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Lugano lake artists in the northernmost heart of eighteenth-century Catholic baroque art: Guido Antonio Longhi and members of the Paracca family¹

Abstract

The Lugano lake region numbers amongst the most important cradles of European art and architecture since the middle ages. The paths of itinerant masons, painters, builders, sculptors, architects and other diverse Lugano artists and artisans have left their traces throughout Europe. They made a particularly significant impact in the case of the Baroque style. Approximately 40 such individuals were active in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the period spanning the sixteenth through the eighteenth century. It has been argued most prominently by Polish art historian M. Karpowicz that their impact was crucial to the development of the specific Lithuanian architectural style of the eighteenth century termed the so-called Vilnius Baroque. The present article discusses hypotheses related to Guido Antonio Longhi and members of the Paracca family, who constitute the group of the most outstanding Lugano lake artists to contribute to the Vilnius Baroque.

Keywords: Lugano lake artists, Vilnius Baroque, Daugava river region, Guido Antonio Longhi, Antonio Paracca, Francesco Paracca, Domenico Paracca.

Introduction

Over the last five centuries, the Lugano lake region has been divided between the Swiss and Italian states. Ticino — the southern-most Swiss canton — controls most of the lands that surround the lake. Most of its inhabitants speak Italian, in contrast to Switzerland's German and French majority. Its main city is Lugano, an important European financial center through the last half century. Historically, however, the Ticinese lands were poor, marked by a dense population, bad soil, difficult communication due to the mountainous landscape, and a dearth of industry. These challenges have given rise to a people who, to cope with the material problems, have been famous across Europe as universal, technical, creative and unique artists, builders and architects, traveling the continent in search of wealthy and powerful patrons since the middle ages. The most famous builders of Rome — Domenico Fontana, Francesco Borromini, Giacomo della Porta — all originated in this same region.

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One of the countries that welcomed Lugano lake artists (hereafter also “Ceresio artists”) was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, hereafter “GDL”. Approximately forty architects, sculptors, painters, as well as other types of artists and craftsmen had left their mark on nearly fifty sites across the historical territory of the Grand Duchy, including areas of present-day Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Belarus. In Vilnius alone, a dozen objects have survived the historical tumults of the ensuing centuries until today. In other very important centers of the region — Hrodna, Slanim, Viciebsk, Kaunas and Niasviž — their impact is also clearly visible, though historical developments of the modern period have severely damaged and in many instances entirely destroyed their architectural legacy on the built environment.

From a statistical perspective, the Lugano lake artists’ contributions in the GDL may not seem ostensibly overwhelming. The number of churches and related sacral monuments they constructed from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries does not exceed one percent of the total quantity of all sacred architecture that existed in the vast Lithuanian territories. This type of calculation and approach to gauging cultural and artistic impact, however, is misleading, due to the intersection of a particular historical fact rather unique to Lithuania during the pre-modern period of the late Baroque and Enlightenment era, and to material-technical and socio-cultural aspects of these Ceresio artists’ own particular building practices. On one level, whereas during the centuries of their activity in the GDL, the region was dominated by wooden architecture (including sacral architecture), the Lugano artists specialized in the construction of masonry architecture, producing brick and stone buildings that constituted special rarities in the usual landscape and necessitated exceptional materials and technical skills. On another level, due to their exceptional training and technical and material practices these same artisans were only engaged by the richest and the most influential patrons with the cultural awareness and monetary means to enlist such extraordinary architectural productivity. Taken together, these factors resulted in a uniquely limited architectural oeuvre restricted to only the most representative sites in the territories of the Grand Duchy. What is more, the forms and styles introduced by migrants from the Ceresio region to the architectural landscape of the GDL were usually innovative and avant-garde, and subsequently replicated and spread throughout the region by local artists. This phenomenon of dissemination at the local level has resulted in issues of attribution today, given the dearth of documentary evidence in the case of many monuments.

To address the state of research in the context of Lithuanian scholarship of recent decades, the phenomenon of the Lugano lake artists already started to attract scholarly notice in the last decade of the twentieth century. An important article by S. Samuolienė synthesized works by Comacine sculptors (mostly stuccoists or plasterers) in the lands of the Grand Duchy². While the ensuing decades produced no specific studies dedicated to the phenomenon, several researchers have thoroughly analyzed select individuals and monuments. For example, M. Paknys has devoted years of research to the Pažaislis monastery, a late seventeenth-century complex exceptional in the context of the entire

²S. Samuolienė, *Komaskai ir stiuko lipdyba Šiaurės Europoje bei Lietuvoje XVII a. II pusėje*, [in:] *Nuo gotikos iki romantizmo. Senoji Lietuvos dailė*, Vilnius 1992, pp. 56–73.

Polish-Lithuanian state, and a monument to which a group of Valsoldese artists (from the region of Valsolda on the northern banks of lake Lugano) made important contributions³. A. Kaladžinskaitė has contributed studies on representatives of the Fontana family of architects, who originated from different parts of the Lugano lake region, migrating to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth since the end of the seventeenth century, and making a visible impact on the architecture of the next century⁴. In the work of the present author, the critical role of Lugano artists in the art and architecture of the GDL has been summarized in several publications and on the website: www.ldk-ticino.info, created in 2017 and continuously updated⁵.

In the Belarusian lands that historically covered most of the Grand Duchy territory the legacy of Lugano artists has been significantly devastated by the subsequent misfortunes of history, but still remains visible. Thus far, however, no art historians in the current-day country of Belarus have dedicated studies to the Ceresio phenomenon as such, though some artists are mentioned in general surveys on Belarusian art and architecture⁶. Some studies indirectly address certain narrow questions, such as that by A. Shalanda (Шаланда), which treats a representative of the Greppy family who worked in Hrodna⁷, or by O. Bazhenava (Баженева), which includes the work of M. Pedetti in Niasviž⁸, with the former artist originating from the western and the latter from the eastern Lugano lake region.

