

Medieval Liturgical Vestments Depicted in the Iconographic Programs of Southern Transylvanian Churches (14th to 16th centuries)

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This work sets out to list and describe the liturgical vestments present in panel and mural paintings of churches located in southern Transylvania. The surviving body of such vestments on display in the "Brukenthal" National Museum of Sibiu and that of the Black Church of Braşov not only confirms their use in religious services, but also the fact that they served as models for Transylvanian ecclesiastical painting. Of Western derivation, this type of vestment reflects a way of thinking and stands testament to social status or to the different hierarchies within the church. It is, at the same time, an indication of the development of this kind of craft, produced by specialized workshops.

Keywords: *liturgical vestments, ecclesiastical art, panel painting, mural painting, material culture, Transylvania, late Middle Ages.*

The large amount and variety of lay and clerical garments play an important role among items of material culture depicted in medieval ecclesiastical painting. Nearly every mural ensemble, as well as countless polyptychs which at that time were placed on the table of the holy Altar, portray Catholic clerics or the holy martyr saints of the church. The painted image, along with its symbolic value, welcomes the believers, showing them, in easily identifiable images, the respective people and events. Depictions of the Christ, the Virgin Mary, the holy Fathers of the Church therefore come to life, familiar and close to the believers who take part in religious ceremonies inside religious monuments. Christian iconography is meant to be symbolic, but here the message appears through both image and word. The iconographic program represents the message addressed to all those partaking in the Holy Liturgy concerning *The Heavenly Kingdom*, but also the path a Christian must follow in order to reach that objective. Entering *God's Kingdom* and thus attaining salvation by following the Church's precepts seems, by means of images, more easily understood by believers. Acceptance of martyrdom and transcendence of suffering and hardships find their way into the representations of the saints.

In this paper, we shall attempt to itemize liturgical vestments identified in mural painting and ecclesiastical painting present in southern

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Transylvania, more precisely in the area colonized by German settlers also known as *Fundus regius*.

Some of Transylvanian liturgical vestments on display in museum collections or those belonging to churches from Transylvania have recently been analysed and brought to the attention of researchers. We refer here to the publication, in four brief years, of two works focused precisely on this topic: Transylvanian liturgical vestments. Daniela Dâmboiu, a researcher with the "Brukenthal" National Museum of Sibiu, published in 2012 a catalogue of medieval liturgical vestments found in that museum¹. In 2015, an extensive study in two volumes also focused on liturgical vestments was published by Evelin Wetter who, together with fellow researchers Corinna Kienzler and Ágnes Ziegler, covered the body of liturgical vestments belonging to the Black Church of Braşov².

Counting and itemizing the collection had been necessary on different occasions, such as the taking on or signing off of the religious items by persons or institutions or the setting up of exhibitions. On those occasions when the itemizing documents have survived, they represent a source of further understanding regarding the number of items and their description. Such is the case for the registries kept by the Evangelical Church of Sibiu, covering the 14th and 15th centuries, where "14 dalmatics, 36 chasubles, 19 copes (pluviale) and 22 other liturgical vestments"³ are mentioned. Such lists also offer glimpses into the garments worn by clergy of Braşov⁴.

Made of silk brocade or silk velvet coloured in high relief⁵, woven with threads of gilded silver depicting animal or floral motifs, as well as pomegranate, the precious liturgical vestments were ordered from different European manufacturers, located especially in northern Italy, or elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, as is the case of some copes found in the Braşov collection⁶. This data points to several locations where brocade was manufactured, such as Lucca, Venice and Florence, but also other Italian cities such as Bologna, Milan, Naples, Genoa, Perugia or Siena⁷. According to researcher Daniela Dâmboiu,

¹ Daniela Dâmboiu, *Veşminte liturgice medievale din colecțiile Muzeului Național Brukenthal, Sibiu*, 2012.

² Evelin Wetter, *Liturgische Gewänder in der Schwarzen Kirche zu Kronstadt in Siebenbürgen*, Riggisberg, 2015.

³ Gustav Seiwert, *Das älteste Hermannstädter Kirchenbuch*, in AVSL, XI, 1874, p. 346-347, 354-357 apud: D. Dâmboiu, *Veşminte liturgice medievale*, p. 7.

⁴ E. Wetter, *Liturgische Gewänder*, p. 71-88.

⁵ D. Dâmboiu, *Veşminte liturgice medievale*, p. 17.

⁶ E. Wetter, *Liturgische Gewänder*, p. 50.

⁷ D. Dâmboiu, *Veşminte liturgice medievale*, p. 8.

the vestments belonging to the Sibiu collection are of Italian origin. In turn, this speaks to the status, financial might⁸ and the taste of the lay and ecclesiastic ruling classes of the time. Wearing these extremely expensive garments was regulated by strict laws and only certain social strata were permitted to don them. Both panel picture and mural picture bear testament to this fact. Judging by the large number of depictions of these vestments, one can assume that the guild of brocade and embroidery manufacturers had played an important role within medieval trades. Moreover, their artistic prowess makes them comparable to other leading craftsmen and artists of their day. During the 13th century, the wearing of such garments was not limited to clergy: such a precious commodity was sought after by kings and high dignitaries. We now know that laws even existed, regulating who could wear such special fabrics and what restrictions applied. However, the religious Reformation starting from the beginning of the 16th century obviously led to a decrease of orders from those parts of Europe which adhered to the new doctrine. In Transylvania, these extravagant vestments continued to be used for a while because clear legislation concerning keeping or abandoning them was missing and the decision was left to the clergy. The 1557 synod lists them as *adiaphora* objects (optional), not necessary for salvation, neither recommended, nor forbidden by the Scripture. Martin Luther, the father of the *Wittenberg Reformation*, takes a neutral stance towards this, a stance which is opposed to that of other reformers such as Zwingli or Calvin⁹.

