

The summary of PhD thesis:

**Morphology of the Nazi concentration
and death camps on occupied Polish territory**

The subject related to the history of Nazi-German concentration and death camps is still a current subject of interest for researchers in various fields of science, mainly historians. The geographical approach, based on the methodology of research relevant to this field, clearly gives way to others. In this dissertation, the author attempted to include a geographical perspective in the spectrum of research on Nazi concentration and extermination camps, placing in the center morphological issues included in the form of a comparative study.

The subject of the research is the morphology of Nazi camps functioning in the territory of occupied Poland during World War II. The group of studied objects included concentration camps: Konzentrationslager (KL) Auschwitz-Birkenau (in Oswiecim-Brzezinka), KL Lublin (in Lublin) and KL Plaszow (in Krakow-Płaszow) and extermination (death) camps: Kulmhof (located in the Wartheland, in Chelmno nad Nerem), and the Operation Reinhardt camps located in General Government: SS-Sonderkommando Sobibor (near Sobibor), SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka (near Treblinka) and SS-Sonderkommando Belzec (near Belzec).

The main purpose of the dissertation is a morphological analysis and a comparison of Nazi concentration and extermination camps functioning on the territory of Poland occupied by the Third Reich. The comparative study was preceded by a detailed analysis which will allow us to answer the question: was there a pattern in creating places of imprisonment and death in the Polish territories?

The spatial scope of dissertation covers the territory of occupied Poland (Second Polish Republic), where the camps were located, while the basic time scope covers the period of World War II. In some aspects this scope was extended not only to include a retrospective back to the end of the 19th century, when the first war and colonial camps were established, but also to include modernity regarding the state of preservation of former camp objects.

The author concretized the following problems:

- KL Auschwitz-Birkenau and KL Lublin showed significant similarity in terms of location and morphology, thus reproducing the solutions adopted in KL Dachau, while ZAL / KL Plaszow, although based on locational factors similar to other concentration camps, clearly differed morphologically from them

- the death camps in Belżec, Sobibór and Treblinka established as part of the Reinhardt Operation were characterized by similar elements both in terms of location and their morphology, while the Kulmhof camp was an exception to this background.

In the presented work the basic method was the historical one, mainly retrospective, used to identify morphological elements of the camps based on the analysis of historical maps, archival sources and processed source material contained in the literature. In addition, the following methods were used: cartographic, genetic, morphometric analysis, free intelligence, GIS computer technology and field studies of the studied objects.

Camps in their form and structure resemble settlement units, because they have a specific genesis, location in space and internal and external structure. Morphology of the city deals with the study of the complex issues of internal and external construction of cities. Considerations undertaken within this discipline, and especially the achievements of one of its most distinguished representatives, Marek Koter, were used by the author of the dissertation in research on concentration and extermination camps.

The institution of Nazi concentration camps, as a tool for implementing the policy of the Third Reich in areas of occupied Poland, in its location and spatial assumptions was the sum of selected experiences of many such places in the world, expanded by absent solutions. The so-called British type of concentration camps, created during the Boer Wars at the end of the nineteenth century, was the correct original and model for this type of camps, while for Nazi camps the Soviet ones were the right model. The extermination camps were the places of execution, that the idea, location and elements of spatial construction were fully developed by their German creators, and which in this camps spatial form have never before appeared in the history of the world.

In the dissertation, also subcamps were subjected to the location and to the morphological analysis, as elements of the concentration camp system. The subcamps, which were not integral parts of the concentration camps, constituted labor camps administratively connected with the base camps. The subcamps belonging to KL Auschwitz-Birkenau and KL Lublin constituted specific labor camps and were characterized by an optimal location in the places where they were supposed to provide their activities. In terms of morphology, they were closed areas, largely created on a rectangular, square or trapezoid plan. Their boundaries were mostly barbed wire fences. A permanent element in them were buildings intended for prisoners; other types of buildings appeared in these places in a diverse way. The analyzed subcamps of KL Plaszow were also labor camps, most often fenced with barbed wire, in which residential premises for prisoners were an indispensable element. Analyzed subcamps showed strong diversification in terms of external construction. It is difficult to say that these places were created according to a specific pattern. Their common features were: the character of the place - a labor camp, location in places where they were supposed to provide their services, simple shape and permanent building elements - residential buildings for prisoners and closing the area mostly by fencing in the form of barbed wire.

Concentration camps in the occupied territory of Poland were generally characterized by similar location factors: close location to railway lines, on the outskirts, spatial isolation, neighborhood of jobs for prisoners.

The camps were also characterized by a similar process of shaping their form. This concerned former mentioned concentration camps and ZAL / KL Plaszow, which was initially created as a labor camp.

