

The Gypsy Synagogue in Prague

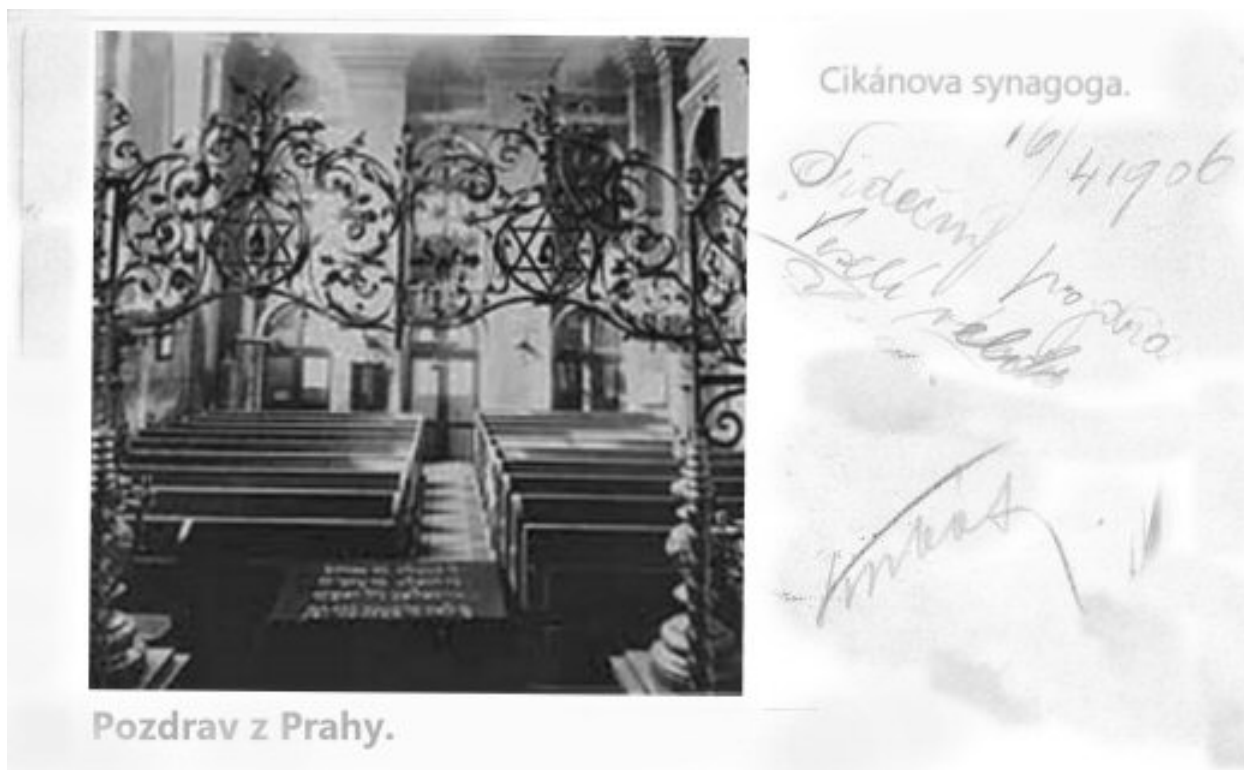
by Dr.Douglas Schar

I wanted to put something together for our Slovakian, Romanian, and Hungarian brothers and sisters interested in learning about the mystery of our Jewish ancestry. It's a new thought to many of us, but the more we test members of the community, the more we become aware of our Jewish ancestry. We are in the process of unlocking a mystery. One person at a time.

In the meantime, here is a mystery that really makes a person think.

Did you know Prague was once home to a Gypsy Synagogue? Well, there was. Here you can see the exterior and interior of the building.





The Gypsy Synagogue was named after its founder, Solomon Salkind-Cikán or Salkind Zigeuner. After a fire in 1689, it was rebuilt on a larger scale in 1701. It was destroyed by fire again in 1754 and was rebuilt in 1755. It was demolished in 1906 replaced by the Jubilee Synagogue, built on Jerusalem Street in 1906.

Was the Gypsy Synagogue built by a Gypsy Jew for Gypsy Jews? Were there Gypsy Jews? Historians are largely silent on that subject of why a synagogue would be called “the Gypsy Synagogue”. Some say it was called the Gypsy Synagogue because it was built in the Gypsy neighborhood. Some say it got its name because it was built on “Gypsy Street”. Some say it was named after its founder, Salomon Salkind-Cigan, and for this reason was known as the Cikanova Sinagoga. Most are quick to say, there were no Gypsies involved in the story of this synagogue.

I’m not so sure.

What do we know about Salomon Salkind-Cigan? He was born in Selenica, Slovakia in 1580. His parents were Moses Zigeuner and Reginia Futralmacher. A wealthy merchant, he married a woman called Golde(1580-1613). He had five children, Braun, Abraham, Josef, Gerson, and Herschman. His children used the surname Cigan and Zigeuner interchangeably. He and his wife built this synagogue, and when Goldi died, heartbroken, Salomon left Prague for Vienna, leaving the synagogue in the hands of his sons. All that remains is his headstone.

