

Archaeological Research at the Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street in Warsaw. Preliminary Results of Fieldwork Carried out in the Area of Quarter 1 in the years 2020–2021

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT THE JEWISH CEMETERY ON OKOPOWA STREET IN WARSAW. PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF FIELDWORK CARRIED OUT IN THE AREA OF QUARTER 1 IN THE YEARS 2020–2021

Abstract

The paper presents preliminary results of the archaeological research conducted in quarter 1 at the Jewish Cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street in Wola in Warsaw in the years 2020–2021, which was carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the Rabbinical Commission for Jewish Cemeteries in Poland, as well as respect for tradition and halakhic law. The results of archaeological work contribute to a better understanding of the history of the entire Warsaw necropolis from the time of its foundation, with a particular emphasis on the late 19th and early 20th century, to the times of the battles fought at the necropolis during World War II.

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KEYWORDS

- Jewish cemetery
- Judaism
- excavation
- Warsaw
- Okopowa Street-Wola necropolis
- 19th–20th centuries

INTRODUCTION


Archaeological research at the Jewish cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street began in July 2020. In total, it lasted several months and was completed in August 2021. During this period, an area covering 3100 m² was surveyed, stretching from the administrative building built in the southeastern part of the cemetery to the Mausoleum of Jewish Fighters for Poland's Independence (about half of the entire quarter). Further archaeological work is envisaged in the future, in a small part of this quarter located to the west of the Mausoleum (Fig. 1).


The archaeological work was carried out on behalf of the Cultural Heritage Foundation (Fundacja Dziedzictwa Kulturowego).¹ The first area to be surveyed was

quarter 1, which is the oldest part of the still functioning cemetery. In the following years further quarters were surveyed: 9, 72, and 12. Religious supervision of the project, carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the Rabbinical Commission for Jewish Cemeteries in Poland from the Office of the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, was provided by a representative of this team, Aleksander Schwarz.²

element of European cultural heritage. The archaeological investigations of Jewish cemeteries represent a part of the Foundation's mission: www.dziedzictwo.org.pl. The field research is carried out by Szymon Lenarczyk's company 'Wykop na Poziomie' in cooperation with archaeologists Magdalena Sugalska, Zofia Kowarska, and Marcin Wagner from the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. Thanks to the cooperation with the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, more than 50 archaeology students took part in the fieldwork and thus had the opportunity to carry out archaeological field training.

² The Jewish cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street constitutes an immovable heritage monument according to the interpretation of the Act on the Protection and Care of Monuments and thus is subject to heritage protection (act of 23 July 2003, consolidated text in Journal of Laws of 2017, item 2187), including archaeological protection. On 1 December 1973, the

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¹ The aim of the Cultural Heritage Foundation, according to its statute, is to protect and promote Polish national heritage as an



Fig. 1. Jewish cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street, Warsaw. The area covered by archaeological excavations on the quarter 1. Graphic design: S. Lenarczyk.



The need to carry out archaeological work in Jewish cemeteries has already been indicated by Paweł Fijałkowski, who in his papers argued the legitimacy of this type of research with the need to broaden our knowledge of the past and the culture of Polish Jews.³ In his opinion, thanks to archaeological work, it is possible to discover numerous objects closely related to Jewish culture. Similar postulates were put forward before World War II by Majer Bałaban, who carried out cleaning work and research at the Jewish cemetery in Lviv.⁴

It is important to emphasise that the archaeological research carried out at the Jewish cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street broadens our knowledge about Jewish customs and culture. Thanks to the careful exploration and recording of historical layers and the numerous finds identified *in situ*, it is possible to gain more information about the inhabitants of Warsaw at the turn of the century.

So far, areas of Warsaw's Jewish cemeteries have been investigated through archaeological research only twice. Excavations in 2011, carried out in the area of the Bródno necropolis, were aimed to define precisely its original extent from the side of Św. Wincentego Street.⁵ The area of the necropolis designated for archaeological research is still outside the cemetery fence that which was

cemetery was entered into the register of monuments under no. 874. For more information on the protection of Jewish cemeteries see: Bednarek 2020, 360-370. The guidelines of the Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries are published, among others, in www.jewishheritagepoland.org/.

³ Fijałkowski 1989, 25-42; Fijałkowski 2003, 361-371.

⁴ Bałaban 1929, 110.

⁵ Bis 2011.

sponsored by the Nissenbaum Family Foundation in the mid-1980s.⁶ Unfortunately, the fence did not enclose the entire area of the cemetery.

