

Tomasz Eugeniusz Malec

**Jewish Architecture and Urbanism
in the Years 1495–1815**

The Jewish City in Casimir, Cracow



Copyright © MMXV
ARACNE editrice int.le S.r.l.

www.aracneeditrice.it
info@aracneeditrice.it

via Quarto Negroni, 15
00040 Ariccia
(06) 93781065

ISBN 978-88-548-8420-5

*No part of this book may be reproduced
by print, photoprint, microfilm, microfiche, or any other means,
without publisher's authorization.*

1th edition: May 2015

*Author would like to thank everyone
who helped in the writing of this book*

Contents

- 9 *Foreword*
- II *Introduction*
- 23 *Chapter I*
Establishment of the Jewish Diaspora in the Kingdom of Poland
1.1. Migration of Jews to Polish lands, 23 – 1.2. Social, economic and political reasons of medieval Jewish migrations to Kingdom of Poland, 27.
- 33 *Chapter II*
Medieval Jewish colonization in Cracow and its service cities
2.1. 11th–Century Jewish colonization in the Cracow area, 33 – 2.2. Medieval Jewish colonization in Casimir in the 14th and 15th C., 34 – 2.3. Urbanism in medieval Casimir, 36 – 2.4. Founding of the Jewish City in 15th C., 40 – 2.5. Territorial development of the Jewish City in the 16th and 17th C., 42.
- 49 *Chapter III*
Non-cultural conditions of the Casimiriensis Jewish City spatial development
3.1. Influence of chosen non-cultural conditions on the Jewish City's development, 49 – 3.2. Statutes and general privileges given to the Jews in the Kingdom of Poland from the 13th to 15th centuries, 59 – 3.3. The legal and economic situation of the Jewish City inhabitants before the Swedish Deluge and the Chmielnicki Uprising, 64 – 3.4. Economic fall as the main reason of the stagnation of architectural development in the Jewish City, 68 – 3.5. Polish Catholic Church regulations influencing the urban space of the Jewish City, 72.
- 77 *Chapter IV*
Cultural conditions of the Casimiriensis Jewish City's spatial development
4.1. Relations between culture, architecture, and urbanism, 77 – 4.2. Organization of Jewish society on Polish lands, 79 – 4.3. Jewish intangible

culture and its influence on architecture and urbanism, 83 – 4.3.1. *Knowledge and technology*, 86 – 4.3.2. *Religion, tradition, customs*, 90 – 4.3.3. *Religious conditions of Jewish urbanism development*, 91 – 4.3.4. *Sabbath in the Jewish City's space*, 93 – 4.3.5. *Influence of the Sukkoth on architecture*, 95 – 4.4. Jewish architectural detail, 97 – 4.5. Conditions of synagogues' development in the Jewish City, 109 – 4.6. Architecture of synagogues in terms of cultural and non-cultural conditions influence, 114.

125 *Conclusions*

129 *List of References*

137 *List of Figures*

Foreword

N. Gül Asatekin*

As an architect, I was very interested when I read the book *Development of Jewish Architecture and Urbanism in the Years 1495–1815: the Jewish City in Casimir, Cracow*. The book contains very valuable information and presents the results of intense interdisciplinary research on the Jewish urban space, exploring the Jewish City in Casimir, which is a well preserved historical district. The importance of this approach to the research is based especially on an assumption that development of the Jewish buildings in the Jewish City in Casimir, through all the time of its existence, remained in direct connection with both cultural and external conditions.

I have observed several neighbourhoods named “Jewish Districts” in different European countries, including Turkey. But, literature on the architectural characteristics of these environments is very limited and mostly local. The historical studies on the Jewish community mainly focus on socio-cultural and political aspects. Analysis of the physical environment and their change in time with respect to influencing factors are usually not of primary importance.

The messages expressed by the community who created the architectural features can only be understood by evaluating the architectonics of the built environment.

