

COMMUNION THROUGH ART: TWO 17TH-CENTURY BELLS IN TWO CHURCHES FROM FĂGĂRAȘ*

Abstract: The bibliography on the history of civilisation and that of the history of fine arts in Romania includes a series of studies and books dedicated to the topic of bells, these traditional liturgical worship objects that animate the monuments of religious architecture. Art historians are faced with a wide field of research that entails not only the inventory of these liturgical items, but also the identification and study of the different workshops and the activity of the craftsmen and family enterprises that worked for the achievement thereof, especially insofar as the period of the 16th-20th centuries is concerned. Of course, specialised literature has recorded a series of outstanding examples of the genre, but it is equally true that the problem has been debated in the subsidiary of major, much more generous themes, of the kind pertaining to the formal architectural analysis of the monument.²

Despite the requisitioning of the inventory that included these religious objects during World War I, when the material they were made of was used in the war industry, the towers of the Transylvanian churches still retain a large number of testimonies of the genuine “industry,” to whose operation there also contributed, together with the local artisans, craftsmen belonging to well-known smithies in Central Europe.

Keywords: Făgăraș, bells, Churches, arts, Transylvania.

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A future exhaustive repertoire of the bells from Transylvania could include works from the Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and neo-Classical periods. We are still in a period of reporting the material, in which even an objectual presentation of the works could contribute to a better understanding of this theme, which is important not only for art history, but also for the history of crafts in Transylvania, of the relations with the cabinets of Central Europe.

The town of Făgăraș, the centre of the old Land of Făgăraș, is especially known through its architectural monuments (the bastion fortress, the church founded by

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² Müller, Fr., *Zur älteren siebenbürgische Glockenkunde*, in *AVSL*, VI, 1863, p. 200 and passim; Orbán Balázs, *A Székelyföld leirása*, Pesta, I, 1868, pp. 20, 23-25, 64, 106, 112-113, 117, 119-120, 140, 155, 157, 166, 175, 181, 191, 202, 219, 221, 224; II, 1869, pp. 20, 32, 34, 36, 41, 43-44, 88, 145; III, 1869, 12, 37, 50, 116-117, 118-119, 131, 181, 205; IV, 1870, pp. 60, 62, 68, 87, 128, 178, 186, 189, 194, 198; V, 1871, pp. 32, 56; VI, 1873; Victor Roth, *Geschichte des deutschen Kunstgewerbes in Siebenbürgen (Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte, 104)*, Strassburg, 1908, pp. 6-7; Balogh Jolán, *Az erdélyi renaissance*, I (1460-1541), Cluj, 1943, pp. 152, 335; Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în țările române*, București, 1959, pp. 16, 9, 852-853; B. Nagy Margit, *Reneszánsz és barokk Erdélyben*, București, 1970, pp. 295-296; Idem, *Stílusok, művek, mesterek. Művészettörténeti, tanulmányok*, București, 1977, pp. 178-179, 208; Benkő Elek, *Erdély középkori harangjai és bronz keresztelődmedencéi*, Budapest, Kolozsvár, 2002.

Brâncoveanu, the Reformed church, the Orthodox church, known as the church of the "Greeks," i.e. of the non-Uniate Romanians, the Franciscan monastery and the Evangelical church) or through the beautiful parietal paintings and iconostases of the Romanian churches.³ Nothing has been written about the pieces in the liturgical inventory, the objects of worship from the Orthodox church or about the Reformed church. In two of the churches from Făgăraș mentioned above there are preserved bells from the 17th century, works of notable artistic value, which are not mentioned in the specialised literature.

The first in the chronological order is the bell of the Reformed church in Făgăraș.⁴ The assembly (Fig. 1), counting also the mounting structures, has a total

³ N. Aron, *Monografia bisericii, școalelor și reuniunilor române din Făgăraș*, Făgăraș, 1913, p. 198; C. Petranu, *Die Kunstdankmäler des Siebenbürger Rumenen*, in *Melange d'Histoire Générale*, I, Cluj, 1927, pp. 197, 234; Șt. Meteș, *Relațiile bisericii românești ortodoxe din Ardeal cu Principatele române în veacul al XVIII-lea*, Sibiu, 1928, pp. 4-5, 31-32; Idem, *Zugravii bisericilor române*, in *ACMIT*, 1926-1928, pp. 121-123; I. D. Ștefănescu, *La peinture religieuse en Valachie et en Transylvanie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIX-e siècle (Orient e Byzance)*, Paris, 1932, pp. 281-185; V. Literat, *Orașul și Țara Făgărașului*, Făgăraș, 1953; Grigore Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii în România*, II, București, 1965, pp. 79-80; I. Cristache-Panait, *Cu privire la unele monumente din Țara Făgărașului în lumina relațiilor cu "Țara Românească*, in *BMI*, XXXIX, 1970, no. 2, pp. 33-50; Ioana Cristache-Panait, E. Greceanu, *Biserici românești din Țara Făgărașului*, in *MA*, XVI, 1971, no. 7-8, pp. 567-573; Fl. Dumitrescu, *Sculptura brâncovenească*, in *PVAR*, 1974, pp. 39-40; M. Porumb, *Pictura românească din Transilvania, I*, Cluj-Napoca 1981, pp. 93-96; V. Drăguț, *Arta românească, I*, București, 1982, p. 459; Avram Andea, *Constantin Brâncoveanu și biserica românească din Făgăraș*, in *D. Prodan. Puterea modelului*, ed. Nicolae Bocsan, Nicolae Edroiu, Liviu Maior, Aurel Raduțiu, Pompiliu Teodor, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, pp. 84-100; Valeriu Literat, *Biserici Vechi Românești din Țara Oltului*, afterword, edition and index by Nicolae Sabău, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1996.