Just over a decade earlier, in 1998–1999, archaeological investigations were organised on the initiative of Bolesław Szenicer, who at the time was the director of the Wola Jewish cemetery. Excavation trenches were set up right at the entrance to the necropolis, by the wall that separated the cemetery from Okopowa Street. This is where the foundations of the pre-burial house and the synagogue were uncovered. Unfortunately, these buildings had been destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising.⁷

It is worth noting that the matter of archaeological works carried out in Jewish cemeteries still provokes a lively discussion, as mentioned by Dariusz Rozmus in his book *Prawne i badawcze wyzwania archeologii żydowskiej*. According to him, archaeological work in Jewish cemeteries does not necessarily have to be associated with classical excavations,⁸ by which he probably means deep excavations that go down to the natural layer. Usually, only rescue excavations are carried out on Jewish necropolises to protect archaeological artefacts, including loose finds and matzevot, as well as human remains, and their necessity is usually linked to a planned construction project.

⁶ The Nissenbaum Family Foundation, active since 1983, has set itself the goal of, among other things, saving Jewish cemeteries. Until 2012, it took care of the Jewish cemetery in Bródno, which was then handed over to the Jewish Religious Community in Warsaw, cf. Bielawski 2020, 191.

⁷ This research is mentioned, among others, by Zieliński 2020, 61. B. Szenicer wrote about his work in an article, Szenicer 2000, 101-104.

⁸ Rozmus 2022, 22.

In his book, D. Rozmus lists the activities undertaken at the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street, stating that they cannot be called archaeological excavations but rather 'archaeological work'.⁹ It is difficult to comment on these arguments concerning terminology briefly outlined above. In the Wola cemetery, due to the restrictions imposed by the guidelines of the Rabbinical Commission for Jewish Cemeteries in Poland, as well as respect for tradition and halachic law, it is not possible to open deep excavation trenches. Nonetheless, archaeologists are guided in their work by all the rules of the archaeological profession concerning the excavation methods and recording that are the determinants of 'archaeological excavations'.¹⁰ Prior to any invasive work in the ground, investigations were carried out using non-invasive archaeological methods (topographical surveys, aerial survey, GPR spot survey).

The main aim of the research was to uncover the original surface of the cemetery from the last phase of the use of quarter 1, dating from the end of the 19th century to the 1930s, when the burial of the deceased in this part of the necropolis ceased.

The foundation of the Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw's Wola district located at the exit of the former Gęsia Street took place in 1806.¹¹ According to Leon Przysuski, this date should be pushed back as far as 1799, while the above-mentioned date from the beginning of the 19th century refers to the actual opening of the cemetery.¹²

Officially, the first person buried in quarter 1 was Nachum, son of Nuchym of Siemiatycze (1807), but an earlier date is recorded on the gravestone of Elka Junghofowa, daughter of Yehuda Leib of Kalisz, who died in 1804.¹³

Initially, the cemetery was roughly rectangular in shape, measuring approximately 100×180 m, and its area included today's quarters 2 and 9 and only partly quarters 1 and 8 (Fig. 2). From the very beginning, the cemetery was divided into a men's section on the southern side (currently quarter 1) and a women's section in its northern part (currently quarter 9).¹⁴ The eastern part of quarter 1 was



Fig. 2. Fragment of the map of Warsaw from 1808 with the Jewish cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street (scale ca. 1:11500, author: Johann Georg Lehmann (?), engraver: Joseph Bach, collection of the State Archives of the Capital City of Warsaw, set 1004/IV, collection I of maps and plans of Warsaw, reference no. K I 18). Source: <http://maps.mapywig.org>

purchased and annexed to the cemetery along with the present-day quarter 10 only in 1824.¹⁵ Schipper mentions further land purchases to enlarge the cemetery, which took place in the 1840s–60s.¹⁶ The cemetery only gained its final shape during the Nazi occupation when it was incorporated into the ghetto (Fig. 3).¹⁷

In addition, Eleonora Bergman and Jan Jagielski point out that a system of so-called 'elevations' had already been in use since 1831, due to the insufficient number of sites for new burials.¹⁸ The number of instances of raising the ground reached

¹⁵ Schipper 1938, 93.

¹⁶ Schipper 1938, 93-94. The problem of the expansion of the Jewish cemetery in Wola is discussed in detail by Eleonora Bergman and Jan Jagielski in their study, Bergman and Jagielski 1990, 9-18.

¹⁷ Bergman and Jagielski 1990, 16.

¹⁸ Further ground raising occurred in 1843, 1855 (this appears to be the area of modern quarters 7, 8, and 9), in 1922–1924 (in quarters 12, 24, 36) and in 1926–1930 (in quarters 23, 28, 29, 31, and 80), cf. Bergman and Jagielski 1990, 16-17; Paszkiewicz et al. 1992, 16. And further, as Przysuski writes: *The cemetery was extended several times. Before the war itself, due to the impossibility of acquiring new land, the cemetery authorities started to create elevations, i.e., in the old quarters from 50 years ago, after the removal of the remaining tombstones, fresh soil was poured in and in this way, the first new elevation, or one-storey cemetery, was created in 1915. The number of these elevations, or one-storey cemeteries, is steadily increasing and has now reached the number of 14,* Przysuski 1936, 7.

