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Economic Relations between Jewish Traders and Christian Farmers in the Nineteenth-Century Lithuanian Provinces

AELITA AMBRULEVIČIŪTĖ

AFTER the partition of Poland–Lithuania in 1795, the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania was absorbed into the Russian empire. Incorporated into Russia's imperial system, the area was subjected to the administrative institutions of that empire, which had an impact on all aspects of public affairs, including the economy. The empire's economic backwardness in relation to the countries of western Europe could not ensure adequate conditions for economic development. After the partitions, economic modernization, already lagging behind that of the more advanced West, slowed down still further, and declined even more after the reforms of 1861, above all the abolition of serfdom.

The geographical boundaries of the Lithuanian provinces (in Russian, *gubernii*) were established in the nineteenth century. There were three such provinces—Vilna, Kaunas, and Grodno—which, after a series of revisions and boundary changes, were combined into one administrative unit in the late 1860s. This unit was under the jurisdiction of the Vilna Governor-General.

In examining the question of the relationship of the Jewish and Christian communities in the Lithuanian provinces in the nineteenth century, particularly in regard to their close ties in the area of trade, I shall describe the commercial relations between Jewish traders and Christian farmers, explaining the reasons for the pre-reform marginalization of traders by farmers (often mistaken for antisemitism) and the new attitudes towards traders in the post-reform period.¹ This formulation of

¹ Professional traders in Lithuania had traditionally always been Jews (distinguished in society both as a class group and as an ethnic religious group). Jewish predominance in the economic life of Russia's western provinces is often considered a factor behind the appearance of antisemitism. However, in Lithuania antisemitism did not expand far beyond its earlier, traditional, level among the broad layers of society, as Jews (traders) and Lithuanians (peasants) had traditionally coexisted peacefully. Antisemitism was more characteristic among some of the rising class of Lithuania's nationalistic elite. In the post-reform period, with the growing importance of domestic and international trade, the intensifying commercialization of agriculture, and the formation of ideas of a national commerce, society's

the issue leads to a primary hypothesis that the historically determined domination of the trading sector by Jews, and their well-organized retail network, completely satisfied the needs of the country's inhabitants, but may have inhibited entrepreneurial activity by the Christian majority of farmers; such activity developed later than in the provinces of Russian Poland or central Russia. However, with changes in economic relations, the prevailing attitudes towards trade might also be expected to change.

The research, conducted empirically, examines economic relations between Jewish traders and farmers, with the aim of explaining whether the active role of Jews in trade in the Lithuanian provinces could have had an impact on the new structures of business for reasons to do with ethnicity, or whether other factors could also have been influential.

JEWES IN THE TRADE SECTOR OF THE LITHUANIAN PROVINCES

After the final annexation of Poland and Lithuania by Russia, and the gradual institution of laws of the Russian empire in the territories of Poland and Lithuania from the end of the eighteenth century, the legislative order of earlier times was changed, creating certain obstacles to Jewish activity in many areas of public life.²

As a result of the tsarist administration's establishment of the Pale of Settlement, Jews became particularly concentrated in the Lithuanian provinces, and by the mid-nineteenth century, because of the laws applied by the state (for example, the Jewish Statute of 1804, and the categorization of Jews in 1844 into 'useful' or 'useless' groups), Jews constituted the majority of urban dwellers. Approximately half lived in cities, most of the others in towns, and very few in villages.³ Most earned a living from crafts

attitudes towards the trader also changed. Gradually, more and more non-Jewish inhabitants became involved in the trading business.

² After the third partition of Poland and Lithuania, the government of the Russian empire had to deal with the large numbers of Jews who lived in these newly annexed territories, who, according to the laws of the empire, were forbidden to live on its lands. The government had to familiarize itself with the social, economic, and political situation of this large concentration of Jewish communities, and find a way of regulating their social, economic, and political life. The establishment of the Pale of Settlement in the lands near the empire's western border resulted in this territory having the largest concentration of Russian Jews. From 1804 (with the promulgation of the Statute Concerning the Organization of the Jews), Jews were forbidden to live in villages, rent estates, keep inns or taverns, and so on. Somewhat more lenient conditions were applied to Jewish manufacturers and traders, but Jews from other classes also continued to engage in their traditional trade activities and crafts: see S. Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias nuo XIV amžiaus iki XX a. pabaigos* (Vilnius, 1998), 39; J. D. Klier, *Rossija sobiraei scoikh evreev: Proiskhozhdenie evreiskogo voprosa v Rossii, 1772–1825* (Moscow, 2000).

³ Jewish domination among the urban-dwelling class has been discussed in R. Civinskas, 'Rusijos politikos įtaka žydų miestiečių ekonominei veiklai XIX a. pirmojoje pusėje', in V. Sirutavičius and D. Staliūnas (eds.), *Žydai Lietuvos ekonominėje-socialinėje struktūroje: Tarp tarpiminko ir konkurento* (Vilnius, 2006), 51–78; V. Merkys, 'Lietuvos miestų gyventojų tautybės XIX a. pabaigoje–XX a. pradžioje

and trade.⁴ In the period under discussion, only a very small number of people who were not of Jewish origin engaged in trade (or in other non-agricultural businesses).

Jews transported goods to surrounding villages, bought up agricultural produce, owned and ran shops in the cities and towns, and kept inns in villages. Jews engaged in intensive development of trade, and thus constituted a large part of the trading class in Poland and Lithuania.⁵ Alongside this, in the early nineteenth century the Christian trading class consisted mostly of foreign and Russian traders who took advantage of the new markets that had opened up to them.⁶ Traders from St Petersburg, Moscow, Riga, and other cities of the Russian empire and the Kingdom of Poland played an important role in the trade sector of the Lithuanian provinces; these foreign traders often had an office and intermediaries in Vilna as well as in other cities of the Lithuanian provinces.⁷ This background leads to the question: just how active were local Christians in the trade sector?

It is known that in early nineteenth-century Vilna there were fewer Jewish than Christian traders: in 1806, there were 42 Christians registered in Vilna as traders, and only 12 Jews; in 1809, the corresponding figures were 37 and 18; in 1810–38 and 27; in 1811–36 and 27; in 1812–35 and 28; in 1813–36 and 30; and in 1814–38 and 37.⁸ This proportion changed after the Napoleonic wars. In 1815, the numbers of registered Christian and Jewish traders were equal (36 of each), while from the mid-1820s Jewish traders took the lead and dominated: in 1826 there were 39 Christians and 95 Jews; by 1836 there were 32 and 88, respectively, and in 1846 there were 39 and 70.⁹

The domination of Jewish traders in the trade sector is also illustrated by an account of the markets of the town of Šiluva in Kaunas province given by Liudvikas

klausimu', *Lietuvos TSR mokslų akademijos darbai*, ser. A, 2 (5) (1958), 86–7; L. Truska, *Lietuviai ir žydai nuo XIX a. pabaigos iki 1941 m. birželio: Antisemitizmo Lietuvoje raida* (Vilnius, 2005), 18; R. Kolodziejczyk, 'Image przedsiębiorcy gospodarczego w Polsce: Próba nakreślenia problematyki badawczej oraz miejsce tematu w naszej historiografii', in id. (ed.), *Image przedsiębiorcy gospodarczego w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1993), 41; P. V. Tereshkovich, *Etnicheskaya istoriya Belarusi XIX–nachala XX v. v kontekste Tsentral'no-Vostochnoi Evropy* (Minsk, 2004), 95; H. Mościcki, *Pod berłem carów* (Warsaw, 1924), 27. The composition of the population of cities and towns and their occupations were discussed by E. Stankūnienė, 'Lietuvos gyventojai pagal 1897 m. surašymo duomenis', *Geografinis metraštis*, 11 (1971), 21–8.

⁴ Jewish integration into the urban-dwelling classes (traders and craftsmen) and the issues relating to Jewish farmers at the beginning of the nineteenth century have been discussed by Remigijus Civinskas: see R. Civinskas, 'Kauno žydų integracija į miestiečių luomą', *Darbai ir dienos*, 28 (2001), 51–66; id., 'Žydų miestiečių luominis statusas ir jo kaita XIX a. viduryje', in V. Sirutavičius and D. Staliūnas (eds.), *Žydų klausimas' Lietuvoje XIX a. viduryje* (Vilnius, 2004), 33–52; id., 'Rusijos politikos įtaka žydų miestiečių ekonominei veiklai'.

