

## FOLK ARCHITECTURE OF PODHALE<sup>1</sup>

EWA BANIOWSKA-KOPACZ

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY  
POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The article presents the folk residential development in Podhale region, through overview of the construction materials used, the techniques and construction solutions, as well as the most common decorative motifs. The author has used a classification of types of cottages in Podhale (due to the layout of the rooms and their functions) and types of farmsteads (depending on the number of buildings and their arrangement within the farm). She has tried to show the changes in the Podhale development in the twentieth century. The article also highlights the Stanisław Witkiewicz's 'Zakopane Style', and his role in shaping the residential architecture of the highlands.

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Przedmiotem artykułu jest wiejskie budownictwo mieszkalne Podhala, ukazane poprzez pryzmat wykorzystywanych materiałów budowlanych, stosowanych technik i rozwiązań konstrukcyjnych, a także najczęstszych motywów zdobniczych. Autorka zastosowała klasyfikację typów chałup podhalańskich (ze względu na rozplanowanie pomieszczeń i pełnione przez nie funkcje) i typów zagrod (ze względu na liczbę budynków i ich układ w obrębie zagrody). Starła się ukazać zmiany zachodzące w budownictwie podhalańskim na przestrzeni XX wieku. W artykule zwrócono także uwagę na 'Styl Zakopiański' Stanisława Witkiewicza i rolę, jaką odegrał w kształtowaniu się architektury mieszkalnej Podhala.

**Key words:** Podhale, traditional architecture, homestead in Podhale, folk residential development, highlands construction, Zakopane Style architecture.

Folk architecture of Podhale is one of the few areas of the region's folk culture to have received due scholarly attention in the form of many monographic studies, as well as studies devoted to selected issues within its scope. Great interest focused not only on the architecture of Podhale in general, but also on its interesting and varied decoration. Excellent works by Władysław Matlakowski, published in 1892 and 1901, are the first studies to focus on the architecture and decorative art of the Podhale highlanders and to record the state of their development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Notes

<sup>1</sup> The article was written based on ethnographic materials collected by **Kazimierz Jagiełła**, and stored in the Archives of the Ethnology Section in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków, as well as on the article: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 171–217.

by Ludwik Kamiński (1992) date from roughly the same period, the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the more recent studies, articles by Wanda Jostowa (1961, 1982), pertaining to the entire area of interest to us, are extremely valuable. Architecture of Podhale has always been a separate section in studies presenting folk architecture on the scale of the entire country. Among those, works by Ignacy Tłoczek (1980, 1985), Gerard Ciołek (1984) and Marian Pokropek (1976) deserve special attention.

The topic of this article is residential architecture in a Podhale village, which is shown against the background of the entire homestead, that is in connection with the homestead's other buildings.

#### TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN PODHALE

**Building materials.** The fundamental building material in Podhale was timber obtained from spruce and, to a lesser extent, fir. The locals were familiar with the features of various types of wood, but due to the relative rarity of other species of trees in the region, the above two were the most often used. Informants reported that *smrek* (spruce), as more resistant and thus providing better thermal isolation, was better. Additionally, the aesthetic quality of spruce wood, which is lighter in colour and therefore considered more pleasing, was underlined. Fir was used mainly for *foszty*, the floorboards (villages: Ząb 1907; Brzegi 1903; Ząb 1918). Oaks being rare in Podhale, oak wood was only sporadically used in the architecture of the region, although it was considered the hardest and thought to guarantee durability.

Apart from timber, *skole*, boulders pulled out of streams, were used as a supplementary material. Broken stone (ill. 65 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 173) was used in the construction of cellars and foundations, as well as to fill the gap between the ground and the bottom log of the wall framework constructed of interlocked logs. The corners of buildings were supported by *pecki*, single large stones. Large stone slabs, known as *skrzyżole*, were also used in the architecture of Podhale, for instance for paving *obora*, the courtyard (Zejszner 1849a, 90), and for cellar ceilings (village Ząb 1923). A mixture of clay, lime and sand, known as *malta*, or sometimes *sfora*, "stone milk" extracted from the bottom of a stream, were used as binding agents (Nizińska 1966, 20). In Czarny Dunajec and the neighbouring villages, rich householders were building *murowanice*, brick houses, as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kantor 1907, 70).

**Construction solutions.** Foundations in their today's form were not used in the traditional Podhale architecture. Various levelling substructures had to be laid instead, as the surfaces of building plots were often uneven. On a flat or levelled ground, the large stones *pecki* were placed at the corners of a building, and the space between the ground and the stones was filled with *podwalina* – rough logs lying directly on the

ground, along the longer walls of the building. In the course of research, buildings, mainly service ones, where the log frame was laid directly on the ground, were also found. This manner of construction was used until the 1920s/1930s (Misińska 1971, 83). The oldest type of substructure known in Podhale is a construction consisting of stones placed at the corners of the building, with the space in between filled with broken stone bound with clay mortar. When the building was situated on a mountainside, the substructure was sometimes laid only at the side of the downward slope, while at the back the walls were placed directly on the ground. A 1841 house in the village of Ząb is an example of this solution.

Walls of almost all buildings within a homestead were constructed of logs in the frame technique (ill. 66 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 175). Most often, logs were transported to the building site and subjected to meticulous processing. Logs intended for the walls were cut lengthwise in half (depending on the diameter of the log); such a cut log was called *plaza*. All logs were interlocked at the corners of the building, most often with lap joints made by notching the logs at the ends, with blocking notches hidden inside (ill. 67 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 176). A few holes were bored in each log, to insert *teble*, dowel pegs, used internally for pegging subsequent logs together in order to prevent them from warping – “The timber was thick, so for it not to twist out of true” (village Brzegi 1903).<sup>2</sup> A wall consisted, on the average, of some ten logs (Pokropek and Pokropek 1995, 152). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the logs were only rarely cut lengthwise by means of boring holes with a drill and splitting the log with wedges. Most often the logs were cut with a *troc*, a mechanical saw. Once cut, they were hewn, and their flat side was whittled by hand; this was done by the less qualified helpers of the *budarz* (builder), the *heblowace* (planers).

