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THE EVIDENCES
OF THE ACTIVITY OF THE JESUITS
IN THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
OF POLISH LIVONIA

Several Catholic spiritual orders, the missionaries of *Societas Jesu* among them, have left significant imprints on the heritage of Latvia's art and enriched the region's culture with original features. The followers of this religious movement were active in the territory of Latvia under the auspices of the province of Poland-Lithuania during 1582 to 1820 (fig 1).

After the Swedes conquered Vidzeme (*Livland*) and the residence in Cēsis (*Kieś, Venda, Wenden*) was closed in 1625, some Jesuits came to Latgale (Polish Livonia). In 1626 the missionary Petrus Culesius settled in Daugavpils (*Dynaburg, Dyneburg, Duneburgum, Dünaburg, Dźwińsk*) and in 1630, the residence in Daugavpils began work under his leadership. Regular Jesuit missions, financed by affluent local landowners, were dependent on the residence in Daugavpils. On 14 September 1761 General Lorenzo Ricci conferred the title of college on this residence.

In 1718, under the aegis of Jan Dominik Borch, *Missio Livonica* was established in Vārkava (*Warkowo*). *Missio Borchiana* started its work around 1727 on the property of the Borchs in Varakļāni (*Warkland*) and Preiļi (*Preile*).



Fig. 1. Kārlis Škapars. Map: the colleges, residences and missions of the Society of Jesus in the territory of Latvia 1583–1820. From: *Latvijas vēstures avoti jezuitu ordeņa arhīvos // Latvijas vēstures avoti / Ed. by J. Kleijntjens. – Rīga, 1941. – 3. laid. – 2. d. – (without pagination).*

In 1727 *Missio Hylzeniana* was founded and it existed until 1820. It was active in Kaunata (*Kownat*), Dagda (*Dagaten*) as well as Izvalta (*Uschwalde*) where the Jesuit college moved in 1819. During the Jesuit times churches were built at these mission locations. *Missio Plateriana* was founded in Krāslava (*Kraslaw, Kraslau, Kreslowka, Kreslaw*) in 1676. It was initiated by Georgius Ludingshausen-Wolff. In Krāslava Jesuits stayed until 1756 when the mission was moved to Indrica where it existed until 1780. *Missio Szadursciana* was founded in Puša (*Pusza*) in 1743. Jan Szadurski built a church on his property and gave it to the Jesuits. Initially, one Jesuit lived there but after 1750, there were two. The mission existed until 1820. In 1724 Joannes Ansgarius Czapski founded a mission in Laucesa (*Lauzen, Laukiessa, Kalkuhnen*) but by 1752 it had already been taken over by secular priests. In 1747 Bishop Georg Hylzen established *Missio Smolenscenis*. It is known that there was also a mission in Rēzekne (*Rositten*) – *Missio Rositensis*.

In 1772, after the partition of Poland, Polish Livonia became part of the Russian Empire. Due to the fact that Catherine II had prohibited the proclamation of the breve of Pope Clement XIV in the Russian Empire, here (this territory became a part of the province of Vitebsk) the activity of Jesuits

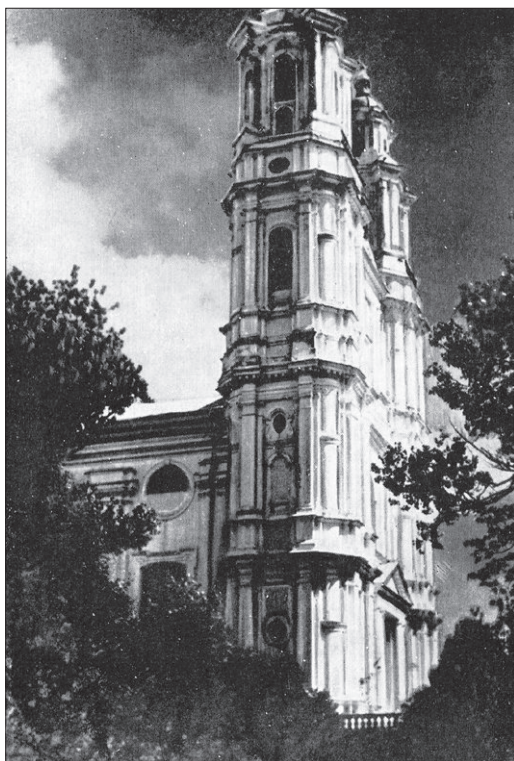


Fig. 2. Daugavpils Church. 1737–1747. From: *Васильев Ю. Эволюция города Даугавпилса (Динабурга) в XVI–XVIII веках // Архитектура и пilsētbnvniecība Latvijas PSR. II. – Rīga, 1971. – 113. lpp.*