⁵ D. Stone, 'Jews and the Urban Question in Late Eighteenth Century Poland', *Slavic Review*, 50 (1991), 533–4.

⁶ T. Bairašauskaitė, 'Vilniaus pirkkliai XVIII a. pabaigoje–XIX a. ketvirtjo dešimtmečio viduryje: Judėjų ir krikščionių padėties palyginimas', in Sirutavičius and Staliūnas (eds.), *Žydai Lietuvos ekonominėje-socialinėje struktūroje*, 41.

⁷ K. Meškauskas et al., *Lietuvos pramonė ikisocialistiniu laikotarpiu* (Vilnius, 1976), 106.

⁸ *Pamyatnaya knizhka Vilenskoj gubernii na 1853 god* (Vilna), 190.

⁹ Ibid.

Adomas Jucevičius, a prominent Lithuanian writer and ethnographer, in the first half of the nineteenth century: 'But more than any other, there were Jewish shops: . . . there was a long row of shops where our simple, dear little Jews, dirty, noisy, and always annoying, had their area of activity all set out. Further ahead, more Jewish shops, and further still . . . more Jews with their goods.'¹⁰

A similar situation existed in other towns of the Kaunas province: 'Although there are plenty of shops in Jonava, there are only four traders who pay the guild tax—three Jews and a Russian . . . In the end it is mostly Jews who run the retail stores—they trade in timber, grain, and other products.'¹¹

According to witnesses at the time, 'at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Grodno province, all trade was in Jewish hands, and across the entire province there could hardly have been more than ten Christian traders. Meanwhile, several decades ago, in Grodno alone, Christian traders owned many, many trading places.'¹² In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Jews had assumed the dominant position among traders in the Grodno province: in 1847 there were 13 Christians and 141 Jews, in 1850 there were 14 and 141, respectively, and in 1852 there were 18 and 139.¹³

Obviously, our sources do not allow us to revise the opinion established in the historiography regarding Jewish domination of trade in the Lithuanian provinces, but they do allow us reasonably to raise another question: why was the number of Christian traders participating in the trade sector in the Lithuanian provinces relatively small? We cannot dismiss the hypothesis that Christians did not want to become involved in trade, as according to traditional Lithuanian cultural attitudes, only farming was considered to be a worthwhile means of earning a living.¹⁴ In this respect, comments made by tsarist officials are noteworthy:

Constant wars with neighbouring states reduced the number of foreign traders, and removed or limited the opportunities for the local population to engage in trade themselves. Owing to the nature of their [restricted] civil rights, Jews did not participate in the political life of the state, and as such were free to concentrate on trade, manage their capital, and, later, master all branches of business. In other words, it was not any innate characteristics that distanced local people from trade, but historical events. Force of habit ingrained the conviction in the minds of the local people that only Jews were capable of trading, while Jews got used to the idea that their only calling was trade . . . So having divided these activities amongst themselves, each side established its own monopoly: some in the agricultural sector, the others in the trade sector.¹⁵

¹⁰ L. A. Jucevičius, *Žemaičių žemės prisiminimai* (1842), in id., *Raštai* (Vilnius, 1959), 371–2.

¹¹ K. Tiškevičius, *Neris ir jos krantai: Hidrografo, istoriko, archeologo ir etnografo akimis*, trans. V. Būda (Vilnius, 1992), 281.

¹² J. E. Lachnicki, *Statystyka gubernii Litewsko-Grodzienskiej* (Vilna, 1817), 66.

¹³ *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii: Grodnenskaya guberniya*, pt. ii (St Petersburg, 1863), 116.

¹⁴ L. Truska and V. Vareikis, *Holokausto prielaidos: Antisemitizmas Lietuvoje XIX a. antroji pusė–1941 m. birželis* (Vilnius, 2004), 23.

¹⁵ *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii: Vilenskaya guberniya* (St Petersburg, 1861), 513.

Table 1. Merchants in the towns of Vilna province, by confession, 1870–1894 (five-year averages)

Confession	1870–4		1875–9		1880–84		1885–90		1891–4	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Orthodox	2.0	(11.9)	2.6	(10.6)	3.2	(14.3)	3.6	(13.3)	3.75	(10.9)
Catholic	0.2	(1.2)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Jewish	13.2	(78.6)	20.7	(84.5)	18.2	(81.2)	21.4	(79.3)	27.75	(80.4)
Lutheran	1.4	(8.3)	0.8	(3.3)	1.0	(4.5)	2.0	(7.4)	3.0	(8.7)
Other	0	(0)	0.4	(1.6)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	16.8	(100.0)	24.5	(100.0)	22.4	(100.0)	27.0	(100.0)	34.5	(100.0)

Sources: Pamyatnaya knizhka Vilenskoj gubernii: na 1872 god, sect. ii, p. viii; na 1873 god, sect. ii, pp. vii–viii; na 1874 god, sect. ii, p. x; na 1875 god, sect. ii, p. v; na 1876 god, sect. ii, p. xiii; na 1877 god, sect. ii, p. xi; na 1878 god, sect. ii, p. xii; na 1879 god, sect. ii, p. xii; na 1880 god, sect. ii, p. xii; na 1881 god, sect. ii, p. xi; na 1882 god, sect. ii, p. xi; na 1883 god, sect. ii, p. xii; na 1884 god, sect. ii, p. viii; na 1885 god, sect. ii, p. vii; na 1886 god, sect. ii, p. 12; na 1889 god, sect. ii, p. 162; na 1893 god, sect. ii, p. 89; na 1894 god, sect. ii, p. 102; na 1895 god, sect. ii, p. 115; Obzor Vilenskoj gubernii na 1894 god, 27.

Table 2. Merchants in the towns of Kaunas province, by confession, 1879–1911

Confession	1879		1897		1899		1901		1905		1911	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Christian and other	23	(7.9)	72	(10.8)	7	(2.0)	13	(3.9)	15	(4.7)	11	(3.5)
Jewish	268	(92.1)	593	(89.2)	337	(98.0)	318	(96.1)	304	(95.3)	303	(96.5)
Total	291	(100.0)	665	(100.0)	334	(100.0)	331	(100.0)	319	(100.0)	314	(100.0)

Sources: Pamyatnaya knizhka Kovenskoj gubernii: na 1881 god, sect. ii, pp. 327–36; na 1913 god, sect. iii, p. 9; Obzor Kovenskoj gubernii: na 1897 god, 18; na 1899 god, 26; na 1901 god, 28; na 1905 god, 27.

This was clearly reflected in the professional trade sector in the Lithuanian provinces, where during the entire nineteenth century only a very few non-Jewish inhabitants engaged in trade. In the Grodno province, ‘trade is on a small scale, and is mostly concentrated in the hands of the Jews’;¹⁶ in the Vilna province, ‘trade is mostly concentrated in the hands of the Jews, and up until recently, their numbers accounted for as much as 75 per cent of all traders’.¹⁷ This information is supplemented by statistics on the religious affiliations of the trading classes of the cities and towns of the Vilna and Kaunas provinces, presented in Tables 1 and 2, which illustrate the predominant roles that Jews maintained in trade.

The data from the census of the Russian empire conducted in 1897 show the total number of individuals who listed their occupation as traders. According to these data, there were 56,405 self-employed individuals (excluding family members)

¹⁶ *Pamyatnaya knizhka Grodnenskoj gubernii na 1895–1908 gody*, pt. ii (Grodno), 513.

¹⁷ *Obzor Vilenskoj gubernii za 1894 god* (Vilna), 26.

Table 3. Traders in the Lithuanian provinces, by nationality, 1897

Nationality	Vilna province		Kaunas province		Grodno province	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians	658	(3.9)	511	(2.6)	549	(2.8)
Poles	872	(5.1)	442	(2.2)	1,044	(5.4)
Lithuanians	100	(0.6)	1,585	(7.9)	2	(0)
Jews	15,179	(89.4)	17,161	(85.9)	17,679	(91.0)
Other	175	(1.0)	286	(1.4)	162	(0.8)
Total	16,984	(100.0)	19,985	(100.0)	19,436	(100.0)

Note: The table shows the number of individuals who listed their occupations as 'trader' in the 1897 census of the Russian empire.