⁹ Rozmus 2022, 145, footnote 153.

¹⁰ Cf. definition from the National Heritage Institute website; https://samorzad.nid.pl/baza_wiedzy/podstawowe-pojecia-archeologiczne.

¹¹ Schipper 1938, 26.

¹² Przysuski 1936, 7.

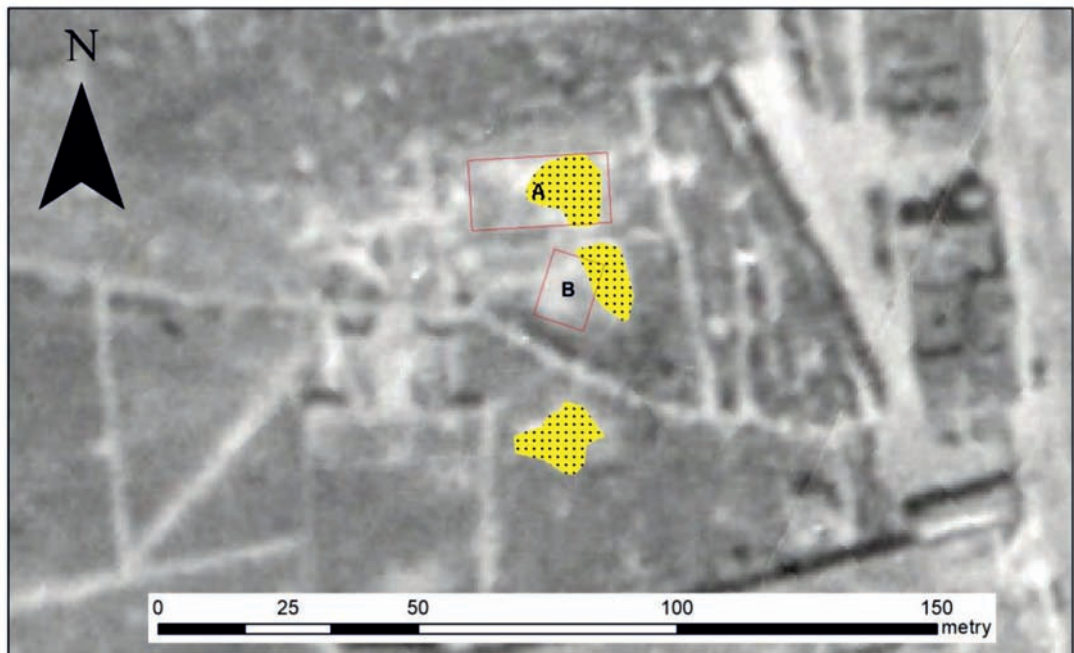
¹³ The grave of Nachum, son of Nuchym of Siemiatycze, is located in quarter 1, row 46, number 11, while that of Elka Junghofowa is in quarter 2, row 12, number 8. These burials are mentioned as the oldest ones by Ignacy Schipper in footnote 17, although he incorrectly gives 1807 as the date of Elka Junghofowa's death, Schipper 1938, 26.

¹⁴ Schipper 1938, 26.

Fig. 3. Map of the Jewish cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street, Warsaw. Drawing: S. Lenarczyk.



Fig. 4. Jewish cemetery at 49/51 Okopowa Street, Warsaw. Photo from 1942 with colour-marked mass graves. Interpreted by S. Różycki. Source: NARA.



a total of 14 levels by the time of World War II.¹⁹ This situation was observed during the archaeological investigations in quarter 1, where a few matzevot tops are visible on the cleared use level from the end of the 19th century, placed much lower.²⁰ This is also confirmed by the shape of terrain in this part of the cemetery. The present-day surface of the described area rises slightly towards the west.

¹⁹ Paszkiewicz et al. 1992, 16.

²⁰ The tops of older matzevot are visible, among others, to the east of Ber Sonnenberg's *ohel*.

Testimony to the cruelty of the Germans during World War II is the identification of one of the three mass graves. It is located in the north-western part of quarter 1, east of the Mausoleum (Fig. 4).²¹

²¹ The mass grave in quarter 1 was identified, among other things, on the basis of GPR surveys carried out by Aleksander Schwarz and the interpretation of archival aerial photographs made by Sebastian Różycki, cf. Różycki and Michalski 2021. It was also possible to verify the locations of the mass graves in the area of the cemetery (quarter 1 and quarter 9) on the basis of photographs taken in 1941 by Heinz Jost on his birthday. Visible on them are the tombstones that are still standing today.

