The Role of Women in the Jewish Community of Kraków
An Unwritten History?

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Introduction

Visitors to cities such as Vienna, Prague and Budapest may well come across fine hotels which form part of the ‘K and K’ group. Most, though, will be unaware (and many will not care) that K and K refers to the twin monarchies which were created by the Austro Hungarian Compromise (the Ausgleich) of 1867. Those monarchies were the Kaiserreich of Austria and the Königreich of Hungary – hence ‘K and K’.

Rather more sinister was the ‘K and K’ promoted by Adolph Hitler in 1934, when he adapted the late nineteenth century phrase ‘Kinder, Küche und Kirche’ (Children, Kitchen and Church). Hitler argued that for the German woman her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home. That is to say Kinder und Küche.1

The view that women play only a subsidiary role to men is reflected in the writings of early historians who wrote about the Jewish community of Poland in general, and Kraków in particular. Such historians included Feivel Hirsch Wetzstein (1858-1924) and Bernhard Friedberg (1876-1942) who wrote wide ranging historical accounts of the history of Jewish communities in Kraków, and more generally in the province of Galicia. However, the names index in his work Dzieje Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu (1304-1868)2 shows that the vast majority of people mentioned in the book are men. Where women are listed in the index, their names are often followed by the word ‘córka’ or ‘żona’ indicating that they are being mentioned only or mainly as the daughter of their father or as a wife.

Bernard Weinryb’s book The Jews of Poland3 runs to over four hundred pages. However, the word ‘women’ does not appear in the index, and the subject of women’s status is limited to little more than one page. Whilst the author refers to the role of women within marriage, he does say ‘in practice women shared the burden of making a living and in some cases were the main bearers of this burden. Individual women were lauded for outstanding learning, charitableness or piety. They were also officially regarded as partners in property ownership.’

Two modern publications may be taken to illustrate the emphasis or possibly the dominance of males in the Kraków Jewish community. The first is a book about prominent Jews in Kraków from the fourteenth to the twentieth century,4 whilst the second is a book of bibliographies of graduates of the Jagiellonian University.5 The first book describes about 60 leaders of the community, only three of whom are women. They are Róža Rock, Sarah Schenirer

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinder,_Kuche,_Kirche
2 Published in Kraków in 1912. This work was revised and in 1931 and 1936 republished in two volumes as Historja Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu, 1304-1868. The work has since been translated into modern Hebrew as Toldot ha’Yehudim b’Krakov u’ve Kazimierz 1304-1868.
4 Agnieszka Kutylak (Ed.), Krakowianie: Wybitni Żydzi Krakowscy XIV-XX w. (Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa; Kraków, 2006).
and Zofia Ameisen. The first two of these women were associated with the Jewish orphanage, and with the education of orthodox Jewish girls, whilst the third was an art historian. The second book gives 29 bibliographies, but only four relate to women. These are Zofia Ameisen, Maria Einhorn-Susulska (psychologist), Laura Kaufman (zoologist), and Maria Orwid (psychiatrist).

It does not follow from what has been said that feminism was not an issue in early nineteenth century Poland. For example reference should be made to the book Głos Kobiet w Kwestyi Kobiecej (Female Voice in Women’s Issues) which was published in Kraków in 1903.

The Jewish Women’s Archive (www.jwa.org) has a mission which ‘documents Jewish women’s stories, elevates their voices, and inspires them to be agents of change’. The site includes a number of articles and papers, including one by Professor Moshe Rosman of Bar Ilan University entitled ‘Poland: Early Modern (1500-1795)’. This is available at https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/poland-early-modern-1500-1795. The author starts by referring to the argument that little has been said about the role of women because there is a lack of source material. He then points out that this reasoning is not sound. On the contrary there are at least three groups of sources. These are Yiddish books, archival sources, and literature. The author then challenges the traditional view that the role of women was wholly subsidiary to, and separate from, the role of men.

At the beginning of her paper ‘Jewish Women and the Household Economy in Manchester, c 1890-1920’ Rickie Burman refers plainly to ‘a persuasive andro-centric view [amongst male authors and historians] which sees women as peripheral to the main thrust of history: women are defined in relation to men and are not perceived as active agents.’

The issue which has been described was identified by the modern Jewish feminist movement which became established in America during the 1970’s. It is reflected in a book by Emily Taitz and Sondra Henry called, Written out of History; Our Jewish Foremothers. It is also reflected in a chapter in the book Women in the Holocaust, which is entitled ‘The Missing 52 Per Cent; Research on Jewish Women in Interwar Poland and its Implications for Holocaust Studies’.

The Kraków Statute of 1595

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6 A third example is the book by Eugeniusz Duda and others (eds.) Powiśczenie; Nowy Cmentarz Żydowskie w Krakowie (Kraków, 2006). This includes a large number of brief biographies, but very few relate to women.

7 For other references to early Polish feminist works see https://lewicowo.pl/category/teksty/kwestia-kobieca. See also Archiwum Historii Kobiet (The Women’s Historical Archive) at www.herstorie.pl, and a 2011 discussion, in Polish, ‘Does Kraków Need a Women’s Museum?’ at https://en.mocak.pl/does-krakow-need-a-women-s-museum/


10 Emily Tait and Sondra Henry, Written out of History; Our Jewish Foremothers (Bloch Publishing Co; Jacksonville, FL, 1978). See also, for example, Susannah Heschel (ed.), On Being a Jewish Feminist (Schocken Books; New York, NY, 1983).

It is well documented that local Jewish communities were largely self-governing until the rule of King Stanisław August Poniatowski in the eighteenth century. The Kraków community was governed by its Statute of 1595, and a number of supplements or amendments to that statute.\textsuperscript{12} Extracts from the Statute are available in English largely thanks to the work of Shmuel Cygielman, author of \textit{Jewish Autonomy in Poland and Lithuania until 1648} (5408)\textsuperscript{13} Provisions concerning women and property are considered in the next section of this paper.

The Statute governs a range of subjects, including elections within the community. As might be expected the members who were entitled to vote were ‘taxpayers and those entitled to call themselves \textit{chaver} (brother) or \textit{morenu} (our teacher)\textsuperscript{14}, terms which excluded women.

However protection was given to brides. For example, in the case of a marriage to a person from out of town it was the duty of the communal leaders to ensure that no betrothal be permitted in which the father gives his daughter less than 150 gulden. There were also provisions to protect the bride if a man broke off the marriage after the betrothal.\textsuperscript{15} The importance of not causing embarrassment to a poor bride is illustrated by the case where famous Kraków Rabbi, Moshe Isserles (the Remu), authorised the performance of a marriage ceremony after the beginning of the Sabbath.\textsuperscript{16}

Sources relating to the 1595 Statute do not comment to any significant extent on the question of divorce. It appears that the authorities had the power to imprison husbands who did not co-operate in the divorce procedure, and that they even had the power to ban them from the community. However, as in current times, there appears to have been no provision which enabled the Courts to grant a divorce (‘Get’) to a wife against the wishes of the husband.

Daniel Tollet refers to other aspects of the 1595 Statute in his paper ‘The Private Life of Polish Jews in the Vasa Period’.\textsuperscript{17} He points out that in general terms the Statute prevented women having access to synagogues. In terms of business, the Statute provided that a merchant’s wife was allowed to help or take her husband’s place in his absence, but not to make any decisions. He quotes a Kraków based case where a wife was able to demonstrate she entered into a trading transaction in accordance with an instruction from her husband. A rich woman was judged to be so dangerous and provocative that the Statute placed restrictions on her dress code. In the same spirit of modesty the Statute forbade women supervising expectant mothers to play cards and dice.

**Women and Property**

The story is told of Kazimierz the Great and his Jewish mistress, Esterka.\textsuperscript{18} Out of devotion to her the King is said to have built many manor houses for her. Whether or not this particular story has any historical validity, it is clear that a few Jewish women had property rights from the

\textsuperscript{12} See Anna Jakimyszyn, \textit{Statut Krakowskiej Gminy Żydowskiej z roku 1595 i jego uzupełnienia} (Księgarnia Akademicka; Kraków, 2005).
\textsuperscript{13} Shmuel Arthur Cygielman, \textit{Jewish Autonomy in Poland and Lithuania Until 1648} (5408) (Jerusalem, 1997).
\textsuperscript{14} Shmuel Cygielman, 54, footnote.
\textsuperscript{15} Shmuel Cygielman, 67 and 89.
\textsuperscript{16} Shmuel Cygielman, 350-351. See also Henryk Halkowski, \textit{The Legends from the Jewish Town in Kazimierz near Cracow} (Mercury; Kraków, 1998), 18-21.
\textsuperscript{17} Antony Polonsky et al (eds.), \textit{The Jews in Old Poland, 1000-1795}, (I B Taurus; London, 1993), 53-5.
\textsuperscript{18} For example, see Ewa Basiura, \textit{The Jews of Poland in Tale and Legend} (Storyteller; Kraków, 1997). See also Chone Shmeruk, \textit{The Esterke Story in Yiddish and Polish Literature; A Case Study in the Mutual Relations of Two Cultural Traditions} (Zalman Shazar Center; Jerusalem, 1985).
earliest days of Jewish settlement in Poland. For example Rachel, the mother in law of Rabbi Jacob Polak was the only Jewish person to receive the right to own a house in Kraków after the expulsion of Jews in 1495. Another record from the fifteenth century shows that at one time a house in St. Anne Street was owned by Sara, the widow of ‘a Jew named Smerl’. On the other hand, a partial list of property owners in Kazimierz dating from 1653 does not include any women.

It appears that in terms of pure Jewish law (halakha), there is a general provision that a married woman cannot own property independently of her husband. This view is reflected in some modern works. For example, when considering a prozbul (avoidance of the release of a debt) for wage earning women, Rabbi Yisroel ha’Levi Belsky writes ‘a married woman may also be in a position where she controls a certain amount of assets with the permission of her husband. The basic rule is that all her income belongs to her husband’. However, the general halakhic bar on a married woman owning property is subject to the rule that a woman retains ownership of property she owned before her marriage. By contrast, a right acquired after her marriage for a woman to occupy a seat in a synagogue was an asset in her husband’s bankruptcy which was available to his creditors even if the seat was registered in her name.

As noted above, in Kraków, a wide range of financial, legal and social activity was governed by a Statute of 1595 and by various supplements which were added in the period 1604 to 1616. As already mentioned, several of the provisions have been considered by Professor Shmuel A Arthur Cygielman in his work Jewish Autonomy in Poland and Lithuania Until 1648 (5408). The regulations are based on an assumption that a person who owes money, a debtor, is a married man. They provided that ‘there shall be no distinction between him and his wife – for she is considered a debtor – he and his wife must pay’. Generally, then, the wife’s assets must be sold to pay her husband’s debts.

