



# Gothic Route

Crossroad of Cultures and Heritage  
*Gothic Route Conference Proceedings V*

# *Gothic Route – Crossroad of Cultures and Heritage*

Gothic Route Conference Proceedings V

*Gotická cesta  
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# Preface

Since 2007, the Gothic Route Association has been trying to systematically help to make the medieval sacral heritage of Gemer and Malohont accessible, to promote it, research and restore it. In recent years, we have also been promoting these precious monuments of this multicultural and multi-confessional region in Hungarian and English, so that people from abroad can also get acquainted with them. One of the ways to help the sacral monuments is through conferences that we organize every two years in the heart of the region – in Rožňava. These events are an opportunity to share and exchange scientific knowledge about monuments from several disciplines and thus to contribute to a better understanding of the historical and artistic values of monuments in the region.

In 2022, for the first time, we held this conference in an international format. Thanks to the financial support from Visegrad Funds, we managed to achieve this goal and to organize the conference with the participation of historians, art historians, architects, epigraphers and preservationists from Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. Our thanks also go to the partner institutions from three countries that are culturally, historically and geographically close to Slovakia, namely *Centrum raně středověkých studií Semináře dějin umění Filozofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity* (Centre for Early Medieval Studies, Department of the History of Art), *Teleki László Alapítvány* (Teleki László Foundation) and *Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Wydział Historyczny* (Jagiellonian University, Faculty of History).

Thanks to the interesting contributions of the authors from Hungary, we had the opportunity to get to know the architectural values and artistic contacts of Gemer and the wider surroundings, but also the phenomenon of the so-called magic pits. Colleagues from Poland opened the topic of sacral architecture and art in the wider Central European context with their contributions. The contribution from the Czech Republic highlighted the important links between the Czech and Hungarian kingdoms in the Middle Ages. And contributions from Slovakia opened up a broader discussion on sacral heritage in terms of geography, history, art history, architecture, epigraphy, and monument care.

At the conference we had the opportunity to see the great interconnectedness of Central Europe and the many parallels between the countries. Also, the informal discussions in the beautiful setting of the Baroque Franciscan monastery in Rožňava showed that, when people from these countries meet, it is as if they are old acquaintances – the debates quickly and spontaneously turn to discussions about common history, but also about common problems that the scholars are

struggling with in their research. The event ended with an excursion that allowed conference participants to marvel at the wealth of monuments that the Gothic Route Association seeks to promote.

We believe that in this way it was possible to put Gemer and Malohont back onto the intellectual map of Central Europe (not only) for a few days.

Editors

# At Europe's Cultural Crossroads



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*Above: Vault of the south side nave in Štítník*

Gemer region is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and forgotten regions of Slovakia. In the past it was an important crossroads of cultural currents. German colonists imported mining and metallurgical technologies, the nobility brought Hungarian aristocratic culture and Italian art was reflected in remarkable sacral wall paintings.

Multiculturalism and multi-confessionalism remained typical features. The decoration of many churches has been preserved in Gemer, as in Spiš, because of the tolerance of the believers. The legacy of those times is still visible in the region today, although the communities of believers are small and the region suffers from an outflow of young educated people to larger centres.

This element, i.e. Gemer as a crossroads of cultures, nationalities and confessions, became a kind of leitmotif of the 5<sup>th</sup> annual conference. Among the speakers were representatives of the V4 countries. Specialists in the field of history and art history from neighbouring countries systematically deal with our history, architecture and visual arts in broader contexts. Researchers and the professional public in Slovakia are often unaware of these studies and the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the Gothic Route event helped to convey this information in our scientific environment as well. It is also interesting to compare the development of the architecture with immediately nearby regions such as Liptov and Spiš. Béla Zsolt Szakács deals with the church in Spišská Belá in the context of the sacral architecture of Spiš; Monika Tihányiová and Peter Koreň with their research in Rimavská Seč have brought knowledge from a hitherto neglected and little-studied church. István Paszternák documented an overview of the magical rituals associated with the appearance of pits in church portals; Justyna Kamińska described the development of the Dominican church and monastery in Sandomierz, Poland. Other Polish researchers deal with the interior furnishings of churches, Wojciech Sowała works on Collegiate church in Skalmierz. In our environment we often lack more cross-sectional research by specialists from academia, but the system of monument protection in Slovakia requires architectural-historical and art-historical research as one of the bases for monument renovation. Thanks to this, we can present new knowledge on the structural development of individual buildings, for example, Ľuboš Kürthy with the topic of medieval development stages at the monasteries in Leles and Šahy. Eva Semanová from Monuments Board has been systematically engaged in the protection and research of historical greenery for a long time. It is important to support architectural research with current historical research; Kornélia Kolářová Takácsová deals with the fundraising activities and contacts of Queen Constance

of Hungary, which we can compare thanks to this historical figure with our environment (Porta Speciosa – the defunct portal of the Esztergom Basilica with Porta Coeli in Tišnov – Předklášteří).

Saint Ladislaus was a significant figure in iconographic cycles and Michal Augustovič explores the written sources of the cult of this saint in Rus. Magdalena Garnczarska gave a lecture on the Breslav Psalter. Slovak researcher Miroslav Čovan collects and studies important epigraphic relics – medieval and early modern graffiti in Gemer. Wall paintings, for which the churches of Gemer are famous, were studied in the early days of monument protection. Documentation, conservation and restoration of historical wall paintings in Hungary until 1918 were presented by the Slovak historian Peter Buday. In Hungary, Zsombor Jékely, among others, is researching Slovak wall paintings and traces the connections and differences between Gemer and Liptov regions. Martin Homza is an important Slovak historian who presented Gemer in his study in a Central European context. Štefan Valášek deals specifically with the medieval wall paintings in Ludrová as an example of the interrelationship between visual art and written text.

We will not be able to preserve wall paintings and precious furnishings unless the churches are systematically maintained. Even many of the buildings that have undergone partial restoration show a number of technically unmanaged details and recurring errors. Pavol Ižvolt presented these situations on the basis of concrete examples based on the work of the Department of Preventive Maintenance of Monuments from the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic.

For this year's excursion, the objects of the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Rožňava were selected, accompanied by Silvia Lörinčíková, archivist from the Bishopric of Rožňava. The tour of the Rožňava Calvary gave an insight into the restoration process. The manor house in Jelšava is known for its long-term preservation efforts led by Viera Kozárová. Saturday's programme allowed for an excursion around the Štítnik Circuit of the Gothic Route. The European dimension of these sacral buildings was confirmed by the award of the European Heritage Label in 2022. The European Commission included the sets of medieval wall paintings found in twelve churches in Gemer and Malohont in the list of monuments of European significance because they reflect common European values and their impact on the development of culture and society.

The international meeting of experts from several countries symbolically puts Gemer back on the map of the European cultural world. We can thank the Gothic Route Association for a successful conference and wish them many more similarly successful conferences, events and much strength in further preservation of this precious heritage.





*Abstract: The paper deals with the genesis of geography standards in Slovak – as used before the language was codified – in connection with the territory of Gemer. For this purpose, the author studies hitherto unexplored documents found in archives. The first group consists of three Slovak manuscripts dealing with geography the author came across recently. The last document – on Ladislav Bohuslav Bartolomeides – is a printed article published in 1798. The broader aim of the paper is to show the genesis of geography as a discipline within the national language of Slovaks before its codification by the Bernoláks and, later on, by Ľudovít Štúr. From a narrower perspective, it is a probe into the teaching of geography of the homeland on the example of one region, Gemer, which – by pure coincidence – also happens to be the birthplace of Ladislav Bohuslav Bartholomeides.*

*Keywords: Geography, Slovak, Matthias Bel, Gemer, Ladislav Bohuslav Bartolomeides*

After the Battle of Mohács on 29 August 1526, Slovakia became the center of political, ecclesiastical and educational institutions of nationwide importance. Among the centers of learning providing higher education were the Catholic Jesuit universities in Trnava and Košice, as well as the Protestant Evangelical lyceums in Prešov, Kežmarok and Bratislava.

For centuries, Kežmarok – the Kežmarok Evangelical Lyceum, to be exact<sup>1</sup> – was one of the most renowned Protestant educational institutions within the polity ruled by the Habsburgs commonly known as Royal Hungary. No wonder, then, that a considerable number of young Slovak Protestants from Gemer studied there. This paper maps how Slovaks – but not exclusively – learned to know their “little” homeland in their native language in geography class at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A slightly earlier – but all the more important – Slovak work from the Catholic milieu will serve us for comparative purposes.

The Kežmarok Evangelical Lyceum harnessed the new spirit brought about by the Enlightenment outstandingly. As a matter of fact, the school underwent a major reform in the 18<sup>th</sup> century under rectors Juraj Bohuš (+ 1722),<sup>2</sup> Juraj Buchholtz, Jr. (+ 1735)<sup>3</sup> and, mainly, Jozef Bencúr/Benczúr (+ 1784).<sup>4</sup> It was thanks to this reform

1 See Johann Lipták, *Geschichte des evangelischen Lyceums* (Kesmark [Kežmarok]: Selbstverlage des Lyzealpatronatesanlässlich der 400-Jahrfeier des Lyzeums, 1933), 237. Imrich Sedlák, ed., *The Kežmarok Lyceum* (Bratislava: Erpo, 1984), 270.

2 On the work of Juraj Bohuš at the Kežmarok Lyceum, see Lipták, *Geschichte des evangelischen Lyceums*, 72.

3 On the work of Juraj Buchholtz, Jr. at the Kežmarok Lyceum, see Lipták, *Geschichte des evangelischen Lyceums*, 72.

4 He was Rector of Kežmarok Lyceum in 1755 – 1760 and 1771 – 1776. Eva Kowalská, “Obrazy dejín etník Uhorska

that geography started to be taught systematically not only at this lyceum but throughout the whole kingdom. Ladislav Bohuslav Bartolomeides – who was born in Gemer and wrote the first printed Slovak textbook on geography, *Geografia, aneb, Wypsánj Okrsslku Zemského*,<sup>5</sup> – studied there precisely at the time the second of the above-mentioned, Jozef Bencúr, was rector (1771 – 1776). (Fig.1)

The journey that led to the publication of the first Slovak geography textbook also starts in Kežmarok. This journey was far from being straightforward, though. In fact, it had several lines. Some of them were described back in 2020 in my study *Notes by Andrej Kleniar/Klenner, an Important Testimony to the First Codification of Geographical Terminology in Pre-codified Slovak*.<sup>6</sup> In the meantime, however, ongoing research has significantly expanded our knowledge on the origin of Slovak written toponymic standards.

In the early summer of 2022, I was lucky enough to come across two documents in the Manuscripts Section (Kézirattár) of the *Inventarium Codicum – Slavicorum* of the Szechényi National Library (*Országos Széchényi Könyvtár*) in Budapest (hereinafter OSZK). The first and earlier one, called *Krátke poznamenání sveta* (A Short Description of the World) was written around 1760.<sup>7</sup> The second and more recent one dates back to the reign of Emperor Leopold II – i.e. from 1790 to 1792 – and forms part of a notebook containing some other texts written in Slovak around the same period. It is called *Geografické rozpsanj Zeme Uherské* (*Geographical Distribution of the Land of Hungary*).<sup>8</sup>

Both documents deserve special attention. Although the earlier work – from the late 1750s – is of major importance for understanding the genesis of scholarly texts on geography in Slovak, it has not been paid the necessary attention – if any – in Slovakia. For this reason it deserves at least a few words. Despite the fact that its author is unknown,<sup>9</sup> its language clearly points at the circle of scholars it comes from, namely cultivated Western Slovak. Moreover, a sentence found in the introduction of the paper, which reads: “*Užiwaj tehdi a zabawugse statečne á mudre á powez aby i takuto prácu mu bylo pochwáleno Gméno Gežissové, Amen*” (So enjoy this work bravely and wisely, and in so doing, enjoy it so that the Name of Jesus may be praised, Amen) reveals compelling information about its author: it was clearly a Slovak Jesuit. Starting with folio No. 13, each page is properly marked

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v učebných textoch 18. storočia“ [Images from the history of ethnic groups in the Kingdom of Hungary in 18<sup>th</sup> century textbooks], *Forum Historiae* 6, no. 2, (2012): 140-146 and eadem “Evanjelické a. v. spoločenstvo v 18. storočí” [Evangelical a. v. Community in the 18<sup>th</sup> century], 166-175 and other works by the same author.

5 Ladislava Bartolomeidesa, *Geografia, aneb, Wypsánj Okrsslku Zemského s ssesti Mappami vlastnj Rukau geho wrytými* (Báňská Bystrica: in Jan Sstefánjho, priv. Knihltlačiteľa, 1798). See mainly chapter II.

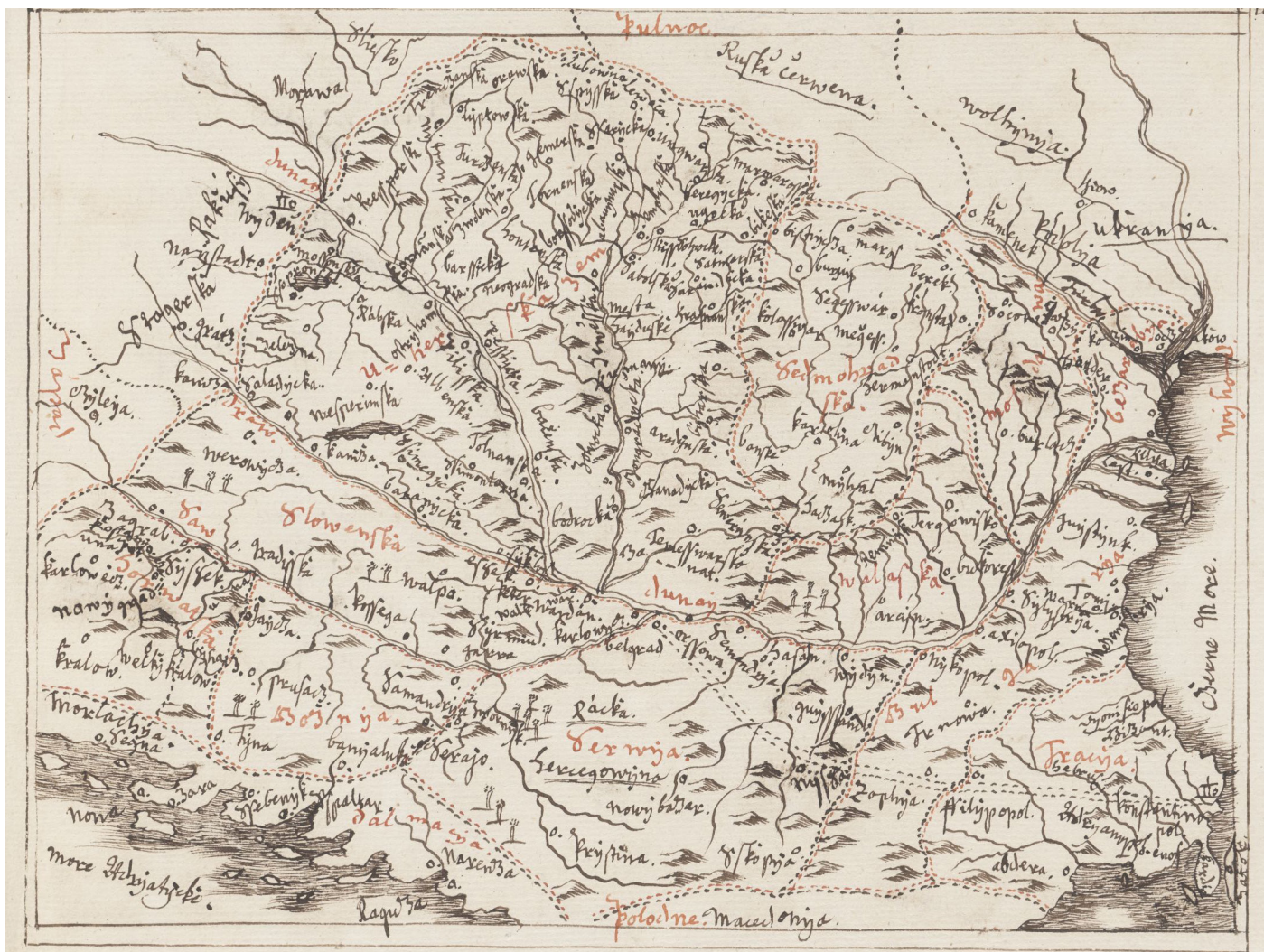
Subpart Uherská země, from p. 57 with enclosed map. On Bartolomeides, see Erika Brtáňová, *Osvietenské písanie Ladislava Bartolomeidesa* [The Enlightenment Writing of Ladislav Bartolomeides] (Bratislava: Veda, 2022), 141, as well as an earlier work by Jozef Martinka, ed., *Ladislav Barolomeides: vlastivedný priekopník* [Ladislav Barolomeides: a Pioneer of Homeland Studies] (Martin: Osveta, 1956), 110.

6 Martin Homza, “Zápisky Andreja Kleniara (Klennera) ako dôležité svedectvo o prvej kodifikácii geografickej terminológie v slovenčine predpisovného obdobi” [Zápisky Andreja Kleniara (Klennera) as an important testimony of the first codification of geographical terminology in pre-codified Slovak] in *Monumenta Linguae Slovacae*, vol. 5, eds. Martin Homza, Naďa Labancová and Vladimír Olejník (Bratislava: Comenius University, 2020).

7 Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (hereinafter OSZK). Budapest. Department of Manuscripts (Kézirattár): *Inventarium Codicum – Slavicorum IN QUARTO* (hereafter Quart. Slav.) *Krátke poznamenání sveta to gest Malý Spis Krajín, měst, wód: áno y národuw rozličných Roka PANE 1759 dokonane 1760*. Sign. Quart. Slav. 37. OSZK, Kézirattár: *Inventarium Codicum – Slavicorum – Octo*. Sign. Octo Slav. 38 (pp. 4-94).

8 OSZK, Kézirattár: *Inventarium Codicum – Slavicorum – Octo*. Sign. Octo Slav. 38 (pp. 4-94).

9 See: “Krátke poznamenání sveta, to gest Malý Spis Krajín, měst, wód, áno y národuw rozličných Roka Pane 1759, dokonane 1760” in *Pramene k dejinám slovenčiny*, vol. 1, ed. Vincent Blanár (Bratislava: Veda, 1992), 257-267. Extract from the original in Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (OSZK) – Magyarország nemzeti könyvtára in Budapest, Quart. Slav. 37 (p. 296).



Map of the Kingdom of Hungary in the 1759 manuscript *Krátke poznamenání sveta* (A Short Description of the World) by an anonymous Jesuit author

on the upper right and left corners. The document has been provided with an additional professional pagination in which the number of every folio has been imprinted in ink. The Arabic folio numbers are located on the right-hand side. The work contains numerous specialized drawings and maps. Another interesting feature of the manuscript is that it was catalogued on 25 December 1797 by librarian and legal historian Martin Gregor Kovachich/Martin Georg Kovachich (+ 1821), a native of Šenkovice who, by the way, also studied at the Jesuit University of Trnava.

A short *Preface* by this anonymous Jesuit is followed by two chapters explaining the basic terminology and defining the measurement methods used in the work. These are plainly illustrated as well. The table of contents of the first Slovak geography textbook that bears the poetic title *Prst ukazujúcej kde hľadať našim Kraginy Strán Sweta etc.* (A Finger pointing at [Guidance on] where to look for countries in the world space, etc.) can be found in folios 8r to 10r. The description of the Kingdom of Hungary forms part of the Danube River Basin section. It begins on p. 159 (fol. 91<sup>r</sup>) with a map of the Kingdom and ends on p. 171 (fol. 98<sup>r</sup>).

This anonymous writer divided the Kingdom of Hungary according to the cardinal points. This division is vaguely reminiscent of the one we know from the work by another Jesuit, Fabio Antonio de Colloredo, from the late 1680s, namely *Parvus Atlas Hungariae sive Geographica Hungariae* (Small Atlas of Hungary or Geography of Hungary).<sup>10</sup> However, it differs from more recent geographical works by other Jesuits – such as Michael Bonbardi (+ 1729)<sup>11</sup> and Samuel Timon (+ 1736)<sup>12</sup> – published in the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the first Slovak text on geography, its author makes a brief enumeration of the counties and their basic characteristics starting from the west. These are followed by the list and description of the southern (*od poledna*) counties of the Kingdom. Next come the counties in the east and the north (*od polnocy*). Gemer is listed among the ‘central’ counties on p. 167 (fol. 97<sup>r</sup>). It is the fourth in the list, before Zvolen and after Torna county. The short description of the county reads: “*Gämerská stol. Mesto predsij Arcibiskupa ostrichomeckého: Rožňawa hodné památky. Mestečká k temu: Četnek, Joližwa, á zámki: Murány, Kóharijho Groffa, Krásna horká Andrassy Barona.*” (“Gemer county. Memorable Rožňava, the town of the Archbishop of Esztergom. The towns of Štítnik, Jelšava and the castles of Muráň, which belongs to Count Koháry, Krasná hôrka (belonging to) Baron Andrassy”).

Before moving on to the initial information about the second manuscript found recently in the Hungarian National Library in Budapest, let us follow a strict chronological order and deal first with a geography textbook in Slovak of an earlier origin, namely the geography class annotations written by Andrej Kleniar, a student of the Kežmarok Lyceum. These notes can be reliably dated back to the reign of Emperor Joseph II, i.e. 1785. Kleniar’s original notebook is now located in

10 Fabius Antonius de Colloredo, *Parvus Atlas Hungariae sive Geographica Hungariae in 40. Tabelas Divisae Descriptio* (Viennae: Typis Leopoldi Voigt, 1689).

11 Michael Bonbardinus, *Topographia Magni Regni Hungariae, Sive Nobilissimae eius Ditionis, quam modo Hungariam dicimus: cum annexis Dalmatiae, Croatiae, Sclavoniae, Serviae, & Bulgariae &c. Regnis; tum etiam Transylvaniae, Valachiae, Moldaviae Provinciis...* (Viennae: Typis Ignatii Dominici Voigt, 1718).

12 Samuel Timon, *Imago antiquae Hungariae, repraesentantis terras, adventus et res gestas gentis Hunnicae: historico genere strictim perscripta...* (Cassoviæ: Typis Academicis Soc. JESU, 1733). Samuel Timon, *Tibisci Ungariae fluvii notio, vagique ex parte...* (Cassoviæ: Typis Academicis Soc. JESU, 1734). Idem, *Imago Novae Hungariae, Repraesentans Regna, Provincias, Banatus, Et Comitatus Ditionis Hungaricae – Additamentum Ad Imagines Antiquae, Et Novae Hungariae...* (Cassoviæ: Typis Academicis Soc. JESU, 1734).

COMPENDIUM  
HUNGARIAE  
GEOGRAPHICVM,

AD EXEMPLAR  
NOTITIAE HUNGARIAE NOVAE  
HISTORICO-GEOGRAPHICAE,  
MATTHIAE BEL,  
IN PARTES IV.

VT POTE,  
HUNGARIAM CIS-DANUBIANAM, TRANS-  
DANUBIANAM, CIS-TIBISCANAM, TRANS-  
TIBISCANAM, ET COMITATVS,  
DIVISVM.



*Cum Permissu Superiorum.*

POSONII,  
LITTEAE IOANNIS MICHAELIS LANDERER,  
TYPOGRAPHI MDCCLIII.



Frontispiece and title page of Matthias Bel's Compendium from 1753

the Kežmarok Lyceum library.<sup>13</sup> Since I have already analysed this text *in extenso* elsewhere, I will deal with it just briefly this time. Undoubtedly, the starting point for these notes was Matthias Bel's original Latin work *Compendium Hungariae geographicum* (The Geographical Handbook of Hungary), which was published in Bratislava after Bel's death in 1753.<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 3)

It is necessary to indicate, however, that the information compiled by the great polymath was summarised for geography teaching purposes by his pupil Ján Tomka Sásky/Szászky (+ 1762). In 1751, Tomka Sásky also included instructional maps in his work *Parvus atlas Hungariae*,<sup>15</sup> which clearly illustrate the geographical division of the Kingdom of Hungary. The second and third editions of Bel's *Compendium* were published in 1768 and 1779, respectively, thanks to the diligence of the aforementioned rector of Kežmarok Lyceum, Jozef Bencúr. (Fig. 6).

The relevance of this piece of information resides in the fact that Kleniar's Slovak notes constitute, in fact, a further adaptation of the mentioned publications. They were primarily developed to serve for teaching purposes at the Evangelical Lyceum in Kežmarok. The reason why these works were translated into Slovak was to strengthen the emotional bond of the students to the places they were learning about: their homeland. Such an approach, however, is not exclusive to Slovak intellectuals.<sup>16</sup>

Leaving out Ladislav Bohuslav Bartolomeides's publication *Geografiia aneb Wysánj Okrsslku...*, there are two more manuscripts or notes of this kind. This very fact implies that there must have been an original Slovak manuscript whose existence or location is, unfortunately, unknown at this time. Nevertheless, its author is most likely to have been Jozef Bencúr himself, the rector of Kežmarok Lyceum. This original manuscript was, then, the basis not only for Kleniar's and the recently discovered geography annotations in Slovak by an anonymous author, but also for a third work: the first printed Slovak geography textbook by Ladislav Bohuslav Bartolomeides.

13 "Školské zápisky Andreja Kleniara z roku 1785" [Class Notes by Andrej Kleniar from 1785], in *Monumenta Linguae Slovacae* (hereinafter MLS), vol. 5, eds., Martin Homza, Naďa Labancová and Vladimír Olejník (Bratislava: Comenius University, 2020), 224 (description of Gemer on p. 162, in the original it is fol. 37v).

14 Mathiae Bel, *Compendium Hungariae geographicum ad exemplar Notitiae Hungariae novae historico-geographicae, Matthiae Bel, in partes IV utpote, Hungariam Cis-Danubianam, Trans-Danubianam, Cis-Tibiscanam, Trans-Tibiscanam, et comitatus divisum* (Posonii: Litteris Ioannis Michaelis Landerer, 1753), 139 p. + index. The Kežmarok lyceum library possesses the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this work from 1772. Undoubtedly, however, earlier editions were already being used, as mentioned below.

15 *Parvus atlas Hungariae* (*Small Atlas of Hungary*). It was published in the form of 19 coloured maps in 1751. More about the author and the work, together with facsimiles of the different maps, also János Tomka Szászky, *Magyarország első történelmi atlasza*, eds. Gergely Tóth and Enikő Török (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Kiadó, 2004). Thus, the material for the medieval engravings of the maps must have been prepared during Bel's lifetime, i.e. before the year usually indicated in their legend, i.e. 1750 – 1751, mostly placed in the upper or lower right-hand corner together with the place of their production and publication, Bratislava (POSONIUM). All 19 maps are richly coloured and to this day they reflect not only the rich knowledge of their creators, but a new edition could make them a tool of inspiration for teaching historical geography today. See in more detail Ján Purgina, "Ján Tomka-Sásky ako historický geograf" [Ján Tomka-Sásky, a historical geographer], *Geografický časopis* 12, no. 2 (1960): 97-100 (here 97-98).

16 Ľubomír Viliam Prikryl, "Vyučovanie zemepisu a tvorba učebníc v Uhorsku so zreteľom na Slovensko do počiatkov 19. storočia" [Geography Teaching and Textbook Creation in Hungary with Regard to Slovakia up to the Beginnings of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century], *Geografický časopis* 32, no. 1 (1980): 28-43. Also Karl Gottlieb von Windisch, *Geographie und Geschichte für Kindern* (Preßburg: Anton Löwe, 1780). I had a second edition of this book from 1786. Johann Ernstfabri, *Kurzer Abriß der Geographie für Schulen* (Halle: Verlage des Waisenhauses, 1786). Idem, *Geographie des Königreichs Ungarn*, vol. 1-3 (Preßburg: Anton Löwe, 1780 – 1790).

It should be said that although both texts are based on the earlier works of Matthias Bel and Jozef Bencúr, they no longer fully reflect the Slovak dimension, which is present mainly in the systematic use of Slovak geographical terminology and the reference made to the Great Moravian aspects of the history of the Danube Basin.



Ján Tomka Sásky: The Kingdom of Hungary divided into 2 parts and 52 counties (1751)



Ján Tomka Sásky: Third Cistisia Circle Divided into 11 Counties (1751)

The different time (1785 – 1798) these Slovak texts were written at and the diverse origin of their authors can be traced back in some linguistic and semantic shifts in their wording. Those concerning Gemer will be listed gradually. The first text in chronological order, *Zápisky Andreja Kleniara* (Andrej Kleniar's Notations), – transliterated as in the original – reads:

*„Ktera gest ssesta Stolica?*  
“Which is the sixth county?

*Gomōrska[.]*  
Gemer

*Gakowe ma pole?*  
What fields does it have?

*Gedna častka geho gest welice vrodna, ale na nekterich mistech pro mnoho homoku,<sup>17</sup> ne mnoho serodj. Chowani dobytkka nenj zde welike[.]*  
Part of it is very fertile but some places, for the amount of sand, do not yield much. Cattle are not raised in large numbers.

*Co prinassj tato Zem?*  
What does this land produce?

*Železo a Cynob.*  
Iron and Cinnabar.

*Gakowich ma obywateluw?*  
What is the population like?

*Vhru Nemcu a Slowaku[.]*  
Hungarians, Germans and Slovaks

*Gak welika gest?*  
How big is it?

*Dluhost gegj obsahuge 10. a ssjrost 8 mil[.]*  
It is 10 [Hungarian] miles long and 8 miles wide

*Gakowe ma mestečka?*  
What towns does it have?

- 1. Roznawu kde Biskup prebywa a Banaye na Zlato med cinob žjwo srebro kopane bywagj*  
1. Rožňava, where the bishop sits and where there are gold, copper, zinc, quick silver mines
- 2. Tsethnek neyznaminitegssj zelezo pameti hodne*  
2. Štítnik best renown for iron

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<sup>17</sup> The expression *mnoho homoku* is unclear. Possibly “too much sand.” *Homok* means *sand* in Hungarian.

3. Dobsina  
3. Dobšiná  
4. Gemer  
4. Gemer  
5. Putnok  
5. Putnok

Banske Mestečko  
Mining towns

*Kdo gest wteto Stolicy hlawnj Ispan?*  
Who is the main Comes in this county?

*Groff Georgius Caky de Keresztszeg.*<sup>18</sup>  
Count Georg Csáky de Keresztszeg (today's Cheresig, Romania)

The second in chronological order is the manuscript by an unknown author from the times of Leopold II found in the Hungarian National Library in Budapest. As already indicated, this manuscript – together with other Slovak texts – is part of a notebook. Just like in the case of Kleniar's, this notebook format also supports the assumption that it served as a teaching aid. The pages of the notebook are numbered in pencil, whereas the different folios have been additionally numbered in ink – just like in the case of the geography textbook by the anonymous Slovak Jesuit. Interestingly, this is the most detailed 18<sup>th</sup> century description of Gemer in Slovak known so far. The author placed the Gemer county between those of Turna and Borsodi as the seventh county of the Cistisia circle. However, he terminologically connected it with the earlier understanding of the so-called *Wissnie Uhry* (Upper Hungary):

*“VII Stolice Gemerská, od mestečka Gemer nazwaná  
VII Gemer County, named after the town of Gemer  
Železem obzvlásste a medi známa.*

Especially known for iron and copper.

*Ě.1 Kterjch se tjka na hranicech swogch?*

Ě.1 What other counties does it border on?

*Na pulnocy tené se Lyptovská a Spiská stolcy, na poldnj*

To the north with the Liptov and Spiš counties, to the south

*Borssodskeg, na zapade Kis-Hontskeg a Zvolenskeg, na wý=  
with Boršod, to the West with Malohont and Zvolen, and to  
chodu pak Tornalskeg.*

the East with Torna.

*Ě2. které mestá prislúchagj do této stolicy?*

Ě2. What towns are found in this county?

*Nasledugjcy, asyce*

The following, namely

*1. Rožnawa banske a biskupské mesto na weselem mjste polo=*

1. Rožnava, a mining and episcopal town, in a cheerful place loca-  
žené, rozličnjmj remeslnjky a handlem, gako tež banemj na  
-ted, known for different crafts and trade, as well as for...  
*zlato med, živé Strjbro a Cynobr známe, pri rece Sajo ležjcy.*

<sup>18</sup> See MLS, vol. V, 162.

gold, copper, quicksilver and cinnabar mines, located on the Slaná river

2. *Gelssawa welike mesto peknyým kasstjelem ozdobené, množ=*

2. Jelšava a large town adorned with a beautiful chateau, ma-  
stwij reči mluwjcyh, známe nade wssecko železem, asbestem,  
-ny languages are spoken here. Known above all for iron, asbestos,  
*Cynobrem, medi, Papjrni.*

cinnabar, copper and a paper mill

3. *Stitnik mesto dosti weliké, mnohjmi Zemanskjimi familie=*

3. Štítňik, a fairly large town, with many lesser noble famil-  
*mj, gako tež neglepssjm železem wychjrené.*

-ies, and celebrated for the best iron

4. *Gemer zamek predtjm, nynj chatrné mestečko, rozli=*

4. Gemer, once a castle, now a shabby town, known...

*čným negkrasnegssjm owocym a wynecmj zname*

for most pleasing fruits and vineyards

6. *Plessiwec srednj mestečko pri rece Sajo položené, a stoli=*

6. Plešivec, a medium-sized town on the Slaná river and...

*čnjmj shroždenjmj známe*

known for county diets

7. *Rimasecs mestečko pro garmarky známe a grófum*

7. Rimaseč, known for its market and belonging

*Koháry vlastné.*

to the Kohary counts

8. *Ratkowa mestečko roliou bohate, a mnoho ssewcú magjcy*

8. Ratková, a town rich in fields and with many tailors

9. *Murány mestečko se zámkem predtjm nagpewnegssjm*

9. Muraň, a small town with the once strongest castle

*který na vysoké welmi skale wystaweny gest, prislucha*

which stands on a very high rock, belongs

*Grófu Kohary a má dobrú papjrni*

to Count Kohary and has a good paper mill

10. *Tyrgárt wesnjce toliko pod kralowu Horu ležjcy, a*

10. Telgárt, a village located just below Kráľová Hoľa,

*wssak pramenem reky Hron známa.*

but known for being the source of the Hron river.

& 3. *Které Zámky se nacházegj w teto Stolicy?*

& 3. What castles are located in this county?

*Nasledugjcy, a wssak giž wssecky skažené, gakožto*

The following ones, but they are all already dilapidated, in fact

*Muráň, Krásna – Horka, Balog, Putnok, a Hajnatsko*

Muraň, Krásna Hôrka, Balog, Putnok, and Hajnáčka

& 4. *Gakowj gsou obywatele a kdo gestit teto Stolice hl. lsp?*

& 4. What is the population like and who is the head Comes of this county?

*Obywatele gsou Uhrowe, Slowácy a Nemcy, hlawnj*

The main peoples are Hungarians, Slovaks and Germans

*Pak Isspan gegi gestit Grof Giri Csaky de Kereřtszegh.*<sup>19</sup>

and its Comes is Count Georg Csaky de Kereřtszegh [today Cheresig, Romania]



Ladislav Bartolomeides' self-painted map VI. (Hungarian Land and Transylvania with Slavonia) published in his work *Geografhia, aneb, Wypsánj Okrsslku Zemského*

The third text – based on the same archetype – is Ladislav Bartolomeides work published in 1798. Pages 57 to 71 deal with the Kingdom of Hungary. At the end of the publication Bartolomeides included the map of the Kingdom by his own hand (Tab. VI) using Slovak toponymies.

Bartolomeides also included Gemer in the Cistisia circle after Abov and before Torna. Just like Andrej Kleniar and Matthias Bel in his *Compendium*, Bartolomeides assigned it serial number 6a.

*“Gemerská St. od pólnoci a západu wr=*

The Gemer county to the north and west hichowatá, na poledne rowněgssí, a proto rozdílňlly, rather plane to the south, and therefore diversely urodná; ta na kowy, tato na obilj bohatssj. Oby= prolific, here in metals, there richer in grain. The people watelé gsou Slowácy, Uhre, Němcy, Řeka Ssa= ples are Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, the Sla-

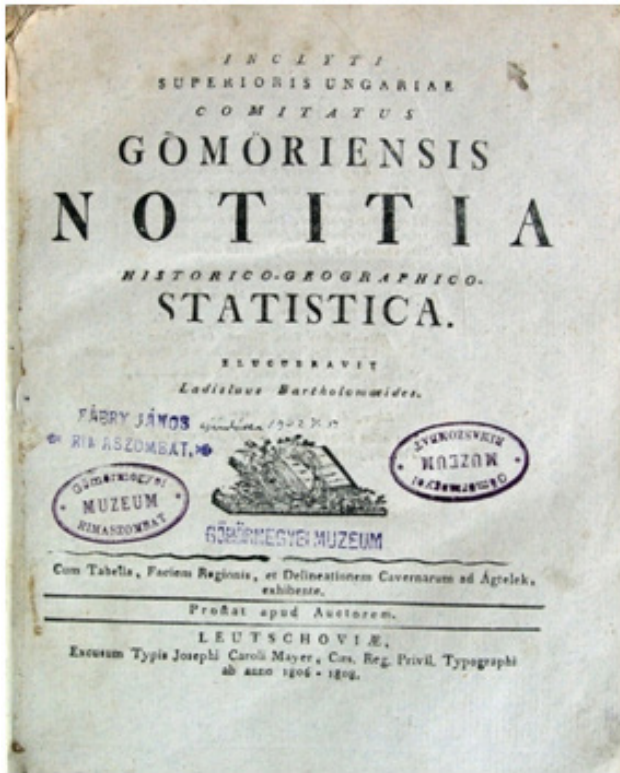
*jawa gi zwlažuge, a Hron tu se počjná. Městeč=* ná river irrigates it and the Hron rises here. The *ka gsou: Rožnawa Biskupské, Stjtjnk, Dop=* towns are Rožňava, a bishopric, Štítnik, Dobssina, Plessowce, Gemer, Gelssawa, Rewu= šiná, Plešivec, Gemer, Jelšava, Revúca, Ratková, Rimaseč, od banjků, a řemesl= ca, Ratková, Rimaseč, with a population of miners and craftniků obydená. Gsau y zámky některé, obzwlásst men. It also has some castles, especially *Murán, a Krásnahorka.”<sup>20</sup>* Muráň and Krásna Hôrka.

As these examples show, all three documents in Slovak have to do with geography teaching at Protestant schools in Slovakia at the time. Two of them are manuscripts and one is printed. The earlier geography textbook by a Jesuit is likely to have had a similar purpose. All four texts have several common and several distinct features. Let us not deal with them comprehensively or systematically now as doing so would go beyond our primary goal, i.e. to present the region of Gemer. However, I would like to make some preliminary generalisations and conclusions on the example of the Slovak descriptions of Gemer. Based on the found similarities and differences, I will then outline some tendencies in the development of 18<sup>th</sup> century geography standards in written Slovak.

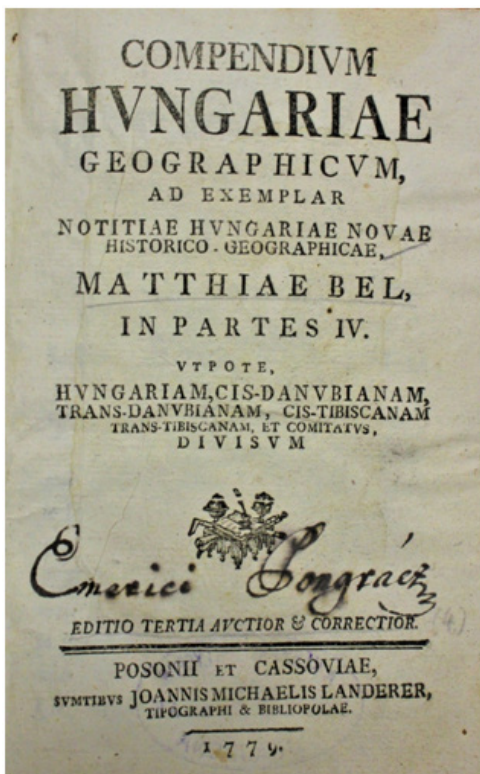
First of all, it is necessary to mention the location of the Gemer county itself. The first of the examined texts, the Catholic *Krátke poznamenáni sweta* (A Short Description of the World), places Gemer between the Torna and Zvolen counties among the 11 counties of the ‘central’ part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Interestingly, the first of these central counties is Zemplín, whereas Bratislava (Pressburg) is the last. Remarkably, Nitra is also included here. In other words, the imaginary “central part” of the Kingdom is almost identical with the present-day territory of Slovakia, as well as with the concept of the Royal Hungary under the rule of

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20 Bartolomeidesa, *Geografía, aneb, Wypsánj Okrsslku Zemského*, 66.



Title page and map of Gemer by Ladislav Bartolomeides from 1806 – 1808



The third edition of the 1779 Compendium was based on the second, supplemented edition prepared by Jozef Bencúr

the Habsburgs. Generalising a bit, it is even possible to say that it also matches the commonly accepted geographical notions that see Nitra as the centre of the Kingdom of Hungary. These concepts are known, for instance, from the *Legend of Saint Svatopluk, King and Confessor* found in the Benedictine menologium compiled in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century by Gabriel Bucelin.<sup>21</sup> Significantly enough, this legend begins with the words “*In finibus Hungariae*”, which can be roughly translated as “Within the boundaries of Hungary” i.e. Nitra (where the remains of Saint Svätopluk lie). In general, including Gemer among the “central” counties seems to follow the line of much earlier notions about the organization of the Kingdom of Hungary. In them, central is understood as being most important as well.

This centrist conception of Gemer stands in contrast to the three other originally Evangelical geographical representations whose common denominator is – as already mentioned – their common source, namely Matthias Bel’s *Compendium*.

The original edition places Gemer after Abov and before Torna (p. 88) as the VI county of the III circuit labeled as “*Circvlvs III Cistibiscanvs in Comitatus XI divisus.*” The defining and dominant feature of this III circuit are the right tributaries of the Tisa River. Only the anonymous author from the time of Emperor Leopold lists Gemer as the seventh county in this circuit. The same author, however, mechanically identified the Cistisia district with the older historical and geographical concept of Upper Hungary, i.e. ‘*Wissnie Uhry.*’

Apart from the location of the county, the basic information Slovak pupils are provided with about Gemer is more or less the same. The only significant differences concern the amount of facts included. All of the versions mention that Rožňava is the most important town in the region although, initially, it had been the municipality of Gemer. The latter, however, eventually lost its leading position. Likewise, they all emphasise the importance of the urban areas of Jelšava, Štítnik and Dobšiná. Plešivec is referred to as the place where the Gemer nobles of the time would assemble. Muráň and Krásna Hôrka are said to be the most important castles although both documents emphasise their deplorable current condition. The lower and flat land of Gemer is described as being fertile, whereas the mountains are said to be rich in minerals. For all of the Evangelical authors, the main river in the region is the Slaná (Sajó). A curious fact is also included, namely that the Hron River rises at Telgárt, at the foot of Kráľova Hoľa mountain. According to contemporary geographers, the most important mineral resources were – the extraction and processing of – gold, quicksilver (mercury), iron, cinnabar (vermilion, cinnabarite or mercury sulphide), as well as asbestos. As for the population structure by language, Hungarians, Slovaks and Germans are the main groups. Slovaks appear on the first place in Bartolomeides’ work only. Although the Slovak geographical handbooks do not deal much with the confessional structure of the Gemer population, it is obvious that the most important Catholic center was the mining town of Rožňava, which had formed part of the Archbishopric of Esztergom since the Middle Ages. In connection with the social stratification of Gemer, Štítnik is made particular mention as the hometown of some lesser noble families. While Rožňava, Dobšiná and Štítnik have a predominantly mining character, the main handicraft centers are said to be Jelšava, Revúca and Ratková.

21 See “S. Suatacopius rex” in *Menologium benedictinum sanctorum, beatorum Atque Illustrium Eiusdem Ordinis Virorum*. ed. R. P. F. Gabrielus Bucelinus (Veldkirchii: Apud Henricum Bilium, 1655), 188.

The rural areas are described as having a predominantly peasant population. The hereditary administrators of the county are the Csáky counts, the owners of Krásna Hôrka are the Andrásy barons, and the lords of Muráň Castle and the village of Rimaseč (Rimavská Seč) are the Koháry barons.

There is no doubt that the information included in these works are, in fact, rather basic facts intended for a specific age bracket of students. This fact also supports the main reason why geography was taught in Slovak, namely to use this knowledge to nurture the natural affection and positive perception the local population had of their common homeland, the Kingdom of Hungary. This idea is corroborated by one of the first sentences of Bel's *Compendium*: *'The Kingdom of Hungary is the richest of all the kingdoms of Europe.*

Moreover – just a few lines below – Bel quotes an old Latin saying popular in the Kingdom: *"Extra Hungariam non est vita, si est vita, non est ita,"* i.e. "There is no life outside Hungary and, even if there is, it is not the real thing." Curiously, someone translated this Latin sentence into Slovak in the margin as follows: *"Takže, gestli wen z neg [Uhorskej země] žiwot gaký, ten wssak predce nenj taki."* ("For if there is any life outside of it [the land of Hungary], this [life] is not so").

Although Bel's *Compendium* was published after his death, it represents the pinnacle of his work and constitutes a general survey of the really impressive geographical knowledge on the Kingdom of Hungary he collected in his unsurpassed writing *Notitiae...* Unfortunately, Bel's premature death did not allow this great polymath to include the Gemer county in his work. His research was completed by Ladislav Bohuslav Bartolomeides, who published *Inclyti Superioris Ungariae Comitatus Gömöriensis Notitia Historico-Geographico-Statistica* (Historical, Geographical and Statistical Knowledge of the Famous Upper Hungarian county of Gemer) in Levoča in 1806 – 1808. See Fig 8.

As a matter of fact, this work is characterised by outstanding scholarly and encyclopaedic standards and still constitutes an inexhaustible reservoir of data on the historical region of Gemer not only for Slovaks, but also for Hungarians, Germans and any other enthusiasts striving to revitalise the significance of this extraordinary county of the Kingdom of Hungary.

## Summary in Slovak

Príspevok sa zaoberá genézou vzniku geografie v slovenskom jazyku predpisovného obdobia so zreteľom na územie Gemera. Autor pracuje prevažne s neznámym materiálom najmä archívneho charakteru. Ide o tri slovenské dokumenty s geografickou tematikou rukopisného charakteru, ktoré boli objavené autorom článku v poslednom období. V prípade Ladislava Bohuslava Bartolomeidesa ide o text, ktorý vyšiel v roku 1798 tlačou. V širšom zámere je cieľom práce poukázať na genézu vzniku odboru geografie v národnom jazyku Slovákov pred jeho uzákonením Bernolákovcami a napokon Ľudovítom Štúrom. V užšom slova zmysle ide o sondu do problematiky výuky zemepisu vo vzťahu k vlasti na príklade poznania jedného regiónu. V prípade Ladislava Bohuslava Bartolomeidesa, zhodou okolností aj jeho rodného.

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## Medieval and Early Modern Graffiti Inscriptions in Gemer Region



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*Above: North wall of the presbytery of the Evangelical Church in Ochtiná with graffiti inscription*

*Abstract: The paper deals with a specific kind of epigraphic monuments in Gemer region. Graffiti inscriptions, unlike other inscriptions, were mostly created spontaneously. Although this has a negative effect on their formal design, it can also decipher the content of the texts which are unique. There are different kinds of graffiti. The simplest ones, in the form of initials associated with dating, have very little meaningful value. More interesting are those with a full name, origin and occupation. I consider texts that express the creator's religious or other worldview beliefs to be the pinnacle of graffiti inscriptions.*

*Keywords: graffiti, Gemer, Middle Ages, Early Modern Period*

## Introduction

The inscriptional culture on the territory of Gemer in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period represents an important part of our cultural history. It is a region with many immovable or movable artefacts and these are the carriers of epigraphic monuments, i.e. inscriptions. The reasons why we need to systematically examine such written sources are obvious to the professional public. By deciphering, analysing and comparing inscriptions we gain important information about the worldview of our ancestors. After all, the text they chose to place on an exposed piece of sacred architecture, religious utensil, or sepulchral monument represented a community or influential individual. Thanks to epigraphic monuments, we gain valuable information about the time of creation of the medium itself, whether it is architecture or a movable artefact. By analysing the inscriptional text, we can reveal the initiator of the artefact's creation or its commissioner or the craftsman who made it. In the Early Modern period, for large texts of a literary nature (epitaphs, epigrams), successful decipherment of an inscription can help to reveal authors of such poems, who were educated scholars, rectors of local schools or pastors and preachers. It is for these reasons that epigraphic research is valuable for preservationists, church historians or art historians.

Graffiti inscriptions are a special kind of inscription culture. Unlike other inscriptions, they were created spontaneously, which is reflected rather negatively in their formal design. Even among their contemporaries, they were not as valued as epic, official epigraphic artefacts, and so very often, as we know it today, graffiti depictions and texts overlap older ones, or are scratched out and destroyed. They are therefore often illegible and their narrative value is often minimal. This is

especially true for those inscriptions where only the initials have been preserved, at most supplemented by the phrase *Hic fuit* (*I was here*), or its abbreviated form *HF*. The graffiti containing a full name with dating are much more interesting. Unlike today, we observe that, especially since the onset of the Reformation, this form of self-presentation was typical of prominent personalities. Thus, often a scholar, a pastor or a school rector hides behind a name. Members of the nobility are no exception. Such personalities, sometimes, do not limit themselves only to the name and date, but also reveal their occupation and origin. The most valuable graffiti are those whose creators also try to express their worldview, mostly through passages from the Bible or liturgical texts or through their own work, for example in the form of a poem.

We must not forget that the term graffiti also includes spontaneous artistic expressions, which were very diverse. A classic example known in the Middle Ages was the pentagram, which was present in our churches, and therefore also in the churches of Gemer, and has been preserved to this day. It was actually a five-pointed star, which has had a protective function since pre-Christian times.<sup>1</sup> In the Gemer region, let us mention for example Ochtiná, where the pentagram is found in abundance in the interior of the church. Various other depictions are also known, such as a rider on horseback or hanged man. Such graffiti is recorded in Kraskovo. In Ochtiná, mentioned above, a horse with a rider in the form of a grim reaper has been preserved.<sup>2</sup> It is debatable whether the distinctive mark on the Archangel Michael's sword in Kraskovo can also be regarded as graffiti. This could have been part of the original fresco. In any case, the wheel as a symbol of torture and justice, supplemented by a cross, clearly demonstrates an attempt to express that it is an executioner's sword.

## Gemer graffiti inscriptions

The first inscription that I would like to present is a typical example of a simple graffiti inscription, which is, however, located on an extremely rare monument. It is a unique depiction of the Holy Trinity in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Rákoš. The seated God with three faces giving blessings is holding an open book with a text, which is not a graffiti inscription, but because of its importance I will take the liberty to interpret it at this point. It is an inscription expressed in Gothic minuscule and, like the entire painting, most likely dates from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century: *'Ego : s/um : [l]/vx m[u]/ndiqui : cr/edit : / in me / : vive/t : in et(ernum)'*, that is, *'I am the light of the world. He who believes in me shall live forever'*.<sup>3</sup> Probably from the 17<sup>th</sup> century comes the graffiti, which contains only the name without dating: *'MICHAEL / VIETORIS'*. In addition to the name, a figure is engraved above the faces of God, which we can probably associate with the inscription itself, i.e. the name.

1 Hans Biedermann and Sybille Biedermann, *Lexikon symbolů* [Dictionary of Symbolism] (Prague: Beta, 2008), 263-264.

2 I am grateful to Peter Lukáč for the information about this scene.

3 Peter Mlích, "Nástenné maľby v Kostole Najsvätejšej Trojice v Rákoši" [The Wall Paintings in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Rákoš], in *Najnovšie poznatky z výskumov stredovekých pamiatok na Gotickej ceste III.* [Recent Findings of Research on Medieval Monuments on the Gothic Route III], ed. Michaela Kalinová (Rožňava: O. Z. Gotická cesta; Bratislava: PÚSR, 2020), 56-57.

The author's claim that the creator of the inscription did not know Latin because he used "vivet" instead of "vivit" is not true. The form "vivet" is the future tense of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and the whole inscription must be interpreted as such. From a theological or religious point of view, this is crucial information.

The figure represents a man girded with a sword scabbard, holding a sword or another weapon in one hand. Most likely, therefore, it was a soldier. However, this is mere conjecture. We have not been able to find out anything else about Michael Wietoris.

Although graffiti inscriptions have been preserved mainly from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which is undoubtedly related to the increasing education of the population and also to the Reformation, such written records were also left by people in the Middle Ages. Gemer is exceptional in this respect because of the number of preserved monuments. One of them, and one of the oldest, is an inscription in the Evangelical Church in Kraskovo from 1429: *'Michael de [- -] rona a(n)no d(omi)ni 1429'*. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to identify the locality from which Michael came.

Interestingly, the dating is already expressed in Arabic numerals using the Gothic form of the numeral four and the letter o, which is superscripted above each numeral, thus referring to the dating and use of ordinal Latin numerals in the ablative: *millesimo quadringentesimo vigesimo nono*. As early as the Middle Ages, it was common for a given individual to try to leave a memory of himself with multiple inscriptions. This is also the case in the Evangelical Church in Ochtiná. It was done by a certain Stephen of Brezno or Brusno in 1475: *'hic fuit Stepha(nvs) de brvszno anno / d(omi)ni lxxv'*. Interestingly, other graffiti also come from the same year, with the year being expressed in Arabic numerals with typical Gothic shapes for the four, seven and five for a change. The following text is engraved next to this year: *'1475 / [- -] bartholomeus [- -] / hic fuit hospes de liphovia [- -]'*. The name of the man from Liptov is unfortunately not preserved, but the word "hospes" is extremely valuable, i.e. how he perceived himself. This Latin expression has several meanings. In the context of place and time, however, it should certainly be translated as pilgrim. This says a lot about who the authors of the graffiti inscriptions in this period were. Again, the mention of Liptov as the origin of this or any other pilgrim in Ochtiná was not the only one.

