

10. THE BRUSNO STONEMASONRY TRADITION

One of the most distinctive features of the cultural landscape of Eastern Roztocze and the Lubaczów region are the products of the stonemasonry center in Brusno Stare. This craft developed thanks to the local deposits of Tertiary calcareous sandstones and lithothamnium limestones. These rocks were formed several million years ago, when this area lay along the coastline of a warm Miocene Sea. The places where the stone was quarried—known locally as łomy—are scattered across different parts of what was once Brusno Stare. The oldest remnants of these quarries are found in the village's northeastern reaches (the former Szałasy hamlet). One of the largest quarries lies on the slope of Mount Brusno (365 meters above sea level), situated in the central part of the former settlement. It was intermittently exploited up to modern times.

Stone extraction in Brusno Stare likely began in the 15th century. By 1565, three “masters” were already working here, fashioning millstones. Over time, residents of several nearby villages also took up the stonemasonry trade, forming what came to be known as the Brusno stonemasonry district (including Huta Stara, Werchrata, and Dziewięcierz).

The practical side of this craft included making millstones and hand grinders, producing architectural elements, quarrying building materials, and burning lime. By at least the 17th century, local stone had also come into use for artistic purposes. From this period come the so-called turki—stone crosses associated with Tatar raids. In the 18th century, stonemasons produced both Christian gravestone crosses and Jewish matzevot. At the beginning of the 19th century, crosses and stelae for Evangelical cemeteries (founded for German settlers) were added to the repertoire. The stonemasonry of Brusno developed rapidly from the 19th century on. Over the next 150 years, thousands of crosses, figures, and stelae were created, filling cemeteries of multiple denominations and nationalities. Along local roads, votive monuments, including large communal crosses, became widespread.

Most of these stone monuments were created by Ukrainian, and later also Polish, folk artists and craftsmen—individuals from families such as the Birnbachs, Bumbars, Chmiels, Dusios, Hałaburdas, Hrabcios, Kusmys, Lubyckis, Pidhoreckis, Kuźniewicz, and Zaborniaks. Thanks to traveling sales, the reach of Brusno sculpture extended in a radius of about 100 kilometers, including areas near Rzeszów, Jarosław, Lviv, and Zamość.

Postwar population and cultural changes led to the decline of large-scale artistic production. It survives today through the work of a handful of sculptors (including Józef Lewkowicz and Grzegorz Wajs) who carry on the old stonemasonry traditions of Brusno.

(compiled by: Janusz Mazur)

