LEGACY OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES
IN THE URBAN SPACE OF BIELSKO-BIAŁA

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Abstract: Religious heritage is an important cultural resource for a city. First, cities are at the crossroads of conflicting trends in globalisation. Urban communities are looking for that which makes them universal and unique at the same time. Second, reflection on identity in relation to the heritage and history of a city reveals the multicultural past of Central and Eastern Europe, and shows an image of social change and transformation. Religious heritage plays, therefore, various roles. Places connected with religious identities have symbolic, sacred and artistic meanings. They construct a local universe of meaning; they are an important factor of the local narrative and customs, and they place it in the context of national, regional and ethnic traditions. Churches, temples, and cemeteries are also a sign of memory, this shows not only history but also the contemporary processes of remembering and forgetting. The city of Bielsko-Biała was a cultural and religious mosaic until 1945. Jewish, German and Polish cultures were meeting here everyday with diverse religious belonging and boundaries. Today, the heritage of its religious identity is recognized mainly via monuments, tourist attractions, and cultural events. Only occasionally is the religious heritage of the city analysed in the context of collective identities. Urban space still reflects the complexity of the relationships between religious, national, and regional identities. The purpose of the paper is to describe the variety of functions of religious heritage in a contemporary city on the example of Bielsko-Biała in Poland. The analysis will be based on demographic data from the national census of population, religious community documents, available sociological research outcomes, and historical and contemporary images of the city such as maps and plans, postcards and tourist brochures.

Keywords: identity, religion, public sphere, city, Central Europe, heritage

Introduction

The legacy of religious identity in Polish cities is the heritage, which is still waiting to be discovered. There are several reasons for this situation. First, religious identity is often considered an exclusively private matter and therefore separated from the public sphere of the city. Churches and other sacred places or religious architecture in general are the pride of the city usually when they are associated with significant events or personalities from national history, or they represent particular artistic value or special meaning for the faithful, as for example places of pilgrimage. Consequently, religious heritage is a tourist attraction only in selected cities. Second, religious identity in Central and Eastern Europe is currently undergoing strong structural change associated with systemic transformation and the parallel cultural change taking place in the societies of this part of Europe. These embrace redefinitions of lifestyle and the role of religious institutions. In addition, after 1989 there was a kind of religious revival in post-communist countries. Individual religiosity, religious affiliation, and traditions have become an essential part of the political discourse raising questions about the limits and the manner of the presence of religion in the public sphere and its role in civil society (Mach 1997). It can be observed that religious identity in these countries is both traditional and highly individualistic, hybridised and dogmatic. According to I. Borowik (2009), in Central and Eastern Europe there is a parallel occurrence of fixed and unchanging tradition as in a traditional society, the idea of choice and variability of identity as in an industrial society, and the elements of post-industrial society, expressed in selectivity and hybridisation of religious identity.

For all these reasons, religious identity plays an important role in cities as an element of public life and public space, and is being rediscovered as part of the identity of the city. Symbolic sites in the city define its history, identity and image. Symbolic meanings are reflected in buildings and architecture, customs and traditions, systems of spatial memories and the narrative of the local community.

Bielsko-Biała is a city where different meanings and the significance of religious identities can be found in the urban space and the local community. It is one of the few towns in Poland, where to this day, though in very different proportions than in the 19th century, three religious groups coexist and their communities are present in the life of the city. This fact provides a basis for a discussion of the role and importance of religious identity and their heritage in the city. It can serve also as the basis for the hypothesis that religious identities influence the identity of the city that they are part of. The aim of the paper is to describe the variety of functions and meanings of religious heritage in a contemporary city on the example of Bielsko-Biała in Poland.

Various meanings of religious identity
– problems with the concept itself

The most common theoretical perspective that describes collective identity is a theory of symbolic interactionism (Mead 1975; Mach 2008). According to it, collective identity is a picture of oneself or a group with which we identify. The picture is shaped on the basis of social relationships and interactions with others.

"Looking at collective identity from the broadest perspective, it can be said that it is the result of the classification of the social world, an order in a symbolic world around us is the image of the group, an integrated system of elements that represent the essential features and distinguish it from other groups, and identify their relationship. Everything we see and what we think needs to be defined, recognised and have their place – in this way every society forms a unique system of meanings, values and symbols, or culture" (Mach 2008, 8).

Place of origin, territory and religion are assigned labels and values, that particularly strongly define the social identity of individuals and groups often regardless of individual choice (Bauman 2007). In the era of personalisation and relativisation, religion is one of the categories that make up the culture of place and time.

Religious identity is also dynamic and is a process in its nature. According to numerous researchers, religious self-declarations and rates of participation in religious practices do not necessarily confirm one another and the processes of secularisation and individualisation of religion take place in different ways and are strongly conditioned by cultural and social circumstances (Berger 2001).

One of the most frequently cited difficulties in defining religious identity in Poland is the incompatibility of statistics and self-declarations or the results of qualitative research. Poland is a religiously homogeneous society (*Ludność. Stan i struktura* 2013) with a high proportion of practitioners. According to the latest census, 87.58% of the Polish population identifies with the Roman Catholic Church. The Lutheran Church, discussed in the article, currently has 71,000 faithful representing 0.18% of the Polish population, the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland consists of only 1,222 members, representing 0.004% of the Polish population (*Wyznania religijne* 2013). Several investigators also draw attention to the high level of institutionalisation and the strength of religious identity in the Polish public sphere, revealed by its presence in the media and the functioning of religious identity as part of national discourse (Demerath 2000; Casanova 2004; Pollack 2008). Religious identity is present in a variety of practices and ideas of everyday life, but religion as such may be somehow "invisible" to the public (Luckmann 1996) as part of cultural habits (traditions, festivals, shared values) or the individual search for meaning (spirituality and personal development). Continuity and diversity of forms of religious identification make religion a hybrid, blurred and multilayered identity.

Religion is no longer limited to assigned spaces but there are many ways in which everyday spaces can be implicated with religious meaning-making (Kong 2010).

