

# Swiss artists in Alpine passes...

## How artists travelled from the Lombard-Ticino lakes to Central Europe

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Travelling and means of transport in different parts of Europe played a very important role in the lives of artists and craftsmen in the early modern age. They had an impact not only on the lives of the individual masters and their families, but also influenced the time it took them to complete commissions, the working season, and the amount of time they spent away from home. Travelling was of quite fundamental importance for the master artists and craftsmen from the region of the Lombard-Ticino lakes, in other words what is today the southern part of the Swiss canton of Ticino and northern Lombardy. These artists and craftsmen, and members of a number of other associated professions in the building sector, had been migrating to find work ever since the Middle Ages. During the period from the 16th to the 18th centuries this artistic migration assumed the proportions of a wide-ranging European phenomenon, which was no longer simply the consequence of complex economic and geographical processes, but gradually became a deliberately fostered and developed tradition that was consciously followed by further generations<sup>1</sup>. Lombard-Ticino migration was characterised by superb organisation of labour, and an exceptional ability to cooperate and flexibly “supply” the building sites of early modern Europe with the necessary number of men of the required professions and specialisations from within its ranks. The masters from Ticino and the surrounding areas functioned in their way like loosely organised early modern corporations that were active internationally and were able to carry out complete projects – albeit in stages, with the gradual involvement of various masters – from the stage of planning and design, through the construction of buildings, to their final decoration.

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<sup>1</sup> From the wealth of literature see esp. L. Damiani Cabrini, *Le migrazioni d'arte*, [in:] *Storia della Svizzera italiana. Dal Cinquecento al Settecento*, ed. R. Ceschi, Bellinzona 2000 (with an overview of the older literature). See further e.g. G. Cheda, *L'emigrazione: un problema di sempre*, [in:] G. Cheda [et al.], *Emigrazione, un problema di sempre*, Bellinzona 1991, pp. 9–24. Among Polish researchers the standard works on Ticino migration include in particular texts by M. Karpowicz, e.g.: *Artisti ticinesi in Polonia nel '600*, Lugano 1983; *Artisti ticinesi in Polonia nel '500*, Lugano 1987; *Artyści włosko-szwajcarscy w Polsce I połowy XVII wieku*, Warszawa 2013. See also *Artyści z nad jezior lombardzkich w nowożytnej Europie*, ed. R. Sulewska, M. Smoliński, Warszawa 2015.



1. N. Visscher, *Exactissima Helvetiae Rhaetiae, Valesiae caeterorumque Confoederatorum ut et finitimum populorum regionum tabula*, 1684 (?), copperplate engraving on paper

Although the master artists and craftsmen from the Lombard-Ticino lakes came from very poor and remote communities in the foothills of the Alps, they were “globetrotters” who during several centuries left in their hundreds and even thousands to work in many different parts of Europe, and also in Russia and elsewhere. It was typical of them that with a few exceptions they remained linked throughout their lives to their place of origin, usually represented by their native village and its immediate surroundings. They nearly always left their families at home and sent them money to live from, and they themselves frequently returned home from their travels in Central Europe, depending on their economic situation, the commissions they had received, and other circumstances. In this article we will examine the travels of these artists to Central Europe, especially to Moravia. How often did they return home? Which routes did they use? And how long did such journeys take?

### The Alpine passes

Ticino is isolated from the north by the high ridges of the Alps. Even today they can only be crossed through a very small number of passes. Every master artist or craftsman, unless they left their native land to work in the south, was confronted by this mountain chain and had to undertake this demanding and frequently dangerous journey, often many times during their life. However, the penury and harsh natural conditions of their infertile native land of lakes and mountains taught the local population to overcome this isolation, to such an extent that some artists and craftsmen in the 16th and 17th centuries crisscrossed Europe virtually without any geographical limits and travelled distances that would have been difficult to imagine for the inhabitants of other regions where life was easier.

Thanks to its position, Ticino played an important role, for it lay on one of the main transit routes across the Alps between Italy and Central Europe [fig. 1]. Transport policy in the area that is today Switzerland has been important from time immemorial, for it was necessary to provide for the transit of people, animals, and goods across the Alps, and the way this policy functioned has influenced the economic, political, and cultural life of the region. The economy of this previously very poor territory was dependent on the quality of what we would today call infrastructure. Where the main lines of communication run today, with railway lines and motorways, there were previously to be found various roads, paths, and tracks. The original form of migration in the mountain regions was the herding of livestock, which for centuries meant the movement of populations from the Alpine valleys and the resettlement of groups of people within certain locations. As a result of this way of life various refuges and shelters were created in the mountain areas, and gradually a network of roads and paths developed that were more or less passable on foot or for horses, connected human settlements in remote locations, and enabled the transport of wool, cheese, and other commodities.

The Ticino villages and settlements were linked by a network of paths or, in the case of the more frequented locations, roads. The main line of communication run from south to north, connecting Lombardy with Ticino, and above Bellinzona it split into three routes leading to three important passes across the Alps: St. Bernard, Lukmanier, and St. Gotthard. The artists, craftsmen, and stonemasons from Ticino and the surrounding area used various different routes to cross the Alps, depending on which part of Europe they were heading for. Some routes were more popular in certain epochs than others. Up until the 16th century we only have a limited number of source documents. From the 17th century onwards, thanks to the greater extant correspondence by artists and craftsmen, we have a better idea of the routes they took<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Especially the correspondence of artists in the Archivio di Stato, Bellinzona. Some letters have been published by G. Martinola: *Lettere dai paesi transalpini degli artisti di Meride e dei villaggi vicini (XVII-XIX)*, in appendice *L'emigrazione delle maestranze d'arte del Mendrisiotto oltre le Alpi (XVI-XVIII)*, Lugano 1963; *Le maestranze d'arte del Mendrisiotto in Italia nei secoli XVI-XVIII*, Bellinzona 1964.

