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HERR DOKTOR AS A CHAIRMAN. NEW JEWISH ELITES IN THE GOVERNING BODIES OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES (A CASE STUDY OF CIESZYN SILESIA BEFORE 1918)

Abstract

The nineteenth century in Europe marked a period of transition from the feudal system towards a mass society based on the principles of personal freedom and individual responsibility. During this time, new social groups and new elites emerged, among them the intelligentsia, particularly members of liberal professions – lawyers, doctors, journalists, artists, and scientists – who began to appear as an integrated and socially respected group. This development was also evident among the Jews living in the Habsburg Monarchy, where restrictions imposed on this social group were gradually lifted (finally in 1867), and their traditional approach to education made them the best-educated ethnic-social group in many regions. Individuals with academic degrees, primarily advocates and physicians, held prominent positions within Jewish groups, serving on the governing bodies of Jewish religious communities. The article examines these processes through the case of Cieszyn Silesia, a relatively small yet one of the most economically and socially advanced regions of the Habsburg Monarchy. The advancement of local Jewish intelligentsia, particularly physicians and lawyers, illustrates Pierre Bourdieu's thesis that capital (economic, cultural, social) accumulated by individual families as the product of their past work can be passed on to the next generation, thereby offering them improved chances for life and future careers.

Keywords: Cieszyn Silesia, Jewish intelligentsia, Jewish religious communities, Jewish physicians, Jewish lawyers, tolerated Jews, Pierre Bourdieu

The establishment of integrated education systems led to a tremendous rise in schooling levels across the most developed countries of Europe in the nineteenth century. This trend was also reflected among the Jewish population in the Habsburg Monarchy, where,

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despite regional variations, the restrictions affecting their lives were gradually lifted (finally in 1867). As historians have already noted, the traditional emphasis on learning, combined with new opportunities, led to a marked overrepresentation of Jewish youth in secondary and higher education.[1] Thanks to denominational equality, Jews could integrate into public life and new elites began to emerge, as this is evidenced in the governing bodies of the Jewish religious communities acting as representations of the broader Jewish population.

Cieszyn Silesia provides a valuable case to study how Jewish elites functioned in the 'Austrian Province' before 1918.[2] Diverse in terms of religion (including a significant percentage of Protestants), and socially and nationally heterogeneous (with the dominance of Polish-speaking inhabitants), this region experienced significant civilisational development in the nineteenth century, driven by industrialisation and progress in commonly accessible education.[3] Although Jews accounted for a small percentage of the population (2.5 per cent in 1910), they played a pivotal role in the region's economic, educational and cultural life, and greatly contributed to the process. Moreover, Cieszyn Silesia was located at the intersection of Galicia and Slovakia – regions with predominantly Orthodox populations – and Bohemia and Moravia, where a modernised form of Judaism was most prevalent. However, the primary point of reference for Cieszyn Jews was Vienna, and their increasing number migrated there in pursuit of their aspirations, rising as a result of their rapid economic and social advancement. In earlier times, however, their situation had been much more constrained.

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[1] For example Steven Beller, 'The Social and Ethnic Foundations of a Culture Elite. Jewish Overrepresentation in Vienna's Gymnasien', in Victor Karady and Wolfgang Mitter (eds), *Bildungswesen und Sozialstruktur in Mitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Wien, 1990), 163–76; Wolfdieter Bihl, 'Die Juden', in Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch (eds), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. 3 (Wien, 1980), 922–4.

[2] Cieszyn Silesia, formerly the Duchy of Cieszyn until 1653, was ruled by a local branch of the Piast dynasty. In the eighteenth century, it became part of the Austrian Silesia Province, the southern portion of Silesia, which the Habsburgs lost to Prussia in 1742. Between 1783 and 1849, it belonged to the Moravian-Silesian Governorate (as Cieszyn District), and between 1849 and 1918 it was part of the Austrian Silesia crown land, with its capital in Opava.

[3] Janusz Spyra, *Śląsk Cieszyński w okresie 1653–1848* (Cieszyn, 2012); Krzysztof Nowak and Idzi Panic (eds), *Śląsk Cieszyński od Wiosny Ludów do I wojny światowej (1848–1918*) (Cieszyn, 2013).

I

In the sixteenth century, a ban was imposed on Jewish settlements in Silesia, with exceptions made solely for communities and individuals holding specific imperial privileges. In Cieszyn Silesia, such privileges were enjoyed by only two families: the Singers from Cieszyn and the Munks from Frýdek. From 1752 onwards, only 88 tolerated Jewish families were permitted to live in Cieszyn Silesia, and only the eldest sons inherited the residence rights after their fathers. They were permitted to lease vodka production rights and engage in small-scale trade but were not allowed to own real estate.[4] They were relatively dispersed and governed by the so-called Jewish tax collectors, appointed by local authorities. While their responsibility was to collect additional taxes, these administrators also came to serve as representatives of the local Jewish community. Following the reforms of Joseph II, the system was softened, but the prohibition on synagogues and rabbis remained in effect. Despite these restrictions, Jews operated communal houses of worship and eventually established synagogues in Bielsko and Cieszyn. During the first half of the nineteenth century, permanent minyans could be found in Skoczów, Polish Ostrava, and Frýdek (together with Jews from neighbouring settlements in Mistek and Koloredov in Moravia).[5] After the enactment of the new Civil Code in 1811, the authorities recognised Juda Löbl Glücklich in Cieszyn as a licensed religion teacher. In fact, he was a local rabbi.[6]

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Bielsko grew in prominence as a textile industry centre. All Jewish merchants contributed greatly to this development and, from 1832 onwards, also cloth manufacturers (Samuel Paneth, Leopold Baum). Many of them maintained business connections all over the world, e.g. Benjamin Holländer (*c.* 1801–1879), who can be regarded as one of the local maskilim. Originating from

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[4] Janusz Spyra, 'Jews Rights of Residence in Cieszyn Silesia, 1742–1848', *Polin*, xiv (2001), 31–48. In the western part of Austrian Silesia, settlement rights were granted to 23 families in the Duchy of Opava and Krnov, and to eight families in Vidnava.

