

THE CHURCH OF VIRGIN MARY IN MALANCRAV

Dana Jenci

Historical Data on Apa Family.

The church in Malancrav was built as a court church by counts of the Apa family in several phases of interventions between the first part of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century. Owners of the lands beginning with the thirteenth century, the Apas belonged to the high Transylvanian aristocracy that has given leaders and princes.

The first documentary mention of the locality dates from year 1305 when the possessions of the nobleman **Apa** (in documents beginning with 1258) were divided between his successors. *Almakerek*¹, along with other villages of the estate, Neudorf and Peschendorf are the due of Apa's youngest son. Gregorius; **Gegus** (Geegus, Jegus Gyegus), as he is later called in documents, is mentioned between 1305-1340, being considered the forefather of the Apas. The construction of the court church of the family in its primarily shape, dated by the scholars in the first part of the fourteenth century, from which are preserved now the modified nave and west tower, could be considered the foundation of Gegus (2,6). In 1309, "Hericus of Almakerek" was priest in Malancrav that belonged from religious administrative point of view to Cris/Kreis. Few years later, in 1320 the church in *Albkarak* is also mentioned.

For a long time, *Malmkrog/Malancrav/Almakerek*, together with Neudorf/Nou Săsesc, Kreisch/Cris, Felsendorf/Floresti, as an enclave of Weisenburg/Alba Iulia County (placed between the Seats of Mediasch/Medias to the west, Schässburg/Sighisoara to the north and east and Schenk/Seica to the south), was the subject of a long dispute between several Counties. In year 1322 the Diet in Turda clearly shows that the estate belonged to the Alba Iulia County since more than hundred years ago, when the Cathedral was founded and in 1340 the Council of the City of Hermannstadt/Sibiu recognizes the possession of the successors of the nobleman Apa of that estate, including *Halbencragen*².

In 1349, King Louis of Anjou signs in *Alba Juliae, terra Transilvaniae* the documents that attest the possession of magister **Iwanus/Johannes** (1345-1374) the son of Gegus of *Medium collum*³ on his ancestors' estate formed by the six villages. Johannes, mentioned in documents until 1374, might be the donor of the painting in the nave, dated "soon after 1350" (9). Between 1366 and 1386 are mentioned his sons **Petrus** and **Ladislaus**.

¹ *Almakerek, Albkarak* - the Hungarian form of Malancrav, in English "round apple forest".

² *Halbencragen, Almkragen, Halmkrog* - German form of Malancrav, in English "half collar" or "half slope".

³ *Medium collum*³ - Latin form of Malancrav, in English "half collar" or "half slope".

In the first part of the next century, between 1398 and 1451 the head of the family is *militis magistri Nicolaus*, “the son of Petrus Apa of Malancrav”. Devoted to the Anjou royal family, Nicolaus took part in 1403 to the revolt against King Sigismund of Luxembourg (between 1401 and 1403). The royal pardon document delivered through *relacio Piponis da Ozora* mentions that Nicolaus was the familiar of Nicolaus Csaky, vicevoivod of Transylvania and one of the leaders of the rebellion.

Between 1408 and 1445 (testament in 1432), there is also mentioned his wife, Anna of Birlhelm/Biertan, the daughter of the other vicevoivod Johannes of Waradya. In 1418 Nicolaus travels to meet Emperor Sigismund in Konstanz, Switzerland. Among the several acts delivered by Sigismund for “... *fidelis noster dilectus egregius miles Nicolai filius Petri Apa de Almakerek*”, there is also the one through which the village of Biertan receives the right of “*jus gladii*”, Nicolaus and his twin brother Georgius of *Halmkrog* being *comes* of Biertan until 1440.

In 1424 Nicolaus receives an indulgence letter from Pope Martin V in order to build the Sacred Blood Chapel (*capellae Sanguinis Christi in Malencrach Transilvaniae*). There is no evidence that the chapel has ever existed, but some sources speak about the church in Malancrav as a pilgrimage place, where precious relics were preserved. The dimensions of the building overpasses, indeed the proportion of a court chapel.

“The noble and severe Knight Appafy Miklos of *Almkragen*”, as Count Heydrich of Alzen/Alțina calls Nicolaus in their German correspondence, continues to appear in documents as part in trials alone, against the sons of count John Bethlen in 1439, or in 1440 together with his son Ladislau. In 1447, November 5th, Nicolaus writes his testament that mentions as the unique heir, his grandson, Michael. He dies in 1451.

Victor Roth was the first scholar who has deciphered at the beginning of the twentieth century in the graffiti preserved on the eastern wall of the apse the year 1404/05 (38). Since then on, this date was considered in the bibliography as a *terminus ante quem* for the reconstruction of the sanctuary. Gernot Nussbächer, very kindly read especially for this study the inscription: “... *Anno... Anno Domini Millesimo Quadrigesimo Qu[.]to. Dominus Nico ... Voluisset...Domin...sibi... Marie Virginis*”(1404/05).

