

**Abstract: “Italian architects and bricklayers from Piuro, their activity in the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries”**

Architects and bricklayers from Northern Lombardy played a significant role in the implementation of new solutions to modern architecture in the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. One of many locations of origin for the said artists was Piuro, a town known for its rich history, located on the river Mera near Chiavenna. Situated in the Province of Sondrio, in the Val Bregaglia, on the south face of the Alps, until recently the town was chiefly associated with noble families, the likes of the Vertemate Franchi, the Lumagas, the Moras, the Beccarias, the Crollanzas, the Camoglias, to mention but some, which – owing to their hard work and skills in trade and banking – made Piuro famous throughout Europe. The location became well-known and it abounded in palaces, gardens and churches. Its flourishing history was interrupted by a disastrous landslide of Mount Conto, which took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1618, proving one of the greatest geological catastrophes in the history of Lombardy. In a time span of just a few minutes, circa one thousand inhabitants of Piuro were buried underneath masses of sliding land and debris. The natural disaster wiped off the archives and the entire historic centre of the town including its period monuments. The oldest record of Piuro dates back to the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In 1226 it received the municipal charter. Together with other locations situated in Valchiavenna, in 1335 Piuro passed under the domination of the Duchy of Milan, ruled at the time by the Visconti family. The beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was marked by wars and destruction. First, in 1500 the French defeated Lodovico il Moro and took over Valchiavenna and Valtellina. Then, in 1512 the territory got conquered by the Grisons from the north – allied with the republic of the Three Leagues – who would rule over the valleys throughout the entire modern age until 1797. The conquering of Piuro by neighbours from the north did not hamper its development and the entrepreneurial spirit of its inhabitants. The town owed its economic development to the excavation and processing of soapstone, production of silk, and also to trade, taking advantage of its location at the crossroads of important trade routes. Prior to the natural disaster, there were as many as eight churches in Piuro. They were recorded in a print by Hardmeyer and in a number of oil paintings created after the disastrous landslide. The damaged churches included San Casiano (the main parish church) and San Giovanni Battista in the Scilano district. Also ruined in the landslide was the palace of Giovanni Pietro Vertemate, located in the centre of Piuro (visible in the Basel print), the Belford palace and other tenement houses and gardens owned by wealthy townsmen. Testimony of the Renaissance splendour of Piuro is found today in the Cortinaccio palace and summer residence, formerly owned by the Vertemate family, constituting the most illustrious landmark of the town and the region. Constructed by two brothers – Guglielmo and Luigi – in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the palace is marked for its austere and simple architecture, contrasting with the sumptuous interior, decorated with frescoes – depicting scenes from ancient mythology – with intarsias and profusely ornamented ceilings. One of the most significant profit-generating activities practiced by contemporary community of local craftsmen was the excavation and processing of soapstone. The stone material was obtained from mining tunnels drilled into the slopes of Mount Conto. The craft was practiced intensively for a number of centuries. *Pietra ollare* was used to manufacture cooking pots and wine-drinking mugs, but also portals of tenement houses, fountains, epitaphs, and other architectural details. Fine examples of period soapstone products include the Romanesque baptismal font dating back to the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, stored in Chiavenna in Santa Maria rotonda, as well as the town’s Renaissance portals and fountains. Francesco Ventretta from the school of Tomasso

Rodari of Como stood out from the 16<sup>th</sup> -century craftsmen and sculptors originating from Piuro. In 1517–1518 he created the main portal of San Antonio church in Morbegno. As for famous painters of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the following names deserve a mention: Antonio of Piuro (who worked in Milan); Nicolò Crollanza, active in Verona; Sebastiano of Piuro, whose extant works are found in the church of San Giacomo di Livo; and finally, Domenico Brusaporci, who innovated – with Paolo Veronese – 16<sup>th</sup> -century art of painting. The first records of the Italian town of Piuro, which appeared in Polish historical literature, was Bishop Paweł Piasecki's chronicle of 1645, relative to the landslide disaster. This tragic event was also recorded in form of a brief note published in "Kurier Warszawski" ["Warsaw Courier"] in March 1859, giving account of archaeological activities undertaken in Piuro. Presumably, the only historical figure from Gdansk, who had visited Piuro prior to 1618, was Philipp Clüver, an exceptionally colourful personage – geographer, scholar and traveller, author of maps of Italy and contemporary Europe. Among the *polonica* on display in Piuro there are also gold ducats bearing the image of the Polish King Sigismund III Vasa. Forming part of a "treasure of coins" discovered in Piuro in 1988, the coins had possibly been buried by a wealthy bishop or a banker.

