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## Deaf People in the Kingdom of Poland, in Light of the 1897 Census\*

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### SUMMARY

The article addresses the problem of the structure and numbers of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland in light of the 1897 census. The analysis of such data as geography of settlement, the circumstances of marriage, as well as linguistic and occupational factors, make it possible to understand the social context in which the Deaf functioned on the frontier of the Russian Empire. The use of comparative data from the 1839 and 1921 censuses not only dynamizes the picture, but also empowers us to observe the long-term social processes that the Deaf underwent.

**KEYWORDS:** history of the Deaf, history of the Kingdom of Poland, cultural minorities.

### STRESZCZENIE

#### Głusi w Królestwie Polskim w świetle spisu powszechnego z 1897 roku

W artykule zostały poruszone problemy struktury i liczebności Głuchych w Królestwie Polskim w świetle spisu z 1897 r. Analiza takich danych jak geografia osadnicza, okoliczności zawierania małżeństw, a także kwestie językowe i zawodowe, pozwoliły na zrozumienie kontekstu społecznego, w jakim funkcjonowali Głusi na pograniczu Imperium Rosyjskiego. Wykorzystanie danych porównawczych ze spisów 1839 i 1921 r. nie tylko dynamizuje ten obraz, lecz także upoważnia do obserwacji długofalowych procesów społecznych, jakie stały się udziałem Głuchych.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** historia Głuchych, historia Królestwa Polskiego, mniejszości kulturowe.

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## Introduction

The study of the social history of Central and Eastern Europe is entering a stage of research into specific issues of social relations. Their theoretical layer is today located not so much in the strictly hierarchical and perhaps too schematic history of societies, seen from a structural perspective, as in the borderlands between cultural history and historical anthropology<sup>1</sup>. One of the binding themes of this borderland of research fields, is the problem of the struggle to empower those social groups that were effectively marginalized for years. In the Polish context, a clear example are the studies of peasants which are located in the so-called “peoples history”. They are conducted with varying degrees of success and effect. In this case, researchers try to empower the studied group, give it a voice or even consider its history, taking into account the agency of the studied subjects<sup>2</sup>. Following the achievements of Western historiography and observing the intensification of studies on peasants, Polish historians are also beginning to take an interest in other social groups, such as representatives of non-heteronormative groups, sex workers or the criminal world, which until now were almost outside the field of their scholarly consideration<sup>3</sup>. Research on people with disabilities has also been emerging from this trend in social history. Although it is difficult yet to speak of significant results of these studies inspired by contemporary social history, it seems obvious that following the fashion of postcolonial research on the marginalized they seem to be a forward-looking trend<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The differences in perspectives were defined in P. Burke's 2005 book published in Polish as P. Burke, *Historia kulturowa (wprowadzenie)*, Kraków 2012.

<sup>2</sup> A. Leszczyński, *Ludowa historia Polski*, Warszawa 2020; K. Pobłocki, *Chamstwo*, Wołowiec 2021, M. Rauszer, *Siła podporządkowanych*, Warszawa 2021; A. Chwalba, W. Harpula, *Cham i Pan. A nam, prostym, zewsząd nędza?*, Kraków 2022.

<sup>3</sup> In terms of the social history of non-heteronormative people, a tendency to research the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to source limitations, is apparent; see: K. Karczewski, “Call Me by My Name:” A “Strange and Incomprehensible” Passion in the Polish Kresy of the 1920s, “Slavic Review” 2022, vol. 81, no 3, pp. 631–652 and *idem*, *Transnational Flows of Knowledge and the Legislation of Homosexuality in Interwar Poland*, “Contemporary European History” 2022, pp. 1–18. For the Kingdom of Poland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jolanta Sikorska-Kulesza's book remains invaluable: *eadem*, *Zło tolerowane. Prostyucja w Królestwie Polskim w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2004. Crime studies have the longest history. Today they are developed mainly for the interwar period and in a series of works by Mateusz Rodak. Conceptually, they are based on Elżbieta Kaczyńska's research: *eadem*, *Człowiek przed sądem. Społeczne aspekty przestępczości w Królestwie Polskim 1815–1914*, Warszawa 1982.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting the research conducted by Aleksandra Oniszczyk. The first results of these studies are forthcoming.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the social image of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland during the era of its unification with the Russian Empire, based on statistical data. Analysis of the 1897 census materials will not only allow us to understand who the Deaf were and the social structures in which they lived during this period, but it will perhaps also bring us closer to answering the question of the opportunities and barriers to their integration and enable us to define the social space in which to locate the process of building a distinct cultural identity of the Deaf.

The period of study was not chosen accidentally. At the time in question, strong emancipation tendencies were emerging as a result of the powerful Russification policy in the Kingdom of Poland and in spite of the fact that grassroot social processes were constrained by the tsarist regime. Not only the rise of the national movement but also the effects of the enfranchisement and empowerment of the peasant masses, the noticeable activity of women's movements (the period of the first wave of feminism), the emergence of modern Jewish or Ukrainian identities all formed the social context in which the Deaf community should be analysed<sup>5</sup>. Judging by the development of social and educational institutions and organizations for the Deaf, one could assume that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a process began, which resulted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a situation where the Deaf started to be perceived as a cultural minority, characterized by a unique identity. Both the changes in the educational system (described, for example, Beata Trębicka-Postrzygacz's work), as well as the emergence of associations for the Deaf (in the Kingdom of Poland, the Society of Former Deaf Students of the Institute for the Deaf in Warsaw, founded in 1883), suggest that the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century may have been a key moment in the history of the Deaf<sup>6</sup>. However, this issue requires further study, whereas this article is intended only to outline the social background in which such transformations could occur.

From the research and study of the history of the Deaf conducted in Poland by historians of education, we know that until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the

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<sup>5</sup> These processes are well shown in the works by Aleksiej Miller and Stanisław Wiech: A. Miller, *Impieria Romanowych i nacjonalizm*, Moskwa 2006 i S. Wiech, *Spółeczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego w oczach carskiej policji politycznej (1866–1896)*, 2. ed., Kielce 2010, as well as in the collective work: *Regiony Rossijskiej Impierii. Idenciczność, reprezentacja (na) znaczenie*, red. E. Boltunowa and W. Sanderlend, Moskwa 2021 and M. Rolf, *Rządy imperialne w Kraju nadwiślańskim*, Warszawa 2016.

<sup>6</sup> B. Trębicka-Postrzygacz, *Szkoły dla dzieci niesłyszących na ziemiach polskich w latach 1817–1914*, Lublin 2011.

Deaf were a marginalized group of people<sup>7</sup>. Their status had until then been observed through the prism of educational activities. Those, in turn, bore the marks of paternalistically organized assistance and care, and attempts to “restore” the Deaf to society took the form of education and providing (“teaching”) them with the tools of communication<sup>8</sup>. The organization of the Institute of the Deaf and Blind in Warsaw in 1817 and the activities of Fr. Fałkowski, on the one hand, are highly commendable; but on the other hand, they locate the Deaf in the system of social and, above all, cultural dependencies. The philanthropic and educational endeavours, well described in Beata Trębicka-Postrzygacz’s<sup>9</sup> book and Bogdan Szczepankowski’s<sup>10</sup> anecdotal but broadly comparative work, leave us with no illusions about the status of the Deaf in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Christian charity, which formed the core philosophical basis for the philanthropic approach towards the Deaf, locked the beneficiaries in the feudal and state social system, into the zone of “the others”, despite its positive sides and real support for those in need. The stigmatization and inequality inherent in this type of philanthropy, though unintentional, nevertheless determined the social status of that group. It is true that, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the society on the western fringes of the Russian Empire did not have much to offer to the Deaf since professional and educational structures and, above all, strong and enduring patterns of social division dictated that those who did not fit into the norms constructed at that

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the process of marginalization continues even today see: H. Lane, *Maska dobroczynności. Deprecjacja społeczności głuchych*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 21–53.

