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Gestures and Inner Feelings in the Graphic Representations of the *Last Supper* in Old Romanian Writings (1700–1829)

The last meal Jesus Christ ate together with the twelve disciples is described in all the four Gospels (Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–38; John 13:17–30).¹

The Last Supper comprises two different aspects. The former refers to the moment when Jesus revealed that he was to be betrayed by one of His disciples: “When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, He said, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you will betray Me’” (Matthew 26:20–21). The latter aspect refers to the introduction of the Eucharist: “While they were eating Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:26–28).

One of the earliest representations of the *Last Supper* is found in an ivory diptych dated back to the fifth century (Treasury, Dome of Milan). Between the sixth and the 15th centuries (but even afterwards), the artists chose to depict the

¹ An earlier version of this article was previously published in Italian in Remus Câmpeanu, Vasile Rus, Varga Attila, Florin Jula eds. *La Scuola Transilvana I* (Nyíregyháza – Oradea: Szent Atanáz Görögkatolikus Hittudományi Főiskola, 2014), 60–80.

forecast of Judas' treachery (see for example the mosaic in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, 520–525; the miniature in the Gospel of Rossano, the third quarter of the sixth century, kept in the treasury of the Cathedral; the wall painting of Leonardo da Vinci in the refectory of the Monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan, 1495–1498). The varied postures, gestures and expressions of the apostles, gathered in four groups of three (in Leonardo da Vinci's case) emphasize the dramatic character of the scene. All the disciples are surprised, worried and indignant.

Until the 15th century, the institution of the Eucharist, in the Occident, was a theme not very often encountered. For instance, one of the exceptions is Dirk Bouts' *Last Supper*, the central panel of *Altarpiece of the Holy Sacrament* (St. Peter's Church, Louvain/Leuven, 1464–1468), with Jesus consecrating the Eucharistic Host.

During the Reformation and Counter Reformation, the approach to this theme grew in intensity. For example, Christ blesses bread and wine in Philippe de Champaigne's painting, 1648, Louvre, Paris.

The representation of the Sacrament in the form of the Eucharist offered to His disciples is depicted early, in the East (beginning with the sixth century). Jesus often appears twice in front of the altar: once offering His body in the form of bread to a group of apostles, and then offering His blood in the form of wine² to another group. Formally, this representation of the Eucharist has no connection with the type of image of the *Last Supper*. In other words, the moment of instituting the Sacrament is differently depicted in the West as compared with the East, while the moment of betrayal is rendered approximately in the same way. (Sachs et al. 1980, 124–125)

In the long run, there were three types of depicting the table: semi-circular (sigma), round or oval, and rectangular.

The semi-circular (or sigma) table appeared in Byzantine art in the sixth century, although tables of the same shape had also been used in the Paleochristian art. In this respect, the mosaic in Sant' Appollinare Nuovo at Ravenna is well known. Here, Jesus in a half-prone position, according to the fashion of the time, is placed at the farthest left of the table, the Roman position of honour ('in cornu

2 We have found important information about rendering the Last Supper in art in Réau 1957, 406–426; Duchet et al. 1994, 211–213; Sachs et al. 1980, 13–14; Ștefănescu 1973, 106–108; Cavarinos 2005, 140–145; Dionisie din Furna 2000, 113; and Taylor 2005, 68–70.

dextro'). The disciples are also half-prone, and there are two big fish (the symbol of Jesus) and some loaves of bread on a plate on the table. (Réau 1957, 411; Ștefănescu 1973, 106–107; Cavarnos 2005, 143–144; Poeschke 2010, Figure 53)

Among several representations in the Byzantine art or art of Byzantine tradition, where the table in the Last Supper is semi-circular, we shall mention the following: the mosaic in the Baptistery of San Giovanni, Florence, dated to 1240/50–1300 (Jesus sits at the left of the table, this time too – Poeschke 2010, Figure 184); the fresco in the Protaton Monastery, Mount Athos, 1310–1312 (Jesus is in a central position – Ștefănescu 1973, 107; Cavarnos 2005, Figure p. unnumbered); the frescoes from Moldavia: Bălinești (Drăguț – Lupan 1982, Figure 25), Dobrovăț, Popăuți (Henry 1984, pl. XXXV/1), Humor, Moldovița (Drăguț – Lupan 1982, Figure 119; Ștefănescu 1973, 108).

