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CARVED DOORS IN WOODEN ARCHITECTURE OF THE LATE 19TH – MID 20TH CENTURIES. CITY OF MOHILEU (EASTERN BELARUS)

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Abstract

On the basis of a large number of collected photo materials on the wooden construction of the Belarusian city of Mohileu in the late 19th – mid-20th centuries, a description and characteristics of the method of carving doors of buildings located in this city is given, and connections with monuments of professional stone architecture of the 18th century are traced.

Keywords: architectural carved décor; door; entrance; artistic and decorative image

INTRODUCTION

From ancient times and actually until the second half of the 20th century, Eastern Europe was a region where traditions of wooden folk architecture live. First of all, this was due to the cheapness and wide availability of wood as the main building material in this area, as well as the lack of natural stone for stone construction and expensive brick production. On the other hand, the widespread use of wood for construction led to the emergence of local traditions of carved architectural decoration in these territories, which flourished in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries.

The appearance of these local traditions of architectural decoration was influenced by many different factors, including professional stone architecture. The topic of wooden architectural decoration of Eastern Europe only became of interest to researchers of ethnography and history of architecture late, most of the main works on this topic appeared only in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily based on traditions in the territory of Russia – Tyumen, Tomsk, Volga region and others.

The situation is much worse with the research of this topic on the materials of Belarus, where research-

ers turned to the study of local traditions only in the 1980s and 1990s. According to these studies, the intensity of the spread of carved architectural decor in folk architecture on the territory of Belarus increases as you move from the west of the country to the east, while its greatest concentration occurs in the southeast [A.I. Лакотка 1995 p. 276].

The east of Belarus is the historical and ethnographic region of Dniepr, the largest center of which was the city of Mohileu in the 16th–19th centuries. It was one of the largest and richest cities in the eastern part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which developed its own bright tradition of artistic culture, including a peculiar school of stone baroque architecture of the 17–18th centuries, book graphics, etc.

No less interesting is the Mohileu tradition of carved decoration of wooden architecture of the end of the 19th – middle of the 20th century, which, unfortunately, has not yet been described anywhere in science. This article is one of the first attempts to provide a scientific description of this bright and peculiar, but very local tradition (which actually covers only the city of Mohileu itself), and more precisely, such a phenomenon as the decoration of the front door. It can

be assumed that the methodology of analysis of this phenomenon on the materials of Mohileu will become an example for the appearance of similar works on the materials of other cities.

In the spring of 2019 the author of this article made 10 expedition trips to Mohileu for the purpose of photographing preserved examples of local wooden architecture and its carved decor. As a result, a photo database was collected, which includes photos with images of 464 buildings of the city of Mohileu (4062 digital photos), of which 366 buildings are decorated with wooden architectural decor. The total for Mohileu region as of 2020 was 11265 photos, where images of 1808 buildings from Mohileu, Bobruisk and 11 other settlements of the region were collected, which made it possible to draw some general conclusions. Unfortunately, at the time of collecting real-time photo materials, a significant number of buildings had already partially lost their decorative elements or had been rebuilt. This did not give an opportunity to get a complete picture of the original appearance of such buildings and the compositional intention of their builders, but a statistical comparison of preserved fragments from different houses, including those that have preserved their original appearance, gave a general idea of the patterns and properties of the architectural decor common in the studied city and region.

The dates of the construction of the investigated houses were obtained from the archive of the Republican Unitary Enterprise «Mohileu State Registration and Land Cadastre», however, they are characterized by incompleteness (exact dates are not available for all buildings), the absolute majority of the received dates refer to the construction of the recorded houses no earlier than the beginning of the 20th century, and only a few houses date back to the 1890s. But a comparison of these materials from the Mohileu agency with the dates obtained from the materials from the archive of a similar Homel agency shows that the Mohileu materials are not complete and contain approximate information. For example, in Homel, the information is much more complete, containing dates even from 1860. Buildings (1 house) and stable information about buildings show 1870–1940 as the dates of construction, which made it possible to reliably correlate the decor common in Homel and the dates of construction of the houses. However, it was almost impossible to do this on the materials of Mohileu, so in this analysis we had to use a comparison with Homel materials and stylistic analysis. A small number of dates on the photographed buildings were presented by their inhabitants themselves during the expedition research, they are generally almost identical to the dates from the archive

of the RUE «Mohileu Society for State Registration and Land Cadastre».