<sup>8</sup> The study of the history of the Deaf is, on the whole, limited to works devoted to upbringing and education: H. Okopiński, *Zarys dziejów nauczania głuchoniemych*, Warszawa 1964; M. Pękowska, *Twórczość naukowa i działalność popularyzatorska nauczycieli szkół kształcących głuchoniemych w latach 1870–1913: zarys problematyki*, “Studia Pedagogiczne. Problemy społeczne, edukacyjne i artystyczne” 2008, t. 17, pp. 107–114; U. Eckert, K. Wereszka, *Początki kształcenia osób słabosłyszących w Polsce*, “Człowiek – Niepełnosprawność – Społeczeństwo” 1 (11) 2010, pp. 37–48; O. Lipkowski, *150 lat szkolnictwa dla głuchych w Polsce (w 150 rocznicę założenia Instytutu Głuchoniemych i Ociemniałych w Warszawie)*, Warszawa 1967; B. Trębicka-Postrzygacz, *Szkoły dla dzieci niesłyszących*; L. Karpińska, *Zarys dziejów Warszawskiego Instytutu Głuchoniemych i Ociemniałych w latach 1817–1917*, in: *O wychowaniu dzieci głuchych*, red. O. Lipkowski, Warszawa 1967, pp. 11–56; B. Szczepankowski, *Historia ruchu głuchoniemych*, Warszawa 1997; M. Pękowska, *Pamiętnik Warszawskiego Instytutu Głuchoniemych i Ociemniałych źródłem wiedzy o zagranicznych instytucjach kształcenia specjalnego*, “Człowiek – Niepełnosprawność – Społeczeństwo” 2/36 (2017).

<sup>9</sup> B. Trębicka-Postrzygacz, *Szkoły dla dzieci niesłyszących*.

<sup>10</sup> B. Szczepankowski, *Zarys Historii Stowarzyszeń Głuchych 1876–1946*, Warszawa 1996.

time should be placed on the margins of the society<sup>11</sup>. Throughout almost the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century a kind of double morality dominated, which on the one hand encouraged the support and “restoration” the Deaf to society but on the other excluded them<sup>12</sup>.

After the enfranchisement of the peasants during the second wave of industrialization of the western lands of the empire, social relations changed rapidly, and the process of social modernization, in its peripheral versions, effectively changed not only the behaviour, but also the ideas of the social masses<sup>13</sup>. The purpose of this article is to understand what social and demographic conditions the Deaf lived under on the fringes of the Russian Empire and how these conditions may have affected their social position.

Defining the Deaf is certainly a separate problem worthy of linguistic study<sup>14</sup>. In accordance with the terminology adopted today, I use the term “the Deaf” with a capital letter, as it refers to the cultural minority that exists today. By this term I mean, first of all, people who are deprived of hearing to a degree that prevents them from full communication and participation in society without conflict. The sources at my disposal exhibit a strong language of medicalization of the problem in this regard. The press discourse, in turn, used inconsistent language. The terms, today rightly considered offensive and deprecating, such as: “dumb” or “deaf-dumb” were part of the operationalization of deafness as a social problem with a medical, not cultural, basis. In addition to their definitional and communicative function, the terms obviously had a value-laden meaning which emphasized marginalization. The 1897 census placed statistical data about the Deaf next to the data on the blind (Rus. *slepych na oba glaza*), mute (Rus. *niemych*) and intellectually disabled (Rus. *umaliszenych*), adopting the category of “deaf” (Rus. *głuchoniemych*) in the case of interest to us<sup>15</sup>. In the 1921 census, the term “deaf” was used, and the rubric was placed within the category “blind in both

<sup>11</sup> On the subject of the forming social distances in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Polish lands, see: I. Ihnatowicz et. al., *Spółeczeństwo polskie od X do XX wieku*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 551–563.

<sup>12</sup> M. Piotrowska-Marchewa, *Nędzarze i filantropi. Problem ubóstwa w polskiej opinii publicznej 1815–1963*, Toruń 2004, pp. 114–138.

<sup>13</sup> Wiktor Marzec deals with political aspects of this phenomenon in: *idem, Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne*, Łódź–Kraków 2016.

<sup>14</sup> In part, such research is being conducted, but it currently relates to studies of contemporary use, cf.: W. Eżlakowski, *Aksjologiczna analiza słowa Głuchy w języku polskim (na podstawie materiału korpusowego)*, “Poradnik Językowy” 2021, nr 2, pp. 87–101.

<sup>15</sup> The term “deaf and dumb” is not only hurtful, but also wrong because the vast majority of deaf people communicate very well; they speak, if not with a speech apparatus then with sign languages or in writing.

eyes” and right next to it, the category “without arms, without legs”. This cursory review of terms supports the remark made earlier about the paternalistic and medicalized treatment of the Deaf and their relegation to social margins. They were simply not recognized as “full” members of society at the time. At the same time deafness was actually becoming a disease that permanently placed those affected by it in a lower social stratum. This is perfectly evident in public discourse, when Deaf people were included in narratives about people with disabilities<sup>16</sup>.

Studies of the history of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland are developed by successive works on education, child rearing, and self-organization”<sup>17</sup>. Among a number of excellent historical treatises, created especially in the pedagogical stream, there is a severe lack of those that answer the questions of who the Deaf were, how many of them there were, what social structures they lived in, and what they did. Additionally, there has never been an attempt to answer the question about the social conditions in which the process of creating a cultural identity for the Deaf began. Did the structuralist view of the Deaf’s place within society foster integration or force efforts to create separate spheres of contact – within the group only?

These are the basic research questions I pose in this article. As in the case of the Kingdom of Poland, answers are also lacking for the Russian Empire as a whole. Russian historiography focuses on the organizational and educational aspects of the history of the Deaf. The object and topic of study there are not so much the Deaf themselves, as the institutions established by hearing people to support them<sup>18</sup>. Non-Russian historiography on the Deaf in the tsarist empire is practically non-existent. In the few works that were written, the Kingdom of Poland is not singled out, and the problem addressed here is absent even in the context of the empire<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> J. Czerniawski, *Problem niepełnej sprawności na łamach prasy warszawskiej okresu pozytywizmu (1865–1885)*, “Kronika Warszawy” 2003, nr 30/1/2, pp. 11–27.

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 7.

<sup>18</sup> M. Bogdanov-Berezovskij, *Polozhenie gluhonemyh v Rossii s obzorom sovremennogo sostojanija voprosa v vosstanovlenii sluha gluhonemyh*, Sankt-Peterburg 1901; A.G. Basova, *Istorija obuchenija gluhonemyh*, Moskva 1940; *Vserossijskoe obshhestvo gluhih. Istorija, razvitie, perspektivy*, red. V.G. Ushakov et al., Leningrad 1985; *Istorija Armjanskogo obshhestva gluhih*, Moskva 2013; *Istorija Vserossijskogo obshhestva gluhih*, t. 1, Moskva 2007; D.W. Dolgov, *Blagotvoritel’nye, popechitel’nye i uchebnye zavedenija dlja gluhih v dorevoljucionnoj Moskve (1831–1917)*, Moskva 2017.

<sup>19</sup> C.L. Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR. Marginality, Community, and Soviet Identity 1917–1991*, Ithaca and London 2017; A.B. Rosen, *The Status of Deaf Under the Regime of the Czar* “American Annals of the Deaf” 1921, vol. 66, no. 4, pp. 349–353; S. Burch, *Transcending*

Directing the text to the Polish reader, in the situation of rather limited results of previous studies of the Deaf in the perspective of social history, I gave up the comparative method. The literature on the Deaf in nineteenth-century Western Europe and the USA is quite rich<sup>20</sup>. Western European and American studies, however, are of a different nature, that is, they approach the problem of the Deaf from the perspective of observing the process of identity change in this group and the possible development of institutions supporting it. The different social context, the peculiarities of the western frontiers of the Russian empire and the difficulty of comparing 19<sup>th</sup> century statistics, produced by very different methods, do not allow for comparative studies at this stage in my research.

In this text, I first seek to identify the social structures in which the Deaf functioned in the Kingdom of Poland at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and consider how these may have influenced the emergence of deaf cultural minority in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Registration of the Deaf and Its Credibility

The strategy introduced by modern states to control the population by the administrative procedures resulted in the preparation of a number of tools for registering the population. From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Western European administrations tried to census citizens and subjects in various ways, using categories developed for political and fiscal purposes. Statistics for the nineteenth-century Kingdom of Poland, created under the influence of those tendencies, however, do not have a reputation for being well conducted. Maria Nietyksza and Witold Pruss, experts on the subject, have pointed out that not only were such studies conducted sloppily and not very accurately, but they were also defectively planned<sup>21</sup>.

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*Revolutions: The Tsars, the Soviets and Deaf Culture*, "Journal of Social History" 2000, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 393–401.

