

## BASIC STEPS OF JEWISH CEMETERIES DOCUMENTATION

PETRA ČERNÁ, JAN VLADAŘ

### SUMMARY

The presented study offers basic methodical steps of complete documentation of a Jewish cemetery including documentation works in the terrain, analytical procedure of processing and archive study as a heuristical basis for scientific research of Jewish settlement history. The outline problematic consists of several parts which are on distinct, unequal degree of knowledge, intervening into various scientific fields and techniques.

The study points out to the neglected and rapidly vanishing historical source. It suggest methods and possibilities of its physical description, image recording and subsequent analytical processing. In keeping with the suggested procedures, the output of the terrain work will be represented by complete documentation of the status, commented edition of historical texts and the formal analysis of the data.

### INTRODUCTION

We can perceive the abandoned, old Jewish cemeteries as a romantic part of our contemporary cultural landscape. However, they represent not only an interesting historical sight but foremost they are sacred final resting places. Only a glimpse at the poor state of many of them urges us to take care of their preservation and renovation. However, the old

Jewish cemeteries and epitaphs of their gravestones constitute also a significant historical source for those who are interested in looking deeper into our past. The study of tombstone epitaphs enriches the knowledge of the local settlement and the Jewish community. They supplement the written records (for instance Chevra Kadisha books), in some cases being the only evidence of existence of a vanished local Jewish community. In addition to the historians, the founded knowledge can be followed up also by other social-scientific disciplines: sociology, genealogy, history of art. We can only welcome the increasing interest in studying the Jewish cemeteries, perhaps motivated by the desire to bring another piece to the mosaic of our past.

Due to the extended group of enthusiastic workers who are educated in this field and who are willing and ready to transcript and to study the texts of tombstones or to contribute in another way to the terrain documentation, we offer an instruction manual in the form of methodical guide starting from the technical works in the terrain to evaluation of the gained data and to their insertion into the database for a future comparison.

The Jewish cemeteries documentation, in the same way as other pieces of scientific research, must be carried out according to the formal standards of documentation. Therefore we offer a preliminary summary of the basic points which should be contained in a responsible documentation work.

### SELECTION OF LOCALITY

We consider it obvious that the person interested in studying Jewish cemeteries will choose a suitable locality especially in the region of his domicile or as the case may be in a locality to which he has a certain relationship. However, before considering a particular place, consultation with the regional experts on preservation of monuments, the regional museums' experts and especially Jewish monuments specialists (for instance from the Jewish museum in Prague) is necessary. The cemeteries which have been declared protected national monuments are subject to particular laws and consultation with a responsible worker of the Public Preservation of Historical Monuments is necessary. The recommendations of specialists will enable the researcher to choose a locality threatened by damage or destruction, a locality which has not been documented yet or a locality which has been worked out only partially.

In addition, the documentation works in a particular locality must be agreed upon with the owner of the plot, of the structure (municipality,

Jewish Communities Federation, local Jewish community, further see cadastre) and in an ideal case, if the owner considers renovating the cemetery in the future to agree directly on the coordination of works.<sup>1</sup>

In some cases, the owner of the cemetery delegates a person to provide the easiest maintenance and supervision at the place. It can even be a person from the nearest village carrying out the most necessary technical works such as cutting off self-seeding, cutting grass and cleaning the cemetery. The more demanding maintenance, especially the renovation of the encircling wall – from a halachic point of view the basic element of a cemetery when it is necessary to separate the world of the living from the “Bet Hakvarot” (house of graves) is already preconditioned by a more contiguous interest and a plan of renovation of the locality, therefore a decision of the owner to renovate the cemetery is an ideal case to start the documentation. These works consist of repairing the masonry, fixing a gate as the only entrance to the cemetery, re-erecting and cleaning the tombstones, restoring stones and sometimes also restoring the mortuary, if possible. If it is not possible to ensure the mentioned works and if it is sure they are not going to be performed in the near future one can start doing the documentation on his own and simply consider adding the suitable documentation later in the future.

There are approximately 350 existing Jewish cemeteries<sup>2</sup> in the Czech Republic many of them are still waiting for a professional description and concern whereas another ones are the subject of interest for a few researchers. Therefore we can only recommend to everyone to introduce his work and to coordinate it with other scholars and with the institutions concerned and thereby to avoid in time a possible concurrence of identical works with others. So far, there is not any umbrella register keeping a record of the current state of the old Jewish cemeteries (both the physical state and the degree of documentation) or future plans of renovation. However, the Jewish cemeteries database being created by the Jewish Museum’s Archive in Prague and being continually supplemented, Matana a.s. website<sup>3</sup> or

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<sup>1</sup> For instance Matana, a.s., administrator of the property of Jewish Communities Federation, ensures systematically the maintenance and renovation of Jewish cemeteries. At the same time, it is a partner of the Public Preservation of Historical Monuments, providing the basic inventory by pre-view photo-documentation of the current state connected with the layout plan of the tombs’ placement. Using external co-workers is necessary due to the number of localities and the current pace of degradation of epitaphs and the entire tombs. It is the preparation of background papers for declaring a cemetery a protected national monument which constitutes one of the requested results.

