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Jewish Community in Cieszowa in Upper Silesia (1737–1904) and the Efforts of Fr. Karl Urban to Save its Material and Spiritual Heritage

Abstract

When in 1908 in Cieszowa, one of the oldest Jewish communities in Upper Silesia, buildings of the dissolved Kehilla were put up for auction, Fr. Karl Urban (1864–1923), the priest of the parish of St. Joseph in Sadow, to which Cieszowa also belonged, purchased a synagogue with the surrounding outbuildings from his own resources, thus protecting them from inevitable liquidation. Cieszowa was one of four villages in Upper Silesia, in which Jews were ordered to reside during Prussian settlement bans, issued in the 1770s and 1780s. The article briefly describes the history of the Jewish community in Silesia, with the emphasis on the religious community set up by them in Cieszowa. In addition, the circumstances of the auctioning of local buildings in 1908 and their purchase by Fr. Karl Urban were described. The author focused on the activity of Fr. Urban, aimed at creating a religious and museum memorial site. Moreover, the author undermines the popular opinion involving the demolition of wooden monuments, allegedly after 1911, postponing the time of their destruction for the years after the death of Fr. Urban, i.e. after 1923.

Keywords: “German-Jewish symbiosis”, Jews in Upper Silesia, Fr. Karl Urban (1864–1923), Jewish Community in Cieszowa, Cieszowa (Czieschowa) in Upper Silesia.

Wspólnota żydowska w Cieszowej na Górnym Śląsku (1737–1904) i starania ks. Karła Urbana o zachowanie jej materialnego i duchowego dziedzictwa

Abstrakt

Kiedy w 1908 r. w Cieszowej, jednej z najstarszych gmin żydowskich na Górnym Śląsku, wystawiono budynki rozwiązanej kahały do licytacji, ks. Karl Urban (1864–1923), proboszcz parafii św. Józefa w Sadowie, do której należała również i sama Cieszowa, z własnych środków zakupił synagogę wraz z zabudowaniami, chroniąc je w ten sposób od nieuchronnej likwidacji. Cieszowa była jedną z czterech wiosek na Górnym Śląsku, w których kazano zamieszkać Żydom w czasie pruskich zakazów osiedleńczych, wydawanych w latach 70. i 80. XVIII w. W artykule w sposób skrótowy opisano dzieje społeczności żydowskiej na Śląsku, a szczególnie założonej przez nich gminy wyznaniowej w Cieszowej. Ponadto opisano okoliczności wystawienia w 1908 r. tamtejszych budynków na licytację i ich

zakupienia przez ks. Karla Urbana. Autor skupił się na aktywności ks. Urbana, mającej na celu utworzenie religijnego i muzealnego miejsca pamięci. Ponadto podważa utartą opinię o zniszczeniu drewnianych zabytków, rzekomo po 1911 r., przesuwając czas ich destrukcji na lata po śmierci ks. Urbana, tj. po 1923 r.

Słowa kluczowe: „niemiecko-żydowska symbioza”, Żydzi na Górnym Śląsku, ks. Karl Urban (1864–1923), wspólnota żydowska w Cieszowej, Cieszowa (Čieschowa) na Górnym Śląsku.

Introduction

For centuries Silesia was referred to as the homeland of people of many languages and nationalities. As a border area, it was a part of various kingdoms and countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, the Holy Western Roman Empire, Prussia, United Germany and again Poland. One of important ethnic groups that inhabited the areas were Jews. The beginnings of their settlement in Silesia date back to the early Middle Ages. Their fate was changing in time, and their presence among the Christian majority was treated differently – from apparent tolerance in the medieval period, through bans imposed on their settlement, enacted exiles in the 16th century to their resettlement after the Thirty Years' War, which was so damaging for Silesia. In the mid-18th century, Jews would more and more willingly settle in Silesia, despite numerous restrictions and bans imposed by Prussian authorities in this regard. It was then, during the time when further restrictions were being decreed, allowing the settlement only on the right bank of the Odra River, and ultimately only in 4 villages in Upper Silesia, that the history of the Jewish community in Cieszowa began, in a small village in the district of Lubliniec, near the former border of Silesia with the former Republic of Poland. It was there that the emigrants found their place of refuge; it was also there that they built a wooden synagogue, a rabbi's house and founded a cemetery. From the beginning of the 19th century, following the edict of the Patent of Toleration and the permission for Jewish settlement in Silesian cities, the community in Cieszowa started to decrease gradually to undergo the actual dissolution in 1904.

Owing to the parish priest of the St. Joseph's Catholic parish in Sadów – Fr. Karl Urban, their material heritage of religious worship could be initially protected. The Catholic parish priest, a devoted researcher of Silesian history, would always refer to the synagogue as the house of God, and he did not accept the fact that it might be demolished. The efforts of the said priest to save the historic substance of the former Jewish community in Cieszowa, as well as the fate of the buildings after his death in 1923 are the subject of the present study. It is preceded by a short history of the Jewish community in Cieszowa in the 18th and 19th centuries. The discourse will include information collected through a query carried

out in Upper Silesian church and court archives, which contradicts the opinions repeated so far about the alleged demolition of the synagogue after 1911.¹

1. From the history of Jewish community in Silesia until the second half of the 18th century

It is supposed that the first groups of the Jewish population reached Silesia during the Crusades, settling in the vicinity of Wrocław, Legnica, Bolesławiec and Zgorzelec. The first documented reference to Jews in Wrocław dates back to the 12th century, and the first known tombstone – at the first denominational cemetery – dates back to 1203. In Silesian cities they were mainly engaged in trade, had good contacts and knowledge about the realm of money-goods economy, competing with Christian merchant families. Together with German miners, Jews reached also Upper Silesia (including Otmuchów, Widnawa, Ujazd, Racibórz, Koźle, Pyskowice, Opole and Nysa).² It is estimated that in the second half of the 14th century their population in Silesia could amount even to several thousand. Effective competition in trade would bring about a growing number disputes and, consequently, resulted in the proclamation of settlement bans. Under the pressure of merchant guilds, at the time of the progressing economic crisis and reformation turmoil, in 1558 the Emperor Ferdinand forced the Silesian Parliament to pass a resolution to expel Jews, and four years later this ban was confirmed by the local parliament of the Duchy of Opole and Racibórz.³ The edict of the Emperor Rudolf II of March 26, 1582, sanctioned the bans which had been issued earlier. As a consequence, almost all Jews left Silesia. The only enclaves of relative tolerance had become: Głogów in Lower Silesia and above all Biała in Upper Silesia. It is estimated that around the year 1600, approximately 25 families lived in Biała – a total of 120 followers of Judaism.⁴

¹ Many inaccuracies and falsifications are contained particularly in popular science studies about Cieszowa, reproduced on almost all available websites. Cf. Jan Myrcik. 2007. "Historia Żydów w Cieszowej". *Ziemia Lubliniecka. Kwartalnik Społeczno-Kulturalny* 6 (1–2): 10; Jan Paweł Woronczak. 1991. *Cieszowa, Lubliniec*. In *International Jewish Cemetery Project*. <http://iajgscemetery.org/eastern-europe/poland/cieszowa> (23.03.2020); <https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/rewizje-artykulu/137186-historia-spolecznosci/421-cieszowa> (24.04.2020).