<sup>20</sup> *The Deaf History Reader*, ed. J.V. van Cleve, Washington 2002; M. Nomeland, R. Nomeland, *The Deaf Community in America. History in the Making*, Jefferson et al. 2012; R.M. Buchanan, *Illusions of Equality. Deaf Americans in School and Factory 1850–19150*, Washington 1999; S. Plann, *A Silent Minority. Deaf Education in Spain 1550–1835*, Berkley et al. 1997; K. Nakamura, *Deaf in Japan. Singing and the Politics of Identity*, Ithaca, NY and London 2006.

<sup>21</sup> W. Pruss, *Ludność Królestwa Polskiego 1864–1914*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 42–46; M. Nietyksza, *Ludność Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 11–12.



Population censuses, specifically the 1897 Russian Empire census, which is of interest to us, is a source fraught with a number of errors and inaccuracies. The efforts of the tsarist authorities implemented by the Statistical Committee, both at the central and local levels, have been described many times<sup>22</sup>. It is worth mentioning in this aspect that the vast majority of the census misrepresentations, in the form of data manipulation, manifested themselves in the categories of language and religion. Matters of social structure were primarily influenced by the circumstances under which the census was conducted, namely, for this study, the question of attitude to the census of those being registered and their acceptance of its mechanisms. It is obvious that it is impossible to register correctly those who will oppose it. In this case, we have no data on the reception of the census among the Deaf. We can only guess that not everyone knew and understood its objectives, because of poor access to both oral and written information<sup>23</sup>.

Strict laws requiring care for the Deaf were introduced in Russia in 1833 and 1857, but due to the autonomy of the Kingdom at the time, they were not then in force there. They imposed the need for medical examinations to determine the degree of social independence of people affected by deafness<sup>24</sup>. Those regulations were finally codified in 1900 and may have been put into practice in the Kingdom of Poland at that time<sup>25</sup>. However, we have no reliable information, because the obligation of medical examinations was not implemented for various reasons, even in Russia itself<sup>26</sup>. Those norms did not define who was considered

<sup>22</sup> The most interesting remarks can be found in the following works: *Die Nationalitäten des Russischen Reiches in der Volkszählung von 1897*, Bd. H. Bauer et al., vol. 1, Stuttgart 1991, pp. 54–60, and Ż. Kadio, *Laboratorija impierii: Rossija/SSSR, 1860–1940*, Moskwa 2010, pp. 47–58; A.C. Dobroński, *Infrastruktura społeczna i ekonomiczna guberni łomżyńskiej i obwodu białostockiego (1866–1914)*, Białystok 1979, pp. 37–40; W. Pruss, *Ludność Królestwa Polskiego*, pp. 42–46; S. Szulc, *Wartość materiałów statystycznych dotyczących stanu ludności b. Królestwa Polskiego*, Warszawa 1920, pp. 8–15; A.E. Brjuhanova, N.P. Ivanova, *Strukturalno-tipologičeskij analiz pervichnykh materialov Pervoj vseobshhej perepisi naselenija 1897 g. kak osnova istoriko-orientirovannoj bazy dannyh*, in: *Estestvennye metody v cifrovoj gumanitarnej sfere. Materialy vserossijskoj nauchnoj konferencii s mezhdunarodnym uchastiem (g. Perm', 15–18 maja 2018 g.)*, Perm' 2018, pp. 185–186.

<sup>23</sup> For the circumstances of conducting the census see: P. Rachwał, *Spis powszechny ludności w Królestwie Polskim 1897*, "Studia Archiwalne" 2021, vol. 8, pp. 61–64 and S. Szulc, *Wartość materiałów statystycznych*, pp. 61–64.

<sup>24</sup> *Istoria Vserossijskogo obshhestva gluhih*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> A.I. Blinov, *Predystorija Vserossijskogo obshhestva gluhih*, in: *Vserossijskoe obshhestvo gluhih. Istoria, razvitie, perspektivy*, Leningrad 1985, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.



deaf, hence the census instructions and extant census commissions documents in the Polish archives do not provide any information on this issue.

The strategy for conducting the census was that accountants would visit households – the unit used in the census – twice. Information was to be provided by the “head of the household”. If this person were not deaf, one would imagine that the census should record everyone correctly. However, it is an open question of whom would vouch for those who did not fit into the social mainstream, following the tradition of Old Polish pre-statistical censuses<sup>27</sup>.

It is certainly a problem that the census data only allows us to obtain a static picture. Although relatively the best source of figures for the Kingdom of Poland of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 1897 census does not allow us to observe changes and analyse the dynamics of the parameters studied. However, this problem is impossible to resolve. I am convinced that even a static picture obtained for only one historical moment at least permits an approximate answer to the research question posed in the introduction.

We can achieve a nuanced picture by referring to data of unclear provenance collected by the Governmental Commission for Domestic Affairs, Clergy and Public Enlightenment in 1839, and preserved in unverifiable copies<sup>28</sup>, and from later census materials created by the Second Polish Republic in 1921. However, it is impossible to make a territorial match between the data of 1839 and 1921 and that of 1897. Therefore, the attempt to obtain some dynamics of the studied phenomena must be limited to observations of certain issues at only a very general level.

There are no known attempts to keep special and separate administrative statistics referring to the Deaf for the entire empire, although some interest related to this matter was shown in Russia in 1835<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, relying on the 1897 census, such information was collected only in the face of the need to resolve medical or educational problems on an irregular basis<sup>30</sup>. However, selective archival records indicate that in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, city administrations

<sup>27</sup> For more about problems with the credibility of the pre-statistical census see: C. Kuklo, *Demografia Rzeczypospolitej przedrozbiorowej*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 51–74.

<sup>28</sup> Archiwum Państwowe Dokumentacji Osobowej i Płacowej w Milanówku (National Archives of Personal and Employment Documentation, further: APM), Instytut Głuchoniemych im. Jakuba Falkowskiego w Warszawie (the Jakub Flakowski Institute for the Deaf, further: IGFW) ref. 260, k. 26.

<sup>29</sup> V. Flori, *Głuchonemye, rassmatrivaemye v otnoshenii k ih sostojaniju i k sposobam obrazowanija, samym svojstvennym ih prirode. Sochinenie*, Sankt-Peterburg 1835, pp. 298–299.

<sup>30</sup> P. Jakobi, *Głuchonemye. Jetjud demografii i sravnitel'noj pedagogiki, predstavlen Gosudarstvennoj Dume kvoprosu ob objazatel'nom i darovom shkol'nom obuchenii*, Sankt-Peterburg 1907 and M. Bogdanov-Berezovskij, *Polozhenie gluhonemykh v Rossii*, pp. 15–55.

(presumably select ones) attempted to record the Deaf and a range of information about them. Such documents have survived only for the districts of the Radom Governorate and Radom itself, as well as Łódź. Their character can be described as police-administrative, because officials sought to determine the exact place of residence of those registered and a number of social parameters (origin, education, age, livelihood). The data served philanthropic purposes and can also be linked to the issue of the movement of some Deaf people to Warsaw to receive education at the Falkowski Institute. The strategies of the officials that helped them to find out the Deaf were quite different from those operating at the time of the census data collection. Based on surviving archival documentation, we can hypothesize that the Deaf found their way into the state administration's interest in Łódź and the Radom Governorate only when their lives required such an encounter with the office, be it because of philanthropic issues or ordinary matters of their livelihood. This would have consequences, as I will indicate below. Since the data comes only from two sources, it cannot be extrapolated over the entire group of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland. Nevertheless, these two cases allow us to shed a more light on at least selected geographical regions<sup>31</sup>.

We can contrast the data from the 1897 census with the aforementioned 1875 censuses of Radom and Radom County and the 1898 census of Łódź. The statistical differences between the two are enormous. The 1897 census records 24 Deaf people in Radom and 67 in Radom County, while for Łódź it records 199 Deaf people. Official local administration data lists 10 persons in Radom and 30 in the Radom County, but 93 in Łódź<sup>32</sup>.

These discrepancies are difficult to explain simply by the difference in time (1875 and 1897). However, one can judge, as it has been mentioned, that local administrative authorities had access to information about the Deaf, only if the Deaf themselves reported to the offices for some reason. Due to communication problems, this was probably infrequent. The administration could also be contacted on a Deaf person's behalf by someone who had legal custody of such a person and provided relevant information to officials. The issue of the completeness of the data from the 1897 census is different. The procedures of its collection allow us to

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<sup>31</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Radomiu (National Archives in Radom, further: APR), Rada Opieki Społecznej Guberni Radomskiej (Council for Social Care in the Radom Governorate, further: ROSGR), ref. 1098; Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (National Archives in Łódź, further: APŁ), Policmajster Miasta Łodzi (Łódź Chief Police Officer, further: PMŁ), ref. 1883.

