

The phenomenon of sacred places based on the case study of Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation in Czerwińsk, Poland

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of sacred places based on the case study of Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation in Czerwińsk, Poland.* Sanctuaries are places with special atmosphere. From the observer's point of view sometimes it is difficult to determine or identify what their uniqueness is made up of and what it consists of. What causes spiritual experience of the space, not only for believers, pilgrims, but also tourists? These are probably the tangible and intangible values most often indicated by landscape researchers. They mainly focus on objects, remarkable interior design of holy places, some historical events, their holiness, the combination of the sacred with the profane – it all adds up and creates the atmosphere constituting their specificity as holy places. However, when observing their mode of action, one important issue is intricacy of the functions they perform, which affects properties of individual objects. The idea and purpose of this article is to present the results of research on the phenomenon of the sacred place of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation in Czerwińsk referring to other sites of a similar nature. To achieve this, the research was carried out in six selected Marian shrines in three voivodeships: Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Mazowieckie and Podlaskie. We applied a number of methods appropriate to landscape architecture on the spatial and sacred composition of objects, the place context, function, symbolism, colours and meaning. According to the selected criteria, a list of objects was made. Some special observations of the Czerwińsk sanctuary were made to determine its specificity. The user of the site and its activity, history rich in events, local conditions and

setting the site in the landscape all turned out to be of key importance for the place. By indicating the features and values of the sanctuary in Czerwińsk our goal is to awaken the potential dormant in the landscape, which requires special care and memory.

Key words: genius of the place, sacred landscape, Saint Mary's sanctuary, holy space, phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Among many stable and universal values of everyday human life, its spirituality is undeniably important. By further exploring the issue of spirituality (Kapała 2017), we will find spiritual intelligence, intuition, spiritual sensitivity, and spiritual identification (Emmons 2000, Zohar and Marshall 2001). The issue studied and defined in terms of various areas of our life is also reflected in the surrounding landscape and the processes of shaping and feeling it. In terms of landscape, it touches the prevailing atmosphere, defined by the spirit of the place (Norberg-Schultz 1980, Królikowski 2006), a concept that evokes the spiritual dimension of architecture and landscape (Rutkowska 1985). Elusive, unique, immeasurable, but always present, this

spiritual element is hidden in the matter that we perceive and experience with our senses (Rykała 2011). The materiality that surrounds us is, after all, an expression of spirituality, i.e. landscape evaluation is not only a superficial record of forms, but also a sign left in the mind of the observer as a result of contact with it (Kosiacka-Beck and Szarejko-Worobiej 2019).

It is most felt and clear in sacred places, where, thanks to properly arranged compositions, its depth and spirituality are hidden in the landscape. This testifies to the uniqueness of the place and its specific features. Shaping such spaces, apart from the knowledge of the principles of composition and design, requires great sensitivity and humility so that the design solutions would emphasise values of these places and not destroy the already existing ones.

The enormous potential of sacred places in cultural landscape is evidenced by the research undertaken on their identity. Sowińska and Soszyński (2012) in their considerations based on numerous publications on issues related to the study of cultural and spatial identity (Wojciechowski 1986, Gutowska 2000, Nohl 2001, Myczkowski 2003, 2009, Sowińska et al. 2007, Dąbrowska-Budziło 2011, Królikowski 2011, Zachariasz 2011, Chmielewski 2012) or the sacredness of landscape (Myga-Piątek 2012) created a list of the so-called distinguishing features of sacred landscapes specificity, classically generalising to the material and immaterial ones. The author defined features that determine their identity, identify a given place (natural and spatial context, architectural form, form of use and state of preservation,

integrity, readability, openness, connections with events, place name, multisensory nature, dynamics, mood, felt emotions and feelings). They are a key to its spiritual dimension and influence the religious (spiritual) experiences of people staying in given space.