Additional important sources of information about the development of wooden architectural decor in Mohileu came from a number of visual materials of different nature:

- drawings and engravings of the 18th – end of the 19th centuries. (authorship of Nikolai Lvov, Yuzef Peshka – beginning of the 19th century, 10 pieces in total), mid-second half of the 19th century. (authorship of Alexander Busyrskyi in 1850, Napoleon Orda in 1876), which gave a certain idea of the wooden architecture of Mohileu in this period;
- pictures with views of Mohileu and its architecture, published in various printed editions of the 19th and 20th centuries.
- images from the Lithuanian National Historical Archive, namely 63 cases of obtaining a bank loan against the property of residents of various places, including Mohileu, which included detailed plans, sections, measurements and images of facades – a set of documents submitted to Vilnius land bank have survived to our time (LVIA, F. 544);
- photographs of the beginning of the 20th century with views of the city (about three dozen);
- a collection of postcards of the early 20th century with views of Mohileu (about four dozen);
- photos of Mohileu from 1941 to 1944, taken by German soldiers during the occupation of the city during the Second World War (about six dozen);
- a small number of photos with views of wooden buildings in Mohileu, taken by its residents in the period 1950–2010s. (about three dozen).

This group of visual materials is less informative about wooden architectural decoration compared to the photographic materials collected during the author's field expeditions in 2019, but it contains a number of important examples of buildings and their decorative finishes that have long since disappeared and were not recorded in 2019. Also, the mass of wooden buildings recorded on visual materials of the beginning of the 20th century – 1944 allowed for some approximate statistical studies, which were additionally verified on the materials of 2019 (for example, the predominant form of roofs, gable designs, window moldings, etc.).

The majority of postcards and photographs of the first half of the 20th century was presented to the author for research by local historians, in particular A-D. Lisovsky, A. Balakis and others.

As a result of the collection of materials, information was obtained about approximately 45 Mohileu

buildings from the end of the 19th – mid-20th centuries, decorated with wooden carved doors. Information on several examples of carved doors belonging to various city buildings from the 17th–18th centuries was also revealed, including information concerning four houses of prayer, not all of which have been preserved.

1. RESULTS

The entrance is an important element of creating an attractive image of the whole building, because it, unlike the rest of the house, is always directly connected to the physical level of the person and direct contact with him. This applies primarily to doors. In Mohileu, at the time of the researched period, decorated front doors were usually located on the main facade of the building, while doors from the side of the yard were usually not decorated and had only a functional design.

In the wooden buildings recorded during the research, in Mohileu, the location of the main entrance usually corresponded to one of three options:

- the entrance door is located on the main facade – in the center or at the edges of the street facade, the entrance to the house was directly from the street (Fig. 1, 2);
- the entrance to the house took place through a separate extension-verandah (entrance room) located on the side of the main facade, which led directly from the street, sometimes directly to the upper floor of the building (Fig. 3);
- the entrance is located in the side wall of the house from the yard and you can get to it only by passing the gate from the side of the street facade.

Initially, the front door from the street was always decorated with a front porch (not always preserved until the beginning of the 21st century).



Fig. 1. Mohileu. Alkhouskaya str. 3. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 2. Mohileu, Bykhauskaya str. 22. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 3. Mohileu, Zawadskaya str. 23. Before 1917; photo by the author

