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THE 'KINDRED CIRCLE' OF VILLAGE MAYORS IN THE HABSBURG MONARCHY AND THE EXAMPLE OF CIESZYN SILESIA, 1864-1918

Abstract

In Cieszyn Silesia (the eastern part of the crownland of Austrian Silesia) from the time local government was introduced in 1864 until 1918 it is possible to identify 1332 village mayors (German: *Gemeindevorsteher*; Polish: *wójt*; Czech: *starosta*). Of these, at least 1006 (almost 76 per cent) had another village mayor in Cieszyn Silesia in their 'kindred circle', which includes second-degree relatives according to canonical computation, as well as witnesses at weddings and baptisms of their closest family (children, parents, siblings). The uninterrupted lineage of these types of relationships connected at least 875 village mayors, or 66 per cent of all those known. Thus the partial democratisation at the level of local self-government led to a kind of oligarchy, with the position of the village head being assumed by wealthy peasant families who all had connections to one another. Outside of the 'kindred circle', there were the factory owners and officials of archdukes and counts, who took the position of village mayor in industrialised areas, as well as a few Jewish village mayors and probably the majority of village mayors from the mountain villages.

The question examined here is whether the situation looked similar in other parts of the Habsburg monarchy, or whether Cieszyn Silesia stood out in this respect. This question remains unanswered due to the lack of analogous studies on village mayors.

Keywords: Cieszyn Silesia, genealogical consciousness, village mayors, self-government, kindred

I INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of the history of local elites in the Habsburg monarchy, the crucial legal act is the *Commune Bill* of 5 March 1862 (*Gesetz vom 5. März 1862, womit die grundsätzlichen Bestimmungen*

zur Regelung des Gemeinwesens vorgezeichnet werden, Reichsgesetzblatt 18/1862).¹ Thanks to this bill it was possible to adopt further legal acts in the crownlands, which became the basis for the functioning of municipal government. In the case of Austrian Silesia (German: Österreichisch-Schlesien; Polish: Śląsk Austriacki; Czech: Rakouské Šlesko), the first elections under the new legal acts were carried out in 1864.²

A few years ago, I conducted a prosopographical study of village mayors (German: *Gemeindevorsteher*, Polish: *przełożony gminy/wójt*, Czech: *starosta*; hereinafter: VM) in Cieszyn Silesia (German: Teschener Schlesien; Polish: Śląsk Cieszyński; Czech: Těšínsko) – the eastern part of this crownland – for the years 1864–1918. The first step was to establish a list of the heads of 214 communes and then to develop their biographical notes. In total, the list includes 1332 VMs.³ This is the only compilation of this type, covering the village mayors in half of this Austrian crownland.

The research questionnaire covered primary genealogical data, including information about parents and wives. It transpired that many VMs were either related or related by affinity. This statement does not seem surprising. Although Cieszyn Silesia in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was a destination for many migrants seeking employment in industry, the majority of VMs came from families who had been settled in the region for generations, thanks in large part to the semi-democratic electoral law. It has been known for a long time that the *siedlacy* (meaning rich peasants in Cieszyn Silesia) sought to arrange marriages within their class.⁴

¹ The act is available online: ALEX – Historische Rechts- und Gesetzestexte Online, <http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=rgb&datum=1862&size=45&page=62> [Accessed: 22 May 2019], also in Josef Kasprzykiewicz, *Landesgesetze für Schlesien*, i (Teschen, 1870), 71–82.

² For a list of the rest of the acts, see Michael Morys-Twarowski: ‘The Relationship between Religion, Language and Nationality on the Example of Village Mayors in Cieszyn Silesia in 1864–1918’, *Historie – Otázky – Problémy*, x, 2 (2018), 155–6.

³ Michael Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie na Śląsku Cieszyńskim 1864–1918. Studium prozopograficzne*, 3 vols. (Kraków, 2018). This project was financed by the Narodowe Centrum Nauki (National Science Centre) based on decision number DEC-2013/09/N/HS3/02621.

⁴ Antoni Kieloch, ‘Na gospodarstwie Kielochów – „Wronów” na przełomie XIX i XX wieku’, ed. Emil Kopec, *Watra* (1980), 148.