As a general rule, a daughter did not inherit from her father. On the other hand, if a woman became widowed and no bankruptcy was involved she inherited from her husband. It appears that this inheritance remained part of the woman’s property even if she remarried since it was acquired before the second marriage. In the rare case of separation or divorce, the husband had to pay his wife compensation as repayment for her dowry.

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19 Bernard A Weinryb, The Jews in Poland, 99. As to whether the expulsion was complete see Bożena Wyrozumska, ‘Did Jan Olbracht Banish the Jews from Cracow?’ in Andrzej Paluch (ed.), The Jews in Poland’, vol. 1 (Jagiellonian University Press; Kraków, 1992).
22 Rabbi Yisroel ha’Levi Belsky, Shulchan Halevi (Simchas Hatorah; Kiryet Sefer, Israel), 237.
23 See however the general restriction in the 1595 Statute which has already been mentioned and which limited women’s access to synagogues. The author’s paper ‘Jewish Bankruptcy Law including References to the Jewish Community of Kraków in the 14th to eighteenth Centuries’ is available at https://www.academia.edu/ paper number 26381098.
24 Based on a translation by Professor Majer Balaban, these statutes were reproduced in Polish and Yiddish in Anna Jakimyszyn, Statut Krakowskiej Gminy Żydowskiej z roku 1595 i jego Uzupełnienia.
25 Cygielman, 97
The catalogue of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw includes a reference to a document dated 1774 which relates to the entitlement of a widow to a pension following the death of her husband.\footnote{Emanuel Ringelblum Collection, Gmina Kraków, 1774}

Having said that, it is possible to find examples of property which is owned by wives, independently of their husbands. In one of his works, Feivel Hirsch Wettstein quotes extracts from the record book of the Kraków Jewish community from the mid seventeenth century.\footnote{Feivel Hirsch Wettstein, *Mi'Pinkasei ha'Kahal b'Kruke* (Breslau, 1901), particularly v-vii.} One extract dated 1646 records that the community is asked to protect Eidel, the wife of Zundel the bookseller, and her half of a house from her husband’s creditors. Furthermore the famous Kraków Rabbi, Moshe Isserles ruled that a creditor cannot take the clothes of a debtor’s wife, apparently including the clothes that the husband gave to his wife after the marriage.\footnote{R. Eliyahu Touger, *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Mishpatim, Hilchot Malveh v’Loveh*, chapter 1, para 5}

Arguably, the extent to which Jewish women owned property in Kraków at the beginning of the nineteenth century can be established by a list of householders that was prepared in 1807 and 1808.\footnote{The list is contained in Ignace Enderle, *Plan Miasta Krakowa, Senacki*, sometimes known as the Senate Plan (Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa; Kraków, 1959). The list is headed ‘Wyzk Realności’ (List of Realty) and ‘Grundbuch’ (Land Register)} The list includes about 200 properties in the Jewish town (Miasto Żydowskie, or Judenstadt) together with the names of the householders. Out of the registered owners it appears that only the following four are female:- Ester Goldgürtel (house number 73), Adel Elster, a widow (house 104), Perla Brechslser (176) and Freidle Rosin (178). A quick review of the entries for one of the non Jewish areas, Piasek, shows that women were still very much in the minority of householders, but that they accounted for a higher proportion than in the Jewish town.

Moving away from land and buildings, it is clear that many women owned stock (inventories) and other assets which they used in the course of trade, as will now be demonstrated.

**Trade and Commerce**

In her book which describes the life of the Kraków born founder of the Bais Yaakov Schools, Sarah Schenirer, the author Leah Zussman relates ‘In Tammuz 5646, Golda the spice merchant and Rivkah the greengrocer sat at the entrance to their shops…’\footnote{Leah Esther Zussman, *Sarah Scenirer; Life Story* (C H Publishing; Jerusalem, 2011), 15 and 16.} It may well be that Golda and Rivkah are fictional characters. However, they do illustrate that in the hasidic community at the very least, women were engaged in trade. Certainly, it is well established that Sarah Schenirer herself worked as a dressmaker in order to supplement the family budget.

One of the earliest examples of a woman who was active in commerce on her own account is Rachel, sometimes known as Raška Fiszel. This is the same person who, as noted above, was allowed to remain in the city of Kraków after 1495 when nearly all of the Jewish community moved to what was then the separate town of Kazimierz on the other side of the Vistula River. Rachel was active as a money lender to the Royal Court.\footnote{Majer Balaban, *Historja Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu, 1304-1868*, volume 1, 106-112.}

Writing his PhD thesis in 1944, Rev Myer S Lew, appears ahead of his time in that he includes a section specifically dealing with ‘the position of women’ in sixteenth century
Quoting from rabbinic and other sources, he refers to women being charitable and having a high standard of religious life, but also carrying on trade, sometimes with their husbands and sometimes independently. He mentions a case of a young man liquidating his own business to join in partnership with his betrothed. When the engagement was cancelled, he claimed compensation from her for the loss which he had sustained. Rev Lew also refers to the dangers encountered by women who travelled between towns as part of their business ventures. On the other hand he writes ‘As in all ages, the women of our period showed a fondness for expensive clothes and costly jewellery, and the community of Cracow found it necessary to pass a regulation against ostentatious dress and precious ornaments.’

There have been a number of detailed studies into the customs registers, and other trade records, for Kraków for the several centuries up to the end of the eighteenth century. However, these studies are largely concerned with international trade. Some of the books resulting from the studies do include indexes of the names of traders, but there are very few female names.34

Women who were engaged in economic activity were to be found within the general Jewish community, and not just in the Orthodox section where husbands spent much of their time in religious study. In the early eighteenth century there was concern at ‘the unseemly participation of women in commerce, and especially in peddling’. In general the community leaders (the kahal) strongly discouraged such activities by women and imposed severe penalties on them. However, there is a record of a submission to the Kraków municipal authorities (as opposed to the kahal) by a group of Jewish women peddlers, who sought permission to continue their commercial activities.35

In his paper that has already been mentioned, Rabbi Rosman quotes Professor Weinryb as identifying further evidence that wives often worked outside their homes. He refers to a document from the 1720’s where a husband makes it clear that he did not insist that his wife ‘go to the Cracow market to deal in a livelihood to make a living for them and their family as is customary for men and women who always look for a way to make a living’. Rabbi Rosman also identifies documents from the fifteenth century which gave trading concessions to both men and women. Additionally, he mentions Gitl Kożuchowska, the widow of David Todros, as being prominent in business in Kraków during the seventeenth century.36

Despite what has been said that there is only limited information about the role of women in trade and commerce in the period up to the end of the eighteenth century. This can be

34 See, for example, F W Carter, Trade and Urban Development in Poland: An Economic Geography of Cracow from its Origins to 1795 (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, UK, 1994); Bożena Wyrozumska, The Jews in Mediaeval Cracow; Selected Records from Cracow Municipal Books (Polska Akademia Umiejętności; Kraków, 1995); Jan M Malecki, Jewish Trade in Cracow at the End of the XVI Century and in the XVII; Selected Records from Cracow Customs Registers 1593-1683 (Polska Akademia Umiejętności; Kraków), 1995, and his earlier paper ‘Jewish Trade at the End of the Sixteenth Century and in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century’ in Antony Polonsky (ed.) The Jews in Old Poland, 1000-1795. See also Szymon Kasuzek, Żydzi w handlu Krakowa w połowie XVII wieku (Towarzystwo Naukowe Societas Vistulana; Kraków, 2005).
35 Gershon David Hundert, Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century; A Genealogy of Modernity (University of California Press, 2004), 52, 53
36 Majer Balaban, Historja Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu, 1304-1868, vol I, 280 and 547-552.
illustrated by Przemysław Zarubin’s detailed book on the Jews of Kraków in the eighteenth century\textsuperscript{37}. The book includes an extensive name index – which includes very few women.

Arguably, however, more information should be available from three groups of sources which became available in the nineteenth century. These are

- Address and trade directories
- Censuses, and
- Registrations of births, marriages, and deaths\textsuperscript{38}

During the nineteenth century, there were several changes to the numbering of houses in the Jewish district, Kazimierz. Two such changes took place in 1858 and 1892, and on each occasion directories were published in order to record these changes.\textsuperscript{39} The directories include the names of many women, but they give no information relating to their (or to men’s) occupations. A large number of directories can be viewed at http://genealogyindexer.org and many of those, particularly from the twentieth century, do give information about trades and occupations. However, these directories do not seem to have been examined yet in any consideration of the role of women.

The second group of sources which has been mentioned relates to census returns. General statistical information is available from a census which was carried out in 1765\textsuperscript{40} but this has not been considered in relation to women’s occupations. In any event, the census would represent no more than a picture at a particular time, since during the eighteenth century ‘people tended not to engage consistently and permanently in one precise category of livelihood.’\textsuperscript{41}

Detailed census information is available for censuses which were carried out at approximately ten yearly intervals, starting in 1790. Again no research has been conducted on these censuses from the perspective of women’s occupations but the following examples may indicate what information is generally available, and what is not available. The examples relate to the Weiskerz family – an ordinary ‘working class’ family, one which was a long way from being part of the communal elite.

The 1790 census (house 96) shows the head of the household as Szmul, Swicarz (candle maker). However, his wife, Dwora is shown only as ‘ Żona’ (wife) without any occupation, despite her children being adults. Similarly in the 1795 census, Szmul’s son Izaak is shown as a producer of candles and soap but Izaak’s wife, Ester, is shown without an occupation, though as the mother of two young children. This is consistent with information about late eighteenth century censuses given by George J Alexander in his book Generations which also shows that occupations were not shown for married women.\textsuperscript{42}

Likewise, many census returns around the middle of the nineteenth century show the occupations of fathers, but not of mothers. By way of example, a return at 31 December, 1869 shows Rachel Weiskerz, born 1820, as head of her household but with no occupation. Her elder

\textsuperscript{37} Przemysław Zarubin, Żydzi w aglomeracji Krakowa w czasach stanisławowskich (Księgarnia Akademicka; Kraków, 2012).

\textsuperscript{38} Further information about these sources can be found in the author’s work, Kraków; A Guide to Jewish Genealogy and History third edition (Gesher Galicia, 2017), chapter 6

\textsuperscript{39} Przegląd Nowego Podziału i Oliczbowania Domów w Głównym Mieście Krajowem Krakowie, 1858 r and Wykaz Ulic, Placów i Właściwicieli Domów w Mieście Krakowie. Both of these directories are held at the state archives in Kraków.

\textsuperscript{40} Majer Balaban, Historja Żydów w Krakowie i na Kazimierzu, 1304-1868, chapter 25

\textsuperscript{41} Gershon D Hundert, Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century, 53

\textsuperscript{42} George J Alexander, Generations; A Millennium of Jewish History in Poland from the Earliest Times to the Holocaust told by a Survivor from an Old Kraków Family (Congress For Jewish Culture; New York, NY, 2008), chapter 13.
son, Benijamin, born 1847, is shown as a ‘mydlarz’ (soap maker), but no occupation is shown for the younger son or the daughters.

