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# **WOODEN SACRAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE LUBLIN REGION DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD: INSIGHTS FROM RECENT RESEARCH**

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## **Abstract**

The article presents the results of the latest research on wooden sacral architecture in the Lublin Voivodeship during the period of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939). The study covers 45 wooden churches, which constituted more than half of the newly erected religious buildings in the region. The authors highlight the significance of this type of architecture in the context of national identity and local cultural tradition. The article addresses formal, technical, and stylistic issues related to the design and construction of these churches, as well as problems concerning unauthorized construction, the quality of architectural designs, and questions of authorship. Special emphasis is placed on the protection of heritage and the gradual disappearance of monuments from this historical period. In addition to typological and structural analysis, selected churches are presented as case studies. The article is based on archival sources, inventory documentation, and field research conducted as part of a scientific project at Lublin University of Technology

*Keywords: Wooden churches, Interwar period, Cultural heritage, Protection*

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## **1. Introduction**

Wooden sacred architecture has, for centuries, constituted a significant component of Poland's cultural heritage, deeply embedded in the rural and small-town landscape. As Marian Kornecki observes, wooden churches were not only integrated into the spatial structure of settlements, but also functioned as dominant elements in the landscape, shaping the spatial composition and rhythm; furthermore, they served as centres of religious worship and as visible markers of the community's shared cultural identity [1]. Within this context, churches in particular played a special role — due to their advanced carpentry techniques and refined architectural forms, they are regarded as among the most outstanding achievements of traditional construction craftsmanship [2]. Above all, however, they fulfilled an ideological function: as places of worship, they stood at the heart

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of the community's spiritual life and symbolized its collective identity and unity. The symbolic and cultural dimension of these churches renders them not only architectural artefacts, but also carriers of local tradition and collective memory.

The Lublin region is characterised by a rich and complex cultural heritage shaped by its multiethnic and multireligious history. This area — today defined by the boundaries of the Lublin Voivodeship in eastern Poland, bordering Ukraine — has long functioned as a frontier between Eastern and Western Slavic cultures [3].

The materials collected for the purpose of this study constitute an extension of the research project conducted at the Department of Monument Conservation of Lublin University of Technology, entitled 'Architecture of National Identity – Sacred Complexes of the Interwar Period in the Lublin Region' (project number: NdS-II/SP/0529/2024/01), within the framework of the 'Science for Society' programme. The photographs, cartographic materials, and architectural inventories presented herein are original and were prepared during the course of fieldwork.

The bibliography includes all accessible and relevant sources: correspondence, descriptive records, inventories, architectural designs, site surveys, administrative decisions, illustrations, photographs, and references to press materials and websites. The chronological scope of the research spans the years 1918 to 1939 — from the regaining of Polish independence to the outbreak of the Second World War. The territorial scope corresponds to the historical borders of the Lublin Voivodeship at that time. The methodological approach includes a review of scholarly literature, archival research, case studies, and comparative analysis.

## **2. Sacral architecture in the Second Polish Republic**

### ***2.1. The Construction Process: Legal, Organizational and Technological Aspects***

During the implementation of church construction projects in the Second Polish Republic, debates regarding architectural form were most often curtailed by pragmatism. The construction of sacred buildings was governed by the 1918 Code of Canon Law, which required the faithful to obtain permits based on submitted design plans and cost estimates, reviewed by diocesan bishops or designated committees. While liturgical and functional elements were clearly specified, artistic guidelines were minimal—new churches were simply expected to reflect the dignity of sacred space.

The Code also stated that wooden churches could be blessed but not consecrated, which resulted in a practical division: masonry churches were considered permanent, while wooden ones were treated as provisional. Even if built with artistic merit, wooden churches were often dismantled within a few years and sold, once funding allowed for masonry replacements.

In addition to canonical requirements, state law also applied. Until 1928, responsibility for approving church plans lay with the District Directorates of

Public Works under the Voivodeship Offices. These authorities demanded compliance with formal design documentation, which had to be certified by licensed professionals. In territories of the former Russian partition, this posed a problem due to the scarcity of qualified engineers. Evaluations focused on structural safety, often at the expense of aesthetics. Still, from 1922 to 1928, conservation officers provided guidance on architectural quality.

Not all churches were built in compliance with regulations. In many cases—especially in the eastern provinces—churches were constructed without permits or official documentation. As Ewa Błotnicka-Mazur points out, the architectural quality of rural wooden churches depended heavily on the technical competence of their creators. A persistent shortage of well-trained professionals, particularly in remote regions, led to projects managed by county architects with only secondary technical education, or less. This significantly impacted the standard of both design and execution [4].

Grassroots efforts often initiated church-building projects. Community meetings among villagers marked the beginning of many endeavours. Grażyna Ruszczyk notes that one major factor was distance: rural settlements were frequently so dispersed that travel to the nearest church could reach 100 kilometres [5]. The condition of infrastructure compounded the problem—roads became impassable during spring thaws, cutting off access to worship.

Ultimately, a church's form was determined by parish needs, available funds, and local building traditions. Financing came from parishioners' voluntary contributions or levies decided at communal gatherings. In wealthier noble villages, landowners often provided substantial funding, which translated into more complex forms and a higher likelihood of masonry construction.

## ***2.2. The Architecture of Wooden Churches***

Despite its lower durability, timber remained the most accessible and affordable construction material in rural regions. Pine was the preferred material due to its availability, while oak, though stronger, was used sparingly—mainly for foundational beams [6]. Builders frequently reused materials, including railway sleepers and elements salvaged from dismantled churches and Orthodox buildings. For instance, the church in Chmiel (1929) incorporated parts from the church in Trzeszczany, such as the roof truss, altar, and choir balustrade (only the balustrade survives today) [7; 8].

Churches were typically erected on concrete, brick, or stone foundations, with timber sills placed on top. The walls were constructed using various methods: horizontal logwork, post-and-plank (*sumikowo-łątkowa*), and timber-frame systems. Often, these techniques were combined—especially in the case of low-quality materials. Vestibules and towers were usually built using timber-frame construction, though in some cases, lower tower storeys were constructed using logwork.

Interiors of single-nave churches were covered with flat or beamed ceilings. In triple-nave churches, the main nave was emphasized by increasing its width and height, and was typically finished with flat, beamed, or coffered ceilings.

Vaulting was considered the most fitting for sacred architecture. Single-nave churches featured various barrel vaults—semicircular, segmental, elliptical, or pointed. In triple-nave churches, only the central nave was usually vaulted (e.g., in Łuzki), while side aisles were covered with flat ceilings. In rare cases, vaults were extended to the aisles as well (e.g., Kolembrody, Leopoldów). A distinct innovation was the use of trapezoidal and pentagonal vaults, such as in Wierzchowiska, Biała Podlaska, and Olbięcín.

The most common roof trusses employed were rafter-and-collar beam and post-and-beam frameworks. Other types included hanging, purlin-and-tie beam, and strut-and-brace constructions. Roofs were typically covered with shingles, metal sheets, or asbestos-cement tiles. Thatched or reed roofs were rare, borrowed occasionally from Swiss spa (The style is called Swiss, as it originated in Alpine cantons. It is also known as spa style for its popularity in health resorts) or Orthodox architectural traditions.

Spatial layouts largely followed historical models. The most common were longitudinal single-space or two-part schemes with nave and chancel, sometimes preceded by a porch or tower. Changes included a reduction in chancel size—often replaced with a small altar area surrounded by sacristies or storage rooms. These annexes were usually placed symmetrically. While traditional sacristy placement beside the chancel remained popular, more unconventional solutions also appeared: sacristies located in the ambulatory (Zastarzyńce, 1928), along the chancel axis (Leszkowice project, 1921), or added to angled termination walls (Lublin, 1933), or even on the nave side wall (Rudno, 1935). In rare cases, sacristies had irregular or pentagonal plans, as in Baranowicze (1925) [5].

The main body of interwar wooden churches was typically single- or triple-nave. As Jarosław Wojciechowski noted, the decision was mainly based on required usable space. Single-nave layouts suited smaller parishes and chapels, generally up to 400 m<sup>2</sup> (or 700 m<sup>2</sup>, according to Fr. Gościcki). Larger churches adopted triple-nave plans, with side aisles at least 4 metres wide [9].

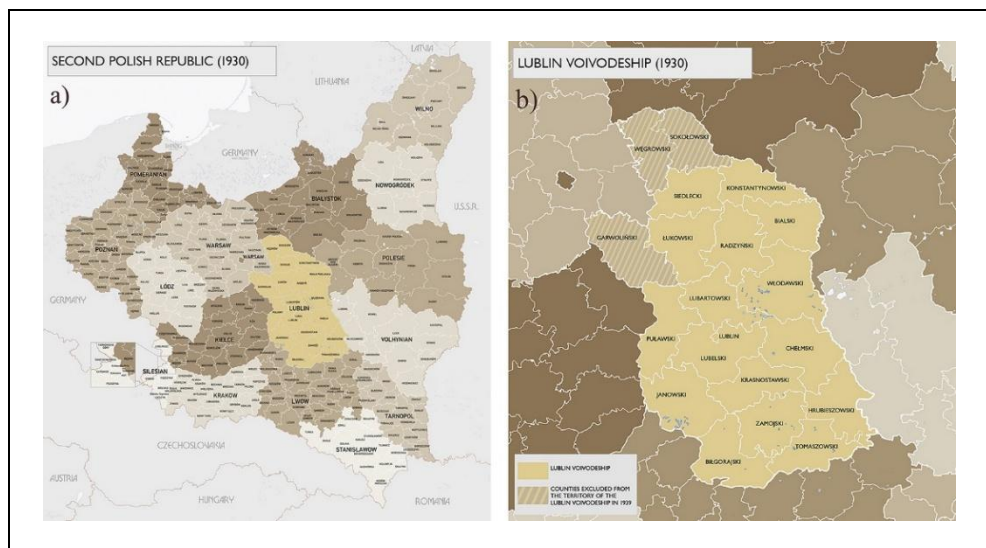
Cruciform plans were rare—only 27 wooden churches built between 1918–1939 followed this model. Such forms were usually created by adding two chapels with square or polygonal closures or employing a short transept. Even more unusual was the addition of a single lateral chapel [5].

