“Second Life” of Abandoned Temples – Retrospect and Prospects

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Abstract. This paper presents “second life” of abandoned Christian temples. It focuses on searching for modern methods of saving the architecture of temples from ruination and profanation, while ensuring its dignified transformation. It presents selected examples of full or partial reconstructions of the ruins of temples and interconfessional conversions in the last quarter of a century in Poland. It also shows the process of transformation of spatial and functional structures as well as iconography of the temples, implemented throughout adaptation, modernization or extension. It covers problems in architectural conservation as well as essential ideological aspects of symbolical and liturgical nature. Apart from a retrospective look at first post-war buildings of this type there are also latest author projects introduced. They exemplify a design method of a “non-invasive” approach to historical monuments, including respect for their historical values and adding new qualities at the same time. Those examples are representative for the architecture of cultural borderland, which attempts to synthesize both Western and Eastern Christian art.

1. Introduction

Devastation and profanation of the cult objects, as well as other spiritual places and those devoted to mankind's memory become very common these days. Their adaptations to unworthy purposes, contradictory with their spiritual status, become common. They are being turned into caricatures, lacking of religious spirit. Culture departs from the cult; from which it had genetically originated. It is a very dangerous phenomenon as it touches the very essence of culture, striking at its basic values: truth, good and beauty.

Greatly concerned over the welfare of sites associated with spiritual culture and memory, we plead to the governments and political authorities of all countries to adopt an architectural policy striving for the protection of the value of these sites so that they do not perish. We address our message primarily to architects, calling for their full respect for the spiritual and cultural heritage of all the local communities in the world, and to make a commitment to protect and develop it.

Today, however, a clear and visible polarisation of attitudes has taken place within the space of human life and of human spiritual values. Extremes – ranging from complete negation, based on a foundation of the depreciation of spirituality to religious proselytising and religious war – are being encountered more and more often. As a consequence of the ongoing secularisation of life and the depreciation of religion we are today witnessing the demolition of temples or their conversion to forms of use that are unbecoming of their former religious status. Acts of religious proselytising also include their premeditated demolition or aggressive destruction, as well as conversion into temples of one's own religion. In both cases, places of worship of all religions are being destroyed – from the
architecture of Christian temples, synagogues and mosques to ancient, Buddhist, Hindu and other ones. We all know about this. We observe every day.

Data and forecasts are frightening. According to official forecasts of the Observatoire du Patrimoine Religieux – with the existence of around 100000 Christian religious sites in France it is estimated that 5000-10000 temples under the management of community authorities will be demolished by 2030 – which is between 5 and 10% of all temples. This is also happening in Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Ireland, Austria or even Italy. Cardinal Willem Eijk, the Dutch archbishop of Utrecht and head of the local episcopacy has already publicly stated that 1000 churches will soon have to be closed. They are being deliberately demolished or converted into restaurants, dance clubs, storehouses, hotels and shops or even brothels and toilets in countries of Western Europe, just as they were in the eastern countries of the communist bloc, especially in the USSR.

This is architecture that expresses the highest human values, which are the essence of human spiritual and religious aspirations, the source of the creation of the true values of human life and the heritage of human culture, built on its fundamental values: truth, good and beauty.

In Poland we have also participated in this process of destruction and conversion for a long time, until contemporary times. We have not been better or worse. In the past we have done it quite often and in a violent way. Nevertheless we have done it as well in the 20th century. We converted orthodox churches, evangelical temples and synagogues.

After the restoration of independence in Poland in 1918, we destroyed 63 out of 94 orthodox garrison churches and converted 22 of them into Rome catholic, Old catholic and Evangelic churches. Immediately before the Second World War, in 1938, on the southern Podlasie and Chelmzczzyna we destroyed 127 of those temples and converted 8 of them. After the Second World War after the displacement of more than 140 thousand of autochthon Rusyns during Operation Vistula in 1947 we converted more than a hundred of their temples. The rest of them disappeared forever or they are in ruins. On the western and northern territories, after the displacement of German community and the return to so-called Recovered Territories we converted, for change, hundreds of post-evangelical temples for roman catholic, orthodox and uniate churches. The processes of conversions differed one from the other. Many objects had been profaned as they had been converted into workshops, storehouses, shops, restaurants, dachas and even toilets. There was not a lot of tolerance! [1]

2. Matter vs. spirit

The fierce conflict between the sacred and the profane is becoming painfully apparent today not least because of the conflict between the past and modern history in the field of historic monument conservation. It is especially visible in those places where historic sites, living witnesses to the past, are in an express need of reparation or even reconstruction. Often, throughout the ages, they have lost much of their material substance, their matter, but their intangible aspect, their spirit, remains intact.