Nowadays, there is a problem concerning the approach to shaping sacred landscapes. Despite the awareness of its value, we observe the difficulty of fitting actions into the existing natural landscape rhythm and spiritual functions of space. Many such places lose their authenticity on account of inappropriate actions, and the introduced spatial solutions often blur the original value that once accompanied its creation. However, there are still sites in landscape around us that are waiting for being discovered, activating them, but in a proper way guaranteeing the full display of local conditions. Such a place is the Marian Sanctuary in Czerwińsk.

The aim of the study was to determine the uniqueness of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation in Czerwińsk Hill is, where the phenomenon of this place and its power of attraction is hidden. Which spatial and landscape values make the site unique, what makes it remembered, where is a potential that should be used in spatial management in order not to lose its spatial and landscape values.

It is crucial to discover the place's phenomenon as it should always open a further process of shaping the landscape.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Before researching the phenomenon of the Czerwińsk sanctuary, an attempt had been made to interpret the meaning of sacrum in objects of similar specifi-

city. According to the definition of the sanctuary it is a place considered sacred, often identified with a temple, a building erected on a site considered sacred (Kopaliński 1989). For the analysis of space, apart from the methods typical of landscape architecture, the method of the five categories of genius loci by Norberg-Schultz (1980) was used, a phenomenological study of the nature and value of the analysed spaces, but also an approach facilitating reading of the past, the current state and future potential (Fig. 1).

According to this method, landscape is captured not only as a kind of image, but also as a multi-sensory experience or as a certain phenomenon, as it is subjected to dynamic processes and constant transformation. The phenomenological methods applied in the landscape study allow us to get to know it in unempirical and intuitive way, therefore, they are a perfect complement to research that is not based on sensory impressions.

Cognition, in turn, largely depends on life experience as well as observer's emotions (Kosiacka-Beck and Szarejko-Worobiej 2019).

Therefore, to analyse the phenomenon of a place, one should refer to a specific material shape, notice the forms and things that built it, how they arrange themselves, what their function is, and how they change over time. To do this, the following analyses were carried out in the field of landscape architecture for the selected objects: the functional and spatial, spatial values, meanings, colour and material, and sacred composition. According to the definition of sanctuary, the objects selected for analysis were a place of miracle and sanctity. Some objects of the Marian cult, well-known places, sites of pilgrimage, with developed infrastructure around and landscape values (proximity to water elements, landscape natural value as shape of ground, plants form, view connections, location in the vicinity of settlement



FIGURE 1. The categorisation of the place spirit by Ch. Norberg-Schulz. Diagram of the phenomenological method of landscape research (author E. Rykała 2018)

units). The six sanctuaries, two in three adjacent voivodships, were selected for research (Fig. 2).

1. The Sanctuary of Mother of Christian Unity in Święta Lipka, located in the picturesque landscape of Masurian lakes, where the beginnings of the Marian cult date back to the 14th century. Famous for its large, spreading linden on which the miraculous statue of the Mother with the Child was

placed and worshiped, which is the source of many healings.

2. The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Hope in Popowo, a temple located in the Bug river landscape, with an image of graces famous for Our Lady of Częstochowa, alive in the awareness of the uniqueness of the temple and the authenticity of Marian apparitions.
3. The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Gietrzwałd, located at the foot of

