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PRINCIPLES OF ARCHITECTURAL PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL RETREAT CENTRES

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ABSTRACT

An insightful analysis of the features of the origin and formation of spiritual retreat centers has been carried out. The main tendencies and principles of the architectural and planning arrangement of spiritual retreat centers are defined on the ground of the detail analysis of world and national experience.

Key words: spiritual retreat centers, principles of the architectural arrangement, sacral architecture, spirituality, religion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern society puts new requirements on the Church and the need to meet them leads to the appearance of new multi-functional sacral institutions - spiritual retreat centers, which in addition to the standard liturgical function, have a number of new social functions designed to provide recreational, leisure, charitable, educational and educational activities.

Spiritual retreat centers combine many functions, and are aimed at providing a proper spiritual, educational and housing environment. In fact, such centers would satisfy the needs of parishioners, pilgrims and tourists, as well as would help in the formation of deep religious consciousness and spirituality.

2. ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

The urgency of this research is caused by the lack of fundamental studies dedicated to the in-depth study of the principles of the internal arrangement of space of spiritual retreat centers. It is worth to use scientific works that develop this research partially.

In particular, the the phenomenon of spiritual exercises was investigated by William A. Barry, [13] Jones T. [12] The architectural organization of sacred space was outlined in the works of Stegers R. [10], Sovik E. A. [8] The architectural space of spiritual retreats was drawn by Robert J. Regalbuto [7], Richardson P. [6] and others.

Considering Ukrainian scientists it should be noted that Stotsko R.Z.[12] and Bulychova T.V. [1] analyze the appearance and development of spiritual centres, as well as their functional and space planning arrangement in their scientific researches.

Stepanova I.V. [11], Riaguzov M.V. [4], Fedotova L.A. [5], Proskuriakov V.I. [3] Plakhotna N.A. [2] investigated in their works the features of the appearance and principles of the formation of multi-functional spiritual educational and retreat centres.

Goal of research is profound analysis of the features of the formation of modern spiritual retreat centers and determination of the main principles of their architectural planning arrangement.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Religion is an important factor in the spiritual prosperity and self-affirmation of the nation, as well as social resource for the formation of the value orientation of society. Over the last years, there has been observed an intensification of the activities of Christian youth organizations throughout the country, the growth of the number of believers, the construction of temples and monasteries, where spirituality develops, the widespread opening of new institutions of Christian education, recreation and leisure. The appearance of the new building of the sacral type - the spiritual retreat centre - takes the pride place in this aspect.

In modern times, the spiritual retreat centre is considered as important multi-functional social institution, which, in addition to traditional spiritual and educational functions, has a number of new sociocultural functions. It is based on qualitatively new stage in the development of society. The main feature of the spiritual retreat centers is the possibility of obtaining spiritual healing and renewal through participation in Spiritual Exercises. The Spiritual Exercises are a compilation of meditations, prayers, and contemplative practices developed by St. Ignatius Loyola to help people deepen their relationship with God. The architecture of spiritual retreat centers is designed to provide comfortable staying and satisfy all the spiritual and social needs of a wide range of visitors - from deeply believing pilgrims, practicing parishioners to tourists, religious scholars, that pursuing exclusively cognitive purposes.

The architectural and spatial arrangement of the spiritual retreat centre is an integral structural system, and therefore requires deep and multi-method research and consideration of two important aspects - the stages of the formation of the space planning schemes, the theological-religious component and the symbolism of the sacral space.

The space planning structure of the spiritual retreat centers and the composition of the required functional groups of facilities determines a number of important criteria - typology, functional purpose and priority directions of activity, the location of the building in the structure of the settlement and the environment, the territorial capacity of the facility, its infrastructure and type of facilities, which influenced the choice of territory (temple, monastery, healing spring or the presence of the Miracle-working icon, etc.) as well as city-planning and architectural limitations. Such aspects are important to consider when designing the spiritual retreat centers.

In order to expand the palette of functional programs, it is important to provide a flexible planning structure that will allow changing the parameters of the facilities, isolating certain functional areas, dividing or combining the spaces depending on one or another type of activity. This also applies to existing monasteries, temples and spiritual centers. The appearance of new sociocultural functions will improve the architectural solutions of these facilities during their reconstruction and will create new facilities and elements of the infrastructure in accordance with modern requirements.

