

Agnieszka WITKOWSKA* (AMU, Poznań, Poland)

Sources of the history of the Jewish community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą (1507-1939)

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Abstract: *No full monograph has yet been devoted to the history of the Jewish community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą. This paper, whose subject is the almost completely unknown history of Jews from Dobrzyń in the years 1507-1939, stems not only from the author's own interests, but also from the need to fill the above-mentioned gap. To study the topic, the author used mainly archival sources, which were the legacy of administrative and political authorities. Fragments of source materials are currently kept in the State Archive in Bydgoszcz and the State Archive in Toruń, and the branch in Włocławek. Especially noteworthy sources include: the vital records of Jewish people (1826-1936), the records of the Pomeranian Voivodeship Office in Toruń (1920-1939), the town records of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą (1917-1937), and the records of the Board of the National Council (1950-1972). In these collections, the largest numbers of documents are extracts from birth records, official correspondence, minutes from the meetings of local authorities, and municipal inspections from the inter-war period. Apart from the above-mentioned archival collections, the author used a wide range of other source materials, for example, collections of maps kept in the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw and in the District Office in Lipno, as well as very interesting items from private collections. Most of the above-mentioned sources have not yet been published.*

Key words: Dobrzyń nad Wisłą, Jewish community, vital Jewish records, archival sources, maps

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the sources for the history of the Jewish community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą whose fortunes have been almost unknown for more than four hundred years. Although the Vistula settlement is a historical capital of the Dobrzyń Land and one of the oldest towns in Central Poland,¹ the town does not

* ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2579-6813>. agnwit1@amu.edu.pl; Adam Mickiewicz University.

¹ The source literature does not provide any accurate date for the town's foundation. In 1228, Dobrzyń was mentioned as one of the villages belonging to the Płock bishopric. See: Guldón & Powierski, 1974: 155; Kalinowski, 2001: 16; The first preserved source account in which Dobrzyń is referred to as *civitas* (city) is found in the document of the Masovian-Teutonic agreement of 1235. See: Bieniak, 1998: 8; Hence, it must be assumed that Dobrzyń was granted town privileges not later than at the beginning of 1230s. Cf. Posadzy, 1962: 7; Bogucka & Samsonowicz, 1986: 87; Klevan, 1989: 177.

have a complete monograph concerning its history.² Furthermore, there are no publications which describe the history of the Dobrzyń Kahal in a comprehensive manner, considering all the preserved archival sources, the press and private collections.

The conducted research query, which covered the documentation of the national archives, local government agencies and private collections, provided a lot of information – unpublished so far – concerning the functioning of the Dobrzyń community over the centuries. Nevertheless, the presentation of the sources discovered ought not to take place without referring to previous historiography accomplishments.

The status of the research on the history of the Jewish community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą

The source literature includes only a few very general studies concerning this topic. This paper presents the current status of the research on the history of the Dobrzyń Kahal in chronological order.

The oldest preserved publications on Dobrzyń Jews date back to the 19th century. The first very general mentions about Orthodox Jews in Dobrzyń are found in the historic work by Wincenty Gawarecki entitled *Opis topograficzno-historyczny Ziemi Dobrzyńskiej...* (1825). The author provides, inter alia, the exact number of the town's inhabitants of Jewish origin (1824), the general description of Zduńska Street where the main institutions of the commune's religious life were located and he mentions the active participation of Jews in plundering Christian houses during the Swedish invasion (1656).³ Slightly more detailed data are provided in the later publication *Starożytna Polska pod względem historycznym, jeograficznym i statystycznym opisana* (1843) by Michał Baliński and Tymoteusz Lipiński. This work records, inter alia, the amount of the quarterly rent for a synagogue (1765) and the list of Jewish buildings in Dobrzyń in the second half of the 19th century.⁴ The mentions in *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich* (1881), which provides, inter alia, data on the Jewish minority as a share of the total number of the town's inhabitants in the years 1861-1881, are of an informative nature.⁵

It is worth mentioning that the 19th century authors on many occasions used sources which were not preserved in their original form until the recent times,⁶ therefore, it is difficult to verify them in terms of authenticity. At the same time, there

² The most important publications on the history of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą: Gawarecki, 1825: 41-51; Baliński & Lipiński, 1843: 339-344; Chlebowski *et al.*, 1881: 87-90; Nowak, 1960: 1-4; Posadzy, 1962; Guldon & Powierski, 1966; Bieniak, 1998: 8-14; Kalinowski, 2001; Kłodawski, 2005.

³ Gawarecki, 1825: 44, 47-48. See Baliński & Lipiński, 1843: 343.

⁴ Baliński & Lipiński, 1843: 344.

⁵ Chlebowski *et al.*, 1881: 87.

⁶ Gawarecki, 1825: 44, n. 55.

are no prerequisites which would imply that the information contained therein is inauthentic.

