

Family, Patronage, and Artistic Production: The Apafis and Mălâncrav (Almakerék, Malmkrog), Sibiu District, in Transylvania

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This analysis is a case study of a church in Mălâncrav, Sibiu district, Transylvania, and its patrons, members of the Apafi family, one of the most prominent Hungarian families during the Middle Ages as well as in the modern period. This article is an attempt to correlate the documents issued for the Apafi family with the iconographical data offered by the rich interior decorations still preserved in the church in order to understand the meaning and the importance of this sacred place in the family's history.¹

Mălâncrav is located in a picturesque, hilly area with many vineyards. The village's remote location and poverty were remarked on by the nineteenth-century traveler Charles Boner,² who stated that the only stone constructions were the church and the owner's manor house inhabited in those times by the Countess Susan Haller. It is not known where the manor house was situated.³ One may assume that it was probably located on one of two plateaus:⁴ either the one situated to the southwest of the church (some 200 m away, where the abandoned community feast house is located), or situated on the lower plateau to the north, where the priest's house now stands.

¹ Hereby I wish to express special thanks to all the professors, colleagues and friends from the Department of Medieval Studies of Central European University. I also want to thank the Krems Institute for offering me the possibility to use images from their large database and to Peter Böttcher for his generous help.

² *Komm Mit*, (Bucharest: Verlag Neuer Weg, 1985), 68.

³ On a plateau situated on the north of the church stands now a big house that was used by the community as a feast house. Taking into consideration its shapes we may suppose that it was built in the end of the nineteenth century or beginning of the twenty century. The discovery of a reused door frame with some remaining inscription (possibly from the seventeenth century) raises new questions.

⁴ Géza Entz, *Erdélyi építészete a 14-16 században* [Transylvanian architecture during the fourteenth up to sixteenth century] (Cluj: Az Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület Kiadása, 1996), 54-55.

The topographical location of the church (fig. 1) is significant: It is positioned on a small hill that dominates the whole village. The monument is a basilica with one nave and two side aisles, a polygonal apse and a western tower, a sacristy, and a cylindrical tower located on the northern corner between the sacristy and the northern wall of the apse. Initially, access to the church was through the late Gothic western portal. This portal is now walled up, and the entrance is through the side doors. It is worth noting that the apse with its buttresses is better preserved than the side aisles which have been heavily restored.⁵ The building itself is not a large one. It is surrounded by a wall that in the past was provided with towers, but now only the entrance tower is preserved.



Fig. 1: The church of Mălâncrav

From an architectural point of view, the church in Mălâncrav can be included in a series of Gothic basilicas built in the fourteenth century (i.e.,

⁵ The analysis of the church architecture is more difficult as a consequence of the restorations done in the beginning of the century (around 1913-1914) by the Commission of Monument Conservation (Budapest). Observing the difference in time and style between the wall paintings in the nave and those in the apse, V. Drăguț proposed two phases of construction supposing that the nave belonged to an earlier building to which later a new choir, the present one, was attached.

with a tower on the western side of the nave). This type was typical for villages situated in the region of the Târnava Mare river: Bratei (Pretai, Barathely), Curciu (Kükülökörös, Kirtsch), Așel (Ecel, Hetzeldorf), Șaroș pe Târnava (Saros, Scharosch), Richiș (Riomfalva, Reichesdorf), Copșa Mare (Nagykapus, Grosskopisch).⁶

For a long period, starting from the fourteenth century up to the eighteenth century, there is material evidence, such as wall-paintings, the altarpiece, the key-stone in the apse, the tomb stones and the written sources, all of which indicated that the church in Mălâncrav was the family church of the Apafiș.⁷

From a genealogical point of view, the Apafi family is a branch of the Becse-Gergely kindred, who were also the ancestors of another well-known family: the Bethlen.⁸ According to the historian Imre Lukinics, the Becse-Gergely were of Hungarian origin and became lords in the counties of Komárom, Csepel, Tolna, and parts of the Tisza region and especially in Transylvania, near the Someș (Samos) river and the Târnava (Kükülo) river.⁹ The family properties were held in comunon in the beginning, but in 1305 a document issued on April 15 by the Chapter of the Church of Archangel Michael in Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár, Weissenburg)¹⁰ indicates that the lands were divided between the sons of the first Apa: Nicholas (ancestor of the Apafi), Gregory, and Jacob (founder of the Bethlen

⁶ Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române* [History of the feudal art in the Romanian countries] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1959), 1:417-418.

⁷ The literature referring to the church from Mălâncrav and its interior decoration is very rich. See the latest bibliography in Erno Marosi, ed., *Magyarországi Művészet 1300-1470 körül* [The Art of Hungary between 1300-1470] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 1:850-851. See also Zsuzsa Urbach, "Ikonográfiai megjegyzések az almakeréki nativitas freskó egy motívumához," [Comments on the iconography of the nativity fresco from Almakerék] *Ars Hungarica* 2 (1995), 169-185; idem., "Megjegyzések a soproni Zettl-Langer gyűjtemény osztrák gotikus táblaképéhez," [Comments on the Austrian panel in the collection Zettl-Langer from Sopron] *Tanulmányok Csakai Endre emlékére* (Sopron, 1996), 95-110.

⁸ János Karácsonyi, *A magyar nemzetségek a XIV század közepéig* [The Hungarian families until the middle of the fourteenth century] (Budapest: Kiadja a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1900), 214-226.

