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SYNAGOGUES IN PODKARPACIE – PROLEGOMENON TO RESEARCH

SYNAGOGI PODKARPACIA – PROLEGOMENA DO BADAŃ

Abstract

This paper is a prolegomenon to the research on the history, architecture and state of preservation of the synagogues still surviving in the Podkarpacie region. After almost a millennium of Jewish presence in the area, despite wars and the Holocaust, 31 buildings or the ruins of former synagogues have remained until the present. It can be claimed that a Jewish cultural heritage of considerable value has survived in the Podkarpacie region to this day, and therefore requires protection and revalorisation. The paper presents the state of research in this area and an outline of the Jewish history of Podkarpacie, as well as a preliminary description of the preserved synagogues with regards to their origin, functional layout and state of preservation.

Keywords: Podkarpacie region, synagogues, history, state of preservation

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł jest prolegomeną do badań nad historią, architekturą oraz stanem zachowania istniejących jeszcze na terenie Podkarpacia synagog. Z prawie tysiącletniej obecności Żydów na tym terenie, pomimo wojen i zagłady, do dnia dzisiejszego pozostało 31 budynków lub ich ruin, w których kiedyś mieszcili się synagogi. Można zatem stwierdzić, że do dzisiaj zasób zabytkowy kultury żydowskiej na Podkarpaciu jest pokaźny, a co za tym idzie, wymagający ochrony i rewaloryzacji. W artykule zaprezentowano stan badań w przedmiotowym obszarze badawczym, zarysowano historię bytności społeczności żydowskiej na Podkarpaciu, a także wstępnie mówiono zachowane synagogi, biorąc pod uwagę okres ich powstania, układ funkcjonalno-przestrzenny oraz stan zachowania.

Słowa kluczowe: Podkarpacie, synagogi, historia, stan zachowania

1. Introduction

The first recorded information about Jewish settlers in Poland can be found in the chronicle of Yehuda ha-Kohen, a German Jew, rabbi, traveller and chronicler, who lived in Mainz in the years 1028–1070. According to that account, there existed a Jewish community in Kiev already in 1018, as well as merchant factories (trading posts) in the then Ruthenian lands: in Volodymyr and Przemyśl [1].

In the next centuries, one could observe the history of Jewish settlement interlocking with the history of Poland. On the one hand, the Jewish community had a singular impact on the development of Polish towns, commerce, crafts, economy, industry and culture; on the other – the Polish Republic offered space in which a unique Jewish parliament functioned for centuries, the phenomenon of Hasidism was born, and Jewish printing houses flourished. From the end of the mediaeval period until the Holocaust the largest diaspora in the world was here, and here beat the heart of Yiddish culture. It was also an area in which there were hardly any cities or towns without Jews, and where synagogue architecture was particularly developed.

This article is an introduction to the research on synagogues in the Podkarpacie region, which constitute tangible evidence of the centuries-long presence of Jews in the area.

2. State of research – studies concerning synagogues in Poland, including Podkarpacie

The first articles devoted to individual synagogues appeared in the 1880s. During the next several decades, information about Polish synagogues only appeared in general publications, most often concerning architecture.

The first mentions and descriptions of Polish synagogues were included in the accounts of the research commission for the history of art in Poland. In the years 1888–1893, Władysław Łuszczkiewicz organised eight science-and-art excursions for students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow around Galicia and the Polish Kingdom in order to research architectural heritage. One such field trip, organised in 1891, in which his students acted as graphic artists, resulted in descriptions, exterior views and sketches of interiors of the Staromiejska and Nowomiejska Synagogues in Rzeszów, and the no longer existing synagogue in Przeworsk. *Sprawozdanie z wycieczki naukowej odbytej w lecie 1891 roku* [2] contained the first detailed descriptions of the interiors in the Staromiejska and Nowomiejska Synagogues, bearing evidence of the uniquely lavish decor in those buildings.

