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AMONG THE MONUMENTS OF  
THE NEW JEWISH CEMETERY IN ŁÓDŹ  
REFERENCES TO ANCIENT  
EGYPT AND NEAR EAST

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Łódź in the 19th century became a Promised Land, a land that welcomed numerous immigrants of different origin, creating incredible mosaic of culture and tradition. Under the Russian reign Poles, Jews and Germans together built the city of four cultures that soon became an important economic center. Nowadays, after 200 years of fierce history Łódź lost its industrial character and is rebuilding, not without a pain, broken intercultural ties. “Jewish” history of the city is arising more and more interest. At the beginning of the twentieth century Jewish Community of Łódź was second largest in Poland. Families of the Jewish factory-owners greatly contributed to the growth of the city, not only in the fields of economy and architecture but cultural as well<sup>1</sup>. New Jewish Cemetery, more and more often visited today by the citizens and tourists, is counted among the most important monuments of this society. Since the 1980-ties the Cemetery is being conserved and cleaned up by numerous fundators. Although there are a lot of studies on this topic it still holds some mysteries and surprises that should be lighted up.

New Jewish Cemetery<sup>2</sup> in Łódź is the biggest *kirkut* in Europe, and the only one of the hundreds of such that were located on territories occupied by the Germans during the Second World War almost untouched by Nazis. It is placed in the northern part of Bałuty quarter of the city, in frames of Bracka, Zmienna, Kaufmana and Inflancka streets and to its main gate one can walk

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<sup>1</sup> More on Łódź Jewish community: A.Machejek (ed.), *Jews of Łódź*, Łódź 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Old Jewish Cemetery was located by Wesola Street, it was closed 10.11.1892. Destroyed during the Second World War, finalny liquidated in the fifties of the twentieth century.



1. Obelisk of N. Tykociner, A quarter, right side. Photo: A.Lachmayer

by Chryzantem Street. The Cemetery is divided into two parts: actual cemetery (ca. 40.5 ha) and fore cemetery with buildings (ca. 2 ha). Both parts are separated by the inner wall with a gate. Behind it there is a main, wide alley with 125 quarters along both sides. The quarters are separated by smaller alleys perpendicular to the main one<sup>3</sup>.

New Jewish Cemetery in Łódź was started in 1893-1896 on a ground of ca. 10.5 ha – a donation of Izrael Poznański, one of the richest factory owners in Łódź. For the next 7 years new grounds were being added due to which Łódź *kirkut* was finally formed as a polygon of an area of nearly 42.5 ha (and in this stage it is today). The layout of the cemetery and the implementation of the plans are the work of an architect A. Zeligson and surveyors Z. Kułakowski, Trąbczyński and Masłowski. On the turn of the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries for the employees of the

cemetery a family house was erected together with synagogue, mikveh (baths), shelter (for the Sukkot Holiday), farm, watchman house, stable, orangery and the Funeral Home. During the First World War and just after it the cemetery was seriously damaged due to war actions (one of the front lines run close to it), as well as by the local population (destruction of the tombstones, cutting trees for fuel) and soldiers of so-called Blue Army of general Haller (that pastured their horses on the cemetery grounds). Altogether some 500 monuments were destroyed and many others damaged. In the short period between the two world wars the cemetery was started to be rebuilt. New brick wall was erected (works were done by J. Oszer and D. Pruszkowski companies), destroyed buildings were renewed, cemetery service was created and in 1931 the cemetery was elec-

<sup>3</sup> On cemetery and its history: Kersz I., *Jewish Community in Łódź and the Jewish cemetery. A brief historical account* [in:] Kersz I., *Szkice z dziejów Gminy Żydowskiej oraz cmentarza w Łodzi*, Łódź 1999, p. 129-138; Muszyńscy D. & L., *Jewish Cemetery in Łódź*, Łódź 1995; Podgarbi B., *The Jewish Cemetery in Łódź*, Łódź, 1999; Wojalski M.Z., *Jewish Cemetery in Łódź*, Łódź 2000.

trified. During the Second World War the cemetery was an eastern part of the Łódź Jewish Ghetto, constituted by the German occupants of Poland. Until 1944 some 45 thousand people<sup>4</sup> were buried on so called Ghetto Field (located along Bracka Street). Places of burials are marked with small pillars or iron bed frames because the German authorities prohibited erecting standard tombstones. During the war cemetery was used as a place of execution, which can be proved by deep holes dug along the inner wall, to the left from the gate. There were prepared for the last alive Jews of the Ghetto (800 people) and fortunately not used.

