

20. Summary

Sacral landscape transformation in the Polish-Slovak-Ukrainian border region during XIX -XXI century

Introduction

The subject of the project is a sacral landscape of International Biosphere Reserve „Eastern Carpathians”. This type of landscape is one of the main research problems of geography of religion (Jackowski 2003). Studies in this area focus on the problem of transformation of natural and cultural landscape under the influence of the development of religious functions and mutual relations between the *sacrum* and the surrounding space. *Sacrum* and *profanum* are one of the main divisions of cultural reality. *Sacrum* includes categories of things and activities separated within a certain community as sacred, therefore becoming the subject of religious worship. In contrast, the *profanum* is defined as a sphere of non-holy, secular matters.

Study includes research problems in the form of the following questions:

1. To what extent sacred landscape of the study area in the years 1850–2012 was formed under the influence of historical, political and socio-economic factors, and to what extent was the result of specific local conditions, which were a reflection of religious relations and nationality?
2. What factors influenced the location of objects and places of worship in the study area in the years 1850–2012?
3. What is the state of preservation of historic buildings and places of worship, how to protect them, and how to shape new temples in the contemporary landscape?

The specific objectives of the study were answering the research questions, which required, among others:

- Analysis of: the literature, conditions that shaped settlements in the area of research, the religious and national relationship, symbolism of places of worship and their architectural forms;
- Analysis of the political, legal, cultural, social, economic and topographic factors influencing the sacral landscape and location of sacral objects;
- Gathering knowledge on the state of preservation of historic places of worship and analyzing their role in the context of the touristic values of the region and the modern sacral landscaping.

Essentially, sacral landscape formed from the appearance of man, and its present condition is the result of processes occurring over several centuries. The sub-

ject of the study especially included the relationships between the various faiths and the natural environment shaping the landscape, as well as the relationship between the landscape and human religious activity. The study area is part of Outer Eastern Carpathians and is located in the border area of Poland and Slovakia. It is an area of valuable natural resources and landscape, which are under various forms of protection. The analysis was based on an inventory made in the field as well as historical sources, including primarily historical maps processed by the ESRI software (ArcView, ArcGIS within the GIS BNP) in relation to the coordinates of topographic maps in scale 1:25000 (Polish Coordinate System, 1965). The number of factors and conditions shaping the sacred landscape of IBR "Eastern Carpathians", throughout history were identified.

Historical, geopolitical, cultural and socio-economic factors

Specific geopolitical location of the study area resulted in co-existence of the various nations and religions. Each of the religious groups left a trace in space in the form of objects and sacred places, at the same time living in mutual respect and understanding.

Because the essence of geographical study is examining the phenomena in the context of spatial, temporal and socio-economic implications for the environment, analysis included a broad historical background, explaining the origins of the processes currently observed.

As a result of settlement on the border of Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine the specific religious mosaic was created. In the highest mountain backwoods, in the Polish-Hungarian borderland, settlement of Walachian-Ruthenian culture was developed, associated with Orthodox Christianity and after the adoption of the Union – the Greek-Catholic. In the valleys, however, where there were favorable conditions for the development of agriculture Polish settlers, belonging to the Roman-Catholic Church, settled down. For the most abundant, Christians of the Eastern Rite, landowners either funded churches or allowed for their construction. Landowners themselves were usually associated with the Roman-Catholic Church. The prevailing poverty, difficult living conditions and a small number of followers of the Roman Catholic Church made the development of this church structures very slow. Therefore objects and sacral places of the Roman-Catholic Church occurred less frequently and were dependent on landowners. Starting from the sixteenth century, there was an increase of the Jewish population, first in the towns and later in the villages, in which trade, timber and oil industry was developed.

Number of faithful inhabitants and stabilization of the village were important in the construction of the first church. Churches, which then arose, were fit for an initially small number of people (about 100). They were characterized by small

size, typical during this period for Eastern Christianity. The interior of the temple was creating the mood and atmosphere of spirituality during services.

