

Brâncovenic style in the romanian religious architecture of the 17th-18th centuries

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Abstract: *The issue of our research lies in highlighting religious art during the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu. The present study aims at an analysis of Brâncoveanu religious architecture in close connection with the socio-political and religious context of the 17th-18th centuries. The historical and artistic researches, presented successively and concurrently, each with the specific route of study, make an objective analysis of the importance of the innovative style in the Romanian creation that has been imposed over the centuries in the national culture. Historical documents reveal periods and dates, without going into a stylistic analysis, and the artistic studies on the subject make the aesthetic analysis of the period without insisting on the socio-political characteristics of the Brâncoveanu era. The presented paper aims to be a balanced exploration between the two branches of study, focusing on the history-art-theology dialogue. So we will try to make a sum of the historical, stylistic, pictorial and archaeological foundations, which were the basis of Brâncoveanu style, concluding that the art created by the era dominated by the personality of the great lord Constantin Brâncoveanu was a significant mode for Romanian art. In the subject presented, we will talk about the brâncovenian architecture in the XVIIth century, ie the architecture of the fortifications, the unfortified residences and we will realize a real anatomy of the Brâncoveanu style.*

Key-words: *Brâncoveanu; Religious; Architecture; Art;*

The 17th century religious architecture offers a great variety of remedies with a confusing rivalry between the new and the classical forms, and the decorative apparatus offers a huge range of combinations with frequent entanglements between the Western origins (Gothic, Renaissance, but also Baroque), on one hand, but also oriental (especially Persian and Ottoman), on the other (Drăguț, V, 1984, p. 347).

As we have seen when it comes to the fortifications, it is customary for Wallachia and Moldavia to take care of the defensive building of the churches, defensive construction by equipping them, especially in Moldova, with a solid expression of stronger toughness (Barnovschi, Bârnova, Ion the Baptist from Iași, Precista from Galați, etc.). Another common feature is the building of a bell tower in the structure of the church, usually seated over the pronaos in Wallachia and across the plain in Moldova. We will also report in the environment of the two schools of architecture, the ascending collapse of the chromatic effects in the ornamentation of the facades of the wall paintings and the alternation of the brick plaster panels respectively, preferring them evenly plastered surfaces, whose neutral background read more easily the architectural elements, the ornamental games of the frames and possibly the stucco ornaments. Abandoning the multicolored effects, the monuments of the seventeenth century received with great excitement the embellishments made in relief, appealing either to the oriental ornamental repertoire (Dragomirna (Ionescu, Grigore, 2007, pp. 379-380), Trei Ierarhi), or the Baroque (Casin, Golia, Hurez, Berea, Râmnicul Sărat). In total, irrespective of the origin of the decorative motifs, one can discuss the tendency of ornamental baroque, which corresponds to the spirit of the European art of the time (Macarie, Gheorghe, 2008, pp. 123-134).

Along with these features common to the architecture schools in Moldova and Wallachia, it is appropriate to mention the frequencies of interference and the exchange of

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decorative processes (Theodorescu, Răzvan, 1979, pp. 114-134), this contributing to the "creation of formal and decorative expressions of correspondence, able to highlight the tendencies of unity of Romanian architecture in general. The Montenegrin influence in Moldova can be seen through the porch with arcades and columns from the Little Dragomirna Church (1602), as well as the decoration of the facades using the median girdle, „ciubuce” (untranslatable) or of the friezes with archival entries, at the church of St. Paraschiva in Ștefănești (ante 1620), in the Suceveni churches Ițanii Vechi and Mirăuți (ante 1620), at the ruin of the church in Bugiulești-Podoleni (Neamț County) or at the church of St. John the Baptist of Suceava, founded by the ruler Vasile Lupu (1643)". Moreover, under the influence of the foundation of Vasile Lupu from Târgoviște (Stelea church, 1645), in Wallachia the Moldavian Gothic Ancadrations are often encountered in the decorations of the monuments in the Southern Carpathians "over a period of several decades, up to the first quarter of the eighteenth century (Brebău and the Holy Emperors-Tirgoviste, 1650; Coeni-Mironesti, 1671, Hurez, 1692, Cretulescu, 1724). Along with the Moldavian Gothic style frames were taken over the decorations of decorative character (the Church of the Holy Emperors from Tirgoviste, 1650, the church of St. Dumitru from Craiova, 1651 etc.).