In the course of the research, a sociological poll of the clergy was held, during which it was discovered that the current state of the organization of spiritual retreat centers is unacceptable and needs substantial improvement. Among the main disadvantages was the lack or unsatisfactory condition of rooms, irrational functional and planning structure of existing establishments and primitive unattractive artistic and compositional solutions of buildings. The lack of research in this area determines the relevance of this study with the aim of improving the existing state of the architectural organization of spiritual retreat centers for Ukrainian experience.

According to the deep analysis of the world and ukrainian experience in architectural arrangement of institutions of this type, the following main trends and principles useful for the designers of the spiritual retreat centers were identified:

3.1. Principle of universality

It is proposed to make the architectural arrangement of spiritual retreat centre by reference to the multi-functionality of the institution, what will not only increase the attractiveness of this facility among a wide range of visitors, but also provide conditions for comfortable stay of people of different levels of religiosity. (fig.2) Such a multi-functional approach allows significantly to expand the cultural and leisure aspect of recreation and attract visitors with different goals and interests. [5] The basis of this principle is the creation of facilities with universal purpose, which when using the appropriate constructive means, can satisfy the various functional processes and ensure the adaptation of the structure to the new requirements of society. In addition, the principle of universality gives the architects a lot of opportunities for the implementation of unique architectural solutions.

3.2. Orientation to the spiritual component

The special content and specifics of spiritual retreat recreation require of the architects to observe certain canons and rules when arranging the architectural space of the spiritual retreat centers. (fig. 1) This approach allows the use of sacral symbols in the external and internal arrangement of building in order to spiritualize the space and create a proper atmosphere. In this aspect, the conventional complexes should be considered, on the territories of which the delicate regular monastery gardens with parterre flower garden and cozy areas for prayer quite time were formed. It is advisable to landscape the territory of the spiritual retreat centre in the similar style using the stylized modern features of the monas-

tery gardens. In landscaping it is worth to use iconic symbols, sculptures, small architectural forms.