² Marcus Mordechai Brann. 1917. "Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czeschowa O/S". *Oberschlesien. Monatsschrift zur Pflege der Kenntnis und zur Vertretung der Interessen Oberschlesiens* 16 (3): 127.

³ Willy Cohn. 1929. Einleitung in die Geschichte der Juden in Schlesien. In *Katalog der Ausstellung das Judentum in der Geschichte Schlesiens*. Ed. Erwin Hintze, 3–13. Breslau: Verein Jüdisches Museum e.V.

⁴ Marcus Mordechai Brann. 1887. *Geschichte des Landrabbinats in Schlesien. Nach gedruckten und ungedruckten Quellen*. Breslau: Will Jacobsohn & Co, 5; Marcus Mordechai Brann. 1915. Etwas von der schlesischen Landgemeinde. In *Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag Jakob Guttmanns*. Publ. Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Wissenschaft des Judentums, 225. Leipzig: G. Fock. Cf. Israel

The return of Jews to Silesia was taking place gradually throughout the 17th century. During the Thirty Years' War many cities became depopulated, and the population of Silesia decreased by as much as 1/3. In order to improve the country's finances, the Emperor Ferdinand II eased his policy towards Jews, allowing them to settle in Silesia after paying a special fee. Yet, the settlement bans were maintained in many cities. The turning point came at the time of Polish-Swedish wars, as a result of which many Jews escaped from persecution to Silesia from hitherto friendly Poland. At that time, individual families settled in Mysłowice, Nysa, Cieszyn, Mikołów, Bytom, Bielsko, Namysłów, Pszczyna and Opole.⁵ Also, the nobility, wishing to revive their territories economically, sporadically agreed to settle refugees in their estates (at first they came from Moravia, later from Poland). In this way, in 1664 the owners of Wielowieś in the circle (district) of Toszek created favorable conditions for their settlement, and thus, as early as in 1720, there were 50 Jews living there. In a short time, the community built a wooden synagogue, and the dead were buried in their own kirkut (Jewish cemetery).⁶ Jewish merchants offered their services not only in trade, but they were also good leaseholders renting noblemen's inns. Their employment was encouraged by the Tolerance Edict issued by the Emperor Charles VI on 10 January 1713, pursuant to which their settlement depended on the payment of a specific fee, the so-called tolerance fee (from 3 to 21 guilders per year, depending on where they lived). In addition, they were forced to pay taxes to the parish priest of a given locality for the fields that once belonged to Christians.⁷ In the census of 1722 carried out for the Royal Superior Office, it was estimated that the number of the entire Jewish community in Silesia amounted to 775 people (according to Marcus Brann – 509).⁸

When in 1740 Prussia conquered most of Silesian lands, initially the policy of the Habsburg times was continued, and the authorities themselves indifferently referred to Silesian Jews. On 11 October 1741, the new ruler of Silesia even issued an appropriate permit for their settlement.⁹ To alleviate the conse-

Rabin. 1926. Die Juden in Zülz. In *Geschichte der Stadt Zülz in Oberschlesien: von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart*. Ed. Johannes Chrzęszcz, 117–161. Zülz: Magistrat in Zülz.

⁵ Brann. 1915. Etwas von der schlesischen Landgemeinde, 226; Jan Kwak. 1989. "Żydzi w miastach górnośląskich w XVII–XVIII w.". *Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka* 44 (1): 65.

⁶ The oldest tombstone was from 1702. See: Brann. 1915. Etwas von der schlesischen Landgemeinde, 244; Piotr Górecki. 2009. *Archiprezbiterat toszecki w latach 1618–1740. Kościelne dzieje Toszka, Pyskowie i okolic w czasach reformy Kościoła katolickiego na Śląsku*. Gliwice: Drukarnia „Epigraf”, 71–72.

⁷ Marcus Mordechai Brann. 1921. Die Bedeutung der Juden für die Geschichte und Kultur Oberschlesiens. In *Oberschlesien. Ein Land Deutscher Kultur*. Ed. Paul Knötel, 94. Gleiwitz: Heimatverlag Oberschlesien; Marian Ptak. 1991. "Źródła prawa określające status ludności żydowskiej na Śląsku do 1742 r.". *Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka* 46 (2): 146.

⁸ Brann. 1887. *Geschichte des Landrabbinats in Schlesien*, 19–20.

⁹ Brann. 1915. Etwas von der schlesischen Landgemeinde, 236.

quences of the economic crisis effected by subsequent wars about the territory of Silesia, Prussian authorities granted special privileges to the richest Jewish manufacturers and entrepreneurs, and allowed for trade profitable for the country with Jews living on the other side of the border, i.e. in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1744, the state authorities officially recognized the Jewish community in Wrocław, together with their religious structures, i.e. the consent to have their own rabbi and denominational cemetery (until then the Poznań rabbinat had to be consulted in religious matters).¹⁰ The legal status for the Jewish population throughout Silesia was based on the act of 1751, which subjected them to double taxation: tolerance tax and personal excise duty. Taxes were paid in the so-called tolerance offices, whereof 11 operated in Upper Silesia and 10 in Lower Silesia. The personal excise duty in towns was paid according to wealth classes, while in villages it was paid by every Jew over 15 years of age, regardless of gender. In 1754, the Prussian authorities provided the Jewish community with a more coherent system, but it still remained under the control of a committee consisting of town and state officials. The Jewish community itself was divided into 5 classes: fully privileged, privileged, tolerated, residents of other towns (where also privileged Jewish communities existed, or Jews were granted temporary residence permits) and those who were in the care of privileged noble families. The latter, however, were forbidden to carry out trading activity. That restrictive division only to some extent allowed Jewish families to enjoy their freedom of life and economic activity, which in principle was reserved only for the richest. Apart from a few towns in Lower Silesia, where Jewish communities could normally function, most of them settled in Upper Silesia. New settlers most often rented distilleries owned by the nobility, or they would go into peddling business. The prospects of being allowed to settle depended on their financial status. When they had assets of 200 thalers, they were allowed to settle in the countryside. The right to settle in Upper Silesian cities depended on the owned assets valued at 300–500 thalers – an amount that sometimes was not even available to townspeople themselves who had had been impoverished by the wars.¹¹ In 1754, 656 Jews lived in Lower Silesia (not including the Jewish community in Głogów), while in the less populated Upper Silesia, the population of Jews reached 1854 (not including the community from Biała).¹² Prussian

¹⁰ Manfred Agethen. 1990. Die Situation der jüdischen Minderheit in Schlesien unter österreichischer und preußischer Herrschaft. In *Kontinuität und Wandel. Schlesien zwischen Österreich und Preußen. Ergebnisse eines Symposiums in Würzburg vom 29. bis 31. Oktober 1987*. Ed. Peter Baumgart, 321. Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke.

