

2.III.4.1 **Moravian** (Czech Republic, s, c)

Vernacular architecture in Moravia has the same basis as in Bohemia and Slovakia but as the economic development and geographical conditions differed in this area, so a specific village image developed.

The heart of Moravia is a lowland region (*Haná*), which stretches from the mountainous part of Silesia to the Austrian border and which is a continuation of the Pannonian plain, with which it has many common features in folk architecture. This region has been settled for a long time with villages having village greens while in the southern and southeastern part, they may also have village streets. The building materials are adobe, rammed earth, and, since the 19th century, bricks. Only smaller buildings were timber constructions and they can be found in peripheral parts of the region where even stone might be used as a building material. In this region a few examples of a construction technology almost unknown in Czech folk architecture – cylinders made of earth in the manner of *opus spicatum* – have been preserved. Thatched roofing is being replaced with tiles or slate roofing.

The houses have three parts, a chamber or room, a hall and an upstairs storage room. As a result of economic prosperity the houses soon became larger, a few more rooms being added and the whole plot becoming built-up. The houses also became higher with another floor being added. First a semi-upstairs storage room was built in the chamber reaching the level of the old storage room and then two-storey houses came into being. The original way of rebuilding these houses by putting the upstairs storage room in front of the entrance of the hall (*žudro*) so that the lower part of the storage room forms an archway, has been preserved only rarely.

The heating system was almost uniform throughout the whole region – oven and stove in the chamber, and fireplace in the hall or the outside kitchen. The older type of two-part house, where the fireplace was even in the chamber, has been noted only sporadically in the eastern parts of the region.

Gradually, especially in the western part of Moravia the chamber became heated by a stove, the oven and the fireplace being in the outside kitchen or the hall. The outbuildings are then built at a right-angle to the house, the plot being closed by large barns.

The original stucco decorations and colourful fronts are unfortunately being replaced by plain cement plaster, while the portico by the entrance and the *žudro* (porch) are not being preserved in the reconstructions.

The southeastern part of Moravia (Moravské Slovácko) was poorer and consequently older types of house with separate storage rooms have been preserved, especially in the mountainous part near the Slovak border.

The ground plans of villages are also varied and often the building materials are timber covered with earth, the 'timber cottage in a fur coat'. Towards the south the ground plans are all built up. The farmyard is built L-shaped and the whole plot is closed by barns (originally wattled or made of boards) which used to make almost impenetrable fortifications around the villages. Fruit-drying sheds used to belong to almost every estate, especially in the northern mountainous area.



Moravian house with stucco front built 1890. Ostrožská Lhota.

Separate storage rooms in the area of the village green have been preserved only sporadically. Wine cellars and walled rooms in front of them (*búda*) are typical of this region. These architecturally specific buildings used to make something like small villages behind the communities. The villages until recently painted in blue and yellow, with decorated or plain porches, and simple portals lavishly and colourfully decorated with ornaments, used to be among the most beautiful in the country.

In the southern part of Moravia, elements of the Pannonian region can be traced – for example in arcades along cowsheds and other outbuildings. Compared with those in the northern and eastern parts, these houses are less rich in decoration and in the sophistication of the ground plan. Near residences of the nobility, buildings in the baroque style can be found.

Even in south Moravia, areas with wine cellars and walled rooms in front of them outside villages are common. The architecture there is also decorated or in the baroque style. In some places, wine cellars are cut in sandstone rocks.

In the west, the north, and the east the central plain gives way to the hilly part of Moravia. In the west are the Bohemian-Moravian Uplands, more densely populated in the late Middle Ages. The villages have village greens or sometimes are formed by houses standing far from each other or separate clusters of houses. The house here has a common entrance to a room, hall

Street of vintners' houses, Pavlov, Moravia.



and storage room, or to a room, hall, storage room and cowshed. The houses are built with gables facing the street or sometimes irregularly. Building materials are timber covered with earth, stone, and later bricks, with shingled roofing.