Beyond the general indications made above, which are able to show the unity tendencies of the Romanian architecture in general, a process that finds its counterpart in the circulation of scholarly books and endeavors to make a language that is grateful to all if architectural schools in The Wallachia and Moldavia allow, through their many concretizations, a monographic representation that easily results in local attributes, authentic ways of renewal based on the experiences gathered in the previous centuries in Transylvania in the seventeenth century, the religious architecture marks only few achievements, generally quite timid in appearance. The only respectable monuments are the foundations of Moldavian and Wallachian rulers, always concerned with maintaining the links with the brethren beyond the mountain, over which the oppression became more and more difficult. In this sense, it is suggestive of a document issued by the prince Gheorghe Rakoczy II, which confirms that the state of serfdom is a yoke, which implies misery similar to those afflicted in the tartar country and even harsher. Under the given conditions, the Transylvanian church monuments are included in the architectural schools in Moldova and Wallachia, consolidating once more the idea of connection.

In 1609, Metropolitan Anastasie Crimca proclaimed the great church of Dragomirna, a monument of great importance for the history of Moldavian architecture, "its influences going to mark most of the important 17th-century buildings. Surprisingly, the large church of the Dragomirna monastery is in fact a rather faithful continuation of the old church monastery church in Moldova. The eastern part is triconically planed, with the lateral apses of the nave hidden in the recesses, as before at the church of Stephen the Great in Piatra Neamț or as the church of the Slatina monastery. The protuberance, developed in length, has two trajectories, such as the church of the ascension from Neamț or the church of St. George of Suceava, but he (Balș, Gh., 1933, p. 96) "Is separated from the nave through three arcades on stone columns, a solution first adopted in Galata by Petru Șchiopul. The porch is polygonal, recalling the treatment of the western part of the Balinese church; even the vaulting system remains in principle faithful to tradition, but Dragomirna has a decoration consisting of semi-coloons, springs and ribbed twigs. In order to enhance the decorative effect of the ribbing, drawing a dense net on the entrance of the porch vault or the starved vaults of the narthex, the stone craftsman also endowed them with small heraldic shields" (Balș, Gh., 1933, pp. 96-97). These joins were stylistically intriguing due to the fact that: "while the double-twisted rope is an old decorative motif of Caucasian origin, the heraldic shields come from the ornamental sphere of the West" (Balș, Gh., 1933, p. 175).

Eclectic, but comfortably composed, is also the ornamentation of the facades that weigh a double-twisted rope girdle. The architectural plastics of the exterior include the high-pitched basement, the ridges and the fortifications, the Moldavian Gothic ancadrations, but with renaissance style banquets, the double frieze on consoles below the cornice and, first of all, the tower whose carved decoration full of stone inaugurates a new era in the architecture of Moldova. Reinstalling exactly the composition of the old Moldavian towers with stellar bases and octagonal drum penetrated by windows on the cardinal axes and adorned with small countertops on the blind sides, the Dragomirna Tower (Ionescu, Grigore, 2007, pp. 336-341) is totally decorated with floral motifs arranged in small rectangular panels or rosettes housed in cradles. Considered isolated, some decorations could refer to Renaissance stylistics, others to that of the Caucasus, but the collective composition is unmatched, offering the Dragomirna tower a certain authenticity.

Under the direct influence of Dragomirna was built the church of the monastery Solea, built in the years 1612 -1620 by the prince Ștefan Tomșa where Dragomirne specific elements such as "the use of the torsade-like ribs are found, because at Solea the planimetric disposition is closer to the tradition , the facades are sober, the large plastered surfaces being hardly interrupted by the small windows with Moldavian Gothic style. Drawing the elements of Dragomirna and Solea, the church of the Bârnova monastery, founded by Miron Barnovschi (1629), has a triconcous plan with the hidden side apses, but above the western porch there is a bell tower with fortification elements, hideaway and a watchtower with ramparts" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 350-351). Both the ancadrations, the profiled stone springs and the rosette decorations, the twisted rope-shaped girdle denote the influence of the Dragomirna church, but the Bârnovei architecture is more severe "closely related to the spirit of Miron Barnovschi's epoch, when, as it has been shown, the main constructive program was the defensive one" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 350-351).