The increase in interest about the history of the Jewish commune in Dobrzyń took place in the 2nd half of the 20th century. A highly valuable work, not published so far, was written in 1962 by Wiesław Posadzy concerning the spatial development of the town in the post-war period.⁷ The author of the study, in the part on the genesis of the town's spatial development, describes, very generally, the location and extent of the Jewish district in the 18th and 19th centuries,⁸ using all available cartographic sources.⁹ A few years later (1966), a paper on the history of the town, from the earliest times to the end of the 18th century, was published, and at that time was the most voluminous one – it was written by Zenon Guldon and Jan Powierski.¹⁰ This study includes many factual mistakes¹¹; nevertheless, it appears that the information referring to the Jewish population may be deemed reliable, since most of it is confirmed in the sources from the given period (inspections, the records of customs chambers).¹²

At the end of the 1980s, Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Institute, Hebrew יד ושם) published the encyclopaedia of Jewish communes in Poland (*Pinkas Hakehillot: Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities, Poland, Vol. IV, Warsaw and Its Region*).¹³ This study presents an outline of the history of the Jewish commune in Dobrzyń from earliest times until the end of 1939. The Israeli researchers used mainly Polish 19th century studies and archival materials which are currently kept in Jerusalem and selected excerpts from the regional press from the 1920s.¹⁴ This publication provides interesting data on the population size and the organisation of the commune in the 18th century,¹⁵ as well as information on the kahal's social and political life, which is not found in the original studies.¹⁶

⁷ Posadzy, 1962.

⁸ Posadzy, 1962: 10-11, 18.

⁹ Posadzy, 1962: 2-3. The author compared the key cartographic materials for the research on the spatial development of the town.

¹⁰ Guldon & Powierski, 1966: 3-17.

¹¹ The authors, at the beginning of the study, underlined that due to the fragmentary status of the sources and the lack of source literature, some gaps and uncertain hypotheses could not be avoided. See Guldon & Powierski, 1966: 3.

¹² Guldon & Powierski, 1966: 13, 15-17. See Tomczak *et al.*, 1961; 1963; Górski *et al.*, 1996; Guldon, 1967.

¹³ Klevan, 1989.

¹⁴ Klevan, 1989: 177-178 (entry: דוברין'ן ע"ג ויסלה).

¹⁵ 757 Jews lived in Dobrzyń in 1765; furthermore, 330 Orthodox Jews, living in the neighbouring villages, also belonged to the community, Klevan, 1989: 177. Perhaps, these were Jews from Fabianki, Chełmca (Duża), Łochocin, Okrągła or Tłuchowo. The inhabitants of these places paid premiums to the Dobrzyń community in 1939. See AP Bydgoszcz, UWP Toruń 1920-1939, ref. no. 4492: 99-101.

¹⁶ According to the authors of the study, a few Jewish aid organisations operated in the town in the inter-war period, such as: Centos ("צנטאס"), Labour Cooperative ("צרכניה לעמלים"), the Association of Supporting the Poor ("חברת תומכי עניים") and the People's Bank ("בנק עממי"), Klevan, 1989: 178. See *Wykaz Spółdzielni...*, 1928: 8. Furthermore, there were the divisions of political parties operating in the town: Poale Zion, HeHalutz, Mizrachi, Agudat Yisrael (most of the members originated from the Ger Hasids) and Bund. See Kawski, 2012: 74-75.

Unfortunately, the source materials kept in the Polish archives were nearly completely omitted; hence, there are factual mistakes in the study.¹⁷

Other publications are from the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century and refer to the Jewish communes in the Kuyavia and Dobrzyń Land in the inter-war period and during the years of Nazi occupation.

The first work which must be indicated here is *Byli z ojczyzny mojej. Zagłada ludności żydowskiej ziemi dobrzyńskiej w latach drugiej wojny światowej (1939-1945)* by Mirosław Krajewski.¹⁸ The author presented the unknown war fortunes of the Jewish communities of four towns, namely Lipno, Rypin, Dobrzyń by the Drwęca River and Dobrzyń by the Vistula River. As a result, he focused mostly on the history of the community by the Drwęca River. Nevertheless, this study also contains some interesting information about the Jews from the Vistula Kahal, inter alia, mentioning the deportations to the ghettos in Warsaw, Mława and Nowe Miasto.¹⁹ A supplement to this work is another publication by this author entitled *Kujawy wschodnie i ziemia dobrzyńska w latach okupacji hitlerowskiej (1939-1945)*.²⁰

Particular attention should be given to the publications written at the beginning of the 21st century by an outstanding researcher of the history of the Jewish communes in the Kuyavia and Dobrzyń Land, Tomasz Kawski. In 2006, the said author published a very valuable study, preceded by a reliable archival query, *Żydzi kujawsko-dobrzyńscy w latach 1918-1950*,²¹ and six years later he published the work entitled *Gminy żydowskie pogranicza Wielkopolski, Mazowsza i Pomorza w latach 1918-1942*.²² Both publications provide a lot of data on, for example, the social and political, cultural and economic life of the Jews in Dobrzyń in the period under discussion. Nonetheless, it must be underlined that they are general and that they do not cover the entire range of problems.

