

Urban Areas outside the Centre and the Artistic Expression of the Spiš Region in the Eighteenth Century

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Despite being centres of art, it is mainly outside large cities that the development of art takes place. This paper focuses on the Spiš region during the eighteenth century, the final phase of a period during which various territories of the region were under the administration of the Hungarian or Polish crown. The first part of the text explores the local sculpture and painting scene, with a particular focus on the two generations of artists of the Theresian era. Then the region serves as a model for non-central areas in terms of their typologies and place in art-historical and broader cultural-historical development. The paper analyses the current approaches to the issue of centre and periphery and discusses the impact of smaller towns and administrative settlements on the cultural and artistic profile of the area.

Keywords: Smaller town; Centre; Periphery; Regional topography; Kingdom of Hungary; Eighteenth century; Critical geography; Art and visual culture.

Introduction

The historical region of Spiš, located on both sides of the current Polish–Slovak border, has been influenced by its location and unique historical circumstances. Since the Middle Ages, it has been an important economic and cultural environment, maintaining its special position in modern times. The Theresian era marked the final phase of development for this border region of the former Kingdom of Hungary under Hungarian and Polish rule. The former Spiš County, known for centuries as Scepsum or Comitatus Scepusiensis, remains one of the most challenging regions in Europe for historical research. It is not merely a territorial-administrative unit, but a geographically complex terrain with unique territorial-administrative divisions. Additionally, various territorial parts at times fell under the administration of either the Hungarian or Polish crown due to the pawning of some Spiš towns and villages to Poland (Spiš pawning, 1412–1772; Fig. 1).¹ Moreover, the diverse social, ethnic and religious composition of the local population, as well as its complex settlement structure, must also be taken into account.

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1 Spiš county was divided into: Seat of the 10 Lance-bearers (Upper Seat and Minor County; Sedes X Lanceatorum), Capitaneatus Scepusiensis (Province of 13 Spiš towns and so-called dominium – Ľubovňa, Podolíneč, Hniezdne and some villages controlled by Polish administrators since 1412), Province of 11 Spiš royal towns, 2 free royal towns with special legal status (Levoča and Kežmarok) and the privileged area of the Spiš mining district (Terra montanorum). In: HOMZA – SROKA, *Historia Scepusii* Vol. II, 21. The book is based on extensive research of archival sources. The introduction of the work does not contain the methodology. It only states the aim of the publication, which is to provide a comprehensive view of the region studied.



Figure 1: Map of the Spiš region with the territories subject to Spiš pawning: Spiš towns and villages pawned to Poland (blue and green) by Hungarian king Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor (1412–1772), with historical and current borders of the region. Photo: Kristo 2007. Accessed 29 March 2024. https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiš%C5%A1sk%C3%BD_z%C3%A1loh#/media/S%C3%BAbor:Map_of_Spiš_pawned_towns.jpg

Spiš Art of the Theresian Era

Until the end of the twentieth century, Spiš early modern art (not only) of the Theresian period was minimally known. This is confirmed by a comprehensive overview of the Baroque in Slovakia published in 1998, which only refers to the still nearly unknown sculptor Dionysius Reißmaier and his works for Červený Kláštor (and Fintice in Šariš region), the Levoča goldsmith Johann Szilássi and the portrait painter Johann Gottlieb Krammer.² The Spiš region, which was considered as extending only up to the present Slovak border, was clearly understood and presented in the texts of the publication as a non-innovative provincial and artisanal area without a distinct centre or artists. A gradual change in the understanding of the subject has occurred since 2000.³ After some case studies, a new perception of the art of the Spiš region was first sketched in *Historii Scepusii II* (2016),⁴ then developed by the author in the exhibition and publication project *Treasures of the Baroque Between Bratislava and Kraków* (National Museum Kraków 2017).⁵

This research cannot be considered complete, but in contrast to the poor knowledge of eighteenth-century Spiš art at the end of the twentieth century, our current understanding allows us to state that the flourishing of the late Baroque and Rococo period there was directly connected with the reign of Maria Theresa. It affected all artistic genres and involved two generations of artists and several local centres. It is also characterized by a variety of forms of flourishing artistic expression, which, together with the art of the nearby Šariš region, strongly influenced by Spiš, and Košice, created the characteristic form of artistic expression in the region. In the 1760s–1780s, this formed the so-called East Slovak Rococo phenomenon.

