Aristocratic Interiors of the Kaisersaal Type from the Mid-seventeenth Century in the Kingdom of Hungary:

A Case of Habsburg Imperial Iconography in the *Lange Saal* of the Pálffy Residence at Červený Kameň (Slovakia).[1]

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Archival sources as well as the well-preserved pictorial material from the middle of the seventeenth century attest to the presence of numerous portraits of rulers and of members of ruling dynasties in Hungarian aristocratic residences. The inventories show that such depictions were not only displayed in the ceremonial centre of the household, for example in a great hall or a great chamber, as well as in entrance areas or connected spaces, but also in the private rooms of princely apartments and sometimes even in the *oratorio*.[2]

Representative Spaces in Baroque Residences with a Royal Iconography: Historical Labels

Within this context, the focus of this chapter is on the highly representative rooms of the *Kaisersaal* type. There is no such concept to be found in the contemporary official terminology that denotes this kind of room-type as a specific part of palace architecture. Nonetheless, this kind of hall presented a specific royal iconographic programme, which illustrated the idea of a genealogical-dynastic succession of the Holy Roman Emperors (*Kaiser*) as the legitimate successors of the ancient Emperors (*Caesars*). Thanks to this majestic decoration – either in the form of large portrait paintings affixed to the walls, of sculpted busts, of paintings with historical themes or later also allegorical frescoes – a residence was adequately prepared for a potential imperial visit.[3]

The direct formal and ideological model for interiors of a *Kaisersaal* type space in aristocratic residences of the Habsburg territories was the so-called *Reichsaal*, a feasting hall typical for the residences of German princes.[4] The cycle of rulers of the Holy Roman Empire displayed in there went back to dynasties far before the Habsburgs, it often harked back to classical antiquity: in these cases the hall was called *Römer Saal*,[5] *Römischer Saal*,[6] and also *Imperatorensaal*.[7] It was exactly this ancient imperial iconography – generally in a grouping of twelve according to Suetonius – that quickly gained popularity in the Central-European aristocratic milieu.[8] It may be found

as well in the residences of the Hungarian aristocracy, regardless of their religious confession or political opinion. As an example, Count Franciscus (Ferenc) Nádasdy presented a dozen portraits of pagan emperors (*heidnische Kayser)* in a vestibule next to the staircase on the *piano nobile* of his palace in Pottendorf.[9] Similarly, in a connecting area in front of one of the public chambers at Trenčín castle, there were thirteen pictures (*obrazov*) of ancient kings (*starodavnych kralov*).[10]

Key Decorative Themes in Habsburg Territories

In general, two key decorative themes prevailed in the Central-European Habsburg territories: either they were related to a celebration of the Habsburg imperial family or they followed the idea of national patriotism.[11] Due to the mentioned variations in the political programmes, there was a relatively broad range of labels applied to this kind of state room: for example, in his new residence in Bratislava the Count Palatine Paulus (Pál) Pálffy had a *Fürstenzimmer* installed with twenty-five unspecified portrait busts.[12] Besides them, he also included at least one of the electors' portraits from the well-known series by Frans Luyckx.[13] According to a 1678 Slovak-language inventory of Trenčín Castle, in the Illésházy´s *Hercegház* (here: ceremonial hall) as many as nine imperial or royal effigies and four portraits of empresses were displayed.[14] Count Franciscus Nádasdy also had a feasting hall (named the *Chászár Háza*)[15] built for his Pottendorf residence; nevertheless, he presented a fifteen-piece portrait collection of Holy Roman emperors of the Habsburg dynasty in the second room leading from the official dining-room into the study room.[16] Another ten old, imperial Habsburg portraits were displayed in front of the Great Hall (*große Saal*).[17] In general, the difference between this type of Saal or Zimmer lies in their respective use: while the first label denoted an impressive ceremonial hall, the second described a more intimate but, nonetheless, luxuriously furnished space intended as accommodation for the most prominent visitors.[18] In any case, at the time the most spectacular halls of a *Kaisersaal* type with painted or sculpted portraits of emperors or kings were presented in Czech and Moravian castles, such as Bučovice, Velké Meziříčí, Moravská Třebová and Český Krumlov.[19]