In 1915, a work by A. Grotte entitled *Deutsche, böhmische und polnische Synagogen typen vom XI. bis Anfang des XIX. Jahrhunderts* [3] was published in German, which was an attempt at a synthesis of architecture of German, Czech and Polish synagogues. The study included plans and cross sections of several masonry synagogues from Lesser Poland and Greater Poland, e.g. the Staromiejska and Nowomiejska Synagogues in Rzeszów. These synagogues were also described by J. Pęcowski in his work *History of the city of Rzeszow until the end of the 18th c.* [4]. The issue of



Fig. 1. Synagogue in Cieszanów nowadays (photo by authors)

Polish synagogues was also addressed by R. Krautheimer [5] in the book published in Berlin in 1927 entitled *Mittelalterliche Synagogen*. In the same year an article was published by A. Szyszko-Bohusz *Materiały do architektury bóżnic w Polsce* [6] containing descriptions, photographs and sketches of several synagogues from the then Kieleckie, Lubelskie and Warszawskie Voivodeships. In the studies by R. Krautheimer and A. Szyszko-Bohusz there are no examples from the present-day Podkarpacie region. In their work on the architecture of synagogues, Grotte, Krautheimer and Szyszko-Bohusz put forward the need to establish the type of a synagogue, its development and tried to systematize the architecture of Jewish temples in Poland.

During that period, the architecture of synagogues became the subject of interest for other scientists as well. In 1927, M. Bałaban wrote about defensive synagogues in the eastern borderlands of the Polish Republic [7], and in 1929 he published another study entitled *Zabytki historyczne Żydów w Polsce* [8], in which he attempted to determine the chronology of synagogues in the then Polish territories.

A summary of the then state of knowledge concerning the history and culture of Polish Jews was included in the joint publication from 1932, entitled *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej* [9]. The study contains articles on the subject of Jewish art and synagogue architecture. In 1923 the Unit of Polish Architecture (ZAP) was established at the Warsaw Polytechnic, under the supervision of Prof. O. Sosnowski, and in 1929 the Central Office of Monument Inventorying (CBIZ). The ZAP commenced work on inventorying synagogues and broader research of Jewish art, in which an art historian and photographer, S. Zajczyk, played the main part [10]. He was also the author of an article on the architecture of Baroque masonry synagogues in Poland, published in 1933. In his article he draws attention to 9-square synagogues built in Lesser Poland at the beginning of the 17th and 18th centuries. Besides characterising the basic features of their architecture, Zajczyk also identified and described two types of 9-square Jewish temples.



Fig. 2. Synagogue in Dębica nowadays (photo by authors)

Before 1939, in the course of the research work in ZAP and CBIZ, over thirty synagogues located in the lands of the 2nd Republic were inventoried and photographed.

In the years 1939–1944, Germans murdered Jews and destroyed almost all the monuments of their culture. Wooden synagogues were burnt; the majority of masonry synagogues with their lavish furnishings were demolished. In 1944, Germans burnt down the Unit of Polish Architecture. Its employees managed to save some materials, which, in 1946, were returned to the rebuilt Faculty of Architecture at the Warsaw Polytechnic. Currently they are in the collection of Art Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. The collections of ZAP and of the Art Institute of PAS became the basis of the architectonic and photographic documentation for the first book by Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka, *Bóżnice drewniane*, published in Warsaw in 1957 [11]. The book was supplemented and expanded, and then published in 1997 under a new title: *Bramy Nieba. Bóżnice drewniane na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* [12]. In the quoted studies, the authors demonstrate that wooden synagogues were unique phenomena among spatial and construction solutions, especially as far as carpentry was concerned. Polychromes in wooden synagogues were also a rare, practically unique phenomenon.

In 1990, P. Burchard published a book entitled *Mementos and monuments of Jewish culture in Poland* [13], which was the first ‘catalogue’ of monuments of Jewish culture (synagogues,

qahal houses, cemeteries, monuments and memorial plaques) that can be found in Poland. The author included much information about synagogues from the Podkarpacie region, e.g. about the synagogues in Brzostek, Dębica, Dukla, Lesko, Rymanów, Sanok, Ustrzyki Dolne, Cieszanów, Jarosław, Medyka, Przemyśl, Radymno, Stary Dzików, Wielkie Oczy, Czudec, Kolbuszowa, Łańcut, Niebylec, Sokolów Małopolski, Strzyżów and two synagogues in Rzeszów.