Brick or stone buildings often take features of classicism in the plaster framing of windows, doors and gables. Older houses used to have wooden gables colourfully decorated or painted with ornaments and words, for example gables decorated with miniature round roofs (*kačrince* or *kukly*). Big magistrates' houses are reminiscent of city buildings in their complexity. The villages were not complete without special roofed sheds built over streams for keeping and cooling milk (*haltýř*). The northern part of the Bohemian-Moravian Uplands was populated as early as the Middle Ages. The houses built on the field which belonged to them expanded into large square brick or stone estates. Original timber houses with storage rooms and polygonal barns have been preserved only in fragments. The architecture of these estates is emphasized by the mass rather than by ornaments or colours. OTAKAR MÁČEL

See also

1.VI.1.h-í Žudro
3.VI.6.j Moravian

References

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2.III.4.I-í Jeseníky

The north of Moravia is formed by the mountain range of Jeseníky which was colonized in the same way as the Bohemian-Moravian Uplands in the Middle Ages. Its location did not, however, favour the appearance of large estates, so in the valleys there are rows of timber cottages and simple brick or stone buildings having common entrances for rooms, halls, storage rooms and cowsheds. Shingles or slate are used for roofs; the buildings are not very complex. Only large estates have fronts with plaster pillars and framing of windows and doors.

The northernmost part of Moravia behind the Jeseníky mountains has been settled for a long time and the ground plans of villages have both village greens and streets. The gables of the houses face the street. The houses have storage rooms standing on their own, sometimes with up to three floors, and sheltered porches with extensions. The houses are

made of brick or stone whereas the rooms are made of timber. The appearance is influenced by baroque and classicism.

The northeastern border of Moravia is formed by the Beskydy mountains, a region called Valašsko, which was colonized as late as the modern era by building settlements on the fields which belonged to them. No big estates were built there owing to the poverty of the region. The small houses of big families used to accumulate so the village ground plans are chain-shaped. Villages higher above sea level consist of isolated houses far apart and small clusters of houses. In the pastoral region, shingled timber cottages prevailed for a long time. These cottages consist of three parts – chamber, hall, and storage room – and small houses have four parts – chamber, hall, storage room, and cowshed. Special to this region are the shepherds' chalets which are in contrast to bailiffs' houses (hereditary magistrates) in larger villages. These were usually two-storey buildings with many rooms and a balcony. Bailiffs' houses built by carpenters used to have complex gables decorated with elaborate ornaments and mouldings.

Folk architecture also shows in sawmills and mills. Most of the buildings were built of wood by the village people and their architecture was very simple. The only decorations were painted gables, beams, miniature roofs on gables with inscriptions and ornaments, and painted framing of doors and windows. OTAKAR MÁČEL

2.III.4.I-ii Moravian: house decoration

Decoration of houses always appears in the village after the basic needs of the inhabitants have been satisfied; it can therefore be expected to be found in the bigger estates in rich regions. Another significant factor is the qualification of the artisans. Where the village people, for instance bricklayers, had some contact with towns, working on village houses when the season was over, decorating elements from official architecture appear, in a simplified form.

In contrast, in poor regions with scattered estates (south-eastern Moravia) with no contact with towns, adobe houses survived for a long time, and there was no necessity for taking over decoration from official architecture.

It is difficult to establish since when, and why, the houses have been decorated; perhaps to satisfy a natural desire for magical symbols, ornamentation or display. The need for decorating depended on the capabilities and imagination of the people themselves. The exposed parts of a house used to be decorated with ornaments and colours.

The oldest and simplest decorating is done with fingers in the plaster to make, for instance, wavy lines and floral patterns. This technique is not, of course, specific to Moravia, but is known all over Europe. Colourful decoration appeared later and concentrated on exposed parts of the house – the entrance, porch and windows. Windows were given lines or geometrically accentuated corners and later ornaments.

Porches in particular were decorated, and were the first to be painted. The oldest motifs were of roses, while later there were also tulips, stars, elliptic motifs and scrolls. Plant decorations became more sophisticated, then lost their impact, and, influenced by fashion, pictures of hearts and roosters started to

Timber built house,
Valašská Polanka.





