

**PROGRESSIVE PREACHER SZYMON DANKOWICZ (1834-1910).  
A STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM IN PARTITIONED  
POLISH LANDS<sup>1</sup>**

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**Key words:** progressive Judaism, progressive synagogue, Szymon Dankowicz, Kraków Tempel, preacher, Jews in the Kingdom of Poland, Jews in Galicia, methodology

**Abstract:** The article presents the activities of a preacher and teacher Szymon Dankowicz (1834-1910). In the 1860s Dankowicz was active in progressive circles in Warsaw. He had bonds with several institutions such as the Warsaw Rabbinic Seminary, the Lomdei Torah association, and the salon of the young Jewish intelligentsia; he also published in two Polish-Jewish periodicals *Jutrzenka* and *Izraelita*. In 1865 he unsuccessfully applied for the preacher position in the Daniłowiczowska Street synagogue. After 1868 he served as a preacher in the Kraków progressive synagogue. There he delivered sermons in the Polish language and manifested his pro-Polish attitude. In this city he also developed extensive pedagogical and charitable work. In later years Dankowicz applied for a preacher position at the Tempel in Lviv (1890) and served for several years in the Tarnopol Tempel (1895-1898). His biography, especially when compared to the biographies of other preachers, is an important example of the activities of a progressive preacher in partitioned Polish lands.

The aim of this article is to characterize the activities and religious standpoint of one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressive preachers active in partitioned Polish lands – Szymon Dankowicz (1834-1910).<sup>2</sup> Dankowicz was born in 1834 in Częstochowa, in the Kingdom of Poland, as a son of merchant and midwife.<sup>3</sup> In his hometown he received basic education and later moved to Wrocław and Berlin where he continued his education. In Wrocław he studied at Jewish Theological Seminary. During the 1860s Dankowicz pursued his studies in Warsaw – he studied for one academic year in the Medical and Surgical Academy (1860/61) and four years in the Main School at the Philology-History Faculty. During his stay he received *smicha* from Rabbi Ber Meisels. At the end of 1867 Dankowicz moved to Kraków where he was appointed to the preacher position in the local progressive synagogue (Tempel). In 1875, mainly due to conflicts within the Jewish community, Dankowicz left Kraków and served as a rabbi in small communities in

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<sup>2</sup> Also spelled Dankowitz and Dankovich.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. APCz, Akta stanu cywilnego okręgu bożniczego, no. 16/1834.

the Prussian Partition – firstly in Schwetz (today Świecie), and after 1879 in Birnbaum (Międzychód). In 1883 he moved to Strakonitz in Bohemia. During the years 1889-1892 he served as the Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria, based in Sofia. From Sofia he moved with his family to Vienna. With the exclusion of the period between 1895-1898, which he spent as a rabbi in Tarnopol, Dankowicz stayed in Vienna until the end of his life in 1910.<sup>4</sup>

During his lifetime, Dankowicz had various bonds with several progressive synagogues<sup>5</sup> – above all with Kraków, where he lived for eight years and served as a preacher, but also with Warsaw where in his youth he engaged in manifold ways in the life of its progressive circles, and Tarnopol where he served as a preacher at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He also applied for the preacher position in the Lviv Tempel, which he did not receive. This article aims to present Dankowicz's activities in the above-mentioned progressive milieus. Because of this connection to several progressive synagogues, his life might serve as an interesting example of a biography of a progressive leader, important for the currently developing research on progressive Judaism.

## Warsaw

The seven years that Dankowicz spent in Warsaw were a formative period in his life. During this time he graduated from the university, received his *smicha* and presumably commenced his professional career. In Warsaw Dankowicz in many ways became engaged in the life and endeavors of progressive circles. The reasons why he moved to Warsaw from Breslau remain unclear, although in later years Dankowicz, in the job application letters he sent to various communities, hinted that he came to Warsaw to take up a job in the Rabbinic Seminary, for which he was recommended by Zacharias Frankel, the president of Breslau Seminary. The Warsaw Rabbinic Seminary, established in 1826, aimed to produce “progressive” rabbis and teachers who would combine religious training with secular education and who would be fluent in the Polish language. The school was not successful in terms of educating future rabbis, but it had an impact on the Polonisation of Warsaw Jewry. A progressive synagogue on Nalewki Street, opened in 1852, in which a Polish sermon was introduced, was linked with the Seminary. Moreover, numerous students and graduates of this school often possessed a Polish patriotic worldview.<sup>6</sup>

Upon his arrival to Warsaw Dankowicz continued his education. He enrolled in the Medical and Surgical Academy and, after completing one year of study, pursued studies in the Warsaw Main School. In the early 1860s Dankowicz was supported in his studies by the Lomdei Torah association, a philanthropic organization founded in 1858 and associated with the Daniłowiczowska Street synagogue which aimed at helping young,

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<sup>4</sup> Detailed descriptions (in the Polish language) of Dankowicz's biography and activities can be found in Maślak-Maciejewska 2013. For his short bio see also Bałaban 1937d; Jansen 2009.