Polish historians have hitherto made the most significant contributions to the research on the migration of Lugano lake artists to the Grand Duchy. Beginning already in the mid-twentieth century, S. Kozakiewicz started collecting, analyzing and system-

³One of the last books on the topic, where all previous are indicated and summarized: M. Paknys, *Pažaislio vienuolyno statybos ir dekoravimo istorija*, Vilnius 2013.

⁴Selected articles by A. Kaladžinskaitė: *Architektas Domenico Fontana: autorystės labirintuose*, [in:] “Menotyra”, 4, 2018, pp. 259–277; *Nauji architektūros istorijos šaltiniai: architektas Juozapas Fontana*, [in:] “Menotyra”, 4, 2012, pp. 285–300; *Vilniaus baroko mokyklos sklaida Livonijos, Polocko, Viciebsko ir Mstislavlio vaivadijose*, [in:] *XVIII a. studijos: Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė tarp tradicijų ir naujovių*, Vilnius 2014, pp. 242–259.

⁵Artistic relations between Lugano lake region and Lithuania has been studied in the project of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania institute that started in 2009. It has been headed by a researcher of Vytautas Magnus University R. Kamuntavičius, and financed mostly by the honorary consul of Lithuania in Ticino — Gintautas Bertašius. The collaborators of the project were S.M. Lanza and A. Vasiliauskienė, both from the Vytautas Magnus University. As a result, several publications have been published in Lithuanian and in Italian: R. Kamuntavičius, A. Vasiliauskienė, S.M. Lanza, *Lugano ežero pakrančių menininkai — Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės baroko kūrėjai (XVI–XVIII a.)*, [in:] “Darbai ir dienos”, t. 61, Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas 2013, pp. 233–261; R. Kamuntavičius, A. Vasiliauskienė, S.M. Lanza, *Gli artisti del lago di Lugano e del Mendrisiotto nel Granducato di Lituania (dal XVI al XVIII sec.)*, [in:] “Arte e Storia”, Lugano 2013 (agosto-ottobre).

⁶Selected bibliography: *Архітэктура Беларусі*, Мінск 1993; Т. Габрусь, *Мураваныя харалы. Сакральная архітэктура Беларускага барока*, Мінск 2001; Ю. Гардзеў, *Магдэбургская Гародня*, Гародня-Вроцлав 2008; *Каталіцкія храмы на Беларусі*, Мінск 2001; Б. Лазука, *Беларускае барока*, Мінск 2001; *Страчаная спадчына*, ed. Т. Габрусь, Мінск 2003; В. Чантурыя, *История архитектуры Белоруссии*, т. 1, Минск 1985.

⁷A. Шаланда, *Род Антонія дэ Кгрыпа, муляра замка Гарагзенскага, ў канцы XVI — першай палове XVII ст.*, [in:] *Castrum, urbis et bellum*, Баранавічы 2002, pp. 402–414.

⁸О. Боженова, *Радзивилловский Несвиж*, Минск 2007.

atizing relevant data⁹. By far the greatest body of research, however, is that made by M. Karpowicz, who since the 1980s has written dozens of books and articles directly related to the topic of migrant Ceresio artists and architects in the GDL¹⁰. His scholarly oeuvre investigating not only individuals, their origins, family ties and careers, but also their artistic style within the broader context of regional and European art, has had a profound influence on subsequent scholarship, resulting in the multiplication of insights and discussion of the phenomenon in various contexts in work of his various colleagues and acolytes¹¹. The present author owes a debt of gratitude to Karpowicz himself for valuable consultations.

It is also important to mention that Karpowicz's work has likewise had a significant scientific impact beyond the confines of his native Poland and north-easternmost Europe, as his scholarship through translation has become significant to historical studies in the Lugano lake region on the Swiss-Italian border. Among his closest collaborators, the Italian scholar G. Mollisi, director of the Museum Casa Pagani in Valsolda, is researching the migration of the Valley's artists in various European lands, including Poland-Lithuania¹². While it is difficult to over-estimate Karpowicz's scientific impact on research questions taking up issues of Lugano artists in Poland-Lithuania, a few remarks are warranted here. Firstly, that his scholarship (as indeed the entire Polish historiographical tradition to which he belongs) regards Lithuania as a part of and beholden to Polish civilization, results in the frequent dismissal, minimization, or under-evaluation of Lithuanian cultural and artistic originality and indeed autonomy. Secondly, from this it also follows that certain specific Lithuanian cultural and historical contexts and sources have been ignored.

In light of these mis-estimations and lacunae in the existing scholarship, the scientific and methodological novelty and utility of the present synthetic essay lies not only in its goal to summarize prior research on the topic, but also to draw attention to some specificities unique to the Grand Duchy that can be seen only when removed from the unilateral totality of the omnipresent „Polish civilization.“ In addition to and

⁹S. Kozakiewicz, *Valsolda i architekci z niej pochodzący w Polsce*, [in:] „Biuletyn historii sztuki i kultury”, nr 1/2, Warszawa 1947, pp. 306–321.

¹⁰The most important synthetic studies by M. Karpowicz include: *Artisti ticinesi in Polonia nel '500*, Lugano 1987; *Artisti ticinesi in Polonia nel '600*, Ticino 1983; *Artisti ticinesi in Polonia nella prima metà del '600*, Ticino 2002; *Artisti ticinesi in Polonia nella prima metà del '700*, Ticino 1999; *Artisti Valsoldesi in Polonia nel '600 e '700*, Como 1996.

¹¹In this context, there can be mentioned P.J. Jamski, K. Guttmejer and the collaborators of the series *Materiały do dziejów sztuki sakralnej na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*. Guttmejer published an extensive monograph on Guido Antonio Longhi (Warsaw 2006), whereas Jamski an extensive number of publications on specific topics. Some selected positions: P.J. Jamski, *Kaplica Św. Kazimierza w Wilnie i jej twórcy*, [in:] *LDK sakralinė dailė: atodangos ir naujieji kontekstai*, Vilnius 2008, pp. 91–112; P.J. Jamski, *Pałace niedoszłego króla. Artystyczne przygotowania Kazimierza Jana Sapiehy do Sejmu Grodzieńskiego w roku 1693*, [in:] „Studia nad sztuką renesansu i baroku”, VI, cz. 1, Lublin 2005, pp. 53–83.