Porches (*kruchty*) provided thermal protection and security but were not prioritized as design features. Though Wojciechowski suggested incorporating them into the nave, the small scale of most churches prevented this. They continued to be built as external projections or within tower bases.

Façades were often simplified and towerless, though towers—typically placed on the front façade's central axis—were valued as compositional tools. In some cases, towers were placed at façade corners. Their forms varied widely: *izbica*-type with spires, bulbous or tented roofs, squat volumes, or even modernist expressions. In larger churches (over 900 m<sup>2</sup>, per Gościcki), twin towers were common. Upper levels were often used for choir lofts.

Arcades stood out as both aesthetic and functional elements. They lent a dynamic rhythm to the church's silhouette and emphasized its spatial articulation.

### **3. Wooden sacral architecture in the period of the Second Polish Republic in the Lublin region**



**Figure 1.** Lublin Voivodeship during Second Polish Republic (1930):  
a) map of the Second Polish Republic – voivodeships division;  
b) Lublin Voivodeship – counties division (maps by K. Kluz 2025)

Within the realities of an emerging statehood, the Lublin Voivodeship was established in August 1919. It became one of the largest administrative regions in the country during the interwar period (Figure 1.a). It encompassed the territories of two former imperial governorates (Lublin and Siedlce) and consisted of 19 counties. This administrative structure remained largely unchanged until 1 April 1939, when three counties—Węgrów, Sokołów, and Garwolin—were separated and incorporated into the Warsaw Voivodeship (Figure 1.b). In 1928, the city of Lublin was administratively separated from Lublin County, and in 1932, the Konstantynów County was completely dissolved, with its territory divided between the Siedlce and Biała Podlaska counties [10].

Although the counties differed slightly from one another, the investment activities undertaken within them may be regarded as fairly typical. Among these, special attention was devoted to places of religious worship. The construction of such sites increased significantly during this period and was distributed relatively evenly across the territory of the voivodeship (Figure 2).

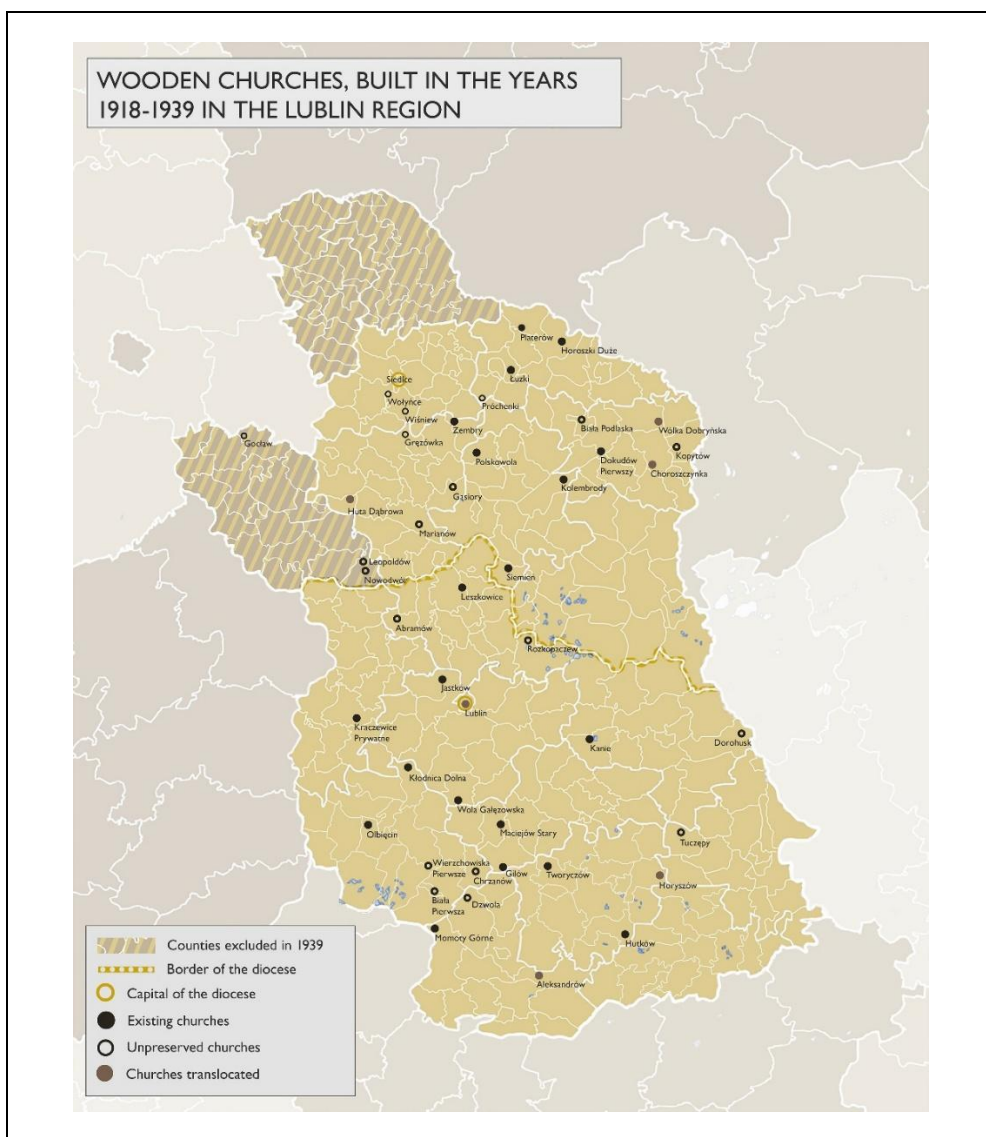
#### ***3.1. Characteristics of the Religious Architectural Stock Erected During the Interwar Period in the Lublin Region***

In light of research conducted by the Department of Conservation of Built Heritage at Lublin University of Technology, a total of 45 wooden churches were built in the Lublin region between 1918 and 1939 (23 in the Diocese of Lublin

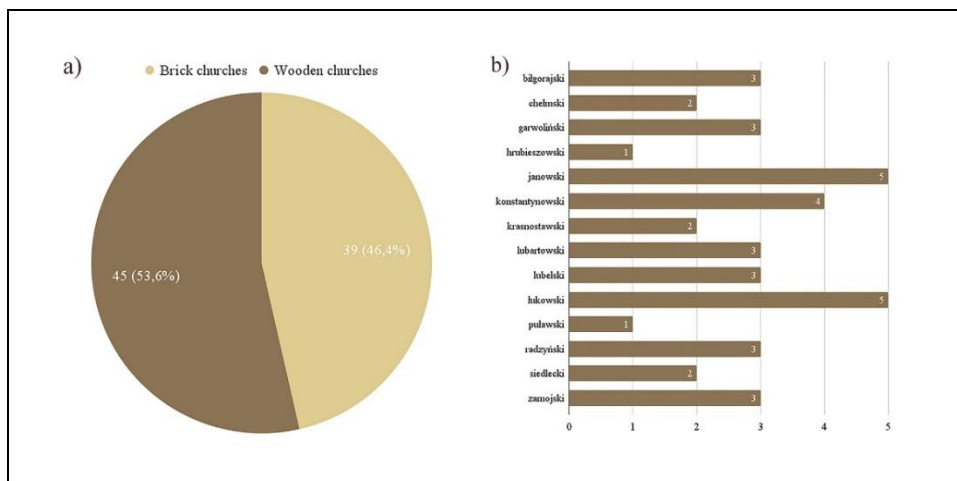
and 22 in the Diocese of Siedlce), accounting for 54.1% of all churches constructed in the region during that period (Figure 3.a).

The highest number of wooden churches were built in the counties of Biała Podlaska, Janów, Łuków, and Konstantynów, while the fewest were constructed in the counties of Puławy and Hrubieszów (Figure 3.b).

The architectural form and overall aesthetic quality of these buildings, as the research indicates, are closely linked to the professional competence and technical skills of their designers and builders. It is worth noting that the former Russian Partition territory suffered from the greatest shortage of qualified engineers.



**Figure 2.** Wooden churches, built in the years 1918-1939 in the Lublin region; (map by K. Kluz 2025)



**Figure 3.** Wooden churches in the Lublin voivodeship: a) Churches built in 1918-1939; b) The number of wooden churches built in the territories of the counties (charts by K. Kluz 2025)

One of the key factors behind the rapid increase in the number of churches built in the Lublin region was the growing concern within the Catholic Church and among its followers over the increasing influence of the Polish National Catholic Church, often referred to as the ‘Hodur sect’.

As a result, the largest proportion of wooden churches built in the Lublin region during the interwar period are unsigned designs, with around 45% of them having unknown authors, as could not be determined through the research conducted. Within this group, buildings of a temporary or provisional nature are the most numerous.

To date, just over half—precisely 56.8%—of these structures have survived, amounting to 25 buildings. This statistic highlights a significant problem regarding the understanding and proper management of this relatively young heritage resource. It should also be noted that, as the research has shown, formal heritage protection status does not necessarily correlate with the state of preservation of the buildings.