The St. Gotthard Pass, today the most famous of the passes linking Ticino with the Transalpine lands, was one of the most important and shortest ways of crossing the Alps in those days, too. It was used by artists and craftsmen journeying from the area we now call central Switzerland to the territories of present-day Germany, France, Denmark, Holland, or Great Britain. Up until the early 18th century the journey across the St. Gotthard Pass was extremely demanding. The route contained a number of difficult sections such as the Piottino and Biaschina gorges and the famous Devil's Bridge spanning the Schöllenen Gorge and the torrential waters of the River Reuss. The St. Gotthard Pass could only be negotiated on foot or with mules. It was impassable for stagecoaches or carts and could not be used for transporting large quantities of goods. Its importance and frequency of use increased in the 19th century, with the cantonal government passing a law on financing building work on the most important transport routes. During the early decades of the 19th century some very important roads were built. At the same time as the Ticino Canton was working on the St Gotthard Pass, the Graubünden Canton was improving the infrastructure of the St. Bernard Pass. The two capitals were in competition with each other, because the provision of infrastructure brought economic advantages to the region. The road across the St. Gotthard Pass was opened in 1839, and the railway conquered the Pass in 1882.

However, artists travelling from Ticino to Vienna, Moravia, Poland, or Bohemia used other routes for crossing the Alpine range than the St Gotthard, Lukmanier, or St Bernard passes. The most common route was via Chiavenna, which artists could reach in two main ways, depending on where they lived or where they started their journey from. For masters settled in the southern part of Ticino, that is to say south of Bissone, it was best to go south to Como, from where with a favourable wind they could cross the whole of Lake Como by boat, from its south-western tip to the north, in 10 hours. If the weather made the journey by boat impossible, the artists had to go on foot along the western shore of the lake. Depending on the starting-point, the section to Chiavenna took about one and a half days. The second way of reaching Chiavenna was either by boat across Lake Lugano or by land. This route was used by artists and craftsmen from the areas adjacent to the lake. From the northern tip of Lake Lugano they then had to continue on foot to the village of Menaggio on the western coast of Lake Como. Alternatively, it was possible to go through Arogno and the Intelvi area. From Menaggio they could then continue to the northern end of Lake Como either along the shore or by boat.

From Chiavenna the route to eastern Europe continued via the Bergell Valley to the Maloja Pass, and then along the Engadin Valley through St Moritz as far as Innsbruck. A few kilometres beyond Innsbruck it was possible to take a boat and continue along the River Inn to its confluence with the Danube in Passau. However, travelling by boat along the Inn or the Danube was only possible for those masters who were able to pay or to work their passage. The others had to continue on foot. From Passau the artists travelled in various directions depending on their final destination. They could either carry on along the Danube to Vienna, or strike out towards Bohemia, Moravia, or other areas in what are today Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Poland<sup>3</sup>. There were also other ways of crossing the Alps, depending on the starting point and final goal of the traveller. These routes included the Brenner Pass or the road via Venice, Ljubljana, Graz, and Vienna<sup>4</sup>. However, these were not so popular among the artists from the Lombard-Ticino lakes.

<sup>3</sup> On the individual routes see e.g. A. Crivelli, *Artisti ticinesi dal Baltico al mar Nero: Svezia - Polonia - Cecoslovacchia - Austria - Jugoslavia - Ungheria - Romania - Turchia* (series *Artisti ticinesi nel mondo II*), Locarno 1969, pp. 15-17; G. Piffaretti, "La montagna" terra di emigranti, [in:] G. Cheda [et al.], *Emigrazione, un problema di sempre*, Bellinzona 1991, esp. pp. 42-56.

<sup>4</sup> The journey from the town of Capolago by Lake Lugano to Venice took six days. See A. Crivelli, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

### The working season. How often did they return home?

In the specialist literature the mistaken conviction can still often be found that master artists and craftsmen returned home every year to spend the winter in their native land. The stucco artist Baldassarre Fontana (1661–1733) is said to have “interrupted his stay in Moravia every year to return home for the winter to his native land, where he could deepen and refresh his artistic insights and knowledge through direct contact with the Roman sculpture of Bernini’s circle”<sup>5</sup>. This well-off and very successful stucco artist returned home to Chiasso more frequently than most of his fellow-countrymen. Some of the time he took his wife Maria Elisabetta with him across the Alps, and she gave birth to children in Kroměříž<sup>6</sup>. However, even Fontana did not travel home every winter, but only once every two or three years<sup>7</sup>.

For ordinary masters, the usual interval between visits home varied roughly from two to four years, depending on a number of circumstances<sup>8</sup>. Certain conclusions can be drawn, even though cautiously, from studying registers of births and deaths and the frequency of the birth of children. As late as the first half of the 20th century, when the migration of the Ticino masters still continued, although in a different form, it was quite usual for a father to conceive a child when he returned home, and to see it for the first time on his next visit several years later.