After the War cemetery became the property of Congregation of Moses Faith of Łódź. Cemetery service was decreased to janitor only and thefts of worthy tombstones were on incline together with the acts of destruction. Only in the seventies of 20<sup>th</sup> century Conservator Service of Łódź undertook first ordinary works and started to collect the documents and archive materials on the cemetery. In 1975 Jewish Cemetery of Łódź was registered on the list of historical monuments and some 10 years later Social Committee for Care for Jewish Cemetery in Łódź was formed, lead by I. Kersz<sup>5</sup>. Thanks to the foundation „Monumentum Iudaicum Lodzense” established in 1995 r., and due to actions of private persons (also from abroad, mainly Israel and Germany) a lot of historical monuments were renovated but many more await their time.

Today neither mikveh nor synagogue exist and on the inner wall numerous boards were placed in the memory of the victims of the Second Word War. There is also a monument (obelisk with menorah) in memory of the 200,000 Society of Jews of Łódź – victims of extermination by Germans and a lot of



2. Obelisk of S.Goldsztejn, A quarter, left side. Photo: A.Lachmayer

<sup>4</sup> mostly Jews, but also Gypsies.

<sup>5</sup> His contribution was, among others, familiarization knowledge about *kirkut* in Łódź. He was buried on this cemetery in the first row, in honorary quarter.



3. Obelisks of B. and G. Sochaczewski, F quarter, right side. Photo: A. Lachmayer

symbolic graves. After so many years the cemetery is functioning again being the burial place for the next generations of the Jews of Łódź.

In Łódź Jewish Cemetery there is about 180,000 tombstones left of some 240,000. 100 of them is meant to be historical monuments. Most of them are traditional mазzevoth (grave stela in number of 60 000 – 65 000 mазzevoth)<sup>6</sup>, the oldest and most plain of them are located in the western part of the cemetery. Tombstones of the central part, especially those alongside the main alley (resting place for most noble and richest citizens of the Łódź Jewish society), are definitely different in style. They are bigger and more splendid, erected of sandstone, black granite, white marble, artificial stone and concrete, and they have elements of glass and grey iron. They represent as many styles as Eclecticism, Secession, Modernism, Constructionism and Neo Classicism<sup>7</sup>. Most preferred style was Baroque and it inspired a lot of architectural ornamentation. Very popular was Antique seen in classical architectural orders and a mixture of loose details and elements. Around 1902 first tombstones in Secession style were erected, first as vertical boards (e.g. tombstone of Halinka Szyffer, R quarter, right side), later obelisks (e.g. Betty Rabinowicz, M quarter, right side)

<sup>6</sup> Wojalski M.Z., *Jewish Cemetery in Łódź*, Łódź 2000: 41.

<sup>7</sup> Świątkowska M., Budziarek M., *Nekropolia żydowska* [in:] Żydzi w Łodzi, Łódź 1990: 42.



4. The family vault of A.Stiller, I quarter, right side. Photo: A.Lachmayer

and architectural tombstones (e.g. The Rappaports, M quarter, right side and the Poznański, I quarter, left side)<sup>8</sup>. Ornamentation of this style is present until 1939 but with passing time it becomes modest and does not show creativeness often repeating motives from the beginning of the 20th century. One of the best examples of the late Secession is a tombstone of the Monitz family erected in 1917 (R quarter, left side). After 1910 sophisticated forms disappear displaced by simple, geometrical arrangements and the only decoration is a symbolic David's Star and garlands<sup>9</sup>.

Initially the rules of Judaism were strictly observed so that the graves of men, women and children were located in different quarters. This rule was broken by rich Jews that used the Warsaw precedent (in 1859 rabbi Ben Ber Mends in Warsaw permitted erecting family tombstones) and started to erect their mausoleums<sup>10</sup>.

