

**THE LIGHT OF  
THY COUNTENANCE  
GREEK CATHOLICS  
IN HUNGARY**

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Cover images: wall-painting of the Pantocrator (by Zsolt Maklár) in the Nyíregyháza Seminary Chapel and a fragment of the icon *Christ the Great High Priest* from the iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty (*Magyarkomját*)

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## III.2.4 The Iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty (Magyarkomját)

### *Szilveszter Terdik*

Through the mediation of Sándor Szabó, a carver from Satu Mare (*Szatmárnémeti*), the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, purchased the rococo iconostasis of the late-18<sup>th</sup>-century Greek Catholic church of Velyki Kom'yaty (*Magyarkomját/Nagykomját*) for 300 Kronas in 1913. The dispersal of the ensemble would begin exactly half a century later: A few of its pieces were taken to the Ferenczy Museum in Szentendre in 1963, while the remaining parts were handed over to the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, in 1970.<sup>1</sup> The iconostasis returned to the forefront of scholarly attention one and a half decades ago; thanks to successful grant applications, its Sovereign Tier was even renewed partially.<sup>2</sup> In conjunction with the work commencing then, the author of the present paper prepared a reconstruction drawing of the carved structure of the iconostasis,<sup>3</sup> the accuracy of which would be verified by an old photograph discovered a few years later in the Documentation Department of the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, capturing the condition of the iconostasis in its original location<sup>4</sup> (Picture 8). In 2019, however, all the pictures of the iconostasis and even a handful of its carvings could be conserved, affording a golden opportunity to rethink some previous art-historical considerations and revise them in the light of recent research findings.

As archival sources on the making of the ensemble have not been found so far, the age and masters of the carvings and paintings may be proposed on the basis of stylistic observations.

With reference to their structural arrangements and stylistic properties alike, the wooden structure and the

ornamental carvings are in every respect closest to the iconostasis of the Cathedral of Uzhhorod (*Ungvár*). A characteristic of iconostases of this type is that they hold a frontally almost invisible structure consisting of worked laths and grills attached to horizontal beams built into the triumphal arch of the church, with finely shaped carvings frequently showing fretwork, naturalistic floral elements and rocailles or a combination of such, snugly fitted on it. The iconostasis of Uzhhorod was started by Franz Feeg/Feck from Košice (*Kassa*) in 1776 and, after his death, it was completed by his brother, Johannes Feeg/Feck in 1778; the activities of the latter are evidenced in Upper Hungary until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> From the data collected by Enikő Buzási, it may be established that Franz and Johann studied for one year at the Arts Academy of Vienna in 1750 and in 1753 respectively. According to the register of the institution, they lived in Vienna, and their father was a sculptor.<sup>6</sup> Franz married in Košice in 1765; in the local records, he is said to have been of Silesian origin, possibly indicating that he had come to Hungary from there after Vienna. Johann married elsewhere; prior to Košice, his presence in Kežmarok (*Késmárk*) may also be ascertained, but it is not known where he wed. As, at the moment, neither the exact date of Johann Feck's death nor the time when the wooden sections of the iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty were made are known, it may only be surmised that this work could also be created in his workshop – possibly under his supervision – during the final decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The carvings on the iconostases of Uzhhorod and Velyki Kom'yaty were similar not only in their style but in

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<sup>1</sup> On the collection-history-related aspects of the iconostasis, see: Terdik, 2006, 150–152.

<sup>2</sup> For a study on the conservation of the iconostasis, see in the present volume.

<sup>3</sup> The drawings were digitised by Maxim Mordovin. I wish to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to him for his assistance. Terdik, 2011b, 12.