On the other hand there is an entry for 31 December, 1849 which shows Dwojra Weiskerz, born 1781, and listed as a ‘przekupka’ (market trader) living with her son Dawid.

One conclusion might be that the majority of married women did not have occupations outside the home. An alternative one is that the recording of occupations of women, particularly married women, was not considered important by the enumerators, or was not required by the authorities. Although further research is probably required, it does appear that the census returns do not provide a reliable basis for evaluating women’s roles in the economy in the late eighteenth or in much of the nineteenth century.

As Gershon Hundert puts it in relation to the eighteenth century, ‘Of course most participation by women in the economy was not a form of resistance but collaboration with their husbands. It is thus difficult to compute the degree of female commercial and artisanal activities, which were accounted as part of their husbands’ business.’

A review of birth, marriage and death registrations leads to the same unhelpful conclusion. For example in 1813 Izaak son of Szmul married for the second time. The entry states that the groom was Izaak Weiskerz, a mydlarz (soap maker) and widower, aged 45, the son of Szmul (who was himself the son of Mark/Mordechaj) and Dwora (daughter of Izaak). The entry further states that the bride was Dwora aged 28 the widow of Jakob, a blacksmith and merchant. However no mention is made of the bride’s trade or occupation. It can be mentioned in passing that, even today, in the United Kingdom the situation is only a little better from a feminist point of view. A UK marriage certificate does show the ‘rank or profession’ of both the bride and groom, but additionally it shows that information only for the father of the bride and groom, and not their mothers.

One occupation which was generally reserved to women was that of marriage broker or matchmaker (shadkhan). It is difficult to find references to this occupation in Kraków, but a famous Kraków Rabbi did rule that any person who arranges a successful match between a man and a woman is entitled to payment for this service. He further ruled that a matchmaker could sue just as any other provider of a service. As with all halakhic matters, these decisions depend on the specific facts of each case.

Some evidence of female traders in the twentieth century is available from photographic collections. For example Stanisław Markowski’s book ‘Krakowski Kazimierz; Dzielnica Żydowska, 1870-1988’ shows a number of female market and street vendors. It has to be said, however, that most photographs of the period which have survived are of buildings and street scenes, or of men rather than women.

Religious Activities
As with other aspects of Jewish life in Kraków, nearly all the historical comment on religious activities concentrates heavily on the roles undertaken by the men. There is therefore a good source of material concerning the teachings of Rabbi’s and, for example, genealogists have access to synagogue membership lists, and to lists of synagogue officers, all of whom were male.

43 Gershon David Hundert, Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century, 53.
44 Recent full birth certificates show the occupation of both parents
45 Rabbi Tzvi Spitz, Cases in Monetary Halacha (Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, NY), 198-202, which include a consideration of how much a shadkhan can charge under different circumstances
46 Stanisław Markowski, Krakowski Kazimierz; Dzielnica Żydowska, 1870-1988 (Wydawnictwo Arka; Kraków, 1992), 59, 62 and 63. See also Roman Vishniac, Polish Jews; A Pictorial Record (Schocken Books, New York, NY, 1965), photo no 11.
It is largely true that in medieval times, even religious women did not attend synagogue anywhere as often as their male counterparts. Indeed, separate galleries for women, or ‘metronea’ did not become widespread in the synagogues of Kraków until the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{47} It is also true that women had, and to some extent still have, religious roles which are different and separate from male roles. It is not true, however, that women were not active in religious life. This was illustrated in Rabbi Moshe Rosman’s work on the website of the Jewish Women’s Archive which has already been mentioned.\textsuperscript{48} At the most personal level, women observed the laws of personal hygiene (hilkhos niddah), and attended the ritual baths (mikvah) on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{49} The author points out that, additionally, women read a wide range of Yiddish language books, including ‘translations and re-workings of the Bible based on rabbinitic interpretation. These books often formed the basis by which mothers gave religious education to their daughters prior to the formalisation of education for orthodox girls in the twentieth century. The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People even has a record of one female ‘melamed’ teaching at a cheder (boys’ primary religious school).\textsuperscript{50} In his paper ‘The Private Life of Polish Jews in the Vasa Period’, Daniel Tollet puts a slightly different interpretation on women’s reading habits. Quoting Majer Balaban, he states, ‘It should be added that men spent Saturday mornings in the synagogue and read the Talmud after meals, while women studied the bible for women. Moreover in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries women read German romances about Theodoric from Verona or the knight Hildebrandt, translated and published in Kraków. It was opposed by the rabbis.\textsuperscript{51}

The interest that some women had in religious matters may be illustrated by a Rabbinic ruling which is mentioned by Rabbi Rosman in his paper. That is a ruling by Rabbi Isserles (sometimes referred to as ‘The Remu’) to the effect that in strict legal (halakhic) terms it is permissible for women to wear a prayer shawl (tallis) but that they should not do so as that would show arrogance (yo’harah) on their part.

Information about the wives and daughters of various rabbis is available as a result of research into the cemetery which adjoins the Remu Synagogue on Szeroka Street in what is now the Kazimierz district of Kraków. This cemetery was in general use up to the end of the eighteenth century. Possibly the first historian to record this information was Bernhard Friedberg


\textsuperscript{48} \url{https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/poland-early-modern-1500-1795}

\textsuperscript{49} See for example \url{www.sztetl.org/pl} , choosing your preferred language (top right) and search for ‘Krakow Mikveh’, See also Anna Jakimysyn, \textit{Mykwa; Dzieje Żydowskiej Łaźni Rytualnej ul. Szerokiej w Krakowie} (Austria; Kraków, 2012), and an article by the same author in English ‘The Mikveh in Kazimierz until the Middle of the Seventeenth Century; A Few Remarks on the History and Appearance of the Building’ in Michał Niezabitowski (et al, eds.) ‘\textit{Cracovia Iudaearum 3D}’, 141-146. See also, for example, section 68 of the 1595 Statute which begins ‘A woman and even a girl cannot go to a non Jewish bath while the King or his Court is staying there’. This apparently relates to a secular bath house rather than the mikvveh.

\textsuperscript{50} On line catalogue of the Central Archives, searching for ‘Krakow’ \url{http://cahjp.huji.ac.il/webfm_send/1005}

\textsuperscript{51} Included in Antony Polonsky (et al) (eds.), \textit{The Jews in Old Poland, 1000-1795}, 50.
(1876-1961) who wrote ‘Lukhot Sikoron’ in 1897.  

However he was followed by authorities such as Feivel Hirsch Wetstein, Majer Bałaban, Eugeniusz Duda, and Leszek Hońdo.

Information about wives and daughters of Rabbi’s has also survived in the form of extracts from the old community record books. For example, Feivel Hirsch Wetstein notes that Rabbi Nathan Nata Spira (1585-1633) had a daughter, Chavałeh Frieda who married three times. In another extract from the record book, Wetstein refers to a document dated 1646 in which, Gitl, the wife of Yakov Lezer Tribitscher agrees to raise the baby Batsheva, daughter of Benjamin Zev Wolf Sirkes Horowicz who was a Dayan (religious judge) in Kraków.

It may be argued that ultimately ‘the Master’ of the house had overall responsibility for ensuring that religious law (halakha) and custom (minhag) were observed within his home. However, on a day to day basis these laws and customs were implemented largely by the women of the household. In particular the wife would take care to ensure food was kosher, and that for example milk was not mixed with meat. Clearly, these duties relate to one of the two K’s, küche. However the duties were (and to many still are) very important indeed.

The hasidic movement reached Kraków from the east, but little has so far been written about how it impacted upon women. A popular perception may well be that the movement was primarily for men and it has been stated that there is no indication in hasidic literature that women had any role or importance as actors in this new spiritual path. As noted below, it is well recorded that the educational reformer Sarah Schenirer sought the advice of her Rebbe before establishing the Bais Ya’akov movement. However, Sarah Schenirer cannot be regarded as a typical woman, even within the hasidic community.

The historian Gershon Hundert refers to women seeking advice regarding agunah (obtaining a husband’s release in divorce) and barrenness but he also refers to anti-hasdıc literature which describes ‘the rebbes as shameless exploiters of the naïve’

A more positive description of hasidic life in Kraków between the two world wars is given by Sara Rosen in her book ‘My Lost World; A Survivor’s Tale’. In that work the author writes ‘Our family was typical of well-established Hassidic families in Galicia. Closely knit, relying on one another for advice, moral and material support…’

There is some photographic evidence that women visited the Jewish cemeteries from time to time. One occasion for such a visit was the minor festival of Lag B’Omer. Rabbi Moses Isserles, the Remu, died on Lag B’Omer in 1572, and it was therefore a custom of women as well as men to visit his grave on that festival. However, it was not the widespread custom for women to attend funerals, and indeed that is still not the custom in some orthodox communities.

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52 Bernhard Friedberg, *Lukhot Sikoron; Epitaphien von Grabsteinen des Israeitischen Friedhofes zu Krakau* (A H Żupnik; Drohobycz, 1897).
53 See particularly Leszek Hońdo, *Stary Żydowski Cmentarz w Krakowie* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, 1999) which includes a lengthy bibliography concerning the cemetery.
54 Feivel Hirsh Wetstein, *MiPinkasei ha ‘Kahal b ‘Krokuv* (Breslau, 1901), iii,iv.
55 Ibid., v, vi
56 Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, 203
57 Ibid.
59 Teresa Leśnikiak (ed.), *Świat przed Katastrofą/ A World Before Catastrophe* (International Cultural Center; Kraków, 2007) 96, 97.
60 See for example Rabbi Chaim Binyamin Goldberg, *Mourning in Halacha* (Art Scroll/Mesorah Publications; Brooklyn, NY, 1991), paragraph 10:10. See also Rabbi David Weinberger and
Despite what has been said, it would be wrong to believe that all the Jewish women of Kraków were pious (frum), and religiously observant. From the latenineteenth century onwards, many women and girls were attracted by influences such as the Enlightenment (Haskalah), secular Zionism and Socialism. Even before then some women were drawn away from traditional Judaism to such an extent that they converted to Christianity. This is a topic which has received the attention of several academic writers some of whom discussed conversion from as early as the 15th century. By way of example reference can be made to Rachel Manekin’s paper ‘The Lost Generation; Education and Female Conversion in Fin-de-Siècle Kraków. In that paper, the author notes that in one fifteen year period beginning in 1887 over 300 Jewish women converted in Kraków alone, almost all of them at the convent of the Felician sisters. Most, but by no means all, of the converts came from small villages around Kraków and the author describes the detailed papers which relate to the conversion of Deborah Lewkowicz a teenager from the village of Rzeszotary, some nine miles (fourteen km.) south of Kraków. Deborah returned to Judaism shortly after her conversion, but such a return seems to be an exception.