Another work by Kawski appeared in 2019 and focuses on the fates of the Jewish population during the years of Nazi occupation – *Ludność żydowska Ziemi Dobrzyńskiej w latach 1939-1945. Próba bilansu*.²³ The author extensively describes the extermination policy conducted by the occupier concerning the Jewish population

¹⁷ The encyclopaedia's authors provide, among other things, an incorrect date for the town's foundation as 1519. See footnote 1. They also indicate a later date for the formation of the Dobrzyń Kahal, suggesting the 17th century. At that time, a wooden synagogue and a Jewish cemetery were built. See Klevan, 1989: 177. Cf. Kalinowski, 2001: 21 and Kawski, 2012: 73. The Polish researchers indicate unequivocally that the beginnings of the Vistula Kahal could even be dated back to the middle of the 16th century, with the cemetery established around 1557.

¹⁸ Krajewski, 1990.

¹⁹ Krajewski, 1990: 17.

²⁰ Krajewski, 2002.

²¹ Kawski, 2006b. An important addition to publications is the profiles of Dobrzyń rabbis (304-305).

²² Kawski, 2012: 73-77. So far, this has been the most complete study concerning the history of the Dobrzyń community in the years 1918-1942. Furthermore, the author provides data on the community's population size in the following years: 1793-1794, 1808-1816, 1819, 1827, 1857, 1897, 1909, 1921, 1933, 1935.

²³ Kawski, 2019.

in the Lipno and Rypin poviats. He used the preserved sources in his research and the accounts of eye witnesses. It is the most comprehensive publication on this topic.²⁴

To conclude, the research hitherto on the history of the Dobrzyń Kahal is selective. Undoubtedly, this is caused by the fragmentary status of the preserved sources and the lack of interest in the aspects under discussion by the end of the 1980s. The publications thus far refer only to the excerpt of the rich history of Dobrzyń community – mainly the inter-war period and the years of Nazi occupation. There are no studies describing, for example, the organisation of the kahal, the Jewish educational system, the movement of people and Polish-Jewish relations over the centuries. Comprehensive studies on the post-war fates of Dobrzyń Jews were not undertaken.

Sources of the history of the Jewish community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą (1507-1939)

Science includes the numerous attempts to define the notion of a historical source. According to Marian Pawlak and Jerzy Serczyk,²⁵ this term is applied to each object connected with conscious human activity. This refers both to the testimonies of the past existing in the collective awareness, as well as objects of everyday use. Hence, an object of historical research may be an object which is the work of human hands as well as a demonstration of human mental activity.

Among the various types of written sources, certificates and documents are particularly important since they record the activity of various institutions and the objective of their formation is usually completely practical and utilitarian, related to the everyday functioning of some institutions. Contrary to descriptive sources, certificates and documents are not usually drawn-up for shaping the thoughts and convictions of an addressee; therefore, they are not determined with specific subjectivity.²⁶

Formal documentation produced mainly in the 19th and 20th centuries constitutes the key group of sources for studies on the history of the Jewish community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą. This collection has not yet been published,²⁷ and the general studies only include a small percentage of the information contained therein.²⁸ It must be underlined that the materials preserved primarily constitute documentation produced by the then administrative authorities. They relate to organisational issues connected with the functioning of the town authorities and institutions operating in the town, and also include religious organisations. Unfortunately, the certificates produced by

²⁴ See also Tomkiewicz, 2020: 207.

²⁵ Pawlak & Serczyk, 1997: 17.

²⁶ Pawlak & Serczyk, 1997: 22.

²⁷ Kawski, 2006a: 87.

²⁸ Krajewski, 1990; Kawski, 2006b; 2012: 73-82.

the Dobrzyń community are fragmentary. This material comprises several documents²⁹ drawn-up mainly in the inter-war period. The community archive was completely destroyed, probably at the end of 1939 or at the beginning of 1940.³⁰

The oldest preserved document acknowledging the presence of Jews in Dobrzyń is *Taxa Judeorum et opidis Regni existentibus*, that is, *The tax rate of Jews living in cities and towns of the Kingdom* from 1507. This document includes the register of the Jewish communities taxed in relation to the coronation (24 January, 1507) of Sigismund I. Apart from the name of the place, it also records the sum of the amounts paid by Dobrzyń Jews to the new king.³¹

More detailed information on the Dobrzyń Jewish population is provided by the register of the Nieszawska customs chamber from 1765.³² This is the oldest document which specifies the names and surnames of Jewish merchants from the town. It is worth mentioning that in this period the participation of Jews in the Dobrzyń river trade was nearly 72% – the most of all the Kuyavia and Dobrzyń towns recorded in the censuses of the Nieszawska customs chamber.³³

Another key document drawn-up in that year is the confirmation of the rights and prerogatives of Dobrzyń Jews, for example, for the production and sale of drinks. This is Stanisław August's privilege of 7 May 1765.³⁴ A certain supplementation of the information contained therein is the inspection of aldermanship³⁵ conducted on 24 December 1774.³⁶

