

## THE ROLE OF OPEN-AIR CALVARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF LANDSCAPE HERITAGE PROTECTION OF THE EASTERN SUDETES

Janusz ŁACH<sup>id</sup>

Department of Regional Geography and Tourism, Institute of Geography and Regional Development Wrocław University,  
Wrocław, Poland, e-mail: janusz.lach@uwr.edu.pl

Aneta MAREK<sup>\*id</sup>

Department of Regional Geography and Tourism, Institute of Geography and Regional Development Wrocław University,  
Wrocław, Poland, e-mail: aneta.marek@uwr.edu.pl

---

**Citation:** Łach, J., & Marek, A. (2024). THE ROLE OF OPEN-AIR CALVARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF LANDSCAPE HERITAGE PROTECTION OF THE EASTERN SUDETES. *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 53(2), 489–501. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.53212-1224>

---

**Abstract:** The article concerns the meaning and landscape functions of Small Calvaries located in the Eastern Sudetes in the border area of the Czech Republic and Poland. The publication aims to indicate the main typological features of this type of calvary, taking into account the current behaviour of residents having a common sarcastic heritage. Due to the subject, interdisciplinary research was undertaken in the direction of valorization as well as environmental interviews. The use of geo-sociological methodology made it possible to assess the landscape in terms of its contemporary functions and potential threats. The research allowed us to distinguish two types of landscape layouts: elliptical and linear of a historical nature, and modern, mainly linear. Sociological research showed the attitude of local communities to the sacred heritage in the Eastern Sudetes.

**Keywords:** Europe, the Eastern Sudetes, sacral landscape, little calvaries

\* \* \* \* \*

### INTRODUCTION

Calvaries, or groups of churches or chapels symbolising the stations of the Passion, were usually founded on hills to resemble Jerusalem. They were intended to represent the Passion path walked by Jesus Christ in Jerusalem on his way to Golgotha for crucifixion. This path is further enriched by stages such as the Cenacle, the Garden of Olives, the capture, the trials conducted by the Jewish high priests and the chapels commemorating the events after Jesus' death: the Resurrection, the Ascension and Pentecost. The first Calvary was established in Córdoba, Spain, in 1405, followed by Italy and Germany at the end of the 15th century. Today, there are around 708 calvaries of various types in Europe, ranging from Great Calvaries, through Little Calvaries known as open-air calvaries, monastic calvaries, church calvaries and cemetery calvaries. Calvaries began to appear in the Polish landscape in the 17th century. The first one is considered to be Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, representing the Great Calvary type. It was established in 1602 on the initiative of Mikołaj Zebrzydowski on Góra Żar (Mt Żar) in Pogórze Wielickie (Wielickie Foothills). Since 1999, it has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Over a period of 400 years, 29 Great Calvaries were built in Poland. They were often founded on the initiative of magnates or wealthy monasteries. The foundation trend also emerged among less wealthy local landowners or ambitious parish priests. From the 18th century onwards, they led to the appearance of less grandiose so-called Little Calvaries ('open-air calvaries'), usually limited to outdoor Stations of the Cross with a few chapels.

These open-air calvaries, with their elaborate symbolism and sophisticated artistic expression often alluding to a folk (local) style, were often erected as votive offerings for favours received, becoming witnesses to the history of the local community. Due to their religious importance of 'untouchability', they became guardians of the past - connecting the landscapes of distant and contemporary times, defining this little-known European cultural heritage.

It is the Little Calvaries, therefore, that have become the focus of this article in a landscape-cultural context in order to protect these unique, distinctive architectural and landscape settings in the European territory. Little Calvaries from the area of the Polish part of the Eastern Sudetes, an area of exceptional dynamics of historical, cultural, social and religious changes occurring during the 16th - 20th centuries, was selected as a case study (Figure 1).

Centuries-old processes of urbanisation, industrialisation and agricultural intensification changed the landscape structure of the region, which was resisted only by enclaves of sacral landscapes as sacred "untouchable" sites. These landscapes, through the Landscape Convention adopted by the countries of the European Union in 2000, became the object of protection of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to the consolidation of European identity. Referring to the general principles of the Convention, a typology of landscapes for the area of Poland was developed in 2015 by Chmielewski et al. (2015) for the purpose of implementing landscape management policy. In this study, the Calvary landscapes, mainly those of the Great Calvaries, were classified as suburban and residential landscapes with the subtype of large-scale sacral complexes,

---

\* Corresponding author

historically conditioned, constituting a forest-water-agricultural-settlement spatial composition without a clear definition of the landscape background. However, the aforementioned typology ignored the landscape essence of the Little Calvaries.

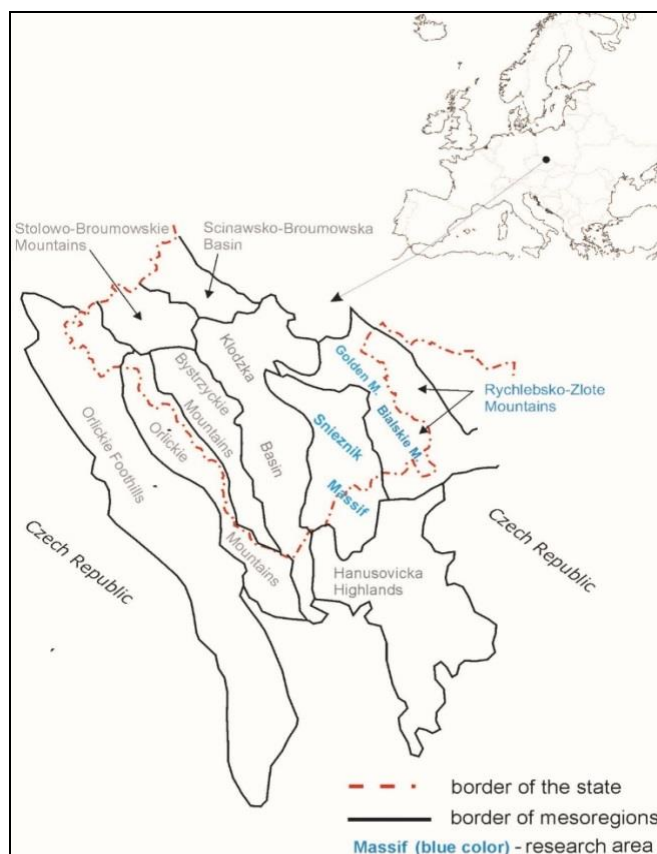


Figure 1. Location of the study area - location map of the Eastern Sudetes together with part of the Central Sudetes (Source: Rozenkiewicz and Łach, 2012)

The sacral landscape of the little calvaries of the Eastern Sudetes constitutes an interesting (niche) research theme, due to the nature of the religious-political-social-historical changes that took place during the 17th to 21st centuries. Given the numerous traces of human activity in the landscape of the Sudetes, it is worth noting that sacred buildings, including calvary buildings, are one of the dominant features of the mountain space. The undertaken research of landscape and cultural analyses on the preservation of unique calvary landscapes of the Polish part of the Eastern Sudetes requires from the authors a holistic research approach, i.e. determining the authenticity of individual components of the environment while preserving the specific features of the cultural landscape.

