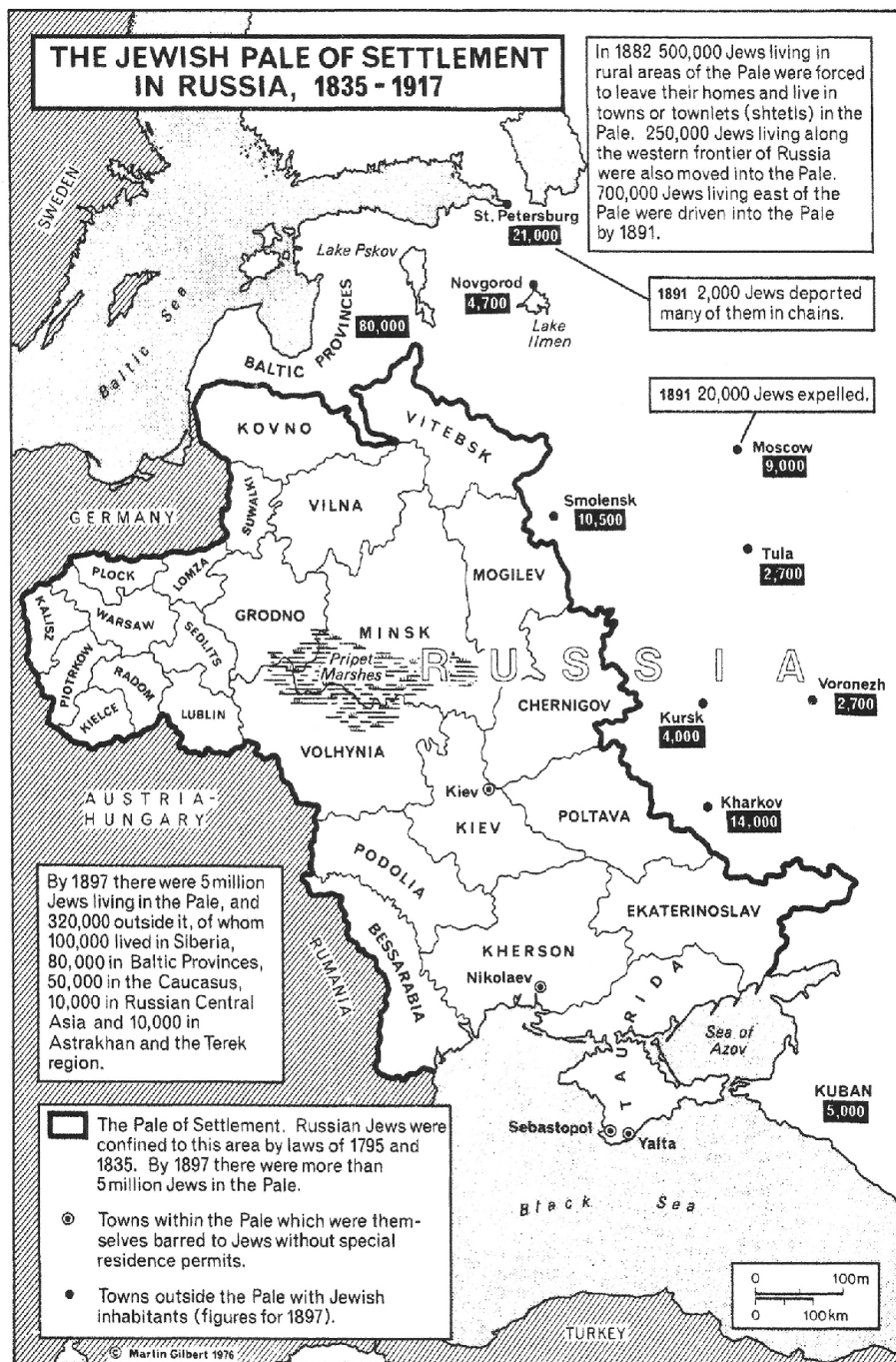


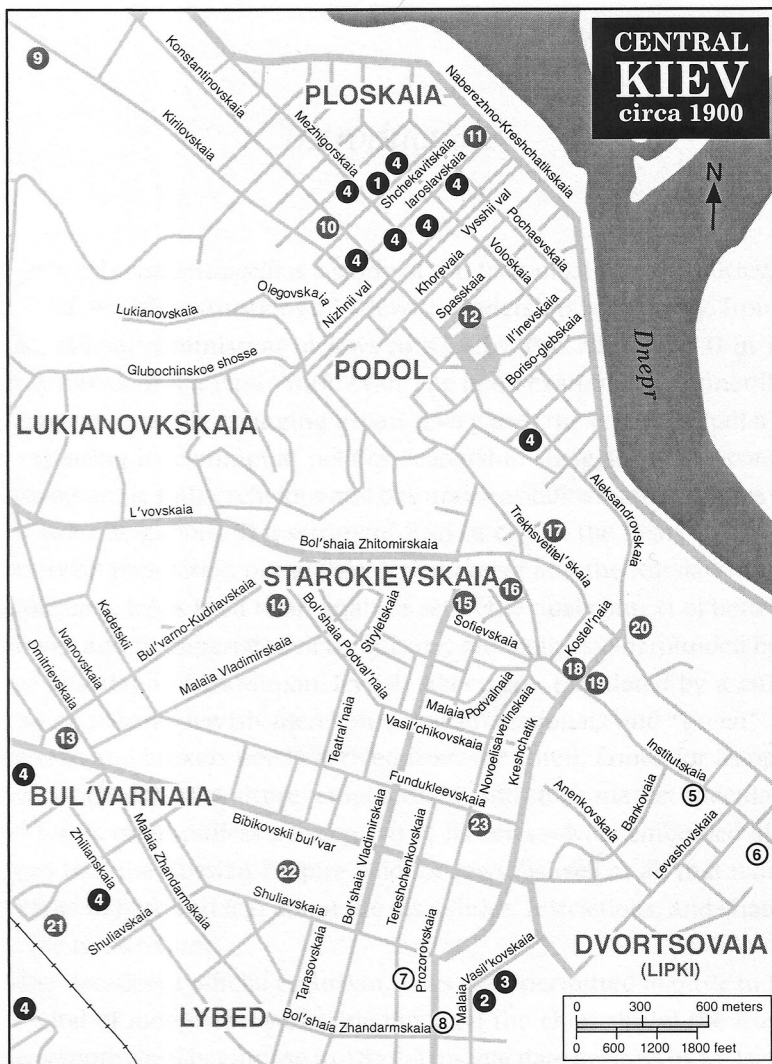
*To the memory of  
John Doyle Klier*





Map 2. Kiev circa 1900. Courtesy of Indiana University Press. All rights reserved. From Nathan M. Meir, *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis, a History, 1859–1914*.





#### SYNAGOGUES

- ① Tailors' Synagogue (Rozenberg Synagogue)
- ② Merchants' Synagogue
- ③ Brodsky Choral Synagogue
- ④ prayer houses

#### PRIVATE RESIDENCES

- ⑤ Dr. Max Mandel'shtam
- ⑥ Lazar Brodsky
- ⑦ Lev Brodsky
- ⑧ Sholem Aleichem

#### OTHER SITES

- ⑨ Zaitsev Clinic

- ⑩ First Talmud Torah
- ⑪ Bathhouse and communal kitchen
- ⑫ Contract House
- ⑬ Evreiskii bazar ("Jewish Market")
- ⑭ St. Sophia Cathedral
- ⑮ Bogdan Khmel'nitskii Monument
- ⑯ Governing Body of the OPE
- ⑰ Mikhailovskii monastery
- ⑱ City Hall (duma)
- ⑲ Kiev Exchange
- ⑳ Merchants Club
- ㉑ Main Railway Station
- ㉒ St. Vladimir University
- ㉓ Bergon'e Theater

Central Kiev, c. 1900. Cartography by Margaret Seiler, based on map in The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe.

