



Confirmation of Privileges

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The huge and beautiful Main Market Square in Kraków strikes today with its monumental character, the impetus of free space enclosed in the remarkable frazes of the *Cloth Hall* attic, tops of townhouses and palaces, and the towers of *St. Mary's Church*. This huge square used to be densely developed with various buildings. The old outlook of the market square is preserved only in the old graphics and paintings kept in the Kraków museums. Among the actual throng of stalls, slaughterhouses and stands there was a small empty corner at the surface of the market square. It was the area between today's Town Hall Tower and the exit of Bracka Street. This place was called by Kraków inhabitants as *na goldzie* which may be translated as *at homage site*, and even more precisely as a place where homage was paid. It was here that the stand, *theatrum*, where Albrecht Hohenzolern paid homage to Sigismund I the Old in **1525** was placed. Today the site is commemorated with a plaque. A lot of other events took place there. In December **1683** the great Vienna triumph of Jan III Sobieski was celebrated. Apart from the joyous and triumphant events the *na goldzie* site sometimes stroke with awe, as at the times when public executions were held here.

For the city inhabitants the most important *na goldzie* meetings were those held always at the first day after coronation of the new king. On this day the King started his first journey with the crown. It was not a far-away journey as he travelled from Wawel to the Kraków's Main Market Square. At the *na goldzie* site a stand was then erected where His Majesty sat on the specially prepared throne. The most learned councillor, or sometimes the specially hired scholar of the Kraków Academy, delivered wonderful speech in Latin and the burghers made the loyalty pledge to the new ruler, often with 'tokens' of their love in the form of tinkling money. At the end the king was handed a book, a great code where all the privileges of Kraków that the city had received starting with the 1257 location privilege were listed in chronological order. The king did not say anything but placed his hand on the open pages of the code. This gesture had legal force, and it meant the confirmation of all city privileges: it confirmed their validity and imposed new meaning to them.

Two such codes have been preserved at *The Jagiellonian Library* in Kraków. The first one is the exquisitely illuminated **Code of Balthasar Behem** of **1505** (photo), while the second, much more modest code is the **Code of Michał Piątkowski** from the beginning of the 17th century. The third **Code of Zygmunt Zaleski** dating back to the end of the 17th century is kept at the State Archives in Kraków.

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