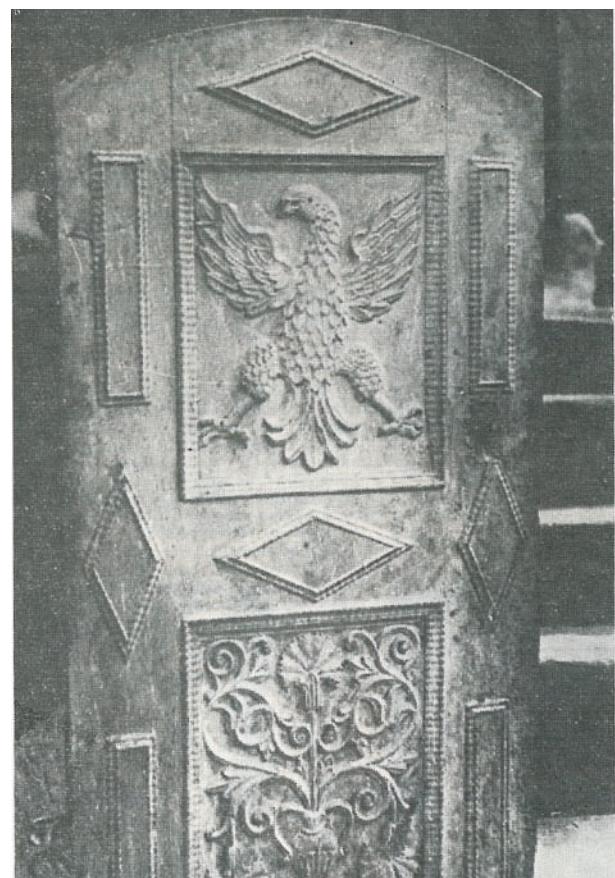


Fig. 4. Doors of the 17th century from Mohileu. Photo of the late 1940s. [O.A. Tpycob 1988, p. 35]

The oldest wooden doors recorded by researchers date back to the 17th century and are known only from a photograph from the late 1940s. (Fig. 4) [O.A. Trycub 1988, p. 35].

This door is single-leaf, it is a solid wooden canvas, rounded at the top. The door is very richly decorated: two large rectangular frames of almost the same size with relief images – a single-headed eagle in the upper one and a vase with a lush plant bouquet in the lower one. It is obvious that the single-headed eagle is the Polish coat of arms, which was adopted from the coat of arms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a vase with a magnificent bouquet, from which two S-shaped plant-floral scrolls depart – a typical baroque motif, which is recorded many times in the art culture of Mohileu of the 17–18th centuries: in crown tiles for 17th century stoves [B.E. Собаль et. al. 1989, p. 80 a.o.], in the carved baroque iconostasis of the Mykola church (made by local craftsmen around 1672), window frames of the burgher's house of the 17th century [Д. Струков 2011, p. 127, 248; B.A. Чантурія 1977, p. 127; Т.І. Чарпяуская 1973, p. 14-15], in book engravings of the late 17th and early 18th centuries from the printing house of the Mohileu Bopayavlensky brotherhood [Б.А. Лазука 2007, p. 59], in the upper parts of local icons from the beginning of the 18th century [сакральна...2007, Fig. 89], in the decoration of the upper part of the window molding of the brick farm building at the end of the 18th century in the estate of the Kniazhycy near Mohileu [B.A. Чантурія 1977, p. 246] and in the tops of carved window frames on city houses from the late 19th and mid – 20th centuries.

Along the perimeter of the frames on these doors are placed overhead flat rectangles and rhombuses with relief carved edges, which form a certain symmetrical composition. It is difficult to understand the design of the rectangular compositions from the photo, but apparently they are made of one wide board, on which the images of an eagle and a vase with flowers are made in the technique of flat relief carving with background removal. The resulting rectangular compositions are inserted into the frame of the door panel (like a primitive door panel-filling), and the seams are covered with a carved overhead frame.

Examples from the 18th century include the doors of the main Mohileu churches, two Catholic and one Orthodox. Of them, only the oak door at the main entrance to the Mohileu Cathedral Church of St. Stanislau (The Catedral) (Fig. 5, 6) remain, the rest are known only from photographs from the beginning of the 20th century – 1944.