Such a precious work as the sanctuary of the church could be definitely donated by a high positioned and enlightened personality as Nicolaus was. The indulgence letter asked from Pope Martin V in order to found the Sacred Blood Chapel shows his building disposition, while his great piety is proved by the generosity for the Church recorded in his testament. The presbytery has been reconstructed and richly decorated with sculptures, carved stones and wall paintings around year 1400 in one of the most spectacular expressions of the “international style” in Europe, linked with the Bohemian art. Prague, one of the most important European Gothic centers of the time, was the court of Vaclav of Luxembourg (1378-1419), the brother of Sigismund, Emperor of the Holy Empire and King of Hungary and after 1419, King of Bohemia. It is difficult but not impossible to consider that Nicolaus mentioned in documents beginning with 1398, a familiar of the Transylvanian vicevoivod, built and painted the sanctuary before 1404/5 when the graffiti was written. His real ascension begins only later: if in 1414 *magister* Nicolaus was still mentioned along with his

brothers Ladislaus, Johannes and Georgius, in 1416 he appears for the first time in documents as *miles*, knight of the royal guard, short time later being *comes* of Biertan. There is no doubt that this new status was gained through his merits, being known that the Transylvanian army, led from 1414 again by Nicolaus Csaky (!) took part to the battles of the King in Italy (1411-1413) and on the Danube line, on the territory of Bulgaria, Serbia or Bosnia, mostly after 1413. In Nicolaus travels in Switzerland to meet Sigismund, who names the ex rebel *hospitum nostrum* and *fidelis nostri grate et sincere dilecti egregi*, that shows that Nicolaus undoubtedly were in the grace of the King. In Konstanz, where the works of the Ecumenical Council would mark the end of the “great Schism “ in the Roman Church, gathered all the great political personalities of Europe of the time together with their courts from which artists made part. Pilgrims searching for work were also there for sure. The travel in Switzerland might offer to Nicolaus many opportunities to encounter and invite artists to build the sanctuary in Malancrav.

In the same time, even for paleographers, that hardly readable graffiti inscription on the wall of the choir is not an indubitable mark. The writing seems to be several decades later than the beginning of the fifteenth century and the year could be simply wrong written (Nussbächer).

That is why, it might be considered also the hypothesis that the works to the sanctuary, including the carved stone decoration and the paintings were donated by Nicolaus after his 1418 voyage or maybe in connection with the indulgence letter from 1424, given by Pope Martin V for the chapel that seems that have never been built.

In Nicolaus’ testament from 1447, **Michael Apa** (1440-1469), his grand son was mentioned as the single heir, still an adolescent. In 1467, Michael takes part to the rebellion against King Mathias Corvine and the history seems to repeat: in November 22nd the King forgives him and one year later he receives back *de jure* the goods of the family. Michael dies in 1469; his wife Clara and sons Franciscus, Leonhardus and Nicolaus get back the possessions only in 1474.

Mihail Apafi and his wife, Clara are the donors of the polyptic altar preserved inside the Church (20). In the central image, their patrons, Archangel Michael and St Clara present them to Virgin Mary. There is possible that the altar - work of an artist linked with the workshop of Michael Wolgemut in Nürnberg, to be done after Apafi’s amnesty. In the painting, he addresses his prayer to Jesus: *o, fili dei, miserere nobis*, while his wife, Clara prays to Virgin Mary: *ora pro me sancta dei genitrix*. Around the central image of the *Virgin with the Child adored by angel musicians and donors*, there are four virgin saint martyrs: *Catherine, Barbara, Margaret, Agnes* and scenes from the life of Virgin Mary: *The Birth of Jesus Christ, The Adoration of the Magi, Dormition of the Virgin, The Ascension* (feast days). Outside the panels: the *Annunciation, the Circumcision, Jesus to the Temple, the Archangel Michael and Saint George killing the dragons*. On the predella is represented the devotional scene *Vir dolorum* with Jesus carrying the instruments of Passion between Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist.

The Church

Without archeological and parament researches, indispensable for a complete knowledge of the monument, the data concerning the datation of the phases of construction are pretty relative. The old foundation of the counts Apafi of Malancrav has been

presumably built as a Romanesque basilica with three naves, a bell tower on the west side by Gegus in the first part of the fourteenth century, while the sanctuary was rebuilt around year 1400 in “Gothic international style”.

The present aspect of the church is considerably affected by the incisive intervention done at the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1913-1914 (1). In 1924, Mihail Csaki, inspector to the Commission of Historical monuments was writing in his report that “in 1913 there were rebuilt the aisles (!), the carved stone elements and the ceiling”. Then, there have been totally removed the plaster of the facades, that were preserving, after certain sources, outside paintings (an *Adoration of the Magi* was on south, *saints* and *angels* on north). The wooden ceilings were replaced, those of the aisles being tilted after the slope of the roof (6). A part of the decorative carved stones - window and doorframes, were replaced with new ones (2). The interventions continued and finished after the World War, in 1924/1925, when consolidation works to the paintings in the nave took place too.

