**From Contested Space to Sacred Topography: Jews, Protestants and Catholics in Reformation Cracow**

**Anat Vaturi**

Throughout the 16th century and into the beginning of the 17th, a time when England was satirically considered a “Hell of Horses […] and the Paradice of Weomen,”[[1]](#footnote-1) Poland was described as a paradise for Jews (*paradisus Judaeorum*) and a refuge for heretics (*asylum haereticorum*).[[2]](#footnote-2) Indeed, in a Europe fraught with religious wars, Poland’s “golden and silver age”[[3]](#footnote-3) accommodated a multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious mosaic that attracted members of persecuted denominations from outside the country and empowered the development of local religious groups.[[4]](#footnote-4) The unification with Lithuania (1569) and resulting territorial expansion from the Baltic Sea almost all the way to the Black Sea coincided with economic prosperity, as Poland became the “wheat barn of Europe” as well the site of a cultural and intellectual boom. Concurrently, the aristocracy’s increased power in relation to the church and monarchy led to the emergence of a “democracy of nobles,” able to legislate limited religious pluralism. All these factors, along with a strong fear of religious war, led to the coexistence of Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Armenians, Muslims, Jews, and Protestants of different denominations in sixteenth-century Poland, with minimal religious coercion from the state.[[5]](#footnote-5) This situation encouraged the development of everyday practical tolerance among neighbors of different religions or confessions, and facilitated the development of a number of arrangements that allowed different ethnic or religious groups to share urban spaces. Shared churches of Catholics and Protestants, or of Lutherans and Calvinists, mosques in the outskirts of Vilna, multiple Jewish communities, and a multidimensional coexistence between the followers of various confessions were a source of Polish pride at the time and attracted the attention of foreign travelers and emissaries, such as the papal nuncio Niccolo Stoppio, who was astounded by the power of Protestants during his visit in Cracow in 1564:

“So powerful are the heretics, that they dare take arms and wreak havoc on the royal city.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

What puzzled Stoppio was not the very existence of Protestants in Cracow, which at that time was the most ethnically diverse metropolis in Poland, with a large immigrant population.[[7]](#footnote-7) Rather, the papal nuncio was astounded by Protestants’ status, their ability to express religious diversity and exercise power in public in a city known for its Catholic religiosity. This chapter seeks to shed some light on the character of the religious diversity that surprised the papal legate. Concentrating on the Jewish and Evangelical communities,[[8]](#footnote-8) it traces the dynamics of interreligious coexistence and discusses the local arrangements that helped establish and constantly redefined the experience of a shared city center in the period immediately prior to the triumph of the Catholic confesionalization in the second half of the 17th century.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**The Jewish Challenge**

Late medieval Cracow was known as Poland’s principal metropolis, a university town, and a flourishing commercial, cultural, and political center with extensive ties to other states and a substantial number of foreign residents.[[10]](#footnote-10) It was also a Catholic spiritual center with a growing number of churches, convents, and relics attracting pilgrims, as well as home to the most influential Jewish community in the Crown Poland. Until 1469, Jewish communal institutions and houses of most community members were centrally located on and near today’s *Jagiellońska Street*, then markedly called *Vicus Iudaeorum*, and *Judengasse*, or Jewish street, otherwise known as St. Anne Street, which ran from the main market square to the city walls and the so called Jewish Gate (*portula Iudaeorum*) leading to the main Jewish graveyard outside the city walls.[[11]](#footnote-11) There were no walls or gates to indicate spatial segregation and Christians lived adjacent to Jews; nonetheless, the city corner marked with an old synagogue (built before 1356) with an adjoining cemetery located on a parcel in front of the Church of St. Anne was recognized as a Jewish space.[[12]](#footnote-12) In contemporary documents, the location of this c church and of the first university buildings was designated as *in Judea* or *inter Judeos*.

During the 15th century, Jews were very active in the Cracovian real estate market. Some sold their houses to Christians, while prominent Jewish community members purchased properties for themselves and for the entire community in another part of the city centre, near the Szczepańskiego Square, behind the Church of Saint Stephen.[[13]](#footnote-13) A new synagogue was established close by on St. Mark Street. In 1469, an exchange agreement was signed between the representatives of the Jewish community and the Dlugosz brothers, according to which the Jews left their old quarter in the city centre and moved to the northern part of the city.[[14]](#footnote-14) Although the rules of Jewish residence and the legal status exempting Jews from municipal jurisdiction did not change, the new location was not only more remote from the main road to the city, from the city scale and the town hall, but also distanced Jewish homes from the upscale first row of city square houses. In exchange for a less central location, the communal authorities preserved Jewish residence inside the city. Unexpectedly, they quickly managed to re-establish a quite consolidated new neighbourhood. Although the new location wasn’t physically defined with a wall or limited to Jewish residents, and its formal religious space centred around a single synagogue, Jewish domestic practices and rituals rendered it a distinct sanctified urban area, spread along streets lined with houses whose windows shone with candlelight on Friday nights. Although its official name had not been changed, very soon Szpiglarska Street became known as Jewish Street in everyday topography, thus challenging the sacred landscape and municipal jurisdiction of the Catholic capitol. This source of contention was part of the context of two attacks on new Jewish neighbourhood in 1477 and 1494.