The connection between Gemer and Liptov is also reflected in the following, already Early Modern inscriptions. Several personalities from Liptov left their traces on the wall paintings in the Evangelical Church in Kocelovce. I deliberately refer to personalities because in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries it was no longer just pilgrims or other anonymous individuals creating graffiti. They are already educated, often prominent rectors, preachers or pastors. In Kocelovce, for example, the following inscription is still preserved: *'Hic fuit Johan(nes) Priehradni Lipto[viensis]'*. According to the findings so far, he did not work as a preacher or pastor in Kocelovce. In any case, he certainly served as a pastor in the territory of Gemer in the 1740s and 1750s. First in Rákoš, later in Ratková and finally in Poloma.<sup>4</sup> Balthasar Duchon, who engraved this inscription in Kocelovce, almost certainly came from Liptov: *'H(ic) F(uit) Balthasar Duchon / Anno Domini / 1595'*. We know that from 1569, the senior and Svätá Mara pastor of the same name was the head of the Liptov Protestant Clergy Association. Although we cannot claim with certainty that it was this prominent representative of the Evangelical Church who was in Kocelovce, we cannot ignore the fact that several members of the Duchon family served as

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4 András Fabó, *Monumenta evangelicorum aug. conf. in Hungaria* III (Pest: Kiadja Osterlamm Károly, 1865), 25, 39-40.

pastors in Liptov at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>5</sup> With the last Liptov citizen in Kocelovce, however, we need not doubt his identity at all. The graffiti inscription that he carved into a wall painting reads as follows: *'Joannes Schyermer / Hybensis'*. The native of Hybe served as a pastor in Kocelovce around 1615. He had previously served in the same position in Vyšná Slaná and in the village of Brádno. He moved from Kocelovce to Kunova Teplica around 1619.<sup>6</sup>

In Kocelovce I also managed to identify graffiti that may have a different informational value for us. One of the inscriptions reads as follows: *'Hic fuit m(a) g(iste)r [- - -] organista de [- - -]'*. Although I have not yet been able to identify the name and the locality, the inscription, probably dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, informs us directly about the occupation of the person in question, who was an organ player. Another mid-16<sup>th</sup>-century inscription from Kocelovce has similar content: *'[- - -] qui fecit fenestra(m) vitrea(m) [- - -] 1550'*. It was thus a craftsman who made the glass for one of the windows of the church. In contrast to these texts, in Chyžné, in the Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, the entire inscription has been preserved, i.e. both the name and the position performed by the author of the graffiti: *'Ego Martinus Malichi(us) occupavi scholam / Chiznensem concomitante Deo die 18 Augus[tij] / Anno 1637'*.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the new rector actually brings us closer to one of the reasons why such graffiti inscriptions could have been created. It was a significant event in the life of a particular scholar, and he chose to immortalize it in this form, as evidenced by the pronoun *ego*. Sometimes graffiti inscriptions can have a high narrative value also in terms of the history of a local place or region. An extensive graffiti inscription in the Evangelical Church in Ochtiná, which was created in 1622, represents a real unique feature: *'N(ota) B(ene) / A(NNO) D(OMINI) 1622 summa / annonae caritas et inaudia / fuit in omnib(us) Regionib(us) / hic in superiori Hungar(ia)'*.<sup>8</sup> Some commodities and their prices are mentioned in the text. These include, for example, barley, wheat, wax, lard and beef. It is clear that the text is describing the situation in the country following the outbreak of the plague. We know from historical sources that the provinces of north-eastern Hungary were particularly affected.

From the point of view of personal statement, the texts, through which their writers tried to express their worldview, are a kind of imaginary peak of graffiti creation. One of them has been preserved in Ochtiná by an unknown author who probably created it in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century: *'[laetabitur i]ustus in [Domino] et sperabit in D(omi)no et laudabu(n)t(ur) omnes recti corde'*.<sup>9</sup> This is a text from the Book of Psalms, specifically Chapter 63, verse 11. It is thus clear that the author of the text was an educated man, again probably a member of the clergy or a teacher, who either worked directly in Ochtiná or was a guest there.

A truly unique place as far as these graffiti inscriptions are concerned is the Evangelical Church in Štítník. I will focus here in particular on the late Gothic wooden stallum in the sanctuary of the church. I have managed to identify several very significant texts on it, which are extremely valuable sources for the understanding of the spiritual history of Gemer in the Early Modern Period. The

5 Fabó, *Monumenta evangelicorum*, 56-57, 62.

6 Ladislaus Bartolomaeides, *Memorabilia provinciae Csetnek* (Neosolii: Johannes Stephani Typographus, 1799), 152-153.

7 I, Martin Malichius, with the support of God, took control of the school in Chyžné on 18 August 1637.

8 In 1622 there was an unheard-of grain price in all regions, here in Upper Hungary.

9 *The righteous shall be glad in the LORD; he shall take refuge in him. And all the upright in heart shall glory.*

significance of the inscriptions is increased by the knowledge that we can link at least part of them to a specific person. One of the inscriptions reads as follows: '*Jacob(us) / Szentivaniensi[s] Anno 1637*'. It is remarkable that here again we are dealing with a man from Liptov region, specifically from Svätý Ján. Jacob was active in the region for a long time. Although we do not know what specific position he held in 1637 when he created the inscription(s), between 1648 and 1653 he was a pastor in nearby Kunova Teplica. From there he moved to Lipovník.<sup>10</sup> It cannot really be assumed that he alone was the author of all the inscriptions. In any case, these were extremely educated people. Similar to the name of Jacob from Svätý Ján, the following text, dating from the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was also written with red pigment: '*Haec fuit effigies quonda(m) venera/bilis Hussi / dum sua pro Christo mem/bra cremandi dedit*'.<sup>11</sup> It is clear that this text must have been a response to the depiction of Jan Hus near the church bench, which, however, has not survived to this day. The couplet itself comes from the 1558 edition of the collected writings of Jan Hus and Hieronymus of Prague, prepared for the press by the humanist scholar Matthias Flacius Illyricus.<sup>12</sup> He was also the author of the couplet that accompanied the image of the burnt Jan Hus in the book. Another couplet was written in the same space and at the same time: '*Quod sibi quisque serit presentis tempore vitae, Hoc sibi messis [erit dum dicitur: Ite, venite!]*'.<sup>13</sup> It is a Latin proverb, already known in the Middle Ages, the origin of which is not entirely clear.<sup>14</sup> This couplet was very often part of another larger text.<sup>15</sup> Another text that I have been able to identify in this space is written by another hand: '*Credo in [unum Deum] / patrem [omnipotentem]*'. This is certainly the beginning of the Apostles' Creed. The last graffiti inscription from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, which has survived to the present day on a rare Late Gothic artefact, is also a message for contemporary admirers of the church in Štítník.

For the following text is a universal statement and message that any person in the world today can identify with, regardless of anyone's worldview or creed: '*Quid valet hic mundus quid Gloria quidve / [triumphus]*'. This verse has almost always been associated with the line, '*Post miserum funus pulvis et umbra sumus*', translated as: *What is the value of this world, of fame or victory? For after a miserable death we are but dust and shadow*. The origin of these verses, philosophical principle or moral, is unclear. However, our scholar in Štítník may have been inspired by the then very popular German humanist poet Hans Stigel, who incorporated these verses into his poem *Vita hominis meditatio mortis est*.<sup>16</sup>

10 Bartolomaeides, *Memorabilia provinciae Csetnek*, 154.

11 *This is the likeness of Hus, once a venerable man, when he had his body burnt for Christ's sake.*

12 Mathias Flacius Illyricus, *Iohannis Hus et Hieronymi Pragensis confessorum Christi Historia et monumenta I-II* (Nurembergae: in Officina Ioannis Montani. et Vlrici Neuberi, 1558).

13 *He that soweth what he soweth in his lifetime shall reap when he heareth: come, it is time to come!*

14 On Latin proverbs from the medieval period, see Jakob Werner, *Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sinnsprüche des Mittelalters aus Handschriften gesammelt* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1912).

15 Julius Wegeler, *Philosophia partum versibus praesertim leoninis, rhythmis Germanicis adiectis, iuventuti studiosae hilariter tradita* (Confluentibus: Rud. Frid. Hergt., 1869), 28.

16 *Poematum Iohannis Stigelii, Liber II. Continens sacra* (Ienae: Excudebat Donatus Richtzenhain et Thomas Rebart, Anno M. D. LXVI). Accessed May 31, 2023, [http://mateo.uni-mannheim.de/camena/stigel1/books/stigelpoemata\\_2.html](http://mateo.uni-mannheim.de/camena/stigel1/books/stigelpoemata_2.html). We cannot, however, attribute authorship to him either. The verses had already appeared before as part of the Sepulchralia. At the same time, the text "*pulvis et umbra sumus*" already appeared in the works of Horace or Ausonius. DI 75, Halberstadt Dom, No. 201 (Hans Fuhrmann), accessed May 31, 2023, [https://www.inschriften.net/halberstadt-dom/inschrift/nr/di075-0201.html?tx\\_hisodat\\_sources%5Baction%5D=show&tx\\_hisodat\\_sources%5Bcontroller%5D=Sources&cHash=3258edf29f2fb19dfeed6e766c0c58b7](https://www.inschriften.net/halberstadt-dom/inschrift/nr/di075-0201.html?tx_hisodat_sources%5Baction%5D=show&tx_hisodat_sources%5Bcontroller%5D=Sources&cHash=3258edf29f2fb19dfeed6e766c0c58b7)

# Conclusion

The Gemer region is one of the key areas in our territory in terms of epigraphic research. Graffiti inscriptions are a natural part of the whole research process. The examples of my research presented here sufficiently demonstrate the validity of their identification and analysis through which it is possible to learn more deeply not only about the inscriptional culture of our ancestors. After all, it is through inscriptions created in such a spontaneous way that we learn about historical personalities, their origins, their work or even their thinking.<sup>17</sup>

## Summary in Slovak

Nápisová kultúra na území Gemera v stredoveku a ranom novoveku predstavuje dôležitú súčasť našich kultúrnych dejín. Ide o región s množstvom nehnuteľných či hnutelných artefaktov a práve tie sú nosičmi epigrafických pamiatok, čiže nápisov. Osobitný druh v nápisovej kultúre predstavujú graffiti nápisy. Na rozdiel od ostatných nápisov vznikli spontánne, čo sa prejavuje na ich formálnom vyhotovení dosť negatívne. Ani medzi svojimi súčasníkmi nepožívali tú vážnosť ako výpravné, oficiálne epigrafické artefakty a tak veľmi často, tak ako to poznáme aj dnes, graffiti vyobrazenia aj s textami prekrývajú tie staršie, resp. sú preškrabávané a ničené. Výpovedná hodnota graffiti nápisov je rôzna. Úplne najcennejšie sú tie graffiti, ktorých tvorca sa snaží vyjadriť aj svoj svetonázor, a to zväčša prostredníctvom pasáží z biblie či liturgických textov alebo svojou vlastnou tvorbou, napríklad v podobe básne. Jedinečným príkladom v tomto smere je drevené neskorogotické stallum v evanjelickom kostole v Štítniku, ktoré je nosičom textov vytvorených nepochybne vzdelaným človekom, ktorý či už priamo v Štítniku alebo inde na Gemeri zastával funkciu farára či rektora.

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<sup>17</sup> The study was carried out as part of the solution of the grant project VEGA 1/0256/22: Inscriptional Culture of Košice in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period.



Graffiti 'Hic fuit Johan(nes) Priehradni Lipto[viensis]', the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> c., Ev. Church of A. C. in Kocelovce



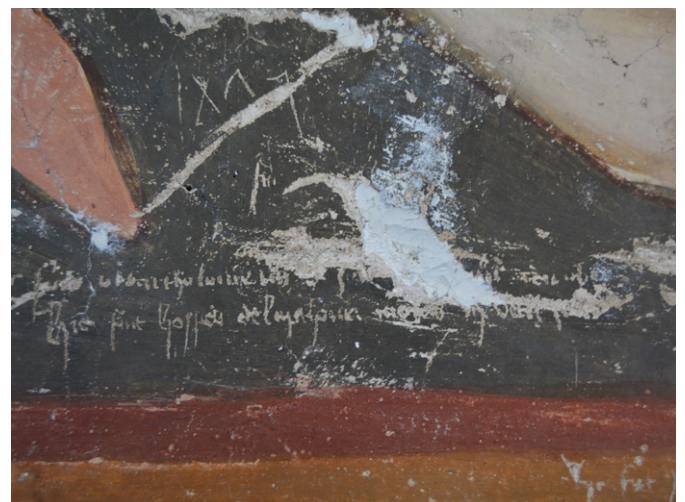
Graffiti 'N(ota) B(ene) / A(NNO) D(OMINI) 1622 summa / annonae caritas et inaudia / fuit in omnib(us) Regionib(us) / hic in superiori Hungar(ia)', Ev. Church of A. C. in Ochtiná



Graffiti 'H(ic) F(uit) Balthasar Duchon / Anno Domini / 1595', Ev. Church of A. C. in Kocelovce



Graffiti 'Ego Martinus Malichi(us) occupavi scholam / Chiznensem concomitante Deodie 18 Augus[ti] / Anno 1637', Church of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary in Chyžné



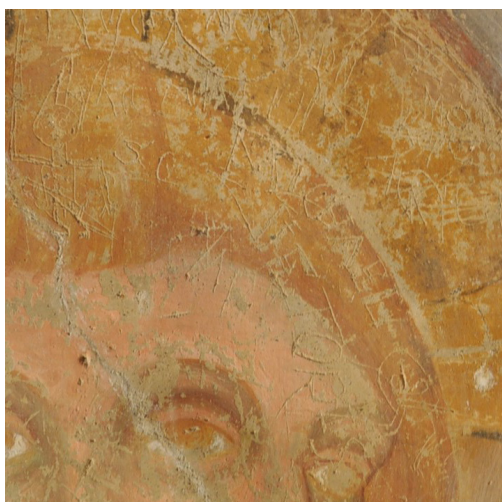
Graffiti "1475 / [- -] bartholomeus [- -] / hic fuit hospes de liphthovia [- -]", Ev. Church of A.C. in Ochtiná



Depiction of the Holy Trinity, beg. of 15<sup>th</sup> c.,  
Church of the Holy Trinity in Rákoš



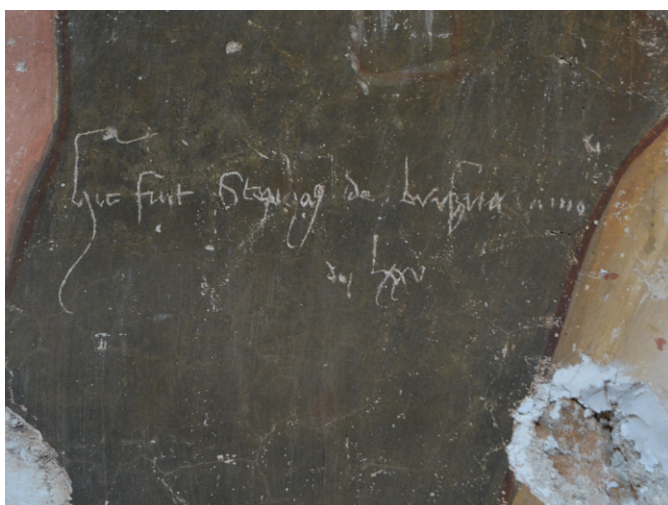
Depiction of a pentagram, symbol of protection, 16<sup>th</sup> c.,  
Ev. Church of A. C. in Ochtiná



Graffiti on the depiction of the Holy Trinity,  
"MICHAEL / VIETORIS", 17<sup>th</sup> c., Church of the  
Holy Trinity in Rákoš



Graffiti "Michael de [- - -]rona a(n)no d(omi)ni 1429",  
Ev. Church of A. C. in Kraskovo



Graffiti 'hic fuit Stepha(nvs) de brvszno anno / d(omi)ni lxxv',  
1475, Ev. Church of A. C. in Ochtiná



Graffiti "Jacob(us) / Szentivaniensi[s] / Anno 1637", Late Gothic stallum, Ev. Church of A. C. in Štítník



Wooden Late Gothic stallum, beg. of 16<sup>th</sup> c., Ev. Church of A. C. in Štítník



Graffiti inscriptions, the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> c., Late Gothic stallum, Ev. Church of A. C. in Štítník

## *Gemer and Rus': The Knightly Story of Saint Ladislaus in the Written Sources of Medieval Rus'*



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*Above: Fresco Cycles of Saint Ladislaus, Evangelical Church in Kraskovo, detail*

*Abstract: The story of St. Ladislaus, who pursues a Cuman warrior in order to rescue a kidnapped Hungarian girl, then wrestles with the pagan warrior and together with the girl kills the Cuman, is known from numerous wall painting preserved in churches in the territory of the former Kingdom of Hungary and from several Hungarian chronicles. In the 15th century, however, the story found its way in altered form to distant Russia, where it became part of liturgical books and several chronicles. In this story, Ladislaus no longer fights against a Cuman, but kills the Tartar leader Batu himself. Potentially, Ladislaus thus becomes a model of successful struggle against the Tatars.*

*Keywords: Saint Ladislaus, legend, wall painting, medieval Rus'*

One of the most frequent motifs of wall paintings in Gemer and Malohont regions is the so-called Legend of St. Ladislaus. The story of the Hungarian King Saint Ladislaus, who ruled at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, became popular especially from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, thanks to the Anjou kings. To this day, wall paintings depicting this story have been preserved in the churches of Rimavská Baňa, Kraskovo and Rákoš in Gemer and Malohont. It survived in a fragmentary form in the church in Silica, and thanks to the restorers Peter Koreň and Juraj Gregorek, fragments of this story have recently been uncovered in the church in Kameňany. The focus of this paper is the knightly story of Saint Ladislaus, so we will help ourselves by a description of the story on the wall paintings, as interpreted by Zsombor Jékely:

*"Upon hearing of the invading Cumans, Prince Ladislas and the Hungarian army leaves the castle (generally identified as Várad [Oradea, Romania]); then a tumultuous battle against the Cumans ensues. Ladislas then notices a Cuman warrior, who has abducted a Hungarian girl, and proceeds to chase him on horseback. The Cuman shoots arrows back at Ladislas, who pursues him with lance in hand – but in vain. In the climax of the narrative, the heroes dismount, and a duel with bare hands follows: they pull at each other's belt and grab each other's shoulders, to no avail, until the rescued girl intervenes and cuts the Cuman's tendon with an axe or sword. The king and the girl then decapitate the Cuman; and finally, Saint Ladislas rests under a tree with his head on the girl's lap, as she touches the king's hair."*

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1 Zsombor Jékely, "Transylvanian Fresco Cycles of Saint Ladislas in a New Light," *Hungarian Review* 5, no. 2 (2014): 98.

It is not surprising that in Gemer and Malohont regions the story of St. Ladislaus is present in several churches. This story in the form of fresco cycles was probably widespread throughout the entire Kingdom of Hungary. This is still evidenced by preserved wall paintings in Slovakia, Transylvania (Romania), Hungary and Slovenia. Surprisingly, however, the story has spread in a modified form in distant Russia.<sup>2</sup> The aim of the following lines is to present a reflection on the authorship of the Russian version of the story from the point of view of scholars who have worked on the subject and to compare in rough outline this adaptation with the Hungarian version or versions of the story. Possible reasons for why the story of Ladislaus appears in the milieu of Eastern Christianity, as well as the image of Ladislaus as a military saint, are addressed in the Master Thesis from 2022.<sup>3</sup>

## The authorship of the Russian version of the story of Saint Ladislaus

Although the story is sometimes referred to as the *Legend of St. Ladislaus*, some scholars (e.g. Gábor Klaniczay) prefer the term *Historia*, as it is not a legend in the true sense of the word. The story, for which this study uses the name the *Historia of Saint Ladislaus*, is referred to in Russian sources as the *Narrative of the Killing of Batu*. This story is present in Russian records in two versions: *chronicler*<sup>4</sup> and *menaion* version.<sup>5</sup> The shorter chronicler version is found in several Russian chronicles<sup>6</sup> and in the *Chronograph*<sup>7</sup>, while the longer one is present in the liturgical books called menaion where it is supplemented by the *Narrative of the killing of Michael of Chernigov*.<sup>8</sup> The first who identified this story in Russian sources as an adaptation of Ladislaus' *Historia* was the Russian scholar S. P. Rozanov in 1916. He published the text of the story in this form: *"The Killing of the Evil Batu in Hungary*

2 In this study, the term "Russia, Russian" is used alongside the term "Rus" as the paper deals with texts that date to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Russia was gradually being formed from the Principality of Moscow. It is therefore complicated to clearly distinguish between "Rus" and "Russia."

3 Michal Augustovič, "Saint Ladislaus in Rus: Hidden Aspects of the Saint Ladislaus Cult" (Master Thesis, Vienna: Central European University, 2022), supervisor Prof. Gábor Klaniczay.

4 *Летопись* [letopis] – a literary genre popular in Rus, usually translated as "Chronicle."

5 *Минея* [mineya] (gr. *menaion*) – the liturgical service book used in Eastern Orthodoxy and by Uniaths containing hymns and collects for each month. The book includes the invariable feasts of Christ, the Virgin Mary and other Christian and Old Testament saints. *Encyclopedia Britannica* accessed May 5, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Menaion>.

6 *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей* [Complete collection of Russian chronicles], vol. 23 (Saint Petersburg: Typography of Edward Prats, 1910); *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей* [Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles], vol. 24 (Saint Petersburg: Typography of Edward Prats, 1921); *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей* [Complete collection of Russian Chronicles], vol. 25 (Moscow: Typography of Edward Prats, 1949). [A. A. Gorskij] A. A. Горский, "Повесть о Убиении Батия' и Русская Литература 70-х Годов XV в" ["The narrative of the killing of Batu" and Russian literature of the 1570s], in *Средневековая Русь 3* [Medieval Rus] (Moscow: Indrik, 2001).

7 *Хронограф* [chronograph] – a specific literary genre occurring in Russia since the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century which attempt to capture world history in a systematic way, while also having a moralising character.

8 For a more detailed analysis of the sources, see the study of Gorskii, in which he compares the diverse variants of *Historia* contained in Russian sources and explains their relationship: [Gorskij], "Повесть о Убиении Батия," 191-221.

See also: [O. L. Novikova] О. Л. Новикова, "Материалы Для Изучения Русского Летописания Конца XV – Первой Половины XVI в.: I. Летописные Подборки Рукописи Погод. 1956" [Materials for the study of Russian chronicle writing from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century: I. Chronicle collections of the manuscript Pogod, No. 1596], in *Очерки Феодалной России* [Essays on feudal Russia], vol. 11 (Moscow, 2007), 161-164. From older works: [S.P. Rozanov] С. П. Розанов, "Повесть Объ Убиении Батия'" [The narrative of the killing of Batu], in *Извѣстiя Отдѣленiя Русскаго Языка и Словесности Императорской Академiи Наукъ* [News of the department of Russian language and literature of the Imperial Academy of Sciences] 21, no. 1 (1916): 109-110.

[...] And this is how the wrath of God came to Oradea itself, a city of Hungary.<sup>9</sup> This city is in the midst of Hungary, where there are few common trees, but plenty of fruit, and an abundance of wine. The whole city is surrounded by water, and therefore the inhabitants of this fortress fear no one. In the centre of the town stands a towering pillar, which greatly astonishes all who see it. At that time the King Vladislav<sup>10</sup>, the ruler of this country, was the king of the Hungarians, Czechs, Germans and the whole Pomorie as far as the Great Sea.<sup>11</sup> At first the Hungarians received baptism into Orthodoxy from the Greeks, but the Greeks failed to translate their writings into their language, while the Romans, being close to them, forced them to follow their heresy, and it has been so ever since. The aforesaid King Vlaslov also remained obedient to the Roman Church until St. Sava, the Serbian archbishop, came to him and persuaded him to adhere to the pure Christian Greek faith, without, however, outwardly making it known, because he (Ladislaus) feared that the Hungarians would rise up against him. [...] The most accursed tsar<sup>12</sup>, Batu, came to the country, destroying cities and killing God's people. [...] When this ruler (Ladislaus) saw the wrath of God, he came to the land, weeping, and could do nothing, and abode many days, neither any bread nor water in his mouth, but abode upon the pillar aforesaid, watching what the ungodly (Tartars) would do. His sister fled to his city (Oradea), but the barbarians, who reached her, captured her and took her to Batu. The King Vladislav was crying so much when he saw this; he began to pray to God. [...] He was speaking weeping and the tears that flowed from his eyes were like a river, and wherever they fell on the marble, they soaked in, to know God's help. And a man stood before the king, and said to him: "Because of your tears the Lord gives you victory over the wicked king." And he (Ladislaus) began to look into the face of him that spoke to him, and saw no one. And when he came down from the pillar, he saw a saddled horse, on which there was no one. It was standing by him, carrying a (battle) axe, and from this he understood that God's help would help him the most. So the ruler sat on his horse and roaring, rode out of the city against those who opposed him. But when the adversaries saw this, they were overwhelmed by fear and fled. He pursued them and destroyed a great number of the wicked barbarians. [...] The ungodly Batu fled to the plains of Hungary and his evil life came to an end at the hands of the ruler Vladislav himself. But the inhabitants living there say that Vladislav's sister, who was kidnapped, then fled with Batu. And then, when Vladislav was wrestling with Batu, his sister helped Batu, and so the ruler (Ladislaus) killed them both. [...] The king<sup>13</sup> was made of copper, sitting on a horse, and holding the axe in his hand with which he had killed Batu, and he was set up on that pillar to be seen and to commemorate the family, and (stands there) to this day."<sup>14</sup>

9 The text uses the Slavic name for Oradea – *Великий Варадин* [Velikij Varadin]. Compare with the Slovak form *Veľký Varadín*.

10 Ladislaus is referred to as *Vladislav* or *Vlaslov* in the Russian text.

11 József Perényi interprets *Pomorie* as Dalmatia and the *Great Sea* as the Atlantic Ocean. According to Perényi, the author is actually describing a situation in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the Kingdom of Hungary was ruled by Sigismund of Luxembourg, who was also the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. [József Perényi] Йозеф Перени, "Легенда о святом Владиславе в России," [The legend of St Vladislav in Russia] *Studia Academica Scientiarum Hungaricae* 1 (1955): 227-244.

12 In Russian sources, Mongol khans are usually referred to by the title of *tsar*.

13 Meaning his aforementioned statue.

14 убиение злочестиваго Батяя въ угрехъ.

[...]Симъ же тако бывающимъ, достиже онъ гневъ Божий и до самага Великаго Варадина, града Оугорскаго. Той бо среди земли Оугорской лежить, древесъ простихъ мало имоущихъ, но много овощиа, изьобилна же и вина; град же весь водами обведень, и отъ сеа же крепости не боящяся никого же. Среди же града столъпъ стоа превысокъ, елико оудивляти зрящихъ нань. Бы же тогда самодръжець тоа земли король Владиславъ, Оугромъ же и Чехом и Немцемъ и всемоу Поморию, даже и до Великаго моря. Бехоу же пръвое Оугри въ православие крещение отъ Грекъ приемше, но не оупевшимъ имъ своимъ языкомъ грамотоы изложити, Римляном же, яко близъ соущихъ, приложиша ихъ своей ереси последовати, и оттоле да иже и до днесъ бывает

Rozanov assumed that this text was written by an author of Serbian origin in Oradea, who later reworked it in Russia into its present form. According to Rozanov, at the time when the author visited Oradea, there were two stories about St Ladislaus that could have been a source of inspiration for the author of the Russian version: 1) *the Historia of St Ladislaus*, and 2) *the story of the Tatar invasion*, where the defeat of the Tatars was caused by a military miracle in which the reliquary with the head of St Ladislaus played a major role. Thanks to the Serbian author, according to Rozanov, the story of Ladislaus made its way into the Russian chronicles, from where it was later taken and combined with the *Narrative of the killing of Michael of Chernigov* and in this form it was later included in the *menaion*.<sup>15</sup>

The first scholarly reflection on the Russian version of the *Historia* from the Kingdom of Hungary also dates back to 1916. In this year, probably independently of Rozanov, the author of Ruthenian origin, Anton Hodinka, also identified that the text found in Russian records was an adaptation of the *Historia of St. Ladislaus*. He published four texts from Russian chronicles dealing with Hungarian history. They also contained the text of the Russian version of the *Ladislaus' Historia*. Although Hodinka provided the Russian text with a short commentary, he did not deal with the subject of the story of Ladislaus in detail. Like Rozanov, he assumed that the author of this version was of Serbian origin. The latter was to be evident especially from the use of some Serbian terms.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, József Perényi believes that the author of the Russian version of the story was of Serbian origin. Apart from the argument that the author uses some Serbian linguistic elements in the text, the fact that this author was obviously familiar with the *Life of Saint Sava*<sup>17</sup> is

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такo. Предреченный же король Власловъ и той такоже пребываше римской церкви повиноуася, дождеже прииде к нему святыи Сава, сербский архиепископъ, и семоу паки сътворяеть пристоупити к непорочней хрестыанстей вере гречестей, не явленно, отай, бояше бо ся вьстания Оугровъ на ся.  
 [...]Той же оканнхъ оканнейший царь Батыи пришелъ в землю, грады разроушаа и люди божиа погоубля.  
 [...]Тый же самодръжець, видевъ божий гневъ пришелъ на землю, плакааше, не имый что сътворити, на многи же дни пребысть, ни хлеба, ни воды вкушаа, но пребываше на предреченном столпе, зря бываемаа отъ безбожныхъ. Сестра же его бежаше к нему въ градъ; тя же варвари, достигше ю, плениша и к Батыю отведоша. Король же Владиславъ сиа видевъ и тако сугубый плачь на рыдание приложивъ, начать Бога милити.  
 [...]Сиа же ина многа плача глаголаше, слезам же текущимъ отъ очию его, речнымъ быстринамъ подобящеся, и идеже аще падааху на мраморие, оно проходяхоу насквозе, еже есть познаша помощи Божией быти. Ста же некто предъ кралемъ и рече ему: "Сего ради твоихъ слезъ даетъ ти Господь победити царя злочестиваго." Начаша же смотрити лице глаголющаго и не видеша его ктому. И съшедше съ столпа оногo, видеша конь оседланъ, никим же дръжимъ, о себе стоащъ, и секира на немъ. И отъ сего избестнейши разумеша помощи Божией быти. И тако самодръжець вседь на коня оногo и изыде на противныхъ изъ града с вой, елико обретошася с нимъ. Видевше же спротивни, и абие страхъ нападе на нихъ, и на оубешание устремилася. Они же вследъ текуше, толикое множество безбожныхъ варвать [...]безбожному оному Батыю къ Оугорскимъ планинамъ бежашо, зле житию конецъ приемлетъ отъ роуки самого того самодръжца Владислава. Глаголють же неции иже тамо живущей челоуеци, яко сестра того Владислава, еюже плениша, и та тогды бежаша бяше с Батыемъ.  
 И бысть повнегда сплестися Владиславу с Батыемъ, тогда сестра его помагаше Батыю, ижже самодръжець обою погоуби. [...]Створен же бысть меднымъ деланиемъ король на кони седя и секироу в роуце держа, еюже Батя оуби, и въдрожень на томъ столпе на видение и на память родоу и до сего дне. Trans. Michal Augustovič, for original text, see:  
 [S.P. Rozanov] С. П. Розанов, "Повѣсть Обѣ Убіеніи Батыя" [The narrative of the killing of Batu], in Извѣстія Отдѣленія Русскаго Языка и Словесности Императорской Академіи Наукъ [News of the department of Russian language and literature of the Imperial Academy of Sciences] 21, no. 1 (1916): 96-98.  
 15 [Rozanov], "Повѣсть Обѣ Убіеніи Батыя," 96-114.  
 16 Anton Hodinka, *Az Orosz évkönyvek Magyar vonatkozásai* [Hungarian aspects of the Russian annals] (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Science, 1916), 458-83. Hodinka pointed out that the author uses some Serbian terms instead of Russian ones: *память [paměť]* ("memory") instead of Russian *память [pamyat']* and *кράль [kraľ]* ("king") instead of Russian *король [koroľ]*. However, the terms used are the same in some West Slavic languages. For example, in Slovak: *kraľ* – king and *paměť* – memory [pameť].  
 17 In the Russian version of the story of Ladislaus, the narrative of Ladislaus' struggle with the pagan is preceded by a passage in which the king is converted to Orthodoxy by the Serbian archbishop St. Sava.

also supposed to confirm his Serbian origin. Perényi in his study also analysed the intellectual background of the author of the Russian variant of the *Historia* and tried to trace where this author might have drawn inspiration from when writing the *Narrative of the killing of Batu*. He identified the Serbian monk Pachomius as the author and tried to trace the places he might have visited. Perényi argues that Pachomius mentions in some of his works that he came to Russia from a monastery in Athos, but on the other hand, in the *Life of Nikon of Radonezh*<sup>18</sup>, he claims that he came to Russia from Serbia. Although no evidence of Pachomius' stay in the Serbian monastery of Chilandar on Athos has been found, Perényi nevertheless thought that he spent some time there for study purposes. He also considered it probable that Pachomius had stayed in the Serbian monastery of Manasija for some time. This monastery was an important intellectual centre of Serbia, and Pachomius had the opportunity to acquire better knowledge here than at Athos. According to Perényi, in the context of the Russian version of Ladislaus' *Historia*, it is certain that the author personally visited Oradea, where he had the opportunity to see the statue of St. Ladislaus with his own eyes and where he learned about the *Historia of St. Ladislaus* from the locals.<sup>19</sup> Perényi assumed that Pachomius visited the city between 1410 and 1438, and considered 1438 as the last possible year of his visit, since he was already in Russia in that year. From this Perényi deduced what sources and knowledge Pachomius could have worked with: (1) the Hungarian *Historia of St. Ladislaus* and his struggle with the Cumans, (2) the stories told to him by the inhabitants of Oradea, (3) his own observation of the life in the city, (4) the *Life of St. Sava* by Theodosius,<sup>20</sup> (5) and information from some Balkan sources about the Christianization of the Hungarians by the Byzantines. According to Perényi, Pachomius brought to Russia a new genre – *the chronograph* – dealing with world history and linked it with the positive example of the victorious heroic struggle against the Tartars (*St. Ladislaus' Historia*), which was to be a model for the Russian princes in their struggle for liberation from the Tartar yoke.<sup>21</sup>

The literary scholar Đorđe Radojičić also assumed a Serbian author of the Russian narrative, as it is obvious that the author was familiar with the *Life of St. Sava*. He also claimed that the author had probably personally visited Oradea and talked to its inhabitants. Radojičić mentioned the famous equestrian statue of St. Ladislaus, which was located in the city and which is mentioned in the Russian version of the *Historia*, but erroneously claimed that it was destroyed by the Turks in 1474. Based on this misunderstanding, he concluded that the Russian version of the *Historia* was written before that year. He associated the Serbian author's activity with the acquisition of possessions in the area by the oppressor Štefan Lazarevič in 1411 and, on the basis of these arguments, assumed that the work must have been written between 1411 and 1474. Radojičić ruled out the possibility that Pachomius was the author of the text. He argued that the *Chronograph*, which we know was written by Pachomius, contains an abridged version of the *Narrative of the killing of Batu* (*Historia*) and the author would not have abridged his own text.

18 Nataliya Pak, "The Third Pachomian Edition of the Life of Nikon of Radonezh," *Slavianovedenie* 4 (2020): 50-67.  
 19 Since 1390 there has been an equestrian statue depicting St. Ladislaus on horseback holding a battle axe. The statue was destroyed during a Turkish attack in 1660. This statue probably inspired the author of the Russian version of the *Historia* to create the story about the marble column.

20 Perényi assumed that the version used was that of the Serbian monk Theodosius the Hilandarian (1246 – 1328), see: [Теодосије] Теодосије, *Житије Светоз Саве* [Live of Saint Sava], ed. [Danijel Dojčinović] Данијел Дојчиновић (Banja Luka: Art Print, 2016). In contrast, Rozanov concluded that the Serbian author used the version of *Life of Saint Sava* by Domentian. See: Domentijan, *Žitije Svetog Save* [Live of Saint Sava], ed. Dimitrije Bogdanović (Belgrade: Gregorić, 1984).

21 [Perényi], "Легенда о святом Владиславе," 227-244.



1. (IX) The king defending himself against the demon with a cross, 2. (X) St. Ladislaus fighting the Tatars (Cumans), 3. (XI) St. Ladislaus is wounded, 4. (XII) St. Ladislaus wrestles the Cuman, whose leg is cut off by the girl (Hungarian Angevin Legendary, Vatican Codex, Wikimedia)

XIII. qm̄ Comanū tepitabat p̄ crines  
et puella decollabat collum suū.

XIII. qm̄ iacebat in gremio puelle.



XV. qm̄oto br̄a iugo meditat ip̄m.

XVI. qm̄ elevat' est in aerem.

1. (XIII) The girl beheads the Cuman 2. (XIV) Saint Ladislaus rests on the girl's lap 3. (XV) The Virgin Mary heals the king's wounds 4. (XVI) The king rises into the air in prayer (Hungarian Angevin Legendary, Vatican Codex, Wikimedia)

Radojičić assumed that the longer *menaion* version was older.<sup>22</sup> The American historian Charles J. Halperin also disagreed with Pachomius' authorship and assumed that the text was written without any political aim. Nevertheless, Halperin misinterpreted the text of the Russian narrative when he claimed that Ladislaus (living in the 11<sup>th</sup> century) erected the column in Oradea, while in fact the equestrian statue was erected in 1390. According to Halperin, "The 'Tale' may [...] be described as the anonymous work of a writer of unknown ethnic identity, unquestionably addressed to a Muscovite audience."<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, O. M. Ulyanov connects the origin of the text with the hostile sentiments against the Golden Horde in the Russian milieu, which culminated in the Great Stand on the Ugra River in 1480, and dates the text to the 1480s. Ulyanov considers the authorship of Pachomius possible, but in any case he connects the origin of the text, in addition to anti-Horde sentiments, with the distrust of Western Christianity after the Union of Florence in 1439 and with the intellectual immigration to Russia from the Balkans as a result of Ottoman expansion. However, he focuses only on *the chronicler version* of the Russian version of the *Historia*.<sup>24</sup>

In a recent study, A. A. Gorskii made a detailed analysis of various variants of *the Narrative of the killing of Batu* (i.e., the Russian version of Ladislaus' *Historia*) and *the Narrative of the killing of Michael of Chernigov*, and by comparing the variants he concluded that Pachomius can indeed be considered the author of the Russian *Historia*. Gorskii identified certain characteristic features of Pachomius' style, such as repeated references to the same work already existing in the literature before him. According to Gorskii, it is clear from a comprehensive analysis that the Russian version of the *Historia* was not written as a supplement to the *Narrative of the killing of Michael of Chernigov*, but was written earlier. One of the reasons why the monk Pachomius can be considered the author of both the Russian *Historia* and the *Narrative of the killing of Michael of Chernigov* is the use of the same words in both texts. In both narratives, Batu is referred to as *окаянный* and *безбожный*, referring to the Tatars as *варвары*, terms that were not commonly used in Russia before the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but Pachomius used them. Gorskii concluded the question of authorship by stating that the author of the Russian version of the *Historia* is Pachomius, who compiled the work no later than 1477.<sup>25</sup> Also G. M. Prokhorov identified Pachomius as the author. In his study devoted to this author, he described his literary output. Prokhorov dated the creation of the Russian version of the *Historia* before 1473, but considered the South Slavic folk song to be the source of this narrative. According to Prokhorov, however, it is not clear whether Pachomius was supposed to have written the Russian narrative or was merely a compiler.<sup>26</sup> The topic of authorship was also addressed by the Hungarian linguist and Slavist András Zoltán, who presented an overview of the literature

22 [Ђорђе Radojičić] Ђорђе Радојичић, "Стара Српска Књижевност у Средњем Подунављу (Од XV До XVIII Века)" [Old Serbian Literature in Central Danubian Region (from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century)], *Годишњак Филозофског Факултета у Новом Саду* [Annual review of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad] 2 (1957): 239-270.

23 Charles J. Halperin, "The Defeat and Death of Batu," *Russian History* 10, no. 1 (1983): 60-3.

24 [О.М. Улјанов] О. М. Уљанов, "Смрт Батја (к Водросу о Достоверности Летописног Соодбешенја о Гибели в Венгрии Золотоордынског Хана Батја)" [The death of Batu (On the reliability of the chronicle account of the death of the Golden Horde Khan Batu in Hungary)], in *Сборник Русског Историческог Обшества* [Collection of the Russian Historical Society], vol. 11 (Moscow: Russkaja panorama, 1999).

25 [Gorskij], "Повест о Убиении Батја," 191-221.

26 [G. M. Prokhorov] Г. М. Прохоров, "Пахомий Серб (Логофет)" [Pachomius the Serbian (Logofet)], in *Словарь Книжников и Книжности Древней Руси* [Dictionary of scribes and bookishness of ancient Rus], vol. 2 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989).

on the creation of the Russian version of *Historia*. Zoltán pointed out that the two versions of the narrative have different lengths. On this basis, he considers it unlikely that the shorter and longer versions were written by the same author, as it is unlikely that the author of the *menaion* version would have shortened his text into a *chronicler version*. Furthermore, according to Zoltán, there is no evidence that Pachomius was still alive at the time of the *Chronograph's* composition, which would have been in the 1490s.<sup>27</sup> R. J. Pochekaev, on the contrary, expressed the conjecture that the author of both – *The killing of Batu* and *the Chronograph* – was Pachomius. However, Pochekaev was more concerned with the reasons why *the Narrative of the killing of Batu* was written than with who wrote it, and he considers it a political rather than a historical work.<sup>28</sup> The Russian version of the *Historia* has also been discussed by the political scientist A. B. Strakhov. He assumes Pachomius as the author, although he gives no arguments. However, Strakhov has attempted to sketch a picture of the political background in which the text of the Russian version of the *Historia* was written, as well as the motivations that the author may have had in writing the text.<sup>29</sup>

## Comparison with the Hungarian tradition

If we compare the text of the Russian version of the *Historia* of St. Ladislaus with the Hungarian version, the most striking difference from the traditional interpretation of the wall paintings is the change in who embodies the enemy. According to the usual interpretation of the wall paintings, it is the *Cumans*, and this is evidenced by the traditional Cuman caps worn by the enemies on their heads. In the case of the Russian version of the story, however, the enemy is embodied by the *Tatars* ("*Татары*"). Comparing the Russian version with the written versions of Ladislaus' *Historia* found in several Hungarian chronicles, we can see that some sources also mention *Tatars* instead of *Cumans* as enemies. In the *Chronica picta* the *Cumans* appear as enemies, but in one variant they are identified with the *Tatars* as well: "*De adventu Cunorum quos vocant Tartaros*."<sup>30</sup> In the *Hungarian Angevin Legendary*, the brief comments on the pictorial scenes depicting Ladislaus' *Historia* mention, in one illumination, the *Tartars* and, in another, the "*Comanis*". In the case of the *Chronicon Rhythmicum* by Heinrich of Mügelin, the enemies are referred to as *Tartars* and *Huns*.<sup>31</sup> However, the story that corresponds most closely to the story on the wall paintings is recorded in a German-written chronicle, also by Heinrich of Mügelin, which is also commonly referred to as the *Ungarnchronik*.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in this version of the *Historia*, as in the case of the Russian variant, the *Tatars*, i.e. "*Tatter, Täter*", act as enemies. Thus, we can say that the identification of the enemies with the *Tatars* is probably not an idea of the author of the Russian version of the story, but was already present in the Hungarian tradition. However, the identification of the main negative

27 András Zoltán, "Szent László és Batukán" [Saint Ladislaus and Batu Khan], in *Ad vitamaeternam: Tanulmánykötet Nagy István 70. születésnapjára*, ed. Mária Gyöngyösi (Budapest: ELTE, 2017), 355-361.

28 [R. J. Pochekaev] Р. Ю. Почекаев, *Батый: Хан, Который Не Был Ханом* [Batu Khan: The khan who was not khan] (Moscow: Evrazija, 2006).

29 [A.B. Strakhov] А.Б. Страхов, "О Духовно-Политических Смыслах 'Слова Об Убиении Злочестивого Царя Батыя'" [On the spiritual and political implications of the 'Word of the killing of the evil tsar Batu'], *Историческое Образование* [History Education] 2 (2014): 100-105.

30 In the note this version of the legend is marked as V4. Imre Szentpétery, ed., *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum* (further as *SRH*), vol. I (Budapest: Hungarian Historical Society, 1937), 366.

31 *Chronicon rhythmicum Henrici de Mügelin* in *SRH* II, 269.

32 *Chronicon Henrici de Mügelin Germanice conscriptum* (Ungarnchronik) in *SRH* II, 177.



*Stylites (pillar saints), a type of eremites widespread in the Byzantine Empire (Wikimedia)*



*Bronze equestrian statue of Saint Ladislaus in Oradea (c. 1595, Austrian National Library, Vienna, Wikimedia)*



*Fresco Cycles of Saint Ladislaus, Evangelical Church in Kraskovo  
(photo by David Raška)*

character of the story with Batu is probably an innovation. He is represented in the Hungarian tradition by a pagan leader named "*Osul*".<sup>33</sup>

There is also interesting information that is not found in the Hungarian versions of the story. One of the additions is a scene depicting Ladislaus fasting and praying on a pillar. This is strikingly reminiscent of the type of eremites – *stylites*, who were especially associated with the ascetic life on pillars and who were known in Eastern Christianity.<sup>34</sup> This element may therefore have been the invention of the author of the Russian version, who, as an intellectual coming from the Eastern Christianity background, must have been familiar with this type of eremitism. The Russian story goes on to describe that during Ladislaus' prayer, his tears ran down his pillar and that they soaked into the marble. In this context, it is interesting that in the sermons of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Bishop Benedict of Oradea, it is actually mentioned that there is a stone relic in Oradea soaked with the tears of Saint Ladislaus. This tradition may have been brought to Oradea, as the centre of the cult of Saint Ladislaus, by King Bela III, who initiated his canonisation in 1192. During Bela III's stay at the Byzantine court in 1169, the Pantokrator monastery received a stone from Ephesus as a gift, on which the body of Jesus Christ was supposed to lie, and which was soaked with the tears of the Virgin Mary. This motif could then be brought directly to Oradea by King Bela III.<sup>35</sup> Although the origin of the story of the stone soaked with the tears of Saint Ladislaus deserves more research, it is likely that the author of the Russian text could have taken the motif of the stone soaked with his tears from the local Oradean tradition.

A significant change from the Hungarian sources is the fact that Ladislaus is not referred to by the adjective *saint* in the Russian version. Nevertheless, even in this version of the story he is associated with motifs that make him a supernatural figure. Before the decisive scene of the chasing the pagan, according to the Russian version of the story, a saddled horse with an axe appears to Ladislaus. Thus, Ladislaus is associated with his typical attribute of a saint – a battle axe and also an exceptional horse, which is known from Hungarian written sources under the name Zug.<sup>36</sup> Both of these attributes acquire a supernatural aspect in the story, especially as they miraculously appeared to Ladislaus after his fasting and prayer on the pillar and in particular after his conversation with the unknown stranger. Thus, although Ladislaus is not directly referred to as a saint, he cannot be considered an ordinary mortal, since even the gifts mentioned (horse, axe) are referred to in the story as "divine help" and thanks to them Ladislaus achieved victory.

33 Chronicon Pictum: *Osul* in SRH I, 367; A different form of the name is in both chronicles by Heinrich of Mügelin: *Osla*, in SRH II, 177, 269.

34 *Stylite* – "a Christian ascetic who lived standing on top of a column (Greek: *stylos*) or pillar" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed May 31, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/stylite>.

35 Terézia Kerny, "László Király Szentté Avatása És Kultuszának Kibontakozása (1095 – 1301)" [The Canonization of King Ladislaus and the Unfolding of His Cult (1095 – 1301)], in *Ősök, Táltosok, Szentek. Tanulmányok a Honfoglaláskor És Árpád-Kor Folklorjából* [Ancestors, Táltos's and Saints. Studies in the Folklore of the Time of the "Conquest" and the Age of the Arpads], ed. Éva Pócs and Vilmos Voigt (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1998), 177.

36 In the Chronicon pictum the name of the horse is mentioned as *Zug* (SRH I, 368) in the Ungarnchronik as *Zaug* (SRH II, 177).

## Conclusion

Although a number of studies have been devoted to the knightly story of St. Ladislaus (in this study referred to as *St. Ladislaus' Historia*) in Central European historiography, the Russian version of the story remains understudied. For this particular reason, the above work mainly cites scholars from other regions. On the question of authorship, most scholars agree that the author of the Russian version of the Ladislaus' story was of Serbian origin. Several arguments led them to do so. The first one being the fact that the author was familiar with the *Life of Saint Sava*, and the second being the linguistic elements which the authors consider to be of Serbian origin. Most of the scholars consider the Serbian monk Pachomius to be the author of the narrative. Arguments in favour of his authorship are based mainly on his Serbian origin, his high scholarship, and the fact that he was the author and compiler of many lives of saints in Russia, including *The Narrative of the Killing of Michael of Chernigov*, which is related to *The Narrative of the Killing of Batu*. The author of the Russian variant modified the story to the Russian setting. To make the saint acceptable to Eastern Christianity, he inserted a passage about his conversion to Orthodoxy. On the other hand, the story of Ladislaus retained many facts from the Hungarian milieu. The main source for the creation of the Russian variant was probably the wall paintings and local tradition in the city of Oradea. We can assume that this tradition was cultivated by the local clergy and that these were not just stories of the common people. The main storyline of the story remains preserved, but it is supplemented with motifs not found in the Hungarian versions of *Ladislaus' Historia*. It is likely that some of the motifs originated in the milieu of Orthodox Christianity.

## Summary in Slovak

Príbeh o Svätom Ladislavovi, ktorí prenasleduje Kumánskeho bojovníka, aby zachránil unášané uhorské dievča a následne s pohanským bojovníkom zápasí a spoločne s dievčaťom Kumána zabije, je známym z početných nástenných malieb, ktoré sa zachovali v kostoloch na území bývalého uhorského kráľovstva a z viacerých uhorských kroník. Tento príbeh však v 15. storočí našiel v pozmenenej podobe cestu aj na vzdialenú Rus, kde sa stal súčasťou liturgických kníh a niekoľkých kroník. V tomto príbehu už Ladislav nebojuje proti Kumánovi, ale zabije priamo tatárskeho vodcu Batua. Uhorský kráľ Ladislav sa tak na Rusi mohol stať vzorom úspešného bojovníka proti Tatárom. Štúdia ponúka prehľad literatúry, zaoberajúcej sa otázkou ruskej verzie príbehu o Svätom Ladislavovi a tiež porovnanie tohto príbehu s uhorskou tradíciou.

## *From Gemer to the North: Wall Painting Workshops around 1400*



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*Above: Necpaly (Necpál), nave (above later vault), Pietà*

*Abstract: The paper explores the activity of painting workshops responsible for the decoration of the sanctuary of Rimavská Baňa (Rimabánya) and Rákoš (Gömörrákos), calling attention to their stylistic connection to the paintings of Čerín (Cserény) in Zvolen County. Additional connections are made with the nave frescoes at Šivetice (Süvete) as well as at Necpaly (Necpál). This interconnected group of wall paintings can be dated to the second decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, based on historical and heraldic evidence. Our goal is to propose more secure dates for some key monuments in Gemer County, enabling to clarify the chronology of key monuments. The paintings reflect Central European International Gothic style, which exerted a strong influence in these regions, and which modified the predominantly Italian Trecento style of paintings of the previous generation.*

*Keywords: wall painting, stylistic connections, International Gothic style*

The richness of wall painting in the territory of Gemer and Malohont (Gömör and Kishont) Counties is unrivalled in the territory of the former medieval Kingdom of Hungary. Village churches in the region preserve complex hierarchical cycles painted in the sanctuaries and extensive narrative cycles in the naves, which were commissioned by some of the leading aristocratic families of 14 – 15<sup>th</sup> century Hungary. Although the material is quite well known and accessible, several basic uncertainties still exist concerning this material.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the dates of the creation of the mural cycles are usually very approximate and references to their commissioners are often based on educated guesswork. To arrive at a clearer picture and a more reliable chronology, systematic investigation must be carried out to map workshop connections and identify patrons. This requires detailed historical research on one hand and a more attentive comparative analysis, using the traditional tools of art history.<sup>2</sup>

1 The first overview of the regions frescoes was written by István Gróh, who was responsible for uncovering and copying and restoring several of the wall paintings. See: István Gróh, "Középkori falképek Gömörmegyében" [Medieval wall paintings in Gemer County], *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 15 (1895): 56-66, 229-238. On the activity of Gróh, see: Peter Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie stredovekých nástenných malieb v Uhorsku* (Rožnava: Georgius Bubek, 2021); Hungarian edition: *Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása* (Rožnava: Georgius Bubek, 2022).

Standard overviews of the frescoed churches of Gemer include: Mária Prokopp, "Gömöri falképek a XIV. században" [14<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings in Gemer], *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 18 (1969): 128-147; Milan Togner, *Stredoveká nástenná malba v Gemeri* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1989); Mária Prokopp, *Medieval Frescoes in the Kingdom of Hungary* (Somorja: Méry Ratio, 2005); Tomáš Haviar and Vladimír Plekanec, *Italianizmy v stredovekej nástennej malbe: gotický Gemer a Malohont* (Bratislava: Arte Libris, 2010).

2 Luckily, historical research focusing on the region is providing more and more useful overviews. In particular, I would like to mention the two monographs by Monika Tihányiová, both published in Slovak and Hungarian editions alike: Monika Tihányiová, *A pelsóci Bebekék: Egy nemesi család felemelkedése és bukása* [The Bebek family of Plešivec] (Rozsnyó: Georgius Bubek, 2019); Monika Tihányiová,



*Rákoš (Gömörrákos), sanctuary, Apostles*



*Rimavská Baňa (Rimabánya), sanctuary, Saint Barbara*



*Rimavská Baňa (Rimabánya), sanctuary, Saint George*



*Šivetice (Süvete), nave, right side of the triumphal arch, Crucifixion (detail)*

My study will offer some points for consideration for this long and hard work, taking examples both within and outside the Gemer region. I will call attention to some connections of this material with frescoes from other regions in Upper Hungary and will also provide some chronological anchors and data about patrons, information which will make it possible to reexamine chronological issues.

Let us start with the analysis of a characteristic figure type often seen in medieval frescoes in the Gemer region. I am referring to figures with graceful, elongated bodies, with tilted heads and oval faces. The saints have almond-shaped eyes, flowing or curly hair and they often display exaggerated gestures. Their figure style belongs to the stylistic phase of the International Gothic. The saints usually appear framed by a decorative setting originating from the wall painting of the Italian Trecento: Cosmatesque borders and quatrefoil frames are characteristic elements as are decorated plastic haloes and colorful imitations of marble panels in the lower zone. Such graceful and elongated figures decorate the sanctuary of Rákoš (*Gömörrákos*), which is the result of a unified campaign of decoration.<sup>3</sup> Most likely the same workshop painted the sanctuary of Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*), where only the figures of Saint George and Saint Barbara remain, as well as a scene of the Agony in the Garden above the triumphal arch (the Last Judgment composition on the east wall is largely destroyed). There is one more church where frescoes of this workshop can be seen: in the rotunda of Šivetice (*Süvete*). Here several layers and several workshops can be detected, but our painter was responsible for two large scenes in the nave, painted on the right side of the triumphal arch: the Crucifixion and the Lamentation. These scenes are one above the other, originally with another register between them (possibly with an image of the Deposition). On the left side of the triumphal arch, only minuscule traces indicate that once there were paintings here as well. These three ensembles are closely related to each other.

