

Saaneckh People from Elsewhere - through myths, legends and sagas ...does history write stories, or do stories create history...?

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On 9th November 2006, exactly 550 years passed since the last of the Celje (Cilli) princes, Ulrik II, fell under the sword as a victim of a plot. This act marked the collapse of the last great dynasty that had its family seat on Slovenian soil and was involved at the highest level in European politics. The history of the House of Celje has all the elements that are necessary for a high-quality screenplay: the rise, splendour, glory, incessant action, intrigues and plots, ill-fated love and a tragic ending. It therefore comes as no surprise that the history of this famous family has attracted and continues to attract artists from various fields.

The origin of this noble family is unknown. In the light of the first documented mention around 1130, we may conclude that they came from the ranks of the free nobles. It is suspected that they were a side branch of the high Bavarian nobility. Their allodial property (inherited estates free of obligations) was contiguous and close-knit.

They further increased their power through marriages with important noble houses. At the beginning of the 14th century they became vassals of the Habsburgs, and this merely enhanced their position as they had a strong mercenary army that ensured a substantial and stable income. Herman I Celjski married Katarina, the daughter of the Ban of Bosnia Stjepan II Kotromani. On the other hand Viljem Celjski married Ana, the daughter of the Polish King Kazimir the Great. These marriages further consolidated the political position of the House of Celje. In 1372 Charles IV of Luxembourg, finally with the assent of the Habsburgs, elevated them (once more) to the position of state Counts of Celje.

After 1385 the reign of the family was taken over by Herman II Celjski, whose far-reaching and adept policies placed the Celje Counts alongside the European ruling families. Of great importance in his half-century rule was the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396, where he saved the life of the Hungarian King Sigismund, the future Czech and German king and Holy Roman Emperor. Through this act he became the Emperor's adviser, confidant, ambassador and member of the elite Order of the Dragon. As a reward, the Counts of Celje were able to expand their territories in Slovenia, Slavonia and Croatia. The mutual affection between the King and Herman was so deep that in 1406 Herman gave his daughter Barbara's hand in marriage to Sigismund. Barbara Celjska was of great historical importance. This highly educated woman of religious tolerance, was one of the first women scientists (astrology and alchemy), and as such represented a model of a Renaissance person. Since the territory in today's Croatia was becoming increasingly important, Herman II married off his son Friderik II to Elizabeta Frankopanska in 1405.

Following the death of his first wife (supposedly dispatched by Friderik himself), Friderik II married Veronika Deseni ka - the daughter of a petty and insignificant Zagorje noble - without his father's consent. Herman II imprisoned his son and ordered his

