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Gothic Survival in Synagogue Architecture of Ruthenia, Podolia and Volhynia in the 17th–18th Centuries

The Ruthenian, Podolian and Volhynian provinces were the easternmost areas reached by the Gothic style in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and in the whole of Europe. The geographical position of these regions – today part of Ukraine,¹ but formerly part of the Old Russia with its Orthodox Church and dependence on Byzantine culture – was the reason for the comparatively late penetration of Gothic architecture. It was imported during the 13th–14th centuries by several waves of Roman Catholic colonists, i.e. townsmen and gentry from Poland and Germany, as well as by the monastic orders. Though Gothic architecture in these regions still deserves better exploration, it can be assumed that it was rather conservative, detached from the centers of major developments in Western and Central Europe.²

From the third decade of the 16th century onwards, the Gothic in Europe was gradually replaced by Renaissance, Mannerism and early Baroque. This holds true also for Poland, where first-class masters brought Italian novelties to the royal court, the magnates' residences and the monasteries promoting the Counter Reformation in the East. Nevertheless, Gothic architecture was not abandoned; it survived through the 16th and 17th, and even into the early 18th centuries. This late phase of the Gothic coincided with the beginning of masonry synagogue building in the eastern regions of Poland.

As it has been shown by Tadeusz Chrzanowski, the continuation of Gothic building in Eastern Europe knew two principal variations, one static in nature, and the other expansive. The first variation, referred to as the Gothic Survival,³ originated from the century-old usage of the Gothic, which transformed it into the »native« style of many countries north of the Alps. This survival was based on tested technical and artistic experience, an initial lack of understanding of Renais-

sance aesthetic theory, and a preference for »native«, not imported forms.⁴ Alternatively, the expansive penetration of Gothic took place in those eastern regions where it was little known before, like Masovia, Lithuania, and Moldavia, where it was applied to Orthodox sacred buildings for the first time.⁵ In fact, there were no distinct borders to the Gothic expansion of the 16th century, as Orthodox communities were

¹ The geographical names of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth are given in Polish, with an exception of Lvov (L'viv, Lwów, Lemberg).

² Tomasz Węclawowicz, *Małopolska i ziemie Ruskie Korony*, in: *Architektura gotycka w Polsce*, ed. Teresa Mroczko and Marian Arsztyński, vol. 2, Warszawa 1995, pp. 61–81, here: pp. 75–79.

³ On application of the term »Gothic Survival« see: Howard Colvin, *Gothic Survival*, in: *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, vol. 13, New York 1996, pp. 209–212.

⁴ Tadeusz Chrzanowski, »Neogotyck około roku 1600: Próba interpretacji, in: *Sztuka około roku 1600: Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki. Lublin, listopad 1972*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 75–112, here p. 76.

⁵ Chrzanowski (as note 4), p. 78. The issue of interacting eastern and western elements in the sacred architecture of the borderlands is continuously discussed by the Polish, Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian scholars. See: Alge Jankiewicz, »Wschodni obszar występowania gotyku i niektóre specyficzne cechy litewskiej architektury XV–XVI wieku, in: *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki*, XIX, 3 (1974), pp. 233–242; eadem, *Vzaimodeistvie arkhitekturnykh kul'tur na territorii Velikogo Kniazhestva Litovskogo v XV–1601 pol. XVI vv.*, in: *Architektura mira: Materialy konferentsii »Zapad-Vostok: vzaimodeistvie traditsii v arkhitekture«*, Moscow 1993, pp. 14–18; Vladimir A. Chanturia, *Istoriia arkhitektury Bielorusii*, Minsk 1977; Aleksandr M. Kushniarevich, *Kul'tavaia doilidstva Bielarusi XIII–XVI st.*, Minsk 1993; Sergiej Jurcenko, *Niektóre osobliwości ewolucji przestrzeni wołyńskich cerkwi z XVI w.*, in: *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki*, XLIII, 4 (1998), pp. 316–318; Robert Kunkel, *Późnogotyckie cerkwie na zachodnich rubieżach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, in: *Sztuka ziem wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVIII w.*, Lublin 2000, pp. 37–54.

borrowing architectural experience from their brethren elsewhere. In the case of synagogue architecture, there is every reason to speak of the first, static version of style continuity, since Gothic forms were common to synagogues in Germany and Bohemia – the birthplace of the forefathers of Ruthenian Jewry, who keenly preserved contacts with those countries. Nevertheless, the possibility that certain forms penetrated into synagogue architecture as a result of Gothic expansion into the Orthodox realm, should be carefully examined.

The Gothic forms of the period discussed here did not consistently exploit any particular phase of the medieval building style; they referred to some generalized, timeless Gothic.⁶ The way the architectural forms were combined and harmonized was a matter of local circumstance and the architect's taste. The resulting integration of peculiar details, the formal and programmatic flexibility could often be understood as a piece of Mannerist⁷ or Baroque architecture. Thus, certain elements of architectural decoration, like the ogee arcades, can be understood as both, a quotation of the dying Flamboyant, and the Oriental furnishing consistent with the Polish »Sarmatian« trend within the Baroque epoch.

The very survival of building forms belonging to a previous epoch reveals the presence of a certain historical awareness in architectural concepts, a positive evaluation of the past, where the aesthetic dimension is just one among others. This feature of Gothic Survival is known not only through built monuments, but also from contemporary texts, as well as from the folk narratives of later times. The latter, along with a certain degree of fantasy, sometimes include genuine information either about the founder, or about the communities' perception of their »ancient« synagogue. An exploration of the Jewish aspect of this early historicism is one of the objectives of this article.

1. Elements of Gothic in Synagogues of Ruthenia, Podolia and Volhynia

The monuments known to bear signs of the Gothic are the Nachmanowicz Synagogue of Lvov, later named the Golden Rose (or TaZ, an acronym of Turei Zahav,

1582),⁸ the synagogues of Międzybóž (the BaH Synagogue, before 1612),⁹ Stary Konstantynów (late 16th–early 17th centuries), Podhajce (between 1621 and 1648),¹⁰ the Old City of Zasław (first half of the 17th century), Tarnopol (1622–1628),¹¹ Satanów (the 17th century),¹² and Husiatyn (1654¹³ to 18th centuries).

⁶ Chrzanowski (as note 4), p. 91.

⁷ The Mannerist architecture in Poland did not correspond to its Italian version. The term would have to mean a more »naïve« or »popular« Mannerism when applied to Poland. See: Stefan Muthesius, *Polska: Art, Architecture, Design, 966–1990*, Königstein im Taunus 1994, p. 125.

⁸ Maria and Kazimierz Piechotkowie, *Bramy nieba: Bożnicy murowane na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 151, 154–155.

⁹ Veniamin Lukin, Boris Khaimovich, *100 evrejskikh miestechek Ukrainy: Istoricheskiy putevoditel'*, vol. 1, Jerusalem/St.-Petersburg 1997, p. 133. BaH (Yoel Syrkes, 1561–1640) left Międzybóž in 1612. The synagogue was ruined during World War II, and disassembled in the following decades.

¹⁰ Vasyl' Slobodyan, Oksana Boyko, Dariya Lonkevych, Synahohy Ukrainy, in: *Visnyk instytutu Ukrzhidpoekrestavratsiya*, vol. 8, L'viv 1998, p. 114. As it has been shown by Roman Mohytych, the area where the synagogue is located, became a city in 1621–1628, and could hardly be a building site earlier (see: Roman Mohytych, Pidhaytsi (istoryko-mistobudiveli'nyi narys), in: *Visnyk instytutu Ukrzhidpoekrestavratsiya*, vol. 1, L'viv, 1993, pp. 17–22, here: pp. 20–21). It is most possible that the synagogue was built before the outburst of Chmelnicki's uprising in 1648. A German traveler, Ulrich von Werdum, notes the existence of the synagogue of Podhajce in 1672 (see: Ulrich von Werdum, »Shchodennyk podorozhi, yaku ya zdiysnyv u roky 1670, 1671, 1672... cherez Koroľivstvo Pol'ske...«, Ukrainian translation and commentary by Ivan Iv. Svarnyk, in: *Zhovten'*, 10 (1983), pp. 89–104, here: p. 104.

¹¹ Central State Historical Archive in Lvov, collection Nr 700 (Provincial Authorities for Conservation of Architectural Monuments in Kraków), registry Nr 14, file 1. The documents states that the date was carved in the structure. These dates correspond to the overlord's permission for the reconstruction of a synagogue; see: Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 253. Ulrich von Werdum in 1672 describes the city of Tarnopol in the following words: »... the Jews, in such a plenty that they occupy a separate, and the best part of the city, possess here such a nice masonry synagogue that I have not seen any better in the whole Poland« (quoted after Ulrich von Werdum [as note 10], p. 96). Today, the synagogue no longer exists.

¹² Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 254. As it was concluded by Vladimir Levin in a report by the Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the construction date of the synagogue is still unclear. Some sources indicate the

Among these only the Nachmanowicz Synagogue is reliably dated, and no formal building permission for any of these synagogues is known.¹⁵ Unlike the Nachmanowicz Synagogue, most of them were located in privately owned cities of the borderlands, exposed to many invasions and much destruction, a long way from the important centers of royal and religious power. These synagogues were located close to the eastern extremities of the Gothic style in Poland. In almost every location, the contemporary Christian sacred buildings had Gothic elements as well. Thus even in the Ruthenian capital Lvov, renowned for a number of Italian architects active in the 16th–17th centuries, lancet arches were used in the St. Lazarus Church in 1620–1641.¹⁵ In provincial Podhajce, the Catholic parish church was built in 1634 with rib vaults and polygonal apses in chancel and transept.¹⁶ The monastic Trinity Church in the vicinity of Satanów with its polygonal apse and lancet arches dates to the first quarter of the 17th century.¹⁷ The monuments of Gothic survival in Międzybóż with the same elements include the Castle Church (1586), and the Catholic parish church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity (1632).¹⁸ The Castle Orthodox Church of Sary Konstantynów with its lancet arches and buttresses was constructed between 1561 and 1581,¹⁹ whilst the Dominican Church with a polygonal apse and lancet arches was built in 1612.²⁰ St. John's Church of the Bernardine monastery in Zasław, started in 1599, features a polygonal apse and ribbed vaults.²¹ The Late Gothic Bernardine Church of Husiatyn, later reconstructed, was erected in 1610.²² These monuments represent just a selection of the heritage of Gothic Survival, scattered throughout the neighboring cities, a sequence closed by the Catholic Parish Church of Skala-on-Zbrucz (1714).²³ The massive application of the Late Gothic throughout the region could indicate that the Jewish communities commissioned their buildings from the local masons, rather than seeking masters from distant locations.