Women’s Suffrage before World War One
The title of this section is deliberately misleading, because women did not have the right to vote before the First World War. This point possibly needs to be emphasised because at first sight even some modern historians may give the contrary impression. For example Israel Bartal describes the effects of the Austro Hungarian Compromise of 1867 (the Ausgleich) in his book The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1722-1881. He states ‘The participation of all the inhabitants of the state in the general elections was an unheard-of innovation in Eastern Europe. The equal rights of the Jews of Galicia within the overall reform of the Austrian kingdom gave them a new type of political power in the elections to the parliament.’

Israel Bartal is a learned professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, by referring to ‘all the inhabitants of the state’ and ‘the Jews of Galicia’ he seems to be considering only the men. The Ausgleich did not introduce votes for women, as is made clear in two sources which are given by way of example. The first is Dobrochna Kałwa’s paper ‘Uneven Roads to Gender Equality; The Situation of Women in the Second Polish Republic’ whilst the second is ‘Women’s Suffrage in Austria; An Overview’ by Hannes Richter. Both these sources explain that women’s suffrage was not introduced into Austria until after the first world war, by which time Kraków was part of the Second Polish Republic. In the interests of balance it should also be stated that according to Hannes Richter universal suffrage for men was not achieved in Austria until 1907.

In fairness to Professor Bartal, he is not the only modern author who appears to have ignored women in considering the impact of the Ausgleich. Anna Jodlowiec-Dziedzic writes

Rabbi Jacob Shacter The Funeral and Cemetery Handbook (Art Scroll/Mesorah; Brooklyn NY, 2003), 96 which states ‘It is accepted custom that pregnant women do not attend the grave site funeral service or visit the cemetery. Nonetheless, where there is a strong desire to do so …. they are permitted to go’.

about the 1867 Constitution saying, ‘For Jews this meant, amongst others, a free choice of the place of residence, full right of ownership, unconstrained activities in the fields of economy, politics, education, and science, as well as in the public domain, and access to numerous professions.’ For many Jewish men these benefits were probably more theoretical than practical; for Jewish women many of the benefits were not available even in theory until the early part of the nineteenth century. Indeed the author recognises this because later on in her work, when describing the Municipal Government of Kraków she states ‘the active voting right belonged to men of a specified property qualification’. She then names a number of Jewish councillors, and Jewish leaders in the Kraków Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Municipal Savings Bank in the period leading up to the Second World War. They were all men. Again, in the interests of balance it must also be stated that before the Second World War women were largely excluded from politics and commerce in communities well beyond Kraków.

A paper ‘Cracow’s Jews and the Parliamentary Elections, 1919-1939’ names a number of Parliamentary candidates, the vast majority of whom were men. However, two female candidates are mentioned, Dr Berta Schwartzbart, a physician, and Laura Tenger. It is likely that the first of these was related to the Zionist politician, Ignacy Schwartzbart. The author also notes that in January 1919, the leading candidate Ozjasz Thon had a meeting with Jewish women.

Children, Education and Orphanages
It is possible that some writers about Jewish women may be anxious to steer readers away from ‘kinder und küche’ in order to emphasise the range of activities undertaken by women outside those spheres. Nevertheless, an account of Jewish women in Kraków would be incomplete without mention of schools and orphanages. An account of the history of Jewish education in Kraków can be found at <www.academia.edu/4203766>. For the purposes of this paper, however, reference will be made in this context largely to three individuals, Sarah Schenirer, Róza Rock, and Lena Kuchler-Silberman.

Arguably, more has been written about Sarah Schenirer (1883-1935) than any other female Jewish resident of Kraków. As Wikipedia puts it, ‘she was a pioneer of Jewish education for girls and began a change in the way women were perceived in Orthodox Judaism. In 1917 she founded the Bais Yaakov school network….’

Many articles and books have been written about Sarah Schenirer and her legacy, but just some examples will be given here. The first of these is the website of the Jewish Women’s Archive (<www.jwa.org>) which has already been mentioned. The site includes three articles written by Dr. Deborah Weissman, who is a specialist in the history of the education of Jewish women. One of her works which is not on the JWA site is ‘Bais Yaakov: A Historical Model for Jewish Feminists’.

A second source for information about Sarah Schenirer is the website for the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (www.jofa.org). This is a group which ‘seeks to expand the spiritual, ritual, intellectual and political opportunities for women within the framework of halacha’. The website includes an on line library with various references to and articles about Sarah Schenirer, for example at www.jofa.org/library/subject/46. Kolech (www.kolech.org.il/en/), based in Jerusalem, is another organisation which supports orthodox Jewish feminists.

Volume 23 of ‘Polin’, published in 2011 is devoted to ‘Jews in Kraków’. It includes two articles relating to Sarah Schenirer. They are

‘Sarah Schenirer; Founder of the Beit Ya’akov Movement; Her Vision and her Legacy’ by Caroline Scharfer, and

‘The Beit Ya’akov School in Kraków as an Encounter between East and West’ by Agnieszka Oleszak.

Amongst the books which have been written on the subject, two in particular can be mentioned. The first is a relatively short work by Leah Esther Zussman, Sarah Schenirer Life Story68 whilst the other with 470 pages is Pearl Benisch’s Carry Me in Your Heart.69

The young Sarah attended a secular state school even though she was born into an orthodox hasidic family. This was by no means exceptional. On the contrary, by 1885 the majority of Jewish children in Kraków were attending schools in the state (public) sector70. The various sources relate in greater or less detail that as she grew older Sarah became increasingly concerned that a lack of formalised religious education for girls was a major factor in their becoming less observant. Many Orthodox authorities of the time were opposed to formal instruction for girls and young women. Yet despite this opposition Sarah Schenirer persuaded the Belzer Rebbe (a senior leader in the hasidic movement) and members of the orthodox Agudas Yisroel movement to support the establishment of a girls’ school in Kraków. This ultimately formed the basis of the Bais Yaakov network of schools which is now spread throughout the orthodox Jewish world.

It appears that, as a woman, Sarah did not have direct access to the Belzer Rebbe. On the contrary it was her brother who wrote the ‘kvitl’ (request or note) to the Rebbe and had the audience with him. It seems that Sarah was only an observer in the room at the time of the audience. 71

Whilst a great deal has been written about Sarah Schenirer, relatively little has been written about the other two female leaders mentioned previously.

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68 Leah Esther Zussman, Sarah Schenirer; Life Story (CH Publishing; Jerusalem, 2011).
69 Pearl Benisch, Carry Me in Your Heart; The Life and Legacy of Sarah Schenirer, Founder and Visionary of the Bais Yaakov Movement (Feldheim, Jerusalem, 2003). This work, like others, draws on Sarah Schenirer’s autobiographical essays Gezametle Schrifn (Collected Writings), see ‘Polin’ Vol 18, 286. Other sources relating to Sarah Schenirer include:- Leo Deutschlander, Bajs Jakob. Sein Wesen und Werden (Verlag der Keren Hatorah-Zentrale; Vienna, 1928); Moshe Prager and Arye Bauminger (eds.), Sefer Kraka, Ir v’Am b’Yisra (Rav Kuk Institute and the Association of Cracovians in Israel, 1959), pages 369-376; Leo W. Jung (ed.), ‘Sarah Schnierer’ by Judith Grunfeld Rosenbaum in Jewish Leaders 1750-1940 (New York, 1964) and Agnieszka Kutylak (ed.), Krakowianie: Wybitni Żydzi Krakowscy XIV-XX w (Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa; Kraków, 2006), 73-75.
71 Pearl Benisch, Carry Me in Your Heart (Feldheim, Jerusalem, 2003), 27, 28.
Róża Rock (1871-1926) was a social activist who was heavily involved in the Jewish orphanage in Kraków. In the period following the First World War she modernised various aspects of the establishment. Her work is described as part of the historical background to the orphanage in Martyna Grądzka’s bilingual (Polish and English) work *A Broken Childhood*. This work also includes several references to Anna Feuerstein who was director of the orphanage during the Holocaust, working with Regina Nelken and Sabina Mirowska. Additionally, Matylda Schenker ran the Craftmen’s dormitory. Other women who took a leading role in the care of children during the Holocaust included Rachela Mahler, Dr Gizela Thon and Maria Biliżanka (Billig-Kleinberg).

Amalia (Małka) Wasserberger (1869-1936) was another philanthropist in the Kraków area. An example of her generosity is that she donated a house at 8 Krakusa Street, in the Kraków district of Podgórze, to the Jewish Orphans’ Home Association.

Lena Kuchler Silberman (1910-1987) was born in Wieliczka about 10 miles (16 km) to the south east of Kraków. She studied at the Hebrew Gymnasium (secondary school) in Kraków and then at the Jagiellonian University in the city. Following graduation she worked as a teacher but during the war spent much of her time in Lwów and Warsaw. In 1945 she came to Kraków in search of surviving relatives and friends. Lena experienced the poor working conditions at the Jewish Community Centre on Długa Street, and this led her to take responsibility for the orphanage for Jewish children. In the summer of 1945 Ms Lena arranged for large numbers of children to be transferred to healthier conditions in Zakopane and Rabka, both to the south of Kraków. Information about the home in Zakopane is available on the website of the Ghetto Fighters House Archives at [www.infocenters.co.il/gfh/notebook_ext.asp?book=124826&lang=eng](http://www.infocenters.co.il/gfh/notebook_ext.asp?book=124826&lang=eng). A healing centre for Jewish children had been established at Rabka before the war by Maria Fraenkel, née Liban.

Lena published her memoirs *Me’ah Yeladim Sheli* in 1959. This work has been translated from the Hebrew into many languages. The English version is *One Hundred Children*. The memoirs were presented as a film in 1987. Information about the author and her work is also available by searching ‘my 100 children’ on U Tube.

As noted below, a Jewish orphanage continued to operate in Kraków for more than ten years after the end of the Second World War.

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72 Martyna Grądzka, *A Broken Childhood; The Fate of the Children from the Jewish Orphanage at 64 Dietla Street in Cracow during the German Occupation* (Wydawnictwo Wysoki Zamek, Kraków, 2012). See also Agnieszka Kutylak (ed.), *Krakowianie: Wybitni Żydzi Krakowscy XIV-XX*, 71, 72.

73 Joanna Sliwa, draft paper ‘Stopping the Spread of Moral Savagery – Child Relief Efforts in the Kraków Ghetto’ at [https://www.brandeis.edu/hbi/childrenholocaust/workingpapers/SilwaWP.pdf](https://www.brandeis.edu/hbi/childrenholocaust/workingpapers/SilwaWP.pdf). Dr Sliwa’s other works include ‘Coping with Distorted Reality: Children in the Kraków Ghetto’, ‘Clandestine Activities and Concealed Presence; A Case Study of Children in the Kraków Ghetto’, and ‘The Forced Relocation to the Kraków Ghetto as Remembered by Child Survivors’.