¹²A recent article by G. Mollisi directly related to Ceresio artist activities in the GDL: *Giovanni Maria Merlo (1631–1707), uno scultore valsoldese fra l'Italia settentrionale e la Lituania*, [in:] *Pažaislio vie-nuolyno 350 metų istorija*, ed. M. Paknys, Vilnius: Lietuvos kultūros tyrimų institutas 2014, pp. 87–110. It is important to add that G. Mollisi has been the editor of the major scientific journals dedicated to art history in Ticino: „Arte e Storia” and „Arte e cultura”.

building upon these synthetic aspects, this article critically reviews and re-contextualizes several hypotheses raised by Karpowicz: first, what follows re-examines the figure of Guido Antonio Longhi, active in Warsaw through the 1740s, and credited with several churches in the far-away Grand Duchy. Second, I revisit the phenomenon of the Paracca family members, among whom Karpowicz stressed the importance of Antonio, relegating Francesco and Domenico to the proverbial shadows. What follows undertakes a sharper distinction among them and more accurate identification of the monuments they contributed. Lastly and more broadly, the relation between these selected Ceresio artists and others active in the Grand Duchy is reconsidered.

Guido Antonio Longhi

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a decentralized country lacking a strong central government, especially since the sixteenth century. The Grand Duchy was governed by the nobility, which constituted up to 10% of all society, and wrote their own laws, executed justice, and together with their Polish compatriots elected a single Commonwealth ruler and, simply speaking, carried out the actual governing of the state, without any higher power above them. Certainly, nobility was not a homogeneous stratum per se, as some magnate families owned much more land and controlled enormous financial resources and powers. The notion of the state without an overwhelming and dominant center contributed to both local investment and provincial development. Lower strata of the nobility spent funds decorating native churches, whereas richer and more enlightened patrons funded much more splendid, elaborate, and expensive projects. These were focused, however, not on Warsaw or Vilnius but on local sites associated with patrimonial territories and estates. The result of this patronage paradigm was a Grand Duchy that looked like a homogeneous tissue decorated punctuated by occasional jewel-like churches, palaces, and monasteries.

The northern part of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, located along the river Daugava, experienced its own regional specificity lasting over centuries. Historically, Polock, already formed in the ninth century, was the most important center in this region, and today is regarded as the foremost cultural and political center of Belarusian statehood. It has preserved specific deeply authentic traces of its identity until today. To the east, on the border with Muscovy, Viciebsk for centuries has been the most significant strategic outpost in the north-eastern Grand Duchy specifically and the western Catholic world more generally. To the west from Polock, in modern-day Latvia, the region of Inflanty (today called Latgale; Daugavpils is the major city) was part of the former Livonian Order and then from 1561 belonged to the Grand Duchy, and since the Lublin Union (1569) was administered by both Poland and Lithuania. Bordering with Lithuania and having no physical contact with Poland, Inflanty became a part of cultural and political world of the Grand Duchy. One of its main cities was Krāslava.

The development of the region was very uneven. On the one hand, the constant wars with Muscovy and Sweden since the sixteenth century severely devastated the Daugava river region many times. On the other hand, its fortuitous position — on the banks of the major river — contributed to the prosperity in times of stability. Since the Middle ages the river has been an important economic artery connecting Ruś and

Muscovy with the Baltic sea ports, especially Rīga. One such period of prosperity happened in the eighteenth century, since the end of the Northern war in 1721, and resulted in impressive legacy of art and architecture.

Starting from the 1930s, art historians have noticed the existence of a specific branch of late European baroque architecture that flourished in the Grand Duchy. They named it “Vilnius baroque” and assigned to it churches constructed between 1730 and 1790. Since its earliest manifestation, this phenomenon was associated with northern Italian artists, especially adherents of Guarino Guarini (1624–1683), an influential architect from Piedmont, a region with close relations to Lugano lake region artists. Early monuments of the Vilnius baroque style include in Vilnius the tower of the All-Saints church, in Minsk the Dominican church, and the church of Discalced Carmelites in the town of Hlybokaje (close to Polock). Construction or reconstruction of all three started in the 1730s¹³.

While Karpowicz concurred with scholarly consensus about the starting point of the phenomenon, he argues that the first among the most mature manifestations of Vilnius baroque is the Sobor of St. Sofia in Polock¹⁴. Constructed in the eleventh century, it was one of several largest and the most important Christian cathedrals in Ruś and served as one of the key spiritual centers of the region. After the building was devastated in the Northern war (1710), it was decided to build a completely new structure. Works started in 1738, and already in 1750 the new Cathedral was consecrated. In the traditional historiography, J.Ch. Glaubitz (1700–1767) has been indicated as the main architect. Karpowicz, however, has expressed doubts about that. He suggested that Glaubitz could have participated only in the final stage of construction, and slightly modified the initial project by adding some conservative details, such as the portal. According to him, there are plenty of elements in the structure that are alien to Glaubitz, including among other aspects the light and transparent towers, with open holes. Vertically, the towers are divided into sections: higher and lower ones interchange one with another while gradually becoming slimmer and smaller. The lightness and the dynamism of the façade are stressed by tall niches and shaped horizontal lines that cross the whole façade. All of these elements would become the core of the Vilnius baroque style. At that time, however, they were too innovative and too “Italian” to the artistic style of J.Ch. Glaubitz, which was much more restrained and conservative.

Karpowicz argues that the architect of the Sobor was Guido Antonio Longhi (1691–1756) from Viggiù, a village located in the Lugano lake region. He was born in a family whose members a half century previous had worked on the construction of SS. Ambrogio e Carlo al Corso basilica in Rome dedicated to the people of Lombardy — the second with the largest cupola in the city. In Poland-Lithuania, Longhi was supported from the 1740s by his influential compatriots and relatives, especially by Giacomo Fontana (1710–1773), the architect of the King. In order to better understand the context, the first wife of Longhi’s father was from Valsolda, the region that produced many important architects who worked in Poland-Lithuania; in addition, the brother of

¹³ J. Kowalczyk, *Guarino Guarini a późnobarokowa architektura w Polsce i na Litwie*, [in:] “Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki”, XLII, nr 3, 1997, pp. 179–200.