Tadeusz Paleczny (2008) lists three ways in which religion can affect social identities:

1. Comprehensive and global coverage of the place and destiny of man, that is cosmogonic ideas of the world and man. At this level, religion can be regarded as a "horizon of values" reflected in the culture of the given group by myths, law and art.
2. Religion as a determinant of differences, social hierarchy and group divisions. This includes the relationship between religious affiliation and other collective identities such as ethnicity, nationality and social ties that may arise on the basis of religious identification, for example, a parish.
3. Impact on human creativity and its products. In this sense, religion is the spiritual inspiration of material culture such as architecture. The city from this perspective, can also be considered as an architectural entity in which religious influences can be read (Zeidler-Janiszewska 1997).

All these ways of interaction can be observed both in large social groups such as a nation, as well as in local communities. Religion is, in this sense, a kind of cultural base, which is embedded in a cultural and civilisational identity (Huntington 1993; Inglehard, Norris 2006), ethnic identity (Babiński 1994) or local identity. The limits of locality and familiarity often coincide with religious identification and affiliation. This compound of religious identification, cultural and territorial identities makes religious identity a symbolic resource responsible for strengthening the sense of "we" and "imagined community." It also stresses the similarity of social ties that occur in religious communities and ethnic or national groups. In this paper, I use the concept of religious identity in the sense of collective identity manifested in the contexts described above.

Religious heritage and the city

The city with its local community and urban space is a specific arena of performance of religious identities. It may be an area of the realisation of individual spiritual sentiments as well as cultural and social heritage and collective practices that build the symbolic universe of geographic space and community.

Marek Szczepański (2013) lists the following items of identification with a city:
– individual identification with the local community and culture,
– a sense of distinctiveness and the category of "we" that functions in the collective consciousness,
– attachment to the local area and significant places,

– cultural awareness and understanding of the meanings and symbols,
– the individual (biography) or collective (history, narration) link with the history of the place,
– economic life and everyday life of the community,
– special forms of construction and spatial layout.

Religious identity may be present in all of these features. It may refer to the identity of locals as well as the uniqueness of the city, its character, image and atmosphere.

The classic definition of cultural heritage emphasises that it includes tangible and intangible heritage of the community formed in the course of its historical development (UNESCO 1972, 2003). In the case of religious heritage, intangible assets are particularly important and embrace practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as objects, artefacts and cultural spaces. This type of heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, and is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their current environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity (UNESCO 2003).

In the city, intangible heritage may be social in nature – based on a variety of ties between residents and social memory, or cultural – based on the awareness, understanding, values and meanings inscribed in the common space. Collective religious identity must be based on shared personal identifications, but its cultural and social forms can also function independently of individual religious beliefs and belonging.

Table 1. Religion and identity in the city

Identity of the inhabitants	Identity of the city
Individual religious identity	Memory and testimony of the past
Social bonds based on religious identification	Images and narratives
–	Material culture and urban planning

Source: Own study based on Paleczny 2008, Szczepański 2013.

To describe the importance of religious identity and its heritage in the present-day city, it is necessary to define criteria for such identifications and how they are realised in selected geographical areas (Kong 2010). In the case of a city's identity, everything can be meaningful that forms the image of the city inside and outside – from everyday practices, opinions and memories of residents, to the images and promotional materials shaping the outside image of the city (Brace 2006). This scheme does not cover all possible manifestations of collective religious identification.

It allows, however, to organise the analysis of the various forms of religious identity in the city and their meanings.

Bielsko-Biała – border city and city of borders

In Bielsko-Biała religious identities are particularly connected with the identity of the place and the region. Bielsko-Biała is a city of borders including borders of geographical regions, and ethnic and religious boundaries have been meeting here forever. The River Biała served as the border between the Kingdom of Poland and the Czech Kingdom (1327–1526) and later the Austrian Empire (1526–1772). Since the first partition of Poland in 1772 to its independence in 1918, here ran the border between Galicia and Austrian Silesia. Today's twin town of Bielsko-Biała was founded in 1951 as the union of Bielsko, which has existed since the 13th century as a city in the Habsburg Monarchy, and Biała, which had developed around a village of weavers in the 15th century on the fringes of the Małopolska region.

The city's location at the crossroads of trade routes and national borders also fostered migration (Kenig 2010). From the 16th century on, came to the area settlers of German origin, Jews, Czechs and others. At the time of the Counter-Reformation, the city was a refuge for Protestants. Even despite a ban on public religious manifestation for dissidents living in the Catholic Habsburg Monarchy, which was in force until the year 1781, the city remained a key centre of Protestantism. The influx of the city's Jewish population was mainly due to the development of the textile industry and physical expansion of the city in the 19th century. While Jewish communities were found in both neighbouring cities, they represented different strands of Judaism. In Bielsko prevailed the liberal wing of Judaism, which took after modern Jewish communities in Vienna and other Germanic cities, while in Biała the majority of the Jews were Orthodox and very traditional, as in the rest of Poland (Proszyk 2012).

The rapid development of the textile industry in the 19th century led to economic prosperity and established the rules of functioning of the cultural mosaic of the twin town. Ewa Chojecka (1994, 9) writes that it is a city that "grows on the border, where different roads meet [...] In short, it is a city whose chances and hopes depend on whether these trails are open and unobstructed." This type of openness is important here not only literally but also symbolically. Despite tensions and conflicts as well as numerous changes of national borders, the city maintained its multi-religious character. Representatives of three religious traditions – Catholic, Protestant and Jewish – still reside in the city and are active in the local community. However, today's religious groups in Bielsko-Biała, beside the dominant Roman Catholic Church, are very small. The fact that they are continuously present and active in the city makes their role in its history and identity not to be underestimated. Bielsko-Biała shares

a history as well as demographic and social features (migration, religious pluralism, ideological repression of religion from the public sphere during the communist era) with many cities in Central and Eastern Europe. In contrast to the majority of Polish cities, religious pluralism is still present here.

Religion and identity of inhabitants

Individual religious identifications

Individual religious membership is the basis of religious references in the public sphere and thereby manifesting religious belonging in the community and in the city. Already in the 19th century, the question of individual identifications expressed in the census was complicated and highly changeable. Communities of followers of different religions have evolved over time, and religious identification overlaps with national and class differences. Political conditions, ethnic conflicts and migration contributed to the volatility of the statistical picture of the city.