Speaking of Miron Barnovschi, we have to say that, during this time of the competent voivode (1626-1629), who took care of the re-profiling of agriculture, of spiritual life and the creation of a large system of fortifications, dates from an astonishing number of a great army of princely and boyars: Bârnova, Barnovschi, Toprașuți, Buhalnița, Nicorita, Rădeana, etc., which indicates that at that time there was a reactivation of the construction sites in Moldova, thus preparing the era of Vasile Lupu.

An exceptional appearance is held by the church of St. Sava's monastery in Iasi, built in 1625 by the protheast Gheorghe, originally from Istanbul. As Paul de Aleppo mentions. In his travel diary, the stambuliot master executed a mosque-like church, the two small tower towers of height but wide, being quite distinct in the ambiance of the Moldavian architecture. And at this moment there is a double-twisted stone rope, a decorative element that moldavian stones will always use in the decades to come.

One of the elements that give the monument Three Hierarchs (Balș, Gh., 1933, pp. 96, 175) is the presence of ornaments on the facade. Starting from the ornamental idea of the Dragomirna tower, the exteriors of the Three Hierarchs are covered entirely with a carved autumn sculpture (Ionescu, Grigore, 2007, pp. 348-350. From the sink to the cornices, the exteriors are divided into several pieces, each with another type of ornament, but which coincide as a general expression: entrelacuri and rosettes of different categories, zigzags and braids, chain links and flower pots, cords with double twist and marble strips engraved with maschers, a whole set of decorative motifs mastered with the geometry of masters who knew the rules of composition of Islamic art, and above all, a scholastic coloring with lapislazuli and a real waste of polish all over the exterior, gave Vasile Lupu a unique appearance of wealth, that she could really say about her, that she caught the wonder. " Early research has succeeded in identifying the source of the various motives, fixing Islamic, Armenian, Georgian paternities, and so on, and so on, but it should be noted that nowhere in the world of

the Near East, from where come the countless decorative motifs of the Three Hierarchs (Debicki, Jacek, 1998, p. 178), such an overall composition has not been made and that, in the case of the Iasi monument, we are discussing the subsumption of the whole decoration with a classic architectural composition for Moldova.

We will also recognize here a certain baroque type of availability for the rhetorical gesture, for the ornamental emphases, which explains another Vasile Lupu's initiatory initiative when he decided to restore the old church of the Golia monastery in Iasi (1650-1653). Coming back to the services of Italian stone builders and builders coming from Poland (Ionescu, Grigore, 1965, p. 226), "Vasile Lupu imposed a plan of Moldovan tradition: a triconc with hidden side apses, with a thorn, a pronaos and a porch. Foreign masters dressed facades in an unexpected ornamental appliance, introducing for the first time in Moldova the decorative baroque grammar. Execute entirely from cast and profiled stone, Golia's facades are rhythmized by a succession of colossal pilgrims, among which there are large window panes whose frames with fronts and small pilasters fit harmoniously into the general composition" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 353-354). The turrets were destroyed after the 1733 fire and 1738 earthquake but were rebuilt. It can be seen how the turrets originally looked with the shapes kept at Cașin, a construction that the same team of craftsmen worked on. "More than the Three Hierarchs Church, whose precious decoration could not easily be imitated, the new church of the Golia Monastery exerted a powerful influence on the monuments of Iași, its decorative forms being interpreted and adapted to the brickwork until late second half of the eighteenth century" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 353-354).