¹⁴ M. Karpowicz, *Wileńska odmiana architektury XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 7–40.

the Polish King's architect Carlo Antonio Bai (1678–1740, born in the nearby Magliaso, Ticino) lived in the same native village as Longhi and was closely allied to his family.

Longhi designed churches and their elements in a specifically rococo type style. The undulating lines of the façades, transparent towers with holes and big open windows, shaped windows and openings, and the forms of arcs and niches were all innovative not only in Poland-Lithuania, but also in his native region. Art historians attribute to him Ss. Trinità church in Crema (Lombardy) as well as some other smaller projects in native Viggiù and Locarno. In Poland, his main project was the church of St. Trinity in Kobyłka (1740–1745), close to Warsaw¹⁵.

Karpowicz argues that because the style of Longhi was excessively innovative — not only for Poland, but also for his native land — this is why he had no direct followers. However, the features of such a type of architecture took root in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and became an integral feature of the Vilnius baroque style. Based on analogies, it can be supposed that Longhi could have designed additional churches in the Grand Duchy, all having the same innovative features or their traces. These include St. Michael the Archangel in Ivjaniec and the Bernardine church (today Orthodox Cathedral) in Minsk, as well as contributions to the designs of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary church in Vilnius. In all cases, his contribution has not been documented and, it can be supposed (a suggestion also expressed by Karpowicz himself) that the designs could have been made by other artists from northern Italy, or by some locals affected by the ideas of Longhi.

The Paracca family: Antonio, Francesco and Domenico

Northern Italian forms, especially those created and spread in Piedmont, were rooted in the Grand Duchy throughout the eighteenth century, contributing to the Vilnius baroque style. If Guido Antoni Longhi can be called the trailblazer at the vanguard of this phenomenon, among the most famous of his followers was a compatriot Antonio Ludovico Paracca (1722 — circa 1790), born in Valsolda Castello. Though separated geographically by the waters of Lugano lake and chronologically by one generation, these two architects nevertheless had a shared tradition of artistic activities and most probably common relatives¹⁶.

Information on Antonio Paracca's life is very scarce. It is known that he was born in a family of artists with deep roots. Paracca sculptors nicknamed Valsoldo and Valsoldini were known in sixteenth-seventeenth century Rome and decorated such important sites as the basilica of S. Maria Maggiore. No known information survives about the exact date of Antonio's arrival in Poland-Lithuania, but it can be inferred that he migrated through the mediation of his powerful compatriots who enjoyed special positions at the Royal court and among the magnates of the country¹⁷. His activities in Poland-Lithuania were documented during the period spanning 1750–1775. It is also known that he married a local noble woman Małachowska and lived in Latgale

¹⁵ K. Guttmejer, *Guido Antonio Longhi. Działalność architektoniczna w Polsce*, Warszawa 2006.

¹⁶ M. Karpowicz, *Wileńska odmiana architektury XVIII wieku*, pp 42–73.

¹⁷ The God mother of Antonio was the mother of D. Merlini (1730–1797), an influential architect of the Polish-Lithuanian ruler.

in a manor close to Ludza town. Antonio had three sons, only one of whom — Domenico — lived until old age, because the others died in 1812 during the Napoleonic wars while fighting on the side of Lithuania against Russia. His great-grandchild Ignazio Paracca was deported to Siberia for participation in the 1863 uprising. Hence, the Paraccas became permanent immigrants not only rooted in the Grand Duchy, but also acting as patriots of their adopted nation.

Karpowicz is the foremost researcher to analyze at length the oeuvres and biographies of the Paracca. His first monographic study, published in 2008¹⁸, was updated and supplemented in 2012¹⁹. In these studies, he not only reconstructed the Paracca family tree based on church registers in Valsolda, but also established many attributions of the most important monuments, furnishing descriptions of each, to constitute Paracca's oeuvre. He concluded that Antonio Paracca was among the foremost architects of his age living in the Grand Duchy and perhaps in the whole Polish-Lithuanian state, his work embodying the most innovative and liberal forms in period architecture. Projects associated with Paracca are dispersed across the whole territory of the Grand Duchy, with a special concentration in its northern region.

The main patrons of Paracca were families of the Lithuanian nobility, especially the Plater. The latter had their roots in German Livonia. Many Germans came to the conquered Latvian and Estonian lands from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. In middle of the sixteenth century, the Livonian state collapsed. On the political level, it was split among Lithuania, Sweden and Denmark. Later, Muscovy intervened and through the following century rooted its power in the northern and central part of the former Livonia. On the religious level, the lands were split among protestants and catholics, with the latter in the minority and concentrated in the Latgale region. The local German families, who had always composed the cultural and political elites, contributed much to the promoting of Catholicism and pursued similar strategies compared to their Polish-Lithuanian colleagues. The Plater numbered among these clans and were moreover very much polonized, and culturally merged with Polish-Lithuanian tradition already in the eighteenth century.

Krāslava, located on the river Daugava, was the main residential city of the Plater. Constantine Ludwig Broel-Plater (1722–1778), an elder of Livonia, greatly invested in making Krāslava an important cultural and religious center of the region. His efforts initiated an unprecedented heyday of crafts and economic prosperity, such that tradesmen, artisans, and other expert professionals came or were recruited from all over Europe to contribute to and benefit from the local boom. In 1752, Plater constructed a new city hall with lines of shops, works attributed by some scholars to Antonio²⁰. Sadly, these buildings have not survived today. In addition, Antonio Paracca designed

¹⁸ M. Karpowicz, *Antonio Paracca. Architetto del Rococò estremo*, Valsolda 2008.

¹⁹ M. Karpowicz, *Wileńska odmiana architektury XVIII wieku*, pp. 43–73.