In the mid-nineteenth century Greek-Catholic parish network was dense, and a relatively large number of churches were enough to meet the religious needs of people. The creation of the new church was conditioned by the support of the founder and to a lesser extent, by the number of the faithful inhabitants. In the initial stage of formation of the sacred landscape of the study area, the most significant were, next to the religious factors, historical processes and the socio-economic development.

Under the influence of continuous contact and mixing of the multinational community of Polish, Ruthenian and Wallachian, specific ethnographic regions called Boyko and Lemko were developed. The study area was in the transition zone, under the influences of both, Boyko and Lemko culture.

The Boyko region has been shaped by a combination of Wallachian migration and Ruthenian agricultural colonization. On the West, Lemko region was influencing the area, where elements of the Ruthenian and Wallachian mixed with earlier existing agricultural settlement of Polish and Slovak (in the southern part of Carpathians). Under the influence of specific socio-cultural processes resulting from spatial proximity of diverse inhabitants, the transition zone was developed within the study area. The political boundaries did not define clearly cultural regions.

The shape of ethnographic regions was reflected in the different architectural design of the sacral objects. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century churches of the study area were shaped in the tradition of Boyko culture, with elements of Lemko culture. Most of the buildings were made of wood, which was driven largely by poverty of these densely wooded and infertile lands, and also by the conservatism characteristic for folk art. Cemeteries, founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for sanitary reasons were located away from the village buildings. However, cemeteries were generally close to the church, mostly on gentle slopes, close to the watercourse.

Arrangement of sacral objects and places within the village located them not far from the mansion and tavern. Frequent neighborhood of church, manorial buildings and tavern resulted from state of dependence from the owner of the village (the foundation of the church, the function of the patron). Churches played a very important role for residents and often marked the center of the village.

In the 2nd half of the nineteenth century the importance of tradition was decreasing and influence of the church building rules (Romanization) and administrative legislation of the Habsburg monarchy were more and more visible. Among others, the towers over the women's gallery were built, roof ridge was introduced, roofing method was changed from shingle to the metal sheets, wood was replaced with brick or stone and schematic projects of churches not associated with the tradition of the East were introduced.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the clear link between sacral architecture and political factors on the north side of the Carpathians was visible. Churches became the measure of religious, social, cultural and national integration. The rivalry between the two Churches was one of the reasons for constructing bigger and bigger churches. At that time the canon of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church was developed. It was supported by the bishops of Przemyśl and distributed by local priests, whose position as a result of administrative regulations, and social change (the enfranchisement, raising of the education of priests) increased and strengthened. As a result of socio-economic transformation, the role of the laity (bearing the expenses for the construction of the new churches) in the Greek-Catholic Church has also increased. Under the leadership of the Greek-Catholic clergy, old traditional churches were replaced with the new, built in the so-called national Ukrainian style. Consequently, the architecture of churches moved away from local tradition, understandable to villagers, and took the nature of a political affirmation. Churches „grew” up, in place of the old hip roofs characteristic domes of the Eastern Church were introduced. In the south of the Carpathians old wooden churches were turned into one made of brick, schematic structures with the Baroque basilica tower over the entrance. As a result, a process of liquidation of old Ruthenian elements in church and the unification of the architectural form took place.

Roman Catholic churches referred to the Western tradition, and were in most cases made of brick, in neo-Gothic style. They had high towers, which were dominant in the landscape. Crosses crowning the towers, made according to the scheme of the Latin, accentuated the presence of the Roman-Catholic Church, during this period linked with Polish nationality. It is worth noting that, in relation to the inhabitants of the Bieszczady schematic recognition: Pole – Roman-Catholic, and Ruthenian (Ukrainian) – Greek-Catholic, was not reflected in statistics.

In first half of the twentieth century, the evolution of the sacral landscape of the region was influenced by economic factors. During this period there has been intensive development of the timber industry in the upper San and Cirocha valleys and also iron industry development in Cisna and Stakčín region. The factor that intensified the development was the construction (1904–1906) of the railway line Lviv-Uzhgorod together with the narrow-gauge railway network to transport wood in the north and south of the Carpathians. Arriving workers were Roman-Catholics, which contributed to the building of new churches in Sokoliki Górskie, Sianki, Snina and Wielkie Berezne and expansion of the existing church in Cisna.