In the early 20th century, statistics show a growing number of Catholics and a declining number of Protestants[1] and Jews in both cities. Comparing Bielsko to Biała at the turn of the century, Catholics strongly dominated in the Polish town of Biała, while Austrian Bielsko was multi-religious and multinational. In the period 1869–1910, the number of Catholics in Bielsko increased from about 45% (1869) to nearly 56% in 1931 (Spyra, Kenig 2010). In the same year in Biała Catholics accounted for more than 78% of the population. The number of Lutherans in Bielsko gradually decreased from 44% in 1869 (Spyra, Kenig 2010) to 18% in 1931, while in Biała their number was even smaller, and in 1931, Lutherans accounted for 8% of the town's population. The Jewish community grew strongly in the late 19th century and in 1921, it accounted for 20% of inhabitants in Bielsko and 17% in Biała. At the end of 1945, the Jewish Committee in Bielsko noted 1,589 persons of Jewish descent and it was the only Jewish organisation in both cities. In the 1950s, the local Jewish community numbered about 3,000 (Spyra 1996). After the official foundation of the twin city of Bielsko-Biała in 1951, a rapid religious and national

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[1] Protestants in the city were followers of the Lutheran tradition and today belong to the Evangelical-Augsburg Confession, which is the largest Lutheran Church in modern Poland. Its official name refers to the text of a creed composed in 1530 at the Synod of Augsburg, which is also one of the main religious books in Lutheranism – the Lutheran Confessions. Some researchers also note the presence of a small number of Calvinists and Methodists in the city; however, they had no parish or church in the twin city. Therefore, I use the name Protestants and Lutherans interchangeably and the name "Lutheran Church" refers also to the Evangelical-Augsburg Confession.

homogenisation was noted. Religious minorities have survived since, but are hardly reflected in current statistical data. Sample data from 2005 included in the table confirm that each non-Catholic identification does not exceed the limit of statistical error – 1% of the population. At the same time, as many as 15% of the residents of

Table 2. Religious identifications in Bielsko (1900–1931), Biała (1921–1931) and in double city Bielsko-Biała (2005)

Religion	Population						
	Bielsko				Biała		Bielsko-Biała
	1900	1910	1921	1931	1921	1931	2005
Population	16,600	18,568	19,785	22,332	7,746	22,702	150,260
Roman Catholic	9,464	10,378	10,694	12,645	5,627	17,878	148,935
Greek Catholic	–	–	24	50	27	71	–
Orthodox	–	–	8	7	6	9	20
Protestant	4,662	4,955	5,059	4,087	716	1,806	1,181
Jewish	2,460	3,024	3,982	4,430	1,363	2,903	50
Other	14	211	2	1,077	–	25	74
No identification	–	–	16	36	7	10	26,604
Share of population [%]							
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Roman Catholic	57.00	55.90	54.05	56.62	72.64	78.75	84.21
Greek Catholic	–	–	0.12	0.22	0.35	0.31	–
Orthodox	–	–	0.04	0.03	0.08	0.04	0.01
Protestant	28.10	27.60	25.57	18.30	9.24	7.96	0.67
Jewish	14.80	16.30	20.13	19.84	17.60	12.79	0.03
Other	0.10	1.10	0.01	4.82	–	0.11	0.04
No identification	–	–	0.08	0.16	0.09	0.04	15.04

Source: *Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej opracowany na podstawie wyników pierwszego powszechnego spisu ludności z dn. 30. września 1921 r.* i innych źródeł urzędowych. *Województwo krakowskie i Śląsk Cieszyński*, t. XII, GUS, Warszawa 1925, s. 3; *Drugi powszechny spis ludności z dn. 9. XII 1931 r. Mieszkania i gospodarstwa domowe, ludność, stosunki zawodowe. Województwo krakowskie i Śląsk Cieszyński*, GUS, Warszawa 1938, Statystyka Polski, ser. C, z. 83, s. 27; J. Spyra, P. Kenig, *Sytuacja wyznaniowa Bielska w drugiej połowie XIX i na początku XX wieku*, [in:] I. Panic (ed.), *Bielsko-Biała. Monografia miasta*, t. III. *Bielsko od wojen śląskich do zakończenia I wojny światowej (1740–1918)*, Urząd Miejski w Bielsku-Białej, Bielsko-Biała 2010, s. 259, *Wykaz parafii w Polsce 2006*, ISKK SAC, Warszawa.

the city have declared no religious identification. According to the authors of the most recent census, which includes religious denominations (*Wyznania religijne* 2013) "in the communist period, religion was overlooked for ideological reasons, and in the first general census after the transition [to capitalism] in 2002, the question of religion was not included in the [interest of the] protection of personal liberty." Such a high percentage of people reporting no religious identification, with respect to the general picture of Poland, certainly is to be associated with recent history and people's reluctance to disclose private information. The reluctance to declare one's religious identification in the studied city may also result from the overlap of religious identity and national or ethnic belonging. The religious and national diversity of the past in the studied city simply does not match the general Polish historical narration and stereotypical images of the followers of different religions in Poland.

Today, 22 Catholic parishes in the city are host to 148,935 members. Three parishes of the Evangelical-Augsburg (Lutheran) Church in Bielsko, Biała, and Stare Bielsko have 2,971 members, and the Jewish community has about 50 members.[2] The problem of incompatibility of data on registered and practicing members in diaspora communities makes it possible to estimate accurate numbers only for the Catholic Church.[3] Today, in the city there are also other churches and religious groups, mainly of the Protestant tradition as well as new religious movements. The largest groups are congregations of the Baptist Church, Pentecostal Church ("Philadelphia" congregation), Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Buddhist groups. Since 1992, the city has been the seat of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec. It is also the seat of the Cieszyn Diocese of the Lutheran Church. Both the Catholic and the Protestant dioceses have symbolic significance for their Churches and the region.