¹¹ Gabriela Waś. 2007. Śląsk pod panowaniem pruskim. In *Historia Śląska*. Ed. Marek Czapliński, 224. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

¹² Brann. 1887. *Geschichte des Landrabbinats in Schlesien*, 32.

authorities were continually making efforts to expel the Jewish population from Lower Silesia, allowing them to settle in Upper Silesia, especially in towns and villages bordering with Polish lands. At the time of the beginnings of industry and industrial transformations, they became a group that significantly contributed to the economic development of Upper Silesia and left traces of their great culture which survived to our times.¹³ It was just at the beginning of the Prussian period that the first Jews settled in Cieszowa.

2. Jewish community in Cieszowa (Ger. Czieschowa)

The first mention of Cieszowa, a small village in the district of Lubliniec, comes from the records of Peter's Pence collection in 1305. In the years 1586–1628 it was the property of the Cieszowski family. In the records of the canonical visits from the second half of the 17th century, we can find information that there was a wooden church of St. Martin (built around 1520), which by way of affiliation belonged to the parish in Sadów. In 1687, in a vast parish comprising as many as 33 villages and hamlets, most of the residents were Catholic, except for 140 Protestants – most often the local nobility and their servants. That year, 1300 people received Easter holy communion.¹⁴ In the mid-eighteenth century, the owners of the village were: Baron Johann Friedrich von Strachwitz und Gross-Zauche and Baroness Sophia Elisabeth von Frankenberg und Proschlitz. It was them who in 1751 contributed to the construction of the currently existing wooden Catholic church, and they also became patrons of the first followers of the Mosaic religion, who came to Cieszowa supposedly from the territory of the Republic of Poland.¹⁵ The first record of “4 Jews from the village of Scheschow” comes from 1737. In that year they paid the tolerance tax (*Toleranzsteuer*) in the amount of 6 guilders and 30 kreutzers. A year later, a name Isaac Davidt from “Scheschow”, who was still in arrears with tax, was mentioned.¹⁶

In the Prussian period, the number of Jewish settlers increased significantly, but, according to the Order of 1752, they were not allowed to purchase land

¹³ For more information on the Jewish community in Silesia, see: Marcus Mordechai Brann. 1896–1917. *Geschichte der Juden in Schlesien*. Vol. 1–6. Breslau: Koeber'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung (the work was not completed).

¹⁴ Joseph Jungnitz. Publ. 1904. *Visitationsberichte der Diözese Breslau*. Vol. 2, pt I: *Archidiaconat Oppeln*. Breslau: G.P. Aderholz Buchhandlung, 324–325.

¹⁵ Piotr Górecki. 2017. *Parafie i kościoły diecezji gliwickiej*. Gliwice – Opole: Wydawnictwo i Drukarnia Świętego Krzyża, 147–148.

¹⁶ Jan Myrcik incorrectly gives the year 1757. See: Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschow a O/S”, 128; Jan Myrcik. Cieszowa, <http://cmentarze-zydowskie.pl/cieszowa.htm> (9.02.2020).

as private ownership. They certainly had a small prayer room and possibly also a cemetery, and in 1765 they managed to erect wooden buildings of the synagogue and the rabbi's house on the land belonging to the dominion of the nobility.¹⁷ Also the first monuments of their material heritage came from that year: votive inscriptions from two drapes (funded by Moses, son of Rabbi Yechiel, probably from Żarki in the district of Cracow), a silk drape for Aron ha-Qodesch (a gift from Eliakim Getzel, son of Dob Baer and his wife Eva, daughter of Nathan).¹⁸ It was a difficult period for them, because the state law allowed only one of the sons to get married – the one who was to inherit the property from their parents. Faced with such severe restrictions, few emigrated from Upper Silesia to the west: deep into Germany, to the Netherlands or England, and from there to America.¹⁹ In September 1768, the authorities prohibited the establishment of new Jewish cemeteries or the construction of synagogues without paying for a special license. In that way, the status of the community in Cieszowa increased significantly, especially when in 1776 the Jews residing on the left side of the Odra River (except for Brzeg and Głogów) were ordered to relocate to the right side of the river, but they could only settle in villages.

After a few years – in September 1779 – the authorities ordered all Jews to leave the villages and move to towns. Gliwice was to be the main place of residence. On August 17, 1780 the Chamber of Wrocław designated five resettlement towns for Jews: Tarnowskie Góry, Mysłowice, Mikołów, Lubliniec and Bieruń Stary. On August 8, 1781, the Prussian king Frederick II issued an edict ordering Jews to leave Upper Silesian villages and towns, and to relocate to four villages in the vicinity of Polish border: Wielowieś (Langendorf), Cieszowa (Czieschowa), as well as Krasków (Kraskau) near Kluczbork and Miejsce (Städtel) – in the municipality of Świerczów. The authorities gave them 10 days for resettlement. After that date, no Jew could reside in the prohibited area. The choice of Cieszowa was deliberate. It was there that “the Jewish cemetery had been located for a long time”.²⁰ In addition, in 1778 a fire totally destroyed the southern part of the village, as well as manor houses and the palace. Two years later, Johann Gustav von Strachwitz und Gross-Zauche sold his part of the village to Karl Heinrich von Sobek from Koszęcin. The new owner was definitely interested in the renovation of the village and in its revitalization through cross-

¹⁷ The Jewish community of Wielowieś erected their synagogue in 1771. See: Brann. 1915. *Etwas von der schlesischen Landgemeinde*, 227; Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 138.

¹⁸ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 130–131.

¹⁹ Brann. 1915. *Etwas von der schlesischen Landgemeinde*, 245.

²⁰ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 128; Karl Urban. 1909. “Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa, Kreis Lublinitz O/S”. *Oberschlesische Heimat. Zeitschrift des Oberschlesischen Geschichtsvereins* 5: 113.

