Chortkiv

The writer – Karl Emil
From Chortkiv, at the Bristol directly from Berlin
Dropped by just like that – to no one in particular
On the Seret – milk-and-honey-coloured
yellow clay of white bread

Vasyl Makhno, *For Chortkiv*

On the banks of the Seret ◖

The first written mention of Chortkiv (Czortków) dates back to 1427, when the nobility of Ruthenia gathered for a *sejmik* (diminutive of Sejm, regional diet) that was attended by the nobleman Jan Prandota. King Władysław Jagiełło awarded him with lands at the Seret River as a reward for his heroism in the Battle of Grunwald (1410), in which Polish and Lithuanian troops defeated the Teutonic Knights. Prandota came from the village of Czartki in Sieradz Voivodeship (Palatinate), and he named the centre of his new estate Czartków in memory of his far-off home village. With time, Jan's descendants changed their family name to Czartkowski. ◖ In 1522, King Sigismund I granted the large village of Czortków municipal rights, and in the same year, Jerzy Czartkowski built a wooden castle here. In 1610, Stanisław Golski, Voivode of Ruthenia and Castellan of Halych began to build a stone castle here. After the death of Stanisław Golski and his brother Jan, the castle and the town became the property of Count Stefan Potocki. Three times – in 1648, 1649, and 1655 – Chortkiv and its castle were captured by Bohdan Khmelnytsky's Cossacks during the bloody and devastating Cossack revolution. As a result of the Ottoman Porta invasion, in 1672–1683, the town was part of Podolia Eyalet (palatinate) reporting to Istanbul. It was not until 1683 that royal forces drove the Turks away from Chortkiv. ◖ The castle as a fortification lost its military significance in the 18th century and from then on served only as a residential palace. In 1809, the mercantilist-oriented town owners transformed the castle into a tobacco drying facility; soon after, the Austrian government, which leased the castle, used it as a warehouse and from 1815, as a prison. The last owner of the castle was Hieronim Sadowski, who left it to charity when he died in 1895. It was eventually purchased by the founder of the Chortkover Hasidic dynasty, Rabbi Moshe Dovid Friedman, the son of the tsaddik of Ruzhin, who had established his headquarters in Sadhora near Czernowitz (today Chernivtsi).

The Jews of Chortkiv ◖

The first Jews settled in Chortkiv soon after the town was established. Rabbi Beniamin Selnik (1555–1620) of Podhorce (now

Pidhirtsi) mentioned in his book *Masa'at Beniamin* – the Travel of Binyamin – that the Jews of Chortkiv had come here as wine traders and that the wine trade was one of their main occupations. The memorial book of Chortkiv mentions a *matzevah* dating back to 1616. ¶ By the mid-17th century, about 50 Jewish families lived in Chortkiv. A collection of short stories and ethnographic materials gathered by A. Litwin (real name: Shmuel Horowitz, 1862–1943), titled *Yiddishe neshomes* (Yid.: Jewish Souls, vol. 5, 1917), reports that in 1645, Jews were accused of collaboration with the Cossacks and expelled from the town to a suburb known since then as Vygnanka (from the Ukrainian "exile," one of the Jewish quarters was established there later). ¶ In the late 17th century, the Jewish community in Chortkiv experienced a revival and it came to be associated with the names of two eminent experts on Jewish law: Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Halevi Horowitz (known as Rabbi Hirsheli) and Rabbi Segal of Lviv. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch's son Shmuel Horowitz became famous as Shmelke of Nikolsburg (currently Mikulov in the Czech Republic) – one of the most eminent Hasidic leaders, the disciple of Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezherich, and the Chief Rabbi of Moravia. Tzvi Hirsch's other son, Rabbi Pinkas, became Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt am Main. ¶ In 1722, Count Stefan Potocki officially granted the Jews a privilege allowing them to settle in town without restrictions, to build houses, and to work in trade and crafts. At the same time, the Jews were also obliged to renovate the castle and repair the roads as well as to defend them if necessary. That year the Chortkiv Jewish families owned 110 houses, while Christians had 142. ¶ In 1789, the Austrian authorities enforced the implementation of the 1782 Joseph II's Edicts of Tolerance and eliminated the autonomous Jewish communal self-government (*kahal*) in Galicia. The imperial authorities conducted a census and ordered that the Jews should adopt German surnames. In 1797, Chortkiv's Jews owned 121 houses, compared to 232 owned by Christians. In 1848, in the wake of the Spring of Nations, the authorities allowed Jews to work as

clerks at the local government offices and courts of law, and also to study and practise law and medicine. Thus, the Jews of Chorkiv could enter liberal professions.

Cemeteries ◖ There were three Jewish cemeteries in Chortkiv, and all of them have partially survived to the present day. The best preserved is located on the Vygnanka Hill, off Kopychynetskoi Provulok St., near the bridge over the Seret River and the bus station. That cemetery was probably founded in the early 1920s. There still remain a few dozen *matzevot* from the 1930s; a small memorial lapidarium has been built near its edge. At the rear of the Christian cemetery on Bandery St. there is a Jewish cemetery, which functioned in 1914–1926, and where many Jewish victims of influenza and other epidemics were buried. A part of the wall and fragments of *matzevot* have survived there too. A municipal hospital now stands on the site of the old Jewish cemetery (near Nezalezhnosti St.), established in the early 17th century. Only one gravesite marker can be found there – a modern one, erected several years ago, commemorating the Tsaddik Moshe Dovid Friedman.