When searching for artistic traces of representatives of Piuro in Poland, one cannot miss an epitaph of Giovanni Battista Vertemate (Werdemann), located in the Franciscan monastery in Cracow. A member of the eminent Vertemate family from Piuro, he was a son of Giovanni Antonio, who had conducted business activities in Cracow already since 1581. Giovanni Battista had an associate, Federico Beccaria; the two probably co-owned a company. Extant information also reveals that he was born in 1543 and died on 25 March 1588 at the age of 45. His Cracow-based epitaph was probably made by another representative of Piuro, Joannes de Simon, one of the most outstanding members of the Cracow artistic milieu active at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Due to its high quality execution, Vertemate's epitaph occupies a special place in the Polish funerary art.

Architects and bricklayers originating from Piuro played a significant role in the introduction of new solutions to the Polish modern architecture. The first name worth mentioning is that of "Joannes de Val Clavenna de la villa Piur". Accompanied by a group of other Italian bricklayers, in 1560 he was sent from Cracow to Vilnius on the order of Sigismund Augustus. Impossible as it is to identify any of his works completed in the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, it is feasible to assume that a large group of Italian bricklayers from Northern Lombardy completed architectural or sculpting tasks at the royal residence, the Vilnius cathedral or the church of Saint Anne – Saint Barbara. The role of the earliest recorded bricklayer from Piuro remaining in royal service is the more significant that he counts among the Italian artists and craftsmen who implemented achievements of Italian Renaissance in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the furthest north-eastern territories.

As for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the main "base" for artists originating from Piuro was not so much Cracow, but Lublin, a city located at the crossroads of important trade routes. Following a great fire in 1575, the city was in need of gifted architects and bricklayers for the reconstruction of its churches, manors and tenement houses of local townsmen. Another significant factor was the establishment in 1578 of the Crown Tribunal in Lublin, its activity covering the entire Małopolska province. Among the 1575 Italian immigrants to the city located on the river Bystrzyca, there was Pietro Trapolini, probably originating from Piuro, as indicated by archives in Sondrio. The bricklayers received commissions from Lublin nobles and townsmen, including Walenty Krzesza, Jan Meglewski, Lublin Standard-bearer, as well as Piotr and Jakub Ostrowski. In the 1590s Lublin witnessed the arrival of Pietro Bonai the Elder, who would soon pass his craftsmanship onto his son, Pietro the Younger. Based on documents from the Lublin Archive, Pietro Bonai constructed his own tenement house, situated on the outskirts of Lublin, and another one for

Hirsz. He also renovated a house owned by Tomasz Wątróbka, a Lublin shoemaker. As a master craftsman of the Lublin guild, Bonai the Elder takes credit for carrying out, with the help of master craftsmen Balin and Traversi, the 1571 reform of the guild rules and regulations. Arguably, master Pietro facilitated the arrival of his “fellow citizens” in the Lublin province, namely Antonio Pelacini and Giovanni Malinverni.

