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Austrian History Yearbook (2025), **56**, 52–71
doi:10.1017/S0067237824000778

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

Bottom-Up Baroque: Recontextualizing the Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders

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Abstract

Though not among the most famous of the Baroque's architects and builders, the Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders, who were heavily involved in the creation of a sacred landscape of churches and monasteries in the wider Lake Constance area, have attracted scholarly attention since the nineteenth century. This article attempts to recontextualize these builders by taking them out of the usual framework proposed by art historians who, not least due to a chance discovery of an important source in the mid-twentieth century, tended to interpret the remote alpine valley of the Bregenzerwald as some kind of "rustic Florence." Instead, this article rereads these builders in the context of the more mundane social and political realities of the Bregenzerwald. It suggests that in order to better understand this fascinating group of builders and craftsmen, it may be helpful to avoid reconstructing their sociopolitical history from their artistic achievement (How were they able to accomplish this?), and instead to reverse this approach to uncover the sociopolitical structures in which they lived (Who were they before they accomplished this?).

Keywords: Bregenzerwald; Baroque; migration; Early modern period; Vorarlberg

The question of who is responsible for artistic production—designers, engineers, architects, builders, artisans—has been debated since antiquity. Aristotle, in *Metaphysics*, wrote, "We consider that the master craftsmen in every profession are more estimable and know more and are wiser than the artisans because they know the reasons of the things which are done; but we think that the artisans, like certain inanimate objects, do things but without knowing what they are doing."[1] Karl Marx expressed a similar idea when he compared the work of the spider to that of the weaver, or the bee to an architect: what "distinguishes the most incompetent architect from the best of bees, is that an architect has built a cell in his head before he constructs it in wax."[2] More recently, however, theorists like Loïc Wacquant have argued that the concept of embodied knowledge, which has become important in cultural anthropology since the 1980s,[3] troubles the distinction between imagination and creation and, consequently, the

I would like to dedicate this article to Alois Niederstätter on occasion of his seventieth birthday. He not only pre-read an earlier version of it and, as always, gave invaluably helpful remarks and suggestions, but for almost twenty-five years he has been a most illuminating and committed teacher of medieval history, of Austrian history, and, probably most of all, of the regional history of Vorarlberg. Ad multos annos!

[1]Aristotle, Met. 981a30–981b1.

[2]Cited in Tim Ingold, "The Architect and the Bee: Reflections on the Work of Animals and Men," *Man* 18, no. 1 (1983): 2.

[3]See Giulio Angioni, *Il sapere della mano* (Palermo, 1986); Almut-Barbara Renger, Christoph Wulf, Jan Ole Bangen, and Henriette Hanky, "Körperwissen: Transfer und Innovation," *Paragrana* 25, no. 1 (2016): 13–19.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dominion of the mental over the physical that has long determined how art in its many forms has been understood.

This article takes up the question of whose work should be recognized as "artistic" to introduce a new approach to understanding a fascinating historical phenomenon. I argue that the bottom-up social, political, religious, and cultural history of the so-called Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders (*Bregenzerwälder Barockbaumeister*) can provide a stepping stone to a more comprehensive understanding of a Baroque building culture that was very much alive north of the Alps from the 1600s well into the eighteenth century.[4] "Bottom-up," in this context, does not mean that I try to reread the Bregenzerwald Builders as some kind of almost-Marxist grassroots movement that found the Baroque building culture standing on its head and stood it back on its feet. Baroque building culture, in every form, was, in fact, very much dependent on top-down interests, including financial capacities, powerful agents like ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical princes, and sometimes communities with regulatory and organizational assertiveness.[5] The case of the Bregenzerwald Builders, however, helps to uproot not so much this dominion of material capacities and political power in the Baroque building culture, but rather the scholarly paradigm that elevated the role of the allegedly all-important architectural genius over mundane issues such as demography, mobility control, and guild organization. While these more mundane factors most certainly also have top-down qualities to them insofar as they decisively and sometimes overwhelmingly determine the lives of individuals, they can be considered, in relation to the scholarly paradigm of intellectual genius as the driving force behind Baroque building culture, bottom-up forces because they counteract the all-too-well-ordered system of privileging intellect over more material realities.

In this vein, I will focus on the balancing of power between the artisans' guild and the local political authorities in the Bregenzerwald to understand how the Bregenzerwald Builders came to play an important role in the Baroque building boom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such a recontextualization of these builders from a rather insignificant rural valley in the westernmost part of Austria—in modern-day Vorarlberg—puts, I believe, what we already know from decades of research, mainly in art history, in a new and illuminating context. The Bregenzerwald Builders are not as well known amongst international scholars as other contemporary architects and builders, especially those from Bavaria like Dominikus Zimmermann and others.[6] This is likely due less to the quality of their work which has, in fact, shaped much of the rather impressive Baroque landscape in what is today Southwestern Germany, Northeastern Switzerland, and the Alsace, but more to their quite local organizational structures. While the builders from Bavaria are more easily recognizable, and analyzable, by their connection to the famous monastery of Wessobrunn ("Wessobrunner School") and to the politically quite centralized building culture in Bavaria, the Bregenzerwald Builders primarily worked in the Lake Constance region where, instead of a single central political authority, many individual monasteries stood behind the Baroque building boom.[7] They were also organized in a

[4]See Peter Hersche, Muße und Verschwendung. *Europäische Gesellschaft und Kultur im Barockzeitalter*, vol.1 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006), 39.

[5]See Bernd Roeck, "Konjunktur und Ende des süddeutschen 'Klosterbarock'. Umrisse eines wirtschafts- und geistesgeschichtlichen Forschungsproblems," in *Europa im Umbruch. 1750–1850*, ed. Dieter Albrecht, Karl Omar Freiherr von Aretin, and Winfried Schulze (Munich, 1995), 214–27. Roeck highlights the importance of intellectual and religious ideas in Baroque building culture; at the same time he shows that the realization of such ideas required financially strong agents.

[6]This has not always been the case, at least not in German-language scholarship. In the mid-twentieth century there were attempts to connect the Bavarians from the "Wessobrunner School" with the Bregenzerwald Builders; it was even argued that Dominikus Zimmermann, probably the most important representative of the "Wessobrunner School," depended, in some of his major architectural accomplishments, on input provided by builders from the Bregenzerwald. See Hugo Schnell, "Kaspar Moosbrugger und der Grundriss der Wies," *Das Münster. Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 3 (1950): 183–86.

[7]See Bernhard Schütz, *Die kirchliche Barockarchitektur in Bayern und Oberschwaben 1580–1780* (Munich, 2000), 19.

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rural guild in their home valley. Therefore, they must be rediscovered in their own historical terms, that is, through the lens of local history.[8]

New Findings and New Perspectives

The story behind the recovery of a rare artefact of architectural expertise in the 1940s in the alpine valley of the Bregenzerwald sounds like a historian's wildest dream come true. It goes like this: When the heirs of a recently deceased, childless couple went through the attic of their house in Schoppernau, in westernmost Austria, they came across a strange volume with peculiar drawings. They intended to dispose of it—along with all the other useless junk they found—in the nearby Bregenzerach river. Fortunately, the village primary school teacher became aware of their discovery and made sure that the volume was not destroyed. In what can only be described as an almost unbelievable stroke of luck, the same teacher also came across yet another volume in the neighboring village of Au. This second volume was, for the most part, identical to the first one. An expert was consulted, and his assessment must have been quite breathtaking for those involved: the two volumes were, in fact, architectural pattern books from the early eighteenth century, and contained numerous hand-drawn copies of plans of realized and unrealized buildings (Figure 1). The volumes were akin to self-made *Reader's Digests* of the core architectural theory of the time. They included manual copies of some of the most important architectural standard elements, like the well-known Five Architectural Orders of Column Design. Volumes of such design were practically unheard of, not only in the Bregenzerwald but in general.[9] The whole story was nothing short of sensational.[10]

It was, however, not only the peculiarity of their genre that made these volumes so valuable but also the location of their discovery. From the 1650s until well into the second half of the eighteenth century, Au, along with Schoppernau, had been the cradle of some of the most important Baroque master builders of the age. Along with others, they had transformed the wider Lake Constance region into a sacred landscape suffused with several of the finest examples of Baroque architecture.

The builders of the Bregenzerwald have become legendary in Central European architectural history. They reached their greatest fame posthumously, starting at the end of the nineteenth century when academic art history first became interested in the Baroque (which until then had the reputation of being kitsch—worse: religious kitsch—albeit on a grand and self-confident scale). In this context, fascination grew for ingenious master builders who were responsible for literally hundreds of new churches and monasteries. And, surprisingly, art historians found such ingenious master builders, too, in the remote and profoundly rural Bregenzerwald, which, to many, acquired the reputation of having been some kind

[8]Incidentally, all this may also help the recently founded and expertly curated small museum in the village of Au, which is dedicated to the Bregenzerwald Builders, to resist the stereotypical story of architectural geniuses (which, at the moment, it does not). Digging deeper into a building culture that very much depended on interests and concerns of local agents from below, the perspective of academic art history may prove more relevant for future research and more powerful when it comes to understanding the relevance of the Bregenzerwald Builders for today's cultural identity of the region. See https://barockbaumeister.at (accessed 15 May 2024). I would like to thank Reviewer 1 for bringing my attention to this important element of the contemporary relevance of the Bregenzerwald Builders. Not only here, but also in several other places, they, along with Reviewer 2, have given invaluable suggestions to improve my line of reasoning.

[9]Max Pfister, "Die Graubündner Baumeister im Umfeld ihrer Region und Zeit," in *Graubündner Baumeister und Stukkateure: Beiträge zur Erforschung ihrer Tätigkeit im mitteleuropäischen Raum*, ed. Michael Kühlenthal (Locarno, 1997), 27–33, at 30, mentions "old books" that were found in the Swiss village of Roveredo (Valle Mesolcina) that may have been used for educational purposes by local building craftsmen in the Baroque.

[10]See Silvia Groß, "Die Auer Lehrgänge: Ein einzigartiges Kulturerbe findet seinen Weg ins Museum," In *Vorarlberg: Ein making-of in 50 Szenen. Objekte – Geschichte – Ausstellungspraxis*, ed. Markus Barnay and Andreas Rudigier (Bielefeld, 2022), 107–8; Jakob Albrecht, "Zur Herkunft der 'Auer-Lehrgänge'," in *Barockbaumeister und moderne Bauschule aus Vorarlberg*, ed. Tobias G. Natter and Ute Pfanner (Hohenems, 2006), 63–65; Werner Oechslin, "Die 'Auer-Lehrgänge', Br. Caspar Moosbrugger und Umkreis," in Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister: Ausstellung in Einsiedeln und Bregenz zum 250. Todestag von Br. Caspar Moosbrugger: Mai – September 1973, ed. Werner Oechslin (Einsiedeln, 1973), 62–78, at 62.