<sup>4</sup> The photo positive was made by Imre Tóth S. Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest, Documentation Department, FLT 27296. Published for the first time in: Terdik, 2014a, 96, Picture 114

<sup>5</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 94–101. A review of the Roman Catholic parish records of Košice has yielded the following data on them: Franz Feck married Anna Maria Pajerin on 6 November 1765; it is stated that the groom was of Silesian origin. Their children were baptised on the following dates: Ignatius Jos[ephus] Math[eus] on 21 February 1770, Anna Maria Dorothea on 31 July 1771, Anton Vincentius on 21 October 1772, Anna Júlia on 19 January 1774, Johann Nep[omucenus] and Franciscus on 25 April 1778; the latter two were twins, and Franciscus was already buried on 23 July. The father passed away on 16 June 1779 at the age of 42; at that time, the name of the sculptor's wife was written as Anna Pajer. The data included on Johannes Feck are not so numerous: On 2 January 1781, he and his wife, Susanna, had their son, Johannes, baptised, whom they would already bury on 24 November 1782. On 4 November 1782, their daughter, Elisabeth, was baptised. The first two children's godparents were Venceslaus Viller and Anna Brantin, without any indications of the two of them being a married couple. Their sons, Johannes (for the second time), Johannes Martinus and Franciscus, were baptised on 4 December 1785, on 10 November 1789 and on 15 September 1791 respectively. The date of Johann Feck's death is not disclosed, but it is certain that his widow, Susanna Feeg, died in Košice on 10 January 1824, at the age of 68. Apart from them, the records also mention a certain 'sculptor' Ladislaus Fek, who, together with his wife, Anna, had his little son, Johannes, baptised on 22 December 1780. It cannot be established whether he was genetically related to the two sculptors with the same surname. The parish records may be researched as digital photographs at: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/693000?availability=Family%20History%20Library>.

<sup>6</sup> Buzási, 2016, 122–123.

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terms of the surfaces of their structures as well: Carved ornaments and frames were completely gilded, and some of the fruits, leaves and flowers were even painted with coloured varnish, i.e. lustred, while the other components were covered with *polierweiss*. In Uzhhorod, these were undertaken and executed also by a master from Košice, Vencel Wellerovszky.<sup>7</sup> The resultant white surface was 'dynamised' with gold veins evocative of marmoration, which were even restored on the conserved elements of the iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty – on the sides of the tables, on the Sovereign Tier cornice and on the frame of the Royal Doors – but are longer seen in the Uzhhorod ensemble. On the chalk-grounding of the frames of the sovereign-tier icons, prior to gilding, convex ornamental decoration was made, also visible in both locations. Smaller frames were punched subsequent to gilding. However, gilding and 'porcelainising' – as white surface making was called at the time – were not the responsibility of sculptors but of a separate master or of the painter. This latter arrangement was the case in Velyki Kom'yaty as well, but here the gilder and the painter were probably a single person.

Since no archival source on the painting of the pictures of the iconostasis is evidenced, recourse must be had to observations pertinent to criticism of style in this instance as well. Similarly to the sculptural elements, it is clear that the painter of the pictures in Velyki Kom'yaty was well acquainted with the paintings of the Uzhhorod iconostasis, the works of Mihály Spalinszky (1778–1779).<sup>8</sup> The master working in the territory of the Eparchy of Mukacheve from 1756 still received several commissions in the Cathedral of Uzhhorod and the Episcopal Palace in the 1780s, as well as in Máriapócs and in Tokaj (1787), but afterwards he would disappear from sources, suggesting that he probably did not work or could even be dead in the last decade of the century. Thus, it also seems unlikely that he was involved in the activities in Velyki Kom'yaty.