⁴ The first building of the reformed church in Făgăraș was started in 1629 by Gabriel Bethlen and continued by his widow, Catherine of Brandenburg, who, in a letter dated 22 March 1630, appealed to the architect Giovanni Landi in Alba Iulia "ratione aedificandi Templi ipsius Fogarasensis cum magistris Lapidarijs." However, this place of worship was finished during the reign of George Rákóczi I (1631-1648). The chronicler Szalárdi states that the church, beautiful and low "so as not to deplete the town," was erected in the centre of the town (left to the river Berivoi). This church was seriously damaged in 1658, when the town was destroyed by the Tatars. The next church was built in the Great Square of the town by Michael Apafy I, the Prince Transylvanian, and his wife Ana Bornemisza. The place of worship, which was finished after 1663, stood in the area where the present-day evangelical church was built in 1843. The second Reformed church was destroyed in 1704, during the fights between the Kuruc of Fr. Rákóczi II and the Lobonts. The sanctuary was erected again between 1712 and 1715, in the vicinity of the former street of Hurez. The new monument's founders were Joseph Teleki and his wife Catherine Bethlen, known as Árva-Bethlen Kata. The one who brought his construction to this church was Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, through a donation of 400 fl. For the new church, there were used building materials and decorative fragments of stone that came from the old place of worship. Inside the present-day Reformed church, there is preserved the beautiful pulpit carved in stone, with vegetal ornaments similar to the Brâncoveanu-type stonework, the gravestone of Maria Apafi, the young daughter of the prince, who died on 21 January 1666, and the emblem of the Reformed Consistory, a slab of stone incorporated in the stalls, decorated with an ellipsoidal framework charged with four medallions with the coats of arms of Rákóczi, Apafi, Bethlen and the crest of the town of Făgăraș. The field of the emblem features ecclesiastical symbols (see Gh. Sebestyén, *Arhitectura renașterii în Transilvania*, București, 1963, pp. 60, 63, 68, 69, 113, 196-199; Kovács

height of 90 cm. Without the aforementioned “ears,” the bell measures 76 cm in height and 87 cm on the interior diameter. The bell features a newer mounting and balancing device, cast in metal (the “Patent” trademark), with a height of 66 cm and a width of 68 cm.

The extrados of the bell is richly embellished. In the upper part, we may discern a decorative frieze consisting of small vegetal motifs. Underneath it, in the space bordered by two rows of parallel edges, there runs an inscription in capitals by the master bellfounder:

IN . HONOREM . DEI . FVDIT . ME .GEORGIVS . WEIRD . IN . EPPERIES .
ANNO . DOMINI . M . DC . LI

Underneath the inscribed band, there appears a flatly embossed decoration composed alternately of the exotic fruit motif, framed by rich vegetal bouquets, and heads of angels with wings consisting of plumage stylised according to typical mannerist patterns.

On the band that represents the middle of the bell’s extrados, there are outlined, in somewhat higher relief, the bust figures of the four evangelists (I=11.5 cm) accompanied by their consecrated symbols and by their names engraved in capital letters, at the bottom: S. MARCVS: EVN . ; S MATVS: EVN ; S . LVCAS: EVN ; S . IOANES: EVN. The figure of the child Jesus is placed between Ev. Mark and Ev. Luke. On the opposite side, also in the central space of the exterior of the bell, there is placed the donor’s coat of arms, inscribed in a garland of laurel leaves of ellipsoidal shape. Underneath this crown, one can read the commemorative inscription, in capital letters, on four rows:

AZ : ISTEN : TISTESZEGIRE:
ÖNTETE : EZ HARANGGOT :
DERECZKE : WARASANAK : SARKADI :
MIKLÓS : FÖ : KAPITAN : ANNO : 1651

(In honour of God / has cast this bell / Sarkadi Miklós, captain of Dereczke fortress. The year 1651).