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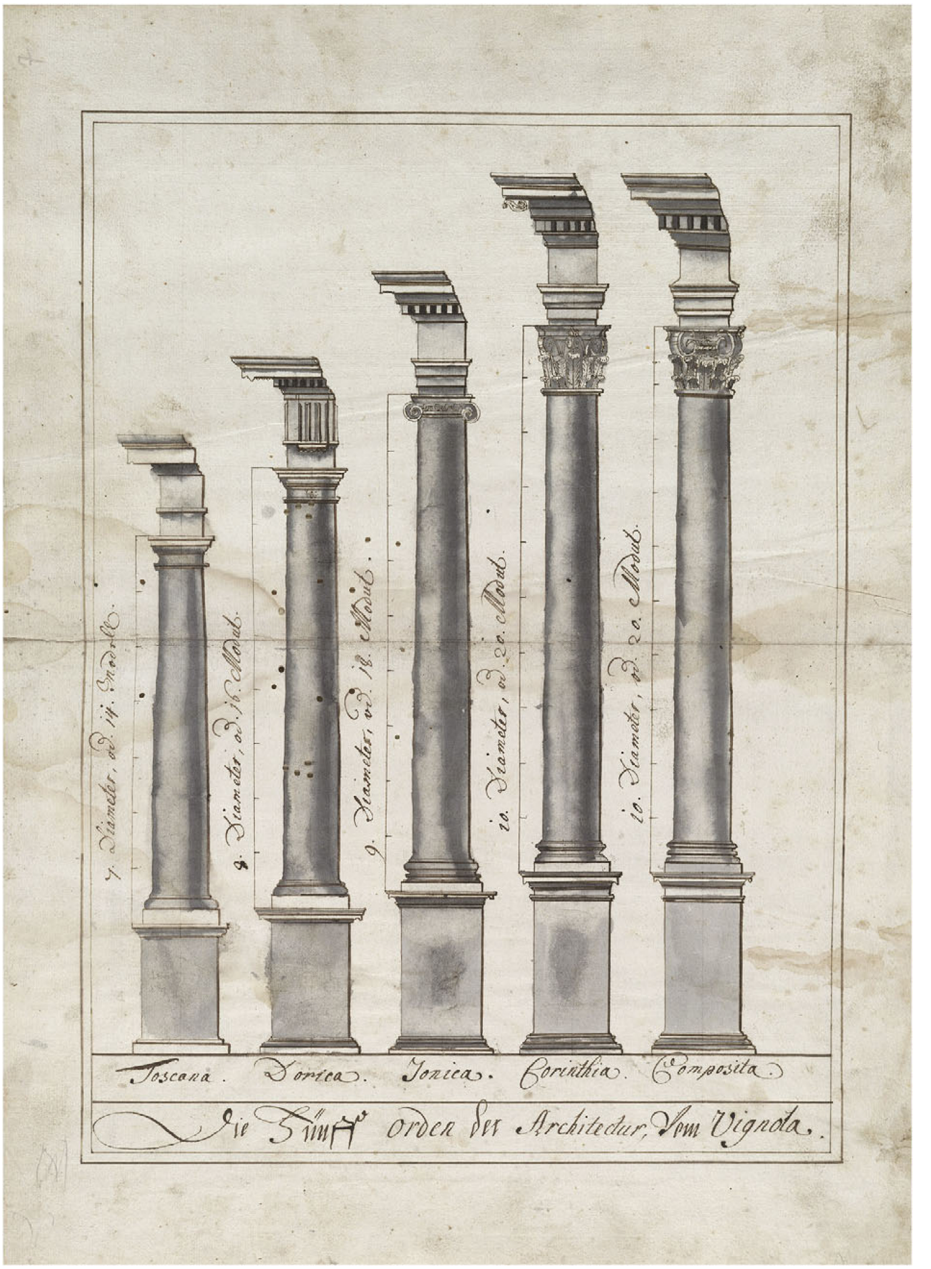


Figure 1 "The Five Orders of Architecture" as depicted in the Au Tutorials (vol. 1). Vorarlberg Museum.

of "rustic Florence."[11] Michael Beer (c. 1605–66), for example, has long been credited as the founding father of the Guild of Au. Although his surviving oeuvre shows a man of a practical mind rather than architectural ingenuity, by the 1650s he had built up quite a reputation. The Prince Abbot of Kempten entrusted him with the new building of St. Lorenz Basilica, the first major project of a Baroque building spree in Southwestern Germany that followed the devastation of the Thirty Years' War (albeit only for a

[11]Oscar Sandner, *Die Kuen: Bregenzer Barockbaumeister des Barock* (Constance, 1962), 7 [my translation].

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short time until Giovanni Serro took over this building site).[12] Beer was joined by his son Franz Beer (1660–1726), later ennobled Franz Beer von Blaichten, who was certainly the most productive member of the Guild of Au. Franz Beer planned, organized, or built dozens of churches and monasteries, and several non-ecclesiastical buildings, in the Lake Constance region, including Weißenau and St. Katharinenthal.[13] Or, from the same generation, Caspar (Andreas) Moosbrugger (1656–1723), known foremost, but not exclusively, for being the architect of the monumental Benedictine monastery complex and church of Einsiedeln in Central Switzerland, where he had become a monk in 1681/82. Or Peter Thumb (1681–1766), who, quantitatively (though, arguably, not qualitatively) overshadowed by his larger-than-life father-in-law Franz Beer, had been the mastermind behind several impressive building projects like the beautiful churches of Birnau and, maybe only in part, Ebersmünster, "the handsomest sacral building"[14] in Upper Alsace.[15]

The Bregenzerwald, however, was not only known for the quality of the architectural individuals from its ranks such as the Beers, the Moosbruggers, and the Thumbs. It was also known for its extraordinary stamina in the production of remarkable quantities of able carpenters, bricklayers, and stonecutters who worked for generations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as seasonal workers on many of the construction sites in the German Southwest and beyond. From the late 1640s to the second half of the eighteenth century, the surviving guild books list more than 1,800 names of apprentices in the building crafts, mostly, although by far not exclusively, from Au and Schoppernau.[16] This number is even more impressive when one considers that in the 1670s the villages of Au and Schoppernau, then still making up one joint parish, had a total population of hardly more than 1,400 people.[17]

The extraordinary thing about this was not the number of artisans per se. We know, for example, of similar quantities in the Außerfern in Tyrol or in the South-Eastern Switzerland Valle Mesolcina. In the Außerfern, however, a local guild for this massive quantity of artisans was created (which, incidentally, was primarily a religious organization with its own guild church[18]), but no remarkable architects were ever brought up in this guild.[19] The Valle Mesolcia, in contrast, may have produced several important

[12]Outdated in some details, but still instructive is Walther Genzmer, "Das Lebenswerk des Vorarlberger Baumeisters Michael Beer," Das *Münster: Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 5 (1952): 72–84. See also Michael Kühlenthal, "St. Lorenz in Kempten: Giovanni Serro und Giovanni Zuccalli," in *Graubündner Baumeister und Stukkateure: Beiträge zur Erforschung ihrer Tätigkeit im mitteleuropäischen Raum*, ed. Michael Kühlenthal (Locarno, 1997), 199–225.

[13]Unfortunately, there is no new scholarly biography of Franz Beer von Blaichten, who would surely deserve one; see, therefore, the older characterizations in Norbert Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 3rd ed. (Munich, 1976), 27–28.

[14]See Schütz, *Die kirchliche Barockarchitektur*, 31. See Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 19. See also Friedrich Naab and Heinz Jürgen Sauermost, "Franz Beer," in *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 7–10.

[15]Peter Thumb is one of the few Bregenzerwald Builders on whom a fine book-length scholarly biography is available: Hans-Martin Gubler, *Der Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister Peter Thumb, 1681–1766: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der süddeutschen Barockarchitektur* (Sigmaringen, 1972).

[16]See Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 15. In the respective research, these guild-books have been referred to multiple times; they have, however, never been put under systematic scholarly scrutiny. To make this possible, I am currently working on a critical edition of these important, though remarkably dry, historical sources. The guild-books are to be found in: Vorarlberger Landesarchiv [Provincial Archive of Vorarlberg] (VLA), Zunftarchiv Hinterer Bregenzerwald, Hss. 1, 2, 3, and 5; and in: Bregenzerwald Archive [BWA], Bezau, Handwerkerverein, Sch. 7, Hs. 1. Very recently (fall of 2023), hitherto unknown guild books have surfaced, which attest to the fact that from the mid-seventeenth century the building crafts surged in the Bregenzerwald beyond Au and Schoppernau. It stands to reason that these newly discovered guild books will help deepen our understanding of the Bregenzerwald Builders not only when it comes to numbers and statistics, but to a more nuanced view of their significance for the region (see, e.g., the guild book of Bizau, Bregenzerwald, beginning in 1655: BWA, Bizau Handwerker- und Gewerbeverein, Sch. 5, Hs. 1).

[17]See Mathias Moosbrugger, *Frühneuzeitliche Steuerbücher des Raumes Au-Schoppernau: Bemerkungen zur Sozialgeschichte des Hinteren Bregenzerwaldes* (Regensburg, 2007), 128.

[18]Heinz Moser, "Zur Geschichte der Zunft von Bichlbach," in *Künstler, Händler, Handwerker: Tiroler Schwaben in Europa* (Innsbruck, 1989), 182–85.

