

## THE OLDEST CHURCH IN CZEŚTOCHOWA IN THE CONTEXT OF SECULAR AND CLERICAL PATRONAGE

St. Sigmund's Church is thought to be the oldest temple in Częstochowa<sup>1</sup>. Although the remnants of the medieval building are visible almost only in the church's presbytery, there is no denying the fact that the church can be defined as a document of the local history, culture, and religious transformations in different periods. The church underwent numerous modifications – for example in the 16th and 17th century – as a result of fire damage and destruction brought on by the Polish-Swedish wars<sup>2</sup>. The church furnishings, as well as the private chapels, were funded by clergymen and aristocracy from the vicinity of Częstochowa<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the parish temple was strongly connected to the Order of St. Paul the First Hermit<sup>4</sup>. The monastery had been functioning there until 1866 – it was then replaced by a rectory<sup>5</sup>. St. Sigmund's Church is a token of the local identity, since for about five hundred years the inhabitants of Częstochowa were buried in the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Żmudziński, *Budownictwo i sztuka w Częstochowie do połowy XVII wieku*, [w:] *Częstochowa. Dzieje miasta i klasztoru jasnogórskiego. T. I. Okres staropolski*, red. F. Kiryk, Częstochowa 2002, s. 282–283.

<sup>2</sup> J. Borowska-Antoniewicz, *Dawna architektura Częstochowy i regionu w ikonografii XVII–XX wieku*, Częstochowa 1988, s. 16.

<sup>3</sup> M. Wardzyński, *Rzeźba nowożytna w kręgu Jasnej Góry i Polskiej Prowincji Zakonu Paulinów; Ośrodek rzeźbiarski w Częstochówce pod Jasną Górą 1620–1705*, t. 1, s. 41; A. Jaskiewicz, *Św. Zygmunt*, „Aleje 3” 2006, 57, s. 22.

<sup>4</sup> The Archive of the Metropolitan Curia in Kraków (hereinafter referred to as „AMCK”), Av Cap 15, *Acta visitationis exteritoris decanatum Skalnensis, Wolbramensis, Leloviensis, Bytomiensis et Blschinensis* [sic!] *ad archidiaconatum Cracoviensem pertinentum. per Christophorum Kazimirski nominatum episcopum Kiioviensem (...) ex commissione Georgii Cardinales Radziwil episcopi Cracoviensis (...) a 1598 expeditae*; J. Żmudziński, *op. cit.*, s. 281.

<sup>5</sup> *Katalog zabytków sztuki w Polsce. T. VI. Miasto Częstochowa. Cz. 1. Stare i Nowe Miasto, Częstochówka i przedmieścia*, red. Z. Rozanow, Warszawa 1995, s. 44–45.

parish cemetery nearby the temple<sup>6</sup>. Finally, the aforementioned building is an important monument which miraculously avoided the ultimate destruction in the last decade of the 19th century when it was planned to demolish the church and replace it by a new and more spacious temple – the future cathedral<sup>7</sup>.

In the Peter's Pence register, kept from 1325 to 1327, there is a mention of a wooden Virgin Mary sculpture and the Mother of God's Church on the Jasna Góra hill<sup>8</sup>. The parish was transferred to St. Sigmund's Church on the 22 of June 1382 when Henryk Biel from Błesno, coat of arms Ostoja, was fulfilling the duties of parish priest<sup>9</sup>. The decision was connected with Władysław Opolczyk's foundation of the Pauline Fathers Monastery on Jasna Góra and – in consequence – a decree signed by the Bishop of Kraków Jan Radlica<sup>10</sup>.

The parish church was built near the Warta River around the mid-14th century and since its origin it was dedicated to St. Sigmund<sup>11</sup>. In that time, the temple was as a single nave building with a presbytery of two bays which was ending with a straight wall supported by buttresses. In the west side of St. Sigmund's Church, there was a tower built on a rectangular plan<sup>12</sup>. Presumably, certain parts of the temple were not created in the same time. They could presented the effect of modifications made after the takeover of the church by the Order of St. Paul the First Hermit in 1474, approved by Kazimierz Jagiellończyk's certificate<sup>13</sup>. Before that, the church was used by priests from the Diocese of Kraków. The Pauline Fathers erected a monastery next to the south part of temple. In that period, the area of the parish was

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> W. Skrodzki, *Archikatedra Świętej Rodziny w Częstochowie*, Częstochowa 1996, s. 9–10.