The journey home brought with it expenses that most masters could not afford every winter. The main factor influencing the frequency of visits to their homeland was their current financial situation, which determined whether they could afford not to work and to spend part of their earnings on the journey. Another important factor consisted of unfinished commissions, and further opportunities for work that arose and had to be made use of. We learn about specific cases from artists’ correspondence. For example, the stucco artist Giovanni Oldelli planned to return to his native Meride in October 1717. However, one of his fellow-countrymen put pressure on his wife to pay him the sum of 40 thalers that Giovanni owed him. Giovanni sent the money he owed to his wife, but as a result he had to postpone his journey home, because he could no longer afford it<sup>9</sup>. His relation, the stucco artist Giovanni Antonio Oldelli (1691 – after 1758), sent a letter to Giovanni from Olomouc on 23 IV 1721, in which he wrote: “I no longer want to undertake so many journeys as I did formerly, because my experience is that it empties my purse and destroys my life”<sup>10</sup>.

When they did return, they tried to avoid travelling in the winter months, in other words December, January, and February, when conditions on the roads were usually most difficult. Artists often had to postpone their journeys “because of the harshness of the weather”<sup>11</sup>. For example, the notary Andrea Antonini (1606 – after 1675) from Manno, who had settled in Vienna, sent a letter to the bishop of Olomouc on 8 I 1670 with the message that the painter Carpofo Tencalla (1623–1685) could not come to Moravia from

<sup>5</sup> M. Stehlík, *Umění baroka na Moravě a ve Slezsku: Sochařství*, [in:] I. Krsek [et al.], *Umění baroka na Moravě a ve Slezsku*, Praha 1996, p. 88. Similar views can be found in a number of other publications, e.g. M. Stehlík, *Sochařství vrcholného baroka na Moravě*, [in:] *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění III/2*, ed. J. Dvorský, Praha 1989, p. 512; A. Pedroli, *Siamo tutti emigranti*, [in:] G. Cheda [et al.], *Emigrazione, un problema di sempre*, Bellinzona 1991, pp. 27–28; M. Číhalík, B. Číhalíková, S. Pechová, *Stavebně historický průzkum zámku v Holešově*, Brno 2005, p. 134.

<sup>6</sup> On Fontana see especially L. Máčelová, *Baldassarre Fontana na Moravě*, PhD thesis, Masaryk University in Brno 1949; M. Karpowicz, *Baldasar Fontana 1661–1733. Un berniniano ticinese in Moravia e Polonia*, Lugano 1990; *idem*, *Baltazar Fontana*, Warszawa 1994.

<sup>7</sup> See L. Máčelová, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–37; M. Karpowicz, *Baldasar Fontana 1661–1733...*, pp. 30–40. Either from the archives, or indirectly based on the conception of his children, we have evidence that he stayed in Chiasso at these times: winter 1696–1697, February 1700, December 1702 – February (?) 1703, December 1708, winter 1713–1714, winter 1714–1715, winter 1721–1722, 1732–1733. However, it can be assumed that he spent time at home in other years as well.

<sup>8</sup> See J. Ganz, *Zur Tätigkeit des Malers Carpofo Tencalla südlich der Alpen*, „Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte” vol. 35 (1978), esp. pp. 52–53.

<sup>9</sup> See G. Martinola, *Lettere dai paesi...*, p. 115 (letter written in Durlach on 23 X 1717).

<sup>10</sup> Original wording: “nè voglio più far tanti viagij come ho fatto, perchè ho trovato in esperienza che mi sasino la borsa e la vita”. Transcribed in: *ibidem*, p. 137.

<sup>11</sup> Original wording: “Per la rigorosità del tempo”. Transcribed in: *ibidem*, p. 148.

Vienna, partly because he was suffering from catarrh, but also because of the state of the roads, which “are now impassable because of the amount of snow that has fallen”<sup>12</sup>.

The master artists and craftsmen usually set out northwards to look for work at the beginning of March or later during that month, so that they would arrive in the Transalpine lands in time for the new working season. They also left for the north at other times, however, depending on many different circumstances, including the time they had come home, their family situation, and, last but not least, when work would start on commissions that had already been arranged. For example, Quirico Castelli (1620–1679) wrote to Karl of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno (1624–1695) that he would set out from Melide on 24 IV 1669, as he evidently planned to spend the Easter festival with his family<sup>13</sup>. The date of the journey home at the end of autumn and before the onset of winter depended mainly on the completion of work and the weather. It usually took place between October and December. For example, Carpoforo Tencalla worked intensively in October 1675, in order to be able to return afterwards to his native Bissone for the winter<sup>14</sup>.

Sometimes, however, artists remained beyond the Alps and worked there over the winter. Evidence of this can be seen in a letter from the stucco artist Quirico Castelli to the Bishop of Olomouc, Karl of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, dated 10 X 1667, in which he promised to decorate with stucco six or seven of a total of 17 halls in Mírov Castle by the spring<sup>15</sup>. Although this work was in the interior of the Castle, working conditions in the winter were more difficult, and the materials that were normally used reacted differently as a result of the change in temperature and humidity.

A useful tool in studying the frequency with which the Ticino masters returned to their native towns, and when and how long they stayed there, is provided by the parish registers for marriages and baptisms. Paola Barakat-Crivelli has studied the large Oldelli family, many of whom were active as artists, and other related families, in the years 1675–1890. Her analysis shows that of a total of 38 weddings, 17 took place in February. There were also several weddings in January, March, and April. It was rare for members of this family to marry at other times of the year<sup>16</sup>. Our analysis of the registers for weddings in the towns of Melide, Bissone, and Gravesano [figs. 2–4], where many of the masters who worked in Moravia in the 17th century came from, reveal similar figures<sup>17</sup>. More than half of the 127 weddings in the years 1601–1699 took place in January or February. We have to bear in mind that the time weddings took place was influenced not only by the seasonal work of migrant artists, craftsmen, and stonemasons, but also to some extent by considerations of agricultural work, from which people could take a short break in the winter months.