Despite a number of differences in minute details, the iconostasis of the church of Kenézlő, once part of Szabolcs County, bears a very close resemblance to the Velyki Kom'yaty ensemble in both style and iconography



(1)

(Pictures 1 and 17).<sup>9</sup> The picture screen, also modelled on that of Uzhhorod, was erected in 1801; unfortunately, the carver's name is not mentioned.<sup>10</sup> However, from a recently discovered letter by the local parish priest, it may be gathered that the painting and gilding of the iconostasis were completed by 'Venceslaus Willer' (Viller), a master from Košice, on 12 March 1806.<sup>11</sup>

In 1789, Vencel Viller worked on the gilding of the bishop's throne and pulpit of the Cathedral of Uzhhorod, carved by Johann Feck. He was granted civic rights in Košice in 1790, and, at that time, it was also recorded that he was from Polička (*Politschka*), a town on the Czech-Moravian border.<sup>12</sup> It may be determined from the

<sup>7</sup> He was contracted on 19 March 1778, for a one-year assignment for 2000 Rhenish guilders. Terdik, 2014a, 96–97.

<sup>8</sup> Spalinszky was contracted for the painting of the icons in April 1778. Terdik, 2014a, 100–101.

<sup>9</sup> Puskás, 2008, 278–279, Pictures 158–161 and 164

<sup>10</sup> 'Anno 1801 Bema, seu Iconostasion novum ex dispositione testamentaria Theodori Gojda, curavit Parochus loci qua filius Rfnis 350.' From the Parish Charter. GKPL, Miskolc, I–1–b, Kenézlő. Hence, the local parish priest had it made from the sum dedicated for this purpose in his father's will. Terdik, 2011b, 14.

<sup>11</sup> In his letter written on 10 April 1806, parish priest András Gojda reports to Bishop András Bacsinszky that the pictures of the iconostasis, along with its gilding, were completed on 12 March and requests permission for their blessing: 'Ab initio semper sollicitudo meae maxima haec fuit, ut Domum Dei, seu Ecclesiam meam Kenézlőiensem ad perfectionis statum perducere possim, quod pium, et salutare opus Deo Juvante jam ex toto finitum est. Nam die 12a Martii a. c. Venceslaus Willer Pictor Cassoviensis non solum Picturam Bematis, ast etiam inaurationi [...] honorifice ex integro terminavit.' DAZO, fond 151. opis 6, no. 1596, fol. 10

<sup>12</sup> Terdik, 2014a, 112.



Roman Catholic parish records of Košice that his wife's name was Elisabeth, they had two children, and the master died in the same place on 21 June 1806, at the age 58.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps, the iconostasis of Kenézlő happened to be his last major assignment. The possibility that Viller could be identical with Vencel Vilerovszky, with his name also occurring in the form Villerovszky, who gilded and 'porcelainised' the iconostasis of the Cathedral of Uzhhorod, has been considered. Based on parish record entries, the question cannot be decided conclusively; further sources would be needed, though the possibility is real.<sup>14</sup> The German-like sound of the shortened form of a Slavic name might have been more appealing to the citizens of Košice. Viller maintained excellent relations with Johann Feck: They were each other's children's godparents, a circumstance that may have been a consequence of or an antecedent to their joint assignments.

According to archival sources explored of late, another one of Viller's Greek Catholic commissions was connected precisely to the centre of historic Ugocsa County, Vynohradiv (*Nagyszőlős*), in the vicinity of Velyki Kom'yaty. On 21 March 1799, local parishioners approached Bishop András Bacsinszky in a letter written in Hungarian asking him to support the completion of the iconostasis of their

new church. As they pointed out, the assignment would be undertaken by a painter (*pictor*) from Košice, by the name of Viller, for 1400 guilders, but they did not have enough money.<sup>15</sup> The Bishop's reply remains unknown. A year later, in 1800, the condition of the parishes in the Deanery of Vynohradiv was also surveyed. Of the villages of the Deanery, a church built from a solid material was found only in Velyki Kom'yaty and Vynohradiv; in the other places, churches were made of wood. For the church of Vynohradiv, it was remarked that the painting – which must be a reference to the pictures of the iconostasis – was still missing.<sup>16</sup> The settlement documents of the Greek Catholic parishes of the county were collated in 1803, and it was also indicated what additional items of equipment or furniture were required in each church.<sup>17</sup> In the church of Vynohradiv, at least an additional 1000 guilders was to be spent on the iconostasis at that time, suggesting that it continued to lack painting and gilding; in all probability, the Bishop sought to obtain state funding for the completion of the work.<sup>18</sup> It is as yet impossible to ascertain when Viller finished painting and gilding. At any rate, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he was regarded as the master behind the icons.<sup>19</sup> The church of Vynohradiv was renovated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and its

