

Churches of Peace (Poland)

No 1054

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Churches of Peace in Jawor and Swidnica
<i>Location</i>	Historic region of Silesia, Principality of Swidnica and Jawor
<i>State Party</i>	Republic of Poland
<i>Date</i>	30 June 2000

Justification by State Party

The Churches of Peace in Jawor and Swidnica give exceptional testimony to the cultural tradition of timber-frame architecture at the peak of its structural and aesthetic potential. They also bear witness to the coexistence of Baroque art and Lutheran theology. **Criterion iii**

The Churches of Peace are outstanding, pioneering, and unique structures, the construction, spatial arrangement, and technology of which were later imitated only in a simplified and reduced form. Developed in response to imposed external conditions, their architecture satisfied the expectations and needs of local communities in terms of space arrangements, architectural forms, and ideological content. **Criterion iv**

The Churches of Peace are directly linked to an important historical event (the Peace of Westphalia), to a universal idea (religious freedom), and to ideology (the Christian faith, the Reformation). Their form and symbolism were closely linked with the political situation of a large and dynamic population group defined by its religious denomination – a group which, as a result of internal conflicts and war, was reduced to the position of a diaspora barely tolerated by state authorities. **Criterion vi**

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, these are *monuments*.

History and Description

History

The Thirty Years' War in Europe ended with the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which upheld the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, ie the faith professed by the ruler was obligatory

for his subjects. At that time Silesia was a part of the Catholic Habsburg monarchy. In most of the province Protestants were persecuted and deprived of the right and possibility to practise their faith. Through the agency of the Lutheran king of Sweden, the Emperor finally allowed (1651–52) the erection of three churches, henceforth known as the Churches of Peace, in Silesian principalities under direct Habsburg rule in Glogow (Glogau), which ceased to exist in the 18th century, Jawor (Jauer), and Swidnica (Schweidnitz) in the south-west part of present-day Poland. The Emperor's consent was, however, given upon conditions that were difficult to comply with. The churches had to be built exclusively of perishable materials (wood and clay), located outside city walls, and built in a limited period of time. These restrictions, together with the need to provide adequate space for large crowds of worshippers, forced the architect, Albrecht von Sabisch (1610–88), a prominent master-builder and fortification designer active in Wroclaw, to implement pioneering constructional and architectural solutions of a scale and complexity unknown ever before or since in wooden architecture. The timber-framed structures of enormous scale and complexity were assembled. The Churches of Peace, as they are still called today, were to be as inconspicuous as possible in the townscape; they were to be the refuge of a legally disadvantaged and only reluctantly tolerated minority, whose role as outsiders should be evident in the location of the churches outside the protective city walls.

The first permit was given to Glogow (1651) and the site was located 300m outside the city walls. Building started quickly and the first service was held in October 1652, but the church was destroyed by a violent storm in the summer of 1654. A new church was built the following year, but this burnt down in 1758 and was then replaced by a brick building. The permit for the other two churches was given in 1652. The church of Jawor was built in 1654–55. In Swidnica a temporary structure (*Gotteshüttlein*, God's Hut) was built in 1652 and the actual construction was able to take place in 1656–57, thanks to the donation of Count Hans Heinrich von Hochberg and support from the Lutheran magistrate of Swidnica. A new sacristy was erected in 1695 and private pews were built by noble families in the early 18th century. Several auxiliary buildings were added to the ensemble, including the residences of the pastor and the vicars, a Latin school, and a German school. The two churches were designed as basilicas with built-in galleries but their plans and spatial arrangements differed. In their décor, integrated into the architectural framework, exuberant Baroque forms and complex imagery were used in a truly unique way to convey concepts of Protestant theology. During the Silesian War, Swidnica was under siege on several occasions, and the hostilities resulted in the destruction of the sacristy and structural damage to the northern wall. All the damage was repaired by 1763.