Through the differences they bear, the clothing items worn by the prelates of the Catholic Church on different occasions, such as performing religious ceremonies and processions or attending synods, are filled with symbolic significance. Even more so, the liturgical vestments donned by the clergy had to be different, so that they could be recognizable to believers and thus receive authority and respect as “servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed” (1 Cor.: 4-1). At the same time, they had to instil “respect towards those wearing them,... to make a strong impression over believers and to create the atmosphere of celebration characteristic to performing divine service.”¹⁰

⁸ Alexandru Alexianu, *Mode și veșminte din trecut. Cinci secole de istorie costumară românească, I, Bucharest, 1971, p. 7.*

⁹ Regarding the adoption of a certain kind of vestments and specific colors after the Reformation, see: Christina Burde, *Bedeutung und Wirkung der schwarzen Bekleidungsfarbe in Deutschland zur Zeit des 16. Jahrhunderts, Bremen, 2005, Phd Dissertation (http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/diss/Bremen/2004/E-Diss1214_Burde.pdf - 19.10.2015)*

¹⁰ Ene Braniște, Ecaterina Braniște, *Dicționar de cunoștințe religioase, Sibiu, 2010, p. 495.*

Aside from the common Catholic liturgical attire (the alb, the chasuble, the cope and the amice), one has to mention the precious cope clasp, richly adorned, which held up the clothing around the chest.

According to some scientists, this piece played an important role within ecclesiastical vestments, having a special compartment for holy relics¹¹, similar to encolpion crosses. However, in the aftermath of the Reformation, this piece lost its importance, in the same way as other liturgical vestments used until that point, as the new doctrine brought about significant changes to religious service. The cope clasp, as other items used during liturgy, slowly lost its religious connotation, becoming an ornament for lay clothing, its style evolving throughout time¹².

The following pages list items of liturgical vestment identified in the panel painting of polyptychs and in mural painting in Transylvania. The geographical space covered by our research is confined to the area of southern Transylvania colonized by German settlers, namely the counties of Sibiu, Braşov and Mureş. At the same time, we are, of course, aware of other document images belonging to Transylvanian medieval art or of other areas neighbouring the studied cultural area. The time frame spans the 14th to the 16th century, namely until the adoption of the new religious dogma.

Overview of the pieces:

The enclosed polyptych of the church of Băgaciu (Mureş County), painted by *Johannes Stoss* and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who is also the patron saint of the church¹³, depicts, in its eight geometrically ordered panels, eight pairs of saints, painted together with their attributes. Of these groups of saints called upon to protect the community, we would like to focus on one pair: St. Stephen and St. Lawrence. St. Stephen, protomartyr of the Christian Church, is shown in the left side of the panel, facing the viewer, wearing a heel-length, loose robe with folds – an *alb*, symbol of spiritual purity, on top of which he wears a dalmatic made of velvet brocade, embroidered at the edges and on the outside of the sleeves with a wide golden band, off of which long, black tassels are hanging. Two cope clasps, shaped like lion protomes, off of which hang two circular rings – probably using Dürer woodcut *The Mass of Saint Gregory* – cover his chest and embellish the deacon's attire. Over

¹¹ Viorica Guy Marica, *S. Hann*, p. 46 apud D. Dâmboiu, *Breasla aurarilor din Sibiu intre secolele XV-XVII*, Sibiu, 2008, p. 89.

¹² D. Dâmboiu, *Breasla aurarilor*, p. 89.

¹³ Hermann Fabini, *Atlas der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Kirchenburgen und Dorfkirchen*, I, Hermannstadt-Heidelberg, 1998, p. 79.

his shoulders, he is wearing liturgical vestments – an ornamental amice with golden edges (plate 1)¹⁴.

Painted as we nearly always encounter him, in tandem with St. Stephen as patrons of deacons, St. Lawrence, deacon of Pope Sixtus the Second, also martyred during persecutions against Christians, is easily identifiable due to his specific attribute – the gridiron on which he was tortured. He wears a pleated *alb* under a fire brick red coloured dalmatic made of heavy silk brocade woven with vegetal patterns. On the edges of the garment and on the outside of the short sleeves there is a wide golden band woven with metallic thread off of which long, red tassels are hanging. Two cope clasps complete the attire. Over the shoulders, at the neck, he wears an amice made of flax or hemp (plate 1).

Another panel of the same polyptych depicts Saints Urban and Nicholas. St. Urban, martyr of the Church, is represented in clerical attire, with the pastoral and sacerdotal distinctions: the mitre and the crozier; in his left hand, he is holding a bunch of grapes, one of the attributes identifying him. He wears a heel-length, pleated robe – an *alb*, on top of which he wears a dalmatic. On top of that, he wears a golden cope made of silk brocade, lined on the inside with red fabric. Two golden cope clasps hold up the garments. He also wears an amice around his shoulders (plate 2).

St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra, standing in front of him, wears a bishop's mitre embroidered with golden bands and embellished with gems. He holds a liturgical book in his left hand, above which there are three spheres of gold – symbols of his miracles – and a crozier. On top of the heel-length *alb*, he wears a precious garment made of heavy red silk brocade woven with vegetal patterns edged with golden metallic thread. On the front, we can see a wide golden band sewn on the edge of the tunic. Black, textile tassels are hanging from the lower part of the cope. On his chest, two golden cope clasps decorated with a floral pattern complete the attire. At his neck and around the shoulders, he wears an amice embellished with golden brocade, embroidered with vegetal patterns (plate 2).

