

Terdik Szilveszter

**ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION
OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC EPARCHIES IN HUNGARY**

BUDAPEST, 2011

The historical background. During the 17th century, the Orthodox communities of historical Hungary and Transylvania united with the Roman Catholic Church (1646 Ungvár /Uzhorod, 1697 Gyulafehérvár/Alba Iulia). They had accepted the Symbol of the Council of Florence, and then the catholic partner guaranteed them to respect the old Byzantine rite and ecclesiastical customs. Another aspect of the union was very important for the Orthodox clergy, i.e. the promise of the king of Hungary were to make their social position better and give them the same rights which the Latin clergy had owned for centuries.

The changes proposed by the ecclesiastical unions were realised slowly because of the uncertain political events of Hungary and Transylvania on the turning of the 17th and 18th century. The position of the new churches was reinforced only from the middle of the 18th century, when the queen decided to establish the Greek Catholic eparchies as official catholic dioceses, canonically independent from the Latin bishops who had a very strong influence over the united churches from the end of the 17th century. The lack of the canonical independencies of the Greek Catholic hierarchy hindered the development of the own institutions of the eparchies for a long time. Their bishops did not have sufficient economical background to construct new cathedrals and palaces, to organise seminaries and schools.

In these historical circumstances the Greek Catholic hierarchy found himself in a strange situation. On the one hand, the united people did not want to accept any changes in the liturgy or in other old traditional forms on the other hand, the Latin clergy did not have confidence in the real catholic sentiment of the united one regarding the flourishing of the old mentality.

The limits of the research. The author of this dissertation originally intended to write a history of art of the all Greek Catholic Dioceses-centre in former historical Hungary and make a comparative study about these materials. But in the beginning of the research it became clear that the history of the most important monuments was not researched and written because of the historical circumstances of the last decades in this part of Europe. After the end of the Second World War, during the communist political systems, the Greek Catholic Churches were forced to reunite with the local Orthodox Churches then the Greek Catholic religion became illegal. The churches were taken by the Orthodox Church or by the state, lot of them was in danger to be destroyed, others were closed. After the changing of political the

situation in these countries the Archives were opened where the historical sources of the Greek Catholic Churches had been collected by the states. From these undiscovered historical materials the art historians finely could publish lot of unknown document, project, drawing etc. In this study the author has tried to write a detailed art history of three Greek Catholic ecclesiastical centre (Munkács/Mukachevo – Ungvár/Uzhorod, Balázsfalva/Blaj, Nagyvárad/Oradea), focused on only the 18th really baroque century, used many unpublished documents from several Archives.

Art, identity, representation. The united bishops made the first attempts at creating a special artistic representation for themselves and for their communities in the 18th century. In that time the Imperial Court started to give financial assistance for these dioceses, that new cathedrals, bishopric palace and seminaries should be constructed in the centre of the eparchies. For example, Balázsfalava/Blaj has become the most important Greek Catholic centre in Transylvania, the construction of the new buildings were started in 1737 and the project had been draught by Martinelli, an architect from Vienna. Ten years later the frescoes on the dome of the cathedral were painted a local artist studied in Walachia, the huge iconostasis was carved by an unknown artist, probably from the Balkan region, the majority if its icons was painted by a local orthodox painter. It is important to notice if theses artists were commissioned by the bishop. The simultaneous presence of artists of different origin in a united ecclesiastical centre, can indicates us the bishop's intention to be devoted to the old Byzantine traditions. It was believed that the union between the two Churches is a real return to the true eastern faith, a renovation of the deformed one. In this perspective the cathedral of Balázsfalva became a meeting point between different artistic and cultural tradition, a symbol of a new Greek Catholic identity which has been looking for new ways to survive in the grave historical situation of that time.