<sup>2</sup> FIEDLER, J. Židovské památky v Čechách a na Moravě, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> [www.pamatky.kehilaprag.cz](http://www.pamatky.kehilaprag.cz)

Keshet<sup>4</sup> internet application constituting an individual attempt for a Czech and Moravian Jewish cemeteries database, can be used.

Besides the general specialized dispositions of the researcher in the field of protection of monuments, history, Hebraistic studies and Judaism, “in order to work out every inscription resource...” it is necessary to get acquainted with the cultural-historical, art-historical and geographical context of the region.<sup>5</sup>

As for the Jewish cemeteries, apart from the study of a relevant literature (for instance about the history of Jews in the particular region), the preparation consists also of studying the registry office records, the books of Chevra Kadisha etc. It is also needed to get acquainted with the level of documentation or as the case may be with the results of research at the cemeteries in the near surroundings, respectively with the history of the local Jewish communities and the fate of their individual members. Such theoretical preparation can facilitate identification of surnames of both families and individuals in the particular locality. Orientation in various language variants of the local names is enabled by the list of towns and villages with German equivalents<sup>6</sup> and historical maps<sup>7</sup>. This comparative material is necessary for the interpretation of the worked-out texts of epitaphs and for the future insertion of the results into regional and wider-scale connections.

#### TERRAIN DOCUMENTATION

##### *Making a plan of the cemetery*

In order to make an accurate geodetic plan of the cemetery which is necessary for a more detailed documentation we can recommend solely specialized geodetic services. In simpler cases, it is possible to create a basic orientation plan independently by orthogonal method, i.e. by measuring in local coordinate system without altitudes. A methodology for making an orientation plan is summarized for instance in the seminar work by Ladislav Faigl.<sup>8</sup> A layout scheme of the cemetery in its boundaries which has been found out according to the preserved peripheral masonry or other

<sup>4</sup> [www.chewra.com](http://www.chewra.com)

<sup>5</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> [Http://exonyme.bplaced.net/Board/archive/index.php/thread-72.html](http://exonyme.bplaced.net/Board/archive/index.php/thread-72.html)

<sup>7</sup> [Http://oldmaps.geolab.cz](http://oldmaps.geolab.cz)

<sup>8</sup> FAIGL, Ladislav. *Metodika při mapování (vytváření plánů) židovských hřbitovů* [online]. Ústí nad Labem : UJEP, 2010. 13 p. Seminar work UJEP. Available at WWW: <<http://www.box.com/shared/4hzrjp59ys>>.

traces of the original enclosure visible in the terrain is the essential point. For the drawing itself, a suitable measuring scale of the plan being created is to be chosen. We can facilitate the orientation inside the confined area by measuring and drawing distinct orientation points (for instance trees, terrain edges etc.). Before we locate the particular graves, we determine distinct grave lines (the graves at the Jewish cemeteries are usually oriented to contiguous lines) and then we start drawing the placement of individual tombstones. For the needs of further processing, each tombstone is allocated a number in the plan. The ordinary folding ruler and tape measure serve as the basic metrical aids.

### *Photo documentation*

Out of various methods for a visual recording of an explored object, photography seems to be the most effective. The use of photography however is definitely not an ideal way, although it does constitute a practical compromise between an accurate capture of the pattern and the technical, time and related financial possibilities of the researcher. Making a complete, uniform photo documentation is a necessary part of the terrain work.

The current abilities of digital cameras enable to take quality documentary photographs to be taken in the simple automat regime and further technical equipment (computer, printer, eventually snaps editing software) enable their immediate processing. The digital photography enables also an easy insertion into the needed documents (texts, forms, catalogues, databases etc.).

Just by taking pictures we can make a basic documentation of the appearance of the cemetery, starting from the overall views capturing the placement in the terrain to different peripheral masonry details, the mortuary structure and the entrance, to partial, illustrative views of the particular way of placing the grave stones in the area of the cemetery. In addition to an individual sensitivity for the snap composition a suitable, natural lighting (with minimum of vegetation and shades, i.e. the best season is in the fall or in the spring, at clouded sky etc.) is to be chosen. When photographing smaller objects and details (in particular masonry) we proceed from an overall view to a detail, we put a horizontal ruler (folding ruler, level rod) in a suitable way to the object being photographed p. that it does not cover up the important elements as for instance cranking, joints etc. Placing pole stars to the view (we make them from the folding ruler) will facilitate a fast orientation later.

We can also capture the fashion and the current state of particular grave places. The photograph should contain an overall view of the grave place including the tombstone, confine of the grave (a stone, metal enclosure) or a single grave. The mentioned is valid provided that the grave place is visible in the terrain. As for damaged, broken or overthrown multiple-part tombstones we capture all unambiguously related parts at one time.

Before taking pictures of the tombstone, the vegetation covering up the view of the object and the object itself is to be cleansed from impurities, however ivy or moss is to be removed from the tombstones only if there is no danger of damaging the stone.

A visible, readable sign with a tombstone's identification number according to previous chapter "Making a plan of the cemetery" is a necessary part of the photography.

