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**A sample of *Opus Fiorentinum* in Hungary – Cardinal Thomas Bakocz's  
chasuble in the Collection of the Cathedral Treasury in Esztergom**

PHD THESIS BOOKLET

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2025

The chasuble with the insignia of Cardinal Thomas Bakócz in the Treasury of the Esztergom Cathedral is one of the few liturgical objects that have survived from the large number of objects and church equipment of the former Cardinal and Archbishop of Esztergom.

In the meantime, not only the chasuble's former surroundings has been destroyed, but the object itself has also been significantly altered, and is now only a 'descendant' of the original chasuble. Changes over time have distorted the original shape of the chasuble, the arrangement of its decoration, the number of the images and the original concept of the depictions has been modified.

In other words, the chasuble has been detached from its original context: the artistic environment in which it was born, the historical context that created it, the possessory context in which it had a function, and finally, it has lost its own context, the organic unity of its original components.

Therefore, the questions raised by the Bakócz costume were motivated by a focused search for the contexts, and the thesis is organised along these lines-

In the following, I outline the questions raised, the hypotheses and the partial results obtained, according to the research methods and approaches

## I. Autopsy

The study of the technical characteristics and the parameters of material use was important in the research. Two consultations based on direct object examination were held, in which Katalin E. Nagy, textile conservator of the object, Márta Járó,

chemist, Erika Kiss, Art Historian (Hungarian National Museum) and co-supervisor, and Andrea Perger, textile conservator (Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest). Partly based on the lessons learned from previous restorations and on the examination of other areas, such as the technique of making the metal threads of the object or the Raman spectroscopic examination of the blue silk in the coat of arms, I wanted to get closer to the technical details of the embroidery of the vestments in order to get a more accurate picture of the characteristics of the original object, the time and circumstances of its making<sup>1</sup>.

The observations made during the direct examination of the object have played a prominent role in the discussion of certain parts of the chasuble, which I will discuss below.

## II. Research on the history of survival - Source research

The vestment, known as the chasuble of Tamás Bakócz in its present form from 1880, when the first known photographic record appeared in József Dankó's work (Historical, Literary and Documentary Details from the Treasury of the Cathedral). I wanted to explore the "life" of the object up to this point (until 1880) by researching the history of its survival to record the changes that have taken place in the meantime. This would provide the historical context in which the objects bearing the coat of arms of Tamás Bakócz can be identified as remnants of an earlier liturgical object group<sup>2</sup>. I did this by researching sources in several areas (treasury inventories, consistory notes, economic documents, archbishop's legacies). During

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<sup>1</sup> Examinations were held in 2019, and in 2021, with Katalin E. Nagy, the conservator of the object in 1982, Dr. Márta Járó, chemist, Dr. Erika Kiss, Head of the Department of Historical Repository at the HNM, and Andrea Perger, Textile Conservator (MAA).

<sup>2</sup> Ágnes Szabó: *Bakócz Tamás címerével ellátott tárgyak egykor az esztergomi főszékesegyházban. Táregygyűttes rekonstrukció.* In: *Művészettörténeti Értesítő* 70 (2021) 305-341.

my research, I was able to identify fourteen liturgical textiles in the inventories of the treasury of the Esztergom Cathedral (between 1528 and 1770) which once wore the cardinal or archbishop's coat of arms of Tamás Bakócz. By 1770, only five of these objects are present in the inventories, but the description of a chasuble (without a coat of arms) matches in many details the parameters of the object known today as the Bakócz chasuble. This latter was made on a red ground, decorated with gold-coloured flowers and 'decorated with a cross in the middle', on which were placed 'images of various saints in circular shapes'; between the circular images decorating the cross, there were two flowers embroidered in amphorae, and in front was a cross made of gold trim. The text adds: "not much used, but old." All this led me to assume that an earlier phase of the object, now known as the Bakócz dress, could be identified in this description as being from the last third of the 18th century. If we accept this, then the 1770 entry already recorded the presence of the altered chasuble in the inventory. The earlier appearance of the chasuble can also be inferred from the results of the source research. One of the items in the diachronical inventory compiled on the basis of the treasury inventories bears many of the characteristics of the present-day chasuble, so we can hypothetically speculate that it is a description of the original object: 'A white chasuble woven with gold thread, lined with red linen, with the image of the eight apostles and the Annunciation on the front and back, and the coat of arms of Archbishop Thomas on the bottom. The text also mentions the cardinal's coat of arms in plural, confirming its presence at the end of the row of apostles.