The rebuilt sanctuary has a rectangular choir and a polygonal apse covered with cross-ribbed vaults, strengthen outside by buttresses (4, 7, and 20). High, narrow windows with specific tracery in the upper part, penetrate the walls of the apse and the south walls of the choir where there is preserved a round window decorated in a similar way (23). Rich decoration carved in stone with profiled ribs and vegetal brackets, treated also as canopies above niches for statues. The keystones of the vaults are decorated with grotesque-vegetal elements (a leaf-mask) and with the coat of arms of the donors along with the inscription: GENTILAE SCUTUM APPAE. The tabernacle has a late Gothic coronament with the relief of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ between Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist, the theme being symbolically linked to the Holy Sacrament preserved inside.

The presbytery of the church, decorated and painted in the same phase of interventions is one of the most complex, unitary and spectacular works of the “international style” in Europe. In link with the reconstruction of the presbytery, the Romanesque nave of the church has been also modernized in Gothic style: the four pairs of arcades between the nave and aisles, supported by prismatic pillars receive a pointed shape and the openings are enlarged, new Gothic carved stone frames being installed (1, 9-10). After the interventions from early twentieth century that changed many of them, closer of the original shape is the portal of the principal access on west, now closed, with Late Gothic profiles - a central fleuron and typical vegetal decoration, showing the same style as the rest of the works around 1400 (5).

The bell tower has four levels and is now flanked by two rooms arranged latter in the western part of the aisles as school and funeral chapel where are preserved the tombstones of the Apafi family. In the northern part of the choir, under the sacristy, in 1688 has been arranged a crypt for the monumental tomb of Prince Michael II Apafi, the masterpiece of the Transylvanian sculptor Elias Nicolai that is now preserved at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest.

Restoration works in the twentieth century:

- 1913-1914: radical interventions to the church stopped by the war.
- 1925: conservation works to the wall painting in the nave.
- 1968: works of electrification.

-1974: restoration of the altar in the workshop of the painter Gisela Richter in Brasov.
-1988: restoration of the outside walls that surround the church led by architect Hermann Fabini in Sibiu. The upper part of the walls was rebuilt in brick. The red blue windows installed in 1913-1914 were replaced.

Other medieval works of art in the church: bell from the second half of the fourteenth century, stales in the sanctuary made in the workshop of Johannes Reichmut in Sighisoara in the first part of the sixteenth century, font from around 1500.

The Wall Painting

Inside the Church, on the northern wall of the nave there is preserved the vastest wall painting ensemble in “Gothic narrative-linear style” in Transylvania that probably dates back from mid fourteenth century (9). The frescoes in the presbytery were painted later, around year 1400 in link with the reconstruction of this part of the church, being one of the masterpieces of the “international style” in Europe (24).

The Wall Painting in the Nave

The paintings, a real synthesis of the history of the salvation, based on the story of the two Testaments is disposed in scenes arranged in five registers that could be read as a *bustrofidonical* writing, sequential from left to the right and from right to the left.

The scenes from the upper registers, more remote to the human visual field, are vaster than the others, the preoccupation of the medieval artist to assure the unity of perception of the ensemble, being obvious. The painting in the nave has been damaged during the successive interventions: around 1400 the shape of the windows and arcades was modified, being installed new carved stone frames and in 1792, the level of the ceiling has been changed, covering the upper part of the first register of paintings (9). Maybe then, the paintings were whitewashed, being cleaned in 1914 by Imre Szöts, architect and Zoltán Veres, painter. Neat reparations to the paintings with colored plaster were made in 1924-1925. During other interventions from the twentieth century disappeared or were covered with reparation plaster some scenes that Éber mentioned in 1915.

The superficial lime wash traces that still cover the whole surface of the paintings make difficult the perception of the scenes, mainly of those from the higher registers, inaccessible in the same time because of the distance. Beginning with the western corner from the superior part are represented scenes from the Old Testament -The Creation of the World, The Life of Jesus Christ from the New Testament (Childhood, Passion and Resurrection), a developed representation of The Dormition of the Virgin and images from the life of some martyrs saints.

The first register – **The Genesis:** *The Separation of Light and Darkness, the Creation of Stars, the Creation of Vegetation, the Creation of Birds, Fish and Animals, the Creation of Eve, Adam and Eve in Paradise, the Original Sin, Adam and Eve expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve leaving the Paradise, Adam and Eve on Earth, Abel and Cain, the Death of Abel* and a deteriorated zone where Éber still saw in 1915 *Cain after the Death of Abel* (Radocsay).

