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THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN CHICAGO: A COMPLICATED STORY OF THE SEARCH FOR LITHUANIAN IDENTITY

Summary. The article examines the complicated history of the search for Lithuanian identity in the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago. After leaving their homeland in the aftermath of World War II, the Lithuanian community struggled to maintain its national identity under difficult conditions of emigration. The search for a Lithuanian architectural character became an important part of this political task. Based on a case study, a church near Chicago's densely populated Marquette Park in Lithuania, the text analyzes the Lithuanian community's debate about the cultural and political mission of Lithuanian architecture in exile, and the way to express it. Although the concept of the *national style* had already emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, post-war technological progress and the unfamiliar context of emigration brings additional questions to the subject. The article argues that historical reminiscences in the church are more an ethical than an aesthetic choice. This approach embodies the specific cultural expectations of the community and is, at least partially, in line with the critique of modernism from regionalist point of view.

Keywords: architecture in exile, Lithuanian identity, national style, regionalism, Jonas Mulokas, Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas, Chicago.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Lithuanian architecture of the twentieth century reflects the difficult destiny of the nation. The interwar period, the Soviet era, and the post-WWII migration, while close chronologically, are crucially different historical periods for Lithuania. However, the differences are less pronounced in an architectural context. Despite social, cultural, and political differences, these are different phases – the birth, growth, and, perhaps the decline, of the Modern Movement. The issue of national identity was another important topic for architects in all three eras.

During the interwar period, the quest for the so-called *national style* was motivated by the desire to strengthen political separation from the Tsarist Russia. However, creating a recipe for the pure Lithuanian version of modern architecture has never been an easy task. Attempts were made to combine the motifs of folk art and baroque, although it was incompatible with the ascetic spirit of 20th-century

functionalism. In fact, history has shown that the modernization of cities has been more important than national ornaments in strengthening a national identity. It was modernist architecture that qualitatively transformed Lithuania's architectural environment and thus achieved the fundamental political goal of creating qualitatively new cities that no longer resembled the Russian Empire.

After WWII, Lithuanian architecture took two directions: some of the architects remained in occupied Lithuania, while others chose to leave. Paradoxically, in both cases, the issue of Lithuanianness remained relevant. The ideologists of Stalinism, in search of an alternative to Bauhaus, created a doctrine of architecture that is "national in form, socialist in content". Although this was an artificial theoretical concept dedicated to the whole Soviet Union, in Lithuania, socialist symbolism was supplemented with ornaments associated with local folk art. Later, as socialist modernism took hold, Lithuanian architects started to look for a distinctive regional character. Such attempts

are particularly pronounced in resort and seaside architecture. Although constrained by the scarcity of building materials and working under the pressure of the political conjuncture, Soviet Lithuania nevertheless developed certain distinctive features that can be seen as manifestations of regionalism.

Meanwhile, refugees were drawn to camps for displaced persons (DP) and then spread throughout the world. In such circumstances, architects abandoned their usual professional practices and turned their attention to writing or organizing architectural competitions for hypothetical objects. Real opportunities for construction emerged around the 1950s, when Lithuanians started to accumulate the funds needed for public projects. In the USA and Canada, for example, Catholic churches were the type of construction most commonly built during the 1950s and 1960s: "every year, Lithuanian Catholics in America build at least one church; at least three or four churches are decorated a year".[1] Despite the unfamiliar environment, Lithuanians cherished the expectation that public buildings should have the task of nurturing identity and conveying a political message to the world about the Lithuanian nation and the loss of independence.

Thus, this was the third version for architectural Lithuanianness.

Although the idea of a *national style* was clearly taken over from the interwar period, it gained a unique character in an exile. It is no coincidence that one of the first examples of the so-called *Lithuanian style*, the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Marquette Park, has often been portrayed as "a great beginning".[2] Although Jonas Mulokas began to develop his ideas at church for St. Virgin Mary Immaculate Conception in East St. Louise (first drafts from 1949, Fig. 1) and the Lourdes Franciscan Chapel in Kennebunkport in 1953, it was the construction in Marquette Park that, due to its size and visibility to the Lithuanian community, became the trigger for a wider discussion in the professional and cultural community about the possibility of a Lithuanian style.