-border trade. Not without significance was the fact that until 1781 the diocese of Wrocław had been administered by bishop Johann Moritz von Strachwitz as its coadjutor (born in 1721 in Cieszowa). The commercial contract could contain a clause stipulating that the dignitary of the Church of Wrocław would take care of the interests of the new owner of Cieszowa, increasing in that way the value of the transaction for his kinsman impoverished by the fire.²¹ From that period come the first preserved tombstones at the Jewish cemetery located one kilometer away from the village: the matzevah of the deceased leader of the community, Eliakim Getzel, son of Nathan Nat, who died in November 1780 (according to Brann – the first leader of the community)²², the matzevah of Gerson Mannes, son of Rabbi Nathan Nata from Przedbórz²³, who died on December 11, 1782 (according to Brann – rabbi of Cieszowa)²⁴, and the matzevah of Eliakim Getzel, son of Dob Baer (founder of the drape in the synagogue, who died on November 3, 1798).²⁵ Brann regarded the latter as another community leader, who was very important in the Jewish history of Cieszowa, because it was during his time that a large group of Jews settled, in line with the Ordinance of 1781. It was the most significant period in the history of the Jewish community in Cieszowa. In 1780, the construction (or extension) of the wooden synagogue was completed, which unquestionably survived until the 1920s.²⁶ In 1781, the book of deaths registration was established. The card 3b contains a record about the death of Moses, son of Isaiah, “117 years old” (he died on October 23, 1779). On the decorative prayer card from 1783, on the prayer table-top covered with glass, its founder wrote his name: Joseph Jospe, son of rabbi J. from Pińczów, teacher of youth and a ritual she chita (butcher) from Boronów.²⁷ The said entry indicates that not all Jews from the Lubliniec district were forced to live in Cieszowa. Yet, it was a fact that they gathered in the synagogue to pray, and they were buried in the cemetery there. It is not known how many Jews lived in the town itself. We only learn from the statistical study of Friedrich Zimmermann from 1783 that 20 Jews lived in Lubliniec in 1780, 23 in 1781, and 46 in 1782 (per 757 Chris-

²¹ Cf. Urban. 1909. “Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa”, 109.

²² Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 133.

²³ A small town in the Radomsko district in the voivodeship of Łódź. Until 1939, there was a wooden synagogue from 1638, renovated in 1789. See: <https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/p/435-przedborz> (24.04.2020).

²⁴ The mitzvah did not indicate that he was the local rabbi - in line with the ordinance of 1744, on the basis of which the rabbi from Wrocław was officially the religious superior of all Silesian Jews. See: Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 134–135.

²⁵ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 135–136.

²⁶ The year of construction was placed in a decorative chronogram, located on one of the load-bearing ceiling beams of the synagogue, being a paraphrase of biblical quotes (Gen 28.17, 1 Kgs 8.28 and Ps 118.20). See: Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 129.

²⁷ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 130.

tians). In Dobrodzień there were 60 of them in 1781, and 125 in 1782 (per 883 inhabitants), respectively. All of them belonged to the synagogue in Cieszowa, and the population of the entire district in 1783 was 12 066 people. Jews were subject to the tolerance office in Lubliniec, managed by an office head named Springer.²⁸ With respect to Cieszowa, the author only mentioned that in the village belonging to Count von Sobek, there were two nobility manor farms, a filial Catholic church, a school, 9 peasant farms, 23 crofters, 1 mill, a Jewish school and a cemetery – a total of 216 inhabitants.²⁹

In 1787, the Prussian authorities withdrew from the idea of resettling Jews to the designated places, because the towns they had left suffered too much economic loss.³⁰ In 1797, they were acknowledged as a separate state, but the division into protégée and tolerated Jews was still maintained. In 1803, Zwi Hirsch ha-Cohen (a native of Wodzisław) who lived in Cieszowa and his wife Ether funded a velvet veil for the Torah.³¹ In February 1808, the guild privileges were abolished, along with the famous law *de non tolerandis Judaeis*. From then on, Jews could, with the permission of the authorities, settle in all Silesian cities and purchase real estate freely. On March 11, 1812, the Prussian King Frederick William III issued an edict on civil relations (*Edikt die Bürgerlichen Verhältnisse der Juden*), commonly known as the emancipation edict. The said document made Jews full citizens of the Prussian Kingdom, who were no longer referred to as tolerated, but as citizens of the state (*Staatsbürger*) or nationals (*Inländer*). The edict of 1812 marked the beginning of the economic, cultural, and thus also the subsequent political emancipation of Jews. It also contributed to the decline of the significance of the Jewish community in Cieszowa, after the construction of a brick-built synagogue in Lubliniec in 1821.³² In 1830, there were 45 Jews residing in the village, and in 1845 only 28.³³ In 1840, the Association of Upper Silesian Municipalities was founded in Gliwice, bringing together all Jewish communities. In 1848, Jews were granted the right to vote, and in 1850, in the constitution adopted by the

²⁸ Jews did not settle in those towns until after 1756. See: Friedrich Albert Zimmermann. 1783. *Beyträge zur Beschreibung von Schlesien*. Vol. 2. Brieg: Johann Ernst Tramp, 136, 148–149.

²⁹ Zimmermann. 1783. *Beyträge zur Beschreibung von Schlesien*. Vol. 2, 152.

³⁰ In 1791, a total of 3,779 Jews lived in 36 Upper Silesian cities and 30 villages. See: Brann. 1915. *Etwas von der schlesischen Landgemeinde*, 231.

³¹ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 131.

³² The local Jewish cemetery, where about 1,100 people were buried, was founded in 1840 (acc. to other data in 1855). Since then, the Jewish cemetery in Cieszowa had also lost its significance, where only Jewish residents of the village were buried. See: Klaus-Dieter Aliche. 2008. *Lexikon der jüdischen Gemeinden im deutschen Sprachraum*. Vol. 2, <https://www.jüdische-gemeinden.de/index.php/gemeinden/k-l/2408-lub-linitz-oberschlesien> (24.04.2020). Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.

³³ In 1845, Cieszowa was inhabited by 476 people, including 38 Evangelicals and 28 Jews. See: Johann Georg Knie. 1845². *Alphabetisch-statistisch-topographische Übersicht der Dörfer, Flecken, Städte und andern Orte der Königl. Preuss. Provinz Schlesien*. Breslau: Barth Graß und Co, 476.

Prussian parliament, all previously acquired rights were confirmed (renewed after the reunification of Germany in 1871). Despite the fact that since then they enjoyed full freedom of life and economic and intellectual activity, they would emigrate from villages to Upper Silesian industrial towns, as well as to large cities in Germany and to America.

On 26 November 1849, the land and mortgage register was set up for the plot on which the synagogue and a house for the rabbi were located. It was stipulated in the deed of ownership that on 11 August 1823, the Jewish community became the owner of land and real estate by purchasing it from the owners of the dominion for 60 thalers.³⁴ On 4 February 1856, the Jews from Cieszowa, by virtue of the enfranchisement act, bought the rights to the remaining land from the owner of the knightly lands Rudolf Schindler, paying a total of 400 thalers in three installments. The Jewish community was represented by: the superior Koppel Olschowski, Salomon Fuchs and the plenipotentiary of the community Isaak Brahn.³⁵ In 1861, the village was only inhabited by 18 Jews, and in 1894 only by 4.³⁶ The last rabbi of the community – Samuel Schloshof – died in 1871. The responsibility for prayer services (*Kultusbeamter*) was taken by a man named Rother, but prayers were rarely initiated in the synagogue, because it was difficult to gather the required ten praying people (*minjen*). When in 1872 the Association of Upper Silesian Synagogue Communities (*Oberschlesische Synagogen-Gemeinden*) was founded, Cieszowa no longer had its representative in it. When Rother left Cieszowa in 1879, Marcus Deutsch and his wife took care of the buildings. Fr. Urban wrote about them with admiration: “They led a truly hermitic life. Marcus Deutsch was known for his knowledge of the Bible and Talmud, but also for his humor and sarcasm. When asked by a newcomer about the way to get to the next village, he would reply mockingly: «I’ve never had any need to go there»”.³⁷ In 1905, no followers of the Mosaic religion lived in Cieszowa.³⁸ From then on, Jews from the surrounding villages met in a more convenient place for them: in Lubliniec and Koszęcin.

