Chalice

Metalwork Collection

Accession Nr.:	13689
Date of production:	early 17th century (presumably)
Place of production:	Hungary (presumably)
Inscription:	jelzetlen
Materials:	silver-gilt
Techniques:	chased; chiselled; pierced; repoussé/punched
Dimensions:	height: 24 cm opening diameter: 10 cm base diameter: 14,7 cm weight: 568,6 g

The sexfoil base of this chalice rises in a concave arch from the foot, which is separated from the decorative floral band above it by a dense row of notches. The tall, plain lobes of the base rise like a pyramid, coming together at the flared collar, under which only the fragments of the former leafy crenellation have survived. There are stylized dual leaf designs in relief on the flattened spherical node (this scalloped decoration is the later “descendant” of the bulbous decorations on the nodes of earlier chalices). Its studs (rotuli) alternate between strawberries surrounded by four leaves or set in flowers with six petals, and the traces of the former enameling can be found on these.

The node is bordered above and below by architectonic hexagonal openwork stem rings, both of which have six small columns each and images have been engraved in the small windows between the columns. The openwork calix with engraved decorations has ribbons with inscriptions winding around it, and a row of stylized, undulating tongues of flame behind this. The crenellation of the calix is also openwork, which according to the inventory book depicts evergreen branches with pinecones. However, we would refer to these motifs representing stylized stemmed roses between two leaves instead as rosebough ornaments according to current terminology.

A less widespread metalworking method was used to attach the individual elements of the chalice to one another; instead of screws, tubular shafts and rods were employed. However, numerous analogies to its type, construction, and decoration can be found amongst the silverworks of Upper Hungary and Transylvania.

The legible Latin text of the inscribed ribbons is the refrain from a medieval Christian hymn, “GLORIA, LAUS ET HONOR, TIBI SIT, REX CHRISTE REDEM/P/TOR: CUI PUERILE DECQ[US PROMPSIT HOSANNA PIUM].” The hymn, “All Glory, Laud and Honor” was composed by Theodulph, the bishop of Orléans who died in 818, and worshippers sing it during the processional on Palm Sunday in honor of Jesus’s arrival in Jerusalem.

This chalice was purchased by the museum for a relatively inexpensive price of 1,000 korona in 1915 along with numerous mostly 16th century pieces of metalwork such as lidded tankards and cups. The person of the seller, Henrik Egger, raises certain doubts about the origins of the work. It came to light that a “French Rococo” chalice bought from him and later exhibited was not an original, but a Historicist work from the late 19th century.

The brothers Henrik and Dávid Egger, who worked as goldmiths and antique dealers in Vienna and Budapest, would have been quite familiar with the historical techniques of making works such as this. For example, Arnold Ipolyi, the bishop of Besztercebánya (Banská Bystrica, Slovakia), “had Egger make” a copy of the cloissoné enamel Gothic chalice from the end of the 15th century from the Garamszentkereszt (Žiar nad Hronom, Slovakia) Roman Catholic parish church, “reproducing as they desired the filigree enamel technique” (Dr. CZOBOR Béla: Egyházi emlékek a történelmi kiállításon [Ecclesiastical Relics in the Historical Exhibit]. Klny. See: MATLEKOVITS Sándor ed.: *Az*

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ezredéves kiállítás eredménye [The Results of the Millennial Exhibition], vol. V. Budapest, 1898, 50.)

Henrik Egger retired from the business and started collecting works of art. He loaned this chalice with a Latin inscription to the Museum of Applied Arts for its exhibition displaying Hungarian chalices from his own high-quality collection of fifty pieces (which also included French furniture, Italian bronze statuettes, rugs, etc.). This work was shown in 1913 and was one of the pieces purchased for the museum two years later from the estate of Henrik Egger, who had passed away in the meantime.

by Ildikó Pandur

Literature

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