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RULERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CULT OF SAINTS: PATRON SAINTS OF WALLACHIA (14ᵀᴴ-18ᵀᴴ CENTURIES)

Abstract: *The cult of saints is an important element of reference in studying medieval culture, Church life and iconography of religious art. Like all medieval states, the Principality of Wallachia through its rulers, main founders of the Church, developed in the middle Ages a preference for certain patron saints. Our study discusses the most important manifestations of their cult, revealing their possible motivations, influences and iconographic peculiarities.*

It was previously observed that the formalization of the cult of saints in the countries of Byzantine-Slavic tradition, including Romanian Principalities, falls on the political power, as playing an important role in building the legitimacy of royal authority[1]. The translation of holy relics was thought to be very important not only for the church which was to receive them, but also for the city where the church or monastery resided in, and even for the whole country. The Prince or at least representatives of his court had therefore to be present, as hosts, at the arrival of the saints' relics in the city that was about to receive them.

The first known case of *translatio* of a saint, in Romanian principalities, is the event of Philothea's holy relics arrival from the Patriarchate of Tǔrnovo to the church of the princely court at Arges, Wallachia. It is not known when this event took place or the persons who were involved in it and what reason led the court to bring the relics in the Wallachian reign's residence. The oldest evidence confirming the presence of the relics dates from 1656, as well as the saint's hagiographic history, narrated from the Synaxarion of Arges and the mention that the saint had her own celebration office (*akoluthia*)[2]. But both were comple-

tely different from the version of the *Vita* of Blessed Philothea of Pamphylia written by the Patriarch of Tǔrnovo, Euthymius, and reissued by Joachim, bishop of Vidin. In the Synaxarion of Arges was told the life of a saint Philothea of Tǔrnovo, a Bulgarian peasant child, while the *Vita* edition of the saint hermit Philothea of Pamphylia, due to Patriarch Euthymius, was not preserved in any copy in Wallachia[3].

The assumption that Philothea's holy relics could be brought under prince Mircea the Elder from Tǔrnovo or Vidin soon after they fell under Turkish domination (1393-1396), is hampered by the complete lack of saint's hagiography in Wallachia. The fact that the relics could be translated without being accompanied by their own Synaxarion and *akoluthia* is an argument that pleads against the thesis of "official" *translatio*[4]. Romanian local tradition has developed the legend that the mythical Prince Radu Negru (beginning of the 14th cent.) brought Philotea's holy relics in the country, tradition recorded in the late 18th century and illustrated in the paintings on the nave's pillars of the princely church at Arges about the same time (**fig. 1**). In 1811, Bishop Joseph of Arges set the date for the commemoration of saint Philothea "of Arges" on December the 7th, succeeding the feast of St. Nicholas, patron of the princely church[5]. Wallachian princes'

[1] Petre Guran, „Invention et translation des reliques – un cérémonial monarchique?" in *Revue de Études Sud-Est Européens*, vol. XXXVI (1998), nr. 1-4, pp. 196-197.
[2] Paul of Aleppo, „The Voyage of Patriach Makarios of

Antioch in the Romanian Principalities", in *Călători străini despre țările române*, ed. M.M. Dersca-Bulgaru, vol. VI, Bucharest, 1976, p. 165.
[3] Emil Turdeanu, *La littérature bulgare du XIVᵉ siècle. Sa diffusion dans les pays roumains*, Paris, 1946, pp. 196-197.
[4] Bishop Epifanie Norocel, „Sfântul Eftimie, ultimul patriarh de Târnovo şi legăturile lui cu Biserica românească", in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, vol. LXXXIV (1966), 5-6, pp. 552-557.
[5] Dumitru R. Mazilu, *Sfânta Filoteia de la Argeş. Lămurirea unor probleme istorico-literare. Monografie hagiografică*, Bucharest, 1933, pp. 37-40, 46.

Fig. 1. The history of saint Philotea, St. Nicholas in Arges, north-west pillar of the nave (ca. 1745). Above: the martyrdom of the saint; below: the holy relics of Philotea brought to Wallachia by Prince Radu Negru.

Fig. 2. The interior of St. Niphon II's reliquary lid, painted with the portrait of Prince Neagoe Basarab beside the icon st. Niphon. Dionysiou Monastery, ca. 1517.

role in bringing the holy relics of Philotea, even if cannot be disputed - they were deposited in the church of the royal court at Arges, in the heart of the capital - is recorded only in lately synthesized traditions[6]. Even though their arrival might not due to the rulers, the tradition naturally put it on their behalf, by reason of medieval mentality regarding the central role of the monarch in the development of the cult of saints. More suggestive concerning the role of the prince of

Wallachia in translating relics of saints is the arrival event of the relics of St. Patriarch of Constantinople Niphon II, former mentor of Wallachian Prince Neagoe Basarab, at Arges Monastery, in 1517. Neagoe apparently paid the relics (the head) of his blessed confessor with the relics (the head) of St. John the Baptist[7]. The high price offered by the prince in return of his mentor's relics show that their translation to Wallachia from Mount Athos was due to his personal desire to have them near, in his own necropolis church (**fig. 2**). The ceremony held in the honour of the saint, at his relics' arrival (1517), was certainly unprecedented in Wallachia, by their ecumenical dimension, as gathering all the abbots of Mount Athos and the Ecumenical Patriarch Theolept. It was preceded by a local council in which Niphon was canonized and was composed a celebration office[8].