3. Fr. Karl Urban and effective attempts to save Jewish heritage

In 1899, the post of the parish priest of the vast parish of St. Joseph in Sadów, in the deanery of Lubliniec (in the former diocese of Wrocław), was taken by Karl

³⁴ District Court in Lubliniec, Land and Mortgage Register Department. Ref. WL 14 Cieszowa, *Titulus possessionis nr 1*.

³⁵ Urban. 1909. “Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa”, 113.

³⁶ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 128.

³⁷ Urban. 1909. “Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa”, 114.

³⁸ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 128.

Urban (1864–1923), whose life passion was to explore the knowledge about the multicultural and multinational history of Upper Silesia.³⁹ He spent almost all his priestly life researching the history of small homelands, publishing articles in scientific journals in Upper Silesia.⁴⁰ He treated this task as his mission, because his ancestors had been living in the area of the Silesian-Moravian-Czech border for generations, and his father – Carl (1836–1922) – had worked for many years as the headmaster of primary schools in Upper Silesia. Everywhere where Fr. Urban provided his pastoral ministry (whether as a vicar or administrator), he proved to be a good host, renovating churches, chapels and outbuildings.

The parish of Sadów was still very large. After several divisions, in the times of Fr. Urban the parish comprised a total of 21 villages, colonies and hamlets. In 1902, 4,304 people inhabited the parish, including 4,143 Catholics, 149 Protestants and 12 Jews.⁴¹ After a thorough renovation of the parish church in Sadów, which was carried out in the years 1908–1910, the priest was preparing to renovate the wooden filial church in Cieszowa, built in 1751.⁴² When organizing the building material, he also made the first historical notes.⁴³ When he was organizing sight-seeing tours for the guests of the local nobility, he often brought them to Cieszowa, where they obligatorily visited the church of St. Martin and the local synagogue. It was during one of such trips that he learned from Marcus Deutsch that the buildings left by the Jewish community had been put up for sale. Numerous written requests, directed by the highest authorities to Jews around the world to save the Cieszowa synagogue, remained unnoticed. Also the plan proposed by the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, dr. Grunwald, to move the temple to Dresden failed due to very high costs of such an undertaking. For this reason, a tender was announced for the sale of the synagogue. The parish priest of Sadów became engaged in the works aiming to save the buildings, because for him they were a testimony reflecting the past times of those lands. He believed that both the buildings of the Catholic church in Cieszowa and the synagogue were a material testimony of the generations “worshiping God of the Old and New Testament”⁴⁴, and hence they must not be allowed to dilapidate. Fr. Urban successively collected information about Cieszowa build-

³⁹ For more information on this priest, see: Archdiocesan Archives in Katowice, Personal Files. Ref. 883. *Ks. Karol Urban*, 1–58; Archives of the Parish of St. Joseph in Sadów (hereinafter: AP Sadów). *Geistliche Personalien 1889–1952*; Jerzy Myszor. Ed. 2009. *Słownik biograficzny duchowieństwa (archidiecezji katowickiej 1922–2008*, Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 428–429.

⁴⁰ Other texts have survived to this day in the form of incomplete manuscripts, stored at the Parish Archives in Sadów. See: AP Sadów. *Miscellanea 1899–1939*. Vol. 1–3.

⁴¹ AP Sadów. *Kirchliche Statistik 1909–1917*; 1902. *Schematismus des Bisthums Breslau und seines Delegatur-Bezirks für das Jahr 1902*. Breslau: Fürstbischöfliche Geheime Kanzlei, 116.

⁴² See: AP Sadów. *Ausgabe 1896–1953*; AP Sadów. *Kirchliche Bauten in Sadow 1885–1902*; AP Sadów. *Kirchen-Visitations-Protokolle 1897–1948*.

⁴³ AP Sadów. *Kirchliche Bauten zu Czieschowa 1869–1907*.

⁴⁴ See: Urban. 1909. “Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa”, 115.

ings, mistakenly assuming that the beginnings of the local Jewish community could date back to the 14th century⁴⁵, and the history of the synagogue standing there – to 1751 (according to Alfred Grotte – even to the beginning of the 17th century).⁴⁶ In this respect, he mistakenly repeated the opinions of Rabbi Abraham Löwenthal from Berlin⁴⁷, the royal construction advisor Max Grünfeld from Katowice, and even the opinions of Hans Lutsch himself.⁴⁸

On 21 February 1908, an auction took place during which the buildings of the synagogue, rabbi's house along with the land and the Jewish cemetery were put up for sale. The transfer of the real estate on behalf of the Jewish community was done by a man named Kaufmann, who on a daily basis lived in Koszęcin. After a short auction, the real estate was purchased by the parish priest of Sadów for 1,250 marks. The sale agreement guaranteed that: "The buyer will continue to maintain the synagogue in an unchanged style and, if necessary, make it available to the followers of the Mosaic religion for prayer services, and the key to the temple deposited at the local organist's can be made available for them at any time requested".⁴⁹ On 30 September 1908, the court notary named Kujawa made an appropriate entry in the land and mortgage register, in which Fr. Karl Urban was appointed the new owner of the Jewish real estate.⁵⁰ It is worth adding here that the said auction caused considerable confusion in Jewish circles throughout Germany. For many followers of the Mosaic religion it was incomprehensible that a Catholic priest could buy – even with honest intentions – a synagogue building for private money. For that reason, Fr. Urban was contacted by the chairman of the Association of Upper Silesian Jewish Communities, court councilor named Berger from Królewska Huta (now

⁴⁵ Such an opinion was voiced, among others, by a teacher from Cieszowa named Nowomiej-ski, who from 1850 taught children at the local school for 50 years. He tried to prove the hypothesis by the parchment scroll of the Pentateuch owned by the Jewish community residing there at that time, but, as Brann wrote in his article, no one ever saw it. Years later, a professor from Wrocław identified the scroll, which was stored in Koszęcin, and he defined its date at 1842. See: Brann. 1917. "Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S", 127–129.