<sup>5</sup> In Polish “synagoga postępową”. The synagogues which defined themselves as “progressive” opened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in several larger towns in the partitioned Polish Lands. Numerous members of these synagogues were part of the professional intelligentsia. The liturgy remained relatively conservative but more emphasis was put on the elegance of the service; and they introduced a modern sermon, delivered in German or Polish. General information on these synagogues can be found in Corrsin 2000; Galas 2011c.

<sup>6</sup> More on this school, cf. Polonsky 2000.



**Fig. 1.** The portrait of Szymon Dankowicz

financially needy students to become future progressive, Polish-speaking leaders (both preachers and teachers). This goal was achieved by sponsoring their short academic stays abroad (especially in Breslau in Berlin).<sup>7</sup> Dankowicz was one of the most famous grantees of the Lomdei Torah association and presumably used his scholarship to study in Berlin.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to pursuing formal academic education, Dankowicz participated in the meetings of an informal self-study group (called also “the salon of the young Jewish intelligentsia”). The intellectual and spiritual patron of this group was Marcus Jastrow, a preacher of the Daniłowiczowska Street progressive synagogue.<sup>9</sup> During meetings of the group, which had a scholarly and social character, members discussed the problems of current politics, of history (both Polish and Jewish), and of cultural and literary developments. Discussions often concentrated on a subject presented by one of the participants.<sup>10</sup> In 1860 during one of the meetings Dankowicz delivered a lecture in which he claimed that, “Jews did not cease to be a nation.”<sup>11</sup> This claim turned out to be controversial, and many members of the self-study group openly opposed it. They asserted that

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Zilbersztejn 1934, 42-44.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Nussbaum 1881, 103. Sources preserved do not allow us to establish for certain how Dankowicz used his scholarship. We know however that for some time he studied “Orientalia” in Berlin, presumably as a *Gasthörer*, not listed on the regular student lists.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Galas 2007, 98-99.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Kraushar 1880, 507-510.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kraushar 1910, 75.

“a nation could not exist without a land, and only a land in which Jews were born should be their motherland.”<sup>12</sup> It is not surprising that Dankowicz’s pre-Zionist claim was met with an opposition in these integrationist circles, which strived for the inclusion of Jews into Polish society. It should be stressed however that Dankowicz was also an ardent proponent of Polish-Jewish rapprochement. His statement (and also some of his later projects) show that he tried to foster both – Polish patriotism among the Jews, and simultaneously their conscience about their own culture and heritage.

We learn more about Dankowicz’s worldview at that time from the correspondences and articles that he sent to Polish-Jewish periodicals associated with the Warsaw progressive circles. In 1862 he published in *Jutrzenka*, a bi-weekly edited by Daniel Neufeld, a series of three articles in which he collected proverbs and sayings scattered in rabbinic, post-Talmudic literature.<sup>13</sup> In the introductory article, where he presented his project, he also encouraged his coreligionists to collect “from the people” Jewish proverbs, legends and even specific jargon, collocations and sayings. Dankowicz believed that they constitute an important part of Jewish heritage and as such deserve to be preserved. This project, since it recognized the value of the Yiddish language and referred to the Jews as a “nation,” also met some opposition.<sup>14</sup> A few years later Dankowicz began his cooperation with another Polish-language periodical, *Izraelita*. His first article appeared in this weekly in 1867; it was a translation of an anonymous manuscript preserved in Paris, pertinent to the relation between religion and academic studies. From the introduction written by Dankowicz, we learn that he himself was a proponent of uniting faith with an academic approach.<sup>15</sup> Soon after the publication of this article, Dankowicz was invited to a further collaboration with *Izraelita*. He accepted the invitation and published a series of three lengthy letters.<sup>16</sup> The first two contained a thorough critique of contemporary Jewish society. According to Dankowicz its general intellectual and spiritual condition was poor mainly due to insufficient education. For this situation Dankowicz blamed home upbringing, which did not put enough emphasis on general knowledge, and neglected spiritual and intellectual development. Moreover Jews, instead of focusing on valuable yet difficult writings, too often read fiction. As a result they, as Dankowicz claimed, were unable to conduct a coherent conversation, especially on weighty or academic subjects. In his third letter Dankowicz offered an analysis of inner-division within Jewish society. In his opinion it was torn between two extremes: religious fanaticism and backwardness and, on the other hand, religious indifferentism and dull rationalism. Between them were “Jews understanding well their task,” who were proponents of progress and moderate reform. Dankowicz, who clearly identified himself with this group, accused it of not engaging enough with society.