Conservation theory has long been prone to favour what is material over what is immaterial, to give supremacy to material, tangible aspects – as fixed and visible witnesses to history – over the divine breath of the Holy Spirit and the elusive – invisible to the senses – premonition of metahistory. The authenticity of the value of the matter exceeds their spiritual values. Aristotelian hylomorphism supersedes Platonic idea. It is visible not only in written precepts and guidelines relating to the rules governing conservation work. It is deeply rooted in culture and its practice of proceeding and realising a rationalised plan for the continuity of historic art, in its so called good practices of conservation, which constitute its school of preservation and conservation of historic monuments. And it is nothing like the Platonic Academy. It is Aristotle’s Lyceum.

One of the hard-line postulates of The Venice Charter states that restoration work should be abandoned and can be carried out only in indispensable cases. This is followed by a strict prohibition of reconstruction. Article 15 reads as follows: „All reconstruction work should however be ruled out "a priori". Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and its use should be the
least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form” [2]. The Charter recommends the original substance of the construction and the material the historic monument is made of to be treated with utmost respect, and that any new additions should be easily distinguishable from the original elements. Where the use of traditional techniques, corresponding with the building, is impossible, application of modern techniques is admissible. It is also postulated that every part of a building coming from different stages of its construction should be protected, and the replacement of original elements with their faithful copies is expressly forbidden.

Those postulates may be wise and appropriate, for they are meant to safeguard historic monuments, which constitute our material heritage. It is also a way to protect the authenticity of historic forms and truths. This is very good. Is it, however, possible to depart from the recommendations put forward in those postulates? And if yes – in what circumstances?

There are certain categories of historic monuments in which the material value bears only auxiliary value to, and functions merely as a medium for the expression of, values much more important, the higher, super-imposed values which deserve to be protected in the first place. Sacral architecture undoubtedly belongs to that category.

The temple is, first and foremost, a place of worship. Its superior value, one which requires respect and protection above all other values, is its function as a place of cult. It is through this function that the essential purpose of a temple is realised. And although it may be a remarkable work of art, it will remain a form ancillary to religion. For it is religion that it serves primarily, not culture.

The essential postulate and ideological core of The Venice Charter is the struggle for the authenticity of the monument, and for it to be treated adequately to the specific circumstances of its construction – without falsifications and contaminations. The authenticity of a sacral art historic monument can, however, be understood in many ways. It can be seen as the authenticity of its material substance, its form, function, techniques applied in its erection, as well as, first and foremost, the authenticity of its ideological meaning [3], the effect it has as a place of religious worship through the conveyance of hierophantic content. It follows from there that both messages, the material and physical, as well as the spiritual-mystagogical, theological and symbolic contribute jointly to the superior value described as the sacred.

What is, however, the primary criteria by which to establish the authenticity of monuments in this particular category of architecture? Is it, first and foremost, its authenticity in terms of the value of the cult, the sacral, spiritual and ideological values – in line with its status, sense and purpose it serves, especially in situations of conflict, when a choice has to be made – or the authenticity of the heritage of culture and history, material and physical values? Or – to be more direct – is the need to preserve the faithfulness of historic forms, as carriers of the heritage of the values of the material and spiritual culture of a given religion stronger than the need to preserve the truths of the faith, worship, dogmas, ideological integrity of the theological-aesthetic message, which constitute the sense of its existence, its ontological value? Isn’t that a question of theology?

Theology of art, compared to history of art, focuses interpretation and axiological assessment of a work of sacral art on the reception of what is inscribed into that work. It does not seem to care about its authors, its historical and cultural background, dating, affiliation with specific styles and its purity. It is not very interested in the work’s historiosophical or scientific value. It does not seem to care much about the material aspect of the image unless there are some important ideological reasons. It assumes indifference to all those aspects, eliminating them in a way [4]. This is because it takes a different view of history, which it treats as merely a way of reaching eternity. It is necessary for divinization and salvation of this world.

