

Central European University

**Produced for Transylvania - Local Workshops and Foreign Connections.**

**- Studies of Late Medieval Altarpieces in Transylvania -**

PhD dissertation in Medieval Studies

by

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I, the undersigned **Emese Sarkadi**, candidate for the PhD degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present dissertation is exclusively my own work, based on my research and relies only on such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the dissertation infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the dissertation has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, February 6, 2008

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## Foreword

The author never feels a work is really ready when it is done which is the case for this dissertation as well. The topic of medieval winged altarpieces in Transylvania represents such a wide and far-reaching research territory, and raises so many interesting and still unresolved problems that this thesis can only mean the beginning of decades of long work.

A number of questions could be answered, others could be resolved tentatively and in many cases it only proved possible to raise issues. The studies presented here provide a selected overview of the larger topic. A brief characterization of the early period (fourteenth and the early fifteenth centuries) of Transylvanian winged altarpieces is aimed at providing an image on the very beginnings of altar production in or for Transylvania. The few preserved examples and the written data on this period's retables represent important preliminaries of the art of the following decades and also consequently for the two main chapters of this thesis. The first considerable and coherent period of Transylvanian winged altarpieces, although standing still under strong foreign influence, is marked by the 1470s - 1480s. A group of retables from the time of King Matthias which stylistically almost exclusively characterize the period was selected in order to encompass this era. Finally, the heyday of Transylvanian winged altar production is presented through one special workshop from sixteenth century Hermannstadt (*Sibiu, Nagyszeben*). The *oeuvre* of Master Vincentius offers a feasible and characteristic example of craftsmen's lives and work in this period in terms of workshop activity as well as of the stylistic influences detectable in this period. A catalogue at the end of the thesis contains never before gathered data and objective descriptions of the pieces discussed in the study. Although the writing of this dissertation was preceded by a long work of inventarizing, the thorough processing and analyzing of all the 98 altarpieces, fragments or sculptures that may once have belonged to retables understandably did not fit within the framework of a PhD thesis. This work will certainly keep me occupied for the next few years.

In the research into winged altarpieces the question of how the movable wings of the retables exactly functioned in their original place, in their original role in the church is still an open but as yet not clearly resolved question. Probably, no general answer exists to this question, the solution lies in several case studies, a topic beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, I stayed with the two most well-known expressions of "Feast-day-side" (or *Festtagseite*) and Work a' day side (or *Werktagseite*) on these altars, in spite of the fact that I am aware that these expressions considerably simplify and generalize the rule according to which the retables were opened and closed during the different periods of the liturgical year.

A complicated task that proved almost impossible to resolve satisfactorily involved the correct and consistent use of Transylvanian place names. These locations today have official Romanian names. However, it would be historically incorrect to use the official actual name, when speaking of a fifteenth or sixteenth century locality. I have therefore chosen to use the Hungarian or German variant where appropriate based on the majority inhabitants' nationality, respectively the characteristic culture in the given locality in the Middle Ages. Thus, I speak of Hermannstadt (rather than Sibiu) but of Gyulafehérvár (rather than Alba Iulia). In the bibliography, following the *Chicago Style Manual*, I used the English forms of the localities, where possible, but in all other cases the name-form of the locality given in the book. A place-name concordance at the end of the thesis should also help the reader orient within these complexities and each time a Transylvanian town or locality name is introduced in the text of the dissertation I have given the other two language-versions as well. Names of institutions are used in their official versions.

Help in my work, was offered by the Central European University, not only through stipends and travel grants accorded but also through the knowledge and practical help given by professors in the Medieval Studies Department, especially by Dr. Marcell Sebök, my departmental supervisor and by Alice Choyke, who did the English proofreading of the text. Further aid to my investigations came in the form of scholarships offered by the Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas Leipzig, the Bosch Stiftung, the Siebenbürgen Institut in Gundelsheim and the Országos Kutatási Alapprogram (OTKA), (the latter through the financing of a project dedicated to Transylvanian winged altarpieces in collaboration with Prof. Dr. János Véghe and Miriam Szócs. I owe special thanks to my external supervisor Dr. Imre Takács, who has continuously paved my way with his comments and methodological suggestions during the years of this research. For numerous useful discussions and advice I should also thank Prof. Dr. Robert Suckale, Prof. Dr. András Kovács, Prof. Dr. Ernő Marosi, Dr. Evelin Wetter, Dr. Stefan Roller, Dr. Gernot Nussbächer and Prof. Dr. Maria Crăciun. For his support given in the Archives and Library of the Black Church in Braşov and for his continuous and swift bibliographical help I have to thank Thomas Şindilariu. For innumerable and immediate technical supports I owe thanks to Márta Guttmann from Sibiu. For understanding, permissions given and much patience, I have to thank colleagues from the Brukenthal Museum, the Art Museum and the Historical Museum of Cluj, the Székely Museum of Miercurea Ciuc and from the Bishopric and the Archives respectively the Library of the Lutheran Church of Sibiu, especially to Dr. Wolfram G. Theilemann and Dr. Gudrun Liane

Ittu. The conservator and restorer Ferenc Mihály has played a special role in the preparation of this dissertation. I have learned so much from him throughout these years and he also offered his rich documentation material, photographs and infra-red reflectographies for the purposes of my work. For their special help and encouragement given in the last, most frightening months of writing, and for advice and reading of a considerable part of this work, I am grateful to Dr. Györgyi Poszler and Dr. János Kalmár. I also have to thank to colleagues and the leadership of the Library of Fine Arts Museum in Budapest, not only for their generous help, but also for the “Genthon István”-stipend I received from them. This stipend assured my living during the last months of writing. I am also grateful for the patience with which they have treated my research during the last year which has probably led in several cases to neglect of my official, library-duties.

However, above all I owe thanks to my family: my parents, who have treated my long-lasting work with understanding, who have always assured me the encouragement necessary from the very beginning when I chose the not very well-financed art history as a course of study. My husband, Márton Sarkadi, has struggled through my everyday difficulties with me, he was a sympathetic audience for my daily doubts. Without him this work would certainly not have been finished. His continuous interest in my topic as well as his special knowledge as an architect and his passion for photography have contributed considerably to this dissertation. (Most of the photographs of the altarpieces from Transylvania presented here, are his).

A heavy but dear burden is thus taken off my shoulders with the completion of this dissertation, which will – I hope – be of use for researchers dealing with the topic as well as for anyone with an interest in the subject.

## **The history of interest in Transylvanian altarpieces**

### ***Previous scholarship***

There is a task that has been formulated a very long time ago in the art historical literature but has still not been fulfilled. Transylvanian winged altarpieces represent a great gap in research. No scholarly corpus exists to facilitate an overview of the surviving objects. Continuous publishing of detailed studies that would be helpful in formulating more general conclusions is also necessary. While there has been an increasing interest in the Hungarian (and not only Hungarian) literature concerning altarpieces in upper- and western Hungary

(Transdanubia) as shown by a series of detailed and overview-studies published in the last decades,<sup>1</sup> researchers interested in Transylvanian panel painting or wood sculpture still need to rely on Victor Roth's general opus written in 1916.<sup>2</sup> This classic work is concerned with the development of both the Saxon and partly also Székely altarpieces from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Since the book was published in Strasburg, it made (at the beginning of the century) a slice of Transylvanian art accessible to the public in Western Europe. Roth summed up all the information published up to that time, mainly by Saxon historians, clerics and several interested amateurs as well.<sup>3</sup> He gathered together all the earlier altarpiece-descriptions, short studies offering an overview on church-antiquities, most of the data available in written sources, charters and account books referring to craftsmen and to altarpieces published in collection-volumes at the end of the nineteenth century. Neither did the early manifestations of Hungarian literature on the topic escape his attention.<sup>4</sup> Roth's series of articles on Transylvanian altarpieces mainly published in German before World War I although sometimes in Hungarian as well, reflects only one aspect of Roth's wide interests in the art and culture of the Transylvanians. It is, more or less, the results of these studies that he revised and compiled in his basic overview from 1916.<sup>5</sup> Roth's fundamental statement, according to which Transylvania cannot and should not be understood as an autonomous artistic region,<sup>6</sup> was much debated in the literature since he suggested that Transylvanian art was simply a blend of Eastern and Western artistic trends, their influence evolving along the cultural and commercial routes crossing the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom. Local art objects were not, he thought, the work of local masters, but of itinerant artists coming to the region from distant countries. Martin and George of "Clussenbruch" alone were considered "real" Transylvanian artists by Roth. The main sequence of the objects discussed by Roth are presented chronologically but articulated by stylistic groups. In spite of the fact that most of the connections delineated by him can be debated his statements (on the "large group of

<sup>1</sup> See studies by Gyöngyi Török, Terézia Kerny, János Eisler, János Végh, Györgyi Poszler, Iván Gerát, Miklós Mojzer, Zsuzsa Urbach or Gábor Endrődy and also latest works on altarpieces of the Zips region (Upper Hungary) by Robert Suckale or Jiří Fajt.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Roth, *Siebenbürgische Altäre*, (Strasburg: Heintz & Mündel, 1916).

<sup>3</sup> Without trying to list here all the contributions of this early period a few examples are referred to here: Johannes Reichart, "Der Heldsdörfer Altar." *Korrespondenzblatt für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 20 (1897)1-6; 17-22, Friedrich Teutsch. "Die Bilder und Altäre evangelisch-sächsischen Kirchen." *Korrespondenzblatt* 19 (1896), 45-46; Wilhelm Wenrich, "Künstlernamen aus siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Vergangenheit." *Archiv des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*. 22 (1889), 42-78; Ludwig Reissenberger, "Bericht über kirchliche Altertümer", *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Wochenblatt*. 6 (1873), 102.

<sup>4</sup> He refers to all the well known works of Kornél Divald, Balázs Orbán, Arnold Ipolyi or Ferenc Pulszky.

<sup>5</sup> A considerable portion of the work was published in 1913 in Hungarian, in: Gyula Forster ed. "Magyarország Műemlékei" (Monuments of Hungary), Vol.3, (Budapest: Fränklin 1913), 117-180.

<sup>6</sup> Roth 1916, 1.

altarpieces” grouped around the St. Martin’s retable from Schässburg (*Sighișoara, Segesvár*), the “Birthälm group of altarpieces” or the “retables of Master Vincentius”) have for many long decades put their print on the general image of Transylvanian altarpieces and workshop organizations.

In his book from 1932, István Genthon used much of the data published by Roth although he came to conclusions that were in many respects opposite to those of the Saxon specialist. “The artifacts of the Transylvanian school form a closed group at the beginning of the sixteenth century and their style is not to be taken for anything else. The ridge is represented by local painters, local schools.”<sup>7</sup> Later he said: “If no artist from the more central towns reached Upper Hungary or Transylvania, it is even less probable, that foreign itinerant craftsmen could have found their living here.”<sup>8</sup> The exact location of the workshops where Transylvanian altarpieces were produced, their eventual import as well as the origin and the studies of the masters who painted them are all questions that have still not been answered in the literature. The presence of various Western influences is incontrovertible in Transylvania in the same way as is the local character, usually interpreted in earlier research as simple provincialism. The solution is obviously in a combination of the two factors.

Victor Roth has once more published his opinion on the topic, with the collegial contribution of well-known specialists like Theodor Müller and Alexander von Reitzenstein.<sup>9</sup> Their overview volume on German art in Transylvania, an early publication of the Deutscher Kunstverlag Berlin, has again aimed to popularize the culture of the region outside the borders of Medieval Hungary. Edit Hoffmann has also provided short comments on certain Transylvanian altarpieces in her much quoted article on old Hungarian panel painting and its graphic patterns.<sup>10</sup> She has, however, merely touched the altars from Székelyzsombor (*Jimbor, Sommerburg*), Radeln (*Roadeș, Radeln*) and Csíkmenaság (*Armășeni*). She also identified certain prints of Dürer and Beham that were used in the compositions of these paintings. Much of her information was based on the publications of Victor Roth. Not only the number but also the quality of Transylvanian retables remained behind those found in

<sup>7</sup> „Az erdélyi iskola termékei a XVI. század elején zárt csoportot alkotnak és stílusuk félreismerhetetlen. Helyi festők, helyi iskolák alkotják a gerincet”. István Genthon, *Régi Magyar Festőművészet*. (Vác: Pestvidéki nyomda, 1932), 16.

<sup>8</sup> „Ha a központibb fekvésű városokból nem igen került művész a Felvidékre vagy Erdélybe, még valószínűtlenebb, hogy külföldi vándorlegények alkalmazást nyertek volna.” Ibidem 17.

<sup>9</sup> Viktor Roth-Theodor Müller-Alexander von Reitzenstein, *Deutsche Kunst in Siebenbürgen*, (Berlin-Hermannstadt: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1934.)

<sup>10</sup> Edit Hoffmann, “Jegyzetek a régi magyar táblaképfestészethez.” (Notes on the old Hungarian Panel Painting) *Archeológiai Értesítő* 50 (1937): 1-31.



Upper Hungary according to Jenő Rados. In his overview volume on Hungarian altarpieces<sup>11</sup> he recognized certain important stylistic relationships including the connection between the Csíkmenaság altarpiece and the one from Székelyzsombor. In other cases however, he followed the mistaken interpretations of other researchers including the late, sixteenth century dating of the retable from Csíksomlyó (*Şumuleu*).<sup>12</sup>

Transylvania figures as “the most eastern frontier of Gothic- and of all Western culture” in the analysis of Antal Kamps compiled in 1940.<sup>13</sup> The introduction of the book, discussing the general characteristics of the region’s art works, emphasizes the “peculiarities” and the “reserved provincialism” of the local art, the “lower quality of these objects compared to those surviving in Upper Hungary”.<sup>14</sup> As regards the concrete data from Transylvania, he was inspired by Roth’s publications. In contrast to Genthon, he suggested that “there were several examples of Transylvanian altarpieces that were probably imports while only in the rarest cases can the presence of foreign masters or the foreign origin of the altarpieces be demonstrated in Upper Hungary”.<sup>15</sup>

As the result of historical circumstances related to Transylvania’s annexation to Romania after World War I, it became much more complicated for Hungarian art historians to personally investigate Transylvanian artworks. Jolán Balogh has very correctly recognized a phenomenon in this period, which has remained more or less true until today. “The teachings of Balázs Orbán have been forgotten, so that researchers from Budapest only know as much about Transylvanian art as they can find in the books of Viktor Roth”.<sup>16</sup> Balogh not only used earlier literature in her work, but has also tried to rectify the above-mentioned deficiency with personal journeys, collecting of material on the spot in Transylvania. Known for her delineation of the notion of Transylvanian flowery-Renaissance (*erdélyi virágos reneszánsz*), Balogh has above all followed the presence of Italian and German Renaissance elements in

<sup>11</sup> Jenő Rados, *Magyar Oltárok. (Hungarian Altarpieces)* (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1938) 30-31.

<sup>12</sup> In spite of the fact that he was aware of the fact that the panels were related stylistically to Franconian painting of the 1470s, he considered that the altarpiece came out of a late-blooming Székely art movement and dated it incorrectly to around 1520.

<sup>13</sup> „A gótikus, vele a nyugati műveltség legkeletibb végvára”. Antal Kamps, *Középkori faszobrászat Magyarországon. (Medieval wooden sculpture in Hungary)* (Budapest: Officina, 1940) 77.

<sup>14</sup> „sajátos arculat”, „tartózkodó vidékiesség”, „A Szepességhez viszonyított alacsonyabb színvonal”. Ibidem.

<sup>15</sup> „míg a Felvidék emlékei közt mind keleten, mind nyugaton a legritkábban fordul elő olyan darab, amelynek külföldi származása vagy alkotójának külföldi volta kétségtelenül bebizonyosodnék, addig Erdélyben közvetlen behozatalra több bizonyító példát is találunk.” Kamps 1940, 77. For concrete examples he refers to the book of Roth-Müller-Reitinstein from 1934 and to his own overview published some years earlier: Antal Kamps, *A középkori magyar faszobrászat történetének vázlatja 1450-ig. (Outline of the Medieval Hungarian wooden sculpture’s history until 1450)* (Budapest: Budapesti Királyi Magyar Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetem, 1932.)

<sup>16</sup> „Orbán Balázs tanításait régen elfeledték, a budapesti kutatók csak annyit tartottak számon az erdélyi művészetről, amennyit Roth Viktor könyveiben megtalálhattak.” Balogh 1943,43.

her analysis of the retables. Her overview being completely dedicated to the Transylvanian Renaissance, she has naturally excluded the discussion of fourteenth and fifteenth century objects and the stylistic- and workshop-relationships between these earlier works of art. As regards the question of whether the masters were local or foreign craftsmen, Balogh suggested that some work was carried out by Italian masters (for example the wall-paintings in the northern-apse of the Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, Weissenburg/Karlsburg) cathedral). On the other hand, there was a clear influence of imported Italian works of art on local objects, reflected in a type of retable, called by Genthon the “Transylvanian type”, presenting a central image on a low predella and a lunette-form superstructure. Along with her careful analysis she published an important collection of data, which finally clearly demonstrates the existence and functioning of local workshops and masters in Transylvania.

The most up-to-date literature may be found in the *corpus* of Dénes Radocsay, published in 1955 on panel paintings in Medieval Hungary. His observations, the stylistic-connections outlined by him have been shown to be mistaken only in few cases, in spite of the fact that his survey was compiled without personal on-the-spot research but was mainly based on earlier literature, photos and objects held in Budapest collections. A series of his clear-eyed remarks have been shown to be true during the restorations and the cleaning work carried out decades later on the panels. Unfortunately, he did not live to see for example the way the eighteenth century repaint of *Jeremias pictor* on the panels of the Hermannstadt altarpiece indeed covered late Gothic compositions showing the influence of the Danube school, just as he had suggested. Gisela Richter and her assistants brought to light one of the best quality Transylvanian panel paintings of the late Gothic period when they cleaned the central image, the predella and the wings of the above-mentioned altarpiece in the 1980s. At the same time, it is absolutely surprising for modern researchers that certain well-known connections, considered today almost common-places, were still unknown to Radocsay. Very little was known about the altarpiece of Birtálm in the 1950s. Radocsay was obliged to look back and base his interpretations on Roth’s ideas.<sup>17</sup> Thus, he has stated that the Birtálm (*Biertan, Berethalom*) altarpiece had been produced in the supposedly large Schässburg workshop, the work of the same master as the sixteenth century retable from Schaas (*Şaeş, Segesd*). He still had absolutely no idea of the connections of the central part of the Birtálm

<sup>17</sup> „a berethalomi táblák máig publikálatlanok – huszonnyolc képmezőjéből mindössze egy jelenet használhatatlan reprodukciója látott napvilágot” (the panels from Birtálm are still unpublished – only one useless reproduction in known out of the twenty-eight images that may be seen on it) Radocsay 1955. 183. It has to be remarked, that the two stable panels of the altarpiece were overpainted in this period through nineteenth century representations of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Radocsay already foresaw the presence of late Gothic saints’ figures under the repainting which have actually been revealed in the meantime.

altarpiece to Viennese artistic traditions while he did not mention the influence of the Schottenmaster at all, something that has often been discussed since Harald Krasser's publication.<sup>18</sup> Not having even seen reproductions or photos of the BIRTHÄLM altarpiece he was not able to differentiate between the fifteenth and sixteenth century parts of the retable. Unfortunately, Radocsay's work is generally determined by the fact that he was not able to personally examine most of the pieces. The mostly "second hand" data he published was adopted from Roth, Kampis or Jolán Balogh and in many cases was incomplete or misunderstood. There is naturally a considerable number of surviving pieces that escaped his attention and also a number of panels or sculptures (such as two altar-wings in the collections of the Brukenthal Museum for example)<sup>19</sup> that have already been mentioned but pass without even a short description or parallel published image. Thus, these pieces have long remained unknown, unnoticed and unidentified in later research. The other basic work of Dénes Radocsay, dedicated to the wooden sculptures of Medieval Hungary, was preceded by the 1958 book by Mária Aggházy on a similar topic. However, in Aggházy's overview, the entire Transylvanian altar-production was represented only by the retable of Csíkmenaság.<sup>20</sup> Despite Radocsay's idea that because of the unfortunate destiny of the art objects from medieval Transylvania and Western Hungary (the so-called *Dunántúl*) these two regions could be discussed in one and the same chapter, still a fairly large number of Transylvanian wooden sculptures are discussed in his review, including pieces that have been almost forgotten today. His analysis is based on the two large, geographically clearly defined groups of sculptures, which have already been noted by previous authors. Radocsay considered that the sculptural heritage of the Saxon towns could be very clearly differentiated from that of the Székely region, in spite of the fact he was aware that there were considerable stylistic overlaps between the two schools.

Romanian research on the topic has long been characterized only by the works of Virgil Vătăşianu. His short articles<sup>21</sup> were followed in 1959 by a large review opus dedicated

<sup>18</sup> Harald Krasser, "Zur siebenbürgischen Nachfolge des Schottenmeisters". *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Denkmalpflege*. 27 (1963): 109-121. and later studies which will be discussed in the following.

<sup>19</sup> "a nagyszabeni múzeumnak két ismeretlen helyről származó oltárszárnya a gyenge provincializmus színvonalán áll. Mindkettő helyi s szűkebb hazája határain túl nem jutó, erdélyi mester alkotása." (Two wings of unknown origin in the collection of the museum in Hermannstadt represent a low provincial level. Both are the works of a local master, who never traveled in foreign lands.) Radocsay 1955 180. The author very probably refers to the panels held today in the Brukenthal Museum under inventory numbers 1985 and 1986.

<sup>20</sup> Mária Aggházy, *Alte Holzfiguren in Ungarn*. (Budapest: Verlag der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1958)

<sup>21</sup> Virgil Vătăşianu, "Colecțiile de artă de la Institutul de studii clasice din Cluj". (The art collections of the classical studies institute of Cluj) *Boabe de grâu* 4 (1933): 1-17. Idem, "Icoana Maicii Domnului in muzeul Institutului de Studii Clasice din Cluj", (The icon of the Lord's Mother in the museum of the classical studies

according to the spirit of the age, to the art of the feudalist period in the three Romanian countries (meaning Transylvania, Walachia and Moldavia).<sup>22</sup> The pages of the book dedicated to Transylvanian altarpieces discussed the surviving objects divided by panel paintings and sculptures. His interpretations were also mainly based on the information adopted from Victor Roth, but partly revised on the basis of his personal experience. The number of studies, research- and restoration-accounts on altarpieces, panel-paintings and wood-sculptures has increased in both Romanian and in Saxon periodicals during the 1970s and 80s. After his very first examination of Transylvanian art in the 1930s<sup>23</sup>, Harald Krasser published his determinative observations on the relationship between the Birthälm altarpiece and the former high altar of the Viennese monastery of the Scotts on the pages of various Transylvanian and Austrian periodicals during the seventies.<sup>24</sup> Otto Folberth's monograph on the Mediasch (*Mediasch, Medgyes*) altarpiece was published in the same period. In it the author also sees the same Viennese influence of the Schottenmaster in this retable. However, due to the book's long historical and geographical introduction and an analysis which becomes lost in generalities, this volume appears more a popularizing work for the Western public than a specialist study.<sup>25</sup> Folberth's monograph however called attention on one of the most interesting questions related to Transylvanian altarpieces: the presence of concrete western influences, - and its most characteristic and most feasible example, the impact of the Viennese Schottenmaster on Transylvanian panel painting. The wide spread influence of this leading Viennese master in Central Europe has become widely accepted in the last years. The idea that the Mediasch and the Birthälm altarpieces are outstanding works of followers of the Schottenmaster in Transylvania is almost a commonplace in art historical literature since Krasser and Folberth's works were published. In spite of this, the publications in the last few decades have mainly repeated the earlier formulated statements, while fundamental questions remained open. No closer information has appeared on the persons of these masters or what

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institute Cluj) *Volum omagial pentru frații Alexandru și Ion I. Lapedatu*, (Bucharest: M.O. Imprimeria Națională, 1936), 3-8.

<sup>22</sup> Vătășianu 1959

<sup>23</sup> Harald Krasser, *Deutsche Kunst in Siebenbürgen*. Siebenbürgische Vierteljahrsschrift. Bd. 58 (1935)

<sup>24</sup> Harald Krasser, *Untersuchungen zur Mittelalterlichen Tafelmalerei in Siebenbürgen. Zur Herkunft und Datierung der Birthälmer Altartafeln*. Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde 14/2. (1971): 9 – 24. Idem, *Zur siebenbürgischen Nachfolge des Schottenmeisters*. Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Denkmalpflege. 27 (1963): 109 -121. Idem, *Die Birthälmer Altartafeln und die siebenbürgische Nachfolge des Schottenmeisters*. Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde. 13 (1976): 96 –108.

<sup>25</sup> Otto Folberth, *Gotik in Siebenbürgen. Der Meister des Mediascher Altars und seine Zeit*. (Wien-München: Anton Schroll & Co Verlag, 1973). On the same topic for the same years see also: Herman Fabini, „Auffallende Übereinstimmungen entdeckt. Zur Frage der Entstehung der Mediascher Altartafeln.” *Karpathen Rudschau*. 12 (1979) nr.2/ 12 ian. 1979, 6. Dietmar Priebisch, „Der Mediascher Meister, ein Epigone.” *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahresblätter*. H2. (1972): 116-121.

the nature was of their connection to the Viennese school or to each other. In the same way, little is known about the commissioners of the altarpieces.

In parallel with the Saxon publications, the interest of Romanian researchers was also piqued concerning Transylvanian altarpieces with contributions by Viorica Guy Marica or Andrei Kertesz-Badruş containing detailed descriptions and a series of important observations.<sup>26</sup> It is also evident that after 1971 at the initiative of Vasile Drăguţ chief of the Romanian Monuments' Office in that period, the restoration workshop financed by the Saxon Lutheran church was founded in Kronstadt (*Braşov, Brassó*) and the interest in Transylvanian altarpieces and thus also the number of local publications greatly increased.<sup>27</sup> The activity of the workshop, run by the conservator Gisela Richter has been summarized in a volume published by Christoph Machat in 1992. Unfortunately, it contained rather sparse information on the way the restoration was carried out while important descriptions and analysis on the retables were offered, due to the work of Otmar Richter.<sup>28</sup> The book, which contains collected data on twenty-two altarpieces restored in the Kronstadt workshop is the most important overview-contribution of the last decades on the topic and continues to be of fundamental help to art historians despite its popularizing character.

The last few years have seen a welcome interest in art historical literature for questions related to Transylvanian altarpieces. The undoubtedly strong nationalistic character of earlier literature has been – perhaps a little bit too severely – criticized in the writings of Evelin Wetter.<sup>29</sup> The main interest of this art historian has been in the goldsmithing works of the Jagellonian period in Transylvania, but many of her articles also touch upon certain aspects of

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<sup>26</sup> Viorica Guy Marica, "Altarul de la Jimbor" (The altarpiece from Székelyzsombor) *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Seria Artă plastică*. 18/2. (1971), 203-222. ; Idem, "Dürer Werke als Vorbilder für die Gemälde eines siebenbürgischen Flügelaltars", *Revue Roumaine d'histoire et de l'art*, 8 (1971): 13-24. Andrei Kertesz-Badruş, "Der Altar von Grossprobstdorf, ein Werk der Europäischen Spätgotik." *Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde* 23/2 (1980), 59.-71; Idem, "Noi contribuții la cunoașterea picturii de panou Transilvănene din secolul XV-XVI." (New contributions to the knowledge of Transylvanian panel painting in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) *Studii și comunicări 2. Galeria de Artă*. (Sibiu: Muzeul Național Brukenthal, 1979), 163-171.

<sup>27</sup> Erhard Antoni: "Freigelegte Gemälde am Gross-schenker Altar." *Kirchliche Blätter* 8 /1977, 7. Otmar Richter: "Der Braller Altar." *Kirchliche Blätter* 10/1976, 6, Otto Nutz, "Der Braller Altar" *Kirchliche Blätter* 2/1977, 5, Otmar Richter, "Eine Kunsthistorische Entdeckung." *Neuer Weg* 12 Mai 1979, 3-4., Otmar Richter, "Der Flügelaltar von Heldsdorf." *Jahrbuch 1978 Siebenbürgisch-Sächsischer Hauskalender*. München, 1977, 33-41, Anamaria Haldner, "Aspecte locale ale altarului de la Boian." *Studii și comunicări. Istorie-arheologie. Muzeul Brukenthal*, 18 (1975), Sibiu. 157-166.

<sup>28</sup> Gisela and Otmar Richter, *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre*. Ed. by Christoph Machat. (Thaur bei Innsbruck: Wort und Welt, 1992 (Kulturdenkmäler Siebenbürgens. Bd.1))

<sup>29</sup> "Weite Wege Siebenbürgischen Silbers und seine historiographische Rezeption." Evelin Wetter ed., *Die Länder der Böhmischen Krone und ihre Nachbarn zur Zeit der Jagiellonenkönige (1471 – 1526). Kunst – Kultur – Geschichte*, (Ostfildern: Ian Thorbecke Verlag, 2004 (Studia Jagellonica Lipsiensia 2), S. 49-65.; "Das sog. siebenbürgische oder ungarische Drahtemail. Zur Ausbildung eines kunsthistoriographischen Topos." Robert Born, Alena Janatková and Adam S. Labuda eds., *Die ostmitteleuropäischen Kunsthistoriographien und der nationale Diskurs*, (Berlin: Humboldt Universität, 2004 (Humboldt-schriften zur kunst- und bildgeschichte 1), S. 253-268.

panel painting or wood-sculpture.<sup>30</sup> Even more than Evelin Wetter, Maria Crăciun has shown interest in Transylvanian panel paintings from the point of view of the Reformation. Her published studies have made important contributions concerning the role of retables in Transylvanian ecclesiastic history. From a theological point of view she has also made interesting comments on the iconography of the surviving pieces.<sup>31</sup> The research and publications of Ciprian Firea view the Transylvanian altarpieces from an art historical point of view. This young researcher dedicated his BA thesis to the altarpiece from Mühlbach,<sup>32</sup> his MA thesis to the donor representations on Transylvanian panel paintings and has published case studies on individual altarpieces.<sup>33</sup>

Old, oft' repeated interpretations of Transylvanian panel painting and wood-sculpture have started to be revised over the last few decades. The interest on the part of not only local but also foreign art historians on this topic and their publications based on personal experience, have contributed considerably to the formulation of new evaluations in the field. However, many more case studies will be necessary in order to understand broader connections, to finally be able to include Transylvanian art within the cultural framework of artistic trends in the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom and of Central Europe.

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<sup>30</sup> Evelin Wetter, "Das vorreformatorische Erbe in der Ausstattung siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Pfarrkirchen A.B. Altarbildwerke – Vasa sacra/Abendmahlsgerät – Paramente." Ulrich A. Wien and Krista Zach eds., *Humanismus in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen. Politik, Religion und Kunst im 16. Jahrhundert*, (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau, 2004 (Siebenbürgisches Archiv 37), S. 19-57. For the later use of pre-Reformation church furnishings and paraments see: Evelin Wetter and Jana Kneifl Fajt, "Der Kronstädter Paramentenschatz. Vorreformatorische Meßgewänder in nachreformatorischer Nutzung" *Acta Historiae Artium* 45 (2004), 257-315 and also Evelin Wetter, "Überlegungen zum Bekenntniswert vorreformatorischer Retabelausstattungen siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Pfarrkirchen", Joachim Bahlcke, Keren Lambrecht eds., *Konfessionelle Pluralität als Herausforderung. Winfried Eberhart zum 65. Geburtstag*. (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag GMBH, 2006), 109-126.

<sup>31</sup> Maria Crăciun, "Polipticul de la Dupuş în contextul devoțiunii euharistice din Transilvania (sec. XV-XVI)", (The altarpiece from Tobsdorf in context of eucharistic devotion in Transilvania in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) *Ars Transsilvaniae*, 12-13 (2002-2003), 139-158. Idem, "Eucharistic Devotion in the Iconography of Transylvanian Polyptych Altarpieces", José Pedro Paiva ed., *Religious Ceremonials and Images. Power and social meaning. (1400-1750)*. (Coimbra: Palimage Editores, 2002,) 209-230; Idem, "Rural Altarpieces and Religious Experience in Transylvanian Saxon Communities" *European Religious Differentiation and Cultural Exchange, 1400-1700*, (Cambridge, University Press, under publication); Idem, "Iconoclasm and Theology in Reformation Transylvania: The Iconography of the Polyptych of the Church at Biertan" , *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 95 (2004), 61-97.

<sup>32</sup> Ciprian Firea, "Altarul poliptic din Sebeş" (The polyptych from Sebeş), Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj, 2002. Another MA thesis on the retable of Mühlbach was defended by Uwe Hientz at the University of Augsburg: Uwe Hientz, *Der Wurzel Jesse Altar in Mühlbach, Siebenbürgen*. Schriftliche Arbeit zur Erlangung des Grades Magister Artium. Universität Augsburg, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Ciprian Firea, "Imagini de ctitori si donatori in pictura medievala din Transilvania", (Representations of donors and patrons in Transylvanian Medieval painting), MA Thesis Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj, 2003, Idem, "Artă și patronaj artistic în Transilvania Medievală - Polipticul din Sibiu", *Ars Transsilvaniae*, 12-13 (2002-2003), 123-138.

### ***Restorations. The workshop of Gisela Richter in Kronstadt***

Conservation work, respectively restoration of Transylvanian altarpieces, panel paintings and wood-sculptures mirror the interest, the appreciation shown for these pieces early on. The first signs of such care, - even if combined with factors of necessity – can be considered the transformations and repairs on retables in the eighteenth century. It is well-known that the retable of Seiden (*Jidvei, Zsidve*) was sold to the community of Taterloch (*Tatârlaua, Tatárlaka*) in the eighteenth century. Similarly, the altarpiece from Meschen (*Moşna, Muzsna*) was transferred to Gross-schenk (*Cincu, Nagysink*) in the same period. Both retables received a baroque frame on this occasion in order to make them appear larger and more fashionable.<sup>34</sup> In Taterloch a certain master Michael Hartmann even decorated the empty shrine with a new panel and an end foliage, while the panels were covered with new paintings glued over the old ones. The eighteenth century inscription on the Tobsdorf (*Dupuş, Táblás*) altarpiece discloses that the retable was transferred to Tobsdorf and restored in 1720.<sup>35</sup> The lost relief from the central shrine of the altarpiece from Schweischer (*Fişer, Sövénység*) was replaced in the eighteenth century with a canvas depicting the Crucifixion. The panels of the altarpiece from Braller (*Bruiu, Brulya*) were completely overpainted during the eighteenth century, just like those from Schorsten (*Şoroştin, Sorostély*). The panels of the feast-day side and the predella of the large altar from Hermannstadt were overpainted in 1701.<sup>36</sup> A number of other examples could be mentioned here to show that it was in the eighteenth century that a serious wave of restoration of the already frayed and incomplete medieval altarpieces took place, naturally according to the period's notions of restoration. A following restoration trend took place at the very end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In this period foreign "restorers" were already being invited to work on these precious pieces. In the last years of the nineteenth century a team comprising two local craftsmen, led by Eduard Gerisch from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, restored the altarpiece in Bogeschdorf (*Băgaciu, Szászbogács*).<sup>37</sup> In 1903, when the retable from Magyarfenes (*Vlaha*) was

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<sup>34</sup> See the corresponding chapter of this thesis.

<sup>35</sup> *"Hanc aram inveteratam propriis sumptibus comparavit et renovari ovravit et huic ecclesiae piamente dicavit Johan Wellther domal[diensis]. P.P. Pastor H.L. Anno 1720"*

<sup>36</sup> According to the inscription which disappeared in the twentieth century during the restoration: *"1701 Renovatum per Thomam Schemelium"*

<sup>37</sup> Information contained by the inscription on the back side of the altarpiece: *„Restauriert aus dem, durch eine Stiftung der seligen Elisabetha Bernerth geb. Gökel, begründeten Altarfonde in den Jahren 1896-1899. Die Bilder erneuert durch Eduard Gerisch, Kustos an der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien, das Schnitzwerk der Vergoldung durch Josef Vogel, Kunstschler in Schässburg u. Gustav Spreitzer, Vergolder in Mediasch."*

transferred from its original home to the Museum of the Bishopric in Gyulafehérvár<sup>38</sup>, the panels were restored and cleaned in Vienna.<sup>39</sup> The Museum of Fine Arts in Kolozsvár (Cluj Napoca, Klausenburg) bought the former altarpiece of the parish church in Székelyzsombor from the parish of Székelyudvarhely (*Odorheiu Secuiesc*) in 1909.<sup>40</sup> On this occasion József Beer was invited from the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest to restore the retable.<sup>41</sup> Photos made before the intervention show that Beer touched up large surfaces of the predella and the panels. It is in this period that the medieval paintings seem to regain their value in the eyes of the communities, something also testified by the 1914 renewed restoration of the altarpiece from Taterloch, during which Hans Hermann cleaned the above-mentioned Baroque overpaintings on the panels.<sup>42</sup>

The altarpiece fragments and retables which reached the collections of museums during the twentieth century have since under gone several restorations during the 1950s and 1960s. These dates are usually documented in the inventory books of the institutions. Unfortunately however, these works were only in the most unusual cases documented with photographs and detailed descriptions of the restoration work. The meaning of the word restoration, the methods and principles of restoration, all continuously changing – can be clearly followed on Transylvanian altarpieces throughout the centuries. The first systematic, centralized restoration campaign and thus also the most important one in the history of these objects took place in the workshop of Gisela Richter, in Kronstadt. The restoration workshop of the Saxon Lutheran church was, as already mentioned above, founded on the initiative of Vasile Drăguț in 1971. He suggested the organization of such a workshop to Bishop D. Albert Klein. The works continued over ca. two decades in Kronstadt, in a private house in the immediate neighborhood of the so-called Black Church. The communist era, the circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s were not geared towards the enlightened functioning and sustaining of such a workshop. The necessary materials, chemicals and instruments for the work were mainly assured by the *Gustav Adolf Werk Kassel*, the *Diakonische Werk in Stuttgart* and the *Hilfskomitee der Siebenbürger Sachsen und Banater Schwaben*. After a training course in Germany,<sup>43</sup> Gisela Richter kept up continuous correspondence with colleagues from

<sup>38</sup> Presently held in the Biblioteca Națională a României – Filiala Batthyaneum, in Alba Iulia.

<sup>39</sup> Roth 1916, 30.

<sup>40</sup> According to the corresponding entry in the inventory books preserved in the History Museum of Kolozsvár: *Az Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület leltárkönyve* (Inventory book of the Society of Transylvanian Museum) Vol. III./II. 530. Muzeul de Istorie al Transilvaniei.

<sup>41</sup> Viktor Roth, “A székelyzsombori és szenterzsébeti oltárok.” (Altarpieces from Székelyzsombor and Szenterzsébet) *Erdélyi Múzeum* 17 (1910) 9-21.

<sup>42</sup> Hans Hermann, “Eine Entdeckung”. *Die Karpathen* 7 (1914) 638.

<sup>43</sup> Along with Era Nussbächer who was trained in parallel in the restoration of textiles.



Germany, as material preserved in the church-archives in Kronstadt testifies. Problematic questions and decisions were always discussed with several (foreign) specialists. However, the local circumstances, the lack of corresponding materials in many cases but also the restoration principles of the period led to results that are often criticized nowadays.

Twenty-two almost completely preserved retables and a number of fragments including panels, sculptures but also other furnishings, doors or wooden epitaphs were restored over these two decades by Gisela Richter and her assistants. The pieces which came to her workshop were understandably those preserved in and around Saxon, Lutheran churches, the single exception being represented by the panels from the Székely locality of Csíkszentimre (*Sîntimbru*) which were restored here as well.<sup>44</sup> Fortunately, the works were continuously documented through photographs. In spite of the fact that not all the works were equally well photographed and a part of the documentation was supposedly lost over the last decades,<sup>45</sup> the images contain valuable, previously never utilized and only very-very sporadically published information referring to the altarpieces and to the interventions on them.

A large number of panels were cleaned of their later, usually Baroque or nineteenth century overpaintings. The phases of the cleaning procedure were quite well documented. Thus, it was naturally also possible to detect when debatable interventions, such as the disappearance of very early overpaints took place.<sup>46</sup> The photos present details of the retables which in many cases cannot be observed with the naked eye, or which were later covered up during the restoration work. Impressions of the original, now missing sculptures in the shrines, traces of the shrine vaulting and articulation, thus important information which can help in a theoretical reconstruction of the altarpiece's original appearance, can be easily traced. These notes also enable researchers to follow perfectly which details of a panel had been painted in or painted over during restoration work through a detailed comparison of the paintings before and after the intervention. Thus, the documentation has a special importance for stylistic analysis. Many traces of the overheated actions that took place during the Reformation can also be observed on these photographs. Thus, put out eyes, scratched faces and, broken noses were all documented before being restored. The great majority of the photographs are in black and white, so that certain good-quality detailed images can almost be used like infrared shots, with the under drawings being clearly observable under the worn layer of paint.

<sup>44</sup> Thus, the book by Gisela and Otmar Richter (already referred to above), published with the help of Christoph Machat, also only refers to these pieces, excluding all objects held in museums or in Catholic churches.

<sup>45</sup> A considerable part of the documentation is kept in the Archives of the Lutheran Church in Sibiu (Kultur- und Begegnungszentrum "Friedrich Teutsch" der Evangelischen Kirche A.B. in Rumänien – Zentralarchiv), while another part of it reached, with the rest of the spiritual inheritance of the Richter couple, Christoph Machat.

<sup>46</sup> See the chapter dealing with the sixteenth century modifications on the BIRTHÄLM retable.

In spite of the often debatable methods used during these interventions and the transport-circumstances of the objects, the work carried out by the restorers of the Kronstadt workshop (which seems to have functioned even for a period after the emigration of the Richter couple to Germany) is of great importance in the history of Transylvanian winged altars. The idea of founding a central workshop for the restoration of these objects would be of interest nowadays as well, when most of the interventions that take place conform to the grade of interest of the priest or the community and the occasional financing offered by various institutions, but mainly by the Saxon Lutheran Church. The formulation of a general politics of restoration of an order of importance based on the condition of certain pieces is urgent considering the present condition of the objects. The activities of specialists like Ferenc Mihály, thanks to whom a considerable number of the altarpieces have gone through a conservation or restoration process over the last few years, and the contributions of young conservators of the Hermannstadt University as well as the occasional help offered by foreign (mainly German and Hungarian) specialists, should allow continuous and systematic monitoring of the objects' condition to be sustained.

## **Historical background and art historical preliminaries.**

*The historical and social situation in the region between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, with special reference to masters, guilds and altarpieces.*

The general identification of the territory as a geographical, historical and/or cultural unit, reasonable and almost obligatory when doing regional research is of less importance in the case of Transylvania. Historical Transylvania was unquestionably a separate territorial unit of development in the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom. However, its art and culture has always been an organic part of the country's continuous development.

As usual, the winged retables in Transylvania are also faithful mirrors of this situation, representing a compact group of art works which reflect coeval economic, commercial and intellectual conditions and the changes of these factors within the region. At the same time they show the influence of artistic, spiritual and cultural trends that were current approximately in the same period in other parts of the Kingdom. The specific character and the changing number of altarpieces in certain regions of Transylvania and in certain periods of its history, obviously depends on the possibilities and claims of the particular social background it came from. Compared to other parts of Europe, in Transylvania it would be necessary to place a greater emphasis on these features because of the very small number of concrete historical data on the commissions and their background. Thus, the historical overview presented here will follow and emphasize the guidelines offered by the altarpieces of Transylvania themselves. It would be useless to try and reconstruct the original number of altarpieces ornamenting churches and chapels in fifteenth – sixteenth century Transylvania and to try and determine the extent to which these altar pieces have fallen victim to historical, ecclesiastical, cultural events and changes throughout the centuries. However, it is most probable that those periods, nowadays vaguely characterized by a small number of preserved altarpieces, also originally produced a smaller number of retables compared to those years that produced an important proportion of the panels and sculptures that have been preserved to date. However, the fact, that artworks from the late fifteenth and sixteenth century replaced earlier, worn out ones may also have contributed to the small number of the altarpieces from fourteenth and fifteenth century Transylvania. The number of preserved retables is supposedly proportionate with the number of ones originally produced, not only in time but also in space, as reflected in the very well defined regions of Transylvania in these centuries. The large

majority of the retables, panels and wood-sculptures discussed in this thesis were preserved in the Saxon lands in spite of the fact that the ideas of the Reformation conquered this territory at a very early date in contrast to the region of the Székelys, who mainly preserved their Catholic beliefs. It is quite peculiar that almost nothing is known about the altarpieces of the noble counties, their disappearance being usually explained by the excessive actions of Protestantism in these regions. The three above-mentioned characteristic regions, the territory of the noble counties, the land of the Székelys and that of the Saxons comprised Transylvania in this late medieval period.

The seven noble counties made up a considerable part of Transylvania. They were mainly populated by Hungarians, and each led by a *comes* (*ispán*). However, from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards, the individual counties no longer held meetings presided over by their *comes* but rather it was the voivode who called united assemblies of the seven counties which usually took place in Torda (*Turda, Thorenburg*). Thus, the voivodes governed the Transylvanian counties as though they comprised a single country. The voivode being the deputy of the king, he had almost absolute control in the region. The political weight of the nobility was seriously hindered and more easily controlled.

The Székely social order came closest to the nobility's way of life, as the two major features which characterized Székely society, personal freedom and the obligation to undertake personal military service, were also typical of the nobility. The Hungarian tribe of the Székelys (their origin is still disputed), formed the population along the southern and eastern boundaries of Transylvania, assuring defence of the frontiers here. After 1224, when King Andrew II has moved them from the region of the later Mühlbach (*Sebeş, Szászsebes*) to the basin of Háromszék (*Trei Scaune, Drei Stühle*), they organized themselves in the territory of seven administrative regions, the Székely *sedes* or seats, under the leadership of the Székely *ispán* (*comes*). The population began to be socially divided only at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the division being automatically generated by differences in the extent of their properties. The social status of the Székelys was reflected in the way they were able to fulfill their military and frontier guarding duty. The wealthier Székelys went on horseback while the rest went on foot. In 1473, King Matthias institutionalized the three social estates of the Székelys.<sup>47</sup> The highest, the most privileged rank was represented by the *primores*, the

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<sup>47</sup> See: György Györffy, "A székelyek eredete és településük története". (The origins and the history of the settling of the Székelys) Elemér Mályusz ed., *Erdély és Népei*. (Transylvania and its peoples) (Budapest: Maecenas Könyvkiadó, 1999), (2nd revised ed.), 72.

next comprised those fighting on horses (Hungarian: *lófők*) by the *primipili*, and the lowest rank by the *pedites*.

The Saxons started to inhabit certain areas of Transylvania during the reign of King Géza II, who permitted them to settle in the region of what was later to be Hermannstadt. However, a more stable organization of the Saxons took place when the whole region from “Broos bis Draas” was given to them by King Andrew II in the famous document called the *Andreanum*. The Saxons, thus unified, lived in seven seats (*sedes*), the seven administrative regions grouped around the eighth one, the main seat of Hermannstadt. The neighbouring two seats of Mediasch and Schelk, the so-called “zwei Stühle”, were from the administrative and from the ecclesiastical point both a separate region, usually mentioned from the mid-fifteenth century together with the other seven in the form of: “*die sieben und die zwei Stühle*”.<sup>48</sup> The seats were run by the *iudex regius*, first named by the king and later (from the late fifteenth century onwards) elected by the population of the seat. The *iudex regius* of Hermannstadt had a special role of *iudex* for the whole province (*Provinzialkönigsrichter*). It was later also called *Sachsengraf*. The District of Bistritz (*Bistrița, Beszterce*), the so called “*Nösner Land*”, geographically separated from the *sedes*, had from 1366 the same rights as the seven seats. During the time of King Sigismund the third large Saxon region around Kronstadt, the “*Burzenland*” also was given the same rights and privileges. Beginning at the end of the fifteenth century the notion of the “*Universitas Saxonum*” was institutionalized, meaning the unity of the privileged Saxon nation.<sup>49</sup> Thus, due to the politics of King Andrew II, a homogeneous Saxon and a similar Székely society was formed and a social process of differentiation got started, leading with time to the formation of the three privileged Transylvanian estates. It was for the first time in the 1437 union of Kápolna (*Căpâlna*) that the three privileged estates, the (mainly Hungarian) nobility, the free Székelys and the Saxons are described in a clearly formulated way, mirroring their equal legal status. In this document they set up an alliance of mutual aid, for which there was a special need in this period, characterized by peasant wars and a continuously growing Turkish threat.

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<sup>48</sup> The two seats formed a unit because they shared a common administration. Until 1420, their ruler was the Székely *comes*, a reminder of the fact that a part of the Székelys moved from this region to this new homeland. (See on the topic: Sándor Pál-Antal, *Székely önkormányzat-történet*. (The history of local Székely government) (Marosvásárhely: Mentor, 2002), and György Györffy 1999)

<sup>49</sup> For a basic text on the history of the Saxons see Georg Daniel and Friedrich Teutsch, *Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen für das sächsische Volk*, Vols. 1-4. (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau, 1984 Reprint of the 1878 Kronstadt edition) and Gustav Gündisch, *Siebenbürgen und die Siebenbürger Sachsen*. Studienbuchreihe der Stiftung Ostdeutscher Kulturrat. Vol. 8 (München: Langen Müller, 1998.). On the history of the administrative organization see also: Gernot Nussbächer, “Verwaltungseinrichtungen der Siebenbürger Sachsen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts.” Aus Urkunden und Chroniken, Vol. 1, (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1981), 11-18.

The ecclesiastic situation of Transylvania was mainly characterized by the bishopric of Gyulafehérvár, the so-called Transylvanian bishopric, which was ecclesiastically speaking the center for all of Transylvania, with the exception of the Hermannstadt provostship (founded in 1192 in the territory around Hermannstadt, settled by Saxons by King Géza II and later becoming the seven seats), which was directly dependent on the Archbishopric in Esztergom and thus differed from the rest of the Saxon regions, belonging to Gyulafehérvár.<sup>50</sup>

In spite of the fact, that the Székelys were one of the three estates, from the legal point of view equal to the Hungarian nobility and the Saxon burghers, their general economic situation was not on the same level. This was also reflected by their localities.<sup>51</sup> Their towns were of medium size and never received the *civitas regius* privilege, but were referred to in written sources as *oppida*, developed on those places, where, as a result of the favorable geographic and economic conditions, markets formed. Their importance lay precisely in their geographic and economic positions. It was the town-policy of King Sigismund that brought a certain development in the life of these localities, while the privileges given by the rulers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries favoured one of them especially, Marosvásárhely (*Târgu Mureș, Neumarkt*). Due to continuous royal support this locality attained a lively town-life, contributed to by a large number of guilds operating in the town.<sup>52</sup> It is in relation with the fairly active economic, cultural and spiritual life of the town that the Franciscans settled here. The church of the friary must have been built at the end of the fourteenth - beginning of the fifteenth century. In 1400 the Pope already mentioned the altar of the church, dedicated to the Virgin Mary.<sup>53</sup> Due to the fact that only very sporadic written sources make reference to the history of these Székely localities up until the sixteenth century, there is practically nothing known about the crafts practiced in these settlements or about the masters and workshops which could have produced panels and sculptures here in this period. It is naturally tempting to suggest that certain workshops might have functioned in the lively town environment of Marosvásárhely.

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<sup>50</sup> Although region of Bihar, the bishopric of Bihar – later Várad – only neighbored and did not belong to historical Transylvania, certain aspects regarding this most important ecclesiastic and cultural center will also be referred to in this short analysis. The art commissions in the environs of the bishopric were clearly closely connected to overall Transylvanian artistic production. The same workshops, the same personal relationships and economic features applied for work at the bishopric as in the rest of the discussed territories

<sup>51</sup> It should also be taken into consideration that their mainly military way of life seriously hindered the early development of a “professional” merchant stratum.

<sup>52</sup> Györfy 1999; See also: Sándor Pál Antal 2002 and the literature mentioned by him.

<sup>53</sup> “*ut altare maius fundatum in honore beate Mariae virginis situm in ecclesia domus fratrum minorum in foro oppidi Cicculi Transylvaniae diocesis...*” Entz 1996, 74, 379.

However nothing concrete is known at the moment about any of the masters who might have worked here. Nor is anything known about other masters who might have worked in other Székely *oppida*. Jolán Balogh argued for the existence of a local workshop in the Csík (*Ciuc*) region, beginning from the middle of the fifteenth century, one closely related to the founding of the Franciscan monastery in Csíksomlyó, erected between 1444-1448.<sup>54</sup> She based her opinion on the fact that the most altarpieces from Székely lands are preserved in this region. However, a thorough look at these artworks reveals that grouping them around a single workshop would be stylistically problematic.<sup>55</sup> It is indeed peculiar and should be taken into consideration when doing research on altarpieces preserved in the Székely *sedes* that preserved panels, altarpieces and sculptures are almost exclusively clustered in the seat of Csík. Although the circle of influence and attractions of the Franciscan friary in Somlyó probably played a role in this clustering, an exact explanation still needs to be found. Due to the general lack of written documents referring to the Székely territory, it is indeed only such preserved pieces that are available for consideration as primary sources like other crafts in the region.<sup>56</sup> Their stylistic analysis can help us further in this problem. An examination of these pieces will hopefully clarify whether there were local masters - even when the exact localization of a workshop will hardly be possible. Such studies will also permit researchers to consider the extent of the close relationship and exchange with masters and workshops in the Saxon lands.

It is not easier to formulate hypotheses on the medieval altarpieces from the counties. The paintings or sculptures preserved only very sporadically in this territory do not allow any such considerations<sup>57</sup> in spite of the fact that the towns of these counties were of national significance. They therefore possessed the necessary social, economic and cultural background for the production of pieces of art. Royal towns (*civites regii*) such as

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<sup>54</sup> Balogh 1943, 124. Csíksomlyó must have been some kind of a regional center in the second half of the fifteenth and at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Nothing is known of the role in crafts and trade of the present center of the area, Csíkszereda (*Miercurea Ciuc*), which only grew into an *oppidum* in the second half of the sixteenth century.

<sup>55</sup> Jolán Balogh only considered the panel from Csíkszentdomokos (*Sîndominic*) and the retable from Székelyzsombor as imported works while the remainder she considered products from the same large workshop.

<sup>56</sup> See the latest exemplary research on the stove-tiles of Csík-, Gyergyó- and Kászonszékhely. Mónika Kémenes, *Kályhacsempék Csík-, Gyergyó- és Kászonszékhelyről*, (Stove tiles from Csík-, Gyergyó- and Kászonszékhely) (Kolozsvár: Entz Géza Művelődéstörténeti Alapítvány, 2005) Erdélyi Művelődéstörténeti Források (Sources of Transylvanian cultural history) 3.

<sup>57</sup> The retable from Magyarfenes (*Vlaha*), kept in the Batthyaneum-library in Gyulafehérvár, the fragments of a retable preserved in the Orthodox church of Kiskalota (*Călățele*) and one of the earliest preserved Transylvanian wooden sculptures, the Virgin with Child from Tordatúr (*Tureni*), in the cathedral in Gyulafehérvár can be considered as belonging to this group, although the provenience of the fragments in Kiskalota is not known.

Kolozsvár,<sup>58</sup> which received considerable privileges from the King in this period<sup>59</sup> were started on their artist paths with fourteenth century masters of international fame, the brothers *Martinus et Georgius de Clussenberch*,<sup>60</sup> or some decades later *Thomas de Coloswar*. It is thus most strange that nothing is preserved of the artistic milieu of these masters. Written sources are mainly silent concerning the names of masters in this early period and guilds were only starting to organize. One of the rare mentions of a painter from these years may be found in the 1371 inscription on the base of one of the bronze sculptures of a king in Várad (*Oradea, Grosswardein*) created by *Martinus et Georgius*. This inscription points out their origin by referring to their father *Nicolaus*, a painter in Kolozsvár.<sup>61</sup> In spite of the few mentions of master's names and their works, historical data, building construction in Kolozsvár at the end of the fourteenth - beginning of the fifteenth century and written mentions of already existing altars also support the idea that a highly developed urban culture existed at this time in Kolozsvár. Building work on the significant parish church of Kolozsvár took place at the end of the fourteenth century and in 1414 three altars are already mentioned in the church, dedicated to St. Catherine, All Saints and Corpus Christi. However, in addition to this dedication, nothing more is known about them.<sup>62</sup> The earliest data on the building of the Dominican friary in Kolozsvár comes from 1397 when a charter was issued there. Among the witnesses a certain carpenter called *Nicolaus* made his confession while touching the altar dedicated to St. Dominic.<sup>63</sup>

None of the altarpieces from the cathedrals of the two episcopal towns, Gyulafehérvár and Várad, have been preserved. There is no historical data on them although a large number of altars are mentioned in documents of the period. These again not provide us with information on the type and decoration of these altarpieces. The first data on the altars in the cathedral of Gyulafehérvár has a very early date. In 1291 three altars are mentioned – the high altar dedicated to the Virgin (!), an altar of St. John the Baptist and one dedicated to St.

<sup>58</sup> Kolozsvár had a mixed population during the Middle Ages comprising roughly half Hungarian and half German.

<sup>59</sup> On the history of Kolozsvár in these years see: Elek Jakab, *Kolozsvár Története* (The history of Kolozsvár). (Buda: Szabad Királyi Kolozsvár Város közöisége, 1870.) Vol. 1, here especially: 348.

<sup>60</sup> Compare their signature on the Saint George statue in Prague

<sup>61</sup> A.D. MCCCCLXXI. SERENISSIMO. PRINCIPE. REGNANTE. DNO. LODOVICO. REGE. HUNGARIAE. XXIX. VENERABILIS. DNS. PATER. DEMETRIUS. EPPUS. VARADIENSIS. FECIT. FIERI. HAS. SANCTORUM. IMAGINES. PER. MARTINUM. ET. GEORGIUM. FILOS. MAGISTRI. NICOLAI. PICTORIS. DE. COLOSWAR. (as quoted by Ernő Marosi, *Kép és Hasonmás*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1995. Művészettörténeti Füzetek 23.), 93.

<sup>62</sup> Jakab 1870 Vol.1, 154-156. Entz 1996, 82. Written references of altars in documents from these years unfortunately never refer to their character. Thus, it is not possible to estimate if they were decorated with panels, sculptures or in any other way.

<sup>63</sup> Entz 1996, 82.; „...corpus altaris sancti Dominici...manibus ipsorum tangentes” Entz 1996., 342.



Peter.<sup>64</sup> The number of data referring to altars increased from the second half of the fourteenth century onwards until in the first quarter of the sixteenth century there is information on a total number of thirty-two altars in the cathedral.<sup>65</sup> Forty-five altars were already standing in the bishop's cathedral of Várad in 1374 based on the written documents. Their number increased by only seven over the next two centuries.<sup>66</sup>

The situation changed in most Transylvanian towns at the end of the fifteenth and in the sixteenth century when the number of written sources also increased a considerable number of testaments, tax-registers, town-accounts and other documents mention specific commissions, masters and their works. In spite of the fact that there are a few sources that are always mentioned,<sup>67</sup> the matter is far from being sufficiently studied. An analysis aimed at late medieval written sources connected to altarpieces together with a systematic research into documents mentioning masters, panels or sculptures, eventually specific commissions has still not been carried out and would surely enrich our knowledge considerably at this point.

The number of altarpieces in the parish churches increased greatly in this period all over Transylvania, mainly due to the improving material situation of the burghers. However, it is clearly the Saxon lands that offer the richest material both in terms of the preserved panels, sculptures and complete altarpieces and also written documents. Most of the preserved altarpieces or their fragments date from the sixteenth century and have survived in churches in the territory of the seven seats as well as the two Saxon seats in addition to the separate region of the so-called Burzenland, in the environs of Brassó. There is nothing preserved of the altarpieces from the third, geographically quite distant region inhabited by Saxons, the environs of Bistritz (*Bistrița, Beszterce*), in spite of the fact that this town in no way lagged behind the leading towns in the other two Saxon regions. Urban development in Transylvania was clearly most spectacular within the political framework of the Saxon Nation and under its effective protection. For this reason, Transylvanian burghers comprised more-or-less, the main population of these Saxon towns. One of the major incentives for the growth of these

<sup>64</sup> Géza Entz, *A gyulafehérvári székesegyház*. (The Cathedral of Gyulafehérvár) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1958), 131, 201.

<sup>65</sup> Entz 1958, 131. See the catalogue of the documents referring to altars on page 201-209. It is unfortunately impossible to follow in these documents how many of these altars stood at the same time in the cathedral.

<sup>66</sup> Vince Bunyitai, *A várad püspökség története alapítástól a jelenkorig*. (The history of the Várad bishopric from its foundation to the present day) (Nagyvárad: Várad püspökség, 1883, Reprint Nagyvárad, 2000.) Vol.1., 186-187. and Vol. III. 41-43, 132. See also: Radocsay. Táblaképek 145.; Balogh. Erdélyi Reneszánsz 139, 286.

<sup>67</sup> Like the often mentioned 1485 testament of István Erdélyi: "*Thomae pictori qui tabulam in claustru Koloswar pinxit...pro una tabula in qua picta sit imago assumptionis beate Mariae virginis cum imagini...dictos centum florenos solvere debeat.*" (Entz 1996, 344-345.) For a careful social analysis of Transylvanian testaments of the period see Mária Lupescu Makó: "*Item lego...*" Gifts for the Soul in Late Medieval Transylvania." *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* Vol 7. (Budapest: CEU, 2001), 161-186, as well as her forthcoming dissertation.

towns was a lively trade. King Louis's economic policy also fostered Saxon trade. In 1369, he granted Kronstadt a staple right, which obliged the incoming Polish and German merchants on their way to Walachia to sell their most sought-after merchandise, broadcloth, to the tradesmen of Kronstadt, who were then able to resell the goods in Wallachia. In 1378, Hermannstadt received the same rights over the international trade route passing through the town, while Bistritz had already gained control over the Polish route through Moldavia in 1368.<sup>68</sup> In parallel the Saxon towns also exported their own goods to Walachia and the Balkans. Thus, the continuous active trade with the two Romanian voivodates and the Balkans played an important role in the development of these localities.

Transylvanian Levantine commerce developed considerably from the second decade of the fifteenth century. The majority of spices from the Black Sea region reached the Hungarian Kingdom through Kronstadt, Hermannstadt and Bistritz.<sup>69</sup> Saxon handicrafts took advantage of this great economic boom. The very first data referring to guilds from the entire Hungarian Kingdom survived from this region.<sup>70</sup> The first guilds must have appeared in Transylvania in the mid-fourteenth century, but King Louis first abolished them, only to re-establish the guilds at the request of the Saxons in this much referred to regulation from 1376. The document mentions 19 guilds and 25 crafts and refers to four important Saxon towns of the period: Hermannstadt, Schässburg, Mühlbach and Broos (*Orăștie, Szászváros*). It already contains most of the basic rules which will be found in later regulations of Transylvanian guilds as well as in guild-documents from German towns.<sup>71</sup> However, these very first written sources do not mention a guild of painters or sculptors in any of the towns, even if single masters do already figure sporadically in documents. In Transylvania the first guilds were obviously, just as elsewhere in Europe, formed by those craftpeople who could best sell their goods on the markets. In Schässburg, nine guilds for 18 crafts were organized during the fifteenth century<sup>72</sup> and 12 in Kronstadt. By 1480, 70 crafts existed in Hermannstadt so that by the end of the fifteenth century the percentage of craftspeople had reached 50% in

<sup>68</sup> Béla Köpeczi ed., *History of Transylvania*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994.), 233.

<sup>69</sup> For the problem of Levantine trade see the works of Zsigmond Pál Pach, *Levantine trade and Hungary in the Middle Ages*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), or Idem, *The Transylvanian Route of Levantine Trade at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980)

<sup>70</sup> Most of researchers consider the charter from 1307 of the furriers from Kassa a fake. See Iván Bertényi, *A tizenegyedik század története*. (The history of the fourteenth century) (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2000), 123-124.

<sup>71</sup> The regulation published most recently by Monica Vlaicu, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Hermannstadt*, Vol. 2, *Handel und Gewerbe in Hermannstadt und in den Sieben Stühlen*. [Hermannstadt: hora Verlag – Arbeitskreis für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde Heidelberg, 2003], 64-70. For guild documents of German towns see: Hans Huth, *Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967)

<sup>72</sup> Nussbächer, Gernot "Das Schässburger Gewerbe im 15. Jahrhundert." Nussbächer 1981, 104-107.

Hermannstadt and comprised a third of the population in Kronstadt and Bistritz (as well as in Klausenburg).<sup>73</sup> The number of the craftsmen grew continuously and gradually they gained more and more importance in the running of the towns as well.<sup>74</sup> Among those craftsmen considered artists today are first mentioned the goldsmiths.<sup>75</sup> They were also present among the first mentioned guilds. Their products were obviously expensive but easy to sell, looked for on the market in secular as well as ecclesiastic circles. The work of the goldsmiths from Hermannstadt was already of international fame and quality around 1400. Still, there were a number of crafts which were not gathered in guilds for a long time, and obviously sculptors and painters were among these. Their products were naturally never as necessary as that of the weavers, furriers, bakers or smiths. However – as far as altar production is concerned - it was not only guilds that might have had their own altar in one of the town churches which they were obliged to care for, but also those crafts which did not have a guild yet could also have maintained their own altar. In a number of cases their later organization took on the name of the altar's patron saint.<sup>76</sup> The first guild regulations – and at the same time the first mentioning of the common painters', joiners' and glassworkers' guild is known in Hermannstadt from 1520 and in Kronstadt just a few years later, in 1523.<sup>77</sup> The latter document, which also includes the sculptors in the common guild with painters, joiners and glassworkers, mentions that the regulations were adopted from the corresponding guild in Hermannstadt.<sup>78</sup> The existence of a common guild of these crafts is not a local oddity since similar examples can be found in several towns in German speaking territories.<sup>79</sup> The regulation also corresponds to those known in foreign towns. In its basic points the regulation also corresponds to charters of other, earlier guilds. However, the concrete identification of a

<sup>73</sup> For the development of several crafts see: Jenő Szűcs, *Városok és kézművesség a tizenötödik századi Magyarországon*. (Towns and crafts in fifteenth century Hungary), (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1955 and also Rudolf Rösler, "Beitrag zur Geschichte des Zunftwesens. Aelteres Zunftwesen in Hermannstadt bis 1526" Archiv, 38 (1912): 443-451.

<sup>74</sup> The common guild regulation from 1376 already prescribed that each guild had to elect two leaders who represented their rights in the town-council. This was a recurring motif in later guild regulations, a feature that perfectly corresponds to regulations of guilds known from German territories. Thus, after a while, with an increasing number of guilds, half of the town-councils would be formed from guild-leaders. Craftsmen could also aspire to the most important administrative roles in a given locality: the much quoted inscription above the triumphal arch in the "Bergkirche" of Schässburg mentions a certain *Valentinus pictor*, as a town mayor.

<sup>75</sup> A goldsmith is already mentioned in Schässburg from 1393. See: Urkundenbuch Vol. 3., Nr. 1282, 48.

<sup>76</sup> Szűcs 1955, 116.

<sup>77</sup> See: Vlaicu 2003, 264-267. For the Kronstadt regulation see: Gernot Nussbächer and Elisabeta Marin, eds., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt*. Vol. 9. 1420-1580. [Kronstadt: aldus Verlag – Arbeitskreis für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde Heidelberg, 1999], 139-141.

<sup>78</sup> This document mentions the name of Veit Stoss the younger, son of the Nuremberg master, as one of the principal masters of the guild.

<sup>79</sup> For examples see: Huth 1967, 73-76. The matter will be further referred to in the chapter dedicated to the *oeuvre* of Master Vincencius Cibiniensis.

masterwork did not figure in earlier regulations but is a late feature in guild-charters. The regulations from Hermannstadt and those from Kronstadt, which adopted word-by-word the points from the Hermannstadt guild, touch upon this point. In order to attain the title of master, a painter had to first produce an image of the Virgin Mary, painted with a transparent glaze (*Lasur*) and with polished gold and second he “should paint a piece of window-glass made of panes” (*Glasscheiben*). A joiner had to be able to produce an unpainted table and a playing-board.<sup>80</sup> The growing number of the craftsmen belonging to this guild is not only shown by the fact that in the first quarter of the sixteenth century they were finally capable of organizing themselves into a brotherhood or guild. The tax registers and account books also already support this fact, beginning with the last three decades of the fifteenth century and continuously increasing in number in the beginning of the sixteenth. The mention of painters often becomes increasingly common in these documents.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, these sources only list the names of these painters and the sum of the payments they were due. Only in the rarest cases is there information on the work they have carried out. Even in cases when the commissions are named – these are almost exclusively minor, although variable, works such as execution of coats-of-arms, of a door, the painting on a stove, of a couple of window panes or of a flag.<sup>82</sup> This fact also suggests that the living of the masters and workshops was not even in the Saxon towns insured by the production of altarpieces. Most days were filled with smaller work like that mentioned above.<sup>83</sup> Even when small wooden sculptures or single panels could have been in certain cases produced as “confection”, retables were finalized exclusively as specific commissions. Being in continuous need of work, the painters usually

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<sup>80</sup> “*Item eyynn Moler sol thun seynner Mesterschafft eyn Beweisung noch vnser Gewohnheit. Das erst Stwck sol er molenn eyynn Maria Pild eyner Elenn hoch vnnd das sol er molen mit Lasur vnd mit pnalirtem Gold. Zum ander Mol sol er machen eyn Stück Glas eyenner Elenn hoch von Glascheiben. [...] Item wer eyynn Tyschler ist vnnd dy begert ind y vorgeannte Bruderschaft, der sol auch thun eon Webeyssung. Das erst Stück sol seynn eyynn yngefast Twisch noch der Czwir unndLeng, das ander ein Spilprei*” Vlaicu 2003, 264-267.