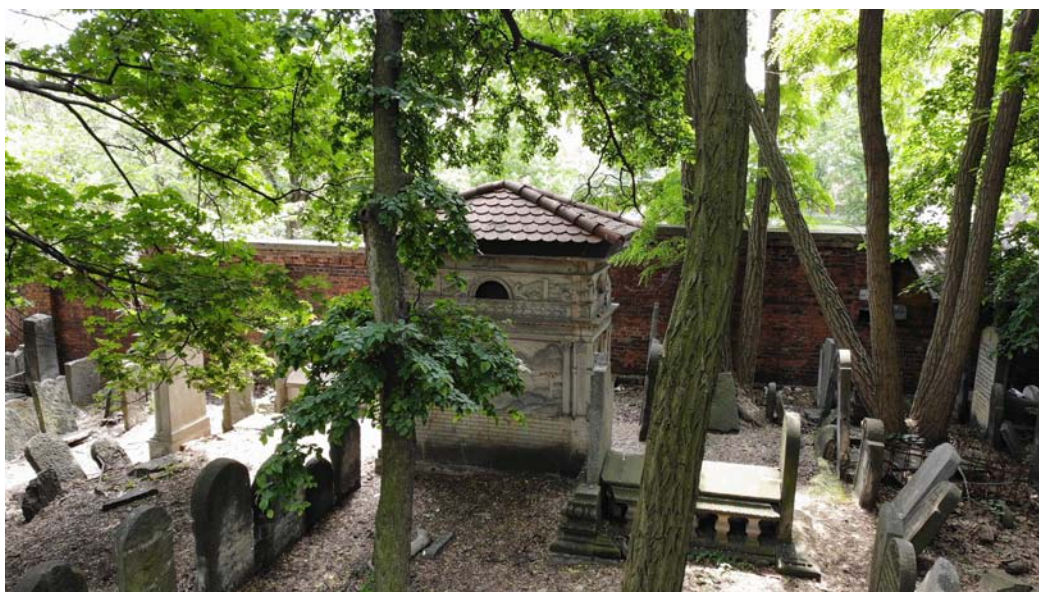


Fig. 5. The eastern part of quarter 1.
Photo: S. Lenarczyk.

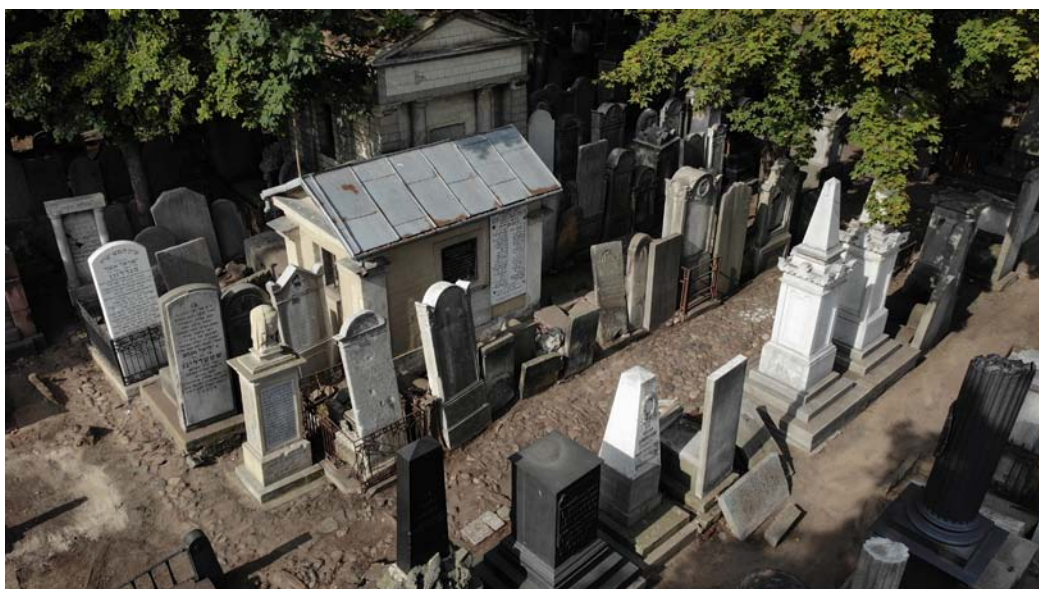


Fig. 6. View of quarter 1 with the Ber Sonnenberg's ohel.
Photo: S. Lenarczyk.