Much evidence attests an impressive cult for the saint apostles during Neagoe's reign. It is seen particularly in Arges monastery church, where the narthex is surrounded by 12 columns, symbolizing the 12 apostles - according to the theologians of the time[9]- and representing, thus, a figure of the city of Zion, the New Jerusalem[10]. The link between the holy apostles and the person of the Byzantine emperor had been accomplished long before, with the canonical proclamation of Constantine as "Equal to the Apostles" and the Byzantine law synthesis, in which the apostolic canons and decisions of Church councils were recognized as legal as the state's civil law and obligatory to be defended by any Christian autocrat prince.

[6] Paul Cernovodeanu, „La double histoire de sainte Philothée d'Argeş et ses miracles", in *L'empereur hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine*. Actes des colloques internationaux „L'empereur hagiographe" (13-14 mars 2000) et „Reliques et miracles" (1-2 novembre 2000), ed. Petre Guran, New Europe College, Bucharest, 2001, p. 169-174.

[7] *Life of St. Niphon* (Greek edition, ed. Vasile Grecu), Bucharest, 1947, p. 157.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 155.

[9] Elisabeta Negrău, „The Structure of the Monastery Church from Curtea de Argeş. A Theological Interpretation", *European Journal of Science and Theology*, Iasi, vol. 6 (2010), nr. 1, pp. 59-66.

[10] Revelations, 21: 14

Such an apology of the right laws[11], represented by the apostles and also by St. Niphon, might be determined, in Wallachia, by the need of moral reparation of the throne, after an episode of infringement of Church canons by Prince Radu the Great, which finally led to the exile of former patriarch Niphon from Wallachia to Athos[12], as also after the conversion to Catholicism of Prince Mihnea, the immediate precedent voivode[13].

Neagoe assisted, in his youth, at the event of the relics' arrival of St. Gregory the Decapolite from Constantinople to the monastery of Bistrita (ca. 1494), organized by his half-uncle, the great boyar Barbu Craiovescu. After he became voivode, Neagoe took care of rebuilding this church. The relics of St. Gregory the Decapolite received a vestment made from the royal mantle of Neagoe (*kaftan*) who showed, thus, humbly, a high honour to the saint[14]. The decoration of icons and relics with *regalia*, the *insignia* of royal power, seem to constitute a particular feature of voivode Neagoe's manifestation of godliness[15]. It manifested similarly in other cases: at the monastery of Arges, Neagoe decorated the royal icons with the insignia of his dead son, Prince Peter and, at Vatopedi, adorned an icon of the Virgin Mary with a golden "apple" decorated with pearls, more probably a pomegranate, which was a popular symbol, of ancient origin, of wealth, knowledge and royalty[16]. Another ancient symbol of royalty, evoking the eternal life, was the tree of life, also present in the decorative repertoire of royal insignia among Christian rulers, due to the importance given to it in Psalms: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon" (Ps. 91: 12). Stylized trees (cypress-like), of oriental origin, began to be used in the mid 15th century on the seals of the Wallachian voivodes Vladislav II, Vlad the Empaler and Basarab the Younger[17], spreading on many other princely donation objects, as religious miniatures, metalwork, icon veils and sepulchre palls, by the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.
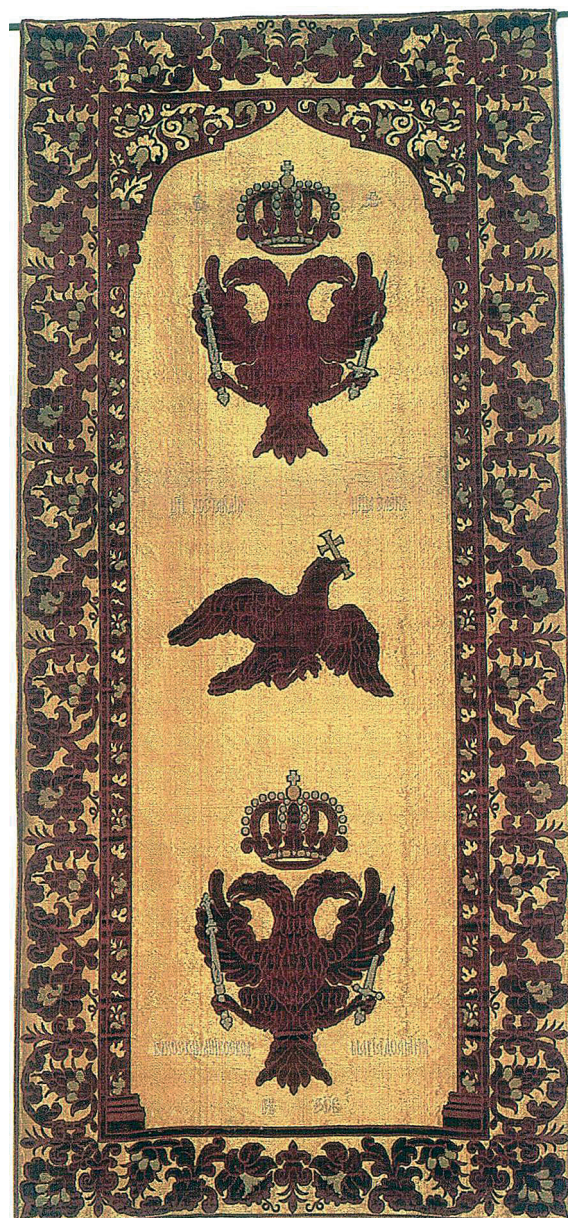