The Catholic diocese was established by Pope John Paul II in 1992 and its first Bishop Tadeusz Rakoczy was a close colleague of the Polish Pope, and he comes from the region as well. The Cieszyn Diocese is the largest diocese for Lutherans living

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[2] Data for Catholic parishes: *Wykaz parafii w Polsce 2006*; Data on Jewish residents: D. Wiewióra, *Kilka uwag o losach społeczności żydowskiej w Bielsku-Białej po 1945 r.*, http://www. olszowka.most.org.pl/zydzi05.htm (27.10.2013). Data for Protestant communities come from church statistics and were received by the author from the Office of the Cieszyn Diocese of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church in Bielsko.

[3] According to the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church in Poland, the dominicantes rate in 2010 was 41% of registered members; communicantes 16.4%. See: Dominicantes 1992–2010 wykresy, Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego, http://www.iskk.pl/kosciolnaswiecie/75-dominicantes.html (15.10.2013). In the case of Protestant churches and Jewish communities in Poland, only data on registered members are available. However, these religious groups are diasporas in Poland and tend not to demonstrate considerable differences between registered and practicing members.

in Poland (58% of all faithful)[4] and is now the centre of educational and publishing activity and charitable works of this church in Poland.

It can be concluded that the accumulation of a variety of religious identifications is not reflected in the statistics as strongly as in the activity and presence of religious communities in city life. What is important for the interpretation of the function of religious identity is, therefore, the activity of the community of believers and their educational and cultural role in the past and present of the city.

Social bonds and religious identifications

In the past in Bielsko and in Biała there was a very lively cultural life and education organised by religious groups. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Bielsko there were about 120 organisations at work (Kocurek 2010). Catholic associations in 19th century Bielsko included the Catholic Association, Catholic Association of Apprentices, and the Catholic Women's Association. It is worth mentioning that they were run by German Catholics. Polish Catholic associations in Biała focused mainly on national issues; established by the priest Stojałowski were Polish House and the Christian People's Party. Lutherans focused mainly on education and philanthropy and established a folk school, which was later nationalised, and also established a teachers' college. The broadest philanthropic programs were run by Jews. The most famous were the Austria Humanitarian Society, B'nai-B'rith Lodge, Jewish Society of the Free Table, and the Ferienheim Association, which organised holidays for children. Moreover, there were sports societies, crafts associations, and many others (Spyra, Kenig 2010). These organisations often cooperated with each other, but were limited to their own religious groups and remained separated even if they had a similar field of interest. For example, there were three women's charitable organisations as well as three gymnastics societies. Religious ties were also important in the local clothing guilds, which offered practical and religious education, as well as the upbringing of children and cultural offerings for their members (Dąbrowska 2012).

Religious identification serves as an excellent base for the functioning of social bonds and social networks based on traditional community ties (religious community), institutionally established ties (parish), and purpose driven ties (religious organisations such as charitable associations). The meaning of these social bonds is particularly important in the context of the city, where membership in the local community, neighbourhood, being one of "us" or being "a stranger" are categories connecting religious and regional identifications.

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[4] Data for the Evangelical-Augsburg Confession are available online. The following film is also educational: "Luteranie w Polsce," http://www.luteranie.pl/strona_glowna.html#!prettyPhoto[mixed]/0/ (10.09.2013).

The mechanisms of social linkage integrate individuals, but also reinforce divisions. Distance between different religious groups is a phenomenon not remaining unnoticed for a sense of belonging, familiarity or strangeness in the city. In the words of Florian Znaniecki, "the most common thing in history is antagonism over religious matters as the religious values of a group are, in the eyes of its members, the most sublime components of culture […]" (Nowicka 1993 after Znaniecki 1931). It is this mechanism that makes the relationship between two religious groups possess both cognitive and emotional distance. This is perfectly mirrored in the history of Bielsko-Biała. Each of its religious communities continued to operate its own cultural, social and educational programs among its followers and declared special attachment to the region.

Today's religious communities in Bielsko-Biała continue their cultural initiatives, but there is considerably important ecumenical activity in the city. It includes not only the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity," but also ecumenical events such as a festival of sacred music (*Sacrum in Musica*) and biblical knowledge contests for children.[5] Ecumenical events are also occasions for meetings of city management organisations and cultural institutions. However, in everyday practice, the city's religious groups are not very open and ecumenism tends to be inspired by some priests rather than by the faithful. In Bielsko, there are numerous Catholic organisations as well as branches of national movements such as the Association of Civitas Christiana. Local Lutherans have continued their engagement in education and publishing after 1989. The Jewish community is focused on maintaining its archive, cemeteries and educational activities covering the history of Jews in Bielsko. There are also a number of associations such as the Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland and the Polish Evangelical Association.

Religion and the identity of the city

Religious heritage in the traditional sense – churches, monuments, material culture

According to art historians and urban planners, a city is a type of piece of art (Chojecka 1994; Purchla 2005). The development of urban space reflects social and

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[5] See this year's activities for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Bielsko-Biała: Ekumeniczny maraton biblijny po raz szósty, http://ekai.pl/diecezje/bielsko-zywiecka/x74579/bielsko-biala-ekumeniczny-maraton-biblijny-po-raz-szosty/ (22.04.2014). Information on the "Sacrum in Musica" Festival, http://www.sacruminmusica.pl/index.php. Information on ecumenical competition for children, http://www.katecheza.kuria.bielsko.pl/konkursy/ekumeniczny-konkurs-jonasz (22.04.2014).

economic changes in the city and serves as testimony of the spirit of the era. Urban space combines aesthetics and functionality and its elements become part of the experience of people creating the *genius loci* of the site. The religious material heritage of Bielsko-Biała is a record of the history and activity of three religious groups: Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish (Fig. 1).