The subject of Lithuanian DPs' identity in the North American context of the 1950s and 1960s is not a new academic topic. Vytis Čiubrinskas,[3] Ilona Bučinskytė,[4] Lijana Šatavičiūtė,[5] Skaidrė Urbonienė[6] and other researchers have analysed this subject in various ways. Morta Baužienė,[7]
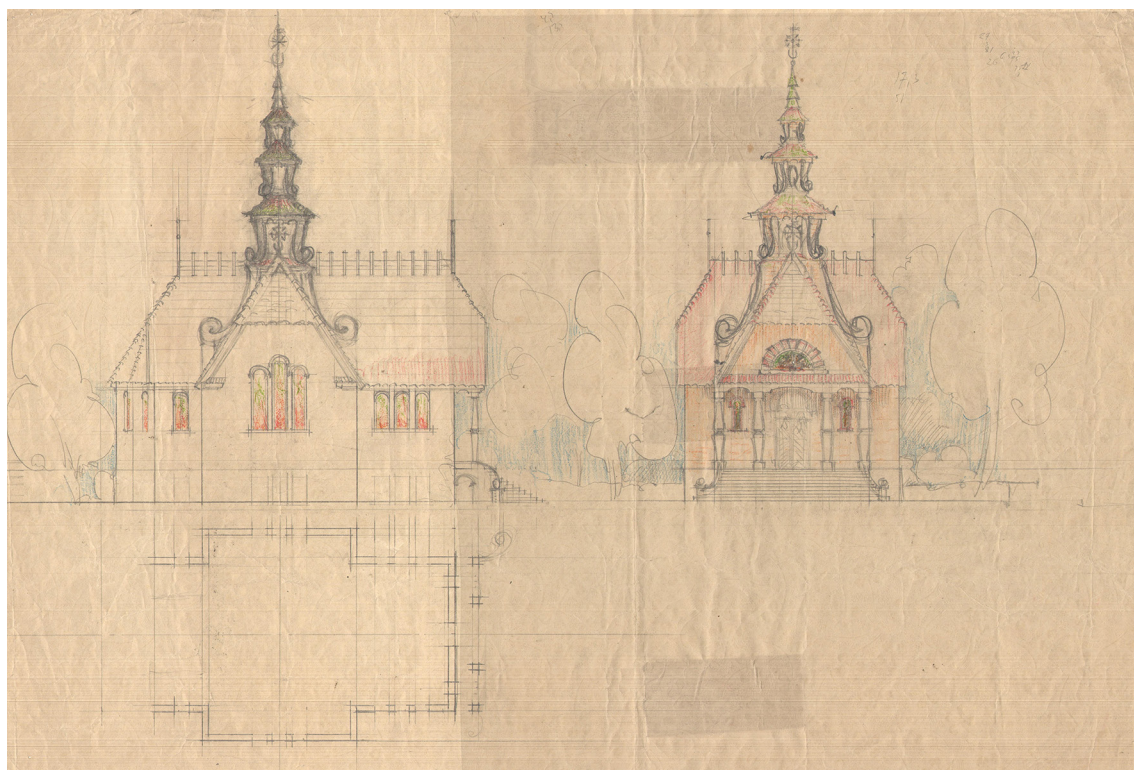

Fig. 1. Drawing for the church for St. Virgin Mary Immaculate Conception in East St. Louise, architect Jonas Mulokas, 1949, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

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Algimantas Mačiulis,[8] Rasa Andriušytė-Žukienė[9] and others also have written about different architects of the post-war diaspora. Jonas Mulokas has also received special attention in academic discourse.[10] However, the architectural debate provoked by the construction of the Marquette Park church has remained unexplored. Therefore, the main aim of this article is to contribute to the topic of architectural Lithuanianness in post-war North America. The case study exposes the architectural and cultural challenges the Lithuanian community faced when aiming to find a special Lithuanian architectural character. This research is based on previously unpublished projects and documents from the Mulokai family archive in Santa Monica, as well as on publications in the diaspora periodicals of the time. These historical documents were analysed from the perspective of architectural ideas in order to assess the significance of the church in the context of not only Lithuanian but also global architectural history.

THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE CONTEXT OF MARQUETTE PARK

In the 1950s, Marquette Park was one of the most densely populated Lithuanian places outside Lithuania. As contemporaries wrote: "Fifty years ago, Marquette Park was already home to Lithuanians. From an impenetrable marshland, thanks to hard working people, the area became one of the most beautiful in Chicago, and it is not for nothing that Lithuania Plaza was built here".[11] In addition to the many attributes of Lithuanian daily life, such as shops, cafeterias, or restaurants, it was also the location of important public facilities. In 1935, the Darius and Girėnas monument was erected. The Lithuanian convent of the Sisters of St. Casimir, located in the district, contributed to the establishment of a Catholic girls' gymnasium and St. Cross Hospital. A Lithuanian church also existed in the area, but according to Chicago Lithuanians, "in its smallness, simplicity, and modesty, it did not correspond to the inclinations of our spirit".[12] On 12 May 1957, the new church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary was consecrated by Archbishop of Chicago

Samuel Stritch and became the symbolic center of the district.

The new church has been commissioned by Canon Jurgis Paškauskas, who organized a small competition for its construction. Jonas Mulokas, Stasys Kudokas, Petras Kiaulėnas, and two other American architects[13] submitted proposals. The competition models were displayed in the lobby of the old church. The parish committee chose a variation of the Mulokas design, which started to be publicized in the press[14] (Fig. 2). Architect and Canon Paškauskas emphasized that the new project aimed to create a building that reflects the Lithuanian spirit (Fig. 3).