<sup>8</sup> E. Wartalska, *Dzieje Częstochówki (1220–1655)*, [w:] *Częstochowa i jej miejsce w kulturze polskiej*, red. S. Chrostek, Częstochowa 1990, s. 23–24.

<sup>9</sup> M. Antoniewicz, *Subregion częstochowski w średniowieczu (XIV–XV wiek)*, [w:] *Częstochowa i jej miejsce w kulturze polskiej*, red. S. Chrostek, Częstochowa 1990, s. 14–15.

<sup>10</sup> M. Wardzyński, *op. cit.*, s. 21.

<sup>11</sup> J. Zbudniewek, *Parafia św. Zygmunta*, [w:] *Częstochowa. Dzieje miasta i Klasztoru Jasnogórskiego. T. I. Okres staropolski*, red. F. Kiryk, Częstochowa 2002, s. 207–208.

<sup>12</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 35–36.

<sup>13</sup> A. Jaśkiewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 22.

relatively large and included the city of Częstochowa and – among the other settlements – the villages of Rększowice, Dźbów, Kiedrzyń, Bleszno, Wrzosowa (the property of Jan Treпка), Częstochówka, Wyczerpy, and Jakub Koniecpolski's domain called Konopiska<sup>14</sup>. After a fire devastated the church in 1505, it was rebuilt in 1519; unfortunately, the scarcity of archival documents made it impossible to reconstruct the extent of work carried out at that time.

The first description of architectural forms and furnishings of St. Sigmund's was produced in 1598, along with an inventory included in a report made after a canonical visitation<sup>15</sup>. The document lists such items as: three bells – two hanging in the west tower and one in the fleche, four altars with paintings, a wooden baptismal font, ciborium with silver pyxis, crosses made of noble metals, a gilded monstrance, silver chalices, and a copper thurible<sup>16</sup>. In the inventory, one can find also information about the liturgical vestments, however, this topic is not the main concern of this article and may be only mentioned in passing. During the first decade of the 17th century, St. Sigmund's Church was supplied with new furnishings, for example, the fifth altar, a pulpit, and a stone baptismal font. In that period, a statue of Christ on the Cross was placed in the chancel in the main altar<sup>17</sup>.

The essential rebuilding of the parish church began in the second quarter of the 17th century when St. Cross chapel – made of bricks – was constructed in the expanded area of the cemetery<sup>18</sup>. That enterprise, an example of monastery patronage, was undertaken by Andrzej Gołdonowski – the Pauline Father who fulfilled the role of the provincial from 1641 to 1644<sup>19</sup>. In the years 1647–1648, he was the prior of the parish of Częstochowa<sup>20</sup>. Father Gołdonowski is recognized without a doubt as one of the most prominent representatives of the Order of St. Paul the First Hermit, since he contributed to the erection or modification of remarkable sacral buildings like St. Roch and

<sup>14</sup> J. Zbudniewek, *op. cit.*, s. 208–209.

<sup>15</sup> AMCK, Av Cap 15.

<sup>16</sup> J. Braun, *Częstochowa: rozwój urbanistyczny i architektoniczny*, Warszawa 1959, s. 26.

<sup>17</sup> J. Zbudniewek, *op. cit.*, s. 232–234.

<sup>18</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 44.

<sup>19</sup> M. Wardzyński, *op. cit.*, s. 41.

<sup>20</sup> J. Borowska-Antoniewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 16.

