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SMALL ROADSIDE SACRAL STRUCTURES IN THE BORZECZÓW COMMUNE (LUBLIN REGION) AND THEIR DENDROFLORA

Magdalena LUBIARZ,* Piotr KULESZA, Małgorzata ŻAK-KULESZA

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

Trees and shrubs significantly increase the visual value of roadside crosses and shrines. The paper presents results of the inventory of small roadside sacral structures in Borzechów Commune (Central-Eastern Poland). The species composition and the age status of dendroflora surrounding small roadside sacral structures were examined. We have inventoried 94 small roadside sacral structures in Borzechów Commune. Only 68 of them were surrounded by trees and shrubs that represent 39 species. The most common deciduous species are small leaved lime (*Tilia cordata* Mill.) and common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris* L.), but the most common coniferous species is northern white-cedar (*Thuja occidentalis* L.). In the research area the most common small roadside sacral structures are crosses. Shrines and statues of saints are very rare.

Keywords: dendroflora, small roadside sacral structures, landscape of Borzechów, cross, shrine

Small roadside sacral structures represent an important element of the cultural landscape of Poland. Alongside other displays of religious cult, they create a sacral or religious landscape, and are the spiritual and cultural legacy of the nation. They constitute a material expression of devotion of the local people, as well as a part of broadly understood sacral space (Przybylska 2005; Myga-Piątek, 2012; Plit, 2012). Roadside crosses and shrines dominate the landscapes of all regions across Poland, as evidenced by the results of studies to date. Since 1990's, the number of roadside crosses in Poland has rapidly increased, exceeding fourfold the number of shrines and statues (Przybylska and Czepczyński, 2016). The majority of studies regarding small religious structures in Poland is inventory in character, with special focus on typological, historical, cultural, and artistic aspects (Seweryn, 1958; Gauda, 1987; Janicka-Krzywda, 1991; Białczak, 2002; Pawelec, 2004; Golonka-Czajkowska and Maj, 2006; Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz and Kimic, 2007; Kozaczyńska, 2007; Kondraciuk and Urbański 2008; Garbacz, 2009; Kozaczyńska, 2010; Mełges, 2010; Frąckiewicz, 2011; Czerwiński, 2012; Rembiś et al., 2012; Antolak and Szyszkowski, 2013; Rydzewska and Wilkaniec, 2013; Pukowiec and Pytel, 2013; Hernik et al., 2013; Holly 2012; Kulesza and Lubiarez, 2013; Kuprjaniuk, 2014; Hochleitner, 2014; Kijowska, 2015; Kulesza et al., 2017a). Only a few studies undertake the issue of vegetation accompanying the objects, especially their evaluation from a natural viewpoint (Borcz and Czechowicz, 2003; Majdecka-Strzeżek, 2003; Pudelska, 2011; Lubiarez and Kulesza, 2013; Kulesza et al., 2017b; Gorączkowski and Bykowska, 2018). However, the authors highlight the great value of trees and shrubs that grow near crosses and shrines. Due to this vegetation, roadside crosses and shrines become more visible within

the landscape, thus increasing their sacral expression in terms of space (Antolak and Szyszkowski, 2013). Especially significant are tall, old trees that form a connection between the earth and the heaven. They express the divine and earthly elements alike. What is more, the span of their crowns demarcates a safe space for the sacral objects, highlighting their religious aspect (Cała, 2007). Thus far, studies suggest that the most dominant deciduous trees are lime trees (*Tilia* sp.), while among coniferous – *Thuja* sp. (Cała, 2007; Pudelska, 2011; Lubiarez and Kulesza, 2013; Kulesza et al., 2017b). Despite the fact that roadside sacral structures are increasingly becoming the subject of interest of many fields of study, there still are not enough studies dedicated to the vegetation that surrounds them. Therefore, it is important to extend analyses and supplement the present state of research.

The Borzechów Commune was established in 1973, however, the area it consists of has a complicated history. Before 1474, the administration of the Borzechów Commune area belonged to the Sandomierz Voivodeship. Between 1474 and 1795, the territory was a part of the Lublin Voivodeship, the Urzędów County to be exact. Only after 1830 and entering this region to the Kingdom of Poland did the area become a part of the Lublin County. After regaining independence by Poland in 1918, the territory that presently belongs to the Borzechów Commune was a part of Niedrzwica Duża and Wilkołaz Communes. Following the Second World War, in the years 1955–1972, the areas that comprise this commune were under the jurisdiction of Gromada National Councils, i.e. the smallest administrative units of the country, which usually encompassed a few villages (Kozłowski, 2013). Parish membership also underwent significant changes.