The problem of relatedness and affiliation of and between VMs can be analysed on three levels. The first is strictly genealogical. The aim is to establish specific connections, e.g. that Franciszek Lipa, the mayor of Bobrek, was the son-in-law of Jan Czako, the mayor of Kocobędz (Czech: Chotěbuz, German: Kotzobendz).⁵ This information will be of interest mainly to regional historians and genealogists. It is worth mentioning that genealogy – despite the ‘fads’ in contemporary historiography – is currently the most popular manifestation of interest in history.⁶ Meanwhile, academic historians often treat genealogical research with a degree of contempt, as if it was only good for ‘antiquarians’. This is yet another proof that academic historiography is becoming more and more a kind of elite club, where historians write only for a handful of their peers.

The second level is, in a way, an extension of the first and would consist of an attempt to connect all VMs with a constant sequence of affinities.⁷ The condition of genealogical sources in Cieszyn Silesia allows us to hope that the attempt could be successful. In the literature, one can point to examples of the use of this type of sequences not only in genealogical research.⁸

From the perspective of research into local elites and the functioning of local government, the third area seems to be the most interesting. It involves capturing the ties that connected VMs of which they were aware. In other words, whether there were other VMs among the people whom the village mayor considered to be his relatives (or they

⁵ Michael Morys-Twarowski, ‘Losy chłopskiej rodziny Lipów ze Śląska Cieszyńskiego do 1918 roku i jej droga do polskiej narodowości’, *Świat i Słowo*, xvii, 2 (2011), 126–7; *id.*, ‘Czako, Jan – zarys dziejów chłopskiego rodu ze Śląska Cieszyńskiego od XVII do początku XX wieku’, *Pamiętnik Cieszyński*, xxiii (2019), 117, 119.

⁶ Spencer Wells, *Deep Ancestry. Inside the Genographic Project: The Landmark DNA Quest to Decipher our Distant Past* (Washington, DC, 2006), 11, wrote that “Genealogy is the second most popular American hobby after gardening (and the second most visited category of Web sites after pornography)”.

⁷ A popular example of this kind of connection is the one between Henry III of England and Kublai Khan, who were just six degrees of separation from each other. See Anthony Wagner, *Pedigree and Progress: Essays in the Genealogical Interpretation of History* (London, 1975), 72–3.

⁸ This type of sequences was used by Marek Minakowski in his research, ‘Gęstość sieci koligacji w parafii Kampinos’, *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski*, xxv (2014), 65–74.

were considered as such by outsiders). The concept of a 'kindred circle' seems to be the adequate expression for this type of relationship, which includes not only relatives but also affinity.⁹ This poses the question: Who should be included in a kindred circle?

II GENEALOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN PEASANT FAMILIES

The genealogical awareness of peasants in Cieszyn Silesia has not so far been the subject of scholars' interest. Most often, they were able to name their ancestors two–three generations past, i.e. their grandparents and great-grandparents. Jan Szuścik (1879–1941), a teacher, a son of a peasant from Gułdowy near Cieszyn, begins the story of his family from his great-grandfather Paweł Szuścik, who settled in Cieszyn Silesia at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Jerzy Mrowiec (1860–1941), a pastor in Wisła, wrote to the parish at Drogomyśl and Goleszów in 1934 with a request for data on his ancestors, which were sought by his son Walter in order to develop a family tree. The sender himself knew his ancestors only to the generation of his grandparents.¹¹ In 1914, Henryk Tomanek (1896–1980), son of Józef (1862–1927), a teacher at Grodziec, grandson of Józef (1832–1912), based on his father's information managed to trace his ancestry to his great-great-grandfather, Jakub Tomanek (1776–1830).¹² Franciszek Hess-Halski (1910–96), based on his father's account, states that his great-grandfather Paweł Hess (b. 1828) was a blacksmith and farmer in Boguszowice.¹³ Although none of the above-mentioned men was a mayor, the father of Szuścik was a village councillor in Krasna; the probable uncle of Mrowiec was the mayor of Bąków; and the grandfathers of Henryk Tomanek and Franciszek Hess-Halski were members of

⁹ For more on kindred, see William E. Mitchell, 'Theoretical Problems in the Concept of Kindred', *American Anthropologist*, lxxv, 2(1963), 343–54.