The land exchange agreement of 1469 between the Jews and the Dlugosz brothers, moving the Jewish challenge to the city image further away from the city centre, did mitigate the spatial conflict. Although significant, this change in residential area did not help with the more pressing tension related to the Jewish share in the urban economic sphere and their physical and economic omnipresence in the central market square. This issue laid the foundation for the 1485 agreement, a ‘*pacta*’, between the Cracovian magistrate and the elders of the Jewish community. This rather constrained compromise, which aimed at limiting Jewish competition in trade and sales, actually divided the contested economic sphere between Christian and Jewish merchants. To preserve their share in the city’s urban economy, the Jewish community agreed:

[To abstain from trade and cease from dealing with merchandise. Likewise, not to take various commodities or merchandise and sell with our own hands to other Christians, except for our unredeemed pledges by which we lost in usury and which we can sell in our houses at any time and opportunity. We may not dare to convey and bring these pledges to sell them in the streets or markets in the city, except for two specific days of the week, that is on Tuesday and Friday, restricted for markets, as well as on the fair-days […] Likewise we shall sell only the pledges we can swear on the Torah to be ours. […] Likewise, poor Jewesses have the right to sell on all days headdresses and neck jewels made by their own hands and craft. [[15]](#footnote-15)

For local authorities, struggling with Jewish exemption from municipal jurisdiction, this arrangement was a way to subject the Jewish community to their will. For Christian merchants, this agreement sought to deprive Jews of full economic rights of city residents and reduce their market activity at least to the limited level of other foreign merchants (*extranei*),[[16]](#footnote-16) who were allowed to sell their products at fairs and were subject to city’s staple rights.[[17]](#footnote-17) From the perspective of sacred topography, this arrangement reflected the church policy to strengthen the Catholic nature of city streets by limiting Jewish economic activity on Sundays and Christian holidays. From the Jewish perspective, this agreement limited community members’ share of retail and wholesale activity. Yet at the same time, it officially secured Jewish presence in the urban economy and created an opportunity for Jews to increase their activity in pawnbroking and trade in unredeemed pledges (so-called lapsed bonds—*obligatio sub lapsu*). It forced Jewish merchants to develop marketing methods that would overcome the urban mercantile cartel, such as employment of mercantile agents who worked on percentage and flooded the city streets and markets, or enrollment of family members and especially women in sales of handicraft products. Thus, while fewer Jews probably appeared at the city scale, Jewish peddlers and agents enticing customers became an omnipresent feature of the city squares. The economic pressure continued growing,[[18]](#footnote-18) and together with the above-described spatial challenge and increasing jurisdictional tension, this necessitated new arrangements limiting the Jewish share in Cracow’s religious landscape and economy to a tolerable level.

**Redefining the Jewish Share in Contested Space**

While searching for ways to overcome the economic limitations imposed on them, some of the affluent Cracovian Jews purchased properties in the adjacent independent royal city of Kazimierz, south of the northern branch of the Vistula (*Wisła*) river.[[19]](#footnote-19) In 1495, following a great fire and several anti-Jewish riots, the entire Cracovian Jewish community, amounting probably to 500–700 individuals at the time, moved from Cracow to Kazimierz, where they joined a small Jewish community which had been present there since the 14th century.[[20]](#footnote-20) The nature of this resettlement and the interreligious tensions behind it were interpreted differently not only by modern historians but already by contemporaries.[[21]](#footnote-21) However, when analyzing the sociopolitical and economic forces at play and perceiving physical space as a ‘contested ground’, it seems that the Jewish community consciously agreed to move to a designated quarter of the royal city of Kazimierz, which, although independent, was still a part of Cracow urban economy under royal jurisdiction. By settling a mere half-hour walk from the Cracovian city market, Jewish authorities gained a higher degree of communal autonomy and congruence, as well as more freedom in economic activities of Jewish merchants and craftsmen in the capital, all without losing jurisdictional protection assigned to Jews residing in royal domains under the supervision of administrator of royal estates (*wielkorządca*).

Whatever the circumstances were behind the move to Kazimierz, the significance of this change remains undisputed. The Jewish community and its institutions were erased from the sacral topography of Cracow. With the exception of very distinguished individuals who had royal permits to reside in the capital,[[22]](#footnote-22) no Jews permanently dwelled in the city or remained there after the town watch announced evening curfew. If any Jew did reside in the city, or in its enclaves owned by nobles, they still needed to walk to Kazimierz to attend religious services or receive communal assistance. Thus, the mode of Jewish residence itself was altered, the jurisdictional and social environment changed. Although socioeconomic, confessional, and political tensions similar to those occurring in Cracow could be felt in Kazimierz, the situation and dynamics in this town on the main city’s outskirts were different. With two separate “sacred areas” gradually established – a Christian town and the Jewish quarter called ‘the city of Jews’ (*Oppidum Iudaeorum)* – the frequency, amplitude, and resonance of conflicts became much lower. Around 1530, after settling the stormy quarrels with new emigrants from Bohemian lands, the size of the Jewish population in Kazimierz was more or less the same as that of the Christian population (circa 2000),[[23]](#footnote-23) and the Kazimierz community was on the cusp of the period known as its golden age. The community soon had a number of functioning synagogues,[[24]](#footnote-24) and turned into a fast developing ‘big urban community’ managed by an autonomous self-government in a corporation-like manner and ready to adopt itself to the evolving surroundings.[[25]](#footnote-25) The community secured the needs of its members not only in the spiritual realm but in everyday life as well. After the king officially forbade Jews to live in the Christian part of Kazimierz (1566),[[26]](#footnote-26) the community received the first privilege *de non tolerandis Christianis (to not tolerate Christians)* evergranted on Polish lands (1568).