It may seem logical that the creation of the first iconographic type of such a decoration was perceived at the time as a manifestation of absolute political loyalty; therefore, in most territories then belonging to the Habsburgs the imperial iconography was transformed into the celebration of local kings. In Austria, it found expression in sets depicting local princes (*Landesfürsten*).[20] Similarly, in Bohemia, it brought to light extended portrait cycles of their own territorial princes, kings and of legendary ancestors of the Czech tribe. To the most extensive collection of this kind in Bohemia belonged a sixty-piece portrait set of Czech princes, kings and alleged ancestors of the Czech people up to the time of Leopold I's rule, which Count Slawata installed in the so called *Pěkný sál* (Nice Hall) of the family residence in Jindřichův Hradec around the middle of the seventeenth century.[21] In Hungary the mixed iconography of legendary dukes and historical kings was significantly influenced by the publication of *Mausoleum Regni Apostolici Regum et Ducum* (Nuremberg 1664), the cost of which was borne by the already-mentioned Count Franciscus Nádasdy.[22] One of the first people to respond to this new type of iconographical programme during the seventeenth

century, was young Count Christoph (Kristóf) Batthyány:, his set of large-format painted portraits of the Hungarian dukes and kings constituted a monumental supplement to the portrait gallery of the family's manor house in Rohoncz (Rechnitz in the Austrian Burgenland).[23] By the end of the seventeenth century and then again at the beginning of the eighteenth century – and therefore in a period of several anti-Habsburg uprisings – in some residences of a politically rebellious Hungarian aristocracy prints, drawings and watercolour representations of Transylvanian kings and princes descending from Johann (János) Zápolya were exhibited temporarily and with considerable caution. In these cases, the collection usually consisted of small paintings designed and created with a strong provincial flavour.[24]

Nonetheless, the straightforward iconographical programme of Habsburg celebration as the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation arrived in the Central-European Habsburg territories only very gradually. One of the first well-known examples from the Austrian aristocratic milieu was the so-called Österreicher Saal at Windhaag castle, the interiors of which were recorded and published in print by Matthäus Merian the Younger in 1656.[25] During the 1650s and 60s, Prince Václav Eusebius Lobkovicz alone presented the purely imperial iconography of this period in Bohemia. Unfortunately, only a torso has survived from the former decoration of the hall in the Lobkovicz palace on the Hradčany.[26] The only famous example of Habsburg imperial iconography in the kingdom of Hungary, part of which extended into today´s Slovakia, is a collection of sixteen limestone busts of the Habsburgs as Holy Roman-German kings and emperors.[27]

The Imperial Habsburg Iconography of the *Lange Saal* at the Pálffy Residence of Červený Kameň in Slovakia

In the context of the figurative arts in the former kingdom of Hungary, this collection of limestone busts represents a unique monument of the early-baroque production of sculpture. And yet, until recently, they have been barely mentioned in Slovakian art-historical literature, neither has there been a single serious attempt of iconographical analysis and interpretation of particular busts in Hungary.[28] The busts are highly idealized and, in many cases, no direct iconographical source can be found. The arrangement of the busts in their correct order is another significant problem, since only a few of them are numbered. The interpretation of the busts as 'a cycle [....] of Roman-German emperors from Charlemagne to their own days',[29] is one of the main reasons why so far there has been no successful identification of particular busts. Indeed, these sixteen busts exclusively represent members of the Habsburg dynasty, who – with the exception of two – held either the title of the king of Rome, or of a Holy Roman emperor. The context of the acquisition of the collection is also very intriguing and constitutes an authentic testimony of the complicated socio-political situation in relation to the succession to the imperial office, at the time of the busts' creation.

Count Nicolaus (Miklós) IV Pálffy (1619?–1679) commissioned the busts during the second half of the year 1654 for the niches of the Hall of the Staircase (*Langer Saal*) on the *piano nobile* of his residence at Červený Kameň (*Pibersburg, Bibersburg, Vöröskő*) in today's Slovakia. At

present, the busts are still *in situ*. We know from the Pálffy accounting records that their executing artist was the mason David Weiss from Wiener Neustadt, who in the first days of December 1654 delivered a balustrade with the statue of Pallas Athena (worth 288 florins) as well as the already-mentioned sixteen busts, for which he received a payment of 320 florins.[30] Therefore, each bust was valued at the sum of c.21 florins.