Fig. 3. Dvera (iconostasis courtain) donated by prince Constantine Brancovan to the monastery of Hurezi (1693/4)

No stranger to this aulic approach to the cult of saints -or descending from it – is the tradition of adorning the iconostasis drapes and even decorative fresco areas, with *regalia* -crown, sceptre and sword- and heraldic symbols: the emblem of Wallachia and the two-headed eagle (17th-18th centuries; **fig. 3**)[18]. They illustrate the monarchical piety and also the legitimacy of political power. The representation of state's official symbols (the flag) in churches became a rule which extended to nowadays.

Prophets David and Solomon were often seen, in the Byzantine tradition, as models and examples for the

[11] Cristina Codarcea, *Société et pouvoir en Valachie (1601-1654) entre la coutoume et la loi*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 235.

[12] *Life of St. Niphon II* (ed. V. Grecu), p. 81 *sqq.*

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 284.

[14] Corina Nicolescu, *Histoire du costume de cour dans les Pays Roumains (XIVᵉ-XVIIIᵉ siècles)*, Bucharest, 1970, p. 132.

[15] Radu Păun, „*La couronne est à Dieu*. Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521) et l'image du pouvoir penitent", in *L'empereur hagiographe*, pp. 214-215.

[16] See Manolis Andronikos, Manolis Chatzidakis, Vasos Karagiorgios, *Ta Ellinika Mouseia*, Athens, 1975, p. 365 *sqq.*

[17] Flaminiu Mîrţu, „Reprezentarea florii de crin pe inele în Ţara Românească în secolele XIV-XVI", in *Studii şi Cercetări de Istoria Artei*, Bucharest, vol. 16 (1969), nr. 2, p. 129.

[18] Corina Popa, „Tradiţie şi «renaştere» bizantină în arta Ţării Româneşti", in *Arta istoriei Istoria artei. Academicianului Răzvan Theodorescu la 65 de ani*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 155.

Fig. 4. Saints Simeon and Sava Nemanja with the portraits of the icon donors, lady Milica Despina Branković and her daughters (ca. 1522, the National Museum of Art, Bucharest)

from the Cross (both about 1522; **fig. 4-5**)[23]. The Descent from the Cross icon presents an unconventional parallel between the sacrifice of the Son of God and the drama of princess Milica Despina Branković, spouse of voivode Neagoe, grieving the loss of her dead son, Theodosie. The Western typology of characters and the chromatic dominant, based on ruby red and emerald green, also the transparency effects of the air and especially the iconographic type of composition which evokes the "Pieta" Madonnas are reasons to attribute this work to a painter from the Veneto-Cretan milieu[24]. The icons bearing portraits of donors are quite rare in the Romanian principalities. Mostly, they are commanded by great cultural personalities: in Wallachia, they belong to voievode Neagoe and lady Despina in the 16th century and to voivode Matthew Basarab and Constantine Brancovan in the 17[th25]. In Moldavia, there are not known any such examples.

The Romanian political relations with the Slavic world generated the adoption of the cult of the Serbian national saints Simeon and Sava Nemanja, of John of Rila -represented in the mural painting of the narthex of Tismana monastery church (1546) – of St. Euthymius of Tŭrnovo and the martyrs of Kiev, Princes Boris and Gleb. Most of their liturgical offices were preserved in manuscripts of the 15th century, in the Moldavian Monastery of Neamt. The large dowry of manuscripts from the Wallachian monasteries of Arges and Bistrita would probably contain such offices too, but most of them were not preserved. A Psalter of 1531 from the Bistrita Monastery contained *katavasiae* dedicated to the Serbian saints Štefan Dečanski[26] and Simeon and Sava Nemanja[27], whose Wallachian cult during this period might be due to the spouse of prince Neagoe, lady Despina Branković, or to her uncle, Maxim (George) Branković, temporary resident in Wallachia at the monastery of Bistrita. Obviously, the circulation and adoption of such texts overlaps a long tradition of Wallachian relations especially with the Slavic church, which was facilitated by the political power[28]. The presence of Serbian

monarchs[19]. They were mentioned in donation inscriptions and represented in iconography, both in Moldavia and Wallachia, especially in princely churches[20]. Neagoe was compared with king David for his concern for the Wallachian Church[21].

More suggestive than the importance given to the royal insignia in the cult of saints is the figuration of the royal family in the field of the so-called "family icons" of prince Neagoe (today, at the National Museum of Art, Bucharest)[22]: St. Nicholas (ca. 1518), Serbian saints Simeon and Sava and the Descent

[19] Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest. The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 4.
[20] Pavel Chihaia, „Modele răsăritene şi modele voievodale în Ţara Românească", in *Glasul Bisericii*, vol. XXXV (1976), nr. 1-2, p.159.
[21] *Life of St. Niphon II* (Slavonic edition, ed. Tit Simedrea), in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română (BOR)*, vol. LV (1937), nr. 5-6, p. 286.
[22] Victor Brătulescu, „Icoanele de familie ale lui Neagoe Basarab", in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, vol. LXXIV (1961), nr. 2, pp.776-777.