<sup>81</sup> A tax-register from between 1478-1480 from Hermannstadt makes mention of seven different names of painters. The seven names may perhaps correspond to a larger number of craftsmen. It is difficult to differentiate between several masters with the same name on the basis of this document. “Hermannstädter Steuerregister aus den Jahren 1478-79 und Verzeichnisse über die Kosten der Thorhutwachen aus den Jahren 1478-80.” *Rechnungen aus dem Archiv der Stadt Hermannstadt und der Sächsischen Nation*. Quellen zur Geschichte Siebenbürgens aus Sächsischen Archiven. Vol.1.(Hermannstadt: Ausschuss des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, 1880), 40-97.

<sup>82</sup> A few randomly chosen examples include: 1503 – “*Item Bartholomeo pictori ex parte unius fenestras ad stabam pro labore in nova domo scheyben in numero 128 ...flor 1. den 56*” In, *Rechnungen* 1880, 384. “*Item pictori exposuit dominus villicus, ut pinxit fornacem in praetorio ...flor 0. den 20*” *Rechnungen* 1880, 357. ; 1497 – „*Magistro Valentino pictori pro labore vexillorum in novo aedificio seu domo florens 1.*” (*Rechnungen* 1880, 237); 1497 – “*Valentino pictori arma civitatis super domum novum depicta florens 1.*” (*Rechnungen* 1880, 252); 1540 – Jacobus Chyk lignifaber makes doors for the bath-house in Kronstadt. Balogh 1943, 159.

<sup>83</sup> For similar types of small commissions as part of the continuous work in the Katzheimer workshop in Bamberg see: Marcus Hörsch. “Zur Bamberger Malerei in der Jugendzeit Cranachs.” *Lucas Cranach. Ein Maler-Unternehmer aus Franken*. (Augsburg: Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 1994), 98.

working on panel might easily have accepted commissions for wall or glass paintings as well since the techniques belonged to the same craft.<sup>84</sup> This is not a surprising feature, there are a considerable number of similar examples among well-known painters like Altdorfer, Michael Pacher or Filippino Lippi, as well as among no-name masters from all over Europe in the Middle Ages – in Italy as well as the German-speaking regions.<sup>85</sup>

It is obvious that the personal and business relations built up through commerce and due to the studies abroad of many Transylvanian students – thus there was a growing intellectual stratum – were both important factors in the commissioning of art pieces in Transylvania. The style of the preserved retables also speaks to the relations with Nuremberg and Vienna and historical data clearly supports this observation. This information indicates the presence of former Nuremberg burghers in Hermannstadt especially.<sup>86</sup> The very first data on mutual commercial relations between Nuremberg and Transylvania dates from 1412, when the Nuremberg merchant Eberhart der Quetrer transferred the debts of a burgher from Vienna owed to him to a certain Merten Chraus “von der Hermanstat in Sibenbürgen”.<sup>87</sup> The act clearly points to an on-going trade along the route running from Nuremberg to Vienna on to Transylvania.<sup>88</sup> In 1466, a certain Ludwig Norrimperger was member of the town council in Hermannstadt.<sup>89</sup>

Of the goods Nuremberg merchants could offer, fine cloth and various textiles were the most sought after in the Hungarian Kingdom and in Transylvania. From a guilds-book of the smiths in Hermannstadt from 1462-84, it can be seen that the cloth coming from Nuremberg and the western German towns, was well-known and among the goods that were continuously needed in Transylvania. The account-books from Hermannstadt show that

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<sup>84</sup> The painter Lucas in Kolozsmonostor (*Clujmănăştur*, today part of Cluj) painted both a panel and a window in 1492 (Balogh 1943, 142, note 56). As shown above, according to a regulation of the common guild in Hermannstadt, a painter had to execute both a panel and a glass-painting as a masterwork. For wall paintings done by (mainly) panel painters see the fresco by Master Vincencius Cibiniensis, or the wall paintings in the tower of the Schässburg church, as well as the imitated panels on the wall of the chapel in the fortification of Birthälm. The matter will be referred to in the chapters that follow.

<sup>85</sup> For an interesting type of commission see the case of Max Reichlich, who settled in Salzburg and worked together with Michael Pacher for a time. In 1508, he was commissioned by Emperor Maximilian to “restore” the wall paintings in the castle of Runkelstein. See: Artur Rosenauer ed., *Geschichte der Bildenden Kunst in Österreich*, Vol. 3. *Spätmittelalter und Renaissance* (Munich: Prestel, 2003), 453.

<sup>86</sup> Relations to Kronstadt are much rarer. In the first half of the sixteenth century, mention of a single burgher from Nuremberg who established himself in Kronstadt may be found in the documents. See: Gündisch 1998, 49)

<sup>87</sup> Ub Vol. 3, 557.

<sup>88</sup> Ute Monika Schwob, *Kulturelle Beziehungen zwischen Nürnberg und den Deutschen im Südosten im 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert*. Buchreihe der Südostdeutschen Historischen Kommission, no. 22 (Munich: Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1969), 7.

<sup>89</sup> Gündisch 1998, 47.

Flemish and west German cloth was gradually displaced by the Nuremberg goods around 1500.<sup>90</sup> Families like the Hallers, the Mayers or a decided cloth-merchant, Wolfgang Koberger, played a great role in this trade.<sup>91</sup> The most often mentioned and probably also the most important Nuremberg family in Transylvania was the Haller family. In spite of the fact that Nuremberg merchants already show up in records of the Hungarian trade in the first half of the fourteenth century, it was Ruprecht Haller who first established himself in the region and became not only an important merchant in Buda but also had political functions there. By 1481 he already had commercial contacts with Transylvania.<sup>92</sup> Three of his five sons later also have decided connections with Transylvania. Hans, the eldest son, who was later given the leadership of the Haller Firm in Buda by his father, married the daughter of an important patrician family from Hermannstadt, Eufemia Hecht. He is also known to have owned – together with his brothers (probably a gift from their father) half of the so-called “zwanzigstel”(a tax at the border of Transylvania) of Kronstadt, as pledge from the King.<sup>93</sup> Another son, Paul Haller, died in Hermannstadt in 1530. However, Peter Haller played the most important role in Transylvania. He studied at the University of Vienna and already came as a merchant to Transylvania sometime before 1526.<sup>94</sup> In 1528, he was already a member of the council in Hermannstadt, in 1529 he married Margareta Schirmer, daughter of the town judge of Kronstadt and beginning in 1542 he was already mayor of Hermannstadt.<sup>95</sup> He played an prominent role in the political and economic life of the region for decades.

Nuremberg trade was not limited to textiles. Contractors reached the Transylvanian “Erzgebirge” as well. A certain Ludwig Stromer traveled to Hermannstadt in connection to mining in Transylvania in 1471 where he figures in the tax-register in 1480, 1484, 1485.<sup>96</sup> A representative of the Nuremberg Firm of Mayer<sup>97</sup>, Georg Mayer – lived in Hermannstadt. His

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<sup>90</sup> Ibidem 17.

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem 17.

<sup>92</sup> András Kubinyi, “Die Nürnberger Haller im Ofen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Südosthandels im Spätmittelalter” *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 52 (1963-64): 91.

<sup>93</sup> On the 24th of April 1516, Hans Schirmer, mayor of Hermannstadt, the judge in the town and the whole council issued a document concerning a debt of 3300 florins value as relief from this pledge. See: Kubinyi 1964, 97.

<sup>94</sup> Schwob 1969, 12.

<sup>95</sup> On the life and activity of Peter Haller see especially Georg Gündisch, “Peter Haller. Bürgermeister von Hermannstadt und Sachsengraf”, *Deutsche Forschung in Südosten* 3 (1944): 43-102. He also lists a number of other data referring to the presence of Nuremberg burghers in Transylvania. A certain Hermann Nürnberger comes in 1500, the widow of Hans Nuremberger is mentioned in 1515 and in the same year the goldsmith Peter Mayer arrives in Hermannstadt from Breslau ( *Wroclaw* ), where he had studied. He is supposed to have been a relative of the above-mentioned merchant Georg Mayer, who also figures as *notarius* in a series of guild charters. (See: Gündisch 1944, 47-48)

<sup>96</sup> Rechnungen 1880 67., 101., 103, 109. Also referred to by Schwob 1969, 22.

<sup>97</sup> The firm brought its goods to the southeast European markets through their representatives living in Poland and different regions of the Hungarian Kingdom including Transylvania. See: Schwob 1969, 14.

name occurs in documents related to the trade in arms<sup>98</sup> as well as with another matter much more interesting from the point of view of this thesis. He was commissioned by the famous Nuremberg sculptor, Veit Stoss, to proceed in his name in the matter of the testament of his deceased son who had lived in Schässburg.<sup>99</sup> The role of the Nuremberg merchants in mining and in the trade related to it, was already strongly limited in the Hungarian Kingdom by the sixteenth century by the Thurzó-Fugger concern. The presence of the latter in Transylvania is not so well researched as that of the Nurembergers, but based on the few known data it is obvious that the topic should be of interest from the point of view of art history as well. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Thurzós leased the mines from Rézbánya (*Băița*) in Bihar county from the bishopric of Várad and very probably continuously exploited these mines throughout the sixteenth century.<sup>100</sup> In 1507 the mayor of Hermannstadt payed János Thurzó from Besztercebánya for copper bought in Buda. Thus, very likely it was copper from Upper Hungary that was used in Hermannstadt.<sup>101</sup> The Fuggers sent Hans Dernschwam as their representative to Transylvania in 1528 in order to survey the salt mines there (in Torda, Dés (*Dej*), Kolozs (*Cojocna*), Szék (*Sic*) and Salzburg (*Vízakna*)). His report remains one of the most important descriptions of these regions from the period.<sup>102</sup>

The routes marked by commerce and personal relations acquired through trade must also have played a certain role in the spread of cultural and artistic trends in the period. The still unrevealed commercial relations of Upper Hungary, through Kassa (*Košice, Kaschau*), with Transylvania and those routes running between Transylvania and Cracow will also

<sup>98</sup> On the 10th of December 1526, the Council of Nuremberg sent a demand to the town of Hermannstadt demanding a payment of 1000 Gulden, the price of powder and other goods related to artillery, bought by the representative of Hermannstadt, Georg Mayer from the Nuremberg burgher Martin Söldner, for the fight against the Turks.

<sup>99</sup> *Des Johann Neudörfer Schreib- und Rechenmeisters zu Nürnberg Nachrichten von Künstlern und Werkleuten daselbst aus dem Jahre 1547. Nebst der Fortsetzung des Andreas Gulden nach den Handschriften und mit Anmerkungen* herausgegeben von Dr. G.W.K. Lochner Stadtarchivar zu Nürnberg. (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1875. *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*. Vol. 10) The son was, without doubt, Johannes Stoss, who is also encountered (unfortunately only following his death) in other documents in the town of Schässburg. The matter of the Veit Stoss sons in Transylvania is much more complex, which deserves a separate study.

<sup>100</sup> It was Bishop Domokos Kálmáncsehi, who rented the mine. His two accolates, Bishop György Szatmári and Zsigmond Thurzó were both connected through family ties with the Firm Fugger-Thurzó. This makes it very probable that the mines' exploitation was continuous in the sixteenth century. See: Elek Benkő, *Erdély középkori harangjai és bronz keresztelőmedencéi*, (Bronze bells and baptismal fonts of Transylvania in the Middle Ages) (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002), 36.

<sup>101</sup> Benkő 2002, 37.

<sup>102</sup> He also notes that all five salt chambers were exclusively Hungarian. There were no German-speakers even among the miners. See: Lajos Tardy ed., trans., János Dernschwam, *Erdély, Besztercebánya, törökországi útinapló*. (Transylvania, Besztercebánya and Turkish diary), (Budapest: Európa, 1984), referred to by Elemér Mályusz, *Az erdélyi magyar társadalom a középkorban*. (Hungarian society of Transylvania in the Middle Ages), *Társadalom és Művelődéstörténeti Tanulmányok sorozat*, (Studies of social- and cultural history) no. 2 (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézet, 1988), 81.

hopefully make reference to the movement of craftsmen and with their mediation with respect to artistic styles. The wide variety of connections with Nuremberg outlined above had a clear impact on cultural and artistic life. A trade in books is documented between Transylvania and Nuremberg, books printed in the south German town being the most often found in Hermannstadt libraries of the late Middle Ages.<sup>103</sup> In spite of his having been a cloth-merchant, the name of Wolfgang Koberger hints in this direction since there are good reasons to believe that he was a relative of the famous Nuremberg printer, Anton Koberger. It has been demonstrated that the merchants living in Transylvania kept in continuous contact with their homes, traveling and keeping up regular correspondence. This fact must also have had an impact on the art of Transylvania. The already mentioned documents referring to the Veit Stoss sons are a good example<sup>104</sup> although there are a number of preserved panels and sculptures throughout Transylvania with stylistic elements pointing towards Nuremberg. Recent research has also assumed through the example of Hans Siebenbürger that painters originating from Transylvania went to Nuremberg in order to learn their craft there, eventually never returning home but becoming very influential artists abroad.<sup>105</sup> Nuremberg merchants may also have contributed to this process of mediating Viennese artistic trends because of the commercial way they transported their goods to Transylvania through both artists and pieces of art – especially engravings and woodcuts. It is easy to imagine that former burghers from Nuremberg, having settled in Hermannstadt and taking on important economic and politic roles in the life of the town, to have been behind a series of retable and other commissions of church-furnishing.

Another feature that should be considered when looking for the commissioners of altarpieces and the explanation for the numerous influences of Viennese artistic styles on Transylvanian art, is the intellectual stratum in this period. It was their claims and erudition that brought these pieces of art into being. Their numbers continuously increased from the fourteenth century. In these first decades it was the University of Prague that was favored by Transylvanians wanting to study.<sup>106</sup> Already in the second half of the fifteenth century,

<sup>103</sup> Friedrich Müller, “Die Inkunabeln der Hermannstädter Kapellenbibliothek.” *Archiv* 14 (1877): 295, 489.

<sup>104</sup> A detailed study dedicated to the Veit Stoss sons in Transylvania should also add considerable information on commercial and artistic relations with Poland. Johann Stoss was supposedly born during his father’s stay in Cracow and very probably also grew up in the environment of the Cracow workshop. For a basic discussion: Max Loßnitzer. *Veit Stoß. Die Herkunft seiner Kunst, seine Werke und sein Leben.* (Leipzig: Verlag Julius Zeisler, 1912)

<sup>105</sup> Suckale 2004, The author claims that Hans Siebenbürger, a/the leading master in the Vienna workshop of the Schottenaltar, earlier worked in the of Hans Pleydenwuff’s Nuremberg workshop.

<sup>106</sup> Tonk 1979, 43.



however, it was the University of Vienna and Cracow – as the geographically closest ones - that received the largest number of Transylvanian students.<sup>107</sup> A great number of the students never received any degree at these universities, but spent the year abroad mostly in order to make acquaintances and contacts which could be used to good effect later. This was especially true for the sons of merchant families. However, there was also an important stratum of highly educated people, who came back to Transylvania as *baccalaureus*, *magister* or even *doctor* in one or more fields. The erudite were basically ecclesiastical men and the formation of lay-intellectuality began much later. As the number of people who had studied at foreign universities grew, it was not only the high clergy, bishops or members of the chapters<sup>108</sup> who were specially educated, but also the parish priests and even the altarists<sup>109</sup>. The incomes of both could possibly ensure the material possibility to study abroad. Educated parish priests and even altarists themselves often founded altars; the altarist, in spite of the fact that he was subservient to the parish priest would have had more time for learning and increasing his knowledge even in parallel with his work than the parish priest, who had to care for the the administration of the whole church.<sup>110</sup> The free time of the altarist was of course dependant on the size of the altar-foundation: the smaller ones only needed an hour or two of work each day while the larger ones would have taken up all their time and energy. It was naturally these larger ones that would have ensured a complete living. By the end of the fifteenth century the better part of the parish priests in the large, privileged parishes<sup>111</sup> had studied at foreign universities, while priests at the preminent town-parishes were exclusively erudite theologians.<sup>112</sup> This did not mean however, that priests in smaller villages were not intellectuals. A number of such examples are also known.<sup>113</sup> In addition to secular priests, members of the mendicant orders also produced outstanding individuals among Transylvanian intellectuals during the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. Thus, it is very probably commissioners

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 44-50.

<sup>108</sup> It cannot be stated, that it would have been a prescription for bishops or members of a chapter to have studied at university, however it is clear that those having done so had priority at an election. See: Tonk 1979, 127, 130.

<sup>109</sup> For the duties and benefits of the life of the altarist in the period see: Elemér Mályusz, *Egyházi társadalom a középkori Magyarországon*. (Church society in Middle Ages Hungary) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971) 146sq

<sup>110</sup> Miklós Mojzer, "A festő hagyatéka, ahogyan mi látjuk". (The Bequest of the Artist: as we see it today) MS Mester vizitációképe és egykori Selmebányai főoltára. (The Visitation image of Master MS and his former high-altarpiece from Selmebánya) (Budapest: MNG, 1997), 9-30.

<sup>111</sup> The priests of these privileged parishes had authority equal with that of the archdeacons. The deaconate of Kronstadt in 1444 prescribed that its priests should have a *studium generale* (a notion also used in universities during the Middle Ages). Tonk 1979, 137.

<sup>112</sup> Tonk 1979, 137.

<sup>113</sup> Tonk 1979, 138.

of art pieces can also be sought among them. For this reason alone it is quite interesting that preserved altarpieces have almost exclusively been found in parishes.<sup>114</sup>

Unfortunately no contracts for commissions, no schemes (*Visierung*) for altarpieces have been preserved – or are known for this time – in Transylvania as in German territories. Nothing concrete is known about the practice of inviting foreign masters for certain commissions or that of importing panels and sculptures through commercial routes. It is obvious, both from the number of preserved pieces and from written sources that local altar-production only had its most active period at the beginning of the sixteenth century and would not continue very much longer as the first incoming ideas of the Reformation would obviously bring this boom to a halt. The first impact of Lutheran trends can already be felt on the iconography of the preserved altarpieces of the second and third decades, a topic that would be worth a separate study.<sup>115</sup> It can also not have been by chance that, in spite of the fact that there are such a large number of altarpieces dated to the 1520s, nothing has been preserved from the 1530s. It is a well-known fact that Johannes Honterus held the first Lutheran church service in Kronstadt as early as 1542. The ideas of not only Luther but also Karlstadt, Bullinger and other personalities reached Transylvania through the mediation of both students studying abroad and merchants who returned with the most up-to-date literature during the 1520s. The earliest Transylvanian written source about the claim that the churches were being cleared of all painted and sculpted images is considered to be the 1543 report by the clerk of the council in Bistritz, Christian Pomarius. He affirms that the Turkish danger was drawing near and that the Turks would first kill those who venerate images.<sup>116</sup> Reports and descriptions concerning the emptying of churches have been preserved in Kronstadt. The organist of the Black Church in Kronstadt, and at the same time chronicler of the town, Hieronimus Ostermayer writes: “Item sein mit Willen der Obrigkeit die Bilder aus den Kirchen, auch der grosse Altar in der Pfarrkirch abgebrochen worden. Dito den 22. Tag Aprilis mit gemeiner Wahl der gelehrte und gottesfürchtige Mann Herr Johannes Honterus zum Pfarr in Cronstadt erwählet worden”<sup>117</sup> The parish church of Hermannstadt seems to have

<sup>114</sup> A number of panels and sculptures held in museums today are of unknown provenience. Thus, it cannot be excluded that they came from monasteries. The panel representing the Virgin Mary in the collection of the Kolozsvár museum is known to have come from the Franciscan Friary of Vajdahunyad. (Inv. no. II. 8980)

<sup>115</sup> See the studies lately published by Maria Crăciun on the matter.

<sup>116</sup> „Erlaubt also keineswegs, dass jene Götzenbilder dort, wo sie unter dieser vorübergehenden Gottesgeißel abgetan worden sind, unter Aufwendung grösster Kosten wieder aufgerichtet werden.” Karl Reinert, *Die Gründung der evangelischen Kirchen in Siebenbürgen*. Studia Transilvanica, no. 5 (Köln-Weimar: Böhlau, 1979), 136.

<sup>117</sup> *Chroniken und Tagebücher*, Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Brassó Vol.4., (Brassó: Heinrich Zeidner, 1903), 504-505.

followed Luther's ideas referring to keeping paintings in the church as artworks, as can be seen in the words of the parish priest, Matthias Ramser in 1544.<sup>118</sup> The Protestant doctrines however spread not only through the Saxon lands, but also in the counties. It was naturally mainly among the Saxon inhabitants of Kolozsvár that the Lutheran ideas already became established in the 1530s. At the end of 1541, the burghers already occupied the house of the Franciscan nunnery although at this point the National Assembly was still ordering that the house should be given back.<sup>119</sup> The Reformation resulted in more serious measures being taken when in 1544 Caspar Helt (Heltai Gáspár) became parish priest of the town. As the notarius of the Convent of Kolozsmonostor reports in 1556, the population had chased the Dominican and Franciscan friars from the town. Their goods and library were damaged and all the images of the saints were burnt.<sup>120</sup> Similarly overheated actions are reported in 1565 from Gyulafehérvár by Giovanandrea Gromo, the Italian officer of the Guards of Prince János Zsigmond. The Protestants chased out the Catholic clergy from the cathedral and altarpieces, sculptures and paintings were thrown to ground, broken and burnt.<sup>121</sup>

Thus, written data as well as the number of preserved pieces show that these vehement actions were characteristic mainly in the counties' territory. The Saxon parishes were already ordered early on to at least maintain the high altar in the church, while the Hermannstadt Synod of 1557 suggested that paintings with images referring to the Bible or to church history should be retained.<sup>122</sup> Other sources point to the fact that in most cases the high altar was preserved in the church, while secondary altarpieces were removed.<sup>123</sup> This is the usual explanation for the fact that the great majority of the preserved retables were maintained – or

<sup>118</sup> „Imagines vero, tanquam opus artis per se neminem offendus, permisimus, aut tanquam mnemosinon rerum gestarum” Quoted after Erich Roth, *Die Reformation in Siebenbürgen. Ihr Verhältnis zu Wittenberg und der Schweiz*. Vols 1-2. (Köln-Graz: Böhlau, 1962, 1964), here Vol. 1. 160.

<sup>119</sup> Zsigmond Jakó, *A kolozsmonostori konvent jegyzőkönyvei* (Protocols of the Convent of Kolozsmonostor) Vols. 1-2, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 85.

<sup>120</sup> „Monachi ex utroque claustro Coloswariensi expulsi sunt in 1556.” „Imagines sanctorum et omnia sculptilia ex utroque claustro Coloswariensi eiecte et combuste sunt 1556.” Quoted after Jakó 1990, 88.

<sup>121</sup> Referred to by Géza Entz 1958, 131; 205. Similarly reports from *frater Lőrinc Dési* in 1564: „*Sabbato p. Laurentii sacramentarii intronissi in ecclesiam metropolitanam Albensem...tabule altarium sequenti sabbatho eiecte.*” Ibidem.

<sup>122</sup> See the 1547 church-order for all Saxons in Transylvania by Georg Daniel Teutsch, *Urkundenbuch der evangelischen Landeskirche in Siebenbürgen*, Vol 1. (Hermannstadt: n.e, 1862), 66; The 1557 Act of the Synod in Georg Daniel Teutsch, *Synodalverhandlungen der Evang. Landeskirche A.B. in Siebenbürgen im Reformationsjahrhundert*. *Urkundenbuch der Evangelischen Landeskirche A.B. in Siebenbürgen*. Vol. 2. (Hermannstadt: n.e., 1883), 6; both noted by Evelin Wetter: „Das vorreformatorsche Erbe in der Ausstattung siebenbürgisch-sächsische Kirchen.” Ulrich A. Wien and Krista Zach eds., *Humanismus in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen*. (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau, 2004), 28.

<sup>123</sup> See Wetter 2004, 28. and also 24-26. referring to the assumption that the so-called altar from Marienburg, fragments of which may be found today in the Black Church in Kronstadt, could originally have been components of the high altar in the Kronstadt church. Thus, it may have partially fallen victim to the large fire in the church in 1689.

had been maintained until the last years – in village churches. Reformation did not mean the end of Transylvanian altarpiece-production but marked a significant change in the type, style and number of the retables. Thus, the time-limit of our inquiries stops at this point, so that only altarpieces produced between the late fourteenth and the first quarter of the sixteenth century have been touched upon in this dissertation.

*Evidence from the objects. Preliminaries of the local mass-production – an overview.*

In spite of the small number of written sources related to the early period of Transylvanian sculpture-, panel painting- and altarpiece-production, there are a few preserved pieces of art that can help reconstruct an image of the level and style represented by the art of the fourteenth and first half of the fifteenth century. An analysis of these preliminary studies of the Transylvanian winged altarpieces is still not sufficient while after the study of the individual pieces an overview would be necessary in which the few preserved wood-sculptures and panel paintings are placed into their wider Transylvanian artistic context. Due to their small number and sporadic character, understanding and interpreting them will only be possible – in this period even more than later – primarily through defining their relationship to the architecture and architectural decoration of the age: stone sculpture and wall painting. This is obviously not the place for such a complex analysis. However, a short presentation of the matter is unavoidable in order to get a notion of the past artistic context in which the altarpieces interpreted in the following chapters came into being.

Transylvanian sculpture in the second half of the fourteenth century is usually characterized in the literature by the bronze statuary by the Kolozsvári brothers, Martinus and Georgius. At the same time, probably the region's most important contemporary architectural decoration is the sculptural program of the church in Mühlbach, which was finished more-or-less in the same period when the Kolozsvári brothers received their commission from Bishop Demetrius and also finished their bronze figures of kings in Várad.<sup>124</sup> This is also the period from when the earliest Transylvanian altarpiece-fragment is preserved. The reliefs decorating the inner side of the wings and the central part of the retable from Bonnesdorf (*Boian, Alsóbajom*) have not been taken into consideration from this point of view until now as their dating in the literature was most confusing. **(Figs. II.1-2)** The altarpiece has been dated by different authors to different periods, from around 1400 to the middle of the fifteenth century.<sup>125</sup> The confusion is due to the fact that the retable was continuously treated as a unity.

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<sup>124</sup> For the dating of the Mühlbach sculptures to the third quarter of the fourteenth century see: Livia Varga, *A százszobesei evangélikus templom középkori építéstörténete*. Művészettörténeti Füzetek, no. 16, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984), 47-51.

<sup>125</sup> Kampis dates the retable to 1390-1420, (Kampis 1940, 20-21); Radocsay to 1410-1430 (Radocsay 1967, 49), An overview of Hungarian art in the Middle Ages dates it to the middle of the fifteenth century (Marosi 1987, 597) as does Vătăşianu . (Vătăşianu 1959, 788). The latest work on the retable comes from Gyöngyi Török, "Altartabel zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxembourg", *Sigismundus Rex et Imperator : Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg 1387 - 1437*. Exhib. Cat. Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest - Musée National

It was never considered that the reliefs decorating the feast-day-side might have been reused in the late fifteenth century when the entire structure of the altarpiece was conceived. Thus, the retable from Bonnesdorf should not be included in a typological analysis of fifteenth century altarpieces, without considering that it must have had to adapt to these particular, earlier reliefs. We have no certain information on the type of the fourteenth century retable to which the reliefs belonged, but it is obvious that the figure of the Virgin and the Child should have had a central position in the original arrangement as well.<sup>126</sup> **(Fig. II.3)** The enthroned Madonna can clearly be understood as individual image in parallel with its belonging to the composition of the Adoration of the Magi, on two of the flanking panels. The Virgin-representation type can be related to the so-called “Sitzmadonnen” from the first half of the fourteenth century. It is especially characteristic of the Rhenan region but also spread through other German-speaking territories. The central relief on the Bonnesdorf retable belongs to the very common type of enthroned Virgins, where the infant is represented in a standing position. However, in most cases, he stands naturally on the left leg of the Virgin, facing his mother, while his position on the Bonnesdorf relief indicates that the image originally had an arrangement connected to the figures of the three kings. The forms and arrangement of the draperies, the face types and the hair-style of the figures, their arrangement in perspective (especially in the scene of the *Twelve year old Jesus in the temple* or the *Annunciation to the shepherds*) all suggest a dating in the years immediately following the middle of the century. These reliefs of unknown origin were reused hundred years later by the master of the Bonnesdorf retable, who created an entirely new structural unit.<sup>127</sup> The golden brocade pattern in the background of the reliefs, the foliage-fragment preserved above the central panel<sup>128</sup> clearly date from the fifteenth century as do the paintings on the outer side of the wings. Even details like the parapet wall behind the Annunciation, covered with a red tapestry, or the greenery hanging behind the Virgin and their golden stencil-patterns, support the idea of the organic fifteenth century concept; - these motifs recur in the backgrounds and on the dresses of the saints decorating the outer wing-sides. The figures of the woman saints represented on

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d’histoire et d’art, Luxembourg. (Mainz: Zabern, 2006), 547-550, here especially 549. She dates the retable to around 1400.

<sup>126</sup> For up-to-date literature on retable-types of the fourteenth century see: Hartmut Krohm, Klaus Krüger, Mathias Weniger eds., *Entstehung und Frühgeschichte des Flügelaltarschreins*. (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 2001.); Norbert Wolf, *Deutsche Schnitzretabel des 14. Jahrhunderts*. (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2002); Peter Tängeberg, *Retabel und Altarschreine des 14. Jahrhunderts : schwedische Altarausstattungen in ihrem europäischen Kontext*. (Stockholm : Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2005).

<sup>127</sup> This late rearrangement of the reliefs also explains the incorrect sequence of the scenes.

<sup>128</sup> Similar foliage decorated all the panels of the feast-day-side, but only a fragment of the central panel has been preserved.

the “workday-side” display the influence of Schongauer’s engravings and clearly date the entire structure to 1470-1480 and place the retable among the Transylvanian altarpieces from the time of Matthias Corvinus.<sup>129</sup> (**Figs. II.4-5**) Thus, the altarpiece from Bonnesdorf is, just as the altarpiece at Birthälm will be almost half a century later, a very good example of the afterlife of earlier retable-fragments, their appreciation (whether for economic or esthetic reasons) and their reuse decades later.

Two other wooden sculptures enrich our notions of fourteenth century Transylvanian art. One is a statue of the Virgin and Child found in the Franciscan church of Hermannstadt, (**Fig. II.6**) and the other is a similar representation presently standing in the Cathedral of Gyulafehérvár. (**Fig. II.7**) The former is of unknown origin, while the latter was recently moved to the cathedral from the village of Tordatúr (*Tureni*). The two unusually large figures<sup>130</sup> have very similar compositions. The position and gestures of both the Virgin and the infant, the arrangement of their dress and mantle are very similar to each other. Even the fold-work is quite similar in spite of the fact that the abundant drapery of the Hermannstadt Virgin’s mantle is of much better quality. Generally, the Hermannstadt figure displays similar solutions on a higher level and perhaps also suggests a date a couple of years later than the Tordatúr example. The characteristics of the two figures suggest that they date to a time shortly after the Bonnesdorf reliefs, in the third quarter of the fourteenth century.<sup>131</sup>

The years around 1400 are not well represented by Transylvanian panel paintings and wooden sculptures. There are four figures which bear the marks of the soft style, two kept in the Székely region and two in the Saxon region. The female saint in Csíkmenaság was probably a Madonna figure although the infant has been lost. (**Fig. II.8**) The sculpture clearly displays a rich drapery arranged in bowl-folds in front of the figure and in bunches of tubular folds beneath the arms – typical characteristics of the beautiful style. The poor surface of the sculpture, damaged by termites and badly chipped and weathered, makes it difficult to date the sculpture, although the figure was probably finished around 1430. Radocsay considered the Virgin and child from Csíkszenttamás to be a work by the same master. (**Fig. II.9**)

<sup>129</sup> A very close analogy to these woman saints can be found on the outer side of the wings of the so-called “Starck-tryptich”, dated to 1480-1490, in the collections of the National Gallery, Washington. The figure of Catherine on the Starck-retable clearly follows the same Schongauer model as Apollonia, or the Saint usually identified as Ursula on the Bonnesdorf altarpiece. B (271)

<sup>130</sup> The Hermannstadt Virgin is 195 cm high, the Tordatúr figure measures 185 cm. Their original function is unknown. They may have also been part of a larger altarpiece or decorated a church as individual devotional images.

<sup>131</sup> A thorough analysis of the Virgin-figures of the fourteenth and early fifteenth century is being prepared by Ágnes Körber who has already presented her research to date at the conference “A Régi Erdély Művészete” (The art of old Transylvania) in Cluj, 2005.

Unfortunately, the comparison of the two pieces is presently very difficult to establish due to the thick layer of modern polichromy that covers the latter figure. An archive photo shows the Csíkszenttamás virgin before the modern “restoration”. It reveals that the head types of the two Virgins are indeed quite similar, but the handling of the drapery differs greatly. **(Fig. II.10)** The way the Csíkszenttamás figure was worked is only slightly reminiscent of the soft style in terms of its patterning but its execution is very different and remains below the level of the folds observable on the Csíkmenaság Virgin. The sharp, hard edges of the drapery in certain places even suggest that there may have been a later intervention. The general concept behind the figure and especially the arrangement of her mantle suggest a dating between 1440-1450.

A Virgin and a child of unknown origin was first published by Gisela and Otmar Richter in their review volume on Transylvanian winged altarpieces. The figure, kept in the Roman Catholic parish of Hermannstadt also displays certain characteristics of the beautiful style. **(Fig. II.11)** The bowl-folds in front of the figure and the tubular ones beneath the arms as well as the position of the infant almost slipping out of his mother’s hands are all features indicating the beautiful style, in spite of the fact that the usual S-curve of the Virgin-figure is almost completely missing. The figure probably dates from the 1430’s. It is presumably the same period that the Madonna from Michelsberg, presently held in the Brukenthal Museum, dates from. **(Fig. II.12)** It displays traces of the original polichromy and the above-mentioned fold-arrangement, typical for the beautiful style. However, the drapery is not so abundant and the tubular folds beneath the arms not so wavy as in the high period of the above-mentioned style. Thus, the figure most probably dates to around 1430.

It would obviously be completely misleading to characterize the beautiful style sculpture of Transylvania only through these statues of the Virgin. This is why it has been already pointed out that the interpretation of these pieces is only possible by placing them in the broader context of artistic genres. Architectural decorations of mainly parish churches, like the sculptures of the so-called Black Church from Kronstadt, obviously contribute to a fuller image of the period. Also decorations in certain village churches might be of interest, if one takes a look at the high quality tympan-relief in the church of Reichesdorf (*Richiş, Riomfalva*) with its roots in Parlerian art. A group of stone sculptures and perhaps also certain goldsmith’s works of the highest quality also need to be taken into consideration. Pieces of art like the *Pietà*,<sup>132</sup> the *Mater Dolorosa*,<sup>133</sup> the Crucifixion of the Austrian Petrus Lantregen in

<sup>132</sup> Muzeul Brukenthal, Inv. no. S 311.

<sup>133</sup> Muzeul Brukenthal, Inv. No. S 174/ 4581



the late Baroque Chapel of the Holy Cross in Hermannstadt or the monstrance and the reliquary cross from Heltau (*Cisnădie, Nagydisznód*)<sup>134</sup> together all give an impression of the international rank of the Transylvanian – mainly the Hermannstadt region's, artistic claims in this period. At the same time, the presence of these wooden, stone and gilt silver examples indicate that the period was most probably characterized by the activities of mixed local and foreign masters.

The same feature seems likely in the paintings of the age. While the first decades of the fifteenth century, the heyday period of the beautiful style, were represented by wall paintings like the complex interior programs of the churches in Malmkrog (*Mălăncrav, Almakerék*), Mediasch or Székelyderzs (*Dîrjiu*), the outgoing years of the international Gothic already left traces in panel painting. The altarpiece from Tartlau (*Prejmer, Prázsmár*) has often been referred to in the literature as representing Transylvanian panel painting by the middle of the fifteenth century together with the retable from Malmkrog. The panels are usually dated in the literature to the 1440s<sup>135</sup> and speak mainly of Austrian and netherlandish stylistic influences.<sup>136</sup> (**Fig. II.14**)

The retable clearly had a strong devotional character, provided mainly by the central image but accentuated by the wing-representations related to the same idea. The devotional strength of the central image lies in the barren surroundings of the Crucifixion scene. While the rest of the panels display natural elements in the background, this was obviously omitted on the central image by the painter. The barrenness of the scenery is meant to concentrate the viewers attention on Christ's suffering and thus emphasize the emotional involvement of the faithful. The iconographic program of the retable, beginning on the outer side of the wings with scenes of the Passion, continues with the central panel and closes with the four scenes on the inner side of the wings, - depicting events related to the death and resurrection, thus to the body of Christ, the Corpus Christi.<sup>137</sup> The central idea and the program of the retable thus perfectly suit the dedication of the church to the Holy Cross. Certain details of the retable show that the master of the Tartlau altarpiece had still been "brought up" in the tradition of

<sup>134</sup> Muzeul Brukanthal, Inv. No. T 30/ 4756 and T 29/ 4749.

<sup>135</sup> Roth dated the panels to the last quarter of the fifteenth century (Roth 1916, 26) Genthon to 1430-1440 (Genthon 1932, 43-44), Radocsay dated it to 1440 (Radocsay 1955, 76), Gyöngyi Török to a period after 1440 (Marosi 1987, 720), Helga Fabritius to around 1440 (Fabritius 2006, 135) and, Richter to around 1450 (Richter 1992, 41-45)

<sup>136</sup> Gyöngyi Török, "Beiträge zur Verbreitung einer niederländischen Dreifaltigkeitsdarstellung im 15. Jahrhundert", *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 81 (1985): 7-31.

<sup>137</sup> The Virgin holds Christ in front of her in the scene of the Lamentation – as if she wanted to present him to the congregation, just as the priest does when he elevates the Host, saying: "Corpus Christi". The same idea is emphasized by the fact that the Lamentation and the scene of the Entombment are not found together as usual, but represented on separate panels.

the beautiful style and was acquainted with the stylistic and technical solutions of the 1420s. The central Crucifixion shows a series of elements that have their roots in these years and can be found similarly on one of the most famous retables from the 1420s, Thomas de Coloswar's Garamszentbenedek (*Hronský Beňadik, Sankt Benedikt*, today Slovakia) altarpiece.<sup>138</sup> While the representations of the wing-panels also display a number of elements such as the fine, fragile figures, the soft arrangement of the draperies, the eavey edges of the womens' head-dresses, transparent veils, accurate leaf-by-leaf depiction of the trees and other delicate solutions which clearly make an allusion to the beautiful style, they also reflect the fact that the painter was already acquainted with the most contemporary trends of the 1430s. (**Fig. II.13**) The general concept behind the compositions, the representation of space, the handling of the perspective as well as certain motifs show that the style represented in Austria by the master of the Albrecht-altarpiece or in Suabia by Hans Multscher's painting, was not alien to the master of the Tartlau altarpiece. The form of the square panels which already assure new types of compositions, themselves indicate this direction as does the composition of the space determined by the diagonally set objects dividing the space, facilitating the arrangement of the figures that can be found in the oeuvre of the above-mentioned masters. (**Fig. II.15**) The details mentioned by Gyöngyi Török,<sup>139</sup> displayed a netherlandish influence. Though, they were probably filtered through south Germany or more Austrian mediators. All these features suggest that the master who produced this particular retable stylistically was at the same developmental level as the Albrecht's master in the second half of the 1430s in Vienna. Thus, the earliest possible dating of the retable would be the late 1430s, but more likely around 1440.

The same transitional style, still strongly influenced by the Interantional Gothic, but already displaying more modern elements as well, can be observed on one of the period's most complex and most intresting Transylvanian iconographic programs, the wall paintings in the chapel of the fortification in Honigberg (*Härmani, Szászhermány*). These paintings must be taken into consideration when discussing the artistic environment of the Tartlau panels, not only because they date to approximately the same period, or just a few years later than the

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<sup>138</sup> The position of the Saviour on the cross, the depiction of the wood's surface, the rocks at the base of the cross as well as the punched ornamental motif on the golden background with diagonal lines crossing each other. Even the small punched flower-imitating motifs, on the rombs formed by the diagonal decoration in Tartlau – can be observed as edge decoration or ornamenting the halos on the panels by Thomas de Coloswar.

<sup>139</sup> Török 1985

altarpiece,<sup>140</sup> but also because an important historical datum links the two localities. In 1240, King Béla IV, donated Tartlau, Honigberg, Marienburg (*Feldioara, Földvár*) and Petersberg (*Sînpetru, Barcaszentpéter*) to the Cistercian order. The donation also ordained that these localities not only had to pay a tax to the order, but additionally stated that no building works, and no altarpiece-, or cemetery-consecration could take place without the special permission of the order.<sup>141</sup> The Cistercians held the same rights in the fourteenth century as well as shown in a document from 1400. In it the pope orders the Cistercians to give the parish of Tartlau to Nicolaus, son of Simon.<sup>142</sup> The right was probably exercised until the dissolution of the Cistercian monastery of Kerz (*Cârța, Kerc*) by King Matthias. It is well-known that both churches – that of Honigberg and that of Tartlau share characteristics of the Cistercian building workshop that also operated in Kerz. It can easily be imagined that the order also played a particular role in the commission of the altarpiece at Tartlau in the same period they allowed or perhaps actively contributed to the commission of the wall-paintings in Honigberg.<sup>143</sup>

One work by Johannes de Rosenau, a large wall painting depicting the Crucifixion on the northern wall of the chancel of the Hermannstadt parish church, has an inscription with the date 1445.<sup>144</sup> (**Fig. II.16**) It is thus not much later than the Tartlau retable, and a painting that should necessarily be taken into consideration when discussing of the panel paintings of the period. The composition, the detailed drawing, the overall character of the so-called “Volkreicher Kalvarienberg” type of image show<sup>145</sup> that the painter was experienced in the panel painting technique. Understanding the work can clearly contribute to our knowledge about local altar-production in this period.

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<sup>140</sup> Latest and most complex analysis of the wall-paintings from Honigberg, noting and commenting on the complete previous literature as well: Helga Fabritius, *Die Honigberger Kapelle*. (Dössel: Verlag Janos Stekovics, 2006)

<sup>141</sup> Entz 1996, 107; Ub. I. 68

<sup>142</sup> Entz 1996, 142

<sup>143</sup> Helga Fabritius only suggested the local parish priest, Antonius, in the role of patron since he studied at the Vienna University in that period. She does not count with any possible role of the Cistercians. However, it may be of interest that Michael, abbot of Kerz, was also enrolled at the University of Vienna in 1432, in other words exactly in the years preceding the commissions. See: Tonk 1979, 140.

<sup>144</sup> The wall painting has been mentioned by Helga Fabritius as an analogy for the dating of the wall-paintings from Honigberg. The most recent literature on the topic: Ciprian Firea “Pictura murală Crucificarea din Biserica Evanghelică din Sibiu” (The wall paintings with the Crucifixion in the Lutheran church of Sibiu). Daniela Dâmboiu, Iulia Mesea eds., *Convergences. European Landmarks in Transylvanian Arts*. Sibiu: Palatul Brukenthal, 2007. 29-32.

<sup>145</sup> Elisabeth Roth, *Der Volkreiche Kalvarienberg in Literatur und Bildkunst des Spätmittelalters*. (Berlin: Schmidt, 1967).

The altarpiece from Malmkrog has been considered in the literature a provincial work in spite of its nobile patrons.<sup>146</sup> (Fig. II.17) However, its stylistic characteristics embody a very important phase in Transylvanian winged-altar development. The central image shows the enthroned Virgin with the donors of the altarpiece kneeling at her feet. Flanked by a pair of superposed, narrow panels which represent the four *Virgines Capitales*,<sup>147</sup> the retable recalls the arrangement of the so-called ‘Viereralters’. The representations on the inner and outer sides of the wing panels are dedicated to the Life of the Virgin (respectively the infancy of Christ), but in spite of the fact that all the depictions on the panels fit within the same narrative, their order is completely illogical. The outer side shows the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Circumcision and the Presentation in the Temple, while the ‘Feast-day-side’ presents the Birth, the Adoration of the Magi, the Resurrection of the Virgin and the Death of the Virgin.<sup>148</sup> There is no likelihood that the retable was modified later because the backgrounds are handled differently on the inner and the outer wingsides. The compositions of the panels present a solution for the organization of the diagonal space – similar to what has already been mentioned for the Tartlau retable as being specific for the 1430s. (Fig. II.18) However, the remnants of the International Gothic style are less evident here. The retable was clearly produced in a somewhat later period compared to the retable from Tartlau.<sup>149</sup> The Malmkrog paintings have been used as an analogy by Zsuzsa Urbach for the Nativity representation of the Zettl-Langer collection from Sopron.<sup>150</sup> The Sopron panel, attributed to an Austrian master belonging to a Salzburg workshop, but also keeping the works of the contemporary Tirolese school in mind, is indeed closely related to the Malmkrog paintings, with very similar face types, spacial arrangements and details such as the special

<sup>146</sup> Radocsay 1955, 76, Zsuzsa Urbach, “Megjegyzések a soproni Zettl-Langer gyűjtemény osztrák gótikus táblaképehez” (Comments on an austrian panel of the Zettl-Langer collection in Sopron). *Tanulmányok Csatkai Endre emlékére*. (Studies in honor of Endre Csatkai) (Sopron: Soproni Múzeum, 1996), 95-109; Marosi 1986, 720-721.

<sup>147</sup> Saint Agnes is depicted alongside the figures of Saint Catherine, Barbara and Margareth, instead of the usually represented Dorothea.

<sup>148</sup> The depiction of the Death of the Virgin is clearly identifiable. However, the scene above has been unanimously called in the literature the “*assumptio animae*”, because of the presence of the Virgin’s soul in form of an infant, a usual feature in Assumption representations. The soul of the Virgin is, however, usually taken by Christ at the moment of her death, when, based on pictorial traditions, she lies on her bed with closed eyes. On our image, Mary is sitting in her sarcophagus. Christ, approaching from the clouds has just lifted his mother from her prone position, while the three angels do not take her soul to the Heavens, but have just brought it back so that the Virgin can be reanimated. Thus, the scene must be identified as the Resurrection of the Virgin. See: LCI. Vol. 2. 276-283 and Vol. 4. 333-338.

<sup>149</sup> It is usually dated to the middle of the fifteenth century. Roth 1916, 12-24; Radocsay 1955, 76; Marosi 1986, 720-721; Urbach 1996, 95-109, Gogáltan-Sallay 2002, 181-210. – Gogáltan and Sallay simply date the retable, based on the death of the supposed donor, Michael Apafi before 1469 (the date of his wife’s first mention as a widow)

<sup>150</sup> Urbach 1996. 108.

types of hats represented in the painting. Solutions for the perspective and form of representation of the figures as well as the face-types – point to the fact that the “Death of the Virgin” panel from the Keresztény Múzeum in Esztergom<sup>151</sup> is closely analogous to the Transylvanian paintings. The altarpiece from Esztergom, painted around 1440 under the influence of the Viennese master of the Albert-altar, also represents the same stylistic direction of the panels from Malmkrog. The master who painted this Transylvanian retable very probably acquired his knowledge of painting in Austria during the late 1430s and early 1440s. The “work-day-side” of the retable displays two very elegant representations of St. Michael and St. George flanking the wingpanels described above. **(Fig. II.19)** The fact that the stationary wings are undivided is not usual for Transylvanian altar-typology. The two knight-saints give the impression that they are painted versions of the so-called “Schreinwächters” - guarding the sides of many winged retables in German territory. The elegant military character thus given to the retable is very probably connected to Nicolaus de Apa’s 1447 testament, in which he ordains the military education of his heir, his grandson Michael.<sup>152</sup> This point of the testament was undoubtedly formulated with the intention of maintaining the family’s old role at the court, Nicolaus de Apa having been called *aule miles* for many long years.<sup>153</sup> The retable has an extremely elegant, “courtly character” through the use of *Pressbrokat* applications on the vestment of the Virgin on the central panel, but also on certain robes on the outer side of the wings.<sup>154</sup> **(Fig. II.20)** The presence of the *Pressbrokat* is unique among the preserved Transylvanian retables as far as we know at present. Its use on the altarpiece from Malmkrog is also a very early example in the history of the technique.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>151</sup> (Inv. no. 56.492) See: János Vég, “Osztrák festő az Albert-oltár Mesterének hatása alatt: Háromrészes festett szárnyasoltár.” (Austrian Master under the influence of the Master of the Albert.altar: Painted triptych) Cséfalvay Pál ed., *Az esztergomi Keresztény Múzeum*. (Budapest: Corvina, 1993), 187 (no. 24.) with the previously published literature.

<sup>152</sup> Marosi 1987, 127. In the volume Marosi has overlooked the fact that Nicolaus gave orders as to the education of his grandson but not about that of his son, Ladislaus, who was already dead at the time of the testament. See the text of the testament dated 5th of November 1447 in Ub. Vol. 5, 213-215, doc. No. 2605. For an earlier version of the same text, dated to 20th of January 1446 see Jakó 1990, vol.1, 325, doc. No. 552.

<sup>153</sup> On the role of Nicolaus as *aulae miles* and the mentions of his ancestors as *miles* see: Pál Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301-1457* (Secular archontology of Hungary 1301-1457) (Budapest: História – MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1996), chapter no. 6. , also discussed by Gogaltan-Sallay 2002, 184.

<sup>154</sup> The applications have been largely lost over the centuries and the surfaces were inpainted during the restoration of the retable in the Kronstadt workshop of Gisela and Otmar Richter. However, photos taken before the restoration and those made in scrape-light clearly show that these patterns were originally applied on the panel, very probably using the *Pressbrokat* technique or something very similar.

<sup>155</sup> The earliest known example of *Pressbrokat* is encountered on the panels of the so-called Tegernsee-master, while in Austria it was supposedly Konrad Laib, in the 1440s who first introduced the technique. See: *Reclams Handbuch der Künstlerische Techniken*. (Stuttgart: Philip Reclam Jun. GmbH & co., 2002), Vol. 1, 177. Note that Zsuzsa Urbach has also mentioned the *Pressbrokat* on the Nativity panel of the Zettl-Langer collection. This panel, as mentioned above, has close analogies with the Malmkrog paintings.

The dating based on the already mentioned stylistic connections of the altarpiece is supported by the representation of the donors on the central panel. The two persons can be identified as Michael Apafi and his wife Claire (just like the patron saints standing behind them and the figure of St. Michael on the heraldic right side of the altarpiece demonstrates).<sup>156</sup> The depiction of Michael as a very young man without children, supported by the above mentioned stylistic considerations suggest the altar might have been commissioned shortly after Nicolas' death, perhaps around 1450. By this date, young Michael may have already reached the age of legal maturity<sup>157</sup> and the altarpiece was probably commissioned right after his marriage with Clara took place. Attention should also be paid to a small addition to the dating of the retable. The three figures of the superstructure: the crucified Christ, the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist standing under – respectively on the sides of the cross and standing on the tops of the finials of the superstructure, are obviously earlier than the rest of the altarpiece. (**Figs. 21-22**) The three little sculptures, without polychromy, may be dated – as the form of their drapery, face types and details such as the character of Christ's side wound suggest – to the end of the fourteenth century. They could easily have come from an earlier retable, contemporary with the wall-paintings in the chancel.

Two other altarpiece-fragments bear witness to the art and style of the mid-fourteenth century: the Gothic predella placed underneath Master Vincecius's retable in Gross-schenk (**Fig. II.23**) and a panel from the Franciscan monastery of Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara) held in the art museum of Kolozsvár (**Fig. II.24**).<sup>158</sup> The first one depicts the Man of Sorrows standing between the Virgin and John. The very defined contours of the faces and the hard, breaking folds place them close in time to the Malmkrog predella that has the same representation. However, the somewhat more complete details perhaps point to a slightly later stylistic development and date the panel to the 1460s. Its certain provenience is not known but there is reason to suppose that it once formed part of the early altarpiece of Gross-schenk.<sup>159</sup> The panel kept in Kolozsvár depicting the head of the Virgin Mary was obviously cut out and

<sup>156</sup> Gogâltan and Sallay are of a different opinion. Both consider that the patron saint of the woman should not be identified with Claire but with Saint Margaret of Hungary. Thus, the woman donor would be not the wife, but rather the mother of Michael Apafi, called Margaret. I join those who are of the opinion that the saint, holding a monstrance in her hand, can be identified with Saint Claire. (Note that Gogaltan has also modified her opinion in her PhD thesis, defended after the publication date of their article). Zsuzsa Urbach considered that it is Nicolaus Apafi, grandfather of Michael, who is depicted on the panel and has dated the retable to around 1447, based on the date of the Testament already mentioned above.

<sup>157</sup> The only data referring to the age of Michael Apafi is the last will of Nicholas de Apa (1447). At the time of the will Michael was still a minor.

<sup>158</sup> Vătășianu 1959, 779 and also Vătășianu 1936, 3-8. Kept today at the Museum in Kolozsvár, Inv. no. II. 8980

<sup>159</sup> See the corresponding catalogue section for the description of the complete Gross-schenk altarpiece.

belonged originally to a much larger altar-panel. It was clearly a work from the same period as the Gross-schenk piece and even a workshop relation can be supposed.

In spite of the rather reserved character of the written sources of this period, the number of preserved altar fragments present a fairly broad image. The completion of a thorough, detailed study discussing the International Gothic in Transylvania from its beginnings to its after life, remains a task for the future. A special place in such a study should be retained for the retable imitations – wall painted altarpieces of the age. From this point of view, the complete interior decoration of the so-called *Marieturm* in Mediasch plays an important role. The imitated triptych painted on the eastern wall of the chapel comprises part of a complex illusionistic ornamental program in the whole of the interior. **(Fig. II.25)** Similar altarpiece imitations will also play a significant role in the painting of the later fifteenth century, - as the “panels” painted on the wall of the BIRTHÄLM chapel in the so-called Catholic-tower **(Fig. II.26)** or even later the panel-imitations on the walls of the tower in the Schässburg parish church demonstrate.<sup>160</sup>

The amount of information, – both written and material – increased in the last decades of the fifteenth century, a period in which a completely different stylistic orientation takes root, anticipating the boom of local production in the sixteenth century. There is of course no written evidence for such a hypothesis, but the amount and the character of the altarpieces at the end of the fourteenth- and first half of the fifteenth century in contrast to the situation of this genre at the beginning of the sixteenth century gives the impression that the involvement of foreign masters was much stronger in the early period. Although the example of the Kolozsvári brothers show that local masters with foreign education should also be considered the obvious flourishing of winged altarpieces in the sixteenth century, the large number of masters and workshops functioning in those years define a general difference between the two periods. While the local masters were able to fulfill sixteenth century demands, this was probably not yet true in the fourteenth and during most of the fifteenth century. In this period therefore, invited craftsmen very probably played a more important role.

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<sup>160</sup> See a detailed analysis of the Schässburg paintings in the next chapter.

## Transylvanian Altarpieces at the End of the Fifteenth Century. The followers of the Viennese *Schottenmeister* in Transylvania

### *Introducing the problem.*

The very last years of the reign of King Matthias Corvinus are hall-marked in Transylvanian panel-painting by a group of retables which show the clear influence of the period's leading Viennese workshop, the workshop of the so-called Schotten-retable.

The issue of Transylvanian followers of the "Schottenmeister" is almost considered an exhausted topic in literature dealing with the art of the region. Indeed, the matter has received much more attention than anything else in the otherwise rather vague research on Transylvanian altarpieces. The very first retable that has been connected to the leading Viennese workshop of the Schotten-altar was that of Mediasch. The earliest articles discussing the retable were not concerned at that time with the problem of the stylistic characteristics<sup>161</sup>, while Victor Roth, although putting his finger on the stylistic direction very correctly by mentioning certain Netherlandish and Frankish connections did not recognize the concrete Viennese elements.<sup>162</sup> The first to mention Vienna in this connection was Theobald Streitfeld who recognized in his 1930 article the representation of the St. Stephen church from Vienna in the background of the Crucifixion panel in Mediasch.<sup>163</sup> Still, in the same year Franz Juraschek, restorer of the Viennese "Bundesdenkmalamt für Oberösterreich" not only accepted Streitfeld's supposition, but also identified other Viennese buildings on the same painting.<sup>164</sup> Discussing the Vienna-representations on panel paintings of the period he considered the master from Mediasch to be an important member of the Schotten-workshop. The idea was immediately accepted by Victor Roth<sup>165</sup> and became a permanent element in the literature mentioning the Mediasch-retable from this time on. German-speaking researchers

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<sup>161</sup> Andreas Gräser: *Umriss zur Geschichte der Stadt Mediasch*. Hermannstadt: Steinhausen, 1862.; Karl Werner: *Die Mediascher Kirche. Festgabe der Stadt Mediasch bei Gelegenheit der Vereine im Jahre 1872*. Hermannstadt: Steinhausen, 1872.

<sup>162</sup> Victor Roth: "Die spätgotische Flügelaltar in Mediasch". *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*. 34 (1907): 193-240; Roth 1916, 36-56.

<sup>163</sup> Theobald Streitfeld: „Etwas über die Kreuzigung des Mediascher Altars.“ *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 53 (1930): 52-53.

<sup>164</sup> Franz Juraschek: "Das mittelalterliche Wien in einer unbekanntem Ansicht". *Kirchenkunst. Österreichische Zeitschrift für Pflege religiöser Kunst*, 2 no. 2 (1930): 45-46.

<sup>165</sup> Victor Roth: "Das Kreuzigungsbild des Mediascher Flügelaltars". *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 53 No. 11-12 (1930): 280-281; idem: „Neue Forschungen zur Siebenbürgischen Kunstgeschichte“. A Mügyűjtő. (The art collector) 3 (1931): 83-87; Idem, "Zur Problematik der siebenbürgisch-deutschen Kunstgeschichte". *Festschrift für D. Dr. Friedrich Teutsch*. (Hermannstadt: Verein für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, 1931), 228-257.



seem to have accepted the new idea at once, while Hungarian art historians published several critiques in the 1930s and 40s on this point or simply ignored the possibility that the Mediasch master might have been a follower of the Viennese painter.<sup>166</sup> Even Dénes Radocsay handled the problem with a good deal of scepticism in his review work, suggesting that the painter had had only the loosest of connections with contemporary Austrian panel painting.<sup>167</sup> However, the matter slowly became generally accepted in art history literature. Included as an unambiguous fact in Alfred Stange's 1961 review work<sup>168</sup>, and later being somewhat more thoroughly analyzed in a monograph by Otto Folberth<sup>169</sup>, the stylistic affiliation of the Mediasch master seems now to be obvious in up-to-date art historical literature.<sup>170</sup>

The panels of the altarpiece from Grossprobstdorf (*Proștea Mare, Nagyekemező*), together with the Mediasch retable, have been added to the small group of Transylvanian paintings belonging to the stylistic circle of the Schotten-followers. Already in 1916, Roth suggested that two of the Grossprobstdorf panels were stylistically close to the Mediasch paintings.<sup>171</sup> Later, this opinion was refined and presently all the surviving panels (kept in the Brukenthal Museum in Hermannstadt) are considered to have belonged to the same Grossprobstdorf altarpiece, produced by the Mediasch workshop.<sup>172</sup>

The retable of BIRTHÄLM was only recognized much later as belonging to this stylistic group. Harald Krasser published a series of studies in the 1970s indicating there was a concrete relationship between the panels of the retable and the former high altar of the Schottenstift.<sup>173</sup> Thus, in the present stage of research, three retables are known with some

<sup>166</sup> Just a few examples: István Genthon, *A régi magyar festőművészet* (Old Hungarian Painting). (Vác:Pestvidéki Nyomda, 1932), 37; Tibor Gerevich, "Erdélyi művészet" (Transylvanian Art). *Magyar Szemle*. 22 (1934): 225-241; Henrik Horváth, "A Mátyás-kori magyar művészet." (Hungarian art in the age of Mathias). Lukinich, Imre ed., *Mátyás király. Emlékkönyv születésének ötszázéves fordulójára*. (King Mathias. Festschrift to the five hundred years' anniversary of his birth) (Budapest: Franklin, 1940), 182-183.

<sup>167</sup> Radocsay 1955, 179.

<sup>168</sup> Alfred Stange: *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik*. Vol. 11. (München-Berlin: Deutsche Kunstverlag, 1961), 162.

<sup>169</sup> Folberth 1973

<sup>170</sup> A complete list of the literature dedicated to the Mediasch retable is offered in the corresponding catalogue entry of this thesis. The presented bibliography only means to offer an overview of the birth and development of the research dedicated to the Schotten-master's stylistic influence in Transylvania.

<sup>171</sup> Roth 1916, 57.

<sup>172</sup> Radocsay considered, just like Roth that the Grossprobstdorf panels, were part of two different altarpieces, although all were works of the Mediasch master himself. Otto Folberth considered, similarly to Roth, that only the panels depicting the *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand* and the *Martyrdom of Sebastian* works of the Mediasch master and also wrote of two different altarpieces coming from Grossprobstdorf (Folberth 1973, 75-77) The relation between all the Grossprobstdorf panels and the Mediasch panels is unquestionable although the degree to which the panels are related differs depending on the opinions of several authors. Stange writes about a workshop connection. (Stange 1961, Vol. 11, 162) Even the latest literature on the topic still dates the stationary and the formerly movable wings of the altarpiece from different periods (*Convergences. European Landmarks in Transylvanian Arts*. Exhib. Cat. Palatul Brukenthal, (Sibiu: Muzeul Național Brukenthal, 2007) 140.)

<sup>173</sup> Harald Krasser, "Untersuchungen zum Mittelalterlichen Tafelmalerei in Siebenbürgen. Zur Herkunft und Datierung des BIRTHÄLMER Altartafeln". *Forschungen zum Volks- und Landeskunde*; 14, No. 2, (1971): 9-24;

degree of connection to the stylistic group represented by the Transylvanian followers of the Schottenmaster. However, in spite of the fairly rich literature dedicated to these retables, a large number of questions still remain open. Can this stylistic group really be delineated merely with the help of the above mentioned examples or can one anticipate that there will be additional paintings that can be included within the same group? What was the relationship of the masters of these Transylvanian retables to the leading Viennese painter? How can the fact be explained that the two large retables, two of the largest and most important retables of all the surviving late Gothic Transylvanian altar-pieces belong to this same group. However it is only the Grossprobstdorf panels that can be connected to one workshop or the other. No other traces of influence of these two miraculous pieces have been found so far in the region. Were these painters living, working and running a workshop in this region, had they been only invited for carrying these concrete commissions or can these works be considered to be imported? These are some of the problems that will be approached in this study.

Another factor that directs interest once again on the matter of the Schotten-workshop's impact on Transylvanian painting comes from the latest research dedicated to the *oeuvre* of Hans Siebenbürger. There is no doubt that the Viennese workshop, that gathered together a group of important painters, was one of the most influential in Austrian territories and in Central and Eastern Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century. The stylistic background of the leading masters and their indisputable impact on painting in Austria and neighbouring countries has been discussed in many different studies, monographs and other scholarly works.<sup>174</sup> The special significance of this leading Viennese workshop and its immediate environs for Transylvania has been brought into prominence in 1991 in a study by

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Harald Krasser, "Zur siebenbürgischen Nachfolge des Schottenmeisters." *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 27 (1973): 109-121. Harald Krasser, "Die Birtälmer Altartafeln und die siebenbürgische Nachfolge des Schottenmeisters", *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 13 (1976): 96-108, Harald Krasser, "Der Birtälmer Altartafeln und die siebenbürgische Nachfolge des Schottenmeisters". Gustav Gündisch, Albert Klein, Harald Krasser and Theobald Streitfeld eds., *Studien zur Siebenbürgischen Kunstgeschichte*, (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1976), 193-214.

<sup>174</sup> There is no need to provide an annotated list of the large number of works dedicated to the topic as the literature is well-known and often referred to. The works will be referred to in part when I analyze the Transylvanian pieces and listed in the bibliography at the end of the dissertation. However, one thing needs to be shortly pointed out here. It is well-known that authors dealing with the problem of the Schotten-retable have different opinions regarding the unity of the retable. A large group of researchers align themselves with Otto Benesch who considers that the Passion-cycle and the cycle representing scenes from the life of the Virgin can be attributed to two different masters. Others, like Walther Buchowiecki or Alfred Stange have suggested that a single main master was responsible for the complete retable. Rupert Feuchtmüller was of the opinion that there was one general concept to the retable although several apprentices contributed to its execution. Thus, he also consequently wrote of a "Passionsmeister" and a "Marienmeister". Similarly researchers are divided regarding the dating of the altar. The 1469 inscription of the retable is considered by most art historians dealing with the topic to mark the beginning of the work, while the newest literature has started to revise this idea with suggestions that such dates usually mark the end-stage of a project.

Imre Takács, who identified the master of the Eligius-panel (Hungarian National Gallery) with Hans Siebenbürger. In this work Takács defined the painter's oeuvre also noting the significance of the itinerate life of craftsmen between Transylvania and Vienna.<sup>175</sup> The results and ideas deriving from this article have been accepted and developed through a contribution by Robert Suckale, dedicated to the *oeuvre* of the painter Hans Siebenbürger.<sup>176</sup> The author claims that this master was the leading painter in the Schotten-workshop.<sup>177</sup> The presence and activities of Siebenbürger in Vienna in the second half of the fifteenth century were known of, before the above-mentioned studies.<sup>178</sup> The stylistic relationship between his known works and those most closely influenced by the workshop connected to the Monastery of the Scots has been previously discussed.<sup>179</sup> However, the identification of the painter - obviously originating from Transylvania - with the leading master of the Schotten-workshop, something supported by stylistic analysis, historical data and especially by an inscription observed on the wristband and neckline of Stephanon in the Crucifixion scene from Sankt Florian, is a new, revolutionary thought. Independently of the fact whether or not one accepts this identification, it is clear that Hans Siebenbürger played a very important role in the workshop where the Schottenaltar was produced. This recognition brings the Transylvanian afterlife of the Schottenmaster's stylistic and compositional solutions renewed into play, enhancing its significance and providing new points of view for consideration.

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<sup>175</sup> Imre Takács, "A budapesti Eligius-táblakép: A bécsi későgótikus festészet ismeretlen emléke" (The Eligius-panel from Budapest: an unknown example of the late Gothic Viennese painting), *Annales de la Galerie Nationale Hongroise*, (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1991), 85-93.

<sup>176</sup> Robert Suckale, "Der Maler Johannes Siebenbürger (um 1440 -1483) als Vermittler Nürnberger Kunst nach Ostmitteleuropa", Evelin Wetter ed., *Die Länder der Böhmisches Krone und ihre Nachbarn zur Zeit der Jagiellonenkönige (1471 – 1526). Kunst – Kultur – Geschichte*, Studia Jagellonica Lipsiensia 2 (Ostfildern: Ian Thorbecke Verlag, 2004), 363-384.

<sup>177</sup> Suckale speaks of a group of painters working in the workshop. He considers, however, that the retable is stylistically uniform. He writes that Siebenbürger was the leading master of the workshop, and affirms, based on analogies, that the date-inscription of 1469 marks the finalization of the retable.

<sup>178</sup> Richard Perger, "Hans Siebenbürger – Meister des Hauser Epitaphs und Stifter des Ölbergs zu St. Michael in Wien", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 34 (1980): 147-150; Idem, "Zur Herkunft der Votivtafel des Jodok Hauser (1478)", *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Galerie* 17 (1973) 7-14.