The less affluent householders, who could not afford to build their houses with a frame of interlocking logs, applied *trotówka*, a post frame technique. Its name derives from *trot*, sawdust, which was used as an isolation layer filling the spaces between posts that formed the skeleton of the house. This frame was clad with clapboard both on the inside and the outside (Nizińska 1966, 13, 44; Pokropek and Pokropek 1995, 9–10).

Openings for doors and windows were reserved as the log wall was being raised. In old houses, the top and bottom of the window opening were formed by the wall logs (the so-called upper and lower *ocap*), and the window's vertical framework was made of stakes embedded in those logs at appropriate places. In newer houses, there were window-frames known as *skrzyńki* (cases) – “wide clapboard slats that surrounded the opening cut out in the logs” (Nizińska 1966, 29). In the late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century houses, *obitka*, the slat that covered the chinks, was particularly decorative, often being cut in a zigzag line (Matlakowski 1901, 21 fig. 11).

<sup>2</sup> Quotations from interviews and studies are translated solely for the current article – translator's note.

According to information reported by M. Misińska, small four-part windows could be seen in Podhale, as her informant stressed that “They made tiny widows, with four little panels of glass in them” (1971, 87). It can be assumed that they were more or less square in shape. The most popular, however, were six-part windows, which too were present since a long time past. Their incidence in the oldest houses in Podhale was confirmed by Matlakowski in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Matlakowski 1892).

In the traditional architecture of Podhale, the manner in which the main entrance doors were constructed, and their rich ornamentation, attested to the affluence of the owner of the house (ill. 68 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 178). The lintel was usually semicircular; its shape was achieved by means of special braces, the so-called *pieski*, which joined the door-case with the *ocap* (the log above the doors), which was whittled to curve slightly. The main entrance doors in old houses are, construction-wise, only loosely attached to the walls of rooms adjacent to their sides. This is because in Podhale, those two rooms – known as the black and white room (*izba czarna* and *izba biała*) – are separate constructional units, joined by a shared purlin and roof. “Only having built the house completely does the highlander close that space [i.e. the hallway between rooms – E.B.K.] in such a way that he attaches grooved posts to the corners from the back, and then fills the space between the posts with logs, from the foundation up to the purlin” (Matlakowski 1892, 36). Doors, which had been made in advance, were inserted from the front and secured against falling out with various braces and staples.

The door panel was usually richly decorated, especially in its upper part (ill. 18 in: Lehr and Tyłkowa 2000, 49; ill. 69 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 179). The most frequent motif was the rising sun, with its rays formed by narrow laths joined concentrically at the centre of the door. To conserve heat, doors were built rather low (e.g. 1.60 m). A small opening would sometimes be cut above the upper lintel to provide light in the hallway; it usually had the shape of a Greek cross, as in the already mentioned 1841 house in Ząb. In the same house, the inner door, leading from the hallway to the “white room”, are also ornamented.

In the highlander houses, the rooms’ ceilings were made especially neatly. They consisted of several *sosręb* and *sosrębik* beams (the latter also called *tragarz*, carrier beams), as well as the ceiling boards. *Sosręb* is a thick beam running above the centre of the room and joined to a log in the gable wall (the gable *warsotka*). “Its load-bearing function is especially important; its task is principally to diminish the span of the supported construction in order to prevent it from buckling” (Kornecki ed. 1984, 65). Today, Podhale carpenters admit that its function may once have been to “staple the house”, but in the present-day wooden houses the *sosręb* is mainly decorative. Three smaller beams, *sosrębiki*, were supported on the *sosręb*; they were ceiling beams joined to logs in the front and back wall of the building. According to M. Pokropek and W. Pokropek, their characteristic feature was that “they extended beyond the face of the longitudinal walls, and that the edges of the roof were supported

on their projections, called *rysie*” (1995, 153); another typical feature was that it was only those smaller beams that supported the boards of the ceiling. In older houses, the ceiling was made of boards overlaying one another, pegged to the *sosrębik* beams with thick wooden dowels. Sometimes the ceiling was made of narrow slats pegged decoratively in a herringbone pattern. The *sosręb* beam was the most carefully made (ill. 20 and 21 in: Lehr and Tylkowa 2000, 52–53; ill. XIb in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 176–177). A six-pointed star surrounded with a circle would be carved in its centre to protect the house against misfortune, especially against fire. The date of construction and various decorative motifs, usually vegetal, were carved to the sides of the star. Sometimes longer mottoes, or the name of the owner and even carpenter who built the house, were carved along the *sosręb*. Thus, the beam became a *sui generis* certificate of the house.<sup>3</sup>

After the *sosrębik* beams were laid, two partial rounds of wall framework logs followed. Along the longitudinal walls, the top logs of the frame, called *plotwy*, provided support for the roof construction. In the gable wall, in turn, additional logs – the so-called *daremne drzewa* – were laid between the top logs (*plotwy*); those additional logs were not attached at the corners with notches, but only inserted between the ends of the top logs. Their task was to conceal the space which remained after the top logs of the frame were laid along the gable wall.

