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*The exhibition “Village and Small Town”  
and the “Borderland Town” in Biłgoraj.  
Rescuing memory or falsifying the history  
of an image of a Polish traditional landscape*

*Introduction*

With the shaping of national styles in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, among the various functions and meanings ascribed to architecture, especially appreciated was its role in the forming of an identity of a place, a country and a nation. When in 1915 the Polish Architects’ Club prepared an Exhibition of Polish Architecture called “The Village and Small Town”, the organisers of the project aimed to preserve the forms of traditional Polish construction that were disappearing. They wanted to keep the memory of the architectural heritage and reveal it to contemporary designers as a source of inspiration and a model for creativity. In a similar vein, during the reconstruction of the country after the devastation of the Great War<sup>1</sup>, “familiar” forms were strongly promoted. Despite the efforts of the contemporary architectural community, both the progress of civilization and disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made the typical Polish town and its landscape presented at the exhibition a thing of the past. The only remnants of it are solitary, frequently renovated buildings and historical illustrations. The idea of saving the image of a traditional provincial urban layout is reflected in a somewhat controversial way in the contemporary concept of the “Borderland Town” in Biłgoraj. The housing-services concept

constitutes a contemporary composition, referring in a simplified and superficial way to the traditional wooden provincial architecture and urban planning of the region. It is supplemented with replicas or copies of historical public utility buildings and objects of worship, characteristic of the ethnic wealth of Eastern Poland. These have become tourist attractions. The investment does not have the value of historical authenticity. The actions taken within it do not fit strictly into the work of saving material heritage, although the authors’ intention is to contribute to the saving of the memory of the past shape of Polish landscape. The aim of the article is to present the results of a multifaceted analysis and critical evaluation of the Biłgoraj complex. There are no published studies yet on the investment, which is still at the implementation stage. However, several items cited later in this article are devoted to the region’s disappearing authentic wooden architecture and its history. The topic of authenticity in architecture has been discussed many times, mainly in relation to historic buildings and their partial or full reconstruction<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, the term Great War is not commonly used. After the outbreak of World War II, the one that was formerly called great was called the first. The author decided to use the nomenclature used in the period in question.

<sup>2</sup> Numerous conferences and scientific sessions have been devoted to the issue of authenticity, including those co-organised by the Polish National Committee of International Council on Monuments and Sites ICOMOS: Authenticity in architectural conservation up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (2012), Authenticity in architectural conservation (2013), Authenticity and the palimpsest of conserved monuments (2015), Authenticity and reconstruction in conservation research and work (Conservator’s Forum 2016); Authenticity and valuing architectural heritage (Conservator’s Forum 2017). It is also worth mentioning a few sample texts at this point. Studies related to the issue have been published in the form of single articles (e.g., [1], [2]), whole journal issues devoted to the topic (e.g., [3]) and collective monographs (e.g., [4]).

### ***From the tradition of “wood construction”***

The historical landscape of Poland, due to its geographical and environmental location, was largely shaped by wooden constructions. This applies to both rural and urban – in later centuries mainly small-town – residential, sacral and communal architecture, excluding monumental buildings. Marian Kornecki emphasizes that initially [...] *all buildings were erected here from wood, and over time some of their types were gradually constructed in other materials* [5, p. 170].

Only in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the reconstruction of the country after World War I, it became doubtful whether, in view of the plundering of forests carried out by the partitioning powers and the losses caused by fires during the war, wood would still remain the basic building material of reconstructed and newly erected buildings. Additionally the introduction and more common use of bricks and concrete blocks has to be taken into account (more: [6, p. 313], [7, pp. 64–67]). Nevertheless, even in the first years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a significant number of small-town buildings, especially in central and eastern Poland (Mazovia, Lublin, Podlasie) were made of wood.

Currently, these buildings are the subject of interest of many researchers, mainly in the context of the problem of saving an increasingly shrinking, although still large, group of historical structures, in a varied state of preservation (broader: [8]).