These components determine its unique character, making people identify with the essence of the place - the "genus loci". In the scientific literature, the Little Calvaries of the analysed area constitute a niche theme and are described rather rarely. So far, these sites have been the subject of interest of only a small number of landscape experts, while in the sphere of scientific research they remain a typical "terra incognita". The issue of calvarial complexes in the literature has been dealt with by Čičo (1992, 1998), Jackson and Henrie (1983), Liutikas (2015), Vaisvilaite (2002). Among Polish researchers, the interpretation and definition of sacral vs. religious landscapes and their functions is still under discussion by Jackowski (1999), Mitkowska (2003), Myga-Piątek (2012) and Andrejczuk (2013).

### AIMS

As a result of the conducted research, the authors set themselves the goal of supplementing the above typology of calvary landscapes in Poland and the Czech Republic in the cross-border zone, with the landscape type of open-air calvaries created outside or in close proximity to rural settlement units.

To achieve the goal, the authors set themselves several research tasks, including:

- carrying out an inventory and description of complexes of Calvary open-air museums in the Polish and Czech part of the Eastern Sudetes in terms of historical knowledge (review of source materials constituting a publication niche), architecture and art history, as well as geographical and landscape knowledge (morphological location, exposure of slopes, their coverage, number of objects included in the calvary complex). The inventory takes into account their state of preservation and their functions. The task is to identify the characteristic typological features of open-air calvary landscapes
- the so-called small calvary of mountain areas through the analysis carried out using the methods of Sowińska (2012) and Myga-Piątek (2007), modified to determine the identity and landscape values as well as sacral calvary in the open air (Figure 2);
- assessment of landscapes of small calvaries to identify possible cultural and social threats to their protection;
- defining the role of the local community in the implementation and monitoring of the landscape policy;

- determination of the state of implementation of the landscape policy of the European Landscape Convention by the administrative authorities of the areas where complexes of open-air calvaries are located, representing landscapes of cultural and historical value.

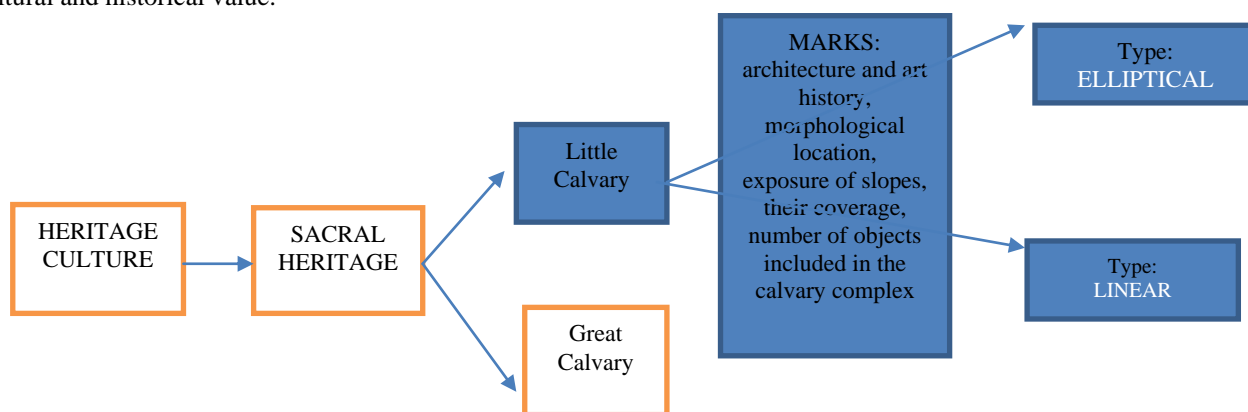


Figure 2. Main stages leading to the development of the typology of Little Calvary in mountain areas

**METHODS**

Finally, it is considered important to attempt to develop a methodologically and tool-wise universal research toolkit that will enable similar work to be undertaken in the neighbouring regions of the Sudetes, including in the cross-border area. The following methods were important for the realisation of the research tasks: field survey of the Little Calvaries located in the Eastern Sudetes conducted in 2022 and 2023, which made it possible to obtain important documentary and descriptive information (topographic position of the founding of the complexes, land cover, historical information, state of preservation). For a more complete description, metrical documentation of the elements forming a given calvary complex was made, enriched with photographic documentation. The method of survey of sources and scientific materials concerning the research problem and the subject of the study was also applied (Figure 3).

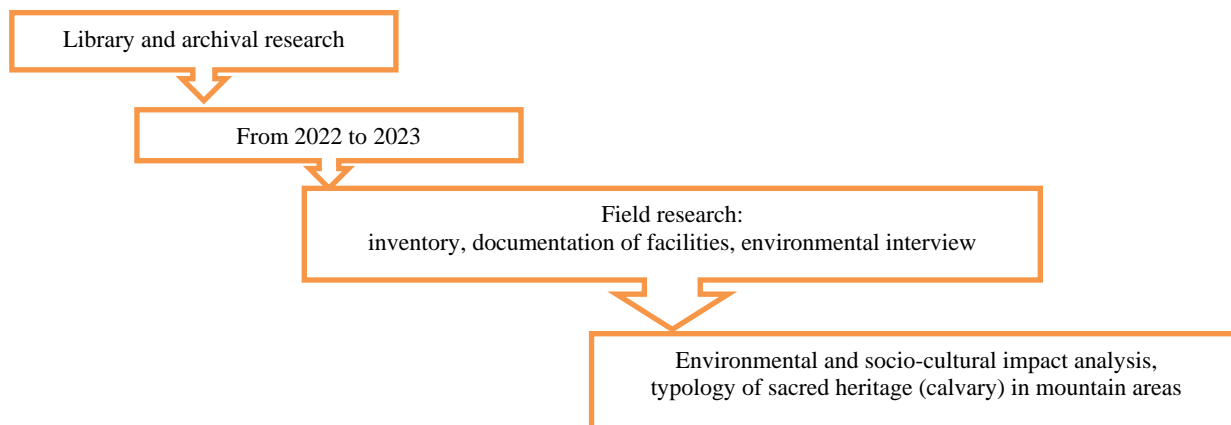


Figure 3. The main steps of methodology

To valorise the aesthetic, cognitive and spiritual values, a method of distinguishing tangible and intangible identifications of sacral landscapes, modified for the purposes of the research, was used, applied among others by Sowińska (2012) and Myga-Piątek (2007) based on a free-form community interview with visitors to the studied sites. In order to obtain data on the implementation of the principles of the European Landscape Convention by the administrative units of the study area, a targeted community interview was conducted with persons responsible for spatial management and observance of landscape policy in the district centres of Stronie Śląskie, Bystrzyca Kłodzka and Złoty Stok of the administrative area where the studied open-air calvaries are located.