The polyptych of Beia (Braşov County), dating from 1513 and painted by *Johannes Stoss* of Sighişoara, is dedicated to St. Ursula, martyr from Cologne (Köln) in the 4th century. The festive part of the polyptych depicts four themes of the Saint's legend: *Saint Ursula's pilgrimage to Rome, Saint Ursula and her companions in Rome, the Baptism of the catechumens and the Martyrdom of Saint Ursula and her companions*. On the right side of the panel depicting the pilgrimage to Rome there is a bishop holding his crozier in the

¹⁴ Once again I express my thanks to Ms. Daniela Dâmboiu for the information offered so kindly.

left hand (plate 3). On his head he wears a bishop's mitre. He is also wearing a cope made of golden silk brocade, woven with vegetal patterns edged with black silk in a fashion typical of the Italian Renaissance, common to those worn by clergy in the 15th century. A similar garment can be found in the dalmatic belonging to the Brukenthal National Museum (inv. no. AD 244/M2229; 3818)¹⁵. Over the shoulders, he wears an amice ornamented with a piece of fabric identical to the cope.

In the panel showing *St. Ursula in Rome*, behind two female characters about to pass under the arch of a building, we can see the bishop who accompanied the pilgrims. Only the mitre, the crozier and the amice worn over the shoulders are visible.

It seems like the same Church prelate is also depicted in the solemn moment of Baptism. Bent over a female believer, the cleric is reading the prayers from a book held by a deacon who is also present. The bishop is attired in a pleated, heel-length alb, with golden fabric at the cuffs. *Over* the alb, he wears a golden cope made of silk brocade with vegetal patterns covering the whole length of the garment woven with black silk threads, held together over the chest with a wide double flower-shaped cope clasp. Around his neck, he wears a thick chain of precious metal and on his head he has a bishop's mitre – a symbol of clerical status (plate 4).

Two panels of the polyptych of the parish church of Biertan (Sibiu County), from 1483, the year mentioned in a book from the scene *Jesus at the Temple*, depict the pairs of saints Augustine and Ambrose, and Gregory and Jerome. Their images have recently been brought back to life, after extensive restoration work. The polyptych impresses by its size and by the quality of the craftsmanship, which is most likely the work of travelling craftsmen or at least ones trained in the great cultural centres of the West. It testifies as well to the material might of the local clergy, being housed, as it was, in the residence of the Evangelical bishop of the Saxon settlers in Transylvania¹⁶.

One of the panels depicts, facing one another, St. Augustine – famous defender of Christian dogma from heresies – and St. Ambrose – his spiritual father, who baptized him. Dressed in clerical vestments, they both hold the bishop's crozier (*pedum*) sculpted with a Gothic architectural *nodus*, on top of which the hook, embellished with wreaths, is mounted. Both prelates wear bishop's mitres sewn with golden thread and embedded with gems.

St. Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church, wears a heel-length, pleated alb, on top of which there are two layers of ecclesiastical vestments.

¹⁵ D. Dâmboiu, *Veșminte liturgice medievale*, p. 93, fig. 24.3.

¹⁶ H. Fabini, *Universul cetăților bisericești din Transilvania*, Sibiu, 2012, p. 151.

The first, the dalmatic, is made of golden silk brocade woven with red silk thread and vegetal patterns. The lower edge of the garment is decorated with a band embroidered of gilded silk. On top of that, St. Augustine wears a cope made of green silk brocade, embroidered at the edges with a wide band woven from gilded silver and decorated with small rectangles with floral patterns and embellished with gems. The cope is tied at the chest with a beautiful clasp made of gilded silver, of the “foliage” type (plate 5).

St. Ambrose, painted on the right side of the same panel, facing the viewer, is dressed in a pleated alb coming down above the shoes. On top of the alb, he wears a cope made of red silk velvet brocade, with a wide band at the edges woven with gilded silver threads in a vegetal pattern. Around his neck, he wears an amice made, probably, of the same fabric as the alb.

Another panel belonging to the same polyptych depicts two other Doctors of the Western Church: Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Jerome. The former, Saint Gregory (540-604), writer and chronicler of the Church and English apostle, would end up a monk in one of the monasteries built by him on the Colina Celio in Rome. A few years later, he would become one of the most important popes Rome has ever had. He is presented wearing a papal tiara and three layers of clerical vestments. Underneath, he wears an alb covered by a precious garment made of golden silk velvet brocade – a dalmatic – embellished with golden brown thread forming complex arabesque patterns of flowers and stalks. The lower edge has a wide band of black velvet embroidered in a vegetal pattern. The top vestment is a cope made of greenish silk brocade, tied at the chest with a massive ornament of precious metal, a four-leaved morse decorated with stalks forming a floral pattern with an oval gem in the middle. The edges of the cope are adorned with a wide band woven from gilded silver in rectangular diamonds on which gems are embedded in a geometrical or vegetal pattern.

In front of him, Saint Jerome, doctor of the Church and the one who translated the Holy Scripture into Latin, is wearing, on top of the alb, the red cardinal’s robe lined with ermine fur and the cardinal hat, called *galero* (plate 6).

The Gothic polyptych dedicated to the St. Hierarch Nicholas, the patron saint of the church in Bruuiu (Sibiu County)¹⁷, dates back to the beginning of the 16th century¹⁸. This liturgical furnishing was moved in the year 2000, for security reasons, to the parish church of Cîsnădie (Sibiu County).

¹⁷ H. Fabini, *Atlas der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen*, I, p. 89.

¹⁸ Victor Roth, *Siebenbürgische Altäre*, Strassburg, 1916, p. 95; Ciprian Firea, *Arta polipticelor medievale din Transilvania (1450-1550)*, PhD thesis (mss.), Universitatea „Babeş-Bolyai“, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, II, p. 77.