Even a brief review of the mentioned Late Gothic synagogues (fig. 1) discloses their basic common feature, namely a hall layout of the sanctuary, void of interior piers. This scheme, popular throughout the whole medieval synagogue architecture, was applied to a number of German synagogues of the 11th–14th centuries, in-

cluding those of Speyer, Frankfurt, Erfurt, Miltenberg, Rufach, Bamberg, Mödling, Korneuburg, the early stages of the Old and the Pinkas synagogues in Bohemian Prague, two synagogues in Hungarian Sopron (14th century), the synagogue of the Silesian city of Strzegom (Striegau), later transformed into the St. Barbara's Church (1459), and others. In most cases, these prayer halls were comparatively small rooms, spanned by groined vaults when size allowed, or by flat wooden ceilings in more spacious rooms.

As yet two scholars have attempted to attribute the style of the hall-scheme in Polish synagogue architecture. The first was Majer Bałaban, who derived the elongated hall plan from western models, opposing it to the »eastern« square plans, allegedly influenced by Byzantine architecture.²⁴ In his opinion, the Nach-

date as 1514 or 1532, but this seems to be incorrect. Chemical analysis of the mortar made in 1992 showed that it is similar to the mortars of the mid-17th and early 18th century (see: Iu. Lifshits, *Naturnye issledovaniia zdaniia sinagogi XVII–XIX vv. v g. Satanovie Khmiel'niatskoi oblasti*, in: *Istoriia evreev na Ukrainie i v Bielorusii: Ekspeditsii. Pamiatniki. Nakhodki*, ed. Valerii Dymshits, St.-Petersburg 1994, pp. 120–127, here: p. 126). Following the wars of the second half of the 17th century, the building was restored. The inscription on the cartouche in the Torah Ark indicates the year 1716 as the year of reconstruction. It is likely that repairs were made as well as in the 19th century.

¹³ Tyt Hevryk, *Murovani synahohy v Ukrayini i doslidzhennia yikh*, in: *Pam'yatnyky Ukrayiny*, 2 (1996), pp. 32–38, here: p. 33. The scholar does not mention any source for this information.

¹⁴ The Nachmanowicz Synagogue first appears in the records as an illegal building, silently accepted by the Magistrate for certain financial services. The lack of valid building permission was revealed by certain aldermen to the Jesuit friars, and became a matter of a lawsuit. See: Majer Bałaban, *Żydzi lwowscy na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku*, Lwów 1906, pp. 56–57.

¹⁵ *Pamiatniki gradostroitel'stva i arkhitektury Ukrainy SSR*, ed. Nikolai L. Zharikov, vol. 3, Kiev 1985, p. 81.

¹⁶ *Pamiatniki* (as note 15), vol. 4, p. 42.

¹⁷ *Pamiatniki* (as note 15), vol. 4, p. 200.

¹⁸ *Pamiatniki* (as note 15), vol. 4, pp. 220–222.

¹⁹ Jurczenko 1998 (as note 5), pp. 316–318.

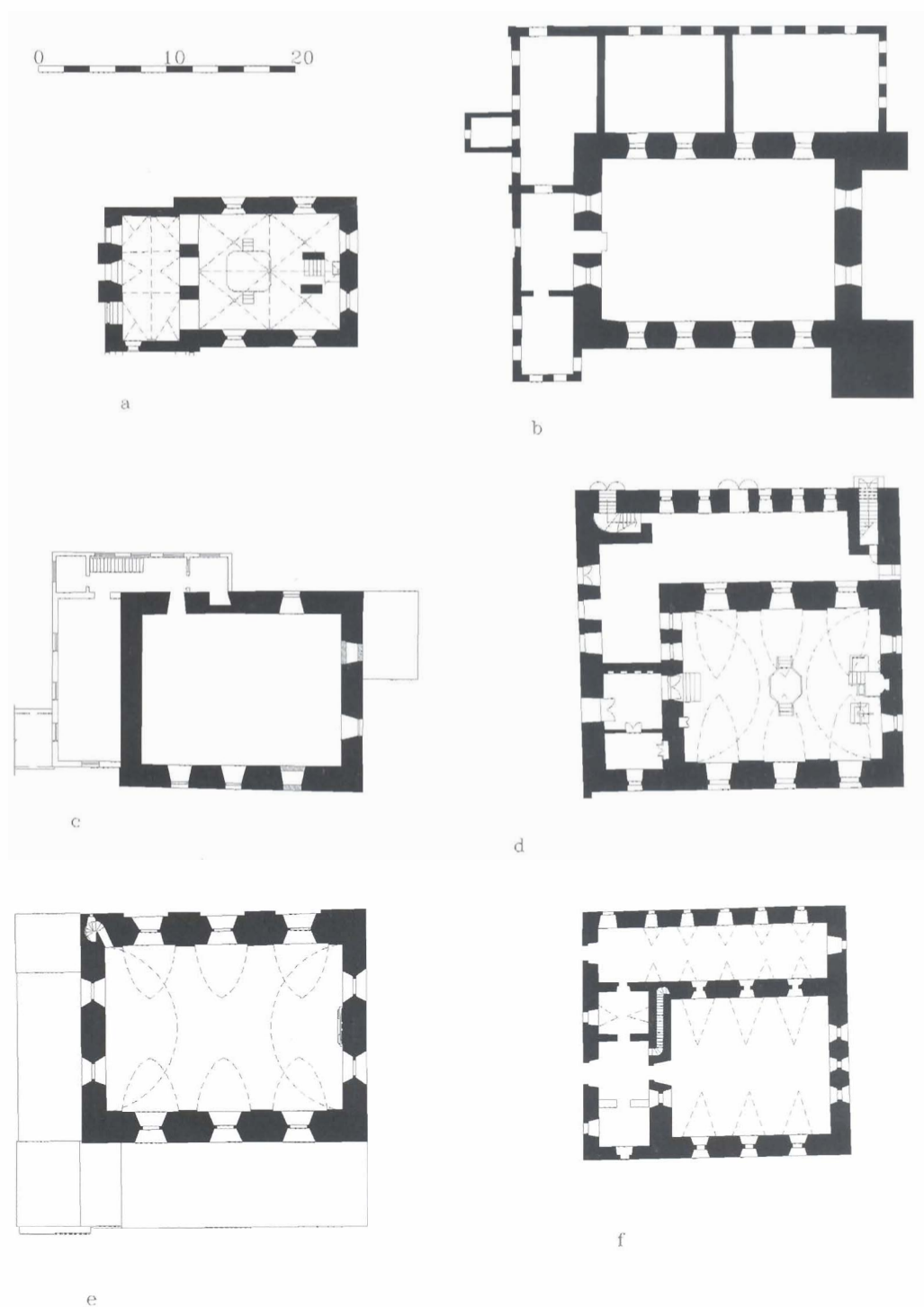
²⁰ *Pamiatniki* (as note 15), vol. 4, p. 227.

²¹ *Pamiatniki* (as note 15), vol. 4, p. 205.

²² *Pamiatniki* (as note 15), vol. 4, p. 60.

²³ Jurczenko 1998 (as note 5), p. 293.

²⁴ Majer Bałaban, *Zabytki historyczne Żydów w Polsce*, Warszawa 1929, p. 60.



1. Plans of the Gothic Survival Synagogues: a – Nachmanowicz Synagogue; b – synagogue in Podhajce; c – synagogue in Zastaw; d – synagogue in Tarnopol; e – synagogue in Satanów; f – synagogue in Husiatyn

manowicz Synagogue with its exterior measurements of 24 by 20 cubits represented a transition from western forms to eastern ones. Bałaban alleged that »everything is Renaissance in this synagogue, even the corbels from which the ribs spring are Renaissance, as well as the wonderful Torah Ark is Renaissance«,²⁵ yet he overlooks the large pointed window embrasures and rib vaults of the synagogue. Thus, he considered the slightly oblong Nachmanowicz Synagogue as either »Renaissance« or »eastern«, but by no means »western«. This concept was elaborated by Szymon Zajczyk, who assumed that the Polish hall synagogues with their almost square proportions and their central *bimot* were a departure from medieval principles, and thus constituted Renaissance monuments.²⁶ This concept has to be questioned, since the proportions of some medieval synagogues were also very close to the square, like that in Rufach (1429), with its prayer hall measuring 10 by 11.35 m.²⁷ Also the central position of the *bimah* in the Polish synagogues was a result of liturgical impetus, not an architectural ordering: it was recommended by Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (1135–1204), and afterwards reiterated by Rabbi Moshe ben Israel Isserles (ca 1525–1572), who was considered the »Maimonides of Polish Jewry«.²⁸ In my opinion, Polish hall synagogues continue a medieval tradition, due to recognizable design elements associated with this scheme. The Gothic elements noticeable in synagogue architecture of the 16th–18th centuries are rib vaults, pointed lunettes, embrasures and openings, as well as ogee arches. A common device in medieval architecture like buttresses spanned above the windows, as present only in the Satanów Synagogue, should be studied in comparison with its application in Catholic and Orthodox sacred buildings, representing various trends within the Late Gothic. As it can already be understood from the above brief review of local churches, the vocabulary of the Gothic Survival in Christian architecture of the region was richer, including, for instance, the polygonal apses of chancel and transept.