Among the city's most important Roman Catholic sacred places are churches, sites of commemoration and sites of pilgrimage. In Hałcnów, a village today within city limits, is located the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sorrows whose origins date back to the late 18th century. Pilgrims come to the miraculous statue of Our Lady, which is found at the main altar of the local church since 1784. Today the sanctuary is one of the most well-known in the region.[6] The oldest churches include St. Stanislaus Church in Stare Bielsko dating from the 14th century and the 17th century wooden church of St. Barbara in Mikuszowice Krakowskie, which is found along a tourist trail of wooden architecture in Silesia.[7] The most important in the city are the largest parish churches that dominates the skyline – the Church of St. Nicholas in Bielsko (Photo 1, Fig. 5) and the Church of Divine Providence in Biała. Both churches received their current facade in the era of the largest urban development of the twin cities. The Cathedral of St. Nicholas was rebuilt from 1908 to 1910 in the Romanesque Revival style with Art Nouveau elements. The 61-meter tower of the Cathedral dominates the skyline of the city and is one of its most characteristic elements. The Church of Divine Providence was built in 1769 and is one of the finest examples of Baroque architecture in the region. The location of the church on the River Niwka, which has been regulated, recalls the urban regulation plan of Max Fabiani from 1898, which is now recognised for its foresight and modernity. In fact, the demographic and religious landscape of the city is inscribed in the urban plan and its redefinitions. With the expansion of the city, sites which were outside the city walls, such as Protestant churches, have become today's downtown. The location of churches also reveals the significance of religious communities in the various stages of history of the city. For example, the representative building of the Synagogue of Bielsko, designed by Karol Korn in the 19th century was built along a main avenue, with the view on the railway.[8] Another unique example is the

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[6] The sanctuary is also present on the internet: Parafia NMP w Hałcnowie, Historia Kościoła, http://www.parafiahalcnow.pl/a/parafia/historia-kosciola/69/ oraz Sanktuarium w Hałcnowie, https://pl-pl.facebook.com/pages/Sanktuarium-w-Ha%C5%82cnowie/583552708324609 (22.04.2014).

[7] See: *Szlak Architektury Drewnianej, Pętla Beskidzka*, http://www.slaskie.pl/sad/ (22.04.2014).

[8] During World War II, on September 13th, 1939 the synagogue was completely destroyed. The images of the synagogue used to be presented on the walls of the building of the Art Gallery BWA, which was built in the 1960s in its place. The former synagogue's street remains a main thoroughfare in the city. However, it has lost its former urban functions to become the main thoroughfare for cars driving through the city.

Table 3. "Bielski Zion" – selected buildings and their use in the past and today

Number on Fig. 2	Original use of building	Today's use of building
1.	Church of the Redeemer	Church of the Redeemer (so-called Lutheran Cathedral)
2.	Lutheran Teacher Training Seminary and People's School for Boys	The School of Administration
3.	Old school – demolished in the 1980s and replaced with a publishing house.	The Publishing House "Augustana" and the seat of the Cieszyn Diocese
4.	Alumneum im. P.E.Lauerbacha	Mikołaj Rej High School and Junior High School
5.	Lutheran orphanage	"Soar" Home of Rest
6.	Silesian Evangelical House of the Diakonia Sisters	Public prosecutor's office in Bielsko-Biała
7.	Lutheran People's School	Parish of the Redeemer's Church
8.	Lutheran Girls' School	Primary School No. 2
9.	Lutheran Cemetery	Old Lutheran Cemetery
10.	Statue of Martin Luther	Statue of Martin Luther
11.	The Pastor's Well – a monument	The Pastor's Well – a monument
12.	Monument of Gratitude and Love	Monument of Gratitude and Love

Source: Author's own study.

history of the "Bielski Zion" – the Protestant quarter of the city, which was created after the announcement of tolerance laws in 1781 (Fig. 2, 6).

Shown on the map as a green quarter with the Church of the Redeemer in the middle, at the beginning of the 18th century it was a grassland found outside the city, which would become a centre of Lutheran culture in the Habsburg Monarchy by the end of the 19th century. The most important buildings in Bielski Zion are the Redeemer's Church (now the diocesan cathedral) built between 1782–1790 (Photo 2),the building of the present-day rectory that was built as a school in 1794, and other school buildings, including the largest Teachers' Seminary (now the School of Administration), youth Alumneum (students' house), and girls' school. The Teacher's Seminary building from 1863 is built according to a design by Emanuel Rost, a prolific and famous architect from Biała. Interesting is also the Statue of Martin Luther, manufactured in Vienna in 1900, which is currently the only public monument to Martin Luther in Poland. The buildings show the glory days of the city and are decorated in the Neo-Gothic and Neo-Renaissance style – inspired by the architecture of Vienna. A similar style is also presented by other Protestant churches in the former Biała and Old Bielsko (Photo 4 and Fig. 8).

Choice of architectural detail and style is also an essential element of urban heritage. According to Ewa Chojecka (1994), the whole architecture at the turn of the 20th century is sometimes called *architecture parlante* because it was based on the language of association with the characteristic forms of different historical epochs. Its purpose was to "create broader ideological connotations that would show relationships between the past and the present. References to the Gothic and Romanesque were regarded as symbols of religion and spirituality" (Chojecka 1994, 42). Neoclassical architecture in Bielsko-Biala is a characteristic element of the visual identity of the city and testimony of the intellectual currents of the era such as the idea of the modern nation, and 19th century pluralism (Fig. 3, 4). The programmatic desire to "produce in the minds of modern people a deeper sense of connection with history and culture" (Chojecka 1994) was reflected by the Romanesque-style of the main synagogue in Bielsko (Fig. 7) built by Charles Korn in 1879. The synagogue was destroyed in 1939 in the course of World War II. The funeral house at the old Jewish cemetery (Photo 3) is today the only reference to the style of that building.

The urban area also tells a story of social tension and the desire to show the presence and significance of religious culture in the city by religious communities. For example, near the castle there is a plaque commemorating the visit of Pope John Paul II in Bielsko-Biała in 1995 and at the seat of the bishop of the diocese there is a large statue of the Polish Pope. There are former places of worship such as the altar table "Jan" – a stone table in the forest, which is a reminder of the secret place of worship of Protestants in the 18th century. The religious context of urban space relates also to non-sacred buildings. The most famous case is the story of the Frog House (Fig. 8), which is one of the most interesting art nouveau buildings located opposite the Lutheran Church in Biała (Photo 4). Humorous feasting frogs, one holding a glass and a pipe and the other playing the mandolin, have recently been withdrawn as a promotional symbol of the city because it was learned that they are an architectural trace of religious intolerance towards other churches (*Dziennik* 2009).