The polyptych along with a central chest, which nowadays houses a statue of the Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus, depicts in its four panels scenes inspired by the legend of St. Nicholas: *the Dowry for the Three Virgins*, *Saint Nicholas feeds the whole town*, *Saint Nicholas saves three innocent people from death* and *Saint Nicholas calming the storm at sea*. In all of the four panels, the saint is depicted with the bishop's mitre on his head and the prelate crozier in his hands. He is wearing an alb, on top of which he has a red dalmatic made of silk brocade; tassels are hanging from the lower side (plate 7, 8, 9). On top of this garment, he wears a cope made of heavy silk brocade woven in a vegetal pattern. Around his neck and over the shoulders he wears an amice. The cope is held in place on the chest by a golden clasp, with two flower-shaped morsers. Around his chest, he wears a thick chain with a massive golden cope clasp, portraying an icon: the Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus.

The closed polyptych shows pairs of saints standing alongside their attributes, which makes individual identification easier. On the upper left panel, seen from the front, are presented the saints Fabian and Sebastian. Saint Fabian, martyred in Rome during Decius'¹⁹ persecutions, is wearing a papal tiara on his head, and is attired in an alb, on top of which he has a liturgical vestment, symbolizing the purple cape which Jesus wore during His Passions²⁰. On top of that, he is wearing a cope made of silk brocade woven in vegetal arabesque patterns (plate 10).

The panel on the right of the one described above presents the saints Anton and Francis. They are both wearing the austere robes of monks, with woven ropes tied around their waists (plate 11). In the background, each of them has an embroidered golden carpet tied to a horizontal pole and attached to the ceiling by hoops.

St. Valentine is holding a beautiful Gothic monstrance in his hands and on his head, he wears the bishop's mitre. He is wearing an alb and on top of that a dark blue dalmatic made of silk brocade, while the lining is fire brick red. The short sleeves are decorated with a pattern trimmed with golden metallic threads. On top of this vestment, he is wearing a light green garment adorned on the front with a Latin cross made of bands of red fabric. Over his shoulders, around his neck, he is wearing an *amice* (plate 12).

Another saint depicted in front of him is holding a crozier and a book with locks and ornamental buttons made of precious materials. On his head, he wears a mitre and is dressed with an alb on top of which there is a purple garment of silk velvet and a green cope made of silk velvet brocade woven in

¹⁹ David Hugh Farmer, *Dicționar al sfinților*, Bucharest, 1999, p. 201.

²⁰ E. Braniște, p. 492.

golden metallic thread. The upper side of the cope is closed with two metallic cope clasps and around his neck the bishop is wearing an *amice*. (plate 12).

The lower left panel depicts the holy deacons Lawrence and Stephen, easily identifiable because of their attributes. They are wearing dalmatics, one green, the other red, with black fabric tassels on the edges. They each wear an *alb* underneath, while around the shoulders, in the neck area, is an *amice* (plate 13).

The predella of the same polyptych depicts the *14 Holy Helpers*. Two of the bishops painted in the centre of the panel are wearing red vestments and a golden cope made of silk brocade with stylized vegetal patterns, closed near the top with buckles. Both bishops wear an *amice* around their necks. The bishop standing between the two already described wears a clerical mitre and crozier and is dressed in a black cope made of silk brocade, with the lining made of red fabric. He wears an *amice* around the shoulders (plate 14).

A predella credited to *Vincentius*, a painter from Sibiu, coming from the Evangelical church of Cîsnădie (Sibiu County) depicts scenes from the life of St. Servatius, the patron saint of the weavers' guild of the town. Currently, this liturgical furnishing is kept in the collection of the Brukenthal National Museum of Sibiu. Images of the saint are also featured at the foot of the reliquary cross of Cîsnădie²¹, certifying to the veneration he received from the local community. The centre of the panel is occupied by St. Servatius sitting at a table (the altar table?), covered with a table cloth made of silk brocade with floral and other vegetal patterns made of black silk. Two church leaders are painted either side of him, holding their croziers and wearing their mitres. They are wearing *albs* and on top of them red copes made of silk velvet; the edges of the copes have wide golden bands embroidered onto them, while on the upper back a shield (hood) is present with a wide golden band, embellished with vegetal patterns. The centre of the shield seems to have woven in it with barely visible golden metallic threads the pomegranate motif, symbol of eternal love²². The vestments are closed at the top with fabric laces. Both persons wear an *amice* around their necks. The mitres are also adorned with floral and vegetal patterns, on which there are embedded gems. Servatius, his hands on his chest in prayer is about to be consecrated bishop; behind him, two deacons dressed in dalmatics, one holding a mitre, the other a crozier, seem to be waiting to bestow them onto the new prelate (plate 15).

²¹ D. Dâmboiu, *Orfevrăria liturgică sibiană. Din tezaurul Muzeului Național Brukenthal*, Sibiu, 2004, p. 10.

²² D. Dâmboiu, *Veșminte prețioase folosite de clerul catolic din Transilvania înainte de Reformă, în 800 de ani Biserica a Germanilor din Transilvania*, Thaur bei Innsbruck, 1991, p. 150.

The festive ensemble of the Cund polyptych (Mureş County)²³, dating back to the first decades of the 16th century and kept today in the Evangelical church “on the hill” from Sighişoara, displays on its panels the legend of St. Nicholas: *St. Nicholas gives money to three poor girls*, *St. Nicholas calms the storm at sea*, *St. Nicholas saves three innocent men from death* and *St. Nicholas feeds the town*.

In the lower left panel, seen from the front, (*St. Nicholas calms the storm at sea*) the saint is depicted dressed in bishop’s vestments, the mitre on his head and the crozier in his right hand. On either side of the frontal part of the mitre there are two people outlined with golden metallic thread.

St. Nicholas painted under a cloud holds with his left hand the mast of a ship battered by the storm and is dressed with an alb, on top of which the cope is tied across his chest with a golden fabric lace. The vestment, made of red silk brocade and blown by the storm, has a band of golden metallic thread sewn on its edges, representing a geometrical model forming diamonds, inside of which there is a dot. Around his neck, on his shoulders, the holy prelate wears an *amice* (plate 16).