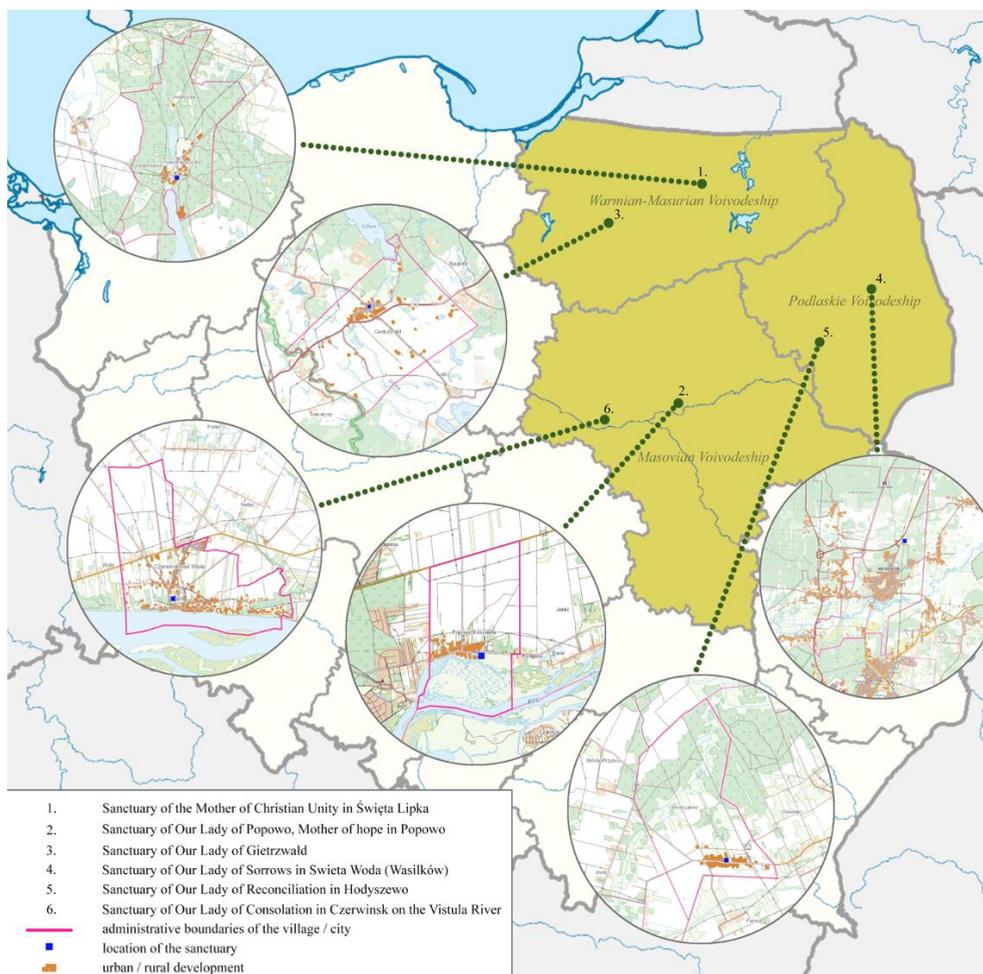


FIGURE 2. The location of the sanctuary and their landscape context (author D. Szymkowicz 2021)

the Warmian hills, the site of the 19th century Marian apparitions, with the famous spring of grace.

4. The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sorrows in Święta Woda in Wasilków, on the pilgrim route between the Holy Virgin, which defends Częstochowa, and the one in Ostra Brama, among the forest hills and green meadows of Podlasie, the mountain of votive crosses and the spring are a special landmark.
5. The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Reconciliation in Hodyszewo, famous for the miraculous image of the Queen of Podlasie from the 17th century, worshiped by Christians of various rites, both Orthodox and Greek Catholics.
6. The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation in Czerwińsk on the Vistula, towering on the Vistula embankment on the route between Warsaw and Płock, venerated for centuries with the famous painting of Czerwińsk 'Help of Christians'. The temple, built in the 12th century, is one of the most signifi-

cant Romanesque buildings in Poland today.

The research began with identifying the sources of the object's sanctity and embedding it in the local tradition, such as in Święta Woda, the source in Hodyszewo, the appearance of an icon on the tree, Święta Lipka, the place of miracles was a sculpture suspended on the linden tree, Gietrzwałd the revelation of the figure of Saint Mary over a maple to a girl. Another important activity was to determine the location and natural conditions that shaped the place atmosphere, e.g. in Czerwińsk a hill on the Vistula embankment with a picturesque view of the surrounding area (Fig. 3). Then, for each object, the spatial composition was defined in accordance with the identification of the elements of the urban composition of Wejchert (1974) and Bogdanowski (1976).