was not terminated. As in the entire territory of the Russian Empire, so in Latgale the Society of Jesus existed until 1820.

No doubt, that pretty courageous on the background of the overall cultural traditions seems the idea of the Jesuit church of Daugavpils (fig. 2). The peculiarity of Latgale is the difference of the economical and social structures. Until the middle of the 18th century there was no evidence of maintaining the continuity of the local tradition of historical styles. That is how the building projects inspired by Catholic countries – Italy, Austria, Poland – could enter, not meeting any resistance of local masonry church architecture, and fasten their positions with certainty. Accordingly on the background of small wooden chapels in 18th century the Jesuit church of Daugavpils introduced an imposing and brave undertaking already with its idea.

The ground plan of the church of Daugavpils (fig. 3) is based on the shape of an extended quadrangle. In comparison with the church of the Jesuit Church in Skaistkalne (the Duchy of Courland) it looks more compact, i.e., with the less pronounced difference between the shortest and longest side.

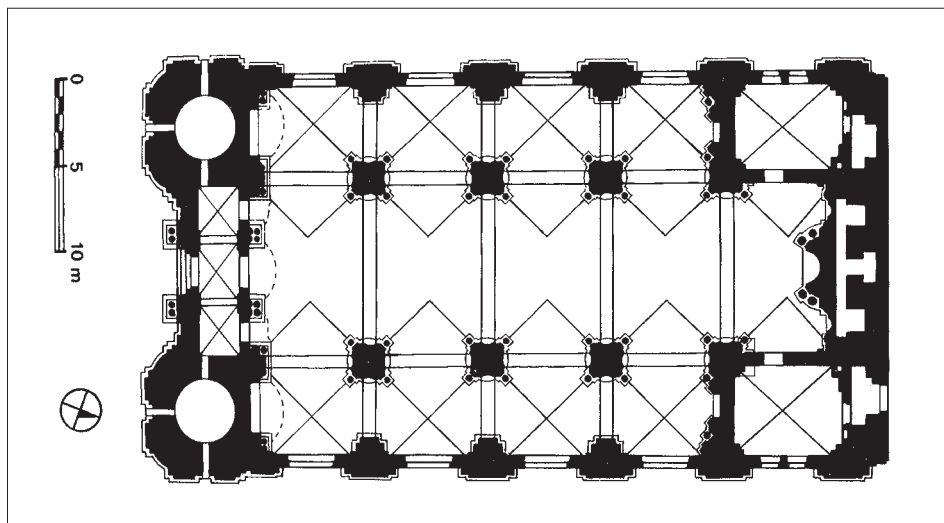


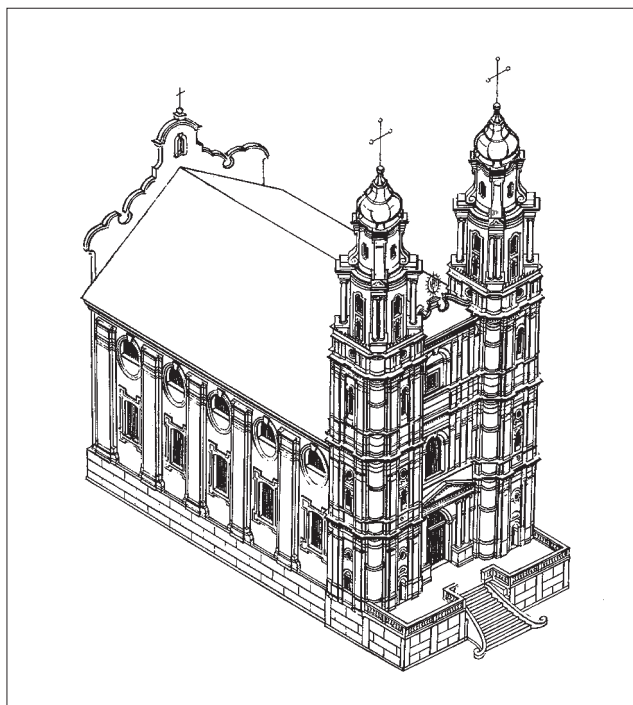
Fig. 3. Plan of Daugavpils Church. From: *Głowacki K. Kościół jezuitki w Dźwińsku – zapomniane dzieło F. B. Rastrellego // Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki. – 1986. – T. 31. – Zesz. 2. – Rys. 3.*