In 1862 Dankowicz published in Warsaw a Polish translation of the religious textbook *Toldot Israel* written by Peter Beer in 1796 in Prague.<sup>17</sup> It was one of the most important haskalah textbooks and it inspired many other similar publications.<sup>18</sup> Danko-

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Jutrzenka* 1862, no. 12, 18, 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Jutrzenka* 1862, no. 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Izraelita* 1867, no. 7, 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Izraelita* 1867, no. 9, 10, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Dankowicz 1865.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hecht 2002.

wicz's translation was the second one after the French from 1819. In his introduction Dankowicz explained that he wanted to make Beer's textbook accessible to the young generation who had only started learning religion. He noted that there were no other religious textbooks tailored for the needs of Jewish children. Translating this modern textbook to Polish not only filled this gap, but also enabled providing religious instruction in Polish, which in his opinion was a more suitable language for this task than Yiddish.

In Warsaw Dankowicz was a member of several (and overlapping) Jewish intellectual circles which adopted an ostensibly pro-Polish attitude and eagerly participated in the Polish patriotic manifestations of 1860-1861, which led to the so-called Polish-Jewish fraternization, and later took part in the January Uprising. Presumably Dankowicz also took part in these events and fought in the January Uprising. Although no primary sources were preserved which could confirm his participation, his access to the Polish national cause was mentioned by pre-war researchers such as Majer Bałaban and Nathan Michael Gelber.<sup>19</sup> Those researchers also vaguely suggested that after the January Uprising Dankowicz went to Kraków. Even if he did, his stay could not have been long. In 1865, after M. Jastrow left Warsaw, the position of progressive preacher in the Daniłowiczowska Street synagogue became vacant. Dankowicz applied for this position, but it was granted to his colleague Izaak Cyłkow, recommended for it by the Lomdei Torah association.<sup>20</sup> This failure may have urged Dankowicz to seek employment elsewhere.

## Kraków

Dankowicz moved to Kraków at the end of 1867 and in January 1868 he was granted a preacher post in the local progressive synagogue (Tempel). He was the first one to be hired as a regular preacher of this synagogue, meaning that his duties were well-defined and he was entitled to a regular salary. The political circumstances that allowed Kraków progressives to create a permanent preacher position in 1868 were complex. The first statute of the Progressive Association from 1843 acknowledged the need to hire a preacher in the future, but his prospective appointment was conditioned on the financial standing of the Association.<sup>21</sup> Until 1868 this position was filled only temporarily (I. Miseses, G. Kranz) and the Progressive Association could not afford to pay the preachers enough to hire them on a regular basis. Political changes from the mid-1860s gave the progressives an opportunity to overcome these financial difficulties by attempting to establish that the preacher's salary would be paid by the whole Jewish Community.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Gelber 1923, 220; Bałaban 1936, 711; Bałaban 1937b; Bałaban 1937d; Getter *et al.* 1939, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Zdanie Sprawy 1865, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Statut 1843.

<sup>22</sup> This was possible thanks to the creation of a special division for Jewish affairs (Department of Jewish Affairs – Wydział dla spraw izraelskich) in the City Council in 1866. It was dominated by the progressives. The years 1866-1869 saw a vivid conflict between this organ and Jewish Committee (Komitet Starozakonnych) established in 1817. The two governing bodies fought over the scope of their competences and prerogatives, the question of the preacher position being one of them. Since the Committee was dominated by the orthodox and the Department by the progressive Jews, the conflict between these organs had not only an

Since no agreement pertinent to those matters was achieved, Dankowicz's service was made difficult for him – his salary was delayed and some of his prerogatives (such as his right to perform wedding ceremonies) were questioned and subsequently waived.<sup>23</sup>

The most important task standing before the newly hired preacher was delivering sermons on every second Saturday, during Jewish holidays and on other occasions important for the Jewish community.<sup>24</sup> Dankowicz was supposed to be able to preach in both the Polish and German languages, but sources confirm that he preached almost exclusively in Polish. This marked a significant change for the progressives. Although part of the progressive milieu was already Polonized in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Polish language was not heard in the synagogue until Dankowicz's arrival, as his predecessors were exclusively German-speaking.