<sup>32</sup> APR, ROSGR, ref. 1098, ch. 7 and 10–12, APŁ, PMŁ, ref. 1883, b.p.k.

conclude that, in terms of registration of the Deaf, the data contained is potentially more complete than other available statistics<sup>33</sup>. In the administrative system of the nineteenth-century state, deviations from the social “norm” of the time were typically meticulously recorded; thus, communication difficulties with the Deaf would have been bureaucratically documented. Sources devoted only to the Deaf, such as the aforementioned materials from Radom and Łódź, or archives devoted to the daily, “standard” activities of offices that reference the Deaf are virtually non-existent. Since it is difficult to assume that deafness was ignored, it should be than considered that Deaf people avoided encounters with the administration wherever possible. This approach to undertaking any social activity, however, does not apply to the same extent to those Deaf people who received education and were able to use, for example, Polish in writing, if only to participate in religious practices<sup>34</sup>. From its inception, the 1897 census was recognized as a better source of statistical data than materials provided by civil servants<sup>35</sup>.

The 1897 census reliably captures the structural problems faced by the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland. However, the issue of diagnosing deafness cannot be left unmentioned. Statistics related to age, which I will treat later, indicate limited numbers of young people under the age of ten included in the Deaf population. One could conclude (and this was probably partly the case) that young children were not diagnosed as deaf. However, it does not seem that they were recorded as those burdened with mental illness (which in poorly educated communities would probably be easy to do), since, in this respect, the statistical data within age groups is very similar as the one for the Deaf. It needs to be taken into account that some of the children were not diagnosed and completely omitted in the census questionnaires, or were not considered to have any problems at all. This problem is also discussed below. For now, it is only worth pointing out that, in my opinion, despite the shortcomings mentioned above, the 1897 census provides us with data allowing to obtain a reliable and fairly detailed picture of the Deaf community at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>33</sup> For the ways of conducting the census see: Ż. Kadio, *Laboratorija impierii*, pp. 55–58.

<sup>34</sup> Such examples are also scarce. Therefore, it is worth mentioning here the letters of the Deaf peasants to the “Gazeta Świąteczna” found by Łukasz Kożuchowski (I hereby thank him for sharing these materials with me). See: “Gazeta Świąteczna” 1903, nr 44, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> P. Jakobi, *Gluhonemye*, p. 19.

## What Was the Population of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland?

The answer to the above question is not so much an estimate (to these, after all, one can have various objections) as an attempt to assign appropriate recognition to a certain group of people. The people recorded in the census within the category of the “Deaf” are those who were considered by such by the respondents, who, let us recall, in light of the instructions were the “heads of households”. In fact, we are dealing here with a mechanism of imposing a certain variant of identification, where people were externally categorized into a particular group. It is less significant if we examine categories relating to social stratification, more so when it comes to the problem of identity.

Deaf people made up 0.11% of the population in the Kingdom of Poland. In light of the data from 1839, it was 0.02% and in 1921 for the territories of the Second Polish Republic: 0.12%<sup>36</sup>. The differences can be explained by the low level of registration of the Deaf in 1839 and the significant improvement of the same in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today, despite the continuing difficulties in compiling statistics related to this group, resulting from the difficulty in ascertaining whether or not deafness is a permanent condition and what degree of deafness were necessarily to be classified as “Deaf” in the statistics, it is more than 2%<sup>37</sup>. In contrast, in social practice, typically 1 person per 1,000 is deaf. The difference is due to definitional problems. However, if we consider the theoretical higher percentage to be appropriate, it is difficult to question this phenomenon and explain it in any other way than with these three hypotheses presented below.

The first one concerns shortcomings in the registration of the Deaf. I pointed out the organizational difficulties of the census and certain patterns and traditions. Those tended to have regional trends, or at least differed in their strength and direction regionally. After all, it is difficult to assume that in regions with different population structures, different degrees of urbanization, and different population densities, the level of deficiencies in the registration of the Deaf would

<sup>36</sup> *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*, Sankt Pieterburg 1904 (here and further calculations based on volumes referring to all governorates of the Kingdom of Poland) and *Statystyka Polski wydawana przez Główny Urząd Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, t. 31: *Pierwszy powszechny spis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 30 września 1921 roku. Mieszkania, ludność, stosunki zawodowe. Tablice Państwowe*, Warszawa 1927, p. 58.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/nik-o-przygotowaniu-urzedow-do-kontaktu-z-nieslyszacyimi.html> (accessed: 1.10.2022).

be statistically identical. This hypothesis is contradicted by the evenness of the statistical distributions (see: table 1). Small differences do not indicate that there were any clear tendencies for the statistical apparatus to ignore the Deaf in any region. On the contrary, the even distribution suggests that the registration procedures were quite effective and they applied uniformly to the entire Kingdom of Poland.

The second hypothesis is that deafness and the spread of numerous diseases that lead to it – especially infections (inflammation), rheumatoid, and infectious diseases such as scarlet fever – are related to civilizational progress<sup>38</sup>. The development of diseases associated with modern societies and a number of stimuli that negatively affect hearing may be the cause of a significant increase in the percentage of Deaf people with age.

The third is the already raised problem of defining the deaf, and thus including all such people in the state's statistical apparatus. The creator of the census did not define the category of "Deaf" as used in the census, so it can be assumed that for the people of the time, including the accountants collecting the data, the definition of Deafness and the Deaf was clear and understood intuitively, which does not mean identically in all cases. Today, sociological research also do not use uniform categories with resulting inconsistencies in the created statistics.

It is difficult to completely rule out any of the hypotheses presented. However, it seems that the third one most likely explains the statistical differences. Therefore, it could be assumed that the percentage of the Deaf a century ago was roughly equal to that of today.

Without a doubt, it should be recognized that the Deaf constituted a statistically marginal community in the Kingdom of Poland. This parameter indicates unequivocally that there were no favourable social conditions for the Deaf to form either a distinct social or legal group or a distinct cultural identity. Such a small community had little social power; meeting a lot of competition from groups constructing their national and therefore cultural identities, it would be difficult to expect clear activity in marking the determinants of dissimilarity. This conclusion is clearly supported by the fact that the population of the Deaf was evenly distributed throughout the territory of the Kingdom of Poland. There were no enclaves concentrating the population of the Deaf in geographic proximity, which, in light

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<sup>38</sup> The aforementioned diseases dominated medical statistics in the Kingdom of Poland as early as 1910, and arguably their detection and treatment was better handled in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, see: *Rocznik Statystyczny Królestwa Polskiego. Rok 1913*, red. W. Grabski, Warszawa 1914, p. 289. P. Jakobi, *Głuchonemye*, p. 19.

Table 1. The number of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland in particular governorates in 1897

Governorate of	Area of governorate /km <sup>2</sup>	The Deaf	
		a.n	%
Warszawa	14,562	2,038	0.11
Piotrków	12,249	1,542	0.11
Lublin	16,831	1,221	0.11
Kalisz	11,373	1,153	0.13
Radom	12,352	814	0.10
Siedlce	12,595	726	0.09
Kielce	10,092	1,019	0.13
Suwałki	12,550	661	0.11
Łomża	12,086	623	0.11
Płock	10,187	700	0.13
Warsaw (city)	.	553	0.08
Total	.	11,050	0.11

Source: APM, IGFW, ref. 260, p. 26.

Table 2. The number of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland in particular governorates in 1839

Governorate of	Area of governorate /km <sup>2</sup>	The Deaf	
		a.n	%
Krakow	10,567	148	0.3
Sandomierz	13,565	129	0.27
Kalisz	16,998	189	0.26
Lublin	16,736	158	0.27
Płock	16,650	193	0.35
Masovian	19,835	232	0.24
Podlachian	14,183	101	0.24
Augustów	18,764	248	0.39
Warsaw (city)	–	28	.
Total	–	1426	0.12

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*, Sankt-Peterburg 1905.

of Gordon's former research, for example, would block their integration and support the maintenance of markers that consolidate the group and at the same time distinguish it from other communities or the rest of society in general<sup>39</sup>.