A functional and spatial analysis was performed in order to identify the ways of using space and objects, taking into account profane and sacred functions.

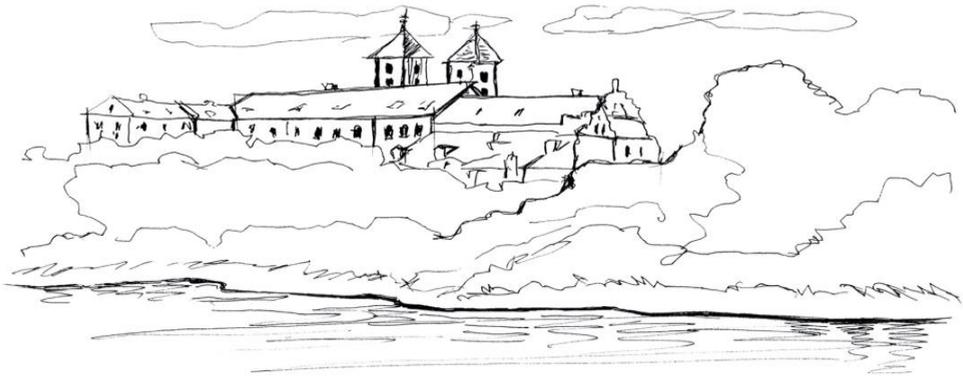


FIGURE 3. Czerwińsk on the Vistula architecture integrated with the landscape, growing out of landscape values (author A. Rykała 2020)

The vicinity of sanctuaries, mostly located on the outskirts of built-up areas, among the rich natural values, which had a significant impact on the formation of the sacred composition, also plays an important role (Fig. 4).

In the next step, the readability of the sacred composition and its components were assessed. For each of the objects,

the space was valorised and the meanings written in forms were read. With regard to the adopted research methods, it turned out that it was essential to search for a space code written in stagnant landscape forms and a material – a building material that gives strong material patterns and based on the available resources, which also results in a clear colour code (Fig. 5).



FIGURE 4. An example of the location of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Gietrzwałd (author D. Szymkowiak 2020)



FIGURE 5. Material and colour patterns made for the Marian's Sanctuary in Czerwińsk on the Vistula (author E. Kosiacka-Beck 2021)

Analyses of the sanctuary areas were a key to getting to know their character and come closer to their uniqueness. Additional social analyses in the form of observations, conversations with residents and users were made in the Czerwińsk sanctuary. They concerned the image of the functioning of the facility and its users.

RESULTS

Research on the sites confirms that Marian sanctuaries are places filled with Christian (Marian) symbolism, a special feeling of the sacred atmosphere, which is made up of remarkable features of the landscape, but also the role they play in the cultural landscape (in line with the provisions of the Congregation for Divine and Sacramental Discipline).

Each sacred function they perform generates a certain type of notation, spatial code:

- the cultic function requires making preparations to enable sacraments celebrations, and open-air altars, chapels, Stations of the Cross or rosary roses, theme gardens, places of contemplation etc. appear in the space;
- ecumenical function of organising prayer meetings of Christians of various denominations and followers of various religions, the spaces have interiors of different character and equipment that strengthen the sacred character of the objects (orchard, grove, clearing, the vineyard, the spring, the hill);
- evangelising function – proclaiming the words of the Gospel, which are

to be the main source of knowledge about Christ for the faithful;

- social function proclaiming the work of mercy, supporting and building communities (Sołjan 2012), by creating meeting places, identifying local communities and pilgrims with the place.

But the profane function of objects also confirms that they adapt to the needs of modern users:

- cognitive function in the arrangement of space, there are elements informing on history of the place, events, natural values;
- utility, economic and gastronomic function, places and facilities adapted to serve pilgrim groups and tourists (parking lots, catering and service points, pilgrim accommodation).