[5] Janusz Spyra, *Żydzi na Śląsku Austriackim 1742–1918. Od tolerowanych Żydów do żydowskiej gminy wyznaniowej* (Katowice, 2005), 69–81, 101–3, 132–7; id., *Żydowskie gminy wyznaniowe na Śląsku Austriackim (1742–1918)* (Katowice, 2009), 131–252.

[6] Id., 'Die Juden im Herzogtum Teschen unter der Herrschaft Josephs II. und seiner Nachfolger (bis 1848)', *Oberschlesisches Jahrbuch*, xx (2006), 67–96.

Prešov in Slovakia, he was granted a place in Bielsko by his marriage to a daughter of a local tolerated Jew. His extensive business operations amassed considerable wealth. Between 1841 and 43, he served as a tax collector for Jews in Cieszyn Silesia and played a crucial role in the construction of the synagogue in Bielsko. Holländer contributed to the introduction of choral singing and sought to have an organ installed in the temple.[7] Unofficial rabbis were also present among Bielsko Jews, and some tolerated Jews were renowned for their Talmudic expertise, for example, Joseph Paneth, father of Jecheskiel (1783–45), later a Hassidic rabbi active in Galicia and Transylvania. The majority opted for a moderate reform of Jewish worship, inspired by the teachings of Isaac Mannheimer (1793–1890) from Vienna.[8]

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the authorities mandated Jewish attendance at state schools, as a prerequisite for obtaining a marriage licence. As a result, the third generation of Jews embraced the German language and culture as their own. During the 1830s and 1840s, only a few Jews would attend annually the junior secondary school in Cieszyn. In the third decade of the nineteenth century, the first tolerated Jews began their university studies in Vienna.[9] Prior to the outbreak of the Springtime of Nations, the earliest students from local tolerated Jewish families graduated from the Faculty of Medicine in Vienna (Joseph Ziffer, Jacob Weissenberg).[10]

The authorities' policy of granting tolerated status solely to Jews who were able to pay taxes effectively excluded underprivileged families. In a still underdeveloped region, only people who owned several thousand Austro-Hungarian gulden were considered wealthy. An exceptional case was Joachim Wittmann, a merchant from Bielsko, who, upon his death in 1816, left an estate valued at 300 thousand gulden. The region's economic elite consisted of Bielsko merchants and

[7] In order to cut off the ties with Orthodox Jews from Galicia, as he stated in his request to the emperor. Moravský zemský archiv v Brně, Moravské místodržitelství, box 636.

[8] Spyra, *Żydzi na Śląsku Austriackim*, 132, 145–7; Moses Rosenmann, *Isak Noa Mannheimer. Sein Leben und Wirken* (Vienna, 1922).

[9] Moravský zemský archiv v Brně, Moravské místodržitelství, Box 599A, Fol. 269.

[10] Joanna Lusek and Horst Doležal, 'Jewish Students from Silesia Studying at the Medical Faculty of Vienna University in the Years 1850–1938', in Marcin Moskalewicz, Ute Caumanns, and Fritz Dross (eds), *Jewish Medicine and Healthcare in Central Eastern Europe. Religion, Spirituality and Health*, vol. 3 (Cham, 2019), 164.

manufacturers (Paneth, Wittmann, Brüll, Baum, Mallner, Riesenfeld, Schäffer) as well as the families of more affluent vodka leaseholders.[11] Families that succeeded in acquiring any real estate, which Joseph II permitted only in exceptional cases, occupied a special position. Among them was Markus Glesinger, a highly respected tax collector, originally from Horni Žukov, and later from Vojkovice n. Frýdek. This policy not only excluded the poor from the ranks of tolerated Jews but also led to the emergence of a dozen much wealthier families. They had specialised in the production and sale of alcohol, as well as in the trade and organisation of large-scale textile manufacturing. In addition to adequate financial resources, such business operations required the possession of real estate. Local Jews also invested their assets in establishing the foundations of communal religious life.

II

During the Springtime of Nations, Jews in the Austrian Monarchy were, for the first time, allowed to participate in public life. Similarly, in Austrian Silesia, most of the Jews supported the reforms, e.g. by joining the newly created National Guards.[12] More affluent Jews took steps to purchase new or to legalise ownership of their existing houses and other real estate. Moreover, this enabled them to obtain municipal citizenship and the right to vote and be elected in the first municipal elections in 1849. In Cieszyn, Max Ritter was elected to serve as a member of the Town Council, and in Vojkovice (where 88 per cent of the population were Catholics), Bernard Glesinger, Markus's son, was elected mayor. However, he lost his position on 31 December 1851, following the suspension of the Municipal Act of March 1849, which granted Jews the right to vote and be elected, together with the revocation of the majority of reforms implemented during of the Springtime of Nations (in 1859, Glesinger was re-elected as the only

[11] The families of Tugendhat, Goldschmied, Pollak, Reik, Blumenthal, Fasal, Aufricht; Sachs, Ripper, Königstein, Hüttner; Wechsberg. Kolban, Lindner, Altmann, Munk, Landsberger and a few branches of the Ziffer and Spitzer families.

[12] Wolfdieter, *Die Juden*, 890–6; Helmut Rumpler, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa. Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie* (Wien, 1970), 351–7. Even prior to 1848, some Bielsko Jews maintained contacts with the opponents of Metternich's regime.