Photographing individual stones is specific and more demanding in terms of the technical equipment. Not only a high-quality depiction but mainly epigraphically valuable readability of the picture is the basic condition. It should be stated in advance that such photo documentation forms a basis of all further activity, for one thing enabling "reading" of unreadable tombstones in a common way, for another thing facilitating, even replacing a detailed word description of the tombstone, for another thing it can serve retrospectively for additional comparative study and eventually it is an initial basis for making a catalogue.<sup>9</sup>

It turns out that the right use of artificial side lighting is quite essential for the "readability" of a picture. The authors experimented with a less financially demanding set (camera Canon PowerShot G12, transmitter Canon Speedlite ST-E2, flash Canon Speedlite 430EX II) enabling wireless communication of the flash with the camera.

We do the photographing frontally to the object with the camera fixed in horizontal or as the case may be in vertical position on the camera stand. We place the side flash lightning almost perpendicularly to the axis of camera lens and slightly askew from the frontal level of the object being photographed. We adjust the distance of the camera to the size and height of the object (approximately within 5 m), we don't fill in the entire picture by the object, we do the trimming when processing. By bigger distance from the object we limit the distortion of its real measurements. The placement of the flash (will be provided by a helper) depends on the local conditions, the distance of the flash from the object (approximately between 0,2–1 m)

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<sup>9</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 61.

changes the intensity of illuminating of the object at the same time. In each object being photographed we recommend to try illumination by flash from different angles (from right, from left, from above) and distances and to carry out about 10 variant pictures and to not to choose the best ones until the processing. The authors achieved the best results when having the camera set up for automatic length of exposition with the possibility to control the diaphragm according to the current conditions in order to achieve an optimal illumination and dept of focus of the picture. Similarly, not using the camera stand anymore should be done in th case of taking pictures of covered or unlit parts and different details in overall view.

In terms of the technique of photographing, the modern, shining, strongly reflecting tombstones (burnished granite, marble) are the most demanding. A suitable angle of lighting is to be found and the access of natural light is to be limited.

Contemporary digital photography, especially the possibility to gain a high number of pictures within a short time forms the basic part of the terrain documentation. It enables to capture not only the fashion and state of the object being documented but if a suitable technique is used also plastic details which are not visible normally. Therefore the final depiction of the degree of relief and “readability“of the writing significantly complicates the attempts to read the inscriptions on the tombstones directly in the terrain.

Yet, common photography is not an ideal tool of documentation since it includes distortion given by the optical features of the lens. A technical drawing used to be the usual way of recording the real appearance of an object. However in addition to the general negatives, using the drawing is obviously not suitable in the particular case. Yet, some historically and artistically significant tombstones require more accurate way of picture documentation than simple photography. Therefore, photogrammetrical image, capturing the real appearance of the object in its accurate measurements directly creating the three-dimensional model, is in the phase of trials. The few above-described digital photographs are the input data. To the object being photographed in the terrain we add coding points whereby the pictures from different positions of the camera become entwined by means of software. By comparing the difference in the deformations of the picture caused by different position of the camera towards the depicted object we get the position of all mutually identifiable points from all pictures in the original three-dimensional space. The processing by means of a computer program from the company Eos Systems Inc. Photo Modeler Scanner results in a simple model which corresponds to the pattern being enlightened by a one-side

askew light. Other functions of the application or using other software enable inserting the texture of stone, changing the lighting etc.

Using and combination of several methods up to the phase of final graphic depiction seems to be the most effective in the modern ways of documentation while enabling the other scholars to review or to follow up the achieved results.

### *Description of tombstone and transcription of epitaph*

Primary description of tombstone and copy of epitaph from autopsy is a foremost part of the terrain works. We recommend to thoroughly post all data related to both the carrier<sup>10</sup> (measurements, material, decoration etc.) and the epitaph (the size of letters, transcription etc.) to a form prepared in advance, corresponding to the structure of a future catalogue page. In order to completely understand the sepulchral monuments, attention is to be paid both to the main elements; the carrier and the inscription. We consider it an artefact requiring recording (photographs), capture of information (transcription), analysis and interpretation (translation). These degrees of documentation can be initial also for the paleografic discipline, history of art, petrography, material processing technology, philology.<sup>11</sup>

After making the photographs we know approximately of the state in which the inscriptions on individual tombstones were preserved. We transcribe most of the inscriptions from autopsy directly in the terrain. Only in some cases we first use a photographic snapshot for the transcription. These are the inscriptions which are more readable due to the use of external flash. Yet, we check the transcription subsequently in the terrain. We have to plan for a repeated visit of the cemetery because of different daylight incidence thanks to which we can read the tombstone better. If we have problems to read the epitaph immediately we have to return to it in the course of the work and to add the missing words or parts of the text. Sometimes, with lapse of time, one manages to read and to interpret the epitaph on the basis of a further study (classification of tombstones, registration offices, Chevra Kadisha books).

We transcribe the entire text of an epitaph in the terrain, we number individual lines for later orientation during the translation. If there is a Jewish symbolism on the tombstone, we record its placement in the transcription.

<sup>10</sup> "Also the term inscription carrier is used; it is the object physically carrying the inscription." ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> TRZCIŃSKI, A. *Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Materiale Kamiennym W Polsce*, p. 46.



When transcribing an inscription, the bottom line is to maintain all orthographic distinctions which we subsequently thoroughly mention in a commentary when transcribing them into the catalogue.

