

Change of Status, Change of Art

The change in the status of Orthodox icon painters from Transylvania brought forward a change in their art during the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries. During this period the condition of Orthodox painters changes from that of mere craftsmen to artists. Our main sources besides the paintings themselves and the signatures of the artists are the visitations notes, a few contracts that still remain to this day and the painters biographies. One of the factors leading to a change in the status of the Orthodox painters is the rising importance of the commissioners in determining the scenes and motives to be represented as well as their composition. In this article, we first look into the status of the painters and then we present the social and political context of the period. We then analyze the changes at the level of their art and finally, we also make a semantic analysis. The change in the status of the Orthodox icon painters can be considered not only by looking into the transformation and development of certain iconographic representations, but also by the study of their signatures. Are all these changes due to the desire of icon painters to acquire a better social status, or are they imposed by the commissioners and the church authorities? This is the main question that we address in this article. We conclude that the seeking of social status is intertwined with the demands of the commissioners, both determining the changes in the Orthodox church art.

Keywords: *change of art, iconographic representations, change of status, signatures, commissioners, church authorities*

Introduction

“The XVIIIth century witnessed in Transylvania an explosion of Romanian art, the most suggestive evolution took place in the field of painting, 300 painters being active during this period. With confidence and humility they adorned the wooden and stone churches of the Romanians”¹.

The Transylvanian painters of this period were first mentioned by Ștefan Meteș² and Coriolan Petreanu³ at the beginning of the XXth century. However, Ștefan Meteș and Petreanu did a mere review of the painters and their works, but not a stylistic analysis. Art historians like I.D. Ștefănescu do not take into account this period due to Western influences in the traditional Orthodox art. Neither do other two famous art historians, Vasile Drăguț or Virgil Vătășianu who focus on earlier paintings from the medieval period. However, later one of the latter’s former students, now a member of the Romanian Academy, Marius

¹Marius Porumb, *Un veac de pictură românească din Transilvania, secolul XVIII*, (A Century of Romanian Painting in Transylvania: the XVIIIth century), Meridiane Publishing house, București, 2003

²Ștefan Meteș, *Zugravii bisericilor române*, (The painters of the Romanian churches) in *Anuarul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, secția pentru Transilvania 1926-1928, Cluj, 1929

³Coriolan Petreanu, *Bisericile de lemn ale românilor ardeleni* (The wooden churches of Romanians from Transylvania), Sibiu, 1934

Porumb⁴ analyzed in a book the artistic milieu of the XVIIIth century. Also, several monographs of some of the painters active in Transylvania during this period were published by some historians, like those about Iacov of Rășinari⁵, Stan of Rășinari⁶, Toader Popovici⁷, Grigore Ranite⁸, or articles about painters like Simion Silaghi⁹, Ursu Broină¹⁰, Stefan Tenecki¹¹ etc.

Unfortunately, this research either takes very little into account possible interactions between the painters, either does not perform an in-depth analysis of the changes that occur during this period and does not look into the broader context of the Orthodox painters under Habsburg rule. We try to fill in this gap by discussing the mobility of painters, their social status and by trying to shed light on the possible interactions and sources of change. Our article attempts to build a link between the changes in art during this period and the changes in the social status of the painters. Our research is based on both visual and textual sources.

The first question we address is who were these painters.

Some of these painters were Romanians, while others came from the neighbouring regions and mostly from the Orthodox communities under Habsburg rule. The circulation of painters to Transylvania is not a new phenomenon. During the Middle Ages one can identify several painters who embellished the Transylvanian churches with beautiful frescoes. Some of them came from the neighbouring Romanian lands: Wallachia and Moldavia, while others came from the Western world. Even the supposedly local painters such as Mihul from Crișul Alb, who during the XIVth century decorated with frescoes the church of the Râmeț monastery seem to have come from Serbia or to have studied under Serbian painters¹². While in Râmeț the style is mostly Byzantine, in other Transylvanian churches from the XIVth and XVth centuries, like those of Strei, Ribița and Crișcior, the Byzantine style coexists with the Gothic and Neo-Gothic Western styles of the Catholic churches in Mălâncrav, Dârlos, Sântana de Mureș¹³, etc.

During the XVIIth century several invasions by Tatars and Ottomans destroyed most of the churches in Northern and Central Transylvania. In a

⁴Marius Porumb, op. cit.

⁵Ana Dumitran et al., Iacov Zugravul, (Iacov the Painter), Ed. Altip, Alba Iulia, 2010

⁶Ana Dumitran et al., Stan Zugravul, (Stan the Painter), Ed. Altip, Alba Iulia, 2011

⁷Vasile Mureșan and Marcel Naste, Toader Popovici Zugravul, (Toader Popovici the Painter) Ed. Vatra Veche, Târgu Mureș, 2015

⁸Ana Dumitran, Un zugrav de elită: Grigore Ranite, *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica* 14(I):83-98, 2010

⁹Ana Dumitran Pictorul Simion Silaghi-Sălăgeanu. În căutarea identității, ('Painter Simion Silaghi Sălăgeanu. In search of an identity') *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*, 16/I, 2012, pp. 189-228

¹⁰Silvia Marin Barutcieff „Un pictor transilvănean pierdut...? Ursu Broină” („A Forgotten Transylvanian Painter...? Ursu Broină”), in *Apulum*, Alba Iulia, no. 50, 2013, pp. 361-378

¹¹Horia Medeleanu, *The Life of an 18th century painter: Stefan Tenetchi*, in : *Revue des études sud-est européennes* XXI-2, Timișoara 1983, 125-145

¹²Ana Dumitran, The Chronology of the Murals in the Râmeț Monastic Church. Based on a Re-evaluation of the Dating of the Narthex Inscription, *Museikon*, Alba Iulia, 4, 2020, p. 109-162

¹³Dana Jenei, *Pictură murală gotică din Transilvania*, Noi Media Print, București, 2007

1 letter of Metropolitan Sava Brancovici to the Russian Emperor, the head of the
 2 Orthodox church of Transylvania asks for money in order to rebuild the
 3 Metropolitan church of Alba Iulia which was destroyed for the third time in a
 4 century, this time by order of the Reformed leaders of Transylvania¹⁴. The last
 5 great Tatar invasion took place in 1717 and a lot of churches in Northern and
 6 Central Transylvania were destroyed on that occasion¹⁵. At the same time, the
 7 Reformed leaders of Transylvania were not in favour of icons. At the
 8 beginning of the XVIIIth century the Jesuit Joseph de Camillis notes that most
 9 of the icons from the Orthodox churches had been destroyed by order of the
 10 Reformed Transylvanian princes¹⁶. However, Ana Dumitran does not agree
 11 with this statement arguing that the production of icons during this period was
 12 still important¹⁷.