<sup>179</sup> Alfred Stange (Stange 1934-1961, Vol.11. 47) already stated in 1961 that there was a stylistic relationship between the Hauser epitaphy and a number of works stylistically grouped around the Schotten-retable. However, at this time the master of the epitaphy had not yet been identified with Hans Siebenbürger. This was finally done by Richard Perger in 1973. (See above)

### *The BIRTHÄLM altarpiece*

The inscription in an open book on the panel representing the scene of the **Twelve year old Jesus in the Temple**, dates the BIRTHÄLM retable unambiguously to 1483. (**Fig. III.3**) The date refers to the panels of the altarpiece's central part, and only to these, while the rest of the construction was executed and the complete retable was mounted together only in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. This second phase of the retable's history is dated by the inscription on the upper frame of the superstructure's central panel: ANNO VIRGINIS PARTUS 1515 and is emphasised by one of the two shields that can be seen on the predella, representing a chalice and the initials IO respectively. These shields most probably refer to Johannes, parish priest of BIRTHÄLM in that period.<sup>180</sup> (**Fig. III.1**)

The previously mentioned articles by Harald Krasser have demonstrated the fifteenth century retable is stylistically affiliated with the circle of the Schottenmeister, based mainly on the close compositional connections of five of the BIRTHÄLM panels to the thematically corresponding images of the Viennese retable. **The Birth of the Virgin**, the **Engagement**, the **Visitation**, the **Presentation in the Temple** and the **Birth of Jesus** are scenes that have been clearly conceived in an artistic context of the tightest dependence on the Schottenretable's compositions. Additionally, the representation of the **Twelve year old Jesus in the temple** also displays certain details copied from the Viennese model. Krasser shortly also refers to the fact that it is not only compositional relations that links the Transylvanian retable to its Austrian sibling, there are also specific stylistic features, types of figures that show undoubtedly that the master of the BIRTHÄLM retable spent time in the Viennese workshop. He refers explicitly to the head-types of the Virgin and that of Joseph in order to develop this stylistic link. However, the matter seems to be more complex.

Both sides of the movable wings, the four fixed panels flanking the central shrine, and the undivided stationary wings of the retable with the representation of the four Church Fathers gives an impression that the panels are stylistically organic and homogeneous. This is not to say that the paintings were the work of one and the same hand, but they clearly belong to the same workshop, were executed in the same period and, all belong to the same stylistic circle. The paintings are characterized by well-balanced compositions, many fine details and a general use of vivid colours. However, a more thorough look at the work reveals the painter

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<sup>180</sup> This periodization of the retable was first formulated by Harald Krasser in his articles mentioned above dedicated to the topic.

was not particularly original and certain details also display a good deal of uncertainty. With exception of the first and the last panel of the cycle decorating the “*Festtagseite*”, the feast-day side of the retable, the themes of the representations and their sequence basically follow those of the Schottenretable. In spite of the fact that only the five previously mentioned scenes can almost be considered copies of the corresponding Viennese panels, in terms of composition as well as the use of colors, the rest of the panels were also clearly inspired by the form- and motif collection of the same workshop.

The first two scenes of the Schottenretable’s *Feast-day-side* are unfortunately not preserved. No information exists about those representations.<sup>181</sup> Thus it is not possible to decide whether a corresponding scene existed that the **Meeting at the Golden Gate** from Birthälm was based on. In any case, the general concept and arrangement of the Birthälm scene clearly fits the tendencies found in the circle of the Schottenmaster. (**Fig. III.4**) The meeting of Anna and Joachim takes place in front of a gate that ends in a semi-circle. Through the gate there is a view onto the street of a medieval town. The gate occupies the right half of the background, while the left side includes the scene previous to the meeting of the husband and wife, that of the Annunciation to Joachim. The figures act in a well defined space in the foreground of the image. A closely related type of composition is that of the **Visitation (Fig. III.18)** (based, as already mentioned on the corresponding panel from the Schotten-retable). In the composition an embracing pair may be seen in the extreme foreground, in front of a gate, outside a medieval town. The depiction of this town-detail provides a realistic impression for the background of the represented scene. The encapsulation of the bible-scene within a realistic or even a real town-background is in itself a phenomenon that has been much discussed for the environment of the Schotten-workshop.<sup>182</sup> The same feature occurs in Birthälm on the above-mentioned two panels: the **Meeting at the Golden Gate** and the

<sup>181</sup> In his theoretical reconstruction of the retable, Otto Benesch suggested that the Annunciation to Joachim and the Meeting at the Golden Gate were the first scenes. Otto Benesch, “Der Meister des Krainburger Altars” Eva Benesch ed., *Otto Benesch. Collected writings*. Vol. 3, *German and Austrian Art of the 15th and 16th centuries*, (New York: Phaidon, 1972), 181.

<sup>182</sup> Karl Salomon, “Die ältesten Ansichten der Stadt Krems.” *50 Jahre Landzeitung*. Krems: Faber, 1929. 31; Fritz Dworschak, “Der Wiener Schottenmeister, Maler Wolfgang Kremser?” *Krems und Stein. Festschrift zum 950-jährigen Stadtjubiläum*. (Krems: Stadtgemeinde, 1948), 180. Alfred May: *Wien in alten Ansichten. Das Werden der Wiener Vedute*. Vienna: Verlag für Jugend und Volk, 1965; Walter Brauneis, “Beitrag zur mittelalterlichen Topographie der Stadt Wien.” *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 27 (1973) 121-131; Rupert Feuchtmüller, “Wien zur Zeit des Schottenmeisters”. Rupert Feuchtmüller - Peter Weninger eds., *Friedrich III. Kaiserresidenz Wiener Neustadt*. Exhib. Cat. (Vienna: Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum, 1966), 425; Ferdinand Opll, „Das Antlitz der Stadt Wien am Ende des Mittelalters. Bekanntes und Neues zu den „Wien-Ansichten“ auf Tafelbildern des 15. Jahrhunderts.“, *Jahrbuch des Vereins für geschichte der Stadt Wien*. 55 (1999): 101-145. On realistic and authentic depictions of towns in the period see: Michael Imhof, “Die Bamberg Ansichten des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts aus dem Berliner Kupferstichkabinett und ihre Kunsthistorische Einordnung.” *Berichte des Vereins Bamberg* 128 (1992): 7-73.

**Visitation.** However, neither displays an authentic, identifiable town-scape. Real-looking images of towns in the backgrounds of panel paintings were very much a fashion and actually dominant, in this period. The transition between the real and the real-looking is fluid, exactly because of the role of these depictions. The realism they mean to represent is not only an element in the renewed narrative-art of the fifteenth century, but also an important component of devotion, of devotional images. The representation of a biblical scene in a town well-known for its spectator, or a street detail at least resembling the houses he or she is living in and among permitted a stronger empathy for the occurrences represented a help for a deeper devotion.<sup>183</sup> This is also a plausible explanation for the two Birthhälm panels, although the presence of the fantasy-vedutes in this case can be better explained by the simple fact that the motif was in general use in the Schottenmaster's circle. The architecture depicted, the types of houses represented are not specific for Transylvanian towns, they are composed of elements seen in Austrian regions and background representations of Austrian panels.<sup>184</sup>

The presence of a scene in the background, a narrative element, something that has happened previous to the main scene on the panel, is also known from paintings coming from the environment of the Schottenmaster. The origins of this feature can of course be traced back, through the learning stages and through the sources used by the Viennese master, to South-German – mainly Frankish panels and further on to several Netherlandish images, - especially those of Rogier van der Weyden.

Although the composition of the Meeting at the Golden Gate is not known from the Schottenretable, it seems more than probable that the origin of the Birthhälm panel should be looked for in the model-collections of the Schotten-workshop. Austrian panels, the existence of which would be unimaginable without the Schottenretable and several works attributed to this workshop, are organized in a way very similar to this example. A panel from a retable from Kirchdorf an der Krems representing the same scene and dated to between 1480-1490,<sup>185</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Imhoff 1992, 52; Michael Baxandall, *Die Wirklichkeit der Bilder. Malerei und Erfahrungen in Italien des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*. (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1977); 61. He refers to a so-called "Garden of prayers" (Zardino de Oration), a religious study-book for young girls from 1454, containing pieces of advice for better devotion. ("Um die Passionsgeschichte deinem Geist besser einzuprägen und jede Handlung daraus leichter erinnern zu können, ist es hilfreich und nützlich dir die Orte und Passionen im Geist auszumalen: zum Beispiel eine Stadt, die die Stadt Jerusalem sein wird; zu diesem Zweck wälst Du eine Stadt die Du gut kennst [...]"). See on the topic also: Frank O Büttner, *Imitatio Pietatis. Motive der christlichen Ikonographie als Modelle zur Verähnlichung*. (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1983).

<sup>184</sup> See: Gunter Dimt: "Haus und Hof zwischen Nordwald und Alpenrand – Eine Spurensuche." Lothar Schultes and Bernhard Prokitsch eds., *Gotikschätze Oberösterreich*. (Linz: Bibliothek der Provinz, 2002), 87 – 96.

<sup>185</sup> See the image in: Lothar Schultes: *Die Gotischen Flügelaltäre Oberösterreichs*. Vol. 2. *Retabel und Fragmente bis Rueland Frueauf*. (Linz: Österreichisches Landesmuseum, 2005), Fig. 251. 129. Here, the composition is discussed as going back to Ludwig Schongauer's retable dedicated to the Virgin Mary, dated to around 1475, preserved in the Museum of Ulm. Schultes showed that the preserved panels of the retable from

displays the same composition including a semi-circular gate on the right side through which a street detail can be observed. (**Fig. III.5**) Even the depiction of the street architecture has certain similarities, while the left side of the image shows the Annunciation to Joachim, next to a long, meandering path. Another related composition is one from Mariapfarr, (**Fig. III.6**) dated to the very end of the fifteenth century.<sup>186</sup> In this case the semicircular gate on the right side of the panel does not have a view into the town but the way it is depicted, its architectural forms and details are quite similar to the BIRTHÄLM panel. Besides the depiction of Joachim's Annunciation on the left side of the background even a detail like the threshold shown next to the gate dividing the scene from the background space is present on both images. The **Meeting at the Golden Gate** from BIRTHÄLM does not display any closer stylistic relationship with the panels discussed above. However, similarities in their composition points to the existence of a common model, a model that was obviously part of the Schotten-workshop's collection of patterns.

The next two panels of the retable include representations of the **Birth of the Virgin** (**Fig. III.7**) and the **Engagement** (**Fig. III.9**) and are no doubt copies of the corresponding Viennese panels. (**Figs. III.8, III.10**) Compositional differences are minor and the stylistic dependence clear. The latter lies not only in the spacial arrangement, the types of figures, their dresses and their colours, all tightly followed, but even specific details such as the fold-forms were adopted. The H-form folds of the drapery above the head of St. Anne's bed, the way the dress of both helpers follows the forms of their legs all testify to the Transylvanian painter's close dependence on the Viennese master. Beside differences in composition compared to the Viennese panel such as omission of one of the servants, or extra details like the towel and wash-bowl on the background wall, there is a series of minor, but very fine elements that were simplified by the Transylvanian master. Precisely drawn details like the panes of glass on the background windows or the late gothic tracery on the bench near Anne's bed were "forgotten" on the Transylvanian example.<sup>187</sup> However, - and partly of course in connection to this feature, the most obvious difference lies in the level of the two paintings. Uncertainties, difficiencies in the drawing knowledge of the master of the BIRTHÄLM retable are visible in the anatomy of certain figures and on representations of perspectives as well. The same can be

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Kirchdorf/Krems were among those showing the influence of the Schottenretable as far as certain solutions are considered.

<sup>186</sup> Image no. 7001657 in the data-bank of the Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit in Krems. See: <http://tarvos.imareal.oeaw.ac.at/server/images/7001657.JPG> (Site visited on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2007).

<sup>187</sup> Certain details like the vaulting of the kitchen in the background, or the brocade pattern of the golden drapery above the bed have fallen victim to time and restorations.

said about the panel depicting the scene of the **Engagement** which follows even more precisely the Viennese model. The narrow format of the Transylvanian panel did not prevent the painter from taking over all the figures from the Schottenretable.

The **Annunciation** is obviously based on other models, although the figure of Mary is still quite closely related to the Virgin on the corresponding Viennese panel. (**Figs. III.11, III.12**) The total position of the figure, the arrangement of her mantle and, the gesture she makes with her right hand mirror the scene on the same panel of the Schottenretable that must have been well-known to the painter. Other motifs in the composition are also linked to the same stylistic environment. The **Annunciation** panel on the 1479 retable from Zwickau displays serious compositional analogies.<sup>188</sup> The position of the Virgin with the book in her hand, the gesture of the arriving angel and the letter in his left hand, even the column set on a parapet-wall in the background, indicate that the two works must to a certain extent have followed a common source.<sup>189</sup> The book-holding hand of the Virgin and her fine, fragile fingers playing with the pages of the open book are a recurrent element in the circle of the Schottenmaster.<sup>190</sup> The same detail can be detected on the panel with the representation of St. Catherine, most probably originally part of the predella from the so-called Behaim-Retable from Nürnberg, today in the collections of the Fränkische Galerie in Kronach and considered by Robert Suckale to be an early work by Hans Siebenbürger.<sup>191</sup> (**Fig. III.13**) The motif of the sealed letter in the angel's hand, instead of the more usual scepter and banderolle, is also not very common.<sup>192</sup> Besides the Zwickau example, it recurs on an Upper-Austrian panel, on the altar from Eggelsberg, dated to 1481.<sup>193</sup> (**Fig. III.14**) The scene of the **Annunciation** from Birthälm also displays certain similarities with the corresponding panel of another upper

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<sup>188</sup> Alfred Stange, *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik*. Vol 9. *Franken, Böhmen und Thüringen. Sachsen in der Zeit von 1400 bis 1500*. (Munich-Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1958), Fig. 90.

<sup>189</sup> The retable from Zwickau is attributed to the workshop of Michael Wolgemut, the master who took over the Nuremberg workshop of Hans Pleydenwurff. Thus, if we accept Robert Suckale's supposition that Hans Siebenbürger has spent a period of apprenticeship in this workshop of Pleydenwurff, Wolgemuth must have been a colleague of his.

<sup>190</sup> The same motif also returns on the figure of Saint Hieronymus on the fixed-wings of the retable.

<sup>191</sup> Panel dated to 1460-1465, referred to by Rober Suckale 2004, Fig. 9.

<sup>192</sup> Th[eodor] Hach, "Die Verkündigung Mariä als Rechtsgeschäft." *Christliche Kunstblätter* 23 (1881) 165-169; Lech Kalinowski: „Der Versiegelte Brief. Zur Ikonographie der Verkündigung Mariä." *Ars Auro Prior. Ioanni Bialostocki Sexagenario dicata*. Warsaw: Panstwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1981. 161-169. The article differentiates between two types of this iconography: a sealed folded letter and an opened parchment-roll. Both versions represent a charter, a contract of peace between the Divine and the Human. The first type with a folded document contains a deeper theological meaning: the sealed letter suggests the secret of the incarnation and the virginity of the Holy Mother.

<sup>193</sup> Schultes 2005, Fig. 214. The dismantled retable is also discussed by the author as being among the panels presenting certain motifs and compositional solutions from the Schottenretable and even more of the Nuremberg art which the Schottenretable is also stylistically related to. Schultes also mentions the charter-form message in the hand of the Angel as a curiosity of the retable. Schultes interpreted the three seals as belonging to the three Divine persons.



Austrian retable, the Bäcker-altar from Braunau. These similarities not only lie in the already mentioned motif of the open book in Mary's hands and her fingers leafing through the pages of the book, but the composition of the whole panel with the angel coming from the left, lifting his right hand in the well-known gesture of benediction and the position of the Virgin, give the general impression that these two panels were related. (**Fig. III.15.**) The master of the Bäckeraltar is thought to have been one of the fairly close followers of the Schottenmaster.<sup>194</sup> Other details from its panels were related to elements on the Birthälmtretable and can serve to emphasize the idea that the two masters must have worked from the same collection of motifs. The same is true for the parapet-wall decorated with simple blind-tracery in the background, behind the women saints of the fixed panels in the altar from Braunau. This was a motive that can also be observed in the background of the **Annunciation** scene from Birthälm. (**Fig. III.16.**)

The quite striking background motif of the hole and of the rolling up plaster spots on the vaulting of the chapel, occur first in old German painting by Konrad Witz but have Netherlandish origins.<sup>195</sup> Thus, it has also reached the motif-collection used in the circle of the Schottenmaster; a clear proof of which is its presence on the panel depicting the **Martyrdom of St. Thomas** of the Winkler-Epitaph Master.<sup>196</sup> (**Fig. III.17**)

The **Visitation** panel (**Fig. III.18.**) has already shortly been referred to as composition related to that of the **Meeting at the Golden Gate**. The two women-figures standing in the foreground again follow the corresponding two persons depicted on the Viennese retable down to the smallest detail. However, the rest of the panel, the background town-detail, the architectural elements are completely different. The represented vedute is again not likely to be a Transylvanian or any other authentic town-detail. Looked at more carefully, the representation seems to be composed of accidental elements showing that the painter has never considered whether the architecture depicted could possibly remain standing from the static point of view. Motifs, like the very elegant, clearly palast-like building-detail above the gate, with its polygonal balconies, obviously point to this fact. It is a mere scenery-element, seen somewhere, taken out of its original environment and used here. It should be mentioned however, that the detail in question inevitably calls to mind, for the Transylvanian-

<sup>194</sup> Artur Saliger ed., *Der Braunauer Bäckeraltar. Eine Ausstellung der Österreichischen Galerie Belvedere und des Bundesdenkmalamtes*, Bedeutende Kunstwerke. Gefärdet – konserviert – präsentiert. 16, (Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 2001).

<sup>195</sup> Regarding the Netherlandish impact on the painting of Konrad Witz see: Charles Sterling, "Observations on Petrus Christus", *Art Bulletin* 53 (1971), 1-26.

<sup>196</sup> Bodo Brinkman – Stefan Kemperdick, *Deutsche Gemälde im Städel. 1300-1500*. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2002) 293.

schooled eye, the Vajdahunyad (*Hunedoara, Eisenmarkt*) Castle. Other elements, like the attached, “Fachwerk” decorated building-attachement on the side of the bridge tower on the right of the image resemble well-known details from south German and Upper-Austrian panel paintings.<sup>197</sup> The town represented is thus an ideal gothic one, combining realistic elements, but not identifiable with any of the known settlements of the period.

As already mentioned, the two figures of women on the Birthälm panel exactly follow those on the Visitation panel of the Schottenretable. (**Fig. III.19**) However, while the Viennese panel represents the figures inside the town, on a street, in front of a house-gate, Mary and Elisabeth are depicted outside the settlement on the retable in Birthälm. The same space concept is found in a **Visitation** panel from Stift St. Florian and obviously belonging to the stylistic circle closest to the Schotten-workshop.<sup>198</sup> (**Fig. III.20**) Compared to the Schottenretable, the St. Florian panel offers a mirror copy of the two women in front of a town-representation very similar in type but differing in its details.

The last scene in the upper panel-row of the retable, the **Birth of Jesus (Fig. III.21)**, again shows the closest compositional dependence on the corresponding Viennese scene with only the slightest of differences observable. (**Fig. III.22**) Differences include a change in the colour of the angels’ tunics that are a simple white on the Schottenaltar or the loss of small details like the hole in the pavement before the Virgin. The golden brocade dress of the Holy Mother, here as well as on the other panels is very much worn so that the brocade pattern can hardly be discerned. Originally, this brocade was not shown in four different colours as the corresponding detail in the Viennese panel, but it was certainly finely drawn, in black and gold.

Strangely, the next panel of the narrative is that of the **Circumcision, (Fig. III.23)** instead of the Epiphany that only follows in the next panel. The inversion can only be a mistake by the painter himself. The two scenes could not have been inversed later because they are painted, as the backside shows, on a single panel, only divided by a frame-lath. The scene is among those which are compositionally independent from the Schottenretable. The vaulted space where the event takes place can hardly be felt since the figures are so crowded into the foreground. This is the first painting in the row where the Virgin is represented with covered head like a married woman.

<sup>197</sup> “Gemauerte Untergeschosse mit aufgesetzten Obergeschossen in Fachwerktechnik. Tafelbilder des 15. Jahrhunderts aus St. Florian, Seitenstetten” Fig. 9. of Günter Dimt: “Haus und Hof zwischen Nordwald und Alpenrand – Eine Spurensuche.” Lothar Schultes and Bernhard Prokitsch eds., *Gotikschätze Oberösterreich*. Exhib. Cat. Oberösterreichisches Landmuseum, (Linz: Bibliothek der Provinz, 2002), 93.

<sup>198</sup> See the image in: Schultes 2005, Fig. 181, 87.

The next scene, the **Adoration of the Magi (Fig. III.24)** belongs to the same category, it is independent from the composition of the Schottenretable's corresponding panel, utilizing though a number of motifs that can be traced back to the immediate environment of the Viennese master. The composition itself is somewhat unbalanced. The Virgin, sitting in the center of the scene with the Child on her lap, is surrounded by four men. Three of them are on her right, her husband stands behind her and two of the kings, Caspar and Melchior, kneel in front of her. Only the Saracen king, who has just arrived, stands to her left. Most disturbing is the figure of Melchior, pressed into the small space between Caspar and Joseph. He leans forward kissing the Child's hand, a gesture usually linked to the old Caspar. The composition very much resembles the Epiphany scene from the high altar presently found in the St. Jacob church in Straubing, attributed to Michael Wolgemut.<sup>199</sup> The connection is obvious: Mary sits at the center holding her child who just stretches out his hand for the contents of the cup held by the old king. The figure and position of this latter king, the gestures and arrangement of the mantle of the Saracen all correspond well on the two panels. The common source for both may well have been a compositional concept originating in the Pleydenwurff workshop. Only the figures of Melchior and Joseph did not fit on the Birthalm panel according to the model, and the problem was not resolved very well by the representation of the King in a kneeling position which has been squeezed in. Certain detail-motifs in the composition, like that of the old king kneeling with his hat set on the ground in front of him, have a long history and can be traced far back to Netherlandish origins.<sup>200</sup>

The scene of the **Presentation in the Temple (Fig. III.25)** is the fifth following the exact composition of the Schotten-panel on a similar topic, **(Fig. III.26)** the main deviation lies only in that the Transylvanian panel presented a narrower space for the painting. Thus, two staff-figures have fallen victim to this formal difference. As a result of the narrowness of

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<sup>199</sup> The Straubing altarpiece is depicted and thoroughly analyzed in: Maximilian Benker, *Ulm in Nürnberg. Simon Lainberger und die Bildschnitzer für Michael Wolgemut.* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2004) 141-213. Here, especially Fig. 136. It is generally known that Wolgemut has taken over the workshop of Hans Pleydenwurff in Nuremberg, after the latter's death. As already mentioned, Hans Pleydenwurf is also the painter identified by Robert Suckale as master, teacher of Hans Siebenbürger, it is in his workshop that Siebenbürger produced the first identifiable work which has come down to us, the predella of the Bahaim-retable. Suckale 2004, 367.

<sup>200</sup> See the Adoration scene of Rogier van der Weyden's Columba-Altar. (München, Alte Pinakothek). Depicted in: Dirk de Vos, Rogier van der Weyden. *The Complete Works.* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1999), 277. However, it is evident that the Netherlandish paintings have nothing concretely to do with the Transylvanian examples we deal with here. All motifs mentioned in this analysis as originating in fifteenth century Netherlandish painting obviously reached the Transylvanian workshops through the mediation of the Frankish and Austrian art worlds. On the circulation of these motifs see: Achim Simon: *Österreichische Tafelmalerei der Spätgotik. Der niederländische Einfluß im 15. Jahrhundert.* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2002). And also: Artur Rosenauer, "Zu einer Niederländischen Beweinungskomposition und ihren Reflexen in der Österreichischen Malerei des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts", *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 22 (1969): 157 -166.

the panel, the arrangement of the figures became more crowded. The staff would not have been observable in the hand of Joseph. He was represented with a basket of doves, an attribute more usual for one of the female servants in this scene as well as a candle, which is his usual attribute in birth scenes. The black board with a semi-circular end on the altar in the background, presently has the same inscription as the parallel detail on the Schottenpanel. However, previous to the panel's restoration in the Kronstadt workshop, no inscription could be seen on this board, only a couple of "*Hic fuit*" letters scratched in later and perhaps a date (16...?). Their presence suggests that the board was very probably originally represented without the inscription or else it was painted over completely during the sixteenth century. **(Fig. III.27)**

It has already been identified in previous literature that the panel representing the **Flight from Egypt** was based on Schongauer's etching.<sup>201</sup> **(Figs. III.28-29)** Just as in the panels following the model of the Schottenretable the composition is precisely taken over and differences are only minor. The image was narrowed with some of the flanking details, - trees and a rock on the right side of the etching have been omitted, certain stones and plants are missing from the foreground and there are fewer angels on the tree.

Striking motifs can be seen on the panel depicting the **12 year old Jesus in the Temple. (Fig. III.30)** As also noted by Krasser, the figure of the child clearly follows the corresponding detail in the Viennese retable as do the figures of the Virgin and Joseph. In the same way certain features of the throne-architecture can be traced back to the same source. However, none of the teachers represented follows this model. The arrangement of the figures is rather crowded again. The vehement gestures give an exalted, active impression to the image. The representation seems to follow not so much the so-called "teaching type" of this scene but more the "discussion-type"<sup>202</sup> The gestures make this clear. The motif of the book being rapped in the hand of the teacher sitting in the foreground is special in the iconography of the scene. Yet, the same motif is encountered on another Transylvanian panel with a similar topic from Marienburg (*Földvár, Feldioara*), actually in the church of Kronstadt. Its meaning is probably related to the gesture of the teacher covering his ears encountered on other examples of the scene.<sup>203</sup> The panel is especially valuable among those in the BIRTHÄLM retable because the book lifted into the air by the teacher on the right side of the image has the

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<sup>201</sup> B 7 (123)

<sup>202</sup> LCI Vol. 4. 583-589.

<sup>203</sup> On the panel with the same topic as the retable from Großmain for example. See Salzburg 1972., 124.

date of the altarpiece written on it.<sup>204</sup> The text on the right side-page of the book begins with the date 1483, but unfortunately the rest of the inscription could not be deciphered. Only the first words in the other book, lifted by the teacher sitting on the left side could be identified: “*HIC INCEPIT LIBRO...*”

The very last panel on the retable’s feast-day side has caused certain interpretative troubles for researchers dealing with the topic. The iconographic program of the retable is not special. The scenes taken from the life of the Virgin appear in the normal, well-known sequence. Such series regularly end in a representation related to the end of the Virgin’s life, either her last prayer, or her Death, or finally the scene of the Assumption or Coronation. The irregularity here lies in the fact that the circle ends with the **Baptism of Christ. (Fig. III.31)** Thus, the scene continues thematically events taken from the early life of Christ. Krasser was the first to suggest, based on this peculiarity that this last panel might have been the work of a different master, a panel perhaps repainted in the Reformation.<sup>205</sup> The Richter-couple, having cleaned and restored the retable, admitted that a certain repaint could be observed on the panel (note that the same repaint was also present on the other panels of the retable!) but thought after its removal however that Krasser’s critique of should be “moderated”.<sup>206</sup> Based on these opinions and on her own considerations related to the attitude of Reformation Transylvania towards the iconography and representations of previous centuries, Maria Crăciun has expressly suggested that the panel with the Baptism of Christ was an iconographic modification dating to the Reformation. Thus she argued that the prereformation depiction, probably of the Assumption, was replaced by this Christological episode representing a shift in meaning appropriate to the ideas of the Reformation.<sup>207</sup> However, a series of other considerations contradict this idea. All the stylistic characteristics support the contemporaneity of this panel with the rest of the retable. The faces depicted, the doll-like face and head of the angel with its tresses of hair, the folds of John’s mantle or of the angel’s robe match perfectly the previously analyzed representations. The motif of Christ’s joined hands with only the fingertips touching has already been remarked on Mary’s figure in the representation of the circumcision. From the stylistic point of view the panels of the retable can definitely be considered a unit. An archive photo, part of the documentation compiled

<sup>204</sup> Placing the dating of an altar by the depiction of an open book is not usual. However, another example of Transylvanian panel painting, the panel representing the Death of Saint Martin on the retable from Schweischer (Fișer, Sövényesség) – dated by the inscription to 1522 – contains the same motif.

<sup>205</sup> Krasser 1976b, 204.

<sup>206</sup> Richter 1992, 69.

<sup>207</sup> Maria Crăciun: “Iconoclasm and Theology in Reformation Transylvania: The Iconography of the Polyptych of the Church at Biertan.” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*. 95 (2004); 61- 97.

when the panel was restored in the Richter-workshop, also contradicts the above theory. **(Fig. III.32)** The image in question represents the pre-restoration stage of the panel, with clear iconoclast interventions. The eyes of Christ, John and also those of the angel had been put out, a well-known practice by iconoclast movements during the Reformation. Thus, the composition was clearly not produced or replaced in these years. The representation of the Baptism can thus be considered one of the original panels of the retable, part of the iconographic program which continues narratives from the Virgin's life like the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, with the story of Christ's childhood and the beginnings of his earthly preaching.<sup>208</sup>

The panels that the congregation could see on closed stage of the retable, the so-called "*Werktagseite*", nevertheless belongs to the same stylistic circle and clearly to the same workshop. Both stationary wings with the representations of the four Church-Fathers, were brought to light in the Richter workshop from underneath a nineteenth century repaint.<sup>209</sup> **(Figs. III.33-34)** Thus, these panels remained unknown to researchers dealing with the retable before the 1970s. The representations of the Church Fathers are undoubtedly among the highest level paintings of the retable; this is also visible in the actual state of the panels and is strongly supported by the photos showing the condition they were in previous to the restoration.

General stylistic features like the folds of the draperies obviously continue the tradition represented by the paintings on the inner side of the wings. The thick, rather hard, sometimes H-formed folds are very carefully drawn with a sure hand. The figure-type of Hieronymus makes reference to one of the wing-panels on the so-called Behaim predella in the Alte Pinakothek, München,<sup>210</sup> which Robert Suckale thinks was an early work of Hans Siebenbürger.<sup>211</sup> **(Figs. III.35-36)** Although the Frankish panel represents a half-figure in contrast to the full-figure from BIRTHÄLM, the general approach to the representation of the Church father, the face-type with its characteristic wrinkles, the depiction of the left arm in the tight sleeve buttoned at the wrist, correspond very well to the Hieronymus on the Behaim predella. In spite of the fact that the gesture of the hands is modified, the bookholding hands

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<sup>208</sup> The wide spread apocryphal gospel combines the story told in the Gospel of Jacob – referring to the life of the Virgin - and the infancy-gospel of Thomas, relating Christ's childhood. Although Pseudo-Matthew's Gospel ends with the scene of the 12-year old Jesus in the temple, this event is practically the first one that can already be considered as belonging to the preaching period of Christ's life - a period which will continue with the Baptism of Christ, represented on the last panel in BIRTHÄLM.

<sup>209</sup> Richter 1992, 74.

<sup>210</sup> München, Alte Pinakothek, WAF 721. I have to thank colleagues from the Alte Pinakothek for sending me an image of the panel used as an illustration in this thesis.

<sup>211</sup> Suckale 2004, 367.

of Hieronymus, with their fine fingers, was again a motif quite beloved in the circle of the Schottenmaster, as was shown above in connection with the scene of the Annunciation. The general predilection for fine details and delicate jewellery can be clearly observed and is another feature characteristic for the environment of the Schottenmaster. On photos taken after the cleaning of the panels but previous to the repaint carried out by the restorers, the very fine decoration of Gregory's tiara can be clearly seen. **(Fig. III.37)** The ornament-lines surrounding the tiara, composed of fine, interwoven gothic leaves, are a common pattern in this stylistic circle. A very similar motif can be observed in the decoration on the parapet-wall in the background of a panel from Lvov, depicting three woman saints.<sup>212</sup> Crowns with the same decoration can be observed both on the panel representing Christ visiting the imprisoned St. Catherine, attributed to a collaborator of Siebenbürger,<sup>213</sup> and on the representation of the Martyrdom of St. Ursula in the collections of the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, attributed to Siebenbürger and his workshop.<sup>214</sup> A very similar type of highly refined ornament was originally used for the painting of the mantle clasp of Gregory in BIRTHÄLM. Both the tiara and the clasp were painted over, however, during the restoration, so that unfortunately it is exactly such fine details that can no longer be observed. **(Fig. III. 38)** However, it can still be generally stated that the faces of the four Church fathers are much more individual than the pattern-like head-types seen on the inside of the wings; the execution of the composition, of its details - unusually for the work's a day-side of altarpieces - is much finer, more carefully done.

The outer side of the movable wings comprises four panels with rows of saints. **(Figs. III. 39-42)** They are all set in front of a blue background ornamented with golden star-applications. The panels are not coherent, especially deliberate compositions. The figures depicted seem again to follow models of the Schotten-workshop's collection or stamps of the period, simply set one next to the other. Thus, one can see the influence of Master E.S.'s print in the figure of St. Michael.<sup>215</sup> In spite of small changes and the inversion in the motion of the feet, the link is clear, lying primarily in the strong torsion of the lower body that defines the figure in both cases.<sup>216</sup> The figures on the BIRTHÄLM wings are simply listed although a certain

<sup>212</sup> Referred to by Suckale 2004, Fig. 16.

<sup>213</sup> Suckale 2004, Fig. 12. Dated to 1465-1470. The place the panel is presently kept is unknown.

<sup>214</sup> Dated to 1480. Suckale 2004, Fig. 6.

<sup>215</sup> L 152, Not depicted by Bartsch.

<sup>216</sup> On the spread of this upper-Rhenan Saint Michael figure-type see: Stefan Roller: *Nürnberger Bildhauerkunst der Spätgotik*. (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1999.), 123-129. The Saint Michael figure in the *Lorenzkirche* in Nuremberg, analysed by Roller, presents even closer similarities to our Transylvanian figure in terms of its drapery than the etching. The hard folds of the alba breaking above the invisible belt, the way the alba adheres to

attempt to make compositional links between them can be observed. The figure of Joseph on the right side of the first panel turns his back on the three saints depicted on the same panel, looking towards his wife and son, standing turned towards him, on the first place of the next panel. Thus, the unity of the Holy Family was to some extent indicated.<sup>217</sup> It appears as a similar but less successful attempt, when Barbara is depicted as the last figure on the third panel, turning her back towards the rest of the saints on her panel and looking towards the Virgin standing facing front in the first place on the next image. The stylistic affiliation of these panels is unquestionable. Joseph clearly follows the same figure-type as on the inside of the wings. Figures like those of St. Barbara, St. Dorothy or St. Margaret follow models also known to the painter of the above-mentioned Behaim-predella. The face-types, and the arrangement of the hair are clearly linked in particular to St. Catherine's figure on this predella. The face-type of the Virgin on the last panel, the so-called *Ährenkleidmadonna*,<sup>218</sup> is quite similar to that of St. Barbara on the same Franconian predella. However, such stylistic comparisons should only be made with much circumspection on the basis of older photo-documentation because juxtaposing a photo of these panels before and after the restoration made in the Kronstadt workshop shows us surprising differences. After being cleaned, the panels were completed and overpainted in a manner that seriously altered some aspects of them, especially the faces discussed here. (Figs. III. 43-46).

The composition of the dresses and mantles is not very diversified. The folds of the cloaks seem comprised of repeatedly used patterns as can be seen in the undulating line of Margaret, Dorothy, Barbara, Joseph or Elisabeth's mantle-edges, a motif also found on the Visitation panel of the Schotten-retable where such lines can be seen on the cloak of the Virgin. Generally speaking, the types of figures represented, the compositions, the draperies depicted point to the fact that the painter displayed a low degree of originality on these four panels from the outer side of the Birthälm wings. The program of the "work'a day side" follows the fairly wide-spread practice in the period to present a row of the most venerated

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the knee of the saint and the material forms hard folds on the leg above this portion suggest a common source for the two representations.

<sup>217</sup> This representation of the Virgin as Apocalyptic woman belongs at the same time to the less common type of the *Dexiokratousa*: the Virgin holding the Child on her right arm.

<sup>218</sup> The ears of wheat are observable on the robe of the Virgin on photos taken after the restoration. They were not previously discernable. The inscription on the frame of the panel which identifies the saints in the rest of the cases does not help with this problem. The words, read and transcribed in previous literature as: MARIA MALAVIT have clearly been misread. The letters in the inscription could be read as S. MARIA MALANT which also means nothing. Taking into consideration that the inscriptions are contemporary with the sixteenth century construction of the retable it can be imagined that we are dealing with a sixteenth century misinterpretation of the (perhaps abbreviated) word: MAGDALENA. The big head of hair on the saint agrees with her identification as Maria Magdalena, taken, as her position suggests, from an etching which presented her Assumption by angels. No unambiguous explanation of the problem can be suggested at the moment.



saints. However, small oddities like the double representation of the Virgin, once as the Apocalyptic woman with the child on her arm and once as the “*Ährenkleidmadonna*” indicate that the painter had considered the dedication of the retable even on this side of the altar that was not seen during the great feasts for the Virgin but during ordinary times. The same tendency is also very probably being emphasised in the representation of St. Anne, with Mary on her arm, and the group of the three women also called Mary depicted behind Anne.

The main direction in the analysis of this retable has been undoubtedly determined by the statement of Harald Krasser that the master of the altarpiece was one of the followers of the Schottenmaster.<sup>219</sup> The nature of the relationship between the master of the Transylvanian retable and the painter of the Viennese retable can be specified with the help of the concrete stylistic links enumerated above and the models employed in the creation of the images. These stylistic and compositional links suggest that the master of the Birtählm panels was in possession of a serious amount of the Schotten-workshop’s motif and pattern collection. His surviving work shows that he did more than admire and copy one of the most significant and most influential retables of the age, - the panels of the Schotten-altarpiece. Even those Birtählm images that do not directly derive from corresponding panels of the Schottenretable show that the master painted using a body of motifs from the same artistic milieu. He followed the models at his disposal at a fair artistic level, but with a certain lack of originality, using them more as learned clichés. His drawing is not perfect and mistakes, uncertainties in anatomy and perspective can be observed on a number of panels. However, these details can also be explained by the collaboration of workshop colleagues and apprentices. His general style, the beautiful, oval, oft’ times doll-like face-types, but also the technical details – like the character of the thoroughly and finely sketched folds, the fur-collars or the wrinkles on the faces, his predilection for elegance – the frequent occurrence of golden brocade dresses, of fine jewellery and the concept of the compositions in general all point in the same direction. The master of the Birtählm panels must have received his education in the immediate environment of the Schottenworkshop.

### **An Excursus**

In spite of the fact that the aim of this chapter is to present the way Transylvanian painting was influenced by the Schotten-workshop’s leading master, an outline of the overall history of the retable ought not to be omitted. This is especially the case because this analysis

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<sup>219</sup> Krasser 1971, 1973, 1976a, 1976b

should raise additional questions also related to panels dated to 1483 and may shed new light on their afterlife.<sup>220</sup>

The structure of the Birthälm retable is completely uniform but, at the same time, unique. A thorough examination of this retable leads to the conclusion that the 1515 inscription on the gable-tryptich can be accepted as a perfect date for the construction as a whole which obviously reused the panels discussed above painted thirty years earlier. It was most probably not the complete central part that was adopted from the earlier work. Only the panels were likely reused. The shrine itself was possibly newly made or else completely rearranged. Although it is hard to decide from its details whether they were produced in the 1480s or 1510s analogies from Transylvania suggest the latter date. **(Fig. III. 47)** The character of the shrine-façade including the flanking twined columns and especially the motif of fine foliage enclosing the shrine has close parallels in sixteenth century Transylvania.<sup>221</sup> The engraved, gilded vine-pattern on the shrine-background has though no parallel in Transylvania and is not a widely used type of background motif generally.<sup>222</sup> The forms of this foliage find their fairly exact parallels in the panel-closing baldachin-motifs of sixteenth century Transylvanian retables.<sup>223</sup> Even if the shrine was indeed altered in the sixteenth century, the original, fifteenth century central part of the retable must have had the same dimensions – based on the width of the panels. As for the original sculptural decoration of the actual – sixteenth century – shrine, Krasser and other researchers have already suggested that the Assumption or the Coronation of the Virgin would have conformed to the rest of the iconography. Naturally, a simple statue of the Virgin would also have fulfilled the iconographic expectations to a certain extent, but a thorough look at the background-gilding suggests that a more complex representation was indeed placed here. The vine-foliage ornament only covers a narrow band on each side of the shrine-background, while quite a large, fairly regular square surface was left undecorated, obviously because it was covered by

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<sup>220</sup> For versions and dates regarding the sixteenth century form of the altarpiece suggesting a prominent role of the Reformation in this rearrangement, see most lately: Evelin Wetter, "Überlegungen zum Bekenntniswert vorreformatorischer Retabelausstattungen siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Pfarrkirchen", Joachim Bahlcke, Keren Lambrecht eds., *Konfessionelle Pluralität als Herausforderung. Winfried Eberhart zum 65. Geburtstag*. (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag GMBH, 2006), 109-126.

<sup>221</sup> The foliage is very similar to that on the Bogeschdorf retable, where similar columns most probably originally supported this decoration. Also, the gable-ornament from Birthälm may be linked to the same retable. More simple, but with similar foliage and twined columns decorate the shrine on the Radeln-retable. Both the Bogeschdorf and the Radeln altarpieces can be dated to the first quarter of the sixteenth century.

<sup>222</sup> See: Hans Westhoff-Heribert Meurer eds., *Graviert, Gemalt, Gepresst. Spätgotische Retabelverziwungen in Schwaben*. Exhib. Cat. Württembergisches Landesmuseum Stuttgart, (Ulm: Süddeutsche Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1996). In the chapter summarizing the engraved or pastiglia foliage-patterns on backgrounds of shrines, panels etc. on Suabian late Gothic altarpieces and their analogies, there is not one single motif resembling that from Birthälm in the catalogue. Certain examples can be found though in Upper Hungary.

<sup>223</sup> Quite similar forms can be observed on the panels of the altarpiece from Schweischer.

the sculptural decoration. With a single sculpture the contours of the figure would be observable, outlined by the chalk-foundation. Thus, the presence of a large rectangular surface in the background of the BIRTHÄLM shrine makes it plausible that the original decoration was (based on the depth of the case) a quite high relief-composition. The unusually large, centrally placed, sun-like halo suggests that the composition was also a central one, with – most probably the figure of the Virgin filling the vertical axis.<sup>224</sup> The space available for the relief-scene was determined by the small wooden vaulting of the shrine, supported by late-gothic consoles in the corners. The undecorated, white rectangular surface was clearly disturbed after the shrine composition was removed - most probably during the Reformation. It must have been on this occasion that the chalk-covered surface was overpainted with an inscription written in Renaissance capitals. Inscription that was probably visible until the restoration in Kronstadt, as can be seen in an illustration of Harald Krasser's article published in 1973.<sup>225</sup> The text was a bible quotation, identifiable on the basis of the deciphered words and taken from John 3, 16: "*sic enim dilexit Deus mundum ut Filium suum unigenitum daret ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat sed habeat vitam aeternam*"<sup>226</sup> The surface was gilded-over at the end of the 1970s - beginning of the 1980s in the Kronstadt workshop although the letters can still be discerned to a certain extent. There is unfortunately no information on the date the Crucifixion group was placed in the shrine of the retable nor on the provenience of these sculptures. Although they can most probably be dated to the last quarter of the fifteenth century making them contemporary with the fifteenth century panels, their dimensions do not make it probable that they belonged to the original fifteenth century retable.<sup>227</sup> On the other hand, it is also not likely at all that they would have been preserved throughout the centuries after the retable was completely restructured in the sixteenth century and then changed to a certain extent during the Reformation. The group, which originally might have been part of an individual Crucifixion composition because the backsides of the sculptures are also carved, **(Fig. III. 48)** was possibly set up in its actual place later when the emptiness of the shrine seemed disturbing.

The predella and the gable tryptich seem to have been produced at the same time, in the same workshop because their structure was clearly composed to fit the rest of the retable.

<sup>224</sup> The outer band of the halo shows remains of letters indicating that the saint whom the halo belonged to was identified here. Unfortunately, the inscription cannot be made out today. Perhaps a future restorational-analysis will help in this matter.

<sup>225</sup> Krasser 1973, 110. fig. 102.

<sup>226</sup> The use of painting over parts of a retable with Bible-quotations during the Reformation can be caught in the very act on the central panel of the Hermannstadt-retable. (A repainting, very often referred to, written in Renaissance capitals as well, dated by its inscription to 1545.)

<sup>227</sup> The sculptures, showing the influence of the Multscher circle, would deserve a separate study.

The baldachin-imitating golden patterns closing the panels follow the same model on both the predella and the gable's side panels. The representations of the gable are especially enigmatic and deserve a more detailed explanation in a special study elsewhere. Their analysis does not fit with in the framework of this chapter that primarily deals with the connections and history of the fifteenth century details found on the altarpiece. Here, I will emphasize those features which are of importance from this point of view. The central panel depicts an allegoric Crucifixion with a living cross, represented in form of a vine stem with vivid green leaves and bunches of grapes. **(Fig. III.49)** The apostles are shown standing on the branches of the tree while Mary pours water from a jar and John the Baptist hacks around the stem of the cross. The inscription on the panel (*MARIA RIGAT – EGO SUM VITIS, VOS PALMITES ANNO VIRGINIS PARTUS 1515 – JOHANNES PLANTAT*) is meant to explain the central elements in the allegory. The central part of the inscription, (*Ego sum vitis, vos palmites*) taken from John 15,5 is very concretely represented: the motif of the cross depicted as a grape-vine stem with the apostles on its branches has parallels in late medieval Christian iconography. The curiosity is represented by the Virgin and the Baptist and is referred to in the beginning and the end of the text.<sup>228</sup> The common presence of the Holy Mother and John the Baptist – a close relative of Christ - and of the apostles, a large number of whom were also related to the Saviour – could be referring in an oblique way to Christ's Kindred. Besides, the figure of the Virgin watering and feeding the vine alludes to her role as mediator and contributor in Redemption. Similarly, the figure of John the Baptist planting the tree symbolizes his role in preparing and arranging Christ's earthly way leading to Redemption.<sup>229</sup> Both flanking images, the prechristian, pagan representation of Emperor Octavian's vision and the Old Testament vision of the Prophet Ezechiel are linked to the Marianic program of the retable. The representation of the Caesar's vision is fairly well-known. According to the *Ara-coeli* legend, when the Roman senators wanted to venerate the emperor as God, he was reluctant and called the Tiburtine Sibyl. **(Fig. III.50)** She prophesized the coming of a new king. The sky opened and the emperor saw the Virgin with the child on her arm above the altar. The scene was often represented from the twelfth-thirteenth century, emphasizing the role of the Virgin in the general strengthening of Faith. The vision of Ezechiel is depicted based on Ez 44, 1-4. **(Fig. III. 51)** The castle standing on a hill in the background with its large, iron-hooped gate

<sup>228</sup>The parallel mention of the words *rigat* and *plantat* unavoidably remembers one of the verse taken from Chor.1, 3:7-8.: "itaque neque qui plantat est aliquid neque qui rigat sed qui incrementum dat. Qui plantat, et qui rigat, unum sunt"

<sup>229</sup> The way his presence is emphasized here in parallel with the figure of the Godmother may provide a hint as to who commissioned the retable: *Plebanus Johannes*.

obviously represents the closed gate from the Vision of the prophet. The closed gate, which is traditionally interpreted as a Symbol of the Virgin's immaculacy, is an old testament prefiguration of Christ's Birth from the Virgin.<sup>230</sup> The half-figure of the Virgin holding the child on her arm, occurring above the clouds, emphasizes this point and thus at the same time the composition came to resemble to a certain extent the usual depictions of the St. John the Evangelist's vision on Pathmos.

The iconography of the predella with its representation of the large Holy Family distributed over all the panels of the altarpiece with inscriptions identifying the depicted persons, fits very well into the intention presented above emphasizing Christ's Kindred. (**Figs. III. 52-54**) The complete sixteenth century iconographic program, reflects a determined, theologically clearly defined and supported concept which could also explain and include in the order of its ideas the theme of the thirty years earlier cycle. The meanings suggested by this new program, concentrating on the relatives of Christ and on the preparation for his earthly passage leading to Redemption, probably reflect the premonitory signs of the Reformation. The very well identified, unified program supposes a highly educated commissioner – in the person of *Plebanus Iohannes*, whose heraldic shield is depicted on the predella.

Additional analysis will emphasize that the unity of the altarpiece was not only ensured by the content but also in its formal details. A general ambition to create a new composition in which the inclusion of the earlier fragments does not give a visually odd impression, seems to be quite widespread. Fine details pointing to this intention can be observed. The golden-black pattern of Apostle Bartholomew's robe, a pattern that is closely related to the dress of the Tiburtine Sibyl or that of Maria Jacobi and Zebedeus on the predella, follows the model of the red-blue-white drapery that can be seen in the background of the fifteenth century Engagement scene.<sup>231</sup> The pattern has clearly been intentionally imitated. In addition, photographs taken before and during the restoration of the retable in the 1980s, show a repaint of the panels at certain points that most probably dates to this sixteenth

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<sup>230</sup> LCI Vol.3. 424. The motif is part of the Lauretan Litany. LCI Vol.3, 27-31.

<sup>231</sup> A very similar, engraved not painted pattern was used as a background motif on the Engagement panel of the so-called Marienburg retable, parts of which may be found in the Black Church in Kronstadt today. Although no concrete stylistic relationship can be traced between the two retables, it is noteworthy that this is the second concrete link between them. The scene of the twelve year old Jesus in the temple showing certain teachers tearing out pages from the book – was earlier mentioned in this chapter as a common motif between the two altarpieces. The signature "Jonas pictor Norinbergensis" that could once be seen on one of the panels (see Stange Vol 11, 162, Richter 1992, 115) is unfortunately no longer detectable. However, the signature suggests a locality that can be considered a common source for these motifs for the two painters, even though the BIRTHÄLM master received them by way of Vienna.

century period. The repaint was completely removed during the restoration because was considered alien to the fifteenth century paintings. Thus it is only the preserved black-and-white photos that can help us in this matter. The documentation shows that complete overpaint of the earlier panels was not undertaken, only certain details, mostly draperies were – one might perhaps say – restored. No faces or other important parts were changed. One of the most striking of the repainted details is perhaps the very first panel representing the Meeting at the Golden Gate. St. Anne’s mantle, which proved to be white with a light red lining after the cleaning, was “colored” to some dark shade. Also, the white lining of Zacharias was overpainted at this time. This is shown by the shiny-shadowy surface of this detail, the folds so very different from those drawn on the rest of the mantle. **(Figs. III. 55-56)** Similar types of drapery representations can be seen on other photos of the pre-restored stage of the other panels: the kerchief the child is covered with in the scene of the Birth of the Virgin was over painted with folds that unavoidably remind the viewer of the so-called “*changierende Farben*” so widely used in painting of the sixteenth century. **(Fig. III.57)** The same feature can be observed on the wide sleeves of the old king in the scene of the Adoration on the robe of the high-priest on the Presentation in the Temple and it is clearly observable on the sleeves of the teacher lifting the book in the air on the representation of the Twelve year old Jesus. **(Fig. III. 58)** The panels on the outer side of the wings have also not escaped this unifying and corrective repaint. The feature is perhaps most striking on the robe of St. Michael, which clearly presents the same changeant-characteristics as the draperies described above. **(Fig. III. 59)** The nature and quality of the repaint-folds are so similar to the drapery depictions of the predella-panels that their contemporaneity seems very likely.

The sixteenth century repaint, as already mentioned, did not affect the complete surface of the panels. The photos give the impression that only certain draperies – perhaps the fainter ones – were “restored”. I use the word repeatedly now and with intention. The fact that the earlier retable, or at least significant details from it, were reused in an altarpiece no more than thirty years later, shows that it was still appreciated. It is not possible to decide of course if the reuse was justified by the fact that the high quality retable was esteemed to such an extent or whether its reuse was a simple material economy. The explanation probably lies in a combination of these two reasons. It is in any case obvious that the master of the sixteenth century altarpiece received the commission to produce a retable, large enough for the newly built chancel of the Birthälm church, and restore the fifteenth century details in order to reuse

them in the new altarpiece.<sup>232</sup> The interventions were minimal. They clearly aimed to restore the panels where necessary and at the same time give the impression of uniform style and quality to the completed retable. The same unifying tendency is emphasized by the inscriptions on the retables. The identity of the type of letters used on the predella-panels, the superstructure's inscriptions and the outer sides of the fifteenth century wings, show that the row of saints could be identified with these inscriptions on the occasion of the sixteenth century production of the retable.

The work was obviously carried out in a workshop. Thus, the fifteenth century parts of the retable must have been carried there.<sup>233</sup> The matter unavoidably raises the question of whether the fifteenth century retable was in the possession of the BIRTHÄLM church. Did it ornament the earlier chancel, or did they buy it from another community and transformed it for their own needs? The question cannot be definitely decided at present stage of research. However, certain points of view need to be taken into consideration. It has been pointed out already by Victor Roth<sup>234</sup> that the openwork foliage with finials and vimpergues flanking and crowning the panels of the superstructure were produced in the same workshop as the corresponding details on the retables from Schaas and Bogeschdorf. **(Figs. III. 60-61-62)** Based on this connection Roth suggested that all three altarpieces could have been created in the same workshop, and he spoke of a so-called BIRTHÄLM-group of altars. Later, Harald Krasser explained the matter, noting very correctly that the similarity of the foliage only indicates an identical joiner, not necessarily a complete workshop.<sup>235</sup> He also mentioned that the style of the Bogeschdorf panels was completely different from the rest of the retables mentioned by Roth as belonging to this group although the central panel from Schaas representing the Holy Family, does indeed display similarities with the predella from BIRTHÄLM. Thus, he introduces the name "Master of the Holy Families", specifying that it is only the central panel and perhaps the lunette from Schaas that can be attributed to this

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<sup>232</sup> We do know about a commission for restoration of a panel or a retable in 1464, when Nicolaus, bishop of Transylvania sent a "thabula" to Hermannstadt to be restored or transformed ("reformare") and afterwards placed back to its place in the cathedral of Gyulafehérvár. See: Entz Géza, "A restaurálás első nyomai a középkori Magyarországon." (The first traces of restoration in Medieval Hungary). *Ars Hungarica* 15, no.2, (1987): 119-121.

<sup>233</sup> I believe that the unity of the sixteenth century retable contradicts Krasser's (ever since much quoted) assumption that the 1524 entry in the BIRTHÄLM accounts-book saying that 1 florin was paid for the transport to BIRTHÄLM of a painting representing Saint Anne, might refer to the predella panel of the altar-piece. ("1524 erhält ein Maler 4 fl. Weniger 25 Dr. und für die Abholung des Bildes der Hl. Anna zahlt man 1 fl." Salzer 1881, 84.) It is not very probable that the predella or at least the central panel of the predella would have been added nine years later to the retable.

<sup>234</sup> Roth 1916, 99.

<sup>235</sup> Krasser 1976b, 211. Based on the opinion of Victor Roth, Radocsay also considered the retable from Schaas a work of the BIRTHÄLM master. Radocsay 1955, 183.

master, as the retable was from a later time – just like the one from BIRTHÄLM – composed from details that originally did not belong together. (Fig. III. 60) This is not the place to enter into a deep stylistic analysis regarding the sixteenth century parts of the BIRTHÄLM altar and those of the Schaas retable, but the matter presented above is worth clarifying shortly in order to bring us closer to the history of the altarpiece. The paintings of the predella show clear similarities with the Holy Family panel from Schaas. The faces depicted, the folds used are very similar to each other, although it is also obvious at first glance that the Schaas panel is at a much higher artistic level. The retable from Schaas, in its actual form is supposedly composed of fragments from two separate altarpieces. The central panel, with its small predella and the lunette is an independent altarpiece in itself which very probably originally decorated a smaller but, based on its extremely high artistic level, a quite important space. The large Gothic predella this smaller retable is placed on is what remains of a huge Gothic altarpiece. Probably both foliage structures flanking the central panel were also part of this piece. Thus, the foliage work and the central panel both display connections to the BIRTHÄLM retable but belonged to two separate altars. We do not know anything about the origin of these pieces nor about the exact time they were assembled. However, the fact that they had been kept over the last centuries in the village of Schaas, in the immediate neighbourhood of Schässburg, makes it quite likely that they were both produced in a workshop in this latter town.<sup>236</sup> To cut it short, the idea obviously occurs that the sixteenth century retable from BIRTHÄLM, with painted panels, repaints, shrine-work and other joiner's work was carried out in a workshop in near-by Schässburg.<sup>237</sup> Consequently, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that the fifteenth century retable from BIRTHÄLM was also perhaps bought in the town of Schässburg around the year 1515, when the rest of the altarpiece was commissioned.<sup>238</sup> Is it possible that a local master was commissioned to make the necessary

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<sup>236</sup> Based on an analogous situation from Gross-Schenk, it might be supposed that the large Gothic predella was part of the altarpiece that decorated the chancel of the church in Schaas during the Late Middle Ages, while the Renaissance retable could have been bought from a neighbouring community – perhaps from Schässburg – during the 18th century. Further research into the 18th century documents kept today in the Archives of the Lutheran Church will hopefully provide new information on this matter.

<sup>237</sup> The presence of a heraldic shield on the predella of the altar, with a the representation of a hand, part of the coat of arms of Mediasch, is not in contradiction to this supposition. It probably only refers to the fact that the parish priest Johannes, whose coats of arms are represented on the other side of the predella, and the community of BIRTHÄLM belonged from the administrative point of view to the seat of Mediasch and from the ecclesiastical point of view to the Mediasch chapter.

<sup>238</sup> As we will later see, the town of Schässburg was also not free of the influence of the Viennese workshop of the Schottenaltar.



changes and completions in order to match both the theological demands of the commissioner and those of its new place: the large chancel-space of the BIRTHÄLM church?<sup>239</sup>

There is no final answer to the question. There are very few data on the history and architectural history of BIRTHÄLM and its church from the period around 1483 when the retable was completed. The present church was mostly erected in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, but there is no concrete information on the building which stood in its place. The first written document which refers to the existence of a parish church in BIRTHÄLM when its priest was mentioned comes from 1373.<sup>240</sup> Later, in 1402, a letter of indulgence clearly refers to a standing church dedicated to the Virgin Mary.<sup>241</sup> However, there is absolutely no information on the character of the building.<sup>242</sup> The first mentioning of the “Kirchenburg”, thus – a reference to the fact that the church was already fortified, dates from 1468, when King Mathias freed a third of the inhabitants of BIRTHÄLM from the obligation of participating in a war, in order to stay at home and defend their fortified church.<sup>243</sup> Certain commissions were obviously carried out during the second half of the fifteenth century around the church in the same way that the wall paintings in the so-called Catholic-tower belonging to the fortification date from these years.<sup>244</sup> However, nothing else is known about the period to which these fifteenth century panels from the retable can be dated. The rivalry between the two most important towns of the two *sedes*, the so-called “zwei Stühle”, that is, BIRTHÄLM and MEDIASCH, has been continuously referred to in literature dealing with their history. In 1418, BIRTHÄLM was granted the right to holding a weekly market and in 1424 MEDIASCH received the same right. As already mentioned, in 1468 one third of the inhabitants of BIRTHÄLM were excused from going to war in order to defend their own fortification from the on-going Turkish danger and in 1477 MEDIASCH was given a very similar privilege. The two localities continuously competed for priority in the *sedes*, for the residence of the judge, the *iudex regius*. The number of their inhabitants and the number of the students they sent to foreign universities, all

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<sup>239</sup> In addition to the suggestion that the sixteenth century retable was produced in a Schässburg workshop, the following information should be mentioned: the stalls standing in the BIRTHÄLM sanctuary, dated to 1523, are also supposed to have been commissioned, according to the modern literature, in the Schässburg workshop of Johannes Reichmut. (Jenei 2004, 269, Machat 2002, 99) Johannes Reichmut was also the master of the stalls from Bogeschdorf. The carpenter work on the Bogeschdorf altar was produced in the same workshop as the altars in BIRTHÄLM and Schaas – as already pointed out by Victor Roth. (Roth 1916, 99)

<sup>240</sup> “*Nicolao Petri de Birchalin...parochialis ecclesia de Birchalin*” Ub. Vol 2, 415, Entz 1996, 235.

<sup>241</sup> “*Ecclesia parochialis in Byrthelm ... in honorem...virginis Mariae fundata et constructa*” Ub. Vol. 3, 274, Entz 1996, 235.

<sup>242</sup> Only details, such as the two keystones which most probably were part of the vaulting of the earlier church and which were built into the wall of the church above the main entrance, can provide minor hints as to the character of the church that stood at this place in the fourteenth-fifteenth century.

<sup>243</sup> Ub. Vol. 5, 357; Salzer 1881, 30; Fabini. 2002, 62.

<sup>244</sup> Jenei 2004.

show that they developed shoulder to shoulder during the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries.<sup>245</sup> It could well be considered a part of this competition that both communities commissioned a spectacular altarpiece in the same period, with paintings belonging to the same stylistic environment – that of the Viennese Schottenmaster’s. One important difference would have been that the town of Mediasch had already erected its new parish church, and the modern retable was commissioned to decorate the new chancel, while BIRTHÄLM in 1483 could only order an altarpiece for its old church. There is no sure information even on the person of the priest in the community of BIRTHÄLM at that date. A certain Christian Guttermann de Megies was parish priest in 1475<sup>246</sup>, while the next priest that is known is Martinus Schezer, who first figures in the written documents as priest of BIRTHÄLM in 1493.<sup>247</sup> It can be supposed that Schezer was the successor of Christian Gutterman, but no data exists referring to the exact date of the succession. It may be of interest from our point of view, (and this would support the version of the story in which the fifteenth century retable was commissioned for the BIRTHÄLM church) that both of them were – as the form their names were mentioned in also shows – from Mediasch and both were studying in Vienna. It can thus not be excluded that the retable was commissioned by either one of them in the period preceding the rebuilding of the parish church. As a result the production of a new altar became necessary not much later on. This happened then around the year 1515 at the initiative of Johannes, successor to Martinus Schezer as parish priest of BIRTHÄLM, acting here until 1520. Johannes was very probably the creator of the complex iconographic program presented above, that matched so well the ideas reflected in the earlier panels of the retable.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Rudolf Theil, "Zur Geschichte der „2 Stühle“ in der zweiten Hälfte des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts." *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*. 1873 (11): 61-97.

<sup>246</sup> Gutterman was a student at the University of Vienna in 1457 and became *baccalaureus artium* at the same place in 1461. (Tonk 1979, 221) He seems to have been quite an important person, as the pope ordered the abbot from Kolozsmonostor and the provost of Kertz in 1475 not to allow Christian Guttermann, parish priest of BIRTHÄLM, to be summoned in front of the bishop without his (the pope’s) consent. (Tonk 1979, 221). In 1476, Guttermann became Doctor of Arts and Law at the University of Padua. (Gernot Nussbächer, "BIRTHÄLMER Studenten". *Neuer Weg*, 26 April, 1983: 4 )

<sup>247</sup> "Mayster Marianus plebanus de Virthalmen" (*Monumenta Vaticana Historiam Regni Hungariae Illustrantia*. Series Prima. Tomus Quintus. *Liber Confraternitatis Sancti Spiritus de Urbe*. Budapest: Franklin, 1889, 12) In 1468, Martinus Schezer de Megies was a student at the University of Vienna becoming in 1472 *baccalaureus artium* and in 1476 *magister artium* in this place. (Tonk 1979, 285). He was parish priest in BIRTHÄLM until 1502. He was followed by Johannes, commissioner not only of the sixteenth century retable but the comprehensive enlargement of the church. (Salzer 1881, 91)

<sup>248</sup> Through the inscription on the triumphal arch of the church, we know that Iohannes was a *baccalaureus*: "Erecta est hec edis sacra ac instituta impendiis venerabilis dni baccalaurii iohannis qui tum parochiani hic fongebatur munere quem tandem eiusdem nepos magister lucas subsecutus eandem ex sua legatione testamentali finire per industriam iacobi cementarii civis cibiani curavit." His coat of arms can also be found on the wooden door of the sacristy – together with the same date of 1515 – as on the retable.

## *The Mediasch Retable*

”*Templum Mediensium majus in honorem sanctae Mariae virginis aedificatum seculo XV, perfectum anno 1488, ut chronologicae notae innuunt*” wrote Georg Soterius in the eighteenth century in his Transylvanian chronicle about the parish church in Mediasch.<sup>249</sup> At this point (1488) the winged retable very probably already stood in the church, or in any case it had surely been commissioned. The enlargement or reconstruction of the earlier parish church during the second half, final decades of the fifteenth century can almost be considered a general phenomenon in large Saxon localities. A similar undertaking took place in these years in Birthälm, in Schässburg, but also in a series of rich surrounding villages. It is the large works of reconstruction that indicate the flourishing economic situation of Mediasch in the second half of the fifteenth century, but we also know of other data mirroring the on-going active commercial, economic, cultural and ecclesiastical life here at this time.<sup>250</sup> Mediasch was not only the center of the administrative region, the *sedes* Mediasch, which brought together a group of eighteen communities, but also an ecclesiastical focal point and the center of the Mediasch chapter. As such it belonged to the diocese of the Gyulafehérvár Chapter instead of the Hermannstadt provostship. The written sources show that its deacon played a fairly important role among the Saxon deacons. It was mentioned several times as ”*Decanus generalis*” and even in the period when this notion was not yet used, he figured in the very first place in an enumeration of the deacons.<sup>251</sup>

It is in these last decades of the century that the reconstruction of the parish church has approached its end and the high altar had been commissioned. In order to get closer to the circumstances under which it was commissioned and produced a thorough analysis of the retable is necessary to provide a plausible answer the question of whether the panels were imported or painted in Transylvania. Although it has become a commonplace that the Mediasch altarpiece belongs to the stylistic circle of the Schottenmaster, neither the nature of the dependency between the two altarpieces and thus the two masters is known, nor has the

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<sup>249</sup> Georgius Soterus, *Historia Transsilvaniae*, Manuscript.1095, referred to by Karl Werner, *Die Mediascher Kirche*. Festgabe der Mediascher Kommune zur Erinnerung an die im Jahre 1872 in Mediasch tagenden Vereine. (Hermannstadt: Steinhausen, 1872). The reference to the dedication of the church to the Holy Virgin is clearly a mistake made by the chronicler.

<sup>250</sup> See: Rudolf Theil, “Zur Geschichte der „2 Stühle” in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts”. *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 1873 (11): 61-97 and Carl Werner, “Geschichte der zwei Stühle unter Wladislaus II. und Ludwig II”, *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 1874 (12): 270-311.

<sup>251</sup> Johann Michael Salzer, *Zur ältesten Geschichte des Mediascher Kapitels*. (Hermannstadt: Druck von Josef Drotleff, 1883), 22, 27.

relationship of this altarpiece to the other large Transylvanian altarpiece from the same stylistic circle, the retable of BIRTHÄLM, been studied. The link with Vienna was first noted after the identification of the vedute in the background of the Crucifixion scene from Mediasch.<sup>252</sup> However, as already mentioned, Victor Roth also identified the stylistic direction of the panels quite correctly when he spoke of the Hofer Altar's Crucifixion scene having been used as model for the corresponding Mediasch panel.<sup>253</sup> However, all the authors who have dealt with the topic only took the particular panel representing the Crucifixion into consideration, since it created a connection to the Schottenretable and its circle.

The decoration of the generally more sumptuous "*Festtagseite*" of the retable has been completely destroyed. Based on the traces on the shrine-background there were three carved individual figures standing in the central shrine although there is no information on their identity.<sup>254</sup> (**Fig. III. 63**) Similarly, the imprints on the predella-shrine suggest that four standing figures, perhaps those of the evangelists or the Church Fathers had decorated this part of the altarpiece. There is absolutely no extant information on the themes of the reliefs that once covered the inner sides of the wings. The most wide-spread kind of iconography would suggest that the four scenes of the Virgin's Life: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth and the Adoration of the Magi had stood here. Thus, only the outer side of the wings can be considered when examining the relationship of the Mediasch retable with the Viennese one. It has already been pointed out in earlier literature,<sup>255</sup> that seven of the scenes follow the compositions of Israhel van Meckenem's Larger Passion<sup>256</sup>. It is precisely in the Crucifixion scene referred to above that – missing in the form of an individual representation from Meckenem's Passion cycle, – was composed of different elements. The painter did obviously not dare to adhere to Mackenem's innovative method of representing the main scene of the Crucifixion pushed into the background of another episode.<sup>257</sup> He needed this scene as an individual composition. Thus, the representation was compiled from several motifs taken partly from Schongauer and partly from a pattern-collection connected to the Schotten-

<sup>252</sup> Streitfeld 1930, 52-53.

<sup>253</sup> Roth still writes that the Hofer Altar was a work of Michael Wohlgemut although in the meantime the piece has been attributed to the master of Wohlgemut, Hans Pleydenwurff. However, this does not change the fact that the stylistic direction has been correctly identified.

<sup>254</sup> Taken into consideration that the church was dedicated to Saint Margaret, it can be supposed that one of the figures, perhaps the central or the left-side one was the martyr with the dragon at her feet.

<sup>255</sup> Dietmar Priebitsch, „Der Mediascher Meister, ein Epigone. Über die Vorlagemuster des Passionsaltars von Mediasch." *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahresblätter*, 18 (1979) no. 2: 116-121.

<sup>256</sup> Bartsch 10-21; Lehrs 142-153.

