

The Parish and Pilgrimage Church of St Elizabeth in Košice. Town, Court, and Architecture in Late Medieval Hungary. (*Architectura Medii Aevi* 6.). By Tim Juckes. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011. XII + 292 pp., 224 figs.

In recent years, western scholars have shown a much welcome interest in the art of medieval Hungary. In the past the vast majority of studies were published by Hungarian scholars in Hungarian only, thus having little influence beyond the Hungarian-speaking world. Recognizing the problem, art museums in Hungary some time ago began publishing works in at least one other language besides Hungarian – a relevant case in point is the catalogue of the 2006 Sigismund-exhibition, published in German and French versions as well. Recently, more and more monographic works have been published in English or German – primarily by Hungarian, Slovak and Romanian scholars, but also in increasing number by people for whom this is not native territory. The most recent sign of this is the monograph of Tim Juckes on the church of St Elizabeth in Kassa (Košice, Slovakia), which is based on the author's doctoral dissertation defended at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. He has already published a number of studies about the subject, but now the results of his research are published by a major publisher in the form of a monograph of 292 pages.¹ Hopefully, this publishing activity—including the future work of Tim Juckes as well—will eventually lead to a point where this part of Europe will no longer be a *terra incognita* on the map of medieval Europe.

One of the challenges in Hungarian medieval art history is the fragmentariness of the evidence. To get a clear picture a considerable amount of reconstruction is needed. The term “reconstruction” applies in every sense of the word, as much of medieval Hungary and its built heritage were obliterated by the occupation of a large part of Hungary by the Ottoman Turks in 1541. Even greater destruction took place at the time of the sieges of re-conquest in the seventeenth century and during the rebuilding and modernization that took place thereafter. Although the Church of St Elizabeth in Kassa escaped the destruction of the Ottoman wars,

1 See: Tim Juckes, “Plan and Plan-Change at the Church of St. Elizabeth in Košice: Masons, Patrons and Liturgy,” *Hallische Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte*, 7 (2006): 73–89; idem “Prague–Vienna–Košice: The Church of St. Elizabeth in Košice and Vault Design in the Generation after Peter Parler,” in *Art and Architecture of Medieval Prague and Bohemia. Proceedings of the BAA Annual Conference, Prague 2006*, ed. Zoë Opačić (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2009), 110–25; idem “Sigismund and Košice: Architecture and Patronage in Hungary around 1400,” in *Kunst als Herrschaftsinstrument. Böhmen und das Heilige Römische Reich unter dem Luxemburgern in europäischen Kontext*, eds. Jiří Fajt and Andrea Langer (Berlin–Munich: Deutsche Kunstverlag, 2009), 409–21.

the original monument was profoundly transformed during the late nineteenth century purist renovation. Thus even here, the first task of the art historian is to virtually reconstruct the original building – this time back to its true medieval stage, which was quite different from that constructed in 1877.

There is no question that the church of St. Elizabeth, the second building of the parish church of Kassa, is one of the most important surviving medieval churches in the Kingdom of Hungary. The importance of the church has been long recognized: it was the subject of the first book ever written on Hungarian medieval art: Imre Henszlmann's 1846 study on the medieval churches of Kassa.² When Henszlmann first wrote about the building, the late Gothic style of its construction period was seen as an aberration from the classical Gothic standards or, at best, as a preparatory phase for the Renaissance. This led to two mistakes: an early dating of the building which had very little to do with historical reality, and also a drastic rebuilding at the end of the nineteenth century, according to "true principles of Gothic architecture" (1877–1896). This view of late Gothic art changed only in the early twentieth century with the recognition of the autonomous development in Northern art and with the emergence of the concept of the *Sondergotik* in German–Austrian scholarship. At this time Kassa, which in 1920 ended up outside the borders of modern Hungary, also received more and more attention, as one of the better preserved medieval urban centres, by both Hungarian and Slovak scholars.

