

**The Painted Fortified Monastic Churches of Moldavia:
Bastions of Orthodoxy in a Post-Byzantine World**

by

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DEDICATION

To my family.

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This project is the result of years of study and training with support from numerous individuals, institutions, and organizations. My interest in the rich Moldavian corpus of ecclesiastical monuments began in a seminar on “Medieval Image Theory” in fall 2011 at the University of Michigan. I am incredibly grateful to Elizabeth Sears for leading this course and for initially encouraging me to delve into the Moldavian material. The project then developed under the tutelage of my *doktorvater*, Achim Timmermann, who from the outset was supportive of my interests in pursuing research on the artistic production of Eastern Europe, and the little-studied regions of the Carpathian Mountains. His feedback and insights over the years have helped me shape my project and bring it to completion, and have also taught me how to be a careful and thorough scholar. I would also like to acknowledge the rest of my committee members—Elizabeth Sears, Paroma Chatterjee, and John V.A. Fine—who offered enthusiasm, key advice, and invaluable suggestions at various stages in this process. Their assistance has enabled me to think carefully and critically about the works I study, and push my project in exciting new directions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xxxiii
ABSTRACT	xxxiv
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	
Research Parameters	1
Moldavia at the Crossroads	15
Historiography	27
New Directions	38
The Sources	42
Chapter Summaries	48
CHAPTER TWO: Princely Aspirations and Artistic Patronage	
Introduction	51
Moldavia <i>vis-à-vis</i> the Ottoman Empire after 1453	52
Fortresses and Royal Courts	58
Stephen's First Churches	64
Relics of the True Cross in Moldavia	69
A Constantinian Model	72
From <i>Prince</i> to <i>Emperor</i>	78
The Gate of Christianity	81
The Murals of the Katholikon at Pătrăuți	87
Conclusion	97
CHAPTER THREE: Architectural Forms and Stylistic Pluralism	
Introduction	101
The Architecture of the Moldavian Katholika in Context	104
Stephen's Ecclesiastical Projects	111
Transitions and Transformations	127
Peter's Churches	130
Western Gothic Forms	138
Stylistic Pluralism	149
Conclusion	159

CHAPTER FOUR: Iconographic Programs and the Structuring of Spatial Experience	
Introduction	161
Working Techniques and Underpainting	166
The Interior and Exterior Mural Cycles	174
Eucharistic Theology and Its Visual Manifestations	192
The Iconostasis and Its Functions	199
Conclusion	211
CHAPTER FIVE: Dynastic Concerns and Memoria	
Introduction	216
The Moldavian <i>gropniță</i>	222
Burials <i>apud ecclesiam</i>	230
The Graves and Their Props	233
Social and Symbolic Explanations	238
Spiritual and Eschatological Dimensions	244
Offerings and Memoria	254
Conclusion	262
CHAPTER SIX: Afterimages of Byzantium	
Introduction	264
Political and Military Conflicts	266
The Murals of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i>	269
Historical Allusions in the Murals of <i>The Siege</i>	272
The Context of the <i>Akathistos Hymn</i>	276
The Celebration of the <i>Tuesday Rite</i>	283
Multiple Facets of the Sacred	286
Peter's Aspirations	295
Conclusion	302
CHAPTER SEVEN: Epilogue	
Further Developments in Moldavian Monastic Art and Architecture	305
Concluding Remarks	316
FIGURES	321
APPENDICES	621
BIBLIOGRAPHY	739

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

1.1	Map of Europe c.1500. Delineated is the principality of Moldavia, 1359 (source: public domain)	321
1.2	Map of Moldavia during second half of the fifteenth century (source: public domain)	322
1.3	Map of ecclesiastical sites in Moldavia during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea</i> , 657.)	322
1.4	Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery, Moldavia, 1532, view from SE (source: author)	323
1.5	The Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar Island, Armenia/Turkey, 921, view from SW (source: public domain)	324
1.6	Detail of exterior reliefs showing David and Goliath, Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar Island, Armenia/Turkey (source: public domain)	324
1.7	Cathedral of St. George, Yuryev-Polskym Russia, founded between 1230 and 1234, view from W (source: public domain)	325
1.8	Moldovița Monastery, Moldavia, aerial view (source: http://www.larumania.es/monasterio-de-moldovita)	326
1.9	Plan, Moldovița Monastery, Moldavia (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 195.)	326
1.10	Map of Mount Athos (source: Bogdanović, et al, <i>Chilandar</i> , inside the front cover.)	327
1.11	Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai, 548-565, aerial view (source: Berthold Werner)	327
1.12	The Great Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos, aerial view (source: http://www.chalkidiki.com/athos/great_lavra.html)	328
1.13	Studenica Monastery, Serbia, c.1186-1196, aerial view (source: http://www.republik.rs/studenica-monastery)	328
1.14	Plan, Ravanica Monastery, Serbia, c.1375 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 632, fig. 736.)	329
1.15	Plan, Manasija (Resava) Monastery, Serbia, 1406-1418 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 633, fig. 738.)	329
1.16	Missal, Feleac, fol. 107r (source: Toth, <i>Primele manuscrise matematice românești din Transilvania</i> , fig. 9a-9b.)	330
1.17	The Hodegetria icon of St. Anne, Bistrița Monastery, arrived in Moldavia in the early fifteenth century (source: Ștefan Cojocariu)	331
1.18	Map of Eastern Europe. Delineated is Mount Athos, Dobrogea, and Mangup (from left to right) (source: public domain)	332

1.19	Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Vad Monastery, Transylvania, view from NW (source: public domain)	333
1.20	Elevation and plan, Church of the Dormition, Vad Monastery (source: Porumb, <i>Ștefan cel Mare și Transilvania</i> , 24.)	333
1.21	Church of St. Parascheva, Feleac, view from NW (source: public domain)	334
1.22	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Parascheva, Feleac (source: Porumb, <i>Ștefan cel Mare și Transilvania</i> , 22.)	334

CHAPTER TWO

2.1	Plans of Moldavian fortresses (Scheia, Neamț, and Suceava), late fourteenth-early fifteenth centuries (source: Nicolescu, “Arta in epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 273, fig. 4.)	335
2.2	Plan, Suceava Fortress, Moldavia, rebuilt 1476-1479 (source: Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, eds., <i>Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 186.)	335
2.3	Plan, Neamț Fortress, Moldavia, rebuilt 1476-1479 (source: Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, eds., <i>Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 189.)	336
2.4	Kuressaare castle, Kuressaare Estonia, late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries (source: http://www.castles.info/estonia/kuressaare/pictures/kuressaare03.jpg)	336
2.5	Ciechanów Castle, Poland, fourteenth century (source: http://f.tqn.com/y/goeasteurope/1/5/k/3/-/-/PolandCastleCiechanow.jpg)	337
2.6	Plan, “Baba Vida Fortress,” Vidin, Bulgaria, early thirteenth century (source: Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, eds., <i>Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 174.)	337
2.7	Pyle or a liturgical embroidery for the Royal Doors of the iconostasis, Putna Monastery, 238 x 192 cm, 1510 (source: <i>Sfânta Mănăstire Putna</i> , 316, fig. 93)	338
2.8	West façade, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery, Moldavia, 1487, view from W (source: author)	339
2.9	Dedicatory inscription, west façade, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	339
2.10	Sainte-Chapelle, Paris, consecrated 26 April 1248, view from SW (source: http://jehoshuathebook.com/2/post/2015/02/illuminating-the-crown-of-thorns-at-sainte-chapelle.html)	340
2.11	Chapel of the Holy Cross, Karlštejn Castle, 1348 (source: http://www.hradkarlstejn.cz/informations-for-visitors-2013/guided-tours/)	341
2.12	Church of the Holy Cross, Pelendri, Cyprus, second half of the twelfth century (source: public domain)	341
2.13	Church of the Raising of the True Cross, Volovăț, Moldavia, 1500-1502, view from S (source: author)	342
2.14	Elevation and plan, Church of the Raising of the True Cross, Volovăț, Moldavia (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 131.)	342
2.15	<i>Tetraevangelion</i> , Ms.M.694, fol. 308r, completed 1492 (source: Morgan Library and Museum)	343

2.16	<i>Tetraevangelion</i> , Humor Monastery, fol. 266v, completed 1473, now at Putna Monastery (source: http://putna.ro/revista2014/articol16)	344
2.17	<i>Tetraevangelion</i> , Humor Monastery, fol. 265v, completed 1473, now at Putna Monastery (source: <i>Sfânta Mănăstire Putna</i> , 261, fig. 30)	345
2.18	Constantine the Great and Helena with the True Cross, interior mural, west wall of the naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	346
2.19	Ivory Triptych with Crucifixion, tenth century, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Berlin (source: Walter, <i>The Iconography of Constantine the Great</i> , fig. 63.)	347
2.20	Reliquary and detail, eleventh century, Esztergom Cathedral, Hungary (source: Walter, <i>The Iconography of Constantine the Great</i> , figs. 68-69.)	348
2.21	Votive painting, interior mural, south and west walls of the naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	349
2.22	Detail of the votive painting, interior mural, west wall of the naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: http://romania-insights.com/listings/patrauti-monastery/)	349
2.23	Interior murals, west wall of the naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: http://biserica.patrauti.ro/biserica/pictura-interioara.html)	350
2.24	Detail of the votive painting, south wall of the naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	350
2.25	<i>Anastasis</i> , interior mural, south wall of the naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	351
2.26	<i>The Procession of the Soldier Saints</i> , interior mural, west wall of the pronaos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	352
2.27	<i>The Procession of the Soldier Saints</i> , interior mural, west wall of the pronaos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	352
2.28	Detail of <i>The Procession of the Soldier Saints</i> , interior mural, west wall of the pronaos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	353
2.29	Detail of <i>The Procession of the Soldier Saints</i> , interior mural, west wall of the pronaos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	353
2.30	Detail of <i>The Procession of the Soldier Saints</i> , interior mural, west wall of the pronaos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	354
2.31	<i>The Triumph of Constantine</i> , interior mural, Church of St. Constantine, Kritsa, Merabello, Crete, c.1354 (source: Walter, <i>The Iconography of Constantine the Great</i> , fig. 104.)	354
2.32	<i>The Vision of Constantine</i> , interior mural, Church of the Holy Cross of Agiasmati, Platanistasa, Cyprus, c.1500 (source: Walter, <i>The Iconography of Constantine the Great</i> , fig. 56.)	355
2.33	<i>The Procession of the Soldier Saints</i> (below) and <i>The Marriage at Cana</i> (above), interior mural, west wall of the pronaos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	355

2.34	South wall, Church of the Birth of the Virgin, Tazlău Monastery, Moldavia, 1496-1497 (source: author)	356
2.35	East wall, Church of the Birth of the Virgin, Tazlău Monastery (source: author)	356
2.36	South wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery, Moldavia, 1530 (source: Miclea and Florescu, <i>Probota</i> , fig. 22.)	357
2.37	South wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery, Moldavia, 1530 (source: author)	357

CHAPTER THREE

3.1	Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery, Moldavia, 1530, view from NE (source: author)	358
3.2	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 13, 14.)	358
3.3	Axometric projection (L) and floor plan (R), Great Lavra Monastery, Mount Athos, rebuilt 963 (source: Mylonas, <i>Neohellenic Architecture Archives</i> : < http://www.benaki.gr/eMP-Architecture/eMuseumPlus >	359
3.4	Katholikon of the Great Lavra, Mount Athos, lithograph of an older pen and ink drawing, Vassily Barsky, monk from Kiev, drawing 1744, lithograph 1887, .35 x .50 m (source: Mylonas, <i>Athos and its Monastic Institutions Through Old Engravings and Other Works of Art</i> , 57, no. 16.)	360
3.5	Church of the Holy Trinity, Siret, Moldavia, 1354-1358, view from SW (source: author)	361
3.6	Elevation and plan, Church of the Holy Trinity, Siret (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 162.)	361
3.7	Plan, Church of the Ascension, Ravanica Monastery, Serbia, c.1375 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 680, Fig. 792/A.)	362
3.8	Church of the Trinity, Cozia Monastery, Wallachia, consecrated 18 May 1388, view from SE (source: public domain)	363
3.9	Plan, Church of the Trinity, Cozia Monastery (source: http://relevee.uauim.ro/146/)	363
3.10	Tower, exterior, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	364
3.11	Detail of tower, interior, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	364
3.12	View of main dome, interior, Armenian Cathedral of Saint James, Jerusalem, twelfth century (source: Ron Peled)	365
3.13	Detail of the dome over the mihrab, Great Mosque of Córdoba, founded eleventh century (source: http://www.europaenfotos.com/cordoba/eng_cor_3.html)	365
3.14	Plan, Church of St. Demetrios, Veliko Tarnovo, c.1185 (source: Bichev, <i>Architecture in Bulgaria From Ancient Times to the Later 19th Century</i> , 37, fig. 22.)	366

3.15	Plan, Church of the Holy Virgin of Petrich, Assen's Fortress near Asenovgrad, twelfth-thirteenth centuries (source: Bichev, <i>Architecture in Bulgaria From Ancient Times to the Later 19th Century</i> , 40, fig. 25.)	366
3.16	Church of St. Shoghakat, Vagharshapat, Armenia, 1694, view from SW (source: Vigen Hakhverdyan)	367
3.17	Section, Hagia Sophia, Trebizond, 1238-1263 (source: Eastmond, <i>Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond</i> , 41, fig. 17.)	367
3.18	Church of St. Procopius, Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Moldavia, 1487, view from S (source: public domain)	368
3.19	Ruins, Church of St. Procopius, Bădeuți (Milișăuți) (source: public domain)	368
3.20	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Procopius, Bădeuți (Milișăuți) (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 26.)	368
3.21	Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery, Moldavia, 1487, view from N (source: author)	369
3.22	Elevation and plan, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery, (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 23.)	369
3.23	Church of St. Elijah, Suceava, Moldavia, 1488, view from SE (source: http://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserici-manastiri/biserica-sfantul-ilie-suceava-67982.html)	370
3.24	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Elijah, Suceava (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 29.)	370
3.25	Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery, Moldavia, 1488, view from SE (source: author)	371
3.26	Elevation and plan, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 90.)	371
3.27	Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Putna Monastery, Moldavia, 1466-1469, view from SE (source: author)	372
3.28	Elevation and plan, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Putna Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 145, 146.)	372
3.29	Church of the Ascension, Neamț Monastery, Moldavia, 1486-1497, view from S (source: author)	373
3.30	Elevation and plan, Church of the Ascension, Neamț Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 100.)	373
3.31	Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dobrovăț Monastery, Moldavia, 1503-1504, view from W (source: Mihai Tudorsky)	374
3.32	Elevation and plan, Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dobrovăț Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 119.)	374
3.33	Church of St. George, Baia, Moldavia, 1467, view from SW (source: author)	375
3.34	Elevation and plan, Church of St. George, Baia (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 19.)	375
3.35	Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Borzești, Moldavia, 1494, view from NE (source: author)	376

3.36	Elevation and plan, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Borzești (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 83.)	376
3.37	Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Războieni Monastery, Moldavia, 1496, view from SW (source: author)	377
3.38	Elevation and plan, Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Războieni Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 76.)	377
3.39	Church of St. John the Baptist, Piatra Neamț, Moldavia, c.1498, view from NW (source: author)	378
3.40	Elevation and plan, Church of St. John the Baptist, Piatra Neamț (source: <i>Repertoriul</i> , 162.)	378
3.41	Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Scânteia, Moldavia, 1494, view from S (source: Cezar Suceveanu)	379
3.42	Elevation and plan, Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Scânteia (source: <i>Repertoriul</i> , 210.)	379
3.43	Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Reușeni, Moldavia, 1504, view from SW (source: author)	380
3.44	Elevation and plan, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Reușeni (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 114.)	380
3.45	Church of St. Parascheva, Ștefănești, Moldavia, date unknown, view from SW (source: Cezar Suceveanu)	381
3.46	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Parascheva, Ștefănești (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea</i> , 77.)	381
3.47	Church of St. Parascheva, Cotnari, Moldavia, 1496, view from SW (source: author)	382
3.48	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Parascheva, Cotnari (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 140.)	382
3.49	Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore, Moldavia, 1502, view from SW (source: author)	383
3.50	Elevation and plan, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 113.)	383
3.51	Plan, chapel at Hotin Fortress, Moldavia, 1459 (source: <i>Repertoriul</i> , 207.)	384
3.52	Elevation and section, chapel at Hotin Fortress (source: <i>Repertoriul</i> , 208.)	384
3.53	Tower with chapel of St. John the New, Bistrița Monastery, Moldavia, 1498, view from N (source: author)	385
3.54	Section and plan, Chapel of St. John the New, Bistrița Monastery (source: <i>Repertoriul</i> , 158.)	385
3.55	Plan, Church of St. Stephen (Lazarica), Kruševac, Serbia, 1377-1388 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 671, Fig. 783/A.)	386
3.56	Plan, Church of the Presentation of the Mother of God, Kalenić Monastery, Serbia, 1407-1413 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 671, Fig. 783/E.)	386
3.57	Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Vaslui, Moldavia, 1490, view from S (source: Cezar Suceveanu)	387
3.58	Plan, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Vaslui (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 65.)	387

3.59	Church of St. Nicholas, Iași, Moldavia, 1491-1493, view from SW (source: author)	388
3.60	Plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Iași (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 61.)	388
3.61	Church of St. George, Hârlău, Moldavia, 1492, view from N (source: author)	389
3.62	Elevation and plan, Church of St. George, Hârlău (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 50.)	389
3.63	Church of St. Nicholas, Dorohoi, Moldavia, 1495, view from SW (source: author)	390
3.64	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Dorohoi (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 38.)	390
3.65	Church of St. Nicholas, Popăuți Monastery, Botoșani, Moldavia, 1496, view from S (source: author)	391
3.66	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Botoșani (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 44.)	391
3.67	Church of the Birth of the Virgin, Tazlău Monastery, Moldavia, 1497, view from SE (source: author)	392
3.68	Elevation and plan, Church of the Birth of the Virgin, Tazlău Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 70.)	392
3.69	Church of St. Parascheva, Dolheștii Mari, Moldavia, before 1481, view from SW (source: Cezar Suceveanu)	393
3.70	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Parascheva, Dolheștii Mari (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 127.)	393
3.71	Church of St. Nicholas, Bălinești, Moldavia, 1499, view from S (source: author)	394
3.72	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Bălinești (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 134.)	394
3.73	Church of St. George, St. John the New Monastery, Suceava, Moldavia, 1514-1522, view from NW (source: author)	395
3.74	Elevation and plan, Church of St. George, St. John the New Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 170, 171.)	395
3.75	Church of All Saints, Părhăuți, Moldavia, 1522, view from NW (source: author)	396
3.76	Elevation and plan, Church of All Saints, Părhăuți (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 180.)	396
3.77	Church of St. Demetrios, Hârlău, Moldavia, 1530, view from NE (source: author)	397
3.78	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Demetrios, Hârlău (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 70.)	397
3.79	Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery, Moldavia, 1530, view from SE (source: author)	398
3.80	Elevation and plan, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 23.)	398

3.81	Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery, Moldavia, 1532, view from NW (source: author)	399
3.82	Elevation and plan, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 30, 31.)	399
3.83	Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Baia, Moldavia, 1532, view from W (source: author)	400
3.84	Elevation and plan, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Baia (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 43.)	400
3.85	Church of St. Demetrios, Suceava, Moldavia, 1535, view from NW (source: author)	401
3.86	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Demetrios, Suceava (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 48.)	401
3.87	Church of St. Nicholas, Coșula Monastery, Moldavia, 1535, view from NE (source: Cezar Suceveanu)	402
3.88	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Coșula Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 58.)	402
3.89	Church of St. Nicholas, Râșca Monastery, Moldavia, 1542, view from S (source: author)	403
3.90	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Râșca Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 78.)	403
3.91	Church of the Assumption of the Virgin, Bistrița Monastery, Moldavia, 1541-1546, view from NW (source: author)	404
3.92	Elevation and plan, Church of the Assumption of the Virgin, Bistrița Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 122, 123.)	404
3.93	Exterior buttresses, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	405
3.94	Exterior buttresses, Parish Church of St. Michael, Sopron, Hungary, last quarter of the thirteenth century, view from NE (source: Kovacs Daniel)	405
3.95	Exterior buttresses, south wall, Church of the Birth of the Virgin, Tazlău Monastery (source: author)	406
3.96	Exterior buttresses, north wall, Church of St. John the Baptist, Piatra Neamț (source: author)	406
3.97	Exterior buttresses, south wall, Church of the Ascension, Galata Monastery (source: author)	407
3.98	Exterior buttresses (source: author)	408
3.99	Church of the Virgin, Biertan, Transylvania, 1500-1525, view from SE (source: public domain)	409
3.100	Roof decoration, Church of St. George, Monastery of St. John the New, Suceava (source: author)	410
3.101	Roof decoration, St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna (source: public domain)	410

3.102	Main entrance to the church, west façade, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	411
3.103	Main entrance to the church, west wall, inside the exonarthex, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	412
3.104	Elevation drawing for a Gothic portal frame, southern German, 1446 (source: Böker, <i>Architektur der Gotik</i> , 307, fig. 16.996.)	413
3.105	Schulterbogenportal, interior, threshold between pronaos and naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	414
3.106	Schulterbogenportal, originally in the interior at the threshold between pronaos and naos, now outside of the church, Church of St. John the Baptist, Piatra Neamț (source: author)	415
3.107	Schulterbogenportal, interior, threshold between pronaos and naos, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Borzești (source: author)	416
3.108	Schulterbogenportal, interior, threshold between pronaos and naos, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	417
3.109	Schulterbogenportal, exterior, south wall, Black Church, Brașov (source: author)	418
3.110	Schulterbogenportal, exterior, west façade, Church of the Virgin, Biertan, Transylvania (source: author)	419
3.111	Portal at the threshold between the pronaos and burial chamber, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	419
3.112	Schulterbogenportal, interior, threshold between pronaos and burial chamber, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: http://ortodox.ro/manastiri/manastirea_humor.html)	420
3.113	Entryway to the burial chamber, and entryway to the naos, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	420
3.114	South wall, windows in pronaos, burial chamber, and naos, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	421
3.115	Window of the burial chamber, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	422
3.116	Lancet windows, south wall, pronaos, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	423
3.117	Drawings of tracery windows, c.1465, attributed to Laurenz Spinning (source: Böker, <i>Architektur der Gotik</i> , 316, fig. 17.004.)	424
3.118	Window tracery, apse, Black Church, Brașov (source: author)	424
3.119	Brackets, north-east and south-east corners of the naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	425
3.120	Vault of the porch tower, Church of St. Nicholas, Bălinești (source: author)	426
3.121	Vault, Chapel of the Holy Cross, Wawel Cathedral, Krakow, mid-fourteenth century (source: http://www.katedra-wawelska.pl/images/Image/32_12.jpg)	426
3.122	Church of St. Nicholas, Rădăuți Monastery, Moldavia, 1367-1368, view from NW (source: author)	427
3.123	Elevation and plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Rădăuți Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare</i> , 158, 159, 160.)	427

3.124	Catholic Cathedral, Baia, Moldavia, rebuilt 1410, view from SE (source: author)	428
3.125	Plan, Catholic Cathedral, Baia (source: Grigoraș and Caproșu, <i>Biserici și mănăstiri Vechi din Moldova</i> , 61.)	428
3.126	Cathedral of the Dormition, Kremlin, Moscow, 1474-1479 (source: Daniel Kruczynski)	429
3.127	Cathedral of the Dormition, Vladimir, c.1160-c.1180 (source: public domain)	430
3.128	Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, Kremlin, Moscow, c.1505-1509 (source: Fedor Chelnokov)	430
3.129	Church of St. Nicholas, St. Nicholas Monastery, Kuršumlija, Serbia, c.1166-1168, view from SW (source: Milica Jovanović-Marković)	431
3.130	Plan, Church of St. Nicholas, St. Nicholas Monastery, Kuršumlija (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 492, fig. 553.)	431
3.131	Church of St. George, Djurdjevi Stupovi Monastery, Serbia, c.1166-c.1170, reconstruction model (source: public domain)	432
3.132	Church of the Forty Martyrs, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, 1230, view from NW (source: Nenko Lazarov)	433
3.133	Plan, Church of the Forty Martyrs (source: Kandi)	433

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1	South wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Bălinești (source: author)	434
4.2	Portrait of Grigore Roșca, south wall, Church of St. George, Vroneț Monastery (source: author)	434
4.3	Painted brick exterior, south wall, Church of St. Demetrios, Suceava (source: author)	435
4.4	Brick underpainting, south window, burial chamber, Church of the Ascension, Neamț Monastery (source: author)	435
4.5	Underpainting layer, west wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Baia (source: author)	436
4.6	North wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	437
4.7	North wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	438
4.8	South wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	438
4.9	NE wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	439
4.10	Apse detail, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	439
4.11	Brick and stone underpainting, south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	440
4.12	South wall, Church of St. George, Monastery of St. John the New, Suceava (source: author)	441

4.13	South wall, Church of St. Demetrios, Suceava (source: author)	442
4.14	Main dome, Parekklesion of the Church of the Theotokos Pammakaristos, Constantinople (Fethiye Camii), 1292 (source: Müller-Wiener, <i>Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls</i> , 134, fig. 123.)	443
4.15	Main dome and northern exonarthex dome, Katholikon of the Chora Monastery, Constantinople (Kariye Camii), eleventh century (source: Ousterhout, <i>The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul</i> , fig. 153.)	443
4.16	South wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Bălinești (source: author)	444
4.17	Church of St. George, Kurbinovo, completed 1191, view from SW (top), detail of west wall (bottom) (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 382, figs. 411, 412.)	445
4.18	Church of St. Stephen, Banjska Monastery, Serbia, 1312-1316, view from SE (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 658, fig. 768.)	446
4.19	Church of St. Nicholas, Banja Monastery, completed 1329 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 659, fig. 770.)	446
4.20	Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Borzești, Moldavia, view from E (source: author)	447
4.21	Church of the Archangels of Michael and Gabriel, Războieni Monastery (source: author)	448
4.22	Church of St. John the Baptist, Piatra Neamț (source: author)	448
4.23	Detail, votive mural, interior south wall, naos, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	449
4.24	Raised haloes, interior, east wall of pronaos, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	450
4.25	Raised haloes, west façade, Church of the Dormition, Humor Monastery (source: author)	450
4.26	Detail showing gold leaf, former main portal, west wall of pronaos, interior of exonarthex, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: author)	451
4.27	Detail showing gold leaf, <i>Deésis</i> , south wall above the main entrance, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: author)	451
4.28	North apse, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	452
4.29	South apse, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	453
4.30	The Crucifixion, north apse, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	454
4.31	The Descent of the Holy Spirit, south apse, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	454
4.32	Narrative with moments from the Passion of Christ, west wall, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	455
4.33	The Dormition of the Virgin, west wall, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	455

4.34	The Mandylion, west wall, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	456
4.35	The Mandylion, lower drum of the tower, facing east, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	457
4.36	Military saints, north wall, naos, interior, to the right of north apse window, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	458
4.37	Military saints, north wall, naos, interior, to the left of north apse window, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	458
4.38	Votive painting, west wall, naos, interior, to the left of the entrance into the burial chamber, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	459
4.39	Votive painting, west wall, naos, interior, to the left of the entrance into the burial chamber, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	459
4.40	Votive painting, west wall, naos, interior, to the left of the entrance into the pronaos, Church of St. Elijah, Suceava (source: author)	460
4.41	The Royal Seat of Peter Rareș, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	460
4.42	Mural showing Sts. Constantine and Helena with St. Paisie, west wall, naos, interior, to the right of the entrance into the burial chamber, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	461
4.43	Dome, naos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	462
4.44	Dome, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	463
4.45	The Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils, north, east, and south walls, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	464
4.46	West wall, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	465
4.47	Menologium, east wall, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	466
4.48	Detail, Menologium east wall, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	467
4.49	Lower register, east wall, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	468
4.50	Lower register, east wall, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	468
4.51	The Annunciation, east wall above the entryway, pronaos, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	469
4.52	Virgin Orans, east wall, burial chamber, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	469
4.53	Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery, view from the SW (source: author)	470

4.54	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, south wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	471
4.55	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	472
4.56	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, north wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	473
4.57	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, south wall, Church of St. George, Monastery of St. John the New, Suceava (source: author)	474
4.58	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, naos, south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Baia (source: author)	475
4.59	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, pronaos, south wall, Church of St. Demetrios, Suceava (source: author)	476
4.60	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, south wall, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: author)	477
4.61	Guelph family tree in the necrology from Weingarten Abbey (Fulda, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Ms. D11, fol. 13v) (source: Morganstern, <i>Gothic Tombs of Kinship</i> , 151, fig. 105.)	478
4.62	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , drawing with black ink on paper, 71 cm x 23.5 cm, sixteenth or seventeenth century, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 177.)	479
4.63	Detail, <i>Tree of Jesse</i> , drawing with black ink on paper, Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 177.)	480
4.64	St. Athanasios the Athonite, grisaille on paper, 29 cm x 16.3 cm, sixteenth century, Simonopetra Monastery, Mount Athos (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 174.)	481
4.65	<i>Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples</i> , grisaille on paper, 31.5 cm x 22 cm, sixteenth century, Dionysiou Monastery (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 175.)	482
4.66	<i>The Anastasis</i> , cartoon, 41.5 cm x 30.5 cm, seventeenth century, Benaki Museum, Athens, Xynogopoulos Collection, 22.113A (source: <i>From Byzantium to El Greco</i> , 198, plate 72 on p. 143.)	483
4.67	<i>The Baptism of Christ</i> , cartoon, 42 cm x 31.6 cm, seventeenth century, Benaki Museum, Athens, Xynogopoulos Collection, 22.88 (source: <i>From Byzantium to El Greco</i> , 199, plate 73 on p. 144.)	484
4.68	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	485
4.69	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	486
4.70	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	487
4.71	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of St. Demetrios, Suceava (source: author)	488
4.72	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Baia (source: author)	489
4.73	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of St. George, Monastery of St. John the New, Suceava (source: author)	490

4.74	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	491
4.75	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , north wall, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: author)	492
4.76	Epitachelion with the Akathistos Hymn, sixteenth century, Stavronikita Monastery (with fringes) 280 cm x 11.5 cm, each panel 12.8 x 13.2 cm (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 392-393.)	493
4.77	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	494
4.78	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of St. George, Monastery of St. John the New, Suceava (source: author)	494
4.79	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	494
4.80	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	494
4.81	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of St. Demetrios, Suceava (source: author)	495
4.82	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Baia (source: author)	495
4.83	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	495
4.84	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, north wall, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery Nicholas, Probota Monastery, painted 1532 (source: author)	495
4.85	West pillar, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	496
4.86	<i>The Heavenly Customs</i> , mural, north wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	497
4.87	<i>The Heavenly Customs</i> , mural, north wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	498
4.88	<i>The Heavenly Customs</i> , mural, north wall, buttress, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: author)	499
4.89	<i>The Heavenly Customs</i> , mural, west façade, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	500
4.90	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, west façade, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: author)	501
4.91	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, east wall, exonarthex, interior, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	501
4.92	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, east wall, exonarthex, interior, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	502
4.93	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, east wall, exonarthex, interior, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	502
4.94	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, west façade, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: author)	503
4.95	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, west façade, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Baia (source: author)	504

4.96	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, west façade, Church of St. George, Monastery of St. George the New, Suceava (source: author)	505
4.97	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, west façade, Church of St. Nicholas, Coşula Monastery (source: author)	505
4.98	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	506
4.99	<i>The Last Judgment</i> , mural, south wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Râşca Monastery (source: author)	507
4.100	<i>Deésis</i> , exterior mural, south wall, directly above main entrance, Church of St. Nicholas, Rădăuţi Monastery (source: author)	508
4.101	<i>Deésis</i> , exterior mural, south wall, directly above main entrance, Church of St. George, Voroneţ Monastery (source: author)	509
4.102	<i>Deésis</i> , mural, directly above the main entrance, Church of All Saints, Părhăuţi Monastery (source: author)	510
4.103	<i>The Genesis Cycle</i> , mural, west façade, Church of the Annunciation, Moldoviţa Monastery (source: author)	511
4.104	<i>The Genesis Cycle</i> , mural, west façade, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	512
4.105	<i>The Genesis Cycle</i> , mural, west façade, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	513
4.106	<i>The Genesis Cycle</i> , mural, north wall, Church of St. George, Voroneţ Monastery (source: author)	513
4.107	Church of the Annunciation, Moldoviţa Monastery, view from SE (source: author)	514
4.108	East wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldoviţa Monastery (source: author)	515
4.109	Master of the Tucher Altar (follower), <i>Epitaph of Konrad Zingel</i> , 1447, St. Egidien, Nuremberg (source: http://gregorsmesse.uni-muenster.de/objektanzeige.php?ID=33351&-skip=120&currentQuery=Show).	516
4.110	Hans Baldung Grien, <i>The Mass of Saint Gregory</i> , 1511 (source: The Cleveland Museum of Art)	517
4.111	<i>Christ in the winepress</i> , c.1440, Franciscan cloister, Kraków, Poland (source: public domain)	517
4.112	<i>Passion altarpiece</i> , c.1510-1515, Cloister Ihlow, Flemish, from Antwerp, now in St. Lambert's Church, Aurich	518
4.113	<i>Passion altarpiece</i> , c.1510-1515, Cloister Ihlow, Flemish, from Antwerp, now in St. Lambert's Church, Aurich	519
4.114	<i>Melismos</i> , altar area, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuţi Monastery (source: Gabriel Herea)	520
4.115	<i>Melismos</i> , early thirteenth century, Church of the Virgin Mary, Studenica Monastery, Serbia (source: http://exeget.panikarolinka.ru/misc/melismos01.html)	520
4.116	Altar niche, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: http://www.manastireaprobota.ro/english_painting.html)	521

4.117	Bishops, altar area, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: www.probota.ro)	522
4.118	Iconostasis, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	523
4.119	Royal Doors, iconostasis, second quarter of the sixteenth century, tempera on wood; gilded, 108.5 cm x 76.6 cm, National Museum of Art, Bucharest, inv. 11092/L 41 (source: <i>Arta din Moldova de la Ștefan cel Mare la Movilești</i> , 47, plate 3.)	524
4.120	Annunciation, Royal doors, iconostasis, first half of sixteenth century, tempera on wood, gilded, 99.5 cm x 65 cm, Văratec Monastery, inv. 4447 (source: <i>Arta din Moldova de la Ștefan cel Mare la Movilești</i> , 49, plate 4.)	525
4.121	Hodegetria icon, despotic icon from the iconostasis in the church at Humor Monastery, second quarter of the sixteenth century (source: Sabados, “La datation des iconostases de Humor et de Voronet,” 69, fig. 3.)	526
4.122	Deésis with apostles, despotic icon from the iconostasis of the church at Humor Monastery, second quarter of the sixteenth century (source: Sabados, “La datation des iconostases de Humor et de Voronet,” 69, fig. 4.)	527
4.123	Icon of St. Michael, despotic icon from the iconostasis of the church at Humor Monastery, second quarter of the sixteenth century (source: Bedros, “Cultul arhanghelilor,” 113, fig. 2.)	528
4.124	Detail, iconostasis, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	529
4.125	Detail, iconostasis, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	530
4.126	Part of an epistyle with scenes from Christ’s passion, wood, egg tempera, 137 cm x 45 cm, Ivron Monastery, 1535-1545, Theophanis the Cretan (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 110-111.)	530
4.127	Part of the epistyle of an iconostasis with the Dodekaorton, sixteenth century, wood, egg tempera, 300 x 57 cm, Pantokrator Monastery (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 142-143.)	531
4.128	<i>The Great Deésis</i> , beginning of the seventeenth century, 347 cm x 36 cm, Văratec Monastery, inv. 4455 (source: <i>Arta din Moldova de la Ștefan cel Mare la Movilești</i> , 91-94, plate 25.)	531
4.129	Detail, iconostasis, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	532
4.130	Cross, wood and egg tempera, 183 cm x 134 cm, Pantokrator Monastery, c.1360-1380 (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 79.)	532
4.131	Interior, naos, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	533
4.132	View of iconostasis (L) and exterior of eastern apse (R), Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	534
4.133	View of the altar through the Royal Doors of the Iconostasis, Divine Liturgy, 2004, Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery (source: Gabriel Herea)	534