Jew living there). The reinstatement of the ban on ownership of real estate was experienced by Jews as particularly severe. However, 'by way of grace', the emperor permitted Jewish manufacturers to hold real estate, as part of broader efforts to support industry during the Neo -absolutist era.[13] The owners of textile mills in Bielsko strengthened their position, while Joseph Munk and Philip Landsberger established new enterprises in Frýdek. New liquor distilleries and breweries appeared across the region.[14]

The defeat in the 1859 War forced Francis Joseph I to initiate a series of reforms, which brought German liberals to power in Vienna. They pursued further social changes, including equal rights for the Jews with whom they had long cooperated. With the lifting of the ban on real estate ownership, Jews were finally able to capitalise on their business expertise fully; under new rules, they established companies in sectors such as trade and transport, alcohol and liquor production, financial intermediation and others. Because they were particularly attentive to their legal rights, they registered businesses more often in commercial courts than other citizens. Some of these companies evolved into significant industrial plants. For instance, Emanuel Neumann (1825–96) from Radvanice took over a small brewery, established in 1858 by his father, and turned it into a large, modern enterprise. He was elected mayor of Radvanice in 1864 and 1867 and was re-elected for two additional terms. Both smaller and bigger companies were also established by Jews who had come from different regions, often leveraging existing business and family connections with local tolerated families.[15] The towns of Bielsko and Frýdek witnessed the construction of new textile mills. Members of the Jewish economic elite also represented the Jewish community in local government

[13] *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, xxi (1861), 301; *Handbuch für das Herzogthum Schlesien auf das Jahr 1856* (Troppau, 1856), 256–8.

[14] Radek Lipovski, 'Filip Landsberger', in *Sborník Státního okresního archivu Frýdek-Místek* (Frýdek-Místek, 2020), 7–38; Janusz Spyra, 'Juden in Österreichisch-Ostschlesien 1848–1918', *Oberschlesisches Jahrbuch*, xx/xxi (2007), 93–122.

[15] E.g., in 1864, Alois Lemberger, the son-in-law of Bernard Glesinger from Vojkovice, established a weaving plant in Mistek (Sviadnov). The plant developed fast and Lemberger became partner of Neumann Brothers company in Frýdek; Janusz Spyra, 'Židé v rakouském Slezsku (1742–1918). Nástin dějin', in id. and Marcin Wodziński (eds), *Židé ve Slezsku. Studie k dějinám Židů ve Slezsku* (Český Těšín, 2001), 32–4.

elections. In towns, following the elections of 1861, this representation was limited to one delegate, but after 1864, this number went up.[16] They were usually wealthy entrepreneurs, close to German liberals, and were also involved in an expanding number of associations, which they often managed, e.g. gymnastics, singing or theatre associations or volunteer fire departments.[17]

All the activists who succeeded in this new economic landscape were also leaders of newly established free Jewish associations. In 1848, the authorities recognised Jews from Cieszyn Silesia as one Jewish community, governed by a three-member Religious Board [*Cultusvorstand*], chaired by Markus Glesinger, a former tax collector. In 1849, Dr Abraham Schmiedl was appointed as the first district rabbi in Cieszyn. For the authorities, Schmiedl was officially responsible for teaching religion and for the population registration in the entire region,[18] while being actually employed by the Religious Board. Notably, he soon departed Cieszyn,[19] as did his successor. Many members of the Religious Board came from formerly tolerated Jews. However, the authorities did not clearly define the powers conferred to the community, which encompassed all of Cieszyn Silesia. As a result, the Jewish community in Bielsko operated with considerable autonomy under the supervision of B. Holländer and Adolph Brüll (the latter was the son of a former tax collector, Abraham). Likewise, Jews living in the vicinity of Skoczów obtained permission to build a synagogue in 1851. After 1859, Jews from Bielsko hired their own rabbi with a university degree, and regarded themselves as a fully autonomous community. In response, the Religious Board adopted its own constitution, which stated that the religious community of Cieszyn encompassed the entirety of Cieszyn Silesia. The Board garnered

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[16] Spyra, *Juden in Österreichisch-Ostschlesien*, 74–6.

[17] For example, in Cieszyn they were initiated by Adolph Tugendhat, while in Bielsko activists included for instance Dr Julius Baum and Adolph Brüll.

[18] His nomination was based on the decision of 1847, when Cieszyn Silesia was designated as the Cieszyn District [*Kreis*]. In 1849, districts were abolished and replaced by political districts as basic administrative units. Nevertheless, for some time, the whole region was still referred to as a 'district'.

[19] He moved to Proštějov, and ultimately to Vienna, where he was known by the name Adolf; see Janusz Spyra, *Rabbiner in der Provinz. Die Rolle des Rabbiners im Leben der jüdischen Gemeinschaft in Teschener und Troppauer Schlesien* (Berlin et al., 2018), 77–81.

the support from members of various milieus across the region (except for Bielsko), who were all former tolerated Jews. However, in 1865, the Ministry of Worship in Vienna officially recognised the religious community in Bielsko within the jurisdiction of the Bielsko court district, thereby reducing the territorial scope of the Cieszyn community to the remaining seven districts. Minyans (smaller prayer groups) in Skoczów, Polish Ostrava, Frýdek, Mistek and Koloredov were granted the status of religious associations operating under the authority of the Cieszyn religious community and the supervision of the district rabbi.[20]

While entrepreneurs from formerly tolerated families had the greatest influence, members of the intelligentsia gradually joined the ranks of the Jewish communal authorities in Cieszyn and Bielsko, as well as minyans. The first of them were Jewish physicians. Notably, in 1856, only three practised in the entire region. Among them was Joseph Ziffer (1807–1878), who earned prominence by treating the sick during the typhus epidemic between 1846 and 1849, and then as a town doctor in Frýdek. In 1863, he became the chair of the committee which organised Religious Associations in Frýdek, Mistek and Koloredov, and remained its chair until his last days. In Bielsko, it was Dr Ignatz Rößler, an advocate, who became involved in the campaign to create an independent community. Following its establishment, he served as one of its three leaders (alongside B. Holländer and Salomon Tugendhat).[21]

III

The situation ultimately settled after the enactment of the Basic Laws in December 1867, which granted Jews equal status with other citizens.[22] From that time onwards, they were allowed to purchase developed real estate, and even entire villages. Leopold Kolban, the son-in-law of Bernard Glesinger from Vojkovice, acquired a village

[20] In 1871, they were joined by a religious association in Fryštát; Spyra, *Żydzi na Śląsku Austriackim,* 169–70, 187–93.

[21] Spyra, *Żydowskie gminy wyznaniowe*, 157–63, 241–5.

