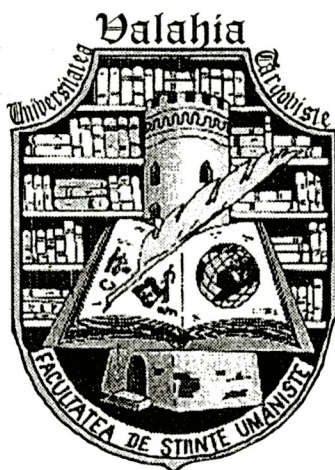


Le Ministère d'Education et de la Recherche  
L'Université „Valahia“ Târgoviște  
Faculté de Sciences Humaines

ANNALES  
D'UNIVERSITÉ „VALAHIA“  
TARGOVISTE



SECTION  
d'Archéologie et d'Histoire

Tome IV-V

Târgoviște  
2002/2003

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**ISSN 1584-1855**

Producteur : S.C. Editura Logos SRL - Editura Cetatea de Scaun  
Str. Mr. Spirescu, Bl. C4, Sc. C, Ap. 2, Târgoviste, jud. Dâmbovita, Roumanie  
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## GENERALITIES REGARDING THE STONE SCULPTURE IN THE ART OF WALLACHIA. THE 14<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

*Maria Georgescu\**

The funerary plastic art and the monumental plastic art represent an important chapter of the history of the medieval stone sculpture of Wallachia.

The most ancient type in the stone sculpture is the funerary plastic art, which is mainly represented by two typological categories: the crosses and the gravestones.

The most important works of the funerary plastic art from the 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries are to be found in the princely necropolis: the Princely Church of Curtea de Argeș, the Church of Dealu Monastery or the Church of the Monastery of Neagoe Basarab, in Curtea de Argeș.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the sculpture, as well as the silver ware, by the few preserved pieces, expresses two sources of inspiration, the oriental-byzantine and the occidental one.<sup>1</sup>

A representative piece is the recumbent effigy (having the representation in relief of the deceased) of the count Lawrence of Campo Longo (1330), who is represented according to the western iconography. Later on the piece was reused, thus the work became a slab of an altar.

Dating from the same century, we know a unique work in Wallachia through its decoration (although very much degraded) - the gravestone supposed to belong to Vladislav the First (Vlaicu Vodă) (1364-1377) or to Radu the First (1383-1386). Discovered in the Princely Church "Saint Nicholas", in Curtea de Argeș, the piece is making part today of the collection of the National History Museum of Romania.

On the upper part of the stone is shown a princely character, in recumbent position, with the arms fold over the chest. The deceased character is dressed according to the western fashion, with a long mantle and collar, which falls on the shoulders, while on the tunic there is a decorative embroidery - a creeping stalk ended with semi-palmettes, the princely status being marked by a crown worn on the head.<sup>2</sup>

The long side of the stone is decorated with a frieze with stylised trees with occidental aspect, which form a composition obtained with a design in scratch-work technique. The lower part of the crown of the trees, together with the trunk, suggest a row of archways in pointed arch with flower shape ornaments, a decoration specific for gothic portals. The same type of decoration is to be found on the thurible of Tismana, which is dated to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. On the lid is represented the Tree of Life, crowned with a solar rosette, in shape of a vortex, embed in the field of a stele with twelve side - "the wind rose".<sup>3</sup> This lid of sarcophagus is - through the type of the decoration - one of the most significant examples, which express the eclectism of the sources of inspiration of the spread of that time, which join decorative and symbolic elements of heterogeneous traditions, spread on wide geographical areas, from the Orient to the Occident.<sup>4</sup> The transposing of these motifs - used since the prehistory - and the geometrising vision of the

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composition, as well as the type of the technique that was used indicate as the author of this work a local stonecutter.