**LITERATURE RESEARCH**

**Historical background of the foundation of open-air calvaries in the Kłodzko Land from the 17th to the 21st century**

The Eastern Sudetes region, as a physical-geographical unit, is historically assigned to the region known as the Kłodzko Land or Kłodzko County. The 16th century in Europe was a time of development and flourishing of the new Reformation currents initiated by Martin Luther (1483-1546). The preaching of the so-called "pure gospel" developed rapidly gaining adherents known as Protestants, who stood in opposition to the Roman Catholic denomination. The year 1524 was the date of the emergence of Protestantism in Lower Silesia, initiated by the von Dokna family living in Góra Śląska (Wiszewski, 2006). Protestantism appeared in the Kłodzko area seven years later in 1531 thanks to Jan von Bernstein, who pushed the Roman Catholic Church out of the region between 1531 and 1548. In the history of the Reformation period, an important episode was the Peace of Augsburg concluded in 1555, which stabilised religious life,

among others through the principle "cuius regio, eius religio", thanks to which the secular authorities could impose their religion on their subjects. For Protestants, this peace guaranteed freedom of worship within the authorities accepting the new religion, while Catholics were protected from the expansion of new faiths. The Habsburgs in charge of Lower Silesia in the 16th century - Ferdinand I Habsburg (1503-1564) and later his son Maximilian II (1527-1576) - initially applied a policy of moderate religious tolerance if it did not harm the foundations of the religious and social order. The result of such a policy was the fully peaceful Protestantisation of Silesia. Wiszewski (2006) estimates that in about 1570 almost 90% of the population opted for Lutheran teaching, which was observed in 1500 churches in the region.

This situation, however, began to change in the 1580s, when the Habsburgs began to build a state of strong imperial power supported by Catholicism. The attitude to the political direction taken was that 'Catholicism equals loyalty' whereas the followers of M. Luther were seen as potential rebels. This conviction became the basis for a complex current of change called confessionalisation, whose significant impetus for the approach became the findings of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Relative tolerance was short-lived, because already in the 1590s the Kłodzko region experienced recatholisation. The process of the return of the Catholic faith in the region was initiated by King Rudolf II (1552-1612), and its executors were the Jesuits residing in the college established in 1597 in Kłodzko (Lec, 2020).

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) also had a negative impact on the religious situation in the Kłodzko area. After its end, as a result of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the Emperor of Austria had the right to take over the hereditary property of Protestant churches taken from Catholics in the 16th century. However, the process of taking over churches and the growing recatholisation movement had already begun earlier in 1621 under the so-called Dresden Accord. By virtue of it, the emperor undertook to treat the Protestant population more leniently and to allow freedom of Lutheran confession (Harasimowicz, 2010). An exceptional county that did not conform to the arrangements of the Dresden Peace was the County of Kłodzko. Various repressive measures were applied against Protestants, Protestant clergy and teachers were expelled and their properties were confiscated forcing them to emigrate (Mazurski 1994-1996).

Between 1625 and 1626, almost the entire Protestant population of the Kłodzko area was induced to adopt the Catholic faith. A significant role in the process of religious change was played by the Jesuits, who gathered around them numerous followers through enriching the liturgy with singing, organising concerts, enriching and beautifying churches with frescoes of biblical themes, sculptures of saints, and most importantly, in the process of convincing people to the religion with education. Education became an important element of social and religious life among the wealthy inhabitants. It was due to them, among others, that the founding of calvary complexes of the New Jerusalem type was initiated by, among others, Daniel Paschasiusz von Osterberg in 1683 in Wambierzyce.

In the following 18th and 19th centuries, foundations of little calvaries by wealthy landowners or parish priests residing in the Kłodzko area took place. As a result of the Silesian Wars of 1740-1763, King Frederick II the Great took Silesia from Austria, and the County of Kłodzko became part of the administrative boundaries of Silesia. Through Article 6 of the Berlin Peace Treaty, the Catholic denomination in the Kłodzko County was granted inviolability, and ecclesiastical authority over the diocese was exercised by the Archbishop of Prague. The King of Prussia, on the other hand, undertook to maintain the status quo for the Catholic Church, preserving its possession status with regard to church buildings, the parish network and the existence of religious orders (Wąs, 2002).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Contemporary structure and function of "Little Calvaries" in the landscape of the Polish and Czech Eastern Sudetes

Of the many types of cultural landscape, the sacral landscape occupies an important place, encompassing a category of things and activities set apart by a particular community as sacred and therefore subject to religious veneration. The act of setting apart refers to the power of God and is intended to lead to the isolation of places dedicated for God for the purpose of worshipping him in order to evoke religious experiences (Jackowski et al., 1999). A landscape characterised by the presence in space of the sacred based on hierophany<sup>1</sup> or the manifestation of the sacred becomes the spirit of the place - *genius loci* (Park, 2003; Eliade, 2020). Sacral landscapes constitute a unique identity of place, infused with the spirit of place are mostly rooted in a non-material dimension, yet often combined with symbolism. However, the influence of the religion professed by a given society (civilisation) through material goods sets its spatial boundaries (Holly, 2014).

Sacral landscapes, especially outdoor ones, are an expression of the harmonious relationship between content and form against a natural background. Nowadays, however, they are subjected to increasing pressure to abandon them, but also to renew them often without preserving their historical-architectural context, introducing disharmonious elements not directly related to the Calvary content, e.g. Lourdes grottoes, sculptures of contemporary saints. Modern reconstructions of ancient sacral landscapes seek to define and enrich the unique heritage of the region shaped over the centuries by successive national, ethnic or religious changes, and now by the emerging identity and sense of a 'Little Homeland' among local people. Each object of worship located in a specific natural and cultural space is the basis defining the identity of a place as a human-determined landscape interior (Myczkowski, 2009). In the Christian tradition, the harmonious landscape of a calvary is the result of a centuries-old tradition of managing and transforming the environment, and is treated as human's participation in the work of creation (Plit, 2012). The elements conditioning the location of a calvary and thus defining its boundaries in a specific place are: the nature of the environment, historical, socio-economic conditions, cultural and architectural traditions, system of beliefs and rituals. According to

<sup>1</sup> According to Eliade (2020), hierophany confronts us with a historical document by manifesting itself in a specific historical situation through symbols (in relation to hierophanies defined as coherence). The function of the symbol is of exceptional importance for the magico-religious human experience.