Previous research has done a lot to analyze the workshop connections of these and other related frescoes, establishing the relationships of various fresco ensembles. Let us concentrate only on the three monuments discussed so far: in the art historical literature, these painting cycles are generally dated to the 1380s. Milan Togner put the sanctuary frescoes of Rákoš (*Gömörrákos*) and Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*) the 1380 – 1390s and the nave frescoes of Šivetice (*Süvete*) to the 1360s.<sup>4</sup> Mária Prokopp gave a date in the 1380s for Šivetice (*Süvete*) and also for Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*) (identifying Frank Szécsényi as the commissioner), and dated Rákoš (*Gömörrákos*) to the 1390s.<sup>5</sup> If we look at the wider group of monuments in Gemer which similarly combine Italian stylistic elements with features of the International Gothic, the dating found in the literature varies quite a bit between the 1360s and 1400: this is true of Ochtiná (*Ochtina/Martonháza*) and Kocelovce (*Gecelfalva*) (which are very closely related in every respect), Chyžné (*Hizsnyó*), Rimavské Brezovo (*Rimabrézó*), and Kyjatice (*Kiéte*) (in all cases I am

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*A Csetnekiek: Kultúrtörténeti és gazdaságtörténelmi barangolások Felső-Gömörben* [The Csetneki family] (Budapest: Martin Opitz, 2022).

3 The frescoes of Rákoš were uncovered by Gróh, see Buday, Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása, 22-23. Most recently, they have been fully restored, see: Peter Mlích, "Nástenné maľby v Kostole Najsvätejšej Trojice v Rákoši" [Wall paintings in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Rákoš], in *Najnovšie poznatky z výskumov stredovekých pamiatok na Gotickej ceste III. Zborník Gotická cesta 3/2018* (Rožnava: O. Z. Gotická cesta, Bratislava: PÚSR, 2020), 51-60.

4 Togner, *Stredoveká nástenná maľba*, 88, 140, 146, 180-181.

5 In 1969, Prokopp dated Rimabánya to 1360 – 1370, this was later modified. Prokopp, "Gömöri falképek a XIV. században," 141-142. See also Mária Prokopp, *Italian trecento influence on murals in East Europe particularly Hungary* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), 177. The 1380s is given as a date in Prokopp, *Medieval Frescoes in the Kingdom of Hungary*, 52.

mainly referring to the decorations of the sanctuaries).

To see more clearly, several aspects of the style of the frescoes need to be analyzed. First, let us examine one aspect: their Italian Trecento component. It is clear that none of the frescoes in the focus of our examinations can be directly connected to the Italian peninsula (despite some claims to the contrary). Another explanation given for their strong Italianate character is the proximity of the region to Esztergom, the seat of the archbishop with direct authority over the local ecclesiastical hierarchy. It is well-known that the frescoes in the palace chapel of Esztergom are indeed of primary importance among the Hungarian wall paintings with direct Italian connections.<sup>6</sup> However, we cannot find any direct links with the Esztergom wall paintings and those in Gömör and there isn't even a need to try. In the Gömör area, we know of one monument of outstanding quality, which bears witness to close Italian connections and which could have served as a model for the wider and narrower region in this respect: the church of St George in Plešivec (*Pelsőc*), situated at the centre of the Bebek family estates.<sup>7</sup> The church was built during the period of György Bebek, who in 1349 applied to Pope Clement VI in Avignon for a dispensation to build the church, apparently to help the construction work already under way.<sup>8</sup> It is tempting to speculate that the master of the cycle of paintings depicting the life of Christ is directly associated with the builder, who visited Italy several times, but we have no concrete evidence to support this, and we do not know the exact date of painting. At Plešivec (*Pelsőc*), the painting campaign must have taken place following the construction of the church, so definitely not earlier than 1350. On the sanctuary walls, we find complex, well-composed compositions that retain the characteristics of their supposed Italian predecessors much more clearly than other wall paintings in the region, such as the Presentation in the Temple scene, which follows the structure of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's highly influential composition for the side altar of the Siena Cathedral, dating from 1342. In their technical details, the paintings also clearly indicate that they were painted by an Italian workshop, one which clearly exerted considerable influence on local painters. This commission could have provided the models for all the Italian-type decorative elements, although we do not find other paintings in Gemer which would be so closely related to Italy (with the potential exception of some frescoes of Štítňik [*Csetnek*]). The elements became part of the repertoire of local painters and thus Italian Trecento frames and other decorative elements regularly appear in Gemer following the model of Plešivec (*Pelsőc*) and they apparently remained in use for decades.<sup>9</sup>

Although the decorative and technical elements known from Plešivec (*Pelsőc*) survive for a long time, they are usually combined with a figure style characteristic of the International Gothic style – the Central European court style of around 1400. This characteristic indicates that the date of the frescoes perhaps should be placed later than the last third of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

6 The most important study is: Mária Prokopp, "Pitture murali del XIV secolo nella capella del castello di Esztergom II: Problemi dello stile," *Acta Historiae Artium* 18 (1972): 170-192; see also Prokopp, *Italian trecento influence on murals*, 80-84, 88 (on the influence to the Gemer region).

7 Éva Szakályos, "A pelsőci templom 14. századi falképei," *Ars Hungarica* 39 (2013): 212-219.

8 Árpád Bossányi, *Regesta supplicationum: A pápai kérvénykönyvek magyar vonatkozású okmányai. Avignoni korszak. I. VI. Kelemen pápa 1342 – 1352* (Budapest, 1916). CDXVIII. On the church and its construction, see also Tihányiová, *A pelsőci Bebekek*, 95-103.

9 On the latter, see József Lángi, "Bodony (Heves megye), római katolikus templom," in *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Magyarország északkeleti megyéiből*, authors Zsombor Jékely and József Lángi, ed. Tibor Kollár (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2009), 50-65.



*Plešivec (Pelsóc), north wall of sanctuary, Presentation in the Temple*



*Rimavská Baňa (Rimabánya), sanctuary, Trecento decorative elements;  
prophets in quatrefoil frames*



*Šivetice (Süvete), triumphal arch, prophets in quatrefoil frames*



*Rimavská Baňa (Rimabánya), sanctuary, keystone with Stibor coat of arms*

The exact internal chronology of the material in Gemer and Malohont Counties is not known – but it could be the work of several decades, as in the case of the workshop of Johannes Aquila, who worked on the western border, where the monuments range from 1378 to 1405. There are no exact dates associated with either of these fresco cycles, but we do have some clues. One piece of circumstantial evidence helps us establish the *post quem* date of one of the fresco cycles: above the sanctuary of Ochtiná, the dendrochronological examination revealed the use of timber beams cut in 1377 for the original roof structure.<sup>10</sup> The frescoes thus were likely painted after this date. Ochtiná is a key monument along with the very closely related fresco cycle in the sanctuary of the church of Kocelovce (*Gecelfalva*). The painters of this workshop can also be found in the rotunda of Šivetice (*Süvete*), where a new cycle of Passion scenes was painted in the sanctuary on top of an earlier, 13<sup>th</sup> century layer.<sup>11</sup> The wall paintings of the rotunda were discovered in 1911, and when it was discovered that earlier painting were still preserved under the Gothic layer, the Gothic wall paintings of the sanctuary were removed (in 1936). The detached mural paintings are in the collection of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava: the upper part of the image of the Carrying of the Cross is the best-known fragment (a detail of the legend of St Margaret is also known – the themes repeated the 13<sup>th</sup> century decoration). Other scenes are only known from the watercolor copies of István Gróh). In agreement with Milan Togner, we can identify this painter with the master of the sanctuary of Ochtiná and the very closely related frescoes at Kocelovce (*Gecelfalva*). The paintings in the sanctuary in Chyžné (*Hizsnyó*) is also closely linked to this workshop. The wall paintings in the sanctuaries of Rimavské Brezovo (*Rimabrézó*) and Kyjatice (*Kiéte*) were also executed in a similar style, but using simplified, more linear forms. The spread of this style further to the west, towards the county of Novohrad (Nógrád), is shown by the wall paintings of Turíčky (*Etrefalva*): they are closely related to the wall paintings of the sanctuary at Rimavské Brezovo (Rimabrézó), but also contain elements – such as the imitation colored marble slabs – that are absent there. In the context of this large group, the church of Bodony in Heves County is also worth mentioning, with similarly shaped female saints in the windows of the sanctuary and a version of the painted marble slab decoration. We are probably not mistaken if we assign a date of c. 1380 to 1400 to these frescoes.

Even stronger clues are provided for the dating of the decoration of Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*), based on heraldic evidence. The frescoes can be dated to the early 15<sup>th</sup> century based on the Stibor coat of arms on the keystone of the sanctuary. This requires some explanation: Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*) in Malohont (*Kishont*) County was part of the estate of Hajnáčka (*Ajnácskő*) castle, which belonged to the Szécsényi family. In 1411, Simon Szécsényi (the younger brother of Frank, the judge of the land) divided the property between Frank's son László and his own descendants: the castle of Hajnáčka (*Ajnácskő*) was given to Simon's descendants, but its belongings were divided in two parts.<sup>12</sup> Without getting into every detail, we can state that in Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*), the Stibor coat of arms can only appear in one context: the husband of Frank Szécsényi's daughter Dorottya was

10 Peter Glos, "Architektonicko-historický výskum striech a krovu ev. kostola v Ochtinej" in *Zborník Gotická cesta 1/2014* (Rožňava: O. Z. Gotická cesta, 2014), accessed May 31, 2023, <http://gotickacesta.sk/konferencia-2014-architektonicko-historicky-vyskum-strechy-a-krovu-ev-kostola-v-ochtinej-glos/>.

11 Togner, *Stredoveká nástenná malba*, 185-186; Prokopp, *Medieval Frescoes in the Kingdom of Hungary*, 12-14.

12 *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár IV*, 49. The will is analysed in detail by Daniela Dvořáková, *A lovag és királya: Stiborici Stibor és Luxemburgi Zsigmond*, trans. Margit Garajszki et al. (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2009), 263, 327.

Stibor Stiborici the Younger. We do not know the year of their marriage, but the will of 1413 already mentions Dorottya as a woman. Stibor may have therefore acted as a patron in Rimavská Baňa (Rimabánya), as the husband of Dorottya Szécsényi.<sup>13</sup> As a result, we can date the frescoes of Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*) – along with the closely related frescoes of Rákoš (*Gömörrákos*) and Šivetice (*Süvete*) to the 1410s.

The early 15<sup>th</sup> century dating of the Rimavská Baňa (Rimabánya) frescoes is relevant for another fresco cycle, located outside the Gemer region: namely the frescoes on the sanctuary walls at Čerín (*Cserény*) near Banská Bystrica (*Besztercebánya*).<sup>14</sup> Both in figure style and in decorative details the similarities are very strong. There is a similarity between the elongated, curved figure type used to paint the standing saints, the similarly shaped faces surrounded by a crown of hair in twisted curls in the case of the angels and knight saints, and the long hair softly surrounding the face in the case of the female saints. The use of three-quarter profiles is also common, and the facial features are rendered perceptible by a similar system of lines. The shaping of the groups of figures is similar, for example in the central group of Lamentation scenes Šivetice (*Süvete*) and Čerín (*Cserény*), and the decoration of the inner arch of the triumphal arches is identical, with the prophets in quatrefoil frames (*Rákoš/Gömörrákos*, *Rimavská Baňa/Rimabánya*, *Čerín/Cserény*).

Our examinations can lead us even farther to the north, to Turiec (*Turóc*) County. Here we find two places where wall paintings can be connected to our group, especially to Čerín (*Cserény*) and Šivetice (*Süvete*): Necpaly (*Necpál*) and Turčianske Jaseno (*Túrócjeszen*). The paintings of the nave of the church of Necpaly (*Necpál*) stand out, even though they are fragmentary and have not been adequately studied yet.<sup>15</sup> The painted surfaces survive in the attic above the nave's later vaulting: notably a Pietà and a group of female martyred saints on the triumphal arch. The Pietà composition is accompanied by a flying angel on either side. The workshop also painted the legend of St. Ladislav on the north wall: scenes from the Leaving of the castle and the Battle can be identified – it is possible that the entire cycle was painted in two rows. These wall paintings, hidden above the vault and never touched by a lime-washer or restorer, best preserve the characteristics of the paintings of the period. The same painter probably worked in Čerín (*Cserény*) and Necpaly (*Necpál*): whether we look at the heads of the angels or the depictions of the Virgin Mary, the lines are the same. The slender figures of the female saints are also painted very similarly in the two cycles of wall paintings. The use of bright turquoise-green halos, which appears on almost all the figures in Necpaly (*Necpál*), is a characteristic feature: in Čerín (*Cserény*) only in one or two places, for example in the angels hovering over martyred virgins. The master of the Necpaly (*Necpál*) frescoes also worked in the church of nearby Turčianske Jaseno (*Túrócjeszen*): here, among the frescoes from several periods, the fragmentary mural of St. Helena in the nave, on the north side of the triumphal arch, is attributed to him.

13 On the younger Stibor, see Dvořáková, *A lovag és király*, 325-338.

14 The frescoes of Čerín (*Cserény*) are discussed at length: Zsombor Jékely, "Cserény, Szent Márton-templom," in *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegye területén*, Zsombor Jékely and Gergely Kovács, ed. Tibor Kollár (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2021), 149-237.

15 Vlasta Dvořáková, Josef Krása and Karel Stejskal, *Středověká nástenná malba na Slovensku* (Praha: Odeon; Bratislava: Tatran, 1978), 125-127. *Gotika: Dejiny slovenského výtvarného umenia. Katalóg výstavy*, red. Dušan Buran (Bratislava: Slovenská národná galéria, 2003), 676, cat. 3.10.



Čerín (Cserény), sanctuary, Lamentation



Čerín (Cserény), sanctuary, female saints



*Necpaly (Necpál), nave (above later vault), female saint*



*Čerín (Cserény), sanctuary, detail with figure of an angel*

A blessing angel flies towards St. Helena from the right, which could be a sister of the angels seen in the paintings of Necpaly (*Necpál*); perhaps a scene of the finding of the Holy Cross. The painting around the sacristy in Liptovská Mara (*Liptószentmária*), especially the large standing figure of the Vir Dolorum, whose blood is dripping into a chalice held by an angel, is also connected to this circle, but is of lesser quality (the medieval church of Liptovská Mara [*Liptovszentmária*] was demolished in 1975 and its stone carvings and wall paintings were incorporated into a replica).<sup>16</sup>

These connections have, of course, been noticed by others: the relationship between Čerin (*Cserény*) and Necpaly (*Necpál*) is regularly mentioned in the literature, and Ernő Marosi has repeatedly drawn attention to Čerin's (*Cserény*) connection with the painting of the sanctuary in Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*) and its chronological consequences.<sup>17</sup> Studies on Gemer however, have not taken these observations into account and usually assigned a date too early for these frescoes. If we consider the post-1413 production of the Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*) wall paintings as a firm starting point, then we can securely date the entire group of frescoes to the 1410s.

Let us consider one more time one of the key monuments of this group, the frescoes painted in the Gothic phase of the decoration of the rotunda of Šivetice (*Süvete*). Luckily, all surviving frescoes have been uncovered there as a result of a decades long restoration campaign. Now finally, the way is open to research whatever is left of these paintings. As mentioned above, we need to concentrate on the frescoes in the nave of the church: the large Crucifixion and Lamentation scenes on the southern side of the triumphal arch, which were part of a Passion cycle arranged in three rows on the eastern wall of the nave, on the two sides of the triumphal arch. Whether the Legend of Saint Ladislav, of which only a small fragment remains on the north wall of the nave, was painted by the same workshop, cannot be established with certainty (the fragment shows the fight of Ladislav with the Cuman, at the moment when the girl intervenes and cuts the leg of the Cuman). The master of the fragmentary paintings was described by Milan Togner as the leading master of Šivetice (*Süvete*). The quality of these once monumental compositions rises above Čerín (*Cserény*) and is more similar to Necpaly (*Necpál*). Let us examine the historical circumstances to see when the scenes in questions could have been painted.

Šivetice (*Süvete*) was part of the estate of Jelšava (*Jolsva*) castle, the fortifications of which were probably erected by Leusták of Jolsva himself, who rose to the rank of palatine – the family had been the owners of the area since 1327. We can certainly identify members of the Jolsvai family as patrons of the rotunda. I would like to argue that for historical reasons, it was not the Palatine of Hungary, Leusták Jolsvai who commissioned the frescoes, but one of his successors. In 1396, during

16 László Zolnay, "A régi zólyomi ispánság építkezéseinek történetéhez," *Ars Hungarica*, 3 (1975): 19-40; Katarína Biathová, *Maliarske prejavy stredovekého Liptova* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1983), 16-17, 180-185.

17 This factor was often mentioned by Ernő Marosi, first in his review of the monograph of Ján Bakoš (*Dejiny a koncepcie stredovekého umenia na Slovensku: Explikácia na gotickom nástennom maliarstve* [A szlovákiai középkori művészet története és koncepciói: a gótikus falfestészet példáján kifejtve] (Bratislava: Tatran, 1984)), *Ars Hungarica* 14 (1986): 140. Probably because he proposed a date of 1424, his suggestion was not really taken into account. See also Ernő Marosi, "Falképek a középkori Magyarország északkeleti részéről," in *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Magyarország északkeleti megyéiből*, ed. Tibor Kollár (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2009). 7–25:20; Ernő Marosi, "Centrumok és perifériák a középkori festészetben: Az erdélyi falfestészet újabb példái," *Ars Hungarica* 39 (2013): 11-19:14.

the Battle of Nicopolis, Leusták Jolsvai was taken prisoner by the Turks, from which he could not be ransomed, although his family even mortgaged the castle of Hrušov (*Hrussó*) to the Kanizsai family for 6,000 gold in 1400 to pay the ransom.<sup>18</sup> Leusták of Jolsva never returned home, writing his will on the island of Lesbos in 1400 and dying in captivity. The wall paintings are therefore most probably related to his son, György Jolsvai, who also held the office of comes of Gemer between 1407 – 1410. This corresponds very well with the likely date of the paintings as established above. The patronage of the family, which played a prominent role in national politics, explains the high quality of the painting, which is also evident from the fragments, and it is reasonable to assume that the painting of the special rotunda was the starting point of a larger workshop.

Šivetice (*Süvete*) thus may have been a starting point of a late flourishing of the Gemer workshop, active in the 1410s and also reaching farther regions in the area of Zvolen (*Zólyom*) and Turiec (*Turóc*), as his work is directly connected with the wall paintings of Čerín (*Cserény*) and Necpaly (*Necpál*). The work of this leading master was the starting point for a new group of frescoes in the Gemer region, represented by Rákoš (*Gömörrákos*) and Rimavská Baňa (*Rimabánya*). The dating of this group of wall paintings to the early 15th century is in line with what we can observe about the survival of the Italian Trecento tradition and its blending with the international Gothic style in other regions of medieval Hungary as well. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the case of early 15th century wall paintings in the vicinity of Cluj-Napoca in Transylvania, where elements of Italian trecento painting also survive in the period of international Gothic.<sup>19</sup> The sanctuary frescoes at Vlaha (*Magyarfenés*), the nave frescoes at Bădești (*Bádok*), as well as the decoration of Sântana de Mureș (*Marosszentanna*) are the most characteristic examples of this stylistic phase there.

If we try to place this kind of painterly practice in a broader, international context, then South Tyrol is the first analogy to be considered. In this area, the influence of Italian painting was constant throughout the 14th century, with stylistic characteristics that originated in Padua, as can be seen in the wall paintings of Bolzano. However, the northern stylistic tendency of the International Gothic also appeared around 1400.<sup>20</sup> A large number of village churches and mural paintings have survived in the region, providing good parallels to the similar scale of rural architecture in Upper Hungary.<sup>21</sup> These monuments provide a chronological parallel for the wall paintings of Gemer County in the early 15th century as well: demonstrating that the mural painting of medieval Hungary was in no way inferior to that of other regions of Central Europe at this time.

## Summary in Hungarian

Tanulmányunk a rimabányai (*Rimavská Baňa*) és gömörrákosi (*Rákoš*) templomok szentélyeit kifestő műhely tevékenységét elemzi, megpróbálva történeti alapokon

18 *Zsigmondkori Oklevéltár* II, 135.

19 Zsombor Jékely, "Les ateliers de peinture murale en Transylvanie autour de 1400," *Ars Transsilvaniae* (Volum dedicat aniversarii Academicianului Marius Porumb la 70 de ani) 23 (2013): 31-54

20 On the frescoes of this period, see: Andreas Besold, "Il gotico internazionale. Influssi nordici," in *Trecento: Pittori gotici a Bolzano*, ed. Andrea De Marchi, Tiziana Franco and Silvia Spada Pintarelli (Bozen, 2002), 195-201.

21 For specific examples, see Silvia Spada Pintarelli, *Fresken in Südtirol* (München: Hirmer, 1997).

pontosítani a falképek korábbi datálását. Bemutatjuk a Zólyom vármegyei Cserény (*Čerín*) falképeivel kimutatható stiláris kapcsolatokat, valamint további összefüggéseket a süvétei (*Šivetice*) és a necpáli (*Necpaly*) templom falképeivel. Ezt az összefüggő emlékekből álló, több megyére kiterjedő csoportot a 15. század második évtizedére keltezhetjük, heraldikai és történeti megfigyelések alapján. Ezzel egyben felhívjuk a figyelmet arra, hogy Gömör vármegye középkori falképeinek datálása kapcsán szükség van a szilárd történeti alapokon nyugvó, reális kronológia felvázolására. A gömöri és a zólyomi-liptói vidék stilárisan összefüggő falképei a Közép-európai internacionális gótika stílusjegyeit mutatják, amely irányzat fokozatosan felváltotta az itáliai Trecento festészet megoldásait alkalmazó festőműhelyeket.



*Čerín (Cserény), sanctuary, Crucifixion, detail*



*Šivetice (Süvete), nave, right side of the triumphal arch, Lamentation, detail*

## *Image and Text: The Medieval Wall Paintings in Ludrová as an Example of Interrelations between the Visual and the Written*



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*Above: Female figure with the text Veni de libano coronaberis in the northwestern part of the vault of the sanctuary, state in May 2015*

*Abstract: The medieval wall paintings in the Church of All Saints in Ludrová-Kút are mainly known thanks to the large Christological cycle in the presbytery of this church, dated to around 1420. During my doctoral studies at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, I dealt in the detail to their stylistic, functional and iconographical analysis. Thanks to the archive and „in situ“ research of the latin texts written on the scrolls (phylacteries), which are interwoven among the figures in individual scenes of the interior painting decoration, I found out new discoveries and influences which originate in temporary medieval literal culture. This study presents the close connection between image (murals) and text (scrolls, phylacteries). Many experts in the field of art history considered the contents of the phylacteries to be only quotations from the Bible. However, it is not quite so. The master craftsman who oversaw the execution of wall paintings for the Ludrová presbytery (also possibly the designer of the iconographic program) was influenced not only by the texts of the Holy Scriptures, but also by contemporary treatises and mysteries. I can mention in this place as an example the scene of the Descent of Christ into the pre-hells, but also the typological depictions of the prophets in the sections of the vault of the presbytery. The presentation of this issue wants to be an inspiration for the research of other monuments from the field of medieval art in Slovakia, where the symbiosis of the visual and the written is also evident.*

Hungarian art historians began to deal with the wall paintings, history and architecture of All Saints' Church in a more professional way in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Here we can mention Ferencz Flóris Rómer, who was the first to identify the various iconographic themes of the Christological cycle in the presbytery of the church.<sup>1</sup> We cannot fail to mention also Viktor Myszkovszky.<sup>2</sup> The medieval monuments of Upper Hungary attracted not only Hungarian art historians, but also the local intellectuals. In 1878, a parish priest from Liptovský Svätý Michal, Štefan Nikolaj Hýroš, published a work on the oldest Christian churches in Liptov.<sup>3</sup> From our point of view, the contribution of his work is mainly the determination of the style of the wall paintings in Ludrová. He called it the Prague School. It is also very important for our research that Hýroš identified some inscription bands that were repainted by Jozef Hanula at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, medieval wall paintings in Ludrová – Kút were marginally dealt with by Dénes Radocsay and Mária Prokopp.<sup>4</sup> From the

1 Ferencz Flóris Rómer, *Régi falképek Magyarországon* (Budapest, 1874).

2 Viktor Myszkovszky, "Liptómege középkori építészeti műemlékei," *Archeológiai Közlemények* XI (1877).

3 Štefan Nikolaj Hýroš, *Opis starobylých kresťanských chrámov Liptova* (Liptovský Michal, 1878), manuscript in the Liptov Museum in Ružomberok.

4 Dénes Radocsay, *A középkori Magyarország falképei* (Budapest, 1954); Dénes Radocsay, *Wandgemälde in mittelalterlichen Ungarn* (Budapest, 1977); Mária Prokopp, *Italian Trecento Influences on Murals in East Central*

point of view of the methodology of researching medieval wall painting, the most important publication to this day is Ján Bakoš's.<sup>5</sup>

In the research of medieval wall paintings in Ludrová – Kút, the greatest merit probably goes to the team of Czech authors – Vlasta Dvořáková, Karel Stejskal and Josef Krása, who since the 1960s continuously published the results of their field research in Slovakia in the journal *Umění* (Art)<sup>6</sup>, and in 1978 they completed their work with the publication of a monograph of Slovak medieval wall paintings.<sup>7</sup> In 1983, Katarína Biathová focused exclusively on medieval painting (both panel and wall painting).<sup>8</sup> Since then, the wall paintings in Ludrová have been very marginally studied and presented in the art history literature (in the 2003 accompanying publication of the exhibition *Gotika* (Gothic Art) edited by Dušan Buran, they are mentioned only marginally; in the 2006 exhibition catalogue *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator* there is no mention of them). Ludrová wall paintings became the main topic of my dissertation. The choice of this topic was a reaction to the aforementioned dismal state of Slovak art historiography. New findings and discoveries were published in several foreign periodicals and in a monograph<sup>9</sup> in 2013.

The dating of the wall paintings in Ludrová – Kút is not stable in art history – it varies between 1420 (Biathová) and 1440 (Buran). On the basis of previous research we date the paintings to the period around 1420. This dating is helped not only by formal and contextual analysis alone, but also by political and social events after 1431 – we are referring in particular to the Hussite campaign. The state of preservation of the wall paintings from Ludrová is not satisfactory. As early as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Štefan Nikolai Hýroš mentioned that some scenes and inscription bands are difficult to read due to dampness and weathering. It should be briefly mentioned that since 1826 liturgical ceremonies were performed in the church only sporadically – on major feasts – because a new church (also dedicated to All Saints) was built and consecrated in Ludrová. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the wall paintings in the sanctuary were completely repainted by the local artist Jozef Hanula. The Latin texts on some of the inscription bands were

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*Europe, Particularly Hungary* (Budapest, 1983).

From newest Hungarian literature is important to mention: Zsombor Jékely and Gergely Kovács, *Falfestészeti emlékek a középkori Zólyom vármegyé területén* (Budapest, 2021).

5 Ján Bakoš, *Dejiny a koncepcie stredovekého umenia na Slovensku: Explikácia na gotickom nástennom maliarstve* (Bratislava, 1984).

6 Vlasta Dvořáková, P. M. Fodor and Karel Stejskal, "K vývoji středověké nástěnné malby v oblasti gemerské a malohontské," *Umění* 6 (1958): 325-363; Krása, "K novým objevům středověkých nástěnných maleb na Slovensku," *Umění* 7 (1959): 170-173; Josef Krása, "Zpráva o průzkumu středověkých nástěnných maleb na Slovensku," *Umění* 8 (1960): 306-309; Vlasta Dvořáková, Josef Krása and Karel Stejskal, "Zpráva o průzkumu středověkých nástěnných maleb na Slovensku 1961," *Umění* 10 (1962): 258-275.

7 Vlasta Dvořáková, Josef Krása and Karel Stejskal, *Stredoveká nástenná maľba na Slovensku* (Bratislava; Praha, 1978).

8 Katarína Biathová, *Maliarske prejavy stredovekého Liptova* (Bratislava, 1983).

9 Štefan Valášek, Jana Brokútová, Katarína Vandáková and Jozef Vandák, *Symbolika a ikonografia v stredovekej nástennej maľbe Liptova* (Bratislava, 2013); Štefan Valášek, "Innowacja-tradycja. Średniowieczne malarstwo ścienne na Liptowie i jego przemiany w XIV i XV wieku," in *Procesy przemian w sztuce średniowiecznej. Przełom – regres – innowacja – tradycja*, eds. Rafał Eysymontt and Romuald Kaczmarek (Warsaw, 2014), 209-222; Štefan Valášek, "The Medieval Wall Paintings in All Saints Church in Ludrová (Slovakia): Artists and Artistic Influences in Central Europe in the First Half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Umění*, no. 1-2 (Praha, 2015), 66-73; Štefan Valášek, "Średniowieczne malowidła ścienne w Ludrowej – Kúte. Ich funkcja i ikonografia," in *Kultúrne dejiny*, no. 2 (Ružomberok, 2015), 182-195; Štefan Valášek, "Eucharistický triptych v kostole Všetkých svätých v Ludrovej – Kúte na Liptove. K otázkam jeho funkcie a ikonografie," *ARS* 49, no. 2 (2016): 172-189; Štefan Valášek, "Iconography of the Virgin Mary in the Medieval Wall Paintings in Ludrová – Kút in Slovakia," in *IKON*, vol. 10 (Rijeka, 2017), 137-148; Štefan Valášek, "Średniowieczne malowidła ścienne w prezbiterium kościoła Wszystkich Świętych w Ludrowej-Kúte. Ikonografia – funkcja – styl," (Dissertation, Krakow: Instytut Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2018), 289, supervisor prof. Marek Walczak.

added, not adhering to the original medieval inscriptions.

The wall paintings were probably damaged even more by the restoration work in the 1960s and 1970s, and also by the ongoing restoration, than by the repainting itself. In some cases, not only the repainting by Jozef Hanula was removed, but also the original pigments and layers along with it. The wall paintings were made in mixed technique – i.e. fresco-secco, painted on semi-dry plaster. The paintings made using this technique in particular are very sensitive to restoration interventions and the removal of repainting.

The subject of my paper are the inscription bands which are found mainly in the Christological cycle on three walls of the presbytery – north, east and south. Due to lack of time, we are unable to list all the phylacteries and their interrelations to the visual. Many of the inscription bands are not visible at present. Today's paper is based on an analysis of archival photo documentation from 1961, made by Mikuláš Štalmach before the restoration work began. It should be emphasized that the historiography of the wall paintings in Ludrová – Kút has so far lacked a closer analysis of this archival material. Of course, the individual inscription bands, which are captured in the photo-documentation, must be approached critically, because they depict wall paintings with the re-paintings by Jozef Hanula from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Christological cycle begins in the upper left corner (the first register) of the north wall of the sanctuary. In the first register on the north and east walls, where the stories of Christ's childhood are found, one notices a lower frequency of phylacteries. The significance of these images, and especially the Mariology, is explained by the three male and one female figure in the lower sections of the vaulting of the presbytery. The prophet in the south-west corner of the vault: ***rore mades (sic!) vellus sed permanet arida tell(us)***. The correct text of the Vulgate should read: *Rore madet vellus sed permanet arida tellus* which is a quotation from the book of Judges when Gideon asked the Lord for a sign whether he should lead the Israelites into the battle against the Philistines. At the time of the appearance of the wall paintings in Ludrová, i.e. in the first half of the 15th century, typological literature – *Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Biblia Pauperum and Concordantiae Caritatis* – was already widespread. These works were by this time already written *in vulgari*, i.e. in the national languages (German, Czech, etc.). It was the scene of Gideon's Fleece that served as the *prefigurationes Christi*, namely the incarnation of the Word into human flesh. The Old Testament prophet in the white robe points his forefinger of his left hand horizontally, toward both the Coronation scene of the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation scene. All four figures highlight the purity, the immaculateness of the Mother of God. The Old Testament motif of Gideon's Fleece is a prefigurement of the conception of Christ, which happens as a miracle. It is an event that human reason is incapable of comprehending. The female figure in the north-west corner of the western part of the vault says: ***veni de libano coronaberis***.<sup>10</sup> The complete Vulgate text has the words *sponsa me*, i.e. my bride, which is related to the theme over this figure – the Coronation of the Virgin Mary.

<sup>10</sup> Pies 4, 8. Vulgate text: *Veni de Libano, sponsa mea: veni de Libano, veni, coronaberis* [Come down from Lebanon, my bride, come down from Lebanon!].



*Christ sends the apostles to prepare the Last Supper, state in 1961*



*Christ sends the Apostles to prepare the Last Supper, state after the cleansing of the paintings, May 2015*



*Descent into the antechamber of Hell, state in 1961*



*Descent into the antechamber of Hell, state in May 2015*



*Judas returns thirty pieces of silver, state in 1961*



*Judas returns thirty pieces of silver, state in May 2015*



*Christ washes the feet of the apostles, state in May 2015*



*Prophet with the text Rore mades vellus in the SW part of the vault of the sanctuary, state in May 2015*

The prophet in the north-west corner of the north vault, with a cap called a capelin on his head, holds a phylactery in his right hand with the text: **ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium**. In the north-east corner of the north vault, the prophet is depicted with a hood on his head with the text: **egrediet(ur) v(ir)ga dei (sic!) radice yesse e(t) flos eius**.<sup>11</sup> In this case, we are clearly dealing with the work of Jozef Hanula, which is confirmed by a significant error in the text of *virga dei* instead of *virga de*. The remaining two prophets in the lower part of the south vault no longer exist today because the current restoration team decided to remove Jozef Hanula's repainting entirely, leaving only the original layer from around 1420. We cannot agree with this approach. The prophet in the south-eastern part of the southern vault was depicted with the text: **tota pulchra es et macula non est in te**. These are the words of a prayer of the same name, the origin of which dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Nicholas of Cusa (1401 – 1464), in his sermon in 1456 on the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, gives a series of reflections on the beauty of the Virgin, using the words: *Tota pulchra es*.<sup>12</sup> The Carthusian monk Richard Methley (1451/2 – 1527/8) prays with similar words during his mystical visions of heaven: *Tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te*.<sup>13</sup> Like the quotation *veni de libano coronaberis*, this quotation comes from the Song of Songs.<sup>14</sup> The quotation *veni de libano coronaberis* and *tota pulchra es et macula non est in te* unites the liturgy for the feast of the Nativity and Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During these St Mary's feasts, the aforementioned quotations appear in homilies and antiphons.<sup>15</sup> The prophet in the south-western part of the south vault: **beatam me dicent omnes generationes** (all generations shall praise me). If original, this second inscription band would be an addition to the scene of the Visitation of the Elizabeth on the opposite, north wall.

From the Christological cycle we select only some of the scenes in which we find inscription bands that are more closely related to the liturgy of Holy Week, in which Christians commemorate the most important moments of human redemption – the entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. In the depiction of the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem we find traditionally depicted texts such as: **hosanna filio David, benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini and hosanna in altissimis**. A male figure with a *pilleum cornutus* on his head, dressed in a white tunic, stands on a tree. There is a discussion between this figure and Christ, which is shown not only by the text, **Zachee festinans descende**, but also by the gesture of Jesus. Based on the work of Moshe Barasch<sup>16</sup>, we argue that in this case we are not dealing with the gesture of blessing, which is used during the liturgy, but with the so-called *acclamatio* – i.e., *the gesture of speech* (the thumb touching the bent ring finger and little finger – the gesture of speech). In the texts of the Gospels, the toll collector Zacchaeus is not mentioned during the arrival of Christ in Jerusalem. His presence in this scene could simply be explained by the fact that medieval artists were fond of combining two events that took place at different times into a single image. More important, however, is the discovery that the text *Zachee festinans descende* is an antiphon

11 Iz 11, 1. Original text of the Vulgate: *‘et egredietur virga de radice lesse et flos de radice eius ascendet.’*

12 W. Ann Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (New York, 2006), 2.

13 Barry Windeatt, ed., *English Mystics of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1994), 268.

14 Pies 4, 7.

15 For example, the antiphonary from Klosterneuburg (signature A-KN 1018, fol. 124r, c. 1300). On the liturgy of both feasts: Eva Louise Lillie and Nils Holger Petersen, eds., *Liturgy and the Arts in the Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of C. Clifford Flanigan* (Copenhagen, 1996), 142-143.

16 Moshe Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, 1987), 18.

that was sung during the Mass on the anniversary of the consecration of the church. (*Missa in dedicatione ecclesiae*).<sup>17</sup> The presence of the inscription band with the words addressed to Zacchaeus adds two iconological layers to the scene of the Festal Entry into Jerusalem – it is not only a depiction of Palm Sunday, but also a reminder of the anniversary of the consecration of the church to which the local faithful come.

The correct identification of the scene between the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem and the Last Supper has posed a major problem for art historiography to date. The first to correctly identify it was the Czech art historian Josef Krása.<sup>18</sup> The correct identification is not only helped by the phylacteries themselves, which are still legible in archival photographs, but also by the texts of the Gospels, which mention that Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Last Supper. The identification of the individual Apostles is not difficult – it is based, among other things, on physiognomy (John the young, Peter with a beard and a bald head). From the Apostle John comes an inscription band with the text: ***Ubi vis paremus tibi comedere pascha?***<sup>19</sup> And from Christ: ***Euntes parate nobis pascha ut manducemus.***<sup>20</sup> The conversation between the disciples and Christ had its firm place in the Paschal Mysteries.<sup>21</sup> After the Apostles are sent out to prepare the Passover, the next step of preparation for the Last Supper is – the Foot Washing. The events of the Last Supper are commemorated especially on Maundy Thursday, the feast of the institution of the Eucharist. The scenes of the sending the disciples to prepare the Last Supper and the Foot Washing were the example *par excellence* for the faithful to prepare and purify their own souls from sins before receiving the Eucharistic Christ. The scene of the Foot Washing can also be interpreted as a symbol of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It should be pointed out that this iconographic theme is very rare in Central European art of the Middle Ages. In wall painting, we know only one example from Strakonice in southern Bohemia (the monastery of the Johannites, c. 1340). To this day, however, this scene in Strakonice has not been identified. The literature of the subject mentions only a fragment with three figures, probably Christ and two disciples.<sup>22</sup> From the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century we can mention the manuscript *Concordantiae Caritatis* (The Library of the Piarists in Budapest, c. 1413, sign. CX 2, fol. 2v), in which we also find this iconographic theme.<sup>23</sup>

17 For example, in an antiphony from Kielce, made in 1372 by Chvalislav (Falislaus) from Nysa in Silesia, there is the chant *Zachee festinans descende* (Kielce, Chapter Library, Ms. 1, fol. 257 v.).

18 Dvořáková et al., *Středověká nástěnná malba*, 122. Krása refers to the Gospel of St. Mark (Mk 14, 13), but the Apostles Peter and John are mentioned only by the Evangelist Luke (Lk 22, 7-13). The author was not quite sure of the identification of the subject. He also admits that we may be dealing with a scene in which Christ predicts his death.

19 Mt 26, 17.

20 Lk 22, 8.

21 Sandro Sticca, *The Latin Passion Play: Its Origins and Development* (New York, 1970), 134-135.

22 Jaroslav Pešina, ed., *Gotická nástěnná malba v zemích Českých I. 1330 – 1350* (Praha, 1958), 133. Most recently, wall paintings in Strakonice were dealt with by Ondřej Faktor in his dissertation from 2016. The author identified only a composition with three figures. Cf.: Ondřej Faktor, *Středověká nástěnná malba v jihozápadních Čechách (okres Klatovy, Prachatic, Strakonice)* (Dissertation, Prague: FF UK, 2016), 324, supervisor Prof. Jan Royt.

23 Jörg Oberhaidacher, *Die Wiener Tafelmalerei der Gotik um 1400. Werkgruppen – Maler – Stile* (Vienna; Cologne; Weimar, 2012), 49, il. 46 (cat. no. 7, 338-340). This manuscript has been dealt with in detail by Anna Boreczky in her dissertation: Anna Boreczky, *The Budapest Manuscript of Concordantiae Caritatis* (Dissertation, Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University 2009), supervisor: Dr. Tünde Wehli. Accessed May 31, 2023, <http://doktori.btk.elte.hu/art/boreczkyanna/thesis.pdf>; Partly also: Anna Boreczky, "Vienna: 1413. The Workshop of the Budapest Concordantiae Caritatis," in *Art and Architecture around 1400: Global and Regional Perspectives*, eds. Marjeta Ciglenečky and Polona Vidmar (Maribor, 2012), 281-291.

The author of the Christological cycle in Ludrová – Kút was able to skilfully use the space he had been given for the layout of the individual scenes. He also helped himself by combining two events into one pictorial scene, namely the Washing of the Apostles' Feet and the Last Supper. A similar example was found in Lower Silesia, in the Church of All Saints in the village of Strzelce near Sobótka (c. 1350 – 1360) and in the manuscript *Biblia Pauperum* of Metten (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, sign. Clm. 8201, fol. 84v, c. 1414).<sup>24</sup> In the Ludrová painting, we find two inscription bands depicting a conversation between Jesus and the Apostle Peter. Christ says to Peter: ***si non laveris (sic!) te non habebis (sic!) partem mecum***. The apostle responds in a two-line phylactery as follows: line 1: ***non lavabis mihi pedes in aeternum*** line 2: ***D(o)m(i)ne n(on) t(an)tum pedes s(e)d e(t) manus e(t) cap(ut)***. This text is also found in the antiphon *Ante diem festum Paschae*, which was also sung in Spišská Kapitula (Budapest, University Library, cod. Lat. 73, dat. 1462 – 1469).<sup>25</sup> The antiphon was sung by a deacon facing north. The main motif of the events of Maundy Thursday is the sacrifice of Christ (the Eucharist) and humility (the foot washing), which was also emphasized by St. Bonaventure in his *Letter on Following Christ: If the Savior humiliated Himself so much, all the more should the faithful follow Him and "humiliate themselves"*.<sup>26</sup> On Maundy Thursday, the rite of foot-washing (*mandatum*) was obligatorily performed in Franciscan monastic churches in the presbytery area at the table (*deinde sedentibus ad mensam...*).<sup>27</sup> Christ was represented by the abbot, the apostles, by the monks. The words depicted in the Ludrová painting were part of this ceremony. We may consider it probable that the author of the painting in the Ludrová church sanctuary could have seen with his own eyes the foot-washing ceremony in a monastic setting, or in one of the religious brotherhoods. The nearest Franciscan monastery was probably in Nemecká Ľupča (today Partizánska Ľupča).<sup>28</sup> In the Middle Ages, we know of several artists who were both painters and monks (e.g. Fra Angelico in Italy or Master Francke in the North Rhine and Hamburg area). The same may have been the case with the author of the wall paintings in the presbytery of Ludrová.

In the scene of Christ before Caiaphas, in the left part of the picture field, we find an inscription band, the content of which does not coincide with the depicted event. In the archival footage it is possible to read the text: [...] ***ad latronem existis cum gladiis***, which are the words of Christ addressed to the soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane. The presence of this phylactery is not unreasonable from the point of view of the liturgy. The antiphon *Tamquam ad latronem* was sung during the Good Friday rites (*feria 6 in Parasceva*). One of many examples is the manuscript of

24 Adam Labuda and Krystyna Secomska, eds., *Malarstwo gotyckie w Polsce. zv. II. Katalóg pamiatok* (Warsaw, 2004), 92; Štefan Valášek, „Innowacja – tradycja: Średniowieczne malarstwo ściennie na Liptowie i jego przemiany w XIV i XV wieku,” in *Procesy przemian w sztuce średniowiecznej: Przetom – regres – innowacja – tradycja*, eds. Rafał Eysymontt and Romuald Kaczmarek (Warsaw, 2014), 221.

25 *Ante diem festum Paschae, sciens Jesus quia eius hora venit ut transeat ex hoc mundo ad Patrem, et cena facta, surrexit, linteo praecinxit se, misit aquam in pelvim, coepit lavare pedes discipulorum. Venit ad Petrum. Dicit ei Simon: Non lavabis mihi pedes in aeternum. Respondit Jesus: Si non laveris tibi, non habebis partem mecum. Domine, non tantum pedes meos, sed et manus et caput.* Peter Macardle, *The St Gall Passion Play: Music and Performance* (Amsterdam; New York, 2007), 131; Miklós István Földváry, ed., *Ordinarius Strigoniensis. Monumenta ritualia Hungarica II. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum* (Budapest, 2009), p. XXII, LXII. The original name was probably *Rubrica Strigoniensis*. The author of this ordinal was Ioannes de Aranyas, a cleric of Spišská Kapitula, from Esztergom.

26 Bonaventúra, „Epistola de imitatione Christi” in *Św. Bonawentura: Pisma ascetyczno-mistyczne* (Warsaw, 1984), 206.

27 J. Lewański, *Dramat i teatr średniowiecza i renesansu w Polsce* (Warsaw, 1981), 32, 36.

28 Gabriel Hunčaga and Miroslav Huťka, *Žobravé rehole a stredoveké mestá: Pôsobenie mendikantov v stredovekom urbánnom prostredí* (Ružomberok, 2022), 172.

the Carmelite Fathers at Piasek in Krakow, Ms. 2, fol. 181v dated to 1397).<sup>29</sup> Another example of the interrelation between image and text that I would like to mention is the scene of Judas returning the thirty silver coins. The reaction of Caiaphas and the members of the high council are depicted not only by text but also by image – by gestures. They answer him *quid ad nos, tu videris*. These words are divided into two phylacteries – one coming from Caiaphas **quid ad nos**, the other from the person in the green cloak with the *pilleus cornutus* on his head **tu videris**. But what is important is the gesture of this figure, who is pointing upwards with his forefinger. The words **tu videris** (that's your business) take on a double meaning thanks to the gestures. The Jew in the pointed hat is pointing at Satan in the scene of the Temptation in the desert, and Satan is pointing down to the ground, but also to the image below him – the hanged Judas. The gestures here form a triangle that gives inner meaning (the semiotic triangle).

Judas clung to money, betrayed Christ, and then committed suicide because he did not believe in God's forgiveness and mercy. The southern, darker and unlit wall thus becomes the antipole of the north wall of the presbytery, which is illuminated by two windows from the south. On the north wall there are themes that are closely related to the sacraments in which God gives himself to a man. The Latin texts on the inscription bands in the scene of the Descent of Christ into the antechamber of Hell give us evidence of the interrelations and influences between the visual medium (wall painting) and the medieval liturgy. Between three and four o'clock in the morning, before the matins on Easter Sunday, the ritual of the *Descensio ad inferos* and the ceremony of the *Elevatio Crucis* took place.<sup>30</sup> During the rite of *Descensio*, the principal celebrant, standing behind the closed doors of the church, chanted the antiphon *Tollite portas* three times and struck the door three times with the lower part of the cross. The tone of the chant increased with each intonation. The clerics, symbolizing Satan, were locked in the church and asked the celebrant three times: *Quis est iste rex gloriae?*<sup>31</sup> This very text is found in the scene of Christ's descent into the antechamber of Hell in the lower register on the east wall of the Ludrová presbytery. After the third chant, the principal celebrant answered: *Dominum virtutum, ipse est rex gloriae*, then the doors of the temple opened so that he and his assistants could enter in.<sup>32</sup> We may say that the *Descensio ceremony* is *sui generis* visually represented in the scene of the Descent into the antechamber of Hell in Ludrová – Kút. Christ is dressed in a white tunic and holds a long thin stick (probably a cross) on which a phylactery with the text is attached: **(tollite) portas principes vest(ras) et elevam(ini)**.<sup>33</sup> This scene, representing a dialogue between Christ and Satan, reflects contemporary paraliturgical practice: Christ is the actual celebrant (priest) and Satan is the clerics or the faithful. The Latin inscription on the phylactery held by Christ is the text of the antiphon *Tollite portas principes*, which was sung not only during the Easter season, but also on the First Sunday of Advent and on the feast of the dedication of the church.<sup>34</sup> Not everywhere was the *Descensio* ritual performed in its complete

29 Szymon Sutecki, *Księgozbiór klasztoru karmelitów na Piasku w Krakowie* (Kraków, 2014).

30 J. Lewański, *Liturgiczne tacińskie dramatyzacje Wielkiego Tygodnia XI-XVI w.* (Lublin, 1999), 67; J. Lewański *Średniowieczne gatunki dramatyczno-teatralne. Zeszyt 1. Dramat liturgiczny* (Wrocław; Warsaw; Krakow, 1966), 49.

31 Rainer Warning, *The Ambivalences of Medieval Religious Drama* (Stanford, 2001), 57.

32 Text of antiphon: *Tollite portas, principes, vestras et elevamini porte eternas et introibit rex glorie*. The priest singing the antiphon represents Christ destroying the gates of hell – *Qui quidem sacerdos representabit personam Christi ad inferos descensuram et portas inferni dirupturam*. Anne Bagnall and Jesse D. Mann, ed., *The Liturgical Dramas of Holy Week at Barking Abbey* (Iowa, 2014), 20-21.

33 In 1961 archival photographs there is an incomplete text: [...] *portas principes vest[...]* et *elevam[...]*.

34 Examples may be cited here: the antiphonary from the church of St. Elizabeth in Wrocław, dated to the period

dramatic form, which was also the case in Poland.<sup>35</sup> Importantly, the ritual of *Descensio ad inferos* is not recorded in the Esztergom Ordinal. According to some scholars, the Esztergom rite was performed in most of the dioceses that belonged to the Archbishopric of Esztergom.<sup>36</sup> The wall painting in Ludrová – Kút is probably a testimony that the rite of *Descensio ad inferos* was practiced in some parishes in Upper Hungary.

The *Descensio* ceremony was followed by the *Elevatio Crucis*, a ceremony that appeared relatively late, just before the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> It consisted of taking the cross out of the Holy Sepulchre, a procession and placing it as a symbol of happiness in a visible place in the church where it was possible to honour it (*in loco suo honorifice*).<sup>38</sup> In some manuscripts the *Elevatio Crucis* is called *Elevatio Hostiae*, because instead of the cross, the hosts were carried from the tomb to the high altar, and the antiphon *Cum rex gloriae*<sup>39</sup> was sung during this. The priest walked in procession with candles, incense, banners and holy water.<sup>40</sup> It should be emphasized that mysteries and liturgical dramas involved the chanting of gospel or liturgical texts. The texts on the phylacteries in the scene of the Descent into antechambers of Hell are to be found primarily in liturgical books – antiphonaries, graduals, missals, agendas, etc. (*caeremoniale, processionale, breviarum*).<sup>41</sup> The text of the inscription band held by the souls in the antechamber comes from the hymn *Cum rex gloriae*, more precisely from its middle part: **adve(nisti) desiderabilis que(m) exspectabamus** (thou comest desired).<sup>42</sup> When the antiphon *Cum rex gloriae* was sung, it was the words *advenisti desiderabilis* during which the voice was raised and the bells rang for the first time since Maundy Thursday. At this point we may cite the example of the 15<sup>th</sup> century rite of Sankt Gallen, which took place before the matutin on Easter Sunday. The ceremony consisted of taking the cross out of the tomb and chanting a dialogue between Christ, Satan and the souls of the prophets in the antechamber.<sup>43</sup> Not only the cross, but also the figure of

after 1350 (Wrocław, University Library, Ms. R 503, fol. 1v), and the two-volume *Antiphonarium Benedictinum* from the monastery of Sankt Lambrecht in Styria, dated to the period around 1300 (Graz, University Library, 29 olim 38/8f., fol. 2v). Cf.: Barbara Hagg "Two Offices for St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Introduction and Edition," in *Musicological Studies*, LXV/1 (Ottawa 1995).

35 Lewański, *Dramat i teatr średniowiecza*, 43.

36 Eva Veselovská, "Kult sv. Vojtecha v ostrihomskej liturgickej tradícii: O immarcescibilis rosa." in *Svätý Vojtech – Svätec, doba a kult*, eds. Jaroslav Nemeš and Rastislav Kožiak (Bratislava, 2011), 113; László Dobszay, "Introduction," in *Antiphonen. Monumenta Monodica Medii Aevi* (Basel, 1999), 13-34. The Archbishopric of Esztergom is understood as *mater et caput omnium ecclesiarum Hungariae*.

37 Warning, *Ambivalences*, 61. *Tollite portas*, which first appeared as late as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, is younger dialogue. The texts in the scene of the Descent into the antechambers are thus evidence that the author of the wall painting was familiar with the religious rituals of the time.

38 Justin E. A. Kroesen, *The Sepulchrum Domini through the Age* (Leuven, 2000), 167.

39 The complete text of the antiphon: *Cum rex gloriae Christus infernum debellaturus intraret et chorus angelicus ante faciem ejus portas principum tolli praeciperet sanctorum populus qui tenebatur in morte captivus voce lacrimabili clamaverat advenisti desiderabilis quem exspectabamus in tenebris ut educeres hac nocte vinculos de claustris te nostra vocabant suspiria te larga requirebant lamenta tu factus est spes desperatis magna consolatio in tormentis alleluia.*

40 Lewański, *Liturgiczne tacińskie dramatyzacje*, 68.

41 For more examples, see *Ibidem*, 263-296.

42 Johan Nowé, "Kult oder Drama? Zur Struktur einiger Osterspiele des deutschen Mittelalters." in *The Theater in the Middle Ages. Medievalia Lovaniensia*. Series 1. Studia XIII, eds. Herman Braet, Johan Nowé and Gilbert Tournoy (Leuven, 1985), 289; Franz Joseph Mone, *Schauspiele des Mittelalters: aus Handschriften herausgegeben und ertlärt*, vol. I (Karlsruhe, 1846), 124-125; Walther Lipphardt, ed., *Latin Easter celebrations and Easter plays*. vol. V (Berlin; New York, 1976), 1464-1465.