An other example of western inspiration is the gravestone of Voislav, son of Nicolae Alexandru. The work, uncovered at Curtea de Argeş, is decorated with a heraldic shield, which crowns a tree - the Tree of Life.<sup>5</sup>

An exception to this rule is represented by the monuent of sarcophagus type belonging to Mircea cel Bătrân. This work, found at Cozia and only partially preserved today, has the inner part in the shape of a human body, covered by a slab in two rectangular pyramid overlapped trunks, a unique case in Wallachia, a piece which is typical for the south-danubian space.<sup>6</sup>

On the gravestones dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, preserved or coming from the Church of Argeşului Monastery, on the central field are disposed the cross and the instruments of the passions of Jesus Christ, which redeemed the mankind represented by "glava Adama" (the skull of Adam) placed under a base (on the grave slabs of the graves of Neagoe Basarab and of his wife, princess Despina, along with the cross are figured the tools of the passions, the spread and the sponge dipped in vinegar), as well as the sun, designed by a vortex, as symbol of the divinity. On the common gravestone of the founder's sons, the vortex, inscribed in a circle, appears only as an ornament (of the body of one of the crosses). The mentioning inscriptions (excepting the one belonging to the titled lady Neaga, mother of Neagoe Basarab) are displaying only on the lateral frames.

The gravestone of Radu de la Afumaţi has an inscriptioin situated also on the inferior part of the central zone. Above it, a circle with side plating, similar to the one of the graves of princess Despina or Roxanda, surrounds the image of the sun; here is placed a patriarchal cross with is a symbol of the triumph of Christianity, while a little lower is figured the brave voivode - a figure on horseback, with the right hand holding the sceptre and wearing the crown on the head. The horse on parade walking and the rider are represented at perfect size, being realised by the simple outline of the figures. This work is the most exquisite example of the figurative sculpture of the ancient medieval Romanian art. The two representations - the cross and the equestrian image of the voivode - remember the scene of the cavalcade from the painting of Pătrăuţi, which illustrates the legend of the victory of the Byzantine emperor, Constantine the Great, obtained with the help of the cross.<sup>7</sup>

The gravestone of Albu Golescu (1574), from the church of Vieroşi (Argeş county) is directly inspired of the gravestone of Radu de la Afumaţi, but is much more simple, without having the framing and the blended ornaments of the model, with the ample text which covers the central field. The artisan succeeds to make the difference between the signs of the great boyar and of the voivode, by replacing the crown with a bulby.

Another tombstone with the image of the deceased represented while fighting with the enemy - the tatar Ghirai - is the onme above the grave of Stroe Buzescu (1602), in the church of Stăneşti (Vâlcea county). The stone has an ample text and is the work of a local craftsman.

The funerary slabs with equestrian representations are exceptions in the Romanian medieval art. The idea of an equestrial representation and the méplat technique might suggest a relative similitude, maybe with the tile stoves of western influence, decorated with the relief repretantion of Saint George on horseback.<sup>8</sup>

With the exception of these three gravestones of figurative type, all the others, forming groups of each foundation: Snagov, Călui, Bucovăţ, Stăneşti and others, repeat - in



a simple or complex way, more artistic or in a rudimentary manner - the same geometrical composition, having the cross as a central motif and the Slav inscription curved on the framing.

Towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, some of these funerary slabs - among which the most representative is the one of Irina, wife of Albu Golescu (1576/7), in the church of Vieroși - mark, maybe through an influence coming from Moldavia - the passing from the geometrical decoration to the floral one, a style of decoration which will become in the next centuries - in a representation influenced by the Renaissance and the Baroque - frequent in Wallachia.<sup>9</sup>

The funerary sculpture in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century continues the line of a well-balanced decoration. One of the gravestones - as the one from the Church of Călinești (Prahova county) - are taking back the type established by the tombstone of Neagoe Basarab: the inscription placed towards the edges, while in the central field is figured the Golgotha cross, represented on its entire height. Other works present elements of oriental geometric decoration. A separate group is formed by the funerary monuments belonging to the voivode Matei Basarab and to his family. These works are made by the sculptor Elias Nicolai of Sibiu, in the baroque technique, which characterise the Transylvanian sculpture, which does not influence very much the style from Wallachia.

In the epoch of Cantacuzino family and the Brancovan family,, the decor of the funerary plastic art was enriched with vegetal motifs, realised in a natural manner. This new style of decoration is placed on the wide marginal framing, while in the central field is placed the inscription, with a very careful carved graphics. On other works, beside the funerary inscriptions are represented heraldic signs - as on the tombstones of Matei and Iordache Cantacuzino, or ecclesiastical signs - the patriarchal mitre carved on the funerary slab of patriarch Dionisie (1696).