Sources: *Perčaya vseobščaya perepis' naseleniya Rossijskoi imperii 1897 goda*, ed. N. A. Troinitsky, 89 vols. (Moscow, 1899–1905), vol. iv: *Vilenskaya guberniya*, 110–13; vol. xi: *Grodnenskaya guberniya*, 202–7; vol. xlii: *Kovenskaya guberniya*, 150–5.

engaged in trade in the Lithuanian provinces. The breakdown of the data by nationality is given in Table 3, from which it is clear that even in the late nineteenth century Jews still occupied dominant positions in the trade sector of the Lithuanian provinces.

Generally speaking, in the provinces of the Pale of Settlement, among traders there were more Jews than members of any other ethnic group. The census data from 1897 show that Jewish traders dominated in the provinces of Volhynia (89.2 per cent), Podolia (87.5 per cent), Minsk (93.6 per cent), Mogilev (89.1 per cent), and Vitebsk (85.5 per cent). The same data also show that Jewish traders in the Kingdom of Poland occupied similarly dominant positions in the trade sector in the provinces of Siedlce (89.9 per cent), Suwałki (85.5 per cent), Radom (88.1 per cent), Płock (77.8 per cent), Lublin (87.5 per cent), Łomża (84.9 per cent), and Kielce (85.3 per cent). There was a somewhat smaller proportion of Jewish traders in the provinces of Piotrków (69.4 per cent), Kalisz (64.7 per cent), and Warsaw (62.2 per cent).

It should be noted that even in the Pale of Settlement there were provinces in which Jews were less active in trade;¹⁸ indeed, there were some provinces in the Pale and elsewhere in which Jewish traders constituted a minority.¹⁹ In other words, there must have been some factors that determined why the peasantry did not wish to seek the status of professional traders. This situation raises yet another question: why, in the Lithuanian provinces, did the division of economic activities in effect match ethnic group boundaries (which also happened to match social class boundaries), and why was an ethnically differentiated labour market maintained for such a long time? This situation demands closer attention.

¹⁸ The percentages of traders made up by Jews in these provinces were: Bessarabia 76.5, Kiev 72.4, Chernigov 60.8, and Kherson 60.0.

¹⁹ The percentages in these provinces were: Ekaterinoslav 45.3, Courland 37.1, Tavrida 23.6, Poltava 17.5, and Livonia 11.5.

First of all, it should be emphasized that during the mid-nineteenth century it was not believed that the high percentage of Jews in trade (and other businesses) was the result of Polish–Lithuanian or Russian laws, or the empire’s internal policy that restricted Jewish economic activity. It was said that Jews were drawn to trade because of their alleged laziness, and that they avoided demanding, physical labour and preferred trade and the role of intermediaries.²⁰ In attempting to explain this situation, attention should be given not only to societal stereotypes, but also to the links between official government fiscal policy and economic circumstances. A part of the Russian political elite believed that the ‘isolation’ of Jews, their ‘harmful’ economic activities, and other evils had appeared because the government had for centuries discriminated against them, even though there had been attempts to encourage Jews to take up ‘useful’ public activities such as farming or industrial manufacturing and to reject the ‘parasitic’ way of life.²¹ Some thus believed that because of the laws of the Russian empire, Jews might have been pushed into a certain economic framework, which might have accordingly reinforced their position in trade.

In addition, the government aimed to integrate Jews into the urban-dwelling class by forcing them into larger towns: ‘in the first decade of the nineteenth century this was just encouraged, but by the 1820s–1830s the government was forcing Jews out of small towns and into cities’.²² The prohibition on the purchase of land by Jews and their constant fear of being placed in the ‘useless’ category could have been a stimulus to them to take up crafts and trading, in which they increasingly dominated; the position of Christians in the agricultural sector was correspondingly strengthened.²³

²⁰ Z. Medišauskienė, ‘Atkarus, bet būtinus: Žydai ir bajoriškoji Lietuvos visuomenė (XIX a. vidurys)’, in Sirutavičius and Staliūnas (eds.), *Žydų klausimas Lietuvoje XIX a. viduryje*, 94.

²¹ D. Staliūnas, ‘Rusijos politika žydų atžvilgiu XIX a.: Istoriografinis aspektas’, *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2001, no. 1, pp. 140–1.

²² Civinskas, ‘Rusijos politikos įtaka žydų miestiečių ekonominei veiklai’, 64.

²³ Civinskas’s research shows that the act passed in 1804—the Jewish Statute—was designed to regulate the status of Jews in society. According to its classification system, Jews had to belong to one of four categories: farmers, craftsmen, traders, or urban dwellers. However, it was only the Jews’ economic activities in the small towns that were legalized and regulated, and only the status of craftsman that had a detailed outline. Similarly, the rights of Jewish farmers were not clearly outlined either in 1804, or in 1844 when Count Pavel Kiselev’s programme was introduced, whereby Jews were meant to be turned into farmers and given allocated plots on state land. According to Civinskas, the reaction that this offer by the Russian government provoked was unexpected, even to its creators. By the spring of 1845, thousands of Lithuanian Jews had already asked for permission to become farmers and receive a plot of land. However, these requests were mainly due to the fear of being categorized in the non-settled urban dwellers group. For the same reasons, many poorer Jews sought protection in the newly established Jewish guilds. To avoid being classified as ‘useless’, one could register as a small-scale trader, as the Russian government allowed Jewish urban dwellers engaged in trade to belong to the settled urban dwellers group: see Civinskas, ‘Rusijos politikos įtaka žydų miestiečių ekonominei veiklai’, 56–9, 64–5, 70, and id., ‘Žydų miestiečių luominis statusas ir jo kaita XIX a. viduryje’, 35–43.

Table 4. Self-employed individuals engaged in farming and trade, by confession, 1897 (%)

Confession	Vilna province		Kaunas province		Grodno province	
	Farmers	Traders	Farmers	Traders	Farmers	Traders
Christian ^a	99.0	9.6	94.7	12.6	99.2	8.2
Jewish	0.9	89.4	1.3	86.0	0.7	91.0
Other ^b	0.1	1.0	4.0	1.4	0.1	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a In the census statistics, those ethnic groups that were traditionally of the Christian faith—Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, and Lithuanians—were considered to be ‘Christians’.

^b The category ‘other’ may have included Karaites, Tatars, and other ethnic minorities professing different faiths.

Sources: As for Table 3.

Table 5. Self-employed individuals engaged in farming, by nationality, 1897

Nationality	Vilna province		Kaunas province		Grodno province	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Russian	5,492	(2.5)	5,936	(2.4)	2,297	(1.2)
Ukrainian	21	(0)	9	(0)	58,410	(29.4)
Belarusian	147,314	(67.8)	6,276	(2.6)	113,109	(57.0)
Polish	11,713	(5.4)	21,948	(9.0)	22,369	(11.3)
Lithuanian	50,722	(23.3)	196,453	(80.8)	538	(0.3)
Jewish	1,974	(0.9)	3,062	(1.3)	1,349	(0.7)
Other	199	(0.1)	9,471	(3.9)	235	(0.1)
Total	217,435	(100.0)	243,155	(100.0)	198,307	(100.0)

Sources: As for Table 3.

This situation is reflected in the statistics from the 1897 census, which allow us to compare the proportions of Jews and Christians engaged in farming and trade: see Table 4. Table 5 shows the breakdown of farmers in the Lithuanian provinces by nationality.

THE PEASANTRY'S TRADING SITUATION

It was rare to find farmers engaged in professional trading, even though it was also rare to find a craftsman or farmer who did not sell his own products from his workshop or property, or at local town fairs or markets, a practice which had a long history. However, for village-dwellers, this informal trade was a secondary activity alongside a main occupation such as farming or the practice of a craft. This situation was influenced by several factors.