<sup>257</sup> Meckenem used this method both for the "Washing of the feet" scene, where the Last Supper was shifted to the background and the "Resting Christ" scene where the Crucifixion was represented as a secondary event in the background.

environment. The most striking detail, unquestionably recalling Crucifixion representations from the circle of the Schottenmaster, is the couple comprising Pilate and the centurion. The gestures of these two persons are represented in a very similar way on the Crucifixion panel of the Schottenaltar as well as on the central panel of the Tryptich from Sankt Florian or that of the already mentioned Hofer Altar. **(Figs. III. 64-65)** The gestures of Pilate, the pointing thumb, the left hand grasping his sword and, his general posture are most closely linked to the corresponding detail of the Schottenretable. The figure of the Saviour, his head bent onto his right shoulder, his hair falling on this shoulder, his hands with the fingers convulsively closed and the overall character of the body refer to the same artistic circle, in spite of the fact that the influence of one of Schongauer's Crucifixions is unquestionable. **(Fig. III. 66)** The general position of the figure, with his head and upper body turned in one direction and his parallelly arranged legs with its knees bent, twisted into each other is characteristic. Even the weaving ends of his loin-cloth and its folds had been copied from the graphic-leaf discussed here.<sup>258</sup> The vedute-motif is not present on the Crucifixion scene of the Schottenretable (although it occurs on other panels). However, it can be observed in the background of the central panel of the Sankt Florian altarpiece, although in a completely different form.<sup>259</sup> The group of women accompanied by John the Evangelist can again be deduced from etchings by Martin Schongauer. Mary Magdalen, the kneeling Virgin and the woman clad in blue on the edge of the image are all adopted from leaf B 17. **(Fig. III. 67)** The woman weeping, wearing a red mantle and lifting her left hand to her cheek is present on several versions of Schongauer's already mentioned Crucifixion<sup>260</sup>. The figure of Johannes does not appear either on the Schottenpanel or in Schongauer's work. Although his clothing, the folds of his robe recall the Johannes-figure from the Schottenretable, the Evangelist was clearly not copied. The position of his upwards looking head is completely different and in Mediasch he is shown simply standing behind the Virgin without the wide spread gesture of holding her beneath his arm. The panel indeed shows the closest connection of all the Mediasch panels to the workshop of the Schottenmaster.

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<sup>258</sup> B .011 S1, S2, C6, C13

<sup>259</sup> As already mentioned, the identification of the vedute with Vienna has contributed to the inclusion of the Mediasch altarpiece's master into the category of the Schottenmaster-followers. Although several researchers have identified various Viennese constructions on this representation, it has also been pointed out that the depiction is far from being topographically correct - it only presents presumably Viennese buildings in a random arrangement. See: Ferdinand Opll, "Das Antlitz der Stadt Wien am Ende des Mittelalters. Bekanntes und Neues zu den "Wien-Ansichten" auf Tafelbildern des 15. Jahrhunderts." *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Wien*. 55 (1999): 101-145.

<sup>260</sup> Bartsch .011 S1, S2, C6, C13.

The rest of the cycle is closely inspired by the previously mentioned series by Meckenem. The scene of **the Betrayal** very closely follows the corresponding etching. (**Figs. III. 68-69**) It is only the face-types and the clothing of certain figures that has been changed based on the personal style of the painter. It appears that he took special joy in depicting several types of head-dresses. The little town-representation in the left-hand corner of the background has also been changed. The scene of the **Flagellation** again displays only small differences relative to the etching, all details taken from other sources. (**Figs. III. 70-71**) The figure of the summoner dressed all in red, lifting his whip with his right hand was unquestionably borrowed from an etching by Schongauer.<sup>261</sup> (**Fig. III. 72**) The remainder as well as the general architecture in the scene was taken from Meckenem, and even the background events, depicting happenings preceding the episode in the foreground in the course of the narration, are consistently present on the Mediasch panels. This feature was not even invented by Meckenem, but derived from Netherlandish works known to him. Another minor alteration compared to Meckenem's work is the somewhat simplified model of the floor-tiles, a model that will recur in the circle of the Mediasch master. The two persons assisting at the flagellation are a permanent motif since they recur in several scenes of the retable and can be identified as Pilate and one of the High Priests. The **Crowning with thorns** reflects the same tendency with the etching followed precisely, with only minor borrowings from other works. (**Figs. III. 74-75**) The figure of the man kneeling in front of Christ, mocking him by handing over a simple staff alluding to a sceptre is a mirror image of a version borrowed from Schongauer's etching.<sup>262</sup> (**Fig. III. 73**) The two persons standing in the lower left corner of the image witnessing the event are slightly changed in order to resemble the above-mentioned figures of Pilate and his mate who accompany most of the scenes. The motif on the golden-black brocade mantle of Pilate is reserved for his person on this retable. The motif itself points unmistakably to the environment of the Schottenmaster again.<sup>263</sup> That the hand producing the image was still unpracticed, perhaps that of an apprentice who needed to stay close to the model being employed is suggested by the fact that this back-figure of Pilate was used as a model for Pilate's person, represented frontally on the panel of the Flagellation. The position of his feet obviously shows that a pattern from a back-side figure was used here. The scene of the **Ecce Homo** again displays only the smallest

<sup>261</sup> B 12.

<sup>262</sup> B 13.

<sup>263</sup> See the pattern in: Daniela Gräfin von Pfeil, *Der Pleydenwurff-Wolgemut Kreis*. Dissertation TU Berlin, 1995. Called in her catalogue "Muster 2", listed there as present in painted form and as a Pressbrokat on a number of retables from the circle in point: Bamberg – Klarenretable, Michael Wolgemut – Epitaph of Anna Gross, Hans Pleydenwurff – Hofer Retabel, Dreikönigretabel etc.

deviations from the original etching. (**Figs. III. 76-77**) However, these differences are quite outstanding. The painter again demonstrated his predilection for depicting several types of special head-dresses. One of the most striking head-dresses on the panel – clearly different from the one used on the graphic print, is the tall white fur cap, a piece of clothing that was very fashionable in the “cloak-room” of the Schotten-circle.<sup>264</sup> The gesture of the crossed fingers that can be observed in the crowd, symbolizes the cry of the people: “Crucify him!” It is also a motif known from the corresponding panel on the Viennese altar. The woman-figure in the background also leads our thoughts in the direction of this same environment. The woman, probably Pilate’s wife, was represented relating her dream to her husband. She is shown in a costume well known in panel paintings from the stylistic circle of the Schottenworkshop.

The following three panels from the lower panel-row of the retable are obviously of a much higher quality in their drawing in their depiction of the details, the painting of the faces than the other panels. The scene of the “**Bearing the Cross**” follows and just as with the previous panels are “word-by-word” copies of the Meckenem-etching. (**Figs. III. 78-79**) Differences can be found mainly in the lower right-hand corner of the composition. The soldier pulling Christ’s hair on the etching and holding the bar of the cross with his right hand was seriously modified on the panel. His dress, especially the short over-coat decorated with a golden brocade pattern, with an indecipherable inscription on its edge, was again more similar to the Viennese tradition of the last decades of the fifteenth century, than the costumes seen in Meckenem’s prints. His gestures reflect the painter’s knowledge of other important sources besides the etching series. The soldier pulls with his right hand on end of the rope tied around Christ’s waist and is preparing to hit the suffering Christ with it. His left foot steps on the knee of the Saviour instead of the elegant, almost affected step observable on Meckenem’s image. Although on the underdrawing, both legs of the soldier had been conceived according to the Meckenem-model, the motif was changed during the painting as can easily be seen on the infrared-photographs.<sup>265</sup> (**Fig. III. 80**) The gesture of treading on the suffering Christ can be found on several panels and several scenes in Passion-cycles<sup>266</sup>. However, the origin of the

<sup>264</sup> Similar head-dresses can be observed on the Ecce Homo scene of the Schottenretable as well as on the representation of the Martyrdom of Saint Ursula from Lilienfeld, today held in the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, in Vienna. (Depicted in Baum 1971, fig. 126.)

<sup>265</sup> The first version of the gesture, with the leg of the soldier still on the ground can actually also be observed with the naked eye.

<sup>266</sup> On a *Flagellation* scene of the Master from Hersbruck (around 1490), depicted in Stange Vol 9, Fig. 206, as well as a *Flagellation* of the Katzheimer workshop (Stange Vol. 9, Fig. 216), and a later book illustration of the *Bearing the Cross* of Master IS from 1516. (Depicted in Karlsruhe 2001, Fig. 222) A scene of the *Bearing the Cross* and of the *Flagellation*, from the Lendenstreich workshop and kept in the Castle of Landsberg are

motif is probably Netherlandish. In any case, it can be found on a Bearing of the Cross panel dated to around 1495, of the Master Virgo inter Virgines, working in Delft.<sup>267</sup> The panel, very close in composition to the corresponding scene in the Meckenem series, is considered to have been influenced by the same Netherlandish conception as the work of Israhel.<sup>268</sup> Thus, the Mediasch master seems to have had knowledge of another source, probably one rather popular among the Netherlandish influenced painters of the period. The back-figure in the corner has suffered another small modification. Instead of holding the rope in his left hand, he pulls it with his right hand over his right shoulder, while in his left hand he holds a small bucket. The pair of women represented in Meckenem's image standing behind the cross is also modified on the panel. Next to the nursing woman, Veronica with the *Vera Icon* in her hands completes the Mediasch panel. Behind her, the head of a third woman can also be observed.<sup>269</sup> **(Fig. III. 81)** The rest of the image, the background scenery, the details of the architecture and the group of John, the Virgin and the three Marys are in essence copied from the etching.

With the representation of the *Man of Sorrows Resting* on the retable, an "Andachtsbild", a typical devotional image was introduced into the narrative. The composition of the event in the foreground follows the etching by Israhel although the proportions were modified. **(Figs. III. 82-83)** Because the background scene of the crucifixion receives a separate panel on the retable, the foreground scene had more space. Thus, the devotional character of the image increases in importance. Only the group of John, the Virgin and the three women, represented in this case in front of the Golgatha where the terrain for the crucifixion is being prepared has been taken over in the background. The architecture was considerably modified, composed of elements again resembling Viennese buildings. The vividly gesticulating couple in discussion on the left edge of the panel, already known from the previous panels as Pilate and the High Priest, are also faces well-known from the stylistic environment of the Schotten-workshop.<sup>270</sup> **(Fig. III. 87)**

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compositionally also quite close to the corresponding Meckenem leaves and we encounter the same gesture of Christ being trod in the Flagellation-scene. (Stange Vol. 9, Figs. 280-281)

<sup>267</sup> Master Virgo inter Virgines – The Bearing of the Cross – Barnard Castle, Bowes Museum. Inv. No. 168. Reproduced in: Achim Riether ed., *Israhel van Meckenem. Kupferstiche - Der Münchener Bestand*. (Munich: Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, 2006. Exh. Cat. Munich, Pinakothek der Moderne), 221.

<sup>268</sup> Munich 2006, 221.

<sup>269</sup> Veronica is present on Schongauer's representation of the scene (B 16 (126)) but in a completely different way. The figure depicted on the Transylvanian panel more closely resembles the position of Veronica on Schongauer's etching (also copied in a reverse version by Meckenem) B 66 (149).

<sup>270</sup> Pilate's face is indeed very similar to the face of the figure witnessing a scene from the martyrdom of Saint Ursula and her mates, standing on the left edge of the representation, a panel in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Inv. Nr. 42/242 **(Fig. III.87.)**, even if the relation does not seem to be that close as



After the already discussed representation of the Crucifixion, the scene of the Resurrection closes the cycle. At first sight the composition follows the etching again in a servile way. **(Fig. III. 84-85)** However, a more thorough look at the panel shows that the painter has again made use of the corresponding etching by Schongauer as well.<sup>271</sup> **(Fig. III. 86)** The figure of Christ, the ductus and the folds of his mantle, the loin cloth as well as the character of the sarcophagus' lid clearly point to the fact that the Mediasch master knew about Schongauer's etching. The relationship between the foreground and background was again changed with the main motif in the representation occupying a larger surface of the composition, while the background scenes, the figure of Christ in Limbo and the three women in the distance can hardly be distinguished because they are so tiny. The background architecture again displays changes although these are of very little importance on the panel.

Because they have been in this overpainted state for centuries probably, and were revealed only during the restoration in the Kronstadt workshop, the paintings of the predella have been omitted from the analyses of most researchers. It is only Folberth who, in his discussion of the representations, gave as his opinion that they could not have been works of the same master who was responsible for the remainder of the altarpiece.<sup>272</sup> After careful observation of the paintings it seems very likely that not only were both figures produced in the same workshop but were the works of the main master himself. In spite of the fact that the patrons were overpainted and this, as well as the cleaning procedure, effected the quality of their preservation to a certain extent. However, it is still clear that both figures were drawn by a sure, practiced hand. The left-side man, an ecclesiastical person, is somewhat better preserved. **(Fig. III. 88, 90)** His red *birretum* indicates that he was a learned man, a *magister*, as the open book in his hand emphasizes. The legs of both figures are somewhat short as drawn, most likely because of the form of the predella. The folds of their mantles are also not very easy to evaluate. Those of the priest still retain their original contours but have clearly been overpainted. Those on the mantle of the other donor, however, are so very faded that only the black contours that were redrawn during the restoration can still be seen. **(Fig. III. 89, 91)** Both faces indicate that a highly skilled painter was at work here. These faces can be compared to those on the three panels of the highest quality on the retable. While the two figures are unquestionably individual works by the master and seem to have been uninfluenced by any of the fashionable etchings of the period, the backside of the retable

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Robert Suckale has suggested. He counted with the identity of the master of the panel from Munich and of the altarpiece from Mediasch. Suckale 2004, 379.

<sup>271</sup> B 20 (127)

<sup>272</sup> Folberth 1973, 92.

again shows the master's knowledge of contemporary decorative patterns – very much at fashion and largely popularized exactly by the very same Israhel van Meckenem discussed above. The dense, whirling, typically late gothic leaf decoration in a vivid green color, complemented with white and light yellow flowers and fruits are wide spread motifs in this period but also well known in Meckenem's and Schongauer's *oeuvre*.<sup>273</sup> (Fig. III. 92)

“*Icones Israhelis Alemani per universam Europeam desiderantur habenturque a pictoribus in summo precio*”, wrote Jacob Wimpheling in his 1505 chronicle.<sup>274</sup> Meckenem is considered in the most recent research to have been the first for whom the production of prints was his main interest. He was able to earn a good living from this activity as well.<sup>275</sup> The so-called Large Passion cycle, dated to the end of the 1470s or around 1480, seems to have been one of Meckenem's most commercially successful series.<sup>276</sup> Max Lehrs knows for each leaf of the cycle of around forty to fifty surviving copies.<sup>277</sup> The cycle of 12 prints was once considered to be a completely individual work by the master<sup>278</sup> but today it is mainly thought to be a work largely inspired by the slightly earlier (around 1475) Passion cycle of Martin Schongauer and influenced by several Netherlandish patterns.<sup>279</sup> At the same time, the Passion cycle can be considered one of the most important creations of this master. The dating of the cycle, to around 1480, obviously represents a *terminus post quem* for the Mediasch panels. In spite of the fact that – as far as is known at present – this is the only example of Meckenem's graphics being reproduced on Transylvanian panels, it should not come as a surprise. Taking into consideration the previously mentioned fact that the print series was

<sup>273</sup> See: B 113 (154), B 114 (165) for Schongauer or B 205 (282), B 206 (282) for Meckenem. The decoration on the back side of altars with this kind of ornament is also characteristic of the late fifteenth century. See for example the retable of Zwickau, the panels of which were produced in the workshop of Michael Wohlgenut, a contemporary of the Schottenmaster and also once perhaps his colleague in the workshop of Pleydenwurff. But a number of other examples may be mentioned. The same leaf-ornament may also be seen on the back side of the retable from Grossprobstdorf.

<sup>274</sup> Quoted by Christoph Metzger: „Multiplikation des Ruhmes.” In: Munich 2006, 38.

<sup>275</sup> Achim Riether. „Israhel van Meckenem. Kupferstecher zu Bocholt.” In: Munich 2006, 21.

<sup>276</sup> Munich 2006, 211.

<sup>277</sup> Max Lehrs. *Geschichte und kritischer Katalog des deutschen, niederländischen und französischen Kupferstichs im XV. Jahrhundert* Vol. 9. Israhel van Meckenem, Vienna: Gesellschaft für vervielfältigende Kunst, 1934. Fifteen complete series are still held today in several collections. See: Jutta Schnack. *Der Passionszyklus in der Graphik Israhel van Meckenems und Martin Schongauers*. (Aschendorff Münster: Stadtarchiv Bocholt, 1979), 110.

<sup>278</sup> Max Geisberg: *Verzeichnis der Kupferstiche Israhels van Meckenem*. (Strassbourg: J.H. Ed. Heitz und Mündel, 1905), 6.

<sup>279</sup> Christoph Metzger: „Multiplikation des Ruhmes.” Munich 2006, 43 and also: Fritz Koreny: „Israhel van Meckenem. Recension of Otmar Plassman: Israhel van Meckenem: Kupferstiche des späten Mittelalters aus Westfalen. Ex. Cat. Schmalleberg, Museum in Kloster Grafschaft, 2000 and Martin Sonnabend. Kupferstiche des Israhels van Meckenem, ex. Cat. Frankfurt am Main. Das Städel 2001.” *Print Quarterly* 18 (2001) no. 4: 469-472. – according to Koreny, Meckenem used patterns that were also applied by Baegert, models from the closest circle of the latter as patterns for the complete Passion cycle.

wide spread throughout Europe<sup>280</sup> and sold, probably bound together into little volumes, a master who – like the painter of the Mediasch panels - had clearly spent time in Vienna could easily have purchased them. Meckenem was strongly influenced in creation of his compositions by Schongauer. However, the Mediasch master seems to have revised some of these compositions and complemented them with small details borrowed directly from Schongauer. He clearly knew the complete Passion series of the Colmar master as well and took as much from it as he needed. The general concept behind Meckenem's images suited the desires of the Mediasch painter: the great narrative-spirit placed into a complex space-perception. A clear perspective project, with secondary scenes in the background, clearly depicted in a way learned from Netherlandish painters. This was adopted along with the twisted, mannered positions of Meckenem's figures. However, finely drawn features and stylistic characteristics related to the circle of contemporary Viennese painting replaced the grotesque faces and expressions. Thus, what does the relationship termed in almost a commonplace way – *Schottennachfolge* – cover in the case of the Mediasch retable? We are concerned here with a well-thought out adoption of an etching series, a compilation of known models in a rather individual style that borrowed substantially from the form, pattern and style-treasury of the Schottencircle. The style of the Mediasch master is not dependent from the Viennese predecessor to such extent as the Birthälm painter. The latter remained a pupil of the Schottenwerkstatt, while the Mediasch master has developed his own more individual style, also utilizing everything else he had learned. He was obviously helped by apprentices in his work. As already mentioned, the quality of the three panels with the **Bearing of the Cross**, the **Man of Sorrows resting** and the **Crucifixion** scenes differs so markedly from the rest of the panels that there is little doubt that they were the work of the leading master himself. These same three scenes also contain the most individual details complementing the Meckenem etchings. The two donator-portraits on the predella were very probably the “autograph” work of the main master also, while the remainder of the panels can be identified as workshop-production.

It is these two portraits that can provide us with further information. Since they were revealed in the 1970s by the Kronstadt restorers, several attempts to identify these two persons have not led to success. The single handhold given the researcher is the preserved coat-of-arms on the left side of the predella (**Fig. III. 93**) and the fact that the two donators, two men – an ecclesiastic and a secular person were represented. Usual donator

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<sup>280</sup> From Germany, through Italy to Spain. See: Schnack 1979.

representations either depict a family, a man with his wife and perhaps children, or a single founder, but the representation of two men is not very usual.

Among the names mentioned by charters from the second half of the fifteenth century referring to Mediasch, the name of the Thabiassy family, “*Erbgraf*”s from the neighbouring Hetzeldorf (*Ațel, Ecel*), recurs quite often.<sup>281</sup> The family is known for having played an important role, not only in the life of the town and the *sedes* of Mediasch, but also in the other Saxon-regions in this period. Georgius Thabiassy was mentioned in the documents since 1454. In the uprising of 1467 against the King Matthias, he seems to have stayed on the side of the ruler. In any case it is striking that only a month after the uprising, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1467, he and his two eldest sons – Ladislaus and Tobias – received a series of rewards for the services done for the king, including a number of possessions and the function of *iudex regius* of the *sedes* of Schenk for the period of their lives.<sup>282</sup> In October 1467, the King gave them a stone-built house in Hermannstadt – again as a reward for their services. In 1470, the town council of Mediasch offered the ruined house of Johannes Bwdner to Georgius Thabiassy for the numerous services performed in the interests of the town, on the condition that he would have it rebuilt.<sup>283</sup> Georgius, already mentioned in 1466 as *judex regius* of the two *sedes* – Mediasch and Schelk, had five children: Ladislaus, Tobias, Stefan, Anna and David.<sup>284</sup> Not much is known of Stefan and David, but the two eldest sons were often referred to in the above-mentioned donations of the King and in later documents referring to them. The only daughter, Anna, was married at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the famous *iudex* of Hermannstadt, Johannes Lulay. From our point of view it is more important that the eldest son, Ladislaus, was already a clerk (*notarius*) of the royal chancery at King Matthias’s court in 1466,<sup>285</sup> after having obtained a degree of Master of Arts at the University of Vienna, where we find him registered in 1460.<sup>286</sup> He still possessed this function in 1470,<sup>287</sup> and probably also in 1472 when he figured as the king’s delegate in a charter inaugurating the seven *sedes* and Hermannstadt in certain new possessions.<sup>288</sup> Not much later he seems to have

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<sup>281</sup> See: Rudolf Theil– Carl Werner, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte des Mediascher Kapitels bis zur Reformation*. (Hermannstadt: Theodor Steinhausen, 1870) and the collection of charters on microfilm in the possession of the Magyar Országos Levéltár. I. 246. 34738 and 34860.

<sup>282</sup> Theil Rudolf, “Die Hetzeldorfer Erbgrafen“ Archiv 30 (1901) 437.

<sup>283</sup> Theil 1901, 441; Entz 1996, 384. Entz also supposes, based on the topographical description given in the source, that the house is identical with the so-called Schuller-house that still stands today on the corner of the market-square, in the neighbourhood of the parish church. See: Entz 1996, 183.

<sup>284</sup> Theil 1901, 439; 440.

<sup>285</sup> Ub Vol. 6., 267. No. 3504.

<sup>286</sup> Tonk 1979, 274.

<sup>287</sup> Tonk 1979, 274.

<sup>288</sup> Theil 1901, 441.

returned to Transsylvania, perhaps on the occasion or shortly before the death of his father, who was supposed to have died around 1477.<sup>289</sup> A series of other charters mention the name of Ladislaus Thobiassy de Etzel. He had clearly obtained a number of exemptions and privileges for Mediasch, Hetzeldorf, Agnetheln and a series of Saxon localities within the family's sphere of influence from the King.<sup>290</sup> In these years he also became parish priest and later became provost in Gyulafehérvár.<sup>291</sup> In 1477, Ladislaus was one of the most important persons in Mediasch, when he was mentioned as a delegate of the "zwei Stühle" travelling to the court in order to arrange a certain problem of the possession of Furkeschdorf.<sup>292</sup> According to Rudolf Theil he possessed the function of *iudex regius* and was also a citizen of Mediasch at this time.<sup>293</sup>

Although indubitable proof is still missing, taking the above listed data into consideration, it is worth to raise the possibility that the donator on the left side of the Mediasch predella might be identified with Ladislaus Thabiassy. The representation of an ecclesiastical person with a magister's *birretum* on his head very well suits the information known about him. Additionally, the coat-of-arms representing a writing hand growing out of a crown, fits perfectly with his position of *notarius* at the royal chancery. The role of the Thabiassy family in the life of Mediasch in the second half of the fifteenth century is unquestioned. The father, Georgius, was *iudex regius* of the two *sedes*, reelected several times during the 1460s. In 1474 he was still greeted first in a charter of the King, apparently as the most important person in Mediasch.<sup>294</sup> It is more than probable that he must have played a great role in the construction works of the town in these years and therefore also the

<sup>289</sup> Theil 1901, 433; 441.

<sup>290</sup> Ub. Vol 6., 267. nr. 3504-3506.; Vol. 7, 124. nr. 4164.

<sup>291</sup> Bónis György, *A jogtudó értelmiség a Mohács előtti Magyarországon*. (The law-aware intelligensia in Hungary before Mohács) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971), 234, 235, 236 and also Tonk 1979, 274.

<sup>292</sup> Theil 1901, 441. The problem of Furkeschdorf went on for years. In 1470, the last inhabitants of Furkeschdorf move to Meschen, and in 1474 King Matthias decides that the territory of Furkeschdorf should be divided between Meschen and Mediasch. Carl Römer, "Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Gemeinde Meschen." *Festgabe zur Erinnerung an die feierliche Einweihung der neuerbauten evangelischen Schule in Meschen am 26. August 1912*, (Mediasch: Reissenberger, 1912), 11-12. It is probably still this same matter that Ladislaus was delegated to solve by the king in 1477.

<sup>293</sup> Rudolf Theil, "Zur Geschichte der „2 Stühle“ in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts", *Archiv*. 11 (1873): 74: "...der Königsrichter der „2 Stühle“ Ladislaus Thobiaschi, der Bürtger von Mediasch war, und der Meschener Graf Jakob zu dieser Zeit die tonangebenden Persönlichkeiten waren." However, the charter he is referring to at this point is unfortunately not unambiguous as regards the function of Ladislaus Thabiassy: "*Nos Matthias... Memoriae commendamus tenore praesentium fideles nostri egregius ladislaus, filius Georgy Thabyasy de Eczel ac Jacobus Gereb de Musna et laurentius Aurifaber de Meggyes in ipsorum ac prudentum et circumspectorum iudicis et juratorum ceterorumque civium et inhabitatorum universorum oppidi meggyes et villae nostrae Muszna exhibuerunt nobis et presentaverunt...*" See Theil 1873, 93.

<sup>294</sup> "*Matthias dei gratia rex Hungariae, Bohemiae et cetera fidelibus nostris nobilibus et prudentibus viris Georgio Thabyasy de Etczel ac iuratis senioribus duarum sedium Saxonicalum Saxonibus salutem et gratiam*". Ub. Vol 7, 23, nr. 4012.

rebuilding and vaulting works on the St. Margaret church that occurred in this period.<sup>295</sup> The influence of the Thabiassy family in Mediasch did not come to an end with the death of Georgius. Ladislaus remained one of the most important citizens in the town. He probably continued to support and try to finish the works begun in the time of his father. The work on the church-chancel probably came to an end in these years, thus it can be easily imagined that he only had to put the crown on the work sponsored by his father and put the altarpiece into commission. Thus, there is also a possibility that the donator on the right side of the predella could be his father, Georgius Thabiassy, represented there on the order of his son – as a gesture of respect and remembrance to one who played such a great role in the life of the town and the constructions on the church. The old age and the dress of the depicted person support this supposition, although only the coat-of-arms – unfortunately destroyed – that would have constituted a proof.

The retable was painted after 1480 and – as pointed out above, based on the Meckenem etchings. The Thabiassy sons, Ladislaus and Tobias, must still have possessed important power in this period. In 1486-1487, the *iudex* of Hermannstadt, Thomas Altenberger, protested against their occupying the role of *iudex* in the Schenk *sedes* (one of the seven *sedes*) without having been elected, based on the privilege given to them by King Matthias in 1467. Little is known on the role played by Ladislaus in Mediasch in these years. However, his wealth and importance still probably permitted him to make the necessary donation for a not particularly large or luxurious but high quality altarpiece. The fact that a Viennese-trained painter, a follower of the most famous master of the region in that period was given the commission for this work, fits nicely also with the information that Ladislaus studied in Vienna in the 1460s. Having spent afterwards years at the royal court, he was probably up-to-date with the cultural and artistic trends and fashions of the period even after he had left Vienna.

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<sup>295</sup> For the architectural history of the church see: Ernő Marosi ed., *Magyarországi Művészet 1300-1470 körül*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 693. – considering the present chancel a work of the second half of the fifteenth century. See also: Alexandru Avram, *Topografia monumentelor din Transilvania. Municipiul Medias. Centrul istoric*. (Topography of Transylvanian monuments. Medias. The Historic center) (Sibiu: Ministerul Culturii și cultelor – Muzeul Național Brukenthal: 2006), 21- 25. According to his information (based mainly on the excavations done in the 1970's) the new, larger chancel was built at the middle of the century (after 1440), at the same time a sacristy was attached, and the southern aisle of the church was finished. He considers the vaulting of the chancel and of the nave dating from the last decades of the century – (thus exactly the period we are speaking about).

### *The panels from Grossprobstdorf*

The information presented above and suppositions on the circumstances of production of the Mediasch retable still do not provide an answer to the question of whether the altarpiece was commissioned outside Transylvania, imported and simply assembled in Mediasch or whether the master actually worked in the region. It is the surviving details from another altarpiece, today in the Brukenthal Museum,<sup>296</sup> that will provide certain hints in this regard. The retable that once decorated the chancel of the church in Grossprobstdorf, a village neighboring Mediasch, was originally a winged one, with most probably a central shrine. The shrine was flanked by four narrow panels displaying four angels playing music. This representation suggests that the shrine might have been decorated with a representation of the Virgin Mary. The inner sides of the two movable wings were painted with what were most probably the four most often represented scenes from the life of the Virgin: the **Annunciation**, the **Visitation**, the **Birth** and the **Adoration of the Magi** (of which the first the Annunciation panel is not preserved). The back sides – or outer sides – of the three surviving panels have pairs of saints painted on them. **Catherine and Margaret (Fig. III. 96)** are depicted on the back side of the Visitation while on the back sides of the other two preserved panels the figures of **St. Laurentius and Archdeacon Stephen** respectively **St. Claudius and an unidentifiable saint** are shown.<sup>297</sup> It is the two stationary wings that are more interesting from the iconographic point of view. The left side panel was decorated with a representation of the Crucifixion combined with the **martyrdom of the ten thousand** martyrs, while the right side wing was ornamented with a depiction of the **martyrdom of Sebastian** (instead of the scene usually paired with the ten thousand, Ursula and the eleven thousand martyrs.)

In spite of the fact that the village of Grossprobstdorf lies so near to the town of Mediasch, it belonged neither to the *sedes* nor to the Chapter of Mediasch. It was the property of the Hermannstadt provostship until 1424, when King Sigismund, after dissolving the provostship, donated its properties to the town of Hermannstadt.<sup>298</sup> In addition, a number of

<sup>296</sup> Inv. No. 1507, 1518, 1519, 1520, 1521, 1522, 1523, 1524, 1601

<sup>297</sup> During the years I was working on my dissertation, I was not allowed to examine the outer sides of the Birth and Adoration panels because of their state of preservation and their positioning in the exposition of the Brukenthal museum. Neither did I ever get photographic documentation from the museum concerning these representations. Thus, the identifications are adopted from Vătășianu 1959, 782.

<sup>298</sup> Ub Vol. 4, 218.

early data exist referring to the tenth paid by the village<sup>299</sup> and certain mentions of the fact that Grosspropstsdorf, as a former property of the Hermannstadt provostship, had the same rights as the seven *sedes*.<sup>300</sup> However, little is known about the history of the locality and its church. According to information from Johannes Rampelt, an inscription above the main entrance of the parish church showed the date of 1492, while another inscription in the chancel dated it to 1505.<sup>301</sup> These data would suggest that the church was under continuous construction at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a fact that has caused researchers to date the altarpiece to around 1500.<sup>302</sup> It has also been pointed out in previous literature that the retable was the work of a master closely related to the workshop of the Mediasch altarpiece. There is no reason to doubt this statement, but it is worth being refined. The inner side of the retable was, as already mentioned, without any iconographic peculiarity. An eye schooled in paintings related to the circle of the Schottenmaster, be it the environment he came from or the school he initiated, - would recognize at first sight that all the panels unmistakably belonged to this same artistic milieu. The representation of the **Birth** is a fairly loose composition; the space where the event takes place is somewhat unusual because of the tiled floor and the elegant brocade carpet in the background. (**Fig. III. 97**) Mary's figure follows a type quite well-known in the environment of the Schottenmaster; her hands clasped in prayer, pointing downwards can be traced back far away to a well-known type of representation based on a text by Brigitte of Sweden.<sup>303</sup> However, the complete arrangement lies quite close to the so-called "Epitaph of Florian Winkler" dated to 1477. (**Fig. III. 98**) Besides the Virgin's figure, details like the position of the child (although not lying on the end of his mother's mantle as in the Austrian panel), his pointing right hand and the total position of his body, it is also Joseph's figure, and the background architecture that contains certain resemblances to Florian Winkler's memorial panel. The gilt, restored spot behind Joseph's head very probably represents a trace of the hood seen on the epitaph in question. The tiled floor and the half arch in the background are all details that correspond with this memorial panel.

<sup>299</sup> In 1331, see: N.a., "Erdélyi káptalani tizedlajstromok" (Tenth-lists of the Transylvanian chapter), *Történelmi Társaság Társulása* 34 (1911), 401-442, here especially 413.

<sup>300</sup> 1469. Ub Vol.4, 280; 1494 Rechnungen 1880, 160;

<sup>301</sup> Data quoted (as Rampelt. L.K. Archiv 1870) according to Fabini 2002, 240. The referred work is probably a manuscript or typo-script in the collections of the Lutheran Archives in Hermannstadt. The abbreviation is not resolved by Fabini.

<sup>302</sup> Hermann Fabini, "Die älteste Darstellung von Mediasch" *Die Woche* 245, 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1972.

<sup>303</sup> János Vég, "Lehajtott fejjel és összekulcsolt kézzel. Egy motívum útja Rogier van der Weydentől Lőcsei Pálígtól" ( With bowed head and joint hands. The route of a motive from Rogier van der Weyden to Paul of Levoča) *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 44 (1995): 19-42.



The representation of the **Epiphany** is a more crowded composition, of the type where the Virgin sits on the side, the three kings approaching her from the left. (**Fig. III. 99**) Somewhat unusually, the scene takes place inside a room, which does not resemble a stall. The carved window frame and the carpet which covers the parapet-wall of the window give more an impression of a palace interior. The motif of the king kissing the hand of the Child recurs quite often in this stylistic circle. This scene was discussed with regard to the similar motif on the Birtälm retable. However, on most of the examples the child reaches for the box of gold held by the king kneeling in front of him, while the latter kisses his hand. In this case, the box has already been handed over. It is being held by the Mother, while Jesus simply offers his hand for the homage-kiss. The other two kings, arranged closely behind the eldest, bring as usual, a ciborium in their hands. Noteworthy is the fact that the third king is not represented, as was already usual in this period with dark skin but rather is shown as a blond man.

The third surviving panel shows a depiction of the **Visitation**. (**Fig. III. 100**) The very poorly preserved representation clearly has a composition well known in the circle of the Schottenmaster, a version of which can be seen on the Schottenaltar itself, also followed in the corresponding Birtälm panel. However, the Grossprobstdorf scene is obviously closer to the Visitation representation in Stift Sankt Florian, attributed to Hans Siebenbürger.<sup>304</sup> (**Fig. III. 20**) The figures of the women, their gestures, the architecture behind Elisabeth with the gate that offers a view into a town, follow quite precisely this panel. It is only the background on the left side that differs somewhat. However, details, such as the square, wrinkled face of Elisabeth and the hard folds of her head-dress, are closer to the style of the master of the Winkler-epitaph more than that of the Schottenmaster. The state of conservation of the back side of this panel makes it hard to carry out an analysis. (**Fig. III. 96**) However, certain features can and should be noted. The lower part of the garments, which is somewhat better preserved, clearly shows the way draperies were conceived in the environment of the Schottenmaster. The most obvious detail is perhaps the wavy edge of Margaret's lifted left mantle-side, a motif also encountered on the visitation scene from Sankt Florian presented above – in the case of Mary's mantle, but also recurring many times on the panels of the Schottenaltar. The surviving detail of Catherine's ring-holding hand shows the same type of large, puffy palm which seems to be characteristic of the master of the Grossprobstdorf altar. The tiled floor is also similar to that appearing in the Birth-scene.

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<sup>304</sup> Depicted in: Schultes 2005, 87, Fig. 181

The four narrow panels depicting angels playing music have the same characteristics as the previous panels. The unusually large hands are striking, and one can also observe deficiencies in the anatomy. (**Figs. III. 101-102**) This is most obvious perhaps on the first angel, who has a short upper body giving the impression he is standing with his shoulders drawn up. The parapet walls in the background of all four panels are a wide-spread motif in the stylistic circle under discussion.<sup>305</sup>

It is the two stationary wings of the Grossprobstdorf altar that can be considered something more special in the iconography of the Transylvanian altarpieces. The representation of the Crucifixion combined with the **martyrdom of the ten thousand** is not very wide-spread in Transylvania and thus, it deserves a small iconographic excursus. (**Fig. III.103**) The legend of Achatius and the ten thousand martyrs is one of the great legends of medieval hagiography. It seems to be generally accepted that the legend itself came into being in the twelfth century, as a sort of encouragement and moral support for members of the Crusades. It came into being based on the legend of the Legion from Thebes (led by St. Mauritius) and it was the crusaders who assured its spread in this first period.<sup>306</sup> The legend became most popular in German territories throughout the Middle Ages with the earliest known example a thirteenth century vault-painting in the St. Severus church in Boppard, Germany. Already the very first known representations of the legend grasp the moment of the martyrs being pushed into thorn bushes and this – as a sort of attribute-type of torture for Achatius and his fellows – becomes the specific scene for representations of the legend. In most cases ten half-naked martyrs surround the figure of Achatius, who is usually enhanced by his position in the composition and by his prince's hat or bishop's miter.<sup>307</sup>

<sup>305</sup> See the representations of the woman saints on the Bäckeraltar from Braunau (depicted in Schultes 2005, 103); Four narrow panels with representations of angels playing music also flanked the shrine of the altar from Csegöld, held today in the Keresztény Múzeum, Esztergom. In spite of the structural analogy of the two altars and although the panels are roughly contemporary with the ones from Grossprobstdorf, there appears to be no serious stylistic relationship.

<sup>306</sup> According to the legend, the heathen prince, Achatius was sent with his nine thousand soldiers to a battle in Asia Minor by the Emperors Hadrian and Antoninus. The great numerical superiority of the enemy made their victory unlikely. However, an angel appears to give them heart promising victory. After their miraculous victory the sky opened and all the soldiers converted to Christianity in the presence of seven angels on Mount Ararat. The emperors, with the assistance of seven oriental wise kings summoned the soldiers before their court trying to convince them to give up their new belief, torturing them - without any success. Yet, at the sight of this strong belief and firm faith, another thousand soldiers from the army of the oriental kings converted and followed Achatius and Christianity. All ten thousand were subject to various torture methods: they were stoned, whipped, crowned with thorns, pushed from Mount Ararat into thorn bushes and finally crucified.

<sup>307</sup> There is a complex literature concerned with the of Achatius being represented as a bishop or as a prince. Achatius is described in the legend as a heathen prince, as a soldier, but in none of the versions does he figure as a bishop. The contradiction is explained by Joseph Braun in his book as a medieval mistake. Joseph Braun, *Tracht und Attribute der Heiligen in der Deutschen Kunst*, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1943), 19-23. The feast of Achatius, the leader of the ten thousand, is celebrated on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June. However, the feast day of Achatius, a bishop of Melitene (Armenia), from around the middle of the AD 3<sup>rd</sup> century is on

The cult and iconography of Achatius and his ten thousand fellows clearly had its real heyday in the fifteenth century. Although the first period of its spreading and the birth of the legend were explained by the need to provide moral support to the crusaders, the changes in message and iconography, and its extensive spread in the fifteenth century have not really been examined by scholars. Around 1440-1450 representations of Achatius among the fourteen auxiliary saints were also becoming increasingly well-known – due to the up and coming popularity of these saints. The general reorganization of the European artistic focal points starting in the 1430s-1440s produced new types of representations and reinterpreted meanings in the iconography of the legend. One of the represented types – combining the martyrdom of the ten thousand with Christ's Crucifixion became remarkably widespread at this time. A representative example, dating from the mid-fifteenth century is on display in the *Šarišske múzeum* of Bartfeld (*Bardejov, Bárťfa*). The painting is one of the very few remaining examples of canvas painting from the Middle Ages, depicting Christ on the cross and ten martyrs in different positions arranged in form of a circle under the cross. Robert Suckale, speaking of this representation and the type it belongs to considers<sup>308</sup> that it is the result of a feasible development, the logical outgrowth of an earlier representation-type. The fourteenth century wall painting in the St Jacob Church in Thorn (*Torún*) depicts the martyrs hanging as fruits on a sort of *lignum vitae*, but stabbed through with the thorns of the tree. The composition of the image is thus reminiscent of Tree of Jesse representations. On the top of the tree and crowning the image, Christ is seen, holding the souls of the dead martyrs in a large shawl, just as angels do on other depictions. This detail, leads our minds to representations of Abraham's bosom – as the embodiment of Paradise. In his article Robert Suckale suggests that this image-type may have served as a source, as starting point, for the fifteenth century depictions of the above-mentioned type, the crucifixion combined with the

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the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. The above-mentioned contradiction was explained by Braun as a confusion of the prince and the bishop, a confusion which slowly came into general use and figures in the literature - due to Braun - as a special iconographic group, under the name of "Achatius as bishop". Another explanation was offered by Christoph Stöcker ("Dürer, Celtis und der falsche Bischof Achatius. Zur Ikonographie von Dürers *Marter der Zehntausend*", *Artibus et Historiae* 1984, 121-137.). He explains, that probably the first version of the legend (figuring also on the pages of the *Acta Sanctorum*), written down in the twelfth century by a certain Anastasius Bibliothecarius, describes as the soldiers were led to victory by the angel, tortured because of their beliefs and became saints after death. Thus the martyrs were pronounced saints without ever having been properly baptized. The legend was soon corrected in several ways. In one of the versions, a bishop is introduced into the story who baptizes the whole army. Around 1350, in a translation of Anastasius' work into German, Hermann von Fritzlar adds the following lines to the original version: "Ouch war mit in gemartert der erzbischof Hermolaus der dise selben heiligen zentusent rittere toufte". Thus, a certain archbishop Hermolaus should have been tortured together with the martyrs after having them baptized. According to Stöcker's suggestion the bishop figuring on representations of the legend in question should clearly be identified with Hermolaus.

<sup>308</sup> Robert Suckale, "Ein Tüchleinbild der Achatiusmarter aus der Nachfolge des Meisters von St. Lambrecht" *Ročenka Slovenskej Národnej Galérie v Bratislave*. (Bratislava: Narodná Galéria, 2001), 77-83.

martyrdom of the ten thousand.<sup>309</sup> An additional explanation for the development of this widespread compositional type could be considered. Examples depicting Achatius in the middle of the scene, in a position with outstretched arms suggesting the Crucifixion of Christ were not unusual. Some of these examples are also quite early. The one from *Thunau* dates from the mid-fourteenth century,<sup>310</sup> the one from *Bruck an der Mur* to around 1400.<sup>311</sup> Already the text of the legend draws a strong parallel with the Passion of Christ. Of all the martyr legends, the story of Achatius and his ten thousand fellows is perhaps apropos for presenting the *Imitatio Christi*. The ten thousand were whipped, crowned with thorns, pushed into the thorn bushes and finally crucified.

The type of representation combining the Crucifixion and the martyrdom of the ten thousand – thus drawing an unambiguous parallel between the two – probably served as a perfect devotional image, a so-called “Andachtsbild” at the period when the ideas of the *Devotio Moderna* and the *Imitatio Christi* were gaining more and more in importance.<sup>312</sup> Perhaps the most popular representation of the legend is the one by Dürer. (**Fig. III. 104**) The painting has been analyzed many times, and is probably one of the most narrative depictions of the legend. Although the composition does not belong to this type it should be mentioned here as it does transmit the same message, alluding to Christ’s Passion through other means. Already Panofsky noted in his Dürer monograph<sup>313</sup> the similarity of the figure with thorn crown to the usual Christ-pattern. He also mentioned that the two crucified martyrs on the painting strongly resemble the two thieves on the Golgotha: “on rough-hewn crosses, while a regular cross, still on the ground between them, awaits a Christ-like victim”.<sup>314</sup> According to Panofsky it “was not so much the martyrdom of the ten thousand in itself, as the analogy between this martyrdom and the Passion of Christ” that appealed to the religious feelings of the Elector (Frederick the Wise), commissioner of the painting. “In visually stressing this

<sup>309</sup> See the depictions of all the abovementioned images in Suckale 2001.

<sup>310</sup> Depicted in: *Corpus der mittelalterlichen Wandmalereien Österreichs*. Vol.1. Elga Lanc ed., *Wien und Niederösterreich*. (Wien: Verl. d. Österreichischen Akad. d. Wissenschaften, 1983) Figs. 580-581.

<sup>311</sup> Depicted in: Günter Brucher ed., *Geschichte der bildenden Kunst in Österreich*, Vol. 2. Gotik. (Munich-London – New York: Prestel, 2000), 129.

<sup>312</sup> Other images also emphasize the identification with Christ through other methods. The martyrs on the painting from Bartfeld, more precisely the position of two of them at the center of the circle (just beneath the cross) imitate positions linked to Christ. The upper martyr is posed in a manner reminiscent of the position of the lying Christ in a Pietà, while the lower martyr, with his arms half hanging makes a reference to the position of Christ on Descent from the Cross scenes. Suckale 2001, 81. The author also suggests that the imitation of Christ can be understood as a secondary theme within the representation.

<sup>313</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer*. (Princeton: New Jersey – Princeton University Press, 1948)

<sup>314</sup> *Ibidem* 121.

analogy (– Panofsky continues –) Dürer transformed a purely narrative rendering of tortures and slaughter into a symbol of the *Imitatio Christi*”.<sup>315</sup>

The panel from Grossprobstdorf is obviously a version of the above mentioned iconographic type, combining the Crucifixion with the martyrdom of the ten thousand. Among the martyrs under the cross, it is not easy to identify Achatius, their leader. According to the dispute presented shortly above concerning this iconography the bishop, represented in the lower left corner, not having an outstanding position in the composition could be identified with Hermolaus. Achatius might perhaps be the person wearing the red prince’s hat, pointing towards Christ, on his right side, in spite of the fact that he is also just one of the ten, not clearly marked.<sup>316</sup> This also points to the fact that the legend itself, the textual background, seems to play a secondary role here. Partly the main emphasis was laid on the Crucifixion, and thus on the devotional character of the image instead of the narrative of the legend and partly because very probably only a representation type was used here without much knowledge of the various legend-versions. A panel in the Museum of Wrocław (*Breslau*) is a close compositional and conceptual analogy to our example which is also similar in its rectangular form. (**Fig. III. 105**) It might therefore be of interest that the panel (originally from Wichów, and dated to 1506-1508) is attributed to the Master of the Poliptych from Gościszowic (*Gießmannsdorf*). This master is known as a follower of Hans Pleydenwurff and therefore was part of a branch of the artistic center dealt with in this chapter of the thesis.<sup>317</sup>

Although much more rigid and anatomically more superficial, with a face that looks more alive, the figure of Christ from Grossprobstdorf is quite similar to the Crucified Savior on the Mediasch altar. The background landscape beneath Christ’s arms, the way the water surrounds the town and the type of trees depicted on the shore are closely related to the corresponding vedute on the Mediasch panel. However, the town representation itself seems to be much more concrete than the small, hardly recognizable buildings on the Mediasch representation. Hermann Fabini has even identified it with the town of Mediasch.<sup>318</sup> Although the arguments of Fabini are not convincing, as the identification of the certain buildings is not

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<sup>315</sup> Ibidem 122. Representations of the ten thousand combined with the crucifixion continued to be a flourishing type on into the sixteenth century in Central Europe. The appropriate panels from the altars at Mühlenbach (Mlynica) and Zeben (Sabinov) in Upper Hungary (today Slovakia) are good examples.

<sup>316</sup> The infrared reflectography of the panel carried out by Ferenc Mihály, showed that the head of this martyr was originally also covered by a miter.

<sup>317</sup> See: Anna Ziomecka ed., *Śląskie Malárstwo Gotyckie. Zbiory Muzeum narodowego we Wrocławiu*. (Gothic painting in Silesia in the National Museum of Wrocław) (Wrocław: Muzeum narodowe, 1986) 63-64.

<sup>318</sup> Fabini 1972

unambiguous,<sup>319</sup> the conceiving of the vedute belongs out of question to the category of real-looking town representations so much typical for the Viennese painting in the second half of the fifteenth century.

The pendent image, the other stationary wing is, as already mentioned, a depiction of **St. Sebastian's martyrdom. (Fig. III. 106)** The figure of the saint, tied to a dead tree with his arms above his head, obviously follows Schongauer's corresponding etching.<sup>320</sup> **(Fig. III. 107)** This is an etching, with a composition clearly alluding to Christ's position when he was whipped. (See for example the scene of the Flagellation in Israhel van Meckenem's Large Passion cycle).<sup>321</sup> The composition is balanced by the group standing on the left side of the image dressed in lively, colorful garments. The two persons, assisting at the event are – as can be seen from their gestures – engaged in a discussion. They greet us like acquaintances. The same motif of the two men having a discussion, is represented with very similar figure-types on the panel depicting the “Man of Sorrows resting” on the Mediasch altar. The concept behind the representation is clearly the same and even the gestures are related. The lifted right hand of Pilate on the Mediasch example, showing his palm as a sign that he is trying to interrupt his speaking partner, recurs in the gesture of the red-mantled figure on the Grossprobstdorf panel. Similarly the scepter held by Pilate on the Mediasch panel in his right hand, lifted and pointing backwards, is repeated in the figure of the bearded man on the Grossprobstdorf image. However, when juxtaposing the two representations, the stylistic and technical details display also considerable differences. The Grossprobstdorf faces are much more accurate although not drawn with such certainty as the ones in Mediasch. The hands are – as already mentioned in the case of the other Grossprobstdorf panels – large and paddle-like, opposite in their anatomical details from the Mediasch retable, which are much finer. Of all the paintings belonging to the Schottenmaster-circle, the one that lies closest to the Grossprobstdorf retable is the so-called “Zwölfbotenaltar” by the Master of the Winkler-Epitaph, with its panels spread in several museums.<sup>322</sup> A comparison between the two persons -mentioned above and the two assistance figures on the panel representing the “Martyrdom of

<sup>319</sup> The buildings of the representation are general types, all of them could easily be found anywhere else as well as in Mediasch. The central piece of architecture, the church, was barely finished at the time this retable was painted. The tower was still under construction in the middle of the 16th century. (See: Avram 2006, 22).

Similarly, at the very end of the century, the town had still not been completely surrounded by a fortification according to a charter of Wladislaw from 1494. In this charter the king orders that the *iudex* of the two *sedes* should be elected for one year from among the citizens of the town and in the other year from among the inhabitants of the *sedes* until the town is not completely fortified. See Theil 1873, 79.

<sup>320</sup> B 112 (240)

<sup>321</sup> B 13 (207)

<sup>322</sup> Two panels in the Städel in Frankfurt, other two in the Saint Martin's church in Pressburg, five in the Szépművészeti Múzeum (Fine Arts Museum) in Budapest and one in the Schottenstift, Vienna.

John the Evangelist” of the former “Zwölfbotenaltar” (in the collections of the Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest, Inv.No. 4147) reflect this relationship. (Fig. III. 108-109) The position of the figures with the younger, beardless one turning towards the other, their lively gestures, the turbans on their heads and their face-types link them stylistically. It is also the way the group was arranged, the face pressed in between the heads of the two discussing individuals, - that can be easily compared. Turbans and other exotic fantasy-hats as well as active, varied, almost forced gestures on the panels painted by the Austrian master have been remarked on as special features of his painting.<sup>323</sup> Such features are also striking on the Transylvanian panels under discussion here.

A concrete compositional link between the work of the Winkler Epitaph-master and that of the painter of the Grossprobstdorf panels has already been mentioned above with regard to the *Birth*-representation. However, the link between the two is more than merely compositional. The connection between the two paintings can be grasped in general features like composition, the relation between background landscape and foreground events, but also, as we have seen, in the figure types and technical details. The way trees and rocks are represented on panels of the “Zwölfbotenaltar”, (like the one representing the Martyrdom of St. Philip (in Bratislava) or the other showing the execution of St. Jacob the elder (Budapest), is obviously similar to the Grossprobstdorf solutions. In both cases, the trees, although they at first sight give the impression of correct nature-observation, after a more careful examination turn out to be a repetition of the same type of tree painted in dark green and modeled with fine yellow spots. The feature is also present in a very similar way on background representations of certain of the Mediasch panels. However, obvious differences in quality may be observed between the Austrian panels and those from Grossprobstdorf. The active gestures, the torsioned positions (on figures of the ten thousand martyrs) do not have the same general dynamic character to the compositions on the Grossprobstdorf panels as on the Austrian retable. Folds are also painted in a less determined, more superficial way compared to those of the Winkler - Epitaph master; this can be clearly observed on the turbans of the two figures compared above.

The stylistic affiliation of the master of the Grossprobstdorf panels is clear. It can also be assumed that he must have worked for a while in the same workshop with the Mediasch master. Specific details like the motif of the already mentioned pair of men in discussion, the close similarity of the background representation on both stationary panels from

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<sup>323</sup> Bodo Brinkman and Stephen Kemperdick eds., *Deutsche Gemälde im Städel. 1300-1500*, Kataloge der Gemälde im Städelches Kunstinstitut Frankfurt am Main Vol. 4. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2002), 292.

Grossprobstdorf and the landscape seen on the Crucifixion panel in Mediasch, as well as other similarities analyzed above, all suggest a workshop connection. Additionally, the decoration on the back sides of both altars, which are covered with a whirling green leaf ornament, also represents a link.<sup>324</sup> (Fig. III. 110) However, as already shortly discussed above, a number of differences also exist. The Mediasch master, at least the leading master of the workshop, whose hand could be traced on three panels and the predella of the Mediasch altar, was someone with much more experience as a painter. His figures are more balanced and better proportioned. The anatomical details, observable especially on representations of naked bodies, are much better executed than those on the Grossprobstdorf panels. It is clear that although a workshop relation can easily be imagined (an idea supported by the geographical proximity of the two localities); the two altars cannot be attributed to one and the same hand. A precise dating of the Grossprobstdorf retable is not possible on a stylistic basis. His work seems to be, more-or-less, contemporary with that of the Mediasch retable, or taking into consideration its stylistic and compositional links to the Master of the Winkler epitaph, perhaps somewhat later. A dating to the very last years of the fifteenth century or the turn of the century, also suggested by the architectural history of the church, seems reasonable.

The fact, that the Mediasch retable is not alone among the Transylvanian retables but that another altarpiece could be linked to the same workshop, supports the thesis that these paintings should not be considered imports, but the products of a workshop operating, – at least for a certain time, in Transylvania. This fact does however not bring us any closer to the leading master of the workshop nor to his colleagues and apprentices. He may have been a foreign master as well as a native born Transylvanian who had accumulated his knowledge of painting in the immediate circle of the Schotten-Werkstatt.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> The feature is fairly wide-spread on retables of the period (see the altarpiece from Zwickau for example), but of all the preserved retables in Transylvania it occurs only on these two.

<sup>325</sup> A certain influence of this Mediasch workshop can also be observed on the panels of the so-called altarpiece from Tobsdorf (today found in the parish church of Mediasch). The retable was incorrectly dated by Gisela and Otmar Richter to 1522, due to a mistakenly read inscription, but the stylistic features of the paintings point to a dating at the end of the fifteenth century. Certain figure-types, garments and folds, details such as representations of trees, grass and floor-tiles show that the paintings of the Mediasch workshop were known to the Tobsdorf master. However, the topic will need further research.



### *The wall-paintings in Schässburg*

A new, still unpublished hint to the fact, that foreign masters schooled in the environment of the Schottenmaster were invited to work in Transylvania in this period can be supposedly deduced from the wall-decoration on the ground floor of the western tower of the so-called “Church on the Mount” (*Bergkirche*) in Schässburg.

An individual entering the church through the western gate, and thus through the tower, will immediately observe the paintings situated opposite to the gate, on the eastern wall right above the entrance to the nave and at the same height on the northern wall. The images, imitations of wooden panels, are placed on the wall-surfaces under the arches of the vaulting, clearly fitted to the shape of the vault. A pair of “panels” is painted in each section, as if hung by chains on a nail. Two pairs of panels on the eastern wall and another pair on the northern wall of the tower – this is what has been preserved of what was originally very probably a more complete cycle decorating the ground-floor of the tower. (**Fig. III. 112**) A representation of a *Vera Icon* can be observed on the eastern wall, between the two panel-pairs and also painted as if it were hanging from nails. (**Fig. III. 120**) A painted inscription can be read right above this, on the in-fill of the vault, situated exactly along the axis of the church. The text was painted accurately in elegant cursive letters on rows previously lined-in. The yellow frame was later added. (**Fig. III. 113**)

1488

*Annorum Domini numerus dum fluxerit iste*

*Hoc opus expletum est auxiliante deo*

*Tempore quo triduo Gerhardi sit tibi sign[um]*

*Nix gravis arboreas fregit a lapsu*

*Huius Opifex Jacobus*

*Kendlinger de Sanct Wolfgang*<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> The inscription was first published by Friedrich Müller, “Die Schäßburger Bergkirche, ein kunstgeschichtlicher Versuch.” *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*. N.F. 1 no.3.(1853): 305-362. According to his transcription the fourth line of the text would be: *Nix gravis et boreas fregit et lap...* I opt for the above mentioned version.

Due to the fact that the text contains important information and has been executed with an unusual accuracy, not only from the point of view of the way it appears, but it also deserves a few extra words in terms of its formulation. So more much so, as no translation or commentary has been published about it yet, in spite of the fact that researchers' opinions differ concerning the subject of the inscription. The text, written in metrical verses is composed of two distiches. The first one is complete, the second is missing a word from its end.<sup>327</sup> The inscription could be translated as:

1488

*As this year of the Lord was passing*

*With the help of the Lord this work was completed*

*When on the third day of Gerhardus – this should be a sign for you (remember this)*

*The weight of the snow has broken the (foliage?) of the trees.*

*Master of this is Jacobus Kendlinger of Sankt Wolfgang.*

The first two lines and the signature thus include art historically important information. However, neither the word *opifex* (simply meaning craftsman), used in the text for identifying the master, nor any other detail of the inscription gives us any further information on the craft Kendlinger worked in, on the nature of the work that was completed and made memorable through these lines.

Attention was first called to the inscription by Friedrich Müller, bishop of the Saxon Lutheran church in Transylvania and one of the pioneers of Transylvanian art- and church-history. In his monograph on the Schässburg church published in 1853.<sup>328</sup> In 1856, he dates the end of the construction works of the church to 1488, based on the inscription.. Imre Henszlmann in his 1879 travel-notes from Schässburg, also mentions the inscription as being related to the church construction.<sup>329</sup> Géza Entz suggests quite decidedly that the large hall of the Schässburg nave was constructed in the 1480s by Jacob Kendlinger from Sankt

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<sup>327</sup> The metrics and the Latin sentence both suggest this. If the third word of the line is read as *arboreas* then a noun is missing to which this attribute belongs. The metrical verse requires a word of two syllables, beginning with a short one. The form of the word *arboreas* requires a *pluralis nominativus*. As *arboreas* means a living tree and as on the third day of Gerhard, the 26th of September, the snow the text speaks of probably fell on still green trees, the missing word could perhaps be: "*comas*", meaning foliage or leaves. For his help with this analysis I have to thank Gábor Révész.

<sup>328</sup> Friedrich Müller, "Die Schäßburger Bergkirche, ein kunstgeschichtlicher Versuch." *Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*. N.F. 1 no.3 (1853), 305-362. and Idem. "Die Schäßburger Bergkirche in Siebenbürgen." *Mitteilungen der k.k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmäler*. 1 (1856), 167-172.

<sup>329</sup> Henszlmann Imre, "Úti jegyzetek a királyföldről. Segesvár" (Travel notes from the royal lands) *Archeológiai Értesítő*. 9 (1879): 337.

Wolfgang.<sup>330</sup> This opinion was adopted by Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker in their *Künstlerlexikon*.<sup>331</sup>

The wall-paintings of the church were revealed in 1934. (Thus, it is obvious that researchers publishing the inscription before that date could not possibly have thought of its eventual relevance for the neighboring wall paintings) Julius Misselbacher, who led the works, published a report in the same year on the marvelous wall paintings which they had revealed in the chancel, on the triumphal arch, in the northern aisle, the vaulting of the church and in the tower.<sup>332</sup> In his short analysis, Misselbacher considers the frescoes in the tower in terms of their dimensions and style closely connected to Transylvanian panel painting, but he does not even mention the inscription, probably also considering it an architectural data. It was I.D. Ștefănescu who first raised the idea (only four years after Misselbacher's publication) that Jacob Kendlinger, coming from Salzkammergut as he says, might have been the master of the paintings on the ground floor walls of the tower.<sup>333</sup> For a long time there has been no response to his opinion. Dénes Radocsay connected the inscription with the building works on the church, based, as he affirms, on oral information received from Géza Entz.<sup>334</sup> Ștefănescu's opinion was adopted by Virgil Vătășianu, who refers to Wolfgang Kendlinger as the master of the wall paintings, considering Sankt Wolfgang to be a locality in Tyrol, thus also placing the frescoes in the neighborhood of Tyrolese panel paintings.<sup>335</sup> His analysis is discussed at length by Christoph Machat in his dissertation on the architectural history of the "Bergkirche" from Schässburg.<sup>336</sup> Although he refers to the master as coming from Salzkammergut, as regards the stylistic affiliation he adopted Vătășianu's evaluation and accepts the theory of the Tyrolese influence. Similarly Tyrolese connections are mentioned by Corina Popa in her study dedicated to the wall paintings of the church in Schässburg.<sup>337</sup> Thus,

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<sup>330</sup> "Segesváron a Hegyi templom három pár fejezet nélküli, karcsú pillérekkel tagolt, tágas csarnokát az 1480-as években a Sankt Wolfgangból való Jakob Kendlinger építette." (The large hall of the church on the hill in Schässburg, articulated by three pairs of slender piers with no capitals, was constructed in the 1480s by Jakob Kendlinger from Sankt Wolfgang) Entz 1996, 180.

<sup>331</sup> Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker eds., *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. Vol. 20. (Leipzig: Verlag Von E.A. Seemann, 1927), 151.

<sup>332</sup> Julius Misselbacher, "Die Wandgemälde der Schässburger Bergkirche". *Jahresbericht der v. Gemeinde A.B. in Schässburg über das Jahr 1934*, (Schässburg: Ev. Gemeinde, 1934), 8-14. He mentions in his article that cleaning the paintings in the tower was extremely difficult because the blue paint which had covered the frescoes could only be removed by rubbing the surface with brushes and bread for a long time.

<sup>333</sup> Ion D. Ștefănescu, *L'art Byzantin et l'art Lombard en Transylvanie*. (Paris: Geuthner, 1938), 27.

<sup>334</sup> Dénes Radocsay, *A középkori Magyarország falképei* (Wall paintings of medieval Hungary) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1954), 204-205.

<sup>335</sup> Vătășianu 1959, 765-766.

<sup>336</sup> Machat, Christoph: *Die Bergkirche zu Schäßburg und die mittelalterliche Baukunst in Siebenbürgen*. (Munich: Verlag des Südostdeutschen Kulturwerks, 1977): 97.

<sup>337</sup> Corina Popa, "Pictura murală a „Bisericii din Deal” și istoria orașului Sighișoara", (The wall paintings of the church on the hill and the history of Schässburg), *Ars Transilvaniae*. 8-9 (1998-1999): 175-184.

the literature referring to the inscription and the wall paintings in the tower reflects different opinions regarding the role of Kendlinger in Schässburg, but those considering the frescoes Kendlinger's work, are unanimous in stating that they are the work of a panel painter schooled in Tyrol.

For the art historian who has spent considerable time studying, analyzing, comparing and writing about the works of the Schottenmaster, his circle and his followers, the wall paintings in the Schässburg-tower will bring a special joy.

As already mentioned above, the paintings on the eastern wall present four scenes of Christ's Passion: The **Flagellation** and the **Crowning with thorns**, on the left side, while the **Ecce Homo** and the scene of **Christ being deprived from his robes** appear on the right. All four images have imitated profiled wooden frames. They are hung in pairs with a painted chain on a painted nail. In order to make the *trompe l'oeil* even more perfect, a bird was depicted on the frame of the right side panel.

**The Flagellation** is an absolutely balanced composition, framed by a semicircular arch, marking the front of the room where the event takes place. (**Fig. III. 114**) Christ is tied to the pier holding the vault in the center of the space. He is represented with his arms tied to the pier behind him wearing nothing but his loin-cloth. The surface on the left of the pier has been largely destroyed. Thus, the figures of the two soldiers standing on that side cannot be very easily discerned. One of them is dressed in a green overcoat and tight, green stockings. He raises his right hand in order to hit Jesus. The other figure seems to have been clad in a red overcoat and his bare legs can still be discerned with pointed, dark boots on his feet. A third soldier stands to the right of the pier. He is dressed in red stockings, high, red boots, a light overcoat and a yellow mantle thrown on his shoulder, wrapped around his waist and waving in front and behind him. He lifts both his hands to the right side of his head in order to strike Christ with his whip. The figure-type is quite similar to that of the executioner of St. Jacob the elder on the panel by the Winkler-Epitaph master (Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest). (**Fig. III. 115**) The motion, the gesture, the dynamics of both the figure but also the drapery are very similar. The overall composition of the wall painting cannot be considered a copy of Schongauer's etching in a similar topic,<sup>338</sup> but it must have been a general source of inspiration for the painter. (**Fig. III. 72**) The composition comprising the semicircular frame, the

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<sup>338</sup> B 12 (125)

pier in the center, Christ's position and the doorway or arch on the right side in the background, all clearly reflect that the painter was familiar with this etching.

A similarly balanced composition is the **Crowning with Thorns. (Fig. III. 116)** Christ is seated centrally, turned in three-quarter profile to his left. His back is covered by a red mantle which falls to the ground behind him also covering his knees. Three soldiers, standing on his left, on his right and behind him are pushing the crown of thorns down onto his head with two long sticks. The one on his right wears a yellow shirt and a sleeveless, red waistcoat above, buttoned down the front. His head is covered by a blue cap with a long end. Only the white shirt and a blue hat with a yellow edge can be discerned of the man standing behind Christ, while the one on his left is dressed in green stockings, pointed shoes, a light green overcoat with a red edge and a yellow turban on his head. A fourth man kneels in front of Christ: only his high, dark boots and his yellow coat can be seen. He is the one handing over the stick, ironically alluding to the scepter. Christ grasps it with his right hand. The background was carried out with much attention and a clear predilection for details. Two windows can be discerned behind Christ; a man leans out of the larger one. A loggia can be seen on the right side of the image. On its parapet, between two columns, another man leans on his elbow pointing toward his mate who leans through the window. His head is covered by a long, blue cap. Behind him the inside of a vaulted room can be observed. The background on the left side of the image is not so well preserved but this was probably the representation of another room. A rectangular doorway can be discerned as well as the head of a moustached man wearing a red cap with a yellow edge. The concept of the background with views into several architectural spaces, with small genre-figures in the windows and loggias, are all very typical of the (Netherlandish inspired) contemporary Viennese painting.

It is the scene depicting the **Ecce homo** that is most closely linked to the Schottenaltar, being an accurate copy of the corresponding Viennese panel, with only a very few modifications. **(Figs. III. 117-118)** Christ is just stepping out through a rectangular door and, two wide stairways separate him from the crowd. His back is covered by a red mantle, the left side of which is held by Pilate, standing to his left. Christ's hands are bound together and on his head he wears the thorn crown. Even the arched opening in the inside of the building he is coming out of is represented. Only the two figures standing behind Christ on the Schottenpanel are omitted in Schässburg. Pilate lifts his right hand, pointing with his thumb towards Christ. In his left hand he holds the end of the Saviour's mantle. He wears a long, green robe, edged with white fur, yellow gloves and a red hat with a yellow rim. Next to him stands an elegant man with his arms crossed, wearing a large, yellow mantle, lined with blue,

and a dark cap with a high rim, pointed above his forehead. Between Pilate and him is depicted a third bearded person in a yellow, kaftan-like mantle, with a wide collar and closed with a long row of buttons. He wears a white turban on his head, slightly turned towards the crowd. He lifts his right hand, also pointing with it in the direction of the crowd. The people and soldiers represented in the background all gesture in the same manner, crossing their fingers. This is an allusion to their wish to have Christ being crucified. Behind them, a detail from a town is depicted. The arrangement of the image as a whole, the figures, their position and gestures correspond entirely to the **Ecce Homo** panel of the Schottenretable. It is only the colours of the garments that have been modified, and a certain simplification of the composition can be observed in that a couple of the staff-figures have been omitted. It is also obvious that the painter both followed the Viennese panel as a pattern and used it as a compositional aid. He can also be considered a stylistic follower of the Schottenmaster. The faces of his figures, the types of robes he paints and the way the folds of the draperies are depicted – are all very close stylistically.