[23] Alexandru Efremov, „Portrete de donatori în pictura de icoane din Ţara Românească", in *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice*, vol. XL (1971), nr.1, pp.41-42.
[24] *Ibidem*.
[25] *idem, Icoane româneşti,* Bucharest, 2003, p.61.
[26] Romanian Academy Library, Slavic ms. 221, f. 277[v].
[27] *Ibidem*, f. 291[v]-308[v]
[28] Mihai Maxim, „Les relations des Pays roumains avec

Fig. 5. Descending from Cross icon, with the portrait of lady Milica Despina mourning her dead son, Theodosie (ca. 1522, the National Museum of Art, Bucharest)

Fig. 6. Saint Procopius on throne, holding the broken chains of boyar Barbu Craiovescu (copy from the first half of 18th century, Bistrita Monastery)

cult of Saints Simeon and Sava in Wallachia is due in a large measure to lady Despina, who commanded the icon of the two saints, family ancestors of hers. For this reason, she also appears represented in the field of the icon, accompanied by her daughters, in mourning vestments after the death of her husband Neagoe and son Theodosie. The two Serbian national saints, father and son, are portrayed without any physiognomic distinction or of age, fact which led the scholars to presume that the icon might be the work of a local painter, who was not aware of their Serbian iconography[29]. Saints Simeon and Sava were also represented, vis-à-vis the portrait of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović and his lady Milica, in the narthex of Arges monastery church (ca. 1526). The blessed Prince Lazar, ancestor of lady Despina and ally of the Wallachian voivode Mircea the Elder, was taken as

a model of ideal monarch by Neagoe Basarab. The Wallachian voivode declared himself as an imitator of the Serbian knez in his votive image from Arges: Neagoe and Despina holding the model of the church were placed next to the representation of the Serbian prince and his lady, holding the model of monastery Ravanica[30].

The boyar Barbu Craiovescu developed in his monastery, Bistrita, a cult for the saint martyr Procopius who apparently had saved him, in his youth, from a prison where had been thrown by Turks. In honor of the saint's miracle, the boyar ordered an icon for the monastery, which praised this hagiographic event. The icon is now preserving in a mid-18th century copy, in the altar of Bistrita monastery (**fig. 6**)[31]. But the cult of Craiovescu for St. Procopius may follow a Serbian tradition. The preference shown by Barbu for this martyr might be due to an influence, in Wal-

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l'archevêché d'Ohrid à la lumière de documents turcs inédits", in *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européens*, vol. XIX (1981), nr. 4, pp. 653-671.
[29] A. Efremov, *Icoane românești*, p. 37.

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[30] P. Chihaia, „Modele răsăritene", pp. 162-164.
[31] Archimandrite Veniamin Micle, *Mânăstirea Bistrița olteană*, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, 1996, p. 225, și n. 178.

lachia, of the Serbian cult for St. Procopius, whose relics were brought to Niš since the late 12th century, the martyr being honored as the patron of this city until the 14th century, when was moved in another town that received his name, Prokuplje[32]. The hagiography of St. Procopius may have a special relevance for rulers, because of an event from the saint's life that resembles the conversion of Emperor Constantine: Procopius also has a vision of the Holy Cross[33].

Saint Procopius was added as patron of the catholicon of Hurezi monastery by its founder, Prince Constantine Brancovan, who has received the saint's holy relics from the former ecumenical patriarch James I, in 1691/2[34], apparently at the demand of the prince, who was honouring, thus, the tradition of his family ancestor, Barbu Craiovescu, for this patron saint. It is probable that Constantine Brancovan's preference for St. Procopius is, as another favorite saint of him, Eustatius Plakidas with his family, related to the theme of family holiness and especially to the cult of the Holy Cross. St. Eustatius also sees the Cross in a moment of revelation and Prince Brancovan, like Emperor Constantine, considers it as a main theme for theological reflection. The two patrons of the monastery of Hurezi, Saints Constantine and Helen and St. Procopius, are mentioned in the wedding service[35]. The invocation of St. Procopius as a protector of the married couple is justified by an event from the saint's hagiography: he has encouraged 12 virgins to receive with him the martyrdom, through which one earns the eternal union with Christ the Bridegroom[36]. The presence of the saint patrons of marriage, in particular at the foundation of Hurezi but also in other foundations of Constantine Brancovan, is probably due to the dynastic vision of Prince Constantine about his reign, revealed in his foundation of Hurezi, where his entire family with princely origins is portrayed.