The doors of the church of St. Stanislau are placed at the front of the temple, which was erected in the 1780s. They are made of oak, have large dimen-



Fig. 5. Mohileu, entrance door of the church of St. Stanislau, 1780; photo by the author



Fig. 6. Mohileu, fragment of the entrance door of the church of St. Stanislau, 1780; photo by the author



Fig. 7. Mohileu, church of St. Francis Xavier; Photo from 1940 Wiener's expedition

sions, and are structurally divided into rectangular parts: a fixed upper part and a movable lower part, which is actually the door itself. Both the upper and lower parts of the door are structurally the same: four symmetrical rectangular vertical panels-filling (more elongated at the top), which are inserted into the frame. Overlay compositions are placed on the door panel: on the uppermost pair of panels are voluminous high-relief angels with wings above clouds, on the remaining six – an elongated plant rosette in the center and four smaller flower buds in the corners. At the very top of the entire composition of the door is a complex entablature, in the center of which is a wide frieze; below it is a row of voluminous currency curls; above it is a row of rectangular denticles.

Unpreserved door of the church of St. Francis Xavier is known from two photographs from 1940 and



Fig. 8. Mohileu, fragment of a 1941 photograph, with the facade of the church of St. Francis Xavier; Photo from the collection of A.-D. Lisovsky (Augsburg, Germany)

1941. (Fig. 7, 8). The stone temple was built between 1699–1720s. (the church was consecrated in 1725). The central entrance to the church was decorated with large two-leaf doors, rounded at the top under an arched opening. The photos show that each of the door leaves was divided vertically by slats with a figured carved edge into two uneven panels (fillings), the larger of which was at the bottom. From the photo, the construction of these slats along the perimeter of the panels is not quite visible, but judging by analogies, they were overhead slats. There were also other decorative elements that were additionally highlighted by color.

In the center of the upper pair of panels there is an overhead rhomboid composition. In the photo from 1941 also visible is a fragment of the lower enlarged part, which contains a more complex vertically elongated carved image. Despite the fact that in the photo less than half of the door is visible, it can be reconstructed quite accurately. It is widespread in the carved architectural decor of southeastern Belarus and its border in the second half of the 19th – 20th centuries. The



Fig. 9. Mohileu, Orthodox Cathedral of St. Joseph. 1780–1798; postcard from the beginning of the 20th century from the collection of A.-D. Lisovsky (Augsburg, Germany)

image of a vertical plant's «rhombus-arrow» is a persistent sign-element of decoration in the form of a rhombus or a rhombus-shaped plant composition derived from it, sprouting from the center in two (rarely four) directions with a large number of various sharp «arrow-sprouts». Such a sign is placed on the front boards of windows frame, cornices, corners, doors, shutters and other places of the house [Я. Р. Malikau 2016, p. 61, 117–118, 228]. In this case, the very fact of the presence of such a sign in the carved design of the wooden doors of the Baroque church in the region of eastern Belarus and Upper Dnieper is very important, as it significantly lowers the earliest date of the beginning of the use of this sign in the wooden architectural decor of this region to the first half of the 18th century.

This door was similar to the design of the entrance door in St. Joseph's Cathedral, built in 1780–1798 according to the project of the Russian architect Nikolai Lvov. The cathedral has not survived to our time, and its carved doors are known only from photographs from the beginning of the 20th century (Fig. 9, 10).

The rectangular two-leaf doors of this temple are clearly symmetrical: each of the leaves contains three panels-fillings – the upper and lower ones are close to squares and are identical, and the central one between them is twice as large. In the center of the smaller

panels there is a large three-dimensional overlay plant rosette, on the central one – a three-dimensional vertical faceted rhombus and plant motifs at the corners. Between the door leaves there is a massive carved bar in the form of a twisted rope.

The doors of the church of St. Francis Xavier were clearly designed in the Baroque style and were probably made in the first half of the 18th century. The doors of the church of St. Stanislau were executed together with the reconstruction of the entrance part of the temple in the 1780s. Despite the fact that the rebuilt entrance part of the church bears the features of the Baroque and Classicism styles at the same time, the tiered asymmetry of the design of the entrance door is clearly closer of Baroque aesthetics. The emphasized symmetry of the doors of the Cathedral of St. Joseph clearly refers them to the style of classicism.