Discussing the era of Vasile Lupu, we will not neglect that the same ruler is owed to the church of St Dumitru in Orhei (1638), St. John the Baptist of Suceava (1643) St. Nicholas of Chilia Noua (1648). Also in his mind, the future ruler Gheorghe Stefan built in Casin (Bacau County), the monastery of the same name (1653), an edifice that faithfully resumes the plan and elevation of the Golia church, but the dimensions are smaller and the sober ornamentation. The pilasters do not contain the corinthian caps at Golia, and the cornice and window frames are less decorated.

In 1662, the new building of the Putna monastery church was completed, rebuilt by the rulers of Gheorghe Stefan and Istratie Dabija. "Reluctant to the type of plan characteristic of the great monastery churches in Moldova, a plan that the old church of the Putna monastery built by Stephen the Great had, the new edifice introduced some innovations characteristic of the epoch, both in the spatial distribution and the decoration of the facades. Thus, according to the Galata example, between the ditch and the nave there is a triple arcade on the columns and the facades are divided into two registers by a double-twisted rope-shaped girdle, with each register being high arches with archives coming in after the Montenegrin fashion" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 354-355). Pilates in the upper registry flaps have the appearance of semi-balusters, and the lower ones are finished on stone consoles, on the upper part they are decorated with small caps. The windows have Moldovan Gothic style frames and they are accompanied by Renaissance style banches. In 1672, Lord Gheorghe Duca finished the church of the Cetățuia monastery near Iasi (Drăguț, V., 1974, p. 217). Here, in plan and elevation, there is a simplistic replica of the Three Hierarchs, but the adornments of the facades are reduced to the medial torsade girdle, full of decorative plates, the upper register having two rows of arched holes. Inside, there is a decoration with colonnets and ribbed-up ribs, a decorative motif that reminds even more of Dragomirna.

Speaking about the fortified fortifications with high curtains and towers, about the royal houses, about the churches, were involved "the Moldavian monastery complexes of the 17th century. For a complete clarification of the problem, we will now say that the monasteries built in Moldova in the seventeenth century often had a double function: a monastic settlement and a place of residence or shelter for the founder. Their composition is

generally very similar: in the center of the enclosure is the main church, and along the walls of the enclosure that typically describe a quadrilateral route, there is the founder's home, the abbey house, the monks' chambers (sometimes made of wood) , cuhnia and other tools" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 355-356). Sometimes the gate tower, the bell tower, also had a room for the chapel. Among the most important monastery complexes of the 17th century belong: Secu, Dragomirna, Bârnova, Three Hierarchs, Golia, Kasin, Cetățuia" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 355-356).

The first decades in Wallachia, following Mihai Viteazul's reign, were marked by uninterrupted struggles and the instability of the reign, all of which are unsuitable for the development of a quality artistic activity. But with the help of the ruler Radu Mihnea (Popescu, Radu, 1963, pp. 140-141), In the years 1614-1623, the church of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Bucharest was rebuilt with the fulfillment of the old planimetric layout and elevation. New edifice, which has since been named Radu Voda (Popescu, Radu, 1963, pp. 140-141), contains a brick transposition of the architectural fragments that the Wallachian church in Curtea de Arges had started in Wallachia. With a tower on the nave, a triconc plan, it has a pronaos developed in width, crowned by three turrets, the main tower of the narthex being held, as in Arges, twelve columns. The outer ornaments are similar to the one from Bucovăț, being made up of two high recessed registers with incoming arches, separated by a median girdle. From the beginning, the edifice had facades covered with a white plaster, a process that from now on will be received more and more throughout the century.

The terrible earthquake of 1628, whose epicenter was in the parts of Vrancea, devastated a large number of churches and monasteries in Wallachia, the state of ruin being preserved until the time of Matei Basarab, in whose household and long reign (1632- 1654) most were restored with the preservation of the original forms, but with a natural adaptation to the decorative plastic of the time. To understand the extent of the effort to restore the architectural dowry of the country, it is enough to recall that in less than a quarter of a century there have been built and rebuilt over Wallachia over fifty churches and monasteries.