Synagogues and kloyzn ◖ The oldest surviving synagogue in Chortkiv was built in 1680. It still stands in the central part of the town, on the premises of the Medical College (Petrushevycha St.), but it is used as a warehouse. The New Synagogue, erected in 1905–1909, incorporated the Hasidic *kloyz* that had been built in 1870 and was later converted into a tsaddik's palace with a large prayer hall. The Viennese architect Hans

CZORTKÓW. Bazar Miejski — Le Bazar Municipal

Goldkremer, who designed the building, modelled it on the Sadhora residence of Rabbi Israel Friedman, the tsaddik of Ruzhin, adding to the *kloyz* annexes with oriental-style turrets. In Soviet times, and until 2013, the building housed a Young Mechanics' Club.

A The municipal marketplace in Chortkiv, 1918, collection of the National Library, Poland (www.polona.pl)

B The market square in Chortkiv, after 1918, collection of the National Library, Poland (www.polona.pl)

Chortkover Rebbe ◖ In 1870, Rabbi **Dovid Moshe Friedman** (1827–1904), the son of Israel Friedman of Ruzhyn, the tsadik of Sadhora (Sadagura or Sadigura), near Chernivtsi, settled in Chortkiv. The town eventually became the residence of the Chortkiv branch of the Ruzhin–Sadigura Hasidic dynasty. ◖ The tsaddik Dovid Moshe Friedman was by all accounts a humble and kind-hearted man and soon gathered around

The soap works belonging to the family of Berl Dov Sharfstein. Standing second from the left is his son, Zvi Sharfstein, who left for Israel in the 1930s. Chortkiv, circa 1928, collection of Beit Hatfutsot, The Museum of the Jewish People, Photo Archive, Tel Aviv, Zvi Sharfstein's legacy

himself one of the largest Hasidic groups in Galicia. The Czortkover Rebbe, as he came to be known, lived an ascetic life, devoting himself entirely to prayer and learning, day and night. The Hasidim told wonder-stories about him, portraying him as a person able to live without sleeping, eating, and drinking for several days showing no signs of weakness. He avoided worldly matters and distanced himself from the problems of the community, yet he had considerable standing among its members. His elder brother Avraam Yaakov (1820–1883) described him thus: "I have never seen such a pious Jew before." During prayer, Rabbi Dovid Moshe would experience ecstatic moments; he would say: "[…] inside a tsaddik there is a burning fire, which sometimes escapes outside. Just like water flows out of an overfilled vessel, the righteous one expresses himself through that excess of holiness, so that people can see that holiness and believe in him." His son Israel (1854–1934) continued Dovid Moshe Friedman's tradition of Hasidic

leadership, simultaneously fighting the staunch opponents of Hasidism such as Rabbi Meir Shapira (1887–1933), the founder of the Chachmei Lublin Yeshivah (Heb.: The Wise Men of Lublin Yeshiva). The representatives of the Czortkover dynasty moved to Israel and re-established themselves there. The third tsaddik of Chortkiv – Nachum Mordechai – died in Israel in 1946.

From France to Chortkiv and from Chortkiv to France ¶ In the 18th century, an international merchant Lefert arrived in Galicia from France. An adherent of the rising Haskalah, he came from a family of Sephardic Jews but considered himself a German. The Austrian authorities, however, gave him the surname of Franzos, because of his country of origin. His son Heinrich worked in Chortkiv as a physician and took part in the revolutionary events of 1848. Heinrich's son **Karl Emil Franzos** (1848–1904) was born in Chortkiv; eventually, he become an eminent writer and translator of German literature. Karl

Emil attended the Dominican school in Chortkiv, but he took private Hebrew lessons and also mastered Polish and Ukrainian. After his father's death in 1858, he moved with his mother to Chernivtsi (then Czernowitz) and then studied law at the University of Vienna and the University of Graz. He wrote substantially about the life of Ukrainian peasants and Ukrainian-Jewish relations, and he won renown after publishing travel notes from Russia, Central Europe, and Turkey. Franzos coined the term "Halb-Asien" (Ger.: Semi-Asia), which he used to portray Galicia, which he saw immersed in poverty, backwardness, and "squalid provincialism." In his collection of short stories *Die Juden von Barnow* (Ger.: The Jews of Baranov), one of the first attempts to create a model Jewish shtetl, the fictional provincial town of Baranov resembles the Jewish Chortkiv – the town of the author's childhood. ❡ **Sasha Blonder** (1909–1949), an acclaimed artist, was born into a merchant's family of modest means in Chortkiv, and left for France as a young man. It was in Chortkiv that he began painting and became the leader of a local group of artists. His works frequently include references to his home town: he oftentimes depicted local synagogues or the quiet yards and streets of old Chortkiv. In 1930, Blonder's parents managed to send the talented young man to Paris to study architecture. There, his artistic taste was strongly influenced by the works of Chagall, Soutine, Modigliani, Bonnard, and other masters of avant-garde and Paris School painting. Blonder gave up architecture to study painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow. In Cracow, he became one of the founders

of artistic groups named "Żywi" (Pol.: Alive) and "Grupa Krakowska" (Pol.: the Cracovian Group). He probably visited his father and brother in Chortkiv for the last time in 1935, two years before he moved definitively to Paris. During the Nazi occupation in France, Blonder was active in the resistance movement and in 1942 began to sign his paintings with the pseudonym "André Blondel."