The roofs of houses in Podhale were constructed in the rafter technique and strengthened with *bant*. Their characteristic feature is a slight fold and an outward curvature of the roof plane in its lower part, below the fold. This effect was achieved by joining the rafters to carrier beam projections (*rysie*) by means of beams called *krośtych*, which constituted the base for the roof plane. Application of *krośtych* beams caused also the characteristic widening of roof surfaces. It is worth noting that the procedure of raising the wall frame by two logs above the level of the ceiling, which had been mentioned above, resulted in the fact that the roof was both higher and broader. Attic obtained in this way was more spacious, providing room for separate larders, storage closets and *wyżki*, cubby-holes where the householders’ most precious valuables were kept (Pokropek and Pokropek 1995, 154).

<sup>3</sup> Especially noteworthy is the *sosręb* beam in the house of the village administrator Maciej Ogórek, dating from 1871, in the village of Dzianisz. It bears the inscription: “Boże Stwórczo Wielki Panie Pobłogosław to mieszkanie Daj mieszkańcom zdrowie Życie utrzymuj ich przyzwoicie [...] w Tobie nadzieje w Tobie myśli moje i siely wszystkie aby Miłosierdzie swoje objaw nade mną i okaz mi drogę po której chodząc szczęśliwy być mogę. Fundator Maciej Ogórek R.P. 1871 Majster Jan Pabin Jan Pawlak Walenty Kamiński Bartłomiej Styracula” [God the Creator Great Lord Bless this Household Give the residents health and Life Keep them seemly [...] in You my hopes in You my thoughts and all strength only show your Mercy upon me and point to me the road walking upon which I may be happy. Founder Maciej Ogórek AD 1871 Master Jan Pabin Jan Pawlak Walenty Kamiński Bartłomiej Styracula] (after Pieńkowska and Staich 1956, 48).

Bearing in mind large snowfalls typical to the region, the roof planes were given a sloping angle and large breadth. Wide eaves provided effective protection against rain and snow, and thus created a handy communication route between the house and the service buildings within the homestead. The eave overhang was clad with clapboards from below, creating the so-called *podsiubitka* (or *podsiębitka*), which prevented the wind from blowing into the attic and thus chilling the house from above. In older houses, dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that cladding was often very simple. Not everyone could afford *descsana podsiubitka*, that is one made from neat slats, and so the overhanging space above the beam projections was filled with “old poles, chunks of wood and whatever else was handy” (Nizińska 1966, 26).

Wooden shingles or boards were used as roofing. Before the advent of the saw-mills, *dranice*, that is hand-cut planks, were used as well. Each side of the roof ridge was lined with a row of handmade shingles in order to seal the ridge against water. It must be stressed that only the affluent householders could afford to cover their roof exclusively with shingles.

Thatched roofs were extremely rare in Podhale, because rye was not grown there due to the restrictions of the local environment. Thatch was occasionally used as roofing in the villages of the Orava–Nowy Targ Valley, where the soil was better and rye could be grown (Kamiński 1992, 36; Kantor 1907, 54; Leszczycki 1933, 208–210).

In the folk architecture of Podhale, gables were clad with slats arranged either vertically or more decoratively in triangles, diamonds or sunrays (ill. 70 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 182). Roof surfaces on the gable edge were provided with downward slats, whose task was to protect the gable, so that it would not get waterlogged during rains and gales, both of which are very frequent in the region. Those slats were called *konie* by the locals; technically they are called rake edges. A finial, known as *pazdur*, was installed at the point where two rake edges met at the top of the gable; it usually had the shape of *leluja*, a lily (ill. 19 in: Lehr and Tylkowa 2000, 50).

**Types of Podhale houses.** The layout of the interior, and hence the function of particular rooms, is assumed as the basic criterion for the typology of residential buildings.

The primary, most basic form is the single-space house, usually protected by a lobby. To the side of the room there often was an alcove, either partitioned off or added as a separate construction. The main entrance to the house was usually situated in the longer wall, so this is a wide-front house. A narrow-front house, i.e. one with the main entrance in the gable wall, is an absolute rarity in this region; its incidence has been confirmed in Łopuszna and Kluszkowce (Jostowa 1961, 159). In single-space houses, the room out of necessity fulfilled both the residential and service functions. Such houses were typical among the poorer villagers: “If someone could not afford otherwise, he would raise a slapdash house of a kitchen and a lobby” (village Małe Ciche 1916).

In the light of ethnographic materials, such single-space houses with a lobby occurred only sporadically. Matlakowski asserts that “poorer homesteads, untypical, small, not at all robust, quickly and shoddily built” were encountered in the villages, and especially in forest clearings (1892, 42). Kamiński (1992, 35–38) and Józef Kantor express similar views; the latter writes that by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century single-space houses were very rarely encountered in Czarny Dunajec, because having such a house “brought no honour, but was considered beggarly” (1907, 77). Nizińska writes that in the village of Ciche, single-space houses belonged to the poorest villagers or to those who lived alone. With the progress of time, those houses developed into two-room houses with an alcove (1966, 14). According to Jostowa, a single-space house

“either occurs as a result of family property divisions, or is a reflection of the village’s social and economic diversity. In addition, it is often encountered at the boundary line between permanent and seasonal residential architecture, resulting from adapting shepherds’ cabins to the needs of housing” (1961, 151).

A slightly more developed version of the single-space house is a house consisting of one large, centrally placed room with a lobby to one side and an alcove to the other side, classified by Jostowa as the Silesia-Spiš type. It is a wide-front house with the frame constructed of interlocked logs (post frame was used as a supplementary technique in constructing the lobby); the door is located in the front wall of the building; the room has two windows, and the alcove has a tiny window or a *wyziór* – a look-out through a chink between adjacent logs of the wall. The most beautiful, and also the best known example of the Silesia-Spiš type is Sabała’s house in Zakopane-Krzepiówki (Jostowa 1961, 157).

