

## EARLY RECORDINGS OF JEWISH MUSIC IN POLAND

by

**Michael Aylward**

### **Introduction to the online edition March 2008**

I would like to thank the Littman Library which has kindly given its consent for the online publication of this article which was first published in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry, Volume 16: Jewish Popular Culture and its Afterlife* (2003), edited by Michael C. Steinlauf and Antony Polonsky and published on behalf of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies and the American Association for Polish Jewish Studies by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

I hope at some stage this year to write a greatly expanded and updated version of this article which is now woefully out of date. Despite its title, this essay was tantamount to a summary of the *Discography of Early European Recordings of Jewish Music* I had been working on since 1994. At the time of its composition (around 2001) I had documented a mere 1,753 recordings. Since then many thousands more have been incorporated and the total now stands in the region of 14,000. Furthermore, there is every indication that in coming years many thousands more will be added.

Nevertheless, despite this great increase in numbers, the general picture presented here remains much the same. Cantorial and Yiddish vocal items are still the main recorded categories in pretty much equal proportions, whereas purely instrumental recordings continue to account for a minute percentage of the overall total.

The only general statement in this article that needs major revision is the claim that: "The period 1918 to 1939 saw a steep decline, we may even say collapse, of the recording of Jewish music in Europe." Whereas there most certainly was a great decline in production, my continued research during the last 7 years has demonstrated that this was by no means as dramatic as at first seemed the case.

Finally, one factual error needs to be corrected. Dr Rainer Lotz has pointed out to me that the recordings in Table 2 noted as having been recorded in Tarnów would in fact have been recorded in Berlin.

As ever, if anyone has any information, no matter how slight, that may prove relevant to this project, they are always more than welcome to contact me. My contact details are given at the end of the article.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Helen Winkler for generously offering to host this article for me until such time as I get around to creating my own website."

Michael Aylward - 12 March 2008