²⁰ In older literature, there is a hypothesis that the city hall together with the lines of shops could have been designed by Antonio Paracca (E. Łopaciński, *Nieznane dane archiwalne do historii sztuki Wilna*, [in:] *Prace i materiały*, t. 3, Wilno 1938–1939, 97, poz. 801). The same has been repeated by M. Karpowicz (*Antonio Paracca...*). In the recent Latvian and Lithuanian historiography, however, the project is being assigned to another architect of the Platers — Jan Tobias Diderstein.

the Krāslava church of the Missionary order (1755–1767), regarded as the premier example of baroque architecture not only in Latgale, but in the entire Latvian state.

The main palace of the Platers (today in a semi-restored condition) was completed in 1791. It was decorated with sumptuous frescoes, likely executed by another Italian protégé of the Plater, painter Filippo Castaldi (1734–1814, born in Arpino, in the Frosinone region of Italy)²¹. The mural paintings included portraits of the Plater family and scenes of Roman architectural vedute adapted from period prints by Piranesi. In literature, the palace architects are indicated as Antonio Paracca²², as well as Domenico Paracca (a more grounded attribution)²³. Most probably, the latter was Domenico Andrea Ludovico Carlo Paracca, father of Antonio Ludovico, born 1694 in Castello²⁴. The elder Paracca spent some time in Latgale and was recorded as traveling between his native Valsolda and Poland-Lithuania in the first half of the 18th century²⁵. He appears to have been the first documented Paracca family member to come to Poland-Lithuania. Close to the Plater palace, a bit earlier in 1759, a library building was constructed, one of the largest in the region containing about twenty-thousand books. This edifice is firmly attributed to Antonio Paracca. The façade of the building is one of the most impressive examples of the Vilnius baroque style, featuring in its central block an expressively curved section.

In Latgale several more churches are attributed to Antonio Paracca. It is believed that he could have designed the Pasiene church (1753–1761). The curves in its façade recall those of the Krāslava library²⁶. In the same hypothetical manner, the façade of the Ilūkstē church constructed in 1762 has likewise been assigned to him²⁷. Unlike Pasiene, however, the monument in Ilūkstē has not survived today, but was destroyed in 1960.

In Latvian historiography, there can be found other objects attributed to the Paracca family name. This includes the palace of the noble Borch family (1783–1793) located in Varakļāni, belonging to the same Borch who contributed to the funding

²¹ On Castaldi see A. Ryszkiewicz, *CASTALDI, Filippo*, [in:] *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 21, 1978. For his work in Latgale see the work of R. Kaminska: *Filipo Kastaldi un viņa mantojums*, [in:] “Makslas Vesture un Teorija”, 2, 2004, pp. 20–28; and *Filippo Castaldi (1734–1814) and his heritage in Polish Livonia (Latgale)*, [in:] *Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* 5, ed. Wojciech Walczak and Karol Łopatecki, Białystok: Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy 2013, pp. 225–247.

²² *Latgale, the Dvina River and Szlachta — The History of Krāslava: From Neolithic Times till the Eighteenth Century*, http://www.seligman.org.il/Kra%20slava_history_1.html [30.04.2020].

²³ A. Zarāns, *Latvijas pilis un muižas. Castles and manors of Latvia*, Rīga 2006, p. 291. This can also be deduced from a letter written by Domenico in 1766, where he reported to Plater about almost completed roof of the palace. Lithuanian State Historical Archives, Platerių fondas nr. 1276, reg. 2, file 116, fol. 90, *Letter from Domenico Paracca to Constantine Ludwig or Casimir Constantine Plater*, 1766.

²⁴ Domenico Paracca, the father of Antonio, was also an architect working in Latgale and the neighboring region. This can be deduced by a letter written by him from Krāslava to a member of Plater family in 1766 (see previous footnote). In this letter, he discussed a new project for a large church. The document's content is also referenced in R. Kaminska, *Construction history of Krāslava St. Louis church in the historical and artistic context of the region*, [in:] *Tridento visuotinio bažnyčios susirinkimo (1545–1563) įtaka Lietuvos kultūrai: susirinkimo idėjų suvokimas ir sklaida Vidurio Europos rytuose*, Vilnius 2009, p. 106.

²⁵ A. Kaladžinskaitė, *Architektai Fontanos Abiejų Tautų Respublikoje. Klano istorija*, [in:] “Menotyra”, t. 27, nr. 1, 2020, p. 5 (footnote 19).

²⁶ A. Zarāns, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

²⁷ J. Paszenda, *Budowle Jezuickie w Polsce XVI-XVIII w.*, vol. 1, Kraków 1999, p. 38.

of the Pasiene church reconstruction. It is indicated that a son of Antonio Paracca amended the original project by the Italian Vincenzo Mazzoti (or Mazzotti, circa 1756–1798)²⁸. Mazzoti, who supposedly came from Rome (or the nearby region) and was apparently descended from Italian nobility, was a “counselor to the King” at the Polish court, a friend of the owner of Varaklāni Count Michael Johann von der Borch (1753–1810), and not a trained professional architect²⁹. For the palace project Borch employed a professional master mason or foreman, who likely supported Mazzoti and translated the nobleman’s amateur architectural “theory” into concrete structure³⁰. This was possibly the role of Paracca, although we do not know which son was involved. However, regarding other Paracca descendants in the region, we know that Domenico, the only surviving son of Antonio in the middle of the nineteenth century, funded the reconstruction of Pušmucova parochial church in 1852³¹.