Said documents, notwithstanding the fact that they mention Dobrzyń Jews, do not provide any details concerning the functioning of the whole community. According to Stefan Cackowski,³⁷ the most comprehensive sources for specifying the population of the Dobrzyń Land at the end of the 18th century are the descriptions of the Polish towns incorporated into South Prussia in 1793. These sources were probably written

²⁹ The majority of the mentioned documents are currently kept in the national archives, mainly in Bydgoszcz and Włocławek. Some materials were also kept in MD Dobrzyń. After the museum closed, all the documents and exhibits became part of private collections). These are the following: *The letter of the Management of the Jewish Religious Community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą to Dobrzyń Town Council* of 6 August 1928; *The letter of "Tarbut" Educational-Cultural Association to the President of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą* of 14 December 1929; *The letter of the Management of the Jewish Religious Community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą to Dobrzyń Magistrate* of 15 December 1929; *The letter of "Gemilus Chesed" Association of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą to Dobrzyń Magistrate* of 15 December 1929.

³⁰ See Klevan, 1898: 178; Kawski, 2012: 77.

³¹ Horn, 1974: 11-15; see also Kawski, 2012: 73.

³² Said register is kept in AGAD, Archiwum Kameralne, ref. no. III/1619/4-6. See Guldon & Guldon, 1988: 181, n. 22.

³³ The register of the Nieszawska customs chamber includes 13 mentions of Dobrzyń merchants. See Guldon & Guldon, 1988: 183, table 1.

³⁴ This document can be found in AGAD, MK 220, pp. 422–426. See Górski & Mietz, 1988: 6, n. 9.

³⁵ The name of the land plots located in the vicinity of Dobrzyń which were granted by King Władysław Jagiełło to the Chełmicy Family for inheritable ownership. See more extensively Górski & Mietz, 1988: 5, n. 1.

³⁶ Górski & Mietz, 1988: 6.

³⁷ Cackowski, 1995: 12-13.

at the beginning of the Prussian regime. At that time, the local authorities were obliged to provide an answer to 82 questions covering all the essential issues related to the functioning of the town. The questions concerned, among other things: town, religious, welfare and health institutions, spatial development and population, the number and type of craftsmanship and trade establishments, the ethnic composition of the population and various religious groups.³⁸ The comparative analysis of the descriptions of Prussian towns with the source materials from Polish times allows the presumption that the information contained therein is correct. On this basis, it is possible to determine, for example, the percentage share of the Jewish population in the total number of Dobrzyń inhabitants in the years 1793,³⁹ 1800, 1808⁴⁰; moreover, it is possible to indicate the real estate belonging to Jews,⁴¹ estimate the number of Jewish employees in the food,⁴² clothing,⁴³ leather,⁴⁴ construction,⁴⁵ textile,⁴⁶ haberdashery,⁴⁷ and luxury⁴⁸ industries, as well as determine the type and the scope of the services rendered by Jews.⁴⁹

The main source for the research on the estimated natural movement of the Jewish population in the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century are the vital records from this period. The marital status certificates of the Mosaic confession from the Dobrzyń community chronologically cover the years 1828-1936. This collection contains six archival units, namely two collective books of birth certificates (the years 1826-1886 and 1887-1909), three collective books of marriage certificates (the years 1826-1870, 1871-1879 and 1880-1898) and one collective book of death certificates (the years 1899-1936). All the books are kept currently in the national archives in Włocławek.⁵⁰

The regulations of Napoleon's Code introduced by means of Fryderyk August's decree, Saxon King and Warsaw Prince, of 27 January 1808, established the uniform secular registration of births, marriages and deaths for all the citizens of the Duchy of Warsaw notwithstanding the confession.⁵¹ In 1809, the function of the civil registry officials was given to clergymen and the supervisory rights were

³⁸ Cackowski, 1995: 12-13.

³⁹ Cackowski, 1995: 52, table 10.

⁴⁰ Cackowski, 1995: 115, table 32.

⁴¹ Cackowski, 1995: 61, table 13.

⁴² Cackowski, 1995: 72, table 18.

⁴³ Cackowski, 1995: 74, table 19.

⁴⁴ Cackowski, 1995: 76, table 20.

⁴⁵ Cackowski, 1995: 81, table 23.

⁴⁶ Cackowski, 1995: 84, table 24.

⁴⁷ Cackowski, 1995: 86, table 25.

⁴⁸ Cackowski, 1995: 86, table 26.

⁴⁹ Cackowski, 1995: 88, table 27.

⁵⁰ AP Włocławek, ASC Włocławek, ref. no.: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. There are also two unique specimens: the marriage certificates (1928-1938) and birth certificates (1927-1938) of the Synagogue District of Dobrzyń. These are currently kept in USC Dobrzyń. The book of death certificates from 1870-1899 is probably missing. At the beginning of the 1990s it was at USC Dobrzyń.