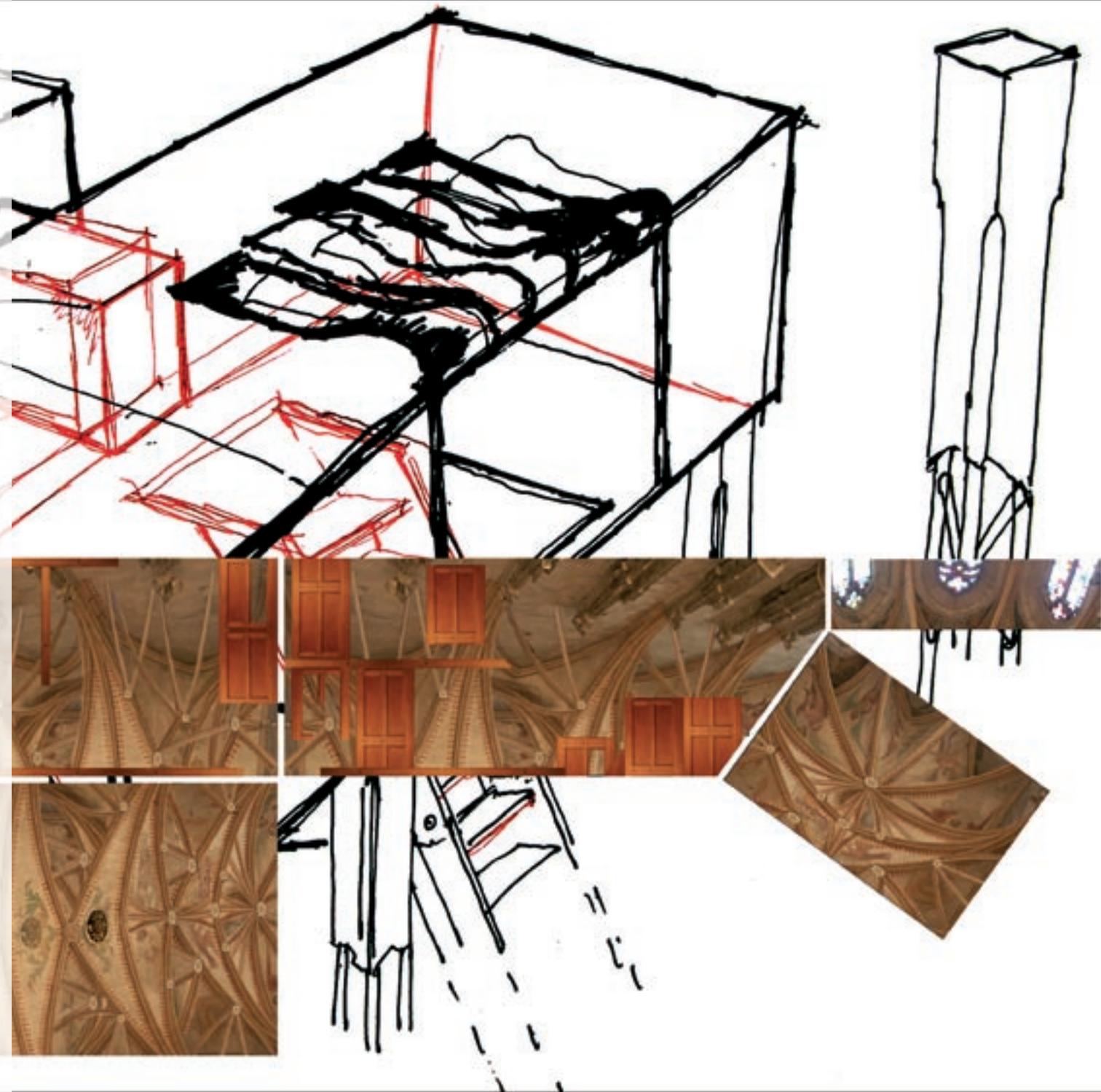
second wife to be drowned. However, owing to the accidental deaths of Herman's three other sons, he was constrained to free Friderik and gradually groom him as his successor, even though the insult was never forgotten.

All the family twists and turns notwithstanding, the House of Celje was not content merely with the title of counts, so they aimed higher, to the title of state princes. The way was cleared for them to become princes through the gesture of the Habsburg Ernest the Iron, who in 1423, on the initiative of Emperor Sigismund relinquished his power over the House of Celje. The actual elevation to state princes took place in 1436, a year after the death of Herman II. As princes, Friderik II and Ulrik II held the right to mint money, exploit mineral ores and hold a court of the nobility. They became equals to the Habsburgs, with whom they concluded a mutual inheritance contract (1443). In 1430, with a grand and extravagant escort, Ulrik II embarked on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, one of the three main pilgrimage sites of Christianity. It is evident that this journey was also of great political significance from the chronicles of the Castilian kings, which reported on this visit. In 1451 Friderik II granted Celje town rights.

The House of Celje strived for power in individual provinces with increasing vigour. In the Kingdom of Hungary they were state barons, and they were Croatian, Slavonian and Dalmatian bans (dukes), which meant that they ended up entangled in local conflicts in numerous places. This interfering produced a wave of resistance among the 'domestic' nobility, which ultimately led to the plot of the Hunyadis and consequently to the death of Ulrik II in 1456 in Belgrade. With the death of the Prince of Celje began the battle for the colossal inheritance. The following players were in contention: Katarina (Ulrik's wife), the Gorica counts, Ladislaus Posthumous (King of Hungary) and the Habsburg Friedrich III. On the basis of the valid inheritance contract, it was Friedrich who took over the entire Celje possessions.

Alongside their political importance, the Celje Counts were also important for fine art. Paralleling the rise to the peak of their power, they enhanced their standing as patrons in the field of the arts. Indeed, fine art is the final remnant testifying to the greatness of the Celje dynasty. The signs of their might were left in heraldic form on numerous sacral objects.