The problem of the fragility of this type of heritage was noticed already over a hundred years ago. Zygmunt Gloger (1845–1910) in the introduction to his encyclopaedic work writes: [...] *having by around 1870 over a hundred drawings of [...] of wooden buildings in pre-partition Poland, I saw how over the next few years almost all of them disappeared completely, either as a result of fires or demolished because of old age* [9, p. 3]. Hieronim Łopaciński (1860–1906) stated in a similar vein: [...] *monuments of wooden construction in Poland, characterized by simplicity, and at the same time by beautiful and pleasing shapes and exquisite familiar ornamentation, are becoming increasingly rare. Fires, impermanence of the material, fashion, and finally the demands of the present moment are destroying what we admired yesterday. [...] not only every year, but almost every day sees the destruction of these remnants of the old Polish style, reduces the number of already scarce wooden buildings from the past centuries* [10, pp. 372, 374]. Growing awareness of the disappearance of traditional forms of construction and at the same time appreciation of their assets and cultural values, resulted in the construction of the first open-air museums at that time [11, pp. 99, 100, 102]. At the same time, efforts were not abandoned to maintain a certain character of traditional forms of construction in modern buildings.

### ***“Homeliness” as an architectural value in the past and today***

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the whole of Europe, but especially Central and Eastern Europe, there was a search for so-called national styles, characterized by a certain individuality, drawn from the designs of local building tra-

ditions. People were looking for a model of architecture rooted in the so-called native shapes, but far from direct copying and duplication of historical objects. It was a period of probing one’s own history of architecture in terms of forms that would be most characteristic of a region or country. And at the same time, it was a period in which an immeasurable role in building, maintaining and rebuilding national identity was attributed to architecture, like to other fields of art. This was particularly important at that time in the situation of external enslavement and the final stage of the road to independence, as well as the start of building a reborn Republic of Poland.

Immediately after the first wave of destructions in the Great War, when the fate of Poland was still far from being finally decided, a group of architects faced the challenge of rebuilding the country and prepared a series of publications of model projects referring in their character to the traditional forms of our construction [12]–[14]<sup>3</sup>. Somewhat anticipating the reconstruction, in 1915 a team of architects from Krakow and Warsaw organised an Exhibition of Polish Architecture “The Village and Town”, crowned by a richly illustrated album of photographs of various types of buildings from different regions of Poland [18]. Civilizational changes and the cataclysm of the next war made the images of a typical Polish town landscape presented at the 1915 exhibition a thing of the past. A research tour conducted a few years after the World War II by Stanisław Herbst, Adam Miłobędzki and Wojciech Kalinowski in the southern part of the Lublin region yielded an inexorably unequivocal result: [...] *all compact complexes of arcaded houses in this area were destroyed during the two last world wars and only in some villages single buildings have survived, either heavily damaged or completely rebuilt* [19, p. 111].

Today, one hundred years after the end of the Great War, in reaction to the phenomena of globalisation and unification, there is a renewed emphasis on the role of local cultural differences. The New Athens Charter, published by the European Council of Town Planners, sets out in its very first paragraphs a vision [...] *of [21<sup>st</sup> century] cities which preserve the richness and cultural diversity of their long history and skilfully combine their present and future with their past* [20, “Introduction”]. Also the development of cultural tourism contributes to the appreciation of characteristic, separate, identity-defining urban and architectural complexes, of which Kazimierz on the Vistula River is an excellent example. It owes its undoubted success to its preserved local specificity, although it is threatened by new investments.

### ***The “Borderland Town” in Bilgoraj***

Currently, more than a century after the above-mentioned exhibition “The Village and Small Town” and the publishing of model architectural publications, an investment is being developed that in some way refers to them. In the south-eastern corner of the Lublin region, an area

<sup>3</sup> Earlier, in 1913. Stefan Szyller (1857–1933) in a series of lectures presented the characteristic features of architecture of individual regions of the country [15], [16]. In 1915 a lecture by the same author was published on strictly wooden construction [17].

Fig. 1. Biłgoraj, “Borderland Town”, market square, northern frontage (photo by A. Tejszerska, 2018)

Il. 1. Biłgoraj, „Kresowe miasteczko”, rynek, pierzeja północna (fot. A. Tejszerska, 2018)

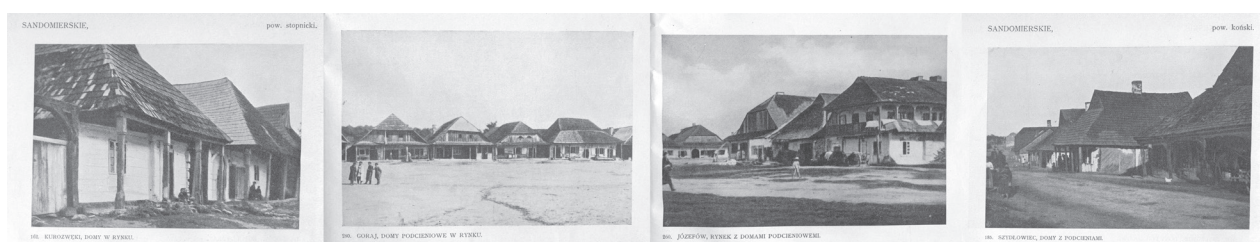


Fig. 2. Arcaded buildings of the Lublin region market squares (source: [18])