In the territory of modern Belarus, the most visible legacy of A. Paracca is in Druja, a town owned by the Sapiega family located approximately thirty kilometers from Krāslava, now on the Belarusian side of the Daugava. Archival sources indicate that Antonio designed and constructed the Druja Dominican church in 1763–1773. Sadly, it was demolished in 1909, though early photographs and other documentation survive. From the surviving visual record, this church has been listed among the most elaborated examples of the Vilnius baroque style. That its construction entailed the migration of 22 masons from Vilnius proves the project required a huge sum of money and indicates Paracca was an architect who wielded great authority. This monument, however, was not his only project in the city. Together with the local architect L. Grincevičius, he contributed to the reconstruction of Bernardine monastery complex and the church of the Holy Trinity in 1643–1646³². During the 1760s, the two upper floors of the bell-towers were added to this church. Their style, according to Karpowicz, ideally correspond to that of A. Paracca, especially when compared to the now-lost towers of the Dominican church. The surviving entrance gates have also been attributed to him on stylistic grounds. This is not the whole story, however. On the Latvian bank of the Daugava, in the small village of Piedruja (originally a suburb of Druja), survives St.

²⁸ P. Zeile, *Latgales kultūras vēsture*, Rēzekne 2006, p. 235.

²⁹ On the Borch palace see the work of J. Polanowska: *Ogród w Warklanach — dzieło właściciela Michała Jana Borchy i architekta Vincenza de Mazottiego*, [in:] “Biuletyn Historii Sztuki”, 2012, pp. 74, 3–4, 551–99; and *Michał Jan Borch and his residence in Varklani: genesis and ideological programme*, [in:] *Maksław Vesture un Teorija*, 2013, pp. 16, 18–32. Count Michael Johann von der Borch, the patron who oversaw construction of the palace, met Mazotti in Warsaw circa 1783, though it is likely they had previously met in Italy, where Borch traveled in 1776–80; in correspondence of 1783–84 with Polish King Stanislaus Augustus, Borch referred to Mazotti as a relation of the Italian collector and author, Marquis di Maffei Francesco Scipione (1675–1755), a personal friend, Knight of the Order of Malta (like Borch), and counselor to the King. See J. Polanowska, *Michał Jan Borch and his residence in Varklani*, p. 21.

³⁰ Correspondence between Borch and his wife in 1807 mentions a “master mason”. See Lviv, Vasyl Stefanyk National Academic Library of Ukraine, Fond 13, Archiwum Borchów z Warklan, file 95, fol. 79. The fond can be accessed online: http://bazy.oss.wroc.pl/kzc/wyniki_pl.php?RL-014556.

³¹ R. Kaminska, *Construction history of Krāslava St. Louis church...*, pp. 106–107. В.В. Губина, *Положение православных и католических храмов на Беларуси в XIX в. Сравнительный анализ*, [in:] *Конференции / VI Международные Кирилло-Мефодиевские чтения. 2000 г.*, “Сайт прихода иконы Всех скорбящих Радость”, <http://www.sobor.by>.

³² А. Кылагін, *Каталіцкія храмы на Беларусі*, Мінск 2001, p. 58.

Mary's Catholic church. Constructed in 1757, it demonstrates the same features of the Vilnius baroque style and, accordingly, is attributed to Antonio³³. Lastly, a sumptuous Jewish synagogue (1755–1756) constructed in the same baroque manner in Druja is also attributed to the Valsolda artist, but unfortunately has not survived.

Other sacred monuments now in Belarus have been attributed to Paracca, including a church in Asvieja, about thirty kilometers due east of the Latvian-Belarusian border. Construction was funded by the Hilzen, a Livonian family who closely cooperated with the Platers. Finished in 1782, the building, however, has not survived. Another attributed to Paracca is in Bierazviečča, a suburb of Hlybokaje, where a Basilian church with monastery was constructed 1751–1767³⁴. In 1950s, this impressive example of the Vilnius baroque style was demolished by the Soviet authorities, a destiny typical of many buildings designed by early modern Lugano lake artists in the twentieth century. The church has been rebuilt, as a Catholic Resurrection, not in Bierazviečča but in Białystok, a city in Poland around 1990 (consecrated in 1993). In addition, the upper tiers of the Bernardine church tower in Hrodna are given to Paracca, who is known to have stayed in Hrodna during its reconstruction after the fire of 1753, though his architectural activities are undocumented. The shape of the Bernardine tower — tall, acuminate, dynamic — correspond to the exclusive style of Paracca³⁵.

In Vilnius several monuments have been attributed to Antonio Paracca by Karpowicz: the tower of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Consolation (1746–1768), the towers and the tambour of the Missionary church of the Ascension (1750–1756), the Basilian gate (1761), and the two towers of the Holy Trinity (Uniate) church belonging to the same complex. No archival documents proving the involvement of Antonio Paracca have been found for these cases. According to Karpowicz, however, all of these structures share the same style and cannot be attributed to another artist who is known to have been in Vilnius during the period. The most complicated of these projects is the Basilian gate case, one of the most paradigmatic examples of Vilnius baroque. According to the Lithuanian historiographic tradition, the architect J.Ch. Glaubitz from Austrian Silesia has been credited with its design, based on the fact that he was documented as the head of the reconstruction of the entire Basilian monastery complex. In contrast, the gate and the towers of the Holy Trinity church stand in stark relief in terms of style from the rest of this Uniate complex, and evince no similarities with any of Glaubitz's other designs.

No archival evidence has yet been identified to substantiate Paracca's activities in Vilnius. This state of affairs contributes to scholarly convention that rejects the possibility of his involvement in the aforementioned mentioned projects. On the other

³³ M. Karpowicz, *Antonio Paracca...*

³⁴ This is claimed by M. Karpowicz, *Antonio Paracca...*, p. 17. A Lithuanian researcher A. Kaladžinskaitė points to the fact that construction agreement was signed with J.T. Diderstein: A. Kaladžinskaitė, *Vilniaus baroko mokyklos sklaida...*, p. 252. The two statements, however, do not contradict one to another. One of the personalities (Paracca or Diderstein) could have been an architect, another a supervisor of constructions works. This was a normal practice in the epoch. Though, such an attribution is a hypothetical statement only.