Inhabitants of settlements where trading was banned often suffered the inconvenience of having to travel to faraway cities and towns to trade. Lack of markets and fairs, poor transport conditions (rough roads), and long distances restricted the possibilities for trade. One must also keep in mind the speed of the transport available and the small number of villagers who had access to harnessed horses. For example, until the middle of the nineteenth century the inhabitants of the town of Alytus had to travel to Butrimonys for supplies, 24 km away, or to Merkinė, 34 km away.²⁴ In practice it was difficult to cover more than 10–15 km altogether on the same day,²⁵ so a distance of 24 or 34 km was inconvenient, especially when seasonal work had to be done, as both men and horses needed to be taken away from the farm.

In addition, having arrived at the market or fair, a farmer could never be sure if his products would sell for more than his local purchaser's prices, or whether he could acquire products more cheaply than from the delivery salesmen. Hence, until the 1861 reforms, village-dwellers must have felt more confident selling their produce locally via intermediaries who regularly visited the villages, and purchasing other necessary items from salesmen who delivered goods to their door.

However, services had a price: the cost of delivered goods had to be lower than in the inns (which in the nineteenth century functioned also as retail outlets) and the small shops, but higher than in the markets, while procurers bought up produce at prices greater than those set by the landlords, but lower than at the markets. So as not to lose some of their profits or so as to improve their economic situation, villagers were often inclined to take the associated risks and engaged in trade themselves.²⁶ Sidestepping the rules and provisions set out by landlords, farmers would travel to city and town markets and annual fairs to buy goods as well as to sell their own

²⁴ Document of the State Property Board of the Trakai District, 22 Nov. 1849, confirming the operation of weekly markets in Alytus: Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas, Vilnius (hereafter LVIA), f. 525, ap. 13, b. 447, fo. 5.

²⁵ B. N. Mironov, *Sotsial'naya istoriya Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII–nachalo XX v.): Genezis lichnosti, demokraticheskoi sem'i, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva*, 2 vols. (St Petersburg, 1999), i. 286.

²⁶ Research conducted by Juozas Jurginis provides indirect evidence of the differences in buying and selling prices, and of the differences between landlords' and procurers' prices. Using the Rėmeriai estates as an example, he shows that the estate landlords tried to usurp the sales of flax, a very profitable crop. The instructions of the Rėmeriai estates proclaim: 'I recommend and insist that all dwellers plant as much flax as possible, as it is a crop of cardinal importance to everyone's welfare, while the *vaitai* [serf supervisors] and *dešimininkai* [similar to foremen] must know the amount of flax sown by each peasant and how much was threshed, and report this to the estate. . . . All without exception who produce flax for sale have no right to sell it anywhere else but to the estate; anyone going against these rules will be required to do labour for three weeks. The estate pays the advertised market price; the *vaitai* must act as supervisors.' From this Jurginis concludes that if the true market price really *had* been offered for all produce, it would not have made sense to ban the peasantry from selling the produce themselves. The bans were avoidable: flax was transported to the larger cities, especially Riga, with farmers operating not individually but in co-operation with several others, so that it was impossible to trace which load belonged to whom. See J. Jurginis, *Lietuvos valstiečių istorija (nuo seniausių laikų iki baudžiavos panaikinimo)* (Vilnius, 1978), 196.

produce. The farmers who transported their own produce to Riga more than covered their travel expenses and time, as they eliminated the use of intermediaries, who took a greater profit margin.²⁷ However, this method of selling could not always be justified. A greater volume of goods had to be transported so that it would be worthwhile travelling to a distant market; this meant that co-operation was necessary, as it was unlikely that one farm could produce enough goods by itself to justify travel to a distant market. In addition, the journey to the market, especially a more distant one, always posed some risks.

These risks were justified when, because of the change of seasons, the condition of the roads worsened or most farmers were busy with farm work and related activities. Then, at a small market the prices would rise, and farmers would be able to sell their produce at favourable prices.²⁸ Having successfully sold his produce, the farmer would be likely to go to the same market again. Some years brought less success, however. For example, on 30 November 1802 the roads were impassable and marketplaces in Vilna were closed.²⁹ Of course, in similar situations some farmers might ignore the difficulties and nevertheless take their goods to the city. But if, after a difficult and tiring journey, they missed the market, they would be forced to sell their produce cheaply to intermediaries. In addition, according to the official Paweł Bobrowski, it was fairly common for farmers to leave much of their market earnings at the inns, in which case 'the village, contrary to the theory proposed by Adam Smith, could only lose out when trading with the city'.³⁰

There were also cases when, during a particularly bountiful year or at a large market, procurers would beat down the farmers' prices: not hurrying to buy up their produce, a procurer would offer minimal prices and wait until the dismayed farmer agreed to sell his goods at the procurer's set price, if only to avoid returning home with a full wagon.³¹ The next time, the farmer would have to decide if it was worth taking the risk of setting out on a one- or two-day journey without guarantee of success. That is why when dealing with a procurer, even though he would get a smaller profit, any farmer could sell even a small quantity of produce without needing to travel or take risks.

On the other hand, from 1824, after the introduction of new legislation, farmers were allowed to trade after receiving permission from a landlord or official.³²

²⁷ *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii: Vilenskaya guberniya*, 524.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 523.

²⁹ V. Pugačiauskas, 'Vilniaus turgūs XVIII–XIX a. sandūroje', in Z. Kiaupa et al. (eds.), *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė XVIII amžiuje: Miesto erdvė* (Kaunas, 2007), 106.

³⁰ *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii: Grodnenskaya guberniya*, pt. ii, p. 384.

³¹ *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii: Vilenskaya guberniya*, 524.

³² Even though, in accordance with the 1812 law, trading certificates for the peasantry of private estates were issued only to the landlords, and to state peasants only with the permission of the local official, a certain degree of freedom to engage in trading activities was nonetheless granted: under the 1812 law, state peasants could engage in 'businesses proper to the peasantry' without any trading activity certificates or permission from their landlords or officials. 'Businesses proper to the peasantry' included transportation of agricultural goods for sale from carts or boats; sale and transportation of food and food

However, such permits were not always issued.³³ Hence, the peasantry's economic activities became increasingly dependent on landlords. Seeking greater profits, landlords forced the peasantry to pay high prices for the most necessary items, and instead of paying in money, they had to exchange their own produce at below-market prices, a practice that often restricted free trade for them.³⁴

Earlier research shows that in the eighteenth century farmers also worked as procurers and agents for wholesale traders, and would often travel to port cities with their own produce, thereby flouting the landlords' monopolistic trade laws.³⁵ However, in the first half of the nineteenth century the peasantry's trade activities developed poorly, especially as local town procurers were also intermediaries for larger seaport traders and product manufacturers.³⁶ In addition, the peasantry had to deal with competition from other procurers and the city-dwellers who handled almost all foreign and domestic trade.³⁷ According to Tamara Bairašauskaitė, from the end of the eighteenth century to the mid-1830s there are scarcely any records of products in cities and their outskirts; maintenance of postal horses, inns, and public courtyards in villages; various types of crafts; transportation and sale of timber, clay, and other building materials; and gardening (park and vegetable/floral) services. Also included were trading on the roads; stationary trading in villages if selling farm produce, food products, and some goods bought in cities or fairs; and permission to trade at fairs up to the value of 2,000 roubles: *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj Imperii*, 1st collection, 45 vols. (St Petersburg, 1830-43) (hereafter *PSZ1*), vol. xxxii, 29 Dec. 1812, nos. 25302, 25304, 35303. However, the introduction of compulsory trade certificates in 1824 affected the peasantry's opportunities to engage in trade. The government law of 14 Nov. 1824 on the Founding of Additional Guilds and Other Forms of Trade stipulated that all forms of trading activity by the peasantry now had to be authorized by a compulsory certificate permitting the holder to engage in a particular type of trade. Instead of four categories of trade, now there were six, but the certificates cost more than one received for selling one's production. The annual cost of a certificate in each of the six categories was: first category (domestic and foreign wholesale trade, and retail trade in one's own town) 2,600 roubles; second category (as first category but with a limited annual turnover) 1,100 roubles; third category (retail trade in one's own town and district) 400 roubles; fourth category (small-scale retail trade) 150 roubles; fifth category (granting the right to trade in small items) 40 roubles; sixth category (small-scale trade but not in the capital) 25 roubles. *PSZ1*, vol. xxxix, 14 Nov. 1824, no. 30115; *Istoricheskie ocherk oblozheniya torgovli i promyslov v Rossii, s prilozheniem materialov po torgovo-promyshlennoj statistike* (St Petersburg, 1893), 126. In fact, the laws of 1824-6 set uniform prices for the peasantry's first- and second-category certificates and the procurers' first- and second-category trade certificates (first-category guild procurers paid 2,200 roubles, second-category guild procurers 880 roubles); the cost of third- and fourth-category trade certificates was decreased: the third to 300 roubles, and the fourth to 80 roubles in the capitals of the provinces, 60 roubles in the chief towns of districts, and 40 roubles in other towns and villages. From 1825, residents of the outskirts and peasants living there were allowed to operate businesses from their homes without a trade certificate. *PSZ1*, vol. xl, 31 Aug. 1825, no. 30468; *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj Imperii*, 2nd collection, 62 vols. (St Petersburg, 1830-84) (hereafter *PSZ2*), vol. i, 11 July 1826, no. 458; *PSZ2*, vol. ii, 21 Dec. 1827, no. 1631.