In quarter 1, we find a wide variety of tombstone forms.²² Most of them are traditional matzevot, arranged in rows oriented according to the east-west line. According to tradition, the dead were buried with their faces towards Jerusalem. The graves are often placed very densely with their longer sides next to each other. Although a grave area of 8 square cubits (or ells)²³ and a distance of 6 tefachim (handbreadths) between graves was defined in the 1850s,²⁴ the graves are distributed very densely, often placed next to each other with abutting longer sides of the grave pits.

The outlines of the grave pits are usually delineated by bricks arranged in a roughly rectangular

shape. The bricks came from the local brickworks, as evidenced by the signature marks imprinted on the surface of some of the pieces.²⁵ Sometimes the grave pits are protected by a horizontal slab covering them.

There are also stone box-type tombstones, ohels, and tombstones imitating in style those known from Catholic cemeteries. They are characterised by elements typical of the artistic trends of the period and differ in form from traditional Jewish tombstones. They belonged to assimilated Jews.²⁶

Noteworthy monuments are the ohels towering above the other forms of tombstones. One of them,

The descriptions of the burial of the dead in these mass graves are also shocking, cf. Blätter 1982, 70-71.

²² The typology of the matzevot from quarter 1 is described by M. Sugalska 2023.

²³ Schiper 1938, 96-97.

²⁴ Bis and Więckowski 2017, 111-112.

²⁵ In quarter 1, there are signatures of the brickworks, such as 'JELONKI,' 'ODOLANY,' 'C*T,' 'W. KLE [...],' 'NATOLIN,' etc.

²⁶ The column-shaped, obelisk-shaped tombstones are located in the eastern part of quarter 1.

Fig. 7. Uncovered matzevah with preserved red and gold polychrome.
Photo: M. Sugalska.



Fig. 8. The plinth of a matzevah with a depiction of a squirrel.
Photo: M. Sugalska.



built in 1831 to honour Ber Sonnenberg (1764-1822), son of Szmul Zbytkower, founder of the Jewish cemetery in Bródno, stands out in particular. The rich artistic decoration of this monument refers to Psalm 137 'By the rivers of Babylon...' and was designed by David Friedlander (Fig. 5). The bas-relief on the other side depicts a view of Warsaw at the time.²⁷

Located nearby is another ohel, a modest white brick monument in an eclectic style, built for the Chief Rabbi of Warsaw, Szlomo Zalman Lipszyc, who died in 1839.²⁸ The Hebrew inscription placed

²⁷ Kroszczor and Zimler 1983, 23. A thorough stylistic analysis and formal description of Sonnenberg's *ohel*, cf. Nowogórski and Kowalska 2000, 277-288.

²⁸ Most probably, the current appearance of the *ohel* is the result of the building's conservation carried out in the 1930s.

on the upper part of the northern façade says that this is 'the ohel of the master, author of Chemdat Szlomo, of blessed memory' (Fig. 6). Inside the ohel are three tombstones commemorating the aforementioned Rabbi Bunem Zew, son of Cwi Lipszyc and Jakir, son of Cwi Hirszt Lipszyc.²⁹

Most of the matzevot in the Jewish cemetery are made of sandstone or limestone; only a few of them are carved from other types of stone that are more difficult to process. The inscriptions and decorations, with a few exceptions (resulting from their repositioning and the reversal of the face of the matzevot), are placed on the eastern side of the monuments. The inscription fields in the central part of the body

²⁹ Bielawski n.d., 105.



Fig. 9. Traces of polychrome in the lower part of the matzevah.
Photo: M. Sugalska.

contain mostly text executed in concave relief; only a few matzevot exposed from the ground have convex letters that indicate their earlier chronological origin. The removal of the layers of soil confirmed the fact that some of the matzevot were also polychromed. The paint layer covering them was done in yellow, green, light blue, brown, red, and gold or silver colours.³⁰ White and black colours were also used, especially to highlight the lettering. The polychrome covering the matzevot served not only to emphasise the aesthetic value of the tombstones but, as specialists suggest, also to highlight the inscriptions or symbols depicted on the bas-reliefs that were important both from the perspective of the viewer and the deceased.³¹

The polychrome is preserved only on fragments of matzevot that until recently have been buried underground. One of the most interesting examples is a lying and broken matzevah found in the northern part of quarter 1, on which, on a semi-circular top there are two lions, carved in convex relief, resting their front paws on a coat of arms. Two Hebrew letters are placed inside the coat of arms: Pe and Nun (פ and נ), which are an abbreviation of the phrase 'מטב הפ' (po nitman), meaning 'buried/hidden here'.³² The smooth background of this scene retains its red colour, while the coat of arms is highlighted in black. The figures of the



Fig. 10. A matzevah with polychrome during conservation.
Photo: M. Sugalska.

lions are gilded.³³ The white colour is preserved in the recesses of the letters Pe and Nun (Fig. 8).

The colour red was also preserved on the plinth of a matzevah with a depiction of a squirrel, the lower part of which was covered with earth (Fig. 8).