The second register- **The Childhood of Jesus Christ** begins with a rare image of the Holy Trinity whose supernatural character is emphasized by the circular shape of the frame. In the presence of St Gabriel Archangel, the Father, sitting on a rainbow (symbol of reconciliation between God and mankind) keeps the new law in his hand, preparing the infant Jesus to come into the world. Follow the common scenes from of the Cycle: the *Annunciation*, the *Visitation of Virgin Mary*, the *Birth of Jesus Christ*, the *Annunciation of the Shepherds*, the *Adoration of the Magi*, *Irod commands the martyrdom of the Innocents*, the *Martyrdom of the Innocents*, the *Flight to Egypt*, the *Presentation to the Temple* and again a deteriorated zone where Éber could see in 1915 the scene of Jesus Christ at 12 years old.

The third register is dedicated to the **Passion of Jesus Christ**. The first two scenes are widely covered with reparation plaster, being seeable only small fragments (11, 13-14): *the Last Supper*, *the Prayer in the Ghetsemane Garden* (there is visible the figure of Jesus in prayer while *dextra dei* benedicts him) the *Arrest of Jesus Christ* (13-14: Judas kisses Jesus while He heals Malchus' ear, Peter keeps the sword with both hands), *Jesus at Ana*, *Jesus at Caiapha*, the *Flagellation*, *Jesus at Irod*, the *Crowning with Thorns*, *Ecce Homo*, *Jesus carrying the Cross* (a soldier keeps the nails and hammer in his hands leading the group, Simon of Cirene helps Jesus to carry the cross, the group of Women Saint close the right part of the composition), *Jesus nailed on the Cross* and the *Elevation of the Cross* (two rare scenes taken from *Speculum humanae salvationis*), the *Crucifixion* (the "classic" image in which a soldier rises the sponge and Longinus pierces Jesus' rib from which spring blood and water that cure his ill eye; John holds Mary between Salomea and Magdalene).

In the fourth register are represented the episodes that follow the death on the cross of the Savior in Gospels: *the Deposition from the Cross*, *Christ mourned*, *the Entombment*, *the Resurrection*, *Noli me tangere* (12: Jesus shows himself to Magdalene as a gardener), *the Unfaithfulness of Thomas*, *the Ascension*. The middle of the register is occupied by an amplified representation of the **Dormition of Virgin Mary**, in the Byzantine iconographical variant, preferred also by the Catholic visual arts of the fourteenth century: *Koimesis* (9, 13). The images linked to the dedication of the church are placed on the best perceptible zone from south, where the entrance for the noblemen is. Mary lies on the catafalque mourned by the Apostles while Jesus that occupies the center of the image in his mandorla holds her soul. John keeps his head, in an affectionate way near Mary and Peter sprays with sacred water. The scene is almost identically reproduced three times. The second image where takes the supernatural "unseen" detail, includes the miracle of Jehonias' hands, the Jewish priest that tried to profane the burial ritual, cured by the Virgin. Through the third image, Jesus and Mary in a *mandorla* among Apostles in prayer (13-15: in fact the amplification of this detail of the *Koimesis*, absent in the previous scene), is represented the *Assumption*. The last three scenes of the register illustrate the life of a martyr: the saint with an angel, a deteriorated zone from which can be seen only the silhouette of fortress, the saint is tormented, beaten by four ill-wishers, designed, in the spirit of the age, with caricatured pig like faces (13-14, 18).

The fifth register, damaged by the modifications brought later to the architecture, preserves figures of martyr saints. In 1915 Éber identified *St John the Evangelist* on the south face of the first western pillar, while on the extreme eastern zone still can be recognized *St Catherine* kneeling in front of the wheel of her torment (21). On the central pillars can be also seen a

saint (12) and a hermit saint along with a princess (9: *St Catherine with her spiritual father? The temptation of St Antony?*).

The archaic simplified manner of the drawing that expressively outlines the shapes on conventional light backgrounds, the thematic and the detailed way of presenting the topic, permit to identify the features of the “Gothic linear-narrative style”, a wide spread trend in the peripheral central European cultural areas, that finally reaches to confound which the popular art. The influence of the book illustration on the wall painting (Mâle), in this case *Speculum humanae salvationis*, explains the coherence of the sacred history of redemption, beginning with the creation of world and man in his perfect shape to reign it, the falling, the coming of Jesus - true God and true Man into the world to redeem through his sacrifice the sins of the mankind, the glorification of Virgin Mary - the holy mother of the incarnated word and the martyrdom of the saints in their attempt of *imitatio Christi*.

The special attention accorded to some themes, shown through their representation in several successive scenes as the *Martyrdom of the Innocents* (two images), the *Crucifixion of Jesus Christ* (three images) and *Dormitio Virginis* (three images) and the presence of some rare scenes as The Holy Trinity or the *Elevation of the Cross* are due to graphic sources. The figures are briefly described in crowded static compositions. Their lack of dynamism is made up by the expressive stylization of shapes and volumes, the hands, of a primordial importance, being frequently the only elements in movement. They concentrate the message of the narrative substratum in jests and codified attitudes, emphasized in the same time by the facial mimic.