It should be emphasized, that the above mentioned Late Gothic hall synagogues co-existed in the same region with a little group of centric hall synagogues, Mannerist or Early Baroque in layout and in detail. These were the synagogues of Zamość, Szczepieszyn

and Sokal.²⁹ Another, more representative group of contemporaneous late Renaissance and early Baroque synagogues included four-pier hall edifices. These synagogues were not completely free of Gothic rudiments, like pointed lunettes in Zamość, Szczepieszyn and Sokal, or octagonal piers in many four-pier synagogues. Nevertheless, they are not an objective of this study, though they will be used as a comparative material.

The most recognizable Gothic feature of the examined synagogues, even visible from the exterior, was the lancet window. This element, known in the Polish east from the oldest Nachmanowicz Synagogue, was present in all the discussed monuments. Nevertheless, it was not the only type of window contour. Already in Nachmanowicz Synagogue, the opening proper was catenary, unlike the pointed shape of the embrasure. In the later synagogue of Satanów, the window openings of the prayer hall, as well as the Torah niche were lancet, whilst the shape of the window embrasures varied from catenary to round. In Zasław, the lancet openings were combined with the round interior embrasures (fig. 9, 10). A further deviation from the Gothic shape of the opening is noticeable in the central window of the eastern elevation of the synagogue in Stary Konstantynów, spanned by a segment arch, while the two other windows are lancet (fig. 7). However, the most common solution for the central eastern window became an oculus, present in synagogues of Podhajce, Międzyboż, Satanów, Zasław and Husiatyn. At least in three of them, Podhajce, Satanów and Husiatyn, and possibly in Zasław, an oculus pierced the center of both eastern and western elevations. In Międzyboż, three

²⁵ Bałaban 1929 (as note 24), p. 61.

²⁶ Szymon Zajczyk, *Architektura barokowych bóżnic muryowanych w Polsce (Zagadnienia i systematyka materiału zabytkowego)*, in: *Biuletyn naukowy, wydawany przez Zakład Architektury Polskiej i Historii Sztuki Politechniki Warszawskiej*, 4, Warszawa 1933, pp. 186–195, here: p. 188.

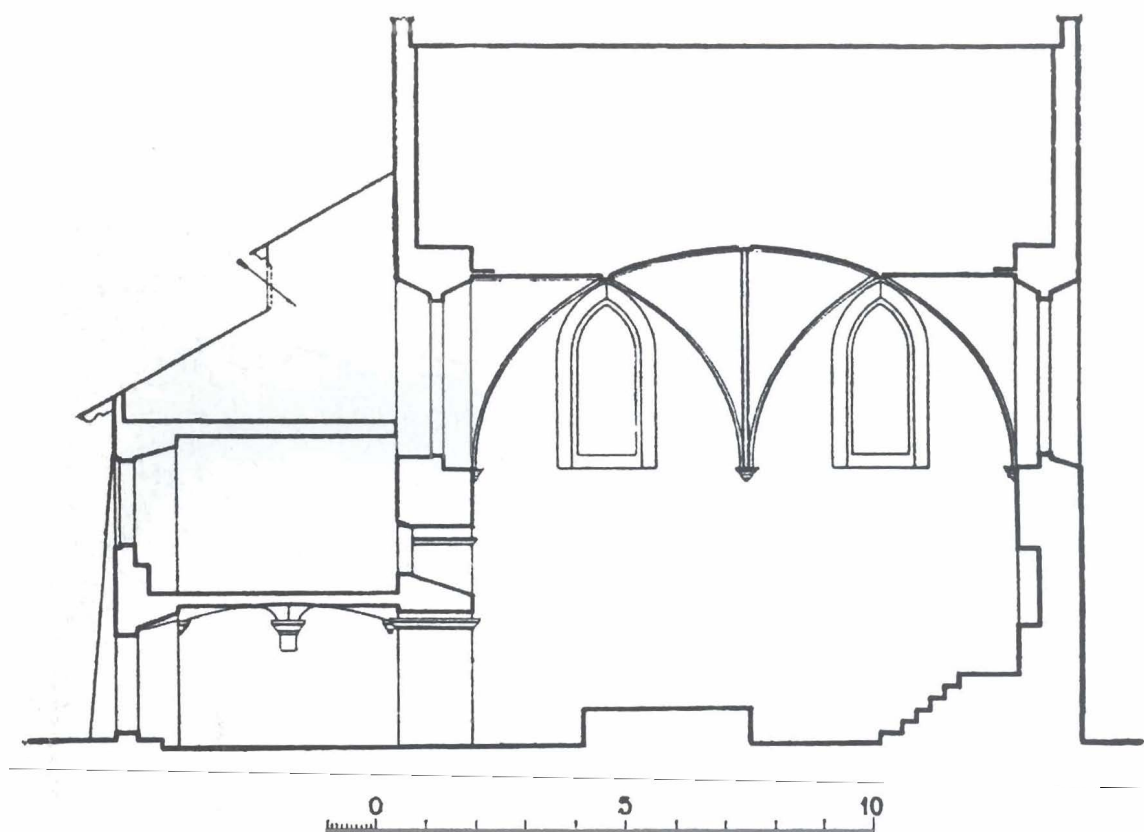
²⁷ Hannelore Künzl, *Der Synagogenbau im Mittelalter*, in: *Die Architektur der Synagoge*, ed. Hans-Peter Schwarz, Frankfurt a.M. 1988, pp. 61–87, here: p. 65.

²⁸ Alfred Grotte, *Deutsche, böhmische und polnische Synagogentypen vom XI. bis Anfang des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1915, p. 19; Piechotkowie (as note 8), pp. 64–65.

²⁹ Piechotkowie (as note 8), pp. 157–162, 163–166, 259–261.



2. *Nachmanowicz Synagogue, 1941*



3. *Nachmanowicz Synagogue, Lvov. Longitudinal section after Feldmaus, Fränkel and Haber*

segment-arched openings were asymmetrically cut through the western wall of the prayer hall towards the women's area (fig. 6). Actually, it was only in the synagogue of Tarnopol that all twelve windows of the prayer hall were lancet.

It should be stressed that central windows in the eastern and western walls were not commonplace in Gothic synagogues. Just the opposite, it was impossible in medieval double-nave synagogues such as Worms, the Altneusynagogue of Prague, or the Old Synagogue of the Krakowian suburb Kazimierz, since the hall axis was occupied by a corbel corresponding to the interior piers, whilst the Torah Ark was placed just below it. The earliest oculus piercing the eastern wall of a hall synagogue above the Torah Ark is known from the synagogue in Miltenburg dating back to 1429,³⁰ and hence, it is not an eastern Polish invention. It should be

mentioned that lancet windows and oculi were well known in church architecture of the Gothic Survival in the Polish borderlands, as in the Dominican Church of Stary Konstantynów, the Catholic Parish Church St. Anthony in Założce (ca 1635),³¹ and many others.

This symmetrical composition of the western and eastern walls of a prayer hall with an opening in the center was not exclusively a feature of the hall scheme during the 17th century. It was also common in late Renaissance and early Baroque synagogues, erected at the same time in bigger cities. These four-pier syna-

³⁰ Richard Krautheimer, *Mittelaltliche Synagogen*, Berlin 1927, p. 189–192.

³¹ Sergiej Jurczenko, Krzyżowe kościoły Ukrainy w pierwszej połowie XVII w., in: *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 3–4 (1995), pp. 283–294, here: p. 292.



4. Synagogue in Podhajce. View from north-east, 1991

gogues are known in two variations: the so-called *bimah*-support and the nine-bay schemes. The first known *bimah*-support synagogue of Przemyśl (1592–1594) already featured a central oculus in the eastern elevation, though it yielded an additional complication for the vaulting, since it demanded a special lunette above the Torah Ark. This addition was missing in some synagogues of the type, like that of Łuck (1626–1628), and the Little Synagogue of Rzeszów (early 17th century).³² Nevertheless, the three-fold fenestration of either elevation became common for the *bimah*-support synagogues in the first half of the 17th century, in spite of structural complications. In the nine-bay synagogues, where the load of the vaults was shared among four piers and twelve pilasters, the three-fold fenestration of either elevation became a standard, starting with the first example, the Lvov Suburban Synagogue (1624–1642). Thus twelve windows became typical for all variations of the synagogue plan of the 17th century,

whether the *bimah*-support, the nine-bay or the hall-plan. Simultaneously, hall-synagogues with two-fold elevations and a total of eight windows in the prayer hall, like that of Zamość, disappeared from architectural practice. This may serve as an illustration of the broad acceptance of the instruction from the Book of Zohar concerning the twelve windows in a synagogue, corresponding to the twelve windows of the »upper synagogue«, a Divine prototype existing in the Heavens.³³ Thus, the typical fenestration scheme of Gothic Survival in Ruthenia was a result of a liturgical order-

³² Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 183.

³³ Thomas C. Hubka, Jewish Art and Architecture in the East European Context: The Gwoździec-Chodorow Group of Wooden Synagogues, in: *Polin*, vol. 10: *Jews in Early Modern Poland*, ed. Gershon D. Hundert, London 1997, pp. 141–182, here: p. 169; idem, *Resplendent Synagogue: Architecture and Worship in an Eighteenth-Century Polish Community*, Lebanon, NH 2003, p. 147.



5. The BaH Synagogue in Międzyboż. View from south-east, 1930

ing, which influenced the Late Gothic as well as early Baroque architecture.

