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Early Neoclassicism and Ganneval's Cathedral in Vác

(Diss.: The cathedral of Vác in the oeuvre of Ganneval)

In this paper, I would like to focus on the unknown French origins of early Neoclassicism in Austria-Hungary. Isidor Marcellus Amandus Ganneval or Canevale (ca. 1729-1786) is one of the central figures of early neoclassical architecture in the region. He built castles, churches, university buildings, hospitals and further public and economic buildings on the territory of the actual Austria, Hungary, Germany, Bohemia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

Earlier considered as architect of Italian origin (because of the erroneous transcription of his name), the research has shown already in the early XX century that Ganneval was French.

After his studies at the Académie Royale d'Architecture, he arrived with Servandoni in 1760 in Vienna, and became there architect of the princely house of Lichtenstein, and later court architect.

Among his works including the so-called Narrenturm and the Josephinum in Vienna, the Neugebäude in Budapest, inner decorations in the royal castle of Bratislava and in the Paar-palace in Vienna (now in the Metropolitan Museum), his most outstanding religious building is the cathedral in Vác (Hungary), decorated with the frescoes of Franz Anton Maulbertsch. The fortunate collaboration with cardinal Migazzi, archbishop of Vienna and also bishop of Vác, collector of antiquities and acquaintance of Winckelmann, and the French architect resulted one of the earliest neoclassical buildings in the region (also compared to another parallels like d'Ixnard's Sankt Blasien for example).

The research attributed this early neoclassical style in Ganneval's oeuvre to his master, Servandoni, and his formation at the French Royal Academy, but I would like to argue that earlier family ties also linked Ganneval to the centurms of early Neoclassicism in France.

On the basis of archival documents recently discovered, I will present the links of the Ganneval family to the porcelain manufacture of Vincennes-Sèvres and to the Bâtiments du roi, where the neoclassical movement first emerged.

A further question of my examination focuses on the problem of migration and the issue of centrum and periphery. Why is it, that some of the earliest examples of this style emerge not in France, but in Germany, Austria and Hungary? How facilitated the special status of Hungary the emergence of the new style, and how the late baroque masters collaborated in this early neoclassical project? A further question is the local reception of the oeuvre of Ganneval. The earlier literature argued that the cathedral itself was too revolutionary, and local church architecture follows the other work of Ganneval in Vác: the triumphal arch. I would like to point out, that the design of these churches is based rather on an Austrian example, also attributed to Ganneval.