¹⁰ Jan Szuścik, *Pamiętnik "Życiorys nauczyciela"* (Toruń, 2011), 32–3.

¹¹ This letter was from 7 July 1934. I found it in a register of deaths: Parafia ewangelicko-augsburska w Goleszowie (Lutheran Parish in Goleszów), *Metryki zgonów 1859–89*.

¹² Michael Morys-Twarowski, *Dzieje rodu Tomanków ze Śląska Cieszyńskiego od XVII do początku XX wieku* (Chorzów, in print).

¹³ Franciszek Hess-Halski, 'Dziadek Józef', *Kalendarz Cieszyński* (1991), 111.

the commune department at Kocobędz and Boguszowice–Kalembice–Pastwiska, respectively.

If a given peasant family lived on the land which was passed down from generation to generation, and they retained the bill of sale, sometimes it was possible to reconstruct the genealogy several generations back. For example, in 1916 the Sikora family from Nawsie (Czech: Návší) had documents confirming that in the sixteenth century they already had a hereditary *vogt* position in their family.¹⁴ The oldest document owned by the Tomanek family, millers from Ropica (Czech: Ropice), came from 1671.¹⁵ Representatives of both families were elected mayors between 1864 and 1918.¹⁶ Another source of information about one's ancestors could be copies of a Bible passed on from generation to generation, in which the previous owners had inscribed basic genealogical data about their immediate family.¹⁷

In peasant families, traditions were kept with respect to the beginnings of the family, even without knowing the generations that linked them with the progenitor. Usually, this type of tradition was related to the etymology of the surname. For example, the Parma family from Zarzecze, according to family lore came from Italy.¹⁸ The Zagóra family, who lived at Ligotka Kameralna (Czech: Komorní Lhotka), was supposed to have arrived in Cieszyn Silesia in the seventeenth century from the Bulgarian city of Zagora.¹⁹ In the case of the Żlik household, who lived in Kozakowice, they were thought to be a side line of the noble Czech Schlick family, and their progenitor settled in Cieszyn Silesia during the Thirty Years' War. The story of this lineage was not unfounded, since in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Schlick line was threatened with extinction, they began talks with a priest Andrzej

¹⁴ Franciszek Michejda, *Ewangelicki zbór Nawiejski A. C. w pierwszym stuleciu swego istnienia* (Cieszyn 1891), 21; *Posel Ewangelicki*, 34 (19 Aug. 1916), 3.

¹⁵ Józef Londzin, '250-letni jubileusz młyna ropickiego', *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska*, 79 (25 Oct. 1921), 1–2.

¹⁶ Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, ii, 347–50, iii, 81–2.

¹⁷ Examples: Grażyna Ciompa-Wucka, 'Dziedzictwo', *Kalendarz Cieszyński* (1991), 78, 80; Andrzej Pawlas, 'Śladami rodziny błędowickiego organisty i nauczyciela Andrzeja Pawlusa – mego ojca', *Kalendarz Śląski* (2000), 102; Janusz Spyra, *Historiografia a tożsamość regionalna w czasach nowożytnych na przykładzie Śląska Cieszyńskiego w okresie od XVI do początku XX wieku* (Częstochowa, 2015), 267.

¹⁸ Rafał Budny, 'Rodzinne Zarzecze', *Kalendarz Cieszyński* (2000), 87.

¹⁹ *Posel Ewangelicki*, 14 (3 Apr. 1937), 3.

Żlik (1802–65), a pastor in Cieszyn, regarding a possible inheritance.²⁰ The Górnjak (Gurniak) family had noble origins, which Adolf Górnjak (Gurniak) (1826–82) mentioned in 1868 in an application for ennoblement.²¹

Quite frequently, the distance between the progenitor of the family (either a true or legendary one) and the last known ancestor was shortened. Such a case occurs in the account of the previously mentioned Franciszek Halski-Hess. Based on his father's account, he states that his great-grandfather Paweł Hess (d. 1828) "was an impoverished nobleman with the privilege of adding 'von' before his name, a cottage worker, and also a blacksmith in Boguszowice. When the Emperor of Austria issued a decree that a noble title could be sold, he sold it to a wealthy man in Vienna for 300 guilders".²² In fact, the Hesses were a peasant family living in Boguszowice from the late seventeenth century. If indeed their ancestor was a pauperised nobleman, he had to have lived in the seventeenth century at the latest.