<sup>13</sup> His widow's name was Elisabeth. Data are available on the birth of two of their children: Anna Nepomucena was baptised on 21 April 1781, while Dominicus on 7 August 1783. The godparents of both children were Jonann Feck and his wife, Susanna: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/693000?availability=Family%20History%20Library>.

<sup>14</sup> This possibility has been pointed out to me by Levente Csomortány, to whom I wish to say thanks. Vencel Vilerovszky married 18-year old Elisabeth Kurner at the age of 27 in Košice on 27 April 1778: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/693000?availability=Family%20History%20Library>. Thus, Vilerovszky was born in 1751, whereas, according to his death certificate, Viller was born in 1748. Parish record data are known to exhibit occasional differences of a few years though. The wives' first names coincide, and Vilerovszky is not featured later.

<sup>15</sup> 'Ezen alkalmatossággal azt is tudósítjuk Ektzellenciájának hogy mi akornánk Isten segettségéből a Templomunkban Pingáltotni mint hogy Szniczár munka kész egészen. Kassai lakos Viller nevezetű Pingáló fel valóna ki is most Tornára Pingált Szőlősen tette és teszi munkáját szép Pingállása tecczik sok helyeken is akit vegben vitt, kér tőlünk ezer Négy száz forintokat, de tán oltsóban is engedne ha véle igoz alkuban erednénk; Erednénk is de igen szegenyek vagyunk se honnét gyamalásunk ha volna tsak kevés segettségünk is, hozzá fognánk hogy mentül hamarébb Isten ditsőségére folytatodnék, hogy elő hozzuk a légyen a munkához kit Ektzellenciája javasollya vagy szabadéttya, le borult Nagy alázatossággal kérnénk az Egész Ungvári Klerust ki mivel ha teccik meg segéte bennünket hogy a munkához elő mozdulhatnánk annyiba mennyibe lehetne.' [In this wise, we advise Your Excellency that, with the help of God, we wish to arrange for painting to be done in our church as the carving is complete. A painter from Kassa, by the name of Viller, is willing to make this undertaking. He has lately painted in Torna and has done and does his job in (Nagy-)Szőlős. His fine painting is liked in many places. He regularly demands about 1400 forints for what he has made, but he might even make a better offer if we could close a good deal with him. We would do so gladly, but we are too poor and have no patronage from anywhere. Even with a little help, we would see to it that the work will resume in due course to the glory of God, and we may bring forth whomever Your Excellency recommends or frees for this purpose. We would prostrate ourselves before the whole clergy of Ungvár and beseech them, who would certainly help us if they so please so that we may progress with the work as much as we can.] DAZO, fond 151, opis 6, no. 263

<sup>16</sup> 'Ecclesia #. Pictura Imaginum destituta.' DAZO, fond 151, opis 6, no. 581, fol. 2

<sup>17</sup> DAZO, fond 151, opis 6. no. 1122, fol. 42–69

<sup>18</sup> 'Ecclesia in Matre hac Parochia est ampla, murata non ita pridem exstructa, ad plenam nihilominus consistentiam adhuc non est deducta, tum ideo, quod portis, quas decpris, et sconstitatis ratio exigit, necessario item ornatu, et supellectilibus sacris destimatur, sed et ideo, quod sedilibus [...] e felett a Sz. Háromságnak a B. Sz. Máriát koronázó ízletesen festett képe baldachinum nélkül...' [Its altar is separated from the nave with a picture screen painted by one Viller, a painter from Kassa. The altar holds an ornate tabernacle (...), with a tastefully painted picture of the Holy Trinity crowning the Blessed Virgin Mary over it, without a baldachin...] DAZO, fond 151, opis 16, no. 2175, fol. 5