Il. 2. Podcieniowa zabudowa rynków Lubelszczyzny (źródło: [18])

with a very strong and until recently practised tradition of wooden building trades, a model called the “Borderland Town” (“Kresowe miasteczko”)<sup>4</sup> is being established. The foundation “Biłgoraj XXI”, at the initiative and largely funded by a private person<sup>5</sup> is building an architectural complex, which in terms of external form, uses traditional materials and construction methods. To some extent it resembles an open-air museum. It is not a strictly museum-like concept, similar to the contemporary reconstructions of fragments of small towns found in open-air museums in Lublin or Sanok. The investors intend the Biłgoraj “town” to be a “hybrid” of an open-air museum and a residential-service district – a museum “living its own new life”.

Following the typical historical model of urban development, the first floors of the market buildings have been designed as residential areas, and most of the ground floors have been planned for commercial premises. The essence and main attraction of the complex is a comprehensive, albeit superficial, return to historical architectural and urban forms. The arcaded houses currently form three market frontages of more than 70 metres. A fourth, closing the layout from the southern side, is still under construction. The buildings were designed by arch. Rudolf Buchalik,

using patterns of regional wooden architecture, characteristic for particular towns of the Lublin region (Biłgoraj, Goraj, Frampol, Józefów). The juxtaposition of architectural forms collected from the wider area is somewhat reminiscent of an open-air museum display. Nevertheless, in historic towns individual houses retained a considerable degree of individuality (cf. [21, p. 5]). Compared to the richness of the successively emerging forms of authentic houses built by owners of different material status, the sequence of gabled buildings in the frontage of the Biłgoraj project shows a high degree of monotony. The height equalization of the ridges, roof eaves lines, and storeys of all frontage segments leads to the impression of architectural monoculture (Fig. 1).

The authors of the investment referred in their project to arcaded buildings, typical for market squares in Polish towns of the 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (cf. [21, pp. 6, 7]). Indeed, arcades were one of the characteristic features of small-town architecture in the Republic of Poland. The album “The Village and Small Town” contains as many as 25 photographs of this type of buildings (Fig. 2). They were highlighted in publications by Zygmunt Gloger and Stefan Szyller. The latter emphasised their importance in shaping the “national landscape”. *We have already mentioned [he wrote] the arcaded houses, characteristic of Polish architecture, which Matejko immortalised with his brilliant pencil as old Jewish houses in Wiśnicz and which also existed in Piotrków before the fire destroyed them, in Warsaw there were houses in Powiśle, they exist in Rakoniewice in Poznańskie, in Kazimierz on the Vistula, in Abramowice near Lublin, in Grodek in Podole, in*

<sup>4</sup> The multi-layered term Kresy, interpreted in various ways in different periods of the history of the Polish Republic, carries a significant emotional potential, which – one gets the impression – was used for promotional and marketing purposes. After all, Biłgoraj does not belong to Kresy (in any of the historical meanings of the term).

<sup>5</sup> It is a partially commercial investment, initiated and invested by Tadeusz Kuźmiński.



Fig. 3. Biłgoraj, „Borderland Town”, market square, eastern frontage (photo by A. Tejszerska, 2018)

Il. 3. Biłgoraj, „Kresowe miasteczko”, rynek, pierzeja wschodnia (fot. A. Tejszerska, 2018)



Fig. 4. Biłgoraj, „Borderland Town”, market square, western frontage (photo by A. Tejszerska, 2018)

Il. 4. Biłgoraj, „Kresowe miasteczko”, rynek, pierzeja zachodnia (fot. A. Tejszerska, 2018)