The question is, how does a knowledge of ancestry translate into ties with relatives in the lateral line? At the turn of the twentieth century, while collecting data for my own family tree, I questioned people born before 1918 whose parents or grandparents were members of the municipal government in Austrian times. They had no problems with naming their nephews, parents' siblings, and first degree cousins (not counting those who died in infancy or childhood). But information on further relatives, such as great-grandparents or cousins of parents, was incomplete and appeared only sporadically.

This statement seems to contradict the information in the record books on matrimonial dispensations. There are dispensations from second-degree affinity in canonical computation,²³ the third affecting

²⁰ 'Ks. Arnold Żlik', *Kalendarz Ewangelicki* (1914), 55. My acknowledgements go to Czesław Hławiczka for providing me with this information.

²¹ Hana Šústková, 'Nobilitovaní příslušníci slezského zemského sněmu v letech 1861–1918', *Historica – Revue pro historii a příbuzné vědy*, 14 (2017), 274–5.

²² Halski-Hess, 'Dziadek Józef', 111.

²³ Parafia rzymskokatolicka pw. św. Piotra i Pawła w Skoczowie (St Peter and Paul's Roman Catholic Parish at Skoczów), *Metryki chrztów, ślubów i zgonów–Kiczycze, Wiślica 1785–1854, Kiczycze, 15* (year 1850, Andrzej Kałuża and Maria Kałuża); Parafia rzymskokatolicka Dobrego Pasterza w Istebnej (Roman Catholic Parish at Istebna), *Metryki ślubów, iii* (1852–1884), *Jaworzynka, 159* (year 1882, Paweł Motyka and Maria Urbaczka).

the second²⁴ and third,²⁵ and the fourth affecting the third²⁶ or even the fourth.²⁷

This does not necessarily mean that the couples were aware of any family relationship they might have had when they started dating. It seems more likely that their parents or grandparents were aware of their blood ties.

In order to determine the ‘kindred’ of a VM, I accepted the border of origin from the joint grandparents, that is, the fourth degree of consanguinity in the Roman Law method of computation (the second degree of kinship in canonical computation). Taking into account siblings, nephews, nieces, parents’ siblings and first degree cousins, this is a number totalling several dozen people. The kindred circle also includes the relatives of wives to the same degree, witnesses at weddings, and godparents of VMs themselves, as well as godparents of their children and siblings.²⁸ Both wedding witnesses and godparents were usually chosen thoughtfully, not counting exceptional situations (e.g. the baptism of a dying infant). An interesting example can be

²⁴ Parafia rzymskokatolicka pw. św. Michała Archanioła w Goleszowie (Roman Catholic Parish at Goleszów), *Metryki ślubów*, iii, 196 (year 1769, Jan Lazar and Zuzanna Śliwka *de domo* Cieślár); *Zemský archiv v Opavě, Matriky*, sig. Ja I 15, 659 (year 1808, Jerzy Buława and Maria Hudzieczek); Parafia rzymskokatolicka Dobrego Pasterza w Istebnej (Roman Catholic Parish at Istebna), *Metryki ślubów*, iii (1852–84), Jaworzynka, 156 (year 1881, Jan Czepczor and Anna Czepczor).

²⁵ *Zemský archiv v Opavě, Matriky*, sign. Ja I 15, 660 (year 1808, Wincenty Paduch and Anna Kuchejda); Parafia rzymskokatolicka pw. św. Marii Magdaleny w Cieszynie (St Mary Magdalene’s Roman Catholic Parish at Cieszyn), *Metryki ślubów*, xi B, 180 (year 1908, Franciszek Raszka and Joanna Hess), 331 (year 1912, Paweł Szuścik and Maria Szuścik); *Obecní úřad Staré Hamry, Matriky*, sig. Fr I 12, 131 (year 1909, Jan Mylek and Anna Velička).

²⁶ Parafia rzymskokatolicka pw. św. Michała Archanioła w Kończycach Wielkich (Roman Catholic Parish at Kończyce Wielkie), *Metryki ślubów*, i, 57 (year 1748, Szymon Kempny and Anna “Czwieniczek”); Parafia rzymskokatolicka pw. św. Michała Archanioła w Goleszowie, *Metryki ślubów*, iii, 53 (year 1757, Jerzy Chmiel and Anna Chmiel); Parafia rzymskokatolicka pw. św. Marii Magdaleny w Cieszynie, *Metryki ślubów*, vi, 284 (year 1763, Jan Dziadek and Anna Sztwiertnia).