13 Some Ruthenian, but also Moldavian painters were active in Transylvania
 14 during that period. Nicolaus Polonii painted the walls of the narthex of the
 15 church in Săliște Sibiului in 1674 and Grigori ot Colomii painted two icons
 16 for the monastery in Deda in 1690¹⁸. Also, the local artist, Mihail from
 17 Hunedoara painted the church in Cinciș at the middle of the century¹⁹.
 18 Furthermore, there are some other icons dating from this period, which though
 19 not signed, can be attributed either to Ruthenian or Moldavian itinerant
 20 painters. The priest Luca of Iclod, the painter of the wonder-working icons of
 21 the Holy Mother of God from Nicula (1681) and Ilișua (1673), also seems to
 22 have been of Ruthenian origin and his style was close to that of the school of
 23 Halicz in Ukraine²⁰. In an official document he was called “gente Ruthenus”.

24 During the following century several painters from Wallachia were active
 25 in Transylvania as David from Wallachia at the middle of the century, or
 26 Nicolae from Pitești who signed the paintings of Gurasada in 1765. Also,
 27 Simion from Pitești was painting in Transylvania in 1777, as were the painters
 28 Simion Oprovinci from Craiova in 1772. At Prislop monastery the icon of the
 29 Virgin had been painted by the Wallachian painter Ioan ot vel Ocna from
 30 Wallachia in 1752. We should of course mention the famous Wallachian

¹⁴Silviu Dragomir, *Contribuții privitoare la relațiile bisericii românești cu Rusia în veacul XVII*, (Contributions on the relations of the Romanian church with Russia during the XVIIIth century), Academia Română, București, 1912

¹⁵Ioana Cristache Panait, *Tipuri sociale și aspecte de critică socială în pictura monumentelor de lemn din centrul și vestul țării*, (Social Types and Aspects of Social Criticism in the Painting of the Wooden Monuments from the Centre and Western Parts of the Country), *RMM, MIA*, 1984, anul XV, nr 1, pp. 54-59, p. 54

¹⁶Ovidiu Ghitta *Episcopul Iosif de Camillis și românii din părțile ungurești*, (The Bishop Iosif de Camillis and the Romanians in the Hungarian territories) *Studia Universitatis Babeș Bolyai*, no. 1-2, pp. 51-74

¹⁷Ana Dumitran *Între logos și eikon. Un eseu despre icoană, români și protestantism în Transilvania secolului al XVII-lea* (Between Logos and eikon. An Essay on Icon, Romanians and Protestantism in the XVIIth century Transylvania) in *Annales Universitatis Apulensis, Series Historica*, 18/I, Ed. Mega, 2014

¹⁸*Ibidem*, p. 127

¹⁹*Ibidem*, p. 131

²⁰*Ibidem*, p. 122

1 painter Grigore Ranite and his son, Ioan Grigoriovici also painting in
2 Transylvania and Banat during this century²¹.

3 In Braşov a famous painter Constandinos of Greek origin was present.
4 Also, Serbian painters like Stefan Tenecki or Nedelcu Popovici also painted in
5 Transylvania, as did the painters from Maramureş, Alexandru Ponehalschi and
6 Radu Munteanu.

7 At the same time, it is possible that Master Andrei Bo(...)dor from Cluj
8 was also of Ruthenian origin as Ana Dumitran argues, considering the
9 decorations and the long faces that he painted²². Another painter of Ruthenian
10 origin active during the XVIIIth century was Vasile Zborotchi who painted the
11 iconostasis of the church of Certege and also an icon of St Nicholas in Lupşa in
12 the Apuseni area, dated 1752²³.

15 The social status of painters at the beginning of the XVIIIth century

17 At the beginning of the XVIIIth century Transylvania came under
18 Habsburg rule. The Romanian population, traditionally Orthodox had no social
19 rights and no social recognition. Orthodox painters from Transylvania were
20 regarded as mere artisans and not as artists. The same state of affairs was
21 observed in the neighbouring land of Ruthenia where some of the painters were
22 also involved in other type of activities as they could not earn their living only
23 by painting. A writer from Ostroh claimed in 1588 that “before, there were
24 excellent, pious painters of icons, but now icon painting was dominated by
25 saddlers, bridlemakers, and other clowns”²⁴.

26 Unlike the Ruthenian neighbouring painters, whom we know used to come
27 from the monastic world, we do not exactly know the social origin of
28 Transylvanian painters. According to Ştefan Meteş at the beginning of the
29 XVIIIth century some of the painters came from the monastic orders, like
30 Gheorghe the monk and Iosif the hieromonk²⁵. However, during this century
31 we notice some changes in the social origin of painters, as most of them were
32 lay painters or clerics, like popa Gheorghe Tobias from Abrud, popa Nicolae of
33 Feisa. They did not generally come from poor families. For example, the
34 famous painters Iacov and Stan of Răşinari were the sons of the priest Radu
35 Man. Marius Porumb even takes into account the possibility that a painter like
36 Simion Silaghi might have come from the ranks of the petty gentry.

²¹Ştefan Meteş, op. cit.

²²Ana Dumitran Pictorul Simion Silaghi-Sălăgeanu. În căutarea identităţii, ('Painter Simion Silaghi Sălăgeanu. In search of an identity') *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*, 16/I, 2012, pp. 189-228, p. 190

²³The inscription reads: 'This holy icon was paid for by Opiria Constandin and wife Ioana from Lupşa 1752':

„Aiastă sfântă **icoană** o plătit Opiria Constandin cu soţu său Ioana, din **Lupşa**. 1752”

²⁴L. Berezhnaya and John Paul Himka *The World To Come. Ukrainian Images of the Last Judgement*, Harvard University Press, 2015 P. XV

²⁵Ştefan Meteş, op. cit., p. 116

In general, we do notice the existence of dynasties of painters, the craft being handed down from father to son. It is the case of the families of the painter Iacov from Rășinari for example, whose sons Gheorghe and Nicolae were also painters, or that of Simion Silaghi who handed down his craft not only to his three sons: Gavriil, Simion and Partenie, but also to his grandson Isidor. The same is true for the family of Toader Ciungar, whose sons Iacov and Nicolae were also painters. The skill was thus passed on from father to son, from generation to generation following an initiation ritual.

Painters and painting schools in XVIIIth century Transylvania

During the XVIIIth century church painting flourished. Several painting schools developed during this period, but no guild is recorded. Only ‘the painters on paper’ were apparently organized in a guild in Gherla. As for the painters the only attempt to gather into a guild was recorded in Banat in 1736 and it involved painters from Wallachia as well as some local painters. Later on, in 1756 a group of five painters which included Gheorghe Ranite, Nedelcu and Șerban Popovici demanded protection from the bishop of Timișoara against the competition of the itinerant painters, which suggests the importance of the mobility of the painters during this period²⁶.

