Transylvanian Jewellery from the 16th and 17th Centuries in the Light of Material, Written and Pictorial Sources

PhD THESIS

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I. Objectives and Methods

The subject of the research is constituted by the jewellery (in a large sense) made in Transylvanian goldsmiths’ workshops in the 16th and 17th centuries, or possibly made in a period which covers part of the mentioned centuries. In certain cases jewels made before or after this period are discussed, if their analysis reveal relevant data about the research topic. The parts of the belts made from metal could reveal also important data from the point of view of the research, they are also discussed. In the mentioned period the Transylvanian goldsmiths’ workshops were not specialized only for jewellery making, consequently the jewels are analysed in the context of Transylvanian goldsmithery.

It is refused the practice which groundlessly attributed Transylvanian workshop or Transylvanian goldsmith center, meanwhile till the present has been not identified a decorative element or technical detail which could constitute the base of the localization with the exception of the small, conical-shaped ornaments, made from spirated wire.

The jewels called Heftel can be related exclusively with Transylvania, more precisely with Transylvanian Saxony and the goldsmith centers from this region. Meanwhile designing the form and ornamentation of the silverware the Transylvanian goldsmiths followed European patterns, in the case of Hefteln they had not this possibility because it was a unique type of jewelry specific to this region. Designing the different type variants which follow the pattern of concentric composition, the Transylvanian goldsmith created without having a detailed and prefigurated model. The importance of these jewels is constituted by the fact that in their design and workmanliness the Transylvanian Saxon goldsmiths’ creativity could manifest its potential almost unlimitedly.
As research goal I followed to reveal extensive data about these jewells and if their close examination was possible, data which could be obtained by their detailed analysis.

II. A Summary of the History of Researches

The scientific research of Transylvanian jewellery began as part of the researches on the history of Transylvanian goldsmithery and was stimulated by the great exhibitions from the end of the 19th century.

The researchers of Transylvanian Saxon goldsmithery were aware of the importance of the Transylvanian Saxon jewellery for the history of goldsmithery and at the end of the 19th century already several essays had been published about this topic.

József Hampel discussed the tipology and the origins of Hefteln in a study which had resumed the results of the researches till that moment.

Viktor Roth connected his researches on Transylvanian Saxon goldsmithery with the analysis of written sources.

Emil Sigerus researched this topic not just from historical, but also from an etnographic point of view.

Tihamér Gyárfás in his monography on the history of goldsmithery from Brassó (Kronstadt, Brașov) wrote about jewellery made in the local workshops and stamped with the goldsmiths’ marks from Brassó (Kronstadt, Brașov). He had given the Hungarian typonyms of some Heftel types also.

Researching the goldsmiths’ marks from Hungary Elemér Kőszeghy found out that the marks stamped on the Hefteln indicate a Transylvanian goldsmith. He systematized the goldsmiths’ marks from former Hungary in his book published in 1936 taking in consideration this observation.
A. Haldner dealt with the typology of Hefteln. Horst Klusch after a study about the origin of Hefteln published a propagatory book about Transylvanian Saxon goldsmithery and annexed a collection of Transylvanian Saxon goldsmiths’ marks. Rectifications were published by Daniela Dâmboiu in her book about the history of the goldsmith’s guild from Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt, Sibiu).

III. The Problem of the Master and Workshop

„The Transylvanian Saxon goldsmithery was famous especially in the 17th century due to the beautiful jewellery, and all what we consider till the present as old «Hungarian goldsmithery», are in fact relics of Transylvanian Saxon and Zipser goldsmithery.” wrote Emil Neugeboren hundred years ago.

The marking of the silverware and the activity of the workshops were more strictly controlled by the guilds from the Transylvanian Saxon cities than in other goldsmith centers from Transylvania. As a result jewells made in Transylvanian Saxon workshops can be identified (the possibility of identification refers to the heavier jewells, because only these were marked), but those made in Kolozsvár (Klausenburg, Cluj) where the guild was mixed: Saxon and Hungarian and those made in other goldsmith centers can not be identified assuredly.

The fact that the mark inventory of the goldsmith’s guild from Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt, Sibiu) was preserved stamped on a leaden plate, made possible the identification of many masters (the plate is partly damaged and not all of the marks are visible). It is noteworthy that thanks to the preserved guild records in Elemér Kőszeghy’s book about the goldsmiths’ marks, published in 1936, the utmost number of identified goldsmiths’ marks are from Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt, Sibiu) and Brassó
(Kronstadt, Brașov) in spite of the fact that the local guilds were not the most numerous from the former Hungary.

The identification of the goldsmiths’ marks from Brassó (Kronstadt, Brașov) was facilitate by the marks stamped in the so-called *Lehrlingsbuch*, and the crown which appear on the upper part of the marks.