Out of thousand mazzevoth the attention of the visitors is drawn by gorgeous graves - mausoleums. They are not only bigger but have numerous references to the ancient art, mostly Greek. In this variety of forms it is easy to over-

<sup>8</sup> Biographical Information: Kempa A., Szukalak M., *Żydzi dawnej Łodzi. Słownik biograficzny*, t.1-4, Łódź 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Pogarbi, *Cemetery...*, 20-21.

<sup>10</sup> Kersz, *Szkice...*, 48.



5. The family vault of D.Prussak, D quarter, right side. Photo: A.Lachmayer

and Bernhard Herzenberg (deceased 1902; R quarter, left side). Both of them are made of black granite. The first one has inscription on the shaft in Hebrew and Polish, second in German. They are encompassed by metal balustrade. They do not have any decoration with the exception of side pilasters ended with volute (one of them retained) and pillars in the corners of the balustrade (ca. 1 meter high) with curved lions' heads in case of Herzenberg's grave. Second variant of this type consists mainly of 3 meters' high, slim monuments with usually lapidary inscription curved in the shaft (e.g. obelisk of Nachman Tykociner, A quarter, right side – phot. 1, or Józef Loewenberg, D quarter, right side). However, there are also more complex in form obelisks between them. One of the best examples is the tombstone of Ignacy Załszupin (F quarter, left side). It's towering on three step socle that is a base for four-sided, tall base. It resembles the form of an obelisk with "doubled two-sided" top (Fig. 10:D). On that base stands the actual obelisk ended with square base for pyramidion. Walls of the obelisk are slightly sloping. It is made of granite by B.Ch. Satt firm. On the other side of the main alley stands almost identical obelisk, decorated with David's Star.

Second type of obelisk (outnumbering the first) can be considered a transition form from mazzevah to obelisk, although it must be said that this argu-

look other monuments, more modest, but not less interesting. Those are plenty (as compared to other forms) obelisks, patterned according to Egyptian style<sup>11</sup>. One can count them in the number of 100 – 200 pieces<sup>12</sup>. Different forms of obelisks were erected on the graves as long as the thirties of the 20th century. There are two main types of obelisks: erected on the layout of square and rectangle. The first one is closest to ancient Egyptian obelisks (Fig. 8:A) and can be divided into two subtypes. First one includes monuments of big, almost bulky size. This type is represented by at least two monuments of Szymon Galewski (deceased 1904; R quarter, right side)

<sup>11</sup> See: Arnold D., *Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst*, Zurich 1994: 179-180.

<sup>12</sup> There is no data in publications, and it is difficult to count them. There is a possibility that there is more of them.

ment is not backed up in chronology. Those obelisks are having the form of trapezium boards of slightly inclined walls. They are ended in two ways: with saddle copestone (Fig. 8:B) or pyramid on rectangular base (Fig. 8:C). In Łódź cemetery there are some variants of the two types. At least four obelisks have doubled saddle “copestones” (i.e. obelisk of Salomon Goldsztejn, deceased 1920, A quarter, left side; Fig. 2), assembled of two intersecting saddles (Fig. 8:D). It is also interesting that both monuments have



6. The sarcophagus of M. and T.Silberstein, I quarter, left side. Photo: A.Lachmayer

the same, not popular on this cemetery decoration – oak leaves lined up horizontally (Fig. 11:E). Atypical obelisks with pyramid endings are those of B. and G. Sochaczewski, erected in first decade of the 20th century (F quarter, right side, Fig. 3). They are encompassed by one metal balustrade although are erected on separate boards. Together with plinth and base they are 3.5 meters high (one of them is knocked over but probably they were meant to be equal). Their shafts are decorated with a motif of two joined palm leaves (although not identical on both shafts). Copestone of the obelisks is in form of step pyramid (4 steps and “pyramidion”, Fig. 8:E). It is possible that those obelisks were imitating so called Black Obelisk of Salmanaser the III of ninth century B.C. This monument is topped with “three-stepped” pyramid without pyramidion<sup>13</sup>.

