Minsk across to Dünaburg and up to Vilnius and Kaunas. The changes to be discussed took place over the course of the several partitionings and the ensuing time periods, continuing up until the construction of the railroads began. How were the territorial partitions and the sense of now belonging to new states reflected in the business behavior of the merchants, their activities and relationships? The study intends to produce and illustrate examples of the “spatial praxis” (Henri Lefebvre) and in what sense within the time period of the survey the commercial spaces in the everyday context changed. This will include a description of how the representations of space changed, thus how the northern regions of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were then perceived, that is to say, in what way the apprehension of areal affiliation gradually developed. What kind of new configurations and entanglements arose, and what kind of scope did they have? The aim of the project is to deconstruct and investigate the narrative of a seamless transition from the Polish-Lithuanian Rzeczpospolita to the Jewish Pale of Settlement; a question is whether or how the Jewish actors who are at the center of the investigation perceived the historical transformation. In addition to that, new localizations in a divided space will be shown.