

The Calvary of Banská Štiavnica

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Abstract

Calvary in Banská Štiavnica is unique in the world. Its builder and spiritual father is František Jasmin Perger, a Jesuit from Bohemia. Pilgrimage has a long history in Christianity as well as in other religions. The obligation to travel to a holy place, to the grave of a saint, or to a place of some glorious event, was almost universally considered to be for the benefit of the individual's spiritual life. The pilgrimage went through not only for blessing or as a tribute to authority but hired for the purification of past sins. Already in the 6th century, the Irish-Scottish missionaries, who literally cross-crisscrossed Europe, began to commence pilgrimages as repentance for those truly shameful crimes. Modern pilgrimage as a part of religious tourism and tourism understands the importance of linking religion with cultural heritage and tourist attractions. The pilgrimage routes that originate in Slovakia follow this multi-social approach. The main purpose of pilgrimage is to address a particular person, his invitation to deepen his spiritual life, to know God.

Keywords: Calvary, pilgrim tourism, religious tourism,

Introduction

Pilgrimage is a cult practice of many world religions (Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Christianity), but the highest number of pilgrims absorb Christianity. Pilgrimage tourism accounts for up to 34% of the world's traffic, with approximately 240 mil. the people go on a yearly journey with religious goals; of this number is about 150 mil. Christians (Eliášová, 2004). Černá (2014) focuses on religious travel in Slovakia. The aim of the case study is to create a typology of religious monuments and attractions related to the specifics and historical development of the territory of Slovakia. Traveling in antiquity and middle ages is dealt with in his publication Croat (2007).

The Calvary of Banská Štiavnica (1744 – 1751)

Banská Štiavnica was one of the largest and most important free royal cities of the Kingdom of Hungary since the mid-18th century. Štiavnica mining lived its golden age. Favorable economic conditions enabled unprecedented cultural development of the city and transformation of its external form, including the emergence of new artistic values. One of them was the construction of a unique Calvary. This impressive Baroque sacred whole and its landmark is one of the most beautiful buildings of its kind in Europe. A perfectly thought-out interplay of architecture works of sculpture, painting and craft in unity with the natural environment literally draws visitors into the story that materializes - the story of Jesus' last journey. The initiator of the construction of the Banská Štiavnica Calvary was Father František Perger (1700 - 1771) from the local community of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). With an unusual enthusiasm, the Banská Štiavnica community gained the idea of building Calvary on the hill Scharffenberg (Sharp Hill), which was in the possession of the Fritz von Friedenlieb family. He managed to enthuse the inhabitants and the representatives of Banská Štiavnica themselves, who took over the patronage of the building for this grand idea. On 22 May, the whole project was approved by the Church. Thus, on September 14th, the foundation stone of the Upper Church could be laid, which was also the first building. The whole project and all work were carried out under the direct guidance of Fr. Perger. There were local masons, carpenters, stonemasons, but also woodcarvers and painters. Exactly seven years after the commencement of work, on September 14, 1751, the entire complex was completed and ordained. Although Calvary originated in the time of culminating Baroque, the architecture of its buildings is moderate and decorative, moderating, allowing the pilgrim to concentrate on the intense inner experience of the Passion story. The strength of the testimony was enhanced by the realistic depiction of scenes in the form of large-scale reliefs, and the final scene of the Crucifixion, created from life-size statues with figurative paintings in the background, dramatically increased.

The complex of sacred buildings on the steep hill of Scharffenberg was built from donations of rich miners, dignitaries and simple mining families. Donors are reminded of coats of arms on the fronts of individual

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stops. In the turbulent times of the Turkish conquests, there was a vartovka on Scharffenberg, which warned of the approaching enemy.

By its conception, the Banská Štiavnica Calvary exceeds the framework of the well-known embodiments of the Stations of the Cross in the form of fourteen stops. The structure, spatial distribution and character of the scenes depicted symbolize the message of the history of salvation in an original, generous and high artistic level. Thanks to this, the passion story is dramatized up to a scenic location, enhanced by its setting in the real landscape. The architectural complex consists of 17 stops, three churches (the Lower Church, the Holy Stairs and the Upper Church), the Dungeons (Ecce homo) and the Holy Sepulcher, the only building on the opposite, eastern side of the hill.

Each of the chapels represents one of the key moments of Jesus' Passion or the events of his life through his artistically crafted wooden reliefs with typical Baroque theatricality. The special arrangement of the chapels is unusual. Commonly known Calvary have fourteen stops, beginning with the condemnation of Christ before Pilate and ending with the grave of God. Banská Štiavnica Calvary (Fig.1) has more and different composition of stops. It begins in Nazareth, where Jesus is going to publicly begin his work of redemption. This uniqueness of Calvary, together with its sensitive harmony with the natural environment, has been and still is the cause of its search among pilgrims, as well as regular visitors to the city.