The same thing can be stated on the fourth “panel” of the Schässburg Passion cycle which represents the scene when the soldiers undress Christ. (**Fig. III. 119**) Already the figure, very probably Pilate, standing on the left side of the picture would in itself lead our minds to the school of the Schottenmaster. His face-type, his green mantle and red hat, just as represented on the previous scene, would almost be enough in itself to include the master in the group of Schottenmaster followers. Christ is placed in the center of the composition with his hands in front of him and his mantle still over his hands. Two soldiers pull his robe off. Pilate is standing behind them on the left side of the image while next to him another man is shown whose head has been completely destroyed. Only his yellow garment can still be discerned. The image is split into two parts by a halberd behind Christ. The Virgin, other women and John the Evangelist are standing on the right side of the halberd. The Virgin crosses her arms over her breast and stands with closed eyes. She wears a red dress and a white mantel above it. John holds her from behind, by her arm. He has a green tunic on and a red mantle above it. The remains of a green landscape can be observed in the background.

The two frescoed “panels” on the northern wall are on a completely different topic, not part of the Passion cycle. They have been identified in previous literature unanimously as two scenes from the life of St. Francis of Assisi.<sup>339</sup> The first one presents the **stigmatization of St. Francis**. He kneels with his arms lifted above his head, a red book lies on the ground in front

<sup>339</sup> Vătășianu 1959, 765; Popa 1998-1999, 175-184; Machat 1977, 97.

of him and he awaits the wounds from the seraphim visible hovering above him. (**Fig. III. 121**) His head is surrounded by a halo. A rock occupies the right side of the image and a monk dressed in a cowl sits at its base. A landscape with a little church on the left side is painted in the background. The exact identification of the second scene has been omitted by researchers. (**Fig. III. 122**) The representation was simply called “another scene from the life of St. Francis”. In reality the scene should be identified with a **Noli me tangere** representation. Christ stands on the right, barefoot with his back covered by a large red mantle. The wounds from his death on the cross can be observed on his feet. In front of him Mary Magdalen kneels, holding out her hands towards Christ. Her long, blonde hair falls down her back, the white shawl that once covered her head has slid down on her neck. Similarly, the wide, red mantle has slid down from her back to her waist. Her head is surrounded by a halo. The image is one of the most worn ones of the whole series, but a wooden gate and a fence, painted with thick, red contours, can still be discerned in the background. In spite of the different topic and its apparent independence from the Passion-representations, the two paintings on the northern wall are clearly works by the same hand. The concept behind of the compositions clearly reflects this and the similar illusionistic way of representing of the hanging panels leaves no doubt that these two scenes belong to the same decorative program. (Attention needs to be drawn to the fact, that the remainder of the tower walls can still hide other scenes belonging to this series, the surface has not been researched. Originally possibly all the four walls of the tower have been covered by paintings and the idea standing behind the program of these could only be understood with the knowledge of the whole.)

The state of conservation of the paintings and the difference in the technique makes it difficult to compare them to the already presented examples of the Transylvanian Schottenmaster-followers. However, based on those face types that can still be clearly discerned, the general composition, the handling of the draperies and on details like the background trees and architecture on the St. Francis-scene, the painter’s technique lies closer to the workshop behind the Mediasch altarpiece compared to that of the BIRTHÄLM retable.

The imitation panels are obviously not aiming to represent an altar-piece and their placement would also not justify this.<sup>340</sup> They are a simple illusionistic play, quite fashionable

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<sup>340</sup> Representations of altarpieces in the form of wall paintings are known in Transylvania from the chapel of BIRTHÄLM and the very similar chapel – arranged, just as in BIRTHÄLM, in one of the towers of the fortification walls around the parish church in Mediasch.

in that period from Italy through the Tirol to several Austrian regions. Mantegna's decoration of the Ducal Palace (Palazzo Ducale), Friedrich Pacher's wall paintings in the Dominican Friary of Bozen, or certain works of the Uttenheim master or Michael Pacher could all be named as representatives of the same playful, illusionistic intentions in the late fifteenth century. The works of the Pacher-circle might of course even have been known to the painter working in Schässburg, as we will see in the following pages.

The prominent place of the inscription: right above the entrance, along the axis of the church, has certainly contributed to the opinion of the researchers who consider that it marks the date of the finishing of the building-works. The fact that important building works took place in this period in the church is without doubt.<sup>341</sup> An inscription dates the pulpit, built and carved together with the northern, middle pier of the nave to 1480. The date 1483 figures three times in the church: on the vault in the neighbourhood of the northern piers and on the sides of two southern windows. One of the window-inscriptions even states the role of the mayor in the works, "Michael Polner purgermeister 1482". There is also another important datum that refers to the fact that during the 1480s the hall church was finished and vaulted. A certificate of character was issued in 1490 by the council of the town of Schässburg for Michael Polner, a document that clearly affirms, among the other virtues of the mayor that he played a great role in the building works and the revaulting of the church on the mount.<sup>342</sup> Why would an architect, who has finished a tremendous work in the nave of the church, linked precisely to the enlargement and modernization of the building, want to sign his name on the vaulting of the tower, considered to be one of the oldest parts of the actual church? Even when the place of the inscription is very prominent, it does not seem probable that the words "*hoc opus*", placed on the tower-vault, would refer to the building works of the nave. It seems much more probable that the verses refer to the wall paintings shown above. It is not very general among painters to sign their works in such an elegant way, in metrical verse, but a not very much later example comes from Transylvania. The predella of the Taterloch-

<sup>341</sup> See: Machat 1977

<sup>342</sup> Karl Fabritius: *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte des Kisdler Kapitels*. (Hermannstadt: Michaelis, 1875), 107-108. "1490. 16 Juli. Schässburg (...) Nouerint uniuersi Ouos Egriegius vir Michael polnar alias nostre Ciuitatis Magister Ciuium presentium ostensor unacum sia virtuosa Geneloia nostri in medium educatus laudanda vestigia suorum parentum ymitatus hucusque laudabiliter consecutus semper in omni virtutum exercicio morum honestate et probitate Nichilominusque in Sublimacione Magistratus Ciuium intra quaque et extra se laudabiliter tenuit pariterque eciam rexit absque quavis nota, vitam cuius nemo veritate dicenda quouismodo obfuscare potest Item proprio ingenio attinctis quoque manibus proprijs certa Edificia Structurarum pro Usibus Ecclesiarum Turrium menium In muro nostre Ciuitatis prefulgen. pro decore et tuicione conseruationeque Incolarum nostrorum eciam precipue Testudinem lucidissimam in Ecclesia Beatissimi patris Nicolai patroni huiusmodi urbis construi perswasit Illa autem omnia non obstan. Neque pensan. Ut ex reuera (se) intellectu edoctj sumus et clarissimam facti habemus experientiam (...)"



altarpiece contains the date of the work (1508) and the name of its painter (Vincencius Cibiniensis) on the left side while on the right side an epigram written in metrical verses can be read, written with the same letter-types, on imitated pieces of papers.<sup>343</sup> Further, the name of the master provides additional support to the hypothesis that Jacobus Kendlinger of Sankt Wolfgang was the painter of the wall paintings in Schässburg. While arguing this matter, it must be mentioned that a not very often mentioned example of paintings belonging to the circle of the Schottenmaster can be found on the backside of the famous altarpiece of Michael Pacher in Sankt Wolfgang. It has been unanimously been thought in the literature that the back side of the retable, dated with an inscription to 1479, was executed not by Michael Pacher, but by local masters. The construction of the altarpiece was obviously complete and in its place by this time with the panels and sculptures arriving even later. They were transported partly at Pacher's expenses, partly at the expense of the abbot, through Braunau to Mondsee and Sankt Wolfgang.<sup>344</sup> Lothar Schultes explicitly includes the paintings on the back side of the altarpiece within the circle of Hans Siebenbürger.<sup>345</sup> It can thus easily be imagined that a master called Jacob, originally coming as his name shows from Kendling, a locality belonging to the administrative circle of Braunau in Upper Austria, spent a certain amount of time in Sankt Wolfgang. He may have worked perhaps in the same workshop, where the back side of the Pacher-altarpiece or the retable of the bakers' guild in Braunau was executed, and finally during the 1480s he reached Transylvania.

It is not very probable that a foreign master should have been invited to Schässburg in order to paint a few panel-imitations on the walls of the tower. It is much more probable that Jacob Kendlinger has arrived in Schässburg in order to execute a complete altarpiece for the newly finished church, perhaps on the commission of Michael Polner himself, who probably played a big role not only in the building but also in the decorating and equipping of the church. We do not have any information regarding where the mayor studied, but several members of the Polner family, known to have played an important role in Transylvania in that period, are mentioned in a number of documents dating from these years.<sup>346</sup> A certain Marcus Polner, brother of the mayor, studied in Vienna in 1460. In 1462, he was already mentioned in

<sup>343</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this detail see the chapter in this dissertation on the altarpiece from Taterloch/Seiden.

<sup>344</sup> Lukas Medersbacher, "Michael Pacher", Artur Rosenauer ed., *Michael Pacher und sein Kreis: Ein Tiroler Künstler der europäischen Spätgotik 1498 – 1998*. Ex. Cat. Augustiner Chorherrenstift Neustift (Bozen: Augustiner Chorherrenstift, 1998): 173.

<sup>345</sup> Schultes 2005, 90.

<sup>346</sup> Richard Schuller, "Das Patriziergeschlecht der Polner in Schässburg," *Archiv* 27 (1897) 344-407.

the matricols of the University of Vienna as a baccalaureus of the free arts.<sup>347</sup> Later, as doctor of Roman law and parish priest of Schaas, he was given the position of director of the St. Andrew chapel in Pécs by the king. In 1484, he is mentioned as archdeacon of Pest and canon of Vác.<sup>348</sup> It can thus easily be imagined that Marcus Polner, having studied in Vienna in the years when the Schottenaltar was exactly under construction played a role in the commissioning, in the choice of the master, for the new high altar from the Bergkirche in Schässburg.

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<sup>347</sup> Tonk 1979, 283.

<sup>348</sup> Gernot Nussbächer, "Spärliche Quellen. Zur ältesten Ortsgeschichte von Schaas," *Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung* 22.07.1995, No. 651: 7; Idem, "Nochmals: Polner in Schässburg." *Karpaten Rundschau* 9 (27), 03.03.1994: 6. and Idem, "Michael Polner Purgermeister. Eine 500 Jahre alte Inschrift und ihre Bedeutung (Jubiläum der Schässburger Bergkirche)", *Neuer Weg* 03.09.1983, 10668 (35): 4.

*Summary. Transylvania's special role for the Schotten-followers.*

There is still a great need for art history scholars to devote an overview study to the wide-spread influence of the Schottenmaster in Central Europe. In spite of the fact that many pieces of research have contributed considerable information on this point, there is still no systematic overview on the topic which would delineate the geographical, cultural and historical boundaries of the impact of this workshop, its methods, the paths and stations along its spread. Transylvania has a special place among the territories touched by this stylistic influence, mirrored in the fairly large number of preserved paintings belonging to this circle. The feature can be and has been explained primarily by the fact that one of the leading masters of the Schotten-workshop, or perhaps the leading master himself might be identified with a painter who came from the region called Hans Siebenbürger. A painter who, as Robert Suckale has pointed out, came from Transylvania, studied in the workshop of Hans Pleydenwuff in Nürnberg, was afterwards invited to Vienna and has undoubtedly played a most important role in the finalization of the Schottenretable.<sup>349</sup> The story is made even more interesting by the fact to which Imre Takács first referred to, and which was also accepted by Suckale, that the Abbot of the Monastery of the Scotts in Vienna since 1467 had been a certain Matthias Vinck who came from Transylvania. It was under his abbotship that the Schotten-retable was produced.

It is therefore evidently not by chance that Transylvania reflected the influence of the Schotten-workshop through such a large number of art pieces. The preserved examples very probably represent only a certain percentage of what was originally produced by followers of the Schottenmeister in Transylvania. It is striking that these paintings all come from the same, quite narrow geographical region, marked by a triangle between Mediasch, Birtälme and Schässburg. With the exception of the Grossprobstdorf panels, all these works date to the 1480s. It would be thus very tempting to assume the existence of a large local workshop that these paintings could all be attributed to although the stylistic and technical differences between them exclude this possibility and make the question rather more complex. The Birtälme altarpiece stands out quite on its own among the others. Stylistically it is the most dependent on the Schottenaltar and completely independent from the rest of the Transylvanian examples. We do not have any information on its master and we cannot even demonstrate that

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<sup>349</sup> Suckale 2004, 376.

it was locally produced and not imported. Even its origin, its primary place of origin is questionable, the present altarpiece having been assembled for the newly built chancel of the Birthälm church, through reusing and repainting the fifteenth century panels in 1515. The eight panels of the Mediasch retable have shown that the altarpiece is the result of a workshop collaboration while the three panels with the **Bearing of the Cross**, **The Resting Man of Sorrows** and the **Crucifixion** can be attributed to the leading master, who clearly has a very individual style. The rest of the paintings are obviously of weaker quality. Unfortunately, due to the complete loss of the sculptural parts of the Mediasch retable, it is not possible to say anything about the sculptor working in or for this workshop. The assumption that the workshop functioned in Transylvania is supported by the stylistically closely related panels from Grossprobstdorf, which we consider were executed in the same milieu. The wall paintings in the church-tower of Schässburg represent an excellent example of a work which by its nature could surely not been imported, but executed on the spot by a foreign master. Jacob Kendlinger coming from Sankt Wolfgang in Austria was clearly schooled in the immediate neighborhood of the Schotten-workshop; however, we have no information about the length of the period he has spent in Transylvania, no data regarding to whether he has had a workshop here or whether he was invited only for a commission or two. It can be supposed though that he was not invited from far away for simply executing the wall paintings in Schässburg, but he very probably also painted an altarpiece for the same church.

Thus, the preserved examples offer a fragmented image of a complex, far-reaching situation. The identification of the persons or families behind these commissions may offer some additional data on this question. If our assumptions are correct then these families would have had a fairly high position in society and a considerable role and social status in the Saxon community. Besides, both families, the Thabiassys regarding the Mediasch retable and the Polners in relation to Schässburg altarpiece had lively contacts with the royal court of King Matthias. There are also supposed commissioners who were also documented as having studied in Vienna in this period, when they could easily have become acquainted with the works of the leading Viennese workshop, that of the Schotten-retable. Their Viennese education does of course not have to be understood as something very particular in Transylvania in that period. University registers show that it was the University of Vienna and that of Cracow that were by far most frequented by Transylvanians wishing to have university degrees. The second half of the fifteenth century saw a considerable increase in the number of

Transylvanian students attending both universities.<sup>350</sup> There is a panel in addition to the altarpieces analyzed above, that could be brought into the discussion of the circle of the Transylvanian Schotten-followers. The painting in question is the detail of a panel registered over all as originating in Marosvásárhely, today in the possession of the Hungarian National Gallery.<sup>351</sup> The image is part of an originally fairly large panel, painted on both sides. The feast-day side showed a woman saint encrowned, elegantly dressed, in front of a pressed golden background decorated with large patterns. It is the work a' day side that presents undoubted links to the followers of the Schotten-workshop.<sup>352</sup> The small and very fragmentarily preserved detail from a Crucifixion scene can be recognized there (**Fig. III. 123**). The composition of the painting, the recognizable face, the colors and types of garments still observable strongly suggest that the master of the panel belonged within the group of Schotten-followers. However, newest research has proved, that the panel does not have Transylvanian origins, but very strong stylistic links support its upper Hungarian provenience. Its production in the workshop of the altarpiece in Zipser Kapitel (today Slovakia: Spišská Kapitula, Szepeshely) can be well supported.<sup>353</sup>

So far, these are all the preserved examples of Transylvanian painting influenced by the Schotten-workshop, - at least as far as is known today. Pieces of art from Upper Hungary (especially the high altarpiece from Kassa (Kaschau, Kosice), in Meran<sup>354</sup> and elsewhere suggest that the large workshop of the Schottenmaster in Vienna was open to a variety of

<sup>350</sup> See Tonk 1979, 44-51.

<sup>351</sup> Inv.nr. 3713. The panel is registered as coming from Marosvásárhely because it was acquired from a certain Lajos Fenyő, clerk of the Hungarian State Railways in Marosvásárhely. Fenyő asks in a telegram in 1908 that the Museum of Fine Arts from Budapest should transfer 100 Korona, the price of the panel, to the address of his wife in Tövis (Teiuș). (See: Inv. No. 320/1908 in the archives of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest).

<sup>352</sup> Radocsay already considered the panel, based on its feast-day side, a work by a younger master who worked in the workshop of the Mediasch altarpiece. Radocsay 1955, 180.

<sup>353</sup> See the attribution in: Emese Sarkadi Nagy, "Az úgynevezett Marosvásárhelyi tábla eredetéről, avagy a regionális kutatások buktatóiról" (About the origins of the so called panel from Marosvásárhely, or the difficulties of regional research). Paper given at the conference "A régi Erdély művészete" (Art of the old Transylvania) in Cluj, december 2007. (under publication)

Two other panels should be mentioned in the context of the Schottenmaster-followers: one of them, representing the *Martyrdom of Saint Barbara* is held by the Brukenthal Museum (inv. No. 2239) and presents obvious connections to the stylistic circle analyzed here. However, it cannot be discussed under the rubric of Transylvanian panel painting. The Brukenthal Museum acquired it in 1963 from a private collection in Bucharest (that of Constantin Crăciun). Most probably (in spite of the attributions in catalogues and exhibitions of the Brukenthal Museum) it should not be attributed to any of the Transylvanian workshops but rather to a South-German one. Another panel that needs to be touched upon here is a painting representing the *Martyrdom of Saint Ursula*, from a private collection in Munich. The panel has already been mentioned above. Robert Suckale considers it to be a product of the Mediasch workshop. (Suckale 2004) This hypothesis is based mainly on the head-type of the figure standing on the left side of the image. It is related to the head of Pilate represented on the Crucifixion panel in Mediasch. In spite of the indubitable similarity of the two figures, the rest of the Munich panel differs so much from the details of the Mediasch retable that I would not dare to speak of such a close relationship.

<sup>354</sup> Suckale 2004, note no. 47.

apprentices and painters coming from abroad, wishing to learn. These people then spread the style and motif-collection acquired in the Viennese workshop all over central Europe with Transylvania obviously occupying a prominent role in their itinerary.

## **Vincencius. Pictor Cibinensis. The development of a Transylvanian master in the sixteenth century**

### *Previous research on Vincencius and the historical sources*

Painters' names, which hardly ever survive, can only rarely be connected with the haphazardly remaining artworks in fifteenth-sixteenth-century Transylvanian art. The significance of the painter Vincencius from Hermannstadt lies exactly in the fact, that a number of works have been preserved that can be attributed to him based on the signature and the date he placed on most of these works; - something not often done in Transylvania in this period.<sup>355</sup> In addition, particular paintings can be connected to his workshop, using critical style methodologys, beginning with the secure attributions. Thus, his oeuvre, his stylistic- and technical development can be clearly followed for a fairly long interval between his first mentioning as a painter in 1500 – with respect to his earliest known work from 1508 – and his last preserved panel dated to 1525. The fortunate coincidence of these facts provides for the first time the opportunity to outline a Transylvanian altar-building workshop. This workshop functioned for at least a quarter of a century, exactly in the same period as the hey day of the production of Transylvanian winged altar-pieces. The workshop was located in Hermannstadt, the city that played a prominent role in the Transylvanian Middle Ages, not only in artistic life but also in political, economic, cultural and ecclesiastical life. The numerous craftsmen working there could thus take advantage of all the circumstances necessary for their successful and very active work.

It is exactly the above mentioned features that raised the interest of researchers in the person of *Vincencius pictor Cibiniensis* - as he called himself in the inscription on the predella from Taterloch, his earliest known work. The fairly high number of art historical articles mentioning his name and his works, never included however a thorough analysis of any of his paintings, nor did anyone try to gather together all the data, that might be used to provide the fullest possible image of his activity.<sup>356</sup>

The earliest works mentioning Vincencius and showing appreciating for his art, date to the eighth decade of the nineteenth century. It was Ludwig Reissenberger who first mentioned his name in 1871, in connection with the altar from Heltau. Reissenberger referred to the

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<sup>355</sup> Certain researchers doubt that the same person could have been the author of all these works, - we will come back to the topic at a later point in this chapter.

<sup>356</sup> The literature on the works of Vincencius will be referred to and commented on in a much more detailed way in the analysis of certain paintings. However, it is necessary to present them shortly in an overview here in order to provide an image of the research that has been dedicated to the topic.

inscription of the predella containing the painter's name.<sup>357</sup> A few years later, Károly Pulszky provided a fairly thorough description of the art objects he saw in records he kept of a trip through the region, including this same altar from Heltau.<sup>358</sup> We next come across the name of this master in a list of artist-names compiled by W. Wenrich,<sup>359</sup> and in a description of the already detached Heltau retable (concentrating on the predella) from the pen of Emil Sigerus, who owned the predella of the altarpiece for a short period.<sup>360</sup> The late *custos* of the Brukenthal Museum, Miklós Csáky, also mentions the piece in his guide to the gallery of the Brukenthal collection.<sup>361</sup> However, the very first researcher who paid adequate attention to Vincencius, was Victor Roth. He dedicated a separate study to the person and the *oeuvre* of the Hermannstadt painter. Roth, while commenting on the altars and panels attributed to Vincencius, stated that the master had been a foreigner who arrived to Transylvania, possibly via Upper Hungary.<sup>362</sup> The author also dealt with the altar from Gross-Schenk in another individual study – a study where he interpreted important historical data with reference to the altar, and described the retable prior to the cleaning of the predella from the eighteenth century repaint, carried out by Gisela Richter in the 1980s.<sup>363</sup> The well-known Saxon researcher came back to the work of Vincencius in his overview-works as well: tangentially in his Transylvanian art history from 1914,<sup>364</sup> and more thoroughly, also presenting other retables of this master, in his much-quoted corpus on Transylvanian altars. Additionally to the signed works, he also attributed several other panels to Vincencius in this book, without thoroughly presenting the stylistic features that back up his attributions.<sup>365</sup>

A few decades later, his opinion has been contradicted on many points by Jolán Balogh. The Hungarian art historian in her work dedicated to the Transylvanian Renaissance, suggested<sup>366</sup> that it was impossible to attribute all the paintings mentioned by Roth to one and the same master. She was of the opinion, that many of Roth's attributions were mistaken. In

<sup>357</sup>Ludwig Reissenberger, "Kurzer Bericht über die von Pfarrern in Siebenbürgen über kirchliche Altertümer gemachten Mitteilungen," *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Wochenblatt*, 6 Nr. 53 (1873): 102.

<sup>358</sup>Károly Pulszky, "Iparművészeti jegyzetek," (Notes on arts and crafts) *Archeológiai Értesítő*. 13 (1879): 273.

<sup>359</sup>W. Wenrich, "Künstlernamen aus siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Vergangenheit," *Archiv* 22 (1889): 70

<sup>360</sup>Emil Sigerus, "Die Predella des alten Heltauer Altars," *Korrespondenzblatt* 28 (1905): 158.

<sup>361</sup>Miklós Csáky, *Führer durch die Baron Brukenthalsche Gemäldegalerie*. (Hermannstadt: Selbstverlag des Museums, 1909): 366

<sup>362</sup>Victor Roth, "Der Hermannstädter Maler Vincencius," *Korrespondenzblatt* 22 (1914): 117-119; (on page 119: „Wir vermuten, daß Vincencius von Auswärts, vielleicht über Oberungarn nach Hermannstadt eingewandert ist, wo er durch Einheirat in die Familie des Bildhauers Simon sesshaft wurde.“)

<sup>363</sup>Victor Roth, "Der Thomasaltar in der ev. Kirche zu Gross-Schenk," *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 11-12 (1904): 125-141

<sup>364</sup>Victor Roth, *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Siebenbürgens*. (Strassburg: Heitz und Mündel, 1914): 45.

<sup>365</sup>Roth 1916, 137-140; Idem: "Erdélyi oltárok," (Transylvanian altarpieces) *Archeológiai Értesítő* 37 (1917): 95-96.

<sup>366</sup>Balogh 1943, 214-216.



turn she suggested that there might have been an elder and a younger master who had the same name, Vincencius. She argued – on stylistic basis – that it was impossible that the author of the altar from Taterloch, dated to 1508, could be the same person as the master of the paintings dated to the 1520s. She also expressed her opinion on the wall-paintings in the former parish church of Salzburg (*Ocna Sibiului, Vízakna*), with the occasion of the deterioration of a part of these during some reparation works undertaken on the building in 1936.<sup>367</sup> The unfortunate event was also referred to in some articles of contemporary cultural newspapers.<sup>368</sup>

The opinion of Jolán Balogh on the supposed existence of two masters that both were called Vincencius, has been adopted in the later Hungarian literature – especially in the much quoted corpus of Dénes Radocsay, on panel paintings in medieval Hungary.<sup>369</sup> Radocsay quotes the lines of Jolán Balogh in a paragraph dedicated to the works of the two Vincencius masters, - without any quibbles. Romanian literature, referring to the topic, is usually based on the old saxon publications, and above all the writings of Victor Roth. Although Virgil Vătășianu was aware of the opposing arguments of Jolán Balogh and Radocsay, it is Roth's opinion that he assesses in the relevant chapter.<sup>370</sup> The same point of view was followed by Andrei Kertesz in his articles mentioning works of Vincencius, - complemented with up-to-date information on the pieces referring to their restorations.<sup>371</sup>

Besides Victor Roth, Gernot Nussbächer also dedicated a separate study to the person of the painter. Gathering the historical information known on Vincencius, Nüssbächer tried to link the master to the art of the southern Romanian principality through an architectural detail of the altar from Großschink. Analysis of Vincencius' art also provided him with the opportunity to briefly analyze the cultural and economic relations between the two countries in the sixteenth century.<sup>372</sup>

<sup>367</sup> Idem, “Magyar mecénások Transzilvániában.” (Hungarian donors in Transylvania) *Hitel*. (Kolozsvár) 3 (1937): 123-132.

<sup>368</sup> Márton Merhán, “Felbecsülhetetlen értékű műkincseket pusztított el a gondatlanság egy Árpádkori ref. templomban.” (Artworks of inestimable value have been destroyed in a reformed church from the Arpadian Period) *Keleti Újság*. 19 (1936, június 7): 5. ; “Elpusztított műkincsek .” (Destroyed artworks) *Páosztortűz* 16 (1936): 253-254.

<sup>369</sup> Radocsay, 1955, 184.

<sup>370</sup> Vătășianu 1959, 797-800.

<sup>371</sup> Andrei Kertesz-Badruș, “Noi contribuții la cunoașterea picturii de panou Transilvănene din sec. XV-XVI.” *Studii și comunicări*. 2. Galeria de artă, (Sibiu 1979), 163-170.; Idem, “Altare și sculptura.” *Catalog. 800 de ani Biserica a Germanilor din Transilvania*, (Thaur bei Innsbruck – Sibiu: Wort und Welt – Muzeul Brukenthal, 1991), 69-86, especially 71, 75-76, 80.

<sup>372</sup> Gernot Nussbächer, “Künstlerische Interferenzen zwischen Siebenbürgen und der Walachei zu Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts. Zum Werk des Hermannstädter Malers Vincentius.” *Aus Urkunden und Chroniken*. (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1981), 23-26.

The book by Gisela and Otmar Richter represents the latest literature on the topic, and is mentioned as such in discussions of many Transylvanian retables.<sup>373</sup> The authors offer a description of the pieces, including short, dictionary-like explanations of the iconography, always referring to previous literature and adding short bits of information on the restoration procedure used in their workshop in Kronstadt. However, as the book only deals with the pieces being preserved in Saxon churches in the 1980s and which had been restored in the conservator workshop of the Lutheran Bishopric, - only two of the retables attributed to Vincencius are mentioned in the book: one from Taterloch and another from Gross Schenk.

The problematic of this dissertation logically will align itself with those researchers who consider that all the preserved Transylvanian works signed by a certain Vincencius, belonged to the oeuvre of one and the same master. This chapter will present different arguments in order to demonstrate why this is a reasonable theory. The information from written sources on the life and person of master Vincencius Cibiniensis is sparse. The first occurrence of the name, which could be unequivocally identified with the master in point, and there is no serious reason to doubt this identification, is a mention from around 1500 by a certain “Vicens Moler” in a partially preserved account book from Hermannstadt.<sup>374</sup> This data only informs us that Vincencius was already a taxpayer painter in the city of Hermannstadt during these years. A more interesting detail from his life can be deduced from the inscription on the right side of the predella in Taterloch, the earliest altar attributed to Vincencius, dated to 1508 (**Fig. IV.25.**):

“Perfectum est presens opus per magistros  
Simonem sculptorem et generum suum  
Vincencium pictorem Cibiniensem Anno  
domini Millesimo Quingentesimo  
octavo”

The text, written in minuscule, shows that the altar was completed by a sculptor called Simon<sup>375</sup> and his son-in-law, the painter Vincencius from Hermannstadt. By the end of the

<sup>373</sup> Richter 1992, 153-159; 240-247

<sup>374</sup> “Vicens Moler lot. 5 debet”. (Bruchstücke von Steuerverzeichnissen aus der Zeit um das Jahr 1500) Rechnungen 1880, 270. There is an earlier mention dated to 1492 of the name in this same form of Vicens. However, this form is associated with the word “master” rather than “Moler”: Item master Vicens flor 12 und ein ort.” (Hermannstädter Provinzialrechnung des Georg Sartor aus dem Jahr 1492.) Ibidem, 135. However, it is very uncertain if this data also referred to this painter.

<sup>375</sup> A certain Simon Schniczer is mentioned in 1485-86 in a partially preserved accountbook from Hermannstadt: “Simon Schniczer den 28” (Bruchstück einer Hermannstädter Thorhutrechnung aus 1485 und 1486), Rechnungen 1880, 111. The same partially preserved account book mentions “Simon Snyczter den 28”. Ibidem,

fifteenth, beginning of the sixteenth century a general, increasing tendency may be observed that the names of several people who worked to complete an altar-piece should be indicated on the work. However, it is not at all typical, that sculptors signed themselves as such and it is even rarer that there should be more than one name in the signature.<sup>376</sup> The fact, that the sculptor Simon is mentioned in the first place suggests that the elder master was the contracting party, the one who undertook the commission, while his son-in-law was his partner and evidently a member of the workshop. Thus, Vincencius seems to have taken advantage of a well-known point of almost all guild statutes in that period, according to which someone who married the daughter or the widow of a master belonging to a guild was exempted from a series of obligations – mainly connected to tax paying – after he had been accepted in the guild.<sup>377</sup> Whether he was a stranger who came to Hermannstadt during his wanderings or a native of Transylvania who learned the trade in Hermannstadt, Vincencius has become member of the local guild.<sup>378</sup> The inscription also suggests that the painters' and sculptor's guilds must already have been organized in common in Hermannstadt at that time,<sup>379</sup> if a painter could gain his acceptance to the guild by marrying the daughter of a sculptor.<sup>380</sup> The common-type of guild is not at all unique in guilds history in the German-speaking territories. In fact, it is not even clear when and how the various fields inside these common guilds became differentiated.<sup>381</sup>

Unfortunately, this is all we can deduce about the person of the painter from the written sources at this stage in the research. However, the promisingly large number of still

126. It cannot be decided definitely if this master is identical with the father-in-law of Vincencius, but can easily be imagined.

<sup>376</sup> "Signaturen von Bildhauern, die sich ausdrücklich als solche bezeichnen, finden sich sehr selten, (...) ganz selten wird mehr als ein Name in den Signaturen genannt." Huth 1967, 66.

<sup>377</sup> Huth 1967, 11.

<sup>378</sup> Being a young master, at this point practically a beginner, working as a colleague of the elder Simon, it is not at all usual that Vincencius signs the retable. In Transylvania at the time this was quite unusual and perhaps hints to the fact that our master came from distant lands.

<sup>379</sup> The statute of the guild of the painters, carpenters and glass workers from Hermannstadt from the year 1520 also shows that the guild functioned in common. The sculptors very probably did not have a separate guild and could also have belonged to this same one. (See: Vlaicu 2003, 264-267.) We also know about a similar example in the case of the guild in Kronstadt where the common guild of the painters, carpenters, sculptors and glass workers is mentioned in 1523. (See: Nussbächer-Marin 1999, 139-141.)

<sup>380</sup> The page of the account book from around 1500 where the name Vincens is also mentioned contains an entry with the name of a certain painter called Simon. ("Simon Moler lot . 3 debet"). It would be tempting to think that Vincencius's father-in-law, Simon, in certain cases called himself a painter and in other cases a sculptor as he belonged to the common guild and his workshop was capable of executing both types of works. However, the known guild's statutes show that – at least theoretically – the masters were required to decide to which branch of the common guild they wanted to belong to and had to prove their mastership in that exact trade. I say theoretically, because there are examples from medieval Hungary where masters were documented as having worked both as painters and as sculptors. See: Miklós Mojzer, "A festő hagyatéka, ahogyan ma látjuk." (The bequest of the artist: as we see it today) *Magnificat anima mea dominum. MS mester Vizitáció-képe és egykori selmebányai főoltára.* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1997), 9-25.

<sup>381</sup> For examples see Huth. 1969, 73-76.

unpublished historical data from the period in the collections of various archives in Romania, gives us hope that with time more can be learned about Transylvanian painters, sculptors, about how these workshops and guilds functioned. The present lack of historical sources means that the analysis of the works that have been preserved will play a larger role. For the works of Vincencius this covers a fairly long period (between 1508 and 1525, his first and his last known dated work). The use of various art historical methods such as iconography, style and technical analysis of the paintings attributed to the master will unquestionably lead us closer, not only to the life, origin and education of the painter. Such methods will also permit me to make some general conclusions about the altar-production of the period. The works to be discussed in this context are the retable from Taterloch/Seiden, the retable from Gross-Schenk/Meschen, the panels from Heltau held in the Brukenthal Museum and the wall painting signed by Vincencius in the church of Salzburg (*Vízakna, Ocna Sibiului*). So far, these are all the known signed works by the master. However, certain additional pieces will be considered that have been, or will be attributed to the same workshop mainly by using style-critic methods.

### *The Seiden/Taterloch altarpiece*

The altar that presently decorates the chancel of the church from Taterloch, the earliest known work of master Vincencius, is consistently referred to in the literature as the altar from Taterloch, although it was originally ordered for the community of the neighboring Seiden and sold to the church of Taterloch at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>382</sup>

The altar nowadays presents a somewhat odd impression at first sight, because of the numerous Baroque modifications, additions and even later repairs, which have changed the original character of the piece to a good deal. **(Fig. IV. 1)** However, its basic structure, a very common one for a winged retable, is still obvious. The central shrine is flanked by a pair of stable and a pair of mobile wings, set on a fairly high predella, which widens upwards to a deep arch on both its ends. There is no information on the retable's original late Gothic gable.<sup>383</sup> The sculptural decoration of the shrine<sup>384</sup> that would have been the only evidence for master Simon's activity has also completely disappeared, most probably during the tumultuous Reformation period.<sup>385</sup>

The iconographic program of the painted wings gives a rather random impression. The themes of the representations on the inner side are not even close related to each other. The two depictions on the upper half of the wings, related to the life of the Virgin, the Annunciation and the Coronation, are followed on the lower section by two martyrdom scenes, that of St. Valentine and another of St. Demetrius. The explanation for the choice of these last, not very wide-spread representations may perhaps be found in some local cult, some kind of significance of these two saints in Seiden.

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<sup>382</sup> Fabiani, 2002, 736; Hans Hermann: "Eine Entdeckung (Altarbild in Taterloch)". *Die Karpathen*. 7 (1914): 638.

<sup>383</sup> The upper board can sometimes preserve some traces of joints, indicating the type of gable. On the occasion of the next restoration or dismounting it should be possible to observe what type of gable belonged to the altar.

<sup>384</sup> As mentioned below in the detailed description of the retable, imprints of the former sculptures and of the original shrine structure could be observed on an archive photo, part of the photo-documentation of the Kronstadt restoration-workshop. When the original brocade-pattern on the background of the central shrine was painted over during the restoration work, the shrine's original, three-arched vaulting-architecture and also the prints of the shrine-sculptures on the background were covered. **(Fig. IV.2)** Although the photo only shows the imprint of two sculptures on the background, the number of the bays (just as the three-arched structure of the front-baldachin) and the placement of the two imprints exactly under the first two arches suggests that the shrine must have hosted three figures. Unfortunately, we do not have any information that would help us in their identification.

<sup>385</sup> The date of 1584 scratched in the background of the shrine at head height for one of the former figures suggests that by this time the sculptures had already been removed from their places. **(Fig. IV.3)** The fact, that the first overheated reactions of the Reformation enthusiasts caused damage to the altar to a certain extent is also documented by the photos showing the scratched faces and poked out eyes of the figures, - losses that were painted in during the restoration. **(Fig. IV.4)**

The closed retable with the series of sixteen saints arranged in pairs decorating the eight panels is a very common program, not only in Transylvania but also in wider praxis. The retables from Braller (*Brulya, Bruiu*), and from Bogeschdorf (*Szászbogács, Băgaciu*) in Transylvania display the same arrangement, while a series of similar examples can be found in German-speaking countries as well.<sup>386</sup>

The compositions used by the painter are not very original. Most of them are, even when their concrete pictorial source cannot be traced, the most simple and common type. Such arrangements were well-known compositional solutions for that certain scene in the period. However, there were many delicate details in these compositions that were used as models that this master was not able to apply. In addition, Vincencius also constantly struggled to adequately present perspective and reproduce the human anatomy correctly. Although he seems to have made use of a number of pictorial solutions, patterns and several “fashionable” elements, he was not able to organically include these into his own creations, mainly because of technical deficiencies in his drawing and knowledge of painting. These facts can be clearly detected on all the panels of the Taterloch retable.

The angel of the Annunciation scene comes into the room from the left. **(Fig. IV.5.)** The Virgin receives him kneeling behind a prayer stool, with an astonished gesture of her left hand that appears rather stiff. In spite of the fact that the painter has portrayed the angel at the very moment of the arrival, the motion is not energetic at all and the angel’s position is quite static. In comparison to the archangel on Dürer’s engraving on an identical topic,<sup>387</sup> **(Fig. IV.6.)** where the angel is represented in a very similar position but in a much more dynamical way (one can almost feel how quickly he has entered the room), the Gabriel on the panel from Taterloch gives the same impression as a seated person. The form was adopted but the content is missing. The placement of the prayer stool between the two figures, the presence of the red curtain behind the Virgin, details such as the white brick wall closing off the space from behind, all show that the painter intended to create a space with perspective. The result however is rather school-bookish. The function of the green curtain (?) behind the prayer stool, with the inscription in minuscule, with the words of the angel: *Ave gra(tia) plena*

<sup>386</sup> See the wings of the altar from Waldneukirchen from around 1490 (preserved in Adlwang and Kremsmünster), reproduced in: Schultes 2005, 114.; or the panels (very similar in character to those from Bogeschdorf) by Hans and Jakob Strüb, dating from 1505 coming originally from the Augustine Convent of Inzigkofen, near Sigmaringen - reproduced in: Isolde Lübecke ed., *The Thyssen-Bornemisza collection. Early German Paintings. 1350-1550.* (London: Sotheby’s Publication, 1991), 380. Or the wings of a retable from the Filialchurch St. Lambertus in Lampsberg, dated to around 1490, reproduced in: Janez Höfler, *Die Tafelmalerei der Gotik in Kärnten.* (Klagenfurt: Verl. Geschichtsverein für Kärnten, 1987), 143. And many other examples could be mentioned here.

<sup>387</sup> B 83 (132)

*dom(in)us tecum*, is left unexplained. The background makes it uncertain whether this is an interior scene or whether it is taking place in the open air.

The composition of the Coronation-scene nevertheless followed a wide-spread iconographic pattern. (**Fig. IV.7.**) The representation-type of the Virgin's Coronation appeared in several versions over the centuries. The variant on this Taterloch panel developed during the fifteenth century. By this period, all three divine persons took their place in the ceremony: God the Father and the Son usually sitting next to each other on a throne, putting the crown on the Virgin's head, while the Holy Spirit hovers in form of a dove above them. The Virgin, depicted frontally, usually kneels on these types of representations, with her hands joined in prayer. In this case, the painter clearly fought with the difficulties of frontal representation. He could not cope with the correct front-wise depiction of the Virgin's knees, he tries to hide the problem with dark shadow spots. The same uncertainty can be observed on the legs of Christ, his cloak covering the knees follow the anatomy in an unnatural way.

The compositions of the two martyrdom scenes are also comprised of figures and motions that were wide-spread on engravings and paintings of the period. (**Figs.IV.8, 10.**) The executioner of St. Valentine, (whose head-position is grotesquely misdrawn) lifting his sword with both his hands behind his head is a well-known character in martyrdom scenes. The same applies for the two conversing, elegantly dressed men in the background, who may be encountered on several passion representations as well as on various saints' martyrdoms during the fifteenth century and afterwards. The elderly man who bears witness in the St. Demetrius scene, wears a long green coat decorated with a white fur collar, a large white turban combined with a red cap and red boots. He leans on his staff with his right hand and hides his left hand in his coat. This figure is a clear allusion to Pilate's figure as represented on many passion scenes of Dürer. The figure of the martyr tied to a dead tree with his hands above his head unquestionably follows Dürer's St. Sebastian stamp<sup>388</sup>, dated to 1500/1502, with a slight modification of the saint's position. (**Fig. IV.9.**) As compared to Sebastian, Demetrius is shown leaning decidedly forwards, in a natural reaction to his being stabbed through with a large sword.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> B 55 (71)

<sup>389</sup> On the panel representing the Martyrdom of St. Demetrius, on the iconography and representations of the Saint in Hungary, see most lately: Szilveszter Terdik. "Szent Demeter a művészetben" (St. Demetrius in art). Tóth Péter ed. *Szent Demeter Magyarország elfeledett védőszentje*. (St. Demetrius, a forgotten patron saint of Hungary) Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2007, 158-204, here especially 183-184. Terdik considers the type of representation – depicting the execution with a sword, placed instead of a prison in open air – unique not only among the Hungarian but also among European representations of the saint's martyrdom.

Similar features can be observed on the paintings of the closed retable. The paired saints follow standard representation types and in certain cases it is even possible to pinpoint the concrete pictorial sources. For the figure of St. John the Baptist (on the third panel of the upper row) Dürer's engraving, dated to around 1502 showing the same saint as the companion of Onophrius,<sup>390</sup> has been used. It is probably some early print of Dürer that is copied in the figure of St. Gregory, some early study, made perhaps for the figure of St. Arnulf, standing on the large "Ehrenpforte" representation.<sup>391</sup> Vincencius repeatedly applies certain favourite details, gestures such as the motion of St. Andrew of lifting up his mantle, holding it above his left knee. The same gesture can be observed on the representation of St. Catherine.

The intention of the painter to depict some personal connection between the figures shown together in pairs is obvious. This was the usual way to loosen up the otherwise rigid row of saints on retables following this iconographic program, thus adding a touch of vivacity to what would be a simple enumeration. Although the gestures and arrangement of the saints on the Taterloch panels, the way they face each other, clearly show this intention, Vincencius was not able to apply this method convincingly. The figures represented appear to be quite independent with no organic connection to each other. The previously mentioned difficulty the painter had with correct anatomical representation can also be present in his depiction of arms and hands. The left arm of John the Baptist is much too short, the left elbow and wrist of St. Servatius are strangely twisted, (**Fig. IV.17.**) the left hand of Gregorius is much too long while and there is the same problem with Dorothie's and Catherine's left. (**Fig. IV.18.**)

Just as in the case of the two martyrdom scenes, the backgrounds of the paintings on the closed retable are represented as mountainous landscapes under a sunset-coloured sky. However, the above mentioned problem of the missing organic connection between the various components of an image is also obvious in this case. The background hills and trees are reminiscent of theatre scenery with the figures merely "acting" in front of it.

The relation is similar between figures and background scenery on the predella, although this was obviously considered the most important part of the retable by the painter and he clearly put the greatest effort into painting this part. (**Fig. IV.21.**) Dürer's copperplate of the Man of Sorrows was the model for the central figure in the image, with its similar

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<sup>390</sup> B 112 (139)

<sup>391</sup> The Arch of Triumph: B 138 (149), a separate detail of the bishop's figure (attributed only with question marks to Dürer): B 23 (181). Neither the differences between the Dürer-figure and that from Taterloch nor their dating make it possible to speak about a direct connection between the two. (the woodcut was ordered from Dürer only in 1512)



topic.<sup>392</sup> (**Fig. IV.22.**) Christ's upper body clearly follows the pictorial source, the raised hands, showing the wounds, the position of the head and the way of drawing the complete anatomy of the naked body make this clear. However, Dürer's full-figure is transformed and used as half figure in the context of an otherwise also wide-spread composition: the Man of Sorrows sitting in his sarcophagus, flanked by two angels. This composition allowed the painter to play with the challenge of perspective; the arrangement of the figures in the foreground at least mirror a certain playful intention. Christ is sitting on the lid of the stone sarcophagus, which is set perpendicularly on the tomb - a quite simple attempt to test his knowledge in depicting foreshortened objects. The angel on the right side is placed in front of – almost above – the grave, while the other angel kneels by the left end, behind the open sarcophagus.<sup>393</sup> In the center of the background may be seen the Golgatha, recognizable by the numerous crosses on its top and mountainous landscape representations on both sides of the predella. A dead tree with a red heraldic shield hanging on one of its branches stands on the left side. The shield has a cross-like sign with split ends on it. The heraldic representation should be possible to identify with the help of a later panel by the master. The panel will therefore be discussed later on.

The choice of the topic for the predella panel is very common from the iconographic point of view. The presence of the *Vir dolorum* on a predella, the most popular of all Eucharistic devotional images in late medieval art, is wide spread on winged retables of the period, being closely related to the transubstantiation taking place on the altar. From the multifold representation types of the Man of Sorrows, the one applied here has an accentuated Eucharistic character<sup>394</sup>, provided by the presence of the two angels gathering the blood from the wounds of Christ in the chalice of the Mass. Thus, the Eucharist is shown issuing from Christ' very body. Although this type of representation with the two angels is also a very popular one, the devotional character of the image on the Taterloch predella is complemented by its didactic character because of a special textual interpretation of the topic, a sort of didactic emphasis on the image: Inscriptions can be read on painted imitations of pieces of paper, depicted as being stuck on both endings of the panel. The already mentioned signature appears on the left hand paper, telling posterity about the name of the two people who worked

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<sup>392</sup> B 20 (42)

<sup>393</sup> One of the photos made in the Richter-workshop preceding its restoration shows that large paint-surfaces were missing on both lower corners of the predella, surfaces that were then completed during restoration. However, these interventions did not affect the composition itself, except for the angels' figures: the ends of the left side angel's surplises, a larger part of the right side angel's body and wing. (**Fig. IV.23**)

<sup>394</sup> See on the topic: Dóra Sallay: "The Eucharistic Man of Sorrows in Late Medieval Art." *Annual of Medieval Studies*. (Budapest: Central European University, 2000), 45-80.

on the retable. The right side inscription contains an epigramm, written with the same type of lettering (**Fig. IV.24.**) :

*„Aspice qui tantas pro te sustinui penas  
Mortalis: nexus ut mortis fugere diros  
Valeres: ecce patencia brachia dedi  
Dulciter genasque meas ad oscula flexi  
Fac igitur rectum colas semperque piusque  
Sic perhennia manebunt te gaudia celi”<sup>395</sup>*

The verses clearly refer to the representation of the Man of Sorrows and the words are uttered by the Saviour himself, a fact that is also emphasized in the depiction. The half opened mouth of Christ, with his teeth visible, was meant to be a speaking gesture. The words emphasize two important messages of the devotional image including the role of the Man of Sorrows as Saviour and his informal relation to the spectator, the human being. Their mutual relationship is based on the fact that the Sacrifice on the cross gave the spectator/reader a chance to lead his life to a good end if he responds by following the right way being pointed out.<sup>396</sup>

The lines are written in a rather low quality metrical verse which suggests that it was not a classical quotation that was used here to interpret the message of the representation, nor was their author a person of high humanist education.<sup>397</sup> Considering that the inscription on the left side refers to the masters of the retable, it is plausible that Vincencius (and his father in law?) are to be made responsible for the epigramm as well. This reveals another important aspect of this painter.

Generally speaking the following can be said about Vincencius' style based on the panels of the Taterloch-retable. In spite of the fact that a number of compositional details on the panels can be traced back to the works of Dürer, the stylistic influence of the Nuremberg master can only be faintly felt on these paintings of Vincencius. The most obvious

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<sup>395</sup> Look at me, I have suffered such mortal punishments for you, so that you have the power to escape from the terrible bonds of Death, see, I have given my open arms and I have sweetly bent my face for kisses, do therefore that you cultivate the right, always the pious, thus the eternal joys of Heaven wait for you.

<sup>396</sup> For the meaning of the image see Rudolf Berliner's comment: "Man muss sich dessen bewusst bleiben, dass die Darstellungen des Schmerzensmannes als Leidenden oder Erlösers und als des Richters verschiedene Bedeutungen hatten. Sollen die ersteren für das Gefühl eine Ansprache Christi an den Beschauer enthalten: „Das litt ich für dich – das leide ich für dich – was tust du für mich" und zugleich in ihm die Hoffnung erregen, dass es ihm noch möglich sei, sich das Wirksamwerden von Christi einmaligen Sühnetod für ihn zu verdienen, liegt da also der Ton auf dem gegenseitigen Verhältnisse von Erlöser und Mensch, so ist in der Stunde des Gerichtes die Rechnung abgeschlossen. Der Mensch kann nichts mehr ändern;" Rudolf Berliner: "Bemerkungen zu einigen Darstellungen des Erlösers als Schmerzensmann." Robert Suckale ed., 'The Freedom of Medieval Art' und andere Studien zum christlichen Bild. (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2003), 192 – 212.

<sup>397</sup> I have to thank Dr. Ágnes Ritoók Szalay for her comments on the poem.

similarity is in the way he drew the body of the half naked Christ on the predella image. The complete pictorial decoration of the altar transmits a still somewhat transitional drapery style. In certain details, the late gothic *ductus* of the folds is followed, partly adapted from the pictorial sources that were used. The sources can be felt in the garments of the two bishop-figures for instance. Yet in other places, a new way of depicting the drapery-ductus is apparent, a pictorial characteristic of Vincentius that will be continuously present in his later works as well, only executed in a much more determined technique. The garments represented form rich, nervous wrinkles when they are shown drawn together or when falling to the ground. The thick, bunched folds are very often set near flat cloak portions, closely following the anatomy of the figure. Light and shadow effects helped the artist to show the modelling of the surface of the garments. In addition to the highlights used to show the light glinting on the surface of the folds, he also tried to apply a very much fashionable technique called “changing colours” (*changierende Farben*) based on the use of complementary colours next to each other, giving the impression of changes in the way the light was used.<sup>398</sup> However, as details like the cloak of St. Andrew with its dark green shadows, or the illogically applied green and orange spots on St Peter’s tunic show, Vincencius still had very little experience with this latter method, a method that will turn up in his later works in a more elaborate way.

The altar, which in its construction follows the well-known late gothic type of the winged retables, got a general Renaissance touch through the patterns of the gilt floral and foliage decoration of the panels’ inner sides. This ornament is very different from the foliage decorations of a prominent late gothic character used on panels of the period. Among contemporary retables of Transylvania, it is unique with its Renaissance rosettes and birds.

As already mentioned above, the Taterloch altar was bought from the community of Seiden in Küküllő county. The place often figures together with the village of Bulkesch in documents, from 1320s onwards. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the two villages are alternately the property of the provost of Hermannstadt, the city of Hermannstadt or a certain Petrus von Bogath.<sup>399</sup> In 1453, the two villages figure partly property of Johannes de Hunyad and partly that of the city and the parish church of Hermannstadt.<sup>400</sup> At the beginning

<sup>398</sup> The technique of the so-called “changierende Farben”, “Schillernde Farben” or changeants is absolutely wide-spread in panel painting of the period. Dürer speaks of its role and usage also in his theoretical writings. See: Ilse Hammerschmied, *Albrecht Dürers kunsttheoretische Schriften*. (Eggelsbach /Frankfurt: Fouqué Literaturverlag, 1997): 194-196

<sup>399</sup> Ub Vol. 4, 220; Ub Vol. 5, 72

<sup>400</sup> Dezső Csánki, *Magyarország történelmi földrajza a Hunyadiak korában*. (Historical geography of Hungary in the age of the Hunyadis), (Budapest: ÁKV, 1986 (Reprint)) Vol. 5, 89; Ub V/501

of the 1460s, King Matthias donated the parts in his father's property to the Chapter of Transylvania for messes to be celebrated for the salvation of his father and brother, both buried in the cathedral of Gyulafehérvár. In 1469 the two villages are mentioned as being completely owned by the parish church in Hermannstadt.<sup>401</sup> There is not much information concerning the architectural history of the church in Seiden. Only the small, square chancel with a sacrament's-niche in the northern wall remains of the medieval past in the present building. What poor literature on the subject there is suggests that the chancel was part of a gothic hall-church from the fifteenth century.<sup>402</sup> Although no concrete data exists referring to architectural or other works on the church at the beginning of the sixteenth century, building activity around the church seems to have lasted until the 1520's. In 1520 the Magistrate of Hermannstadt sent Senator Johann Waal to visit the ongoing construction work on the church's tower.<sup>403</sup> This latter information shows that the property of the village at this time still belonged to Hermannstadt. Thus, it is not surprising that the retable for this church was commissioned not from a workshop at the, otherwise much closer Mediasch or Schässburg, but from the workshop of a master from Hermannstadt. However, nothing else is known about who ordered the retable. No heraldic representation or historical data exists to point to anyone in particular nor does the program of the retable suggest that the person who initiated its production would have been specially educated.

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<sup>401</sup> Ub Vol. 6, 394.

<sup>402</sup> Fabini 2002, 695.

<sup>403</sup> Georg Adolf Schuller: "Vor vierhundert Jahren." *Kalender des Siebenbürgischen Volksfreundes*. 51 (1920), 85.

### *The Meschen/Gross-Schenk altarpiece*

There is an unexplained gap in the oeuvre and life of Vincencius Cibiniensis in the year following 1508 when he finished the Taterloch retable. His next commission was the retable known by the name of the village where it may presently be found, the retable from Gross-Schenk. It differs essentially from the winged altar in Taterloch because it was of an entirely different, Renaissance structural type consisting of a large central panel, a lunette set above and an unusually low, rectangular predella.<sup>404</sup> (Fig. IV.26.) At first glance the retable already gives the impression that the painter has reached the mature phase of his style since a more practiced hand can be observed on these paintings.<sup>405</sup> The central image, depicting the scene of Doubting Thomas, is a clear, balanced, although rather crowded composition. (Fig. IV. 27) The general approach of the composition and especially the central motive of the Resurrected Christ uses Dürer's woodcut as its source,<sup>406</sup> although it is clearly not a servile imitation of it. (Fig. IV.28.) A closer examination at the painting leads to the conclusion that the model was adapted to the artistic preferences and capabilities of the painter. The apostles are arranged in two groups on both sides of Christ, but due to the larger number of represented disciples the impression is more crowded. The setting of the individual apostle figures, especially that of Thomas is completely different. Christ's position, although the main gestures have been adopted being much more frontal. The position of the legs is still rather similar to the woodcut, but the occasional anatomical difficulties are hidden by the golden cloak covering the upper part of Christ's right leg and his knee. The composition of the cloak is thus basically different from Dürer's with only the way it is fixed with a thin string at the neck being similar. The architectural elements in the background play a more important role on the Transylvanian image, while Dürer only vaguely indicated the space through a semicircular arch on the background wall. Vincencius creates an elegant polygonal space,

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<sup>404</sup> Radocsay describes the altar in his *Corpusas* having a pair of wings. According to his information only the central part of the retable was sold in the eighteenth century to the community of Gross-Schenk, while the wings remained in Meschen. He refers to a study by Friedrich Müller regarding this point. However, the reference indicates there is some confusion on this point. The retable from Radeln is described on the particular page and Radocsay appears to describe the iconography of those wings when presenting the altar from Meschen. See: Radocsay 1955, 394. and Friedrich Müller: "Die Vertheidigungskirchen in Siebenbürgen." *Mitteilungen der KK Central Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmäler*. 2 (1857) 269. As explained in the catalogue annexed to this thesis, the richly decorated abundant framing of the retable belongs to the Baroque period, while the larger predella with the representation of the Vir Dolorum among the Virgin and John, can be dated to the fifteenth century and obviously does not belong to the "Vincencius-retable" either.

<sup>405</sup> It is precisely the noticeable difference in style in comparison to the panels from Taterloch that caused Jolán Balogh to consider, - as mentioned earlier - that the painters of the two retables could not be one and the same person, in spite of the fact that their names were the same.

<sup>406</sup> B 49 (120), around 1510.

with Renaissance pillars and windows opening towards the mountainous landscape. The architecture presented an opportunity for him to test once again his not very strong abilities in perspective. The artistic vocabulary of Vincencius does not seem to have been very rich. It catches the eye as the painter repeats certain gestures on the image (a phenomenon already encountered on the Taterloch panels). The left hand of Thomas, kept in the height of his hip, with the palm turned downwards – is found again with the figure of the Apostle (perhaps Paul?) standing behind him, like a pattern taken over from a sketchbook. The hands represented in foreshortened form, seem to have posed something like a puzzle for Vincencius. Similarly, the gesture of the apostle standing most to the back on the left side, lifting his hand to his head is repeated, like a pendent, in the gesture of the backmost disciple on the right side. The rectangular basin-like depression with its semicircular central part shown in front of Christ's legs alludes to the plinth of a sculpture and emphasizes the main figure of the scene. However, the basin chiefly functioned to contain the quotation referring to the depicted scene taken from John 20:28,29 and the signature of the painter, both written with majuscules on the inner edge: DOMIN(US) MEUS ET DEUS ME(US). THOMA QUIA VIDISTI CREDIDISTI BEATI QUI NON VIDERU(N)T ET CREDI(D)ERU(N)T. VINCE(N)CIUS FACIEBAT 1521.

The topic of the lunette-panel did not offer much scope for compositional creation. **(Fig. IV.29.)** The huge figure of St. Christopher – to a certain extent inspired by Dürer's woodcut on a similar topic from 1511<sup>407</sup> - is set in front of a broad landscape. **(Fig. IV.30.)** In order to emphasize his dimensions he is much pulled into the foreground and represented only in three-quarters. The size of his body gives an impression of even greater size because of the radiant red cloak that is shown fluttering behind him, a motive that recurs on the figure of the Christ Child sitting on his shoulder. Certain difficulties that the artist had in the correct reproduction of the human anatomy can be observed again on the arms of the saint. His left shoulder looks twisted and much too large, while his right arm is extremely long.

The measurements and the form of the predella have obviously limited the possible decorations. The series of the fourteen auxiliary saints' shown as half figures perfectly suited these formal requirements. **(Fig. IV.31.)** Grouped more loosely in the middle and more crowded towards the ends, represented in a variety of postures, some of the saints give the impression of having quite personal relationships with each other. Thus St Blaise puts his hand in a friendly fashion on the shoulder of St. Erasmus. Achatius and Cyriacus lean close to

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<sup>407</sup> B 103 (136)

each other as if having a private discussion. The non-ecclesiastical figures are depicted in the most fashionable clothing and in spite of the very thin and frayed layer of paint the once shining, radiant colors are still easy to recognize.<sup>408</sup> Actually, the vivid palette is perhaps the most striking characteristic of the altarpiece. Additionally, the impression created by the colors is increased by effects of light and shadow on the surface of the represented gowns and cloaks. Two techniques can be observed: the use of the changing colors, the “Schilcher”, and the method of using light nuances of the same color on the surface of the cloths, where the light is stronger. Both techniques were already present in a tentative way on the panels from Taterloch, but their application on the richly draped cloths of the retable is now more elaborate.

The iconography of the altarpiece is not very special. The three topics represented are not unusual on winged altarpieces of the period; however they do not seem to have been very characteristic on the preserved Transylvanian pieces. The choice of the representations, as is supposed for the iconographic program of the retables in general would have been connected with the person ordering the retable, about whom there may be some information in written sources although there are no indications about who he was on the retable itself. There is very little known about the history of the retable in Gross-Schenk. It is certain that it was bought from the community of Meschen in the year 1722.<sup>409</sup> As is related in the school and parish register of the community from Gross-Schenk, the old altar-piece, (as described in the register, it was most probably a winged retable) possessed a wooden sculpture in its shrine representing the Virgin with the Child. The general appearance of the altarpiece derived from a gothic gable of the well-known three-towered type. The Virgin was taken – at least according to the register – by Sigismundus Kornis, governor of Transylvania in that period –

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<sup>408</sup> The general iconography of the fourteen auxiliary saints includes the figure of St. Christopher. In this case his person was replaced with that of St. Nicolas, while Christopher was emphasized by being represented separately on the lunette. This kind of replacement is not unique. Depending on the territory or the person of the commander, saints such as St. Florian, St. Wolfgang or St. Nicolas are often included among the fourteen. See LCI Vol. 8, 546-550.

<sup>409</sup> *Matricula Scholae Nagysenkensis*. 316. (as mentioned in Roth 1916, 141: ” Es war allhier in der Kirche ein uralter Altar nach väterl. Weise mit 3 Thürmen ausgeführt, in der Mitte stund ein schönes höltzernes Marien Bild in langer Manns Grösse, das kind Jesus auf dem rechten Arm haltend, welches einen Reichsapfel auch in der rechten Hand mit einem silbernen Kreuzlein hielt. Dieses Bild verlangte als eine schöne antiquität zu verschiedenen maln Tith. Graf. Sigismundus Kornis, damaliger Gubernator des Siebenbürgischen Fürstentums. Ihm wurde es zwar abgeschlagen. aber er bedachte den Stuhl mit übermäßiger Einquartierung, bis man genötiget selbiges A. 1722 folgen zu lassen, welches nach Clausenburg gebracht worden. Als dieses aus dem Altar weg war, stund derselbe kahl, hierauf kauften die Groß-Schenker von Meschen die mittlere Tafel, welche die Auferstehung Christi und besonders den Ap. Thomas praesentiert, oben drüber ist die fabula S. Christophori zu sehen, sie bezahlens mit fl. 32. Das Aus-Werk um diese Tafel lies Titl. H. Martin Sutoris, damaliger Königsrichter durch einen Kayserl. Reuter von der Bildhauer profession für rfl. 100 verfertigen”).)

to form part of his own collection in Klausenburg.<sup>410</sup> After this reduction of their altar, the community bought the retable from Meschen for 32 florins and ordered a new, baroque framework for it for another 100 florins.<sup>411</sup> Meschen belonged to the upper-, or Mediasch-part of the so called “Zwei Stühle”, the two *sedes*. Its first mention in the written sources dates from 1283<sup>412</sup> although there is increasing information about an economically well developed, prosperous locality from the fifteenth century onwards and especially from the very end of the century. A clear sign of the economic upswing is the fact that in 1495 Meschen obtained the right to hold an annual market.<sup>413</sup> At the beginning of the sixteenth century, with 27 Marks (tax-units), the locality was the economically third most powerful community in the “Zwei Stühle”, following Mediasch and BIRTHÄLM.<sup>414</sup> It is naturally in this period that the earlier basilica of the community was transformed into the large and imposing hallchurch that still exists today. The construction works were associated in the literature with the person of Johannes, the parish priest of the community in this period.<sup>415</sup> As far as is known, *plebanus Johannes* died in 1500<sup>416</sup>, and was followed by a certain Alexander. in his position of a parish priest.<sup>417</sup> Alexander can very probably be identified with that Alexander de Muschna, who has

<sup>410</sup> We know about several late medieval sculptures that were collected in a similar way by the count. The former shrine-sculpture from Mühlbach – representing the Virgin Mary as well – was moved to Korod (*Coroi, Krauden*) into his family chapel. The Crucifix presently standing in one of the side chapels of the Franciscan church of Klausenburg has had a similar history. It is known even today as the Kornis-Crucifix.

<sup>411</sup> The description does unfortunately not mention the predella of the old altarpiece from Gross-Schenk. Thus, we can only tentatively state (as has already been suggested by Richter 1992, 241) that the Gothic predella presently placed under the altar of Vincencius could have belonged to this retable, and was preserved in order to increase the height of the newly purchased altarpiece. (**Fig. IV.32**) Neither the description of the register nor that of Victor Roth mention the predella of the newly bought piece with its representation of the fourteen auxiliary saints. This can be explained by the fact that the predella was overpainted with a simple, brown layer and decorated with a sculpted baroque ornament that was removed in the workshop of Gisela Richter in the 1970s.

<sup>412</sup> 1283 “*Petrus plebanus de Musna*”. Ub. Vol. 1, 145.

<sup>413</sup> Carl Werner, “Geschichte der zwei Stühle unter Wladislaus II. und Ludwig II” *Archiv* 12 (1875): 296.

<sup>414</sup> Gernot Nussbächer, “Hattert – Handel – Handwerk. Aus der Geschichte der Marktgemeinde Meschen”, *Karpaten Rundschau*. (1978.05.05): 6.

<sup>415</sup> He is already mentioned in 1481, as “*Johannes canonicus ecclesiae nostrae . . . ac plebanus ecclesiae de Mwsna*” (Ub Vol. 7., 297-298). He is still parish priest of the community in 1498, as he reports to the Council of Hermannstadt about the works of Andreas Lapidica from Hermannstadt, who has worked on the construction of the church in Großbau (*Christian, Kereszténysziget*) and also in the church of Meschen. (Inventory nr. U.II. 627 in the Archives of Hermannstadt, as presented by Hermann Fabini, „Andreas Lapidica – Ein Siebenbürgischer Steinmetz und Baumeister der Spätgotik”, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 31 (1977): 32. In the same article, Fabini suggests that Andreas Lapidica was the master of not only the late Gothic vaulting of the church but also the superbly carved sacrament-house, sitting-niche and entrance of the sacristy.

<sup>416</sup> In 1857, Friedrich Müller describes two tombstones, one of which bore a very much worn inscription from which he could still decipher the year 1500 and the words *plebanus* and *decanus*. See: Friedrich Müller, “Mittelalterliche Kirchen in Siebenbürgen”, *Mitteilungen der k.k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*. 2 (1857): 266. Based on these data, Carl Römer suggested that the grave was that of Plebanus Johannes, whom we know to have been the parish priest of the community in previous years and who was also a deacon in the Mediasch-chapter. Carl Römer, *Aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der Gemeinde Meschen*. (Mediasch: Druck von G.A. Reissenberger, 1912), 70.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibidem*. 20.



studied on the University of Vienna in 1485.<sup>418</sup> In 1505 he turns up as procurator of the town of Mediasch as a doctor of both canonical and Roman law. Later, he also became (like his predecessor Johannes) deacon of Mediasch. In 1520 he signed a letter of complaint to Pope Leo the tenth<sup>419</sup>. It is thought he died in 1525 and was buried in the church of Meschen.<sup>420</sup> While the large construction works of the hall-church in the 1480s and 90s, probably including the completion of the richly carved sacrament-house, sitting niche and sacristy-entrance, is connected to the name of *plebanus* Johannes, the Vincencius altar-piece dated to 1521, was very probably ordered in Alexander's time, perhaps by himself.<sup>421</sup> We cannot be sure whether the retable decorated the main altar of the church or not<sup>422</sup> there is no information concerning the possible existence and number of secondary altars in the church.<sup>423</sup> Carl Römer mentions an interesting data from the town-protocole of Mediasch where there is a note that the retable from the chapel from Meschen was dismantled in 1720 at the order of Johannes Binder, at that time judge of Meschen.<sup>424</sup> (There is not much known about the chapel except that it was included in the fortification wall surrounding the church and collapsed in the eighteenth century). The fact that according to the *Matricola Scholae Nagysenkenis* the Vincencius retable was purchased from Meschen in 1722, makes it tempting indeed to agree with Römer that the altar-piece dismantled in 1720 has been this same retable. It will not be possible at this point in the study to decide, whether the retable was originally destined for the chapel or was put aside there after the Reformation.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Tonk 1979, 200. Carl Römer knows about another mention of a certain Alexander de Hermannstadt, parish priest in Waldhütten (*Valchíd, Váldhíd*) - a village belonging to the same upper part of the two *sedes* as Meschen) - at the Vienna University in 1492. He suggests that this person may have been the same as the later parish priest from Meschen. Tonk does not mention this datum.

<sup>419</sup> Römer 1912, 21.

<sup>420</sup> Based again on the data transmitted by Friedrich Müller, Römer considers the other tombstone mentioned by Müller as having the year 1525 carved on it as having belonged to Alexander. Römer 1912, 70.

<sup>421</sup> After Andreas Lapidica from Hermannstadt was commissioned to work on the construction of the church at the end of the fifteenth century, the commission of a Hermannstadt master for certain works at Meschen already had a precedent. Thus, it is less surprising that a Hermannstadt painter completed a retable in the community of Meschen, a constant rival of the neighbouring Mediasch. For the supposed donorship of Alexander see also Nussbächer 1981, 26.

