

BUDAPEST-PEST SILVERWORK IN SERBIAN CHURCHES OF BANAT

Summary

Hungary has been, especially in the quiet periods of its history, a major centre in silverwork. The silversmiths of Budapest lived and worked in the gilds of Óbuda, Buda and Pest. The objects presented in our paper have come from Pest, being produced in the first decades of the 19th century.

The gild of Pest was organized (or reorganized) after the country's emancipation from the Turks. Consequently, it was in the year 1760 when the rules of the new gild of Pest were established by a group of seven silversmiths. As concerning the hallmark of Pest, it represents a portal with one tower, symbol adopted from the city's arm.

All the four objects analysed here have been punched with the hallmark of Pest, the portal with a tower. Two of them, namely the chalices made in 1809 and 1810, come from the Serbian church of Sânicolaul Mare, the other two objects – the votive light burners created in 1822 – being exhibited in the collection of the Serbian Bishopric of Timișoara, coming here from the Serbian church of Dejan.

Both **chalices** are ceremonial pieces, exquisite works of art in the classicist style. The older one was donated to the church by Gheorghe Stefanowitz in the year 1809. It was realized by the silversmith having the initials SI, still unidentified. The other chalice was made in the year 1810, being donated by Vasile Таааровиæ. This object represents a bigger replica of the first one, the slightly differences between the two suggesting another master as the author of the work. The master's mark punched on the rim of the foot has the initials IP, identified by Kőszeghy as **Josephus Prandtner senior**. Pest hallmark has been punched on both pieces.

What is interesting is the very fact that two almost identical chalices have been made by two different silversmiths of Pest, just about the same time. The explanations could be, therefore, diverse, offering possibilities of interpretation. First of all, we have to emphasize the fact that the Serbian worthies would prefer Budapest in order to command the silverwork for adorning their churches. And this happened in spite of the fact that order given to Augsburg or Vienna was considered to be a matter of prestige in the 18th century, due to the cities' renown as concerning silverwork. Thus, the option towards Budapest could be easily explained considering both the decline of Augsburg and Vienna but also as a result of the competition which Budapest was already engaged in with the two. It is not surprising, therefore, that the option for silverwork's command has been diversified. Referring to the two different masters chosen for executing the objects, one explanation might be that the first one, the one

having the initials SI, was unavailable for the second command. Or, even more probable, considering the powerful gild system in Hungary, the gild of Pest must have offered this second command to another silversmith. The resemblance of the two pieces indicate the existence of a model followed in both cases, model chosen by the Serbian aristocrat from the one of the model books, widespread in the period. And, obviously for pleasing the client, a well-known master of Pest, Josephus Prandtner senior has been chosen for creating the second chalice.

The same Pest mark has been punched on the two identical **votive light burners** also discussed. They originate from the Serbian church of Dejan, being made by the master having the initial K, identified by Kőszeghy as **Johannes Krieck**. The Pest mark on the objects had already included the year 1822, together with the representation of the portal with a tower.

The silverwork ordered at the beginning of the 19th century by the Serbian aristocracy to Budapest-Pest cannot compete, especially in terms of number, the objects made in Vienna in the previous century. Also, as concerning the decoration, the pieces of Budapest cannot challenge the Viennese ones of the baroque period for classicism basically means the denial of the variety, the ornamental abundance and the asymmetrical and sinuous forms of the baroque. The new simplicity of style would eventually result in the limitation of silversmiths' creativity and in their preference for functionality. In any case, the craftsmanship of Pest's masters is undeniable, and the objects made here represents an alternative, especially to the ones made in Austria.