⁴⁶ Alfred Grotte. 1915. *Deutsche, böhmische und polnische Synagogentypen vom XI. bis Anfang des XIX. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Der Zirkel, Architekturverlag, 62–63.

⁴⁷ Rabbi Loewenthal, an unquestioned authority among the followers of Judaism, wrote that the synagogue in Cieszowa was distinguished by a specific and unique style, different from that of the wooden synagogues in Poland. The structure had no special decorations or architectural details, except for the specific curb roof covered with shingles, and that is why he appealed for its protection. See: Abraham Loewenthal. 1905. "Die Holzsynagoge in Czieschowa". *Mitteilungen zur jüdischen Volkskunde* 1 (16): 109; Urban. 1909. "Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa", 111. Cf. Brann. 1917. "Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S", 127.

⁴⁸ Hans Lutsch. 1894. *Verzeichnis der Kunstdenkmäler der Provinz Schlesien*. Vol. 4: *Der Regierungs-Bezirk Oppeln*. Pt. 2: *Fürstentümer Oppeln und Ratibor, Freie Standesherrschaften Beuthen und Pless*. Breslau: W.G. Korn, 200.

⁴⁹ Urban. 1909. "Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa", 115.

⁵⁰ District Court in Lubliniec, Land and Mortgage Register Department. Ref. WL 14 Cieszowa, *Titulus possessionis nr 2*.

Chorzów), and inquired about the purpose he had in buying the real estate in question. The priest's answer was simple and clear: "To continue to preserve all buildings as a religious testimony of worship". In addition, Fr. Urban knew that if the buildings had been bought by the Association, they would have to incur considerable costs by hiring a full-time watchman. And such a person "could also be subject to resentment from local residents".⁵¹

The new owner renovated the roof of the Catholic church and that of the synagogue very quickly, as early as in 1908. In the latter case, he allocated his private funds for that purpose. He received heartfelt thanks for that work from the representatives of Jewish communities. In addition, he announced from the pulpit to the parishioners that he was the owner of the synagogue from then on and warned them that no one would dare to harm those wooden buildings. He also began efforts to make the buildings of both the church and the synagogue, which served the worship of God, the starting point of a larger museum project, actively engaging in the activities of the "Oberschlesischer Geschichtsvereins" association.⁵² Hoping that the purchase he had made would pay off in the future and would contribute to the protection of the centuries-old heritage and to the creation of a unique museum on that site, Fr. Urban published an occasional article about the church and the synagogue in Cieszowa in the journal "Oberschlesische Heimat". In the introduction he described them as buildings "that were built for the praise of God". He wrote about the synagogue, e.g.: "On the edge of the village, right next to the road stands a Jewish synagogue. It is a small wooden building having a log structure, measuring 19 x 11 cubits, with a steep, shingled roof. From the southern side through the porch, we enter the house of prayer, and from the western side there are external stairs to the women's choir".⁵³ The text contains many false historical speculations. The parish priest of Sadów rightly argued that both sacral buildings were characterized by a certain convergence, and they may have even been built by the same carpenter whose name has not been identified to date. Comparing the condition of both buildings, he wrongly assumed that the synagogue was built around 1741 (i.e. 10 years earlier than the church there), but it may also have been erected earlier, which could be suggested by the movables accumulated inside, especially a brass candlestick with the symbol of the imperi-

⁵¹ Urban. 1909. "Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa", 115.

⁵² Some traces of that can be read in the occasional speech of Fr. Johannes Chrząszcz which he gave at the annual meeting of the members and supporters of the "Oberschleisches Museum", on the fifth anniversary of its foundation. Significant were the words stating that the museum wanted to expand the spectrum of its activity and the collection of museum exhibits for future generations in compliance with the principle of Goethe, which he included in his tragedy *Faust: Wer vieles bringt, wird manchem etwas bringen; und jeder geht zufrieden aus dem Haus*. See: Johannes Chrząszcz. 1910. Über die Sammeltätigkeit für das Oberschlesische Museum in Gleiwitz. Sonderabdruck aus der Monatschrift "Oberschlesien", Kattowitz: Verlag von Gebrüder Böhm, 3–5.

⁵³ Urban. 1909. "Die katholische Kirche und die jüdische Synagoge zu Czieschowa", 111.

al eagle (probably from the second half of the 17th century). In addition, wooden matzevot were found in a wooden shed for tools, supposedly from a nearby cemetery, whereof the oldest was dated for around 1650. Fr. Urban wrote that the synagogue served the faithful of the Old Testament, living in the eastern part of the district of Lubliniec, as well as in the areas located far to the south and east of Cieszowa, reaching even deeper into the district of Częstochowa, i.e. beyond the then state border. In that way, he somehow provoked Marcus Mordechai Brann (1849–1920), professor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Wrocław (*Jüdisch-Theologische Seminar in Breslau*) to get interested in the past of the Jewish community in Cieszowa and the buildings erected there.

4. The fate of the Cieszowa synagogue until 1923

In 1910, the Opole administrative region dissolved the synagogue association in Cieszowa and connected it with the Jewish community in Lubliniec.⁵⁴ Fr. Urban continued his efforts to save the synagogue and rabbi's house, but his initiative to establish a foundation and to connect it with the Upper Silesian Museum Association was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. At that time, the church authorities requested Fr. Urban to explain what he intended to do with the properties he had bought. Fr. Urban, who, in addition to the synagogue, had also bought two plots with buildings in Sadów, promised that after his death it would be all handed over to the parish. Shortly afterwards he asked for a new property deed to be drawn up in the land and mortgage register, pursuant to which the parish of St. Joseph in Sadów became the owner of the plot together with the synagogue and the rabbi's house. The notaries named Gielnik and Gaertner made an appropriate entry on February 25, 1916.⁵⁵

Shortly afterwards, Cieszowa was visited by Professor Marcus Brann himself, who was asked to read out Hebrew inscriptions on the liturgical objects and to decipher the chronostices contained therein. Interestingly, he did not choose the parish priest of Sadów as his guide, but Marcus Deutsch from Gliwice, son of Rabbi David Deutsch from Żory. In 1917, he published the results of his research in the scientific journal "Oberschlesien". Basing on the Hebrew votive inscription on one of the beams in the synagogue⁵⁶, Brann read

⁵⁴ Brann. 1917. "Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S", 137.

⁵⁵ District Court in Lubliniec, Land and Mortgage Register Department. Ref. WL 14 Cieszowa, *Titulus possessionis nr 3*.