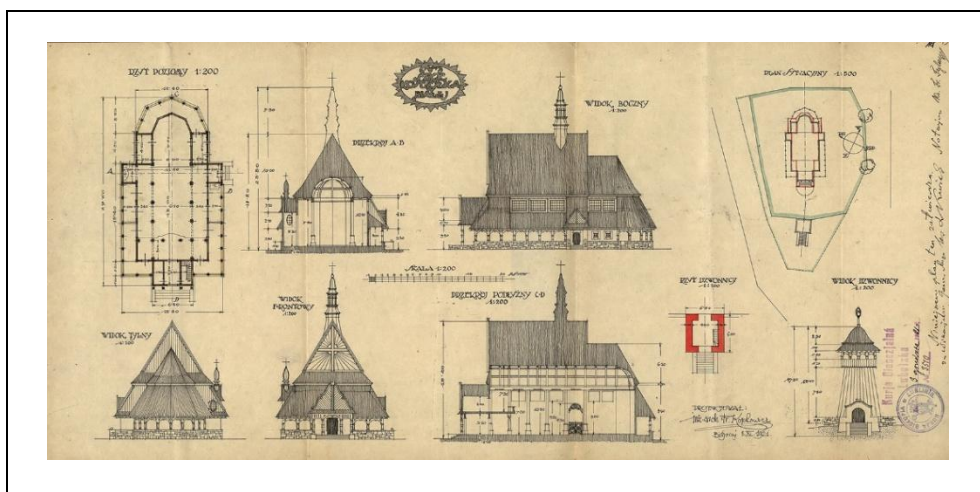
The majority of demolitions took place during the 1980s and 1990s. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this trend appears to have declined; however, the increasing pace of social change must be taken into account, and an appropriate strategy should be developed for the protection and stewardship of sacred architectural heritage from the interwar period.

### 3.2. Wooden Churches – Unauthorized Construction Works

The shortage of qualified architects in the Lublin region also manifested itself in cases of unauthorised construction. During the research, five such documented cases were identified. There are many possible reasons for this during the interwar period. The spontaneous nature of rebuilding efforts, lack of knowledge of building regulations, as well as insufficient funds to pay for proper

plans, encouraged by bypassing the rules. Churches were erected without plans in Abramów, Aleksandrów (1934), Chrzanów, Wołyńce, and Maciejów Stary (1932). The last of these was built by local carpenters ‘according to local tradition’ overnight, despite the objections of the parish priest in Wysokie and some local residents [11].

Another, equally interesting case of unauthorised building is the construction of the church in Biała Ordynacka (now Biała Pierwsza). The church’s design [12] was created in 1921 by Franciszek Kopkowicz — a specialist in wooden architecture construction and ornamentation [13]. The design drew on the arcade-style architecture typical of the Janów and Biłgoraj regions. Originally, the single-storey log construction building on a high stone foundation was to be surrounded by low covered walkways (soboty). The structure was topped with a steep, half-gabled roof, crowned by a slender belfry. The chancel was quadrangular in shape. The architect reinterpreted Baroque motifs in the design, preceding the façade with a porch featuring a volute-shaped gable. He also emphasised a strong folk element by placing a motif of the Zakopane-style ‘sun’ on the façade gable.



**Figure.4.** Project of the church in Biała Ordynacka, Janów County. (1921); source: APL, UWL, 980

The church was built between 1924 and 1929 in a different form than originally designed by Kopkowicz. The building was realised as a two-storey structure, with the nave covered by a high, pitched roof. The covered walkways (soboty) underwent significant alteration; after being enclosed, they formed side aisles, changing the church’s layout from three naves to five (Figure 4). In 1924, after several months of construction, the building inspection noted glaring discrepancies from the approved design. The reasons for these changes remain unknown. The building was burned down by the Germans at the beginning of the war, on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1939 [5].

Another well-known case is that of the parish church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kraczwice Prywatne, built at the expense of the parishioners between

1919 and 1920. It was designed by the architect Brzusko from Puławy; however, as recorded by Father Świostek [14], the carpenters employed on the project, who had low qualifications, simplified the design to such an extent that the architect refused to accept or approve the finished work. As a result, a styleless church was erected. The original design has not survived, so it is difficult to determine the exact extent of the modifications made. Only from a description by Jan Górak, based on accounts from older residents, can one speculate that the existing side galleries were constructed somewhat later, following the architect's insistence, as he did not agree to leave the interior's large space open. Perhaps this was an attempt, at least partially, to reference the original design.

### ***3.3. Wooden churches designed by certified engineers and architects***

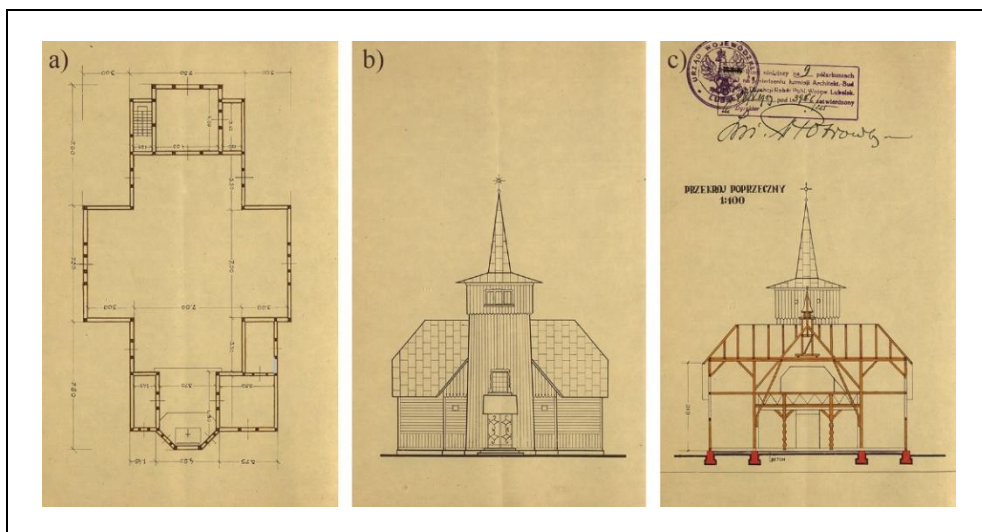
The skills of the designers and builders of churches constructed in the Lublin Voivodeship are reflected in the architectural quality of their churches. The conducted study showed that among the churches realised, only 17 (approximately 35%) were based on designs by certified architects. Among the most prolific in this group were Bohdan Kelles-Krauze and Michał Sławiński. Comparing their works, the architectural quality and 'artistic meaning' differ significantly.

Bohdan Kelles-Krauze, a painter and architect educated at the Institute of Civil Engineers in St Petersburg and the Lviv Polytechnic, served as the architect for the Lublin district and, from 1927, as the head of the Architectural and Construction Department of the Voivodeship Office in Lublin [15]. During the interwar period, he designed three wooden churches: in Kłodnica Dolna (1929) [16], in Leszkowice (1921) [17], and Olbięcín (1933) [18]. He shaped them in a folk style associated with the national-romantic movement, smoothly combining building traditions with contemporary aesthetics [15]. Kelles-Krauze frequently employed simple floor plans, which he used in the designs of the churches in Leszkowice and Olbięcín. The Greek cross plan in the Kłodnica church was achieved by means of a shallow transept with straight-ended arms (Figure 5.a). The church forms in Leszkowice and Kłodnica Dolna were designed as single-towered types (Figure 5.b).

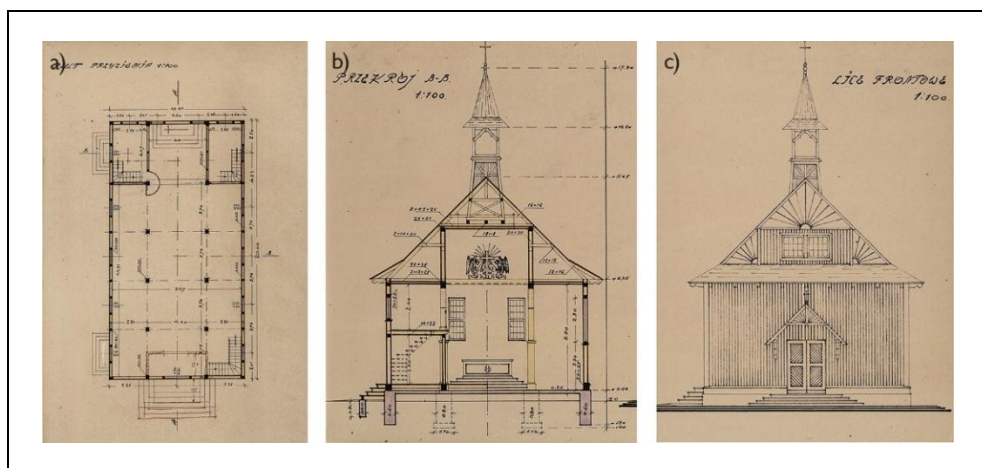
Unlike the towerless church in Olbięcín, the architect designed a tall risalit (a projecting part of the facade) ending with a gable, surrounded at the lower level by a porch. As Ewa Błotnicka-Mazur writes, its form refers to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century wooden manor chapel of the Wybranowski family [15].

The projects signed by architect Michał Sławiński were essentially created in collaboration with building technician Marian Wójcicki, making it difficult to specify the scope of their individual contributions. According to engineer Edward Kranz, architect Sławiński merely authorized the designs prepared by building technician Marian Wójcicki, who lacked architectural design qualifications.

The churches in Leopoldów (1932) [19], Platerów (1934-1935) [20], and Łuzki (1934) [21] share a traditional stylistic approach, replicating Zakopane motifs (the 'sun decoration') in a very simplified manner, and they also use the same structural solutions (Figure 6). Zakopane motifs do not appear only in the earliest project in Leopoldów (1932).



**Figure 5.** Project of the church in Młodnica, Janów County (1931-1932). a - ground plan; b - front view; c - cross-section; source: APL, UWL, 984



**Figure 6.** Project of the church in Platerów, Siedlce County (1933). a - ground plan; b - cross-section; c - front view; source: APL, UWL, 2188

All Sławiński's churches were designed without towers. The buildings are longitudinal, two-part structures with a narrower presbytery distinct from the nave. The main distinguishing architectural emphasis is placed on the presbytery section.