On the other hand, however, fragmentary administrative data suggests that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, people affected by deafness began to seek a change in their social position more actively. The tendency to avoid or separate themselves from the institutions of power probably diminished over time, as suggested by officials indicating that in 1875 there were 113 people awaiting admission to the Institute for the Deaf and Blind in Warsaw. As the adjutant to the general-governor of Warsaw wrote to the head of the Radom governorate: "[...] every year the number of candidates wishing to enter [the buildings of] this institute increases..."<sup>40</sup>. From the perspective of the development of support systems, the Deaf increasingly abandoned their passive attitudes. This moment therefore calls for reflection on the beginnings of construction of a separate group identity. On the basis of incomplete data from an earlier period, we can see that this situation did not change for several decades after 1839 (table 2). Certainly, the level of registration improved; it was good in governorates where efficient officials were in charge (such as the governorate of Płock) and weaker in other less well-administered governorates.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were between 150,000 and 200,000 Deaf people living in the Russian Empire<sup>41</sup>. Statistics indicate that most of them lived in the European part of the country, where nearly 1 person per 1,000 was deaf<sup>42</sup>. Much lower percentages were observed for Siberia, and even lower for the Asian governorates<sup>43</sup>. For example, in the governorate of Yerevan, the Kars region, and Yelizavietpol governorate (territories of Armenia), the Deaf accounted for 0.5 to 0.7 persons per 1,000 inhabitants<sup>44</sup>. In this aspect, the Kingdom of Poland seems to meet the statistical norm. Of course, it should be taken into account that regional differences may have occurred more often due to the accuracy of registration than to the specific geography of settlement. This is similar to the comparative scale for Europe as a whole, where, there were 1.3 Deaf people per 1,000 inhabitants in Austria (excluding Hungary) (1890), 0.5 in Great Britain (1881), 0.73 in Italy

<sup>39</sup> M. Gordon, *America as a Multicultural Society*, Philadelphia 1981, pp. 48–50.

<sup>40</sup> APR, ROSGR, ref. 1098, ch. 2.

<sup>41</sup> [author unknown], *The Status of the Deaf in Russia Before and After the October Revolution 1917*, "American Annals of the Deaf" 1931, vol. 76, no. 5, p. 455.

<sup>42</sup> A.I. Blinov, *Predystorija Vserossijskogo obshchestva глуhih*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> P. Jakobi, *Gluhonemye*, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> *Istoriya Armjanskogo obshchestva глуhih*, p. 5.



(1871), 0.58 in the US (1880) and 0.62 in France (1872). Only the Swedish statistics of 1870 resemble the data from the Kingdom of Poland nearly thirty years later<sup>45</sup>. It is not worth undertaking a discussion based on a comparative method when we have material so diverse in its provenance and collection methodology. One can only judge that the Deaf were a statistically marginal group everywhere.

## Social Parameters of the Deaf Group

At this stage it is necessary to look at the parameters of the group recorded in the censuses as “deaf”. The even distribution of the population’s settlement is accompanied by regularities in the urban/rural variation of the Deaf residence. Given how much of the population of the Kingdom of Poland was rural (exceeding 68%), it should be assumed that the population of the Deaf was distributed in the same proportion, and that the efficiency of registration was good both in urban and rural areas<sup>46</sup>. Hence the conclusion that, in this respect, there were no specific social factors constructing this group.

Statistics from 1921 demonstrate that the population of the Deaf was increasingly rural (table 3). Indeed, at the beginning of the Second Polish Republic the percentage of the Deaf living in the countryside reached 79%. Apart from the obvious technical difficulties involved in conducting the 1921 census, this was probably due to wartime migrations and urban depopulation, as this statistic corresponds generally to settlement structures in the Second Polish Republic<sup>47</sup>. Deaf people were not a significant part of an urban population in independent Poland. Two-thirds of them lived in the countryside. Thus, it can be considered that in this aspect they had a chance to integrate successfully into society as a whole. However, this is not an optimistic sign. We know from advanced research on education and schooling for the Deaf that institutions designed for this purpose were concentrated in cities. This means that a significant number of the Deaf were deprived of access to education and support

<sup>45</sup> Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie (further: APW), Instytut Głuchoniemych im. Jakuba Falkowskiego w Warszawie (further: IGO), sygn. 260, k. 9–13.

<sup>46</sup> J. Janczak, *Statystyka ludności Królestwa Polskiego w drugiej połowie XIX w.*, „Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski” 1994, t. 19, pp. 47–116.

<sup>47</sup> See: *Dokumentacja geograficzna*, z. 3/4, *Ludność miast i osiedli typu miejskiego na ziemiach Polski od 1810 do 1960 r.*, red. A. Jelonek, Warszawa 1967.

Table. 3 Percentage of the Deaf living in rural areas in the Kingdom of Poland in 1897

Governorate of	% rural area
Warszawa	65
Piotrków	67
Lublin	64
Kalisz	66
Radom	66
Siedlce	66
Kielce	66
Suwałki	66
Łomża	66
Płock	66

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*

institutions which resulted in a relatively low level of education and potential limitations to social activity.

In a sense, the structure of estates (clergy, nobility, bourgeois and peasants) of the Deaf corresponds to the pictures emerging from the settlement statistics. In the Kingdom of Poland at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was of only minor administrative and much greater historical significance. In turn, it did not show the real state of inequalities, for the main grid of social divisions there actually took on a class character<sup>48</sup>. The structure of estates in the case of the Deaf does not tell us much about the conditions of their functioning. Rather, it is yet another test of the group's state of integrity. The similarity to the estate structure of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland indicates that legal and economic differences (including access to medical care) did not protect anyone from diseases that sometimes resulted in hearing loss. Interestingly, the estate structure had little effect on the extent and speed of diagnosis of deafness, although it would appear that such a diagnosis was more difficult to achieve in the countryside, which was often deprived of reliable and permanent medical assistance.

Nevertheless, Deaf peasants accounted for more than 73% of all those affected by deafness (chart 1), which was roughly in line with the general statistics derived from the 1897 census for the estate structure (two-thirds of the population of the Kingdom of Poland were peasants). Minor differences between estate affiliation

<sup>48</sup> I. Ihnatowicz et. al., *Spółeczeństwo polskie*, pp. 506–535.

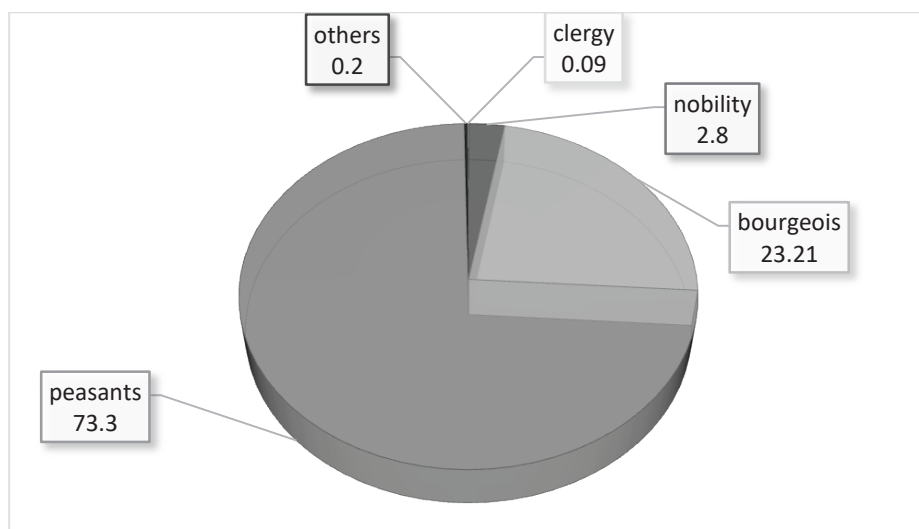


Chart 1. State estate structure of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland in 1897

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*

and place of residence should be explained by the common occurrences of peasants living in towns<sup>49</sup>.

Demographically, the Deaf reflected general social divisions, and deafness was a natural and structurally (if not statistically) common element of social life.

Age plays a special role in the study of the structure and demographic parameters characterizing the Deaf. It helps to define to what extent deafness was an acquired condition and to what it was congenital. In fact, then, it tells us how many of the Deaf had any chances to experience elements of primary socialization in the situation where there was some communication with the social environment – in other words, in a situation where perception of a culture influencing a family was possible.

The chart 2 presents an age pyramid typical of stagnant societies, that is, those with low fertility rates. We observe it for most societies today. Such a pyramid today is the result of the process of demographic transformation caused by a low birth rate<sup>50</sup>. For the Kingdom of Poland in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the age structure of the entire population was arranged in a triangle, that is, it reg-

<sup>49</sup> E. Kaczyńska, *Pejzaż miejski z zaściankiem w tle*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 68–97 and 101.