An architectural form more typical to Podhale than the above was the wide-front frame house built in the interlocking log technique, with doors and windows in the front wall. The usual layout was as follows: a central hallway (often running across the entire width of the house) and two rooms situated to either side of the hallway, the black room (*czarna izba*), which had a service and residential function, and the white room (*biała izba*), which was used only ceremonially (look at ill. page 86).

In a typical Podhale house, the rooms usually had two windows each, but this was not a rule (Jostowa 1961, 144). As it has already been mentioned, constructional separateness of those rooms made it easy to split the house during various property divisions and quarrels about inheritance (Matlakowski 1892, 65). The oldest type of the symmetrical two-room house is represented by a 1711 building which belonged to Jędrzej Kapuściarz of Czarny Dunajec (Kantor 1907, 77). In the villages under research, houses of such type were encountered twice: once in Ząb, the building dating from 1841, and the other time in Małe Ciche, the house being of unknown date. Such houses, especially if they belonged to more affluent householders, were often provided with storage rooms, i.e. an alcove and a *wyżka*, an added space above it. The



The house in Sobczak'scroft, end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, photo by W. Eljasz-Radzikowski  
(Archives of The Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków).

alcove was used for storing food items of daily use and small household utensils. It was adjacent to the white room, with a door leading to it from the alcove. The ceiling of the alcove was lower than that of the white room, which made it possible to organise the *wyżka*, a small, non-habitable space in the attic, above the alcove. It was lit by the tiny window of the smoke-escape. This space was not easily noticeable and access to it was difficult (from the alcove by means of a ladder), which was supposed to protect it from thieves – the *wyżka* was a household treasury, in which stored were the most valuable possessions, such as coral necklaces, clothes, bed linen, honey or bacon.

The above type of a residential building (with a wooden frame constructed in the interlocking log technique, wide-front, with the white and black rooms divided by a central hallway, with doors and windows in the front wall, roofed with wooden shingles), was described by Matlakowski as early as 1892 and considered the most typical to the Podhale region. It provided the model for a later style known as the Zakopane Style or, from the name of its creator, the Witkiewicz Style. Jostowa notes, however, that although this was the most popular type of the house, and also a very aesthetically pleasing one, other forms of peasant dwellings encountered in the region ought not to be overlooked.



The Czarny Dunajec mansion – a rare type, noteworthy due to its uniqueness – represents the only type of brick-built peasant residential dwelling seen in Podhale, mainly in Czarny Dunajec and the neighbouring villages. It is mentioned by Kantor, who writes that such houses, called *murowanice* by the locals, were built by the affluent householders, mainly from their own homemade brick. They were spacious, having two rooms: the white and the black one, a central hallway, and storage spaces, usually two alcoves, situated behind the rooms, towards the back wall of the building. The roofed porch with columns, entered through a short flight of stone steps, was clearly a feature derived from mansion architecture (Kantor 1907, 77; Jostowa 1961, 151).

The number of rooms constitutes the basic criterion of the typology of residential buildings presented herein. It is therefore impossible to overlook the data referring to the functions of those rooms, especially the white and the black one. Their existence is confirmed by many 19<sup>th</sup>-century accounts of travellers to the Tatra mountains. The description provided by L. Zejszner in 1884 is one of the more interesting:

“The exterior and the interior of houses are similarly ordered; usually the hallway divides the house into two parts, with the black room to one side and the white room to the other; behind the latter is a small closet meant for storage. The first is usually larger, entirely covered in soot, truly a black room, with a hearth at one end, from which the smoke escapes not through a chimney, but spreading round the entire room, exits through the door; when there is fire on the hearth, a cloud of smoke spreads all the way to the middle of the room and who is not used to it, cannot stand to stay there, because the eyes sting with the smoke right terribly. This is where they cook; the farm hands stay there in winter, a young calf is admitted there with its dam, and all other four-legged animals too, because everything that lives craves warmth, especially in this harsh climate. On the other side is the white room, very tidy, with the floor covered with boards scrubbed clean [...]. In another corner, over a roomy bed laid with many feather quilts, hang the images of saints painted by a rather unskilled hand. Finally, there is a whitewashed stove and chimney. Cleanliness evident in this room gives a pleasant impression of the residents. Here sits the owner of the house [...] here he receives visitors and the household gatherings take place” (Zejszner 1844, 114–115; cf: Steczkowska 1872, 37; Kamiński 1992, 36–37).

The appearance and functions of both rooms changed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this period, the part of the smoke stove called *nalepa* begins to disappear from the black room of a Podhale house, and the smoke is usually directed through a short chimney to the attic, from which it escapes outside through the tiny smoke-escape window (see Matlakowski 1892, 58–59; Matlakowski 1901, 85; Jostowa 1982, 294). Enclosing the hearth and directing the smoke to the attic made it possible to keep the black room clean and to use it also a bedroom. According to Jostowa, it is at that time that the heating stoves began to be removed from the white rooms; from then on, those rooms had only ceremonial or storage functions, and were used as bedrooms only in summer. This solution was dictated also by economic reasons (Jostowa 1982, 294).