As it has become clear in the previous paragraph, the composition of elevations and the vaulting in prayer halls were tightly interrelated. The most old-fashioned construction among the discussed monuments shows Nachmanowicz Synagogue. It had a ribbed cloister vault with two pointed lunettes on either side of the hall, with central and corner corbels which dictated a two-fold structure of the facades (fig. 1a, 2, 3). This archaic design scheme, with its »busy« axes is not consistent with Renaissance architectural theory. It was noticeably outdated even if compared to the other works of the same architect, Paolo Italus, known by his guild nickname Szczęśliwy (born in Schamut, Graubünden, died in Lvov in 1610).³⁴ It is known that he worked on two other sites in Lvov simultaneously with the synagogue, which was allegedly done for grub, since a master could not deal at once with three sites for

regular payment according to the Lvov masons' guild regulations.³⁵ Unfortunately, there is no information on the two other works of 1582 by Paolo Italus. In the new vestibule, added to the Nachmanowicz synagogue by the same Paolo with assistance of the mason masters Ambroży Przychylny, Adam Pokora and a certain Zachariasz in 1594, the Gothic elements were already limited to the corbels and keystones of the barrel vaults with lunettes.³⁶ Paolo Italus also started a late Renaissance Collegiate Church in Żółkiew (1604–1618), an edifice not free from Gothic elements like a polygonal chancel apse, but much more consistent with the contemporary architectural avant-garde.³⁷ A comparison

³⁴ Michał Kowalczyk, *Cech budowniczy we Lwowie za czasów polskich (do roku 1772)*, Lwów 1927, pp. 27–28. »Szczęśliwy« means »the Lucky« in Polish.

³⁵ Kowalczyk (as note 34), pp. 27–28.

³⁶ Slobodyan/Boyko/Lonkevych (as note 10), p. 93.

of these monuments discloses considerable change in the architect's style, although it could have been occasioned by his client; the Collegiate Church of Żółkiew was commissioned by Stanisław Żółkiewski, the city overlord who belonged to the Italian-educated circle of the Polish elite.³⁸

Amongst the discussed monuments the vaulting in Nachmanowicz Synagogue was the only one with rib vaults. A popular type of vaulting were tunnel vaults with lunettes. This construction is found in Stary Konstantynów, Tarnopol, Husiatyn and Satanów. As it was not demanding qualified masons' work for hewing ribs, keystones and corbels, it was easy to execute. Sometimes it was done in local fieldstone; a roofless example is still standing in Satanów. This construction was generally used in a great number of smaller churches all over the region, from Rzeszów in the west to Latyczów in the east,³⁹ as well as in military and civil architecture as the typical vaulting for fortress gates and cellars. Lunettes in synagogues, as well as in the churches of the 16th–17th centuries, were usually pointed, even in early Baroque edifices. There is a clear geometrical rule determining this shape: the ridge of the lunette should be tangent to the interior surface of the main vault. Sometimes this rule was not followed with the required accuracy, as it was in Satanów (fig. 14). Nevertheless, the final lunette-shape was made pointed by means of plaster (fig. 15). Probably, the case was similar in Tarnopol, where the synagogue plan drawn by engineer Teitelboim in 1930 includes catenary lunettes, despite the pointed shape seen in the photographs a year earlier (fig. 11, 12). In some synagogues the prayer hall was spanned by a plain wooden ceiling, as it may be assumed from the wall construction in Podhajce, which shows no indication of vaults, or from an interior view of the synagogue in Zasław (fig. 10).

Consistent with interior constructions like tunnel-vaults or wooden ceilings, the exterior of the majority of the synagogues discussed were not retained by buttresses. The slanting corner buttresses of the synagogue in Podhajce (fig. 4) were more an emergency conservation device than a recognizable Gothic construction. Only in the synagogue of Satanów a clear rhythm of buttresses bridged by catenary arches repeating the shape of embrasures was applied to its northern ele-

vation (fig. 13). Similar forms are known from an unique medieval monument in Podolia, the Orthodox St. Nicholas's Church of Zbruchans'ke (formerly Nowosiółka), built in the 14th or in the late 13th century.⁴⁰ However, a similar shape was well-known not only in Old Ruthenian architecture, but also in Late Gothic architecture of the Polish north. It was adopted by the Orthodox architecture of the Lithuanian Great Duchy in the 16th century, as a part of the phenomenon defined above as the Gothic Expansion.⁴¹ Later it was used in several sacred buildings of the Ruthenian Orthodox Brethren, like the Church of Madonna's Nativity in the town of Rohatyn (1589–1604), where buttresses were connected by basket arches. It also can be found in the works of architects of Italian origin active in Lvov, like the Benedictine Nuns' Church in Lvov (fig. 17), built in 1595–1597 by a guild master Paolo Dominici »of Rome«, and in the belfry of the orthodox Assumption Church in Lvov, erected in 1572–1580. In a very refined form of shallow round-topped niches, it was applied to the Assumption Church proper, commissioned by the Ruthenian Brethren in 1591–1629 from the same Dominici and completed by a number of leading local architects, including Ambroży Przychylny, already mentioned in connection with the Nachmanowicz Synagogue. This church was not free of Gothic elements, like the pointed arches under the cupola.⁴² Thus, the motif of the bridged buttresses could be an

³⁷ Volodymyr A. Ovsyichuk, *Ukrayins'ke mystetstvo druhoi polovyny XVI – pershoi polovyny XVII st.: Humanistychni ta vyzvol'ni ideyi*, Kyiv 1985, pp. 65–66.

³⁸ Serhiy Yurchenko, *Rolya metsenata u vybori arkhitektunoyi prohramy: Na prykladi khreshchatykh kosteliv Ukrayiny pershoi polovyny XVII stolittya*, in: *Pamiatnyky Ukrainy*, 1–6 (1993), pp. 44–48, here: p. 46.

³⁹ Węclawowicz (as note 2), p. 78.

⁴⁰ *Pamiatniki* (as note 15), vol. 4, p. 47–48; Ivan Mohytych, Roman Mohytych, Yaroslav Movchan, Tserkva z knyazhoyi doby nad Zbruchem, in: *Visnyk instytutu Ukrzakhidpoektrestavratsiya*, vol. 1, L'viv 1993, pp. 23–32.

⁴¹ Kunkel (as note 5), p. 43.

⁴² I express my gratitude to Serhiy Yurchenko, who supplied me with a valuable draft of his article *The Church of Madonna's Nativity in Rohatyn in Contemporary Architectural Context of the Lithuanian Great Duchy*, recently published in Lithuanian language, in which he exposed connection of the Ruthenian Orthodox architecture to the monuments of the Great Duchy, embraced by Gothic Expansion.



6. *The BaH Synagogue in Międzybóž. View from the west, after 1945*

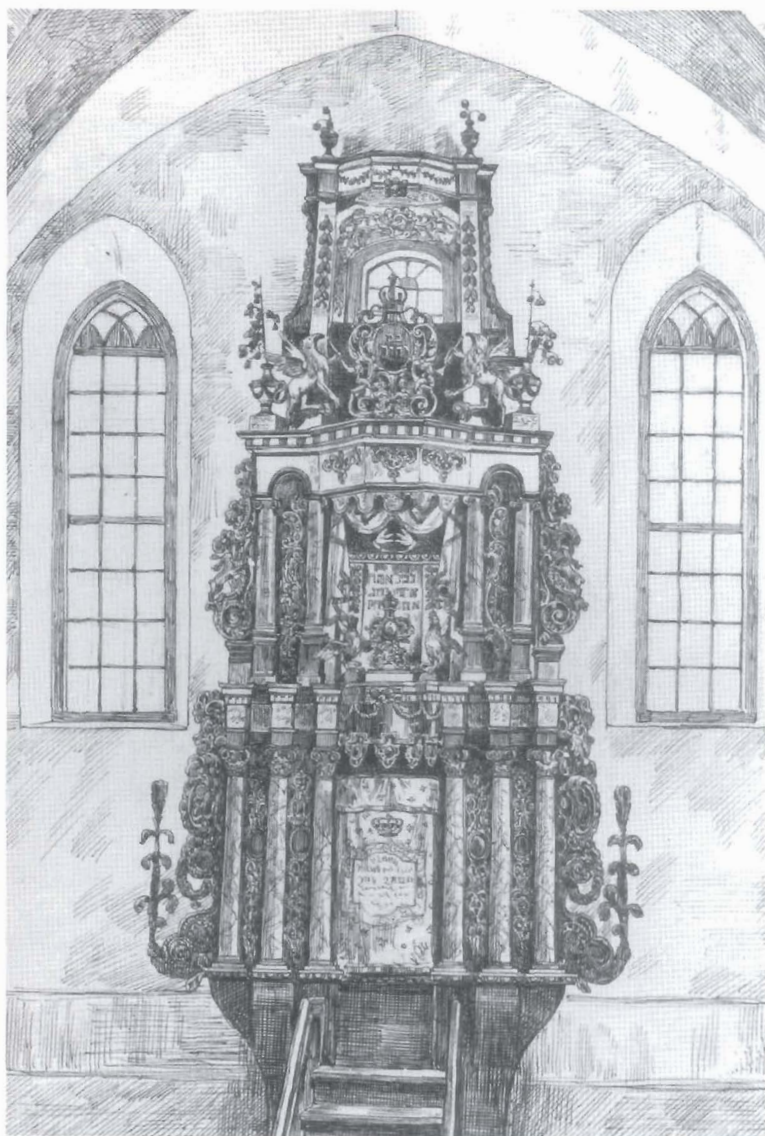
element of Gothic Expansion, originating from the Great Duchy, adopted by the Ruthenian Orthodox communities, and elaborated by the invited Italian architects. Yet in my view, these buttresses of Satanów Synagogue were elements of western medieval origin, applied to a provincial Late Gothic edifice and not really processed in the Renaissance taste of the Lvov architectural milieu, but not a far outdated Old Ruthenian device. In Satanów, due to the fieldstone work and catenary outline, the spanned buttresses looked rough and »medieval« when compared to the Lvov analogues, with their perfectly round arches, built of hewn stone and enriched by articulated imposts and keystones.

The upper part of the synagogue wall was crowned horizontally, either with a cornice (Międzybóž, Podhajce), or an attic wall (the Nachmanowicz Synagogue, synagogues of Husiatyn, Satanów, Tarnopol); the gable

roof of the synagogue in Zasław was a result of later reconstruction. The most typical topping was an attic wall, not only in the discussed hall synagogues, but in all types of synagogues during the 16th–17th centuries. These walls were decorated by a blind arcade, an example of local Mannerism in all the discussed monuments, starting with the oldest Nachmanowicz Synagogue. This element was introduced just about twelve years earlier into the synagogue architecture of Poland in the Old Synagogue of Kazimierz, the Jewish suburb of Kraków, by Matteo Gucci.⁴³ This addition generally was for armed defense, or protection against fire.