<sup>19</sup> In the 1879 inventory of the church, the following note is included on the painter of the iconostasis: 'Oltára a hajótól el van különítve az ungvári püspöki templom mintájára bizonyos Viller kassai képiró által festett képállvány által. Az oltáron van díszes tabernaculum, [...] e felett a Sz. Háromságnak a B. Sz. Máriát koronázó ízletesen festett képe baldachinum nélkül...' [Its altar is separated from the nave with a picture screen painted by one Viller, a painter from Kassa. The altar holds an ornate tabernacle (...), with a tastefully painted picture of the Holy Trinity crowning the Blessed Virgin Mary over it, without a baldachin...] DAZO, fond 151, opis 16, no. 2175, fol. 5

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baroque furnishings were replaced, so the iconostasis is no longer in its original place.<sup>20</sup>

At the time of the 1800 census, the church of Velyki Kom'yaty is described as built from a solid material and fully supplied with sculptural works,<sup>21</sup> a possible allusion to the fact that its altar and the wooden sections of its iconostasis were complete. Based on the data collated in 1803 but possibly recorded even earlier, the construction of the church ended exactly in 1792, but at least an additional 800 guilders was meant to spent on the iconostasis.<sup>22</sup> The amount implies that painting and gilding must still have

been pending here as well. Whereas, in Vynohradiv, initially 1400 and subsequently only 1000 guilders was needed for the painting of the iconostasis, Velyki Kom'yaty was 800 guilders short. The price difference may be a realistic reflection of the difference in the size of the two churches. If it was indeed Viller who worked in Velyki Kom'yaty as well, the painting may be dated to the period between 1800 (or rather 1803) and 1806.

As has been suggested above, several fragments from iconostases from the former counties of Sáros and Ugocsa show close stylistic connections with the Velyki

<sup>20</sup> Сирохман/Syrokhan, 2000, 362. Although it has not been confirmed by archival sources, it is conceivable that the old iconostasis of Vynohradiv was transferred to the church of Nove Selo (*Tiszaújhely*), where the current church was built in 1924 and 1925. On the date of construction, see: Сирохман/Syrokhan, 2000, 366–367. The pictures of the iconostasis of Nove Selo are reminiscent of Viller's works even despite the massive repainting. With reference to their large size, they are not likely to have been originally made for the former wooden church of the village. The wooden structure is from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For a photograph of the iconostasis, see: Marosi, István. *Görögkatolikus magyarok Kárpátalján: Közösségek és templomok*, Nagybégány – Beregszász, 2014, 132.

<sup>21</sup> 'Ecclesia # solida. Labore sculptoriosi ex integro provisa'. The parish priest was György Popovics, aged 36, ordained 11 years earlier. DAZO, fond 151, opis 6, no. 581, fol. 1

<sup>22</sup> 'Ecclesia est murata per ipsos Loci Incolas recensius Anno nimirum 1792. exstructa requisito nihilominus ornata, et praeprimis Bemate minus provisiva, quam in finem ejectamur. 800 Rfl.' Other deficiencies related to minor liturgical equipment. DAZO, fond 151, opis 6, no. 1122, fol. 49r.



(4)



Kom'yaty icons.<sup>23</sup> The circle may be further expanded with the subsequently modified iconostases of Korolevo (*Királyháza*), Ugocsa County, and Chabanivka (*Bacsó*), Ung County: Even though the Sovereign Tier of the former is from a later period,<sup>24</sup> the latter has retained the entire original picture set in spite of the alterations.<sup>25</sup> Naturally, it may well be the case that, on the basis of archival sources emerging in future, the list of

(5)



iconostases currently attributed to Viller will be expanded – or reduced for that matter.