Unfortunately, other early examples of carving doors in Mohileu are no longer recorded. All four examples given above clearly come from the most magnificent stone buildings not only of the city of Mohileu, but also to a large extent of the entire surrounding region of Upper Dnieper. They are clearly distinguished by certain common features associated with the use of three-dimensional (overlay and relief) carved decor and probably could have influenced the appearance of



Fig. 10. Mohileu, a fragment of a photograph of Nikolais Astankovich at the beginning of the 20th century from the collection of the Vilnius University library [Šv. Juozapo...]



Fig. 11. Mohileu, Mihaia Lane 9. 1904; photo by the author

similar decor on the doors of other buildings in Mohileu. Of course, here it is necessary to take into account that at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, decoration with elements of overhead three-dimensional carving was widespread in construction in all European and American cities, even special advertising guides were published with examples of such doors. But specifically in Mohileu, the decorative carved composition of the entrance doors of the Cathedral of St. Joseph, created at the very end of the 18th century, was repeated exactly in the doors of an upperclass two-story brick building, which was built in 1904 and was preserved at Mihaia Lane 9 (Fig. 11, 12, 13). The door of this upperclass house is much smaller in size, but has all the same basic elements, albeit in a slightly simplified version.

The early methods of decorating the entrance door should also include diagonal laying with short boards, which resulted in a rhythmic pattern in the form of a «herringbone tree» or a perspective rhombus. During the collection of in-situ materials in 2019 existing examples of such door design were not recorded, but they were found in photographs and dimensional drawings with types of residential buildings in Mohileu at the beginning of the 20th century (Fig. 14). The oldest examples of such doors are recorded at the entrance to the church of St. Nicholas on Padmikolie, built in 1669–1672 (Fig. 15) and on the side doors of the church of St. Francis Xavier (Fig. 8). It is not known for certain whether the entrance doors of the Mykola Church, recorded in the photographs from the beginning and middle of



Fig. 12. Mohileu, Mihai Lane 9. 1904 A fragment of a door; photo by the author



Fig. 13. Mohileu, Mihai Lane 9. 1904 A fragment of a door; photo by the author



Fig. 14. Mohileu, the facade of the Kudrytska house in the block of Bykhavska and Zavalska streets. Fragment of dimensional drawing from the end of the 19th century [LVIA. F. 544. Ap. 1. B. 12693]; photo by the author



Fig. 15. Mohileu, entrance to the church of St. Nicholas.
Photo from the beginning of the 20th century

the 20th century, are authentic, preserved from the end of the 17th century, but they are very close to the doors of the church of St. Francis Xavier, which indirectly indicates their considerable antiquity.

The carved doors in Mohileu that are most often recorded in all types of sources used (both in the photo materials of 2019 and in the photos from the end of the 19th and mid-20th centuries) are various versions of frame doors with filling (Fig. 16–37).

All recorded examples are two-leaf symmetrical doors, most of them having three rectangular filling on each door leaf, rarely two or four. A transom window is often placed above the door for natural lighting of the space behind it, or a large board decorative composition, sometimes two sheets of filling (Fig. 38, 39).

The elements that make up the decorative finish of a paneled door are the panels (fillings) themselves – their number, size, shape, overhead rails and belts