The round table, undoubtedly originated from the East (Réau 1957, 411), can be found in the *Codices of Rabbula* in the Monastery of Saint John of Zagba from Mesopotamia (Syria), dating to 586, kept up in the Laurentian Library, Florence. It is also rendered in Syrian manuscripts from the 12th and 13th centuries.³

In the illumination that depicts the *Last Supper* accomplished by the Armenian Grigore in the Gospel of Tarcmanciat, 1232, the table is oval. (Turnovo 1975, 52, Figure 60)

A very interesting miniature can also be found in an Armenian Gospel, produced in the 13th–14th centuries, in which the Last Supper takes place around a circular table where Christ is shown sitting on the left. Only the heads of the apostles are portrayed while Judas sits apart, at the bottom right-hand corner of the image (*La miniature...* 1984, Figure 69).

In the fresco of the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos, 1312, Jesus is placed in the central position behind a round table. (Ștefănescu 1973, 107; Di-onisie din Furna 2000, Figure unnumbered).

In the frescoes of the famous churches from Moldavia, Voroneț (15th century) and Sucevița (the end of the 16th century – the frescoes were made by painters Ion and his brother Sofronie), the table of the Last Supper is also round (Ștefănescu 1973, 108; Drăguț–Lupan 1982, 58).

The miniatures of two manuscripts, one in Wallachia, *Tetraevangeliiar*, belonging to Prince Alexandru II (the second half of the 16th century – G. Popescu-Vilcea 1984/1, Figure XXXIX), and the other one in Moldavia, *Tetrae-*

3 See the text of the figure 69 in *La miniature...* 1984.

vangeliiar, owned by Prince Ieremia Movila (the beginning of the 17th century – G. Popescu-Vilcea 1984/2, Figure XXXVII), were depicted in an archaic style: Jesus is in a reclining position or sits at the extreme left of an oval table.

It must be emphasized that the round table within the theme in discussion was present not only in the East, but also in the West (Ștefănescu 1973, 107). Here we will only mention the miniature in the *Ottheinrich Bibel*, Regensburg, around 1425–1430, in which the scene is rendered from above (a bird's eye view). In the middle of the table, on a large plate, there is a lamb, alluding to Jesus' imminent death. (Walther–Wolf 2005, 304, Figure p. 305)

The rectangular table (seldom square) appeared in the occidental art in the 11th century.⁴

Very frequently, the table of the Last Supper is conveyed frontally and horizontally, with some exceptions, Jesus being seated in a central position. Later Tiziano placed the table diagonally, to give depth to the composition. This innovative technique will be taken over by Tintoretto and Pieter Bruegel. (Réau 1957, 411–412)

We consider it useful to point out the following examples: the fresco in Saint-Jacques-des Guérets, France, around 1200 (*Les grands...* 1989, Figure p. 128); Giotto di Bondone, fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, 1304–1306 (*Padova* 1985–1998, Figure p. 43) (Jesus still sits at the left side of the table); Duccio di Buoninsegna, the reverse of *Maestà* with 26 scenes of the Passions, tempera on panel, about 1308–1311, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena (Toman 2008, Figure p. 64); Barna da Siena, in the cycle of frescoes of the New Testament, around 1340, Collegiata, San Gimignano (Toman 2008, Figure p. 78); Paolo Veneziano, the polyptych of St. Clara, tempera on panel, around 1350, Gallerie del'Accademia, Venice (*Arta gotică* 2010, Figure p. 190); Andrea del Castagno, fresco, *Cenacolo di Sant'Apollonia*, Florence, around 1447–1449 (Toman 2008, Figure p. 266) (here Judas is in an isolated position, being placed in front of Jesus); Leonardo da Vinci, wall painting in the refectory of the Monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan, 1495–1498 (it must be mentioned that Leonardo's work is “instantly recognized as the best depiction of this theme, influencing more or less all his successors” – Toman 2008, 372–373, Figure p. 372);

⁴ Réau 1957, 411; Cavarnos states that the rectangular table is specific to the Occident, and it replaced the sigma shaped one in the second half of the 12th century (Cavarnos 2005, 140, 144). They mentioned the mosaic of San Marco in Venice.

Albrecht Dürer, woodcut of the Big Cycle of Passions, 1510 (Kurth 1963, Figure 215); Albrecht Dürer, woodcut, 1523 (Kurth 1963, Figure 328); Jacopo Robusti Tintoretto, painting, 1547, the Church of San Marcuola, Venice. (*Mari pictori...* 2001, Figure p. 6–7)

As it has been mentioned, Tiziano Vicellio's approach to the *Last Supper* is an unprecedented one: the obliquely directed table makes the composition very dynamic (1542–1544, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino–Kaminski 1998, Figure 77).