²⁷ Parafia rzymskokatolicka pw. św. Michała Archanioła w Kończycach Wielkich, *Metryki ślubów*, i, 156 (year 1781, Andrzej Tomica and Ewa widow after Jan Tomica); *Zemský archiv v Opavě, Matriky*, sig. Ja I 15, 662 (year 1808, Jakub Kuchejda and Maria Paduch).

²⁸ For more on the issue of godparenthood, see Markéta Skořepová, ‘Kmotrovství jako badatelský problém. K sociálním dějinám raného novověku a 19. století’, *Český časopis historický*, cxiv, 1 (2016), 64–88.

found in the letter of Anna and Jerzy Liszka from Wilamowice near Skoczów from 1850, asking Jerzy Zabyszczyński, mayor of Dębowice, to become the godfather of their son Jerzy, who 29 years later became the mayor of Wilamowice.²⁹

III

CHARACTERISTICS OF VILLAGE MAYORS' KINDRED CIRCLES

In the first instance, I tried to determine whether there was any other village mayor in Cieszyn Silesia in a given mayor's kindred circle. It transpired that out of 1,322 VMs in the years 1864–1918, at least 1006 (that is nearly 76 per cent) had another mayor in the region in their kindred circle.

In addition, several VMs in Cieszyn Silesia, unrelated to the local peasant elites, had among their kith or kin village mayors from outside the region. Jan Gross, the mayor of Błędowice Górne (Czech: Horní Bludovice), was the son-in-law of the mayor of Osoblaha (German: Hotzenplotz; the town belonged to the so-called Moravian enclaves in Austrian Silesia). Antoni (Anton) Rzihak, the mayor of Cierlicko (Czech: Těrlicko), was the son of the mayor of Hruška in Moravia. Karol (Karl, Karel) Neumann, the mayor of Lubno, was the son of the mayor of Kyjov in Moravia. The godfather of Franciszek Obtulowicz, the mayor of Trzyniec (Czech: Třinec), was Franciszek Kloska (Kluska), the city mayor of Żywiec in Galicia. Ryszard (Richard) Anderka, mayor of Ustroń, was the son of the mayor of Moravská Ostrava in Moravia. There is also Ludwik (Ludwig) Kallina, the mayor of Chybie, who married the sister-in-law of Sobiesław (Sobieslaus) Klucki, a lawyer from Cieszyn, a representative to the Imperial Council in Vienna, son of Ludwik Klucki, mayor of Cieszyn.³⁰

The links between the village mayors might have been even more numerous than my research suggests. Not all of them could be researched, despite reviewing hundreds of thousands of pages of record books. The record books of the Lutheran parish at Drogomyśl have been lost. On more than one occasion, a full query was prevented by parish priests or employees of civil registry offices. In the case of

²⁹ Książnica Cieszyńska w Cieszynie, Archiwum Polskiego Towarzystwa Ludoznawczego, ref. no. 32.22.

³⁰ Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, i, 82.

mountain villages such as Istebna, Jaworzynka, Koniaków or Wiśla, the prevalence of some common names hinders a researcher's attempts to capture links between individuals. In the case of a few dozen VMs, their family connections could not be reconstructed (mainly due to identification problems caused by having a name popular in a given locality). For this reason, the numbers given below (percentages) can be taken as a certain minimum, and the scale of relations of VMs in the Duchy of Cieszyn is almost certainly even greater.

It is clear that the circles of relatives of individual mayors overlapped – the head of village A had in his circle relatives of the heads of B and C, and those respective heads of D and E, and F, G and H. In this way, I have constructed groups of VMs. This is somewhat similar to the 'family network'; defined by Marek J. Minakowski as a group of people between whom one can determine an unbroken sequence of relations by blood and marriage.³¹ However, in the case of this study, it is an uninterrupted series of people belonging to the circles of relatives, including – as pointed out above – also non-relatives (best men at weddings, godparents). I use the term 'great kindred circle', although it might perhaps be more fitting to define this as 'groups of relatives.'