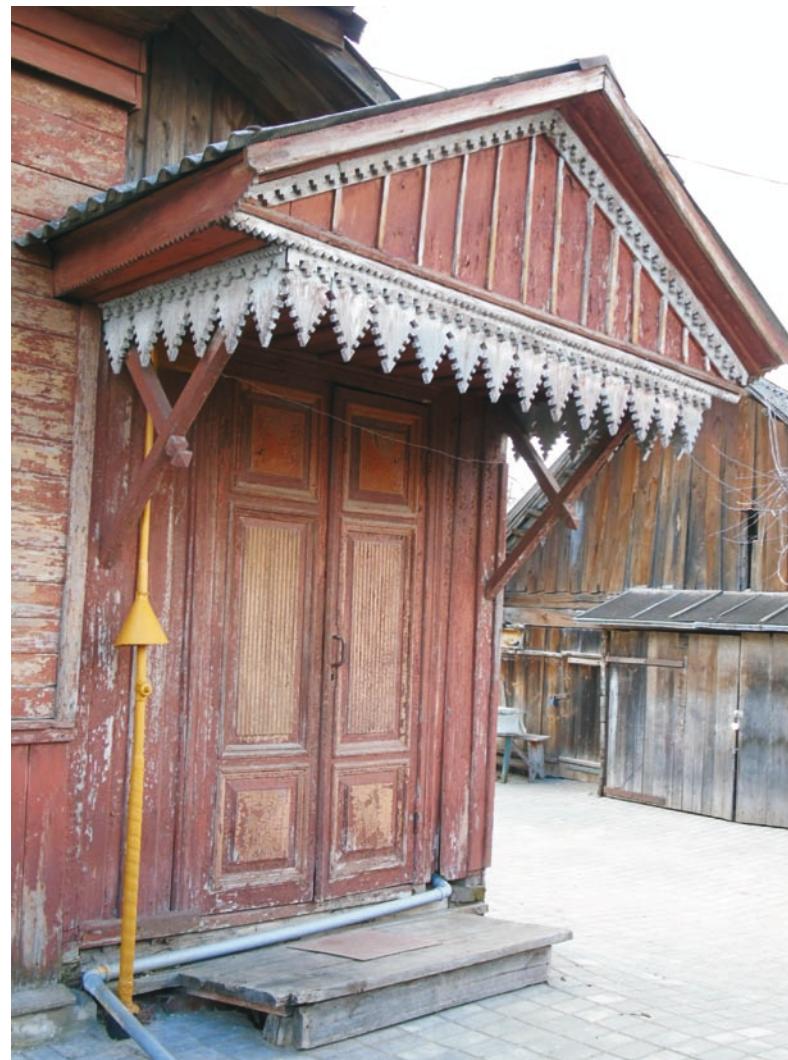


Fig. 16. Mohileu, Levaneuskaha 1st Lane. 10. 1940;
photo by the author

around them, voluminous overhead elements on the panels and the frame around them, and also a vertical strip between the doors, decorated with relief carving.

Certain regularities are recorded in the decoration of door panels (fillings). When using three fillings on one door leaf, the composition is formed with a large one in the center and two identical smaller ones at the edges, or a small one in the center and two identical large ones at the edges. But there are also versions of three different-sized panels. When using four panels on one leaf – they are all the same or the image and dimensions are duplicated in two of them.

The panels themselves could be decorated with relief parallel lines or have complex outlines (Fig. 40, 41). But the most widespread decoration is overlays in the form of low faceted pyramids or rhombuses. A number of identical houses on Chyunachna Street, built at the beginning of the 20th century, have almost identical



Fig. 17. Mohileu, Karpinskaha str. 22. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 18. Mohileu, вул. Alkhouskaya str. 3. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 19. Mohileu, Mashekauskaya Vialikaya str. 14. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 20. Mohileu, Chyrvonaya Zorka Lane 10. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 21. Mohileu, Sadovaya str. 25. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 22. Mohileu, Sevastopalskaya str. 4. 1910; photo by the author



Fig. 23. Mohileu, 2nd str. Chyhunachnaya 8. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 24. Mohileu, Yatsyny str. 13. 1922; photo by the author



Fig. 25. Mohileu, Padhornaya str. 22. 1946; photo by the author



Fig. 26. Mohileu, Shypouny Lane 10. 1952; photo by the author



Fig. 27. Mohileu, Shyrshova str. 13. 1948; photo by the author



Fig. 28. Mohileu, Karabanauski 4th Lane 11. 1970; photo by the author



Fig. 29. Mohileu, Karpinskaha str. 12. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 30. Mohileu, Katouskaha str. 48. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 31. Mohileu, Sviardlovast. 24. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 32. Mohileu, Chyhunachnaya 1st str. 9. 1910; photo by the author



Fig. 33. Mohileu, Chyhunachnaya 1st str. 11. Around 1910; photo by the author



Fig. 34. Mohileu, Chyhunachnaya 1st str. 19. 1910; photo by the author



Fig. 35. Mohileu, Yatsyny, p. 13. 1922; photo by the author



Fig. 36. Mohileu, Ivanauski Lane 7. 1952; photo by the author



Fig. 37. Mohileu, Labacheuskaha str. 12. 1954. A similar design of the door was recorded on the building from the beginning of the 20th century [LVIA, Ap. 1, B. 21193]; photo by the author