The first three chapels are also called preparatory. The place where they are today was not their original. They were many tens of meters lower but disappeared between residential buildings after the expansion of the urban development. Therefore, they were moved to their present location at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. From the lower church then the road it continues to the seventh chapel and leads to the central church - the Holy Steps - where the serpentine paths bifurcate.

On the left side are the chapels depicting the latest events of Jesus' condemnation and martyrdom and culminating in the Upper Church with the appearance of his crucifixion. Bypassing the Holy Sepulcher, pilgrims return alongside the chapels depicting the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary. The whole pilgrimage culminates above the Lower Church at the Sphinx of Seven Sorrows.



Fig.1 Calvary of Banská Štiavnica (Photo: Tomáš Mlynárik)

Important dates:

- November 19, 1649 – Founding of the Jesuit mission in Banská Štiavnica
- March 13, 1744 – Magistrate agrees with the proposal of priest Perger SJ to build the Calvary and gives him the first financial support in the amount of 300 gold coins.
- May 22, 1744 – Perger asks the ecclesiastical authority for permission to build Calvary according to

plans submitted and for the patronage of the city. At the time, the Archbishop of Esztergom (based in Trnava) was Imrich Esterházy (1725-1745).

- August 13, 1744 – Archbishop receives an acceptable plan; ecclesiastical approval follows.
- Meanwhile, Father Perger continues gathering material and money. Landscaping and delivery of material to the top has started, with the assistance of both city officials and groups of workers and believers.
- September 14, 1744 – The foundation stone is solemnly blessed in the presence of a large number of believers and the priesthood on the Feast of Exaltation of the Cross. The first building completed was the „Upper Church“.
- September 14, 1745 –The Upper Church is blessed, and the first Mass is celebrated, attended by a flag-bearing procession from the town. The sanctification was carried out by the Vicar General, Bishop Michael Frivais and Mass was served by superior of the Jesuits Filip Pez. A Slovak homily was delivered by Michal Hučekovič, pastor from Chrenovec and a German sermon was preached by George J. Herczeg, pastor of Handlova.
- 1746 – Regular Processions to the Calvary begin.
- 1751 – On the feast of the Holy Trinity distinguished guests, among them the Emperor Francis of Lorraine visited the Calvary.
- 1748 – Francis P.Perger SJ, the man behind the Calvary, previously authored several religious works. Later he wrote and published a book, written in Slovak language, which contained lessons and prayers, worship schedules for the feasts of Finding and Exaltation of the Cross, indulgence connected with the Calvary, prayers to the Passion of Christ the Lord, in honor of the Sacred Heart, prayers to twelve hours of the day, etc.
- September 13, 1751 – ceremonial blessing throughout the Calvary.
- 1894 – Some chapels were repaired and restored by architect William Groszmann and J. Kraus, a wood carver from Banská Štiavnica.
- 1945 – Major damage sustained during the fighting of World War II.
- 1948 – Pilgrimages were „regulated“and restricted by the state. However, many believers made non-authorized pilgrimages.
- 1978 – 1981 – The most extensive maintenance, renewal and partial restoration works to date were made under the parish priest P.Karol Benovic, SVD. Three lower chapels were gradually moved higher into the calvary area to distance them from recent residential building.
- From 1989 – The black market in antiquities starts to be accessible and theft of the sculptures begins. Parts of the copper roofs start to disappear and the whole area is attacked by vandals many times.
- 1993 – The calvary together with the town was entered into the UNESCO World Heritage list
- June 2007 – The Calvary is entered in the list of the 100 most Endangered Monuments in the World
- September 2007 – Existing baroque statues and wooden reliefs are moved to the museum of The Old Castle and the exhibition „Calvary in Asylum“established. Seminar of professionals with the topic „Saving the Calvary,,
- 2008 – Re-establishment of the Calvary Fund. Obtaining general sponsors: The VÚB Bank Foundation, the Ministry of Culture of Slovakia, Middle Slovak Electricity and the World Monuments Fund (Fig.2). The project of chapel adoption is initiated... (Kalvária v Banskej Štiavnici, 2019)



Fig.2 Calvary before and after reconstruction



Fig. 3 Descent from the Cross has been their place (Photo: Pali Urbi)

- 2013 - Banská Štiavnica Calvary has been removed from the list of the 100 most endangered monuments in the world. After five years she managed to restore her largest church and several chapels. So far, however, the work is only in the middle and still needs 2 and a half million euros for its final rescue.
- 2019 on the World Heritage Fund (WMF) website, the Calvary complex in Banská Štiavnica is marked as completed. Works remain on the interiors of the Holy Stairs and the Holy Sepulcher, with a completion date of 2022. (Svetový pamiatkový fond, 2019)

Pilgrintourism

Pilgrim tourism is a part of religious tourism. It denotes hiking paths, the main motive of which are religious reasons or also religious-cognitive reasons, while part of the journey is devoted to participation in pilgrimage as part of a religious cult. The pilgrimage is organized and generally follows a strict ritual order. It includes other elements of religious cult - eg. prayers, worship, meditation and other forms of religious ceremony. The pilgrim's tourism destinations are sacred places (cult centers or some sanctuary).