Despite the type all the obelisks are erected on socles. They are usually two- or three-stepped (a reference to Greek crepidome or Egyptian step pyramid? Fig. 9:B,C), but may have also the form of decorated (with a motive of gate, Fig. 9:E) or plain cube (Fig. 9:A,D). Quite often the socle reminds in its form a rock, stone (Fig. 9:F,G). On it the base is located for the obelisk. Forced by the shape of the obelisk the base may be rectangular or square. Usually they have additional decorations like „abacus” or „trochilus” of rectangular layout (Fig. 10:A-E). In most cases the shafts of the obelisks are decorated. Most common motive is girland (Fig. 11:C), less often David’s Star (sometime in a circle, Fig. 11:A,B), and palm leaves (Fig. 11:D). Obelisks are usually surrounded with fences. Quite often it is made of metal and richly decorated with

<sup>13</sup> See: Śliwa J., *Sztuka i archeologia starożytnego Wschodu*, Warszawa 1997: 351, Fig. 342.



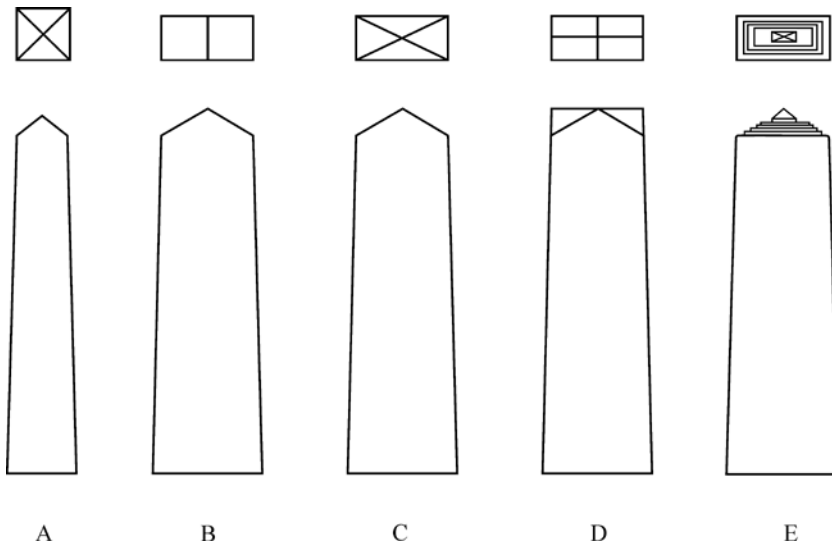
7. The tombstone in the form of a throne, D quarter, right side. Photo: A.Lachmayer

floral motives; sometime in the corners there are short, stone pillars or obelisks. Sometime the fence has the form of columns or obelisks connected with chain made of big, plain links or links with two thorns. Inscriptions are also in different forms despite the type of an obelisk. They are placed directly on the tombstone or on a board built into it. The writings are in Polish, Hebrew or German. Quite often they are bilingual. In such cases the texts are under each other or the translations are on the bases. One can also notice a link between the material of the monument and the inscription. It is done in either concave or convex relief in most granite obelisks made on square layout. It leads to a conclusion that inscriptions were under special care (inscriptions made in sandstone faster undergo destruction)<sup>14</sup>. In case of tombstones made of less durable (but easier to obtain, which means cheaper) there was a need to place the name of the deceased on the slab made of different material. This, in turn, influenced the shape of an obelisk. To build in the rectangular board it was necessary to enlarge the width of the sides to keep the square shape. In effect the tombstone would become massive and would appear “heavy” and be more costly. Other solution, preferred one as can be seen, was expanding only two sides, which in the final effect gave the form of rectangle.

The form of an obelisk can be seen at the Jewish Cemetery as decorative element. In such character it appears over the entrance to the tombstone of the fam-

<sup>14</sup> See: Muszyńska D., *Przegląd form nagrobnych na cmentarzu żydowskim w Łodzi* [in:] Woronczak J. (ed) *Studia z dziejów kultury żydowskiej w Polsce*, t.2: *Cmentarze żydowskie*, Wrocław 1995: 51.