If the 500th anniversary of Vytautas the Great's death was a significant symbolic date in interwar Lithuania, then the 700th anniversary of King Mindaugas baptism in 1953 was a significant date for the 1950s. The New Lithuanian church became a symbolic commemoration of this occasion, and on the outer east wall Adomas Varnas created an image dedicated to the coronation of King Mindaugas. The Lithuanian dimension was to be strengthened with a pinch of Lithuanian land brought by the first exiles and donated to the chairman of the Lithuanian Council of America Leonardas Šimutis.
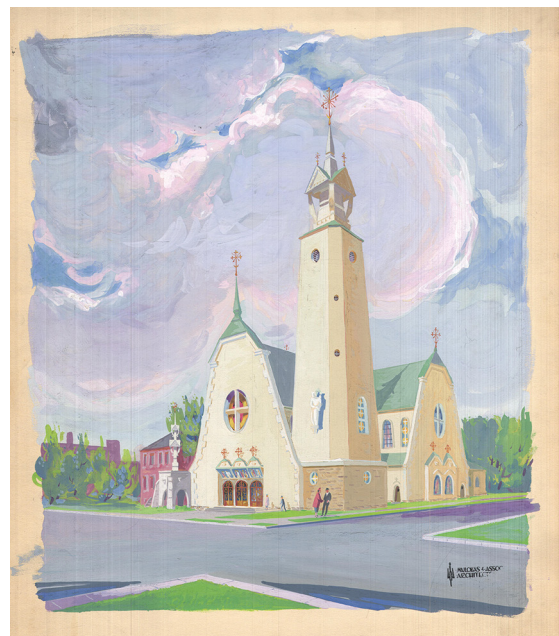

Fig. 2. Competition project for the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, 1952, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica
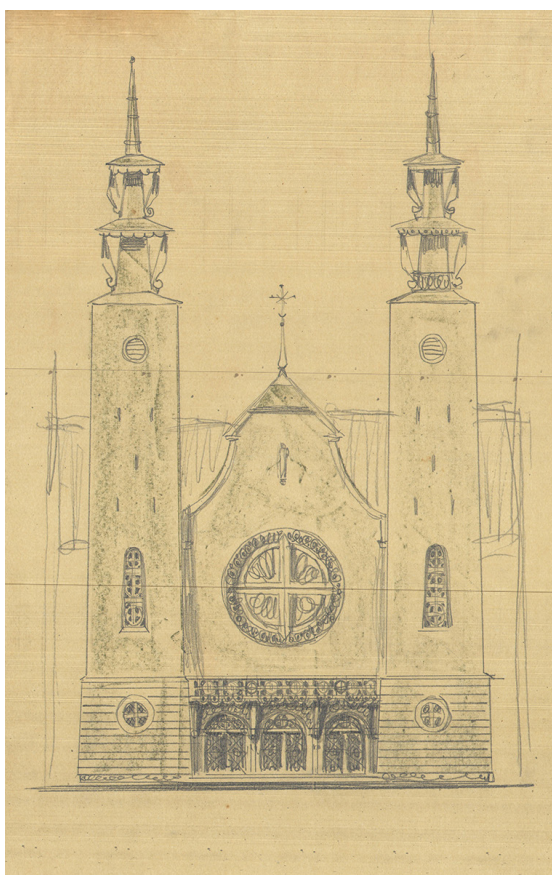
Fig. 3. Drawing for the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1952, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

Fig. 4. Architect Jonas Mulokas in front of the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1960s, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

The words of the priest Feliksas Kapočius: "at present, this is the only pinch of land free from occupation"[15] had to be inscribed on the wall of the church. The building was also given a political meaning by incorporating the Vytis, the coat of arms of Lithuania, and the coats of arms of "the most important Lithuanian cities"[16] into the main façade. As a symbolically important building, the church was particularly suited to the purpose of conveying a political message.

Notwithstanding the political message, the chosen form, the integration of folk art and baroque, was received controversially in the Lithuanian community. Along with congratulations, the press also reacted negatively to the announcement of the winner of the architectural competition, questioning how the chosen style would meet the aesthetic and technical standards of architecture in the second half of the twentieth century. A mocking review signed by the architects Stasys Kudokas, Vytautas Peldavičius and the painters Zenonas Kolba and

Viktoras Petravičius (although the signature of Kudokas was later questioned) was widely circulated. According to critics, the church was generally neither a good neo-Baroque style nor a good architecture: "the spaces are in total disproportion, undeveloped, and do not harmonize with the forms chosen. The Baroque forms used are more reminiscent of the short-lived Jugendstil".[17] Although the final design (Fig. 4) differed from the version published in the press, the style of the church remained a matter of debate even decades later.

Despite the criticism of the new church's style, there was no doubt that it would be a significant cultural landmark for the Lithuanian community. At a cost of around a million dollars, a noteworthy sum for the Lithuanian community, the building stood out for its scale and ambition. The auxiliary bishop Vincentas Brizgys, who was one of the most prominent voices in the Lithuanian community at the time, was convinced that "it would be an understatement to call the sanctuary extraordinary. It

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will be celebrated in the art history of America and the Lithuanian nation in general."[18] The *Southwest News-Herald*, a newspaper for Chicago, even went so far as to hail the 1976 church as "one of the most beautiful in the country".[19]

In the context of the United States, it was also important that the architectural concept was created by artists of Lithuanian origin: architect Jonas Mulokas in close collaboration with artist Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas. A number of other Lithuanian artists also contributed to the various decorations: Vytautas Kašuba, Adomas Varnas, Kazimieras Žoromskis, Ramojus Mozeliauskas, and others. Lithuanians were a very large part of the design team, and it was a new phenomenon that was later repeated in other projects. Later, Jonynas wrote in a letter to Mulokas: "I thank you for your efforts to create your own, and for the support of your own Lithuanian creators; we have lit the fire and now everyone is looking around for Lithuanians".[20] Such an attitude reminds of interwar Lithuania, when the design of the significant objects was entrusted to architects related to Lithuania. A good example is the competition for the church of the Resurrection, which was open only to Lithuanian citizens, Lithuanians living in foreign countries and foreigners living in Lithuania.