Map 3. Central Kiev circa 1900. Courtesy of Indiana University Press. All rights reserved. From Natan M. Meir, *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis, a History, 1859–1914*.

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# Abbreviations

- CAHJP—The Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People,  
Jerusalem
- DAKO—The State Archive of the Kiev Region
- DAMK—The State Archive of the City of Kiev
- GARF—The State Archive of the Russian Federation
- PSZ—Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii (The Complete  
Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire)
- RGIA, St. Petersburg—Russian State Historical Archive, St.  
Petersburg
- RGVIA—Russian State Military Historical Archive
- TsDAKFFD U—The Central State Archive of Film, Photo, Sound  
Documents of Ukraine
- TsDIAK U—The Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in the  
City Kiev
- YIVO—YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York

# A Note on Dates, Spelling, and Names

**P**re-revolutionary dates in this book are given in the “Old Style.” In conformity with academic practice, pre-revolutionary Russian orthography has been modernized. Transliterations follow the Library of Congress method, except where a common usage in English is well-established.

In the text I use “Sholom Aleichem.” In notes, I refer to the famed writer with his name as spelled in the title page of the cited work; thus “Sholem Aleichem” also appears.

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- Map 3.** Central Kiev circa 1900. Courtesy of Indiana University Press. All rights reserved. From Natan M. Meir, *Kiev, Jewish Metropolis, a History, 1859–1914*.

# Introduction

Only serpents slip their skin  
While their souls remain unchanged  
Alas, in us the soul constantly changes  
While the body cannot alter.

—Nikolai Gumilev

You cannot understand Russia with logic,  
A common yardstick cannot measure it:  
It is unique—  
You can only believe in Russia.

—Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev

**M**y memories of Kiev are mixed: love and nostalgia for my native city, where five generations of my family lived, beginning with my maternal great-great grandparents who settled in the city in the late nineteenth century; and, simultaneously, bitter recollections of my encounters with anti-Semitism, which I faced many times when I lived there. I believe many Kievan Jews have shared my feelings. Kiev, like the Roman God Janus, has always had two faces turned toward Jews: one smiling and beckoning them to the city with far better conditions than in the overcrowded shtetls of the Pale of Settlement, commercial

and business opportunities, the possibility of a good education, and a vibrant cultural life; the other face snarling, “Go away, Yids, or you will be killed, you will find your death in Kiev.” This was no idle threat. Violence struck Jews many times in the city, beginning in Kievan Rus’ and up to the present day. Jews have paid a high price for the right to live in Kiev.

My family was no exception to this rule. My great-great grandparents first achieved financial success in Kiev—they had a store on the city’s central street, Kreshchatik, where they sold sterling silver. But their wealth became the cause of their demise. During the civil war in Ukraine (1918–1920), their store was robbed three times; the third time, the pogrom-makers, upset at finding an empty store, killed them. My grandmother told me that her grandparents were killed by *petliurovtsy* (members of the Ukrainian National Army), but neither she, nor her mother, were in Kiev at the time. She heard this story a few years later, from her grandparents’ neighbors. Hence my great-great grandparents could have been murdered by any of the various bandits roaming Ukraine in those years.

What was Kiev for the Jews? A Jewish city, with one of the wealthiest and largest Jewish communities in the Russian Empire and a multitude of Jewish organizations and institutions? Or *Yehupets* (i.e., Egypt, as Sholom Aleichem calls the city in his works), the place with the worst Judeophobia and anti-Semitism in Russia, and the most severe persecution of Jews by the authorities?

