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MINORITY AND ITS SACRED
ARCHITECTURE IN THE
REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

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МАЊИНА И ЊИХОВА
САКРАЛНА АРХИТЕКТУРА
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THE POLISH NATIONAL MINORITY AND ITS SACRED ARCHITECTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

ABSTRACT

The topic of this paper is the arrival of the Polish national minority to the territory of today's Republic of Srpska and the architecture of its sacred buildings. The Poles colonized Bosnia and Herzegovina shortly after the Austro-Hungarian Empire had occupied this territory in 1878.

The Poles, like many other colonized minorities, built churches that served not only as sacred buildings, but as monuments to their culture, language, and national identity as well. After WWII, the majority of the Poles were repatriated, with the highest rate among all minorities in former Yugoslavia. Many of their churches, which are the topic of this paper, were demolished during and after WWII, with only one remaining northern from Banja Luka.

Keywords: *The Poles, national minorities, sacred architecture, the Republic of Srpska*

ПОЉСКА НАЦИОНАЛНА МАЊИНА И ЊИХОВА САКРАЛНА АРХИТЕКТУРА У РЕПУБЛИЦИ СРПСКОЈ

РЕЗИМЕ

Тема овог рада је долазак припадника пољске националне мањине на данашњу територију Републике Српске, као и архитектура њихових сакралних објеката. Пољаци су колонизовани у Босну и Херцеговину недуго након што је Аустро-угарско царство окупирало ову територију 1878. године.

Пољаци су, као и многе друге колонизоване мањине градили цркве, које нису служиле само као сакрални објекти, већ и као споменици њиховој култури, језику и националном идентитету. Након Другог свјетског рата, Пољаци су масовно репатрицирани, са највишом стопом међу свим мањинама бивше Југославије. Многе њихове цркве које су тема овог рада су уништене током и након Другог свјетског рата, од којих је само једна сачувана сјеверно од Бањалуке.

Кључне ријечи: *Пољаци, националне мањине, сакрална архитектура, Република Српска*

1. INTRODUCTION

The colonization of the Polish national minority on our territory took place during the Austro-Hungarian regime in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The situation, in which the Poles were at the time, was quite similar to their Royal compatriots from today's territories of Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Slovak Republic, etc.

The Immigration of the Poles began in 1893, and later was popularized. Mostly those were the families from Galicia, from districts: Buchach, Zbarazh, Rava-Ruska, Rudky, Ternopil, Rohatyn, Zolochiv, Sokalj, Brody, Berezhany, Drohobyc, Pidhaitsi, Permyšljany, Horodenka, Tovmač, Sambir, Skalat, and Husiatyn and from the Carpathian Ukraine from Ticov and Uzhhorod. In the late 1893, the Poles settled in the district Gradiška, where they dominated in Miljevačka Kozara, and were mixed with the Ruthenians in Čelinovac and Gornji Bakinci. Dubrava was inhabited by families from Moravia and Vinkovci, as well as evangelists from Hungary and Galicia. It should be noted that the settlers from Poland are often incorrectly identified, although they all originate from Galicia: there were two groups, one authentic Polish - Catholic, which used Polish as their mother tongue, and the other was a Ukrainian (Ruthenian) unitary group that used the Ukrainian (Ruthenian) language. The local population did not tell the difference and called them all Galicians. [1:959]

In the context of the official colonization, with all the benefits, the following Polish colonies were established: Čelinovac, Donji Bakinci, Miljevačka Kozara, Gornji Bakinci, Dubrava, Novi Martinac, Rakovac, Gumjera, Kokorski Lug, Smrtići-Palačkovci, Kunova, and Grabašnica, while Polish-Ukrainian colonies were formed in places Gajevi, Devetina, Stara Dubrava, and Gornji Detlak; and Ukrainian colonies with the Polish presence were formed in Kamenica, Nova Dubrava, and Rasovac. [2:27]

In addition to the planned settlement, there was an immigration from Austro-Hungary and Russia without the permits given by local authorities, and those families without a defined status were forced to fight for pure survival. In the early 20th century, there was an immigration of Galicians to the wood estates of Gumjera, Dolina, Rakovac, and Poprašnica. The Poles colonized the villages of Novi Martinac, Gumjera, Devetina and Dubrava, all belonging to Prnjavor district. Hungarian colonists settled in the complex of Vučijak. [3:127-8]

“Data on the number of foreign peasants vary, but according to the report on administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period from 1913 to 1905, 38 foreign colonies were established in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a total of 13,340 people, who were allocated 20,845 hectares of arable land, Out of 38 peasant colonies, 12 were Polish, 11 German, four Czech, four Polish-Ruthenian, three Ruthenian, two Italian, one Hungarian, and one Slovenian. Thus, peasants came mostly from Germany and Poland. Out of all foreigners in Bosnia and Herzegovina from Austro-Hungarian area, the most numerous were the Croats, the Serbs from Croatia, Slavonia, Vojvodina and Dalmatia, followed by the Germans, Poles, Czechs, Russians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Italians, and Romanians.

According to the consequences of the Austro-Hungarian colonization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the conclusion is - apart from the political and socio-economic aspect - it also had a demographic, national and religious aspect and served to prevent any attempt of national and political uprising of Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was discouraged by the settlement of foreigners in areas with a homogeneous structure of population. Immigrants had a significant role in the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the cultural aspect.” [3:134]

Out of all immigrants of foreign nationalities, the highest rate of returns to their home-countries was recorded with the Germans and the Poles. Large groups of Germans had left Bosnia and Herzegovina even before the First World War, while the Poles became the subject of a repatriation process after the Second World War on the basis of an interstate agreement. [2:72-3]

2. SACRED ARCHITECTURE OF POLISH NATIONAL MINORITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

All national minorities, for the purposes of religious practises, built sacred buildings in sites that they colonized, and it was the case with the Poles, too. In comparison to the others, the Poles built very few sacred sites, out of which only one is still preserved. Many others were demolished during and after WWII.