Count Nicolaus IV Pálffy was an ambitious, educated and liberal-minded Hungarian nobleman, who married the lady-in-waiting Countess Maria Eleonora Harrach (1623–1693) in 1649. Through this marriage alliance, he gained a close family relationship with the three most influential aristocratic families at the Viennese court of the second quarter of the seventeenth century: the Harrachs, Waldsteins and Eggenbergs. Moreover, the dowager empress Eleonora Gonzaga herself was the godmother and sponsor of Pálffy´s wife.[31] Approximately five years after the wedding, Pálffy started with the reconstruction of his inherited family residence: firstly, in 1654, he ordered the rebuilding of the magnificent staircase, including the mentioned *Lange Saal* on the *piano nobile* (fig. 1). However, such modification of the ceremonial space was meant to preserve the historical state from the time of his famous grandfather, Baron Nicolaus II Pálffy (1552–1600), the first Pálffy owner of the castle. In the years 1655–1659, Nicolaus IV Pálffy focused on the embellishment of the *Sala Terrena*,[32] which is considered one of the most beautiful early-Baroque spaces of this type in Central Europe as well as of the castle chapel and almost all the other public and private rooms on the *piano nobile*. The vestibule leading to the Long Hall above the ceremonial staircase should have fulfilled the criteria of an imperial hall and of a gallery. While it is possible to call it a 'gallery' in the sense of room function, it remains to be asked, if it did not also contain features of a family portrait gallery besides the expected royal portraits.[33]

In the eyes of the visitors, Pálffy´s loyalty towards the imperial house was expressly illustrated by the iconographical programme of the sculptural decoration, which underlined the multi-generational success of the Habsburg dynasty as well as the meaning of a tradition of imperial authority, which stretched back to antiquity.[34] For this purpose, the artist combined different iconographical sources. For the figures of Rudolf I to Maximilian II, David Weiss followed the engravings from the representative five-piece genealogy *Imagines gentis Austriacae,* created by Francesco Terzio between the years 1558 and 1573.[35] However, Weiss very likely changed the iconography at the request of his patron and conceived the busts of this *Kaisergalerie* in an *all'antica* way. The visual inspiration for this purpose was based on the popular iconography of the twelve ancient Caesars according to Suetonius, which was developed by artists such as Jan van der Straet, called Stradano, or by Antonio Tempesta at the turn from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century.[36] The Pálffy collection of the Habsburg Holy Roman kings and emperors refers, therefore, formally to the ancient Roman Caesars mainly because of the choice of sculpted portrait busts as well as of the draped *paludamenta* worn over one shoulder. Perhaps the most Romanizing element is the ancient way of coronation of all Habsburg portrait busts 'according to Stradano' with a simple laurel wreath in tandem with their consistent (and therefore historically not acceptable) wearing of the insignia of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The Habsburg rulers from Rudolf

II onwards, who were obviously not included in Terzio´s *Imagines,* can be identified quite easily on the basis of their numerous painted and printed portraits, especially from the well-published Habsburg portrait collections at Innsbruck and Vienna.

Fig. 1 Ceremonial staircase and the *Lange Saal* in the Červený Kameň Castle (Slovakia);
View of the limestone busts displayed in niches.

Fig. 2 David Weiss from Wiener Neustadt, *Albrecht I, Habsburg King of the Romans*, 1654, limestone,
SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň, photo after restoration.

Fig. 3 Francesco Terzio and Gaspare Oselli, *Albertus I*, in *Avstriacae Gentis imaginvm pars [...]*.
1 (1569), f. 15, copperplate, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf.