World War II and the Holocaust

❡ In 1939, there were about 5,000 Jews among the 12,000 residents of Chortkiv (then Czortków). In September 1939, Jewish and Polish refugees began

A Former New Synagogue in Chortkiv, 2014. Photo by Viktor Zagreba, digital collection of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

B The tomb of Tzadik David Moshe Friedman at the Jewish cemetery in Chortkiv, 2014. Photo by Viktor Zagreba, digital collection of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

arriving in thousands from western Poland. The town was soon captured by the Red Army; then, on July 6, 1941, the Nazis occupied the town and, as in many other places, established their New Order by orchestrating a pogrom. The Nazis established a *Judenrat*, but a month later, they shot the *Judenrat* members in the Black Forest, near the town, along with several hundred other representatives of the Jewish intelligentsia. From July to October 1941, more than 650 Jews were murdered in Chortkiv. In April 1942, the Germans established a ghetto that encompassed Rzeźnicka, Składowa, Łazienna, Szkolna, and Podolska Streets. On August 26–27, 1942, the first deportation operation took place: 2,120 people were sent to the Bełżec death camp, including Jews from Chortkiv, Yagilnitsa (Jagielnica) and Tovste (Tłuste); 350 people were killed on the spot. On 5 October, another deportation was carried out – 500 Jews from Chortkiv were added to a transport of people from Ternopil, Tovste, Yagilnitsa, Monastyryska,

and Buchach. Jewish policemen were also deported from Chortkiv at that time. This transport was sent to Bełżec, but it stopped first in Lviv, where the Germans carried out a selection: about 1,000 people (out of the 6,000 Jews in the entire transport) were taken off and moved to the labour camp in Janowska Street; they were replaced on the train with the same number of Jews classified by SS as unfit to work. In December 1942, the Germans set up a labour camp for over 500 local artisans in Chortkiv's Talmud Torah building. The workers faced hunger and other privations there but were safe from the round-ups. When the ghetto was liquidated on June 17, 1943, about 2,000 people were executed. At the same time, there was an attempt at resistance. A group of Jews hidden in bomb shelters used weapons against the Germans. Their attempt failed, however, and all of them were killed. On June 23, 1943, the labour camp in the Talmud Torah building was also liquidated. The Nazis carried out selection, sending one group, classified as unfit to work, to be

shot dead in the Black Forest. The others were sent to the nearby labour camps. A few dozen survived there until the arrival of the Red Army in June 1944. Other Jews in the area were hidden by Christians and therefore survived the war. ¶ In 2005, a memorial was established at the mass grave site in the Black Forest (near the road to Kopychyntsi).

Former **old synagogue** (17th c.), Petrushevycha St. ¶ Former **new synagogue** (19th c.), Shevchenka St. ¶ **Jewish cemeteries** (17th–20th c.), Nezalezhnosti St., Kopychynetskoi Provulok St., Bandery St. ¶ **Chortkiv Castle** (1522–1610), Zamkova St. ¶ **Dominican Church of St. Stanislaus** (early 20th c.), 2 Shevchenka St. ¶ **Greek Catholic Church of the Ascension** (wooden, 1717), Zaliznychna St. ¶ **Orthodox Church of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary** (1635), Tserkovna St. ¶ **"Old Town Hall"** (2nd half of the 19th c.), *fachwerk*-style cloth hall (*sukiennice*) in the market square. ¶ **"New Town Hall"** (1926–1930). ¶ **Local History Museum**, 3 Zelena St.

Kopychyntsi (17 km): a former synagogue (19th c.), a wooden Greek Catholic church (1630), a church (1802), Folk House (1910). ¶ **Probizhna** (18 km): a former synagogue (19th c.). ¶ **Husiatyn** (38 km): former fortified synagogue (17th c.), tombs of tsaddikim of the Friedman family (renovated in 2007), the Greek Catholic Church of St. Onuphrius (16th c.), Church of St. Anthony (1610). ¶ **Skala-Podilska** (38 km): a Jewish cemetery (16th c.), ruins of the castle (14th c.), the Church of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1719), the Greek Catholic Church of St. Nicholas (19th c.) ¶ **Zalishchyky** (48 km): a former synagogue (19th c.), Church of St. Stanislaus (18th c.), the Poniatowski Palace (18th c.). ¶ **Horodenka** (56 km): a former synagogue (18th c.), a Jewish cemetery (18th c.), Theatine church and monastery (18th c.).

CHORTKIV