*Jablonków in Silesia, in Muszyna near Krynica etc., etc. in all lands inhabited by Poles. These arcades were and still are used in cottages and manors of noblemen, houses of poor and wealthy townsmen, forming long galleries along streets or around market squares* [15, pp. 579, 580]. Czesław Thullie (1888–1976) emphasized that: [...] *the architectural motif of the arcades is as old as Poland is* [22, p. 119], and the authors of the “memorandum on the reconstruction of cities, towns and villages” encouraged its use in erected buildings [23, p. 26]. The poor state of preservation of historical arcaded houses means that today the basic research materials remain illustrations. Nevertheless, even on their basis it was possible to determine the existence of many types of such buildings, characteristic for the region. Jan Górak lists the following arcades: longitudinal, gable, corner and flanking the central niche. Ad exemplum: in the centre of Łaszczów stood both wooden arcades and brick buildings with wooden arcades added, separated from each other by 1.5-metre “nipples”. The square in Modliborzyce was surrounded by houses with longitudinal arcades with brick columns, covered with roofs of different shapes. In the Szczebrzeszyn market as late as 1917 there were only wooden houses with longitudinal arcades, whereas the photographs from the inter-war period show buildings with gable arcades [21, pp. 20, 21]. In the frontage of the Krzeszów market square before the Great War there were gable arcaded houses covered with half-hip, gable and hip roofs. Before the First World War

Krasnobród had a square-shaped market square where each frontage had different forms of arcaded houses, most of which were gable-ended. There were also storey houses or houses with habitable lofts. Only one of the frontages had a homogeneous type of building with five-pillar gable houses, and after the war reconstruction – three-pillar arcades. In the other three frontages, the houses had very diverse forms [19, pp. 114, 115]. In most cases, individual buildings formed separate segments, which made their arcades, using contemporary nomenclature, belong to semi-private or private space. The frontages in the market square of the Biłgoraj investment form a monolithic whole, they resemble sequences of brick galleries, arcaded cloisters performing the function of a passage (Fig. 3). In addition, the terraced, monolithic three- or four-bay arcades of the individual houses are distinguished by only slightly differentiated repetitive elements of regional carpentry. The diversity of individual buildings comes down primarily to the use of several types of gable forms. Only the western frontage is more differentiated (Fig. 4). A concept unusual in an authentic functional layout of historic houses was the placement of arcades on two opposite sides of the buildings – both at the front and at the back – in a way resembling Greek amphiprotilos. Hieronim Łopaciński, summarizing the building activity in Wrzelowiec near Lublin, emphasized that [...] *the houses recently erected [...] here have [traditional] arcades on pillars [...], however the plan of these houses is already different* [10, p. 376]. Thus, maybe this unprecedented concept can be considered as the next stage in the evolution of arcaded buildings.

If the Biłgoraj investment was only a contemporary residential complex using formal references to the local building tradition (use of historical urban layout, gable positioning of houses in the market frontage, half-hip roofs, arcades, porches in the attics; cf. [19, pp. 112–116]), it could be considered one of the typical realizations in the spirit of new urbanism, which by no means require historical fidelity. The proponents of this trend build residential and commercial complexes in a variety of ways drawing on the local tradition, which finds expression in the compositions with postmodern overtones that combine the present with the past, based on the traditional repertoire of forms. Notable examples of such a solution are Borgo Città Nuova in Alessandria and the English Poundbury



Fig. 5. Poundbury, Cambridge Walk – city centre – market square, (photo by J. Kamiński, 2012)

Il. 5. Poundbury, pasaż Cambridge – rynek  
(fot. J. Kamiński, 2012)



Fig. 6. Biłgoraj, open-air museum “Sievemakers Farm”, front elevation (photo by A. Tejszerska, 2020)

Il. 6. Biłgoraj, skansen „Sitaraska zagroda”, front  
(fot. A. Tejszerska, 2020)

(Fig. 5). In this type of complexes only the architectural quality can be assessed, not the historical correctness. In the Biłgoraj investment, it is necessary to appreciate the fact that the buildings were covered with aspen shingles, and the traditional construction and use of wood gave the complex a familiar atmosphere. Just as the trend of new urbanism was born in the face of the problems of modern cities, so the “Borderland Town” was created as a kind of protest against the ugliness of post-war buildings, which replaced the wooden historical buildings. In this context, unfortunately, the opportunity was missed to expose and link with the newly designed complex the authentic 1810 Sitar Homestead located nearby and now serving as a “real” small open-air museum (Fig. 6).

The problem with the Biłgoraj project is that it aspires to be a cultural investment. It bases its success on very strong, though superficial historical references, builds an illusion of an authentic concept, and becomes a kind of falsification. Its negative impact on the educational level is exacerbated by its function as a centre of cultural tourism, which is to be served by the other facilities created within its framework.