Characteristic for the Lublin region, and shaped in earlier periods, is the model of a three-part church covered with separate roofs. This design was also realized in the churches in Kraczwice Prywatne (1920) or Chrzanów (1932) [22].

During the interwar period, one of the most important sources of inspiration became the best-known and at the same time extraordinarily picturesque wooden churches of Lesser Poland, particularly those characteristics of the Western Beskids and the Podtatrzański region. Their forms, developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,

featuring a tower with an izba (upper chamber) on the façade and a nave surrounded by soboty (covered walkways), became widely regarded as the perfect representation of a Polish church [23].

Sacred architecture traditions were employed in establishing appropriate proportions between the height of walls and roofs. Patterns from all architectural epochs—Gothic, Baroque, and Classical—were used and reinterpreted. Many motifs were borrowed from folk art. In this way, characteristic features of the national-romantic current began to crystallize in the church's architecture [5].

One particularly interesting example is the church of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist in Polskowola. A plan was drawn up to rebuild the former Orthodox church and adapt it to the new rite. The project, developed in 1920 by engineer A. Petasz, envisaged giving the church neo-Gothic features [24]. Due to a poorly designed structure and an exterior decoration that did not align with the contemporary aesthetic trends, the drawings were not approved.

Due to the poor technical condition of the building, the decision to rebuild the former Orthodox church was ultimately abandoned. The parish was then forced to hire an architect, entrusting this role to the builder Jan Godlewski. Based on his design, between 1921 and 1923 a new church was erected, made from pine logs and covered with metal sheeting, executed in classical forms typical for the 'national style' (Polish), inspired by single-tower mountain churches and Art Déco forms.

Many buildings were also constructed in the historicist style, drawing from Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque, and Classical architecture. The first church project in Polskowola originates from Gothic traditions. Various epochs' motifs were used in the eclectic church in Biała Podlaska [25], while the church in Kolembrody represents a nod to Classicism.

## **4. Case-studies presentation**

### ***4.1. Kolembrody***

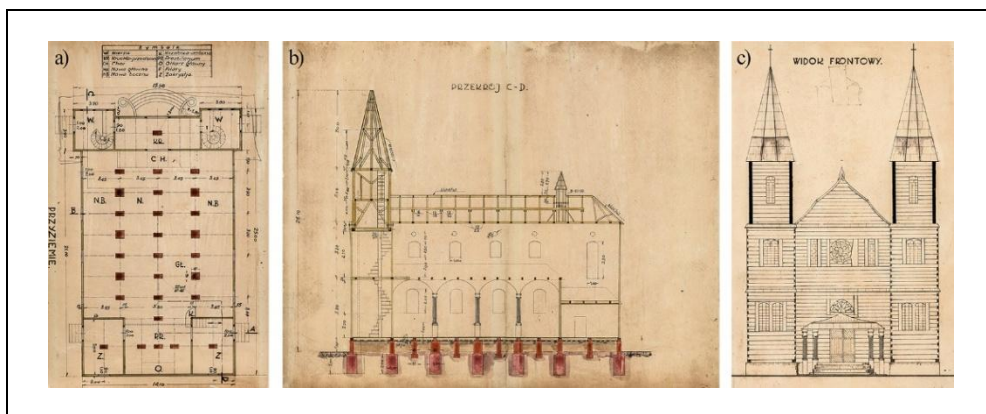
The church complex in Kolembrody is located in the Lublin Voivodeship, Radzyń County, Komarówka Podlaska Commune (Figure 9.a). It is situated on the western edge of the village, right next to the main road passing through the village, in the center of a rectangular churchyard cemetery. It is an oriented church, with its facade facing the road. The church complex includes: the church built between 1933 and 1935, a wooden Baroque bell tower from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the rectory (a wooden rectory from 1935, demolished after 2013, and a new brick rectory built in 2005), and the former primary school.

The Catholic parish in Kolembrody was reconciled in 1918, and the Roman Catholic parish of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary was established a year later. The old church, which was too small and at risk of collapse, was dismantled in 1930. At that time, services were held in a provisional wooden chapel.

The current wooden church was erected on the site of the former Orthodox church between 1933 and 1935.

### 4.1.1 Project

The authorship of the first project for the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Kolembrody is attributed to road technician Czesław Mańko. Until 1923, Mańko worked as a road technician in the District Road Administration in Radzyń Podlaski, later transferring to the same position in Międzyrzec Podlaski. His contribution to construction is not well documented [26].



**Figure 7.** Project of the church in Kolembrody (1930) by Czesław Mańko  
a - ground plan; b - longitudinal section; c - front elevation; source: APL, UWL, 2061

Mańko designed a two-tower basilica-type church on a rectangular plan. The naves were divided by three pairs of fluted columns connected by semicircular arches (Figure 7.a). The vaults took the form of barrel vaults. The facade was designed with three axes, with tower risalits at the outer axes. In the central part, on the axis, Mańko designed the main entrance preceded by a columned porch, above which he placed a semicircular window. On the second floor, on the axis, Milewski designed a rose window, closing the facade with a triangular gable with drips (Figure 7.c).

The design by Mańko, after being submitted to the employees of the Communication and Construction Department in Lublin, was not approved [26]. Apart from numerous structural errors in the roof truss design, officials also challenged almost all aesthetic aspects concerning the use of barrel vaults, segmental closures of window openings, round windows in the upper part of the main nave, and the arches separating the aisles. The facade was suggested to omit the columned porch preceding the entrance, and the removal of neo-Gothic rose windows and pyramidal spires was also recommended.

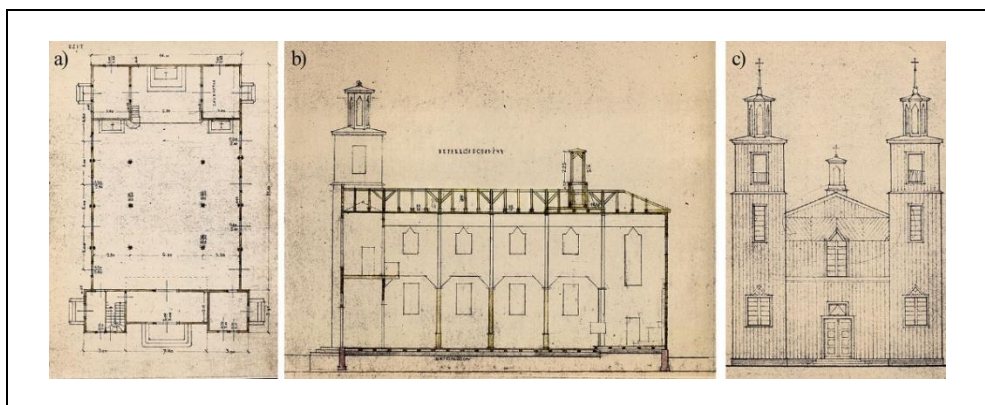
Officials proposed a simplification of the details. According to their opinion, the semicircular arches, both in terms of vaults and openings, should be replaced with straight or trapezoidal ones. Regarding the aesthetics of the towers, the officials recommended introducing polygonal lanterns on their tops, covered with flat roofs. This vision, closer to traditions developed for wooden architecture, was characteristic of modernist realizations of that period [5].

Corrections respecting the official recommendations were prepared by engineer Kazimierz Milewski, a graduate of the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the Warsaw University of Technology and, since 1930, a construction advisor at the ODRP in Lublin [10]. During his architectural work in the Lublin region, Milewski designed several primary schools in the Biała district and in Nałęczów. The stylistics of his buildings were close to the currents of functionalism and traditionalism, drawing on classical aesthetics.

In 1933, he made corrections to the church project in Kolembrody. Milewski maintained the three-nave basilica body, dividing the aisles with three pairs of fluted columns.

He replaced the arches of the openings and the vaulting of the main nave with a flat closure (windows in the upper part were closed with gables). The semicircular arches of the side aisles' arcades and vaults took trapezoidal forms. The spiral staircases leading to the towers were replaced by one two-flight winder staircase. The choir gallery on the upper floor of the tower span was opened to the main nave with a balcony. The facade was kept as a two-tower, three-axis design, with the entrance in the central part on the axis.

The facade was crowned with a triangular gable. The towers, in the form of risalits, were three stories high, topped with a slender, openwork lantern on a hexagonal base, covered with a flattened roof and a cross at the top (Figure 8).



**Figure.8.** Project of the church in Kolembrody (1930) by engineer Kazimierz Milewski a - ground plan; b - longitudinal section; c - front elevation; source: APL, UWL, 2061

Ultimately, the expectations of the Office were met only regarding the facade. During construction, the columned porch was abandoned. The upper stories of the towers were topped with open, slender lanterns covered with flattened roofs and crowned with iron crosses. The gable was simplified by omitting the dripstones and the neo-Gothic rose window on the facade. The rest of the design, especially the interior architecture, was executed based on the unapproved plans of Czesław Mańko.

Inside, barrel and barrel-cross vaults were constructed along with the arches separating the aisles. The window openings were left with segmental arches, and the round windows in the upper part of the main nave were also retained.

#### **4.1.2. Implementation**

The church's architecture is maintained in historic forms, with references to Classical motifs, particularly evident in the design of the interior [5].

The church is wooden, built on a stone foundation, with walls constructed using the log technique and clad on both sides. The floors are wooden, plank laid on joists. The vaults are barrel and groin vaults. The roof structure is wooden, based on trusses. The roof is covered with galvanised sheet metal (Figure 9.b). The music choir is cantilevered on a half-dome. Inside, the walls are clad horizontally with boards.