<sup>50</sup> M. Okólski, *Demografia. Podstawowe pojęcia, procesy i teorie w encyklopedycznym zarysie*, Warszawa 2004, p. 57.

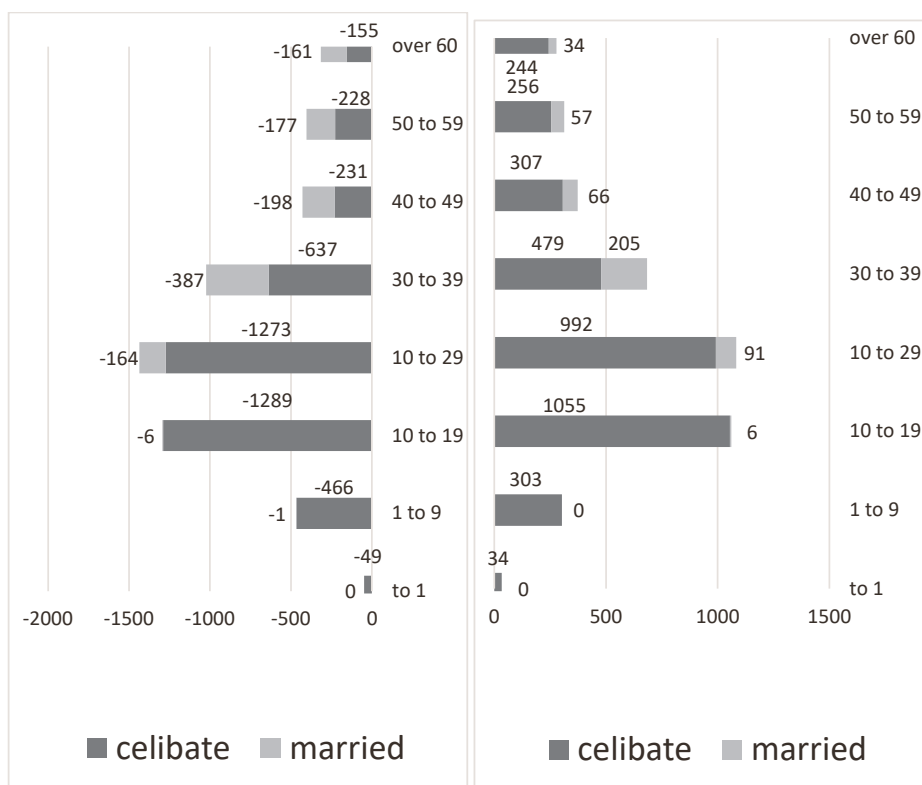


Chart 2. The age pyramid of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland in 1897

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*

istered a large number of young people and exhibited a regular decrease in the number of subsequent age groups<sup>51</sup>. To what does this shape of the age pyramid for the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland in 1897 testify? Undeniably, it is evidence that hearing loss was, in the vast majority of cases, an condition acquired during childhood and early adolescence (roughly the end of the first and beginning of the second decade of life). The exact causes for the population we are dealing with are not known. Medical and statistical studies of that time list a number of infectious and inflammatory and rheumatic diseases. In the aforementioned letter to the "Gazeta Świąteczna", the cause of hearing loss of a person mentioned in the correspondence to the newspaper is attributed to typhoid<sup>52</sup>. At this stage, it is worth

<sup>51</sup> *Historia Polski w liczbach*, t. 1, red. A. Jezierski and A. Wyczański, Warszawa 2003 (ch. "Ludność Królestwa Polskiego według płci i wieku w 1897 r.", b.p.s.).

<sup>52</sup> „Gazeta Świąteczna” 1903, nr 44, p. 3.

returning to the problem of reliability of registration that was mentioned earlier. Certainly, some Deaf children were not diagnosed early enough, and this state of affairs shapes age statistics. It seems that children who did not respond to audio messages could have been included to the group of people with mental illnesses; however, this is not the case, as the age pyramid for the mentally ill resembles that presented for the Deaf. Additionally, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the diagnosis of mental illnesses was doubtless already quite accurate. Data for 1910 indicates that at least twenty two different conditions in this area were recognized<sup>53</sup>.

Thus, it can be concluded that the vast majority of Deaf people were socialized early in life in the area of the language and culture of those not affected by deafness. Hence, it may be important to study linguistic declarations, as they depict at least in part the identity of the environment in which the Deaf recorded in the census grew up. The phenomenon of dual identities, e.g., Deaf Jews, Deaf Germans, etc., may have emerged over time among them. Besides, it is important to notice that socialization in a non-Deaf environment prevented social disintegration. In analysing the phenomenon of acquired deafness, it should be recognized that the majority of Deaf people grew up and spent part of their lives among hearing people. It may be assumed then that at the stage of primary socialization they absorbed, to at least a small extent, the basic elements of hearing people's cultures, including those related to religious or national divisions.

Detailed age data obtained in the Radom governorate in 1875 for the purpose of regulating the availability of education for the Deaf indicates the presence of some behaviour exhibiting self-consciousness<sup>54</sup>. Contrary to the census data for the entire Kingdom of Poland, people under the age of twenty account for 50% among those recorded, which is not at all surprising, given the reasons for collecting the data. However, something else draws our particular attention, namely the clustering around the ages of five, ten, and thirty. It either indicates low self-awareness among the Deaf or administrative authorities' lack of knowledge about the Deaf.

Another interesting phenomenon is the slight feminization of that group (table 4), greater in governorates with low rates of industrialization and lower in the areas with industrial centres<sup>55</sup>. This may indicate the trends in socio-professional choices, the lack of opportunities in the labour market of modern industrial cit-

<sup>53</sup> *Rocznik Statystyczny*, p. 293.

<sup>54</sup> APR, ROSGR, ref. 1098, ch. 22.

<sup>55</sup> Those centres are discussed in a classic work by Wiesław Puś; see: *idem, Przemysł Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1870–1914: problemy struktury i koncentracji*, Łódź 1984.

ies, and the tendencies to search for opportunities in the provinces. With an even geographical distribution of the numbers for the Deaf, it can be concluded that either administrative authorities overlooked women in registers or that medical issues caused men to acquire deafness more often. Modern medical knowledge does not support the thesis of a specific, so to speak, male aetiology of deafness, and there is no sign that things were different in this regard in the 19<sup>th</sup> century than they are today. Therefore, the hypothesis of inaccurate registration of women remains in force. What does this show? It indicates a double marginalization. In this case, deafness remained as a phenomenon ignored not only as such, but also more broadly among women, whose social status was often perceived as lower than that of men<sup>56</sup>. In 1839, the extent of Deaf women's under-registration (and therefore double marginalization) was so great that the feminization ratio is 35.2. In light of the 1921 census, it remained respectively: 85 in cities and 78 in the countryside (79.7 overall), which, compared to the 1897 data, indicates a certain stability in the social structures and demographic parameters among the Deaf. The data for the 3 administrative units of the territories of present-day Armenia, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, show that the feminization rate was similar, as there were 60 Deaf men and 45 women per 10,000 Armenians, respectively<sup>57</sup>.

Gender relations are a fundamentally important factor in determining the areas of integration. Among these, marriages are an important indicator that shows the capacity for cultural integration. It is impossible to study the marriage choices of the Deaf, although these would provide clear answers to the question of the potential for integration or of barriers to integration. Instead, we know much about the marital status of that population group. It should be recognized that during the period studied, the model of remaining in a heterosexual marriage was the most common and desirable among representatives of all social and religious groups living in the Kingdom of Poland. Therefore, dissimilarities in matrimonial policy should be interpreted as a strong factor of cultural disintegration. It should be noted that in this aspect we are not studying the causes of this disintegration, but its possible occurrence.

The statistics presented in the table 5 show huge differences. Deaf people were three times, or, in the case of women, six times less likely to start a family than

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<sup>56</sup> For more about that problem, see: A. Żarnowska, *Kobieta w przestrzeni miejskiej w dobie nowoczesnej urbanizacji. Miasto i szanse awansu kulturalnego kobiety przełomu XIX i XX wieku*, in: *Kobieta i rodzina w przestrzeni wielkomiejskiej na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, red. A. Janiak-Jasińska et al., Warszawa 2013, pp. 1–16.

<sup>57</sup> *Istoriya Armjanskogo obshhestva gluhih*, p. 5.