In Viller's activities, it is remarkable that first he worked as a gilder and, a little later, as a painter as well. Nothing may be ascertained regarding his prior training; he most probably worked alongside Johann Feck and he may even have won the commissions in Uzhhorod through him. It must have been there that he

<sup>23</sup> The icons from Helcmanovce (*Nagykuncfalva/Helcmanóc*) at the permanent exhibition of the Saris Museum, Bardejov (*Bártfa*). Terdik, 2011b, 13–14. The icon of *Saint Nicholas*, which is now in the collection of the Zemplín Museum (*Zemplínske múzeum*), Michalovce (*Nagy Mihály*), could also be part of this ensemble (110 × 77 cm [43.31 × 30.32"]). Inv. No. NSU–46. The repainting of the Apostle Tier from the wooden church of Tarna Mare (*Tarnafürdő*) (currently at the permanent exhibition of the Satu Mare County Museum/Muzeul Județean Satu Mare/); the iconostasis of the wooden church of Novoselytsia (*Sósújfalú/Csarnatőújfalú*). Terdik, 2011b, 13. Cf. the Picture on the page 85 in this volume.

<sup>24</sup> No mention is made of the iconostasis of the current church of Korolevo, constructed in 1864. Cf. Сирохман/Syrokhan, 2000, 383. For the iconostasis there a quotation was submitted by carver Péter Kovaliczky in 1880. It seems that, for the structure made at that time, earlier pictures were utilised; only the sovereign-tier icons were replaced.

<sup>25</sup> The church of Chabanivka was built in 1881, see: Сирохман/Syrokhan, 2000, 68–69. The former church was a wooden church. According to its inventory compiled in 1880, its *antimins* was presented by Bishop Bacszinsky in 1793, (possibly a reference to the date of construction and consecration), and it is commented that 'its iconostasis was painted in good condition' (translated from the Hungarian original). DAZO, fond 151, opis 16, no. 2174, fol. 7v. At the time of the compilation of the 1835 inventory, the wooden church was known to have been built about 44 years earlier, i.e. around 1791. DAZO, fond 151, opis 8, no. 1358, fol. 23r. Thus, the late-baroque iconostasis must have been made in the late 1790s, and, expanded by one row, it was retained in the new church as well. I wish to thank Father Makariy Medvid for the photographs of the iconostasis.





(9)



10 cm



(10)



(11)



study the paintings of the Cathedral, and the possibility that he could even make Spalinszky's acquaintance cannot be discounted, either, especially if the guilders Viller and Villerovszky were indeed the same person. Whichever way it happened – in a manner still difficult to reconstruct in detail – Viller came to be a master who would reproduce Spalinszky's style with the greatest precision in the Eparchy of Mukacheve at the turn of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Viller would adhere to his prototypes most faithfully in the Sovereign Tiers of iconostases<sup>26</sup> (Pictures 1–3). Depictions of the feasts could also draw upon common sources, but, adapting to the board sizes of the smaller iconostases he was assigned, Viller would considerably simplify compositions (Pictures 4 and 5). In the icons of the Apostles, he would apply even more changes: The Apostles of Kenézlő and Velyki Kom'yaty are very similar but they differ

<sup>26</sup> The quotation placed in the open book in the hand of the teaching Christ is the same as almost everywhere else: 'Придѣте блгословенни оца моего, наследуйте оуготованное вамъ цѣствие со сложенія мира. Возалкаѣ бо ся и дасте ми ясти. Матф. Гл. Кѣ.' – 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food' (Matt. Ch 5; transcribed by András Dobos).

