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### Book Review: Anna Niedźwiedź and Kaja Kajder, eds., *Mapy miasta: Dziedzictwa i sacrum w przestrzeni Krakowa* / *Maps of the City: Heritages and the Sacred within Kraków's Cityscape*.

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## BOOK REVIEW

Anna Niedźwiedź and Kaja Kajder, eds., *Mapy miasta: Dziedzictwa i sacrum w przestrzeni Krakowa / Maps of the City: Heritages and the Sacred within Kraków's Cityscape*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Libron, 2020. (Hardcover, available as PDF at: <https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/xmlui/handle/item/250941>) ISBN: 978-83-66269-33-0.

**Reviewed by Christopher Garbowski, Associate Professor, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland.**

The book *Maps of the City* is the result of an exhibition at The Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków that was held between November 2017 and February 2018. As the subtitle makes clear, the exhibition focused on the place of heritage and the sacred within Kraków's cityscape, together with the relationship between the two, both for the city's residents and visitors. The latter group includes pilgrims. The curator of the exhibition was Anna Niedźwiedź, a cultural anthropologist at Jagiellonian University and author of *The Image and the Figure: Our Lady of Częstochowa in Polish Culture and Popular Religion* (2010). She is also one of the editors of the book. This richly illustrated volume is no mere catalogue of a museum exhibition. The editors, together with their team of anthropologists, have written essays based on original research that forms the basis of the exhibition and the chapters of the book. What we have in the end is a book that is both for the broader reading public and the scholar, and due to its bilingual form, both for Polish and English readers.

What are the research concepts that guide this book? At its center the "maps of the city" are made up of "humanized space," that is, humanized at both the personal and public level, and thus there are a plethora of maps. For the anthropologist the boundaries between the city's sacred and heritage spaces are quite fluid. But even the lived sacred space is porous: related to religious traditions on the one hand and, on the other, "urban rituals, local tales, beliefs and convictions about the *genius loci*" (p. 13). Concerning heritage, Kraków makes for an ideal location of study, having been internationally recognized as a world heritage site by UNESCO already in 1978. The researchers claim the ambiguity of the links between both aspects that interest them are created by continual intersections. This raises fascinating questions. Generally, these questions lead them, while "studying the sacred and sacralized places," to perceive the heritage in a manner that "emphasize[s] their multiplicity, revealing a polyphony of spaces, inviting us to perceive various dimensions of sacredness, and encouraging us to build new urban trajectories and draw further maps of Kraków" (p. 13).

After the introduction, the study begins in earnest with four analytical chapters, a pictorial conclusion essentially cataloguing the exhibition, and a fairly rich selected bibliography. The first chapter is a case study of the heritage monument at the historical and cultural center of the city, the statue of the national bard Adam Mickiewicz. It was erected in the main square at the end of the nineteenth century. The object of early postcards from the city, it is now also the focus of family and group photographs of city dwellers and Polish tourists. A number of these visitors are interviewed. The locals affectionately call the statue by the Polish diminutive of Adam, which the authors use for the title of the chapter. One of the ritual festivals that connects it with the sacred is the display of Christmas crèches—the “Kraków cribs”—at its base from an annual contest for their construction by amateurs. Famously, the crèches incorporate features of historic Kraków buildings and structures. Some have even been featured on postcards.

The second chapter studies the street that connects the main square with the royal castle by the Vistula River. The relatively short street has several historic churches. These include Catholic churches of both parochial and monastic nature, together with a Protestant church and a synagogue. Near the square the first sacred building is a synagogue, which—I might add—unlike the main synagogue in the historic Jewish quarter, has been left abandoned, as a testimony of the absence of the thriving Jewish community in the city before the Holocaust. After this analysis, the chapter is closed by extracts from interviews of church members and other city residents who share their memories of specific aspects of street life.

The chapter that follows studies the crosses of the city center. These vary from memorial crosses within churches to those commemorating historical events. The authors state: “Crosses do not only carry religious significance—sometimes they indicate areas of memory and references to the past or specific political convictions” (p. 77). This again leads at times to an ambiguity as to the significance of specific crosses. A quite dramatic example, near one of the parishes in the city, is an Armenian *khachkar*, or stone cross, was erected in 2004. It commemorates the victims of the Armenian genocide in Turkey in 1915 and is also dedicated to all the Armenians living in Polish lands for centuries. One might add that this combination marks the influx of post-Soviet Armenian immigrants to Poland that have been accepted by the members of the historic community.

In 2015 *City of Saints: A Pilgrimage to John Paul II's Krakow* was published. Among its authors is none other than George Weigel, the theologian and author of the most highly regarded biography of the Polish pope so closely associated with the city. The final analytical chapter of *Maps of the City* is devoted to tourists and pilgrims. There is a section closely

related to the exhibition where the authors attempt to create a “map of objects” exhibited representing both categories of visitors. Unsurprisingly, a concise section among the more than dozen others is devoted to objects from “the papal city.” Along with the various Catholic objects in that and other sections there are those from other Christian denominations, specifically Orthodox and Lutheran churches, together with the Jewish souvenir section, and various heritage sections. The authors point out that people visit Kraków for a variety of reasons, including searching out or coming upon Christian churches, the graves of Jewish *tsadiks* or rabbis, together with a variety of related events. “However,” they add, “this sacral space is rarely stable and unambiguous. The pilgrims are often tourists at the same time, and the tourists, when sightseeing the city, often ‘turn into’ pilgrims” (p. 103).

Among the pertinent questions raised at the onset of the book is when the sacred is combined with a famous historical monument, does the latter become trivialized and “changed into a tourist attraction?” (p. 13) Not only is this and the related issue of historical monuments polyphonic and ambiguous, but undoubtedly dynamic and rapidly changing. For instance, in 2021 a church in Warsaw that also functions as a heritage site was defaced by vandals in what can be categorized as a hate crime against religion. Such incidents are multiplying in a rapidly secularizing Poland and will no doubt have to be taken into account in any future study of heritage and sacred spaces, whether in Kraków or elsewhere in Poland. *Maps of the City* with all its implied richness might then be looked at by some with a degree of nostalgia.