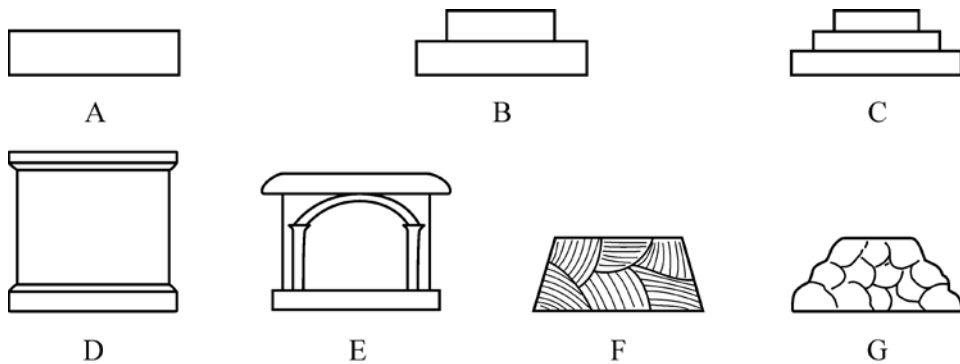


8. Types of obelisks in New Jewish Cemetery in Łódź: A – erected on the layout of square, ended with pyramidion, B – erected on the layout of rectangle, ended with saddle copestone, C – erected on the layout of rectangle, ended with pyramid on rectangular base, D – erected on the layout of rectangle, ended with doubled saddle “copestones”, E – erected on the layout of rectangle, ended with step pyramid

ily of Jarociński (D quarter, left side). Those are two short, slim obelisks made in white marble, decorated with relief in the form of palm branch. More often, however, it is used as an element of the fences of the vaults or smaller graves (especially those in the form of obelisks). Three short obelisks are preserved, previously connected with a chain by the family vault of Zygmunt Lichtenfeld (M quarter, left side), and also in at least two more cases around almost destroyed graves (without tombstones). Inscription board of one of them is preserved so it is known that it belonged to Maksymiljan Szyffer (deceased 1935, so it is also one of the latest example of the usage of an obelisk; J quarter, right side).

An interest in the Egyptian style can be noticed also in bigger architectural forms – vaults of the famous factory owners and philanthropists. It shows, however, that it was not as popular as classical orders – it is represented rather decent. Most splendid and obvious at the same time linkage to ancient Egypt is the family vault of Arnold Stiller (1845-1904). It has the shape of low mastaba ended with torus and cavetto cornice (I quarter, right side; Fig. 4)<sup>15</sup>. The vault is located on a high base and has deep niche, to which lead three steps. Inside the niche there is quite a big board – bronze doors in the shape of double mazzevah. There is an inscription in Polish and German, and in the mid-

<sup>15</sup> See: Arnold D., *Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst*, 146-148, 171.



9. Types of socles in New Jewish Cemetery in Łódź: A – plain cube, B – two-stepped crepidome, C – three-stepped crepidome, D – plain cube with additional architectural decorations, E – decorated with a motive of gate, F – stylized rock, stone, G – rock, stone.

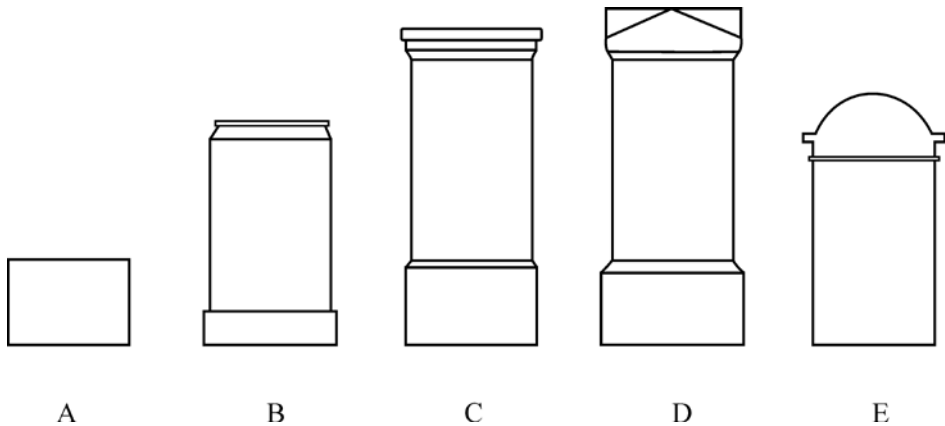
dle, as the only decoration of the vault, done in Secession style rose tree. The vault was constructed around 1906 according to the project of Otto Richter from Berlin. Probably it resembled to constructions from German cemeteries, where similar forms were very popular<sup>16</sup>. The vaults of this type are also present at London Brompton Cemetery (i.e. the mausoleum of Lord Kilmorey erected in 1853)<sup>17</sup> and on Warsaw Cmentarz Powązkowski (i.e. the vault of T. Dunin, of L. Gnoiński family or grave chapel of G. Kamiński)<sup>18</sup>.