Values are often built up around these functions. In this respect, the Czerwińsk sanctuary is a particularly important object: for the Marian cult, culture and history of Poland (the hill in Czerwińsk has been an official place of historic interest since April 2021). Its importance is highlighted by the fact that the Czerwińsk sanctuary is called Masovian Jasna Góra (Mroczko 1972, Nowiński 2013). The final stage of works concerned the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation (the Czerwińsk Madonna). Spatial analyses performed similarly to other objects helped to define the character of the place and its uniqueness. The research was deepened by observations and interviews with the place users.

The factors that distinguished the object from others were identified as a result of the work, some of them are presented below.

PHENOMENON HIDDEN
IN THE PLACE LOCATION IN
THE STRUCTURE AND THE SPACE
COMPONENTS

1. The location of the basilica on a slope rising above the river Vistula landscape turns out to be of key importance. This location played an important role when the main crossing route was the Vistula seen from a different perspective, it still perceived as a dominant, also in semantic terms (Fig. 6). Today, thanks to still undeveloped space around, the church towers can be seen

from all sides. In the composition, the monastery buildings combine the structure of the entire city, unlike other buildings in the vicinity.

2. The specificity of this temple and its surrounding buildings consists in blending its form into the surrounding natural landscape, material and colour blending, thanks to which the spatial composition, subjected to natural processes, gained a truly majestic appearance (Fig. 7). However, as time goes by the most valuable picturesque views towards the river have deteriorated.



FIGURE 6. The potential deeply embedded in the landscape and the location of the Czerwińsk temple, restitution of the Vistula (photos by L. Ostoja-Beck 2020)



FIGURE 7. The Basilica of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Czerwińsk shows several historic layers and the richness of emerging forms that are a source of inspiration (photo by E. Kosiacka-Beck 2021)

3. Architecture growing out of the landscape, the presence of landscape interiors conducive to contemplation, silence and prayer, subdued saturation of the object with direct symbols all give a strong feeling of spirituality.
 4. Closeness to nature, free composition of greenery, controlled by formal layouts, meaning and composition axes, interiors with formal layouts build a hierarchy of interiors.
 5. Distant views from the terrace towards the river, the eye wanders towards infinity, which strengthens the mysticism of the view, reaching the absolute, gentle penetration into the landscape.
 5. Southern solar exposure, high variability of light, helioplastic effects from sunrise to sunset, picturesque views stretching from many places.
 6. Sequence of consecutive interiors close to architecture, decorated, organised, intertwined with those open to the surroundings (clearing archetype of emptiness, rosary garden, orchard and road winding serpentine along the escarpment, patio, etc.).
 7. Muted colours in the sanctuary space facilitate and foster contemplation.
 8. The arrangement of the interiors and their diversity favour the use of the facility and collision-free events at the same time.
2. The Salesians' care for the education of young generations, memory and the place history. The history is alive there, events and characters are actively recalled through concerts, services, meetings, museum halls (Bishop August Hlond's Chamber), chapels, and interiors of commemoration.
 3. A positive element is the openness to various forms in which Salesian gardens are used, inviting the local community (Strawberry Days in Czerwińsk), fostering interpersonal contacts on the occasion of events, a specific interpenetration of the sacred with the profane (a picnic was held for the fourth time to commemorate the crossing of the Vistula by the Polish army heading for the Grunwald battle, rosaries are held on the Vistula from May to September).
 4. Respect for the old and contemporary local traditions, fishing, Vistula rafting, cultivation, horticulture and agriculture, a strong bond with the town and its inhabitants.