A particularly tragic for the areas located on the south side of the Carpathians was the period of World War I, the frontline was situated there in 1915. The remains of the bloody battles are numerous war cemeteries that social forces have renovated and labeled in the Slovak part of the study area.

In the 2nd half of the twentieth century, the landscape of the study area has been transformed under the influence of political factors and further undergoing the “desacralization” process. The most significant effects of changes were connected with displacement of people from the Polish part of the study area, especially in 1946–1947, resulting in the disappearance of former ethno-national border culture. The change of the political system and planned actions, aimed at the annihilation of the old religious architecture, brought huge losses. As result of these actions, abandoned churches that have survived deportation were turned into warehouses, demolished or left unattended for destruction. Only a few have returned to cult serving as a Roman-Catholic Church. Currently, the state borders divide the Bieszczady region not only politically, but also culturally. In contrast to neighboring areas, the area is inhabited by culturally different populations. On top of that postwar settlers, coming from the entire Poland, belong to different cultures. The present community of Bieszczady is uniform in terms of religion and nationality, but diverse in terms of culture. Due to the dominance of Roman Catholic population, the most numerous are these churches. They are built in a modern architectural style.

In the Slovak part of the study area the transformation in the sacral landscape occurred in connection with the decision to build the reservoir of drinking water Starina and displacement of inhabitants of 7 villages. Together with the displacement of inhabitants the buildings were destroyed, including churches. The remaining few roadside crosses and cemeteries are visited by the former inhabitants. In places of demolished churches, the provisional chapels were erected, for the purposes of worship.

The influence of natural factors

Arrangement of the village remained in balanced connection with terrain, a network of rivers and vegetation. The boundaries of the villages ran along line of ridges and mountain passes. It seems that the hydrographic elements were of greater importance for the organization of the village and its functional structure. Significant at the same time, however, was not only the fact that there are water-courses that marked communication tracts, but also the accompanying valleys. Between the larger valleys and mountain slopes, there were differences in the initial forestation, soil quality and microclimate. For this reason, the first settlements were established in the broad valleys of the rivers and streams, which then spread along the smaller streams entering progressively less favorable, higher grounds. Even the Wallachian villages where not agriculture, but the pastoral economy-culture played a greater role, were initially established in the wide, more convenient valleys. Later due to an increase in population and the influx of new settlers lands located above were occupied.

An important factor determining the spatial composition of the village was vertical formation of the terrain. It regulated often the shape and length of the village, which due to existing differences in height was often very twisty. Geomorphological forms influenced the directions of spatial development of the village, their internal structure, characteristics of buildings and the aesthetic values of landscape. The villages belonged to the so-called łańcuchówka (having the shape and structure of the metal chain), in which the density of buildings to the half of twentieth century steadily increased covering tighter bottom of valleys. In such configuration of the village sacred objects and places were incorporated.

In the nineteenth century, sacral assemblies were generally located in the center of the village. The cemeteries were localized in area surrounding the church and symbolic boundary between the *sacrum* and *profanum* was a fence with a gate and the ring of old trees. Most of the churches along with the cemeteries were located on flat areas of the slope and the highest terraces. Orography raised the architectural value of buildings and emphasized the size of the forms and gave them “sublimity”. Submerged in the greenery churches were the most beautiful part of rural cultural landscape. They were also a symbol of the village, a sign of orientation, and at the same time giving a sense of stability and continuity of history.

Defensive location of the churches is evident in the villages located in the San valley and nearby, where settlement took place at the earliest. Churches were located on watersheds and higher plateaus. As a result, crosses thumping over the treetops were creating a clear landscape accents and were very good viewpoints. As a result, we can admire a vast panorama – the most attractive of them are the orthodox churches in Krywe, Smolnik, Studenne, Ruski Potok, Użok, Ulic.