Fig. 39. Mohileu, Sviardlova str. 24. Before 1917; photo by the author



Fig. 38. Mohileu, Pershamayskaya str. 60-. 1906. The house was demolished in 2023; photo by the author



Fig. 40. Mohileu, Alkhouskaya str. 3. Before 1917; photo by the author

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Fig. 41. Mohileu, Sialianskaya str. 8. Photo from 1957, the house does not exist anymore. Photo from the personal archive of Yauhen Bulau (Mohileu)



Fig. 43. Mohileu, a fragment of the entrance door of the Hotel «France»; photo from the summer of 1941, from the personal collection of A.-D. Lisovsky (Augsburg, Germany)

Fig. 42. Mohileu, Chyhunachnaya 1st str. 9. 1910; photo by the author



Fig. 44. Mohileu, str. Leninskaya, 1941–1944; a fragment of a building. Photo from the personal collection of A.-D. Lisovsky (Augsburg, Germany)



Fig. 45. Mohileu, Velikaya Sadovaya str., the former house of Bobovik. Fragment of an advertising publication from the beginning of the 20th century; from the personal collection of A.-D. Lisovsky (Augsburg, Germany)

doors decorated with small geometric rosettes turned on a lathe in the form of a disc (Fig. 42). Carved doors similar in composition, but much better in quality and larger in size, were recorded at the entrance to the «France» hotel, one of the best in Mohileu at the beginning of the 20th century (Fig. 43).

A variant of the development of paneled doors are examples in which the upper panels (fillinds) are replaced by glass. At the time of in-situ collections, such an entrance door on the main facade of the building was fixed only once (on a house that was already subject to demolition). However, such examples are not rarely recorded on photographs from the beginning – middle of the 20th century. (Fig. 44, 45).

Twice in the photographs from the beginning – the first half of the 20th century appeared a fixed entrance door designed in the Art Nouveau style. In both recorded cases, they were located at the entrances to the theaters – the city drama theater (built in 1886–1888 according to the project of the architect P. Kam-burov in the pseudo-Russian style, but its doors in the Art Nouveau style were clearly made in the 1900s) and the cinema Art Nouveau (built in the Art Nouveau style in 1909) (Fig. 46, 47).

It should be noted that, in contrast to the doors on the buildings of professional stone architecture of Mohileu, all recorded examples of carved doors used in the wooden architecture of this city show greater modesty – there are no or very rarely applied overhead volumetric elements, and such elements are clearly plain in their execution. In this modesty of door carving design, the wooden architecture of Mohileu is clearly different from similar architecture, for example, in Homel, where three-dimensional elements were much more actively used in decorating not only entrance doors, but also corners, windows, and sometimes even gates.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the small number of preserved and recorded examples of Mohileu doors from the end of the 19th to the middle of the 20th century, the collected materials provided a sufficient amount of information to draw certain conclusions.

Recorded in the late 1940s, the door from the 17th century of an unknown building in Mohileu showed that the tradition of artistic decoration in this city exists at least since this time. The motif of a vase with a bouquet and S-shaped plant curls used in their design was widely used in the art culture of Mohileu in the 17–18th centuries and survived until the middle of the 20th century in the architectural carved window decoration of local wooden buildings. This indicates a certain continuity of the local artistic tradition.