Following the relocation to Kazimierz, the negotiations between Jews and the Cracovian magistrate continued. Yet, their character and orientation changed. The reoccurring conflicts had economic roots and although some religious rhetoric was gradually added to the opposition against renting city shops and storage to the Jews or against Jewish economic activity on Sundays and Christian holidays, the negotiations focused on the contested urban market and the new Jewish position in the metropolitan economic constellation. While Cracovian burghers insisted on treating Jews as foreign merchants and constantly returned to the above-mentioned agreement of 1485,[[27]](#footnote-27) the Jewish merchants and craftsmen sought to utilize their “in between” position. On one hand, they claimed that the restrictions of the 1485 pact could not be imposed on them as they were no longer town residents. On the other hand, the community continued to refer to itself as the Holy Community of Kroke (Cracow in Yiddish), and emphasized its location within the co-urban economic triangle of Cracow –Kazimierz – Kleparz and therefore demanded a fair Jewish share in the urban economy.[[28]](#footnote-28) Since Christian inhabitants of Kazimierz enjoyed some special trade rights in the capital, including permission to freely sell their products and purchase materials necessary for their craft,[[29]](#footnote-29) Jews insisted on equal treatment.[[30]](#footnote-30) They appeared in Cracow on every possible occasion, selling various commodities around the city, attracting Christian buyers, taking an active part in local bazaars and fairs, and making use of the small city weighing scale not only for measurements and taxes but also for closing deals.[[31]](#footnote-31) Following Jewish merchants’ requests, the king allowed them to rent a number of stores and warehouses in the center of the capitol:

Jews are allowed to rent shops and storage spaces, display merchandise at the market of Cracow; the magistrate and custom officials should not charge them with high or special payments, different to those required of the citizens of Cracow or Kazimierz.[[32]](#footnote-32)

While small merchants opposed renting shops to the Jews, other groups in the Cracovian society supported doing so. The Cracovian elite sought to continue rent spaces to Jews for substantial sums,[[33]](#footnote-33) while the municipality enjoyed the taxes collected from Jewish merchants. Even the poorer strata of Cracovians supported Jewish peddlers for their provision of cheaper products:

If only Jews were allowed to sell goods and roots, we would get them for much cheaper; [Christian merchants] are worse vendors than Jews, that is why they hate Jews […].[[34]](#footnote-34)

The royal interventions did not always manage to ease the conflict between the negotiating sides and at times, when the city council could not appease guild members or Christian merchants claiming exclusive trade rights, the conflict escalated and the competition over agricultural products even before they reached the city included confiscation of merchandise or violent excesses.[[35]](#footnote-35) In times of crisis, not only merchants but the city magistrate took extreme measures, such as temporary closing of the city gates before Jews.[[36]](#footnote-36) Using the excuse of epidemics brought by Jews as outsiders entering the city, the municipality sought to arrest the cycle of multiple litigations and antagonism, and redefine the market division anew, emphasizing the residential separation of the parties.

Throughout the sixteenth century, the existence of separate religious spheres diminished the importance of religious topography in determining Christian-Jewish relations and as a root of reoccurring conflicts. The sacral character of capital was not the key argument used by anti-Jewish opposition fighting for their everyday income. Following the Jews’ relocation to Kazimierz, economics constituted a framework for *convivencia* and religious diversity while it simultaneously fueled the market rivalry and supported the management of crises and reconciliation. In the new established arrangement, Jews and Christians saw themselves as physically separated from one another. Although Jews no longer lived in unifying *intramuros* space, they cohabited the same economic and administrative environment. Both sides understood the inevitability of economic tides and encounters, and negotiated – albeit not always peacefully – their character, frequency, and scale. They imposed limits on interreligious ties and economic activity that could lead to overexposure to another way of life or challenge the sacredness of religiously demarcated space. As long as they posed no religious threat and agreed to limitations, Jews were interwoven into the symbiotic metropolitan economic structure. The residential separation was the product of a complex multifaith reality. Economic relations, on the other hand, were far from facilitating total separation between the two communities. Rather, they reinforced religious diversity and practical toleration in the shared market space, even when the Protestant Reformation posed a new challenge to the religious topography of Cracow.

**The Rise of the Protestant Challenge**

Cracow, as a heterogenic city with a large German-origin population, and as a university town with a thriving publishing and cultural scene that also served as a center of international trade, was exposed to the ideas of the Reformation at an early stage. Many members of Cracow’s academia[[37]](#footnote-37) had a keen interest in Luther’s ideas, and read and discussed his publicly sold works. Despite the papal bull and a number of anti-Reformation decrees issued by the king,[[38]](#footnote-38) Lutheranism continued to spread across Cracow with every passing day, not only among humanists and intellectuals but also among urban nobles and wealthy city dwellers.[[39]](#footnote-39) In an attempt to quell the spread of the Reformation in this early stage, the Church launched a series of public sermons and began prosecuting city residents accused of Lutheran errors and the desecration of Catholic sacraments (1525–1531). Public interest in Luther’s teachings brought to Cracow a former student of its academia and a zealous preacher, Jakub of Iłża. In 1528, he was put on trial for supporting Lutheran doctrine, but received only a warning. Jakub continued to propagate Lutheran ideas, this time from the church stand at St. Stephen’s and became the first preacher to build a following in Cracow. He was put on trial again (1534); this time, after the church authorities understood the threat of losing a parish church to a new confession, he was forced to escape into exile. The rising presence of Lutheranism in the city and the threat of losing parish churches were also behind the Church authorities’ recommendation to move German sermons from St. Mary’s – the largest, most prominent, and centrally located parish church in town – to the smaller one of St. Barbara’s in the churchyard (1536).[[40]](#footnote-40) In response to the Church’s clampdown, the Reformation movement in Cracow went underground, with supporters convening clandestinely in private residences. Between 1542–1547, the royal librarian Andrzej Trzecieski, known in modern historiography as “the first hero of the Polish Reformation,”[[41]](#footnote-41) hosted what were to become the most famous Protestant private gatherings in his home. Gradually, many Reformation supporters began abandoning the Catholic church and officially accepting the Protestant faith. Consequently, even before the death of the king Sigismund I the Old (1548), who was a strident opponent of the Reformation, the movement emerged back into the open. Public Lutheran sermons could be heard in several of Cracow’s Catholic churches that became contested spaces and budding sites of Protestant sacred topography. The Catholic response, at that stage, was focused on curing the souls and strengthening teaching basics.