The former was recorded in extant archive documents as architect and constructor of the Bernardine church and monastery in Leżajsk. In 1615 he received the Lublin city rights as a bricklayer, son of Pietro and Anastasia Pelacini. Two years later he married a daughter of the Italian architect Giacomo Balin, and later inherited his father-in-law’s brickyard and some of his property. Coexistence of many different architectural solutions found in works completed by Balin and Pelacini seems to suggest that young Antonio carried on his apprenticeship with Giacomo Balin. It was probably in 1623 that both, Barbara Balin and her father, died. At the time, master Antonio was already in Leżajsk, where he was recorded in archive documents as a constructor of a “new, bricked church”. On analysing this project it is feasible to attribute the plans of the said church and the monastery also to Pelacini. The complex was created in cooperation with the Bernardine monks and with a creative input of Antonio of Piuro, who in turn represented the legacy of the Lombardian architects and the Lublin bricklayers. The plan of the church offered a compromise between the monastery’s strong attachment to traditional architectural forms and the modern plans of basilicas, raised at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Zamość, Lviv and Lublin. The construction of the church in Leżajsk began in 1618 and ended in 1628. In 1630 the church was consecrated by Adam Nowodworski, Bishop of Przemyśl. The Leżajsk church assumed a form of a three-nave oriented basilica on a rectangular plan, with bricked walls covered in plasters. An elongated, two-span presbytery was enclosed in a semi-circle, while the main body of the church had a four-span form. The Leżajsk church reveals perfectly balanced proportions between mutually juxtaposed individual elements and the whole construction. The church forms and decorations indicate a clear dependence of the Lublin milieu, which is substantiated by the constructors’ cooperation with Giacomo Balin on the one hand, and a skilful use of models of Jesuit basilicas on the other. Antonio Pelacini introduced a certain element of the Italian spirit to the Leżajsk basilica, expressed in the light and spacious character of its interior. It is highly probable that it became possible thanks to the application of designs by Francesco Maria Ricchino. In circa 1605 this exceptionally gifted architect created a number of designs relative to the reconstruction of Santa Maria alla Porta church in Milan, which show exceptional similarity to those applied by Pelacini in Leżajsk: the same four-span body of the basilica with two axes enclosed with an entrance opening. The nave and the presbytery are of the same width, while the aisles are enclosed with chapels. Ricchi’s successive projects, dating back to 1623 and executed at the San Giorgio al palazzo church in Milan, were nearly identical with works by Pelacini. The significance of master Antonio of Piuro and his output in modern Polish architecture consists in the application of the grand basilica model, echoing the post-Trident liturgy reform, while taking into account provisions of old mendicant orders, strongly attached to the tradition.

Meanwhile, the monastery in Leżajsk represents the Piuro master’s creative application of the model of Palazzo Rosmarino from the 7<sup>th</sup> book of Serlio’s treatise. In Polish residential – and in this case monasterial – architecture it forms the second, even more ideal, example – following the complex raised in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska – of the application of the Italian treatise models. The palace-like character of the Leżajsk monastery is noticeable in the large-size corner pavilions incised in the body of the wings and in the enclosed cloister around a rectangular garth. The greatness of Pelacini’s work is also evident from the fact that his model of the basilica was copied and replicated in different variants, mainly by large-size orders of Benedictine, Dominican and Franciscan monks. Pelacini skilfully applied stucco decorations in the basilica, preserved in the chapel of Saint Francis, and in the south wing of the monastery,

which he modernized in the Italian style, by introducing figural and ornamental decorations in painting. Stucco netting on the ceiling no longer served exclusively as a décor in itself, but it also provided framing for painted images. The execution of the stucco strips as well as their composition both indicate that they were created by two or three different stucco artists. Arguably, one of them was Balin's apprentice named Jędrzej, and the other – Cristoforo Galli, whose stay in Leżajsk in 1629 was recorded in archival sources. It was probably also Pelacini who designed a set of wooden Renaissance portals for the Leżajsk monastery. He brought their models from Lombardy. Their architectural form is profusely decorated with chiselling and painting. A comparative analysis has proved wrong the attribution of certain churches to Pelacini, quoted in scientific literature. None of the said examples replicates the majority of elements characteristic for master Antonio of Piuro's art. The last archival information relative to Pelacini dates back to the time of his stay in Leżajsk in 1633. He was at the time married to his second wife Anna, daughter of Stanisław Ubidusza of Stężyca. The later fate of master Antonio of Piuro is unaccounted for.