St. Sebastian's Church, St. Barbara's Church with the monastery, St. Jacob's Church with a hospital, and the chapel in Żabieniec<sup>21</sup>. In 1642, the mentioned provincial raised St. Anne's Chapel by the first bay of the nave from the east, in the north side of the church<sup>22</sup>. The undertaking was financed by the provincial budget. The chapel was built on a rectangular plan and crowned with a dome with a baroque finial. Mariusz Philonardi, the Apostolic Nuncio, consecrated St. Anne's Chapel in October of 1643 and the inhabitants of Częstochowa funded plaques for that part of the parish temple<sup>23</sup>. Despite the war damage, there were certain liturgical vessels preserved which were probably ordered as the chapel's equipment by Andrzej Goldonowski. One of the vessels is a silver reliquary of the Holy Cross, made in Cracow in the 1640s. It has a form of a high cross with floral ornaments and semi-precious stones encrusted in the arms. As a result of the mentioned enterprises, St. Anne's Chapel became a notable example of work made by both clergy and laymen<sup>24</sup>.

Except for the sacristy – built in 1647 and torn down in the 1680s – the next modification of St. Sigmund's Church took place in 1661 when Grzegorz Otwinowski, a nobleman and landlord of Bleszno, founded a chapel which was dedicated to his patron saint, St. Gregory<sup>25</sup>. That part of the parish church resembled St. Anne's Chapel in its architectural form and was located in the south part of the nave. When those two undertakings were finished, the church's outline took the form of the Latin cross<sup>26</sup>.

The appearance of St. Sigmund's Church in the 17th century was immortalised in the preserved iconographic materials: a painting dated to the end of the 1650s and a graphic from 1659<sup>27</sup>. The second piece of

<sup>21</sup> J. Zbudniewek, *op. cit.*, s. 235–237; About St. Roch and St. Sebastian's Church: A. Barczyk, *Architektura i wyposażenie kościoła pw. św.św. Rocha i Sebastiana w Częstochowie. Zarys dziejów*, „Almanach Częstochowy” 2012, s. 95–119.

<sup>22</sup> The Archive of the Jasna Góra AJG 742 (hereinafter referred to as „AJG”), *Acta seu continuatio eorum ab anno (...) 1641 sub tempore regiminis R. P. provincialis Andreae Goldonowski et eius maioris collegae Fr. Adami Zawada secretarii provinciali (...)*, s. 200, 209; M. Wardzyński, *op. cit.*, s. 115.

<sup>23</sup> J. Żmudziński, *op. cit.*, s. 285.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> J. Braun, *op. cit.*, s. 26–27.

<sup>26</sup> J. Żmudziński, *op. cit.*, s. 285–287.

<sup>27</sup> J. Borowska-Antoniewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 16.

art, created by Gorczyn and Bensheimer, presents the siege of Jasna Góra Monastery during the Swedish Deluge<sup>28</sup>. It shows also the most important places and buildings in the 17th century Częstochowa including – apart from the Pauline Fathers' Monastery – the temples erected or modified under the guidance of Andrzej Gołdonowski, for example St. Jacob's, St. Barbara's, and the parish church. St. Sigmund's is displayed in the foreground as a temple with a rectangular west tower, a tracery window, and the chancel lower than the nave<sup>29</sup>. In the Bensheimer's work, there is visible also St. Anne's Chapel topped with a baroque dome and accompanied by a sacristy situated in the north side of the temple<sup>30</sup>. Both the nave and the chancel are covered with two-sloped roofs<sup>31</sup>. The architectural forms of St. Sigmund's Church, relatively reliably documented in the aforementioned graphic, have been destroyed and – in consequence – the current shape of the temple is an effect of subsequent rebuildings<sup>32</sup>.

After the Swedish Deluge and the Lubomirski's Rebellion, it was necessary to reconstruct the parish church<sup>33</sup>. Konrad Raciborski, the parish priest, contributed to that initiative; unfortunately, the result of the renovation was damaged again by the Swedish royal army of Charles XIII at the beginning of the 18th century<sup>34</sup>. There are some remnants of the furnishings from the second half of the 17th century in the St. Sigmund's interior. The archival documents provide information about six altars which would adorn the parish church in that period, but, apart from them, there have been preserved only two sculptures located in the chancel in the main altar designed in the Gothic Revival style<sup>35</sup>. The statues of St. Barbara with a tower and St. Catherine of Alexandria holding a sword were funded by the Pauline Fathers and sculpted probably in the years 1665–1675 in an unknown workshop<sup>36</sup>. They are

<sup>28</sup> M. Wardzyński, *op. cit.*, s. 29; A. Jaśkiewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 22–23.