The Heftel was an essential element of the Transylvanian Saxon women’s gala and festive dress and it is related to the Transylvanian Saxon goldsmiths’ workshops. The research of the marks from the Hefteln is important also because they indicate a workshop from a Transylvanian Saxon city and they allow a well-founded attribution.

**IV. The Used Row Materials and the Applied Techniques**

On the base of the analysis of technical details and ornamentation of Transylvanian Saxon Hefteln and belts can be noticed that the goldsmiths from the Transylvanian Saxon cities used almost all the possibilities offered by different goldsmithery techniques.

The analysis of the jewellery pieces also revealed that in 16th century metal decorative elements were preferred and smaller, uncut gems. In the next century on the surfaces of certain Heftel types different gems, turquoiseis, pearls and enameled metal elements were used to obtain a colourful composition. In spite of the fact that the guilds had forbidden the using of glass instead of precious stones, a great number of Hefteln were decorated with coloured glass. The forbiddance denotes that the goldsmiths still used these cheaper imitations. The goldsmiths active in the second part of the 17th century preferred also the overpainted enamel decorated with delicate lines. In the ornamentation of Hefteln from this period beside the dainty, overpainted enamel appear shade in different gradations also.
The different types of Hefteln reveal almost continuously ornamental and technical innovations. Presumably the wealthy elites from the Transylvanian Saxon cities, the patriciate and their demand for luxury was the mainspring of these innovative efforts. With time new ornamental elements appeared on the surface of Hefteln and were included in the composition in accordance with the current styles.

V. The Specific Traits of Hefteln

Relatively isolated territories at the border of Europe, such as Norway, Estonia and Transylvanian Saxony has preserved elements of medieval attirement. In all of the mentioned regions the huge, round, breast brooch (worn sometimes as pendant) can be found as part of the festive costume. In Norway it is called bolesølje and is decorated with a ring of round bosses. The sõlg worn in Estonia had a conical shape and was covered sometimes with incised decorations.

All of the Heftel types worn by Transylvanian Saxon women can be easily differentiated from the mentioned examples because they had some specific traits. The most characteristic of these is the colourful aspect which results from the rich decoration with gems and enameled discs (there is an exception, an early type, from the 16th century, ornamented exclusively with metal decorative elements).

The Heftel together with the belts decorated with rosettes and the hairpins constituted compulsory parts of Transylvanian Saxon women’s gala and festive dress. In the attirement of Hungarian women from Kolozsvár (Klausenburg, Cluj) in the mentioned period are traceable elements taken from the Transylvanian Saxon women’s wear but there is no evidence that the Heftel was also borrowed as breast ornament.
VI. The Types of Hefteln

Some of the Hungarian typonims of Hefteln were given by Tihamér Gyárfás. He had not detailed the subtypes and type variants, that is why introducing new typonims was a necessity at the description of morphology and decorative pattern specific for the different types and subtypes.

1. Púpos típusú erdélyi szász mellboglárok
   1.1 Függesztett köldökös erdélyi szász mellboglárok
      1.1.1. Figurális díszítésű, függesztett köldökös erdélyi szász mellboglárok
      1.1.2. Levélkelyhes, függesztett köldökös erdélyi szász mellboglárok
         1.1.2.1. Virágdíszes, levélkelyhes, függesztett köldökös mellboglárok
         1.1.2.2. Eperdíszes, levélkelyhes, függesztett köldökös mellboglárok
         1.1.2.3. Középköves, levélkelyhes, függesztett köldökös mellboglárok
      1.1.3. Pártadíszes, függesztett köldökös erdélyi szász mellboglárok
         1.1.3.1. Eperszemes, pártadíszes, függesztett köldökös mellboglárok
         1.1.3.2. Középköves, pártadíszes, függesztett köldökös mellboglárok
   1.2 Rögzített köldökös erdélyi szász mellboglárok
      1.2.1. Levélkelyhes, rögzített köldökös erdélyi szász mellboglárok
         1.2.1.1. Virágdíszes, levélkelyhes, rögzített köldökös mellboglárok
         1.2.1.2. Eperdíszes, levélkelyhes, rögzített köldökös mellboglárok
         1.2.1.3. Középköves, levélkelyhes, rögzített köldökös mellboglárok
      1.2.2. Pártadíszes, rögzített köldökös erdélyi szász mellboglárok
         1.2.3. Áttört díszítésű, rögzített köldökös mellboglárok
   2. Bordadíszes erdélyi szász mellboglárok
   3. Sodronycsigás típusú erdélyi szász mellboglárok
   4. Indadíszes, hatkaréjos erdélyi szász mellboglárok
   5. Labdacsdíszes erdélyi szász mellboglárok
6. Hasított levéldíszes erdélyi szász mellboglárok
   6.1. Páros hasított levéldíszes erdélyi szász mellboglárok
   6.2. Háromas hasított levéldíszes erdélyi szász mellboglárok
7. Csigavonalas erdélyi szász mellboglárok
8. Virágkoszorús erdélyi szász mellboglárok

VII. The Question of the Origin of Hefteln.

The question of the origin of Hefteln constituted a main topic for almost every researcher who dealt with these jewellery pieces. A part of them considered that its origin should be searched in one type of medieval jewellery, another part thought that it has its origins in two, different types of old, medieval clasps.