The nave is three-aisled, basilica type, consisting of four bays. The chancel is the same width as the main nave but longer than its bay. The interior is entirely clad vertically, with applied carved decoration. The dominant feature is the main nave connected to the chancel, covered with a shared barrel vault on ribs. On either side are the lower side aisles, half the height of the main nave, opened to the main nave by semicircular arched arcades resting on pillars. The pillars stand on plinths and are decorated with panels. The vault ribs rest on pilasters in the giant order. Above the arcades runs a frieze decorated with a meander pattern, above which, beneath the vault, are windows framed with moulded surrounds. In the chancel, the side walls are divided by doors leading to the sacristies and a very tall window. Below the meander frieze (as in the nave) is a wider arcade frieze. The side aisles are covered with groin vaults on ribs, which rest on wall pilasters. The music choir is cantilevered on a half-dome, with the main entrance below in a wide surround topped with a lintel cornice. The choir parapet is solid with an arcade frieze. In the wall with the tower are rectangular glazed doors. The sacristies and tower rooms have flat ceilings with no distinctive features. In the western tower room, there is a winding staircase leading to the music choir. The church's interior decoration was executed by carpenters from Komarówka Podlaska.

The church's form is twin-towered, composed of adjoining rectangular blocks. The dominant volume is the rectangular main nave and chancel, covered with a shared, three-pitched, flattened roof. The side aisles are rectangular, half the height of the main nave, with shed roofs. The towers are rectangular, three-storey, topped with tall, openwork cupolas on an octagonal base.

The western facade is twin-towered, three-storey, with three vertical axes, clad vertically. The three-storey towers (storeys separated by drip caps) project beyond the building's corners. At the base, the towers have pairs of biforium windows, above which are wider single windows on the central axis. In the middle section, on axis, is the main entrance to the church, above which is a semicircular window. The main doors are sheltered by a gable roof supported on corbels. In the second storey is an image of the Virgin Mary, flanked by two narrow, elongated rectangular windows. The whole is topped with a triangular pediment (Figure 9.c).

The side elevations are similarly treated, clad horizontally, composed of the tower and the main nave block, flanked by the side aisles and sacristies. The main nave block, with an indistinct chancel, has five axes. Along the nave are four low windows with segmental arches, above them are oculi. The tower projecting in

front of the nave across its full width houses a side entrance. On the second and third floors of the tower are wooden blinds filling the wooden openings (Figure 9.d,f).

The rear elevation is three-axis, clad horizontally. On the outer axes, flanking the chancel, are the sacristies with segmental-arched windows on the axis. The chancel part is smooth, windowless (Figure 9.e).

#### **4.1.3. Condition**

The church underwent renovations in 2011 (window replacement, landscaping works around the church), 2016 (interior renovation), and 2019 (facade renovation) [27]. It remains preserved without changes.

### **4.2. Kanie**

The church complex in Kanie is located in the Lublin Voivodeship, Chełm County, in the Rejowiec Fabryczny commune (formerly Pawłów) (Figure 11.a). It is situated in the central part of the village, at the junction of the roads Kanie-Krasne, Kanie-Liszno, and Kanie-Ewopole. The church stands on an irregular plot, aligned on the eastern side.

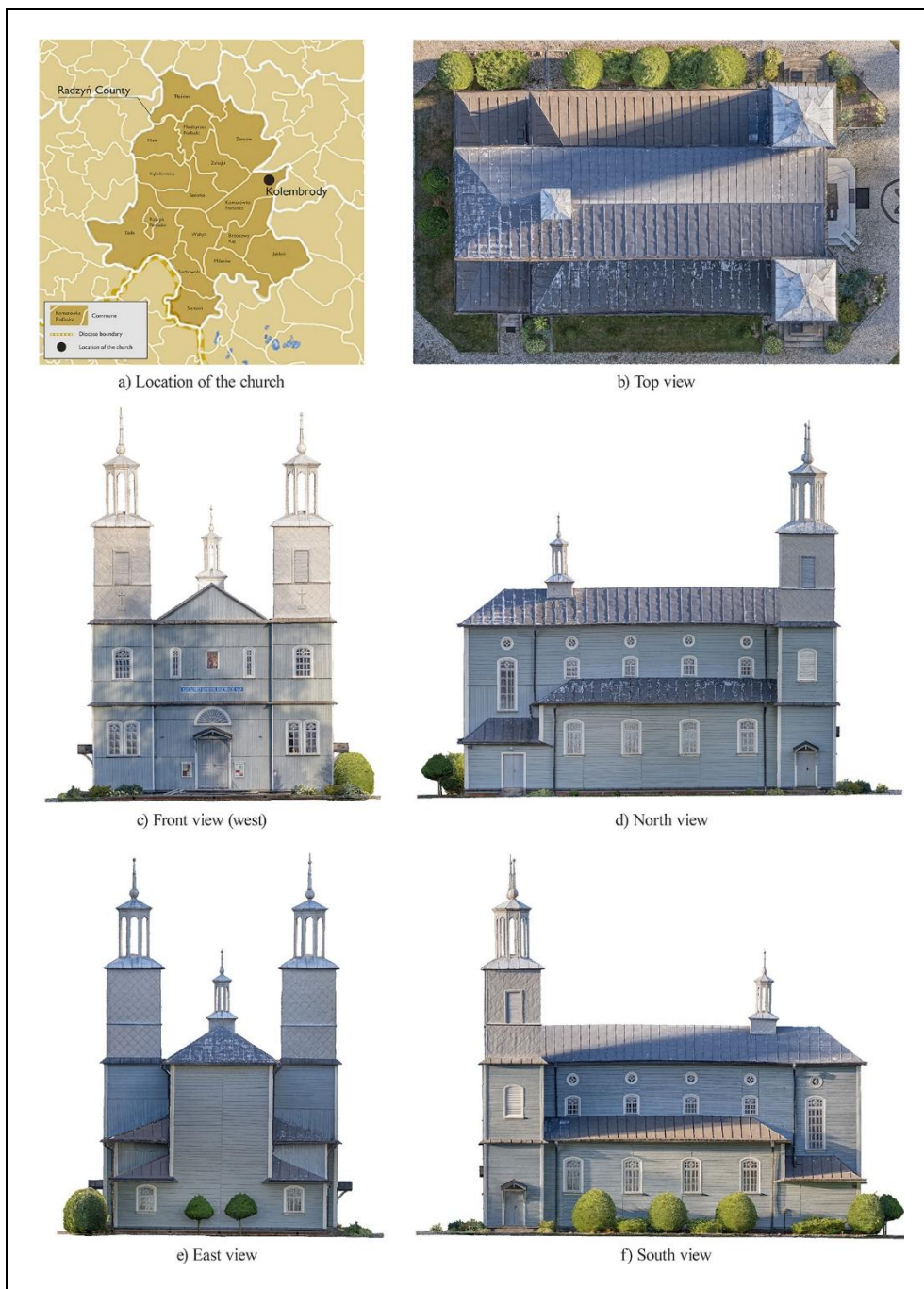
The parish church dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul was built between 1937 and 1938, next to the former Uniate church. The project was approved on 6 April 1938, following revisions. In the corrected plan, the new church was positioned behind the old Uniate church, on its left side [28].

#### **4.2.1 Architect**

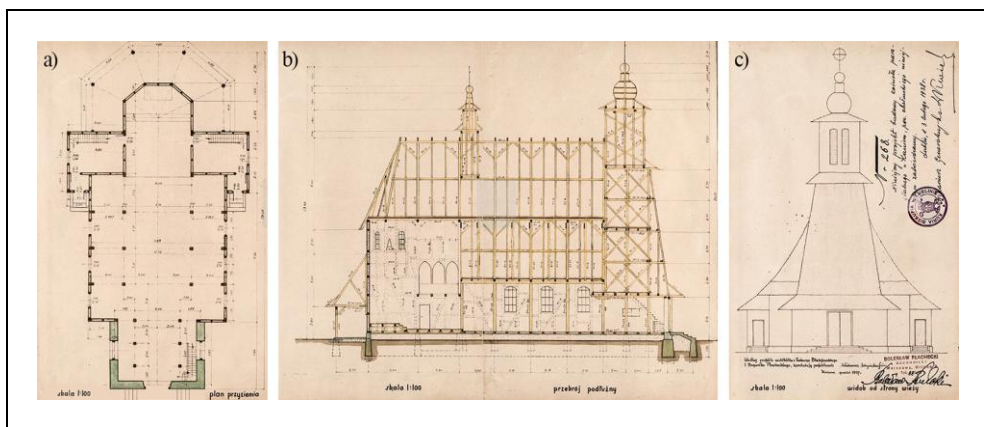
Few architects broke away from the conventional planning schemes commonly used in designing churches. One notable exception is the Kanie church, designed by architects Bogumił Płachecki and Tadeusz Błażejowski. The project also involved architect Bolesław Płachecki and Włodzimierz Woyciechowski, son of the Kanie estate owners and designer of the church's load-bearing structure. Built in 1938, the Kanie church is a distinctive building in terms of both its structural and planning solutions, standing out among other constructions of its time. The church in Kanie, designed by them in 1937, was constructed in accordance with their plans.

#### **4.2.2. Architecture**

The church was designed in the national-romantic style, with a silhouette recalling the wooden mountain churches. It was built on high foundations made of local limestone (opoka) using the so-called 'timber framing' method. The church has a very tall, steeply pitched roof, originally covered with wooden shingles. The presbytery is surrounded by picturesque, wide covered walkways (soboty) supported by posts.



**Figure 9.** Architectural inventory of the church in Kolembrody - photogrammetric method: a - Location of the church; b – f - Inventory materials of the church in Kanie (2024); source: a – map by K. Kluz; b-f - photogrammetry by M. Wac



**Figure 10.** Project of the church in Kanie (1930) by arch. Tadeusz Błażejowski and Bogumił Płachecki: a - ground plan; b - longitudinal section; c - front elevation; source: APL, UWL, 595.