At the level of the painting schools, one of the most important was that of Feisa established by Iacov of Rășinari²⁷ when he moved there in 1762. His sons, Nicolae and Gheorghe were two of its illustrious representatives, as was Toader Popovici. The family of Iacov had close links with the famous Wallachian painter Grigore Ranite²⁸. Stan, Iacov’s brother had been his apprentice and had painted with him at least at the church of Curtea de Argeș where we find his signature. Iacov himself was placed under the protection of the bishop of Râmnic in Wallachia and had probably painted with Grigore Ranite, who later became his godfather. Later, Stan opened his own workshop in Orăștie. These kind of relations account for well-established links between the southern part of Transylvania and Wallachia that date back many centuries and can be traced at least starting with the XIVth century. Thus, Transylvanian painters became acquainted with the Byzantine and post-Byzantine painting in Wallachia.

²⁶Ștefan Meteș, op. cit., p. 131

²⁷Ana Dumitran et al., *Iacov Zugravul*, (Iacov the Painter), Ed. Altip, Alba Iulia, 2010

²⁸Ibidem, p. 1

1 **Figure 1.** *The Holy Mother of God, Iacov Zugravul 1746*



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4 **Figure 2.** *Icon of St Nicholas, Iacov Zugravul 1745*



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7 Grigore Ranite was one of the best-known representatives of the neo-
8 Byzantine style in Wallachia developed under the reign of the martyr Prince
9 Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714). He came from Craiova and he painted
10 many churches in Wallachia, like the monastery of Tismana, the skete of
11 Crasna, the monastery of Sărăcinești, the bishopric chapel in Râmnic. His
12 activity in Transylvania encompassed the famous Black Church of Brașov
13 (1733-1734), the St Paraschiva church of Rășinari (around 1758) and the uniate

bishopric cathedral of Blaj (1736). He introduced several eschatological images in his iconographic programmes and generally the churches he painted have exonarthex or external decorations involving apocalyptic images.

Figure 3-4. *The wheel of life represented by Grigore Ranite at the Black Church in Braşov 1733-1734 and at St Paraschiva church in Răşinari 1758*



Another famous painting school during this period was the one in Laz, where the tradition was handed down from father to son or from uncle to nephew to this day. The first generation of painters from Laz, as Savu and Simion painted both fresco, icons on wood and on glass. Later the painters from this school focused only on glass icons. The school of Lancrăm was also specialised on glass icons.

The painting school of Abrud was founded by Simion Silaghi towards the end of the century. Simion Silaghi had many apprentices, among them his three sons, but also other painters from the region of Apuseni where he had his workshop: Ion and Nicoale Cuc, Nicolae and Nechifor Bădău, Gheorghe Şpan, Motok Karoly are only some of them.

Other painting schools developed in the neighbouring regions of Maramureş and Banat. In Maramureş, Ruthenian painters were active as Alexandru Ponehalschi, whereas in Banat there were mostly Serbian painters, like Stefan Tenecki, Nedelcu Popovici, Toader Crăciun, etc. Sometimes these painters also received commissions in Transylvania. They either went there themselves, or they worked on the commissions they received in their own workshops and later delivered them to their donors.

1 **Figure 5.** *The altar of the Greek Catholic cathedral in Blaj by Stefan Tenecki*



5 The political and social context of the period

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7 In Transylvania, the XVIIIth century was characterized by the fight of
8 Romanians to be recognized as a nation with the same rights as the other
9 nations living in this land, the Hungarians and the Saxons. The new Habsburg
10 domination lifted up the hopes of the Romanians living in Transylvania. The
11 unity with the church of Rome at the beginning of the century, in 1701 served
12 this aim. Following this step, some of the Orthodox churches passed under the
13 possession of the uniate church. However, Romanians did not receive the same
14 rights as the other nations and in mid-1740s a Serbian monk called Visarion
15 Sarai draw attention on the betrayal of the true Orthodox faith by the bishop
16 and the priests. He was active in Southern Transylvania. Following his
17 initiative, several demands and petitions in favour of returning to the Orthodox
18 church were written and presented to the Empress Marie Therese. The lack of
19 response triggered serious unrest and discontents which reached a peak with
20 the uprising under monk Sofronie of Cioara in 1760-1761. During the uprising
21 several Orthodox churches were destroyed, but finally the Empress admitted
22 the Orthodox faith and placed the Orthodox in Transylvania under the
23 jurisdiction of the Serbian Metropolitan of Karlowitz in 1761²⁹. Romanians did
24 receive some rights after the decree of tolerance passed by the Emperor Joseph
25 II in 1781, including the right to build stone churches.

²⁹Ljubivoje Cerovič *Sârbii din România. Din Evul Mediu până în zilele noastre*, (The Serbs in Romania. From the Middle Age to the Present Day) Uniunea Sârbilor din România, Timișoara, 2008, p. 66, Paul Brusanowski, „Statutul canonic al Ortodoxiei din spațiul intracarpatic până în 1864”, in *Revista Teologică*, SN, 20 (92), 2010, Nr. 1, pp. 95-113

1 The fight did not have the same success on the social dimension so a new
 2 uprising took place in 1784 in the Apuseni Mountains. Romanians did not
 3 request the abolition of social classes, but they demanded equal rights with the
 4 other nations living in Transylvania. The uprising was not a success and the
 5 heads of the uprising were executed in the capital city of Transylvania, Alba
 6 Iulia in 1785³⁰.

7 Later, a group of intellectuals, members of the newly formed church,
 8 which guaranteed them access to education abroad, called the Transylvanian
 9 School emerged and addressed a petition to the emperor in which they required
 10 social rights for the Romanians in Transylvania. Finally, they were obtained
 11 only following the 1848 Revolution led by the young lawyer Avram Iancu.

12 Starting with 1761 Orthodox Romanians from Transylvania were placed
 13 under the authority of the Metropolitan of Karlowitz. The Metropolitan of
 14 Karlowitz, Arsenie IV Jovanovic was concerned with the priests' level of
 15 education and that of the believers therefore he founded an academy in
 16 Karlowitz where painting was also taught in 1743³¹. While the first official
 17 painters of the Metropolitan See had studied with Russian teachers, the next
 18 generation was taught by teachers from Kyiv Caves Lavra. Painters such as
 19 Stefan Tenecki from Lipova, considered the court painter of the bishop of Arad
 20 were educate at the Caves Lavra and possibly also at the Vienna Academy. The
 21 teaching dispensed at the Caves Lavra covered many topics, besides
 22 iconography, students also studied portrait art and monumentalistic painting³².

23 Orthodox Serbs were granted privileges that other Orthodox nations under
 24 Habsburg rule did not enjoy. This explains why they were more open to
 25 Western influences³³. At the same time, the Russian teachers were likely to
 26 have been strongly influenced by tsar Peter's reforms of 1722 contained in a
 27 *Gramata*. The teachers from the Kyiv Lavra were equally influenced by
 28 Western art as many Western models were copied and taught at the school of
 29 the Lavra.