The military saints as patrons of churches naturally proliferate at princely foundations because of the valence of these great martyrs to be defenders of Christians in wars: St. Mercurius (Plătăreşti, 1646), St. Demetrius (Craiova, ca. 1640), especially St. George (princely Church of Pitesti -1656, the monastery of Brancovan in Bucharest-1706) and Sts. Archangels (Metropolitan Church of Alba Iulia –ca. 1600, monastery of Arnota-ca. 1644) are the most common patrons of this category. The great military martyrs have the fundamental quality of being defenders against the tyrants and infidels. St. George, very popular in the East[37], in Georgia and in Moldavia -whose patron was- is also one of the patron saints of Constantinople, which is why his hagiographic cycle was often assumed for representation by the Cantacuzino boyars, of Greek Constantinopolitan origin, in their foundations in Wallachia, at the end of the 17th century[38]. At the monastery churches from Sinaia and Fundenii Doamnei (ca. 1690), the foundations of Mihail Cantacuzino, occur both cycles, of Sts. George and Demetrius, in the porch. At Cotroceni (ca. 1685) was featured on the church door, instead of the Wallachian coat of arms, the carved shield of St. George, according to some opinions[39].

The dedication of Cotroceni monastery to saints Sergius and Bacchus was dictated by the reverence of Prince Serban Cantacuzino for the two martyrs, which was due to a biographical event. As happened with Barbu Craiovescu, Serban owed too his rescue from death to a miracle. For that event took place in the commemoration day of saints Sergius and Bacchus, he built a monastery -Cotroceni- on the place where he hid to escape from execution[40]. In addition, the Prince made another gesture that expressed devotion and gratitude to the two saints, whom he then considered his protectors: he donated a manuscript edition of the Slavonic *Life of Saints Sergius and Bacchus* at the monastery of Chilandar in 1685, asking the monks from all the monasteries of Mount Athos to do vigils, masses and prayers to the two holy martyrs and "for Prince Serban, his parents and his children and for the whole country"[41].

Since the mid-17th century, the reverence for the "local" saints Nicodemus of Tismana[42] and Grego-

[32] Smiljka Gabelić, „On the Iconography of Saint Prokopios" (in Serbian), in *Zbornik Radova. Vizantološkog Instituta,* vol. 43 (2006), pp. 527-530.

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 528, note 3.

[34] Romanian Academy Library, Romanian ms. 1396, *the Pomelnik of the monastery of Hurezi* (1695), f. 9[r].

[35] Pr. Vasile Gavrilă, *Cununia, viaţă întru împărăţie*, Bucharest, 2004, p. 189, 221.

[36] *Ibidem,* p. 222.

[37] Răzvan Theodorescu, „Despre «coridoarele culturale» ale Europei de Est", in *Academia Română. Memoriile Secţiei de Ştiinţe Istorice*, vol. VII (1982), p. 19.

[38] Corina Popa, „Tradiţie şi «renaştere» bizantină", p. 144.

[39] Dan Ionescu, „Ideal and Representation. The Ideal of Restoration of the Byzantine Empire during the Reign of Şerban Cantacuzino", in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1979, p. 528.

[40] Gheorghe I. Cantacuzino, *Mânăstirea Cotroceni*, Bucharest, 1968, pp. 8-9.

[41] *Apud* Pr. Ioan Moldoveanu, *Contribuţii la istoria relaţiilor Ţărilor Române cu Muntele Athos (1650-1863),* Bucharest, 2007, p. 135.

[42] Serbian monk, disciple of Elder Isaiah at the monastery of Chilandar, he had an active role in the Serbian delegation at Constantinople, which pleaded for the recognition of the Patriarchate of Peć. Nicodemus came then to Wallachia and founded the first monasteries of the newly constituted state of Wallachia. He died at his monastic foundation of Tismana, in 1406.

Fig. 7. Saint Nicodemus of Tismana and Gregory the Decapolite wearing omophoria (Govora Monastery, altar, ca. 1710)

"saint" by the patriarch of Jerusalem, Paisios II[45]. It seems that even if the cult of the Serbian monk Nicodemus was present at Tismana -the monastery where he was abbot- long before the times of Matthew Basarab, his iconographic representation was conceived and spread during the rule of this prince.

An iconographic peculiarity of the times of Constantine Brancovan is the inclusion of Sts. Nicodemus of Tismana and Gregory the Decapolite in the iconography of the altar - sometimes represented wearing *omophorion* (Govora -1710, **fig. 7**) - and associated to the greatest hierarchs of the Church. In narthexes' paintings, they are represented together not only in Oltenia, but also in other regions of Wallachia, both during Brancovan and the post-Brancovan period (the church of "Saints and Sibyls" in Bucharest, 1728, "All Saints" church, Ramnicu Valcea, 1764 etc.). The pair of saints appears to acquire the role of protectors of Oltenia and, perhaps, of the whole country[46], acting as "national saints".