The set of the Červený Kameň busts begins with the first king of the Romans from the Habsburg dynasty.[37] Rudolf I was crowned in 1273 (d. 1291) and was followed by Albrecht I (1298–1308; figs. 2 and 3) and by Friedrich called the Handsome (1314–1330), who used the title of king of the Romans together with Louis IV of Bavaria. Albrecht II (1438–1439), approximately one hundred years later, became the next Habsburg king of the Romans for the last two years of his life. In 1440, he was succeeded by Friedrich IV, who eventually was elected emperor (1452–1493) under the name of Friedrich III. Albrecht's and Friedrich's busts are the first in the cycle to present the 'portrait' of a Habsburg sovereign. The golden era of Habsburg rule as part of the history of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation is represented in the Červený Kameň Castle´s *Lange Saal* by the busts of the emperors in office during the sixteenth and in the first half of the seventeenth centuries. The cycle of busts starts with Maximilian I (king of the Romans 1486, emperor 1508–1519; figs. 4 and 5), who was succeeded by Charles V (king of the Romans 1519, emperor 1520–1556, d. 1558; figs. 6 and 7), Ferdinand I (king of the Romans 1531, emperor 1558–1564), Maximilian II (king of the Romans 1562, emperor 1564–1576), Rudolf II (king of the Romans 1575, emperor 1576–1612), Matthias (king of the Romans and emperor 1612–1619), Ferdinand II (king of the Romans and emperor 1619–1637; figs. 9 and 10) and finally by Ferdinand III (king of the Romans 1636, emperor 1637–1657; fig. 11). The remaining three busts attest to the difficult socio-political situation during the second half of the year, while Weiss carried out Pálffy´s order. At the beginning of July 1654 the heir to the throne, Ferdinand IV (fig. 12), for whom his ageing father had been able to secure the Czech (1646), the Hungarian (1647) and the Roman-German crowns (1653), suddenly died. The preparations for the individual coronations of a new heir, in theory the emperor´s younger son who was at the time the barely fourteen-year-old Leopold, was quite easily achieved in the Hungarian (1655) and Czech kingdoms (1656). Nonetheless, Leopold won these crowns long after the busts in the Lange Saal at Červený Kameň had been commissioned. Emperor Ferdinand III died, when Leopold was not yet of a legal age to succeed to the title of Holy Roman emperor, so his claims as a possible Habsburg successor were hampered by complicated international diplomatic negotiations with the imperial electors, as well as with France and Sweden who were in favour of Elector Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria. Until Leopold's eighteenth birthday in June 1658, Leopold William served as regent in lieu of his nephew.[38] Count Nicolaus IV Pálffy, therefore, probably commissioned 'for reasons of the archduke's regency' also the bust of Archduke Leopold William (d. 1662; fig. 13), who served as military governor in Flanders. The interregnum lasted for fifteen months after the death of Ferdinand IV, when Leopold finally won the eagerly desired election as emperor (July 1658). The last bust of a Habsburg displayed in the Pálffy collection is, therefore, the still uncrowned Archduke Leopold (fig. 14).

Fig. 4   David Weiss, *Maximilian I Habsburg, Holy Roman Emperor*, 1654, limestone, SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň.

Fig. 5   Francesco Terzio and Gaspare Oselli, *Maximilianus I*, in *Avstriacae Gentis imaginvm pars* [...]. 1 (1569), f. 6, copperplate, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf.

Fig. 6 David Weiss, *Charles V Habsburg, Holy Roman Emperor*, 1654,
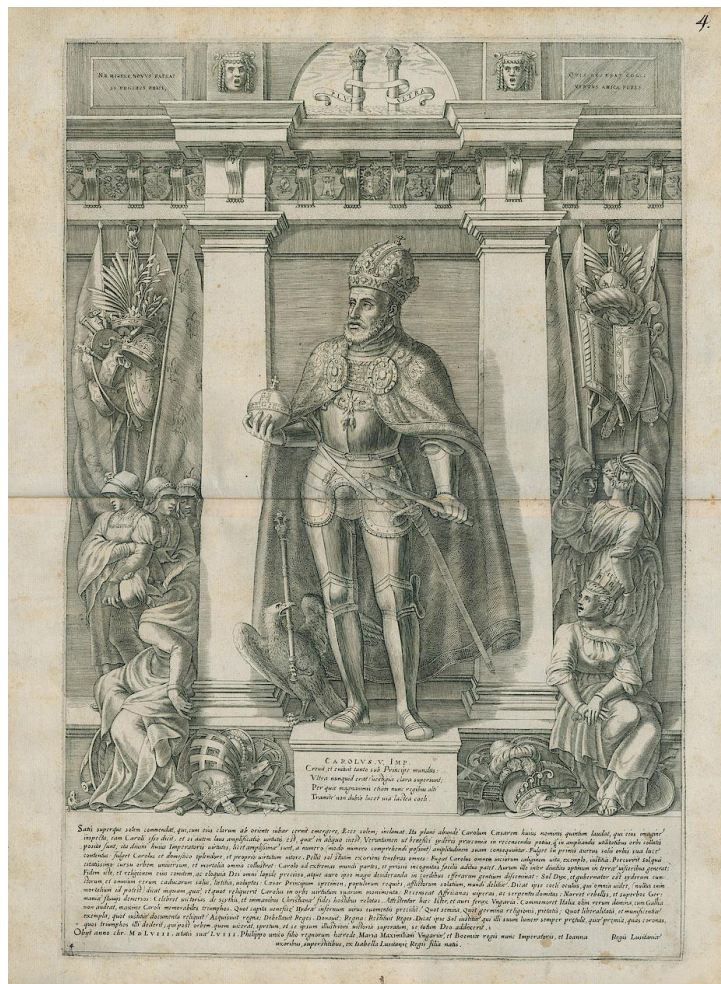Limestone, SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň.