Gothic narrative-linear ensembles were painted during all fourteenth century, especially inside the countryside small churches of central Europe. In Transylvania paintings of the kind are preserved in Homorod (1300), Mugeni (the first half of the fourteenth century), Drauseni (the third quarter of the fourteenth century). Stylistic and iconographic similarities with paintings in Slovakia (Zehra, Cecejovce, Podolinec - the image of the Trinity) have permit to date the frescoes in the nave of the Church in Malancrav immediately after 1350, being hypothetically donated by count Johannes Apa.

The Wall Painting in the Sanctuary

The ensemble preserved inside the sanctuary of the church is, with no doubt, one of the most spectacular examples of the “international Gothic trend” of the European painting around year 1400 (24). The frescoes belong to the same phase of interventions with the reconstruction of this part of the church, entirely covering the walls. After the results of the recent investigations, their state of conservation is good enough and there are not proofs of a “Baroque restoration” or of *al secco* painted details, as some sources mention (Radocsay, Vatasianu). In 1882, the paintings were “cleaned” and whitewashed up to a level of 3 m. Once the limewash removed remained the preparatory drawing and the first colors used by the painter, blue and green in pale traces (26, 28-30: Munteanu).

The iconography is mainly dedicated to the Life of Jesus Christ illustrated by the episodes around His Birth and Resurrection, in the same time being glorified the Virgin, to which the church was dedicated. On the vault of the sanctuary (25) the images are displayed

on the deep blue background, in the southwest area being represented the scenes of the **Childhood of Jesus Christ**. *The Annunciation*: the scene includes the representation of the mystery of embodiment. From a Heaven symbolically painted God the Father sends the Infant Jesus who carries the Cross on his shoulder into the World on a ray light preceded by the Dove of the Holy Spirit. *The Birth of Jesus*: Mary tries the water into the bath that a servant fills. Behind her, Joseph keeps the Babe. *The Adoration of the Magi*. *The Presentation to the Temple*. On the eastern surface of the arc of triumph there is painted the **Virgin** as *Mater Misericordiae* (22), while two other scenes dedicated to her are represented in the second register of the sanctuary: the *Virgin with the Child*, on east near the last scene of the Passion (30) and *Coronatio virginis* among angels musicians, on south (26, 28).

In the north eastern sector of the vault of the choir there are painted the four **Doctors of the Catholic Church** sitting to their scriptories along with the apocalyptic symbols of the **Evangelists** (25): Ambrosias with the ailed lion of Mark (NV), Jerome with the eagle of John (NE), Augustin with the bull of Luca (NE), Gregory the Great with the papal *triregnum* with the angel of Mathew (SE).

On the vault of the apse are represented **Martyr Virgins** on thrones with their consecrated attributes (24): *Apollonia* keeps a tooth in her hand while an angel offers her a pair of tongs; *Dorothy* – the Infant Jesus offers her the flower basket; *Ursula* – an angel offers her the arrow; *Catherine* with the wheel near her, a flying angel gives her the sword; *Angela* – an angel offers her a lily; *Margaret* with a small dragon near her; *Barbara* with the tower while an angel offers her the sacred host; *Agnes* with the lamb, *Lucia* – an angel carries a scroll with the inscription: *lucia v-go*; *Agatha* holds a palm leave and has the name written behind her, on the throne.

In the sanctuary, on the walls the scenes and characters are displayed in registers separated through decorative bands. **Female and Male Saints** without distinctive attributes, seldom a cross in their hands, decorate the southeastern part of the sanctuary (28).

The firsts lower register is decorated with a frieze of busts of Saints under arcades that emerge to the central image of **Vir dolorum**, on east (34-37). Two blessing Bishop Saints flanks Jesus, one of them with a key being *Peter* (35). Immediately near Peter can be also identified after his X cross the *Apostle Andrew*, while the rest of the saints have no attribute, in this register of which important areas are damaged or limewashed.

In the second register, between the two images of *Mary* already mentioned are painted figures of **Female Saints** (29). On the south wall, near *Coronatio Virginis* appears the rare image of *Anna Metercia with the Holy Family*, scene that can evoke the sacred patron of the wife of Nicolaus Apafi. This image that worships the Mother of the Virgin and her relatives in Malancrav, shows near the central group of Anna, Mary and the Child - *Metercia*, the other two step sisters of the Virgin, daughters of Anna - Salomea and Mary Cleophe, with their sons, Jesus' cousins and future Apostles: John, Jacobus Major, Jacobus Minor, Simon, Judas Thaddeus, Joseph Justus. Along with the paintings in Sant Ana de Mures, also in Transylvania and with the altar of Heilige Sippe in Cologne (1420), *Anna Metercia with the Holy Family* in Malancrav is one of the earliest representations of the theme, being almost unknown to the rest of Medieval Europe until the end of the fifteenth century. The register is close to west by the high-dimensioned protective image of *St Christopher* (26).