The history of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat was very popular in the Byzantine and Serbian court milieus. The special interest of the emperors of late Byzantium for the monastic virtues left important traces in the imperial cult character, which is visible in the association of pious Palaeologus emperors and Serbian kings with Josaphat[47]: John VI Cantacuzenos (1354)[48] and John Uroš in Serbia (about 1380)[49] who chose to follow this model, renouncing the throne in favor of the monkhood, have chosen, as monks, saint Josaphat's name. In iconography, the parable of the unicorn – a theme from this hagiographic novel- appear early in Wallachia (narthex of Cozia, ca. 1390)[50]. Far from being just a parenetic literature for pious rulers, the

ry the Decapolite, begin to manifest in iconography. The second saint was represented in Wallachia since the early 16th century, in the painting of Bistrita monastery's infirmary church (ca. 1520), as patron of the monastery, but in the times of Matthew Basarab he already began to be represented outside the province of Oltenia, in other monuments in Wallachia (Plătărești, 1646). For the first, however, there are not known previous representations to the painting from the nave of Topolniţa hermitage (1673)[43]. This would indicate that the foundations of the cult of St. Nicodemus as protector - not just for the monastery of Tismana but for the whole province of Oltenia - were projected in the period of Prince Matthew Basarab. Although Nicodemus was not officially canonized by the Wallachian Church[44], he was recognized as

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[43] Cornelia Pillat, *Pictura murală în epoca lui Matei Basarab*, Bucharest, 1980, fig. 102.

[44] The first edition of the office of Saint Nicodemus the Archimandrite, abbot of Tismana, dates from the second half of the 18th century: *Slujba osebită a Sfântului Preacuviosului Părintelui nostru Nicodimŭ sfinţitulŭ, celu dinŭ*

lavra Sfintei Mânăstiri a Tismeanei, Râmnic, 1767.

[45] *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, B. *Ţara Românească*, Bucharest, 2006, vol. XXXIII (1648), nr. 169.

[46] Corina Popa, „Military and Local Saints in the Art of Seventeenth Century Wallachia", in *Colloquia. Journal of Central European Studies*, vol. XII (2005), nr. 1-2, p. 79.

[47] Vojislav J. Djurić, „Le nouveau Joasaph", in *Cahiers Archéologiques*, vol. 33 (1985), pp. 99-109.

[48] Donald M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor. A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c. 1295-1383*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 132.

[49] *Ibidem*, p. 185; *idem, Meteora. The Rock Monasteries of Thessaly*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1975, chap. 3.

[50] Ioana Iancovescu, „Viaţa sfinţilor Varlaam şi Ioasaf. Versiuni iconografice româneşti", in *Închinare lui Petre Ş. Năsturel la 80 de ani* (ed. Ionel Cândea, Paul Cernovodeanu, Gheorghe Lazăr), Brăila, 2003, p. 507.

Fig. 8 Saint Alexius Man of God, between saints Barlaam and Josaphat (ca. 1526, the National Museum of Art, Bucharest)

plete lack from the Romanian Synaxarion in the modern era- was due to the princely court. The live of these saints is a theme of spiritual reflection for the rulers and *-ad usum Delphini* – for the princes' sons. In this latter regard, the reference to the *Vita* of Barlaam and Josaphat in the *Teachings* of prince Neagoe for his son, Theodosie, or the representation of the two saints in the paintings of the hermitage of St. Stephen near Hurezi (1702), next to the heir prince Stephen Brancovan[53], are very eloquent.

Along with St. Josaphat, another saint of noble origin who chose to live a humble life is Alexius, "the man of God". The development of his cult in Wallachia seems to be linked to the prince Neagoe Basarab and is probably coming *via* the Athonite Synaxaria[54]. In the icon from the Arges monastery (ca. 1517, today, at the National Museum of Art, **fig. 8**), Alexius is flanked by Barlaam and Josaphat[55]. The virtue of humility which characterized Alexius and Josaphat - who has renounced the monarchy- was a valuable model for rulers against pride and vanity. Alexius, a noble man, chose to live in complete anonymity. His hagiographical history relates that, on his deathbed, he decided to reveal his true identity, handing the Roman Emperor Honorius an act which was proving his aristocratic origin[56]. The figure of Alexius blends often the harsh, monastic, physical appearance with the aristocratic fineness, being visibly likened by iconographers to the figure of St. John the Baptist[57].

In Wallachia circulated widely the *Laudae* of Saints Constantine and Helen written by the patriarch of Tŭrnovo, Euthymius, at least from the 16th century[58]. The text was a main source of inspiration especially for the panegyrics dedicated to Prince Constantine Brancovan[59]. The symbolic association with the figure of the canonized emperor Constantine was, in

Vita of the two saints was included in Synaxarion. It seems, however, that a liturgical office for Barlaam and Josaphat was not composed until the 17th century and Wallachia did not used it until the Archimandrite John of Hurezi made a copy of it in Slavonic (ca. 1691)[51], which, however, seems not to have circulated beyond the monastery of Hurezi. A Romanian translation of the *Vita* of the two saints was made in mid 17th century, after a manuscript Slavonic version which circulated in Wallachia in the 16th century. The representation of Barlaam and Josaphat was included on the title page of the Wallachian *Nomocanon* (1653)[52], fact which is indicative for the significance of the two saints as models for princes. The representations of Barlaam and Josaphat are almost never painted in churches inside the Synaxaria, but often in large size, among martyrs and hermits, on the naves' and narthexes' walls, fact which obviously raises questions regarding the function and the significance of these saints. It is highly probable that their importance in the Middle Ages -in contrast to their com-

[51] Romanian Academy Library, Romanian ms. 1396, *Čeaslov* of the Archimandrite John of Hurezi, f. 254ᵛ.