74 Teresa Leśniak (Ed), *Świat przed Katastrofą/ A World Before a Catastrophe*; 119.


76 Lena Kuchler Silberman, *One Hundred Children* (Doubleday & Co, Garden City, NY, 1961). Some of the background information about the author has been taken from Wikipedia.
As might be expected, women were active in education beyond the Bais Ya’akov school, and the orphanages. A considerable amount of material is available regarding the Jewish Secondary School, or ‘Gymnasium’ in Kraków. Although the majority of senior teachers there appear to have been men, the following female teachers are listed in the museum catalogue This was the Hebrew School of Kraków: The Hebrew Secondary School, 1918-1939: Anna Brossowa (PhD, history and geography), Regina Fallman (physical education), Fryderyka Feldman-Sternbergowa (MA philology and German), Rachel Goldwasserowa (natural sciences and geography), Regina Hausman-Juerowa (MA practical classes), Etl Hornówna (mathematics), Ada Nadel-Hechtowa (MA practical classes), Ilza Perlberg-Schinaglowa (MA physical education), Sara Perlmutterowa (geography and natural sciences), Helena Rosenzweig-Hecker (PhD Polish), Nella Rostowa (PhD Polish and French), Laura Rymplowa (natural sciences), Hudes Steinbergerowa (Latin), and Róża Vogel (MA English). Additionally Maria Pechnerowa is listed as the school medic, and Wacława Zastocka as commandant of the women’s army cadet unit. The sources do not state that all those named were Jewish, but the length of the list, taken with the names of various female teaching trainees demonstrates that women played a major role in what was probably the most important Jewish school in Kraków during the interwar years.

Jewish vocational education, as opposed to academic education, is described by Sean Martin in his work on the interwar years. He refers to courses which were held in the school building of the Middle School for Trade for girls over seventeen who had finished elementary school. The author then refers to the Girls’ Vocational School of the Ognisko Pracy (Centre of Work) Association in Kraków. As noted below, the school was established during the First World War, but moved to new premises in 1923 thanks to funds from the American ‘Joint’ (The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and the Fraenkel family. This school is described elsewhere as the Professional School for Jewish Girls. It was managed for some thirty years by Eliza Fraenkel. The school is described by Arnon Rubin as ‘Markaz Ha-Avodah’. He states that the school was established in 1916 and that the pupils learned cutting and sewing, knitting and embroidery. By contrast the corresponding trade school for boys taught the skills of locksmiths and mechanics.

Reference can also be made to two Jewish schools which were opened in 1933. These are the School of Handicraft and the Secondary Commercial School. Eugeniusz Duda notes that the second of these had 400 students, most of them girls.

Although many Jewish girls attended Jewish schools, as has already been stated many, like Sarah Schenirer, did not. For example, Sean Martin refers to the Queen Jadwiga Private Gymnasium for Girls. He points out that in 1937, 28 per cent of the girls attending that school were Jewish. In relation to families engaged in the bakery trade it has been stated ‘These were

77 Michał Niezabitowski et al (eds.), This was the Hebrew School of Kraków; The Hebrew Secondary School 1918-1939 (Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa; Kraków, 2011),182-184, quoting Natan Gross (ed.), To Była Hebrajska Szkoła w Krakowie; Historia i Wspomnienia (Związek Krakowian w Izraelu; Tel Aviv, 1989, 33-37).
78 Further sources and information concerning the Jewish Secondary School are included in the paper ‘Jewish Education in Kraków’ at www.academia.edu/4203766
79 Sean Martin, Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939, 184-186
80 Eugeniusz Duda (Ed), ‘Powiększenie; Nowy Cmentarz Żydowski w Krakowie/ Blowup [Enlargement]; The New Jewish Cemetery in Kraków’, 184
81 Arnon Rubin, The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communities in Poland and their Relics Today, Vol 3, Kraków District, 74
83 Sean Martin, Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939, 159
84 Ibid, 141, 142
Hassidic families whose daughters went to Polish state schools, learned the romantic Polish poets by heart, and spoke Polish with their siblings at home. In the afternoons they had private religious instruction. Authors who describe their experiences in the state educational sector include Irena Bronner (Cykady Wisła i Jordanem) and Halina Nelken (Pamiętnik z Getta w Krakowie translated into English as And Yet I am Here).

It was not until 1878 that women were allowed to attend lectures at the University in Kraków, and even then only as guests. The University first admitted women for degrees in 1894. Academics of Jewish Heritage in the Modern History of the Jagiellonian University is the leading work of its subject which has been published in English. However, as noted at the beginning of this paper, it includes the biographies of only four female undergraduates. These are Zofia Ameisen, (an art historian specialising in illuminated manuscripts), Maria Einhorn-Susułowska, (a clinical psychologist), Laura Kaufman, (a biologist and geneticist) and Maria Orwid, (a psychiatrist). Further information about female graduates of Jewish origin is available from two papers which were published in Polish during the 1990’s by Jadwiga Suchmiel.

Women in other Professions and Politics in the Twentieth Century

Whilst women were engaged in teaching, child care and social work, it must not be assumed that women were engaged in only these types of professional work. As an example, reference can be made to Diana Reiter who qualified as an architect before the war. She survived in the Kraków ghetto, but was shot in the head at Płaszów after insisting that the camp commandant permit the reconstruction of an improperly built barrack building.

Maria Einhorn-Susułowska (1915-1998) graduated from the Jagiellonian University, and then obtained a Master’s degree in 1938. She spent much of the Holocaust in Lwów before returning to Kraków. During the 1950’s she worked closely with the Psychiatric Clinic of the Medical Academy and carried out research into the experience of concentration camp survivors.

Maria Orwid (1930-2009) was born in Kraków to an assimilated Jewish family. She spent time during the Holocaust in Przemyśl and Lwów and then returned to Kraków where she was...

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85 Maria Balinska, *The Bagel; The Surprising History of a Modest Bread* (Yale University Press; New Haven, CT, 2008), 76.
86 Wikipedia ‘Timeline of Women’s Legal Rights (other than voting)’
87 Wiesław Kozub-Ciembroniewicz (ed.), *Academics of Jewish Heritage in the Modern History of the Jagiellonian University.*
88 ‘Kariery Naukowe Żydówek na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim do Czasów Drugiej Rzeczpospolitej’ (The Academic Careers of Jewish Women at the Jagiellonian University up to the Time of the Second Republic) in Aleksandra Bilewicz and Stefania Walasek (Eds) *Rola Mniejszości Narodowych w Kulturze i Oświatie Polskiej w Latach 1700-1939* (Wrocław University Press; Wrocław, 1998) and *Kobiety żydowskie ze stopniem doktora wszech nauk lekarskich oraz doktora filozofii w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim do czasów Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Jewish Women with the Degree of Doctor of Medicine as well as Doctor of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University up to the Time of the Second Republic) (Wydawnictwo WSP; Częstochowa, 1997). Both these works are included in a bibliography in Volume 18 of *Polin, ‘Jewish Women in Eastern Europe’.*
90 Wiesław Kozub-Ciembroniewicz (ed.), *Academics of Jewish Heritage in the Modern History of the Jagiellonian University,* 103-108
one of the earliest women to study psychiatry. Like Maria Einhorn-Susulsowska, she later carried out research into the psychiatric effects of concentration camp experiences on former prisoners.\(^91\)

Until recently nursing was considered to be mainly a female occupation. However, in the context of Kraków very little has been written about Jewish nurses, or indeed the Jewish hospitals. The work of nurses during the Holocaust has been mentioned in general terms, but not in detail.

Having said that, the advancement of women in the professions and in politics was delayed, and slow. Possibly this can be illustrated by the fact that women were not able to obtain degrees at the Jagiellonian University before the last decade of the nineteenth century.

The Historical Museum of Kraków (Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa) publishes a wide range of books and booklets, many of which refer to the Jewish community. One of these is entitled *The Architects of Modern Kraków*\(^92\). The front cover shows a photograph of over thirty leaders of the Jewish community. They are all men.

In pre war Kraków, and even from the end of the nineteenth century, the second hand book market was dominated by Jewish traders who operated mainly in and around Szpitalna Street. What is referred to here, includes the purchase and sale of books of historical and academic value rather than low grade items. Several female members of the Taffett, Seiden and Himmelblau families ran their own businesses independently of their male relatives.\(^93\)

### Sporting, social and cultural activities

By the time of the Second Republic the Kraków Jewish community had developed a wide range of sporting, social and cultural groups, which reflected the diverse nature of the community itself. In his book *Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939* Sean Martin mentions that there were nine registered Jewish women’s organisations. He states that four of these were dedicated to charitable goals, two were devoted to the support of working women, and three were nationalist in orientation.\(^94\) However, the author points out that the number of women’s organisations is quite small when one compares it with the total of 305 Jewish organisations in Kraków which have been identified by one researcher, Zofia Wordliczek.

A branch of the Women’s International Zionist Organisation was established in Kraków during the 1930’s.\(^95\) Isaac Schwartzbart’s work on Jewish Life in Kraków between the World Wars\(^96\) includes a chapter entitled ‘Di Zionistische Freien-Bavegung’ (The Zionist Women’s Movement) which describes the Wizo, Young Wizo and Haddasah groups.\(^97\) The book also

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91 Ibid., 179-186  
94 Sean Martin, Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939, 197. See also the work (in Polish) by Bogusława Czajecka ‘The Activities of Jewish Women’s Associations (Professional, Educational and Charitable) in Cracow in the Years 1869-1939’ in Krzysztof Pilarczyk (Ed) *Jews and Judaism in Contemporary Polish Research,* Kraków, 1997  
95 Catalogue of the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem  
96 http://cahjp.huji.ac.il/webfm_send/1005  
98 For further reading see Puah Rakovsky, *My Life as a Radical Jewish Woman; Memoirs of a Zionist Feminist in Poland* (Indiana University Press; Bloomington, IN, 2002), originally
includes a chapter ‘Di Yunge Yiddische Frei in Unser Renessance’ (Young Jewish Women in our Renaissance).

Sean Martin devotes several pages to institutions concerned with sport, libraries and reading rooms, art, and the Yiddish theatre. It is apparent from his descriptions that these activities, except for some sports, were led by males, with very few women reaching positions of leadership.

*The Maccabees of Sport; Jewish Sport in Kraków* was published by the Historical Museum of Kraków (Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa) in 2012. The book describes a wide range of sports, and it is clear from this publication that some Jewish women were active in sports such as skiing, (for example at the Maccabiah Winter Games at Zakopane in 1933), gymnastics, volleyball, tennis, athletics, swimming and water polo.