## EPIGRAPHIC CATALOGUE

The Monument Commission within the Association of Jewish religious communities of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia started a continuous documentation of Jewish cemeteries after 1930. In total, approximately 30 cemeteries have been documented but these were mostly “selective” documentations.<sup>12</sup> Only the grave stones which seemed to be the oldest ones or the most damaged ones by the influence of erosion have been transcribed. Further research was suspended by the war events for a long time.

The current epigraphic research carried out usually within the protection of monuments is solely focused on historical Latin inscriptions. Therefore the Hebrew epigraphic misses its own modern methodology which would deal with epigraphic research corresponding to the specific character of Hebrew sepulchral monuments. Specialized methods may be found abroad in publications of p. called “Polish school”.<sup>13</sup> The general domestic experiences are summarized shortly by J. Roháček<sup>14</sup> who at the same time mentions the example of a standardized catalogue record for the description of epigraphic monuments. The publication by J. Roháček and the Polish research are a way out for the authors for the proposal of a standardized catalogue. An equivalent of the catalogue can be run also in the form of electronic database.

The fact that the epitaphs are ceasing at an increasing pace is a stimulation for their intensive research. At the same time it is very desirable to unify not only the terrain methods but especially the research outputs including a complete and accurate description of the tombstone and the most accurate transcription of the epitaph along with a quality photo-documentation. In the final outputs, the documentation must be unambiguously distinguished from the interpretations, especially in the case of transcription or translation of Hebrew names or data according to the Jewish calendar into the Latin alphabet. The research outcomes must be comprehensible

<sup>12</sup> PETRUSOVÁ, L. *Židovský hřbitov v Dřevíkově*, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> TRZCIŃSKI, A. *Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Materiale Kamiennym W Polsce*, Lublin, 2007; HOŃDO, L. *Inskrypcje Starego Żydowskiego Cmentarza W Krakowie*. Krakow, 2000; WODZIŃSKI M. *Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Śląsku XIII–XVIII Wieku*. Wrocław, 1996 etc.

<sup>14</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*. Prague, 2007.

for other scholars. A publication of epigraphic part of the research in the form of edition, available for potential users from the field of history, history of art, preservation of monuments, palaeography, heraldry, genealogy, linguistics, religious studies and other ones, requesting quality, understandable and unified data for own usage, is an ideal case.

The catalogue consists of catalogue pages listed chronologically (see hereinafter), searching according to other criteria is enabled by indexes. The electronic database offers immediate ordering of the records and an easy search.

The data on a particular inscription and its carrier are gathered in an individual catalogue page.<sup>15</sup> It contains a heading consisting of four parts: locality, tombstone number, name of the deceased and date of death which is determining for chronological order. The second, graphically separated part includes information concerning the carrier of the inscription: shape, material, decoration and measurements. The third part includes factual information on the inscription: scope, the technique of fabrication, height or as the case may be the type of writ and the state of damage of the tombstone and of the inscription. This is followed by transcription of the epitaph and its translation. The other section includes a commentary on name and date. Here we record titulaturas, text parallels, name of the stonemason or the workshop and other commentary both relating to the tombstone and to the text of the epitaph. This is followed by prosopography, other supplementing comments, sources, literature. The date of making the copy in the terrain and its author is mentioned on the last line of the catalogue page.<sup>16</sup>

We are also referring to links to older documentation of individual tombstones in the catalogue, with regard to copyrights we attach it in a copy, for instance a drawing documentation which arose in the period prior the Second World War, photographs from the records of monuments etc. Supplementing the older documentation is advantageous especially at the time when the tombstone was not preserved or it is already unreadable in this time. We write the inserted data by italics with a proper quotation. A tombstone which didn't survive shall be placed on file according to its original location within the cemetery.

<sup>15</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Examples to particular records are stated in italics in brackets in this work.

*Heading*

The heading contains four most important records (locality, tombstone number, name of the deceased, date of death) serving for a quick orientation and searching in the catalogue.

We mention a locality most often according to the cadastral area of the municipality on which the cemetery is located. Or, as the case may be, we mention it according to a traditional local name, distinguishing for instance an old and a new cemetery in a village. Commonly used identification of locality may be found in synoptic literature.<sup>17</sup>

The placement of the tombstone is determined by the tombstone number, enabling to make initial records. We allocate a number to the tombstone when making a plan of the cemetery. Rarely can we use the original location numbering (in case of modern cemeteries, in cemeteries with preserved complete documentation of grave places).

We mention the civic name of the deceased (David Abeles), we transcribe the Hebrew name (David ben Avraham) in the Latin alphabet. If there are both variants in the epitaph, we choose only the civic name. All other data as patronymicum, mother's name, husband's name etc. we mention in the commentaries. If the name on the tombstone is not readable we can add it additionally after comparing it with other sources. The name is then mentioned in angle brackets with mentioning the source.

The last section in heading is datation, i.e. a piece of information which is mentioned in the epitaph as date of death or date of burial. If both data are recorded we put only the date of death in the heading. Again, we can get an unreadable date on a tombstone secondarily from other sources and then we mention it in angle brackets for instance [1860-11-12] or [1750] with mentioning the source.

*Tombstone*

The other part of the catalogue intermediates the primary, physical description of the carrier – shape, material, decoration, measurements. When describing a tombstone but also a writ we use generally the standard Czech art-historical terminology.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> HEŘMAN, J. *Židovské Hřbitovy V Čechách a na Moravě*. Prague, 1980.