**Types of homesteads.** Of the obligatory principles when establishing a new homestead, two must be mentioned as fundamental. The first of those principles is that the front wall of the residential house had to face south in order to receive maximum sunlight. This fact is stressed by Matlakowski (1892, 15) and Kamiński (1992, 35). Czarny Dunajec, with its “cluster of houses reminiscent of a small town” (Jostowa 1961, 137) is an exception; there, the orientation of homesteads was relatively neutral with regard to both the cardinal points and the water courses. Kantor wrote “In Czarny Dunajec, houses run parallel to roads from Nowy Targ and Chraca” (1907, 70); Jostowa’s note completes the picture: “It is a house [...] oriented regardless of the four cardinal points, with its gable to the street” (1961, 148). It must be noted that the situation in the villages neighbouring with Czarny Dunajec is similar.

The other almost universally applied principle is that the homestead must be sheltered by the walls of the buildings and by a fence. This tendency results from the harsh climate of Podhale, where maximum protection from rain and the biting westerly winds is a necessity. Also, a properly arranged homestead has protected communication routes between all the buildings (Matlakowski 1892, 16). To achieve this, service buildings were usually located on the western side of the homestead, at a right angle to the residential building. This type of the Podhale homestead, described as classical, is the dominant one. However, the arrangement of buildings in homesteads of this region is affected by a broad spectrum of factors. As a result, taking the number of buildings and their relative positions within a homestead as the departure point, it is possible to differentiate three fundamental types of homesteads.<sup>4</sup>

The most simple, and probably the oldest form is the single-building homestead, which has a residential and a service part under one roof. It was typical to the poorest households. Such homesteads were usually found at the edges of villages, reflecting the social and economic diversity of the local community. They were also quite often encountered at the boundary line between permanent and seasonal housing, which may point to their genetic link to a shepherds’ cabin, suitably extended and adapted to be lodged in all the year round. There is still an abandoned homestead of this type, dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the village of Brzegi. One wing of the house contains a small room with a hearth, and a closet, once used for storing leaves and bedding for animals, on the gable side. In the middle of the house there is a wide lobby, which once served also as *boisko*, the space for threshing grain. The storage space proper was in the attic, where hay and threshed grain were stored. The opposite wing of the house contains a byre and has a characteristic broad, arcaded eave under the

<sup>4</sup> I would like to emphasise that this typology presents the most typical solutions, not delving into the local or individual opportunities of arranging the homestead, as was done by Jostowa in her article (1961). Considering such factors as the plot size, positions of particular buildings in relation to those in neighbouring homesteads and their positions in relation to the road, she distinguished nine types of homesteads in Podhale.



A croft “Na Bachledach”, end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, photo by W. Eljasz-Radzikowski (Archives of The Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków).

projecting beams. A similar type of homestead was recorded in the villages of Ciche (Nizińska 1966, 11, 13) and Białka Tatrzańska (Zembaty 1975, 160–161), which points to its once more widespread presence.

The second type of homestead, known as the angle homestead, has the residential and service buildings arranged at a right angle; the service building is usually multi-functional, containing *boisko* (threshing-house), *sopa* (shed), cart house and possibly also other spaces for tools, animals and storage (look at ill. above). As a rule, the two buildings joined at one corner. In the classical arrangement of this type of homestead, the house is situated with its front wall facing south, whereas the service building is on the western side, protecting the courtyard, called *obora*, in front of the house.

Considering the criterion of the *obora* courtyard being located at the front or to the back of the house, it is possible to distinguish variations in the above model. Locating the courtyard in front of the house seems more popular, because then it could be watched without leaving the house (in the traditional Podhale house, windows were placed only in the front wall). Some homesteads retain the above classical arrangement (the house fronting the south and the service building to the west), but the two structures are not conjoined and small outbuildings fill the gap. In this layout, buildings

are not combined into one cohesive complex. Sometimes, when the plot was too small or located on both sides of the village road, the service building could be placed at the other side, but the basic layout was still retained. This pattern of homestead arrangement was recorded in the village of Koniówka (Jostowa 1961, 138). It is worth noting that although in the overwhelming majority of cases the service building was located to the west of the house, the opposite arrangement, with the homestead protected from the east, did occur as well. This type was noted in Chochołów; its form was largely conditioned by the width of the plot (Jostowa 1961, 141–142).

In the more affluent households, the service section of the homestead was more developed; the buildings were located in a “U” and the homestead had the shape of a horseshoe. Later it was completely closed by adding a fence with an entrance gate at the remaining open side. In homesteads of this type, the *obora* courtyard was placed centrally, surrounded on all sides with the house, various service buildings, buildings for animals, and the fence. The locals describe this type as *okolnicno obora*. This quadri-lateral homestead used to be typical to the most affluent households. Its presence has been confirmed in specialist literature as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century:

“Barns, stables, cart houses stand in a square, and what is not enclosed by the buildings is completed with the fence. The courtyard is sometimes paved with flagstones” (Zejszner 1849a, 538).

The historic homestead of Jan Tylka, dating from 1871, in the village of Dzianisz is among the more interesting examples. It is laid on a square plan with a completely enclosed courtyard. The house stands at its southern side; the cattle byres, sheepfolds and cart houses are to the north, pigsties and a stable to the west, and granaries to the east. The house and service building are joined into a cohesive complex by means of an arcaded eave. An inscription on the *sosręb* beam informs that the homestead used to belong to the village headman and administrator (*sotrys*), Maciej Ogórek (Pieńkowska and Staich 1956, 49–50).

In the course of research in Ząb, one homestead of this type was recorded, built in 1928 (ill. 72 in Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 187). It consisted of a large house, a threshing-house at a right angle to it, and a line of buildings for animals at a right angle to the threshing-house. From the street, the complex was closed with a tall fence.