As already mentioned, two generations of artists represented the art of Spiš in the Theresian era. The first was led by the sculptor and painter duo Reißmaier and Reich. Both masters surpassed the other contemporary productions in the area in terms of quality, and their expression became for several decades a determining factor in the form and direction of artistic expression not only in the Spiš region but also in its surroundings.⁶ Dionysius Reißmaier was originally an Austrian master who, together with an almost unknown painter and probably also a polychrome master from Levoča, Johann Reich, created a new interior furnishing for the medieval church of the Camaldolese monastery in Červený Kláštor in 1745. The centrepiece was the high altar, which for the eastern part of present-day Slovakia served as an early and influential model of the retabular form popular in Central Europe.⁷ Variants of this type then dominated

2 TORANOVÁ, Eva. Osudy zlatníctva. In: RUSINA, *Barok*, 80 plus two entries 488; BESKID, Vladimír. Sochárstvo 18. storočia na východnom Slovensku. In: RUSINA, *Barok*, 86–87 plus two entries to Červený Kláštor 445–446; MEDVECKÝ, Jozef. Johann Lucas Kracker, Jasov a východoslovenské rokoko. In: RUSINA, *Barok*, 84–85. Within the art of eastern Slovakia after 1740, the book edited by Ivan Rusina mentions only marginally and with reference to the mediocrity of expression – the Levoča carver Ján Kebling with two realizations outside the Spiš region (Fričovce, okr. Prešov, Šariš region and Vyšná Slaná, Rožňava district, Gemer region), frescoes in Podolíneč and Lubica (without clear authorship), Ján Reich (without specific works) and then only at the end of the period under review a Levoča painter of the transitional generation, Jozef Lerch (1751–after 1828).

3 CHMELINOVÁ, *Spišská boltcová rezba*, 221–232. With an emphasis on the seventeenth century, the text based on the author's art-historical and archival research provides a starting point for further research.

4 CHMELINOVÁ, *Niekoľko poznámok k barokovému umeniu*, 838–875.

5 CHMELINOVÁ, *Skarby baroku*. Subsequently, these findings were also popularized in Slovak in the publication KOLBIARZ CHMELINOVÁ, *Za Márie Terézie*.

6 CHMELINOVÁ, *Nové poznatky*, 151–170 with references to older literature and archive sources.

7 Cf. CHMELINOVÁ, *Miesto zárazok*, 45.

the high altars of the whole area until the end of the eighteenth century. In addition, the pair of artists added a quartet of side altars and pews to the church. An essential part of the interior renovation, which intensified the artistic effect of the temple space, was its rococo stucco and fresco decoration, created with the participation of Italian masters. We should consider this sacral space as the first complex interior of the Spiš region in the actual rococo style. In addition, another significant local rococo sacral interior, that of the Church of St John the Baptist in Spišské Vlchy from the 1750s, is also associated with the influential Reißmaier–Reich duo (Figs 2–3).⁸ At that time the village was still a part of the Spiš pawn and so under Polish administration. The concept of the new interior furnishing of this church intentionally created a complex connection to the medieval tradition. Its ideological basis was probably based on the relevant ecclesiastical circles. From the Gothic furnishings, a communion table in the sacristy, then the baptistery and a part of the pews have been preserved. What is essential, however, is that the seven new altars strictly respect the original medieval iconography and situation.⁹ Its creator, sculptor Dionysius Reißmaier, with a possible family connection to the Bavarian plasterer Nicolaus Reißmaier, settled in the north of present-day Slovakia¹⁰ only after his marriage in Bratislava in 1740.¹¹ Subsequently, he worked in the Spiš region from the mid-1740s until his death, which we can date only after 1761 and before October 5, 1767. Reißmaier was known as “Sculptor Varalliensis” and he had a flourishing workshop, probably in Spišské Podhradie, which was also one of the villages of the Spiš pawn. After his death, the workshop was taken over by a younger sculptor, probably his son Jozef Reißmaier. For a long time, the works of Dionysius Reißmaier were considered in art historical writings mainly as the works of the Košice sculptor Jozef Hartmann. Reißmaier’s works were connected with the parts of Spiš under Hungarian but also Polish administration in the Spiš pawn, and they also spread beyond the borders of Spiš into the adjacent Šariš region (e.g. Fintice 1755, Prešov 1761) and probably also into Lesser Poland, where the sculptures from the high altar of the Church of St Andrew, Order of the Poor Clares in Krakow are very close to realizations of Reißmaier and his workshop.¹²

8 CHMELINOVÁ, *Nové poznatky*. Spišské Vlchy formed part of the Polish pawning, and the Catholics got their church back in 1674 with a Piarist priest from Podolíneec. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the church and its furnishings were still in a dilapidated state, which is confirmed by the record of the canonical visitation of 1712. It was rebuilt only after the consolidation of the situation in 1747, and the present interior of the church probably dates back to the end of the 1750s. On the perception of the sacredness of the temple space at that time cf. MEYER ZU SCHLOCHTERN, *Domus Dei und domus ecclesiae*.