The main religious monuments and sacred places of Bielsko-Biala are not situated on the city's central square and are not a primary tourist attraction in the city. Their significance lies here in the authentic performance of functions of worship and the religious traditions of the city's inhabitants.

Memory and testament of the past

The city is not merely structure and space, but also history and time. It is human history enchanted in stone and memory that can be read from the place. In Bielsko-Biała, memory and forgetfulness form the current image of the city and its identity. It could be argued that each religion and nationality present in the city at some point in time has left its mark on the city's memory, image, and identity.
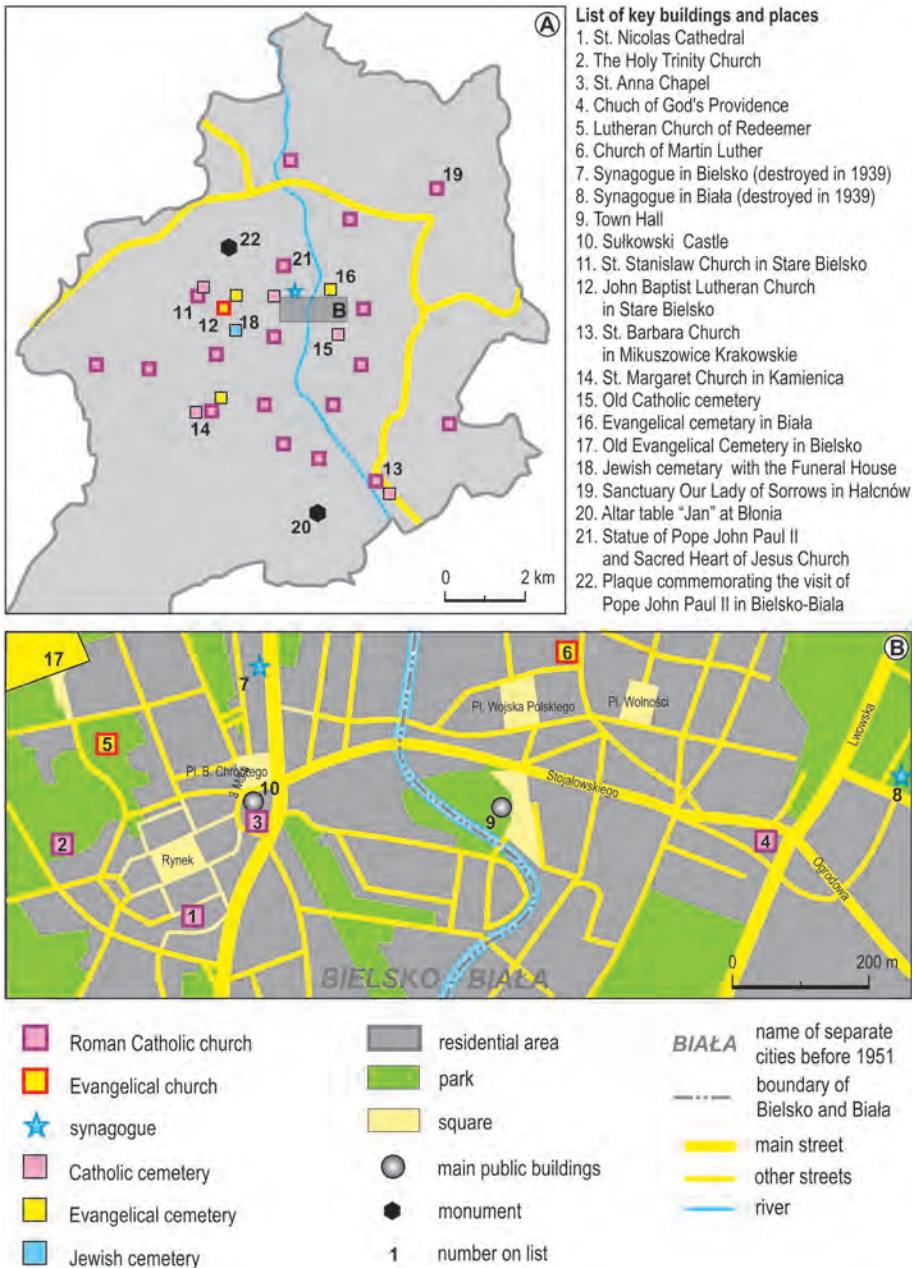
List of key buildings and places
1. St. Nicolas Cathedral
2. The Holy Trinity Church
3. St. Anna Chapel
4. Chuch of God's Providence
5. Lutheran Church of Redeemer
6. Church of Martin Luther
7. Synagogue in Bielsko (destroyed in 1939)
8. Synagogue in Biała (destroyed in 1939)
9. Town Hall
10. Sułkowski Castle
11. St. Stanislaw Church in Stare Bielsko
12. John Baptist Lutheran Church
    in Stare Bielsko
13. St. Barbara Church
    in Mikuszowice Krakowskie
14. St. Margaret Church in Kamienica
15. Old Catholic cemetery
16. Evangelical cemetary in Biała
17. Old Evangelical Cemetery in Bielsko
18. Jewish cemetary with the Funeral House
19. Sanctuary Our Lady of Sorrows in Hałcnów
20. Altar table "Jan" at Błonia
21. Statue of Pope John Paul II
    and Sacred Heart of Jesus Church
22. Plaque commemorating the visit of
    Pope John Paul II in Bielsko-Biala

Roman Catholic church
Evangelical church
synagogue
Catholic cemetery
Evangelical cemetery
Jewish cemetery

residential area
park
square
main public buildings
monument
number on list

BIAŁA name of separate cities before 1951
boundary of Bielsko and Biała
main street
other streets
river

Fig. 1. Churches and sacred places in Bielsko-Biała (A) and in the centre of the city (B)
Source: Author's own work, and graphic design by E. Bilska-Wodecka.

Fig. 2. Protestant quarter – "Bielski Zion"
Source: Author's own work, and graphic design by E. Bilska-Wodecka.

Fig. 3. Panorama of the center of Bielsko from the roof of Hotel "Keiserhof"
(now "President") with St. Nicolas Church, 1912
Source: Muzeum w Bielsku-Białej.

