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(Translated into English by Andrew Rajcher)

An Outline of the History of the Jews of Kłobuck to World War I

The settlement of a Jewish population in Kłobuck begins relatively late, only at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries¹. It seems that among the main factors which influenced this was the agricultural character of the town. It is also important that, during the Swedish invasion of Poland, in 1658, King Jan Kazimierz removed Kłobuck from the Krzepice District authorities and, together with several other villages, placed it into the perpetual “estate” of the Paulines from Jasna Góra. There is speculation that the Paulines forbade Jews from settling in Kłobuck. However, those who lived in the parish at the time that it was handed over to the Paulines were able to remain in their own homes. It is estimated that, at the end of the 18th century, thirteen Jewish families lived within the parish, but none in Kłobuck itself².

That situation changed when, after the Second Partition of Poland, Kłobuck came under Prussian rule. In July 1796, the Prussian authorities issued a law taking over church and district authority property and making it the property of the State Treasury³. Kłobuck was thus removed from the jurisdiction of the Jasna Góra monks. From that time on, there was no longer a formal impediment which would hamper Jewish settlement in the town. In 1800, barely 10 Jews lived in Kłobuck. In 1820, there were 181 while, in 1827, there were already 255. In the following years, that number doubled to 545 individuals in 1851⁴.

The increase in the population numbers in the 19th century was mainly influenced by two factors – natural growth and migration. People, “superfluous in the countryside” and seeking employment, flooded into the town. They moved from villages into the town where they sought an income, mainly through craft and trade⁵. Kłobuck was an agricultural town. Farming was the main occupation of the Christian population (in 1845, 299 out of 464 families, namely more than 65%)⁶. Jewish residents, as elsewhere in the country, were occupied mainly in craft and trade⁷. Some leased inns, while others handled contraband. Their lifestyle and other activities were dependent upon their means of subsistence.

In Kłobuck, in addition to traditional crafts such as tailors, shoemakers and bakers, in the 19th century, Jews began engaging in new occupations. To mention a few, they became

¹ J. Laberschek, *W czasach piastowskich i jagiellońskich*, (in:) F. Kiryk (ed.), *Kłobuck. Dzieje miasta i gminy (do roku 1939)*, Krakow 1998, s. 136. It is worth mentioning that, in the Middle Ages, a fisherman named Mojżesz is mentioned. Perhaps he was a Jew, although merely his name cannot guarantee that. Any such suggestion should be treated as a curiosity.

² *Encyklopedia Powszechna Orgelbranda*, Vol. 14, p. 878; Z. Perzanowski, *Zarys dziejów miasta Kłobucka*, „Małopolskie Studia Historyczne” 1958, p. 54.

³ Czesław Michalski, *W okresie wojen napoleońskich i powstań narodowych*, (in:) *Kłobuck. Dzieje miasta i gminy (do roku 1939)*, p. 250.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 261–263; F. Rodecki, *Obraz jeograficzno-statystyczny Królestwa Polskiego*, Warsaw 1830, tab. IV.

⁵ *Encyklopedia Powszechna Orgelbranda*, Vol. 14, p. 878.

⁶ J. Lipiec, *Ekonomiczno-społeczna i prawna degradacja miast regionu częstochowskiego w XIX w.*, „Ziemia Częstochowska”, 6/7, 1967, pp. 106–107.

⁷ J. Verdmon, *Krótką monografią wszystkich miast, miasteczek i osad w Królestwie Polskim*, Warsaw 1902, p. 97.

weavers of cotton, “manufacturers” of soap, oil producers and masons⁸. In December 1816, a law was introduced “regulating craftsmen, artisans and the professions”. On the basis of that law, Jews could belong to guilds, albeit without either active or passive voting rights⁹. Those, who worked as craftsmen in the city, paid higher taxes than Christian craftsmen who, for example, paid 3 złotych, while a Jew would pay 6 złotych. A Jewish butcher was required to pay up to 12 złotych annually¹⁰.