Loosely to the art of Ancient Egypt links the family vault of Samuel Czamański (1829-1910). This granite monument has the shape of vertical wall of slightly sloping sides, ended with cornice resembling Egyptian cavetto cornice (M quarter, right side). It has a lot of clearances separating two boards with inscriptions as well as “pillars”. They have rectangular cross-section and simplified base and capital. One pillar stands between the boards with inscription, five smaller overhead. Next example of pattern after the Egyptian architectural ideas, although to a small degree, is a family vault of Zygmunt Lichtenfeld (I already mentioned the obelisks from this monument). The construction is very simple and modest: resembling the form of a tent it consists of a roof sustained by twelve simple pillars. In each of the four corners there are two rectangular with a square one between them. The roof is ended with

<sup>16</sup> See also: Werner F., *Ägypten als Insbegriff des Erhabenen in der Baukunst* [in:] Seipel W., *Ägyptomanie, Europäische Ägypten-Imagination von der Antike bis heute*, Wien 2000: 83-105.

<sup>17</sup> Śliwa J., *Egyptianizing grave monuments in London's Brompton cemetery*, SAAC 9, 1999, p. 11-21.

<sup>18</sup> Piątek B., Ćwiek A., *Egiptyzujące grobowce na cmentarzu powązkowskim w Warszawie*, Meander XLVII, Warszawa 1992: 529-532.



10. Types of bases in New Jewish Cemetery in Łódź: A – plain cube, B – with simple architectural decorations, C – with additional architectural decorations, D – form of an obelisk with “doubled two-sided” top, E – form of gate

low, three- step pyramid. Elements characteristic for Egyptian art can be seen also in the family vault of Dawid Prussak (1845-1909; D quarter, right side). It is also quite simple construction – an oval dome sustained by four pillars. Inside there are two sarcophaguses of Dawid Prussak and his wife Rebeka. The pillars of the vault are referring to Egyptian ones: in their capitals one can see the stylized palm capitals. The grave is surrounded by stone balustrade with an entrance gate. Its pillars are in style close to those of the vault and in the upper part they are decorated with reliefs resembling the Egyptian representation of lotos (Fig. 5)<sup>19</sup>.

It is difficult to explain such limited popularity of the Egyptian art in the monumental vault architecture at the Łódź cemetery. Probably such „strict”, not effective styles were far from the taste of the wealthy manufacturers. As a matter of fact they surely wanted that their graves resembled their social status and were marked with glamour and style.

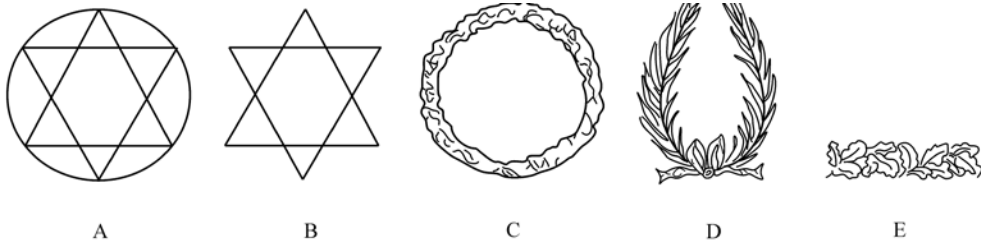
One of the most interesting inspirations from the antiquity are griffins and sphinxes. Those fantastical creatures may be connected to the ancient Egypt.<sup>aaaa</sup> Israelites adopted them in the ancient times probably with the “help” of the Phoenicians<sup>20</sup>. Griffins are probably closely „related” to cherubs, known from the Holy Bible<sup>21</sup>. After centuries they were „resurrected” and hale their representations on the Łódź cemetery.

By the main alley, on the left side (I quarter), shadowed by the trees, resembling the Greek temple, there is a family vault of Markus Silberstein (1833-

<sup>19</sup> See: Arnold, *Lexikon ...* 278.

