

**CHAPEL OF ST PETER IN NOVO MESTO ZELINSKO:
PROPOSAL FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROMANESQUE
ROSE WINDOW**

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This paper briefly analyses the medieval architecture of St Peter chapel in Novo Mesto Zelinsko situated near Sveti Ivan Zelina, on the main communication road from Poetovio via Andautonia to Siscia. During the reconstruction of the chapel's roof in 2010 parts of a small rose window were found. Reconstruction of the rose window has been made on the basis of the two preserved fragments clearly showing the Romanesque form which puts the mentioned rose window in the pre-Tartar building phase of the chapel.

Croatia, Slavonia, Novo Mesto Zelinsko, St Peter's chapel, Medieval architecture, rose window, reconstruction

The chapel of St Peter in Novo Mesto Zelinsko is situated on the left bank of the Lonja river, to the east of Zagreb, near an important road linking, since Antiquity, Sisak (Siscia) with Ščitarjevo (Andautonia) and Ptuj (Poetovio).¹ Sveti Ivan Zelina – a significant medieval point of this region thanks to its central role in the Moravče County during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – is situated across the Lonja river towards west.²

St Peter chapel is a small aisleless building with a rectangular sanctuary set on a hilltop surrounded by a ditch. There are four round-headed Romanesque windows on the south nave wall – the one standing closest to the western wall is smaller because it was used to highlight the empura situated next to the western wall in the interior. Two of the round-headed Romanesque windows are situated in the sanctuary, one on the south and one on the east wall.³ In the interior the triumphal arch is pointed and the sanctuary is rib-vaulted. The ribs were supported by sculpted brackets

which, together with the capitals of the triumphal arch and the key stone, were made by the same workshop. On the west side of the nave, there are traces of an empora. Therefore, in order to fit the height of the empora the mentioned western window of the south nave wall is somewhat smaller than the others. The nave walls are covered by three layers of frescoes. The middle one depicting the legend of St Ladislav dates from the fourteenth century.⁴ The chapel was first mentioned in 1409, and later in 1501 as a parish church.⁵ In the literature the chapel of St Peter has been recognized as a late Romanesque – early Gothic building built in the thirteenth century, probably after the Tartars' invasion of 1241.⁶ It has also been connected to the patronage of the Herceg (Duke) Koloman and the Zagreb's Bishop Stjepan II from the beginning of the thirteenth century.⁷

The building has been recognized as a Templars' and Hospitalers' church due to its forms – the rectangular sanctuary, the empora in the west part of the nave and the position on a hilltop near a main communication route. Also the iconographic scheme inside the church and the vicinity of the Templars' lands contribute to such a conclusion.⁸ The Templars received their first estates in the medieval Slavonia in the twelfth century when they came into possession of the properties in Zdela and Haco. Also King Bela III donated them the land in the county of Gora⁹ and in 1209 King Andrew II granted them the great estate of St Martin on the east rim of the Medvednica mountain with the borders between the present town of Sesvete, the river Zelina and the creek Črnc, with all the privileges.¹⁰ Therefore the year 1209 is a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the chapel of St Peter. Thanks to the newly found Romanesque fragments of the rose window and the already known pieces of a Gothic bifora which was situated on the western wall above the Romanesque portal we can assume two Medieval building phases, at least on the western facade.

The first building phase on which we concentrate in this paper runs from the year 1209, the already mentioned *terminus post quem* for the chapel, probably to 1242 when the Tartars passed through pursuing King Bela IV on his way to Dalmatia. The chapel is built from brick which is typical for the medieval architecture of southern Pannonia particularly in the regions lacking good building stone.¹¹ Usually stone was used just for certain architectural pieces and decoration (portals, windows, rose windows, ribs, brackets, capitals) which is also visible in the architecture of St Peter's chapel, noting that the nave windows were shaped using bricks.

According to known facts and according to the visible forms we can assume that the original Romanesque chapel had the same dimensions as today.¹² It is an aisleless church with a rectangular sanctuary. On the western wall in the first building phase, between 1209 and 1242, it had a round-headed Romanesque portal, above which was situated a small rose window. Reconstruction of the rose window was made on the basis of two preserved fragments found during the reparation of the roof part of the chapel in 2010 (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 One of the two preserved fragments of the rose window, found at Novo Mesto Zelinsko, now in Sveti Ivan Zelina Museum.
Photo: M. Cepetić.

