

The plans of Johann Grenner for the Greek Catholic episcopal centre in Ungvár (Uzhhorod)

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Abstract

Maria Theresa founded the independent Greek Catholic Diocese of Munkács (in English: Mukacheve) in 1771. The episcopal centre was intended to be moved to Ungvár (in English: Uzhhorod) from Munkács, to the abandoned castle that would have hosted the necessary institutions, the cathedral, the Bishop's Palace and the seminary. For the commission of the Chamber, the conversion plans were prepared by master builder Joseph Simmet. For the Court Chamber initiative in Vienna, a reviser Johann Grenner and an architect Lorenz Lander were sent to the site. Grenner presented the new plans in 1774. He would have converted the inner castle into the apartments of the bishop and the prebendaries, while the cathedral and the seminary would have been placed in the outer castle. It was a daring solution to compose the new cathedral – with its Greek cross layout and oval central dome – on top of an Old Italian system bastion. The plans of Grenner were much more expensive than that of Simmet, so for the proposal of Court Chief Architect Franz Anton Hillebrandt the decision was made to convert the Jesuit convent, also standing abandoned near the castle, into the Bishop's Palace, the church into the cathedral, and place only the seminary in the castle. This proposal was accepted, thus Grenner's design was not realized.

Keywords

Ungvár · castle · Greek Catholic · episcopal centre · Johann Grenner · Joseph Simmet

1 Prelude

In 1646, in the fortress church of Ungvár (in English: Uzhhorod), part of the clergy of the Eastern Slavic (Ruthenian) orthodox population, living in the north-eastern counties of historic Hungary, entered a union with the Roman Catholic Church. In the following decade, the position of the union would only gradually grow stronger due to a variety of historical events affecting the area; it was finally stabilized after the Treaty of Szatmár (1711), which closed Rákóczi's War for Independence. The leader of the Greek Catholic Church created this way became the bishop, living in the Basilian monastery at Csernek Hill, near the town of Munkács (in English: Mukacheve), the predecessors of whom had already carried this title since the 15th century. It was a specific result of the church union that, since the end of the 17th century, the Greek Catholic episcopate of Munkács was not considered as a separate diocese from the Catholic point of view. The reason was that the Latin ordinary, i.e. the Roman Catholic bishop who was responsible for that district, considered the Greek Catholic bishops – together with their believers – as subordinate in their position; he acknowledged his bishop partner only as a rite vicar. This state was repaired during the period of the Greek Catholic bishop György Gennadius Bizánczy (1716-1732), with the approval of the Holy See. This often created a difficult situation for his descendants, who on many occasions had serious conflicts with the bishops of Eger. The situation became acrimonious so often that finally even Maria Theresa found it better to establish the separate diocese of Munkács in accordance with church canons. The diocese was realized in 1771, after several years of struggle against the Holy See and the Bishop of Eger.

After the union, the bishops that originally had lived in the monastery of Csernek Hill, were forced to fight for the episcopate against the orthodox bishop leading the group who did not accept the union. Later, Bishop Johannes Josephus De Camillis (1690-1706), arriving from Rome in 1690, initially lived in the town of Munkács; after moving to the monastery, he had new timber and stone houses built. Otherwise, the monastery was a rather modest building at that time; its small church with

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circular layout was built in 1661, from the donation of voivode Constantin Serban, who was banished from Wallachia [10, p. 159] [13, pp. 18-24]. There had also been construction works after the Treaty of Szatmár: in 1712, the monastery was fenced with paling, four years later new cells and kitchen were built and then in 1724 also the church was renovated. [1, pp. 184-200]. In 1751, Empress Maria Theresa (1740-1780), having heard the request of the monks, decided that the bishop should not live in the monastery but in a new residential house to be built in the town of Munkács. For the construction of a new episcopal centre, a 2000 Forint allowance was allocated [4, pp. 667-671]. At that time, Bishop Mihály Mánuel Olsavszky (1743-1767) settled in Munkács, next to the Greek Catholic church that had been built a decade earlier, and soon he also started the construction of a monumental episcopal seat. The budget of the new building was calculated by Nikodémus Liczky, a master builder from Kassa (Košice) who had designed the pilgrimage church of Máriapócs two decades earlier. The church in Máriapócs and the adjacent Basilian monastery was still under construction during this time [11, pp. 364-370]. Since the expenses of the building, already started in Munkács, would have been nearly five times higher than the allocated aid, the government organizations did not want to fully finance it, thus the work progressed slowly, the house was not completed with only part of it habitable [3, pp. 54-58] [4, pp. 671-675].