[22] Jens Budischowsky, *Die staatskirchenrechtliche Stellung der österreichischen Israeliten: zugleich ein Beitrag zur Auslegung des Artikels 15 Staatsgrundgesetz über die allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger, RGBl 1867/142* (Wien, 1995), 37–70; Andrzej Dziadzio, *Monarchia konstytucyjna w Austrii 1867–1914. Władza – obywatel – prawo* (Kraków, 2001).

named Dolní Domaslovice. The transaction sparked a legal dispute as to whether a Jew could exercise patronage rights over a Catholic parish. The dispute was settled by the Administrative Tribunal in Vienna.[23] The period leading to 1879 also witnessed the peak of liberal influence in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This trend mirrored the broader situation in Austrian Silesia, where Jews rapidly became a fully-fledged part of the local community. Jewish entrepreneurs who aligned with liberals strengthened their position in the economic fabric of Bielsko, where around 1880, they owned several factories, and a few ones in Frýdek. Their importance in the region's economic life was further evidenced by the elections to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Opava, where they had their representatives since 1870.[24]

Jewish politicians became increasingly influential in local government, especially in Bielsko, where during the 1873–76 term, all four departments of the Bielsko Town Council were managed by Jews, and Adolph Brüll was one of five members of the town leadership. During this time, in Cieszyn, the Town Council consistently employed the most prominent members of tolerated Jewish families and activists from the religious community, such as Bernard Glesinger, Daniel, and later Adolph Tugendhat, Sigmund Kohn, and Maurice Fasal. The number of associations and other institutions with a significant participation of Jews was on the rise. All of these groups were aligned with the party of German liberals. In Bielsko, this affiliation led to the adoption of a "religious agreement", which (contrary to fundamental liberal rules) established a "parity-of-seats" policy for Town Council elections, whereby Jewish candidates were nominated by their religious community.[25] However, they were no longer the only representatives of Jews. In Frýdek, Dr Joseph Ziffer was elected to the Town Council in 1870, to be replaced in 1879 by his son-in-law, Dr Maurice Spitzer (1838–1901), also a physician, and later the director of the town's

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[23] Adam von Budwinski (ed.), *Erkenntnisse des Verwaltungsgerichtshofes*, iv/1 (Wien, 1876/77), 14–7.

[24] For example, Julius Baum from Bielsko, Jakob Munk, Julius Neumann, Adolf Landsberger from Frýdek; *Handels- und Gewerbekammer in Troppau 1850–1925* (Opava, 1925).

[25] Janusz Spyra, 'Prowincjonalny liberalizm. Niemieckie stronnictwo polityczne wobec kościołów i wyznań w 2 połowie XIX wieku w krajach monarchii austro-węgierskiej', in Marek Vařeka and Aleš Zářický (eds), *Modernizace církve: od zrušení jezuitského řádu do II. vatikánského koncilu* (Ostrava, 2018), 100–14.

first hospital.[26] In Cieszyn, the representatives of Jewish intelligentsia were typically appointed as deputies to department members.[27]

The 1869 School Act was a milestone, as it abolished religious schooling, which, in a region that had experienced significant economic development, facilitated the establishment of a dense network of elementary and secondary schools. Within ten years, compulsory education was universally attended by all children and youth, including Jewish boys and girls, who were generally among the best students. A significant number of Jews started their secondary education. In the 1875/76 school year, they accounted for 27 per cent of all the students at secondary schools focused on liberal arts, and even a higher percentage of 34.6 at technical schools [*Realschule*].[28] Although further on, the percentages of Jewish students at secondary schools decreased (to 16.5 and 21.9 per cent, respectively), their absolute number continued to rise. As a result, Jews attained higher levels of education than any other social group, and Jewish youth enrolled in university at higher rates – a trend typical of the Habsburg Monarchy.[29] However, due to their relatively small number, Jews were represented mainly within the broader non-Jewish community, unlike in large Jewish centres such as Vienna or Galicia, where they could rely on their own communal structures.

After 1867, the situation of state-recognised religious communities in Cieszyn and Bielsko became more stable. Rabbis who were hired there, especially district rabbi Simon Friedmann, became actively involved in public life.[30] Nevertheless, decisions were taken by secular leaders from formerly tolerated families. In Bielsko, beginning in 1870 and following the constitutional reform, the community was led

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[26] Jaromír Polášek and Jiřina Polášková, 'Židé a jejich zasahování do veřejné správy a společenského života ve Frýdku a Místku (1870–1939)', *Židé a Morava: sborník z konference konané v Muzeu Kroměřížska dne 15. listopadu 2006* (Kroměříž, 2007), 68–86.

[27] During the 1864–70 term, Dr Alois Kohn, a physician; between 1870 and 76, Simon Friedmann, a rabbi; between 1876 and 79, Dr Leopold Glesinger, a physician; between 1879 and 85, Dr Hugo Spitzer, a court adjunct.

[28] Janusz Spyra, 'Szkolnictwo żydowskie na Śląsku Cieszyńskim i jego rola w procesie asymilacji miejscowej społeczności żydowskiej (przed 1918)', in id. (ed.), *Książka – biblioteka – szkoła w kulturze Śląska Cieszyńskiego* (Cieszyn, 2001), 297–306.

[29] Bihl, *Die Juden*, 922–4; Beller, *The Social and Ethnic Foundations*, 163–276.

[30] Spyra, *Rabbiner in der Provinz*, 89–99.

by a chairman, a 9-member board and a 15-member department. Holländer served as chairman until his death in 1879, after which Adolph Brüll assumed this position until 1898. While the Board was dominated by entrepreneurs, Dr Adolph Engelsmann became its member in 1873, and Dr I. Rößler, followed suit in 1875. In Cieszyn, the community leadership became almost hereditary with the Glesinger family.[31] A similar pattern was followed by religious associations in Skoczów and Frýdek, Mistek and Koloredov. Only in Fryštát did merchants – also from the groups of formerly tolerated Jews – prevail in the leadership.