The sculptors succeed, especially in the necropolis belonging to the princely families - to raise representative works of art. Among these, a particular group - which should be situated on the first place - is the one from Cotroceni monastery (demolished in 1984). A special attention should be given to the one belonging to Șerban Cantacuzino (1688).

An other interesting group is the one coming from the former metropolitan seat of Târgoviște, works that today are to be found in the Lapidarium collection of the National Museum Complex "The Princely Court" of Târgoviște. To the same group are belonging the anepigraph tombstone of Constantin Brâncoveanu from Saint George the New Church in Bucharest, as well as the ones from Brâncoveni, of the predecessors of the voivode. The funerary monument with the slab raised on a high base, decorated with floral motifs, made in "à jour" technique is represented by the one of princess Bălașa Cantacuzino (1711). Here is carved - beside the inscription - the armorial bearings of the Cantacuzino family - the bicephalous eagle.

Carved with very much talent and craftsmanship in white marble, all these works are remarkable examples for the orientation of an entire generation of artists. In their ornamental repertory, the floral motif is a fundamental one, having different interpretations in various combinations. Thus, the decoration of the gravestones is various and complex in the same time. The variation on the same theme of a precise repertory of models has determined - in the field of funerary slabs - the carrying out of works in the same style, specific to the stone sculpture of the Brancovan period.<sup>10</sup>

The stone wayside crosses, interesting works for the stone sculpture, are very numerous in Wallachia, during 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This type of pieces are to be found in



the markets from cities or townlets, at the boundaries of the estates or on the graves - to be remembered forever -, all of it representative monuments of the Romanian medieval sculpture.

The initiative for raising such monuments - due to the social prestige given by this act - belonged to the voivode or to the great boyars. Starting with the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the members of the middle class were allowed to raise such monuments and this is how we can explain large number of monuments dating from this period.

The artistic qualities of the stone wayside crosses consist in decorative elements placed on both sides of the monument, but also in the decorative style of the text, written with careful carved and beautiful framed letters. The origins of this way of decoration are to be found in the oriental architectural art or in the Brancovan one: the monumental cross from Răzvad (Dâmbovița county), raised during the reign of Matei Basarab by the boyar (Lord Steward) Cârstea of Cornățeni, the cross founded by cavalry commander Mogoș (1718-1719) or the cross inlaid in the altar of the Oborul vechi Church in Bucharest.

The most common ornamental motifs are the rope, the rod, the knitting, the braids, the vegetal motifs and the stylised flowers, made in "méplat or champ-levé" technique. Their disposal suggests the shape of the work and - in the same time - assure a delimitation for the field of the inscription. On the space of the intersection of the two arms of the cross are usually carved one or many medallions containing the liturgical initial letters. In the upper registry of the vertical arm are represented sometimes astral motifs (the sun, the moon or various heavenly bodies). On a cross from the village Valea Voievozilor (Răzvad commune, Dâmbovița county) are represented - in small medallions, in a schematic manner - the figures of the Evangelists<sup>11</sup>, yet on another wayside cross, coming from the same locality, in the central medallion is carved Saint Nicholas.

Numerous civil or cult buildings which were erected in Wallachia after 1330 were decorated with remarkable assemblies of wall painting, being adorned with elements of decorative sculpture and being endowed with precious treasures.<sup>12</sup>

The *monumental plastic art* is admirably represented by the ornaments of the great church from Cozia (Călimănești town, Vâlcea county), foundation of Mircea cel Bătrân, dating back to 1387-1388. The stone framing of the windows were decorated with "rincaux" motifs (creeping stalks), palmettes and semi-palmettes of Byzantine type, rosettes, knitting, birds joining head to head, a bicephalous eagle, all contained in twisting torus, placed towards the edges. The air holes with rosettes or "knitting have circular shapes". The archivolt is decorated with palmettes and "entrelacs" motifs made in oriental technique. The square base of the belfry has stone rosettes adorned with knitting.