#### FOLK ARCHITECTURE OF PODHALE IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

Transformations in the traditional Podhale architecture are observable already in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but on a greater scale they are evident only in the inter-war period. It was a time of great social changes. The level of education increased, the flow of information and population mobility were facilitated by technological advances. Living conditions changed and tourism was developing. Yet houses which referred

to the traditional architecture were still being constructed; witness the house built in Murzasichle in 1927, located in an angle homestead, oriented with its front wall to the south with a slight tilt to the west. It is a wide-front, symmetrical house, with a single communication axis and a central lobby divided into two parts. In the back part of the lobby there is an alcove, extending slightly beyond the contour of the building. Wooden stairs lead from this alcove to the non-habitable attic. The frame of the house was built of spruce logs laid in the interlocking log technique. The log walls are set on a brick foundation up to 0.6 m high. The entrance door has a semicircular lintel. In front of the door there is an unglazed porch with a little roof supported on four posts (Jaroć 1994). In the above description, the arrangement of rooms and the general image of the homestead do not differ from the traditional layout, but elements alien to traditional architecture: the relatively high foundation and the porch, have already appeared. Both are elements of the Zakopane Style, which began to influence local architecture. The next step in the modernisation of an old house was to protect the porch from wind and slanting rain or snow, first from the west, and later on all sides; this is how the glazed porches emerged (ill. 74 a-d in: Baniowska and Jagieła 2000, 199–200). The following stage was to use the attic for residential purposes. Zembaty writes that already by the 1930s “the upper rooms (*górkę*), adapted specially for the summer tourists, appeared with an increasing frequency. Those were rooms in the attic, that is on the upper floor, situated directly above the central part of the house” (Zembaty 1975, 165; Jagieła, Archives, sig. 1816) With the adaptation of the attic and the construction of the *górkę*, the porch develops a third, mansard gable, called *facjat*.

The period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and the following years were characterised by stagnation in construction enterprises. At this time, new houses still evinced very clear references to tradition, especially with regard to interior layout; the main changes were in the function of particular rooms. The black room (*czarna izba*) became a kitchen with modern equipment. Kitchen stoves, often of high technical standard, had various conveniences, for instance a water grate or pipe (called *kopyto*) for heating water. Stoves retained their more traditional character only in the houses inhabited by older people. As a rule, the function of the white room changed considerably, although certain favourable exceptions to this rule appear as well. In the village of Brzegi, one of its middle-generation residents, an activist of the Association of Podhale Highlanders (Związek Podhalań), deliberately furnished his white room in keeping with the “old tradition”. In the same village, another young man was using his white room in a modern way, as the place for watching television and holding celebrations and social gatherings (Jagieła, Archives, sig. 1816). In most cases, however, the white room served as a handy storage space for infrequently used items.

The village architecture in Podhale began to develop anew only after the year 1950, with the revival of the summer-resort movement and tourism. In that period, new

building materials, such as breeze blocks, bricks, concrete, fibre cement, roofing paper or sheet metal, and new constructional solutions resulting from the altered layout of the interior, were introduced on a greater scale. Zembaty recorded that

“while in the first fifteen to eighteen post-war years houses were built almost exclusively from timber, in the recent years they are being built almost exclusively from stone, breeze blocks and brick” (1975, 170).

Popularisation of new building materials was influenced by administrative regulations (a ban on timber construction was officially introduced in the 1960s with the justification that this protected forest resources), safety measures and the feelings of the highlanders themselves, who considered *murowanice* to be more respectable.

Newly introduced building materials made it possible to arrange house interiors in a different way than before. New houses had the width of not one, but two rooms; they also became taller because, on the one hand, higher foundations could be constructed, and on the other, the *górk*i (adapted attics) were replaced by an additional story located in the loft (Zembaty 1975, 165; Jagiełła, Archives, sig. 1816).

Construction of a modern house begins with the foundations, which often reach 1m below the ground level. They are made of concrete consisting of cement and gravel. The foundation is covered with tarred paper sealed with a layer of asphalt adhesive to protect the house against moisture. Upon the foundation, already above the ground level, a basement walls are laid from water-smoothed boulders extracted from streams, arranged in decorative patterns and bound with cement mortar (ill. 75 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 201). When the basement is ready, another layer of tarred paper and asphalt adhesive is laid; afterwards the entire surface on which the future house will stand is covered with a huge concrete slab. The house is built of breeze blocks or brick (ill. 76 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 202). The altered shape of the building, which has a roughly square ground plan (whereas in the traditional architecture the house was built on a rectangular ground plan), and the tendency to fully utilise the loft space cause the roof to lose its once characteristic shape. In the new architecture, the roof becomes increasingly sloping and, in order to provide light in the loft, has openings into small interior spaces (*wyględy*). Thus the old principle of constructing smooth roof planes with the distinctive fold and curve typical to the traditional architecture is broken. Inside the roof there can be two or, especially in the newest buildings, even more stories (ill. 77 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 203).

The layout of the homestead alters as well. Both Nizińska and Zembaty agree that the quadrilateral homesteads are disappearing. This seems to be caused by several factors. In the traditional architecture, this type of homestead appeared only in the large, affluent households and was therefore a sign of the economic position of its owner, and often his social position as well. The other factor is linked with the tendency towards a more efficient use of space, resulting in spacing edifices more densely on a smaller

plot. With a view to this, the most after encountered types of homesteads are the angle and single-building ones (ill. XIII in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 192–193). The layout in which the house and the service buildings are at right angles and conjoined at one corner seems to be decidedly the more frequent. It must be pointed out, however, that modern service buildings contain, apart from spaces typical to traditional architecture, also workshops, garages etc. (Zembaty 1975, 165). In comparison to the traditional arrangement of this type of homestead, it is evident that whereas in the past the service part of the homestead was situated at the western side, today's owners pay attention also to the presentable appearance of the homestead and its openness towards, for instance, the village road. Hence the service buildings are relatively frequently situated to the east of the house.