43 Lewański, *Średniowieczne gatunki*, 49-50. Quot.: *Et elevantes Crucem de sepulchro cantent hos versus: Sole cathenatus. Versus: Redde tuam faciem. Quibus finitis, cantatur antiphona: Cum rex gloriae, submissa voce, portantes crucem ante chorum in monasterio. Antiphona finita, cantant antiphonam: Attollite portas, principes, tribus vicibus, pulsantes contra ianuam cum pede crucis in signum redemptionis animarum ex limbo. Ad istum pulsum ianua aperitur. Postea ponatur Crux ante altare Beatae Virginis, panno supposito ac lumine accenso, ut a populis adoretur [...].*

In the wall painting in Ludrová – Kút, Christ does not strike the lower part of the cross into the gates of hell, but touches it lightly. This adds to the serenity and elegance of the work.

the Resurrected Christ could have been transferred to the main altar, as evidenced by the ordinarium of the monastery of the Augustinian canons from the town of Žagaň, dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup> The rituals of the *Descensio* and *Elevatio Crucis* were inspired by the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which describes in detail Christ's descent into the antechambers of Hell.<sup>45</sup> The main significance of the *Elevatio Crucis* rite was the celebration of the Resurrection, Christ's victory over death, and the celebration of the cross as a sign of salvation.<sup>46</sup> This idea was included in the sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*, which was sung after the celebrant approached the altar and raised the cross.<sup>47</sup> The time of the *Elevatio Crucis* rite was also important. At that time, the night was ending and the morning was coming, so the darkness was giving way to light. Considering this fact, it seems that it was not for nothing that the scene of the Descent into the antechamber of Hell was placed under the window on the eastern wall of the sanctuary, through which the first rays of the sun entered the temple. Rainer Warning pointed to an important element in the theatricalization of Christ's descent into the antechambers of Hell, which was the exorcism – the expulsion of Satan from the temple area. Through liturgical drama, the faithful were able to experience firsthand the power with which the Church casts out Satan.<sup>48</sup>

The abundance of phylacteries and the colourful language of gestures in the interior decoration of the presbytery of the Church of All Saints in Ludrová – Kút may suggest that the chief master who organised and supervised the work in his workshop was not only trained in an artistic centre dominated by the influence of the beautiful style, but was also skilled in rhetoric and was familiar with the contemporary para-liturgical dramatisations of Easter events. František Šmahel states that *rhetorical manuals also, as iconographic research has shown, had a far-reaching influence on the late medieval visual aesthetics*.<sup>49</sup> An unanswered question (mainly due to the lack of historical written records) is whether there was a priest in the "semi-rural" church who was able not only to read, but also to make practical use of the wall paintings and the phylacteries depicted on them, during sermons and Sunday catechesis. Other persons, who explained the meaning of the paintings in the Middle Ages, were the so-called *literati* – people who acted as temple guides and interpreters of the artworks.<sup>50</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt asked whether there was any connection between the exposed role of gestures in paintings and the growing importance of theatre in public life.<sup>51</sup> The communication between the figures and the wide range of gestures in the Christological cycle in Ludrová – Kút is probably the result of these interpenetrations and influences between visual and dramatic arts.<sup>52</sup>

44 Ibidem, 53. The Ordinal of Žagaň documents that the dramatization of the Descent into the antechamber of Hell could have been minimized – the procession stopped only for the time of the reading of the corresponding text (i.e. *Cum rex gloriae*). *Tunc prior cum seniore uno ymaginem portent et fratres vadant in medium ecclesie cantantes voce submissa: Cum rex gloriae [...]*.

45 More on this topic cf.: Georges Duriez, *Les apocryphes dans le drame religieux en Allemagne au Moyen Age* (Lille, 1914). The rituals of the *Descensio* and *Elevatio Crucis* were inspired by the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which describes in detail Christ's descent into the antechambers of Hell. The main significance of the *Elevatio Crucis* rite was the celebration of the Resurrection, Christ's victory over death, and the celebration of the cross as a sign of salvation. This idea was included in the sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*, which was sung after the celebrant approached the altar and raised the cross.

46 Svetlana Kravecová, "Genéza a vývoj veľkonočnej procesie" *Adoramus Te*, no. 4 (2006): 8.

47 Lewański, *Liturgiczne łacińskie dramatyzyacje*, 69.

48 Warning, *Ambivalences*, 62.

49 František Šmahel, *Mezi středověkem a renesancí* (Prague, 2002), 13.

50 Ibidem, p. 22.

51 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Gest w średniowiecznej Europie* (Warsaw, 2006), 273.

52 This process was also noticed by Michael Baxandall in Italian cinquecenta painting. M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford 1972),

## Summary in Slovak

Stredoveké nástenné maľby v kostole Všetkých svätých v Ludrovej – Kúte sú známe najmä vďaka rozsiahlemu kristologickému cyklu v presbytériu tohto chrámu, datovanému do obdobia okolo roku 1420. Počas doktorandských štúdií na Jagelovskej univerzite v Krakove som sa detailne venoval ich formálnej a obsahovej analýze. Mojej pozornosti neušiel ani terénny a archívny výskum filaktérií, ktoré sa v hojnom počte prepletajú pomedzi postavy v jednotlivých výjavoch interiérovej maliarskej výzdoby. V svojom príspevku prezentujem úzky súvis medzi obrazom a textom. Mnohí odborníci z oblasti kunsthistórie považovali obsah nápisových pásov len za citáty z Biblie. Nie je to však celkom tak. Hlavný majster, ktorý dohliadal na vykonanie nástenných malieb ludrovskom presbytériu (prípadne konceptor ikonografického programu) bol ovplyvnený nielen textami Svätého písma, ale aj súdobými traktátmi a mystériami. Príkladom je scéna Zostúpenia Krista do predpekieľ, ale aj typologické zobrazenia prorokov vo výsečiach klenby presbytéria. Predstavenie tejto problematiky chce byť inšpiráciou pre výskum ďalších pamiatok z oblasti stredovekého umenia na Slovensku, kde tiež badať symbiózu vizuálneho a písaného.

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*71. A figure played its part in the stories by interacting with other figures, in the groupings and attitudes the painter used to suggest relationship and actions. The painter was not the only practitioner of this art of grouping: in particular, the same subjects were often represented in sacred drama of one kind or another.*



# Documentation, Preservation and Restoration of Wall Paintings in Hungary until 1918



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*Above: The Church of the Evangelical Church of Augs. Conf. in Štítňik. Detail from the cycle of the Seven Liberal Arts and Virtues in the lining of the window on the south wall. Watercolor on paper (Peter Buday, István Gróh a dokumentovanie stredovekých nástenných malieb v Uhorsku [István Gróh and the documentation of medieval wall paintings in Hungary] (Rožňava: O. Z. Georgius Bubek, 2021), SC 1: 4, 1910 (MÉM MDK, FM 80).*

*Abstract: The paper focuses on the process and rules of documentation, preservation and restoration of wall painting monuments in Slovakia (in Hungary) before 1918, with emphasis on the activities of the artist and documenter István Gróh. The text draws primarily from the files of the Hungarian Monuments Commission and pays particular attention to Slovak sites and monuments.*

*Keywords: monument preservation, wall painting, documentation, restoration, copies*

The monograph on István Gróh (1867 – 1936) from 2021<sup>1</sup> focused mainly on the monumental documentation and restoration activities of this artist and former director of the School of Arts and Crafts in Budapest. The collection and evaluation of materials during the preparation of the book yielded important insights into the course of mapping and conservation of pre-1918 wall painting monuments, but new areas of concern naturally emerged alongside the established facts. Particularly noteworthy was the question of whether monument preservation in Hungary (as presented by the Hungarian Monuments Commission, *Műemlékek Országos Bizottsága*, or MOB) had sought to establish binding rules, or at least recommendations, for the creation of documentary copies of wall paintings (and not only for these), their protection, preservation and restoration, or the preservation of the physical substance, in cases where the building in which such works were located could no longer be preserved. Clues to these considerations were provided by the written material examined. It seems that while in the field of preservation and restoration certain, generally valid principles were established and declared relatively early, the situation in the case of documentation was not so clear.

Wall painting became one of the great themes of 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian *archaeology*. Arnold Ipolyi (Stummer)<sup>2</sup> was the first to include it in the developmental context of medieval art in Hungary. The fundamental impulse for research came from Ipolyi's contemporary, Franz Florian Römer. He summed up a decade of his field research in 1874 with a challengingly conceptualized survey of

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1 Peter Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie stredovekých nástenných malieb v Uhorsku* [István Gróh and the documentation of medieval wall paintings in Hungary] (Rožňava: O. Z. Georgius Bubek, 2021), 48-64. In the notes we will primarily refer to the above publication and its partially supplemented Hungarian edition Péter Buday, *Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása* [István Gróh and the documentation of medieval wall paintings in Hungary] (Rožňava: O. Z. Georgius Bubek, 2022).

2 Arnold Ipolyi, "Magyarország középkori festészeti emlékeiből. A szepesváraljai XIV. századi falfestmény" [Monuments of medieval mural painting in Hungary. Wall painting from the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Spišská Kapitula], in Ipolyi Arnold: *Tanulmányok a középkori magyar művészetről*, ed. Mária Verő (Budapest: Holnap Kiadó, 1997), 161-186.

the previously known examples of domestic wall paintings.<sup>3</sup> Despite Rómer's efforts at systematic documentation, the group of known monuments of this kind grew mainly thanks to accidental finds.

The frescoes were usually uncovered as a result of natural disasters, neglected maintenance and advanced degradation of the building, and especially during renovations, when younger plaster was chipped off, or parts of the interior furnishings were moved or removed. Of course, amateur explorations were not rare (Kocelovce, Žehra, Želiezovce, Žíp). However, such cases, when a priest was truly interested in uncovering and presenting the paintings, were rather exceptional.<sup>4</sup>

Rómer particularly emphasised the exactitude of the copies of the paintings. Through their high-quality reproductions, he wanted to bring unfamiliar artistic regions closer to a foreign professional audience in particular. His aforementioned work is illustrated by reproductions of drawings and paintings mainly by Franz Storno Sr. and Viktor Myskovszky.

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the specialist documenters József Huszka and István Gróh entered the scene. Apart from the fact that they both had the same training and teaching profession, they also shared a common interest in the study of wall paintings and Hungarian ornamentation. Huszka's and Gróh's painted copies marked a new level in documentation. Compared with the works of their predecessors, which showed varying degrees of stylization and correction of what was seen, they stood out for their accuracy.<sup>5</sup>

Gróh assigned new roles to the copies. In 1903, he submitted a proposal to the Monuments Commission for a separate gallery exhibition that would trace the development of domestic wall painting through copies. In the understanding of 19<sup>th</sup> century museology, the copy was equivalent to the original; it could replace it and thus help to illustrate the developmental sequence. In order to make the picture of the history of medieval Hungarian wall painting as comprehensive as possible, Gróh advocated the implementation of a long-term programme of uncovering and mapping the paintings and also returned to the idea of publishing them in a representative album. The artist's idea of an exhibition, which ultimately did not become a reality, was perhaps most closely resembled by the exhibition held in January 1905 at the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest.<sup>6</sup>

Most of Gróh's copies were made upon decisions of the MOB. After a positive assessment the submitted sheets became part of the MOB's documentary collections, where they formed a separate and extremely valued component. As reflected in the words of László Éber, art historian and officer of the MOB, its development was a matter of prestige for the Monuments Commission: *Since our rich collection of copies of medieval Hungarian wall paintings is unparalleled and has received interest and recognition even from foreign scholars, we consider it desirable and necessary to expand it by all means we have.*<sup>7</sup>

3 Ferencz Flóris Rómer, *Régi falképek Magyarországon*. Magyarországi régészeti emlékek III [Old wall paintings in Hungary. Archaeological monuments of Hungary III] (Budapest, 1874).

4 Buday, *István Gróh and the documentation*, 48.

5 Ibidem, 49-50.

6 Ibidem, 54-55.

7 Buday, *Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása*, 46; Magyar Építészeti Múzeum – Műemléki Dokumentációs Központ, Tudományos Irattár, MOB-iratok (hereafter referred to as MÉM MDK,

Initially, the artist-documenter had the decisive say in the choice of the motifs to be immortalised on the copies. He himself evaluated the art-historical significance of the paintings and determined the scale and technique of making the copies, which is confirmed by Gróh's observations in his letter to the preservation commission of 23 March 1906. ... *so far it has been up to me which paintings will be copied and at what scale.*<sup>8</sup> In his own words, the artist applied a scale corresponding to *the requirements of art history*. According to him, not only completely preserved units were to be documented, but he also considered fragments to be noteworthy *if they evidenced a new master or a new pictorial type.*<sup>9</sup> The scale of the copies was to be as close as possible to the originals, or at least one figure from each cycle was to be represented in real size.<sup>10</sup>

As time went by, the MOB became more and more insistent in its demand for the observance of the quality standard of the drawn and painted documentation. Making copies thus became a multi-stage, continuously controlled process, with the criteria becoming stricter after the introduction of photography. In the long term, the financially demanding, hand-produced copies could not compete with photography as an ideal and, above all, *objective* documentary medium.<sup>11</sup>

When Gróh, then still a drawing teacher at the Rožňava Secondary Grammar School, arrived in Budapest in March 1894 to present sketches of the Kocelovce paintings to the commission, the clerk Béla Czobor gave him the necessary guidelines for the production of the copies.<sup>12</sup> This reference might suggest that the MOB had a set of recommendations for its staff, but it is questionable whether it also took the form of a consensus document. Judging from the available sources, these were more likely to be verbal requests that resulted from practice. The making of copies generally consisted of the following steps: the artist made tracing drawings, sketches and colour sketches of the uncovered paintings on the spot, or continued to probe or uncover painting cycles. The drawings and colour sketches could be resubmitted to the commission for consideration and selection of specific motifs and details, and also to determine the required scale of the copies.<sup>13</sup> Finished works were judged directly at the meetings of the Heritage Commission (and its sub-commissions) in Budapest, or *in situ*. This was also the approach taken in Gróh's case, when the copies from Kocelovce were evaluated by his former teacher, Bertalan Székely, in front of the originals.<sup>14</sup>

In the later period (after 1900), the selection was made not only by the artist, but also, for the sake of greater objectivity, by a commissioned member of the Monuments Commission, who was usually its clerk – an art historian.

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MOB-iratok), file 1913/308.

8 MÉM MDK, MOB-iratok, file 124/1906, Gróh's letter to the Monument Commission, 23 March 1906.

9 Gróh's letter, 23 March 1906 (ref. 9).

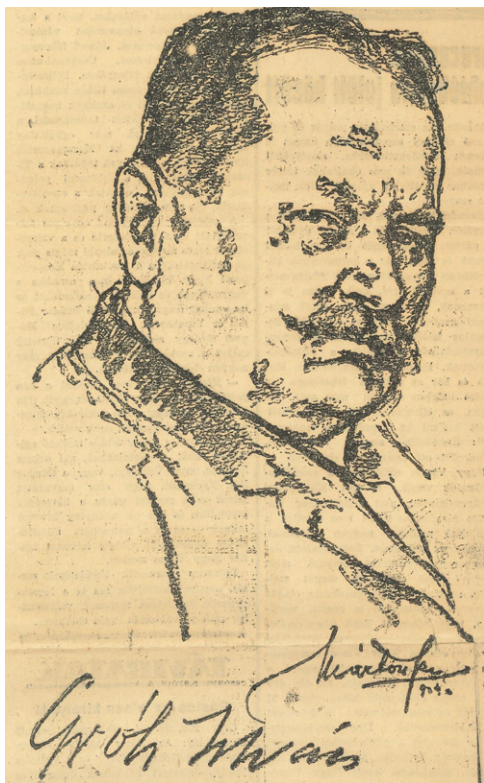
10 Ibidem.

11 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 54.

12 Ibidem, 18.

13 These were usually created in scales of 1 : 5, 1 : 4, for schemes of larger units the ratio of 1 : 20 was recommended. Copies in real size or in the scale of 1 : 2 were created only rarely and were intended mainly for display.

14 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 19.



Portrait of István Gróh in *Magyarság* magazine (January 1924)



László Éber (MÉM-MDK website)



*Christ on the Mount of Olives. Copy of wall paintings by Lajos Tary published in Magyarország műemlékei IV (1915)*



*Crucifixion from the Red Monastery. Copy of wall paintings by Lajos Tary published in Magyarország műemlékei IV (1915)*



V. TÁBLA.



Szent György küzdelme a sárkánnyal. Falkép a mártonhelyi r. k. templomban.  
(Gróh István másolata után).

*The fight of St. George with the dragon on a wall painting in Martjanci (Slovenia), a copy by István Gróh as reproduced in Magyarország műemlékei IV (1915)*

L. Éber, one of the pioneers of the study of wall paintings in Hungary,<sup>15</sup> took on this task with particular initiative. Photography began to be more widely used in the selection of documented details. After the photographs were taken, the selected motifs were decided on directly at the meetings of the Monuments Commission. Photography allowed for a targeted selection and was also used to evaluate the level of the copies supplied. This allowed the Commission to reject works that showed obvious flaws. The Gróh also acknowledged the use of photography, but not without objections. He saw it as a *useful supplement to a good colour copy*. In his opinion, only a painting executed in watercolour or, optimally, in tempera, which was close in character to the technique of the originals, could best reproduce the original.<sup>16</sup>

He also preferred manual documentation techniques for operational research. In 1903, the director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest, Jenő Radisics, drew the attention of the second chairman of the MOB, Gyula Forster, to a unique painted ceiling found in the Calvinist church in Gogan Varolea (Romania, Hungarian: *Gogánváralja*). He first noticed it during his travels in Transylvania, during which he was collecting material for the Hungarian exposition of the World Exhibition in Paris. For many years, seeping water had seriously damaged the ceiling structure. According to Radisics, *only the individual panels were preserved, and it is no longer so much a painted ceiling as a partially preserved relic of it*. Although he was generally opposed to the removal of such monuments from their original setting, in this case he had to agree to the transfer of the ceiling fragments to Budapest, for which he sought the help and support of Forster and the Monuments Commission.<sup>17</sup> His efforts were crowned with success; the painted panels were included in the collections of the museum he ran. In the meantime, the MOB commissioned Gróh to make copies of the painted ornaments. He planned to carry out this work on site, i.e. at the Gogan Varolea, and therefore asked the commission to intervene with the relevant state building authority in order to delay the dismantling of the ceiling, which was planned for the summer of 1903. Failing, he had to complete the copy in Budapest. Ernő Kammerer, the director of the State Gallery, provided him with a suitable place to work.<sup>18</sup>

Gróh's documentations were evaluated very positively, but over time – also as a result of the above-mentioned changes – they were subjected to penetrating criticism. Due to the large number of assignments, Gróh involved his students more and more in his work, which led to a fluctuation in the quality of the documentary files he submitted.

Éber, when assessing Gróh's works from Viștea (Romania, Hungarian *Magyarvista*), reproached the detailed representation of cracks and damages to the picture

16 Éber prepared a monograph on wall painting in Hungary (MÉM MDK, MOB-iratok, 258/1912) and published a number of texts on this topic. László Éber, "XVIII. századbeli falfestmények Magyarországon" [18<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings in Hungary], *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 30 (1910): 193-203; László Éber, "Köpenyes Máriaképek" [Pictures of Virgin Mary with a mantle] *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 32 (1912): 303-319; László Éber, "Troger Pál magyarországi művei" [Works of Paul Troger in Hungary], *Művészet* 12, no. 10 (1913): 381-390; László Éber, "A szigetvári plébániatemplom kupolafestménye" [Paintings on the dome of the parish church in Szigetvár], in *Magyarország műemlékei III*, ed. Gyula Forster (Budapest: MOB, 1913), 193-220; László Éber, "Tanulmányok a középkori magyar falfestményekről" [Studies on medieval wall paintings in Hungary], in *Magyarország műemlékei IV*, ed. Gyula Forster (Budapest: MOB, 1915), 72-104.

16 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 52.

17 Buday, *Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása*, 42; MÉM MDK, MOB-iratok, file 49/1903.

18 Ibidem, 43; MÉM MDK, MOB-iratok, files 418/1903 and 452/1903.

surface, as the depicted motif was becoming illegible.<sup>19</sup> Peter Július Kern was confronted with similar criticism. Some of the copies he made of the church of St. Ladislaus in Necpaly also depicted not cleaned, plaster-covered areas, which called into question their documentary value.<sup>20</sup>

One of the first critical opinions on Gróh's work dates from 1906, when Éber, on behalf of the MOB, formulated a response to the artist's criticisms concerning his methods of work and the amount of royalties awarded for a set of works from Velemér, Selo (Slovenia, Hungarian: *Nagyótlak*), Trnava, Svinica and Turčianska Svätá Mara. The commission's clerk questioned the validity of some of the copies supplied by Gróh, criticising the incorrect scales and the fact that some of the works were not produced on site.<sup>21</sup> The folder of 47 copies considered by the MOB subcommittee in May 1909 was also characterized by uneven quality.<sup>22</sup>

After the meeting of the MOB sub-commission on 20 December 1913, when copies of paintings from the Transylvanian sites were presented, its members directly advocated that copies should be made only by artists who had been entrusted with this task. Gróh had to rework the copies from Fagaras. Éber compared them with the originals on the spot. According to him, *the painter arbitrarily changed the proportions, some details and features of the faces. The copies do not reflect the style of the original, thus... generally do not correspond to scientific standards.*<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Gróh involved his students in the process of making copies (and also in the restoration). Some of Gróh's pupils successfully continued their teacher's work in the field of mapping monuments of historical wall painting. After 1900, their names are increasingly frequently mentioned in the MOB materials. The Commission clearly expressed its ambition to attract artists with a positive relationship to the artistic heritage, thus moving into the role of an institution that trained future specialists by commissioning, guiding and supervising a range of documentation and preservation tasks.<sup>24</sup> The years of the First World War also saw the first thoughts on the training of future restorers.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned P. J. Kern, Lajos Tary, (1884 – 1972) graduate of the decorative painting department at the Budapest School of Art and Design (1906), also made his presence felt in the territory of today's Slovakia. He assisted Gróh in his work on a frieze with the theme of the history of music in the hall of the Music Academy of the Hungarian capital. As a student, he participated in uncovering and documenting paintings in Smrečany, Velemér and at the castle of Hunedoara (Romania, Hungarian *Vajdahunyad*).<sup>26</sup> In the summer of 1909 he uncovered paintings in the Evangelical church in Žehňa and made 11 colour copies based on L. Éber's instructions. In addition, he was to create a design for the painted ceiling of the church. On 14 June 1910, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education commissioned the artist to uncover the painted decoration in the

19 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 53.

20 *Ibidem*, 58.

21 *Ibidem*, 53.

22 *Ibidem*, 54.

23 *Ibidem*, 53-54.

24 *Ibidem*, 56.

25 Peter Buday, "Konzervovanie a reštaurovanie výtvarných pamiatok" [Preservation and restoration of art monuments], in *Pramene k umelecko-historickému bádaniu a ochrane pamiatok na Slovensku (1846 – 1918)*, Štefan Oriško and Peter Buday (Bratislava: Stimul, 2017), 128-129.

26 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 56.

sanctuary of the parish church in Podolíneč. Simultaneously with the research in Podolíneč, Tary worked on copies of the paintings in the refectory in Červený Kláštor. The work began in October 1909 and was not completed until a year later. According to the artist's own words, he took special care to capture the typical features of the style of the late medieval author. The quality of Tary's copies was also appreciated by the monuments commission, which compared them with the photographs after they were received. Gróh also expressed *his full appreciation*.<sup>27</sup> Between July and November 1913, Tary worked on copies of the frescoes from the Church of the Holy Spirit in Žehra. The documentation was, in the opinion of the MOB, prepared with commendable thoroughness and faithfully.<sup>28</sup>

The *Great War* closed the boom period of painted documentary copies, which lasted from around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, photography became increasingly important. This relatively long transitional phase can be illustrated by examples from Bratislava. The cycle of Baroque wall paintings uncovered during the demolition of the sacristy on the south side of the nave of the Clarrisines' Church in 1902 was captured in photographs by Ede Kozics as well as watercolours by István Gróh.<sup>29</sup> In the case of the large-scale late baroque illusionistic painting on the east façade of the town hall (uncovered in 1910 during the preparations for the construction of the neo-Gothic east wing), Éber recommended a large-format photograph, which would then be coloured in.<sup>30</sup> The photograph could have played a serious role in capturing the younger layers of the painted decoration, which were to be removed because of their disturbed condition, their fragmentary nature, or the greater art-historical value of the layers beneath them. Gróh and Éber were confronted with the problem of superposition of two stylistically different cycles (also) in the rotunda of St. Margaret in Šivetice. The Gothic paintings depicting the Passion of Christ were to be documented using a camera and painted copies, and then could be removed to fully reveal the late Romanesque cycle of the Margaret legend.<sup>31</sup> As evidenced by references from the interwar period, there was no full-scale removal of the younger layer, and apparently no preservation of the older paintings was undertaken.<sup>32</sup> Gróh probably evaluated their substrate as sufficiently durable; moreover, given the importance of the Šivetice cycle, it was probably assumed that its restoration would be carried out in a short time.

Closely related to the uncovering of the paintings was the issue of their preservation and restoration. The earlier practice was presented in particular by Storno's restoration *work* with a high degree of renovation and troublesome technology. The material and technological aspects of preservation as well as restoration of wall paintings before 1918 were not, to our knowledge, a subject

27 Ibidem, 57.

28 Ibidem.

29 Ibidem, 29.

30 Archív Pamiatkového úradu Slovenskej republiky (hereinafter PÚSR) [The Archive of the Monuments Office of the Slovak Republic], collection of microfilms of the files of the Hungarian Monuments Commission, vol. 49, file 365/1910, pp. 3131-3132.

31 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 23-24.

32 Archív PÚSR, Pamiatkové orgány na Slovensku 1919 – 1951, šk. 96 [Monuments Authorities in Slovakia Fund 1919 – 1951, box. 96], Šivetice; see also: Tomáš Kowalski, "Prieskum a reštaurovanie stredovekých nástenných malieb na Slovensku: Od Vládneho komisariátu na ochranu pamiatok po založenie Pamiatkového ústavu" [Research and Restoration of Medieval Wall Paintings in Slovakia: from the Government Commissariat for the Protection of Monuments to the establishment of the Monuments Office], in *Najnovšie poznatky z výskumov stredovekých pamiatok na Gotickej ceste III*. [Recent Findings of Research on Medieval Monuments on the Gothic Route III], ed. Michaela Kalinová (Rožňava: O. Z. Gotická cesta; Bratislava: PÚSR, 2020), 26.

of discussion – unlike the preservation of Gothic wood carvings, which was accompanied by informed debates.<sup>33</sup>

Almost simultaneously with the *Stornovian* view, a second, more modern viewpoint began to be cautiously proclaimed in the Hungarian milieu. It is linked to the personality of Ipolyi's pupil, the priest and art historian Béla Czobor, who outlined it as early as 1882. Commenting on the restoration of Pécs Cathedral, he mentioned the restoration of reliefs and potential finds of frescoes: *If we ... found an old fresco fairly well preserved in outline and detail: the most expedient thing to do would be – ... – to leave it untouched, at most to frame it, and if it were in an easily accessible place it should be 'preserved' under glass to protect it ... Furthermore, if the old frescoes are fragmentary, this condition ... should not cause offence, they should be supplemented at most in their outlines.*<sup>34</sup> In his instructions to József Huszka (on the restoration of the paintings in Rimavské Brezovo, 1895), Czobor – responding to earlier approaches – clearly defined the limits of the restoration of wall paintings: *by renovation of the paintings we do not mean repainting or re-creating them, but only adding contours, which does not affect the original character of the paintings and is far from arbitrary modifications by adding colour. Let your lordship apply paint only where it is necessary, but never to overlay an existing layer.*<sup>35</sup>

Thus, there is a significant change in the understanding of restoration: the principle of the inviolability of the original comes to the fore. Priority in terms of protection was given to the figural component, where restoration was to be limited to the minimum necessary. It was not permissible to add physical details and especially faces; at most, only the contour of the figure could be outlined. Emphasising contours by thick and dark lines, which led to distortions in shape, is still the subject of critical comment. However, negative opinions about this procedure were already heard at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even by Gróh himself; he was also criticised and is criticized for similar interventions.<sup>36</sup>

Draperies could only be painted following preserved traces. Seemingly looser rules were applied to the setting of figures, figural compositions and the delineation of scenes. Losses in the colouring of areas in the background were to be filled in with paint of the corresponding tonality, while borders could be reconstructed from remnants of the original designs. The empty areas between the torsos of the paintings were recommended to be filled with a neutral tone, which was based on the predominant tonality of the frescoes and also acted as a unifying element. Finally, the areas of the walls without painted decoration should be coloured in such a way that the restored space gives a coherent impression.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the unambiguous wording, the principles presented by the Monuments Commission may not have been consistently translated into practice, or there

33 Buday, "Konzervovanie a reštaurovanie výtvarných pamiatok" 122-129.

34 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 59.

35 *Ibidem*, 59-60.

36 The subject of Gróh's criticism was the "restoration" of medieval wall paintings, specifically the Nativity scene in the sanctuary of the R.C. church in Lipovník. István Gróh, "Középkori falképek Gömörmegyében" [Medieval wall paintings in Gemer County], *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 15 (1895): 238.

In 1912, the painter Andor Dudits was given the task of assessing the restoration work of Lajos Tary in the sanctuary of the parish church in Podolíneč. He reminded his young colleague that the addition of black had emphasised the contours too much, which distorted the overall effect of the work. Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 60.

37 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 59-60.

was still a wide scope for their *interpretation*. Gróh, referring to religious requirements, did not exclude the reconstruction of the face of Christ on the concha of the apse in Rákoš on the basis of the Poruba analogy.<sup>38</sup> In Štítník he extensively reconstructed the ornamental bands around the figural scenes, on the archivolt and on the arch ribs, but it is questionable whether he strictly followed the surviving older fragments. His designs for new paintings in historic religious interiors were characterised by an even greater freedom and eclectic approach.<sup>39</sup> Also in the statements and opinions of the MOB from the period around – after 1910 there are attempts to go beyond the earlier, perhaps too strictly formulated rules, which were neither possible nor desirable to apply across the board, regardless of the local conditions. The requirements of visibility, legibility and consistency<sup>40</sup> and the accentuation of artistically and content important moments come to the fore.<sup>41</sup> The question of the basic protection of exposed wall paintings, (or the rescue of those that were in the buildings), against their physical demise, remained open.

After being uncovered, the paintings remained – sometimes for decades – without adequate treatment. The first step of rescue thus became registration, at least in the form of a written record. In some sites, however, the documentation process did not continue: while Gróh recommended that the paintings in Žíp at least be covered up, he did not consider the finds from the sanctuary of the church in Velká Čalomija and in Kács to be remarkable enough to be preserved in copies, nor did he suggest the possibility of re-researching them.<sup>42</sup> In Gróh's reports and proposals we do not find any mention of the possible transfer of the plaster bearing the paintings, but this does not mean that such an extreme solution was not considered at that time.

As early as 1895, Károly Pulszky, the director of the State Gallery, asked the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education for permission to transfer the wall paintings *in the way that had been done in Italy*. At the same time, he submitted a proposal for the removal of the paintings in the ruins of the church in Zsámbék. Minister Gyula Wlassics sought the opinion of the Monument Commission on the matter, which did not object to the plan as presented. However, it recommended that consent should be granted only in justified cases; otherwise the principle of preserving the works of art in their original context was applied. Each request to transfer frescoes had to be considered separately.<sup>43</sup>

On 12 November 1904, Kornel Divald informed the MOB about the demolition of the Szirmay manor house in Šarišský Michal, in which he noted the elaborate painted Rococo decorations. He requested that the commission advocate a suspension of the demolition work at least until research had been carried out on the paintings on the ceiling of the main staircase and in the two rooms of the manor house. Based on photographs, he identified those parts of the paintings

38 Ibidem, 22.

39 This is documented by the designs of wall paintings in the R.C. parish church in Pezinok (Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 35-36) and in Martjanec, Slovenia (Buday, *Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása*, 48-49).

40 According to the methodology established by L. Éber and L. Tary for the restoration of the paintings in the sanctuary of the r. k. parish church in Podolíneč, Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 62.

41 In the light of Peter Július Kern's proposals for the restoration of Baroque wall paintings in Székesfehérvár and Szigetvár, Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 62-63.

42 Ibidem, 63.

43 MÉM MDK, MOB-iratok, file 170/1895.

which were to be transferred and subsequently deposited as exhibits in the Šariš County Museum in Bardejov, but this idea was apparently never carried out.<sup>44</sup>

István Gróh himself took a restrained attitude towards transfers, as the case of Deva (Romania, Hungarian: *Déva*) from Transylvania shows. The assignment to uncover the wall paintings in the Calvinist church there was originally given to József Huszka, who promised to carry out the work in 1900. More than a decade later, Oszkár Mailand, chairman of the Hunyad County Historical and Archaeological Society, reported to the Heritage Commission on the ongoing demolition of the church's sanctuary. Mailand succeeded in removing a painting depicting the figures of two saints from the walls, in addition to taking photographs of the remains of the frescoes on the south wall of the sanctuary. *However, I think that there is still much to save.* Gróh arrived at the site on 2 October 1911 and found only the remains of the north wall of the presbytery, which was only 2 – 2.5 metres high. In places, traces of the wall paintings, which were arranged in two horizontal bands, were still clearly visible. The large figures in the upper register had suffered more serious damage, while the lower, smaller figural band survived in relatively good condition. Gróh did not consider it advisable to record the bright remains of the frescoes in photographs, and their eventual transfer was too risky because of the thin layer of supporting plaster. Under these conditions, watercolour copies were the most appropriate method of documentation.<sup>45</sup>

The examination of sources, especially the MOB files, has significantly helped to correct and clarify the hitherto incomplete picture of the documentation, protection and restoration of art monuments, in this case wall paintings in Hungary before 1918. As early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the domestic monument protection authorities were already promoting a modern approach to the restoration of fresco cycles, which is still relevant today. This opinion, which placed the requirement of authenticity at the forefront, was conditioned (also) by the large number of new discoveries, mainly in rural areas. At the same time, a closer look at the selected examples showed that the principles promoted by the Budapest Monuments Commission were not universally applied. In addition to the principle of the inviolability of the original, the requirement of legibility therefore emerges. The steps taken to document the paintings were subject to a special development. In the files examined, one can trace a gradual tightening of the criteria for the production of colour copies and an attempt to control this process multiple times in order to obtain reliable material suitable for scientific purposes. Particular attention should be paid to the problem of recording and preserving works that were in danger of physical destruction. In the text we have referred to this issue with a few examples that we registered during our research, but it deserves more attention from the professional community in the future.

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44 Buday, *István Gróh a dokumentovanie*, 64.

45 In Deva, Gróh distinguished between two distinctly different stylistic layers. While the figures in Mailand's pictures indicated that a master following Byzantine art was working in the church, some of the paintings captured by him were indicative of the work of our medieval Latin primitives. (Buday, *Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása*, 45-46; MÉM MDK, MOB-iratok, files 335/1899, 669/1911, 769/1911, 106/1911.

# Conclusion

Medieval wall painting became one of the great themes of Hungarian art history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Numerous new discoveries contributed to this, first summarised by Franz Florian Rómer in 1874 and subsequently by Péter Gerecze (1906). Until the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the hand-made, painted copy remained the dominant approach in documenting finds. As research has shown, the process of recording paintings underwent changes that were accelerated even more vigorously by the advent of photography. While initially the artist-documenter had a free hand in the choice of details, motifs, scale and technique of making the copy, after 1900 they had to accept predetermined rules, and their work was also checked on the spot and by photographs. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a group of specialists (preservationists, restorers) active in Slovakia (P. J. Kern) and Hungary (L. Tary) in the interwar period began to emerge from among the artists – authors of documentary copies belonging to the circle of István Groh's students. The great wave of uncovering fresco cycles, especially in rural churches, brought with it the question of how to preserve these works and how to present them. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an approach began to take hold in Hungary which broke with earlier restoration practice and which emphasised the principle of respect for the original. Although the basic principles were clearly stated, in practice they did not take strict form. Thus, preservation had to find compromises between its own criteria and the requirements of the lay public. The issues of technology and materials applied to the renovation of wall paintings remained unresolved. In cases of threats to their physical substance, manual, later simultaneously implemented photographic documentation was preferred, but the archival material also sporadically records intentions to transfer the frescoes.

## Summary in Slovak

Stredoveké nástenné maliarstvo sa v 19. storočí stalo jednou z veľkých tém uhorského dejepisu umenia. Prispeli k tomu početné nové objavy, prvýkrát zhrnuté Franzom Floriánom Rómerom v roku 1874 a následne Petrom Gereczem (1906). Dominantným prístupom v dokumentovaní nálezov až do prvej dekády 20. storočia zostala ručne tvorená, maľovaná kópia. Ako ukázal výskum, priebeh zaznamenávania malieb prechádzal zmenami, ktoré ešte dôraznejšie urýchlil nástup fotografie. Kým spočiatku mal výtvarník – dokumentátor voľnú ruku pri výbere detailov, motívov, mierky a techniky vyhotovenia kópie, po roku 1900 už musel akceptovať vopred stanovené pravidlá, jeho práca bola navyše kontrolovaná priamo na mieste a aj prostredníctvom fotografií. Práve z výtvarníkov – autorov dokumentačných kópií patriacich do okruhu študentov Istvána Gróha sa začiatkom 20. storočia začala formovať skupina špecialistov (konzervátorov, reštaurátorov) činných na Slovensku (P. J. Kern) a v Maďarsku (L. Tary) v medzivojnovom období. Veľká vlna odkryvania freskových cyklov predovšetkým vo vidieckych kostoloch so sebou priniesla otázku, ako tieto diela zachovať a akým spôsobom ich prezentovať. Koncom 19. storočia sa v Uhorsku začal presadzovať názor, ktorý sa rozišiel so skoršou reštaurátorskou praxou a ktorý kládol do popredia zásadu rešpektovania originálu. Hoci základné princípy boli jasne dané, v praxi sa neujali v striktnnej podobe. Pamiatková ochrana tak musela hľadať kompromisy medzi vlastnými kritériami a požiadavkami laikov. Neriešené zostali otázky technológií a materiálov

aplikovaných na obnove nástenných malieb. V prípadoch ohrozenia ich fyzickej podstaty sa uprednostňovala ručná, neskôr súbežne realizovaná fotodokumentácia, v archívnom materiáli však ojedinele zaznamenávame aj zábery na transferovanie fresiek.

*The text is an adaptation of the chapter Contexts of Gróh's documentary work which is part of the monograph Peter Buday, István Gróh and the documentation of medieval wall paintings in Hungary (Rožňava: O. Z. Georgius Bubek, 2021), 48-64. In the notes we will primarily refer to the above publication and its partially supplemented Hungarian edition Péter Buday, Gróh István és a magyarországi középkori falfestmények dokumentálása (Rožňava: O. Z. Georgius Bubek, 2022).*

## *Founding Activities and Contacts of Constance of Hungary*



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*Above: Constance of Hungary, Neo-Gothic relief on the side wall of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary of the Porta Coeli Women Monastery in Předklášteří near Tišnov*

*Abstract: The article presents the Czech Queen Constance of Hungary as an important representative of Central European queens and prominent women in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The article focuses on her fund-raising and patronage activities, which are most closely related to the period of her life when she became a widow (1230 – 1240). All of her founding, donating and political activities are discussed in a Central European context, and their analysis points to the strong ties to her country of origin, but also to the ties between her relatives and the ties within the Cistercian order (especially in Austria and Silesia). Special attention is paid to the western portal of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Předklášteří near Tišnov, which belongs to the Porta Coeli monastery. It is discussed the possibility that Constance, by virtue of her relationship with Esztergom, may have been the bearer of the thought programme of the west portal of this church. It is considered that the so-called Tišnov tympanum originally belonged to the now defunct chapel of St. Catherine, which was part of the women's monastery complex, and that it was even the private oratory of the queen.*

## Introduction

The topic of my paper is the founding activities of the Czech Queen Constance of Hungary. The Queen Constance was one of those important women in the Central European environment in the Middle Ages who, in addition to the duties associated with the title of queen, made history during her lifetime thanks to her founding activities. It was in the 13<sup>th</sup> century that the wives and daughters of kings, dukes and other important lords began their founding activities.<sup>1</sup> Josef Žemlička speaks in this context of dynastic competition or rivalry among these women.<sup>2</sup> It was true that noble women followed the founding activities of their relatives, which is not surprising, since they were often in personal contact. Therefore, the founding ventures are often related to each other, art-historically as well.

Given this, it is not surprising that many of the art-historical details of the foundations of the Czech Queen Constance go beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Bohemia to the surrounding Central European lands, especially to the country of her origin – the Kingdom of Hungary, where she owned land. It is in this context

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- 1 More on this issue e.g. an article summarizing the important founding activities of women from the Premyslid dynasty including Queen Constance. Marzena Malta, "The Power and Influence of the Přemyslid Wives and Daughters," *JAEMA* 17 (2021): 135-163.
  - 2 Josef Žemlička, *Počátky Čech královských 1198 – 1253: Proměna státu a společnosti* (Prague, 2002), 485-497.

that I would like to introduce Constance of Hungary and use her example to highlight the importance of studying Central European art historical contexts, the relevance of which is evidenced by the close dynastic ties between the ruling dynasties of the Árpáds, Přemyslids and Piasts in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

## Constance of Hungary

(1180 Esztergom – 1240 Předklášteří near Tišnov)

Constance of Hungary was born as the daughter of King Béla III of Hungary and his wife Agnes of Châtillon in 1180. Her father, Béla III, lived for some time at the court of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I and was to become his successor. In the end, this did not happen and in 1172 he became King of Hungary, having ranked among the successful monarchs of his time. He was able to combine Hungarian culture with both Eastern and Western traditions. This was also reflected in his great building projects. These building activities were then followed by Constance's brothers, as the incoming Hungarian kings. The most important building activities in Esztergom took place in the period before the marriage of Constance to Ottokar I of Bohemia. These may have influenced the building activities of Queen Constance herself, which will be discussed in the following lines.

Constance came to Bohemia after the first marriage of Ottokar I of Bohemia to Adelaide of Meissen<sup>3</sup> was annulled for unclear reasons. We know that a canonical trial on the nullity of the marriage took place in 1198 – 1199. Although this dispute did not end with the declaration, it was followed by a marriage between Constance and Ottokar I of Bohemia.<sup>4</sup> We do not know the exact date, but the year 1198 or 1199 is usually given. Queen Constance lived by her husband's side for about thirty years. She bore him eight or even nine children, among them the future King Wenceslas I of Bohemia and Agnes of Bohemia, who was one of the most important female figures of her time.

## Founding activities of the Queen Constance of Hungary

We have no record of the Queen's founding activities before she was widowed. On the contrary, we know from the sources that during her lifetime alongside her husband, King Ottokar I of Bohemia, Constance of Hungary was present at the consecration of some important monastic foundations in the territory of the Kingdom of Bohemia. Among the important ones are the consecration of the Cistercian monastery at Velehrad in 1228,<sup>5</sup> where King Ottokar I of Bohemia found his final resting place in 1230, and the consecration of the Cistercian nuns first monastery in Oslavany also in 1228. The foundation of Cistercian nunnery is even (erroneously) connected in Pulkava's Chronicle with Constance of Hungary<sup>6</sup> herself.

3 Žemlička, *Počátky Čech královských*, 94.

4 More on this e.g. *Ibidem*, 98-99.

5 Jiří Kuthan, *Splendor et Gloria Regni Bohemiae: Umělecké dílo jako projev vladařské reprezentace a symbol státní moci* (Praha, 2008), 129.

6 FRB V, 137.

Leaving aside the erroneous information from the mentioned chronicle from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, according to other sources, it seems that the actual founding activities were started by the queen only at the end of her life, between 1230 – 1240. She was thus one of the important female founders who, after being widowed, founded "their" monastery. It was the widows of royal dynasties who became frequent founders of monasteries, which they often moved into and lived out their lives in, or had built them as a final resting place for themselves or their dynasty.<sup>7</sup> It was no different in the case of Constance, who also found a final resting place in "her" monastery together with her son, Margrave of Moravia, who had died a year earlier.

Before we come to the monastery of Porta Coeli itself, we must consider the territories that Constance received as a gift on the occasion of her marriage, as well as the large dowry that she received after the death of her husband in Moravia. There are several preserved monuments from the 13<sup>th</sup> century in these areas, which scholars associate with her name.

It is probable that the royal dowry in the border area with the Kingdom of Bohemia was actually owned by Constance. This is the western border area of today's Slovakia. However, she must have received it not from her father Béla III, who was already dead at the time of her wedding (he died in 1196), but from one of her brothers – Emeric or even Andrew II.<sup>8</sup>

We do not have precise data on the extent of the property between the Little Carpathians and the river Váh. Also for this reason I would like to narrow down the issue in this paper to two important monuments of this area, whose history in the 1230s is associated with Constance of Hungary.

## Queen Constance of Hungary as the founder of the Poor Clare monastery in Trnava?

It is mentioned in Pulkava's Chronicle that the town was built during the time of Constance and that in colloquial Hungarian the town is referred to as *Sambach*<sup>9</sup> *Constance*<sup>10</sup>. We also know from other sources that she held estates in the vicinity of the town as well. From the documents of the Hungarian King Béla IV we know that in 1238 she no longer owned Trnava<sup>11</sup>. It was in Trnava where the first convent of the Poor Clare nuns in the Kingdom of Hungary was founded. We have to remain hypothetical when connecting the foundation of this monastery with the former owner of Trnava. The truth is that we do not know the founder of the monastery, but we know almost certainly that they came from royal background. Some scholars believe that Constance was the founder. Others are in favour of the opinion that the monastery was founded by the Hungarian King Béla IV. The situation is complicated by the fact that we do not know the exact year of foundation.

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7 Žemlička, *Počátky Čech královských*, 139.

8 Martin Tibenský, *Červenokamenské panstvo vo stredoveku* (Trnava, 2011), 26-27.

9 The Hungarian name of Trnava is Nagyszombat. It is possible that Sambach is a misrepresentation of the word szombat.

10 FRB V, 137.

11 At that time Béla IV granted a privilege to the citizens of Trnava. Another document of his from 1244 informs us that the previous owner of Trnava was Constance.



*Constance of Hungary and Ottokar I of Bohemia on the tympanum of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary of the Porta Coeli Women's Monastery in Předklášteří near Tišnov, around 1240*



*North side of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary of the Porta Coeli Women's Monastery in Předklášteří near Tišnov, around 1240*



*Portal of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary of the Porta Coeli Women's Monastery in Předklášteří near Tišnov, around 1240*



*Deesis tympanum, Esztergom, around 1180 – 1190*



*Tišnov tympanum, Moravian Gallery in Brno, around 1240*



*Predklášteří near Tišnov with the Chapel of St. Catherine indicated, Porta Coeli women's monastery grounds (colorized drawing, library of the Osek Monastery, now in the estate of Dr. Zdeněk Wirth at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century)*

Bibiana Pomfyová does not exclude the possibility that she may have initiated the arrival of the Poor Clare nuns in Trnava before the territory of Trnava was handed over to her nephew (Béla IV). However, the foundation of the monastery in Trnava could have taken place no earlier than 1235, when Elizabeth of Hungary (Thuringia), niece of Constance and sister of King Béla IV of Hungary, was canonised. The Poor Clare nuns seem to have chosen St. Elizabeth as their patroness from the very beginning.<sup>12</sup> Whether the Poor Clare nuns settled in Trnava on Constance's decision, unfortunately, cannot be confirmed with certainty even on the basis of building-historical research.<sup>13</sup> The research showed that the first monastic church of the Poor Clare nuns in Trnava was a single-nave church with a short vaulted presbytery.<sup>14</sup> These types of Mendicant monastic churches appear in the Kingdom of Hungary in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> Thus, even on the basis of this observation, it is not possible to determine exactly who initiated the foundation of the monastery.

The second – this time secular – monument associated with Constance from the territory of today's Slovakia is the castle of Červený Kameň. In the aforementioned Pulkava's Chronicle there is a record of the foundation of this castle by Constance.<sup>16</sup> Martin Tibenský provides a detailed analysis of the possible Queen Constance's founding and concludes that it is unlikely (contrary to Pulkava's Chronicle) that the castle was founded by the Queen. On the contrary, he believes that around 1230<sup>17</sup> the Queen lost interest in the Hungarian estates and gradually sold them off and concentrated on the completion of the monastery in Předklášteří near Tišnov.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, even in this case it is not possible to rely on an art-historical analysis of the castle, because: *the original castle mentioned in written records as early as in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, ..., disappeared almost without a trace.*<sup>19</sup>

## The dower of Queen Constance in Moravia

After the death of her husband, Constance received a large dower in Moravia, which she had confirmed by the Pope himself. Thanks to this papal charter of 1231, we know the exact extent of her dower. These were the provinces of Břeclav, Hodonín, Kunovice, Přibyslavice and Moravia-Budějovice, often territories that were adjacent to the land of her origin. The queen as a widow was mostly found in southern Moravia.<sup>20</sup> Some sources say that the queen founded or had rebuilt three castles along the border with the Kingdom of Hungary – the castles in Břeclav, Hodonín<sup>21</sup> and Bzenec.<sup>22</sup>

12 Sources sometimes also talk about the consecration to the Virgin Mary. More on that: Bibiana Pomfyová, "Architektúra stredovekých kláštorov klarisiek: Príklad Slovenska," in *Velké ženy ve Visegrádském regionu: kult a umění s nimi spojené*, ed. Kornélia Kolářová Takáčová (Praha, 2017), 67.

13 Pomfyová, "Architektúra stredovekých kláštorov klarisiek," 66-74

14 Bibiana Pomfyová, *Stredoveký kostol: Historické a funkčné premeny architektúry* (Bratislava, 2015), 312, 314 and 316.

15 Let's mention at least the Dominican convent church in Veszprém

16 FRB V, 137.

17 On the contrary, the fact that the name of his judge Kruff appears in the sources, which is also documented in Moravia, speaks of the ownership of property in the Kingdom of Hungary before 1230. More on that: Tibenský, *Červenokamenské panstvo*, 49-50

18 Ibidem, 48-51.

19 Belo Pólla, Michal Slivka and Andrej Vallašek, "K problematike výskumu hrádkov a hradov na Slovensku," *Arch. Historica* 6 (1981): 371.

20 Aleš Flídr, *Porta Coeli* (Master Thesis, Brno: Department of Philosophy, Masaryk University, 2004), 55.

21 CBD II, 428-430.

22 FRB V, 137.

Břeclav was owned by Constance until 1237. A wooden castle from the 11<sup>th</sup> century is documented. Archaeological findings date the beginning of the renovation of the castle into a stone castle to the period when Constance owned the castle (around 1230). The only material evidence is considered to be the lower part of the massive tower, the central position of which suggests that it was a donjon copying the French donjons of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> The construction of the castle has therefore also been linked to Constance and her origins in the Hungarian royal court, which was in contact with the French environment<sup>24</sup> at this time. Contradicting this claim is the dendrochronological finding on the oak foundations of the donjon, according to which the trunk of the wood used can be dated back to the period of Ottokar I of Bohemia.<sup>25</sup> This finding contradicts the archaeological finding with the dendrochronological result. However, "the question remains whether the South German oak has full validity in our territory."<sup>26</sup>

Even more uncertain is the queen's involvement in the conversion of Hodonín Castle into a stone castle. Based on current knowledge, it is not possible to determine whether the conversion took place at the time when the castle was owned by Queen Constance of Hungary.<sup>27</sup> The Chronicle of Přebík Pulkava also refers to the castle in Bzenec which was to be founded by Constance. Due to the lack of archaeological research, we do not know its appearance<sup>28</sup> and therefore it is not possible to confirm the involvement of Constance in the construction activities at the castle in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

What all the above examples have in common is that it is not possible to deduce from them the specific outcomes of the Queen's construction activities. The situation is different in the case of her most important Moravian construction – the Cistercian nunnery in Předklášteří near Tišnov.

## Porta Coeli Women's Monastery in Předklášteří near Tišnov

The most important foundation of Queen Constance was the Cistercian women's monastery Porta Coeli in Předklášteří near Tišnov in Moravia, which was founded as a burial place for members of the Premyslid dynasty, just like the Cistercian abbey in Velehrad.<sup>29</sup> In the case of this monastery, there is no doubt that it was founded by the queen dowager herself with the support of her son, King Wenceslas I of Bohemia, in the period after the death of her husband Ottokar I of Bohemia in 1230 (they considered its founding while he was still alive). The first documentary evidence of the monastery dates from March 1233, but it is possible to assume

23 Miroslav Plaček and Rudolf Procházka, "K problematice opevněných sídel přelomu raného a vrcholného feudalismu na Moravě (Teze)," *Archaeologia historica* 11 (1986): 162.

24 Vratislav Vaníček, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české: 1197 – 1250*, vol. 2 (Praha, 2000), 243.

25 Miroslav Plaček, *Ilustrovaná encyklopedie moravských hradů, hrádků a tvrzí* (Praha, 2007), 132-133.

26 *Ibidem*, 133.

27 *Ibidem*, 221.

28 *Ibidem*, 150.

29 Jiří Kuthan talks about the sepulchral function of both Moravian monasteries and points out the conformity with the fact that from the 12<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a new burial ground for ruling families was established in several European countries precisely on the grounds of Cistercian monasteries. – Kuthan, *Splendor et Gloria Regni Bohemiae*, 122.

that it had been founded in the previous year.<sup>30</sup> The founding venture of the queen was supported by her son, the Moravian Margrave Přemysl, who was later buried in the monastery.<sup>31</sup> There are also unanswered questions about the place of foundation.<sup>32</sup> We know from the sources that the original plan was to establish the monastery directly in Prague, on the site of the German settlement near the church of St. Peter in Poříčí, which belonged to German knights. For this purpose, she received villages from her son, which she was to sell, and the funds were to be used for the construction of the monastery.<sup>33</sup> In the end, the monastery was not founded in Prague, even though the Prague location would certainly have had enormous advantages (for example, the queen would have remained close to her son Wenceslas I, the new Czech king). One of the sources also says that a place in Prague would not be suitable for the nuns, and therefore the decision was made to choose more convenient place in Moravia in the town of Tišnov (the charter mentions *Tusnowic*). The choice of the order that occupied the monastery may also be related to the change of the place. It was the order of Cistercian nuns which Constance insisted on.<sup>34</sup> The Cistercian Order was close to the ruling dynasty (and to the Queen's relatives from the Árpád family) at this time, and the location of the foundation was more suited to this Order, whose women's monasteries were established near towns, but not directly in towns (unlike the monasteries of the mendicant orders). Such an order were the aforementioned the Poor Clares nuns, for whom, in the spirit of contemporary spirituality, she could found a monastery in Trnava, while in Prague she could leave the foundation of the Poor Clares nuns' monastery to her daughter Agnes.