[52] Corina Popa, „Pictura bisericii mânăstirii Hurezi – realitate artistică şi culturală a veacului al XVII-lea", in *Studii şi Cercetări de Istoria Artei- seria Artă Plastică*, vol. XXX (1986), p. 26.

[53] I.Iancovescu, „Viaţa sfinţilor Varlaam şi Ioasaf", p. 510.

[54] François Halkin, André-Jean Festugière, *Dix textes inédites tirés du Ménologue impérial du Kutloumous*, Geneva, 1984, p. 86.

[55] For their association in Serbian iconography, see Svetlana Tomeković, „Les saints ermites et moines dans le décor du narthex de Mileševa", in *Mileševa dans l' histoire du peuple serbe*, Belgrade, 1987, p. 54

[56] Ioannis Spatharakis, *Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete. II Mylopotamos Province*, Leiden, 2010, p. 250.

[57] *Ibidem*, pp. 249-250.

[58] Romanian Academy Library, Slavic ms. 321 (Wallachia, 16th cent.), f. 176-206ᵛ.

[59] Violeta Barbu, „Locuri ale memoriei. Panegiricile dedi-

Fig. 9. The history of Emperor Constantine, the narthex of Hurezi monastery church, 1694, eastern wall. Above: the battle from Pons Milvius; below: the baptism of Constantine, the conversion of Zambri the Jew, the dormition of Saint Constantine.

this late period, due to the growing aspiration of liberation from Turks, associated to the figure of prince Brancovan. The two saints were patrons of two important churches built by homonym rulers: the Metropolitan church in Bucharest, by Prince Constantine Serban (1654-1658), followed in relatively short time by the great foundation of Prince Constantine Brancovan, the monastery of Hurezi (1694). Constantine Brancovan's rhetorical comparisons with emperor Constantine regarding the Christian providential mission of the political leader - to spread, as a new apostle, the Orthodox faith- were due to the threat of the Catholic Counter-Reformation against the Orthodox, especially among the Romanians in Transylvania. The duty of prince to obtain political and spiritual victory over the enemies of true faith is clearly revealed in the iconographic program of the narthex of Hurezi, where the History of Emperor Constantine occupies a privileged place (**fig. 9**). The iconographical selection of the certain moments

of his hagiographical life, whose common theme is the conversion to the Christian faith, shows the concern for illustrating the apostolic valence of Emperor Constantine. He is presented as a model to Prince Constantine Brancovan, who has to protect similarly the Orthodox Church from the threat of Uniatisme (Greek-Catholicism)[60]. The monastery of Hurezi and its four hermitages around it are forming a cross. The Holy Cross was a central theme of the iconographic program of the monastery church of Hurezi, dedicated to the saints Constantine and Helen[61]. An iconographic feature of the reign of Constantine Brancovan is the figuration of Christ crucified on the cross held by the two saints. Thus, it is included the evangelical event in the icon of Saints Constantine and Helen, as

cate lui Constantin Brâncoveanu", in Violeta Barbu ed., *In honorem Paul Cernovodeanu*, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 377-393.

[60] Ioana Iancovescu, „De nouveau sur le *Nouveau Constantin*", in *Les cultes des saints souverains et des saints guerriers et l'idéologie du pouvoir en Europe Centrale et Orientale. Actes du colloque international (coordoné par Ivan Biliarsky et Radu Păun), 7 jan. 2004*, New Europe College, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 251-263.
[61] *Eadem*, „Biserica sf. Împăraţi", in Corina Popa, Ioana Iancovescu, *Mânăstirea Hurezi*, Bucharest, 2009, pp. 209-211.

*Fig. 10 Icon of saints Constantine and Helen, with the portraits of Constantine Brancovan,
his lady Maria and their children. The parecclesion of Hurezi monastery, ca. 1696/7.*

a way to prove it *Vera Crux*. This element is found in frescoes, icons (**fig. 10**), manuscript miniatures[62], silver works[63].

At that time, explicit references to Saint Emperor Constantine were already used by the Russian Tsar Peter to strengthen his own imperial cult. Like Constantine, who moved the empire's capital from Rome to Constantinople, named after his own name, the Russian tsar will do a similar gesture with value of *translatio imperii*, moving the capital of his empire from Moscow to a new city, which received his name, Petrograd[64]. There should not be ignored neither the gesture of the Ukrainian Orthodox community to portray the Polish king John III Sobiecki and his lady, Maria Kazimiera, at the beginning of the same 18th century, as Saints Constantine and Helen,

[62] Tereza Sinigalia, „Un manuscris gréco-roumain enluminé de l'époque de Constantin Brâncoveanu", in *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art - série Beaux Arts*, vol. XXVI (1989), p. 33.

[63] Corina Popa, „Model şi variante în argintăria brâncovenească", in *Studii şi Cercetări de Istoria Artei- Seria Artă Plastică*, vol. 36 (1989), pp. 31-38.

[64] Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*; vol. I, „From Peter the Great to the Death of Nicholas I", Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 42-43; Lindsay Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, London, 1998, p. 207.

in icons of Pokrov, in honor of a victory obtained by the Polish king against the Turkish-Tatar army, which took place on the day of this feast (October 1st)[65].