9 CHMELINOVÁ, *Nové poznatky*, 151–170. The core of the rococo ensemble was the high altar dedicated to St John the Baptist, followed by the one-axis atetonic altars of St Cross and the Virgin Mary at the triumphal arch, then St Michael, St Nicholas, St Catherine and St Mary Magdalene, as well as the eleven-seat stalls in the presbytery, the base of which is still Gothic from 1496. For the theoretical interpretation of the image of the altar centre see e.g. SCHLIER, *Bilder am Altar*. On the altar tables or baptistery SÖRRIES, *Die liturgischen Orte*.

10 BESKID, Vladimír. Sochárstvo 18. storočia na východnom Slovensku. In: RUSINA, *Barok*, 86.

11 PETROVÁ-PLESKOTOVÁ, *Bratislavskí výtvarní umelci*, 230. He married Anna Maria Mandlbürger from Cellendorf (Zellendorf) in Austria in January 1740.

12 Ibidem; CHMELINOVÁ, *Ars inter Arma*, 56–62. Tiež CHMELINOVÁ, *Hlavný oltár Najsvätejšieho mena: CHMELINOVÁ, Skarby baroku*, 126–128. The high altar of the Franciscan Monastery Church of the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary in Prešov was created thanks to Františka Szentiványi and her second husband Baron Samuel Dessewffy.



Figure 2: D. Reißmaier: Angel from the side altar of the Crucifixion from the Church of St John the Baptist, Spišské Vlachy, 1750s, after 1752. Photo: K. Kolbiarz Chmelinová.



Figure 3: D. Reißmaier and J. Reich: Furnishing of the Church of St John the Baptist, Spišské Vlachy, after 1752. Photo: The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic, P. Fratrič 2009.

The final phase of the late Rococo in the Spiš region is represented by the similar painter-sculptor duo Jagusič and Feeg. Both artists were unknown in the twentieth century. Their considerable body of partially joint work is characterized by individual and expressive forms.¹³ They collaborated, for example, on the altar of St Nicholas in Poprad-Velká¹⁴ (Fig. 4) and on the church furnishing in Vrbov. Their works were also encountered in churches in the free royal town of Kežmarok, in Jurgów, and probably in Vyšné Lapše. Johann Feeg (1749–1798) was born to Silesian parents in Kežmarok.¹⁵ Feeg was familiar with the work of the above-mentioned Dionysius Reißmaier as well as that of Johann Anton Krauss, who worked in Jasov. He worked in wood and stucco for commissioners from both the Hungarian and Polish-administered parts of the Spiš region.¹⁶ After the death of his brother, Franciscus Feeg, also a sculptor (1740–1779), he went to Košice to complete his commissions. Sculptors with a related surname are also recorded in Vienna and Cracow. However, a possible family connection between the Feegs of the Spiš region and of the Vienna–Cracow territory has not yet been established.¹⁷ Feeg's counterpart was Emericus Jagušič,¹⁸ sometimes mentioned as originally from Spišská Sobota, which was a small but important town under Polish administration at that time. Between the 1760s and 1780s, he established himself as a distinctive and highly productive figure of the local school of painting.¹⁹ During his artistic training, he probably came into contact with the studio of the painter Anton Schmidt in Banská Štiavnica, the free royal mining town in central Slovakia.²⁰ Jagušič is best known for his central painting of the side altar of the Brotherhood of St Joseph in the Church of St George in Spišská Sobota of 1780. The altar construction and sculptures were executed between 1777 and 1779 by Mathias Köbling, a carver

13 CHMELINOVÁ, *Skarby baroku*, 132–135; CHMELINOVÁ, *K interiérovému vybaveniu*, 77–92; CHMELINOVÁ, *Johann Feeg*.

14 CHMELINOVÁ, *Miesto zázrakov*, 69–70 still without a known sculptor. Compare CHMELINOVÁ, *Johann Feeg*.

15 For more information CHMELINOVÁ, *Johann Feeg*. Compare also GROCHOLA, *Ján Feeg*; CHMELINOVÁ, *Niekoľko poznámok k barokovému umeniu*, 867–870.