The most typical attic wall arcades were round-topped, whilst the most intricate was the ogee arcade in

⁴³ Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 50.



7. Synagogue in Stary Konstantynów. Interior view towards Aron Kodesh

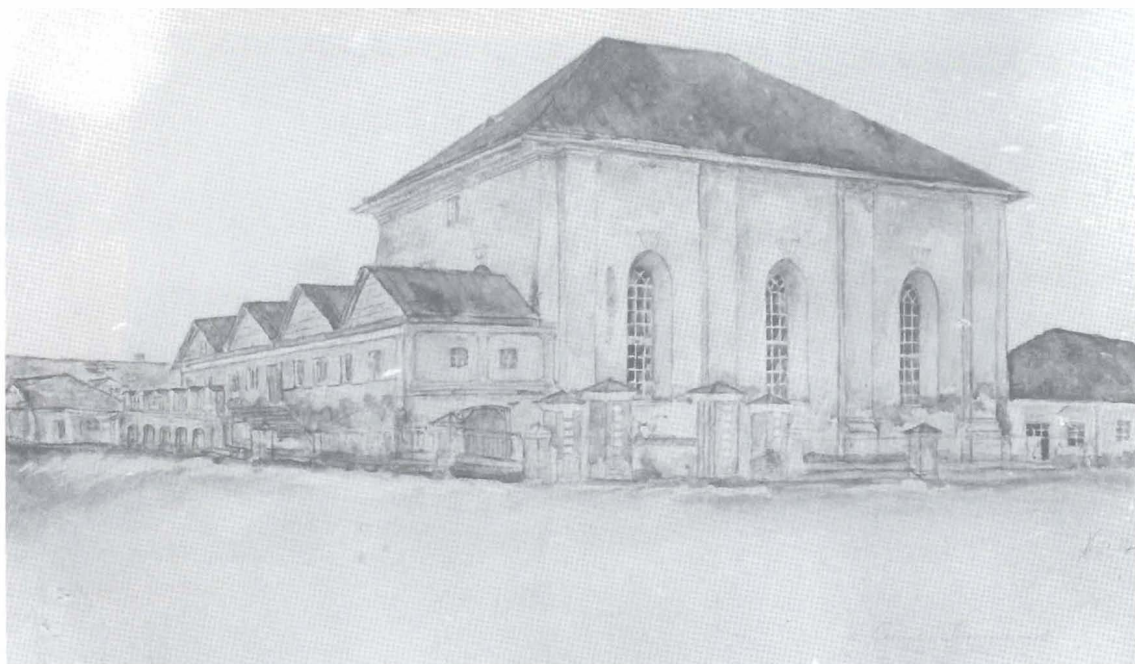
Husiatyn (fig. 16). This composition produces an ambiguous impression, evoking oriental motifs, and, at the same time, a Flamboyant Gothic shape. In another study, I have paid special attention to this attic, since it relates to a particular group of monuments, concentrated mainly in Volhynia.⁴⁴ The earliest application of the ogee attic arcade was found in the Gate Tower of the Upper Castle of Łuck, built in the late 13th century, and reconstructed at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.⁴⁵

It was quoted in the attic wall and in the interior of the Great Synagogue of the same city, built between 1626 and 1628⁴⁶ (fig. 18). This element was repeated in a

⁴⁴ My article *Ogee Arcades in Synagogue Architecture of Volhynia and Podolia in 17th and 18th centuries* is to appear in *Polin*, edited by Antony Polonsky.

⁴⁵ *Pamiętniki* (as note 15), vol. 2, p. 49.

⁴⁶ Mathias Bersohn, *Żydowska bożnica w mieście Łucku*, in: *Sprawozdania Komisji do badania Historii Sztuki w Pol-*



8. Synagogue in Stary Konstantynów. View from south-west

number of edifices like the orthodox church of the Elevation of the Cross in Łuck (1631–mid 1640s), and the Łuck Gate dating from the 1630s in the neighboring town of Ołyka (fig. 19), where ogee arches alternate with round ones. The ogee arches were applied at the same period in the belfries of the Jesuit Church of St. Peter and Paul in Łuck⁴⁷ and the Trinity Church in Ołyka⁴⁸ as decoration on pillars. The last two structures were probably designed by Jesuit architects, respectively Giacomo Briano and Giacomo Maliverna, like the churches proper, or other architects close to their circle. Thus ogee shapes in Baroque ensembles were emerging arguably from Jesuit thought. Supposedly, this element expressed the architects' desire to make the appearance of a church more »oriental« and thus aesthetically credible for the believers of the Eastern Church, welcome as Catholic proselytes after the Church Union of Brest (1596). Such a complimentary approach was explicit in Briano's work, who tried to crown the Jesuit Church of Ostrog with an »oriental«

onion dome,⁴⁹ and arranged three domes in a row in accordance with the Ukrainian Orthodox tradition in the design of the Jesuit Church of Lvov.⁵⁰ His concept was so misleading, that a recently published photograph of a Łuck street scene including the Jesuit Church in the background was probably not by chance supplied with the naïve commentary: »a Jewish corner with a touch of Byzantine«.⁵¹ It is possible, that the ogee motif as seen in the sacred buildings of Łuck was reconsidered

sce, V, Kraków 1896, pp. LXXXVII–LXXXIX; Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 188.

⁴⁷ *Pamiętniki* (as note 15), vol. 2, pp. 52–53.

⁴⁸ *Pamiętniki* (as note 15), vol. 2, pp. 81–82.

⁴⁹ This information was shared by Professor Richard Bösel in his lecture at the Congress of Ukrainists in Lvov, August 1993.

⁵⁰ Roman M. Lypka, Fenomen arkhitekturnoyi spadshchyny L'vova, in: *Halyts'ka brama*, 15 (1996), pp. 4–5, here: p. 5.

⁵¹ Alter Kacyzne, *Poyln: Jewish Life in the Old Country*, New York 2001, p. 19.



9. Synagogue in the Old City of Zastaw, 1928

in the circle of Jesuit influence in architecture, where it bore a meaning of oriental decoration, affiliated with the Polish »Sarmatian« ideology. As an oriental motif, it could also be complimentary to the aspirations of Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, the contemporary overlord of Ołyka and Chancellor of Lithuania, whose ambitions encompassed the eastern policy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁵² It should be mentioned that the town gate in Ołyka is an example of genuine Gothic masonry technique, since its brickwork is executed in Flemish bond, unknown in the later Baroque building of Volhynia. Thus, the oriental »Sarmatian« style of the town gate in Ołyka exploited the Gothic Survival technique in an overall Mannerist composition. In contrast, the Great Synagogue of Łuck was erected in English bond, characteristic for most of the 17th and 18th centuries; it was a centric building of the *bimah*-support type with late Renaissance decoration. Its ogee arcade was a formal quotation from the castle

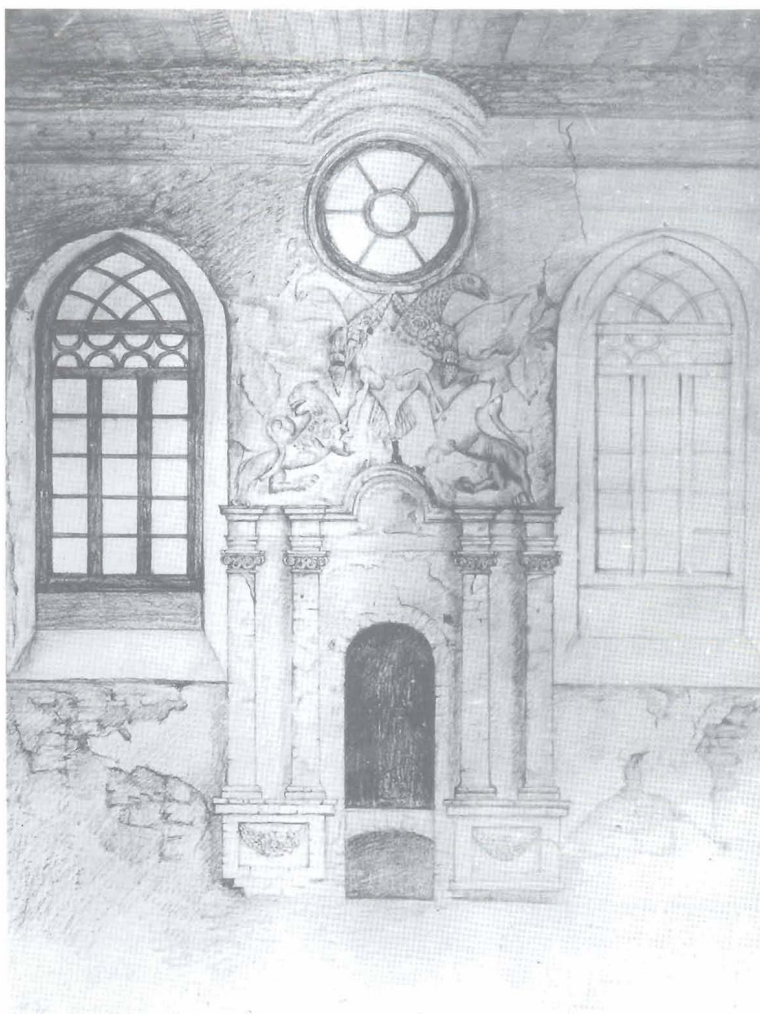
attic, rather than a continuation of the brickwork tradition. As it will be shown further on, the supposed »Sarmatian« character of the ogee arcade would be less important for the Jews of Łuck, than its attribution to the castle, renowned for its hoary antiquity.

It is not easy to determine a date for the ogee arcade in the Husiatyn Synagogue since surviving Polish records are only known from the 18th century. In the opinion of Olga Plamenyts'ka, the original core of the synagogue was erected in the late 16th century, and reconstructed in Late Gothic style in the first half of the 17th century.⁵³ Tyt Hevryk suggested that the building was constructed in 1654.⁵⁴ According to the Piechot-

⁵² *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 30, Warszawa, 1972, pp. 144–145.