30 However, in Ukraine there were two directions of change: one coming
 31 from the newly formed uniate Ruthenian church which adopted Catholic
 32 models. The fist polemical writings about the paintings of the Orthodox
 33 churches appeared during the XVIIIth century. Until then, there were no clear
 34 differences between the Orthodox and the Catholic churches though the Union

³⁰David Prodan, *Supplex libellus valachorum. Din istoria formării națiunii române*, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 2013, p. 245

³¹Makuljevic, Nenad Migrations and the Creation of Orthodox Cultural and Artistic Networks between the Balkans and the Habsburg Lands (17th–19th Centuries) In: Across the Danube: Southeastern Europeans and Their Travelling Identities (17th–19th C.), in Olga Katsiardi-Hering and Maria A. Stassinopoulou (ed) *Studies in Global Social History*, Volume: 27/09, dec 2016

³²Philip Zweig *Icônes, XI-XVIII siècles*, Parkstone International, SUA, 2004, p.116

³³Remus Câmpeanu, A. Câmpian et al. *În spiritul Europei moderne. Administrația și confesiunile din Transilvania în perioada reformismului terezian și iosefin (1740-1790)*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2009

1 of Brest³⁴ had taken place at the end of the XVIth century. Many of the
 2 churches changed often their canonical jurisdiction and some Orthodox
 3 churches were transformed, receiving a choir or tribune. At the council of
 4 Przemyśl in 1693, the church authorities remarked there was a chaos at the
 5 level of church organization, so a new Council took place in Zamosc in order
 6 to set some rules for the liturgical services and the church paintings. The report
 7 of this council was published in Vilnius and Supraśl in 1722 and later in Univ,
 8 Liov and Poceaeu. The council of Zamosc³⁵ equals the importance of the
 9 Tridentine Council for the Ruthenian Greek Catholic church. Some of its
 10 decisions were also adopted by the Orthodox church. Baroque decorations
 11 adorn Orthodox icons. The iconostasis became higher, while in some places
 12 they disappeared completely.

13 New subjects never treated before in the Orthodox art were now
 14 introduced. The iconography of the Passions of Christ was highly developed
 15 with a special emphasis on the Flagellation. Christ's feet on the cross were
 16 separate and pierced by nails. And some Catholic saints began to be
 17 represented as well. Also, compositions like Mater Dolorosa and the three
 18 Persons of the Holy Trinity were represented as well. Christ and the Virgin are
 19 usually crowned and sometimes Christ is represented with the orb and the stick
 20 as attributes of power.

21 On the other hand, the Orthodox tried to answer to the Catholic attempts to
 22 gain control over the church in Ruthenia and they employed Protestant carvers
 23 and printers.

24 One of the main sources of inspiration of the painters during this period
 25 are precisely wood carvings or woodcuts, engravings and Blockbücher. There
 26 is a great mobility especially of engravers during the XVIIth and XVIIIth
 27 centuries in the Romanian space. The prince of Moldavia, Peter Mohyla
 28 became Metropolitan of Kyiv in 1632³⁶. He reformed the Ruthenian Orthodox
 29 Church. He established several printing houses and several schools. The most
 30 important was the school of the Caves Lavra. Though he was a faithful
 31 Orthodox he had been educated in Catholic schools either in France or in
 32 Poland and his aim was to build a school in Kiev which later was granted by
 33 Emperor Peter I the title of academy, following the model of Jesuit Catholic
 34 schools.

35 The main allies of the Orthodox during their fight for recognition were the
 36 Protestants. They had the same enemy, the Catholic Jesuits. Therefore some of
 37 the Orthodox printers employed by prince Ostrozky at the end of the XVIth
 38 century or by Peter Mohyla later, in order to develop and publish a polemical
 39 literature, were actually Protestants who were already skilled in their quarrel

³⁴Waldemar Deluga, L'évolution de l'iconographie dans l'église gréco-catholique pendant le XVIII-ième siècle à la lumière des sources écrites, *Revue des études slaves*, vol LXXI, no. 2 Paris, 1999, pp. 225-242

³⁵Ibidem, pp. 229-230

³⁶Ihor Sevcenko [The Many Worlds of Peter Mohyla](#), *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* Vol. 8, No. 1/2, The Kiev Mohyla Academy: Commemorating the 350th Anniversary of its Founding (1632) (June 1984), pp. 9-44, 1

1 against the Catholics³⁷. They introduced images developed in the Protestant
 2 world by well-known engravers such as Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach and
 3 Hans Holbein the Younger³⁸. This kind of drawings were actually taught at the
 4 painting school at the Caves Lavra.³⁹ Some of the most important works that
 5 inspired the painters of this period were *Biblia Ectypa*, *Thesaurus*, *Theatrum*
 6 *Biblicum* and *Biblia Piscator*⁴⁰.

7 Peter Mohyla also sent teachers as well as printers and wood carvers to
 8 Wallachia and Moldavia where his father and uncle had been princes. They
 9 mainly reprinted the books that had been printed in the Ruthenian lands only a
 10 few years before and reproduced the same wood carvings. He also sent books
 11 to Transylvania.

12 Later on, the abbot Ioan of Hurezi monastery also encouraged paintings
 13 inspired from engravings during his administration of the Wallachian
 14 monastery of Hurezi in 1720s⁴¹ which contributed to the adaptation to painting
 15 of some of the images engraved.

16 So, at the Metropolitan See of Karlowitz, the style was set by the Kiev
 17 School Lavra, combined with the Western influences coming from the Vienna
 18 painting academy. One source of spreading new ideas besides the painting
 19 schools were the canonical visitations of the bishops who could give directions
 20 regarding to what could and what could not be represented in churches. Also,
 21 the priests who were ordained by Serbian bishops in Buda, Arad or Timișoara
 22 were probably educated in that respect before their ordination as the
 23 Metropolitan See of Karlowitz was also concerned with the art promoted in
 24 churches and with the message delivered to the faithful.

25 Most of the painters were not educated in official schools as the School of
 26 the Caves Lavra, the one in Karlowitz or the Academy in Vienna, but in private
 27 workshops. Were there painting manuals at this time? We do not hold any
 28 evidence related to painting manuals, though at that time some painting
 29 manuals already existed. The books were transmitted only inside the workshop
 30 and were left as a legacy to the following generations. The first such book in
 31 the Romanian space to our knowledge is the one compelled by the
 32 Metropolitan Antim of Wallachia at the beginning of the XVIIIth century⁴². It is
 33 possible that some versions of this manual also reached Transylvania. Another
 34 one made between 1733 and 1735 belonged to monk David from Brașov⁴³.
 35 Also, several sketch notebooks from that period still remain as the sketches of
 36 the painter Stan from Orăștie or those of Ștețel Condrat from Bistrița. The

³⁷S. Plokhly *Porțile Europei. O istorie a Ucrainei, (At the gates of Europe. A History of Ukraine)*, Ed. Trei, București, 2018, pp. 100-101

³⁸Waldemar Deluga *Ukrainian Painting Between the Byzantine and Latin Traditions*, Ostrava-Warsaw 2019

³⁹Philip Zweig, op. cit., p.116

⁴⁰Waldemar Deluga, op. cit., p. 233

⁴¹Ioana Iancovescu, Les sources russes et ukrainiennes de la peinture murale au temps de Constantin Brancovan, *Revue roumaine de l'histoire de l'art*, Série Beaux-Arts, Tome XLV, 2008, pp. 101-116

⁴²Ștefan Meteș, op. cit., pp. 19-24

⁴³Ibidem

1 sketch notebooks were left as legacy and inherited by the painters in the
2 workshop.