PHENOMENON HIDDEN IN THE USER AND THE WAY OF USING THE SPACE

1. The presence of the Salesian Brothers, the hosts of the sanctuary, their educational, caring and missionary charism mean the gardens areas are intensively

DISSCUSION

In the process of landscaping, the basis is an individual approach to each place. This is especially important today, when the society's demand for attractive and multifunctional landscape that meets various needs of users continues to grow (Bastian et al. 2006). In the respect of the landscape changes taking place and the holistic research approach, which

was developed based on the development of various environmental studies, it has become necessary to maintain the transparency of individual environment components and the remarkable landscape features, which determine its unique character. They make people integrate with a given place and build its identity. It is “the deepest dependence that occurs between the landscape (environment) perceived by a human being with its historically layered elements: the content (culture, tradition of the place) and the form (canon of the place)” (Myczkowski 2009). It can also be noted that the identity of a place is built by elements such as: historic context, location of a given place, natural conditions and the so-called factors that change over time, e.g. the market situation (Łuczak 2000). Therefore, it should be assumed that identity is a combination of remarkable elements that identify a given place. Such elements in relation to the sacred landscape are highlighted in the research by Sowińska and Soszyński (2012):

- material (natural and spatial context, architectural form, form of use and state of preservation, integrity, readability, openness);
- immaterial (connections with events, place name, multisensory nature, dynamics, mood, felt emotions and feelings).

The above distinguished features show that one should consciously shape the sacred landscape due to its complexity and unique character. Taking into account the specificity of sacred landscape, the most important seems to be to preserve or restore spiritual dimension of these spaces, as they were formed of the need for the spirit. The most appro-

priate action is to use the power of the message of archetypes that are universal and speak more than words. The landscape of sanctuary facilities is saturated with spirituality, but in a religious and Christian sense. Such an interpretation of place spirit synthetically captures and evokes the values and meanings of space (Królikowski 2011), and archetypes appearing in sanctuary landscapes create proper conditions for contemplating Christian values.

Finally, shaped hills, mountains, referring to the bond between heaven and earth, symbolise stability, steadfastness, God’s seat, axis, centre of the world and a place of transformation (Kopaliński 1990, Długozima 2014). In sacred places, the emanation of a mountain is often a stone. Purification, a symbol of God’s graces, a symbol of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins, is reflected in landscape by water. It appears in the form of a river, a spring, it is associated with the baptism of Christ, it is also a source of life and relief. Moreover, it refers to primordial matter, the beginning of nature, because everything that is alive lives with moisture, and dead things dry up (Kopaliński 1990). The sacred composition is enriched by trees, symbolising: the course of life, the gift of creation, greatness, beauty, the cross, shelter, nobility, energy, wisdom, veneration, family genealogy, longevity, rebirth, strength, rejuvenation, life and death, the victory of life over death, resurrection, immortality and many other aspects. Growing singly, in avenue plantings, groves, providing shade and shelter. As the most powerful plant, it symbolises divine beings or their place of residence in many cultures. Therefore, they were

sometimes objects of worship, especially as a combination of underground chthonic forces (roots) and heavenly cosmic spheres (crown) with life on earth (trunk) (Kopaliński 1990). Invaluable value is attributed to open space, distant picturesque views – symbolising emptiness, it is a remarkable symbol referring to silence, freedom, it fosters contemplation, a place for seclusion and intensifying the feeling of loneliness. It can also be a zone of penetration, which helps to calm down as well as an appropriate preparation for leaving the sphere of the profane and entering the sphere of the sacred (Długozima 2014). In addition, the phenomenon of light, fire – a symbol of the Holy Spirit, wind – a symbol of God's breath, voice and power, a symbol of the path – journey, gate – way of the passing, etc.

All these elements appear in the landscape as a matter that mediates the feeling of holiness. They give a given place an individual quality, unique character, a specific identity (Dąbrowska-Budziło 2011). They also shape place character, which consists of aesthetic, symbolic, cognitive, artistic values or historic values that we perceive.

The shaping process should also take into account functionality and usability of places, often dictated by the paradigms of their users. Of great importance for the objects' functioning, their popularity and attractiveness is the religious rule (in the studied objects they were regular canons, Jesuits, Salesians) and the clash of the object sacred functions with the profane ones.