ת נ צ ב ה

656. Salomo Salkind Zigeiner.

... תב"ד [?] (ג) ... Mittwoch.

Sandstein. 105 cm hoch, 56 cm breit, 13 cm dick, 70 cm Texthöhe, 28 cm Zeilenlänge. 404.

Der untere linke Teil des Steines ausgebrochen.



א ב נ ש ל מ ה
ז ק נ ו ש ב ע י מ [י]ם
ה ל כ ב ד ר ד ת מ ים
ג מ ל ח ס ד ים ל ד ל ים
5 ו נ כ ב ד ים ו צ ד ק [תו]
ע ו מ ד ת ב ה ל מ יו ה
א ש ר ב נ ה ב פ ר א ג
ק ר י ה נ א מ נ ה י ה ה
ה י ש י ש כ מ ר ש ל [מ ה]
10 ז א ק י נ ד ג [י ג י י נ ר] . .
מ ש ה ג
י ו מ ד (ג)
ת ד (ו) ל פ כ ת (ג) צ ב ה

Diese Inschrift ist, wie bekannt, die einzige Quelle für die Erbauung der Prager Zigeiner-synagoge durch Salomo Salkind Zigeiner. Über

den Erbauer und die Synagoge vgl. die Monographie von Aladar Deutsch, Die Zigeiner-Grossenhof- und Neusynagoge in Prag (Prag 1907). Die Angaben

Translation from above: This inscription is, as is well known, the only source for the construction of the Prague Gypsy Synagogue by Salomo Salkind Gypsy. For more information about the builder and the synagogue, see the monograph by Aladar Deutsch, Die Zigeiner-Grossenhof- und Neusynagoge in Prag (Prague 1907).

So, from his headstone, we learn Saloman Salkind Cigan the Gypsy Synagogue.

And that is about it. No one has looked into it further and so far, nothing more is has been revealed. Who was Salomon Salkind-Cikán? Who was Salomon the Gypsy? Who were his people? Were they Jewish? Were they Gypsies? Were they Jewish Gypsies? No one knows. What do we know? Well, his first name was Saloman. And that was and is a Jewish name.

From the "Dictionary of German Jewish Surnames" we find some information about his second name, Salkind.

"Salkind; see Sulkind"

"Sulkind: "possibly from Sulka; possible from Yiddish feminine given name sulka or suke , a hypocoristic form of shulamit from the Hebrew originally meaning woman from shulem, a location in ancient Eretz Israel, Song of songs 7:1 Or an old German masculine given name which was used by middle and east European Jews as a Germanized form of Saloman."

So the founder of the synagogue was a man named Saloman. His second name, Salkind, meant either son of Saloman or son of Shulamit.

Now, his third name, Gypsy(Cigan or Zigeuner) is where things gets interesting. His father Moses went by Zigeiner (Gypsy) and he went by Cigan(Gypsy).

Why was his last name Gypsy? Some say that Jews with the last name Gypsy (Cigan, Tsiganes, Zigeiner, Zigeuner) got their last name as a nickname because they were dark skinned. Sometimes Jews ended up with last names that reflected some physical feature, like Gross(fat)= Grossman or fat man, or rot(red)= Rotman=red haired man or kurz(short)= Kurzman= short man. So, some would say Jewish people with the last name Gypsy got the name because they were dark skinned.

Again, Im not so sure.

I have checked all manner of Yiddish reference books. I cannot find any reference to Cigan or Zigeuner being used to describe a dark-skinned person. Cherny (black) and Braun(brown) were used to describe dark skinned people and did become last names. But Cigan or Zigeuner are NOT to be found referring to dark skinned people.

On a basic level, life was hard enough for Jews. Why would you use the last name Gypsy, which brought its on more problems along with it? Unless you were a Gypsy Jew.

I think people who had the last name Cigan, or Tsiganes, or Zigeuner were probably Gypsy and Jewish. But, we have yet to prove it. We are working on it. In the meantime, have a look at all the records that show known Jewish people whose last name was Gypsy! It makes you think.

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Searching for Surname (phonetically like) : ZIGEUNER

23 matching records found.