The third register: figures of **Male Saints**. On the southern wall of the choir are painted the saints Order Founders: *Dominic and Francis of Assisi* (26). Nearby, above the circular window there is the *crucifix* carried by flying cherubim from which Francis receives the *stigmata*. In symbolical connection with the theme of Jesus on the cross, inside the window frame there are two figures of the Redeemer's sacrifice: *The Pelican feeding Her Little* and *the God's Lamb*. Follow a Bishop Saint identified with *Gerard*, the first Bishop of Cenad (Dragut), the *Three Holy Kings of Hungary* – *Ladislau, Steven and Emeric* and *St Louis of France* (26).

Into the lunettes: on the wall of the choir *Jonah* with the whale. On the southern wall of the choir: *St George killing the Dragon*, *Archangel Michael* of the Apocalypse and *St Laurence* with his attribute, the grill (26). On the arc of triumph, flanking *Mater Misericordiae*, the Apostles Peter and Paul (22).

In the northern zone of the sanctuary without windows, where the continuous surface of the walls permits a coherent iconographical display there are represented the scenes of the **Passion of Jesus Christ**: *the Last Supper*, *Jesus washing the feet of the Apostles*, *the Prayer in the Ghetsemane Garden*, *the Arrest of Jesus*, *Jesus at Ana and Caiafa*, *the Treason of Judas*, *the Suicide of Judas*, *the Flagellation*, *the Crowning with Thorns*, *Jesus carrying the Cross*, *the Crucifixion*, a limewashed zone (*the Deposition?/the Entombment?/the Mourning?*), *the Resurrection*, *Vir Dolorum*, *Noli me tangere*, *the Ascension* (24, 27, 30).

- *The Last Supper* (choir - lunette N): Jesus and the apostles are disposed around a round table. In the center Jesus between John who keeps his head on His chest and Peter. Judas stays on the opposite side of the table, having different colored clothes. On the table, the Pascal lamb and a knocked shape bread from which Judas takes a piece to put it in the same dish with Jesus.
- *Jesus washing the feet to the Apostles* (choir - lunette N): Jesus washes Peter's feet who makes the typical jest of protest.
- *The Prayer in the Ghetsemane Garden* (apse - lunette N): Jesus prays while the Apostles Peter, John and Jacob sleep somewhere behind Him. • *The Arrest of Jesus in the Ghetsemane Garden* (the two scenes are painted on the surface of the lunette, being separated only by the wickerwork of the garden): Judas kisses Jesus who is half turned to cure Malchus' ear.
- *Jesus to Ana and Caiafa* (apse – lunette E): The two priests are represented, in an unusual way, inside the same image, sitting on the same throne.
- *The Treason of Judas* • *Judas suicide* (choir – wall N): a devil open his mouth to take his soul, other two tear his body to make his entrails scattered.
- *The Flagellation*. • *The Crowning with thorns* (apse – wall N).
- *Jesus carrying the Cross* (apse – lunette E): Simon of Cirene helps Jesus to carry the cross, a soldier that holds the nails of the crucifixion leads the group.
- *The Crucifixion* (apse – wall N, developed on two registers). Jesus on cross between the two thieves that give their souls on e to an angel with covered hands, the other to a devil. The spear pierces Jesus' rib. Nearby there are the sponge and the red roman flag with the inscription S.P.Q.R. Though the lower part of the composition is damaged and limewashed, the relief of the haloes of the Female Saints and of John the Evangelist can be seen. Other two damaged scenes of the cycle (*The Deposition from the Cross?/ The Entombment?/Jesus mourned?*) are limewashed too.

- The Resurrection* •*Noli me tangere* (apse – wall N).
- The Ascension* (apse – wall N).

The devotional scene *Vir Dolorum* (39: Jesus shows the wound from His rib while His blood springs in the chalice), once painted in the axis of the apse, is painted again on the north wall in connection with the presence of the Eucharist in the tabernacle. The link with the scenes of Passion among which is placed is symbolical but not narrative.

At a first sight the ensemble of the sanctuary in Malancrav, with the ribbed-vaults marked by the specific motive of the festooned clouds and the supple dancing like figures of the saints profiled on the deep blue backgrounds in an elegant way, seems to be an exponent of the Northern “Gothic International Style”, *par excellence*. The typology and the plastical expression together with the saturate colors plead for the same affiliation. The figurative is totally subordinate to the decorative conception through the symptomatically “Gothic stylization” (Lazarev) concentrated more upon the play of the lines than on the representation of volumes, deepness or perspective. Saints, characters without personality wearing fashioned garments pose under Gothic trilobe golden arcades or, detaching on the abstract background, compose scenes that lack in dramatism. In Malancrav, near the spectacular motive of the festooned clouds, impress the abundance of other decorative elements draw with the template that cover the ribs of the vaults, but also the garments and the textures in the backgrounds, imitating textures. But the decorative bands with fantastic animals and medallions with head of expression originate, this time, in the North Italian art and those elements are not the only *Trecento* features grafted on the Northern Gothic in the manner of the principal painter in Malancrav. The lower register with saints under arcades, the scenic elements, especially the rocky conventional stylized soil with extremely delicate painted vegetation, the figures of flying angels, all come from Italy. The thrones and edicules don't have the extravagant schemes of the late Gothic style, reflecting the more temperate character of the Italian painting of the time. In the rendering of the human figure, from Italy comes the obvious care in using the light-dark contrast for rendering the volumes, but only for faces, one of them being linked with the Siennese painting. Similar provenience has the haloes in relief of the saints and the choral perspective in the crowded scenes of the *Passion*.