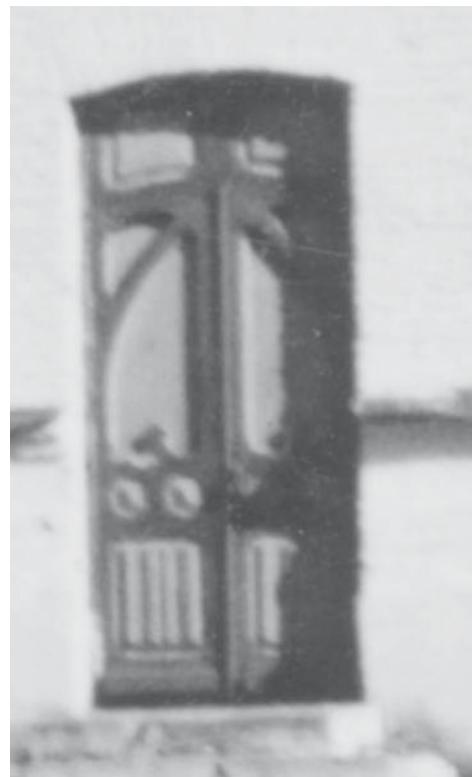


Fig. 46. Mohileu, fragment of the facade of the city theater with doors in the Art Nouveau style at the beginning of the 20th century; photo from the personal collection of A.-D. Lisovsky (Augsburg, Germany)



Fig. 47. Mohileu, a fragment of a postcard with an image of the Modern (Art Nouveau) cinema (opened in 1909); postcard from the personal collection of A.-D. Lisovsky (Augsburg, Germany)

The tradition of carving front entrance doors, recorded on the above-mentioned doors in the 17th century, was continued on the carved doors of Mohileu temples in the 18th century, the decoration of which was made under the influence of baroque and classicism styles.

Comparison of wooden carved doors recorded on manor houses in the late 19th – mid 20th centuries with wooden carved doors on stone buildings of the same and earlier times, showed that the leaders in the development and distribution of the most solemn and modern in style were clearly the doors of wealthy, one might even say elite, stone buildings built according to the projects of professional architects. During the research, traces of obvious imitation of compositional decisions and sometimes decorative motifs from examples of doors of professional architecture (doors of Joseph's Cathedral, Hotel «France») were recorded in private urban construction (stone house on Mihaya Lane, wooden houses on Chyhunachnaya Street). At the same time, recorded replicas of professional examples bear traces of simplification of the adopted prototype.

The leading role in the decoration of the front door was played by fillings, whose very shape, rhythm and proportions created a solemn image of the entire entrance. An important role in this was also played by plastic means – decorating the panels with shallow grooves, voluminous overlapping figures in the form of various pyramids, rhombuses, rosettes, etc. However, comparisons with similar materials recorded in the neighboring, more southerly Homel show that the works of Mohileu masters are characterized by flatter solutions – overlapping figures are quite rare and they stand out due to their small overall height.

On the other hand, on the early examples of Mohileu front doors that have been discovered, decoration in the form of diagonal inlays with a pattern of «herringbone» or a perspective rhombus was actively used. This is a very cheap, simple and archaic way to add minimal aesthetics to a functional door surface. However such examples on the buildings of Mohileu during the field collection of materials in 2019 were not recorded (except for the gates at the entrance to the manor), but they are recorded in photographs from the first half of the 20th century, including at the entrance to the stone Mikolskaya church, built in the Baroque style by local architects in 1669–1672 and the side doors of the church of St. Francis Xavier, built in the first half of the 18th century. This recorded dynamics of the use of such door design indicates the gradual disappearance of the simplest and most archaic options in the construction of the 20th century.

At the beginning of the 20th century, doors appeared in the professional brick architecture of Mohileu, designed in accordance with the aesthetics of the Art Nouveau style prevailing at that time. However, no examples of the influence of this style on the carved decoration of doors in a series of wooden buildings have been found among the recorded materials. In terms of style, the aesthetics of the Baroque and Classicism styles, reinterpreted and reworked to suit the local tastes and financial capabilities of the inhabitants, continued to exert a dominant influence on the masters of the wooden doors of this period and the city.

It is obvious that the various and sometimes even elaborate decoration of the doors played an important role in the aesthetic design of the entrance to Mohileu buildings, both brick and wooden. Made of wood, decorated with various elements of three-dimensional carvings – relief edges, faceted rhombuses, pyramids, rosettes, etc., which were often highlighted with colorful paint, the doors visually contrasted with the flat surface of brick walls or the corrugated surface of unclad log wall buildings. But in both of these cases, the carved wooden door solemnly distinguished the front entrance to the building and, being at the level of direct physical contact with a person, set a general solemn mood for further perception of the interior of the building and its inhabitants.

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