⁹ Imre Lukinics, *A Bethleni Gróf Bethlen Család Története* [The history of the family Bethlen from Beclean] (Budapest: Athenaeum R. T. Kiadása, 1927), 1-14.

¹⁰ Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (Hermannstadt: Franz Michaelis Kommission, 1892), 1:229-230; (after late copies). Translated document in *Documente privind istoria României. Veac XIV. Colectia Transilvania (1301-1320)* [Documents concerning the history of Romania. Fourteenth century. Collection about Transylvania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1953), 1:42-44, doc nr.55.

family)¹¹. This document also provides the first mention of the village Mălâncrav among several others such as Noul Săsesc (Apaújfalu, Neudorf), Beșa – present day Stejereni - (Besse, Peschendorf), as belonging to Gregory, son of Nicholas.

A later document from April 18, 1322 contains the confirmation given by Thomas, Vojevod of Transylvania and Comes of Szolnok, that these villages and some others in the same region, such as Criș, Florești (Földszin, Felsendorf), and Roandola (Rudály, Rauthal) were part of the Alba (Fehér) county and belonged to *magister Gyegus*, son of Nicholas, and his brother, *comes Jacob* son of *Apa*.¹² These two charters provide the first references to the village Mălâncrav as a property of the Apafi family in this region.

The geographical and social context in which this village is located is quite complex because the status of the Saxon peasants is worth paying attention to. Mălâncrav is in the so-called Saxon region in Transylvania on the Târnava Mare river, in the zone between the towns Sighișoara (Segesvár, Schässburg) and Mediaș (Medgyes, Mediasch). In the fourteenth century, when the process of colonization was largely over, the social situation of the Saxons was not identical in all these areas. Not all the Saxons who settled in Transylvania benefitted from the charter given by King Andrew II (1141-62), the *Andreanum*, that conferred free status and privileges to the Saxons who came to populate this region of Transylvania.¹³ For example, in the *Capitulum* from Laslea (Szászentlászló, Gross-Lasseln), six villages were inhabited by Saxon serfs rather than free peasants. These villages correspond to six properties of the Apafis: Florești, Criș, Mălâncrav, Noul Săsesc, Stejereni and Roandola.¹⁴

From a religious-administrative point of view, the church in Mălâncrav was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Alba Iulia.¹⁵ In the

¹¹ Ivan Nagy, *Magyarország Családai Czimerekkel es Nemzékrendi Táblákkal* [Coats of arms of the Hungarian families and Genealogical trees] (Pest: Beigel J. and Kozma Vazul, 1857), 48-52.

¹² Zimmermann, Werner, *Urkundenbuch*, 1:361; *DIR* XIV, 2:37, doc.88.

¹³ Thomas Nágler, *Așezarea sașilor în Transilvania* [The settlement of the Saxons in Transylvania] (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1992) 167-168; Ștefan Pascu, *Voievodatul Transilvaniei* [The Voievodat of Transylvania] (Cluj: Dacia, 1971) 1: 115-129.

¹⁴ Nágler, *Așezarea sașilor*, 221-223, 255-256 citing G.E. Müller, "Die deutschen Landkapitel in Siebenburgen und ihre Dechanten" *Archiv* 48 (1934-1936): 3-102 on the basis of the beginning of the 14th century archives. György Györffy, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország Történeti Földrajza* [Historical geography of Hungary during the Arpadian times] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 1:562; 2:195-197, 198, 200, 202.

¹⁵ A papal document from 1191 mentions the existence of a Saxon Prepozitura in Sibiu (founded between 1188-1191) which, probably in the beginning was subordinated directly to the Papal See, but later it belonged to the archbishopric of Esztergom. This

regions belonging to the royal lands inhabited by free Saxons, the naming of the priest was a function of the community. However, when the church was a private property, the landowners made the decisions regarding religious matters, and thus they named the priest. This was probably the case of *Herricus, plebanus de Almakerék*, mentioned in a document issued by the chapter of Alba Iulia in 1309,¹⁶ as being involved in a long trial with the chapter from Alba Iulia. *Herricus*, together with other priests from the Saxon region such as *Herricus*, dean of Criș and priest in that village, or *Herricus* of Beșa, were asked to give an account of offences and damages as well as for debts, unpaid fees, and incomes.¹⁷ Due to this document we have the first indirect indication about the existence of churches in Mălâncrav, in Criș, Beșa, and Noul Săsesc,¹⁸ all of which were Apafi properties at that time (later, Criș became a Bethlen possession).

Unfortunately, there is no direct written data referring to the origins, the construction of the family church, and its function in earlier times (fourteenth century). However, an analysis of the architecture indicates that the first building was done probably during the middle of the fourteenth century. Then, at the end of the century, the apse was rebuilt, and the nave windows, together with the western portal, were modified.

Correlating all the pieces of information provided by the monument itself with the family genealogy, one might suppose that there were probably two or three persons who were the first patrons of this church. From a stylistic analysis of the architecture, it can be suggested that a member of the family initiated the construction of the church. The nave and its northern wall frescos are the actual remains of this early donation. Then, in the end of the fourteenth century, another patron determined the modification of the apse, nave windows, and western portal. Perhaps the wall-paintings adorning the apse, which are different in style and dating to those in the nave, were also his donation. This second donator ordered his coat of arms to be carved on the keystone in the apse. This is the oldest coat of arms of the family and shows a helmet surmounted by grapes and a grape leaf. Jozséf S. Keöpeczi considered that the helmet was typical for

situation created instability as a consequence of the fact that the Bishopric of Transylvania permanently tried to include these organizations under its jurisdiction. *DIR. C.XI.XII,XIII*, 2:11, doc18.