Fig. 4. Panorama of the center of Biała
Source: Muzeum w Bielsku-Białej.

Photo 1. St. Nicolas Church (Catholic Cathedral)
Source: Artur Sury, Miejskie Centrum Informacji Turystycznej w Bielsku-Białej.

Photo 2. Redeemer's Church (Lutheran cathedral)
Source: Artur Sury, Miejskie Centrum Informacji Turystycznej w Bielsku-Białej.

Fig. 5. Catholic Cathedral
Source: Muzeum w Bielsku-Białej.

Fig. 6. Bielski Zion, 1916
Source: Muzeum w Bielsku-Białej.
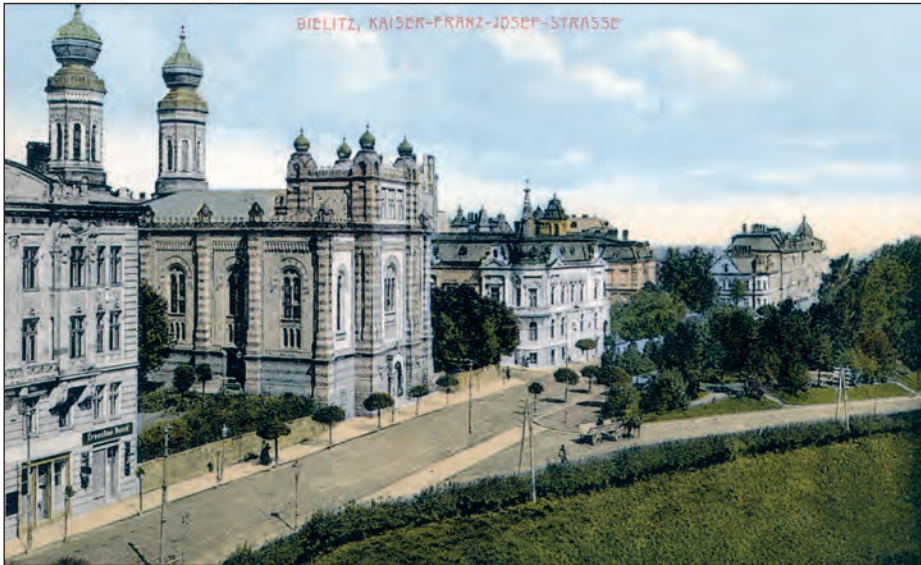
Fig. 7. Emperor Franz Josef Street and synagogue, 1912
Source: Muzeum w Bielsku-Białej.

Photo 3. Jewish cemetery today
Source: Artur Sury, Miejskie Centrum Informacji Turystycznej w Bielsku-Białej.

Fig. 8. Lutheran church in Biała and the Frog House, 1908
Source: Muzeum w Bielsku-Białej.

Photo 4. Lutheran church in Biała – view from Komorowicka street
Source: Artur Sury, Miejskie Centrum Informacji Turystycznej w Bielsku-Białej.

Religious communities and their sympathisers increasingly direct their attention to informing, commemorating and educating others about their history. Some of these activities are inward such as the local Protestant tradition of commemorating religious persecution by organising services in so-called "forest churches." Other efforts are directed outward such as a very popular series of lectures on the history of the Jews in Bielsko organised under the title "Factory of sensation" by Dr. Jacek Proszyk at the Polish Theatre. The fact that multicultural heritage is currently fashionable in modern cultural life becomes a silent ally of memory and commemoration of religious minorities in the city. However, it is also a kind of selective memory. Forgotten areas of the city include the cemeteries of religious minorities and the history of meritorious dissidents. The memory of the cultural diversity of the city is also an area of interest of municipal authorities.

In 2010 the Department of Culture and Art of the City Council published a rather voluminous monograph of the city (Panic 2010) and the memoirs of city residents (Polak 2012). There is also an extensive bibliography of the city (Chojecka 1994; Janoszek 2008; Zachara 2008). However, the nuances of the coexistence of three religious traditions and many nations in the city are still difficult topics. In this context, it is interesting to note that until World War II, the city was a so-called German-speaking island (*Bielitzer Insel*), and despite being on Polish territory, the German language was widely used by the inhabitants of the city.[9] The reason for this was its history in the Habsburg Empire and the German cultural origins of many Protestant and Jewish settlers. Thus, religious identification served often as a frontier between nations. This fact is visible in the memories of the city's residents.

"I stood with my mother before the committee (Since 1924 in Cieszyn Silesia in accordance with the Geneva Convention, children were admitted to schools by the Municipal Commission) – it was a large green table, and behind it sat a group of Poles and a group of Germans who asked me: 'Can you pray, talk, sing?'– I could in Polish and German, so I answered politely. Finally, Mr. Kotoniak, a disabled war veteran from the Polish group, said he had seen my parents in church for Polish worship services, and therefore I should go to a Polish school" (Polak 2012, 175). The city continues to find new information and supplement its image of the forgotten aspects of its history.

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[9] Ewa Chojecka, an interview available as part of a documentary film on the history of Bielsko-Biała, 27.04.2009, http://www.cyganskilas.org/varia/opowiesci/niemiecka-wyspa-jezykowa-opowiada-prof-ewa-chojecka. See also: *Informator o zbiorach Muzeum w Bielsku-Białej i jego oddziałów: Muzeum Juliana Fałata, Muzeum Dom Tkacza, Muzeum Techniki i Włókiennictwa, edited by Bożena and Bogusław Chorąż (Archeology), Maria Aleksandrowicz (History and Julian Fałat Museum), Teresa Dudek-Bujarek (Art, Arsenal), Elżbieta Teresa Filip (Ethnography), Piotr Kenig (Museum of Technology and Textiles), Museum in Bielsko-Biała 2002.*

Image and narrative of the city

Today the city of Bielsko-Biala presents itself as a vibrant cultural and economic centre. The religious heritage of the city is revealed mainly in the form of information on the monuments and architecture (MCIT 2013a) of the city. It is, however, also widely present in the narrative of the city and city legends shared by its inhabitants. It is something that creates the uniqueness of the city and enriches it, but also reminds of the difficulties of coexistence and the time period when the city was divided between Poland and the Habsburg Monarchy. The city authorities carefully manage religious heritage and attention is paid to the individual religious monuments and churches of different religions (MCIT 2013b).