This raises a question about the value of a monument of sacral art and the present day attitude to it. A question about the present sense of its existence as a work of art of the sacred [5, 6]. Can it, on the one hand, be reconstructed, in the light of its fall caused by turmoil and its impending destruction? Can it, on the other hand, be deconstructed when its historic time has passed? What is the extent of possible changes and adaptations that can be made in intermediary cases?

Let’s look at some selected examples which provoke a general reflection.
3. Reconstruction

The orthodox monastic church of the Annunciation to the Mother of God in Suprasl (1503-1511) was a unique temple. It was a one of a kind phenomenon in the history of architecture. Together with the orthodox churches in Synkowicze and Murowanka from the turn of the 15th and 16th century, it created a typologically separate group of byzantine-gothic temples, fortified, rectangular in design, groin or groin-dome vaulted, four pillar (nine spaced), mono- or triapsydial, flanked by four towers. Their tridivided central-longitudinal spatial-liturgical structure, being a canon of an orthodox church, was inveigled in gothic robes. The outer shells resemble those of western churches, whereas the interiors are of classical, eastern orthodox byzantine-rus churches (Figure 1).

![Figure 1, 2, 3. Supraśl. Orthodox monastic church of the Annunciation to the Mother of God](image)

The orthodox church in Suprasl, with its extraordinary architecture and amazing iconography stemming from the byzantine range of Balkan culture of the second half of the 16th century, relates to the tragic history of the Byzantium. Its history – since the creation until the point of definitive destruction, are a testimony to the ongoing and purposeful neutralization and elimination of the value of the orthodox church art, which since the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Apostles to the Slavs, had its rightful place in Poland. It was a co-creator of the indigenous core of its multinational and multireligious culture. After the monastery was taken by force by the uniates in 17th century, the church loses gradually its primary character of an orthodox temple. Its greatest values are being eliminated. It loses the original iconostasis, replaced in 1664 with a late-renaissance one (Figure 2), being more of a wood carving and jewelry work than an iconographic work of art, an object of cult or a theological treaty. A part of unique frescoes is covered, a part is painted over, another is destroyed through placing a new stucco wall decoration. The interior of the temple is changed completely, resembling the one of Latin churches. Side altars, a new pulpit and a choir balcony are created. After the monastery’s return to the Orthodox in 1824 (1839), there is an attempt to partially recreate the original interior design. This process, however, was interrupted by the forced abandoning of the monastery by the monks in 1918 (the so called “bieżeństwo”) and taking over the church in the period between the world wars by the Salesians. Destroyed during the Second World War – first by the Soviet, and after 1941 by the German army – it was blown up on the 23rd of July 1944 (Figure 3). It prevailed into the 80s decade of the 20th century as a solid ruin.

After these shameless acts of antireligious and anticultural vandalism only 30 fragments of the original iconography prevailed until modern days. They are the living memory of the unique unit of byzantine wall paintings created, according to the chronicles of the Suprasl Lavra, by the artel of artists directed by a Serbian monk “Serbin Naktarij Maler”.

Today, this temple – owing to the great sacrifice and strain of the Polish Autocephalic Orthodox Church – is being raised up from ruin. In its exterior architectural form, it is completed (Figure 4). Presently, the restoration of the interior architecture is being conducted, along with the iconography. The frescoes have their documented representation in both Polish and Russian photography archives.
and post-inventory descriptions created in 1911. A special meaning is held by the reconstruction of the original iconostasis, organically related to the old iconography and architecture of the temple.

This work is an attempt of representing the reconstruction project of the original church’s interiors and the idealistic origins thereof. It is represented in the light of the borderlands phenomenon in Poland, the tradition of co-existence of gothic temples: both with 16th century byzantine-rus and modern iconography, being the work of Polish Orthodox. The first is represented by the splendid temples of the Jagiellonian Foundation in Wawel in Krakow, Wislica, Lublin and Sandomierz. The latter in the post-evangelic churches adapted to orthodox churches in Wrocław, Przemków or Gorowo Ilaweckie. Most of them are masterpieces of modern orthodox art, reaching straight into the byzantine culture. They are a pretext for in-depth analysis of the byzantine culture and its transposition onto modern day Polish orthodox art on the cultural borderlands of the Christian East and West.