The presence of the Ticino artists and craftsmen in the land of their birth during the winter is also clearly shown by an analysis of the registers of baptisms. The overwhelming majority of children in the Oldelli family were conceived during the period from December to February. There were also some conceptions in November and March, but very few during the rest of the year<sup>18</sup>. Masters then usually saw their children only once every few years.

<sup>12</sup> Original wording: “c’hora si rendono impraticabili per la gran neve cassata”. See A. Antonini, letter to K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, dated 8 I 1670, Olomouc, Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch, Archbishopric of Olomouc collection, inv. no. 527, shelf mark 55, box 80, correspondence received by K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, January–April 1670, fol. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Q. Castelli, letter to K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, dated 17 IV 1669, Olomouc, Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch, Archbishopric of Olomouc collection, inv. no. 526, shelf mark 54, box 78, correspondence received by K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, January–May 1669, fol. 388. On the Bishop of Olomouc see recently published volumes: Karl von Lichtenstein-Castelcorno (1624–1695). Bishop of Olomouc and Central European Prince, ed. O. Jakubec, Olomouc 2019; Karl von Lichtenstein-Castelcorno (1624–1695). Places of the Bishop’s Memory, ed. R. Švácha, M. Potůčková, J. Kroupa, Olomouc 2019.

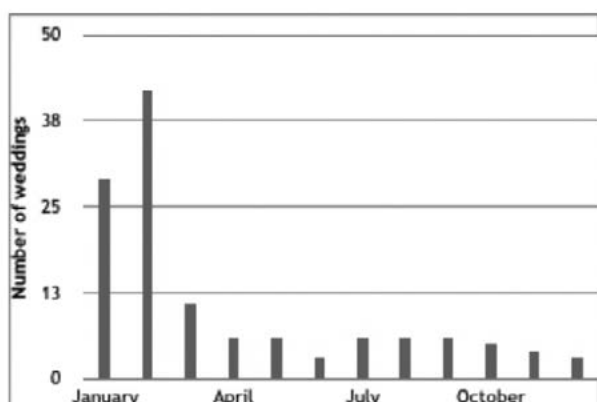
<sup>14</sup> Q. Castelli, letter to the K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, dated 14 X 1675, Olomouc, Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch, Archbishopric of Olomouc collection, inv. no. 532, shelf mark 60, box 93, correspondence received by K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, July–December 1675, fol. 165–166.

<sup>15</sup> Idem, letter to the K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, dated 10 X 1674, Olomouc, Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch, Archbishopric of Olomouc collection, inv. no. 524, shelf mark 52, box 74, correspondence received by Karl of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, October–December 1667, fol. 16, 18.

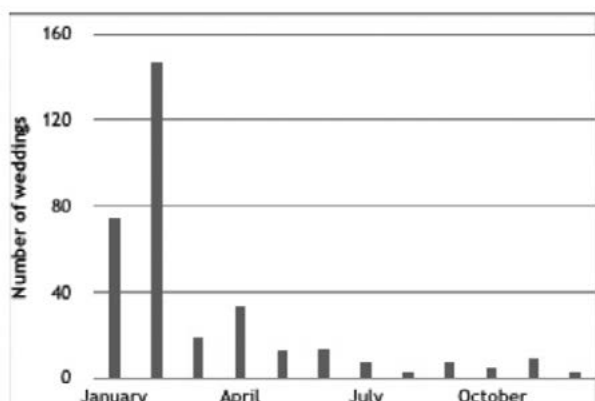
<sup>16</sup> See P. Barakat-Crivelli, *Emigrazione temporanea d’ancien régime: la famiglia Oldelli di Meride*, [in:] G. Cheda [et al.], *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>17</sup> Melide, parish of Santi Quirico e Giulitta, parish archive, register of weddings 1601–1712.

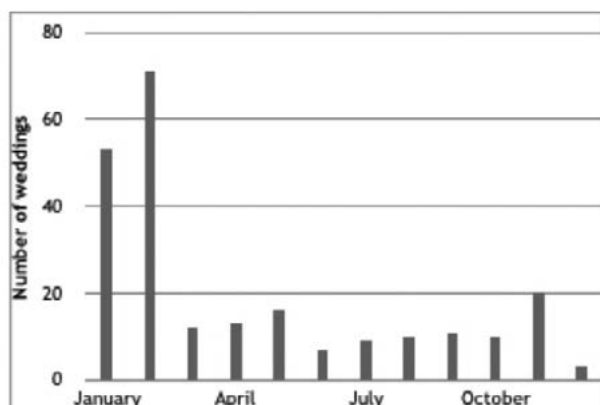
<sup>18</sup> See P. Barakat-Crivelli, *op. cit.*, p. 116.



2. Number of weddings in each month in the Melide parish in the period 1601-1699. Analysis: J. Zapletalová



3. Number of weddings in each month in the parish of Gravedano, Manno, and Bedano in the period 1584-1702. Analysis: J. Zapletalová



4. Number of weddings in each month in the Bissone parish in the period 1585-1709. Analysis: J. Zapletalová

### By stagecoach, on horseback, or on foot?

The master artists and craftsmen travelled in all weather conditions. In the letters sent home by these men from the Lombard-Ticino lakes we find a considerable number of laments and complaints about the tribulations they underwent on their journeys<sup>19</sup>. Travellers were exposed not only to the hardships caused by nature and the weather, but also to other pitfalls in the form of robbers, mercenaries, or wars. For example, on 4 IX 1664 the stucco artists Giovanni Domenico Lucchese (1612 – after 1686) and Castelli set out on horseback from Lugano to Bern, but they did not get very far. On arriving at Altdorf, beyond the St. Gotthard Pass, they had to turn back “because of war”, so that the next day they were back home again<sup>20</sup>. Two weeks later they tried to make the journey once again, and this time they were evidently successful. They set out from Melide on 16 IX and were back again on 28 September<sup>21</sup>.