The building is founded on a masonry base made of limestone, while the walls were designed with a post-and-beam (timber-frame) structure. Both the interior and exterior timber skeleton of the church are clad with boards made from young pine wood. The walls at the tower's base are built of cut limestone blocks from a nearby quarry, shaped like bricks. Directly above the main nave is a ceiling made of curved pine beams with boarding underneath. The roof is very tall and steeply sloped. Above the presbytery, the roof structure is of the hanger type. Currently, the roof is covered with sheets of galvanized steel (Figure 11.b). The interior walls, posts, and ceilings are finished with varnished spruce panelling. The floors are laid with two-tone terracotta tiles on a concrete base.

The design uses a simple plan with a three-nave layout, where the naves are separated by wooden pillars. Narrow, pentagonally closed sacristies with irregular plans are located at the ends of the side naves and along the walls of the presbytery. Staircases within these sacristies lead to galleries that open with semicircular arches onto the presbytery space. The main nave has a pointed-arch vaulted ceiling, which was somewhat innovative, while the presbytery, choir, and side naves are covered with flat ceilings (Figure 10).

The church's form is two-part. The nave body is topped with a high, double-pitched roof with a pronounced eave and crowned with a bell tower featuring an onion-shaped dome.

At the front stands a four-storey tower with slightly sloping walls that step inwards towards the top. Originally, the tower was designed with a stepped roof of two storeys, with a pronounced eave, topped by an onion-shaped dome. The storeys are separated by tall eaves with curved roof slopes, with an onion dome at the summit (Figure 11.c). The west facade is dominated by the tower, symmetrical and single-axis, with double-leaf doors on the central axis. The storeys are separated by tall eaves with curved slopes, topped by an onion dome (Figure 11.c). The side elevations are similarly designed, asymmetrical, five-axis, and lack architectural decoration (Figure 11.d,f). The east elevation is three-axis and

partially obscured by the covered walkways supported by posts reinforced with braces featuring decoratively carved edges (Figure 11.e).

#### **4.2.3. Condition**

Major renovations of the church took place in 1966, 1967, and 1973. Between 1988 and 1989, the roof structure and roofing of the tower were replaced. At that time, the church's form was significantly altered by reconstructing the tower on the facade. The bell tower and the church's entrance doors were also renovated [29].

In 2010, further renovations included: ceiling repairs, roof structure repairs, replacement of roofing, installation of gutters and downpipes, restoration of the bell tower along with repairs to the crowning crosses, wall conservation, and foundation insulation.

The church's external architecture has been preserved with modifications. The reasons for the changes in the building's form remain unknown.

#### **4.3. Pilaszkowice Pierwsze**

The initiative to build the church began in 1925, during the development of the garden city concept in the then-planned district of Dziesiąta. Construction began on 6 July 1933 and lasted one year.

As the Dziesiąta parish grew, the church became too small. In 1984, construction of a new masonry church commenced. The wooden church, preserved to this day, was relocated in 1985 to the village of Pilaszkowice Pierwsze, in Świdnik County (formerly Krasnystaw County), within the Rybczewice commune (Figure 13.a). The church is situated by the road from Bazar to Dąbie, to the east of the road and the Gielczew River. The building stands on the edge of a hill, below residential buildings.

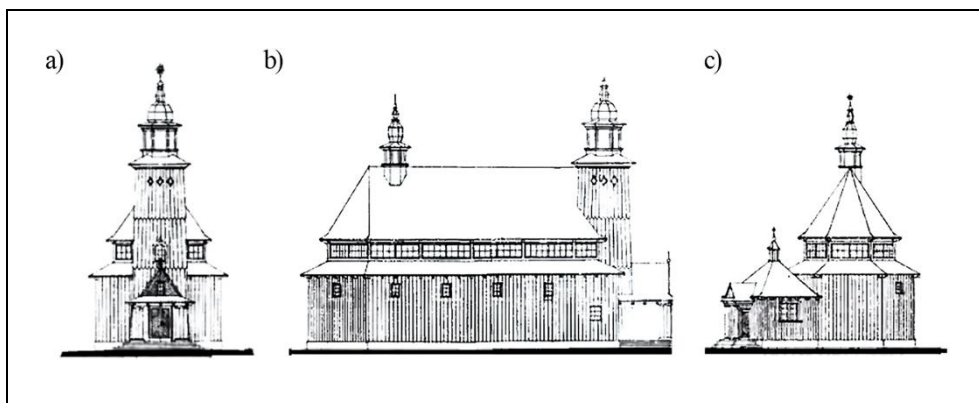
##### **4.3.1. Architect**

The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Lublin (relocated to Pilaszkowice Pierwsze in 1985) was designed by architect Tadeusz Witkowski between 1933 and 1934 [10]. Witkowski was one of the most prolific architects of churches built in the Lublin Voivodeship. Besides the church in Pilaszkowice, his designs were used for churches in Jeziorzany (1929), Staroścín (1930), Brzeźnica Książęca (1935), Branew (1936), and Wygnanowice (1947–1948).

Originally, in the design for the Lublin church, the architect proposed a single sacristy located on the northern wall of the presbytery (Figure 12.c). The nave body in the project had a five-bay form, defined by small rectangular window openings and side doors to the church (Figure 12.b). Ultimately, the sacristies were built symmetrically, and the nave was simplified, lacking window openings in the lower part.



**Figure.11.** Architectural inventory of the church in Kania - photogrammetric method:  
a - Location of the church; b – f - Inventory materials of the church in Kania (2024);  
source: a – map by K. Kluz; b-f - photogrammetry by M. Wac



**Figure.12.** Project of the church in Pilaszkowice Pierwszych:

a - front view; b - side view; c - rear view; source: H. Danczowska, Architekt Tadeusz Witkowski 1904 - 1986. *Kalendarium życia i twórczości*, Lublin, 2009

#### 4.3.2. *Architecture*

The church was realised as a temporary building, in the national-romantic style, referencing single-tower mountain churches, but it also features elements directed towards modernity, unusual for other churches built in the region at the time (Figure 12.a). The interior of the church has a neo-Gothic character.

The church is wooden, with a log-and-post wall construction and a post-and-frame tower structure, founded on a stone base. The architect used railway sleepers, then the cheapest available building material, also readily accessible in a district inhabited by railway workers. The ceilings were designed as flat, beam-supported, with lowered edges. The roof structure was built in a king-post truss system. The roof is covered with metal sheeting. At the height of the presbytery stands an octagonal bell turret topped with an onion-shaped dome and lantern. Inside, the floor is made of wooden boards, and the walls are lined with panelling.

The building is a single-nave, single-space structure with a presbytery not separated from the nave, closed polygonally at the east end. The architect proposed an unusual solution for the sacristies, placing them not on the sides but on the slanted walls of the polygonally closed presbytery (Figure 13.b). At the front, on the ground floor of the tower partially incorporated into the nave body, is a porch, above which is a music gallery with a simple parapet.

Witkowski was particularly interested in the problem of light in architecture. He enhanced the church interior lighting with ribbon windows placed high up in the space between the double-pitched and mono-pitched nave roofs (Figure 13.d,e,f). Sunlight entering through these was directed by walls shaped as pointed neo-Gothic arches.

The church is single-towered, in the style of mountain churches. The tower walls taper upwards. It is crowned by an open lantern covered with a crystalline dome, topped by a cross on a finial. The traditional layout is dynamically enlivened by diagonally set sacristies and picturesque columned porches preceding the sacristy entrances and the main entrance to the church.

The church façade (south-facing) is three-bay, with a central three-storey tower risalit containing the main entrance. The entrance is preceded by a porch supported on wooden columns. The side elevation walls are treated similarly, with no openings in the lower zone, topped by a mono-pitched roof. Above this roof are modernist strip windows crowned by the church roof (Figure 13.c).

#### **4.3.3. Condition**

Repairs were carried out in 1960 (roof conservation, treatment of the church's external walls), 1967 (alterations to altars and interior decoration, including removal of the original altar and balustrade, raising the presbytery, lowering the pulpit, painting murals inside, treating walls against insects, and roof repairs), and again in 2003–2005 (restoration works).

The external architecture of the church remains mostly unchanged. The triple diamond-shaped openings in the tower (Figure 13.a) were probably replaced in 1960 by a rectangular opening fitted with wooden louvers (Figure 13.c).

#### **4.4. Leszkowice**

The church is located in the Lublin Voivodeship, Lubartów County, Ostrówek Commune (formerly Luszawa) (Figure 15.a). It is situated at the beginning of the village of Leszkowice, at the junction of the roads to Ostrówek, Luszawa, and Górka Lubartowska. The church is not oriented.

##### **4.4.1. Architect**

The first design sketch for the Kanie church by Zygmunt Andziak, a construction worker employed by the Lubartów Regional Assembly, was not accepted [17]. The reasoning stated that project is unsuitable for construction, being aesthetically negative.