Run on Tue, 05 Aug 2025 09:35:36 -0400

Date (English)	Birth Surname (English)	Given name (English)	Father's Given Name (English)	Father's Father (English)	Spouse's Surname (English)	Spouse's Given Name (English)	Spouse's Father (English)	More
1614		Goldeh			ZIGEUNER	Salkind		More
1637	TACHORS HOROWITZ	Klonimus Kalmann	Schimon					More
1645	ZIGEUNER	Abraham	Jizchok					More
1648	ZIGEUNER	Jizchok	Moscheh					More
1648		Reichel	Jizchok		ZIGEUNER	Moscheh		More
1668	BENDINER	Moscheh	Leb					More
1672		Beleh			ZIGEUNER	Hirschl	Moshe	More
1677	ZIGEUNER	Hirschl	Moscheh					More
1680	ZIGEUNER	Reichel	Moscheh		TILLIS	Heschel	Kessriel	More
1680	ZIGEUNER	Reichel	Moscheh		TILLIS	Heschel	Kassriel	More
Date (English)	Birth Surname (English)	Given name (English)	Father's Given Name (English)	Father's Father (English)	Spouse's Surname (English)	Spouse's Given Name (English)	Spouse's Father (English)	More
1710	ZIGEUNER CHAJAT	Hirsch	Leb					More
1714	ZIGEUNER	Sarah	Moshe		PORIES	Schmul Simon		More
1714	ZIGEUNER	Sorl	Moshe		PORIES	Schmuel Schimon		More
1714	JUTSCHIN	Breindl	Shalom		ZIGEUNER	Elijeh		More
1714	ZIGEUNER	Elijeh	Leb					More
1714	ZIGEUNER	Leb	Moscheh					More
1720	ZIGEUNER	Reichl	Mosche?		CHAJAT	Sanwil		More

1720	ZIGEUNER	Reichel	Moscheh		CHAJAT	Sanwil		More
1733	WIEN	Jitel	Menachem		ZIGEUNER	Peretz		More
1781	ZIGEUNER	Moscheh	Elijeh					More
Date (English)	Birth Surname (English)	Given name (English)	Father's Given Name (English)	Father's Father (English)	Spouse's Surname (English)	Spouse's Given Name (English)	Spouse's Father (English)	More
1784	TIAS	Beleh	Selig		ZIGEUNER	Elijeh		More
1784	TIAS	Beleh	Selig		ZIGEUNER	Elije		More
		Gerschon						More

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Applications for Passports and Personal IDs

Searching for Surname (phonetically like) : **TSIGANES**

3 matching records found.

Run on Thu, 07 Aug 2025 14:03:08 -0400

Name	Age	Marital Status	Passport #	Address	Type of Record	
Maiden Name	Place of Birth	Relationship to Head of Household	Year Left	Town	Date of Record (D-M-Y)	Comments
Father		Occupation	Reason Left	Uyezd	Archive/Fond/ Inventory/File	Credit
				Country	Film link	
CYGANAS / [TSIGAN], Yankel			3078	Kaunas Kaunas Kaunas Lithuania	Internal Passport Application -Aug-1932 LCVA/402/1vp/76	This record is from the LitvakSIG All-Lithuania Database (about LitvakSIG)
CIGANIS / [TSIGAN], Volf	born in 1909		314/1057236	Panevezys Panevezys Panevezys Lithuania	Internal Passport Application 19-June-1929 LCVA/1264/3/3382	The Certificate Nr. 65 issued by Panevezys Jewish Gymnasium 9 June 1929 is in the file. This record is from the LitvakSIG All-Lithuania Database (about LitvakSIG)
Hertsel	Ramygala, Panevezys Uyezd	schoolboy				
CIGANAS / [TSIGAN], Velvel	born in 1895	Single		Vytauto st. 2 Marijampole Marijampole Lithuania	Internal Passport Application 12-July-1922 LCVA/1020/4/115	His mother's name was Khasia HIMAKHER. Foreigner's Certificate #6463 issued in Marijampole 9 Sep 1922 is in the file This record is from the LitvakSIG All-Lithuania Database (about LitvakSIG)
Peisakh	Byalistok					

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Run on Thu, 07 Aug 2025 13:57:14 -0400

Testimony link	Name	Gender	Relationship To Interviewee	Survivor	Date Of Birth	Date Of Death Cause Of Death	Aliases
Experience Group					Country State City Place Of Birth	Country State City Place Of Death	Places
Interview Details							
Testimony link	Kozin Dora	F	Self	Yes	Sep 01, 1919 Poland Bialystok (Bialystok, Poland)		maiden name: Cygan
Jewish Survivor	[Cygan] Eleon	M	fathers, biological	No			Auschwitz (Poland : Concentration Camp)
Jan 29, 1996	[Cygan] Frieda	F	mothers, biological	No			(generic)
English	[Cygan] Kadi	M	brothers, biological	No			Bergen-Belsen (Germany : Concentration Camp)
U.S.A.	[Cygan] Sol	M	brothers, biological	Not Specified		1937 other type of death	Bialystok (Bialystok, Poland : Ghetto)
California	[Cygan] Rachela	F	sisters, biological	No			Bialystok (Bialystok, Poland)
San Diego	[Cygan] Rose	F	sisters, biological	No			Blizyn (Kielce, Poland : Concentration Camp)
	[Kozin] Leon	M	husbands	Yes			Majdanek (Lublin, Poland : Concentration Camp)
							New York (New York, USA)
							Zeilsheim (Germany)



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