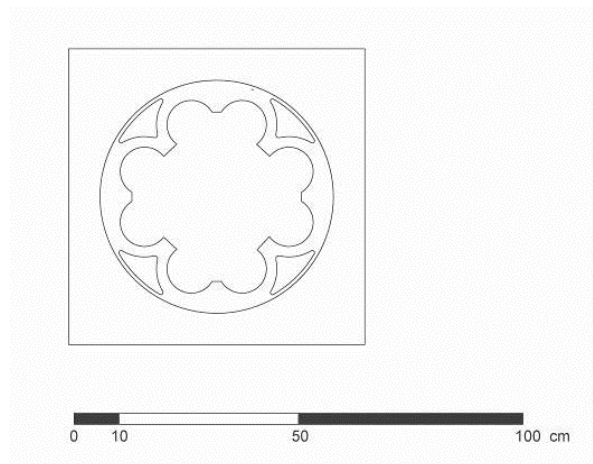


Fig. 2 Proposed reconstruction of the rose window, St Peter, Novo Mesto Zelinsko.
Drawing: A. Laća, d.i.a.

The reconstruction (Fig. 2) shows a round opening incorporated within a four petal flower a few centimeters recessed into a square frame (dimensions: 66×66 cm). Circular tracery shows a symmetrical organisation of shapes revealed by the regular repetition of the motifs. Equilateral perforation triangles with rounded corners are situated diagonally within the square frame produced by drilling and then smoothly polished. The inner corners of the triangles directed to the center of the tracery are visually extended by short spokes. The motif of the double arch is somewhat indented and situated between the triangles which forms the petals of an imaginary rose. Each of the mentioned motifs is repeated four times inside of the rose window circle. It was probably made by first drilling the tracery openings and then by smoothly carving the final tracery shapes. It is legitimate that the rose window was on the western wall, above the portal, before the Tartar invasion (1242). That is also *terminus ante quem* for the rose window which in its form and technique still shows characteristics of the refined late Romanesque style at the rims of the Lands of the Crown of St Stephen, i. e. the period of the first half of the thirteenth century, more precisely its second quarter. The small dimensions of the St Peter's rose window (66×66 cm) fit with the small proportions of the chapel's western facade – width: 8,5 m; height (to the roof moulding): around 7 m. We also find the motif of triangles with rounded corners on the rose window at the Medvedgrad chapel (Fig. 3), presumably of the same date; however, the overall shape of the rose window differs. Similar formal expression can be also found on the rose window of the chapel of St Stephen protomartyr next to the Zagreb Cathedral. The chapel was built right after the Tartar invasion thanks to Bishop Stephen II (one of the reasons was the demolished cathedral). Both of the mentioned chapels are built from brick while stone was used for architectural decoration.¹³



Fig. 3 The rose window, the Medvedgrad chapel, around 1240. Photo: M. Cepetić.

Unfortunately the remains of the Romanesque portal are inserted as *spolia* in the western wall, but on the basis of the visible roundly shaped fragments of the jambs' profilation we can link the portal with the pre-Tartar building phase. In the same assumed first phase of the building there are also the already-mentioned round-headed Romanesque windows on the southern wall and sanctuary. The brackets that support the ribs in the sanctuary and the half-capitals underneath the triumphal arch (Fig. 4) display a high quality of carving which could be associated with the royal domain artists of the second quarter of the thirteenth century. The key stone (Fig. 5) also could be related to the same workshop working at Novo Mesto Zelinsko. The similarity of the sculpted floral forms to the fragments from St Mark in Vinica near Varaždin and to the pieces from Pilisszentkereszt is quite obvious.¹⁴

That suggests that the brackets and half-capitals at St Peter's chapel in Novo Mesto Zelinsko were produced in the second quarter of the thirteenth century by some significant patron who had connections with the royal workshops. This points to Bishop Stjepan II¹⁵ and is also visible in the above mentioned comparison of the rose window in Novo Mesto Zelinsko and the rose window of Medvedgrad chapel, which was certainly connected to the royal workshops working in the medieval Slavonia.¹⁶ The slightly pointed triumphal arch and rib-vault ceiling in the sanctuary are signs of the new Gothic style that first arrived in medieval Slavonia with the Templars and the Cistercians and with the building of their monasteries in Gora (around 1200, the Templars) and Topusko (first quarter of the thirteenth century, the Cistercians). These are monuments of a delayed "Renaissance of the twelfth century" which blossomed in medieval Slavonia in the times of Bishop Stjepan II (1225-1247) and Herceg Koloman (1226-1241).¹⁷ Still, it has yet to be clarified whether we are

dealing with the first or the second building phase. If we look at the ground plan (Fig. 6) it is visible that the sanctuary is not exactly aligned with the nave. No less important is the difference in construction – the round-headed east window in the sanctuary has a stone frame while the other four in the nave are shaped with brick.