³³ M. Jučas, *Baudžiavos irimas Lietuvoje* (Vilnius, 1972), 149-52.

³⁴ L. Mulevičius, *Kaimas ir dvaras Lietuvoje XIX amžiuje* (Vilnius, 2003), 374.

³⁵ M. Jučas, 'Prekyba Lietuvos kaime XVIII amžiuje', in A. Vyšniauskaitė et al. (eds.), *Iš lietuvių kultūros istorijos*, iv (Vilnius, 1964), 109-22.

³⁶ Jučas, *Baudžiavos irimas Lietuvoje*, 148.

³⁷ L. Mulyavichyus and M. Yuchas [L. Mulevičius and M. Jučas], *Nekotorye voprosy genezisa kapitalizma v Litve* (Vilnius, 1968), 34.

traders of free peasantry origin.³⁸ We can preliminarily state that even in later decades the situation remained much the same; for example, in 1847 in the Kaunas province 7.1 per cent of the peasantry, and in 1851 some 5.8 per cent of the peasantry, declared their capital as being equal to that of traders,³⁹ and it is likely that they engaged in trade professionally. Such a situation in the trade sector may have made the peasantry passive participants in the economy, in private estates dependent on landlords and in the state-owned realm dependent on officials who suppressed their business independence and left them with almost no other option but to farm.

This was especially so since the peasantry's economic activities generally involved farm work. Measures for controlling these activities were stepped up: there is no single inventory of an estate's income that shows supplementary income from free business or trade conducted by the peasantry, as there were practically no such cases in this period; it is doubtful that they existed at all, given that leasehold agreements were not in the peasantry's favour.⁴⁰ Most likely, under the prevailing conditions of serfdom, in which peasants worked as unfree cultivators, landlords had more to gain by acquiring the peasantry's produce, which the estate could sell on to the procurers (mostly Jews), a situation that would explain why landlords did not encourage free trade amongst the peasantry and were happy to use the services of the procurers.

Jews travelled around the villages and towns buying up produce from farms. They would then attend fairs and markets with the aim of buying goods, and farmers from the Lithuanian provinces would be sure to receive regular visits from them. This well-established and well-organized trade system, arranged by Jews, was more of an obstacle to the peasantry's aims of business development than a stimulus. For example, under serfdom in Russia trade in the villages was affected by weak ties between the cities and the villages, due to poor roads and great distances between settlements. Villagers could wait almost the entire year for a trader to sell the produce of their farms. They were thus forced to take the initiative and sell their produce themselves by travelling around the district, and if, according to the Russian official Iosif Kulisher, only traders had the right to sell in those districts, the villages would fall into poverty.⁴¹ The huge expanses of countryside, with the greatest distances in all Europe between settlements, as well as poor road conditions, prevented inter-regional contacts from being formed before the introduction of the railway, forcing the peasantry to engage in trade. That is why a strong, small-scale trading class was formed in Russia relatively early on, represented by the peasantry. In Russia, the peasantry also represented wholesale trade capital. According to Fernand

³⁸ Bairašauskaitė, 'Vilniaus pirkliai XVIII a. pabaigoje–XIX a. ketvirtąjį dešimtmečio viduryje', 41.

³⁹ Mulyavichyus and Yuchas, *Nekotorye voprosy genezisa kapitalizma v Litve*, 34.

⁴⁰ S. Pamerneckis, *Agrarinių santykių raida ir dinamika Lietuvoje: XVIII a. pabaiga–XIX a. pirmoji pusė (statistinė analizė)* (Vilnius, 2004), 120.

⁴¹ I. Kulisher, *Istoriya russkoi torgovli do devyatnadsatogo veka vkhlyuchitel'no* (Petrograd, 1923), 250.

Braudel, in the mid-eighteenth century Count Minich, speaking on behalf of the Russian government, stated that, irrespective of prohibitions, the peasantry had for centuries engaged in trade and had made great investments for its continuation; accordingly, large-scale trade had developed thanks to the efforts of the peasantry.⁴² Thus, in the Russian provinces, where the same social-class model was in place as in the Lithuanian provinces and basically the same legal order was enforced, there were nevertheless farmers who professionally engaged in trade. There were even some well-known trading figures who were originally members of the peasantry, such as the members of the Ryabushkinsky family and Nikita Demidov. Yet in the Lithuanian provinces, by contrast, there were few professional traders amongst the peasantry.

In other words, apart from the 'status' factor that determined the function of each class, there had to be another, not necessarily economic, factor to account for the difference between the Russian and Lithuanian provinces. It may have been a combination of social and economic details. The integration of the Jewish communities, first into the urban dwellers' class, encouraged them to act out this group's function: to manufacture or to trade. For a community of restricted opportunities, this meant joining one particular sphere, especially because in the Lithuanian provinces, owing to the undeveloped class of Christian urban dwellers, the Jewish community had little competition.

It appears that, because of the landlords' ban on engaging in trade and the (relatively) weak trade network, peasants did not have the opportunity to trade freely and seek professional trader status, and because of the existence of a well-organized trade system maintained by Jews,⁴³ peasants did not have a major reason to become professional traders:

if it were not for the Jews the farmer would not know who would buy his meagre products—a swathe of cloth, or a skein of thread; the estate-holder would not know who . . . would rent his inn or mill, whom to see about borrowing money, or where to acquire certain products. The Jew is needed everywhere; he pays in cash for weighed products, and cheaply and efficiently intermediates, as if he were the only link between the various social classes. And that is why, if the Jews are hunted down and not replaced with another business class, this act would bring more harm to the state than good, as the economic situation of the peasantry and the landlords would become even more difficult . . .⁴⁴

It was felt that, were such circumstances to unfold, and with the existence of strong Jewish competition in the Lithuanian provinces and an absence of large-scale

⁴² F. Braudel, *Material'naya tsivilizatsiya, ekonomika i kapitalizm, XV-XVIII vv.*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1986-92), vol. iii: *Vremya mira*, 463.

⁴³ The positive impact of Jews on the country's economic development is discussed in Kołodziejczyk, 'Image przedsiębiorcy gospodarczego w Polsce', 41.

⁴⁴ Order of the Second Department of State Property, with G. Siyalsky's note on Samogitians, forests, contraband, Jews, Prussians, clerks, and administrators, 7-13 Sept. 1839: LVIA, f. 525, ap. 13, b. 54, fos. 3^v-4.

procurers with capital stemming from the peasantry, only a rare farmer or craftsman would professionally engage in trade. In addition, entrepreneurship among the peasants (mostly Christians) emerged later than in the central Russian provinces of the empire.