Table 4. Feminization of the Deaf in the Kingdom of Poland in 1897

Governorate of	Feminization rate
Warszawa	79.87
Piotrków	79.72
Lublin	71.48
Kalisz	81.57
Radom	81.29
Siedlce	85.96
Kielce	107.6
Suwałki	77.68
Łomża	82.69
Płock	77.21
Warszawa (city)	76.11
Total	81.35

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*

Table 5. Marital status of the Deaf compared to the entire population of the Kingdom of Poland in 1897 and the Second Polish Republic in 1921 (in percentages)

Groups	Male	Female
1897		
The Deaf	21.34	11.82
In general	62.40	60.00
1921		
The Deaf	23.28	7.50
In general	34.60	33.30

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.* (Governorates of the Kingdom of Poland) and *Statistics of Poland published by the Central Statistical Office of the Republic of Poland*, vol. 31: *First General Census of the Republic of Poland of September 30, 1921. Housing, population, labor relations. State Tables*, Warsaw 1927, p. 58.

non-deaf people. Thus, deaf people remained single or lived with their relatives without starting their own families. This is an important distinguishing and differentiating factor which on a cultural level, prompts the creation of new identity models. The purpose of that process was not only self-help, but also an attempt to build a social sphere where one could increase the likelihood of finding a partner



or, conversely, could function as an unmarried individual. In general, the alienation resulting from matrimonial difficulties could have induced the construction of separate social relationships that enclosed the Deaf in their environment. That was an excellent opportunity to create shared values, habits, and behaviour patterns, constitutive of its group identity.

These conditions proved to be quite persistent despite an apparent strong change in the new tendency toward marriage<sup>58</sup>. Leaving aside minor differences in the scale of the indicators, it is safe to conclude that difficulties in marriage for the Deaf were a condition and a social determinant in the Second Polish Republic as well.

## Vocational Activation of the Deaf

Vocational activation of the Deaf, can be studied very selectively on the basis of the two surviving cases of the Radom and Łódź governorates. While cannot be confirmed that the situation for the entire Kingdom of Poland was similar, counter arguments are also difficult to find. Let us focus then on a case study. The Radom materials show that some juveniles, up to the age of fourteen, stayed outside family structures, with a relatively low level of support from relatives (other than parents). Things were slightly better for people at productive age, although even in this aspect nearly half (especially those without a profession) were at the mercy of family, primarily parents and less often other relatives. Deaf people stayed with their families or only with their mothers far more frequently than only with their fathers. The statistics presented are rather illustrative. With all the reservations related to the registration of the Deaf by the administrative authorities, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. It seems, however, that the level of self-reliance among the Deaf was much lower than among the hearing population (table 6).

The vast majority of Deaf people in Łódź learned their trade at the Institute for the Deaf and Blind in 1898. Geographical proximity certainly helped them come under the Institute's influence. The range of vocations (again, it is difficult to make binding statements, as the data is selective) includes sixteen trades, mostly

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<sup>58</sup> For the indicators related to marriages on the threshold of the interwar period see: B. Ogórek, "It Does Not Stop People from Getting Married" *WWI-Related Changes in Nuptiality in the City of Cracow, Poland*, in: *The impact of World War I on marriages, divorces, and gender relations in Europe*, eds. S. Brée, S. Hin, New York 2020, pp. 191–209.

Table 6. Living conditions of the Deaf in the Radom governorate in 1875 (in percentage)

Age	With parents	With relatives	Independently	Institute for the Deaf	Together
0–14	74.4	6.9	16.3	2.4	100
15–65	43.2	14.3	40.7	1.8	100
Over 65	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	100

Source: APR, ROSGR, ref. 1098, ch. 10–12, 14–15, 19–19v, 25–26, 30–31, 34–39.

crafts. Thirty-three percent of the Deaf recorded by Łódź officials had an occupation. The specific economic condition of Łódź, with its dominant textile industry and large factories, impacted this situation. Laborers were a statistically significant group (over 25%), as well as weavers and shoemakers. Craftsmen such as carpenters, locksmiths, coopers and bakers also appear in the censuses as well as servants<sup>59</sup>.

With such scant data, it does not make sense to compare it to the overall employment structure in Łódź; nevertheless, we see that Deaf people did not pursue careers. Data on the economic position of the registered Deaf people mentioned above indicates that half of them lived on the verge of poverty. Similar analyses of the Deaf's vocational activation created for the entire Russian Empire indicates that most of them hired themselves out to agricultural work, while some hired themselves out to crafts such as carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring. Girls most often found employment as domestic servants<sup>60</sup>.

It can be considered that the social conditions in which the Deaf lived, that is, low marriage rates, dependence on the family (especially parents), low productivity, most often, lack of professional qualifications and low income for half of those who worked, all point to problems with their integration and marginalization. Such a social status probably fostered the processes of building a separate cultural identity, although certainly, and this is indicated by the cases of Łódź and Radom, it is difficult to say whether or not the Deaf at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century possessed the cultural capital appropriate to be exceptionally active in organizing their own institutions or cultural life. It was difficult for them to cope with organizational issues in the world of hearing people, and society's paternalistic attitude did not facilitate self-reliance. On the other hand, the aforementioned problems of integration in the structural sense opened the way for the unique individual

<sup>59</sup> APŁ, PMŁ, ref. 1883, b.p.k.

<sup>60</sup> A.I. Blinov, *Predystorija Vserossijskogo obshchestva глуhih*, p. 5.

development of a new type of identification, which can be considered a space for building a cultural minority.

## Languages of the Deaf

Language is undoubtedly one element that defines the identity of a social group. In the case of the Deaf, we are dealing with a rather complicated situation. The earlier parts of this article have shown that some of the Deaf were socialized in local languages and functioned in families from the western frontiers of the tsarist empire where one (or more) languages were spoken. Thus, it can be assumed that at least a certain group of Deaf people adopted elements of spoken languages, and with them artifacts of the Polish, Jewish, Russian, German or other cultures present in the Kingdom of Poland during the period in question. The procedures for collecting census data assumed that information about the members of the household was provided to the accountants by the head of the household. In this way, the census's principle of directness was implemented<sup>61</sup>. In the case of the Deaf, this facilitated communication issues, but at the same time they were objectified by the data collection procedures and the census itself. Deaf people could not declare a language other than those on the list of census instructions and other than that decided by the "head of the household" to which they belonged.

On the other hand, as a result of the findings of the Milan Congress in 1880, language issues related to the Deaf were dominated by the oralist doctrine, meaning a withdrawal from the teaching and use of sign languages. The Deaf were to acquire the ability to read lips, and to do so, a decent knowledge of some spoken language had to be mastered<sup>62</sup>. Consequently, it was natural for representatives of Deaf community to root themselves in at least one of the languages present in the Kingdom. Indirectly, although the author realizes the shortcomings of such an approach, it is possible to treat those linguistic declarations as an indication of national identification (the question of nationality was not asked in the census)<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> P. Rachwał, *Spis powszechny*.

<sup>62</sup> R.G. Brill, *International Congresses on Education of the Deaf – An Analytical History, 1878–1980*, Washington, D.C 1984, pp. 17–25.

<sup>63</sup> Compare how the problem is presented in: *Die Nationalitäten*, pp. 19–25.

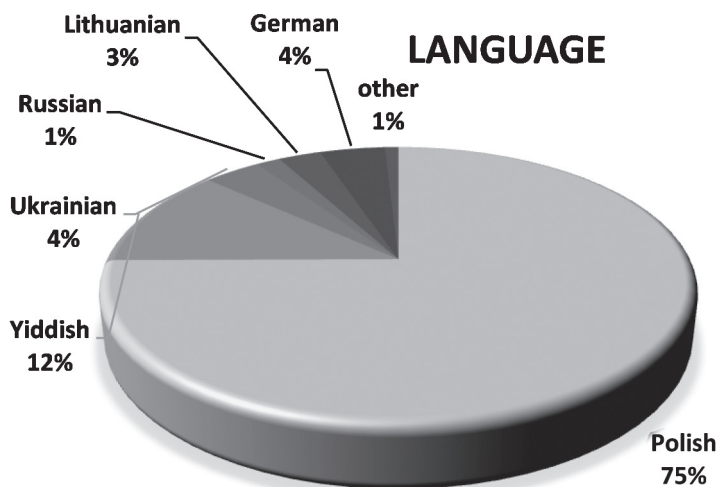


Chart 3. Linguistic structure of Deaf population in the Kingdom of Poland in 1897

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*

The census results presented in the chart 3 indicate the dominance of Polish, a distinct Yiddish component and the presence of languages of minorities residing in the Kingdom of Poland. The basic question that arises in this case is the relationship of the language declaration of the Deaf to the overall linguistic structure of the residents of the Kingdom of Poland.