<sup>18</sup> For instance HEROUT, Jaroslav. *Slabikář návštěvníků památek*. Prague, 2011.

We can meet with various shapes of tombstones in most of the Jewish cemeteries located at our area. Starting with the traditional simple steles closed with arch and embedded in the ground, to multiple-part tombstones from burnished granite to big modern memorials.<sup>19</sup> We describe the decoration by art-history terms, to the symbolism of the tombstone besides the description of the appearance we add the commentary by the meaning of the symbol and the way it completes the epitaph text.

The measurements of a tombstone consist of height (measured from the current surface, although the tombstone can be sunken to earth, up to the epitaph, in no case we reach under the natural surface), wideness and thickness of the stone (measured in the widest place). If the gravestone consists of more parts (mostly the modern tombstones) we measure all parts separately – tombstone, pedestal, plinth or the part 1, 2, 3.

The accurate type of the stone and its eventual provenience will be determined by specialists, however for a common overview it is sufficient to classify it according to the usually used materials: sandstone, granite, marble.

### *Inscription*

In order to describe the inscription we record the height of the writ (“N” for Latin alphabet, “א” *alef* for Hebrew). The description of the type of writ, its shape and irregularities has been neglected p. far despite the fact that the foreign outcomes point out to its certain potential<sup>20</sup> and evaluation of the character of a used writ is a task for the future.

To the section – scope – we record the number of founded, visible lines of the entire epitaph. Even in case of a different plastically rugged tombstone we start always on the top and we record all lines, including abbreviations standing separately.

The technique of making a writ is divided into “a lapidary inscription (under the level of the inscription field), a relief inscription (protruding over the inscription field), a relief inscription in embedded inscription field etc.”<sup>21</sup> We can add the measured depth of the cut to the description. The inscriptions are sometimes accentuated by a colour, usually golden, black or white. In the modern tombstones we meet also with an inscription only on an inserted glass or a marble table or with other non-traditional solution.

<sup>19</sup> HEŘMAN, J. Židovské Hřbitovy v Čechách a na Moravě, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> TRZCIŃSKI, Andrzej. *Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Materiale Kamiennym W Polsce*. Lublin, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 14.

*State of damage*

By inspecting a tombstone in the terrain we find out also its current state and a contingent damage. We can come across with an overthrown or broken tombstone, a broken off part, a tombstone with grown vegetation. Separately we can evaluate the damage of the inscription, for instance caused by degradation of stone.

*Transcription*

Transcription of the displayed text is the most important part of the epigraphic catalogue. The best way is to transcript the text of the epitaph from autopsy into a notebook in the terrain and then we transcript it to our own catalogue page or its electronic version within a shortest time period. If there are errors in the text, obviously at the first look, we put them into the transcription without changing the text, we propose a possible variant of reading in the commentary to the inscription. We also mention thoroughly all orthographic specialities occurring abundantly on the tombstones in the commentary section. Problems may often consist of abbreviations, non-conventional marks, enclave (one letter is written into another one), nexus literarum (connection of two letters resulting in a joint part or draw) and ligature (connection of two or more letters).<sup>22</sup> Therefore it is suitable in the beginning to make a decision for a unified way of capturing and describing the characters. An additional transcription and check based on the photography are enabled by different possibilities of its computer edition.

Because of damage or bad accessibility of the stone it may happen that we are only able to read a part of its inscription. If a larger part of the epitaph is missing, we replace the text by auxiliary characters [--]. If only a part of letter in a word is missing, we replace them by an approximate number of letters [..] איש ישר וכו'.

We can supplement the text with the missing letters or entire words for instance וישר [איש ת] on the basis of context [abc] or on the basis of later comparative study [abc].<sup>23</sup> We are occasionally confronted with the omitting of part of the text or a damaged or deleted text on a tombstone which we record again by means of auxiliary characters <...>.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> We support by quotation, for instance from registry office records, from Chevra Kadisha books, etc...

<sup>24</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 58.

The method of reading the inscription writ is summarized by J. Roháček into two principles: 1. We don't read inscriptions after words but after individual letters (by doing p. we limit our own interpretation stemming from the knowledge of the entire words) and 2. As for hard- readable inscriptions it is important to carefully compare the shapes of unambiguously identified letters with shapes in unreadable expressions. However, the variability of shapes<sup>25</sup> should be taken into account which refers again to the need of thorough description of the writ itself. Eventually a considerable amount of patience belongs to the basic preconditions of accurate reading.

### *Preview picture*

A picture documentation which is usually attached to CD/DVD carrier is an integral part of the catalogue. The catalogue pages, however, should contain pre-view photographs of the particular tombstones.

### *Translation of epitaph*

Three or as the case may be four languages occur on Hebrew sepulchralis in the Czech lands. Hebrew used to be solely used till the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, concurrently both German but also Czech language started appearing on the tombstones in the course of time and as a result of historical events. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, German prevails and we find only a little Hebrew here (mostly it is only the concluding eulogy תנצב"ה). Exceptionally we can meet with the p. called Judendeutsch dialect (for instance in Třebíč).<sup>26</sup>

The translation of an epitaph into Czech is not a simple matter. It is not a simple translation but the transfer of a very specific literary formation. The language in the Hebrew epitaph is used in a special way, both containing and hiding references to different religious texts, containing often ambiguities, grammatical errors, errors in creating words and missing a uniform stylistics.<sup>27</sup> The beginning of study is facilitated by a specialized literature with the translations of the Hebrew "tombstone poetry"<sup>28</sup> and a careful following of all quotations and links to the Tanach text.