¹⁶ Zimmermann, Werner, *Urkundenbuch*, 1:239-292; *DIR. XIV*, 1:92-160, nr.103.

¹⁷ This long document contains the notes for six month of trials which were kept in front of Philip of Sardinia, canon of Oristano, doctor in cannon law and listener sent by brother Gentile, cardinal-priest of the church San Miniato al Monte, *apostolic nuncius* of pope Clement V.

¹⁸ Ulric, parish priest of the Saint Catherine church of Noul Săsesc. *DIR.XIV*, 1:111.

the fourteenth century, being a *Topfhelm* (*csuposisak*) type.¹⁹ The representation has traces of paint and looks more like a seal with an encircling inscription: + o AN o AVTV o APPA (fig. 2).



Fig. 2: The fourteenth-century keystone

The inscription, written in Latin letters, has not been interpreted yet. Being placed so high on the vault, it was misread by Viktor Roth as

¹⁹ József Sebestyén Keöpeczi, "A Becse-Gergely nemzetség. Az Apafi és a Bethleni gróf Bethlen család címere," [The Becse-Gergely kindred. The coat of arms of the Apafi and the Bethlen counts from Beclean] *Erdélyi Irodalmi Szemle* (1928): 69-83, fig.3.

(GEN(tile) SCVTVM APPA(e)²⁰, and his opinion was taken over by several other researchers²¹. It would be extremely useful to understand the inscription, as it would contribute to the dating of this part of the church and also of the wall paintings.²²

Another late fifteenth-century coat of arms appears on the altar's predella, on the left side, and refers to the altar's donator who represents the third generation of the Apafi patrons.

From the second half of the fourteenth century, the documents show that John Apafi (son of Gregory [Gegös]),²³ his son Peter from Almakerék²⁴ and later his grandson Nicholas Apafi²⁵ had the title of *aulae milites* which, during that period, meant connections with the royal court and high military rank. The career of Nicholas Apafi can be followed over a period of time. He was among the *familiares* of Nicholas Csáki in 1403²⁶ and a *miles* during 1410-41, *ispán* in Bosnia between 1414-18 at Dubočac, Srebrenik, and Vranduk,²⁷ as well as representative of the Transylvanian nobles in 1442.²⁸ These three men, who can be considered the first patrons of the church, were not only big landowners but also members of a military elite that assisted the king and his court in representative as well as in military matters. Their social position and professional or family relations are significant elements to be considered.

²⁰ Viktor Roth, "Az almakeréki templom és mükincsei," [The church of Mălâncrav and its treasures] *Erdélyi nemzeti múzeum érem és régisegtárából* [Travaux] (Cluj, 1912): 134.

²¹ Szádeczky, "Az Apafiak Sirboltja", 186; Vasile Drăguț, "Picturile murale din biserica evanghelică din Mălâncrav," [The mural paintings from the evangetic church of Mălâncrav] *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei* 14 (1967): 79-93; *Komm Mit*, 72.

²² The historian Pál Engel had the idea that it actually represents a Latin transliteration of Greek letters indicating numbers. His hypothesis, based on a deep knowledge of the history of nobility in medieval Hungary, is still problematic. Pál Engel suggested that the double letter P appearing in the family name can be connected with 13th century documents when this kind of spelling was preferred. However, looking through a number of published documents from 14th and 15th century this way of writing the family name is not so consistent.

²³ Pál Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája. 1301-1457* [Secular archontology of Hungary. 1301-1457] (Budapest: História. MTA Történettudományi intézete, 1996) 1:484. Document from 1366.

²⁴ Ágnes Kurcz, *Lovagi kultúra Magyarországon a 13-14. Században* [Knightly culture during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988) 297. Pál Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája* 1:492. Document from 1394.

²⁵ Idem, 1:306, 435, 463. Documents 1410-41.

²⁶ Idem, 1: 306.

²⁷ Idem, 1: 435.

²⁸ Idem, 1: 514.

They indicate certain mentalities and aspirations that might have provided sources of inspiration for the church iconographical program.

The modest exterior appearance of the church creates an impressive contrast to the refined quality of the interior wall paintings, especially those decorating the apse. These frescos were dated to the last quarter of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth (but before 1405) on stylistic grounds and as a consequence of the discovery of a graffito scratched on the southeastern wall of the apse.²⁹ The style of these frescos was generally connected by art historians, as for example V. Drăguț, to the Bohemian style, which came to Transylvania through today's Slovakia.³⁰ Maria Prokopp supposed two different influences: "one from the Szepes region, the other from the royal workshop and both belong to the art of the International Gothic."³¹

The iconographical program, especially the one on the southern bay, presents some particular subjects, which may indicate the special wish of the donator. Therefore these frescos of the southern bay will be the focus of the present paper.

On the southern wall (fig. 3), a meaningful collection of saints was depicted, emphasizing the generally praised features of the medieval nobleman: knightly behavior, respect for family traditions as well as humility and piety. The consistency in the choice of subject by several generations of patrons offers valuable insights into the intention and message of that work for the family and the public. However, this type of study, as Ernő Marosi pointed out, needs the help of other disciplines and will encounter "additional problems related to certain well-defined cultural cycles and their influence. The more concrete sources of ideas we can identify or make probable, the more important becomes the question of the mediating persons and their contacts as well as the concrete historical context"³². Marosi states the intentional role of the patron as initiator of the art object and indicates that it is based on the consciousness of an élite of intellectuals with thorough knowledge of rhetoric and political treatises.