A VISION OF THE LITHUANIANNESS IN ARCHITECTURE: A SYNTHESIS OF VERNACULAR AND BAROQUE

When designing the church, Mulokas drew on two main inspirations: the Baroque as a reference to the rich architectural heritage of the period in Lithuania and Vilnius in particular; and vernacular architecture as a form embodying the spirit of the agrarian nation. In this way, according to the architect, the church became an attempt to "transfer elements of old Lithuanian architecture to modern times".[21] Although this way of interpreting an architectural form seemed novel in the US context, for Lithuanians it was already a tried and tested strategy from the interwar period. One of the main contributors to this concept was Vladimiras Dubeneckis. While creating his own concept of *national*

Fig. 5. *Karmėlava St. Anne Church, architect Vladimiras Dubeneckis, 1919, from the personal collection of Antanas Burkus*

style, Dubeneckis was seeing "inspiration not only in the architecture of rural houses and folk art, but also in the sacred architecture of Lithuania: in the wooden churches of the countryside, in the chapels, bell towers, synagogues and Baroque churches".[22] Such architectural fusion styles and approaches are clearly visible in the church of Karmėlava (Fig. 5), building of the *Ragutis* factory, or in the Kaunas City Theater, in the façade of which the architect saw "a crystallized echo of Vilnius in form".[23]

Dubeneckis can certainly be considered one of main sources of inspiration for Mulokas. Similarities between the church in Marquette Park and that in Karmėlava have been repeatedly mentioned in the press. Some saw it as a copy, others as "an interesting and correct logical result of the use of Lithuanian folk architectural motifs by both artists". Interestingly, a similar structure of church towers can be seen in the sketch of 1922 for the *Ragutis* factory dwelling house (Fig. 6). Later, in 1975, Mulokas himself admitted that Dubeneckis' work, together with paintings by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis and texts by Paulius Galaunė, had been an important guide for him in the design of the church.

Neo-baroque was probably the first choice for the main client, Canon Jurgis Paškauskas, who was enthusiastic about this style and wanted "a church similar to that in Jieznas".[24] Although the designers themselves made no secret of the fact that the baroque served as an inspiration, the neo-baroque character of the church was not straightforward,

Fig. 6. Drawing for the the "Ragutis" factory dwelling house, architect Vladimiras Dubeneckis, c. 1922, from the Kaunas Regional State Archives

own church, while the work itself is derived from the shape of our vernacular architecture".[25] While the fusion of Baroque and vernacular is quite evident in some sketches (Fig. 7), in the final version the appearance is closer to vernacular architecture.

One of the most distinctive features of the exterior, the stylized towers designed in consultation with Jonynas, was inextricably linked to the vernacular tradition (Fig. 8). Although the towers themselves are typical of the Baroque period, the designers emphasized that the spires were inspired by the motifs of Lithuanian bell towers,[26] wayside shrines[27] (Fig. 9) and even the floral motifs of the folk art. Priest Petras Celiešius, one of the strongest supporters of the chosen architectural style, associated the tower with the "stylized tulips, the heads of which give the façade the appearance of a bouquet of flowers".[28] This flowery theme was considered characteristic of Lithuania not only in terms of form, but also symbolically: "as a product of the nourishment of the earth, [flower] is a very important element of the old Lithuanian traditions".[29]

but rather goes hand in hand with elements of folk art. According to Jonynas, who was one of the main co-authors, "there was no intention of copying the international Baroque. <...> Mulokas weaves echoes of distant Baroque into the architecture of his

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Fig. 7. Drawing for the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1952, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica
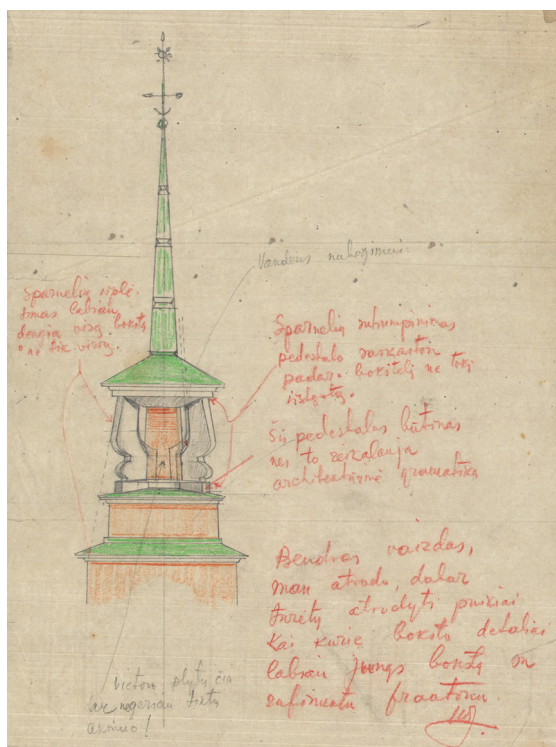
Fig. 8. Drawing with comments of Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas for the tower of the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1955, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

