

EAP469: Last traces of a destroyed community: surveying the Hungarian Jewish congregational archives

Dr Gábor Kádár, Federation of the Jewish Communities of Hungary
2011 award - Pilot project
£10,570 for 10 months

Archival partner: Hungarian Jewish Archives

The project produced a survey of the various locations visited, giving an overview of the size of each of the collections and the types of documents held.

Further Information

You can contact the EAP team at endangeredarchives@bl.uk

**Report on the work of the Hungarian Jewish Archives in the framework of the British Library's
Endangered Archives Programme (EAP 469)**

July 2011 – May 2012

Locations

We have researched the archives of the following Jewish congregations: Baja, Gyöngyös (preparatory phase of the project), Balassagyarmat, Miskolc, Nagykanizsa, Székesfehérvár, Szombathely, Veszprém, Debrecen, Pécs, Pápa, Győr, Kaposvár, Sopron, Komárom-Komárno, Zalaegerszeg, Szolnok, Szeged, Nagykőrös and the Budapest Orthodox Congregation. We have also obtained detailed information on the material of the Kecskemét Jewish community. In accordance with the program outlined in our application, we have created general descriptions of the collections, we have made detailed lists of parts of the bodies of documents, and we have taken sample photographs.

Results

As a result of our survey, we have established that there are ca. 90-100 linear metres of documents (volumes and unbound materials) scattered in more than twenty congregational archives nationwide. Although in some locations (e.g., Szeged, Pécs, Veszprém), the storage conditions are satisfactory, in many places the documents are kept under unsuitable circumstances. The timeframe of the collections is usually in the range of 1850-1970. The content is varied, but the main elements reflect the congregational, community nature of the collection. The common elements are: birth, marriage and death registries; minutes of meetings of various community bodies; financial, cash and tax registry books; lists of community members; Holocaust-related materials; and registered documents of the community's administration.

The results broken by down by archives are briefly summarized below:

We have found relevant documentation at all locations, except for **Pápa**.

In **Baja**, the material was scarce and kept in the apartment of the head of the community. It consisted of two elements: lists of the community's members from the 1970-1980s, and the official stamp of the community reorganized immediately after the liberation of the city in 1945. The documents and the object have been transferred to the Hungarian Jewish Archives.

The documents of the **Balassagyarmat** Jewish Congregation is quite scarce: it consists of four volumes (an empty birth registry book and three financial and cash registry books). Personal documentary bequests of Holocaust survivors from Balassagyarmat are kept by the president of the community. These are mainly copies, but include a few original photographs taken during World War II, and two Jahrzeit plaques. A recent acquisition of the community is the personal bequest of

Balassagyarmat-born director and stage designer Michel Gyarmathy (Ehrenfeld) who lived and worked in Paris.

The material of the **Budapest Orthodox Jewish Congregation** consists of ca. 12 linear metres of documentation kept in two separate locations. The first location holds 36 volumes, mainly vital registry books (marriage, birth, death) from 1871 to 1999, but also a registry book of synagogue seat owners and sponsors from 1954 to 1997, a list of Holocaust victims from Makó, and the registry books of the graves located in the Csörsz Street cemetery. The material in the second storage room is more extensive. It consists of 16 volumes created between 1939 and 1997 (financial, cash and tax registry books; registries of synagogue seat owners; lists of community members; list of employees; donation registry book, etc.) and a relative large collection of unbound material. The latter includes 76 fascicles of registered community documentation of the Budapest Autonomous Orthodox Jewish Congregation (as of 1950: Orthodox Department of the unified Budapest Jewish Congregation) created between 1947 and 1967; tax registry sheets of community members (1939-1946); 13 fascicles of community membership files; 30 fascicles and dossiers of various financial documentation; and a few personal documentary bequests.

In **Debrecen** the documents are kept in two storages. The collection consists of a total of 27 linear metres of documents. It contains materials from both (the Orthodox and the so-called Status Quo) congregations. The emphasis of the material is post-war, running up to the 1980s. This part of the collection includes vital registries; financial registry books; registered documents of the community administration and the Debrecen-centered Tiszántúl Jewish Community district (the Jewish administrative unit between the levels of local communities and the nationwide umbrella organization); registry books of synagogue seat owners and sponsors; postal registry volumes; etc. The pre-1945 section consists of (among other documents): vital registries; list of Debrecen Jews compiled before the ghettoization in 1944, and a cash registry volume of the Orthodox community. The collection also incorporates the documents of other communities, ones that already have ceased to exist. A good example is the material of the Hajdúböszörmény Orthodox Jewish Congregation (mainly pre-1945 financial registry volumes) that has been transported to the Hungarian Jewish Archives for copying.

In **Gyöngyös**, we have discovered 1.4 linear metres of unbound documentation and 14 volumes of vital registries. The former group includes: minutes of various bodies and associations of the community (Chevra Kadisha, Bikor Cholim, magistracy, council of representatives, board, various committees); tax registry sheets; papers of various foundations; documents regarding the erection of the local Holocaust memorial; documents of the community administration; financial documentation (acknowledgements of receipts, bank statements, inventories of community assets, budgets, budget proposals, closing accounts); etc. created between 1881 and 1971. The vital registry books include death, marriage and birth registries from 1881-1976. The material was transferred to the Hungarian Jewish Archives.