²⁹ Victor Roth, "Die Freskomalereien im Chor der Kirche zu Malmkrog," *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 26 (1903): 6-11.

³⁰ Drăguț, "Picturile murale din biserica evanghelică," 89-92.

³¹ Maria Prokopp, *Italian Trecento Influence on Murals in East Central Europe. Particularly Hungary*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), 104-105.

³² Ernő Marosi, *Kép és Hasonmás. Művészet és valóság a 14-15 századi Magyarországon*, [Image and likeness. Art and reality during the fourteenth fifteenth centuries in Hungary] *Művészettörténeti Füzetek*, (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1995) 244-245.

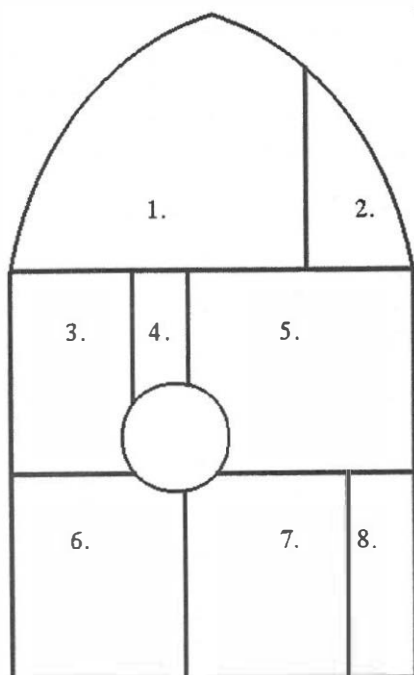


Fig. 3: The wall-paintings on the southern wall of the church of Mălâncrav:

1 Saint George Fighting the Dragon, 2 Archangel Michael and Saint Lawrence, 3 Saint Dominic and Saint Francis, 4 Cherub sending the stigmata towards Saint Francis, 5 Saint Gerhard. Saint Ladislas, Saint Stephan, Saint Louis, Saint Henry, 6 Coronation of the Virgin, 7 Holy Kinship, 8 Saint Christopher

At Mălâncrav we are confronted with a complex situation, which supposes various nuances and has to be approached from different angles. Therefore a detailed description of the southern wall paintings is necessary in order to provide material for interpretation.

On the first upper row of the southern bay the only narrative image on the whole southern wall of the sanctuary is shown. It is a representation

of Saint George³³ fighting the dragon (fig. 4), next to which is an image of the Archangel Michael and Saint Lawrence³⁴ (both placed under a Gothic arcade). Saint George's depiction contains the generally encountered elements in the fight with the dragon. The picture's composition is well balanced. The central space is occupied by the saint,³⁵ dressed in fashionable, knightly vestments, mounted on his white horse, prancing against the dragon that is situated on the right corner. On the right side, in the background, the king's daughter is kneeling on a rocky landscape with some trees drawn in the background. On the left-hand side, the miniaturized castle of the king appears with the terrified people looking from within.

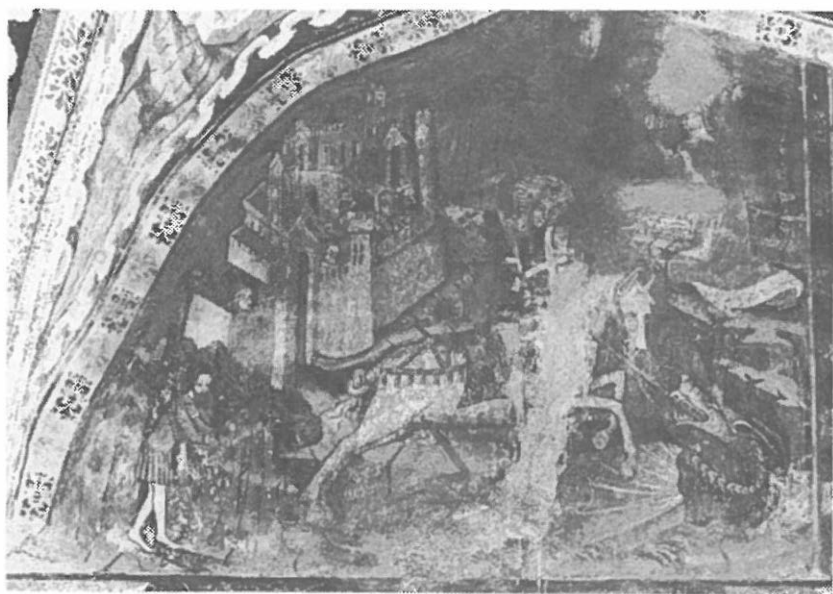


Fig. 4: Saint George Fighting the Dragon (wall-painting, south wall)

The importance given to Saint George among the saints venerated by the Apafi family is further reinforced by his appearance on the right wing of

³³ *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (Rom, Basel, Wien: Verlag Herder Freiburg im Breisgau, 1974), 6:365-390.

³⁴ *Idem.*, 7:374-380.