In Moravia at this time the Cistercians already had their first monastery in Oslavany.<sup>35</sup> The proximity of this monastery to the royal family is evidenced by their presence at the consecration of the monastery. Certainly, the thesis according to which the construction workshop operated in Tišnov and Oslavany (in this case already in the second building phase) at the same time is also important.<sup>36</sup> In the same way, Constance may have been inspired by the most important Cistercian monastery in Silesia, Trzebnica, which was founded by her relative Hedwig of Silesia at the very beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to the Moravian Cistercian monastery. Josef Žemlička believes that the spirituality of Queen Constance may have been closer to the more dignified 'model' of the monastery and the spirituality lived in it, which was chosen also by her relative Hedwig of Silesia, who was closer to her in age, than the ascetic expressions of her niece Elizabeth of Hungary's, which became a model for the newly forming spirituality of the female branches of the mendicant orders.<sup>37</sup> Even the occupation of the Porta Coeli monastery is associated with the sisters coming from Trzebnica, and the main argument of researchers is the kinship between the female founders.<sup>38</sup> Kalinová pointed out the coincidence of the floor plan between the monastery

30 Dušan Foltýn et al., *Encyklopedie moravských a slezských klášterů* (Praha, 2005), 612.

31 Kuthan, *Splendor et Gloria Regni Bohemiae*, 17.

32 Jiřina Joachimová, "Fundace královny Konstancie a pražské statky německých rytířů," *Umění* 16 (1968): 495-499 deals in detail with the analysis of the available sources regarding the plans of the place where the monastery was founded by Queen Constantia.

33 Žemlička, *Počátky Čech královských*, 488-491.

34 Žemlička, *Počátky Čech královských*, 488.

35 On the history and architectural development of the monastery Jiří Kuthan, *Česká architektura v době posledních Přemyslovců* (Praha, 1994), 279-286.

36 Dobroslav Líbal, *Katalog gotické architektury v České republice do husitských válek* (Praha, 2001), 497

37 Žemlička, *Počátky Čech královských*, 489.

38 Aleš Flídr, *Porta Coeli* (Master Thesis, Brno: Filozofická fakulta Masaryková Univerzita, 2004), 68.

church in Trzebnica and in Tišnov,<sup>39</sup> but from my point of view another connection between the monastery churches is also interesting. I mean the rich, representative sculptural and relief decoration of the portals (tympanums) of both monastery churches, which generally does not correspond to the mission of the Cistercian monasteries. In both cases, their appearance can be linked to the intention of representing the dynasty from which the founders came, also in view of the choice of the monastic church as the final resting place.

## Constance as the bearer of the conceptual programme of the western portal in the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Předklášteří near Tišnov?

The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the nunnery of Porta Coeli was built in a short time and apparently it was already finished at the time of Constance's death in 1240. It is a three-nave basilica with a transept with a three-part conclusion. It is ranked among those Moravian buildings with already clearly manifested Gothic style. The monastery buildings adjoined the church on the north side and on the basis of a style analysis it can be assumed that the first construction work was completed by about the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> Important monuments of the Bohemian Middle Ages are related to the monastery: a very clear analogy to the decoration of the Tišnov monastery is represented by the architectural details of the cloister of the St. Agnes Monastery in Prague, or the details in the oldest core of the Old Town Hall in Brno, or parts of the fractionally preserved cloister of the former Premonstratensian monastery in Louka near Znojmo).<sup>41</sup>

Although the entire monastery complex is an extremely high quality monument, the most interesting is the entrance portal of the monastery basilica, which is unparalleled in Central Europe. Helena Soukupová<sup>42</sup> has recently combined the conceptual programme of the portal with the unpreserved Porta Speciosa from the medieval Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and St. Adalbert in Esztergom. She believes that it was this portal that inspired Queen Constance. Soukupová has thus entered into a polemic with Jiří Kuthan and Ivan Neumann, who believe that the theologically elaborate iconographic portal was created under the direction of Bishop Robert of Olomouc.<sup>43</sup> The truth is that the documentary sources speak about the presence of the Queen at the time of the construction of the Porta Coelia monastery; but they say nothing about the Bishop of Olomouc in this context.

39 Alena Kalinová, *K stavebnímu vývoji kláštera Porta coeli v Předklášteří u Tišnova* (Master Thesis, Brno: SDU FF MU, 1980), 61.

40 Foltýn, *Encyklopedie moravských a slezských klášterů*, 618.

41 Kuthan, *Česká architektura v době posledních Přemyslovců*, 406-407.

42 Helena Soukupová, „Zu Datierung und Interpretation des Westportals des Zisterzienserinnenklosters Porta coeli in Tišnov (Tischnowitz),“ *Umění* 52 (2004): 298-309.

43 Jiří Kuthan and Ivan Neumann, „Ideový program tišnovského portálu a jeho kořeny,“ *Umění* XXVII (1979): 107-117.

Porta Speciosa<sup>44</sup> was built by Constance's father, King Béla III in 1180 – 1196, which means that it was about forty years older than the Tišnov portal. We know the portal only from fragments, from an 18<sup>th</sup> century oil painting and from a description of the portal's biblical inscriptions by György Széles, a clergyman of the Esztergom canonry. Soukupová points out the following parallels between the portals: in both cases they are archivolt portals surrounded by lions on both; they show the alternation of the two basic colours – red and white – throughout the portal, and the position of the proscynesis, in which the founders are depicted, is also remarkable. It was long believed that both portals were located in antechambers. In Esztergom there was indeed an antechamber, but in Tišnov it was concluded on the basis of the last surveys in 2000 that has never been constructed.<sup>45</sup>

Besides the parallels mentioned above, there is one – but iconographically significant – difference between the portals. In the Esztergom portal, the Virgin Mary and Jesus are painted in the tympanum, while in Tišnov, following the model of French cathedral portals, Jesus Christ – the Pantocrator – is depicted in the tympanum. Here a fragment from Esztergom, which is exhibited in the cafeteria of Esztergom Castle, enters into the issue. It is the fragment of a tympanum whose central figure is Jesus Christ. I have pointed out in a previous post<sup>46</sup> that this tympanum, dating from the same period and sculptor workshop as the Porta Speciosa itself, may have been the original tympanum of the Porta Speciosa. Imre Takács came to the same conclusion and developed this idea in his publication on Porta Speciosa, in which he explained very thoroughly both the conceptual programme of the Esztergom portal and the possible circumstances of its creation, thus answering the ambiguities concerning the conceptual programme of Porta Speciosa. He concluded that the original tympanum should have been the tympanum with the Deésis motif preserved in fragments from the Esztergom café, which, however, due to the ecclesiastical-political circumstances at the time of the portal's creation, was eventually replaced by a new tympanum with the Virgin Mary and the little Jesus in the middle.<sup>47</sup> The connection of the Porta Speciosa with the fragment of the tympanum from the Esztergom café links the ideological programmes of the two Central European portals, which could only have been initiated by Constance, who certainly knew the Esztergom portal and the circumstances of its creation very well, and who, as we know, supervised the construction in Tišnov. One could go on and on about other possible connections of the western portal of the church of the monastery of Porta Coeli, or of the whole monastic complex with the land of origin of Constance, not only in the iconographic but also in the stylistic field.<sup>48</sup> All these possible parallels only

44 On the abundant literature on Porta Speciosa, see, e.g., Imre Takács, "Esztergom és a művészettörténet," *Budapesti könyvszemle* XI (1999): 162-167; Ernő Marosi, "Az esztergomi Porta Speciosa," in *Ezer év Szent Adalbert oltalma alatt*, eds. A. Hegedüs and I. Bárdos (Esztergom, 2000), 155-163; István Horváth, "Az esztergomi királyi és érseki székhely az Árpádok korában" in *Lux Pannoniae*, ed. I. Horváth (Esztergom, 2001), 15-36; Imre Takács, *Az esztergomi Porta Speciosa* (Budapest, 2017).

45 Soukupová, „Zu Datierung und Interpretation des Westportals,” 298-309.

46 Kornélia Kolářová Takáčková, "Ke vztahu západního portálu kláštera Porta Coeli v Tišnově k analogickým portálům v Uherském království," in *Obsah – forma, sborník příspěvků z mezinárodní konference studentů doktorských programů*, eds. M. Nová and M. Opatrná (Praha, 2017), 52-53.

47 Takács, *Az esztergomi Porta Speciosa*.

48 Other art-historical links to the Hungarian environment are also mentioned in the literature. The rosette above the western entrance to the Tišnov basilica is mentioned in connection with the rosette above the entrance to the royal chapel in Esztergom, in addition to possible French parallels. Closer in time to the examples from the Kingdom of Hungary is also the tympanum of the defunct church of St Stephen in Szentkirály, dating from around the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The architectural parallels with the former Cistercian monastery church in Bélapátfalva, founded in 1232, are interesting. Sometimes a small portal of the Reformed church in Litér near Veszprém is mentioned. The two statues of the Litér apostles are close to the most archaically conceived figures of the Tišnov portal. In this context, I will also mention the portal of the

reinforce the idea of the firm contact of Constance with Upper Hungary.

But the stylistic connections apply to the whole area of Central Europe. Researchers have also paid considerable attention to the stylistic links with the Austrian milieu.<sup>49</sup> It is worth mentioning, for example, the monasteries at Lilienfeld, Zwettl,<sup>50</sup> Heiligenkreuz, but also the sacral buildings in Vienna itself.<sup>51</sup> Tibor Rostás speaks of the very early influence of Porta Coeli sculptural decoration in Central Europe. He highlights the tombstone of Frederick II. in Heiligenkreuz and discusses it in the context of other Hungarian examples, which are the partially preserved parts of the pillar of the triumphal arch from the Gisela Chapel in Veszprém, as well as fragments from the castle of Óbuda and the former Premonstratensian monastery in Zsámbék. He notes that it would be very difficult to prove a direct link, but it is legitimate to assume the influence of such an important sculptural work on the named monuments.<sup>52</sup> József Csemegi was the first to point out the stylistic connection between the west portal in Tišnov and the former St Mary's Church in Budapest. For example, a fragment of the tympanum of the former northern portal, which is close to the Tišnov morphology, comes from the first construction phase in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The workshop that was ending its production in Tišnov could continue to work at the court of King Béla IV, who was actively building at that time (at the court in Buda and on the Margaret Island, where he had a convent of Dominican nuns built for his daughter Margaret of Hungary). However, we are already in the period after the death of Queen Constance, but her children Agnes of Bohemia and King Wenceslas I of Bohemia could certainly have provided such help to their relative.<sup>53</sup>

In this context, another important Moravian portal with strong Central European links can be mentioned. The northern portal of the former church of the Benedictine monastery in Třebíč is associated by some researchers (despite its Romanesque form) with the western portal of the Porta Coeli monastery.<sup>54</sup> Helena Soukupová speaks of a direct connection between part of the Třebíč workshop and the workshop that operated in Tišnov. She thinks that the Tišnov portal and its decoration is the work of a French-trained builder (or sculptor), but it was completed by a domestic workshop familiar with the monastery church in Třebíč.<sup>55</sup> It was such a combined building workshop that could have reached the Kingdom of Hungary through the Austrian environment, as József Csemegi put it.

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former Benedictine church in Ják, whose iconography is quite similar to that of Tišnov, but the stylistic connections between them have even been analysed. For more on this, see e.g. Flídr, *Porta Coeli*; Kolářová Takáčková, "Ke vztahu západního portálu kláštera Porta Coeli," 32-39.

49 For more on that Mario Schwarz, *Die Baukunst des 13. Jahrhunderts in Österreich* (Wien, 2013).

50 Kuthan, *Česká architektura v době posledních Přemyslovců*, 401-406.

51 Jiří Kuthan points out that the Constance in Vienna founded a community of pious women, which she called Porta Coeli – Kuthan, *Česká architektura v době posledních Přemyslovců*, 401.

52 Tibor Rostás, *Kapcsolatok Közép-Európa koragótikus építészetében* (Dissertation, Budapest: ELTE, 2007), 38-54.

53 József Csemegi, *A budavári főtemplom* (Budapest, 1955), 70-72.

54 Václav Mencl states that the Tišnov workshop wanted to surpass the Třebíč workshop in terms of portal decoration and fashionable elements (reclining lions). – Václav Mencl, *Románská architektura v zemích českých. Ročenka kruhu po pěstování dějin umění za rok 1937 a 1938* (Praha, 1939), 36.

55 Soukupová, „Zu Datierung und Interpretation des Westportals.“

# Tišnov tympanum and the Chapel of St. Catherine in the grounds of the Porta Coeli Monastery

Another medieval tympanum, which is usually associated with the Cistercian monastery in Tišnov as well as with Constance of Hungary, is the so-called Tišnov tympanum. It is a tympanum discovered in one of the houses in Tišnov.<sup>56</sup> It depicts a female figure, which researchers have long identified as Constance.<sup>57</sup> Recently, there is an opinion that the tympanum could depict St. Clare, St. Agnes of Bohemia<sup>58</sup> or St. Elizabeth of Hungary<sup>59</sup>, which would open the question of the early veneration of this saint not only in the Kingdom of Bohemia but also in the whole of Central Europe. It is true that St. Elizabeth of Hungary was the niece of Constance, so her early veneration in Tišnov could be related to their dynastic connection. However, the sources say nothing about the veneration of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Tišnov.<sup>60</sup> The situation is complicated by the fact that the original location of the tympanum is not clear. It may have belonged to the tribune chapel at the eastern end of the area in front of the Porta Coeli quadrangle, which may have been related to the person of the founder of the monastery.<sup>61</sup> Another possibility is the use of the chapel as a hospital.<sup>62</sup> Archaeological research has established that this chapel of St Catherine was a single-nave building with a polygonal end. It was entered from the south side, and the lining of the entrance portal has been partially preserved.<sup>63</sup> The dimensions of the tympanum correspond, according to Belcredihon, to those of the chapel's entrance.<sup>64</sup> The chapel was probably built somewhat earlier than the monastery basilica itself,<sup>65</sup> and the tympanum may refer to this dating.

The occurrence of a chapel associated with the personality of the monarch within the monasteries of the Cistercians in Bohemia is not unique. However, the known examples are somewhat younger than the chapel at Porta Coeli. These include the chapels of the monasteries of Plasy and Zlatá Koruna, which are manifestations of court culture on Cistercian soil.<sup>66</sup> Alternatively, the chapel of St. Salvator in the Monastery of St. Agnes may also be mentioned. Jiří Kuthan points to the earlier occurrence of two chapels associated with the ruling family in the Kingdom of Hungary and Austria. These are the royal chapel in Esztergom (c. 1198) and the chapel in Klosterneuburg in Lower Austria (consecrated in 1222).<sup>67</sup> The Hungarian example represents a chapel outside the monastery grounds, but Constance of Hungary was certainly well acquainted with its construction. From the female monastery environment we know the chapel of the Cistercian nunnery in

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- 56 Aleš Flídr, "Tympanon takzvaný „z Předklášteří s královnou Konstancí“," in 61. *Bulletin Moravské galerie v Brně*, ed. A. Krkošková (Brno, 2005), 157.
- 57 Albert Kotal, "Příspěvek k dějinám české pozdně románské plastiky," in *Cestami umění*, eds. J. O. Blažiček and J. Květ (Praha, 1949), 70-71.
- 58 Flídr, "Tympanon takzvaný," 155-164.
- 59 Jiří Doležal, "Tišnovský tympanon: K rané účtě a ikonografii sv. Alžběty Durynské," *Studia mediaevalia Bohemica* 3 (2011): 33-67.
- 60 The depicted female figure does not have a halo. It must have been an unconsecrated Agnes or Elizabeth.
- 61 Foltýn, *Encyklopedie moravských a slezských klášterů*, 619.
- 62 Even a possible hospital chapel could have a tympanum with the motif of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.
- 63 Ludvík Belcredi, "Archeologický výzkum kaple svatě Kateřiny a areálu kláštera Porta coeli v Předklášteří u Tišnova," *Archaeologia historica* 18, no.1 (1993): 325.
- 64 Ibidem, 338-339.
- 65 Ibidem, 334.
- 66 Jiří Kuthan, "Královské kaple 13. století v českých zemích: Styl, typologie, sociální kořeny a význam," *Umění* XXXIV (1986): 35-47.
- 67 Jiří Kuthan, "Cisterciácké kláštery jako pohřební místa vládařských rodů střední Evropy," in *Historická inspirace*, ed. M. Kubelík, M. Pavlík, and J. Štulc (Praha, 2001), 35.

Seligenthal, which was founded in 1232 by Constance's cousin, Ludmila of Bohemia, and who was eventually buried in this monastery chapel.<sup>68</sup>

The archaeological report on the chapel of St Catherine in Porta Coeli speaks of a large number of preserved fragments of two-coloured mosaic tiles. "We know that, according to the Cistercian regulations, these two-coloured tiles, composed in geometric patterns, were the only permitted decoration of the churches of the order, which otherwise had to be completely austere, without coloured windows, statues and towers."<sup>69</sup> The discovery of such a large number of geometrically shaped paving in the setting of a Cistercian monastery in the Kingdom of Bohemia appears to be the earliest example, although we know fragments of paving from Nepomuk and Plasy (from the aforementioned royal chapel), and more modest finds are also from Velehrad and Hradiště nad Jizerou. In the country of origin of the monastery founder, we know about the preservation of a significant number of fragments of two-coloured tiles from the Cistercian monastery in Pilisszentkereszt, which was founded by Constance's father in 1194. Béla III was one of the most important patrons of the Cistercians in the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>70</sup> He also founded the Cistercian monastery in Egres, where Constance's brother, King Andrew II of Hungary, was later buried in 1235. The first wife of Andrew II, Queen Gertrude, was also buried in the church of the former Cistercian monastery in Pilisszentkereszt.<sup>71</sup> In this context, it is interesting to note the links of the abbey of Pilisszentkereszt to the French (Burgundian) environment and its importance in the development of Gothic art in the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>72</sup>

If we accept that the chapel was built as a personal chapel for the founder and her family (donors),<sup>73</sup> we address another unanswered question. Where did Constance and her family live during their stay in Tišnov? Aleš Flídr believes that the ruling family had their own residence built, perhaps in the form of a manor, which was later incorporated into the monastery complex during the construction of the monastery's fortifications.<sup>74</sup> But it is also possible that the manor stood only close to the monastery, which would mean that the chapel did not serve the queen's prayer needs. In this sense, no research has been carried out. In any case, we know that Constance herself was in Moravia after her widowhood. Therefore, the idea of a private sacral space for the queen's personal devotions is appropriate. Moreover, we know that she ended her earthly life in Tišnov, where she was buried next to her son.

## Madonna of Lomnica and Constance of Hungary?

In the context of the Queen's possible chapel and her potential inspirations in the Kingdom of Hungary, I will also mention that the missing Madonna of Lomnica is

68 The monastery was occupied by nuns from Trzebnica, similarly as it is assumed in Tišnov. In this case, it was also a family burial place – the Wittelsbachs.

69 Belcredi, "Archeologický výzkum kaple svaté Kateřiny," 327.

70 Before founding the monastery in Pilisszentkereszt, he also founded monasteries in Egres (1179), Zirc (1182) and Szentgothárd (1183) – Imre Takács, *Francia gótika recepciója Magyarországon II: András korában* (Budapest: A. Balassi Kiadó, 2018), 64.

71 Kuthan, "Cisterciácké kláštery jako pohřební místa," 199-214.

72 It is this connection that could lend credence to researchers linking the use of Gothic morphology in the construction in Předklášteří near Tišnov with the origins of the queen.

73 Graves were also found in the chapel – apparently of the supporters of the monastery. More on this Belcredi, "Archeologický výzkum kaple svaté Kateřiny," 325-340.

74 Flídr, "Tympanon takzvaný," 61.

also discussed in connection with the Queen Constance. It belongs to the group of other Central European statues, of which, with regard to my topic, I will highlight the Madonna of Dunajská Lužná. She reproduces the type of the Madonna of Lomnica and the existing knowledge suggests that her original location is linked to the foundation of a Benedictine monastery in the locality of Dömölk in Hungary. The first of these Madonnas is associated with the site dedicated to the monastery of Porta Coeli by Margrave Přemysl. The time of the Madonna's creation is also close to the time of the founding of the monastery of Porta Coeli. Considering these clues, the possibility that Constance herself was behind the acquisition of this statue cannot be ruled out. This – albeit hypothetical – possibility is strengthened by the assumed origin of the Madonna of Dunajská Lužná from the land of Constance's origin.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Constance of Hungary is one of the most important females of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the Central European area, who were significantly involved in strengthening the dynastic ties between the various ruling families of Central Europe. Historical sources suggest that Queen Constance was skilled in the administration of her property and in the political sphere. She seems to have maintained lively contacts with her country of origin, which was certainly not on the fringes of artistic development in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (the earliest occurrence of the Gothic style in the region). Her relationship to the Hungarian environment is present in her founding activities – the inspiration of Hungarian models and the possible purposeful dissemination of the cult of St Elizabeth of Hungary shortly after her death.

In the words of Géza Entz, it is hardly a coincidence that the first manifestations of the new Gothic style in the Czech environment appeared mainly in buildings associated with the Czech queen of Hungarian origin and subsequently with her daughter.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, the Porta Coeli monastery itself did not go unchallenged in the neighbouring countries; on the contrary, the influence of such an important monastic foundation appeared practically immediately after its foundation both in the country of Constance's origin and in the Austrian environment, where she was also involved as a founder.

## Abbreviations

CDM – Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Moraviae. II. ed. Antonín Boček, Olomouc, 1839.

FRB – Fontes rerum Bohemicarum. The Czech Chronicle of V. Přibíček from Radení, called Pulkava, eds. EMLER Josef / GEBAUER Jan, Prague, 1893.

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<sup>75</sup> Aleš Mudra, *Kapitoly k počátkům řezbářské tradice ve střední Evropě* (Praha, 2006), 72.  
<sup>76</sup> Géza Entz, *A gótika művészete* (Budapešť, 1973), 58-59.

## Summary in Czech

Článek představuje českou královnu Konstancii Uherskou jako významnou představitelku středoevropských královen a významných žen 13. století. Článek se zaměřuje na její fundátorské a mecenášské aktivity, které se nejvíce vztahují k období jejího života, kdy ovdověla (1230 – 1240). Všechny její zakladatelské, donátorské a politické aktivity jsou pojednány ve středoevropském kontextu a jejich analýza poukazuje na silné vazby na zemi jejího původu, ale také na vazby mezi jejími příbuznými a vazby v rámci cisterciáckého řádu.



## *The Breslau Psalter: Some Preliminary Remarks on Gold*



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*Above: The Beatus initial, detail (MS 36-1950, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)*

*Abstract: The Breslau Psalter – now treasured in Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (MS 36–1950)<sup>1</sup> – one of the most abundantly adorned medieval psalters known to us, constantly draws the attention of researchers.<sup>2</sup> Its miniatures are distinguished not only by their quantity but, above all, by their high artistic quality. Moreover, they are an intriguing example of the migration of Italian art north of the Alps. It is a preliminary study, so I restrict myself to outlining the problem and posing questions, which I plan to develop in the following papers.*

*Keywords: Master of Giovanni da Gaibana, Byzantine art, gold leaf, Sinai panel paintings*

## Contents

Written in Latin, in a Gothic bookhand (textualis), the manuscript consists of a calendar (fols. 1v–13r), eight full-page miniatures (fols. 15v–22r), the 150 Psalms (*Psalterium Gallicanum*), accompanied by nineteen full-page miniatures (fols. 23v–135r), the ten Canticles, the hymn *Te Deum*, the Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque vult*; fols. 135r–142v), and Litany with Collects (fols. 143r–147r). Such an arrangement of texts was quite common for medieval Psalters.<sup>3</sup>

1 See *The Breslau Psalter*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/section/theme>; *The Fitzwilliam Museum (2023) "Psalter,"* accessed June 26, 2023, <https://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/object/170619>.

2 See i.a. R. Kaczmarek and W. Mrozowicz, *W kręgu średniowiecznych iluminowanych psalterzy śląskich. Europejska sztuka książki w pełnym blasku* (Pelplin; Wrocław, 2019), 25–62; *Der Breslauer Psalter MS 36–1950 Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum: Kommentar zur Faksimile-Edition*, with contributions from S. Panayotova, N.J. Morgan and P. Ricciardi (Luzern, 2018); S. Panayotova and P. Ricciardi, "Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 36–1950, fols. 49v–50r," in *Colour: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts*, no. 26, ed. S. Panayotova, with the assistance of D. Jackson and P. Ricciardi (London; Turnhout, 2016), 136–138; F. L. Bossetto, "Splendori a corte: Il Salterio Thompson di Cambridge (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 36/1950)," *Alumina: Pagine miniate* 30 (2010): 6–17; *The Cambridge Illuminations: Ten Centuries of Book Production in the Medieval West*, ed. by P. Binski and S. Panayotova (London; Turnhout, 2005), 176–178; A. Karłowska-Kamzowa, *Sztuka Piastów śląskich w średniowieczu: Znaczenie fundacji książęcych w dziejach sztuki gotyckiej na Śląsku* (Warszawa; Wrocław, 1991), 52–53, 127–128; *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Additional Illuminated Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum Acquired between 1895 and 1979 (Excluding the McClean Collection)*, vol. 2, eds. F. Wormald and Ph. M. Giles (Cambridge, 1982), 414–429; I. Hänsel-Hacker, "Die Miniaturmalerei einer Paduaner Schule im Duecento," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 2 (1952): 105–148; J. Květ, *Italské vlivy na pozdně románskou knižní malbu v Čechách / Les influences italiennes sur la miniature en Bohême à la fin de l'époque romane: Práce z vedeckých ústavu*, no. 16 (Praha, 1927), 112, 144; *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Second Series of Fifty Manuscripts (Nos. 51 to 100) in the Collection of Henry Yates Thompson* (Cambridge, 1902), 330–353.

3 See A. Rudloff Stanton, *The Queen Mary Psalter: A Study of Affect and Audience*. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 91, no. 6 (Philadelphia, 2001), 58–59; R.G. Calkins, *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* (London, 1983), 208–209.

The Breslau Psalter comprises 147 parchment leaves, 326 × 227 mm (203 × 132 mm).<sup>4</sup> In addition to 27 full-page miniatures, there are also ten large historiated initials for the main Psalms, 168 small framed scenes in the margins of the ordinary Psalms and Canticles, and a lot of marginal figures, animals, and hybrids.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, in the creation of this Psalter, no expense was spared. Hence the result was a luxurious book for personal piety associated with the *psalmodic culture* of the Middle Ages when the Church recommended the Psalms to pray for both the clergy and the laity. Indeed, the Breslau Psalter was the primary devotional text until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the Book of Hours became more popular and replaced it as a book for private devotion.<sup>6</sup>

## Patronage

Given the luxury of this manuscript, it is not surprising that it was created in a ducal milieu. It is identified to the circle of Duke of Breslau (Wrocław in modern Poland) Henry III the White (r. 1248 – 1266).<sup>7</sup> On fol. 146<sup>r</sup>,<sup>8</sup> there is a prayer penned for a woman (the female grammatical forms evidence this), and within this text, the phrase “famulum tuum Heinricum” also appears. This wording is usually associated with Henry III. Therefore, it is assumed that this woman ordered the Breslau Psalter. Probably it was Anna Premyslid (d. 1265), Duchess of Silesia and Henry’s mother. She would have commissioned the manuscript for herself or rather as a wedding gift for her second daughter-in-law, Helen of Saxony (d. 1309), the daughter of Albert I, Duke of Saxony (r. 1212–1261). Unfortunately, the name of neither of them appears in the Psalter. There is only a blank marked with the Latin abbreviation “N” (nomen). However, it seems that there are more arguments linking the Psalter with Anna Premyslid as a patron of the codex. In the calendar, the feasts of Saint Agnes (21 January) and Saint Wenceslas of Bohemia (28 September) were distinguished in red. Anna’s sister was named Agnes (i.e. Agnes of Bohemia, 1211 – 1282), and she established the monastery of Order of Saint Clare in Prague. Saint Wenceslas, in turn, was the patron of Bohemia and, at the same time, patron saint of her brother Wenceslas I, King of Bohemia (r. 1230 – 1253). Furthermore, both Saint Clare and Saint Wenceslas – along with Saints Vitus and Adalbert of Prague – are mentioned in the Litany in the Psalter. On the other hand, few of the saints mentioned in the Psalter are directly related to Saxony. Thus, there is little evidence of Helen’s

4 See Panayotova and Ricciardi, “Fitzwilliam Museum,” 136; *The Breslau Psalter. Script and Textual Contents*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/make/script-and-textual-contents-49>.

5 See Panayotova and Ricciardi, “Fitzwilliam Museum,” 136; *The Breslau Psalter: Texts and Images*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/section/make>; *The Fitzwilliam Museum* (2023) “Psalter,” accessed June 26, 2023, <https://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/object/170619>.

6 See M. P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms*, rev. E. C. Teviotdale and N. K. Turner (Los Angeles, 2018), 88 [s.v. Psalter], 14-15 [s.v. Book of Hours]; R.G. Calkins, *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*, 207. See also A. Adamska, “Królewska lektura: Uwagi o sposobach obcowania z psalterzem w średniowiecznej Europie,” *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej* 42 (2011): 9-36.

We observe the same phenomenon of the popularity of psalms in personal piety in Byzantine culture, see G.R. Parpulov, *Toward a History of Byzantine Psalters, ca. 850 – 1350 AD* (Plovdiv, 2014), 69-75; idem, “Psalms and Personal Piety in Byzantium,” in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*. *Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia*, ed. by P. Magdalino and R.S. Nelson (Washington, 2010), 77-105. On the subject of Byzantine illuminated, as a starting point, see G.R. Parpulov, “Psalms and Books of Hours (Horologia),” in *A Companion To Byzantine Illustrated Manuscripts*. *Brill’s Companions to the Byzantine World*, no. 2, ed. by V. Tsamakda (Leiden; Boston, 2017), 300-309.

7 See A. Jureczko, *Henryk III Biały: Książę wrocławski (1247 – 1266)* (Kraków, 2013).

8 See Folio 146 r. *The prayer and image of the manuscript’s patron*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/owner/anna-premyslid-mother-of-henry-iii-duke-of-breslau/folio/folio-146r/section/undefined>.

patronage. Presumably, she espoused Henry III the White not long before his unexpected death in 1266. So, as we can guess, Helen, childless and not very attached to the court of her late husband, left Silesia, taking with her the Breslau Psalter, a splendid offering from her mother-in-law. Pondering all these factors, it is reasonable to presume that the Breslau Psalter was commissioned before Anne's passing in 1265 and conceivably finished by 1266 because Henry III the White died that year on December 3.<sup>9</sup>

## Artists

Due to palaeographic analysis, the Breslau Psalter has recently been associated with the scriptorium of the Cistercian abbey in Lubiąż (in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship in modern Poland).<sup>10</sup> In the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Silesia, as it is believed, illuminated manuscripts were produced only in this scriptorium.<sup>11</sup> However, as for the miniatures of the Breslau Psalter, they were not the work of this local workshop – other manuscripts associated with this monastery exhibit a much lower artistic class and, as well, different styles – but a group of artists specially invited to create it. Researchers indicate that about ten painters created the miniatures. Such a large team could be associated with the urgent need to prepare a wedding gift for Henry's second wife.<sup>12</sup>

Researchers have divided painters into two groups considering differences in styles, ornaments and palettes they exhibited. The first consists of the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana and his Associate, and the second one of seven local, Central European artists (of Saxon, Franconian, Czech and perhaps Silesian background; called Hand A, B, C, D, E, F, and G) with their assistants. They were familiar with Byzantine art. However, it is believed that the Italian painters set the tone for this collective work. Despite the Italian leader, the local painters had a certain artistic freedom, so they did not have to imitate the Gaibanesque style, keeping their practices and confining themselves to borrowing selected elements.<sup>13</sup>

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- 9 See Kaczmarek and Mrozowicz, *W kręgu średniowiecznych iluminowanych psalterzy śląskich*, 37-42; Panayotova and Ricciardi, "Fitzwilliam Museum," 136; Anna Premyslid, *mother of Henry III, Duke of Breslau*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/owner/anna-premyslid-mother-of-henry-iii-duke-of-breslau>; Helen, *wife of Henry III, Duke of Breslau*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/owner/helen-wife-of-henry-iii-duke-of-breslau?back=section/owner>.
- 10 This scriptorium as a place of origin of this manuscript has been indicated by the authors of the facsimile edition of the Psalter (*Der Breslauer Psalter MS 36–1950 Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum: Kommentar zur Faksimile-Edition*). See also Kaczmarek and Mrozowicz, *W kręgu średniowiecznych iluminowanych psalterzy śląskich*, 31-37.
- 11 See D. Tabor, *Iluminacje cysterskich kodeksów śląskich XIII wieku* (Kraków, 2004); B. Miodońska, "Śląskie malarstwo książkowe," in *Malarstwo gotyckie w Polsce: Synteza*, vol. 1. Dzieje sztuki polskiej 2, 3, ed. A.S. Labuda and K. Secomska (Warszawa, 2004), 377; M. Walicki, "Iluminacje i oprawy rękopisów," in *Sztuka polska przedromańska i romańska do schyłku XIII wieku*, vol. 1, ed. M. Walicki (Warszawa, 1971), 270-272; E. Kloss, *Die Schlesische Buchmalerei des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1942), 12-29; A. Haseloff, *Eine thüringisch-sächsische Malerschule des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Straßburg, 1897).
- 12 It is worth noting that the structure of the manuscript also facilitated the entire team of painters and scribes to work quite simultaneously: the Psalter has 21 quires (most of them are bifolios, but some of the full-page miniatures before the main Psalms are prepared on separate bifolios) divided into seven units; see *The Breslau Psalter. Collation*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/make/collation-50?back=section/make>.
- 13 See Kaczmarek and Mrozowicz, *W kręgu średniowiecznych iluminowanych psalterzy śląskich*, 27-31; Panayotova and Ricciardi, "Fitzwilliam Museum," 136-138; *The Breslau Psalter: Artists*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/section/make>.



*The Beatus initial (MS 36-1950, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)*



*Christ and Apostles (MS 36-1950, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)*



51r, the initial with David (MS 36-1950, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)



101r, the initial with David and chanting clerics (MS 36-1950, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

The Master of Giovanni da Gaibana, the most prominent artistic personality of the Breslau Psalter, was the painter responsible for the sixteen full-page miniatures of the Epistolary for the cathedral in Padua (MS E 2, Biblioteca Capitolare, Padua; 1259). Other manuscripts attributed to him (e.g. the Seitenstetten Missal; the Admont Missal; a collection of the Epistles of St. Paul with the commentary of Peter Lombard in the library of Saint Paul's Abbey in Lavanttal; the Psalter in the Bodleian Library at Oxford; the Psalter in the Austrian National Library) were produced north of the Alps, where he most likely set out with his collaborators for new commissions. Therefore, his exquisite style swiftly propagated in Central Europe. Local painters were already familiar with some Italianate and Byzantinizing features, but then they also adopted motifs representative for Gaibanesque art, creating new artistic quality. The splendid images of the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana show the strong influence of Byzantine art, including this one from the early Palaiologan period.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, in general, the art of the Veneto region clearly displays the Byzantinizing style (*maniera graeca*) in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup>

It is supposed that the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana and his atelier could travel to Central Europe at the invitation of Vladislav (d. 1270), son of Anna Premyslid. In 1265 he became archbishop of Salzburg, but before his elevation, he studied in Padua. Therefore, it seems reasonable that Vladislav left Padua, taking with him the Master and his associates. Then, the Breslau Psalter, the commission of Anna Premyslid, would be their first work in Central Europe, to be meticulous: in the court of Henry III the White. After his mother's death, Vladislav probably may have supervised the completion of this magnificent manuscript and then the workshop executed other works in the archdiocese of Salzburg. In General, Vladislav took care of his region, so he played a role of a significant benefactor of artists.<sup>16</sup>

14 See F. L. Bossetto, *Il Maestro del Gaibana: un miniatore del Duecento fra Padova, Venezia e l'Europa* (Milano, 2015); J. Tripps, "Ein Bücherschatz des Veneto in Leipzig: der Maestro di Giovanni da Gaibana und seine Bibeln aus dem Thomastift," in *3 x Thomas: Die Bibliotheken des Thomasklosters, der Thomaskirche und der Thomasschule im Laufe der Jahrhunderte: Schriften aus der Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig*, ed. Th. Fuchs and Ch. Mackert (Leipzig, 2012), 37-52; F.L. Bossetto, "Fonti per le iniziali del Maestro del Gaibana: tradizione locale, modelli bizantini, 'crociati' e d'Oltrealpe," in *Citazioni, modelli e tipologie nella produzione dell'opera d'arte: Atti delle giornate di studio, Padova, 29-30 maggio 2008*, ed. C. Caramanna, N. Macola and L. Nazzi (Padova, 2011), 29-40; F. L. Bossetto, *Il linguaggio del Maestro del Gaibana: formazione e diffusione nel XIII secolo* (PhD thesis, Padova, 2010); F.L. Bossetto, "Per il Maestro del Gaibana e il suo atelier: un gruppo di Bibbie," *Rivista di storia della miniatura* 13 (2009): 51-61; R.W. Corrie, "Epistolary of Giovanni da Gaibana," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. H.C. Evans (New York; Haven; London, 2004), no. 275, 465-466; R.W. Corrie, "The Seitenstetten Missal and the Persistence of Italo-Byzantine Influence at Salzburg," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 111-123;

C. Bellinatti and S. Bettini, *L'Epistolario miniato di Giovanni da Gaibana* (Vicenza, 1968) [vol. 1, facsimile; vol. 2, text; see especially S. Bettini, *Le miniature dell'Epistolario di Giovanni da Gaibana nella storia della pittura veneziana del Duecento*, vol. 2, 69-120]; I. Hänsel-Hacker, "Die Fresken der Kirche St. Nikolaus bei Matri in Osttirol: Das Werk einer Paduaner Malerschule des 13. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 3 (1954): 109-122; Hänsel-Hacker, "Die Miniaturmalerei einer Paduaner Schule im Duecento."

15 As a starting point see M. Georgopoulou, "Italy, the Crusader States, and Cyprus," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Art and Architecture*: Oxford Handbooks, ed. Ellen C. Schwartz (Oxford, 2022), 217-233; H. Belting, "Zwischen Gotik und Byzanz: Gedanken zur Geschichte der sächsischen Buchmalerei im 13. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 41, no. 3/4 (1978): 217-257. See also *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. V. P. Goss (Kalamazoo, 1986); H. Belting, "Byzantine Art among Greeks and Latins in Southern Italy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974): 1-29; O. Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (London, 1970).

16 See Hänsel-Hacker, "Die Miniaturmalerei einer Paduaner Schule im Duecento," 139-141; Panayotova and Ricciardi, "Fitzwilliam Museum," 136; *Anna Premyslid, mother of Henry III, Duke of Breslau*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/owner/anna-premyslid-mother-of-henry-iii-duke-of-breslau/>; *Helen, wife of Henry III, Duke of Breslau*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/owner/helen-wife-of-henry-iii-duke-of-breslau?back=section/owner/>; J.F. Hamburger, J. O'Driscoll, *Imperial Splendor: The Art of the Book in the Holy Roman Empire, 800 - 1500* (New York 2021), 123-127.

As for the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana and the Breslau Psalter, scholars usually attributed to him the *Beatus* initial (fol. 23v; fig. 1). Nonetheless, sometimes also other images are associated with this painter: the miniature of *Christ and the Apostles* (fol. 49v; fig. 2), the initial with David (fol. 51r; fig. 3), and eight marginal miniatures (fol. 41r, 47v, 52r, 52v, 53r, 54r, 55r). The Gaibana Master's style is distinguished by a brilliant palette, elegant figures – strongly Byzantinizing – and soft modelling, especially for faces. The flowering, broccoli-like trees are also his trademark. Similar features are symptomatic for the Gaibana Master's Associate. He, although, used to exploit a bit different set of pigments. Be that as it may, they collaborated so closely that there is no agreement on which miniatures were created by the Master himself and which by his Associate. Doubts concern the following images: fols. 49v (fig. 2), 41r, 47v, 51r (fig. 3), 52r, 52v, 53r, 54r, and 55r. This dubiousity most clearly testifies to the shared workshop of both painters from northern Italy.<sup>17</sup>

## Gold Miniatures of the Breslau Psalte

The miniatures of the Breslau Psalter stand out in the craftsmanship of applying gold. Besides numerous gold initials and letters, there are backgrounds and nimbi made of gold leaves burnished to a high shine. Thanks to the extensive use of glittering gold, images exhibit even more Byzantinizing style. Undoubtedly, the manuscript likewise presents itself as a luxurious codex proper to the sophisticated ducal milieu.

Illuminators used to exploit gold to execute dazzling effects depending on light conditions. It is this artistic material that makes the images dynamic. Essentially, it sets them in motion, making them polymorphous, even difficult to perceive, and elusive. It is enough to envision these miniatures in flickering candlelight to comprehend that gold had a decisive impact on the aesthetic value of the work. Modern photographs for research purposes eliminate these stunning visual effects characteristic of gold. As a result, they present surfaces covered with gold leaf flat and even yellow, without a metallic sheen. Nevertheless, the artists reached for it to dazzle and delight beholders.

This precious metal could be employed in two primary forms. The first was granular metal mixed with glue to form a liquid used like paint or ink. The second form – gold leaf – was metal hammered into tissue-thin sheets and then laid onto parchment pages. The technology of goldbeating was presumably known in Egypt, Byzantium and the Near East into the early medieval period. But in Western Europe, due to the lack of gold coins, this skill fell into oblivion. In fact, little gold coinage was minted in Europe after the Merovingian's reign because of a scarcity of gold.

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<sup>17</sup> See Kaczmarek and Mrozowicz, *W kręgu średniowiecznych iluminowanych psalterzy śląskich*, 27-31; Panayotova and Ricciardi, "Fitzwilliam Museum," 136-137; *The Breslau Psalter: The Master of Giovanni da Gaibana*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/artist/the-master-of-giovanni-da-gaibana?back=section/artist>; *The Breslau Psalter: The Associate of the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/artist/the-associate-of-the-master-of-giovanni-da-gaibana?back=section/artist>.



*Annunciation, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai*



*Christ's raising of Lazarus, the part of the epistyle with Scenes from the Life of Christ and Deesis, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai*

A new Western Europe acquired access to greater amounts of gold during the eleventh century began: and using gold leaf instead of granular metal started at the beginning of the twelfth century.<sup>18</sup>

In the case of the Breslau Psalter, exploiting gold leaves was the most significant gilding method because obtained this way surface, burnished to a high gloss, was used extensively in the backgrounds and nimbi of the miniatures. In short, gold leaf was generally polished to produce brilliant, coruscated fields of light or darkness depending on light conditions.

The nimbi usually are gold discs integrated into the background and encircled by vermilion red with white dots. Even though the number of painters engaged in work was quite impressive, the nimbi throughout the whole manuscript are highly uniform. However, we can observe that Hand A occasionally used to embellish his gold nimbi with tooling and incised lines creating diverse designs. Hand F, who made the second largest contribution to the Psalter, used to construct gold-tooled frames (fig. 4).<sup>19</sup> Painters began to create motif punches to miniatures around the mid-twelfth century. These motives, like circles, scrolls and rosettes, were the most common method applied during the High and late medieval periods to adorn gold-leaf surfaces. Moreover, such incised patterns were striking. They also varied plain, quite dull areas of gold.<sup>20</sup>

As for backgrounds of the Breslau Psalter, they are plain, unpatterned thick gold leaves burnished to a mirror-bright sheen. Leaves were first applied as narrow strips to create some linear details. By the second half of the twelfth century, however, bigger pieces of gold used to appear in Western illuminations. Smaller parts of metal were still used for the backgrounds of miniatures.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Psalter was executed when a background produced of gold leaves was well known, especially in Italy. But we also should note that gold circles and rims mark the backgrounds of some images. These circular motifs are distinct because of their strong gloss.

An excellent example of this kind of decoration is the miniature attributed to the Associate of the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana or to the Master himself (he used these motifs in the images of the Epistolary for the cathedral in Padua). It is a depiction of Christ surrounded by eleven Apostles (fig. 2). Here, the four double semicircular bands embellish the upper part of the background. They are placed between parts of city walls and adjoined to the light-green border. A similar motif – the double circular band – is located at the bottom of the image, between the feet of Christ and an Apostle. The painter also applied this kind of decoration in the initial with David (fig. 3): the two gold double circular rims are by the lower and upper parts of the letter *D*. The other painters, these Central European ones,

18 See N.K. Turner, "Surface Effect and Substance: Precious Metals in Illuminated Manuscripts," in *Illuminating Metalwork: Metal, Object, and Image in Medieval Manuscripts*. Sense, Matter, and Medium, vol. 4, ed. by J. Salvatore Ackley and Sh.L. Wearing (Berlin; Boston, 2022), 64-79. See also I. Mestemacher, *Marmor, Gold und Edelsteine: Materialimitation in der karolingischen Buchmalerei: Naturbilder / Images of Nature*, vol. 11 (Berlin; Boston, 2021), esp. 227-274; N. Morgan, "Painting with Gold and Silver," in *Colour: The Art and Science of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 193-199.

19 See *The Breslau Psalter: The decorated halos*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/technique/the-decorated-halos>; *The Breslau Psalter. Hand A*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/artist/hand-a-38>; *The Breslau Psalter: Hand F*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/illuminated/manuscript/discover/the-breslau-psalter/artist/hand-f>.

20 See Turner, "Surface Effect and Substance," 97-100.

21 See ibidem, 79; 86-97; Morgan, "Painting with Gold and Silver," 193-194.

mastered the art of creating these characteristic gold forms. They can be observed in the miniatures of Hand D (e.g. fol. 60 r), E (fol. 39 v), F (e.g. fols. 88 r; 101 r, fig. 4), and G (fol. 115 v).

## Sinai panel paintings and gold

These elements from the Breslau Psalter resemble the decorative gold motifs of some Sinai panel paintings. Since gold polished discs and rims characterise these paintings: they constitute a group of about 120 items<sup>22</sup> dating from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This group of panel paintings of Saint Catherine's Monastery are distinguished above all by very characteristic, high-gloss shiny forms based on the shape of a circle. These shapes keep their clarity also against the gold background with which they are integrated. They are usually used as nimbi, mandorlas, rims and medallions for busts and sometimes also as parts of buildings. Importantly, in the case of Sinai icons characterized by those mentioned above gold properties, we can speak of one coherent group only on a certain level of generality because the images created over three centuries often differ significantly. They share the abovementioned features, but their artistic level can vary greatly. Hence, researchers usually associate these best paintings with Constantinople and the low quality ones with Sinai.<sup>23</sup> So, I must admit that these paintings comprise a relatively large group of works that require further in-depth research.

We can distinguish two basic types among these paintings: images of the Mother of God and saints and narrative panels. The first of them contains the oldest images of the gold group. They are the images of Saint Philip (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century; Princeton Work Number: 244; Michigan Inventory Number: 302; Weitzmann Number: B.59)<sup>24</sup> and Saint Nicholas with Ten Saints (late 10<sup>th</sup> – early 11<sup>th</sup> century; Princeton Work Number: 694; Michigan Inventory Number: 1155; Weitzmann Number: B.61)<sup>25</sup>. Saint Philip is depicted in full figure, and Saint Nicholas in a bust. In both cases, the background is covered with burnished gold leaf, and the figures are equipped with shimmering nimbi, separated from the background due to a unique polishing method. In addition, on the panel frame with Saint Nicholas, there are ten medallions with busts of Christ and Saints: narrow circular rims frame these small images. These bands are polished as nimbi, thanks to which they shine clearly.

22 This amount is an estimate based on an analysis of the artworks in Princeton University's electronic database of Sinai icons – there is no complete catalogue of the monastery's collection yet. Some of these paintings also show traces of repainting or are heavily damaged, and some of the shared photos are not of the best quality, making it difficult to assess the images accurately. Therefore, the given number refers to the examples in which the observation of the above features is not too difficult. I find the presence of shimmering nimbi as the essential criterion. See *The Collection: Icons*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item-set/25999#?c=8m=8s=8cv=8xywh=-972%2C0%2C3599%2C3599>.

23 See K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons*, vol. 1. From the Sixth to the Tenth Century (Princeton, 1976), 101-102; D. Mouriki, "Icons from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. K.A. Manafis (Athens, 1990), 102-108.

24 See *Saint Philip*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/10070#?c=8m=8s=8cv=8xywh=-2910%2C0%2C8199%2C3999>. See also Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine*, 99, fig. 116; G. Galavaris, "Early Icons (from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century)," in *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery*, no. 14, 98.

25 See *Saint Nicholas with Ten Saints*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/12949#?c=8m=8s=8cv=8xywh=-2305%2C69%2C7592%2C3703>. See also G.R. Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting at Sinai in the Thirteenth Century", in *Approaching the Holy Mountain: Art and Liturgy at St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai*. *Cursor Mundi*, vol. 11, ed. Sh. E. J. Gerstel and R.S. Nelson, (Turnhout, 2010), 378, XI.10; N. Patterson Ševčenko, "Icon with Saint Nicholas and Busts of Saints," in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art: And Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era A.D. 843 – 1261*, ed. H. C. Evans and W.D. Wixom (New York, 1997), no. 65, 118.

Another good example is the *Miracle of Chonai* painting (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; Princeton Work Number: 15; Michigan Inventory Number: 124).<sup>26</sup> Shimmering nimbi were introduced here, and gold was also used at the upper part of the scene, above two arms of the stream that creates an arcaded form: a kind of frame for the Archangel Michael and the Monk Archippos. In turn, the entire scene of the *Heavenly Ladder of Saint John Climacus* (end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; Princeton Work Number: 39; Michigan Inventory Number: 51) was composed against a uniform shiny gold background.<sup>27</sup> Against this plain, unpatterned gold surface, burnished nimbi, a semicircle between the group of angels and Christ, and the edges of the heaven in the upper right corner are notably visible. It is worth paying attention to the overlapping nimbi of angels, which, due to appropriate polishing, distinguish themselves from each other: light reflects slightly differently for each element.

Another example of artwork characterized by the unique use of gold is the *Annunciation* painting, usually dated around 1200 (fig. 5; Princeton Work Number: 773; Michigan Inventory Number: 1296).<sup>28</sup> The whole image features golden tones. The main exception is the water with its fauna and the Virgin's robe. Undoubtedly, it is gold that determines the aesthetic expression of the painting. An important role here is played primarily by the visual effects associated with the juxtaposition of matte areas – a strip of ground and architecture with a throne – and polished ones, among which we can observe a gradation of burnishing: the background presents a *standard* level of gloss, while the nimbi, the medallion with the dove of the Holy Spirit, the semicircular segment of the heaven and the ray extending from it have a high gloss characteristic for this group of panel paintings. As a result, the particular elements of the composition – despite their almost monochromatic nature – retain their expressiveness. Details of the architectural parts were painted in dark red, well suited to the golden tone of the whole. The discussed image of the *Annunciation* is also distinguished by a highly elaborate chrysographic modelling that covers the robe of the archangel Gabriel. We can observe a significant differentiation of the shapes, made of properly cut and unpolished tiny gold stripes. The Sinai *Annunciation* is a unique work not only among other gold paintings in the same monastery but generally in Byzantine art. In the case of this painting, the wealth of visual effects resultant from combining manifold gilding and polishing techniques exhibits a mastery of a Byzantine painter.

Among the narrative paintings, there can also be indicated those in which the shimmering discs and rims seem to play solely decorative roles because they fill the empty zones of the background, diversifying the homogeneous, gilding plain area. We can follow such applications in some epistyles (i.e. templon beams) preserved

26 See *Miracle of Chonai*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/8929#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-2537%2C0%2C8199%2C3999>. See also Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 370, XI.120; N. Patterson Ševčenko, "Icon with the Miracle at Chonai," in *The Glory of Byzantium*, no. 66, 118-119.

27 See *The Heavenly Ladder of Saint John Climacus*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/2787#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=15%2C326%2C2746%2C1339>. See also Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 383-384, XII.92; B.V. Pentcheva, "The Heavenly Ladder of Saint John Climacus," in *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, ed. R.S. Nelson, K.M. Collins (Los Angeles, 2006), no. 48, 244-247; K. Corrigan, *Icon with the Heavenly Ladder of John Klimax*, in *The Glory of Byzantium...*, no., 247, 376-377.

28 See *Annunciation*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/13490#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-2460%2C0%2C7379%2C3599>. See also J. Folda, *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting: The Virgin and Child "Hodegetria" and the Art of Chrysography* (Cambridge, 2015), 49-56; Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 382, XII.45; A. Labbatt, "Annunciation," in *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground*, no. 13, 152-153; A. Weyl Carr, "Icon with the Annunciation," in *The Glory of Byzantium*, no. 246, 374-375.

in the monastery. They usually contain in the centre the composition of the *Deesis* and scenes from the cycle of the Twelve Great Feasts (Δωδεκάορτον), sometimes they are extended with additional events from the lives of Christ, the Virgin, the Archangels, the Apostles Peter and Paul, as well as of Saints. For example, in the epistyle with the *Deesis* and Feasts (last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; Princeton Work Number: 510; Michigan Inventory Number: 819), the arcades separated the scenes.<sup>29</sup> The arches supported on the columns are burnished as vigorously as the discs between them. There are four main ones in each segment: the largest middle one, two slightly smaller ones to the right and left of it, and an even smaller one at the bottom, close to the arcades, and tiny ones next to them, on the upper edge of the arch.

An even more decorative arrangement of the discussed embellishment of the fields between the arches of the arcades separating the individual scenes is presented in another slightly later epistyle (ca. 1200; fig. 6; Princeton Work Number: 977; Michigan Inventory Number: 1640-1641).<sup>30</sup> The applied pattern in its basic shape consists of four larger circles, the central one composed of three elements: a shiny circular rim with a larger central ring and eight smaller ones filling the narrow area between them. Moreover, triangular surfaces between the arcades are dotted with scattered, shiny tiny discs: these specific polished elements were differentiated in size and repeatedly duplicated. As a result, a painter used to obtain an exceptionally decorative final effect.

Similar motifs cover the background of the Sanctuary Doors with the *Annunciation* from the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Princeton Work Number: 1013; Michigan Inventory Number: 1727).<sup>31</sup> The mirror-bright shen discs have different diameters and are scattered over the entire surface of the gold background. They were made of silver foil placed on the fabric and silver foil coated with a golden varnish. There are many more examples of this type of decoration, such as the images of the Virgin Blachernitissa (mid-13<sup>th</sup> century – 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; Princeton Work Number: 988; Michigan Inventory Number: 1655)<sup>32</sup> and the archangels Michael and Gabriel (13<sup>th</sup> century; Princeton Work Number: 901; Michigan Inventory Number: 1498).<sup>33</sup> The backgrounds and the frames are filled with whirling discs in both works. In the second one, these circular motifs are arranged in rows and probably have the same size. In turn, in Blachernitissa's image, they are slightly more scattered and diversified in size. The smallest ones surround the nimbi, as well as

29 See *Deesis and Feasts*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/12114#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-513%2C431%2C3660%2C2314>. See also Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 382-383, XII.60.1, XII.60.2; Mouriki, "Icons from the 12<sup>th</sup>," 106, fig. 25-27.

30 See *Epistyle with Scenes from the Life of Christ and Deesis*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/15329#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-17%2C0%2C1056%2C668>. See also Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 386, XII.150.1-7; A. Weyl Carr, "Templon Beam with the Deesis and Feast Scenes," in *The Glory of Byzantium*, no. 248, 377-379; Mouriki, "Icons from the 12<sup>th</sup>," 106-107, fig. 31-33.