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appear. A parallel exists between them and the richly decorated folk costumes.

Decoration of houses in the last century was also seen at Easter and on the villages' patron saints' days. At this time women decorated windows with soap, and made ornaments in sand around the house, and in the hall on the earth floor. The outside kitchen used to be lined with earth, coloured and then decorated with ornaments to a pattern carved in potatoes or maize.

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2.III.4.m Podhale (Poland, s)

Podhale (meaning 'at the bottom of mountain meadows') is a valley region located in southern Poland between the Tatry mountains and the Gorce mountains at an altitude of 420–1259 m (1378–4130 ft) above sea level. It has a cold climate with an annual rainfall of 750–1100 mm (29–43 in) with snowfalls and typical, strong winds (*halny*) coming over the Tatry ridge from the south. The original forests do not exist in their former scale and red fir and pine are cultivated today. In the past larch was also used in construction. Traditional economy of the mountain meadows included some agriculture (mostly oats) and sheep breeding.

The Podhale house developed from a simple one-room log cabin, constructed in the same way as other farm buildings, such as the stable or barn. Still existing in remote sites, they sometimes formed fortress-like enclosures with only one entrance gate.

The typical plan of the recent house consists of two rooms with the hall or vestibule in between. The hall has an entrance door which is usually oriented to the south. In the same south wall are two windows, one for each room. One room is called the 'black room' (*izba czarna*) because of the effects of smoke from the fireplace within, which is used all the time; the other is called the 'white room' (*izba biala*) – often being without a



Entrance to a Podhale house with farm buildings, Jurgow, Poland.

far left
Decorated doorway with a ledge instead of a porch. Nová Lhota, Moravia.

© Tomasz Banach

fireplace it is used in summer and for special ceremonies. Both rooms sometimes have alcoves. Under the 'black room' there is sometimes a small cellar though usually it is outside.

The house has a stone foundation. When one is constructed on a slope it produces a horizontal level. Under the walls large stones are used and the entire house is raised on a plinth infilled with small or broken stones. At the corners are placed flat stones (*pecka*) on which the first wooden foundation element of full section (*podwalina*) is laid. The next element is a rectangular section (*spodek*); literally more or less on the bottom, it forms a kind of pedestal (*cokel*) and is also at the level of the entrance threshold. Halved joints (*na zamek*) fit at the corners. The next six horizontal elements are of half-section logs which form the walls with their joints on the corners stabilized with vertical plugs. They are also connected with two posts fitted into pedestal elements which serve for the entrance doorway. In the second horizontal element of the wall, the lower and upper parts of the window-frame are placed in a special recess (*ocap nizny, nizny*, meaning 'lower'). The upper one is *ocap wyzny*. The sixth element of the wall is 30–50 cm (12–20 in) longer and at its end it has a special profile (*rys*). The seventh horizontal element (*warsolka*) at the gable and hall walls, as well as an element at the front and rear walls, is shifted inside the outer wall plane. The gable and hall elements take, in the middle, the main bearing beam (*sosreb*), each decorated in carving, sometimes with the name of the builder. The front and rear wall elements have – in each room – three holes for smaller beams (*sosrebik* or *tragarczyk*), which work as the structure between the walls and main bearing beam. On this element is fixed the wooden ceiling. Above it is an element, the *zdtuzka*, or a full round section on which the gables and hall walls element (*statniak*), also of round section, rests. The wall plate rests on the front and rear walls while a small element (*zapychadlo*) covers the gap. All chinks in the wooden structure are filled with moss.

The house has a pitched roof with a double slope where the lower part extends as eaves and runs around the house also on gable walls. The eave is constructed by an element (*obsajta*) laid on a second *rys*, creating an extended element existing in gable and hall walls. On it an element (*sztych*) is connected in its upper part with the roof rafters, giving at the same time the characteristic shape of the lower part of the roof. The roof is covered by large split wooden boards or shingles.

Ornamentation is usually on the main bearing beam on the entrance door, on the *rys* and on the gables, in which some-