Just like in the church of Skaistkalne, also in Daugavpils the interior – but here a hall-type structure – is divided into three naves, and similar are two towers incorporated in the main façade. But from the previous example largely differs from the solution of the choir: the church of Daugavpils is not closed by an apse, but ends with a straight and heavy brick wall. The altar space is incorporated in the nave. On both sides of the altar place there are the sacristies, each separated from the rest of the space with dense walls. Different is also the vaulting: the middle part is covered by cylindrical vaulting, while the aisles are covered by groined vaults.

Exploring the materials which nowadays give the impression about the exterior, one can notice that the building is lifted on the solid base (fig. 4). On that level, as it can be well distinguished in the reconstruction by Polish art historian Kazimierz Głowacki¹, there was a wide platform in front of the church. Up to the only entrance of church lead in the middle of the main façade elegantly flexed stairs. The platform itself was framed by a balustrade, thus strictly fencing off the platform from the rest volume of the building.

¹ K. Głowacki, *Kościół jezuitki w Dźwińsku – zapomniane dzieło F. B. Rastrellego*, „Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki”, 1986(XXXI), 2, rys. 8, 9.

Fig. 4. Kazimierz Głowacki.
Graphic reconstruction of
Daugavpils Church. From:
*Głowacki K. Kościół jezui-
cki w Dźwińsku – zapo-
mniane dzieło F. B. Ras-
strellego // Kwartalnik
Architektury i Urbanistyki.
– 1986. – T. 31. – Zesz. 2.
– Rys. 8.*



Albeit the church of Daugavpils was typologically close to the building in Skaistkalne, it represented another phase of the development of two-tower church architecture. The architectural image of the edifice was far more plastic and expressive (fig. 5). Here, letting hardly any free space of the wall, the screen of the façade was entwined, pulsated, trenched by complicated teamwork of columns, double-pilasters, broken off profile belts, cornices, and tooth-ledges as well as rounded angles. Just like it was announced by the planning, mighty towers strived to project from the total mass. And the investigation of the monument reveals that with every storey the towers rise up, the arrangements gained more and more complicated character.

A drawing by Wilhelm Neumann depicts the fine calculated purposefulness that helped the verbose language of forms to reach its concentration in the Baroque-shaped pediment in the centre of the façade². Yet as a result of

² W. Neumann, *Grundriss einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste und des Kunstgewerbes in Liv-, Est- und Kurland vom Ende des 12. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Reval 1887, fl. 66.



Fig. 5. Exterior detail of Daugavpils Church. 1737–1747. From: Heritage Documentation Centre, State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection, Riga, Latvia (further HDC SIHP).

the fundamental repair during 1870 it was replaced by closing of classically temperate shape. Simultaneously there was eliminated the regular roof, replacing by a simple iron roof thus largely misshaping the original architectonic composition. Similarly unsuccessful changes met the tower closing helmets³.

Despite the mentioned changes, the Jesuit church of Daugavpils was indisputable an outstanding example, and this edifice significantly contributed to the heritage of Latvia's architecture. As a compeer to this church can be mentioned the St. Catherine Church in Vilnius (*Šv. Kotrynos bažnyčios*; 1618, rebuilt 1741–1753), although there are also marked differences: the towers of the church of Daugavpils rised up for one storey higher, as well as the central nave was not so high in relation to the aisles as it is seen in the examples in Vilnius (which later will be characteristic to the overall solutions of Polish Livonia). But the most significant feature was the solution of the walls: they were formed much more flat, more generalizing in comparison to the buildings of the Vilnius Baroque.