[19]See Othmar Aschauer, "Tirolische Wander-Bauhandwerker aus dem Außerfern (Westtirol) im 17.–19. Jahrhundert," *Westfälische Forschungen* 20 (1967): 151–93. This article was almost verbatim reprinted in: *Künstler, Händler, Handwerker*, 190–203. See also Heinz Horat, Die Baumeister Singer im schweizerischen Baubetrieb des 18. Jahrhunderts (Luzern 1980), 28–29. The importance of Tyrol as a provider of building craftsmen was not limited to the Außerfern, see, e.g., Alfred Hock,

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architects, but no local guild was founded there to organize a large number of artisans.[20] In the Bregenzerwald, in contrast, both these dimensions coincided: there was a guild for the organization of the impressive quantity of artisans; and there was an environment where able architects could be trained. And right here, in between the individual biographies of the remarkable architects on the one hand and the quantity of artisans emerging in the Bregenzerwald on the other, an explanatory challenge rather forcefully imposes itself upon the historian of the Bregenzerwald Builders, which, many thought, could finally be adequately met by the 1940s findings of Au and Schoppernau. The problem was this: Since the end of the nineteenth century, when Cornelius Gurlitt introduced this region's builders to the realm of academic art history,[21] scholars had been fascinated by the individual biographies of architects from the Guild of Au. Up until the 1940s, however, identifying the historical link between these extraordinary individual biographies and the equally extraordinary quantity of trained building craftsmen within this very guild had meant choosing between two rather unsatisfactory options.[22] One option had been the way of nationalistic, or overly romanticized, history. This had effectively required going along with Gurlitt's crudely folkish explanation that the masses of simple peasants-turned-artisans from the remote alpine Bregenzerwald had to be seen as the "springs of young national strength" [*junge Volkskraft*] of the "sturdy artistry and the big thoughts" [*kernhafte Künstlerschaft und große Gedanken*] of the architectural geniuses emerging from their midst.[23] The other option had been the way of social or economic history. This had meant, again roughly speaking, to interpret the masses of artisans from this guild as hardly more than human resources from which their more successful fellow guild men in architecture and building organization had drawn the construction crews needed for their massive building sites in Southwestern Germany and beyond.

In the aftermath of the findings of the 1940s, an alternative, or at least more comprehensive, view finally seemed possible. Soon this alternative view would become the standard when it came to bringing together the extraordinary individual biographies of architects and the extraordinary number of artisans in the building crafts. Even more than that, it would massively change the general understanding of the Bregenzerwald Builders. This alternative view was the product of intellectual history. According to virtually all interpreters, the newly discovered volumes emphatically suggested rereading the history of the Bregenzerwald Builders, and the Guild of Au, as a history of a well-ordered and surprisingly sophisticated process of information diffusion. These volumes, it was argued, were first and foremost teaching materials; accordingly, they were named Au Tutorials [*Auer Lehrgänge*]. The Guild of Au, according to this interpretation, was to be understood primarily as an educational institution. In the

"Tiroler Bauhandwerker in Hessen nach dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg," *Hessische Blätter für Volks- und Kulturforschung* 23 (1988): 12–28.

[20]See Max Pfister, *Baumeister aus Graubünden – Wegbereiter des Barock: Die auswärtige Tätigkeit der Bündner Baumeister und Stukkateure in Süddeutschland, Österreich und Polen vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1993) focuses on the contributions of architects from Southeastern Switzerland to Baroque art history; Pfister, *Die Graubündner Baumeister*, 31 mentions the fact that Mesolcino artisans joined guilds that were established at the building sites in Southern Germany where they used to work. Adolf Reinle, "Zur architekturgeschichtlichen Stellung der Graubündner Barockbaumeister," *Unsere Kunstdenkmäler: Mitteilungsblatt für die Mitglieder der Gesellschaft für Schweizerische Kunstgeschichte* 24 (1973): 223–37, at 225 mentions, similarly, that for the Mesolcino building craftsmen linking themselves to their employers was more important than creating guilds to link them to their region of origin.

[21]Gurlitt, however, obviously knew nothing of the Guild of Au and mislocated several architects like, most importantly, Franz Beer, whom he made a citizen of Bregenz. See Cornelius Gurlitt, *Geschichte des Barockstiles, des Rococo und des Klassicismus: II. Abtheilung, Zweiter Theil: Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1889), 292–308.

[22]The importance of family ties must not be overlooked (Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 14 and 65 stresses, probably overstresses, this), but is not enough to explain the longevity of the Bregenzerwald Builders in the building business. This is strongly implied by comparison with the Valle Mesolcino building craftsmen, who also had strong family ties, but, probably due to their lack of a unifying guild, lost their major importance in the Baroque building business, with individual notable exceptions, at the end of seventeenth century, Pfister, *Baumeister aus Graubünden*, 106–7.

[23]Gurlitt, *Geschichte des Barockstiles*, 294. In the 1960 second edition of his important monographic survey, Norbert Lieb writes surprisingly similarly that the Vorarlberg Builders were "the product … of an act of self-development of a 'Volkstum'" (Norbert Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister* (Munich, 1960), 8 [my translation]).

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context of this educational institution, the Au Tutorials were believed to have been used to provide the numerous artisans-in-the-making with the necessary theoretical knowledge to become craftsmen who were capable of realizing the visions of the architects among them who had risen to fame and fortune. In addition, this education laid the foundation for those who would become renowned architects themselves.[24] The Au Tutorials, in this interpretation, were the incarnation of the very essence of this specific guild with its merging of quality in architectural knowledge and quantity in artisanry. They were a testament to the unique character of the Guild of Au that made it different from other guilds in the building crafts.[25] Although these volumes may have been physically produced in the early eighteenth century, in spirit, scholars argued, they went back to the earliest beginnings of organized building craftsmanship in the Bregenzerwald in the middle of the seventeenth century. Within this new paradigm Gaspard Pinette, for example, argued that Michael Beer not only found the Guild of Au on an organizational level in the 1650s. He had also been the founding father of its specifically intellectual, or educational, character, which was later materialized in the Au Tutorials. The Au Tutorials, he reasoned, corroborated this assessment clearly enough, because there were sketches and plans in them that could only come, it was argued, from Michael Beer's architectural knowledge of Italy, the heartland of Baroque architecture, that he had brought with him when he returned to his native Bregenzerwald after extensive travel. Many years later, through twists and turns unknown, this rich knowledge eventually found its way into the Au Tutorials.[26] To sum up: these extraordinary pattern books were used to argue that the individual architectural geniuses from the Guild of Au, beginning with Michael Beer, and the collective masses of artisans of this guild had to be reimagined in the context of a teacher-student-relationship. The conveyance of superior architectural knowledge from the architects to the artisans had been the raison d'être of the guild's existence. Or, to put it even more succinctly: the Guild of Au had been founded and organized as a school, the Au Tutorials had been schoolbooks, the leading architects had been teachers, and the scores of artisans had been their students.[27]

In the context of this new scholarly paradigm, born in the 1940s and then further developed in the years afterward, exciting questions arose. Probably the most contested of these questions was this: who created the Au Tutorials? What seemed certain, though the lack of quality in the artistic execution of some of the plans and sketches was noticed early on,[28] was that only a major architect could have brought volumes filled with this kind of architectural knowledge to the Bregenzerwald. The fact that right at the time of the discovery of the Au Tutorials a wave of enthusiasm for Caspar Moosbrugger among scholars was just about to reach its breaking point, made him the obvious choice for many. After decades of interpreting Caspar Moosbrugger as hardly more than an executor of the ideas of other, more brilliant architects, in the middle of the twentieth century he was suddenly regarded by many as the creator of the unique "architectural visions"[29] realized in the vast complex of the monastery of Einsiedeln including the monumental convent church, which made it "one of the most original and beautiful spaces of the Baroque."[30] He was also seen as the ingenious mind behind the Baroque building boom in Eastern

[24]This interpretation was appealing not only for those interested in the Bregenzerwald Builders, but also for those interested in Baroque architecture in general, because it provided an explanation—at least in one specific local context—about the education of Baroque Master Builders about which, as a rule, "conspicuously little is known" (Norbert Lieb, *Barockkirchen zwischen Donau und Alpen*, 6th ed. (München, 1992), 11 [my translation]).

[25]See Werner Oechslin, "Ausbildung – Kontakt mit der Architekturtheorie," in *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 22–61; Oechslin, "Die 'Auer-Lehrgänge', Br. Caspar Moosbrugger und Umkreis," in *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 62–77.

[26]See Gaspard L. Pinette, "Ursprung und geschichtliche Stellung der Auer Lehrgänge," in *Jahrbuch des Vorarlberger Landesmuseumsvereins* (1970), 38–58, at 53–56.

[27]Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 70 concedes that the Au Tutorials may not have been directly used in a broader educational context, but nonetheless interprets them as witnesses to a unique educational process within the Guild of Au.

[28]See Oechslin, "Die 'Auer- Lehrgänge'," in *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 62–77, at 62.

[29]Schütz, *Die kirchliche Barockarchitektur*, 46 [my translation].

[30]N.N., "Einsiedeln," in *Kunstdenkmäler in der Schweiz: Ein Bildhandbuch*, ed. Reinhardt Hootz (Munich, 1969), 361–62, at 361 [my translation].

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Switzerland, and beyond.[31] Was it not likely, therefore, that he was also the mind behind the Au Tutorials? Quite some scholarly effort was summoned to show that this was more than a hunch and that the content of these volumes clearly indicated his direct, or at least indirect, authorship.[32] With the Au Tutorials, it was believed that aspar Moosbrugger had given back to the Guild of Au, naturally in a highly sophisticated and developed form, what he had received from this guild decades before as an aspiring youth, namely: the knowledge that had enabled him to unfold his architectural calling. This scenario conveniently fitted to a vacation of several weeks Moosbrugger had spent in his native Au in the summer of 1715. Taking a vacation was highly irregular for a Benedictine monk in the early eighteenth century and reframing his time in the Bregenzerwald as an "educational trip" seemed to resolve a longstanding puzzle. Educational not so much for Moosbrugger himself, naturally, but for his fellow guildsmen, to whom he gifted at this occasion, it was argued, the neatly and systematically collected knowledge in the Au Tutorials.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Caspar Moosbrugger once again lost the overwhelming appeal he had enjoyed among art historians in the years before the 1950s.[33] What had previously been regarded as an extraordinary originality in his art, was now, by many, seen as amateurish. His contemporary Franz Beer von Blaichten with his more obvious proficiency and productivity as an architect and a building organizer, took his place, at least to some extent. This, however, did not change the general outlook the Au Tutorials had introduced into the study of the Bregenzerwald Builders.[34] Those who did not stick to Moosbrugger as the mastermind behind the Tutorials still saw them as the key to understanding the architects, the artisans, and the guild.[35] If not Moosbrugger, some concluded, it must have been another architectural genius who stood behind the Au Tutorials.[36] Several absurd attempts to pinpoint one specific individual showed how difficult this actually was.[37] But even if this genius could not be identified by name or biography, the Au Tutorials still provided ample evidence that the Guild of Au had been an extraordinary educational institution. For generations, architects of the highest rating had provided hundreds of apprentices from the building crafts with extraordinary architectural knowledge. They stabilized the system of seasonal migration, from spring to autumn, of the Bregenzerwald building craftsmen who, due to their sophisticated architectural education, were