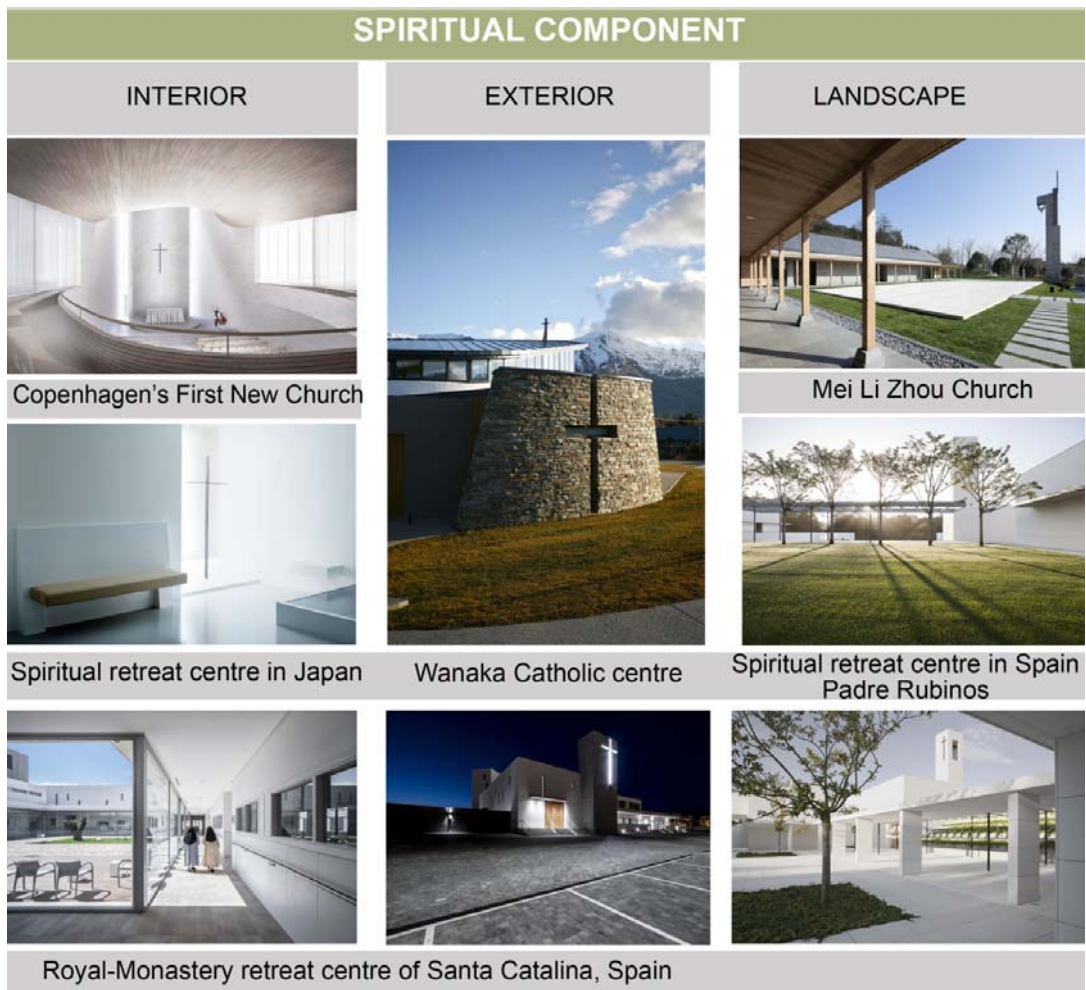


Fig. 1. Principle of orientation to the spiritual component. Source: [1]

3.3. Differentiation

Due to certain features of the functioning of the spiritual retreat centers, it is important to take into account the specifics of the various categories of visitors - from deeply believing pilgrims, practicing parishioners to tourists, religious scholars, that pursuing exclusively cognitive purposes. The latter have quite high demands on service and comfortable stay. For them, the spiritual component is not so much important as the richness of the functional program, the presence of various recreational attractions, museums, excursions and a fully developed infrastructure are. Unlike them, deeply believing visitors can be satisfied with a much lower level of service, but they pay attention to the spiritual and retreat atmosphere, adherence to church canons, opportunity to be alone, engage in missionary and charitable activities, talk with the confessor and receive spiritual healing. Therefore, in order to satisfy the needs of both categories of visitors it is necessary to differentiate the architectural space and provide comfortable conditions for stay of both groups. In this case, the building of the spiritual retreat centre is intended to satisfy not only the needs of the

spiritual direction, but also to become the center of healthy Christian recreation, leisure, communication, which is so necessary in modern demoralized society. Special attention in this aspect should be given to ensuring ergonomics and necessary comfortable conditions in such institutions for the unimpeded stay of persons with disabilities, who are also potential visitors to the spiritual retreat centers.