In the light of the above, we must assume a holy community of eight apostles as the pictorial programme of the original chasuble, which most probably contained several references to personal matters.

### III. The transformation of the chasuble - a historical approach

A problem that often arises at the study of liturgical texts in use is their earlier transformation, dating the various stages of metamorphosis, so I have also carried out an analysis of the form and tailoring of the object<sup>3</sup>. The findings of previous restoration and the aforementioned object studies played a major role in this. It is known from previous literature that the tailoring of the Bakócz chasuble follows the regularities of the Italian-type alteration that became widespread in the period after the second half of the 17th century<sup>4</sup>. The fact that its embroidered decorations are incorporated into the form of the chasuble as an insert suggests a disruption and 'recreation' of an earlier object context and questions the coherence of the present base fabric and the embroideries. Starting from the present form of the object and considering the characteristics of the chasuble portfolio of the Treasury of Esztergom (size, pattern, hems), I have tried to determine the possible date of the reconstruction, also using the written sources related to the Treasury. Based on these sources, I assume that the chasuble was altered between 1750 and 70.

### IV. Or nué embroidered crosses in the area of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary - a typological approach

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<sup>3</sup> Ágnes Szabó: Size, Form and Function: Chasubles Past and Present in the Collection of the Cathedral Treasury of Esztergom In: *Ars Decorativa* 35 (2021) 9-38.

<sup>4</sup> Mária Csernyánszky: *The paramentums of the Esztergom Cathedral Treasury*. Budapest, 1933.46.

The embroidered decoration on the chasuble of Esztergom is Latin cross shaped with images in forms of tondi and all'antica embroidery is a unique combination of the Italian Renaissance taste and technical sophistication of the chasuble decoration, the colonna (i.e. the embroidered decoration on the reverse in the form of a simple column) and the embroidered Latin crosses, which were much more common in the Kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages, and are therefore very rare.

My research on the form of the object and the type of embroidered cross was an attempt to interpret and place Central European liturgical embroidery in a European context by means of a typological approach. This required a deep research and analysis of existing written sources (mainly inventories) and the available artefactual materials. In the light of these results, I have isolated two still existing chasubles which, unlike the contemporary Italian use, are decorated on the reverse with an Italian or nué embroidery crosses in accordance with the contemporary use in Hungary. The occurrence of these (together with other or nué embroidery decorations) can be localised in the royal towns of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom.

In my opinion, between the last quarter of the 15th century and the first quarter of the 16th, there was a demand for local paraments with pearl embroidery of outstanding quality, as well as for liturgical chasubles decorated with embroidery in the style and form of the Italian Renaissance.

(The research has also shown the primary role of the noble and royal patronage in the creation of liturgical vestments decorated with pearl embroidery and precious

stones and has found the place of the previously known group of pearl-embroidered infulas in the history of the textile art of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary.)<sup>5</sup>

## V. Italian or nué embroideries and tondi pictures

In my work, I have focused on the Italian unit of the large corpus of European or nué embroideries on liturgical vestments. I focused on Florence in the first half of the research, for formal and stylistic reasons<sup>6</sup>. In addition to the technical aspects already mentioned, I have sketched a narrow group of objects that can be considered analogous in terms of technique (San Giovanni embroideries, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence; Passerini ornate, Museo Diocesano, Cortona; the funeral vestments of Popes IV Sixtus (1471-1484) and II Julius (1503-1513), Museo del Tesoro della Basilica di San Pietro, Rome; the so-called Pietrasanta vestments, Collegiata di San Martino, Pietrasanta).