Ne of the most important books concerning masonry synagogues is the volume by M. and K. Piechotka *Bramy Nieba. Bóżnice drewniane na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, published in Warsaw in 1999 [14]. By showing the phenomena that influenced the architecture of synagogues, as well as in-depth studies of the history of Jews in Poland, the book explains the origins and development of synagogue architecture in Polish territories. Valuable elements of the book are archive photographs, inventories, descriptions and origins of 82 synagogues erected between the 16th and the beginning of the 20th century. In the chapter devoted to the synagogues from the 16th and the first half of the 17th century, we can find information about the Staromiejska Synagogue in Rzeszów; in the chapter 'Synagogues from the second half of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century' there is information concerning the Nowomiejska Synagogue in Rzeszów, and in the chapter 'Synagogues from the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century' one can find descriptions, inventory sketches and photographs of the synagogues in Łańcut, Rymanów and Lesko. In the final chapter, devoted to synagogues



Fig. 3. Ruins of synagogue in Dukla nowadays (photo by authors)

from the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, there are archive photos of the synagogues in Wielkie Oczy, Radymno and the Scheinbach Synagogue in Przemyśl.

Another important title is the book *Cmentarze żydowski, synagogi i domy modlitwy w Polsce w latach 1944–1966 (wybór materiałów)* written by K. Urban and published in 2006 [15]. It contains a large selection of documents depicting the efforts made by the Congregation of the Jewish Faith and the Central Jewish Committee in Poland in order to preserve the Jewish cultural heritage remaining in Poland after World War II. The selection of documents was preceded by a brief historical outline on the people of the Jewish faith in Poland in the years 1945–1966. The study includes a list of synagogues, houses of prayer and cemeteries in Rzeszów Voivodeship, as well as materials relating the post-war history of the synagogues in Rzeszów, Przemyśl, Jarosław, Lesko, Nisko and Dębica.

While analysing the state of knowledge concerning synagogues in the present-day Podkarpackie Voivodeship, one has to mention that so far there have been no scientific publications addressing the issue thoroughly.

Writing about the state of research on the Polish synagogue architecture with a particular stress on the Podkarpacie region, one has to mention such source material as the Monument Cards. As far back as the 1950s the National Monument Conservation Laboratories commenced the first research and inventory of the most valuable buildings of former synagogues or their ruins. Most frequently, the work was conducted in order to rebuild and



Fig. 4. Synagogue in Łańcut nowadays (photo by authors)

adapt them to new functions. Nowadays, identification cards of architectural monuments and their former equivalents, so called 'green' information cards, found in the Archive of the Voivodeship Monument Protection Office in Przemyśl and its branch archives, constitute an extremely important source of information concerning particular synagogues, and especially their post-war fate.

In the context of current considerations popular-scientific publications prepared by scientists and popularisers of the history and culture of Polish Jews are also worth researching. The first to be mentioned here is the book *Żydzi w Podkarpackiem* written by A. Potocki [16], a historian who studied the history of the Jewish community in Podkarpacie. There, the author presented the history of Jews inhabiting the area between the Vistula and the San River. He also described the history of Jews in the Bieszczady region in the book *Bieszczadzkie judaica, od Sanoka po Sianki* [17], and of those in Rymanów in the publication *Żydzi rymanowscy* [18].

Much valuable information concerning the history of Jewish communities, synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in Rzeszów can be found in the book *Tamten Rzeszów...* by F. Kotula [19]. Also W. Hennig devoted one chapter in his book *Rzeszowski alfabet* to Jewish temples and prayer houses in Rzeszów [20].

3. Jews in the Podkarpacie Region

In the times of the 1st Polish Republic, the Podkarpackie Voivodeship comprised the south-east area of pre-partition Lesser Poland (parts of the then Kraków, Sandomierz and Lubelskie Voivodeships) and the western part of Red Ruthenia (mainly Ruthenian Voivodeship and a section of Belz Voivodeship). After the partitions, the lands of the present-day Podkarpackie Voivodeship were under the Austrian occupation in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria (constituting the middle part of Galicia at the time), and a small part was incorporated in the Kingdom of Poland under the Russian occupation. After Poland regained independence in 1918, it was the borderline between Lviv Voivodeship (major part with Rzeszów), Kraków Voivodeship (west part) and Lubelskie Voivodeship (northern outskirts). In the years 1939–1941, a demarcation line between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia ran across the territory. After World War II, Rzeszów Voivodeship was established for the first time in the history of Poland. Although initially, in the years 1944–1951, almost the entire Ustrzyki County (nowadays Bieszczady County) used to still belong to the Soviet Union, in 1951 it was finally incorporated in Rzeszów Voivodeship. The next post-war administrative division of Poland in 1975 resulted in the area being split into four voivodeships: Tarnobrzeg, Krosno, Przemyśl and Rzeszów (small). The lands were merged again (Przemyśl and Rzeszów Voivodeships, and parts of Krosno, Tarnobrzeg and Tarnów Voivodeships) within the current borders of Podkarpackie Voivodeship on 1 January 1999. At present the voivodeship covers an area of 17 845.76 km² and has a population of 2.13 million inhabitants [21].

