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Galicia

In the nineteenth century, Galicia, one of the regions ruled by the Hapsburgs, was home to three distinctive groups of people that were undergoing major transformative events in their histories. These groups were the Jews, the Ukrainians, and the Poles. For the Jews this was a time of major religious reforms and massive assimilation, as Jewish culture entered its final transformations before being ultimately defined in the middle of the twentieth century by both the tragedy of the Holocaust and the institution of the state of Israel. It was in this time period that we see the creation of Zionism, which entailed the development of concept of Judaism as a nation, and conflict over the idea of assimilation.



At the same time the words “u kraina” (“at the frontier”) began to be used to describe an ethnicity and a language. Rejecting the name “Little Russians,” given to them by previous Russian Overlords; “Ukrainians” emerged as the bearers of what they viewed as a separate national identity, and founded the nationalist movement that would ultimately be successful in the twentieth century. The Poles, who had begun to develop their modern national identity in the early nineteenth century, grounded in their previous existence as an independent nation, will not be a main focus of this thesis. They were an important influence on the region and will be mentioned, however there will not be a focus on them or their history.

Galicia was the site of important instances of these historical moments. I have found very few texts on how these histories may have positively intersected, influenced each other, and perhaps even inspired one another. I am mostly interested in cultural intersections, signs that the people did not simply hate one another, but also played a role in the other's history. I have trouble accepting that these cultures who lived in the same region for centuries never interacted or participated in the histories of the others in a positive manner.

I currently know the most about and am primarily interested in the Jewish history, as it is the one I have a personal connection with, as well as the area where I have currently found the most texts that describe cultural intersections. Because of this the thesis will be framed in the ways the Jews interacted with the Ukrainians. For example I probably will look at the contributions Jews made at Lviv University, how they were being assimilated into the surrounding two cultures, and in what ways they may have participated in the events that were shaping the Ukrainian people during this period as well as how the other group may have influenced the changes in Jewish culture.

However I am also interested in the creation of Ukrainian culture that took place during this time. It was in the late nineteenth century in places like Lviv that the Ukrainian identity and culture began to take shape and flourish. It is important to note that this may in part be because Ukrainian language and literature were indeed an area of study at Lviv University. However I believe that it is in no way insignificant that people such as Ukraine's first president Mykailio Hrushevsky were living in Galicia as they worked to create a Ukrainian nation.



I am prepared to ultimately not find any major places or ways that productive interactions between Jews and Ukrainians living in close proximity took place, however I do wish to examine why so many people assume the main forms of interaction in the region was pogroms and antisemitism.