Concentration camps had different surfaces, which was largely influenced by: genesis, performed functions, planned number of prisoners (related to their functions) and their proper tasks. A constant element of the boundaries of concentration camps were the lines of barbed wire in the direct border and guard patrols, while in the case of parts intended for prisoners, also separated by a similar line, the guard towers were supplemented. Concentration camps were limited in their shape to quadrangles or pentagons. In particular, very similarly, because based on the rectangular plan, parts intended for prisoners were created, which indicated the use of a specific pattern. In this element KL Plaszow was an exception. The main building material of the concentration camps was wood, with the exception of Auschwitz I. In the concentration camp space

there had many permanent elements: main gates, barbed wire lines, barracks (wooden) and buildings (concrete), roads, fire-fighting ponds, parish grounds (separated in space in a planned or contractual way) and places of execution and burial of corpses.

Concentration camps showed quite significant differences in terms of functional and spatial structure. A prisoner zone was the basic functional zone for all camps. Due to the functional and spatial division, Birkenau and KL Lublin were particularly similar. The use of a certain pattern was noticeable in the organization of the space of such camps as Auschwitz I, Birkenau and KL Dachau. In particular, a copy of KL Dachau camp was the Auschwitz I. KL Lublin used some similar solutions, but in terms of morphology it was the closest to Birkenau, especially in terms of the organization of a part intended for prisoners. KL Plaszow was largely an exception and presented the type of labor camp. Its unique characteristics of the layout, shape and organization, mainly the part for the prisoners, were determined by the topographic specificity of the area on which it was founded. Nevertheless, he had several common features with the other camps (including the use of wood building material, the existence of such facilities as: gates, barracks, barbed wire lines, assembly areas, etc.).

The implementation of the set goals has allowed to verify the first hypothesis of the research. The author proved that KL Auschwitz-Birkenau and KL Lublin showed a significant similarity in terms of location and morphology, and they copied the same solutions adopted in Dachau. ZAL / KL Plaszow, which was based on locational factors similar to the other concentration camps, from the morphological side was partially different from them (internal structure). The solutions adopted in KL Auschwitz-Birkenau and KL Lublin were largely reflected in the elements of KL Plaszow morphogenesis and its external structure (building material and building elements used). Thus, the hypothesis adopted at the beginning was not fully confirmed.

The second group of camp objects subjected to the morphological analysis were extermination camps: Kulmhof, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka.

The Operation Reinhardt (OR) camps were characterized by similar location factors, such as camp isolation and camouflage, direct connection to the railway line, close proximity of the Jewish population and the location near the border with the USSR. It should be noted that some of the characteristics of the Belzec indicate its experimental nature. Kulmhof, which was the first of the extermination camps in the Polish territory, was characterized by partially different features.

The OR camps were created in several stages, whereas in the case of Kulmhof - the creation of the camp did not take place in stages, but as a whole.

The biggest differences between Kulmhof and the OR camps can be seen in their external and internal structure. The OR camps were similar in size, while the two parts of the Kulmhof camp were marked by a distinct difference. Referring to the direct border, the OR camps were surrounded by similar structures in the form of camouflaged barbed wire lines, where external borders were enclosed in Sobibor and Treblinka (a minefield and anti-tank barriers). Only a wooden fence was used in Kulmhof. OR camps were built with wooden objects, because these places were to be temporary. In Kulmhof, the proportions were reversed due to the partial adaptation of existing buildings.

In terms of the layout, Kulmhof was also an exception. In the space of the OR camps, there was a tendency to organize the layout of the buildings - from the chaotically arranged buildings (Belzec) to their more regular location in particular parts of Sobibor and Treblinka. Kulmhof, as a prototype of the camp, was composed of two separate functional parts: transport and storage (related to the reception of victims and plunder of property) and extermination. In the first camp OR, which was Belzec, these two zones

were joined together (this solution was used in subsequent camps), and in Sobibor and Treblinka an administrative and service zone was added to them for the needs of the SS and the Ukrainian crew. It represented a certain evolution of the form of extermination centers - from the Kulmhof prototype, through the experimental Belzec, to the spatially developed form of the Sobibor and Treblinka camps.

The author proved that the extermination centers in Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka belonging to the group of camps had similarities both in terms of location and their morphology, while the Kulmhof camp was a special exception.

The best preserved camp is Auschwitz I, and partly Birkenau and KL Lublin. KL Plaszow has not survived practically at all. In 2016, in the areas of former camps, there were various forms of commemoration: monuments, memorial plaques, post-camp relicts and Museums - Memorial Sites. Among them, the most neglected area is KL Plaszow camp in Krakow. Death camps are places of execution that have not survived to the present. Only single objects are visible in the field. These places have been commemorated in a variety of ways: museum buildings, numerous plaques and memorial stones were set, and more important places related to the space and activity of the camp were marked.