Despite these inconveniences, Jewish craftsmen in Kłobuck were doing quite well. Baking can serve as an example of this. From year to year, their participation grew until, in 1857, they reached 100% participation in the trade (all 16 bakers in the town were Orthodox Jews). It was the same when it came to cotton weaving (in 1857, there were three weavers, all of whom were Jews) and rope-making (only two Jews). In the mid-19th century, in Kłobuck, there was one glazier and one soap-maker, both Jews. In 1857, there were three hatters in the town, of whom two were Jews. Amongst the 13 tailors, only three were Christians. Trades such as shoemakers, butchers and potters were much less popular amongst the Jewish residents of Kłobuck¹¹. Almost no Kłobuck Jews were involved in saddlery or masonry. According to the 1857 statistics discussed here, of a total number of 132 craftsmen, 43 were Jews, namely 35%¹². There were quite a number of occupations within which a small number of craftsmen worked, thus indicating that the town did not have any specific specialisation. It was actually a service centre for the local market.

In the following years, the situation did not change significantly, especially that, on the basis of a 1869 Tsarist order, in January 1870, the Organising Committee removed Civic Privileges from 336 towns of the Congress Kingdom of Poland – among them being Kłobuck. From that time, it had the status of a settlement, something which also affected the local Jews, since they could only obtain employment in towns¹³. Despite the lack of accurate data, it can be stated that the Jewish population continued to engage in craft and trade, while agriculture was left to the remaining residents. The situation changed as far as religious proportions are concerned. In 1864, there were 1,361 Christians in the town. In 1909, there were a little more – 1,463. However, the number of Jews grew from 837 in 1864, to 2,200 so that, at the beginning of the 20th century, they constituted a majority of the town’s residents. This indicates large migration flows in this area. The takeover of craft and trade by the Jews, among other reasons, caused the Christian population to leave the area for neighbouring towns in search of work and better living conditions¹⁴. Little is known about the economic activities of Kłobuck Jews during World War I or about the effects of Kłobuck regaining its Civic Privilege in August 1917¹⁵.

Jewish residents of Kłobuck were also engaged in trade. They were leaders in this field and, from its very beginning, they were completely dominant in the flour, cattle and imported drinks trades. Over time, they were also prominent in other areas of trade and, in the case of Kłobuck, they were stallholders, innkeepers and petty traders. In 1857, of the 37 traders in the town, 34 were Jews, only one stallholder and two petty traders were Christians.

⁸ C. Michalski, *W okresie wojen*, p. 269.

⁹ *Dziennik Praw Królestwa Polskiego*, Vol. 4, 1817, No. 17, pp. 114–158.

¹⁰ A. Brzozka, *Żydzi w Kłobucku*, [w:] *Kartki z historii Kłobucka*, Częstochowa 2007, p. 135.

¹¹ In 1857, there was one Jewish shoemaker among the twenty-two, two butchers from a total of seven and three out of fifteen potters.

¹² Table contained in *Kłobuck. Dzieje miasta i gminy (do roku 1939)*, pp. 270–272.

¹³ *Dziennik Praw Królestwa Polskiego*, Vol. 69, 1869, No. 237, pp. 245–253.

¹⁴ C. Michalski, *Po utracie praw miejskich*, (in) *Kłobuck. Dzieje miasta i gminy (do roku 1939)*, p. 310.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

Although there were many merchants, they were not a wealthy group. According to an 1845 classification based on wealth, the largest group of Kłobuck merchants belonged to the lowest level - Group V. Of the overall number of 25, 14 were classified at that level. Seven individuals belonged to Group IV. Of the remaining four, one was in Group III and two merchants were graded at Group VI. No one was assessed at Group I – the wealthiest¹⁶. Following its demotion to the status of “settlement”, the role of trade in Kłobuck diminished, although some Jews remained active within it. That situation improved somewhat over the following decades¹⁷.