2 New episcopate: Ungvár

After the establishment of the Diocese of Munkács (1771), the issue of the episcopate was again on the agenda. At this time the idea arose to relocate the episcopal seat to Ungvár, to the area of the castle that had stood unused after losing its original military functions. It seemed that after some conversions it would be easy to place the necessary buildings and institutes (cathedral, Bishop's Palace, seminaries, etc.) of an episcopal centre there. András Bacsinszky, later Bishop (1772-1809), supported the proposal from the beginning – he might even have been the one who suggested it. In 1771, the queen and Joseph, the co-king had already sought the opinion of the chambers regarding the displacement. The Hungarian Court Chamber opposed the move, saying that it would be much cheaper to finish the buildings in Munkács than the construction works in Ungvár, as the costs of the former were estimated at 2000, but maximum 5000 Rhine Florins.¹ Because of this, Maria Theresa required precise statements on the costs of the planned conversions. The plans of the conversion and the cost estimations were prepared by the masters from Ungvár and Munkács, on behalf of the chamber

administration of Košice. According to the cost statements, the building works in Ungvár would have been much more expensive, demanding several times more than the sum needed for the completion of the works in Munkács [4, pp. 676-678].

2.1 The first plans

The conversion plans for the castle of Ungvár were signed by Joseph Simmet. He intended to place all diocese institutions in the inner and outer castle.

The inner castle with four corner towers was built at the end of the 16th century, and it was converted at the end of the following century, during the period of Miklós Bercsényi. The conversion plan of three floors of the inner castle is known: that of the basement [13, Image 86],² the ground floor [13, Images 83-84]³ and the first floor [13, Image 85].⁴ Also there are such remained copies of the ground and first floor of the inner castle that show not German but Latin explanatory labels.⁵

On the ground floor, besides the kitchen and the rooms reserved for the Bishop, some rooms were assigned for the seminary. According to the plans, the moat around the inner castle would not have been filled up completely but remained as a dry ditch, together with the bridge leading to the castle court. The rooms and spaces on the first floor would also have been built in accordance with the needs of the seminary. Only floor plans are known regarding the conversion concept of the inner castle, it is probable that facade and section drawings were never prepared. However, the layout plan of the roof structure was produced. [13, Image 87].⁶

In addition to the outbuildings, the school would also have been placed in the outer castle, which was reinforced with high walls and a wide moat; it would have been constructed by using the former building remains. [13, Image 91].⁷ Also the castle church of medieval origins was located there, standing ruined for decades [12, pp. 196-205], it was meant to be rebuilt as a cathedral. According to the plans prepared for the church, the building would have preserved its medieval mass – its tower was almost intact, mostly just the vaults of the sanctuary had collapsed – only the mansard roof above the nave and the sanctuary, and the Baroque stone frames of doors and windows would have lent it a more 'modern' appearance. The design documentation prepared for the church differed from the drawings of the inner castle. The facade drawings of the south and north side have survived, there are also floor plans drawn

¹ The report of Duschek salt officer and Kraus contra-agent to the Hungarian chamber about Mukacheve, 18th April 1772. ÖStA HKA, Kamerale Ungarn RNr 717., Fasc. 33/2. Nr. 47 ex Martio 1773. f 40-41.

² ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen Rb 159/9.

³ ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen Rb 159/1. and Rb 159/3.

⁴ ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen Rb 159/5.

⁵ Unpublished: MNL OL T 1. No. 626/1-2.

⁶ ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen Rb 159/4.

⁷ ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen Rb 159/11. Another version: MNL OL T 1. No. 626/3.

underneath them, on which the still standing, usable walls and the new sections to be built are indicated with different colours [5, pp. 183-184, 13, Image 88].⁸ Two carpentry structural plans of the church's roof are known [13, Image 89-90];⁹ section drawings were not made in this case either.

The cost estimates produced by the masters (carpenter, woodworker, glass master, locksmith etc.) are dated to the autumn of 1772.¹⁰ On the 25th September 1772, Simmet estimated the costs of the reconstruction and rebuilding of the castle and the church to a total sum of 43.970 Rhein Florins and 6 Deniers.¹¹ According to the year-end totals, when the planned budgets of the masonry and carpentry works were totalized again, this sum was increased with some thousand Florins (48795 Rhine Florins and 26 Deniers).¹²