The name of the book may give the impression of a sole monograph, but it focuses on the Jewish City of Casimir, Cracow, and gives the clues of these reciprocal relations to understand the religious, ethnic, cultural, political, and social changes in a time. The book refers to the importance of the interdisciplinary scientific work so that one can understand the complex co-existence of different factors before reaching to generalized statements.

Poland played an important role for Jewish culture throughout history. Understanding this phenomenon from the viewpoint of

* Conservation architect, Prof. Dr. at İstanbul Kemerburgaz University.

architecture and urbanism is experienced through the case of the abovementioned specific settlement.

Introduction

Jewish civilization has survived through today as conscious of its beginning and history. Jewish civilization, through the ages, remained in almost unaltered shape, being subjected to only small changes under the influence of exterior conditions. In spite of the passage of several thousand years, this civilization preserved its cultural basis, its own identity, and its perception of reality.

The diversity of Jewish civilization in ancient times aroused much controversy. Therefore, Jewish civilization was recognized as something strange, dangerous, and incomprehensible¹. When citizens of other ancient countries practiced various religions, the Jews kept their faith in one God.

With the passage of a few thousand years since the establishment of Judaism, the perception of its followers, forming a more or less compact community, virtually remained unchanged. In the meantime, other monotheistic religions formed², to some extent similar to Judaism, and drew on the diverse values of a complex nature. Despite this, Judaism has remained the prototype of monotheism until today. Its slow evolution did not affect the sacral basis and allowed the Jewish community to survive as a separate unit of civilization, which is a phenomenon in the history of humankind.

Over the millennia, other ancient civilizations fell irretrievably from the states of Babylonia, Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, and finally to the Greek *polis*, which was composed of complex state structures. Even the “eternal” Roman Empire fell. Many ancient inventions gave basis for evolution of new technologies and machines; a huge amount of ancient achievements in the arts and sciences allowed to reach the current development stage of the contemporary world. However, these civilizations have ceased to exist, disappearing or

1. On the other hand, both ancient polytheistic and later monotheistic religions held the same negative opinions on “religions of others.” For example, different religions were considered by ancient Greek and Romans as “superstitions” and by Jews and Christians as “an idolatry” (Baslez, 2009).

2. Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, The Baha’i Faith, for instance.

evolving over the years into other socio-political organisms of a state or city character.

While Jewish intangible culture was almost destroyed in Europe, a relatively large number of objects representing its cultural heritage has survived. One of the best examples of Jewish tangible culture preserved in Poland is a part of Casimir, currently one of the districts of Cracow (Fig. 1), remaining until the turn of the 18th and 19th C, which was known as the Jewish City (Lat. *Oppidum Iudaeorum*).

The architecture and urbanism of the Jewish City evolved in relation to the social, economic, and political situation of Casimir's Jews. Depending on the current state of relations between the Jews and the king, aristocracy, nobility, and burghers of Cracow, possibilities of development in the field of urbanism and especially architecture changed. Of great importance for the spatial development of the Jewish City were events occurring initially on the outskirts of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Cossack uprisings), and then directly in Cracow and Casimir (The Swedish Deluge, partitions of the state). Therefore, the spatial development of the Jewish City for the entire period of its existence influenced the political position of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and, after the partitions, foreign rulers (Russia, Prussia, Austria) as well.

Additionally, important in this case were also events which took place in the countries (such as the Ottoman Empire, Russia, German states, Prussia) with which Casimir's Jewish Community had trade



Figure 1. Part of the panorama of medieval Cracow and Casimir as a separated city (left side), by the Nuremberg Chronicle by Hartmann Schedel, 1593 (Archive of Historical Museum in Cracow)

relations during certain periods of its existence, as well as natural disasters including fires and floods. From the above, the architecture and urbanism of the Jewish City evolved according to these favorable or unfavorable conditions, entering periods of fast development or stagnation and regression.

