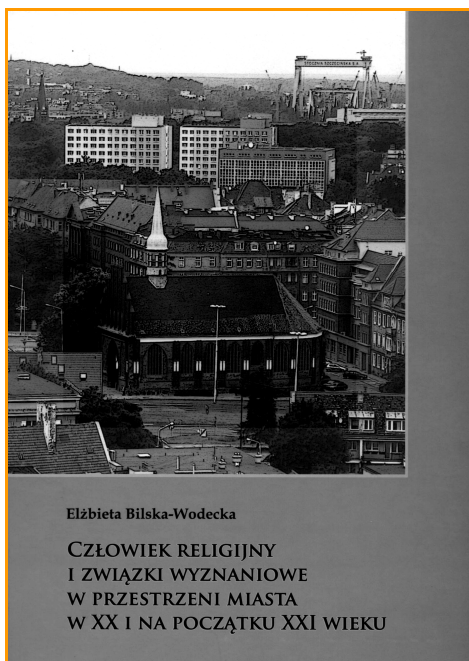


# REVIEWS

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ELŻBIETA BILKA-WODECKA

*CZŁOWIEK RELIGIJNY I ZWIĄZKI  
WYZNANIOWE W PRZESTRZENI MIASTA  
W XX I NA POCZĄTKU XXI WIEKU*  
[THE RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUAL AND RELIGIOUS  
ORGANISATIONS IN URBAN SPACE IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup>  
AND EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES]

INSTYTUT GEOGRAFII I GOSPODARKI PRZESTRZENNEJ  
UNIwersytetu Jagiellońskiego  
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pp. 304

The subject of this mysteriously entitled work is the religious diversity of (selected) cities, situated within the present borders of Poland. The introduction and first chapter outline the objectives and the subject of research, as well as identifying the cities included. In order to construct the methodological basis of the work, the author first had to define two fundamental concepts: the 'religious individual' and 'religious space'.

After presenting the age-old discussion over the semantic range of *homo religiosus*, Bilka-Wodecka concludes that "the religious person tries to organize space and everyday life so that they could live according to the principles they profess" (p.13). It seems that the most important part of this definition is the principles (religion) a person declares.

A more precise definition is provided by the author for religious space, which she derives from geographical space. She believes that it is a "subspace, a fragment of geographical space, with relations between the individual and the *sacrum*". Space understood in this way bears the qualities of social space. It must meet, however, at least one out of two necessary conditions: the area must be permanently inhabited by a population professing some kind of religion, or there must be some sacred buildings present.

The author sets herself two goals: cognitive and methodological. The cognitive goal is "to define the factors shaping the religious space of the largest Polish cities in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, with particular consideration of the religious individual and the religious organizations functioning within this space" (p.13). The other goal is to develop a research procedure which makes it possible to analyse long-term transformations of the religious structure of cities (p. 13).

The author conducted detailed research in the 15 largest cities in Poland (with some exceptions, which she explains in the text), with reference to three periods: 1900-18, 1918-44 and 1945-2005. She has used all available resources, both archival and contemporary. The list of resources is placed at the end of the book, and the tables can be found on the CD attached.

The book is divided into nine chapters, the first three of which are methodological-theoretical, a further five are analytical, while the last contains conclusions.

In Chapter 3 ("Theoretical foundation"), Bilka-Wodecka suggests using the functional method to study the religious function of cities, dividing the functions into exo- and endogenous, as well as postulating the idea of a free religious market. She

believes that the latter may be used to discuss the function of religion in the contemporary world. She also includes a subchapter referring to religious and secular time, as well as to a relative approach as a way of interpreting processes, and in the geography of religion as well.

Chapter 4 is entitled "Political factors determining the situation of religious organisations". It is devoted to the formal and the actual situation of religious organisations on Polish territory at different political periods in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Among other things, the author discusses the degree of interference by occupant countries, and then by different Polish governments as regards the religious market.

In chapter 5 ("The transformations of the religious structure of cities vs. pluralism"), the author presents the factors causing changes in the cities studied (religious, political, economic, demographic and social), as well as influencing the number and variety of religious organisations, and correlations between nationality and affiliation with a given religious organisation. The author quotes the numbers belonging to different religious organisations in Poland in 2005. The chapter ends with a typology of the religious diversification of cities, which includes three types: intermittent, regressive, regressive but stable.

The next chapter ("The religious individual and religious organisations within the religious space of a city") is devoted to an analysis of the main units of religious administration, sacred buildings, as well as the network of parishes in the cities studied. The author presents a cycle for the erection of sacred buildings in Polish cities, which consists of the following stages: fighting for a location, applying for a building permit, the difficult period of constructing (or adapting), ownership changes, as well as the occasional demolition stage.

A special chapter (7) is dedicated to the use of time for religious activity. The author conducted an analysis of religious time in calendars, time on holidays, as well as discussing the factors determining the use of time for religious activity. The last subchapter presents selected aspects of religious life, including the spatial distribution of the *dominantes* index by parish, using the examples of Łódź and Kraków.

The title of the last chapter (8) is very similar to the title of the whole book ("The religious individual and religious organisations over time and space") which I do not approve of. In the first part of this chapter, the author divides religious space into contemporary (formal, functional and perceptual) and historical (secularized and archaic).

The model of the evolution of this space presented in Figure 51 is an attempt to summarize research on religious space. For the purpose of constructing this model, E. Bilska-Wodecka made use of Butler's tourism area life cycle. Her model of religious space consists of seven phases (initial, development, expansion, stagnation, revival, decline and 'going into hiding', whose course is then analysed in each of the 15 cities studied.

In the chapter entitled "Conclusions", the author summarized her research and referred to the objectives set at the beginning of the book. She stated that the creator of and at the same time the person responsible for all the changes in religious space is the religious individual, represented by religious organisations. Bilska-Wodecka emphasizes the obvious influence of political factors on the functioning of religious organisations, which she demonstrated by analyzing the phenomenon in several periods. The synthetic presentation of the changes occurring in the religious space is through a transformational model.

At the end of the book the author asks: "What will be the direction of change in the religious space of Polish cities?" Unable to provide a definite answer, Bilska-Wodecka presents three scenarios which she believes are possible: progressive secularization, the transformational model observed in the United States, and a third one – still difficult to predict and define today.

The author carefully compiled a bibliography which consists of archival sources (manuscripts), printed sources, internet sources and data bases, as well as individual publications. At the end of the book there is a summary in English.

The book by Elżbieta Bilska-Wodecka is an example of a geographical monograph including aspects of the geography of religion, as well as urban, social and population geography. In this respect, it is an exceptional and highly illuminating work. The factual, conceptual and methodological layers of the book deserve the highest praise. In my opinion, it is the first work in Poland where the author has attempted a comprehensive analysis of the religious individual functioning in urban religious space. This attempt has brought very interesting results, both cognitively and methodologically. The noticeable similarity of some models in the geography of religion and tourism is intriguing. It may point to the universality of these concepts in the study of various geographical subspaces (e.g. the area life cycle).

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*Translated by Ewa Mossakowska*