Mitkowska (2003), the topography of a place played an overriding role in the location of a calvary. It often favoured the creation of a spontaneous Jerusalem landscape area. Pilgrimage stations and prayer routes were created with the participation of wealthy founders, following the example of the largest European calvaries. In the process of calvary locating in the natural-cultural landscape, according to Andrejczuk (2013), the boundaries are determined to a large extent by the function or function spectrum of intentional human activities.

This landscape is a natural and anthropogenic system, the main component of which is nature with its elements of the natural environment and the man. It is the human being who is responsible for the character of the functions depending on the objectives he or she sets for the landscape. The research problem undertaken is based on the ten functions of landscape analysis of Little Calvary presented by Andrejczuk (2013) paying attention to: spatial function, i.e. the provision of space, cognitive function, which enables education and development of man expanding their horizons of knowledge about humankind, the environment and relationships, sacral function, which satisfies needs of a higher order (spiritual) and aesthetic function, which provides aesthetic sensations and experiences necessary for their spiritual and moral development.

The word calvary refers to a complex of churches and chapels symbolising the successive stages of Christ's Passion. It defines the spatial arrangement of religious buildings in such a way that they can fulfil the function of a copy of Jerusalem, i.e. the place associated with the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. The creation of ideal copies of the Jerusalem landscape was typical of the period from the 15th to the 18th century, when Great Calvaries of the New Jerusalem type were created (Bilska-Wodecka, 2003). In the Middle Ages, magnates who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land often erected chapels in their estates, referring to the Jerusalem prototypes, with the approval of the church or monastery authorities. Most of the believers could not afford to make the trip to Jerusalem, and so visiting the so-called 'sham' path of the Passion became an alternative to obtaining religious indulgences. In the following centuries, this symbolism began to lose its significance through, among other things, the architectural and landscape form manifested in the erection of a more modest, open-air Stations of the Cross, the so-called Little Calvary, usually consisting of 14 elements (Bilska-Wodecka, 2003).

The open-air Little Calvaries, symbolising the Stations of the Cross of Jesus Christ, in the area of the Polish part of the Eastern Sudetes are represented by 9 complexes with diverse locational, architectural and compositional features, determining religious and pilgrimage identity, as well as sensory and emotional identity, placed against a forest, meadow and settlement landscape (Table 1).

Table 1. Typological features defining landscape and sacral identity of Little Calvaries in the area of Eastern Sudetes  
(Source: own study based on field research using the method of Sowińska, 2012)

LP.	Location	Region	Natural context	Historical context	Architectural form and composition	Religious form of use	State of preservation	Legibility and openness	Uniformity
1.	Młynowiec Photo A Figure 4	Góry Bialskie (Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains)	S-W slopes of Gologóra 997 m, heights 630-700 m, along the Młynówka stream. The area is covered with coniferous forests. 50.277203N 16.9091853E	No source data	14 concrete crosses, diameter 47 cm by 90, on a sandstone pedestal 46x47x23 cm. The numbers of the Stations of the Cross are carved on the crosses.	No	Bad	Low degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.
2.	Bolesławów „Suszyca” Photo B Figure 4	Góry Bialskie (Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains)	W slope of Suszyca at altitude 720-800 m. Valley of an unnamed stream (initial valley - episodically drained). The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.2484374N 16.9046247E	19th/20th century. A votive offering by a resident of Bolesławów for the return of his sons from the First World War.	14 wooden Stations of the Cross, 80-125 cm high. Chapel form with painting (34x25 cm) and lower information plaque (28x20x3cm). Stone grotto of Our Lady (folk character)	Yes	Very good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, graphic, colour uniformity of the Stations of the Cross maintained. The disharmony of the Little Calvary is the stone Grotto of Our Lady.
3.	Stary i Nowy Gierałtów Photo C Figure 4	Góry Złote (Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains)	S slopes of Szewczyk 753 m and SW slopes of Czernik 832 m. The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.3039480N 16.9660449E	New Stations of the Cross since 2007.	14 wooden crosses with station numbers. The crosses are 200-230 cm high, 120 cm wide and have double alternating numbering with the same motif of Christ carrying the cross. An earlier model of the Calvary cross stands by the church in Stary Gierałtów.	Yes	Very good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Forest and meadow complex does not limit openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.

4.	Bolesławów „Ogrójec” Photo D Figure 4	Góry Bialskie (Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains)	N slopes of Zawada 778 m ("Skalska Kopa") + anthropogenic Gorge. The area is covered by a forest-meadow habitat. 50.2521685N 16.8905461E	Year 1833 Author unknown	Stone cross 63x168 cm on a stone mound 135 cm high, the Garden of Olives includes 4 sandstone sculptures - apostles John (130 cm long), Peter (140 cm), James (104 cm), Angel (82 cm), Jesus (116 cm). There are 3 stone crosses on the path to the Garden of Olives.	Yes	Very good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Forest and meadow complex does not limit openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.
5.	Radochów "Cierniak" Photo E Figure 4	Góry Złote (Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains)	S slopes and E ridge of Cierniak 591 m. The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.3538469N 16.8207765E	Year 1836 Founder Anton Wachsmann	The complex is formed by 216 steps, along which there are 3 stone crosses + two plaques with caravaca. At the top there are 14 brick stations in the form of edicules (320x107 cm), a chapel from 1857, and 2 statues (of Roch + Francis), a field altar and a grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes.	Yes	Very good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits the openness of the form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of the Stations of the Cross maintained. The sculptures of the two saints and the field altar together with the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes are disharmonious elements.
6.	Złoty Stok Photo F Figure 4	Góry Złote (Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains)	Góra Krzyżowa 489 m. The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.4371549N 16.8700057E	Author Sigmundt Kahler, 1792/ Maria Schramm 1856	14 stone Stations of the Cross lead around the summit with St. Anne's Chapel and a stone cross on a pedestal.	Yes	Good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.
7.	Stary Waliszów Photo G Figure 4	The Krowiarek Range - Masyw Śnieżnika (The Śnieżnik Massif)	Żelazne Góry - summit of Krzyżowa 508 m. The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.3337100N 16.6983926E	Year 1736 Founder Count von Oppersdorf as a votive offering for the healing of his daughter.	Baroque Chapel of the Holy Cross, surrounded by 14 stone (sandstone) crosses (52 wide, 187 high), at the intersection of the arms there are boards 63x47 with images of Calvary events. Cross on pedestal 78x80. Crosses 15-50 m. apart.	Yes	Good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.
8.	Międzygórze „Maria Śnieżna” Photo H Figure 4	Masyw Śnieżnika (The Śnieżnik Massif)	Igliczna ridge 845 m in E direction. The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.2410229N 16.74833354E	Year 1781	14 stone (sandstone 74x197 cm) Passion Crosses on stone pedestals. At the intersection of the arms a metal plaque (78x45 x5 cm) with a bas-relief. The Stations of the Cross are accompanied by the Stations of the Rosary + the Church of Our Lady Cause of Our Joy.	Yes	Very good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.
9.	Marianówka Photo I Figure 4	Masyw Śnieżnika (The Śnieżnik Massif)	S slopes of Trzy Kopki 750 m. The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.2505563N 16.7450792E	Year 2009	14 wooden carved Stations of the Cross. The stations measure 55x245cm.	Yes	very good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.
10.	Travna Photo J Figure 4	Góry Złote (Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains)	S slopes of Lisci Skala 500 m. The area is covered by mixed forest 50.3767360N 16.9287515E	1894	There are 14 neogothic, brick stations in the form of edicules.	Yes	Very good	High degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.