It is also clear from several publications that women were active in the Yiddish Theatre from the late nineteenth century. Rachel Holcer (1899-1998) was a particularly talented Kraków born actress who made her debut on the Yiddish stage at the age of six. She performed in various parts of Poland before emigrating to Australia in 1938.

The Museum Catalogue *Jewish Artists in Kraków 1873-1939* lists a large number of artists who studied or worked in the city. Nearly all of them were men. Amongst the women whose works are described and illustrated are Dorota Berlinerblau-Seydenmann, Berta (Blima) Grünberg, and Alicja Halicka, all of whom studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków but who spent much of their working lives in Paris.

Some, but not many, were musicians in Kraków during the early part of the twentieth century. The work *Jewish Music in Poland between the World Wars*, originally written by Issacher Fater in Yiddish is now available at [www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/musicians/Musicians.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/musicians/Musicians.html). Linked with this is a list of individuals at [www.zchor.org/fater/lexicon.htm](http://www.zchor.org/fater/lexicon.htm) which includes the following Kraków based female pianists: Jutta Flaster, Izabella Freiman, Helena Landau, Paulina Sznajder and Natalia Weissman-Hubler.

One of the most musical Jewish families in Kraków before and during the Holocaust was the Rosner family. Members included Marysia, a pianist, and Mela who played the piano accordion. Mela and her young son were brutally murdered, but other members of the family survived thanks to their musical skills and Oskar Schindler.

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98 See for example lists of actors, male and female, in *Teatr Żydowskie; Studia i Materialy* (Uniwersytet Jagielloński; Kraków, 1995), 21 and the theatre programmes from the 1880’s reproduced towards the end of the book.


101 For further information about Jewish music in Poland see [www.zchor.org/fater/musicians.htm](http://www.zchor.org/fater/musicians.htm). See also two papers by Sylvia Jakubczyk-Ślęczka and published by the Jagiellonian University in *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* (Vol 9, 2011 and vol 10, 2012). These are ‘La Musique Juive à Cracovie de l’entre-deux-guerres selon les informations du journal Nowy Dziennik’ and ‘Activité de la Loge Cracovienne ‘Solidarność’ dans le domaine de la Culture Musicale Juive’.

Twentieth Century Literature

The diversity of the Kraków Jewish community was reflected in the wide range of literature which was published in that city. Indeed the creativity and other skills of authors was evident even throughout the Holocaust. A paper ‘Jewish Literature in Kraków, 1918-1948’ is available at www.academia.edu/21734836. What is apparent from that paper is that the vast majority of authors in the period prior to 1939 were men.103

Although a large number of newspapers were in circulation during the interwar period, *Nowy Dziennik* was the only Jewish daily which was published in Kraków. The wide appeal of *Nowy Dziennik* is reflected by the series of supplements which the paper published. These covered topics such as home and school. There was also a supplement, ‘Głos Kobiety Żydowskiej’ (The Jewish Women’s Voice)104. However, without going back to the actual publications, it is difficult to find many references to female authors or publishers of these supplements.

Despite what has been said, a number of female writers can be identified. One of these is Felicja Infeld-Stendigowa (Felicja Stending, née Infeld) (1895-1945) who graduated from the Hebrew Gymnazjum and the University in Kraków, to become an essayist, journalist and literary critic. She wrote for various publications, including *Nowy Dziennik*, and was a supporter of the Women’s International Zionist Organisation. Her sister, Bronia (1902-1943) founded the New School in Kraków.105 Felicia had a daughter, Gustawa (1926-2008), who became a pioneer in research on magnesium in medicine and biology. Between 1941 and 1943, in the ghetto of Kraków, Gustawa wrote many poems. During this period she was with her mother who taught her English.106

Dr. Henryka Fromowicz-Stillerowa was a member of the ‘Social Reading Room’ and wrote for *Nowy Dziennik* in the 1920’s. She also wrote for Nasza Opinia. Additionally, she is the author of ‘Emalje Malarskie z Limoges w Muzeum KS Czartoryskich w Krakowie’ (Painted Enamels from Limoges in the Czartory Museum in Kraków) which was published in Kraków in 1922. Between 1937 and 1939 Henryka published a magazine for Jewish children, *Okienko na Świat* (Window on the World).107 The story of Henryka’s sister, Irena Fromowicz-Pisek, and her escape to Jerusalem via Tehran can be read at http://en.iranwire.com/features/7218/

Zofia Ameisen (1897-1967) was a historian who worked at the Jagiellonian Library. Starting in 1918 she wrote extensively on the subject of illuminated manuscripts.108 Her biography is included in the book *Academics of Jewish Heritage in the Modern History of the Jagiellonian University*.109

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103 For wider reading see, for example, Volume 28 of *Polin*, ‘Jewish Writing in Poland’, including Zuzanna Kołodziejska’s paper ‘Czesława Rosenblattowa’s Works as an Example of Women’s Integrationist Literature’. See also Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, *Polish-Jewish Literature in the Interwar Years* (Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 2003).
104 Various authors, the bilingual (English and Polish) work, *A World Before Catastrophe*, 59.
106 www.prof magnesium.org/Biography.htm
108 Andrzej Nowakowski, the bilingual (English and Polish) work, *Blow Up; The New Jewish Cemetery in Kraków* (Dział Handlowy Universitas; Kraków, 2006), 183, and Elżbieta Długosz, in *Krakowianie: Wybitni Żydzi Krakowscy XIV-XX w.*, 133-135
109 Wiesław Kozub-Ciembroniewicz 69-75
Some casual observers may feel that cultural and literary activity in the Kraków Jewish community came to an end in September 1939. However, such a view would be mistaken. A newspaper, *Gazeta Żydowska*, was published in the Kraków ghetto from 1940 to 1942, about two or three times a week. The Gazeta included a section entitled ‘Guide for Housewives’ which contained recipes and other advice regarding the running of households. However, it must be remembered that *Gazeta Żydowska* was under the control of the Nazi rulers of the General Gouvernement.

Diaries form a particularly important type of literature relating to the Holocaust. In her paper ‘Jewish Women in the Kraków Ghetto’ Martyna Grądzka notes that a collection of diaries is held at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, as file number 302, ‘Pamiętniki’. She states that eleven out of sixteen diaries concerning occupied Kraków in the collection were produced by women and teenage girls. Some of the authors, for example Cesia Frymer and Pola Warszawska, have filed testimonies at Yad Vashem.

Possibly the best known wartime diary of a female Jewish author in Kraków is *Pamiętnik Justyny* which was later translated into English as *Justina’s Narrative* and into Hebrew as *Yom na shel Yustina*. This is essential reading for those who do not yet know about the Kraków unit of the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (ŻOB), the Jewish Underground. The diary was written by Gusta Dawidson-Draenger (1917-1943) in a cell at the notorious Montelupich Prison between February and April 1943. The manner in which it was written and preserved is described by Arieh Bauminger in his work which is mentioned below. The original handwritten diary is held at the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum (Beit Lohamei Hagetaot), in Western Galilee, Israel. During the second half of 1943 the Chalutz Underground movement published a news sheet in Polish, which was known by its Hebrew name ‘Hechalutz ha’Lochem’. Justina worked on its publication, along with her husband Szymon (Simek). Further information is available on the Jewish Women’s Archive site and in the book ‘Is War Men’s Business?’

Gola Mire (1911-1943) was another female member of the ŻOB who is featured on the web site of the Jewish Women’s Archive. Gola worked closely with Justina Dawidson-Draenger. Although she had been born into a hasidic family, before the war she was active in the Communist party in Przemyśl and then in Lwów. Her activities in the ŻOB included the

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111 See footnote 110


115 http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/gola-mire
publication of a newspaper and pamphlets, and whilst in the Ghetto she wrote a number of poems in Yiddish and Hebrew. Some were dedicated to her husband and dead child. Others were revolutionary and included ‘Instead of Progress’ which was written whilst she was held at Montepulich prison.  

Maria Hochberg (1913-1996) was the editor of the children’s supplement to Nowy Dziennik in 1937. She was also active with the Polish Socialist Party, the PPS. During the war she survived on Aryan papers, and was a member of the PPS Underground, editing its paper Wolność (Freedom). In 1945 and 1946 she collected testimonies from children and teenagers who came out of hiding. These testimonies form the basis of The Children Accuse. Maria Hochberg’s work ‘Dzieci’ (Children) was included in the 1946 work W 3cią rocznicę Zagłady Getta w Krakowie. She continued to be involved in the Jewish orphanage at Kraków as noted by Noemi Bażanowska in her book To Był Mój Dom.

Zuzanna Ginczanka (1917-1945) moved to Kraków in 1942, having previously lived in Warsaw and Lwów. She lived on Aryan papers outside the ghetto until her arrest and imprisonment. Whilst in Kraków she wrote poetry using the pen name Sara Ginzburg. Her piece ‘Non omnis moriar’ (Not all of me will die) was published in the weekly Odrodzenie in 1946.

Nella Rost (later Nella Rost-Hollander) was a daughter of the pre-war leader Ojjasz Thon. She was a literary scholar in her own right and wrote immediately after the war for the Central Jewish Historical Commission (CZKH) in Kraków. Her post war work included a description of Jewish Society in Kraków during the period of the occupation. Previously, she had written about her father in the Jewish news weekly Nasza Opinia which was published in Lwów.

Dora Agastein (later Dora Agastein-Dormont) was another Holocaust survivor who wrote in the post war period. Her work included a chronology relating to the German occupation and the Jews in Kraków, and a separate paper, ‘Jews in Kraków During the Nazi Occupation’.

Halina Nelken (1924-2009) wrote a diary relating to the period up to Spring 1943 titled Pamiętnik z Getta w Krakowie. This now forms the basis of the book And Yet I am Here. The diary covers the period which the author spent in the Ludwinów district of Kraków, in the Ghetto, and at the Plaszów Camp to the south. In addition to keeping a diary, Halina also wrote

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118 Library of Holocaust Testimonies, Vallentine Mitchell; London, 1996
119 Noemi Bażanowska, To Był Mój Dom; Żydowski Dom Dziecka w Krakowie w latach 1945-1957 (That was my Home; The Jewish Orphanage in Kraków, 1945-1957; Żydowski Instytut Historyczny; Kraków, 2011).
120 Wikipedia and Rafael Scharf, ‘From the Abyss’ in Poland. What Have I to do with Thee (Vallentine Mitchell; London, 1998), previously published as Co Mnie i Tobie Polsko...Eseje bez Upredzen’. See also W 3cią Rocznicę Zagłady Getta w Krakowie (Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich; Kraków, 1946), 83, 84
121 Included in W 3cią Rocznicę Zagłady Getta w Krakowie
122 Sean Martin, Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918-1939, 46.
123 ‘W 3cią Rocznicę Zagłady Getta w Krakowie and Arieh Bauminger (ed.), Sefer Krak: Ir v’Em b’Yisrael (Rav Kuk Institute; Jerusalem, 1959), 381-407
124 Halina Nelken, And Yet I am Here (University of Massachusetts Press; Amherst, MA, 1999). Extracts from the diary relating to 1940 are included in Fabian Schlanger (ed.), ‘....I pozostala tylko legenda (Wydawnictwo Ekked; Tel Aviv, 1986).
poetry and, after the war became an authority on the history of Polish art. Halina’s mother, Regina, spent some time working at the orphanage on Dietla Street. Her testimony is one of several which are reproduced in a book about that orphanage. Other teenagers and women living in Kraków wrote in the form of poems, rather than in diaries or prose. Henia Karmel (1923-1984) and her sister, Ilona (1925-2000) were born in Kraków and spent time in the Ghetto and Plaszów. Ilona (Ila) wrote ‘Rocznicę’ (Anniversaries) in the Ghetto during 1943. The work was published in 1946. The poems of Henia and Ila survived and were published in Polish in 1947. They are now available in English as a book, A Wall of Two; Poems of Resistance and Suffering from Kraków to Buchenwald and Beyond. Additionally, Henia wrote a novel which was based on her experiences in Kraków, The Baders of Jacob Street.

