

PIOTR ZIERKE

ORCID: 0000-0002-9460-2920

Poznań University of Technology, Poland

MANORS, PALACES AND CASTLES IN THE VICINITY OF POZNAŃ – THE TRUTH AND THE LIES

DWORY, PAŁACE I ZAMKI W OKOLICACH POZNANIA – PRAWDA I FAŁSZ

Abstract

The manuscript presents examples of contemporary activities affecting manors, palaces and castles in the vicinity of Poznań, which falsify and deform the historical principles of designing rural residences. Creating modern caricatures of old buildings, constructing contemporary copies of neglected monuments or producing baffling conservation permits are just some of the examples that prove how easily historical architecture can be distorted, warped and falsified in modern times.

Keywords: contemporary architecture, traditional architecture, manors, palaces, castles

Streszczenie

W artykule zaprezentowano przykłady współczesnych działań dotyczących dworów, pałaców i zamków w okolicach Poznania, które przekłamują i przeinaczają historyczne zasady projektowania wiejskich rezydencji. Tworzenie nowoczesnych karykatur starych budynków, kreowanie współczesnych kopii niszczących zabytków, czy wydawanie niezrozumiałych decyzji konserwatorskich to przykłady czynów, które pokazują, jak łatwo w obecnych czasach historyczna architektura ulega zniekształceniom, wypaczeniom i zafalszowaniu.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura współczesna, architektura tradycyjna, dwory, pałace, zamki

1. INTRODUCTION

Manors, palaces and castles are objects which for many years have played an important social, cultural and spatial role. Apart from the usually distinctive architecture, which reflected the social and material status of their owners, these buildings are also of great importance in shaping the rural landscape. For centuries, the possession of a rural residence has been an unfulfilled desire for many Poles, which intensified after the political transformation at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. The dream of a significant part of the society which was rapidly becoming wealthier was to move out just as quickly from apartment blocks of flats, which were illusory signs of low material status, into their own house located in suburban areas. It was then that the meaning and appearance of rural residences began to be distorted. Caricatures of manors filling Polish villages and suburbs begun to appear. They were located in random places that did not match the local architectural style. They quickly disturbed the order and spatial cohesion of these areas. What

is more, the owners of such buildings assumed the right to call them manors in spite of accidental and sometimes even wrongly chosen architectural details, proportions, room layouts, and often incorrect location.

Unfortunately, Poland at the turn of the 20th and 21st century also witnessed other bizarre activities. There were instances of copying existing manors, palaces and castles, and of construction of new, enormous buildings, which resembled historical buildings only from the outside and sometimes only insignificantly.

The examples presented in this manuscript show how thin sometimes the line between the real architecture and its contemporary deviations – which could often be simply called a lie – can be.

2. NEW PROJECTS – MANORS, PALACES AND CASTLES?

In view of the large number of buildings being constructed at the turn of the 20th and 21st century, which at first glance are too pompously and unduly called manors, palaces or castles, the question arises as to whether new and often very modern rural residences kept in historical styles can be described in this way. The dictionary of 100,000 necessary words edited by J. Bralczyk defines a manor house as a “spacious residential house, characteristic of former landed estates,” but also, in olden times, as “the seat of a ruler or a prince, or a landed estate with a house and land developments.”¹ A palace is a “representative residential building being a royal or a magnate’s residence,”² while a castle is a “grand residential and defensive building, formerly: a royal, ducal or magnate’s residence.”³

The above definitions link the name of the building to the status of its owner, usually belonging to a higher social class, which no longer exists today, or to the specific functional status of buildings, e.g. the original defensive role of castles. The presented definitions of manors and palaces do not refer at all to the architectural style, only to their scale or grandeur. This causes terminological problems in determining the proper name of historical rural residences. This is confirmed by the *Report on the state of preservation of historical real estate in Poland* of 2017, which points out that many times, even in professional registers of historic sites, different terms are used to “describe structures of the same type, such as defensive architecture and industrial complexes [...]. Sometimes structures entered in the register on the basis of two decisions are named differently in each of them, which creates problems with their identification.”⁴

However, it seems that calling a modern building a manor house, palace or castle, even if the building imitates historical architectural style very well, is definitely an abuse of the term, if not a lie. This is confirmed by the examples of modern objects presented below, whose classification, as well as the determination of the time of their erection, sometimes causes problems even for historical residence experts. An interesting example of such a building is a residence located in the south-eastern part of the small village of Jeziory Wielkie, in Środa

¹ J. Bralczyk (ed.), *Słownik 100 tysięcy potrzebnych słów*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, pp. 140–141.