That ambivalent orientation is encountered in the compositional schemes too: one of them are issued from the North (*the Flagellation, Jesus carrying the Cross, Noli me tangere* - Parment de Narbonne, 1375), while that scene as *St George killing the Dragon, Imago pietatis* or *Mater misericordiae* clearly derive from Siennese compositions. Other images as *the Birth of Jesus Christ, the Arrest of Jesus, Jesus to Ana and Caiapha, Anna Mettercia with the Holy Family* combine parts of well known variants, the original schemes from Malancrav being either the creation of an outstanding imaginative artist or the use of yet unidentified patterns. For instance, in conceiving *the Birth of Jesus Christ* one have reproduced the first plan of the scene of the Birth of Virgin Mary from the *Trecento* Italian composition, inaugurated by Pietro Lorenzetti, while the upper part takes the extremely used scheme mainly by the Bohemian art of the *Adoration of the Magi* in which the veiled face of Mary is profiled on the pointed tympanum of the manger (Teodoric of Prague, 1368). *The Arrest of Jesus in the Ghetsemane Garden* is at its turn a synthesis of the scheme of the kiss of Judas, as it was painted, for instance, in the frescoes of the Collegiate in San Gimignano by Barna, in 1350 and of the scheme of northern works as the Parment of Narbonne, 1375, in which Jesus cures Malchus' ear. That is why in the

scene from Malancrav Jesus turns His back to the traitor, being likely more involved to cure the servant.

The artistic milieu in which all those Italian and French features were met was the Court in Prague of the second part of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the next. There is known the dynastic link of Emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg (1346-1378) with France as well as his appetite for the Italian art. In his time the Bohemian painting has been strongly influenced by the painting of Tommaso da Modena, knowing in the same time the Siennes models through the direct connections of the Emperor with the Papal Court in Avignon, the bastion of the painting of Simone Martini and his descendants in the North. In the same time, at the end of the fourteenth century, the documents show that Bohemian painters were active in Northern Italy at Treviso and Trento.

During the reign of Vaclav IV of Luxembourg (1378-1419), Charles' son and the brother of Sigismund, king of Hungary, Prague becomes one of the principal centers of the "international style" where along with the strong school of illuminated manuscripts seems that have existed an important center of mural painting whose works were, unfortunately, destroyed in the time of the Reformation. The painter in Malancrav has presumably known the works of Teodoric of Prague and patterns generally used in the works of the Bohemian school of painting as the altar in Vise Brod -1350, the altar of Trebon -1380, the frescoes in Morasice, 1393, the book illuminations from the King from 1390 or 1411-1419, observable in the representation of the scenes: *the Annunciation, the Birth of Jesus, the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation to the Temple, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, Vir dolorum.*

There have been already mentioned the connections with Slovakian wall paintings linked to the Bohemian wall painting sites around year 1400 in Ludrova (the episodes of the *Treason of Judas, the Virgin Saints*), Ochtina and Levoca - 1420. Without accusing a direct link, we also notice the common artistically features with the style of the Styrian Johannes Aquila (ensembles in Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, Austria between 1378 and 1392): the striated haloes in relief, the rocky conventional painted soil, elements in the backgrounds-thrones and edicles, commune iconographic formulas as the association of the Doctors of the Catholic Church with the apocalyptic symbols of the Evangelists. All those similarities are explainable through the circulation of the models and maybe of a common milieu of training. Part of those features are preserved as general stylistic and iconographic data even in later wall paintings in Slovakia, South Tyrol (the Cloister in Bressanone, later Leonard of Bressanone) or Slovenia, towards mid fifteenth century (Jan of Ljubliana - Viseko, Suha).

On the apse walls mainly, near the inscription with the year 1404/05, there are also preserved numerous medieval graffiti of the "*Hic fuit*" type, extremely valuable from documentary point of view. We mention some of the ancients: the one of 1404/5, 1518, *Hic fuit Gasparus...1565*, 1575, LGM 1575, GLP 1593, *Hic fuit MichAEL SVTORIS Schesspurger 1629,CD 1600, Micael Styerer ...pastor ... Almak ANNO 1617, 1629, Elias ...1644, MK 1656, 1677, 1832* and so on (35-37).