Resuming Tizian's procedure several times, Tintoretto confers the theme, executed on canvas between 1592–1594, exhibited in the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore at Venice, in a more alert and tenser note, also augmented by the increased number of figures with intense feelings, and by the particular concern about the play on lights and shades. Accordingly, an unreal atmosphere is created, which deeply touches the viewer, anticipating the way of interaction specific to the Baroque. Sitting at the centre of the table, Christ offers bread to His disciples. Therefore, this work, so masterly conveyed by Leonardo da Vinci, does not present the prophecy of treachery any more, but it shows the institution of the Eucharist and hence the doctrine of transubstantiation, carefully pursued by Counter Reformation. (Toman 2008, 408, Figure p. 409)

Irrespective of the shape of the table, the figures in the Last Supper can be portrayed in a reclining position, sitting or even standing. If initially Jesus was placed at the extreme left, as a sign of high honour, subsequently he was positioned at the centre of the image. The disciples can be either behind the table or around it. John, His favourite apostle, usually lays his head on the breast of Jesus who often raises His right-hand prophesying. (Duchet-Suchaux – Pastoureau 1994, 212) Several variations allow Judas to be identified: he either stretches his hand to the bowl (Matthew 26:23), or Jesus gives him a piece of bread; sometimes he is isolated from the group. In Counter Reformation art, Judas is often accompanied by a dog, which can be explained in different ways: the dog, symbol of loyalty, forms a contrast with Judas' perfidiousness; in bestiaries, the dog represents the embodiment of devil closely linked with betrayal, or it may allude to Matthew's Gospel 7:6: "Do not give dogs what is sacred." (Réau 1957, 415)

The last meal Jesus had with His disciples occurred at night (Matthew 26:20). Consequently, the scene can be lit either by torches or by lamps hanging from the ceiling. On the table, there are bowls, glasses, wine goblets, fish or lamb (Christian symbols), bread, radishes etc. In the case of instituting the Eucharist, Jesus is

holding the Host, which He can offer to one of the disciples, while the Chalice is nearby – Juan de Juanes, 16th century, the Prado Museum, Madrid (Jahn 1965, Figure 32); Otto van Veen, 1592, Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Madrid. (Cantelli, 2009, Figure p. 11)

An important theme in Christian art, the *Last Supper* is frequently painted in the nave and main apse of the churches or in the refectory of monasteries. It can also be found in the miniatures of manuscript writings or in engravings of printed writings. Sometimes it can be treated independently or with varied artistic techniques.

In the early Romanian writings, published between 1700–1829, we have found ten representations of the *Last Supper*, nine woodcuts and a lithograph.⁵

A fine frontispiece in the *Triod* of Buzău from 1700 (Figure 1) presents the scene inscribed in a circular medallion, enclosed, in its turn, in a rectangle decorated with vegetal foliage scrolls of Baroque type. Under the explanatory inscription of the image, written in Slavonic language, there are two angels who border the circular medallion at the top.

In accordance with tradition, there is a room with a table set with a white tablecloth and with bowls, bread and goblets of wine. The twelve disciples, either half-frontal or in profile, are disposed around the table, sitting on benches. Following Byzantine tradition, the scene has the apostles behind a rectangular table with Jesus in central position, frontally portrayed and hierarchically outsized. He is wearing ancient clothes and has the cruciform glory about His head. He raises His right hand, giving away the traitor. (Ștefănescu 1973, 107) John is put to Jesus' left, leaning his head against Him, and Peter to His right hand, in reference to his seniority. As Peter is older than John, the seat on the right, being of greater respect, is usually reserved for the former. The Twelve have no glories, as it ought to be, as halos are to be used before the Pentecost, "when the disciples got filled with the Holy Ghost." (Cavarnos 2005, 141)

The engraving depicts the moment when the disciples – whose gestures and

⁵ Before 1700, we must mention the presence of the *Last Supper* at the bottom of the frame of the title page (woodcut) from Dosoftei, 1679.

attitudes express astonishment, unrest and sorrow – attempt to exculpate themselves after Jesus said: “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.” (Matthew 26:21; John 13:21) Judas, at the right end of the table, is reaching out for the bowl, in a gesture that certifies Christ’s words: “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.” (Matthew 26:23; John 13:26)⁶ The four windows in the background of the room are symmetrically disposed in a massive wall.