² *Ibidem*, p. 531.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 976.

⁴ M. Rozbicka (ed.), *Raport o stanie zachowania zabytków nieruchomych w Polsce. Zabytki wpisane do rejestru zabytków (księgi rejestru A i C)*, Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa, Warszawa 2017, p. 313.

County. Initially, M. Libicki – editor and creator of many historical studies, who documented the state of preservation of Polish manors, palaces and castles for many years – considered it to be almost a hundred years old.⁵ It turns out, however, that the building was not built at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, but in 1978 by designer and actor Andrzej Grzybowski.⁶ In subsequent editions of the excellent guide *Dwory i palace wiejskie w Wielkopolsce* (*Rural Manors and Palaces in Wielkopolska*), the information concerning the year of the building's creation was corrected,⁷ but the building in Jeziory Wielkie shows that even a person without an architectural degree can imitate styles from centuries ago.

Apart from the residence in the Jeziory Wielkie, Andrzej Grzybowski later designed the manors in Osieczek and Runowo Krajeńskie (both in 2002), as well as created unimplemented reconstruction designs for manors in Olsza (1983), Karniowice (1987) and Many (1992). He is also the author of Ryszard Krauze's residence erected in Konstancin-Jeziorna, modelled on Warsaw's Palace on the Water.⁸

An important voice in the discussion on the truth and lies of the architecture of modern buildings which draw reference from historical styles is the gigantic hotel in the village of Katarzynin, usurping the right to call itself a palace in spite of having been constructed without any urban or architectural context, as well as the so-called castles, built in the 21st century in Poznań and Stobnica. The history of the castle on Przemysław Hill in the capital of Wielkopolska dates back to the 12th century. Over the following centuries, however, it was destroyed several times. From the time of its establishment, only the archive building, built in 1783 thanks to the efforts of the Poznań Voivode Michał Kazimierz Raczyński, has survived to the present day. However, even this building is merely a reconstruction made after the destruction caused by World War II. At the start of the 21st century, the Committee for the Reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Poznań was established, which promoted the construction of a new building from scratch, maintained, however, in the historical style. At the same time, artist Jarosław Kozakiewicz designed an ultra-modern building on Przemysław Hill to serve as an observation deck. Despite its modern form, it was supposed to make a reference to both the historical location and the contemporary developments in its surroundings (including the new wing of the National Museum).

Plans to rebuild the castle in Poznań caused a lot of controversy due to the fact that its exact, historical appearance is unknown. The only figure depicting this building in a rather sketchy way comes from the atlas *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* published in 1618 by Frans Hogenberg and Georg Braun, and does not provide any details about its architecture. Unfortunately, the postulates and suggestions not to introduce pseudo-historical buildings to the historical site did not have any effect. In 2003, the Reconstruction Committee facilitated the organisation of a competition for the design of a new castle, promoting historical solutions from the start. After a vote and change of the originally chosen design, such a design eventually won the competition. Made of reinforced concrete and ceramic hollow bricks, the building, designed by Witold Milewski and put into service in 2017, is a pseudo-historical mockup

⁵ M. Libicki, *Dwory i palace wiejskie w Wielkopolsce. Przewodnik*, Wydawnictwo Gazeta Handlowa, Poznań 1996, p. 290.

⁶ M. Loba, *Andrzej Grzybowski. Polski historyzm współczesny*, Podkarpacki Instytut Książki i Marketingu, Rzeszów 2008, p. 60.

⁷ M. Libicki, P. Libicki, *Dwory i palace wiejskie w Wielkopolsce*, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, Poznań 2013, p. 146.