16 CHMELINOVÁ, *Johann Feeg*. Among his works are also the two side altars of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Levoča, the pulpit and the Altar of the Holy Family in Niedzica with angels (Niedzica, around 1770); sculptures of St Paul's Church in Łapsze Wyżne (1775–1776) and in Jurgów (1770s), and in the Mariassy manor house, summer palace and adjacent park in Markušovce (1775–1776, 1778). Parts of the sculptural decoration of the parish church in Ľubica, dated by an inscription on the work to 1773, as well as the high altar of the church in Spišská Stará Ves in "After-Reißmaier" type, probably also come from his workshop.

17 CHMELINOVÁ, *Skarby baroku*, 133. In view of the later life data of these sculptors named Feeg, the records of their namesakes recorded as sculptors from Vienna at the Vienna Academy should not be related. In this connection, the claims made in DETTLOFF, *Rzeźba krakowska*, 177–228, should be reconsidered.

18 CHMELINOVÁ, *Niekoľko poznámok k barokovému umeniu*, 870–871. CHMELINOVÁ, *Za Márie Terézie*. From the earlier CHMELINOVÁ, *Johann Feeg*. Mentions CHMELINOVÁ, *Miesto zázrakov*, 53, 69–70; CHMELINOVÁ, *Ars inter Arma*, 49–50, 53; MEDVEČKÝ, *Novovek*, 122; MEDVEČKÝ, *Anton Schmidt*, 76, note 24. Jagušič's late Baroque paintings were characterized by an intense, expressively accented colour palette, characteristic shape distortions and peculiar renderings of perspective. For the context of the contemporary theory of the sacred image see HECHT, *Katholische Bildertheologie*; KRASNY, *Figures of presence and absence*.

19 One of the joint realizations of Imrich Jagušič and Johann Feeg also dates from the last two decades of the eighteenth century. It is a side altar of St Nicholas from Poprad-Velká, which is an example of a late Rococo atectonic altar in Spiš. CHMELINOVÁ, *Miesto zázrakov*, 69–70 as attributed to Jagušič without a sculptor yet identified. To the joint realizations of the Jagušič–Feeg duo can also be added a rarely preserved double-sided processional painting of the Holy Family and St Tekla (originally St Helena) from the 1770s and 1780s. CHMELINOVÁ, *Miesto zázrakov*, 73–74 still without an author and with an earlier dating. Cf. CHMELINOVÁ, *Johann Feeg*. CHMELINOVÁ, *Skarby baroku*, 133–134.

20 I am grateful to Dr. Jozef Medvecký for his consultation.

originally from Levoča.²¹ Jagušič also worked on commissions for other places in the Spiš region under Polish administration, such as Vrbov, Stará Ľubovňa and Poprad-Velká, as well as outside the Spiš region, for example in towns such as Dubnica and Krompachy.²² Moreover, some murals from Ľubica and the free royal town of Podolíneč indicate certain analogies with his work.²³ Until recently an anonymous generation of artists led by Jagušič and Feeg, this stylistic tendency echoes in the works of a whole group of only moderately talented artists of various origins. From the 1780s onwards, it is finally apparent in the expression of younger artists marked by classicism, such as Jozef Lerch from the free royal town of Levoča.²⁴



Figure 4: E. Jagušič and J. Feeg: Altar of St Nicholas, Church of St John the Evangelist, Poprad – Velká, 1780s. Photo: K. Kolbiarz Chmelinová.

21 NOVOTNÁ – SPALEKOVÁ, *Oblastný reštaurátorský ateliér*, 71–75.

22 CHMELINOVÁ, *Skarby baroku*, 132–135; CHMELINOVÁ, *Za Márie Terézie*. Mentioned by CHALUPECKÝ, *Dejiny Vrbova*, 133. For the time being, however, it can be stated that the paintings of the side altar of St John of Nepomuk in the chapel of the manor house in Dubnica nad Váhom (around 1770) and the high altars of St Servatius in Vrbov (1777–1781) and St Nicholas in Stará Ľubovňa (1785) seem to have originated in his studio as well. CHMELINOVÁ, *Ars inter Arma*, 54.

23 MEDVECKÝ, *Novovek*, 122.

24 As a young artist he collaborated with Feeg on two side altars of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Levoča. CHMELINOVÁ, *K interiérovému vybaveniu*. For his training and other realizations see PETROVÁ-PLESKOTOVÁ, *Maliarstvo 18. storočia*, 84, 92, 103; MEDVECKÝ, Jozef. Johann Lucas Kracker, Jasov a východoslovenské rokoko. In: RUSINA, *Barok*, 85.