³⁵ *Materiały do dziejów sztuki sakralnej na ziemiach wschodnich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej, część IV, t. 1: Kościoły i klasztory Grodna*, Kraków 2012, p. 59.

hand, however, indirect circumstantial evidence does survive to support the theory of a connection between Paracca and Vilnius. In the Bernardine cemetery in Vilnius, for example, can be found the grave of an Izabella Paraka [sic] (1810–1828)³⁶. It remains unclear what her connection was to either Antonio or other Paracca family members. Most probably she was his granddaughter (a child of one of his three sons), because this surname was not typically Lithuanian and could only have been used by a Paracca relative. Thus, this fact somehow ties the Paracca family to Vilnius. Another indication can be identified quite simply in the style of the buildings attributed to Antonio in the capital of the Grand Duchy. Obviously, these monuments are very close to the Piedmont tradition significantly influenced by Guarino Guarini³⁷. One of the most convincing examples can be demonstrated in the comparison between the Basilian gates and the St. Morta church in the locality of Agliè close to Turin. Whereas Piedmontese influences had a considerable impact on German baroque architecture, Karpowicz demonstrates that the case of Vilnius was most probably affected directly by Italian currents, not through German or Austrian mediation³⁸. Moreover, their exuberant and dynamic stylistic character is very distant from the more academic and reserved Austrian and German tradition that is represented in Lithuania by the oeuvre of J.Ch. Glaubitz. It should be noted that archival sources indicate that Paracca family members, including Antonio, undertook studies in Turin. Hence, he had first-hand knowledge of the regional style straight from the primary source, and not mediated through German or other intermediaries³⁹.

In other areas of modern Lithuania, prof. Jerzy Kowalczyk has identified the church of S. George in Veisiejai as the work of Antonio Paracca. The foundation of Bishop Masalski, this church's construction started in 1768 and finished only in 1817⁴⁰. It is further suggested that Paracca could have rebuilt the parochial church in the Smalvos locality, another structure that has not survived⁴¹.

Finally, archival evidence shows Paracca was active in Dusetos, a town close to Latgale and the Daugava river region approximately 150 km north of Vilnius. In 1744 the local Holy Trinity church was rebuilt by the Plater, a project that local Lithuanian historians indicate that A. Paracca was the architect of the tower, constructed in the middle of the century⁴². Archival proof of such an association remains to be found, while the church archive of Dusetos parish was destroyed in 1941⁴³.

Yet another monument in the locality of Dusetos is linked to the Paracca family name. In the archives of the Vilnius University and the Lithuanian State Historical

³⁶ *Cmentarz Bernardyński w Wilnie, 1810–1918*, Vilnius: Versus aureus 2013, p. 624.

³⁷ M. Karpowicz, *Antonio Paracca...*

³⁸ M. Karpowicz, *Wileńska odmiana architektury XVIII wieku*, pp. 43–73.

³⁹ M.V. Cattaneo, N. Ostorero, *L'archivio della Compagnia di Sant'Anna dei Luganesi in Torino. Una fonte documentaria per lo studio dei cantieri e delle maestranze per architettura e decorazione nel Piemonte sabauda*, Torino 2006.

⁴⁰ J. Kowalczyk, *Rola Rzymu w późnobarokowej architekturze Polskiej*, [in:] "Rocznik historii sztuki", XX, 1994, p. 287.

⁴¹ M. Karpowicz, *Artisti Valsoldesi...*

⁴² D. Čepukas, *Be užmaršties (leidinys apie Dusetų (Zarasų raj.) istoriją)*, Vilnius 2008; L. Lukošūnaitė-Malcienė, *Dusetos [Zarasų rajonas]*, Vilnius 2002; ir kt.

⁴³ B. Kviklys, *Lietuvos bažnyčios*, Chicago 1984, p. 163.

archives, two exemplars survive of the contract between Emerencja Plater (circa 1730–1777) and Francesco Paracca, for construction of the palace in Dusetos 1766–1770. The architect who designed the project is not indicated, and Paracca was engaged only as the foreman or construction manager⁴⁴. This reference can only be Francesco Paracca, whose full name was Domenico Francesco. Born in Valsolda in 1729, he was a younger brother of Antonio. Apparently, to avoid being confused with his father, also named Domenico, this junior Paracca commonly used his middle name, according to common practice among the Ceresio artists. After the construction of the palace in 1770, Francesco returned home to Valsolda to seek out more skilled laborers for the Plater's many projects in Inflanty⁴⁵. Like so many Paracca monuments, the Dusetos palace has since been lost.

To summarize, a great deal of uncertainty and debate surround the activities and legacy of Antonio Paracca and his kin. This is the result of scarce archival sources, combined with the fact that many buildings attributed to or designed by him have been destroyed over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Additionally, there is a lack of clarity regarding the genuine features of A. Paracca's style. Some of the monuments assigned to Antonio are of a demonstrably avant-guard rococo style, their forms marked by curved lines and dynamism: above all the library in Krāslava, as well as works in Druja, Pasiene, Biarezvieča and Vilnius. Others are characterized by distinctly classical and more restricted planar forms: the churches in Veisiejai, Asvieja and Krāslava, as well as the Plater palace in Krāslava. Karpowicz, in his latest study on Paracca, is prepared to eliminate the latter ones from Antonio's oeuvre⁴⁶. Compounding the lack of clarity in modern historiography regarding the Paracca legacy is the confusion of the patrimonial names of Antonio's father Domenico and brother Francesco. The contract in Dusetos and indirect source evidence suggests that Francesco's role was primarily that of foreman, construction manager, or collaborator, rather than that of designer or principal architect. In contract, the father Domenico figures as an architect in the 1766 letter cited here. Thus it might be hypothesized that Antonio (and maybe Domenico) assumed the role of architect creating in the most innovative Vilnius baroque style, whereas Francesco worked as a manager who organized, implemented and oversaw the practical needs of construction works in collaboration with various architects, possibly his own senior family members. While such a hypothesis could explain the prolific output of the Paracca, it must remain speculative and necessitates deeper archival research.

Conclusions

Vilnius Baroque architecture, thanks to (among others) Guido Antonio Longhi and members of the Paracca family, was disseminated and developed in the provinces

⁴⁴ Manuscript Department of the Vilnius University Library, The Archives of P. Galaunė, F. 132; Lithuanian State Historical Archives, Pliaterių fondas nr. 1276, 292, 1114: *Контракты..., 1742–1766*, p. 13.