Fig. 9. Wayside shrine in Miliauskai family houshold, Palos Park, Chicago, 1956, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

Fig. 10. Interior of the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1956, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

Fig. 11. Decorations of the Kaunas Central Post Office, architect Feliksas Vizbaras, 1931, from the personal collection of Antanas Burkus

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The interior stained-glass windows and plaster moldings created by Jonynas are particularly important for the interpretation of Lithuanian character (Fig. 10). Although in its architectural logic, this method of decoration is somewhat reminiscent of the moldings of the Kaunas central post office (Fig. 11), Rasutė Andriušytė-Žukienė observes that "it was not the textile or pictorial patterns used to decorate chests, which formed the basis of these compositions, as was customary in prewar independent Lithuania. The artist's compositions were based not only on wood relief carvings, but also on paper cut-outs, Christmas straws, Easter bonnets, Easter eggs and even drawings of snowflakes".[30] Although the volume structure of the church closely resembled historicism, the decorative elements were made to be uniquely representative of Lithuanian culture. The artist himself also saw these interior elements as an important way to convey the symbolic message of the church, and in one of his letters he expressed the hope that "the plasterworks will have more influence on the architecture of the church than the altars themselves".[31]

It is the story of the creation of the central altar that perhaps most clearly reflects the complicated role of the neo-baroque in the quest for Lithuanianness. Although old Lithuanian wooden churches, inspired by *national style*, were very often decorated with Baroque altars, neither Jonynas nor Mulokas considered pure Baroque as a suitable way of expressing the Lithuanian character. For this purpose, a fusion of folk art and Baroque was necessary (Fig. 12). Both artists sincerely defended the idea of decorating the altar with wayside shrines, which had already become an "emblem of Lithuanianness"[32] (Fig. 13). The original idea of the altar was created by Jonynas between 1953 and 1954, but when no agreement was found with the church,[33] the design of the altar was continued by Mulokas. The Mulokas family archive preserves a number of sketch versions of the altar, which were used to try to find a suitable stylistic character that would satisfy both the client and the designers (Fig. 14).

The idea of such an altar was also supported by part of the Lithuanian cultural community. For example, art historian Ignas Šlapelis, in a letter to the architect, writes: "Just as the unnecessary use of foreign words in a language is a sign of an unrefined

man, so the baroque altar of the 18th century in the new church would be a kind of "barbarism" and will be a witness that the builders, when making the architectural mixture, did not know what they were doing".[34] Even the aspect of political resistance has been woven into the debate. In 1957, the Lithuanian newspaper *Draugas* claimed: "the Bolsheviks are destroying our crosses in Lithuania, and we will show our respect and love for them by building the [baroque] altar."[35] Despite the efforts of the Lithuanian community, the idea of decorating the altar with wayside shrines was not realized. A classical neo-baroque altar in the conservative tradition was
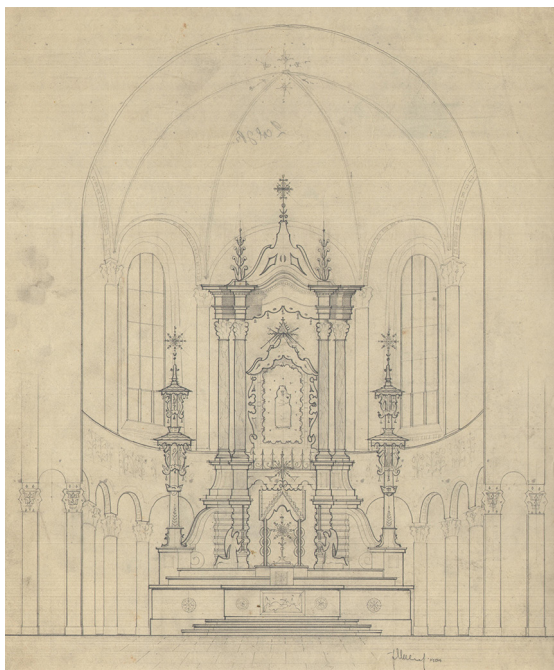

Fig. 12. Concept drawing for the altar of church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1956, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

Fig. 13. Concept drawing for the altar of church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1955, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica
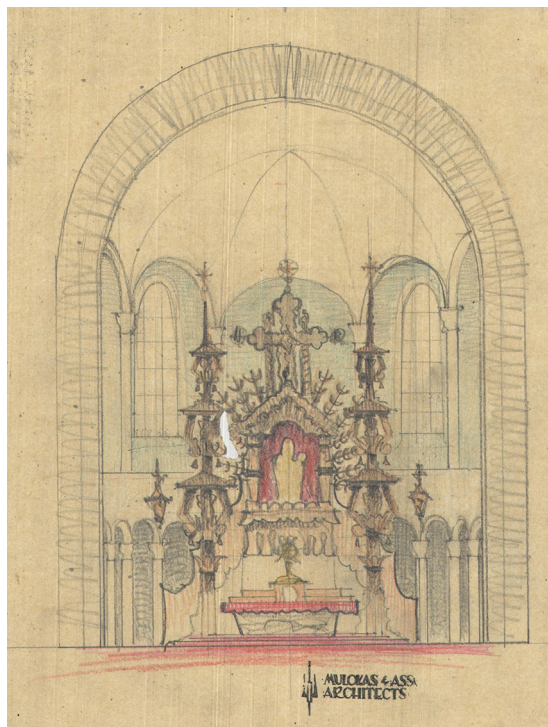