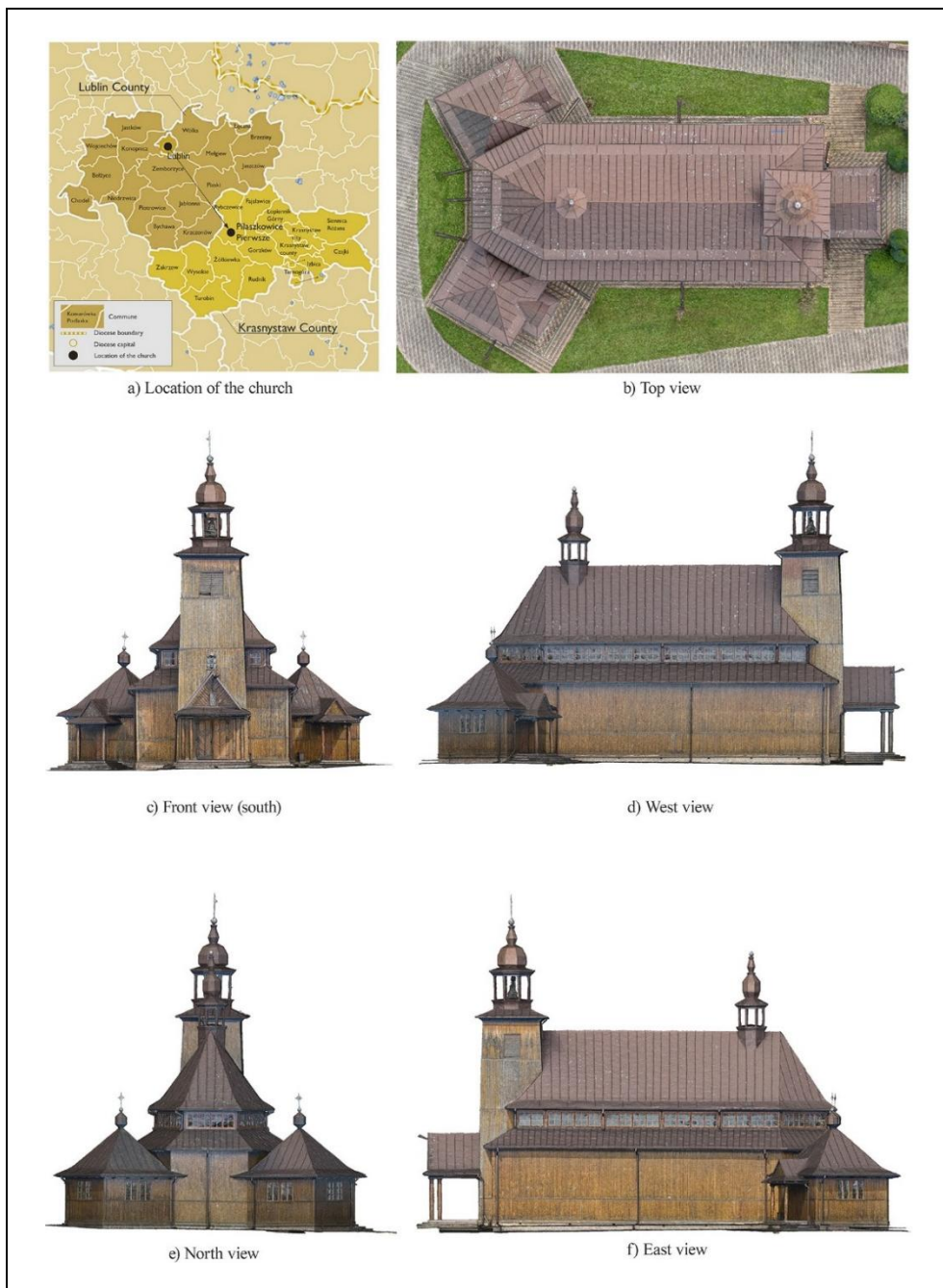
The church was realised based on the design [30] of architect Bohdan Kelles-Krauze between 1921 and 1924 (see p.12). Construction work had likely already commenced by then. The building was completed and the church consecrated in 1924.

In his design for the Leszkowice church, Krauze incorporated only a few vernacular motifs that highlighted the connection of his work with tradition: a squat tower topped with a Baroque-style spire, an archaic turret with a belfry, and ceiling decorations styled after seventeenth-century stucco work found in Lublin churches (Figure 14). Ultimately, none of these motifs were realised. Only the lower stage of the tower retained the shape given by Kelles-Krauze.

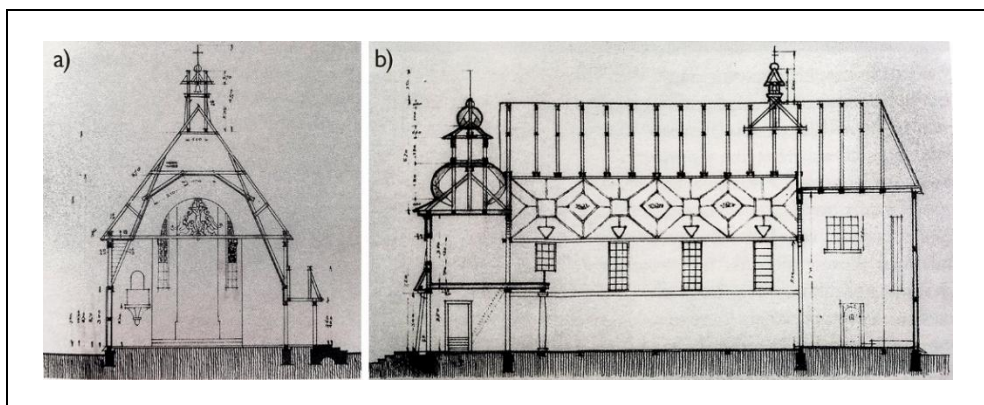
##### **4.4.2. Architecture**

The church's architecture is shaped in a vernacular style, rooted in folk building traditions. Associated with the national-romantic movement, it smoothly combines the building traditions of mountain churches with contemporary

aesthetics. After transformations in 1985, the church now presents a complex structure and form, contrasting the simplicity of the exterior brick silhouette with the innovative design of its wooden interior.



**Figure.13.** Architectural inventory of the church in Pilaszkowice Pierwsze - photogrammetric method: a - Location of the church; b - f - Inventory materials of the church in Kanie (2024); source: a - map by K. Kluz; b-f - photogrammetry by M. Wac



**Figure.14.** B. Krauze, Plan of the provisional chapel in Leszkowice,; source: AAN, 2827

Originally, the church was built of wood with a post-and-beam (frame) structure, filled with straw braids soaked in a clay solution. The walls are clad both externally and internally. The sill beams rest on a stone foundation without insulation.

Currently, the nave and chancel have timber-framed interior walls, with brick walls externally. The sacristy and side chapel walls are brick-built. The porch and tower retain a post-and-beam construction. The nave and chancel are covered by a type of false ceiling with a trapezoidal cross-section, created from parts of the roof trusses with struts and posts. The roofs are covered with sheet metal (Figure 15.b).

The church is single-nave. The nave is rectangular in plan, with an attached polygonal chancel on the northern side. Inside, the church is covered with a false ceiling of pentagonal cross-section (with some roof structure exposed). This is a more elaborate variation of the trapezoidal ceiling common in wooden church architecture during the interwar period. The nave is separated from the narrower chancel by a simple beam (the chancel arch beam) bearing a crucifix.

On the western side of the chancel adjoins the sacristy, almost square in plan, with a small vestibule. At the front is a porch with two side rectangular rooms — the western room contains stairs to the choir, the eastern room is a storage space for church equipment. At the front corners are two narrow L-shaped rooms. The open choir, supported on four posts, overlooks the nave.

The church is single-storey. At the front is a four-storey tower containing the porch on the ground floor and part of the choir above. The nave and chancel have gabled roofs of the same height, with the chancel roof closing in three slopes. Halfway along the ridge is a turret with a belfry, shaped similarly to the tower's spire.

The facade features the four-storey tower, left in wood. The tower's horizontal divisions are strongly marked, and its storeys taper upwards in steps. The two lower storeys are flanked by annexes, with the first storey separated by an eaves roof. The third storey, clad in sheet metal, has sloping walls. The topmost storey is a rectangular prism topped by a slender, tent-shaped spire also covered

with sheet metal (Figure 15.c). The side elevations are simple, without architectural divisions; the sacristy is on the west side, the side chapel on the east (Figure 15.d,f). The rear (north) elevation is windowless, with the sacristy wall projecting too far westward (Figure 15.e).

#### **4.4.3. Condition**

In 1932, the wooden shingle roofs were replaced with sheet metal. A major alteration occurred during the extensive renovation in 1984, when the nave was encased externally in a full brick wall of red ceramic bricks (designed by Antoni Herman). The roof structure was reinforced with collar ties and purlins, and the foundations strengthened. A small porch attached to the east side of the nave was moved closer to the chancel, and its door was bricked up — the porch became a chapel. The position of the sacristy, on the west side, was also slightly altered.

### **5. Results and discussion**

The study's findings reveal the methods employed in the conservation and management of architectural and artistic heritage in wooden sacred architecture.

These discoveries shed light on effective strategies for protection and documentation. A key outcome of the conducted research is a deepened understanding of significant architectural elements of wooden churches from the interwar period, which merit precise identification, appropriate recognition, and effective protection.