Exceptionally important is the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows in the Church of St. Daniel. All of its high-quality individual elements are harmonised into a wonderful artistic whole that comprises the private chapel of the House of Celje. From the secular buildings, ambition, grandeur and haughtiness are clearly indicated by the Prince's Palace. With its pointed arch windows, which were a great rarity on secular buildings, the cross-ribbed vaulted private chapel and the deliberately installed, fully sculptural female figure from antiquity in the medieval walls, a spirit of humanism and the Renaissance prevailed over the late Gothic tone of the space. These two phenomena were probably a consequence of the penitential pilgrimage Friderik II made to Rome, and on the way there he probably became acquainted with the new cultural orientations –the Renaissance and Humanism.



Miha Vipotnik
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The Žovneški from
Elsewhere
Saaneckh People
from Elsewhere

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Open Monday to Friday
10 am to 6 PM



Myth is the honey for spreading history on the bread of everyday temporality. Anonymous

Marijan Pušavec

Disciplined science presents history and the past as a belt, a straight line that explains the flow, causes and consequences of the events that took place in the past.

However, the more undisciplined people there are dealing with the past, the more they mythologise it.

Their probing and individuality no longer serve the purpose of objectively presenting the cause-and-effect events. As a summary they do not retrospectively seek the properties and common features of phenomena or social machineries.

They detect within a field of ideas and images that is not tied to political geography, but rather to the mental geography of time-space.

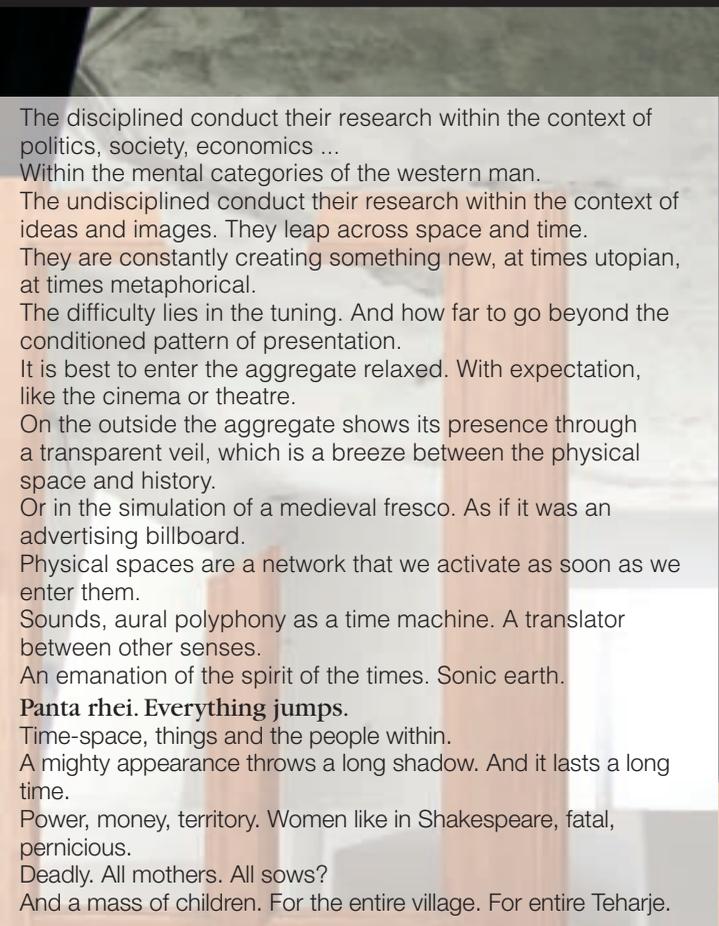
The mental historical geographer-chemist and digital painter Miha works his mise-en-scene approaches in order to transform the cause-and-effect reality into an ambient, poetic landscape that JE-NI (it is/not) was.

Herein lies the key difference between the disciplined historian and the undisciplined artist.

In this case the undisciplined artist goes hand in hand with the disciplined historians. But only as far as the gates of the temple or shrine.

Heut die Grafen von Cilli und Niemandwieder.

Their vibrations and reflexes in time and space, a stone and imaginary architecture. And power and self-confidence.



The disciplined conduct their research within the context of politics, society, economics ...

Within the mental categories of the western man.

The undisciplined conduct their research within the context of ideas and images. They leap across space and time.

They are constantly creating something new, at times utopian, at times metaphorical.