⁵¹ Pomianowski, 2015: 95-106. See also Gruszczyńska, 1993: 1-2.

awarded to the courts of peace. Such a situation was binding throughout the existence of the Duchy of Warsaw, and then in the Kingdom of Poland until 1825.⁵²

Pursuant to Article 174 of the Civil Code of the Kingdom of Poland, the preparation of the certificates of the marital status of non-Christian confessions was entrusted to town officials. Additional regulations referring to the marital status registers were introduced by means of the Regulation of the Administrative Council of the Kingdom in September 1830. In these documents, rabbis, or their deputies or associates, were obliged to keep the registers of births, marriages and deaths. Upon introducing an entry in a proper book, the local rabbi was obliged to appear together with the interested parties in the appointed civil registry office in order to draw-up the given certificate. Each document had to be recorded in two books: the first one was kept at the town office and the other – for safety reasons – was kept at the Land Mortgage Archives of the Court of Peace. Such a manner of registering the certificates of marital status was maintained throughout the inter-war period.⁵³

It is worth underlining that the documentation issued by Dobrzyń rabbis was not preserved. We only have the certificates made by the town administration officials. It is estimated that this collection is preserved in whole.⁵⁴

As far as the certificates of marital status of the Mosaic confession in the district of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą are concerned, it cannot be determined unequivocally whether only the Jewish population living in Dobrzyń was registered there. The use of the term ‘district’ raises some doubts when determining a territory subject to the register. It is possible that the census also involved Jews living in nearby locations.⁵⁵

The form of the vital registry of the Jewish population was similar to the patterns used in the Catholic and Protestant parish books all over the Kingdom of Poland. They were descriptive; thus, they provide a lot of information about the commune’s inhabitants.

The birth certificates include such data as the date and place of drawing-up the certificate, surnames, names, ages, occupations, the permanent residence addresses of the father and the witnesses, the place of birth of the mother and her maiden name, the exact date of birth of the child, its sex and first name.⁵⁶

The marriage certificates contain information about the date and place of drawing-up the document, the first and last name of the rabbi, last names, ages, marital

⁵² See more extensively Gruszczyńska, 1993: 1-2.

⁵³ Gruszczyńska, 1993: 2-3.

⁵⁴ In the Kuyavia and Dobrzyń Land, complete vital Jewish records were preserved only from a few places – apart from Dobrzyń, these were Rypin, Izbica Kujawska, Nieszawa and Piotrków Kujawski. The vital records of other communities, among others, Lipno, Włocławek, Lubraniec or Kowal, are a fragmentary collection. See more extensively Gruszczyńska, 1993: 5-8. See also footnote 50.

⁵⁵ See footnote 15.

⁵⁶ AP Włocławek, ASC Włocławek, ref. no.: 1, 2; USC Dobrzyń, the birth certificates (1927-1938) of the Synagogue District of Dobrzyń.

status, places of birth and occupations of the spouses to be, as well as the personal data of their parents and witnesses. The registry of the marriage certificates also includes information on the pre-marriage agreement, announcements, duplicates of the birth certificates of the spouses to be, and sometimes – in the event of the death of a former spouse – the death certificate.⁵⁷

The death certificates contain detailed information concerning the deceased, the circumstances of death and the personal data of the death's witnesses. If the deceased was married before death, the spouse's name and the names of their children were recorded as well.⁵⁸

The certificates of marital status of the Mosaic Confession in the District of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą have an alphabetical index for each year.⁵⁹ In the collective book of the birth certificates from 1826-1886, the entries were made in Polish (until 1867) and Russian (until 1886). The marriage certificates from the years 1826-1870⁶⁰ and the death certificates from 1899-1936 (the years 1899-1914 are in Russian, the years 1915-1936 in Polish) were drawn-up in a similar manner. The birth certificates for the years 1887-1908 and the marriage certificates for 1871-1898 were only drawn-up in Russian.

The vital records of Dobrzyń Jews are an exceptionally rich historical source which constitutes excellent material for studying the demographic processes and also – especially for linguists – an indispensable source for onomastic studies. Unfortunately, so far, they have not been attended properly in the source literature.⁶¹

⁵⁷ AP Włocławek, ASC Włocławek, ref. no.: 3, 4, 5; USC Dobrzyń, the marriage certificates (1928-1938) of the Synagogue District of Dobrzyń.

⁵⁸ AP Włocławek, ASC Włocławek, ref. no. 6.

⁵⁹ An exception is the collective book of the birth certificates from the years 1826-1886.

⁶⁰ There are no entries from the following years: 1833, 1834 and 1837. In 1853, instead of the following title of the certificate: *Wykaz Ogólny Akt Zaślubień przez ciąg roku w Gminie Żydowskiej Dobrznia nad Wisłą spisanych*, the following name occurs: *Wykaz Ogólny Akt Ślubnych w Gminie Niechrześcijańskiej Dobrzyń n/ Wisłą*. In 1865, next to the first and last name of a man, the personal data of a woman are recorded for the first time.

⁶¹ Actually, none of the studies concerning the history of Dobrzyń Jews in the 20th century includes a mention of the vital community registers. See Krajewski, 1990; Kawski, 2006b; 2012: 73-77.