Service industries were also important activities for Kłobuck Jews. As Baruch Szymkowicz recalls, they served not only their fellow-Jews, but also catered to the needs of the non-Jewish population. Amongst these, we can name “bespoke” tailors such as A.L. Chorzewski, L. Holcman and Z. Zygelman, whose clients included wealthy residents of Kłobuck and the surrounding area. There were many local “cut-price” tailors. They would buy entire bales of material, plus ready-made suits and overcoats, in Częstochowa, usually on credit, and then sell them at local fairs. Two Kłobuck Jews, who engaged in oil-making, also received orders from the local rural population. The peak season was the period of Lent, when Christians used a lot of oil, since they did not eat meat. At that time, both oilers worked day and night. Transport was also a source of income. This was mainly through Jewish wagon-drivers, daily, driving merchants to Częstochowa in order to trade¹⁸. In the 20th century inter-War period, when motor vehicle transport was developing, two of the three companies involved in this industry belonged to Jews (J. Mentel & Co., Sz. Rypstajn & Sukiennik)¹⁹. Also, shops in Kłobuck were largely owned by Jews.

Another source of income for Kłobuck Jews was the leasing of municipal income, namely the leasing of rights to exercise municipal rights in exchange for a fixed fee. Jews were usually the lessees of these municipal benefits, even though the nationwide political situation in the 19th century impaired their activities. The desire to deprive the Jews of the rights to these leases was explained by the fact they were guilty of causing extreme poverty amongst the peasantry, that they extracted every last grosz from them and that it was for vodka.

There was an increase in competition for the developing distilleries and for the right to propination. As a result of the campaign, the Duchy of Warsaw authorities, by a decree in July 1812, banned Jews from making or selling alcohol in the countryside. Two years later, that decree also took effect in the town²⁰. In 1825, that decree was suspended. Jews were temporarily permitted to hold a licence to sell alcohol, but for a substantial fee. However, in 1833, that permission was revoked. In that same year, Jews were refused propination licences and, in Kłobuck, they were refused vodka. However, by 1839, an Orthodox Jew, Weksler,

¹⁶ The table is contained in *Kłobuck. Dzieje miasta i gminy (do roku 1939)*, pp. 270–272.

¹⁷ In the 20th century inter-War period, in 1931 to be precise, there were 180 people engaged in trade in the town. It was not specified as to how many were Jews. However, what is known, is that trade in Kłobuck was largely in the hands of Orthodox Jews.

¹⁸ B. Szymkowicz, *Jewish Artisans and Merchants*, (in) A. Wolf Jasni (ed.), *Sefer Kłobuck. Mazekeret kavod li-kehila ha kedosa she-hushemeda/Yizkor-buch fun farpaynikter klobucker kehile* (The Book of Kłobuck. The destruction of a religious community), Tel Aviv 1960, pp. 65–68 (I am using a translation from Yiddish to English from <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Klobuck/Klobuck.html>).

¹⁹ *Księga Adresowa Polski (wraz z miastem Gdańskiem) dla handlu, przemysłu, rzemiosł i rolnictwa*, Warsaw 1930, p. 229.

²⁰ A. Żbikowski, *Żydzi*, Wrocław 1997, p. 64. Propination – the exclusive right of the owners of property estates to produce alcohol and the privilege of importing these products from other cities and to derive profit from these activities.

applied for a consumer income lease and received it for the years 1839-1841²¹. When he discovered that the Kłobuck parish priest intended to bring in alcohol and illegally slaughtered meat, on the strength of his lease agreement, he turned to the mayor for help to search the wagon. The mayor refused him, using the words, "I'm not a Jewish flunky". With the aid of two guards, Weksler, himself, searched the wagon. When the mayor found out about this, he ordered that both guards be whipped. The Jew, in turn, informed the Wieluń district authorities about the entire incident²².

It is worth noting that the lessees of the production and selling of alcohol, namely "propination", earned the highest level of incomes. Therefore, there was always a high degree of interest in this field, despite the fact that rental rates were high and constantly increasing. In 1826, the fee was 1,500 złotych and, in 1830-1832, it was 1,530 złotych²³. In 1862, a 12-year propination lease was granted to Eicyk Ginsberg of Częstochowa. One condition was that, within three years, he would pay 9,777 rubles and 85 kopeks to the town owner, Edward Lemański²⁴.

Some Kłobuck Jews were also involved in smuggling. It was illegal, but there was great poverty in the town and some took the risk in order to improve their material circumstances. The proximity of the Prussian border was favourable and also the law stated that residents, who lived within three miles of that border. All they had to do was an "identity card" which served as a border-crossing pass²⁵.