IV

After 1879, when power in Vienna shifted to the right-wing government of Viscount Eduard von Taafe, German liberals, supported by Jewish politicians, remained in power in the largest towns of Cieszyn Silesia. However, members of Jewish intelligentsia, especially physicians, grew in numbers. This trend was linked to the growing number of Jewish students pursuing mainly their higher education in Vienna and choosing medicine and law as their primary fields of study. The pattern reflected broader tendencies prevalent in the monarchy: in the early 1880s, Jews constituted over 50 per cent of all medicine students at the University of Vienna.[32] Between 1850 and 1913, the Faculty of Medicine had 73 graduates from Cieszyn Silesia. Most of them (42)[33] were descendants of former tolerated Jews, who, after 1848, had accumulated sufficient wealth to afford the high costs of studies in the capital on the Danube. Notably, five members of the Kohn and Wechsberg families became physicians. Some of them returned home and established private practices, serving as town or district doctors. Others stayed in the capital, and several achieved major scientific careers.[34]

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[31] After the change in the statute, Bernard Glesinger served as a chairman between 1866 and 1869, and was reappointed to the position from 1876 to 1888. He was followed from 1894 onwards by his cousin, J.Ph. Glesinger.

[32] Gary B. Cohen, 'Education, Social Mobility and the Austrian Jews, 1860–1910', in *Bildungswesen und Sozialstruktur*, 146.

[33] Lusek and Doležal, *Jewish Students*, 165–76.

[34] Graduates of medicine from the University of Kraków settled in Cieszyn Silesia less frequently. One example was Dr William Machauf (1873–1938), who obtained his diploma in 1902 and settled there in 1908.

By 1900, Cieszyn Silesia was home to 33 Jewish physicians out of a total of 88 doctors (37.5 per cent), with the majority of them (13) practising in Bielsko.[35] The unquestionable utility of the medical profession afforded these individuals high prestige, which was further consolidated following their active involvement in various spheres of life. For instance, Dr Alois Kohn (*c.* 1832–1917), who came from the circle of local families and had served for a long time as a town physician in Cieszyn, was appointed the first chairman of the Eastern Silesia Physicians' Society[36] in 1894. His case can also exemplify the professional continuity across generations of intelligentsia (his two sons also earned medical degrees).[37]

While physicians were held in high esteem and were elected to town authorities and religious communities, they did not play a leading role in these institutions. Law graduates, mainly advocates, represented the opposite case. In 1868, when a new law on advocates was introduced, the Bar in Opava had 25 members, among whom only one, Dr I. Rößler, was a Jew. During the following decade, he was joined by Jewish graduates of the University of Kraków who had completed their advocate traineeships in the increasingly prosperous region of Silesia. In 1878, Julius Sokal from Tyśmienica and Sigmund Markusfeld were registered as advocates, and in 1880, Joachim Kleinberg and Salomon Eibeschitz followed suit. From that time onward, two or three Jewish lawyers, mostly graduates of the University of Vienna, would join the profession each year. By 1888, there were 29 advocates in Cieszyn Silesia, including 13 of Jewish background (44.8 per cent, with the state average of 35 per cent). The overrepresentation of Jewish advocates was noticeable in other regions as well.[38] While some came from Galicia and were engaged in the Polish national movement,[39] most of them

[35] Identification of individuals of Jewish origin was based on various sources, e.g. their participation in Jewish associations.

[36] Jerzy M. Dyrda (ed.), *Górny Śląsk – dzieje medycyny i farmacji, problemy dokumentacji i metodologii badań* (Katowice, 2003), 89–104.

[37] From 1897, Dr Arthur Kohn practiced medicine in Cieszyn, while his brother Moritz (1878–1955) was a professor at the Vienna University of Economics. Out of the two sons of advocate Joachim Kleinberg (see below), one became an advocate and the other one a junior secondary school teacher and literature historian. These cases represent only a few selected examples.

[38] *Amtsblatt zur Wiener Zeitung*, vi (1870), 27–8; xii (1889), 74; Bihl, *Die Juden*, 911.

[39] E.g. Joachim Kleinberg (1844–1904), or J. Sokal, recently examined by Janusz Spyra, *Pieniądz w służbie społeczeństwa* (Cieszyn, 2023), 81, 85, 95–6, 205.

were aligned with the dominant group, i.e. Germans. This pattern is best exemplified by Dr Sigmund Markusfeld (1847–1903), from a prominent, Kraków-based family, who opted for integration with the Poles. During his studies, he aligned with the so-called progressive Jews. He practised law in Bielsko, where he married a daughter of Adolph Brüll, an entrepreneur and community chairman. In 1888, he became a municipal councillor, subsequently he served as the town's lawyer, and was regarded as the *éminence grise* of Bielsko's Town Hall. He was a member of numerous associations and of the leadership of the religious community.[40] Other advocates similarly engaged in emerging associations and the governance of religious communal authorities.

At the end of the century, Jewish intelligentsia, encompassing also a small number of judges and secondary school teachers,[41] started seeking platforms for cooperation. One such venue was the B'nai-B'rith charity association, founded in 1843 in the USA. The first lodge of B'nai-B'rith in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was established in 1889, in Bielsko, under the name of 'Austria',[42] with physician Jakob Grossmann serving as its first chairman. More lodges soon emerged, e.g. 'Solidaritas' in Kraków or 'Silesia' in Opava. Operating under the motto of "uniting the Jews in support of the highest causes of humanity and developing the spiritual and moral nature of our nation", B'nai-B'rith brought together all local intelligentsia. Humanitarian objectives were achieved through the establishment of associations that focused on alleviating the hardships faced by the poorer segments of the Jewish population. Several such associations existed in Bielsko.[43]

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[40] In 1881, he founded the Jewish Artisan Society and became its first chair. Between 1895 and 1896 he also chaired 'Austria' lodge. It is difficult to consider him as a radical assimilator, as it has been proposed by Paweł Jasnowski, 'A Case Study of Radical Assimilation in Poland. The Family Markusfeld', *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia*, xiv (2016), 121–3.

[41] A small number of secondary school teachers of Jewish origin (e.g. Samuel Gorge), were joined by teachers of the Jewish school, run by the religious community in Bielsko.

[42] By 1918, 'Austria' lodge had 250 members.