Tab. 1. Population of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą (XVII-XX c.)

Year	Population (total)	Jewish population	
		Number of people	%
1658 ^a	363	-	-
1673–1674 ^b	616	-	-
1765 ^c	-	757	-
1775 ^d	712–890	-	-
1793 ^e	860	311	36.2
1808 ^f	2 183	1 816	83.2
1819 ^g	1 559	703	45.1
1824 ^h	1 839	840	45.7
1827 ⁱ	2 161	1 201	55.6
1857 ^j	1 861	831	44.7
1861 ^k	2 221	486	21.9
1881 ^l	2 289	681	29.7
1897 ^m	2 485	927	37.3
1899 ⁿ	2 944	-	-
1900 ^o	2 944	-	-
1909 ^p	3 197	1 461	45.7
1921 ^q	2 693	-	28.8
1926 ^r	2 693	-	-
1927 ^s	2 693	-	-
1928 ^t	2 893	-	-
1929 ^u	3 006	-	-
1930 ^v	2 693	-	-
1933 ^w	2 500	706 or 725	ca. 29
1935 ^x	2 793	767	28
1938 ^y	-	ca. 850	-
1939 ^z	3 268	ca. 850	26

Sources: ^a Guldon & Powierski, 1966: 14; ^b Cackowski, 1995: 24; ^c Klevan, 1989: 177; ^d Cackowski, 1995: 24; ^e Cackowski, 1995: 52; ^{f, g} Kawski, 2012: 73; ^h Gawarecki, 1825: 47; ^{i, j} Klevan, 1989: 177; ^{k, l} Chlebowski *et al.*, 1881: 87. Cf. Kalemka, 1966: 22; ^m Klevan, 1989: 177; ⁿ *Echa Płockie i Łomżyńskie* (7/6/1899), R. II, nr 45: 3; ^o *Echa Płockie i Łomżyńskie* (24/1/1900), R. III, nr 7: 3; ^p Kawski, 2012: 73; ^q Klevan, 1989: 177; ^{r, s} *Księga adresowa Polski...*, 1926/1927; ^t *Księga adresowa Polski...*, 1928; ^u AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917–1937, ref. no. 3; ^v *Księga adresowa Polski...*, 1928; ^{w, x, y, z} Kawski, 2012: 73. Cf. Kawski, 2006b: 35; AP Włocławek, ZM and MRN Dobrzyń 1945–1950, ref. no. 14; author's summary.

The national archives in Włocławek, apart from the vital registers already described, also include the certificates of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą for the years 1917–1937. A kind of supplementation of the information contained therein is the documentation

of the Pomerania Voivodeship Office in Toruń currently kept in the collections of the national archives in Bydgoszcz. The preserved certificates mostly concern issues connected with the organisation of the town authorities, the town economy and the development of education and culture in Dobrzyń in the inter-war period. Said collections are the most interesting and most complete source materials for researching the history of Dobrzyń Jews in the years 1918-1939.

The municipal archives of Dobrzyń for the years 1917-1937 provide a lot of information concerning: Jewish education,⁶² the share of the Jewish minority in the social-political⁶³ and economic life of the town,⁶⁴ Polish-Jewish relations⁶⁵ and the development of the Jewish quarter in that period.⁶⁶

The documentation issued by the Pomerania Voivodeship Office in Toruń comprises the 1930s in chronological order. This collection includes, for example, the inspection of the Dobrzyń community from 1937, the list of premiums and the detailed budget for the year 1939, the list of community real estate and their value, and information concerning J. W. Sender – the last rabbi of Dobrzyń.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, the documentation issued by the Nazi occupier was almost completely destroyed when the German army withdrew in January 1945.⁶⁸

Actually, the only preserved written source referring to the period of occupation in the town are the archives of the Town Management and the Town National Council of Dobrzyń recorded for the years 1945-1950. This collection comprises, for example, a questionnaire concerning military action in the town,⁶⁹ a detailed list of military damage,⁷⁰ a register of the real estate belonging to Jews before the war,⁷¹ details concerning the rebuilding of Słowackiego Street⁷² and information on the fates of some Dobrzyń inhabitants during the occupation and after liberation.⁷³

⁶² AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917-1937, ref. no.: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

⁶³ AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917-1937, ref. no.: 2, 3, 7.

⁶⁴ AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917-1937, ref. no.: 2, 8 (in 1936, the Tax Office in Lipno issued more than 30 enforcement applications in relation to Dobrzyń inhabitants, the debtors were mainly Jewish merchants), 10, 15.

⁶⁵ AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917-1937, ref. no.: 2, 12, 13.

⁶⁶ AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917-1937, ref. no.: 2, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15,

⁶⁷ AP Bydgoszcz, UWP Toruń 1920-1939, ref. no. 4483.

⁶⁸ An exception is, for example, a sketch of the real estate destroyed in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą in 1943 (*Skicce der abgebrochenen Grundstücke in Dobrin Kr. Leipe, Leipe 1943*). This document is currently kept in the private collection of R. Bartoszewski.