⁸ M. Loba, *op. cit.*

and makes little reference to historical realities. Particularly questionable is the tower, which in the Middle Ages could not have been so high and certainly did not have bizarre, openwork machicolations through which visitors can look at Poznań. The structure made of reinforced concrete and ceramic hollow bricks, the crenellation crowning the Renaissance cloister, as well as artificially thickened walls made of plasterboard on the inside are also bewildering. These, and also other unmentioned deviations from the historical realities found in the hastily designed building, leave no doubt about the integrity of its architecture. In 2012, Ł. Skoczylas classed this building among the so-called social⁹ memory implants, which M. Gołka defines as “secondary and post factum created: buildings, records, paintings and films, as well as the content of knowledge, which are to fill in gaps in memory, recreate its alleged content, or even create a new form, which would be consistent with the current common policy or the current system of interests, values and goals.”¹⁰

It might seem that it would be impossible to build an even less genuine building. And yet, the bizarre investment project in Stobnica, in the district of Obornice, deserves to be called just that. In 2018, the media reported that a giant building resembling a castle was under construction in the Notecka Forest. In view of the controversy caused by the form and location of the building, the investor explained that the building was simply a giant development project with a specific form. Needless to say, apart from its external appearance, the building has nothing to do with defensive buildings. Located in the middle of the Notecka Forest, the building with an area of several thousand square meters is to hold about 100 flats, and the height of its highest parts is to be between 50 and 80 meters. One could say that since developers have to give their buildings the form of medieval castles in order to make their investments recognizable, the developers and their architects probably have no imagination anymore.

3. COPIES OF HISTORICAL RESIDENCES

The problem which often results from the desire to have a dream manor or palace at all costs, with simultaneous unavailability of the desired building, reluctance to carry out difficult and costly restoration, or simply a lack of sufficient financial resources, is the issue of copying of existing residences. It is a practice that is based on a lie from the start. However, an even more baffling practice which denies the desire to cultivate traditions – to which their creators sometimes refer – is the copying of buildings that were neglected or abandoned at the time of making the copy.

One of the examples of such an imitation is the residence built in the early 21st century in Chyby in the district of Poznań, whose form very closely resembles the manor in Piotrowo near Poznań. At the time of its creation, the historical prototype in Piotrowo designed by Roger Sławski was abandoned, although in good technical condition. This is confirmed by the words of J. Skuratowicz, who wrote in 2004 that: “One of the most interesting manor

⁹ Ł. Skoczylas, *Poznań – architektoniczne implanty pamięci społecznej w procesie rewitalizacji przestrzeni miejskiej* [in:] K. Darejski et al. (eds.), *Deklinacja odnowy miast*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych UAM, Poznań 2012, pp. 86–87.

¹⁰ M. Gołka, *Pamięć społeczna i jej implanty*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2009, p. 68.

houses built in the Wielkopolska region in the national style can be found in Piotrowo, yet it is empty and is falling into decay [...].”¹¹ What is even more interesting is that there already was one manor house in the very town of Chyby, where the imitation was built.

Interestingly, there are also examples of rural residences in Wielkopolska which have been copied not only by private owners, but also by cultural institutions. An example of such a building is the palace in Studzieniec in the Oborniki district, which has been abandoned and decaying for many years. According to W. Hildebrandt,¹² the entire manor house was disassembled during the repair works in 1982 and the original construction and finishing components were left there for almost ten years. Nevertheless, in 1984, a copy of the disassembled manor house appeared in the Wielkopolski Ethnographic Park in Dziekanowice. As M. Fryza¹³ wrote, although the copy resembled the original, it showed significant differences. They concerned, among other things, the way the building was founded on the ground, its orientation towards the world's directions, the addition of a terrace which the original building never had, and also completely different surroundings. The original stand-alone manor was supplemented at the open-air museum with copies of two outbuildings from 1770, which at the present time are deteriorating at the manor house site in Łomnica, in Nowy Tomyski County.

Interestingly, the manor house in Studzieniec has also finally been rebuilt. The original half-timbered structure can be seen by everyone, as access to the abandoned manor house is open. After a long period during which the manor was abandoned and the concepts for its operation changed several times, some hope for change has finally appeared. Currently, adaptation works are underway to adjust it to a new function.

4. CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES OF TREATMENT OF HISTORICAL MANORS, PALACES AND CASTLES

The technical condition of manors, palaces and castles in Wielkopolska, which has been monitored by the author of this work since the end of the 20th century, is gradually improving.¹⁴ Apart from many positive developments concerning historical rural residences, in recent years there have also been initiatives that the investors, officials or representatives of local authorities should not be proud of. For example, there are many buildings that were not saved, although for many years there had been a chance to do so. A lot of such devastation is, unfortunately, based on lies, sometimes on ignorance and sometimes on a mere lack of knowledge. As M. Libicki wrote in the first edition of his guide *Dwory i pałace wiejskie w Wielkopolsce*: “we were in the village of Gutów in late autumn 1994, and one of the newspapers from 1.12.1994 stated that: ‘[...] a few farmers from the village of Gutów [...]