³⁵ The elegant and fashionable dressed figure of Saint George was linked to the style of Johannes Aquila and his depiction of Saint George in Martijanici (Mártonhely, Slovenia). Marosi, *Magyarország*, 483, 606.

the altarpiece (fig. 5) from the end of the fifteenth century, also a donation of the family.³⁶



*Fig. 5: Saint George Fighting the Dragon;
panel painting from the altarpiece (end 15th c.)*

Considered by art historians such as Viktor Roth,³⁷ Virgil Vătășianu³⁸, or Zsuzsa Urbach³⁹ to be a product of the provincial art influenced by

³⁶Otmar and Gisela Richter, *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre* (Innsbruck: Wort und Welt Verlag, 1992), 46-57; Thomas Nägler ed., *800 de ani. Biserica Germanilor din Transilvania* [800 years. The church of the Germans in Transylvania] (Innsbruck: Wort und Welt Verlag, Taur bei Innsbruck, 1992), 69-70, 78.

³⁷Viktor Roth, "Az almakeréki templom", 164-170.

³⁸Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale*, 1:777-778.

³⁹Zsuzsa Urbach, "Megjegyzések a soproni Zettl-Langer gyűjtemény osztrák gotikus táblaképehez," 108.

Austria, the winged altar is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It is a small altarpiece formed by one central panel showing the Virgin and Child surrounded by four narrow panels with images of four female saints: Catherine, Barbara, Agnes and Margaret. The lateral wings present scenes from Christ's childhood, the Birth and the Adoration of the Magi and, on the right, two scenes, the Death of the Virgin and her Ascension to Heaven. The closed altar is illustrated by two large panels depicting Archangel Michael on the left and Saint George on the right. In the middle, there are four panels showing the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Circumcision, and the Presentation in the Temple. The predella, which is badly preserved, presents the Man of Sorrows together with the Virgin Mary and the apostle John.

The central panel is dedicated to the Enthroned Virgin and Child, and in both corners of the panel, a man and a woman donator are kneeling in adoration. The woman appears in the right corner imploring "*ora pro me sancta dei genitrix*". The intercessor is Saint Clare of Assisi with her attribute, the chalice.⁴⁰ In the left corner the Archangel Michael⁴¹ is depicted behind the male donator who is portrayed as a handsome young man who is praying "*o fili dei miserere mei*". This illustrates the significance of the personal patron saint, the saint whose name the individual had been given in baptism. According to Aron Gurevich, this shows the general belief that "the name affected in a mysterious way a man's essence and a definite connection was established between the heavenly eponym and his mortal namesake."⁴² On the other hand, it was considered that the patron saint offered a special protection for that person and had the role of intercessor for the soul in the moment of death.

A correlation of the documents, the family coat of arms depicted on the left corner of the predella and a stylistic analysis of the panels suggest its dating to the last quarter of the fifteenth century.⁴³ Therefore, the donator must have been that Michael Apafi, mentioned by documents issued for *Apafi Clara relict Michaelis* in 1469 and 1473⁴⁴. He participated in the revolt against king Mathias Corvinus in 1467 which had

⁴⁰ *Lexikon*, 7: 314-318.

⁴¹ *Lexikon*, 3: 255-265.

⁴² Aaron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture. Problems of belief and perception* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1992) 42.

⁴³ Vătăşianu, *Istoria artei feudale*, 777-778; Richter, *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre*, 46-57.

⁴⁴ *Urkundenbuch*, 6: doc 3736, 3938, 3954.

been immediately crushed. Michael Apafi, who then lost his properties, was later forgiven by the king, but soon after he died in 1468 or 1469.⁴⁵

The preference for chivalrous saints is emphasized by the five elegant figures in the second row of the wall paintings (fig. 6). Four of them are dressed in courtly costumes with tight pants, pourpoints, and long, fashionable mantles whereas one represents a saintly bishop⁴⁶. This bishop is, in Vasile Drăguț's opinion Saint Gerald, the first bishop of Morisena Cenad (1036), canonized in 1083.⁴⁷ A close observation of the characters and their attributes permits the identification of the saintly kings. The second on the left is Saint Ladislav, shown as a crowned bearded character carrying an axe in the right hand and the orb in the left⁴⁸. The third personage is old and holds in his hands a scepter with finial and the orb. This may be Saint Stephen⁴⁹ who stands near a younger king who has the same attributes. V. Drăguț⁵⁰ argues that Saint Louis is depicted, king of France⁵¹ and patron of Louis of Anjou, king of Hungary. During his reign, this representation became common in Transylvania (as for example in Sântana de Mureș, Sic, Sâncraiu de Mureș and maybe Bistrița). The fifth depiction is that of a beardless young man with an orb in his right hand; his other hand is raised with a delicate gesture. This holy character looks very similar to the depictions of Saint Emeric even without the often depicted lily, which is his attribute.⁵²

⁴⁵ Richter, *Siebenbürgische Flügelaltäre*, 47. Petre Munteanu Beșliu, "Biserica nobiliară, astăzi dispărută, de la Dumbrăveni (Jud. Sibiu) - Cercetări arheologice," [The church, today disappeared, from la Dumbrăveni (Sibiu district) - Archaeological researches] *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* (1995): 54.

⁴⁶ Roth considers that this scene is meant to commemorate the consecration of the church and those characters represent members of the family Apafi together with the bishop of Transylvania who consecrated the church. Roth, "Az almakeréki templom," 161-162.