Peculiar difference appears among the wordy introduction of the main façade and much more reserved side walls of the church of Daugavpils (fig. 6). The wide, plane hall church wall was hacked by rather simple plastic motives. The composition was shaped by the alternation of five window aisles and five pilasters. The double pilasters seem to be rather plane, however extended unusually wide, thus occupying almost the whole space between the windows.

³ K. Glovackis, *Jezuītu baznīca Daugavpilī un kāda hipotēze par to // Materiāli feodālisma posma Latvijas mākslas vēsturei*, Rīga 1989, 4. Laid, 239. lpp.



Fig. 6. Side façade of Daugavpils Church. 1737–1747. From: HDC SIHP.

Unfortunately, guiding by the materials available today, there is difficult to judge about the ending of the wall. The reconstruction of Głowacki testifies that the choir of the church was adorned by a Baroque shaped pediment, a feature so characteristic to the buildings of the Vilnius Baroque school. For example, such kind of pediment is decorating the end of the wall of St. Catherine Church in Vilnius, the church of the Re-found of the Holy Cross (*Šv. Kryžiaus Atradimo (Kalvarijų) bažnyčia*, 1755–1772), St. Casimir's Church (*Šv. Kazimiero bažnyčia*, 1604–1618, 1750–1755), as well as church of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin (*Švč. Mergelės Marijos Žengimo į dangų bažnyčia*, 1695, 1750–1756), St. John's church (*Šv. Jono bažnyčia*, 1738–1749) and other. Sadly as a result of the reconstruction mentioned above together with the roof covering in the church of Daugavpils this decorative element was replaced by a blunt, low rectangle object.

Basing on the plastic language introduced in exterior, also in the finishing of the interior, especially the shaping the columns, which divided the isles, could be observed almost unreasonable complexity of the arrangement (fig. 7). And the same decorative scheme echoed in the composition of the altars, continuing the language of twisting rhythms of sharp and actuated forms also in the whole inner space of the building.

In 1744 was established to main decoration of the church interior there the brick altar (fig. 8), covered by false marble plastering, and the significant part of its decorative details were gilded. And adjusting its arrangement, simultaneously there were set up ten side altars. Two of them, of similar composition, were



Fig. 7. Interior detail of Daugavpils Church. 1737–1747. From: HDC SIHP.

placed at the end of the aisles, while the rest, of more modest size, were incorporated into the pillar volumes. In 1748 were set up in the central nave the benches made by the Jesuit carpenter Michael Szulc (*Schulz*)⁴. But much more significant are the statements of archive materials that in 1743 the vaulting of the church were painted and adorned with stucco decoration in the shape of gilded rosettes. Presumably this work may be connected to the name of the Jesuit artist Jan Gundlfinger (1703– before 1750). It is known that in 1740th the artist was occupied by the decoration works of the church⁵. This information is especially valuable, because thus the church of Daugavpils is placed next to the church of Skaistkalne as a unique example of Latvia's church interiors,

⁴ Ibidem, 235. lpp.

⁵ Ibidem.



Fig. 8. Interior of Daugavpils Church. 1740s. From: HDC SIHP.

where the architectural décor is joined with the decorative stucco finish as well as polychrome design. Unfortunately the reconstruction of the 19th century touched also the inner side of the church. From the vaulting of the naves the stucco décor was removed, as well as the painting was extinguished. From three altars were removed many details and ornaments, from the niches of pillars were taken out and liquidated the figures of the saints. These facts must be considered when trying to estimate the ensemble of the interior, because it seems rather difficult to get the impression of the original grandeur, just by observing the pictures which record the state after these changes.

For a long time the last word on the matter about the authorship of this building had Kazimierz Głowacki, whose hypothesis remained unquestioned and undeveloped⁶. His attention was drawn by the mere fact that with regard to this Jesuit building, no indication can be found of the names of the Society's architects and builders. In Głowacki's opinion this omission allows us to conclude that the main executor of the church project came from the ranks of the secular specialists. In the attempt to discover the identity of the architect of the church of Daugavpils, Głowacki directs us to a document in the archives that tells of a public meeting of all concerned parties prior to the commencement of work on the new Daugavpils Church. One of the people mentioned was a provincial Jesuit, but another was the *architectus italicus Rondalensis*, who drew up the design of the sacred building. Kazimierz Głowacki proposed that this might be no other one, than the author of the

⁶ K. Głowacki, Kościół jezuicki..., s. 127–149.