Little is known about the corpus of Italian chasubles made of or nué-embroidered tondis, which also use or nué-embroidered decorative floral ornamentation, but this is a key feature of the Bakócz chasuble. It is so rare that my research has revealed only four other items from this period in Italy (the funeral chasuble of Popes Sixtus IV and Giulio II, the chasuble commissioned by Pope Leo X (1513-1521) for the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence, and the so-called Armellini chasuble, also from the papacy of Leo X). The group of objects that emerges clearly reveals the context in which the court of the pope is in a role as the customer. I believe that the Renaissance garments embroidered with tondi designs were vestments with a

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<sup>5</sup> Ágnes Szabó: "(...) cariche de perle tanto argente non ha Milano, Cremona ne Ferrara insieme" Tessuti liturgici medievali ricamati da perle nel Tesoro della Cattedrale di Esztergom. In: György Domokos (ed.) *Vestigia II Research – Documents Related to Hungary from Mantua, Modena and Milan*. Verbum - Analecta Neolatina, XXIII, 2022/2, 391-414.

<sup>6</sup> I conducted my research on the Italian object group in the Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, at the suggestion of my supervisor, dr. habil. Béla Zsolt Szakács. I also visited many Italian collections, where I primarily sought to learn about the textile and goldsmith works of the period. The trips were made possible by the MTA Isabel and Alfred Bader art history research grant.

special 'disegno' that the observer could clearly identify with their place of origin. Following on from the funeral chasuble of Sixtus IV, the main point of this identity can be found in the court of Popes of the Della Rovere family, and in the identity and symbolism of the tondo-embroidered garments. Following the above line of thought, I assume that the use of the clay images was inspired by the costumes of the Eastern rite, in which Giovanni Bessarione (1403-1472), Patriarch of Constantinople, Bishop of Rome and his entourage, played a major role.

## VI. Style

Outlining the art historical context of embroidery is a complex task, since it is a handwork, and it is a complex creation of several crafts. To get to know the genre of the templates used to prepare Florentine embroideries more closely, I studied the oeuvre of Raffellino del Garbo, one of the most important masters of Florentine Renaissance art, who also made preparatory cartoons and sketches, in the graphic collection of the Uffizi. Regarding Raffaellino del Garbo's creative character, the research agrees that the characteristics of the painting of Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, Perugino and Pinturicchio can all be recognized in his works.

A thorough stylistic analysis of the Bakócz-chasuble tondos and a comparative analysis of the relevant works of the above masters make it clear that the drawing quality of the Esztergom embroideries is not consistent. During the analysis carried out in the thesis, I thought I could see the style of the embroideries of the Esztergom chasuble in the first decade of the 1500s, among the followers of the Perugino tradition, primarily in the stylistic elements represented by Pinturicchio.

## VII. The chasuble of Tamás Bakócz

Due to the pictorial program of the chasuble and its characteristics refers to the papal court, and due to the pieces that have survived from people connected to the papal court, I assume that the chasuble could have come to its first owner as a gift, and I do not consider it likely that it would have arrived in Hungary through agents or through a direct order. In my opinion, in accordance with the idea that has been present in the literature so far, the appointment of Tamás Bakócz, Archbishop of Esztergom (from 1498) as a cardinal (September 28, 1500) or Patriarch of Constantinople (October 1507) provided the occasion that the chasuble was gifted for him<sup>7</sup>. The latter is also supported by the style of the embroideries.

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<sup>7</sup> Fraknói 1902, 259; 277.

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- *„Cariche de perle tanto argente non ha Milano, Cremona ne Ferrara insieme” – Tessuti liturgici medievali ricamati con perle nel Tesoro della Cattedrale di Esztergom.* In: György Domokos (ed.) *Vestigia II Research – Documents Related to Hungary from Mantua, Modena and Milan.* Verbum – Analecta Neolatina, XXIII, 2022/2, 391-414.
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- *Pro sacris usibus - a főpásztori mecenatúra példái és gesztusai az esztergomi főszékesegyházban Simor János érseksége idején.* [Pro sacris usibus – Examples and Gestures of Mecenatism in the Cathedral of Esztergom between 1867-1891] In: Barna Gábor (szerk.): „Leborulva áldlak...” Az Oltáriszentség és Úrvacsora a magyarországi vallási kultúrában. SZIT, Budapest, 2020. 135-146.
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