31 See *Annunciation*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/16401#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-5305%2C0%2C16256%2C7929>. See also Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 390, XIII.90; Sh.E.J. Gerstel, "Sanctuary Doors with the Annunciation," in *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground*, no. 22, 178-179.

32 See *Virgin Blachernitissa*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/15338#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-2493%2C0%2C7379%2C3599>. See also Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 390, XIII.101; E. Bakalova, "Icon with the Virgin Blachernitissa," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261 – 1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans (New York; New Haven, 2004), no. 212, 352-353; Y.A. Piatnitsky, "Icon with the Mother of God Blachernitissa," in *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia: Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Y. A. Piatnitsky, O. Baddeley, E. Brunner and M. Mundell Mango (London, 2000), no. S57, 239-241; Mouriki, "Icons from the 12<sup>th</sup>," 117, fig. 61.

33 See *Saints Michael and Gabriel*, accessed June 26, 2023, <https://www.sinaiarchive.org/s/mpa/item/15253#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-2508%2C0%2C8199%2C3999>. See also Parpulov, "Mural and Icon Painting," 395, XIII. 339.

some of the larger circles, imparting an outstanding decorativeness to the image of the Virgin Blachernitissa.

Given that the mirror-bright shine gold forms so far are known from the panel paintings treasured in Sinai, it seems that it was most likely the milieu of crusader artists who mediated the transfer of these decorative motifs to Latin Europe. Moreover, the art of Venice influenced the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana. This Italian republic was strongly involved in the Crusades and had strong ties with the Byzantine Empire. We also know that the techniques of applying gold leaves appeared in Western Europe thanks to crusader artists. It was around the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Before that period, medieval artists used to use gold pigment.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was an active artistic milieu in Sinai. It was especially relevant after 1204, when the Crusaders conquered Constantinople.<sup>34</sup> The monastery treasures Byzantine and Crusader icons in its collection that attest to close and lively artistic contacts between these circles. Therefore, I suppose that these artists honed to perfection this specific method of gold burnishing. Then, around the mid-thirteenth century, this technique came to the West through Crusader artists, maybe related to the Mendicant Orders.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the miniatures of the milieu of Master of Giovanni da Gaibana prove the rapid transfer of the art technique, which was possible only thanks to highly mobile artists. As in the Middle Ages, they easily crossed not only political but also cultural and artistic boundaries.

## Summary in Polish

Miniatury tzw. Psalterza Wrocławskiego (ok. 1255 – 1267; MS 36-1950, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) wyróżniają się kunsztem w stosowaniu złota. Obok detali (np. elementów fantazyjnej architektury, ornamentów i elementów szat) oraz niektórych liter, znajdują się tam złote tła i nimby. Sądzę, że ten aspekt Psalterza jest istotny również w kontekście dyskusji nad artystycznymi powiązaniem jego malarzy.

Jeśli chodzi o złote tła, większość z nich składa się z gładkich, niewzorzystych grubych płatków wypolerowanych na wysoki połysk. W Zachodniej Europie, mniej więcej pod koniec XII wieku, malarze książkowi opanowali sztukę wykorzystywania złota płatkowego: przed tym okresem używali złotego pigmentu. Ta nowa technika artystyczna pojawiła się w południowej Italii, na Sycylii i w Wenecji dzięki krzyżowcom wyszkolonym na bizantyńskim Wschodzie. Tak więc Psalterz został wykonany, gdy tła ze złota płatkowego były już dość dobrze znane, zwłaszcza w Italii.

Należy jednak zauważyć, że tła obrazów (zwłaszcza fol. 49v i 51r) przypisywane współpracownikowi mistrza Giovanniego da Gaibana są oznaczone złotymi

34 See S. Ratseva, "The Sinai School at St. Catherine Monastery: Areas of Activity and Spread of Its Production between Second Half of Tenth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Проблеми на изкуството* 39, no. 3 (2006): 10-19; M. Lidova, "The Artist's Signature in Byzantium: Six Icons by Ioannes Tohabi in Sinai Monastery (11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century)", *Opera Nomina Historiae: Giornale di cultura artistica* 1 (2009): 80-89; M. Panayotidi, "Thirteenth-Century Icons and Frescoes at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai: Some Observations," in *Orient et Occident méditerranéens au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Les programmes picturaux*, ed. J.-P. Caillet, F. Joubert (Paris, 2012), 87-102.

35 See A. Derbes and A. Neff, "Italy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Byzantine Sphere," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power*, 449-461.

okręgami i otokami. Wyróżniają się one niezwykle wyraźnym blaskiem. Elementy te nawiązują, jak myślę, do grupy synajskich obrazów tablicowych (około 120 dzieł datowanych od drugiej połowy X wieku do końca XIII wieku) charakteryzujących się złotymi dyskami i otokami polerowanymi na bardzo wysoki połysk. W Psalterzu nimby zazwyczaj są złote dyski wkomponowane w tło i otoczone okręgiem z cynobru i białymi kropkami. Ta ostatnia cecha wywodzi się z tradycji łacińskiej, podobnie jak symptomatyczne dla Ręki A złote nimby z puncowanymi ornamentami. Tak też pod względem zastosowania złota Psalterz Wrocławski stanowi interesujące połączenie rozwiązań Zachodnich i bizantyńskich. Przy czym w przypadku wpływów bizantyńskich malarze wykazywali się znajomością nowych trendów, reprezentatywnych dla synajskiego malarstwa tablicowego.



# *The Significance of the Medieval Church in Spišská Belá*



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*Above: The parish church of Spišská Belá / Szepesbéla / Zipser Bela from southeast  
(photo by author, 2021)*

*Abstract: In 2020 two, so far unknown wall paintings were discovered behind the side altars of the Roman Catholic church in Spišská Belá (Zipser Bela, Szepesbéla). This is a good opportunity for discussing the place of this quite neglected church in the history of local architecture. The church of Spišská Belá stands at the turning point of the rich architectural traditions of Spiš County: it is continuing the Early Gothic traditions of Spišská Kapitula, participating in the establishment of the first local style after 1241 – 1242, and a forerunner of the rise of the local version of High Gothic style that became the first typical style of the region. The recently discovered frescos, however, belong to the next phase of the building history of the church, when the chancel and the northern aisle were added. The empty surface in the middle of fresco of the south side can be explained as the backdrop of a former statue, representing a rare type of combined painted and carved altarpieces.*

*Keywords: Spišská Belá, Early Gothic style, High Gothic style, painted altarpieces*

The course of the Gothic Route in Slovakia is changing as time is passing. There was a period when the Spiš region was incorporated into this circle;<sup>1</sup> therefore the presentation of an important historic monument from this region seems to be reasonable. The medieval parish church of Spišská Belá (*Szepesbéla* in Hungarian, *Zipser Bela* in German) deserves our attention in itself.<sup>2</sup> In the following I will try to justify why it should be considered especially significant in the unusually rich heritage of the churches of the Árpád period in the Spiš region. However, a current event recently drew attention to the church. In the darkest times of COVID, in the summer of 2020, news appeared on the website of the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic (PÚ SR) stating that previously unknown wall paintings were discovered in Spišská Belá; these frescos were dated to the time of the church's construction, i.e. the 1260s or 1270s.<sup>3</sup> If this is true, these would be the earliest surviving wall paintings of the Spiš region.

Spišská Belá is located in the middle course of the Poprad River, which crosses the former Spiš (*Szepes*) County diagonally, along the road leading to Krakow, at the

- 1 This state is commemorated by the information table standing in front of the old tower in the centre of Rožňava which we were able to visit during the conference. I express my gratitude to the organizers for their dedicated work.
- 2 I started research on the medieval churches in the Spiš region in 2014, resulting in a monograph: Béla Zsolt Szakács, *Árpád-kori építészeti hagyományok Szepes és Sáros megyében* [Architectural traditions of the Árpád era in the counties of Spiš and Šariš] (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2023), in print.
- 3 E. Poláková, KPÚ Prešov, *Objav ranogotických nástenných malieb v kostole v Spišskej Belej*, 10. júla 2020. Last accessed July 24, 2023, <https://www.pamiatky.sk/page/objav-ranogotickych-nastennych-malieb-v-kostole-v-spisskej-belej/>.

junction of busy roads.<sup>4</sup> Over time, its central role was taken over by Kežmarok (*Késmárk, Käsmark*), located slightly further south, but all signs point to the fact that in the beginning Spišská Belá was at least as important and had a chance for a bright future.

The parish church in the centre of the town is a good example of the monument protection processes that took place in the Spiš region.<sup>5</sup> It has preserved its medieval appearance well, but not without changes. Thus, with the help of an archive photograph, we can recall its state during the 1882 restoration.<sup>6</sup> The tower received Neo-Gothic cornices with rows of blind arches, and its unsegmented block was divided by horizontal cornices. These Neo-Gothic elements were removed between 1966 and 1970 in the spirit of modern monument protection principles valid after the Second World War; that is, the method of *Entrestaurierung*, or re-restoration, was applied here as well. Today, there is no indication of this 19<sup>th</sup> century condition on the outside; the wall surfaces of the tower are undivided.

It is not easy to determine exactly what the church looked like before the 1882 restoration. Our main source for this is Viktor Myskovszky's drawings. Myskovszky,<sup>7</sup> who came from a Polish family and was born in 1838 in Bardejov (called at that time *Bártfa* or *Bartfeld*), taught geometry and architecture in Košice (*Kassa, Kaschau*) for three decades. His talent for drawing soon became apparent, which he used in the service of monument protection.<sup>8</sup> Imre Henszlmann, also connected to Košice, asked him to participate immediately after the establishment of the Temporary (later National) Monument Commission (*Műemlékek Ideiglenes Bizottsága, later Műemlékek Országos Bizottsága, MOB*) in 1872; in the same year he submitted 15 drawings related to Košice to the committee. In the 1870s, he started to discover the Spiš region; in 1874 he published a study on the medieval monuments of Spišské Podhradie (*Szepesváralja, Kirchdrauf*).<sup>9</sup>

In 1875 he made a bigger trip around the regions of Spiš, Šariš (*Sáros*) and Abov (*Abaúj* in Hungarian); he published a summary of his study trip in the 1876 volume of the *Archaeologiai Közlemények*.<sup>10</sup> His drawings are kept in the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Centre (*Magyar Építészeti Múzeum és Műemlékvédelmi Dokumentációs Központ, MÉMMDK*).<sup>11</sup> Among them there is a drawing of the south façade of the church

4 For the roads between Buda and Krakow, see Katalin Szende, "Kraków and Buda in the Road Network of Medieval Europe," in *On Common Path: Budapest and Kraków in the Middle Ages*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Judit Benda et al. (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2016), 31-37, and István Draskóczy, "Highways between Buda and Kraków," in *ibidem*, 38-41.

5 For the monument protection of the region, see Béla Zsolt Szakács, "The Preservation of Medieval Historical Monuments in the Spiš/Szepes/Zips Region," in *Európai műemlékvédelmi tendenciák különös tekintettel a Kárpát-medencére: A Pécsi Tudományegyetem Művészeti Kara Művészettörténet Tanszéke oktatóinak és vendégeinek műhelykonferenciái 2021*, eds. Endre Raffay and Anna Tüskés (Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem Művészeti Kar Művészettörténet Tanszék, 2022), 42-57.

6 Oskar Schürer and Erich Wiese, *Deutsche Kunst in der Zips* (Brünn; Wien; Leipzig: Rohrer, 1938), Fig. 137. See also the photo kept in the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center, Budapest, Photo Archive no. 10268 N.

7 I will use his name as it appears in the drawings. Slovak literature prefers the orthography *Miškovský*.

8 Katalin Granasztóiné Györffy, "Myskovszky Viktor műemlékvédelmi tevékenysége" [The activity of Viktor Myskovszky in monument protection], in *Viktor Miškovský a súčasná ochrana pamiatok v Strednej Európe: Myskovszky Viktor és a mai műemlékvédelem Közép-Európában*, ed. Alexander Balega (Bratislava: Pamiatkový ústav; Budapest: Országos Műemlékvédelmi Hivatal, 1999), 24-33.

9 Victor Myskovszky [sic!], "A szepesváraljai középkori műemlékek rövid ismertetése" [A short presentation of the medieval monuments of Szepesváralja], *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 8 (1874): 203-214.

10 Viktor Miskovszky [sic!], "Az 1875-dik év nyarán tett régészeti utazásom eredménye" [Results of my archaeological trip in the summer of 1875], *Archaeologiai Közlemények* 10, no. 3 (1876): 56-83.

11 I am most grateful to the keepers of this collection for their help, especially to Gergely Kovács.

(Fig. 1).<sup>12</sup> According to this document, the two Gothic windows of the tower were bricked up and indeed there was no sign of cornices. What is striking, however, is that Myskovszky did not register the round window, which is located between the two Gothic windows, and which we have no reason to assume was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This may have been walled in, but unfortunately in the case of Myskovszky, inaccuracies and even deliberate distortions also occur. For example, he indicated tracery on the Gothic windows of the south facade, but at the same time he himself stated that *the tracery and columns (?) (Fensterpfosten) of the Gothic windows of both the chancel and the nave were broken*.<sup>13</sup> So, Myskovszky reconstructed an assumed previous state in his drawing. In the same document, he depicted the southern gate of the chancel with a modern frame, between the two windows. On the contrary, the walled medieval gate visible today is located to the west of the chancel windows and has a Gothic frame. In this case, it is possible that the walled-in medieval gate was discovered only later, and in Myskovszky's time its modern successor was in use; however, this would require archaeological research of the wall structure.

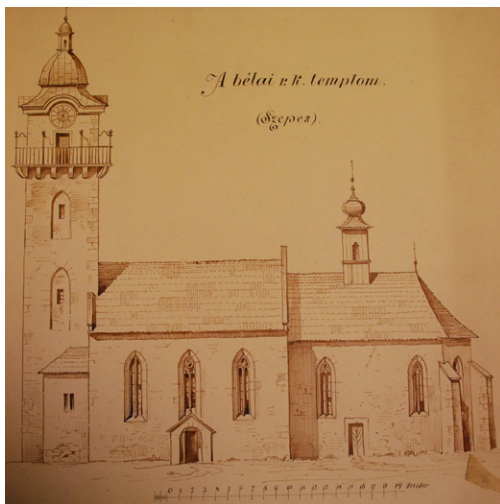
The renovation of the church in recent years would have offered a good opportunity for such observations. During this process, the plaster of the wall surfaces was also renewed. At first glance, no radical changes have been made, but if we take a closer look, we can see that they have deviated from the principles of the 1960s. At that time, the ashlar blocks were left exposed, so the stone surfaces of the corners and window frames remained visible (Fig. 2). Obviously, in the Middle Ages this was not customary, even the ashlar walls were covered with plaster. Thus, it is not unhistorical that the masonry of the corners was once again hidden under plaster, which may also serve to preserve the structure, although it undoubtedly takes away something from the medieval character of the church and covers an important, original architectural feature. At the same time, in the case of the window frames, only the protruding stone surfaces were plastered, the inner sides of the frames were left uncovered (Fig. 3). This solution seems inconsistent; it follows neither the medieval practice nor the modern principles of preservation.

The ground plan of the church shows a complex spatial structure that was created over several centuries (Fig. 4). It currently consists of a nave divided by piers to two aisles, flanked by a side chapel on the north, connected to a polygonal chancel with a sacristy on the east, and bounded by a magnificent tower on the west. The northern aisle has four sections covered by cross vault. Before the latest restoration, its ribs were highlighted by didactic painting (Fig. 5). This colouring was obviously not of medieval origin. During the most recent renovation, the interior was given a uniform whitewash (Fig. 6). In my opinion, none of these solutions can be traced back to the Middle Ages, so authenticity cannot play a decisive role here. Aesthetically, the coloured ribs have a more varied effect and highlight the architectural structure better while homogeneous whitewash makes the space boring. The only detail that remains uncovered is found in the southeast part: a fragmentary figure of a lion above which the rib ascends from a lily crown (Fig. 7). Juraj Žáry dated the north chapel to the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century; however, the corbel does not justify such a late dating.<sup>14</sup>

12 MÉM MDK, Plan Archive, K 4499, dated to 1876.

13 Myskovszky, "Az 1875-dik év nyarán tett régészeti utazásom eredménye," 81.

14 Juraj Žáry, *Dvojlodové kostoly na Spiši* [Double nave churches in Spiš] (Bratislava: Tatran, 1986), 254.



1. The south façade of the church of Spišská Belá by Vitor Myskovszky, 1876 (Budapest, Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Center, Plan Archive, K 4499)



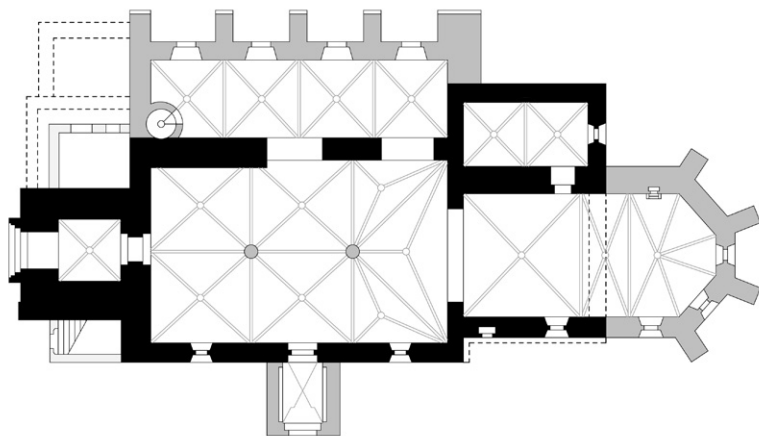
2. The south façade of the church of Spišská Belá in 2014 (photo by author)



7. Corbel in the north aisle (photo by author, 2021)



3. The south façade of the church of Spišská Belá in 2021 (photo by author)



4. Ground plan of the church of Spišská Belá indicating the building periods (drawing by Domonkos Szakács)



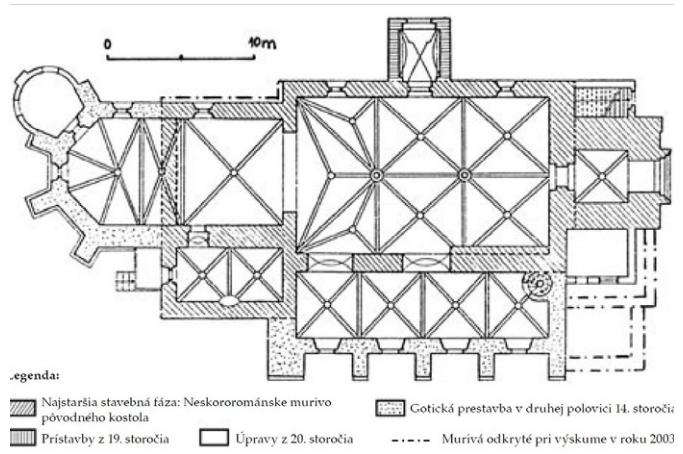
5. The interior of the north aisle looking to the east in 2014 (photo by author)



6. The interior of the north aisle looking to the east in 2021 (photo by author)



8. The interior of the nave with the pier and the discovered wall-paintings (photo by author, 2021)



9. Ground plan of the church with the result of the excavations (Marta Giertlová-Kučerová 2003)



10. Ribs of the cross vault in the chancel (photo by author, 2021)



14. Capital with hunting scene in the church of Břňa / Bény (photo by author, 2016)



11. Capital in the north wall of the chancel with its eastern side (photo by author, 2014)



13. Capital in the south wall of the chancel (photo by author, 2021)



12. Capital in the north wall of the chancel (photo by author, 2021)



15. Ribs of the cross vault on the ground floor of the western tower (photo by author, 2014)



16. Northwest corbel on the ground floor of the western tower (photo by author, 2014)



17. West portal of the church (photo by author, 2021)



18. North portal of the cathedral of Spišská Kapitula / Szepeshely / Zipser Kapitel (photo by author, 2021)



19. West portal of the Holy Virgin church at Ľubica / Leibic / Leibitz (photo by author, 2019)



20. West portal of the church at Vrbov / Ménéhárd / Menhardsdorf (photo by author, 2021)



22. Capital zone of the west portal of the church of Batizovce / Batizfalva / Botzdorf (photo by author, 2014)



21. Capital zone of the west portal of the church of Spišská Belá (photo by author, 2021)



23. Capital zone of the west portal of the church of Stará Lesná / Felsőerdőfalva / Altwalddorf (photo by author, 2017)



24. Capital zone of the north portal of the church of Odorín / Szepesdelény / Dirn (photo by author, 2021)



25. Capital zone of the south portal of the church of Velký Slavkov / Nagyszalók / Großschlagendorf (photo by author, 2023)



26. Capital zone of the south portal of the church of Danišovce / Dénesfalva / Diensdorf (photo by author, 2014)



27. Wall-painting belonging to the south side altar in the nave of the church of Spišská Belá (photo by author, 2021)



28. Sacrament niche in the north wall of the chancel of the church of Spišská Belá (photo by author, 2021)



29. Painted altarpiece in the tower of the Catholics in Biertan / Berethalom / Birtihalm, Transylvania (photo by author, 2022)

The biggest transformation in the life of the church took place when its chancel was provided with a polygonal closure, and the nave was divided in two aisles by two central piers and received a vaulting (Fig. 8). Žáry put the expansion of the chancel around 1340, and the modification of the nave to the 1360s.<sup>15</sup> The two transformations can probably be regarded as successive elements of a larger expansion, and it is possible that the northern side chapel continued this line as well. Excavations in 2003 shed light on minor extensions, of which there are no traces today, and they mainly affected the northwest and southeast parts of the building (Fig. 9).<sup>16</sup>

If we ignore all these later transformations, we have the ground plan of a typical Árpád-era church in the Spiš region.<sup>17</sup> The vast majority of surviving monuments here are single-nave churches with a western tower and a square chancel, which is often joined by a sacristy from the north. Chancels are usually covered with a cross vault. We find the same structure here as well: the western section of the chancel has preserved its original vault. The ribs, as in the churches in the Spiš region in general, have a profile with cavetto moulding in its corners (Fig. 10). However, there are differences within the same type: the width of the cavetto and the rib nose have a different ratio from case to case. It seems that the narrower the nose of the rib and the deeper the corner cavetto, the later the carving. The chancel rib in Spišská Belá is thus the most archaic of the monuments in the Spiš region. Its closest relatives are known from Mórchida (Árpás) in Western Hungary and from Berekböszörmény in Central Hungary; these can be dated to the middle or second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup>

The ribs of the vaulting were supported in the corners by three-quarter columns, the remains of which still exist even after the original east wall was demolished when the polygonal part was added to the chancel. If we look at the eastern side of the capitals, we can see the roughly carved stone surface originally covered by the wall (Fig. 11). Obviously, their decorated side is more exciting for art historical analysis. The capital in the northeast corner depicts a figure standing naked, holding a sword and a shield, with a helmet on his head (Fig. 12). The forms of the figure are quite rudimentary. In the southeast corner, the depicted figure was preserved more fragmentarily (Fig. 13). This one wears a long dress, holds a book in his hand, and probably had a long beard. The proportions here are also strange, with short legs and huge hands. The two figures had apparently opposite meanings: one was secular (warrior), the other perhaps ecclesiastical and learned; one is naked, the other is covered with a cloak. Although their style is rather rudimentary, it resembles the historiated capital of the Premonstratensian church in Bíňa (*Bény*), on which hunting laymen of similar proportions were depicted

15 Ibidem, 254.

16 The manuscript of Marta Giertlová-Kučerová is quoted and her excavation ground plan is published by Marián Soják, "Pred prvou písomnou zmienkou" [Before the first written mention], in *Spišská Belá*, ed. Zuzana Kollárová (Prešov: Universum, 2006), 23-51, esp. 47.

17 For the architecture of the region, see Bibiana Pomfyová, "Súčasný obraz spišskej sakrálnej architektúry do konca 13. storočia" [Contemporary image of Spiš sacral architecture until the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century], *Studia Archaeologica Slovaca Mediaevalia* 3-4 (2000 – 2001): 295-315 and Bibiana Pomfyová, "Vybrané problémy k dejinám Spišskej stredovekej architektúry" [Selected problems related to the history of medieval architecture in Spiš], in *Terra Scepusiensis: stav bádania o dejinách Spiša*, eds. Ryszard Gładkiewicz and Martin Homza (Levoča: Kľaštorko n.o.; Wrocław: Centrum Badań Slaskoznawczych i Bohemistycznych Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2003), 177-192.

18 For the proportion of early ribs, see Béla Zsolt Szakács, "Berekböszörmény református temploma" [The Calvinist church of Berekböszörmény], in *Művészet és vallás a Felső-Tisza-vidéken*, ed. Tibor Kollár (Nagyvárad: Királyhágómelléki Református Egyházkerület; Nyíregyháza: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Területfejlesztési és Környezetgazdálkodási Ügynökség Nonprofit Kft., 2014), 88-113, esp. 100-101

(Fig. 14).<sup>19</sup> The corbels from the former second cathedral of Kalocsa (kept now in the staircase of the archbishop's palace) are of better quality, but the naked and clothed opposition also appears there.<sup>20</sup> Although direct connections cannot be supposed between these reliefs, they can be informative in the sense that the original chancel of Spišská Belá also belonged to the Early Gothic stylistic phase.

Another area of the church that preserves its early vault is the ground floor of the tower, from which the western gate of the nave also opens. The corners of the rib here are carved with a cavetto as well, but the proportions are different: the cavetto is seemingly larger, so it may be somewhat later, which is also logical, provided that the church was built from east to west (Fig. 15). The ribs are supported by corbels, on which a heavily decayed decoration can be seen (Fig. 16). These are flat-carved, highly stylized, obviously far from the naturalism of mature Gothic; rather, the abstraction of Romanesque is present here.

The western gate has a stepped structure with three-quarter columns in the corners of the jambs (Fig. 17). They have a common capital zone with uniform abacus and astragal. This gate structure was previously applied on the north gate of the former collegiate church (today cathedral) in Spišská Kapitula (*Szepeshely, Zipser Kapitel*), which, based on our current knowledge, was built in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> Of course, the gate of the collegiate church is of much higher quality and the details are richer, but the structure is similar (Fig. 18). The capitals at Spišská Kapitula are crocket capitals following the principles of Early Gothic style, but the shaping of the crockets is particularly detailed, testifying to the influence of Late Romanesque. This gate structure is also known from the church of the Virgin Mary in Ľubica (*Leibic, Leibitz*), where the base of the column consisting of a simple torus is also similar to the gate in Spišská Belá (Fig. 19). In Ľubica, the capitals were decorated with flat-carved, stylized leaves reminiscent of the corbels in the tower in Spišská Belá. A close relative of the church in Ľubica stands in Vrbov (*Ménhárd, Menhardsdorf*), where the column base has been renewed, but the ornamentation of the capital evokes the same world (Fig. 20). The churches in Ľubica, Vrbov and Spišská Belá are connected by their size: surprisingly, they are among the largest churches from the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the Spiš region, even if we ignore their later expansions.<sup>22</sup> Since Ľubica and Vrbov are mentioned as early as 1251,<sup>23</sup> it is reasonable to date these churches to the 1250s. Together with the early layer of Spišská Belá, they may belong to the first constructions after the Mongol invasion of 1241/42, which can be characterized by elements of Early Gothic and Late Romanesque styles already present in the region in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Compared to this, the capital zone on the right side of the west gate of Spišská

19 Bibiana Pomfyová, "Marián Samuel and Henrieta Žažová," in *Stredoveká Biňa: Archeológia – história – architektúra* [Medieval Biňa: archaeology, history, architecture] (Bratislava: FO ART, 2014), 120.

20 Imre Takács, "Egy eltűnt katedrális nyomában: Újabb töredékek a 13. századi kalocsai székesegyházból" [In search of a lost cathedral. New fragments from the 13<sup>th</sup> century cathedral of Kalocsa], in *A középkori Dél-Alföld és Szer*, ed. Tibor Kollár (Szeged: Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 2000), 305-336, esp. 318-322. Endre Raffay, *A kalocsai második székesegyház és faragványai* [The second cathedral of Kalocsa and its stone carvings] (Újvidék: Forum, 2010), 18-19.

21 Magdaléna Janovská and Vladimír Olejník, *Katedrála sv. Martina v Spišskej Kapitule* [The cathedral of St Martin in Spišská Kapitula] (Spišské Podhradie: Rímskokatolícka cirkev Biskupstvo Spišské Podhradie, 2017).

22 Béla Zsolt Szakács, *Árpád-kori építészeti hagyományok Szepes és Sáros megyében*, 95-96. Cf. Žárý, *Dvojloďové kostoly na Spiši*, map on the inner cover

23 *Villa Lubicha and villa Werbev* is mentioned in 1251, see its transcription from 1281, Imre Nagy, Farkas Deák and Gyula Nagy, *Hazai oklevéltár 1234 – 1536* [Domestic charter collection 1234 – 1536] (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1879), 22, no. 18; Imre Szentpétery, *Az Árpád-házi királyok okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke* [A critical list of the charters issued by the kings of the Árpád dynasty], vol. I (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1923 – 1943), 293-294, no. 948.

Belá is surprising (Fig. 21). A rather naturalistic tendril ornament was carved on it, with five-fingered, plastic leaves. This style is also well known from the south gate of the church in Batizovce (*Batizfalva, Botzdorf*). The two carvings are connected by the identical profile of the abacus (Fig. 22). However, the bases are different; the Batizovce gate seems to be more advanced. Based on written sources, the church of Batizovce can be dated between 1279 and 1286.<sup>24</sup> The group also includes the partially preserved southern gate of the church in Stará Lesná (*Felsőerdőfalva, Altwalddorf*). Unfortunately, this is now covered by the later tower, moreover, its ground floor serves unworthy purposes, and the carvings are also difficult to judge due to the thick whitewash covering them (Fig. 23). In spite of all this, it is very probable that the capitals of the gates of Spišská Belá, Batizovce and Stará Lesná were carved by the same workshop during the period of 1260–80. These can be considered the first representatives of High Gothic style in the Spiš region. This stylistic level appears with a more complex structure in Odorín (Szepesedelény, Dirn), on the north gate that currently opens into an interior space (Fig. 24). However, its capital zone is of a much higher standard than the ones seen so far, so it is questionable how it is related to the group in Spišská Belá. From our point of view, it is sufficient to mention here that this style appears in many churches in the Spiš region, such as the interconnected churches in Veľký Slavkov (*Nagyszalók, Großschlagendorf*) and Danišovce (*Dénesfalva, Diensdorf*), which can be dated to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Figs. 25-26). In other words, the stylistic significance of the church in Spišská Belá is given by the fact that while the chancel and the ground floor of the tower is dominated by the late Romanesque/Early Gothic trend of the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the High Gothic style that defined the following decades and became a local characteristic of the Spiš region perhaps appeared the first time at the western gate here. Spišská Belá is therefore a turning point, and due to its impressive size, it can even be considered one of the artistic centres of the region in this short period.

How do the recently discovered wall paintings relate to all of this? While no traces of the 1882 restoration remained on the exterior of the church, the interior preserved its Neo-Gothic altars. Accordingly, there were two Neo-Gothic altars in front of the triumphal arch, which were restored during the most recent renovation. When the altars were removed, medieval wall-paintings were discovered behind them. These could have formed the painted decoration of the medieval side altars. Unfortunately, they were found in a rather poor condition. The representations in this condition can only be interpreted to a limited extent. In 2021, I was able to study them in an unrestored state. Of the two frescos, the southern one can be interpreted easier (Fig. 27). Its structure consists of a painted triple Gothic niche. The central part is covered by a monochrome surface with a pointed arch, on both sides of which a figure can be seen. The attributes of the right one consist of a crosier, a book, and probably a mitre. Thus, a bishop saint can be identified here. On the other side, the details of the figure are less visible, but perhaps a crown can be supposed within the glory. The details of the frame can be seen better than the figures. The figures are framed by a double wimperg; the interior one is ornamented in the inner side. The outer frame has a steeper slope

24 The Máriássy family provided the right of establishing the village in 1279, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticum ac civilis*, ed. György Fejér, vol. V/2 (Buda, 1829), 598. In 1286 the Máriássy family sold the half of their property here, mentioning the village, *A márkusfalvi Máriássy család levéltára 1243 – 1803* [The family charter collection of the Máriássy of Márkusfalva, 1243–1803], ed. Béla Iványi (Lőcse: Szepesmegyei Történelmi Társulat, 1917), 18.

and it is decorated with crockets. This decoration may recall the sacrament niche of the chancel extension, whose steep spire is embellished with similar leaves (Fig. 28). Anna Kónya recently drew attention to the fact that the middle, empty surface can also be significant: it could probably be the background of a statue that was once placed on the altar slab. In this way, we can reconstruct a relatively rare altarpiece arrangement with a statue in the middle and painted decoration on the two sides. In medieval Hungary, this solution is only known from the chapel in the south tower of the fortification of the church in Biertan (*Berethalom, BIRTHÄLM* in Transylvania) where the former existence of the altar and the statue standing on it are now only hinted at by their imprints (Fig. 29).<sup>25</sup>

Based on all this, we cannot confirm the preliminary assumption that the wall paintings are of the same age as the first building period in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is much more likely that they were created in the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century during the extension of the chancel and the vaulting of the nave. At the same time, their importance is particularly noteworthy due to the special arrangement of the liturgical environment.

All these questions also raise issues of monument protection. When I visited the church again in 2022, I found that the southern side altar had already been restored to its place, and I suspect that the other side was destined for a similar fate. The solution to the dilemma is not easy. Is the preservation of the homogenous interior created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century more important, or should preference be given to the newly discovered medieval wall paintings? Moreover, the state of the wall paintings may raise doubts as to how well even a particularly careful restoration can produce spectacular results that satisfy both the faithful and the visitors. Based on all this, the restoration of the 19<sup>th</sup> century altars can be justified. At the same time, even on the basis of a superficial study, it is clear that with the help of continued research and careful preservation significantly more could be presented than what has been seen so far. Even if the wall paintings in Spišská Belá cannot be considered the earliest painting monuments of the region,<sup>26</sup> due to their importance in liturgical history presented above, they would definitely be worthy of restoration, careful preservation and, if possible, presentation. We can only hope that this will happen one day.

## Summary in Hungarian

A közelmúltban a szepesbélai római katolikus plébániatemplom mellékoltárainak restaurálásakor eddig ismeretlen középkori falképek kerültek elő, amelyek ráirányítják a figyelmet erre a sok szempontból különleges építészeti emlékre. A templom első fázisa a XIII. század közepére tehető, de később többször is átalakították (szentélyét bővítették, a hosszházat kéthajóssá alakították, majd egy északi mellékkápolnát csatoltak hozzá; tornyát a XIX. században historizáló díszszel látták el, amelyet az 1960-as években eltüntettek). Az első fázishoz tartozik a nagyméretű hajó és ennek eredetileg egyenes szentélyzáródása. A

25 Anna Kónya, "A falkép mint oltárkép: Példák az erdélyi 15. századi falfestészetből" [Wall Painting as Altarpiece: Examples from the 15<sup>th</sup> century Wall Painting in Transylvania], in *Látkép 2021 – Művészettörténeti tanulmányok*, ed. Kitty Árvai-Józsa et al. (Budapest: BTK Művészettörténeti Intézet, 2022), 251-260.

26 For the earliest frescos of the region, see Milan Tognier and Vladimír Plekanec, *Medieval wall paintings in Spiš* (Bratislava: Arte Libris, 2012).

szentély bordás keresztboltozatát a sarkokban háromnegyedoszlopok tartják, melyek közül a két keletit figurális faragványok díszítik. Ezek stílusa korai gótikus emlékekkel rokon. A boltozat bordája sarokhornyolt, de a horony egészen szerény méretű. Ehhez képest valamivel fejlettebb a toronyalj bordaprofilja. Ezt konzolokról indították, amelyeknek nehezen kivehető ornamentális dísze a leibnici és a ménhárdi templomokéra emlékeztet. Ugyaninnen ismert a szepesbélai nyugati kapu szerkezete is. Ugyanakkor ezen a kapun megjelenik az a klasszikus gótikus ornamentika, amely hamarosan az egész szepesi régióban elterjed és a terület egyik jellegzetességévé válik (pl. Batizfalva, Felsőerdőfalva). A szepesbélai templom jelentőségét tehát nemcsak igényes méretei adják meg, hanem az is, hogy összekötő kapcsot képez a szepeshelyi és szepesváraljai kora gótikus kezdemények és a tatárjárás után kivirágzó érett gótikus stílusfok között, így a saját hangját megtaláló szepesi regionális építészet első alkotásának tekinthető. A most feltárt falképek már a következő fázishoz tartozhatnak, amikor a templomhoz szentélybővítést és északi mellékkápolnát csatoltak. Amennyire ez kivehető, a déli falon festett oltárképet készítettek, melynek középső felülete egy szobornak képezhette a háttérét.



# *Insight into the Ongoing Research of the Church of the Reformed Christian Church in Rimavská Seč*



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*Above: The Reformed Church in Rimavská Seč from the north*

*Abstract: The study presents the results of the restoration research of wall paintings, the historical masonry and plaster in the Church of the Reformed Christian Church in Rimavská Seč. The research was carried out in 2022. The authors of the study also trace the individual construction phases of the church, placing them in the historical context of the history of the village, the local landowning family and the entire Gemer region. Originally, the medieval church was dedicated to St. Martin. It was first mentioned in archival sources in the inventory of papal tithes from 1332. The current appearance of the church is the result of alterations and modifications from later periods. As part of the restoration research, a Late Gothic portal with stone lining was newly discovered on the north wall. In the crossing of the Early Gothic rib vault, a primary polychrome with a solar rosette motif was partially uncovered on the bolt. As part of the research, petrographic analysis of stone samples was also carried out.*

*Keywords: Rimavská Seč, the Széchy family, restoration research, Gothic portal, Gothic window, a bolt with polychrome.*

The aim of the present study is to summarize the restoration research of wall paintings, historical masonry and plaster, carried out in the Church of the Reformed Christian Church in Rimavská Seč in 2022. The results of the findings are based on field research, which included probing on the exterior and interior walls of the church, as part of which stone samples were taken for petrographic analysis. The samples came from the worked stone members of the south-east corner of the sanctuary and from the stone frame of the lining of the bricked-up east window. The samples were evaluated by Assoc. prof. RNDr. Daniel Pivko, PhD. from the Department of Geology and Paleontology, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava.<sup>1</sup> An overview of the history of the church and the village itself was prepared by Assoc. Mgr. Monika Tihányiová, PhD. from the Department of History, the Faculty of Arts, the University of Trnava.<sup>2</sup> Important knowledge about the appearance of the church in the last third of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was provided by the records of Flóris Rómer's trip to the monuments of western Gemer in 1876<sup>3</sup> and the correspondence of the church

1 Daniel Pivko, "Petrografické vyhodnotenie vzoriek z gotického kostola v Rimavskej Seči," in *Návrh na reštaurovanie a výskum nástenných malieb, historických omietok a muriva kostola Reformovanej kresťanskej cirkvi v Rimavskej Seči*, ed. Peter Koreň (2022), rkp, 36-38.

2 Monika Tihányiová, "Dejiny Rimavskej Seči s osobitným pohľadom na dejiny reformovaného kostola," in *Návrh na reštaurovanie a výskum nástenných malieb, historických omietok a muriva kostola Reformovanej kresťanskej cirkvi v Rimavskej Seči*, ed. Peter Koreň (2022), 39-41.

3 MÉMMDK. MOB No. 86/1876.

congregation with the Monuments Commission in 1904<sup>4</sup> and 1905.<sup>5</sup> These materials are now stored in the Monuments Documentation Centre (Műemlékvédelmi Dokumentációs Központ) of the Hungarian Museum of Architecture in Budapest. In addition, the archive holds two unlabeled photographs with views of the east wall of the sanctuary from the exterior and the south façade from a distance. These are probably photographs taken by Otto Sztehlo in 1905. These sources were pointed out by Mgr. Gergely Kovács. The research was also aided by a floor plan and a drawing of the east wall of the sanctuary, signed by Otto Sztehlo and dated 1905. These materials are currently in the archives of the Budapest Monument Protection Documentation Center.

The probing, as an invasive part of the research, was for the most part focused on the former medieval sanctuary. The nave was uniformly rebuilt in the Classical period. Smaller probes in the nave did not confirm the presence of older layers.

## Art history exploration of the church in the past

The church has so far been overlooked and no extensive research has been carried out on it. Even the basic literature on medieval monuments does not mention the building in terms of architecture. The church was first brought to the attention of the aforementioned Flóris Rómer in his report to the Hungarian Temporary Monuments Commission in 1876.<sup>6</sup> It was a mapping of the churches of western Gemer, which at that time carried signs of older origin. In the case of the Reformed Church in Rimavská Seč, Rómer mentions segmented Gothic windows and a sanctuary with a straight closing. Further information about the state of the church is given in a letter from the local church congregation addressed to Baron Julius Forster, chairman of the conservation commission.<sup>7</sup> In the text relating to the grant application, we see an initial effort to present the church in detail. We thus have the opportunity to learn about the church before the renovations that took place in the 20th century, which partly changed the character of the building. We learn lost information about the construction of two brick emporia in 1844. The Late Gothic stone lining on the northern wall of the sanctuary, captured in the current probe, was bricked up around 1750, based on the knowledge at that time. The letter concludes with a plea for support as static cracks had appeared in the church, which the congregation's leaders attributed to some kind of earthquake or long-term drought. The necessary repairs, worth 1200 crowns, were carried out in advance according to the plans of Béla Tóth from Rimavská Sobota. The response to the request is from 1905.<sup>8</sup> In September, a reapplication was written by the new pastor. The architect Otto Sztehlo, who was working in Kraskovo at that time, came to inspect the building in the same year. The short recommendation did not convince the ministry and no help was given for the total restoration. Three photographs and one drawing were attached to the report. Two of the photographs have been preserved in the archives in Budapest. Those are a view of the east wall of the sanctuary before restoration and the south facades from the bottom of the hill. Although the photo was taken from a relatively long

4 MÉM MDK. MOB No. 647/1904.

5 MOB MDK. MOB No. 519/1905.

6 MÉM MDK. MOB No. 86/1876.

7 MÉM MDK. MOB No. 647/1904.

8 MOB MDK. MOB No. 519/1905.

distance, the south window of the sanctuary is discernible. At this time, like the east window, it was bricked up in the lower half. The mass of the plaster, and in the plinth parts also of the masonry, were visibly deteriorated. A vertical crack ran above the window. In both cases, the traceries were presented but covered with lime. The profile of the vanished crown cornice is also visible in the photo. Sztehlo graphically recorded the church plan and cross-section with a view of the east wall. The partially bricked up Early Gothic east window is also visible in the drawing.

After the modifications and renovations of the medieval building, a simple cross vault with a bolt was a visible evidence of the Early Gothic origin. The clergymen mentioned in the above-mentioned letter also appeal to the Monuments Commission claiming that this is the building from the 'Arpad period'. They also point out that the former sanctuary would provide an opportunity for an archaeological survey of the building as part of the restoration. Most probably they expected to find medieval crypts.

The last restoration of the church was carried out in 1994. Communication with the then Institute of Monuments is not documented. In this period, stone members were presented on the exterior facades by exposing the surface of the mass. The building was not surveyed.

## Analysis of the historical development of the building on the basis of stratigraphy and archival sources. Technical condition of individual layers.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century

Based on the preserved architectural details, the approximate period of the church's construction can be determined to the period of the emerging Gothic period with surviving Romanesque traditions, sometime after the Mongol invasion of Hungary (1241 – 1242). The plan of the original building is preserved in the sanctuary. The nave was shorter compared to its present state. The inner dimension of the sanctuary is 600 x 600 cm. The church was built of burnt brick in combination with stone elements. The raised plinth is closed by a moulded cornice made of worked tufa stones. The height of the plinth above the current level is 80 cm. The corners and lining of the openings are also made of worked blocks. Samples of material were taken from the blocks and the lining of the east window for petrographic analysis. These are volcanic sandstones with andesite composition, which come from the vicinity of Putnok in Hungary or from the vicinity of Rimavská Sobota. The sample from the lining of the window is glauconite-bearing sandstone located near the village to the south-west near Hangony and to the east near Putnok. The burnt brick is 26 cm long and 5.5 cm high.

In the area of the former sanctuary with a straight closing, a cross vault with ribs of a square profile has been preserved. In the crossing, a circular bolt with a diameter of 42 cm is preserved. It is flanked by a 3 cm wide projecting ring. Rarely, the primary polychrome is preserved under the over-painting. The extent

of fragments of later over-paintings does not allow analysis of specific shapes. The motif of the painting is the 'solar rosette' or 'flower of life'. The six-petalled white flower is painted with a black background. It was originally blue, as the black background shows small unoxidized parts with the pigment of the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli. The ring is light red. Ribs are also a part of the stone element. The remains of polychrome reveal that the surface of the ribs was decorated with ochre and green ornamentation with black lines. On the ribs, all layers were removed except for the mass of stone. Fragments of lime paint are preserved in the structure. The plaster in the interior is 10-20 mm thick, the filler is composed of coarse-grained river sand and the surface is smoothed with a distinct tool mark. The surface is covered with a deposit. Probing confirmed three medieval, later bricked up openings. In the centre of the south wall there is a find – a niche carved into one piece of stone. The opening measures 45 x 33 cm. The depth of the opening is 32 cm. The size of the stone block is 70 x 65 cm. The bottom edge of the opening is 120 cm above the current floor level. A niche without a stone lining was uncovered on the north wall. The edges are made of brick. There is a 10 mm wide rim at the edge. The width of the opening is 40 cm. The height cannot be identified. The lower part is interlaced with modern masonry. The upper line of the opening is 205 cm above the floor. Another opening may have been in place of a bricked window under the matroneum. In probe No. 16, the lower, right-hand edge formed by a worked stone element was uncovered. The surface of the sandstone is heavily weathered. The edge was used to form a later window, probably during the renovation of the church after 1632. The east window of the sanctuary is in the form of a diphorion with a central mullion terminating in a trefoiled tracery above two window closings, so-called "nuns". The height of the window, including the stone parts, is 195 cm. The width is 82 cm. There are scars on the lining from the transverse fittings at 29 cm intervals. The inner diameter of the trefoil is 32 cm. The south window is simple with a "nun closing". The opening measures 170 x 32 cm. The outer lining with segmental arch has dimensions 220 x 80 cm. Both windows are blinded by brickwork. The mass of stone is presented without paint after the last renovation. Smaller pieces of lime paint remained in the notches of the profiles. On the south facade of the nave, three original windows, similar in size to the south window of the sanctuary, are indicated in the plaster by a slight projection. The primary layer could not be identified on the interior walls of the nave when probed.

The existence of the church in Rimavská Seč is first mentioned in the inventory of papal tithes from 1332 – 1337. In the past, the not entirely unambiguous entry *de ecclesia Sancti Martini* encouraged to identify it with the village of Martinová.<sup>9</sup> However, the confirmation of the patronage was provided by the will of Elisabeth, wife of Stephen Compóra of Compórhaza (now defunct village in the area of today's village of Ivanice), dated 1497. It was written by Albert of Rimavská Seč, a chaplain and at the same time Elisabeth's confessor. In her testament, Elisabeth also thought of Albert and the Church of St. Martin in Rimavská Seč, where Albert served. To this church she bequeathed two of her furcoats, popularly called "*Rackamoka*".<sup>10</sup>

9 András Mező, *Patrocíniumok a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest, 2003), 268. Vincent Sedlák, ed., *Monumenta Vaticana Slovaciae*, vol. I (Trnavae; Romae, 2008), 81, no. 441. There identification with the municipality of Martinová.

10 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltár, Diplomatikai Levéltár (MNL OL DL) 61083.



*The Reformed Church in Rimavská Seč from the south-west*

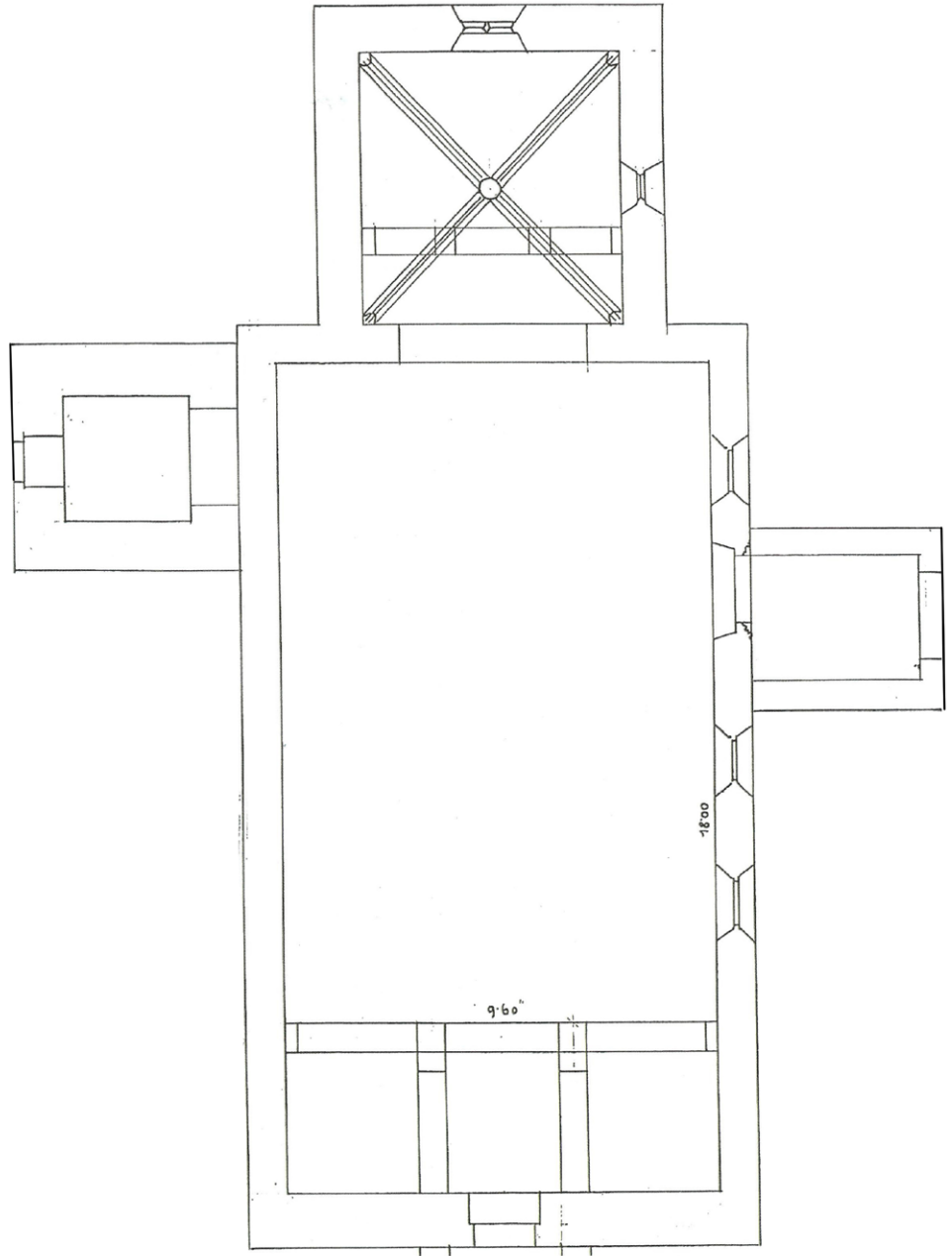


*The former sanctuary*

The origins of the village, as well as its medieval and early modern history, are closely linked with the history of the ancient Balogh family and its branch, the lords of Seč or the Széchy family (also known as Séči, Szécsi).<sup>11</sup> The Balogh family appears in the history of Gemer probably as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> In fact, it was first mentioned in written records as early as 1214.<sup>13</sup> A member of the family, Benedict, the son of Tumbold, is recorded in public life as early as 1263. Between 1268 and 1269 he was even a palatine at the court of the younger King Stephen.<sup>14</sup> We find from written records that the Balogh family owned a large area in the basin of the Blh and Rimava Rivers during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the widely branched family split into several family lines (the Oth family, the lords of Seč, Drienčany, Uzovská Panica).

The first mention of the existence of the village dates back to 1245. In the records of Ivanice, a grove or forest belonging to Seč (*nemus de Zeechy*) is mentioned.<sup>15</sup> The village itself is subsequently mentioned in the source in 1297, when it is referred to as the seat of the superior officer Mikuláš, the son of Ivanka of the Balogh family, and his sons, Peter and Jan, the oldest members of the Széchy branch of the family (*in villa ipsorum Zeech*).<sup>16</sup> As early as in the first two decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, at the time of the struggle of King Charles I of Anjou against the powerful oligarchs, we can see active support from the members of the family for the King, the first ranks at the royal court and in the church sphere. Along with the merits in the battles come the first donations for new estates.<sup>17</sup> In 1323, the lords of Seč acquired from the King the castle of Blh, built and originally belonging to their relatives, the Oths of the Balogh family. At the time of the King's struggle against Matthew III Csák, they took the side of the powerful oligarch, for which they were punished by the confiscation of their estates.<sup>18</sup> After the division of the original family estates in 1360, the castle and its appurtenances, which included Rimavská Seč, belonged to the sons of Ban Dionysius, Blažej and Tomáš of Seč.<sup>19</sup> Rimavská Seč, together with another family property, Miskolc (in Hungary), are identified in this source as larger residences in which the lords of Seč had and have their residences (*duas villas maiores Myskouch et Zeech nuncupatas, in quibus villis ipsorum predecessores et perconsequens ipsi personalem habuissent et nunc haberent residentiam*).<sup>20</sup>

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- 11 On the history of the municipality see. Leon Sokolovský, "Erb Rimavskej Seči," *Vlastivedné štúdie Gemera* 8 (1990): 7-31. Örs László Kollmann, "Rimaszécs helye a középkori Gömör megye és Magyarország városhálózatában," *Gömörország – az északi magyar peremvidék fóruma* 2, no. 4 (2001): 2-9. About the Lords of Seč, see: Monika Tihányiová, "Sepulkrálne pamiatky šľachtického rodu zo Seče ako súčasť historicko-genealogického výskumu rodu," in *Epigraphica & Sepulcralia* 11, ed. Jiří Roháček (Praha, 2022), 205-230.
- 12 Richard Marsina, "Die Entwicklung der Besiedlung im Komitat Gemer bis Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts" in *Studia historica slovacca. Beiträge zu ältesten Besiedlung der Slowakei*. Herausgegeben von Vincent Sedlák (Bratislava, 1994), 188-189.
- 13 Ibidem, 188.
- 14 Attila Zsoldos, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1000 – 1301* (Budapest, 2011), 289.
- 15 Richard Marsina, *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae II*. (Bratislava, 1987), 141, no. 206A.
- 16 Imre Nagy, Farkas Deák, Farkas and Gyula Nagy, eds., *Hazai oklevéltár* (Budapest, 1879), 161, no. 152.
- 17 They received their first donation from the king in 1312, shortly after the Battle of Rozhanovce. *Anjou-kori Oklevéltár I.-XLVI*. (hereinafter referred to as AO), eds. Gyula Kristó, László Blazovich, Lajos Gécz, Tibor Almási, Ildikó Tóth, Ferenc Makk, Ferenc Piti, Ferenc Sebök, Éva Teiszler, Éva B. Halász, Krisztina Rábai and Geisa Érszegi (Budapest; Szeged, 1990 – 2017). AO III, 170, no. 372. In 1317 we find Peter in the sources as castellan at the Zemlín castle of Purušfan, Nicholas at the castle of Hațeg in today's Romania, and Paul as the County Governor of Somodi. At the same time, their brother Andreas appears in the sources as Provost of Transylvania, from 1321 as Bishop of Transylvania. He held this rank for 36 long years. From 1318 until 1349, the Széchy family held the important rank of royal server. RDSI II, p. 400, no. 920; Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltár, Diplomatikai Levéltár (hereinafter referred to as MNL – OL DL) 24892.
- 18 DL 104 926. In 1347 the sons of Andreas's brother Peter, the Slavonian-Croatian Ban Nicholas and the royal dapifer Ivánka, and the sons of Dionysius received from King Louis I an important right of the sword relating to their estates of Blh, Rimavská Seč and Miskolc, which had belonged to the family since 1325. MNL OL DL 100037
- 20 MNL OL DL 104926.