#### *Cultural attractions of the concept*

According to the investor’s intention, the biggest attraction of the current stage of construction is the replica of the wooden synagogue from Volpa in the Grodno region, built in 1648 and considered to be the most beautiful in the Second Republic of Poland (Fig. 7). It was destroyed by the Germans in 1941. A detailed description of it was given by Zygmunt Gloger: *The synagogue is 24 1/2 metres long by 20 metres wide. In the middle there is an octagonal dome supported by four great pillars [...]. The height of the nave from the floor to the top of the octagonal dome is about 30 meters* [9, pp. 32, 33]. While the frontage buildings of the market square are the application of a contemporary project based on local historical patterns, the synagogue is a replica, made on the basis of a detailed

inventory drawn up under the supervision of Oskar Sosnowski in the 1930s<sup>6</sup>. The accurate reconstruction of the synagogue building, despite the fact that it was built in a place unconnected with the original construction, can be evaluated positively in the context of cultural-preservation activities undertaken as part of the development of open-air museums. (Especially as out of so many wooden synagogues in the Republic of Poland none survived the German occupation). Jan Zachwatowicz’s statement may justify such actions: [...] *the reconstruction of monuments in Poland after the devastation of the last war created a special scope of activity, which does not fit into the categories of established notions of protection, conservation, or even restoration of historical objects and complexes, namely their partial or full reconstruction. The motivation to undertake this activity resulted from [...] the aspirations of the society to restore, even in a reconstructed form, the monuments of culture, barbarously destroyed by the Nazis, in a conscious action of liquidation of Polish culture* [25, p. 13], (more: [26, p. 101]). It is worth remembering that wooden synagogues were a characteristic element of the urban structure of the First and Second Polish Republics. *If we want to get to know Polish culture*

<sup>6</sup> The awareness of the value of architectural heritage and its transience, accompanying architects at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in view of the losses of the Great War, resulted, among other things, in intensified documentation work. Oskar Sosnowski, the founder and head (from 1923) of the Polish Architecture Department of the Architecture Faculty at the Warsaw University of Technology, with the participation of his students, did a tremendous job of making an inventory of a number of historic buildings in Warsaw – which was invaluable source material during its reconstruction. The photographic documentation of the synagogue in Wolpa was drawn up by Szymon Zajczyk (1900–1944), who cooperated with the Department of Polish Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology and the Office for Monuments’ Inventory. Measurements and photographs of several dozen synagogues, including several wooden ones, have survived in the Department. Inventory measurements, under the direction of Szymon Zajczyk, were taken by students of the Faculty of Architecture as part of their mandatory practice [24].



Fig. 7. Biłgoraj, “Borderland Town”, replica of the synagogue from Wolpa, southern façade (photo by A. Tejszerska, 2020)

Il. 7. Biłgoraj, „Kresowe miasteczko”, replika synagogi z Wolpy, elewacja południowa (fot. A. Tejszerska, 2020)



Fig. 8. Biłgoraj, “Borderland Town”, view of the market square from the southwest corner (photo by A. Tejszerska, 2018)

Il. 8. Biłgoraj, „Kresowe miasteczko”, widok rynku z południowo-zachodniego narożnika (fot. A. Tejszerska, 2018)

[Szyszko-Bohusz advised students of the Lviv Polytechnic], *let us turn from the monuments which resemble the canons of pan-European art the least, to the most independent ones, and such are our monuments from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: churches, chapels, manors and mansions, and finally synagogues, which perhaps contain the most Polishness* [27, p. 18]. A few decades later a similar thesis was put forward by Marian Kornecki, who wrote: [...] *they [synagogues] echoed in some way the already lost grand wooden country palaces, transposing the forms of the developed Baroque into the native technique* [5, p. 174]. Also Hieronim Łopaciński mentions wooden synagogues as one of the most characteristic objects of the Polish landscape: [...] *surviving houses in our towns and villages, old granaries, very rare storage houses, larch churches remaining in rural retreats, synagogues in towns – these are the specimens of the Polish style in building* [10, p. 374].