<sup>27</sup> Matthew the Evangelist: 'Книга Родства Исуса Христа Сина Давида. Сина Авраамла. гл. а.' – 'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matt Ch 1). Luke the Evangelist: 'Понеже оубо мнози начаща чинити повѣст. о из. лука ꙗ гл. а.' – 'Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative...' (Luke Ch 1) John the Evangelist: 'В началъ бѣ [слово] и [слово бѣ] оу бѣа. [И] бѣ бѣ Слово. гл. а.' – 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John, Ch 1). Peter the Apostle: 'Сми[рите]ся оубо подѣ крѣпкую руку Божию, да вы возне[сет] во время' гл. ѳ.' – 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you' (Ch 5). Philip the Apostle: 'Апѣль Филип / Гдѣ и покажи намъ оца и довлѣть намъ. Иванъ гл дѣ.' – 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us' (John Ch 14) – transcriptions by András Dobos.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Terdik, 2011a, 43–44.

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from those of Uzhhorod in a number of ways, showing closer affinity with Spalinszky's Apostles in Máriapócs and Tokaj instead. It is noticeable that Viller places significantly more inscriptions in the open books held in the hands of the Apostles than Spalinszky, possibly dictated by the demands of the customers (Pictures 6 and 7).<sup>29</sup> The prototypes of Spalinszky's Apostles go back to the mass-produced graphic plates from the Netherlands widespread in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, presumably familiar to him, mainly in a form distilled and transformed by the Kiev Painting Academy, from the engravings illustrating the liturgical books published by printing presses in Kiev.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps having even inherited Spalinszky's models, Viller also worked from similar material but he would vary his prototypes freely. In the axis of the Apostle Tier, Christ as the Great High Priest appears, with an open book in His

was faced with the fact that church construction projects intensifying during the tenure of Bishop Bacszinsky generated a great demand for the making of new and impressive-looking furnishing items. It could also become obvious to him that the iconostasis of Uzhhorod would come to function as a model in the whole of the Eparchy. In Velyki Kom'yaty, in all probability, Viller or his workshop performed the gilding and prepared the *polierweiss* surfaces as well. A notable detail on the practice of the workshop may be derived from the fact that, at the top of the cornice closing the Sovereign Tier of the iconostasis, in the area in front of the feast icons, pencil inscriptions of the names of individual feasts in German have been discovered, presumably designed to facilitate the replacement of the boards, just as the currently barely legible Arabic numerals written on their reverse sides did.<sup>26</sup> It is unlikely that he transported so many boards and carvings to Košice because, on account of the road

<sup>26</sup> Comparable inscriptions and numbers have been found on the iconostasis of Fábánháza as well. Cf. Terdik, 2014d, 195.

<sup>27</sup> Terdik, 2011a, 54–62.

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conditions and transport facilities of the time, this could have resulted in substantial damage of the material. It is reasonable to posit that he went to the location himself and strove to complete the tasks as quickly as possible on site, as the masters working in Hajdúdorog a few years later did, too,<sup>27</sup> though, of course, transportation cannot completely be ruled out, either.

It is uncertain when Viller began painting icons; painting activities of a different type by him are not evidenced, though there must have been such instances as well as the inhabitants of Vynohradiv allude to 'his painting in Torna' in their 1799 letter. Since there was no Greek Catholic community in Turňa nad Bodvou (Torna), he must have received a commission for the Roman Catholic church, possibly the County Hall or the Palace. It is also possible that Viller identified a grand opportunity in the 'market niche' created by the death of the ageing Mihály Spalinszky. During his assignments in Uzhhorod, he must have been able to

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hand – just as in Uzhhorod –<sup>31</sup> but with the omission of the Theotokos and John the Baptist (Picture 13). In the Prophet Tier, an even greater scope for different arrangements is provided: Whereas, in Uzhhorod, Spalinszky had painted half-figure Prophets in four-foiled picture areas, in Velyki Kom'yaty, Viller depicted them in full figure, against varied backgrounds (Pictures 11 and 12). He would proceed in like manner in the ensembles of Koroleve and Chabanivka, though, adjusting to the properties of the respective structures, he would feature two upright Prophets in a single picture area in the latter instances. In Kenézlő, where the carver faithfully reproduced the basic patterns of the iconostasis of Uzhhorod, Viller also returned to the half-figure form but diverged from the Uzhhorod compositions by including a large number of inscriptions here as well: Exactly half of the Prophets hold inscribed scrolls in their hands. In the picture of the crucified Saviour closing the pediment of the iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty, his vision as a painter is manifested in a number of details. The greenish skin colour of Christ painted with cold shades serves as an indication of the genuineness of His death. He also employed the same cold skin colour in painting Mary lying on her bier in the icon of the *Dormition of the Theotokos* in the Feast Tier. A surprising component of the

