



In former Slovene March 'Slovenska krajina', on the border of eastern Goričko, the Rotunda Church in the village Selo is placed like a pearl in the valley of the Kobilje stream. Legend has it that the church originally belonged to the Knights Templar, however, the truth is still covered in a veil of mystery. Even though the site Selo (*Lak*) is first mentioned in 1340 and 1365 as *seu valle Lak Sancti Nicolai* (in the valley of St. Nicholas), its origins are earlier, as the previous cognitions show, it could originate in the time before the 1st half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in the time of Hungarian King Andrew II (1205–1235), when it was built, as a part of a supposed monastic stronghold, by an influential building workshop under high aristocratic or order patronage.

The round temple is a magnificent relict of what supposed to be a wider architectural medieval buildings complex: the basic wall is made of volcanic tuff and it carries a harmonic brick coat, picturesque divided by rhythmically arranged lesene, which height impulsion under cone and with shingle covered roof is stopped by dynamic brick wreath wall of consoles and horizontally laid zigzag pattern of serrated bricks. To this Romanesque canon and proportion the apse is also completely subordinated, together with the characteristically narrowed portal, the semicircular concluded window openings and the complete interior. In the ground floor it is transformed into ten seat hollows, the passage of the cylindrical walls to the dome is divided by brick wreath. Due to its exceptional architectural perfection and stylistic Romanesque harmony the Rotunda in Selo deserves a prominent place even among the typologically related architectural structures in the wider Danubian area, such as the chapels in Ják, Kallósd and Vitenyédzentpál.

In addition to the exceptional architectural testimony, the two layers of wall paintings remain preserved. The first layer is represented on the inner northern walls by the remaining monumental composition of the Journey and Adoration of the Magi, painted on whitewash without any basic plaster and marked by typical 'Early Gothic linear style'. In the origin space it is an early, so called cavalry type of Journey, which means that in continual manner the journey on horses and the adoration of the Wise Men is represented simultaneously. This painting probably originates in the 1<sup>st</sup> third of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, made by a hand of a skilled painter, closely connected to the patrician donor, who presumably are the aristocratic dynasty Omode from former Upper Lindua.

Around 1400 the unknown painters of the so called 'ducal workshops' – the circle of co-workers in the so called 'glass work workshops' – realised, in content and artistic features deepened, conception of Christ's Passion in fresco technique. The artistic character of the Passion cycle is testified by its origins in the so called 'second Prague style', which is here, due to the Viennese mediation, completely recognizable in the spirit of the 'International Gothic Style'. In niches in the ground floor part male and female saints are represented, among them, besides the patron St. Nicholas, St. Louis of Anjou stands out; higher up are the fragments of the monks' busts, in the middle part of the northern walls the composition of The



Journey and Adoration of the Magi, directed towards the apse and the altar and underlines the epiphanic meaning, which is brilliantly upgraded with the Passion iconography, that is composed into a comprehensive and complex content. Its notional concept was conceived by a highly qualified cleric, perceived into Franciscan or other monastic mediations. Allegorical scenes form a deliberate projection fading into a harmonic and relevant anagogic eschatological diction. Upon entering, the visitor is directly confronted with Juda's Kiss. The scene instils doubt about the fragility of faith and makes the viewer identify with Juda's betrayal, because simultaneously a symbolic representation of Jesus entering Jerusalem is depicted in a vertical axis above the entrance of the Rotunda. From this point onward, following the wall painting all around from right to left, the viewer is symbolically participating in all the stages of Christ's Passion. For example, on the opposite side of the apse and altar you will find the scenes of the Last Supper and Christ praying on Mount Olive, symbolically representing Eucharistic offering.

This finely detailed content and artistic portrayal of the Passion culminates in the crown of the dome. Besides the symbols of the Evangelists in ellipse, in axis, divided by the symbols of the Sun and the Moon, the Throne of Mercy (*Thronus gratiae*), the God Father with the crucifix in his arms on one side and the Christ Resurrected on the other can be seen. The implications relate to deep theological premises. Behind the apparently clear scheme and arrangement of Passion scenes, in formulation of *Thronus gratiae* eschatologically complicated projection is placed: in Selo the painter actually painted God the Father with covered face, which in its original subordination to Passion scenes rounds up the original theological concept of the Last Judgement that ends in splendid conception based upon the biblical text: "It is he that sitteth upon the globe of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as locusts: he that stretcheth out the heavens as nothing, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." (Is 40, 22). This fine symbolism is consistent with the architectural features of the Rotunda, for the dome is the Heaven of the sanctuary and "as a tent to dwell in".

Due to the specific extensions, the paintings in Selo represent over-regional meaning. The so called 'ducal workshops' could only get engaged by influent 'family' mediation, where besides Nicholas II Szécsi and his wife Helen, a sister of an influential courtier and palatine Nicholas II Garai, the counts of Cilli must also be considered.

In the sense of historicism, the remodelled Rotunda from the years 1845-46 was newly reconstructed in the year 1956 in accordance with the Romanesque period and the wall paintings were restored in the years 1978–1980. A small part of its original equipment, the late gothic wing altar with the scenes of The Annunciation, The Birth of Christ, The Adoration of the Magi and The Death of the Holy Virgin Mary on the feast side, and the images of the patron St. Nicholas and the three Hungarian saints St. Stephen, St. Emeric and St. Ladislaus on the workshop side, dating around 1490, and donated to National Museum in Budapest in 1864 by bishop Ferenc Szenczy, is on display in the Hungarian National Gallery (Magyar Nemzeti Galéria). That's why in the apse of the Selo Rotunda only the Baroque portrayal of The Crucifixion can be admired.



Rotunda of St. Nicholas and the Holy Virgin in Selo

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