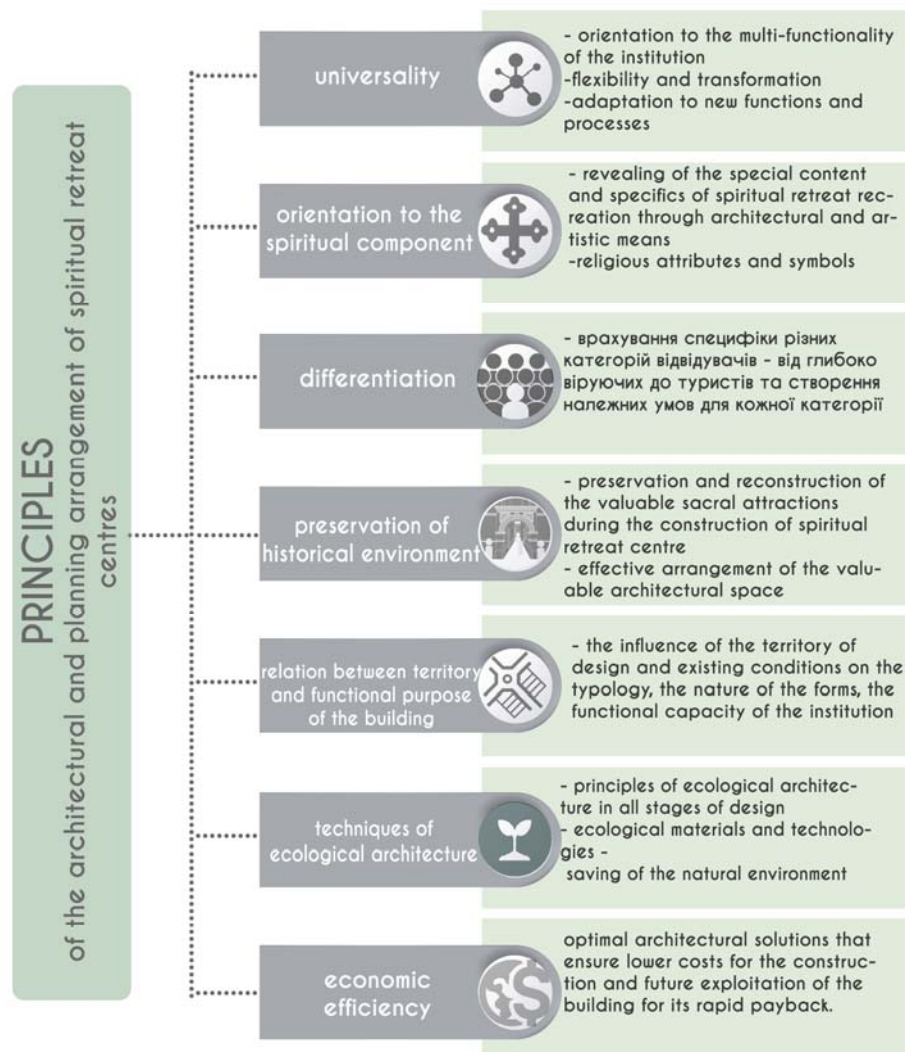


Fig. 2. Principles of the architectural and planning arrangement of spiritual retreat centers (author's proposal)

3.4. Preservation of valuable historical environment

Often the areas near valuable sacral monuments and religious buildings are the potential territories for the construction of spiritual retreat centre. (fig.3) Such approach has many advantages, both for the successful functioning of the spiritual retreat centre, and for the preservation of the existing sacral heritage. The architectural arrangement of the spiritual retreat centre on the basis of valuable sacral attractions will ensure the inclusion of attractions in the spiritual and cultural life of the people, which will attract funding for its preserva-

tion and reconstruction. The implementation of this principle will improve the existing environment of the attraction and expand and effectively arrange the architectural space for the various categories of visitors, as well as emphasize the unique spiritual, cultural and cognitive context of the place. However, in this case it is very important to follow all the norms and rules, without breaking the boundary of the guarded area of the attraction.

3.6. Relation between territory of design and functional purpose of the building

It is logical that the choice of the territory for the building of the spiritual retreat centre (near the historical sacral attraction, in the territory of the pilgrimage center outside the city or near the parish church in the central part of the settlement, etc.) determines the type of spiritual retreat centre, its functions and direction of activities. Therefore, having the appropriate territory, before starting the design, it is necessary thoroughly to analyze all factors - from the contingent of potential visitors to the functions that should be allocated to the future institution. This principle also determines the nature of forms of the building, its space compositional structure. After all, the architectural solution of the spiritual retreat centre in the central parts of cities, in the structure of street building should be subject to the appropriate stylistics of the existing status. Planning solution is also subject to the compact existing conditions. In spiritual retreat centers outside the city, the factors determining its character are the natural environment and the nature of the relief, which gives the architect much more opportunities and original architectural techniques.

3.8. Application of techniques of ecological architecture

The appearance of this principle is logical and necessary for architectural solutions of any type of buildings. The principles of ecological architecture help to minimize the devastating impact of the human factor on the environment and save the natural resources that are now in exhaustion.

This principle should be reflected at all stages - from the design stage (the choice of rational energy saving forms) to the implementation (application of the latest energy saving technologies and constructive solutions, selection of environmental building materials and related equipment) and further exploitation of the building. However, it should be mentioned that the use of this principle should be supported and encouraged at the state level, due to high prices for equipment that is producing alternative energy. The application of this approach will absolutely have a positive effect not only on the natural environment and the visitors themselves, but will also help to achieve a positive economic effect on saving money from electricity consumption.

The maximum ecological effect is achieved with the integrated application of the entire spectrum of principles of ecological architecture:

- arrangement of green roofs, greenhouses, greened courtyards, atriums
- vertical landscaping of the walls (both in the exterior and in the interior)
- use of ecological construction materials
- provision of natural ventilation and illumination of facilities
- harmonious combination with the forms of the natural landscape, inclusion of a natural component in the architectural solution of the building, etc. [8]

3.9. Economic efficiency

This principle is especially relevant for religious buildings and spiritual retreat centers. Indeed in general such facilities are build to funds of charitable contributions of parishioners and pilgrims. Sometimes, in the absence of public funding, the process of fund raising goes on decades. And that is why it should be provided the optimal architectural solutions that would ensure lower costs for the construction and future exploitation of the building for its rapid payback.