<sup>422</sup> The fact that the church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary does not in itself exclude that an altar made in the sixteenth century should have had a representation of Saint Thomas painted on it. However, compared to the ca. 7 m width of the church's chancel, the 181 cm width of the retable appears rather small.

<sup>423</sup> The only mention of an altar, is the reference to a certain altar dedicated (quite unusually) to St Nicolas the confessor, in 1481: "...*transtulisset et easdem res altari beati Nicolai confessoris in ecclesia parochiali de...Mwsna...applicuisset*" Ub. Vol. 7, 297-298. also Entz 1996, 391-392.

<sup>424</sup> Römer 1912, 57.

<sup>425</sup> We know that the Council of Strassbourg had determined on the removal of images in 1524, but "in der still und mit beschlossenen Türen". Besides, the objects had to be stored "in die cruft oder sonst an ein heimlichen Ort". Michael Baxhandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 73.

### *Vincencius as a wall-painter*

In the same year following the completion of the retable for the community of Meschen, Vincencius carried out a commission in the church of Salzburg (*Vízakna, Ocna Sibiului*). Besides his panel painting, this is the only work we know of from Vincencius that was executed on walls. Thus, he represents another example of the Transylvanian but also the more general, European custom that painters often had to try their hand at techniques that were different from what was thought to be their daily routine.<sup>426</sup>

The wall painting on the northern wall of the Salzburg parish church was according to its inscription, commissioned in 1522 by Martinus Makray, agent of the salt treasury (*racionista*): MARTINUS MAKRAY RACIONISTA WYZAKNENSIS 1522 FIERI FECIT PER WINCE(n)CIU(m) P(ictorem).<sup>427</sup> The life and development of the locality, situated in the immediate neighbourhood of Hermannstadt and already at that time an *oppidum*,<sup>428</sup> was influenced from its beginnings by salt mining. The locality held the privilege throughout the Middle Ages to transport the salt extracted in Salzburg through the Székely and through the Romanian territories (*per terram Siculorum aut per terram Blacorum*), without paying tax.<sup>429</sup> The owners of the land were the Vizaknai family who attained separation of Salzburg from the Province of Hermannstadt and the so-called *Königsboden*. The village thus belonged from around 1350 to Fehér county.<sup>430</sup> The oppidum was inhabited and run by both Saxons and Hungarians from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, a fact that also led at a certain point to some divergence between the Hungarian and the Saxon burghers regarding the nationality of the

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<sup>426</sup> If altar-commissions could be considered a daily occurrence indeed, was discussed earlier in this dissertation, along with the problem of painters fulfilling several types of commissions throughout the Middle Ages, naturally not only in Transylvania, but generally in this period in Europe.

<sup>427</sup> Jolán Balogh mentions that Martinus Makray may have been a relative of Valentinus Makray, archdeacon of Kraszna (1525) and Hunyad (1532). However, she does not offer any details to support her suggestion. The Makray family was an important noble families in Hunyad county, with Felpestes and Vízszentgyörgy as their property, also using the latter in their names (Makray de Vízszentgyörgy). Unfortunately, neither Iván Nagy nor Albrecht Amlacher offer any data on the person of Martinus Makray in their works dealing with the history of the family. Martinus is not even mentioned in either of the works among the family members. Iván Nagy, *Magyarország családai czímerekkel és nemzedékrendi táblákkal*. (Families of Hungary with coats-of-arms and geneological tables) (Pest: Ráth Mór, 1860) Vol. 4., 272-274 and Albrecht Amlacher, "Adalékok a Makray család származásához." (Additions to the origin of the Makray family) *Hunyadmegyei Történeti és Régészeti Társulat évkönyve*. (Annual of the History and Archeology Organization from Hunyad County) 11 (1900). 153-176.

<sup>428</sup> Although in 1403 it was mentioned as *civitas*, later it clearly figures as *oppidum*. (Ub. Vol. 3., 294, Vol. 4., 60, Vol. 5., 526)

<sup>429</sup> The right was first given to them by King Andrew II in 1222 and was later renewed by King Matthias in 1467. See Ub Vol.1, 34, and Ub. Vol. 6, nrs. 3365, 3432, 3554.

<sup>430</sup> Friedrich Schuller: "Über die Lostrennung Salzburgs von der Hermannstädter Provinz", *Korrespondenzblatt*. 16 (1893) 82-83.

first priest (the parish priest).<sup>431</sup> During the fifteenth and in the first half of the sixteenth century the parish priest and the schoolmaster seems to have been Saxon although in the second half of the sixteenth century the question was resolved by the parish priest being Hungarian, while Saxon preachers or deacons served close to him. The Calvinist Hungarians and the Lutheran Saxons used the church in common from this point on.<sup>432</sup>

The church of the community, a basilica dating from the Romanesque period, was partly rebuilt and vaulted after the Turkish assault at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>433</sup> The wall paintings were commissioned in all probability at the end of this construction-phase. Unfortunately, only one scene of the original interior decoration is preserved (respectively revealed) today. A series of articles contain the information that at least one other wall painting must have decorated the church until the 1930s, namely the field above the triumphal arch. At that time, due to its poor state of preservation it was destroyed.<sup>434</sup> According to the literature containing reports on this event, there was an inscription, worded very similar to the one that has been preserved, was connected to this scene: FIERI FECIT GREGORIU(s) L(itte)RAT(us) RA(cio)NISTA WYZAKNEN(sis). The scene was not identified, or described and no year was mentioned in connection with it so that it is not even certain if this destroyed decoration was from the same period, whether it was another work from the same master or not.

The fragmentary but still preserved painting depicts the scene of Christ's Farewell to his Mother, occupying the complete surface of the upper part of the northern wall, limited by the arch of the vault, from console to console. (**Fig. IV.33.**) As the scene has been incorrectly identified in previous literature as a detail of the Crucifixion<sup>435</sup>, a detailed description of it I will be provided here. The center of the composition is occupied by the huge figure of Christ, barefoot and dressed in a long, dark gown. He turns back towards the three women. His Mother was shown next to him joining her hands in a gesture of despair next to her right face and dressed in a long, radiant light-blue robe. Her head has been completely destroyed. Her

<sup>431</sup> Binder Pál. *Közös múltunk*. (Our common past) (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1982), 152.

<sup>432</sup> Binder, 1982, 159.

<sup>433</sup> Friedrich Teutsch: *Geschichte der ev. Kirche in Siebenbürgen*. Vol. 1. (Hermannstadt: Hermannstadt Krafft, 1921), 120.

<sup>434</sup> Balogh 1943, 296; Idem, *Magyar mecénások Transzilvániában*, (Kolozsvár: Glória, 1937), 126; D.J.:

"Elpusztított műkincsek". (Destroyed artworks) *Pásztorúz*. (Shepherd's fire) 22 (1936, 11), 253-254; Miklós Merhán: "Felbecsülhetetlen értékű műkincseket pusztított el a gondatlanság egy árpádkori református templomban." (Priceless art works have been destroyed in a Calvinist church from the Arpadian Period), *Keleti Újság* 19, (1936, June the 7<sup>th</sup>), 5.

<sup>435</sup> The scene has been incorrectly identified by Jolán Balogh as a detail from the Crucifixion, combined with the figure of the Judas departing in the background. Balogh. 1943, 116. The same identification figures in Vătăşianu. 1959, 800.

long dress fills the surface between the figure of Christ and the woman standing next to her with the drapery falling to the ground exactly following the contours of the cloaks of the two flanking persons. A second woman stands behind the Virgin, also with her hands clasped near her face. Large tear drops trickle from her eyes. She wears a white headdress and a dark gown, held together at his waist by a thin belt. Remains of the purse, knife and probably keys, - a group of objects often represented in the period as the customary accessories of a housewife's costume – can still be recognized to a certain extent hanging from her belt. A vivid red cloak covers her back. The thick, soft drapery is modelled with white light-spots on the surface of the cloak and with blue changeants on the sleeves-folds of her dress. A third woman, dressed in fashionable green clothing and wearing a ribbed, white hairdress crouches in the left corner of the scene, folding her hands around her knees. Her richly draped dress falls in abundant, soft folds to the ground around her. For the composition of her figure Vincencius very probably used a detail from Dürer's early graphics representing the Lamentation,<sup>436</sup> in spite of the differences in the costume. (Figs. IV.34-35.) Behind the women, in the background, the remains of a town representation can be observed with a damaged house and a better preserved tower. On the right side of the image, behind Christ in the background, a group of the departing apostles is depicted although very badly preserved. Their coloured, pastel-nuanced blue, violet, green clothing is rather poorly preserved. They all wear thin laced sandals, of a type already seen on the disciples depicted on the central panel of the Gross-Schenk altarpiece. One of them, a bearded figure clad in a violet tunic and a light green cloak, turns back in the direction of the farewell scene. His tunic fits close against his right leg.<sup>437</sup> The green color of the background behind them suggests that a landscape was originally painted there. The lower right corner shows the already mentioned inscription written in majuscules that informs us about the master and the commissioner as well as the dating of the painting. The general characteristics already present on (earlier) panels of the painter are clearly apparent on the wall painting as well including the striking

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<sup>436</sup> B 13 (117), 1498-99

<sup>437</sup>Jolán Balogh considered this apostle, identified by her as Judas, a figure adopted from the painter of the frescoes in the Gyulafehérvár cathedral, a master considered by her to be Italian. She was generally of the opinion that Vincencius must have been a disciple of the painter from Gyulafehérvár, the influence of the Italian painting being mixed in his style with motifs borrowed from German woodcuts and engravings. ("Stílusában sajátos módon keveredik az olasz festészet hatása a német metszetekből átvett motívumokkal. Renaissance jellegű, puha redőkezelését, egyes fejtípusokat – mint például a vízaknai freskó alacsonyhomlokú Júdását – a gyulafehérvári olasz festőtől vette át." Balogh 1943, 116) The frescoes in the northern apsidiole of the cathedral are indeed in date and even in style not far from the works of Vincencius. However, their present condition does not permit secure statements to be made on their concrete relation with the paintings of the Hermannstadt master. As far as the Italian influence has been considered in the style of Vincencius, this is nothing more in my opinion than Renaissance motifs – coming from Italian art but reaching Transylvania filtered through the German painting.

palette, the soft, thick folds combined with flat surfaces of the clothing that closely follow the anatomy of the body, the role of light and shadow in modelling the dresses and the predilection for changeant colors, all belong to the artistic vocabulary of Vincencius. The face of the apostle turning back is very similar to the faces depicted on the Gross-Schenk retable. In particular, the women represented on the left side of the composition display a stronger stylistic influence of the Dürer circle than the painter's earlier works. It should thus be taken into consideration that Vincencius was by this time probably running his own independent workshop in Hermannstadt and most probably employed several apprentices there. The trace of his helpers' hands may be seen on some of his works and this may explain why minor differences may be seen between his works.

### *The altar from Heltau*

Two panels in the possession of the Brukenthal Museum, originally parts of an altarpiece from Heltau (*Cisnădie, Nagydisznód*), are recorded in the literature as having been part of the last known work of Vincencius, dated by an inscription to 1525. One of the panels is a former, although fragmentary, predella of the altar representing scenes from the life of St. Severus<sup>438</sup>. The other one was formerly the lunette of this piece and depicts the interior of the room of a muribund.<sup>439</sup> (Figs IV.36-37.)

When Károly Pulszky described the altar in 1879,<sup>440</sup> it was still in its original place in the church of Heltau. When one year later it was dismantled, they intended to take it to the Brukenthal Museum. Instead, the predella first came into the possession of Emil Sigerus in 1881, and only became part of the collections of the Museum as his donation in 1912.<sup>441</sup> Victor Roth found the lunette in 1914 in the Ferula of the parish church of Sibiu.<sup>442</sup> The central panel and two of the wings also described by Pulszky came into the possession of baroness Melanie Pach, born countess Csáky, in Pozsony (today's Bratislava). Afterwards, the trace of the panels was lost in the twists and turns of the art trade.<sup>443</sup>

On the basis of the form and measures of the two preserved details, it would be possible to conclude that the original structure of the altar-piece was very similar to the altar from Schaas (*Şaeş, Segesd*) or to another Vincencius retable from Gross-schenk. In both

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<sup>438</sup> Saint Severus was bishop of Ravenna and patron saint of weavers. I have referred to his legend in a detailed way in the corresponding catalogue entry.

<sup>439</sup> Inv. No. 1219/a-b. See the exact description of the pieces in the corresponding catalogue section.

<sup>440</sup> Károly Pulszky, "Iparművészeti jegyzetek" (Notes on arts and crafts), *Archeológiai Értesítő*, 13 (1879): 273.

<sup>441</sup> Emil Sigerus, "Die Predella des alten Heltauer Altars", *Korrespondenzblatt* 28 (1905), 158.

<sup>442</sup> Roth 1916, 152.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibidem* 150 - 151.

cases the central panel is flanked by two Renaissance piers, standing on a predella ending in volutes on both sides and closed in the upper part by a Renaissance cornice and a lunette set on it.<sup>444</sup> The curved imprint of the former frame of the Heltau predella, visible on both lower corners of the panel, clearly suggests, that the predella indeed belonged to the above mentioned, volute-type, information also shortly referred to by Pulszky.<sup>445</sup> It is known, that Pulszky described the altarpiece in 1879 on the occasion of his visit of St. Walburga's church at Heltau<sup>446</sup> although his description is not consistent with the above supposition. According to him, the altar's central panel represented the Baptism of Christ "in the manner of Lucas Cranach" and was flanked by a pair of stationary and a pair of mobile wings. The inner sides of the mobile wings were decorated by the figures of St. Antoine, St. Severus, St. Paul and St. Nicholas. Scenes of the Birth of St. John the Baptist, his Beheading, St. John the Evangelist on Pathmos and the Martyrdom of the Evangelist were represented on their outer surfaces. Depictions of St. Aloysius, St. Joseph, Joseph the Patriarch in the well and a representation of an unidentified saint cardinal decorated the stationary wings.<sup>447</sup> The image of the retable we get from Pulszky forces us to conclude that if the retable was a winged one as suggested by Pulszky then it must have had rather small dimensions. The width of the lunette and that of the predella presuppose wings of approximately 40-42 cm, flanking a central image of around 80-84cm, something not common among the known Transylvanian altars.<sup>448</sup> This suggests

<sup>444</sup> The width of the lunette from Heltau (178 cm), but mainly the dimensions of the predella (135 cm in its actual form, originally it could have been at most the same width as the lunette) would also suggest that the altar was of the type described above, a type that was quite common in the region. The whole width of the altarpiece from Schaas (182 cm) and Großschenk (181 cm) remains extremely close to the dimensions of the lunette from Heltau (178 cm).

<sup>445</sup> "Az oltárképnek fölfele szélesedve kanyaruló, alsó lapján jeleneteket látunk Szent Severus életéből;" (On the lower panel of the altar which widens upwards in a curve there are scenes from the life of Saint Severus). Pulszky 1879, 273.

<sup>446</sup> The somewhat unusual title of the church figures in a document of 1430: "Capellanus Michael Mathaei portionarius parochialis ecclesiae Walburgis de Helta (Ub. Vol. 4., 400) and is referred to by several authors, (Heinrich Wittstock, *Aus Heltau. Vergangenes und Gegenwärtiges*. [Hermannstadt: Franz Michaelis, 1883]; Halaváts Gyula. "A nagydisznódi ágost. ev. templom." *Archeológiai Értesítő* 34 (1914): 232-240.) The cult of Saint Walburga was mostly typical in Bavaria. (see for example the St. Walburga church in Eichstätt), her feast-days are on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. See: LCI Vol. 8, 585-588.

<sup>447</sup> "a nagydisznódi szárnyas oltárkép három részből áll. A középsőn a főhelyen Christus kereszttelése van ábrázolva Lukás Cranach modorában. Ezen képet két ajtó fedi, melyek kívül belől díszítvék. Belől látjuk Szent Antalt; ez Martin Schongauer ismeretes metszetét juttatja eszünkbe. Szent Severust; remete Szent Pált; torentinói Szent Miklóst. Kívül ábrázolvák kereszttelő szent János születése; ugyanannak lefejezése; evangélista Szent János Patmoson; s az ő martyriuma. Az oltár szárnyain Szent Alajos; Szent József; József a kútban (?); szent bíbornok. Az oltárképnek fölfele szélesedve kanyaruló, alsó lapján jeleneteket látunk Szent Severus életéből; a bal sarokban fölül találjuk a fölírást: "D.O.M. DIVOQ SEVERO EP(ISCOP)O RAVANE(N)SI 1525 VINCE(N)C(IUS) PINXIT". Az oltárképet fölül félkör alakú tábla koronázza. ezen egy haldoklót látunk gyertyával kezében; ágya fejnél Szent Mihály áll a mérleggel." Pulszky 1879, 273.

<sup>448</sup> One could also consider the possibility of the lunette being placed only above the central image of the retable, and the predella – which was approximately the same width as the lunette – also supporting only the central image and just a short section of the stationary wings. However, this would result in an altar structure that would have been totally foreign in Transylvania. The possibility that the wing-pairs were added later to the altar should

that the retable served as a secondary altar in the church of Heltau. As for the iconographic arrangement the logical and characteristic order of such representations suggest that the scenes from the lives of both St. Johns actually decorated the wings' inner and not their outer sides. From the iconographic point of view they perfectly match the representation of the Baptism of Christ on the central panel, and they are also connected to the predella and the scenes taken from the life of Severus.<sup>449</sup> When the wings were closed, a series of eight standing saints could probably have been seen on the retable. The movable wings were possibly inverted during a later mounting. This would, to a certain extent, explain the description provided by Pulszky.

The iconography used on the two preserved panels is unique in Transylvanian panel painting. The lunette depicts the bedroom of a dying person. St. Michael stands at the foot of the deathbed. The scene is clearly meant to be the closing image of the *Ars Moriendi* illustration series. The increasing importance of the role of death in everyday life in the Middle Ages in the fifteenth century led to the appearance of a series of treatises on the technique of dying well, the *artes moriendi*.<sup>450</sup> These first served to instruct the clergy in assisting the dying. Later, they appeared as illustrated block books. Once translated into vernacular European languages, they came into the possession of numerous laymen. A series of block-printed and hand-pressed versions are known. Each page of the text was illustrated with a picture. Five pairs of illustrations showed several instances of the struggle between the forces of heaven and hell for the soul of the dying man; one image regularly depicts a certain temptation, while its pair image represents the support given by Faith to resist the temptation. The last, the eleventh image, stands alone. It shows the hour of death, the victory of Faith over Evil. The representation on the lunette from Heltau can be identified with this scene. The dying man is represented in his deathbed. The crucified Christ appears in front of his eyes, while his soul is taken by an angel. A priest (sometimes also a nun) holds a candle in front of him, while several demons, representatives of hell, flee from the room. The beasts standing at

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also be considered. However, the iconographic program of these wing-pairs corresponds so well not only to the topic of the central image but also to the usual arrangements of medieval retables this supposition seems completely unlikely.

<sup>449</sup> Due to an important common point in their legend, the "self-burial", Severus is occasionally represented together with St. John the Evangelist. *LCI*. Vol. 8, 341.

<sup>450</sup> The most often cited of these is the "Opus tripartitum" of Johannes Gerson, the third part of which bears the title "De arte moriendi, The "Speculum artis bene moriendi", possibly a work by Nicolaus von Dinkersbühl, came into being in Viennese university circles through the influence of Gerson's work, a fact that might perhaps be of importance from the point of view of Vincentius' sources. As the University of Vienna was an important intellectual center for the whole South-German area during the fifteenth century, the "Speculum" spread in several manuscripts of the period throughout the whole German-speaking region. (See among others: *Lexikon des Mittelalters* [Stuttgart-Weimar: Metzler, 1999] Vol. 1, 1040 )

the foot of the deathbed have been defeated by the faith of the moribund, expressed also by the two inscriptions above his face: *IESU FILI DAVID MI(sere)RE ME(i)*<sup>451</sup> respectively near the crucifix in the background: *FIDES TUA SALW(um) TE FECIT*.<sup>452</sup> The mouth of the Leviathan can be observed in the left corner of the image and is meant to be a representation of hell. St Michael is represented on the left half of the panel, with a balance in his right hand. The figure is strangely isolated. By being placed on a pedestal he is made to look like a sculpture set in the bedroom. On one dish of the scale he is holding, a demon is seen with a book, on the other one the soul of the deceased is shown kneeling and praying. The book in the scale, just as the large volume represented at the head of the deathbed, probably contains the records of the dying man's acts, to be evaluated in the hour of his death.<sup>453</sup> Thus, the lunette from Heltau represents a fairly late example of the last scene of the *ars moriendi*. The use of this iconography on an altarpiece is extremely rare, not only in Transylvania but in late Gothic painting generally. As has already been mentioned, depictions of the *ars moriendi* are mostly known as book-illustrations: woodcuts or miniatures. One of the very few panel paintings on the topic is the famous "Death and the Miser" of Hieronymus Bosch.<sup>454</sup> The representation clearly derives from the *Ars Moriendi*, but is fitted into a moralizing framework through details pointing to the concrete story of a miser. The panel is supposed to have served as the left wing of an altarpiece.<sup>455</sup> Bosch's composition was obviously known by Cranach, when working on his Leipzig panel with the same topic, although it did not have the same function.<sup>456</sup> The inscription surrounding the semicircular end of the panel identifies it unquestionably as the epitaph of Heinrich Schmitburg.<sup>457</sup> Obviously, there is no concrete connection between Cranach's crowded composition and the panel from Heltau. However, the

<sup>451</sup> "et clamavit dicens Iesu Fili David miserere mei" (Luke 18, 38)

<sup>452</sup> "Et Iesus dixit illi: "Respice! Fides tua te salvum fecit" (Luke 18, 42). Both quotations are taken from the story of the healing of a blind man in Jericho.

<sup>453</sup> :In the *artes moriendi* of the fifteenth century the drama takes place in the bedroom of the dying person. God and the devil are consulting the book at the head of the deathbed. But it looks as if the devil is the one in possession of this book or public notice which he brandishes vehemently to claim his due." Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*. (New York: Knopf, 1981), 105. The beast in possession of this book is probably represented in this case on one plate of the balance.

<sup>454</sup> ca. 1485/1490, oil on panel, 93 x 31 cm. Washington, The National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection 1952.5.33

<sup>455</sup> Colin Eisler ed., *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection. European Schools Excluding Italian*. (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1977), 66-69.

<sup>456</sup> 1518 (?), oil on panel, 93 x 36.2, Leipzig. Museum der bildenden Künste. (40)

<sup>457</sup> See on the panel: Claus Grimm, Johannes Erichsen and Evamaria Brockhoff eds., *Lucas Cranach. Ein Maler-Unternehmer aus Franken*. (Kronach-Leipzig: Festung Rosenberg – Museum der bildenden Künste, 1994), 301-302.



Transylvanian panel is not very different from the one in Leipzig either in style or in the general, moralizing-didactic conception of the image, emphasized by several inscriptions.<sup>458</sup>

The predella shows the consecration of Severus, bishop of Ravenna. In the foreground of the scene the saint is shown sitting on an altar-mensa, with his hands joint to prayer.<sup>459</sup> In the background, scenes from his life are represented that follow the narrative of his legend. Severus is seen kneeling and praying on the left with a pigeon above his head,— Originally, he was very probably shown in front of an altar that has fell victim to the truncation of the panel. The scene depicted in the background on the left side represents the bishop's election. Severus kneels with bowed head, surrounded by clerics. A figure wearing a bishop's miter points to the pigeon, a symbol of the Holy Spirit that according to the legend indicated that the weaver called Severus should be elected. The bishop's death is shown on the right side of the panel. As Severus felt his death near, he opened the grave of his wife Vincentia and his daughter Innocentia. The skeletons miraculously moved aside by themselves so that he could lie near them. The inscriptions above and under the grave explain these events.

The presence of scenes from the life of Severus, patron of weavers, on the altar from Heltau can be explained with historical data. Written sources indicate that Heltau was a culturally and economically flourishing, lively community in the first decades of the sixteenth century. It is known that several persons from Heltau studied at Vienna and Cracow and several highly educated parish priests worked in this community during the discussed period.<sup>460</sup> The locality's good economic situation is also mirrored in the fact that in 1500 the privilege of holding an annual-market on the feasts of St Peter and Paul and on the feast of the Decapitation of St. John the Baptist had been granted them.<sup>461</sup> This privilege, as well as the outstanding economic situation itself, was mainly related to the activities of the weavers' guild. Heltau was known from the Middle Ages onwards as town of weavers.<sup>462</sup> The first mention of the guild in Heltau is as late as 1513<sup>463</sup>, but there are good reasons to suppose that

<sup>458</sup> Cranach's painting clearly did not serve as concrete pictorial source for our painter. Nor was the well-known stamp series of Master E.S used by Vincencius, something that should be the first thing to think of when speaking about an *Ars Moriendi* representation.

<sup>459</sup> The fact that the saint is seated on an altar instead of a bishop's cathedra, shows some kind of confusion in the representation: a confusion between the bishop's consecration and the canonization procedure. This also led to the misunderstanding in which Vătășianu identified the scene as "St. Severus sitting on his tomb, being adored by two bishops" See: Vătășianu 1959, 799.

<sup>460</sup> Gernot Nussbächer, "Studierende und Akademiker im mittelalterlichen Heltau". *Aus Urkunden und Chroniken*, vol. 2, (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1991), 143-144 ; Heinrich Wittstock 1883; Franz Zimmerman, "Katalog der Heltauer Pfarrer". *Korrespondenzblatt* 2 (1879), 106.

<sup>461</sup> Hermann Rehner, *Heltau, eine Monographie*. (Hermannstadt, 1931), 13.

<sup>462</sup> See: Nussbächer, Gernot. "Wollenweber und Sichel schmiede in Alt-Heltau". *Aus Urkunden und Chroniken* . Vol. 1, (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1981), 108 – 109.

<sup>463</sup> Rehner 1931, 46.

it was present here much earlier.<sup>464</sup> Its role is clearly indicated by the fact, that the eldest known tax register (1594) at Heltau records the presence of 182 weavers making it the largest guild in Transylvania.<sup>465</sup> The importance of the guild obviously needs to be taken into consideration in relation to the altar. The iconography of the predella is related to the weavers' guild. Severus, being a weaver himself, was venerated as their patron saint.<sup>466</sup> The supposition that the guild commissioned the altar seems to be quite plausible, while the scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist on the inner side of one wing and on the central image could also be of importance from this point of view. This choice of the altar's iconographic program seems to be connected with the fact that one of the annual markets, that was no doubt of exceptional importance to the weavers, was held on the feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist. In the light of the above, the altar, partially preserved in the Brukenthal Museum, was very probably one of the secondary altars in the church in Heltau and must have been commissioned and supported by the guild of the local weavers.

However, the choice of an *Ars Moriendi* representation on the lunette of the altar is still strange and unexplained. The iconography would be unambiguously easier to fit into the program of an epitaph, as was done by Lucas Cranach in his Leipzig panel. However, it must also be mentioned that there have been questions as to whether the panel was really an epitaph.<sup>467</sup> One possible suggestion is that the Heltau-altar may be connected to the death of a guild-principal, who may have made a deposition in a testament connected with the founding of the altar and the commission of the retable. There are many known examples of similar points in testaments of various notabilities,<sup>468</sup> but even in cases when the iconography is also specified in the text of the testament, it is not characteristic that the decoration includes scenes related to the iconography of Death. It may of course also happen, that the panel was originally planned to have another function. However, these questions cannot be resolved at this stage in the research.

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<sup>464</sup> Gernot Nussbächer, "Wollenweber und Sichelschmiede in Alt-Heltau". *Aus Urkunden und Chroniken*. Vol.1., (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1981) 109.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>466</sup> The relation between the saint and the guild has already been shortly discussed by Roth. Roth 1916, 152.

<sup>467</sup> Some reserachers consider that the panel was already finished by 1515, not in 1518, when it was ordered as an epitaph by the son of Heinrich Schmiedburg. See: Claus Grimm, Johannes Erichsen and Evamaria Brockhoff eds., Lucas Cranach. *Ein Maler-Unternehmer aus Franken*. (Kronach-Leipzig: Festung Rosenberg – Museum der bildenden Künste, 1994), 301.

<sup>468</sup> Mária Lupescu Makó is dealing with the problem in her PhD dissertation to be defended at CEU – Medieval Studies. A considerable choice of the literature and of sources referring to the topic has already been gathered in: Mária Lupescu Makó: "Item lego..." Gifts for the Soul in Late Medieval Transylvania." *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* Vol 7. (Budapest: CEU, 2001), 161-186.

Neither the style, nor the artistic quality of the two preserved panels suggest at first sight that the paintings can be attributed to Vincencius, master of the altars from Taterloch and Gross-Schenk. Based on the often quoted description by Pulszky, these panels were attributed to the master. According to him the predella bore the following inscription: „D.O.M. DIVOQ SEVERO EP(ISCOP)O RAVANE(N)SI 1525 VINCE(N)C(IUS) PINXIT”.<sup>469</sup> The actual state of the two pieces make it rather complicated to comment on the style and education of their master. However, there are certain features which link them to Vincencius’ earlier works. One of the painter’s clearly observable characteristic is his unquestionable interest in perspective, in the depiction of various spaces employing different planes of representations. This is especially visible on the predella. Not only the large space of the vaulted hall, divided in naves demonstrate it, but so does the arrangement of the central scene in several planes set one behind the other. Piers are used to divide not only the inner space but would also permit secondary scenes and figures to be placed skillfully. At the same time, the master’s ability to render perspective cannot be considered completely satisfactory. A similar approach to the same problem could already be observed in the earlier works attributed to this master. Faces have common characteristics with the panels from Heltau and earlier works attributed to Vincencius. Severus’ features bear close resemblance to that of the apostle standing behind the left shoulder of Christ on the central panel from Gross-Schenk. Another stylistic comparison can be drawn between the representations of the drapery. Due to the state of the panels and the blurred character of the folds, this aspect of the work must be approached with caution. As has been noted earlier, folds are represented in quite a precise way in the rest of Vincencius’ works. His early work, such as the retable from Taterloch, is technically less developed, but already shows a clearly delineated tendency in the style of the drapery. The same tendency can be followed on later works as well but executed in a much more determined technique. Thick, bunched folds are set near flat cloak portions, closely following the anatomy of the figure, a technique which leads to a very dynamic drapery work. A similar use of drapery can be observed on the gown of St. Michael on the lunette from Heltau. The golden brocade, with delicately contoured black pattern, that covers the altar seems to be a recurrent motive in the oeuvre of Vincencius. It is present on the predella of the Heltau-retable as well as on Christ’s cloak on the altar from Gross-Schenk. Although both

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<sup>469</sup> The inscription is mentioned as such by Pulszky 1879, 273. The complete transcription would be “Deo Optimo Maximo Divoque Severo Episcopo Ravanensi 1525 Vincencius Pinxit” As mentioned above, to date only the date remains of this inscription. Sigerus relates that he has never seen the inscription, although the panel was in his possession between 1880 and 1912. Thus, the predella must have been truncated during the dismembering of the altar, before Sigerus became owner of the piece. Sigerus 1905, 158.

panels from the former Heltau altarpiece have unquestionably darkened during the centuries, and the thick layer of lacquer covering them produces a general yellow-brown dominant tone, the green coat of Severus, the red hose, the light red gown of St. Michael hint to the lively, bright use of colors, pointed out many times as a general characteristic of all of Vincencius' works. Besides many similarities between earlier and later works of the master, the representation of human figures on the two Brukenthal panels is somewhat weaker in terms of the way the anatomical problems are resolved. The figures depicted are often disproportionate. Although his anatomical knowledge seems to have presented him with only minor problems in his earlier works, it is apparently quite forgotten here.

Thus, the signed works of master Vincencius from Hermannstadt present a series of stylistic elements that define the personal style of the painter quite clearly although they also display certain features that could potentially cause embarrassment to the art historian in the terms of their attribution. There is however, one specific detail that remained unobserved until now and that should be considered when one wants to expressly affirm that the painter of all the listed works was one and the same person. Thus, it is also possible to give a convincing response to the problem raised by Jolán Balogh. She argued, that the master of the altar from Taterloch, dated 1508, cannot be the same as the author of all the works dated to the 1520's.<sup>i</sup> By careful examination, a cross-like sign can be observed in the right corner of the Heltau predella on the basis of the column directly in front of Severus' grave. (**Fig.IV.38.**) The extreme ends of the cross are split, and a dot is set between three of these bifurcations. A more elaborately executed version of the same sign has already been mentioned for the predella in Taterloch, in the left corner, on a red heraldic shield hanging on one of the branches of a dead tree. (**Fig. IV.39**) It is reasonable to interpret this sign as a hallmark of Vincencius. In this symbol there lies a clear link between the master's first and last work. It also clearly demonstrates that the stylistic differences between the panels from Taterloch and those from the 1520's can be considered at least partly the result of the natural stylistic development of the same master. Partly, I say, because on the other hand many of the differing stylistic solutions can be very probably written on the account of the workshop-members. Hallmarks and signatures are generally accepted as a proof of authorship although not necessarily of the master himself, but his workshop. The mark authenticates the work as belonging to the inner circle of the master.<sup>470</sup> As has already been pointed out, it is very

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<sup>470</sup> On the signature of the master see Huth. 1969, 67: "Als Meister und Leiter der Werkstatt deckte er mit seinem Namen die Leistungen seiner in der Anonymität verbleibenden Werkstattgenossen oder sonstigen Mitarbeiter. – Neben den Ehren hatte er aber damit auch die Verantwortung für die entstehenden Mängel."

probable that in his mature period in the 1520s, Vincencius did not work on such important commissions on his own, but brought in the members of his workshop. Thus, it is known that the altar-piece from Taterloch was the result of the collaboration between son-in-law and father-in-law. The later works of Vincencius were also not exclusively “autographic” work of the master, but the result of apprentice-collaboration.<sup>471</sup>

### ***Other works associated with the Vincencius-workshop and its influence***

There are a number of retable-fragments, that have been associated in earlier studies in the literature – based on stylistic considerations – with the person or at least the workshop of Vincencius.<sup>472</sup> These will be taken into consideration here, in order to include them or exclude them from his oeuvre.

A large predella in the collections of the Brukenthal Museum<sup>473</sup>, shows the remarkable representation of Christ’s Appearance to his Mother after his Resurrection. (**Fig. IV.40.**) The episode is not recorded in any of the canonical gospels although it was considered obvious and natural that the Virgin deserved the honor of seeing her Son after his Resurrection. The belief that such a meeting had taken place was mirrored in the texts of ecclesiastic writers (although the formulation of a self-contained, apocryphal description of an Apparition was a relatively late development).<sup>474</sup> From an art historical point of view, it is generally accepted, that Pseudo-Bonaventura’s *Meditationes Vitae Christi*<sup>475</sup> was primarily responsible for the popularity of the subject, shaping the iconography of most of its illustrations.<sup>476</sup> The pictorial occurrence of the topic became more common from the second half of the fourteenth century

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<sup>471</sup> Unfortunately, it was not possible thesis to make infra-red reflectography on all the relevant altarpieces during the years of my research for this thesis, although I am aware of the fact that analyzing the underdrawing, the preparation methods used on these panels could have provided important information reflecting the degree of Vincencius’ personal role in the finalizing of a panel. The infra-red photographs taken of merely the two Heltau-panels do not reveal determined lines, elaborated, detailed underdrawing. We can observe a very fine, thin, guiding outline, which is thoroughly prepared only for certain faces – like that of Severus and the two ministrants standing behind the altar. Not many details have been changed on the painting in comparison to the initial plan, only the originally drawn halos of Severus have been omitted. Thus, it is still plausible that the two panels could have been executed – after a draft by the leading master – by apprentices. For the effort of including the infra-red examination of the Heltau panels in his full program, I have to thank the conservator Mihály Ferenc. At the same time, I have to thank the direction and staff at the Brukenthal Museum for permission to carry out these examinations and for their patience they have treated our long-lasting work with.

<sup>472</sup> See: Roth 1916, 137-140; Balogh 1943, 214-216; Kertesz 1998, 96-97.

<sup>473</sup> Inv no. 1990

<sup>474</sup> Ambrosius, *Liber de virginitate* 3, 14; Rupert von Deutz, *De divinis officiis* VII, 25; Siccardus Cremonensis, *Mitrare* VI; Ludolf von Sachsen, *Vita Jesu Christi* cap 70 fol. 236 etc. As referred to in LCI Vol. 1. 667-671

<sup>475</sup> Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, *Meditations on the Life of Christ* (Paris BN, Ms. it 115) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 359.

<sup>476</sup> James D. Breckenridge, “Et Prima Vidit’ The Iconography of the Appearance of Christ to His Mother”, *Art Bulletin* 39 (1957): 9-32. The article is an important contribution to the literary and iconographic history of the episode.

onwards, and two important types of the representation took shape. One of them, popular mainly in German-speaking territories, depicts Mother and Son embracing each other. Other countries apparently favoured presentation of the very moment of the Apparition, when the Ressurrected Christ came to his Mother who was deeply absorbed in her prayers.<sup>477</sup> This last version has become more widely used, although both versions completely correspond to the vivid and affecting narrative of Pseudo-Bonaventura. The version of the scene depicted on the predella from Hermannstadt does not belong to either of these two widely distributed types of representations. The Transylvanian painter seized the moment when the Virgin had already fallen on her knees in front of her Son, who is greeting her and – absolutely conforming to Pseudo-Bonaventura’s narration<sup>478</sup> – is also about to kneel down before her mother. Christ, approaching from the spectator’s left holds the hand of his mother between his palms. He wears a radiant red cloak, arranged so that his wounds may be seen. The triumphal banner, otherwise a characteristic attribute of the Ressurrection scenes, leans to his right shoulder. The Virgin, kneeling in front of him, looks upwards to her Son. She is clad in a blue mantle, wearing a white headdress and holds her left hand in front of her chest. The arrangement of the two persons, especially the position of the Virgin, at first sight gives the impression of an allusion to the pictorial tradition of the ‘*Noli me tangere*’ scenes. However, it is exactly the detail of the touching hands that contradicts this. In the fifteenth century there was already a wide spread iconography generally based upon the ‘*Noli me tangere*’. A motive that is also one of the iconographic components of Rogier van der Weyden’s complex interpretation of the episode on his Miraflores altar, an interpretation that has played an important role in the popularization of the topic and such a tremendous effect on its iconography. However, on these pictorial types Christ shows his wounds, holding his hands in a recoiling gesture. This gesture is completely missing from the Transylvanian panel. The motive of Christ’s holding the Virgin’s hand between his palms does not occur in the texts, nor does it figure on any of the representations known to me. Most of the examples depict Christ lifting his hand in greeting of benediction, or – as already mentioned – showing his wounds. Even when there exist certain depictions showing Christ holding her mother’s hand – this is more reminiscent of a simple offer of his hand<sup>479</sup>, than of the tender way he holds her

<sup>477</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting. Its origins and character*. (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1953), 262-264; 460-464.

<sup>478</sup> "And therewith she kneeling down honored him; and He also kneeling beside her said: My dear Mother, I am." (modernized English text of *The Mirroure of the blessed lyf of Jesu Christ*, Oxford, 1908, as mentioned by Breckenridge, 16.)

<sup>479</sup> Christ Appearing to the Virgin. Paris, Bib. Nat., Ms fr. 9196, fol. 203v, referred to by Breckenridge, image no. 4

hand on the Hermannstadt predella.<sup>480</sup> This sign of the intimate, personal moment in the relationship between Christ and his Mother can be perhaps considered an unusual variant of the representation type when the two are shown embracing each other.

Although texts do not refer to it, the triumphal banner of the Resurrection appears on the representations of the scene from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Besides the banner leaning against his right shoulder on the Hermannstadt predella, Christ is clad in his vivid red mantle, known also from the scenes of the resurrection (and first used by Rogier), in spite of the textual reference to the white clothes worn by Christ when he appears. Other details of the Hermannstadt representation make clear allusion to the scene of the Annunciation. The borrowing of compositional schemes of one type or another of the Annunciation was quite general in Apparition depictions of the period and results from the desire to emphasize the parallels between the two episodes: the heralding of the Incarnation by the Archangel, and Christ's own announcement, to his mother of the fulfillment of that Incarnation.<sup>481</sup> The interior of the room in the background of the Hermannstadt image with the black baldachin on the right side of the room or the open book on the table are details serving this aim. Even the position of Christ can be linked with the position of the approaching archangel's.<sup>482</sup> The representations that place the scene of the Apparition inside the Virgin's room, can be considered to follow the text of Pseudo-Bonaventura. The Hermannstadt panel represents a sort of a transitional solution since it places the scene in the front of the room, in a kind of forehall, which may or may not be indoors.<sup>483</sup> The parapet wall made of broad stone, limits the space from behind on both sides of the room and offers a view on both sides towards a mountainous landscape. On the left side, Christ appearing to the three women in front of the cave, another scene connected to the Resurrection, can be discerned.<sup>484</sup> The presence of the group of angels witnessing the episode is somewhat unusual, but not completely without parallel in the iconography of the topic.<sup>485</sup> All in all the iconographic composition of this

<sup>480</sup> On other examples Mary, fallen to her knees, kisses the hand of her son. See: Workshop of the Rohan Master. Christ appearing to his Mother. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cod. 52, fol. 26 v. As referred to by Breckenridge, image no. 6.

<sup>481</sup> Breckenridge 27.

<sup>482</sup> For the position of the legs including the composition of the drapery, see especially Dürer's Annunciation woodcut B 83 (132) dated to 1503.

<sup>483</sup> A similar solution is known from the *oeuvre* of Juan de Flandes – on his panel dedicated to the topic, in the collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie. See: Pilar Silvia Marolo, *Juan de Flandes*, (Salamanca: Caja Duero, 2006), 244.

<sup>484</sup> The tradition of depicting the resurrection in the background of the scene, as well as the depiction of other episodes connected to it can also be traced back to Rogier and his immediate followers.

<sup>485</sup> The above-mentioned example by Juan de Flandes presents a similar detail, although the angels appear much more like outsiders on the scene on the Spanish panel compared to the Transylvanian predella. Angels are also

panel is fairly complex, employing motives from several variants of the representation. It would be reasonable, knowing the most usual source of the sixteenth century Transylvanian panel painting in general and of the Vincencius workshop as well, to search for the direct pictorial pattern in Dürer's *oeuvre*. However, the version of the scene created by the great Nuremberg master<sup>486</sup> belongs to a completely different tradition, presenting the Virgin still kneeling at her prayer stool but facing Christ. Although Dürer's version of the representation type was also a very important moment in the dissemination of this iconography, it was not used as a source on the predella. A drawing attributed to Lucas Cranach's circle and considered by Otto Benesch to belong to the master's early period is much closer to the Hermannstadt image both in its conception and style.<sup>487</sup> The drawing was obviously not the concrete source for the Transylvanian painter, however, both images may have their roots in some common model, perhaps in a common educational sphere. This is suggested by the general interpretation of the background room, its wooden barrel-vault and its furnishings that speaks of distant netherlandish models. The way the anatomy of the figures is formed, especially that of Christ, also links the two representations.

There is another detail of the predella that is of importance and has not yet been referred to: the inscription in front of Christ's mouth, directed towards the Virgin and containing the exact words that left his lips when entering Mary's room according to Pseudo-Bonaventura: SALVE SANCTA PARENS. In spite of the fact that the words of the episode do not often occur on the pictorial representations of the scene, I would not consider this proof that the Transylvanian master knew the written source itself. However, conscious or not, the quotation is a direct reference to Pseudo-Bonaventura's *Meditationes*.

The overall stylistic characteristics do place the predella in the immediate proximity of Master Vincencius.<sup>488</sup> The most striking link lies in the rich draping, in the thick, soft folds combined with surfaces – as on Christ's right leg – that closely follow the anatomy of the figure. The anatomy of Christ's half-naked upper body, the way his musculature is represented is close to the Vir Dolorum figure of the Taterloch predella. All in all, the pale-greyish incarnate employed by the artist and the facial types represented, - especially the

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present on the version by Albert Bouts. See: Max J. Friedländer, *Early Netherlandish painting*. Vol. 3, *Dieric Bouts and Joos van Gent*. (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1968), 116 no. 55.

<sup>486</sup> B 46 (120)

<sup>487</sup> Otto Benesch, "Die Anfänge Lucas Cranachs. (Die Bilder in St. Florian)". Eva Benesch ed., *Collected writings*. Vol. 3., *German and Austrian Art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries*. (New York: Phaidon, 1972), 30-72, Image no. 36.

<sup>488</sup> Victor Roth considered the predella to be a work of Vincencius personally (Roth 1916, 153). In opposition, Jolán Balogh was of the opinion that the characteristics the predella had in common with works of Vincencius were only part of the general stylistic features of the period. Balogh 1943, 215.



Saviour's face with his high forehead and little round eyes, are perhaps most similar to the Taterloch panels from the works of Vincencius presented so far.<sup>489</sup> This similarity suggests that the panel should be dated to a time between the creation of the Taterloch altar-piece and that from Gross-Schenk, in the second decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>490</sup>

A predella with volutes on both its ends with a Renaissance-style frame, presently mounted on the high altar-piece of the church in Mediasch, depicts the Last Supper.<sup>491</sup> (**Fig.IV.41.**) The figures of the apostles sitting around the table present features obviously reminiscent of Vincencius' artistic style. The faces, although it is clear that they were deliberately destroyed, can still be clearly connected with either the apostle figures on the Gross-Schenk altar or with certain faces of the Heltau-panels. Minor difficulties in the anatomical representations, misdrawn arms – like those of the two white bearded apostles on both ends of the table – are details repeatedly encountered on signed works of the master. The general composition of the space, the room almost surrounded by piers of Renaissance style, the view towards a landscape on the left side of the image, the golden-black brocade drapery behind Christ and the similarly decorated gown of the apostle sitting on the left side between the two piers, are all elements already known from works of Vincencius. Although the effects of light on the surface of the textiles is a means also repeatedly used as well by the master, the folds of the cloaks and draperies of the predella in Mediasch are somewhat harder, more angular than the thick, bunched folds seen on previously presented panels of Vincencius. The plate-halos of the apostles are also something new in comparison to his *oeuvre*. All in all, the panel can be considered a work that is quite closely connected to the workshop of the master. These are the works that based on stylistic criteria sho, in my opinion, be considered, to belong to the Vincencius workshop. However, there are a number of other panels considered in the literature to be part of Vincencius' circle. Andrei Kertesz has discussed the panels from the altar-piece from Niemesch (*Nemeş, Nemes*), the panel from Hundertbücheln (*Movile, Százhalom*) representing St. Anthony and St Paul, the hermits<sup>492</sup> and a large *Vir dolorum* panel of the Brukenthal Museum,<sup>493</sup> as possible works of the Vincencius workshop.<sup>494</sup> The

<sup>489</sup> Although the angels also have their parallels in the figure of Saint Michael on the lunette from Heltau.

<sup>490</sup> This earlier dating is also supported by the predella type that suggests that the retable was of the Gothic, winged-type. The later works (those dated to the twenties) related to the Vincencius workshop all clearly bear signs of Renaissance influences.

<sup>491</sup> The piece has been placed within Vincencius' circle by Roth. Roth 1916, 137, Kertesz 1992, 76; Radocsay 1955, 184., Vătăşianu 1959, 798.

<sup>492</sup> Today in Das Landeskirchliche Museum der Evangelischen Kirche A.B. in Rumänien, Hermannstadt

<sup>493</sup> Inv. No. 1896

<sup>494</sup> Kertesz 1998, 97. He considered these panels to be works by the master himself, while in his other publication (Kertesz, 1992, 76) he put his point more cautiously, suggesting that the panel from Hundertbücheln was painted in the manner of Vincencius.

style of these panels hardly supports this opinion. The retable from Niemesch, although it clearly follows the stylistic and compositional direction represented by Lucas Cranach the elder<sup>495</sup>, is in its details very different from what we have seen on the Vincencius works. The panel from Hundertbücheln is again unquestionably contemporary with the activity of Vincentius, but the faces depicted, the fineness of the drawing are very different from Vincencius' "handwriting" and much more strongly oriented towards the elaborated phase of the Donauschule. Finally, the *Vir dolorum* panel contains a series of characteristics that clearly separate this painting and those of Vincencius. The way the figures themselves are conceived, the much harder arrangement of the folds, the ductus of the drawing, the colorit and many other details of the panel produces a general impression that is quite unlike works from the circle of Vincencius.

### ***Conclusion. The workshop of Vincencius. Style and historical certitude***

The significance of Vincencius lies obviously in the number of dated, signed works that can unquestionably be attributed to him, something that is unique in the Transylvanian art of the period. The long interval his workshop is attested for left its imprint on the panel painting of the period, - some influence of Vincencius's workshop is indeed be postulated for works dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

Thus, the works presented here and attributed to Vincencius Cibiniensis and his workshop, provide hints as to his schooling, to what influenced him and, to the collection of patterns he used throughout during his active life. It has become obvious through the analyses presented above, that the basic model-repertory he chose from is that of Dürer's. As has been shown, the panels of the Taterloch altar-piece, dated to 1508, already reflect the knowledge of Dürer-engravings, dated to the very beginning of the sixteenth century. However, Vincencius seems to have used Dürer's works as mere pictorial sources. His style does not primarily reflect the influence of the Nuremberg master.<sup>496</sup> The concrete sources of his style have to be looked for elsewhere. His altars' background landscapes, the sunset-colored skies, remind us at first sight of the paintings of the "Donauschule". Though, these landscapes are obviously not only technically inferior to those of the Danube school, but the the nature-representations are conceived entirely different. The landscapes in Vincencius' work are still used as mere

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<sup>495</sup> See the catalogue entry referring to the retable. The composition of the predella undoubtedly follows Cranach's woodcut B 39 (282)

<sup>496</sup> It is perhaps in the way of drawing the naked body on the Taterloch altar and certain details like the female figure in the left corner in the wall painting from Salzburg, where we can observe a stronger dependence on characteristics found in Albrecht Dürer.

backgrounds are not depicted for the sake of nature itself. Vincencius' figures do not constitute parts of the nature; the hills and trees in the background are reminiscent of theatre scenery.

His dynamic draperies, painted in thick, bunched folds on flat cloak portions, contouring some body parts, find their closest parallels on a group of works belonging to Lucas Cranach's earliest, Vienna period. Drapery solutions like those applied by Vincencius are first encountered on Cranach's Vienna works including the representation of St. Valentine with a donor<sup>497</sup>, (**Fig. IV.42**) the St. Stephanus woodcut from the *Missale Pataviense*<sup>498</sup> or the little Crucifixion panel preserved in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.<sup>499</sup> There are several other details in the work of Vincencius that are linked to the art of Cranach's early period. Facial-types, like those of Vincencius's apostles, the predilection for golden-black brocade gowns as well as certain characteristics of the drawing<sup>500</sup> point to the environment in which the famous master has executed his first works. The central panel of the Gross Schink retable reflects most clearly the influence of the German master. Cranach is known to have spent a couple of years in Vienna between 1500-1502/3, his earliest known works dating from these years. He is also considered to have been through his activities in Vienna, one of the initiators of the Danube school. His influence on Altdorfer, the main master of this school, has not been unquestioned in the literature. At the same time, it is generally accepted that early works of Cranach were indisputably influenced by Dürer. The coincidence of all these features suggests that Vincencius Cibiniensis may have spent a period in Vienna during the very first years of the sixteenth century.<sup>501</sup> There, he may have become acquainted with the circles that Cranach's early works came out of as well as the first initiatives of the new style, called later the Danube school. He would also have been able to obtain Dürer's latest woodcuts and engravings, probably already in common use in the Viennese workshops. The use of the early impressions is already obvious on the panels from Taterloch, but the master seems to have continuously acquired Dürer's latest works, even after his return to Transylvania.

<sup>497</sup> 1502/3, Oil on panel, 91 x 49 cm, Wien – Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste. Inv. No. 549.

<sup>498</sup> 1502, Paper, 32.2 x 15.1 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. No. 170 – 1929.

<sup>499</sup> around 1500, Oil on Panel, 58.5 x 45 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Inv. No. GG 6905

<sup>500</sup> The infra-red photographs taken of the panels from Heltau already mentioned above display certain faces with very fine drawing (mainly those of the more important figures). Fine, thin lines compose the hairs, the beards, the facial features, - a technique often encountered on works executed in the workshop of Cranach.

<sup>501</sup> The suggestion is even in accord with the first mention of the master in Sibiu, which only in the secondary literature is reported as dating from the year 1500. Actually, the tax list which mentions Vincencius' name is only partially preserved. We do not know its exact date but it is published as a document from **around** 1500, thus possibly, from 1501-1502, perhaps after the painter's arrival from Vienna?

A remote connection to Cranach's works could also explain Vincencius's obvious moralizing intentions. The use of certain iconographic representations was most likely the responsibility of the commissioner. However, the emphases expressed through the way the scene is composed, and especially the inscriptions that stress the meaning of the image, were the master's own. The clear didactic intention of the predella from Taterloch, the strong moralizing aspect of the lunette from Heltau achieved through the attached inscriptions, all fit together. Similar solutions are also encountered in many of Cranach's earlier and later works. Most of the elements listed above, just as the often mentioned use of the changeant colors by Vincencius, the play with the effects of light on the surface of the textiles should perhaps be considered in their own right characteristics of the period's general style. However, the coincidence of so many of these characters, the general impression they create together, encourages us to suppose that they can be explained by the master's concrete experience gained in the very first years of the sixteenth century in Vienna. In spite of the divergencies, a large amount of stylistic, technical and concept features link the early and the late works attributed to Vincencius. Additionally, the hallmark fortunately present on both his very first and very last known work, presents a so far unpublished proof to the fact, that the master ran a workshop in Hermannstadt throughout the first quarter of the sixteenth century. This workshop, certainly produced a much larger number of paintings than those preserved. The level of these paintings, as we have seen, is variable, presenting deficiencies in anatomy and perspective but also beautiful solutions in composition and color. The works of Vincencius do not represent the highest level of Transylvanian painting in the sixteenth century, but are of a fair quality for a workshop obviously not working for the "high society" but for parishes and lay patrons belonging to the middle-layer of the local society.

It is still not possible given the present stage of research to decide whether Vincencius, who called himself Cibiniensis, was a born Transylvanian, a citizen of Hermannstadt or a foreigner who came to Transylvania either as a famulus or already a master who later became a member of the local guild. It is probably not too important to decide this question. The master lived more than a quarter of a century in this land, married and worked here and left a clear imprint on the Transylvanian painting of the period. Thus, he was a real *pictor Cibiniensis*, an authoritative part of Transylvanian art history.

## Conclusions and future tasks.

### *General observations on Transylvanian workshop connections*

The case studies on retables discussed above and the conclusions drawn have shed light upon a number of previously unresolved or questionable aspects of Transylvanian altarpieces. Additional aim was to offer thus also a more complex overview of the circumstances under which the surviving pieces were produced.

Despite the fact that the earliest sculptures and altarpiece fragments that have survived come from the fourteenth century, the small number of written and material data available from this period as well as the first half of the fifteenth century does not permit researchers at this point to identify workshops or localize them in one town or another. The surviving pieces show however, that the claim to decorate churches and their altars with painted or sculpted images was present at a very early date, shortly after the middle of the fourteenth century and continuously in the region from this time on. Artistic production became much more pronounced in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, a period which can mostly be characterized by the group of altarpieces and paintings strongly influenced by the Viennese Schotten-master. In spite of the fact that the pieces display the same stylistic tendencies, their diversity show that they were not produced in a single workshop. It seems most likely that several foreign masters worked in collaboration with local masters. Where the workshop or workshops in which these pieces were produced can be localized, a question still remains. The density of such paintings in the small geographic triangle between Mediasch, Schässburg and BIRTHÄLM as well as the persons of the suggested donors, obviously suggest that this workshop should be located in one of these settlements. Unfortunately, very little is known about arts and crafts in BIRTHÄLM and Mediasch in these and the following decades, in contrast to Schässburg where a dynamic development can already be traced at the end of the fifteenth<sup>502</sup> and especially at the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Even if painters were not organized in guilds, (see Nussbächer, "Das Schässburger Gewerbe im 15. Jahrhundert." 1981, 104-107.) their role in the administrative life of Schässburg at the end of the fifteenth century is well known, reflected in the inscriptions and documents of the period. *Valentinus pictor* is known to have held the post of mayor, (in 1490 and between 1496-98) – based on an inscription on the triumphal arch of the Schässburg church "on the hill". *Matthias pictor* is mentioned in a series of documents as a highly influential representative of the town. (See Entz 1996, 436)

<sup>503</sup> Tereza Sinigalia has also suggested that the workshop of the BIRTHÄLM retable may possibly have operated in Schässburg. Tereza Sinigalia, "Pictură, sculptură și artă decorativă la Biertan.", (Painting, sculpture and

The two cases used as examples in this thesis concern the work of the followers of the Viennese Schotten-master and the workshop of Master Vincentius in Hermannstadt. These two studies present the basic characteristics of altar production at the end of the fifteenth respectively in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. There is of course a large number of altarpieces preserved from the flourishing period of early sixteenth century besides those produced in Vincentius's workshop, the analysis of which will contribute to a full image of Transylvanian altar production and workshop relations. However, already at the actual stage, after an inventoring work of the pieces it can be seen that the geographical distribution of the preserved objects and their stylistic characteristics clearly delineate the special significance of altar-production in two major Transylvanian towns, Schässburg and Hermannstadt, at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century.

Stylistic connections with a Schässburg workshop were already present in the sixteenth century details on the Birthälm retable. The possibility of the existence of a single large workshop in this town had already been suggested in earlier literature, and the presence of the Veit Stoss son, Johann was particularly suggestive in this regard.<sup>504</sup> Although the direction of artistic influence was very correctly formulated by both Roth and Radocsay as well as in the writings of Harald Krasser, more precise differentiation of even broader artistic connections will eventually be possible through a thorough stylistic analysis and through personal observation of all the surviving altarpieces and sculptures. Here, I will shortly discuss certain features that provide an impression of the rich information hidden in those surviving altarpieces. The retables known from around and in Schässburg suggest that at least two separate workshops operated in the same period in this town. Altarpieces, the production of which could be hypothetically linked to Schässburg, fall into two groups, around the altarpiece from Schaas on one hand and the so-called retable from Schässburg, dedicated to St. Martin, on the other hand. However, the picture of altarpiece production is still not that clear. In spite of the indubitable stylistic links between these retables, the diversity of the details in the various pieces and their connections often point to various workshops even in the case of one single retable. Thus, one should not think that these late medieval workshops

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decorative art at Biertan) *Buletinul Comisiei Naționale a monumentelor, ansamblurilor și siturilor istorice* 3 no.1 (1992): 28 – 36.

<sup>504</sup> Victor Roth has suggested that there was a workshop where the so-called “large group of altarpieces” (Die grosse Altargruppe) was produced. He considered that it was not possible to localize this workshop. However, he connected most of the pieces belonging to this group with the name of Johann Stoss, known to have operated a workshop in Schässburg. He also spoke of the altarpieces from Meeburg, Schweischer, Radeln, Schässburg, Reußdorf, Schorsten, Braller and Pretai as belonging to this large group. By and large, Radocsay followed Roth's ideas. Thus, he also suggested that Johann Stoss might have played an important role in this large workshop. Radocsay 1955, 181-184.

represented closed workshop-communities. The hand of several painters can obviously be traced in both above mentioned groups of altarpieces. In addition, more concrete, more palpable technical features also show the cross-relations between these workshops, the existence of workshop-filiations.

It has been shown that the sixteenth century details of the BIRTHÄLM retable indicate that the joiner work on the Bogeschdorf, the Schaas and the BIRTHÄLM altarpiece took place in the same, hypothetical Schässburg workshop. A series of several technical details on other retables can also be grasped that apparently point in the direction of Schässburg workshops. The pattern on the shrine-background is identical on the Bogeschdorf, the Reußdorf (*Cund, Kund*) and also the Székelyzsombor retable. The pattern of the wing-frame decoration is identical on the Székelyzsombor and Csíkmenaság altarpieces, both of which are closely related to the frames on the Schässurg Martin's altar. The type of superstructure is also closely related on the Székelyzsombor and the Csíkmenaság retables. Another link may be seen in the almost identical pattern on the shrine-background of the Csíkmenaság, Niemesch and Radeln altarpieces, while the foliage enclosing the shrines is very similar on the Székelyzsombor and the Bogeschdorf retable as well as on the Radeln altarpiece. Even if the pieces can be basically grouped by style around the two very high quality retables from Schaas and Schässburg, these links and the fact that the technical connections in certain cases do not correspond to the stylistic relationships between the same altars, indicate the existence of two or more, autonomous but collaborating workshops in Schässburg in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Naturally, it stands to reason that the workshop of Johann Stoss, mentioned in written sources, played a leading role in this lively environment for altarpiece production. This matter will deserve further, extensive research, corresponding to its importance. Although there is considerable literature that refers briefly to Veit Stoss' supposed Transylvanian origins and to his three sons mentioned as living in Transylvania,<sup>505</sup> Johann, Veit the younger and Martin, the original written sources still need to be thoroughly compared to the preserved pieces of art that may be considered works by the Veit Stoss sons. Various authors, briefly mentioning the matter, adopt historical data and information from each other, leading to a series of misunderstandings. The sources that are most often referred

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<sup>505</sup> See most recently: Miklós Mojzer, "A történelmi MS mester Sive Marten Swarcz seu Martinus Niger alias Marcin Czarny, Veit Stoss Krakói főoltárának festője" (The historical master MS, Sive Marten Swarcz seu Martinus Niger alias Marcin Czarny, the painter of Veit Stoss's high altar in Cracow), *Művészettörténelmi Értesítő*. 55 /2 (2006), 223- 246. Here especially 240-243.

to were first published by G.W.K. Lochner<sup>506</sup> and Max Loßnitzer<sup>507</sup>. A letter from the Schässburg-council dated to 1534, following the death of the great Nuremberg master, mentions the name of Johann, son of Veit Stoss, who according to the document was a painter in Schässburg. The letter asks the council of Nuremberg to pay the inheritance-part of Johann, who died in 1530 and the parts coming to his widow Margareta and his three sons, Franz, Emerich and Georg, to the stepfather of the children, the painter Christian from Schässburg.<sup>508</sup> Researchers have therefore concluded that Johann must have had a workshop in Schässburg. Based on the period's guild regulations, the workshop was taken over after his death by his eldest assistant, who also seems to have married Johann's widow. Veit Stoss the younger is known to have been a leading sculptor in Kronstadt by the time of the formulation of the local guild regulation in 1523.<sup>509</sup> He was also identified by previous researchers with a certain Vitus who worked at the church in Curtea de Argeş in Walachia. Taking into consideration the contemporary active trade relations between Kronstadt and Walachia this is easy to imagine.<sup>510</sup> Researchers like Harald Krasser and Chrisoph Machat have also been concerned with mention of one of his works, the so-called "Englises Gruß", probably a sculpted representation of the Annunciation, which has not been preserved.<sup>511</sup> Documents dating from the 1530s also mention the name of a third son of Veit Stoss, Martin, who appears to have been a goldsmith. At one time, he figures as a citizen of Mediasch and later as a citizen of Schässburg, Nürnberg and even Cracow.<sup>512</sup>

A careful investigation of the topic, which would finally examine the original sources for the above-mentioned, often quoted information, may reveal still unknown archival data. The historical part could then be nicely complemented with a detailed stylistic analysis of the surviving pieces of art, suspected to be works of the Veit Stoss sons. Besides the Schässburg groups of retables, other pieces connected to style of Veit Stoss should also be considered.

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<sup>506</sup> *Des Johann Neudörfer Schreib- und Rechenmeisters zu Nürnberg Nachrichten von Künstlern und Werkleuten daselbst aus dem Jahre 1547. Nebst der Fortsetzung des Andreas Gulden nach den Handschriften und mit Anmerkungen* herausgegeben von Dr. G.W.K. Lochner Stadtarchivar zu Nürnberg. (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1875. Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik des Mittelalters und der Renaissance. Vol. 10)

<sup>507</sup> Max Loßnitzer, *Veit Stoß. Die Herkunft seiner Kunst, seine Werke und sein Leben*. (Leipzig: Verlag Julius Teisler, 1912), 161, note no. 477.

<sup>508</sup> Loßnitzer, 1912, 161, note no. 477.

<sup>509</sup> Nussbächer-Marin 1999, 139-141.

<sup>510</sup> Nussbächer 1981

<sup>511</sup> Christoph Machat, *Veit Stoss. Ein Deutscher Künstler zwischen Nürnberg und Krakau*. (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1984) 116 and Harald Krasser: "Veit Stoss und Siebenbürgen. Legende und Wirklichkeit". *Süddeutsche Vierteljahresblätter* 27 (1978) 24-30. Unfortunately, either of these authors refer to their source for this information.

<sup>512</sup> Loßnitzer 1912, 164.



The sculpted decorations of the Mühlbach altarpiece,<sup>513</sup> the original Virgin-figure of which is now located in the Korniss chapel in Kóród (*Coroi*) is one example. The group of Crucifixes known in Kolozsvár, Nyárádremete (*Remetea*) and in the so called “Alserkirche” in Vienna also deserve special attention.<sup>514</sup> After having catalogued the Transylvanian altarpieces, wood sculptures and panel paintings it will certainly now be possible to also attribute other preserved objects to this stylistic circle and delineate the *oeuvre* of the Veit Stoss sons in Transylvania.

The nature of the preserved altarpieces and historical data indicate that the other center of altarpiece production at the end of the fifteenth and during the first decades of the sixteenth century was Hermannstadt. Its economic and cultural role has already been referred to in this thesis. These features already assured the necessary circumstances for the flourishing art in the locality around 1400. The workshop of Master Vincencius delineated in this thesis, represents a good example of the way such workshops operated in Transylvania. The unified *oeuvre* of Vincentius could be finally reconstructed based on the identification of his hallmark. At this stage in research, the number of surviving pieces that can probably be linked to Hermannstadt do not allow researchers to determine the exact number of workshops that existed here in addition to Vincencius’ workshop. However, as has already been pointed out in the chapter dedicated to this master, the character, the variety of surviving pieces clearly suggest the parallel existence of other workshops in Hermannstadt. The character of the supposed former high altar of the parish church<sup>515</sup>, commissioned partly by Johannes Lulay<sup>516</sup>, mayor of Hermannstadt in the years when the altarpiece was executed supports this assumption. Nothing is known presently about the master of the altarpiece, besides what can be seen at first glance, that he was a master at using motifs from Dürer’s prints, - the

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<sup>513</sup> Recent literature concerned with the altarpiece, the BA thesis of Ciprian Firea: *Altarul poliptic dein Sebeş* (The poliptych from Mühlbach) Defended at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Kolozsvár, 2002, and the MA thesis by Uwe Friedrich Hienz, *Der Wurzel-Jesse Altar in Mühlbach, Siebenbürgen*. Defended at Universität Augsburg in 2005.

<sup>514</sup> Dénes Radocsay, “Der Hermannstädter Kruzifix in Wien”, *Acta Historiae Artium* 6 (1959), 283-298 and Artur Saliger ed., *Veit Stoss und Österreich. Bedeutende Kunstwerke Gefährdet, konserviert, präsentiert*. (Vienna: Unteres Belvedere, 2005) 12-13.

<sup>515</sup> Later researchers have tried to demonstrate that the retable was not part of the high altar of the church. See: Ciprian Firea, „Artă și patronaj artistic în Transilvania medievală. – Polipticul din Sibiu” (Art and artistic patronage in Medieval Transylvania – The Hermannstadt Poliptych) *Ars Transilvaniae* 12-13 (2002-2003), 123-138.

<sup>516</sup> Of the two heraldic representations on the predella of the altarpiece, only the coats-of-arms of Lulay has been identified so far. In spite of the similarity of the other heraldic shield – showing a deer emerging from a crown – with the blazon of the Hermannstadt family Haupt, the identification is not likely. There is no information on this family before the seventeenth century. (An identification with the Haupt-blazon has been suggested by: Ion Albu, *Inschriften der Stadt Hermannstadt aus dem Mittelalter*. (Sibiu: Hora Verlag, 2002): 35)

compositions of the wing panels are based on Dürer's smaller, copper-plate Passion series. The high quality altarpiece clearly had an influence on panel painting in the region and its master was obviously one of the leading painters working in sixteenth century Transylvania. A number of other objects, mainly in the collections of the Brukenthal Museum in Hermannstadt, can most probably be linked to local workshops. The predella with the representation of the Death of the Virgin<sup>517</sup> has the coats-of-arms of the town in its corner. Additionally, a panel depicting Christ amidst the apostles, most probably central image of the same altarpiece has also survived.<sup>518</sup> Another panel located in the parish church of Hundertbücheln, depicting the Hermits St. Anthony and St. Paul,<sup>519</sup> the large panel with the representation of the Man of Sorrows between two angels, in the collections of the Brukenthal Museum<sup>520</sup> and a series of other sculptures and retable fragments presently held in the same museum can be also attributed to Hermannstadt workshops, based on stylistic and geographical considerations. Just as in Schässburg, Hermannstadt also offered the necessary economic and cultural background and the necessary number of commissions to allow several workshops to operate in parallel. Understandably, these workshops operating in close proximity to each other naturally left mutual imprints on each other's works.