⁴⁷ Saint Gerard of Budapest, (September 24) [Gerhard, Gellert, Gerardo], was a Venetian, benedictine monk in San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. Saint Stephen invited him to Hungary in order to educate his son Henry (Emeric). In 1036 Saint Gerard was named bishop of Cenad (Csanad) on the river Mureș. In 1046 he was lapidated in Buda, pierced with the lance by pagans and thrown into the Danube from the hill which now bears his name. He was canonized in 1083 and considered the patron of Budapest. Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien* (Paris: Presses Univ. de France, 1955), 3/2:579.

⁴⁸ *Lexikon*, 7: 361-363.

⁴⁹ *Idem*, 8: 407-409.

⁵⁰ Drăguț, "Iconografia picturilor murale gotice din Transilvania. Consideratii generale si repertoriu pe teme," [The iconography of the gothic mural paintings in Transylvania. General considerations and theme repertory] *Pagini de vechi arta Romaneasca* (Bucharest; Ed. Academiei, 1972), 43, fig. 54.

⁵¹ *Lexikon*, 7: 426-442.

⁵² *Idem*, 6: 144-145.



Fig. 6: *The five chivalrous saints*

The novelty of the Angevin period cult of the saints was the introduction of the ensemble veneration of all the saints of the royal family⁵³. This is the reason why a large number of representations of the “*sancti reges Hungariae*” emerged⁵⁴, several of which are still to be seen in Transylvanian churches⁵⁵.

The representation of these three Hungarian saint-kings was a specific choice by the Apafis, more than likely, in order to assert and enhance their social and political position, thereby expressing a consciousness of themselves as noblemen connected to the court⁵⁶. It is also worth mentioning that in Transylvania the depiction of the group of

⁵³ Gábor Klaniczay, “Rois saints et les Anjou de Hongrie” *Alba Regia* 22, (1985): 57-66.

⁵⁴ Marosi, *Kép és Hasonmás*, 258.

⁵⁵ Vasile Drăguț, “Iconografia picturilor murale,” 76; As for example Crișcior (Krystior-Hunedoara district). See Marosi, *Kép és Hasonmás*, 69, fig. 87. Other representations can be found at Ribița (Hunedoara district), Tileagd (Mezotelegd - Bihor district) dated to the last quarter of the 14th century, and at Remetea (Remete - Bihor district) dating from the first quarter of the 15th century. Marosi, *Magyarországi Művészet*, 2: 1394, 1395.

⁵⁶ Marosi, *Kép és Hasonmás*, 256-258.

the holy Hungarian kings, Stephen, Ladislaus, and Emeric was adopted by Romanian nobles in the Hațeg region and had a similar political function.⁵⁷

Considering the fact that the church in Mălâncrav was located in a region inhabited by Saxons with whom the family had violent border-conflicts,⁵⁸ this depiction starts to be meaningful.

The next group may have been chosen as a reference to the family's sympathies with the Mendicant Orders. The depiction shows two monks which could be identified with Saint Dominic (who holds the Gospel in his right hand and points towards his left) and Saint Francis (fig. 7).⁵⁹ They appear under a double arched frame.



Fig. 7: Saint Dominic and Saint Francis

⁵⁷ Adrian A. Rusu, *Cători și biserici din Țara Hațegului până la 1700* [Donators and churches from the Hațeg region until 1700] (Satu Mare:Ed. Muzeului Sătmărean, 1997), 34-35.

⁵⁸ On March 18, 1345, two of the Apafi family from Noul Săsesc and Roandola were attacked and some precious things stolen. The village chapel built in honour of Saint Katherine was burned and three people died in the fire. Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner, Georg Müller, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (Hermannstadt; Druck von W. Krafft, 1897), 2: 25-26; *DIR* IV, 232-233, doc. 299.

⁵⁹ *Lexikon*, 6: 260-315.

In spite of the bad state of conservation of this part of the wall, situated above the round window, one is able to recognize the Cherub on the cross⁶⁰, sending the stigmata towards the saint. It is Saint Francis of the Stigmata, as Bonaventura promoted it, emphasizing the saint's identification with the sufferings of Christ on the cross⁶¹. This symbology is further enhanced by two other Christological signs, the lamb carrying the cross and the pelican feeding its young ones, appearing on the interior part of the round window.

The Mendicants and especially the order of Saint Francis of Assisi had a spectacular growth especially starting from the second half of the thirteenth century when they massively spread to Hungary. They were particularly successful in Transylvania where approximately half of the monasteries founded in Hungary were located. These convents were generally founded after the year 1320.⁶² Not only was it that the number of churches greatly increased, but also the large number of popular sermons had a strong influence on lay worship in general.⁶³ The Franciscan concern to spread their ideals among the various social levels of the urban communities also had an effect upon the spread of religious images depicting Franciscan saints⁶⁴ as well as people's donations⁶⁵.

Unfortunately, little is known precisely about the earliest family connections with the Franciscans. However, we may suppose that they must have existed, and one small indication lies in the fragmentary

⁶⁰ Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e l'invenzione delle stimmate. Una storia per parole e immagini fino a Bonaventura e Giotto*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1993), 165.

⁶¹ Frugoni, *Francesco*, 26.

⁶² Marie-Madeline de Cevins, "L'église dans les villes Hongroises aux XIV^e et X^e siècles," [Ph.D. diss., Sorbonne, Paris, 1995], 1:213-214.

⁶³ André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en occident aux derniers siècles de Moyen Age d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: Scuola Tipografica S. Pio X, 1981), 388-413.