The commodity which was most often imported from abroad was salt, while alcohol was the most frequent export. In Kłobuck, in the 19th century, the number of distilleries fell from twelve to six. However, due to improved production methods, productivity increased significantly. The production of spirit made from rye increased by 100% and potatoes also began to be used in the production of alcohol – which made it cheaper. As a result, six Kłobuck distilleries produced around 240,000 litres of spirit annually. Of course, the town's residents were not able to consume that amount, so some of it was smuggled into Prussia²⁶. It was Jews who were mainly involved in contraband and, above all, in illegal goods trafficking. Goods smuggling was most prevalent in the Wieluń district. The Congress Kingdom government took up the fight against the "contrabandists", but it was not completely eradicated. The reason for this was simple – poverty, especially amongst the Jewish population, for whom contraband was often the only way to earn money²⁷.

In part, this state of affairs led to nationwide legislation. I have already mentioned laws that restricted the activities of Jews in various aspects of life. Among other things, they were banned from certain professions and banned from settling in certain places or from acquiring real estate ownership. As though that was not enough, they were required to pay

²¹ State Archives in Łódź, Anterior Piotrków Provincial Government, Ref. 472 (Records regarding rental consumer income in the city of Kłobuck, 1837–1848).

²² A. Brzozka, *Kartki z historii Kłobucka*, p. 35.

²³ APŁ, Anterior Piotrków Provincial Government, Ref. 478 (Files relating to leases in 1825–1851).

²⁴ This was the amount which, as a result of a dispute with the owner, the Governmental Internal Affairs Commission of the Warsaw Governate ordered to pay residents as excess taxes from 1832-1854. Regarding Eicyk Ginsberg, see Janusz Spyry's paper in this publication.

²⁵ A. Brzozka, *Kartki z historii...*, p. 36.

²⁶ C. Michalski, *W okresie wojen napoleońskich...*, p. 268.

²⁷ This applies not only to Kłobuck, but to the whole Congress Kingdom of Poland, in which 9 out of 40 Jews lived in poverty.

additional taxes. In Kłobuck, these were a military equipment tax and a kosher tax²⁸. And, for the running of a craft workshop, they were required to pay double or even four times the fee paid by the Christian population. They were tolerated but, most often, they were considered as “lower category” people. This situation changed only partially following the Wielopolskie reforms in 1862.

Apart from the earning of a living, it was also important for Jews to organise a communal life, especially a religious one. The history of the Jewish community council in Kłobuck stretches back to the first half of the 19th century and, throughout the entire period, it was considered to be a small, religious community²⁹. This was one of the reasons for source materials and studying not belonging only to the richest.

Jews living in Kłobuck, at the beginning of settlement in this area, came under the purview of the Jewish Community Council in Działoszyn, around 22.5 kilometres away and, at this time, the largest concentration of Jews in the area. Their number in Kłobuck did not justify them having an independent organisation. Annually, the Działoszyn Jewish Community Council had an income of 1,524 złotych, the amount being proportionately divided amongst all members of the Jewish community, which included the Jewish residents of, among other places, Kłobuck, Praszka and Pajęczno. There was no specific amount that the Jews of Kłobuck were required to pay³⁰, but they also had to pay for the use of religious services in the Działoszyn synagogue. In 1821, the amount was 120 złotych which, by 1825 had grown to 150 złotych³¹. However, not everyone in the town paid their fee towards Działoszyn. Seven residents had a collective debt of 270 złotych, calculated as at the last day of December 1821³².

At the beginning of the following year, a Tsarist decree was issued which took effect on 22nd February 1822 and which abolished all Jewish Community Councils which existed at that time. It replaced them with synagogue supervisory boards³³. Perhaps the growing Kłobuck Jewish community was considering the creation of its own separate structure. However, a lack of funds for the construction of a synagogue and for a rabbi’s salary meant that the relationship with Działoszyn was still maintained. The financial records of the Działoszyn synagogue, up until 1863, include an item described as “religious fees from the Jews of the town of Kłobuck”. It amounted to 9 rubles. Perhaps this amount was for the services of a rabbi which, for many years, Kłobuck could not permanently employ³⁴. There was no official Jewish community in Kłobuck in 1827 and there is no mention of one in the list of official communities in the Kalisz Province in 1834. It was established later, in 1838³⁵.