[43] In 1898, 'the Free Table Society' [*Freitisch-Verein*] was founded. Until 1939, the Society ran a charitable canteen for several dozen impoverished students. The association 'Verein Ferienheim für isr. Ferienkolonien', founded in 1902, organised summer holidays for Jewish children. The former was led by Dr Ludwig Reich, a physician, and from 1906 onwards, by Dr Joseph Steckel, an advocate, while the latter was managed by Professor Eduard Feuerstein.

By facilitating contact with the broader European Jewish community, B'nai-B'rith also served as a platform for cooperation between the intelligentsia and economic elites, as the first generation of its activists were supporters of German liberalism. The association brought together numerous 'progressive' entrepreneurs, including community leaders. Although formally independent, 'Austria' stayed close to the communal life due to personal ties and ideological alignment between the elites of both institutions.[44]

V

The 1890 regulations on religious communities in Austrian Silesia were enacted following an extended debate over territorial partition. Dr Maurice Kornbluh, the newly appointed chairman of the religious community in Fryštát, was very active during the dispute. His persistence and knowledge of legal procedures led to the establishment of the religious community in Fryštát, opposed by both the authorities of the religious community in Cieszyn and by the district administration. From 1893 onwards, five religious communities operated in Cieszyn Silesia (Fryštát, Frýdek-Mistek, Cieszyn, Skoczów, and Bielsko). In 1910, they were joined by a newly established community in Bohumin (Šunychl).[45] Under the existing regulations, each community was required to hire the necessary staff, including rabbis. In countries where Orthodox Jews prevailed, such as Galicia, rabbis were part of the traditional Jewish elite, typically reluctant to embrace modern solutions and rejected the adoption of the achievements of modern science and education into Jewish life. However, because in Cieszyn Silesia, supporters of moderate religious reforms predominated, the two existing Jewish communities in Cieszyn and Bielsko would hire rabbis with academic degrees. After 1890, this pattern became the legal norm. The communities' constitutions defined the rules for employing rabbis; in Austrian Silesia they were required to hold a doctoral degree and to have graduated from a rabbinical seminary (while in Galicia, rabbis were only required to complete four years of elementary schooling).

[44] For instance, B'nai-B'rith was able to help the community in the reform of its healthcare system by establishing the Committee for the Support of the Poor.

[45] Spyra, *Żydzi na Śląsku Austriackim*, 214–31; Daniel Baránek, 'Instituce rabinátu v emancipačních židovských komunitách na Moravě a ve Slezsku v letech 1860–1918', *Český časopis historický / The Czech Historical Review*, cxiii, 3 (2015), 782–813.

Gradually, rabbis who met these requirements were hired across all communities, and the group of *Doktors-Rabbinern* in the religious communities of Cieszyn Silesia became part of the emerging elite. However, their position among the communal staff was a testament to their subordination to the secular management.[46]

Community constitutions[47] also defined the procedures for selecting their governing bodies, i.e. broader community representations (between 7 and 30 members) and boards (3 to 11), including chairs and their deputies. While these bodies became increasingly representative, they were dominated by the Jewish industrial establishment, joined by individuals with higher education, often connected through family ties. In Bielsko, Salomon Pollak served as the chairman from 1898 to 1920, continuing the policies of his predecessors in the Town Council; he was later awarded the title of Bielsko's honorary citizen.[48] Business representatives constituted the majority of the community department, although liberal professions also had a significant representation.[49] In Cieszyn, power was still in the hands of the descendants of former tolerated families, associated mainly with the Glesingers; a similar pattern could be observed in Frýdek-Mistek, where members held university degrees or were incomplete degree holders.[50] In Skoczów, the seven-member department remained with former tolerated Jews for some years, but over time it became dominated by other groups.[51] In Fryštát, controversial Dr M. Kornblüh was replaced in 1899 by another advocate, Dr Albert Mayer, whose

[46] In Frýdek, even the debate regarding the reinstatement of the 'Kol Nidre' prayer took place without the rabbi's involvement. In Skoczów, the community chairman nearly dismissed a newly appointed rabbi on his own decision.

[47] During their drafting, the participation of the intelligentsia, particularly lawyers, was almost a must, e.g. Dr William Münz in Bielsko.

[48] In Frýdek, this title was conferred on two physicians, Joseph Ziffer and Maurice Spitzer, and on factory owner Adolph Landsberger. In Cieszyn, it was awarded to Maurice Fasal, a liquor manufacturer. Viktor Lustig was named an honorary citizen of Moravian Ostrava and Přívoz.

[49] Physicians: Jakob Grossmann, Ludwig Reich, Karl Wagner; advocates: Maurice Aronsohn, Julius Schmetterling, Sigmund Markusfeld, Joseph Stekel, Oskar Schanzer, Sigmund Robinsohn; teachers: Eugen Kellner and Prof. Eduard Feuerstein.

[50] After the passing of J.Ph. Glesinger in 1909, the position of the community chairman in Cieszyn was assumed by his son-in-law, imperial counsellor, Jacques Silberstein, and in 1912 it passed to his son, Leopold Silberstein.

[51] The small number of intelligentsia representatives included advocates Dr Karl Silzer of Skoczów and Dr Otto Hoffenreich of Strumień.

deputy was Salomon Blumenthal of Orlová, from a former tolerated Jewish family.[52] The situation differed notably in the new religious community of Bohumin (Šunychl), founded on new migration, as its leadership consisted of immigrants who had recently settled in the area. Compared to earlier times, the communities' authorities had to increasingly take into account the needs of adherents of Orthodox Judaism, who occasionally introduced their representatives into community departments, but they still remained a distinct minority.