¹¹ J. Skuratowicz, *Wprowadzenie* [in:] J. Goszczyńska, *Majątki wielkopolskie*, vol. 8, Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Kultury Wsi i Rolnictwa, Szreniawa 2004.

¹² W. Hildebrandt, *Był sobie dwór* [in:] *Kultura u podstaw*, 2019, 26 lutego, <https://kulturaupodstaw.pl/byl-sobie-dwor-studzieniec-dziekanowice-wojciech-hildebrandt/> (access: 6.4.2020).

¹³ M. Fryza, *Dwór w Wielkopolskim Parku Etnograficznym*, Studia Lednickie, 2002, vol. 7, pp. 244–249.

¹⁴ P. Zierke, *Aktywizacja dworów, pałaców i zamków w Wielkopolsce – osiągnięcia i sukcesy*, [in:] M. Milecka (ed.), *Krajobraz jako dorobek kulturowy*, Wydział Ogrodnictwa i Architektury Krajobrazu Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Lublinie, Lublin 2015, pp. 116–119.

arbitrarily demolished part of the historic ruins of the local palace. They wanted to build cowsheds from the bricks [...].”¹⁵

J. Skuratowicz in his introduction to the book entitled *Majątki wielkopolskie. Miasto Poznań* mentioned another devastation in 2004, namely concerning not historic residences as such, but entire manor and palace complexes:

It is hard to comprehend why subsequent architects of the city of Poznań behaved like barbarians instead of preserving the remnants of its history. Is it not a barbarity to have built blocks of flats in the old park in Naramowice where, in the 1960s, an old palace was converted into a modern office building? Moreover, an island in the park [...] has not been explored hitherto. Nobody from today's restorers and architectural authorities has recalled this fact nor reminded the city authorities that it is their duty to do so.¹⁶

Unfortunately, there are more examples of degradation of historic buildings. The manor house in Dębno in Środa County for a long time was on the brink of ruin. The residence was undergoing long-term, but simulated renovation works, which in effect contributed to the total destruction of the building. At the moment, only some external walls and a fragment of the entrance portico remain from the whole building.

From the manor house in Karsy in the Pleszew district, which was also on the brink of ruin for a long time, now only the corner of two outer walls remains.

In 2008, the Smogorzew manor house in the Gostynin district, which had been on the brink of ruin, was completely demolished. Since then, the manor does not exist.

Throughout practically the entire 21st century, one could observe the slow decay of the manor in Łopuchów in the district of Poznań. The building, which had been in ruins for a long time, degraded increasingly over the years. In 2011, the roof and most walls collapsed. There was still a tower that was originally added to the main building. In 2015, it also collapsed.

An even greater dishonour is brought upon by examples of buildings that were not in a bad technical condition, but were brought to ruin as a result of irresponsible actions and decisions.

The manor in Radomice in the district of Września, whose condition was described as neglected in 2001, was subjected to protection in 1998 by entering it in the register of historic sites. Unfortunately, at the same time the conservator gave permission to its demolition, on condition of further reconstruction. What good did it do, if subsequently only demolition work was done. At the moment, only a fragment of the porch and part of the foundations remain from the entire building.

In 2015, the manor house in Kawęczyn in Września County was demolished, even though only a few years earlier it was only neglected.

In the early 1990s, the manor house in Koszanów, Kościan County, where partial renovation works had previously been carried out, was demolished.

In the 1980s, the manor in Dzięczyna in Gostyń County was demolished.

The author's unpublished research shows that out of 316 manors, palaces and castles whose technical condition was analysed in Wielkopolska in 2018, 169 (over 53%) were in good condition, 80 (25%) were in a neglected state, 38 (12%) were on the brink of ruin and 19 (6%) were in a ruined state. 10 (3%) of the residences were undergoing renovation works.

¹⁵ M. Libicki, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ J. Skuratowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. VII–VIII.

Of the 262 historical buildings analysed, the technical condition of 71 improved, of 35 deteriorated and of 156 did not change between 2001 and 2018.