4.134	Entrance tower, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	535
4.135	Main entrance, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	536
4.136	Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery, view from E (source: author)	536
4.137	Portal leading into the pronaos, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	537
4.138	Interior, view from naos looking toward the entrance, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	538
4.139	Labyrinth motif, exonarthex, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	539
4.140	Labyrinth motif, burial chamber, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	539
4.141	Directional spatial emphasis, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author scan)	540

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1	Tombstone of Bogdan I, naos, north wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Rădăuți Monastery (source: http://istoria.md/articol/15/Bogdan_I,_domn_al_Moldovei)	541
5.2	Interior view, naos, south aisle, Church of St. Nicholas, Rădăuți Monastery (source: author)	542
5.3	The tomb of Archbishop Daniel II, fourteenth century, Church of the Holy Apostles, Pec, 1266 (source: http://www.kosovo.net/grstones.html)	543
5.4	Gravestone for the tomb of Bogdan I, Church of St. Nicholas, Rădăuți Monastery (source: <i>Repertoriul</i> , 251, fig. 178.)	544
5.5	Tomb of Alexander the Good, burial chamber, Bistrița Monastery (source: author)	544
5.6	The tomb chamber in Karabaş Kilise, Cappadocia, c.1061 (source: http://documentingcappadocia.newmedialab.cuny.edu/ commemoration-in-cappadocia-a-reexamination-of-the-tomb-chamber- in-karabas-kilise/)	545
5.7	Plan, Church of St. Nicholas, Kuršumlija Monastery, Serbia, c.1166-1168 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 492, fig. 553.)	545
5.8	Plan, Bistrița Monastery, Moldavia (source: Bălan, <i>Mănăstirea Bistrița</i> , 31.)	546
5.9	Plan, Church of the Virgin Mary, Studenica Monastery, 1183-1186 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 495, fig. 559.)	547
5.10	Plan, Church of the Ascension (Vaznesenje), Mileševa Monastery, before 1250 (source: Ćurčić, <i>Architecture in the Balkans</i> , 502, fig. 568.)	547
5.11	Tomb of Bishop Ephrem, seventeenth century, burial chamber, north wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	548
5.12	Tombs of Peter Rareș and his immediate family, burial chamber, along the south wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	549

- 5.13 Tomb of Toader Bubuioag, burial chamber, south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: http://www.wikiwand.com/ro/M%C4%83n%C4%83stirea_Humor) 549
- 5.14 Tombs of Stephen the Great (left) and Maria of Mangup (right), Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Putna Monastery (source: *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 130.) 550
- 5.15 Grave cover for the tomb of Stephen the Great, 2 July 1504, Putna Monastery, embroidered with gold and silk thread, 164 x 152 cm (source: *Holy Putna Monastery*, 321, fig. 38.) 551
- 5.16 Grave cover for the tomb of Maria Voichița, Stephen's third wife, 30 January 1513, Putna Monastery, 170 x 100 cm (source: <http://www.putna.ro/Acoperamant-mormant-s3-ss1-c4-cc7.php>) 552
- 5.17 Grave cover for the tomb of Maria of Mangup, Stephen's second wife, 19 December 1477, Putna Monastery; embroidery with gold, silver, and silk thread, 190 x 102 cm (source: *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 278.) 553
- 5.18 Detail of the double-headed eagle, grave cover for the tomb of Maria of Mangup, Putna Monastery; embroidery with gold, silver, and silk thread, 190 x 102 cm (source: *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 279.) 554
- 5.19 Detail of the abbreviation for the name Palaiologina, grave cover for the tomb of Maria of Mangup, Putna Monastery; embroidery with gold, silver, and silk thread, 190 x 102 cm (source: *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 279.) 554
- 5.20 Detail of the grave cover for the tomb of Maria of Mangup, Stephen's second wife, 19 December 1477, Putna Monastery; embroidery with gold, silver, and silk thread, 190 x 102 cm (source: *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 278.) 555
- 5.21 Detail of the abbreviations for the name Asanina, grave cover for the tomb of Maria of Mangup, Putna Monastery; embroidery with gold, silver, and silk thread, 190 x 102 cm (source: *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 279.) 556
- 5.22 Grave stone of Hugues Libergier (1229-1263), Reims Cathedral, 275 x 135 x 25 cm (source: http://www.cathedrale-reims.culture.fr/HTML/III-13_51_01175_NUCA.html) 557
- 5.23 Grave stone of a magistrate, now in the Musée de Beaux-Arts in Arras, France (source: Bauch, *Das mittelalterliche Grabbild*, fig. 420.) 558
- 5.24 Dedicatory inscription, south wall, Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Războieni Monastery (source: author) 558
- 5.25 Funerary niche, pronaos, south wall, Church of St. Parascheva, Dolheștii Mari (source: author) 559
- 5.26 Tomb of Luca Arbore, pronaos, south wall, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author) 560
- 5.27 Tomb of a priest, early-mid fourteenth century, Parish Church of Welwick, East Yorkshire (source: <http://diannesmedievalwriting.blogspot.com/2015/07/whats-with-medieval-tombs-part-12-low.html>) 561
- 5.28 Plans, Neamț Fortress (detail of the east side of the fortress) (a), Royal House from Probota Monastery (1530) (b), Royal House from Cetățuia Monastery (c) (source: Năstase, "Despre spațiul funerar în arhitectura moldovenească," 206, fig. 7.) 562

5.29	Votive painting of Peter Rareș, Bogdan III, and Stephen the Great, naos, west wall, Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dobrovăț Monastery (source: author)	563
5.30	Votive painting of Prince Iaroslav Vsevolodovic, niche mural, south wall, Church of the Savior, near Novgorod, c.1246 (source: Lazarev, <i>Mosaïques et fresques de l'ancienne Russie</i> , 120, 139.)	563
5.31	<i>Life of the Virgin</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, north wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	564
5.32	<i>Life of St. Anthony</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, north wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	564
5.33	<i>Life of St. Nicholas</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	565
5.34	<i>The Parable of the Prodigal Son</i> , exterior mural, burial chamber, south wall, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery (source: author)	566
5.35	<i>The Parable of the Prodigal Son</i> , exterior mural, south wall, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	566
5.36	<i>Menologium</i> , barrel-vaulted ceiling, burial chamber, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	567
5.37	North wall of the burial chamber, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	567
5.38	<i>Deésis</i> , interior mural, burial chamber, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	568
5.39	<i>Deésis</i> , interior mural, burial chamber, Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dobrovăț Monastery (source: author)	569
5.40	<i>Monastic Cross</i> , interior mural, burial chamber, niche in south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	570
5.41	Votive painting of Șendrea and his family, pronaos, south wall, Church of St. Parascheva, Dolheștii Mari (source: author)	570
5.42	Votive painting of Luca Arbore and his family, pronaos, south wall, Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	571
5.43	Votive painting of Toader Bubuiog, burial chamber, Humor Monastery (source: author)	572
5.44	Votive painting of Anastasia Bubuiog, burial chamber, Humor Monastery (source: author)	573
5.45	<i>Deésis</i> , interior mural, naos, Church of St. Elijah, Suceava (source: http://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserici-manastiri/biserica-sfantul-ilie-suceava-67982.html)	574
5.46	Interior, burial chamber, looking west, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	575
5.47	Antimension from the sacristy of Simonpetra Monastery, Mount Athos, painted on linen, 42 x 54.5 cm, sixteenth century (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 418-419.)	576
5.48	<i>Hetoimasia</i> , exterior mural, west façade, Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery (source: author)	576

5.49	Interior, burial chamber, looking west, Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery (source: author)	577
5.50	Grave cover for the tomb of Maria Despina, Putna Monastery (source: <i>Sfânta Mănăstire Putna</i> , 280.)	578
5.51	Embroidered liturgical standard with St. George, c.1500, golden and silver thread on silk, 123.8 x 94.2 cm (source: National Museum of History, Bucharest, Nr.inv.75062)	579
5.52	Votive sculpture showing Stephen the Great, tower of Vatopedi Monastery (source: http://www.doxologia.ro/viata-bisericii/sfantul-munte-athos/ctitorii-stefaniene-din-sfantul-munte-athos)	580
5.53	The miracle-working icon of Grigoriou Monastery, Mount Athos, gifted by Maria of Mangup (source: http://www.crestinortodox.ro/religie/maica-domnului-icoanele-facatoare-minuni-sfantul-munte-athos-88348.html)	580
5.54	Chalice, Protaton Monastery, Mount Athos, silver gilt, height 23 cm, rim diameter 12 cm, base diameter 13 cm, 1504-1517 (source: <i>Treasures of Mount Athos</i> , 617.)	581
5.55	<i>Tetraevangelion</i> , fol. 5v, Cod.Slav.7, 1502, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (source: http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/Search/Result.aspx?p_ItemID=1 www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/ImageDetail.aspx?p_iBildID=5049359)	582
5.56	<i>Tetraevangelion</i> , fol. 245r, Cod.Slav.7, 1502, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (source: http://www.bildarchivaustria.at/Pages/Search/Result.aspx?p_ItemID=1)	583
5.57	Votive painting of Peter Rareș and his family, naos, west wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	584

CHAPTER SIX

6.1	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery, painted 1537 (source: author)	585
6.2	South wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	585
6.3	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the infantry and cavalry forces of the enemy, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	586
6.4	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the naval battle, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	586
6.5	<i>Map of Constantinople</i> , c.1422, Cristoforo Buondelmonti, <i>Liber Insularum Archipelagi</i> (source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris)	587
6.6	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the large fortified city, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	588

6.7	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the deacons, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	588
6.8	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the priests, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	589
6.9	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the emperor and members of his court, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	590
6.10	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the empress and her ladies-in-waiting, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	591
6.11	Detail, <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the Virgin's girdle, the Hodegetria icon, and the acheiropoieton of Christ, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	591
6.12	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the divine intervention in the form of rain and fire descending from the skies, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	592
6.13	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the culverin cannons, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	592
6.14	<i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, Arbore, painted 1541 (source: author)	593
6.15	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the Hodegetria icon in procession, mural, south wall, Church of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, Arbore (source: author)	593
6.16	Greek fire used in the Byzantine-Arab wars, Codex Skylitzes Matritensis, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, Vitr. 26-2, f. 34 v. b. (source: public domain)	594
6.17	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing Greek Fire, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	594
6.18	<i>Siege of Constantinople in 860</i> , interior mural, naos, Cathedral of Our Lady of Smolensk, Novodevichiy Convent, Moscow, painted mid-sixteenth century (source: http://www.peggysphotos.com/moscow-day-4b/)	595
6.19	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople in 860</i> , part of the <i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , mural, refectory, Hilandar Monastery, Mount Athos, painted 1621-1622 (source: Millet, <i>Monuments de L'Athos: les peintures</i> , 104, fig. 2.)	595
6.20	Detail of <i>The Siege of Constantinople</i> showing the contemporary inscription along the perimeter of the fortification, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	596
6.21	Detail of the <i>Akathistos Hymn</i> and <i>The Siege</i> , mural, south wall, Church of Saint Peter, Golem (Veliki) Grad Island, Prespa Lake, Macedonia, founded c.1360 (source: http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/pb/6e8e2/)	596
6.22	<i>The Procession of the Hodegetria Icon</i> (drawing), Blachernae Monastery, Arta (source: Vassilaki, ed., <i>Mother of God</i> , 376, fig. 211.)	597

6.23	Stanza 24 from the Akathistos Hymn, Markov Monastery, late fourteenth century (source: Vassilaki, ed., <i>Mother of God</i> , 135, fig. 81.)	597
6.24	Detail of <i>Akathistos Hymn</i> showing the illustration of Stanza 23, mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	598
6.25	<i>The Procession of the Hodegetria Icon in Moscow</i> , Embroidered Icon of Helena Voloshanka, 1498 (?), State Historical Museum, Moscow (source: Vassilaki, ed., <i>Mother of God</i> , 52, fig. 23.)	599
6.26	<i>The Burning Bush</i> , mural, south wall, Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	600
6.27	<i>Pala d'Oro</i> , high altar, Basilica San Marco, Venice, after 1204 (source: public domain)	600
6.28	Moldovița Monastery, Moldavia, aerial view (source: http://www.larumania.es/monasterio-de-moldovita)	601
6.29	Suceava Fortress, Moldavia, founded end of 14th century, rebuilt 1476-1479 (source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/httpwwwyoutube.com/watch?v=2db9fka1io/4447111699/)	601
6.30	Map of Moldavia at the turn of the sixteenth century highlighting the major fortresses built by Stephen the Great between 1457 and 1487 (source: <i>Bucovina</i> , 26.)	602
6.31	Hodegetria icon, despotic icon from the iconostasis in the church at Humor Monastery, second quarter of the sixteenth century (source: Sabados, "La datation des iconostases de Humor et de Voroneț," 69, fig. 3.)	603
6.32	Detail of the south wall murals showing the four stanzas of the <i>Akathistos Hymn</i> (21, 22, 23, and 24) placed directly above the image of <i>The Siege</i> , Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery (source: author)	604

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1	Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery, Moldavia, 1581-1583, view from SE (source: author)	605
7.2	Elevation and plan, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea</i> , 160, 161.)	605
7.3	West wall, pronaos, interior, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	606
7.4	Votive painting, interior mural, south and west walls of the naos, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	607
7.5	Votive painting, interior mural, west walls of the naos, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	607
7.6	East wall, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	608

7.7	<i>Tree of Jesse</i> , exterior mural, south wall, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	609
7.8	<i>Akathistos Hymn</i> , south wall, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	610
7.9	<i>Ladder of St. John Climacus</i> , north wall, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	611
7.10	Grave covers for Ieremia and Simion Movilă, 1606 and 1607, The Museum at Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	612
7.11	South porch, Church of the Resurrection, Sucevița Monastery (source: author)	613
7.12	Church of the Ascension, Galata Monastery, Moldavia, 1582-1584, view from NW (source: author)	614
7.13	Elevation and plan, Church of the Ascension, Galata Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea</i> , 10.)	614
7.14	Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dragomirna Monastery, Moldavia, 1609, view from NE (source: author)	615
7.15	Elevation and plan, Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dragomirna Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea</i> , 27.)	615
7.16	Church of the Three Hierarchs, Three Hierarch Monastery, Moldavia, 1635-1639, view from SE (source: author)	616
7.17	Plan, Church of the Three Hierarchs, Three Hierarch Monastery (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea</i> , 135.)	616
7.18	Rib vault, exonarthex, Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dragomirna Monastery (source: http://manastireadragomirna.ro/index.php?page=interiorul-manastirii)	617
7.19	Tower over the naos, Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dragomirna Monastery (source: author)	617
7.20	Detail of the exterior sculptures, Three Hierarchs Church, Iași (source: author)	618
7.21	Detail of the exterior sculptures, Three Hierarchs Church, Iași (source: author)	619
7.22	Line drawings of the exterior carvings of the Church of the Three Hierarchs (source: Balș, <i>Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea</i> , 141.)	620

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Chronology of Rulers: Moldavian Princes, Wallachian Princes, East-central European Monarchs, and Ottoman Sultans	621
Appendix 2: The Akathistos Hymn	626
Appendix 3: Timeline of Important Events: 1453-1546	634
Appendix 4: Catalog of Ecclesiastical Monuments	648

ABSTRACT

In the decades after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the principality of Moldavia—lying within the borders of northeastern modern Romania and the Republic of Moldova—emerged as a Christian frontier at the crossroads of western European, Slavic-Byzantine, and Ottoman cultures. Contacts with neighboring regions resulted in the local assimilation of select elements from distinct visual traditions. This eclecticism with respect to sources is most evident in the painted and fortified Orthodox monastic churches of Moldavia built under the patronage of two rulers, Stephen III “the Great” (*r.* 1457-1504) and Peter Rareș (*r.* 1527-1538; 1541-1546), Stephen’s illegitimate son and heir. The mural cycles painted on the interior and exterior walls of some of these churches show religious scenes interspersed with historical narratives adapted to address contemporary anxieties about a perceived Ottoman threat against the region’s political independence and religious identity. This study addresses the compound visual character of the Moldavian churches, the historical circumstances under which they were built, and the cultural connections that extended between Moldavia and its neighbors that resulted in the visual and semantic eclecticism so characteristic of late medieval Moldavian art and architecture. I also examine the varied dimensions of Orthodox monastic spaces and the visual and spatial manifestations of dynastic, spiritual, and military concerns on the part of the patrons in the monastic sphere. In engaging with the architecture, image programs, and functions of the Moldavian churches in the context of religious politics and patronage, the Orthodox liturgy, the cult of saints, and the theory of images, I analyze the extent to which these churches aided in the construction of a new sacred landscape in Moldavia, while also presenting visual responses to and commentaries on a series of crises located in the past, present, and future: the events of 1453, the declared end of the world in 1492 as predicted by some Eastern Orthodox Christians, and the failed Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529. Notions of history, cultural memory, artistic integration, spatio-

temporal experiences, kinds of cross-cultural rapport and modes of translation are concerns central to this study.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Research Parameters

On the eastern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains,¹ narrow roads that wind among wooded hills and forests of evergreen firs lead to some of the most remarkable religious monuments in all of Europe. These little-known but exquisite architectural works—insufficiently and inconclusively studied by art historians—are the Orthodox monastic complexes that survive scattered throughout the former principality of Moldavia (Figs. 1.1-1.2).² The oldest of the Moldavian³ monasteries were built by Prince⁴ Stephen

Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

¹ Characterized in the contemporary chronicles as the “impenetrable mountain” with “sharp peaks.” *The Chronicle of Macarie*, fol. 260v and fol. 261r. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 85 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 99 (for a Romanian translation).

² The territory of modern Romania was divided during the late medieval and early modern periods into three principalities: Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania. The giant southern cleft of the Carpathian Mountains—a mountain range that descends from Poland and Slovakia, and then continues eastward through the southwestern regions of Ukraine before reaching the Romanian lands—served as the dividing line between these three principalities. While the territory of Transylvania became a *voivodeship* within the ‘kingdom’ or monarchy of Hungary in the early eleventh century, Wallachia and Moldavia, located to the south and east of the mountain range respectively, achieved their independence in the second half of the fourteenth century and maintained it, for the most part, well into the nineteenth century. Wallachia became an independent state in 1310 and Moldavia in 1359.

The principality of Moldavia extended in the northeastern part of modern Romania and today’s Republic of Moldova—a region that was ceded in 1812 to the Russians by the Ottoman Turks in accordance with the Treaty of Bucharest. The Republic of Moldova gained its independence in 1991; its eastern part, Transnistria, remains a highly contested area within the wider Pontic region.

In terms of language and origins, the Romanian people of Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania were closely linked to the peoples of the Latin West. In terms of their religion and geographical location, however, the Romanians to the east and south of the Carpathian Mountains, from Moldavia and Wallachia, had strong ties to the Slavic-Byzantine world and its Orthodox religion, whereas those from Transylvania were more strongly influenced by their western and central European neighbors.

³ For the remainder of the dissertation, my references to Moldavia denote the former principality of Moldavia, and not just to the northeastern part of this region that makes up present-day Romania. Contemporary sources in Church Slavonic, Latin, and Greek refer to Moldavia as *Земли Молдавскои* / the territory or land of Moldavia, *Земли Молдавляхїискои* / the territory or land of Moldovlahia, *Terrarum Moldaviae*, *Terra Moldoviensis* (a direct translation from the Slavonic terminology), *Terrae Moldaviae et Valachiae*, and *Μολδοβλαχίας*. For a more elaborate discussion of this terminology and the sources in which it appears, see Gorovei, “Titlurile lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 59-63.

III “the Great” *Voivode* (r. 1457-1504).⁵ Stephen’s reign, the longest in Moldavia’s history, saw moments of great political unrest, but, more generally, marked a period of stability in the region. It was particularly Stephen’s prolonged rule that fostered great cultural and artistic developments in Moldavia characteristic of the time—developments unprecedented up to that point in the region, in part because of Moldavia’s internal political struggles.⁶ The Moldavian chronicler Grigore Ureche (1590-1647) concisely noted that Stephen “reigned for forty-seven years, two months, and three weeks and built forty-four monasteries.”⁷ His account may seem slightly exaggerated so as to highlight Stephen’s accomplishments, but it is not far from the truth. Local chronicles, documents, and extant dedicatory inscriptions on churches indicate that Stephen established forty-seven religious sites in Moldavia, and an additional two in Transylvania; most of these date from the last two decades of his reign.⁸ Not all of Stephen’s ecclesiastical projects were monasteries, however. The commissions included chapels, parish churches, and ecclesiastical structures in royal courts (Fig. 1.3).

⁴ The epithet *господарь* (Romanian: *domn*; Slavic: *gospodin* or *gospodar*; Latin: *domnus*) can be best translated as ‘lord’ or ‘prince’ or ‘sovereign’. I choose the translation ‘prince’ throughout the dissertation. See Năstase, “Imperial Claims in the Romanian Principalities from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries. New Contributions,” 186.

⁵ The rulers of the Romanian principalities—Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania—received the title *воевода* or *voivode* (*voyvod*) denoting their principal command of their territories—“one who rules.” On this topic, see, more recently, Joudiou, “Remarques sur la signification du titre “souverain” dans les principautés roumaines,” 67-77. Contemporary sources refer to Stephen as “John Stephen voivode, prince or lord of the land of Moldavia.” / “*Іо(анна) Стефанъ воевода и господарь земли Молдавской.*” This appears, for instance, in the dedicatory inscription at the Monastery of St. Paul on Mount Athos, dating to 1501. The name John derives from the Biblical name “Ioannes” and was adopted by Wallachian and Moldavian rulers, following a Byzantine (and in particular Bulgarian) model, as an indication of their sovereignty and divine power. The Latin sources refer to Stephen as “wayvoda et dominus.” This appears, for example, in a letter that Stephen wrote toward the people of Braşov, dated 17 June 1482. The letter was published in Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare*, II, 369, doc.no.CLXV. The variant, “vayvoda dominusque” was also used in reference to Stephen, and crops up in a letter written to the people of Braşov of 4 February 1481. For the letter, see Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare*, II, 359, doc.no.CLX. King Sigismund, in a letter of 3 February 1531, also referred to Stephen as “Stephanus ille magnus.” See Hurmuzaki, ed. *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, supl. 2, I, 22. For a more elaborate discussion of Stephen’s various titles, see Gorovei, “Titlurile lui Ştefan cel Mare,” 41-78. For an English monograph on the Moldavian prince, see Papacostea, *Stephen the Great: Prince of Moldavia, 1457-1504*.

⁶ Even a cursory glance at the list of Moldavia’s princes from the establishment of the principality to the middle of the sixteenth century reveals the political struggles for power in the region. See Appendix 1 for such a list, as well as lists with rulers from some of Moldavia’s neighboring regions, including Ottoman Sultans.

⁷ Ureche, *Letopiseşul Ţării Moldovei*, 129: “Stephen reigned for forty-seven years, two months, and three weeks and built forty-four monasteries.” / “Au domnit Ştefan Vodă 47 de ani şi 2 luni şi 3 săptămâni, şi au făcut 44 de mănăstiri...”

⁸ For a list of Stephen’s ecclesiastical commissions, see Chapter Three.

Individual churches built during Stephen's rule introduced new architectural forms that were further developed and consolidated in individual churches commissioned by his illegitimate son, and his third direct successor, Prince Peter Rareș *Voivode* (r. 1527-1538; 1541-1546).⁹ According to the chronicler Macarie, Peter was crowned “after God’s revelation” as he was “one of the descendants of the eternally-remembered Stephen...who was raised to the princely seat with honor, before the general council, and anointed...”¹⁰ Like his father, Peter was a prolific patron of ecclesiastical art and architecture and ordered during his two periods of rule (especially his first) the construction, rebuilding, restoration, and decoration of seventeen churches in the region.¹¹ Through his rebuilding projects in particular, Peter’s larger program is revealed, for he seems to have derived value not just from building anew, but restoring and refashioning older edifices, especially those initially built by his father. In this regard, Peter’s projects find analogies in the politically-charged undertakings of figures of the past, among them, Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths (r. 475-526), for whom

⁹ According to legend, after the death of Stephen the Young, the last legitimate son of Stephen III, the Moldavian boyars gathered to mourn the death of their prince and decide who the next leader of Moldavia would be. At that time, Peter’s mother came to them with a charter from Stephen III that excused her from paying taxes and acknowledged Peter Rareș as his son. On the basis of this document the boyars unanimously elected Peter to the throne of the principality. Dimitrie Cantemir described this moment in his opus *Descriptio Moldaviae*, 136: “*Petrum V, Raress vel Maze vulgo cognominatum, Stephani V filium, sed ex illegitimo concubitu natum, e cuius electione perspicue patet quam religiose Moldaviae proceres olim haereditariam principum suorum successionem observaverint. Latebat nimirum omnes, quae huic Petro nascendi fortuna contigisset, aut quod puderet parentem procreati ex iniusto concubitu filii, aut quod dissensionibus post se inde orituris nollet dare occasionem, ipseque Petrus, suae nobilitatis inscius, ad tantam paupertatem erat redactus, ut vitam abiectissimo opifici genere, piscium mercatura (quae apud Moldavos mazerie vocatur, ipsique postea nomen Maze indidit) tolerare deberet. Cum autem Stephani VI fato nobilissima illa Dragossiadum stirps extincta crederetur, cunctique barones ad electionem novi principis convenissent, apparuit huius Petri mater, et diploma Stephani Magni ostendit, quo ipsam a tributo liberam pronunciaverat, eiusque filium Petrum suam esse sobolem fassus fuerat: eaque re cunctos permovit, ut, seposita alia consultatione, Petrum hunc, ceu sui Domini filium, principem crearent, et a piscatura ad thronum vocarent.*” See also Toderășcu, “Înscăunarea,” 47-57. Peter was named Rareș after his mother. See Székely, *Sfeticii lui Petru Rareș*, 174.

¹⁰ *The Chronicle of Macarie*, fol. 249r: “Тогожде лѣта и мѣсаца, по открьвенію Божию, избран бысть въ воеводство Петръ чудный, и царствіа въ коупѣ и вѣнцем оукрашен, о немже слово малым прѣдвари. И сзи единь отъ цѣлди приснопамятнаго Стефана, съкръвен іакоже нѣгде свѣтильникъ подъ сплѣдомъ, иже и на прѣстолѣ царства его общіимъ съвѣтомъ достолѣпнѣ възведенъ и елемъ благодати просвѣщенъ, рѣкожъ иже и вноука сего слова низхода прѣдвспомѣнѣжъ.” / “In the same month and year [January 1527], after God’s revelation, Peter ‘the wonderful’ [Rareș] was chosen to rule, and at the same time he was crowned, the one whom I mentioned before. He was one of the descendants of the eternally-remembered Stephen, hidden like light under a bushel, who was raised to the princely seat with honour before the general council, and consecrated with the blessed oil by the hand of the one whom I mentioned before [Metropolitan Teoctist] who also anointed his [Peter’s] nephew.” Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 81 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 95 (for a Romanian translation).

¹¹ For a list of Peter’s ecclesiastical commissions, see Chapter Three.

building new edifices was combined with rebuilding, especially in ancient Rome: “It is our intention to build afresh, but even more to preserve old buildings, because in preserving them we shall win no less praise than from building anew.”¹²

What particularly distinguished Peter’s architectural projects from those of his father were the hundreds of brightly colored murals that were painted on church exteriors, especially during the years from 1527 to 1538. A case in point is the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery, begun in 1532 and entirely painted five years afterward (Fig. 1.4). The pictorial cycles of this church, and others like it, functioned in tandem with the interior murals, and their imagery was carefully calibrated to enhance and give visual expression to the specific purpose of the parts of the building onto which they were painted. Analogous precedents are few. Although rendered in a different medium, the Moldavian painted exteriors call to mind the low relief sculpted exteriors of early tenth-century Armenian churches such as the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on Aghtamar Island in Turkey’s Lake Van (begun 921) (Figs. 1.5-1.6), or a series of similarly adorned churches on the Upper Volga River in the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal that date to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including the Cathedral of St. George from Yuryev-Polsky, built between 1230 and 1234 (Fig. 1.7). However, these Armenian and Russian programs of relief sculpture do not cover the exterior of the churches as extensively as the painted murals do on the Moldavian churches, nor are they predominantly biblical and religious in character.

In the Moldavian murals, Christological, Mariological, and hagiographical stories appear alongside full-length and hierarchical depictions of saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs, angels, and other religious figures. Interspersed with the religious images are historical scenes, including the famous attack on Constantinople in 626 by the Avars and Persians, averted only with the help of a miracle-working icon of the Virgin Mary. This powerful, multi-layered story of divine aid in the fight against non-Christian enemies was invested with a particular urgency after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. The scene was painted on the exterior of no fewer than nine of the fortified monastic churches; prominently visible at all times of the day, the images

¹² Cassiodorus, *Variae* 3.9. The letter addressed to the city of Estuni (Sestinum?). Cited in Frugoni, *A Distant City*, 34-35.

functioned as a pictorial commentary on the continuing Ottoman threat against Moldavia's independence, political stability, and religious identity. As discussed in Chapter Six, this image among others, demonstrates that political and military concerns had an important place in the religious (and in particular the monastic) sphere in sixteenth-century Moldavia.

The extant monasteries from Stephen's and Peter's reigns, took the form of fortified monastic complexes with a large central church. Judging from the extant dedicatory inscriptions, the building of the churches generally began between the months of April and September, which ensured the completion of at least the triconch naos before the start of the harsh winter months. Consecration proceeded shortly after the churches' completion. The surrounding buildings were then erected. These included the cells of the monks or nuns, the living quarters of the abbot or abbess, the princely house, the treasury, and the refectory with other auxiliary rooms and cellars below. The Moldavian monastic communities adopted a semi-eremitic life that emphasized silence, prayer, temperance, and humility. The church and the refectory—the second largest building in these compounds—served thus as the principal meeting places for the monks or nuns. Living quarters and the administrative offices were normally situated to the west of the church within the surrounding walls, with the treasury house that stored the ceremonial vestments and liturgical objects of the monastery nearby. The layout of Moldovița Monastery presents a case in point (Figs. 1.8-1.9).

In their layout, organization, and rituals, the Moldavian monasteries followed Greek-Orthodox and Slavic models.¹³ Like the Serbian monasteries built under Prince Stefan Nemanja (*r.* 1166-1196), for example, the Moldavian monasteries served as centers of cultural activity and artistic production, and as princely mausolea, while also participating in political and economic life. The monasteries, thus, met the spiritual needs of the monks and nuns, the communities of regular lay worshippers and pilgrims, as well as those of the ruler. In this regard, the Moldavian examples, although separated by two centuries from the Serbian, can likewise be said to present “a deliberate departure from

¹³ Each of the monasteries was overseen by an hegoumenos, the superior or abbot, under whose guidance the starets led the monastic community. Each of the monks had a particular responsibility within the monastery. For a study on the patterns of monastic organization in the Orthodox cultural sphere during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Cherniciuc and Dumitrescu, “Modele de organizare monahală din lumea Ortodoxă în secolele XIV-XV (Bizanț, Balcani și Rusia),” 148-179.

the Byzantine experience, where the political views of the monks and those of the state, or for that matter of the official Church, were not always on the same track,” as Slobodan Ćurčić explained with regard to the Serbian monastic movement of the twelfth century.¹⁴ From the formation of the principality in 1359¹⁵ until the end of the rule of Peter II in 1391, the Moldavian Church was a Bishopric subordinate to the Metropolitanate of Halici, in modern-day Ukraine. Sometime during the first years of Peter II’s reign, the Moldavian Church was placed under the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople; then, on 26 July 1401 it became a Metropolitanate in its own right.¹⁶ From the turn of the fifteenth century onward, the seat of the Moldavian Church was in Suceava, the capital of the principality, only to be moved to Iași, the new capital of the region, in 1564.¹⁷

The Moldavian monastic communities reveal the strongest affinities with the Byzantine monasteries on Mount Athos—the peninsula in Greece celebrated as home to the oldest still extant Eastern Orthodox community of monks.¹⁸ Twenty monasteries under the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarch in Constantinople make up the Orthodox community on the Holy Mount (Fig. 1.10).¹⁹ In the Athonite monasteries, like those in Moldavia, the church is the central feature of the architectural compound; it is surrounded on four sides with a series of ancillary buildings that together form the shape of a square or a rectangle. This rectilinear layout is based on early Byzantine-Orthodox prototypes, such as the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai built between 548 and 565 under Emperor Justinian (Fig. 1.11). Similar monastic establishments with rectilinear plans

¹⁴ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 652.

¹⁵ For a consideration of the moment when Moldavia declared its independence (1359), and the historical circumstances under which this occurred, see Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei: Probleme controversate*; idem, “Armoiries et rapports politiques: le ‘cas’ Moldave au XIVe siècle,” 117-128.

¹⁶ The Patriarchate in Constantinople intended to appoint a Greek as the Metropolitan Bishop in Moldavia, but in the end accepted a Moldavian, Iosif Mușat (1401-?), related to the Moldavian prince.

¹⁷ Unfortunately, no documents survive from when the seat of the Orthodox Church in Moldavia resided in Suceava.

¹⁸ The appellation “Holy Mount,” although unofficially used since 985, was for the first time officially mentioned in the second typikon for Mount Athos published by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos in 1045.

¹⁹ The twenty Athonite monasteries, listed chronologically from the earliest founded to the most recent, are: Great Lavra (963), Xeropotamou (971), Zographou (971), Iviron (980), Vatopedi (985), Xenophontos (1010), Stavronikita (1012), Philotheou (1015), Esphigmenou (1016), Karakalou (1018), Dochiariou (1046), Konstamonitou (1051), Koutloumousiou (1169), Hilandar (1198), St. Paul (1259), Grigoriou (1347), Pantokratoros (1363), Simonopetra (1363), Dionysiou (1370), St. Panteleimon (1394).

dating from as early as the tenth century survive on Mount Athos, the Great Lavra being chief among them (Fig. 1.12).²⁰

The square or rectangular layout, typical of the Athonite and Moldavian complexes, differs markedly from the circular or polygonal organization of the Orthodox monasteries in the Balkan region. A case in point is Studenica Monastery in Serbia, begun in 1183 or 1186 and completed in 1196 by Prince Stefan Nemanja (*r.* 1166-1196) (Fig. 1.13).²¹ Subsequently, from the end of the twelfth century onward, Serbian monasteries were typically raised over irregular polygonal plans, with the katholikon at the center of the compound, as is the case at Ravanica, built c.1375 (Fig. 1.14), and Manasija (Resava), constructed between 1406 and 1418 (Fig. 1.15). This aspect suggests that there must have existed more direct points of contact between the Moldavian monastic communities and those of the Byzantine world, and that the regions of the Balkan Peninsula and Wallachia did not necessarily serve as places of mediation of artistic and architectural forms between these two distant monastic cultures.