Contact address: Magdalena Lubiarez, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Faculty of Mathematics, IT and Landscape Architecture, Institute of Landscape Architecture, Department of Environmental Protection and Landscape Preservation, Konstantynów 1H, 20-708 Lublin, Poland, +48 81 445 45 39, e-mail: lubiarez@kul.pl

Villages originally belonging to this area belonged to the Wilkołaz and Ratoszyn parishes. In 1930 the parish of Kłodnica Dolna was established and is still operational. In 2006 a new parish in Borzechów was founded (Kozłowski, 2013).

The oldest villages of the Borzechów Commune are: Borzechów, Kłodnica Dolna, Kłodnica Górna, Łopiennik (all originated in the 15th century), as well as Kępa dating back to the 16th century. The remaining villages are from the 19th century. Only three villages – Dobrowola, Kolonia Łopiennik, Majdan Radliński – were founded at the beginning of the 20th century (Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego, 1880–1914).

Material and methods

The field research was carried out across the span of the Borzechów Commune (cadastral area), rural in character. The commune is situated in the Lublin Voivodeship (middle-eastern Poland), and its area equals 67.73 km². This commune was selected for our study due to the fact that its area previously belonged to historic settlement units. What is more, Borzechów adjoins other communes with high historical value. The study includes all roadside sacral structures (crosses, shrines, statues) located within the administrative boundaries of the commune. Observations and measurements were performed in July and August, 2018. We determined the types of sacral structures, as well as species composition of the accompanying vegetation using the method of dendrological inventory based listing all observed trees, shrubs, and prostrate shrubs. Botanical nomenclature for the dendroflora was adapted from Seneta and Dolatowski (2017). In the case of trees, we also carried out a dendrochronological analysis, using the measurements of diameter at breast height (130 cm from the ground), as well as a tree age table by Majdecki (1986). Detailed photographic documentation was prepared as well.

Results and discussion

Despite its rich history, the Borzechów Commune is somewhat forgotten. One of the reasons is that it was founded relatively late – in the second half of the 20th century – by merging different administrative units. Therefore, it has been insufficiently studied in terms of its value as a cultural landscape, especially when considering sacral structures – in comparison to the neighbouring communes (Niedzwica Duża, Wilkołaz), that have been thoroughly studied (Biegalska, 2000; Janczarek et al., 2014; Kosidło, 2015).

The Borzechów Commune is located far from vital communication and pilgrim routes, especially the Lublin section of the Way of Saint James leading through Kraśnik to Sandomierz (Mróz, 2014ab). In the past, however, it used to belong to Via Regia leading from Vilnius, through Lublin to Cracow (Kozłowski, 2013). That ensured its rapid economic and demographic development. The register of monuments of the Lublin Voivodeship from 2018 indicates that curatorial

protection encompasses only three architectural complexes: the wooden parish church with historic tree stand in Kłodnica Dolna, the manor-park complex in Kłodnica Dolna, as well as the historic manor and park in Łopiennik (Kopciowski, 2018).

As a result of the research carried out across the Borzechów Commune, 94 roadside sacral structures were found. Among those are: 5 statues, 3 shrines, 84 crosses, and 2 crosses with cabinet shrines (Fig. 1). It is important to note that, in comparison with other communes from Lublin Voivodeship and the rest of the country, this commune is filled with roadside sacral structures, since in the Mełgiew Commune (area of 95.64 km²) there were 84 sacral structures (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013), in the Trzydnik Duży Commune (104.73 km²) – 73 structures (Kulesza et al., 2017b), and in the Nakło nad Notecią Commune (186.97 km²) only 23 such structures were found (Gorączkowski and Bykowska, 2018).

Roadside sacral structures in the Borzechów Commune are scattered unevenly. The higher concentration of these objects was noted in Kłodnica Górna and Kłodnica Dolna situated in the south-eastern part of the commune. Numerous crosses can be found in Łopiennik (South-West) and Majdan Skrzyniecki (North-West). The area of the village of Łopiennik is dominated by metal crosses, whereas in Majdan Skrzyniecki one can find metal crosses, as well as old, wooden, often dilapidated ones (Fig. 2).