From sketchy reports in the correspondence it also appears that some artists were forced to set out on journeys when they were ill<sup>22</sup>. Apart from the economic situation of the artists, the most important factors influencing the frequency of their journeys and the means of transport chosen were their physical condition, age, and state of health, fluctuations in the weather, and military conflicts. The price of travelling by coach, on horseback, or by boat along the rivers or lakes, was usually too high for most masters to be able to afford it. The vast majority of them therefore used the cheapest available means of transport – their own legs. From analysing correspondence and other archive documents, it appears that artists travelled around 10 hours each day and, depending on the circumstances, could cover up to 50 km in a single day<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> A large number of archive materials, in particular in the Archivio di Stato, Bellinzona, various collections (e.g. the Oldelli collection). From the transcribed and printed sources see e.g.: G. Martinola, *Lettere dai paesi...*; *idem*, *Le maestranze d'arte...*; G. Piffaretti, *Le maestranze d'arte dei paesi della montagna Arzo - Besazio - Meride - Tremona. Sec. XV-XVIII*, Morbio Inferiore 1986, esp. pp. 110-112.

<sup>20</sup> G. D. Lucchese, *Libro delli dinari*, manuscript, 1648-1671, private collection, fol. 73 (4 IX 1664).

<sup>21</sup> See *ibidem*, fol. 74 (28 IX 1664).

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. G. B. Clerici, letter to G. Oldelli, dated 5 VIII 1730 (transcribed and published in: G. Martinola, *Lettere dai paesi...*, pp. 30-31).

<sup>23</sup> Analyses by A. Crivelli, *op. cit.*, p. 15; G. Piffaretti, “La montagna”..., p. 43.

The means of transport used on the passable sections of the Alpine routes and above all in Central Europe in the 16th to the 18th centuries were horse-drawn carriages, post coaches, and horses. Sometimes masters made use of these possibilities. They were mostly the more affluent ones, who could afford to travel in this way, or those who were unable to journey otherwise because of their age or illness. An example of an artist who was well off was the sought-after and extremely busy Viennese court painter Tencalla. However, even he did not hesitate to travel some distance on foot if it was necessary. According to a letter from the notary Andrea Antonini to the Bishop of Olomouc dated January 1670, the painter planned to travel from Vienna to Kroměříž by means of a stagecoach serving the route from Vienna to Olomouc, and to get off in Vyškov. From there, unless the Bishop was able to arrange transport for him to Kroměříž, he intended to continue on foot<sup>24</sup>. The distance between the two episcopal towns was around 35 km, in other words seven hours' journey on foot. From another report we learn that when Carporo was working on the decoration of a house in Passau, the Abbot of Kremsmünster provided him with two horses to travel with. At that time the painter was 61 years old<sup>25</sup>.

The master artists and craftsmen from the Swiss-Italian border region often travelled in the company of their colleagues. This was no doubt due partly to the natural human desire to travel with others, but mainly for reasons of economy and security. The costs of travelling by stagecoach and accommodation could be shared. For example, on 20 IX 1662 Giovanni Antonio Oldelli wrote a message from Vienna to his father Sebastiano in Meride, saying that on the 13th day of the same month he had met Angelo, the Pozzo brothers, Carlo Provino and Todeschino, and that they were all travelling on the same stagecoach back to their native land<sup>26</sup>. He added that he was confident they would all arrive home without any mishaps. We are told that another master, Giovanni Ferrari, had to stop with his nephew in Prague on his journey home to Tremona, because "he was not able to endure the journey on the stagecoach"<sup>27</sup>.

We also know of other stories about artists. For example, the stucco artist Giovanni Antonio Oldelli, who from 1725 onwards mostly spent the summer in Prague or somewhere in Bohemia and Moravia, bought a horse for 80 guilders in Prague in July 1731, planning to use it for his journey home to Meride. At the time he was 40 years old. However, he soon discovered that the animal suffered from short-windedness. He therefore resold the horse at a loss and had to postpone his journey home<sup>28</sup>. His brother wrote back to him that next time he bought a horse he should not allow himself to be duped, and should make sure that the horse was not more than seven years old, so that it could manage the journey and he could sell it again in Meride. They did not need a horse at home, because there was not enough hay that year, and they already had a very good one, on which Mola had come from "Germany"<sup>29</sup>.

When circumstances permitted, artists used lakes and rivers as transport routes. Transport by boat was used, for example, by the stonemason Gian Pietro Fossati from Arzo, who travelled along the section between Vienna and Buda in 1687. In order to reduce the costs, he worked during the voyage as a *tuttofare*, a handyman ready to help with anything. At night, however, the vessel stopped by the bank of the river, and in one letter Fossati wrote that he had to sleep in the forests in the rain, and he only survived thanks to the mercy of God<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> See A. Antonini, letter to K. of Lichtenstein-Castelcorno, dated 8 I 1670, Olomouc, Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch, Archbishopric of Olomouc collection, box 80, shelf mark 55, fol. 87.

<sup>25</sup> See J. Ganz, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> See G. Martinola, *Lettere dai paesi transalpini...*, p. 188: "...tutti insieme sopra di un carro, quali credo senza nessun fallo che venissero alla patria".

<sup>27</sup> Original wording: "non pol star in carocia". See G. Martinola, *Lettere dai paesi transalpini...*, p. 156.