⁶⁹ AP Włocławek, ZM and MRN Dobrzyń 1945-1950, ref. no. 40.

⁷⁰ AP Włocławek, ZM and MRN Dobrzyń 1945-1950, ref. no. 45.

⁷¹ AP Włocławek, ZM and MRN Dobrzyń 1945-1950, ref. no. 6, 14.

⁷² This street was subsequently renamed: Włocławska (the first half of the 19th century), Żydowska (the second half of the 19th century), J. Słowackiego (20th century). Before the outbreak of the war, this was one of the main streets in the Jewish quarter. AP Włocławek, ZM and MRN Dobrzyń 1945-1950, ref. no. 6.

⁷³ AP Włocławek, ZM and MRN Dobrzyń 1945-1950, ref. no.: 37, 38.

Tab. 2. List of Jewish properties in Dobrzyń destroyed during the German occupation (1939-1945)

Owner	Building address	Building type	Value of building in 1939 (zł)	Damage level (%)
Baumgarten Złata	Rynek	house	10 000	100
		outbuilding	3 000	100
		granary	12 000	100
Bilskier Icek	Słowackiego	house	4 000	100
		outbuilding	2 000	100
Czarnobroda Hersz	Słowackiego	house	3 000	100
Jewish community	Zduńska	synagogue	50 000	100
Gold Chana Bajla	Zduńska	house	1 500	100
Goldberg Nuchym	Słowackiego	house	3 000	100
		stables	500	100
Goldberg Nuchym	Kilińskiego	house	4 000	100
Grynberg Chiel	Rynek	house	3 000	100
Jankiewa Ejdel	Rynek	house	15 000	100
		granary	3 000	100
		stables	500	100
Kowal Abram	Słowackiego	house	15 000	100
Kwiat Abram	Słowackiego	house	3 000	100
		stables	500	100
Ledeborg Icek	Pierackiego	house	8 000	100
		sheds	500	100
Lerer Rojza	Słowackiego	house	3 000	100
Lipińska Gitla	Rynek	house	4 000	100
Manesowicz Abram	Słowackiego	house	3 000	100
Marczak Zelek	Zduńska	house	1 500	100
Parszos Efroim	Słowackiego	house	5 000	100
Parszos Icek	Rynek	house	3 000	100

Prync Rywa	Rynek	house	15 000	100
		outbuilding	10 000	100
Sochaczewski Szymon	Pierackiego	house	3 000	100
Szafran Itta	Rynek	house	15 000	100
		outbuilding	5 000	100
Szpektor Gecel	Słowackiego	house	8 000	100
		stables	500	100
Szpigiel Pinkus	Słowackiego	house	8 000	100
		stables	500	100
Wiewiórka Szymon	Rynek	house	4 000	100
Zajde Chaim Ber	Rynek	house	4 000	100

Source: AP Włocławek, ZM and MRN Dobrzyń 1945-1950, ref. no. 45, *Wykaz szkód wojennych szczegółowych w mieście Dobrzyniu nad Wisłą z dnia 24 lipca 1945 roku*; author's summary.

An essential source of material, almost completely omitted so far by historians, are cartographic sources.⁷⁴ These materials are really valuable because they depict the spatial development progress of Dobrzyń at the turn of the centuries. They provide valuable information concerning, for example, the location of the Jewish synagogue and cemetery, the situation and extent of the Jewish quarter in the 19th century, the distribution of the properties of Dobrzyń Jews in the 1930s and the war losses.⁷⁵

The oldest preserved cartographic representation of Dobrzyń nad Wisłą is the copy of the town plan made in 1804 by Penny.⁷⁶ The author refers to the original entitled *Charte von der Stadt Dobrzyń an der Weichsel*, drawn-up by the construction inspector, Goeppner, at the end of the 18th century or at the beginning of the 19th century. This plan is the only preserved cartographic source with Bóźniczna

⁷⁴ An exception is a valuable study by Posadzy (1962): in different locations. Nevertheless, the author did not include the town site plan from 1878, the cadastral map of Dobrzyń from 1907 (this is currently kept in the collections of the Powiat Starosty in Lipno) and the sketch of the destroyed Jewish real estate from 1943.

⁷⁵ The sketch of destructions prepared by the occupant in 1943 was preserved (Skicce der abgebrochenen Grundstücke in Dobrin Kr. Leipe). On this basis, it is possible to determine the extent of the Jewish quarter at the end of the 1930s quite accurately. It also includes the exact dimensions of plots and the personal data of their Jewish owners. The following are mentioned in this document: Lewkowicz Lajb, Peses Golda, Kowal Rojza, Szpektor Abram, Szpiegel Mendel, Stern Naftali, Szafran Ita, Eides Jankiel, Parszos Sura, Majer Icek, Baumgarten Złata, Lewin Salomon, Goldberg, Czarnobroda, Kwiat Nuchyn, Bilsker Icek, Lerer Rojza, Prync Rywa, Grynberg Chiel Majer, Wiewiórka Szlama, Lipiński Gitel, Zajde Chaim Ber, Erben Szabliński M.