A 'great kindred circle' of VMs connected with each other can also be divided by denomination (C – Catholics, P – Protestants). The largest Catholic circle of relatives [C1] included 618 out of 863 VMs who are known to be of that denomination, or 72 per cent. By analogy, the largest Protestant kindred circle [P1] included 254 out of 393, or 65 per cent. Thus it is evident that the intensity of ties in the peasant Catholic and Protestant circles was at a similar level. In the context of the close relationships of Protestant peasant elites, the opinion of the pastor Paweł Nikodem, son of the mayor of Gródek (Czech: Hrádek), is interesting:

Ever since we organised in Silesia into one Protestant church, we have become literally one family. We do not need to reach up to Adam and Eve to show our relationship. Probably it would not be difficult to find the thread that connects us all – the Grycz family with the Kajzar, the Kajzar with the Cichy, the Cichy with the Sikora, the Sikora with the Śliwka, the Śliwka with the Grycz.³²

³¹ Minakowski, 'Gęstość sieci koligacji', 68.

³² *Posel Ewangelicki*, 25 (28 June 1919), 2.

The Catholic and Protestant kindred circles were interrelated (I found 26 connections between Catholic and Protestant VMs), and some of them were mixed marriages. In some families, there was strong resistance to such marriages, although many of the leading figures in the political life of the Duchy of Cieszyn had married women of a different denomination. Protestants Teodor (Theodor) Haase (Moravian-Silesian superintendent and member of the Imperial Council in Vienna), Paweł Stalmach (editor of the local newspaper *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska*), and Jan Michejda (lawyer and member of the Imperial Council in Vienna) all had Catholic wives. The Catholic Jan (Johann) Demel von Elswehr (mayor of Cieszyn and a member of the Imperial Council in Vienna) was married twice, both times to Protestant women. It seems that the opposition towards mixed marriages came mostly from the Protestant families, which is understandable. Protestants were a minority fearing for their wealth and identity. In addition to that, a tradition of marriage only with co-religionists prevailed, because otherwise in the counter-reformation period, i.e. between 1609 and 1781, this meant in practice raising children as Catholics.³³ Helena Sztwiertnia (born in 1911), granddaughter of Golezów mayor Jan Sztwiertnia, when talking about her suitors claimed that “I would definitely not marry a Catholic”.³⁴

By renouncing the criterion of religious division, it transpires that the largest circle of relatives (in addition to the circles of C1 and P1, it also includes several VMs who I managed to connect only with P1) counted a total of 875 VMs, or 66 per cent of all known rural municipal superiors in Cieszyn Silesia in the years 1864–1918. It is worth bearing in mind that the reforms initiated by the Commune Act of 5 March 1862 did not mean full democratisation, but only the introduction of a semi-democratic municipal self-government. It was

³³ For more on the counter-reformation at Cieszyn Silesia, see David Pindur, ‘Století rekatolizace Těšínska. Ke konfesním proměnám – od knížete po poddané (1609–1709)’, in Renata Czyż, Waclaw Gojniczek, and Daniel Spratek (eds), *Trzysta lat tolerancji na Śląsku Cieszyńskim. W trzystulecie założenia Kościoła Jezusowego w Cieszynie* (Cieszyn, 2010), 89–129; Janusz Spyra, *Śląsk Cieszyński w okresie 1653–1848* (Cieszyn, 2012). About marriages during counter-reformation see Michael Morys-Twarowski, ‘Z dziejów kontrreformacji na Śląsku Cieszyńskim albo jak Suchankowie z Brzezówki w XVII i XVIII wieku wiarę zmieniali’, *Historica – Revue pro historii a příbuznévědy*, ix, 1 (2018), 83–99.

³⁴ Helena Szeruda, ‘Pamiętnik pastorowej’, *Kalendarz Ewangelicki* (2016), 207.

possible to predict that the partial democratisation in the Duchy of Cieszyn would lead to oligarchisation at the level of the commune and the concentration of local power in the hands of a closely related group of people. However, these links covered not just one commune or parish, but the entirety of Cieszyn Silesia, one of the most densely populated regions on the continent at the beginning of the twentieth century. Only now are scholars finally able to assess the scale of this phenomenon.