Residential buildings most often constructed in Podhale today (i.e. in the early 1990s) include two fundamental types. Forms of both spring directly from their purpose and function they are to fulfil. The decidedly most popular and frequent is the type of a masonry building roofed with shingles or a fireproof material, intended for the use of the family and for room rental. Such house is constructed on a roughly square ground plan, considered the most cost-effective, and is commonly called *czwórka* (a four).<sup>5</sup> It almost always has a high basement made of stream boulders, sometimes slightly hewn, arranged in a decorative pattern and bound with cement mortar. The body of the building is often complemented with various porches and arcades matching the whole. If the building is partially intended for room rental, the lower story is always reserved for the owners, the upper for the holidaymakers. The basement very frequently contains the kitchen, bathroom, larder and boiler room. Sometimes instead of the kitchen there is a garage, in which case the kitchen is on the ground floor. The ground floor may contain also two rooms, a bathroom and sometimes a dining-room (if the kitchen is downstairs). The layout of the upper stories usually mirrors that of the ground floor, only instead of the service rooms (kitchen or dining-room) there are guest rooms. A house of this type is characterised by vertical expansion. The roof with multiple planes enables the maximum use of loft space for residential purposes. Constructing the house on a high basement caused another story to emerge in the basement space (ill. XIV a-d in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 192–193). It is mainly there that family life concentrates, especially on working days. The focus of family life is the modern and well-appointed kitchen which, with regard to the broadly viewed functions, continues the traditions of the former black room, in which family life concentrated around the hearth. In houses built with room rental in view, a large dining-room is functionally linked to a spacious kitchen. The ground floor, and depending on

<sup>5</sup> The name *czwórka* derives from the fact that the building's ground plan is divided into four parts. This central layout was promoted by the architect A. Czarniak, graduate of the Timber Industry School at Zakopane (Jaroń 1994).

the floor layout sometimes the first floor as well, are reserved entirely for the owners' use and to a certain extent continue the traditions of the ceremonial white room. This is where family life concentrates in the evenings and on festive days. Upper floors and the loft are reserved for tourists, holidaymakers, paying guests etc.

In the modern architecture of Podhale timber is still used, but on a much smaller scale than before. It is commonly used in various finishing works on the interior and exterior of the house. There exist residential buildings constructed of brick or breeze blocks, which are entirely clad with clapboard on the outside and the inside. Not infrequently ceilings made of reinforced concrete are clad with slats to imitate wooden ones. When the house is roofed with shingles, the gable is often decorated with a *pazdur* (finial) in the shape of a tulip or a lily, usually not hand-whittled but turned on a lathe.

However, entirely wooden houses referring to the traditional architecture are still being built, if more rarely; this is the second fundamental type. They are usually houses intended to be inhabited only by the family, much less impressive in comparison to the houses described above. Such buildings are usually constructed by the villagers who have access to their own resource of timber. The decision to build a wooden house is often influenced by the much-advertised healthiness of timber housing.

Houses of this type are settled on high basements similar to these typical to the previous type and the frame is built in the interlocking log technique, but in the new houses the logs, joined at the corners with lap joints, are far more thoroughly surface-finished (so that the exterior walls are as smooth as the interior ones). They are most often two-story buildings, with the upper story always contained in the loft; apart from those two stories, there is a basement containing utility spaces, such as the boiler room and the cellar, occasionally also a kitchen or a bathroom. In these circumstances, the roof must have openings, little windows and balconies, to provide additional lighting, and the roof planes are still subdivided. The house usually has three gables. This type of residential building most clearly refers to the traditional architecture of Podhale. Above all, the building material, and the construction of the walls, are appropriately similar. Noteworthy are also the decorative architectural details, such as the beam projections (*rysie*), finials (*pazdury*), placed only on shingle-covered roofs, and the motif of the rising sun (*stonko*), emphasised with the *gadzik* iron fittings, which currently is most frequently seen decorating the panel of the main door; decorative pegs are the other typical door ornament.

The *sosręb* beam (ill. 79 in: Baniowska and Jagiełła 2000, 206) is an element deriving from traditional construction and encountered in both the above types of houses (although more rarely in the masonry house). An interesting *sosręb* is found in a masonry house dating from 1981. The front side of the beam bears the date of construction and the typical six-pointed star. On the back side of it, however, there is a rosette identical to that which was carved on the old beam in a house dating from 1809, which used to stand in the same homestead and was demolished to make way for



the new masonry house (Jagiełła, Archives, sig. 1816). In another masonry house, built in 1978, the upper story contains two small rooms furnished in the traditional style; their *sosręb* beams have more modern ornamentation (Jagiełła, Archives, sig. 1816).

#### THE ZAKOPANE STYLE

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Podhale witnessed an influx of visitors (Dolińska 1997, 3). This was due mainly to the activity of dr. Tytus Chałubiński and the increasing fame of the local spa resorts. Zakopane began to develop with the arrival of increasing crowds of holidaymakers and enthusiasts of spa treatment. In this period, Podhale was regularly visited by Stanisław Witkiewicz, who noticed the growing influence of the city on the highland culture. Worried with this trend, in the late 1880s he wrote:

“Native features begin to vanish in what the highlanders are building today, and what appears is an imitation of the already characterless villas and chalets, whose quasi-Swiss style is smothered in a cosmopolitan sauce” (Witkiewicz 1963a, 23).