Unfortunately no collection of Dankowicz's sermons was compiled and we know the texts of only three of them in total.<sup>25</sup> This source material does not suffice to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Dankowicz's preaching, but nevertheless it reveals some of his central ideas about Judaism and his mission as a preacher. From his inaugural sermon we learn that he perceived Judaism as a "positive religion" whose sources were inalterable, but which, at the same time, encompassed certain elements that were dependent on historical development. Dankowicz believed that humans naturally strived for progress and that the idea of "progress" was embedded in both Judaism and human nature.<sup>26</sup> In these statements we see clear echoes of the Breslau "positive-historical" school of Zacharias Frankel, according to which Judaism had an unchangeable foundation, stemming from revelation, but simultaneously contained some elements which could undergo limited changes due to changing historical circumstances. The second main thought of Dankowicz's inaugural sermon pertained to the relation between living Judaism and secular education along with academic study of Judaism. In his opinion education and living religion nourished one another and shared one goal, which was betterment of the human being. One of Dankowicz's other sermons was devoted to the subject of philanthropy and the issue of educating youth.<sup>27</sup> a substantial part of this sermon pertained to the activities of a charitable association, which supported needy Jewish boys who wanted to learn craftsmanship (The Association for Support of Poor Jewish Boys – *Stowarzyszenie wsparcia biednych chłopców starozakonnych*). From this sermon we learn that while Dankowicz recognized the apparent importance of religious studies, he also understood that under specific social circumstances (such as poverty), learning a concrete profession might be a legitimate and wise choice. In his sermon Dankowicz urged his coreligionists not only to support this organization, but more generally, to accept moral responsibility for the well-being of others. In his opinion philanthropy was not an obligation limited

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administrative but also an ideological character. More on these controversies cf. Mahler 1934; Kozińska-Witt 1999, 113-132; Manekin 2011, 169-174; Maślak-Maciejewska 2013, 51-62.

<sup>23</sup> The problem of the progressive-orthodox conflict over the appointment of a progressive preacher cannot be discussed in detail in the frame of this article; more on this conflict cf. Maślak-Maciejewska 2013, 59-62, 82-86, 104.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. ANKr, # Mag II 473 (8.03.1868).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Dankowicz 1868a; Dankowicz 1868b; Dankowicz 1869.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Dankowicz 1868b.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Dankowicz 1868a.



exclusively to the richest. Dankowicz himself set a good example, and during his stay in Krakow he supported numerous charitable and social initiatives.<sup>28</sup>

In July 1869 Dankowicz delivered a sermon which probably had the largest impact and for which, according to press reports, crowds gathered in Tempel, such that not everybody was able to enter the synagogue building.<sup>29</sup> It was delivered on the occasion of the reburial of King Casimir the Great. The unexpected (and interpreted by some contemporaries as miraculous) discovery of the king's remains in Wawel Cathedral in June 1869 triggered patriotic enthusiasm that spread beyond the borders of Galicia. The day of the king's second burial became a moment of enthusiastic Polish patriotic manifestations (sometimes even called a "national spectacle").<sup>30</sup> The ceremonies centered in Wawel Cathedral, where a solemn service was conducted. A service in the progressive synagogue was organized on the same day, in the evening, hence many of those who earlier participated in the official ceremonies on Wawel Hill were able to take part in this ceremony as well.<sup>31</sup> The central part of the synagogue service was a Polish patriotic sermon given by Dankowicz.<sup>32</sup> The preacher noted that under Casimir's rule Jewish settlement and culture flourished. In his view Casimir was also a king of Jews and therefore the ceremony of his second burial also had a great importance for the Jewish inhabitants of Kraków. In his sermon Dankowicz reminded listeners about the longstanding Christian-Jewish coexistence in Polish lands, dating back to the Middle Ages. The histories of both nations were entangled together and united by the one land in which they lived. In his opinion Jews were "sons of the Polish lands, part of the Polish nation" and Krakow was "a true Polish Jerusalem." Although Jews differed from Christians by faith, tradition and customs (Dankowicz neither questioned nor wanted to change this) they share the same thoughts, emotions, and above all, the same history. Dankowicz preached:

I would offend this ceremony if I was speaking about reconciliation, about [Jewish] connection with the nation. Were we not united by history? Were we not united already by nature? Were we not united by a common fate, by common sufferings, by common joy and misery?<sup>33</sup>

Understanding this historical unity, Dankowicz hoped, would inspire Jews to feel responsible for the fate of their Polish motherland and at the same time would remind Poles about the long-existing tradition of brotherhood between both groups. Dankowicz believed in the possibility of future Polish-Jewish cooperation and mutual understanding. From press reports we learn that his sermon was accepted enthusiastically.<sup>34</sup> Some Christians were so deeply moved by its patriotic content, that they started to clap their hands, apparently forgetting about the proper behavior during a religious service.<sup>35</sup> In

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<sup>28</sup> Dankowicz not only financially supported particular associations, he also engaged actively in collecting money for charity. He did this through activities including giving open lectures (during which money was collected) and printing two of his sermons as the separate brochures (revenue from their sale was donated to charity).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Kraj* 1869, no. 106.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Buszko 1970; 1996, 37.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Czas* 1869, no. 154.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Kraj* 1869, no. 103.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Dankowicz 1869.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Czas* 1869, no. 154.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Kraj* 1869, no. 106.