The architecture of residential buildings of the Jewish City during most of its existence was subordinated to the greatest extent simple functional requirements, which usually resulted from daily human needs. Only after satisfying the necessities of life of entire, and often very large family, the next place in the hierarchy occupied care about decorating the space³; only the wealthiest residents could decorate the façades of their buildings. It should be emphasized, however, that an important role in the approach of the Jewish inhabitants of Casimir to the tangible culture, including aesthetics played religion.

The evolution of architecture of the Jewish City led to the almost total elimination of timber houses in favor of buildings made of brick. The development of masonry buildings gradually displaced the timber houses and this did not occur in a linear manner. Because of long-term failures and the economic situation of the Jewish minority in Casimir, this physical reconstruction was finished by the turn of 19th and 20th C., after administratively merging the Jewish City with the rest of Casimir.

The architecture and urbanism of the Jewish City, despite the impact of non-cultural conditions, were subjected to the strong influence of Jewish culture. Jewish culture shaped the look of the district, inhabited mostly by the Ashkenazi⁴ population. During several centuries, a complex space developed there typical for Jewish culture.

3. The described manner of the Jewish community in the Jewish City is consistent with the assumptions of A. Maslow's pyramid of needs.

4. Ashkenazi, are any of the historically Yiddish speaking European Jews who settled in central and northern Europe, or their descendants. They lived originally in the Rhineland valley, and their name is derived from the Hebrew word *Ashkenaz* ("Germany"). After the start of the Crusades in the late 11th century, many migrated east to Poland, Lithuania, and Russia to escape persecution. In later centuries, Jews who adopted the German-rite synagogue ritual were called *Ashkenazim* to differentiate them from the Sephardic, or Spanish-rite, Jews, from whom they differ in cultural traditions, the pronunciation of Hebrew, and synagogue chanting as well as in the use of the Yiddish language (until the 20th century). Today they constitute more than 80% of the world's Jews (Merriam-Webster's, 1993).

Aim of the research

Research on a culture have direct or indirect behavioral references. Bastian (1825–1905), a 19th C. German anthropologist, as a basis of human development points out similar behavior in the elementary plane, common for all people. Bastian also finds a large autonomy of individual cultures and their tendency not to move to other territories, but remain, as far as possible, on already known area.

It follows the fact that culture can grow only in certain and similar environmental conditions, as it happened in the Jewish City in Casimir. It can also refer to architecture: in one case, Bastian finds its cultural base in the sphere of intangible social influences (Bastian, 1860). According to the foregoing, about cultural characteristics of Jewish building, particularly, provide these conditions, the source of which is widely understood complex of behaviors belonging to the intangible culture, created by appropriate, in this case Jewish social group⁵.

Thanks to the influence of Jewish intangible culture and non-cultural factors, architecture and urbanism have their own distinctive and recognizable features; the statement mentioned above assumed as a main working research hypothesis. These features prove the existence of the Jewish architecture and urbanism as a part of the tangible Jewish culture in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and later⁶ on its territory divided between foreign invaders in the years 1495–1815.

The main aim of this interdisciplinary research is the verification of the assumed hypothesis on the basis of archival sources, including photographic documentation and selected paintings, and their analysis. It is taken into consideration that the proof of existence of the original Jewish architecture and urbanism is possible by demonstrating the influence of the intangible Jewish culture and non-cultural factors on the space of the *Casimiriensis* Jewish City, inhabited in this period only by the Jews. Revealing this influence

5. Bastian also directly refers to the issue of art. He states namely that when knowledge becomes harmonious and legible, art disappears. Therefore, art is a domain of chaos or at least disorder (Bastian, 1860).

6. From 1772 to 1918. In 1918 former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth regained its independence as Second Republic of Poland and Lithuania, as a separate country, both in other national borders.

is, at the same time, the main theoretical – cognitive goal of the research⁷.

Methodology of the research

Research on architecture and urbanism was conducted for verification of the hypothesis about existence of characteristic Jewish tangible culture in space of the Jewish City in Casimir. It was made on the base of analysis of the relations between intangible and tangible culture. This research, also revealing the impact of the non-cultural factors on the development of the Jewish City was carried out on the basis of:

- contemporary and historical studies on Polish and Jewish literature involving science and religion, analysis of archival sources, including historical photographic documentation, paintings, drawings, and sketches;
- interviews with specialists in the field of Jewish architecture in Poland and Turkey;
- interviews with Jews in Poland, and members of Jewish communities that have continuously existed since Middle Ages in Istanbul⁸.