A surprising planning decision of the Biłgoraj project was to locate the replica of the synagogue in the middle of the market square (Fig. 8). Such a solution is not confirmed by traditional city plans. It is a contemporary idea, probably based on the assumption that the most attractive object should be placed in the very centre of the complex. It did not take into account the fact that market squares performed commercial and administrative functions, the

nature of which was incompatible with the sacral function. Catholic churches were built not far from the market square in the vicinity of corner plots, but never in the middle of the square, while synagogues occupied plots further away, in Jewish quarters<sup>7</sup>. Mid-market buildings, found mainly in larger cities, were not related to the religious function. Incidentally, in Wolpa itself, the town square did not have any mid-market buildings. According to the available illustrative material, the synagogue stood on a property fenced off with a rail fence, in the vicinity of individual, not very impressive houses.

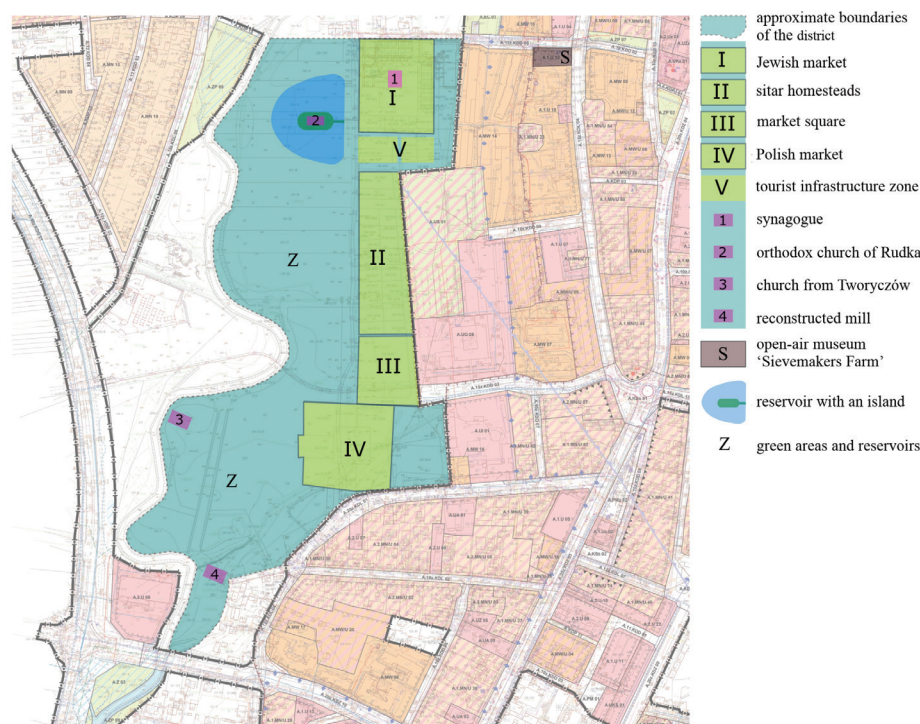
Equally bizarre is the justification for the location of the synagogue by giving the main square the name of a Jewish market, especially in the context of a clear reference of the market's form to the regular urban layout of the centres of towns in the region<sup>8</sup>. As a result, the next planned parts of the complex were assigned the names of the Polish and commercial market (Fig. 9). This, again in the context of the tourist and cultural function and its educational role, is

<sup>7</sup> Even in Łaszczów, where Jews constituted 95% of the population, the synagogue stood on the outskirts of the town.

<sup>8</sup> The layout forms a regular urban arrangement – as characteristic for small towns in the southern Lublin region as the arcaded buildings themselves.

Fig. 9. Biłgoraj, “Borderland Town”, diagram of planned estate segments (drawing by A. Tejszerska based on the Local Spatial Development Plan of Biłgoraj 2019)

II. 9. Biłgoraj, „Kresowe miasteczko”, schemat rozkładu planowanych segmentów zespołu (rys. A. Tejszerska na podkładzie załącznika do MPZP Biłgoraj 2019)



a falsification of history, from which we know the concept of a market (in the sense of the main market), salt market, water market, or new town, but not Polish and Jewish. Throughout the project there is a noticeable emphasis on Jewish culture, justified by the pre-war population structure of Biłgoraj<sup>9</sup> and the close ties with the city of the Nobel Prize winner Isaac Singer (1902–1991). The western frontage of the market contains “Singer’s house”, which is the museum of the foundation of his name and which was reconstructed on the basis of memories and archival images of it.