Fig. 14. Concept drawing for the altar of church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1955, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica
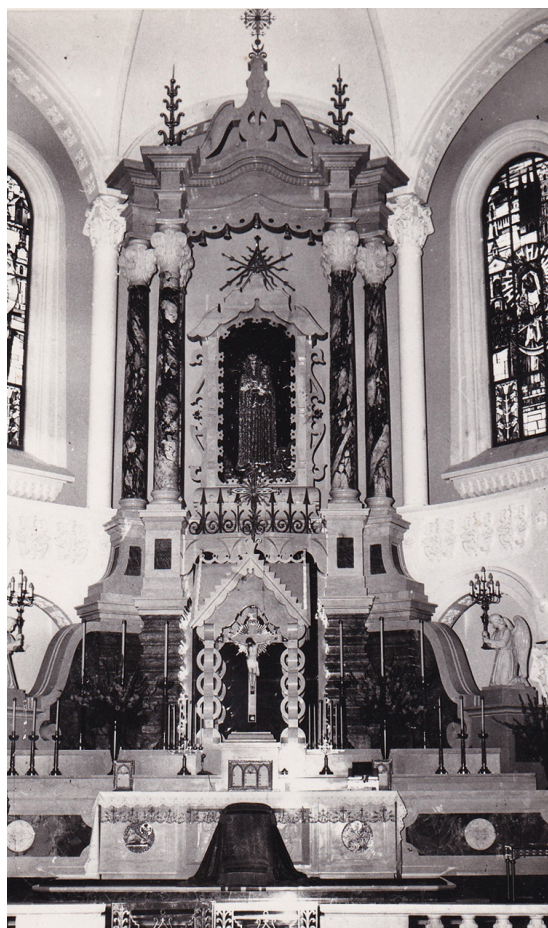

Fig. 15. Altar of church of church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1957, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

brought from Italy (Fig. 15). The wayside shrines were replaced by angel figures, despite the author's claim that in such a case "the composition of the central altar would be completely altered and destroyed".[36] Only the capitals of columns designed by Jonynas remain from the efforts of Lithuanian authors.[37]

NATIONAL CHARACTER AND MODERN MOVEMENT: A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP

The difficulty of finding a national Lithuanian style in Marquette Park was not only due to disputes about the appropriateness of specific elements of Baroque or folk art. The building, saturated with symbolism and historical reminiscences, was generally unacceptable to part of the Lithuanian community as an irrelevant throwback to the past. Thus, the complicated search for Lithuanianness in architecture has another field of tension – between traditionalism and the Modern Movement. A prime example of this attitude, the ruthless publication by Mykolas Morkūnas, in which he sarcastically describes the architectural solution of the building as a compilation: "it is clear to anyone a

Fig. 16. Construction works of the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1953, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

little disillusioned that this church is a glue-up of romantic Byzantine, Renaissance, Baroque and even Gothic styles".[38] This is a standard stand of the proponents of modernism, who were in no doubt that twentieth century architecture "should be based directly on new means of construction and should be disciplined by the exigencies of function; its forms should be purged of the paraphernalia of historical reminiscence".[39]

Indeed, from the point of view of technological progress, the construction of the church echoes the debates on the unity of form and technology of the early twentieth century. The modern, steel structural frame (Fig. 16), made in the "workshop of by Engineer Antanas Rudis",[40] was filled with traditional plastered and decorated brick walls (Fig. 17). Thus, although the church was built in the 1950s, this decision is reminiscent of the contradiction between the innovative design of the metal frame and the conservative surface of the building, created in the same Chicago at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. William Le Baron Jenney, Louis Sullivan, Daniel Burnham, William Holabird, and many other architects, even when designing skyscrapers that were technologically and typologically innovative, remained aesthetically faithful to certain amount of ornamentation, which Siegfried Giedion later has described as reminiscent of "commercial classicism".[41]