JEWES AND FARMERS UNDER CHANGING TRADE CONDITIONS

In the Lithuanian provinces, 'two nationalities, Lithuanians and Jews, living alongside one another since time immemorial, created two separate worlds, two isolated communities that had relations with one another only sporadically, to settle this or that affair, but were divided in every other sense'.⁴⁵ With this background to everyday life, and with self-identification made on the basis of one's religion, farmers regarded the Jew as a completely foreign element, with a different language, different customs, and a different religion. These traditions influenced the economic sphere, where the areas of activity of 'our own' people and 'the others' were also separated, and because of the role of Jews in trade in the Lithuanian provinces, this separation could have been transmitted into the trade sector as well. Thus we cannot dismiss the idea that trade—like business, and the division of the sphere of work according to religion—was marginalized by the peasantry (and the landlords).

In addition, trade might have been regarded as an immoral field of activity, like business, and thus be foreign to the Catholic mindset. Given the widespread practice of cheating in trade under competitive circumstances and an absence of strict laws regulating relations between buyers and sellers, the conditions were just right for business. In the opinion of the historian Andrey Polovnikov, the conditions of industrial capitalism enabled the most brutal means of trade to develop. Seeking profits was not considered to be dishonourable, and driving the hardest possible bargain was commonplace, whether by charging excessively or by cheating through false calculation, inaccurate weighing of goods, and various other means. For example, a buyer would often be shown a quality product that was then underhandedly swapped for a poorer-quality version when sold.⁴⁶ Another example of trickery is described in the Kaunas province's statistical records.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Truska and Vareikis, *Holokausto prielaidos*, 23.

⁴⁶ A. Polovnikov, *Torgovlya v staroi Rossii* (Moscow, 1958), 69–70; see also Truska and Vareikis, *Holokausto prielaidos*, 24.

⁴⁷ 'The producer transports his produce to the market to the procurer, always a Jew, who by paying 1 or 2 roubles more, and selling at a lower price, aims to cheat the producer [usually a peasant farmer] by weighing the flax on a balance which is fixed to give an erroneous reading. Having weighed his flax at home, upon re-weighing it on location the producer is surprised that the weight of the flax has decreased. He thus refuses to sell his flax. He is then approached by other similar procurers, who weigh his flax and find that it is the same as the first procurer claimed. In the end, the producer is convinced the announced weight is correct after all, and sells his goods. But the next time he takes his flax to market, he no longer trusts either his own balance or the procurers' ones, and tries himself to cheat the

Cautionary tales on this subject were frequently recounted in periodical publications as well:

The objective of trade, as we have seen, is to be the intermediary . . . the trader, without regard for the buyers, tries to earn as much for himself as possible. As if it were not enough for him to buy goods at the lowest price, and sell them at the highest, he also often cheats by substituting old, poor-quality products for the new, quality products one sees; fabricates copies of factory-produced brands; changes the prices; and fabricates products to the extent that they may endanger the buyer's health or life.⁴⁸

Even though society in the first half of the nineteenth century was prepared to find rational explanations for Jewish traders' practices, consumers had to deal with cheating in trade so often that they developed a negative image of traders.⁴⁹ As Jews constituted the majority of those engaged in trade (and other businesses) in the Lithuanian provinces, and as Christians dominated agriculture, 'Christian' and 'farmer' easily became synonymous terms, as did 'Jew' and 'trader', while the negative image of traders and the negative attitude towards them might have reinforced the negative image of Jews in general, and Jewish traders in particular.

These assumptions can also be substantiated in many periodicals when a 'trader' is mentioned.⁵⁰ Most often in these publications it is a Jew who is accused of or is the embodiment of immoral behaviour, or is held to be a spreader of sin. Jews are cited in crimes such as stealing, or dishonest sale or trade in horses, or the falsification of goods.⁵¹ The negative image of the Jewish trader also appears in the records

procurer by dampening the flax or inserting a 5 pound [approx. 2 kg] lump of clay into the middle of the bundle of flax. The procurer, a Jew, having overpaid for the *birkavas* [a measure of weight equal to 10 *pūdas*, or 163 kg] of flax by 2 roubles, and wanting to recoup that difference and earn something on top, ties a thicker rope around the bundle and dampens it again before selling the flax. By selling at 4 roubles per *pūdas* he earns 44 roubles instead of the 40 he has paid; in other words, he gets back the 2 roubles overpaid, and earns the same amount on top.' *Pamyatnaya knizhka Kovenskoj gubernii na 1895 god* (Kaunas), 227.

⁴⁸ P. Bulovičius, 'Rūpinkimės daugiau prekyba', *Šaltinis*, 1911, no. 13, p. 146.

⁴⁹ One landlord, Vladimiras Gadonas, saw the root of the problem in the very customs of the Jewish community. First and foremost, the division of objects and food into clean and unclean (kosher and *trejff*) made some things too dear for the poorer Jewish classes to acquire and thus they were demoralized as a result of the strict customary requirements. They were then forced either to cheat in order to earn money for the clean objects, or to deceive the community in failing to abide by this custom: see T. Bairašauskaitė, 'Vladimiras Gadonas (XIX a. I pusės Žemaičių bajoro sociokultūrinis portretas)', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1997, pp. 143–63.

⁵⁰ See *Aušra*, *Šviesa*, *Varpas*, *Tėvynės sargas*, *Šaltinis*, *Ūkininkas*, and other periodicals from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many such articles are mentioned in works by Liudas Truska and Linas Venclauskas, e.g. Truska, *Lietuviai ir žydai nuo XIX a. pabaigos iki 1941 m. birželio*, and L. Venclauskas, 'Moderniojo lietuviško antisemitizmo genezė ir raida (1883–1940 m.)', Ph.D. diss. (Vytautas Magnus Univ., Kaunas, 2008).

⁵¹ Leading article, 'Žydai ir mes', *Šaltinis*, 1914, no. 29, p. 433.

of the tsarist administration;⁵² the same source mentions the ‘Christian’ trader too, presenting him in a more positive light.⁵³

In the context of values, the virtuous Christian, especially the God-fearing farming peasant raised according to Christian village traditions, was supposed to need protection from such foreign, ‘dishonourable’, and dishonest ‘Jewish’ activities, and needed to avoid all business apart from that which was ‘Christian’—that is, farming: ‘and what is more, not so long ago there was a time a Lithuanian wouldn’t dare to take up trading, considering it immoral work; it appeared to him that this work was suited only to Jews’.⁵⁴ Mikalojus Katkus, an ethnographer of the mid-nineteenth century, wrote a story about a strange farmer, Karoliukas, who would carve spoons and pipes, or collect nuts to sell while the other workers took a break from gathering hay: ‘There were more of these Karoliukas fellows, but the village did not understand them.’⁵⁵ It appears that someone who worked on a farm, and who saw himself only as a farmer, dissociated himself from everything that was not farm-related (or Catholic). In addition, Jews were very astute traders, with wide networks. Because of the competition that this could pose, a non-Jewish newcomer would have found it extremely difficult to start a business—and all the more so since Jews were free, while the peasantry was in bondage up until 1863–4, and estate instructions often stipulated that it was forbidden for peasantry to trade beyond their landlords’ boundaries.

⁵² ‘Traders constitute the highest class amongst the Jewish community, which itself can be divided into three classes: the first—educated; the second—partly educated; and the third—uneducated. The existence of the first class proves that Vilna’s Jews can become useful members of society and that their nature or faith does not impede their ability to be honest and useful people . . . unfortunately, there are not many such Jewish citizens and, worst of all, their influence is usually weakened by the richer fanatics . . . Jewish traders have had some bold aims, but the excessively great desire to get rich quickly takes them beyond reasonable limits, and so there are often cases of rapid wealth, and just as rapid decline . . . It is not easy for a small-scale trader to become a millionaire: one needs credit, an education, and many other conditions that a partly educated Jew does not have. But instead of these qualities, he has the innate ability not to be limited by external factors. This awareness of free scope often delivers wealth into their hands that, under the circumstances of honest trading, would not be possible . . . A Jew, with less than a hundred roubles, starts to engage in trade which allows him to earn a simple living; this poor way of earning a living forces the trader to ensure there is a high turnover, as goods that do not sell for a long time reduce the Jew’s means of subsistence; that is why a specific feature of the small-scale trader is his hastiness, importunity, and the unavoidable urge to cheat others. “Testing” the buyer, he first raises prices and then hastens to drop them to a certain lower limit, just so that the goods will not remain unsold too long.’ *Materialy dlya geografii i statistiki Rossii: Vilenskaya guberniya*, 411.

