

Maria i Kazimierz Piechotkowie, *Oppidum Judaeorum. Żydzi w przestrzeni miejskiej dawnej Rzeczypospolitej (Oppidum Judaeorum. Jews in the Urban Space of the Old Commonwealth)*, Warszawa 2004, Wyd. Krupski i S-ka, 296 pp., bibl., maps, ill., index of geographical names.

The authors discuss a very important subject which has not yet been given adequate attention in historiography, namely, the place and function of Jewish agglomerations in urban structures in Polish territories, from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. The book not only spans nearly the whole of Poland's history but has also a vast territorial scope covering the lands first of the Piast monarchy and then of the Polish-Lithuanian state ruled by the Jagiellons and the Commonwealth of the Two Nations, that is territories which are now in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Western Ukraine. The term *oppidum* (town) used by the authors for Jewish agglomerations refers to the terminology used in sources and emphasises the important role played by them because of the specific form of Jewish settlements, their size, distinct structures and rules of functioning.

The book consists of two parts. In the first one (pp. 10–77) the authors discuss the beginnings of the influx of Jews and of Jewish settlement in Polish territories, as a result of which the first agglomerations of Jews emerged in early towns even before these were granted municipal charters (11th–early 13th century, pp. 10–16). Next they deal with the appearance and functioning of Jewish agglomerations in new cities which were being founded in the 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries on the basis of Magdeburg law (pp. 17–31). Let us add, however, that not all cities were granted Magdeburg law (*vide* Kulm law!), though most of them were. The development of Jewish settlements in the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries is rightly defined by the authors as “the golden age of Polish Jews” (pp. 32–50). Next the authors present the fate of Jewish settlements in the late 17th and 18th centuries, at the time of wars and economic crisis of Polish towns, as well as the attempts to reconstruct the urban life (pp. 51–66). This part of the book ends with a description of the new principles on which Jewish settlements emerged and developed in the three partition zones at the beginning of the 19th century (pp. 67–77). As a matter of fact, the authors frequently go beyond the chronological framework signalled in the title of the book; they extend their story to the second half of the 19th and even the 20th century, thus presenting a general outline of the history of Polish Jews up to the tragedy of the Holocaust.

The second part of the book (pp. 80–275) presents the development of Jewish settlements in several dozen towns which the authors have selected because of their size and, first and foremost, their economic and political role. Two particularly important centres, the city of Cracow (with Kazimierz) and the city of Warsaw, are discussed separately, but the place assigned to them in the book seems to be accidental (pp. 150–163 and 260–275). The presentation of individual towns, which naturally depends on the availability of sources, covers the times from their foundation to the end of the First Commonwealth and in some cases to the emancipation of the Jews and the formal abolition of settlement restrictions (19th century), sometimes even to the last few years before the outbreak of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

The authors have divided the towns into what they call chronological–typological groups; they have distinguished towns which arose before the practice of granting municipal charters (they call them proto-towns, a controversial name), towns with charters, ducal and royal towns, private towns (they discuss separately private towns founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and separately those founded in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), royal towns which had the privilege *De non tolerandis Judaetis*, and towns which were reconstructed or expanded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is rather a crabbed and not always consistent division, the criteria sometimes overlapping each other. It would probably have been better to apply a chronological arrangement and within it

a geographical division, which would have made it possible to take account of the specific development of towns and influx of Jews in each part of the country (Great Poland, Little Poland, Mazovia, Lithuania; urbanisation differed in each of these territories) and at the same time apply the historiography-sanctioned typology which refers to the criteria of ownership and to the legal system as well as to the functions of each town. Such arrangement would have been much more transparent and logical. The result is that in the Chapter *Jewish Settlements in Proto-Towns* Wrocław is discussed next to Płock and then come the Jewish communities in Legnica, Kalisz and Lwów. In the Chapter dealing with ducal and royal towns founded in the 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries the authors discuss in turn the influx of Jews into Świdnica, Strzegom, Oleśnica, Opole, Poznań, Gniezno, Łęczyca, Międzyrzecz Wielkopolski, Sandomierz, Szydłowiec, Kazimierz Dolny, Przemyśl, Belz, Luck, Grodno and Brześć on Bug. This switching from one geographical territory to another makes it impossible to present the question on a sensibly comparative scale. Moreover, towns which had existed since the early Middle Ages are included in the group of newly-founded towns only because they were granted municipal charters in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Gniezno, Poznań, Łęczyca etc.).

The chapter on Jews who in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries lived in royal towns which had the *De non tolerandis Judaeis* privilege (pp. 164 ff.) begins with an analysis of the situation in Gdansk, then come Konin, Lublin, Piotrków Trybunalski, Radom, and Rawa Mazowiecka; probably by mistake two private towns, Prosperów and Izbica, have been included in this group. In the chapter about the influx of Jews into private towns in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries (pp. 198 ff.) the authors discuss in turn Tarnów, Kraśnik, Rymanów, Opatów, Rzeszów, Żółkiew, Zamość, Brody, Stanisławów, Tomaszów Lubelski, Husiatyn, Narol and Wielkie Oczy, once again very different urban centres. The next chapter concerns settlements of Jews in reconstructed and expanded towns in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century (pp. 232 ff.). This is not a precisely defined group for after the wartime destruction in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century all towns had to be reconstructed in one way or another. The authors have analysed Nowy Sącz, Tykocin, Szydłowiec, Bobowa, Włodawa, Białystok and Przysucha. The Chapter entitled *Districts Assigned to Jews in the Plans for the Reconstruction and Expansion of Towns in the Late 18th and Early 19th centuries* (pp. 253 ff.) begins with a reference to Warsaw (or rather to the Warsaw suburb Praga), followed by the description of Koźnice, Ryczywół and Biała Podlaska. The book ends with an extensive presentation of the city of Warsaw and of Jewish settlement in that town which, in accordance with the title of the Chapter, is presented in the long period from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (pp. 260–275), in fact even up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the extermination of the Warsaw Jews by the Germans in 1943.

The publication contains a wealth of informative material (data about the first references to Jews in individual urban centres, the establishment and size of Jewish communities, the types of Jewish occupations, the functioning of Jewish prayer houses and schools, the types of spatial layout and architecture of Jewish settlements) gathered by the authors during the many years of their laborious research work in many archives and libraries. The book presents for the first time the question of Jewish settlements from the point of view of town planning (the authors are well known architects). It shows the symbiosis of Jewish settlements with urban structures within the bounds of a town (Jewish districts and streets) or on its borders (the functioning of Jewish communities in suburbs and in areas outside municipal jurisdiction). The many plans and photographs of Jewish settlements illustrating the situation from the architectural point of view are an important part of the book. These are priceless materials for researchers interested in Jews' coexistence with townspeople and in the centuries — old intensive economic and cultural interaction between Jews and other inhabitants of towns in the lands of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The authors have indeed accomplished an imposing job by gathering and presenting such a rich

and comprehensive documentation. The value of the book is enhanced by its beautiful graphic design and editorial quality for which thanks are also due to the Publisher.

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