

## **Maja Cepetić – Danko Dujmović**

### St. Peter at Novo Mesto Zelinsko – New Iconography for Claiming Political Continuity

The church of St. Peter in Novo Mesto Zelinsko near Sveti Ivan Zelina has deep medieval roots. Standing on a hillfort it is an exceptional, albeit small monument of late Romanesque and Gothic styles. The aisleless church has a rectangular apse covered by a rib vault featuring high quality capital zones and a keystone. A master from the circle of Bishop Stjepan II in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century seems indicated.

The church was at first a part of the Templar estate of the Lands of St. Martin. The impact of Templar architecture is apparent in the simple forms of the nave and the sanctuary. According to Ivan Srša, who has restored the wall paintings, in this first phase all inside walls were painted in light gray-blue. With the abolition of the Templar order, most of the Croatian Templars joined the Hospitallers. Upon the latter's takeover of the church, the existing architecture was used as a medium for the expression of the new owner's ideas, i.e. as a display area (the nave and its walls) of the new (early Gothic) cycle of wall-paintings showing the legend of the king St. Ladislav. According to the legend, St. Ladislav was meant to lead the First Crusade, but died too soon. His fight with the pagan Cuman leader, depicted also at Novo Mesto Zelinsko, could be seen as a kind of a Crusade, too. The scenes are linked together and they start at the railing of the emporia, wherefrom they proceed toward the triumphal arch. St. Ladislav, an eminently Arpadian Saint, was, however, also the chosen patron of the Anjou dynasty which replaced the Arpadians at the Hungarian throne – an act by which the new kings claimed their legitimacy i.e. continuity of the rule. The ideologies of the Hospitallers and of the Angevin kings thus found a happy common medium.

The architecture and architectural sculpture was retained as a framework for the display of the ideas of the new owners closely cooperating with the new rulers of the country and their interests. In that, the simple, plain (or rudimentary decorative) Templar wall décor provided a surface for the display of the key story for both the Hospitallers and the Anjou. Briefly, the church had been built with one purpose in mind, and reused for new cycle of

ideological and artistic display – from the Romanesque to the Gothic, from the plain (or plain decorative) to figured, from the Templar to Hospitaller, from the Arpadian to Angevin. The artistic interventions and iconographic schemes were supposed to secure continuity, in this case the legitimacy of the new owners, and of the new rulers of the land.