In addition, it is impossible to imagine the artistic expression of Spiš during the Theresian era without the goldsmith Johannes Szilassy (1707?–1782). Szilassy, with his long career, connects two generations of painters and sculptors. After training in Košice, he settled in Levoča at the end of the 1720s. He became famous for his well-developed form of work with painted enamel, including numerous figural medallions.²⁵ The artist's work can be divided into two stylistic phases, up to the 1760s and from then on, which correspond to two mentioned generations of Spiš artists (Figs 5–6). Szilassy's goldsmithery was not limited to the historical region of Spiš, nor the current territory of Slovakia. Although the treatment of this subject is still evidently insufficient, it is documented that he also realized works for Bohemia and the present-day territory of Hungary and many for Poland.²⁶

In contrast to late twentieth-century ideas, the current art-historical view of eighteenth-century Spiš depicts a region with a medieval tradition still reflected. There is no dominant centre, but rather several medium-sized and smaller towns or villages that serve as centres of artistic and arts and crafts production. These include the free royal towns of Kežmarok and Levoča, under Hungarian administration, and Spišské Podhradie and Spišská Sobota, which remained in the control of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. During the period being studied, local centres were often linked in pairs, with one centre from the Hungarian administration and one from the Polish administration. The local centres were subject to some variability during this time, but this did not significantly impact their pairings. Besides that, the Spiš region was primarily influenced by two lines of communication: one leading from Vienna to the north and northeast, the other from Silesia to the west and southeast. This occurred within the context of a network of smaller inter-regional relationships, including active artistic exchange between Spiš artists and those from Košice and Prešov. During the period in question, the Spiš region was also marked by the blending of these various influences. This web of influences was not solely a byproduct of the coexistence of the two countries' governments in the region. Nor was it only due to the connections, nor indeed mutual distinction, between the representatives of the two governments – the mayors of the Spiš pawning in Stara Ľubovňa from the Lubomirski family and of the hereditary Hungarian Spiš counties from the Csáky family, with their seat in Spiš Castle and the manor houses of Hodkovce, Biacovce and Iliašovce. The connections among the Hungarian and Polish ecclesiastical administrations (Spišská Kapitula, Podolíneč – Piarists), the free royal towns, and the local mining area are significant in this context.²⁷ Furthermore, Spiš maintained a superior position concerning its

25 CHMELINOVÁ, *Skarby baroku*; CÓNOVÁ, *Levočský zlatník*, 9–13. On goldsmithing in Slovakia in general see TORANOVÁ, *Zlatníctvo*. In 1728 he married Reuther's daughter Katarína, a year later he became a burgher, applied for incorporation into the Levoča goldsmiths' guild and apparently took over the former Reuther's workshop.

26 The first known work of this Levoča goldsmith from today's Poland is the monstrance from Nowa Biąta, created thanks to Johann Vincentius Pavlak by Johannes Szilassy from Levoča in 1776. SAMEK, *Znane i nieznané diela*, 97–99.

27 The eighteenth century marked the further development of mining, when the erar – i.e. the state as the owner of the mineral wealth – introduced the compulsory purchase (exchange) of copper ores in the erar smelters. Between 1764 and 1769, 181 mines in Spiš exchanged copper ores. In 1798, 100 mines swapped ores. In 1748 was formed an association of miners called the "Oberungarische Waldbürgerschaft" (Upper Mountain Mining Association). This is connected with the last upsurge of Spiš copper ore mining. LACKO, *Produkcia a hospodársky význam*, 109–116. For the manor houses see JANURA, *Vidiecke šľachtické sídla*.

immediate surroundings, with the expression of artistic and artisanal production in the area of the historical regions of Šariš, Liptov, and Orava.



Figure 5: J. Szilássy: Monstrance from Sabinov, 1758. Photo: K. Kolbiarz Chmelinová.



Figure 6: J. Szilássy: Monstrance from Nowa Biata / Nová Belá, 1776. Photo: K. Kolbiarz Chmelinová.

Region, Periphery and Previous Perception of Spiš Art

The majority of the current, mostly partial, art-historical and historical research, including that related to Spiš, is primarily material-oriented without a clearly articulated theoretical basis. However, the current form of the artistic map of Spiš and the image of its creative potential (not only) of the Theresian era, which is a consequence of the increasing knowledge of artistic expressions in the area and time under study, also raises questions: How should we effectively research and interpret the art of Spiš and similar non-central areas? Furthermore, how do we interpret the art of these areas, located on the borders of different historical and current state units? In these considerations, the place of origin and function of monuments in cities, towns or other settlements occupies a prominent place, which has its advantages and limitations.