Description

Unlike the Baroque Catholic churches of Silesia, the Churches of Peace do not represent a self-confident mission-oriented religion, triumphant in its victory over heretics, but rather they embody a place of refuge for an oppressed religious minority that wanted to assert its faith, to remain conscious of its individuality, and to preserve the communal cult of its traditions and practices. Stability and durability were achieved by means of an efficient structural system and careful use of traditional techniques in handling

the materials and in connecting the individual timbers with one another. The Churches of Peace are among the latest examples of an architecture that combines post-and-beam construction (building with one-piece wall-high posts) with the techniques of halved joints; the structural framework of regularly placed uprights and horizontal connecting rails is reinforced by means of diagonal crossed struts that are inserted in the posts and rails in a way that makes shifting of the structural framework impossible. As post-and-beam buildings, the Churches of Peace are part of a European tradition that goes back to the 12th century (the Norwegian stave churches, one of which found its way to Silesia in the 19th century) and continued into the 18th century (eg the Churches of Grace). The churches in Jawor and Swidnica differ from one another in the character of their floor plans. Both have three aisles, both terminate in a polygonal east end, but whereas in Jawor the eastern end is still a true chancel, in Swidnica it is only the formal remembrance of such: its function has become that of a sacristy.

- THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF PEACE IN JAWOR

The church was designed by the architect Albert von Sabisch and constructed by the master carpenter Andreas Gamper from Jawor in 1654–55. Located outside the town, the church is surrounded by a park, the former graveyard, with the original layout of tree-lined alleys. The auxiliary buildings occupy a quarter of the site. The church is in the form of a basilica with one nave, two aisles, and a presbytery. The building is a timber-framed structure, filled with vertical wooden chips wrapped in straw and plastered with clay. It is covered with shingle roofs. The bell-tower adjoining the south elevation was erected in 1707 on a rectangular plan, the first storey in brick and the upper storeys timber-framed, with an octagonal helmet on top. The building is 43.3m long and 26.8m wide. Its height from floor to ceiling is 16.4m and externally to the rooftop 23.7m.

The interior has two tiers of principal galleries and two tiers of auxiliary galleries. The auxiliary galleries were added in the 18th century. The galleries are divided by screens and partitions into a complex system of interconnected pews for local nobility and craft guilds. The original polychrome decoration consists of ornaments in tones of white and blue and of 143 biblical scenes with inscriptions. The paintings, inspired by Mathias Merian, were executed by Georg Flegel. Similar decoration is also on the auxiliary galleries, and the décor is supplemented by cartouches bearing coats of arms. The high altar (1672) is a multi-storeyed structure executed by the workshop of Michael Schneider of Landshut.

- THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF PEACE IN SWIDNICA

The church was designed by the same architect as the Church of Jawor, Albert von Sabisch, and built by master carpenters Andreas Gamper (from Jawor) and Kaspar König (from Swidnica) in 1656–57. It is located north of the town centre and was incorporated into the outer ring of fortifications in the mid-18th century. The polygonal site is occupied by the churchyard with its original layout and surrounded by walls. The auxiliary buildings include the residence of the head pastor, the vicarage, and two schools. The church is in the form of a basilica with a transept and four tiers of galleries. Its plan is close to a Greek cross. The structure is similar to the Jawor church. The church is 45.1m long and 20.9m wide; the nave is 11.5m wide and 14.5m high. Externally the building is 22.5m tall. The polychrome decoration of the interior, started in 1693 under the direction of Christian

Sussenbach, was inspired by the Bible. The high altar was executed in 1752 by the sculptor Gottfried August Hoffman, replacing an old altarpiece, and he also built the pulpit. The main organ was built by Christoph Klose in 1666–69; it was repaired several times in the 18th century and more recently in 1834.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The churches of Jawor and Swidnica are both property of the Diocese of Wrocław.

The Church of Jawor and its surrounding area (former cemetery and a Soviet army cemetery) are legally protected as monuments (No 990/173/L, as of 1963). The current master plan contains provisions for the protection of the site (1988, amended in 1994 and 1996).

The Church of Swidnica and its auxiliary buildings are legally protected as monuments (No 9/131 of 1950) and have been placed in Zone A (strict conservation and archaeological protection) of the historic town, designated in the current master plan (1994).

Management

The Churches of Jawor and Swidnica are regularly used for religious purposes and there is no intention to change this. The general management and routine maintenance are carried out and financed by the respective parishes. There are no particular environmental pressures that would threaten the churches.

The conservation management of the church of Jawor is the responsibility of the Lower Branch of Historical Monuments Protection Service in Legnica and in the case of Swidnica of the corresponding office in Walbrzych. The protection is supervised by the Voivodship Conservator's office in Wrocław and the Commissioner for Historic Monuments in Warsaw. Regular monitoring is carried out by specialists.