In this case the ideological reconstruction of the form of the original iconostasis, which was before organically related with the iconography of its walls and its architecture carries particular significance. Although we will never know its exact form and iconography in full, the structure of its content – individual types of the icons, their approximate size and even location – we know from the descriptions of the archimandrite Sergius Kimbar from the 16th century. The project relating to the interior envisages its structural and typological reconstruction, but with the use of a new, modern imaging convention, the so called stained-glass icon. This will ensure ideological and stylistic integrity of the iconostasis with the Byzantine architecture and art of the 16th century. In ideological interpretation, it will also provide for an authentic form of theological depiction, adequate to contemporary times (Figure 6). The project also involves the return of the other frescoes to their original locations in the temple. They should never become ‘silent witnesses’ to the temple’s fall and desecration. They should serve their function as objects of cult, living icons confirming divine presence. Their rightful place is not in the neighbouring museum of icons, even if it is located in the nearby monastery building. Their rightful place is on the walls and pillars inside the temple. Inscribed organically into the structure of the new – although typologically copied from the original – frescoes they should participate in the creation of the entirety of the past and present presence of the sacred.

There is also special importance attached to the need for the continuation of the structural convention of geometric divisions of the stellar and cross vaults of the temple. Their forms are truly remarkable. They constitute great symbolic value inside the temple, in its heavenly space and, truth be told, they should as well go out from the temple into the space of the churchyard and the, desecrated after the Second World War, nearby monastery cemetery, catacombs and garden. They give geometric order to the space, fill it with angelological meaning (Figure 5). Although derived from the old, they now create the new place of memorial worship. They are a sign of the ideological unity of the outside

Figure 4, 5, 6. Supraśl. Orthodox monastic church of the Annunciation to the Mother of God.

Project of the reconstruction of the temple: Jerzy Kuźmienko, Michał Bałasz [4].

Project of a new urban plan of the complex and interiors of the temple with iconostasis: Jerzy and Marta Uścinowicz [5, 6].
and the inside of the temple. A sign of the unity of macro and microcosm, the image of the outer Garden – Eden – and the image of the longed for, and anticipated, New Jerusalem inside the temple.

The new architecture of the temple has been reconstructed basing, albeit to various extent, on the old foundations, remnants of the past Orthodox church, thanks to relatively faithful post-inventory documentation, and as it were, against the provisions of The Venice Charter which specifically rule out such activity. Whatever we will call it – restoration or reconstruction, it has been done. And it is for the better! For what kind of testimony on the history of culture and what kind of special spiritual meaning could be given by this crippled, desecrated to the core ruin of a Supraśl Orthodox Church? What else could it tell us about itself other than remind us of the complete loss of old spiritual values of the once intense worship? What values of cultural heritage would it communicate apart from exposing the fall, desecration and devastation?

And after all it is the Supraśl Lavra! A phenomenon of the Polish Orthodox Church on the territory of the cultural borderlands. The only one located so far into the West. Doesn’t it deserve to be given new life? Even if it were no longer deemed a cultural monument, but merely a Christian temple?

4. Integration

The revitalisation of the Roman Catholic church, the Orthodox chapel and the old castle walls in Mielnik on the Bug River is an example of a different type of conservation activity. It is different, because our scientific knowledge does not allow full reconstruction, and what we have and could be treated as source material does not give us any solid ground to work on. Although there is a much greater amount of innovation and technical and technological freedom in the planning process, the idea and methodology which stand behind it make it an activity which is, in essence, traditional and adequate to the condition of the monuments, deeply rooted in the archetypal-symbolic system of interpretation of the proposed forms, spaces, geometric and numeric configurations and phenomena. The project aims at reconstruction of desecrated forms and containing in them the spirit still alive today. The spirit of that place.

The castle mountain is an exceptional complex in the cultural and environmental landscape of Mielnik. Situated on a high bank of a fluvial terrace, it is divided into two parts – the upper and the lower – already in the late Middle Ages referred to as the Upper and the Lower Castle. The lower part includes ruins of the old church, the old clergy house and underground relics and artefacts of the castle walls. The upper part includes the remnants of the walls of the old settlement (gord), and the ruins of an Orthodox church. In the past, the castle was a fortified stronghold. Today it is not even able to protect the ruins of the temples from further desecration. They decay with the passage of time.