11.	Stribnic e Photo K Figure 4	Masyw Śnieżnika (The Śnieżnik Massif)	S_E slopes of Dzi- czy Grzbiet 750 m. The area is covered by mixed forest. 50.1838888N 16.8987322E	1887	There were 14 brick stations in the form of chapels.	No	Bad	Low degree of expressiveness of the space allowing it to be defined. Dense tree cover limits openness of form.	Structural, architectural, colour uniformity of Stations of the Cross maintained.
-----	--------------------------------------	---	---	------	--	----	-----	---	---



Figure 4. Sites of Little Calvaries in the Eastern Sudetes: A – Młynowiec, B – Bolesławów „Suszyca”, C - Bolesławów „Ogrójec”, D - Stary Gieraltów – Nowy Gieraltów, E – Radochów „Cierniak”, F – Złoty Stok, G - Stary Waliszów, H – Międzygórze „Maria Śnieżna”, I – Marianówka, J – Travna, K - Stribnice (Source: Authors)

The identification of diagnostic features for the Little Calvaries on the basis of a field survey and a source materials research allowed for a typological historical-architectural-landscape analysis. All sites were built between 1736 and 2009, most of them as thanksgiving votive offerings of local leaders, i.e. wealthy landowners or priests. Four cases out of nine have relevant documents. The calvaries were located outside the boundary of the built-up area, in the mountainous terrain of the following mountain ranges: the Rychlebsko-Złote Mountains band the Śnieżnik Massif (three sites per each), at altitudes ranging from 500 to 845 m above sea level.

What draws attention is the exposure of the sites, which were built mainly on south-western and southern slopes (which accounts for 67%), less frequently on north-eastern slopes (33%). The consideration of SW and S exposure may have been important due to the length of time the slope was illuminated and heated, allowing the snow cover to melt more quickly, especially during the Easter (early spring) period - this applies mainly to the youngest calvaries. On the other hand, the location of the calvaries in Radochów or Międzygórze, the oldest complexes was conditioned by the theological assumptions, i.e. the orientation of the complexes eastwards - towards Jerusalem (Figure 5).

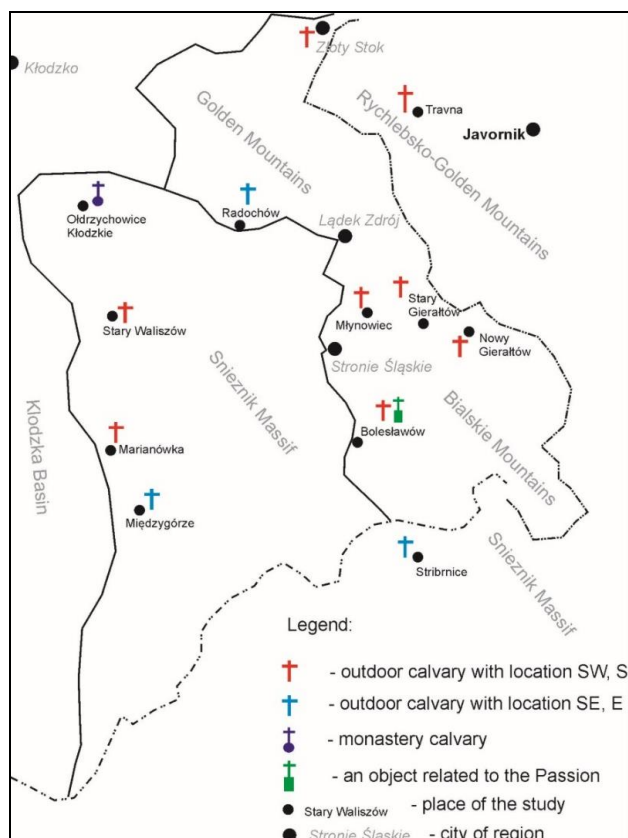


Figure 5. Location of Little Calvaries in the area of the Polish and Czech (cross-border zone) Eastern Sudetes (Source: own study)

Landscape background for the calvaries is spruce forests or mixed forests. Exceptions are the "Ogrójec" (Garden of Olives) calvary in Bolesławów and in Stary and Nowy Gierałtów, where the background is forest-meadow complexes.



Figure 6. Radochów Cierniak - example of closed (elliptical) arrangements of open-air calvaries. Visible brick edicules located around the Chapel of Our Lady Help of the Faithful



Figure 7. The Chapel of the Holy Cross with the surrounding Stations of the Cross on Hill of the Cross (Source: Authors)



Due to the dense ground cover, this woodland limits the openness of the form giving an impression of neglect, but also a unique mysticism. Stone was the most commonly used building material. Sandstone, a raw material commonly found in the Sudetes, was used for the construction of four structures. Wood was used for the construction of three calvaries: in Marianówka, Bolesławów "Suszyca" and Stary and Nowy Gierałtów, while only in one case in Radochów was brick used. The compositional layout of the discussed objects is varied. Most often it takes the form of linear sequences e.g. in: Marianówka, Stary and Nowy Gierałtów, in Międzygórze on Igliczna, on Młynowiec on Travna or on Stribrnice, but there are also forms taking the shape of an ellipse, e.g. in Radochów (Figure 6), Bolesławów "Suszyca", Stary Waliszów or Złoty Stok. Among the architectural forms of the analysed objects we can distinguish **crosses and edicules**<sup>2</sup>, the latter being characteristic for Złoty Stok, Radochów and Marianówka, **churches** in Międzygórze, Stary and Nowy Gierałtów (from which the Stations of the Cross begin and end), **chapels** in Radochów, Stary Waliszów (Figure 7), **grottoes** of Our Lady of Lourdes in Bolesławów "Suszyca" (Figure 8), Radochów and Travna. The architectural form of stone or wooden crosses is further complemented by stone reliefs in Międzygórze or paintings in Stary Waliszów, Bolesławów "Suszyca", Stary and Nowy Gierałtów. The most recent architectural form of the Stations of the Cross, is represented by the wooden "edicules" - chapels with reliefs in Marianówka (Figure 4I). The architectural form is typical of Little Calvaries, which presents the content of the Passion in a simple way. All objects represent purity and legibility of form.