Renia Knoll (1927-?) wrote her diary during the course of 1940. It has since been published by the Jewish Historical Institute, in Polish, as Renia Knoll: Dziennik. As noted on the Institute’s web site ‘Renia’s diary is by no means a chronicle of the fates of Cracow Jews during the occupation. It is a diary of a teenager who worries about anti-semitic repressions as much as about flirtation with her male friends, learning problems, or arguments with her parents.’

Miriam Akavia (née Weinfeld) was born in Kraków in 1927. She was one of several survivors who wrote their memoirs in later life. Her work was first published in Hebrew in 1975. It has since been published in English as An End to Childhood. Another book by the same author is My Own Vineyard: A Jewish Family in Kraków between the Wars. Both of these works were published by Vallentine Mitchell as part of their Library of Holocaust Testimonies. Other female Krakovians who have had their works published as part of the Library include Sara Rosen (My Lost World: A Survivor’s Tale, published in 1993), Gena Turgel (I Light a Candle, 1995) and Janina Fischler-Martinho (Have You Seen My Little Sister?, 1998).

Ana Novac (1929-2010) was another teenager who in 1944 wrote a diary of her life in Kraków, or more precisely in the Plaszów Camp. The diary was published as Les Beaux Jours de ma Jeunesse in 1992, and again as The Beautiful Days of my Youth five years later.

Other young female survivors of the Kraków Ghetto and Plaszów are remembered by their oral testimony rather than the written word. Celina Karp and Rena Finder are just two such examples.

The Holocaust

125 Martyna Grądzka, A Broken Childhood; The Fate of the Children from the Jewish Orphanage at 64 Dietla Street in Cracow during the German Occupation (Wydawnictwo Wysoki Zamek; Kraków, 2012), 440-444. The book also includes statements by Pola Neiger, Renata Goldberger née Grünbaum, and Sabina Mirowska née Hochberger
126 CŻKH, W 3cią Rocznicę Zagłady Ghetta w Krakowie, 99-100
127 Henia Karmel and Ilona Karmel, A Wall of Two; Poems of Resistance and Suffering from Kraków to Buchenwald and Beyond (University of California Press; Berkeley, CA, 2007).
129 Renia Knoll, Dziennik (Zydowski Instytut Historyczny; Warsaw, second edition, 2014)
130 Ana Novac, The Beautiful Days of my Youth; My Six Months in Auschwitz and Plaszów (Henry Hold & Co; New York, 1997).
131 See, for example, Interviews 11133 and 21482 at the Visual History Archive, University of Southern California, Shoah Foundation, mentioned by Joanna Śliwa in her paper ‘The Forced Relocation to the Kraków Ghetto as Remembered by Child Survivors’ which is included in Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian (Eds), The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime (Bloomsbury; London, 2016).
Mention has already been made of diaries which were written during the Holocaust, but women played a much wider role during that period than recording daily events.

Rather too little recognition has been given by the general public to the gallantry of men and women in the Jewish Fighting Force, Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (the ŻOB). Even Martyna Grądzka devotes only half a page to this topic in her paper ‘Jewish Women in the Kraków Ghetto’ which runs to a total of nearly twenty pages. Members of the ŻOB were largely recruited from the ranks of the Akiva (Agudat ha’No’ar ha’Ivri Akiva) and Hashomer ha’Tzair youth movements. Information about the force can be found in several sources, including Arieh Bauminger’s work The Fighters of the Cracow Ghetto. That book includes information not only about Gola Mire and Justyna Dranger, but also about the escape of women prisoners on 29 April, 1943.

As might be expected information is also available on the website of the Ghetto Fighters’ House in Israel (www.gfh.org.il/eng/), as well as in their publication (in Hebrew), Yael Peled’s (Margolin’s) book Jewish Cracow, 1939-1945; Resistance, Underground, Struggle.

The ŻOB was by no means a predominantly male force as is demonstrated the earlier references to Gusta Dawidson-Draenger and Gola Mire, and by the following list of some of the other female members of the Kraków unit.


A more complete list can be seen at http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/krakow/hechalut.htm

The role of women during the Holocaust was mentioned in an exhibition catalogue Fighting for Dignity; Jewish Resistance in Kraków, published by the Galicia Jewish Museum. Particular reference was made to the role of travelling as messengers between the occupied cities, smuggling ‘letters and other correspondence, orders between Jewish fighting organisations, underground newspapers, and very often guns and grenades or other explosives’.

One such courier was Hela Rufeisen-Schüpper, who was born into a Hassidic Kraków family in 1921. Despite some resistance from her family, Hela joined the Akiva youth movement. During the war she acted as a courier of weapons between Warsaw and Kraków, and also between Kraków and other branches of Akiva. Her activities are described on the Jewish Women’s Archive. Her later life saw the publication of her book Farewell to Mila 18; A Courier’s Story.


133 Tomek Strug (ed.), Fighting for Dignity; Jewish Resistance in Kraków (Polish and English, Galicia Jewish Museum; Kraków, 2008) 91.

134 https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/schupper-hella-rufeisen

135 Published in Hebrew, Tel Aviv, 1990, later published as Pożegnanie Milej 18 (Beseder; Kraków, 1996)
Reference should also be made to non Jewish women who put themselves and their families at extreme risk whilst protecting, or attempting to protect, Jewish citizens. Yad Vashem has recognised some of these women as being amongst ‘The Righteous Amongst the Nations’. By way of example the Eilat Gordin Levitan website (www.eilatgordinlevitan.com) identifies the following Righteous females who were connected with the Kraków branch of the Żegota Group, sometimes referred to as The Relief Council for Jews.

Bogna Domanska, Emilia Hiżowa, Janina Wasowiczowa-Raabe, and Wanda Wojcikowa. Others from Kraków who have been named Righteous include

Franciszka Ziemiańska, Rozalia Natkaniec, and Zofia Tomaszewska, as well as various female members of the Bachul family, and Emilie Schindler who was named as Righteous in her own right, and not merely as the wife of Oskar.

Eugenia Manor (née Wohlfeiler) was 13 at the outbreak of war, the daughter of the chazzan (cantor) of the Wysoka (High or Hoyka) Synagogue. She survived camps at Płaszów and Auschwitz and was rescued by Oskar Schindler. She is credited with saving the lives of several family members in 1939.

Helena Sternlicht was born in Kraków in 1925. She survived the Ghetto and was transferred to Płaszów where she was forced to work as a housemaid for the notoriously sadistic camp commandant, Amon Göth. She shared her duties with Helen Hirsch for approximately two years. Both girls came under the protection of Oskar Schindler along with Helena Sternlicht’s elder sisters Symonia and Bronia. Helen Hirsch testified against Göth after the war.

Martyna Grądka’s paper ‘Jewish Women in the Kraków Ghetto’, which has already been mentioned, describes the changes in family relationships and the professional status of women during the period of the ghetto. She refers to a situation where women often turned out to be stronger and more resistant to the conditions of the time so that women ‘became heads of families, taking a place naturally assigned to men’. In support of this view the author uses information from the employment censuses that were conducted during the lifetime of the ghetto. One of the examples she gives is that of Berta Müller, the mother of Stella. Berta was the main bread winner of the family, running the office in a button factory, thanks largely to her proficiency in German.

The topic of role reversal between the sexes has been discussed in other contexts, for example by Dobrochna Kałwa where she considers the effects of the first world war in her paper ‘Uneven Roads to Gender Equality; The Situation of Women in the Second Polish Republic’. It is a theme which is developed by Anna Czocher in her work ‘Heroines of Everyday Life; Kraków Women of the German Occupation Period, 1939-1945’. Both of these papers are

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136 Eugeniusz Duda, The Jews of Cracow (Wydawnictwo Hagada; Kraków, 1999), 72.
138 Website of the Polin Museum for the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw
141 See also Stella Müller-Madej, A Girl from Schindler’s List (Polish Cultural Foundation, London, 1997 and DjaF, Kraków, 2006), previously published as ‘Dziewczynka z Listy Schindlera; Oczami Dziecka’
included in the book Is War Men’s Business? Unfortunately, Ms Czocher, who works with the Institute of National Remembrance, distinguishes between ‘Jewish’ women and ‘Polish’ ones, whereas the description of tasks and roles undertaken by both groups indicate that the Jewish women were also good Poles.

Several sources describe how women in the ghetto took steps to keep up a good appearance despite the reversal of some traditional roles. For example there are accounts of women restyling old clothes in the absence of new ones. Some of the diaries written by younger women illustrate that, despite the death and destruction around them, they continued to be interested in young men. There are several recorded examples of couples being married during the Holocaust. For example Gusta Dawidson (‘Justyna’) married Szymszon Draenger in early 1940 and Rosalie Baum married William Schiff in the Ghetto. The musician Leo (Leopold or Poldek) Rosner married Helen (Hela) Haubenstock on 17 January 1943, the day before he was sent to the camp at Płaszów.

At the opposite end of the emotional spectrum, there are also accounts of ‘gynaecological examinations’ and systematic rapes. Some accounts record how women committed suicide in order to avoid becoming enforced prostitutes. The most widely known of these is a document relating to students at the Beis Ya’akov School. However, this account is now considered by most researchers to be a myth.

The Kraków Ghetto was liquidated in March 1943 when the remaining survivors were transferred to the concentration camp to the south of the city, at Płaszów. A commemorative book of the New Cracow Friendship Society states:

[The] first women were taken into the camp in June 1942, when small Jewish communities near Cracow had been wiped out. They did their hard work in the kitchen, cooking for prisoners. They had also to serve as cleaning women in the SS and Camp-guard barracks. They were very decent and tried to help the starving prisoners.