⁶⁴ Unfortunately there are few preserved depictions of Saint Francis in Transylvania. Drăguț mentions in his repertory of the mural paintings besides Mălâncrav only four other images in Deva (demolished church), Sebeș (Alba district, in St. Jacob's chapel, early 15th century), Cioboteni (Harghita district, in the ex-Franciscan monastery on the western façade) and Sighișoara (Mureș district, evangelical church on the hill on the vault of the bell-tower – 1488). See V. Drăguț, *Iconografia*, 66. In Hungary we know only one representation of the stigmatization at Turnisce (Bántornya, Slovenia) in the church which belonged to the Banfi family. At Keszthely, in the Franciscan church, the Saint is depicted with the cross in the hand. See Marosi, *Magyarországi Művészet*, 2: 1281; 1: 38.

⁶⁵ Bram Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage. The Rise of Professional Artist in Renaissance Italy*, (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 74-77.

tombstone discovered in the graveyard of the ex-Franciscan church in Târgu Mures (Marosvásárhely). The tombstone was ordered for Michael Apafi (aprox. 1470) and, in spite of its condition, the deep carvings still preserve some recognizable elements which look like the Apafi coat of arms from the fifteenth century (similar to the one on the altar's predella and to the coat of arms from a document issued by Francis Apafi in 1493 and bearing his seal).⁶⁶

The last visible row of paintings situated on the southern bay, above the choir stalls, contains three separate scenes. The first on the left is the Coronation of the Virgin, surrounded by angels playing musical instruments, followed by the Holy Kinship (fig. 8) and the massive figure of Saint Christopher carrying the infant Christ on his shoulders.

Under a triple arcade, Saint Anne is depicted with Mary and Christ. On the left, there is another female saint with four children (all depicted with halos) and on the right, another female saint is shown with two children⁶⁷. Saint Anne's arms are embracing the whole group.



Fig. 8: *The Holy Kinship*

⁶⁶Keöpeczi, "A Becse-Gergely nemzetség," 81-83; Geza Entz, *Erdély építészete*, 161, fig. 185.

⁶⁷Drăguț, *Iconografia*, 44-45, fig. 27-30. Drăguț mentions the existence of two similar depictions of Saint Anne in Transylvania: at Sintana de Mures (Marosszentanna, Mureș district) dated at the end of the 14th century and another one preserved only in copies from Iermata Neagră (Arad district). See also Jolán Balogh, *Az erdélyi renaissance* (Cluj: Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet, 1943), fig. 32; Marosi, *Magyarországi Művészet*, 2, 1382.

The notion of Anne's three marriages is a western invention and its depiction, entitled the Holy Kinship⁶⁸ enjoyed a wide diffusion as a consequence of its incorporation into two very popular works: the *Legenda aurea* and the two further versions of Pseudo-Matthew⁶⁹. She is considered in this way "the founding parent of the historical Christian community. From Anne and her daughters came not only Christ but most of the apostles"⁷⁰. Among the cultural roles of Anne, the most important was her function as intercessor for married women and mothers. It was her quality of a mother and grandmother of a sacred family that motivated her association with the idea of genealogy⁷¹. Therefore, it is possible to understand the choice of the depiction of the Holy Kinship in Mălâncrav as an expression of the ideology of the family showing their genealogical pre-occupations. This symbolic function of Saint Anne and the Holy Kinship is especially significant in relation to the fact that the church represented the main burial place of the Apafi family until the eighteenth century.⁷²

In this case, examples of well-documented late burials are meaningful because they show that Mălâncrav was always regarded as the place which preserved the family roots and memories.

Michael Apafi I, Prince of Transylvania, paid special attention to the resting place of his parents and ordered a monumental tombstone to be sculpted (in the last decades of the seventeenth century) by the famous Transylvanian sculptor Elias Nicolai. This richly decorated sarcophagus was meant to commemorate his father George Apafi of Apanagyfalu (Nuşeni, Bistriţa district) who died on February 18, 1635 and his mother

⁶⁸ *Lexikon*, 5: 185-190.

⁶⁹ Kathleen Ashley, Pamela Sheigorn, *Interpreting Cultural Symbols. Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens, London: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1990), 16.

⁷⁰ *Idem*, 3.

⁷¹ *Idem*, 49.

⁷² László Éber, "Apaffi György síremléke," [The tombstone of George Apaffi] *Archaeologiai értesítő* (1902): 97-113; László Kövári, *Erdély építészeti emlékei* [Memories of Transylvanian buildings] (Kolozsvár, 1866); Viktor Roth, "Az almakeréki templom és műkincsei," [The church from Mălâncrav and its treasures] *Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Nemzés Régiséggyűjteményéből* 4, (1913): 128-173, fig. 36; Domonkos Teleki, *Egynéhány hazai utazások leírása* [Some descriptions of Hungarian travelers] (Bécs, 1796), 65; Mór Wertner, "Az almakeréki Apafi-emlékről és udvarházáról," [Memories about the Apafi from Mălâncrav and their manor house] *Századok* (1910): 793; István Wesselényi, *Sanyari világ. Napló 1703-1708. II 1707-1708*, [Sad world. Diary. 1703-1708. II 1707-1708] Lajos Demény, András Magyari ed. (Bucharest, 1985), 500-502.

Barbara Petki, together with two younger brothers Francis and Nicholas⁷³. The monument was situated in the family chapel, which stood on a hill at the entrance of the village's cemetery. Now the chapel has disappeared,⁷⁴ and the sarcophagus was taken to the National Museum of Budapest in the beginning of the century.