<sup>28</sup> Transcription of part of the letter in: *ibidem*, p. 143.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> See G. Piffaretti, "La montagna" terra di emigranti..., p. 44. Original wording: "miseramente alla foresta havendo pattito li fredí che mai in tempo di vita habia patito con notte d'acqua che a dirgliela giusta altro che la misericordia di Dio ci ha salvati".



Ai. 24. Agosto io ricevuto della Sig.  
Amia Anna 30 ½ Scudi a conto  
Del Sig. Casino Gio. Alberto della  
Polina che lui mi resta debitor  
si quali fanno Scudi - - Lire 25

Ai. 9. Settembre il Sig. Antonino  
Poro di qua si Millia ritornare  
A Verona il Quattro di di ala  
Sig. Lucrezia la dinare di di  
Ogheri nono a nome del Sig.  
Giliberto che fanno Scudi 14 Lire

Ai. 24. Dicembre. i 6 5 6 io vinsi di  
Vienna a milli et alli 3 suddetto io  
mi partii di Vienna con il Sig. Pietro Turchetti

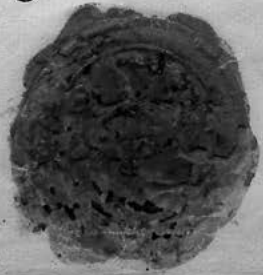
5. Record of the journeys of the stucco artist G. D. Lucchese. After: *idem*, *Libro delli denari*, manuscript, 1648-1671, private collection. Photo: J. Zapletalová

**AROLUS DEI GRATIA EPUS OLOMUCENSIS, VVX.**  
*S. R. I. Princeps, Regia Capella Bohemia, & de Lichtenstem Comes.*

Notum facimus tenore presentium Universis, et singulis, quod, cum *Balthasarus fontana* Stuccator una cum  
 suo Socio *Paulo Barucio* hic tota astate quo ad artem suam laboraverit, nunc vero in Italiam speciatim vero  
*Luceanum* proficisci decrevisset, & Nobis humiliter supplicasset, quatenus sibi litteras nostras, quo commen-  
 "dator apud exteros esset, et itce suam commodius, et tutius peragere posset, largiri dignaremur.  
 Nos proinde humili ejus petitioni annuentes, et honestam intentionem ejus ex parte nostra promovere cu-  
 "pientes Eum omnibus, & singulis commendamus, decenter requirentes, quatenus Eidem ut pote ex locis  
 per Dei gratiam ab omni pestifera contagionis lue liberis, & inimicis proficiscenti non modo libe-  
 "rum per *Vitiones*, et loca sua transitum, et reditum concedant, sed etiam Eidem tanquam homini ho-  
 "nesto humanitatis officijs adesse, et secundare velint; quod in simili, vel alia occasione redhibere  
 parati sumus. In quorum fidem has presentes manu nostra propria, subscriptas sigillo cancellariae nostrae  
 Communiri iussimus. Data in civitate nostra Residenciali die 4. Novembris Anno 1688.

*Carolus*

*Chas Friderig Schmidt*  
*Supplicarius*



1286

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6. Litterae securi passus dated 4 XI 1688 for the journey of B. Fontana and P. Barucci from Moravia to Switzerland; Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch. Photo: J. Zapletalová

A valuable source of information about the journeys of Swiss artists from the region which is today the canton of Ticino is provided by the account book of the stucco artist Giovanni Domenico Lucchese, brother of the Viennese court architect Filiberto Lucchese<sup>31</sup> [fig. 5]. As relatively wealthy artists, both of them travelled between their hometown Melide and Vienna exclusively on horseback. As Giovanni Domenico himself noted several times in his account book, he had no use for horses at home, and they would simply have used up more money. Usually, therefore, a few days after returning from Transalpine lands he would go to the market in Milan or Varese and sell the animal, even though in a few months' time he would be travelling north again and would have to buy another one<sup>32</sup>.

### How long did the journeys take?

Extant letters by master artists and craftsmen from the Lake Lugano region or other archive documents make it possible in some cases to calculate or deduce the speed with which they travelled. The account book of Giovanni Domenico Lucchese which we have just mentioned records a total of five major journeys across the Alps, three of them from Vienna to Melide, the native town of the Lucchese brothers, and two in the opposite direction. For the first journey, when the architect Filiberto Lucchese set out alone from Melide to Vienna on 10 III 1648, we do not know how long it took him. For the second recorded journey, however, we have the complete dates. Giovanni Domenico Lucchese and his brother Filiberto travelled home together from the imperial metropolis in September and October 1652, and the journey on horseback took them 24 days<sup>33</sup>. Four years later Giovanni Domenico Lucchese returned home from Vienna with the architect Giovanni Pietro Tencalla. They left Vienna on 3 XII 1656 and arrived home 22 days later on Christmas Eve<sup>34</sup>. On his last recorded journey Giovanni Domenico Lucchese was accompanied by his son Giovanni Filiberto, who was only eight years old. In spite of the boy's tender age, they completed the journey from Melide to Vienna in only 15 days<sup>35</sup>. However, they travelled in July. About 15 months later they returned on three horses and this time the journey took them 26 days<sup>36</sup>.