The establishment of a religious communal structure of its own required a reorganisation of religious life with its own finances. However, Kłobuck Jews were not amongst the wealthiest. Although, over the years, the wealthier did become more numerous.

²⁸ Kosher – a tax on the ritual slaughter of animals; *rekrutowe* – from the name of a release from military service. It is unknown how much money from these two taxes entered the State Treasury from Kłobuck.

²⁹ For this reason, Konrad Urbański included Kłobuck in his work on small religious communities in the Kieleckie Province (See below).

³⁰ AGAD, CWW, File: 1543 (A summary of all documents from the Jewish community in Działoszyn).

³¹ C. Michalski, *W okresie wojen napoleońskich...*, p. 263.

³² AGAD, CWW, File: 1543 (A list of Jewish contributions to the Działoszyn Jewish Community Council until the last day of December 1821). Among those list were. Dawid Deyt – for 90 zł, Marek Altan – for 36 zł and a certain Aronowicz – for 24 zł.

³³ *Dziennik Praw Królestwa Polskiego*, Vol. 7, 1820, No. 31, pp. 275–278.

³⁴ AGAD, CWW, File: 1543 (Synagogue Financial Records for the City of Działoszyn, Wieluń District, Warsaw Governate).

³⁵ AGAD, CWW, File: 1547.

It was probably not until the middle of the 19th century that they began building a synagogue. Before that, they would meet for prayer services in the private home of Aron Wajs. The memoirs of the town's former Jewish residents contain information that, over many years, the religious life of the local Jews was centred on his house³⁶. Work on their own synagogue began in 1851, with little money. However, benefactors were found who took responsibility for covering part of the related expenses. They were an innkeeper from the Kłobuck-Zagorz area, Szymon Weksler and his wife Rachela. It is not known as to when, precisely, construction of the synagogue, which was on ul. Bożniczna was completed. In the memoirs, it is described as very tall, with large windows. Wide stairs led to the entrance. Behind the door was an atrium, from which one could access the *Bet Ha-Midrash*, the synagogue's courtyard or, of course, the synagogue itself³⁷.

Apart from the synagogue, there were also two prayerhouses in Kłobuck - the Big *Bet Ha-Midrash* and the Small *Bet Ha-Midrash*. They were set up before the community's synagogue was built. The Big prayerhouse was always open. Classes were held there and people prayed there regardless of the season or day. As Baruch Szymkowicz recalls, sometimes boys would meet there at four in the morning in order to study together. When the first *minyán* (at least ten adult Jewish men) came an hour later, the boys would move to the Small *Bet Ha-Midrash*. Prayers were held within it throughout the year, on Shabbat and on holydays, but classes were taught there only in the summer.

Apart from the two prayerhouses on ulica Bożniczna, there were also *Chederim*, Jewish religious schools for boys. Mothers taught the alphabet and the basics of the Hebrew language to their small boys. The older boys would go, by themselves, for Torah study³⁸. Teachers conducted classes in private homes or in rooms added-on to their houses. They received payments directly from the parents of their students. Outside of school, Jewish children in Kłobuck also attended the town's elementary school which, based on nationwide recommendations, was supposed to be non-denominational. From the middle of the 19th century, Jewish students constituted around 13-16% of the total number of children³⁹.

There was a *mikvah* near the synagogue on ulica Bożniczna, the street which, one could say, was the religious centre for Kłobuck Jews. The ritual bathhouse served to wash away ritual uncleanness. It was used mainly by women following menstruation or following a period of pregnancy confinement. It existed throughout the Jewish Community Council's existence. However, it was not until 1931 that fees for the use of the *mikvah* differed between men and women. Women paid 30 groszy to 1.50 złotych, while fees for men were between 30 groszy and 5 złotych⁴⁰.