⁵⁶ The votive inscription read: "Oh, how deeply worshiped this place is; here is nothing but the House of God and here is the gate to heaven" (*Wie Ehrfurcht gebietet ist dieser Ort; hier ist nichts anderes denn ein Gotteshaus, und hier ist die Pforte des Himmels*).

out the year of its construction: the year 5540 according to Jewish year-counting system, i.e. 1780: “*Quod erat demonstrandum*” – conclusively cutting off incorrect speculations.⁵⁷ In addition, he closely looked at the famous wooden epitaphs, which he actually described as old, but the inscriptions left on them were no longer legible. He presumed that they were characteristic for the southern and eastern territories of Germany, and they could have been brought by Jews forced to emigrate and who wanted to save their testimonies of history. In the same way other worship items appeared in Cieszowa, as well as five brass candlesticks: four with the initials of King Frederick the Great, and one with the two-headed imperial eagle in the women’s gallery. The location of the latter proved that the community did not consider the object to have been particularly important, since it was in a place where women rarely gathered to pray, “maybe only twice a year”.⁵⁸ The professor particularly valued the cemetery located 1 km away from the village, placed on a small hill, which, among others, contained mortal remains of Jewish emigrants from the second half of the 18th century. However, he did not find any gravestones from the times before the Prussian period, and the oldest matzevah that was found there belonged to the head of the community – Eliakim Getzel, son of Nathan Nata, who died in 1780.⁵⁹ The article was concluded with a short report from the events of 1908 and the situation awkward for his fellow believers at the time. In this regard, he had to acknowledge the sincere intentions of the parish priest, expressing the words of gratitude addressed to him: “*Dem vorurteillosen, milden und wohltätigen Herrn Pfarrer Urban sei hiermit die wärmste Dank ausgesprochen*”.⁶⁰ And what Fr. Urban had done was described by him as: “A great and comforting *documentum humanitatis* in this difficult period that God’s Providence has sent us”.⁶¹

Years later, the memory of the events of 1908 disappeared. The hypothesis created after World War II that the buildings of the synagogue and the rabbi’s house were demolished after 1911 is no longer justifiable. Alfred Grotte’s book published in 1915 mentions that “the synagogue is in good condition”⁶², and Mar-

⁵⁷ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 129.

⁵⁸ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 132.

⁵⁹ Marcin Wodziński presumed that the account given by the local community about such an old origin of the cemetery was based only on oral tradition, not confirmed by any document. See: Marcin Wodziński. 1996. *Hebrajskie inskrypcje na Śląsku w XIII-XVIII wieku*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej, 57–58.

⁶⁰ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 139.

⁶¹ *Währlich, ein urhebendes und tröstliches documentum humanitatis in dieser schweren Zeit, die die Vorsehung über uns verhängt hat*. Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 139.

⁶² Grotte. 1915. *Deutsche, böhmische und polnische Synagogentypen*, 63.

cus Brann wrote two years later: “*Synagoge und Friedhof bestehen noch heute*”.⁶³ In 1922, most of the Lubliniec district, including Sadów and Cieszowa, entered the structures of the reborn Poland. It was a difficult time for the local community, characterized by social tensions and divisions among parishioners themselves. At the beginning of 1923, Fr. Urban suffered a heart attack, after which he did not return to full fitness. Shortly before his death, he wrote two letters: to the Vicariate General in Wrocław and to the Apostolic Administration in Katowice, writing in them that in the past he had purchased, as a private individual, three properties, including a plot in Cieszowa: “on which the synagogue and a rabbi’s house were located”. After his death – consistent with his will – those goods were to enlarge the property of the parish in Sadów. Yet, he requested that the people who lived in the building of the former post office in Sadów should be allowed to stay there until their death, in line with his promise, which, he feared, he would not be able to fulfill himself. There was no mention in those letters that the synagogue would be demolished. Similarly, they did not raise the issue of the Jewish cemetery. The priest knew that for the followers of Judaism, as well as for Christians, it was an inviolable and sacred part of land, and therefore it could not become the property of the Catholic parish.⁶⁴

Fr. Urban died of pneumonia on 17 September 1923 and was buried at the parish cemetery in Sadów. As Jan Paweł Woronczak rightly pointed out, basing on the archival documents of the huge Catholic parish in Sadów – to which Cieszowa belonged for centuries – religious intolerance had never been mentioned: “In a sense it was also an act of tolerance that the synagogue and the rabbi’s house could be sold by tender to the Catholic parish priest Karl Urban from Sadów in 1908”.⁶⁵ This event confirms the common phenomenon of tolerance towards the Jewish community in Silesia and Germany at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, which was referred to as “German-Jewish symbiosis”.⁶⁶ In the case of the priest Karl Urban, we can additionally talk about inter-confessional friendship and respect for the material remains of the multi-faith heritage. At that time there was no talk of interreligious dialogue. Nevertheless, Fr. Urban was one generation ahead of those who, after World War II and the tragedy of Shoah, began a dialogue between Christians and the followers of Judaism.

⁶³ Brann. 1917. “Die jüdischen Altertümer in Czieschowa O/S”, 138.

⁶⁴ See: AP Sadów. *Miscellanea*. Vol. 1: *Notatki i listy 1899–1923, Letter from Fr. Urban to the Apostolic Administration in Katowice on June 8, 1923*, 1–2.

⁶⁵ See: Woronczak. 1991. *Cieszowa, Lubliniec*.

⁶⁶ Peter Maser. 1990. *Das schlesische Judentum*. In *Geschichte Schlesiens*. Vol. 3: *Preußisch-Schlesien 1740–1945, Österreichisch-Schlesien 1740–1918/45*. Ed. Josef Joachim Menzel, 345, Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag.

5. Instead of ending. The fate of the synagogue and cemetery after 1923

After the death of Fr. Urban the post of parish priest was taken by Jakub Hermann, the former administrator in nearby Olszyna. In the 1920s and 1930s, the local population was going through a difficult time of economic crisis, unemployment and frequent harvest disasters. Not without significance were the increasing nationalist sentiments and threats related to the brutal Nazism spreading across the borderline. It was then that the wooden synagogue and the rabbi's house were demolished, but it is not known when exactly it happened and for what reasons. The expert on the subject, Przemysław Nadolski, claims that the residents themselves could have contributed to the demolition of the buildings shortly after the death of Fr. Urban: "Ownerless, decaying and unattended buildings have become an easy prey for the impoverished community". In his opinion, such an act of vandalism could not have happened after 1926, the time when the post of voivodship heritage conservator was taken by Tadeusz Dobrowolski, known for many initiatives to save Silesian monuments. In my opinion, Dobrowolski alone could not do much in this respect, because there were many other sacral monuments in the district of Lubliniec that also required protection. This was the case with the renovation of the parish church in Sadów built in 1331, as well as the wooden church in Cieszowa, which Dobrowolski visited in 1936, without providing any support. Only on 12 March 1960, the church in Cieszowa was entered into the register of monuments.⁶⁷

Very likely and acceptable demolition time was suggested in his study by Józef Wysocki from Cieszowa, born shortly before the outbreak of World War II: "The synagogue and the rabbi's house were demolished just before the war broke out due to significant damage".⁶⁸ After the last repairs that took place in 1908, the wooden buildings were not renovated, and the damaged shingles were not replaced. Due to the fact that no repair works had been done, the beams started decaying, undermining the entire structure. The parish alone could not afford to renovate even the church buildings, and thus it was difficult to take care of the other buildings. We can indirectly find out about the reasons to refrain from renovations from the letter of Fr. Podleski, sent to the diocesan curia in Katowice in June 1938. The said priest, who was substituting the ailing Fr. Hermann in the parish ("he had a serious accident"), wrote about the need to carry out repairs

⁶⁷ Archives of the Diocesan Curia in Gliwice (hereinafter: AKD Gliwice), *Acta Localia* (hereinafter: AL), *Parafia św. Marcina Biskupa i Wyznawcy w Cieszowej*. Vol. 1: 1925–1989, *Letter of the Voivodship Conservator of Monuments dated March 10, 1978*.