Both churches are currently subject to a comprehensive conservation programme by the Deutsches Zentrum für Handwerk und Denkmalpflege, Probstei Johannesberg, Fulda e.V. The programmes are implemented in close collaboration with the Institute of Science of Historical Works of Art and Conservation Techniques of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun; the conservation of decorations is the responsibility of the Department of Conservation of the Polychrome Paintings and Sculpture and the Department of Conservation of Paper and Leather.

Both churches are included in regional and local tourism development plans. The sites are accessible to groups and individual visitors, and have the necessary facilities. Most visitors come from Germany, the Czech Republic, and Austria, and amount to 12,000 per year in Jawor and 24,000 in Swidnica.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The embellishment and decoration of both churches lasted well into the 18th century, including additional structures on the site. In Jawor some major repairs were undertaken in the

occasion of the anniversaries in 1852 and 1902. Recognizing the significance of the building, special care was taken to minimize interference with the original structure, but involving repair and replacement of fillings and clay renderings. The church had structural deformations and, because of the lack of proper maintenance during and after World War II, its condition caused serious concern in the 1970s. Thorough survey and recording were undertaken in this period, followed by the development of conservation programmes in the 1980s. An immediate result was the reinforcement of the deformed central roof trusses, thus preventing further deterioration and without compromising the authenticity of the building.

In the case of Swidnica, the Seven Years' War and the siege by the Prussian army in 1762 caused considerable damage to the church. The facade away from the city received so many direct hits that large parts had to be renewed during repairs the year after the peace treaty. The new sections were harmoniously integrated with the existing structure but using joinery characteristic of the 18th century. A new timber-framed sacristy was also built. As in Jawor, further repairs were carried out in 1852 and 1902. In 1852, a new porch was added to the sacristy and the so-called nuptial hall was built, both in neo-Gothic style. A baptism hall was built inside the church. In 1902 the main entrances received timber-framed porches. Structural repairs were as a rule limited to the replacement of individual members and the construction has remained basically that of 18th century. The timber structure was stabilized and consolidated in the 1960s and 1970s and the shingle roof was replaced.

Both churches are currently subject to conservation programmes, in two parts, one dealing with structural consolidation and the other with interior decoration and furnishings. The structural work will be completed in the near future. The conservation of the décor has been initiated with a pilot phase and will be continued subject to obtaining funds.

Authenticity

Both Churches of Peace have a very high degree of historical authenticity. Their basic historic fabric and their formal appearance have remained unchanged since they were built. Any later elements in the interior fit in well with the older components in the existing architecture and form an artistic whole. The construction and roof forms of the external additions are adapted to those of the main building. Although the churches have had some restoration, this has been carried out in a correct and respectful manner. Lutheran services have continued being held in both Churches of Peace without interruption since the time of construction, and their relationship with the setting has remained intact. The churches can therefore be judged to pass the test of authenticity.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the site in January 2001, and ICOMOS scientific committees were consulted on the quality of the architecture concerned.

Qualities

Protestant churches were generally built in simple forms, avoiding excessive decoration. In the case of Silesia, with an impact of the Counter-Reformation, the Churches of Peace were the only Lutheran churches in an otherwise Catholic context. Because of the context and an obvious competition between the two religions, these churches set out to match the Baroque language used by the Catholics. This resulted in a unique phenomenon in Europe both ideologically and artistically, and gave a particular significance to these buildings.

The two churches are the only examples of their kind. They have been built using old traditional techniques, but reaching exceptional dimensions which have required high technical mastery as well as outstanding quality in their architecture. The buildings, in fact, should not be considered vernacular but as outstanding examples of 17th century architecture.

Comparative analysis

Before proposing the properties for inscription, the State Party carried out a thorough comparative study. It is understood that the two extant Churches of Peace represent a particular phenomenon in the history of art and architecture with no real analogies elsewhere. This is due not only to the ideological and artistic content of their design and construction but also to their size and type of construction.

The scale of the Churches of Peace is nearly matched by only two other wooden churches. The Lutheran church of the Holy Ghost in Clausthal, Lower Saxony, consecrated in 1642, is a hall church with two aisles and two tiers of galleries. It is 36.5m long and 17.7m wide, with an overall height of 19.5m, and accommodates some 2200 persons. The Lutheran church in Kerimäki, Finland, was built entirely in wood in 1848. This building has a cross plan with a dome over the crossing. The main nave is 45m long and the transept 42m long; the building is 24m high to the rooftop. In the past it could accommodate 3600 persons; now this has been reduced to 3300. Jawor with its 6000 seats and Swidnica with 7500 thus represent the largest existing wooden church buildings.