We have available a number of other examples where we know how long the journeys took. The section from Mendrisio to Salzburg, which was the main route from Ticino to Bohemia and measured roughly 540 km, was covered by the Ticino masters in 16 days on average (Mendrisio – Chiavenna: 2 days; Chiavenna – Hall in Tirol: 8 days; Hall in Tirol – Salzburg: 6 days)<sup>37</sup>. When they travelled part of the way by boat along the Inn and the Danube, the speed of the journey depended on the current, the wind, and also whether they paid for the voyage with money or by working their passage – mainly loading and unloading goods – which meant further delays to the journey<sup>38</sup>. This route was taken in harsh winter conditions by the master stonemason Gian Pietro Fossati when he set out on 1 XI 1687 from Meride via Como and Chiavenna to Salzburg<sup>39</sup>. In spite of the cold, the snow, and the impossibility of travelling part of the way by boat, he covered the distance of 450 km in 14 days. His journey was evidently far from ideal; he defined it as “a confounded journey full of rain and mud, which only a human being could endure”<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> G. D. Lucchese, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> On the journeys of G. D. Lucchese and the sale of horses see *ibidem*, fol. 6, 17, 18, 27, 54, 55, 56, 64, 66, and *passim*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 17 (26 V 1652).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 26 (24 XII 1656).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 52–53 (3 VII 1662, 17 III 1662).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 53.

<sup>37</sup> These numbers were the result of A. Crivelli (*op. cit.*, pp. 15–17) analysis of a number of archive records. See also derived from this: G. Piffaretti, “La montagna” terra di emigranti..., pp. 42–45.

<sup>38</sup> See A. Crivelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–17; G. Piffaretti, “La montagna” terra di emigranti..., pp. 42–45.

<sup>39</sup> See A. Crivelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16; G. Piffaretti, “La montagna” terra di emigranti..., pp. 43–44.

<sup>40</sup> Original wording: “disgratiato viaggio tanto di pioggia come di fango che a creatura umana possa occorrere”. See A. Crivelli, *op. cit.*, p. 15. More details of Fossati's journey can also be found there.

Thanks to correspondence that has survived, we have a number of testimonies about the length and course of the journeys by artists from the region of the Lombard lakes<sup>41</sup>. On 10 VII 1690, Damiano Pozzi wrote, “I undertook an unnecessary journey, and the last thing I needed was to walk through those mountains...”<sup>42</sup>. In 1713 Gaspare Mola covered the journey from Coldrerio to Cologne in 24 days<sup>43</sup>. Alfonso Oldelli needed the same number of days to travel virtually the same distance, from Meride to Cologne. According to the testimony of his own letter, two years later Gaspare Mola completed the journey from Coldrerio to Cologne on horseback in 15 days. Among his acquaintances was the stucco artist Giovanni Antonio Oldelli, who crisscrossed Europe in the first half of the 18th century hoping to find work, and often stayed in Moravia and Bohemia.

A useful source of information about transport in Moravia and what is today Poland is provided by sources about the travels of Fontana, who evidently used horses and stagecoaches for his journeys and, as a well-off and respected stucco artist, did not have to travel on foot, as can be deduced from an examination of the archive materials. For example, on 31 December 1695 he received payment in Cracow for stucco work in the church of St Anne, and then set off for his native Chiasso, where he arrived on 19 January. The journey could thus not have taken him more than 19 days – evidently he travelled on horseback<sup>44</sup>.

If possible, the artists and craftsmen from Ticino and the surrounding areas got their employers to write a testimonial for them for use on their journeys. Even in those days, these documents were known as passes – *litterae securi passus*. They served to establish the identity of their holders and to confirm their honesty and probity for innkeepers and lodging house owners. At times of military unrest, however such a pass could cause considerable difficulty for its holder if it had been issued by a nobleman or ruler from a hostile party<sup>45</sup>.

Archive documents provide evidence of several examples of passes issued to artists working in Moravia. The Court Office in Vienna recorded the issue of passes on 29 XI 1656 to the architect Giovanni Pietro Tencalla and the stucco artist Giovanni Domenico Lucchese. The two men planned to travel accompanied by two servants and five horses<sup>46</sup>. One of the animals was evidently intended to carry their baggage. The stucco artist Fontana had travel passes issued to him during the period when he was working in the service of the Bishop of Olomouc. We know of two such documents. The first one, written in Latin and dated 4 XI 1688, was issued to Fontana and his assistant Paolo Barucci<sup>47</sup> [fig. 6]. In it, the Bishop’s secretary Elias Schmidt confirmed that he had drawn up the document at the request of the stucco artist Fontana, who had worked in the Bishop’s service all summer and was now preparing to set out with his associate for “*Italiam, speciatum vero Lucanum*”. The pass confirms Fontana to be a decent and honest man and asks everyone to help and assist him on his journey. In addition, it certifies that Fontana was travelling from a region that was not suffering from the plague – something that was not without importance. The second *litterae securi passus*, issued on 6 III 1708, was intended not only for Fontana but also his associ-

<sup>41</sup> Above all the correspondence in the Oldelli collection in the Archivio di Stato, Bellinzona, part of which has been published in: **G. Martinola**, *Lettere dai paesi transalpini...*

<sup>42</sup> **D. Pozzi**, letter to A. Oldelli, dated 10 VII 1690. Original wording: “*Così io ò fatto il viaggio per niente e fatto una vita del diavolo andare sopra quele montagne...*”. Transcribed and published in: **G. Martinola**, *Le Maestranze d’arte del Mendrisiotto in Italia nei secoli XVI, XVII, XVIII*, „Bollettino storico della Svizzera italiana” vol. 74 (1962) (quote on p. 171).

<sup>43</sup> See **G. Martinola**, *Lettere dai paesi transalpini...*, p. 99; derived from this: **A. Pedrolì**, *op. cit.*, esp. p. 27.