Despite the many traces of religious minorities in the historical fabric of the city, they remain barely visible in its overall image. This division of the image understood as a tourist and marketing product and the narratives of the city, which consist of the voices of residents, highlights the difficulty of religious heritage as a cultural resource. The most obvious ways of presenting cultural heritage are not always productive (Góral 2012). The promotional strategy of the city allows for the preservation of its complexity and escapes the commercial styling of its multicultural past.

Not surprisingly, there is plenty of artistic interpretation and reference to religious heritage made by all generations of artists in the iconography of the city covering images and artistic works from the 18th century on (Purzycka 2010). The majority of panoramas of Bielsko-Biala combine the industrial city skyline with the towers of churches and city hall.

The nuances of the coexistence of many religions are reflected strongly in local life. For the Protestant community, locality and religious heritage are a special nexus. In this diocese, especially in Cieszyn region, it manifests itself even in the tradition of wearing regional costumes for religious celebrations (e.g. confirmations). Urban communities in Bielsko-Biała do not fallow this tradition and rather stress their ties with the city, demonstrating strong local identity and their role for the development of the city. Catholics focus on updating the narrative of the city by marking religious meanings in geographic space. One example of this trend is the "Papal Trail" designed for mountain tourists. Only recently is the white spot of Jewish history being slowly filled in by the initiative and work of local enthusiasts and a small Jewish community. As Ewa Rewers (1998, 79) wrote: "The stories of cities still provide the most comprehensive answers to questions about the results of the cultural production of urban space, ways of assigning its meaning, and the discovery of new applications."

Issue of multiculturalism

The history of the city raises questions about its multicultural and multi-religious past as well as its legacy. Undoubtedly the material and intangible cultural heritage of the city serves as evidence of the past. It must be remembered, however, that the modern idea of multiculturalism refers to a society where the basis of the status of minorities is equality before the law and tolerance in intergroup relations. Such relationships in Bielsko at the turn of the 20th century were quite complicated.

"The richest and most influential residents were the Lutherans, who constituted the majority of the electors of different bodies because of the required property census. However, until 1861, the Lutherans were in Austria in the position of a merely tolerated religion, gradually losing their numerical advantage in the city. The number of Catholics did increase, but apart from a few exceptions, they were among the economically weaker sections of society. Jews were essential for the development of industry but their position in the economic and cultural life of the city strengthened gradually [...], and their activity encountered also various legal restrictions that closed the way to integration with local society" (Spyra, Kenig 2010, 268).

In the past, the different religious communities had different legal status and oriented their activities around the specific purpose of their socio-political situation. Religious ties were combined with tensions on the grounds of nationality, class, and economic status, and were quite important in local politics. The candidates for local government positions were de facto determined by religious communities until the World War I. The configurations of their size and support for chosen candidates created space for cooperation across religious boundaries. This was especially evident between liberal-minded Jews and Protestants (Proszyk 2012). This sort of cooperation established the principle of religious parity in local elections (Spyra, Kenig 2010). Peaceful coexistence and numerous examples of cooperation between faiths and religions testify to the city's religious and cultural pluralism. Numerous examples of practical cooperation, tolerance, and participation in the public sphere have been noted. Today, however, such relationships can be considered to be multiculturalism only in the historical sense, simply as living together in a city and pursuing some cooperation. Despite some cooperation between religious groups, the historical social reality does not fit with contemporary definitions of multiculturalism (Mamzer 2001). It was rather a pluralistic society similar to what is known as "pillar society" (e.g. the Netherslands) where each community is acting on its needs and traditions separately and on its own, and cooperation is necessary only in the case of specific tasks. Yet, the culture of dialogue, and numerous examples of long-term common activities of religious groups is worthy of respect. As a result of homogenisation and hostile politics towards cultural and religious diversity in Poland after World War II, it is difficult to speak of multiculturalism as a current feature in the city. What

remains is the heritage of various groups as evidence of historical diversity. This knowledge is becoming more widely distributed also because of a kind of "fashion" for multiculturalism linked with European integration and a growing awareness of history among the city's inhabitants. Religious heritage and its legacy are valuable assets and can serve as an educational and cultural resource.

Functions of religious heritage in urban space on the example of Bielsko-Biała

As demonstrated in the analysis of Bielsko-Biała, religious heritage in the broadest sense consists of those elements of culture which are believed to be due to the values assigned to them (ideas, patterns of behaviour) and should represent the realm of "living" experience for successive generations (Kieres 2003). Collective religious identity is both the substance and product of heritage. All elements of religious tradition contribute to the construction of collective identity as a more or less stable compound of local cultural space; on the other hand, this local heritage contributes to the religious identity of the next generation. Hence, religious heritage is manifested in many ways and has many features of both the identity of a city and the identity of its inhabitants. The key functions of religious heritage in a city are:
– creating the aesthetics and uniqueness of a place,
– building the image of the city,
– creating a narrative space via identification, traditions, and religious practices,
– creating order across urban space – sacred places act as points of reference and the basis for the zoning of certain activities in the city (sacred and secular),
– commemorating as well as the formation of collective memory,
– creating an arena for collective action and the basis for local ties, e.g. parish membership,
– strengthening of local identity and local community,
– functioning as a cultural resource and asset to the city.

It is also worth noting that religious identification meets the conditions recognised by UNESCO as necessary to evaluate intangible cultural heritage that is community-based and representative of the given community. Religious identification serves as a link between the authenticity and credibility of heritage and the identity of inhabitants and its cultivation in a given place. The legacy of religious identity can be carried on irrespectively of the number of followers and includes those who are not present in the city anymore; however, its presence in the public sphere and its influence on the contemporary identity of a city requires at least conscious religious practice, which can be reflected in public spaces, personal memory, and art. Such a perspective may also shed some light on the problem of superficial contemporary

interpretations of religious diversity in Central European cities such as Bielsko as an example of modern ideas of multiculturalism in Central and Eastern Europe.

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