the memoirs of one of the Christian participants of the service, we find an interesting description of Dankowicz's sermon:

Dankowicz spoke with true affection, constantly referring to a sense of Polishness and patriotism. Celebrating the memory of the king of Poland, a king of peasants and Jews, encouraging Jews to connect with us for good in one Polish nation, a historical explanation about how Jews are indebted to Poland and Casimir the Great, accounts about the legal equality of Jews and blissful effects thereof – all of this asserted in a meaningful way, with passion, wisely – not only enraptured me and many others but also made us indebted to Dankowicz.<sup>36</sup>

The Kraków daily press wrote about the content of the sermon; it was published in a separate brochure available in all Kraków bookstores, which made it easily accessible to the public.<sup>37</sup>

In various activities undertaken by Dankowicz we can notice his strivings for closer cooperation with Christians and for the betterment of Jewish-Christians relations. He believed that in many areas of social life (such as education and providing for the needy) both groups could act together to achieve a larger goal. In 1868 Dankowicz became secretary of the Kraków branch of the Association of Friends of People's Education (Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół Oświaty Ludowej), which aimed at supporting education by opening reading rooms.<sup>38</sup> Beyond Dankowicz there were five other members of the association's board, among them a catholic priest, Walerian Serwatowski. Dankowicz, like many other progressive Jews from the intelligentsia (doctors, lawyers etc.), was also professionally active outside of the Jewish community. He studied at the Jagiellonian University<sup>39</sup> and frequented the meetings of the Krakow Scientific Association (Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie).<sup>40</sup> Among his friends or acquaintances were representatives of Polish intelligentsia, such as Józef Łepkowski (archeologist and art historian) or Józef Mayer (the chairman of the Kraków Scientific Association).

During his stay in Krakow Dankowicz engaged in teaching. He served as a teacher of Mosaic religion in the secondary schools (St. Hyacinth's Gymnasium, Imperial and Royal St. Ann's Gymnasium, Higher Realschule – Wyższa Szkoła Realna) and at the Female Teachers' Seminary (Seminarium Nauczycielskie Żeńskie).<sup>41</sup> He gave free, open lectures on religion, morality and Jewish history two or three times a week to youth separate lessons for both girls and boys who did not attend similar classes at their schools. Those lectures were organized in a room adjacent to Tempel synagogue and were part of his duties as preacher. From 1869 to 1872 he was the headmaster of the Jewish Main School in the Kazimierz district.<sup>42</sup> In 1874 Dankowicz wrote a textbook of religious instruction in Polish, which he dedicated to his "beloved students" and printed at his own

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Serafińska 1958, 260.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Kraj* 1869, no. 113; *Czas* 1869, no. 161.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Kalina 1869, no. 24; *Czas* 1869, no 28.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. AUJ, # WF II 224.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. APAU, # TNK-62, the protocol of the meeting no. 114, 117, 119.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Szematyzm 1871, 381; 1872, 366; 1873, 367; 1874, 394-395; 1875, 390, 404.

<sup>42</sup> The problem of granting Dankowicz this position became one of the focal points of the progressive-orthodox conflict. The former headmaster of the school, Marcus Winter, supported by the orthodox rabbi Simon Sofer, was dismissed on the pretext of not speaking Polish (which after 1867 was supposed to become the language of instruction). This decision was not accepted by the Jewish Committee. More on these controversies cf. Maślak-Maciejewska 2013, 82-86.



expense.<sup>43</sup> The main part of textbook was a Polish translation of narrative fragments of the Torah, which Dankowicz arranged in a chronological manner so that they would tell the biblical story from creation to the construction of the Second Temple. Dankowicz believed that his textbook would lead to the modernization of religious instruction and would more closely root it within the biblical text. In the introduction Dankowicz expressed his hope that this deepened knowledge of the Bible would serve as a basis for further discussions on ethical subjects during class hours. He postulated that the young generation should learn not only religion, but also morality. This, he believed, would give youth the tools to differentiate between good and evil in everyday life and also would instill in them the rules of social co-existence. Focusing exclusively on religious instruction (which he understood as teaching customs, dogmas, prayers and Talmud) without paying attention to the moral and ethical dimensions of religious precepts, could lead, in Dankowicz's opinion, to raising a "bigot, a religious person, a blind, scrupulous follower of religious practices, an intolerant fanatic."<sup>44</sup> The modernization of religious instruction also involved the improvement of the physical conditions in which it was being taught, necessitating spacious, comfortable classrooms. From the correspondences that Dankowicz sent to Warsaw's *Izraelita*, we learn that he was proponent of using a blackboard during lessons.<sup>45</sup>