The Reformation began to truly thrive in the capital with the enthronement of young Sigismund II Augustus, ‘inclined to pragmatic compromise’ in matters both political and religious.[[42]](#footnote-42) As of 1552, the minister Grzegorz Paweł of Brzezin, one the most prominent leaders and theologists of the Polish Reformation movement, began conducting Protestant services in private homes near Cracow. These were attended ‘by masses of people arriving on foot from Cracow with the utmost enthusiasm […] in good times and bad times, and without fear of the threats or insults levelled at them along the way at the incitement of the Church’.[[43]](#footnote-43)

In the 1550s, many Poles who had previously been interested in Lutheranism began leaving the Catholic establishment for Calvinism, which was better tailored to the needs of wealthy city dwellers and nobles. Calvinist congregations were quick to emerge. On August 17, 1557, the first public Protestant mass was held in Cracow, at the court of the burgrave and senator Jan Boner.[[44]](#footnote-44) This event marked the official beginning of the Cracovian Evangelical community. At the request of the followers, Grzegorz Paweł was appointed as the first permanent chief Protestant minister in Cracow, subsequently serving in this position for ten years.[[45]](#footnote-45) In addition to continuous attempts to introduce Protestant preachers to parish churches,[[46]](#footnote-46) Protestant services were held at the private homes of nobleman Marcjan Chełmski next to the Church of St. Francis,[[47]](#footnote-47) and of Jan Tarło on St. John Street. Although not ecclesiastical, these buildings became acknowledged sites of religious practice, and of the fast developing alternative sacred topography. Their appearance in the midst of city center and next to ecclesiastical buildings shaping the religious life of Catholics introduced Protestantism to the official public sphere and made it more pluralistic, to the obvious dismay of Catholic church authorities.

Lutheran-Calvinist division was not the only one to divide the Polish Protestant community. While the Calvinist doctrine as it was adopted in Poland gave no room to social ideals that would appeal to city commoners or members of the lower classes, following some theological disputes, many city residents left the Calvinist Church in favor of even more radical sects. The Calvinist denomination split into the larger Reformed Church and the anti-Trinitarian minor church (*Ecclesia Minor*), referred to by its rivals as Arian (after the ancient Christian sect), and by its supporters as the Polish Brethren.[[48]](#footnote-48) Grzegorz Paweł became a leader of the Polish Brethren in Cracow. In the capital, members of the more radical denomination held their services at a residential building on 14 Szpitalna Street, corner of St. Thomas Street, which had been donated to the Polish Brethren Church by Stanisław Cikowski.[[49]](#footnote-49) Cracow fast became the most important center of this radical denomination (alongside Lublin), up until the establishment of the ani-Trinitarian center in Raków (1567). The split inside the church did not impede the rapid development of the Calvinist center in Cracow. According to the clearly not objective account of the Protestant minister Wiśniowiecki, there were approximately 1000 Protestants in the Cracow metropolitan area in 1556.[[50]](#footnote-50) According to Urban’s likely inflated estimates, there were 2,000–3,000 Protestants of different faiths and sects in the Cracow metropolitan area already in 1568. That is, roughly 10 percent of the local population,[[51]](#footnote-51) most of them Calvinists.[[52]](#footnote-52) Despite their growing numbers, Protestants’ impact on city religious outlook was still minor. Their domestic space had no sacred character, and their daily urban life differed in no way than that of their Catholic neighbours. Protestants gathered in private residences and ceased their missionary activities. As Tazbir accurately summarized, in Poland “the transition to the Protestant faith did not involve lifestyle changes; nobles who changed their faith did not sever ties with Catholics and vice versa.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Research proves that Calvinist communities in Poland were dissimilar to those in western Europe, as the Polish nobility did not change its ways or make efforts to propagate the new faith, nor were they secluded from theirs Catholic neighbors.[[54]](#footnote-54) The fact that Calvinist Synod legislation called upon devotees to change their ways, to cease from “gluttony, drunkenness, and immodest dancing […] and extravagant dress,”[[55]](#footnote-55) likely points to the lack of any significant behavioral change among Polish followers of Geneva. Some burghers and nobles who adopted a new faith did become more earnest and righteous, and more inclined to live modestly or abstain from luxury.[[56]](#footnote-56) Otherwise, religious differences had very little influence over the day-to-day lives of devotees, and thus posed but a minor challenge to the city outlook. Despite the opposition of religious authorities on both sides, intermarriage was not uncommon, and Christians of different denominations gathered in assemblies and accommodated each other as guests. Catholics discussed religion with Protestants and attended Protestant funerals. Wealthy owners employed Protestant servants and clerks. The atmosphere as a whole encouraged the development of pragmatic approaches to interfaith interaction, which existed alongside prejudice and religious animosity. This relatively quiet period, observed by the papal nuncio Stoppio, was temporary, and it changed when Protestants’ achievements started to threaten the sacred topography of Cracow.

In 1564, the first Protestant gymnasium was founded, attracting students from all over Poland, and establishing Cracow as one of the centers for reformist education.[[57]](#footnote-57) In 1569, “thanks to the influence of the Protestant magnates,”[[58]](#footnote-58) King Sigismund II Augustus permitted the establishment of an Evangelical cemetery in an ancient garden outside one of the city gates (*Brama Mikołajska*).[[59]](#footnote-59) On May 2, 1572, after years of praying in private homes, proclaiming Protestant ideas in contested parish churches, and following continuous effort and fundraising, the community managed to obtain a permit from the king to open a Protestant church (*zbór*) in the city, on 6 St. John Street.[[60]](#footnote-60) Due to the unique structure of the roof, reminiscent of a movable structure used to cover hay barracks (see picture), the church was nicknamed “Bróg” (the Haystack).[[61]](#footnote-61) This was the so called “shared church,” in which members of both the Augsburg Evangelical (Lutheran) Church and the Evangelical Reformed (Calvinist) Church could hold their services separately according to the common Evangelical confession, formulated in 1570 and known as *Consensus Sandomirensis.* [[62]](#footnote-62) German services were held in a separate hall on the uppermost floor, while the German-Lutheran minister was subordinate to the Polish minister.[[63]](#footnote-63) Besides those local achievements, the Protestants in the capital gained also from state-wide political successes of their leaders. For example, owing to the annotation to the legislation of King Casimir IV Jagiellon, they could hold titles and positions “as long as they were members of the Christian faith,” and not necessarily “members of the Christian faith who answer to the Roman Church.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Moreover, owing to the Warsaw Confederation (1573), their legal status was reinforced and no state interference in conscientious matters was permitted, thereby strengthening the Evangelical Protestants’ legal status within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Following the Evangelists’ series of triumphs in the regional and state political arena, the Cracovian congregation began to attract opposition. Markedly, although anti-Protestant excesses had both religious-political and socioeconomical grounds, the most resented were Evangelical actions influencing the religious topography of the city center of Cracow. Although Catholic authorities tolerated Protestants in the city council and market square,[[65]](#footnote-65) it was a rather antagonistic tolerance, based on Catholics enduring of Evangelical modest presence without embracing it. It was a very delicate equilibrium which lasted as long as the sacred landscape of the capital was preserved. Collective use of public space for processions and establishment of new sites of religious practice shaken the balance. Yet, since the church authorities had their hands tied by political agreements, the anti-Protestant opposition moved to “the streets.” Among all the cities in Poland, Cracow became the site of exceedingly frequent religious riots, until the papist opposition managed to push the Protestant sacred institutions out of the city and regain control over urban sacred landscape.