Groups of women worked in various locations, the most famous of which are Oskar Schindler’s enamel works and his ‘armaments’ factory which is said to have produced goods which in modern parlance were ‘not fit for purpose’. Other women worked in the Madritsch brush and clothing factories and in other workshops both on the camp and off site.

143 Ibid., 50
144 William and Rosalie Schiff, William & Rosalie; A Holocaust Testimony (University of North Texas Press; Denton, TX, 2007), 31, 32.
145 Anna Rosner Blay, ‘Leo Rosner; A Man of Note’ at www.hybridpublishers.com.au and then search for ‘Rosner’
146 See for example, Helene Sinnreich, ‘And it was Something We did not Talk About; Rape of Jewish Women during the Holocaust’ at https://www.academia.edu/1545832
147 See for example, Naomi Seidman, ‘Beautiful Martyrs; The Ninety Three Bais Yaakov Girls’ at https://www.academia.edu/13843997. A detailed account of Beis Ya’akov in Kraków during the Holocaust is set out in Pearl Benisch’s book To Vanquish the Dragon (Feldheim; Jerusalem, 1991)
book *And the Sun Kept Shining*, Bertha Ferderber-Salz briefly describes working in the sewing workshop at the camp.\(^{150}\)

The role of the Jewish Police force during the Holocaust is not altogether clear, but is generally regarded unfavourably by commentators and survivors. The topic is the subject of Alicja Jarkowska-Natkaniec’s paper, ‘Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst [OD] in Occupied Kraków during the Years 1940-1945’.\(^{151}\) This paper indicates that the police force in Kraków was entirely male. There is some evidence, though, of female OD members elsewhere, for example in Łódź.\(^{152}\)

**The Post Holocaust Period**

Many Holocaust memoirs do not describe the time immediately after the writers’ liberation, although the authors do write about their new lives in America, Israel or the United Kingdom. However, a few female survivors have written about their experiences on returning to Kraków. Some of those who returned were still young enough to resume their studies, whether at state schools or one of those set up by the Jewish community immediately following the war. For example Roma Ligocka writes

> A small Jewish school has reopened in Kraków. It is located in a shabby dark building with tiny rooms. I am put into the second form because I already know how to read and write because I am almost seven years old….. The atmosphere in the classroom is so tense. Hardly a minute passes when someone doesn’t break down in tears. The teachers and the pupils cry at almost anything…\(^{153}\)

Maria Orwid, who has already been mentioned, returned to Kraków where she attended the Urszulanka Secondary School. Stella Müller, who is mentioned below, was another Jewish girl who attended a state school in the immediate post war period. Her book *A Girl from Schindler’s List* was published in 1991.

Examples of other memoirs which describe life in post war Kraków are William and Rosalie Schiff’s *William and Rosalie*\(^{154}\) and Bertha Ferderber-Salz’s *‘And the Sun Kept Shining’*\(^{155}\)

The remnants of the Jewish community had to deal with considerable antisemitism. This culminated on 11 August, 1945 in a pogrom, resulting in the death of an Auschwitz survivor, RóŻa Berger.\(^{156}\)

The immediate post war experiences of women is described by Barbara Klich-Kluczewska in her article ‘Women in Post War Poland; Paradoxes of the Communist Reality’\(^{157}\) She refers to the sense of isolation and loneliness which was suffered by men and women on returning to Kraków in the hope of discovering family and friends. She also refers to equal opportunities legislation as being one of the mainstays of socialist modernisation; however, it is

\(^{150}\) Bertha Ferderber-Salz, *And the Sun Kept Shining* (Holocaust Library; New York, NY, 1980) 118, 119 and also 120, 121, *A Sad Love Affair in the Camp* concerning personal relationships between men and women. Pages 158 and 159 describe the maternity unit which became necessary largely as a result of rapes.

\(^{151}\) *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia*, Vol 11 (2013), and [https://www.academia.edu/6528819](https://www.academia.edu/6528819) See also an item in *The Memorial Journal in Honor of the Jews from Cracow who Perished, 1939-1945*.


\(^{154}\) William and Rosalie Schiff, *William and Rosalie*, chapter 10.

\(^{155}\) Bertha Ferderber-Salz, *And the Sun Kept Shining*, 209-221.

\(^{156}\) Wikipedia, ‘Kraków Pogrom’

\(^{157}\) ‘Is War Men’s Business?’ 96-103
clear that Jewish women had other priorities, not least of which were those brought about by pogroms in Kraków in 1945, and in Kielce the following year.

A Jewish Aid Society was established at ul. Długa 38 in order to help returning refugees, at least so far as was possible under the circumstances of the time. As noted previously, a Jewish orphanage was also established at the same address until children were transferred to healthier locations to the south of Kraków. However a substantial Jewish orphanage continued to operate in Kraków for a little more than ten years.158

Stella Müller was born in Kraków in 1930 in to a middle class family. She survived the Ghetto, Płaszów and Auschwitz together with her parents and her brother as a result of their strength and good luck, and thanks also to Oskar Schindler. The family returned to Kraków in 1945 and Stella graduated from the Junior High School in 1952. She emigrated to America in 1959, but her parents and her brother remained in Kraków.159

Eva Hoffman (née Ewa Wydra) was born in Kraków in 1945, and she emigrated with her family when she was 13. She describes her post war experiences in her book Lost in Translation160. She and her family lived a middle class life due largely to her father’s activities in smuggling and dealing in foreign currency. In her book the author speaks of the need to live off one’s wits, a skill which both men and women developed in order to increase their chances of survival both during and after the Holocaust. Eva stayed in Kraków until she and her family emigrated in 1959.

Lili Haber was born in Kraków in September, 1947. She and family left in one of the waves of emigration between 1945 and 1968. She now lives in Israel where she is the President of the Association of Cracovians in Israel.

Maria Bieberstein is the daughter of Artur, and her grandfather was Marek, Chairman of the Judenrat. She was born in 1947 and educated in post war Kraków until she emigrated with her surviving family in 1958.

Halina Nelken, who has already been mentioned in this paper, returned to Kraków in 1949 and gained a degree in the History of Art and Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University. She worked as a curator at the National Museum in Kraków before leaving Poland in 1958161.

During the Communist period, a number of researchers visited Kraków in order to observe what was regarded as the dying Jewish community.162 One such researcher noted that by the end of the 1980’s the orthodox Jewish community was down to about 190 members, over half of whom were women.163 One of those women who received particular mention was Róża Jakubowicz. Her husband Meir, also known as Maciej, was President of the community for

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158 Noemi Bażanowska, To Był Mój Dom; Żydowski Dom Dziecka w Krakowie w latach 1945-1957 (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny; Kraków, 2011)
161 Notes from Halina Nelken, Images of a Lost World; Jewish Motifs in Polish Painting, 1770-1945See also her work And Yet I am Here originally published as Pamiętnik z Getta Krakowie
162 See, for example, Earl Vinecour and Chuck Fishman, Polish Jews: The Final Chapter (New York University Press; New York, NY, 1977)
163 Beata Kowalska, ‘A Receding World; The Jewish Religious Community in Cracow Today’ in Andrzej K Paluch (ed.), The Jews in Poland, Volume I (Research Center on Jewish History and Culture in Poland; Kraków, 1992)/
nearly thirty years before he was succeeded in 1979 by his nephew, Czesław. Róża is described as ‘the mother of the community…. Always ready to work for the community, to help those who need her’. It has to be stated, though, that she is recognised largely for her work in the kitchen, including her preparation of the Passover meals, and her baking of ‘challah’ bread, as well as her skills as an embroiderer. Róża’s son, Tadeusz, was born in 1939 and he is the current President of the community, having succeeded his cousin, Czesław, in 1997.

**The Post Communist Period**

A description of the role of women in the Kraków Jewish community would be incomplete without a reference to the current minister of the city’s Progressive Congregation, Rabbi (or Rabba in the feminine form) Tanja Segal. The wide range of the congregation’s activities can be viewed at [www.beitkrakow.pl](http://www.beitkrakow.pl) The Rabbi was born in Russia and ordained in 2007 in Jerusalem. At the end of that year she became the second Rabbi at Beit Warszawa before taking up her post in Kraków in 2009. Tanja Segal is also the director of the Midrash Theatre which is based at the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków.

The Progressive community in Kraków is very wide and inclusive, with a strong policy offering equality of opportunity. An illustration of this is that the community has adopted the practice of including an orange on the Pesach Seder Plate (the Passover ceremonial dish). This practice is said by some to relate back to a traditional Rabbi’s opinion that ‘a woman belongs on a bimah (a place of authority in the synagogue) as much as an orange belongs on a seder plate’.

The current Jewish community of Kraków was featured in the January 2014 issue of the London based journal *Jewish Renaissance*. The issue included an interview with the President of the Progressive Congregation, Magda Koralewska. The interview covered subjects including her conversion to Judaism, and her work with Tanja Segal in the Midrash Theatre. Another interview featured in the same publication was with Malgosia Ornat who, with her husband, founded the Ariel Café and the Klezmer Hois Hotel. Additionally, they can be credited with the publication of a number of books of Jewish interest through their publishing house ‘Austeria’.

**Conclusions**

This paper results from a review of some source documents, and a wide range of publications which were written in the form of academic works, memoirs, and testimonies. The paper supports the commonly held view that little has been written about the role of women in the Jewish community of Kraków in the early centuries of the community’s development. The following additional broad conclusions can be stated.

In connection with periods prior to the First World War, the majority of authors, even in recent years, have given little attention to the activities and achievements of women compared with those of men. Arguably, this is because authors have not used, or even recognised, the range of sources which are available.

The 1595 Statute restricted the roles of women rather than supporting them. Historically, the property rights of women were limited, for example to those assets which were acquired prior to marriage, or upon a husband’s death. Women trading on their own account, as opposed to jointly with their husbands or on their behalf, were not uncommon but their trade was mainly on a local and small scale. Little evidence of women in trade can be obtained from sources such as census returns. Women were active in religious life and observance, though their religious roles were largely separate from those of their male relatives.

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Women’s involvement in the community increased around the time of the First World War, initially in areas of education and child and social care. Female involvement in other professional occupations developed very slowly. Between the World Wars there was a small number of women’s cultural and social groups, including the WIZO Zionist group. Some women were also active in sport.

Jewish women were particularly active in the field of literature before, during and after the Holocaust. Additionally, women played a full role during the Holocaust as members of the Jewish Underground Force. So far as possible, many women maintained a degree of normality. Often they took over the roles of their husbands.

Several female survivors returned to Kraków after the Holocaust, some to search for relatives and other to resume their education. Some supported communal institutions such as the orphanage, but most emigrated after a short time in the city. These have now been replaced by others, who play their part in the current community, and particularly in the Progressive Congregation.