Kłobuck Jews also established a cemetery, the exact date of which is not known. It would certainly have been shortly after the opening of the town's synagogue. It was located on ulica Szkolna and had an area of 0.76 hectares⁴¹. What is known is that, in 1866, the Jewish Community Council applied to the Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment Department for permission to create a fence around the cemetery. Permission

³⁶ G. Goldberg, *The Rise of the Synagogue*, (in) *Sefer Kłobuck*, p. 25.

³⁷ B. Szymkowicz, *The Synagogue, the Prayer House of the Kłobuck Jews*, (in) *Sefer Kłobuck*, p. 26.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 27, 29.

³⁹ J. Lipiec, *Nauczanie w szkołach elementarnych Księstwa Warszawskiego i Królestwa Polskiego w latach 1807–1830 (studia nad Okręgiem Częstochowskim)*, Częstochowa 1993, p. 77.

⁴⁰ K. Urbański, *Gminy żydowskie małe w województwie kieleckim w okresie międzywojennym*, Kielce 2006, p. 237.

⁴¹ P. Burchard, *Pamiętki i zabytki kultury żydowskiej w Polsce*, Warsaw 1990, p. 132.

was granted and a fence was erected⁴². After functioning for years, the number of available burial sites began to decrease. As a result, in November 1924, at a meeting of the City Council, an application from the Kłobuck Synagogue Supervisors was favourably received. It related to the sale of a property adjacent to the cemetery, the area of which they, most probably, wanted to enlarge⁴³.

As I have already mentioned, the Kłobuck Jewish community was considered as small and, also, as not a very wealthy one. This impacted on the organisation of its religious life. Difficulties arise when we attempt to ascertain just how many rabbis served the community in Kłobuck. In Jewish culture, the rabbi is the interpreter of religious law, for which he is asked for advice in difficult situations. In the 20th century, in order to become a formal rabbi, several requirements needed to be met. First of all, several years' study in a *yeshivah* was needed to be completed. One then needed the practical experience of working as an assistant to a rabbi and, finally, one had to obtain a *smicha*⁴⁴. It was only then that one could look for a vacancy in with a Jewish community⁴⁵.

However, in the 19th century, the Congress Kingdom of Poland authorities, just like in other countries, assumed that, if there was a Jewish community council, then there must also be a rabbi at its head (although, in practice, the situation was much more complex). On the basis of an 1830 decree, which regulated the positions of rabbis in the Jewish communities of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, they wished to make it an administrative position which, at the same time, would serve as some kind of link between secular authorities and the Jews⁴⁶. Apart from that, a rabbi had to be approved by an overriding authority. The Congress Kingdom of Poland authorities also demanded that a rabbi, as head of the Jewish community, be present at weddings in order to complete official certification formalities which, according to Jewish traditions, were not essential⁴⁷.

For many years, these regulations were not followed and the situation became complicated. For example, in the Civil Registry records, it is stated that “an event took place in the town of Kłobuck on 21st December 1826. Szmul Tyś Rabbi, together with orthodox Jews ...”⁴⁸. It cannot be clearly stated as to whether he was a formal rabbi, whether he was just acknowledged by the Jews as such, but not accepted by the authorities or someone who simply performed the duties of a rabbi. This type of situation lasted for a long time in Kłobuck. There were relatively few Jews here and they were poor, so that they could not afford a formal, approved by the authorities, rabbi. His duties were often performed by someone respected by his fellow-Jews. He could have had a rabbinical qualification (a *smicha*), often someone older who had grown-up children and who would be able to devote

⁴² AGAD, CWW, File:1547 (Information about the cemetery fence in 1866).

⁴³ State Archives in Częstochow (APCz), Częstochowa Powiat Department, File. 226 (Records of meetings of the Kłobuck Town Council 1919–1926). During World War II, the Jewish cemetery was completely destroyed.

⁴⁴ Smicha – is a type of examination sat by people applying for rabbinical status and a certificate of competence. It is usually signed by at least two rabbinical authorities

⁴⁵ In addition, the state authorities required a knowledge of the national language, a certificate of “morality” and have passed an examination or have certification of “spiritual knowledge”. See M. Rzepecka- Aleksiejuk, *Wprowadzenie*, (in) *Miasto bez rabina nie może istnieć. Rabini, podrabini i kandydaci na rabinów guberni warszawskiej w latach 1888–1912*, Warsaw 2012, pp. 7–10; R. Żebrowski, *O rabinach słów kilka*, *ibid.*, pp. 16–24.