Figure 8. Bolesławów "Suszyca" - Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes as a new (contemporary) element of the open-air calvary



Figure 9. Stary Gierałtów - landscape of the Stations of the Cross with a single element representing its spatial extent

Another distinctive feature of the material identity of the sacral landscapes of the Little Calvaries of the Sudetes is the religious and historical-social context, which refers to the counter-reformation movement that influenced the religiousness of the area's inhabitants with the help of the Jesuits between the 17th and 19th centuries. Nowadays, the Roman Catholic parishes, or more precisely the inhabitants themselves, gathered around the resident priest, are responsible for the state of preservation and religious functions. The sites are still places for meditating on the Passion of Christ in the vicinity of the natural landscape, emphasising the spiritual aspect. All the sites analysed have a sacral function although the state of preservation varies. The best preserved calvaries are located in Międzygórze, Marianówka, Radochów, Bolesławów "Suszyca" and "Ogrójec" and Złoty Stok. Neglected Stations of the Cross can be seen in Młynowiec and Stribrnice. Unfortunately, not all objects represent the completeness of the original structure.

An example of a damaged calvary is Bolesławów "Ogrójec". There, only three crosses are visible, which lead to the prayer complex in the Garden of Olives. Most of the sites show no disintegrating elements in the space, with the exceptions of the sites in Bolesławów, Radochów and Międzygórze, where other religious contents such as grottoes of the Virgin Mary or sculptures of saints have been added to the calvary complexes. The calvaries retain their integrity of style, form, colour and the materials from which they are made (an exception may be the Stations of the Cross at Młynowiec, where the missing, former stone crosses have been replaced with concrete ones).

In the landscape of the Eastern Sudetes, only one calvary represents spatial extensiveness. It is the Stations of the Cross, which connects the two villages of Stary Gierałtów and Nowy Gierałtów over a distance of approximately 4 km (Figure 9). The other calvaries represent openness within sight. In the case of the damaged calvary in Bolesławów, there are no clear and sharp boundaries for the establishment of the form, apart from the Prayer of the Garden of Olives.

In addition to material distinctions, it is worth noting the subject of non-material distinctions, which also played a significant role in the formation of sacral landscapes. The establishment of complexes of little calvaries was largely due to the various events faced by the inhabitants of neighbouring villages. Most calvaries, therefore, were *ex vota*, being thanksgivings for graces received or healing from illness. An example of such a calvary is the complex in Radochów, Stary Waliszów or Bolesław "Suszyca". Calvaries were founded in places where a shrine (chapel, church) had previously been established, so they are directly connected with the particular pilgrimage site, raising their profile (Radochów, Maria Śnieżna, Złoty Stok, Travna). Another distinctive feature of the choice of place and name of the calvary may be the neighbourhood of a monastery (Marianówka), where a monastery was founded by the Salesian fathers. Non-material

<sup>2</sup> Edicule - a chapel with a pediment supported by columns or a niche providing a backdrop for a sculpture, bas-relief or painted image

distinguishing features can also be found in the form of multisensoriality, which consists of touch and, in the case of five sites, the sound coming from church bells (Międzygórze, Stary Gierałtów, Nowy Gierałtów) or the ridge turret bells of the chapels of Radochów and Stary Waliszów. All the sites are thought-provoking and mysterious, allowing the spiritual experience of the mysteries of Christ's Paschal Mystery.

**Evaluation discussion of Little Calvaries in the context of the protection of calvary landscapes**

It is a difficult social process to implement new principles of landscape management. This is especially the case in post-communist countries, where there was a predetermined policy of the central state administration, often not in line with environmental considerations. The interviews conducted in the local government units of the study area clearly show that knowledge about the European Landscape Convention is treated marginally. Cooperation with scientific institutions, representing fields such as history, archaeology, cultural studies, theology or geography, to describe and assess the landscape is not undertaken. This explains the lack of any documentation of monuments, but also of basic knowledge about the history and revitalisation processes of sites. The units cooperate with the Provincial Conservator of Monuments, but only to a certain extent. However, it is possible to notice cases of cooperation of local communities in the revitalisation and maintenance of cultural heritage objects.

Table 2. Criteria for assessing the landscape of the Little Calvaries for the purpose of determining their current functions and potential threats (Source: Own study based on field research using the method of Myga-Piątek (2007) modified for the needs and specificity of the research subject)

Location	Age	Historicity	Aesthetic value	Harmony	Content	Uniqueness	Emotional value	Utility value	Multisensoriality	Sum of points
Młynowiec	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	10
Bolesławów (Suszyca)	2	1	2	3	1	1	2	3	1	16
Bolesławów „Ogrójec”	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	3	1	17
Stary i Nowy Gierałtów	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	12
Radochów „Cierniak”	2	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	21
Złoty Stok	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	3	1	19
Stary Waliszów	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	3	2	18
Międzygórze „Maria Śnieżna”	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	24
Marianówka	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	13
Travna	2	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	1	15
Stribnice	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	11
Scale of grade	3 points - landscape with cultural elements more than 300 years old 2 points - landscape with cultural elements aged 300-100 years 1 point - landscape with cultural elements less than 100 years old	3 points - landscapes where historical events of national scale and importance have been recorded 2 points - landscapes where historical events of regional scale and importance have been recorded 1 point - landscapes where historical events have not been recorded and are not associated with such events	3 points - highly aesthetically pleasing landscapes 2 points - landscapes with slightly disturbed aesthetics 1 point - average, disharmonious landscapes	3 points - full compositional harmony, giving a sense of order and spatial arrangement and continuity of functions 2 points - slight disturbance to order, arrangement and continuity of functions 1 point - complete sense of spatial chaos and discontinuity of functions	3 points - significant and easily identifiable landscape symbolism with a distinct "genius loci" of nationwide rank 2 points - symbolism of regional scale and prominence 1 point - symbolism of a local scale and importance.	3 points - original and unique landscapes on a nationwide scale 2 points - original and unique landscapes on a regional scale 1 point - landscapes with typical and repetitive features	3 points - the local community shows close emotional ties with the place 2 points - social ties with the place concern only selected social and age groups 1 point - local community does not identify with tradition of place and does not care about condition of space	3 points - landscapes used in accordance with their traditional function, definitely not subject to changes in function and architectural and landscape forms 2 points - landscapes used according to their traditional function, potentially exposed to changes in functions and architectural and landscape forms 1 point - landscapes "to be forgotten" due to lack of protection, functions and architectural-landscape forms disappear	3 points - touch, sound, smell 2 points - touch, sound 1 point - touch	

These are sometimes the initiatives of associations (e.g. the Association of Friends of the Biała Łądecka Valley "Kruszynka") and village administrations (e.g. the administrator of the village of Kamienica, Ms. Irena Foremnik) for mutual cooperation. This cooperation is aimed at protecting the sacral heritage often found in the area. Information boards and printed materials such as brochures and leaflets are produced on the initiative of local communities.