3 Both the scriptures and the apocryphal literature were sources of
4 inspiration for the scenes developed during this period. The legend of the
5 fourth magus is illustrated during this period and several apocryphal texts were
6 very influential. One of the most important was the Apocalypse of Basil the
7 New which contained a thorough description of the torments suffered by the
8 sinners in hell that inspired many of the compositions of the Last Judgement⁴⁴.

9 As Orthodox painters tend to copy and want to be equal to painters from other
10 confessions, especially the official Catholic painters of the Imperial Court, they
11 were influenced by their art and their ideas and one can notice modern Baroque
12 influences and Western Catholic elements that were introduced in the Orthodox
13 art.

16 **Changes at the level of religious Orthodox art**

18 How did the changes manifest? First, Western influences penetrated the
19 religious art and can be observed at the level of the iconographic programmes.
20 Marian scenes were represented more often, as the Virgin was the main saint
21 promoted by the Jesuit Counter Reformation propaganda in their fight against
22 the Protestants. Both Catholic and Orthodox had a special reverence for the
23 Virgin Mary. She was represented in Orthodox iconographic programmes of
24 the XVIth century in a developed form especially in the Akathistos hymn. The
25 Reform had forbidden the representations of the Virgin. The churches that still
26 stand from that period have a very simple iconographic programme depicting
27 merely the Passions of Jesus with a narrative and didactical function as for
28 example the church in the Strâmba monastery, now in the county of Sălaj.

29 Also, the representation of God the Father can be found in most of the
30 churches of the period, though it is against the Orthodox canons, as stated also
31 by the council of Moscow in the XVIIth century⁴⁵.

32 Images promoted by the Catholic Counter Reformation are depicted in
33 most of the Orthodox churches during this period as the *Coronation of the*
34 *Virgin Mary*. The image of the *Coronation of Mary* illustrates the doctrine of
35 the *Immaculate Conception* and was promoted after the Tridentine Council.
36 Due to her Immaculate Conception the Virgin is raised with her body to heaven
37 after death where she is crowned either by Christ or by the Trinity. Also,
38 another image that developed following the Tridentine Council in 1545-1563
39 was the image of the Virgin of the *Immaculate Conception* represented as
40 Maria in sole, *the Woman of the Apocalypse*. Mary redeems humanity,
41 delivering it from Eve's sin, therefore she is represented in opposition to Eve
42 with the attributes of the *Woman of the Apocalypse*, like the crescent of the
43 moon, or the twelve stars.

⁴⁴John-Paul Himka, *Last Judgement Iconography in the Carpathians*, University of Toronto Press, 2009, pp. 46-49

⁴⁵Leonid Uspenski, *Teologia icoanei în biserica ortodoxă rusă*, Ed. Patmos, Cluj Napoca, 2005

1 **Figure 6.** *The Coronation of the Virgin by the Holy Trinity, St. Michael church*
 2 *in Vința, Simion Silaghi, 1819-1821*



3
 4
 5 Furthermore, in the Orthodox art Mary was never represented bear headed,
 6 her head is always covered, which is not the case in some compositions from
 7 this period. She is also never represented crowned as is the case of the
 8 Coronation of the Virgin or in some compositions of the Virgin enthroned with
 9 Christ child represented in the apse of some churches during this period. Judith
 10 Herrin⁴⁶ explains that in the Byzantine empire we already have an earthly
 11 empress wearing a crown and though her garment is very rich, the Mother of
 12 God is practically never represented with a crown because she would be
 13 competing with the empress, whereas in the West there is no empress, so no
 14 such competition.

15 Other images from the Orthodox iconographic programmes are either
 16 replaced or transformed. For example, the Virgin in the *Annunciation* scene is
 17 no longer presented seated, instead she is reading a book, an image inspired by
 18 the Catholic religious paintings from the Medieval period and promoted by the
 19 Counter-Reformation. The image underlines the importance of prayer,
 20 schooling and of the knowledge of the Holy Scripture. It also promotes Mary
 21 as a learned scholar, a model for the pious believers⁴⁷. The scenes of the
 22 *Passions of Christ* were constantly represented in all iconographic
 23 programmes. However, the episodes of Christ's suffering do not have the same
 24 dramatic accents as in the Western art, Christ is filled with joy even when he is
 25 raised on the cross.

⁴⁶Judith Herrin, *The Imperial Feminine in Byzantium*, No. 169 (Nov., 2000), pp. 3-35

⁴⁷Laura Saetveit Miles *The Virgin Mary's Book at the Annunciation: Reading, Interpretation, and Devotion in Medieval England*, D.W. Brouwer, 2020

1 **Figure 7.** *The Annunciation, apse, St. Archangels church in Mogoş Cojocani,*
 2 *Gheorghe son of Iacov, 1771*



3
 4
 5 The *Assumption* also borrows a lot from the Catholic doctrine as the soul
 6 of the Virgin is represented often according to the Catholic dogma, already in
 7 heaven with Christ and not according to the traditional Orthodox
 8 representations where Christ holds in his arms her soul, as a pure child, next to
 9 the bed on which the Virgin rests.

10 Also, the image of the *Weeping of the Mother of God* or *Mater Dolorosa* is
 11 represented very often. Although some researchers claim its Russian source,
 12 the image being introduced into Romanian Orthodox iconography following
 13 the war between the Russians and the Turks, it is more reasonable to believe
 14 that at least in Transylvania its influence is rather Western, as during this
 15 period writings like the Catholic hymn *Stabat Mater* were translated.
 16 Engravings on the subject were widely spread in Transylvania, either coming
 17 from abroad or as a product of the Blaj guild of engravers and the image was
 18 largely promoted by the Jesuits in their circles.

19
 20 **Figure 8.** *The Crucifixion, Iconostasis, St George church in Lupşa, Simion*
 21 *Silaghi and his son Simion in 1810*



1 An abundance of angelic representations accompanied those of the Virgin.
 2 Whole angels or just putti heads, a Renaissance influence largely borrowed and
 3 promoted later by the Baroque art embellish some of the Orthodox churches.