⁴⁶ J. Mizgalski, *Dzieje, dziedzictwo i tożsamość kulturowa Żydów Częstochowy jako punkt wyjścia do refleksji nad ich tożsamością polityczną w XIX i XX wieku*, [w:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie – współlistnienie, Holocaust, pamięć*, Częstochowa 2006, p. 57.

⁴⁷ A rabbi does not have to attend a marriage ceremony. The marriage could have been conducted before a pious and respected Jews.

⁴⁸ APCz, Civil Registry records relating to the Kłobuck Synagogue District.

himself to matters of religion. He would receive a certain sum of money, but the amount would be a symbolic one. The state authorities did not recognise such a solution, but they were often forced to tolerate it and the local Jews did not have to bear any additional costs.

A reflection of this situation can be found in surviving synagogue records relating to Kłobuck for the years 1846-1863, namely Jewish Community Council budgets. Within the line-items for expenditure, the amount designated for salaries does not include a provision for a rabbi over those years. The salary for a so-called “spiritual leader”, for that entire period, was barely 18 rubles⁴⁹. From this, it can be concluded that this “spiritual leader” simply performed some of the duties of a rabbi for the Kłobuck Jewish community. The surviving records of Jewish weddings in Kłobuck from 1826, Szmul Tyś (1826), Dawid Deycz (1827-1828 and Sumer Kunter (December 1828-1832) are designated as “a clergyman, temporarily acting as rabbi” or as “assistant rabbi”⁵⁰. A further Jew who performed the duties of a rabbi in the community was Lewek Grun. He appears in Civil Registry records, continuously, from 1832 to 1865, being at the same time chairman of the synagogue supervisory board. Archival material clearly contains the phrase “a synagogue supervisor performing the duties of a rabbi”⁵¹. That situation lasted until the beginning of the 20th century when the rabbi in Kłobuck was Lejzor-Aba Zelinger (1902) and, later, Icek-Henoch Goldberg.

As I have already pointed out, the Jewish community in Kłobuck was relatively small and its residents did not count amongst the wealthy. For this reason, also, the contents of its coffers were not impressive, especially during the inter-Uprising period. In the years 1843-1846, the Jewish Community Council coffers received 20 rubles 40 kopeks in religious fees. From 1852 to 1857, the amount was barely 9 rubles 35 kopeks. These amounts included fees for a *rodal*, namely for the right to read from the Torah in the synagogue on holydays and during prayer services. This brought in about two rubles annually. Small amounts, less than one ruble, were received for weddings and circumcisions. These payments were voluntary. The Kłobuck synagogue supervisors were also responsible for the collection of income from the *mikvah*, which amounted to 4 rubles 50 kopeks⁵². A marginal profit, on average 43 kopeks, was made from the sale of wax after the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). The synagogue collection-box and voluntary contributions, over those almost twenty years, raised amounts between 50 kopeks and 1 ruble 75 kopeks⁵³. In the middle of the 19th century, there were around 500 Jews in Kłobuck, so that 1 ruble from 500 individuals was not much. Also, small amounts, most often not exceeding 50 kopeks, were received in the synagogue during prayer services. Rentals on synagogue benches are also recorded as bringing in a similarly low amount. Like most leases, they were allocated on an auction basis and were, for example, for a period of three years. Whoever paid more sat closer to the synagogue’s centre, the *bimah*, during services.

The Jewish Community Council’s expenses also had to be modest and were required to meet current needs, especially for the “spiritual leader”, namely the person performing the duties of a rabbi. It was only in the budget for 1846-1848 that a scribe-supervisor was included. In the following years, perhaps as a budget saving, his duties were taken over by the person acting as assistant rabbi. Surviving records show that, in Kłobuck, there was the position of “knocker” (*pukacz*), who earned a salary of 16 rubles. This is one Polish

⁴⁹ AGAD, CWW, File: 1547 (Synagogue records for 1846-1863).