Devotees of the original highland style wished to purge Zakopane and its environs from that cosmopolitan influence and to create a truly Polish national style based on highland patterns. In the year 1888, the periodical *Wista* published Witkiewicz’s description of the doors in Podhale houses. The author noted:

“No other peasant house I know in Poland can match that of a Zakopane highlander. This is more than an assembly of logs and straw to merely provide shelter [...]. A highlander house is comfortable and serviceable; it appears to be a higher and well-developed type of a timber structure, in which the entire practical skeleton is decorated in an original and individual manner” (Witkiewicz 1888, 120).

Having expressed this remarkably favourable opinion, Witkiewicz proceeded to transfer Zakopane-style decorative elements and constructional solutions to contemporary architecture of villas and guest-houses, as attested to by his designs, soon followed by finished edifices. The first of those was Villa “Koliba”, built for Zygmunt Gnatowski in the years 1891/1892 at Kościeliska Street in Zakopane. The next design to be carried out, in 1897, was Villa “Pod Jedłami” built for the Pawlikowski family (look at ill. page 96). Its exceedingly precise model was sent to the Exposition Universelle in Paris to serve as an example of Polish architecture in the national style.

The Zakopane Style found many admirers and followers, but as many critics. It was hotly debated in many agitated milieus.<sup>6</sup> In spite of this, or perhaps because of

<sup>6</sup> Not to debate the charges against the Zakopane Style in detail, it may be generally said that “its national character was questioned and it was accused of drawing on various historical styles [...]. Often it was completely denied the name of a style, as it did not pertain to constructional forms, but exclusively to ornamentation [...] The most serious accusation [...] was that it mythologised Podhale and resulted in neglecting the existence of the art of other regions of Poland” (Drozd-Piasecka and Paprocka 1985, 86).



The Villa "Pod Jedlami", Zakopane, end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, photo by W. Eljasz-Radzikowski (Archives of The Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Kraków).

this, it became a part of the Podhale landscape for good. Its success was influenced by one more factor, which was the nascent regional movement. The aims of the Podhale regionalism were, among others, to study and preserve the local cultural heritage; this found a reflection in the programme of the Association of Podhale Highlanders. Locally, the style was not only accepted but, what is more, the highlanders were advised, or at least encouraged, to build their houses in the Zakopane Style; this was evident during the first congress of the Association in 1911. The highlanders' acceptance of the Zakopane Style

“was influenced [...] by the fact that it retained the local building material, as well as the fundamental constructional solutions of the frame, and above all the roof, [...] together with the rich architectural decoration based on woodcarving skills and the characteristic highland ornamentation” (Pokropek and Pokropek 995, 159).

In short, the characteristic features of the Zakopane Style can be described as follows: a complex plan and body of the edifice; very tall stone basements with buttresses and arches; logs and constructional elements left without cladding; introduction of

a habitable loft; introduction of elements absent in the traditional architecture: open verandas (called *przyłap*), porches, huge eaves, balustrades, stairs, tiny loft rooms and others. Characteristically, the style developed old decorative motifs and introduced new ones. The function of edifices altered, being linked not with agriculture, but mainly with receiving holidaymakers (Jaroć 1994).

The activity of Witkiewicz and the emergence of the Zakopane Style, both occurring in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are impossible to overestimate. Witkiewicz's idea was to promote the Zakopane Style and thus to turn it into a Polish national style. At the foundation of his enterprise lay his deepest belief in the qualities inherent in the Podhale village people and the creations of their hands. His scheme proved unsuccessful and the Zakopane Style remained a regional one;<sup>7</sup> yet it provided an alternative in the development of the local architecture and showed the way to employing native models without reference to foreign prototypes.

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Contemporary architecture in Podhale has diverged far from the traditional forms, described in the inestimable studies of Matlakowski, as well as from the proposals offered by the Zakopane Style created by Witkiewicz. Comments of B. Tondos seem more than right when she considers the role played by the Zakopane Style and postulates that its name ought not to be applied to present-day works of, for instance, Podhale architecture, proposing the term *zakopiańszczyzna*<sup>8</sup> instead (Tondos 1999a, 195; Tondos 1999b, 9). The style of buildings constructed in the region nowadays results from three very closely interconnected factors. The first, and decisive, of those is the vigorous tradition of Podhale carpentry, which is still being passed from generation to generation. The second factor is the idea of the Zakopane Style itself, which, together with the debates that accompanied its emergence and development, focused attention on values inherent in the highlander architecture, decorative art etc., not only among the intelligentsia and the broader circles of the Polish society, but also among the locals themselves. Above all, the phenomenon of the Zakopane Style made it more than clear that those values must be protected and that the residents of the region should be the first to do this.

The third factor that must be considered is fashion, so ubiquitous in today's life. Mountains and the highland style have been in vogue for more than a century now. Without this enduring fashion, this region, too, may have lost its distinctiveness and

<sup>7</sup> However, it is necessary to remember examples of the Zakopane Style elsewhere (both those dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the villas in Wisła or Żeromski's *Chata* in Nałęczów, and houses and villas built currently in many regions of Poland), in which echoes of Witkiewicz's influence are still easy to notice.

<sup>8</sup> Which can be rendered as "Zakopane fashion" – translator's note.

extraordinary quality. The exceptionality of Podhale architecture lies most probably in the fact that the local builders have been able, on the one hand, to retain the elements of traditional architecture and construction, and on the other to select and adapt the ideas of Witkiewicz to their own needs, and thus to create their own style – a style different from the source models, yet referring to them energetically and most successfully.

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Authors' address:

Ewa Baniowska-Kopacz, Ph.D.  
Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology  
Polish Academy of Sciences  
ul. Sławkowska 17  
31-016 Kraków, POLAND  
e-mail: ewa\_baniowska@vp.pl

