

# Recreation of a central element of the structure of spiritual buildings in Odesa – Transfiguration cathedral in 1991–2010

## Summary

The article presents the main stages of an outstanding lost object of Ukrainian cultural heritage recreation – Transfiguration cathedral in Odesa in 1999-2010.

Key words: spiritual structure of the city, lost object of cultural heritage, history of cathedral recreation

Odesa has always been an international city, it was being built by famous architects from various countries. Polish architects Felix Gonsiorowski, Mykola Tolwinski, Piotr Ambrozehewich, Lew Wlodek and others made a significant contribution into shaping the city construction. A lot of majestic buildings, which are now under state protection as architecture and city-planning monuments, were created by their projects and with their participation. The following three objects of spiritual purpose occupy special place among those buildings: Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary – the main Roman Catholic temple in Odesa (architects Francesco Morandi, Felix Gonsiorowski, second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century); Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle (architects A. Lewicks and K. Messner, beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century); St. Clement's Cathedral (architects Vladyslav Dombrovsky and Lew Wlodek, beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, destroyed in 1936).

They were a part of the construction network which formed the spiritual structure of Odesa at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The centre of this structure – Transfiguration Cathedral was founded at the same time as Odesa – in 1774 – and for over a hundred years was developing together with the city and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became the biggest cathedral of the North-Western Black Sea region – the centre of spiritual life for Odesa residents. Barbarously ruined in 1936, the Cathedral was reconstructed by the will and efforts of Odesa residents at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (pic. 2) without involvement of budgetary costs [1].

In 1991 I was teaching at Architecture faculty of Odesa Engineering and Construction institute. It was at that time that we conducted architectural search and started

developing the first version of recreating the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa project. Architectural measurements, done by Odesa Engineering and Construction institute students in 1936 under the supervision of an engineer F. Motsakov and available at that moment iconography from a number of sources in Odesa, Kyiv and Saint Petersburg served as the basis for developing the project.

At that time my friend and colleague V. Proskuriakov, who worked as a teacher at Architecture faculty of Lviv Polytechnic National University, came to Odesa. We visited Soborna square where the cathedral had been located before 1936, he got acquainted with historical documents with regards to ruined sacred place, supported the importance of the topic of recreating the main city cathedral and advised to study the aspect of its city-shaping role in the structure of spiritual buildings in Odesa on the basis of an architectural yantra method.

In March 1993 I prepared the first edition of grounding the need for recreating the cathedral where I framed the hypothesis that Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa was the central element of city structure and its sacred buildings (pic. 3) which created a peculiar network (pic. 4), covered Odesa and shaped the spirituality of its residents. Having lost a central element of this network – the Cathedral – the whole structure collapsed.

Recreation of a lost main cathedral of the city was expected to assist in revival of its residents' spirituality which, in its turn, would lead to improvement of Odesa residents' life quality. Moreover, geometrical analysis of significant buildings location regular-



ill. 1. The Cathedral after reconstruction, 1900-1903. From the archives of architect Volodymyr Meshcheryakov  
ill. 2. Cathedral's background lighting re-created, 2005. From the archives of architect Volodymyr Meshcheryakov