For those who questioned the modernity, national symbols were also considered a mistake. In modernist theory, it was clear that "ornament is no longer
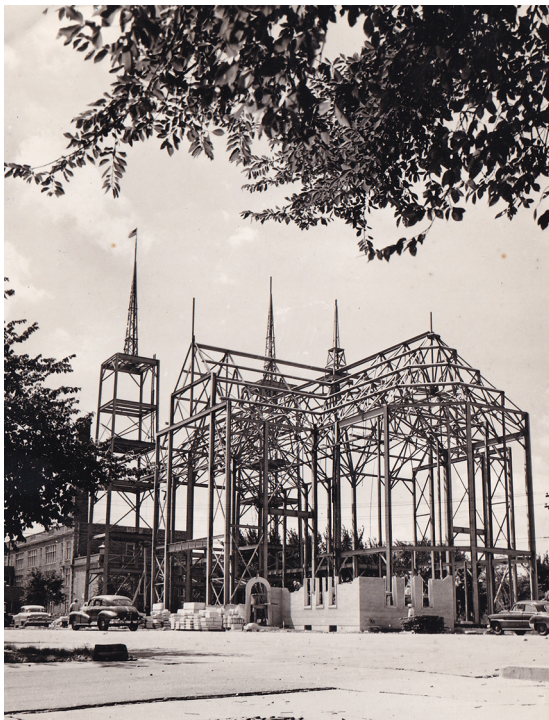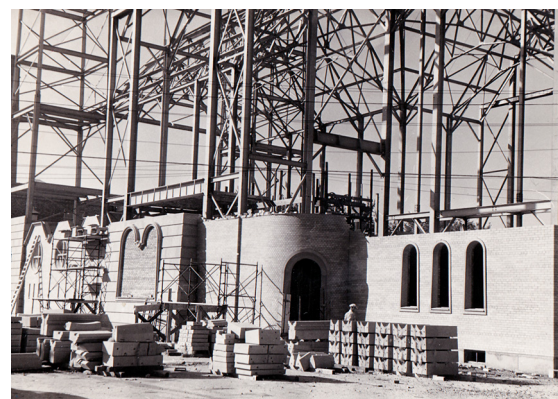
Fig. 17. Construction works of the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago, c. 1953, from the personal archive of Mulokai family, Santa Monica

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organically connected with our culture, ornament is no longer the expression of our culture".[42] In the case of Marquette Park, not only was the building saturated with symbols related to Lithuanian history, but the very notion of architectural aesthetics is based on ornamentation. Naturally, ornamentation was criticized by Lithuanian architects and cultural figures who supported modernism as an approach. A symptomatic remark was made by Abertas Kerelis, an architect of the younger generation, who later became president of the Lithuanian American Society of Engineers and Architects. He is highly critical of any decoration inspired by folk ornaments or political symbols and compares it even to Stalinism: "a similar understanding of architecture is found, in a negative sense, only in Soviet Russia, where buildings, whatever their style or purpose, are loaded with hammers, sickles, and stars".[43]

Unique towers, which resemble wooden wayside shrines, were also targets of criticism. Already during the interwar period, there was a lot of skepticism about such a way of creating an architectural Lithuanian identity. Working in exile, the vernacular tradition had lost its natural and cultural context and therefore much of its meaning. According to Jurgis Gimbutas, "removed from its natural environment, enlarged and inserted among other urban buildings, a Lithuanian folk art loses its character".[44] Thus, where designers and proponents found a Lithuanian uniqueness, critics saw an outdated nostalgia. However, a large part of the expatriate community interpreted national symbolism and the fusion of styles with different eyes. Adomas Varnas argued that "a whole series of structural and ornamental features drawn from our vernacular wooden and brick building stock"[45] gave the project its originality, while the famous geographer Steponas Kolupaila saw in the church a reminder to "Chicago of Vilnius and Lithuania".[46]

It is worth noting that Jonas Mulokas himself sees a contradiction between modern architectural trends and the architectural expression of Marquette Park church, and tries to explain his aesthetic choice. Although acknowledging that new construction allows new forms to be created, he argues

that "by starting from vernacular architectural forms, I think I am more in tune with our contemporary sorrows".[47] This approach makes it clear that style was an ethical choice, even if "according to the old European schools of architecture, one is committing a serious offence.[48] It was an attempt to seek the novelty of architectural language not by following contemporary trends, but by looking for a specific meaning that would echo the emigrant's sentiment for Lithuania. The complicated relationship between modernity and national nostalgia is vividly described by one of the supporters of the project, the poet Petras Babickas: "It is dangerous to lag behind the 'spirit of the times'. But maybe it's our salvation or perhaps doom? Perhaps salvation, because only a strong soul goes against the different trends. Today, when the so-called civilized world is beginning to worship only the form, the Lithuanian consciously returns to the essence, to the soul, to the ideal. This is brave, noble, meaningful, and honorable thing to do".[49] Thus, the imperative of modernity is trumped here by the imperative of national identity.

However, not everyone saw Mulokas' architecture as an outdated whim, the only explanation for which was the desire to strengthen national consciousness. The debate on modernity can also be approached from a different angle, and to refer to a more critical view on the monolithic nature of modernism. Modernism in the context of the mid-century was no longer a doctrine of one-way, and gradually developed "the capacity to cultivate a resistant, identity-giving culture while at the same time having discreet recourse to universal technique".[50] In their correspondence, Jonynas and Mulokas also treat modernity with a caution, trying as much as possible to avoid any details that could be interpreted as monotonous international modernity: "with this [modernist] kind of detail you can get into a lot of trouble, and instead of having a Lithuanian church, you will get an international vinaigrette, for which you will be deserving of a big spanking".[51]