An interesting piece of information is provided by a letter discovered by Lajos Szádeczky⁷⁵ in the cartulary of the Bethlen family at Criș (Kreisch, Keresd) written on September 6, 1688 by a certain Peter Alvinczi and addressed to Elek Bethlen. Describing the burial preparations for Princess Anna Bornemisza, wife of Michael Apafi I, in the church in Mălâncrav, this letter reveals that at first they tried to dig a grave in the main nave. But, probably because they found earlier graves and bones, they abandoned the idea and made the grave for the princess under the sacristy.⁷⁶ It is hard to know what the actual situation was because, as far as I know, excavations have been carried out only in the sacristy. However, the recent rescue excavations in the church of Dumbrăveni

⁷³ Viktor Roth, *Die deutsche Kunst in Siebenbürgen* (Hermannstadt: Kraft und Drotleff, 1934), fig. 183.

⁷⁴ Without archaeological excavations it is impossible to know whether that chapel is identical to the one mentioned in a document from March 28th 1424, an indulgence given by the Pope Martin V to the benefit of Nicolaus Apa, for the chapel of the Holy Blood of Christ in Mălâncrav, the diocese of Transylvania ("Capellae Sanguinis Christi de Malenkrach Transilvanæ diocesis"). Franz Zimmermann, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (Hermannstadt: Ausschuss des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, 1937) 4:208, doc. 1945; regest at Pál Lukácsics, *Diplomata pontificum*, 1:157 nr. 731 orig. in the Vatican Archives, Suppl. Reg. Bd. 176 f. 257. Or maybe one should accept the date which was mentioned by Szádeczky as existing on the bricks of the gable: 1633. The chapel was described by Szádeczky as a square construction of approx 8x8 m large with a small tower and lighted by two little round openings above the entrance. On the top of this tower existed a tin flag with the inscription *AP:BO 1651* (which may be connected with the names of Apafi Michael I and Anna Bornemisza), a half moon and a star. Szádeczky, "Az Apafiak Sirboltja és Hamvai," [The grave of the Apafi] *Századok a Magyar Történelmi Társulat Közlönye* ed. Samu Borovszky (Budapest: Athenaeum R. Társulat Könyvnyomda, 1909), 188.

⁷⁵ Idem., 185-202.

⁷⁶ Idem., 194. Wanting to discover the burial place of the Prince Michael Apafi I, Szádeczky started archaeological excavations in the sacristy in October 1908. He also hoped to find there the coffins of the son, Michael Apafi II and his wife Kata Bethlen who both had died in Vienna, and their bodies were transported to the Mălâncrav church temporarily, waiting for the ceremonial burial. However, due to troubled times and legal problems (as a consequence of the fact that with Michael Apafi II the family has died out and the royal treasury claimed its lands) the coffins remained unburied for almost fifty years. Finally, in 1790 the Bethlen relatives buried them. The archaeological excavations revealed the existence of four coffins with skeletons, most likely of Anna Bornemisza, Michael Apafi I, Kata Bethlen and Michael Apafi II.

(Erzsebetvaros, Sibiu district) (which also belonged to the Apafi family later, in the sixteenth century) led to the discovery of an impressive system of double-leveled crypts under the church⁷⁷ which may provide interesting parallels.

Having exposed all these facts and interpretations one important question has to be raised: How much of this can be considered close to the meaning or significance which the frescos and the church had for the family and for their medieval public? It is difficult to answer, but in the case of Mălâncrav, we have documented facts which give some basis for analysis: the family donations for the decoration of the church, the late burial monuments and the indirect documentary evidence, they are existing pieces of the puzzle. The art product as a result of the interaction between the donator's own ideas and the painter's experience is a part of a larger phenomenon which, especially for the fourteenth and fifteenth century, has been less studied in Transylvania. Therefore, this short presentation represents only the starting point of a larger study aiming to illustrate the links between patronage, its social and intellectual background, and the commissioning of art in the region.

⁷⁷ Petre Munteanu Beșliu, "Biserica nobiliară, astăzi dispărută, de la Dumbrăveni (Jud. Sibiu) - Cercetări arheologice," [The church, today disappeared, from la Dumbrăveni (Sibiu district) - Archaeological researches] *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* (1995): 49-56.

MEDIUM AEVUM
QUOTIDIANUM

39

KREMS 1998

HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

Titelgraphik: Stephan J. Tramèr

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, A-3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist. – Druck: KOPITU Ges. m. b. H., Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, A-1050 Wien.

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Vorwort

Medium Aevum Quotidianum legt mit Heft 39 einen Band vor, welcher sich schwerpunktartig mit der Analyse von Bildquellen, vor allem Wandmalerei, auseinandersetzt. Die Autoren der Beiträge stammen aus zwei Institutionen, in denen Bilddokumentation und Analyse konzentriert betrieben werden: dem Department of History an der Universität Kopenhagen und dem Department of Medieval Studies an der Central European University, Budapest. Das erstgenannte Institut ist besonders durch seine Digitalisierung des Gesamtbestandes dänischer Wandmalerei bekannt geworden, der über das Internet allgemein zugänglich geworden ist und als Basis für umfassende qualitative und quantitative Bilduntersuchungen herangezogen werden kann. Das Department of Medieval Studies der CEU konzentriert sich in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften auf die Sammlung, Katalogisierung, Dokumentation und Analyse zentraleuropäischen Bildmaterials. Die Verfügbarkeit des aufgearbeiteten Bestandes via Internet ist in Vorbereitung.

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Gerhard Jaritz, Herausgeber