Rundāle (*Ruhenthal*) palace (1736–1740; 1765–1768) as well as many other buildings in various Russian cities: Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli (1700–1771). It was not unusual to invite non-Jesuit specialists for completing Jesuit churches. And that is why at first glance Głowacki's suggestion seems to be quite plausible. The Polish art historian sets out all the facts logically to create an apparently convincing argument, which did not give rise to any objections.

The rich collection of archive documents and facsimiles from Rundāle allow us to focus on studying Rastrelli's style. However, one must admit that, for the present, the countless examples of the creative heritage of this famous architect (starting with plans of buildings and ending with analysis of minute details) do not provide a powerful attestation to his eventual connection with the Daugavpils Jesuit church. Surprising is not only the sharp difference between two buildings created at the same time – Rundāle palace and Daugavpils church – but also Rastrelli's constructive and decorative thinking as such, which are by no means echoed in the Daugavpils case.

First of all, Rastrelli's approach is different with a different language of proportions and lines in general. Secondly, the rather chaotic composition of fragile and gently plastic lines is not characteristic of the master architect of Rundāle. In his hands the plane is decorated by different means – appliquéd elements appear on a sometimes heavy, still well-defined frame.

The version of Rastrelli, that he is the architect of the church of Daugavpils is subject to doubt by another question: why such a mighty Catholic church, an edifice described as an “unprecedented fundamental building for this region” does not appear in Rastrelli's summary of his works?⁷ If this list mentions several buildings of minor significance, why such an important project would be omitted? Neither Rastrelli himself mentioned this church, nor there came to light a direct attribution to Rastrelli by the many fastidious researchers, who have based their conclusions on extensive studies of the archives.

Taking another glance at the mysterious *architectus italus Rondalensis*, one cannot help wondering why the idea about Carlo Francesco Rondelli, who was working in Vilnius in the second half of the 18th century, has been so hastily dismissed. Sadly, at this stage of the survey there was no chance to find convincing facts to support this hypothesis.

⁷ *Architekt Rastrelli o swych pracach: Materiały działalności artysty z 35 ilustracjami*, red. Z. Batowski, Lwów 1939.

A detailed analysis of the plans of the buildings executed by the Jesuits in the territory of Latvia, and careful examination of the individual features – main façade, side walls, apse, interior as well as the decorative elements – leads to the conclusion, that though all three objects are of the same architectonic type, they are completely different in their construction and arrangement. In the context of the Society of Jesus the question arises about a Jesuit style: does the language of architectural forms allow us to ascertain some features characteristic of this order?

Talks on this issue with respect to churches of Ilūkste (*Illuxta*, *Iluxte*, *Illuxt*) and Daugavpils were given by Wilhelm Neumann at the end of the 19th century⁸ and Boriss Vipers in the 1930th⁹. Examining the material of Latvia's art in the context of comprehensive art history during the first half of the 20th century, the Lithuanian priest and art historian Kazimieras Jasenas also mentions the presence of this style¹⁰. Later researchers are more cautious in the use of this term. In seeking an adequate explanation for the problem it is worth looking at how the concept of a Jesuit style came about.

Most probably the false notion of Jesuit obedience, which would have influenced all activities in any aspect, including architecture, has played a deceptive role here. This notion would make it easy to assume, that all the buildings were constructed in the same shape and it would be enough to observe the “mother church” of the order *Il Gesù* (1568–1584) in Rome to allow drawing conclusions about the rest of them. It is no secret, that in cases where a Jesuit community could not avail itself of the services of a qualified architect, it could borrow the plans from other missions and carry out the projects without any changes. However, this does not prove, that there were some unifying standards enforced by administrative means.