⁵³ ‘In terms of its mentality, the Christian trading class can probably be associated with the educated class of the Vilna province; however, the fruits of this education have had little significance for the development of trade in the country. The shortage of capital and entrepreneurship, as well as the lack of will, affect the trader’s routine: buy for less—sell for more, and this constitutes a specific characteristic of Jewish traders (and also brings the Christian trader closer to the level of the Jew), the only difference being that in Christian shops, the buyer is less likely to be cheated on the quality of the product or its price, as is frequently the case in Jewish shops.’ *Ibid.* 386.

⁵⁴ K. Arpietis, ‘Rūpinkimės pirklyba ir pramonė’, *Lietuvos žinios*, 23 May (5 June) 1914, p. 1.

⁵⁵ M. Katkus, *Balanos gadynė*, in id., *Raštai* (Vilnius, 1965), 42.

While the religious peasantry looked upon trade as a business unsuitable for Christians, the ideologues of nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries aimed to reinterpret entrepreneurship as a new type of economic activity suited to a nation being 'reborn': 'Lithuania's people, having for a long time engaged only in outdoor work, have become used to doing only such work and have become unaccustomed to other types of work. We think that we are incapable of taking up one or another craft, especially trade, but we must take up these other activities.'⁵⁶ The Christian section of society had to overcome more than one stereotype: first, to change the prevailing attitude towards trade as a dishonest activity in itself, and second, to see trade as a business suitable for Catholics as well. That is why the peasantry's apathetic approach to business, its inability to compete, and its lack of entrepreneurial skills are often noted, along with motifs of social criticism, urging a modernizing society to shake off its bondage-era passivity. One writer commented on the small size of farm carts:

With one person already seated, there's no room left for a second. This type of cart came about because of serfdom, because they were careful not to strain their horses too much. Now that serfdom is gone, they need to start using their brains, and make larger carts, with a shaft, pulled by two horses. It's a shame, as a strong man could carry as much as can be loaded onto one of those old carts.⁵⁷

Also noticeable is the ambition to rid people of their preconceived notions about the supremacy of other ethnic groups in business and their own self-doubts:

Many Lithuanians are fleeing to foreign lands in search of happiness, while Jews, Germans, and other foreigners come here and accumulate their wealth in Lithuania. Wouldn't it be better if, instead of running somewhere else, the smarter Lithuanians could work out how those foreigners amass wealth across our homeland, Lithuania, and learn from those foreigners? . . . then our homeland would find benefit, and they would find happiness.⁵⁸

However, as far as the encouragement of their *own* businesses and their *own* warehouses, and support for their *own* consumer society is concerned, these ideas of co-operative trade were based on co-operation against Jews and other ethnic groups regarded as economic opponents: 'No, this [trade and industry] we cannot leave to the Latvians, nor the Jews, nor the Poles, nor any other nation';⁵⁹ 'Let's support Polish, Christian trade and industry!'⁶⁰ Such arguments were intended to present the construction of their own warehouses as a necessity, or as one of the ways to withstand foreign, especially Jewish, competition. Discussions of the Jew as the main economic opponent further show that the figure of the Jew as an immoral businessman

⁵⁶ P. Liūtas [P. Leonas], 'Keli žodžiai apie prekybą (kupčystę) ir amatus', *Šviesa*, 2 (1887), 49.

⁵⁷ M. Valančius, *Palangos Juze*, in id., *Raštai* (Vilnius, 1977), 251.

⁵⁸ Paukščius, 'Vienybėje maži daiktai auga', *Šaltinis*, 1911, no. 26, p. 302.

⁵⁹ Arpietis, 'Rūpinkimės pirklyba ir pramone', 1.

⁶⁰ A slogan printed in the newspaper *Gazeta Codzienna*, 23 Apr. (6 May) 1912, p. 1.

has its origin in traditional folklore,⁶¹ and stress the division of business between ‘our own’ and ‘foreigners’. At the same time, the emphasis on the negative image of Jews further stimulated economic antisemitism, chiefly by attributing to Jews as a group the role of a collective opponent in business.⁶² The ‘boycott of Jews’ and various stratagems employed to support ‘our own’ businesses were, it seems, predicated on the perceived growing threat from the Jews as economic opponents: ‘today, Jewish intermediation is not necessary, and conversely, we are all under the obligation to ensure that national industry and trade become more and more independent and stronger, and to support any Polish enterprises—this is also the duty of every Pole’.⁶³ However, articles were also published in which the aim of pushing Jews out of their dominant positions in business was not argued for on the basis of ethno-cultural distinction or ethno-cultural opposition, but was related to their professional activities:

we do not have our own manufacturers, apart from home-made handicrafts. Nor do we have our own traders: all trade is in the hands of the Jews. That is why, when there is a struggle against the established traders, here in Lithuania, it becomes a struggle against the Jews, and not because the Jew is any different from a Lithuanian, Pole, Belarusian, or anyone else, but because Jews have the whole trade sector in their hands.⁶⁴

Despite the fact that Jews were targeted because of the way trade was organized in the Lithuanian provinces, and that to create the foundation of a national economy involved eliminating Jews from the trade sector (and other businesses) as they were the main economic competition, there were also some positive assessments of the Jews’ economic activities:

Prices here are reasonable because there are many Jewish traders, not like in Russia, where trade was in the hands of bourgeois monopolists. Russian newspapers and the public complained that there were few markets, and that there was a bourgeois procurer in every village who would buy up [produce] from the peasantry at any price he wanted, and would sell [goods] to the peasantry at any price he wanted . . . We are writing this in the name of justice, and everyone who says that they don’t like Jews but stops to think, will nevertheless admit that that is the truth [that trade is well organized under the Jews, and acknowledge their economic superiority and positive impact on the country’s trade].⁶⁵

⁶¹ According to Laima Anglickienė, religious, class, and ethnic insularity, echoing back to the Middle Ages, is reflected in Lithuanian folklore in references to Jews, as well as in responses to differences in customs and psychology, and in cases showing disagreements between the peasantry and traders and innkeepers. The Jew is visualized precisely as a trader or innkeeper. Aspects of his character that are the subject of ridicule include greed, wiliness, selfishness, importunity, and feebleness. See L. Anglickienė, *Kitataučių įvaizdis lietuvių folklore* (Vilnius, 2006), 165–6.

⁶² Vladas Sirutavičius notes that the ideologues of the central and east European national movements began to consider Jews a very clever collective opponent that had to be overcome competitively in order to guarantee the establishment of the nation. See V. Sirutavičius, ‘Katalikų Bažnyčia ir modernaus lietuvių antisemitizmo genezė’, *Lietuvių katalikų mokslo akademijos metraštis*, 14 (1999), 70.

⁶³ A.P., ‘Emigracija Żydów’, *Gazeta Codzienna*, 1 (14) Feb. 1912, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Bulovičius, ‘Rūpinkimės daugiau prekyba’, 146.

⁶⁵ A.U., ‘Valasnoe zemstva i zhydy’, *Nasha niva*, 1911, no. 14, p. 196.