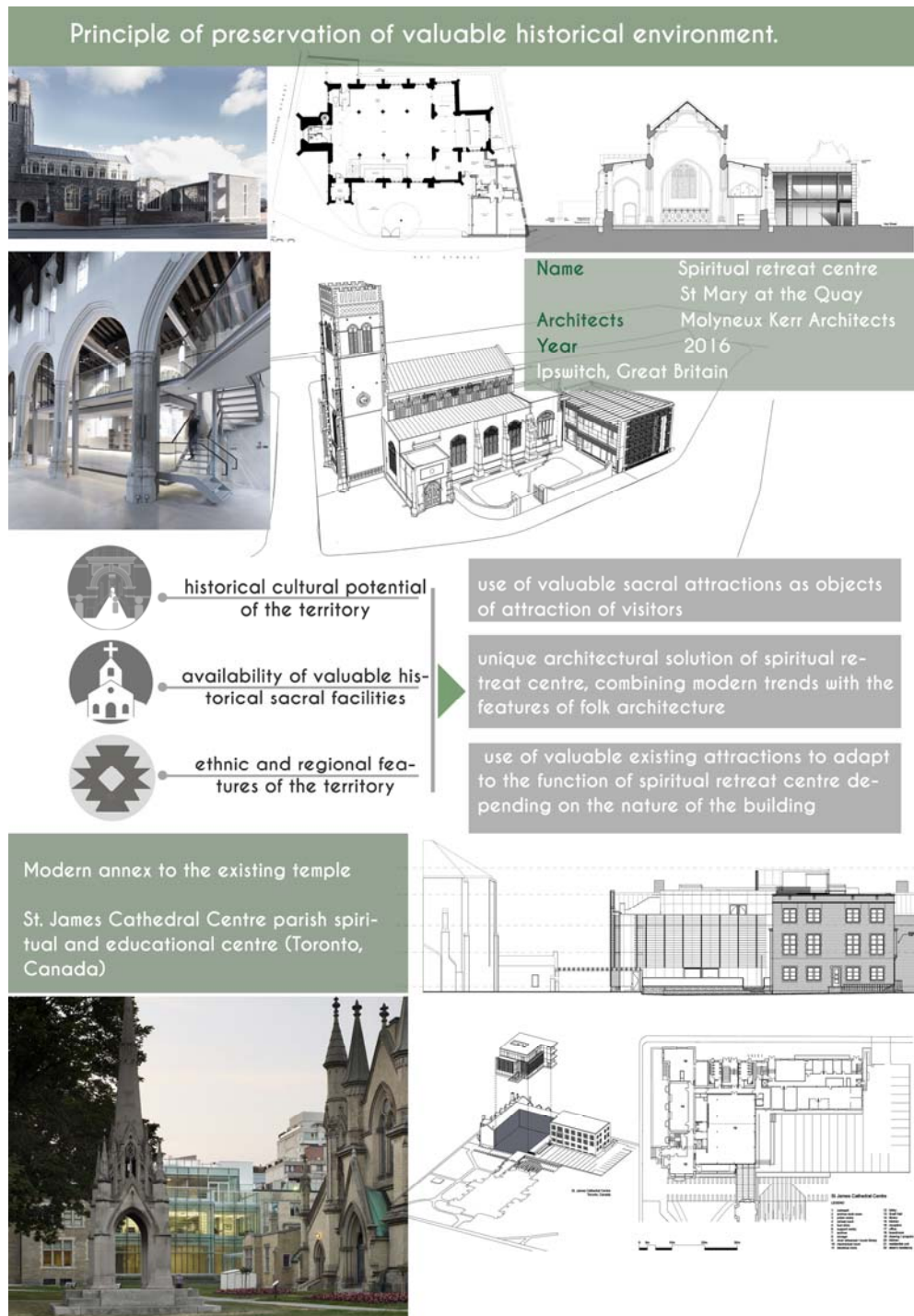


Fig. 3. Principle of preservation of valuable historical environment. Source: [1]

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the course of the study on the ground of the detail analysis of world and national experience the main tendencies and principles of the architectural and planning arrangement of spiritual retreat centers were defined. The results of the study can become an important stage for successful designing of buildings or reconstruction of existing buildings for the

performance of functions of the spiritual retreat centre. Determination of the main groups of facilities, their blocks and connections between them, as well as the integrated application of all of the above mentioned principles of architectural planning arrangement of spiritual retreat centre is a key to modern architectural solutions that are designed to fully meet the whole range of spiritual and social needs of modern society. The application of these principles of designing a public sacred space will have a good effect for the Ukrainian experience.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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