The churches at the heart of this project, as noted above, were built in the wake of a particularly critical moment in the history of Christian Europe: the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople on 29 May 1453.²² Constantinople had been the capital of Eastern Orthodoxy for well over a thousand years. With the Ottoman conquest, this long era came to an end, and a new era, viewed with suspicion and even terror by Christians, was ushered in. In the decades that preceded and followed the events of 1453, the Ottoman armies under Sultan Mehmed II turned their attention toward other points of resistance, particularly in the Balkan Peninsula.²³ Moravian Serbia fell in 1459 after the capture of its last capital, Smederevo. The following year the Despotate of the Morea

²⁰ Prior to attaining its current large size, the Great Lavra was smaller and its original enclosure may have been rectilinear, with four sides and fortified projections on at least two of its corners. Theocharides, "Recent Research into Athonite Monastic Architecture," 211, for a diagram of the general plan of the Great Lavra, see the same publication, 207.

²¹ On the relationships between the Serbian and Byzantine monastic traditions, see Popović, *Krst u krugu: arhitektura manastira u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* [*Cross in Circle: Architecture of Monasteries in Medieval Serbia*], 60-65, 475-486 (for an English summary). Cited in Čurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 487, ns. 282 and 283.

²² Given the temporal parameters of this project, the term *Ottomans* or *Ottoman Turks* will be used throughout the dissertation instead of just *Turks* since the modern Turkish nation did not emerge until the early twentieth century. Contemporary sources refer to the Ottomans as *Turcas* in Latin; Τουρκοισι in Church Slavonic.

²³ For a comprehensive history of the Balkans prior to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, see Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 1987.

(Peloponnesus) was captured, and completely wiped off the map in 1463. The same year, Bosnia, despite its protective ring of over 70 active fortresses, was conquered within just eight days. By 1462, the Ottoman armies had crossed the Danube River and were invading the principality of Wallachia to the south of the Carpathian Mountains. Albania offered the strongest resistance against the Ottomans, especially under the leadership of George Castriot, better known as Skanderbeg (*r.* 1443-1468). Following a number of failed campaigns in 1457, 1458, and 1462, his lands finally came under Ottoman control in 1466. Then, in 1482, after the fall of Novi, Herzegovina was conquered. The Ottoman Empire was, thus, swiftly making its way through the regions of the Balkans and of southeastern Europe and successfully taking them, reaching the gates of Belgrade by 1521. Following the battle of Móhacs on 29 August 1526, Hungary succumbed, and, three years later, in 1529, the Ottoman forces arrived before the walls of Vienna. Their subsequent siege of the Habsburg capital turned out to be unsuccessful, however, and on October 15 of that year they blew the retreat. The failure of this campaign, which had aimed for the very heart of Europe, gave new hope to traumatized Christian rulers and their subjects, the Moldavians included.

After their conquest of Bulgaria, the Ottoman armies reached the banks of the Danube River in 1393. The following year they made their first incursions into Wallachia and Transylvania.²⁴ But it was not until 1420 that the Ottomans decided to attack Moldavia at its eastern strategic outpost: the fortress at Cetatea Albă. The Ottomans there met strong opposition from Prince Alexander the Good and his armies, and were forced eventually to retreat from their campaign. For the rest of the fifteenth century and throughout the sixteenth century, the Ottomans were a constant presence in the region, as we will see in Chapters Two and Six. But the Ottoman Empire did not pose the only threat to Moldavia in the aftermath of the events of 1453. The Crimean and Volga Tatars of the Golden Horde, too, had their eyes on the principality, and repeatedly attacked from a series of bases in what is today southern Ukraine.²⁵ They were decisively

²⁴ Wallachia's Prince, Mircea the Old, defeated the Ottomans in 1397. His domain, however, came under Ottoman suzerainty at a later point during his rule. Sultan Bayezid I's sovereignty was accepted, arguably, following the crusade of Nicopolis in 1396. Maxim, *Țările Române și Înalta Poartă*, 208-217. Arguments in favor of the year 1396 are discussed beginning on 216.

²⁵ According to *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* and *The Chronicle of Macarie*, the Crimean Tatars threatened Moldavia in the first half of the fifteenth century carrying out an attack on 28 November

beaten by Stephen III in the Battle Lipnic near the Nistru River, in modern-day Republic of Moldova (20 August 1470); another Tartar advance aiming straight for Moldavia's capital Suceava,²⁶ was repelled on 12 June 1476, eventually causing the Crimean Tatars to withdraw from the principality's borders.²⁷

In addition to the Ottomans and the Golden Horde, Christian Poland and Hungary posed a threat, and both repeatedly succeeded in bringing the principality under their respective suzerainty. At times, Moldavia came under the control of the Polish crown,²⁸ while at others it became a vassal state of Hungary.²⁹ By and large, Stephen sought to ally

1439 and another the following year on 12 December 1440. In 1439 the Tatar armies made it up to Botoșani, and the following year all the way to Vaslui and Bârlad, burning the country along the way. They attacked again on 20 August 1470, 12 June 1476, and 6 July 1484, often joining forces with Ottoman contingents advancing from the south. The Tatars of the Golden Horde posed a threat to the principality in 1502 and in 1514. The Crimean Tatars also contributed to the Ottoman campaign in Moldavia in the summer of 1538 that resulted in Peter's exile to Transylvania.

²⁶ The Crimean Tatars were supposed to join in this battle with the Ottoman forces coming from the south. A letter sent from the Porte to the Crimean leader reads: "The great ruler [Mehmed II] decided to wage a sacred war (*gaza*) against the cursed Kara-Bogdan [Stephen III]. For this reason, it is also made known to you that you should join the Sultan's armies with all of your own, to defend the Islamic faith, and proceed from your side [against Moldavia]." The leader of the Crimean armies, Eminek Mîrza, stated in a letter from October 1476 addressed to Sultan Mehmed II, referencing the message he had received from the Sultan. The letter continues to recount the devastating attacks suffered by the Crimeans at the hand of the Tatars while away in the expedition against Moldavia. A Romanian translation of this letter is published in Mehmed, *Documente Turcești privind istoria României, Vol. I, 1455-1774*, 4.

²⁷ Mehmed, *Documente Turcești privind istoria României, Vol. I, 1455-1774*, 4.

²⁸ On 26 September 1387, Moldavia joined an alliance with the Polish-Lithuanian state—an act that ignited a rivalry between Hungary and Poland over this eastern Carpathian territory, and one that was to mark the predominant orientation of Moldavia's foreign policy for the following decades. This Moldavian-Polish treaty was renewed at Roman on 25 May 1411, and again at Overchelăuți sometime before 29 April 1459, following Stephen's successful campaigns and victories in southern Poland between 1458 and 1459. The 1459 accord also placed Moldavia within the Polish-Ottoman alliance in opposition to Hungary and its vassal state, Wallachia. Three years later, on 2 March 1462, and again on 28 July 1468, Stephen signed additional treaties with Poland, gaining greater protection from its northern neighbor. As a vassal of the Polish crown, Moldavia was obliged to furnish 4,000 men in the fifteenth century and 7,000 men in the sixteenth century in various campaigns. See Pippidi, "Moldavie et Pologne," 65-68.

²⁹ Moldavia's relations with Poland triggered the Hungarian campaigns in the region. The first such attack was carried out 2-14 February 1395, following Moldavia's acceptance of Polish suzerainty as established on 6 January earlier that year. A few decades later the relations between Moldavia and Hungary improved slightly. In fact, when Stephen was forced to flee to Transylvania in 1451 following his father's assassination by Peter Aron at Reușeni he was first granted refuge at the court of John Hunyadi, the regent of Hungary, and then by Vlad Dracula at his court in Wallachia. Yet, shortly after the Moldavian-Polish treaty of 1459, Moldavia's relations to its western neighbor once again turned sour. Stephen waged war in Transylvania on 5 July 1461, plundering the Szeklers' country because voivode Sebastian de Rogozny had taken Petru Aron (who left Poland in 1460) to his court. On 22 June 1462, Stephen sought to capture the fortress at Chilia, defended by a Hungarian garrison at the time, but failed. He did succeed in this endeavor three years later when he captured the fortress in the siege of 23-25 January 1465. Following this defeat, and Stephen's support of a revolt against Matthias Corvinus in 1467, the Hungarians led by their king set out on a great campaign against Moldavia later that year. 40,000 men left from Brașov on 11 November 1467 and eight days later captured Troțuș Fortress. The Hungarian armies advanced along the Siret Valley

Moldavia closer with Hungary, especially during the second half of his reign, which resulted in the steady deterioration of the principality's relations with Poland in the north. Conflicts also erupted at this time between Moldavia and its southern neighbor, Hungary's vassal state, Wallachia. As will be discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Six, during the reigns of Stephen III and Peter Rareș, Moldavia repeatedly reassessed its diplomatic position and foreign policy relative to those of its neighbors in the hope of establishing greater political, economic, and religious independence, as well as enhancing security.

Amidst the political and military turmoil of the Balkans then under Ottoman suzerainty, the Romanian principality of Moldavia emerged as a bastion of Eastern Orthodoxy. During the rule of Stephen III in particular, the principality managed to remain semi-autonomous from the Ottoman Porte and to develop a policy of equilibrium with its other, often stronger, neighbors. Moreover, the region under Stephen's leadership, as it had forged strong religious and political ties with the Byzantine Empire throughout the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century, actively sought to preserve, perpetuate, and even transform in a new context Byzantium's heritage in the decades following the Ottoman conquest.

Stephen's reign, furthermore, coincided with, and extended through, another significant historical moment in the context of which his artistic patronage should be considered. This moment is the year 1492—the year 7000 in the Byzantine Calendar—in which, according to the beliefs and preoccupations of Eastern Orthodox Christians, the world was to come to an end. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 in particular was

and took hold of Bacău and Roman (Nov 29-Dec 7) and Târgu-Neamț and Baia (Dec 14). The night of December 14, in the town of Baia, Stephen led to victory a Moldavian army of about 12,000 men against the Hungarians. This setback marked the last great attempt of Hungary to reestablish through combat control of Moldavia. Although Stephen sought support from Hungary, he did not break his alliances with Poland. Stephen pledged on 12 July 1475 to help the king of Hungary with troops against all enemies, “but the king of Poland.” Matthias Corvinus, in turn, in a document issued in Buda the following month, dated August 15, agreed to support Stephen in his fight against the Ottomans and to offer him shelter west of the Carpathian Mountains if needed. A peace treaty of 1483 between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, resigned again in 1488, stipulated that Moldavia and Wallachia fell within Hungary's sphere of influence. The fortresses at Chilia and Cetatea Albă, however, seemed to have been purposefully excluded from the agreement, thus giving the Ottomans the liberty to siege these important strongholds with access to the Black Sea. See Simon, *Ștefan cel Mare și Matia Corvin*; idem, “Valahii la Baia. Regatul Ungariei, Domnia Moldovei și Imperiul Otoman în 1467,” 127-150, 145-146 (for the transcription of a Venetian document from 18 February 1468 on the Battle of Baia in 1467 and the Hungarian-Ottoman relations at the time), 150 (abstract in German); Neagoe, *Campania din 1467 și lupta de la Baia*.

regarded by many as one of the final signs of the impending Apocalypse, as the conquest of the city occurred only 39 years prior to this fearfully anticipated moment. Extant paschal tables from the second half of the fifteenth century, intended to calculate the day of the celebration of Easter, end at the year 7000 (1492).³⁰ One such Paschal Table from Transylvania, near to Moldavia, is found at the end of the *Missal* from Feleac and was composed for the years 1482-1492 (fol. 107r) (Fig. 1.16).³¹ If no extant Paschal Tables have been found in Moldavia that end with the year 7000 (1492), there does exist a Paschal Table in a *Breviary* in the Moldavian monastery at Putna (MS. 43) copied by monk Paladie at the end of the fifteenth century, which covers the years 7001-7048 (1493-1576).³² This suggests that there may also have been local Paschal Tables that ended with the year 7000 (1492). The situation is similar in Wallachia, where the only surviving Paschal Table of this type begins in the year 7001 (1493).³³ Other sources from nearby regions, such as the first Slavonic Bible completed in 1499 at the behest of Archbishop Gennadius Gonofov of Novgorod (d. 1505; in office 1484-1504), also known as the *Gennadius Bible*, further attest to the significance and gravity of this date for Orthodox Christians.³⁴ As the end of the world was approaching, not many changes or developments seem to have occurred in the cultural and artistic spheres of the Slavic-Orthodox regions of the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Russia.³⁵ The situation, however, proved different in Moldavia, as will be shown.

³⁰ For example, the Paschal Table from the Church of St. Demetrios from Thessaloniki, written for the period 1473-1492, and discussed in Congourdeau, "Byzance et la fin du monde," 72.

³¹ The manuscript is housed at the Biblioteca Centrală Universitară "Lucian Blaga," Cluj-Napoca, MS. 4745. Lința, *Catalogul manuscriselor slavo-române din București*, 118-119. The Paschal Table is reproduced in Toth, *Primele manuscrise matematice românești din Transilvania*, fig. 9a-9b.

³² The manuscript is MS. 53 from Putna Monastery. Paradais, *Comori ale spiritualității Românești la Putna*, 419, no.69. This manuscript was discussed by Székely, "Ștefan cel Mare și sfârșitul lumii," 257; Mareș, "Sfârșitul lumii (anii 7000 și 8000)," 195-196.

³³ The Romanian Academy Library, MS.sl.277. Only the first folio of the Paschal Table survives, covering the years 7001-7003 (1493-1495). This example was discussed Mareș, "Sfârșitul lumii (anii 7000 și 8000)," 196.

³⁴ See, for example, the dedicatory inscription in the Gennadius Bible, in which the Archbishop talks about the end of the world in the year 1492. On the work of Archbishop Gennadius and the Gennadius Bible, see especially Gerd Freidhof's studies, and in particular *Vergleichende sprachliche Studien zur Gennadius-Bibel (1499) und Ostroger Bibel (1580/81)*; idem, *Auszüge aus der Gennadius-Bibel (1499)*; idem, "Mitteilung zur Edition aus der Gennadius-Bibel," 79-82.

³⁵ In the aftermath of the anticipated year 7000 (1492), Moscow emerged as the only free Orthodox capital. In fact, from 1448 on, the Russian Orthodox Church began functioning independently from the Patriarchate in Constantinople, taking on a central role in the protection of the Orthodox faith after the

During the reign of Peter Rareș, spanning the first decades of the sixteenth century, Moldavia's relations with the Ottomans rapidly declined. While the Wallachian princes sought to benefit from cooperating with the Ottomans,³⁶ who were steadily increasing their stronghold on the Christian polities of southeastern Europe, Peter went the opposite way, and resisted them where- and whenever he could. Peter's opposition, like that of many of his fellow Christian leaders, only grew when the Ottomans and their seemingly invincible war machine were finally routed before the walls of Vienna in 1529. It is in the context of these epochal events that Peter's artistic and architectural patronage is best understood, as Chapter Six will show.

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Moldavia found itself at the crossroads of western European and Slavic-Byzantine cultures, and fostered political, military, economic, and cultural ties with its closer and more distant neighbors. The principality was indeed a frontier zone with numerous vital contacts that intensified in the second half of the fifteenth century as the region assumed a more significant role in the fight against the Ottomans. Exchange with other regions from Europe, the Balkans, and beyond, thus facilitated the local assimilation of select elements from various cultural traditions. This is most evident in the spheres of art and architecture. The monastic churches, in particular, developed distinctive architectural and visual vocabularies that began to exhibit an eclecticism with respect to sources unprecedented in extent and complexity up to that moment, or since, in Christian religious architecture. Architectural monuments in which diverse building traditions co-exist were certainly found in other regions as well, as was the case in southern Poland (e.g. Kraków under the Jagiellonian rule), in Norman Sicily, in Venetian Crete, in the Frankish Levant, and parts of the Balkans such as Serbia under the ruler of the Nemanja dynasty (1166-1371) and later the Branković dynasty (before 1323-1502), for example. However, the extent to which select elements, spatial solutions, and modes of construction from the Latin, Greek, and Slavic cultural spheres were brought together, changed, and supplemented in the Moldavian monastic churches of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, is unparalleled.

events of 1453. On 23 January 1589 the Patriarchate in Constantinople recognized the independence of the Russian Orthodox Church and Moscow became a Patriarchate.

³⁶ Wallachia's princes at this time often gained control of the throne as a result of the Sultan's interventions.

This project, thus, centers on the impressive ecclesiastical patronage of Stephen III and Peter Rareș, the two illustrious princes who reshaped Moldavian art and culture, as well as the region's political, economic, and military positions, during their respective reigns. The chapters that follow examine from architectural, iconographic, social, political, and historical standpoints the numerous monastic churches built throughout Moldavia under the aegis of these two princes who, through their artistic patronage, self-consciously reflected upon the past glory of Byzantium and of their sometimes precarious contemporary situation.

The primary objective of my study is to examine and situate the Moldavian corpus of ecclesiastical monuments in its historical context, and, in so doing, to also engage with the following overarching questions: How did the memory of lost Byzantium reverberate in the Moldavian consciousness and how was it expressed in the architectural and decorative programs adorning the monastic churches of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries? To what extent can these buildings be understood as a response to the crisis of 1453 and to the rise and increasingly threatening presence of the Ottoman Empire in the region, as well as to the events of 1492 and 1529? And, finally, what role did these churches play in reflecting and also shaping both a specifically princely identity, and a Moldavian collective identity, in the crucible of the post-1453 world?

The chronological parameters of this project, largely spanning the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries—with an epilogue at the end that extends into the second half of the sixteenth century and the early decades of the seventeenth century—may at first surprise scholars of medieval and early modern art. For art historians of the Eastern Orthodox world, this is a period characterized as “Post-Byzantine”—a term denoting Slavic and Greek Orthodox art produced in the period after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.³⁷ However, this is also a moment that coincides chronologically with the period in western art history known as the Renaissance—defined by the so-called “father of art history” Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) as a revival of the art of

³⁷ For a recent attempt to explain the various facets of Post-Byzantine art—art that “reflects innovation and continuity” and that should “be better understood within a broader material culture”—see Spratt, “Toward a Definition of “Post-Byzantine” Art: The Angleton Collection at the Princeton University Art Museum,” 2-19.

classical antiquity that departed from the “crude *maniera greca*” of medieval art.³⁸ To be sure, art historians have questioned Vasari’s strict dualism in efforts to provide more nuanced accounts of the period.³⁹ In a similar vein, so-called post-Byzantine art and western medieval and Renaissance art have largely been studied as separate phenomena, and the possibility of reciprocal influenced has scarcely been considered. Recently, however, inroads have been made. A number of major exhibitions in the last two decades, for example, have reevaluated the evidence, demonstrating that the artistic production of certain regions at particular historical moments, such as Cretan art from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, did not always emulate strictly Byzantine traditions but mediated between many.⁴⁰

The period under scrutiny in this study, from the fifteenth through the middle of the sixteenth centuries, scholars (and in particular Romanian scholars) regard as “medieval” because it marks a significant moment in Moldavia’s history when local rulers reinvented their own political and dynastic identities alongside those of their domain, placing their endeavors in larger, more dynamic contexts. This period, too, from political and cultural standpoints, marks the rule of princes from local families (*domnii pământene*), which was a form of governance replaced by the so-called Phanariote Rule instituted by the Ottoman Porte in the early eighteenth century.⁴¹ Dimitrie Cantemir (r. 1710-1711) was the last Moldavian autochthonous prince before the Phanariote period commenced.

³⁸ See Vasari, *Lives of the Most Excellence Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*.

³⁹ For example see, most recently, Casper, *Art and the Religious Image in El Greco’s Italy*, esp. 92-95 (“Art Theory After Vasari”); Kim, *The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance*, esp. 48-53, 57-63, 180. See also Hetherington, “Vecchi, e non antichi: Differing Responses to Byzantine Culture in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany,” 203-211.

⁴⁰ See, for example, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261*; *Byzantium, 330-1453*; *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*; *Chypre: entre Byzance et l’Occident, IVe-XVIIe siècle*; *Heaven and Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*.

⁴¹ The Phanariote Rule lasted in Moldavia from 1711 to 1821, and in Wallachia from 1714 until 1821. In this new phase, the two Romanian principalities were no longer ruled by local princes but by princes appointed by the Ottoman Porte who were originally wealthy Greek merchants and bankers from important families from the Greek quarter of Constantinople known as Phanar, hence the name Phanariote. This rule lasted for a little over a century until 1821 when the Romanians returned to the throne. See Mitrany, *Rumania: Her History and Politics*, 18-20; Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, 360-384 (“The Phanariots”).

Moldavia at the Crossroads

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Moldavia emerged as a significant Christian frontier with far reaching contacts in regions of western Europe and those of the Slavic-Byzantine cultural spheres. Although Moldavia's political, religious, artistic, and cultural ties with the Byzantine Empire predate the foundation of the principality in 1359, these connections were strengthened after this point as the region aligned itself, particularly through the Church, with the Orthodox world of southeastern Europe and the Balkan Peninsula.⁴² For example, on 26 July 1401 the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Matthew I (1397-1410) appointed Bishop Iosif I of Cetatea Albă as the Metropolitan of Moldavia—the leading bishop of the province—a move that confirmed the ties between the Moldavian Church and the Byzantine Patriarchate. Shortly afterward, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (*r.* 1391-1425) and his wife Irina gave the Moldavian Prince Alexander the Good and his wife Ana a miracle-working icon of the Virgin and Christ Child (of the Hodegetria type), celebrated as the *Icon of St. Anne* (Fig. 1.17).⁴³ This icon has been standing before the large iconostasis of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin at Bistrița Monastery ever since it was presented by Princess Ana to this famous monastic establishment sometime before her death on 2 November 1418 (likely in 1402).

Moldavia's direct and indirect ties with the Byzantine Empire during the fifteenth century were not only religious and diplomatic in character, but economic, political, and legal as well. For one thing, the *Syntagma*⁴⁴ of Matthew Blastares⁴⁵—a text composed in

⁴² Moldavia had strong ties with the Byzantine world even before the sixteenth century, and even before the region became a principality in 1359. See the work of Corina Nicolescu, especially *Moștenirea artei bizantine în România*. Nicolescu's study, in particular, focuses on the archaeological findings (small objects, decorative fragments, etc.) from the 1950s onward and on the evidence provided by surviving monuments and seeks to demonstrate that the presence and influence of the Byzantine world on the regions north of the Danube River in modern Romania (so Wallachia and Moldavia) date back to as early as the fifth century, with artistic forms mediated through regions of the Balkan peninsula. On this topic, see also Nicolescu et al., *Cultura bizantină în România*.

⁴³ The Byzantine Emperor and his wife gifted the icon to Alexander the Good and his wife following the visit of his son, Andronicus Palaeologus, Lord of Thessalonica, through Moldavia. The icon is believed to have been painted in Jerusalem between 1150 and 1250.

⁴⁴ The full title of the legal code reads: "An alphabetical collection of all subjects that are contained in the sacred and divine canons, prepared and at the same time organized by Matthew, the least amongst hieromonks." Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 40. The *Syntagma* contains "beside the basic canon law corpus of the Orthodox Church (that is, canons of the ancient councils and fathers of the church)...the later decrees of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchs and local councils....those civil laws rulings

1335, well-known in the field of Byzantine and Slavic studies, and addressed as recently as 2012 in a book-length monograph by Victor Alexandrov⁴⁶—circulated in Wallachia and Moldavia as well and served as the basis of canon law and especially ecclesiastical and civil legislation.⁴⁷ As Alexandrov observes, the surviving Romanian manuscripts of Blastares' code "demonstrate that from at least the middle of the fifteenth and until the beginning of the seventeenth century, Blastares' collection was the basic canon law code in Moldavia and Wallachia."⁴⁸ From Moldavia, three dated *Syntagma* survive from Stephen's reign, two from the most important scriptoria: one was copied at Neamț Monastery in 1474 (MS. 131) by monk Gervasie,⁴⁹ and the other at Putna Monastery in 1475 by hieromonk Iacov (Jacob) (MS. 742);⁵⁰ and the third was written at the Church of St. Nicholas in Iași and completed in 1495 (MS. 254).⁵¹ Two other manuscripts of Blastares' code, dated by their watermarks to the second half of the fifteenth century, were likely produced in Moldavia: one is currently in the collection of Sucevița Monastery (MS. 446) and the other at the University Babeș-Bolyai in Cluj-Napoca (MS. 4104).⁵² Although four sixteenth-century codices of the *Syntagma* survive from Moldavia and Wallachia, only one can be securely dated to the reign of Peter Rareș: the manuscript now in the Russian State Library in Moscow (MS. 65), produced sometime between 1516 and 1536 (scriptorium unknown).⁵³ From the early seventeenth century, there are four Slavic copies of this popular text, three of which were executed under the

accepted by the church and used in ecclesiastical administration and disciplinary practice...some most essential stipulations of a purely civil nature." Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 40-41.

⁴⁵ Matthew Blastares was a hieromonk or priest from Thessaloniki who composed his legal compendium c.1335. See Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 32-37.

⁴⁶ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*.

⁴⁷ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, esp. 99-115 (Chapter Five, for a consideration of the Moldavian and Wallachian manuscripts of Blastares' code).

⁴⁸ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 99.

⁴⁹ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 100-101, 200 (for the corresponding catalog entry no. 26).

⁵⁰ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 100-101, 201 (for the corresponding catalog entry no. 27).

⁵¹ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 101-102, 202 (for the corresponding catalog entry no. 28).

⁵² Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 102, 202-203 (for the corresponding catalog entries no. 29 and no. 30).

⁵³ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 104-105, 204 (for the corresponding catalog entry no. 32).

direction of Metropolitans from Suceava.⁵⁴ Blastares' Byzantine legal code, therefore, was widely used in the north Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. In Moldavia, given the surviving evidence, the text seems to have been introduced under Stephen's direction, at a particular moment when the prince was beginning to redefine his aspirations and ideologies, as Chapter Two explains.

As the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga argued in his celebrated 1935 publication *Byzance après Byzance*, the fall of Constantinople in 1453 did not put an end to the impact of the Byzantine Empire.⁵⁵ Rather, Byzantium's cultural forms and legacy continued to shape in significant ways the cultural, religious, and political life of Eastern European regions and centers in the Balkans. This was the case for Moldavia as well, as scholars have demonstrated in subsequent studies.⁵⁶ Moldavia, which had long shared traditions with Byzantium, now perpetuated and ideologically transformed a Byzantine ideal. The inheritance of the Byzantine legacy in the Moldavian lands, however, as Iorga argued, was limited to the cultural and ecclesiastical spheres and did not, until the middle of the sixteenth century at least, alter the Moldavian conception of sovereignty. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, this date can be pushed forward because it was during Stephen's reign, and not in the century that followed, that the voivodal title was replaced with the imperial one.

This was a period of great economic and political developments throughout Europe. Commerce began to extend beyond the Mediterranean and the Baltic shores, and great monarchies were taking root: Charles V and Philip II in the Holy Roman Empire and Spain; Francis I and Henry IV in France; Henry VIII and Elizabeth in England; Sultan Suleiman I "the Magnificent" in the Ottoman Empire; and Ivan IV "the Terrible" in Russia. In this world, Moldavia was far from peripheral. Major trade routes crossed the country to connect northern Baltic ports and commercial centers in Eastern Europe with the Black Sea that facilitated contacts between Moldavia and far-reaching regions. As the historian Franz Babinger explains it:

⁵⁴ Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*, 109-111, 207-208 (for the corresponding catalog entries no. 35, no. 36, and no. 37)

⁵⁵ Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance*.

⁵⁶ See, for example, the collection of essays edited by Lowell Clucas, *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe*, esp. 185-224. See also the work of Andrei Pippidi, and in particular *Byzantins, Ottomans, Roumains*, esp. 9-79.

For many years the route by way of the Mediterranean, Syria, and Egypt had ceased to be the sole link between west and east; the development of the Black Sea route had made Kaffa a leading commercial center. The products of western and central Europe did not always reach the Black Sea via the Dardanelles; they also passed through Vienna and Buda, along the Danube and through the Carpathian passes, or over the much traveled route through Poland and Moldavia.⁵⁷

The Black Sea facilitated further points of contact for Moldavia. It served as an easy-to-cross bridge and played an important role in maritime connections.⁵⁸ With the opening of the ports at Chilia and Cetatea Albă in the first decades of the fifteenth century, during the reign of Alexander the Good, Moldavia came into contact via the Black Sea with flourishing societies such as Theodosiya (a Greek colony along the northern coast of the Black Sea in modern-day Ukraine), and Trebizond (a successor state of the Byzantine Empire along the southern coast of the Black Sea that fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1461), as well as distant regions in the east such as Georgia and Armenia. Foreign motifs found in paintings, embroideries, ceramic works, and manuscripts from the fifteenth century attest to the wide-ranging contacts that extended between Moldavia and these faraway lands.⁵⁹

Three important regions served as initial points of direct contact for Moldavia with Byzantium: Dobrogea, Mangup, and Mount Athos (Fig. 1.18). The region of Dobrogea on the Black Sea (now shared by Romania and Bulgaria) was completely part of the Byzantine Empire until the beginning of the fourteenth century. Around 1337-1338, it fell under the Tatar domination of the Kipčak.⁶⁰ Although Byzantine control of Dobrogea was ceased before the foundation of the principality of Moldavia, Byzantine traditions established in the region did not come to an end with the Tatar invasion.

⁵⁷ Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Times*, 346.

⁵⁸ Ștefănescu, *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie*, 302.

⁵⁹ Nicolescu, "Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare," 290.

⁶⁰ Laurent, "La domination byzantine aux bouches du Danube sous Michel VIII Paléologue," 184-198; idem, "Le métropolitain de Vicina Macaire et la prise de la ville par les Tartares," 225-232; Nicolescu, "Aspecte ale relațiilor culturale cu Bizanțul la Dunărea de Jos în secolele X-XIV," 7-52.

Moldavia, therefore, was able to have direct contacts with Byzantine artistic forms and traditions via Dobrogea even as late as the second half of the fourteenth century.⁶¹

Further exposure to Byzantine artistic and cultural traditions came through the principality of Theodoro—a small region in south-west Crimea established in the early fourteenth century and closely allied with the empire of Trebizond, which was conquered by the Ottomans in 1475. Ties between Moldavia and the region of Theodoro were strengthened following the marriage of Stephen III to his second wife, Princess Maria Asanina Palaiologina, or Maria of Mangup (Theodoro), on 14 September 1472—the Feast Day of the Raising of the True Cross. This union, which lasted for five years, until Maria’s death on 19 December 1477, came at a moment of crucial self-fashioning for Stephen, when he was redefining his role and aspirations as Moldavia’s leader. The arguments put forth in Chapter Two revolve around the cultural, artistic, and ideological implications of this important marriage.

Regular connection with selected monasteries of Mount Athos worked to promote significant forms of Byzantine spirituality in Moldavia, especially after the fall of Constantinople.⁶² As support from the Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and even Georgian rulers diminished, or even ended altogether, Moldavia’s princes began to take an ever more active interest in Mount Athos, gifting precious objects to and financially supporting the restoration of many monasteries on the Holy Mount.⁶³ Stephen in

⁶¹ Elian argues that this was not the case and that once the Tatar invasion of Dobrogea took place, all ties of this region to Byzantium were seized and all traditions were lost. I find this argument unconvincing because the culture of a region and its particular history and ties do not simply cease to exist following an invasion; remnants of the past are always present. Elian, “Moldova și Bizanțul în secolul al XV-lea,” 156-159.

I have concluded that a more careful study of ecclesiastical monuments from Moldavia in dialogue with architectural developments that took place in monastic churches from Dobrogea needs to be undertaken, with a particular focus on the following monasteries in the region of Dobrogea: the Aladja Monastery and the Monastery of St. Constantine near Varna, on the coast of the Black Sea; the Bassarbovski Monastery and the Ivanovski Monastery near Rousse; the Pomoriyski Monastery and the Monastery of St. Anastasia near Bourgas; and the Monastery in Patleina.

⁶² Although Mount Athos came under Ottoman dominance around 1460, the community was allowed a considerable degree of freedom in political, religious, and economic matters. The community was self-governing with a small parliament in the capital city of Karyes where delegates from each of the twenty monasteries gathered. For the early history of Mount Athos, see Papachryssanthou, *Ho Athōnikos monachismos: arches kai organōsē; Treasures of Mount Athos*, introduction.

⁶³ The Romanian patronage of Mount Athos began sometime in the middle of the fourteenth century during the reign of the Wallachian prince Nicholas Alexander (*r. c.* 1344-1352 with Basarab I; 1352-1364 alone) who made an initial donation to Kutlumus Monastery. His financial support of this monastery contributed to restorations of the complex and the building of the larger tower. Căndea, “L’Athos et les

particular, in an effort to ensure the autonomous continuity of the monastic communities on Mount Athos, even paid their debt to the Porte. As a result of these direct contacts among traveling monks, artists, and architects, and the exchange of objects, ideas, and artistic forms were exchanged between these far-flung Orthodox centers.⁶⁴

Through its ties with Mount Athos, Moldavia also came into contact with Slavic traditions during the second half of the fifteenth century. Unlike Wallachia to the south, a principality interested in Mount Athos primarily because of its Greek cultural heritage and also in more direct contact with Serbian Athonite monasteries such as Hilandar,⁶⁵ Moldavia sponsored monasteries populated by Serbs and Bulgarians alike, including Hilandar, Zographou, Simonopetra, and Grigoriou, among others (an exception to this would be Vatopedi Monastery, which had less of a Serbian presence than the rest).

Links with Bulgaria were also fostered within the Church. During Stephen's reign the appointed Metropolitan was Teoctist I (Metropolitan of Moldavia from 1453-1478), a Slav in origin.⁶⁶ Trained initially as a monk in the Bulgarian-Byzantine realm, possibly

Roumains,” 249. Unlike the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Russians who had financially contributed to the building of specific monasteries on the Holy Mount, Moldavia and Wallachia had no specific monastery. Rather, they provided financial support and gifted precious objects to many different Athonite monasteries.