Human, as a spiritual being, tries to reach the sacred in many ways. One of them is the need to experience and main-

tain a certain harmony. Therefore, to find orientation in the surrounding world, he reads selected places and their elements in which the sacred manifests itself and distinguishes them from the environment. Sacrum is associated with religious cult, symbolism and unique events and customs, so they are often places of worship or special places, due to their location or history. These spaces have a specific character, which is closely related to the concept of *genius loci*. Sacrum also refers to places of emotional importance for society and important for the individual, and thus, they are an undeniable value in the landscape (Hodor and Łakomy 2016). Three types of sacrum have been distinguished: pure sacrum referring to temples and chapels, the sacred located in space where the sacred and the profane meet like chapels, memorial sites and finally profane bays in the sacred, such as: monuments related to the history of the nation, commemorative plaques (Mandrurowicz 2002). They are all located in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation in Czerwińsk.

CONCLUSIONS

The juxtaposition of objects with each other confirms the importance of the landscape components that testify to their sacred dimension and the need to shape their space with dignity and rationality. The greater the involvement of people associated with a given sanctuary in the development of the cultic, evangelising, ecumenical and social functions is, the easier it is to learn about the object history, and, as a result, to be emotionally linked with it, care for its maintenance and spiritual transmission. Strong

cultural and spatial identity of objects and adapting their functions to the needs of modern users help to emphasise the importance of a place as a carrier of the past and inspiration for the future.

Such actions were undertaken for Czerwińsk where priest Łukasz Mastalerz SDB, in the words “saving from oblivion, and more broadly – extracting one of the treasures of Polish culture from oblivion”, initiated his stay in the local parish (Mastalerz 2018).

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- i niematerialne najczęściej wskazywane przez badaczy krajobrazu. Skupiają się one głównie wokół obiektów, elementów wyposażenia miejsc świętych, wydarzeń historycznych, świętości, przenikaniu sacrum z profanum, atmosferze budującej ich specyfikę jako miejsc świętych. Obserwując ich współczesne działanie, ważną jednak kwestią jest złożoność funkcji przez nie pełnionych, co wpływa na właściwości poszczególnych obiektów. Ideą i celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie wyników badań nad fenomenem świętej przestrzeni Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Pocieszenia w Czerwińsku nad Wisłą, odnosząc się do innych miejsc o podobnym charakterze. Aby to osiągnąć, przeprowadzono badania w wyselekcjonowanych sześciu sanktuariach maryjnych trzech województw: warmińsko-mazurskim, mazowieckim oraz podlaskim. Do badań nad kompozycją przestrzenną i sakralną obiektów, kontekstem miejsca, funkcją, symboliką, kolorystyką i znaczeniem wykorzystano metody właściwe architekturze krajobrazu. Zgodnie z obranymi kryteriami dokonano zestawienia obiektów. Dodatkowym obserwacjom poddano czerwińskie sanktuarium, aby określić, na czym polega jego specyfika. Użytkownik terenu i jego aktywności, historia bogata w wydarzenia, lokalne uwarunkowania i osadzenie obiektu w krajobrazie okazały się kluczowe dla obiektu. Wskazanie cech i wartości czerwińskiego sanktuarium ma obudzić uśpiony w krajobrazie potencjał wymagający szczególnej pielęgnacji i pamięci.

Słowa kluczowe: duch miejsca, krajobraz sakralny, sanktuarium Matki Bożej, święte miejsce, fenomenologia

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Streszczenie: *Fenomen miejsc świętych na przykładzie Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Pocieszenia w Czerwińsku nad Wisłą. Sanktuaria są miejscami o szczególnej atmosferze. Niekiedy z punktu widzenia obserwatora trudno określić czy zidentyfikować, na czym polega ich wyjątkowość i co składa się na nią. Co powoduje przeżycie duchowe przestrzeni nie tylko wyznawców, pielgrzymów, ale też zwykłych turystów? Wartości materialne*

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