⁵³ Olga Plamenyts'ka, *Oboronni khramy Podillya*, in: *Pamyatnyky Ukrainy*, 1–2 (2002), pp. 30–39, here: p. 34–35.

⁵⁴ See note 13.



10. Synagogue in the Old City of Zaslav. Interior view towards Aron Kodesh. Drawing by Maltz, 1927

kas, it was built in 1692,⁵⁵ when the city was under Turkish rule; this would have explained the oriental appearance of the building. This idea is based on Bałaban, who had taken into consideration findings in the Polish archives of the early 18th century.⁵⁶ Yet this later date for the synagogue construction becomes unconvincing when compared with contemporary Turkish sources. Actually, there were only two Jews in Husiatyn in 1681,⁵⁷ and they definitely could not afford a commission of a large masonry synagogue. Michał Potocki became an overlord of Husiatyn in 1729, and immediately became involved in a suit brought by the Archbishop of Kamieniec, Hieronim Wacław Sierakowski

against the Jews of Husiatyn, who allegedly erected their synagogue on Church land.⁵⁸

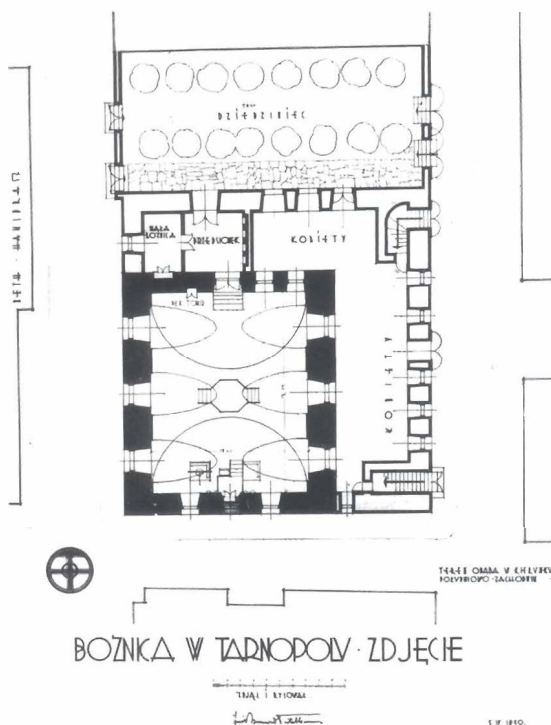
In my opinion, the synagogue of Husiatyn was fundamentally rebuilt between 1699 and 1729, when the Turkish invasion was over, and Husiatyn was returned

⁵⁵ Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 256.

⁵⁶ Majer Bałaban, *Bóżnice obronne na wschodnich kresach Rzeczypospolitej*, in: *Studia historyczne*, ed. Majer Bałaban, Warszawa 1927, pp. 93–99, here: pp. 96–97; idem, *Yidn in Poyln*, Vilna 1930, pp. 263–264.

⁵⁷ Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Podole pod panowaniem tureckim. Ejalet Kamieniecki. 1672–1699*, Warszawa 1994, p. 146.

⁵⁸ Bałaban (as note 55), pp. 263–264.



11. Synagogue in Tarnopol. Ground plan by engineer Teitelboim, 1930

to Poland. Apparently the lancet windows of the main body of the building were built at that time, since one of them blocked a staircase which originally led to the fortified attic.⁵⁹ The ogee-arched attic wall of the main volume could have appeared at the same period. Supposedly, its shape was imported from Volhynia, given that a large number of Jews left Volhynia for Podolia in those years.⁶⁰ The decoration of Husiatyn synagogue became even more oriental-looking after its reconstruction in about 1900, when acanthus-like crenellations were added on top of the attic wall and above the vestibule cornice.⁶¹ These changes could be better explained in terms of the so-called Moorish style of 19th century synagogue architecture, than in terms of Gothic Survival, Mannerism or Baroque.

Summarizing the review of Gothic Survival synagogues in the eastern Polish borderlands, it should be confirmed that their architecture was a spontaneous or deliberate continuation of Gothic building tradition,

including the hall-layout without interior supports, application of several Gothic features like pointed outlines, ribbed vaults, ogee arcades, and spanned buttresses. In a number of monuments the Gothic vocabulary became combined with the later building technique, i.e. Renaissance, Mannerist and Baroque elements.

2. Gothic Survival as a Narrative of »Excavated Synagogue«.

The simultaneous existence of the Late Gothic with more advanced Renaissance and Baroque architecture poses the question of the building program. A short-sighted answer would state that the Gothic Survival monuments just exploited some provincial, slightly outdated building techniques. However, there are more daring hypotheses, at least concerning the Christian sacred buildings. Thus, the Gothic expansion into Orthodox architecture of the Great Duchy has been evaluated as an attempt to approach the concept of the Florentine Church Union.⁶² Alternatively, the Late Gothic architecture of the Volhynian, Podolian and Ruthenian borderland is suspected to honor the knightly values highly appreciated by the overlords, permanently involved in battles.⁶³ Quite obviously, these hypotheses are irrelevant to the synagogue architecture, and I will propose another suggestion for its Gothic Survival program.

Though legal permissions for the construction of none of the discussed hall-synagogues has been preserved, the known limitations imposed on synagogues in Poland may shed light on their appearance. The key document is the resolution of the Synod of Piotrków (1542), demanding »that [the King] should order to destroy new synagogues built of stone even in Kraków. Since the Church tolerates the Jews only as a memory of our Savior's passions, their number shall not grow,

⁵⁹ Plamenyts'ka (as note 53), p. 34–35.

⁶⁰ This fact has been traced by Boris Khaimovich through the Jewish Podolian tombstones from the 18th century. I am very grateful for this, as yet unpublished information.

⁶¹ Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 256.

⁶² Kunkel (as note 5), pp. 44–46.

⁶³ Yurchenko (as note 37), p. 48.



12. Synagogue in Tarnopol.
Interior view, 1929

and according to the sacred canons, they may only reconstruct the old synagogues, but not build the new masonry ones.⁶⁴ This resolution was reinforced by the Synod of Gniezno (1589): »The Jews in the royal cities, in spite of the old legislations, have built new large masonry synagogues, more beautiful than churches, and houses in a number exceeding the allowed; shall the king forbid this harshly«.⁶⁵ In 1606, the king issued a ruling, which prohibited construction of new synagogues, but allowed reconstruction of the old ones.⁶⁶ Thus, for the Jews, the value of any old synagogue was enormous, since its existence was presumed legal.

The rare permissions for new synagogues given afterwards elaborated the concept of the general limitations.

⁶⁴ The original wording is: »[...] sinagogas novas, ubique etiam Cracoviae muro extructas, destructi facere mandet, licet enim in memoriam passionis Salvatoris nostril, Judaei ab ecclesia tolerantur, tamen numerus eorum augeri debet minime, qui juxta sacrorum canonum dispositionem veteres sinagogas reformare, novas autem praesentim ex muro minime construere possunt [...]«. The passage is quoted after: Bałaban (as note 14), p. 53.

⁶⁵ Bałaban (as note 14), p. 54.

⁶⁶ Bałaban (as note 14), p. 54. The original text reads: »Ne Judaei novas synagogas extruere, sed tantum veteres reficere audeant«.



13. Synagogue in Satanów. View from north, 1930

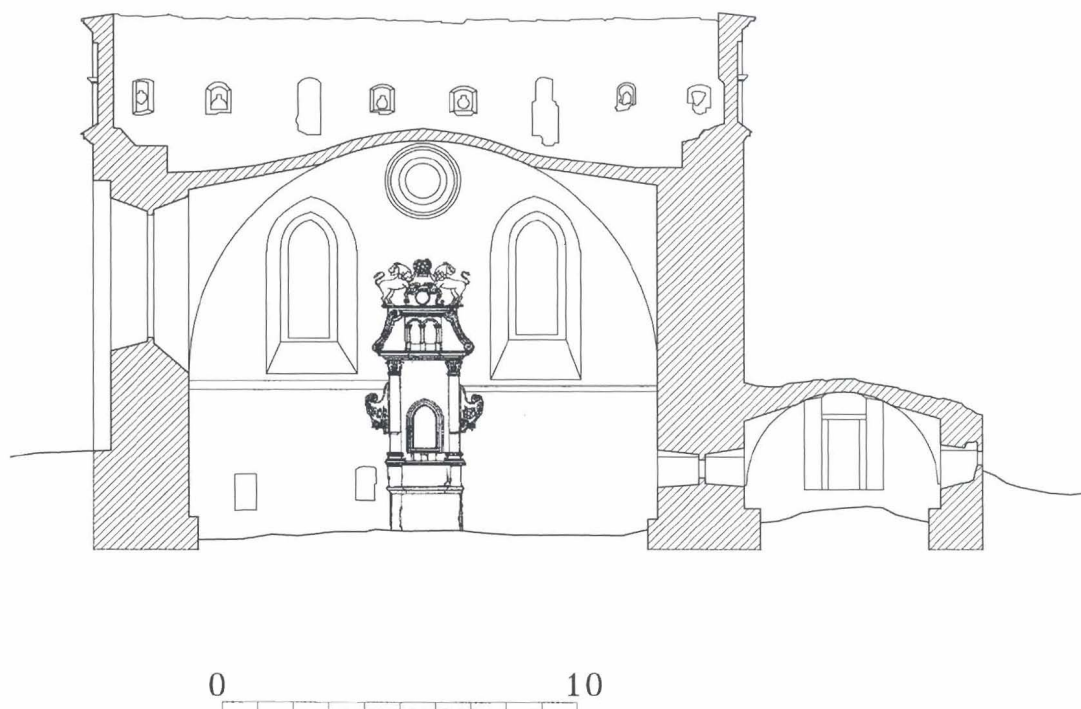
For instance, in Przemyśl the permission issued in 1592 by Bishop Wawrzyniec Gostyński demanded »that the planned synagogue shall not be imposing or any notable structure, the walls' height from the street surface shall not exceed twenty cubits. And if it would be desirable for the proportions of the interior vault, they should lower the floor, digging into the ground for two or three cubits, and the width of the synagogue shall be twenty cubits from wall to wall, the total interior length shall be thirty cubits. The roof shall not be imposing, but low in Italian manner, with drainages and a masonry parapet at this roof for improved protection from fire«. ⁶⁷ An agreement between the Suburban Jewish community of Lvov and the Magistrate from 1624, approved later by the Bishop, stated that the synagogue vaulting »should be arranged modestly [...] under an Italian roof«. ⁶⁸ In both passages, the term »Italian roof« meant a hipped, not a gable roof. Thus, the synagogues were to be crowned by a horizontal cornice or parapet (an attic wall), obviously to avoid any resemblance to

a church, but rather to make them look like a secular building. It may be symptomatic that the roof is called »Italian«, referring to a modern stylistic feature. Apparently, the legislator intended to supply the structure with a recognizable sign of the epoch, in order to make a clear distinction between the new synagogue, legal on certain conditions, and the old synagogues, legal by presumption.