⁶⁴ The most significant studies on the Romanian presence on Mount Athos are: Iorga, “Le Mont Athos et les Pays roumains,” 149-213; idem, *Portretele domnilor noștri de la Muntele Athos*; idem, “Daniile românești la Muntele Athos,” 19-21; Nandriș, *Documente Slavo-Române din Mănăstirile Muntelui Athos*; Bodogae, “Mănăstirea Cutlumuș, ctitorie românească,” 34-43 and 56-64; idem and Șindrilaru, *Ajutoarele românești la mănăstirile din Sfântul Munte Athos*; idem, “Tradiția Sfântului Munte în viața popoarelor ortodoxe,” 263-309; Bogdan, “Despre daniile românești la Athos,” 263-309; Crețeanu, “Traditions de famille dans les donations roumaines au Mont Athos,” 135-151; Căndea and Simionescu, *Witnesses to the Romanian Presence in Mount Athos*; Năstase, “Les documents roumains des archives du covent athonite Simonopetra. Présentation préliminaire,” 373-383; idem and Marinescu, “Les actes roumains de Simonopetra (Mont Athos). Catalogue sommaire,” 275-419; Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*; Căndea, *Mărturii românești peste hotare*; idem, “L’Athos et les Roumains,” 249-256; Zahariuc, *De la Iași la Muntele Athos*; Păun, “Quelques notes sur les débuts des rapports entre la Valachie et le monastère de Hilandar au Mont Athos,” 151-164; idem, “La Valachie et le monastère de Chilandar au Mont Athos: nouveaux témoignages (XVe-XVIe siècles),” 137-184; idem, “La Moldavie de Stefan le Grand (1457-1504) et le monastère de Hilandar au Mont Athos: témoignages et hypothèse,” 167-190; Bojović et al., *Chilandar et les pays roumains (XVe-XVIIe siècle)*; Speake and Ware, eds., *Mount Athos: Microcosm of the Christian East*.

⁶⁵ See, for example, and most recently, Păun, “Quelques notes sur les débuts des rapports entre la Valachie et le monastère de Hilandar au Mont Athos,” 151-164; idem, “La Valachie et le monastère de Chilandar au Mont Athos: nouveaux témoignages (XVe-XVIe siècles),” 137-184; Bojović et al., *Chilandar et les pays roumains (XVe-XVIIe siècle)*.

⁶⁶ Moldavia's Metropolitans during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were: Iosif Mușat (1401-?), Damian (1436-1447), Ioachim (1447-1452), Teoctist I (1453-1477), George I from Neamț (1477-1508), Teoctist II (1509-1528), Calistrat (1528-1530), Teofan I (1530-1546), Grigore Roșca (1546-1551), George II from Bistrița (1551-1552), Grigorie II from Neamț (1552-1564), Teofan II (1564-1572), Anastasie (1572-1578), Teofan II (1578-1579), Teofan II (1582-1588), George III Movilă (1588-1591), Nicanor

argues, occurred primarily through intermediary means, such as other regions, like Serbia and Bulgaria, that had strong Byzantine connections. The surviving evidence, however, reveals that this was not the case exclusively. Elian, in his analysis, does not consider carefully the influences from Wallachia, the Slavic regions of the Balkans, and Greece. On the other hand, the concept of “influence” is embedded in ideas of agency that are problematic and so perhaps should be avoided altogether in the discussion. Moreover, I disagree in part with Elian’s point of view. Moldavia’s ties with Byzantine cultures were both direct and indirect—direct through places like Mount Athos and Constantinople, the great capital with which the Moldavian Orthodox Church was in an ongoing dialogue, and indirect through regions under Byzantine control and/or influence such as Armenia, Mangup, and Moscow, as well as other areas on the periphery of the empire. These regions, indeed, are more intermediary in the transmission of Byzantine traditions and culture but they are nevertheless significant points of contact. In turn, it is crucial to stress that Moldavia may have served as an intermediary zone for the spread of Byzantine elements and artistic tradition in monumental painting into the southern parts of Poland, for example—an issue that requires still further study.⁷²

Cultural, political, and economic relations also extended between Moldavia and the lands to its north, such as Lithuania, Kiev, and Moscow especially from the mid-fifteenth century onward. The Orthodox Church played an important role in these affairs, but some initiatives were primarily driven by political and economic concerns. For instance, soon after Stephen ascended to Moldavia’s throne, he confirmed to the merchants of Lwów/Lviv⁷³ the privilege to carry out their commerce in Moldavia. Documents from 3 July 1460 and 25 January 1462 attest to this commercial freedom.⁷⁴ The bells from Bistrița Monastery brought from Lwów/Lviv in 1490 present just one example of goods and objects that arrived in Moldavia from this northern center. These commercial ties continued well into the sixteenth century.⁷⁵ Moreover, it was through

intermediare, nu totdeauna lesne de localizat în spațiu, și au reclamat, ca să se introducă, perioade greu de delimitat în timp.” / “...the main Moldavian [artistic] features borrowed from Byzantium are not the result of direct contacts, but rather traveled the arduous path through intermediary spheres, not always easily localized in space, and thus presented the introduction of periods difficult to delineate temporally.”

⁷² Molé, “Ein Problem der byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte in Polen,” (1930): 529-531.

⁷³ A city in western modern-day Ukraine. In Polish: Lwów; German: Lemberg; Ukrainian: L’viv.

⁷⁴ Demciuc, “Domnia lui Ștefan cel Mare—reper cronologic,” 3.

⁷⁵ Bezviconi, *Contribuții la istoria relațiilor româno-ruse*, 31-32.

Lwów/Lviv that merchants from Moscow started making their way to Moldavia. Scores of manuscripts from Stephen's reign and produced at his court, especially between 1463 and 1498, survive in collections in Moscow and St. Petersburg, confirming the contacts that extended between Moldavia and Moscow at this time.

The marriage of Stephen III with his first wife, Maria Evdochia of Kiev⁷⁶—the daughter of Prince Alexander Olelka of Kiev⁷⁷ and his wife Anastasia, the daughter of Grand Prince Vasily I Dmitriyevich of Moscow (1371-1425; *r.* 1389-1425) and his wife Sophia of Lithuania (whom he married in 1392)—which lasted from 5 July 1463 to 1467, further strengthened the ties between Moldavia and its northern neighbors.⁷⁸ Maria Evdochia was Ivan III's cousin (“The Grand Prince of all Rus'”) (*r.* 1462-1505)—the Russian ruler who ended up marrying (for his second marriage) Sophia Palaiologos, the first cousin of Maria of Mangup, Stephen's second wife.⁷⁹ The familial ties between Moldavia and Moscow in the second half of the fifteenth century extend still further. Stephen and Maria Evdochia had a daughter, Elena (Olena, Helen; 1465-1509),⁸⁰ who married in 1483 the heir to the Muscovite throne, Ivan Ivanovich (Ivan the Young, 1458-1490)—the eldest son of Ivan III from his first marriage to Maria of Tver—and together they had a son Dmitry Ivanovich. This marriage between Stephen's daughter and Ivan III's son also coincided with a moment when Moldavia and Moscow were seeking to establish a political and military alliance—following Moscow's final liberation in 1480 from Tatar control as Ivan III renounced his allegiance to the Golden Horde.⁸¹ These marital connections brought Moldavia into more direct political and cultural contact with

⁷⁶ Her visage is preserved in the interior paintings at the Church of St. Nicholas in Iași, which were later removed by Lecomte de Nouy. Today these murals are found in the Metropolitan Church of St. George in Iași.

⁷⁷ Prince Alexander Olelka (d. 1454), of the Olelkovich noble family from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was the son of Vladimir, Duke of Kiev, and grandson of Algirdas, Grand Duke of Lithuania.

⁷⁸ Stephen's marriage to Maria Evdochia of Kiev is mentioned in *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 239r. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 7 (for Church Slavonic transcription), 16 (for Romanian translation).

⁷⁹ The Russian chronicle from Gustinski Monastery mentions incorrectly that the wives of Ivan III and Stephen III, Sofia and Maria, were sisters. See Bezviconi, *Contribuții la istoria relațiilor româno-ruse*, 36, n. 1.

⁸⁰ Elena was buried in the same church in which she was married, Voznesenki Monastery on the Kremlin, Moscow.

⁸¹ In 1480 took place the Great Standoff on the Ugra River between the forces of Akhmat, Khan of the Great Horde, and Ivan III and his armies, which resulted in the final retreat of the Tatars and the end of the Tatar rule over Moscow. On the relations between Stephen III and Ivan III, see Cioban, “Contribuții la studiul relațiilor lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Ivan III,” 125-136.

these lands to the north of the principality, which also served, by extension, as places of mediation and transmission of Byzantine culture.

Moldavia also forged certain networks with the other Romanian-speaking regions around the Carpathian Mountains (Wallachia and Transylvania) as well as with the cultures of western Europe, especially during Stephen's reign. These ties were primarily economic and commercial in nature, but political and cultural connections existed as well. The city of Braşov (Kronstadt), for example, played a major socio-economic, political, and cultural role in the interactions between Moldavia, Transylvania, and Wallachia.⁸² On 13 March 1458, Stephen renewed to all the merchants of Braşov the privilege they had from the reign of Alexander the Good to carry out commerce in Moldavia.⁸³ A letter of 3 January 1472 reconfirms this privilege.⁸⁴ The three main trade routes through which the Transylvanian merchants brought items, mainly weapons and metalwork, into Moldavia were "the Bistriţa Road," "the Baia Road," and "the Braşov Road." The Moldavians, in turn, exported animals, skins, and fish along these trade routes. Moldavia established stronger ties with Wallachia beginning in 1477, following Stephen's third marriage to Maria Voichiţa on 19 December of that year, the daughter of Wallachia's prince Radu the Handsome, who was in turn the son of Vlad Ţepeş, also known as Vlad "the Impaler."⁸⁵ This marriage strengthened the political and military connections between these two neighboring Romanian principalities in the decades that followed.

Moldavia also forged military alliances with Transylvania and, by extension, the rest of the Kingdom of Hungary. For example, a treaty of 12 July 1489 between the King of Hungary Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III attests to the mutual support of these two regions in their anti-Ottoman campaigns.⁸⁶ Following this treaty, Stephen acquired in Transylvania the fortresses at Ciceu and Baltă, which had within their compounds

⁸² Manolescu, *Comerţul Țării Româneşti și Moldovei cu Braşovul (sec. XIV-XVI)*.

⁸³ Demciuc, "Domnia lui Ştefan cel Mare—reper cronologice," 3.

⁸⁴ Demciuc, "Domnia lui Ştefan cel Mare—reper cronologice," 5.

⁸⁵ Stephen's third marriage is mentioned in the thirteenth entry in the *Moldo-German Chronicle*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 34.

⁸⁶ Demciuc, "Domnia lui Ştefan cel Mare—reper cronologice," 9.

residential royal courts and chapels, and were, in turn, part of vast estates.⁸⁷ The strong military relationship between Moldavia and Transylvania continued even after Corvinus's death in 1490. Indeed, in 1497, the prince of Transylvania Bartholomew Drágfi (r. 1493-1499), referred to in *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* as an “in-law of Prince Stephen,”⁸⁸ helped Stephen defeat the Polish armies which under King Albert were threatening Moldavia, by leading an army of 12,000 men. Moldavia emerged victorious from this battle, but not without the significant support of the Transylvanian armies.

In Transylvania, Stephen supported the establishment of two Orthodox episcopates in the second half of the fifteenth century: one in the village of Vad, and the other in the village of Feleac.⁸⁹ In the 1490s he commissioned a church in Vad, located on the estate of the Ciceu fortress (Figs. 1.19-1.20). The church, dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin, came under the direct control of the Moldavian Metropolitan See, and, therefore, was constructed on a type of plan characteristic of the Moldavian milieu.⁹⁰ It is triconch in plan, having a naos with a north and south semicircular apse and a choir that is polygonal in shape.⁹¹ The church has a pronaos with a single window on the south wall, separated from the naos by a small entryway, and an exonarthex with a tower above. As is also characteristic of Moldavian churches, the edifice displays certain markedly Gothic features, notably the ribs of the vault above the altar, and the window and portal frames, as well as the window tracery.

⁸⁷ Very little survives of these two fortresses of Stephen III to the west of the Carpathian Mountains. See Porumb, *Ștefan cel Mare și Transilvania*, 10-11. Stephen's ownership of these two Transylvanian strongholds was confirmed in a letter from 18 April 1492 written by King Vladislav II of Hungary.

⁸⁸ *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 244v: “...Бирток воєвода Ардалскіи, иже и сватіа ба Бирток воєвода съ Стефаном воєводим.” / “...Birtoc [Bartholomew Drágfi], voivode of Ardeal [Transylvania], who [Birtoc] was also an in-law of Stephen voivode.” Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 11 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 20 (for a Romanian translation).

⁸⁹ Vătășianu, “Considerațiuni privind evoluția arhitecturii ecleziastice pe teritoriul arhiepiscopiei Vadului, Feleacului și Clujului,” 35-40, 306-307; Meteș, *Istoria bisericii și a vieții religioase a românilor din Transilvania și Ungaria*, I; Porumb, *Ștefan cel Mare și Transilvania*, 18-25. For the relations that extended between Moldavia and Transylvania during Stephen's reign, see Pop, “Relații între Transilvania și Moldova în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 11-21; Sabău, *Relații politice dintre Moldova și Transilvania în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*.

⁹⁰ Balș, “Biserica lui Ștefan cel Mare de la Vad,” 75-83; Porumb, *Ștefan cel Mare și Transilvania*, esp. 23-25.

⁹¹ *Repertoriul*, 214-215 (with bibliography); Meteș, *Mănăstirile românești din Transilvania și Ungaria*, 149.

territories.⁹⁵ Letters he exchanged with Casimir IV Jagiellon (*r.* 1447-1492), for example, reveal the intentions of these two rulers to forge political and economic relations, as well as to aid in their respective military excursions against the Ottoman Turks. Moldavia was also in contact with the city of Venice, sending diplomatic ambassadors back and forth.⁹⁶ But perhaps, more importantly, Venice and Genoa as well were interested in maintaining the commercial ties with Moldavia in large part because of the principality's direct access to major ports such as Chilia and Cetatea Albă on the Black Sea; it was from these ports that merchants from both Italian city republics brought luxury goods to and through Moldavia. Stephen's kingdom was indeed at the crossroads.

Historiography

The ecclesiastical architecture of Moldavia has largely been studied to the present from specific, somewhat limiting angles. As might be anticipated, Romanian historians, art historians, archaeologists, and conservators, have contributed the greater part of the research on the monastic churches, and they have focused predominantly on formal, archaeological, and iconographic issues. The often formalist approaches of these investigations, which mainly identified and dated the monuments, considered the distinct iconographic programs of the murals, and at times engaged with broader questions of patronage of church architecture in Moldavia more generally, were mainly descriptive in nature.⁹⁷ Relatively few scholars have attempted to embed the structures in their larger historical contexts, to engage in detailed comparative work, or to consider the imagery in relation to liturgy, as I seek to do. Nevertheless, these studies serve as crucial resources and points of departure for my own investigation.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a number of publications written in Romanian and in French appeared that were centered on the medieval and early modern ecclesiastical

⁹⁵ Sigismund in a letter to the Catholic archbishop of Leapolle spoke of Stephen as “patron al Ortodoxiei în regiunile ucrainene de sub stăpânirea polonilor catolici.” Demciuc, “Ștefan cel Mare—‘un vero atleta della fede cristiana’,” 38, n. 3.

⁹⁶ See Iorga, *Veneția și Marea Neagră*; Denize, *Țările Române și Veneția*, esp. 77-233.

⁹⁷ Similar approaches are evident in western European scholarship of the time. With regard to the study of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, for example, the work of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and Henri Focillon is regionally-centered and presented in a formalist framework. It was only in the middle of the twentieth century that scholars began to challenge this rationalism.

architecture of Moldavia.⁹⁸ Especially notable are the contributions of the Romanian historian Gheorghe Balș who was the first to outline the developments in church architecture in Moldavia from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries.⁹⁹ Balș's books took the form of catalogs in which the text was supplemented by black and white photographs, drawings of plans and elevations, as well as ground plans of various monastic complexes. Balș's ambition was to describe the buildings closely and to create reliable chronologies. He provided no in-depth architectural analysis of the churches, nor did he examine the many external factors that may have contributed to their distinctive forms. His interest did not extend to the image programs of these buildings. These cannot be divorced from the architecture itself. Balș also did not consider the varied functions of the buildings within their monastic and local communities. In addition to these monographs and articles, Balș also published a number of essays in which he considered aspects of the architecture of the Moldavian churches in relation to church building traditions in the Balkan Peninsula, outlining in one instance the Serbian influences on the distinctive plan of the Moldavian churches.¹⁰⁰ Shortly thereafter, Vasile Grecu revisited the latter issue in his own article on the topic.¹⁰¹ These initial studies are important for making the remarkable structures known, if they lack a general interpretative framework for placing them with larger architectural histories.

In the early 1930s, two important monographs on the Moldavian churches saw the light of day—one was written by Ion D. Ștefănescu, the other by Paul Henry.¹⁰² Both authors, writing in French, approached the Moldavian churches from a formalist angle, and each offered an overview of the style and iconography of the murals that cover both the interior and the exterior walls of these buildings. Both Ștefănescu and Henry dedicated a good part of their careers to preparing iconographic studies of the Moldavian murals in which they worked to identify the scenes represented in the image cycles, their

⁹⁸ French was the language of the educated in pre-WWII Romania, as was the case in Poland during the nineteenth century.

⁹⁹ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*; idem, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea. 1527-1582*; idem, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea*.

¹⁰⁰ Balș, "Sur une particularité des voûtes moldaves," 9-16; idem, *Începuturile arhitecturii bisericești din Moldova*; idem, "Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines," 277-294.

¹⁰¹ Grecu, "Influente sârbești în vechea iconografie bisericească a Moldovei," 235-242.

¹⁰² Ștefănescu, *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie*; Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du nord*.

textual sources, as well as their connections to Byzantine iconographic programs.¹⁰³ That these two studies were not written in Romanian is significant, for it suggests that they were intended for a wider, international audience.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, western European scholarly circles began to introduce new theoretical and conceptual frameworks to give focus to the study of medieval and early modern art and architecture. However, the formalist and archaeological attitudes toward the study of the ecclesiastical architecture of Moldavia, among local scholars, prevailed well into the 1980s. The art historians Vasile Drăguț and Corina Nicolescu jointly published in 1974, in Romanian, a catalog of the churches of Moldavia in which each entry provided a formal description and relevant historical data on the buildings in question, arranged in chronological order beginning with the earliest monument from the fourteenth century and continuing through to the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Drăguț, in the first part of the introduction, offers a brief overview of the architectural developments and image programs of the religious monuments of Moldavia from the establishment of the principality in the second half of the fourteenth century and through the nineteenth century. Nicolescu, in the second part, describes the icons, liturgical objects, and furnishings that once belonged to these churches. Then follows a catalog, presented in chronological order, consisting of formal descriptions and historical data on the churches, accompanied by photographs (most black and white, with only a few in color).

Around this same time, other similar lengthy studies emerged from scholars like Petru Comărnescu¹⁰⁵ and Grigore Nandriș,¹⁰⁶ as well as shorter articles in local magazines, newspapers, and newsletters, intended to reach a wider, mostly local audience.¹⁰⁷ Romanian scholars like Vasile Drăguț also started publishing short

¹⁰³ Ștefănescu, *L'Illustration des liturgies dans l'art de Byzance et de l'Orient*; idem, *Iconografia artei bizantine și a picturii feudale românești*; idem, *Arta Feudală în Țările Române*.

¹⁰⁴ Drăguț and Nicolescu, *Monumente istorice bisericesti din Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*.

¹⁰⁵ Comărnescu, *Îndreptar artistic al monumentelor din nordul Moldovei*.

¹⁰⁶ Nandriș, *Christian Humanism in the Neo-Byzantine Mural Painting of Eastern Europe*.

¹⁰⁷ Ștefănescu, "Averea artistică a Bisericii Ortodoxe din Moldova," 410-423; "Averea de artă religioasă a Moldovei. Tezaurul de la Putna. Icoanele," 588-599; "Colecția de artă a Patriarhiei noastre," 989-104; "Monumente de artă religioasă (Icoane alese)," 260-288; Crăciunaș, "Bisericile cu picture exterioară din Moldova," (1969): 406-444; (1970): 133-153, 480-520.

monographs or guidebooks on individual churches.¹⁰⁸ Drăguț's contributions have been instrumental in identifying some of Moldavia's points of contact with Transylvania to the west, as some of his publications have considered the relationships between the Moldavian and the Transylvanian mural painting traditions.¹⁰⁹

Formal descriptions and iconographic readings of the image cycles took center stage in the next wave of scholarly studies. These publications first presented a brief description of the general architectural features of the Moldavian churches, and then outlined the major iconographic themes that are present in the image cycles of these buildings.¹¹⁰ A number of scholars have also studied carefully particular scenes, like the many representations of the *Tree of Jesse*,¹¹¹ *The Siege of Constantinople*,¹¹² and the *Akathistos Hymn*,¹¹³ among others.¹¹⁴ The work involved efforts to uncover the specific visual and textual sources of the images and to seek for programmatic meanings. The 1980s witnessed a rise in interest in the study of the Moldavian murals, and their

¹⁰⁸ Drăguț, *Dragoș Coman: maestrul frescelor de la Arbore*; idem, *Humor*; idem, *Dobrovăț*. Other Romanian scholars also published short monographs on individual churches: Nicolescu, *Mănăstirea Moldovița*; eadem and Miclea, *Sucevița*; eadem et al., *Arbore*; Grigoraș, *Biserica Trei Ierarhi*; Musicescu, *Mănăstirea Sucevița*; eadem and Ulea, *Voroneț*.

¹⁰⁹ Drăguț, "Picturi murale exterioare în Transilvania medievală," 75-101; idem, *Pictura murală din Transilvania*; idem, *Dicționar enciclopedic de artă medievală românească*; idem, *Arta gotică în România*; idem, *Arta românească*; idem, *Pictura murală din Moldova sec. XV-XVI*. On the achievements of Vasile Drăguț, see "Lucrările simpozionului Vasile Drăguț – 75 de ani de la naștere – 2003" and Sinigalia, "Bibliografie selectivă a operei profesorului Vasile Drăguț," 13-15.

¹¹⁰ See, most notably, Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*; idem, *Pictura murală din nordul Moldovei*; Drăguț, *Pictura murală din Moldova sec. XV-XVI*.

¹¹¹ See, for example, Henry, "L'arbre de Jessé dans les églises de Bukovine," 1-31; Taylor, "Three Local Motifs in Moldavian Trees of Jesse," 267-275; idem, "A Historiated Tree of Jesse," 125-176.

¹¹² See, for example, Tafrali, "Le Siege de Constantinople dans les fresques des églises de Bucovine," 456-461; Grecu, "Eine Belagerung Konstantinopels," 273-289; Meinardus, "Interpretations of a Wall-Painting of the Siege of Constantinople in the Bucovina," 169-183; Zach, "Das Türkenbild in der Moldaukunst des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel der Darstellung Johannes des Neuen," 206-223; Grabar, "Un graffite slave sur la façade d'une église de Bucovine," 89-101.

¹¹³ Henry, "Quelques notes sur la représentation de l'Hymne Acathiste dans la peinture murale extérieure de Bukovine," 33-49; Vicovan, "Theological Significance of the *Akathistos Hymn* from Moldovița Monastery," 51-68; Ciobanu, "L'iconographie de l'Hymne Acathiste dans les fresques de l'église St. Onuphre du monastère Lavrov et dans la peinture extérieure moldave au temps du premier règne de Petru Rareș," 3-24; idem, "La symétrie 'dissimulée' dans l'ordonnance des illustrations aux strophes de la deuxième moitié de l'Hymne Acathiste," 123-137; Tafrali, "Iconografia Imnului Acatist," 49-84, 127-140, 153-173.

¹¹⁴ Other notable contributions come from Oreste Tafrali and Irineu Crăciunaș Suceveanul. See Tafrali, "Les fresques des églises de Bucovine," 39-47; Suceveanul, "Vechea picture bisericăscă din Moldova (veac XV-XVII)," 468-502; idem, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova, I," 406-444; idem, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova, II," 150-170; idem, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova, III," 480-520; idem, "Temele iconografice reprezentate în pictura exterioară din Moldova. Noțiuni introductive," 631-644.

conservation. The paintings were in various stages of preservation, and the danger of losing them captured the attention of scholars and conservators alike who embarked on restoration projects at select sites.¹¹⁵

All along a number of western European and North American scholars also participated in the discussion, but their ventures were likewise general and formalist in nature, and sometimes only resulted in a few descriptive pages. The Austrian scholar Joseph Strzygowski made some initial forays in the first decades of the twentieth century,¹¹⁶ followed by his pupil, Władysław Podlacha, who published in 1912 the first monograph on the Moldavian murals, preceded by a number of articles on specific topics related to the corpus.¹¹⁷ Before the middle of the century, international scholars also began including comparative reference to the Moldavian material in their respective studies: the Catalan architect and historian Josep Puig i Cadafalch,¹¹⁸ the French medievalist art historian and theorist Henri Focillon,¹¹⁹ the French Byzantine historian and art historian Charles Diehl,¹²⁰ the French Byzantinist Louis Bréhier,¹²¹ the British art historian David Talbot Rice,¹²² the French Byzantinist archeologist and art historian Gabriel Millet,¹²³ the Byzantinist Philipp Schweinfurth,¹²⁴ the Belgian art historian Paul Philippot,¹²⁵ the German theologian Wilhelm Nyssen,¹²⁶ as well as the Russian art critic and historian Viktor Nikitič Lazarev¹²⁷ and the Russian historian and art theorist Mikhail Vladimirovich Alpatov.¹²⁸ Perhaps the two most notable international scholars who have

¹¹⁵ For a more general account of the conservation and restoration of medieval murals in Romania, see Sinigalia and Opreș, “Considerații generale privind conservarea și restaurarea picturilor murale medievale ale României,” 7-20.

¹¹⁶ Strzygowski, *Origin of Christian Church Art*, esp. 160-161.

¹¹⁷ Podlacha, “Die ‘Göttliche Liturgie’ in der Wandmalereien der Bukowiner Klosterkirchen,” 259-268; idem, “Das hl. Abendmahl in den Wandgemälden der griechisch-orientalischen Kirchen in der Bukowina,” 139-160; idem, “Abendländische Einflüsse in den Wandmalereien der griechisch-orientalischen Kirchen in der Bukowina,” 271-286; idem, *Malowidła ścienné w cerwiach Bukowiny*.

¹¹⁸ Puig i Cadafalch, “Les églises de Moldavie: contributions à l’étude de l’origine de leur forme décorative,” 76-89. See also Drăguț, “Josep Puig i Cadafalch et l’art roumain,” 49-56.

¹¹⁹ Focillon, *Moyen âge: survivances et réveils; études d’art et d’histoire*, esp. 185-201.

¹²⁰ Diehl, “Impressions de Roumanie,” 832-846, esp. 835-839.

¹²¹ Bréhier, *La Civilisation byzantine*, trans. as *Civilizația bizantină*, 351-383.

¹²² Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Art and its Influences*, 19, 220.

¹²³ Millet, *Broderies religieuses de style byzantin*.

¹²⁴ Schweinfurth, *Die byzantinische Form: Ihr Wesen und ihre Wirkung*, esp. 106-107.

¹²⁵ Philippot, *Die Wandmalerei: Entwicklung, Technik, Eigenart*, esp. 60.

¹²⁶ Nyssen, *Bildgesang der Erde: Außenfresken der Moldauklöster in Rumänien*.

¹²⁷ Lazarev, *Old Russian Murals and Mosaics: From the 11th to the 16th Century*, esp. 80.

¹²⁸ Alpatov, *Istoria Artei: Arta lumii vechi și a evului mediu, Vol I*, esp. 373-374.

studied the artistic production of Moldavia from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and whose scholarship has made significant contributions, are the art historians Paul Henry¹²⁹ and André Grabar.¹³⁰ They made new discoveries and adopted an array of approaches to the study of the material.

From these scholarly contributions it becomes clear that the medieval and early modern artistic production of Moldavia, and of the Carpathian Mountain region more generally, has not been at the forefront of international art historical scholarship. In part, inconsistencies in the definition of what constitutes Eastern Europe, or Central Europe, or East-central Europe (*Ostmitteleuropa*) at any given moment was responsible for the marginalization, as well as ideological agendas, prejudices in historical writing, and difficulties in gaining physical and intellectual access to this region, have contributed to this issue. Definitions of what constitutes east-central Europe more often than not exclude the regions of modern Romanian to the east and south of the Carpathian Mountains (Moldavia and Wallachia).¹³¹ Transylvania, of course, often enters the discussion because of its political and regional ties to the Hungarian Kingdom. German nationalist histories prior to WWII placed emphasis on the Germanic cultural heritage that dominated in the regions of east-central Europe, including Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary, among others.¹³² After WWII, scholarship minimized the contributions of German scholars. The Polish art historian Jan Białostocki, in his study *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe: Hungary, Bohemia, Poland*, downplayed, for instance, the importance of the Habsburgs and the Saxons in the artistic production of the regions.¹³³ Białostocki defined

¹²⁹ Henry, "De l'originalité des peintures bukoviennes dans l'application des principes byzantins," 291-303; idem, "Folklore et iconographie religieuse," 63-97; idem, "Quelques notes sur la représentation de l'Hymne Acatiste dans la peinture murale extérieure de Bukovine," 33-49; idem, "L'arbre de Jessé dans les églises de Bukovine," 1-31; idem, *Les églises de la Moldavie du nord*.

¹³⁰ Grabar, "Les croisades de l'Europe Orientale dans l'art," 19-27; idem, "L'origine des façades peintes des églises moldaves," 365-383; idem, "Un graffiti slave sur la façade d'une église de Bucovine," 89-101; idem and Opreșcu, *Rumania: Painted Churches of Moldavia*; idem, "Un cycle des 'capitales' chrétiennes dans l'art moldave du XVIe siècle," 125-130; idem, "La représentation des 'peuples' dans les images du Jugement dernier en Europe orientale," 186-197.

¹³¹ Most recently, Gábor Klaniczay has discussed the problems of the definition of east-central Europe as a historical region in "Von Ostmitteleuropa zu Westmitteleuropa: Eine Umwandlung im Hochmittelalter," 17-48. Other relatively recent studies that have presented a more general orientation on the subject are: Maczak, *East-Central Europe in Transition*; Szűcs, *Die drei historischen Regionen Europas*; Kłoczowski, *East central Europe in the Historiography of the Countries of the Region*; Borgolte, "Ostmitteleuropa aus der Sicht des Westens," 5-19.

¹³² See, for instance, Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards*.

¹³³ Białostocki, *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe*.

Eastern Europe as the Czech, Polish-Lithuanian, and Hungarian kingdoms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but excluded the regions of the Carpathian Mountains, such as Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia from the discussion. His study thus focuses on the famed monuments of the Corvinian and Jagiellonian “Renaissances,” such as the Bakócz Chapel in Esztergom Cathedral, the Sigismund Chapel in Kraków Cathedral, and Kraków’s Wawel Castle, among others, highlighting their ties to the artistic developments of the Venetian and Florentine Renaissance, and eliminating from the discussion less celebrated monuments from regions such as Transylvania. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, in his book *Court, Cloister, and City*, included Croatia and Slovakia in his definition of central Europe. He argued that this large geographical region should be considered as a “cultural entity” connected along political, dynastic, cultural, and religious lines.¹³⁴ This effort on behalf of the artistic heritage of central Europe, he wrote, was “an attempt to contribute to its reintegration into a unified notion of European culture.”¹³⁵ In response to his useful and ambitious project, it is perhaps now time to reemphasize the multi-ethnic and multilayered character of each of the territories and their role in producing the regional variants that existed then, and still do today.¹³⁶

To a large degree, the limited approaches taken to the study of the Moldavian corpus of ecclesiastical monuments have been a consequence of twentieth-century politics. The Iron Curtain created actual and ideological barriers, rendering much of the relevant literature inaccessible and new fieldwork difficult to carry out. As a result, both the local and the international intellectual communities lacked access to the resources necessary to examine more fully and seriously the artistic production of Moldavia in particular and that of the entire Carpathian Mountain region in general. East-central Europe throughout the twentieth century was unjustifiably seen “as somehow distinct from the real Europe of the western Atlantic alliance,” as Kaufmann wrote, and, therefore, led to “an unstudied ignorance or neglect of much of the continent.”¹³⁷ Nevertheless, he continued, “[o]n the ‘map of forgetting’ which was charted after 1945

¹³⁴ Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City*, 13-28.

¹³⁵ Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City*, 15.

¹³⁶ Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City*, see esp. “Questions of Definition,” 16-21.

¹³⁷ Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister and City*, 16.

‘Central Europe’ may have disappeared, but the countries, their peoples, cultures and histories clearly did not cease to exist.”¹³⁸ The fall of the Iron Curtain and the death of Romania’s Communist president Nicolae Ceaușescu on 22 December 1989 initiated a reassessment of individual and national identities throughout Europe, and once again enabled intellectual and physical contacts between regions that up to that point had remained distant and inaccessible to one another for decades.¹³⁹ Scholarship that had stagnated throughout much of the twentieth century was now being reinvigorated.

The 1990s saw the publication of more comprehensive and exciting studies on the religious art and architecture of Moldavia of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—individual studies that not only engaged with formal, stylistic, and iconographic aspects of the monuments, but also considered their functions within their religious, social, and political contexts. The majority of these publications centered on the exterior paintings of the churches. The work of Anca Vasiliu was notable because it examined the style and iconography of the image cycles in light of contemporary political issues and theological developments.¹⁴⁰ Ruth Fabritius, meanwhile, considered the image programs through the lens of the Orthodox liturgy, in particular with regard to the notion of hierarchies within the Orthodox Church and the role of the Virgin Mary in Salvation.¹⁴¹ Finally, the work of Sorin Dumitrescu, in particular his publication *Chivotele ecumenice ale lui Petru Rareș și modelul lor ceresc*, deserves mention here, but not praise.¹⁴² This substantial volume with many colored plates (some of substandard quality) was published initially in Romanian and then poorly translated into various languages.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, it brought attention to the churches.

In the last two decades the topic was the focus for a number of M.A. theses and doctoral dissertations, written mostly at European institutions and in a number of

¹³⁸ Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister and City*, 16.

¹³⁹ For a recent interdisciplinary study that looks at the cultural consequences of the fall of Communism in Europe, see Barta, ed., *The Fall of the Iron Curtain and the Culture of Europe*.

¹⁴⁰ See Vasiliu, *La Traversée de l'image: art et théologie dans les églises moldaves au XVIe siècle*; eadem, *Monastères de Moldavie, XIVe-XVIe siècles*; eadem, et al., *Moldauklöster: 14.-16. Jahrhundert*.

¹⁴¹ Fabritius, *Außenmalerei und Liturgie*.

¹⁴² The work of Sorin Dumitrescu, *Chivotele ecumenice ale lui Petru Rareș și modelul lor ceresc*, was translated into several languages. It has been much criticized for lack of a scholarly framework.