The beginnings of the Mielnik gord and settlements date back to the 11th century. The castle appeared later, in the first half of the 14th century, and it was probably meant as a continuation of the function of the old gord. Already then it was an important administrative centre. In 15th and 16th
centuries it underwent expansion. The first record of the gord appears in the ‘Ipatiev Chronicle’ in the year 1260, and it is mentioned in relation to a visit paid by the king Danylo Romanovych in the Orthodox Church of the Mother of God where he prayed before the venerated icon of Christ Pantocrator (Spas). In 1420 prince Vytautas founded a Catholic Church of Corpus Christi, Assumption of Mary and All Saints. First it functioned as castle church, then it became a parish church. The exact original location of both temples – the Orthodox and the Catholic – remains largely unknown. The Catholic Church was situated in the Lower Castle, although it is not certain whether it was exactly in the same place as the ruins. The same can be said about the Orthodox church of The Mother of God. Maybe its location was the same, maybe different? At that time conversions and alterations of existing churches were commonplace. This can be easily seen on the example of the Orthodox church of the Mother of God in Chełm, founded by Danylo Romanovych in the place which was later the site of a Uniate Cathedral and where the present Basilica of the Birth of the Virgin Mary is located. The layout of the interior columns of the Mielnik temple, similar to the one in Chełm, is undoubtedly a clue which is worth checking through stratigraphical and comparative examinations. Additionally, in the sixties of the 19th century a chapel of St. Alexander Nevsky was built on the top of the hill. It was demolished in the twenties of the previous century, and is now a ruin which, as a place of worship, also deserves protection from further desecration (Figure 9).

The church of Corpus Christi, Holy Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas, and later the Holy Trinity was built probably in 16th century, before 1577. Its history was rather turbulent. It was destroyed and rebuilt several times during wars. In 1915 it was burned down, and between 1949-1941 it was partly dismantled. In the 19th century it was also converted into an Orthodox church. The church is made of bricks, it is a single-nave church with crypts under the floor and a sacristy on the southern side, where for some time there used to be a chapel of St. Nicholas. The walls were built of solid clay bricks and lime mortar, with the use of rubble. The characteristic for gothic architecture Flemish bond is used. The vaults of the temple did not survive. Brick vaults of the crypts are badly damaged. The church is in extremely poor condition. It is in fact a ruin in danger of collapsing (Figure 7, 8). Everything that survived are free standing remnants of the walls, without the outer layer of bricks both on the inside and the outside. The damage is at times 12 centimetres deep, at times even deeper.

The undertaken project includes conservation and revitalisation of the ruins of the church, clergy house, underground ruins of the old Lower Castle and the chapel located in the old Upper Castle, together with their exploration, integration and preparing for exhibition. It is an interventional form of protection and conservation which, in the face of the critical condition of the building in danger of complete annihilation, intends to restore the proper exhibition of historical, artistic and scientific values. The project activities envisage permanent, integrated protection and reparation of all ruins and other – both over and underground – architectural and archaeological objects and relics, along with their revitalization and adaptation for museum, exhibition and educational purposes. This is done in a non-invasive manner, mostly by investment activities oriented on the preservation of existing buildings and the creation of a clear-span underground museum space integrating all these objects.

Figure 10,11,12. Mielnik. Lower and Upper Castle. Design of revitalization: J. Uścinowicz (2017)
One of the first, key activities is to guarantee the stability of the entire bank on which the site is situated, on the eastern side (Figure 11). This is what the arch-shaped retaining wall of the museum – the so-called "living wall of history and culture", is supposed to do. Its deep foundations will protect the bank against landslides and loss of stability. The project preserves today's single-space character of the building, with priority given to its display function. The space of the former church is open from the ossuary in the cellar to the roof with the exposition of the construction of its structural steel and glass cover and quasi vaults. This space is filled only with passageways, with a centrally located platform over the cellar and perimeter-led light mezzanines around the walls. They will be supported, non-invasively for the walls of the temple, by the externally constructed structure of the ceiling of the museum. Reconstruction of the geometry of the edges of the Gothic stellar vaults and a steel-and-glass rood beam with a stained-glass crowning cross symbolically emphasize its original sacral function and gothic provenience. Supplemented by a glass altar in the chancel, they will create a place of prayer, concentration and memory (Figure 10, 11).