However, the period of King Sigismund (1387–1437) did not enter the focus of research until 1937, when Henrik Horváth completed the first extensive intellectual and artistic history of the age of Sigismund.³ After World War II, large-scale excavations and reconstruction work carried out in medieval towns such as Sopron and Buda demonstrated the cross-border connections that existed between various Central European centres. Examples include the role of members of the Prague Parler workshop on the church of Our Lady and the royal castle at Buda, or the influence of Viennese ateliers in towns in north-western Hungary like Pressburg and Sopron. It was only in the 1970s and 1980s that the importance of the Sigismund period was truly recognized. At that time,

2 Imre Henszlmann, *Kassa városának ó német stílű templomai* [Old Germanic Style Churches of the Town of Kassa] (Pest: n. p., 1846). Reprint edition with accompanying study: Ernő Marosi, *Henszlmann Imre és Kassa városának ó német stílű templomai* [Imre Henszlmann and the Old Germanic Churches of Kassa] (Budapest: Argumentum, 1996).

3 Henrik Horváth, *Zsigmond király és kora* [King Sigismund and his Era] (Budapest: Budapest Székesfőváros, 1937). See also Stephen Béla Vardy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1976), esp. 62–101.

more and more attention was paid to Kassa's international connections as well. Although the church and its history has been the subject of a lot of research, the medieval building of the church has never been treated in a monograph until the present work by Juckes. Closest to a monograph is the series of studies by Ernő Marosi, which, however, never appeared in a book form.⁴ The selection of this topic by Juckes—likely suggested by the advisor of his dissertation, Paul Crossley—is thus much welcome.

In this new monograph, Tim Juckes first surveys the documentary evidence and the historiography of the church of St Elizabeth, before embarking on a new analysis of the building and its history. The structure of the book is clear and logical: it helps us to understand the medieval building, virtually restoring it from beneath the layers of nineteenth-century transformations. The first chapter provides an overview of the nineteenth-century rebuilding of the church as well as a brief survey of previous scholarly literature and opinions on the structure. After this the time machine is turned on, and we travel back to the fourteenth century, to study the history of the town and its parish church, based on a careful analysis of written sources, urban topography, patronage and building lodge. We then start to move forward, following the chronology of construction.

The monograph analyses the phases of construction in chronological order, spanning the century from the beginning of the work during the last decades of the fourteenth century until the completion of the main altar and the sacrament house in the 1470s. Most attention is given to the early phases of construction: the time when the key decisions, determining the entire building, were made. Juckes—as most authors before him—identifies three major phases of construction. In the first phase construction of the new church commenced with building the outer walls around the old church, starting with the southern aisle walls, and on the northern side. Although work on the new sanctuary had not started yet, the outline of the ground plan—including the western towers, the transept and the diagonal chapels at the end of the aisles—was established in this first phase. This construction must have started around 1390. In the second phase, which commenced at the very beginning of the fifteenth century (coinciding with the papal bulls issued in support of the construction in 1402), the old church was demolished and the interior plan of the church—including

4 The extensive series of studies by Marosi, published in the late 1960s and early 1970s are cited throughout by Juckes. Here I would only like to call attention to Marosi's important German-language study: Ernő Marosi, "Die zentrale Rolle der Bauhütte von Kaschau. Studium zur Baugeschichte der Pfarrkirche St. Elisabeth um 1400," *Acta Historiae Artium* 15 (1969): 25–75.

all the inner supports of the new structure—were established and built. This second phase was crucial for the appearance of the entire church: decisions about the vaults and the configuration of the portals date from this period. One of the most significant parts of the church, the south transept ensemble—including the porch and the portal, as well as the southern gallery and the double spiral staircase leading up to it—was built in this phase. The completion of this phase can be dated on the basis of a painted inscription inside the church, which indicates that the rebuilding must have been completed by around 1440. Juckes also identifies a third phase, which saw the completion of the large new sanctuary of the church, as well as the building of the western towers.

As far as the sanctuary is concerned, while there is a marked stylistic difference with regard to the rest of church, there is also evidence of continuity with the second phase. Ultimately, it is not certain whether the eastern end of the church was also completed by around 1440, or only some time later, by the early 1450s. As Sándor Tóth emphasised in an earlier study, there is no need to suppose a much extended construction period on this part of the church.⁵ This is a very significant shift compared to earlier theories, when the eastern end of the church was dated much later, on the basis of the assembly of the main altar (1474–1477). On the other hand, work continued well into the 1470s on the western façade and the towers (the entrance of the south tower is dated to 1462, while on the northern tower the post-1469 arms of King Matthias can be seen), which were never completed to their intended height. Finally, in this third phase a series of private chapels were built and the church was furnished.