<sup>29</sup> J. Zbudniewek, *op. cit.*, s. 232.

<sup>30</sup> A. Barczyk, *Kościół pw. św. Zygmunta w Częstochowie. Historia i architektura*, „Almanach Częstochowy” 2013, s. 101.

<sup>31</sup> J. Żmudziński, *op. cit.*, s. 284–285.

<sup>32</sup> J. Braun, *op. cit.*, s. 48.

<sup>33</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 35–37.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> *Kościół Św. Zygmunta w Częstochowie*, „Dzwonek Częstochowski” 1902, 2, s. 90.

<sup>36</sup> AMCK, Av 32, *Visitatio decanatus Leloviensis vigore synodi Lubienscianae ad praepositum Pilecensem spectantis sub fel. auspiciis Eminent. ac Cel. Principis*

about one meter high, made of polychromed linden wood, and gold-plated<sup>37</sup>. As for their style, both art pieces are similar to the sculptures from Beszowa<sup>38</sup>. The main altar – with the finial flanked with the statues of St. Barbara and St. Catherine of Alexandria – was made by Jakub Borawski from Warsaw in 1874 in the Baroque Revival style, with a wooden crucifix from the first half of the 18th century placed in its central part<sup>39</sup>. The altar replaced the wooden work of art dated to the 1660's<sup>40</sup>. The previous altar has been removed in the second half of the 19th century because of its poor condition. The two mentioned sculptures were originally situated in the old main altar<sup>41</sup>.

The 18th century descriptions of St. Sigmund's Church are included in the certificates called *Acta Visitationis* which provide information about the building's roofing and the church's bad condition in that period<sup>42</sup>. The final effect of the renovations – including for example the reconstruction of the upper tower's storeys – was short-lived because the parish church was burned down in 1760 and in 1778 and, in consequence, it was once more in a desperate need for repair. The attempts at saving the temple were documented in the archival sources and bills for the plasterers' and roofers' work<sup>43</sup>.

St. Sigmund's Church was reconstructed in 1783 and its present architectural form is a result of that rebuilding<sup>44</sup>. New bays were added to both St. Anne's and St. Gregory's chapels, making the parish temple

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*R. D. Joannis Alexandri S. R. E. Cardinalis Lipski, episcopi Cracoviensis, ducis Severiae, per R. D. Adamum Ignatium a Komorowo Komorowski, cathedralem Cracoviensem, s. Michaelisin Arce et Pilecensem praepositum ac officialem perpetuum expedita A. D. 1739, incipiendo a die 2 Novembris ad diem Decembris, s. 390–391.*

<sup>37</sup> AJG 2078, *Akta klasztoru św. Zygmunta w Częstochowie*, s. 36–37.

<sup>38</sup> M. Wardzyński, *op. cit.*, s. 194–195.

<sup>39</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 38–39; J. Borowska-Antoniewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 16.

<sup>40</sup> AMCK, Av 32, *Visitatio...*, *op. cit.*, s. 390–391.

<sup>41</sup> M. Wardzyński, *op. cit.*, s. 194.

<sup>42</sup> J. Zbudniewek, *op. cit.*, s. 232–234.

<sup>43</sup> J. Braun, *op. cit.*, s. 45–46.

<sup>44</sup> The present architectural form of St. Sigmund's Church was described in: A. Barczyk, *Kościół...*, *op. cit.*, s. 113–116.

a three-nave basilica<sup>45</sup>. During the building works which took the following decades, construction of the west two-tower facade was initiated, only to be finished in 1862<sup>46</sup>.