All these motifs are of oriental inspiration and are taken from the repertory of the Serbian scripts or from the architecture of Constantinople or from the Italian one of that epoch.<sup>13</sup>

The church of Dealu Monastery, situated close to Târgoviște city, founded by Radu cel Mare (Radu the Great), around 1499-1501, is a significant work for the monumental stone sculpture from Wallachia. The facades, entirely plated with well cut stone, are characterised by a decoration of sober sumptuousness and a perfect execution of the details. They are decorated in two registries of arcatures, made of hookahs, separated through a median girdle. To the belfries and on the western façade appear ornamental motifs made of geometrical knitting, which will be later used - in a richer manner - for the adornment of Episcopal church at Curtea de Argeș.<sup>14</sup> The entrance portal from the western side is cut in marble, having on its upper part a segment of arch made of waved marble voussoir bricks,



in two colours (white and brown), of certain oriental influence. The framing of the windows are also carved in marble, in an austere cutting.

The church of Argeşului monastery (1512-1517) - foundation of Neagoe Basarab - is the most representative example of the link between architecture and sculpture. The sculptural decoration, resembling the oriental one, as the one from Dealu monastery, made in “méplat and à jour” technique, is displaying discontinuously in vertical panels, one of it with geminate windows, others with simple, high, narrow windows, covering the facades of the apses of the nave and of the narthex. They are balanced in the decorative composition of the monument through the panels of circular or rectangular shape, all adorned in “à jour” technique, under the arcatures of the upper registry. The girdle made of four floral knitted garlands, strongly shaped, is displaying ceaselessly on all the sides of the ornament.

The main façade, respectively the western one, presents an ample decorative composition in the central part. The belfires are decorated with arcatures in round arc, on the sides of the central belfry of the narthex, with the “rincaux” motifs (creeping stalks), palmettes and knitting around the windows.

The sumptuous decoration of the church relate entirely with the plastic structure of the monument. Thus, the monument is to be remarked through not only the variety and elegance of the motifs, by the refinement of the composition or by the artistry with which was disposed on the white-yellow face of the limestone of Albeşti, but also by the craftsmanship of the cutting, by technique skills used for a complete fulfilment.<sup>15</sup>

The sculpture of the great ecclesiastical edificies from Wallachia, as Cozia, Dealu and Curtea de Argeş have an oriental and south-danubian source of influence.<sup>16</sup>

Three stone sculptures of the heraldry of Wallachia from the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries are of special interest. Two of these pieces are coming from Curtea de Argeş and are to be dated on the epoch of Vlad Dracul and Neagoe Basarab, while the other one, a coat of arms from the period of Radu cel Mare (Radu the Great), dated in 1499, is coming from the Dealu monastery, from a bell tower.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in Wallachia, the monumental plastic art knows a creative period during the reign of Matei Basarab, with an extension on the Phanariot epoch, until 1750.

Three remarkable monuments dating from the epoch of Matei Basarab are to be noticed for the mastership of the stone sculpture used for the decoration: the fortified mansion (1641-1642) and the church from Goleşti (1646, Ştefăneşti commune, Argeş county), built by the master Stoica for the great treasurer Stroe Leurdeanu<sup>17</sup>, the Stelea Church from Târgovişte, founded in 1645 by the ruler of Moldavia, Vasile Lupu and the house of the Herescu family (Hotarele commune, Giurgiu county), raised by Udrişte Năsturel before 1654.

The mansion of Goleşti preserves the windows framing of oriental influence; on one of it is engraved the name of the stone artisan, Stoica. In addition, do still exist the old windows framings of the church, cut in the oriental “méplat” technique; on the sanctuary’s window is the signature of “Stoica master”. The portal in double accolade from the entrance in the narthex is decorated with “entrelacs” motifs, beautiful “rincaux” motifs, embowered branches, stylised flowers and a bird outlined with open wings. All these ornaments are of oriental influence and are made in the “méplat” technique. The portal facing towards the nave is worked under the influence of the late Moldavian Gothic style, for the first time used in Wallachia on the plastic art of the Stelea Church.



The assembly of decorative sculpture of the Stelea Church of Târgoviște is realised by Moldavian artisans. Thus, the window framing are decorated with crossing rods and with openings in accolade, resembling the one from the Trei Ierarhi Church. Later this model will spread to other churches built in Wallachia. A twisted stone girdle divides the two registries and another similar girdle decorates the octogonal tambour of each belfries. The framings of the three entrances in the church porch are cut simply, only with twisted mouldings, placed around the voids cut in pointed arch, as well as the imposing entrance portal towards the narthex is decorated with crossing rods and ogee arch, all disposed on a single plane.<sup>18</sup> In the upper part the inscription is framed by two massive balusters, while in the central part appears the coat of arms of Moldavia, the aurochs with the rose between the horns. In the narthex, from the edges are raising stone ribs in shape of cable mouldings.