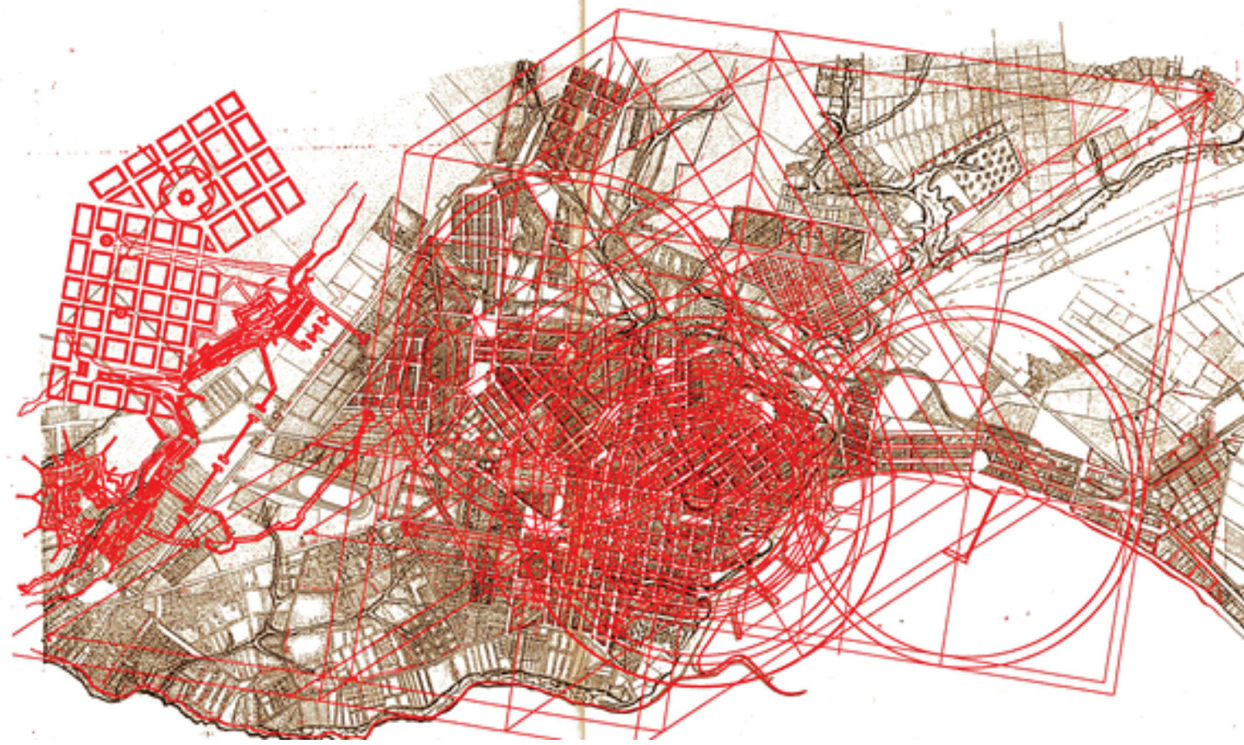
ill. 3. Mid-nineteenth century engraving remarking of the Cathedral's central role to Odesa's infrastructure. From the archives of architect Volodymyr Meshcheryakov

ity with Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa being a central element of the structure (pic. 4) could become the basis for choosing the locations of new sacred objects in the places of crossing the lines where similar buildings were absent. Therefore, the structure of significant buildings in Odesa could continue being sufficiently developed. The suggested scheme should be combined with geology data, tectonic and geographical features of city territory, it should use the data of psychics and folk

methods of identifying the "sacred places" what was not done by us at that time.

In 1994 my two diploma students Liudmyla Shamarina and Anna Yaroshenko, graduates of the Architecture faculty of Odesa Engineering and Construction institute (now Odesa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture), defended an integrated diploma project of recreating Odesa Transfiguration Cathedral which can be considered





ill. 4. Analysis of religious buildings exhibits geometrical consistent patterns establishing the Cathedral's central role (the Cathedral is missing). From the archives of architect Volodymyr Meshcheryakov

as the first version and the basis for our future projects on the main cathedral in the city.

Liudmyla Shamarina performed the city-planning part of an integrated project with arguments for the topicality and necessity of cathedral recreation as a lost central element of planning structure in Odesa, as its main city-planning dominant and as a centre of its spiritual life.

Known to us at that moment spiritual buildings, including orthodox and other religions, cathedrals, house churches, objects of various religions, comprising 86 objects together, were recorded on the city map. In that way we formed the basis of design and planning structure of Odesa with indicating the locations of spiritual buildings at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To the extent of its architectural development Odesa Transfiguration Cathedral was reflecting the development level of Odesa and the whole country. Being a small building at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it became one of the biggest cathedrals in Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Cathedral had room for up to 12 thousand people simultaneously and Soborna square became the main square in Odesa where all big city holidays and events started and took place. At all times the Cathedral was visited by such famous guests of Odesa as emperors, official and non-official figures, artists, travellers. In 2004 Bulgarian Prime Minister, tsar Simeon II of Bulgaria (as Bulgarian citizen – Simeon Borisov Saksoburggotski) with his wife visited the recreated cathedral; in 2005 it was the Chairman of the Council of Europe Parliament Assembly - René van der Linden with his wife.