Not once was the existence of a style of the era of Matei Basarab discussed; "If by style is meant unity, to the stereotype, the programs and the ornamental apparatus, then, no doubt, such a style did not exist; but if by style is meant a certain consistency in the thinking of forms, a specific sensitivity of proportions and a selective choice of decorative modalities, then we can speak of a well-styled style, and the era of Matei Basarab appears to be one of the most fruitful in the history of our old architecture" (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 357).

Apart from the many concerns of the craftsmen of the era, two of them have their attention. First of all, it is about raising a bell tower on the narthex and maintaining access to the bell room, usually in the form of a spiral staircase, adjacent to the northern facade. The belfry tower on the pronaos attributes to the edifices a more robust feature, which the expressive symmetry created by the scale tower makes it worthwhile. The belfry to which we mention, appears both in churches with rectangular plan (Gherghița, 1641, Strehaia, 1645, Golești, 1646, Sfinții Împărați Târgoviște, 1650, Coeni-Mironești, 1671), and in the churches with triconc plan (Calinesti, 1646, with subsequent transformations, Cornet and Bajești, 1666, the latter due to the master craftsman Dragomir).

A second representative concern of the time is the realization of the "open porch with arches and brick columns. The open courtyards were built at the churches of the Arnota, Clocociov, Plătărești, Gura-Motru monasteries, and the adoption of this link between the interior and the exterior was to become generalized in the second half of the century. The not very large openings and the massiveness of the masonry supports give Matei Basarab's porches a robust, male appearance in consensus with the general shapes of the edifices whose composition they complete" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 357-358).

Examining the forms of plan and the ordering of the architectural dimensions, we observe that, in the continuation of the fixed tradition in the XVIth century, differences between the parish churches and the churches of the monastery or parishes were preserved on the other. A limited number of exceptions is given by the rectangular church chapels, usually having a bell-tower and pronaos (Gherghița, Golesti (Ionescu, Grigore, 1965, p. 202), Coeni-Mironești, Dobreni, Vlădești-Muscel). A group of more complex typological issues is that of the triconc plan churches. The simplest version reminds of the old builders from Brădet-Argeș and from Ostrov-Călimănești, being represented by triconc planets with a spiral nacelle without any complexity of plan and elevation (church of the Crasna-Gorj hermitage, 1636; the church of Topolnita-Mehedinti, 1646).

Another group, particularly important in meaning and interpretation, is the one of the churches that had as prototype the church of the Dealu monastery, founded by Radu the Great. "In four cases, there are reconstructions of previous buildings, destroyed by the earthquake of 1628 (Clocociov, 1645, Plumbuita, 1647, Buzau 1649, Gura Motrului, 1653), two new churches are new founders of the prince Matei Basarab and the lady his Elina (Plătărești, 1646; Brebu, 1650). Assuming that the earlier monuments had a look inspired by the Dealu church, a fact that is quite explicable if one considers that the first episcopal church in Buzau was also built by Radu the Great, there could be seen some respect for the traditional" (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 359). It is considered that the interpretation may be nuanced in the sense of a programmatic return to the prestigious model given by the church of the Dealu Monastery, a hypothesis in relation to which the whole constructive policy of Matei Basarab acquires a special significance. It should be added immediately that the takeover of the model from Dealu was not made in the conformist way; on the contrary, the masters of the age demonstrated a real fantasy in the handling of the shapes.

Reconstruction of Sadova Monastery Church (Ionescu, Grigore, 1965, p. 132), from 1640 allowed the restoration of a type of monument, older, namely Bucovățul. The church of the Sadova Monastery, which has a triconc plan, with a turret on the nave, is defined by the generous treatment of the pastophores, the ornamentation of the exterior (unfortunately incisive changed) being exactly the same as that of Bucovăț. A more modest case of proportions, but also slightly rusticated as expression, is represented by the church in Ciutura-Dolj (1654). Particularly, probably at the request of the reign, at the church of Căldărușani monastery (1638) (Popescu, Radu, 1963, pp. 156-167), the craftsmen were also inspired by the very complex plan of the Episcopal Church in Curtea de Arges. Its avenue is developed in width, and in its space there are only two pillars that support the crowning system and not twelve, so is the model of the Dealu church, with only two turrets on the eastern traverse.