The new equipment like, for example, art pieces and liturgical vessels, played the essential role in renovation. Antoni Bilski, coat of arms Jelita, has donated four stucco side-altars which stand today on both sides of the rood arch and in the east parts of the aisles<sup>47</sup>. The side-altars were made in 1787 in the late Baroque style and their forms could be described as parallel. In the north part of the rood arch, there is an altar called the Madonna and Child due to the icon placed in its central piece. The one-bay altar with columns flanking its second storey and multiple pilasters surrounding the main painting has been enriched by the 19th century figures of St. Kinga and St. Jadwiga of Poland<sup>48</sup>. It is worth mentioning that the 17th century picture is decorated with crowns – dated to the same period – and a silver dress adorned with symbols of the Virgin Mary, like lily and rose. Above the entablature, in the finial, there are located a cartouche with the hierogram of God's Mother and – beneath – the symbol of the Holy Spirit in a radial glory, surrounded with clouds and faces of putti<sup>49</sup>.

As it was said, the other altars founded by Antoni Bilski are similar in form to the work of art described above. Symmetrically to the altar, in the south part of the rood arch, stands the Five Wounds Christ altar with the main image depicting resurrected Jesus surrounded by personifications of faith, love, and hope – the three theological virtues. It was painted in the 17th century on sheet metal and modified around one hundred years later to celebrate the foundation of the Five Wounds Fraternity in 1758<sup>50</sup>. The retable is flanked with the 19th century sculptures of St. Francis Seraph and St. Anthony of Padua. In the finial, one can notice a cartouche decorated with *Iesus Christus Soter*

<sup>45</sup> J. Żmudziński, *Budownictwo i sztuka w Częstochowie od połowy XVII wieku do 1795 roku*, [w:] *Częstochowa. Dzieje miasta i klasztoru jasnogórskiego. T. I. Okres staropolski*, red. F. Kiryk, Częstochowa 2002, s. 518.

<sup>46</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 35–36.

<sup>47</sup> J. Żmudziński, *Budownictwo i sztuka w Częstochowie od połowy XVII wieku do 1795 roku...*, *op. cit.*, s. 521.

<sup>48</sup> A. Jaśkiewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 22–24.

<sup>49</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 38–39.

<sup>50</sup> J. Zbudniewek, *op. cit.*, s. 228.

hierogram and the Sacred Heart with crown of thorns in a radial glory and surrounded by the angels.

In the east bays of the aisles, there stand the other two altars. First of them is situated in the location where – before the rebuilding in 1783 – St. Anne's Chapel was placed. In the central part of the altar there is a painting created in 1952 by Bolesław Rutkowski, depicting St. Francis of Assisi embracing the crucified Jesus<sup>51</sup>. According to the documentation, the picture covers the icon of the Mother of Consolation<sup>52</sup>. Sculptures of St. Sigmund, the patron of the parish church, and Bl. Bronislawa flank the retable and the finial has been decorated with a Franciscan emblem. The main piece of the other altar, as the documents indicate, should present a picture of St. Anthony with a silver dress dated to the first quarter of the 18th century<sup>53</sup>. In fact, the central space of the altar is dedicated to the Pensive Christ statue. There have been also sculptures of St. Czesław and St. Hyacinth incorporated into this piece of church furniture.

The donator of the described altars and his wife have been commemorated by a stucco tombstone made in the end of 18th century<sup>54</sup>. In its form, it resembles a pulpit with a semi-lying man sculpture – interpreted by some researchers as a knight – beneath it<sup>55</sup>. The tombstone is crowned with a relief composition of two medallions depicting the deceased couple, crowned shield with coat of arms Jelita, and a stucco canopy with pelmets above the initials of Antoni Bilski. White and gold colours make the tombstone – located on the pillar in the south part of the nave – elegant and dignified. It is worth mentioning that the monument inspired the artist who in 1820 made the pulpit located on the opposite side of the nave, re-creating the original forms and colours<sup>56</sup>.

Returning to the history of St. Sigmund's Church, it is necessary to describe an event which took place at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Since the parish temple was taken away from the Pauline

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<sup>51</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 39.