The four evangelists are clothed in simple tunics with a straight cut around the neck and in the adorned with buttons on the chest (Ev. Mark, Fig. 2). Over the tunics, they are wearing loose robes with the conventional folds wrapped across the shoulder or the upper arm. The right hand, holding the writing quill, sometimes points, with didactic moralising gesture, towards the open book in the left hand. The symbols that particularise the characters are placed on the right: the angel with one arm around the shoulder of Matthew and with the other indicating a passage from the Gospel, the lion (Mark), with a profile closer in shape to that of a sheep than to the famous feline, the ox (Luca), with the contours of the head quite correctly shaped, and the eagle (John), with partially outstretched wings, facing left.

András, *Szabályos alaprajzú, olasz-bástyás, várkastélyok Erdélyben*, in *Művelődéstörténeti Tanulmányok*, București, 1980, p. 90; Balogh, Jolán, *Varadinum, Várad vára*, II, Budapest, 1982; p. 363; Dr. Arch. Gheorghe Sebestyén, *O pagină din istoria arhitecturii României, Renașterea*, București, 1987, pp. 102-108, 178-179; Nicolae Sabău, *Sculptura barocă în România*, București, 1993, p. 80; V. Literat, *Un dar al lui Constantin Brâncoveanu la Făgăraș*, in *AIIN*, VII, 1936-1938, Cluj, 1939, p. 603; Kovács András, *Késő reneszánsz építészet Erdélyben, 1541-1720*, Budapest- Kolozsvár, 2003, pp. 149-150.

From a formal point of view, the characters highlight three of the biological stages of life: youth (John) (Fig. 3), maturity (Luke) and old age (Mark and Matthew) (Fig. 2, 4). With the exception of John, with a beardless figure, overshadowed only by his beautiful curly hair that goes down upon his shoulders, the other characters have their faces framed by larger or smaller beards, with the hair arranged in strands. The faces of the evangelists are only partially individualised (Ev. John and Ev. Luke), physiognomic differences being insignificant with Ev. Mark and Ev. Matthew.

The clay mould used by Master Georgius Wierd to cast the figures of the evangelists reveals several bivalent formal characteristics, in which specific models of the late Gothic period were adapted to Renaissance patterns of German extraction. Contemporary German engraving and sculpture offered inexhaustible informative material for the elaboration of notebooks with blueprints for the aforementioned moulds.⁵

The nude child Jesus was represented frontally, with the head disproportionately large compared with the body (Fig. 5). The long face and the curly hair are framed by a halo delineated by rays. In his left hand, he holds the globe, devoid here of the cross-bearing insignia, a detail that may be explained if we consider that the work was intended for a church belonging to the Reformed denomination. Jesus is sitting on a small pedestal covered with flowers and phytomorphic stalks, among which is discernible the more archaic motif of the clubs.

The donor's coat of arms is inscribed in an ellipsoidal wreath of laurel leaves, marked by crossed ribbons at the top and at the bottom and by quadrilobed motifs on the sides (Fig. 6). The heraldic shield composed of symmetrically juxtaposed curves and counter-curves is surmounted by a griffin leaping left, sword between the paws. The shield is charged with a helmet and a noble crown and the griffin with the sword is resumed as the coat of arms. The shield is surrounded by lambrequins consisting of fleshy stalks with curved paths. Under the wreath with the crest, there appears the commemorative inscription mentioned above.

In the bell mould there were applied impressions with the obverse of Austrian coins with circular legend and the two-headed eagle. Since this is the obverse, their value is not well defined. In this case, the coins have a purely decorative significance, as they surround the figure of the child Jesus on three sides.

Therefore, the bell that is housed now by the tower of the Reformed church in Făgăraş was executed, according to the commemorative inscription, in 1651, in the smithy of Master Georgius Wierd of Epperjes (Eperjes, Prešov, Slovakia). In the 18th century, Prešov was located in an area of Austrian domination. Compared to the areas under Turkish domination, crafts could further develop unhindered in this region. Moreover, this was a period when there occurred a real infusion of specialised labour due to the surplus provided by the German craft centres. This reference is valid for other specialisations as well. The northern regions of Italy ensured a continuous migration of master builders, masons, sculptors, stucco-layers and painters, who spread, during this century, across a wide area in Austria and Bohemia, via Poland

⁵ Michael Baxandall, *Die Kunst der Bildschnitzer. Tilman Riemenschneider, Veit Stoß und ihre Zeitgenossen*, München, 1984, pp. 85, 184; Pl. 22, 48.

and Transylvania, and reaching Russia and Turkey.⁶ The German countries offered these regions such skilled workers in metal, be it ordinary or noble. The case of the Neidel family smithy confirms the above statement. Active in Prešov, Paul Neidel continued his activity in Brasov after 1600. His smithy honoured orders for bells destined for the churches of Szekler villages. His native place is mentioned only once in the autographed inscription on the bell of a small chapel from Misentea (Harghita County): MAGISTER PAVLVVS NEIDEL EPPERIENCIS ME FVSIT 1608.