This position can be seen in the words of the artist Adomas Varnas by attributing the church to a

certain alternative to modern architecture. Varnas points out that modernism "has had and continues to have, as its main task not only the most rational harmony with the principles of the economic and hygienic use of space, or with the principles of the use of forms, but also sees a living need to connect architectural construction with aesthetic ties to both the character of the immediate environment, and the spirit of the wider landscape of the region".[52] Therefore, despite the certain sentimentality of Mulokas, the discussion about the style reflects global notions of critical regionalism.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Frank Lloyd Wright, who was known and appreciated among Lithuanians,[53] was involved in the discussion. Petras Celiešius, the biographer of Mulokas, writes about an important meeting with the famous architect regarding the church. According to this story, Mulokas went to Taliesin West and showed the project to Wright and his colleagues. Wright described the building as "partly similar to Oriental forms, praised its architectural novelty and encouraged the project to proceed".[54] Later, in 1985, Lithuanian architect Jurgis Okunis also mentioned this meeting in the Lithuanian journal *Aidai*: "as a result of the 'opposition', the creator of our Lithuanian architecture approached America's best architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, and outlined his idea to apply the folk motifs of his own land to monumental architecture. After receiving Wright's enthusiastic endorsement, Mulokas returned as a winner and began to work."[55]

Although we only know about this meeting from secondary sources, it is clear that Wright's skeptical attitude towards universal modernism had a lasting influence on Mulokas work. During the construction of the Marquette Park church, Mulokas publishes an article entitled "On Lithuanian Architecture", in which he introduces Wright as the most famous architect in America, if not in the world, and draws attention to the cantilevered roofs that characterize Wright's work. According to Mulokas, these roofs not only recall "the oriental motif of wooden construction", but also are typical of "ancient Lithuanian house".[56] And this "makes possible old wood architecture to be incorporated into monumental architecture".[57] In this way, despite its unexpected and perhaps eccentric style, which, according to Jonas Kaunas, "was the inevitable accompaniment of a clash of styles",[58] the church embodies the quest for an alternative to monotonous modernism.

CONCLUSIONS

Although Marquette Park church is only a small part of the architectural heritage of the Lithuanian diaspora, it is one of the first public buildings of significant scale created by post-WWI refugees. At the same time, it is one of the first attempts to foster national identity through architecture in emigration. Although the use of various elements of folk art cannot be interpreted as a novelty, considering the Lithuanian experience between the wars, the church was a new phenomenon in the US context. The political stance taken was expressed as a distinctive synthesis of Baroque and Lithuanian folk art, reinforced by visual signs of statehood.

Paradoxically, despite symbolical importance, scale, and even the finances invested in the construction, the architectural idea has become the subject of fierce debate. The principal question was is it rational and ethical in the mid-20th century to use decoration and symbolism in architecture? Such an approach obviously does not reflect the technological and conceptual advances of the mid-century. There was also disagreement about specific aesthetic solutions, especially the role of the neo-baroque in expressing the Lithuanian and sacred character. Although critics interpreted the chosen style as a naïve continuation of architectural ideas that had already failed between the wars, the emerging global criticism of modern architecture puts the church in an international context as a peculiar example of the regionalism made by immigrant community.

While the debate over the architectural quality of the building has persisted for decades, it is important to stress that the complicated stylistic and ethical choices reflect the complicated history of the

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nation. In this way, the church embodies not only the patterns of global or Lithuanian architectural history but also a striking testimony to the political history of 20th century Lithuania. For this reason, the Marquette Park church can be considered one of the most significant works of Lithuanian architectural heritage outside Lithuania.

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THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN CHICAGO: A COMPLICATED STORY OF THE SEARCH FOR LITHUANIAN IDENTITY

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ŠVČ. MERGELĖS MARIJOS GIMIMO BAŽNYČIA ČIKAGOJE: KOMPLIKUOTA LIETUVIŠKO IDENTITETO PAIEŠKOS ISTORIJA

Santrauka

Straipsnyje tiriama komplikuota lietuviškojo identiteto paieškos istorija Švč. Mergelės Marijos Gimimo bažnyčioje Čikagoje. Po Antrojo pasaulinio karo iš Lietuvos pasitraukusi lietuvių bendruomenė sudėtingomis emigracijos sąlygomis visomis išgalėmis siekė neprarasti tautinio identiteto. Lietuviškojo architektūros charakterio paieška tapo reikšminga šios plačios kultūrinės užduoties dalimi. Pasitelkus atvejo studiją, tankiai lietuvių apgyvento Market parko rajono Čikagoje bažnyčią, tekste analizuojamas lietuvių bendruomenės disputas apie kultūrinę šio objekto užduotį ir tam pasirinktą stilistinį pavidalą – baroko ir liaudies meno sintezę. Nepaisant to, kad lietuviškojo tautinio stiliaus koncepcija susiformavo dar XX amžiaus pradžioje, pokario technologinė pažanga ir emigrantams svetimas kontekstas šiam klausimui suteikė papildomą dimensiją. Straipsnyje argumentuojama, kad istorinės reminiscencijos bažnyčioje yra daugiau etinis nei estetinis pasirinkimas. Toks požiūris įkūnija specifinius kultūrinius bendruomenės lūkesčius ir bent dalinai atitinka regionalistų išsakomą kritiką modernizmo kaip monolitinio estetinio stiliaus atžvilgiu.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Egzilio architektūra, lietuviškasis identitetas, nacionalinis stilius, regionalizmas, Jonas Mulokas, Vytautas Kazimieras Jonynas, Čikaga.

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