<sup>20</sup> Moscati S., *Le antiche civiltà semitiche*, Bari 1958.

<sup>21</sup> See: Gen 3,24; Ex 25,10-11; Ex 25,17-20; Kings 6,23-29.



11. Types of decorations in New Jewish Cemetery in Łódź: A – David's Star in a circle, B – David's Star, C – garland, D – palm leaves, E – oak leaves lined up horizontally

1899). Climbing the steps one can enter the vault, where in the central place is occupied by the sarcophagus made of the white marble according to a project of A. Zeligson (Fig. 6). It is posted on rectangular, three-step base. It is decorated with four protons of cherubs, one in each corner, and six garlands (one on the shorter and two at longer side) The lid of the sarcophagus is destroyed and only half of it is left. It is decorated with antefixes resembling the Greek palmette ones: two semi-round on the longer side axis and two quarter round at the corners. It can be said with a great probability that such decorations were placed at all corners.

Cherubs guarding the grave of Silberstein have form of winged lions with open jaws. They may be styled on fantastic ancient creatures, but they do not resemble any of them. Cherub (equivalent of gryphon) according to the mythologies of Near East was intermediary between gods and people passing the prayers. Gryphon (lion with eagle's head) and sphinx (lion with human face) were adapted by the art of the Western hemisphere and were often used in Greece, Rome and Hellenistic states<sup>22</sup>. In my opinion the sarcophagus in the vault of Silberstein is to a greater degree styled on the Ark. The argument backing my opinion may be the garlands decorating the sarcophagus. The Ark made of acacia wood was covered with gold and decorated with golden garlands<sup>23</sup>. It is not known how the cherubs decorating the Ark looked, but basing on the Judaist ban of not showing human faces in art one may suppose that they did not have human faces. It should be true in case of the cherubs from the vault. Also the author of the vault could show his own invention and use any ancient motives.

Beautifully done gryphons (or rather only one as the second was destroyed probably in the 1980-ies) guards also the tombstone made in the form of a low throne (D quarter, right side). Unfortunately this tombstone is heavily damaged and there is no information to whom it belonged. The preserved throne (Fig.

<sup>22</sup> Negev A.(ed.), *Cherubs* [in:], Negev A.(ed.), *The Archeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 2000: 96.

<sup>23</sup> Ex 25,10-11.

7) is decorated with deep relief. On the front there is part of initials („B.R.” In Cyrillic or „B.P.”/”B.B.” in Latin alphabet?), on the back – well preserved bas-relief showing two maces (?) tied with a ribbon (sign of a kin?). The grave was probably surrounded by metal chain or fence spread between fragmentally preserved rods in the shape of pyramids with concave edges ended with simple volutes (upper parts did not preserved).

Yet another, very untypical vault is worth mentioning, distinguishing itself among the monumental vaults of the Łódź Cemetery. It belongs to the family of Jakub Kestenberg (ca. 1862-1921) and, as the local legend says, it will be the very first place visited by The Messiah on the Judgment Day<sup>24</sup>. It is a piece of wall made of stone with portals ended with elongated arches in the shape of horseshoes (A quarter, right side). It has richly decorated bronze wickets. Remaining sides (surrounding space in the shape of a letter „L”) of the vault are made of simple metal fence spread between stone pillars ended with serrate cones. Those pillars are decorated with bas-relief repeating the same motive that is seen on the front wall – stepped battlements. They resemble decorative element characteristic for the vaults in Petra, done in so-called Hegra<sup>25</sup> style, and also the cogged endings of walls from Assyrian fortifications.

Together with the growing interest towards the Near East and study of the monuments of the past that started in 19<sup>th</sup> century more and more often people were looking for artistic inspiration in the art of the past periods of human history. One of the most interesting was meant to be the art of ancient Egypt and its monumental vaults. On many of European cemeteries there is a lot of Egyptian mastabas and obelisks and single elements of Egyptian architecture.

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<sup>24</sup> Podolska J., Walicki J., *A guide to the Jewish Cemetery in Łódź*, Łódź 2001: 31.

<sup>25</sup> Machowski W., *Skalne grobowce Petry*, Meander LIII, 621-629.