The house from Herăști, built of blocks of well-carved stone still has portals belonging to the late Renaissance period, as well as the denticules placed under the cornice. The windows of the ground floor have rounded accolades of oriental influence. The eclectic decoration of the house seems to confirm the affirmation of Paul of Alep, who was saying that the sleeping partners "brought architects masters from the Hungarian country" (Transylvania). These craftsmen had good knowledge of the renaissance ornamentation, as well as of the elements of the Ottoman decorative registry of the Balkans.<sup>19</sup>

The monumental plastic art from Wallachia starts at the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to renew its registry. Thus, the place of the geometric and stylised vegetal motifs is taken gradually by more natural vegetal motifs, placed symmetric to a median axis. These new motifs, coming from the Renaissance and Baroque art, have spread little by little in the decoration style in Wallachia, through the masters of western formation, who worked on some of the constructions sites due to the initiative of the founders from the Cantacuzino family, especially the sword bearer Mihail Cantacuzino, as well due to the western graphic adopted an disseminated by the publishing establishments of Wallachia in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

On the frontispiece of the learning Gospel, started at Govora in 1642 and accomplished at Târgoviște, at the Dealu monastery in 1644, or in the frontispiece of the *Antologhion* of Câmpulung, from 1643 can be found the scheme of some portals of monuments erected by the members of the Cantacuzino family (The Doamnei Church oin Bucharest - 1683) or of Brancovan monuments (the church of the princely court of Doicești - 1706). The title page of *Pogribania* from 1650 has a structure resembling the portals of the churches erected by Mihail Cantacuzino. The book illustration from the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries offers to the stone artisans of the Brancovan epoch compositional models and new ornamental elements or even new interpretations for their decorative repertory.<sup>20</sup>

The monumental sculpture puts into value the frequent ornamental motifs from the Renaissance or Baroque art: the floral motifs; the garlands of flowers; the vegetal motifs (the lily flower, the acanthus flower; the leaf of acanthus; the leaves of laurel); the zoomorphic motifs (the lion and the dolphin, especially at Mogoșoaia); the figurative motifs (the *mascheroni* - at Potlogi, Mogoșoaia and Văcărești); the anthropomorphic motifs, but keeping a strict decorative character or valuable works of art with anthropomorphic subject (the angels wirth trumpets at Fundenii Doamnei or the winged angels of Colțea, figures of the evangelists - at Colțea or the representation of Samson - at Stavropoleos); heraldic motifs (the country's coat of arms, the family's coat of arms, the crown with the mace - at Potlogi, Mogoșoaia), the shell motif; the egg-shaped motif or the pearled motif, the last two imported from the Italian Renaissance art (Potlogi, Mogoșoaia, the church



porch of the former Metropolitan Church from Târgoviște, the kiosk from the Princely Court of Târgoviște).

Until the western Baroque art the sculpture has three guide masks: the period of Matei Basarab (the monastery of Bistrița), the Moldavian influence and the Greek influence.

The monumental sculpture imports Renaissance and baroque motifs, along with the one coming from the oriental world. These motifs will be: prismatic ornaments of stalactite and stalagmite type - Cotroceni, the Doamnei church, Hurezi, the Princely Church of Târgoviște, the Princely Residence of Doicești - works used nowadays for the exterior decoration of a house in Târgoviște.

These motifs will be transformed and adapted to the Romanian architectural shape, being integrated completely in to the decorative conception of the Brancovan stone artisans. The craftsmen have contributed by their interpretation of the decorative motifs, as well as by their technical artistry to the fulfillment of a new Romanian decorative vision.

During the Brancovan period, on sculpture and painting will appear local schools conducted by foreign masters, as Vucașin Caragea the stone artisan (his painted portrait was preserved on the church portal of the Great Church of Hurezi). Thus, the local artisans will be able to synthesize a more complex decorative vision. Vucașin caragea, appreciated for his new vision of interpretation on the decorative elements, as well as for his technical craftsmanship was the master of the stone artisans of the foundations of Constantin Brâncoveanu, in the same time being the most solicited among the other stonecutters, according to the diplomatic sources.