The same holy prelate is depicted on the panel describing the theme *The Dowry for the Three Virgins*. In his right hand he is holding the bishop’s crozier, while in his left the bag with money. Saint Nicholas is portrayed by the painter wearing an *alb* under a golden vestment and a red cope made of silk velvet. The golden garment under the cope seems to be made of silk brocade, with a vegetal pattern going down in bands throughout the vestment and woven into it. The lower part of the garment has tassels hanging from it. The red cope worn on top has its edges sewn with a band of golden ornament in a geometric pattern. The cope is closed across his chest with a thick golden lace. Over his shoulders and around his neck he wears an *amice* (plate 17).

The same vestments are present on the Cund polyptych in the panel depicting the theme *St. Nicholas feeding the town*. Here, the holy prelate is present in the middle of a crowd unloading sacks full of grain off a ship. He blesses the food with his right hand, while with his left hand, folded on his chest, he is holding the crozier (plate 18).

St. Nicholas stopping the executioner from killing the three innocent men is depicted by the prelate holding the blade of a sword. This panel of the Cund polyptych presents St. Nicholas against the reddish backdrop of a cliff, wearing the same clerical attire described above (plate 19).

A panel painted with the *Engagement of Virgin Mary* belonging to the disassembled polyptych from Feldioara (Braşov County), shows the prelate’s

²³ V. Roth, *Siebenbürgische Altäre*, p. 92-93.

face at the center of the scene on a background of golden brocade (plate 20). He takes part in the event as the priest, surrounded by the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, together with a retinue of young women and men holding branches, painted on the left and right sides of the panel. The painting, dating back to the end of the 15th century, is signed by Jonas P(ainter) Nore(mbergensis)²⁴. The prelate presiding over the event is dressed in the typical manner of hierarchs from the time of the painter, with a bishop's tiara on his head, wearing an alb and reddish-brown cope made of silk brocade with outlines made of golden metallic thread forming a floral pattern. The edges of the vestment form a band woven with threads of gilded silver with gems on top in a floral pattern.

The polyptych dedicated to St. Martin, one of the most venerated saints of the Middle Ages²⁵, dates from 1520-1522 according to written sources, and originated from the al Church of Fișer (Brașov County) and is kept nowadays in the Evangelical Church of Sibiu – Johanniskirche. Its festive frame depicts four scenes from the life of St. Martin: *St. Martin giving his clothes to a beggar*, *St. Martin resurrecting several people*, *St. Martin's Liturgy* and *the Death of St. Martin*.

In the lower left panel, seen from the front, painted as *St. Martin resurrecting several people*, the monk who became a bishop of the Church is represented in the ecclesiastical vestments corresponding to his rank. He wears an alb whose straight folds reach the ground and on top of that a red cope made of silk velvet with a shielded hood (clipeus) with a tassel and a spherical knot on the lower side, decorated with a wide band woven with gilded silver thread. On top of the hood a hexagonal shape is sewn in black silk thread. The inside of the shield has a stylized pomegranate with a gem at its centre. The red cope has a wide golden band sewn on the front, on either side of the chest and on the lower side hang red tassels. A golden morse, decorated with a floral pattern and gems is used as a clasp, holding the cope in the chest area. Around his neck, the bishop wears an amice and on his head he has a bishop's mitre with vegetal patterns. In his hands, he holds a crozier, a sign of his clerical rank (plate 21).

In the upper right panel, seen from the front, we have *St. Martin's Liturgy*, an iconographic theme inspired from the Dürer work: *St. Gregory's Liturgy*. St. Martin, kneeling before the altar, is surrounded by two deacons also on their knees and dressed in *albs*, on top of which they wear green dalmatics with red tassels on the edges. Around their necks, they are wear-

²⁴ C. Firea, *Arta polipticelor*, II (MS), p. 149.

²⁵ D. Farmer, *Dicționar*, p. 361-362.

ing an amice with a golden band sewn on it, while on the back sides of the dalmatics are sewn ornaments shaped like lion protomes off of which a cord with a metallic sphere and tassel is hanging. Another cleric, dressed in red velvet, is holding the saint's bishop's mitre. St. Martin, with his hands raised in prayer before Jesus, who is coming out of a sarcophagus laid on the altar table in the *Vir dolorum* position, is dressed in an *alb*, on top of which he wears a golden brocade vestment, woven with red thread in vegetal patterns. On the dorsal cross of the chasuble there is the embossed image of the crucified Jesus. Around his shoulders, in the neck area, he wears an *amice* on which a band of golden fabric is woven in black silk thread in a crisscrossed pattern (plate 22).

A similar model, from the 16th century, but where Jesus is embroidered crucified on a tree trunk or on the trunk of a vine with cut down branches, is kept at the Brukenthal National Museum of Sibiu [inv. no. M. 1963 (6228)] and originates from the chasuble of the Evangelical Church of Ghimbav (Braşov County).

The panel depicting the *Death of St. Martin* shows the prelate lying on the ground, his head against two sizeable books, wearing an *alb* under a vestment made of golden silk brocade woven in a vegetal pattern. A black *crux commissa* is embroidered on his chest. A golden cope clasp is hanging from his chest area, inside which the bust of the Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus is portrayed. Around his shoulders, in the neck area, he is wearing an *amice* similar to the one described above. On his head, he wears a bishop's mitre, a symbol of clerical rank (plate 23).