We suppose that in order to produce this engraving, whose author might have been Ioanichie Bakov, a similar model was followed, signed “VThZ” and dated to “640” (Figure 2), which appeared in the *Triod* of Lviv from 1642. (Kameneva, Guseva 1976, 29–30, 49, Figure 219) There are minor differences between them. In the Ukrainian book, the disciples are not so closely grouped around the rectangular table, on which there are only some plates and dishes, and in the background, behind Jesus there is a curtain and two windows at each side. It must also be noted that some other engravings of the writings from Buzău followed models of the books from Lviv. (Tatay 2011, 114, 116, Figure p. 175, 177; Tatay, Tatai-Baltă 2024, 425-427)

We have found out that the engraved plate used to decorate the *Triod* of Buzău from 1700 was used again to adorn the *Triod* of Bucharest from 1746 (Tatay, Tatai-Baltă 2015, 19, Figure 580, 581) and the *Triod* of Râmnic from 1761.

The way in which the *Last Supper* in the *Triod* of Buzău, 1700, is executed, calls to mind that of Barna da Siena (Figure 3) who in 1340 painted a complete cycle showing the life of Christ, displayed in three registers on the northern wall of the nave of the Collegiata Church at San Gimignano. Barna da Siena was influenced, among others, by Duccio di Buoninsegna. Similarly, the *Last Supper* “is enclosed in the same type of grating frame, with the console supported by beams, and with vertical rectangular retracted walls, some figures being placed in the same positions (compare Christ, Judas and John).” (Toman 2008, 65) Unlike Simone Martini or the Lorenzetti brothers, Barna “maintained the Byzantine elongation of figures”. (Toman 2008, 65) We also underline that the painter “vigorously animated bodies.” (*Enciclopedia...* 1974, 28)

In the woodcut of Buzău as well, the scene runs within a limited frame. In the background there is a wall with windows and the characters seated on benches

⁶ For details, see Cavarnos 2005, 141; Ștefănescu 1973, 107; Dionisie din Furna 2000, 113; Réau 1957, 413; Duchet-Suchaux – Pastoureaux 1994, 212; Sachs et al. 1980, 14.

are similarly grouped around the rectangular table. The Italian painting shows the disciples with glories, except Judas, who is in the foreground, stretching his hand to the bowl. As it has been shown, in the woodcut of Buzău, Judas sits at the right side of the table.

In the *Triod* of Râmnic from 1731 there is a frontispiece that presents the *Last Supper*; beyond doubt it is a copy of the one printed in Buzău in 1700. The rendering of the central scene is very much alike. There are only slight differences. In the back of the scene there are only two windows instead of four, and Judas, placed at the farthest right end of the table, holds in his right hand the purse with the thirty pieces of silver he took to betray Jesus. He also appears carrying the purse in the woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer from 1510 (it belongs to the “Cycle of Great Passions” – Kurth 1963, Figure 215) and from 1511 (belonging to the “Cycle of Small Passions” – Kurth 1963, Figure 230). The vegetal decoration flanking the scene is much more simplified, and the two angels are missing.

The frontispiece that comprises the *Last Supper* in the *Triod* printed at Bucharest in 1769 is signed by Grigore Ieromonah and is dated to 1768. It was obviously copied after the frontispiece which initially appeared in the *Triod* of Buzău, later on taken over in the *Triod* of Bucharest, 1746, and in the *Triod* of Râmnic, 1761. Minor differences can be noted only regarding the vegetal decoration that borders the central scene.⁷

In the elegant *Strastnic* printed in Blaj in 1773, there are some illustrations signed by Petru Papavici Râmniceanu, the most prolific woodcutter in the famous religious, cultural and political centre from Transylvania, and one of the most skilful typographers and engravers on Romanian territory in the period between the 16th and 19th centuries. It must be pointed out that Petru Papavici was, on the whole, a traditionalist who frequently appealed to woodcuts printed in Romanian writings in which the iconographic themes and style were of Byzantine manner. He also created woodcuts using Ukrainian models. Sometimes he followed Renaissance or Baroque patterns, probably of German origin.⁸

As for the ornamentation, the frame of the large (about 25x15) title page of the *Strastnic* is of occidental inspiration. The *Resurrection* is shown at the cen-

⁷ Concerning Grigore Ieromonah, engraver and typographer who worked in the typography of the Metropolitan of Bucharest, see Bianu-Hodoş 1910, 211; Mârza – Bogdan 2013, 140; Tatai – Tatai-Baltă 2015, 35-48.