The difficulty lies in the tuning. And how far to go beyond the conditioned pattern of presentation.

It is best to enter the aggregate relaxed. With expectation, like the cinema or theatre.

On the outside the aggregate shows its presence through a transparent veil, which is a breeze between the physical space and history.

Or in the simulation of a medieval fresco. As if it was an advertising billboard.

Physical spaces are a network that we activate as soon as we enter them.

Sounds, aural polyphony as a time machine. A translator between other senses.

An emanation of the spirit of the times. Sonic earth.

Panta rhei. Everything jumps.

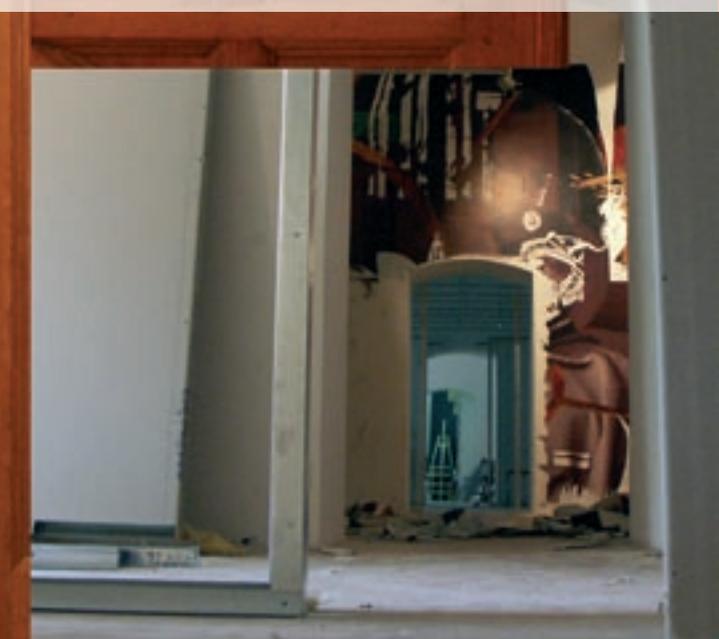
Time-space, things and the people within.

A mighty appearance throws a long shadow. And it lasts a long time.

Power, money, territory. Women like in Shakespeare, fatal, pernicious.

Deadly. All mothers. All sows?

And a mass of children. For the entire village. For entire Teharje.



Our Father!

Build a house by the river. A house on a house palace.

A country on a country state. A state on a state empire.

The archipelago of Venice-Aquileia-Salzburg-Vienna. Croatia-Bosnia-Serbia-Ottoman Empire.

And there a large library of learned books.

The gentry did not merely wage war and fuck, they read Latin and German books.

Exploiters of Slovenian serfs.

Like some blithe self-evidence. A real chivalric tale. With elegance and troubadour lyrics. With a court that gave two queens.

The series includes the interesting letter B. It remains in the centre of the map.

And in the centre of the other map we can find two women. See how the map of passion and the map of time-space overlap!

The land that JE-NI (it is/not) was.

A thousand years of yearning to be one's own master. Only to seek for a new master.

Where is the heart of this palimpsest scenery?

It beats as a vision.

In the floors of a thousand-year old cellars, across which the Roman peoples marched towards the east or towards the west.

And beneath the road the audible inflow of the river.

It is still flowing downwards.

Miha Vipotnik: **The Žovneški from Elsewhere**, Saaneckh People from Elsewhere, European Commission, 8 Storey's Gate, Westminster, SW1P 3AT • Text by: **Marijan Pušavec, Matija Plevnik** • Technical works: **Bogdan Majce** • Technical support: **Bogdan Majce, Zdeno Kuzmič, Vojko Aleksič** • Cast: **Spela Hvala, Saša Šuster, Mark Požleb, Gašper Plano, Miha Kaučič, Jure Cvitan, Matija Plevnik, Sunčan Stone** • Photographic credits on digital prints: **Jure Kravanja, Vinko Skale** • Video animation: **Simon Sedmak, Markus Kuha, Matija Suhadolc** • Sound: **Julij Zornik** • Graphic design: **JZS** • Website: **Andraž Beguš** • The project was supported by: **Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia London and the European Commission Representation in the UK** • Sponsors of the exhibition: **Amidas translating agency, Protechnik / house of digital prints, Vision Global Ltd, NLB d.d. Representative office London, RIKO d.o.o.**

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