In every chapter, Juckes also surveys the documentary evidence for each phase in question, and conveniently includes the most important documents at the end of the book. In each chapter, he analyzes the stylistic connections of each phase and attempts to identify the key figures of construction. On the basis of available sources, the author examines the key players: the *Kirchenvater* responsible for moving construction along and the master masons in charge of the actual works, including Master Nicholas, who was mentioned in a royal source in 1411 and in the early 1420s was active in Vienna, and Master Stephan, documented in Kassa and Bártfa [Bardejov, Slovakia] in the late 1460s and 1470s. The central European connections of the workshop responsible for each phase—including the south-German orientation in the first phase, connections

5 See Sándor Tóth, “Kaschau, Pfarrkirche Sankt Elisabeth,” in *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg 1387–1437*. Exh. cat. Budapest–Luxemburg, 2006, ed. Imre Takács. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2006), 652–56, cat. no. 7.98.

with the Prague Parler workshop as well as with the Vienna lodge in the second phase—are all analyzed in great detail. The author dedicates considerable attention to the Vienna lodge and the most important construction activities in Vienna contemporary with those at Kassa. However, quite inexplicably, one name is not mentioned at all: Michael Chnab, an important master of the Vienna lodge, documented at Maria am Gestade. His influence was often emphasized in previous literature – it is hard to see why he is not mentioned here at all.

Juckes makes considerable effort to emphasize the central role of the Kassa workshop and discusses its influence on the art of Central Europe: the spread of masters from the workshop to Northern Hungary and Transylvania (Segesvár [Sighișoara, Romania], Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca, Romania] and Brassó [Braşov, Romania]) as well as to Lesser Poland (Krakow-Kazimeerz) are all examined. The book thus takes the first step towards a wider study of late gothic architecture of medieval Hungary.

Throughout his analysis, the author presents a number of new theories concerning the building, including the suggestion that the Last Judgment relief of the northern portal was perhaps originally intended for the western portal. Its reuse here would explain its more conventional style (p.121). A very interesting section is dedicated to the original function of certain parts of the building (p.149–54). The southern transept was most likely where the famous relic of the Holy Blood was displayed, while a small space inside the southern tower, embellished with a wall niche, may have provided a secure storage place for the same relic. In this section the motivations of the patrons, the burghers of Kassa, also emerge, and certain choices made during the construction of the church (such as the insertion of a double spiral staircase) become more understandable. At this point the author perhaps should have stepped outside the boundaries of the topic a little bit, to include a more detailed analysis of the wall paintings, altars and liturgical furnishings of the church (liturgical manuscripts, chasubles, goldsmith works).⁶ Such elements (for example the monumental Calvary group of the south transept) are only mentioned and discussed as chronological markers (p.149). A more complex

6 The analysis of the liturgical textiles of Kassa is also important for artistic connections with Prague. It would have been useful to include a few references to the studies of Evelin Wetter, for example Evelin Wetter, “Kirchliche Schatzkünste im Ungarn Sigismunds von Luxemburg,” in *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg 1387–1437*. Exh. cat. Budapest–Luxemburg, 2006, ed. Imre Takács. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2006), 551–57 and cat. no. 7.73. See also: Mária Ginelliová, “Liturgické textilie,” in *Gotické umenie z košických zbierok*, ed. Anton C. Glatz (Košice: n.p., 1995), 181–85.

analysis might further our understanding of the function and significance of the medieval church. However, the thematic focus of the book is clear: it deals with the architecture and questions of chronology, style, function, patronage, representation and the connections of the workshop and masters. Less attention is given to iconography, which could have been explored in connection with the portal sculpture. The author probably felt that a discussion of the iconography or of the liturgical furnishing of the church would have distracted from the clear focus of his monograph.