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cross is Adam's skull visualised in a naturalistic fashion, even with an hourglass placed upon it by the painter as an iconographic curiosity, with a bird (dove?) perching on its top (Picture 14). In contemporary iconography, as a symbol of transience, the hourglass was frequently an attribute of death but, combined with the crucifix, it could also be featured in so-called *Memento Mori* depictions, an indispensable constituent of which was the skull. There are also examples of a bird with a flower in its beak sitting in compositions of the latter type, as a possible allusion to the soul.<sup>32</sup> Presumably, the bird on the hourglass is a symbol of the human spirit here as well. Through these elements, by addressing the viewer individually and reminding him or her of his or her own sinfulness and death, the painter emphasised the personal aspect of the meaning of the skull symbol denoting the fall of the whole of human kind, which was reversed by Christ's death.

<sup>31</sup> 'Пріідоша к нему и сотвори два надесати да будут с нимъ и да посылаеть ихъ проповѣ[дати]. Марк гл. г.' – 'And He appointed twelve so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach' (Mark Ch 3, transcribed by András Dobos).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Szilárdfy, Zoltán. *A magánáhitat szentképei a szerző magángyűjteményéből*, I, 17–18. század (Devotio Hungarorum, 2), Szeged, 1995, 32, 44, kat. 65, 228 Id. *Ikonográfia – Kultusz történet: Képes tanulmányok*, Budapest, 2003, Picture LXXV

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Viller adopted an arrangement, originating in Ukrainian areas in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which included the painting of the two liturgy-composer Church Fathers, Saint Basil the Great and Saint John Chrysostom on the bevelled jambs of the Royal Doors, as well as of a dove in the arch of the doors as a reference to the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup> In the iconostasis of Chabanivka, he ventured even further: On the frames of the deacon's doors, he placed naturalistic, painted bouquets of flowers tied around with a ribbon. Within the material attributed to him, it is solely in these paintings that he perceptibly transcended the method of icon painting, essentially confined to reproduction, which he would take rather seriously. This could be explained not necessarily by theoretical but rather by practical reasons – such as efficient time management during work, and, through these bouquets, he also succeeded in demonstrating his familiarity with other genres of painting (e.g. still life) (Pictures 15 and 16).

#### List of pictures

1. Teaching Christ from the iconostasis of Kenézlő
2. Theotokos with the Infant. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.14

3. Teaching Christ. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.28
4. The Nativity of Jesus Christ. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.49
5. The Entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.63
6. Saint Luke the Evangelist. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.80
7. Saint Bartholomew the Apostle. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.76
8. The iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty in its original location Old photograph, Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest
9. The conserved components of the iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty
10. The Royal Doors. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.21–22.
11. Saint David the Prophet. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.112
12. Saint Moses the Prophet. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.114
13. Jesus Christ the Great High Priest. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.87
14. The Crucified Saviour. NM, Inv. nr. 2018.124.136
15. Saint Nicholas in the Sovereign Tier, Chabanivka
16. Bouquet of flowers, fillet of the deacon's door, Chabanivka
17. The iconostasis of Kenézlő

<sup>33</sup> The inscription in the open book of one of them reads: 'Со страхомъ Б'жимъ и со вѣрою присту(пите).'- 'Approach with fear of God and with faith' – transcribed by András Dobos.