The other bells produced in his foundry record, besides the commemorative inscription, only the name of the bellfounder and the year of execution (Armășeni, Harghita County, 1604 and Lăzarea, Harghita County, 1617). The craftsmen who came here adapted quite soon to the Transylvanian urban environment and to the internal life of the guilds here. The communion of language – the majority were of German origin – facilitated their much more rapid integration. The craftsmen who immigrated to Transylvania contributed, in an innovative and effective way, to perpetuating the local craft tradition. In this case, the casting of bells was a specialised craft recorded in documents since the end of the 13th century, in full Romanesque era. Victor Roth mentioned a bell from the Evangelical church in Cloașterf (Mureș County) dating back to the year 1190, but returned in more recent times. A local craftsmen must have been that “Meistr Vilricy” who engraved his name on the bell of the Roman Catholic church in Mesentea. In the 17th century, in addition to the bellfoundries from Brasov and Sibiu (see the bell of the Reformed church from Boarta made by A. Vtern in 1648), there also operated one in Alba Iulia, perhaps right next to the cannon foundry here.⁷ The bell of the Reformed church from Cristurul Secuiesc confirms this: MIT GOTTES HILFE GOS MICH ANTONI VTEM IN WEISSENBURG. A.D. 1644: This was also the context in which Georgius Wierd left Klagensfurt and settled in Prešov.⁸ It was in this town that his smithy operated over a period of 30 years, between 1628 and 1657. His foundry was commissioned to honour orders for church bells in Sáros County, Hungary). His retail market also included parts of the Upper Tisa.⁹ Sporadically, the products manufactured in his foundry could also be found in the territory under Turkish occupation at that time, especially in Szolnok County (Hungary), at Besenyszög, Csongrád, etc. The productivity of his foundry was very high. On the territory of Hungary alone there was recorded a total of 20 bells, of which 13 are engraved with his apostille in bronze: “...FVDIT ME GEORGIVS WIERD IN EPPERIES.”¹⁰ In present-day Slovakia, in the Spišska area, there have been identified eight other bells produced in the Wierd

⁶ Aldo Crivelli, *Artisti ticinesi dal Baltico al Mar Nero: Svezia – Polonia – Cecoslovacchia – Austria – Jugoslavia – Ungheria – Romania – Turchia*, 1969; Nicolae Sabău, *Alcuni maestri italiani nella Transilvania del Settecento*, in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, II, 1992, pp. 5-28.

⁷ Kovács András, “Farkas az én nevem...” *A gyulafehérvári fejedelmi fegyvertár és ágyúöntés kezdeteinek történetéhez*, “Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából” S.N. 2(12)/(2007), pp. 157-172.

⁸ Patay, Pál, *Régi harangok*, 1977, p. 15.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

smithy.¹¹ On the Romanian territory there are at present two bells manufactured in this foundry: the original copy from Făgăraș and the bell of the Reformed church from Dobra (Hunedoara County, now in the collection of the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, Budapest).¹²

Since the end of the previous century, the pages of history journals have registered bells made by Georgius Wierd.¹³ From then until now, the literature of the subject has been enriched, opening up the possibility of compiling a genuine repertory, in the future, of the bells made in the foundry from Prešov.

We do not know the details of the circumstances whereby this bell, made in 1651 at the expense of the supreme captain of the fortress, Dereczke Sarkadi Miklós, came to be bestowed to the Reformed church in Făgăraș by the Transylvanian princess, Anna Bornemisza. It is known that this place of worship had been founded by herself and her husband, Prince Michael Apafi. The treasure of the church was enriched with splendid silver-made objects of worship¹⁴ in the late 17th and in the 18th centuries (Fig. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13).

Historical sources recorded the festive moment when the church was endowed with the new bell. The event was mentioned in the Journal of Réty Péter, who noted the following for the year 1665: "On 6 August, there was raised in the tower of Făgăraș the bell given to the church by our great Lady, a bell that was cast at Eperjes

¹¹ Juraj Spiritza, *Spišské zvony*, Bratislava, 1972, pp. 87-90, 136-138.

¹² The bell – at the base, the diameter measures 76.6 cm and the height, without the handles (crown), is 59 cm – was commissioned in 1640 by Sigismund Prépostváry, quartermaster of Emperor Ferdinand III. The work bearing the autograph of Master Wierd and featuring the busts of the four evangelists as decoration was requisitioned by the army during World War I, but was saved from melting by the Historical Monuments Commission (Patay Pál, *Régi harangok*, p. 52).

