



*Space as a Category for the Research of the History of Jews in Poland-Lithuania, 1500–1900*, ed. Maria Cieśla, Ruth Leiserowitz (Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen und Studien, Bd. 40), Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2022, 156 pages, 1 map, ISBN 978-3-447-11895-8.

The contributions collected in this volume are based on a conference of almost the same name at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, which was organised by the two editors in the summer of 2017. It thus fits into the intensive discussions about ‘space’ as a category of Jewish history, in which the Jews of Poland-Lithuania were usually addressed in passing but were not systematically examined<sup>1</sup>. As an analytical framework, the editors focus on the works of Henri Lefebvre<sup>2</sup> and Martina Löw<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly, they group the contributions around the thematic blocks ‘Spatial practices’, ‘Representations of space’ and ‘Imaginary spaces’. Geographically, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is represented with two articles and the Kingdom of Poland and Congress Poland with four articles. The two texts on ‘Imaginary spaces’ focus on the German-speaking world and the discursive connections to Polish-Lithuanian Jewry in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In her article ‘Litvak traders and their spatial dimensions at the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century’, Ruth Leiserowitz shows how a spatial history approach can overcome national/territorial restrictions (‘containers’) in historiography. The author elaborates on how these merchants reacted to the territorial shifts resulting from the partitions of Poland-Lithuania. They appropriated the newly created spaces, stabilised their networks and were able to further expand their trading activities in the changed geographies. In view of her clear argumentation, it is somewhat irritating that the author uses the term *Litvaks* essentially as a synonym for ‘Jews from the (former) Grand Duchy of Lithuania’ (p. 20). In doing so, she follows a tradition that is quite widespread in English-language historiography<sup>4</sup>. However, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Litvak*, or *Litwak* in the Polish spelling, was popularised in the Polish-speaking world and bore clear traits of a pejorative and excluding term, which François Guesnet placed in the vicinity of the *Ostjude* (‘Eastern Jew’) emerging at the same time<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context*, ed. Alina GROMOVA, Sebastian VOIGT, Felix HEINERT, Berlin 2015; *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History*, ed. Simone LÄSSIG, Miriam RÜRUP, New York 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Henri LEFEBVRE, *The Production of Space*, Malden 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie*, Frankfurt am Main 2001; English translation: eadem, *The Sociology of Space: Materiality, Social Structures, and Action*, New York 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Dov LEWIN, *The Litvaks: A Short History of the Jews in Lithuania*, transl. Adam TELLER, Jerusalem 2000. In contrast, Masha GREENBAUM, *The Jews of Lithuania: A History of a Remarkable Community, 1316–1945*, Jerusalem–New York 1995, avoids the term *Litvak* altogether.

<sup>5</sup> François GUESNET, *Polnische Juden im 19. Jahrhundert. Lebensbedingungen, Rechtsnormen und Organisation im Wandel*, Köln–Weimar–Wien 1998, pp. 78–80.

A discussion of the imaginary space the term *Litvak* referred to, would have provided a valuable bridge to the last contribution in this volume.

Cornelia Aust leads her paper 'Jewish practices at fairs, courts, and notary's offices. Was there a "Jewish space" in Christian places?' with an in-depth discussion of what the concept of 'space' means for her work. In her three case studies, she successfully applies her theoretical considerations to concrete situations and shows how 'Jewish' spaces were marked in 'Christian' spaces and places, and how Christian-marked spaces were used by Jews.

Maria Cieśla's contribution 'The court and the market – Jewish-Christian spaces in the town of Śluck in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' is also aimed in the same direction. She points to the role of mutual trust, which enabled trade operations in a common space, and discusses the tavern run by Jewish tenants as a space shared by Christians and Jews, used side by side but not together. She sees another common space in the court led by Christian judges. Here, a Jewish space is marked by the practice of (Hebrew) signatures, which shows a clear difference from the medieval use of Jewish actors using a Latin first name in addition to the Hebrew one.

The second section is about 'Representations of space'. Hanna Zaremska returns once again to the 'Relocation of the Jewish community from Krakow to Kazimierz' in 1495. It traces the topographies of the Jewish quarters in Cracow in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and later in Kazimierz, questioning the integrating and exclusionary dimensions. Despite the move of the community to Kazimierz, Cracow remained part of the Jewish space even in modern times.

Michael K. Schulz looks at 'Jews and Christians in the shared spaces of Gdańsk in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century'. He also begins his remarks with in-depth reflections on the methodological approach, relying primarily on Martina Löw's *The Sociology of Space (Raumsoziologie)* and her distinction between the material-physical substrate, structure of interactions and activities, institutions and regulations, and symbols and representations. He discusses these based on four case studies, which show the close interdependencies between the different dimensions. This results in interesting cross-connections to the contributions of Leiserowitz and Zaremska.

Małgorzata Hanzl's text 'Forms of Jewish place. Considerations on organisation of space in Jewish neighborhoods of nineteenth century and early twentieth century Poland' occupies a special position in the volume. She does not present a specific case study but summarises the results of her habilitation thesis from 2017<sup>6</sup>. Like other contributions, she also deals in detail with the methodological foundations of her work, which lies primarily in the field of urban planning analysis. In contrast to the others, however, her categories of analysis are not historically but rather sociologically oriented. She presents the main sections of her monograph very briefly, producing at the end an extensive list of characteristics, on how 'Jewish communities in pre-war central Poland significantly influenced the appearance of urban spaces [...] through bottom-up practices' (p. 112). These characteristics of Jewish spaces have undoubtedly been correctly identified, but the question remains to what extent they were also specifically

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<sup>6</sup> Małgorzata HANZL, *Morphological analysis of urban structures – the cultural approach: Case studies of Jewish communities in Lodz and Mazovian voivodeships*, Łódź 2017.

Jewish. A discussion based on a case study would certainly have been enlightening here. Thus, the impression remains that the article primarily encourages the reading of her monography, but unfortunately communicates little with the other texts in the volume.

The two articles in the third part of the book, which is dedicated to 'Imaginary spaces', shed light on the symbolic side of the discussion on spatial history. Agnieszka Pufelska dedicates her contribution to 'The Polish-Jewish "Berlinertum". The impact of Berlin's Haskalah on Polish Jews' and presents Enlightenment Berlin as a space for contemplation, learning, and acting for Polish Jews towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of three biographical sketches of Salomon Maimon, Izrael Zamość, and Isaak Satanow.

Małgorzata A. Maksymiak asks: 'Who was afraid of the East? German discovery of Polish Jews at the end of the eighteenth century'. She discusses the stereotype of the 'Eastern Jew' as a strategy of allocating and denying space and shows how, since the partitions of Poland-Lithuania, the Prussian images of the 'East' have consciously taken up orientalisng and colonial motifs in order to achieve an exclusion and devaluation of the Jewish population.

In addition to fascinating case studies, almost all the contributions in this volume provide a careful reflection on the question of what a spatial historical approach brings to the history of Polish-Lithuanian Jews in a broad time frame from the late Middle Ages to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therein lies the great strength of the volume, which also represents an important contribution to the discussion on spatial history beyond the horizon of Polish-Lithuanian-Jewish history.


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