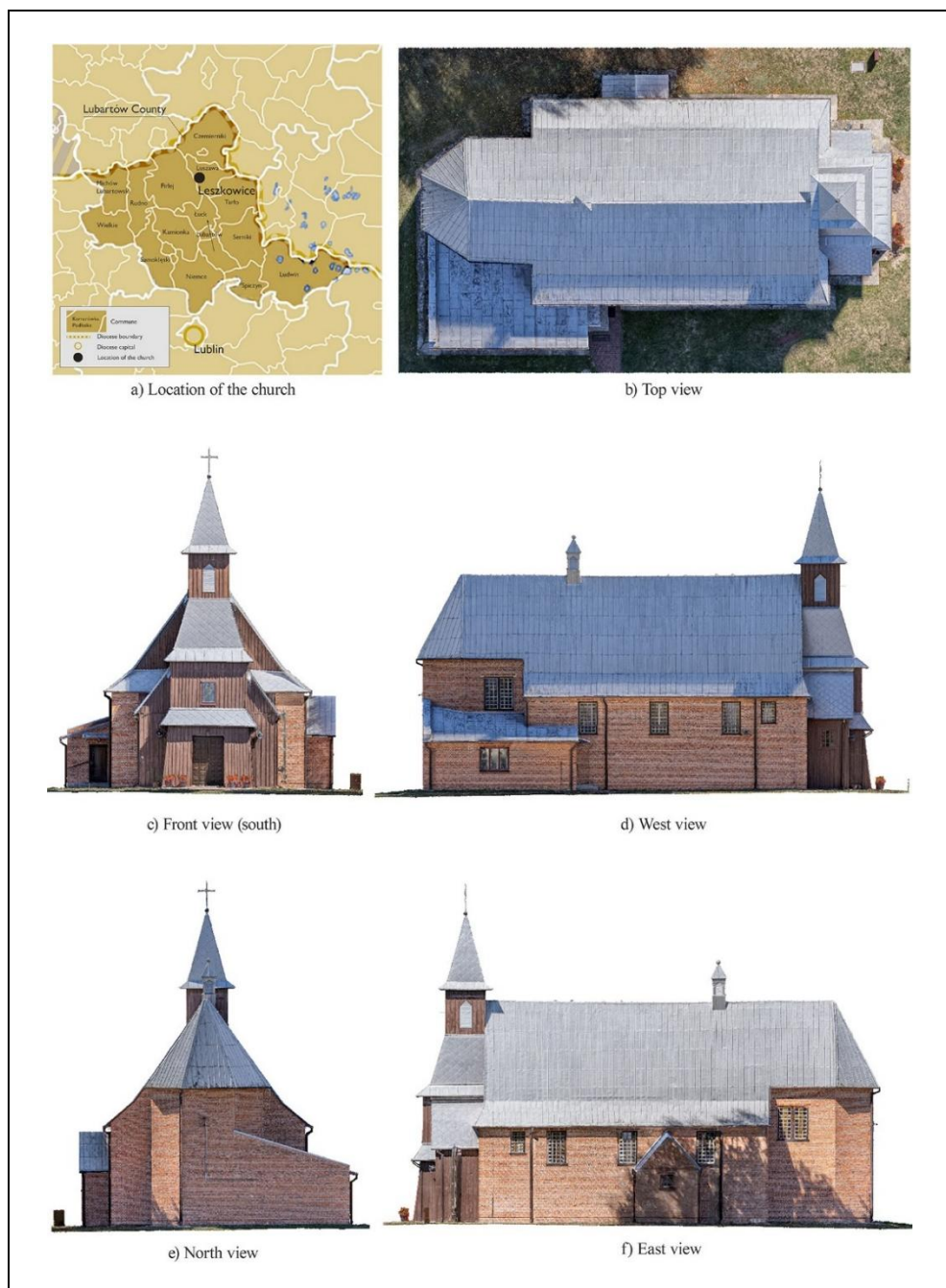
By presenting and analyzing selected cases of churches the study's authors have organized and updated the current state of knowledge regarding this narrow segment of heritage. The analyzed cases provide insight into typical strategies and challenges related to the conservation and management of heritage from this period.

As a result of the research, two key trends were observed regarding the authenticity of the ideas behind churches built during the interwar period in the Lublin region. The first concerns churches erected based on designs by certified engineers and architects, which tend to be relatively faithful to the original design concepts. The second concerns churches constructed according to designs by technicians and building office staff, where authorities often objected to the proposed aesthetic solutions, delegating design corrections to qualified engineers and architects. These corrections, however, involved a number of compromises, which can be seen in the final outcomes.

The church in Kanie serves as an excellent example of a faithful representation of the original design idea, as well as effective cooperation between architects and structural engineers, the results of which can still be admired today in the solutions proposed by the design team.

Another case, slightly different, is that of the church in Pilaszkowice Pierwsze. During construction, the original design was modified, resulting in the erection of two symmetrical sacristies instead of one. It is reasonable to assume that this change was agreed upon with the supervising architect, as evidenced by

the achieved functional, visual, and compositional results. Despite the introduction of solutions atypical for wooden sacred architecture, the construction demonstrates a high level of craftsmanship.



**Figure.15.** Architectural inventory of the church in Leszkowice - photogrammetric method: a - Location of the church; b – f - Inventory materials of the church in Kanie (2024); source: a – map by K. Kluz; b-f - photogrammetry by M. Wac

The churches in Leszkowice and Kolembrody represent the other side of the issue. Both were erected based on modified designs.

In the case of the church in Leszkowice, architect Bohdan Kelles-Krauze was hired to prepare new plans under the condition that construction had already begun. A comparison of both floor plans shows that the architect attempted to adapt the overall layout to Andziak's sketches, while proposing a more proportionate form and varied architectural detail. However, the final execution does not faithfully reflect the architect's vision, and the reasons for the deviations from Kelles-Krauze's project remain unknown.

A similar case is that of the church in Kolembrody. The current form of the building represents a compromise between the visions of both designers, in opposition to the decision of the Building Office. In this case, however, the reasons for abandoning some of the official guidelines are clear and stem from the investor's (the parish priest and congregation's) understanding of ecclesiastical architecture. For them, such a radical simplification of architectural details appeared overly modern and too far removed from traditional aesthetics, making it ultimately unacceptable.

It is worth noting that assessing the authenticity of an architectural concept would not have been possible without access to preserved archival materials, including original designs, sketches, and post-construction photographs. Only a method based on in-depth archival research allows for a reliable analysis of the design assumptions, and—when combined with a wide spectrum of objects—enables proper understanding and classification. This classification is essential for evaluating the value of this group of heritage objects.

Another observation addressed the evolution of the churches during their use. The main issue here was an attempt to assess the authenticity of the historical fabric. Preserved designs, archival photographs, architectural surveys, and renovation and remodeling plans were compared with new data gathered from a photogrammetric inventory conducted in 2024 by MSc Eng. Michał Wac as part of the research team's work.

The conclusions from this part of the study are satisfying. The research clearly showed that in three out of four cases, the original historical substance was preserved with minimal changes.

The flagship case is undoubtedly the church in Kolembrody, whose external architectural form has remained unchanged since its construction. All work carried out on the monument has complied with the recommendations of heritage authorities (e.g., window replacements).

In the churches in Pilaszkowice Pierwsze and Kanie, transformations to the architectural form—and thus the historical substance—mainly affected the tower section. In Pilaszkowice, the changes were minor and limited to a triple diamond-shaped opening. Considering that the building was relocated in 1985, the degree of preservation is particularly commendable.

The changes to the tower of the church in Kanie were more substantial, involving its overall shape, architectural divisions, and finishing materials. Originally featuring a stepped, two-level roof with an overhanging eave and a

shingled onion dome, the tower was rebuilt into a four-level structure with slightly sloped walls and a metal-clad stepped design.

The reasons for these transformations are primarily functional, related to structural condition and safety.

The most significant transformation occurred in 1984 at the church in Leszkowice, when the log walls of the nave were externally encased in solid red ceramic brick. Significant changes were also made to the building's form, including moving the east-facing porch closer to the presbytery and bricking up its door, as well as relocating the sacristy. However, the interior of the church retained its original historical substance. The work was carried out according to plans by architect Wojciech Herman, approved by then-Conservator of Monuments T. Zielniewicz. This radical transformation was prompted by the building's poor technical condition. According to a 1982 expert report, the outer walls—secured in the interim with steel ties—were deforming due to excessive horizontal thrust from the roof structure. The 1984 intervention was thus of a protective nature.

The issue of managing and protecting wooden sacred architecture—especially relatively recent examples—is complex.

Exposed to atmospheric conditions, wooden churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century often no longer meet contemporary safety and usage demands. As a result, decisions about their future are usually driven by utilitarian concerns—adjusting buildings to modern functional needs and reducing high conservation costs, for example, by replacing vulnerable materials with more durable ones. However, such actions can significantly affect the authenticity of these structures, often permanently distorting their original form.

It is therefore crucial to define the boundary between acceptable transformations in this group of buildings and actions that should not be permitted.

Digital inventory methods now constitute an essential pillar of the work of both conservators responsible for safeguarding heritage and architects undertaking restoration and modernization of wooden sacred architecture.

## **6. Conclusions**

The architectural heritage of wooden churches from the interwar period of the Second Polish Republic constitutes a unique collection. Despite their consistent architectural formula and liturgical requirements, these structures are not immune to modifications aimed at adapting them to contemporary standards.

Each case reflects a distinct approach to the construction, preservation, and conservation of existing buildings, making them significant case studies for understanding the challenges involved in safeguarding this relatively young heritage from a crucial period in Poland's history. Despite deviations from the original designs and subsequent transformations, wooden churches represent a highly valuable legacy of architectural thought, achievements in decorative design, and construction techniques that reflect the spirit of their time.

The present study focused primarily on the external architectural features of the churches; however, the applied methodology is universal and can

successfully be extended to studies of the interior architecture of this group of buildings.

The churches discussed in the article vary in terms of the consistency between design intent and implementation, as well as in usage and state of preservation. The conducted research enabled a comprehensive examination of the wooden sacred heritage stock, allowing for conclusions essential for proper management and protection of this resource.

A general conclusion drawn from the study is that wooden sacred architecture in the Lublin region is an extremely important element of the cultural landscape of towns and villages. It serves as a lens through which significant historical and social trends, observed in the territory of the Second Polish Republic during the interwar period, are concentrated. Ensuring proper management, conservation, and presentation of these structures will not only contribute to the preservation of this heritage but also has the potential to raise the cultural awareness of the communities connected to it.

Although the study presented examples of buildings under formal protection whose state of preservation does not raise major concerns, it is important to remember that as of today, 43.2% of the wooden churches built during this period in the Lublin region no longer exist.

Only proper documentation, systematic inventory based on modern technological advancements, and respectful, well-informed management and conservation of wooden sacred architecture will allow for its preservation.

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