¹³ Thus were presented the bell of the Roman Catholic church from Regéczke (Hungary), with the inscription: GEORG WIERD IN EPERIES GOSSE MICH, ANNO MDCXXVII. AGITE POENITENTIAM; the bell of the Greek-Catholic church in Mágyóroska (Hungary), decorated with six heads of angels and vegetal ornaments in Renaissance style (DVRCH FEYUR FLOSSE ICH GEORG WIERD IN EPPERIEIS GOSS MICH MDCXXXV) and the bell dedicated to the Holy Trinity Roman Catholic church in Göncz (Hungary), embellished with the figures of the four evangelists (see Mihálik József, *Felsőmagyarországi régi harangok*, in *AE*, XVII, 1897, pp. 346-347).

¹⁴ Among them, mention should be made of the gilded silver wine cup – CS logo – decorated with medallions comprising figures of angels bearing the instruments of Jesus's passions (17th century); the gilded silver wine cup with mannerist vegetal and geometric decorations, with figures of soldiers dressed in picturesque costumes of the 18th century; the gilded silver wine cup decorated with heads of cherubs and medallions containing animal figures (a stork with a snake in its beak, a galloping horse, a stag with an arrow piercing its rump (17th century); gilded silver goblet from the late Gothic period, remade, in 1640 bestowed to the church in Făgăraș by Susana Lórantfy, wife of George Rákóczi I, a piece decorated with the figures of the evangelists inscribed in medallions and with cherubs wearing lacy ruffs around the neck. On the plinth appear the instruments of Jesus's passions: a gilded silver goblet bestowed, according to the inscription, in 1694, by Matthew from Săsciori and his wife Maria Boer (MATHEVS T: SZESCSORI cum UXORE MARIA BOER curarium Fievi in Usum Ecclae Fogoraszensis Ao 1694, 15 Ap.); two gilded silver patens with commemorative inscriptions, the first from 1624 (IN SACRUM COENAE DOMINI USUM. MATHIAS SZARASZI DE THOLNA FIERI FECIT ANNO 1624), the second bestowed by the goldsmith Peter, marked with the logo PS (DONO DABAT PETRVS AVRIFA=ECCLESIE FAGARAS: SVB TEMPORE PAS/TORIS FRAN+ CISCI PETTRI/ANNO + 1638. DIE 14 MAR).

by Sarkadi Miklós, Captain of Derecske fortress, at his own expense for the church there, in the year 1651.”¹⁵

The bell of the Reformed church in Făgăraș, with the evangelists' figures, reveals formal and stylistic analogies with the bells of the churches from *Dobra* (Romania, 1640) and *Göncz* (Hungary, 1641). The bell in Făgăraș is in a good state of preservation and fulfils the purpose for which it was created even today.¹⁶

The second bell we shall present was cast in the late 18th century and was located in the massive belfry erected above the narthex of the church of St. Nicholas in Făgăraș.¹⁷

The height of the bell cup is 60 cm. Together with its six mounting crowns, the bell has a height of 76 cm. At the base, the diameter measures 76 cm. The bell is hanging from a mounting and balancing yoke made of wooden beams, overlapped and bound together by metal straps (Fig. 14, 15, 16). The lateral sides of the yoke are cut after a design consisting of a circle segment, continued with a rectangular lower edge and an edge of the same shape, but larger. At the base, the width of the yoke measures 78 cm and the total height is 53 cm.

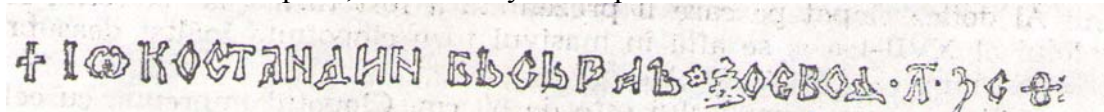
¹⁵ Rétyi Péter *naplója*, ed. Maria Ursuțiu, București, 1983, pp. 54-55.

¹⁶ In each of the towers of the churches from Făgăraș, there may still be examined a series of bells cast in the 18th and 19th centuries: a great bell with the inscription: ME FUDIT IN HONOREM DEI AD USUM ECCLESIAE EVANGHELICAE FOGARAS ANNO 1804 DIE 13 NOVEMBRI TEMPORE EXIST. PASTORE JOHANN MÜLLER, CURATORES JOHANN REINER. ET PETRUS TELLMANN. JOHANNES BAUMGARTNER SCHESBURGENSIS — CAMPA FUSOR (the work is preserved in the Evangelical church); three bells with commemorative inscriptions, in the patrimony of the Orthodox church from Ion Codru-Drăgușanu Street; a big bell “WITH THE HELP OF GOD AND AT THE EXPENSE OF MASTER GHEORGHE CORODI THIS BELL WAS MADE ON 23 APRIL 1791,” a middle-sized bell, “THIS BELL WAS MADE BY SQ. PANĂ NEGREȘ IN THE YEAR 1791 AND WITH THE HELP OF THE PEOPLE IT WAS CAST IN JUNE 1852”; a small bell, “THIS BELL DEDICATED TO THE HOLY TRIPTYCH OF GREEK NON-UNIATE LAW IN FĂGĂRAȘ WAS ACQUIRED THROUGH THE PEOPLE’S AID IN 1840.” In the patrimony of the (Franciscan) Roman Catholic church, there is preserved a small bell for Mass, decorated with figurative reliefs representing the Immaculate Conception; Ev. Luke and Ev. John are wearing long robes, then comes an angel carrying a laurel wreath among floral stalks and the inscription “AMDMF + SOLI DEO OR ET GLORIA + M. D. CLXXIV.”