¹⁴³ Dumitrescu, *Les tabernacles œcuméniques de Petru Rareș et leur modèle céleste*; idem, *The Ecumenical Tabernacles of Petru Rareș Voivode and Their Celestial Model*.

disciplines. Laura-Cristina Ștefănescu¹⁴⁴ and Sabina Manuela Cismaș¹⁴⁵ looked from a historical standpoint at the donor portraits in the Moldavian churches and outlined some of the functions of these kinds of images. In their doctoral theses, Anca-Cristina Agura-Toni¹⁴⁶ examined the artistic production of Moldavia during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, while Cătălina-Elena Iliescu¹⁴⁷ focused on the relevant developments that took place in the artistic sphere during the seventeenth century. Teodora Artimon's M.A. thesis explored Peter Rareș's artistic patronage against the backdrop of his political ambitions,¹⁴⁸ while her recently completed dissertation looked at the historical figure of Stephen III and his afterlife in Romanian historiography and culture.¹⁴⁹ Mollie Elizabeth McVey, in an unpublished M.A. thesis, interpreted the exterior paintings in the context of the processional ceremonies that took place on Easter Sunday around the churches.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Ștefana Pop-Curseu and Martine de Rougemont addressed the theatricality of the Moldavian paintings.¹⁵¹ Two recent dissertations, one written in English by Adriana Balaban Bara¹⁵² and the other in Romanian by Constantin Ciobanu,¹⁵³ examine the intricate relationships between text and image in the creation of the pictorial cycles, and argue that specific textual sources explain the choice of iconography for particular sections of the programs. Finally, the dissertation of Bogdan Bratu approaches the study of the Moldavian monastic churches and their exterior mural cycles from a theological perspective.¹⁵⁴

The corpus of Moldavian churches and monasteries has also attracted the interest of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. In 1962, UNESCO sponsored a book on the subject—an oversized volume containing 32 color images of general views of the churches and details of some of the murals described

¹⁴⁴ Ștefănescu, "Gift-Giving, *Memoria*, and Art Patronage in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia."

¹⁴⁵ Cismaș, "Power and Salvation: Donor Representations in Moldavia."

¹⁴⁶ Agura-Toni, "Die rumänische Sakralkunst des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts in Moldova der Mușatini, Rareș und Movilești."

¹⁴⁷ Iliescu, "Cultura Română în Moldova la mijlocul secolului al XVII-lea."

¹⁴⁸ Artimon, "Peter Rareș and his Visual Concept."

¹⁴⁹ Artimon, "The Proto-Myth of Stephen the Great of Moldavia."

¹⁵⁰ McVey, "Beyond the Walls."

¹⁵¹ Pop-Curseu and de Rougemont, "La théâtralité de la peinture murale post-byzantine: XVe-XVIIe siècles."

¹⁵² Bara, "The Political and Artistic Program of Prince Petru Rareș of Moldavia."

¹⁵³ Ciobanu, "Sursele literare ale programelor iconografice din pictura murală medievală Moldovă."

¹⁵⁴ Bratu, "Pictura bisericii: Icoana Impărăției în Moldova secolelor XV-XVI."

briefly in an introduction written by André Grabar and Georges Oprescu.¹⁵⁵ In 1993, seven of the churches were added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites, which in turn contributed to initiating a number of restoration projects at these sites.¹⁵⁶ The Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery underwent a project of restoration supported by UNESCO and the Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage between 1996 and 2001.¹⁵⁷ In 2009, the Romanian association Art Conservation Support (ACS) was founded to promote the conservation and restoration, as well as the publication, of the extensive cultural patrimony of Romania, focusing primarily on the mural cycles that adorn many of the churches.¹⁵⁸

In the last two decades, a number of Romanian historians and art historians have made significant contributions to the study of the artistic production of Moldavia—studies that stand at the roots of my own investigations of the corpus. These include, most notably, the work of Vlad Bedros,¹⁵⁹ Oliviu Boldura,¹⁶⁰ Ecaterina Cincheza-Buculei,¹⁶¹ Constantin Ciobanu,¹⁶² Constanța Costea,¹⁶³ Maria Crăciun,¹⁶⁴ Ștefan S. Gorovei,¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁵ Grabar and Oprescu, *Rumania: Painted Churches of Moldavia*.

¹⁵⁶ These include the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore; the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Humor Monastery; the Church of the Annunciation, Moldovița Monastery; the Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți Monastery; the Church of St. Nicholas, Probota Monastery; the Church of St. George, Suceava; the Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery. In 2010, the Church of the Resurrection at Sucevița Monastery was also added to the list.

¹⁵⁷ This project resulted in the following publications: Elo and Dean, *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery (1996-2001)*; Sinigalia and Pușcașu, *Mănăstirea Probota*; eadem, *The Restoration of the Probota Monastery*.

¹⁵⁸ This association is spearheaded by Dr. Oliviu Boldura, Anca Dină, Magdalena Drobotă, and Teodora Poiată.

¹⁵⁹ See especially Bedros, "Iconographie et liturgie. Le programme de l'abside de l'autel dans cinq monuments moldaves," 453-507; idem, "Iconografia absidei altarului în bisericile din Moldova la sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea și în prima jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea"; idem, *Patrimoniul artistic armenesc în România. Între nostalgia exilului și integrarea culturală*; idem, "Selecția sfinților ierarhi în absidele moldovenești (secolele XV-XVI)," 65-75.

¹⁶⁰ See most notably Boldura, *Pictura murală din nordul Moldovei*.

¹⁶¹ See in particular Cincheza-Buculei, "Programul iconographic al gropnițelor Moldovenești," 85-93; eadem, "Tema *Menologului* din pictura Bisericii Mănăstirii Neamț," 135-142.

¹⁶² See especially Ciobanu, *Stihia Profeticului*.

¹⁶³ See most recently Costea, "Naosul Suceviței," 105-116; eadem, "Programe iconografice insuficient cunoscute," 15-26; eadem, "Sub semnul *Miresei Nenuntite*," 99-108.

¹⁶⁴ See in particular Crăciun, "*Apud Ecclesia*," 144-167; eadem, and Elaine Fulton, eds., *Communities of Devotion*.

¹⁶⁵ See the recent studies by Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps omni laudae maior: O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*; idem, "Titlurile lui Ștefan cel Mare," 41-78; idem, "Stemele lui Ștefan cel Mare de la Cetatea Albă," 215-226; idem, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina. O prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei*.

Voica Maria Pușcașu,¹⁶⁶ Maria Ileana Sabados,¹⁶⁷ Tereza Sinigalia,¹⁶⁸ Maria Magdalena Székely,¹⁶⁹ and Răzvan Theodorescu.¹⁷⁰ A number of scholars from the Republic of Moldova have also joined the conversation, chief among them being Andrei Eșanu, who published extensively on various aspects of the artistic, cultural, and historic dimensions of Moldavia from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries.¹⁷¹

By far the most significant work on Moldavia's painted churches to date has been undertaken by the Orthodox priest Gabriel Herea from Pătrăuți. His book, published in 2010, takes a theological approach to the study of the Moldavian corpus and interprets the image cycles in relation to the particular architectural layout of the churches and in the context of the experiences of the Orthodox faithful who came to these sites.¹⁷² This study consists of two parts: the first examines the relationship between each space within the church and the paintings that are found on the inside and outside walls; the second part presents a series of case studies in which particular aspects of each church are highlighted in order to support the arguments put forth in the first part of the book. What is noteworthy about Herea's contribution is that in addition to engaging with the relationships between the architectural layout of the churches and their extensive image cycles, as well as the experience of the faithful at these edifices, the book also presents a brief discussion of some of the images, liturgical utensils, and furnishings that once belonged to these sites. By integrating these new often dispersed objects into his discussion, Herea thus comes a step closer to viewing Moldavia's churches as complete

¹⁶⁶ See especially Pușcașu, *Actul de ctitorire ca fenomen istoric în Țara Românească și Moldova până la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea*; eadem, *Mănăstirea Probota*.

¹⁶⁷ See Sabados, "Transilvania și școala moldovenească de pictură în secolul al XVI-lea," 149-156; eadem, "La datation des iconostases de Humor et de Voroneț," 67-76; eadem, "L'iconostase de Moldovița: un repère dans l'évolution de l'iconostase moldave," 27-43.

¹⁶⁸ See in particular Sinigalia and Pușcașu, *Mănăstirea Probota*, and many articles on various topics related to the decoration of the Moldavian churches in particular (see bibliography).

¹⁶⁹ Most notably, see Székely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*; eadem and Gorovei, eds., *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Atlet al credinței creștine*.

¹⁷⁰ See especially Theodorescu, *Bucovina: The Moldavian Mural Painting in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*; idem, *Pictura murală moldovenească din secolele XV și XVI*; *Les chemins du paradis: la peinture murale moldave aux XVe-XVIe siècles*.

¹⁷¹ Eșanu, *Din vremuri copleșite de greutate. Schițe din historia culturii medievale din Moldova*; idem, *Cultură și civilizație medievală românească*; idem, *Moldova medievală, structuri executive, militare și ecleziastice*; idem, *Epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare*; idem and Valentina Eșanu, *Mănăstirea Voroneț: istorie, cultură, spiritualitate*.

¹⁷² Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean*. This study was originally published in Romanian and translated in a few other languages soon after the initial publication.

semantic entities, total works of art. He does not, however, engage with the political and historical context in which these monuments were built and within which they should be examined.

New Directions

As I have found, little thorough scholarly attention has been given to the Moldavian churches in the pages of history and art history books. Moreover, current scholarship (especially art historical scholarship) lacks a definitive interest in, and a critical framework for, the evaluation of these monuments. While the Moldavian churches have been studied quite extensively from predominantly formalist and archaeological angles, mostly by Romanian scholars, broader contextual issues such as cultural contacts or assimilation have so far not been brought to bear on the interpretation of this fascinating corpus. The evidence suggests that the artistic production of Moldavia, and of east-central Europe more generally, should be analyzed through more nuanced interpretative strategies, highlighting for instance the region's far-flung cultural connections, as scholars have done already in the case of Venice, Crete, and the Levant, for example—all areas in which cultural interactions extended between Byzantium and western Europe at various moments throughout their respective histories.

My project, on the one hand, builds on earlier investigations. In draw upon and seek to bridge the gap between Romanian, German, Italian, and French scholarship on the Moldavian churches, their form, decoration, and function. On the other hand, my work seeks to introduce new theoretical and conceptual frameworks to guide the examination of these multifaceted monuments. Thus, I look at the Moldavian churches through notions of artistic integration, as defined by scholars of western medieval architecture in recent decades in an effort to illuminate the multivalence and multimedia dimensions of Gothic religious spaces.¹⁷³ Paul Crossley's examinations of the way liturgical props and

¹⁷³ The theoretical framework for the concept of 'artistic integration' with regard to Gothic buildings articulated by Willibald Sauerländer in the introduction to the edited volume *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, edited by Virginia Chieffo Raguin, Kathryn L. Brush, and Peter Draper can be fruitfully applied in this context as well. Sauerländer identifies first an 'integration by time' that examines the various renovations and innovations that took place in the buildings, as wells as the continuities and disjunctions between original intent and evident result; second, an 'integration by performance' that considers the various audiences and the furnishing in religious spaces in the context of the religious activities that unfolded in those spaces; and, third, an 'integration by context' that takes into account the political,

images worked in tandem with the buildings that contained them so as to structure and enhance the devotional experiences of the faithful have served as an important model for my own inquiries.¹⁷⁴ In this vein, I consider in this study the architecture of the Moldavian churches, their extensive image cycles, as well as their furnishings, liturgical objects, and icons,¹⁷⁵ in the context of the activities that took place at these sites during the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, notably rituals that included the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and that of special Feast Days.

While shaped by (and, in turn, operating in direct relationships to) complex social and religious politics, these monastic churches, I argue, illuminate how cross-cultural exchange and translation operated in frontier regions in moments of crisis, and how, in turn, these critical moments were articulated artistically. This is one of the driving issues of my project that seeks to introduce new theoretical and conceptual frameworks to the examination of these multifaceted monuments. In taking this approach, I try to present the Moldavian churches and their monastic milieux as complex settings with visual, spatial, and performative aspects, as well as political and military dimensions, that structured in dynamic ways the experiences of their varied audiences.

The larger goal of this project is to encourage a rethinking of standard art historical narratives. Rigid and reinforced western canons of rationality remain prevalent in art historical scholarship and current stories of the development of medieval, early modern, Byzantine, and post-Byzantine art continue to exclude the artistic production of Moldavia and of east-central and southeastern Europe more generally from their geographical, thematic, cultural, and temporal purviews. A reevaluation of these issues will involve, too, a scrutiny of existing, although artificial, periodizations since

economic, social, and ideological contexts of religious buildings. To this, I would add also an ‘integration of the visual’ that could consider how the various objects and images brought together in the space of the church operate in aesthetic and semantic terms.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, Crossley, “The Integrated Cathedral: Thoughts on ‘Holism’ and Gothic Architecture,” 157-173; idem, “The Man from Inner Space,” 165-182.

¹⁷⁵ The furnishings of these churches include elaborately carved chairs and thrones, stands for icons and liturgical books, candle holders, and the large iconostasis screen, just to name a few. Chalices and patens, censers, as well as altar coverings are some of the objects used during the liturgical ceremonies that take place inside of these churches. In addition to the extensive figural wall paintings, large icons of the Hodegetria and/or military saints (like St. George) are displayed before the iconostasis. There are also intricately embroidered liturgical vestments worn by the priests. For the most recent study on such liturgical vestments worn by priests in the Byzantine Orthodox church, see Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*.

“medieval” artistic forms were produced in the region of Moldavia well into the seventeenth century.

In analyzing the plans, architectural features, image programs, and functions of these buildings in the context of religious politics and patronage, the Orthodox liturgy, the cult of saints, and the theory of images, I consider the extent to which these churches aided in the construction of a new sacred landscape in Moldavia, while presenting particular responses to a series of events located in past, present, and future: the crisis of 1453, the predicted end of the world in 1492, and the failed Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529. The Moldavian churches, with their compound artistic and architectural vocabularies, reveal a particular mode of translation of Byzantine cultural heritage after the empire’s collapse intermingled with elements from local and more distant building traditions. The monastic churches served as sites for negotiating conflict and allowing coexistence across cultural lines. Thus, they yield information about artistic transfer.

I study the Moldavian churches as the product of their particular historical moment as I seek to explain their compound visual vocabularies. In this regard, I consider the stylistic plurality of these monuments in the context of the contacts that extended between Moldavia and its neighbors—notably regions of the Holy Roman Empire and its adjacent territories, parts of the Balkans, Mount Athos, and Armenia—in the decades prior to and following the events of 1453. In doing so, I seek to draw out the complexities and nuanced dynamics of cultural encounter, interaction, and exchange and to chart their operation in this porous region. With this approach, I intend to participate in the broadening of the critical apparatus for the examination of the processes and agents of exchange and translation in the late medieval and early modern periods, and also to contribute to current conversations about border crossings and cultural exchange.

Despite the evident compound visual vocabulary of the Moldavian monastic churches from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the processes of transmission of artistic and architectural ideas and stylistic variants from disparate places remain elusive. Masons and artists from different centers and working within distinct building traditions certainly came to Moldavia in the aftermath of the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and contributed to the building of the churches—but their movements

are hard to follow.¹⁷⁶ Their implementation of new skills, ideas, and techniques, alongside those developed locally, led to particular building standards to evolve. Changing patterns of patronage that emerged in the new socio-political atmosphere of the post-1453 world seems to have contributed to the distinctive character of these monuments. Despite the lack of extensive archival documentation on the builders and artists who worked on these churches,¹⁷⁷ or the nature of patronage, a careful examination of the buildings themselves provides insight into their builders and patrons alike, as well as the cultural contacts that extended in this region at this time. The lack of written sources should not preclude studying about these issues because, as Slobodan Ćurčić has emphasized with regard to Serbian architecture, which poses similar problems, there is much to be gained from the “documentary value of the physical evidence at hand.”¹⁷⁸

This project thus stands at the intersection of the relations between cultural geography, history, artistic production, and cultural exchange as revealed in monuments produced in the aftermath of critical historical moments: in this case the events of 1453, the expected end of the world in 1492, and the failed siege of Vienna in 1529.

¹⁷⁶ With regard to ecclesiastical architecture in Serbia, Slobodan Ćurčić has argued that “...workshop skills acquired by young apprentices on major building sites, supervised by Byzantine master builders, became the means of spreading Byzantine architectural styles within Serbia.” Ćurčić, “The Role of Late Byzantine Thessalonike in Church Architecture in the Balkans,” 78-79. See also idem, “Two Examples of Local Building Workshops in Fourteenth-Century Serbia,” 45-51.

¹⁷⁷ The evidence suggests that masons trained in Transylvanian workshops were likely summoned to Moldavia to contribute to the building of the churches from Stephen and Peter’s reigns. As for the artists who executed the murals, little evidence survives. A Constantinopolitan artist, or perhaps George of Trikala (and his workshop) executed the murals at Pătrăuți and St. George in Hârlău. The Church of St. Nicholas in Bălinești was likely painted under the guidance of Gavriil Ieromonahul and his team. A number of Romanian scholars have pointed to a certain Toma the Painter as the individual who directed the executions of the paintings at the katholikon in Humor, and perhaps even that at Moldovița. The church in Arbore was painted close to the middle of the sixteenth century by artists from Iași, including Dragoș Coman (“Pisanello of Moldavia” or “Byzantine Pisanello”, according to Paul Philippot, see Chapter Four, n. 2), son of Priest Coman from Iași, at the request of Ana, the niece of Luca Arbore. The katholikon at Râșca was painted between 1552 and 1554 under the guidance of Bishop Macarie by the Greek monk Stamatelos Kotronas from Zante, Greece. By the end of the sixteenth century, the katholikon at Sucevița received its paintings executed by Ioan Zugravul and his brother Sofronie from the Crimca school of painting (identified by the use of light, metallic green and blood reds contrasting with gold).

Even at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Prince Alexander the Good, in a letter written sometime between 1414 and 1419, gifted the painters Dobre and Nichita two Moldavian villages in return for them painting two churches. The letter is found in the Romanian Academy Library, in the original and a photograph LXXVIII/11. *Documente privind Istoria României, A Moldova volumul I (1384-1448)*, I, 35-36; *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 55-56 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 56-57 (for a Romanian translation). Balș notes the date of the document as 1416 (6924) in “Zugravi moldoveni,” 141.

¹⁷⁸ Ćurčić, “The Role of Late Byzantine Thessalonike in Church Architecture in the Balkans,” 84.

The Sources

The extant churches themselves, and the monastic communities to which they belong, provide primary evidence for the study of image cycles and church architecture in Moldavia and their developments in the decades prior to and following the events of 1453. In addition to the churches themselves and their distinctive architectural and iconographic features, as well as their relation to other buildings in the monastic compounds, an examination of the furnishings, liturgical objects, and icons once present at these sites and used in the context of certain ritual activities also enter the discussion. Some of the furnishings include elaborately carved chairs and thrones, stands for icons and liturgical books, candle holders, and the large iconostasis screen, to name but a few examples. Chalices and patens, censers, as well as altar covers are some of the objects used during the liturgical ceremonies. In addition to the extensive figural wall paintings, large icons of the Hodegetria and/or military saints such as St. George of Cappadocia were displayed in prominent locations throughout the churches, for instance in front of the iconostasis. There were also intricately embroidered liturgical vestments worn by the priests that display an iconography calibrated to reflect and refract liturgical acts.¹⁷⁹

Aside from the monuments themselves, the arguments put forth in this dissertation utilize contemporary textual sources written in Church Slavonic, German, and Latin; these include princely and ecclesiastical documents, chronicles, edicts or charters, manuscripts and liturgical books, as well as inscriptions in books, manuscripts, and on surviving monuments.¹⁸⁰ The documents are preserved in national and local archives in Bucharest, Iași, and Suceava, among other places. Most have also been published during the course of the twentieth century in catalogs either with summaries, in full transcriptions with summaries in Romanian, or full transcriptions followed by full translations in Romanian.¹⁸¹ Since very few English translations of these texts have

¹⁷⁹ For the most recent study on such liturgical vestments worn by priests in the Byzantine Orthodox church, see Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon*.

¹⁸⁰ The majority of the inscriptions have been transcribed, translated in various languages, and published most notably in Kozak, *Die Inschriften aus der Bukovina*; Iorga, *Inscripții*, 2 vols; *Repertoriul*; Caproșu and Chiaburu, eds., *Însemnări de pe manuscrise și cărți vechi din Țara Moldovei*.

¹⁸¹ Some of the most notable collections include: *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, II, III, VI; *Documente privitoare la Istoria României, A. Moldova volumul I*. To this list I should add the publications of Romanian documents housed in foreign collections, such as Corfus, *Documente privitoare la istoria României culese din arhivele Polone*; Nandriș, *Documente Slavo-Române din Mănăstirile Muntelui Athos*.

appeared to date, all of the translations of textual sources in this dissertation are my own. Large collections of little known manuscripts and liturgical books such as the Four Gospels or Tetraevangelia, Lectionaries, Psalters, Synaxaria, Menologia, Homilaria, as well as Typika and Sbornik (Miscellanies), are found at local monasteries such as Neamț, Moldovița, and Sucevița, for instance, as well as in local museums such as the National Museum of Art of Romania, and the National Museum of Romanian History, both in Bucharest. The fifteenth-century manuscripts are written by hand whereas some of the sixteenth-century books are printed.¹⁸² Some of the inscriptions, on the other hand, survive in manuscripts, where they were handwritten, as well as on liturgical objects such as icons. Others were carved on the exterior of the churches as dedicatory inscriptions and are still found in situ, although lacking their original brightly painted sections. The church exteriors here under scrutiny also preserve inscriptions and graffiti added at a later date; the interpretation of this epigraphal evidence remains difficult, though in some cases it seems to record the responses of later generations of viewers to the imagery in front of them—as we will see in Chapter Six.

It has proved useful to examine the image cycles of the churches in relation to the *Hermeneia* (or *Painter's Manual*) of Dionysius of Fournà (c.1670-after 1744) written on Mount Athos roughly between 1730 and 1734.¹⁸³ This book provides indications of how scenes and figures were to be painted on icons and church buildings in the Byzantine cultural sphere, recipes on how to prepare colors and gesso for painting, as well as instructions on how to render appropriate body proportions on human figures.

The language of the written sources I treat in this project is predominantly Church Slavonic—the official chancery language and that of the Church in Moldavia and in the other Romanian-speaking regions around the Carpathians, as well as in parts of the

¹⁸² In the Romanian-speaking regions, the first book was printed in 1508 in Târgoviște, Wallachia. The second one appeared in 1510, and the third in 1512. These developments in mechanical movable type and printed books in Eastern Europe came about seven decades after the printing press started being used in western Europe. One notable early example is the Gutenberg Bible, printed by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany, in the 1450s.

¹⁸³ The manual was compiled using a variety of sources, both ancient and contemporary, by “Dionysius, priest-monk [hieromonk] of Fournà, the unworthiest of painters” together with his “worthy pupil, Master Cyril of Chios.” (2). *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 65. For the nineteenth-century Romanian variants of this text, see Grecu, “Versiunile românești ale Erminiilor de pictură bizantină,” 107-174.

Balkans like Serbia and Bulgaria.¹⁸⁴ Although the precise moment of the introduction of Church Slavonic to Moldavia is still unknown,¹⁸⁵ from the beginning of the fourteenth century and on through the first half of the seventeenth century, Moldavian church and administrative texts were written with Cyrillic characters mainly in Church Slavonic. The Moldavian recension or variant of the Church Slavonic language was not affected initially by interactions with native Romanian speech and so it preserved throughout the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Bulgarian orthography introduced by Bishop Euthymius of Tarnovo (1327-1402; in office 1374-1393) in the second half of the fourteenth century.¹⁸⁶ In the first decades of the sixteenth century, the Moldavian recension of Church Slavonic came to be influenced not only by Middle Bulgarian but by Russian, Serbian (mainly through Wallachia), and Romanian as well. Beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century, the sources continued to be written with Cyrillic characters but now in Romanian, a transformation that persisted up until c.1860 when the Latin alphabet came to be used exclusively.¹⁸⁷ In Moldavia, important centers of writing

¹⁸⁴ Variants of the Church Slavonic language after the eleventh century include: Bulgarian, Serbian, Bosnian, Russian, Croatian, Slovenian, Czech, Slovakian, Polish, Ukrainian, and even aspects of Romanian. To this list we can add the documents written in Church Slavonic from Ragusa/Dubrovnik and Turkey.

¹⁸⁵ It is possible that this occurred sometime in the ninth century as Slavonic Orthodoxy was beginning to expand northward from Bulgaria. See Deletant, "Slavonic Letters in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania from the Tenth to the Seventeenth Centuries," 1-21; idem, "Some Aspects of the Byzantine Tradition in the Rumanian Principalities," 1-14; Nandriș, "The Earliest Contacts Between Slavs and Roumanians," 142-154; idem, "The Beginning of Slavonic Culture in the Roumanian Countries," 160-171.

¹⁸⁶ The orthographic changes to the Slavonic language introduced by Bishop Euthymius in the second half of the fourteenth century were part of a process of revitalization of the Bulgarian Slavic written culture that for two centuries prior was overshadowed by the use of the Greek language. This process included the reexamination of the alphabet and the rewriting and correcting of the books in Bulgaria, a complicated process associated with the Hesychast movement that also flourished in the fourteenth century.

Euthymius's orthography returned to the alphabet of Cyril and Methodius and modeled the Greek language in the use of diacritic marks and the manner of writing. In the 1370s, the Euthymian orthography was also introduced in Serbia under the Bulgarian Bishop Efrem, then Patriarch of Serbia, and in the region of Moscow and Kiev by Bishop Cyprian, Patriarch of Kiev, also of Serbian or Bulgarian descent. In 1423, the Bulgarian writer and chronicler Constantine of Kostenets (the Philosopher) (c.1380-after 1431) writes a new treatise on letters (*Skazanije o pismenah / A History of the Letters*) that explains the Euthymian orthography and the changes that it needed. This was the first Serbian philological study and the Serbs quickly adopted all of the newly proposed changes to the language (except for the nasal vowels, which were difficult to pronounce), giving rise to the so-called Resava Orthography predominant in Serbian and Wallachian texts of the fifteenth century. For the most recent study on the literary school of Tarnovo, see the dissertation by Pineda, "L'école littéraire de Târnovo (XIV-XVe siècles)."

¹⁸⁷ The Bible of Șerban from 1688 is the first Bible printed fully in Romanian with Cyrillic characters. After the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were united in 1859, a law was passed by Ion Ghică on 8 February 1860 that enforced the use of the Latin alphabet in all governmental communications. This law

in Church Slavonic during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries included the monasteries at Bistrița, Putna, and Neamț.¹⁸⁸

A number of surviving chronicles written in Church Slavonic recount significant historical events in Moldavia from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, which covers the years 1359 (the year of the establishment of the principality) to 1507, is the most detailed out of all the early chronicles.¹⁸⁹ Others include *The Putna Chronicle I*¹⁹⁰ and *The Putna Chronicle II*,¹⁹¹ as well as four other so-called “foreign” chronicles sent from Stephen’s court as diplomatic instruments to inform others of his deeds and Moldavia’s history: *The Moldo-Russian Chronicle*,¹⁹² *The Moldo-German Chronicle*,¹⁹³ *The Moldo-Polish Chronicle*,¹⁹⁴ and *The Moldo-Serbian Chronicle*.¹⁹⁵ It is likely that all of these texts had a common prototype from which they

predates a period in which both the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabet were used together, before the Latin alphabet was fully adopted.

¹⁸⁸ Similar Church Slavonic writing centers existed in Wallachia at the monasteries Tismana (c.1377), Vodița (1369-1374), and Cozia (consecrated 18 May 1388), as well as in Transylvania, at the monasteries Peri (first built in 1391), Prislop (1399-1405), Feleac (1488), and the Church of St. Nicholas at Scheii Brașovului (1495).

¹⁸⁹ The manuscript belonged to the Archpriest Ursu from Iași (at the turn of the eighteenth century), Priest Gheorghe from Baiceni (1710), Manco Giurgiov from Tulcea (1869) and the Bulgarian Club from Tulcea, where it was found by Ioan Bogdan who published the chronicle under the title *The Chronicle from Bistrița* in the volume *Cronice inedite atingătoare de istoria Românilor*, 3-78. Bogdan proposed that the manuscript was begun at Bistrița Monastery during the reign of Alexander the Good, sometime in the early fifteenth century. This chronicle was republished under the title *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* in Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 1-5 (introduction), 6-14 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 14-23 (for a Romanian translation). Given the emphasis placed on the events that took place during Stephen III’s reign and the great details with which they are recounted, Panaitescu argued that the chronicle was written sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century at Stephen’s court, under his guidance. The manuscript that incorporates *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* is a copy of the original chronicle written at Stephen’s court. It is small in scale, written on paper, and has 246 folios with some missing from the beginning and the end. *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* is found on folios 237v-246v. Today this manuscript belongs to the collection of the Romanian Academy Library, MS. slav. nr. 649.

¹⁹⁰ *The Putna Chronicle I*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 43-47 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 48-52 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁹¹ *The Putna Chronicle II*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 55-60 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 60-66 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁹² *The Moldo-Russian Chronicle*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 154-157 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 158-161 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁹³ *The Moldo-German Chronicle*. The chronicle covers the years 1457 to 1499 – the Romanian Academy Library microfilm nr. 18 after Cod. Lat. 952 from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek from Munich, fol. 287-298; copy from 1502 in German. A copy is found at the Central State Library, Bucharest. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 28-37 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁹⁴ *The Moldo-Polish Chronicle*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 167-177 (for the Polish transcription), 177-187 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁹⁵ *The Moldo-Serbian Chronicle*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 189-191 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 191-193 (for a Romanian translation).

derive the emphasis on particular events as well as some of their common language. Petre P. Panaitescu, who has closely studied these chronicles, drew a number of conclusions about these extant texts. First, he noted that *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* is the closest to the prototype because it has the most exact dates and lacks the anachronisms that are evident in the other examples, in part as a result of the copying process.¹⁹⁶ Second, because Stephen's reign receives the most attention in these texts, which glorify his accomplishments, and provide barely any detailed information or accounts about his predecessors, it is likely that the prototype dates to Stephen's reign and was perhaps even written at his court, at his behest.¹⁹⁷

The chronicles of the sixteenth century present a continuation of *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*. These include: *The Chronicle of Macarie*,¹⁹⁸ *The Chronicle of Eftimie*,¹⁹⁹ and *The Chronicle of Azarie*.²⁰⁰ Whereas Bishop Măcărie wrote under Peter Rareș, his two pupils, Father Superior Eftimie and the monk Azarie completed their texts under Peter's followers, Alexander Lăpușneanu and Peter Șchiopul, respectively.²⁰¹ The famous sixteenth-century chronicler Grigorie Ureche (1590-1647), whose text modern scholars often cite in their respective studies, reworked and translated into Romanian the Church Slavonic chronicles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²⁰² I draw extensively on the original fifteenth and sixteenth century chronicles written in Church Slavonic at Stephen's and Peter's courts.

All of the written sources in Church Slavonic that I reference in the main text and the footnotes are transcribed from the original and translated into English. The

¹⁹⁶ Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, x.

¹⁹⁷ Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, xi.

¹⁹⁸ *The Chronicle of Macarie* was written in middle-Bulgarian and covers the years 1504, from Stephen's death, and until 1551. It was published by Bogdan in *Vechile cornice moldovenesti până la Urechia*, 149-162 (for the transcription), 198-212 (for a Romanian translation); Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 74-77 (introduction), 77-90 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 90-105 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁹⁹ *The Chronicle of Eftimie*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 109-116 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 117-125 (for a Romanian translation).

²⁰⁰ *The Chronicle of Azarie*. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 129-139 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 139-151 (for a Romanian translation).

²⁰¹ On Măcărie, see Ulea, "O surprinzătoare personalitate a evului mediu Românesc: cronicarul Măcărie," 14-48.

²⁰² Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*. In Wallachia, by contrast, the chronicles in Church Slavonic that supposedly preceded the ones written in Romanian are lost. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, xiii.

transcriptions are broad meaning that they are reproduced for content and not for the purposes of a linguistic and/or orthographic analysis, which would require the additional transcription of accent marks over initial vowels or second vowels in a sequence or in digraphs, as well as other textual markings. The parentheses “()” included in certain words in the transcriptions denote the letters that have been omitted from the word as it was written in an abbreviated form. Thus, all of the words in the transcriptions are resolved, that is presented in forms true to the original word, and not shortened or abbreviated. Brackets “[]” in the transcriptions denote areas in which the written text has been damaged and/or is no longer legible. The letters and words found between the brackets are inserted on the basis of other (often similar) sources in an effort to suggest what the original inscription may have said. The brackets “[]” found in the English translations of the original texts mark my own clarifications of certain words, phrases, and dates.

The dates in particular need elucidation, since all are written in the Moldavian sources from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries according to the Byzantine Calendar.²⁰³ This system is based on the assumed date of the creation of the world, *Anno Mundi* / *A.M* (“year of the world”), which is calculated to have occurred about 5508 years before the birth of Christ. Thus, the dates I provide within the brackets in all references to original written sources are presented according to the Julian Calendar (reformed in 1582 as the Gregorian Calendar, or the western Christian Calendar), the calculation of which requires the subtraction of 5508 or 5509 from the date reckoned according to the Byzantine Calendar.²⁰⁴

Throughout the dissertation, personal names have been given the English equivalent (hence, Peter rather than Petru, Alexander rather than Alexandru, Stephen rather than Ștefan). For names of local towns, places, and sites, the Romanian version has

²⁰³ In fact, the Byzantine Calendar was most commonly used in Slavic-Byzantine written sources.

²⁰⁴ Because the Byzantine church year begins on 1 September, 5509 has to be subtracted from all dates recorded according to the Byzantine Calendar that fall between 1 September and 31 December. 5508 should be subtracted from all dates given according to the Byzantine Calendar that fall between January 1 and August 31. For example, the second *Tetraevangelion* gifted to Putna Monastery by Stephen III, and executed by monk Paladie, states that it was completed between 3 September and 23 March 6997, which corresponds with the dates: 3 September 1488 and 23 March 1489. The end of the dedicatory inscription placed at the end of the Gospel of John: “ЛѢТ(О) СІЦІЇЗ; И НАУА(А) М(Ъ)С(Е)ЦА СЕП(ТЕМВРІА) П И СЪВРЪШИ С(А) М(А)РТ(ІА) КІ.” *Repertoriul*, 393 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 398 (for a Romanian translation).

been reproduced (occasionally with the name of the region or place as given in other languages, according to contemporary primary sources, provided in parentheses “()”). All other specialized terminology in Romanian, Church Slavonic, Greek, and Latin, among other languages, that appear throughout the dissertation, is explained in footnotes.

Chapter Summaries

The arguments put forth in this project develop in seven chapters organized thematically and traversing individually, and as a group, the century-long period, roughly, from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the end of Peter’s reign in 1546. Certain sections of the chapters also discuss material from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, as well as sources from the second half of the sixteenth century and the initial decades of the seventeenth century. The three critical historical moments at the center of the discussion include the aftermath of the events of 1453, the year 7000 (1492) that, as it approached, was believed to mark the end of the world according to the beliefs of the Orthodox Christians, and the failed siege of Vienna in 1529 that provided a new sense of hope for Europe’s Christian leaders in their individual and collective opposition to the Ottoman Empire.

Chapter One serves as the introduction and, as such, provides an overview of the corpus at the crux of this project, and the particular historical and cultural circumstances within which it developed. These introductory pages also outline the historiography on the topic and serve to define my own contributions, as well as the sources, both primary and secondary, upon which I have drawn in preparing this study.