The differences of style and technique are suggesting the existence of various centres and groups of artisans, but in the same time we can emphasize the small constructions sites of the family foundations, as are the foundations of the sword bearer Mihail Cantacuzino. Apart from the school of Hurezi, where worked Vucașin Caragea, we know today some other authors of the sculptures which adorn the foundations of the sword bearer Mihail Cantacuzino, as Lupu Sărățan, who was probably the leader of these stone artisans. On the other hand, the intense artistic activity around the Princely Court and the Metropolitan Seat of Târgoviște presume the training up of some sculpture masters in this city. In Bucharest, the unity of style of the sculptured works from the monasteries Antim and Stavropoleos, as well as the carved decoration of the Văcărești monastery (demolished in 1985), allow to suppose the existence of the same group of artisans.<sup>21</sup>

The Great Church of the Hurezi monastery (Romanii de Jos village, city of Horezu, Vâlcea county) - the main foundation of Constantin Brâncoveanu between 1690-1693 - makes itself conspicuous by the ten columns of the church porch with the capitels and bases decorated with acanthus flowers, carved in an oriental decorative vision. The framing of the windows are taking again the ornaments of the Stelea Church of Târgoviște, while de portal is cut in marble and is decorated with vegetal motifs on which are predominant the creeping stalk and the acanthus flower, partially gilded. On the upper registry is placed the inscription and under it, two medalions, respectively the coat of arms of Wallachia - the eagle with the cross ("acvila valachica") and the armorial bearings of Cantacuzino family - the bicephalous eagle. The strongly shaped cornice is decorated with palmettes and acanthus flowers, followed by the "oves et dardes" motif (egg-shaped ornaments and arrows). The portal of the church from Brâncoveni resembles this one, but in a different variant.



The princely house is situated on the southern side of the precinct. The flatroofs of the house have sober stone columns, and the interior vaults are based on columns in the shape of a truncated cone, with the bases and the capitels decorated with sculptures of oriental conception.

The four main foundations of the sword bearer Mihail Cantacuzino are the monastic complex of Sinaia (Prahova county, 1690 - 1695), the monastery from Râmnicu Sărat (Buzău county, 1691-1697; here the other founder was the voivode Constantin Brâncoveanu), the Fundenii Doamnei Church (1699) and the Colțea Church (1702), both situated in Bucharest.

All these monuments are decorated with sumptuous sculptures, unique masterpieces in the Romanian medieval art. So, the church of the Sinaia monastery has stone columns decorated with relieves inspired from the vegetal ornamentation. The church of the former "Dormition of the Mother of God" monastery in Râmnicu Sărat has a rich carved decoration on the portal, the columns and the window framings being cut by master *Mira*. The Fundenii Doamnei church has an elegant church porch with stone columns adorned with the "rincaux" motifs (creeping stalks), while the beautiful portal is influenced by the baroque art.

The Colțea church has a monumental portal, the windows framings being decorated with creeping stalks and flowers; the ten columns of the church porch are ornamented with a vegetal decoration, while the capitels are wearing zoomorphic and avimorphic motifs with symbolic meanings. The railings of the church porch are decorated with the heraldic motif - the bicephalous eagle. The panels with floral motifs are coming from the former Caimata church, demolished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also are to be noticed the beautiful carved inner columns, the vault brackets and the cartouches of the nave.

The richness and the beauty of the sculptures from the foundations of the Cantacuzino family have influenced the decoration of the church of the Berca monastery (Buzău county), erected by the High Steward Mihalcea Căndescu and his wife Alexandra, around 1694-1698. The stone sculptures of the monument are characterised by the outsized ornamental motifs; the works were realised by the master *Gheorghe*.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the civil Brancovan architecture, the palace of Potlogi (Potlogi commune, Dâmbovița county), erected by Constantin Brâncoveanu in 1698, represents a link between the sober decoration from Hurezi and the opulent one from Mogoșoaia.

The most significant examples of sculptured decoration from Potlogi are the beautiful carved columns of the elegant flatroof, the panels of the railings, the inscription, the elegant columns of the double *loggia* from the northern side of the palace, the vault brackets from the upper floor, as well as the fretwork of the cellar's air holes.