Another original case of a model used in the past is registered at the St. Dumitru church in Craiova. Rebuilding from 1651 the old foundation of the Craiovești boyars, Matei Basarab appropriated the type of Greek cross plan, in the version of the princely church in Târgoviște, which carries two towers on the pronaos, and on the west side a porch. The ornamentation of the facades was conceived from the counterfoils, with two arches archives, as well as in Bucovăț and, as in Bucovăț (as well as in many monuments of the XVIth century), from the alternation of the brick ashes with the panels plastering in cassettes. It should be emphasized that, within the so rich of the parament, there were also introduced counterfeits, thus embedded in a Montenegrin perspective.

An exceptional monument of the time is the new Stelea church in Targoviste, founded by Vasile Lupu in 1645, in peace sign with Matei Basarab whose "ambitious Moldovan reverend seat tried in vain to rip him for his son John. Taking over the planimetric and spatial composition of the Three Hierarchs Church in Iasi, the Stelea church is a twin tower with two towers, one on the nave and the other on the narthex, and on the west side there is a porch. The system of vaulting, using the sloping arched tower, the octagonal towers with two stellar

bases, the Moldavian Gothic stone statues are as many elements as evidenced by the presence of craftsmen sent by Vasile Lupu".

If the Stelea church remained without echo from the point of view of the vaulting system, the Moldan Gothic crosses with stone crosses were immediately taken over and they were re-visited at the time of Matei Basarab on a large number of monuments (the Holy Emperors, Gura Motrului (Ionescu, Grigore, 1965, pp. 143-144), Plumbuita, Târgoviște Fair Church, Săcueni-Dâmbovița church, etc.). One of the stone craftsmen who helped popularize these frames was called Lupu, on the western portal of the Brebu Monastery church, with his signature. A new element taken from the Stelea church is the counterfort used especially as a decorative element. In Târgoviște, at the church Sfinții Împărați, at the church in Săcueni-Dâmbovița, and in Craiova at St. Demetrius Church, the confinements are embedded in the general composition, being adorned with the same forms of material and proportions as the rest of the church (Ionescu, Grigore, 1965, p. 168). Also in the Stelea church, the presence of ceramic bumps on the outside of the tower-bell tower in Câmpulung, on the facades of the Vlădești-Muscel church or later on outside the Cornet hermitage church (Vâlcea County) must also be taken into account.

But for a better understanding of the force of fulfillment and widening the cultural and artistic horizons of Matei Basarab's time, it is also necessary to take a look at some aspects of the initiatives of the founder at that time. So it is worth mentioning the care that Matei Basarab held for the building of churches and monasteries in this Danube plain, which was taken to the neighbors of this great river. In the days of his predecessors, the most numerous boyars and princes were to be searched in the areas below the mountains and hills, but Matei Basarab indicated a priority interest for the plain area, building and rebuilding a large number of monasteries and churches (Măxineni-Brăila, 1637, Slobozia-Ialomița, 1634, Căldărușani, 1638, Sadova-Dolj, 1640. Plătărești, 1646, Negoești-Giurgiu, 1649, Drăgănești-Teleorman, 1647).

Analyzing the map of these plains, two considerations are addressed: firstly, we are talking about a great effort in territorial reorganization, conditioned by the growth of cereal farming; and secondly, knowing that all the monasteries were under a self-defensive system, we can accept the concern for a closer surveillance of the movement of the Turks from the Danube's territories. Continuing to return to its foundations in Transylvania, Porcești, Hunedoara etc., their mention here is only the point of emphasizing the generous opening of the culture of Matei Basarab's time. The policy of spiritual and material support of the Balkan peoples under Ottoman rule continued, and Matei Basarab intervened, like his predecessors, with many donations at Athos, Meteora, as well as in settlements in Bulgaria and Serbia. Like other important achievements, the church of St. Paraschiva and St. Panteleimon of Vidin, as well as the church of the Apostles Peter and Paul of Svishtov, were built, these being a building of stone blocks, rectangular, semicylindered vaults and dubbloons.