Chapter Two presents the historical circumstances under which the art and architecture of Moldavia took on a distinctive form beginning in the second half of the fifteenth century, during the reign of Stephen III. Moldavia’s relations with the Ottoman Empire and its Christian neighbors play a central role in the discussion, as do Stephen’s secular and ecclesiastical commissions. The chapter considers the ways in which some of Stephen’s churches and their particular iconographic programs reflected certain princely ambitions, and also contributed to framing a particular kind of identity for the patron.

Chapter Three focuses on the architectural vocabulary of the Moldavian churches and traces the development of certain features and spatial solutions of these buildings

from the fifteenth through the early sixteenth centuries in the context of Moldavia's contacts with its closer and more distant neighbors at this time. The chapter addresses the various church building traditions that shaped the eclectic visual rhetoric of the Moldavian churches, and finally engages with the notion of stylistic pluralism as evident in the Moldavian context.

Chapter Four centers on the iconographic programs of the churches and considers the dialogue between their architecture and image cycles in the context of the liturgical ceremonies carried out at these sites and as a means of structuring in dynamic ways sacred space and the experiences of the faithful.

The next two chapters engage with the visual manifestations of spiritual and dynastic concerns on the part of Moldavia's princes, and the ways in which some of the distinctive architectural features of the Moldavian *katholika* and certain aspects of their mural cycles presented a response to the political and military circumstances of the region.

Chapter Five addresses the visual manifestations of spiritual and dynastic concerns. These concerns took on a visual form in the monastic sphere most prominently through the development of the burial chamber as a distinct, clearly delineated space situated at the center of the monastic churches, and in aspects of the iconography of the interior and exterior murals of these special funerary rooms. The functions of the burial chamber are investigated within the framework of notions of perpetual remembrance and the spiritual economy of Salvation—issues in the context of which the votive paintings and the princely acts of gifting and donating goods and money to other monasteries, for example, are also considered.

Chapter Six examines how the Moldavian monastic churches functioned as repositories of history and memory, particularly during the first half of the sixteenth century, during Peter's rule, in the context of Moldavia's political and military relations with its neighbors and the Ottoman Empire at this crucial moment. The murals of *The Siege of Constantinople* with their rich historical allusions adapted to reflect local anxieties stand at the core of this chapter.

The last chapter, the epilogue, briefly surveys significant developments in Moldavian monastic church architecture and iconographic cycles during the second half

of the sixteenth century and the beginning decades of the century that followed. A concluding part provides an overview of the arguments put forth in the dissertation, and outlines a number of possible future directions for the study of the Moldavian corpus of ecclesiastical monuments.

A series of Appendices follow the text and the figures referenced. These include: a list of Moldavia's princes as well as those of its neighboring territories (Appendix 1); the text of the *Akathistos Hymn* (Appendix 2); a timetable of events for the period between 1453 and 1546 (from the fall of Constantinople and until Peter Rareș's death) (Appendix 3); and an extensive catalog of forty-five churches and other religious sites from Moldavia built between the late fourteenth and the early decades of the seventeenth century, with a particular focus on those edifices constructed, restored, and/or painted during the reigns of the two principal protagonists of this study, Stephen III "the Great" and Peter Rareș (Appendix 4). All of the buildings listed in the catalog are discussed or referenced, in various capacities, in the body of the dissertation (and especially in Chapter Three and Chapter Four). The comprehensive bibliography that concludes the dissertation is intended to serve as a point of departure for future analyses of the Moldavian corpus of monuments and art objects, as well as the important art historical, historical, social, and cultural issues that their study raises.

CHAPTER TWO

Princely Aspirations and Artistic Patronage

Introduction

The dramatic capture of Constantinople in 1453 and the Ottoman campaigns against Serbia and other regions of the Balkan Peninsula that followed suit dictated Moldavia's initial relations with the Ottoman Empire. This chapter looks at Moldavia's political and military contacts with its Christian neighbors, particularly Poland and Hungary, as well as the Ottoman Empire, during the second half of the fifteenth century. At this time, the throne was occupied by one of Moldavia's most notable rulers, Stephen III "the Great" (r. 1457-1504), under whose leadership the principality was consciously transformed into a bastion and buttress protector of the Christian faith. In the pages that follow, Stephen's secular and ecclesiastical commissions are discussed against the backdrop of Moldavia's changing political and military circumstances and in the context of Stephen's princely aspirations. A number of notable Romanian scholars—among them Dumitru Năstase, Ștefan S. Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, and Liviu Pilat—have discussed aspects of Stephen's ambitions—political, economic, ideological—during his long and successful reign.¹ These scholars, however, have largely based their analyses on the written record. I will focus my discussion on material survivals as well, stressing that the study of patterns in the artistic patronage (both secular and ecclesiastical) of this Moldavian prince provide significant insight into Stephen's aspirations and agendas at this critical moment in Moldavia's history.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

¹ See, most notably, Năstase, *Ideea imperială în Țările române*; idem, "Imperial Claims in the Romanian Principalities from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries. New Contributions," 185-224; idem, "Ștefan cel Mare împărat," 567-609; Gorovei, "1473 – Un an-cheie al domniei lui Ștefan cel Mare," 388-393; idem, and Székely, "'Semne și minuni' pentru Ștefan voievod," 67-85; Székely, "Ștefan cel Mare și cultul Sfintei Cruci," 81-112; Pilat, "Modelul constantinian și imaginarul epocii lui Ștefan cel Mare," 429-444; idem, "Cultul Sfintei Cruci în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare," 5-16; idem, *Între Roma și Bizanț*.

Under Stephen's strong and determined leadership, and as a result of his long and prosperous rule during which Moldavia experienced extended periods of internal economic, political, and religious stability, the art and architecture of the region flourished. This was to prove particularly true in the ecclesiastical sphere, as this chapter and the ones that follow will demonstrate. As I will argue, the artistic production of Moldavia during the second half of the fifteenth century, in good part as a result of Stephen's extensive patronage, took on a distinctive visual and symbolic vocabulary. On the one hand, his projects presented a response to the political and military crisis that was overtaking the Balkan Peninsula and east-central Europe as the Ottoman forces were steadily advancing westward. On the other hand, the art and architecture of Moldavia communicated Stephen's princely ambitions, which, as will be revealed, were always grand in character.

Moldavia *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman Empire after 1453

Contemporary sources such as chronicles, imperial charters, letters, petitions, and reports, are not particularly straightforward on the nature of the initial interactions between Moldavia and the Ottomans. It appears from the extant sources that Moldavia, along with other Black Sea states like the Principality of Theodoro (Gothia) and the Empire of Trebizond, among others—polities that maintained political, military, and/or religious ties with the Byzantine Empire throughout their existence—was forced to recognize Ottoman suzerainty and pay an annual tribute to the Porte sometime soon after the events of 1453.² Although the exact date at which Moldavia became a tributary state³ is difficult to establish, the principality ratified a peace agreement or treaty (*'ahdnâme*) with the Porte sometime after 1455, during the second reign of Peter Aron.⁴ Sultan Mehmed II issued a document to Peter Aron on 5 October in which he outlined the

² On Moldavia as a tributary state of the Ottoman Porte, see Papacostea, "La Moldavie, état tributaire de l'Empire Ottoman au XVe siècle: le cadre international des rapports établis en 1455-1456," 445-461; Căndea, "L'État ottoman et "le Monde de l'alliance": remarques sur le statut international des Principautés danubiennes du XVe au XIXe siècle," 237-249; Gemil, *Români și otomanii în secolele XIV-XVI*; Maxim, *O istorie a relațiilor româno-otomane, cu documente noi din arhive turcești*. See also Grigoraș, *A existat un tratat de pace între Mehmed II și Ștefan cel Mare?*.

³ Ottoman-Turkish: *harâçgüzâr*; Latin: *tributarius*.

⁴ The principalities of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania enjoyed the status of *dar al-'ahd* (Land of Agreement), serving as tributary states, which differentiated them from other regions under the direct administration of the Ottomans labeled as *dar al-İslâm* (Land of Islam). Maxim, *Romano-Ottomanica*, 13.

conditions of a peace settlement between Moldavia and the Porte, requesting a punctual annual payment of 2,000 gold ducats in return for peace. The agreement reads:

From the great sovereign and great Emir Sultan Mehmed Bey to the noble, wise, and estimable Peter, voivode and prince of Moldavia [*Morovlahia*].⁵ Receive friendly greetings, Your Excellency. You have sent your messenger, the boyar and chancellor Mihail. And My Highness has taken note of all the words he has said. If you send My Highness *harac* [tribute] in the amount of 2,000 gold ducats each year, let there be perfect peace [between us]. And I grant you a delay of three months. If [the tribute] arrives within this time, let there be complete peace with My Highness. But if it does not arrive, you know [what will happen]. And let God rejoice you! On the fifth day of October, in Sarukhanbeyli [Saranovo or Saranbei, near Tatar Pazardzhik]!⁶

On 9 June 1456, the Sultan sent another letter to the Moldavian prince in which he recognized Peter's acceptance of the peace conditions—an action that is said to have “eliminated the hostility” between these two leaders and their domains.⁷

In addition to the annual tribute, Moldavia was responsible for providing military support to the Porte's campaigns, if requested to do so.⁸ The first recorded Moldavian-Ottoman collaboration, in which Moldavia provided troops to an Ottoman military operation, took place in 1462 with the expedition against Chilia Fortress—a siege that was part of Sultan Mehmed II's campaigns against the principality of Wallachia and its

⁵ Morovlahia or “Black Wallachia” in reference to Moldavia.

⁶ The document is damaged and the year is missing; it is dated October 5 and was likely written in 1455. This source is found in microfilm in the National Archives in Bucharest, Microfilm Polonia, rola 1, c.118, 245. The original is found in Archiwum Głowne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Skarbu Koronnego, Dz. Turec., pack 1, no. 1. A Romanian translation of this letter is published in Mehmed, ed., *Documente Turcești privind istoria României*, 1-2. The translation here is corrected and adapted from the English translation reproduced in Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Times*, 137.

⁷ “Aradan düşmanlığı köterdün.” This document is found in microfilm in the National Archives in Bucharest, Microfilm Polonia, rola 1, c.119, 243. The original is found in Archiwum Głowne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Skarbu Koronnego, Dz. Turec., pack 2, no. 3. A Church Slavonic transcription and a Latin translation is published in Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, II/2, 671. A Romanian translation of this letter is published in Mehmed, ed., *Documente Turcești privind istoria României*, 2-3.

⁸ Ovidiu Cristea analyzes the participation of the Moldavian and Wallachian princes in Ottoman campaigns. See Cristea, “The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns,” 253-274.

prince, Vlad Țepeș.⁹ The sources, however, are silent on any definitive military or diplomatic ties between Moldavia and the Ottomans before this time. Unlike the other states south of the Danube River, such as Serbia, for example, Moldavia never became a *pashalic*. Thus, it retained its autonomy. In exchange for the tribute payment of *harac* (*harâc*), presenting official gifts to the sultan and his dignitaries, and providing military support, Moldavia's freedoms included an acknowledgement of the frontiers of the principality, the authority of its princes in their domain, the retention of former laws and customs, liberties of action in foreign affairs, respect for the Orthodox faith and its rituals, and, perhaps most importantly, limitations to the presence of the Ottomans in the land.¹⁰

The collaboration between Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire significantly weakened after Stephen's ascent to Moldavia's throne in 1457.¹¹ In his efforts to distance his realm from the Porte's control and political ambitions, Stephen torpedoed the peace agreement with the Ottomans by no longer paying the *harac*. Tensions mounted between the two powers until eventually the Ottomans embarked on a series of attacks against Moldavia.¹² Regarded by the Ottomans in times of war as "infidels" (*harbiler*) or "enemy infidels" (*harbi küffar*) because of their strong Christian beliefs, the Moldavians came to be part of the so-called "house of war" (*dar ül-harb*, *dar-i harb*, *harbi vilayetleri*), which included all foreign territories under the Porte's control and those north of the Danube River.¹³ In fact, from June 1459 onward—when Serbia's last capital, Smederevo, fell to the Ottomans and Serbia officially became a *pashalic* (although it had already been under partial Ottoman suzerainty following the Battle of Kosovo in 1389)—the Ottoman

⁹ External sources explicitly state this Moldavian-Ottoman collaboration. The *Chronicle of Laonikos Chalkokondyles* records this event, as does a Venetian report from Constantinople dated 28 July 1462, and a letter from a Genoese of Kaffa to Casimir IV Jagiellon of Poland dated 2 April 1462. See Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chilie și Cetății-Albe*, 124-125. Moldavian sources, however, do not mention the Ottoman collaboration in this siege of Chilia Fortress. The "Constantinian model" applied to the writing of these historical texts, however, may explain the lack of references to the Ottoman involvement. See Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII*, 69, 146; Pilat, *Între Roma și Bizanț*, 461-474.

¹⁰ Maxim, *Romano-Ottomanica*, 21.

¹¹ On Stephen's ascension to the Moldavian throne in 1457 and his conflict with Peter Aron see, most recently, Lefter, "12 aprilie 1457: o problem de logică istorică," 299-310; Pilat, "Doljești – 12 aprilie 1457," 311-320.

¹² See Rosetti, "Stephen the Great of Moldavia and the Turkish Invasion (1457-1504)," 87-103.

¹³ Panaite, "The Legal and Political Status of Wallachia and Moldavia in Relation to the Ottoman Porte," 10-11. For a more detailed discussion see idem, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace*, 77-126.

pressure on the Danube and their presence in the Carpathian Mountain regions considerably increased. By 1462, the Ottomans were engaging in an extensive campaign against Wallachia; by 1470 they were fighting regularly against the Moldavians. The Ottomans were supported, in part, by Wallachian armies under their governance. Gory battles against the Ottomans, detailed in the contemporary chronicles (Moldavian and Ottoman) and a number of significant letters and reports, took place in 1475 at Vaslui, in 1476 at Războieni, in 1481 at Râmnic, in 1485 at Cătlăbuga, and in 1486 at Scheia—to name but a few of these military confrontations.¹⁴ It is important to note here that these major battles between Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire span a period of just a little over a decade during which Stephen was redefining his role as Moldavia's leader and protector of his domain and the Christian faith at large.

Although Stephen had initially been successful in his first major encounter with the Ottomans, at Vaslui on 10 January 1475, he failed the following year.¹⁵ Stephen and his armies were also defeated at the battle of 26 July 1476 in Războieni, waged by the Ottomans under Sultan Mehmed II with support from Wallachia.¹⁶ The campaign against Moldavia was initiated because Stephen refused to deliver personally or even pay the annual tribute, as stipulated by the Porte.¹⁷ In fact, by 1476 the tribute payment had already been overdue by three years. A campaign against Moldavia ensued, during which

¹⁴ See Appendix 3 for a more detailed account of the events that took place between 1453 and 1546.

¹⁵ On the battle from 1475, see Esarcu, "Documente inedite din biblioteca ambrosiană de la Milan, relative la victoria lui Ștefan cel Mare de la Racova 1475," 420-425; Rosetti, *Încercări critice asupra războaielor din anii 1475 și 1476 dintre Ștefan cel Mare și Turci*; Culici, "Racova sau Podul Înalt. Bătălia de lângă Vaslui. 10 ianuarie 1475," 84-87; Radu, *Bătălia de la Podul Înalt – 10 ianuarie 1475 între Ștefan cel Mare și Suleiman Pașa*; Cupșa, "Vaslui 10 ianuarie 1475: Marea biruință a lui Ștefan cel Mare," 6-9, 11; Cristea, "La chronique de Benedetto Dei sur la guerre moldo-ottomane, 1475-1476," 375-377; Mehmet, "Un document turc concernant le kharatch de la Moldavie et de la Valachie aux XVe-XVIe siècles," 265-274, 271 (image of the document), 272 (for a transcription of the original document), 273-274 (for a French translation).

¹⁶ On the battle from 1476, see Rosetti, *Încercări critice asupra războaielor din anii 1475 și 1476 dintre Ștefan cel Mare și Turci*; Culici, "Campania din 1476 contra Moldovei. Ștefan cel Mare și Mohamed II. Bătălia de la Valea Albă-Războieni," 69-93; Kogălniceanu, *Bătălia de la Războieni*; Gemil, "Fetiș-name a sultanului Mehmed al II-lea privind Campania din 1476 împotriva Moldovei," 252-258; Cristea, "La chronique de Benedetto Dei sur la guerre moldo-ottomane, 1475-1476," 375-377; Olteanu, *Lupta de la Valea Albă (1476)*.

¹⁷ The Ottoman historian and chronicler Ashik Pasha-Zade (1400-1484) recounted that Sultan Mehmed II requested of Stephen sometime prior to the summer of 1476: "This time you must deliver the tribute yourself, just as the ruler of Wallachia does [Basarab Laiotă the Old], and be with us just like Wallachia's ruler, so that we may know the way in which you are with us." The chronicle continues that Stephen disregarded the Sultan's message and did not arrive before the Porte with the requested tribute. Guboglu and Mehmet, eds., *Cronici Turcești*, I, 95.

the Ottomans and the Wallachians attacked from the south, while the Crimean Tatars joined their forces and entered Moldavia from the east.¹⁸ The outcome was devastating for the Moldavians and for Stephen's armies (although they defeated the Tatars before these could join forces with the Ottomans and the Wallachians). The Ottoman grand vizier and chronicler Hadim Suleiman Pasha (Orudj Bin Adil) (in office 1474-1490) recounts the events of 1476 as follows:

...Sultan Mehmed carried out an expedition in the land of Kara-Bogdan¹⁹ [Moldavia], a country that was burned down and devastated. He met the Moldavian armies in a fortified valley [*derbend*] protected from all sides. Bringing along cannons and guns, [the Ottomans] destroyed the main gate [of the fortress]... Sultan Mehmed overthrew all the nonbelievers [the Moldavian armies], passing them through the sword.²⁰

The Moldavians suffered great losses in that battle and the defeat reverberated throughout the Christian lands.²¹ *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* recounts the events and outcome as follows:

There was great sadness in Moldavia at that time, and in all the countries nearby and among all Christian believers, when they heard that the good and brave warriors, and grand nobles, and the good and young soldiers, and the entire good, brave, and chosen army [the Moldavians], fell to the hands of those with infidel and pagan tongues and those pagan

¹⁸ A letter from the governor of the Crimean khan written to Sultan Mehmed II on October 10-19, 1476 describes the losses of the Tatars in their expedition against Moldavia and Stephen in 1476. A Romanian translation of this letter is published in Mehmed, ed., *Documente Turcești privind istoria României*, I, 4-5. Giovanni Maria Angiollelo in his *Historia Turchesca* also mentioned that 12,000 Wallachian forces aided Mehmed II's campaign in Moldavia in 1476. See da Lezza, *Historia Turchesca, 1300-1514*, 89; Gemil, "Două documente tătarești referitoare la campania din 1476 a sultanului Mehmet al II-lea în Moldova," 185-194.

¹⁹ The Turkic word *kara* meaning "black," "north," "chief," or "great." *Boğdan* denoting the first Moldavian ruler. The Ottoman name for Moldavia, in the sources, was Kara-Bogdan. See, especially, Lăzărescu-Zobian, "Cumania as the Name of Thirteenth Century Moldavia and Eastern Wallachia," 266, n. 12.

²⁰ Guboglu and Mehmet, eds., *Cronici Turcești*, I, 62.

²¹ See, for example, the message from Stephen to the Venetians and the Pope, sent through his messenger and uncle John Țamblac, delivered on 8 May 1478. See n. 119 in this chapter.

Wallachians who parted with the pagans and fought on their side against the Christians.²²

The *'ahdname-i hümayun* issued by Mehmed II in 1479—one of the few peace agreements of this nature to survive—outlined the reasons for the launch of the overwhelming operation against Moldavia in 1476, and highlighted the clauses of the new peace treaty between the two powers.²³ According to this binding document, peace would be restored in Moldavia and no threats would come from the Ottoman forces, or anyone under their control, as long as the annual tribute—raised to 6,000 forints (*Sikke-i Efren-i filori*) in the aftermath of the conflict—was paid on time and in full. In this way, Stephen and his principality were to become “the friend of the [Porte’s] friends and the enemy of [the Porte’s] enemies.”²⁴ Stephen may have accepted this agreement initially.

These conditions were short-lived, however. With the death of Mehmed II on 3 May 1481, Stephen once again ignored the conditions of the peace agreement, refusing to pay the annual *harac*. As a result, another period of military conflict ensued for Moldavia. Under Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), Moldavia’s key strongholds on the Black Sea, the fortresses at Chilia and Cetatea Albă—two places that also served as important shipping centers—were seized by the Ottomans following their campaign in

²² *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fols. 241v, 242r: “И быст тогда скръзь велѣа въ Молдаветан земли и въсам вколним землем и господам и православним христѣаном, възнегда слышаша ѣако падоша добрии и храбрии вѣтажи и великии болѣри и добрии и млади юнѣци и добра и храбра и избранна воиска и съ храбрыми хуцари под ржки невѣрних и поганских ѣзик и под ржки поганих Моунтан, ѣако причѣстници биша поганым и биша въ оучѣстие их на христѣанство.” Panaitescu, *Cronicile Slavo-Române din sec. XV-XVI*, 9 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 18 (for a Romanian translation).

²³ The original document is found in MS. 3369, folios 47-49 (*Münşe'at*), fond. Esad Efendi, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Istanbul. It is also found in microfilm form at the National Archives in Bucharest, Microfilm Turcia, rola 2, c.204-205. A Romanian translation of the text is published in Mehmed, ed., *Documente Turcești privind istoria României*, 5-7. See also Decei, “Tratatul de pace - sulhnâme - încheiat între sultanul Mehmed II și Ștefan cel Mare, la 1479,” 465-494. A number of Romanian scholars have contested the authenticity of this document, as with others from this period, arguing that it is in fact an eighteenth-century fabrication. I consider this source authentic. On Moldavia’s status relative to the Ottoman Porte in this period, see Mehmed, “Un document turc concernant le kharatch de la Moldavie et de la Valachie aux XV^e - XVI^e siècles,” 265-274, 271 (image of the document), 272 (for a transcription of the original document), 273-274 (for a French translation); idem, “La politique ottomane à l’égard de la Moldavie et du khanat de Crimée vers la fin du règne du sultan Mehmed II ‘le Conquérant,’” 509-533. Gorovei, “Moldova în ‘Casa Păcii’. Pe marginea izvoarelor privind primul secol de relații moldo-otomane,” 640-641.

²⁴ As stipulated in the *'ahdname-i hümayun* issued by Mehmed II in 1479. Mehmed, ed., *Documente Turcești privind istoria României*, 6.

the summer and fall of 1484.²⁵ This movement was triggered, in part, by Stephen's refusal to pay the annual tribute, which was by then already three years overdue—a situation similar to that of 1476.

The following year, in the fall of 1485, Stephen again battled the Ottomans forcing them to retreat as far as Chilia Fortress in September, while in November, supported by Polish horsemen, he defeated the Ottomans at the battle of Cătlăbuga. Although Stephen and his armies emerged victorious against the Ottomans again at the battle of Scheia in the spring of 1486, that same year he once again finalized a peace agreement with the Porte.²⁶ This treaty with the Ottomans marked the beginning of a short-lived period of peace and stability for Moldavia. This is when Stephen directed his attention away from the intense civic building campaigns that had occupied the first thirty years of his reign, which are discussed next, and toward the building of churches and monastic sites throughout his land, which will be addressed later on in this chapter.

Fortresses and Royal Courts

Between 1457 and 1487 Stephen engaged in an extensive project to fortify heavily Moldavia at key sites, initially in anticipation of, and then in response to, the Ottoman incursions into his realm. Following the battle of Vaslui on 10 January 1475, in which Stephen and his army emerged triumphant despite being outnumbered by the Ottoman forces three to one, Stephen directed even more attention to his civic building campaigns, making the rebuilding of Moldavia's major fortresses and fortified royal courts one of his main priorities.²⁷ He first built or rebuilt a royal court in every one of the main towns in the regions, stimulating the development of civic and economic life there, as well as making a public demonstration of his control and resources.²⁸ Suceava,

²⁵ On the siege of the fortresses at Chilia and Cetatea Albă see, most recently, Simon, "Chilia și Cetatea Albă în vara anului 1484: noi documente din arhivele italiene," 177-196.

²⁶ On the peace agreement from 1486 between Moldavia and the Porte, see Cristea, "Pacea din 1486 și relațiile lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Imperiul Otoman în ultima parte a domniei," 25-36; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps omni laudae maior: O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 238-248.

²⁷ See Chițescu, "Privire asupra fortificațiilor Moldovei în sec. XIV-XVI," 63-80; Floareș, *Fortificațiile Moldovei din secolele XIV-XVII*.

²⁸ The following royal courts were built and/or rebuilt by Stephen during his reign: Suceava (built in the second half of the fifteenth century and rebuilt after the Turkish attack of 1485), Hârlău (rebuilt around 1486 a fourteenth-century royal court), Bacău (first mentioned in a document from 1462; rebuilt in the fifteenth century), Iași (rebuilt an early fifteenth-century royal court), Vaslui (rebuilt a court first mentioned

the capital of Moldavia at the time, had one of the largest fortified royal courts. It later became Stephen's favorite winter residence.²⁹ Between 1476 and 1479, Stephen strengthened the key fortresses in the north and west of the principality, and then the fortresses at Cetatea Albă and Chilia in the south. Sultan Mehmed II recognized early on the significance of the latter two strongholds, revealing after his campaign in Wallachia in 1462 that "as long as Chilia and Cetatea Albă belong to the Romanians, and the Hungarians hold Serbian Belgrade, we [the Ottomans] will have no victory over the Christians."³⁰ Even the Ottoman historian and chronicler Tursun Beg (b. mid-1420s) described Chilia Fortress as "the lock [*kilit*] to Moldavia."³¹ Once it was to be captured, the path to the principality and to other lands could finally be unlocked.³²

The fortresses (sg. *grada*) at Suceava,³³ Neamț,³⁴ Cetatea Albă,³⁵ Chilia,³⁶ Orheiul Vechi,³⁷ Roman,³⁸ Țețina,³⁹ Tighina, Brăila, Hotin,⁴⁰ and Soroca,⁴¹ as well as the royal

in 1435; the earliest document written at this court survives from 1464), Huși (new), Dorohoi (new), Popăuți-Botoșani (new), Cotnari (perhaps newly built or rebuilt; only one document survives written at this court on 25 March 1454), and Piatra Neamț (new court first mentioned in a document from 1491). See also *Repertoriul*, 231-237.

²⁹ This is based on the surviving correspondences written from the court in Suceava most often dated between the months of October/November and April/May. A cursory glance at the documents published in Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, supports this observation.

³⁰ According to Constantin Mihailovici de Ostrovita (1435-after 1501), who was taken prisoner by the Ottomans in 1455, brought to Constantinople, and made a janissary, this is what the Sultan said to Radu the Handsome (*r.* 1462-1475; with interruptions), brother of Prince Vlad Țepeș (*r.* 1448-1462; with interruptions; 1476-1477), after his Wallachian campaign of 1462. The original Polish text is published in Hașdeu, *Arhiva istorică a României*, repr., I/2, 8-10 (for the Polish original), 10-11 (for a Romanian translation). A Romanians translation of the Polish original also appeared in Holban, ed., *Călători Străini*, I, 128.

³¹ Guboglu and Mehmet, eds., *Cronici Turcești*, I, 77.

³² Guboglu and Mehmet, eds., *Cronici Turcești*, I, 78: "Lacătul acelu ținut era Chilia, deoarece, după ce a fost cucerită, s-au deschis drumurile și către alte țări. Când șahul lumii a deschis calea luptei sfinte, el a devenit stăpânul lumii de aici și de dincolo." / "The lock to that country [Moldavia] was Chilia, because once it was captured the roads opened to other countries as well. When the key piece opened the way for holy war, he [the Sultan] became the ruler of the world from here to there."

³³ Suceava Fortress was first attested to in a charter from 10 February 1388. The fortress was enlarged between 1476 and 1479. Sion, "Fortress of Suceava, Romania," 186-187. See also *Repertoriul*, 225-230 (with bibliography).

³⁴ Neamț Fortress was first mentioned in a document from 1395 in which it was referred to as "Castrum Nempch." It was restored and enlarged between 1476 and 1479. Sion, "Fortress of Neamț, Romania," 188-189. See also *Repertoriul*, 220-224 (with bibliography).

³⁵ The fortress at Cetatea Albă was rebuilt and enlarged by Stephen in 1476. See *Repertoriul*, 217-219 (with bibliography). Russian: Belgorod; Turkish: Akkerman; Italian: Maurocastro, Albo Castro.

³⁶ Chilia Fortress, for example, was rebuilt entirely in just a few months. *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* (fol. 242r) states that on 22 June 1479 work started on the fortress at Chilia and it was completed on 16 July of the same year. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 10 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 18 (for a Romanian translation). The fourteenth entry in *The Moldo-German Chronicle*, fol. 294v, states: "On July 22, 6987 [1479], the price [Stephen III] started building Chilia, and

courts in Cotnari,⁴² Bacău,⁴³ Vaslui,⁴⁴ Suceava,⁴⁵ Piatra Neamț,⁴⁶ Hârlău,⁴⁷ Huși,⁴⁸ Iași,⁴⁹ and Siret,⁵⁰ were also rebuilt and enlarged in these initial decades of Stephen's rule. These sites, strategically located at weaker border crossings and near main roads and princely residences, played crucial roles in protecting Moldavia from foreign attacks throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The "border fortresses" delineated the perimeter of the principality: in the north-east the fortresses at Hotin, Soroca, Tighina, and Cetatea Albă, in the south the strongholds at Chilia, Brăila, and Crăciuna, and in the west, in Transylvania, the fortresses at Ciceu and Baltă. The "support fortresses" that provided assistance to the main border forts included in the east Țețina (east of Hotin and Suceava), and Orheiul Vechi (behind Soroca). The strongholds at Suceava, Neamț, and Roman could be categorized as "interior fortresses" since they provided a second line of

he finished it in the same summer with the help of 80 master masons and 17,000 additional helpers." Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 34 (for a Romanian translation). See *Repertoriul*, 219-220 (with bibliography).

³⁷ The fortress at Orheiul Vechi was rebuilt between 1469 and 1470. See *Repertoriul*, 225 (with bibliography).

³⁸ The new fortress at Roman was completed in stone in 1483. The earlier fortress was mentioned first in a document from 30 March 1392. Bucharest State Archive, Peciți, no. 111. *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 3, doc.2. See *Repertoriul*, 225 (with bibliography).

³⁹ The fortress at Țețina dates to the last decades of the fourteenth century. It was rebuilt during Stephen's reign and destroyed at the end of the fifteenth century. It is last mentioned in a letter from 23 August 1481 written by Stephen in Suceava to the Bishop in Rădăuți. Archive at Putna Monastery, Inv.nr.636. *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 363-364 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 364-365 (for a Romanian translation).

⁴⁰ The fortress at Hotin was built under Alexander the Good in the initial decades of the fifteenth century and significantly expanded under Stephen's patronage. It was rebuilt once more during the reign of Peter Rareș as it served as an important northern stronghold.

⁴¹ The fortress at Soroca was strengthened initially and then rebuilt in 1499.

⁴² The royal court in Cotnari dates to the early decades of Stephen's rule. The only extant document written at the court in Cotnari dates to 25 March 1454. See *Repertoriul*, 230-234 (with bibliography).

⁴³ The royal court in Bacău was built c.1462. See *Repertoriul*, 231 (with bibliography).

⁴⁴ Mentioned as early as 1435, the royal court in Vaslui became one of Stephen's active residences beginning in 1464. See *Repertoriul*, 237 (with bibliography).

⁴⁵ The royal court in Suceava was built sometime during the second half of the fifteenth century and destroyed by the Ottomans in 1485. See *Repertoriul*, 237.

⁴⁶ The royal court in Piatra Neamț dates to before 1491. See *Repertoriul*, 236 (with bibliography).

⁴⁷ The royal court in Hârlău was rebuilt by Stephen in 1496. See *Repertoriul*, 234-235 (with bibliography).

⁴⁸ Although it no longer survives, the court in Huși was built by Stephen sometime during the initial decades of his rule. See *Repertoriul*, 235 (with bibliography).

⁴⁹ Stephen enlarged the court in Iași, which is first mentioned in 1408. See *Repertoriul*, 235-236 (with bibliography).

⁵⁰ The fortified royal court in Siret dates from the last decades of the fourteenth century, being rebuilt sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century.

defense. This cleverly-devised infrastructure of fortresses and royal courts ensured the protection of the principality from all sides.

At these sites, under Stephen's patronage, curtain walls between three to six meters in thickness with a parapet at the top were erected around the compounds and multi-level, powerful towers were placed all around, with the top-most levels used primarily for culverin cannons. All of the fortified sites were equipped with artillery in response to contemporary military tactics. Deep dry moats surrounded the fortresses. Their gates, the most vulnerable sections, were strongly fortified. The strongholds likely had palisades and ramparts all around, although these structures no longer survive. Unlike the fortresses of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries that had rectilinear fortification walls and square towers placed at the corners of the compounds—as was the case at the fortresses at Neamț and Suceava, for example (Fig. 2.1)—the rebuilding projects carried out under Stephen's patronage resulted in more expansive polygonal *enceintes* and semi-cylindrical defensive towers placed around the perimeter of the strongholds.⁵¹ This is evident, for example, in the rebuilding of the bastions at Suceava (Fig. 2.2) and Neamț (Fig. 2.3).

Suceava Fortress (also known as the Peter Mușat Fort) was initially erected during the reign of Peter II Mușat in the last decades of the fourteenth century (Fig. 2.2). The site was designed as a square fort, measuring 45 meters in length and 45 meters in width, with rectilinear corner towers as well as towers along the middle of its eastern, southern, and western walls. Additionally, steep hills protected the original stronghold at Suceava along its western and northern sides, while deep dry moats surrounded the other two sides. Although restorations and alteration to the original format of the fortress were carried out under Alexander the Good in the early decades of the fifteenth century, the most significant extensions were undertaken under Stephen's patronage, between 1476 and 1479. Stephen reshaped the rectilinear inner precinct, expanding the fortress with a tall polygonal wall with square towers set about 20 to 25 meters from the main fort. This new wall was further strengthened by an outer bailey, an enclosure 4-6 meters in thickness

⁵¹ Gheorghiu, *Arhitectura medievală de apărare din România*, 196. In addition to the masonry fortifications, wooden ones existed as well during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. They no longer survive today, but they are mentioned in documents from the period. See Grigoraș, "Vechi cetăți moldovenești," 132-153.

that extended in rounded bastions around the towers. This additional wall was erected in response to the heavy use of artillery in contemporary combat. A larger moat, 30 meters wide and 15 meters deep, reinforced by a counterscarp, was dug outside of the new wall for additional protection. These modifications to the original stronghold proved effective. Suceava Fortress withheld successfully the Ottoman siege of 1476 and many other attacks thereafter. In fact, throughout the fifteenth century and in the centuries that followed the fortress was never captured.⁵²

Neamț Fortress, the other notable Moldavian stronghold, also dates to the reign of Peter II Mușat (Fig. 2.3). The original form of this structure was roughly trapezoidal, measuring 36 by 50 by 38 by 40 meters. It was originally built with four-sided interior corner towers. Under Stephen's patronage, this fortress was expanded and strengthened. Stephen added an outer bailey on the north side with rounded flanking towers equipped for artillery at the corners and along the middle of the curtain wall. The outer bailey extended about 20 meters from the original structure. These modifications reinforced the initial fortress and would help deter the attacks of the Ottoman, Hungarian, and Polish armies that were to take place after 1476.⁵³

The original appearance of the fortresses in Suceava and Neamț—presenting rectilinear structures with square towers and an interior courtyard surrounded by buildings adjoining the outer *enceinte* (Fig. 2.1)—resembles a type of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century western and southern European fortification known as *Kastellburg* and ultimately derived from the Roman legionary *castrum*.⁵⁴ Given these formal architectural parallels, western forms may have been mediated through Hungary, as well as Poland and the Baltic states—regions with which Moldavia established economic and political contacts. The early-fifteenth-century Moldavian military constructions share

⁵² Suceava Fortress witnessed further repairs and restorations during the reigns of Alexander Lăpușneanu (r. 1552-1561; 1564-1568), Vasile Lupu (r. 1634-1653), and Dumitrașcu Cantacuzino (r. 1673-1674; 1674-1675; 1684-1685). Between 1894 and 1904 the Austrian architect Karl A. Romstörfer carried out excavations at this site. In the middle of the twentieth century, between 1951 and 1959, archaeological investigations continued at Suceava Fortress under the supervision of the Archeological Institute “Vasile Pârvan” from Bucharest. Today the site is under restoration. Sion, “Fortress of Suceava, Romania,” 187.