The polyptych dedicated to the *Saint Apostles*, kept in the Evangelical church of Hălchiu (Braşov County), presents on one of its panels the iconographic theme of *Visit and salvation of the bishop by St. Andrew*. Through the semi-circular window of a house, one can notice three people sitting down around a table. The individual on the right is a bishop dressed in red brocade with small floral elements woven in golden thread on top. On his head, he wears a bishop's mitre decorated with precious stones (plate 24).

The canopy of the predella of Richiş, dating back to the first decades of the 16th century and presents the scene *Baptism of Christ*, and is kept today in the southern tribune of the Evangelical Church of Mediaş (Sibiu County). In the centre of the scene, on a mountainous background, are depicted Jesus, kneeling in the river Jordan, and St. John the Baptist with his hand in the water, ready to perform the act of baptism. Behind John, an angel-deacon is painted holding with both hands a thurible made of precious metal. He is wearing an *alb*, whose straight folds reach the ground. He has two bands of

golden fabric around his chest – the equivalent of the orarium in Orthodox liturgical attire (Latin: *orarium, sudarium, linteolum*), a liturgical piece specific to deacons²⁶ (plate 25).

A polyptych kept in the Evangelical Church „on the Hill” in Sighișoara (Mureș County), dating back to the first decades of the 16th century, depicts several bishops of the Catholic Church; in their midst we can identify St. Martin, St. Dominic and St. Erasmus. The four panels of the polyptych present scenes from the legend of St. Martin. On the back of the panels there are icons of four saints standing. In the central panel we see St. Martin giving his cloak to the beggar from Amiens. He is wearing the bishop's mitre on his head and is dressed in an alb, a dark coloured vestment with golden tassels at the lower edge and on top of another cope, red in colour and made of red silk satin, with edges embroidered in silver which denotes different protagonists (saints or evangelists?). Over the shoulders and around the neck he wears an amice. The red cope is held up at his chest by two oval clasps made of gold with precious stones embedded in the middle, with a green tassel hanging off each clasp. A golden chain with a round cope clasp made of precious metal, in the middle of which we can see the Virgin Mary, holds the vestments in place over his chest. Next to him, on the right and seen from the front, we see St. Dominic dressed in a reddish-brown monk's robe. At his feet there is a bishop's mitre on which two saints are embroidered, one of whom is probably Jacobus Minor, identifiable by his attribute – the saw. There are red and black precious stones embedded in the golden edge of the mitre. In the background, behind the two aforementioned saints, there are three other bishops, mitres on their heads and amices around their necks, wearing golden copes made of silk brocade with a vegetal pattern outlined in black silk, in a stylistic manner typical for the Renaissance (plate 26).

Wearing the same vestments described above, St. Martin is painted on the panels of the polyptych in the following scenes: *Healing a leper*, *The resurrection of a suicidal young man*, *The resurrection of a hanged man* and *Curing Arborius' daughter* (plate 27, 28, 29, 30).

The back of the panels shows St. Martin with a mitre on his head and the crozier in his hand, with an amice around his neck, dressed in an alb covered by a dark coloured liturgical vestment with tassels on the lower part, on top of which he wears a red cope with green lining. The vestment is completed with a cope clasp shaped like a flower, made of precious metal. There is a thick golden chain around his neck, with an oval clasp depicting a saint. (plate 31)

²⁶ E. Braniște, Ec. Braniște, *Dicționar*, p. 300-301.

St. Giles, painted on the outside of a panel, is dressed in a white tunic under a reddish-brown monk's robe. At his feet there is a bishop's mitre and the saint is holding a bound book and a processional cross (plate 32).

The outside of the panel above shows another unknown monk, holding a loaf of bread. He is wearing a long white alb under the dark coloured monk's robe (plate 33).

One of the panels of the polyptych of Jidvei (Tătărlăua?) depicts the pair of saints Servatius and Gregory the Great. St. Servatius, holding a crozier and a key, is dressed in an alb, dalmatica or chasuble made of brown fabric, embellished with a band on the lower edge and a red cope. Around his neck, he is wearing an amice and on his head a bishop's mitre. St. Gregory the Great is wearing an alb under a green vestment sewn with a golden band on the lower edge and a silk cope with wide edges of woven golden thread. The vestment is tied with a golden cope clasp. On his head he is wearing the papal tiara (plate 34).

Mural painting, unlike panel painting, does not pay so much attention to details, nor does it render the glow of the vestments. Depending on the execution technique and on how well the fresco is preserved, we often witness a lesser survivability of the painting.

In the fresco of the Lutheran church of Alțâna (Sibiu County), in a nook located on the southern wall of the choir, a painting dating back to the 14th century depicts a priest painted with his hands held together in prayer. Only parts of the original painting are still visible, but one can still notice a red brocade vestment with a pattern made of crisscrossing diamonds, in the middle of each diamond there is a dotted pattern. The edges of the fabric have white embroidered bands. Around his neck and shoulders, the priest seems to be wearing an amice (plate 35).

A large number of unidentifiable saints are painted between the three windows of the apse, behind the Latin capital letters naming the saints: St. Valentine, St. Anthony the Great, St. Eligius and St. Erasmus.

St. Valentine is painted under a Gothic aedicule, wearing the bishop's mitre on his head and a vestment embellished with a pattern of crisscrossing red lines. On top of this vestment he is wearing a fire brick-red cope and around the neck and over his shoulders an *amice* (plate 36).

St. Eligius, who went on to become the patron of goldsmiths, blacksmiths and farriers²⁷, is represented under some arcades, painted standing with the bishop's mitre on his head, holding a golden chalice in his left hand and a crozier in his right. A priest who later became bishop of Noyon in 641,

²⁷ D. Farmer, *Dicționar*, p. 184.

St. Eligius (Eloi) is depicted in a prelate's attire: a long fire brick robe under a golden cope, embroidered with a pattern made up of red circles. On the sides and around the neck, the piece seems to have a golden band sewn (plate 37).