⁶⁸ Józef Wysocki. 2001. *250 lat kościoła św. Marcina w Cieszowej 1751–2001*, Cieszowa: Allegro, 2. Cf. Józef Wysocki. 1999. *Cieszowa. Gmina i wieś. Rys historyczny*, Cieszowa: Allegro; Józef Wysocki. 2014. *Historia naszych przodków*, Koszęcin: Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Społecznych.

in the parish, which had not been undertaken for many years. In addition, in the summer of 1937, a terrible storm and hailstorm hit the area, which caused great damage to the material structure of the parish. In his opinion, the faithful could not bear the cost of repairs, because for a year they had been afflicted by cattle plague and epidemic.⁶⁹

Some scarce information is provided by another letter that on 2 September 1943 (during the war) was sent to the Vicariate General in Katowice by Franciszek and Maria Duda (née Brodalski). They requested the church authorities to purchase the plot of land on which “the synagogue had been located in the past”. According to Franciszek Duda, on 12 July 1925, the parish in Sadów handed them that plot of land for lease, which he alone was to keep in order. In 1940, a new road was marked out in Cieszowa, which reduced all plots by 3 meters. The host planned to build a well, and he marked out its location within the borders of that plot so that it could be “without detriment to other neighbors”. Besides, he doubted that the parish would be interested in the plot: “If a parish was to be established in Cieszowa, then the parish owned a more convenient plot of land of the area of 2 morgens located right next to the church”.⁷⁰ On 30 September 1943, Fr. Hermann suggested that church authorities should not make any binding decisions during the war. On 6 October 1943, the vicar general, Fr. Wosnitzer responded to the interested party, explaining that now he could not grant such a permission and suggested further lease of the land.⁷¹ In view of the above, the question is whether the said buildings could have been dismantled after 1923 and before 12 July 1925. It is difficult to unequivocally accept such an opinion, but it is also difficult to reject it.

On 20 March 1950, pursuant to the government act on the takeover of goods of a dead hand by the state (Act No. 2, Article 32), most of the land belonging to the parish of Sadów, including the plots in Cieszowa, was confiscated. The parish tried to save the estate at all costs, but the efforts were only successful in relation to the land where the church buildings, presbytery and parish cemeteries were located. In this way, the state became the owner of the land left by the Jewish community in Cieszowa, which can be clearly seen by following the annotations on the maps of plots stored in the Department of Geodesy at the Municipality Office in Koszęcin, one of the departments of the State Geodetic and Cartographic Resource.⁷²

⁶⁹ AKD Gliwice, AL, *Parafia św. Józefa w Sadowie*. Vol. 1: *Akta katowickie 1889–1989*, Letter from Fr. Podleski to the Diocesan Curia in Katowice dated June 1938.

⁷⁰ AKD Gliwice, AL, *Parafia św. Marcina Biskupa i Wyznawcy w Cieszowej*. Vol. 1, Letter from Franz and Maria Duda to the Vicariate General in Katowice dated September 2, 1943, 1–2.

⁷¹ AKD Gliwice, AL, *Parafia św. Marcina Biskupa i Wyznawcy w Cieszowej*. Vol. 1, Letter from Fr. Jakub Hermann of September 30, 1943; Letter from Fr. Franz Wosnitzer of October 6, 1943.

⁷² National Geodetic and Cartographic Resources, District of Lubliniec. Article 15 of the Cieszowa plots register (plot 12/13); Boundary protocol of 1916 r. (plot 12/13), 7–10; Sketch 1916-

On 5 April 1958, the presidium of the District National Council in Lubliniec informed about the takeover of the remaining real estates, including the farm land belonging to the parish (over 6 ha in total).⁷³ The painstaking battle to save at least a part of the church property began again, and it lasted until the 1970s.

Only the Jewish cemetery has remained to our times from the very rich Jewish architectural heritage of small Cieszowa. Looking historically at the huge losses suffered by Jewish culture in Poland, in Silesia and in the world, it is an exceptional monument. At the time of Fr. Urban, the Jewish cemetery was surrounded only by a fence made of wooden boards, where nearly 500 burials took place. The cemetery survived World War I, the interwar period and the bestial years of World War II. The wooden fence has deteriorated, and the ancient matzevot affected by erosion have lost their former splendor. After World War II, the centuries-old venerated “place of Jewish memory” was forgotten. On 15 August 2008, a tragedy occurred in the area, when tornado, passing among others through the localities of Lubliniec district destroyed many places and buildings, including ancient trees which were knocked down at the cemetery of Cieszowa.⁷⁴ In recent years, thanks to the involvement of good people – including youth from the nearby schools – the necropolis has been tidied up. Some matzevot have been restored and an inventory of the remaining grave-stones was made.⁷⁵ Currently, we can still identify 100 matzevot in the cemetery, but most of them are not in the right position. The inscriptions on stone matzevot, made in Hebrew and German, are partly blurred. And yet, thanks to people of good will and also owing to local community activists who are not indifferent to the fate of past generations, we can hope that the account of the rich history of the Jewish community in Upper Silesia, inhabiting Cieszowa also in the 18th and 19th centuries will be saved. It is also worth remembering about the special initiative of Fr. Karl Urban, who also today raises a lot of admiration and respect among many experts on the subject.

0006; Sketch 1916-0004; Copy of the cadastral map 2 km in Cieszowa (plots 12/13, 129/13, 132/48 and 131/48); Article 55 of Cieszowa plots register.

⁷³ AKD Gliwice, AL, *Parafia św. Józefa w Sadowie*. Vol. 1, *Decision of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry at the Presidium of the District National Council in Lubliniec, October 24, 1958*. (Nr R.U.Z. 5/12/58), 1–2.

⁷⁴ In effect of those atmospheric phenomena, 4 people were killed, including 2 in the Lubliniec district, and 34 were hospitalized. 360 houses and many outbuildings and elements of the so-called small architecture were destroyed.

⁷⁵ Jan Myreik. 2007. “Historia Żydów w Cieszowej”. *Ziemia Lubliniecka*. *Kwartalnik Społeczno-Kulturalny* 6 (1–2): 10.

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