⁵³ Neamț Fortress was restored under the leadership of Vasile Lupu in the first half of the seventeenth century. The first archaeological investigations at this site took place between 1939 and 1942. Extensive restorations were carried out between 1950 and 1959 and then again between 1962 and 1965. Sion, “Fortress of Neamț, Romania,” 188-189.

⁵⁴ Italian: *castello*; French: *château*; German: *Burg*

similarities with fortifications such as the Kuressaare Castle in the capital of Saaremaa (the largest island off the west coast of modern-day Estonia) that dates back to the 1380s, and was restored during the sixteenth century (Fig. 2.4), as well as Ciechanów Castle in the town of the same name in Poland, built in the fourteenth century by the Masovian Dukes⁵⁵ (Fig. 2.5).⁵⁶ Similar fortification sites existed also in the northeastern parts of the Balkans, particularly in Bulgaria, as evident in the plan of the “Baba Vida” Fortress in Vidin, built initially during the thirteenth century and modified during the fourteenth century (Fig. 2.6).⁵⁷

The enlargements undertaken on the Moldavian fortresses during Stephen’s reign reveal the impact of the new warfare technology on military architecture in the region. Especially at Suceava Fortress, the massive curtain walls of the outer bailey (up to 6 meters in thickness), with rounded flanking towers that protected the square towers of the original fortress, were devised primarily to protect against the cannons that were rapidly becoming the preferred siege weapons. Comparable modifications took place a little over a decade earlier, sometime after 1461, on the town walls of Dubrovnik, for instance.⁵⁸

Moreover, the new, expanded forms of the Moldavian fortresses, and some of their more particular details like the conical roofs over the towers, found visual expressions in other contemporary examples, like the murals of *The Siege of Constantinople* painted on the exterior of monastic churches from Moldavia during the first half of the sixteenth century (a subject addressed in Chapter Four and explored in detail in Chapter Six), as well as on the lavish *pyle*⁵⁹ commissioned by Stephen’s son Bogdan III in 1510 and executed at Putna Monastery by monks Mardarie, Ioil, and

⁵⁵ The Duchy of Masovia was part of the Polish Crown beginning in 1351 and until 1526 when the region was incorporated into the Jagiellonian Polish Kingdom.

⁵⁶ As Nicolescu has noted, Polish-Lithuanian masons have worked in Moldavia during the first half of the fifteenth century, a fact which suggests earlier contacts between the artistic traditions of Moldavia and its northern neighbor. More specially, in 1421 a group of Lithuanian masons was brought to Moldavia to work on the restoration of the fortress at Cetatea Albă. Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 616; Nicolescu, “Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 281.

⁵⁷ The fortress is one of the most important extant medieval sites in Vidin, and it is named after a legendary aristocratic woman by the name of Vida who supposedly owned the fortress at one point. The present plan of the fortress consists of a rectilinear arrangement of fortified walls measuring 70 meters by 73 meters with square and rectangular towers at, and near, the corners and at the entrance. Chaneva-Dechevska, “Baba Vida Fortress, Vidin, Bulgaria,” 174-177.

⁵⁸ Ćurčić, “Architecture in the Age of Insecurity: An Introduction to Secular Architecture in the Balkans, 1300-1500,” 35.

⁵⁹ A *pyle* (πύλη) is a curtain or veil for the Royal Doors or central doors of the iconostasis in an Orthodox church.

Zosima (Fig. 2.7).⁶⁰ The embroidery was finished on 15 August 1510 and gifted to Putna Monastery. Surrounding the central scene of the *Dormition of the Virgin*, twelve roundels with vegetal borders depict the sites (in the form of fortifications) from which the twelve Apostles came to Jerusalem for the Virgin's funeral. Particularly noteworthy is that the architectural features of these fortified locales correspond to those of late-fifteenth century fortresses and royal courts from Moldavia built or rebuilt under Stephen's patronage.⁶¹

Stephen's First Churches

By the spring of 1487, Stephen's military projects and strategic planning allowed Moldavia to enter a period of relative political, military, and economic stability. This moment was also marked by a peace agreement ratified between Moldavia and the Ottoman Porte. Stephen's military victories over the Ottoman armies in late fall/winter of 1485 (Battle of Cătlăbuga) and spring of 1486 (Battle of Scheia) allowed the Moldavian prince to draft a peace treaty. The Romanian historian Nicoară Beldiceanu first determined that a peace agreement was drawn between the two powers in October 1486.⁶² The Ottoman chronicles also mention this agreement, recounting briefly that a Moldavian messenger arrived before the Porte in 1486 and departed only after the peace treaty was ratified.⁶³ Moreover, as Ștefan S. Gorovei has argued, Stephen was not forced to sign a treaty with the Ottomans on the Porte's terms, but rather he himself initiated an agreement in an effort to establish stability in Moldavia and protection from both Ottoman campaigns and potential attacks from Moldavia's western neighbors, particularly Poland and Hungary.⁶⁴ A contemporary, the Italian humanist Filippo

⁶⁰ *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 271-272.

⁶¹ *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 272; Nicolescu, "Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare," 272-282, figs. 6a, 6b, 7, 8 (for black and white details of the embroidery). See also Batariuc, "Imagini ale cetății Sucevei în picture murală din Moldova," 59-65.

⁶² Beldiceanu, *La Moldavie ottomane à la fin du XVe siècle et au début du XVIe siècle*, 244.

⁶³ Guboglu and Mehmet, eds., *Cronici Turcești*, I, 137, 187.

⁶⁴ Gorovei, "Pacea moldo-otomană din 1486." This treaty with the Ottomans may have been even initiated by Stephen since he failed to be included in either of the Hungarian-Ottoman Treaty or the Polish-Ottoman Treaty. Gorovei goes on to point out that "If in Stephen's history there exists a year that could have served as a 'turning point', that is to mark a crossroads in Moldavia's political orientation, this is, without any doubt, the year 1484." / "Dacă în istoria lui Ștefan cel Mare există un an care să poată fi numit *an de cotitură*, care să marcheze o răscruce în orientarea politică a Moldovei, aceasta este, fără îndoială, anul 1484." Gorovei, "Pacea moldo-otomană din 1486," 510. In 1484, with the fall of Chilia and Cetatea

Buonaccorsi, also called Callimachus Experiens (1437-1496),⁶⁵ wrote from Kraków in 1490 in a letter to Pope Innocent VIII (1484-1492) that the Moldavians, as a result of their efforts causing great losses to the Ottoman armies, entered an alliance with the Porte under certain conditions and not pressured to do so.⁶⁶ Through this treaty, Stephen assured that his realm received “the most favorable status relative the Ottoman Porte.”⁶⁷

Precisely at this moment—beginning in 1487, after three decades of extensive civic and military building campaigns and numerous battles to ensure the protection of his domain—Stephen turned his attention toward the foundation and building of ecclesiastical sites, churches and monasteries in particular. In 1487, between June 8 and 13, construction began on two significant edifices—the Church of St. Procopius in Bădeuți (Milișăuți) and the Church of the Holy Cross at Pătrăuți Monastery. The distinctive architectural features of these two *katholika* and their place in the development of Moldavian monastic church architecture during the second half of the fifteenth century will be discussed in the next chapter. What is particularly noteworthy for the argument to follow are the dedications of these two churches that mark the beginning of Stephen’s extensive church building projects in Moldavia and beyond the borders of the principality.

The foundation stone of the church at Bădeuți (Milișăuți) was laid on 8 June 1486—on the feast day of St. Procopius and exactly five years after Stephen’s victory at the Battle of Râmnic in 1481. The dedicatory inscription, originally on the south façade of the church to the right of the entrance, reads:

In the year 6989 [1481], July 8, the day of the holy martyr St. Procopius,
John Stephen voivode, through God’s grace prince of the land of
Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode, and with his beloved son Alexander,
fought at Râmnic with Basarab the Young voivode, prince of Wallachia,

Alba to the Ottomans, Stephen turned (more intensely) for support from his neighbors between 1484-1486 so that he may adequately protect his domain. When these endeavors failed, Stephen turned to the Ottomans for an alliance.

⁶⁵ His epitaph, completed sometime after 1493 by Veit Stoss and the Vischer workshop in Nuremberg, survives today in the Dominican Church in Kraków. Reproduced and discussed in Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City*, 91-92.

⁶⁶ Cited in Papacostea, “Politica externă a Moldovei în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 16 and 26; Gorovei, “Pacea moldo-otomană din 1486,” 512.

⁶⁷ Papacostea, “Politica externă a Moldovei în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 26: “cel mai favorabil statut cu putința față de Poarta otomană.”

named Țepeluș. God helped Stephen voivode and he won against Basarab voivode; and a great number of Wallachians died. For this reason, Stephen voivode decided with his good will and intention to build this church in the name of the great martyr St. Procopius, in the year 6995 [1487]; and it was begun in the month of June 8, and it was completed in the same year, in the month of November 13.⁶⁸

The church at Pătrăuți was begun only five days later, on 13 June 1487, and served as the katholikon of one of the few convents built by Stephen. Its dedicatory inscription—much shorter than the one at Bădeuți (Milișăuți), and set in a narrow register⁶⁹—sits at the center of the west façade above the main entrance to the church (Fig. 2.8).⁷⁰ Unlike the church at Bădeuți (Milișăuți) and all other Moldavian churches, which were dedicated to a saint or the Virgin Mary, the katholikon at Pătrăuți was dedicated to the Holy Cross itself. The dedicatory inscription (Fig. 2.9) states that: “John Stephen voivode, prince of the land of Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode, started building this edifice dedicated to the Holy Cross in the year 6995 [1487], in the month of June 13.”⁷¹

The dedication of the church at Pătrăuți to the Holy Cross is peculiar, but very meaningful, especially because very few churches carry this dedication. In fact,

⁶⁸ “† Б л(ѣ)тѣхъ ꙗꙋл(іа) ѿ м(ѣ)с(е)ца юл(іа) ѿ, въ д(ѣ)нь с(в)ѣт(а)го великом(оу)ч(е)н(и)ка Прокопіа, Іу(ан)на Стефан воевода, б(о)жію м(и)л(о)стію г(о)сп(о)д(а)ръ земли Молдакской, с(ѣ)нь Богдана воеводи, и съ прѣвзлюбелым своим с(ѣ)номъ Александромъ; сътвори развои на Ривникъ съ младимъ Басарабомъ воеводомъ, г(о)сп(о)д(и)на Влашкои земли, названыи Цапалоуш. И поможе б(о)гъ Стефану воеводѣ и побѣди на Басарабу воеводуу и выст оупадеіе веліе събо въ Басарабохъ. Того рад(и) Стефан воевод(а) бл(а)гопроизволи бл(а)гымъ своимъ произволеніемъ и добрымъ промысломъ и създа храмъ съ въ имѣ с(в)ѣт(а)го великом(оу)ч(е)н(и)ка Прокопіа въ л(ѣ)тѣхъ ꙗꙋл(іа) и на чѣ м(ѣ)с(е)ца юн(іа) ѿ и съврзши съ тогожде лѣта, м(ѣ)с(е)ца ноевр(іа) ꙗꙋл(іа).” *Repertoriul*, 57 (for the Church Slavonic original), 57-58 (for a Romanian translation). The dedicatory inscription is preserved in the Ethnographic Museum in Rădăuți.

⁶⁹ The long and narrow format of the dedicatory inscription on the church at Pătrăuți is very uncharacteristic of the format of Moldavian dedicatory inscriptions on churches, which tend to be more square in shape and layout.

⁷⁰ Maria Magdalena Székely has pointed out that no other Moldavian church from the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries—and certainly none of the churches roughly contemporary with the church at Pătrăuți, which are the churches at Milișăuți and Voroneț and the Church of St. Elijah in Suceava—has a dedicatory inscription on its façade marking the entrance to the church that is quite as brief and set in such a long, narrow register. Székely, “Ștefan cel Mare și cultul Sfintei Cruci,” 23.

⁷¹ “† Іу(ан)на Стефан(н) воевода г(о)сп(о)д(а)ръ земли Мо(л)давской, с(ѣ)нь Богдана воево(д)с(ѣ)н(и) на чѣ(ѣ) създати храмъ съ въ има ч(ѣ)снаго кр(ѣ)ста въ л(ѣ)тѣхъ ꙗꙋл(іа) ѿ м(ѣ)с(е)ца юн(іа) ꙗꙋл(іа).” *Repertoriul*, 61 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation). Unlike all other dedicatory inscriptions that are roughly square or rectangular in shape, the one at Pătrăuți is the only one presented in a long and narrow register and placed directly above the main entrance to the church.

throughout the medieval and early modern periods, in the Roman Catholic sphere for instance, only a few important and celebrated chapels—shrines built to house some of the most sacred relics in all of Christendom—have been dedicated to the True Cross. One remarkable example is the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, begun c.1240 under the patronage of King Louis IX (*r.* 1226-1270) and his mother Queen Blanche of Castile, and consecrated on 26 April 1248 (Fig. 2.10). The chapel—a monumental shrine that references in its double storey arrangement Charlemagne’s Palatine Chapel in Aachen—was built to house and display the King’s impressive collection of Constantinopolitan Passion relics, which included Christ’s Crown of Thorns and a relic from the True Cross. Closer to Moldavia, the relic chapel (1357) at Karlštejn Castle outside Prague (1348) built by one of Europe’s most avid relic collectors, the King of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (*r.* 1355-1378) presents another example (Fig. 2.11). The chapel of the Holy Cross at Karlštejn emulated the Sainte-Chapelle and the Byzantine Church of the Virgin of the Pharos in Constantinople, and housed the imperial regalia and the extensive collection of relics. The palace chapels are exceptional. However, no medieval or early modern church in western or central Europe can be found dedicated to the Holy Cross.

In the Eastern Orthodox sphere, by contrast, there exist churches dedicated to the Holy Cross and to the Raising of the True Cross, an event also celebrated in one of the *Twelve Great Feasts* or *Dodekaorton* of the Orthodox Church (September 14).⁷² These churches are few in number, however, but more common on Cyprus than anywhere else in the Byzantine cultural sphere.⁷³ The first monastery on Cyprus dedicated to the True Cross—Stavrovouni Monastery, literally “Mountain of the Cross”—was first built in the fourth century as a church to house a relic of the True Cross.⁷⁴ Other examples from the island include the Church of Timios Stavros (The Holy Cross) in Pelendri, built in the

⁷² The *Twelve Great Feasts* of the liturgical year are comprised of the Nativity of the Theotokos (8 September), Elevation of the Holy Cross (14 September), Presentation of the Theotokos (21 November), Nativity of Christ (25 December), Epiphany (6 January), Presentation of Christ at the Temple (2 February), Annunciation (25 March), Entry into Jerusalem (the Sunday before Pascha), Ascension of Christ (forty days after Pascha), Pentecost (fifty days after Pascha), Transfiguration (6 August), Dormition of the Theotokos (15 August).

⁷³ Legend has it that St. Helena, on her way to Constantinople in 327 following her discovery of the Holy Cross, stopped in Cyprus. The veneration of the Holy Cross was thus transmitted throughout Cyprus. The villages of Lefkara, Tochni, Anogyra, and Kouka, all have important churches and monasteries dedicated to the Holy Cross.

⁷⁴ Although now the oldest building on the site dates to the tenth century.

second half of the twelfth century (Fig. 2.12), and the katholikon dedicated to the Holy Cross from the Troödos Mountain region—the Stavros Ayiasmati, or the Church of the Holy Cross of Ayiasmati, from the village of Platanistasa (Nicosia District) built toward the end of the fifteenth century. In Moldavia, aside from the Church at Pătrăuți that was dedicated to the Holy Cross, only one other church, that at Volovăț—built by Stephen in the year 1500, at a moment when Moldavia’s struggles against the Ottomans reemerged—was dedicated to the Raising of the True Cross (Figs. 2.13-2.14; Cat.no.27). However, churches dedicated to the Holy Cross, the object itself, as is the case at Pătrăuți, are rare in the Slavic-Byzantine spheres, which makes the katholikon at Pătrăuți remarkable.⁷⁵

The specific dedication of the church at Pătrăuți is confirmed not only by the dedicatory inscription on the church’s west façade. It is also mentioned in the colophon on fol. 308r of the *Tetraevangelion* (recorded as “lost” in the Romanian sources throughout the twentieth century, and recently rediscovered in the Morgan Library in New York) commissioned by Stephen and his third wife Maria Voichița and completed on 30 September 1492 (Fig. 2.15):

Through God’s grace, the instruction of the Son, and the action of the Holy Spirit, this Gospel Book was made in the days of the devout and Christ-loving John Stephen voivode, prince of the land of Moldavia, and of his devout lady Mary. Moved by zealous love, caring for Christ’s words, she willingly paid, and it was copied in the year 7001 [1492] and completed on September 30. And she gave it as a prayer offering for herself to the church of Pătrăuți Monastery dedicated to the Holy Cross. It was written in the city of Suceava by the labor of the sinful deacon Toader, son of priest Gabriel.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Grabar, “Les croisades de l’Europe Orientale dans l’art,” 21. Grabar aptly notes, however, that the only other Moldavian church dedicated to the Holy Cross, roughly contemporary with the church at Pătrăuți, is found in the city of Suceava and is Armenian. See also Balș, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea*, 176-179.

⁷⁶ Morgan Library and Museum, Ms.M.694, fol. 308r: “† Бл(а)гоизволеніемъ ш(т)ца и наоученіемъ с(ъ)на и съврзшеніемъ с(в)т(а)го д(оу)ха оучин(ил) с(ъ) сїи тетраев(а)г(е)лзъ въ д(ь)ни бл(а)гоу҃зстиваго и х(р)ист(о)любиваго г(о)сподина Іу(а)нна Стефана воеводы, г(о)сп(о)д(а)рзъ земле Молдавскон, и бл(а)гоу҃стивон его г(о)сподни Марїи, еже она желаніемъ възж(д)елѣвши любви (ради) Х(р)истов(ъ)хъ словес(с) ра҃чителница потъщателно даде и исписа то в л(ъ)то 733 и съврзши са м(ъ)се)ца септе(м)врїа въ л(ъ)ни :7 И даде е(го) въ

What is more, the church at Pătrăuți was consecrated on a special day, September 14—the Feast of the Holy Cross. The following year, in 1488, Stephen’s church at Voroneț Monastery, dedicated to St. George (a military saint), was consecrated on 14 September as well. This is not just a mere coincidence. The surviving evidence suggests that Stephen held in very high regard this significant feast day, and the Holy Cross as an object and a symbol. Therefore, an explanation for why the church at Pătrăuți was dedicated to the Holy Cross, the object itself, and why Stephen took such a keen interest in the feast of the Holy Cross, deserves consideration.

Relics of the True Cross in Moldavia

As Maria Magdalena Székely recently suggested, it is possible that a relic of the True Cross actually existed in Moldavia during Stephen’s reign, and around which the church at Pătrăuți was built.⁷⁷ As such, the church would have served as a monumental reliquary, functioning in part like the Sainte-Chapelle, for example. No concrete evidence survives to show, however, that such a relic of the True Cross was present in Moldavia during the fifteenth century.⁷⁸ The only extant source that attests to the actual presence of relics from the True Cross in Moldavia dates to the reign of Vasile Lupu (*r.* 1634-1653). According to Lupu’s nephew, Deacon Paul of Aleppo (1627-1667), when Macarie, the Patriarch of Antioch, arrived at Lupu’s court in Iași in order to retrieve a donation, he

ММЛБ(Ж) СЕБЕ ВЪ ЦР(Ъ)КВИ ВЪ МОНАСТИРИ УТ ПЕТРЪОУЦИ ИДЕ(ЖЕ) (ЕСТЪ) ХРАМ ВЪЗДВИЖЕНІЕ ЧЕСТНАГО КР(Ъ)СТИ В(О)РА :~ И ИСПИ(СА) СЯ ВЪ ГРАДЪ СЮ(Ч)АВЕТВМ :~ ПОТРОУЖДЕНІЕМ МНУГ(О)ГРЪШНА(ГО) ТВАДЕР(А) ДІАК(А), С(Ъ)НА ГАВРІИЛА ПРЕЗВИТЕРА.” *Repertoriul*, 403 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation, both with errors). In *Repertoriul* the date is also provided incorrectly as 1493. A careful scrutiny of this colophon reveals that it was written by three hands, perhaps at three different times. The first hand completed the text up to the date of completion, 30 September 1492. The second hand noted that the manuscript was gifted to the monastery at Pătrăuți, and the third hand notes that it was written in Suceava by Deacon Toader. Surprisingly, Toader’s name, placed outside of the decorative frame of the colophon, is interrupted (essentially divided in half) by the central decorative element extending from the lower edge of the border. This manuscript is a direct copy of the *Tetraevangelion* produced at Neamț Monastery 1429 by monk Gavril and now part of the collection of the Bodleian Library (MS.Canon.Gr.122). See also Căndea, “Comori de artă din vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 11-18.

⁷⁷ Székely, “Ștefan cel Mare și cultul sfintei cruci,” 33.

⁷⁸ Iftimi, “Lemnul Sfintei Cruci și Țările Române,” 47-57, esp. 53-57. It is possible that the Moldavian leaders came into contact with such relics from the True Cross in Poland, since there existed a cross with a Greek provenance that was brought to Kraków either in the last decades of the fourteenth century or the early decades of the fifteenth century. For example, in a letter from 29 June 1456, Peter Aron communicated to King Casimir IV Jagiellon of Poland that he respects the earlier agreements because the Moldavians “are tied through oath [with Poland], as they [the Moldavian leaders] have touched with their body and kissed the wood of the life-giving cross.” Halichias, “Pe marginea unui document de la Petru Aron,” 320.

brought to the Moldavian prince a plethora of relics and precious objects to show his gratitude and exalt the Moldavian ruler. Among these relics, according to the account, were “a few pieces from the True Cross, black like ebony.”⁷⁹ These were protected “in a round case... artfully sculpted—a meticulous work” that was placed on top of a piece of cotton and covered by a cloth embroidered with gold thread.⁸⁰ To test the authenticity of these most-precious relics, the men “placed the relics in fire and they burned, but once they were removed from the flames they cooled and returned to their original state. Then they were placed in water, and sunk to the bottom.”⁸¹ According to Paul of Aleppo, the Moldavian prince was amazed at what was happening to the relics. He was tremendously happy to have received such a special gift that, as the patriarch states, was given “in his name and for his eternal protection.”⁸²

A number of written sources, read in the context of certain historical events, suggest that a relic of the True Cross may have also existed in Moldavia during the reign of Stephen III. As the Romanian historian Liviu Pilat has noted, the celebration of the feast of the Holy Cross on 14 September 1466 appears to have been a particularly significant event in Moldavia. Surprisingly, this celebration was mentioned only at the end of a letter written at Stephen’s court in Suceava the following day (Monday, 15 September 1466).⁸³ The letter, recording a donation from Stephen to Putna Monastery, is the only instance in the extant sources from Moldavia in which the celebration of a religious feast is recorded.⁸⁴ The last sentence of the document reads: “Tador Prodan wrote this, in Suceava, in the year 6974 [1466], in the day following the [feast of the]

⁷⁹ Bulgaru, ed., “Paul de Alep,” in *Călători străini*, VI, 43: “...câteva țândări din lemnul adevăratei cruci, de culoare neagră ca abanosul.” Also cited in Iftimi, “Lemnul Sfintei Cruci și Țările Române,” 53-54; Pilat, “Cultul Sfintei Cruci în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 14.

⁸⁰ Bulgaru, ed., “Paul de Alep,” in *Călători străini*, VI, 43: “Erau închise într-o cutie rotunda, o lucrătură indiană, sculptată cu măiestrie—lucrare migăloasă—și sub ea era bumbac și peste ea o stofă de brocat cu fir de aur; cutia [era] așezată într-o pungă roșie trandafirică.”

⁸¹ Bulgaru, ed., “Paul de Alep,” in *Călători străini*, VI, 43: “Le-am încercat băgându-le în foc și s-au făcut așa ca el; le-am scos, s-au răcit și au revenit la starea lor [dintâi]. Le-am încercat în apă; au coborât la fund.”

⁸² Bulgaru, ed., “Paul de Alep,” in *Călători străini*, VI, 43: “Când a văzut-o, [domnul] Moldovei a rămas foarte mirat și apoi s-a bucurat nespus de mult când i-a spus domnul nostrum patriarch: ‘Aceasta este [dată] în numele tău și ea să te aibă în pază.’”

⁸³ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 202-203 (for a German translation of the original document), 203-204 (for a Romanian translation). The document survives only in German copies of the original (very likely written in Church Slavonic).

⁸⁴ Pilat, “Cultul Sfintei Cruci în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 5-6.

Raising of the true and life-giving Cross, Monday.”⁸⁵ It is possible, as Pilat has suggested, that this particular celebration of the feast of the True Cross in 1466 was different from ones that had preceded it in that it perhaps centered on a relic of the True Cross that Stephen may have acquired sometime that year, possibly from Mount Athos.⁸⁶ Although conjectural, this certainly could have been the case. No other legal document mentions such a religious celebration, which leaves me to believe that the feast of the Holy Cross in 1466 was likely a particularly special festivity, much more grandiose than the ones that had preceded it.

An edict dated 10 May 1466 documents the first monetary donation from Moldavia to Mount Athos that was to recur annually.⁸⁷ Stephen sent the letter from his court in Suceava to Zographou Monastery promising an annual donation of 100 Hungarian ducats to the monastery in exchange for eternal remembrance through prayer for himself and his family. It is possible that the monks from Zographou sent something as a counter-gift to Moldavia to thank Stephen for his generous support. Or, perhaps, Stephen initiated his yearly donation to Zographou as a response to a precious gift that he had already received from the Athonite monks. Little is known, however, about what the Moldavian prince received either prior to, or after, his donations to Zographou in 1466, and to other monasteries on the Holy Mount shortly thereafter. Over two decades ago Dumitru Năstase has aptly recommended “the reconsideration of the role played by Mount Athos in Romanian history based on its value as a symbol and as a source of power.”⁸⁸ Although little scholarly work has been done on the topic to date, in large part

⁸⁵ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 203: “Geschrieben hats Todor [Tador] Prodan zu Soćaw im J(ahre) 6974 [1466], im zweiten Tag nach der Erhöhung des verehrten und lebengebenden Kreuzes, am Montag.” 15 September 1466 was a Monday, but the German translation of the original document lists an incorrect date. Since the date of the document is after 1 September, 5509 needs to be subtracted from the date given according to the Byzantine Calendar (6974), which corresponds to the year 1465 and not 1466. But 15 September 1465 fell on a Friday and not a Monday. Thus, the original date provided according to the Byzantine calendar, and which should have appeared in the German translation, was likely 6975, and not 6974.

⁸⁶ Pilat, “Cultul Sfîntei Cruci în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 6, 13-14.

⁸⁷ The original document is found at Zographou Monastery. A copy is found at the Romanian Academy Library, photograph XXII/78. Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, I, 99-103 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation); *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 191-194 (for a Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation). Additional references in Căndea, *Mărturii*, II, 633.

⁸⁸ Năstase, “‘Necunoscută’ ale izvoarelor istoriei românești,” 496: “reconsiderarea rolului jucat de Muntele Athos în istoria românilor în funcție de valoarea sa de simbol și sursă a puterii.” Cited in Pilat, “Cultul Sfîntei Cruci în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 14.

due to the difficulty in accessing the archives and libraries on the Holy Mount (especially for women), this presents an important topic for further study.

As Emil Turdeanu has noted, “in 1466 begins, as if on cue, the endowment of the cultural sphere in the country [Moldavia].”⁸⁹ Indeed, the year 1466—beginning with the donations to Athos initiated on 10 May, the rebuilding of Putna Monastery that commenced exactly two months later on 10 July, and the special celebration of the feast of the Holy Cross on 14 September—marked an important moment in Stephen’s rule. The Moldavian prince took upon himself the responsibility of financially supporting the monastic communities on Mount Athos (especially Zographou), he oversaw the initial stages of the construction of his princely mausoleum (Putna Monastery), and he began taking a keen interest in the Holy Cross and its celebrations—an interest that was to continue throughout the rest of his reign. As such, I would suggest that certain changes in Stephen’s vision of rulership began taking shape at this earlier date (1466), and were to intensify a few years later, and particularly during the initial years of the 1470s.

A Constantinian Model

I would suggest, then, that Stephen’s religious architectural commissions, and in particular the churches that mark the beginning of his extensive building projects in the ecclesiastical domain—the churches at Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Pătrăuți, and Voroneț in particular—should be considered in the context of his princely objectives. As will be discussed below, beginning in the early 1470s, Stephen’s princely aspirations became ever more grand in character, almost imperial, in fact. Although Dumitru Năstase has argued that the “imperial idea” in the Romanian-speaking lands around the Carpathian Mountains—in particular Wallachia and Moldavia—predates the fall of Constantinople in 1453,⁹⁰ I argue here that Stephen’s reign marks a moment during which the “imperial idea” takes on new and grandiose dimensions in Moldavia, particularly in conjunction with certain notable historical events.

⁸⁹ Turdeanu, *Manuscrisele slave din timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 140: “în 1466, țâșnește, ca la un semn, avântul înzestrării culturale ale țării.”

⁹⁰ Năstase, “Imperial Claims in the Romanian Principalities from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries. New Contributions,” esp. 185-202, 194-202 (for Moldavia).

Indeed, as he envisioned himself as a protector of his domain and of the Christian faith at large, Stephen began to model his princely ideologies on the deeds and accomplishments of Emperor Constantine the Great (r. 306-337)—an exemplary ruler and ideal Christian leader who, for hundreds of years, was regarded in the eastern cultural sphere as the ultimate Christian monarch and primary defender of Christianity, although he in fact tolerated all religions.⁹¹ Constantine, thus, served as an “imperial prototype, a point of reference, and a symbol of imperial legitimacy and identity.”⁹²

Against this backdrop the dedication of Stephen’s first two independent churches, the one at Bădeuți (Milișăuți) to St. Procopius and the one at Pătrăuți to the Holy Cross, takes on new nuances. Given the challenging political and military situation in Moldavia during the second half of the fifteenth century, Stephen repeatedly sought the protection and support of military saints in his endeavors. Sts. Procopius and George in particular were favored and revered by the great Moldavian prince. As will be shown, the peculiar dedication of the church at Pătrăuți to the Holy Cross is best understood in the context of Stephen’s aspirations at this moment and his vested interest in the historical figure of Constantine the Great.

Six years after the events of 1466, on 14 September 1472—the feast day of the Holy Cross—Stephen married his second wife, Maria of Mangup from the Palaiologan-Asani family, one of the last Byzantine princesses who descended from the great Palaiologan Dynasty.⁹³ Not coincidentally, as Székely and Gorovei noted, Stephen’s marriage to “a descendant of the Byzantine emperors took place under the sign of the raising of Christianity’s supreme symbol [the Cross].”⁹⁴ This union served as one of the main catalysts for Stephen’s ideological transformations, his self-redefinition as a grand

⁹¹ See Klein, “Constantine, Helena, and the Early Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople,” 31-59; and the edited volume by Paul Magdalino, *New Constantines*.

⁹² Magdalino, ed., *New Constantines*, 3.

⁹³ This event received a rather short entry in *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 240: “В ЛѢТО 6980, МѢСАЦА СЕПТЕВРІА ДѢ, ПРИАТ СТЕФАН ВОЕВОДА СЕБѢ ГОСПОЖДА, КНАГІНѢ МАРІА УГ МАНГОПА.” / “In the year 6980 (1472), the month of September 14, Stephen voivode took as wife the princess Maria from Mangup.” Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 8 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 17 (for a Romanian translation). On Maria Asanina-Palaiologhina, see the most recent and comprehensive study, published in Romania by Gorovei and Székely, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina. O prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei*. See also Rădulescu, “Episoade din historia Moldovei redată pe cahle descoperite la Curtea Domnească de la Vaslui: nunta lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Maria de Mangop,” 81-100.

⁹⁴ Székely and Gorovei, “‘Semne și minuni’ pentru Ștefan voievod,” 72: “Nu întâmplător, unirea principelui cu urmașa împăraților bizantini fusese pusă sub semnul Înălțării supremului symbol al creștinismului.”

ruler of his own domain, and primary defender of Christianity within and beyond the borders of his principality. This union coincides, and perhaps even prompted, the beginning of Stephen's new vision of rulership and his interests in the figure of Constantine the Great who embodied the image of the ideal Christian ruler.

The extant sources from the early 1470s on—such as select written documents and manuscripts, as well as Stephen's civic and ecclesiastical building campaigns—reveal both directly and indirectly that Stephen began to take an active interest in the figure of Constantine the Great around this time. In reimagining Constantine in his own context—as other rulers of the Byzantine Empire had done before him in their respective domains—Stephen adapted the ideological and symbolic image of the first Byzantine Emperor. First, Stephen sought to emulate Constantine's efforts as he, too, fervently fought to protect the Christian faith in his principality and beyond, increasingly threatened then by the Ottoman Empire. Second, Stephen took an active interest in ecclesiastical patronage both within his realm and in regions such as Mount Athos that served for many centuries as a locus of Orthodox Christian monasticism and spirituality. Moldavia was a patron of and in close contact with Mount Athos throughout the fifteenth century. I will return to this topic in Chapter Five.

Between 1374 and 1393, Bishop Euthymius of Tarnovo (1327-1402; in office 1374-1393), the last Patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church,⁹⁵ wrote a eulogy dedicated to the first Byzantine emperor, Constantine the Great, and his famous mother Helena. In the text, Bishop Euthymius praised Constantine as follows:

...Constantine, chosen branch of the good faith;
Constantine, zealous one among the apostles;
Constantine, founder of churches;
Constantine, squanderer of idolaters;
Constantine, messenger for the good faith;
Constantine, follower of Christ;
Constantine, discoverer of the True Cross,

⁹⁵ Bishop Euthymius was the last patriarch of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church before Bulgaria fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1393.

and, what is there more to say?