The study indicates that most timber-framed buildings have followed a simple scheme without aisles. There are few examples of larger hall churches, and the basilica type is the most complex. Of the two Churches of Peace, the plan of Swidnica is the more complicated owing to its large transept. A limited number of timber-framed churches with similar structural system were erected in the early 18th century (Freystadt, Sagan, Wrocław, Voigtsdorf, Leipe, Guhrau) but all of these have since been destroyed or demolished. The only existing ones of this type are the two Churches of Peace. Considering the required size of the churches and the conditions imposed on building materials, the builders had to use the utmost inventiveness to apply time-tested carpentry techniques at this scale, resulting in a sophisticated use of such technology.

The other wooden church buildings on the World Heritage List include the medieval Urnes Stave Church (inscribed on the List in 1979: criteria i, ii, iii) in Norway, Kizhi Pogost (1990: i, iv, v) in the Russian Federation (Carelia), Petäjävesi Old Church (1994: iv) in Finland, built by a peasant master builder in 1763–64; the Wooden Churches of Maramures (1999: iv) in Romania, and the Churches of

Chiloé (2000: ii, iii) in Chile. Furthermore, a selection of wooden churches in Southern Poland is presented for nomination in 2001. On the occasion of the nomination of the Petäjävesi church a comparative study identified and evaluated the different types of wooden churches in northern Europe. It is noted that the buildings mentioned above represent different types of all-wooden construction, whereas the Churches of Peace are timber-framed constructions. Furthermore, the case of the Churches of Peace is fundamentally the result of a particular political and cultural situation in Europe at the time, and the consequent challenges to find technical, architectural, and artistic solutions for their design and construction.

In this context the Churches of Peace are distinguished as exceptional because of their typology and the application of timber-frame construction to congregation buildings of this size. At the same time their particular value lies in the ideological significance of their construction and artistic expression, where they remain unique. These churches are the largest sacred timber-framed buildings in Europe and as such are an engineering achievement that has never been surpassed in this material and in this building technology. The construction method and the structural system of the Churches of Peace are both the result of an historical situation that existed nowhere other than in Silesia and at no other time than after the Thirty Years' War. There was a need for churches that combined a minimum of expense and an extremely short building period (one year) with maximum accommodation for the faithful. The emphasis was not on development of the liturgy or cultivation of private piety but rather for the congregation to be brought as close as possible to the point from which the word of God was proclaimed. These were the premises for the spatial design, from which the architect developed a convincing solution in Swidnica: the cross-shaped central plan with surrounding galleries, which was prototypical for Protestant church construction up until the end of the 18th century.

Brief description

The Churches of Peace in Jawor and Swidnica in Poland are an exceptional achievement, the largest religious timber-framed buildings in Europe, at the time of the religious dispute after the Peace of Westphalia in the former Silesia in the mid-17th century. Constrained by physical and political conditions, the Churches of Peace are testimony of the search for religious freedom and a rare expression given to Lutheran ideology in using the means generally associated with the Catholic Church.

Statement of Significance

The Churches of Peace bear exceptional witness to a particular political and spiritual development in Europe and represent outstanding technical and architectural solutions to meet the difficult conditions imposed on the builders and the community, using age-old traditional techniques. They represent architectural and artistic evidence of the faith of a religious community and its will to survive. Under difficult circumstances this community created, in an unparalleled *tour de force*, the spaces it needed to exercise its faith up to the present day. The Churches of Peace are masterpieces of skilled handicraft, demonstrating what men are capable of when the utmost is demanded from them.

ICOMOS Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii, iv, and vi*:

Criterion iii The Churches of Peace are outstanding testimony to an exceptional act of tolerance on the part of the Catholic Habsburg Emperor towards Protestant communities in Silesia in the period following the Thirty Years' War in Europe.

Criterion iv As a result of conditions imposed by the Emperor the Churches of Peace required the builders, to implement pioneering constructional and architectural solutions of a scale and complexity unknown ever before or since in wooden architecture. The success may be judged by their survival to the present day.

Criterion vi The Churches of Peace bear exceptional witness to a particular political development in Europe in the 17th century of great spiritual power and commitment.

Bureau Recommendation

That the Churches of Peace in Jawor and Swidnica be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii, iv, and vi*.

ICOMOS, September 2001