The political landscape was changing across the entire monarchy, with a rise of anti-Semitism, also in Austrian Silesia, in particular in German-speaking Opava Silesia. Still, thanks to the alliance with Jewish elites, liberals active within the progressive-German party maintained their influence in larger towns in Cieszyn Silesia (Bielsko, Cieszyn, Frýdek), as well as in the emerging economic centre around the transportation hub in Bohumin (Šunychl), where the number of Jewish inhabitants was rapidly increasing. Jewish activists succeeded in establishing a new religious community, following Viktor Lustig's election as mayor in 1904 and his re-election for two consecutive terms. In response to the threat of anti-Semitism, the Jewish establishment reacted by strengthening cooperation with international organisations, such as Alliance Israélite Universelle. In 1908, the chairmen of all religious communities participated in establishing the Association for the Support of Jewish Students of Moravia and Silesia studying in Vienna, acknowledging that further funding for similar German organisations was counterproductive.[53] They were actively involved in the talks to establish a general representation of religious communities in the monarchy, culminating in the creation of the Union of Silesian Religious Communities in 1912.[54]

Nevertheless, a new elite took root, ready to fight for their rights through confrontation. They were Zionists, whom the regional Jewish establishment, except for some isolated figures, initially regarded

[52] The area of Orlová had a larger population of Judaism followers than Fryštát. It was home to a thriving organisation, the Synagogue Association, which operated its own synagogue and cemetery. The association was chaired by Blumental, and from 1910 onwards, by imperial counsellor and physician, Dr Leopold Eichenwald.

[53] *Jüdische Zeitung*, ii, 5 (31 Jan. 1908), 9; *Dr. Bloch's österreichische Wochenschrift*, xxv, 5 (31 Jan. 1908), 83.

[54] Yet, it was only approved by the authorities of Czechoslovakia in the late 1918; Spyra, *Żydzi na Śląsku Austriackim*, 237–46.

with scepticism. For quite a long time, the ideals of Zionism were promoted by students attending the University in Vienna, through so-called summer academic associations (beginning with the founding one – "Emunah" – organised in Bielsko, in 1896). Within a few years, those activists completed their studies and, as university graduates, they became fully-fledged members of the intellectual elite, and managed to gain the support for their ideals among some segments of the adult population. In 1898, the 'Haschachar' association was established in Bielsko, but the efforts to gain seats in the religious community's management board proved completely unsuccessful. The defeat suffered in 1901 prompted the Zionists to seek an alliance with more moderate Orthodox groups, which led to the election of only one representative, Salo Rittermann. It was only in the 1913 election to the religious community that Bielsko Zionists achieved greater success, securing a few seats in the 30-member department. Zionists gradually established their organisations in other centres as well,[55] but Bielsko (along with Opava in the western part of the region) remained their stronghold in Austrian Silesia. Zionist activists, all of them either students or holders of university diplomas, constituted the elite of "action" for their followers. To a large extent, these individuals were descendants of former tolerated Jews, yet their ideology placed them in opposition to earlier generations.

Jewish intelligentsia continued to grow. Before 1914, out of 109 physicians practicing in Cieszyn Silesia, 39 were Jews, i.e. about 36 per cent, not to mention the profession of advocates, where 30 out of 50 legal practitioners were of Jewish origin (60 per cent), and most of them lived in Bielsko (11 out of 15 in total).[56] They also played a more prominent role in the leadership of religious communities. In 1897, among the 26 members of the communal top management (chairman, chairman's deputy, board members), there were only three doctoral holders (11.5 per cent), and in 1913/14, there were seven doctoral degree holders among 42 board members (16.7 per cent).[57] The following advocates served as chairs: L. Silberstein in Cieszyn,

[55] Janusz Spyra, 'Ruch syjonistyczny na Morawach i Śląsku Austriackim (do 1928 roku). Recepcja, organizacja, bariery', *Studia Judaica*, x, 1 (2007), 25–41.

[56] *Mährisch-schlesischer Auskunfts-Kalender für das Gemeinjahr 1913* (Brünn, 1913), 235, 250–2.

[57] At the level of the entire Austrian Silesia, even greater progress was evident: in 1897, 6 out of 50 individuals in management held doctoral degrees; in 1913/14,

A. Mayer in Fryštát, Ferdinand Goldklang in Bohumin (Šunychl); Dr Ignatz Lamberg was the deputy chairman in Frýdek–Mistek. Dr Leopold Eichenwald managed the Synagogue Association in Orlová, which operated much like a religious community. In the largest community of Bielsko, where all local factions actively competed for votes in elections, the 30-person department consisted of four advocates, one physician, two teachers and two members of engineering intelligentsia. Samuel Landau, a merchant, also held a doctoral degree.

CONCLUSION

As Pierre Bourdieu noted, the social world represents an accumulated history. The capital amassed by specific families (economic, cultural, social) as an accumulated product of their work can be transmitted across generations, offering them a head start and facilitating future career trajectories.[58] This framework aptly describes the experience of Jewish families from Cieszyn Silesia, who made substantial progress during the lifespan of just a few generations. Initially, the elite comprised wealthier vodka leaseholders, and in Bielsko, it encompassed textile merchants and factory owners from the group of so-called tolerated Jews. Following the 1848 abolition of the bans and other legal restrictions imposed on Jews, they skilfully leveraged their experience in sectors where access had earlier been limited, establishing trading companies, alcohol factories, and textile mills, and transforming them into larger, sometimes very large-scale enterprises after 1861. They also represented Jews in public life, notably in local government. In the second half of the nineteenth century, as a heated dispute was underway concerning the respective roles of secular and religious leadership in Jewish communities, they took steps to found their own religious associations. They provided funding, hired rabbis and took key decisions concerning communal religious affairs, promoting a moderately reformist version of Judaism, observed in modernised Jewish communities in Bohemia, Moravia and Vienna.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the local Jewish elite expanded significantly, driven by the influx of individuals with higher

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this number rose to 12 out of 61 board members, and in Opava individuals with doctorates constituted half of the core community management.

[58] Pierre Bourdieu, *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht* (Hamburg, 1992), 49–50.

education, mainly physicians and advocates, who sought to attain financial and social prestige within the broader labour market. By the end of the century, the Jewish elite had already become relatively sizeable, representing both money and 'spirit'; with the advent of Zionism, they were joined by the elite of 'action'. They possessed all types of capital identified by Bourdieu:[59] cultural capital (manifested primarily through higher education confirmed by distinct degrees, and a similar strategy of social conduct), social capital (reflected in a network of influential contacts), and economic capital, directly convertible into material resources. Jewish intelligentsia employed a deliberate strategy of reproduction. Their presence was increasingly visible in many areas of public life: they took on roles of local government activists and became engaged in various organisations and institutions, including religious communities. In contrast to many other regions, such as Kraków, prestige was simultaneously accrued within both Jewish and non-Jewish circles.[60]

In principle, it is not posited here that Bourdieu's theory of social capital provides a correct framework for the description of some pivotal historical processes. However, when applied to a relatively small, close-knit group of tolerated Jewish families in Cieszyn Silesia, it enables us to reconstruct precisely and compellingly the trajectories of their social advancement. Comparable processes were, for instance, lived by Jews in Bohemia and Moravia – regions that shared similar conditions (high level of economic development and education, and a relatively small Jewish minority as part of the total population).