<sup>25</sup> ROHÁČEK, J. *Epigrafika v památkové péči*, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> These issues are referred to in a part of work by Lucie Petrusová: PETRUSOVÁ, L. *Židovský hřbitov v Dřevíkově*. Prague, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> WODZIŃSKI, M. *Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Śląsku XIII-XVIII Wieku*, p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> For example MUNELES, Otto; VILÍMKOVÁ, Milada. *Starý židovský hřbitov v Praze*. Prague, 1955 etc.

The traditional Hebrew epitaph contains usually four basic parts: the initial formula, laudatios, information about the deceased, another block of laudatios and the concluding formula.

The initial formula is usually graphically separated from the text, representing the main decorative motive especially on older tombstones. Along with the concluding formula it serves as a decorative framing of the central text. These are abbreviations פה נטמן פה טמונה פ"ט; פה טמון / פה טמונה פ"ט; פה טמון – here is hidden, here lays in rest, here is buried.

The most often used commendatory epithet for men are for instance: ישר; חשוב; תם; יקר; כשר; צדיק; כבד; נאמן. For women: אשת חיל; יקרה; צנוע; יקרה; אשת חיל. Followed by biographic data about the deceased – name, father's name (or husband's name is mentioned in case of women), mother's name is stated exceptionally. The titles of the deceased and of his father are put traditionally in front of the name in the form of abbreviations: ב"כ *ben kavod* – “son of the honourable”, כ' *kavod* – “respectable”, כה"ר *kevod ha rav* – “honourable lord”, כהר"ר *kavod ha rav rabenu*, הר"ר *ha rav rebel rabenu* – “teacher rabbi“, later rather in a sense of “lord“, מהר"ר *morenu ha rav rabi*, אלוף *aluf* – “chief”, הקצין - *ha kacín* “leader”, תרני *torani* “our teacher“. <sup>29</sup> The most famous eulogy following the name is ז"ל *zichrono livracha* “of blessed memory“, literally “may his (her) memory be blessed” (or זצ"ל).

Biographical data about the deceased may be usually found in the middle part of the text or as an inscription in the gravestone arch. The first name is followed by patronymicum being expressed by: בן *ben* “son” or בת – *bat* – “daughter” and the father's name. As for women, we find often her husband's name, for instance רות אשת אברהם *Rut ešet Avraham* “Rut, wife of Abraham”. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, <sup>30</sup> also the surnames of the deceased started to appear. Name can be sometimes expressed by means of acrostichon. Date of death, sometimes in connection with date of burial is important information to identify the deceased. The year on the tombstones is expressed by separately placed Hebrew consonants having a numerical value. Sometimes may be used a chronostiche, i.e. marked or enlarged letters in epitaph and sum of letters marked in this way rendering the year (chronogram). The year is followed by an abbreviation לפ"ק *lafak* (*li-frat*

<sup>29</sup> For example WODZIŃSKI deals in detail with the titles translation issue in *M. Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Śtasku XIII-XVIII Wieku*. In the chapter *Zásady překladau* (Principles of translation) he explains the translation or as the case may be interpretation of titulaturas, reasoning the accepted solutions. Or MUNELES, O., VILÍMKOVÁ, M., *Starý židovský hřbitov v Praze*.

<sup>30</sup> A decree by Joseph II. adjusting the Jewish names was issued in 1787.

*katan* “according to small number“), sometimes being featured as nexus literarum (connection of letters resulting in a joint part). The abbreviation occurs in different modifications (being expressed only as ל, ל"ק).<sup>31</sup> The other data includes the age of the deceased which almost does not occur in the Hebrew written epitaphs while its occurrence is more frequent in the Czech and German ones. The year of birth of the deceased should be recorded better than the information about his age.

The last information which was mentioned here is a topographical information often connected with abbreviatura מ"ק קאש"לן – *mi kehila kdoša Kašlan* ” of a holy community of Kožlany“. However, we don't find out from this information whether it was supposed to be the place of birth, domicile or the community the deceased belonged to.

The name is followed by another block of laudacious; eulogy speeches and praise of the deceased or as the case may be lamentations and the traditional closing formula תנצב"ה, *tehi nafšo crura bi-cror ha-chajim (tanceva)* – „may his soul be bound up in the bond of everlasting life“ which is inspired by the biblical text (1 Samuel 25, 29<sup>32</sup>). It occurs frequently at the end of the epitaph in connection with date of death.