³⁰ Cf. Rozmus 2005, 137-141.

³¹ Trzcíński 1989, 63-64.

³² Kurczyński 2022, 56-57, no. 1, fig. 25.

³³ The interpretation of the scenes with lions on the matzevot, cf. Krajewska 1989, 50-51; Rozmus 2005, 239-254.

Fig. 11. A matzevah with a depiction of padlocks.
Photo: M. Sugalska.



Another example of the use of polychrome is a matzevah from 1832, which depicts elements of the townscape. The matzevah is located to the north-east of Dow Ber Sonnenberg's ohel. On the exposed plinth of the matzevah, traces of red and yellow polychrome have survived on one of the buildings depicted in relief (Figs. 9 and 10).³⁴

Architectural elements are a recurring motif in the decoration of tombstones. The plinths often feature rustication together with a gate depicted in the middle, locked with a padlock (Fig. 10).³⁵ Padlocks or bolts carved on matzevot refer to the old custom of placing them in graves. Padlocks were supposed to seal the burial forever, according to the Talmudic term meaning 'lock' or 'closure' (Fig. 11).³⁶

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

During the excavations of quarter 1, archaeologists unearthed several alleys, hitherto covered by a thick layer of topsoil, the surface of which was paved with cobbles. During the uncovering of the alleyways, archaeologists also found many small artefacts dating from the second half of the

19th century to the 1920s and 1930s.³⁷ The aforementioned alleys mark the use level and thus the floor of the excavations (Fig. 12). It seems that the location of the cobbled alleyways has been dictated by the construction of two ohels (Sonnenberg and Lipszyc's). Both in the past and now, due to the fact that they are burials of prominent individuals, they are among the most visited places in the cemetery.

The archaeological work was carried out through the successive removal of thin accumulation layers to carefully record all finds. The expected presence of human bones, which could have been displaced from deeper layers as a result of root and animal penetration of the ground, prompted the archaeologists working on the site to maintain great care and vigilance and check the thin mechanical layers of soil while they were being removed. As mentioned above, Jewish tradition, as well as the religious rules of the Halakha, do not allow any disturbance of human remains, which, as a result of potential exposure, had to remain in situ until a representative of the Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries arrived to secure them in the same location.

The entire area of the investigations was divided into 100m² (10×10 m) squares (Fig. 13). This division allowed the research to be carried out in small teams, consisting of archaeologists and students from the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. It should be noted that the beginning of the archaeological work coincided with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Poland. Thus, the research had to be carried out under strict sanitary restrictions. In addition, the subdivision into 100m² excavation units made it possible to carefully control the stratigraphy of the investigated area³⁸ and determine the target depth of exploration at a given spot, depending on the location of the tombstones and their state of preservation. The thickness of the removed layers generally did not exceed 30 cm.

In the successively removed layers, archaeologists discovered many interesting and valuable artefacts, including coins, fragments of clothing (Fig. 14:2-3) and other objects (bricks, ceramic tiles, roof tiles), fragments of pottery and glass vessels (Fig. 16), and militaria (Fig. 14:4), which are

³⁴ Kurczyński 2022, 59, no. 3, fig. 28.

³⁵ An example of such a depiction is the matzevah restored in 2022, with a preserved painting in the form of red colour highlighting the rustication, green on the gate door, and black on the lock. This matzevah dates from 1836, cf. Kurczyński. 2022, 73-74, no. 11, fig. 37-38.

³⁶ On the custom of putting padlocks in graves see: Skóra 2016, 131-145, cf. Rozmus 2005, 147-150.

³⁷ In the course of the research, among other things, the following coins were discovered: 2 kopecks from 1862, 1/2 kopecks from 1889, 10 kopecks from 1908, 1/2 kopeck from 1908, 2 kopecks from 1912, 10 kopecks from 1914, and 1 groschen from 1923.

³⁸ A longer stratigraphic sequence can be observed in the Jewish cemetery at Okopowa Street only during conservation work when it is necessary to excavate the lower fragments of a matzevah undergoing restoration.

