

Evidence of Patronage in Late Medieval Transylvania. Saxon Priests as Promoters of the Arts

Abstract:

The study aims to analyse the “symbols of patronage” preserved in Transylvanian Saxon churches in order to answer a section of the Cuius regio questionnaire on the commissioning and production of artworks in the province. These signs, indicating both liturgical and artistic patronage, are inscriptions, coats of arms, “portraits”, tombstones, etc. The study concludes that especially in lesser localities in the Universitas Saxonum, the parish priest was the most conspicuous and active figure in artistic patronage. Even though the local community was the real patron in terms of ius patronatus, the most proficient users of visual symbols of patronage, who drove the energies of the communities towards such ends, seem to have been the parish priests. Several case studies (Biertan, Richiș, Moșna, Prejmer) provide evidence for this argument.

Keywords: *Transylvanian Saxons, patronage, parish priests, late medieval art and architecture, heraldry.*