<sup>44</sup> On B. Fontana see esp. **M. Karpowicz**, *Baldasar Fontana 1661–1733...*, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> This is documented e.g. by a letter from **S. I. Melchion** to G. Oldelli, dated 12 VI 1711. See **G. Martinola**, *Lettere dai paesi transalpini...*, p. 87. Some remarks on passes can be found in: **G. Piffaretti**, “*La montagna*” *terra di emigranti...*, p. 111. The stucco artist G. A. Oldelli, for example, was helped by such a pass, because thanks to it some hussars left him and his two companions alone. See **G. Martinola**, *Lettere dai paesi transalpini...*, p. 123.

<sup>46</sup> See **H. Haupt**, *Archivalien zur Kulturgeschichte des Wiener Hofes. 1. Teil: Kaiser Ferdinand III: Die Jahre 1646–1656*, „Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien” vol. 75 (1979), p. CIII, entry 965.

<sup>47</sup> E. Schmidt, letter to B. Fontana and P. Barucci, dated 4 XI 1688, Olomouc, Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch, Archbishopric of Olomouc collection, inv. no. 577, shelf mark 105, box 160, year 1688, fol. 377–378. Transcribed in: **L. Máčelová**, *op. cit.*, p. 170; **M. Smýkal**, *Giovanni Pietro Tencalla. Světské stavby na Moravě*, PhD thesis, Masaryk University in Brno 1975, pp. 243–244; **M. Karpowicz**, *Baldasar Fontana 1661–1733...*, p. 253.

ates Giovanni Battista Spinola, Gaspare Mella, and Giovanni Babante. All of them planned to travel to their native land<sup>48</sup>. The Bishop's office in Olomouc issued a similar pass, with only slight variations, to the stucco artist Domenico Chiesa, who had decided to set out for Como, together with his assistant Andrea Vacchano, in order to settle his inheritance<sup>49</sup>.

## Conclusion

Although the references above are so far only a mosaic of various sketchy archive reports, they have still enabled us to draw certain general conclusions, which will certainly be the subject of future research. The artists, craftsmen, and stonemasons from Ticino and the adjacent areas were extremely mobile, travelling around the whole of Europe and migrating flexibly to meet demand. Often, working only on the basis of historical documents and in the absence of more detailed studies on this subject, we have a tendency to underestimate the frequency of these journeys, which in many cases influences our conclusions about how works of art were created and when they were completed<sup>50</sup>. As can be seen from a number of examples, some artists often worked on several different commissions at the same time, frequently in locations several hundreds of kilometres apart, and would travel from one to another to continue their work, depending on how building work and other related projects were progressing. We should not necessarily therefore assume that artists always completed a piece of work in one place before moving on somewhere else. We have evidence of overlapping commissions, for example, when following the movements of the painters Carpofofo and Giacomo Tencalla, who flexibly crisscrossed Central Europe, or of Fontana, who frequently travelled between Olomouc, Cracow, Chiasso, Kroměříž, and many other locations<sup>51</sup>. It will doubtless be a task for future research to examine more comprehensively and in greater depth the entire issue of the travelling that took place in the framework of the artistic migration of the masters from the Lombard-Ticino lakes, and the relationship between this and the way work was carried out on commissions in the early modern age.

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### Keywords

artists from the Lombard-Ticino lakes, Ticino artists, travelling in the 17th century, Ticino, art in Moravia

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<sup>48</sup> See F. V. Peřinka, *Dějiny Kroměříže. Díl druhý, část 4, Od smrti K. Lichtenštejna do zřizení arcibiskupství 1695–1776*, Kroměříž 1950, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> See undated Latin draft of testimonial for a journey (*litterae securi passus*) for the stucco artists D. Chiesa and A. Vachano, who needed to travel to Como because of an inheritance Olomouc, Provincial Archives in Opava, Olomouc branch, Archbishopric of Olomouc collection, inv. no. 588, shelf mark 116, box 173a, years 1657–1700, fol. 1.

<sup>50</sup> On issues relating to travelling, see e.g. A. Crivelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–17; G. Piffaretti, “La montagna” terra di emigranti..., pp. 42–56.

<sup>51</sup> On the movements of C. and G. Tencalla see e.g. M. Mádl, J. Zapletalová, *Malíř Carpofofo Tencalla (1623–1685) jižně a severně od Dunaje*, [in:] *Tencalla I. Statě o životě a díle ticinských freskařů, o objednavatelích a o umělcích z jejich okruhu*, ed. M. Mádl, Praha 2012; *iiidem*, *Malíř Giacomo Tencalla (1644–1689). Carpofofovův napodobitel na Moravě a v Čechách*, in: *Tencalla I...* For B. Fontana see M. Karpowicz, *Baldasar Fontana 1661–1733...*; *idem*, *Baltazar Fontana...*

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## Summary

### JANA ZAPLETALOVA (Palacký University Olomouc) / Swiss artists in Alpine passes... How artists travelled from the Lombard–Ticino lakes to Central Europe

Traveling played an important role in the lives of master artists and craftsmen from the region of the Lombard-Ticino lakes. These masters have been extremely mobile since the Middle Ages and, thanks to their flexibility and mobility, have been able to obtain commissions in many places in Europe and Russia. Travel influenced not only their lives, but also the building and artistic activities and the organization of the work of these masters. The text based on the study of archival documents deals with a wide range of topics related to the migration of these artists and artisans to Central Europe, especially to Bohemia and Moravia from the 16th to the early 18th centuries. It represents the main routes the masters have taken. The author focuses on the ways of transportation, the duration of trips and the working season. She wonders how often these artists returned home to Lake Lugano, how many of them usually traveled in the group, and how they organized work at multiple locations simultaneously. All this is demonstrated on a number of concrete examples from correspondence and other archival documents from archives in the Czech Republic and the Swiss Confederation.