⁴⁵ For this journey see Domenico Francesco Paracca's 1770 letter to Casimir Constantine Plater: Lithuanian State Historical Archives, Pliaterių fondas nr. 1276, reg. 2, file 119, fols. 72r–73v. See also R. Kaminska, *Construction history of Krāslava St. Louis church...*, p. 106.

⁴⁶ M. Karpowicz, *Wileńska odmiana architektury XVIII wieku*, pp. 43–73.

of the Grand Duchy. That this style manifested in provincial territories like Latgale does not mean, however, that it had no relation to the cultural and political centers of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. Hence, Longhi was closely connected to Warsaw and the region of the Polish capital, where he lived and worked in the 1740s. Although the Paracca were installed in Latgale from the 1750s through the 1770s, they also hypothetically left traces in Vilnius and Hrodna, two capitals of eighteenth-century Lithuania. There is, however, no evidence that they worked in Poland. Whatever their relations to Warsaw and Vilnius, the architects treated here contributed to a style that was not typical for the academic environments of European centers, nor even indeed for Poland. Thus, in accordance with Karpowicz's suggestion, the anti-classical forms of the Vilnius Baroque, constituting an interpretation of the liberated rococo, found favorable soil for their proliferation, refinement and reiteration in the decentralized and liberal outskirts of the Western civilization, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The hypothetical corpus of monuments to which Longhi and the Paracca contributed remains for the time being only speculative. Since no documented traces of Guido Antonio Longhi in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania are known to have survived, all his attributed works have been postulated by Karpowicz. With the Paracca we find a slightly better situation: their reliably attributed corpus includes the library, the St. Louis Missionary church and Plater palace (in conjunction with certain other architects, apparently) in Krāslava; the Dominican church in Druja, of which only a ruinous fragment remains; and the Holy Trinity church tower in Dusetos. A son of Paracca contributed to the Borch's palace in Varakļāni. In addition, the archival documents prove that construction of the Plater palace in Dusetos was supervised by Francesco Paracca, though this monument has not survived. More than a dozen other objects have been attributions based purely on stylistic analogies, and made mostly by Karpowicz.

The question of artistic collaboration in the eighteenth-century Grand Duchy amongst different architects — from the same family or otherwise — represents a very complicated issue. The problem itself reflects the historical reality that the matter of architectural copyright and authorship in this context was not as important as it is today. As the insights of Karpowicz have shown, the initial projects of Guido Antonio Longhi could have been modified subsequently by later architects. A similar authorial uncertainty lingers around the work of the Paracca, on more than one level. Firstly, the assigning of individual roles and the style of collaboration amongst the two brothers and the father — Antonio, Francesco and Domenico — remains completely indistinguishable. All of them possessed the skills and ability to contribute to both the conceptual and stylistic design and the technical and logistical aspects entailed in the process of the material construction of a given building. Secondly, the Paraccas could have collaborated with other architects, especially another who worked in the remit of the Plater family, Jan Tobias Diderstein. Most recent studies, especially those by Aukšė Kaladžinskaitė, raise the importance of the latter architect, by diminishing that of the Paracca⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ A. Kaladžinskaitė, *Vilniaus baroko mokyklos sklaida...*, p. 255. Karpowicz, in one of his last publications, ardently criticized the Kaladžinskaitė's approach: M. Karpowicz, *Wileńska odmiana architektury*

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Photos



Krāslava. The library. Martynas Ambrazas



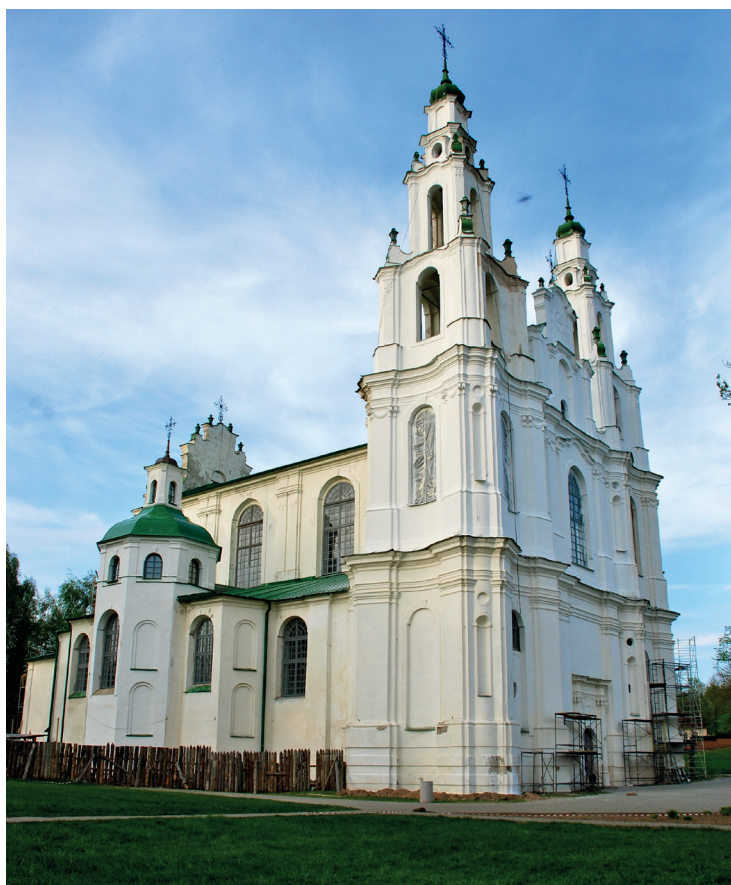
Dusetos. The tower of the St. Trinity church. Rūstis Kamuntavičius



Hrodna. The Bernardine church. Martynas Ambrazas



Druja. Presumably, the ruins of the Dominican church. Rūstis Kamuntavičius



Polock. The Sobor of St. Sofia. Rūstis Kamuntavičius