The most significant discovery made in the course of the archival research relates to Giovanni Malinverni. Presumably, he was accompanied by Pelacini on his arrival in Lublin, where in 1616 he married Regina, a Lublin townswoman, daughter of Stanisław Małachowski. It was also in Lublin that their three daughters – Regina, Magdalena and Marina – were born. He then moved to Brest-Litovsk, a city of the Union of Brest (1596), which witnessed a dynamic growth in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. An important factor differentiating the city was a growing patronage of churches and monasteries, observed in the aftermath of the great fire of 1613. It was possibly one of the reasons why Malinverni left Lublin and moved to Brest-Litovsk, which offered far better prospects for employment. It is highly probable that he cooperated with Pietro Bonai "Brush" the Younger, whom he also sued in the Lublin court of justice on two occasions. It is likely that the two craftsmen co-owned a construction company. Regrettably, we know nothing of their distribution of competencies. Presumably, Giovanni Malinverni was responsible for designs and the acquisition of new commissions, while Pietro Bonai took care of construction activities by employing bricklayers from the Lublin guild. Certainly, bricklayers from Brest-Litovsk, supervised by Iwan Marcinowicz, were also employed in various construction projects, lending the Lublin character of bricklaying to Malinverni's architecture. Equipped with considerable financial resources, Malinverni invested in local immovable property, by purchasing land from the city and from Brest-Litovsk townsmen. Following the death of his first wife, he married Zuzanna Okmińska. Extant sources mention Zofia, Joanna and Anna, three daughters born to the couple. Held in high esteem and respect by inhabitants of Brest, in 1646 master Giovanni was elected the city mayor. He died probably before 1664.

Similar to Antonio Pelacini, Giovanni Malinverni's legacy is limited to only a single construction, namely the collegiate church of the Holy Trinity in Olyka. Records in archival sources indicate that the church was raised by workers and craftsmen including the Italian architect. This piece of information was published by Szymon Starowolski in *Monumenta Sarmatarum...*, published in 1655 in Cracow. The patron of the church was Albrecht Stanisław Radziwiłł, Grand Chancellor of Lithuania, an extraordinary political and intellectual figure. Raised in 1635–1640, the Olyka church gained a form of a transept-free basilica, with a presbytery and the nave of equal height and width. The two-span presbytery is enclosed in a semicircle, while the nave is four-spanned. The façade of the church is uniform in terms of neither workshop nor style. Based on a comparative analysis, a close analogy was found with the façade of the church in Loreto, designed by Giovanni Boccacino. It is highly probable that master Giovanni used it as an inspiration and a direct model, which he adopted in a creative manner in the Olyka church, using – among other things – graphic patterns. Another analogy indicates the façade of the Lublin-based Jesuit church, visible in the alignment of the gable and