In spite of the fact that documents show the existence of a considerable number of crafts in Mühlbach, Broos and other smaller Saxon towns<sup>521</sup>, nothing is known about painters or sculptors working here or on altarpieces produced by craftsmen in these localities. Stylistic considerations have led to the idea that even the elaborate Mühlbach altarpiece was the work of masters from neighboring towns. It is clear that in addition to Hermannstadt and Schässburg, Kronstadt must also have played a considerable role in Transylvanian altar production. The trade and economic importance of the town, regulations of the common painters', joiners' and glassworkers' guild from 1523 that has been preserved in the archives<sup>522</sup>, the presence of Veit Stoss the younger in the guild as well as the fair quality of the (unfortunately not very great number of) altarpieces and fragments preserved in the region, clearly point in this direction. However, a more thorough investigation of the written

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<sup>517</sup> Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Inv. No. 1895.

<sup>518</sup> Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Inv. No. 2667.

<sup>519</sup> The panel is presently in the collections of the Museum of the Lutheran Church in Hermannstadt, the so-called Kultur- und Begegnungszentrum "Friedrich Teutsch" der Evangelischen Kirche A.B. in Rumänien – Landeskirchliches Museum

<sup>520</sup> Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Inv. No. 1896

<sup>521</sup> Note that the earliest previously mentioned document referring to Transylvanian guild regulations dating from 1376 refers to Schässburg, Hermannstadt, Mühlbach and Broos.

<sup>522</sup> The regulation as well as the role of the town has been analyzed in the chapter dedicated to the social and historical background of the altarpieces.

sources, town accounts and, commissions that reflect the activity of local painters, sculptors and joiners still needs to be carried out. Together with the careful analysis of the preserved pieces these written sources should help create a clearer image of the artistic climate in Kronstadt.

Similarly, the importance of the town in the late Middle Ages and the mentions of corresponding craftsmen and commissions also suggest that Bistritz must have had workshops that produced a number of altarpieces during the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, in spite of the fact that no single panel or sculpture has been preserved in this area.<sup>523</sup> The contribution of Kolozsvár, a town of approximately the same importance as these Saxon localities, has already been referred to in the introductory chapter. Unfortunately, in spite of the many signs that suggest that a lively crafts-life developed here and that important commissions must have been carried out in local workshop(s) operating in the town, nothing has survived of the pieces once produced here. The territory of the counties is very poorly represented as concerns preserved altar fragments so it is not possible at the moment to draw any conclusions about the workshops in these towns.

The Székely region has also briefly been presented from this point of view, based mainly on historical data. It has been concluded that the *oppidum* of Marosvásárhely had a level of social development that might most possibly have permitted workshops to operate although the better part of the preserved pieces is clustered in the continuous Catholic region of Csík. However, the characteristics of these surviving altarpieces, sculptures and fragments make it very problematic to pinpoint particular local workshops. The pieces that have been preserved display great variability that defy grouping on a stylistic basis. There is little chance that they are the products of one single large local workshop, as Jolán Balogh described. Certain altarpieces in this region, such as the altarpiece from Csíkmenaság or from Székelyzsombor are clearly related stylistically to altarpieces produced in the Saxon area. The identity of the shrine-background patterns, the closely related foliage ornaments on the panels and above the shrines, clearly indicate (additionally to the stylistic links) workshop relations with the Saxon territory. Thus, the earlier theory concerning a clearly definable Saxon and Székely style should obviously be revised in the future. The idea is also relevant to the dating of the altarpieces from the Székely region. Gyöngyi Török has already dated the Csíkmenaság

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<sup>523</sup> Only the stall and the wooden reading-pulpit in the parish church of Bistritz point in this direction.

altarpiece to the 1520s,<sup>524</sup> in spite of the earlier dating based on the 1543 inscription on the shrine itself. Török considered the inscription the result of a later repainting. A thorough analysis of the panel paintings should also lead to the conclusion that, just as the altarpiece from Székelyzsombor, the Csíkmenaság retable indeed perfectly fits, within the character of Saxon altar production from the 1520s. Similarly, the custom of considering Székely paintings and sculpture as being generally later compared to art in the German-speaking territories of Europe and even to the art of Transylvania influenced the dating of the Csíksomlyó (*Șumuleu*) altarpiece in previous literature. The central panel and a wing of this retable came to and wandered between the Budapest museums from the end of the nineteenth century, while the predella, thought to come from the same altarpiece was bought by the museum in Kolozsvár. It is very probable the presence of the Jagellonian coat of arms on the predella due to which the altarpiece as a whole was dated to the first decades of the sixteenth century and considered a representative of a stylistically late-coming Székely art production. However, the character of the central panel and the wings clearly points towards the Viennese and Franconian art of the 1470-1480-s. As the paintings on the predella differ completely from the paintings on the retablepanels stylistically, the pieces may only have been mounted together at a later time, there is no serious reason to doubt that the retable was painted in the last decades of the fifteenth century for the parish church of Csíksomlyó, located in Csobotfalva (*Cioboteni*).<sup>525</sup>

This feature of late datings for Székely art production should actually be revised generally in the approach of art historians to medieval Transylvanian art. Transylvania was long considered a territory where most of the stylistic trends arrived later than to the neighboring countries, although this is contradicted by the above-mentioned examples and also by other aspects of the research presented in this thesis. Prints used as models for the compositions of Transylvanian panel paintings already hint at the contemporaneity of Transylvanian art with its western neighbors. Although the plates of Schongauer may have served as graphic sources for a considerable number of the fifteenth century images in Transylvania, printed sheets produced at the very end of the 1470s or even around 1480 by Israhel van Meckenem, the most “fashionable” master of the period, were used on the Mediasch altarpiece in the years that immediately followed. It can be considered a rarity on

<sup>524</sup> Gyöngyi Török, *Gótikus szárnyasoltárok a középkori Magyarországon. Állandó Kiállítás a Magyar nemzeti galériában.* (Gothic winged-altars in medieval Hungary. The permanent collections of the Hungarian National Gallery) (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó-Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2005), 23.

<sup>525</sup> For a more detailed explanation of this matter see: Emese Sarkadi Nagy. ”Szent Imre. Oltárszárny külső táblája Csíksomlyóról” (Saint Emerich – outer panel of a wing from the Csíksomlyó altarpiece) *Szent Imre ezer éve*, (Thousand years of Saint Emerich) exhib. cat. (Székesfehérvár: Egyházmegyei Múzeum, 2008)

sixteenth century panels when models other than the woodcuts or copperplates of Albrecht Dürer were used to conceive the compositions. In many cases, these graphic-sheets can be followed on Transylvanian panels only a couple of years after their supposed production. Vincencius' paintings are good examples of this phenomenon and for the very early presence of the Danube school style-characteristics in Transylvania. Prints by Dürer and the influence of the Danube school clearly comprised the two most feasible models for sixteenth century Transylvanian panels. As shown in this dissertation, a clear relation to the Viennese schools can be traced in Transylvanian paintings from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards. Neither did this influence diminish in the sixteenth century. The up-to-date stylistic trends probably arrived within a very short time by the wandering masters themselves although their movements were also mediated through the large number of Transylvanian students studying at the Vienna University and by woodcuts, copperplates, books and other prints brought in by merchants that continuously circulated between Transylvania and Nuemberg, through Vienna. Stylistic observations obviously reflect these cultural and economic relations. The fact that Viennese influences reached Transylvania rapidly has already been made clear by observations made in this dissertation. However, trade and art relations also point towards other regions, mainly in the direction of Upper Hungary and through its towns onwards into Poland. The existence of these connections seems likely but still need to be thoroughly investigated and demonstrated.

In general, wooden furnishings of churches and public buildings as well as the analysis of retables should be examined in order to develop a more complex image of Transylvanian altar-producing workshops. The motif collection on the large number of sixteenth century church-stalls, decorated wooden doors and, rarely, reading pulpits as well are obviously related to the same joiner-workshops the altarpieces were produced in. Masters like Johannes Reichmut, a joiner who produced a series of Transylvanian stalls was very probably also responsible for the joiner-work of certain altarpieces.<sup>526</sup>

An overview of late Gothic and Renaissance altarpieces of Transylvania, refined through a number of case studies, has shown that this region offered a possibility for continuous work for incoming foreign masters spending various amounts of time here as well as for local craftsmen. The number of preserved pieces, the economic development of the towns and the historical sources all make it likely that throughout the fifteenth century the role of guest-masters was more important while the altar production of the first decades of the

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<sup>526</sup> Research by Zsuzsa Eke will hopefully produce considerable information on the stalls.

sixteenth century was mainly characterized by local workshops, even if they were founded by foreign masters who settled here, such as the sons of Veit Stoss. It was also in this period when guilds for painters, sculptors and joiners were finally constituted. The great stylistic variability apparent in the surviving pieces clearly shows that major Transylvanian towns were able to host a number of workshops operating in parallel in contrast to what has been suggested by previous scholars.

**Catalogue (Transylvanian winged altar-pieces and fragments of altars analyzed in the thesis)**

**1. Retable dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Birthälm**

*(Berethalom, Biertan)*

**Provenience:** Birthälm, former parish church dedicated to the Virgin Mary

**Dating:** 1483, 1515

**Present location:** original, Birthälm, presently a Lutheran church

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera.

**Main measures:**

Shrine: h: 179.5 cm, w: 147.5 cm, d: 36 cm

Wings (with frame) h: 179.5 cm, w: 73 cm

Predella w: 331 (211), d: 31.5

**Arrangement:**

Feast-day side:

		Vision of Augustus	Crucifixion Allegory	Vision of Ezechiel		
Meeting at the Golden Gate	Birth of the Holy Virgin	Betrothal with Joseph	Crucifixion (Group of Sculptures from the 15 <sup>th</sup> century)	Annunciation	Visitation	Birth of Jesus
Circumcision	Adoration of the Magi	Presentation in the Temple		Flight into Egypt	Twelve year old Jesus in the Temple	Baptism of Christ
		Mary Jacobi, Jacobus Minor, Alpheus, Barnabas, Simon Zelotes, Judas Thaddeus	The Holy Family: Saint Anne, the Virgin, Jesus, Joachim, Joseph	Mary Salome, John the Evangelist, Zebedeus, Jacobus Minor		

Work a' day side:

	Vision of Augustus	Crucifixion Allegory	Vision of Ezechiel	
Saints Augustine and Ambrose	Saints Rochus, Michael, Sebastian, Joseph	Virgin with Child, Saint Anna, three Marys		Saints Gregory and Hieronymus
	Saint Margareth, Dorothy, Catherine, Barbara	Saints Mary, Elisabeth, Helen, Agnes		
	Stolanus, Emerencia	Zacharias, Saint John the Baptist, Elisabeth	Emyu, Memeliy, Saint Servatius	Esmeria, Afra

**State of conservation, restorations:**

The retable is generally speaking in good condition. The most alarming part about its present condition is the fact that both of its large wings are warped to such an extent that they can hardly be moved. The rest of the retable construction is stable, with the framework and the gable equally well preserved. Both the fifteenth century panels and the sixteenth century predella and gable panels have spots of repaints, probably work from the 1980s. Several earlier repaints of the panels were removed in the same period, in the Richter-workshop. Based on the photo documentation (**Figs. III.55-56**) on the panel representing the Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate, the mantle of St Anna was painted in some dark color and the cloak of Joachim was greatly modified. The difference between the folds of the cloak part thrown over his arm before and after the restoration is obvious. The same tendency to repaint the draperies in an extremely different manner, with the folds handled in quite another way in terms of their lights and shadows, were noted previous to the restoration on the rest of the panels as well. All of these were removed in the Richters' workshop. The background of the central shrine is decorated with a pressed, golden brocade pattern, presenting swirling vine-leaves and foliage. The central part of this decoration, situated under the large halo, was originally covered by the sculpture of the shrine and has thus not been gilded. This surface was later, most probably during the Reformation, painted in with an



inscription, a Bible quotation (John 3, 16)- that can still be observed on archive photos<sup>527</sup>. During the last restoration, the surface was gilded again, however, without reconstructing the pressed vine-decoration. Thus, the Capitals of the inscription are still visible. The Crucifixion group in the shrine was restored and completed in many places. The endings of the crucified Christ's fingers are results of the Richter- restoration. The photos of the workshop document the loss of the originals. Similarly, the hands of John the Evangelist were missing before restoration and completed in 1972.<sup>528</sup>

The stable wings of the retable, today displaying the four large figures of the Church Fathers were completely over painted in 1822 by Franz Neuhauser,<sup>529</sup> with a representation of St. Peter and St. Paul. This over painting was also cleaned in the restoration workshop in Kronstadt. The outer side of the movable wings were not over-painted in the eighteenth century, but the already mentioned modification with *changeant* colors could also be observed here. (for example with the cloak of St. Michael). The figures represented on these panels were perhaps the most worn part of the retable before the restoration. A number of the faces were also deliberately scratched-out during the Reformation. These losses were roughly inpainted-repainted so that the personal features of the faces dealt with in this manner were radically changed. **(Figs. III. 43-46)**

The predella panels were somewhat better preserved, although traces of the Reformation's interventions can be observed here as well. (the eyes of the children, Barnabas and Simon Zelotes, were poked out). Thus, small spots of repainting can be identified, the inscriptions belonging to certain persons have only been partly renewed, so that, some of them cannot be read at first sight.

### **Description:**

Late Gothic winged retable with its rather unusual construction was composed and unified in the sixteenth century from several, partly earlier pieces. The central shrine is flanked by a pair of superposed, fixed panels. Both the stationary and the movable wings are attached to these. Each movable wing is divided into four panels on the interior and into two, horizontally arranged panels on the exterior side. The stationary wings are undivided, consisting of only one large panel each. The construction of the predella is in itself that of a winged altarpiece. The central panel is flanked by a pair of movable and a pair of stationary

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<sup>527</sup> See the precise presentation in the corresponding chapter of this thesis

<sup>528</sup> Richter 1992, 61.

<sup>529</sup> Fabini 2002, 68.

wings. These are framed by a large, deep arch on each side. The gable consists of a simple triptych - a central image, flanked by two stationary panels – surrounded by a complex late gothic, stepped gable-work, decorated by pierced gablets, finials and foliage.

The central shrine of the retable was repeatedly rearranged. The opening of the shrine is flanked by two columns, their trunks, spun from gold and dark blue strings, stand on high and narrow, polygonal bases and end in small similar capitals. The two columns incorporate foliage of a late Gothic, gold, openwork decorative type. The shrine has a simple cross-vault, with ribs starting from polygonal consoles in the corners. The background and the sides of the shrine are decorated in an engraved gold vine-foliage pattern. Vertical runners are set parallel to each other with alternating vine-leaves, fruits and curly tendrils on both sides. The gold pattern zone was originally presented in the form of a curtain; the upper bar with the hangings was later painted over with the dark blue background decoration of the shrine's upper part that imitates a night sky with its golden stars. The upper edge of the golden curtain is characteristically decorated with precious stone-imitations while the band on the lower edge, imitating the fringes of the curtain, (originally probably painted in silver and gold based on analogies) is presently painted over with red. A rather wide, central surface of the background vine-pattern is missing. This was most probably the part hidden by the original shrine sculpture. After the removal of the sculptural decoration, presumably during the Reformation, this undecorated surface was over painted with an inscription. As mentioned above, this was later gilded, however, the lettering still shows through with careful observation. Right above this central surface, on the upper part of the shrine covered by the dark blue paint there is an unusually large, golden, sun-like halo that clearly belonged to the original sculpture – perhaps a representation linked to the Virgin.

The Crucifixion-group that presently decorates the shrine was obviously not part of the original decoration of the shrine. The three figures were sculpted all around, worked out in all their details on the back surfaces as well. Christ is shown crucified on a green, living cross. The stem presents the stubs of the cut branches of the tree, the horizontal arms of the cross are symmetrically arched like the branches of a tree. The Savior is crucified with his arms nailed not completely on the horizontal, but slightly upwards. His palms are open and the the fingers are not bent. His head leans on the right shoulder, a thick mop of his curly black hair falling over the shoulder. His hair, beard and moustache are rather roughly sculpted in parallel waving, curly locks. His eyes are open and his mouth closed.

His abdomen is deeply sunken in. The V-shaped row of the ends of his ribs stand out sharply. Both his legs are slightly bent, the right knee somewhat more strongly because his right foot

is nailed onto his left foot. The long ending of the dark-gold, blue loin-cloth winds along his right side, parallel to the body. The cross stem, made from two pieces, is fitted together with an iron band right above the hands of Mary Magdalene kneeling at the foot of the cross. The woman clasps her hands around the stem, grasping her right wrist with her left hand. She slightly leans backwards, lifting her head and looking upwards. She wears a red dress with a golden belt at the waist. The tight sleeves of the dress are decorated on the forearm with a row of little golden buttons. A gold coloured mantle with a dark-blue lining covers her back, falling to the ground in abundant folds, covering not only her legs, but also the rocks at the base of the cross. Her hair is braided on both sides of her face and covered by a long white head-dress with fanlike folds above her forehead. The long end of the head-dress covers her left shoulder and falls in front of her right shoulder, similarly to a mop of hair. She has a broad, oval face, a thick nose and a prominent, rotund chin. The Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist stand on the two sides of the cross. Characteristically, Mary is positioned on the right and John on the left of the Savior. The Virgin, looking upwards towards her Son, wears a long, red dress. Her head is tightly coiffed with a white head-dress that also covers her neck up to the chin. The tight head-dress is covered by another white shawl, the end of which is held in her lifted left hand. She obviously intends to dry her tears with it. Her right hand rests on her breast. A long, gold cloak, lined in dark-blue, covers her head and the whole figure, forming long, parallel folds on her back. The cloak covers her shoulders and both her arms. The ends of the drapery are lifted and held tight in her right hand on her breast.

St. John the Evangelist stands to the left of the cross. His left leg is shifted forward, slightly bent; the weight of his body borne on the right leg. He crosses his hands over his chest with his head leaning towards his right shoulder. The slightly oblique eyebrows and eyes and the sunken cheeks give a painful expression to his face. His dark, curly hair is arranged in ringlets around his face, and in parallel waves on the back side, forming again two rows of ringlets down his back. He is clad in a long green gown, covered by a gold mantle, lined in dark blue. The mantle is fixed with two thin strings over his chest. The right wing of the mantle covers his right arm, its inner edge is nipped under his arm and pressed to his body. The other wing of the mantle covers the left arm, also showing the dark blue lining by the edge and covering the shifted left leg, closely following the anatomy of the knee. His bare feet are clearly observable under the long robes.

The shrine is flanked, as has already been mentioned, by a pair of superimposed, fixed panels, to which the wings of the retable were attached. Thus, when the wings were opened, six

scenes of the Virgin's life were displayed on both sides of the shrine, the narrative following first on the complete upper row, continuing on the lower one afterwards.

**The first panel of the cycle depicts the meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate.**

The elderly couple is depicted in the foreground embracing each other. Anna wears a long, dark blue dress, her white mantle, lined with red, just sliding off her back. The end of her long mantle falls to ground in abundant folds. Her head is tightly coiffed in a white head-dress and is surrounded by a golden halo. Joachim, a white bearded, partly bald man, is clad in a long, dark coat. The lower edge of the coat is edged with fur. His pointed dark shoes can be seen under this coat. His back is covered by a large red mantle, lined with yellow. The mantle covers his left shoulder but has slid off his right one. It is thrown over his right arm and forms abundant, hard folds falling down his right side. The background is divided into two sections. The meeting of Joachim with the Angel is represented on the left side. This is the moment when Anna's husband was told of his wife's pregnancy and sent to meet her in front of the Golden Gate. In the background behind them a footpath may be seen meandering in the hills and the small detail from a fortified town. The surface above this landscape that should be occupied by the sky - is gilded. The right side of the background depicts the gate itself, built of ashlar. Its opening takes the form of a gothic jamb. An elegant gothic building stands attached to the left side of the gate displaying a loophole and a narrow window on its side and an ornamented facade, with a gate on its ground floor and a coupled lancet window on the étage. The building ends in a richly decorated main cornice. Through the gate one gets a view into a medieval town representing Jerusalem. A street detail can be seen, with tall houses, "Fachwerk"-decorated balconies and a couple of passers-by on the street.

**The next following panel depicts the Birth of the Holy Virgin.** The birth-bed is represented in the foreground, set obliquely. St. Anna is half sitting, half lying on her bed, covered with a thick, red cover. She holds the newborn child in her arms, just previous to handing her over to the maiden standing next to the bed. She wears a dark blue robe with a V-shaped neckline, edged with fine, white fur. Her head is covered with a white shawl, the end of which falls over her right shoulder and breast. A gold brocade curtain hangs at the head of the bed, flanked by two, richly folded, heavy green draperies. A maiden stands near the bed clad in a dark blouse and a long, red dress, edged both at its neckline and on the shoulders with white fur. A long, narrow belt encircles her waist with a pack of keys hanging on her right hip, fixed to the belt. Her head is wrapped around with a white head-dress. She lifts her arms, reaching for the child. A long bench stands between her and the bed, the base of which is decorated with a Gothic trefoil. A little wash tub sits on the bench along with a neatly folded white

kerchief. Another maiden stands by the foot of the bed, leaning above the bench, testing the temperature of the water in the tub in order to bath the child there. She puts her right hand into the water, holding a can in her left, while another, larger can stands on the floor, right near the bench. She wears a long, light green dress. The dress' hem falls to the ground in hard, abundant folds – as she leans forward and bends her knee. The left sleeve of the dress is folded back, displaying the dark lining while a white kerchief or apron hangs in front of her abdomen. Her head is covered by a turban-like white head-dress. Behind the bed, a little cradle can be observed, covered with a white sheet and a red blanket. Two semicircular doors open onto two separate rooms in the background. A woman stands near the stove on the left side room, probably a kitchen. A small window can be observed on the background wall and the gothic vaulting of the room can still be discerned to a certain extent. The room on the right side is unusually light since its surface is broken by three large windows. The ceiling is made of wood and the floor is covered by stone. An elderly man, very probably Joachim, sits at a large table, reading a book. Sheets of paper, pens and inkstands are arranged on the table. A dog sleeps at Joachim's feet. It is only St. Anna and the newborn child who are represented with halos around their heads.

The third panel, the first of the narrower, fixed panels, shows a scene from the life of the adult Mary: her **Betrothal with Joseph**. The crowded composition shows the young couple at the moment the priest places their hands in each other's. The Virgin, clad in a long, gold brocade dress, extends her (unnaturally short) right hand to Joseph. The long, parallel folds of her dress break as they reach the floor. The neckline, the edge of the dress' sleeves and its lower hem are all edged with white fur. A dark blue mantle lined in red covers her back. Its left edge is lifted up and held tight beneath her left arm, pressed to her body. The long, blond, curly hair of the Virgin falls over her shoulders and back and she wears a fine gold crown, decorated with pearls and precious stones. Her head is surrounded by a halo. Joseph stands in front of her, putting his right hand into the Virgin's right hand. He reaches out for his stick and the edge of his coat with his left hand under his right arm. He wears a long, dark brown cloak covered by a large, red coat with a green lining. The coat is gathered together on his right shoulder and cut up along his right side. He wears pointed dark shoes. A large, black hood sits behind his head on his back. He appears to be a middle-aged man, already partly bald. The small amount of hair above his ears is grey. The priest, in elegant vestments, stands at the center of the image, right behind the couple. His right hand rests on Joseph's arm and, his left hand almost touches Mary's. His long *alba* is covered with a black pall. He wears a dark hat on his head, ornamented with a row of precious stones and pearls. His face is framed

by a two-pronged beard. The wedding guests are gathered on both sides of the priest. Two men on his right and two, elegantly dressed women stand on his left side. A black-red and white brocade hanging can be observed behind the priest decorating the background wall. A view to the town is offered on both sides of this carpet. Musicians playing on various instruments assist the celebration behind a parapet-wall. Two youngsters play the flute on the left side behind a segment-arched opening. Behind them elegant town buildings can be observed in front of a gold background. On the right side an elegantly dressed man plays the violin while another one touches the strings of a lyre. The detail of a tower is shown behind them, in front of the gold background.

**The scene of the Annunciation** occupies the second narrow panel, flanking the shrine on the right in the upper row. The event takes place in the space of a chapel-like room, covered by a badly preserved, ribbed vaulting, opened with semicircular arches towards the background landscape. The entrance to the space is a semicircular arch standing on a pair of what are probably red marble columns. The remainder of the columns supporting the vault all around sit on a parapet wall decorated with gothic blind-tracery. The Virgin kneels at her prayer-stool, holding a book in her left hand. She turns back her head and upper body towards the arriving angel, lifting her right hand in front of her breast in an astonished gesture. She wears, just as on the previous image a gold-brocade dress, edged with fur and a dark blue mantle above it lined with red. The mantle also covers her legs and lap. Her head is surrounded by a golden halo. The angel, coming from the left, stands close to the Virgin in a rather undefined position. His right knee is probably lifted in front of him although the exact motion cannot be seen due to the large, light-green mantle that covers his back and legs as well. The mantle is fixed to his chest with a large, gold clasp, fixed to the ornamental edge of the neckline. The mantle covers the long, white shirt of the angel. His right hand is lifted in a gesture of greeting, while in his left hands he holds the letter of the annunciation, sealed three times in red wax. Curly, golden hair surrounds his round face, his large wings barely fit in the small room. Two closed books lie on the table behind them, while another, open book is placed on Mary's prayer stool. A castle-like building on the top of a hill can be seen in the distance, a landscape in front of a gilded background.

The fifth scene of the narrative, taking place out-of-doors, depicts the **Visitation** based on traditional pictorial images. The two pregnant women, Mary and Elisabeth, meet in front of the gate of an elegant, medieval town. The Virgin is clad, as on previous images, in a gold brocade dress, covered with a dark blue mantle with a vivid red lining. Her left hand rests on her abdomen and at the same time holds the edge of her mantle and the folds of her dress

tight. Her very short, anatomically completely misdrawn right hand grasps Anna's right hand. The elder woman is dressed in a long, tight, sleeveless, red dress and a green velvet blouse, her head wrapped round with a white head-dress. Her right hand rests in Mary's right hand. She leans close to her relative, kissing her cheek. Both their heads are surrounded by halos. The detail of the town represented in the background unusually elegant. Superimposed above the gate is an idealized, castle-like late gothic building with large, three-fold windows and flanked by two polygonal balconies. A stone bridge crossed the river encircling the town right behind the figures. A high, round tower with partly Fachwerk-decorated building parts supported by consoles, is attached to one end of the bridge,. The street in the background comprises a row of more storied houses and a large, Gothic hall church in the background.

The last panel of the upper row depicts the scene of **the Birth**. The Virgin kneels in her gold brocade dress, holding the Child in front of her, on a white veil. Her dark blue mantle slides down her left shoulder, falling to the ground in abundant folds. A group of four angels kneels in front of her holding a large, white sheet. Joseph stands in the background, leaning on his staff on the left side, in the entrance of the stall, clad in a dark robe and a red mantle. There is a black hood behind his bald head. A wooden fence runs next to the stall's entrance, separating the birth scene from the two gaping men standing behind the fence. One of them points to the three angels hovering above the scene holding a banderole probably containing news of the birth, the annunciation of the shepherds. A cow and a donkey stick out their heads from the stall. The background landscape contains a fortified town in the distance with a shepherd leaning on his staff in front of it.

The first scene in the lower panel row shows **the Circumcision**, taking place in a vaulted room, most probably a church. The high priest sits frontally in the center of the image holding the naked child in front of him. He is clad in a gold brocade vestment. His shoulders are covered with a yellow overcoat. He wears a richly decorated hood-like head-dress. An elegantly dressed elderly, bearded man kneels in front of them carrying out the circumcision. He wears a white shirt with large sleeves, decorated with red and blue motifs and a red robe edged with fur. His dark headdress rests unfolded on his shoulders. Another assistant figure stands to the left of the high priest holding a golden plate. He is dressed in a knee length, fur-edged robe with a light green coat over it, decorated with a golden ornamental band along the neckline. The coat is cut off in the front revealing his abdomen, showing the red lining. He has red stockings on and wears pointed black shoes with strings. His head is covered by a high black hat. The Virgin stands next to a woman servant holding a white kerchief on the right side of the priest. Mary is dressed in her usual robes – a gold dress and a dark mantle

that in this case also covers her head. Her hands are joined in prayer her head is surrounded by a halo. The servant wears a vivid green dress, her head wound in a white head-dress.

**The Adoration of the Magi** takes place in an environment very similar to that of the Birth. The Virgin sits in front of the stall in the center of the image holding the naked child on her knees. She wears her gold brocade gown. Her head is covered with a white veil with the ends loosely surrounding her neck. A dark blue mantle with a vivid red lining covers her head and back, also covering her knees. Her head, surrounded by a halo, leans slightly towards the right in the direction of the child. She holds the sitting child under his arm with her right hand and lifts her left in an uncertain gesture. Jesus sits on the knees of his mother turning his haloed head backwards in the direction of the two kings kneeling there. His left hand is lifted to his chest, while he reaches out for the gold in the golden cup held by the eldest king.

One of the kings, clad in a vivid green velour robe, kneels right next to the Child and leaning forward to kiss his extended hand. The older king kneels in the foreground, mostly with his back to the spectator. He wears a large yellow shirt beneath his heavy gold brocade robe, edged with white fur and held together under his arm by his waist with a large gold-ruby clasp. His head is almost completely bald with only some of his grey hair visible on the very back of his head. He holds a gold cup full of gold coins, opening its lid with his right hand. His elegant, fur edged, green velvet hat lies on the ground in front of him. The third king stands on the right side of the scene. Elegantly dressed, wearing tight, white stockings, a green velour, fur-edged knee-length coat above a tight red shirt. A short, white mantle, decorated with a blue-red pattern covers his back, but slides down his left shoulder being thrown over his raised left arm. In his left hand he holds a golden *ciborium*, while he lifts his turban-like hat with his right hand. His figure barely fits on the panel. Joseph, represented as on the previous panels as an elderly, bald man, assists in the background, in front of the stable's entrance, to the right of the Virgin. He holds a closed cup in his left hand, touching its lid with the fingers of his right hand. He is dressed in a dark gown with a hood and a red mantle above. The stable is represented as a stone building with a wooden for-roof. The head of a cow and of a donkey can be observed poking through the window opening under the roof. A fortification is depicted on a hill in front of a gold background in the upper right corner of the panel.

**The composition of the Presentation in the Temple**, depicted on one of the narrow panels of the retable, is again based on the corresponding scene on the Schottenaltar. The Virgin, standing on the left side of the image, holds the child in front of her, handing him over to the high priest facing them. She is dressed in her gold brocade gown edged with white fur and



wearing a dark blue mantle above it. Even the way the drapery is arranged in folds around her figure has been exactly adopted from the Viennese model. Her head is wrapped around with a white head-dress and her long, golden hair falls down her back and over her shoulders. Her head is surrounded by a halo. She holds Jesus under his arm with her left hand and his leg with her right hand. The child, held by his mother in a sitting position, lifts his right hand in benediction and reaches out with his left hand towards Simeon. Simeon, an old man with long, grey beard and brownish-grey hair is dressed as priest. He holds a dark green kerchief (instead of the traditional white one) in his hands and receives the child, grasping his legs. He wears a long, yellow vestment that falls to the ground in hard, rather square folds, as he steps on the stair in front of him. His back is covered by a large, gold brocade cloak with vivid green lining. Joseph stands behind the priest holding a basket with two doves, representing the purification sacrifice in his left hand, something proscribed by the law for women who had given birth to a child. In his right hand he holds his quite usual attribute on scenes of Christ's childhood, a burning candle, symbolizing the light Jesus brought to the world. Another attendant at the ceremony is a barely visible woman standing behind the Virgin with her head wrapped in a white head-dress. A nearly unrecognizable detail of another person's head can be observed behind her. The ceremony takes place in a sacred place, before an altar, covered by a white kerchief, striped with green. A semicircular panel is set on the *mensa*, with an inscription taken from Luke 2:29: *Nunc dimittis serw(um) tuum Domine secu(n)du(m) verbu(m) tuum in pace: quia viderunt oculi mei salu(tare tuum)*. A detail of a two-fold Gothic window, can be observed above the altar. On both sides a double window divided with red marble opens towards the town in the background. The windows tend to be pointed. Their unnatural angled form can be understood when looking at the same detail on the panel from the Schottenaltar. The arches opened on the original on two sides of a polygonal building-segment. The Transylvanian painter did not succeed adopting this architectural detail.

**The Flight into Egipt** is represented on the fourth narrow panel of the retable. The composition is based on Schongauer's engraving on the same topic.<sup>530</sup> The Virgin is represented in her usual golden robe and dark blue mantle lined with red, sitting on a donkey, holding the Child on her lap. Her head is covered with a white kerchief with the end falling over her right shoulder onto her breast. Embracing her son, she has a fruit in her left hand, while with her right hand she holds a fold of her cloak over the neck of the donkey. On the engraving, she holds the rope the donkey is being led by in her right hand while on the panel

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<sup>530</sup> B 7 (64)

the end of the same rope can be observed in the left hand of Joseph. The child wears a simple white shirt. His feet are crossed under Mary's right arm. Both the Virgin and the Son have halos around their heads. Joseph stands behind the donkey under a tree. He grasps a branch of the tree with both his hands trying to pick some more of the fruit. The tree bends over him in an arch. He wears, as on the previous images, a red cloak with a black hood. His haversack and his flask hang on his neck and on his back. Three little angels, two of them clad in white shirts and one in red, help him pick the fruit, by bending the tree so that he can reach it. Dense, green bushes and trees can be observed behind the scene, in front of a gilded background. The panel was rather worn before the restoration and inpainting can mainly be observed on the folds of the mantles.

**The scene of the Twelve year old Jesus in the Temple** is amongst the most special on the retable. The Child sits in the center of the image on a large cathedra, decorated with Gothic architectural elements. The seat is flanked by two sculpture-niches, the decoration of which is missing. The sculptures sat on a red marble column on each side. The Child sits on a large, vivid red cushion and the large arch behind him is covered by a gold brocade. He is clad in a very simple, long brown shirt with only one of his bare feet visible under it. His angel-like head, with curly blond hair, is surrounded by a golden halo. His hands are lifted in a gesture of explanation. The Virgin and Joseph are standing on his left side having just entered the place. Mary, wearing her usual clothes, joins her hands in prayer at the sight of her son, while Joseph, standing behind her, points in surprise to the Child with his left hand. The teachers sit on the right and in front of Jesus. In the foreground of the image one of them, clad in a red gown with a V-shaped neckline edged with fur, holds a book on his lap and tears its pages into pieces with both his hands. To his left, another teacher with a long, brown beard and wearing a white shirt with a gold brocade robe over it and a hat decorated with precious stones on his head, lifts a book above his head. The book contains an indecipherable inscription and the year 1483 on its pages. Four other teachers are depicted on the right side of the panel. One wears an orange gown and a black mantle above it. His head is covered by a tight black cap and he lifts a book towards his fellow teachers. With his left hand he points to the text written on the pages, beginning with the words: "*Hic incepit libro*". An almost bald-headed teacher looks at the inscription. He stands behind him wearing a red mantle edged with white fur. Behind him an old, white bearded man stands clad in a light green mantel holding the same book with his left hand. One of his eyes is covered. On his head he wears a turban-like black and white hat. Behind them, in the background, yet another man can be observed. Only his head is represented covered by a red, pointed hat with a wide, yellow rim.

He has a beard, a moustache and long brown hair. He looks out from the image, directly towards the spectator. The composition was only partly influenced by the corresponding image on the Schottenretabel: the figure of Jesus clearly follows the Viennese model in most of its details as do to some extent the figures of the Virgin and Joseph. However, the rest of the composition does not have anything to do with the Schottenpanel. It is much more crowded and not a single figure of the Schottenretabel has been taken over.

The last image represents an unusual way to end such a cycle. The **Baptism of Christ** is depicted in a quite conventional way. Christ, standing in the Jordan, only wears his loin-cloth. He is represented frontally, joining his hands in prayer. His head is surrounded by a golden halo, decorated with the cross in the form of lilies. To his left, St. John the Baptist kneels on the bank of the river. He wears a brown robe. A red mantle with a light green lining has just slid down his back. He grasps Christ's left shoulder with his left hand and sprinkles water on His head with the right. On the other side of the Savior an angel with curly blond hair stands clad in a yellow shirt, holding Christ's long, dark robe in front of him. His two large wings are echoed in the two rocks in the background, behind the Baptist. In front of the golden background, the Holy Spirit is represented in the form of a white dove hovering above Christ's head.

The inner side of the retable has a uniform framing. All the panels and the shrine have a gilded frame decorated with rows of lilies. An upwardly turned flower is always followed by one turning downwards thus creating a meandering impression. Only the laths vertically dividing the wings have a somewhat different decoration: lilies turned towards each other forming a garland.

The retable presents a much simpler image when the wings are closed. The two stationary wings are decorated by the figures of two Church fathers each, while the four wide panels on the outer side of the movable wings display rows of saints. The left stable wing depicts, as identified by the inscription on the panel's upper frame, Augustine and Ambrose. The undivided panel offers the possibility for a full-figure representation. Both bishops are depicted in full vestment. Augustine wears a long shirt which falls to the ground in abundant but hard, square folds in shades of orange. He wears a gold brocade, knee-length dalmatic above his clothes while his back is covered by a vivid green mantle, fixed at his chest with a large golden clasp. The edge of the mantle is shown decorated with precious stones and embroidery with its left side turning outwards, showing the white lining of the mantle, its end weaving dynamically behind the Augustine's back. His blond hair is covered by a golden

miter, decorated with pearls and precious stones. One of the bands of the miter is laid on the bishop's right shoulder. His hands are covered by gloves and he wears a golden ring on each hand. In his left hand, he holds a bishop's crook. In his right hand, beneath his arm, he holds a book with a red cover.

St. Ambrose turns towards Augustine. He also wears a long *alba*, that breaks into hard folds on the ground, and a large, red mantle above it. The right side of the mantle runs under the right arm of this church father over to his left side and is kept tight beneath his left arm. Thus, hard, irregular, rigid folds are formed in front of his figure. The left side of the mantle turns outwards showing a triangular detail of the white lining. The gold edging of the mantle is decorated with precious stones and is fixed at the chest of the bishop with two large clasps. His round head is covered by a white miter, decorated with a horizontal and a vertical band of precious stones. The dark green miter bands are arranged on his shoulders. He also wears gloves on his hands, with a ring on his right middle finger and another ring on his left little finger. In his right hand he holds an open book before him, while he grasps his pastoral staff with his left hand. The heads of both church fathers are surrounded by golden halos. The deep blue background of the image is ornamented by attached golden stars, so that the space the two saints are standing in appears completely undefined.

A similar background can be observed on the pendent of this panel representing St Gregory and St. Hieronymus. The pope wears a long *alba*, and a gold brocade *dalmatic* covering it. His back is covered by a large, knee-length, green mantle, decorated with a gold edge band, fixed at his chest with a large mantle clasp. His fattish head is covered by a richly ornamented tiara with two of the bands arranged on the shoulders of the saint. He wears yellow gloves, and holds an open book in his hands. His pastoral staff ends in a double cross and is propped under his left arm. Hieronymus faces him wearing a long, white *alba* as well, and very voluminous, vivid red mantle above it. The rolled-up sleeves of the mantle are edged with white fur, just like the hood and its lower hem. The right side of the large mantle is pulled over in front of the figure and held tight beneath his left arm. This arrangement of the drapery forms a series of V-shaped folds. The weight of Hieronymus' body is borne on his right leg, while his playing left leg is slightly bent with the mantle resting close to his pointed knee. On his head he wears a large, red cardinal's hat. His cheeks are hollow and his face wrinkled. His nose is big, and straight, his eyebrows marked above eyes with thick eyelashes. He has a birthmark on his left cheek. In his right hand he holds an open book, turning its pages over with the fingers of his left hand. His long red mantle partly covers the lion lying by his right foot.

The outer sides of the movable wings are divided into two panels each. Each panel represents a row of saints. The left, upper one depicts (from left to right) the following saints, also identified by the inscriptions above them on the upper frame of the panel: St. Rochus, St. Michael, St. Sebastian and St. Joseph. Rochus, the first in the line, is clad in tight green stockings and a knee-length brownish robe above them. On his feet, he wears dark blue, pointed half boots and a satchel hangs down his left side. His back is covered by a large, white cloak, gathered together at his neck. On his head he wears a broad-brimmed black hat, with its brim turned up above his forehead, and displaying a shell as the symbol of a pilgrim. His round, rosey-cheeked face is encircled by a brown beard. He has little, button-like eyes. He stands on his left leg with his right leg turning outwards, slightly lifted with the knee bent. He holds his pilgrim-staff on his right side and leans on it. Grasping its handle with his left hand, his right hand rests on his left wrist, holding a rosary.

The next saint in the row is St. Michael. His figure can be determined by its strongly twisted position. The torsion visible in his lower body is due to the vehement way he steps with his left leg in the direction of Rochus. Barefoot, he treads with his right foot on the beast under him. He lifts the sword above his head with his right hand, and holds the triumphal staff ending in a cross in his left hand. His upper body turns backwards as does his head. The Archangel wears a long and simple light yellow shirt, held tight at his waist and arranged in abundant, square and hard folds. His face is surrounded by golden, curly hair, reaching to his shoulders. His red-black wings are clearly distinct from the blue background. He is the only one of the four saints represented without a halo around his head.

St. Sebastian stands, elegantly dressed, almost facing frontally. His right leg slips forwards with the weight of his body on his left foot. He wears stockings and pointed, fur-edged shoes. His wide-collared, green mantle has a dark red lining and is also edged in red. The end of its right side is collected and held tight to his body with his left underarm, while he holds a bunch of arrows in front of him in both hands. His somewhat feminine, round face and curly blond hair is very similar to that of the angel. He wears a red and white prince's hat on his head. St. Joseph is depicted similarly to the representations on the inner sides of the wings, on the scenes from the life of the Virgin. He is represented in three-quarter profile, turning his back to the other saints. His pointed black shoes show beneath his simple brownish gown. His back is covered by a red cloak lined in green. The right side of the cloak is caught beneath his arm, the drapery forming hard V-shaped folds under the arm. In his right hand he holds a branch, above which a white dove hovers. He leans on his staff with his left hand. A large

black hood sits on his back behind his neck. His head is half bald and his hair and beard are white.

The right upper panel depicts a coherent row of female saints. The Virgin is represented first, holding the Child on her right arm, turning to the right and thus facing Joseph's figure from the previous panel. She is, at the same time, depicted as the Apocalyptic woman with her whole figure surrounded by a golden wreath of rays and her head surrounded by yet another aureole. She is shown stepping on a human-faced, horned moon. She wears a long, dark red dress, covered by a large, white cloak, lined in a vivid red. Both ends of the cloak are lifted in front of her and held tight as she holds the Child on her right arm. Jesus sits on the arm of his Mother, who holds him with her left hand under his arm. The very long, golden hair of the Virgin falls down her back and onto her shoulders all the way to her waist. She is crowned with a closed, emperor's crown. The next figure is that of the Virgin's mother, St. Anne. She stands facing the front, holding her daughter and Jesus on her left arm, tenderly supporting the Virgin's leg with her fingers. Her left leg pushes slightly forward, thus the tip of her pointed black shoe can be seen. She is clad in a long, gold brocade gown, edged with white fur, and wears a dark blue mantle above it lined in red. She holds both ends of her mantle tight in front of her in her right hand. Thus, the arrangement of the drapery mirrors the Virgin's robe. The head of the saint is wrapped around with a white head-dress. The right half of the panel is occupied by the three Mary figures: Mary Magdalene, Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome. Magdalene stands turned towards Anne clad in a long dark green dress, with a gold, buttoned neckline. Above the dress she wears a voluminous, thin light-green mantle, lined in red and holds a gold jar in her hands. Her long hair covers her back and shoulders and her head is bound around with a white head-dress. Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome stand behind her engaging in a lively discussion. The former wears a vivid red cloak above her blue dress and a white kerchief. She holds a jar with a handle in her left hand and lifts her right hand in an astonished gesture. Her head turns to the left towards Mary Salome who is clad in a long, gold brocade dress. The white mantle above that covers her head as well. She also holds a jar in her left hand with her right hand held caringly above it. The background of the panel is painted in blue and decorated with golden star. Identification of these saints is eased by the inscriptions on the frame.

The lower panel of the left wing depicts the four *Virgines Capitales*. Margaret, slightly turning to the left is clad in a red dress with a red mantle lined in green above it. The mantle covers her back, her lifted left arm, and is held in front of her, lying on her right arm. Her blond hair falls on her shoulders and she wears a delicate crown on her head. She holds a long

cross under her left arm, while with her right hand she grasps the end of the rope which is bound to the neck of the dragon. The beast rears at her feet, its tail encircling her legs. Next to her, stands Dorothy. Her position is very similar to that of Margaret's. Dorothy wears a large-sleeved gold-coloured shirt, and a long green, short-sleeved velvet dress above it that is short enough to allow her pointed red shoes be seen. Her green dress is covered by a sleeveless, light-green, long cloak, lined in red, slightly lifted and held tight under her right arm. In her right hand she holds a basket of flowers, while her left palm is lifted in front of her breast. Her long, blonde hair falls down her back and is decorated by a simple wreath. Catherine stands almost full to the front with her head turned towards Dorothy. She wears a long, large, dark dress that is covered by a white mantle lined in vivid light-green. The mantle covers her back and falls to the ground down her right side. It is then pulled in front of her and lies over her left arm, forming irregular, crinkled folds. The contra-post position of the saint can only be observed because the mantle is close fitting and breaks on the knee of the playing right leg. She holds a palm branch in her left hand and with her right hand grasps the handle of a large sword near her. A section of a broken wheel can be observed by her right foot. Her hair is arranged in a round, loose coil around the beautiful, doll-like face and covered by a rich coronet in a fine web and decorated with precious stones and golden crown-lilies. St. Barbara, standing in three-quarter profile, turns to the left, almost showing her back to Catherine. She is clad in a large-sleeved shirt and wears a long, white edged brocade gown above the shirt with short sleeves and a V-shaped neck-line. A red mantle, lined in green covers her left shoulder, but has slipped down her back. It is held tight under the right arm, its edge forming S-curved folds in front of her figure. She holds a gold chalice in her left hand and a palm branch in her right hand. A host with a faint, fine representation of the crucifixion sits in the chalice. The saint's long, blonde hair covers her back and is ornamented with a golden crown. On her right side, standing between her and St. Catherine, is a white, polygonal tower. Its pointed helm roof extends up to her elbow. The blue background is again decorated with golden stars.

The last panel of the fifteenth century retable continues the row of female saints. The very first in this row is another representation of the Virgin, a so-called "Ährenkleid-Madonna": her large, dark blue gown is decorated with golden ears of wheat. She stands almost frontally. It is only the position of her pointed shoes that suggest she is slightly turned to the right. The tips of her fingers fit together in front of her breast in a position of prayer. Her very long hair falls down her back and her head is uncovered. Next to her, St. Elisabeth stands, turned towards the Virgin. She is clad in a long brocade gown, edged in white fur and covered by a

red mantle lined in light green. The mantle is held tight under her left arm, so that its edge presents S-curved folds again in front of her. She swings a tin can in her left hand and holds a large piece of bread in her right hand. Her head is coiffed in a white head-dress and covered by a very fine golden crown. St. Helen almost turns her back on Elisabeth. She wears a long, dark red dress with wide sleeves and a white edged, heavy, gold brocade gown above it with short sleeves and V-shaped neckline. The gown is lifted in front of her, held tight to her abdomen with her right hand. Thus, the lower edge of the gown is raised obliquely, allowing the long red dress be shown. Her head is covered with a white head-dress, very similar to Elisabeth's, its end falls down to her right shoulder and falling over to her left shoulder follows the V-shape of the neckline. Above the head-dress she wears a fine, gold crown. She holds a large, robust wooden cross under her left arm, and a fine, scepter-like cross, with a crucifix on one end in her right hand. St. Agnes stands facing her. She is clad in a long dark-red dress. Her back is covered by a red mantle, lined in light-green. The large mantle has slipped down from her back, falling on her left side down to the ground in rich folds, its end curving in front of her feet. The other side of the mantle is shown held in front of her. Its end is laid over her lifted left arm. She holds an opened book in front of her with both hands. All the saints characteristically have halos around their heads and fine hands- especially the female saints. The identification of the persons is made possible by the majuscule-inscriptions on the upper frames of the panels.

This was the fifteenth century retable. During the sixteenth century a large predella and triptych-like gable was commissioned to complement it.

**The predella** is also conceived in the form of a little winged retable, flanked by a deep arch on each side. The triangular fields of the arches are decorated with heraldic shields: one representing a chalice and the letters IO on the left side and another one representing the palm of a hand on the right side.

The seven panels of the predella represent the members of the extended Holy Family, identified, based on the wide-spread tradition of the period - by inscriptions. The central panel and the inner side of the wings depict the members based on to the Trinubium-legend. The central panel depicts the most important persons: St. Anne and the Virgin, sitting in the center of the image with Jesus standing on a pillow set on the parapet that runs behind them. Anne sits, represented in three-quarter profile, turning towards her left. She is dressed in a brown dress with a deep, V-shaped neckline and wears a brown mantle above it. The mantle is held together on her chest with two gold mantle-clasps. The left side of the mantle lies on her lap



covering her feet and showing its light green lining. Her head is covered with a loose, white head-dress with an end that also encircles her neck. She holds a book in her right hand on her lap and holds the Child's right hand with her left hand, grasping him with the end of the cloth that covers his waist. The Virgin sits facing her Mother, dressed in a gold-coloured gown, with a deep, white edged, V-shaped neckline. She also wears a large black mantle (originally probably dark blue?), lined in orange. Similarly to Anne's mantle, the Virgin's is held together by two clasps at her breast with its right side lying on her lap, only covering her knees but not her legs. Her long, golden hair falls to her shoulders. Her head is decorated with a simple golden band. She turns towards her child, holding his hand with her left hand and his waist with her right and that also holds his loincloth close to him. The almost naked child stands between the two women, turning his head towards his mother. He only wears the above-mentioned white cloth around his waist. All three have gilded halos around their heads. Joseph sits on the parapet wall, behind his wife. He is clad in a simple light brown gown and wears a red mantle above it that divides by his left arm with the back part lying on his lap. He holds the mantle on his lap with his left hand and with his right hand he leans on a wooden staff. A black barret covers his head and his face is encircled by a rounded beard. He wears shoulder-length hair. His pendant on the panel is Joachim, Anna's first husband and father of the Virgin. He stands behind St. Anna, leaning on his wooden staff with his right hand, while his left hand rests on the shoulder of his wife. He is clad in a long yellow robe, with wide sleeves that are tightened on the lower arm. Above the robe he wears a green mantle cut at the arms. A wide, black collar surrounds his neck. He has a grey beard with his long, grey hair covered by a brown, loose headdress.

The left side panel of the predella displays Mary Jacobi (more often called after his father, Maria Cleophas), St. Anna's daughter from her second marriage. She is depicted with her husband Alpheus and their four children. Mary Jacobi has a long, gold brocade dress and wears a green mantle above it. She holds the edge of the mantle in front of her belly with her right hand. Jacobus Minor sits on her left arm. She wears a loose, white headdress on her head, decorated with a gold edge-band with the ends of the head-dress hanging in parallel folds on both sides of her head. The child on her arm is covered with a red kerchief. He holds a fruit in his right hand and is shown handing it to Alpheus. The man stands before them clad in a long, yellow robe with green shadows. Its sleeves are cut at the elbow, thus allowing the white shirt to be seen. Above the robe he wears a red mantle, thrown over his left shoulder but slipping down from his right shoulder so that the mantle covers him diagonally. He grasps the fruit handed by Jacobus Minor with his extended left hand and holds the hands of another

child standing near him with his right hand. He has dark brown beard and long brown hair. His head is covered by an elegant green, gold fringed hat, the brim of which is turned up at the back and turned down at the front. Three children are by their feet: Barnabas (or Justus), Simon Zelotes and Judas Thaddeus. The inscriptions that help the identification of the children can barely be made out - in contrast to the remainder of the texts on the panel.<sup>531</sup> Barnabas is represented in a knee-length black robe, with a yellow belt and a little waist-bag hanging on the bag. There is a little green hat covering his head. He holds out his right hand to receive a pear from Simon. Simon himself wears a white shirt and a light red gown, with a deep, V-shaped neckline, lined in green. He has a white cap, decorated with a gold band on his head. The third child, Judas, is sitting on his mother's legs wearing only a long, white shirt and a dark-red hat on his head. The heads of all the children are surrounded by halos. There is a dark red curtain in the background, hanging down at the height of Alpheus' and Mary's heads.

The right panel of the predella presents the family of the Virgin's other sister and her family. Mary Salome, daughter of Anne and Salomas, stands turning towards her husband. She wears a long, gold brocade dress that is very similar to her sister's. It is cut at the hip and the elbows, revealing the white shirt that she wears under it. An oval waist-bag hangs down from her belt. She wears a broad gold necklace around her neck. Her head is covered by a white veil, the end of which hangs down her back. The veil is decorated with a gold clasp above her forehead. She holds the little John the Evangelist in front of her in her hands, handing him over to his father. The child is almost naked, wrapped only in a white cloth. Zebedeus stands facing them, very elegantly dressed. He wears tight, red trousers, black shoes and a short, gold brocade coat, edged in black. His waist is encircled by a wide, green textile belt. A grey mantle, with a wide collar, covers his back. It is held together with a pair of ties on his chest. His head is covered by a turban-like yellow headdress and an elegant, long, red-grey hat above it. A luxurious sword, with a gold hilt hangs down his left side. He holds the head and the chin of his son with his right hand and the hilt of the sword with his left hand. Jacobus Maior, their second child, stands by their feet, dressed in a simple black robe, holding a bag in his right hand and a staff in his left hand – both symbols of his future pilgrimage. The heads of the children are again surrounded by golden halos. The background curtain is similar to the one represented on the pendent panel, colored green in this case (very much darkened). The

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<sup>531</sup> Most of the inscriptions have probably been painted over with the occasion of a restoration. These are the ones that can be easily read, while the words that have been omitted during this restoration can hardly be deciphered.

names of the family members are all inscribed in white, and clearly-discernable on this panel. All three panels have a gilded frame, When it is closed, another four panels can be seen on the predella, representing Christ's more distant relations. The first panel depicts the parents of St. Anna. Stolanus is represented in profile, wearing a short-sleeved, long, gold brocade gown, edged in white fur and decorated with a wide fur collar. He wears a dark brown coat under this gown. Its sleeves are decorated with parallel cuts all around the upper arms so that the white shirt-underwear can be seen. He has a brown beard and shoulder-long brown hair, covered by a white turban. With his right hand he holds and lifts the mantle at his left hip, while he stretches out his left hand towards his wife, holding the palm of her hand in his. Emerencia is depicted almost frontally with only her head turning towards the man. She wears a dark blouse with a gold edge at the neck and a long, orange dress, with a very deep V-form neckline. Her back is covered by a green mantle that is held together at her breast by two gold mantle-clasps. The left side of the mantle is caught beneath her left arm, thus, forming oval folds down her side beneath the sleeve. She wears a white bonnet on her head. She has a white face and red cheeks. Her arms are crossed at her breast and her left hand lies in Stolanus'. Their names can be read above their heads, while the following inscription can be read between them: *PARENTES SANCTE ANNE*. A red curtain hangs in front of the high parapet wall in the background The cloudy sky is depicted above the parapet.

The next panel, the outer side of the left wing, depicts the family of St. John the Baptist. Zacharias, the father, holds his child under his arm with his left hand and holds his left hand with his right hand. He wears an elegant, gold brocade robe, red stockings and dark shoes. His robe is held together with a grey textile belt. A large green mantle with a wide, dark collar cut-up sleeves covers his back. He has long, dark beard and hair. His head is covered by an orange, turban-like hat. Elisabeth faces her husband, represented almost in profile. She stands with her left leg thrust out, slightly bending at the waist as she holds the fattish child wrapped in a white cloth in front of Zacharias. She wears a fashionable shirt with very large sleeves, cinched-in at the wrist, a long, gold dress with short sleeves, and a red mantle above it. A white headdress is loosely arranged on her head with one end hanging by the right side of her face and the other end encircling her neck. Only the Child has a golden halo around his head. The background of the image is painted in blue, darkening towards the upper part of the panel. The names may again be read above their heads while Elisabeth's presence is explained by the inscription: *ELISABETH FILIA ESMERIAE*.

The outer side of the right movable wing represents Emyu, the grandson of the same Esmeria (sister of Anna) together with his family: his wife Memelia and his son St. Servatius (later bishop of Maastricht). The name of the woman is followed by a symbol of separation, after which the identification of the man follows: *EMYU FILIUS ELYUD PATER S(an)CT(i) SERVACII*.<sup>532</sup> The inscription referring to the child is placed above his head: *S(an)CT(u)S SERVACIUS*. Memelia is dressed in a long, white dress that falls to the ground forming soft, thick folds. Her elegant red-black upper dress, lined with green, is lifted in front and caught under her belt. Thus, the dress displays deep bowl-like folds on both her sides. Her head is covered by a white bonnet. She holds her child before her, holding him with her left hand beneath his arm, while her right hand disappears under the end of the white cloth the child is covered with. Servatius rests his legs on his mother's arm, turning his head towards his father and hiding his right hand in the V-shaped neckline of the mother's dress. Emyu stands near them, slightly bent, holding the arm of his son with his right hand and holding a plaything for the child in his left hand. He wears a horizontally striped yellow and black shirt with a large orange mantle above it with long, cut sleeves. The mantel is edged with grey and has a wide grey collar held at the waist by a white textile belt. The pair seems to be standing on grassy ground and the background is painted blue.

The last panel depicts Esmeria, sister of St. Anna, the mother of Elisabeth, and her husband Afra. The inscriptions above their heads explain their role in the family: *AFRA MARITUS ESMERIAE and ESMERIA SOROR SANCTE ANNE*. Afra is a most elegantly dressed man, wearing an orange coat, edged in brown and sleeves cut at the elbow. He wears brown stockings and rounded, black shoes. A vivid green mantle is thrown over his left shoulder. One end covers his back, falling to the ground behind him, while the other end covers his left arm and is caught under the right arm. He holds his mantle in front of him with his right hand, while his left hand is stretched out, palm-side up. His hair is cut short in a rounded form. He wears an elegant black hat on his head with a yellow kerchief on its side. Esmeria stands next to him wearing a long, light-green dress, drawn together at her waist with an elegant, long, yellow belt. Her back is covered with a gold brocade mantle, edged in black. She wears an elegant red-gold head-dress on her head, covered and surrounded with a white cloth. Her hair is braided in knot under it. Her hands are joined in prayer in front of her breast. A red curtain hangs as decoration in the background of the image just as in the pendent panel. A cloudy sky

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<sup>532</sup> Only the words MEMELIA and ELYUD can be clearly read, the rest of the words is again hard to decipher.

is depicted on both sides of the curtain. There are no gilded ornaments on either the outer side of the predella wings or the stationary panels.

The gable of the retable is unusual. The central part contains three panels surrounded by a stepped, gilded decoration composed of fine, thin foliage, pierced gables and finials. The panels are separated from each other and also flanked by finials mounted on the panel-frames. The central panel displays an allegorical representation of the Crucifixion. Christ is depicted on the cross, his head leaning onto his right shoulder. Blood streams down his neck and from his side-wound. A vivid green crown of thorns encircles his head. The cross is a living tree, a strong, green vine-stock, with rampant leaves and plentiful fruits. The apostles are arranged in two groups at the sides of the cross, standing on the branches of the tree. They include: John the Evangelist, Andrew, James, Matthew, Thomas and Judas on the right side of the cross and Peter, Paul, Bartholomew, Matthias, Simon and James the Lesser on the left side. The Virgin pours water onto the stem of the cross from a large, white jar. She wears a long brown robe and a blue mantle above it. Her head is covered by a large, white shawl. She lifts the left side of her mantle as she pours out the water. John the Baptist stands on the other side of the cross, hoeing the ground around the stem. He wears his usual attribute, a knee-length mantle with ragged hem and sleeves rolled-up to his elbow as he works. His mantle is held tight by a yellow textile belt at his waist. His long brown hair falls to his shoulders and his face is framed by a brown beard. The heads of all these people are surrounded by gold halos. A text on the frame of the panel indicates the iconography of the representation: *MARIA RIGAT EGO SUM VITIS VOS PALMITES ANNO VIRGINIS PARTUS 1515 JOHANNES PLANTAT.*<sup>533</sup>

The left panel of the gable presents the vision of the Emperor Octavian as also identified by the inscription on the frame: *VISIO OCTAVIANI CESARIS PER SIBILLAM.* The emperor kneels on the bottom left of the image with his arms lifted, opened wide, looking upwards. He wears a long, gold brocade cloak, edged with white and a closed, emperor's crown sits on his head. The sibyl stands before him, holding his right arm in her left hand, while with her right she points upwards in the direction of the vision. Her long, gold brocade dress, has fashionable cut sleeves, is decorated and, at the same time, held tight with a row of ties on her

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<sup>533</sup> The inscription has been misread by Victor Roth, who published it in his „Siebenbürgische Altäre“ p. 99 as “MARIA RIGAT PALMETES. ANNO VIRGINIS PARENTIS 1515. JOHANNES PLANTAT”. His reading has been followed in later literature, none of the researchers seems to have checked the original. However, the words taken from Jn 15:5 “EGO SUM VITIS, VOS PALMITES” and the word “PARTUS” instead of “PARENTIS” can be clearly deciphered on the frame. The fact that Roth does not refer to the Bible quotation in the inscription is so much the more strange, as he refers to the depicted iconography as having the words of Jn 15:5 at its source.

chest. Her back is covered by a cloak. One side of the cloak is pulled under her lifted right arm, across her front and held tight under her left arm. Her neck is encircled by a white pearl necklace. She wears a white bonnet on her head. A richly foliated tree stands on a hill in the background. Above the scene, the Virgin appears on a rose-coloured cloud, standing on a crescent, holding the Child on her left arm. There is no wreath of rays around her although a spot of light surrounds her figure.

The right side panel depicts the vision of the Prophet Ezechiel as identified by the inscription (*VISIO EZECHIELIS PROPHETE*). However, the scene does not correspond either to the usual depiction-types of Ezechiel's visions or the descriptions of his visions in his book. A Marianic vision is depicted on the Transylvanian panel instead of the four-faced cherubim described by the prophet or other iconographic representations such as the *Maiestas Domini*, the Last Judgment, or the Tetramorph. The prophet sits in the foreground of the image wearing a long, brown cloak with a hood. He holds an open book on his knees with a long black ink-holder hanging from his left hand. He holds a pen in his raised right hand. His head and gaze are directed upwards, towards the vision. Clearly, he is about to put on paper what he has just seen. Some vivid bushes and a tree can be observed in the background while a little castle stands on the top of a mountain. An image of the Virgin is depicted above the castle. Only her half figure is visible above the cloud, wrapped in a cloak that forms an oval fold around her. She holds the Child on her right arm and her head is surrounded with a halo. All three panels of the gable are decorated with a gold foliage ornament on their upper parts with the motifs of all decorations being very similar to those of the predella.

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## 2. The High Altar from Mediasch, dedicated to St. Margaret (?)

(*Medias, Medgyes*)

**Provenience:** Mediasch, a former parish church dedicated to St. Margaret

**Dating:** 1480-1490

**Present location:** original: Mediasch, Lutheran church

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera.

### Main measures:

Shrine: h: 303 cm (including a base of 23 cm), w: 220 cm, d: 50 cm

Wingpanels: h: 153 cm, w: 110 cm

predella h: 146 cm, w: 515 (303.5) cm, depth of the shrine: 30 cm

### Arrangement:

Feast-day side:

Relief with the symbol of Matthew (secondary)	Three full figure statues (20 <sup>th</sup> century) (originally three full figure saints' statues)	Relief with the symbol of Mark (secondary)
Relief with the symbol of Luke (secondary)		Relief with the symbol of John (secondary)
Depiction of an ecclesiastic donor	Predella-shrine: originally for small full-figure statues	Depiction of a laic donor

Work a' day side:

Arrest of Christ	Flagellation	Crowning with Thorns	Ecce-Homo
Bearing the Cross	Man of Sorrows Resting	Crucifixion	Resurrection
Depiction of an ecclesiastic donor	Predella-shrine: originally for small full-figure statues	Depiction of a laic donor	

### State of conservation, restorations:

Although the construction itself is fairly well preserved, the sculptural decoration of the retable in particular was badly damaged. Nothing has been preserved of the shrine's original decoration. Only imprints on the background help to a certain extent in the reconstruction. Similarly, the reliefs on the wings' inner sides have been removed, most probably during the Reformation. Only the gilded pattern above the surface once covered by the reliefs were preserved on all four panels as well as a band of arches, probably marking the edge of a former baldachin-foilage. Carved, rectangular fields, flanked by columns were probably put in during the eighteenth century on the surface that had been originally covered by the reliefs. The carved quatrefoils with the symbols of the evangelists placed in the middle of the Baroque wooden fields have been preserved and placed back to the center of the wing-



panels, even when the remainder of the Baroque modification were removed during the restoration in Kronstadt. At the same time, the columns, probably also eighteenth century, that filled the grooves on both sides of the shrine, have been removed and the outer, narrower groove was filled with openwork foliage. Three new wooden figures were placed in the shrine. The four little standing figures originally decorating the predella-shrine also disappeared; the painted predella with the representation of the Last Supper was also retained by the Richters, covering the shrine. The over-painted donor representations on both sides of the shrine, were revealed and the losses also painted-in by the Kronstadt restorers. The rather worn surfaces of the wings' painted outer sides were also repaired and the tracery of the superstructure was complemented with a series of details. Presently, the retable is in fair condition. The structure is stable and the panel paintings are fixed. However, the green foliage-paint of the wings' back side is very poorly preserved with only the central portion in much better condition.

### **Description:**

The high-altar from Mediasch represents one of the absolutely classical types of late Gothic winged retables, although it has suffered serious losses. The central shrine is flanked by a pair of movable and another pair of fixed wings. The predella supports the construction along its complete width with both ends decorated with a Gothic profile. A shrine opens up into the center of the predella. It corresponds to the width of the retable shrine, while both flanking surfaces are painted. The retable has three tower-forming sculpture-baldachins, crowned with crocket-decorated finials on its superstructure, flanked on both sides with an openwork tracery of interlacing pierced gablets decorated by crockets and crowned by finials.

The shrine is presently decorated by three twentieth century sculptures, but the contours observable on the gold background decoration suggest that there were also three separate sculptures as part of the original arrangement of the shrine. The figures were placed on a 23 cm high base that was most probably removed together with the rest of the decoration during the Reformation. The mark the base left on the background was afterwards over-painted by an inscription written on a blue background in capitals. The quotation is taken from John 3, 16: "*sic enim dilexit Deus mundum ut Filium suum unigenitum daret ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat sed habeat vitam aeternam*". The background above the base is covered by a gold pattern, formed of intersecting, diagonal lines, which form rhomboids alternately decorated with lilies and stylized flower-motifs. The complete surface is divided into four equal rectangles by a vertical and a horizontal, carved, gilded band. The sculptures

of the shrine were crowned by a baldachin as wide as the shrine itself, formed of interlacing pierced gablets and finials.

A large, rather deep vertical groove can be observed along the edge of the shrine on both sides. These suggested to Gisela and Otmar Richter that the altar was of “Vierealtars” type. However, the dimensions of the grooves and their proportions do not support this supposition. It seems more plausible – especially taking into consideration that the grooves continue in the predella shrine – that the grooves were filled with a carved foliage containing perhaps with several animal or other comic figures.<sup>534</sup> Based on an archive photo taken before the restoration of the retable in the Kronstadt workshop, (**Fig. III. 63**) two wooden columns were set in the grooves, giving the impression that they supported the shrine-baldachin. A narrower groove frames the shrine, not only on the left and the right sides, but also along its upper part. The groove is filled presently with foliage on all three sides of the shrine. However, the already mentioned archive photo shows that these narrower vertical grooves were decorated as well by two narrow columns. Both pairs of columns were probably part of a Baroque modification of the retable, belonging to the same phase as the arrangement of the wings’ inner sides, as seen in the same archive photograph. The actual foliage in the vertical grooves was probably recarved in the twentieth century. The insides of the wings preserved only few traces of the original, medieval decoration. Originally they must have been ornamented by relief-scenes, occupying about two-thirds of the panel-surface. Above the reliefs, the panels were decorated by a gilded engraved pattern, preserved even today and presenting two different models: one type decorates the left wing and the other type the right wing. A row of arches carved in wood encloses each panel while open-work foliage may have been set above these rows. The surface originally covered by the relief was probably decorated later in the Baroque period by fields flanked by small columns, similar to those that flanked the shrine in the same period. The fields were decorated by symbols of the evangelists, four medieval quatrefoils that can also be seen today on the insides of the panels although the Baroque frames were removed. The four symbols belonged originally not to the retable but to the ends of a Crucifix.<sup>535</sup> It was probably during the last restoration of the retable that the Baroque additions were removed both from the shrine and the wings. The surfaces were originally decorated by the reliefs that were over-painted by an imitation of a Gothic pattern while the previously mentioned evangelist-symbols were placed back in the center of the panels.