Fig. 4 Half-capital (north side) underneath the triumphal arch, St Peter, Novo Mesto Zelinsko. Photo: M. Houška.



Fig. 5 Key stone, sanctuary, St Peter, Novo Mesto Zelinsko. Photo: M. Houška.

This all could be an indication that possibly around 1230-40 there occurred a considerable renovation that included new sanctuary and parts of the western facade with the rose window and the portal. Unfortunately the western facade was rearranged several times during the succeeding centuries, especially during the eighteenth and the nineteenth century,¹⁸ so it is impossible to clearly follow earlier building phases. Also, the layers of wall-paintings inside do not allow for exploring connections between the walls of the nave and the sanctuary in particular.

On the basis of the preserved fragments of the Gothic bifora we can assume another, second building phase, at least of the western wall in the times following the Tartar invasion, probably in the last quarter of the thirteenth century when the French Gothic style was spreading through the Lands of the Crown of St Stephen.¹⁹ The bifora was then placed above the Romanesque portal (Fig. 7) probably where the Romanesque rose window used to be.²⁰

As it was shown, St Peter's chapel at Novo Mesto Zelinsko is an important medieval monument of western Slavonia. The simple architecture and the preserved Romanesque fragments (brackets, half-capitals, rose window) reflect the high quality production of the royal domain workshops in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, i. e. Bishop Stjepan II who was, along with Herceg Koloman, a key person initiating and carrying out major building projects in western Slavonia (Čazma, Medvedgrad, Vinica...)²¹

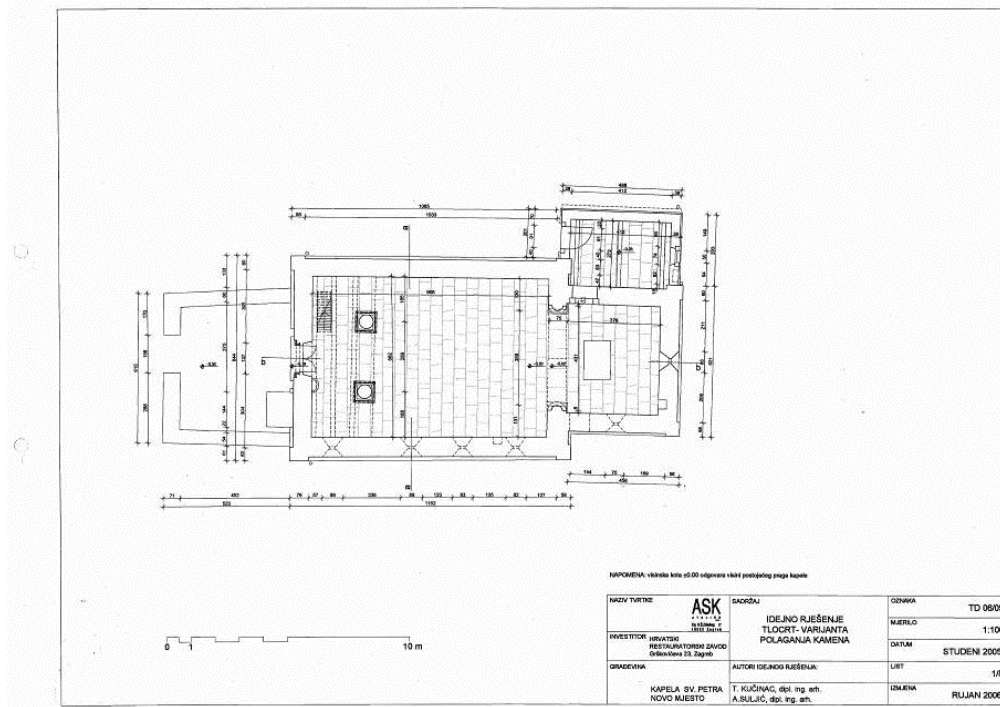


Fig. 6 St Peter's chapel, ground plan. Authors: T. Kučinac, d.i.a., A. Suljić, d.i.a., Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, Zagreb (archive of Sveti Ivan Zelina Museum).