[31]Linus Birchler was the initiator of this Moosbrugger-enthusiasm. See Linus Birchler, *Einsiedeln und sein Architekt Bruder Caspar Mosbrugger: Eine kunstgeschichtliche Monographie* (Augsburg, 1924). Oscar Sandner, "Vorarlberger Bauschule: Die Entwicklung der kirchlichen Raumformen," (PhD diss., University of Innsbruck, 1950) tried his best to find Moosbrugger in every major Baroque building project in Eastern Switzerland of the time (e.g., Pfäfers, Muri, Seedorf, Lachen). For this, see also Rudolf Henggeler, "Der Benediktiner Br. Kaspar Moosbrugger," *Das Münster: Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 5 (1952): 165–66. Several attempts have been made to demonstrate his influence on major Baroque churches beyond Switzerland, see Franz Dieth, "Andreas Moosbrugger. Der entscheidende Architekt der Stiftskirche von Weingarten," *Das Münster: Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 3 (1950): 1–20; Hugo Schnell, "Kaspar Moosbrugger und der Grundriss der Wies," Das *Münster: Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 3 (1950): 183–86. A general survey of the mid-twentieth-century appraisal of the changes in the perception of Kaspar Moosbrugger is given by Hugo Schnell, "Kaspar Moosbrugger: Die Wandlung seiner Wertschätzung," *Jahrbuch des Vorarlberger Landesmuseumsvereins* (1950/51), 25–30.

[32]See Oscar Sandner, "Persönlichkeit und Werk Kaspar Moosbruggers aus der Perspektive zweier Architekturlehrgänge," Das *Münster: Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 4 (1951): 78–96.

[33]For example, Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 26 writes that his works often have "the air of the experimental and not too seldom even of the amateurish" [my translation]. Very similar in their assessment are Friedrich Naab and Heinz Jürgen Sauermost, "Caspar Moosbrugger O.S.B., Taufname Andreas," in *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 3–6, at 6.

[34]See Werner Oechslin, "Die 'Auer- Lehrgänge': Theorie der Praxis," in *Barockbaumeister und moderne Bauschule aus Vorarlberg*, ed. Tobias G. Natter and Ute Pfanner (Hohenems, 2006), 11–31, at 11.

[35]Despite this turn of the scholarly tide in art history, most hold on to the hypothesis of Caspar Moosbrugger's authorship, see Alois Niederstätter, Vorarlberg 1523 bis 1861: Auf dem Weg zum Land (Innsbruck, 2015), 256.

[36]Concerning the rather complex discussion, see the summary given by Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 68–70.

[37]See Herlinde Löhr, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister: Neue Forschung* (Lindau, 2002); Herlinde Löhr, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister: Franz I Beer (1659–1722) – Franz II Beer von Bleichten (1660–1726): Zur 350. Wiederkehr ihres Geburtsjahres* (Norderstedt, 2009). She diligently, but unsuccessfully, tried to establish Franz I Beer (a contemporary of the much more famous Franz Beer von Blaichten) as the systematically overlooked genius of the Guild of Au.

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unusually well equipped to work on the numerous construction sites of the building spree in the German South-West. Due to this training, they could stay in the Baroque building game longer than any other specific group of construction workers like, for example, the Swiss building craftsmen from the Valle Mesolcina.[38] This was the secret of the Guild of Au's success.

The Au Tutorials made education the key to understanding the notable architects and many artisans of the Guild of Au, and their connections. These teacher-architects had been the ones who had kept the guild up and running for such a long time. They had been the ones who had provided the simple artisans in this guild with knowledge and competencies that had made them extra-valuable workers on the building sites of their time. And they had been the organizers of the astounding flux of architectural knowledge within the guild and, as such, the sustainers of the guild per se. Rereading, in this way, the history of this guild as a history of an educational institution made it possible to reimagine the relationship between architects and artisans in a creative way and opened up new and exciting scholarly perspectives. This rereading, of course, was also very much a top-down approach to understanding why and how the Bregenzerwald could become one of the major centers of building craftsmanship in the German-speaking world at this time and why and how it could stay one for so long. The sources of the extraordinary success of the Bregenzerwald Builders were, according to this new paradigm, to be found in the architects with their special knowledge, who had developed a stable and long-time educational system, including the Au Tutorials, to pass it down to the artisans (and not, like Gurlitt's nationalistic-romanticist view would have it, the other way round).[39] This had enabled them to create a distinct architectural outlook beyond individual preferences. Inspired by Jesuit Baroque Builders, they had developed a signature style of building churches using wall pillars in otherwise rather simply structured halls ("Vorarlberger Münsterschema"). This architectural style, which reached its artistical apex in Michael Thumb's churches in Schönenberg ob Ellwangen (1682–95) and in Obermarchtal (1686–92), both located in Upper Swabia,[40] could only become the signature style of the Bregenzerwald Builders, it was argued, because they had an educational system that provided the artisans in-the-making, and future master builders and architects, with the skills and the outlook to realize churches in this style. What they had learned from the Jesuits, they had, in simplified, though effective form handed over to aspiring artisans in the guild.

It is probably about time to reread this rereading.

Revisions and Reconsiderations

A rereading of the intellectual-educational approach to the history of the Bregenzerwald Builders does not and must not entail offhandedly dismissing this long-established scholarly paradigm. In fact, the potential of this paradigm has certainly not yet been fully tapped. It stands to reason that future research into the intellectual-educational character of the Guild of Au, including the Au Tutorials, and its importance for the creation of a specific Southwestern German Baroque building culture will take us far beyond what we know at the moment. Also, it would be a worthwhile field of research, again top-down in design, to uncover why several of the best-known Bregenzerwald Builders moved away from the Bregenzerwald when fame hit, but did not cut ties with their native land. Franz Beer and his son-in-law Peter Thumb, for example, became respected citizens and officials of the city of Constance but maintained strong connections to the Guild of Au, including active roles in admitting, educating, and acquitting artisans. Was there, speaking in terms of the history of mentality, some sort of pride in local

[38]Werner Oechslin, "Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister und die europäische Barockarchitektur," in *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 257–84, at 257.

[39]See Werner Oechslin, "Dankeswort," in *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, XIII–XIV, at XIV.

[40]See Schütz, *Die kirchliche Barockarchitektur*, 43. A comprehensive art historical analysis of the church of Schönenberg can be found in: Cornelia Jöchner and Yvonne Northemann, *Wallfahrtsarchitektur als Erfahrungsraum. Sakraltopographie und visuelle Präsentation von Gnadenstätten – Die Schönenbergkirche bei Ellwangen* (Regensburg, forthcoming). I would like to thank Cornelia Jöchner for giving me access to this title before publication.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778 Published online by Cambridge University Press

tradition at work in this? And was this not yet fully understood phenomenon of these respectable architects' and master builders' attachment to their guild important for the surprisingly long and successful existence of the Guild of Au?

What seems clear, however, is that the decidedly top-down approach with its clear-cut teacher-student character, including other similar questions concerning the connection of the famous architects and master builders with the guild, has its problems; and it is because of these problems that it needs a rereading. Its massive success has tended to obscure other dimensions that were also significant for the guild's long-time relevance as a provider of intellectual and manual manpower for the creation of Southwestern German Baroque. The guild's character as a religious fraternity, which, to this day, has never really been put under systematic scholarly scrutiny, comes to mind.[41] In this context, it would be fascinating to find out how it came about that, of all places, it was the village of Au—until about 1620 home to a substantial community of dissenting Anabaptists[42]—that became, starting in the 1650s, an important center for the architectural revival and restoration of Catholicism in the German South-West. This process must have been connected to profound religious transformations in the local society of Au, or the Bregenzerwald, which, very likely, also played a role in the foundation of the guild. It is a shame that we do not really know in what way.

Perhaps more critically, the top-down educational approach with its teacher architects and student-artisans has lost sight not only of the religious realities of the Bregenzerwald in particular but of sociopolitical elements within this historical context in general that cannot be reduced to educational issues. That Baroque architecture was not and could not be all highflying visions generated within a sophisticated network of artists and architects on a European or even global scale, but had strong bottom-up qualities to it, has already been noted, of course, at least to a certain extent. Matthäus Pest's 1937 study on the material aspects of the Baroque building industry in Southern Germany was groundbreaking in this regard.[43] Pest's main concern lay with the organization of construction sites from a decidedly financial perspective; he stressed the degree to which financial issues shaped the actual process of building churches and monasteries. Hartmut Zückert followed up on this more than half a century later. In a 1988 book, which, incidentally, also dealt rather extensively with architects from the Bregenzerwald like Michael Beer and Peter Thumb, he focused on the question of the relevance of compulsory labor of peasants for their lords' building projects.[44] Several years later he reread this to uncover historical patterns of perceptions of these building projects both by lords and peasants.[45] Peter Hersche and Bernd Roeck, though quite different from Zückert in their final assessments, have also substantially contributed to this project of understanding the Baroque building industry from economic and material necessities in the building processes of churches and monasteries.[46] Apart from these comprehensive and ambitiously

[41]The first to mention this was Joseph Hiller, *Au im Bregenzerwald 1390–1890: Zur Erinnerung an das 500jährige Pfarr-Jubiläum* (Bregenz, 1894), 199. Surprisingly, in 1804/05, when the Guild of Au still existed (albeit only as a shadow of its earlier self) the then parish-priest Johann Jakob Ober listed in his parish-book the religious fraternities in the parish of Au but made no reference to the Guild: Pfarrarchiv Au im Bregenzerwald, Hs. 30, pages 167–73.

[42]See Hildegund Gismann-Fiel, *Das Täufertum in Vorarlberg* (Dornbirn, 1982), 48–87.

[43]Matthäus Pest, *Die Finanzierung des süddeutschen Kirchen- und Klosterbaues in der Barockzeit: Bauwirtschaftliche und finanzielle Probleme des kirchlichen Barocks im deutschen Süden von ca. 1650 bis ca. 1780* (Munich, 1937).

[44]Hartmut Zückert, *Die sozialen Grundlagen der Barockarchitektur in Süddeutschland* (Stuttgart, 1988).

[45]Hartmut Zückert, "Barockbau-Erfahrungen von Bauherren und Untertanen," in *'Erfahrung' als Kategorie der Frühneuzeitgeschichte*, ed. Paul Münch (Munich, 2001), 451–69.