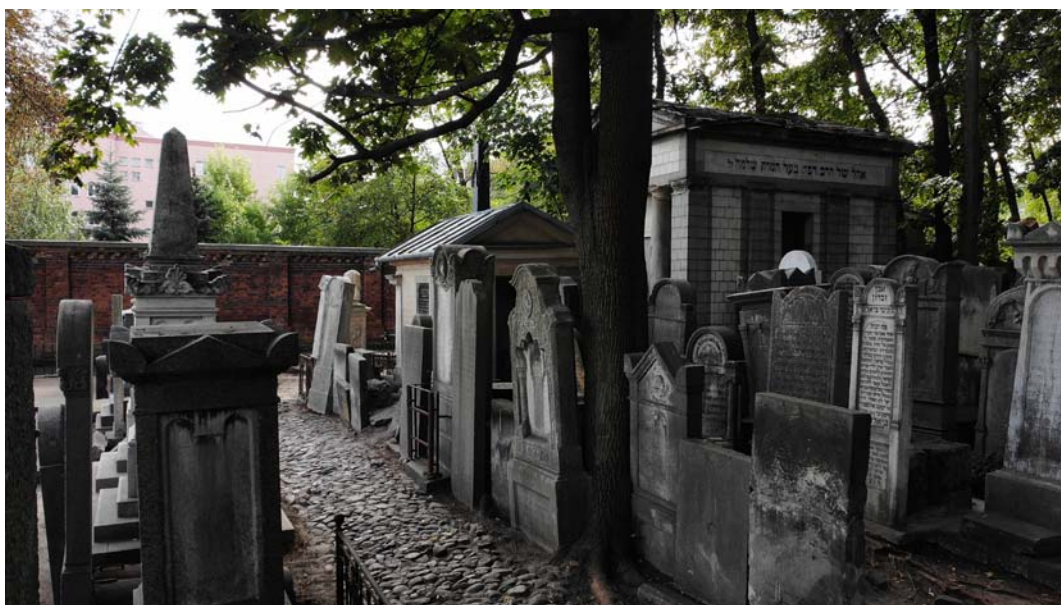


Fig. 12. View of the eastern part of quarter 1 with a cobblestone alley and Lipszyc's ohel. Photo: S. Lenarczyk.



Fig. 13. Quarter 1 at the beginning of archaeological research. Photo: S. Lenarczyk.

evidence not only of funeral rites and Jewish customs but also of the everyday life of the inhabitants of Warsaw during the fin de siècle period and the first half of the 20th century (Fig. 14:1), as well as of battles fought in that area.

Among the most common finds are the remains of ceramic flower pots (Fig. 15). This fact is not surprising, as there were greenhouses in the cemetery at the beginning of the 20th century, the remains of which were uncovered in quarter 72. Ceramic finds also include a large number of fragments of stove tiles and wall coverings or floor tiles, which probably came from the nearby buildings, including the cemetery buildings, which were blown up by the Germans in 1944.

Other mass finds are glass fragments (Fig. 16). These are mainly pieces of bottles and different size entire bottles, the most common of which are vodka bottles (Fig. 16:3) of various capacities ranging

from 0.2 litres to 1 litre, made of pale blue, pale green, and light bluish-green glass³⁹, followed by pharmacy and cosmetic bottles (Fig. 16:4-5), which should be dated to the late 19th century – beginning of the 20th century. The oldest are fragments of wine bottles made of dark green or olive green glass, with a concave bottom with a pontil mark, a cylindrical body with slightly concave walls and a rim decorated with a band of glass thread⁴⁰. Noteworthy is the wine bottle made of dark green translucent glass. It was found near Sonnenberg's ohel, which may suggest that it dates back to the first half of the 19th century, possibly from the time when the mausoleum was built. In the upper part of the body, there is a smooth round glass stamp (Fig. 16:1). In addition, the bottoms of wine bottles were found,

³⁹ Lipiec 2017, 182, figs. 26-27.

⁴⁰ Ciepiela 1977, 95-103; Lipiec 2017, 170-173.

Fig. 14. Small finds:
 1 – plated spoon;
 2 – Polish Armed Forces
 button (1914–1918);
 3 – button from the
 uniform of the Russian
 Empire (1857–1917);
 4 – cartridge case;
 5 – toy gun.
 Photo: M. Sugalska (1),
 J. Śliwa (2-5).

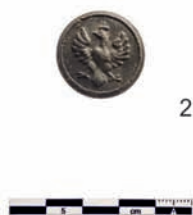


Fig. 15. Ceramic flower
 pot. Photo: J. Śliwa.



containing the remains of pigments used to paint matzevot (Fig. 16:6-7). The collection of glass finds is supplemented by numerous fragments of graveyard candles from the first half of 20th century.

In addition to artefacts representing material culture, archaeologists discovered in the explored layers animal bones, which most probably are the evidence of the presence of homeless groups residing in the cemetery before World War II, or of the making of further terrain elevations.⁴¹ Throughout the period of the cemetery's functioning, soil was repeatedly brought in to raise the ground level.

During World War II, the cemetery was a part of the ghetto and served as a trading place. Specialised groups smuggled basic goods into the ghetto, which were exchanged for the Jews' valuable possessions.

⁴¹ Finds of animal bones were consulted with Dr Anna Gręzak at the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw.