The identity of the borderland cities of the Republic of Poland was created by a mixture of ethnicity, nationality and religion. In the long run, the construction of more religious buildings is planned. This includes a copy of the wooden Orthodox church of Rudka<sup>10</sup> erected in 1693. The complex, together with the presbytery and the bell tower, will serve as a museum of icons and a venue for Orthodox music concerts. There are also plans to relocate a wooden Catholic church from Tworyczów near Szczepieszyn (Fig. 10), to be used as a museum of Christianity, which may not evoke the best associations with the Stalinist period and the introduction of museums of atheism within the church walls<sup>11</sup>. The construction of a Calvinist church or even a mosque is also considered – as the Biłgoraj region was inhabited not only by Poles, Jews, Armenians and Ruthenians, but also by many Tatars. The problem of

all religious buildings of the emerging complex is the lack of cult functions in them. Both the synagogue, which has already been erected, and the buildings which remain in the sphere of plans are intended only as cultural objects: museums, galleries and concert halls. It is worth drawing a comparison with the Lublin Village Museum, where both the wooden Catholic church relocated from Matczyn and the Greek Catholic church relocated from Tarnoszyn serve the local community. Despite the fact that they are located on premises of the museum, they have not lost their essence, they remain what they always were, they retain their authenticity, they are not external shells covering new functions. Historical sacral architecture, fulfilling its basic purpose, is in itself an important element of cultural heritage as well as a tourist destination. However, to designate a religious building as a museum of Christianity in a country in which 93.7% of the population declares itself to belong to the Catholic Church [28, p. 82] seems hardly justified. Also for Jewish Orthodox circles visiting the town the fact of erecting a replica of the synagogue for purely cultural purposes – the Museum of Biłgoraj Jews – remains controversial.

As part of the development of the tourist infrastructure of the “town”, the construction of buildings with hotel, catering, rehabilitation and bio-regenerative functions is planned, historically clothed in a way that constitutes the ideological essence of the complex. Inscripting a new function in forms suggesting a different purpose of the building has always been controversial. As early as 1913 Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz asked: [...] *can there be greater nonsense than a railway station in Romanesque style, a beer hall modelled on a Gothic castle or a doorkeeper’s house in the shape of a Greek temple* [27, p. 15]. The planned objects can be regarded as a kind of architectural pastiche, deprived of the value of authenticity both in

<sup>9</sup> 60% of the inhabitants were of the Jewish faith.

<sup>10</sup> Przeworski County. In the project, the Church of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary is described as Orthodox, although in fact it is still used by Greek Catholics.

<sup>11</sup> The wooden “old” church in Tworyczów no longer has a sacred function. In the 1980s, a new church was erected vis-à-vis it, designed by the author of the Biłgoraj foundation.



Fig. 10. Tworzyców, church of St. Apostles Peter and Paul (1932–1933): a) façade, b) east elevation (photo by A. Tejszerska, 2020)

Il. 10. Tworzyców, kościół pw. św. Apostołów Piotra i Pawła (1932–1933): a) fasada, b) elewacja wschodnia (fot. A. Tejszerska, 2020)

terms of the material fabric and the introduced function, exacerbating the problem of the falsification of historical reality. It should be realized that cultural tourism, which provides direct experience of communing with a specific reality, is a form of education of the highest value in terms of assimilation. A memorable image of the concept definitely has a stronger impact on the recipient than theoretical information presented in book publications.

### Conclusions

Authentic wooden buildings are of immeasurable cultural value, which is being saved by numerous conservation projects and programmes<sup>12</sup>. However, their number is constantly decreasing. Therefore, irrespective of conservation efforts, since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries efforts have been made to promote formal stylistic continuity in new investments, which is partly the case with the construction of the “Borderland Town”. In the summary of the publication devoted to the wooden architecture of the Lublin region, Jan Górak expresses his hope that the reminder of the traditional forms [...] *will be an inspira-*

*tion to use them in the contemporary shaping of the new landscape* [29, p. 67]. The concept of building the “Borderland Town” was accompanied by a noble goal, which reflected the architectural postulates of a century ago. At the same time, the idea seems to meet the public longing for forms rooted in tradition. After all [...] *the element of familiarity is for every nation the most important moment in artistic creation* [30, p. 104]. The originator of the investment treats it as an antidote to the expressionless architecture, which disfigured the region in the 1970s. *Grey, monotonous, monstrous blocks of flats are haunting in the cities where beautiful buildings used to dominate, like in Bilgoraj and its surroundings. I decided to try to save this memory from complete oblivion* [31]. Unfortunately, the connection of the tourist-cultural function with the lack of historical fidelity, a kind of falsification and creation of illusion of historical buildings contributes to the distortion of the image of the historical town in the memory of visitors. The contemporary composition, which is only a free interpretation of historical buildings, plays here the role of an open museum, which should be characterized by fact-based credibility.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the “Wooden Treasure” project covering the heritage of the Lublin region.