In practice, when translating the epitaphs we can encounter a text intertwining with quotations and indications of biblical and other old Jewish literature. The parallels which are suitable to be used in the commentaries point out to the effort of the author of the epitaph “to bring the epitaph text closer to the ancient and venerable biblical language“.<sup>33</sup> The original text consists often of a simple rhyme (however it is not a condition), sometimes might also occur a tombstone with a more contiguous, poetic contents in rhythmical, rhyme prose. Otto Muneles offers two possibilities of Hebrew inscriptions translation: as for formal methods to imitate the original, meaning an attempt to rhyme at every price or to adhere to the literal wording and to use the Kralicka Bible quotations<sup>34</sup>. If a certain, non-violently used rhyme is maintained at the translation, the value of the translation is increased. It depends on individual literary abilities of the scholar, how he translates or transfers the text of an epitaph into the Czech language, however we recommend to try to make a freer transfer capturing

<sup>31</sup> ČERNÁ, P., *Epitafy a symboly vyskytující se na ŽH Kožlany*. Praha 2010

<sup>32</sup> 1 S 25, 29 “Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.”

<sup>33</sup> MUNELES, O., VILÍMKOVÁ, M. *Starý židovský hřbitov v Praze*, p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> Idem.



more the meaning and atmosphere of the epitaph than its literal translation since in many cases we get inaccurate even misleading meaning of the original wording. If we want to translate more „poetically” we must stem from the knowledge of the original language, its cultural- historical context and to have a sense of the Czech language. M. Wodziński writes: *“the tombstone epigraphic issues are imminently connected with the history of the burial place and at the same time, an epitaph cannot be read and translated accurately without understanding the other linkages for instance artistic, historical etc...”*<sup>35</sup>

Abbreviaturas<sup>36</sup> use to be an obstacle in the first attempts to transcript and to translate epitaphs. We mark them always in the text, for instance הני”ל and it is suitable to break them down (*hanal* = *ha-nizkar le’maala*, “as mentioned above”) especially if these are less known abbreviations or if they are related to a particular place (for instance toponym abbreviations etc.).

### *Commentary*

The commentary contains comments on name, date, title, topography, text parallels and other explanatory notes to the inscription or translation. The orthographic form of the name on the tombstone is often different from the registry office records, therefore it is suitable to state both variants of the name in the commentary (for instance – the name Mendl is on the tombstone 059 in Kožlany and Emanuel Tanzer is stated in the List of Jews 1793, despite the fact that it is the same person). Until 1850, the dates on tombstones were stated only according to the Jewish calendar. We convert the data into the civic calendar,<sup>37</sup> interpreting them. The text parallels serve to identify the inserted biblical verses, exceptionally other religious texts. We leave it up to the individual attitude of the scholar to analyze the entire text of the epitaph in detail or to leave out the common, repeated motives and to state only the selection of less usual quotations and statements in text parallels. We provide the decoration and symbolism of a tombstone with a commentary provided that its character is beyond the formalised description.

<sup>35</sup> WODZIŃSKI, M. Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Śląsku XIII-XVIII Wieku, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> Notarikon (a Greek origin word, originally serving to designate shorthand, however the Jews started to use this term to designate writing in abbreviations), further designation occurring in Talmud - siman, aleph-bet, serugin, rashei otot and rashei teivot is the most frequent designation today. CERMANOVÁ, I., SCHEIBOVÁ, M. Hebrejské zkratky, p. 9.; HÜTTENMEISTER, G. *Abkürzungserzeichnis hebräischer Grabsteininschriften*. Tübingen, 2010. Available in the library of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

<sup>37</sup> There are several possibilities how to convert a year, for instance websites: <http://www.jewishgen.org/jos/josdates.htm>. or <http://www.kaluach.org>.

The problematics of Jewish sepulchral decoration and symbolism is elaborated in detail in the specialized work by Iva Steinová.<sup>38</sup>

The commentary should also include found data on the proposal, production and provenance of the tombstone. In addition, there is the separate issue that physical evidence on cemeteries and relevant archive documents, especially for the older period, have not been found p. far. We don't know who was the ordering party was for the tombstone's manufacture, who was the author of the design, of the epitaph text, neither do we know where and how it was manufactured. There are different hypotheses in order to determine the authors of the epitaphs, M. Wodziński assumes on the basis of his research that the authors were frequently not qualified, whether in terms of literature or language and he thinks that the epitaphs were proposed by the closest family members of the deceased or the mason himself was the author.<sup>39</sup> We don't know whether there were collections of samples of inscriptions or instruction manuals for the masons, Chevra Kadisha censorship (supported by evidence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Poland) or some general patterns. In the meantime, only in the form of hypotheses, there are indications of regional distinctions both in the epitaphs' texts and the artistic form of the tombstones pointing out to a likely geographical organization of their manufacture. The modern Jewish tombstones approximately from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are already signed by the mason or by the mason's workshop, similarly as the identical Christian tombstones.

### *Prosopography*

We gain the prosopography data by compariyon and summary of terrain findings and by studying the archive documents and literature.<sup>40</sup> The documentation of cemeteries is a significant source for further study within the prosopography science with the aim to create similar biographies of an individual, his family or a team which is governed by own methodical procedures.

<sup>38</sup> For example STEINOVÁ, Iva. Židovský Náhrobek : Motivy Oslavy a Chvály. *Zprávy památkové péče*. 2010, 70, 6, p. 415-423. Available also from WWW: <[www.npu.cz/download/1304081955/09\\_mastr\\_06\\_10\\_web.pdf](http://www.npu.cz/download/1304081955/09_mastr_06_10_web.pdf)> and other articles or the newest book: STEINOVÁ, Iva. *Maceva : židovský Náhrobek a Symbolika Jeho Výzdoby Ve Světle Tradice*. First Edition. Prague : NPÚ, 2011. 206 p. ISBN 978-80-87104-65-1.