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<sup>534</sup> A similar decoration can be observed on the famous altarpiece of Michael Pacher in Sankt Wolfgang.

<sup>535</sup> For such an example in Transylvania see the Crucifix from Schönberg (Dealu Frumos, Lesses)

When the retable is closed the wings display eight scenes from the Passion. The cycle starts with a representation of the **Arrest of Christ**. The composition, following Israhel van Meckenem's corresponding engraving of the Passion cycle,<sup>536</sup> shows Christ and Judas at the center. Christ, represented frontally, is shown with his hands tied being kissed by Judas who wears a long, yellow robe and a red mantle. A little red belt-bag is fixed to his waist indicating the sum he has received for his betrayal. A large, crowded group of soldiers is depicted behind them. Even the individuals represented in the crowd correspond quite precisely to the van Meckenem engraving. The background is divided into two sections by a group of rocks placed in the center. The above-mentioned soldiers stand to the left of the rocks in a scene preceding what is happening in the foreground: St. John the Evangelist talks to Jesus in the gate of the garden. There is a fence and the detail of a farther off town behind them. In the foreground, before Christ and Judas, Peter is depicted, lifting his sword in order to cut off Malchus' ear. The latter already lies on the ground, dropping the lamp he is holding in his hand.

The second scene, representing the **Flagellation**, again follows the corresponding engraving by Israhel van Meckenem.<sup>537</sup> Christ is depicted in the center of the composition with his hands above his head tied to a column and wearing nothing but a loin-cloth. Two of the soldiers standing on his left are hitting him. One soldier has a scourge, and the other holds a faggot in his hand. A third man stands to his right, striking Christ with a faggot. In the foreground, in the corner of the image, a fourth soldier sitting on the ground on Christ's mantle is preparing his faggot for the flagellation. All the soldiers wear tight stockings, tight, pointed boots and short doublets. A group of distinguished persons enter the room on the left side of the representation. The very first of them, clad in a long, elegant, brocade mantle, and wearing a turban-like hat on his head, can most probably be identified with Pilate. The scene takes place in a room, arranged quite similarly to that on the engraving. A smaller opening in the background, on the left, offers a view into a furnished room. A large arch on the right opens into a partly closed, partly open space where we can see Christ being brought before Herod.

The representation of the Crowning with Thorns shows Christ sitting on a stone-casket, wearing a red mantle clasped on his chest. Three soldiers press the crown of thorns onto his head with vehement motions. A fourth one kneels in front of him handing him a staff as a scepter in a clearly mocking gesture. In the foreground, two dogs lie on the black-red-

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<sup>536</sup> B 16 (207)

<sup>537</sup> B 13 (207)

white chequered floor. Two elegant men are depicted in the left corner of the image witnessing the scene. One of them, wearing a long, brocade gown, red shoes and a red hat turns his back towards us. In his right hand he holds a long staff. His companion, who can only be partly seen, is clad in a long red robe, edged with white fur and has a hat that is similarly red and edged in white. The background architecture exactly follows the details of the van Meckenem engraving. Several persons witness the scene through the arched window and the arched corridor in the background. On the right side, through a larger opening, there is a view into a Gothic chapel-like space, articulated by narrow columns, where the mocking of Christ takes place. Christ is sitting with bound eyes, surrounded by a group of mocking soldiers.

The last panel of the upper row displays a representation of the **Ecce Homo**. Christ is presented to the crowd on a three-step high, arcaded balcony. He only wears his loin-cloth. His body is covered by drops of blood. He crosses his hands in front of his chest. He is led by Pilate, elegantly dressed in a long, brocade mantle with a wide sleeved shirt beneath it. His head is covered by a turban-like red hat, with a wide, white edge. In his hand he holds his judge-scepter. Behind them, two elegantly dressed figures lead a discussion. One figure is dressed in a long red cloak, edged in white and a red hat on his head while the other figure, who seems to be younger, wears elegant green stockings, red shoes, a white shirt and a short overcoat above it. His long curly brown hair is bound by a head band. The crowd facing them expresses its opinion with intense gestures, the crossed fingers suggest their desire for Christ's crucifixion. Head dresses and hats of varied types can be observed in the crowd. The person in the foreground turning his back towards the spectator, wears a red head-dress with a long pointed end and a fringe falling down his back. Another man sports a high white fur hat. A scene once again taking place at a moment previous to the happenings in the foreground may be seen in the background. Pilate and his wife are shown in discussion with each other in an open, arcaded passageway.

The panel depicting the **Bearing of the Cross** is one of the best quality paintings of the eight panels. The crowded composition presents Christ in a long, richly folded, grey robe. He bears the cross on his left shoulder, holding the lower end of the crossbar in both hands. He turns his head backwards looking at Simon of Cyrene, the old man supporting the end of the cross. He is dressed in grey stockings, simple black shoes and a dark mantle lined in green, above his white shirt. His white-bearded face is carefully drawn. A soldier pulls at Christ with a vehement gesture. He lifts his right hand above his head, holding the end of the rope encircling Christ's waist. With his left hand he grasps the hair of the Savior. With his left

leg he treads on Christ's right knee, while his open mouth suggests that he is shouting. He wears tight black trousers, tall yellow boots and a short, but very elegant, gold brocade overcoat. Behind him another soldier, represented with his back towards the spectator, holds the other end of the rope Christ is tied with. He holds the rope over his right shoulder, while in his left hand he carries a little bucket. The procession following Christ can be observed on the left side of the image comprising soldiers wearing armor, simple people, and finally Pilate and his attendants leaving the town on horseback. In the background, right behind Christ, Veronica is depicted holding the veil in front of her. Two other women are shown next to her. Further off the Virgin can be observed fainting in the background, with John the Evangelist and an elegantly dressed woman supporting her. Two other women are behind them. One of these women, probably Mary Magdalene, lifts both her hands expressing her pain. The town depicted on the left side of the image follows exactly the architecture represented on van Meckenem's engraving.

The cycle continues with a so-called "Andachtsbild" included in the narrative: **Man of Sorrows Resting**. The Savior sits on the bar of the cross, wearing nothing but a loin-cloth, crossing his hands in his lap. His head leans on his right shoulder so that he gazes at the man preparing the cross. This man holds a large drill, boring the ending of the cross for the nail. He is represented almost in profile, but turns his back towards the spectator. He wears tight green stockings, a white shirt and a red waistcoat above it. Behind him, on the left of the image, Pilate and his ecclesiastic companion are shown in discussion using active hand gestures. Pilate wears his long, brocade gown already seen on previous images as well as red boots and a pointed hat, with a yellow, turban-like edge. A couple of soldiers follow them, holding halberds and flags. Four soldiers can be observed in the lower right corner of the panel. Two of them are fighting and casting dice on Christ's mantle while two others are shown talking behind them. The background shows the Golgotha with two soldiers preparing the ground for the new cross as well as the group already seen on the previous panel: Mary fainting supported by John and an elegantly dressed woman together with two other women and a man wearing a red cowl. Details of a town can be seen on both sides of the Golgotha. The composition again follows the engraving by Israhel van Meckenem very closely.

It is the representation of the **Crucifixion** that has made the Mediasch altar famous in international art-history literature because the town representation in its background has been identified with Vienna. The crucified Christ can be seen in the foreground of the image, his head bent to the right. His hair falls onto his right shoulder and his legs lie parallel to each other with their knees slightly bent, turning to his left. Both ends of his loin-cloth float on his

right side. Blood flows from his side-wound and down his arms. The Virgin kneels on his right with her hands clasped in prayer. She wears a dark dress and a white mantle lined with red that slips down her back and shoulders, covering the grassy ground around her in rich, hard folds. Her head is covered by a white veil and her eyes are red from crying. Tear drops fall down her cheeks. John the Evangelist stands behind her wearing a vivid green robe and a red cloak above it that is gathered together at his right shoulder. His curly blonde hair falls to his shoulders as he looks up to the Savior. Three women are depicted behind him, all represented with weeping, mourning gestures. Mary Magdalene kneels at the foot of the cross, embracing the cross with her left arm. Her right arm extended towards the Virgin, trying to embrace her as well. She is clad in a green dress and her long, curly blonde hair falls to her shoulders. She looks upwards to Christ. The officials and soldiers are depicted to the left of the Savior. Pilate appears in the long, brocade gown he has been shown in before, wearing yellow boots and a pointed red hat with a green brim. With his right thumb he points towards Christ and with his left hand he grasps the hilt of a large sword. He turns his head towards his companion, the elegantly dressed centurion, who wears a short, but very voluminous red mantle, tight black stockings and red boots. His head is encircled by a yellow turban. He leans on a knobbed stick in his left hands and grasps the hilt of a sword with his right hand. The sword is held under his left arm. Three soldiers in armour stand behind them. A representation of a town surrounded by water fills the complete width of the background.

The last panel of the retable finishes the narrative with a representation of the **Resurrection**. Christ steps with his right leg out of his stone-sarcophagus. He holds the banner in his left hand and lifts his right hand in benediction. A red mantle covers his left shoulder but has slipped down his right shoulder. The right-side end of the mantle is pulled in front of him over to his left hand. The lid of the sarcophagus is pulled away and held on the right side of the image by an angel, clad in a long *alba*. Two soldiers lie on the ground in front of the sarcophagus. The one on the left is depicted at the moment of awakening, his left hand lifted to his forehead. His weapons lie around him with his sword on his left side and a halberd on his right side. The other soldier, represented more in a sitting position, holds a cross-bow before him. Two soldiers arise on the right side of Christ. One carries an elegant shield on his back and the other one holds a lance in his right hand looking up to Christ. A scene of Christ in Limbo can be observed on the left side of the hilly background landscape. A group of naked people are represented standing in a gate, with Adam and Eve at the front and the resurrected Christ standing before them, holding Adam's hand. Farther off, a group of three women approaches from behind a rock.

The frames of the panels are profiled. The inner groove is gilded and, the outer frame lath is decorated with painted foliage. The originally green leaves were drawn with a clear black contour on a vivid red background.

The back side of the altarpiece is decorated with painted green foliage. The motif was painted directly on the wooden panels of the wings, while the shrine's backside was glued over with the same motif painted on paper. The colors are rather dim. The leaves and flowers have been drawn in thick, expressed black lines while the parallel hachure for shading shows a practiced hand. Various types of small, white flowers animate the surface.

The predella supports the retable along its complete width. A shrine, corresponding in width exactly to the retable-shrine opens the central part of the predella, but was covered at a later time with a much smaller, painted predella with a representation of the Last Supper. The shrine is still divided by profiled lathes into four niches, with tiny sculpted bases. The background of the niches was originally decorated with an engraved, gilded pattern, presented in the well-known form of a curtain. The contours observable on the pattern suggest that each niche contained a standing figure, perhaps a statue of a Church Father or an Evangelist.<sup>538</sup> The surfaces on both sides of the predella shrine are decorated with a figure of a donator. These have been painted-over at a later time and were revealed again in the Kronstadt restoration workshop.<sup>539</sup> The deep blue background behind the figures on both sides has lost its vividness because of the over painting and cleaning procedure. An ecclesiastical person kneels at a prayer stool to the left of the shrine clad in a blue robe and a long *alba* above it. The *alba* is arranged in parallel folds starting downwards from his neckline and breaking into V-shaped folds beneath his raised right arm. However, the folds were in part painted-in during the restoration. The head of the patron is covered by a red *magister's* hat and he holds an open book in his hands. He has medium-length blond hair and his face appears to be slightly unshaven. A white veil is thrown over the prayer stool. The lower corner of the predella is represented in perspective, in the form of a niche. A heraldic shield hangs on a painted nail driven into the upper edge of the painted niche. The shield is divided vertically into two parts with one blue and one red field. An arm growing out of a crown is shown that transects the

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<sup>538</sup> Gisela and Otmar Richter suppose that Church Father figures have decorated the predella, but they do not argue the assumption, moreover they don't even offer a description of the imprints on the predella-background.

<sup>539</sup> Victor Roth supposed, that the predella with the representation of the Last Supper had been placed in front of the predella shrine in the period of the Reformation. This is indeed a plausible assumption: the shrine was probably emptied at this period, and in order to cover the empty case, the painted predella, with a representation corresponding to the Reformation ideas has been placed here. It was probably in this period also, that the surfaces on the sides of the shrine were overpainted, leaving, as the archive photo shows, the spots covered by the newly placed predella untouched.

fields. The hand holds a pen and appears to be writing on a white banderole. A non-ecclesiastical donor is represented on the right side of the predella shrine. He kneels at a prayer stool as well and his black hat is placed on the stool. He is clad in a long, gold, originally perhaps brocade-patterned gown, the surface of which is presently quite worn. It is only the decided black contours of the folds that can be clearly discerned, very probably also because of the restoration. The gold robe is edged with dark fur at the neckline and, as it is opened on the man's chest, a white shirt can be seen under it. The donor seems to be a middle-aged man, with black hair but an already grizzled beard. His hands are joined in prayer.<sup>540</sup> Similarly to the other side of the predella, the lower corner is painted in perspective in imitation of a niche. A heraldic shield is depicted hanging on a nail. The shield is in this case also divided into two parts with one field being orange (originally golden?) and the other one field red. Unfortunately, nothing of the representation on the coat of arms has been preserved.<sup>541</sup> The predella has a fairly high, profiled plinth, articulated by a deep groove. Similarly the upper edge of the predella is also decorated by a profiled cornice.

The superstructure of the retable, as already mentioned, is composed of three tower-form sculptured baldachins, standing on fragile piers and finishing in pointed steeples. The central tower is a good deal higher and brighter than the other two and is also superposed by another, narrower one with a spiralling steeple. The statues are missing. The small figures, a crucifixion, with John and the Virgin, presently placed under the baldachins, date to the eighteenth century. All three towers are crowned by volutes that intersect each other and finish in finials. The backsides of the volutes and the steeples are decorated by crabbles. The baldachins at one point are not supported by a pier, but decorated similarly to a console with a heraldic shield. The left side baldachin displays the shield of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom, bi-sected seven times. The upper baldachin of the central tower shows the shield of Mediasch decorated with an open palm, while the last, the right side baldachin, shows a shield with the Hungarian double-cross. The towers are flanked on both sides by openwork tracery formed from intersecting volutes, articulated by fine secondary foils. The row of trefoils on the upper edge of the retable was missing on the archives photos taken previous to the restoration in Kronstadt.

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<sup>540</sup> The figures of the two donors are presently again partly covered by the volutes of the Last Supper predella. However details like the prayer stools or the hat set on the stool can be well seen on the documentation photos taken during the restoration.

<sup>541</sup> I have to thank restorer Ferenc Mihály, that according to my demand he has made an infrared reflectography of this detail. Unfortunately no representation on the shield could be discerned.



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### 3. Details of an altarpiece from Grossprobstdorf, dedicated to the Virgin Mary(?)

(*Proștea Mare, Nagyekemező*)

**Provenience:** Grossprobstdorf, former parish, presently a Lutheran church

**Dating:** 1490-1500

**Present location:** Hermannstadt (Sibiu, Nagyszeben), Muzeul Național Brukenthal

**Inventory number:** Inv. No. 1507, 1518, 1519, 1520, 1521, 1522, 1523, 1524, 1601

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera

**Main measurements:**

Stationary wings: h: 205 cm, w: 95 cm, th: 1.5 cm

Movable wings: h: 97 (90) cm, w: 83.5 (76) cm

Fixed panels: h: 97 (90) cm, w: 40 (33) cm

**Arrangement (Hypothetic):**

Feast-day side:

Disappeared: Annunciation (?)	Angel with an organ	Unknown representation (of the Virgin?)	Angel with a lyre	Visitation
Birth	Angel with a harp		Angel with a flute	Adoration of the Magi

Work a'day side:

Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand	Disappeared: Two unknown saints	Saints Margareth and Catherine	Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian
	(According to Vătășianu) Laurentius and Archdeacon Stephen	(According to Vătășianu) Claudius reviving a dead and an unidentifiable Saint	

**State of conservation, restorations:**

The preserved panels of the altarpiece are in very different states of preservation. Two of the better preserved wing-panels – representing the Birth and the Adoration of the Magi are mounted in an arbitrary and completely illogical way together with the four narrow panels representing angels. These six panels show traces of a restoration, the date of which is not known. However, this work must have taken place some time after 1959, when the overview

work of Virgil Vătăşianu was published containing a photo taken before this putative restoration.<sup>542</sup> The gold backgrounds are seriously damaged and have been filled in very roughly. Certain missing details, like the face of the Christ-child on the Adoration scene, have been painted-in. The worst preserved parts of the altar are the four angel-panels, where not only the gold background but also large surfaces of the figures are missing. The lower left corner of the angel playing the organ was completely destroyed and a considerable part of the garment of the lute-playing angel is also missing. Surfaces of the arm and wings of the harp-playing angel were also filled in during the restoration, while the face of the last angel seems to have been preserved before 1959. However, now it is missing, filled in but not painted-in.

Never restored, and only partly covered over with Japanese paper, the two sides of the third wing panel – representing the Visitation on one side and the figures of Saints Catherine and Margaret – are in a quite distressing condition. Large parts of these surfaces are missing. Not only is the paint gone but also the foundation has been completely lost. The panel possibly came to the museum at a later time than the other panels since it is registered under a completely different inventory number.

The two stationary wings also display serious losses and cracks along the joints of the boards. The upper right corner of the panel with the representation of the Ten thousand and the upper left corner of the other panel are completely broken. The lower right corner of the first panel especially is particularly badly damaged. The left edge of this panel and the right edge of the other edge show a c.a. 5 cm wide strip of white chalk ground indicating that these sides were fixed in frames. The back sides of these panels are decorated with a swirling green leaf ornament, drawn in thick black contours and very poorly preserved. This surface probably never received a chalk ground so that became worn much more easily. Both stationary panels were restored in the workshop of the Brukenthal Museum in 2006.

### **Description:**

The preserved panels once belonged to a winged altarpiece that probably had a central shrine. Four narrow, fixed panels flanked the shrine – two superposed panels on each side. A pair of movable wings was attached to these, while when the altar was closed, a pair of stationary wings flanked the movable ones. No information exists either on the central shrine or the superstructure and the predella of the original altarpiece.

The four narrow, fix panels each display an angel's figure. One of them turns to the left and is dressed in a white alba with a red dalmatique above it, cut on both sides up to the

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<sup>542</sup> Vătăşianu. 784.

waist. Thus, the back part of the dalmatique flutters behind him displaying the greenish, silk lining. He holds a small organ in his left hand and plays on it with the long fingers of his right hand. The lifted folds of his dalmatique are held tight beneath his right arm. His curly, golden hair frames an oval, white face, with a pale rose bush to the cheeks. His large extended wings flank the image. There is a stone-parapet in the background, covered by a green and red brocade-carpet with gold patterns and edges. The surface above the parapet was covered in a gold pattern. The ground was probably originally covered by grass but is almost completely destroyed by now. Another angel, playing a lyre, wears a green tunic with a dark blue mantle above it, lined in red and held together on his chest by a gold mantle clasp, decorated by pearls. His face, turned to the right, is surrounded by golden curls and his body is represented frontally. The background is again marked by a parapet-wall and a now very damaged gold pattern above. The ground is covered by grass. A third angel with his head turned to the right and again represented almost frontally, plays a harp. He wears a yellow tunic and a red mantle above it clasped together on his chest with a double clasp. He seems not to hold the instrument at all using both his hands to play the strings. He holds the right end of his mantle tightly in front of him with his left hand. He stands on grassy ground. His left foot peeps out from under his long tunic. A parapet-wall limits the background, while the surface above it was also decorated with a gold pattern. The last angel wears a long, dark blue tunic and plays on a flute. His face is completely destroyed, but his curly blonde hair can still be clearly seen. He also stands on grass with his bare left foot sticking out from under the tunic. The parapet wall is covered by a red and gold brocade-carpet.

One of the three preserved wing panels depicts the scene of the **Birth**. The Virgin kneels on the left side with her hands slightly clasped in prayer. She wears a long brocade dress with the pattern carefully painted in red and gold. Her back is covered by a dark blue mantel, lined with red and edged with gold. The mantle has slipped down her right shoulder, but covers both her feet behind her, while its right side curves forward on the ground in front of her. Joseph kneels opposite to her. Clad in a grey robe, closed with a row of buttons on his chest, his back is covered by a large red mantle, edged with gold and clasped together at his neck. His grey hair and long grey beard show him as an old man. His head was probably originally covered in part by a hood indicated by the worn spot behind his head that was covered by a later restoration. His left hand is simply lifted before him, while in his right hand he holds a candle in a quite unnatural way in his fingers. The Christ-child is lying on the tiled-floor between his parents, surrounded by a wreath of golden rays while his head is surrounded by a halo. The space is marked by a partly preserved stone arch in the background and another one

on the left side, while a golden-black brocade carpet covers the wall between them. The inside of the stall can be seen in the background, drawn in a rather primitive perspective, presenting the heads of a cow and a horse. The whole of the background surface was covered by a gold brocade pattern that can only be discerned in small traces now and that has been simply gilded over during a previous restoration.

The second panel presents the **Adoration of the Magi**. The Virgin sits on the right side of the panel holding the Child on her lap, embracing him with her right hand under his arm. With her left hand she holds the box full of gold-coins. She wears a brocade dress, similar to the one seen on the previous panel, and a dark blue mantle lined with red and edged with gold. Her head is covered by a white head-dress. Her long, blond hair falls in locks on her shoulders. The child, sitting on the lap of his mother, puts his left hand in the box of gold and holds his right hand out to be kissed by the old king. The eldest of the kings kneels in front of the Virgin and the Child, holding the hand of Jesus with his left hand while kissing it, and holding his leg with his somewhat twisted right hand. He has long, gray beard and moustache and gray hair on the back of his half-bald head. He is dressed most elegantly in tight green stockings with red boots, a dark, three-quarters length robe, with a gold edge, decorated with precious stones and pearls. Above all this he wears a long red-silver brocade mantle, cut up to his waist on both sides and ornamented at the collar and the edges with white fur. His crown lies to his left, on the ground. His two comrades stand behind him. The second king is clad in a precious green mantle and holds a late Gothic golden *ciborium* in his right hand. With his left hand he is about to take off his turban-crown. He has a short, brown beard and curly brown hair. The last and the youngest king stands behind him clad in a yellow shirt and a gold, patterned robe, decorated with white fur on its lower hem. Above these clothes he wears a red, sleeveless mantle that is clasped together under his arms. The V-shaped collar of the mantle is decorated with precious stones, while the edges present down their complete length what seems to imitate an inscription. In his right hand he also holds a golden *ciborium* and the wide sleeves of his shirt hang down his arm as he raises it. His short, blond curly hair is covered by a red and black striped turban with a crown set above it. One of his feet can be seen under the garment and it can be seen that he is wearing pointed red boots. The background is divided into two parts by the carved stone frame of the window. A brocade carpet covers the parapet wall of the window behind the Virgin. The gilded, formerly patterned surface of the background is also seriously damaged. The back sides of each of these two panels described above display representations of two saints. Unfortunately, due to the poor state of conservation of the panels, it was not possible to move them in order for me

to examine the back sides. Based on Vătășianu's description, the other side of these two panels were decorated with depictions of Laurentius and Archdeacon Stephen respectively Claudius reviving a dead (?) as well as an unidentifiable saint.<sup>543</sup>

The third preserved panel is in such a distressing condition that it can hardly be identified. However the two still discernable figures of women in the foreground make it clear that the representation is a scene from the **Visitation**. Mary and Elisabeth embrace each other and the Virgin puts her right hand on Elisabeth's abdomen, while the elderly woman takes Mary's right arm. They were probably shown kissing each other, but the Virgin's face is completely missing so that nothing can be said about this any more. Mary wears a red dress and a dark blue mantle above it, lined in red, and with a fine gold decoration at the edges. Her long, blond hair falls onto her shoulders. The black, pointed shoes can be observed beneath the robe. Elisabeth is clad in a dark blouse with tight, buttoned sleeves and a red dress above it. Her head is covered by a white head-dress. The black, pointed shoes she has on can be seen under the dress, the thick, abundant folds of which fall to the ground behind her figure. In contrast to the other two panels, the background here was not a simple gold-pattern, but a carefully rendered vedute. On the left side, behind Mary, can be seen a town detail with towers. In front of it, a path meanders between trees and rocks. On the right side a gate can still be discerned, close to Elisabeth offering a view into the streets of the town, where a man on horseback is sitting.

The back side of the panel is even in worse condition. Only the two figures of Catherine and Margaret can be identified because their feet and the attributes by their feet can be recognized. The upper part of the saints has been completely destroyed. Catherine, with the detail of a wheel, was clad in a dark dress with a large red mantle above it. With her right hand she leans on a sword, while in her raised left hand she holds a ring. The large sleeves of her white shirt can still be discerned, but nothing of her head has been preserved. Margaret steps on a dragon. She is clad in an elegant gold, brocade dress and wears a red mantle lined in green above it. The left side of the mantle was pulled up, probable held tight by her arm with its curving edge still clearly visible. A few details of her neck and her blond locks can still be discerned. Both saints wear pointed black shoes, standing on a red and-white tiled floor. Nothing of the background decoration can be recognized.

The two stable wings of the altarpiece represent two martyrdom scenes. The (probably) left side one is a depiction of the **Martyrdom of the Ten thousand**, with a representation of the

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<sup>543</sup> Vătășianu 782. It is not understandable from the description which saints belonged to which panel.

crucifixion at its center. The Cross, with the crucified body of Christ rises above the whole image. Christ still holds his head up and his eyes are open. His hair falls onto his right shoulder. His body is covered with blood, and blood flows out from his side-wound. The ends of his line-cloth are weaving along his left side. Under the cross, standing for the ten thousand martyrs, are ten almost naked bodies. Arranged symmetrically on the two sides of the cross, all have been stabbed through with large thorns, in various, twisted positions reflecting their agony. They wear nothing but their underclothing and five of them also wear some kind of head gear. Three simple hats with fur edges can be observed, a prince's hat and a bishop's miter. The right lower corner of the panel is very much damaged. There is a hilly landscape and the representation of a town in the background, dominated by a church tower. The town is surrounded by water and a row of trees grows on the shore.

The (probably) right side stationary panel depicts the **Martyrdom of Sebastian**. The Saint is tied to the trunk of a dead tree, with his hands tied above his head. He wears only a loin-cloth and his body is pierced with seven arrows. Two men draw their bows to shoot another two arrows into the martyr on the left side of the image. They are clad in colorful garments. The first man wears green stockings, long, brown boots, a white, ribbed shirt with sleeves tied around his arm in two places. His red coat, lined in yellow, has slipped down to his waist. Both ends of it wave in the air in front of him. His head is covered by a pointed red hat with a yellow edge. The other man wears a green mantle cinched in at the waist and decorated with a red collar. His head is covered by a dark hat with a yellow rim in the form of two triangles above his forehead. Both men have long, dark, pointed moustaches. Two elegantly dressed men stand behind them, witnessing the scene. One has a long, grey beard and a pointed red hat on his head, with a turban-like rim. He is clad in a white shirt with extremely wide sleeves and a gold, black and red patterned short-sleeved mantle above. In his right hand, he holds a scepter-like staff. His comrade turns towards him raising his left hand as part of a lively discussion. He wears a long, red and black mantle, decorated with black fur at the collar. His grey hair hangs around a rather round, wrinkled face. His head is covered by a pointed, dark hat, with a yellow, turban-like edge. Behind them, yet three other men stand watching the event. All have pointed hats and dark, pointed moustaches. The scene takes place in a hilly landscape with a small town in the background on the right side and a large surface of water, with isles and boats on the left. Just as in the case of the other stationary panel, the surface above the background landscape was not gilded but shows a blue sky.

Thus, the altarpiece must have had a central shrine (or perhaps a central panel), flanked by four narrow panels ornamented by the angels playing music. This strongly suggests that the

central part probably contained some representation of the Virgin Mary. The movable wings on both sides of the narrow panels were decorated with the four scenes most often represented on wings' inner sides. The lost panel was probably the first one depicting the Annunciation, the next one showed the Visitation, the third panel the Birth and the fourth panel the Adoration of the Magi. The outer sides were decorated with pairs of saints, flanked by the stationary wings displaying the two martyrdom scenes. The back sides of the stationary panels were covered with a painted green, swirling leaf-ornament, very similar to the one seen on the Mediasch retable.

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#### 4. The retable from Taterloch

(*Tatárlaka, Tatârlaua*)

**Dedication:** unknown

**Provenience:** Seiden, former parish, presently a Lutheran church, dedicated to St. Cecily.

**Dating:** 1508

**Present location:** Taterloch, Lutheran church

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera. The frames are gilded; the engraved brocade pattern decorating the background of the shrine was also originally gilded.

**Main measurements:**

Shrine: h: 179.5 cm, w: 147.5 cm, d: 36 cm

Wings (with frame) h: 179.5 cm, w: 73 cm

Predella w: 331 (211), d: 31.5

**Arrangement:**

Feast-day side:

Annunciation	Shrine - empty	Coronation of the Virgin
Saint Valentine's beheading		Martyrdom of Saint Demetrius
Vir Dolorum between angel		

Work a'day side:

Saints Paul and Peter	Saints Stephen and Ladislaus	Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist	Saints Bartholomew and Andrew
Saints Servatius and Gregory	Saints Dorothy and Margareth	Saints Catherine and Barbara	Saints Magdalene and Helen
Vir Dolorum between angel			

**State of conservation, restorations:**

The preserved parts of the retable are currently in a stable condition. The original, medieval architectural structure suffered serious losses so that the gable and the sculptural decoration of the central case is completely missing. The paint-surface of the panels is rather worn. Fissures can be observed along the joints of the boards. Traces of vehement vertical

scratches on the faces of certain saints can still be discerned in spite of later restorations. The gilding of the panel-frames and of the foliation baldachins closing the inner sides of the wing-panels are rather worn so that even the bores are visible in many places.

The panels were covered by Baroque overpaintings, glued onto the painted wood-surface until the beginning of the twentieth century. These were then removed by Hans Hermann in 1914 and, at the same time, the rediscovered medieval painting was conserved.<sup>544</sup> The retable was completely restored six or seven decades later in the workshop of Gisela Richter. According to the preserved documentation, the original brocade-pattern on the background of the central shrine was overpainted by Ursula Brandoch, following the patterns of the medieval decoration, but thus covering the traces of the shrine's original, three-arched vaulting-architecture and also the imprints of the shrine-sculptures on the shrine's background. (**Fig. IV. 2**) The many scratches on the faces, the poked-out eyes and mouths, were repaired at that time. (A number of photos document that the heads of both bishops' figures had scratched diagonal lines crossing each other and their eyes were punched out. The figure of St. Catherine was scratched over with long, vertical lines and the eyes of St. Valentine's executioner were also poked out. The traces of these damages can still be observed by careful observation, in spite of the restoration). The surface of the panels was heavily worn before the restoration and these losses were also completed. Large surfaces have been in-painted on both ends of the predella panel. All these interventions were photo documented by the restorers, but they can also be observed by careful examination with the naked eye. Right now, the wood material of the retable is badly worm-eaten, so that, the painted surfaces are blistered in several places – but to a great extent as well on the predella.

### **Description:**

The winged retable with its widely spread structure: a central shrine is flanked by a pair of stationary and a pair of movable wings set on a fairly high predella, which widens upwards in a deep arch on both its sides. The sculptural decoration of the shrine and the gable of the retable have not been preserved.

A Baroque frame and gable decoration was added to the Gothic retable in the eighteenth century. One little panel each surrounded by stylized foliation were placed on both sides of the retable. The representation on the left side panel is badly preserved and thus unidentifiable. The scene on the right side represents the Holy Trinity. The central part of the

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<sup>544</sup> Roth 1916, 137. Hans Hermann, "Eine Entdeckung", *Die Karpathen* 7 (1914): 638.

gable, a depiction of Pentecost, with the Virgin in the center surrounded by the apostles, is placed in a Baroque frame which bears the following inscription: *VERBUM DOMINI MANET IN AETERNUM*. A heraldic shield with the blazon of Hermannstadt sits above the inscription. The frame is also decorated with stylized foliation, surrounding a small representation of the Bible on the left side and a similar depiction of the Mosaic law-panels on the right side. On the upper part, the same foliage frames a representation of the Savior and ends in a winged angel-head. This central element of the gable is flanked by two small panels, the left one bearing the first two ciphers and the right one the last two ciphers with the date, 1715. The back side of the Baroque frame has the following inscription on it: *Michael Hartmann Birthalbensis Fecit Anno 1715*.

The part of the retable that has been most affected by later interventions is the shrine. The statues that originally decorated this central part were most probably removed during the Reformation. A late, low quality, Baroque panel, representing the Crucifixion, with Mary and John standing under the cross, marks an attempt to fill the gap caused by the loss of the sculptural decoration.<sup>545</sup> The original, very probably pierced late Gothic – Renaissance tracery or foliage on the front of the shrine was replaced by a later ornament, which – in its three arched structure – probably mimiced the original baldachin type.

All the traces alluding to the original arrangement of the shrine have been covered up by a brocade pattern painted on the background when the shrine was restored in the workshop of Gisela Richter in Kronstadt. The pattern clearly follows the model of the original, gilded decoration of the shrine background. Based on evidence from a previously mentioned archive photo, part of the photo-documentation from the Kronstadt restorations, imprints were visible showing that a vault comprising three little bays sustained by consoles covered the shrine. **(Fig. IV. 2)** The number of the bays (just like the three-arched structure of the front-baldachin) suggests that the shrine must have hosted three sculptures.<sup>546</sup> The arches, the surfaces behind the heads of the saints, have been filled with a star-decoration. The background of the shrine was originally covered by a gilded brocade decoration, worked out in the form of an applied curtain, fringed on its lower edge. No information exists on the character of the sculptures, the impressions they left do not even permit us to state whether these figures were male or female.

<sup>545</sup> This central panel was most probably carried out at the same time with the framework made by Michael Hartmann in 1715. Victor Roth also considers that Hartmann was the one who covered the medieval panels by baroque paintings glued on them. (Roth 1916, 137.)

<sup>546</sup> Although the same photo shows the imprint of only two sculptures on the back of the shrine, these are arranged in a way, that a third one could easily have fitted in near them

The wings' inner sides display a rather unusual combination of images.

The very first panel representing the **Annunciation** shows a well known arrangement of the figures. The Virgin kneels at her prayer-stool facing the arriving angel. Her right hand rests on the book she has just been reading, while her left hand is raised to her breast in a rigid gesture that is meant to express astonishment. Her dark brown dress is covered by a large, white cloak that slid down from her back to her hip, falling in soft, unformed folds to the ground. Her head is surrounded by a halo formed of gold dots. The angel, just arriving, is about to kneel down. His overall position with his right leg turned almost frontally and both knees bent, the right hand lifted in greeting and holding a scepter in his left hand is a quite widely used motif in representations of this scene in this period. The white dove of the Holy Spirit hovers above the scepter, flying towards the Virgin. A green curtain (?) behind the prayer stool has an inscription in minuscule on it with the words of the angel: *Ave gra(tia) plena dom(in)us tecum*. The function of this curtain remains unexplained. A vivid, red curtain forms the background for the praying figure of the Virgin, while the space of the scene is limited from behind by a white brick wall. Thus, the background arrangement leaves the space uncertain whether the scene takes place in an interior space or in the open air.

The representation on the upper panel on the right wing shows the **Virgin's coronation**, a common theme in the period. The composition is again rather typical for this topic. Mary kneels facing the front in the center of the image with her hands joined in prayer, wearing the same brown gown and white cloak seen on the previous image. God the Father and the Son are sitting on an (invisible) throne behind her, placing the crown on her head with their left hands. They are both wearing neutral brown gowns and red cloaks above them. Halos of the above already mentioned dotted type surround their heads. The white dove of the Holy Spirit hovers above the head of the Virgin. The uniform green wall-like background is broken by a red, brocade-carpet, placed centrally behind the figure of the Virgin.

The left lower panel shows the scene of **St. Valentine's beheading**. The bishop saint is shown kneeling, his hands joined in prayer and his miter placed on the ground in front of him. His tonsured head is surrounded by a fine halo composed of rows of golden points. Behind him his executioner lifts a large sword, holding its hilt in both hands. Two elegantly dressed figures stand in the background. One of them wears a light-red cloak, gathered together with a golden clasp on his breast and a high, pointed cap with its long end bent down. The other person wears a fur trimmed, deep-green cloak and a red hat with bent up white fur edge. The two figures face each other, engaged in a lively discussion. The background landscape is composed of a group of trees on the left side and some bare mountains on the

right side with a rose-coloured sky between them. In addition, a dead tree is represented in the center of the picture. An inscription written in minuscules helps identify the scene: *Decollatio S. Valentini*. According to the legend, Valentine, bishop of Terni converts his executioner who is reluctant to behead him. Thus, the bishop is finally beaten to death with a club. The painter from Taterloch chose to represent the scene of the decapitation which actually never took place.

The last scene represented on the inner side of the wings is that of the **martyrdom of St. Demetrius**. The saint is tied to the trunk of a tree with his hands above his head wearing a single loincloth. His figure is based on Dürer's St. Sebastian print<sup>547</sup>, dated to 1500/1502, with a slight modification of the saint's position. His executioner is a bald man, dressed in red trousers and a short red top-coat. He stabs Demetrius through holding the hilt of the sword with his left hand and pressing the end of it with his right hand. Behind him stand two men dressed in oriental cloths. One of them, wearing a long red cloak and a white turban, half covers the other. The other man is dressed in a long green coat decorated with white fur at the collar, the sleeves and the lower hem, long red boots and a large white turban above a red cap. This last figure, with his long beard leans on a long stick with his right hand while his left hand is hidden in his cloak. The figure is strongly reminiscent of the Pilate figures bearing witness at scenes of the Passion on several engravings by Dürer. The background landscape is again marked by bare mountains and a grove of trees. The inscription *Passio S Demetrii*, employing the same type of letters as on the previous panel, identifies the scene.

All the panels of the inner side have a gilded frame and end in a sort of baldachin with gilded foliage, carved into the chalky foundation. The pattern of this decoration that differs from the ornamental foliage known for Gothic retables, is characteristic of the Renaissance.

When the wings are closed the altar displays a series of sixteen standing saints, grouped in pairs. The pairs usually face each other, although the figures are very much independent from each other. All the saints represented have an identifying inscription above their heads, written with the same type of letters as the texts on the inside of the wings. Followed horizontally, from the upper first panel to the lower last panel, the representations succeed each other as follows: the first panel depicts St. Paul and St. Peter, both clad in long, red and green gowns and cloaks. Paul leans on his large sword and Peter holds a book and a huge key in his hand. Both are barefooted. The second panel shows the two Holy Kings of

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<sup>547</sup> B 55 (71)

Hungary, St. Stephen and St. Ladislaus. The first, presented as an old man with long, white hair and beard, wears black shoes and a large red robe, decorated with white fur at the collar and the sleeves and holding the scepter and the orb in his hand. St Ladislaus, clad all in steel, looks much younger with his long brown hair and beard. He holds the orb in his right hand and his attribute, the halberd, in his left hand leaning on it. Both wear gold crowns. St. John the Baptist and St. John the evangelist stand on the third panel. The brown haired, bearded Baptist has a simple brown gown on covering his feet only somewhat below his knees. In his left hands he holds a book while with his right hand he points to the lamb placed at his feet. His figure clearly follows a print by Dürer, dated to around 1502, representing St John the Baptist in the companionship of Onophrius.<sup>548</sup> His pair on the Taterloch panel, St John the Evangelist, wears a red mantle with a green cloak over it, buttoned together on his right shoulder. The young man holds a chalice with a snake in his left hand as sign of his having been gifted while he points to the chalice with two fingers of his right hand. Both saints are bare footed. The last panel in the upper row depicts St Bartholomew and St Andrew. The first figure, a long, curly haired, bearded young man holds his book in his left hand and his attribute, a large knife, in his right hand. His bare feet are visible under his long red gown, above which he wears a white mantle that has slid down from his shoulders. Andrew, with his long white hair and beard, wears a red gown that is similar to that of Bartholomew as well as a grey cloak above it, modeled with green shadows. He holds his mantle above his knee with his left hand and grasps his attribute, a large Andrew-cross, with his right hand. The first panel of the lower row shows the figures of two bishops: St. Servacius (written with a *c* on the identifying inscription) and St. Gregory. Both wear full ornate: Servatius a red robe and has a white miter on his head. He holds his bishop's staff in his left hand and a large key in his right hand. Gregory, stands on his left wearing a heavy gold mantle above his ornate head-dress and a red-golden tiara on his head. He holds a cross-staff in his left hand and raises his right hand in benediction. The row of women saints begins in the next panel represented by Dorothy and Margaret. The first is clad in a red dress covered by a green cloak, one end of which she presses close to her abdomen. Her long, blond hair covers her shoulders and she holds a little woven basket in her hands. Margaret wears a red gown as well above a large-sleeved, rose coloured blouse. Her long hair falls onto her shoulders. She holds her dress in front of her with her left hand and lifts her right hand in benediction. She stands on the back of her attribute: a huge dragon whose head is placed between the two figures, turned towards

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<sup>548</sup> B 112 (139)

Margaret's lifted hand. Their names can be read above the heads of the saints. St. Catherine and St. Barbara are represented on the next panel. Catherine, wearing a long red dress, above a dark blouse with large sleeves, holds an open book on her right palm and leans on one of her attributes, a large, standing sword with her left hand. Near the sword, on the ground in front of her, lies a fragment of her other attribute, a wooden wheel. Barbara is clad in a light-red, almost orange dress, covered by a green coat. She holds a chalice containing a host on her right palm, slightly supporting it with the fingers of her left hand. The last panel shows Magdalene and Helene, with a large, T-shaped cross standing between them. Magdalene's green dress, fastened with a narrow belt, is covered by a large red mantle. In her hands she holds a jar, lifting its lid with her left hand. Helene faces her, leaning on the cross with her right hand and keeping her left hand on her abdomen. She wears a rose coloured blouse with extremely large sleeves and a green, fur-edged dress above it, with a deep, V-form cut collar. She has a white veil on her head, tightly covering the whole head and neck so that only her face is visible.

All the paintings on the wings' outer side have landscape representations in their backgrounds, mostly consisting of a grove of trees and bare mountains, with a blue and red-coloured sky above them as general characteristics.

The predella showing a representation of the Man of Sorrows is a widespread theme in the iconographic programs of winged retables. The *Vir dolorum* on the predella from Taterloch sits on the perpendicularly set lid of his sarcophagus, on a fine, transparent veil, the ends of which are held by the two angels kneeling by the sides of the sarcophagus. The figure of Christ is partly based on a copperplate by Dürer<sup>549</sup> on similar topic. The Savior sits with raised hands displaying his wounds. His thorn-crowned head turns and leans slightly towards his right shoulder. Blood flows from his side-wound. The end of his richly folded loincloth lies on the edge of the sarcophagus. Both angels, kneeling by his sides, hold a chalice each in one of their hands, gathering Christ's blood flowing from his hand-wounds. In their other hand, they hold the ends of the transparent veil Christ is sitting on. Both angels wear red shirts and large, long white surplices above them, forming bulgy folds under their belts. Their large, feathered wings are extended. The Golgotha is visible in the center of the background behind the figure of Christ. Some other mountains are depicted at a distance. A red heraldic shield hangs in the upper left corner of the panel on the branch of a dead tree. A cross-like sign is represented on the shield. The extreme

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<sup>549</sup> B (20)

ends of the cross are split. Three of the split-ends have dots at their bifurcations.<sup>550</sup> There are two inscriptions to be read on the predella, both of them written on a painted piece of paper, a *trompe l'oeil*, placed at the upper edge of the painting, on both sides. The lines on the left side are metrical verses of quite low quality, referring to the sufferings of the depicted Man of Sorrows:

*”Aspice qui tantas pro te sustinui penas  
Mortalis: nexus ut mortis fugere diros  
Valeres: ecce patencia brachia dedi  
Dulciter genasque meas ad oscula flexi  
Fac igitur rectum colas semperque piumque  
Sic perhennia manebunt te gaudia celi”*

The lines on the right side contain information regarding the masters of the retable:

*Perfectum est presens opus per magistros  
Simonem sculptorem et generum suum  
Vincencium pictorem Cibiniensem Anno  
domini Millesimo Quingentesimo  
octavo.*

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Vătășianu 1959, 797-800.

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<sup>550</sup> The identification of this sign as a hallmark of the master is thoroughly discussed in the chapter referring to Vincencius Cibiniensis.



## 5. St. Thomas retable from Groß-Schenk.

(*Cincu, N agysenk*)

**Provenience:** Meschen (*Moşna, Muzsna*), former parish, presently a Lutheran church

**Dating:** 1521

**Present location:** Groß-Schenk, Lutheran church

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera

### **Main measurements:**

Complete height: 313 cm

Complete width: 181 cm

Central image: h: 152 cm, w: 136.5 cm

Lunette: h: 70 cm, w: 136.5 cm

Predella: h: 29 cm, w: 179 cm

### **Arrangement:**

Lunette: Saint Christopher
Central Panel: Christ and Doubting Thomas among the Apostles
Predella: Fourteen auxiliary saints

### **State of conservation, restorations:**

The retable is presently in a stable condition. The painted surfaces have worn spots and a few in-painted details can be observed. The retable was completely cleaned in the Kronstadt workshop of Gisela Richter between 1977 and 1980 when it regained its original vivid color. An important contribution has been the cleaning of the small Renaissance predella that was painted over in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was thus its medieval representation stayed unknown to previous scholars. The overpainting and perhaps the cleaning procedure itself has considerably thinned and worn the medieval paint layer. A number of large iron-nails were hammered into the predella panel in unexplained, irregular arrangement, surely as a result of some later intervention.

The Renaissance framework also displayed some minor losses that have mostly been completed during the restoration work.

### **Description:**

This Renaissance retable consists of a large central panel flanked by two wide, richly decorated lintels, a lunette set above it and an unusually low, rectangular predella as wide as the retable itself. The central panel is separated from the lunette by an architrave decorated with a sculpted Renaissance ornament. The complete Renaissance retable is surrounded by an rich Baroque frame decoration, set on a larger and much earlier, Gothic predella.

The central image represents the scene of Doubting Thomas. The scene takes place inside an octagonal closed room, three sides of which are visible in the background of the image. All three walls open with a window with a view towards a mountainous landscape. The semicircular arches of the windows are supported by columns with acanthus and volute-decorated capitals and the room is flanked in the foreground by two similarly decorated columns. As a decoration in the entrance of the room, two coral-strings hang between the flanking columns, crossed in the middle above Christ's head, by another string of colored leaves. The resurrected Christ stands slightly bestride in the center of the image, with his left hand grasping Thomas' wrist, while he raises his right hand with the palm facing upwards. An elegant, gold cloak with fine dark-green patterns and with a vivid red lining covers his back and falls in abundant thick folds to the floor, covering his abdomen from his right to his left and hiding his raised left underarm. The large, heavy cloak is tied together with a simple black string at his neck. A golden halo surrounds his head. The young, bearded Thomas kneels on his right, almost placing his left knee on Christ's foot. He raises his right hand and puts two of his fingers in Christ's side-wound. He seems to kind of balance himself with his left hand, holding his hand horizontally and lifted to the height of his waist with his palm facing downwards. He is barefoot, clad in a violet-rose robe with a green cloak above it. The cloak has slipped down from his right shoulder as he raises his hand to Christ's side. The central figures are surrounded by the disciples, the twelve of whom completely fill the room, barely fitting in. Six of them are grouped on the right side of Christ. The long bearded one standing in the foreground wears a long, turquoise robe and a white cloak above it that has slid down from his back, forming thick folds around his hips, plainly following the the upper part of his leg and pulled from his right side to his left side, cast on his left arm and lifted to his right shoulder. His right hand repeats the motion already seen by Thomas. It is held horizontally, with his palm turned downwards. He wears sandals comprising thin black strings on his bare feet. Only the heads of the disciples grouped behind him and some small details of their vividly coloured gowns can still be seen. The apostle standing at the very back, right by the column flanking the room, holds his head in his left hand. Four apostles can clearly be discerned on the left side of Christ. Behind them, the crown on the heads of other,

unexplained persons can be observed. In the foreground, an older, gray-haired man stands, clad in a long black robe with a red cloak above it, wearing sandals composed of black strings. His hands are joined before him. A bearded apostle standing on his right side wears a green cloak, but nothing else can be seen of his figure. Another young disciple, who stands behind him, wears a grey coat and lifts his hand to his head, similarly to his “pendent” apostle on the other side. The head of one more bearded apostle is visible at the very back, behind Christ’s left shoulder. Thus, the number of apostles represented on the altar comes to only eleven. A rectangular niche is cut in the floor, right before Christ. It has a semicircular arch in its center, partly emphasizing Christ’s central figure, but mainly placed there to host a quotation taken from John 20:28,29 as well as the signature, both written in majuscules on the inner edge of the niche: *DOMIN(US) MEUS ET DEUS ME(US). THOMA QUIA VIDISTI CREDIDISTI BEATI QUI NON VIDERU(N)T ET CREDI(D)ERU(N)T. VINCE(N)CIUS FACIEBAT* 1521.

Despite some significant changes, the central figure of Christ and the arrangement of the apostles in the room clearly follows Dürer’s woodcut on the same topic, dated to around 1510. (B 49 (120))

The semicircular lunette contains a representation of St. Christopher set in a landscape. The giant has just reached the shore, stepping out of the river with his right leg, and grasping his huge staff in his right hand. He holds his belt with his left hand. He wears a long brown shirt, fastened together on his chest with a long row of buttons and with a wide green belt around his waist. A large red cloak flutters on his back. The Christ-child sits on his left shoulder clad in a long shirt of the same color as Christopher’s and with a waving red cloak above it that flutters just like the saint’s. The child lifts his right hand in benediction and holds an apple with his left hand on his knee. In the left corner of the image the hermit, who inducted Christopher into Christian Belief, sits on the ground clad in a white cowl holding a lamp in his right hand. The background landscape contains green hills with trees. There is a small building in the right corner and snowy mountains in the distance with a light blue sky above them. The central figure of the panel was once again inspired by an engraving by Dürer (B 103 (136)) from 1511, although the similarity can only be traced in certain motifs. The painter’s characteristic hand is very likely seen in the treatment of the drapery, the play with light and shadow giving the impression of changing colors (*changierende Farben*) on Christopher’s belt (green to orange) and on the Child’s cloak (red to green). The master seems to have had minor problems with anatomy, as shown by the misdrawn left shoulder of the Saint and his much too long right upper arm.

The small predella of the retable contains a row of the fourteen auxiliary saints. The central figure is St Catherine with the remainder of the saints arranged one near the other in a dense row on both her sides, mostly turning towards her. St. Denis begins the row on her left side. He holds his head in his right hand and a bishop's staff in his left hand. He is followed by St. George, grasping the neck of a dragon with his right hand, stabbing him through with a lance held in his left hand. He wears a green coat and a yellow turban on his head. St. Pantaleon stands facing front clad in a red coat. His hands are nailed to his head. St. Vitus is represented as a young man wearing a dark green gown, holding a cock on his left arm. St. Eustace, clad in a green shirt and a red coat above it, holds the head of a stag, with a glowing cross amongst its antlers. The sixth saint represented is St. Nicolas wearing a full bishop's costume and holding a book with three golden balls on it in front of him. St. Catherine, the central figure, holds a palm branch in her right hand and grasps a wooden wheel with her left hand. She is followed in the row by Barbara, dressed in green and holding her attribute, the chalice, in her right hand. St. Margaret, wearing a dark dress and a red cloak above it, can be recognized by the dragon at her right side. St. Erasmus is depicted in an ornate bishop's costume with his entrails wound around a windlass he holds in his right hand. Behind him stands St. Blaise placing his left hand on Erasmus's shoulder and holding a candle in his right hand. St. Giles (Aegidius) wears a simple brown monastic cowl and holds a deer before him. Achatius is represented in armour and with a dark red turban on his head, holding a thorn-branch in his hand. He turns towards the last of the fourteen saints, St. Cyriacus, dressed as a deacon, with a green cloak above his white shirt and holding a sword resting against his shoulder in his right hand. The background of the panel shows a cloudy, blue-rose sky. An incised inscription can be read between the figures of St.s Catherine and Barbara. It continues left from Barbara's head: "*In Anno 1542 Hic fuit*" followed by an indisipherable signature.

The Renaissance framework of the retable displays a variety of gilded and silvered, sculpted ornamental elements. The two piers imitating listels flanking the central image are decorated with a series of stylized, superimposed vases, enriched with various plant elements and volutes. The architrave is filled with Renaissance ornamental foliage with flower-motifs strewn among them and closed on its upper edge by an egg-and-dart frame. The lunette is surrounded by foliage meandering among golden and silver flower-patterns.

The Renaissance retable received its Baroque framework in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was bought from the community of Meschen and set on the much wider, Gothic predella. The striking, carved frame decoration consists of a rich foliage and leaf ornament, meandering around and among five medallions, decorated with Baroque paintings arranged around the

retable. Thus, the not very large Renaissance retable was given a much more prominent character.

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### **The Gothic predella in Gross-Schenk**

**Dedication:** unknown

**Provenience:** Gross-Schenk (?), former parish church, presently a Lutheran church dedicated to the Virgin Mary

**Dating:** around 1450

**Present location:** original (?) - Gross-Schenk, Lutheran church

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera.

**Main measurments:**

**h:** 61.5 cm

**w:** (upper) 315 cm, (lower) 214 cm

**d:** 40 cm

**Arrangement:**

Predella – representation of the Vir Dolorum between Mary and John. (the rest of the retable has disappeared)

#### **State of conservation, restorations:**

The predella-panel is fairly well-preserved, with only small spots trickled out. The surface of the dark halos and their thin, golden edges are worn. The wood was badly worm eaten before restoration in the workshop of Gisela Richter and the complete painted surface was also rather weathered. Losses have been painted-in and this intervention has also led to certain details being painted over. Thus, based on evidence from photos documenting the pre-restoration state of the panel, some of John's hair on the right side of his head was painted over when the red background surface was restored. His eyes that had been poked out, most probably during the Reformation, have also been painted in. The green foliage decoration on the ends of the panel is somewhat worn but in an acceptable condition. The frame of the predella has some chipped corners and its thin red and golden paint is rather worn.

#### **Description:**

The predella set under the sixteenth century retable described above, is typical of the wide-spread predella type from the fifteenth century that ended in an S-curve on both sides. Its ground-plan suggests that it was originally part of a "Schreinaltar": the rather narrow, rectangular frontal part is attached to a trapezoidal protrusion on the back side, which supported the central shrine of the altar. The frontal, painted predella-panel is divided into three sections: a central, rectangular part, marked by a painted red background-curtain is flanked by two sections, decorating the ends of the panel and filled with a bright green plant ornament. The central part shows three half-figures: the Man of Sorrows between the Virgin and John in front of the red background curtain, decorated with little golden patterns. Christ is shown with a naked torso, his long, curly, dark- brown hair covers his shoulders and he wears a vivid green crown of thorns on his head. His hands are crossed in front of him and he holds two of the *arma*, the whip and a brushwood besom, under his arms. The shadows of both objects are carefully represented on the red background. The blood from his hand wounds flows along his forearms. The Virgin Mary is represented on the right side of her Son. She wears a red dress and a white cloak above it that also covers her head. It is bunched in firm folds, especially dense on her lifted right elbow. Beneath the cloak, she wears a transparent veil on her head. Her hair is braided. St. John the Evangelist is depicted left of Christ, holding a red-covered book close to his body in his left hand. His right hand is lifted to his face in the

well-known gesture of lamentation and grief. He is clad in a simple green robe that is arranged in parallel tubular-folds on his chest and in hard, meandering ones over his arms. His long, maroon, curly hair covers his shoulders. All three figures have a dark, golden-edged halo around their heads and a ray-wreath of fine golden rays on the surface of the dark halo. Additionally Christ's aureole displays three red lilies, representing the cross from the halo of the Savior. The very determined features of the three persons' faces display what are feasibly the characteristics of the painter: the large, slightly protruding and ringed eyes and prominent eyebrows, the long, straight noses, thick lips and the slight dimple between the lips and the nose, are closely related the features on the panel in the collection of the Art Museum of Kolozsvár.<sup>551</sup>

The two ends of the predella panel flanking the central, rectangular representation, are decorated with a dense, green, painted, gothic-foliage, - the well known "filling-pattern" of the period.

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<sup>551</sup> Inv. no. II. 8980. The predella and the panel in Cluj was most probably produced in one and the same workshop, even the identity of the masters can be taken into consideration. Certain relation has already been noted in previous literature. See Richter 1992, 243.; The topic deserves to be discussed in a separate study.

## 6. Details of the St. John (?) altarpiece from Heltau

(*Cisnădie, Nagydisznód*)

**Provenience:** Heltau, former parish church, presently a Lutheran church dedicated to St. Walpurga

**Dating:** 1525 (by inscription)

**Present location:** Hermannstadt (*Sibiu, Nagyszeben*), Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Inv. 1219/a-b

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera.

### Main measures:

Predella:

h: 45 cm

w: 135 cm

d: 3 cm

Lunette:

h: 73 cm

w: 178 cm

d: 3 cm

### Arrangement:

Lunette – Representation of the *Ars Moriendi*

Predella – Scenes from the life of Saint Severus

### State of conservation, restorations:

Both panels are made from pine boards. The paint has flaked off in many places, mostly along the joints of the boards; the complete surface was covered with a layer of lacquer in one of the old restorations. Both panels show traces of repainting and completions. The face of Severus was scratched – probably during the Reformation. The predella, originally curved with volutes on both sides, has been cut all around so that no information is available about its original measurements. The missing parts of the Renaissance egg and dart frame of the lunette were complemented with new, profiled but undecorated fragments, most



probably during one of the restorations in 1962 or in 1966.<sup>552</sup> The back side of the lunette was parquetted on the same occasion.

### **Description:**

The predella and the lunette have been part of a winged altarpiece, based on a description by Károly Pulszky from 1879.<sup>553</sup> The presently rectangular predella shows the consecration of Severus, bishop of Ravenna: in the foreground of the scene the saint sits on an altar-mensa, with hands joined in prayer.<sup>554</sup> A small chair is set under his strangely short legs. The altar is covered with a fringed, golden-black, brocade cloth; the name of the saint appears on the edge of the mensa written in majuscule: S. SEVER (US). Two bishops kneel to the left and right of the altar in full canonicals. A short hymn-quotations, written in minuscule is visible in front of the mouth of the bishop on the left: *te deu(m) laudam(us) te dom(inum) confitemur*<sup>555</sup>. The assisting figures in the ceremony stand behind the mensa - one holds the bishop's miter, the other a book. A fifth person in ecclesiastical robes kneels behind one of the piers flanking the altar. The predella of a painted altar-piece, representing the *Vir dolorum* among Mary and John, is shown behind the consecration scene.

The consecration takes place in a large hall church, divided into naves by piers decorated with Renaissance patterns. In the background, several scenes from the life of Severus are represented. On the left, Severus is seen with a dove above his head, kneeling and praying – originally, very probably, in front of an altar that has fallen victim to the truncation of the panel. According to the legend, Severus, who was a weaver, was by chance present at the bishop's election. A dove, the representation of the Holy Spirit, appeared above him and settled three times on his head. That was a sign to the clerics that he should be the one elected. This is the very scene depicted in the background, on the left side: Severus kneels with a bowed head and surrounded by clerics. A figure wearing a bishop's miter points to the dove hovering above Severus. An inscription in majuscules, placed under the scene, provides us with the identity of the main person: *SA(n)CT(us) SEVER(us)*. Another background depiction on the right side of the panel shows the famous closing scene from the bishop's life. As Severus felt his death nearing, he opened the grave of his wife Vincentia and his daughter Innocentia. The skeletons moved aside so that he himself could lie near them. On the image

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<sup>552</sup> Sibiu 1991, 76.

<sup>553</sup> For considerations on the theoretical reconstruction of the retable see the chapter of this thesis dedicated to the oeuvre of Vincencius.

<sup>554</sup> The confusion between his being seated on an altar instead of a bishop's cathedra, has been referred to in the corresponding chapter.

<sup>555</sup> The first two lines of the „Te deum”.

the bishop kneels on the edge of the open grave with his staff in his left hand and his right is lifted in benediction. An inscription at the upper edge of the grave (*SA(n)CTI SEVERI UXOR ET FILIA*) and another one placed under the scene (*S(anc)T(us) SEVER(us) IPSE SEPULCRU(m) INTRAVIT*), explains the story. An altar is represented behind the scene depicting the Man of Sorrows. A date of 1525 may be read above the head of Severus, in the upper right corner of the panel.

The lunette shows the bedroom of a dying person and St. Michael standing at the foot of the deathbed. The dying individual holds a candle with both hands, given to him by a priest kneeling at his bedside. An inscription above the face of the dying man records his cry: *IESU FILI DAVID MI(sere)RE ME(i)* above the face of the dying man<sup>556</sup>. A large book, perhaps the records of the dying man's acts, to be evaluated at the hour of death, is placed on a large wooden chest above his head. Supernatural beings invade the bedroom including two beasts standing by the feet of the dying man while the soul of the man, represented as a naked child, is taken by a guardian angel standing behind the deathbed. The image of the Savior, the crucified Christ, appears in the window represented in the background. Near this window another inscription with majuscule shows his answer: *FIDES TUA SALW(um) TE FECIT*.<sup>557</sup> On the left side of the panel St Michael, a popular patron saint of the dead is represented. He is shown with his well-known attributes including a sword in his left hand and a balance in his right hand. A demon may be seen on one plate of the scale with a book, on the other one the soul of the deceased is shown kneeling and praying. The lower left corner shows the huge mouth of the Leviathan in a representation of hell. The image is clearly a representation from the last scene of the *Ars Moriendi* series.

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<sup>556</sup> "et clamavit dicens Iesu Fili David miserere mei" (Luke 18, 38)

<sup>557</sup> "Et Iesus dixit illi: "Respice! Fides tua te salvum fecit" (Luke 18, 42).

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## 7. Predella with the representation of “Christ appearing to his Mother”

**Dedication:** unknown

**Provenience:** Hermannstadt (?)

**Dating:** 1510-1520

**Present place location:** Hermannstadt (*Sibiu, Nagyszeben*), Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Inv. no. 1990

**Material and technique:** pine, tempera.

**Main measures:**

**h:** 93 cm

**w:** (upper) 273 cm, (lower) 220 cm

**d:** 42 cm

**Arrangement:**

Predella – representation with the scene of Christ appearing to His Mother. (the rest of the altarpiece has disappeared)

**State of conservation, restorations:**

The present condition of the panel is satisfactory. A thick layer of lacquer covers its surface. A scratched-in inscription (*gott laß dich...* 1548) can be read above the hands of Christ and the Virgin although a number of other scratches, dated to various periods can also be observed. The high base-moulding was originally covered by a green glaze (*lasur*), which is very much weathered, missing over rather large spots. The predella was restored before 1913 by Eduard Gerisch.<sup>558</sup>

**Description:**

Large predella, formerly coming from a winged retable. Its measurements and form of the very tall, profiled base-moulding resembling an attic-base, suggests that the piece must have originally belonged to a rather large winged retable. The predella ends on both sides in a

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<sup>558</sup> Roth 1916, 153.

deep arch followed by a slightly curved bevel. Both ends are ornamented with a golden edge-decoration of swirling leaves and little flower-motifs incised into the chalk-ground.

The representation shown in the panel is unique in Transylvanian panel painting. In it the resurrected Christ appears to his mother. In an episode that is not recorded in any of the canonical gospels Christ stands in the foreground of the image, seen in three-quarters profile, half-kneeling already, turned towards his Mother. The Virgin kneels in front of him, holding her right hand between the palms of his hands. He wears a white loin-cloth and a large red mantle that covers his back, held together on his chest by two round clasps. The mantle forms thick folds, modeled with deep shadows, under his right hip and covers his legs, fitting close onto his right flank and the shin of his left leg. The thickly folded end of the cloak is held by an angel kneeling behind Christ. The triumphant red banner with the white cross, - so well-known from all Resurrection representations – leans against the right shoulder of the Savior. He holds the right hand of his mother between the palms of his hands before him. The wounds from his Crucifixion can be clearly seen on his upper hand and on his side. An inscription written in majuscules comes from his mouth towards the Virgin: “*Salve Sancta Parens*”. The Virgin Mary wears a dark blue cloak above her dark dress. Her head and long, curly hair are covered by a white shawl. Her left hand is lifted to her breast and her right hand sits between the hands of her Son. Both their heads are surrounded by halos made up of thin, golden, concentric circles. A group of angels is visible behind Christ. A kneeling angel, with open wings, dressed in a dark green robe and wearing a flower-wreath on his blond hair holds the end of Christ’s cloak. Four other angels stand behind him, one of them holds an open book, which another two are also looking at. The three of them are dressed in very similar, long, yellow surplices, while only the head of the fourth angel is visible in the background. Three broad stairs lead into the completely painted living-room from its foreground where the scene takes place. The room is covered by a wooden vault and its walls are built from ashlar. A view into the neighboring rooms is allowed through a semicircular door on the back wall and a similar opening on the left side. The back wall also displays a semi-circular niche, while a rectangular empty window can be observed on the right wall. A baldachin is visible next to the empty window that very much resembles those known from above the Virgin’s prayer stool, on representations of the Annunciation. The room is neatly furnished: a tall stove stands in the middle, with a table by its side; an open book and a candlestick are visible on the table. A bench is set on the other side of the stove with a red shawl left on it. A shelf with various objects for personal use and a hanger with two cans are fixed on the back wall.

Left of the stairs, on the wall behind the figure of Christ, a window opens and reveals a remote landscape with the entrance of a cave, the resurrected Christ and three women kneeling in front of him. The other side of the stairs is marked by a thick-set column, on the right side of which high mountains can be observed in the background, a small bridge arches over the river and three persons cross the bridge.

It is a noteworthy feature that the scene did not fit on the predella panel, thus the painter continued it on the upper section of the base. The ends of Mary's cloak extends down to this base-section and the complete section continues the colour of the forehall's floor. The deal, which closes the predella does not show any traces of joints that would allow us to draw consequences referring to the type of the retable once belonging to this predella. However, its dimensions make it very probable that a gothic type of winged retable was originally set on it. We do not know at the moment about any other fragments that could have belonged to the same altar.

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### Place Name Concordance

Romanian	German	Hungarian
Alba Iulia	Weissenburg/Karlsburg	Gyulafehérvár
Armășeni		Csíkmenaság
Băgaciu	Bogeschdorf	Szászbogács
Biertan	Birihalm	Berethalom
Bistrița	Bistritz	Beszterce
Boian	Bonnesdorf	Alsóbajom
Brașov	Kronstadt	Brassó
Bruiu	Braller	Brulya
Călățele		Magyarkelecel (Kiskalota)
Cincu	Gross-schenk	Nagysink
Cisnădie	Heltau	Nagydisznód
Cluj-Napoca	Klausenburg	Kolozsvár
Cund	Reußdorf	Kund
Dealul Frumos	Schönberg	Lesses
Dupuș	Tobsdorf	Táblás
Feldioara	Marienburg	Földvár
Fișer	Schweischer	Sővényesség
Hălchiu	Heldsdorf	Höltövény
Hărman	Honigberg	Szászhermány
Hunedoara		Vajdahunyad
Jidvei	Seiden	Zsidve
Jimbor	Sommerburg	Székelyzsombor
Mălâncrav	Malmkrog	Almakerék
Mediaș	Mediasch	Medgyes
Moșna	Meschen	Muzsna
Movile	Hundertbücheln	Százhalom
Nemșa	Niemesch	Nemes
Ocna Sibiului	Salzburg	Vízakna
Oradea	Gross-Wardein	Nagyvárad, Várad
Orăștie	Broos	Szászváros
Prejmer	Tartlau	Prázsmár
Proștea Mare	Großprobstdorf	Nagyekemező
Rodeș	Radeln	Rádos
Șaeș	Schaas	Segesd
Sântimbru		Csíkzentimre,
Sebeș	Mühlbach	Szászsebes

Sibiu	Hermannstadt	Nagyszeben
Sighișoara	Schässburg	Segesvár
Șoroștin	Schorsten	Sorostély
Șumuleu		<u>Csíkсомlyó</u>
Târgu Mureș	Neumarkt	Marosvásárhely
Tatărlău	Taterloch	Tatárlaka
Turda	Torenburg	Torda
Tureni		Tordatúr
Vlaha		Magyarfenes

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<sup>i</sup> She feels that the style of the panels from 1508 differs so much from that of the later paintings that this change could only be interpreted as the stylistic development of one and the same master if we would have some written document seriously supporting this idea. “Ilyen stílusfejlődés illetve átalakulás elvileg ugyan még elképzelhető lenne, de ehhez egyelőre nemcsak a levéltári adatok hiányoznak, hanem az oltárokon megfigyelhető különböző egyéni sajátosságok is ellene mondanak.” Balogh 1943, 214.