Mobs of commoners and students targeted public displays of Protestant worship. They attacked Protestant funerals (1557, 1578, 1581, 1597), demolished the Evangelical cemetery (1574, 1577, 1578, 1585) and the Evangelical hospital (1607), and assaulted Protestant clerics and community members, breaking into their homes or setting them on fire (1577, 1578, 1581, 1610). The Brog church building was demolished twice (1574 and 1587). On May 26, 1591, it was burned to the ground along with the city’s Polish Brethren church building. During the first attacks, Protestants sought to retaliate against their Catholic aggressors. Protestant violence usually took the form of individual attacks against students or clerics. Examples are the assaults carried out by Piotr Tomicki in 1576, by Jan Stadnicki in 1577 and 1581. In addition a student was murdered at the hands of Mikołaj Dłuski’s servant in 1582.[[66]](#footnote-66) There were also isolated cases of group attacks by Protestants, such as an ambush on a group of passersby who had approached the Bróg in 1578, an attack on worshippers during a Catholic mass by a group of soldiers in 1587, or an attack on the Carmelite church in 1588. However, in face of the escalating pressure of the Counter-Reformation and the arrival of the Jesuits in Cracow (1564), the Protestant leadership ceased its displays of power and assumed instead a defensive position focusing on upholding its existing accomplishments and ensuring safety.

**Redefining the Protestant Share in Urban Space**

After the complete destruction of the Protestant church building, the Catholics had achieved their objective: fearful of building it anew, the Protestant community moved its services away from Cracow. The community now gathered in the village of Aleksandrowice, owned by Stanisław Iwan Kamiński, one of the community elders. In this village, 10 kilometers away from Cracow, Polish Protestants – whose numbers were falling – prayed and assembled together with members of German descent who had remained Lutheran. The community continued as yet another small and local community, while its influence beyond the region gradually eroded. The Counter Reformation re-established the Catholic sacred topography of Cracow while limiting Protestant worship to private sphere. Polish Evangelists, who unlike the Jews created no sanctity around their domestic space, were allowed to live in the city center. They were allowed to use public space while refraining from public expressions of their religion, which were viewed as challenging the sacred topography of the city. Furthermore, as the Counter Reformation conquered the urban space, the Catholic church sought to transform the central public sphere from contested or shared to sanctified. While using the urban space as part of their narrative of victory over dissidents and religious diversity, Catholic authorities first invested in retaking former Protestant buildings and transforming them back into manifestly ecclesiastical spaces. For example, they convinced the king to hand the Bróg’s ruins over to Stanisław Lubomirski, a pious Catholic and sponsor of many churches, who then gave them to the St. Bernard Order. The Protestants voiced opposition to this move in the 1627 General Assembly, to no avail. In the 1630s, the construction of a new Catholic church of Saint Mary of the Crib began atop the ruins of the Bróg. In addition to retaking Protestant churches, the Counter Reformation movements included rebuilding existing churches and establishing new religious sites in central city areas. As in many other places in central Europe, the non-Catholic symbolic markers were erased from the contested city center, and the urban landscape returned to an overwhelmingly Catholic topography.

**Conclusion**

On 18 March 1596, the king Zigismund the Third decided to move his residence from Cracow to Warsaw. Although this change significantly contributed to the decline of Cracow’s political and economic importance, it did not influence the prominence of Cracow as a religious center. In the same year, Giovanni Paolo Mucante, the secretary of the papal legate Enrico Caetani, visited Poland and wrote in his diary that Cracow was indeed a spiritual center worthy the old saying “if Rome was not Rome, Cracow would be Rome.”[[67]](#footnote-67) Roughly four decades separate the observations of Stoppio and Mucante, yet the impression left by the two foreign observers testify to a shift Cracow underwent from a urban hub experiencing religious diversity and negotiating the character of its city space, to an ecclesiastical centre “rich […] in churches, in bodies of saints, innumerable places of worship, and non-stop religious services as if the city was another Rome.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Although the city dwellers and daily incoming remained religiously and confessionally heterogenic, the public expression of their religious diversity was limited to the necessary minimum. Both Jews and Protestants of different disseminations were allowed to be present in the economic, juridical, and administrative sphere of the city, as long as their worship practices was confined to private sphere in the case of Protestants, or to the separated residential quarter in adjacent town in case of Jews. The difference in the Catholic approach to Jewish and Protestant neighbors was, among other issues, related to the challenge the two minorities posed to the sacred topography of the city. Since Polish Protestants were not visibly different from their Catholic neighbours, they could live in the city as long as they conformed to the norm of a public and private distinction dictated by the Catholic politico-religious majority and practiced their faith in private spaces marked by the threshold of the house or churches outside of the city. In case of the vibrant Jewish community, it was not only the institutions or worship but the way of life in general that appropriated urban space, and thus violated the sacral topography of Cracow and led to the exclusion of Jews from urban residential space. The coexistence in the public sphere was thus realized through exclusion of religious minorities from the sacred topography of the city. With the victory of the Counter-Reformation, the once contested space of the urban center became the heart of practical toleration, especially in the economic realm and the sphere of antagonistic or granted tolerance of Catholic authorities towards religious minorities.[[69]](#footnote-69) The dominance of the Catholic creed was reflected in the physical transformation of urban space, in which there was no place for a Jewish Street, or for Protestant churches, or for “heretics [who] wreak havoc on the royal city.”[[70]](#footnote-70)