In this context it is worth to draw attention to the fact that thanks to the intervention of Society of Jesus in the territory of Latvia exactly two-tower church buildings (and not *Il Gesù* tower-less type) were introduced. Examining the examples in chronological order one can observe the gradual increasing of the attention drawn to those elements, and consequent decreasing of their role. As excellent examples could be mentioned Jesuit churches in Dagda (*Dagaten*)

⁸ W. Neumann, *Grundriss einer Geschichte*, S. 9.

⁹ B. Vipers, *Latvijas māksla baroka laikmetā*, 118. lpp.

¹⁰ K. Jasėnas, *Visuotinė meno istorija*, t. 3, Sas. 5, Mintauja 1936, p. 348.



Fig. 9. Dagda Church. 1741. Photo: Kristine Ogle, 2004.

(fig 9) (1741) and Auleja (*Aul, Aula, Auł, Awila*) (1780th) (fig. 10). And the form from the *Il Gesù* derived tower-less solution appears in Krāslava (1767), which was built as a cathedral of the archbishop of Inflanty – but also this edifice originally was intended to be with two towers.

It is important to stress that the introduction of buildings of an architectonic type of the twin tower church in the territory of Latvia in its own way united regions (nowadays Latgale and Kurzeme) that cultivated completely different traditions.

Still neither complete unity was required of the Society's architectural projects, nor features that would differentiate their buildings from the solutions of other Catholic congregations. Evidence of this is in Latgale where late Baroque forms can be seen not only in Jesuit two towered churches but also, for example, the Dominican churches in Aglona (*Aglohn*) (1768–1800) and Pasiene (*Possin, Possinja*) (1761–1768). In other words, it cannot be denied that the Jesuit Church in Daugavpils, a great architectural achievement, served as a sort of a paradigm in the region, which architects of other Catholic buildings attempted to emulate. Thus the Daugavpils Church initiated a series of two-tower churches, characteristic of Polish Livonia, and it is considerably echoed in construction of wooden churches, too.

Considering the fact that the Latvian monuments even in the narrow range of Jesuit activities do not have the outwardly unifying characteristics that would permit us to speak of a recognisable, formal language of the order, other sources of information (archives, documentary evidence of the order's members' presence, clients, etc.) allow us to attribute buildings to this order.



Fig. 10. Auleja Church. 1790.
Photo: Kristine Ogle,
2006

In some cases the exterior relation is confirmed by iconography. In the church of Skaistkalne it is a relief with the order's motto above the central entrance in its western façade. In the church of Auleja – which stands out with its peculiar planning – the figures of saints in niches links this church to the Jesuit heritage.

The review of the contribution of Jesuits to Latvia's architecture lends to the conclusion that within the chronological limits of the order's activity, various phases of historical styles have been covered: from Mannerism (in Riga's Holy Cross Chapel) to the characteristics of Rococo (in the decoration of the church of Ilūkste) and early Classicism (in the building of Daugavpils Jesuit College). This observation is important because it adds to the attempts of Western colleagues to counter the persistent claim that the contribution of the Society of Jesus to art is limited only to Baroque.

The construction activity of the Jesuits reflects not just the language nuances of various artistic styles but also brings to the territory of Latvia characteristics inspired by various European regions, thus considerably broadening the contextual scope for this research. Artworks created within

the activities of the Jesuits reveal the order's members' relations with their countries of origin, the subjective interests of their patrons and the mastery of the invited artists, as well as their ties to parts of Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Austria and Russia.

It is natural, that shaping new ensembles of architecture and art, Jesuits could introduce the ideas and solutions inspired in the countries where they came from. Consequently the cognizing of those ways can serve as important references for the clarifying the authorship of each example. On the other hand, there are the non-Jesuit artists (when they were commissioned) with their education, skills and artistic approach. But there is another question, no less important but usually in the background – it is the sponsor of the undertaking, who, by providing financial support, could have great influence on the idea and realisation of every project.

The coincidence of various circumstances (political situation, financial support, successful co-operation with other orders or secular specialists etc.) allowed the Jesuit missionaries to bring innovative and impressive solutions into the territory of Latvia.

In summary it may be said that the contribution of the Society of Jesus has considerably enriched the cultural environment of the territory and was able to synchronise its artistic expression with developments in European culture. Today it provides the art historian with rich research material and extensive opportunities for future research.