The majority – 89 objects are situated in the direct vicinity of roads, where 31 crosses and 1 statue were found



Figure 1 A cross in Łączki-Pawłówek
Photo: Magdalena Lubiarz, 2018



Figure 2 Crosses in Majdan Skrzyniecki
Photo: Magdalena Lubiarcz, 2018



Figure 3 Crosses in Kępa Borzechowska
Photo: Magdalena Lubiarcz, 2018

at crossroads or forks in the road. What is more, 2 crosses and 2 statues are on private properties, and 1 cross is situated in the manorial-park complex in Kłodnica Dolna. The landscape of the Borzechów Commune is dominated by roadside crosses. Among them, over 53 are made from metal, 26 from wood, 5 from stone, and 1 from concrete.

The results of our analyses indicate that none of the inventoried roadside sacral structures is under legal protection, despite the fact that some of them visibly show historical and cultural value. Few objects have a date of their construction, information about the founder, or any inscription related to their origin. Four of the inventoried objects show clear historical value. The oldest is the wooden cross from 1906 in Kępa Borzechowska, with the inscription: "GOD ALMIGHTY, ACCEPT THE SIGN OF YOUR CROSS, WHEN THE POLISH NATION IS NEARING FREEDOM, WE, POOR FARMERS, WORSHIP YOU, MERCIFUL GOD, HAVE MERCY ON US" (Fig. 3). The origin of the cross needs to be linked to the edict of tsar Nicholas II of Russia from 1905, and peasants' movements, which were the result of the document in this area. The cross is accompanied by two over-one-hundred-year-old small leaved limes (*Tilia cordata* Mill.). Around 1908 Józef Sokalski founded a brick shrine in Kępa Wały. It is surrounded by new plantings of Chinese juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* L.) and northern white-cedar (*Thuja occidentalis* L.). The interior of the shrine, however, does not show high historical value, possibly due to the damage

sustained during two World Wars, and following renovation. Situated in Kłodnica Dolna is a statue of Christ carrying a cross from 1909, founded by Mr and Mrs Modzelan. Next to the statue there is a single specimen of an approximately seventy-year-old small leaved lime with three trunks, as well as one, approximately one-hundred-year-old common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* L.), with three trunks as well. Situated in Ludwinów is a stone cross from 1922, founded by the local people. The cross has a small niche, housing a new picture of Our Lady of Fatima, of no historical value. Perhaps there used to be a work of art with higher historical value. Growing next to the cross there are two, nearly one-hundred-year-old specimens of small leaved lime.

Among the inventoried roadside sacral structures in the area of the Borzechów Commune, 68 are accompanied by higher vegetation. The inventoried deciduous plants represent 25 genera from 18 families, whereas among coniferous plants there were 7 genera belonging to 3 families. The majority of identified taxa are of foreign origin, since among deciduous plants they constitute over 71%, and among the coniferous – 55%. The remaining taxa represent taxa of the native flora.

Within the area of the Borzechów Commune among the vegetation accompanying the roadside sacral structures 36 species were found, including: 8 species of deciduous trees, 9 species of coniferous trees, 16 species of deciduous shrubs, 2 species of coniferous shrubs, and 1 species of

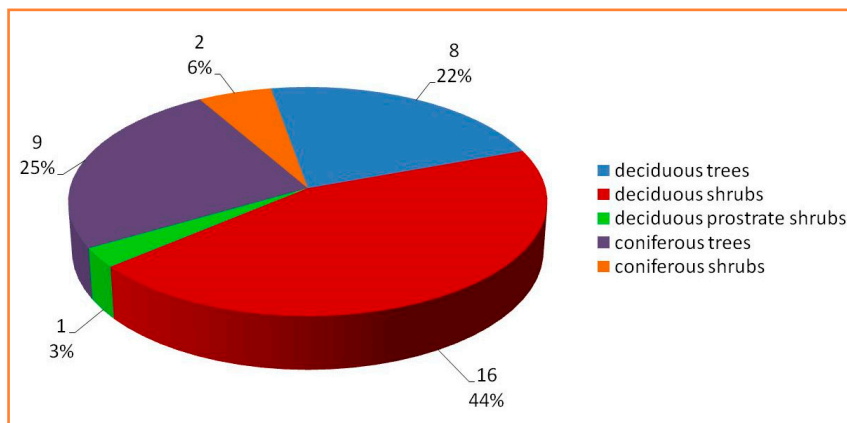


Figure 4 Number and percentage share of deciduous and coniferous species of trees, shrubs and prostrate shrubs
Source: own study