The chronology of a real recreation of an outstanding lost monument of Ukraine – Odesa Transfiguration Ca-

thedral starts 23 April 1999 when the decree № 700 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine included the Cathedral at Soborna square in Odesa together with other lost unique objects into "The program of reconstruction of outstanding lost history and culture monuments of Ukraine". Afterwards in 1999 an all-Ukrainian competition was announced where our lost monument recreation project won. It was only a year later, at Christmas 2001, that the first part of building – the bell tower – was finished.

In 2001-2005 construction of the second part – Cathedral building – was done. In 2005 an Underneath temple (pic. 5) was consecrated with a name of a Sanctifier Innocentius (Borysov), whilst in 2006 Andriivskiy hall (refectory) of the Cathedral was consecrated. In 2005 the third part of construction was also finished – building of Utility place where gas boiler room, switch substation, underground toilets and other objects necessary for functioning of a modern cathedral were situated.

In 2010 the Upper temple was consecrated as well as the whole building of the cathedral.

While forming research and project documentation our priority was city-planning and environmental types of recreating the object as a lost valuable element of architecturally-historical environment. This type of recreation allows grounded changes to architecturally-planning or decorative-artistic solutions of the prototype with the aim of taking into consideration modern demands in a part of constructions, decorative materials, engineering support, fire safety regulations etc. Such approach is applied on valuable territories of historical inhab-



ill. 5. TheUnderneathTemple. 2005. From the archives of architect Volodymyr Meshcheryakov



ill. 6. The Upper Temple of the Transfiguration Cathedral. From the archives of architect Volodymyr Meshcheryakov

ited places with a special status, first and foremost in the places where it is necessary to recreate traditional character of historical environment of the most significant period in its development.

While designing research and project documentation for recreating the sacred place we had a task to design plans, proportions and silhouette of the building as precisely as possible, architectural decor of facades and interiors which would correspond to the parameters and appearance of an outstanding lost object of cultural heritage as closely as possible. For achieving this goal we have applied the comparison method of objective available information with project solutions, in particular – remains of historical foundations and iconography.

As for correspondence of plans project solutions for recreated cathedral to its ruined prototype, with the help of an electronic tacheometer we have conducted the measurements of bare foundations remains for comparing their metrical parameters with project solutions of the plans. Later, we have layered the developed by us project plan of the cathedral first floor on these measurements with its following adjustments according to foundation fragments silhouette of a historical building. That way we have achieved the correspondence between a recreated object and its ruined prototype on the plan.

In 2000 photogrammetric reconstruction of the cathedral bell tower facades was done, as a result of which high points of a designed object were identified precisely, in particular – cathedral bell tower spire. Its height at the point of a cross reached 77 meters, not 75,7 meters as it was measured before destroying the cathedral in 1936 by the students of Odesa Engineering and Construction institute under the supervision of an engineer F.V. Motsakov [2].

On the basis of designed and agreed in established order documentation the first part – the bell tower – was

built in 2000. While comparing the available height parameters of a constructed bell tower, project solutions have been corrected in a number of height marks of the Cathedral.

The history of my personal participation in reconstruction of Transfiguration cathedral in Odesa consists of five main stages:

1. Collection of initial data, under my supervision development of a complex diploma project at the architecture faculty of Odesa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture (1993), its finishing to the stage of a sketchy project and defense at city building board of architecture management and city planning of Odesa city council (1994-1995);
2. Designing a competition project and victory at an open all Ukrainian competition concerning reconstruction of an outstanding lost monument – Transfiguration cathedral in Odesa (1999);
3. Designing a sketchy project and its defense at scientifically-methodical council of State building of Ukraine (1999-2003);
4. Making work documentation and building the cathedral complex (1999-2005);
5. Designing interior projects of the underneath and upper temples of the cathedral, Andriivskiy hall (refectory), christening rooms and their implementation (2003-2010).

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