2.2 The plans of Johann Grenner

The plans of the local masters did not meet unanimous success in Vienna. In the spring of 1773, the Court Chamber, taking into account the opinion of the court architect Franz Anton Hillebrandt (1719-1797), instigated that the queen should send experts to Ungvár to clarify on site whether the buildings of the castle were really suitable for conversion. It was determined that the drawing up of the plans should also take into consideration that in addition to the bishop's apartment, five (or six) others for the prebendaries had to be placed there, as well as a seminary for 60 people and a school. Two men were assigned for the mission: Johann Grenner (sources mention the name also in the form of Krenner and Grönnner, among which he used the former one) Rechnungsrevisor (Audit Inspector) and Hauptmansinspektor (Captain Supervisor) and Lorenz Lander Architekt-Praktikant, who certainly helped in sketching. The Queen had approved the petition; on this Bishop Bacszinsky and the Hungarian Chamber were also informed.¹³ Johann Grenner presented his new and grandiose plans in the summer of 1774 in Vienna [4, pp. 678-680].¹⁴ The ten-sheet design series fortunately survived [13, Images 92-101].¹⁵

On the site Grenner and Lander measured the whole settlement of Ungvár, namely, they prepared the accurate site plan

of the town, indicating the parts to be newly built in yellow. In the immediate vicinity of the castle they also allocated sites for outbuildings, garden, conservatory and the residential areas of the manorial staff. [13, Image 92].

On the other plans, there are proposals for the conversion of the inner and outer castle. The apartments for the bishop and the prebendaries would have been created in the inner castle. After completely filling the inner moat, the main gate of the inner castle would have been relocated in the direction of the town, to the same side, but not on the same axis as the main gate of the outer castle. The ground floor of the inner castle would have hosted the bishop's kitchen, the rooms for the servants, the prison, the pantries, the guest rooms and one of the prebendaries rooms. Essentially, the bishop's apartment, library, archives, chapel, the rooms of the court chaplain and one prebendary, and the consistory would have been placed on the first floor. The complete second floor would have been newly built for the accommodation of the four other prebendaries. Separate staircases were designed for the bishop and the prebendaries [13, Images 94-96].

In the outer castle, in addition to the outbuildings, a large seminary room for 60 people and a school for 300 students would have been placed. The seminary was planned to be built after the demolition of the former castle church by directly using its ramparts and joining the castle walls. Similarly to the inner castle, the seminary would also have been a two-story building. A teacher's room, the kitchen, the refectory and the pantry would have been placed on the ground floor. As an interesting solution, the chapel would have been formed within the space of one of the Old Italian system bastions, on the floor plan of which the place of the altar and the iconostasis were also precisely indicated. Section drawings were prepared for the chapel [13, Images 98-99]; on the first floor there would have been the teachers' and prefect's rooms, as well as the infirmary that would have faced the space of the chapel through a double window. Three dormitories were designed for the second floor, each for 20 persons, three study rooms (museum) and a room for the vice-prefect [13, Images 94-96]. The facade design of the reconstructed and the newly built seminaries can be seen on the cross section of the castle and the seminary [13, Image 96 and 98]. The builders planned a very pure facade articulation: the ground floor would have been decorated with simple quoins while the upper parts would have been articulated with lesenes running through the different stories, and ornamental carved frames were designed around the doors and windows. The documentation also contains a plan for the outbuildings and a drawing of a tile stove [13, Images 100-101]. A smaller gate would have been cut in the side of the outer wall in order to provide direct access to the gardens next to the castle.

The most peculiar and remarkable element of the drawing documentation is the cathedral, about which only the ground floor and upper story floor plans are known; however, they

8 MNL OL T I. 626/4-5. ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen Rb 159/10.

9 MNL OL T I. 626/6. ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen Rb 159/6.

10 ÖStA HKA, Kamerale Ungarn RNr 720, Fasc. 33/3. Nr. 21 ex anno 1776. f 76-113.

11 ÖStA HKA, Kamerale Ungarn RNr 720, Fasc. 33/3. Nr. 21 ex anno 1776. f 118.

12 ÖStA HKA, Kamerale Ungarn RNr 717., Fasc. 33/2. Nr. 47 ex Martio 1773. f 42.

13 ÖStA HKA, Kamerale Ungarn RNr 717., Fasc. 33/2. Nr. 47 ex Martio 1773. f 28-67.

14 His report: ÖStA HKA, Kamerale Ungarn RNr 720, Fasc. 33/3. Nr. 21 ex anno 1776. f 129-131.

15 Plans of Grenner: ÖStA HKA, Kartensammlungen M 10/1-10.

are not illustrated on separate sheets but as details of the conversion plan of the castle. [13, Images 94-96]. Probably, no other detail and section drawings were prepared at all since Grenner mentioned only 10 drawings in his letter addressed to the Court Chamber, and these ten drawings have survived. [13, Sources 2.3.1.].