4 Also, representations of *Arma Christi* as individual scenes develop during
 5 this period.

6 Often, though the subject is inspired by Western engravings, its
 7 representation is slightly changed in order to bring it closer to the Orthodox art.
 8 For example, the depictions of the *Beatitudes* by Stefan Tenecki, borrowed
 9 later by Simion Silaghi were inspired by the *Ectypa Bible* by Christoph Weigel
 10 printed in Augsburg in 1588⁴⁸. *The Beatitudes* were anthropomorphised and
 11 were represented as young women in company of God's angel. One can notice
 12 slight changes between the original engravings and the Baroque paintings of
 13 Stefan Tenecki or the more naïve representations done by Simion Silaghi.
 14 Painting had yet another instrument used to draw attention with respect to
 15 engravings: colour.

16 Baroque influences were manifest in the Transylvanian art as early as the
 17 1720s in the region of Cluj. The garments are lavish, the colours are lively with
 18 powerful contrasts, the faces have a more realistic touch. The characters are
 19 often represented while moving, the angels are sometimes depicted in flight.
 20 The flight is suggested by the movement of their cloths and of their wings. The
 21 Baroque art promotes movement, change and transformation, unlike the
 22 traditional Orthodox art where the characters are static and the focus is laid on
 23 inner change.
 24
 25

⁴⁸ J. Kolundžija Moštenirea pictorului Stefan Tenecki în Episcopia Sremului, (The Heritage of Stefan Tenecki in the Srem Bishopric) in Elena Rodica Colta (ed) *Patrimoniu și patrimonializare*, , Ed. Etnologică, București, 2018, pp. 42-63

- 1 **Figure 9, 10, 11.** *The Beatitudes* by Christoph Weigel for *Biblia Ectypa*, 1695,
 2 *the triumphal arch in the church of the monastery of Krusedol* by Stefan
 3 *Tenecki, 1745-1757 and the triumphal arch, The Nativity of St John the Baptist*
 4 *church in Gârda de Sus, Simion and Gavril Silaghi, 1804*



5
 6
 7 The representations of nature and buildings are also influenced by the
 8 Baroque art. Linear and reverse perspectives are used at the same time in the
 9 development of certain scenes. They are obvious especially in the depiction of
 10 the interior scenes, such as the *Annunciation* scene or the scene of *the*
 11 *Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*.

12 Apocalyptic scenes are more often represented as a consequence of
 13 conflict, death and lack of social and political equity. They are often inspired
 14 by Western models of wood carvings or woodcuts and from Blockbücher. If in
 15 Wallachia, Apocalyptic scenes replace *The Last Judgement* representations in
 16 the exonarthex and narthex⁴⁹, in Transylvania, both Apocalyptic and Last
 17 Judgement scenes are represented.

⁴⁹Cornelia Pilat Note despre unele reprezentări ale Apocalipsei în pictura medievală românească (Notes on some Representations of the End of Days in Romanian Medieval Paintings) in *Variațiuni pe teme date în arta medievală românească*, Ed. Vremea, București, 2003, pp. 139-182

1 **Figure 12.** *The 24 Elders before the throne of God, St Nicholas church in*
 2 *Ponor, 1823, Simion Silaghi*



3
 4
 5 The painting in the church represents the dimension of the world to come
 6 and that is why Orthodox painters use the reverse perspective and why
 7 anatomic proportions are not generally respected. The task of the Orthodox
 8 painter is to reproduce inner grace. However, during this period, the traits of
 9 the portraits are more realistic and proportions begin to be observed, especially
 10 by the more accomplished painters. As in the Ruthenian lands, two type of art
 11 develop: a popular one and a schooled one.

12 Transylvania was a land of overlapping cultures, of many influences which
 13 are reproduced in art.

14 15 16 **Several self-portraits as sign of raising awareness**

17
 18 A level of awareness of the painter's own value and of their search for
 19 social status is represented by the fact that during this period several painters'
 20 self-portraits are painted in contrast with the traditional view on the humble
 21 Orthodox painter that should not make his identity known. In Wallachia the
 22 famous painter Pafnutie already painted several self-portraits at the end of the
 23 XVIIth century in Filipeștii de Pădure in 1692, Holy Archangels Berca in 1694
 24 and Bordești in 1699. During the next century several other Wallachian
 25 painters also painted their self-portraits. One of the best known is that of the
 26 painter Nicolae Polcovnicu from 1818.

1 **Figure 13.** *Self-Portrait of Stefan Tenecki, 1770*



2
3
4 In Banat one of the best-known self-portraits is that of Stefan Tenecki,
5 dating from 1770, the master of Baroque art who also held an influential
6 position in the city council of Arad. This is the first self-portrait in the Serbian
7 art. Other painters that have painted their self-portraits are Radu Munteanu
8 from Maramureş in the church of Ungureni in 1782 and Şteţel Condrat from
9 Bistriţa in Transylvania in the church of Săcalu de Pădure in 1818⁵⁰.

12 **A short semantic analysis of Painters' signatures**

14 Another level where Western influences were manifest were the signatures
15 of the painters.

16 The XVIIIth century was a time during which the quests and the
17 temptations did not go by any of the gifted painters, shaping in their activity
18 periods and stages during which beyond doubt, by making use of the artistic or
19 technical means of the period they departed from the rules of the liturgical art
20 as it had been canonized in the writings of the fathers of the church. We believe
21 thus that even more than during the previous centuries the works of these
22 painters were not only the result of their true and deep spiritual experience,
23 expressed through ascetism and prayer, but also handwork in the most literal
24 sense evoked by the expression 'by the hand of'⁵¹

⁵⁰Ioana Cristache Panait, op. cit., p. 56

⁵¹Ana Dumitran et al., *Iacov Zugravul*, Iacov the Painter Ed. Altip, Alba Iulia, 2010, p. 85

1 Some painters as Iacov from Rășinari seemed to assume aristocratic titles
 2 as he begins to sign his works using the title of boyar, a local nobleman.
 3 Another painter, Simion Silaghi also assumed the title of painter of
 4 Abrudbania.

5 This was not unusual for the Orthodox painters under Habsburg rule, for
 6 example the well-known painter from Muncaci, Ilia Brodlakovici Vișenski
 7 used to sign himself „maljar Mukachevskyj”⁵² and the painters usually attached
 8 to their name, the name of the their region or locality of origin as did Toader
 9 and Iacov Ciungar or father Nicolae of Feisa. This was common use both for
 10 the Ruthenian and the Transylvanian painters.

11 At the same time, the foreign appellatives of *Piktor* of Latin influence and
 12 *Mahler* of German influence were often employed by the painters. The old
 13 appellative *zugrav* or *zograf* of Slavic origin was still largely employed, as
 14 proven by the signatures of Stan or Iacov from Rășinari. But sometimes the
 15 same painter would employ several different appellatives as in the case of
 16 Simion Silaghi who signed both *piktor* and *zugrav*, perhaps depending on the
 17 community that commissioned the work, while Stefan Tenecki's name appears
 18 in the official documents with the appellative of *Mahler* or *Maler*⁵³. The same
 19 was true for the Ruthenian painters Andrei Haljeckyj and his son, Nicolai
 20 Hajeckyj⁵⁴, or for Marco Shestakovych⁵⁵. Also, during the XVIIIth century
 21 there is a painter in Maramureș called Ioan *Maliar* (John the Painter).
 22 Furthermore, Simion Silaghi also recurred at times at the Magyarization of his
 23 name signing Simon Szylagi like in the Magyar language⁵⁶.