In retrospect, nineteenth- to late twentieth-century interpretations of earlier, especially Gothic and Baroque, Spiš artistic productions were dominated by the tension between variously motivated romantic-nationalist/statist and more universal territorial

concepts.²⁸ Concerning the historical region under study, the former has been applied, for example, in Hungarian art-historical writing at various stages of development, from the romantic-nationalist positions of the nineteenth century to the democratized form of statism of the second half of the twentieth century. Polish contributions especially to the Spiš (Polish) Rococo of the first half of the twentieth century, can also be included here. In these approaches, regions and their art are understood as certain subsystems in the history of art as the history of the state, as the manifestation of the spirit of the nation, or as instruments of national self-consciousness. German-Austrian art history, on the other hand, has developed territorial concepts that accept the Central European affiliation of the Kingdom of Hungary and its regions, while at the same time incorporating the image of a supra-territorial Greater German culture. Czech and Slovak art history since the establishment of the common state in 1918, meanwhile, has developed its territorial concepts from the idea of a unified nation (without regard to the Spiš region), through the dualistic territorialism of Vladimír Wagner with the genius loci idea, to the iconological argumentation of the territorial concept with the synchronic factors of formal tradition and a socially stratified world view.

The image of Spiš art of the eighteenth century was thus constructed by Hungarian, Czech and Slovak (and Czechoslovak), but also Polish and German-Austrian writings with different, often openly competing intentions. In these discourses, the Spiš region was generally perceived as peripheral, albeit with lively artistic activity and a recognized specific artistic expression. This was instrumentally interpreted as an expression of the Hungarian, Polish or German nation.²⁹ On the other hand, after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, Spiš Baroque and Rococo were not very interesting to those constructing the idea of the Czechoslovak nation. Another aspect of many of the above-mentioned approaches was the fragmentation of the historical region by the new state borders. It was accompanied by a limited consideration of its historical and artistic monuments only as part of the history and art of today's Poland or Slovakia, with mutual ignorance of the results obtained until recently. On the whole, until almost the end of the twentieth century, the appreciation of and interest in Spiš's art was marginal and instrumental. This reflected the negatives associated with the perception of it as peripheral, but also the fact that the Baroque style was perceived as standing very much in the shadow of the long-preferred Gothic, the latter enjoying prominence as the recognized national style.

Rediscovering the Peripherals

The circumstances for a change in the perception and interpretation of areas outside the centre, such as Spiš, came about in the 1980s. This was connected with the worldwide interest in a deeper examination of the so-called periphery, which became a focus of attention in art history. Before the problem of the relationship between centre and periphery became a key issue at the 26th Art History Congress in Washington in 1986,³⁰ it had been preceded by initiatives such as an Italian publication

28 BAKOŠ, *Periféria*, 169–192. See also BAKOŠ, *Región, periferia*, 53–60. For an overview of Polish writings on the subject, see STANISZEWSKA, *Sztuka sakralna*, 572–579.

29 Significant book SCHÜRER – WIESE, *Deutsche Kunst*.

30 BAKOŠ, *Periféria*, 133–134. In Białostocki's congress speech "Some Values of the Artistic Peripheries" the hierarchization towards the centre still holds. The Italian example understands the centre and the periphery as a complementary pair but still with the acceptance of a centrist hierarchism.

by Castelnuovo and Ginzburg (1979, 2019).³¹ Non-central areas were assigned a rightful place in art history and a specific status and function in the art historical process. From being deemed an inferior phenomenon, they became an equal partner of the centre. In direct response to the congress, Ján Bakoš, in two still inspiring articles from 1987 and 1988, brought the discussion of the significance of the so-called peripheries to Slovak art history with many new insights and a suggestion for approaching them.³² Concerning the concept of region, he points out that it is not only a designation of a specific landscape area. The term also carries negative connotations, namely: the sense of being partial, secondary to the overarching territorial system, and located outside the centre. Consequently, he referred to non-central areas as a distinct phenomenon and, legitimately, as the most widespread situation in the history of art.³³ He emphasized the importance and rehabilitation of the periphery in art history.³⁴ In particular, he emphasized its creative potential and several specific functions, such as a slower historical movement, a functional transformation in the sense of a specific form of creativity of the periphery, and the characteristic duality of tradition and syncretism. Finally, he developed the concept of perceiving this type of area as a crossroads of cultures, which he applied to the entire territory of present-day Slovakia.³⁵ These inspiring impulses were not reflected in work on the art of the Baroque and Spiš until the end of the twentieth century,³⁶ and even in the Slovak-Polish publications on the history of Spiš, with their unprecedented interest in cross-border dialogue, they found only limited resonance.³⁷