In the most cases, the saints whose cult development was due, in Wallachia, to the voivodes, were ultimately perceived as patron saints of the state. Naturally, the prayers of the prince to his patron saints concerned mainly the country's protection. Apart from these cases of patron saints, the rulers' worship for Christ, the Holy Trinity and the Mother of God was also remarkable, but their cult in Wallachia took no peculiar forms to their general post-byzantine manifestations, except, however, a notable phenomenon: the recurrent presence of the Deesis scene in the iconographical programs[66].

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[65] Mirosław Piotr Kruk, „Icons of Our Lady of Pocrov in the Collection of Cracow", in *West Ukrainian Art of the Orthodox Church*, vol II, Łańcut, 2004, p. 357.

[66] Elisabeta Negrău, „The Deesis in the Romanian Painting of the 14th-18th Centuries. Themes and Meanings", in *Revista Teologică* Sibiu, 2011 (to be published).

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ВЛАДЕТЕЛСКИТЕ ПРИДОНЕСИ ВО КУЛТОТ НА СВЕТИТЕЛИТЕ: ПАТРОНСКИ СВЕТИТЕЛИ ВО ВЛАХИЈА ВО XIV–XVIII ВЕК

Култот на светителите претставува важен елемент во однос на проучувањето на средновековната култура. Како многуте средновековни држави, така и во Влахија во текот на средновековието се преферирале одредени патронски светители. Првиот познат случај за преземање светител во романските провинции е случајот со настанот со светите реликвии од Филотеја, кои стигнале во Патријаршијата во Турново, во дворецот на принцот во Арѓеш, Влахија. Не е познато кога се случило тоа, кои биле личностите и причините реликвиите да се сместат во резиденцијата во Влахија. Во романската локална традиција се развила легендата дека митскиот принц Раду Негру (почеток на XIV век) ги донел светите реликвии на Филотеја, а традицијата е документирана во доцниот XVIII век и е илустрирана во наосните столпци во црква на принцот во Арѓеш, во истиот период. Иако нивното доаѓање можеби не е врзано со владетелите, традицијата секогаш ги става во нивна улога, како резултат на менталитетот и централната улога на монархијата во развојот на светителските култови.

Многу подобро е документиран настанот за доаѓањето на светите реликвии на патријархот на Цариград св. Нифон II, поранешен ментор на влашкиот принц Негое Басараб, во Арѓешкиот манастир во 1517, како резултат на желбата на војводата тие да се близу, во неговата фунерарна црква. Иконографските потврди на овие свети апостоли се импресивниот култ во текот на времето на владеењето на Негое. Врската меѓу светите апостоли и личноста на византискиот владетел е потврдена со канонската прокламација на Константин како "рамноапостоли", како и византиската правна синтеза во која апостолските канони и Црковниот совет биле легални, а државно ѓраѓанско право на секој христијански автократски принц било задолжително да ги брани.

Во манастирот Бистрита реликвиите на св. Ѓорги Декаполит се добиени преку облеката на кралскиот кафтан на Негое, што ја покажува молитвената висока чест за светителот. Украсите на иконите и реликвиите со регалија, одлика на царската моќ, претставуваат одредена одлика на војводата Негое за манифестирање на неговата божественост. Иконите со вотивни портрети на ктиторите, исто

така, се одлика на негување на култот на светителите во романските провинции. Тие главно се јавуваат како одраз на култните личности: во Влахија тоа се Негое и неговата војвотка Деспина во XVI век, војводата Матеј Басараб и Константин Бранковеану во XVII век.

Политичките односи на Романија со словенскиот свет се генерираат со прифаќање светители од српска припадност, како свети Симеон и Сава Немањиќ. Присуството на српски светители во Влахија е резултат на војвотката Деспина, која нарачала икона со овие светители и нејзинините предци. Св. Прокопиј е чествуван од бољарот Барбу Краиовеску во XVI век и е додаден како патронски светител на католиконот во манастирот Хуреж од принцот Константин Бранковеану во XVII век. Присуството на светители патрони на бракот, Прокопиј и светите Констатин и Елена, во монашката заедница на Константин Бранковеану во Хуреж (1694) е можеби резултат на династиската визија на принцот Константин за време на неговото владеење.

Од средината на XVII век, почитувањето на "локални" светители како Никодим од Тисмана и Ѓорги Декаполит почнува да се манифестира во иконографијата на времето на принцот Матеј Басараб. Животот на светителите Варлам и Јоасафат е тема за духовните рефлексии на владетелите. Нивното значење во средниот век веројатно било во релација со дворот на принцот. Одликата на понизност, карактеризирана во Алексиј божиот човек и Јоасафат, претставувала значаен модел за владетелите против гордоста и суетата.

Во Влахија циркулирал *Laudae* (чест) за светите Константин и Елена од Ефтимиј од Турново, најрано од XVI век. Текстот преставувал извор на инспирација, особено за панагерикот посветен на принцот Константин Бранковеану, чии реторички споредби се во релација со царот Константин, во врска со односот на христијанската мисија на политичките челници да се шират нови апостоли и православната вера, кои биле опасност за православието од католичката контрареформација.

Во повеќе случаи во Влахија светителите чии култови се развиле биле резултат на војводите кои пак цврсто ги примале патронските светители на државата.