The architectural qualities and remarkable achievements were not the cases in these sites. In most of the sites, the buildings were very modest and simple. The construction material was in many cases wood, both for structural system and façades, and in rare cases the churches were built with solid materials like stone, brick and concrete.

Architectural styles and their properties in the majority of churches belonging to national minorities was far away from contemporary architecture at that time, but still in close link to their homeland and local customs in places from where they originated.



Figure 1. The site of Čelinovac within the surrounding of local settlements Cerovljani and Turjak [4]

2.1. THE CHURCH OF SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

Location: Čelinovac, municipality Gradiška

Confession: Roman Catholic

Village Čelinovac is part of the municipality of Gradiška. The Poles, after arriving to Čelinovac, established their first colony in 1895. At that time, one house in the village was used for the purpose of religious services.

In the last decade of XIX century, a massive, single-naved church, with a rectangular floor plan, and high front tower, was built in Čelinovac. The altar area has two lateral wings. The roof of the church is gabled, covered with plain tiles, while the bell tower is peaked, clad with sheets of copper tin. The each of the longitudinal façades holds two arched windows and the side wings of the altar, one rectangular. The rear façade is without windows. The entrance part is accentuated with tympanum.

Inside, above the entrance, there is a gallery, which rests on two pillars. The ceiling is flat, made out of wood, and tapered at the ends. The altar area is rectangular, embedded within the rectangular base of the church, without the projection of the façade. The church has a bell, inscribed with the year of 1922.



Church of Saint Michael the Archangel, Čelinovac: view from the south



Church of Saint Michael the Archangel, Čelinovac: view from the west

2.2. DEMOLISHED POLISH PARISH CHURCHES

After the end of WWII, due to repatriation of Polish national minority into the motherland, many parishes in Diocese of Banja Luka were left with lowered number of parishioners and later shut down, along with belonging parish churches.

The construction of a parish church devoted to the Birth of Blessed Virgin Mary in Devetina began on 20 March 1901. The activities on construction works on this church had been less known until the year of 1903, when a parish in Devetina was founded. By then, the construction of the parish church and house was completed. After the repatriation in 1946, the church was demolished. [5:471-2]



Figure 2. Peasant house in Devetina where holy mass took place in 1902 [5:471]

The Polish parish of Rakovac was founded after the secession from the parish of Prnjavor. The parish was founded on 6 May 1901; the parish patron was the Lady of Mount Carmel. The Polish immigrants built the church 10x6 m large, even before the parish was founded. The church was devoted to Saint Stanislaus, the bishop. The wooden church was replaced by a solid building in 1937, but it was demolished in 1945.

The parish of Kunova, also in Prnjavor deanery, was founded on 25 July 1922, after the separation from the parish of Rakovac. It included villages settled with national minorities: the Poles as the majority, and Czechs and Croats as well. Those were the villages: Kunova, Gornji Smrtići, Kočačina, Nova Ves, and Bosanski Kobaš. A wooden church, devoted to Saint Stanislaus, was built as early as in 1913, and the parish house was built in 1922, along with the foundation of the parish itself. The parish church was demolished during WWII.

The parish church in Miljevac near Laktaši, devoted to Sacred Heart, was built in 1905. Although the Poles, who were settled in Gornji Bakinci, requested for the church to be built in their village, evinced by a document sent to Ordinariate of Diocese of Banja Luka on 8 June 1905, after the bishop's decision from 10 June 1905, it was finally built in Miljevac. The project was delivered to Ordinariate on 27 April 1905. Miljevac was burnt to the ground in 1942, while the modest church was demolished during the war.



The church of Sinless Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary in Novi Martinac, photo taken in 1903 [5:487]

The parish in Novi Martinac was founded in 1900. It included primarily the Poles in Novi Martinac, Kličkovno Brdo, Zagreblje, Gumjera, Svinjar and Razboj; as early as in 1935, it included 17 sites with the Roman Catholic congregation. The parish patron was Our Lady of Snow. As soon as in 1900, a small wooden church was built, but replaced in 1906, with the church built out of solid materials. The church was devoted to the Sinless Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary. Similarly to other Polish parishes, this one was demolished, too, along with its sacred buildings, during and after WWII.



Figure 3. The Parish church of Saint Michael Archangel in Stara Dubrava, photo taken in 1905 [5:491]

The parish of Stara Dubrava, patroned by Saint Michael Archangel, was founded in 1903. It comprised Roman Catholic Poles as majority, as well as the Italians, Germans, and Croats. A modest wooden church was built in 1903, and demolished in 1945.

3. CONCLUSION

The architecture of the Polish national minority, as far as their sacred buildings are concerned, do not represent any outstanding accomplishment, not even in the local context. Historically, their churches are in the group of sacred buildings built on the turn of the centuries, along with other national minorities like the Germans, Austrians, Slovaks, Italians etc. Their most important values reflect in the intentions of colonists to use the same or similar materials, construction methods and architecture, seen in their local communities, but even more important was their function to gather people, and foster their religious credentials, and cultural and national identity. Unfortunately, only one of those churches is preserved, while all the others were demolished during and after WWII, after which the majority of Poles were repatriated.

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