Since the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the question of the artistic and, more broadly, visual expression of peripheries has been increasingly discussed across disciplines. Welsch's concept of transculturality,³⁸ for example, has entered the discourse of art history and peripheries. The beginning of the twenty-first century has

31 CASTELNUOVO – GINZBURG, *Centro e periferia*. Originally In: PREVITALI – ZERI, *Storia dell'arte*, 285–352. They have re-read the history of Italian art by questioning one of the dogmas on which it has been based for centuries. This dogma identified the centre (or centres) as the locus of artistic creation, giving the periphery a reductive and negative meaning of simple distance from the centre. Against this identification between periphery and artistic delay, their paper describes the relationship between "centre" and "periphery" in a less hierarchical way, avoiding a simple diffusion of artistic models from the former to the latter. In fact, often, even when it appears to accommodate the influence of the centre, the periphery – or rather peripheries – do so in creative ways, or at least at the cost of a resistance that needs to be known and understood.

32 BAKOŠ, *Región, periféria*, 130–150. BAKOŠ, *Periféria*, 133–134.

33 BAKOŠ, *Periféria*, 132.

34 *Ibidem*, 149–150.

35 *Ibidem*.

36 Cf. e. g. RUSINA, *Barok*. The publication does not reflect these theories, its own concept is not clearly articulated, but it is territorial in principle (dual as in works of Vladimír Wagner). The regional concept of division used is hierarchised in relation to the centre from the "West", i.e. Vienna, with a perceptible superiority of the imports. At the same time, it is linked to a nationally oriented statist concept of isolation within the actual borders of a relatively new state formation – the Slovak Republic.

37 GLADKIEWICZ – HOMZA, *Terra Scepusiensis*; HOMZA – SROKA, *Historia Scepusii* Vol. I and Vol II. The argument of mutual Polish-Slovak ties accentuates (in some parts) the Slavic basis as an element of the area's development.

38 WELSH, *Transculturality*, 194–213. The concept of transculturality makes it possible to cover both global and local, universalist and particularist aspects, quite naturally, from the logic of the transcultural processes themselves. Within the framework of transculturality, the globalising tendencies as well as the desire for specificity and particularity can be fulfilled. It makes it possible to avoid the limitations of globalisation or particularism. Transculturalism seeks to illuminate the various gradients of culture and the ways in which social groups construct and distribute their meanings. It focuses on the notion of culture and ethnicity as variable

brought, among other things, new perspectives on the perception of the geography of art. An important starting point was the work of Thomas da Costa-Kaufmann *Toward a Geography of Art*.³⁹ A separate chapter was devoted to (East) Central Europe as a model example of the relationship between artistic regions and artistic metropolises, addressing the question of (their) transformation through diffusion.⁴⁰ With regard to the art of the Spiš region and the present-day territory of Slovakia, this approach was taken into account in the project *Treasures of the Baroque*,⁴¹ a project also stimulated by Piotr Piotrowski's preference for a critical-geographical approach of non-hierarchical horizontal art history over postcolonial and global art history.⁴²

Shortly before da Costa-Kaufmann's work, another groundbreaking publication appeared that offered a different perspective on the issues of centre, periphery and their resolution in a post-formalist conception. In his work *Real Spaces*,⁴³ David Summers offered a spatial understanding of art in one of the most current approaches, one which has not yet been applied within the context of the Spiš region (and not only). It provides tools for pre-mapping artistic expressions of different times and places through the history of so-called social space with a link to global concepts.

Spiš: Model Urban Area outside the Centre

The historical and cultural significance and value of areas outside the traditionally understood centre of power and art are no longer in doubt. The art of Spiš and similar culturally specific areas certainly cannot be described only as a passive manifestation of the periphery. It is necessary to take into account the influence of the environment in a specific historical situation with permeable borders and diffusion of influences. Their issues should be understood in the totality of the historical region, without dividing these territories by actual borders and by accepting the fluidity of their historical boundaries. In the case of the Spiš region, the crucial influences can be traced along two main "axes" in the traditional line of cultural-political and commercial relations between North and South, but also in the line of cultural-formal influences between West and East, along the present-day northern border of Slovakia.

From the presented overview of approaches to the interpretation of Spiš's art and history, the following can be deduced:

factors, characterised by the interpenetration and exchange of different values, with different cultures changing and enriching each other.

39 The relationship between centre and periphery was recognised as colonialist and as such subsequently modified by post-colonialist ideas in favour of recognising the specific values of the "peripheries". DA COSTA KAUFMANN, *Toward a Geography*.