During his stay in Kraków, Dankowicz put forth a great effort to propagate a pro-Polish attitude among his coreligionists. He delivered sermons in Polish, authored a religious textbook in this language, and also offered his adult coreligionists free Polish lessons.<sup>46</sup> Before Dankowicz's arrival in Kraków a significant part of the progressive milieu was already Polonized – the process of gradual Polonization of the Jewish intelligentsia in Kraków occurred earlier than anywhere else in Galicia. Numerous members of the Progressive Association (the most famous being Jonatan Warschauer and Szymon Samelsohn) manifested their Polish patriotism already in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In this sense Dankowicz's activities were not revolutionary in this milieu, but nevertheless his appointment significantly contributed to its further Polonization. After Dankowicz left Galicia, the Progressive Association searched for another preacher who would have a good command of the Polish language and would be able to preach in Polish. They encountered many difficulties finding a candidate meeting this requirement – the next Polish speaking preacher would not work in Tempel until the 1890s.

As noted above, at the time when the preacher post was entrusted to Dankowicz, there was no consensus on the need and conditions for the creation of such a position. Although in January 1868 Dankowicz received an official nomination from the president of the city, Józef Dietl, and promptly afterwards undertook his duties, the Jewish Committee not only questioned his choice, but also the legality of creating the position at the expense of the whole community and without its consent. The conflict lasted for the next few years. Therefore, when Dankowicz's 3-year contract ended in 1871 the option to

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Dankowicz 1875.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Izraelita* 1875, no. 25.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Izraelita* 1872, no. 20 – this letter was Dankowicz's reaction to recent events in Kraków when a group of the orthodox, inspired by a Hungarian ultra-orthodox rabbi (Dankowicz mentions the name Hilel Letsch, probably he meant Hillel Lichtenstein) removed and destroyed the blackboard introduced to the local Talmud Torah school.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Czas* 1868, no. 37.

renew it under the terms of 1868 (salary paid from the communal fund, broad religious competences, significant independence from the rabbi) was not even on the table. At that time it was clear that if progressives wanted to hire a preacher, they would be obliged to pay his salary from their own fund. It is not evident what the status of Dankowicz was after his initial contract ended – it appears that he still served in the progressive synagogue but as a private (not communal) preacher. Dankowicz's unstable position in the community and the conflicts around him presumably jeopardized his sense of stability (and put his honor in danger, as the press reported) and already in 1872, he started to search for a preacher position elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> In the following years he applied for positions in several German-speaking communities and eventually succeeded in 1875 when he found job in Schwetz (in the Prussian Partition).<sup>48</sup>

### Other Progressive Synagogues – Lviv and Tarnopol

Although in the following years Dankowicz served in communities outside Galicia or the Kingdom of Poland, he apparently did not lose interest in progressive synagogues in the partitioned Polish lands, and when the opportunity emerged, he attempted to obtain a position in there. In 1889 the progressive rabbi and preacher of the Lviv Tempel, Bernard Löwenstein died and soon afterwards the preacher position became vacant.<sup>49</sup> Dankowicz, who at that time was Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria, applied for this position. He met all the formal requirements (including fluency in the Polish language) and in February 1890 he was invited to Lviv for probationary sermons. All four sermons (two in German and two in Polish) were well-received and Dankowicz was one of the most seriously considered candidates for this position.<sup>50</sup> It turned out, however, that the discussion over a proper candidate and requirements for this position lingered. In the meantime Dankowicz withdrew his application – unfortunately the motivations behind his decision remain unclear.<sup>51</sup>

A few years later, soon before Dankowicz retired, he served for about four years (1895-1898) as a preacher in the progressive synagogue in Tarnopol, Galicia. Not much is known about his activities as preacher there. Surely he continued to some extent his Polish patriotic activities, as he engaged in the celebrations of the “Adam Mickiewicz Year” in 1898 and on May 22 delivered a Polish sermon for this occasion.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately none of the texts of his sermons from this period has been preserved and we have only scattered information about them – for example in May 1896 he gave a sermon commemorating the life of Baron Hirsch.<sup>53</sup> In Tarnopol Dankowicz continued his didactic work. He served as a headmaster of the local 4-grade Jewish school (Perls'chen Haupt-

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Die Neuzeit* 1872, no. 34.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Izraelita* 1875, no. 37; cf. Heppner – Herzberg 1909, 305.