Fig. 7 Francesco Terzio and Gaspare Oselli, *Carolus V*, in *Avstriacae Gentis imaginvm pars* [...].
1 (1569), f. 4, copperplate, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf.

Fig. 8 David Weiss, *Maximilian II Habsburg, Holy Roman Emperor*, 1654,
Limestone, SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň.

Figs. 9 and 10 David Weiss, *Ferdinand II Habsburg, Holy Roman Emperor*, 1654, limestone, SNM-Múzeum
Červený Kameň. Photo before (9) and after (10) restoration.

Fig. 11 David Weiss, *Ferdinand III Habsburg, Holy Roman Emperor*, 1654, limestone, SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň.

Fig. 12 David Weiss, *Ferdinand IV Habsburg, King of the Romans*, 1654, limestone, SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň.

Fig. 13 David Weis, *Archduke Leopold William Habsburg*, 1654,
limestone, SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň.

Fig. 14 David Weiss, *Archduke Leopold Habsburg*, 1654, limestone, SNM-Múzeum Červený Kameň.

The study of artistic style reveals that David Weiss was also the author of nine further busts of Habsburg scions on the outer wall of the former banqueting hall of Castle Kirchschlag in Lower Austria. Nicolaus IV Pálffy inherited this castle from the Puchheim family who were his relatives on his mother´s side in May 1658.[39] But, in fact, Nicolaus IV Pálffy started to order and pay for architectural and artistic works on Castle Kirchschlag ever since 1655.[40] The rather substantial amount of 100 and then a further 200 florins, which Weiss obtained in July 1655 and in March 1657, was paid through the Pálffy accounting office at Červený Kameň.[41] It seems that Weiss created for Nicolaus Pálffy once more a considerable number of statues, not only the statue of a naked Venus for the then just completed, charming *Sala Terrena* in the castle of Červený Kameň (fig. 15). Of course, the iconographical programme, the intention as well as the artistic style of the *Sala Terrena*´s decoration were different from that of the 'official' staircase on the *piano nobile*.

Fig. 15 David Weiss, statue of Venus in the *Sala Terrena* of Červený Kameň Castle, 1654, limestone, SNMMúzeum Červený Kameň.

The Kirchschlag busts portray only a small selection of historical and contemporaneous Habsburgs: these include the first king of the Romans, Rudolf I, as well as the first emperor Friedrich IV (?).[42] Next in line are Charles V and Philip IV as representatives of the Spanish branch of the family. From the Austrian dynasty, Rudolf II, Mathew and Ferdinand III were chosen, in addition to two archdukes: Leopold William and the young Leopold (I). Similarly to the Červený Kameň Castle collection, the sequence ends with busts of the regent, Archduke Leopold William, and of his nephew Leopold who by then was not yet of age (and still not fully accepted) as aspirant to the Holy Roman Emperor´s throne.

Conclusion

From the perspective of contemporaneous politics, Palffy´s decision to present the imperial iconographic programme may have been somewhat unusual. Had he chosen a Hungarian royal iconography, without doubt Leopold I could have been included among its territorial rulers. Nonetheless, it seems that the display of an imperial iconography served at that time as the most powerful political demonstration of loyal aristocrats in support of Leopold, while he was still aspiring to the imperial throne.

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Illustrations

Figs. 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9–10, 11–15 photos by Mgr. Jozef Tihányi.

Figs. 3, 5 and 7 Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg i. Br., H 5367, f. 4,6 and 15; URL: http://dl.ub.uni-freiburg.de/diglit/terzi_austri-1/0010; -1/0008 and 1/019 (revised: 12 September 2016).