I know the term *Yehupets* may be new and surprising for Western readers, but it best characterizes one of the city’s two faces and its nature and attitude toward Jews. I therefore use this term with the hope that it will be associated with the history of Jews in Kiev in future historical literature. Sholom Aleichem, who lived there for more than a decade, referred to Kiev as *Yehupets*, recalling the biblical account of the brutal enslavement of the Hebrews. Just as the Hebrews had suffered in Egypt under the pharaohs, so Kiev Jews suffered under their local “pharaohs,” as policemen were called in Russian slang.<sup>1</sup> In Kiev,

---

1 Hryhorii Hryhoriev, *U staromu Kyievi* (Kiev: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1961), 65.

the police were continuously hunting for illegal Jews, and made weekly night round-ups of them.<sup>2</sup> (Kiev was outside of the Pale of Settlement, and only certain categories of Jews were officially allowed to live there.) The local authorities required the Jewish community to pay the police to perform this task from the basket tax funds. If the police detected illegal Jews in Kiev, they immediately expelled them from the city. Local officials worked hard to re-categorize some legal Jews as illegal, and thereby expel them. However, the authorities' efforts to decrease Kiev's Jewish population failed, as the desperate poverty of the Pale swept in wave after wave of Jewish migrants. Thus, the Jewish population of Kiev increased steadily, from the beginning of the 1860s to the February 1917 Revolution.

However, we can understand the complexity of the history of Jews in Kiev only in the context of the city's long and complicated history.

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF KIEV HISTORY

I believe that some old cities change their soul and national character many times during their existence. One such is my native city, Kiev. Kievan Jewry also changed its features many times along with the city.

Kiev is a city with a thousand-year history. The city has been ruled by the Khazars, Normans (i.e., Norsemen), Slavic princes, Tatars, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, again the Soviet Union, and finally by independent Ukraine. Kiev became the capital of the Kievan Rus' state in the ninth century. In 1240, the Mongols occupied Kiev, and the Kievan Rus' rulers lost their independence. The Mongol occupation led to a degradation of the social, political, economic, and cultural life of the city. In 1362, Kiev was occupied by the Lithuanian State. After the Union of Lublin of Poland and Lithuania in 1569, Kiev became part of the Poland-Lithuanian State, and was the principal city of the Kiev *Voevodstvo* (administrative-territorial unit) from 1470 to 1700. As a result of the Ukrainian war for liberation from Poland, Left Bank Ukraine and Kiev became part of the Russian Empire in 1654. From 1654 to 1700, Kiev was under Hetman

---

2 "Za proshlyi god," *Voskhod* 1 (1897): 43–45; 1 (1898): 49–50; 1 (1899): 35.

(Ukrainian political leader) rule, the Hetman being appointed by the Russian tsar. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, rule by a Russian-appointed governor was established in Kiev. During this period, Kiev was the main city of Kiev province. In 1832, the office of governor-general was established in Kiev, and it became the main city of the southwestern region of the Russian Empire, which included the three provinces of Kiev, Volhynia, and Podolia. All these political transformations were reflected in the changing outlook, character, and spirit of the city. We cannot talk about one Jewish community in Kiev. Instead, there was a sequence of different Jewish communities that were established in different historical periods after the repeated expulsions of Kiev's Jews. Each of these Jewish communities was very different in their origin and character.

According to some Western scholars, Kiev was established sometime between the eighth and the first half of the ninth century by Khazarian Jews, and originally had the typical features of a Central Asian city. Khazarian Jews were Turkic by origin. Thus, the first Jewish community in Kiev was formed by non-Ashkenazic, Khazarian Jews. Omeljan Pritsak believes that these pre-Ashkenazic Jews lived in Kiev and Eastern Europe before their expulsion by the Lithuanian Grand Prince Alexander in 1495.<sup>3</sup> The Ashkenazic Jews, who came from Poland, first settled in Kiev during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

## **HISTORICAL GOALS, PROBLEMS, AND METHODS**

This book describes the history of Jews in Kiev from the foundation of the first Jewish community in the tenth century until the February Revolution of 1917. Kiev's Jewish community was one of the largest in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1913, over eighty thousand Jews lived in Kiev. My work focuses on the social and economic history of Kiev Jewry, and provides biographical sketches

3 Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars, the Rus' and the Lithuanians," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Peter J. Potichnyj and Howard Aster (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1988), 15–16.



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