The documents of the **Győr** Jewish Congregation are also stored in two locations. The vital registries (1839-present) of Győr and some of the neighbouring communities (Gyórszentmárton, Gyömöre, Oroszvár, Rajka, Szentgotthárd, Tét) are kept in the community offices and the local Jewish cemetery. It holds 1 linear metre of unbound documents, almost exclusively from the post-WWII era. The larger part of the collection consists of ca. 70 volumes and dossiers, including documents from 1852-1980: minutes of various bodies of the community (presidium, school board, general assembly, etc.); Chevra Kadisha protocols; financial and tax registry volumes; registry books of owners of synagogue seats; various community membership lists; list of Holocaust victims; inventory of community assets, etc.

In **Kaposvár** the documents are kept in two locations. The collection consists of less than a linear metre of unbound documents and 52 volumes of vital registry books of Kaposvár and its subsidiary congregations (Csurgó, Marcali, Kadarkút, Tab, Pincehely, Gyöngyösmellék, Gige, Somogyszil, Nagyatád, Pusztakovácsi, Nagybajom, Kaposmérő, Dombóvár) from 1769-1944. In addition, a few, miscellaneous volumes can also be found in the collection from the prewar era (e.g., the handwritten musical score book of Cantor Dezső Östreicher, a progress report book of the local Jewish elementary school and a financial registry volume). The body of documents constitutes predominantly post-WWII papers, including: a series of magistracy protocols from 1948-1970; various name lists (taxpayers, Holocaust victims, returned deportees, community officials); documents regarding the communities' real estates; papers of the women's association, etc. However, two fascicles of registered documents and protocols of the council of representatives from 1886-1895 are also located in the community archives.

The historical city of **Komárom** is split into two by the Slovakian-Hungarian border creating Komárom on the Hungarian side and Komarno in Slovakia. The Jewish community of the latter holds the documents regarding the whole cities' Jewish past. The collection consists of 1 linear metre of documents, predominantly papers from the 1950-1960s, focusing on real estate issues. The collection includes some Holocaust-related documents as well, e.g., list of deported Komárom residents, list of apartments and houses confiscated from the Jews, and survivor registry cards from 1957. The community holds one vital registry book, a post-WWII marriage and birth registry volume. Part of the collection has been transferred to the Hungarian Jewish Archives for copying.

The archive of the **Miskolc** Jewish Congregation is located in the community offices. It holds mainly volumes. The body was created between 1851 and 1999 and includes 127 volumes: birth, marriage and death registries; cemetery registry books; financial, tax and cash registry volumes; minutes of various community bodies (1888-1828: board, general assembly, presidium, magistrate, various committees, etc.); protocols of the local Chevra Kadisha (1883-1897); synagogue seat ownership and rental registries; donation registries; list of community members; list of Holocaust victims; annual budgets and closing accounts of the community; etc. In addition to the volumes, ca. 1.5 linear metres of unbound documents are also kept by the archives, consisting of miscellaneous community

materials created between 1951 and 1990. This group of documents include: registered papers of the community administration from 1961-1964; minutes of various community bodies (presidium, magistrate) from 1959-1965; the exhumation reports of the Hejőcsaba Jewish cemetery; etc.

The papers of the **Nagykanizsa** Jewish Congregation are also stored in the community offices. The collection created between 1830 and 1991 contains 13 volumes and ca. 0.5 linear metres of unbound documents. The former includes: financial and cash registry books; a cemetery registry book; birth and marriage registry books; and a handwritten archival registry book by Jewish Community District IX. The unbound portion of the collection includes a community membership registry card system, but consists of mainly Holocaust-related documents, such as: immediate postwar personal registry sheets containing Holocaust-related data and information on the given person's emigration plans; 1944-1945 documentation regarding the plunder of Jews by the Hungarian state during the Holocaust; lists of Nagykanizsa Holocaust-victims.

The documents of the **Nagykőrös** Jewish Congregation are mingled with the materials of the **Kecskemét** and **Mezőkovácsháza** Jewish Congregations. These collections are stored in Kecskemét. The combined documents amount to ca. 1.5 linear metres of materials. The collection created between 1881 and 1960 consists mainly of unbound documents, including: registered documents of the community administration; minutes of various community bodies; birth, marriage and death registry documents and materials regarding conversions to Christianity as well as name changes; community tax documents; lists of community members; lists of community officials; documents of the Nagykőrös ghetto (1944); newspaper clippings regarding Holocaust commemoration; personal documentary bequests; etc. The few volumes include the financial registry books of the Nagykőrös Jewish Congregation.