The different attitudes towards Jewish economic activity and the varied assessments of it are noted in the historiography too. Jews engaging in trade, industry, and banking were viewed in two ways: some welcomed their activities and valued their noble-minded behaviour with clients, their orientation towards service, and their high morals, while others condemned them, seeing only the 'evil' side to their nature—their 'miserliness', 'wiliness', and 'lack of care and attention'.⁶⁶ Some believed that Jews did not consider it a sin to fool and cheat people, that to cheat a 'goy' or gentile brought respect, whereas according to another view, there were few thieves among Jews, as stealing was forbidden; rather, Jews merely had good bargaining skills.⁶⁷

Under the conditions of the new competition, and acknowledging the lack of business experience of the local non-Jewish population, society came to appreciate the Jews' aptitude for business: 'everything is done so nicely in Mr Ivanaitis's shop, just like at the Jews'.⁶⁸ Even the Catholic Church, with its huge influence on the peasantry and the attempts it made to limit all forms of contact between Christians and Jews (which in the practicalities of social life was impossible to achieve), had to acknowledge that there was an advantage to the Jews: they were dangerous, but one could certainly learn something useful from them.⁶⁹

With the modernization of society and the commercialization of agriculture, other upheavals were also taking place: changes in the economy, wider opportunities for different classes to engage in economic activities through the introduction of new laws,⁷⁰ and changing attitudes towards trade itself are all factors that could have encouraged Christians to start out in businesses that had up until then not been characteristic for them. From the second half of the nineteenth century, the traditionally agricultural Lithuanian and Belarusian ethno-cultural groups started to enter the trade sector. Country-dwellers gradually developed trading skills and, refusing the services of intermediaries, began independent engagement in trade. Recalling men such as the fictitious Karoliukas, who started his 'business' career when it was still socially unacceptable in village communities, actors in the national revival movement were spurred on by such types of 'neo-merchants', and forged ahead in business with new-found self-confidence. With the forces of commercialization in action, the rise of entrepreneurship based on a foundation of nationalism changed commonly held

⁶⁶ S. Kowalska-Glikman, 'Wizerunek ludzi średnich fortun w publicystyce, satyrze i przysłowiach w drugiej połowie XIX w.', in Kołodziejczyk (ed.), *Image przedsiębiorcy gospodarczego w Polsce*, 61–2.

⁶⁷ Anglickienė, *Kitataučių įvairūs lietuvių folklorė*, 134.

⁶⁸ V.D., 'Iš Lietuvos: Raseiniai', *Aušra*, 2/3 (1885), 61.

⁶⁹ V. Sirutavičius, 'Katalikų Bažnyčia ir modernaus lietuviškojo antisemitizmo genezė', *Kultūros barai*, 1998, no. 11, pp. 36–7.

⁷⁰ In 1861, after the review of laws on industry, trade, and taxes (amended in 1863 and 1865), all the empire's inhabitants, including foreigners but excluding ministers of religion and soldiers, were granted the right to engage in industrial and commercial activities. Instead of three guilds, the laws of 1863 and 1865 made provision for two to remain: the first served all forms of foreign and domestic trade; the second—foreign and domestic retail trade. Individuals engaging in commerce but who did not belong to either of the guilds were identified as small-scale domestic traders. *PSZ2*, vol. xl, 9 Feb. 1865, no. 41779.

Table 6. Individuals engaged in business or trade in Kaunas province, by category, 1905–1911

Category	1905		1906		1908		1909		1910		1911	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Urban dwellers	9,760	(83.5)	9,427	(82.4)	9,538	(78.3)	9,860	(78.7)	9,953	(77.8)	9,969	(77.4)
Farming peasants	1,092	(9.3)	1,174	(10.3)	1,558	(12.8)	1,574	(12.6)	1,745	(13.6)	1,794	(13.9)
Landlords	453	(3.9)	459	(4.0)	562	(4.6)	561	(4.5)	591	(4.6)	585	(4.5)
Traders	344	(2.9)	325	(2.8)	344	(2.8)	339	(2.7)	339	(2.6)	344	(2.7)
Foreigners	38	(0.3)	35	(0.3)	23	(0.2)	22	(0.2)	27	(0.2)	31	(0.2)
Other			26	(0.2)	153	(1.3)	168	(1.3)	140	(1.1)	165	(1.3)
Total	11,687	(100.0)	11,446	(100.0)	12,178	(100.0)	12,524	(100.0)	12,795	(100.0)	12,888	(100.0)

Sources: *Pamyatnaya knizhka Kovenskoi gubernii: na 1907 god*, sect. iii, p. 33; *na 1908 god*, sect. iii, p. 33; *na 1910 god*, sect. iii, p. 6; *na 1911 god*, sect. iii, p. 58; *na 1912 god*, sect. iii, p. 10; *na 1913 god*, sect. iii, p. 9.

attitudes towards all the Karoliukas-type men, who no longer had to feel ashamed of engaging in trade or shopkeeping, and towards businessmen 'who were one's own kin and were naturally supported more by the people than was the Jew'.⁷¹

However, the number of farmers professionally engaged in trade remained small. At the beginning of the twentieth century in Kaunas province, just over 10 per cent of farmers (and around 5 per cent of landlords) were considered professional traders. The breakdown of categories of individuals engaged in business or trade is shown in Table 6. According to Ludvikas Truska's calculations, at that time approximately 74 per cent of traders and some 53 per cent of industrialists were Jews.⁷²

The slow rise of the non-Jewish trading class is related to internal economic circumstances. According to Solomonas Atamukas, the formation of the Lithuanian (and, I might add, the Belarusian) commercial, industrial, and financial bourgeoisie at the end of the nineteenth century clashed with the roles of the Polish and Russian landlords who were dominant in the villages, and with Polish, German, and especially Jewish businessmen in the cities.⁷³ However, with the modernization of society and upheavals in the economy, the changed conditions for economic activity provided a new impulse. Traditional attitudes towards trade (and other non-agricultural businesses) changed, and the outdated approach to business met with harsher criticism:

and our people . . . not only do they not know how to improve their lot and are too lazy to do so, they want everyone else to remain in the dark as well . . . it is out of jealousy that they mock him [the non-Jewish trader] or try to set some trap for him, just so that he will fail . . . They must think that only Jews, those Jewish upstarts, are capable of trading and that's why they sell their grain to them, rather than to the Lithuanian. No, brothers, trade is right for anyone and is useful for everyone, not just Jews.⁷⁴

⁷¹ M. Šalčius, *Dešimt metų tautiniai-kultūrinio darbo Lietuvoje (1905–1915)* (Chicago, 1917), 44.

⁷² L. Truska, 'Lietuvos nežemdirbinės buržuazijos skaičius, tautinė sudėtis ir išsimokslinimas prieš Pirmąjį pasaulinį karą', *Lietuvos TSR mokslų akademijos darbai*, ser. A, 1 (50) (1975), 88.

⁷³ Atamukas, *Lietuvos žydų kelias*, 64.

⁷⁴ A. Kalinys, 'Kas girdėti. Korespondencijos. Vilkaviškis', *Šaltinis*, 1906, no. 36, p. 572.

A breakthrough, related to the beginning of socio-economic modernization, occurred around the late 1880s, when customs and norms of economic behaviour began to alter and the greater part of Christian society changed its preconceptions about trade by gradually becoming more entrepreneurial.

Yet the inadequate business experience of the non-Jewish population, the limited opportunities in the domestic market, and the unexpectedly strong competitive advantage held by Jews in business retarded the entrepreneurship of non-Jewish ethnic groups on the one hand, and on the other encouraged the newly forming groups of businessmen who were of non-Jewish origin to search for alternative business channels.

CONCLUSION

In the period under discussion, the traditionally developed structure of ethnic divisions of labour in the Lithuanian provinces endured, and trade remained the specialized domain of the Jewish ethno-confessional minority. However, the ethnic structure of the trading class did gradually begin to change after the introduction of reforms in 1861, and alongside professional (mostly Jewish) traders, the numbers of other traders from the non-Jewish population started to grow. Further, by the late nineteenth century there were many calls from the ideologues of Lithuanian nationalism urging the creation of nationalized business. The difficulties experienced by 'newcomers' in the competitive battle against Jewish businessmen in the trade sector was one factor that led to a rise in the antisemitic mood of society. Jews were seen as the main economic opponents, and the emphasis placed on the activities that secured them their dominant positions in the economy served to continue the tradition of dividing the business sphere into 'our own' and 'foreigners'. However, with the growth of commercialization, the lack of business aptitude among 'our own' and their lack of entrepreneurial skills enabled Jewish businesses to maintain their advantages. But with changes in the ways that economic activities could be carried out, new opportunities opening up as a result of revised legislation on economic activities, and the commercialization of agriculture, social attitudes towards non-agricultural business gradually started to change as well, and traditionally farming-oriented Lithuanians (and Belarusians) began to break into the trade sector. However, the number of local non-Jewish traders was slow to rise, and Jews continued to hold on to their dominant positions. The insignificant participation of the peasantry in trade may have been determined by the slow change in traditional attitudes towards trade, the attachment to agriculture (which had become traditional), and the inadequate business experience of the non-Jewish population.

Translated from the Lithuanian by Albina Strunga