[46]Bernd Roeck, "Konjunktur und Ende des süddeutschen 'Klosterbarock': Umrisse eines wirtschafts- und geistesgeschichtlichen Forschungsproblems," in *Europa im Umbruch 1750–1850*, ed. Dieter Albrecht, Karl Otmar von Aretin, and Winfried Schulze (Munich, 1995), 213–27; Peter Hersche, "Die soziale und materielle Basis des 'gewöhnlichen' barocken Sakralbaus," *Frühneuzeit-Info* 6 (1995): 151–71. In earlier work, Hersche argued that Baroque church building initiated by ecclesiastical lords was often also very much a bottom-up project that was, for religious, but also economic and social reasons, voluntarily supported by these lords' subjects. More recently, he has, in a book-length study, drawn attention to the intrinsic motivation of peasants to put money, time, and effort in the construction of Baroque churches, chapels, and wayside shrines for their parishes and their specific religious needs rather than for their lords: Peter Hersche, *Kirchen als Gemeinschaftswerk: Zu den wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Grundlagen frühneuzeitlichen Sakralbaus* (Basel, 2022).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778 Published online by Cambridge University Press

comparative attempts to understand Baroque architecture in relation to its material, organizational, and financial underpinnings, there are several small-scale, but impressively in-depth studies on material dimensions to be considered in the organization of individual building sites. These studies often provide detailed information concerning the division of labor on these building sites and on the day-to-day routine of the artisans and workers, including, among other issues, their provisions, their working hours, and their wages.

Studies such as these have been helpful in uncovering dimensions of the building culture which had been overlooked for quite a long time. The case of the Bregenzerwald Builders and the Guild of Au, however, may raise awareness that uncovering such material and other hitherto unregarded qualities of Baroque architecture requires going beyond the construction sites of Baroque churches, monasteries, and palaces. "Going beyond," in this context, is meant quite literally, that is, in its geographical sense. It means that when it comes to uncovering the "material and sociohistorical dimensions of building"[47] in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it could be helpful not only to understand how construction sites were organized, financed, and maintained but also to follow the construction crews when they returned to their homes in often far-away alpine valleys after months of working on these construction sites. It prompts us to ask questions concerning the material and sociohistorical dimensions that organized their lives both at home and in between their homesteads and their work sites. A historical attentiveness to these dimensions could tell us not only more about the artisans per se and how and why they had become part of the building industry, both individually and collectively, but also more about the building culture itself. Interpersonal networks among artisans, channels of communication, aspects of religious motivation, processes of the diffusion of knowledge, dimensions of the artisans' economic living conditions, political determining factors, or biographical patterns of these artisans might be reconstructed to help us understand Baroque building culture from a decidedly bottom-up perspective. In this article, I will not be able to do all this; instead, I will focus on reconstructing the sociopolitical frame that was relevant for the realization and specification of the aspects just mentioned. Thus, I hope to provide future research with a context for further historical analysis.

The Bregenzerwald was the sociopolitical context of the Guild of Au as a long-term association of artisans, who, for several generations, were annually traveling between their homesteads and their construction sites. This region, therefore, is an excellent candidate for a case study focused on bottom-up concerns such as these. Such a case study would require a comprehensive reconstruction of the cultural, social,[48] economic, religious, and political environment of the guildsmen of the Bregenzerwald in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[49] This is, at the moment, a scholarly work in progress.[50] Assuming, however, that Carlo Ginzburg is correct in his assertion that identifying and analyzing clues is the essence of doing history and the indispensable starting point for the reconstruction of more comprehensive historical patterns,[51] let us begin by identifying and analyzing clues that may help us to reevaluate the Guild of Au and its artisans from a comprehensive bottom-up perspective in the future. From there, we can proceed to a more nuanced understanding of early modern building culture in general.

[47]Hersche, *Kirchen als Gemeinschaftswerk*, 31 [my translation].

[48]Niederstätter, *Vorarlberg 1523 bis 1861*, 9 sees the social history of the Bregenzerwald Builders as one of the major open questions for future research in early modern Vorarlberg.

[49]Interesting perspectives for such a broad engagement can be found in Wilfried Reininghaus, "Wanderungen von Handwerkern zwischen hohem Mittelalter und Industrialisierung: Ein Versuch zur Analyse von Einflußfaktoren," in *Migration in der Feudalgesellschaft*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Albert Müller (Frankfurt, 1988), 179–215. See also Wilfried Reininghaus, "Migration von Handwerkern: Anmerkungen zur Notwendigkeit von Theorien, Konzepten und Modellen," in *Handwerk in Europa: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zur Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Knut Schulz (Munich, 1999), 195–212. See also Heinz Noflatscher, "Arbeitswanderung in Agrargesellschaften der frühen Neuzeit," *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* 50 (2002): 17–44, at 28.

[50]In 2022 a research project financed by the E.U.-Interreg-Program was begun to move toward such a comprehensive understanding. This article presents preliminary ideas resulting from the first phase of this project.

[51]See Carlo Ginzburg, Clues, Myths and the Historical Method, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1989).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This is where Joseph Willi comes in. His life provides a major clue to be considered in future research. Joseph Willi is not a household name in the historical research on the Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders. In fact, he has never been mentioned in this context so far. To make things worse, not only was he not one of the well-known architects from the guild's ranks, he is not even listed in the Au guild books with their scores and scores of apprentices along with the ever-monotonous information about their masters and the dates of their admissions and their acquittals.[52] If we trusted these guild books to represent, at least quantitatively, the world of the Bregenzerwald building craftsmen, Joseph Willi would simply be a nonentity.[53] However, in fact, his life shows that to understand the living conditions of these craftsmen and the guild adequately, we need to broaden our scope beyond sources like the guild books that are directly linked to these craftsmen. In the case of Joseph Willi, we can do this thanks to an interrogation protocol from June 1709.[54] Preserved only in fragments, this protocol nevertheless allows a glimpse into his life, which seems to have been as chaotic as the document itself.

Willi's life as a building craftsman began, as far as we can tell, quite comme il faut. Born in October 1686 in Au, Joseph Willi, like so many of his peers, started a career in building crafts in his teenage years.[55] In 1704, aged seventeen, he became a bricklayer's apprentice. His master was none other than Valerian Brenner, a successful architect with considerable influence. Valerian Brenner had left Au in the 1670s for Günzburg in the prince-bishopric of Augsburg, where he had made a career as an architect and master builder for the prince-bishop and as an independent building contractor and consultant for other clients.[56] Like other builders who had become famous after leaving the Bregenzerwald, Brenner kept in contact with his former home, obviously not only to have access to the Guild of Au's manpower for his projects but also as a potential supervisor for the education of aspiring youths.[57]

Joseph Willi, who called Valerian Brenner his "cousin" [*Vetter*], came from the Bregenzerwald to Günzburg by the Danube. And that was where his calamities began. It seems he not only committed himself to learning how to be a bricklayer, but also dipped into the business of thievery. Fatally, he would not be able to free himself of this dangerous habit, which would very much determine the rest of his life. Because he had stolen a student's "writing utensils, penknife and other such things" [*schreib zeüg, feder meser und dergleichen Sachen*], he had to leave Günzburg before completing his apprenticeship. As a result, his name never made it into the guild-books. After being dismissed, he went to Rastatt by the Rhine, about 200 kilometers from Günzburg, where he continued his thieving career. Although it is not easy to follow the chronological order of events, due to the messy character of the interrogation protocol, it is sufficiently clear that Joseph Willi more than once tried to get back on track as a building craftsman. In the fall of 1707, he "returned home from Einsiedeln" [*von Einsidlen nacher haus*]. This was exactly the time when Caspar Moosbrugger was busy advancing the new building of Einsiedeln Abbey.[58] Being a Bregenzerwald compatriot seems to have given Joseph Willi the opportunity to work there, even though he had left his apprenticeship unfinished. Then, despite the earlier unpleasant incidents in Günzburg, in the summer of 1708, his former master Valerian Brenner accepted him, once again, as an employee.

But his troubled past and his growing reputation as an untrustworthy fellow eventually caught up with him and made him persona non grata, even in his old home in Au. Arriving there in the fall of 1708,

[52]VLA, Zunftarchiv Hinterer Bregenzerwald, Hss. 1, 2, 3, and 5; BWA, Bezau, Handwerkerverein, Sch. 7, Hs. 1.

[53]See Alois Niederstätter, "Arbeit in der Fremde: Bemerkungen zur Vorarlberger Arbeitsmigration vom Spätmittelalter bis zum 19. Jahrhundert," *Montfort* 48 (1996): 105–17.

[54]The interrogation of Joseph Willi from 20 and 28 June 1709 is found in a collection of interrogation protocols that lacks any pagination. All following references to this specific interrogation therefore, direct as well as indirect, cannot be further specified: VLA, Stand und Gericht Bregenzerwald, Hs. 339, s.p.

[55]See the respective entry in the parish register: Tauf-, Firm-, Trauungs- und Sterbebuch der Pfarre Au im Bregenzerwald 1611–1726 (taken from the 20 October 1686 entry of this volume's *Catalogus Nascentium Baptizatorum* on p. 220, available online: https://data.matricula-online.eu/de/oesterreich/vorarlberg/au/456%252F2/?pg=112 [29 January 2024]).

[56]On him, see the very helpful book by Ingo Gabor, *Der Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister Valerian Brenner (1652–1715): Leben und Werk* (Augsburg, 2000).

[57]See Gabor, *Valerian Brenner*, 458.

[58]See Birchler, *Einsiedeln.*

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he had to hide in an "abandoned house for 14 days in the hay" [*öden haus 14 täg in dem höw*], where his mother supplied him with bread and cheese; he improved this rather frugal diet by breaking into Michel Albrecht's cellar, where he drank wine and ate sausages. This situation, apparently, became unbearable for him, so, after a fortnight, he went back to the prince-bishopric of Augsburg, where he served in a confusing chain of employments between Augsburg and Burgau. Then, on Candlemas (2 February) 1709, he returned for only three days to Au. Joseph Willi does not say why, but the only feasible explanation for this journey of several hundred kilometers for such a short stay is that he must have tried to sign up for one of the construction crews that were typically assembled at this time of year.[59] Obviously, he failed in this and went back to Augsburg, more precisely to the nearby village of Zusmarshausen, where he "worked for some time for a master named Franz" [*ain zeit lang bei ainen maister mit namen Franz geschaffet*], possibly in the building crafts. Again, not for long. In May 1709 he left Zusmarshausen and, despite all his earlier problems, returned once again to Au. There he was caught red-handed in the middle of a burglary spree while trying to forcibly open the table drawer of one Jacob Erath with a blacksmith's chisel. He got away and hid, for the last time, in a hay hut, until he was finally caught by the officials of the Bregenzerwald, who started questioning him on 20 June 1709 in the village of Egg.