The fillings of the missing parts of the walls and layers of bricks will be of three kinds, adequately to the degree of research of their structure and form. The first one will be a reinforced concrete structure with a corten steel coating with improved resistance to weather conditions (Figure 10). After exposure to air and rain, a protective coating resembling rust will appear automatically on its surface. These elements will be used to fill the missing parts of towers, cornices and the supporting structure. The second one will be a light, steel and glass structure, with Gothic, pointed window glyphs inscribed into it. The glyphs will also be made of corten steel, with windows embedded inside. The windows will be filled with stained-glass icons with images of saints. The traditional eastern window will be a stained glass depiction of the Holy Spirit. The third, complementing the remaining missing elements of the outer layers, will be bricks repeated in their dimensions, but slightly different in their colours. They will be used in two ways: with cross signs – from the outside and in the arrangement of pixelated relief iconic representations – from the inside. It will give due distinction between what is old and what is modern. Without material falsification and at the same time ensuring ideological and formal integrity. And above all – repairing the today's state of mutilation and deformation. In the changed, in relation to the original, form it will be given further spiritual life, second life (Figure 10-12).

The ruins of the chapel on the top of the hill will be subject to integration. As a permanent ruin, brought to the reorganisation of the form, as an open to the heavens temple structure will receive a memorial stone altar with Crucifixion. The same that will also stand behind the altar in the church. The serpentine ramp will symbolically connect both temples into a sacred space of the Mielnik mountain (Figure 11). Ecumenically.

5. Incorporation

A different example of conservation and architectural activities is the conversion project of the church in Podgórze, Wałbrzych. It is a beautiful, old, neo-Gothic evangelical church from the beginning of the 20th century. Lutheran brothers prayed there until 1964, when their German-speaking parish was closed down and the church was abandoned by the congregation. The church was taken over by the Wałbrzych gmina (commune). The former place of prayers of the Protestant church was handed over to the Printing House, which converted the place to a paper warehouse. Only the sacristy retained its religious function (Figure 15). It served as the House of God to Orthodox Christians.
The new tenant did not take proper care of the church. All equipment was liquidated. In the southern wall an entrance gate for lorries was carved. No repairs were carried out, mining damages were left unrepaid. At the beginning of the 1990s, a fire broke out inside the church, seriously affecting the structure of the roof of the temple and its lateral matronea. In 1994 the Printing House left the church for good. And nobody wanted it anymore! From the point of view of the gmina, even pulling the church down was not worthwhile. After the Evangelical parish refused to take over the church, the Orthodox took pity of it. Since then, it has belonged to the Orthodox Church Parish of All Saints in Walbrzych. The main nave was temporarily adapted for celebration of services.

The church was severely damaged and required immediate rescue. Timber roof truss, sheathing and roof cover were replaced almost entirely. The wooden ceiling of the nave was dismantled. Most of the structural elements – portals, arches, beams and ceilings, walls, pillars, stairs – were recreated. It was thoroughly conserved.

But, all things considered, this is not the major problem. It seems that from the very beginning it was the very location of the church and its size. The temple could not be protected from acts of vandalism and devastation, including desecration of the altar, icons, and liturgical robes. There were burglaries, the tower was burned down, windows were broken, vulgar inscriptions were made on the walls. The excessive size of the church, on the other hand, meant that it was extremely difficult to hold Orthodox services in it. Its cubature also made it impossible to maintain financially (Figure 13-15).

The main idea of the planned adaptation activities was to build an independent, although geometrically connected, shrine-sanctuary into the nave of the church. In this way, the two temples - the Roman Catholic church and the Orthodox church – remain separate. They live their own "external" cult-historical lives and at the same time complement each other creating a community of liturgical time and space. Both function as ‘the casing’ for liturgical action. This solution, optimal for conservation, construction and economic reasons, seemed to be the best. It was also desirable for ideological reasons to meet the liturgical requirements of the Orthodox church.

