

„The surviving artefacts in the territory of Slovakia, Hungary and Poland from the creative circle of Master Konrad and his followers from Spišská Nová Ves from the 14th - 16th centuries with their historical bells and baptismal fonts as a part of the church's heritage form a representative body of work of national significance contributing to central European cultural heritage.

**THEIR IMPORTANCE  
AND LEVEL CAN BE  
COMPARED TO THAT  
OF THE WORKS  
OF MASTER PAVOL  
FROM LEVOČA,**  
which are part of the world cultural  
heritage entered  
in the UNESCO list.”



*Juraj Gembický: Survey of bells and bellfoundries in Spiš. M. Števík (catalogue): the bells, bellfries and ringing in Spiš in the past. Catalogue for the exhibition. The Museum of Spiš in Spišská Nová Ves 2013, p. 14.*

◀ *One of the oldest preserved bells from his workshop is a bell from Kysak. The bell has a bottom diameter of 107 cm and a height of 82 cm. The inscription on the bell says: O REX ANNO DOMINI MILESIMO CCCLXXV, which means O King, A.D. 1375.*  
Foto: Michal Novák

## SELECTIVE LIST OF BELLS AND BAPTISMAL FONTS FROM THE MASTER KONRAD'S BELL-FOUNDRY

### Bells

Kysak, 1375, Master Konrad  
Nižné Lapše, 14th century, Poland, Master Konrad (nowadays in the East Slovak Museum, Košice)  
Poprad - Spišská Sobota, 14th century, central bell, Master Konrad  
Spiš Castle, 14th century, fragment of bell, Master Konrad  
Cracow, Poland, smaller bell, before 1403, Master Jan  
Cracow, Poland, larger bell, after 1386, resp. before 1403  
Markušovce, break of 14th - 15th centuries (nowadays on the square in Spišská Nová Ves)  
Vrbov, Master Mikulas  
Žehňa, Master Mikulas  
Sp. Kapitula, 1426, Master Mikulas  
Bardejov, 1437, Master Mattias  
Lubica, Large bell, 1475, Masters Pavol and Jan  
Sabinov, 1470, most probably Masters Pavol and Jan  
Bardejov, 1486, Master Jan Wagner  
Betlanovce, 1499 (bell is in Hungary)  
Poprad - Spišská Sobota, larger bell, 1511  
Poprad - Veľká, Large bell, around 1400  
Gánovce  
Strážky, Central bell  
Spišská Nová Ves, 1486, Master Jan Wagner  
Gemerská Poloma, 1491  
Ondrej - Hôrka, 1494  
Košice, 1516  
Bobrovec, 1527  
Krušovce, Master Pavol  
Heves, Hungary, Master Pavol  
Turňa nad Bodvou, Master Augustin

### Baptismal fonts

Spišská Nová Ves (upper part)  
Podolíneč, 14th century, Master Konrad  
Gelnica, 14th century, Master Konrad  
Švedlár, 14th century  
Slovenská Ves (originally in Ruskinovce), 1427  
Kežmarok, 1472, Master M. G.  
Vrbov, 1484, Master Jan Wagner  
Spišské Vlachy, 1497  
Spišské Podhradie, Master Jan  
Liptovská Teplá (baptismal font is in Hungary now)  
Matejovce  
Spišská Belá  
Poprad - Veľká, 1439  
Levoča  
Gyöngyös, Hungary  
Štítnik, 1454  
Lubica, 1463

# MASTER KONRAD

(1357 - 1527)

the founder of the oldest and most  
significant medieval bell-foundry  
in Slovakia



## „19 BAPTISMAL FONTS AND 43 BELLS

of different sizes have still survived, which they are exceptional relics of the medieval craft of bronze casting. In Europe it is unique that medieval castings of this significant amount have remained in the territory of only a few counties.”

*M. Szóke, G. Buzás, B. Romhányi: The great bell in Visegrad and the bell-foundry of Master Konrad. M. Števík (catalogue): the bells, bellfries and ringing in Spiš in the past. Catalogue for the exhibition. The Museum of Spiš in Spišská Nová Ves 2013, p. 8.*





▲ Most probably one of the last bells from Konrad's workshop is called "Smertny" and it dates from 1486. The bell can be seen in the tower of the Roman-Catholic parish church in Spišská Nová Ves. It has a diameter of 92 cm and it is encircled by the inscription O REX GLORIE VENI CVM PACE (O, King of Glory, Come in Peace). Foto: Miro Dibák

Historical information about the bell-founder Konrad are quite scarce. The first mention of him dates from 1357 and is associated with his bell-foundry activity. In that year King Louis I. rewarded him and his brothers Jan and Mikulas with extensive privileges and ennobled him to a knighthood. Privileges granted to him enabled the free choice of the future residence, while exempting his home on various benefits and taxes. Konrad earned this distinction by making and hanging a large bell in Visegrad, at that time the royal capital settlement.

In 1968 – 1969 Mátyás Szőke discovered Master Konrad's bell-foundry in the courtyard of the Visegrad lower castle and fragments of the mold of the bell. The bell was about 300 cm tall, its bottom diameter was 280 cm and weighed almost 13 tons. It was the biggest known medieval bell in Europe.

Most likely, Master Konrad and his two brothers, Mikulas and Jan, came to Hungary from Germany and later they moved from the Visegrad royal court to Spiš. Choosing Spiš and Spišská Nová Ves was not random as the region was rich in copper and had extensive forests with timber needed for melting bell bronze alloy (copper and tin in the ratio of about 4:1).

Master Konrad founded one of the most well known bell-foundry workshops in Spišská Nová Ves, which was working from the middle of the 14th century until the twenties of 16th century. From the workshop came a large amount of bells with perfect sound, and many of them are used until today. Beautifully decorated baptismal fonts were also produced here.