St. Anthony the Great, with a book in his hands and giving blessings, is presented in a line with the other saints. He is wearing a white alb decorated with a pattern made up of bands and fragments of arches sewn in black thread, on top of which he wears a reddish-brown cloth cope. One can see a white cross shaped like a letter "T" (a seam on his vestment, or the upper side of his staff? plate 38).

In spite of the bad condition of the fresco, one can still identify a cleric dressed in a fire brick red vestment crisscrossed by grey diamond stripes which make up a grill similar to the background (plate 39).

In the valley of the Târnava Mare, in another village close to Mediaș, Dârlos (Sibiu County), there is another surviving Gothic hall church, whose frescos are partially preserved both on the outside and on the inside. Bordered by rectangular boxes and red bands, the southern corner of the choir is covered in scenes depicting martyrdom. Behind the pews of sculpted wood, one of the boxes shows the death of a saint (St. Catherine?), lying in a sarcophagus. Two clerics are depicted around her: a priest and a deacon. The priest, holding a Gospel book is wearing an *alb*, on top of which he has a blue cope made of silk and woven with white silk thread in a pattern of floral arabesque. Behind him, a deacon, also wearing a long *alb* which reaches the ground, is holding a twisted wax candle approximately two meters high. The architectural elements in the background suggest important buildings surrounding the scene (plate 40).

Among the scenes with an eschatological character which cover the western wall of the chapel of the church of Hârman (Brașov County), we mention the one depicting the *Gates of Heaven*. A long suite of saints led by St. Peter, represented holding the keys, is patiently waiting to enter the narrow wooden door. Among the holy prelates we can recognize two popes because of their headpieces. Both wear precious vestments. Probably made of silk brocades, the vestments are embellished with stylized vegetal patterns. The green or red garments are painted with long straight folds reaching the ground (plate 41).

In overlapping registries painted in the linear-narrative style, the northern wall of the church from Ighișu Nou (Sibiu County) is decorated with scenes from *The Martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria* and with images characteristic of the *Legend of the Holy King Ladislau*, known in iconography through his fight against Cumans. Framed in a decorative rectangle, the scene drawing attention is the one depicting the funeral of St. Catherine. Laid down

in a sarcophagus close to a church with three naves, choir, apse and belfry, the holy martyr is surrounded by a group of four clerics. One of them, the one giving her the blessing, can be recognized as a bishop because of the mitre he has on his head and the crozier a deacon in the background is holding. The bishop is wearing a golden silk cope. The original decorations have been lost to time or to recent restoration (the painting was exposed to the light of day in the fall of 2014). A deacon standing behind the bishop is wearing a white tunic that reaches the ground. The other two monastic characters are wearing long vestments, green and white in colour (plate 42).

In the fresco of the choir of the Evangelical Church of Mălâncrav (Sibiu County), dating back to the 14th century²⁸, Saint Gregory the Great is painted under a Gothic aedicule, sitting at his writing table and leaning over a book. On top of the dark-coloured vestment, he is wearing a golden cope made of silk velvet, sewn with a stylized black pattern. On his head, a sign of his ecclesiastic rank, he is wearing a bishop's mitre (plate 43).

In another frame painted near the choir, the holy doctor of the Catholic Church, Jerome, is also painted seated at his writing table. He is wearing a fire brick red vestment with a green cope on top. On his head, he wears a bishop's mitre (plate 44).

Next to him, St. Ambrose, assisted by the angel St. Matthew the Evangelist seems to be musing on the manuscript lying on the desk in front of him. On top of his alb, he is wearing a blue cope. (plate 45).

Also in Mălâncrav, on the eastern wall of the choir, under a recently-installed wooden coat rack, a few busts of saints of the church are painted. On either side of a *Vir Dolorum* stepping out of the sarcophagus, we see two holy prelates of the church. The first one, St. Nicholas, with his crozier in his left hand and the mitre on his head, is wearing a vestment made of golden brocade whose decorations have faded away with time (plate 46).

The other holy bishop, painted on the right side – seen from the front – is wearing a bishop's mitre and is dressed with the same long golden vestment (plate 47).

Saint Nicholas with the three strategists is painted on the northern wall of the Evangelical Church of Mediaș (Sibiu County), in one of the registries edged with red rectangles. Following the initiative of Michael Paulini, the church's mural painting has been restored by Gheorghe Ciobanu²⁹. Remov-

²⁸ Vasile Drăguț, "Iconografia picturilor murale gotice din Transilvania" în, *Pagini de Veche Arta Românească*, II, Ed. Academiei R.S.R., Bucharest, 1972, p. 55.

²⁹ V. Drăguț "Picturile murale de la Mediaș: o importantă recuperare pentru istoria artei transilvănene" în: *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor*, Seria Monumente istorice și de Artă,

ing the different layers of plaster, he unveiled again the approximately 100 square meter large fresco which includes the northern wall of the nave, the northern wall of the collateral and the inside of the wall separating the two³⁰. An inscription painted on a rectangle, which extends the width of the painted scenes, dates the fresco to 1420³¹. Dressed in liturgical vestments, the holy bishop is wearing the prelate's mitre and a golden cope with a narrow white band sewn at the edges. Underneath, he wears a long, fire brick red vestment (plate 48).

Because of the surviving inscription, we know that the fresco of the Reformed church from Ocna Sibiului (Sibiu County) was painted in 1522 by the master painter *Vincentius Pictor* from Sibiu. Under the archway of the southern wall, in a rectangular box, we see a high-ranking church official performing the Liturgy. He wears a bishop's mitre on his head and is dressed in an alb, over which he wears a green vestment and a cope. Yet again, the decay of the painting makes it impossible to identify any decorations which might have been embroidered on the vestment. Behind him, kneeling down, a person dressed in a red coat is taking part in the religious service (plate 49).