The conditions under which new synagogues could be constructed were not a trivial issue. Sometimes they related not just to its architecture, but to the essential elements of Jewish life as well. For instance, the owner

⁶⁷ Quoted after: Piechotkowie (as note 8), p. 175.

⁶⁸ Bałaban (as note 14), p. 218–220; *ibid.*, annex »Materiały«, p. 96; the original Polish text reads: »Wtóra szkoła ma być z miejsca swego ruszona odemkniona w nizinie dworu Poznańskiego, której budynek murem ma być niemięjszym jednak, jedno coby ściany (-) sklepienie skromnie we trzy gatunki puszczone sztrychem, włoskim utrzymać mogły«.



14. Synagogue in Satanów. Cross-section

of Ostrog, Anna Aloiza Chodkiewiczowa granted the local Jews the right to build a synagogue. This permission was conditioned on a prohibition against erecting a synagogue higher than the local Catholic and Orthodox churches, a prohibition against conducting solemn burials of the dead while daytime, and a ban on distilling spirits on Sundays and to sell beverages before the end of the Holyday mass.⁶⁹ In Żółkiew, the Bishop Samuel Głowiński re-confirmed the legitimacy of the synagogue in 1756 on condition that the Jews were not allowed to work on the Christian Holydays, to stand in the streets when processions passed etc.; in addition, the Bishop restated the duty of a »Holyday tax«, being paid by the Jews to the vicar.⁷⁰ In Łuck, the construction of the synagogue was conditioned on its being equipped with weapons on four sides, on the installation of a cannon defending the synagogue on account of the community, and complete adherence to the city authorities in war-time.⁷¹ Quite naturally in a number of cases the Jews preferred to construct an »illegal«

masonry synagogue, often with a silent agreement of the city overlord or magistrate, or a wooden synagogue, not mentioned by the synods.

It is my suggestion that these »illegal« synagogues, unlike those allowed by the Church,⁷² were deliberately designed as »old« edifices. They included a number of remarkably outdated details visible from the exterior, like lancet arches, and did not overstep the required modesty of the building in relation to the Christian sacred buildings. This hypothesis explains the eclectic combination of the Gothic, Mannerist and Baroque features in the same building, since even a single Go-

⁶⁹ Stanisław Kardaszewicz, *Dzieje dawniejsze miasta Ostroga: Materiały do historii Wołynia*, Warszawa/Kraków 1913, p. 118.

⁷⁰ Majer Bałaban, *Z historii Żydów w Polsce: Szkice i studia*, Warszawa 1920, p. 44.

⁷¹ Bałaban (as note 55), p. 94.

⁷² I mean, for instance, the Old Synagogue of Przemyśl and the Great Suburban Synagogue of Lvov.



15. Synagogue in Satanów, 1930

thic element could »prove« the alleged antiquity of the synagogue, while the other features could be explained as a result of reconstruction. The characteristic details, like the horizontal gables and attic walls, as well as the smooth wall surfaces, undivided by buttresses or pilasters, were just a superficial show of adherence to the legal demands concerning a modest building manner. Even some »semi-legal« synagogues, like the Great Synagogue of Łuck, permitted by royal, but not religious authority, eagerly employed architectural details of an older building, like an ogee arcade borrowed from the ancient castle. Only by means of architecture, Łuck synagogue gained the nickname »Little Castle«, thus

supposedly dating back to the 14th century, which was recognized even in serious publications.⁷³

Of course, there were not only Gothic, but also Baroque »illegal« synagogues. The magnificent Baroque synagogue of Żółkiew, the so-called Sobieski Shul was legalized retroactively. Nevertheless, this case cannot be seen as typical, because King Jan Sobieski patronized the Jews of his private city of Żółkiew. The very language of the document issued by the Archbishop Konstanty Lipski in 1692 is unusually soft; following a

⁷³ Cf. *Pamiętniki* (as note 15), vol. 2, p. 53.



16. Synagogue in Hustatyn. View from the West

harsh preamble, sustained in a spirit of the Piotrków Synod, it states: »[...] finally, answering the submissive supplications of the infidels' elder and the whole congregation of the city of Żółkiew, who asked about preservation of their synagogue and practices [...] We, due to the respect for their Overlord [...] and touched by Christian compassion [...] decree the synagogue to be recognized as allowed, and hereby state that we will not notice it [...]«⁷⁴

The Jews' own perception of the synagogues is not less interesting. There are several recorded folk tales dealing with the antiquity of synagogues. Abraham Rechtman, a participant in Shlomo An-ski's ethnographical expeditions to Volhynia and Podolia recalled that in many towns the Jews would not answer questions about the building date of their synagogues. In-

stead they would cite an often repeated legend: »It has never been built; children played on a hill, dug the ground, loosened the soil with their sticks and ... saw a roof. The news spread fast throughout the town. People came, started digging around the roof and uncovered a synagogue in its integrity, with all the decorations, murals and benches«.⁷⁵ A story similar to the one documented by An-ski's expedition in Satanów in 1913, was recorded once more 80 years later by Benjamin Lukin after a conversation with a local Ukrainian: »When the Great Synagogue was built? [...] There

⁷⁴ Bałaban (as note 24), p. 162.

⁷⁵ Abraham Rechtman, *Yidishe etnografie un folklor: zikbroynes vegn der etnografisher ekspeditsie, angefirt fun Prof. Sh. An-ski*, Buenos-Aires 1958, p. 38.



17. *The Benedictine Nuns' Monastery, Lvov, 2003.*

was a hill since the old times. People started digging and discovered something solid; they continued digging and thus excavated the whole synagogue.⁷⁶ Sometimes the folklore presents a curiously split image of the synagogue's history. In one tale concerning the Great Synagogue of Ostrog, the version about the synagogue's founding is in full agreement with historical truth.⁷⁷ It is associated with a known personality, Rabbi Samuel Eliezer ben Judah Ha-Levi Edels (1555–1631), one of the foremost Jewish commentators, whilst another narrative pretends that the same synagogue is 800 years old.⁷⁸ The second story is supplied with a rational justification of this incongruity: the synagogue was named the MaHaRShA Shul (an acronym of Rabbi Edels's name) only as gratitude to the love and esteem of the community members.⁷⁹ An explanation of such contradictions, and the substitution of the real history

with a legendary tradition, is sometimes attributed to the interruption of local Jewish life in times of war, aggression and expulsion and presumes the later provenance of the alternative story.⁸⁰ However, there is a possibility that the folk memory was not interrupted, since the »true historical« narrative survived and even

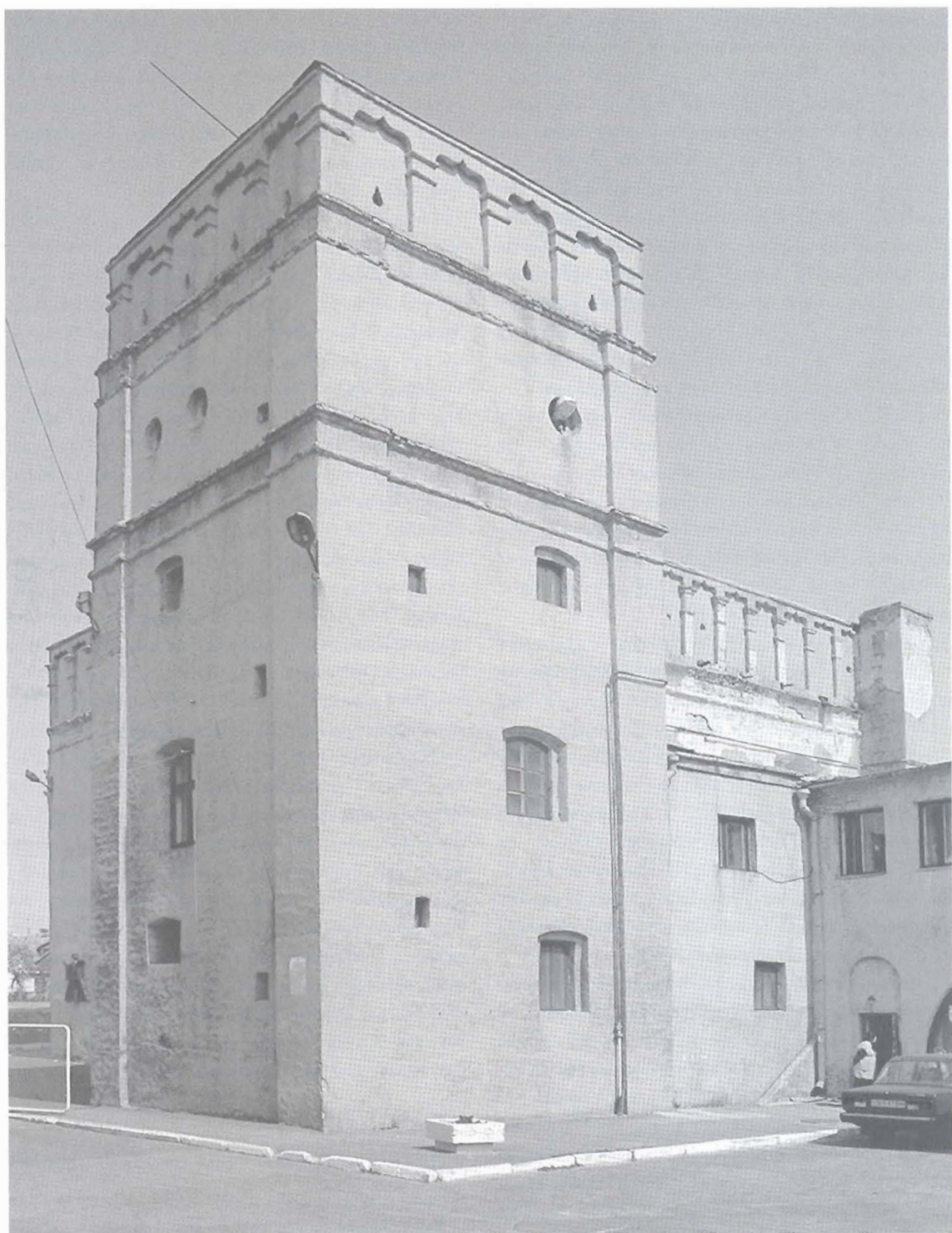
⁷⁶ Lukin/Khaimovich (like note 9), pp. 200–201.