Seldom did it happen that a poor peasant's son achieved the position of mayor, but the story of one such self-made man – Józef Pellar (1823–1913), mayor of Datynie Dolne (Czech: Dolní Datyně) – is quite symptomatic. He came from Jawiszowice in Galicia. In his youth, he was a shepherd for the school headmaster in Stare Bielsko, and later a tanner's journeyman in Skoczów. He settled in Datynie Dolne and became a tanner. In 1845, he married the daughter of a cottager (German: *Häusler*, Polish: *chałupnik*). In 1864, he was elected the village mayor for the first time.³⁵ In later years, this position in the village was filled by his son-in-law and son; the best man at the wedding of the latter was Jerzy Czako, mayor of Kocobędz.³⁶ In other words, the Pellar family found themselves in a great kindred circle of the relatives of the mayors.

Crucially, the kindred circles of individual village mayors included not only mayors of a different denomination, but also of another nationality (defined at the time according to the language criterion), and different political convictions. The pages of the contemporary press in the context of the elections referred to religious, linguistic (i.e. ethnic) or political solidarity, and the beginning of the twentieth century brought about a definitive politicisation of the municipal elections. Meanwhile, in the case of 'kindred' VMs, these were not the key issues. Besides, it was not uncommon in Cieszyn Silesia that close relatives supported various – sometimes opposing – political and national options.

It is worth keeping in mind that in Cieszyn Silesia the main line of political divisions was based on language issues. From 1861 onwards, elections to the Land Diet in Opava (German: Schlesischer Landtag)

³⁵ Alfred Kołorz, 'Stulecie wioski tkaczy i garncarzy', *Kalendarz Śląski* (1965), 66–7; Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, i, 272.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 275–6.

became part of the rivalry between political parties. The situation was similar in the case of elections to the Imperial Council in Vienna, starting from 1873, when they became general elections.³⁷ As far as local government elections were concerned, it was not until around 1885 that reports on them appeared in the local press, and political polarisation began to develop around 1900.³⁸ This did not however lead to a 'changing of the guard'. The broadly understood political beliefs of candidates for local government became simply another debating point in pre-election discussions, as well as the personal qualities of a given candidate, his origin from a given part of the village, his denomination (Catholic or Protestant) or the gifts he gave the voters (especially beer or vodka). It should be noted that the development of socialist parties at the end of the nineteenth century did not make a dent in the mayors' kindred circle, but how could it? The electoral system didn't change. It was only occasionally that some mayors from the 'circle' leaned towards the socialists (mainly in Frysztat County).³⁹

At this point, I would like to address one doubt that may arise. Is it possible that in the rural area of Cieszyn Silesia people were not connected to other people in the same way that village leaders were? The answer to this question is negative. In such defined 'circles' (kindred) in relation to poorer villagers, village leaders generally do not appear, and when they do, it is usually on the outskirts.⁴⁰

IV GROUPS ABSENT FROM VILLAGE MAYORS' KINDRED CIRCLES

The existence of these densely interconnected kindred circles raises the question: Which VMs were *not* included in the largest VM kindred circles? Mostly, these were princely officials employed in the Cieszyn Chamber (German: *Teschener Kammer*, Polish: *Komora Cieszyńska*, Czech: *Těšínská komora*), a private complex of domains of the Habsburgs of Lorraine bearing the title of Cieszyn princes; count officials

³⁷ See also Józef Chlebowczyk, *Wybory i świadomość społeczna na Śląsku Cieszyńskim w drugiej połowie XIX wieku* (Katowice–Kraków, 1966), 138–303.

³⁸ Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, i, 112.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴⁰ The author's observation is based on the genealogy of over 100 peasant families from Cieszyn Silesia.

connected with the aristocratic family of Larisch, as well as factory and higher personnel of industrial plants. Taking advantage of the electoral law, they pushed out the representatives of the local peasant elites in industrialised areas. One example of such a settlement is Gruszów (Czech: Hrušov), where from around 1872 only factory owners from the Miller zu Aicholz family (or people associated with them) became mayors. Another example is Chybie, where after 1899 the office was occupied by officials from the local sugar factory. An intriguing example is the competition for the office of mayor in Baszka (Czech: Baška) and Ustroń, where the local peasants managed to regain the position of mayor in 1886 and 1879, and again in 1905.⁴¹