⁷⁶ AGAD, Zbiór kart, ref. no. 524–6.

Street marked.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the real estate owned by Jews is marked in red.⁷⁸

In the 19th century, another important sketch of the town was prepared, namely a site plan of the northern-west part of the town square.⁷⁹ This was mostly used for marking the planned forge; yet, it is extremely valuable for research on the spatial development of the Jewish quarter. The architect marked Żydowska Street but there is no mention about this street in the preserved sources from the 19th century. In the 20th century, maps then confirm that the Jewish quarter was developed over time, extending to the northern-east part of the town square. Thus, it can be estimated when that process began.

In historical research, apart from documentation and cartographic sources, the regional press plays an important role. Regrettably, informative periodicals were not published in Dobrzyń until 1945.⁸⁰ However, it is known that the town inhabitants received newspapers printed in cities such as Płock and Włocławek.⁸¹ In the light of the preserved sources, it is not possible to determine how this affected the awareness of the local community; it is also difficult to indicate which titles were the most popular. Nonetheless, it may be stated that in the inter-war period, the strongest daily newspaper in the region was Włocławek's edition of Warsaw's *ABC – ABC Włocławka i Kujaw* published in the years 1926-1939.⁸²

Some time ago, the collections of the Dobrzyń Museum included three copies of the said daily newspaper, probably from the end of the 1920s or 1930s.⁸³ This extraordinarily small collection informs, for example, about the share of the Jewish population in the elections to the Town Council conducted in the years 1918, 1919, 1922 and 1927. It is worth mentioning that only a few documents concerning the procedure and the results of elections survived the period of occupation.⁸⁴ It is interesting that the only preserved description of the Dobrzyń synagogue was published in *ABC Włocławka i Kujaw*.⁸⁵

It appears that many pieces of information concerning the functioning of the Dobrzyń community could be supplied by the studies on the Jewish press

⁷⁷ Currently, a part of Zduńska Street.

⁷⁸ Posadzy, 1962: 2.

⁷⁹ It was prepared entirely in Russian on 6 February 1878. The sketch was kept in the collections of the Dobrzyń Museum in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą. See also footnote 29.

⁸⁰ The *Nowiny* bulletin issued in 1937 was not a continuous publication. See AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917-1937, ref. no. 14.

⁸¹ E.g.: *Echa Płockie i Łomżyńskie*, *ABC Włocławka i okolicy* and *Życie Włocławka i okolicy*.

⁸² This daily newspaper was connected in terms of the agenda with the national movement; hence, it often contained anti-Semitic content. See more extensively Notkowski, 1982: 280-281.

⁸³ A problem with establishing the exact date results from the fact that only fragments of the respective copies were preserved. Based on the information contained therein, it is possible to estimate a probable date of publication and the name of the author. See Wiśniewski, 1928; idem (no publishing year – it was probably published between 1934 and 1939).

⁸⁴ See AP Włocławek, AM Dobrzyń 1917-1937, ref. no.: 2, 3.

⁸⁵ Wiśniewski, (no year).

published in Włocławek in the inter-war period. It must be remembered that Włocławek was one of the largest publishing centres in inter-war Poland. At the time, there were 40 Jewish publishing houses operating in the town. In these terms, Włocławek was in sixth position in the country after, for example, Warsaw, Vilnius, Lvov and before, for example, Cracow.⁸⁶

The accounts of witnesses, the participants of the events researched, constitute a separate group of sources. Absolutely, they have a higher factual value when they are provided directly after events which they concern. Regrettably, it has never been attempted to publish the recollections of the town inhabitants about the inter-war period and the years of Nazi occupation. Said accounts could contribute to, for example, establishing the exact location and appearance of the Dobrzyń synagogue, determining the location of the Jewish cemetery, defining Polish-Jewish relations immediately before the war and presenting the fates of some Dobrzyń Jewish families in the period of occupation and after liberation.⁸⁷

Conclusions

To conclude, it must be noted that the source materials for the history of the Jewish community in Dobrzyń nad Wisłą in the years 1507-1939 presented herein are of a fragmentary nature. Except for a few documents from the 16th and 18th centuries, only vital registers from the years 1828-1938 were preserved and incomplete documentation issued by the town administration in the inter-war period. The records of the community, which in fact are a small collection of not more than several documents, are currently kept in the national archives in Bydgoszcz and Włocławek. The other materials, mainly cartographic sources, old photos and accounts are located in the Central Archives of the Historical Records in Warsaw, in the Poviát Starosty in Lipno and in frequently omitted private collections which are extraordinarily rich in detail. Perhaps a more complete archival query, also involving foreign archives and institutions, will allow more detailed research to be conducted in the future on the history of the Dobrzyń Kahal.

⁸⁶ Kawski, 2006b: 210-211.

⁸⁷ The author of the paper, in 2012, recorded the accounts of S. Małkiewicz, K. Sawicki and H. Zejfert, born in Dobrzyń in the 1920s (the transcription of this account can be found in the author's collection). These materials have not yet been published.

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