a deciduous prostrate shrub (Fig. 4). 16 specimens of plants were identified only as far as the level of genus. These are representatives of the *Paeonia* genus (4 specimens), *Rhododendron* (6 specimens), and garden roses (*Rosa* sp. – 6 specimens). Similar results were obtained in the Mełgiew Commune, where 34 species of accompanying 84 roadside sacral structures were found (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013). In another commune in Lublin Voivodeship – Trzydnik Duży – 42 species of dendroflora were found at 73 objects (Kulesza et al., 2017b). Pudelska (2011) noted that 28 species of trees and shrubs were found alongside 31 sacral structures in the area of the Przeworsk County.

The highest species percentage share is represented by deciduous shrubs (44%), followed by deciduous trees (22%), coniferous trees (25%), coniferous shrubs (6%), and deciduous

prostrate shrubs (3%) (Fig. 4). A similar structure of domination of individual groups of dendroflora in the Trzydnik Duży Commune was identified by Kulesza et al. (2017b). Within the area of the Borzechów Commune, deciduous plants accompanying crosses and shrines are represented by 25 species (which constitutes 69% of the inventoried species), whereas coniferous ones – by 11 (equal to 31%). Similar observations were presented in the case of the Trzydnik Duży Commune, where 76% of the identified dendroflora belongs to deciduous species (Kulesza et al., 2017b). In the Mełgiew Commune, however, only 19% of the species were coniferous (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013).

In the Borzechów Commune area the majority of identified species belonged to the Cupressaceae family, which is represented by 7 species from 4 genera. Among deciduous

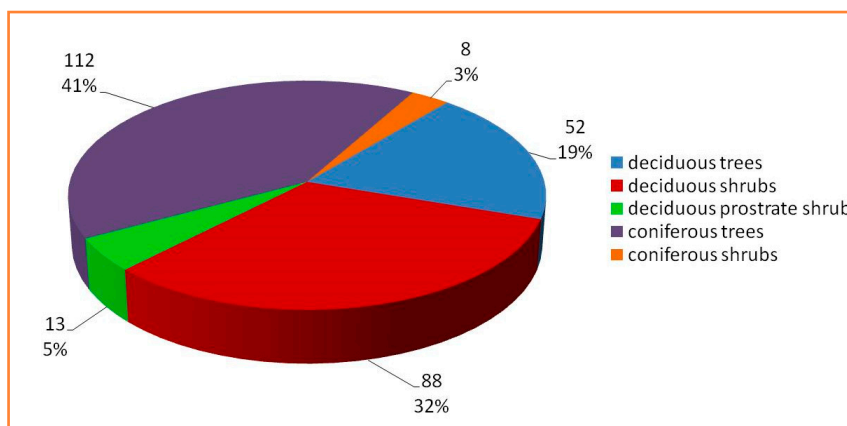


Figure 5 Number and percentage share of plant specimens in individual groups of dendroflora
Source: own study

plants, the highest number of species was inventoried within the *Rosaceae* family – 3 species from 2 genera, as well as the aforementioned garden roses which were identified only as far as their genus. Similarly, in the area of the Trzydnik Duży Commune, the most numerous genera belonged to the following families: *Rosaceae*, *Cupressaceae* and *Oleaceae* (Kulesza et al., 2017b).

There were 273 specimens of plants, including 164 specimens of trees, 96 specimens of shrubs, and 13 specimens of prostrate shrubs inventoried in the area of the Borzechów Commune. Deciduous plants have the greatest number of representatives, since there were 52 trees, 88 shrubs, and 13 prostrate shrubs. Coniferous plants are represented by 112 specimens of trees, and 8 specimens of shrubs inventoried (Fig. 5).

The most often occurring deciduous tree species is *Tilia cordata* (28 specimens), whereas among deciduous shrubs it is *Syringa vulgaris* (28 specimens). *Tilia cordata* accompanies 16 crosses and 2 figures, whereas *Syringa vulgaris* – 12 roadside crosses. It is a sign of a continuing trend of planting vegetation at sacral objects that originated at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Majdecka-Strzeżek, 2003). Similarly, in the area of other communes of the Lublin Voivodeship, the most numerous deciduous species was *Tilia cordata* (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013; Kulesza et al., 2017b). However, in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship, the most numerous species were *Picea abies*, *Tilia cordata* and *Acer platanoides*, and among the shrubs, *Buxus sempervirens* was the most dominant (Gorączkowski and Bykowska, 2018).