*The floor plan from the time of the inspection of the building in 1905 by Otto Sztelhó  
(The Archive of the Regional Monuments Board Banská Bystrica)*

This soon changed, however, when one branch of the family, in an exchange of estates with King Louis I himself, gained control of a large territory in the Vas County with its seat at Felsőlendva Castle (Grad in Slovenia).<sup>21</sup> In this environment and thanks to the income from the large estate, members of this branch of the family soon reached prominent positions in the public life of the Kingdom (palatine Nicholas 1385 – 1386 and his son Nicholas, royal treasurer 1408 – 1410). In 1391 they also became patrons of the Cistercian monastery in Szentgotthárd (Vas County). The son of Nicholas, the treasurer, and his wife, the sister of the prominent Hungarian palatine Nicholas of Gorjany (1402 – 1403), was the Archbishop of Esztergom, Dionysius of Seč (1440 – 1465).<sup>22</sup> The seemingly distant worlds of the two branches of the family – the less important and lower nobility branch from Seč in Gemer and the baronial branch from Felsőlendva – show in the preserved records sporadic contacts and even interests of the Felsőlendva branch in the estates in Gemer County.<sup>23</sup>

As the following sources show, Blh Castle was not used as the family seat mainly because it was divided among all the Gemer branches of the Balogh family.<sup>24</sup> That is why the lords of Seč built a lowland castle in Rimavská Seč, at the eastern end of today's square, above the Rimava River. It was the seat of several members of the family until the turbulent events of the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, associated with the battles against the Brethren (bratřici, i.e. *brothers*).<sup>25</sup> The geographic and transport features of Rimavská Seč, including its central and residential position within the Gemer estates of the Széchy family contributed to its prosperous development, as evidenced by its designation as an oppidum (small town) for the first time in 1421.<sup>26</sup> In 1427, in the portal inventory of the Gemer County, 41 ports (serfs' settlements) are mentioned in the town.<sup>27</sup>

## Late Gothic modification of the building (1457)

The dating of this construction phase is based on a Latin inscription on the east wall of the sanctuary in the interior, rewritten with each renovation. This was also the case after the last renovation in 1994. The letters of the chronosticon are highlighted in red in the text. The inscription reads as follows: 'AEDES SACRA DEO CREBRIS PVLSATA PRO CELLIS'. In the current transcription of 1994 there is also a Hungarian translation in the second line: 'AZ ISTENNEK GYAKORI VIHAROKTÓL VERT SZENT HAJLÉKA. 1457'.<sup>28</sup> The church was extended westwards. The older windows on the south wall of the nave were bricked up, and two new larger ones were inserted between them. The size of the window lining is 355 x 130 cm. The opening is 335 x 95 cm.

21 MNL OL DL 100104-5.

22 Tihányiová, *Sepulkrálné*, 215-218.

23 In 1481, e.g., they together dealt with recovering the castle of Blh from the hands of the lords of Rozhanovce, who had received it as a pledge from King Matthias Corvinus for merits in the battles against the Brethren. MNL OL DF 266883.

24 On the history of the castle Monika Tihányiová, „Blh,” in *Hrady na Slovensku. Život, kultúra, spoločnosť*, ed., Daniela Dvořáková et al (Bratislava, 2017), 256-257.

25 Sokolovský, „Erb,” 9, 11.

26 MNL OL DL 11100. Kollmann, „Rimaszécs,” 9. The granting of town privileges has not been preserved. The mayor and jurors of this locality can be found in the sources as early as 1373. MNL OL DL 56899. The importance of the road passing through the village is evidenced by its designation as 'strata publica' in the 1338 record of Číž. Bálint Ila, *Gömör megye III* (Budapest, 1946), 300.

27 MNL OL DL 35801

28 Translated: God's holy retreat scourged by frequent storms

The lining of the arched windows is made of worked stone members.

On the south wall in the anteroom, in probes No. 22 and 23, parts of the original profiling of the portal's rod-shaped stone members were uncovered. The stone mass is weathered. Fragments of white lime paint are visible on the surface. The mass of the walls and arches of the classical anteroom overlaps most of the exterior lining of the portal. The glass-fronted double doors were made in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A distinctive sculptural element is the stone portal on the north wall of the sanctuary partially exposed in probe No. 12. The opening measures 120 x 80 cm. The top of the stone frame is 255 cm above the floor. Small fragments of lime paint in four layers are preserved on the portal members. The primary colour finish has not been confirmed. The opening was bricked up with mixed stone and brickwork in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the correspondence of the pastor László Vattay with the Monuments Commission in 1904, the bricked entrance is mentioned in 1750. This is information from an unknown source, which dates the remodelling of the sanctuary. The plaster from this period was used only locally in the modifications around the new stonework details. Hypothetically, it can be assumed that the nave of the church was vaulted, which would explain the need to change the layout of the windows. This conjecture could be confirmed by archaeology and architectural and historical research in the areas where the accretion of fallen vaults could be assumed to have occurred.

The Late Gothic renovation of the church dates back to the period when the town, at the intercession of its landlord, Nicholas of Seč, was granted the right to hold an annual market or fair twice a year (on the day of St. Michael the Archangel and on the feast of Corpus Christi) in 1450. The right to hold a weekly market was designated for Wednesdays.<sup>29</sup> The town's capacity to hold fairs is confirmed by its beneficial development and its important position in long-distance trade. Rimavská Seč also held an important place in the county administration, as in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the presence of the dignitaries of the Gemer County is recorded here, as well as several of their local meetings.<sup>30</sup> The relationship of the local landowners to the church and church institutions can be seen in a record from 1414, when several members of the family, for the salvation of their souls, as well as their ancestors and descendants, donated a piece of land near the monastery, with all its appurtenances and benefits, to the nearby Pauline Monastery of St. Anne in Hangony. The donation was dated in Seč (*in Zeecz*), which confirms the continued presence of the landowner in the town.<sup>31</sup> The residential role of Rimavská Seč also at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century is confirmed by a document from 1481, mentioning the local residence of the Széchy family (*domus et curia ipsorum*).<sup>32</sup>

## 1560 – 1570

After a partial decline in development, also due to the local landowners joining

29 Sokolovský, "Erb," 10. Kollmann, "Rimaszécs," 9. MNL OL *Diplomatikai fényképgyűjtemény* (DF) 266883.

30 See e.g. the document from 1455: MNL OL DL 56982.

31 Zsigmondkori oklevéltár IV, ed. Elemér Mályusz (Budapest, 1994), 571, No. 2516.

32 MNL OL DL 103858.

the Brethren (which deprived them of their estates for some time and caused the castle's demise),<sup>33</sup> we can observe the town's boom again at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was also manifested in 1520, when, at the request of Valentín of Seč, King Louis II granted Rimavská Seč two more fair dates, on St. Valentine's Day and on St. George's Day.<sup>34</sup>

Significant changes in the development of the town and the local church occurred after the Battle of Mohács (1526) and especially after the Ottoman occupation of Filákovovo (1554). In the same year of 1554 the town was attacked and plundered by the Ottoman army. It was again raided in 1566. Rimavská Seč and the nearby Číž were the longest taxed Gemer settlements by the Ottomans in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> These facts significantly influenced the demographic development of the town.<sup>36</sup> During the Ottoman expulsion, the church building was also partially damaged. The provisional renovation of the building can be dated relatively early, to 1560 – 1570. At that time, the church was already used for the liturgy of the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, which the local population and the pastor joined sometime around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup>

From this period, local plaster finishes appear. In the sanctuary area, two niches were bricked up, which originally served as a pastophorion and a storage niche. The openings were filled with mixed masonry. The surfaces were locally treated with lime plaster applied by smoothing technique in the places of damages and changes. It is identified in the probes at the brickwork and in probe No. 14 on the vertical wall it extends below the mass of the later matroneum extension. The surface of the mass is mechanically damaged by baking. Alterations of this period were identified only in the sanctuary area. On the rest of the walls a lime coating was applied. The ribs of the vault and the stud were highlighted with grey paint.

## Early 17<sup>th</sup> century

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, like many places in southern Gemer, the teachings and beliefs of Martin Luther were exchanged by the local inhabitants and the pastor for the teachings and beliefs of the Swiss reformers (J. Calvin, U. Zwingli, T. Beza, etc.) and also the German reformer Henrich Bullinger.<sup>38</sup> Since that time, no doubt with the consent of the local landowners, the church has been serving the liturgy of the Reformed Christian Church.<sup>39</sup> Stratigraphically, only another lime

33 Sokolovský, "Erb," 11.

34 Ibidem.

35 Helena Markusková, "Gemer pod osmanským panstvom," in *Najnovšie poznatky z výskumov stredovekých pamiatok na Gotickej ceste III* (Rožňava: Bratislava, 2020), 81.

36 Of the 81 serfs recorded in 1563, only 23 lived here in 1600. Ila, *Gömör megye III*, 302.

37 The early inclination and conversion of this area to the new faith could be evidenced by the enrolment of the student Benedictus, son of Urban from Rimavská Seč, at the University of Wittenberg as early as 1518. Károly Schrauf, *Regestrum Bursae Cracoviensis Hungarorum. A krakói magyar tanuló-kháza lakóinak jegyzéke* (1493 – 1558) (Budapest, 1893), 91.

38 The Reformed Church was formed by extending the teachings of the Swiss Reformation. It spread in Hungary from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The adherents of this faith accepted the new, to some extent deeper and more consistently applied Reformation teachings. Annamária Kónyová, "Reformovaná cirkev v Uhorsku v ranom novoveku," in *Cirkvi v Uhorsku v 17. a 18. storočí*, ed. Peter Kónya (Prešov, 2020), 216-219.

39 Sokolovský, "Erb," 12-13. Given the absence of Protestant visitations of the Church in Rimavská Seč at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is likely that the departure from Evang. A. C. Church had occurred even earlier. The dating to 1565 see. András Fabó. *Monumenta evangelicorum Aug. conf. in Hungaria historica. A magyarországi ágost. vall. Evangelikusok történelmi emlékei III.* (Budapest, 1865), 22. The name Reformed Church came into use in Hungary in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Kónyová, *Reformovaná*, 221.

coating can be assigned to this phase. The inhabitants of the town lived in fear of the Ottomans. In 1609, it is said that in Rimavská Seč, the Pasha of Eger himself personally threatened to send his army against those who did not go and help to build fortifications in Eger.<sup>40</sup>

## After 1632

In June 1632, Mikuláš Forgáč of Gýmeš informed Emperor Ferdinand II about serious Ottoman incursions in the vicinity of Filákovo and today's Rimavská Seč, and even in the town itself.<sup>41</sup> The documented fire of the church, which resulted in the collapse of the vault of the nave, may also be related to this.<sup>42</sup> This is also indirect information that the church was already completely vaulted in the Middle Ages. The vertical walls were repaired in places. In the area of the sanctuary, the construction of a wooden matroneum can be assumed, which is connected with the creation of a new window opening in the lower parts of the east wall under the existing medieval window. The outer lining of the window measured 105 x 80 cm. The window had a semi-arched shape. At the bottom, on the right and bottom edge, a worked stone member with lime coating was uncovered. This architectural detail suggests the use of a former niche in the wall, or the secondary use of a stone member to form the lining of a newly created window.

## Around 1750

After the extinction of the lords of Seč in 1685 by Peter Széchy, the estates of the family, enlarged in 1570 by the estates of the Felsőlendva family and in 1608 by the estates in the north of Gemer (Muráň Castle),<sup>43</sup> passed to the royal crown and they were placed under the administration of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce. However, not for long. The very next period, at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, was marked by important changes in property law, when the noble family of the Koháry family acquired ownership of the former Széchy estates. They respected the legal status of Rimavská Seč as a town and from the beginning supported it in regaining its former economically prosperous status. The depopulation, caused by the Ottoman plundering, the passage of armies of anti-Habsburg uprisings<sup>44</sup> and Polish troops heading to Vienna, and finally the plague, which hit the town twice in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Koháry family tried to remedy by resettling serfs from their other estates (they were mostly Slovaks and Catholics).<sup>45</sup>

40 Arnold Ipolyi, *Alsó sztrégovai és rimai Rimay János államiratai és levelezése* (Budapest, 1887), 406.

41 János Reizner, ed., "A császár-féle felső magyarországi 1631 – 1632-ik évi pórlázadás okmánytára (befejező közlemény)," *Történelmi Tár* (1888), 132.

42 Sokolovský, "Erb," 12. According to G. Balaša, "Staviteľsko-umelecké pamiatky v okrese Rimavská Sobota," in *Kapitoly z dejín a prírody okresu Rimavská Sobota* (Bratislava, 1968), 210.

43 Tihányiová, *Sepulkrálne*, 219-220.

44 The presence of the Kurucs in the town during the Tököli Uprising is evidenced, e.g., by a letter of the Kuruc commander Sigmund Géczy from November 1680 to Stephan Koháry, the captain of Filákovo Castle, who sided with the Habsburgs. Zoltán Igor Komjáti, "A kuruc-labanc viszony harctevékenységen kívüli ügyei a füleki várórség vonatkozásában Koháry II. istván főkapitányságának idején (1672 – 1682)," *A Dornay Béla múzeum évkönyve XXXVIII* (2014 – 2015): 164-165.

45 Ila, *Gömör megye III*, 302-303.

To the period around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we can place the renovation of the interior walls by unifying them with a new plaster treated with curving. The thickness of the layer is 10 – 25 mm. The mass of fine-grained river filler is grey with a white coating of lime. The Late Gothic portal on the north wall of the sanctuary was bricked up with mixed stone and brickwork. Locally applied thicker layers of plaster were mechanically disturbed by baking before the application of the levelling plaster. On the exterior, a layer of plaster was also applied, which was pressed tightly to the existing openings in stone with no stylistic, shape change. Granules of crushed brick were added to the plaster mass. The windows were outlined with ochre bordures.

## 1791

The construction of the church itself was dated to this year in the millennial monograph on the Gemer County. Apparently, the church was substantially rebuilt and renovated.<sup>46</sup> In the interior, colourful decoration of the walls was carried out. Within the range of probes, layers of paint performed by the *secco* technique were identified. The vaulted areas of the former sanctuary were painted with light blue pigment. The ribs of the vaulting were most probably colour-coded. This polychrome was also removed along with others except for the mass of stone. It is partially preserved on the bolt, where areas of ochre and red are visible, a sign of colour separation. It was not possible to identify the shape of the decoration within the extent of the probe and the preservation layer. Pink paint is visible on the vertical walls. Around the windows, bordures in the form of ochre bands were applied.

Rimavská Seč had been in the hands of the Koháry family for more than a hundred years at that time. In 1796 they interceded with Emperor Francis II for the right to hold another fair in Rimavská Seč, this time on the day of St. Paul's Conversion (25 January).<sup>47</sup>

## 1844

This year appears in the church's correspondence with the Monuments Commission from 1904. The clergyman László Vattay advises the construction of the two *matronea* by 1844. At present, we do not know the source of the dating and the use of the exact year and the relatively short time gap allows us to consider this information as credible. The massive *matronea* are built of burnt brick and stylistically bear the hallmarks of the Neo-Romanesque style. The extensions are on the sites of older *matronea*, probably wooden. In the stratigraphy of the probes, the layer appears in the interior of the sanctuary and nave in the form of decorative painting executed in lime paint. It is a simple decorative painting with bordures around the basic architectural elements. Above the east *matroneum* in the area of the former sanctuary, the walls were decorated with imitation of grey marble with veining. In the space below the *matroneum*, the walls remained white.

46 Samu Borovszky, *Magyarország vármegyéi és városai – Gömör – Kishont vármegye* (Rimavská Sobota: Patrióta, 2008), 105 (reprint of the original from 1904).

47 Sokolovský, "Erb," 14. MNL, A 57 – Magyar Kancelláriai Levéltár-Libri regii – vol. 59 – pp. 198-199.

In the nave, the triumphal arch above the stucco frame was adjusted by alternating white and red bands with ochre lines. The classical cornice is flanked by bands of brown, ultramarine, light green and red. In the centre of the bordure on the green band, traces of geometric ornament applied through a stencil are visible. The contour lines are ochre. The paint is powdered.

Sometime around this year the church tower with preserved stucco decoration could have been built. Possible dating may have been part of the architecture. As the original plaster was replaced with new plaster apart from the stucco decoration, this conjecture cannot be confirmed and we rely solely on stylistic elements. Placing it in the 18<sup>th</sup> century period is out of the question as it is a Reformed church and the tower could not be built until 1843/1844. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1891) there is a preserved record of the financial support of Emperor Franz Joseph I to the local Reformed Church in the amount of 100 forints.<sup>48</sup> Rimavská Seč was often the venue of general assembly of Reformed pastors from Gemer during this period.<sup>49</sup> In terms of ownership, it belonged from 1829 to the Coburg family, who had shortly before become related to the Koháry family through their marriage policy. Their interest in this Lower Gemer estate was manifested, e.g. by the foundation of a machine workshop in the town, where hand-operated machines for sowing oilseed rape were produced.<sup>50</sup> The Coburgs were mentioned in the history of the town until 1928, when the family's estates in Slovakia were taken over by the State Land Office in Prague.

## 1957

The renovation of the interior of the church is dated by the inscription of the year on the front of the west matroneum. The layer on the exterior was not identified within the extent of the observation. The most significant interventions include the bricking up of the Gothic windows of the sanctuary, along with the lower east Baroque window. The plaster filler consists of crushed sand. It contains a high proportion of cement. A levelling layer is also used in the ground-floor parts, which is filled with distinctive pink sand from the quarry in Gombasek. It appears locally on the walls, incorporated quite close to the older surfaces. Subsequently the walls were whitewashed. The walls above the east matroneum were painted ochre. The renovation was dated with the inscribed year, which is overwritten in the currently visible painting.

## 1994

The last major renovation was carried out in the recent past. Although the building has been listed as a cultural monument since 1964, no documentation of the renovation has been produced. However, partial guidance of the renewal is evident. This was manifested by the fact that the discovery of the Early Gothic windows was represented by indicating the bricked-up area by means of a projection in the

48 *Protestáns egyházi és iskolai lapok*, vol. 34, 1891, no. 10, 321.

49 *Protestáns egyházi és iskolai lapok*, vol. 40, 1897, no. 45, 707

50 Attila Selmeczi Kovács, "Agrotechnikai változások a XIX. századi repceművelésben Magyarországon," in *A Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeum Közleményei 1975 – 1977*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest, 1978), 103.

plaster. The architectural stone members have been cleaned to mass. The plaster was restored on the entire exterior except for the tower. The negative side of the renovation was, among other things, the removal of older surfaces as well as the chipping off the crown cornices around the perimeter of the church. Plaster was applied to the brick skeleton of the cornices without any attempt to reconstruct the original profiling. The crown cornice of the south anteroom was left in its original shape. The renovation plaster is heavily overbuilt with cement. The filler is made of crushed sand. On the tower of the church, the plain areas were renewed, cut to the edge of the ornamentation. By the application of new plaster, the stucco elements have been “drowned” and stand out less into the space. In addition, the surface of the ornaments has been painted with a thin cement mortar, which degrades the artistic expression. The protruding plinth parts were treated with a structural plaster, the so-called brizolite. The surfaces were painted white, except for the plinth, which is ochre. At present they show signs of degradation due to leakage and rising damp. This is manifested by separation of the plaster from the substrate, dark deposits in the maps and biological attack by mosses and lichens. The leakage was technically solved by the renovation of the roof in 2020. In the interior, the walls were painted in a yellow-ochre shade. The vault of the former sanctuary, the ceiling of the nave and the projecting relief stucco elements were painted white. Oil bronze paint was used on the pilaster capitals. On the west matroneum is a transcription of the modern inscription *MINDENÉRT AZ ISTENÉ A DISCŐSÉG*.<sup>51</sup> and the dates of the restoration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – 1957 and 1994. An attempt at somewhat decorative expression is visible on the matroneum fronts in the form of vine branches with grapes and spikelets.

The research not only defined the technical condition of the mass, but also brought new knowledge about the history of the building. Ongoing archival research into the history of the church and the village provides knowledge that can be related to the stratigraphy of the building. Some medieval details were also presented after later modifications of the church.

## New finds for which there was no record

- 1 – A niche in brick on the north wall of the sanctuary, bricked up in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2 – A niche carved in a single block of stone on the south wall of the sanctuary, bricked up in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3 – The Late Gothic profiled portal on the north wall, which probably served as an entrance to the sacristy, can be considered a significant discovery. It surprises with its advanced workmanship.
- 4 – Primary layer of polychrome on the vault bolt of the sanctuary with the motif of a solar rosette.

Archaeology and the use of GPR could shed significant light on the history of the church. As it is a church in the family seat of the Széchy family, it is likely that the crypts of some members of the family are located under the floor of the sanctuary. With regard to the architecture, it would be possible to confirm or refute the

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51 Translated, “All praise be to God.”

presumption of the existence of a sacristy and to determine the original plan of the nave.

## Summary in Slovak

Štúdia podáva výsledky reštaurátorského výskumu nástenných malieb, historického muriva a omietok v Kostole reformovanej kresťanskej cirkvi v Rimavskej Seči. Výskum bol realizovaný v roku 2022. Autori štúdie sledujú tiež jednotlivé stavebné fázy kostola, pričom ich zaraďujú aj do historického kontextu dejín obce, miestneho zemepanského rodu i celého gemerského regiónu. Pôvodne stredoveký kostol bol zasvätený svätému Martinovi. Prvýkrát sa v archívnych prameňoch spomína v súpise pápežských desiatkov z roku 1332. Súčasná podoba kostola je výsledkom prestavieb a úprav z neskorších období. V rámci reštaurátorského výskumu bol na severnej stene novoobjavený neskorogotický portál s kamenným ostením. V krížení ranogotickej rebrovej klenby bola na svorníku čiastočne odkrytá primárna polychrómia s motívom solárnej rozety. V rámci výskumu bol realizovaný aj petrografický rozbor vzoriek kamenných článkov.



*The north wall of the former sanctuary; the find of the stone lining of the Gothic portal*



*The probe on the bolt of the cross vault in the former sanctuary. The motif of a white solar rosette on the black background is visible on the primary layer of polychrome. The raised bordure is outlined with red iron pigment.*



*Detail of the right lining of the western portal; the so-called magic pits are visible in the mass*



*Detailed side view of the bolt; the remnant of the ornamental linear ochre-green painting is visible on part of the rib*



*The view of the vault of the former sanctuary*



*Eastern gothic window*



*The niche on the south wall of the former sanctuary exposed in the probe; the architectural element is carved into a single stone monolith*



*Part of the exposed niche (pastophorion) on the northern wall of the former sanctuary; the opening is made primarily of burnt brick*



*The probe on the lining of the south entrance to the nave in the narthex; the worked stone element of the Gothic portal is visible beneath layers of secondary surfaces*



*Graphic visualisation of the shape of the bricked portal on the northern wall of the former sanctuary*

# *Medieval Architecture and Furnishings of the St. John the Baptist Collegiate Church in Skalbmierz*



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*Above: St. John the Baptist Collegiate Church in Skalbmierz*

*Abstract: The collegiate church in Skalbmierz was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and belonged to the most important churches in the Kraków diocese throughout the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era. The article discusses the medieval architecture and furnishings of the church preserved to this day. In its current form, it consists of a 12<sup>th</sup> century nave and towers, constituting the presbytery, and a three-nave body added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the archaeological finds, the article puts forward a thesis about a different, more extended eastern part of the church than previously thought. Attention was paid to the undoubted references of the 15<sup>th</sup> century nave to the characteristic ones in Krakow, resulting from the prestigious nature of the foundation and from its strong connections with the capital of the Kingdom of Poland. A testimony to aforementioned phenomenon is also a preserved sculpture of the Madonna, dating from around 1460. It was likely produced in Krakow, but according to the most fashionable Prague patterns. The remaining elements of the medieval collegiate church come from the extensive international contacts of canons and their care for the monument. A wonderful silver reliquary, in the shape of the head of John the Baptist on a platter, probably made in Italy and dating back to the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century is a proof. Its shape is not only related to of reliquary popular at that time, but also highlights the local tradition – this motif appears on city and chapter seals, as well as on the keystone in the church. The last object discussed are stalls from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, whose decorations and manufacturing technique indicated their Spiš origin.*

*Keywords: Skalbmierz, Romanesque architecture, Gothic architecture, Goldschmiedery, Gothic sculpture*

Skalbmierz is now a small provincial town located about fifty kilometers east of Krakow. However, in the Middle Ages, the city, located in the centre of fertile areas, played an important role in Lesser Poland as a local craft and trade centre. Its role in the structure of the diocese of Krakow was even more important, as the collegiate church there was one of the best-endowed chapters.<sup>1</sup> It is assumed that the congregation of canons was founded at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Skarbimir Awdaniec, one of the most influential magnates at the court of Bolesław the Wrymouth. At that time, a stone temple was also erected, which has largely survived to this day (Fig. 1). The preserved towers and lateral walls are made of precisely worked out and fitted cubic stone blocks with dimensions of approx. 60

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<sup>1</sup> S. Romanowski, „Dzieje miasta Skalbmierza,” *Rocznik Muzeum Świętokrzyskiego* 3 (1965): 211-225, 237-240; B. Kumor, *Dzieje diecezji krakowskiej*, vol. 3 (Kraków, 2000), 173-194.

x 40 cm.<sup>2</sup> Andrzej Tomaszewski, who in the 1960s conducted architectural research and archaeological survey excavations in Skalbmierz, reconstructs the church as an aisleless, covered with a wooden ceiling, closed from the east with a semicircular apse and from the west flanked by two square towers, between which there is a gallery connected to the nave by a staircase in the thickness of the southern wall (Fig 2). While the shape of the western part of the temple is beyond doubt, the eastern closure, reconstructed on the basis of cursory research (one short excavation was made behind the eastern wall, running along the axis of the church, in which no remnants of the walls were found) as a semicircular apse connected directly to the existing walls, which would fit inside the present walls is not certain. First of all, in the aforementioned excavation, a stone sarcophagus was found, dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, carved from a single piece of rock, placed along the axis of the church (Fig. 3). It is noteworthy that this is the only such object found in Poland so far, and in Central Europe similar finds are also rare and are associated with burials of state elites. In similar sarcophagi, members of the imperial family from the Salic dynasty in the cathedral in Speyer, or the rulers of Bohemia, Vratislav II and Bořivoj II in the St. Peter and Paul Collegiate Church in Vyšehrad in Prague, were buried. Since such elite burials were usually located within the temple, often in the choir (especially in the case of the founders), and there is no indication that the sarcophagus in Skalbmierz was moved, it should be taken into account, in my opinion, that the church in Skalbmierz was longer and the tomb was in its chancel or apse. The temple would then have highly elongated proportions but not unusual at the time. Similar solutions from the 12th century are known, for example, from the Benedictine churches in Rimavské Janovce or in Lubin in Greater Poland. The parallel with the second temple is particularly intriguing, although the church was consecrated a bit later than Skalbmierz, i.e. in 1148, but its founders are considered to be the Awdaniec family, which also included Skarbimir, the founder of Skalbmierz.<sup>3</sup> The argument, unfortunately, must remain within the scope of hypotheses until comprehensive archaeological research is carried out. There is no doubt, however, that the Romanesque church in Skalbmierz belonged to a group of relatively small but interestingly designed noble churches, which, as Tomaszewski showed, not only had western galleries, but were also built by very good workshops, which was reflected in the precise technique of processing and joining blocks, but above all in the refined reduction of basilica plans. A good example is not only Skalbmierz with a huge two-tower western facade, but also churches in Prandocin and Jędrzejów with western apses integrated with the towers.<sup>4</sup>

The comprehensive reconstruction of the temple in Skalbmierz took place in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> Serious damage to the church due to the earthquake in 1443 forced the commencement of works, as a result of which the temple took the

2 S. Tomkowicz, "Kollegiata świętego Jana Chrzciciela w Skalbmierzu: Reszty romańskiej budowy," *Sprawozdania Komisji do Badania Historii Sztuki w Polsce* 9, no. 1 (1913): 109-112; K. Kutrzebianka, "Skalbmierz," in *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce*, vol. 3, no. 9, ed. M. Kałamajska-Saeed (Warszawa, 1961), 83; Zygmunt Świechowski, *Budownictwo Romanskie w Polsce: Katalog Zabytków* (Wrocław, 1963), 243-244; Andrzej Tomaszewski, *Romańskie kościoły z emporami zachodnimi* (Wrocław; Warszawa; Kraków; Gdańsk, 1974), 115-119; W. Sowała, "Średniowieczna architektura kościoła św. Jana Chrzciciela w Skalbmierzu," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 4 (2020): 497-501.

3 Sowała, "Średniowieczna architektura kościoła św. Jana Chrzciciela," 501-502.

4 Tomaszewski, *Romańskie kościoły*, 137-138.

5 A. Szyszko-Bohusz, "Beszowa, Skalbmierz i system krakowski," *Sprawozdania Komisji do Badania Historii Sztuki w Polsce* 9, no. 1 (1913): 66-79; Kutrzebianka, "Skalbmierz," 83; P. Crossley, *Gothic Architecture in the Reign of Kasimir the Great: Church Architecture in Lesser Poland 1320 – 1380* (Kraków, 1985), 89; P. Pencakowski and A. Włodarek, "Skalbmierz," in *Architektura gotycka w Polsce*, vol. 2/2, eds. M. Arsyński and T. Mroczo (Warszawa, 1995), 206; Sowała, "Średniowieczna architektura kościoła św. Jana Chrzciciela," 504-520.

form that has remained almost unchanged until today. The towers and fragments of the lateral walls of the Romanesque building that survived the cataclysm were used to build the presbytery part (Fig 4). They were strengthened only with buttresses necessary to support the vaults, and the whole construction was closed from the east with a polygonal apse. In this way, an elongated, three-span, single-nave choir was obtained, to which a three-nave and three-span basilica type part was added from the west. Most of the works were probably completed by 1460, when a contract was concluded with a local glazier for glazing the windows in the church. The stonemason's workshop, which erected the nave, consisted of excellent masons, familiar with the latest trends in the architecture of Krakow. This is evidenced by both the regularity of the plan, referring to the capital city standards, and the precision of execution. The rich, well-forged profiling of the arcades between the naves and details decorating the pillars is noteworthy. As in Krakow, a system of buttresses integrated with the pillars of the nave, was used. Both the proportions of the height of the naves, the shape of the pillars, the architectural details and the construction system used in Skalbmierz indicate that at least some of the masons also worked on the nave of the Corpus Christi Church in Kazimierz near Krakow. This thesis is additionally reinforced by the use of similar consoles supporting the vault's ribs and identical stonework marks.<sup>6</sup>

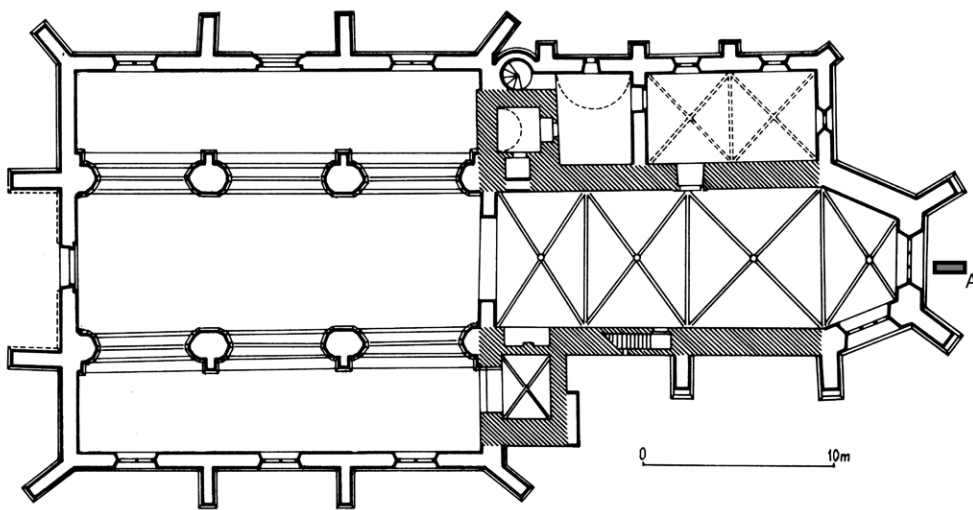
It is worth paying attention to the architectural and ideological context of the church in Skalbmierz. The reference point for the whole of Lesser Poland in the 15<sup>th</sup> century were undoubtedly the great churches in Krakow, the construction of which was started in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and lasted in some cases till the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Cathedral and St. Mary, Holy Trinity, St. Catherine and Corpus Christi churches set the model of the most prestigious temple for the entire region, which has become a basilica with buttresses integrated with inter-nave pillars and an elongated multi-span chancel. However, due to construction difficulties, this model was repeated only three times: in the Pauline Church in Beszowa, in the Collegiate churches in Bodzentyn and in Skalbmierz. It is significant that all these were founded by representatives of the kingdom's elite. The monastery in Beszowa was founded at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the Bishop of Krakow, Wojciech Jastrzębiec, and the collegiate church in Bodzentyn by Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki in the middle of the century. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in both cases the quality of execution is much lower than in Skalbmierz, which is the only one in this respect to match the capital's buildings.

The collegiate church in Skalbmierz does not exactly follow the Krakow pattern. The choir is lower than the nave and there are towers at their junction. This is due to the fact that part of the older church has been preserved, which could of course have resulted from financial savings, but a few reasons indicate that it was done on purpose in order to show the old origin of the collegiate church. Similar actions are known from the area of Central Europe – the most spectacular is saving the Romanesque towers in the facade during the reconstruction of the Collegiate Church of St. Stephen in Vienna.<sup>7</sup> Above all, however, similar activities were widely used by King of Poland Casimir III the Great, reigning in 1333 – 1370.

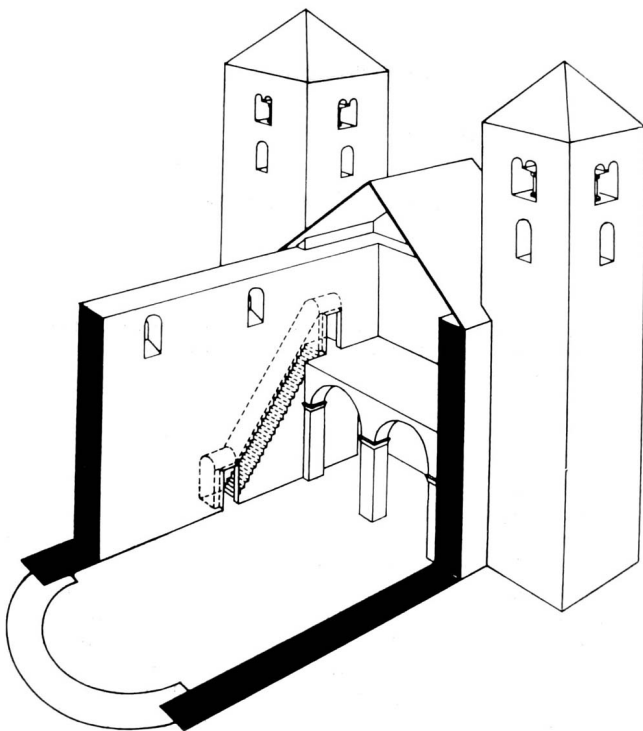
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6 Sowała, "Średniowieczna architektura kościoła św. Jana Chrzyciela," 503-508.

7 K. Oettinger, *Das Werden Wiens* (Wien, 1951), 219.



*Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalbierz  
(according to Achitektura gotycka w Polsce, t. 2, fig. 364)*



*Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalbierz  
(reconstruction according to Andrzej Tomaszewski)*

In this context, it was pointed out that the king saved the Romanesque rotunda of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wawel Castle from demolition, preserved the western crypt and the towers of the Krakow Cathedral or the western massif of the collegiate church in Wiślica.<sup>8</sup> All these activities complicated the process of erecting new buildings, which is most visible in the case of the cathedral where it forced to break its axis. It is necessary to add that the use of the past in the politics of Kazimierz was limited not only to displaying older relics but also had a much wider scope. One can mention here, for example, the foundation of a new tombstone over the tomb of the first Piast King, Bolesław the Brave, in the Gniezno cathedral.<sup>9</sup> In the 15th century, similar actions were undertaken by the Polish state elite. Here we can point to a number of foundations by Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, who founded new churches in places strongly related to the history of the state and diocese, or Jan Długosz, who used forms referring to the Kazimierz the Great foundations in his commissions.<sup>10</sup>

In the case of Skalbmierz, attention should be paid to the members of the chapter and, above all, the provost who fulfilled their functions during the reconstruction, because they were responsible for the concept and supervision of the works. In 1442 – 1456 the provost was Jakub of Sienna, Dębno coat of arms, later Archbishop and one of the most enlightened members of the kingdom's elite. He was the nephew of the already mentioned Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, a contemporary of Jan Długosz, whom he must have known. Educated in Bologna and Rome, befriending Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, he was certainly a person who was able to consciously use the relics of the past to mark the prestige of the institution he headed at the time. Jakub knew similar cases not only from Krakow (from 1435 he was a cathedral canon, from 1446 provost) but probably also from Rome (legal protection of Traian's column). Thus, both the employment of the capital's workshop to build the nave in the most fashionable forms at the time, and the display of the remains of the older collegiate church seem to be a deliberate action aimed at maximizing the prestige and antiquity of the Skalbmierz's chapter in the visual sphere.<sup>11</sup>

The status of the Collegiate Church in Skalbmierz, in which many representatives of the kingdom elite served, were undoubtedly reflected in its furnishings. The confirmation of this can be the record of Jan Długosz that it was rich. Unfortunately, only few of its elements have survived. The figure of the Madonna with Child comes from the 14th century, and was recently dated by Marek Walczak to around 1360 (Fig. 5).<sup>12</sup> Although it was probably located in Skalbmierz from the beginning, the source records allow to reconstruct its history only from the 18th century. It is known that at that time it was venerated as the Mother of Consolation and was located in the chapel under the south tower. Around the middle of the century, a new retable was made for it, ordered in Krakow in the workshop of

8 M. Walczak, "Dlaczego król Kazimierz Wielki zachował od zniszczenia wawelską rotundę Najświętszej Marii Panny" in *Lapides viventes: Zaginiony Kraków wieków średnich*, ed. J. Gadomski et al. (Kraków, 2005), 93-114; P. Pajor, "Król spogląda w przeszłość: Romańskie relikty w murach katedry krakowskiej i kolegiaty w Wiślicy jako nośnik programu historycznego w działalności fundacyjnej Kazimierza Wielkiego," in *Historyzm – tradycja – archaizacja: Studia z dziejów świadomości historycznej w średniowieczu i okresie nowożytnym*, ed. M. Walczak (Kraków, 2015), 83-109.

9 M. Walczak, "Power and History: The Past as a Means of Legitimizing of Ruler's Authority in the Court Art of 14<sup>th</sup> century Poland," *Umění* 1, no. 64 (2014): 4-8.

10 P. Gryglewski, *De sacra antiquitate: Odwołania do przeszłości w polskiej architekturze sakralnej XVI wieku* (Warszawa, 2012), 100-111.

11 Sowała, "Średniowieczna architektura kościoła św. Jana Chrzyciela," 520.

12 M. Walczak, *Do źródła* (Kraków, 2020), 183-186.



Reliquary of Saint John the Baptist, Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalbierz



Reliquary of Saint John the Baptist, Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalbierz (photos by Wojciech Sowała)



Madonna with Child. Muzeum Diecezjalne w Kielcach (photos by Wojciech Sowała)



Sarcophagus excavated near the Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalbierz (photo Wojewódzki Urząd Ochrony Zabytków w Kielcach, Ewidencja Dokumentacji Naukowo Technicznej, sygn. BA 48)



*Stalls, Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalmierz (photo Wojciech Sowa)*



*Details of the stalls, Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalmierz*



*Details of the stalls, Saint John the Baptist's Collegiate Church in Skalmierz (photo by Wojciech Sowa)*



prominent sculptor Wojciech Rojowski.

In the second half of the century, the figure was also decorated with a pair of silver crowns and a scepter, preserved to this day, although in a very bad condition, in the church treasury.<sup>13</sup> After World War II, the heavily damaged figure was replaced with a statue of Christ, and the Madonna was transferred to the Seminary in Kielce, where the exhibits were collected in connection with the plans to create the Diocesan Museum. At that time, the sculpture was also subjected to preservation, which included reconstructing the lower part and the left arm, and strengthening the whole with a wooden frame (Fig. 6). The Madonna of Skalbmierz was most probably made by one of the workshops in Krakow, working in the then-popular Bohemian manner.<sup>14</sup> The arrangement of the figures and the way of folding the garments were modeled on the stone figure of the Madonna from the Old Town Hall in Prague. It is clearly legible despite the simplification of the modeling and the lower artistic class of the figure from Skalbmierz, although it should be noted that the sculptor showed a lot of inventiveness in posing the baby, especially in the way in which it grabs the maforion of the Mother of God. This is also visible in the maforion worn very courteously over the shoulders and neck. This type of Madonna was very popular in Lesser Poland. One can mention the figure of Our Lady of Regulice as an example.

Another medieval work is a silver reliquary in the shape of the head of John the Baptist on a platter (Fig. 7). Mentioned in the inventory from 1544 and later, it was renovated at the expense of canon Andrzej Nechrebecki in 1748, when the platter and the relics repository were replaced. The work is made of soldered four sheets of silver, in the repoussé technique.<sup>15</sup> Not only is the outstanding quality of workmanship noticeable, but most of all the idealized and antiquated face (Fig. 8). Both the inner corners of the eyes made in teardrop forms, as well as a rectangular mouth and a slightly flattened nose resemble an ancient sculpture or Italian Renaissance plastic art modeled on it. The more so because the face and especially the eyes were designed in a very sculptural way, reminiscent of a stone or woodcarving. The comparison with the works of Donatello (i.e. Penitent Magdalene, Florence, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), Andrea del Verrocchio or Francesco da Sangallo suggests that the Skalbmierz's reliquary could have been made by a goldsmith or sculptor educated there, probably in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century or at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Especially that Italy's sculptors often had a goldsmith training. Reliquaries in the shape of the Head of John the Baptist on a bowl appeared in Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the head from the cathedral in Naumburg being one of the oldest.<sup>16</sup> In the fifteenth century they were already very popular throughout Europe. The motif of John the Baptist's head on a platter was also used in heraldry or coinage. Especially in Silesia, this motif was widespread. It was used on coins as early as the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>17</sup> and it also often appeared in architectural sculpture. Nevertheless, the iconography of the Skalbmierz reliquary was not accidental. John the Baptist was the collegiate's patron saint, which was reflected on the seals of the chapter and the city, which contained the head of John the Baptist. A similar image was also found on the

13 W. Sowała, *Artystyczne dzieje kolegiaty świętego Jana Chrzciciela w Skalbmierzu* (Kielce, 2022), 74-75.

14 Walczak, *Do źródła*, 183-186.

15 Kutrzebianka, "Skalbmierz," 85; K. Myśliński, ed., *Ornamenta Ecclesiae: Skarby diecezji Kieleckiej* (Kielce, 2000), 119-120; Sowała, *Artystyczne dzieje*, 42-44.

16 B. Baert, *Caput Johannis in Disco: Essay on a Man's Head* (Leiden, 2012), 45-49.

17 W. Garbaczewski, *Ikonaografia monet pisowskich* (Warszawa; Lublin, 2007), 260-266.

keystone in the choir. The celebrations of John's birth took particularly solemn forms in Skalbmierz, then the general chapter was held, so the liturgy was celebrated in the presence of most if not all of the canons. There was also a fair at that time, which in turn resulted in an increased number of believers.<sup>18</sup> The founding of the reliquary can also be seen as a reference to a similar foundation from the Krakow cathedral, for which Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki ordered a silver head of John the Baptist on a platter to house the relics of the Prophet he had obtained.<sup>19</sup>

The last element preserved in the collegiate church from that time is a wooden, richly decorated bench, made in the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 9). In 1952 it was renewed and partially reconstructed, but as can be deduced from the comparison with the 19<sup>th</sup> century engraving, the most important elements of figural decorations and ornaments are mostly original or faithfully repeated.<sup>20</sup> What draws attention in the bench is the harmonious combination of Gothic and Renaissance elements, the last especially visible in the use of a classic cornice to top the canopy, and the use of inlay as the basic decorative technique. The ornament consists of geometric motifs arranged in stripes or appearing individually. In addition, the backs of the stalls depict multi-story towers topped with fancy rags (Fig. 10). The vault is decorated with stripes of ornament imitating vault ribs in a cross arrangement with yoke ribs (Fig. 11). The juxtaposition of the Skalbmierz's stall with two similar ones from the Church of St. James in Levoča and the Church of St. Aegidius in Bardejov (today at the National Museum in Budapest) is intriguing.<sup>21</sup> Both the composition and the ornamentation show far-reaching similarities. In all three cases, similar or even identical geometric motifs were used in analogous arrangements. Here one can indicate the method of decorating the bases of the slats separating the backrest segments. In all cases, this element is devoid of profiling (present in the upper part) and is decorated with inscribed squares with a star (Fig 12). Architectural motifs are also composed in a similar way – they occupy narrow and high fields in the middle parts of the backs, separated with ornamental stripes. The similarities even apply to the use of an intuitive perspective in depictions of urban buildings decorating the stalls in question. Considering that in Poland there is furniture of slightly different forms, decorated mostly with bas-reliefs and not inlay, while Spiš was at that time the centre producing similar equipment on a large scale, one can, in my opinion, put forward a thesis that the Skalbmierz's bench was made in one of the Spiš centres. The more that both regions had intensive trade contacts at that time.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to point out a few things. First of all, the collegiate of St. John the Baptist in Skalbmierz is one of the oldest chapters in Lesser Poland, and the Romanesque church is one of the most architecturally interesting noble

18 Sowała, *Artystyczne dzieje*, 44.

19 M. Walczak, "Działalność fundacyjna biskupa krakowskiego kardynała Zbigniewa Oleśnickiego," *Folia Historiae Artium* XXVIII (1992): 65.

20 W. Łuszczkiewicz, "Stalle intarsjowane w Skalbmierzu," *Przyjaciel Sztuki Kościelnej* 6, no. 2/5 (1884): 87-88; Kutrzebianka, "Skalbmierz," 85; Sowała, *Artystyczne dzieje*, 42.

21 D. Buran et al. eds., *Gotika Dejiny slovenského výtvarného umenia* (Bratislava, 2003), 776-777; Z. Ludiková, ed., *Renesancia: Dejiny slovenského výtvarného umenia* (Bratislava, 2009), 492-493.

foundations and in addition, it probably became the resting place of its founder. Secondly, the fifteenth-century reconstruction should be considered as one of the best work in Lesser Poland, both in terms of the class and scale of architecture, as well as the sophisticated ideological program emphasizing both the most current and prestigious patterns and displaying the relics of the old church to show the antiquity and prestige of the institution. Thirdly, the surviving elements of medieval furnishings are a testimony to both the good artistic taste of the founders and the ties linking the collegiate church with the rest of Europe. The canons of Skalbmierz, it seems, were familiar with the current artistic trends and ordered furnishings in Krakow or imported them from other, sometimes distant regions.

## Summary in Polish

Kolegiata w Skalbmierzu została ufundowana w XII w. i należała przez całe średniowiecze i część epoki nowożytnej do najważniejszych kościołów w diecezji krakowskiej. W artykule omówiono średniowieczną architekturę oraz wyposażenie kościoła zachowane do naszych czasów. W obecnym kształcie świątynia składa się z XII-wiecznego korpusu i wież, stanowiących dzisiejsze prezbiterium oraz dobudowanego w XV w. trójnawowego korpusu nawowego. Na podstawie znalezisk archeologicznych, w artykule postawiono tezę o innym niż dotychczas sądzono, bardziej wydłużonym kształcie wschodniej partii świątyni. Zwrócono również uwagę na niewątpliwe nawiązania XV-wiecznego korpusu nawowego do wzorów krakowskich, świadczące o prestiżowym charakterze fundacji i silnych związkach ze stolicą Królestwa Polskiego. Na korzystanie ze stołecznych wzorów wskazuje także zachowana rzeźba Madonny, pochodząca z ok. 1460 r. Wyrób prawdopodobnie krakowski ale wykonany zgodnie z najmodniejszymi praskimi wzorami. Pozostałe zachowane elementy średniowiecznego wyposażenia kolegiaty również świadczą szerokich kontaktach kanoników i dbałości o kolegiatę. Wspaniały srebrny relikwiarz, w kształcie głowy Jana Chrzciciela na misie pochodzi prawdopodobnie z Italii i datowany jest na drugą połowę XV w. Jego kształt nawiązuje nie tylko do popularnego wówczas typu relikwiarza ale także podkreśla lokalną tradycję miejsca. Motyw ten pojawia się na pieczęciach miejskiej i kapituły oraz na zworniku w prezbiterium. Ostatnim omówionym obiektem są stalle z początku XVI w., których ornamentyka i technika wykonania wskazują na spiskie pochodzenie.



# *The 13<sup>th</sup> Century Dominican Church of St. James in Sandomierz – The Results of Interdisciplinary Research*



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*Above: Dominican Church of St. James in Sandomierz*

*Abstract: Medieval Sandomierz, located on important trade routes and being the second most important political and religious centre in Lesser Poland after Krakow, could boast of several significant brick buildings, the largest and most important of which were undoubtedly the royal castle, the collegiate church and the town hall. The Dominican church and monastery on the St. James Hill likely stood out from those due to its location outside the city walls and to the unique ceramic decorations of its brick walls. Fortunately, the medieval monastery complex has been preserved to this day in relatively good condition, but, deprived of written sources and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century subjected to restoration, which to some extent distorted its appearance, it remained largely enigmatic for subsequent architectural researchers. Finally, archaeological and architectural research conducted several years ago shed some light on the history of the construction of the monastery and the church bell tower.*

*Its continuation has been interdisciplinary research work carried out in the church of St. James by authors in 2021 and 2022. The combination of research methods of several disciplines (history of art, architecture, and archaeology), with the application of modern technologies for measurements, photography and for the creation of a digital model allowed for the first such detailed analysis of preserved architectural structures in the history of the monument. As a result, it was established that both the presbytery and the nave of the church of St. James were built over the course of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in many stages, interrupted by construction disasters, hostile invasions and changes in architectural concepts. A hypothesis was put forward that the construction of the church began from the nave part. It was also proposed to reconstruct the construction phases of the presbytery, which was probably initially built without a vault.*

*Keywords: Church of St. James in Sandomierz, brick architecture, mendicant architecture, interdisciplinary research*

## Introduction

In 2021 – 2022, as part of the MiniGRANT POB Heritage of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, a team consisting of Justyna Kamińska (Project Manager), Małgorzata Doroz-Turek and Andrzej Gołębniak carried out interdisciplinary research on the Dominican church of St. James in Sandomierz.<sup>1</sup> The research

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Zofia Gołubiew, "Kościół dominikański p. w. św. Jakuba w Sandomierzu w XIII stuleciu i jego dekoracja architektoniczna," in *Studia nad historią dominikanów w Polsce 1222 – 1972*, ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski, vol. II

included an archival query, in situ observations and measurements, as well as the preparation and analysis of digital scans of the monument. The goal of the project was to attempt to reconstruct and date the successive stages of the construction of the presbytery and the nave of the church in question. In this paper, we would like to present the course and results of our research, paying attention to selected threads from the history of construction and reconstruction of the medieval monument. In the last part of the paper, the monument will be placed within the context of 13th century architecture in Poland and Central Europe.

## Situation

Medieval Sandomierz, situated on the trade routes leading along the Vistula towards Gdańsk and overland to Przemyśl and Lublin, and further to the Ruthenia and Hungary, was the second most important political and religious centre of Lesser Poland after Krakow.<sup>2</sup> The settlement was developing on several neighbouring hills rising at the Vistula River.<sup>3</sup> As early as the 14th century, the city boasted several significant buildings. The largest and most important of them were undoubtedly the royal castle, the collegiate church and the town hall. [Fig. 1] The Dominican church and cloister, despite their smaller size and location outside the city walls were no less impressive. They stood out because of their unusual building material (brick) and, most of all, due to exceptionally rich ceramic decorations of their walls.

The Dominicans came to Poland as early as 1222 and established their first convent in Krakow.<sup>4</sup> In 1225, the Polish Province of the Order was created, and a year later a second Dominican monastery in Lesser Poland was founded in Sandomierz.<sup>5</sup> The construction of a new brick church and the first cloister buildings probably began right after the friars' arrival, on the eastern slope of the St. James Hill.<sup>6</sup> It is an area of a former settlement, by some researchers considered the first city of Sandomierz.<sup>7</sup> From the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the settlement was located outside the city defensive walls, from which it is separated by a wide Piszczele Ravine.

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(Warszawa, 1975), 9-196; Jerzy Zub, *Sandomierz: Kościół p.w. św. Jakuba i Klasztor Dominikański* (Tarnobrzeg, 1995); Andrzej Kadłuczka, Klaudia Stala, "Kościół św. Jakuba i najstarsze założenie klasztorne: Synteza przekształceń zespołu," in *Dominikański klasztor św. Jakuba w Sandomierzu*. Archeologia i architektura, historia i współczesność, ed. Andrzej Gołębniak and Marcin Lisak (Kraków; Warszawa, 2019), 131-172; Justyna Kamińska, "Kto fundował XIII-wieczny zespół klasztorny dominikanów w Sandomierzu?," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 82, no. 2 (2020): 175-207.