Economic elites remained the most influential group. Many companies, particularly textile factories in Bielsko and Frýdek, operated on a scale that extended well beyond the region, and the expertise of their owners was recognised by central authorities in Vienna. Their considerable social capital translated for instance into the acquisition of noble and court titles,[61] and a growing number of Jews having

[59] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital', in Reinhard Kreckel (ed.), *Soziale Ungleichheiten* (Göttingen, 1983), 183–98.

[60] Łukasz T. Sroka, *Żydzi w Krakowie. Studium o elicie miasta 1850–1918* (Kraków, 2008), 60–2, 173–9.

[61] Janusz Spyra, 'Drogi społecznego awansu Żydów na prowincji w monarchii habsburskiej (na przykładzie Adolfa Landsbergera von Friedeck)', in Jiří Brňovják and Aleš Zářický (eds), *Šlechtic podnikatelem – podnikatel šlechticem. šlechta a podnikání v českých zemích v 18.-19. století* (Ostrava, 2008), 287–97.

connections with nobility or aristocracy. This upward social mobility was accompanied by the increasing migration of more affluent families to Vienna in search of more prominent careers – a trend which became noticeable as early as the mid-nineteenth century. A representative example of such a career path is Dr Julius Viktor Baum (1845–1911), from a family of Bielsko-based factory owners (descendants of the brother of the aforementioned Joachim Wittmann), who, upon the completion of law studies, assumed the management of the family factory. He served as an advisor to the Chamber of Customs affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce, and was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, but, over time, his family connections and interests tied him to Vienna. Vienna ultimately became his place of residence, where he engaged in various economic and social activities until his death. Numerous similar and more affluent families integrated the ranks of the capital's upper bourgeoisie.[62]

By the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish intelligentsia had possessed social and cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu, not only in terms of accumulated wealth but also education, which paved their way to extensive contacts and greater career prospects. This was particularly evident among physicians and advocates, whose examples illustrate social advancement through educational attainment. Such patterns of advancement were noticeable across all stable European countries. Cieszyn Silesia (and Austrian Silesia as well) stood out in this landscape in terms of the widespread access to modern education; from approximately 1870 onwards, primary school attendance became nearly universal. In the case of local Jewish families from the group of formerly tolerated Jews, it was typical for at least one member to attend the secondary school and to graduate from the university, even if they did not attain doctoral degrees. It was common for affluent entrepreneurs to provide all their male offspring with an opportunity of higher education, while their daughters attended secondary schools (or married men with academic credentials). A representative example is Jakob (Jacques) Silberstein (1849–1912), the president of the religious community in Cieszyn since 1909, himself a businessman

[62] Georg Gaugusch, *Wer einmal war. Das Jüdische Grossbürgertum Wiens 1800–1938*, vol. *L–R* (Wien, 2017), 1745–50 (Landsberger), 1845–7 (Lemberger), 2349–54 (H. Munk), 2421–5 (Neumann); ibid., vol. *U–Z* (Wien, 2023), 5027–35 (Wiedman = Wittmann).

and son-in-law of the previous president, J.Ph. Glesinger. Silberstein was succeeded in this role by his sons, Leopold and, later, Rudolf, both lawyers with doctoral degrees. Their brother, Dr Fritz (Friedrich), became a professor of pathology at the University of Vienna. Against the predominantly plebeian background of Cieszyn Silesia, the Jews' rise from despised pariahs to an economic and cultural elite was all the more apparent. Soon afterwards, however, thanks to a well-developed educational network, relations with other faiths began to even out, as from the 1880s onwards, the percentage of Catholics and Protestants in secondary schools grew as well.[63] Given that the nobility in Cieszyn Silesia had effectively ceased to exist as a large group already by the first half of the nineteenth century, opportunities expanded for representatives of lower social strata to gain extensive presence in public life. This was the background of the emerging plebeian intellectual elite. Therefore, while the advancement of Jews was no exception, it heralded more significant and broader transformations.

Accessing higher education was never straightforward for individuals from plebeian families; however, to obtain a desired degree, Jewish youth had to overcome much greater obstacles, especially in the early stages of their pursuit. Their upward move on the social ladder was facilitated not only by personal aptitudes but also by familial and communal support. This is substantiated by Charles Wright Mills and his followers, who assumed that social mobility into the elite was determined by the position within the socio-economic structure, and that access to the key institutions which confer significance was essential to attain wealth, while personal qualities were of secondary importance.[64]

This is not to suggest that personal qualities were insignificant. Individuals who migrated to Cieszyn Silesia in the second half of the nineteenth century and thereafter had opportunities for advancement through education and individual merit. However, the capital that tolerated Jewish families had accumulated over several generations gave them an advantage in initiating and sustaining their careers. This capital also translated more rapidly into growing social aspirations, which by the early twentieth century contributed to frequent

[63] Janusz Spyra, 'Główne kierunki rozwoju szkolnictwa na Śląsku Cieszyńskim w XIX w. i na początku XX w. w świetle ustawodawstwa i statystyk', in id. (ed.), *Książka – biblioteka – szkoła*, 209–16.

[64] Charles Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York, 1959), 3–30.

relocations of many Jewish families, not only entrepreneurs, from Cieszyn Silesia to the capital city of Vienna. Many Jews from this provincial but well-developed region subsequently pursued careers as men of letters and artists.[65]

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[65] Notable figures included, to name just a few, opera singers Selma Kurz (1874–1933), Rose Pauly (1894–1975), and Rosa Ader (1890–1955), as well as violinist Max Rostal (1905–91).