From the historical perspective, Podkarpacie was the east part of Lesser Poland under the strong influence of the cultural centre in Kraków, and the equally significant (especially in the 19th century) impact of Lviv.

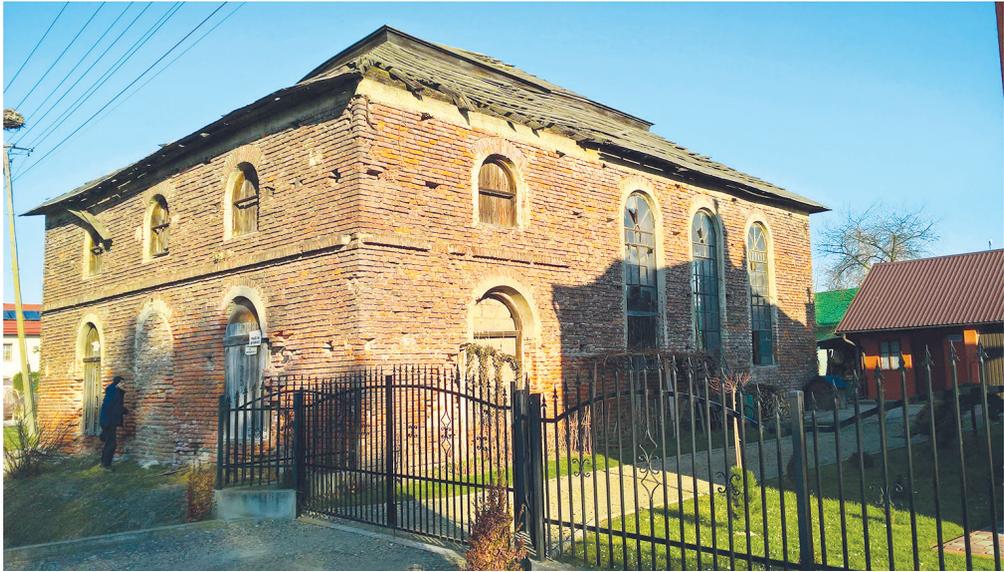


Fig. 5. Synagogue in Medyka nowadays (photo by authors)

According to the population count from 1870, in 74 county towns of Galicia people of the Roman-Catholic faith constituted 40.8%, the Greek-Catholic 15.7%, Evangelical 1.1% of the overall population; Jews constituted 42.2% [22]. Jews lived both in smaller towns and bigger cities. In 27 towns of Western Galicia Jews constituted 35% of inhabitants [22, p. 54]. Towards the end of the 19th century, in Dębica, Dukla and Tarnobrzeg the number of Jews exceeded 80%. In many towns they constituted more than half the number of inhabitants (Cieszanów, Kolbuszowa, Lesko, Lutowska, Niebylec, Przeworsk, Rzeszów, Sanok and Wielkie Oczy) [16, p. 15].

The most important Jewish centres in Podkarpacie were such cities as Jarosław, Łańcut, Przemyśl and Rzeszów, but also towns such as Leżajsk, Rymanów and Sieniawa where the Chasidim movement, which usually avoided large cultural centres, could develop. Sessions of the Jewish parliament, so called the Sejm of Four Lands (from 1580 to 1764) were held in Jarosław (alternately with Lublin). The town then served as an informal “capital” of Polish Jews [23].

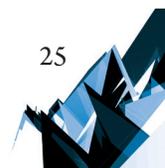
That very well organised social and religious community was annihilated by the Holocaust and its aftermath. Synagogues, prayer houses and cemeteries shared the fate of the people. After the war, in the absence of Jews, unused and abandoned synagogues fell into ruin. Nevertheless, for many years they still were significant elements in the landscape of Polish towns. In the Podkarpacie area several dozen synagogues and numerous Jewish cemeteries have survived until today.