<sup>52</sup> J. Borowska-Antoniewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 16.

<sup>53</sup> A. Barczyk, *Kościół...*, *op. cit.*, s. 117–118. Information about the icon of the Mother of Consolation, among the others, included: *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 39–40.

<sup>54</sup> W. Ratusiński, *Kościół św. Zygmunta*, „Aleje 3” 2006, 57, s. 28.

<sup>55</sup> *Katalog...*, *op. cit.*, s. 40–41.

<sup>56</sup> W. Ratusiński, *op. cit.*, s. 28.



Fathers in 1864, in consequence of the January Uprising, it had been managed by the diocese<sup>57</sup>. Although the two World Wars brought about much destruction, the real danger was stemming from the decisions of the church authorities. St. Sigmund's Church was to be modified for mainly logistical purposes. In the second half of the 19th century, in many cities, among them Częstochowa, the population were increasing. In Częstochowa, there were more or less 22,000 parishioners whereas the temple could hold about 1,200 people<sup>58</sup>. Such an acute problem inspired an idea of constructing a much larger temple<sup>59</sup>. First, St. Sigmund's Church was expected to be converted, however, the architect's evaluation proved the enterprise to be infeasible. Karol Kozłowski from Warsaw observed not only that the parish church could not be expanded but also that it was worthless, and thus had to be demolished and replaced with a new sacral building<sup>60</sup>. The diocese commissioned him to produce a design for a Gothic Revival style church<sup>61</sup>. Fortunately, the plan was not realized and the new temple, the present Archsee of the Holy Family, has been built in a different place – in fact, not as presentable as the Daszyński Square, where St. Sigmund's Church is located. The new temple was under construction since 1900, according to Konstanty Wojciechowski's project, for over one hundred years<sup>62</sup>. In that period the perception of St. Sigmund's Church as either a historical monument or a work of art has changed. It began playing an important role in shaping the identity of the inhabitants of Częstochowa and both the architectural form and the furnishings of the church's interiors were renovated several times<sup>63</sup>.

Nowadays, in the oldest parish temple in Częstochowa one may find a number of precious pieces of church furniture and equipment. Since they are not the main concern of this article, they may be only briefly

<sup>57</sup> A. Jaśkiewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 23–24.

<sup>58</sup> W. Skrodzki, *op. cit.*, s. 9.

<sup>59</sup> W. Ratusiński, *Archikatedra Świętej Rodziny w Częstochowie*, „Aleje 3” 2009, 72, s. 4.

<sup>60</sup> W. Skrodzki, *op. cit.*, s. 9–11.

<sup>61</sup> W. Ratusiński, *Archikatedra... op. cit.*, s. 4.

<sup>62</sup> K. Stefański, *Konstanty i Jarosław Wojciechowski – dwa pokolenia, dwie postawy wobec historyzmu*, „Biuletyn Historii Sztuki” 2003, 1, s. 83.

<sup>63</sup> The renovations were written in greater detail in: A. Barczyk, *Kościół...*, *op. cit.*, s. 103–104, 116–118.

mentioned. Among them, there are a marble stoup dated to the mid-17th century, a wing of a triptich made in the years 1460–1480, reliquaries, epitaphs, and the aforementioned gold-plated monstrance<sup>64</sup>.

Although St. Sigmund's Church has been overshadowed by the Jasna Góra Monastery, it also should be defined as a valuable outcome of secular and clerical patronage. Both chapels founded by the Pauline Fathers' provincial Andrzej Gódonowski and the nobleman Grzegorz Otwinowski have been incorporated into the aisles, and the traces of those modifications – as well as the further renovations – may be recognised on an irregular plan of the temple<sup>65</sup>. Finally, the architectural and church furnishings foundations, emphasized in this article, are only one from many aspects concerning the oldest church in Częstochowa. Thereby, it is beyond all doubt that a further research on St. Sigmund's Church ought to be conducted.

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<sup>64</sup> A. Jaśkiewicz, *op. cit.*, s. 23–24.

<sup>65</sup> J. Braun, *op. cit.*, s. 27–28.