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[1] This study was supported by the grant KEGA 010TTU-4/2013: *Portrétna maľba 16. a 17. storočia na našom území v stredoeurópskych kontextoch a formovanie sa šľachtických portrétnych galérií* [sixteenth- and seventeenth-century portrait painting in Slovakia within the context of Central Europe and of the formation of princely portrait galleries].

[2] As an example, we may take the case of the Illesházy family of Trenčín. After moving to Dubnica in 1676, they kept two or three portraits of the emperors (and of the Habsburgs as Hungarian kings mainly from the period after the Battle of Mohács, 1526) and on average one portrait of the empress in almost every room of their palace at Trenčín–even in the *oratorio*. See Watzka 1957.

[3] For additional information, see Herbst 1970, pp. 210–21; Polleroß 1985, pp. 23–27; Tacke 2004, pp. 130–32; Kubeš 2005, pp. 236–37.

[4] See Matsche 1997 and Tacke 2004, p. 130.

[5] For example in Polleroß 1999, p. 36.

[6] The term was first used in the *Topographia Windhagiana* (1656/73). See Polleroß 1985, p. 26 and Polleroß 1999, p. 36.

[7] For example, see Tacke 2004, p. 130.

[8] For more information, see Stupperich 1995, pp. 39–58; Eichberg 1998, pp. 117–22 and Tacke 2004, pp. 126–30.

[9] According to Sitte 1908, p. 46.

[10] The inventory was written in Old Slovak. See Watzka 1957, p. 405.

[11] See Kubeš 2005, pp. 230–40; Polleroß 2010.

[12] According to Fidler 1995–1997, fig. on p. 227 (Juvenel).

[13] See Štibraná 2013, pp. 110–11, fig. 63. The portrait of Maximilian Heinrich von Bayern, archbishop of Cologne, is still preserved *in situ*.

[14] Watzka 1957, p. 405.

[15] Buzási 2012, p. 915. Sitte 1908, p. 46 ('*Kayßerzimmer*').

[16] Sitte 1908, p. 38.

[17] Sitte 1908, p. 45.

[18] For example, see Polleroß 1985, pp. 19–27.

[19] Petráň 1995–1997, II/1, p. 298.

[20] Polleroß 2000.

[21] Kubeš 2003, p. 77.

[22] Available at URL: www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camenahist/autoren/nadasdy_hist.html (revised: 18 August 2015).

[23] Buzási 1988, pp. 72–73, B. 14-1–6, figs. 50–56.

[24] Cennerné-Wilhelmb 1976.

[25] Polleroß 1999, p. 36.

[26] Kubeš 2005, p. 236.

[27] Published by Štibraná 2013, pp. 149–51, figs. 89–104.

[28] The series of busts is first mentioned by Rusina 1983, p. 44.

[29] See Rusina's catalogue entry in *Barok* 1998, p. 427, cat. nr. 107 (Weiss, *Busty cisárov*, 1654).

[30] Compare to Fidler 1995–1997, IV, p. 248 (Weiss); Fidler 2004, p. 226.

[31] Bastl 2000, chart in the text (without pagination).

[32] Fidler 1994, p. 226.

[33] As observed by Kubeš 2005, p. 237, such an iconographic connection was quite unusual, as we may expect, and he found more examples in Moravia and Silesia than in Bohemia.

[34] As a point of comparison, see Leuschner 2006, p. 10.

[35] Scheicher 1983, pp. 43–89.

[36] Leuschner 2006, pp. 13–21. Stupperich 1995.

[37] The busts are the property of The Slovak National Museum-Museum Červený Kameň (SNM-MČK), Inv. N.: S – 300 to S – 316.

[38] Smíšek 2012, pp. 279–81.

[39] Žudel 1967, p. 66.

[40] As early as in 1655, Pálffy entrusted the imperial court architect, Filibert Luchese, with the project of a façade and with the construction of the ceremonial hall at the castle in Kirchschlag. See URL: www.uibk. ac.at/aia/luchese_filiberto.htm (revised: 20 January 2015). Also, Wanek 1988, pp. 134–51.

[41] Fidler 1995–1997, IV, p. 248 (Weiss).

[42] On URL: www.royaltyguide.nl/countries/austria/kirchschlag/bustenwand.htm (revised: 20 January 2015) the bust of Albrecht I can be found; a bust labelled as an ancestor (Ahnherr) might be Emperor Friedrich IV. See URL: www.vskirchschlag.ac.at/deutsch/001Hofhaus.htm (revised: 20 January 2015).