¹⁷ The Church of St. Nicholas in Făgăraș uses a planimetric model traditionally encountered in Wallachia, the type of church from Strehaia Monastery (1640). This layout that was first adopted in Transylvania at Făgăraș had great success, being adopted in the construction of numerous Orthodox churches from the Land of Olt. Beyond the architectural significance of the building, reading the beautiful inscription preserved in the porch reveals another meaning, namely the overtly Orthodox character of this place – in a town that envisaged itself, in the 18th century, as a stronghold of Calvinism – built by the Voivode of Wallachia, in the tenth year of his reign, as if the church had been in his own country: “this holy and divine church of the East, I Costandinú B(râncovean) Basarabú Voievod, Lord and Protector of entire Wallachia. To the glory of the most blessed and unencompassable three hypostases and one being, the Holy Trinity, and to the honour of the miracle maker Nicolae, Bishop of Miralechia, whose patron saint he is, from the foundations up, at his entire expense, he raised and built it in year 1698 since the redemption of the world, in the tenth year of his reign. And they began in the month of June, on the 17th day, and ended in the month of September, on the 30th day, in the year – and Neagoe Pitar Rătescu was the steward 7206=1697.”

Weighing 90 kg, the bell presents traces of serious deterioration and reparations made in a rather crude manner.

The work was embellished with two ornamental friezes. On the upper part, the six mounting crowns are decorated with protomes, more specifically with the bust figures of cherubim. The bell cap presents a richly embossed decoration in flat relief, composed of juxtaposed volutes marked by baguettes, vegetal motifs and bunches of grapes. Underneath this setting, between two parallel edges, there unfolds the commemorative inscription, written in Cyrillic capital letters:



In the middle area of the bell's extrados there is placed the Wallachian coat of arms, the raven – here it looks rather like a swan with outstretched wings – with the cross in its beak, framed by the sun and the moon. The coat of arms is circumscribed by two circular wreathes made of laurel leaves. Below, underneath the narrow edge that surrounds the bell, there appears the second decorative frieze, in which the ornamental motifs from the upper half are repeated, but at a larger scale.

The commemorative inscription reveals the name of the donor, the voivode of Wallachia, Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), who is also the founder of the church of St. Nicholas, traditionally known as the “Brâncoveanu-style church.”¹⁸ The inscription also states the year of the casting and bestowal of the bell: 7209=1700, but not the bellfounder's name and the place where the bronze piece was cast.¹⁹

¹⁸ The construction of the Romanian church in Făgăraș by the Wallachian voivode had been approved by Prince Michael Apafi II, under a document issued on 10 October 1694. The approval was not only facilitated by the good relations between the two rulers, but it was also “encouraged” by Constantin Brâncoveanu's financial support to the restoration of the Reformed church in the city, to which were added his beneficent ties with General Comte Rabutin de Bussy, commander of the imperial troops in the principality, who sent the chief engineer (*supremum inginerium*) of the army, Italian Giovanni Visconti Morando, to the town of Făgăraș, “for determining the site and performing the necessary measurements” for the construction of this voivodal foundation (Lidia Gross, *Realități transilvane surprinse în memoriile generalului Rabutin de Bussy*, in *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai. Series Historia*, XXXIV, 1989, Fasc., 2, pp. 72-80; Susana Andea, Avram Andea, *Biserica brâncovenească din Făgăraș*, in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, XIV-XV, 2004-2005, pp. 57-100; Marius Porumb, “Date noi privind biserica brâncovenească din Făgăraș,” in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, XIV-XV, 2004-2005 pp.163-166; Nicolae Sabău, *Giovanni Morando Visconti în Transilvania*, in *Maestri ticinesi in Transilvania tra Cinquecento e Settecento* (ed. Nicolae Sabău), Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2007, pp. 51-81).