At the palace of Mogoșoaia (1702) situated in the neighbourhood of Bucharest, a representative foundation of Constantin Brâncoveanu the stone-carved decor is dominant.

The architectural structures of the upper floor are marking - from the compositional point of view - the centre of the palace, dominated by the flatroof and the *loggia*, the two characteristics of the civil Brancovan architecture. The six columns of the *loggia*, four free and two of attached shaft type, have trunks in cable moulding, with garlands of flowers placed in the flutings, with composite capitels and bases adorned with acanthus flowers. The panels carved in the "à jour" technique presents luxuriant elements of oriental influence that are forming the outline of an orientalk vase, together with silhouettes of dolphins or the country's coat of arms. On the brackets of the Voussoir bricks placed on groin in the *loggia* are carved *mascheroni*, while the original vaults from the upper floor



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have various brackets, such as with the coat of arms of Wallachia - the eagle with the cross, the armorial bearings of the Cantacuzino family - the bicephalous eagle or acanthus flowers.

The flatroof situated on the eastern façade has columns with simple cylindrical trunks, with composite capitels and rich decorated socles, while the fretwork panels of the railings, together with the one of the *loggia* are exquisite examples for the stone sculpture of the Brancovan period.<sup>23</sup>

The restorations undertaken the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have modified the original structural assembly, respectively on this occasion were added sculptures brought from other monuments of that epoch (from the palace of Potlogi - four columns, or from the Old Princely Court from Bucharest - a monumental portal).

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the sculpture became close to the forms developed by the baroque art, the decorating being now more exuberant, while the surface of the stone is more richly carved, with more stronger relieves. The Brancovan monumental sculpture is preserved until at the beginning of the modern epoch.

For this stage of its evolution are characteristic the inner columns decorated with creeping stalks and the columns from the church porch, with the trunks in cable moulding, composite capitels and socles adorned with floral motifs, all carved by Vucașin Caragea and coming from the Church Saint George the New in Bucharest (1703-1705), the stone sculptures from the church of Doicești (Doicești commune, Dâmbovița county - 1706) and the portal of the church of the Antim monastery in Bucharest (1713-1715).

During the reign of Mavrocordat family, the Văcărești monastery (1716-1722) and the Stavropoleos church (1724), both situated in Bucharest, are representative works of art through the overabundant and rich stone-carved decoration.

The armorial signs of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries are preserved on the inscriptions of the numerous monuments from Wallachia. Thus, are considered to be representative the inscriptions of the palaces from Potlogi and Mogoșoaia.

The inscription from Potlogi has a rectangular section, dated 1698, with a frame decorated with the “rincaux” motifs (creeping stalks) and flowers, while at the half of each side is figured an angel with opened wings. In the upper part of the central field is carved the official coat of arms of Wallachia - the eagle with the cross (“*acvila valachica*”), placed in a floral coronet, towards right is the sun, while towards the left is the moon, both represented with humanizing figures. On the exterior side, at the four corners are cut: the theocratic attribute “Io” and the initials of the founder - “K”(onstantin), “B”(râncoveanu), “V”(oivode).

The inscription from Mogoșoaia, dating from 1702, has a rectangular section, with a frame made of ample “rincaux” motifs (creeping stalks) and flowers, while in the upper part of the central field is represented the official coat of arms of Wallachia - an eagle with opened wings wearing a cross, placed in a tablet bordered towards the right by the sun and towards the left by the moon, both represented with humanizing figures. The eagle with the cross is stamped with a royal closed crown, having in the centre a cruciferous globe. In the four corners are carved: the theocratic attribute “Io” and the initials of the voivode - “K”(onstantin), “B”(râncoveanu), “V”(oivode).

A remarkable heraldic monument, both by its size and by the quality of the carving, is the inscription from the Colței Tower (preserved today in the collections of the National Art Museum of Romania, in the *Lapidarium* from Mogoșoaia).



The monument has a bicephalous crowned eagle inscribed in a circle sustained by two lions, the entire composition being placed in the central field of the inscription. In the upper part are cut the initials of the founder - "MH" (Mihail), "KT" (Cantacuzino) -, while in the lower one is marked the year 1715, the margins of the inscription being decorated with ample creeping stalks and flowers.