It was a daring solution to compose the new cathedral on the central axis of the north-eastern Old Italian system bastion of the castle. The church's sanctuary would have been built on top of the bastion in such a way that the space with a rhombus-like layout, surrounded by the already existing walls, would have functioned as a supplementary space of the sanctuary. The cathedral would have been a building with Greek cross floor plan and an oval centre dome. Maybe towers were designed for the two sides of the main facade. The places of the altars, the iconostasis and the prebendaries' stalls were also indicated on the floor plans. One end of the seminary would have been directly attached to the church.

Doubtless, when selecting the location of the new cathedral, the architect found the highest spot rising above the town, which would have probably given a stunning monumentality to the otherwise immodest building. Whilst searching for possible architectural pre-images, the idea arose that the concept of the cathedral towering above the town, as well as its layout, could have been inspired by St George's Cathedral in Lemberg (L'viv) built a decade before [8, pp. 138-139, 156-158, 163-164, 169-170. and 64-65]. It cannot be excluded that Grenner or Lander were already aware of the forms of the episcopal complex in Galicia, however, it is more likely that the plans of Ungvár were inspired by the works of the masters in Vienna. Some years earlier, Franz Anton Hillebrandt prepared plans for the new cathedral of Esztergom; the wooden models might also have been his work. The main conceptual element of Esztergom was the domed cathedral with a Greek cross floor plan, built on top of the castle hill [6, pp. 43-47, Image 32] [2, pp. 166-167]. Besides its geographical location, Esztergom was similar to Ungvár in its architectural parameters since the new buildings also had to be placed in the area of the castle. In addition, it seems that already in 1750, Hillebrandt designed for Nagyvárad (in English: Oradea) a central type, cross layout cathedral, organized around a longitudinal oval dome, with a layout arrangement similar to the St Peter church and the Servite church in Vienna, which ultimately was not realized [7, pp. 86-88.]. Nevertheless, his earlier, unrealized plans could have been known to his subordinates and colleagues in Vienna.

As could have been expected, the grandiose plans of Grenner would require a much larger sum than the concept sketched by Simmet and the masters of the Chamber. Realizing the design of the masters from Vienna would have consumed 130,000 Florins, almost three times more than the costs of the Simmet-concept. After the presentation in Vienna of Court Chief Architect Hillebrandt's proposal, the court finally decided to

convert the Jesuit convent, located near the castle of Ungvár and standing abandoned since the dissolution of the order in 1773, into the Bishop's Palace, the church into a cathedral and to place only the seminary in the castle. First the chambers then the empress accepted the proposal in 1775. The Jesuit assets had already been given to Bishop Bacsinszky in this year, while the castle only in the following year [4, pp. 680-681] [6, p. 53].¹⁶

No other architectural works of Grenner are known; further research is also required to uncover his biographical data. Seemingly, he was not employed by the Architectural Office of the Court either [9]. It is difficult to decide what role Lander played in this mission in Ungvár. Maybe he only assisted in the drawing phase, but he might have had influence on the conceptual issues too. He stayed in contact with the bishop of Munkács, later preparing type designs for Greek Catholic churches; he also participated in the realization of the modified concept as he supervised the conversion of the Jesuit church into a cathedral, as well as the extension and conversion of the Jesuit convent into the bishop's palace [13, Sources 2.3.2]. Further research is required to ascertain who was tasked with the conversion of the castle into a seminary, and whose plans were taken as a basis. Probably, the decision-makers returned again to the ideas of Simmet as the structure of the inner castle hardly changed after the conversion but the ruined castle church was completely demolished in the outer castle.

3 Summary

The grand plans designed by Grenner were not realized since the Diocese of Munkács, having modest financial means, could not start construction works of such budget. The Court, bearing in mind the cost-effectiveness, opted for the cheaper solutions and, besides the castle, transferred the meanwhile freed Jesuit assets to the episcopate. Although the ideas of Grenner were known in the literature, his designs have been published just recently [13, Images 92-101]. This design documentation is an exciting example of his grandiose but unrealized drawing series prepared for episcopal centres in the 18th century. The fate of the presented concept anticipated the practice that became increasingly common in the future; namely, that in the development of new episcopal centres, the conversion and further development of the already existing buildings comes into focus.

Abbreviations

MNL OL = Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (= National Archives of Hungary), Budapest

ÖStA HKA = Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv, Hofkammerarchiv, Wien

¹⁶ Hillebrandt's opinion: ÖStA HKA, Kamerale Ungarn RNr 720, Fasc. 33/3. Nr. 21 ex anno 1776. f 133.

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