⁸ For details, see Tatai-Baltă 1986, 113–121; Tatai-Baltă 1995; Tatai-Baltă 2008, 75–86; Tatai-Baltă 2013.

tre top, in a round medallion, and the *Annunciation* is depicted at the bottom. The round medallions on either side comprise: *The Crucifixion*, *The Last Supper*, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, *Judas' Kiss*, *Entombment*, *Descent from the Cross*, *Crowning with Thorns* and *In the Garden of Gethsemane* (*Christ's Agony in the Garden*). The four evangelists with the Gospel in their hands are differently depicted beside these scenes. The medallions and the spaces between them are richly adorned. (Tatai-Baltă 1995, 93, Figure 44)

The *Last Supper* on this *Title Page*, accurately engraved, is executed in a concise manner. Nevertheless, no one can deny the realistic note in which the characters are portrayed. Although the number of disciples is only ten, they are diversely depicted from both the viewpoint of physiognomy and of spiritual traits. It is only Jesus Christ, shown frontally and hierarchically outsized, who calls to mind the manner of treating of Byzantine tradition.

The analogy between this *Supper* and that in the *Triod* of Lviv from 1642 is surprising: the arrangement of the table, the disposition of the apostles in front of the table, of Jesus and John, as well as of the background with hangings is identical. However, there are fewer apostles and only one window.

A frontispiece in the *Triod* of Râmnic from 1777 presents the *Last Supper* in the centre of the image. This must have followed the model of the one engraved by Grigore Ieromonah dated to 1768 and printed in the *Triod* of Bucharest from 1769. Nevertheless, this time John the Apostle does not rest on Jesus' chest, but he only reclines to Him.

It must be emphasized that the frontispiece of Râmnic appears again in the 1798 *Triod* of Bucharest, a further proof that the wood-block that was used circulated from one typographic center to another.

In the second edition of Vasile Aaron – a representative of the 'Transylvanian School' – *The Passion and Death of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ* based on *Messiada* by F. G. Klopstock, printed in Sibiu in 1808, one can find eleven woodcuts, of which one shows the *Last Supper*. (Tatay 2007, 57, Figure 40)

The scene takes place inside, suggested by the pavement, some vague architectonic elements (walls, roof, a window), and a multi-branched candelabrum hanging from the ceiling. Jesus, who, in Byzantine manner, is of bigger size than His disciples, is sitting at the table together with the Twelve, with the glory surrounding His head. Some are presented frontally or in profile, and one of them is depicted from the back, a bold position for the Romanians at the time when the woodcut was done. The engraver seizes the moment when the disci-

ples, whose attitudes express a slight diversity, attempt to exculpate themselves, after Jesus' saying the words "one of you will betray me." On the table there are bowls, a wine goblet and in the middle a lamb on a plate, the lamb symbolizing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in order to save humanity. (Chevalier – Gheerbrant 1993, 299–300)

In *Liturghie*, Chişinău, 1815, the *Last Supper* (Figure 4), which Jesus ate together with His apostles, is depicted differently from those engraved earlier in Buzău, 1700, Râmnic, 1731, Bucharest, 1769, Blaj, 1773, Râmnic, 1777, and Sibiu, 1808.

The room, where the scene is set, is lit by a three-branched candelabrum beside which hangs a curtain forming ample folds. Jesus, in central position, is sitting behind a large rectangular table, surrounded by the twelve disciples, disposed in various directions. They manifest pathetic, strong emotions which can also be noticed in the Baroque or Mannerist works that might have reached the Romanian area via Ukrainian engravings. The prediction of betrayal makes the figures in the illustration extremely agitated and distressed. The fact that the disciple on the right side of the table, seen from behind, is holding a goblet constitutes a detail which makes one think of "genre painting."

We presume that the *Last Supper* (Figure 5) engraved in the *Strastnic* of Buda from 1816 is based on the homonymous work existent in the *Triod* of Râmnic from 1731, which, in its turn, was patterned after the *Triod* of Buzău from 1700. As it has been shown above, the model followed by them was the frontispiece printed in the *Triod* of Lviv from 1642. Our finding is based on the fact that the engravers in the printing press of Buda referred to models existing in the writings of Râmnic several times.⁹ It must be pointed out that only in the engraving of the *Triod* of Râmnic from 1731, Judas, placed at the right side of the table, holds the purse with the thirty silver pieces, for which he had betrayed Jesus.