The most numerous coniferous plant is *Thuja occidentalis* (66 specimens), present at 20 objects, including 19 crosses and 1 shrine. There is an increasing popularity of using coniferous plants alongside sacral structures. Such observations were made earlier, in the areas of the Trzydnik Duży and Mełgiew Communes situated in the Lublin Voivodeship (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013; Kulesza et al., 2017b). Gorączkowski and Bykowska (2018) have also found that the most numerous coniferous taxon

in the Nakło nad Notecią Commune is *Thuja* 'Smaragd'. Pudelska (2011), on the other hand, reports that *Thuja occidentalis* occurs individually near crosses and shrines of the Przeworsk County.

The most numerous genus in our research is *Juniperus*, since there were 4 species belonging to this genus (*Juniperus communis*, *Juniperus sabina*, *Juniperus scopulorum*, and *Juniperus chinensis*). Similar data was obtained by Kulesza et al. (2017b) in the area of the Trzydnik Duży Commune, as well as Gorączkowski and Bykowska (2018) in the Nakło nad Notecią Commune, which confirms that coniferous plants are used more often as a supplement of roadside crosses and shrines, most probably due to them being evergreen.

Near certain objects, trees and shrubs were planted symmetrically, creating a framework for the cross or shrine. However, in many locations in the Borzechów Commune ambiguous compositional settings were observed. It is sometimes due to the fact that trees were cut down at one side of the object, as evidenced by stumps left behind by the removed specimens. It was observed that large deciduous trees are replaced with coniferous species, especially from the *Thuja* and *Juniperus* genera.

At 28% of the roadside sacral structures inventoried in the area of the Borzechów Commune there are no trees or shrubs. Identical results were obtained in the area of the Trzydnik Duży Commune (Kulesza et al., 2017b). In the case of the Mełgiew Commune 24% of objects lack dendroflora (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013). As in other regions of Poland, within the studied area there often was ornamentation present on roadside crosses and shrines, made from flowers produced using synthetic materials (Frąckiewicz, 2011; Pudelska, 2011; Antolak and Szyszkowski, 2013; Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013; Kulesza et al., 2017b; Rydzewska and Wilkaniec, 2013).

Measurements and calculations show that the majority of tree specimens is not older than 20 years, and the size of only 3 small leaved limes (*Tilia cordata*) suggests age above 100 years. Two such specimens of small leaved lime were found at two crosses in Kępa Borzechowska, where there is located a wooden cross from 1906 (Fig. 3). One specimen of lime tree grows at a cross situated on an earth mound in Kłodnica Dolna.

The obtained results are similar to those from earlier studies carried out in the Lublin Voivodeship, in the Mełgiew and Trzydnik Duży Communes (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013; Kulesza et al., 2017b). The dominant form of sacral structures in the three communes is a cross. As in the Mełgiew and Trzydnik Duży Communes, in the Borzechów Commune, deciduous plant species were more numerous (Lubiarz and Kulesza, 2013; Kulesza et al., 2017b).

Conclusions

There were 94 roadside sacral structures found in the area of the Borzechów Commune, among which crosses were the most numerous. The remaining forms were rarely present. Unfortunately, none of the roadside sacral structures was entered into the register of monuments, despite the fact that the statue of Christ from 1909 in Kłodnica Dolna definitely deserves such protection. The majority of roadside sacral objects (as many as 72%) are accompanied by trees and shrubs, both deciduous and coniferous. Species composition

of the dendroflora confirms the results of previous research regarding the vegetation near roadside crosses and shrines in other parts of the Lublin Voivodeship, since the most often observed genera are *Tilia*, *Syringa* and *Thuja*. As in previous studies, there is a visible tendency of replacing old specimens of deciduous trees with coniferous plants, especially of alien origin. Our analyses show that in many places people care for roadside sacral structures, however, there are spaces, where crosses were left without care, slowly degrading. Therefore, it is important to continue in carrying out inventory types of studies in order to preserve, even if only in photographs, some of the forgotten roadside objects.

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