Translated by  
Wiktoria Krzykowska

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### Abstract

#### *The exhibition "Village and Small Town" and the "Borderland Town" in Biłgoraj. Rescuing memory or falsifying the history of an image of a Polish traditional landscape*

The aim of the article is the presentation and critical assessment of a development called "The town on the trail of cultures" or "Borderland Town" currently created in Biłgoraj. The main subject of the research is a contemporary composition, which is a free interpretation of historical architecture, in many respects far from factual credibility, but aspiring to be a tourist and cultural destination. The idea of building these houses and commercial properties was to replicate the traditional wooden small-town architecture of the region. Alongside them, of great interest to tourists, are replicas or copies of historic public buildings and places of worship, characteristic of the ethnic diversity of the eastern areas of the First and Second Polish Republic. The emerging district was evaluated in the context of the role of architecture in building local and national identity and the danger, from an educational point of view, of falsifying history. The architectural form and urban layout of the project, as well as its ideational premises was analysed. Special attention was paid to the noble objectives that accompanied the creation of the complex, and their convergence with the intentions of the architects who a century ago shaped the forms of the Polish national style. At the same time, the negative consequences of creating a peculiar hybrid of a historicizing but still contemporary composition and a kind of open-air museum, which should be characterized by reliable compliance with the facts, were shown. This type of procedure has led to creating an illusion of an authentic historic settlement, its falsification and popularisation of a distorted image of an historic town. The work was based on *in-situ* studies as well as analyses of archival illustrations and textual material and research into the authentic, historical architecture of the region, which was to serve as a model for the designed complex.

**Key words:** open-air museum, pastiche in architecture, historical Polish landscape, wooden architecture, Biłgoraj

### Streszczenie

#### *„Wieś i miasteczko” a „miasteczko kresowe”. Ratowanie pamięci czy falsyfikacja historycznego krajobrazu Polski*

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja i wieloaspektowa, krytyczna ocena realizowanej obecnie w Biłgoraju inwestycji określanej mianem „miasteczka na szlaku kultur” bądź „miasteczka kresowego”. Przedmiotowe założenie to współczesna kompozycja stanowiąca wolną interpretację zabudowy historycznej, pod wieloma względami daleka od faktograficznej wiarygodności, a pretendująca do roli destynacji turystyczno-kulturowej. Mieszkalniowo-usługowe założenie, nawiązujące zewnętrzną formą do tradycyjnej drewnianej małomiasteczkowej architektury regionu, uzupełniane jest

– stanowiącymi atrakcje turystyczne – replikami bądź kopiami historycznych obiektów użyteczności publicznej i kultu, charakterystycznych dla etnicznego bogactwa wschodnich obszarów I i II Rzeczypospolitej. Powstający kompleks oceniono zarówno w kontekście roli architektury w budowaniu tożsamości lokalnej i narodowej, jak i niebezpieczeństwa zafalszowania historii na płaszczyźnie edukacyjnej. Analizie poddano formę architektoniczną, układ urbanistyczny i ideowe przesłanki założenia. Zwrócono uwagę na szczytne cele towarzyszące powstaniu kompleksu i ich zbieżność z zamierzeniami architektów kształtujących przed stu laty formy polskiego stylu narodowego. Jednocześnie wykazano negatywne konsekwencje kształtowania swoistej hybrydy historyzującej, ale współczesnej kompozycji z rodzajem skansenu, który powinna cechować rzetelna zgodność z faktografią. Tego typu zabieg doprowadził do stworzenia iluzji autentycznej zabytkowej osady, falsyfikacji oraz popularyzacji zniekształconego obrazu historycznego miasta. Poza analizą *in situ*, w pracy wykorzystano archiwalny materiał ilustracyjny i tekstowy oraz wyniki badań autentycznej historycznej zabudowy regionu, która stanowić miała wzorzec projektowanego założenia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** skansen, pastisz w architekturze, historyczny krajobraz Polski, architektura drewniana, Biłgoraj