Over the course of two days of interrogation, on 20 and 28 June, Joseph Willi, then twenty-two years old, recapped the long list of his wrongdoings in the course of his rather short life, ending with the palpably resigned statement to his interrogators, that "they should do with him whatever they liked" [*man möge mit ihm anfangen, was man wolle*]. He could only promise, he told them, that "he would try to become better in every way" [*er wolle sich in all weeg besseren*]. Unfortunately, we know neither what the Bregenzerwald officials did with him nor if he was able to keep his promise to improve his way of life and make himself respectable again. Thievery, of course, was potentially a capital crime and we have several charters from the Bregenzerwald recording death sentences against thieves.[60] Such a harsh conviction, however, seems unlikely in this case; nothing in the interrogation protocol suggests it.

Joseph Willi, at any rate, provides a much-needed reminder for everyone seriously interested in the history of the Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders. His life shows powerfully that to understand the reciprocal relationship between the building business and the society of the Bregenzerwald, it is not enough to focus on the architectural geniuses. Willi's life, unorthodox as it was, was probably more representative of the living conditions and the social circumstances of the average guildsman of Au than of those of famed architects like Franz Beer or Caspar Moosbrugger. However, Joseph Willi is not only important for revealing how complex and precarious the lives of ordinary artisans from the Bregenzerwald must have been. The fact that we only know about him from a chance interrogation protocol also shows that it is not enough to focus exclusively on the most obvious historical sources for research on the artisans involved in the building business, such as guild books, building contracts, diaries, and letters of sponsors, initiators, or supervisors of Baroque building projects such as abbots.[61] More than that, Willi's existence at the fringes of the guild system should make us aware that the Guild of Au was not the exclusive institutional intermediary that connected the local culture of the Bregenzerwald and the international culture of the Baroque building industry. Or, to be more precise, his life shows that it is necessary to contextualize the significance of this guild within much broader sociopolitical dynamics that determined the lives of most people—people like Joseph Willi—in the Bregenzerwald.

Altough fascinating and deliciously colorful, Joseph Willi's willingness to cross the line between honesty and thievery certainly was not what makes his life interesting on a sociopolitical level. Nor should it be considered "typical" of the Bregenzerwald Builders. What is likely far more telling and socially relevant was Willi's remarkable mobility and the fact that he acted out this mobility within the

[59]See Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 15.

[60]See Alois Niederstätter, *Vorarlberger Urfehdebriefe bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts: Eine Quellensammlung zur Rechts- und Sozialgeschichte des Landes* (Dornbirn, 1985) (index).

[61]A very informative selection of such letters, building contracts, etc., taken from the professional career of Peter Thumb, can be consulted in: Gubler, *Peter Thumb*, 185–94.

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guild's structures when possible, but also outside of them when necessary. As is well known, comprehensive patterns of mobility are virtually impossible to reconstruct for, not only the Bregenzerwald Builders, but similar artisans more generally; the historical sources we have are too fragmentary for such an undertaking.[62] The case of Joseph Willi provides a welcome example to further flesh out the concept of the "Wanderjahre" in artisans' lives generally, and, specifically, in the lives of artisans associated with the Bregenzerwald Builders. What makes Joseph Willi so relevant is that his life draws attention to a fact which, interestingly, has hardly been noticed among scholars so far. His mobility is a clue to be followed when it comes to uncovering sociopolitical patterns that formed the early modern Bregenzerwald. Specifically, it helps to uncover the relevance of the local political representatives in the regulation and control of mobility; the very representatives who had put Joseph Willi on trial.

Politics of Mobility

There are many dimensions to consider when it comes to understanding mobility and its importance for a given historical society: economic interests, family traditions, political issues, military concerns, and religious convictions.[63] It would also be interesting to add to such structural dimensions as many individual biographies of ordinary people on the move as possible. Such biographies would certainly help uncover patterns of mobility that can only be detected inductively. One major obstacle is the difficulty of finding individual biographies such as Joseph Willi's. Without them, the historiographical project "to discern the concreteness of social processes through the reconstruction of the lives of men and women of modest birth" obviously cannot be realized.[64]

Thankfully, there is one important institutional protagonist in the regulation of mobility we can safely identify right now: the political community in charge of the geographically extensive valley of the Bregenzerwald. This institutional protagonist's activities in the regulation of mobility challenge well-established assumptions concerning the Guild of Au and the organization of seasonal work of building craftsmen from the Bregenzerwald. It is no surprise that mobility was an important issue in the Bregenzerwald, considering its strong demographic growth in the early modern era. From 1511 to the middle of the seventeenth century, its population doubled from 3,000 to 6,000 people. Such a growth rate was not unusual for alpine communities at this time. However, as Jon Mathieu has shown convincingly in several in-depth local studies on alpine South-Eastern Switzerland, demographic growth does not necessarily lead to specific forms of mobility or migration.[65] For understanding such specific forms of mobility an organizing sociopolitical context, force, or protagonist is necessary to give structural shape, in whatever way, to the raw challenges of demographic growth.[66] In the Bregenzerwald, this protagonist was the valley community that had been the established political authority of the region since the late Middle Ages.[67] Its most important representative or official was the "Landammann."[68] A closer look at the respective historical sources shows that controlling mobility was, in fact, a very important concern for

[62]See Reininghaus, "Wanderungen," 181.

[63]Concerning economically motivated migration in the Alps, see the articles in Ursus Brunold, ed., *Gewerbliche Migration im Alpenraum: Historikertagung in Davos 25.–27.IX.1991* (Bozen, 1994).

[64]Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces*, 55.

[65]For his criticism concerning Fernand Braudel's influential theory of overpopulation as the chief agent of emigration see his summary in Jon Mathieu, *Geschichte der Alpen 1500–1900: Umwelt, Entwicklung, Gesellschaft* (Vienna, 1998), 105–6. See also Jon Mathieu, "Migration im mittleren Alpenraum, 15.–19. Jahrhundert: Ein Literaturbericht," *Bündner Monatsblatt* (1994): 347–62, at 360.

[66]See Franz Mathis, "Mobilität in der Geschichte der Alpen: Ergebnisse und Tendenzen der Forschung," *Histoire des Alpes/Storia delle Alpi/Geschichte der Alpen* 3 (1998): 15–23, at 19, calls for detailed studies of migration from local perspectives, because only through that is it possible to escape the "deterministic trap" of demography.

[67]See Mathias Moosbrugger, "Creative Writing: How to Create a Rural Community by Writing about it – in the German South-West," in *The Routledge Handbook of Medieval Rural Life*, ed. Miriam Müller (London, 2021), 66–80.

[68]The term "Landammann" is still used in some Suisse cantons for the head of cantonal administration. In the context of early modernity, it is probably best translated as "bailiff."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778 Published online by Cambridge University Press

officials in this political community in the early modern period. A petition of the Landammann and his councilors from March 1536 to their Habsburg lord's government in Innsbruck shows why.[69]

In this petition, they detailed a major problem for their community: "Due to the harsh conditions of their country only very few people moved to them, but quite a lot moved away from them" [*wie von wegen reühe ihres lands nur wenig leute zu inen ziehen, aber wol vil von inen wegk ziehen*]. If, as many historians used to think, overpopulation had been a problem for alpine valleys at this time because of their limited natural resources, then such emigration would not have been a problem; on the contrary, it could have been a welcome outlet of demographic pressure. The Bregenzerwald officials, however, obviously saw things quite differently. This continuing emigration was a big problem because it made it difficult to pay the seigneurial taxes that were demanded from the Bregenzerwald as a collective political community. The Bregenzerwald officials allocated these taxes to the individual taxpayers not only according to their landholding but also to their "cash" [*parschafft*]. The problem was, they explained in this petition, not primarily that the emigrants went away, but that they took their money with them and, thus, deprived the community of the Bregenzerwald of essential parts of its collective wealth. The result was troubling: those who remained had to contribute higher sums to enable their valley community's officials to pay the communal taxes to their lord. Financial or economic, not demographic, pressure was the issue in the early modern Bregenzerwald's stance toward emigration. That was why the Landammann and his councillors petitioned to be allowed to demand an emigration fee from every emigrant (instead of the usual, but, in this regard, quite useless immigration fee) as compensation for the loss of collective wealth. That would take pressure away, it was hoped, from the individual Bregenzerwald taxpayers. Their lord's government, after several twists and turns, allowed this. Almost 200 years later, in 1705, no other than Franz Beer von Blaichten, the superstar among the Bregenzerwald Builders, had to deal with this regulation when he was about to move from the Bregenzerwald to the city of Constance. His notable financial fortune of 11,000 guldens would have meant an equally notable emigration fee for him. Because the officials of the Bregenzerwald would not meet him halfway in this, he did not shy away from threatening them that he would use his connections in high places and even appeal to the Holy Roman Emperor to "help himself by means of an imperial resolution" [*er welle sich der kayserlichen resolution behelffen*].[70]

To be sure, actions of the Bregenzerwald Landammann and his councillors such as this 1536 petition did not only affect Franz Beer von Blaichten or others like him from the quite thinly populated stratum of the super-wealthy and successful Bregenzerwald Builders. They had major consequences on a socio-political and administrative level.[71] This is also true for other communal activities such as the fostering and regulation of the cultivation and seasonal operation of alpine pastures for cattle in summer, which had massively increased since the late Middle Ages.[72] With this commitment to regulating and fostering this process, the community's officials, especially Landammann and his councillors, were also involved in the transformation of "bad" permanent emigration into "good" seasonal migration. What it had done

[69]We know of this lost petition thanks to an account of the Innsbruck government to their Habsburg lord, King Ferdinand I, from 15 March 1536: Tiroler Landesarchiv [Provincial Archive of Tyrol] (TLA), Bücher Walgau, vol 2, fol. 62^{v}. All the following references are taken from this account.

[70]This episode is found in another highly chaotic protocol, from 6 May 1705, in the community's archive, again without pagination: VLA, Gericht und Stand Bregenzerwald, Hs. 338. From this, obviously, no major resentment emerged, because, only a few years later, according to a letter issued by the Bregenzerwald community's officials on 15 September 1711, Franz Beer von Blaichten agreed to lend the community 1,500 guldens (VLA, Stand und Gericht Bregenzerwald, Sch. 134, 185). They finally paid it back, to Beer's heirs in January 1739.