After Matei Basarab reign, despite the situation "quite troubled in the country, constructive activity continued at a sustained pace, an important role in this respect being the great boyars of the country. By interpreting the established forms in the era of Matei Basarab, the constructing craftsmen have managed, not once, to create buildings of notable architectural beauty, in some cases intervening important changes of the known programs" (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 362).

Lord Constantin Serban (Cârnu) built the church of St Dumitru in Bucharest in the years 1654-1618 with the idea of making it the new metropolitan cathedral of the country. Restoring the architectural composition of the Argeș Episcopal Church with a pronaos developed in breadth and crowned with three spiers, the craftsmen made a solid and harmonious building, individualizing themselves by using a solid, horizontal composition placed on the surface of the ground and giving up the verticality of its foundation Neagoe

Basarab. On the western side is a large porch with brick columns, well integrated with the general composition of the building. The church of St. George in Pitești (1656), which was once again taken over by the model from Dealu, is also very special, showing two towers on the pronaos, but on the west side there is a porch raised by a gazebo with arches of brick, this original solution being taken up at the Three Hierarchs of the Forest Philippe (1688), somewhat later, with the mention that both the foyer and the porch have a polygonal plan.

With the reign of Șerban Cantacuzino (1678 - 1688) a new stage of "searches and experiences in the field of church architecture in Wallachia is inaugurated, experiences that do not concern the basic structural types that will be preserved, but first of all changing proportions and the ornamental appliance, under the sign of a marked vision of elegance and refinement. The main building of Șerban Cantacuzino, the Cotroceni monastery (1679), has a church closely inspired by the Bishopric of Curtea de Argeș, taking over the idea of the porch of the Metropolitan Church of Bucharest" (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 363). If the use of octagonal columns of stone adorned with stalactites of Arabo-Ottoman inspired stalactites may seem like a simple repetition of the Argean model, at the porch the same type of columns in combination with large arches provide the edifice with an aerated expression as never before.

It is important to note that the suspected author of the stone columns decorating Șerban Cantacuzino's buildings is the Moldavian master Gligorie Cornescu. Arrived in Wallachia in 1674, Gligorie Cornescu first made one of the first rebuilding works that we know of our monuments, restoring the sculpted ornamentation on the outside of the episcopal church at Curtea de Argeș. "From there he was able to take the orthogonal column model with stalactites, justifiable takeover, and ever-increasing oriental fashion in his time" (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 364).

The change of expression of the Wallachian architecture started in the time of Șerban Cantacuzino continued under Constantin Brâncoveanu's reign (1688-1714), and he managed to conclude with a new stylistic attitude, in harmony with all the other fields of artistic creation: painting, sculpture, decorative art, etc. and thus motivating the name of Brancovan art. As we could see at the monuments of Șerban Cantacuzino, neither in Constantin Brâncoveanu's time were made any essential changes regarding the plan and the elevation of the new foundations: the rectangular plan is still used for paraclis, the triconc plan is often found in the ambience of the monastery, being preserved from the age of Matei Basarab the idea of the bell tower on the pronaos (Mamu, 1696; Fundenii Doamnei, 1699). At the great church of the Hurez monastery, attention is drawn to the simple interpretation of the church plan of the Argeș episcopal church, but only one tower on the narthex, which, by means of the large arches, loses part on the dividing wall and part on two free columns brick.

The main innovations of the Brâncoveanu architecture are sought in the way of shaping forms, "rethinking the proportions, the importance given to the porches and especially the decorative plastics. Slimmer than in the previous decades, but with no accentuated vertigo, the churches of Constantin Brâncoveanu's age benefit from a touching harmony of the volumes built, admirably valued by the white plaster of the plasters, whose surfaces are easily deciphered by the architectural modifications and the encadrations flowering stone" (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 365). The porch is not only a link between the interior and the outside of the church, but it is placed in the foreground, being considered the "adornment of the churches, being endowed with a festive decoration: columns of stone, straight or torsade, with bases and caps composite type" (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 365), sumptuous porches for entrance into the actual church, murals.