¹⁹ Among the rare examples of bells made in Transylvania, with a bilingual inscription (Slavonic and Latin), there is one from the belfry of the Evangelical church of Roșia (Rothberg, Veresmart), a Romanesque basilica from the 13th century, which underwent vast transformations in the 15th, 16th, 18th and 19th centuries. According to the Slavonic text (Fig. 17), the bell represented a commissioned order (in translation: *The bell was made by Sq. Miroslav biv vel treasurer in the days of nlo Mihnea Voevod in the year 7099*) from the treasurer Miroslav, a much appreciated dignitary in the service of many Wallachian princes between the years 1568 and 1611 (Alexandru II Mircea, Petru Cercel, Mihnea Turcitul, Mihai Vodă and Radu Șerban). The Latin epigraph mentions the casting of the bell in 1601 by the master from Sibiu GV K (Nicolae Sabău, *Curiozități artistice în biserica evanghelică din Roșia (jud. Sibiu)*, in *Ars Transsilvaniae*, VI, 1996, pp. 66, 71-72).

Contemporary documents, the commemorative inscription on the pediment of the entrance door to the church of St. Nicholas, the autographed signature on an icon of the iconostasis (now vanished), the scene of “Jesus before Pilate” in the altar and the records in the Diptych preserved in the parish archive – all these attest to the important donations made to this institution. The entire building is owed to the voivodal generosity, as is the iconostasis with its icons, made by the painter Preda from Câmpulung in 1698-1699, or the frescoes in the altar and the nave signed by Preda and Teodosie, the sons of the painter Preda from Câmpulung, between 1719-1720, the objects of liturgical worship (the gilded silver chalice, the silver candle holder),²⁰ the precious vestments, a number of religious books still found in the patrimony of the church (*Tălmăcirea Evangheliei*, The Interpretation of the Gospel, Buzău, 1698, *Mineie*, Menaion for the months of May and September, Buzău, 1698, *Penticostar*, Pentecostarion, 1698), but also the bell presented above, bearing the state emblem of Wallachia. The latter was not only proof of the material support provided by this great Maecena of the European East, but also a symbol and a guarantee of support to Transylvanian Orthodoxy, at a watershed in history.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Georgius Wierd, Bell decorated with the reliefs of the four evangelists, the coat of arms of the donor and the name of the bellfounder, 1651. Reformed church, Făgăraș.

Fig. 2. Georgius Wierd, Holy Ev. Mark (detail). Bell, 1651 Reformed church, Făgăraș. Drawing after mould, N. Sabău, C-ța Smarandache.

Fig. 3. Georgius Wierd, Holy Ev. John (detail). Bell, 1651. Reformed church, Făgăraș. Drawing after mould, N. Sabău, C-ța Smarandache.

Fig. 4. Georgius Wierd, Holy Ev. Matthew (detail). Bell, 1651. Reformed church, Făgăraș. Drawing after mould, N. Sabău, C-ța Smarandache.

Fig. 5. Georgius Wierd, the child Jesus (detail). Bell, 1651. Reformed church, Făgăraș. Drawing after mould, N. Sabău, C-ța Smarandache.

Fig. 6. Georgius Wierd, the Sarkadi M coat of arms (detail). Bell, 1651. Reformed church, Făgăraș. Drawing after mould, N. Sabău, C-ța Smarandache.

Fig. 7. Army Commander. Goblet, 17th century (detail). Reformed church, Făgăraș.

Fig. 8. Soldier. Goblet, 17th century (detail). Reformed church, Făgăraș.

Fig. 9. Spearman. Goblet, 17th century (detail). Reformed church, Făgăraș.

Fig. 10. Holy Ev. Matthew. Chalice, 18th century (detail). Reformed church, Făgăraș.

²⁰ *Revista istorică*, VIII, no. 7-9, July-September 1922, “Documente ardelene” (pp. 43-146), published the “Memorial of the Holy church in Făgăraș, dedicated to Saint Nicholas, in which are written those who gave and those who will give donations to the holy church, so they will be remembered in perpetuity, until this holy church stands”; gifts made by Wallachian voivodes (*Ioanu Mihnea Voevodu*, *Ioanu Constandinu Voevodu*, *Ioanu Serbanu Voevodu*, with their sons and daughters, bishops of Wallachia (*Varlamu*, *Theodosie*, *Anthimu*, *Damaschinu*), boyars and priests.

Fig. 11. Holy Ev. Mark. Chalice, 18th century (detail). Reformed church, Făgăraș.

Fig. 12. Holy Ev. Luke. Chalice, 18th century (detail). Reformed church, Făgăraș.

Fig. 13. Holy Ev. John. Chalice, 18th century (detail). Reformed church, Făgăraș.

Fig. 14. Wallachia's coat of arms. Bell, 1700 (detail). Church of St. Nicholas (Brâncovan), Făgăraș.

Fig. 15. Fragment of inscription and Wallachian coat of arms. Bell, 1700 (detail). Drawing N. Sabău.

Fig. 16. Brâncovan bell (1700). Church of St. Nicholas, Făgăraș.