<sup>49</sup> After Löwenstein's death the preacher position was given provisionally to Jozef Kobak, cf. Bałaban 1937c, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Ojczyzna* 1889, no. 21, 22; 1890, no. 4, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Ojczyzna* 1890, no. 7; *Kuryer Lwowski* 1890, no. 93.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Bienkowski 1899, 169.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Die Neuzeit* 1896, no. 21.

schule) for girls and boys.<sup>54</sup> In 1898 he became a member of the examination committee for elementary school teachers and conducted exams for teachers of the Mosaic religion.<sup>55</sup>

Tarnopol was not only the last progressive synagogue with which Dankowicz had contacts, but also his last place of employment. After he came back to Vienna he started to appear in sources as rabbi emeritus. His worsening health, particularly impaired hearing, probably impeded his aspirations for further employment.<sup>56</sup>

## Summary: Dankowicz and other progressive preachers.<sup>57</sup>

### A methodological approach

Current research on progressive synagogues in the partitioned Polish lands demonstrates the need to investigate the biographies of preachers. This methodological approach was present already in the interwar period,<sup>58</sup> and in the last two decades it was significantly developed. In 2000 Stephen Corrsin proposed researching the biographies of progressive leaders (rabbis and cantors) as an integral part of the examination of the topic of religious reform in this part of Europe. Among the most urgent research questions he indicated the following two: investigating the training received by progressive leaders and the expectations of their service.<sup>59</sup> Within Polish Jewish Studies pioneering studies on the biographies of progressive leaders were conducted by Michał T. Galas from the Jagiellonian University. In 2007 he published a book on Marcus Jastrow, a progressive preacher active in Warsaw.<sup>60</sup> In the following years M. Galas organized conferences and edited collected volumes on the life and activities of Izaak Cyłkow and Osias Thon.<sup>61</sup> In recent years other researchers also focused on the activities of progressive preachers – one should mention here above all Shoshana Ronen's studies devoted to Osias Thon.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The Jewish communal council decided to entrust him this position during the meeting on 27 Aug. 1895. cf. APP, coll. 1657 (Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Tarnopolu), zię. 31, p. 205. I am grateful to Anna Dawidowicz for sharing this source with me.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Szematyzm 1898, 475.

<sup>56</sup> Dankowicz's impaired hearing was already documented at the end of 1880s. In 1899 and 1910 he was overrun on the street, according to the press due to hearing and sight problems, cf. NFP 1899, no. 12386; WZ 1899, no. 36; NNZ 1910, no. 11. Despite that, Dankowicz apparently wanted to continue his rabbinical activities. After the first accident he sent an explanatory letter to the press in which he renounced having health issues, he also claimed to be 12 years younger than he really was, cf. NFP 1899, no. 12388. In 1900 he unsuccessfully applied for a position in Bulgaria, cf. Benbassa 1995, 68.

<sup>57</sup> By a "progressive preacher" I understand here a preacher (or rabbi) who worked in a synagogue in partitioned Polish lands which identified itself as "progressive" ("postępowa", "förschrittliche"). Also the terms "Tempel", "German synagogue" or "Polish synagogue" (in the case of Warsaw) were used.

<sup>58</sup> One can mention here the biographical studies conducted by Majer Bałaban who published several biographical sketches in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (Polish Biographical Dictionary) and elsewhere, cf. Bałaban 1922; 1937a; 1937b; 1937d; 1938.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Corrsin 2000, 91.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Galas 2007. See also his articles on Jastrow: Galas 2011a; 2011b. In 2013 his book on Jastrow was published in English, cf. Galas 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Galas 2010; Galas – Ronen 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Ronen 2010; 2011; 2015.

A methodological perspective virtually absent in the current research on progressive preachers is the comparative approach, understood as both comparing the thought of particular progressive leaders and, secondly, tracing direct contact between them (and between other figures as well).<sup>63</sup> Since the histories of numerous progressive synagogues and the biographies of the majority of preachers have not yet been researched, fully adopting such a comparative approach might not be possible at the current state of research (for a simple reason – lack of data for comparison). Nevertheless, although those evident gaps in research might prevent us from drawing final, decisive conclusions, the proposed method might be worth employing, even partially, already at this stage of research. (Dis)similarities revealed by such a comparison might tell us more about potential affinities between the particular progressive milieus, and as a consequence contribute to our better understanding of this phenomena. Dankowicz's biography, briefly described in this article, might serve as an illustration of how this approach might be used.

Dankowicz's vision of Judaism was highly influenced by Zacharias Frankel. It appears that from Frankel's teachings he took the conviction about the nature of Judaism, which on one hand is a religion based on revelation and therefore its basis is unchangeable, but on the other hand undergoes limited changes in the course of historical development. Similar views were presented by other Kraków preachers, especially Izaak Miseses and Moritz Duschak. All of them knew Frankel personally. Moreover, Dankowicz was a proponent of combining religious training with an academic, secular study and he followed this path in his own education. In a cover letter which Dankowicz sent in 1878 to the Jewish Community in Schrimm (as a part of his job application) he declared that his "religious views strive to connect Judaism with a positive [here: solid, unchanging] scholarship (Wissenschaft) and therefore, they are conservative and based on the positive, scientific (wissenschaftlicher) ground."<sup>64</sup> Analysis of the biographies of other 19<sup>th</sup> century preachers active in Kraków reveals that all of them had an openly positive attitude to the academic study of Judaism and had achievements in this field. In general, it seems that the majority of preachers serving progressive synagogues in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland shared this view; moreover, many of them possessed PhD titles.