For research purposes assumed the years 1495–1815, the period in which the Jewish City existed as an autonomous district of Casimir, southern satellite town of Cracow. The starting date of the period is the year all Jews were transferred from Cracow to Casimir, identical with establishing the *Casimiriensis* Jewish City. The final date of the considered period is real elimination of the Jewish City's auton-

7. The main reason for the selection of the research is the conclusion derived from a survey research of academic community at University of Technology in Gliwice and School of Civil Engineering and Architecture of Istanbul Kemerburgaz University, in February 2014. To the question: «Is there any historical Jewish architecture that brought some achievements to development of modern architecture or town planning?», 24 surveyed persons (100%) answered: «I don't know».

8. Interviews in Poland were also conducted with people with Jewish roots, who did not take a part in the Jewish community's life, but who wanted to express their opinions on this field of Jewish studies. Due to the nature of the request and disagreement of the surveyed, the results of the research were not included in this study.

omy in 1815⁹, after which the Jews were given rights to live both in Casimir and in Cracow (Piechotkowie, 2008). As a symbolic end of the existence of the Jewish City in Casimir, we can also consider the destruction of the wall separating the Jewish City from the Christian part of Casimir in 1819¹⁰. The reasons for this choice of historical periodization are:

- assumptions of the possibility of identifying Jewish cultural and non-cultural factors influencing tangible Jewish culture in the area well-preserved until today, which is moreover culturally homogeneous¹¹;
- mentioned above, almost total annihilation of intangible Jewish culture in Polish territory during World War II, preventing the development of Jewish culture in the postwar period.

Taking into account the specific character of the relations between intangible and tangible culture, in this research used the fuzzy logic model. This information-processing model, constructed on base of a fuzzy logic, is particularly useful when a mathematical model of a real process is too complicated (Jabłoński, 2007).

The reason for the selection a fuzzy logic model is the effectiveness of its application in the research on cultural relations (Jabłoński, 2007), when available information does not constitute a closed set. In this case, a set of “soft” information, characteristic of cultural studies, especially conducted in historical perspective, shall form a basis to derive both theoretical and applicative conclusions. The use of the fuzzy logic model is desirable for the same reasons; in the case of a separate analysis of the influence of the non-cultural factors, when some elements of the Jewish City belong to the fuzzy set others may not at all¹².

9. We can also recognize 1800 as the other date culminating the autonomous Jewish City existence, the year of its official administrative abolition.

10. The real abolition of the autonomous Jewish City was, in reality, a long term process, visible in many previous and future events. The symbolism of the destruction of the wall in terms of importance to the Jewish community in Casimir can be compared to the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In both cases, they were only symbols for ongoing social processes.

11. Despite of semi-initiated revitalization, and many reconstructive works carried out in recent years changing, partially, original Jewish architecture.

12. The fuzzy logic extends to a whole range of intermediate values between 0 (false) and 1 (true).

In research on relations between intangible and tangible Jewish culture, included, as mentioned above, the impact of non-cultural factors which are variable at time. It determines continuous changes in the field of politics, economy, and law, but, at the same time, it almost does not influence culture, especially considering religious issues. In the research, are taken into account factors regarded as non-cultural, political, economic, legal, and social, which influenced the development of the Jewish City. Because of their interpenetration and many correlations, some of the economic factors, due to logic in terms of causality, are connected with the social conditions. And, in a similar manner, these kind of logical connections are found in the case of political, social, and legal factors. Due to the existence in Casimir, nowadays a district of Cracow, of only a small Jewish community that is largely assimilated into Polish society, interviews among academicians and members of the Jewish communities were conducted both in Cracow and Istanbul. In Istanbul, there still exists an organized Sephardic Jewish community¹³. It allows its members to cultivate native tradition and customs. The significance of the Jewish community in Istanbul increased after the 15th C., when Jewish refugees from Spain, France and Germany arrived. In relation to the larger Diaspora at this time, the mostly Sephardic Jewish community dealt with a meaning and abundance comparable to the position of the Jewish community in *Casimiriensis* Jewish City.