The origin of Hefteln it should be sought in different types of medieval jewells: in ring-brooches, in morses worn by the clergy and in breast ornaments of women from the upper classes of medieval society.

The huge, round medieval jewell found near Motala has its middle divided by six petaline decorations. Similarly division in six parts can be noticed on the surface of some Heftel types. The tiny animals which decorate the Motala-jewell, can be observed also on several Hefteln. The petaline decoration of the middle part reappears on a Heftel from the gravestone of the Umend couple in the Evangelic Church from Beszterce (Bistritz, Bistrița). This has a six-lobed shape, same as the clasp from Queen Eufemia’s gisant in the former monastery church from Sørø.

Mentioning the hoard found in Mainz (the so-called Gisella hoard) and the huge round jewell, A. Haldner emphasized that the Hefteln were not functional jewells.

Same to Emil Sigerus, A. Haldner, and lately Gislint Ritz considered that these pieces of jewellery were introduced in Transylvania
by the first German settlers. The similarities between some medieval jewells and Hefteln can not be denied (in both cases their decorative pattern is organized in concentric circles around an emphasised middle part), but there are not known Hefteln or even huge round brooches found in Transylvania, which could be dated earlier than the 16th century. This hiatus is the weakest point of the above mentioned theory.

There is a type of Heftel which has a longer element (slat) than the middle part. One end of it is bend around the inner brink of the Heftel. Due to this the middle part is suspended on the brink and is movable. The Norwegian bolesølje has a similar structure. Both of the mentioned jewells had their origin in the medieval ring-brooch, which was a functional piece of jewellery: the clothes were fixed around the pin from the middle. In the case of the bolesølje and the Heftel the pin evolved in an element of a merely decorative middle part. Two relatively isolated parts of Europe: the south part of Norway and Transylvania preserved for centuries in two similar forms (bolesølje and Heftel) a very popular medieval jewell: the ring-brooch.

VIII. Belts Made in Transylvanian Workshops in the 16th and 17th Centuries

A delimitation between the belts made in Transylvanian workshops and the belts which were imported can not be effectuated for the period between the beginning of the 16th century and the end of the next, because it has not been identified any decorative element or technical detail characteristic only for Transylvanian workshops.

In contrast to the Hefteln, as far as we know in the mentioned period there are not types of belts (with metal parts) specific to an ethnic group from Transylvania and made exclusively in the local workshops.
The most reliable base of the attributions are still the goldsmiths’ marks identified or unidentified, but holding a crown (as mark for Brassó) or stamped on a Heftel (because these were made exclusively in Transylvania, so they indicate a local workshop).

**IX. Refashioned Transylvanian Jewellery from the 17th Century**

Pieces of jewellery made in Transylvanian goldsmiths’ workshops in the 17th century can be found in the composition of jewels assembled lately. The chapter analysis two cases. The first case is a gala cloak clasp from the Blaskovich Museum, in Tápiószele, which reuse in its middle part a Heftel. The second is also a gala cloak clasp from the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts from Budapest. It was assembled presumably lately from parts of a Heftel or parts made for a Heftel.

**X. The Perspectives for Continuation of the Research**

The Hefteln are special relics of European goldsmithery representing a jewellery type of an unique value. Their rich and various decoration was designed in the Transylvanian Saxon goldsmiths’ workshops. There are not two perfectly similar Heftel; taking in consideration every preserved piece by cataloguing them would be a future goal.

The great applied arts collections from all over the world possess one or more Hefteln. They were collected especially at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the next. The research of the history of collecting could offer new data about the Hefteln.

I consider the research effectuated till the present as the preparatory work for a comprehensive corpus of the preserved Hefteln. Meanwhile a systematized repertory of different decorative elements (such as the
conical-shaped ornaments made from spirated wire) and technical components (such as the screws) of the researched Hefteln could be compiled and completed. This would be a useful research aid even for those who deal with the history of the goldsmithery.

The research of the goldsmiths’ marks of the Hefteln allow the localization of the workshops. The past results of the researches of goldsmiths’ marks were systematized and published by Elemér Kőszeghy and constitute an undispensable aid for researchers, the continuation of these researches is an imperative necessity.