[71]Later, for the administration of this emigration fee, a special book was created, which demonstrates the importance of this fee; the earliest entries in this book (very likely not the first, but certainly the first preserved one) start at the beginning of the seventeenth century: VLA, Gericht Bregenzerwald, Hs. 312 ("Behebgeltbuch").

[72]The most important general regulations for the use of alpine pastures in the Bregenzerwald in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are collected in Gerhard Feuerstein, *Urkunden zur Agrargeschichte des Bregenzerwaldes* (Dornbirn, 1983), 32–41. A major part of the rest of this important collection of sources consists of documents regulating the use of alpine pastures in Au and Schoppernau; it sufficiently demonstrates the political community's deep involvement in this. How important this was is also shown by the sheer quantity of respective charters in the community's archive.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in 1536 for the control of horizontal emigration, it was doing in this context on a vertical level, that is, between the lowlands of the valley homesteads of the people of the Bregenzerwald and their newly cultivated pastures in the mountains.

This commitment to mobility or migration control by the officials of the political community in the Bregenzerwald, which becomes visible in these exemplary cases, challenges two core beliefs of previous scholarship on the Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders and the Guild of Au. First is that the Guild of Au was founded single-handedly around 1650 by the primordial Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builder Michael Beer. According to this theory, Beer had introduced and realized the idea of an association of artisans to his compatriots and convinced them to jump on the bandwagon of the Baroque building industry that he had encountered in his many years abroad. The second one is the conviction that this guild was not only self-created but also an effectively self-governed institution that exercised authority vis-à-vis its members.

Both these core beliefs can claim to be founded on historical sources. Since the mid-seventeenth century, guild-books registered admissions and acquittals of apprentices, not least for the future issuing of apprenticeship certificates. There was also the guild's 1707 Regulations for Stonecutters and Bricklayers which established that the "Brudermeister" (*Master of Brothers*)—along with the "Zunftmeister" (*Guildmaster*) the leading official of the guild—was responsible for dealing with "all conflicts concerning the artisanry in its scope and to punish them according to the respective circumstances" [*alle stritigkheiten, was das handtwerch in seinem gebüet belangen thuet für nemben und nach gelegenheit der sache abstraffen*].[73] Both these core beliefs effectively took the guild, and with it the respective architects and the artisans, out of its sociopolitical context that was effectively constituted by the political community of the Bregenzerwald, by making it an individual product of ingenious architects and by declaring it a self-governed body. By doing this, these core beliefs turned what was probably the majority of (seasonal) migrants into something, with which the political community of the Bregenzerwald, represented by the Landammann and his councilors, effectively had nothing to do.

Knowing, however, the keen interest of the officials of the Bregenzerwald Valley community in enforcing mobility control, this all sounds very unlikely. It is hardly conceivable that the Guild of Au, which was so intensely involved in the seasonal migration of artisans from the Bregenzerwald, could have sidelined the political community's interest in this matter so easily. It becomes even more unlikely considering that there are no records from the time of the guild's establishment in the mid-seventeenth century to corroborate the idea of its foundation solely by Michael Beer. We only know about the circumstances of the guild's founding from tales written down half a century later at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when they were put to paper in a time of existential crisis for the guild from outside forces.[74] Michael Beer and his single-handed foundation of the guild was the perfect origin myth for hard times; to what extent it was more than that is uncertain.

The long silence in the archives concerning the founding years of the guild is compounded by the absence of records to prove that the guild effectively executed the regulatory and punitive power it claimed to have in the 1707 Regulations for Stonecutters and Bricklayers. More powerful even than such conclusions *e silentio* are records that show how strongly the officials of the political community of the Bregenzerwald was committed to the organization and control of local artisanship. Consequently, it becomes even more unlikely that this did not affect the Guild of Au. A charter from 22 August 1567 is

[73]VLA, Zunftarchiv Hinterer Bregenzerwald, Hs. 3, fol. 2^{v}. In the scholarly literature (e.g., Lieb, *Die Vorarlberger Barockbaumeister*, 14) and in the description in archival description, this volume, incomprehensibly, is dated to 1697, when, in fact, it was produced in 1707 (see fol. 35^{r}).

[74]See the respective account at the beginning of a guild-book from 1708 in: BWA, Bezau, Handwerkerverein, Sch. 7, Hs. 1 [s. p.]; according to this account, "the respectable craftsmanship of the bricklayers, the stone cutters and the carpenters was being introduced as a guild with a proper guild chest, articles and order and all necessary statues by Master Michaell Berr from Au anno 1657 in the Hindern Bregentzer Waldt" [*daß ehrsame maurer, steinhauwer und zimer handtwerckh durch den vil geachten herren bauw meister Michaell Berr auß der Auw deß anno 1657 in dem Hindern Bregentzer Waldt zünfftig ein gefüehrt, mit ordentlicher lad, artickchlen, pollicy und zu dem handtwerckh alle erforderende statuta gehalten und fordt gepflanzt worden*].

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important in this regard.[75] There, with reference to imperial regulations, the Bregenzerwald Landammann was informing "all and every one of our compatriots and artisans" [*allen unnd jeden unser mit unnd handwerckhs leute*] that there was no such thing as a regulatory or penal power of artisans executed by themselves. If, in their respective crafts, conflicts arose, they had to be taken up by the "proper authority" [*ordentliche oberkeit*]. And this proper authority, in the Bregenzerwald, was the Landammann and his councillors as the major representatives of the political community.

Probably even more important is a petition from 1598.[76] In it the Landammann successfully asked his Habsburg lord for the exclusive privilege "to establish guilds, associations or fraternities, according to the circumstances, among all artisans" [*under allen hanndtwerchern nach gelegenhait der sach zünfften, gesöll oder bruderschafft ainrichten*].[77] Based on this communal privilege, there could be no self-founded or self-regulated guild of artisans in the Bregenzerwald—neither Michael Beer, nor anyone else, however artistically ingenious or however learned as an architect, could have changed that.

All this means: the circumstances of the foundation of the Guild of Au, its organizational structure, and its role as a regulatory agent of seasonal migration of artisans from the building crafts need careful historical reconsideration. To understand the guild, it must be placed in the context of the actions, concerns, and interests of the political community of the Bregenzerwald. It is clear that the foundation of the Guild of Au around 1650, by whomever, could not have taken place without (at least) the tacit consent of the valley community and its officials. It would be interesting to know if there was an official or unofficial agreement between the community and the early guild; it is, in any case, remarkable that the alleged founder of the guild, Michael Beer, was the son-in-law and the brother-in-law of two consecutive Landammanns.[78] In all likelihood, direct records of such an agreement will never be uncovered. Indirectly, however, such an agreement is not only strongly implied by the community's earlier history, but also by what happened more than half a century after the guild's foundation. At that time, the Guild of Au was in a major crisis and had a hard time realizing its role as a regulatory institution for mobility control. The political community was trying to bring it back on track; this time by taking over direct control.

The context for this was a regime change in the Bregenzerwald at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The rebellions of the so-called Common Man [*Gemeiner Mann*] had brushed away the established political elite; almost all members of the communal council were replaced and a new Landammann was elected.[79] This new Landammann was Johann Jacob Rüeff and he was not only intent on taking over control in the political community of the Bregenzerwald. He also wanted to streamline the Guild of Au to his new regime's interests and, for this, took advantage of the fact that the guild was having some serious troubles with having the journeyman licenses they issued for their apprentices accepted on construction sites. This meant that bricklayers, stone cutters, and carpenters trained in the guild were, in fact, not accepted as fully trained artisans by potential employers. This was a problem for both the artisans and the master builders or architects from the Bregenzerwald who heavily relied on these very artisans as the work force for the realization of their projects. In February 1707, Rüeff went to Innsbruck to have the building craftsmen from the Bregenzerwald incorporated into the high guild [*Hauptlade*] of Innsbruck as a "quarter-guild" [*Viertellade*] and get them new statutes and a new seal. In an official confirmation document from 19 February 1707, the Bregenzerwald bricklayers and stonecutters stated, or were made to state, "that up until then they had not been organized as a guild"

[75]VLA, Urk. 5789. See the 8 March 1568 charter, issued by Archduke Ferdinand II and preserved in the communal archive of the Bregenzerwald, which dissolved all craftsmen's associations, because they had claimed for themselves "behind the back of the proper authority" [*hinder der obrigkait*] to have the authority vis-à-vis the individual craftsmen (VLA, Urk. 5790).

[76]We know of this lost petition thanks to an account of the Innsbruck government to officials in Feldkirch from 6 February 1598: TLA, Bücher Walgau, vol. 8, fol 336$^{r–v}$.

[77]TLA, Bücher Walgau, vol 8, fol 336^{r}.

[78]See Wilhelm Meusburger, "*Die Landammänner des hinteren Bregenzerwaldes: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Bregenzerwaldes*," (PhD diss. University of Innsbruck, 1981), 156, 177.

[79]See Benedikt Bilgeri, "Der Bregenzerwald in der ländlichen Verfassungsentwicklung Vorarlbergs," *Montfort* 21 (1969): 282–334, at 311.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778 Published online by Cambridge University Press

[*vorhero … nit zunfftmässig gewässen*[80]] and had only gained this status by their Landammann's recent actions.[81]

Unsurprisingly, major conflicts ensued. That the Guild of Au, by the Landammann's influence, had been broken up, with the bricklayers and the stonecutters being transferred to the neighboring village of Schnepfau and the carpenters farther away to the village of Andelsbuch, was not the main problem. More was at stake; the self-image of the Guild of Au was threatened. Christian Thumb, the Zunftmeister [*guildmaster*] and probably the most prolific instructor of apprentices in the history of the Guild of Au, did his best to fight against the new order imposed by Rüeff. Thumb had only asked the Landammann, he claimed publicly and emphatically, to get a more universally accepted seal from Innsbruck or elsewhere. But neither he nor any other guildsman had ever authorized the Landammann to establish a new guild with new statutes. There had already been one for more than half a century! Thumb's protest, however, was soon cut short by the Landammann who warned him that he, the Zunftmeister, would be expelled from the guild.[82] Other not so famous, but quite outspoken critics of the new situation announced in a tavern in the village of Schnepfau that their Landammann should take his new seal and "shove it up the bottom" [*in den Hinderen truckhen*].[83] Their claim of having been too drunk to be responsible for their proclamations could not save them from trial and conviction.