In this research used both an analytical and synthetic approach to the selected research problems. Under this point of view, an analytical approach provides a basis for understanding relationships that occur between intangible and tangible cultures, including the influence of non-cultural factors. On the other hand, synthesis is important for simplified presenting of these processes, which is a basis for comparative studies and creating the starting point for the dissemination of the knowledge acquired in the course of this research.

13. The origins of the presence of the Jewish Diaspora in the territory of today's Turkey date back to III C BC. It allows for the recognition of Turkey as a place of continuous residence for the oldest Jewish community in the World (McAnailly Burke, 1997).

Literature review

The question of Jewish architecture and urbanism as essential elements of tangible culture, and the complex relationship between them and intangible culture, is raised relatively rarely in literature. Moreover, there is a relatively low number of comprehensive publications that discuss these complex relationships between culture and architecture and urbanism.

Nevertheless, there are publications which refer to a history of the Jewish cultural development in Casimir and Cracow (especially its intangible qualities) and to issues connected with cultural value of the urban space for its inhabitants¹⁴. In analyzing the state of research are taken into consideration the items which had been published until March 2014.

Understanding a specifically Jewish culture in light of social, economic, and legal conditions was one of main aims of historical research led by Bałaban. Bałaban, a scientist and historian of Jewish society, as well as a teacher and rabbi, is the author of several relevant publications.

In the publications, Bałaban presented interdisciplinary studies of the development of Jewish society in chosen Polish cities not only on the basis of historical research but also according his own and his family's experiences. In published in the early 30s book entitled *Kiedy i skąd przybyli Żydzi do Polski* (*When and from Where Came the Jews to Poland*), based on the habilitation's lecture, he presented the state of knowledge about which causes prompted the arrival of Jews to Polish territory at this time (Bałaban, 1931a).

Furthermore, his two-volume *Historia Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu* (*History of the Jews in Cracow and Casimir*) is so far the most complete presentation of all matters related to a daily life of the Jews in Casimir and Cracow from the beginning of the 14th to the second half of 19th C. In the book, he described the multi-dimensional context of the contemporary political, social, and economic situation (Bałaban, 1931b; Bałaban 1936). This publication, embracing also the cultural aspects of the Jewish City, is a contribution to the Polish literature in the field of Jewish studies.

14. In my opinion, architecture can be valued only in relation to a particular culture, having its own characteristics and requirements associated with the use of space and being created on base of a specific system of values.

A two-volume publication edited by Schiper, Tartakower and Hafftka plays an important role in the presentation of the cultural, social, economic, and political life of Jews in Poland before the war. It is titled *Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej. Działalność społeczna, gospodarcza, oświatowa i kulturalna* (*Jews in Poland Revived. Social, Economic, Educational and Cultural Activity*) (Schiper, Tartakower, & Hafftka, 1932). In a comprehensive and interdisciplinary way, the authors presented a history of the Jews in the Polish Republic, under foreign rule and, above all, after regaining independence. However the studied period includes, especially, the years after period of existence of the Jewish City in Casimir, there is possible to find important clues connected with relationship between social and economical conditions and behaviors of the Jewish society members.

A relevant issue concerning the issue of Jewish architecture in Poland is *Krajobraz z menora* (*Landscape with Menorah*) (Piechotkowie, 2008). *Żydzi w miasteczkach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* (*Jews in Small Towns of Old Republic of Poland*) was written by Piechotkowie. The authors present a general outline of the development of Jewish districts in terms of urbanism and on the basis of sacral and secular architecture since the Middle Ages. They were especially focused on exterior factors influencing the development of the Jewish districts.