<sup>39</sup> WODZIŃSKI, M. Hebrajskie Inskrypcje Na Ślasku XIII–XVIII Wieku, p. 121.

<sup>40</sup> MÜLLER, Julius. Úvod do židovské genealogie I - VI. *Maskil*. 2005.

## BASIC STEPS OF JEWISH CEMETERIES DOCUMENTATION

### THE PRINCIPLES OF REDUCTION

A preview catalogue containing tombstone number, epitaph writ (Hebrew, Latin alphabet), surname, name (Hebrew), name (civic), patronymicum, husband's name, dating (civic), locality (the information on the tombstone), the technique of the writ, tombstone measurements, material and notes may be made for the need of administrative operations (registration of monuments, declaration as a cultural monument, request for subvention). We add to the catalogue a selected photo documentation of the entire condition of the cemetery (on CD), the layout plan with placement of the tombstones and the text stating the historical development of the Jewish settlement cemetery in the particular locality.

### CONCLUSION


The study deals with the methodological approaches and solutions of the documentation of Jewish epigraphic monuments. Based on the methodology developed, the authors document the Jewish cemeteries in the Northern Pilsen Region (e.g. JC in Kožlany, Terešov, Hřešihlavy...). An epigraphic catalog is based on the example of standardized index record for the description of epigraphic monuments by publication of J. Roháček and catalog records currently used in the archives of the Jewish Museum.

The authors believe that their proposal will stimulate a discussion about a uniform way of keeping records, a discussion to deepen our knowledge in partial areas in form of inter-field cooperation and involvement of specialists of the fields in question into the research. It should result in a quality documentation which is usable not only in the field of history and preservation of monuments but also in other areas of social-scientific disciplines.

BASIC STEPS OF JEWISH CEMETERIES DOCUMENTATION

APPENDIX

Catalogue page

Locality: Jewish cemetery <b>Kožlany</b> district Pilsen North		Placement of the tombstone	<b>059</b>
		Name	<b>Tanzer Josef</b>
		Datation	<b>1890-01-01</b>
Tombstone		Inscription	
Shape	volutes, flower (bas relief)	Height, type of writ	quadrate
Decoration		Scope	12 lines
Measurements		Technique of fabrication	negative relief
Material	sandstone		
State of damage			
Inscription		Picture	
<p>ויהי ה' את יוסף ויהי איש מצליח פ"ג איש נדיב לב הלך בתמים מעשיו היו באמונה שלמים גבאי צדק דגומלי חסדים דבריו היו מתוקים ונעימים לשמוע תפילה ודברים טובים ה' ממשכימים ומעריבים שמו ה' נודע [---] כ"ה יוסף טאנצך מו"ל שנפטר ביום ו' ע"כ ונקבר [---]</p>			
Translation			
<p>1. And the L-rd was with Joseph and he was successful in everything. 2. Here is buried 3. A man of noble heart who lived without reproach. 4. He acted scrupulously and always thoroughly.</p>			

Catalogue page

5. He was the Honourable Representative of Gemilut Chasadim
6. His words were sweet and pleasing
7. He would listen to a prayer and the appropriate words,
8. to the L-rd in the morning and in the evening.
9. The Name of the L-rd is known [in entire country].
10. Revered man, Josef Tanzer of Wallisgrün,
11. who died on Friday, on the eve of Yom Kippur and was buried
12. [---]

**Commentary****Name:** Tanzer Josef**Date:** The date is obviously placed on the 12<sup>th</sup> line of the maceva and covered up with earth. It will be possible to read the date after the renovation works at the cemetery are finished. From our vantage point, the date will be likely preserved with good readability.**Title:** *gabay***Epitaph:** The text of the epitaph rhymes within last words that end with the plural ending *-im*. This beautiful epitaph is one of the “more poetic“ texts at the Kožlany cemetery.**Topography:** The abbreviation מו"ל can mean that Josef Tanzer stemmed both from Wallisgrün (Kůzová) and from Welhotten (Lhota). Based on a comparative study (*Soupis židovských rodin v Čechách*, 1793), stating that Josef Tanzer lives in Wallisgrün, we can identify the abbreviation מו"ל as Wallisgrün (in Czech Kůzová).**Text parallels** (selection): line 1 compare Gn 39,2; line 3 compare Ps 15, 2; line 9 compare Ps 76, 2**Prosopography**

The Tanzer family is first mentioned in Kožlany in the List of Jewish families from 1793 in Wallisgrün - Emanuel Tanzer with his wife Eva, Josef Tanzer was their son. He married Anna (number 047 on the tombstone - Hanele). He made living by tanning. He belonged to the religious community of Vysoká Libyně and as we learn from the tombstone, Josef Tanzer belonged to the Chevra Kadisha society.

**Other supplementing comments**

The missing part of the epitaph can be added after the restauration works are finished.

**Sources and literature**

*Soupis židovských rodin v Čechách z roku 1793 V., Čáslavský kraj, Klatovský kraj, Rakovnický kraj*, ed. Ivana EBELOVÁ a kolektiv, Praha : Národní archiv, 2005.

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