A small group of Jewish mayors were also outside the 'great kindred circle'. These included Emanuel Neumann from Radwanice (Czech: Radwanice); Izrael (Israel) Hochfelder from Stare Hamry (Czech: Staré Hamry); Wiktor (Viktor) Lustig from Szonychel (Czech: Šunychl); Leopold Wasservogel from Goleszów; Leopold Lanzer from Niebory (Czech: Nebory); and Zygmunt (Sigismund) Lanzer from Wędrynia (Czech: Vendryně). Moreover, they were not related to each other by close affinity (besides probably Leopold Lanzer and Zygmunt Lanzer), and it did not prove possible to find any connections between them, perhaps due to the fact that during the Second World War the Nazis destroyed a significant number of sources for the genealogy of Jewish families from Cieszyn Silesia, which made tracing the relationships between individuals impossible to prove definitively.⁴² It should also be recalled that the Jewish population in Cieszyn Silesia was quite small (1.75 per cent in 1869, 2.52 per cent in 1910).⁴³

It also proved challenging to capture the associations of VMs from the Silesian Beskids with the largest kindred circle. In some cases it

⁴¹ For more about Baszka, see Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, i, 135–6. For more about Ustroń see Józef Pilch, see '130 lat samorządu wsi, osiedla, miasta Ustroń', *Pamiętnik Ustroński*, vi (1993), 19, 24, 29; Krzysztof Nowak, 'Życie polityczne i społeczne', in Idzi Panic (ed.), *Ustroń 1305–2005*, I (Ustroń, 2005), 236–41, 244, 257–8, 265; Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, iii, 291–9.

⁴² Janusz Spyra, 'Żydowskie metryki i inne akta dotyczące rejestracji urodzin, ślubów i zgonów Żydów na terenie (byłego) Śląska Austriackiego (1784–1945)', *Archiwa i archiwalia górnośląskie*, i (2008), 106–39.

⁴³ Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, i, 31. See also Janusz Spyra, *Żydzi na Śląsku Austriackim (1742–1918). Od tolerowanych Żydów do żydowskiej gminy wyznaniowej* (Katowice, 2005); *id.*, *Żydowskie gminy wyznaniowe na Śląsku Austriackim (1742–1918)* (Katowice, 2009).

was possible, but it seems that the Silesian Beskid mountain region, isolated from the 'lowland' group of relatives, formed its own kindred circles. Due to the popularity of the names of the majority of VMs from those areas, only a meticulous and long-lasting genealogical research could clarify this issue.

V

CONCLUSIONS

The academic literature lacks any analogous juxtaposition of village mayors from 1864–1918 for other parts of the Habsburg monarchy.⁴⁴ It would be very interesting to confront information about the ties of VMs in Cieszyn Silesia with those in neighbouring regions, i.e. Opavian Silesia (part of the same crownland); Moravia; or especially with Galicia because of the strikingly different social structure there (the prestigious role of the nobility in Galicia), denominational structure, or the smaller cultural capital of VMs (most of them were illiterate, while in Cieszyn Silesia cases of illiteracy among VMs were incidental).⁴⁵

Research on the community of VMs in Cieszyn Silesia in 1864–1918 period gives the impression of being very local, perhaps even obscure, but could be a starting point for future research on elections and local government law in the past and even today.

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⁴⁴ For more on the peasantry and village studies, see Werner Nell and Marc Weiland (eds), *Dorf: Eininterdisziplinäres Handbuch* (Berlin, 2019). About Austrian Silesia see also Hana Šústková and Aleš Zářický, 'Agrarreliten in Österreichisch-Schlesien 1848–1914', in Eduard Kubů, Jiří Šouša, and Aleš Zářický (eds), *Agrarismus und Agrarreliten in Ostmitteleuropa* (Praha–Berlin, 2013).

⁴⁵ Morys-Twarowski, *Wójtowie*, i, 59–60. See also Georg Schmitz, 'Organe un Arbeitsweise, Strukturen und Leistungen der Landesvertretungen', in Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (eds), *Die Habsburgmonarchie*, vii: *Verfassung und Parlamentarismus*, 2: *Die Regionalen Repräsentativkörperschaften* (Wien, 2000), 1388.

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