

Images of Chalices in Transylvanian Panel Paintings

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The study of the items illustrated on mural and panel painting, in connection with still existing items, can document medieval material culture. The representation of chalices on almost half of such paintings from Transylvania is a proof of its important symbolist value in religious rituals. These representations also certify the high level of the goldsmiths' art from Transylvania. The present study is intended both as a repertory and an analysis of these sacral objects illustrated in mural and panel paintings.

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The fortified churches in Transylvania were a favorite subject of the Saxon historiography. Their mural or panel paintings were studied in the 19th, but especially in the 20th century. Panel paintings were generally ordered by parochial priests supported by local communities to honor the patron saints or they came as donations/gifts from patricians or rich noblemen. Today only a small amount of painted ensembles from the 15th and 16th century have survived in Transylvania, most of them disappearing after adoption of the Reformation (among these seemingly the most valuable¹).

Itinerant craftsman or those settled in Transylvania in local artistic workshops disseminated and developed in this frontier territory a provincial art with a specific style, but stylistically oriented towards Central Europe, in the territory of present-day Austria and Southern Germany. According to the latest studies, there were approximately one hundred painters in Transylvania during the 15th and 16th centuries.²

Besides painting workshops, other workshops appeared as well to satisfy local service necessities, such as sculpture or goldsmiths workshops, early gothic silver work being a product of the latter.

The cults' art designs reached their highest peaks during the 15th – 16th centuries, stagnating after this period under the influence of Reformation, during which the influence of image radically changed.³ Items which have

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¹ Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*, vol. I, București 1959, p. 777.

² Ciprian Firea, *Arta polipticelor medievale din Transilvania (1250-1550)*, vol. II, PhD Dissertation (manuscript), Cluj-Napoca, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai 2010, p. 90.

³ Andrei Kertesz, in: Thomas Năgler (ed), *800 de ani Biserică a Germanilor din Transilvania*, Thaur bei Innsbruck 1991, p. 72.