The comparison (table 7) brings the conclusion that the statistics across groups were generally very similar. The slight differences can be understood as statistical error resulting from the registration process or sometimes as deliberate or accidental accounting errors<sup>64</sup>. However, if we take a closer look at the differences, we can see that fewer Deaf people declared Russian and Jewish (Yiddish) languages than in society as a whole. It seems that elements of the acculturation process (in the case of Jewish languages), that is, declaring the Polish language, can be seen here. Perhaps, then, it is a problem of so-called declarative acculturation, resulting from the need to manifest national identity<sup>65</sup>. In the case of Russian, the presence of

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>65</sup> A. Jagodzińska, *Asymilacja czyli bezradność historyka. O krytyce terminu i pojęcia*, in: *Wokół akulturacji i asymilacji Żydów na ziemiach polskich*, red. K. Zieliński, Lublin 2010, pp. 15–32.

Table 7. Language declarations of the Deaf in comparison to general language statistics in 1897 (in percentages)

Language	The Deaf	In general	Difference
Russian	1.57	2.8	-1.23
Ukrainian	3.75	3.5	0.25
Polish	74.88	72.0	2.88
Lithuanian	2.82	3.2	-0.38
German	4.25	4.3	0.05
Yiddish	11.83	13.5	-1.67
Other	0.90	0.7	0.20

Source: *Pervaja vseobshhaja perepis' naselenija Rossijskoj imperii 1897 g.*

Russians in the administration and army certainly played a role. After all, there were no Deaf here<sup>66</sup>.

The activities of the organizations of the Deaf indicate their rather Polono-centric character<sup>67</sup>. It is worth noting that Poles were particularly important in running the institutions and associations for the Deaf to combat the policy of Russification<sup>68</sup>.

Certainly, the apparent division between Jews and non-Jews in the Kingdom in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century played a huge role. It resulted from a number of factors already discussed in works on the subject<sup>69</sup>. Studies on deafness and in the process of searching for its social determinants demonstrate that this division was still noticeable in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was believed that among Jews deafness was more common than among practitioners of other religions<sup>70</sup>. There were even statistics presented declaring that the percentage of the Deaf

<sup>66</sup> It is worth paying attention to two key publications that discuss that problem on the local scale: K. Łatawiec, *W służbie imperium... Struktura społeczno-zawodowa ludności rosyjskiej na terenie guberni lubelskiej w latach 1864–1915*, Lublin 2007; and for the whole Kingdom of Poland: A. Chwalba, *Polacy w służbie Moskali*, Warszawa 1999.

<sup>67</sup> B. Szczepankowski, *Historia ruchu*, pp. 11–22.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>69</sup> The discussion of the factors and a list of basic publications related to the problem may be found in the work by Grzegorz Krzywiec: *idem, Polska bez Żydów. Studia z dziejów idei, wyobrażeń i praktyk antysemickich na ziemiach polskich początku XX wieku*, Warszawa 2017.

<sup>70</sup> P. Jakobi, *Głuchonemye*, p. 51.

among Jews was over 14%, when among Catholics and Lutherans it did not reach 5%. The situation was explained by cultural differences, pointing to lower infant mortality among Jews (more Deaf children survived) and (incongruously) intermarriage, leading to problems understood to originate from, in today's terminology, from genetics<sup>71</sup>.

Since the establishment of the Institute of the Deaf and Blind in Warsaw in 1817, Fr. Falkowski began working on a Polish version of sign language. The origin of sign languages used to work with the Deaf goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Polish conditions, parallel work was carried out for many years, relying on both the then-created sign language system and the oralist method. In 1879, the first Polish dictionary of sign language was created. The aforementioned Milan Congress of 1880 and its findings interrupted, or at least hampered, that work until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, it seems that one of the important layers of building a distinct cultural identity was effectively blocked. As we know from materials preserved in the archives of the Institute of the Deaf and Blind in Warsaw, which as a modern institution set the standards for dealing with the Deaf, the situation was not so simple.

Despite official attitudes, sign language existed and was used by the Deaf, for whom it became an essential tool of communication. Those who signed constituted a certain community of people united by a unique skill. National identities, so important in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the face of Russian social and national politics, revealed by linguistic declarations, overlapped with an independent and separate form of language known to some Deaf and a few hearing people. They provided a sense of community and group bonding. The language of the Deaf did not become an important factor of their distinct culture in the nineteenth century, although the foundations the process that took place later in the mid-twentieth century were laid at this time.

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<sup>71</sup> APW, IGO, ref. 260, pp. 9–13. A. Markowski, *Rodzina i gospodarstwo domowe Żydów suwalskich w I połowie XIX w.*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 119–137. Aleksandra Oniszczyk is currently conducting studies on identity issues and conflicts between Deaf Jews and non-Jews. At this point, I cannot refer to the publications on that subject but the conference paper presented by Dr. Oniszczyk during the conference “Badania nad PJM i g/Głuchotą” 17 of April 2023 in Warszawa suggests very promising results.

## Conclusion

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the Kingdom of Poland and later in the independent Republic of Poland, the Deaf constituted a community that had its own educational and social institutions. They developed non-oral languages, built their own culture that conveyed the values of the world of the Deaf, depicted its problems, and supported their internal solutions. The process of forming the Deaf's cultural identity and creating a cultural minority began perhaps as early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>72</sup>. This happened due to social changes that forced the formation of new social ties. It is still uncertain to what extent the Deaf as a cultural minority formed a group independent of national-religious divisions, and to what extent the diversity known from social relations among the hearing population cast a shadow on relations among the Deaf.

The analysis of census data indicates that the Deaf functioned in social structures characteristic among the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Poland. It may be claimed that in this regard, not much changed over the course of at least a century, until the time when Poland regained independence.

The analysis of the social situation of this group of population in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Kingdom of Poland reveals that they faced difficulties in social adaptation. Hence, they were professionally and economically dependent on their families. Some of them experienced the process of socialization in one of the cultures present on the territories of the Kingdom of Poland, after which they were to some extent excluded. At the same time, the settlement geography of the Deaf was similar to that determined by the census for all residents of the Kingdom. The persistence of these characteristics can be observed from the statistics of the Second Polish Republic. Hence, it is easy to conclude that we are dealing with a certain regularity. The sources quite clearly demonstrate that the population of the Deaf was evenly distributed throughout the social fabric of the Kingdom and at the same time define the sectors in which they were rejected or marginalized. Such a situation, in my opinion, provided certain, although not ideal, conditions for constructing one's own distinct social position, searching for an identity that included both necessary values and ways of seeing the world, and the development of methods of social participation.

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<sup>72</sup> B. Kannabell, *Inside the Deaf Community*, "Deaf American" 1982, vol. 34 (4), pp. 21–27; see also P. Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood*, Clevedon et al., 2003, p. 166 and U. Bartnikowska, *Głuchota – mniejszość językowa, kulturowa, pogranicze..., czyli społeczny kontekst badania zjawisk związanych z uszkodzeniem słuchu, "Niepełnosprawność" 2010, nr 4, pp. 27–41.*



On the other hand, the evolution of 19<sup>th</sup> century philanthropic ideas and achievements in education, the democratization of social life resulted in a number of initiatives focused “on the Deaf”. The idea of “restoring” the Deaf to society, touched upon in the introduction, its evolution which entailed new arrangements for languages and modes of communication, concepts of productivization and, especially after 1905, the fashion for self-organization, is an important part of the success in creating a distinct cultural identity of the Deaf in independent Poland.

It may be assumed that there is a model of two-sided influence on the fact that today the Deaf form an efficient and effective cultural minority in Poland. On the one hand, the social conditions described here, already revealed the fields of disintegration at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and on the other hand, there were initiatives taken by hearing population to help, as known from the cited literature on the education and organizations of the Deaf. Those two factors combined at the turn of the century to support the creation of a space for the development of an interesting identity, which characterized people burdened with a number of difficulties that included economic and social ones. That process, which began in the 19th century, did not even end before World War Two. However, it was a hugely important stage in the process of gaining cultural subjectivity by the Deaf and in building an egalitarian open society in modern Poland.

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