A multi-dimensional relationship between a city as a living subject of culture and art were presented in the publication *Miasto w sztuce – sztuka miasta* (*City in Art – Art in City*), edited by E. Rewers (Rewers, 2010). Emphasizing the importance of art in the city, the author connected the rich symbolism of urban space in an interdisciplinary perspective by taking into consideration the social aspects underlying the origins of art. Rewers presented many different points of view, showing the city as a very sophisticated and constantly evolving cultural organism.

Therefore, by researching the relations between urban space and art, Rewers gave large importance to time as one of the conditions not only influencing all levels of development in a city but also on the changing viewpoints of the observers and inhabitants.

One the most important publications in the field of urbanism in Casimir is written by Krasnowolski, *Z badań nad rynkami i placami w planach urbanistycznych i programach lokacyjnych miast małopolskich* (*From Research on Markets and Squares in Urban Plans and Location Programs of the Cities in Lesser Poland*) a chapter of book edited by

S. Krabath (Krasnowolski, 2011). The author included results of his analysis on the urban structure of Casimir and other towns of Lesser Poland. Thanks to this work, it is possible to recognize the sources of differences between the districts built in a planned way, and the districts considered as a result of influence of, above all, other cultural factors.

In a book entitled *Architektura i wartości (Architecture and Values)*, Basista raises the topic of the widely understood value of architecture (Basista, 2009). The author, recognizing buildings as a part of art having their own meaning, presents their significance as changeable in time. Studies on architectural history, in which criteria changed over many centuries, are relevant to this research.

In a relevant publication entitled *Building Jewish in the Roman East*, P. Richardson presents results of his research on the origins of Jewish architecture together with its neighborhood, and chosen places inhabited by Jewish Diaspora during ancient times (Richardson, 2004). Richardson raises the issue of the relationship between Jewish and Christian culture over the years, especially in the field of religion.

The results of analysis provide clues useful for the comparative research of Jewish buildings in later centuries, also in different places, for sacral buildings. Moreover, Richardson used descriptions of ancient Jewish buildings to recognize the meaning of the relationship between political and religious conditions and the development of architecture and urbanism.

In studies on synagogal architecture, a relevant role plays collective work edited by Rejduch–Samkowa, Samek, Łoziński and Kałamajska–Saeed, titled *Kazimierz i Stradom – Judaica: bożnice, budowle publiczne i cmentarze [Casimir and Stradom – Judaica: Synagogues, Public Buildings and Cemeteries]* (Rejduch–Samkowa, Samek, Łoziński, & Kałamajska–Saeed, 1995). The publication includes an architectural description of all public and sacral buildings in Casimir and Stradom, districts of Cracow.

Probably the most important book presenting architecture and urbanism of Casimir and its development from the beginning of existence of the Jewish City in Casimir is *Cracovia Iudaeorum 3D*, written under the authorship of Jakimyszyn, Krasnowolski, Łukacz, Niemiec, Woźniak, E. Zaits, M. Zaits, and Zaremska (Jakimyszyn et al., 2013), with an introduction by Duda. The publication includes a catalogue of the exhibition under the same title, which took place

in Cracow from 06.27.2013 to 04.15.2014¹⁵. In this edition, authors focused on the look of the buildings and the landscape of the Jewish City and therefore on the formal relation between these components in urban space.

In conclusion, European and especially Polish literature include only a relatively small number of publications which focus on the subject of architecture and urbanism of the Jewish City in Casimir in the years 1495–1815. This work is concerned with architectural and interdisciplinary studies, made on tangible culture of the district. Moreover, there is a lack of analytical studies which take into consideration, above all, the impact of Jewish intangible culture on tangible aspects like architecture and urbanism. Excluding the mentioned publications, the last comprehensive studies in this field were made by Jewish scientists before World War II and relied on research methods popular at the time.

15. Duda was the curator of *Cracovia Iudaeorum 3D*, exhibition performed in the old synagogue in Casimir, Szeroka 24 Street.