From now on, the guild was effectively being integrated into the political community of the Bregenzerwald. In apprenticeship certificates, the Landammann was now called "the craft's chairman" [*des handwerckhs obmann*[84]]; he issued these charters with the guild's new seal and his own. When, in 1720, problems arose once again for some forty building craftsmen who had not been admitted to working on construction sites because doubts had arisen concerning their membership in a legitime guild, the scribe of the political community of the Bregenzerwald would be the one to take care of things. He wrote to the guild's officials and requested that they hand in the respective documents to overcome this "dire need" [*höchste noth*] and, thus, to foster "the fatherland's profit" [*des vatterlands nuzen*].[85] The everyday administration of the guild was more than ever controlled by the political authorities. On the back of a 1714 apprenticeship certificate, accordingly, a councilor wrote: "This is a copy or transcript which, at the above date, the community's scribe sent here which was sealed here, an apprenticeship certificate can be produced in this fashion" [*Das ist aine Copo oder abschrifft so her land schriber am obigen datum her in geschickht und hir besiglet worden, kan auff gleiche wiß ain lehrbrief gestellt werden*].[86] This meant that the Guild of Au, henceforth, had to issue their apprenticeship certificates according to a prototype fashioned by their political authority. We also have evidence that the community took care to escort craftsmen when they were going to the big construction sites abroad; and the community was also the go-to institution for outside architects or building contractors who were

[80]VLA, Urk. 6840. See an 18 February 1707 charter (VLA, Urk. 7780) in which the Innsbruck government confirmed the incorporation of the Bregenzerwald stonecutters and bricklayers into the Innsbruck main guild (including a complete copy of the constitution of the Innsbruck guild). See also a further 18 February 1707 (VLA, Urk. 7781) charter in which the Innsbruck carpenter's main guild accepted the Bregenzerwald carpenters into their guild (including a complete copy of the constitution of the Innsbruck guild).

[81]Interestingly, this connection seems not have had any actual impact on either the main guild in Innsbruck or on the new quarter guild in Au, see Heinz Moser, *Die Steinmetz- und Maurerzunft in Innsbruck: Von der Mitte des 15. bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Innsbruck, 1973), 43–44. There was, obviously, no interest on either side to effectively realize the incorporation of the 1707 connection of the Bregenzerwald building craftsmen. Consequently, only a few years letter, they decided to formally cut all ties by a final payment of fifty-five guldens from the Bregenzerwald to Innsbruck. In the future the Bregenzerwald building craftsmen would be "free and unengaged" [*wegen aller an sprach quit-, frey und ledig*] in all financial respects vis-à-vis the Innsbruck main guild (from the confirmation letter of the officials of the Innsbruck main guild from 13 December 1714, VLA, Zunftarchiv Hinterer Bregenzerwald, Sch. 1, Nr. 1).

[82]From a 13 December 1707 interrogation protocol, VLA, Stand und Gericht Bregenzerwald, Hs. 338, s.p.

[83]From a 25 February 1709 interrogation protocol: VLA, Stand und Gericht Bregenzerwald, Hs. 339, s.p.

[84]VLA, Urk. 4020 (7 December 1724).

[85]Both quotations from the respective community scribe's letter from 13 March 1720: VLA, Zunftarchiv Hinterer Bregenzerwald, Sch. 1, Nr. 4.

[86]VLA, Urk. 6841 [9 February 1714].

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reaching out to propose employment opportunities for the building craftsmen.[87] In the early eighteenth century, the guild officially became what, in the eyes of the political authorities, it had most certainly always been: an instrument carrying out the interests of the community officials to regulate and foster seasonal migration to prevent permanent emigration from the Bregenzerwald.

Conclusions and Prospects

Impressive and suggestive though the Au Tutorials are, considering evidence from the bottom-up political realities of the Bregenzerwald strongly suggests that the Guild of Au was not an academy of teacher-architects and student-artisans concerned with the diffusion of architectural knowledge. It must be reimagined in its relation to the valley community of the Bregenzerwald. Knowing, first, that before the founding of the guild in the 1650s mobility control and the control of associations of artisans was of major importance to the officials of the political community, and second, that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the guild became directly controlled by the political officials, leaves hardly any doubt about that. Worth mentioning here is Mack Walker's well-known observation that very often in early modern German towns "guilds of the town were directly and constitutionally involved in town government."[88] Walker highlights "the guilds in their connective functions between citizens and community."[89] This very much resonates with our findings in the rural community of the Bregenzerwald. There are, however, major differences. While, according to Walker, there was a tendency in German towns to make the guilds "part of the communal system of authority,"[90] in the Bregenzerwald, officials representing the Guild of Au were never actively integrated into the political system, but, eventually, transformed into a tool of political power wielded by others. And while in German towns the integration of guilds into the political system tended to make them sclerotic and "unsuited to economic growth and social mobility,"[91] promoting and stabilizing mobility was the raison d'être of the interaction between political authorities and the Guild of Au. What seems clear, so far, is that concern with mobility control will help us understand why the Bregenzerwald's most remote and most mountainous village Au, with Schoppernau, became home to the building craftsmen's guild. Unlike the rest of the Bregenzerwald, this region had been experiencing demographic stagnation since the beginning of the seventeenth century.[92] Obviously, permanent emigration played a major role in this. We know this because of the records of Matthäus Beer, who, in the mid-seventeenth century, served there as parish priest for decades. In 1656, when he wrote down records in his capacity as a provider of pastoral and sacramental services since arriving in Au in 1639, he calculated that he had performed thirty-nine requiems in absentia, because the respective people had moved abroad twenty or more years earlier and nobody had heard from them since.[93] That is an impressive one-eighth of all requiems at this time. Here, an institution such as the Guild of Au would be especially necessary to stop the demographic drain by transforming undesirable permanent emigration into seasonal migration.

[87]See a letter from Johann Michael Beer von Blaichten, Franz Beer von Blaichten's architect son, from Constance to the officials of the Bregenzerwald community from 7 May 1750, where he wrote that, in exchange for help in a judicial matter, he would be willing to try his best to "supply the community or at least the local bricklayers and stonecutters with a remarkable benefit" [*dem gesambten landt oder wenigstens denen darinn sesshafften maurer und steinhauwer einen zimlichen nuzen verschaffen*] in the construction of new roads near Ulm (VLA, Stand und Gericht Bregenzerwald, Sch. 10, 21).

[88]Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate 1648–1871* (Ithaca, 1971), 74.

[89]Walker, *German Home Towns*, 107.

[90]Walker, *German Home Towns*, 79.

[91]Walker, *German Home Towns*, 88.

[92]Klein, "Die Bevölkerung Vorarlbergs vom Beginn des 16. bis zur Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Montfort* 21 (1969): 59–90, at 79.

[93]See Tauf-, Firm-, Trauungs- und Sterbebuch der Pfarre Au im Bregenzerwald 1611–1726 (taken from the 5 August 1657 entry of this volume's *liber defunctorum* on p. 30, available online: https://data.matricula-online.eu/de/oesterreich/vorarlberg/au/456%252F2/?pg=191 [29 January 2024]).

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It was most likely in this context that Michael Beer and others were encouraged, in the mid-seventeenth century, to build up guild structures for the artisans. Luckily, this coincided with the beginning of the Southwestern German Baroque building boom, which provided new possibilities to the craftsmen and their families to survive, in the Bregenzerwald, on a modest but steady income. Fascinatingly, this resulted in remarkable shifts in the social structure of Au, including the emergence of a surprisingly extensive middle class, which was relatively independent in the seventeenth century from income generated in agricultural activities. In fact, we even have evidence that by the end of the seventeenth century, more than half of the town's households could subsist without raising cattle.[94]

These, and other elements of sociopolitical life in the Bregenzerwald must have played a major part in the foundation and organization of the Guild of Au. And once again, it is Joseph Willi whose life suggests that considering the sociopolitical realities of the Bregenzerwald is more than simply reconstructing an interesting, but essentially irrelevant local backstory of Baroque building culture. It includes understanding that within these sociopolitical realities, there was the potential for the diffusion of big ideas (and not just in the fantastical world of an educational guild which, allegedly, made the Bregenzerwald some kind of "rustic Florence").[95] Joseph Willi, at any rate, when being interrogated in June 1709, also slipped in a very interesting remark that attests to this. He told his interrogators that, on one of his trips back home to the Bregenzerwald, he had hidden "a book called Five Pillars Book [Five Architectural Orders Book] under a woodpile at his mother's" [*ain buoch fünff seülen buch genant unter die scheiterbeig bey seiner mutter*].[96] Of course, it would be a great stretch of the historical imagination to argue that it was not Caspar Moosbrugger or another architectural genius, but Joseph Willi who brought the printed copy of a book with specific architectural information with him which was then manually copied and incorporated into the Au Tutorials. Yet this clue, taken from an insignificant craftsman's life from below the usual perceptions of art history, should make us aware that social history, cultural history, or history of everyday life must be considered when it comes to understanding the Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders. Not only because such approaches are interesting in their own right—which they are—but also because they may help us see that even rather sophisticated forms of architectural knowledge need not always be conveyed in a top-down fashion by famous architects in an academy-like craftsmen's guild. Instead, it could perhaps be distributed by highly unlikely agents, even by someone as unlikely as the failed bricklayer's apprentice Joseph Willi.

[94]See Moosbrugger, *Frühneuzeitliche Steuerbücher*, 172. This contrasts considerably with what we know of the intensity and extensity of raising cattle in the region, as can be ascertained by comparison with the nearby village of Andelsbuch, where two thirds of households owned cattle, see Alois Niederstätter, "Bemerkungen zur Rinderhaltung im vorindustriellen Vorarlberg. Eine erste Bestandsaufnahme," in *Aspekte der Landwirtschaft in der Bodenseeregion: Mittelalter und frühe Neuzeit*, ed. Alois Niederstätter (Dornbirn, 1999), 118–28, at 121.

[95]Sandner, *Die Kuen*, 7 [my translation].

[96]From the 20 June 1709 interrogation of Joseph Willi: VLA, Stand und Gericht Bregenzerwald, Hs. 339, s.p.

Cite this article: Mathias Moosbrugger, "Bottom-Up Baroque: Recontextualizing the Bregenzerwald Baroque Master Builders," *Austrian History Yearbook* (2025), **56**, 52–71. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237824000778

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