2 Teresa Wąsowicz, "Sandomierska sieć drożna w wiekach średnich," in *Studia sandomierskie. Materiały do dziejów miasta Sandomierza i regionu sandomierskiego*, ed. Teresa Wąsowicz, vol. 1 (Warszawa, 1967), passim; Tadeusz Lalik, "Sandomierz w świetle źródeł pisanych," in *Sandomierz: badania 1969 – 1973*, ed. Stanisław Tabaczyński, vol. 1 (Warszawa, 1993), 49-72; Andrzej Buko, *Początki Sandomierza* (Warszawa, 1998), 110-111, ill. 66.

3 Piotr Okniński, "Główne etapy formowania się miasta lokacyjnego w Sandomierzu w XIII-XIV wieku," *Roczniki Historyczne* LXXXII (2016): 79-106.

4 Marcin Szyma, *Kościół i klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie. Architektura zespołu klasztornego do lat dwudziestych XIV wieku* (Kraków, 2004); Tomasz Gałuszka, "Przybycie św. Jacka Odrowąża do Krakowa w 1222 roku w świetle nowo odkrytego źródła," *Roczniki Historyczne* 88 (2011): 55-76.

5 Jan Długosz, *Liber beneficiorum dioecesis Cracoviensis*, ed. Aleksander Przezdziecki, vol. 3 (Cracoviae, 1864), 450; Jerzy Kłoczowski, *Dominikanie polscy na Śląsku w XIII-XIV wieku* (Lublin, 1956), 288-292; Dariusz Aleksander Dekański, *Początki zakonu dominikanów prowincji polsko-czeskiej: Pokolenie św. Jacka w zakonie* (Gdańsk, 1999), 103-106.

6 It is suggested by the results of the archaeological research and the stratigraphy identified in the area of the southern end of the east cloister wing – see: Andrzej Gołębniak, "Badania archeologiczne przy południowo-wschodnim narożniku klasztoru dominikanów na Wzgórzu Świętojakubskim w Sandomierzu w sezonach 2016 – 2018: aspekt metodyczny i wstępne wyniki dotyczące faz najstarszych," in *Dziedzictwo architektoniczne. Badania oraz adaptacje budowli sakralnych i obronnych*, ed. Ewa Łużyńska (Wrocław, 2019), 5-19.

7 See for example: Eligia Gąssowska, "Z problematyki badawczej wczesnośredniowiecznego Sandomierza," *Rocznik Muzeum Świętokrzyskiego* 7 (1971): 55; Andrzej Buko, Stanisław Tabaczyński, *Sandomierz. Starożytność, wczesne średniowiecze* (Rzeszów, 1981), 122-125.

From the north, the Church of St. James borders Staromiejska Street and the aforementioned ravine. From this side, the building is surrounded by tall greenery and a cast-iron fence with the main gate opposite the northern portal. The second entrance to the church area leads through a side gate located in the fence on the eastern side. From the east, in front of the presbytery and the eastern wing of the monastery, there is the Vineyard of St. James and a view of the Royal Castle and the Vistula River. From the south, the remains of the monastery are adjacent to modern vineyard buildings, behind which there is the Queen Jadwiga Ravine, stretching to the south, towards the river. From the west, a bell tower cuts into the steep escarpment of St. James Hill, and a preserved fragment of the western wing of the monastery adjoins the church body. Right next to them there is another part of the church fence, behind which there is a plot of the Retired Priests' House, separated by an internal road.

The medieval complex has survived to our times in relatively good condition. After the dissolution of the convent in 1864, unfortunately, a significant part of the monastery buildings of medieval origin was demolished. It was possible to reconstruct their outlines thanks to surviving iconographic sources and to archaeological surveys conducted since the 1980s.

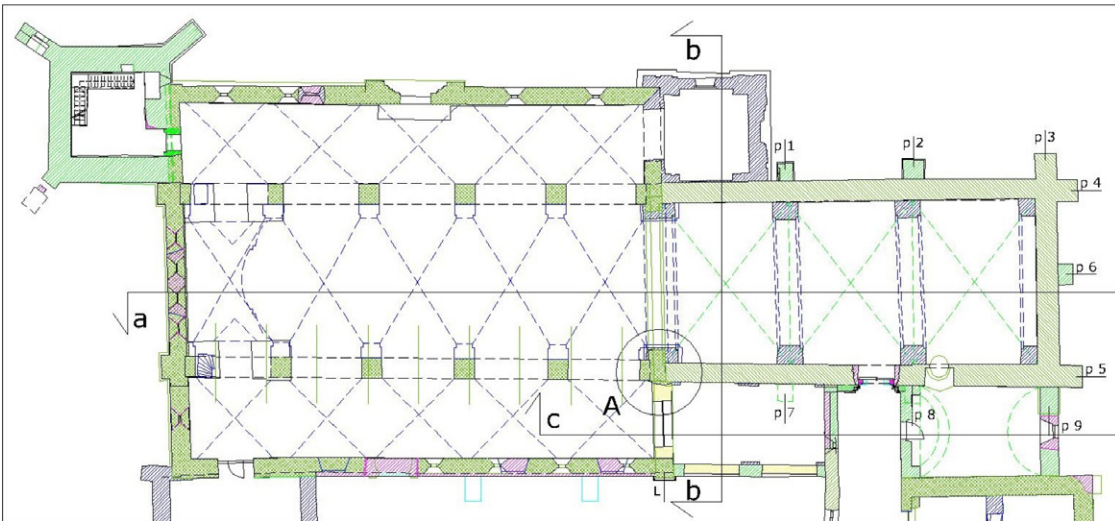
The church of St. James consists of three parts: the presbytery, the nave in form of a non-vaulted basilica, and the belfry. [Fig. 2] The length of the building is approximately 43.30 m plus 5.80 m of the belfry. The height of the presbytery (including the gable) is about 19.20 m, the nave – 21.30 m, and the bell tower – 22 m. The almost completely preserved east wing of the cloister adjoins the chancel, and a fragment of the west wing (today the chapel of St. Hyacinth) adjoins the nave. The dominant building material from which the complex was made is brick, used in the Vendian and Gothic bond (partly in the southern aisle, today's Rosary Chapel, and in the bell tower), and in some fragments without any regular bond. The bricks used in individual parts of the temple differ in size. In addition, stone was used in the construction in some places – these are large sandstone blocks appearing in the foundations and plinth parts of the nave and presbytery, in the plinths and impostes of the inter-nave pillars, in the keys of the arcades, as well as in the architectural detail of the portals (church and eastern wing).<sup>8</sup> Another characteristic feature is the use of relief-embossed ceramic decorations, which are found only in the nave and in the eastern cloister wing.

## Research questions

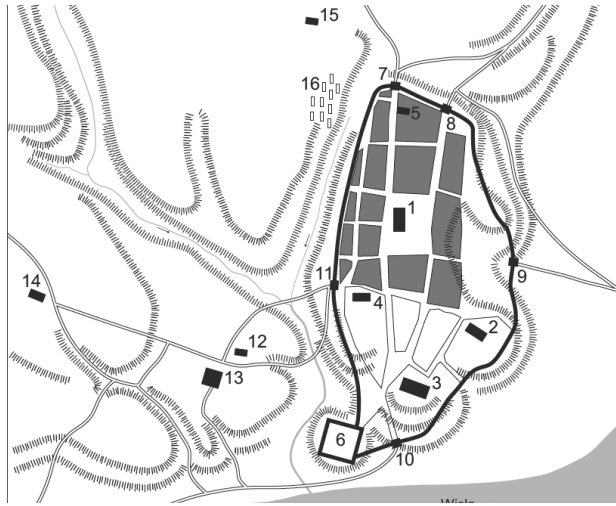
Even this general description shows that the medieval structure of the church and monastery is not homogeneous. It can be observed that the belfry was added to the north-west corner of the northern aisle of the already built nave.<sup>9</sup>

8 Małgorzata Doroz-Turek, "Późnoromańskie portale w kościele pw. św. Jakuba Apostoła i klasztorze dominikanów w Sandomierzu," in *Dziedzictwo architektoniczne. Badania oraz adaptacje budowli sakralnych i obronnych*, ed. Ewa Łużyńska (Wrocław, 2019), 20-35.

9 Małgorzata Doroz-Turek, "Badania architektoniczne dzwonnicy kościoła pw. św. Jakuba Apostoła w Sandomierzu," *Architectus* 56, no. 4 (2018): 13-30; eadem, "Dzwonnica – akcent architektoniczny kościoła św. Jakuba Apostoła ojców dominikanów w Sandomierzu," in *Dominikański klasztor św. Jakuba w Sandomierzu. Archeologia i architektura, historia i współczesność*, ed. Andrzej Gołębniak and Marcin Lisak, (Kraków; Warszawa, 2019), 173-196.



2. Results of the scanning of the church of St. James in Sandomierz: view on the northern façade and a plan (the author of all scans used in this paper is A. Gołębniak and the author of all illustrations is M. Doroz-Turek)



1. Map of Sandomierz under the reign of Casimir the Great, after: Okniński 2016, p. 106, fig. 4:

- 1 – town hall
- 3 – Collegiate church
- 4 – Church of St. Mary Magdalene and second Dominican cloister
- 6 – castle
- 13 – Church of St. James and first Dominican cloister



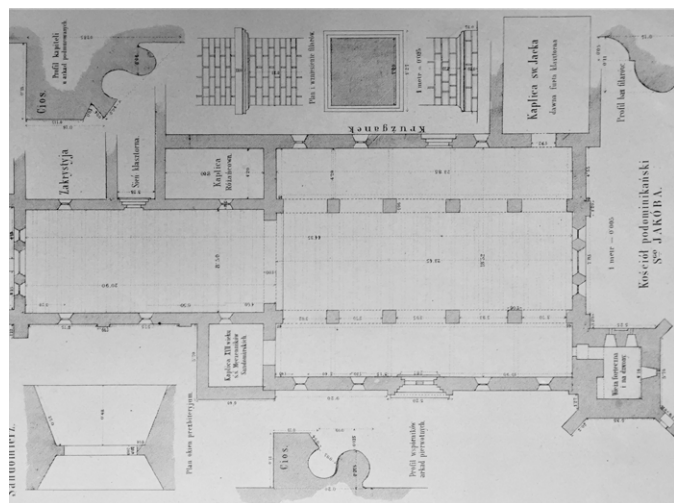
3. Northern inter-nave pillars (photo by M. Doroz-Turek, 2022)



4. Southern inter-nave pillars (photo by M. Doroz-Turek, 2022)



5. Interior of the nave, c. 1907 (after Tadeusz Jurkowlanec, Aleksandr Musin, *Organizacja i finansowanie restauracji kościoła św. Jakuba w Sandomierzu w latach 1905 – 1914*, „Zeszyty Sandomierskie” 27, no. 51 (2021), p. 38, ill. 2)



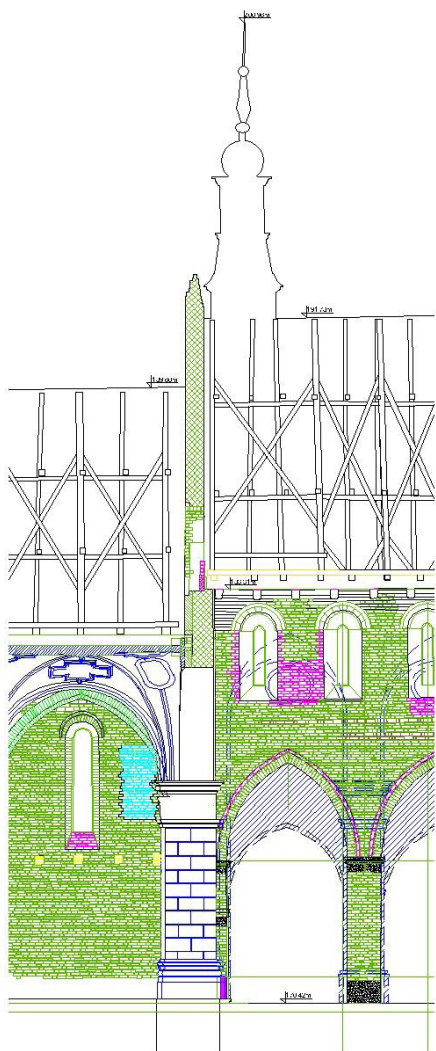
6. Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, plan of the church of St. James in Sandomierz, 1881 (after Łuszczkiewicz 1881, ill. IV.)



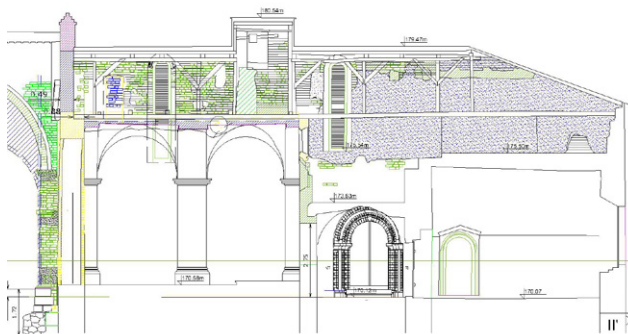
7. Eastern half-pillar of the southern arcades  
(photo by M. Doroz-Turek, 2022)



8. Interior of the presbytery, view on the eastern wall  
(photo by J. Kamińska, 2019)



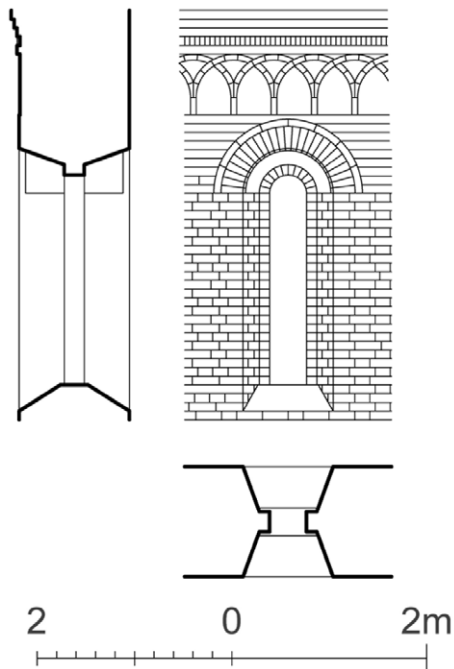
9. Stratigraphy of the longitudinal section of the church (junction of the presbytery and the nave), view to the south



10. Zone above the Rosary Chapel, stratigraphy



11. Zone above the Rosary Chapel, polychromies in the archway of the bricked-up presbytery window  
(photo by J. Kamińska, 2022)



14. Window in the Norbertine church in Krakow (after Bojęś-Białasik, Czechowicz 2015, p. 118, fig. 13)



12. Zone of the chancel arch: stratigraphy of the cross-section (view to the west)



15. Premonstratensian church in Jerichow, photo by J. Kamińska, 2021



13. Reconstruction of the body of the church and the eastern wing of the monastery in Mogiła in 1266 (after Dariusz Niemiec, Średniowieczne fundacje rodu Odrowążów w podkrakowskiej Mogile przed 1266 r., „Materiały Archeologiczne Nowej Huty”, vol. 26 (2020), p. 160, fig. 7)



16. Northern façade of the parish church in Sandau (photo by J. Kamińska, 2021)

However, the question of where the construction of the church began – from the nave or from the presbytery, remains unresolved. The fact that they were built at different times may be indicated by their different structural and decorative solutions, and thus most likely the involvement in the work of various plastering and construction workshops. Explaining this issue has been rather difficult so far, because almost no medieval or early-modern sources of the history of the building have survived, and some of the walls themselves are difficult to access. Moreover, in the early 20th century the church was restored under the direction of Jarosław Wojciechowski, which to some extent distorted its appearance.<sup>10</sup> As a result, various hypotheses appeared on the subject.<sup>11</sup> For similar reasons, little has been established so far regarding the provenance of mason's lodges.

## Research methods

In the conducted research, it was decided to adopt an interdisciplinary perspective, allowing the maximum use of both the information contained in the walls of the building itself, as well as the historical context of its creation and transformation. It was assumed that the basis for the recording of spatial analysis would be laser scanning of the body of the church and the remains of the monastery – the precision of the laser scanner measurement, supplemented with spatial short-range photogrammetry, allows for a true, millimetre-accurate inventory of historic buildings.<sup>12</sup> The geodesically positioned model of the church became an active material for the GIS database built by the researchers. [Fig. 1] In the perspective of the next stages of research, this will allow to combine the results of the architectural analysis and the searches of archaeologists. It will also become the basis for spatial reconstructions of subsequent phases of the construction of the church and, in the future, a collective model of the entire architectural complex.

A lot of new significant information was brought by the architectural research of the church walls. Inside, the observations focused primarily on the area where the presbytery and the nave meet, especially in the attic, due to the 17<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction of the church and, among others, the enclosure of the rood arch with pillars that were left after the restoration carried out by Wojciechowski. In the attic space, above the vaults, the original brick wall has been preserved. The contact of both parts was also observed on the southern façade of the church and in the interior above the Rosary chapel and the sacristy. The junction of both parts was also observed on the southern facade of the church and in the interior at the level of the chapel and the aisle and above them, where seams and penetrations of walls from different construction phases were identified.

Another research method was the analysis of the preserved late-modern and 20<sup>th</sup> century source materials, so far used to a small extent by the researchers of the monument, as well as the analysis of archival iconographic materials. It helped

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10 Justyna Kamińska, "W stronę nowoczesnej praktyki konserwatorskiej u progu odzyskania niepodległości – renowacja kościoła św. Jakuba w Sandomierzu w latach 1907-1909," in *Niepodległość i nowoczesność. Studia z historii sztuki*, ed. Lech Karwowski, Dariusz Kacprzak and Szymon Piotr Kubiak (Szczecin; Warszawa, 2019), 73-88

11 For state of research see: Kamińska, *Kto fundował*, 189-191.

12 Andrzej Gołębniak, "Rola nowych technik dokumentacyjno-pomiarowych w interdyscyplinarnych działaniach badawczo-konserwatorskich," *Wiadomości Konserwatorskie* 40 (2014): 83-93.

in particular in more accurate dating of the observed modern reconstructions and in determining the scale of the reconstructions from the beginning of the 20th century. Additionally, in our analysis, we used the results of the latest archaeological works carried out in recent years in the area of the southern end of the eastern wing of the monastery, which brought new data on the chronology of the construction of the oldest parts of the monastery complex.

## Results

The observations and precise measurements allowed identifying many irregularities in the walls of both the nave and the presbytery, unnoticed in previous studies. [Fig. 1] The main nave of the basilica slightly widens towards the presbytery, while the side aisles are narrower by about 10 and 20 cm. The distances between the pillars between the naves are not the same; they oscillate between about 3.60 m to over 3.90 m. The not entirely regular shape of the basilica, and thus the spacing of the pillars, may result from the location of the church and the shape of the plot limited from the west. The interior of the presbytery tapers to the west by 30 cm and at the outer contour of the walls by 50 cm. Despite the application of this correction, the presbytery remains slightly wider on the rood arch line than the main nave.

The inter-nave arcades differ in height, the northern one is lower than the southern one by about 2 m. [Fig. 3, fig. 4] Decorations of the pillars and arcades are also different. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the southern arcades were lowered and levelled with the northern ones, and the walls of the church were covered with plaster, from under which, however, the outlines of the higher arcades were visible. [Fig. 5] At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wojciechowski returned to the original state, reconstructed the stone impostes and refreshed the polychrome decoration of the southern arcades. The stone impostes in both rows of pillars were largely reconstructed by him, however, preserving the original profiling (different for the southern and northern arcades), recorded by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz in the 1880s.<sup>13</sup> [Fig. 6]

Originally, the arcades were planned to be built symmetrically, but the concept was changed quite quickly, and the southern arcades were raised. Researchers have already paid attention to this, suggesting that it could have resulted from the decision to better illuminate the interior.<sup>14</sup> There could also have been some construction disaster though, because in the inner north-eastern corner of the southern aisle and on the southern half-pillar at the eastern wall of the nave, we observed remains of an older wall. [Fig. 7] They could be associated with the original inter-nave wall and the original wall closing the southern aisle from the east. The slender pointed arch introduced into that wall was designed in the same way as the southern arcades (the same bond of bricks forming the archivolt, the same design of the key), except only for the painted decoration. The discussed correction must have taken place in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, because the inter-nave wall is crowned with Romanesque windows corresponding to those on the north side.

13 Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, "Kościół św. Jakuba w Sandomierzu: Zabytek budownictwa ceglanego XIII wieku," *Sprawozdania Komisji do badania Historii Sztuki w Polsce* 2, part 2 (1881): 27-52.

14 Gotubiew, Kościół dominikański, 68; Doroz-Turek, *Dzwonnica*, 192.

Apart from the irregularities observed within the eastern half-pillar, the interior features a particularly made brick bond above the southern arcades. According to Tadeusz Jurkowlaniec, it may contain messages supplementing the content encrypted in the main portal.<sup>15</sup> We suppose that it may have resulted from a significant slope of the terrain from the west to the east and the need to level it with layers of bricks, as was done on the northern and eastern façades of the belfry. For this purpose, equalizing layers in the form of masonry bricks with the base surface to the wall face were introduced. The same reason could have led to the uneven level of the windows in the nave above the aisles. The difference between the first eastern window and the western one is almost 40 cm in the southern wall and over 20 cm in the northern wall.

The presbytery is currently covered with Baroque vaults introduced here in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, probably between 1624 and 1631.<sup>16</sup> However, traces of a beam ceiling are visible above them and traces of a three-span rib vault with a pointed arch outline can be seen on the inner side of the walls. [Fig. 8, fig. 9] In the attic space, nests in the wall under the crown of the wall are visible. Under these openings, and above the early modern vaults, we found traces of plaster, probably from the period later than the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century renovation. The builders of the chancel encountered some construction problems. This is evidenced not only by the cracks in the facades, but also by the strong deviations of the southern and northern walls, clearly visible in the cross-section obtained from our scans of the church. Moreover, the buttresses of the northern wall of the presbytery were clearly added later, while the corner buttresses are tied to the walls.

In the early modern period, a new room was arranged over the sacristy, as evidenced by the plaster on the face of the wall (the southern facade of the presbytery) and openings for the roof beams. Due to the arrangement of the chapel, first of St. Valentine, then of the Rosary, two presbytery windows were bricked up. In one of them an original painted decoration with a characteristic motif of a heraldic lily has been preserved. [Fig. 10, fig. 11]

In the attic of the church, we focused on examining the perimeter walls and the gable above the rood arch, with particular attention to its outer facing and nodal points in the corners. The wall of the gable, both from the east and from the west, has a clear, original monk bond. The wall narrows upwards – at the base it is about 100 cm wide, and above the passage between the parts it is 60 cm wide. Importantly, in the corner on the south-west side of the presbytery, we noticed a difference between the walls and the addition of the southern wall of the presbytery to the rood wall. [Fig. 12] The cross-section also shows that from the side of the presbytery, up to a certain height, the gable wall was faced with brick. It seems that when building the gable, the masons knew the height of the nave's roof, since both from the side of the presbytery and from the nave, there is no visible superstructure of the gable above the rood arch, as could have happened if the gable of the presbytery was erected first.

15 Tadeusz Jurkowlaniec, "Portal główny kościoła św. Jakuba w Sandomierzu: Związek interpretacji treści dzieła," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 83, no. 2 (2021): 213-252.

16 Melchior Buliński, *Monografia miasta Sandomierza* (Warszawa, 1879), 296.

# Conclusions

The conducted research allowed the formulation of hypotheses concerning the medieval process of building of the nave and the presbytery of the Dominican Church in Sandomierz, including their relative chronology. The presbytery was most likely added to the basilica that was under construction. This is evidenced by the traces in the corner above the vaults. The presbytery was first roofed, and the interior was originally covered with a beam ceiling. At the next stage, a three-span rib vault with a pointed arch outline was introduced, supported on stone consoles. Due to the fragile structure and instability of the walls, buttresses were added to them. The brick vault probably collapsed or was replaced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century due to its poor construction. Perhaps there was also a phase before the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the presbytery had again a beam ceiling and its walls had been covered with plaster.

The observed cracks in the walls of the presbytery but also the traces of a possible construction disaster in the basilica and the irregular brick layers in the walls of the nave and belfry show that the static problems concerned all the elements of the 13<sup>th</sup> century church. These problems could have resulted from the nature of the soil, from the possible use of some of the older foundations of the pre-Dominican Church<sup>17</sup>, and from sudden breaks in construction caused, for example, by the Tatar invasions of 1241 and 1259.<sup>18</sup> All the perimeter walls bear numerous traces of later brickwork, both early modern and from 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was indicated in the documentation prepared by our team and may constitute a reference point for further research on this monument.

Our research shows that the 13<sup>th</sup> century Dominican convent in Sandomierz was erected in many stages and probably with the participation of various mason's lodges, also within the nave itself. The construction concept was changing dynamically and depended most probably on the financial situation of the friars, as well as on the accessibility of workforce. Such a course of that process is more typical for medieval mendicant convents in Poland and Europe<sup>19</sup> than the erection of the presbytery by just one workshop and of the basilica by another, in short and coherent building processes, as has been adopted in many previous studies.<sup>20</sup>

## Comparative analysis

Unfortunately, we still do not have data that would allow us to define exactly in which years the stages of the construction took place. The years 1226 (foundation of the convent), 1241 (1<sup>st</sup> Tatar invasion) and 1259 (2<sup>nd</sup> Tatar invasion) remain the reference points. A comparison of Sandomierz forms with those used in other buildings from a similar period in Lesser Poland and Silesia may be of some help.

17 Marek Florek, "Wyniki badań archeologicznych prowadzonych przy kościele św. Jakuba i dawnym klasztorze dominikańskim w Sandomierzu za lata 1990 – 1992," *Materiały i Sprawozdania Rzeszowskiego Ośrodka Archeologicznego za lata 1991 – 1992*, no. 14 (1993): 111-138.

18 Idem, "Najazdy mongolskie na Ziemię Sandomierską w średniowieczu w świetle źródeł pisanych, legend i wyników badań archeologicznych," *Z Otchłani Wieków* 62, no. 1-4 (2007): 34-46.

19 Caroline Bruzelius, *Preaching, building, and burying: friars and the Medieval city* (New Haven, 2014).

20 See for example: Łuszczkiewicz, *Kościół św. Jakuba*; Zygmunt Świechowski, "Die Bedeutung Italiens für die romanische Architektur und Bauplastik in Polen," *Acta Historiae Artium* 10 (1964): 1-56.

Such references can be found both for the nave and the presbytery. Among the buildings in Lesser Poland, it is worth mentioning, for example, the Cistercian Church in Mogiła near Krakow (before 1266<sup>21</sup>) [Fig. 13], and in Krakow itself, the Norbertine (between 1241 and 1252<sup>22</sup>) [Fig. 14], Dominican (1241 – 1251/1258<sup>23</sup>) and Franciscan (approx. 1250<sup>24</sup> or around 1269<sup>25</sup>) churches. Similar elements in Silesia can be identified, among others in the Church of St. Giles (the turn of the 20s and 30s of the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup>) and the Church of the Dominicans in Wrocław (erected before 1241<sup>27</sup>), as well as in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Środa Śląska (around 1230<sup>28</sup>). Therefore, it seems that local workshops could be responsible for at least some of the building phases identified above.

There are no regional analogies, however, for the forms of the main portal and the polychrome decorations of the presbytery windows. In the literature on the subject, the prevailing view so far was that the solutions used in Sandomierz are of northern Italian origin<sup>29</sup>, but in our opinion that hypothesis should be rejected. Further research points to the Jerichower Land region in Saxony Anhalt (historically Altmark).<sup>30</sup> The Church of the Premonstratensians in Jerichow, built around the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century or around 1178, is a non-vaulted basilica, with a transept and a massive westwork.<sup>31</sup> Other brick churches in that area, showing similarities to the Jerichow church, were erected until approximately the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, when a stylistic change and a shift towards Gothic forms can be seen.<sup>32</sup> [Fig. 15, fig. 16] The observed similarities concern the form of the building (non-vaulted basilica), the arrangement and shape of the windows, polychrome decorations, arcaded and diamond frieze, and the form of the portals.

The current state of research does not allow explaining the reasons why the builders of the Sandomierz complex should have come from that region. It is worth pointing out though that the role of Bologna as a leading centre of the Dominican Order started weakening after the first few years, and the ties between

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- 21 Marcin Szyma, "Architektura kościoła cystersów w Mogile w XIII i XIV w.: Fazy budowy i ich datowanie," *Wiadomości Konserwatorskie Województwa Krakowskiego* 7, 152-154.
- 22 Anna Bojęś-Białasiak and Jacek Czechowicz, "Late Romanesque convent church of the Norbertine sisters in Zwierzyniec in Cracow in the light of architectural research from 2010 – 2011," in *Cihla a stavební keramika ve středověku a novověku v městské architektuře střední Evropy = Bricks and building ceramics in medieval and modern urban architecture of Central Europe*. Forum Urbes Medii Aevi IX, ed. Zdeněk Měřínský (Brno, 2015), 114.
- 23 Anna Bojęś-Białasiak and Dariusz Niemiec, "Kościoł i klasztor dominikanów w Krakowie w świetle badań archeologiczno-architektonicznych w latach 2010-2012," in *Sztuka w kręgu krakowskich dominikanów*, ed. Anna Markiewicz, Marcin Szyma and Marek Walczak (Kraków, 2013), 299, 306-307.
- 24 Waldemar Niewalda and Halina Rojkowska, "Średniowieczny kościół franciszkanów w świetle ostatnich badań," in *Mendykanci w średniowiecznym Krakowie*, ed. Tomasz Gałuszka, Krzysztof Ożóg and Anna Zajchowska (Kraków, 2008), 281-283.
- 25 Marcin Szyma, "Kościół Franciszkanów w Krakowie na przełomie XIII i XIV wieku," in *Artifex doctus: Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Jerzemu Gadomskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Wojciech Bałus, Wojciech Walanus and Marek Walczak, vol. 1 (Kraków, 2007), 253.
- 26 Zygmunt Świechowski, *Katalog architektury romańskiej w Polsce* (Warszawa, 2009), 633-637.
- 27 Edmund Małachowicz, "Architektura zakonu dominikanów na Śląsku," in *Z dziejów sztuki śląskiej*, ed. Zygmunt Świechowski (Warszawa, 1978), 102-104; Jakub Adamski, *Gotycka architektura sakralna na Śląsku w latach 1200 – 1420. Główne kierunki rozwoju* (Kraków, 2017), 96-99.
- 28 Świechowski, *Katalog architektury*, 517-521.
- 29 Łuszczkiewicz, *Kościół św. Jakuba*, 46-50; Świechowski, *Die Bedeutung*, passim; Krystyna Białoskórska, "Problem relacji polsko-włoskich w XIII wieku – zagadnienie mecenatu biskupa Iwona Odrowąża i małopolskich opactw cysterskich," *Sprawozdania z Posiedzeń Komisji PAN*, no. 10 (1963): 249-257.
- 30 Justyna Kamińska, "Extra et infra muros: Formy i funkcjonowanie dwóch konwentów dominikańskich w średniowiecznym Sandomierzu," *Zeszyty Sandomierskie* 27, no. 50 (2021): 40-41.
- 31 Reinhard Schmitt, "Jerichow und Havelberg in der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts," in *Backsteinarchitektur in Mitteleuropa* (= Studien zur Backsteinarchitektur 3), ed. Ernst Badstübner and Uwe Albrecht (Berlin, 2001), 171.
- 32 Damian Kaufmann, *Die romanischen Backsteindorfkirchen in der Altmark und im Jerichower Land: Studien zur Kleinkirchenarchitektur an der Mittelelbe und im südlichen Ostseeraum*, Schleswig-Holsteinische Schriften zur Kunstgeschichte, vol. 19 (Kiel, 2010).

the Dominicans from Poland (including Sandomierz) and the German environment grew stronger, for example through participation in chapters, dependence on two generals of the order of German origin – Jordan of Saxony (1222 – 1237) and John of Wildeshausen (1241 – 1252), or the role of Polish provincials of German origin, such as Henry of Saxony or Gerard of Cologne.<sup>33</sup> Usually, it was typical for mendicants in the 13th century to employ local workshops for construction work. Importing masons from further away could have been caused by a clear wish of the founder, close relationships between Polish and German friars, or perhaps because of a difficult situation on the local market, caused for instance by the Tatar invasion of 1241.

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## Summary in Polish

Średniowieczny Sandomierz, położony na ważnych szlakach handlowych i będący drugim po Krakowie najważniejszym ośrodkiem politycznymi oraz religijnym Małopolski, mógł poszczycić się kilkoma znaczącymi budowlami murowanymi, z których największymi i najważniejszymi były bez wątpienia królewski zamek, kolegiata oraz ratusz. Na ich tle wyróżniał się zapewne już wówczas – z uwagi na swoje położenie poza murami miejskimi, na Wzgórzu Św. Jakuba, oraz na wyjątkowe, niewystępujące w tamtych okolicach dekoracje ceramiczne ceglanych murów – kościół i klasztor dominikanów. Średniowieczny zespół klasztorny zachował się szczęśliwie do naszych czasów w stosunkowo dobrym stanie, lecz, pozbawiony źródeł pisanych, a w początkach XX wieku poddany restauracji, która zafałszowała w pewnym stopniu jego wygląd, pozostawał w dużym stopniu enigmatyczny dla kolejnych zajmujących się nim badaczy architektury. Nieco światła na historię budowy klasztoru i kościelnej dzwonnicy rzuciły przeprowadzone kilka lat temu badania archeologiczne i architektoniczne.

Ich kontynuacją są interdyscyplinarne prace badawcze prowadzone w kościele św. Jakuba przez autorów od 2021 roku. Zastosowanie metod badawczych właściwych dla historii sztuki, architektury i archeologii, z wykorzystaniem nowoczesnych technologii do pomiarów, fotografii i stworzenia cyfrowego modelu pozwoliło na przeprowadzenie pierwszej w historii obiektu tak szczegółowej analizy zachowanych struktur architektonicznych. W efekcie udało się ustalić, że zarówno prezbiterium, jak i korpus nawowy kościoła św. Jakuba były budowane na przestrzeni XIII wieku w wielu etapach, obejmujących katastrofy budowlane, wrogie najazdy i zmiany koncepcji architektonicznych. Postawiono hipotezę o tym, że budowę świątyni rozpoczęto od części nawowej. Zaproponowano także rekonstrukcję faz budowy prezbiterium, które powstało najpewniej jako niesklepione.

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33 Gotubiew, *Kościół dominikański*, 57-58.

# *Protection of Historic Greenery in the Slovak Republic*



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*Above: Spišský Hrhov, manor house with grounds, park, main axis view in the park*

*Abstract: The paper summarizes the basic principles of protection of historical greenery, its legal protection, including established and used procedures in the monument protection. For their clarification, key terms based on international concepts and conventions are defined and implemented into practice according to the terminological dictionary and the Central List of Monuments.*

*Keywords: historic greenery, orchard landscaping, vegetation structure, monument protection*

## Historic greenery

Historic greenery as a professional term in Slovakia is the equivalent of the internationally recognized term *Historic Gardens*.<sup>1</sup> It represents an author's purposefully arranged surface and spatial vegetation structure, which is an integral part of the layout scheme with appropriate technical, decorative and user equipment. Its origin is related to a certain historical period; it is in a continuous development process in accordance with the laws of nature and its condition is in a certain current age stage.<sup>2</sup> The designation of *historic garden* refers to *small, tiny gardens as well as to large-scale shaped and landscaped parks*.<sup>3</sup>

The protection of historic greenery is ensured in the Slovak Republic by two laws, Act No. 543/2002 Coll. on Nature and Landscape Protection and Act No. 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of the Monument Fund (Monument Act), both as amended. According to the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection, all greenery growing outside the forest land fund is protected, but according to the Monuments Act, only greenery that has been specifically declared protected may be protected.

Neither law addresses the protection of historic greenery as a separate category. Both laws address greenery as an integral part of a wide range of natural and cultural heritage for which they regulate the conditions of protection. Specific protection of greenery can be declared under both Acts. The greenery protected

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1 The Florence Charter, Historic Gardens, Florence 1982.

2 The Florence Charter, Historic Gardens, Article 1 A *historic garden is an architectural and vegetative composition that is of social significance in terms of history or art. and Article 2 A historic garden is an architectural composition whose essential components are primarily vegetative, so living and as such ephemeral and renewable. Its appearance therefore reflects the constant balancing act between the cycles of the seasons, the growth and death of nature, and the desire of artists and craftsmen to keep it ever intact.*

3 The Florence Charter, Historic Gardens, Article 6.

under the Monuments Act is, in legal terms, historic greenery. In order to be protected under the Monuments Act, historic greenery must be declared protected by a separate administrative act and, once it has been legally declared, it must be entered in the Central List of the Monuments Fund. The Central List of the Monuments Fund has four registers<sup>4</sup> – for historic greenery there are currently only three, namely the Register of Immovable Cultural Monuments, the Register of Monuments Reserves and the Register of Monument Zones. It is clear from this classification that the protection of historic greenery can be individual or territorial.

According to the Monuments Act, the following are considered to be heritage funds:<sup>5</sup>

1. a set of movable and immovable things declared under the Monuments Act as national cultural monuments – a park, garden, alley, arboretum, orchard landscaping, tree.
2. conservation areas declared under the Monuments Act as conservation reserves or conservation zones – the greenery system of the entire territory (greenery of public spaces, streets, grounds, yards, gardens, fortifications, landscape vegetation...)

The Slovak Republic is bound by international conventions in the protection of historic greenery

1. The Venice Charter for the Protection and Restoration of Monuments and Sites<sup>6</sup>
2. The Florence Charter on Historic Gardens<sup>7</sup>

According to Article 2 of the Florence Charter, the historic greenery, in its loosest presentation, is an architectural and vegetative composition whose building material is primarily plant, i.e. living, and as such is impermanent, disappearing but renewable. Its appearance results from a constant balance between the cyclical change of the seasons, the blooming and dying of nature, an artistic will and a sophisticated intention that seeks to stabilise its condition through permanent maintenance. It is precisely the constant maintenance, i.e. repeated systematic interventions to stabilize the author's idea that represents a contradictory paradigm with the goals of nature conservation, where targeted maintenance is minimized or excluded altogether.

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4 Zákon č. 49/2002 Z. z. o ochrane pamiatkového fondu, § 22 ods. 2 [Act No 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of the Monument Fund, Art. 22(2)].

5 Zákon o ochrane pamiatkového fondu, § 2 ods.1 [Act on the Protection of the Monument Fund, § 2 (1)]: *The Monument Fund is a set of movable and immovable objects declared under this Act as national cultural monuments, monument reserves and monument zones. The monument fund shall also include items for which proceedings for the declaration as cultural monuments, monument reserves and monument zones have been initiated.*

6 The Venice Charter for the Protection and Restoration of Monuments and Monumental Sites, 1964.

7 The Florence Charter on Historic Gardens, 1982 *The International Committee on Historic Gardens ICOMOS-IFLA decided at its meeting on 21 May 1981 in Florence to draw up a charter on the protection of historic gardens, with the name of the city in which it was adopted to bear the name of this document. The Charter was drawn up by the International Committee and registered by ICOMOS on 15 December 1982 as a supplement to the Venice Charter in this specialised field.*

The architectural composition<sup>8</sup> of the historic greenery consists of four basic areas. These are the ground plan and terrain profiles (layout, modelling and relief shaping, regular terraces, connection to the surroundings...), the planting material (trees, their amount, shape, colour, distribution, interrelations, lawn areas, flower beds...), the connectivity system (pavements, roads, platforms, courtyards, parking areas, bridges...), construction and decorative elements (fences, gates, gazebos, benches, pergolas, pavilions, podiums, artistic artefacts, ornamental decoration, elements for relaxation, sports...) and also water elements (fountains, ponds, lakes, natural streams, water channels, rills, ditches, wells...). These principles are currently the basic postulate for the protection of historic greenery as a type of cultural monument or as part of the greenery system in a conservation area.

## Current conservation management in the protection of historic greenery

In order to see how the system of protection of historical greenery is set up in practice according to the Monuments Act, it is necessary to make a short excursion to the beginnings of its formation. Until 1990, the protection of monuments and nature protection was covered by one institution, the Slovak Institute of Monument Care and Nature Conservation, and it was natural that the principle of nature protection prevailed in the attitude of professional methodologists for the protection of historic greenery. In 1991, the long-running institution split into two separate organisations. Nature protection was organizationally attached to the Slovak Commission for the Environment and the Slovak Institute of Monument Care remained under the organizational administration of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.<sup>9</sup> From the 1990s onwards, new procedures were gradually established and shaped in the monument conservation management, which had the ambition to accept the international documents of the Venice Charter and also the specialised Florence Charter. These principles guided the professional view of architectural-vegetation compositions as purposefully man-made works, where vegetation (greenery) is the basic building element and, in accordance with the above information, the protection of historic greenery thus came to be predominantly judged according to the monumental values of the whole, not just the vegetation component. At that time, the protection of historic greenery was governed by Act No 27/1987 Coll. on State Heritage Conservation. The attitude that historic greenery is trees with a high value of age and atypical species of trees (old trees and exotic trees) has been abandoned in conservation management. Of course, the laws of nature apply to living plant material, which are fully respected in the protection of historic greenery, but this is not the only value of historic greenery.

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8 The Florence Charter Art. 4 *The architectural composition of a historic garden includes: its plan and topography; its vegetation, which includes the plant species, proportions, colour, distribution and relative proportions of the different species, trees; its structural and decorative elements; its flowing and stagnant waters reflecting the sky.*

9 Accessed May 5, 2023, <https://www.pamiatky.sk/o-urade/historia-uradu>.



*Spišská Kapitula, Bishop's Garden, restored Baroque layout*



*Trebišov, tree avenue in the park of the manor  
(photo by Michal Valach)*



*Krajné Čierno, Church of St Basil the Great, landscaping of the surroundings*



*Červený Kláštor, Carthusian monastery, landscaping of the archaeological site*

The provisions of the new Monuments Act<sup>10</sup> have reinforced this effort and in monument management historic greenery has achieved a more adequate status among other types of monuments, although under the provisions of the Monuments Act it has an equal status, realistically its society-wide significance has not been, and is not currently, adequately appreciated.

In accordance with the provisions of the Monuments Act, the protection of historic greenery can be individual and territorial. Historic greenery with individual protection, which is registered in the Central List of the Monument Fund, i.e. national cultural monuments, has been gradually classified in the monument management under unified categories – park, garden, alley, arboretum, tree and orchard landscaping. Other unified names according to the terminological dictionary,<sup>11</sup> are also related to these categories, e.g. preserve, grotto, parterre, pond, fountain and many others. In the past, the aim was to create a clear terminology, to clarify the differences in related terms, to unify synonymous terms and to create standard unified names for nationwide application. For the purpose of the protection of the monument fund, the definition of unified names in relation to the identification of monument values is sufficient. The individual categories with unified names have been further subdivided according to their content and in relation to the standard terminology, especially for built cultural monuments.

## Individual protection of historic greenery

A park is a large orchard landscaped area with vegetation elements, vegetation groups, dominant solitaires, parterres, lawn areas, flower beds, meadows, overlooks, paths, building and decorative elements, possibly with a water system arranged in a unified composition unit either as an independent cultural monument park or related to cultural monuments – a manor house park (Fig. 1), chateau park, spa park, monastery park or city parks. The registered gardens are smaller composition units and are also related to buildings – a villa garden, monastery garden, bishop's garden (Fig. 2), manor house garden, country house garden and others.

Alleys as a compositional element are based on the repetitive visual effect of tree trunks and crowns in a terraced planting in a certain pattern, usually related to the road. In the monument fund, alleys are registered as part of large nature-landscape parks, alleys connecting a park or a residence with a historic building in the landscape (Fig. 3), alleys near churches, or as accompanying tree-lined historic roads.

An arboretum is a specific architectural-vegetation composition in which various species of trees are concentrated as an educational diverse collection in order to present native species but mainly exotic, interesting features of the plant kingdom with an educational mission.

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10 Zákon č. 49/2002 o ochrane pamiatkového fondu, pamiatkový zákon [Act No. 49/2002 on the Protection of the Monument Fund, Monument Act].

11 *Terminologický slovník*, interný odborný materiál PÚ SR z 06/1999 [Terminological dictionary, internal professional material of the Monuments Office of the Slovak Republic from 06/1999], which was gradually supplemented.

A tree as a separate individual is also part of the monument fund. Trees, whose presence is related to a significant historical event, or which are of exceptional monumental value, e.g. for their age or as a remnant of a defunct landscape, are registered as cultural monuments. The category most commonly associated with cultural monuments is the category of orchard landscaping, which represents the landscaping of the immediate surroundings of various types of monuments. Thus, they are registered as, e.g. the orchard landscaping of the surroundings of sacral monuments (Fig. 4), sepulchral buildings, calvaries, cemeteries, school or hospital grounds, presentations of archaeological sites (Fig. 5), the landscaping of fortifications (Fig. 6), castles, the landscaping of the surroundings of technical monuments, memorials, artworks and the landscaping of the areas of historical sites.

Each classification carries specific indicators which are the essence of the heritage value<sup>12</sup> and these are the guidelines for their protection. Parks near manor houses have different attributes, villa gardens, alleys or orchard landscaping in the immediate surroundings of sacral buildings, cemeteries or near statues and monuments also have different attributes. The Monuments Office of the Slovak Republic has an update sheet of each national cultural monument of historic greenery, which summarizes all known information about its establishment, its historical development, a description of the actual state of the vegetation structure and equipment, negative interventions are summarized and mainly the monument values of individual specific monuments of historic greenery are determined, which is the basis for determining the conditions of protection and intervention in the restoration.<sup>13</sup> In reality, these conditions are determined in accordance with the provisions of the Monuments Act by the competent regional monuments office, the territorial jurisdiction being determined by the locality in which the national cultural monument is situated.

## Territorial protection of historic greenery

The subject of the territorial protection of historical greenery is the greenery system of the conservation area – the conservation reserve or conservation zone. *A conservation area is a settlement territorial unit or landscape territorial unit of concentrated heritage values for which it may be the subject of territorial protection.*<sup>14</sup>

There is a postulate in historic preservation that historic greenery is complementary to the urban plan in area and complementary to architecture in mass and volume. The greenery system of each conservation area is an integral part of its urban structure, forms a unified whole with the architecture and has

12 Zákon č. 49/2002 Z. z. o ochrane pamiatkového fondu, § 2 ods. 2 [Act No. 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of the Monument Fund, § 2 (2)]: *Monument value is the totality of significant historical, social, landscape, urban, architectural, scientific, technical, artistic or artistic-craft values for which things may be subject to individual or territorial protection.*

13 Zákon č. 49/2002 Z. z. o ochrane pamiatkového fondu, § 32 ods.1 [Act No. 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of the Monument Fund, § 32 (1)]: *Restoration of a cultural monument is a set of specialized arts and crafts activities and other professional activities that carry out maintenance, conservation, repair, adaptation or reconstruction of a cultural monument or its part in order to preserve its monumental values.*

14 Zákon č. 49/2002 Z. z. o ochrane pamiatkového fondu, § 2 ods. 4 [Act No 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of the Monument Fund, § 2(4)].

evolved gradually from the passive presence of natural greenery to regulated, purposefully established and maintained surface and spatial vegetation structures. It represents special categories of historical greenery, which can be divided in monument protection into greenery of street interiors and public spaces, separate park layouts, greenery of courtyards and gardens, orchard landscaping of premises, and greenery of fortifications in urban settlements defined by walls or vegetation of open countryside in rural settlements, always specifically according to the real conditions of the particular monument area. Street interiors in historic buildings are complemented primarily by street tree plantings that accentuate the longitudinal lines of the streetscape and also segregate pedestrian movement from other forms of traffic (Fig.7). In the past, public spaces were landscaped as rest areas for short-term recreation. Some conservation areas, at their foundation or in later years on the sites of defunct buildings, were given park-like layouts in their urban design, which have served as residential amenities (Fig.8). The greenery of courtyards and gardens depends on their use and is a functional-purpose combination of paved areas and greenery, with a variable ratio between them (Fig.9). The complexes were added to the conservation areas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and their landscaping was conceived and established along with the buildings. Although some vegetation elements were lost due to lack of maintenance, they are always renewable and presenting them as they were at the time of their foundation provides an aesthetic balance between architecture and greenery. In the walled conservation areas, the partial or total removal of the wall created opportunities for the establishment of compositionally interesting landscaping, particularly in the moats, and the 19th century brought many valuable plantings that have survived to the present day. In the urban plan, rings of greenery were thus created in both area and space, separating the medieval town from the newer settlement structures (Fig. 10). It is similar, in the conservation areas of vernacular buildings, where natural vegetation in the open countryside forms a backdrop to the original farmsteads and buildings. All of this creates a system of greenery that completes and integrates the buildings into a complex balanced urban whole. Territorial protection also includes the green space system of the protection zone, which is an area defined for the protection and guided development of the environment or surroundings of an immovable cultural monument, a conservation area or a conservation zone.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the principles of territorial protection apply to the greenery which is part of the territory of the defined protection zone, the conditions being determined in relation to the greenery in the immovable cultural monument or conservation area.

The basic protection of a cultural monument according to the provisions of § 27 of the Monuments Act also remembers the permanent maintenance of the good condition of its environment, while the immediate surroundings are defined as the area within a radius of 10 meters from the immovable cultural monument. Most of the landscaping in the immediate surroundings is in the form of surface vegetation structures (lawns, flower beds, etc.) and spatial structures (trees, shrubs, etc.).

The conditions of the definition of historical greenery are also met by many sites that are not nationally significant, but have considerable regional or local significance and these sites of historical greenery are mentioned in the Monuments

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15 Zákon č. 49/2002 Z. z. o ochrane pamiatkového fondu, § 18 ods.1 [Act No. 49/2002 Coll. on the Protection of the Monument Fund, § 18 (1)].

Act by the provision of Section 14 (4) of the Monuments Act, according to which each municipality may decide on the establishment and professional maintenance of a register of monuments of the municipality, where it is possible to include e.g. combined works of nature and man, historical events, commemorative places and others.

## Perspective on the protection of historical greenery

In recent years, the procedures of the well-established system of monument conservation management in the protection of historic greenery have begun to lag behind the rapidly advancing knowledge in the field, inadequately reflecting the societal requirements and current development trends. The elaborated architectural-historical studies of historical greenery have brought a lot of new insights and these contexts give a prerequisite for increasing the quality of preparation and implementation of specific renovations. The diversity of the components of the heritage fund in the Slovak Republic and its current more thorough and deeper understanding raises the requirement for educational mobilization of professionals in the field of historic greenery protection. There was also a pressure to reunify professional terms and methodological attitudes and to harmonize the unified names in the registration of the monument fund. Also not insignificant is the adaptation of procedures for the protection and renovation of historic greenery in relation to climate change, which will probably also require fundamental changes in the assessment of the presence of greenery in the historic environment. For all these reasons, in recent years the Monuments Office of the Slovak Republic has been developing new terminology<sup>16</sup> and preparing methodological rules for the protection and renovation of historic greenery. It is positive that the starting postulate for all the documents under preparation is to remain on the basis of the provisions of the specific international document of the Florence Charter on Historic Gardens.

## Summary in Slovak

Pod historickou zeleňou sa v Slovenskej republike v právnom význame rozumie zeleň evidovaná v Ústrednom zozname pamiatkového fondu buď ako samostatná kultúrna pamiatka alebo ako súčasť pamiatkového územia. Ďalej je to zeleň nachádzajúca sa v ochrannom pásme alebo v bezprostrednom okolí kultúrnej pamiatky.

Na všetku historickú zeleň sa vzťahuje aj ochrana podľa zákona č. 543/2002 Z. z. o ochrane prírody a krajiny, minimálne v prvom stupni ochrany. Predmetom ochrany oboch zákonov je ten istý objekt, princíp a podmienky ochrany sú však rozdielne. Je potrebné odlišovať a nestotožňovať termíny starý strom a historická zeleň. Historickou zeleňou nemusí byť len starý strom, ale môže ňou byť aj sadovnícka

<sup>16</sup> Terminológia a klasifikácia pamiatok záhradnej architektúry a umenia v databázach informačného systému, interný materiál PÚ SR [Terminology and Classification of Monuments of Garden Architecture and Art in the Information System Databases, internal material of PÚ SR] (not yet published).

úprava s mladou výsadbou v súlade so špecifickými podmienkami Florentskej charty o historických záhradách. Rovnako je historickou zeleňou plošná štruktúra trávovo-bylinného spoločenstva, kde je priestorovo pôsobiaca hmota vegetácie pre prezentáciu pamiatkových hodnôt niekedy aj nežiaduca.

Orgán ochrany pamiatkového fondu nevydáva povolenia na výrub stromov, to prináleží len orgánu ochrany prírody a krajiny, ale v svojich rozhodnutiach a záväzných stanoviskách špecifikuje požiadavky na zásahy do porastovej štruktúry historickej zelene s cieľom zachovania a obnovy kompozície z doby jej založenia, akceptovania kvalitných sekundárnych zásahov v minulosti alternatívne aj vytvorenia vhodného neutrálneho novotvaru pre možnosť adaptácie objektov historickej zelene pre súčasné využitie.

*The paper is written on the basis of the author's personal long-term experience and established procedures applied in the Regional Monuments Board Prešov (KPÚ Prešov) and The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic (PÚ SR).*



*Bardejov, monument reservation area, fortification, landscaping of the fortification*



*Prešov, monument reservation area, greenery system, street interior, tree-lined avenue along the houses*



*Sabinov, monument reservation area, greenery system, park layout in the centre*



*Prešov, monument reservation area, greenery system, townhouse, greenery in the courtyard*



*Levoča, monument reservation area, greenery system, greenery fortification, vegetation ring*



*Gemer* is a name that has gradually been returning into awareness in Slovakia. For the cultural public, it is associated with connotations such as history or monuments. In the past, *Gemer* was one of the richest provinces in the centre of Hungarian Kingdom, today it is a rural area in the Slovak border region. Its glorious past is defined by the meeting of different cultures, nations, languages and denominations. The research on the cultural heritage of this region and its restoration, which had been neglected, are progressing and yielding results. Every two years, the Gothic Route Association, dedicated to the promotion of the sacral heritage of *Gemer* and neighbouring *Malohont*, organizes a conference in the heart of *Gemer*, in the historic town of Rožňava, that makes the fruits of this professional work public. This collection of papers is the embodiment of the individual contributions of the 2022 Conference, which was held for the first time in an international format – with the participation of scholars from the four countries of the Visegrad Group. *Gemer* is thus once again a crossroads of cultures and heritages.