4. Synagogues in Podkarpacie – general remarks

Despite wars and annihilation, after almost a thousand-year-long presence of Jews in Podkarpackie Voivodeship, 31 buildings or their ruins that once housed synagogues have remained until today. The oldest in the area – the Staromiejska synagogue in Rzeszów – was built around 1610 [24, 25]. In the first half of the 18th century three synagogues were built, which have survived until the present: the Nowomiejska synagogue in Rzeszów (1712), and synagogues in Rymanów (1700–1725) and in Lesko (1725–1750) [14, p. 408]. The second half of the 18th century is represented by the synagogues in Dukla (after 1758), Łańcut (1761), Strzyżów, the Nowomiejska synagogue in Dębica (2nd half of the 18th c.) and in Czudec (1795?) [26]. In the first half of the 19th century synagogues were built: the Big in Jarosław (1811), in Ustrzyki Dolne (1st half of the 19th c.); in the second half of the 19th century: in Kolbuszowa (after 1850), in Tarnobrzeg (1870), in Lutowska (2nd half of the 19th c.), in Cieszanów (1889), Zasańska in Przemyśl (1892), in Nisko (end of the 19th c.), in Stary Dzików (end of the 19th c.), *Jad Charuzim* in Sanok (1897) and in Brzostek (before 1900) [16, p. 31]. In the first half of the 20th century (until 1939), the following synagogues were erected: the Small in Jarosław (1900), in Sokołów Małopolski (1904), in Niebylec (1905?), in Błazowa (after 1907), in Radymno (beginning of the 20th c.), the New (a.k.a. Scheinbach's) in Przemyśl (1918), in Medyka (beginning of the 20th c.), in Zaklików (beginning of the 20th c.), *Jad Charuzim* in Jarosław (1912), Sadogórska (a.k.a. Small) in Sanok (1924) and in Wielkie Oczy (1927) [16, s. 198].

In the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century, the period known as the Golden Age of Polish Jews, there occurred a synagogue building boom. The functional-spatial programme for synagogues (relations between the main room, the vestibule and the prayer room for women) was established, and all the layouts for the main room in masonry synagogues were formed: one-nave rooms on the rectangular plan, clear span rooms with the plan resembling a square, rooms with the bimah-support and nine-square rooms [14, p. 113].

Exceptional and original solutions were rooms with the bimah-support, where the bimah was surrounded by four columns standing on a rectangular dais, which were tied by arcades at the top into one massive column supporting the ceiling. The oldest rooms with the bimah-support that survived until the last war could be found in the following synagogues: the Old in Przemyśl (1592–1594), in Tarnów (the 16th–17th century) and Staromiejska in Rzeszów (1610). Those three synagogues were built at the same time (the turn of the 16th and 17th c.) and relatively close to one another, near the border between Lesser Poland and Red Ruthenia (nowadays Podkarpackie Voivodeship, Tarnów – Lesser Poland Voivodeship). The Old Synagogue in Przemyśl was badly damaged during the war and in 1956 it was demolished. The synagogue in Tarnów was burnt by the Germans in November 1939. In 1942, the ruins were dismantled, so that only the bimah was left which was put under conservation protection after the war. The Staromiejska Synagogue in Rzeszów, which was the only one of the three oldest synagogues with the bimah-support in Poland to have survived World War II, was restored yet the post-war activities and, primarily, its adaptation to serve as an archive resulted in the loss of its unique interior. In the area of present-day Podkarpacie there used to be two



synagogues with the bimah-support from the turn of the 17th and 18th century, which were destroyed during World War II: in Nowy Żmigród and Przeworsk [14, p. 267 and 274]. Three buildings representing the 18th-century synagogues with the bimah-support: in Rymanów (1700–1725), Dukla (2nd half of the 18th c.) and Łańcut (1761) have been preserved within the discussed area. Unfortunately, the current bimah in the synagogue in Rymanów comes from the time of its reconstruction at the end of the 19th century; while only perimeter walls have remained from the synagogue in Dukla. The best preserved and the only example of a synagogue with the bimah-support from the period is the synagogue in Łańcut (1761).