Bibliography:

- Bálogh Jolán: Az erdelyi Renaissance, Kolozsvár, 1943
- Binder Pál: Almakerék evangélikus templom, in *Brassoi Lapok*, 1608/1-7 1993
- Rainer Budde and Roland Krischel: Das Wallraf-Richartz-Museum. Hundert Meisterwerke, Köln, 2000
- Fritz Burger, H. Schmitz, I. Beth: Die deutsche Malerei de Renaissance, I-III, Berlin, 1957
- Liana Castelfranchi-Vegas: Arta Renașterii. Secolul al XV-lea, București, 1996
- Enrico Castelnuovo: Il ciclo dei Mesi di Torre Aquila a Trento, Trento, 1996
- Vasile Drăguț: Arta gotică în România, Ed. Meridiane București, 1979
- Vasile Drăguț: Arta românească, I, București, 1982
- Vasile Drăguț: Iconografia picturilor murale gotice din Transilvania, in *Pagini de veche artă românească*, II, Ed. Meridiane București, 1972
- Vasile Drăguț: Restaurarea picturilor murale din Ghelînța, in *BMI*, 1973, p. 45-54
- Vasile Drăguț: Despre picturile murale ale bisericii fortificate din Homorod, in *SCIA*, 1964, nr. 1, p. 104-107
- Vasile Drăguț: Picturile murale din biserica evanghelică din Mălincrav, in *SCIA*, 1967, nr. 1 p. 80-93
- Vasile Drăguț: Picturile murale ale bisericii reformate din Mugeni, in *SCIA*, 1964, nr. 2, p. 307-320
- Vasile Drăguț: Picturi murale exterioare în Transilvania medievală, in *SCIA*, nr. 1, 1965
- Vasile Drăguț: Biserica din Strei, in *SCIA*, nr. 2, 1965, p. 299-317
- Vasile Drăguț: Din nou despre picturile bisericii din Strei, in *BMI*, nr. 2, 1973, p. 19-26
- Vlasta Dvořáková, Josef Krasa, Anežka Merhantova, Karel Stejskal: Gothic mural painting in Bohemia and Moravia, Londra, 1964
- Éber L.: Tanulmányok Magyarország középkori falfestményeiről, I, Budapesta, 1915
- Alain Erlande-Brandenburg: L'art gotique, Paris, 1983
- Hermann Fabini: Atlas der Siebenbürgisch-Sächsischen Kirchenburgen und Dorfkirchen, I, Hermannstadt/Heidelberg, 1998
- Iuliana Fabritius-Dancu:
- George Henderson: Gothic, București, 1980
- Dana Jenei, Andrei Kertesz: Pictura murală din Transilvania, in *800 de ani de Biserică a sașilor din Transilvania*, Wort und Welt Verlag, Thaur bei Innsbruck, 1990
- Dana Jenei: Pictura murală a Capelei *Corporis Christi* din Sânpetru, jud. Brașov, in *Ars Transilvaniae*, V, Cluj-Napoca, 1995
- Johannes Aquila und die Wandmalerei des 14 Jahrhundert, Budapest, 1989
- Victor Lazarev: Originile Renașterii italiene. Trecento, II, București, 1984
- H. L. Keler: Reclams Lexikon der heiligen und der biblischen Gestalten, Stuttgart, 1973
- Hans Peter Landolt: Die deutsche Malerei. Das Spätmittelalter (1350-1500), Geneva, 1968
- Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie, 1972
- Stefania Macioce: Il gotico internazionale, Art e Dossier, Prato, 1996
- Émile Mâle: L'art religieux du XIIIe siècle en France. Étude sur l'icônographie du Moyen Âge et sur ses sources d'inspiration, Paris, 1990
- L'art religieux de la fin du Moyen Âge en France, Paris, 1949
- Nagy Iván: Magyarország Családai, Pest, 1857

- Gernot Nussbächer: "Runder Apfelwald" oder "Halber Kragen". Zur ältesten Ortsgeschichte von Malmkrog/Malancrav, in *Karpaten rundschau*, 30 (2409), 26 Juli 1997 Kronstadt/Braşov
- Radocsáy Denes: *A középkori magyarország falkepei*, Budapest, 1954
- Radocsáy Denes: *Mittelalterliche Wandmalerei in Ungarn Budapest*, 1977
- Louis Réau: *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, I-VI, Paris, 1935
- Gisela und Otmar Richter: *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre*, Thaur bei Innsbruck, 1992
- Victor Roth: *Die deutsche Kunst in Siebenbürgen*, Berlin, 1934
- Victor Roth: *Die Freskomalereien im Chor der Kirche zu Malmkrog*. *Korespondenzenblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgischen Landeskunde*, 1903
- Victor Roth: *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Siebenbürgens*. Strassburg, 1914
- Alfred Stange: *Deutsche Malerei der Gotik*, I-XI, München, Lichtenstein, Berlin, 1934-1961
- Francé Stelé: *Monumenta artis slovenicae*, I, *La peinture murale au Moyen Âge*, Ljubliana, 1935
- Stradovĕká nástĕná malba na slovensku, Praha, 1978
- Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, I-VII, Hermannstadt, 1892 - Bukarest 1981
- Virgil Vătăşianu: *Istoria artei feudale în Ţările Române*, I, Bucureşti, 1959