5. SUMMARY

Despite many great initiatives and the technical condition of manors, palaces and castles improving year on year, there are still situations where historical buildings are reduced to unnecessary deadweight, or at best a source for new buildings to be modelled on. However, owners of modern rural residences, and sometimes also of ordinary dwellings, which in terms of size and location have more in common with a rural cottage than with historic residences, try to aspire to the name of owners of manors, palaces and even castles by adding some historical details. A lack of integrity is also associated with copying existing rural residences in new locations, and it is an extraordinary lie to acquire damaged buildings of great historical importance only to bring them to ruin and then build a much cheaper and easier to use modern building. Such actions put in question the sincerity of intentions of investors, architects, officials and representatives of authorities. Ignorance, desire for profit, lack of knowledge, falsehood, wrong perception of savings or simple indifference lead to the destruction of historical architectural legacy. However, the attitude to our heritage shows one and undeniable truth. The truth of what we are as people and as society.



Ill. 1. Manor house in Studzieniec – 2019, photo: P. Zierke



III. 2. Manor house in Łopuchowo – 2005, photo: P. Zierke



III. 3. Outhouse in Łomnica – 2002, photo: P. Zierke



III. 4. Copy of the manor house in Piotrowo – Chyby 2005, photo: P. Zierke



III. 5. Copy of the manor house in Piotrowo – Chyby 2005, photo: P. Zierke

References

- [1] Bralczyk J. (ed.), *Słownik 100 tysięcy potrzebnych słów*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 2008.
- [2] Fryza M., *Dwór w Wielkopolskim Parku Etnograficznym*, Studia Lednickie, 2002, vol. 7, pp. 239–263.
- [3] Golka M., *Pamięć społeczna i jej implanty*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2009.
- [4] Hildebrandt W., *Był sobie dwór* [in:] *Kultura u podstaw*, <https://kulturaupodstaw.pl/byl-sobie-dwor-studzieniec-dzieskanowice-wojciech-hildebrandt/> (access: 6.04.2020).
- [5] Libicki M., *Dwory i pałace wiejskie w Wielkopolsce. Przewodnik*, Wydawnictwo Gazeta Handlowa, Poznań 1996.
- [6] Libicki M., Libicki P., *Dwory i pałace wiejskie w Wielkopolsce*, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, Poznań 2013.
- [7] Loba M., *Andrzej Grzybowski. Polski historyzm współczesny*, Podkarpacki Instytut Książki i Marketingu, Rzeszów 2008.
- [8] Miliszkiewicz J., *Maskarada dla nowych bogatych*, <https://archiwum.rp.pl/arttykul/787443-Maskarada-dla-nowych-bogatych.html> (access: 10.04.2020).
- [9] Obst J., *Nasze dwory wiejskie*, Kwartalnik Litewski, 1910, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 95–124.
- [10] Pawłowski S., *Czy współcześnie budowany dwór powinien być w duchu historyzmu?*, <http://budujemydwor.pl/czy-wspolczesnie-budowany-dwor-powinien-byc-w-duchu-historyzmu/> (access: 12.04.2020).
- [11] Rozbicka M. (ed.), *Raport o stanie zachowania zabytków nieruchomych w Polsce. Zabytki wpisane do rejestru zabytków (księgi rejestru A i C)*, Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa, Warszawa, 2017.
- [12] Skoczylas Ł., *Poznań – architektoniczne implanty pamięci społecznej w procesie rewitalizacji przestrzeni miejskiej* [in:] Darejski K. et al. (eds.), *Deklinacja odnowy miast*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych UAM, Poznań 2012.
- [13] Skuratowcz J., *Wprowadzenie* [in:] Goszczyńska J., *Majątki wielkopolskie*, vol. 8, *Miasto Poznań*, Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Kultury Wsi i Rolnictwa, Szreniawa 2004.
- [14] Zierke P., *Aktywizacja dworów, pałaców i zamków w Wielkopolsce – osiągnięcia i sukcesy* [in:] Milecka M. (ed.), *Krajobraz jako dorobek kulturowy*, Wydział Ogrodnictwa i Architektury Krajobrazu Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego w Lublinie, Lublin 2015.

Author's Note:

Piotr Zierke, Ph.D. Arch.

After graduating from Poznan University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, MS in 2005, Piotr Zierke started working at the same faculty. In 2012, he was granted a doctorate-level degree in Architecture. His scientific interests focus on architectural heritage protection in Poznan Metropolitan Area, and spatial development of towns and villages in Greater Poland region.

piotr.zierke@put.poznan.pl