From the remains of former orthodox churches (so called “cerkwisko”) one can enjoy the attractive landscape and interior view (elements of passive exposure), good examples are: Jaworzec, Łopienka, Krywe, Studenne, Wołosate, Berehy Górne, Dydiowa. Overshadowed by compact treetops, interior landscaping is currently possible from remains of former orthodox churches in Zawoja, Solinka and Łuh.

Sacred landscape of IBR “Eastern Carpathians” in cultural aspect

The influence of the Byzantine and Latin traditions on the study area resulted in presence of iconography and architectural styles typical for Eastern as well as Western culture. On the one hand, opening up to Western influences in terms of architecture and iconography and on the other, affirmation of Eastern Christianity, indicates the border region. Evidence of this is transition zone lying within the study area, visible especially in the architecture of Greek-Catholic churches in the years 1850–1945. This zone stretches from north-west to south-east from

the village Krywka to Wetlina and state border. Certainly favorable factor was the dense territorial structure of Greek-Catholic Church in the Bieszczady Mountains.

It should be noted, that despite the apparent influence of Western culture Greek-Catholic Church remained “faithful” spiritually to the Eastern Church and the Orthodox tradition. New orthodox churches received “Saints” calls characteristic for the Eastern Church. Calls of St. Mary, however, even though they had their counterparts in the Roman Catholic Church retained its original wording typical for the Orthodox Church. During the construction of new churches, efforts were made to cultivate traditional religious symbolism. New Greek-Catholic churches were mostly oriented to the East, and equipped with the iconostasis. Orthodox crosses, typical for eastern iconography crowned the churches. Cemeteries and roadside crosses expose iconographic images in mixed style. It is worth noting the presence of numerous roadside crosses in the eastern part of the study area. However, in the western part house-like small chapels or cabinet-like chapels were present. On the roadside crosses figural images of the crucified Christ were placed, which is not found in the Eastern Church, which rejects the sculpture as too “realistic”. This reflects the impact of the West in the field of sacred art, as a result of the coexistence in one area of the two Churches. It is different in the villages located on the south side of the Carpathians, where on the roadside crosses paintings of Christ were placed.

After World War II, and the displacements of the population, the situation has changed. As a result of these changes the sacral landscape of these mountains recently transformed and is homogeneous. Architecture of new churches does not refer to the local tradition. Similar churches one can see in Pogórze Przemyskie, Małopolska and other regions of the country.

The largest changes in the sacral landscape of the study area occurred within the Bieszczady NP and its buffer zone. Comparing the number of inhabitants and sacral objects in this area over different periods in history, saturation index of sacral landscape can be calculated. Despite the losses of World War I, it reached the highest value in the years 1919–1946, when it was 148 people per 1 sacral object/place. In the years 1850–1918 the index reached 92 people per sacral building, and in 2002 – 60. This highlights a key moment in the transformation of the sacral landscape, related to the period of World War II and post-war deportation actions. Valleys were deserted for many years and in the churches that have survived the period of displacement, no people were gathered. Thus, these objects were not in worship and became „dead”.

Due to depopulation and destruction of objects and places of worship, large scale “desacralisation” of the landscape began. Currently, this process continues on a small scale, due to the lack of funds for maintenance and repairs, as well as the lack of interest from new inhabitants towards old objects and places of worship.

It is worth noting that the maintenance of the religious function of the church is the most important condition for the survival of the object and shaping of sacral landscape.

In the last period a new chapter was began in the history of the Bieszczady Mountains, and with it a revival of the sacral landscape, but in a completely different dimension.

Establishment of protected areas (with the highest rank of nature protection) on the Polish-Slovak-Ukrainian frontier gives hope that, with the protection of valuable natural assets also sacral culture of the area won't be lost. However, the necessary financial resources and professional approach during maintenance are essential. Places where the traces of old culture are preserved should be shown in the landscape and open to the public.

„Submerged” in vegetation, remains of churches create conditions to reflect on the difficult fate of the former inhabitants of the Bieszczady villages, as well as on our own lives.