24 Ana Dumitran⁵⁷ notes that “The Magyarization of the name in official
 25 situations, the signing of the artworks being one such situation, is the fruit of
 26 the awareness of their self-value and the urge to deliver services at the level of
 27 those meant for the privileged, the receipts, a fashion of the period by which
 28 Romanian painters and not only by giving up the former naming of *zugrav*, of
 29 Greek Slavic origin and the association of derivatives of the Latin term of
 30 *piktor* often in corrupt forms of the German *Mahler*, were trying to underline
 31 the modernity of their art, by taking up new techniques, models and forms of
 32 expressions that would bring them more or less closer to the Western art”.

⁵²Iconography. Sacred Painting in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Byzantine Seminary Press, <https://www.archpitt.org/iconography-sacred-painting-insubcarpathian-ruthenia/>

⁵³Marius Porumb *Dicționar de pictură veche românească din Transilvania, (Dictionary of Old Romanian Painting from Transylvania)*, Editura Academiei Române, 1998

⁵⁴Iconography. Sacred Painting in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Byzantine Seminary Press, <https://www.archpitt.org/iconography-sacred-painting-insubcarpathian-ruthenia/>

⁵⁵L. Berezhnaya și John-Paul Himka, op. cit., p. XIV

⁵⁶Ana Dumitran *Pictorul Simion Silaghi-Sălăgeanu. În căutarea identității, (Painter Simion Silaghi Sălăgeanu. In search of an identity) Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*, 16/I, 2012, pp. 189-228

⁵⁷Ibidem

1 **Figure 14.** *Simion Silaghi's signature on the icon of Christ from the church in*
 2 *Bucium Muntari*



3 4 5 6 **Possible reasons for the changes in church art**

7
8 What triggered these changes in the religious painting? Was it just the
 9 social and political context? During the XVIIth century, the Reforms of Peter
 10 Mohyla, followed a century later by those of Emperor Peter the Great had
 11 drawn closer the religious art in the region to the Western religious art. Their
 12 influence spread in Transylvania due to the Metropolitan See of Karlowitz.
 13 Orthodox Serbs were more welcoming to elements from the Western religious
 14 art in their painting as they aimed to prove their equality with the rest of the
 15 Christian confessions in the Empire.

16 Lay painters were more sensitive to the tastes of the commissioners as they
 17 depended solely on the income from their commissions. Most of the painters
 18 were paid in money. For example, the cost of the painting for the Cathedral in
 19 Blaj stood around 4000 and 5000 renans. The cost of the cupola was 400
 20 renans and that of the inferior level of the iconostasis was 300 renans⁵⁸.
 21 Payment in kind was very rare during that period though during the previous
 22 centuries a lot of the works done by painters were paid in kind.

23 Who were these commissioners? We find our answer in the church
 24 inscriptions bearing the name of donors. Generally, the whole community paid
 25 for the construction of the church and for the painting, as Ioana Cristache
 26 Panait⁵⁹ notices. First of all the inscriptions mention the bishop, then the local
 27 priest and the local community.

28 Were these changes imposed by the commissioners under the influence of
 29 the Metropolitan See of Karlowitz or were they undertaken by the painters and
 30 the community as part of their quest for social status and acceptance?

31 Did they occur as a natural part of the many exchanges that took place
 32 among painters?

33 Painters sometimes travelled far to honour their commissions. For
 34 example, Simion Silaghi travelled all the way from Abrud to Julița in Arad

⁵⁸Sylvester Terdik, "Sculptor constantinopolitanus" Un intalagtiore greco a Mariapocs nell
 Settecento in Vegheso Tamas, *Symbolae: Wege der Erforschung des griechisch-Katolischen*
Erbes. Aktes den Konferenz zum Andenken an den 100. Todestag von Nikolaus Nilles SJ
 Niregyhaza, 2010, p. 251

⁵⁹Ioana Cristache Panait, op. cit., p. 54

1 where he probably met for the first time Stefan Tenecki. Later, Tenecki came
 2 to Certege nearby Abrud perhaps to study the iconostasis painted by Vasile
 3 Zboroțchi. He died there and was buried in the graveyard of the parish attended
 4 by Simion Silaghi in Abrud.

5 Later on, in 1835 we find in Bucium Izbita three painters who worked at
 6 the huge iconostasis Simion Silaghi the Young, who was following in his
 7 father's footsteps and was a local, Bucium being only a few kilometres away
 8 from Abrud, Anton Simion from Cluj and Dimitrie Dimitriu who had come all
 9 the way from Bucharest. This facts led us to believe that the mobility of
 10 painters was not restrained during these centuries.

11 Painters also came into contact with foreign painters or at least with their
 12 work. For example, the iconostasis painted by Vasile Zboroțchi in Certege is
 13 likely to have had some influence on a number of painters from the region,
 14 notably on Simion Silaghi who also borrowed a lot of elements from Stefan
 15 Tenecki and from Gheorghe son of Iacov, who, himself had been influenced by
 16 Grigore Ranite and had done at least a part of his apprenticeship abroad in
 17 Vâlcea, in Wallachia. Grigore Ranite's work in Rășinari and Șcheii Brașovului
 18 is likely to have influenced more than one Transylvanian painter.

19 But were all these changes due only to exterior factors or was there a
 20 change of taste inherent to the fact that several nations and confessions were
 21 cohabiting? And to the desire to be recognized as an equal ?

22 A possible answer seems to come from the church in Lupșa, initially
 23 painted by priest Gheorghe Tobias from Abrud in 1750. The inscription reads
 24 "this sanctuary was painted in 1750 at the expense of the faithful Olia Ion from
 25 Lupsa who paid 18 florints for his eternal memory. Ion, Petca, Salomiia, Petca,
 26 Matei, Simziana [?], Andrei, Nicolae, Filimon, Ioana"⁶⁰ The painting was
 27 redone in 1810 by master Simion Silaghi and his son Simion from Abrud. They
 28 only painted the sanctuary and the iconostasis, but if the painting done by
 29 Gheorghe Tobias was in line with the Orthodox tradition, this time a lot of
 30 elements of Catholic influence were included in the iconographic programme,
 31 like the Immaculate conception on the vault of the sanctuary, Mater Dolorosa
 32 at the iconostasis, the Sacred heart of Jesus on the triumphal arch. They
 33 coexisted with Orthodox elements as the representation at the iconostasis of a
 34 stylite saint, probably Symion. To our knowledge this is the iconographic
 35 programme closest to the Catholic dogma that Simion Silaghi had ever painted.
 36 Interestingly, the sanctuary was painted in a time when the church was still
 37 Orthodox. It only became uniatic in 1827. Should we consider this evidence of
 38 the painter's and the priest's and community's free choice?
 39
 40

⁶⁰The inscription writes in Romanian in the Cyrillic alphabet Iar la an 1750 s-au zugrăvit acest sf. altar din cheltuiala unui creștin de aici din Lupșa, anume Olia Ion au dat 18 florinți ca să fie veacinică pom[enire]. Ion, Petca, Salomiia, Petca, Matei, Simziana [?], Andrei, Nicolae, Filimon, Ioana". The inscription refers only to the paintings in the altar.