In order to identify the subject matter in more detail, an assessment of the landscape of little calvaries was made based on nine criteria. For the purposes of determining current functions and potential threats, age, historicity, aesthetic value, harmony, content, uniqueness, emotional value, utility value, multisensoriality and the number of objects in each complex were considered (Table 2). Six of the sites represent more than 100 years of history, translating into a richer architectural and landscape form. Three of the analysed buildings date to the 20th century.

**Historicity** - the most valuable calvary landscape in the study area, in which historical events of regional scale and importance have been recorded, is the calvary in Międzygórze. An important event affecting the rank was the annexation of Kłodzko County to Prussia in 1742, which was associated with significant geopolitical and religious changes.

A new Prussian law restricted Catholic worshippers from making pilgrimages to, among other places, Mariaszell in Austria. In order to solve the problem, in 1750 the village resident of Wilkanów, Krzysztof Veit, brought a folk copy of the statue of Our Lady of Mariaszell, made of linden wood. The statue started a pilgrimage movement to the small chapel on Góra Igliczna in Międzygórze, where in 1781 the foundation stone of the emerging sanctuary of Our Lady of the Cause of Our Joy "Maria Śnieżna" was laid. At present, the sanctuary on Mount Igliczna is an important pilgrimage site for the inhabitants of the region, the country and pilgrims from abroad. The other Calvary complexes represent landscapes in which historical events have not been recorded and are not associated with such events.

However, they were created in the historical environment of the experiences of local people who, feeling the need to thank God, erected Stations of the Cross as votive offerings.

**Emotional value** - with two objects having the status of a shrine, the local community has close emotional ties due to the rank and functions of a unique, sacred place. These objects are the sanctuary of Our Lady Cause of Our Joy "Maria Śnieżna" in Międzygórze, with year-round national and international pilgrimage traffic, and the sanctuary of Our Lady Help of the Faithful in Radochów with predominant local pilgrimage traffic. The emotional value of the last site, which lends real mysticism, is the figure, the only one in the Sudetic range, of the hermit Brother Elisha, standing over the spiritual and physical transmission of the religious character.

With regard to **emotional and social values** concerning selected social and age groups, this criterion is fulfilled by Marianówka and the Salesian monastery located there. These monks influenced the pilgrimage movement and participation in the Stations of the Cross by conducting targeted spiritual retreats. The remaining sites involve parish communities and scored 2 points of emotional value. The only site that the local community currently does not identify with the tradition of the place and does not care about the condition of the space is Młynowiec and Stribrnice, which is due to the depopulation of the place.

**Utility value** - due to the historical-architectural context and emotional value, 90% of the little calvary complexes are used in accordance with their religious function (whether the most recognisable ones are listed in the register - if so, they are legally protected from changes, others may be altered in form by local custodians). An exception is the Little Calvary in Młynowiec and Stribrnice, where there are traces of a lack of interest in ceremonial use.

**Uniqueness** is an important criterion for determining the direction of preservation of the sites in the perspective of the next decades. The calvary complexes of the Eastern Sudetes in the architectural and landscape context are mainly characterised by folk content. Higher-ranking content referring to historical stylistic trends, e.g. baroque, is exhibited by the complexes in Międzygórze and Stary Waliszów, which additionally, due to their high religious rank, constitute a specific "*genius loci*". The uniqueness of the content can still be observed in the Calvary complex in Radochów, through the characteristic architecture of the Stations of the Cross in the form of edicules, chapels or foundation steps leading to the Calvary hill Cierniak, where the names of former (German) benefactors are inscribed.

The uniqueness of the place is largely attributable to harmony, i.e. compositional congruity that allows one to feel order and spatial arrangement. Of the surveyed complexes, all show full landscape-architectural compatibility with the spirit of the place, which is influenced by the morphological naturalness together with the forest-meadow cover, and also through the senses, mainly touch, allow one to feel the spirit of the place.

## CONCLUSIONS

Little calvaries or open-air calvaries are counted among sacred places (*sacrum*), as they are characterised by the existence of a rich symbolism of the material and non-material sphere, creating a unique atmosphere of the place - "*genius loci*" increasing its value in the religious, cultural, but often also artistic context.

These calvaries were founded in the local landscape, trying to approximate to the topographical original of Jerusalem (holy mountain - holy hill). Stations of the Cross - Little Calvaries - were erected to provide pilgrims with indulgences rather than aesthetic experiences, hence the apparent architectural and symbolic modesty. The little calvaries were intended to be places for meditating on the Passion of Christ, but also for enacting Passion stories. Due to their location in the mountain landscape, they could replace pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The sites made use of both natural and anthropogenic elements, creating diverse landscape compositions saturated with symbolism (Figure 8).

The observations allow us to distinguish two main systems - elliptical and linear, from which linear with a small spatial extension (A) and linear with a significant spatial extension (B) were further separated. Linear layout A is characterised by the existence of a church at the beginning of the calvary (the exception is represented by Młynowiec, where there is no building) and a bi-directional path with crosses in the forest environment. This layout should be associated with the period of creation from the 18th to the 20th century (Międzygórze, Bolesławów). On the other hand, linear layout B is characterised by a bi-directional path starting and ending with churches. It represents a new layout created in the 21st century with forests, grasslands and arable fields as its background. This landscape type is represented by the calvary in Stary and Nowy Gierałtów. The elliptical landscape layout in the study area is characterised by a cylindrical arrangement of mainly edicules, with a chapel in the middle. This arrangement, found in Radochów, Stary Waliszów and Złoty Stok, creates a closed form with forests as its background.

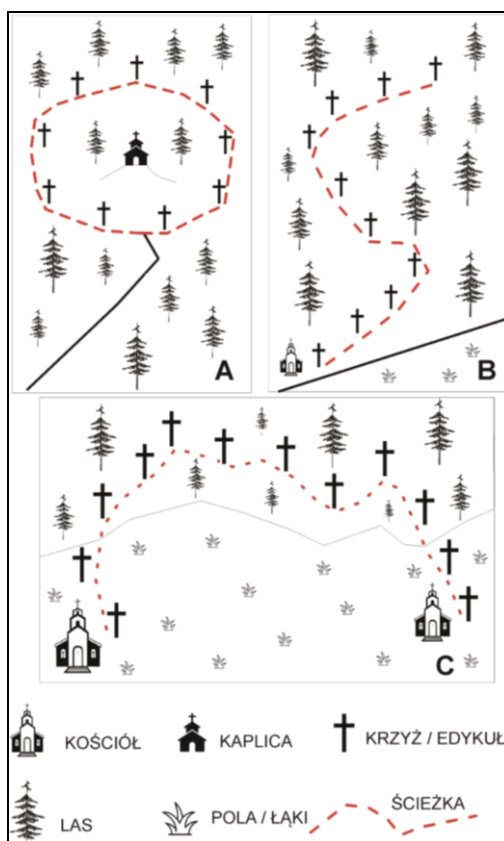


Figure 10. The three prevailing landscape systems of the Little calvaries for the Eastern Sudetes region: A - elliptical, B - linear (former) representing low spatial extension, C - linear (modern) representing high spatial extension. Own study

The analysis of the sacral landscapes of the little calvaries was carried out in the real (material) current, which consisted in locating the objects in mountain and forest landscapes, and in the aesthetic current, where the originality of the composition's assumptions against the background of nature was combined.

