

Early Modern Jesuit Landscape Projects and Their Role in Conversion

Henrieta Žažová, Adrián Kobetič

Trnava University in Trnava, Trnava, Slovakia

e-mail: henrieta.zazova@truni.sk, kobeticadrian@gmail.com

This paper examines Jesuit landscape projects undertaken primarily during the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries, which, through the deliberate creation of sacred topographies, significantly transformed the cultural landscape and played an important role in the process of Catholic renewal and conversion. Rather than erecting isolated religious structures, the Jesuits conceived extensive spatial compositions in which architecture, landscape, and religious symbolism were integrated into complex instruments of conversion that fostered the formation of Catholic confessional identity. Particular attention is devoted to the construction of Calvaries as one of the most significant forms of Jesuit sacralisation of the landscape. The paper presents selected examples from present-day Slovakia, especially the Calvaries of Skalica and Banská Štiavnica, placing them within the broader context of Jesuit landscape interventions in Central Europe. Its principal focus, however, is on Jesuit projects in Trnava and their relationship to the historic University of Trnava, where systematic spatial and visual strategies can be identified in the shaping of the city's sacred topography and its surrounding landscape. The paper aims to interpret these projects not merely as architectural and urban interventions, but primarily as manifestations of broader Jesuit spiritual and conversion strategies rooted in Ignatian spirituality. By relating specific case studies to the theoretical concepts of Jesuit spiritual thought, the paper demonstrates how the landscape functioned as a medium of religious experience, collective memory, and confessional representation in the early modern period.