The quality of the decorative compositions can be recognized in other royal foundations "(Mamu, 1696, the great church of the Brâncoveni Monastery, 1699), also to the main foundations due to the high officials of the time, a leading place reserved for the churches built by the recliner Mihail Cantacuzino Dormition church from Râmnicu-Sarat,

1690-1696, church of Sinaia monastery, 1695, Fundenii Doamnei church, 1699, Colțea church in Bucharest, about 1700). Besides these, it is also worth mentioning the church of the Berea monastery (1694) and the church of Borzesti (1698) (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 365).

It is common to all these monuments a richly carved ornament, found in the window frames, at the porch columns, at the portes, also at the dividing columns between the pronaos and the nave. With the return to this sculpture, we will still notice its baroque peculiarities, both as a decorative repertoire (torsade columns, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations, capitals, vegetal vines) and as interpretations. The unique consideration of this decoration allowed to speak of a Brancovenian baroque, the appreciation being a hasty one if we take into account the structures of the edifices as belonging rather to classicism. We will not forget the baroque taste for the decorative richness, a taste for which the satisfaction often recourse to the Oriental Oriental decorations, in this sense, the most surprising being the horbota of the stucco ornamentation, which wears the facades of the Fundenii Doamnei church (Ionescu, Grigore, 1965, p. 413), a foundation that belongs to the backrest Mihai Cantacuzino. The facades of these momeument are covered with oriental palates, cypress, fruit tables, peacocks, flowers, practically a whole decorative façade of Persian origin.

However, the most convincing demonstration that the Brâncovenian architecture, matured in the last decade of the 17th century (Drăguț, V., 1984, p. 366), can do it, is offered by the great monastic settlement of Hurezi. Thought in terms of regulatory trails, which can be fixed in connection with the Renaissance principles, the Hurezi Monastery is decided according to the east-west cardinal axis: in the center of the quadrilateral enclosure we find the large church, and on the western side, the chapel, highlighted by its elevation above the trapeze. On the southern side there is the belfry to protect the access to the monastery, and on the same side is found the royal house that was previously mentioned. The northern side is reserved for the long body of the cell, but in the western corners of the enclosure we find the kitchen and the bakery. At the unit of expression of the ensemble, the long galleries, with arcades and columns of stone, decorate with their rhythms the north, western and partly southern façades of the interior of the building, setting a precious concordance with the elegant porch of the large church. The presence of the princely house is refreshed with the help of the two ladders with ladder (Ionescu, Grigore, 1965, pp. 380-382).

In the seventeenth century, the Romanians in Transylvania were still subjected to severe persecutions in the past centuries, plus the repressions of the noblemen who were disapproving of the enthusiasm displayed by the Iogabi to Mihai Viteazul. Thus, "only small wooden churches such as those from Sighetul Silvaniei (Salaj County, 1632) could be built; Honțșor (Arad district, 1651); Tarnavita (Hunedoara County, 1655). While preserving the traditional forms found in wooden churches all over the country, these small peasant builders are rectangular, built from beams arranged in horizontal crowns, have a half-cylindrical nave and a pronaos tavern, their main ornament consisting of the carvings made from the bard. The few wall churches were erected by the zeal of some Moldovan or Wallachian founders" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 366-367). The church of Teius (later transformed) was the foundation of Mihai Rat, in 1606, the captain of Michael the Brave. Later, in 1634, with the support of Matei Basarab, the St. Nicholas Church of Hunedoara was consolidated and renovated. Also thanks to Matei Basarab the church from Porcești was raised in 1653 (now Turnu Roșu - Sibiu County). "Larger enlargement, it keeps the original nucleus, presenting a rectangular plan with vaults in semispherical chambers, and on the facades it keeps a mountain-type decoration with arched registers separated by a median girdle" (Drăguț, V., 1984, pp. 366-367). In 1658, voivode Constantin Serban, wandering in the parts of Crisana, rebuilt the church in Tinaud (Bihor County), and in the years 1690-1691, the Balaceni boyars built the Orthodox church in Bungard (Sibiu County).

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