As I mentioned, throughout the book, Juckes analyses the original form of the building as it stood before the late nineteenth-century rebuilding directed by Imre Steindl. As much as possible, the illustrations were also selected from the material available before 1877. Luckily, the author included a series of plans showing the building at three different levels, as well as a number of sections of the structure showing it before the rebuilding. Similarly, the book contains a rich and useful series of photographs showing the original configuration of the structure (some dating before 1858, and thus representing the earliest phase of Hungarian architectural photography). Juckes also uses a large number of new photographs (most of them taken by the author himself) of the original, late-medieval forms surviving in the building and of comparative material. Overall, the 224 black and white figures in the book illustrate every part of the building and all aspects of the content of the monograph.

Commendably, the author relies not only on English and German language publications on Kassa, which are few and far between anyway, but also on a large number of publications in both Hungarian and Slovak. The choice for treating the place names is also acceptable—the current form is used throughout, and historical variants—including the historic Hungarian names preferred by Hungarian authors—are given the first time a place is discussed. An index of places (including other historical forms, in particular the German names) is also provided. The ample documentation—the illustrations, including the plans, elevations and sections of the building, the compilation of original sources, the bibliography and the very useful indexes—make the book an indispensable reference on the subject.

Finally, a few minor remarks should be made. To the network of towns in north-eastern Hungary, one more settlement needs to be added: the town of Nagybánya [Baia Mare, Romania]. As recently demonstrated by Szilárd Papp, the former parish church of Nagybánya (now largely demolished) was an important building erected during the third quarter of the fourteenth century, and, based

on its carvings, had close connections with Prague.⁷ Nagybánya may have played a role in transferring architectural ideas from Kassa further to the east, to the Transylvanian towns. But given the chronological situation, Nagybánya may have even provided the inspiration and the source for certain architectural solutions not only for Kolozsvár and Brassó, but perhaps even for Kassa. The Parler connections of Nagybánya (especially with Cologne) also need to be studied, particularly in relation to the two magnificent relief fragments surviving from the church. In fact, these carvings may be more relevant for the evaluation of the Kassa portal reliefs than another fragmentary sculpture discussed by Juckes: the Körmöcbánya [Kremnica, Slovakia] relief fragments. Here I would like to point out that the high level of realism of the Körmöcbánya figures might indicate a later date, probably the period of King Matthias.⁸ The comparison made by Juckes is with the west portal carving of God the Father at Kassa – a relief which is today badly worn. However, if we compare the Körmöcbánya fragment with the head of Christ on the upper relief (Veronica) of the west portal, the difference becomes quite pronounced.

One further monument should be brought into the analysis of the Kassa portals: the damaged portal of the Garai chapel inside the church of Our Lady at Buda. Remains of this chapel came to light (and were dismantled) when Frigyes Schulek rebuilt the entire church at the end of the nineteenth century. The structure of the chapel's two-sided portal—which opened from the north side of the sanctuary into the chapel—followed a model established by late works of the Parler workshop. The decoration consisted of superimposed niches of various sizes, with sculpted figures inside them. What little remains of these figures indicates that their style was comparable to contemporary works at Buda, commissioned by King Sigismund. Dating from between 1412 and 1433, this portal represents a very important stage in the development of the complex portal structures with figural decoration, although it is probably not directly related to Kassa. In any case, its inclusion would have provided a fuller picture of the local (Hungarian) context of the Kassa portals.

7 See Szilárd Papp, „A történeti Észak-Szatmár egyházi építésze – Helyzetkép széljegyzetekkel. Nagybánya középkori plébániatemplomának építéstörténetéhez” [Architecture in historic North-Szatmár County. The construction history of the medieval church of Nagybánya], in *Középkori egyházi építészet Szatmárban* [Medieval architecture in Szatmár County], ed. Tibor Kollár (Nyíregyháza: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Önkormányzat, 2011), 181–207.

8 On the reliefs, see catalogue entry 2.1.7 by Milena Bartlova, in *Gotika – Dejiny Slovenského výtvarného umenia*, ed. Dušan Buran (Bratislava: Slovart, 2003), 660–61.

Despite such minor details—the likes of which will be debated by art historians for a long time—the book achieves its stated goals admirably. The monograph is the most important new addition to the growing literature on the art of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary published in a major western language. It treats a monument of central importance, sketches its local and regional context and thus puts late medieval Hungary in the focus. The language of the book guarantees that it will be used by Hungarian and Slovak scholars alike, as well as any western researchers interested in Late Gothic art of Central Europe.

Zsombor Jékely