An interesting work is also the coat of arms cut in marble coming from the bell tower of Mărcuța monastery of Bucharest (1799), a monument founded by Alexandru Ipsilanti. The coat of arms of Wallachia - the eagle with the cross - is represented in a shield with four lobes, sustained by elegant lambrequins and stamped with a closed crown. On the upper corners are figured the sign of the voivode power - the mace and the sword -, while on the lateral sides are cut the initials of the founder and in the centre is marked the year 1799.

Evolving from the linear decoration of geometric type, of Balkan or Ottoman influence, towards the volumetric expression of the plastic ornament which assumes forms and motifs of the Renaissance and Baroque, integrated to the structures of architectural decoration using until late the geometric motifs (the windows or the portal with crossing rods), the stone sculpture in Wallachia illustrates the diversity of the cultural contacts which have generated valuable imports during the 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### Notes:

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3. *The History of the Plastic Art in România (Istoria artelor plastice în România)*, vol. I, p. 171; V. Drăguț, *The Romanian Art. Prehisory. Antiquity. Middle Age. Renaissance. Baroque (Arta românească. Preistorie. Antichitate. Ev Mediu. Renaștere. Baroc)*, Vremea Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 94-95; M.M. Popescu, *The medieval stone sculpture in the Romanian Countries (Sculptura medievală în piatră din Țările Române)*, Meridiane Publishing House, 1985, p. 34.
4. *Ibidem*.
5. *Ibidem*, p. 171-172.
6. *Ibidem*.
7. *Ibidem*, p. 282.
8. M.M. Popescu, *The medieval stone sculpture (Sculptura medievală în piatră)*, p. 34-35.
9. *The History of the Plastic Art in Romania (Istoria artelor plastice în România)*, vol. I, p. 282-283.
10. *The History of the Plastic Art in Romania (Istoria artelor plastice în România)*, vol. II, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1970, p. 90-91.
11. M.M. Popescu, *The medieval stone sculpture (Sculptura medievală în piatră)*, p. 56-57.
12. *Ibidem*, p. 30.
13. *Ibidem*, according to R. Theodorescu, *Byzance, Balkans, Occident at the beginning of the Medieval Romanian Culture (the 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries) (Bizanț, Balcani, Occident la începuturile culturii medievale românești (secolele X-XIV))*, Bucharest, 1974, p. 305.
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15. M.M. Popescu, *The medieval stone sculpture (Sculptura medievală în piatră)*, p. 32; E. Lăzărescu, *The Church of Argeșului Monastery (Biserica mănăstirii Argeșului)*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1967.
16. *Ibidem*, p. 31; according to V. Vătășianu, *The History of Feudal Art, I (Istoria artei feudale, I)*, Academiei Române Publishing House, Bucharest, 1959;
17. *Ibidem*, p. 43-44.
18. C. Moisescu, *Târgoviște. Historical and Art Monuments (Târgoviște. Monumente istorice și de artă)*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 158-159.

19. M.M. Popescu, *The medieval stone sculpture (Sculptura medievală în piatră)*, p. 45; according to *Foreign travelers about the Romanian Countries (Călători străini despre Țările Române)*, vol. VI, Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1976, p. 232; “When was started the building people were saying that is no other palace like this in the world, except maybe the French country, because they brought architects from the Hungarian country and started to build inside and outside with well-carved stone”.
20. Th. Voinescu, *Preliminaries about the Study of the Art of the Cantacuzino Family (preliminarii la studiul artei Cantacuzinilor)*, in *Analecta*, IV, University of Bucharest, The Institute of Art History, Bucharest, 1943-1947, p. 41-45; Idem, *Observations on the Brancovan tyle. The Portal (Observații asupra stilului brâncovenesc. Portalul)*, in *SCIA*, nr. 1, 1961, p. 4-15.
21. *The History of the Plastic Art (Istoria artelor plastice)*, vol. II, p. 81-88.
22. M.M. Popescu, *The medieval stone sculpture (Sculptura medievală în piatră)*, p. 48, according to V. Drăguț, *The Romanian Art (Arta românească)*, p. 282.
23. *Ibidem*, p. 49.