Fig. 17. Bilingual inscription of the donation (year 7099) and the craftsman. Bell, 1601 (detail). Evangelical Church, Roșia (Sibiu).



Fig.1



Fig.2

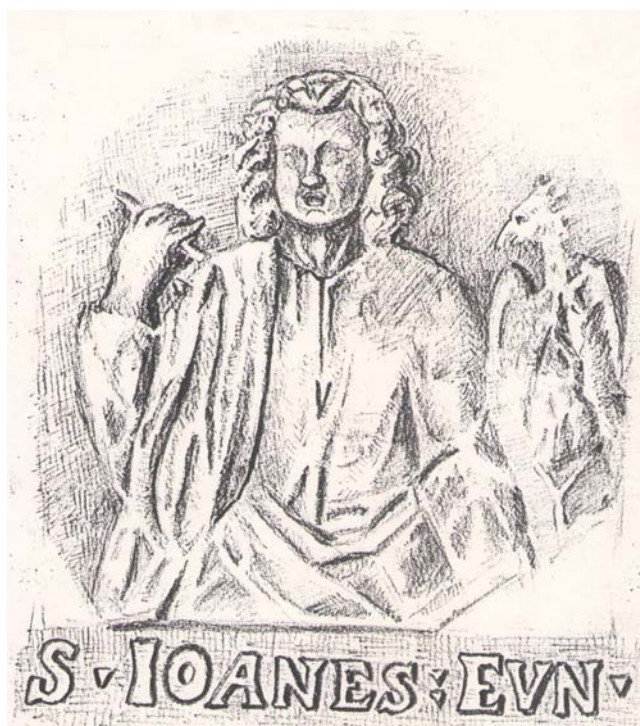


Fig.3

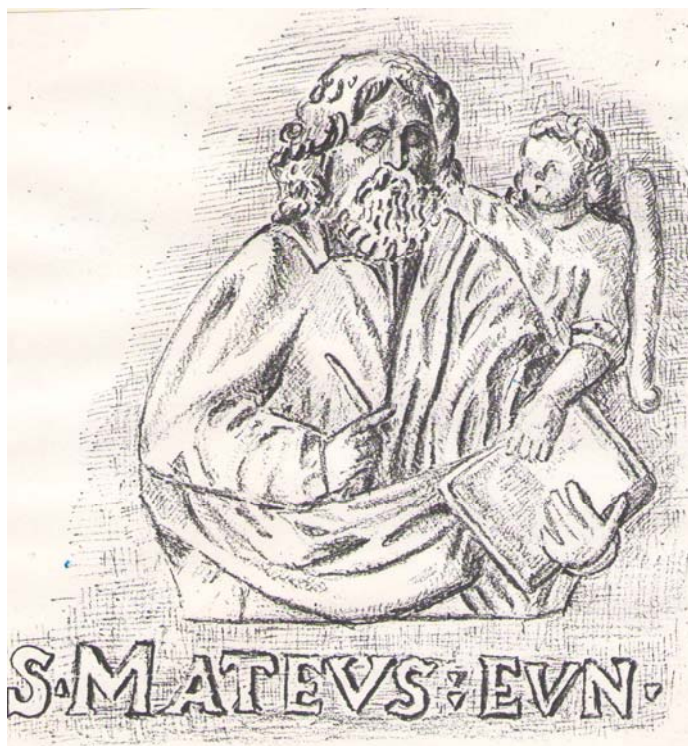


Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig.7



Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10-11



Fig.12-13



Fig.14

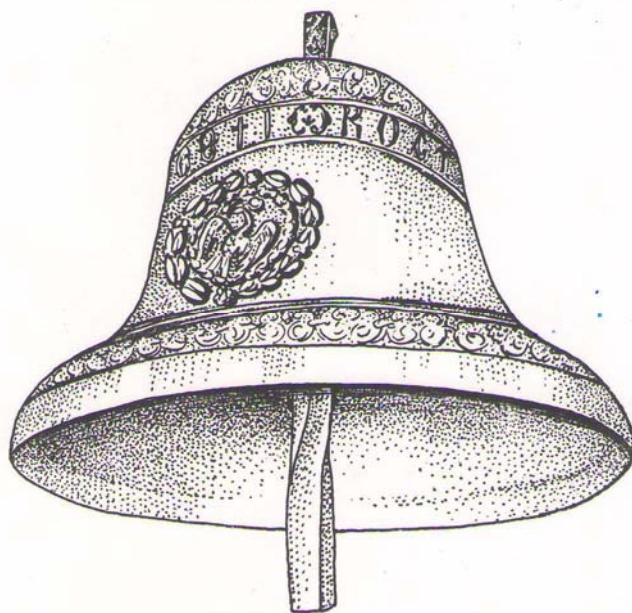


Fig.15

**Fig.16**

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Fig.17