Field research made it possible to estimate nine Little Calvaries in the Eastern Sudetes. It is noteworthy that despite the political, national and religious changes that took place after 1945, the Little Calvaries of the Eastern Sudetes are still visible in the field and are a great testimony to the religiosity of the region's inhabitants. An analysis of the symbolic, architectural meanings and site topography of the studied calvaries in a natural and spatial context provides a substructure for the identity of the site with local heritage. The calvaries in question have the potential to further develop the pilgrimage movement, but also to develop cognitive tourism. The value of the above research is the reference to the typology of Chmielewski et al. (2015), as they complement the typology of sacred landscapes taking into account open-air calvaries referred to as Little Calvaries. These calvaries represent a rural landscape type with a subtype of small-scale sacred ensemble historically and culturally conditioned with a region with a specific forest-agricultural landscape background, which is currently the quasinnatural mountain landscape of the Eastern Sudetes.

The above conclusions regarding the existence of the unique landscape sacral complexes of the Little calvaries in the Sudetic area, in the context of the role of the local society in the implementation and monitoring of the landscape policy, are no longer so obvious. The state of implementation of the landscape policy, based on the European Landscape Convention, by the administrative authorities of the study area is substantively weak.

Despite the knowledge of the existence of open-air calvaries, which are culturally and historically valuable landscapes, caring for them is mainly in the hands of parishioners, village leaders e.g. village administrators, parish priests or local associations. Their activities, although valuable because they come from a sense of "heart", can, without a substantive basis and tools, pose a threat to the preservation of their authenticity.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, J.Ł. and A.M.; methodology, J.Ł. and A.M.; software, J.Ł. and A.M.; validation, J.Ł. and A.M.; formal analysis, J.Ł. and A.M.; investigation, J.Ł. and A.M.; data curation, J.Ł. and A.M.; writing - original draft preparation, J.Ł. and A.M.; writing - review and editing, J.Ł. and A.M.; visualization, J.Ł. and A.M.; supervision, J.Ł. and A.M.; project administration, J.Ł. and A.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** Praca naukowa dofinansowana ze środków budżetu państwa w ramach programu Ministra Edukacji i Nauki pod nazwą „Nauka dla Społeczeństwa” nr projektu NdS/544299/2021/2021 kwota dofinansowania 347 231,00 całkowita wartość projektu 357 231,00.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study may be obtained on request from the corresponding author.

**Acknowledgments:** The research undertaken was made possible by the equal scientific involvement of all the authors concerned.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- Andrejczuk, W. (2013). Cultural Landscape functions. *Cultural Landscape Commission of the Polish Geographical Society*, 20, 65-81.
- Bilska-Wodecka, E. (2003). *European calvaries analysis of structures, types and origins*. Publisher IGI GP UJ, Kraków.
- Chmielewski, T.J., Myga-Piątek, U., & Solon, J. (2015). Typology of current Polish landscapes. *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 80, 3, 377-408. <https://doi.org/10.7163/PrzG.2015.3.0>
- Čičo, M. (1998). Kalvárie na Slovensku, ich výskum a ochrana (Calvaries in Slovakia, their research and protection), *Projekt. Revue Slovenskej Architektúry*, 40, 3, 48-51.
- Eliade, M. (2020). *Treatise on the history of religion*, Publisher Aletheia, Warszawa.
- Harasimowicz, J. (2010). Reformation in Silesia from the perspective of the history of religion and art history, *Quart 4* (18), 3-16.
- Holly, G. (2014). Transformations of the sacred landscape on the Polish-Slovak-Ukrainian border (XIX–XXI). *Monografie Bieszczadzkie*, XV, BPN, Ustrzyki Dolne.
- Jackowski, A., Soljan I., & Bilska-Wodecka E. (1999). World religions, pilgrimage routes. *Great Encyclopedia of World Geography*, XV, Poznań.
- Jackson, R.H., & Henrie, R. (1983). Perception of Sacred Space, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 3, 94-107.
- Lec, Z. (2020). *Jesuits in Silesia and Kłodzko County until 1776*, Publisher Papieski Wydział Teologiczny, Wrocław.
- Liutikas, D. (2015). Religious Landscape and Ecological Ethics: Pilgrimage to the Lithuanian Calvaries. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 3, 1, 12-24.
- Mazurski, K.R. (1994-1996). Reformation and Protestantism in the Kłodzko land, *Rocznik Ziemi Kłodzkiej*, 19/21, 68–80.
- Mitkowska, A. (2003). Polish calvary, *Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich*, Wrocław.
- Myczkowski, Z. (2009). *The identity of a place in the landscape, In Phenomenon Genius Loci, the identity of a place in the historical and contemporary context* (ed.) B. Gutkowski, Publisher Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, Instytut Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu im. Kardynała Wyszyńskiego, Warszawa, 153-162.
- Myga-Piątek, U. (2012). Sacred and religions landscape – an attempt of classification in the typology of cultural landscapes, *Cultural Landscape Commission of the Polish Geographical Society*, 17, 13-23.
- Park, C. (2003). *Sacred Worlds. An Introduction to Geography to Religion*. Routledge, London.
- Plit, J. (2012). Traces of sacrum in the landscape, *Cultural Landscape Commission of the Polish Geographical Society*, 17, 33-40.
- Rozenkiewicz, A., & Łach, J. (2012). Problems of the regional nomenclature of the Polish-Czech borderland. *Moravian Geographical Reports* 3/2012, 20, 64-72.
- Sowińska, B. (2012). Shaping of identity of sacred landscape. *Cultural Landscape Commission of the Polish Geographical Society*, 17, 78-95.
- Vaisvilaite, I. (2002). Calvary Complexes in Lithuania, *Przegląd Kalwaryjski*, 7, 33-36.
- Wąs, G. (2002). *History of Silesia from 1526 to 1806*. (ed.) M. Czaplinski, History of Silesia, Publisher University of Wrocław, Wrocław, 118-247.
- Wiszewski, P. (2006). *Modern history of Christianity in Lower Silesia. 1526-1806*, (ed.) W. Wrzesiński, Lower Silesia, Historical monograph, Publisher University of Wrocław, Wrocław, 261-295.