the corner towers in the second storey. Despite conducted archival research, the only confirmed construction completed by Giovanni Malinverni remains the college church of the Holy Trinity in Olyka. As his authorship of the church architecture has been confirmed, it plays a key role in comparative analyses, serving as a benchmark for his other architectural implementations, including works of sacral architecture. Projects realised by the Piuro master were founded by two most significant personages in the contemporary Grand Duchy of Lithuania, namely Lew Sapieha, Voivode of Vilnius and Grand Hetman of Lithuania, as well as his son, Kazimierz Leon Sapieha, Deputy Chancellor of Lithuania. Based on a comparative analysis, the Piuro master can be attributed – with a high degree of probability – the authorship of the following churches, listed in the chronological order: the Bernardine church of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Anne with the monastery in Brest-Litovsk constructed before 1623; the parish church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Siemiatycze, Podlachia (1626–1637); the Dominican church of Saint Sophia with the monastery in Brest-Litovsk (1635–1647); the Bridgettines church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the convent in Hrodna (1638–1651); the Bernardine church of the Holy Trinity with the monastery in Druya (1643–1646); the Bernardine Sisters church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Anthony and Saint Casimir in Hrodna, raised before 1648; the Jesuit church of the Holy Name of Jesus and Saint Casimir in Brest-Litovsk (1653–1659). Four of the seven listed churches were irreversibly destroyed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The list of the presented sacral buildings attributed to Giovanni Malinverni is certainly going to grow, with the continuous historical research and thanks to the archival documents available in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. The concept of the basilica designed by Giovanni differs slightly from that made by Pelacini in Leżajsk. Its side aisles are enclosed with walls and altars placed against them. The entablature running through the entire interior is marked with plunge-cut grinding in the section of the pilasters. There is almost always a pilaster placed along the longitudinal axis. In a way, Giovanni's aisleless churches constitute a module borrowed from the plans of his basilicas. A significant feature of Malinverni's style is his flexibility and the ability to adapt his work to the tastes of his commissioners, as exemplified by the façades. The churches in Siemiatycze, Druya and Hrodna, their façades containing incorporated quadrilateral towers, were realised to meet the expectations of their magnate patrons. It is highly probable that in the course of his stay in Olyka, Giovanni Malinverni worked not only on the construction of the local collegiate church, but also on other projects commissioned by Prince Radziwiłł, the third entailer in Olyka. The time span of 1628–1656 saw a dynamic growth of the city, including the reconstruction or construction of new facilities. To this end, the entailer was in need of a quality architect and numerous bricklayers. Hypothetically, master Giovanni could also be attributed the design and construction of the local town hall and the Lutsk Gate. Archival sources confirm that the Piuro master partook in raising the town hall in Brest-Litovsk and two tenement houses of local townsmen.

The presence and activity of architects, bricklayers and merchants from Piuro in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth spans from 1560 until 1686. The former year relates to the archival record of Giovanni “de la villa Piur,” who set off from Cracow to Vilnius to work on architectural commissions of Sigismund Augustus. The latter year in turn indicates a confirmation, by source documents, of the presence of Tomasz Certa (Serta), bricklayer and master craftsman in Lublin. Together with Pietro Bonai the Younger, he belonged to the second generation of Italian bricklayers working in the Polish territory. The peak activity of merchants from Piuro, confirmed by Cracow receiving the municipal charter, dates back to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, namely the time span of 1586–1592. Among the merchants let us mention Bernardo Mora and Giovanni Battista Mora, but also Giovanni Battista Vertemate. Following a short break, in 1604 Kazimierz Dolny witnessed the arrival of Cristoforo Serta, and Cracow – in 1631 – of Pietro Antonio Serta, who transferred their businesses from Nuremberg. Viewed

in this context, the arrival of Pietro Bonai, Antonio Pelacini and Giovanni Malinverni in Lublin took place between 1596 and 1616. When juxtaposed, the dates indicate that the most dynamic activity of merchants and bricklayers from Piuro lasted from 1586 until 1616. Following the latter date, the sole incomers to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, both originally from Piuro, were Antonio Barlanda from Spiez in Switzerland, and Antonio Serta from Nuremberg. There is only one logical explanation of the presented process of migration of craftsmen from Piuro, which ended in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century: the disastrous landslide, which occurred on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1618 in Piuro and hampered permanently further migration of merchants, architects and bricklayers from that prosperous and beautiful town.

In the context of archival research, it is highly important to carry on the technological examination of mortars and stuccos, which may prove helpful in the attribution of churches and in the establishment of a database of works created by masters from the discussed Italian-Swiss borderland. It will certainly prove fascinating to compare analogical test results obtained in the Italian Piuro, helpful in addressing the question whether technology used in Poland by Antonio and Giovanni stemmed from their respective family traditions or whether it was created in the Lublin milieu. Beyond doubt, more samples ought to be examined, to guarantee their reliability and to provide a factual overall picture. The already conducted and continued research will certainly help in establishing new, precious findings.

(tłumaczenie na j. angielski: A. J. Gołąbek-Asikainen, A. Idzikowska)