Pilgrimages and processions are among the elements of religious cult (Matlovič, 2001). Pilgrimage has different meanings in different religions. In Catholicism, for example, it is one of the manifestations of piety. In this sense, it can be understood as a journey to any holy place (loca sancta), which is realized from religious motives. Participation in the pilgrimage leads to the spiritual renewal of man. Some of the pilgrimages have their original names (Matlovičová, 2015).

Pilgrimage routes in Slovakia

- Pilgrim's House - OZ Spojené ruky
- Central European Marian Road
- Camino de Santiago Slovakia
- Slovak Marian Road
- Cyril and Methodius Way of the Pilgrim
- Barbarian Route
- European cultural route of st. Cyril and Methodius
- Route of St. Elizabeth

Barborian route

Barborian Route represents a set of nine sections that connect not only mining monuments, but also many other attractions. The visitor can gradually walk or cycle through it. The road is strategically divided into sections between individual municipalities. After passing through the section, visitors can recharge their energy in one of the local accommodation facilities where baggage transfer is also provided. During the journey, there is a catering service with the possibility to taste local traditional dishes.



Fig. 4 Logo of the Barborian Route

The Barborian Route is approximately 190 km long and should last 8 to 9 days. The route is on foot or by bike, on marked hiking trails, while the altitude profiles of the route change during the journey. The route is supposed to start in Banská Bystrica, but the visitor can start on any section. Barborian Route connects the towns of Banská Bystrica - Kremnica - Banská Štiavnica, so they are towns and villages and sites that were in the past the center of mining of pan-European importance. As a result, several mining-related technical works have been preserved in the region. Mining has also influenced the culture and way of life, leaving a huge wealth of technical, religious and cultural heritage and customs. During the journey, he travels through a man-shaped country without first recognizing this human intervention. The human untouched landscape overlaps with the human reshaped landscape. The Barborian Route project and its introduction into the region of Central Slovakia is a project that integrates the interests of entities seeking to develop this area in the area of tourism and regional development. This unique project brings together unique places in the region that have not yet found common elements for synergistic expression of mining, natural, historical, cultural and religious potential. Barborian Route is a sightseeing route in a circuit that combines all the most important values of mining, historical, religious and cultural heritage and unique natural beauties. The tourist route draws on the existing possibilities and potential of the region and therefore does not require any extra investment in the construction of tourist infrastructure. It offers green tourism in a form that is advancing today in Europe and the world and is increasingly sought after for an authentic experience.

The benefit of the Barborian Route project is

- Presentation of mining, historical, natural, geographical, religious and cultural attractions, uniqueness and specificities of the region;
- Creating conditions for an authentic experience of domestic and foreign visitors,
- Revitalizing the region through increasing visitor numbers and expanding services,
- Initiating cooperation of regional entities:

The importance of this project is associated with a certain trend that we can currently see in tourism. While, for example, 10 years ago, the trend was to build ski resorts and stay tours, today, under the pressure of a hurried and stressful time, the need to return to the foundations of human existence, simplicity, nature, and spirituality arises.

In an effort to escape from everyday worries, one increasingly chooses to walk (or by bike) to wander in order to get to know the environment that surrounds him. That's why we offer the idea of the Barborian route: "Walk to Knowledge..."

Through the Barborian Route, the visitor follows three levels of knowledge:

- Getting to know nature, returning to it, as well as getting to know natural attractions and peculiarities.
- Getting to know important mining, cultural, religious, historical and technical monuments in this area.
- Getting to know oneself, recharging physical and mental strength and active relaxation in nature.

The Barborian Route was established by joining the territory of the former important Slovak mining towns. The unifying symbol of the project is St. Barbara - the patron saint of miners. It is interesting to note that after marking the route of the Barbara Road on the tourist map, its silhouette - the figure of Barbara - was created.

The figure has a copper crown, which symbolizes copper Banská Bystrica, Spania Dolina and Staré Hory (in the past, copper was mined and processed in these places). The gold chalice captures the gold Kremnica (gold mining and processing in Kremnica and its surroundings) and the silver sword represents the silver Banská Štiavnica and its surroundings (silver mining and processing). Using the symbols of St. Barbara - crown, chalice, sword and tower created symbol / brand as a single and powerful marketing tool (Barborská cesta, 2015).

Conclusions

The chapels, churches and works of art of this important national cultural monument are largely restored and secured against further deterioration. However, the story of Calvary restoration does not end. While approximately 12,000 visitors visited the Calvary in 2008, the number climbed to 70,000 in 2017. In the coming years, the last restoration work will be underway on smaller buildings, which will not significantly restrict visitors. In the coming years, the last restoration works on smaller buildings will be underway, which will not significantly restrict visitors. The VUB Foundation remains a partner of the Calvary Fund OZ and has committed to release additional funds for the completion of the renovation work.

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