Flanked on either side by boxes depicting the *Allegory of Charity* and the *Archangel Michael evaluating the souls of the believers*, the fresco of the chapel *Corporis Christi* from Sânpetru (Braşov County) depicts the moment of the miracle of transubstantiation. The priest performing the mass in front of the Holy Altar is leaning above the chalice, holding the sacrament and blessing it. Jesus himself is shown over the sacrament, "showing his real presence in the Eucharist"³². The priest is wearing an alb and a silk cope. Around his neck, over the shoulders, he is wearing an *amice* (plate 50).

A lunette located above the scene described above depicts, on a blue background, the *Liturgy of St. Gregory the Great*. Standing in front of the Holy altar, the hierarch is blessing the sacrament and golden chalice laid before him. He is wearing an alb, over which he has a red cope sewn with a pattern of circles with a dot in the middle. The edges of the vestments have diamond-shaped bands woven in white thread sewn onto them. The dorsal cross is embroidered in the same diamond-shaped pattern. The deacon standing behind him is wearing a long fire brick red vestment and is holding the papal tiara of the holy hierarch (plate 51).

1976, 2, p. 12.

³⁰ Alexandru Avram, *Topografia monumentelor din Transilvania. Municipiul Mediaş*, Sibiu, 2006, p. 22.

³¹ V. Drăguţ, "Picturile murale", p. 22.

³² Dana Jenei, *Pictura murală gotică din Transilvania*, Bucharest, 2007, p. 82.

The eastern wall of the northern side nave of the Evangelical Church “on the Hill” from Sighișoara (Mureș County) presents a large depiction of the *Judgement Day*. Holding the keys and ready to open the gates of Heaven, St. Peter is leading the retinue of true-believers towards the *Heavenly Jerusalem*. Because of their head pieces, we can recognize a few high-ranking prelates among the followers. Although the painting has not been preserved in all its size, one can still see the polychrome vestments worn by the clergy (plate 52).

The fresco of St. Matthew the Evangelist located in the Church “on the Hill” from Sighișoara, donated by the fur makers guild in 1483, is attributed to Valentinus Pictor, a painter active between 1480 – 1550³³, member of the city council of Sighișoara (1483–1494) and mayor in 1490³⁴. The Holy Evangelist is depicted with the Gospel under his left arm and the processional cross in his right. He is wearing an *alb* and over it a green vestment (a cope?) (plate 53).

The fresco of the same church depicts a scene of martyrdom with a holy bishop, with a mitre on his head and dressed in an alb, over which he wears a red vestment and a blue cloth cope. He seems to be wearing an amice made of golden fabric around his neck. The painting has been partially destroyed and covered with a layer of plaster (plate 54).

Conclusions

The presence of ecclesiastic vestments in such a large number of medieval mural and panel paintings is justified mainly by the nature of the iconography (religious representations), but also by the place where they have been identified (former medieval Catholic churches erected by the communities of German settlers coming from the West).

The garments represented in the paintings, veritable document-images of the studied period, are mirrored by existing pieces on display in museum collections. By comparing the two, most items of liturgical attire used by the Catholic Church have been identified: the alb, the chasuble, the cope, the amice, the cope clasp, the mitre. The relatively small number of liturgical objects surviving to this day in museum collections is due to their being gradually phased out in the aftermath of Reformation, to time decay, and, most of all, to the lack of interest in replacing them once they were worn out. However, the fact that we can identify these garments in paintings testifies to the fact that they served as models to painters of the age. Moreover, they have never been fully abandoned: we now know that several Transylvanian parishes continued to use them even after the Reformation, for varying lengths of time.

³³ C. Firea, *Arta polipticelor*, I, p. 184.

³⁴ D. Jenei, *Pictura murală gotică*, p. 96.

The numerous depictions of lay, military and ecclesiastic attire present in medieval paintings reflect the fashion of the age, their way of thinking and the display of social status or of the person's standing within the ranks of clergy. This repertory brings supplementary information to whoever is interested in the study of this specialized type of garments.

This information represents perhaps the last and most important historical document, shining back at us from a time which, considering the long history of our civilization seems close to current days.

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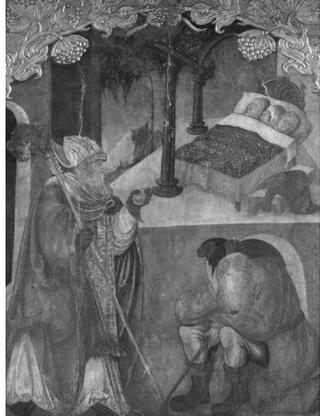
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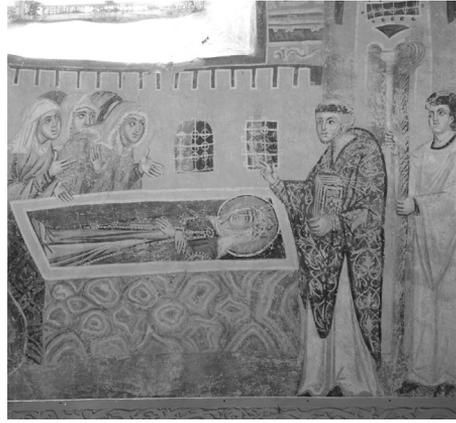
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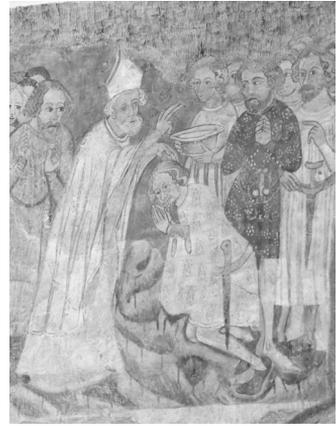
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