During the 1630s, a new type of spatial solution in a synagogue was created – with the so-called nine-square room. Two types of solutions were used in such synagogues: rooms with squares of equal size and rooms with the smaller central square. The layout was still popular in the 18th and 19th century. An example of a room with an identical arrangement of columns dividing the space into nine squares of the same size is the Nowomiejska Synagogue in Dębica (2nd half of the 18th c.) Another example of a nine-square room with all the squares of the same size is the main prayer room in the Big Synagogue in Jarosław (1811). Two examples of nine-square rooms with a smaller central square have been preserved in Podkarpackie Voivodeship: the Nowomiejska Synagogue in Rzeszów (1705–1712) and the synagogue in Strzyżów. The Nowomiejska Synagogue, rebuilt and converted in the years 1954–1963 into the BWA art gallery, lost its former shape. The synagogue in Strzyżów, despite post-war



Fig. 6. Synagogue in Niebylec nowadays (photo by authors)

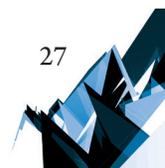
modernisation and adaptation to serve as a library, has retained the exterior and interior features of synagogue architecture.

After the fall of the Polish Republic, the architecture of the synagogues built in its former territories began to lose its homogeneous character developed throughout the 16th–18th century. In the 19th century, the process of economic, social and cultural stratification as well as religious differences among Galician Jews became more acute. The form and functional programme of synagogues were affected primarily by religious dissent. In the 1st half of the 19th century in Galicia a decided majority of Jews were supporters of the traditional Orthodox Judaism. The so called lengthwise arrangement already used in the 17th–18th century, with the main room preceded by a vestibule in the west and with the prayer room for women on the first floor, became popular in small synagogues with a traditional layout, commonly built in small towns in Galicia [14, p. 425].

In present-day Podkarpackie Voivodeship there have survived to a varying degree sixteen buildings of former synagogues erected in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th c., with a traditional layout, in which the lengthwise arrangement was applied (Jarosław (Mała), Ustrzyki Dolne, Kolbuszowa, Tarnobrzeg, Przemyśl (Zasańska), Nisko, Stary Dzików, Lutowska, Brzostek, Sokołów Małopolski, Niebylec, Błażowa, Medyka, Zaklików, Radymno, Wielkie Oczy); one in which the central arrangement was used (Cieszanów); two progressive synagogues (Scheinbach's and Zasańska in Przemyśl) and three founded by the *Jad Charuzim* association (Sanok, Jarosław, and Zasańska in Przemyśl).

Nowadays there are no Jewish communities within the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The only functioning one, though only occasionally during pilgrimages of the Chasidim to the grave of tzaddiks, is the synagogue in Rymanów. The other surviving buildings, which once used to house synagogues, acquired various functions. The oldest – the Staromiejska Synagogue in Rzeszów – stands empty, after it had been abandoned by the Voivodeship State Archive. Only one synagogue in the area documents the Jewish heritage no longer as a working temple, but as a museum with restored interiors and a collection of Judaica (Łańcut); in two there are art galleries (Lesko and the Nowomiejska Synagogue in Rzeszów); several were converted into libraries (Czudec, Strzyżów, Niebylec, Ustrzyki Dolne, Tarnobrzeg, Wielkie Oczy), a museum (Kolbuszowa), centres of culture (Sokołów Małopolski, Wielkie Oczy), a school (Big Synagogue in Jarosław), department stores (Dębica, Radymno, Nisko, Zaklików) and an educational care facility (Błażowa).

The research shows that many post-war adaptations, deliberately or not, destroyed details connected to their former function and significantly transformed those objects, so that they lost their synagogue character. Seven among the abovementioned buildings underwent such transformations: the synagogue in Ustrzyki Dolne (converted into a library), the synagogue in Nisko (adapted to serve commercial and service functions), the synagogue of the *Jad Charuzim* association in Sanok (converted to serve housing and service functions); the synagogue in Sokołów Małopolski (rebuilt and expanded, it currently houses the Municipal Culture and Leisure Centre); the synagogue in Błażowa (refurbished and adapted to serve as an educational care centre); the synagogue in Radymno (adapted, houses a bottling plant); the synagogue in Zaklików (adapted to serve commercial functions).



Another important group consisted of buildings which survived World War II but are currently in ruins: the synagogue in Dukla (18th c.); the synagogue in Medyka; the synagoga in Stary Dzików and the synagoga in Lutowiska. Those four roofless buildings are unprotected and doomed to extinction.