During his lifetime, Master Konrad was active as a member of the town council. In 1369 in his testament he set up an endowment of 12 Golden coins for maintaining the chapel and chaplain.

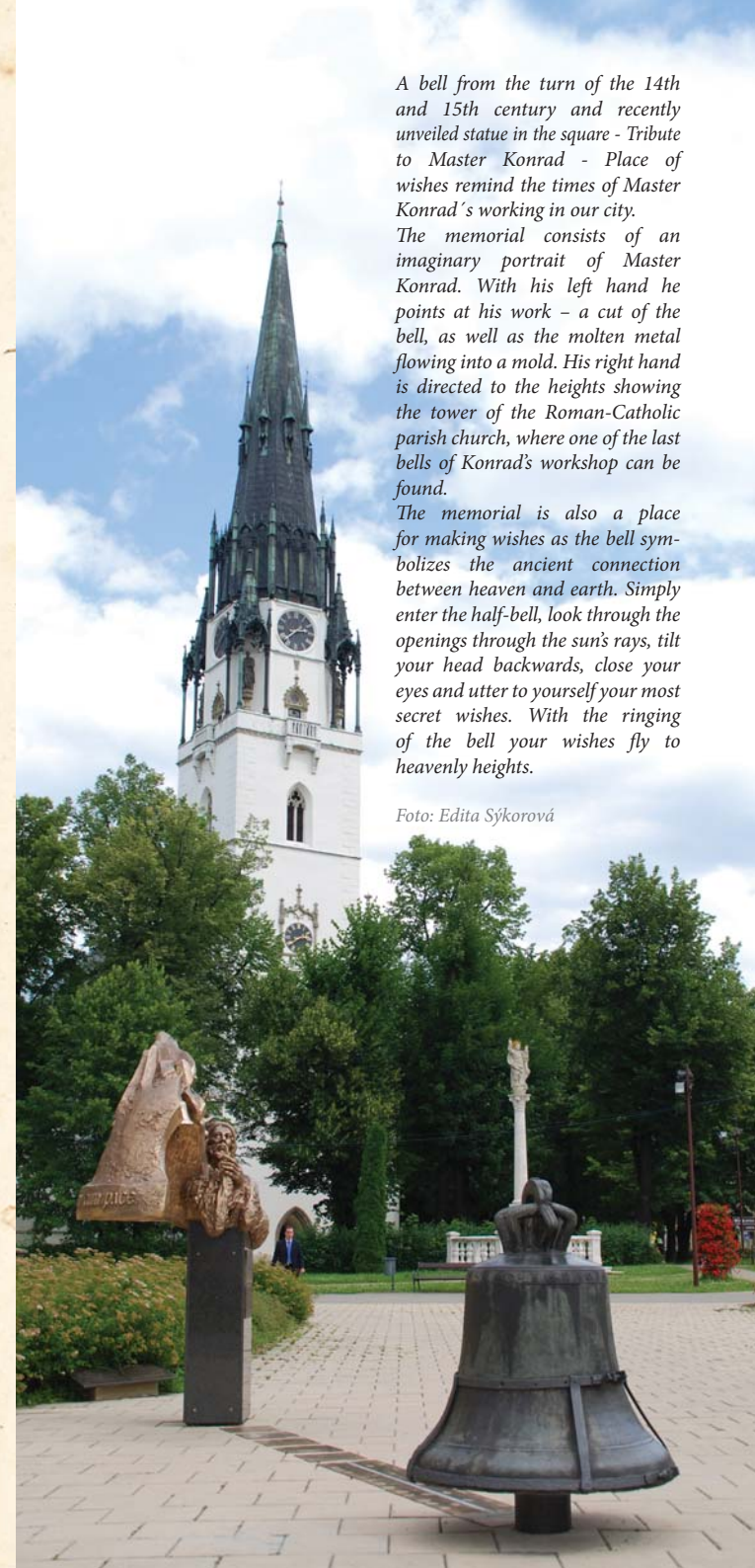
It is believed that he also founded a town hospital, but there are no direct proofs of it.

Other masters working in Konrad's foundry, apart from Konrad and his brothers Jan and Mikulas, included Mattias, Mikulas, Augustin, Master M. G., Pavol, Vincent and Jan. The last known master of Konrad's workshop was Jan Wagner who was for a certain time the vice-mayor of Spišská Nová Ves.

Experts highly praise the artistic value of the bronze bells and baptismal fonts created in the workshop founded by Master Konrad. Bell-foundry is a craft which in the past most made Spišská Nová Ves well known beyond its boundaries.



The similarity of the surviving casts from the medieval foundry, apart from their characteristic shape, show typical decorations with ornamental bands and reliefs, repeated during the one and a half century period of the foundry's existence. Baptismal fonts were richly decorated by figural reliefs, heads of apostles, coins, seals, crosses, etc. Foto: G. Buzás



A bell from the turn of the 14th and 15th century and recently unveiled statue in the square - Tribute to Master Konrad - Place of wishes remind the times of Master Konrad's working in our city.

The memorial consists of an imaginary portrait of Master Konrad. With his left hand he points at his work – a cut of the bell, as well as the molten metal flowing into a mold. His right hand is directed to the heights showing the tower of the Roman-Catholic parish church, where one of the last bells of Konrad's workshop can be found.

The memorial is also a place for making wishes as the bell symbolizes the ancient connection between heaven and earth. Simply enter the half-bell, look through the openings through the sun's rays, tilt your head backwards, close your eyes and utter to yourself your most secret wishes. With the ringing of the bell your wishes fly to heavenly heights.

Foto: Edita Sýkorová