For decades, the papers of the **Pécs** Jewish Congregation were piled up in the rabbi room of the synagogue. Later they were moved to the mortuary of the Jewish cemetery. Today the documents are organized and kept in boxes in a closet on the corridor of the Jewish community center. The collection, created between the 1840s and the 1960s, includes 64 boxes (more than 7.6 linear metres) of documents, and (among others) is constituted by the following: registered, administrative papers of the community; statutes of various community organizations; financial papers; documents of the Pécs Chevra Kadisha; documents of the community school; Holocaust-era and postwar documents regarding the plunder of the Pécs Jews in 1944; lists of community members; documents of the Pécs Association for Helping Deportees Home; documents of Jewish Community district X; etc. The archive also holds tax and financial registry books, a list of the names and addresses of the Pécs ghetto's inmates (1944), and a post-war collection of newspaper clippings. In addition, protocols of the local Chevra Kadisha, and vital registry books of Pécs and its subsidiary congregations from 1846-1946 are also kept here.

The collection of the **Sopron** Jewish Congregation is kept in the community's offices. It consists of 0.6 linear metres of unbound documents (originating from 1944-1975), and five volumes. The latter include: the original German language statutes of the community; protocols of the congregation's leadership from 1947-1949; a financial registry and postal registry volume. The focus of the unbound material is on the immediate post-war years, mainly consisting of material regarding property (predominantly real estate) issues; certificates issued by the community for Holocaust survivors regarding their ordeals; testimonies of Holocaust survivors from 1945; documents regarding the erection of the local Holocaust memorial; financial documents; etc. The collection is also holding an inventory of items confiscated from Sopron Jews in May 1944, and a list of the Sopron Jews probably created in the summer of 1944. The collection also contains ca. 500 photographs of partially identified Sopron Jewish families from the 1930-1940s.

The archive of the **Szeged** Jewish Congregation is located in the community offices. The general storing circumstances are satisfactory: most documents are placed in acid free boxes. The collection consists of ca. 60 volumes and eighty boxes of unbound documents. The volumes include financial, cash and tax registry books; minutes of the generally assembly; synagogue seat registries; cemetery registries; birth, marriage and death registries from Szeged and the neighboring communities (Csongrád, Mindszent, Oroszvámos, Szerbkeresztúr, Szőreg); etc. The unbound material is predominantly constituted by registered documents of the Szeged community administration; materials of the Szeged-centered Jewish Community District XII; documentation of the erection of the Szeged synagogue; the papers of the Welfare Bureau of the Szeged Jewish Congregation; material claim registry sheets of Holocaust survivors returning to the city; handwritten music scores; etc.

The archive of the **Székesfehérvár Jewish Congregation** is situated in the community's offices. The collection's timeframe is 1840-1970, and it holds 40 volumes and ca. 0.5 linear metres of unbound documents. The collection contains birth, marriage and death registries (including both of the Orthodox and the Neologue communities); registry of Christian conversions to Judaism; minutes of meetings of the community's leading bodies; financial documentation (closing accounts, budgets, budget proposals); lists of community members; family papers; community statutes; documents regarding community elections; list of Holocaust victims from Székesfehérvár and some neighbouring communities; registry book of deported Székesfehérvár Jews; prewar insurance policies of community members; news clippings.

The documents of the **Szolnok** Jewish Congregation were created between 1851 and 2006 and consist of almost exclusively volumes (24 items): predominantly birth, marriage and death registries and tax and cash registry books. A few pages of unbound documents (mainly correspondence regarding birth, marriage issues and cases of conversion to Christianity) from the interwar period are attached to the volumes.

The **Szombathely** Jewish Congregation's historical documentation was created between 1852 and 1970. It constitutes 43 volumes, 15 boxes and 8 smaller dossiers. The material incorporates documents from neighbouring communities, such as Kőszeg, Körmend, Vasvár, Szentgotthárd, and Sárvár. The collection includes: birth, marriage and death registries; minutes of meetings of community bodies and organizations; financial registry books; lists of Jews receiving financial aid from the government; Holocaust-related documents: registry of Kőszeg labor servicemen, list of ghettoized Kőszeg Jews, documents of the local Jewish Council, 1944 documentation of the Kőszeg Financial Directorate regarding the plunder of the Kőszeg, Celldömölk and Jánosháza Jews.

The documents of the **Veszprém** Jewish Congregation collection (timeframe: 1888-1948) is rather small, it includes two volumes (a birth registry book and a cemetery registry book) and two additional, related documents. The community is also in the possession of copies of documents and photos regarding the Holocaust in Veszprém. The originals are kept by the Veszprém County Archives and the municipal museum.

In **Zalaegerszeg** collection is rather small: it consists of a birth registry book of the Zalaegerszeg Congregation from 1886-1895 and the protocols of the Bikur Cholim Association of Zalaszentgrót (a nearby subsidiary community of Zalaegerszeg) from 1896-1946. There are close to 50 miscellaneous, unbound documents attached to the birth registry book, predominantly correspondence of the Congregation and the central and municipal Hungarian authorities regarding birth registry issues (1890-1951). After providing the local community with a copy, the collection will be transported to the Hungarian Jewish Archives.