In both the woodcut of Buda and in the other frontispieces produced previously, one can see the same arrangement of the table and disposition of the figures around it. However, this time the Supper takes place in a large room, with four pillars supporting the vaults, with two latticed windows and checkerboard pavement. Both the drapery with two tassels, in the middle of the room, and the two candelabrams on either side are equally elegant. The symmetrical disposition of the above enumerated elements as well as of the characters constitute

⁹ For details see Tatai 2011.

a highly appreciated procedure in the Byzantine art and in that of Byzantine tradition. (Tatay 2011, 119–121, Figure 79) We must emphasise that this engraving influenced Picu Pătruș, who achieved a homonymous miniature for his manuscript entitled *Stihos, namely Verse*, 1842–1851. (Tatai-Baltă, Tatay 2021, 178, Figure 1, 2)

The Gospel printed at the Monastery of Neamț in 1821, is richly decorated with woodcuts executed by Ghervasie Monah and Simeon Ierei. (Racoveanu 1940, 29)

Not signed, the *Last Supper* (Figure 6) in this book (Racoveanu 1940, 30, pl. XLII/4) shows the apostles either sitting or standing, which causes certain unrest among them. Rendering this state of agitation concurred with both their portrayal in profile or frontally, and with giving up the manner of representing the figures' heads on the same level (isocephaly), which was a procedure specific to the art of Byzantine tradition. The architectonic elements (pavements, columns, windows), the drapery drawn aside, and the two candelabrams fixed on the wall, suggest rather convincingly that the scene develops in a room, at night.

The third edition of Vasile Aaron's book *The Passions and Death of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ* printed in Sibiu in 1829, comprises 10 illustrations (lithographs), of which one depicts the *Last Supper*. (Figure 7) Nine of these lithographs are based on the woodcuts that adorn the second edition of the book from 1808, except the *Supper* conceived in a completely different manner. (Tatai-Baltă 2012, 102–103, Figure 7; Tatai-Baltă 2013, 45–46, Figure p. 146)

The table, placed diagonally in this biblical theme, must have derived from Italian painting. It was approached by Tiziano (Figure 8): 1542–1544, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino (Kaminski 1998, Figure 77); and taken over by Tintoretto in the subsequent paintings conserved in Venice: 1566, San Trovaso (Mocanu 1977, Figure 31); 1570, Santo Stefano (*Venise* 2007, Figure p. 217); 1579–1581, Scuola di San Rocco (Mocanu 1977, Figure 42); 1592–1594, San Giorgio Maggiore (Toman 2008, 408, Figure p. 409) – here the composition created diagonally is inverted.

The diagonal placement of the table and the figures' gestures and expressions obviously confer the image dynamism and dramatic character. Some similarities between the lithograph of Sibiu and Tiziano's painting from 1542–1544 can be noted. Beside the way in which the table is placed in the room, in both works, Jesus and His disciples take about the same seats around it. The lithograph of Sibiu portrays John the Apostle with his head resting against Christ, outsized

in comparison with His apostles, following the Byzantine manner. Jesus is also wearing a ray nimbus of occidental type around His head. It must be pointed out that the disciples in the lithograph have disk-shaped glories above their head, specific to the Italian art. The apostles gathered at a long table get smaller and smaller towards the background, which calls to mind the well-known canvas of Tintoretto in San Giorgio Maggiore at Venice. (Toman 2008, 408)

Commenting, for the first time in the specialized literature, on the ten engravings that refer to the Last Supper, printed in the early Romanian writings between 1700–1829, highlights that the representation of the theme of occidental origin, where the table is rectangular (not semi-circular or round), came via the Ukrainian engraving that, in its turn, developed in the area of dissemination of German and Italian art. (Kameneva, Guseva 1976, 10) In the course of time, the works of the artists of the Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque and Neo-Classicism came more and more frequently to the Romanian territory through varied routes.

We fully agree with the statement of researcher Eleonora Costescu who asserted that in the South-Eastern European area it was the themes that were first taken from the occidental art while the style reached here later, “just after a period of adjustment.” (Costescu 1983, 34) The manner of accomplishment of the Romanian engravings, investigated in this study, proves this assertion. It must be underlined that according to Byzantine tradition the figures in these illustrations have discreet gestures, more or less stereotyped, while Jesus Christ is conveyed frontally, with solemn posture, hierarchically outsized. Only towards the end of the above-mentioned period, under the increasing influence of Occidental art, the gestures and inner feelings of the holy figures got individualized, becoming better delineated, the body motion getting more and more natural and the composition more dynamic.

Translated by Ana Tatai

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