⁵⁰ APCz, Civil Registry records relating to the Kłobuck Synagogue District.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Only in the years 1846-1848 was a larger amount recorded, amounting to 11 rubles 80 kopeks.

⁵³ There was one occasion when the collection-box yielded 5 rubles 60 kopeks (AGAD, CWW, File: 1547).

expression for a *shammes*, one of whose duties was to awaken Jews in the morning in time for prayers. He was called a *pukacz*, as he would go from door to door and simply knock on each one. The final position, included in the community's budget, was that of cashier. His salary was also small and ranged from 5 rubles 11 kopeks to 6 rubles 19 kopeks.

The income mentioned above was written into the budget for the information of the authorities. It should be assumed that the majority of the income and expenditure was controlled outside of the Jewish Community Council's official budget. Perhaps its members were wealthier than they wanted to declare to the authorities.

In addition to the expenses relating to the performance of religious obligations, the Jewish Community Council had to cover other costs. Synagogue heating and lighting had to be paid for, which amounted to 10 rubles 50 kopeks. It was necessary to pay for stationery, equipment, bookbinding and official Provincial journals. Every year, 7 rubles 50 kopeks were spent on *etrogim*⁵⁴, 15 rubles 45 kopeks for the purchase of wheat for *matzah* and 5 rubles were allocated for the poor. Jews were also obliged to pay public taxes to the state and to the town. They paid fire and transport taxes and also, as in 1858-1863, for public housing and lighting. These amounts were around 3 rubles.

Several traditional Jewish charitable organisations also operated within the Jewish community. They were no different from those which were active in other communities. They were established on the basis of religious commandments, their activities being purely honourable. They included the Society for the Nursing of the Sick (*Bikur Cholim*). Another important organisation for the Jews was the Burial Society (*Chevra Kadisha*). Its members, together with the Jewish Community Council, exercised supervision over the cemetery. However, their most important function was to care for the dying and to conduct funerals. They ensured that every Jew, regardless of wealth, had a proper funeral. There was the "Bet Lechem" association (*The House of Bread*). They would usually run a kitchen which provided meals for poor Jews. In Kłobuck, this kitchen was probably organised during World War I, when the Jewish Community Council was headed by Abram Jakobowicz⁵⁵. Another organisation which appears in the memoirs of Kłobuck Jews is *Hachnasat Orchim*, also established on the basis of religious commandments. Its aim was to provide Jews in a given town, in this case Kłobuck, with overnight accommodation and safety. The Unglik family lived opposite this organisation's premises, inside which travellers would spend the night. In the morning, as these travellers were leaving, Chaja and Sara Unglik gave them breakfast and, sometimes, a few groszy to help them on their way. In Josel Szymkowicz's bakery, hot coffee or tea was always waiting for travellers or traders who were arriving at the Kłobuck marketplace. They could warm up and pray in peace before setting off on their journey⁵⁶.

The dates when these organisations were established are not known, but at least some of them were already active in the 19th century (certainly the *Chevra Kadisha* was). Other Jewish organisations were established in Kłobuck only during the inter-War period. These were not based on religious tradition, but were the result of Jewish involvement in various levels of communal life⁵⁷.

⁵⁴ Etrog – a fruit, similar to a lemon, grown in the Mediterranean area. It is used during the festival of Succot.

⁵⁵ B. Szymkowicz, *Kłobuck Kehile*, (in) *Sefer Kłobuck*, p. 35.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 369–370.

⁵⁷ In 1919, there was the "Self-Help" Cooperative – an organisation of food consumers. During the inter-War years of the 20th century, several other organisations were formed in Kłobuck, often established contacts with nationwide organisations

Kłobuck Jews were an important link within the structure of Kłobuck society. What is more, for decades, even though the town is located in an area considered as undoubtedly, indigenously Polish, they comprised the majority of residents. In its way, that situation is unique and worthy of detailed examination – that in central Poland, in an area recognised for its Polishness, the Poles found themselves in a minority situation in relation to a group, considered by most as “inferior”. Undoubtedly, this generated additional fields of conflict, although official documents do not register any incidents between the two communities which would differ from the norm in central Poland. Poles and Jews had to live side-by-side and live together in a town which was their common home.