![Figure 13, 14, 15. Wałbrzych. Post-evangelic church. View before reconstruction. Photo: J.Uścinowicz (2004)](image)

![Figure 16, 17, 18. Wałbrzych. Post-evangelic church adapted to All Saints Orthodox church. Design of the reconstruction and the new temple: Jerzy Uscinowicz (2003-2005).](image)
The temple-sanctuary, thanks to the solution which gave mobility to its function, was to serve both as a proper temple and as a hierateion (Figure 16-18). In the first instance, the liturgical function of the bema is performed by the altar in the apse, and this is how it looks like on a daily basis. The church will then be able to accommodate almost 200 people. Perfectly enough for a small parish. In the second case, the temple will be used as the sanctuary – the holy of holies of the church. Its front wall, fitted with three entrances, between which iconic reliefs of Christ and Our Lady Mother of God are placed, becomes an external iconostasis with a semi-circular podium of the pulpit functioning as the place where the Eucharist is given to the faithful. The main nave of the church then becomes the external courtyard of the Orthodox church. This instance will have occasional occurrence, for services celebrated during more important holidays by the bishop, the Ordinary of the diocese. The nave of the church can accommodate almost 1300 people. The temple is also to be used as a museum of icons. It will be located in the side aisle - on and under the mezzanine - through a transparent, glass separation from the main nave. It will also host occasional exhibitions and concerts of sacral music.

The Orthodox church is designed as a rotunda. This type of building, originating mainly from the architecture of early Christian memorials and baptisteries, has its prototype in the ancient St. George's Rotunda in Thessaloniki, which became the prootoplast for the architecture of the Great Moravia region, widespread since the Cyrillic-Methodian Mission. It is worth to mention here the rotundas of today's Czech Republic and Slovakia: in Staré Město (formerly Veletírad), Mikulčice, Uherské Hradiště, Pohansko, Nitrianska Blatnica, Pustiměř, Říp, Krivaň nad Dudváhom, Michalovce. But archaeological discoveries have clearly confirmed the presence of the Slavic rite in the 9th-10th centuries also in Poland: in Silesia, in Lesser Poland (Małopolska) and even in Greater Poland (Wielkopolska). Thus, not only the nearby Silesian rotundas in Niemcza and Gromnik – but also the rotundas "Wislica II Regia" and Our Lady Mother of God Rotunda on Wawel, gerd chapel in Ostrów Lednicki near Gniezno, orthodox churches in Przemysł and Halicz, gerd chapel in Giecz and rotunda in Cieszyn – can serve as genetic references for the planned Wałbrzych temple, which revives, preserves and continues this tradition. Other are waiting to be discovered. In an ideological sense, however, the object is first of all a reference to the Aedicule, shrine – kuvukliya – in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, with the centrally located tomb of Christ and the Chapel of the Angel [7].

The neo-Gothic walls of the former church are not going to be processed. Only in the place of the former, burnt down, pointed roof of the tower an openwork steel structure in the form representing the ‘squaring of the circle’ is planned. A cube with a circle inscribed in it and 4 arches is an omnipresent symbol in Orthodox churches. It is complemented by eight-pointed crosses on the tympanum over the entrance and at the top of the tower.

6. Conclusions

1. These three extremely different examples of the protection of temples from degradation, destruction, and sometimes desecration – through reconstruction, integration, and incorporation – have a common intentional basis. All of them seem to come from the same ideological premises. They also share a common main criterion - the protection of existing material values, but also the further development of spiritual values. In this process of protection and conservation, priority is given to spiritual values over material values. For spiritual values is where they see the search for the truth and the sense of their existence, the authentic protection of their past and present mission in the time and space of this world. Because through them they reach fulfilled on the way to salvation.

2. True art falls from heavens. It is external to storms of history. It also does not fit into our assessment criteria and evaluation mechanisms. Places of religious worship, temples, definitely belong to this category of art. Their transcendental aspirations to ‘go beyond themselves’, their symbolic and mystagogical values, which are the basis for their fulfilment as objects of worship, determine the purpose of their existence. They constitute their core.

3. We have already become accustomed that being a monument is an important value today. It is equal to being recognised as a valuable object, entitled to state protection and care, as an object of national cultural heritage, it guarantees social respect. Sometimes, however, these works, being a
monument, do not fulfil their former functions anymore. They mean something different, they are understood differently. They are no longer authentic in their entirety, which is most strived for in the area of monument protection. It also happens that despite the fact they are strongly embedded in history and very valuable for cultural reasons, having formerly the status of a place of worship, after their restoration or reconstruction - they do not receive such protection and care from us anymore.

Is this how it should be in this very specific category of art? Can reconstructions and restorations of temples – on the one hand, and conversions and adaptations – on the other, although ‘suspicious’ in their direct assessment according to the rights of cultural heritage protection, also be necessary in the wider perspective of history? Especially when such activities can save them from annihilation or desecration?

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