40 Ibidem, In Part Two: Europe Chapter 5 Artistic regions and the problem of Artistic Metropolis: Question of (East) central Europe the author uses the concept of diffusion, which he also applies in other parts of the book e.g. Part 4 Limits of Diffusion on the example of Japan. He then thematizes the question – dealing with the consequences that grow out of the association of art with a particular territory, showing how shifting political and cultural boundaries have contributed to the continuous redefinition of the region and its culture, using the example of Central Europe. He delves into the critical issues of transculturality of local (indigenous) tradition, artistic metropolises, centre and periphery, artistic diffusion, transfer, circulation. Cf. GUREVICH, *On The Border*.

41 CHMELINOVÁ, *Skarby baroku*.

42 PIOTROWSKI, *East European Art Peripheries*. See also MORGANOVÁ – ŠKABRAHA, *Umění a emancipace*, 190–220; PIOTROWSKI, *Art Criticism*. Compare JAKUBOWSKA – RADOMSKA, *Horizontal Art History*; KERN, *Introduction: Transcultural Imaginations of the Sacred*.

43 SUMMERS, *Real Spaces*. The author understands social space as an architecturally formulated real space with a possible interaction of virtual space in the form of painting or sculpture.

- The application of isolationist, statist conceptions as well as romantic-nationalist approaches proved to be highly limiting and distorting.
- Critical geographic approaches are more useful in this case than postcolonial and global interpretations of art history; however, the non-hierarchical horizontal principle of interpretation has certain limitations in the study of local centres or their networks.
- The oft-mentioned multi-ethnicity and multi-confessionalism of the Spiš environment (key concepts in defining the specifics of the area under study) require more appropriate reflection on their impact on collective identity and its artistic manifestations.
- Such consideration needs also to include a more in-depth analysis and evaluation of cultural transfers.

The question, then, is which of the current approaches to understanding the art of non-central areas such as Spiš, with several smaller but artistically influential towns or settlements, provides an effective model for its interpretation. I think it would be useful to follow Ján Bakoš's concept of the crossroads of cultures. Its application to a smaller territorial unit with the character of a historical region as part of a wider periphery will effectively eliminate the problematic question of the boundaries of such a crossroads, without the complicated search for additional criteria for it. In the case of the Spiš region, this concept is not only historically, culturally and geographically justified, but from the perspective of the wider periphery it allows for the differentiation of its analogously formulated individual parts/regions. Consequently, some of them can be understood in terms of local centres, to which Bakoš's scale of centres can be transferred into secondary, tertiary etc. centres. It is necessary to take into account the temporal variability of the positions of the scaled local centres, or rather their constellations in the form of simpler or even more complicated systems of two or more smaller towns and settlements. The new mapping of Spiš art as a model example of such terrains with multiple and temporally variable centres with more equal relationships without one clear centre may resemble a rhizomatic structure or, more precisely, a network with multiple cultural nodes and links.⁴⁴ Areas outside the main centres, the so-called periphery, are not only defined territorially. It is also necessary to perceive the variability of such spaces over time, linked to specific historical situations. Trade and its associated transfer, which is a key factor in shaping the character of the Spiš model, is an underestimated factor in the study of non-central areas. Summers' idea of trade as a strong counterweight to centrality is suggestive in this respect. Overall, the post-formalist system proposed by Summers, which we have so far overlooked, allows, on the one hand, the definition of non-central areas as larger or smaller units, understood as social spaces for a range of group interactions. The latter also have the possibility of defining themselves in relation to their own centres. In the region of Spiš, the traditional centres would be, among others, the Spiš and Lubovňa castles or the Spišská Kapitula. Their character is exemplary for the principles of Summers' definition of a centre with a strong core and elevation, and difficult and also limited access. In addition to the broader perspective of the non-central area, this system can also be effectively applied to the material analysis of individual artistic manifestations: for

⁴⁴ Compare DELEUZE – GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus*; AHNERT, *The Network Turn*; See also SCHICH, *Rezeption und Tradierung*; SCHICH, *A network framework*.

example, the form of concrete sacral interiors, understood as real social space with the interaction of virtual spaces, especially in their painted decoration, or ephemeral celebrations penetrating the exterior (documented in Spiš, for example, in 1772), as well as manor houses, calvaries, and so on. I believe that such an approach, combined with Bakoš's older model of the crossroads of cultures, would not only allow for a desirable holistic territorial understanding of the art of the region, including its multiple connections, but would also provide answers to many unanswered questions about the socially anchored artistic expression of the Spiš region and other similarly non-central areas.

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