Dankowicz had a clear opinion on the position of "progressive Jews" within Jewish society. He believed that they stood in the middle of existing divisions – away from both traditionalists and those who moved away from their Jewishness. In his opinion progressives were those Jews who cared a lot about their faith and tradition but at the same time understood that historical reality changes and some adjustments are necessary. This opinion of Dankowicz on the place of progressives was not isolated and was shared, for example, by his successor on the preacher post in Kraków's Tempel – Moritz Duschak.

Dankowicz was a Polish patriot, fluent in the Polish language and engaged in the Polish cause. He most probably took part in the Warsaw patriotic manifestations from 1860-1861 and later in the January Uprising. It is not certain whether he was the one

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<sup>63</sup> This remark pertains also to the research on progressive synagogues in general. Usually (and since the interwar period) particular progressive milieus were described separately (Cf. Bałaban 1937c; Streit 1939; Zilbersztejn 1934). An attempt to juxtapose two progressive milieus (Krakow and Lviv) was made in Kozłowska-Witt 1999. See also my recent article which attempts to analyze the mutual and direct contacts between the Kraków and Lviv progressive milieus (Maślak-Maciejewska 2014).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. CJA, # I, 75 a Schr I, no. 13 ("Meine religiöse Richtung geht dahin das Judenthum mit der positiver Wissenschaft zu vereinigen und ist demnach eine conservative auf positiver wissenschaftlicher Grundlagen").

who orchestrated the patriotic manifestations in the Kraków Tempel in 1869 (Casimir the Great's second burial) but for certain his sermon played a pivotal role in their course. Also other 19<sup>th</sup> century progressive preachers, such as Markus Jastrow, Izaak Kramsztyk, Izaak Cytkow in Warsaw and Herman Kluger in Łódź, advocated Polish patriotism and were able to preach in the Polish language. It appears that the majority of them were active in the Kingdom of Poland, although Galicia too, especially since the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had preachers fluent in the Polish language, such as Samuel Aron Taubeles in Tarnopol, and later Osias Thon in Kraków (after 1897) and Samuel Wolf Gutman in Lviv (after 1903). Usually those preachers were fluent in German as well.

Dankowicz's professional activity forced him to travel and move house frequently. During his lifetime he lived in eleven communities. This volatility of employment was also shared by numerous other preachers and rabbis at that time. Analysis of information pertinent to job competitions demonstrates that often, progressive preachers were interested by the same job offer. For example Dankowicz at least three times entered the same job competition with Jechieskiel Caro (Warsaw, Erfurt, Lviv). After Dankowicz left Tarnopol, the preacher position was entrusted to S. A. Taubeles, who a decade earlier unsuccessfully applied for the preacher position in the Kraków Tempel.

Some of the above-mentioned similarities might be coincidental or, more importantly, shared by wider group of modern preachers and rabbis in Central Europe, not just the ones employed by progressive synagogues in the partitioned Polish lands. Nevertheless further (and, out of necessity, partial) comparative studies of this kind, conducted simultaneously to research the activities of particular preachers and synagogues, seem important. They might lead to an eventual wider prospographical study of the group of progressive leaders and, as a result, contribute to our better understanding of the social and intellectual background of this religious trend. In the future, this approach might give an answer to one of the main questions pending in the field of research on progressive synagogues, namely if there "existed a «Polish road» to Jewish religious reform, or merely certain «Polish variations» on larger Central and East European Jewish religious themes".<sup>65</sup>

## ABBREVIATIONS

APP – Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu (National Archive in Przemyśl)

ANKr – Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (National Archive in Kraków)

APCz – Archiwum Państwowe w Częstochowie (National Archive in Częstochowa)

APAU – Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności (Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

AUJ – Archiwum Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego (Archives of the Jagiellonian University)

CJA – Centrum Judaicum Archiv, Berlin

PSB – *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Wrocław 1935-

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<sup>65</sup> The question posed by S. Corrsin, cf. Corrsin 2000.

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*Kuryer Lwowski* [Lwów]

NFP – *Neue Freie Presse* [Vienna]

NNZ – *Die Neue National Zeitung* [Vienna]

*Ojczyzna – Ojczyzna*. Organ Towarzystwa Przymierze Braci Agudas Achim [Lviv]

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