Recently, owing to the efforts of local governments, associations and foundations, three former synagogues have been restored in the area of present-day Podkarpacie. Among the few is the synagogue in Rymanów. It is the first project to rebuild a synagogue for religious purposes in post-war Poland. It is to serve the Chasidim making a pilgrimage to the grave of tzaddik Menachem Mendel, as well as a centre for education and dialogue between religions. The reconstruction of the synagogue and frequent visits of the Chasidim from the United States and Israel, who can again pray in the house of their ancestors and spiritual leaders, made the town resurface in the awareness of the Jewish community worldwide.

The second example is the rebuilt synagogue in Wielkie Oczy, which at the beginning of the 1990s was still in ruins. It was then that local cultural organisations began to cooperate with the parish in Wielkie Oczy and descendants of the Jewish community in the village, in order to carry out a renovation of the synagogue and its adaptation to a centre of culture and a library. In 16 June 2013, the renovated building of the former synagogue in Wielkie Oczy was officially opened. An Exhibition Room was opened in the restored synagogue, where original objects were collected from the times when Jews constituted a third of the town's



Fig. 7. Synagogue in Rymanów nowadays (photo by authors)

population as well as Judaica bringing visitors closer to the Jewish culture. The Exhibition Room with the entire synagogue building arouse more and more interest among tourists from Poland and abroad, whose growing numbers visit Wielkie Oczy.

The third example in Podkarpackie Voivodeship is the synagogue in Cieszanow. Since the mid-1990s the building was left abandoned. In 2015, it was saved by a complete refurbishment carried out by the town authorities under conservation supervision and preserving the former functional division. A day-care facility for Senior Citizens was opened in the former synagogue in 2017.

Seven more buildings of former synagogues are waiting to be restored and used again. These are: Staromiejska in Rzeszów, Zasańska in Przemyśl, the New (a.k.a. Scheinbach's) in Przemyśl, the *Jad Charuzim* Synagogue and the Small Synagogue in Jarosław, the Sadogórska (a.k.a. the Small) in Sanok, and the synagogue in Brzostek.

Four buildings are in ruins, deprived of roofs, unprotected, and doomed to extinction; they are the synagogues in Dukla, Medyka, Stary Dzików and Lutowiska.

5. Conclusion

Podkarpacie, formerly known as Galicia, is a voivodeship rich in monuments of Jewish culture. Among the most important Jewish centres in Podkarpacie were such cities as Jarosław, Łańcut, Przemyśl or Rzeszów, but also towns such as Leżajsk, Rymanów and Sieniawa where the Chasidim movement, which usually avoided large cultural centres, could develop. Sessions of the Jewish parliament, so called the Sejm of Four Lands (from 1580 to 1764) were held in Jarosław (alternately with Lublin). Then the town served as an informal "capital" of Polish Jews. That perfectly organised social and religious community was annihilated by the Holocaust and its aftermath. Synagogues, prayer houses and cemeteries shared the fate of the people.

Despite immense war losses, the cultural heritage of Jews who once inhabited the Polish territories constitutes a unique phenomenon on a global scale. Unfortunately, the pre-war beauty and lavish décor of synagogues in Podkarpacie is known only from descriptions, reminiscences and pre-war photos. The way of building synagogues, which developed in Polish territories including the Podkarpacie region (synagogues with the bimah-support), is a unique phenomenon not encountered in other countries. Thus, any elements of Jewish heritage that have survived are even more precious. The buildings of former synagogues, even though they may have lost their function and characteristic architectonic features, have not ceased to be valuable evidence of the centuries-long presence of Jews in those towns.

Poland was always a multi-ethnic and culturally diversified country. That variety can be restored in the social awareness to a certain extent, e.g. by restoring synagogues and uncovering what has been concealed for years, also for the lack of knowledge or attention on the part of local communities. Podkarpacie is certainly an area abounding in post-Jewish monuments. Among the most valuable objects located in this voivodeship are: the Staromiejska and Nowomiejska Synagogues in Rzeszów, the synagogues in Lesko, in Rymanów and in Łańcut.

It should be noticed that despite such a large number of preserved monuments representing Jewish cultural heritage, neither in Podkarpacie nor in its capital, Rzeszów, can one find a place that could serve as a Jewish cultural and historical centre and, at the same time, would be a venue where the two milieus separated for long years could finally meet. The best object to be adapted to serve such a function seems to be the abandoned Staromiejska Synagogue in Rzeszów which, as the only one among the oldest temples with the bimah-support, has survived until today.

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