1 **Figure 15.** *The Immaculate Conception, the vault of the sanctuary, St. George church*
 2 *in Lupșa, 1810*



3
 4
 5 At this time, at the level of religious art, there was no clear opposition
 6 between the Orthodox and the uniate church belonging to Rome as Orthodox
 7 uniate painters such as Gheorghe Tobias painted Orthodox churches and
 8 Orthodox painters such as Stefan Tenecki, Iacov of Rășinari, Grigore Ranite
 9 and Simion Silaghi also painted uniate churches like the Cathedral in Blaj or
 10 the church in Abrud.

11 Furthermore, apparently, Isidor Silaghi's mother, Simion Silaghi's
 12 grandson came from the family of the uniate priest and even bishopric
 13 candidate Alpini, a famous family in Transylvania⁶¹. The two confessions were
 14 united in the quest for social status.

15 Simion Silaghi also painted the effigy of the Imperial House of Vienna in
 16 the church in Ponor in 1823 as a mark of his allegiance to the Emperor.

17 However, the art was not free from social and political influences and
 18 sometimes the discontent was also made manifest by art. For example, the
 19 tormentors in the *Passions of Christ* scenes wore contemporary robes, this was
 20 common practice also in the Ruthenian painting and previously also in
 21 Moldavia in the frescoes of Sucevița painted during the XVIth century in the
 22 scene of the Last Judgement. Christ's sacrifice was brought thus into actuality.
 23 Sometimes Pontius Pilat or the great priests Anna and Caiaphas was
 24 represented either in Ottoman cloths or as the Pope of Rome.

25
 26

⁶¹Ana Dumitran Pictorul Simion Silaghi-Sălăgeanu. În căutarea identității, *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*, 16/I, 2012, pp. 189-228, pp. 189-190

1 **Figure 16.** *Christ before Pilat, St. Archangels church in Mogoș Cojocani,*
 2 *painter Gheorghe son of Iacov, 1771*



3
4
5 The painting in several churches relates to the uprising of Horea, Cloșca
6 and Crișan from 1784 while in Bezded⁶², a church built and painted between
7 1755 and 1759 is depicted the episode of Romanians caught and compelled to
8 take part in the Imperial army.

9 At the same time, painters such as Simion Silaghi were not left out of this
10 fight for social and political rights. In a painting made towards the end of his
11 life, depicting the Resurrection of Christ, Simion Silaghi painted the flag of the
12 Eteria movement. The same flag of the Eteria was also represented in an icon
13 of St. Catherine from Wallachia painted during the same period⁶³.

14 Isidor Silaghi, also a church painter, as his father Simion the Young,
15 moved to Wallachia in 1857 and gave up church painting becoming instead “a
16 photographer”, which at that time meant a painter who depicted contemporary
17 events as he saw them, an illustrator of the Romanian War of Independence in
18 1877⁶⁴. In native Transylvania, he was a highly appreciated church painter, his
19 art being considered as “Byzantic” unlike the art of the painters educated in the
20 Western world. The comparison made by priest Moga in a letter addressed to
21 Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna in Sibiu in 1857 refers to the painter Constantin

⁶²Ioana Cristache Panait, op. cit.

⁶³George Oprescu, *Scurtă istorie a artelor plastice în RPR*, vol. II ‘Short History of Arts in the Socialist Republic of Romania, București, 1958, p. 12

⁶⁴Paul Rezeanu, „Pictorul Selageanu și războiul nostru de independență”, ‘The Painter Selageanu and our War of Independence’ în *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor*, Muzee, 1977, 8, p. 66

1 Lecca who had been educated abroad in Buda⁶⁵. The priest claimed that master
 2 Isidor had received some money in order to paint two churches in the region of
 3 Covasna and that he left to Wallachia without returning the money or
 4 delivering the job. Interesting enough, the Byzantine style in that period came
 5 to encompass a lot more foreign influences, either Ruthenian or Western. The
 6 meaning of the term in the second half of the XIXth century was quite different
 7 with respect to its meaning several centuries before.

8 In 1859 the two Romanian principalities Wallachia and Moldovia united,
 9 accomplishing a long lasting Romanian dream. This may be one of the reasons
 10 for which Isidor chose to move to one of the Romanian Principalities at the eve
 11 of the unification.

14 Conclusion

16 Was the change in art triggered by the change of status or the reverse? The
 17 evidence suggests that the change in art may have been partly imposed by
 18 church authorities and partly freely assumed by local communities and priests
 19 who were the main commissioners of the works. Transylvania was a land of
 20 overlapping cultures and the coexistence of several cultures and confessions
 21 meant exchanges and reciprocal influences. Changes in art may have come
 22 from a change in taste, the tastes of Romanians growing closer to those of other
 23 nations with whom they shared the land. On the other hand, the change in art
 24 may show a desire of acceptance and recognition that could be gained only by
 25 drawing closer to the style of those who were already accepted and recognized,
 26 members of the ruling nations and classes.

27 Change does not occur only in art, but also at the semantical level. Was
 28 this tendency imposed by the authorities in a tendency of assimilation or was it
 29 due to the desire of the painters to be considered as the official court painters,
 30 or at least as the official painters of the Metropolitan See of Karlowitz? Due to
 31 the variety of signatures we can conclude that these changes spring from the
 32 desire of the painters to improve their social status and to their need of
 33 recognition.

34 During this period, the painter is no longer a craftsman. He becomes an
 35 artist, his condition is improved as is his social status.

36 At this time, the term Byzantine art was enlarged and came to encompass
 37 other influences manifest in the Orthodox religious art in Transylvania. A
 38 century later, the art of the Transylvanian painters was regarded rather as
 39 Byzantic in opposition with that of the painters trained in Western schools.

40 To conclude, the eclectic art developed in Transylvania during this period
 41 seems to have been the most appropriate form of expression of the essence of
 42 their belief for both the painters and the Orthodox and Greek Catholic

⁶⁵ Ana Grama, Documente arhivistice sibiene (1850- 1870). Donații din țară și conflicte cu
 autoritățile locale în județul Covasna (1851-1859), (Donations from the country and conflicts
 with local authorities in the county of Covasna (1851-1859)), revista *Angvstia* I, 1996, pp. 165-
 186

1 communities in Transylvania in their aspiration to gain social recognition and a
2 better social status.
3
4
5

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