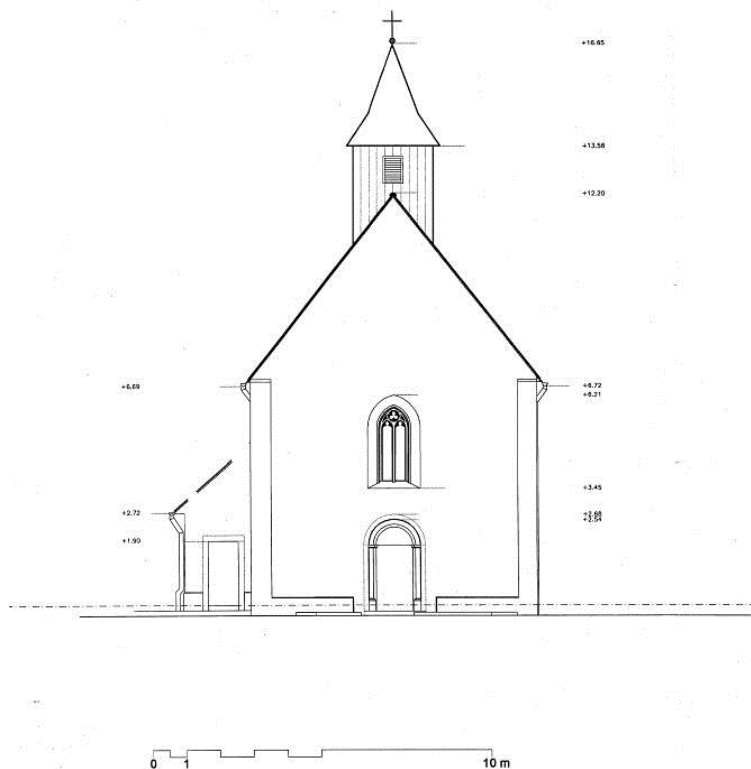


Fig. 10 Proposed reconstruction of the western facade of St Peter's chapel in Novo Mesto Zelinsko. Authors: T. Kučinac, d.i.a., A. Suljić, d.i.a., Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, Zagreb (archive of Sveti Ivan Zelina Museum).

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- ¹ L. Dobronić, 1951, p. 301.
- ² M. Houška, R. Mačković, 2007, p. 40.
- ³ According to I. Srša, 1998, p. 81 only the eastern window of the sanctuary is preserved in original shape.
- ⁴ For more information please see: I. Srša, 1998, pp. 81-83; M. Cepetić, D. Dujmović, 2012, pp. 323-330 with the bibliography mentioned there.
- ⁵ L. Dobronić, 1979, pp. 59-60; A. Azinović, 2002, p.130.
- ⁶ J. Stošić, 1994, p. 121; I. Srša, 1998, p. 77; A. Azinović, 2002, p. 130.
- ⁷ V. P. Goss, 2009, p. 35; V. Jukić, D. Dujmović, 2010, pp. 171-182.
- ⁸ G. Curzi, 2002; B. Stossek, 2001, p. 249; V. P. Goss, 2010, p. 195; M. Cepetić, D. Dujmović, 2012, p. 324.
- ⁹ L. Dobronić, 2002, pp. 28-33; B. Stossek, 2001, p. 246.
- ¹⁰ L. Dobronić, 2002, pp. 38, 99; B. Stossek, 2001, p. 248.
- ¹¹ G. Horváth Zoltán, B. Gondos, 2004.
- ¹² I. Srša, 1998, p. 77.
- ¹³ For more information about the chapel of Stephen protomartyr please see Deanović, Čorak, Gattin 1998: pp. 24-38, especially p. 28.
- ¹⁴ V. P. Goss, V. Jukić, 2008: p. 137; For Hungarian works please see *Paradisum plantavit*, catalogue of exhibition, Pannonhalma, 2001, pp. 433-434.
- ¹⁵ V. P. Goss, 2009, p. 35, V. Jukić, D. Dujmović, 2008, pp. 178-9.
- ¹⁶ M. Cepetić, V. P. Goss, 2010, pp. 179-187.
- ¹⁷ V. P. Goss, 2007, pp. 51-63; V. P. Goss, 2008, pp. 417-426; V. Jukić, D. Dujmović, 2008, p. 173.
- ¹⁸ I. Srša, 1998, p. 91.
- ¹⁹ E. Marosi, 1984, p. 180.
- ²⁰ According to the proposed ideal reconstruction of the western facade of St Peter's chapel, authors: T. Kučinac, d.i.a., A. Suljić, d.i.a., Hrvatski restauratorski zavod, Zagreb.
- ²¹ Note of thanks: Ana Laća, d.i.a, for the drawings of the proposed rose window, Museum of Sveti Ivan Zelina for the photos and documentation, V. Jukić for the photos. Special thanks to Professor V. P. Goss, to whom this edition is dedicated, for the shared knowledge, patience and support in my work as a young researcher.

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