Fig. 16. Glass bottles:
 1 – wine bottle with stamp; 2 – rim of wine bottle; 3 – vodka bottle; 4-5 – pharmacy bottles; 6-7 – bases of wine bottle with remains of pigments.
 Photo: M. Wagner

Paweł Wiczorek, among others, wrote about this practice: '(...) They did business in its area. Most often during funeral ceremonies. Poles would bring in food under their clothes and take out trinkets/valuables purchased from the Jews...'.⁴²

One of the more interesting groups of finds was a deposit of several items which was discovered in an inconspicuous place while exploring the central part of quarter 1.⁴³ Nearby, archaeologists found two gold pocket watches. Most probably, they had been deliberately hidden in the cemetery by their

owner or looters. The watches were preserved in good condition and have been conserved. The first watch, an ELGIN (Fig. 17:1), was made in 1915, while the second watch, HUIT (Fig. 17:2), was made between 1850 and 1867.

The ELGIN pocket watch has been preserved in good condition. It has a 14k gold case. The metal parts of the movement and the case are significantly corroded. The enamel covering the dial is cracked and the visible numerals were sprayed on with paint or ink from a stencil and then sintered. Dimensions: diameter 34 mm, height 48.5 mm, thickness 9.9 mm.

The case of the HUIT watch is covered with an engraving depicting a woman with a bouquet of flowers against a landscape. The manufacturer of the movement, AMI, and the distributor, Sandoz & Fils, are marked on the inner lid of the case. The case of the watch bears the number 59320, and the PM hallmark. The dial is enamelled, with visible traces of cracks.

⁴² Wiczorek 2021.

⁴³ Among the artefacts there were: several coins from the years 1908–1914, 10 kopecks from 1914, 1/2 kopeck from 1908, 10 kopecks from 1908, a coin from 1912, a penknife, fragments of glass bottles, including a piece with the inscription 'Moscow' and the name 'Brokard/Brocand' and a bottle with the inscription 'Pharmacie Gessner Varsovie', a fragment of a spoon, a fragment of a lead seal with anchor, a fragment of paper written in the Cyrillic script.

Fig. 17. Two gold pocket watches: 1 – HUIT, (1850–1867), 2 – ELGIN (1915).

Photo: J. Śliwa.



Fig. 18. The bayonet.

Photo: J. Śliwa.



The numerals were sprayed on from a stencil in paint or ink and then sintered. Dimensions: diameter 34 mm, height 48 mm, thickness 6.62 mm.

A separate category of artefacts found during the investigations is represented by various militaria, predominantly from World War II. The discovery of some of them enables us to answer, among other things, the intriguing question about the absence of matzevot on the northern side of Ber Sonnenberg's ohel. On the slightly elevated terrain in this area, there are only a few broken matzevot protruding from the ground. On the analysed aerial photographs taken between 1942 and 1944, there are visible several white spots, which may be traces of explosions.

A mortar shell found in the area seems to explain the lack of grave stelae at the site, as they must have been destroyed during the war. The fighting in the area of quarter 1 and elsewhere in the cemetery is mainly evidenced by the discovered shells and the visible damage to the monuments caused by artillery fire. The shells discovered at the cemetery can be identified by the information on the rim. Among the artefacts of this type are Mauser cartridges. One of them bears the following marks on its rim: eagle/31/N/67, indicating that the cartridge was manufactured in 1931 at the State Armament Factory (Państwowa Wytwórnia Uzbrojenia), Ammunition Factory no. 1 in Skarżysko Kamienna

and the Norblin steel mill; another bears the mark N/38/N/67, indicating the Norblin factory and steel mill and the year of manufacturing (1938).

Furthermore, on the eastern side of the Mausoleum, near the southern wall of the cemetery, archaeologists found among the matzevot a bayonet (Fig. 18), a Browning pistol, and a glass fuse with white powder inside. A detailed inventory of the militaria found in the area of quarter 1 and their precise distribution plan will allow us to determine the extent of the fighting in the cemetery.

CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological investigations of quarter 1 have contributed significantly to improving our knowledge of the tragic events concerning the cemetery during World War II.

The discovery of new matzevot, which were previously buried underground, makes it possible to supplement the information on the people buried there, whose names are recorded by the Foundation for the Documentation of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland.⁴⁴ Thanks to the cooperation of archaeologists and art conservators working on the restoration of the matzevot in the cemetery we are provided with additional information while the discovered matzevot and monuments are restored to their former beauty. The precise identification of the location of one of the mass graves in quarter 1 contributed to its commemoration by the 'Zapomniane' Foundation in 2022.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

⁴⁴ For years, the Foundation for the Documentation of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland has been digitally recording and inventorying Jewish cemeteries in Poland and in areas historically associated with Polish Jews, <https://cemetery.jewish.org.pl/>

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