1. Fynes Moryson, *The Itinerary* (Glasgow, 1907), 3: 462. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Stanisław Kot, “Polska rajem dla Żydów, piekłem dla chłopów, niebem dla szlachty,” *Kultura i Nauka* (Warsaw, 1937): 255-282. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Paweł Jasienica coined these terms for the 16th century (the Golden Age) and the beginning of the 17th (the Silver Age). *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów* (Warsaw, 1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Leading up to the Reformation, only 40 percent of the population were ethnic Poles, some of whom were Russian Orthodox. Moshe Rosman, “Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,” in *Culture of the Jews. A New History,* ed. David Biale (New York, 2002), 521. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The issue of religious tolerance came under discussion in Poland as far back as the Middle Ages and found expression in a theological doctrine that opposed coercive religious missions. The most well-known pioneer of this approach was Paweł Włodkowic. See also: S. Sider, *Handbook to Life in Renaissance Europe* (New York, 2005), 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Roman Żelewski, *Materiały do dziejów Reformacji w Krakowie. Zaburzenia wyznaniowe w latach 1551-1598* (Cracow, 1962),15. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. By the end of the 16th century, there were approximately 14,700–15,900 inhabitants in the city of Cracow proper. In the 17th century, 40 percent of the city council members were immigrants from abroad or other areas in Poland. Italians, Hungarians, and later, Scots, could be easily found in the Cracovian streets and markets, while 13 percent of Italians in Cracow became members of the city council in the 17th century. See: Kamila Follprecht & Zdzisław Noga, “Kraków w1598 r.” in *Atlas Historyczny Polski. Województwo krakowskie w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, vol. 2, ed. Henryk Rutkowski (Warsaw, 2008), 151; Janina Bieniarzówna, *Mieszczaństwo krakowskie VII w: z badań nad strukturą społeczną miasta* (Cracow, 1969), 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Evangelist community in Cracow included devotees of the Augsburg Evangelical Church (also known as the Lutheran Church) and the Evangelical Reformed Church (also known as the Calvinist Church). They referred to themselves as “Evangelists” to emphasize their adherence to ancient Christian principles, and as a form of protest to the names assigned to them by the Catholic establishment. See: Urszula Augustyniak, *Historia Polski 1572-1795* (Warsaw, 2008), 177–178. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Małłek divided the history of Polish religious tolerance into four sub-periods: 1517–1548, the subversive growth of the Reformation in defiance of the monarchy; 1548–1573, full tolerance under the reign of Sigismund II Augustus; 1573–1648, the age of tolerance with counter-Reformation elements; and 1657–1768, the triumph of Catholic confessionalization and Sarmatism. See: Janusz Małłek, “Tolerancja religijna a konfesjonalizacja w Polsce i Szwecji w XVI i XVII wieku,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 43 no. 2/3 (1999), 25–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Even as late as in the 1670s, 19 percent of personal signatures in Cracow city books were in German, 10 percent in Italian, and 24 percent those of foreign residents whose names had been translated to Polish. See: Wacław Urban, “Skład narodowościowy mieszczaństwa krakowskiego w latach 1574–1660,” in *Społeczeństwo Staropolskie*, ed. A. Wyczański (Warsaw, 1983), 3: 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Hanna Zaremska, *Żydzi w średniowiecznej Polsce. Gmina krakowska* (Warsaw, 2010), 344-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Before 1469, the Jewish corner had one more synagogue with a small adjacent cemetery and a hospital. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. aremska, *Żydzi w średniowiecznej,* 359-360; B. Wyrozumska, *Żydzi w średniowiecznym Krakowie. Wypisy źródłowe z ksiąg miejskich krakowskich* (Cracow, 1995), no. 512. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Jan Długosz (1415–1480) a renowned chronicler and his younger brother were both canons of Cracow. For more information about this process see Marcin Starzyński, “The Oldest Hebrew Document in Poland (1485) and Its Translations,” *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* 15 (2017): 12; Zaremska, *Żydzi w średniowiecznej*, 346, 360, 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Author’s translation from pic. 8 in Majer Balaban, *Toldot ha-yehudim be-Krakov u-be-Kazhimiezh: 1304–1868,* vol. 1, transl. David Weinfeld et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The trend to limit trade by foreign merchants had begun in the 1480s in centres on major regional and international trade routes. See: Zaremska, *Żydzi w średniowiecznej,* 189, 211–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. These required merchants to unload their goods in the city and to display them for sale for a certain period.  [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. For example, in 1494 the number of Jewish butchers was restricted to four (instead of six). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Stefan Świszczowski, *Miasto Kazimierz pod Krakowem* (Cracow, 1981), 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Stanisław Kutrzeba,“Ludność i majątek Kazimierza w końcu XVI stulecia,” *Rocznik Krakowski* 3 (1900): 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. For a discussion on different interpretations of Jewish relocation to Kazimierz see for example: Bożena Wyrozumska, “Czy Jan Olbracht wygnał Żydów z Krakowa?” *Rocznik Krakowski* 59 (1993): 5–11; Hanna Zaremska, “Crossing the River. How and Why the Jews of Kraków Settled in Kazimierz at the End of the Fifteenth Century,” *Polin* 22 (2010), 174–192; Zaremska, *Żydzi w średniowiecznej Polsce,* 493–496; Bałaban, *Historja Żydów* w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu, 1304–1868 (Cracow, 1931), 64; Janina Bieniarzówna & Jan M. Małecki (eds.) *Dzieje Krakowa*, vol. 1 (Cracow, 1992), 150; Ilia M. Rodov, *The Torah Ark in Renaissance Poland: A Jewish Revival of Classical Antiquity* (Leiden, 2013), 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Rodov, *The Torah Ark*, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Danuta Dombrowska, Stefan Krakowski and Arthur Cygielman, “Cracow,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 5, Second printing, (Jerusalem, 1973), 1028. Bieniarzówna & Małecki, *Dzieje Krakowa*, 152. Despite the gradual enlargement of the Jewish area, the demographic ratio remained constant until the Partitions. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. For their detailed description see: Rodov, *The Torah Ark.* [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The term ‘big community’ was coined by Elchanan Reiner in his article “‘Aliyyat ha-Kehillah ha-Gedolah’: al Shorshe ha-Kehillah ha-Yehudit ha-Ironit be-Polin ba-Et ha-Hadashah ha-Mukdemet,” *Gal-Ed* 20 (2006), 13– 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Alicja Falniowska-Gradowska & Franciszek Lesniak, eds., *Lustracja województwa krakowskiego 1659-1664*, v. 2 (Warsaw, 2005), 354-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. It was referred to by voivodes and kings as well. See for example the edict of Sigismund I of 1527: »Sigismund I rex Poloniae ordinationem Ioannis Amor de Tarnow palatini Cracoviensis, de mercatura Iudaeorum a. 1485 factam, ratam esse iubet.«, quoted in Franciszek Piekosiński, *Prawa, przywileje i statuta miasta Krakowa (1507–1795),* vol. 1 (1507–1586), part 1 (Cracow, 1885), 43–45. In an attempt to better enforce local regulations, the Sejm in Piotrkow (1538) ruled that “Jews do not have unlimited freedom of trade, but they ought to follow the rules of our kingdom and observe the pacts which were signed in given cities.” *Volumina Legum: Przedruk zbioru praw staraniem XX. Pijarów w Warszawie,* vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1860), 525. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Economically, Kazimierz was a satellite town that enjoyed a symbiosis both with the central city of Cracow and with the fellow satellite town of Kleparz. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. J. Wyrozumski, *Dzieje Krakowa*, vol. 1. *Kraków do schyłku wieków średnich* (Cracow, 1992), 243. Around 1600, the population of Kazimierz amounted to 26–28% of the population of Cracovian urban agglomeration. Leszek Belzyt, ‘Ludność i domy w Kazimierzu około roku 1600. Próba bilansu statystycznego’, *Czasy Nowożytne* 3 (1997): 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. According to the staple right, the Jews, like other foreign merchants, were obligated to report their merchandise to the city clerk on the day of their arrival to the city or the morning after. Only upon reporting could the commodities be stored or displayed in shops rented by the Jews in the city. In the absence of a fair, the merchandise could be sold to clients directly or moved from the city a week after the reported arrival and under the condition that it was displayed in the market. If the staple right was violated, a Jewish merchant could lose all their commodities: half of it to the voivode and half to the city. The staple right was to be exercised under the supervision of the city magistrate and the kahal of Kazimierz. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Cracow had two city weighing scales located on the main market square. One of the entrances to the small weighing scale was from the Jewish Market. See: Bieniarzówna & Małecki, *Dzieje Krakowa,* 181–83; Szymon Kazusek, *Żydzi w handlu* *Krakowa w połowie XVII wieku* (Cracow, 2000), 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Piekosiński, *Prawa, przywileje,* 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For example, in 1608, two out of four shops in the building belonging to the Cracovian castellan Janusz Ostrogski were rented by Jews. Kazusek, *Żydzi w handlu*, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Walerian Nekanda Trepka, *Liber generationis plebanorum*, part 1, eds. W. Dworzaczek (Wrocław, 1963), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Bałaban, *Historja Żydów*, 217-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Bałaban, *Historja Żydów*, 210–11. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The Akademia Krakowska was founded in 1364 and was the second university to be established in eastern Europe. Its current name – the Jagellonian University – was given to it only in the 19th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. For example, the decree to establish a special committee overseeing bookstores and publishing houses in 1521, a decree permitting the Cracow bishop and town committee members to search private residences for forbidden books in 1523, and a ban on attending Protestant universities abroad. For a discussion on Luther’s influence on the Reformation in Poland, see O. Bartel, “Marcin Luter w Polsce,” *OiRP* 7 (1962): 27–50. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. G. Schramm, “Reformation und Gegenreformation in Krakau,” *Zeitschrift für Ostforschungen Länder und Völker im östlichen Mitteleuropa*, 19 (1970), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. It was a free-standing building in which Polish sermons were delivered until 1530. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Wacław Urban, *Dwa szkice z dziejów reformacji* (Kielce, 1991), 47–53. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Janusz Tazbir, “Poland,” in *The Reformation in National Context*, ed. Bob Scribner et al. (Cambridge, 1994), 169. King Sigismund II Augustus’ attitude to the Reformation is still under debate, but scholars agree that his religious policy was born of political pragmatism and in pursuit of political and dynastic interests. See Alicja Dybkowska, *Zygmunt August* (Lublin, 2003), 64–68; Anna Sucheni-Grabowska, *Zygmunt August. Król polski i Wielki Książe Litewski* (Cracow, 2010), 389-415. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Wojciech Węgierski, *Kronika Zboru Ewangelickiego Krakowskiego* (Cracow, 1817), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Jan Boner (1516–1562), the eldest son of Seweryn Boner and an urban merchant and royal banker turned noble. Already at 14, Boner travelled to Protestant centers and met with leading figures in the movement, such as Philip of Hesse and Philip Melanchton, also befriending Erasmus, who dedicated one of his works to him in 1531. Boner initially supported Luther but later switched to the Calvinist faith. He was an advocate for the Protestant-Evangelical denomination and even tried to integrate Protestants and Jewish converts into the city council of Kazimierz. For further reading see Marian Hanik, *Trzy pokolenia z rodu Bonerów* (Cracow, 1985), 49–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Walerjan Krasiński, *Zarys dziejów powstania i upadku reformacji w Polsce Reformacji w Polsce*. Vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1903), 207. Another minister, Daniel Biliński, was appointed in 1558 for German-speaking adherents. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. In 1550, the town council unsuccessfully attempted to place two Protestant preachers at St. Mary’s, and in 1564 a preacher to the church of St. Martin. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See complaints against these services: Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie (Hereafter APKr.) *Inscr. Castr. Crac*. T. 76: 710, 976. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. This internal schism was officially approved by the 1565 Protestant general assembly in Piotrków. Since the theology of the Polish Brethren was largely formulated by Faustus Socinius, the adherents of the Brethren were known in western Europe as the Socinians. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The exact date of the establishment of the Polish Brethren Church is disputed. Some date it as early as the beginning of 1565. See H. Merczyng, *Zbory i senatorowie protestanccy* (Warsaw, 1904), 108–109. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Wacław Urban, “Heretycy parafii Mariackiej w Krakowkie w 1568 r.” *OiRP* 32 (1987): 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Urban, “Heretycy parafii,” 168. In contrast, Kościelny argues – without specifying sources – that while 15–20 percent of the Polish nobility was Protestant in the 1570s, Protestants amounted to only about four percent of Cracow’s residents. Piotr Kościelny*, Dzieje Reformacji w Polsce* (Warsaw, 2017), 290, 352. For 1572 a much lower number of 600 Protestants is given by J. Bieniarzówna: “Kraków pod wpływami reformacji,” in D*zieje Krakowa,* 2: 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Waldemar Kowalski, “The Reformation and Krakow Society, c. 1517–1637: Social Structures and Ethnicities,” in *Stadt und Reformation: Krakau, Nüremberg und Prag (1500*–*1618)*, ed. by Michael Diefenbacher, et al. (Praha/ Červený Kostelec, 2019), 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Janusz Tazbir, “Społeczeństwo wober reformacji,” in *Polska w epoce odrodzenia. Państwo-Społeczeństwo – Kultura*, ed. A. Wyczański (Warszawa, 1986), 340. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Mariusz Markiewicz, *Historia Polski*, *1492*–*1795* (Cracow, 2002), 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Roman Żelewski, “Zaburzenia wyznaniowe w Krakowie. Okres przewagi różnowierców 1551–1573,” *OiRP* 6 (1961), 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Janina Bieniarzówna and ks. Karol Kubisz, *400 lat reformacji pod Wawelem, 1557-1957* (Warsaw, 1958), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Previously, Cracow had one elementary school where Lutheran faith was taught in German. As of 1572, the gymnasium’s management was handed over to Jan Thenaudus. It continued to operate until the final destruction of the church building and followed the curriculum of German educator Sturm Johann. The emphasis was on the humanities and theology. It remains unclear whether Polish was also taught. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Krasiński, *Zarys dziejów,* 1: 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. APKr, *Inscr. Castr. Crac.* T. 99: 744; *Prawa y wolności dissydentom w nabożeństwie chrześcijańskim w Koronie Polskiej y w W. X. L. Słuzące: z Przywileiow, Konstitucyi Seymowych, y Statutow W. X. L. y rożnych inszych [...] Authentykow zebrane, y dla Wiadomości Wszystkich do Druku Podane przez Daniela Ernesta Jabłońskiego* (n.p., 1767), 23-4. In this privilege, Protestants are referred to as Christians, not “heretics.” According to Węgierski, the king granted the Cracowian community the privilege to establish a school and a hospital already in 1569, together with the permit for a church. This permit is not extant. We do, however, have the permit for the cemetery from August 8, 1569. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. While the seat of the king was now in Warsaw, Cracow remained the legal capital up until 1795. See Bieniarzówna & Małecki, *Dzieje Krakowa,* 2: 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Samuel M.B. Linda, *Słownik języka polskiego* (Warsaw, 1807), 1:170. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Signed in 1570 between the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and the Bohemian Brethren – a more radical faction within the Bohemian Reformation, some of whose members resettled in Poland after being exiled in 1548. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. See Żelewski, “Akta i relacje dotyczące zburzenia zboru kalwińsko-luterańskiego w Krakowie w r. 1574,” in *Z dziejów Odrodzenia w Polsce. Teki Archiwalne* z. 2 (Warsaw, 1954) 111, ft. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Prawa y wolności*, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. In the second half of the 16th century the percentage of Protestants in the city council reached 40 percent. In 1574, Evangelicals constituted 70 percent of the acting council responsible for city administration. Despite those high numbers, the magistrate could not prevent the riots. Zdzisław Noga, *Krakowska rada miejska w XVI wieku: studium o elicie władzy* (Cracow, 2003), 180–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. APKr. *Cast. Crac. Rel*. vol. 3, 689-90, 1156-1157; Bibl. Jagiell. Ms. cim. nr 8420. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Jan Władysław Woś (ed.), *Itinerario in Polonia del 1596 di Giovanni Paolo Mucante Cerimoniere Pontificio* (Rome, 1981), 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Almut Bues, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Dominikaners Martin Gruneweg (1562-ca. 1618) über seine Familie in Danzig, seine Handelsreisen in Osteuropa und sein Klosterleben in Polen* (Wiesbaden, 2009), 831. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. First, new urban residents of the Protestant faith were registered as adhering to another religion. In 1637, at the request of local ecclesiastical authorities, it became legally forbidden for Protestants to join guilds. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. See ft. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)