⁷⁷ On the Great Synagogue of Ostrog see: Sergei Kravtsov, *O proiskhozhdenii deviatipolevykh kamennykh sinagog*, in: *Evreiskoie iskusstvo v evropeiskom kontekste*, ed. Ilia Rodov, Jerusalem/Moscow 2002, pp. 191–204, here: p. 199.

⁷⁸ Rechtman (as note 75), p. 63–65.

⁷⁹ Chaim Finkel, *Ostrog – a Metropolis of the People of Israel*, in: *Ostrog Book: A Memorial to the Ostrog Holy Community*, Tel Aviv 1987, pp. 3–8, here: pp. 5–6.

⁸⁰ Cf. Valerii Dymshits, *Pamiatniki stariny v evreiskom fol'klоре*, in: Lukin/Khaimovich (as note 9), vol. 1, pp. 73–76, here: p. 76.



18. Synagogue in Luck, 2003.

was quoted in the »legendary« one. Thus, the discussed split reflects the existence of two original parallel narratives: one for interior use, and another for strangers. The second, anachronistic story was apparently aimed to prove the synagogue's legality, questioned through the 16th, 17th, and well into the 18th century.⁸¹

Besides such folkloric stories of old synagogues that were never actually built, there is another type of misleading narrative, aimed at the legalization of an existing synagogue. For example the synagogue of Podhajce was claimed to be an Arian Church allegedly purchased by the Jews.⁸² Probably, this anecdote exploited the biography of the city overlord since 1641, Stanisław »Rewera« Potocki (1589–1667), who abandoned Calvinism in about 1612, and acted for the liquidation of the church in Paniowce.⁸³ In fact, no building in the place where the synagogue stood could have existed before 1621, since it was not an urban area.⁸⁴ The above mentioned story of the Husiatyn synagogue allegedly built under the Turkish rule could also be a kind of protective legend, pointing to its origins in the vague, unknowable past.

One more interesting type of narrative is the legend of the Golden Rose, the daughter-in-law of the founder of the Nachmanowicz Synagogue, repeated once more concerning a certain Mirele of the synagogue in Brahiłów. In these stories, the heroine surrenders her innocence in order to expiate the excessive pride of a magnificent synagogue, which is explicitly criticized as a tantamount to a sin. The synagogue's beauty and height draw an attention of the vicious Gentile, a Bishop or an overlord, who immediately wants to convert it into a church, and it is only due to the heroine's sacrifice that his plans are not carried out.⁸⁵

It should be mentioned, that mythological interpretations of native history, seeking legitimization by appealing to ancient history, are characteristic of the 16th–18th centuries. Thus, Polish noblemen saw themselves as Sarmatic people, the Hungarians recognized themselves as successors of the Huns, the Ukrainians sought their Khazarian roots, the Russians dreamed of Moscow as the Third Rome, the Dutch became Batavians, etc. The Jews did not create any new national myth for the lands of the Diaspora; their dreams were confined to the Land of Israel. However, their local

mythology, as reflected in folklore, exposed certain dependency on the historiosophy of their surroundings. Attempting to legitimize their existence in a given city in the terms of actual law, the Jews elaborated a concept of an »Old Synagogue« dating back to some times immemorial, expressed in the architecture of Gothic Survival, as well as in folk narratives.

In conclusion it should be reiterated, that the discussed group of hall synagogues located in the outskirts of eastern Poland, belonged to the Gothic Survival trend, known in many European countries besides Italy. Synagogues like Nachmanowicz Synagogue of Lvov, the synagogues of Międzyboż, Stary Konstantynów, Podhajce, Zaslów, Tarnopol, Satanów and Husiatyn, built in the late 16th–mid 17th centuries, were affiliations to medieval synagogue architecture as developed in Germany, Bohemia and Hungary, as is noticeable in the hall layout and a number of associated architectural elements. The most remarkable features of the synagogue design were the pointed and catenary openings, rib and tunnel vaults with pointed lunettes, and ogee arcades. The Gothic Survival synagogues represented a retrospective tendency in the architectural history of the region, coherent with numerous monuments of local Christian architecture, but different from the late Renaissance and early Baroque synagogues, existent in the bigger urban centers from the late 16th century. The Late Gothic synagogues utilized a number of design elements common for the more up-to-date edifices, like three-fold elevations, hipped roofs, and attic walls, which were influenced by the religious and legal ordinances, rather than being an architectural concept. At least the synagogue of Satanów included spanned buttresses, a medieval motif better known from monuments of Gothic Expansion into Orthodox architecture of the Great Duchy and Ruthenia, than from Gothic Survival. Another motif, the ogee arcades, familiar in the military and sacred building of all the religions in

⁸¹ Haya Bar Itzhak, *Jewish Poland: Legends of Origin*, Detroit 2001, p. 154.

⁸² *Pamiętniki* (as note 15), vol. 3, p. 43.

⁸³ *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (as note 52), vol. 28, p. 140.

⁸⁴ See note 8.

⁸⁵ Bar Itzhak (as note 81), pp. 150–153.



19. Town gate in Otyka, 2003.

Volhynia, was imported into synagogue architecture as a quotation from the castle of Łuck, renowned for its antiquity.

It can therefore be assumed, that the Gothic Survival synagogue architecture had its own ideological agenda, differing from that of the local Late Gothic Christian architecture. Apparently, a modest synagogue with

anachronistic stylistic features that was erected without proper permission, masqueraded as a long-existing and hence legal building. This strategy is reflected in the local Jewish folklore, where the old synagogue was »never built«, existed eternally and was simply excavated at a certain time. This kind of protective mythology was recited in the narrative, as well as in the stone.

Zusammenfassung

Die Provinzen Ruthenien, Podolien und Wolynien waren die östlichsten Regionen sowohl des Polnisch-Litauischen Reiches als auch ganz Europas, die der gotische Stil erreichte. Seit dem dritten Jahrzehnt des 16. Jahrhunderts verdrängten Renaissance, Manierismus und früher Barock die gotischen Formen. Dennoch wurde die gotische Architektur in der Region nicht völlig aufgegeben und überlebte bis in das 17., sogar 18. Jahrhundert hinein. Diese späte Phase der Gotik ist in einer großen Anzahl sakraler christlicher Gebäude präsent und sie fällt zusammen mit dem Beginn des Baus steinerner Synagogen in der Region. Die vom späten 16. bis ins 18. Jahrhundert datierenden Synagogen von Husiatyn, Lvov, Międzybóž, Podhajce, Satanów, Stary Konstantynów, Tarnopol und Zaslav veranschaulichen diesen Trend zur Bewahrung gotischer Formen. Diese Gebäude weisen einen länglichen Gebetsaal – eine Bauform, die offenbar aus Deutschland und Böhmen übernommen wurde – und eine Reihe gotischer Elemente auf, wie z.B. Rippengewölbe, spitzbogige Lünetten und Öffnungen, Kielbögen und Strebebögen über den Fenstern. Diese Formen wurden mit zeitgemäßen Elementen wie manieristischen Brüstungen, Segmentbögen und Tonnengewölben kombiniert.

Dabei waren die Kielbögen sowohl ein Zeichen der Gotik als auch Verweis auf die orientalisierenden »sarmatischen« Strömungen in der polnischen Kultur. Dagegen sind einige barock anmutende Formen wie die zentrale *bimah* und die dreiteiligen Fassaden eher auf religiöse Bedürfnisse als auf architektonische Konzepte zurückzuführen. Zur gleichen Zeit wie die meisten dieser Synagogen wurde eine Reihe von Synagogen erbaut, die in Plan und Detail Formen der Spätrenaissance und des Barock zeigen. Diese Tatsache deutet auf ein spezifisches Bauprogramm für die bewusst altmodisch aussehenden Synagogen hin. Da die religiöse Obrigkeit die Errichtung neuer steinerner Synagogen verbot, die existierenden aber ein Bestandsrecht hatten, imitierten die nachgotischen Synagogen offenbar ältere Gebäude. Die lokale jüdische Folklore bewahrt Geschichten über »nie gebaute«, »ausgegrabene« oder »ewige« Synagogen, die die Legalität der Gebäude gegenüber Fremden beweisen sollten. Andere anachronistische und irreführende Erzählungen behaupteten, dass eine Synagoge ursprünglich als protestantische Kirche, alte Burg oder während einer Invasion errichtet worden wäre. Das anachronistische Aussehen der Synagogen korrespondiert also mit den Darstellungen in der Folklore, die die Gebäude als aus fernen Zeiten stammend charakterisierten.

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