Constantine, royal praise.⁹⁶

The text was commissioned by Bulgaria's Tsar Ivan Shishman (r. 1371-1395) and presented to him in a public ceremony at a time when his power was being threatened by the Ottomans.⁹⁷ The eulogy, written in Church Slavonic, adapted and elaborated on the fourth-century *Vita Constantini* by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (260/265-339/340)—the celebrated panegyric and theological biography that glorified the memory of the first Eastern Roman emperor and one of Christianity's greatest defenders, narrating some of his most memorable achievements.⁹⁸ The model put forth by Eusebius became for future Byzantine emperors an important tool for establishing and validating their own imperial ideologies.

Whereas western Christianity, and primarily the Catholic Church, marginalized the figure of Constantine—especially through the eighth-century contested document *The Donation of Constantine* that was exposed as a forgery during the fifteenth century⁹⁹—the Slavic-Byzantine world celebrated the Byzantine emperor as a saint, one equal to the apostles (isapostolos: ἱσαπόστολος Κωνσταντίνος).¹⁰⁰ Aside from Eusebius's biography and its subsequent variants, the *Life of Constantine* began circulating in the Slavic-Byzantine sphere, especially from the late fourteenth century on, through the

⁹⁶ “КОНСТАНТИНЪ, ДОБАЛА БЛГОУБЪТІА ВЪТЪЗЪ; КОНСТАНТИНЪ, АПЛ(С)КЫИ РЕВНЫТЕЛЪ; КОНСТАНТИНЪ, ЦРКОВНОЕ ОУТВЪРЖ(Д)ЕНІЕ; КОНСТАНТИНЪ, ИДВАЛСКИЙ РАЗ(Д)РОУШИТЕЛЪ; КОНСТАНТИНЪ, БЛГОВЪРІА ПРОПОВѢДНИКЪ; КОНСТАНТИНЪ, ХРИСТОВЪ ПОДРАЖАТЕЛЪ; КОНСТАНТИНЪ, КР(С)ТНЫИ ГВІТЕЛЪ И – ЧТО МНѠ(Г) ГЛА? – КОНСТАНТИНЪ, ЦР(С)КАА ПОХВАЛА.” *The Panegyric for Saints Constantine and Helena* written by Bishop Euthymius of Tarnovo in Mihăilă, *Cultură și literatură Română veche în context European*, 282, 281-332 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 333-379 (for a Romanian translation). Euthymius's text was first edited by Emil Kałuźniacki after a manuscript written by Vladislav Gramatik in a Serbian translation after the original Church Slavonic, and published in *Werke des Patriarchen von Bulgarien Euthymius (1375–1393)*, 103-146.

⁹⁷ The Ottomans, in fact, besieged Bulgaria in 1393. A portrait of the young Tsar Ivan Shishman, along with his family, survives on fol. 3r of *The Gospels of Tsar Ivan Alexander*, 1355-1356, now in the British Library (MS. 39627).

⁹⁸ *De vita Constantini* was delivered either in 336 (or 335) in Constantinople, before emperor Constantine, in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of his ascension to the throne. This text is a eulogy, a biography, as well as a hagiography. Some of the most notable studies on Eusebius's *De vita Constantini* are Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*; Drake, “What Eusebius Knew: The Genesis of the “Vita Constantini”,” 20-38; Schneider, *De vita Constantini - Über das Leben Konstantins*; Dräger, *Über das Leben des glückseligen Kaisers Konstantin - De vita Constantini*.

⁹⁹ For the most recent study on *The Donation of Constantine* and its visual forms in the context of Constantinian imagery produced in Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as the extensive bibliography on the topic, see Tita, “Political Art of the Papacy: Visual Representations of the *Donation of Constantine* in the Early Modern Period.”

¹⁰⁰ St. Constantine is commemorated in the Byzantine liturgy on the anniversary of his death on May 21.

and protector of the Christian faith—issues that were of utmost concern to the Moldavian prince in the early 1470s.¹⁰³

It is no surprise, then, that in the following year 1475 this hieromonk Iacov (Jacob) also completed in the same scriptorium at Putna Monastery, and likely again at the request of the Moldavian prince, a copy of Matthew Blastares' legal code *Syntagma*

¹⁰³ Although closely associated with Stephen's reign and princely aspirations, the figure of Constantine the Great continued to serve as a model for Orthodox rulers in the Romanian-speaking lands around the Carpathian Mountains throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Knowledge of Constantine's life and deeds circulated in the later centuries primarily through textual sources and the copies made after the panegyric work of the Bulgarian Bishop Euthymius of Tarnovo. Here is one example: At the time when the Italian diplomat and political theorist Niccolò Machiavelli was writing one of his most significant works, *The Prince* (1513)—the political treatise regarded as one of the first works of modern political philosophy and the backbone of modern political thinking—the Wallachian Prince Neagoe Basarab (r. 1512-1521) was completing an unparalleled text intended to instruct his son on how to become and behave as an ideal ruler. Whereas Machiavelli's writings made explicit the separation of political matters from moral and religious ones, Basarab's work repeatedly emphasized that political concerns and those of the heart and spirit are intimately connected and should remain as such for the wellbeing of the ruler, his constituency, and his domain. *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosie*, as the manuscript is known, was written sometime between 1513 and 1521 and served, in a larger context, as an educational manual for young men in political, military, diplomatic, religious, and moral matters, presenting a particular and integral vision of rulership in the Orthodox milieu—a milieu from which this text emerged and in which it circulated. Basarab carefully selected relevant passages from well-known texts for his manual, which included sections from the *Book of Kings*, the *Life of Sts. Barlaam and Josaphat*, and from the *Eulogy for Sts. Constantin and Helena* written by Bishop Euthymius of Tarnovo discussed above. To validate some of his arguments, Basarab recalled the character, qualities, and deeds of Constantin the Great who was to serve as a model for young Theodosie (r. 1521-1522) as he was becoming a true Christian leader, morally and spiritually fit to protect his domain. A number of significant editions of this text have been published, mostly in Romanian. For a critical consideration and Romanian translation of the original Slavic text, see Moisil and Zamfirescu, eds., *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*, esp. 125-418 (for a Romanian translation). For a consideration of some of the issues the text raises, see Zamfirescu, *Neagoe Basarab și învățăturile către fiul său Theodosie*. Other significant studies include Grecu, ed., *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab: Domnul Țării Românești (1512-1521)*; idem, ed., *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab: Domnul Țării Românești (1512-1521)*; Ghil, "Neagoe Basarab's Teachings to his Son Theodosie: An Unorthodox Reading," 58-71; Cazacu, "La place des "Enseignements du prince Neagoe Basarab a son fils Theodosie" dans l'histoire des idées politiques," 217-226; Goina, "Medieval Political Philosophy in a Sixteenth-Century Wallachian Mirror of Princes: *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosie*," 25-43.

The manuscript was copied and translated almost immediately after its completion and circulated in all of the major courts in Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as in some more distant ones in Serbia and Greece. Its wide circulation is attested to by the many extant copies and fragments that survive in three languages: Church Slavonic, Romanian, and Greek. The original manuscript was written in Church Slavonic, but survives today only in fragments. The 17 fragments date to 1519-1538 and were written in Slavonic of a Middle Bulgarian recension. The Romanian version is the only one that is complete, surviving in nine different copies from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Romanian scholars agree that the Romanian version is a direct translation of the original Slavonic text. The Greek translation (only of the second half of the text), survives only in two manuscripts that date from before 1530. Vranoussis, "Les conseils attribués au Prince Neagoe (1512-1521) et les manuscrits autographes de leur auteur grec," 377-387.

(MS 742), introduced in Chapter One.¹⁰⁴ Stephen’s aspirations at this moment took on spiritual, cultural, ideological, political, and legal dimensions.

From Prince to Emperor

The famous Battle of Războieni in 1476 resulted from Stephen’s continuing refusal to pay the annual tribute. Indeed, 1473 marks the year when Stephen ceased to pay the annual *harac* to the Porte. This is also the year in which one of the most peculiar and impressive manuscripts was completed under Stephen’s patronage. In the summer of 1473 Stephen gifted to the monks of Humor Monastery a *Tetraevangelion* in which, in a full page richly illuminated miniature on fol. 266v, the Moldavian prince is seen dressed in richly brocaded garb and wearing a large gem-encrusted crown of gold (Fig. 2.16). He is placed in a modest position in the lower left corner of the composition kneeling before the enthroned Virgin and Child, and presenting them with a splendid embellished manuscript, presumably the very gospel book in which he is represented.¹⁰⁵ Since the lower right portion of the page has been damaged, it is difficult to determine what it contained—perhaps a portrait of Stephen’s second wife, Maria of Mangup. In addition to preserving the only such portrait of the great Moldavian prince, the *Tetraevangelion* given to Humor also carries a peculiar dedicatory inscription toward the end. The colophon on fol. 265v makes explicit Stephen’s aspirations by calling him “Tsar” (Fig. 2.17):

The devout and Christ-loving emperor, John Stephen voivode, prince of the land of Moldovlahia, requested the writing of this *Tetraevangelion* by the hand of the hieromonk Nicodim and gifted it to the monastery at Humor, for the remembrance of his soul, and those of his parents and his children, and that of who was then abbot, priest Gherondie. And it was completed in the month of June 17, in the year 6981 [1473].¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion of Blastares’ *Syntagma* and its Moldavian copies in Chapter One.

¹⁰⁵ This is the same manuscript that was sent to Ciceu Fortress in Hungary by the monks of Humor Monastery, and came in the care of Stephen’s son, Peter Rareș, when he was sent into exile by the Ottomans in 1538—a topic that is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁶ Putna Monastery Library, *Tetraevangelion* 1473, fol. 265v: “Бл(а)гоуъстивын и Х(ри)столюбивын ц(а)рз Іω(анна) Стефанъ ввевѡда г(о)сп(о)д(а)рз земли Молдавлахїтской, даде и съписа сын тетраев(а)г(е)ль рѣкож ермонаха Никодима и даде и монастырю, иже на Хоморѣ, въ помань за свои д(о)у)шж и

Here, Stephen is no longer a ‘lord’ or ‘prince’ (господинъ)—the epithet that he and all his predecessors had adopted from the formation of the principality in 1359 onward—but rather he is addressed as a ‘tsar’ or ‘emperor’ (царь) (in the Church Slavonic form).

The title Tsar is also attested at two points in *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, begun on the orders of Stephen by an unknown court scribe in the year 1473, likewise refers to the great Moldavian prince as a ‘tsar’.¹⁰⁷ For example, upon his return to Suceava Fortress following his victory against the Ottomans at Vaslui in 1475, the clergy blessed Stephen shouting: “Long live the Emperor!”¹⁰⁸ However, the earliest reference to Stephen as emperor or tsar in *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* already appears in the entry for 29 August 1471 (the feast day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist). On that day, according to the chronicle, “there was a great earthquake in the entire world, at the time when the emperor/tsar sat at the table [i.e. was dining].”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, an earthquake did shake Moldavia and its neighboring regions at the end of August 1471.¹¹⁰ At a time of intense apocalyptic expectation, this event may have served as yet another sign—in addition to the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453—that the end of the world was imminent. In fact, the end of the world according to the beliefs of the Eastern Orthodox Christians was to take place sometime in the year 7000 (1492). As described in the *Book of Revelations* 8:5, “...the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it on the earth, and there were thunders and voices and lightning, and a great earthquake.”¹¹¹ For Stephen, moreover, this earthquake took place a little over eight months after he had ordered the decapitation of three Moldavian

за родителен своих и ѹад его и егоументвоужцоу тогда попоу Гервндїю; съврзши же са м(ѣ)с(е)ца ꙗноїа 3ї, въ лѣто 8511а.” *Repertoriul*, 388 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

¹⁰⁷ Gorovei, “1473 – Un an-cheie al domniei lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 390.

¹⁰⁸ *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 241r: “Да живет царь!” Panaitescu, *Cronicile Slavo-Române din sec. XV-XVI*, 9 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 18 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁰⁹ *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 240r: “Тогожде лѣта, Августѣ 30, вист трѣс велен тогда по вѣсен вѣселенѣи, въ врѣма вѣнегда сѣдѣше царь на ѡбѣд.” Panaitescu, *Cronicile Slavo-Române din sec. XV-XVI*, 8 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 17 (for a Romanian translation).

¹¹⁰ See Rogozea et al., “Large and Moderate Historical Earthquakes of 15th and 16th Centuries in Romania Reconsidered,” 545-562, esp. 549-550 for the 1471 earthquake, and 561-562 for bibliography on the topic.

¹¹¹ *Book of Revelations* 8:5 – “Et accepit angelus thuribulum, et implevit illud de igne altaris, et misit in terram: et facta sunt tonitrua, et voces, et fulgura, et terraemotus magnus.” Douay-Rheims Bible, <<http://www.drbo.org/chapter/73008.htm>> (accessed 21 January 2016).

noblemen on 16 January 1471, an act for which he seems to have felt remorse.¹¹² The earthquake may have served for Stephen as a divine sign of disapproval for his actions.

The inclusion of the detail that the emperor was dining at the time the earthquake occurred was likely intended to underscore the veracity of the entire chronicle and to prove that the chronicler was a contemporary, writing in the moment. It is possible, then, that the reference to Stephen as emperor of Moldavia began appearing as early as 1471. Another hypothesis, however, would suggest that the chronicler was writing in 1473 and referring to Stephen as tsar in an event that took place two years before. Since no other sources from 1471 or earlier survive that make use of this prestigious epithet to glorify the Moldavian prince, it is difficult to conclude when exactly Stephen himself adopted the title ‘tsar’—although c.1473, following his marriage to Maria of Mangup in 1472, appears to offer a reasonable date. It is impossible to know whether Stephen himself adopted the title of tsar or whether it was assigned to him by the chronicler in the written sources.¹¹³ The surviving evidence from *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* suggests the latter. However, the presence of this epithet in the colophon of the lavish *Tetraevangelion* gifted to Humor Monastery, commissioned by Stephen and completed under his supervision, serves as evidence that Stephen approved the title of tsar himself since we can presume that he took an active interest in the production of this manuscript.

The reference to Stephen as tsar/emperor is not a phenomenon relegated to the early years of the 1470s. In fact, an external source from almost a decade and a half later also identifies the Moldavian prince in this way. In a manuscript dating to 1484 and discovered by Ioan Bogdan in Kiev, a marginal inscription that mentions the fall of the fortresses of Chilia and Cetatea Albă that same year refers to Stephen of Moldavia as

¹¹² Maria Magdalena Székely and Ștefan S. Gorovei have put forth this proposition since they believe that Stephen may have dedicated the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Vaslui to the commemoration of these three noblemen. The church, thus, would have served as a symbolic confession and request for forgiveness for his sinful actions. Székely and Gorovei, “‘Semne și minuni’ pentru Ștefan voievod,” 69: “Edificarea bisericii din Vaslui cu hramul amintit [Tăierea Capului Sântului Ioan Botezătorul] nu poate avea decât semnificația unei uriașe și simbolice spovedanii, a unei veșnice rugăciuni—cât va sta biserica—pentru iertarea păcatului lui Ștefan...” For Stephen’s request of the beheadings on 16 January 1471, see the brief entry in *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 239v. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 8 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 17 (for a Romanian translation).

¹¹³ Ștefan S. Gorovei was first to address this issue in his article “Titlurile lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 74-78.

emperor: царь СЪТѢВАНЬ / Emperor Stephen.¹¹⁴ The writer is anonymous, but he was likely a contemporary because the inscription dates to the year in which the two Moldavian fortresses were captured by Ottoman forces.

The Gate of Christianity

The sources from this period show that Stephen was well aware of Moldavia's unique geo-political position—the region was Europe's eastern-most Christian frontier. Stephen acknowledged the crucial location of his principality in a letter dated 25 January 1475, and written after his battle against the Ottomans at Vaslui two weeks before, on 10 January 1475—an event that reverberated throughout all of Europe.¹¹⁵ Stephen sent his message to Europe's leaders¹¹⁶ in an effort to secure additional military and financial support for his anti-Ottoman struggles. In the letter, the Moldavian prince referred to his domain as the “gate of Christianity”¹¹⁷ and explained that if this eastern Carpathian region were to be conquered by the Turkish forces “the rest of the Christian world would be in great danger.”¹¹⁸ Three years later (after his defeats at Vaslui in 1475 and Războieni in 1476), in a letter delivered by his messenger and uncle John Țamblac to the Venetians and Pope Sixtus IV (1414-1484; in office 1471-1484), on 8 May 1478, Stephen explained:

I do not want to repeat how important my country is for all the Christians;
I think it is superfluous [to repeat], because it is in fact too clear that my
country is the main stronghold for Hungary and Poland, and the garrison

¹¹⁴ Bogdan, *Scrieri alese*, 520; Gorovei, “Titlurile lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 74.

¹¹⁵ In a letter dated 25 January 1475 and sent to Europe's leaders, Stephen announced his victory over the Ottomans who attacked Moldavia with more than 120,000 men—a number likely exaggerated. With this document, Stephen sought support in his anti-Ottoman struggles. This letter survives in three copies in the Italian language. Two are in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, and one in the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice. An incomplete German translation of this letter also survives, and it was published by Nicolae Iorga after a manuscript from the National Library in Vienna in *Acte și fragmente*, III, 91-92: “Ermanung beschehenn durch Steffan-Weyda in der Molda, beschehen und auffgeschriben menigern Christen und in Christenlandt.” *Documente străine despre români*, 56-58 (for a Romanian translation); Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 319-321 (for a transcription of the Italian copy of the original (likely) written in Church Slavonic, and a Romanian translation).

¹¹⁶ “Copia d'una lettera che mandò el capitaneo generale del re d'Ongoria (Ungheria), el Valacho chiamato Stefano vaivoda, alli principi di cristianità, notificando-li la rotta [che] a dato al Turcho.” Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 54-55; Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 322.

¹¹⁷ “questa porta de la cristianità” Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 323.

¹¹⁸ “Et se questa porta se fosse perduta fino a me, havria conturbata tutta cristianità.” Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 323.

of these two kingdoms. Aside from this, because the Turks tripped on me, many Christians remained in peace for the past four years.¹¹⁹

By 1503, the principality of Moldavia was called “the shield and protection from all the pagans.”¹²⁰

Throughout his reign, Stephen’s aim was to establish even greater protection for his domain, and so he set in motion a number of important anti-Ottoman coalitions with both his closer and more distant neighbors. In 1462, Moldavia joined forces with Poland, despite mutual conflicts, especially over the region of Pocuția/Pokuttya to the north of the principality.¹²¹ Ten years later, in 1472, another anti-Ottoman alliance was established in

¹¹⁹ “Ne voglio dir quanto sia commodo questo mio dominio ale cosse cristiane, giudicando esser superfluo, per esser cossa manifestissima, per esser serajo del Hungaria et Polona, et quello che varda quei do regni. Oltra de zo, per esser impedito el Turco cum mi, za anni quatro sono romaxi molti christiani in reposito.” The message from Stephen to the Venetians and the Pope, sent through his messenger and uncle John Țamblac, delivered on 8 May 1478 survives in the Venetian State Archives, Delib. Senat. R. 28, c. 13. Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, VIII, 23-25 (for a transcription of the Italian copy of the original (likely) Church Slavonic text). Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 342-351 (for the Italian transcription, with some corrections, and a Romania translation). This letter was sent from Stephen’s court as he feared an Ottoman campaign against Moldavia, and particularly an attack against the fortresses at Chilia and Cetatea Albă, that served to protect Moldavia and by extension Hungary and Poland. The messenger recounts the devastating loss of the Moldavians at the battle of Războieni on 26 July 1476, which would not have had such an outcome had the Moldavians been helped by their Christian neighbors. This document, on the one hand, reveals Moldavia’s precarious situation at this crucial moment, and its disintegrating relations with its closer neighbors which after all failed to deliver on their promises to help Stephen in times of need. On the other hand, this document illuminates the new hope Moldavia saw in Venice and its support.

¹²⁰ “scutum et protectio ab omni parte paganea.” Document from 3-4 November 1503 recording the conversation between Stephen and a messenger named Firley. Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 472-481, esp. 476 (for the Latin original).

¹²¹ Tensions between Moldavia and Poland mounted during Stephen’s reign particularly with regard to the province of Pocuția, a region in modern-day Ukraine. Pocuția was originally a Polish territory that was to become part of Moldavia, according to the agreement between the two powers signed in 1388, if Wladisław I Jagiełło was to fail to repay within three years the 4,000 silver roubles he had borrowed from Peter II. The loan was extended for another two years in 1411, again with the condition that failure to pay would result in Pocuția becoming part of Moldavia. The repayment was never made in full and so Pocuția became a contested region throughout the fifteenth century. In the summer of 1490 Stephen campaigned in Pocuția in an effort to regain it and to extend Moldavia’s northern territories to the Nistru River. His predecessor, Stephen II, had lost this province to the Poles during his rule. Stephen was victorious in his efforts and by 22 August 1490 he had already placed Moldavian garrisons in the region’s crucial fortress of Sniatin. Following the battle against the Polish armies at Codrul Cosminului on 26 October 1497, which was prompted by the Polish campaign in Moldavia initiated by King John Albert on 9 August of that year in an effort to conquer the fortresses at Chilia and Cetatea Albă, Stephen regained more authority in Pocuția. On 22 June 1498 the Moldavians carried out a campaign in Poland, conquering and burning down the fortresses of Trembowla, Buczacz, and Podhajce, then plundering the country as far as Lwów/Lviv and over the Dniester, in Pocuția. In the last years of his reign Stephen took control of this region and requested of the king of Poland in 1502 to acknowledge this ownership. On 16 October 1503 Vladislav IV, king of Hungary, wrote to the king of Poland referring to Pocuția as a Moldavian land. This ownership was short-lived, however. In 1506, the Poles led by Sigismund I rose against Moldavia and advanced all the way to Botoșani. By December of 1530 Pocuția was once again seized by the Moldavians. The following summer,

Vaslui between Stephen, the Turkoman Khan Uzun-Hasan (Khan of the Ak Koyunlu dynasty, *r.* 1453-1478),¹²² Pope Sixtus IV (1414-1484; in office 1471-1484), and the rulers of Poland, Hungary, and Venice.¹²³ Between 1492 and 1493, Stephen also sought to convince Lithuania and Muscovy to sign an anti-Ottoman agreement, but was unsuccessful in doing so.¹²⁴ In July 1498, the Moldavian prince supported the Polish-Hungarian treaty that stipulated the creation of an anti-Ottoman league.¹²⁵ The following year, on 12 July 1499, when the Jagiellonian anti-Ottoman coalition was actually established, Stephen signed an agreement with Poland in which Moldavia became an equal partner alongside Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and Bohemia.¹²⁶ The following year, on 14 September 1499, Stephen entered into another alliance with Lithuania.¹²⁷ Despite his many efforts to halt the Ottoman advance into Europe, and numerous victories on the battlefield—having won thirty-four of the thirty-six battles he was said to have fought during his reign—Stephen still felt defeated and “surrounded by enemies on all sides” toward the end of his life.¹²⁸

on 22 August 1531, the Polish armies under the leadership of Jan Tarnowski defeated the Moldavians led by Peter Rareș at Obertyn and forced them to retreat from the region. These events are recounted in *The Chronicle of Macarie*, fols. 241r-241v and fols. 255v-256r. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 78, 83 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 91, 97-98 (for a Romanian translation). For the treaty between Moldavia and Poland concluded on 2 May 1462 in Suceava, see Ionașcu et al, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în documente (1368-1900)*, 123-126.

¹²² A tribal federation that ruled present-day Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, eastern Turkey, and northern Iraq from 1378 to 1501. On the relations established between Stephen III and Khan Uzun-Hasan, see Vassman, “O pagină glorioasă a prieteniei româno-iraniene. Relațiile diplomatice ale lui Ștefan cel Mare cu șahul turcoman al Persiei Uzun Hasan,” 83-87; and, most recently, Andreescu, “Data epistolei lui Uzun Hasan către Ștefan cel Mare. Noi contribuții,” 17-26.

¹²³ Gemil, *Românii și otomanii în secolele XIV-XVI*, 146-147.

¹²⁴ Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 329-330 (for summary of the document in Romanian), 390 (for the Church Slavonic original).

¹²⁵ Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 409-410 (for the Church Slavonic original), 410-411 (for a Romanian translation).

¹²⁶ For the agreement concluded on 12 July 1499 in Hârlău, see Ionașcu et al, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în documente (1368-1900)*, 132-140 (for a Romanian translation of the Church Slavonic original). See also Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 417-419, 426-428 (for summary of the document in Romanian), 419-426 (for the Church Slavonic original), 428-435 (for a Romanian translation); 435-441 (for a Latin version).

¹²⁷ For the treaty between Moldavia and Lithuania, dated 12 September 1499 and ratified in Suceava, see Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 442-444 (for the Church Slavonic original), 445-446 (for a Romanian translation).

¹²⁸ The Venetian doctor Mateo Muriano who was sent to Stephen’s court to treat the prince in his last days, wrote a letter from Suceava to Doge Leonardo Loredano (1501-1521) on 7 December 1502 in which he recounted Stephen saying: “...io sono circondato da inimici da ogni banda e ho avuto bataie 36 dappoi che son signor de questo paese de le qual son stato vincitore de 34 et 2 perse.” / “...I am surrounded by enemies on all sides and I engaged in 36 battles as prince of this land [Moldavia], out of which I won 34

The coalitions and the numerous pleas for support did little to secure aid for Moldavia in its anti-Ottoman struggles. Although Pope Sixtus IV acknowledged Stephen's efforts and dubbed him "a true athlete of the Christian faith,"¹²⁹ and Matthias Corvinus was supposed to help Stephen following their agreements in 1475,¹³⁰ whatever western support was sent toward Moldavia never made it beyond the Carpathian Mountains. It is possible that Hungary's conflicts with the Habsburgs and the Jagiellonians limited the degree of its involvement in military matters in the east, and especially against the Ottomans. In fact, in the early 1480s, Corvinus was more concerned with besieging Vienna in the west than he was with the threats posed in the east. Viewed from a different angle, it appears that the predominantly Catholic world of western Europe did not care to support an Orthodox principality as the leader in the Christian fight against the Ottomans.

With little support from his Christian neighbors, Stephen looked to another solution to strengthen his domain. Beginning in the 1470s, his agenda included the unification of the Romanian-speaking lands around the Carpathian Mountains, and in particular Moldavia and Wallachia to the east and south of the mountain range. This strategic move was intended to expand Moldavia's territory and thus create a more powerful Christian front against the advancing Ottoman armies.¹³¹ Thus, in November of 1473 Stephen and his men invaded the principality of Wallachia to the south, defeating the armies of Prince Radu the Handsome while also wreaking carnage on the Ottoman support troops at the Battle of Vodna River, and subsequently taking full control for the very first time of this neighboring Romanian principality north of the Danube. The Sultan

and lost 2." Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, VIII, 36-37 (for a transcription of the original Italian); Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 148-150 (for a Romanian translation).

¹²⁹ In a Papal Bull issued by Pope Sixtus IV and dated 13 January 1477: "verus christiane fidei athleta." Cădea, "Saint Stephen the Great in His Contemporary Europe," 141; Demciuc, "Ștefan cel Mare—'un vero atleta della fede cristiana,'" 40, n. 16; Husar, "Athleta Christi," 503-529.

¹³⁰ For the letter Stephen first sent to Corvinus requesting his aid on 12 July 1475 in Iași, see Ionașcu et al, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în documente (1368-1900)*, 127-129 (for a Romanian translation of the original Latin text). See also Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 330-331 (for a summary in Romanian), 331-336 (for the Latin original). For the treaty between Stephen and Corvinus concluded on 15 August 1475 in Buda, see Ionașcu et al, *Relațiile internaționale ale României în documente (1368-1900)*, 129-132 (for a Romanian translation of the original Latin text).

¹³¹ Dumitru Năstase has also noted that this effort to unite the whole of the Romanian territories "under one single scepter" would have created "a solid base for a liberation offensive in the Balkans." This "conflict for hegemony" in the Romanian lands could be described, again according to Năstase, "as the medieval phase of the Romanian people's fight for national unity." Năstase, "Imperial Claims in the Romanian Principalities from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries. New Contributions," 209.

In referring to Stephen as emperor/tsar and as a “bearer of victory,” and in the detailed description of who celebrated his return to Suceava, Moldavia’s capital at the time—all details part of a rhetoric unprecedented up to that point in the Moldavian chronicles or other written sources—the writer of *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, in this instance, sought to emphasize Stephen’s emerging aspirations by emulating a textual Constantinian model.¹³⁴

Indeed, Stephen’s returns to Suceava following his defeat of the Wallachians in 1473 and the Ottomans in 1475 echoed in their celebratory grandeur the imperial entrance of Constantine the Great into Rome following his defeat of Maxentius at the famous Battle of the Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312—the battle that was to bring a decisive victory for the Christian faith. According to Eusebius, upon Constantine’s return to Rome:

...all the members of the Senate and the other persons there of fame and distinction, ...and all the people of Rome, gave him a bright-eyed welcome with spontaneous acclamations and unbounded joy. Men with their wives and children and countless numbers of slaves with unrestrained cheers pronounced him their redeemer, savior and benefactor.¹³⁵

Most notably, Andrei Pippidi and Liviu Pilat have addressed the parallels between these “imperial” triumphs, separated in time by eleven centuries.¹³⁶ It is possible that the writer of *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* looked for inspiration and an appropriate example in retelling the events of Stephen’s reentry into Suceava to the text of the already discussed eulogy by Bishop Euthymius copied at Putna Monastery in 1474. However, it could also have been the case that Stephen actually adapted his celebrations at that moment to model those of Constantine as described in the eulogy, in an effort to refashion the image of the great Byzantine ruler in his own milieu. But since we have no

їерене, носаци сватое євангелїе вѣ рѣкаѣ и слоужаще и хвалаще Бога ѡ бывшем дарованни ѡт вышнїего и благословїще царѣ: ‘Да живет царь!’” Papaitescu, *Cronicile Slavo-Române din sec. XV-XVI*, 9 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 18 (for a Romanian translation).

¹³⁴ Pilat, “Modelul constantinian și imaginarul epocii lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 429-444; idem, *Între Roma și Bizanț*, 461-474.

¹³⁵ Eusebius. *Life of Constantine*, 85.

¹³⁶ Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în Țările Române*, 103; Pilat, “Modelul constantinian și imaginarul epocii lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 429-444, esp. 436-440; idem, *Între Roma și Bizanț*, 461-474, esp. 466.

other sources aside from the chronicle to confirm the nature of these celebrations, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions. What is clear is that Stephen sought to present himself at this moment (whether in actuality or through the written word) akin to Constantine—as an *alter Constantinus*—and the text written by Bishop Euthymius served as a likely model.

The Murals of the Katholikon at Pătrăuți

The extensive interior murals of the church at Pătrăuți, completed in 1487 and repainted 1496-1499, represent the earliest notable example of Moldavian monastic church painting.¹³⁷ The image cycles at Pătrăuți, moreover, include peculiar Constantinian imagery that further support the argument that Stephen took a keen interest in the first Byzantine Emperor during his reign as he sought to redefine his image as a ruler and protector of the Christian faith. Among the predominately religious scenes and figures that cover the interior walls at the church at Pătrăuți in their entirety are various images of Constantine the Great, his mother Helena, and of the True Cross. Constantine, in fact, appears in three different instances and guises: as a historical and saintly figure alongside his mother Helena and the True Cross; as an intercessory figure in a votive painting; and as an allegorical figure in the celebrated wall painting generally identified as *The Cavalcade of the Holy Cross* or *The Procession of the Soldier Saints* (henceforth *The Procession*).

First, the western wall of the naos, to the right of the entrance into the pronaos of the church, displays a full-length representation of the great Byzantine Emperor and his

¹³⁷ On stylistic grounds, and because of the Greek inscriptions throughout the katholikon at Pătrăuți, scholars have proposed that the murals were executed either by an artist from Constantinople or by George of Trikala, who also worked on the Church of St. George in Hârlău, and was buried there after his death in 1530. His tombstone is now in the National Museum of Art in Bucharest (MNAR 14 888/37). Iorga, *Inscripții*, I, 6: “Съи гробъ ест рабъ бжии пан сто[лн]ика Гевургии и зогурфа, пришеелствова от страни Трикал[с]кине, и прѣстави се къ вечнем...” / “This grave belongs to the servant of God, the steward (?) and painter George who came from Tricalchie [Trikala] and moved to the eternal dwellings... [in the days of the pious Peter Rareș, in the year 7038].” It is very likely that George of Trikala served as one of the court artists of Peter Rareș. See Comărnescu, *Îndreptar artistic al monumentelor din nordul Moldovei*, 339; Stănescu, “Meșteri constructori pietrari și zugrăvi din timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 365; Bedros, entry for Gheorghe din Trikkala, in *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon (AKL)*, LII, 498.

The Greek inscriptions could suggest that either Greek artists or artists trained in the Greek cultural sphere worked at Pătrăuți, but not necessarily. In regard to Bulgarian church painting, Bogdan Filow suggests that Bulgarian artists also used Greek inscriptions on their paintings, although they were not Greek. See Filow, *L'ancien art bulgare*, 75.

mother Helena flanking and triumphantly holding up the very object of their devotion: the True Cross (Fig. 2.18). Constantine and Helena stand monumental against a blue and green background that complements and visually highlights the protagonists and their object of veneration. Dressed in luxurious imperial garb—Constantine in the purple *divitision*¹³⁸ and the richly embroidered *loros*,¹³⁹ and Helena in a women’s version of the *divitision* with the wider, fan-shaped sleeves that extend to the ground—and with golden haloes behind them, the patron saints of the cross are shown within historical and eschatological dimensions.

We can already find images of Sts. Constantine and Helena in this guise in monumental painted programs in Byzantine churches, usually found in a central position in the naos or near the threshold leading into the naos.¹⁴⁰ Cases in point, dating from the thirteenth century onward and comparable to the Moldavian renditions, can still be seen in Serbian and Bulgarian *katholika*, as well as some churches from Kastoria.¹⁴¹ As Christopher Walter has argued, this image type was included within larger iconographic programs because Constantine and his mother (but especially Constantine) “were venerated for the example which they offered to succeeding rulers, at first Byzantine but later Serbian, Bulgarian, and even Russian.”¹⁴² Walter, however, neglects from his extensive and richly illustrated study the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Moldavian versions of this image type and their meanings in the Moldavian context.¹⁴³ This distinctive iconography is also found on smaller objects such as ivories and reliquaries; it appears for instance on a tenth-century Byzantine ivory triptych with the Crucifixion now in the Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Berlin (Fig. 2.19), and a

¹³⁸ A *divitision* (or *dalmatica* or *colobium*) is a long silk tunic worn by the emperor and some court dignitaries on important state occasions. A variant of this garment was worn by the empress. It had fan-shaped sleeves that extended freely to the ground.

¹³⁹ A *loros* is a long stole, often studded with gems, worn on festive occasions by the emperor or empress, and, rarely, by certain dignitaries; archangels are often shown wearing imperial raiment including *loroi*.

¹⁴⁰ Walter, *The Iconography of Constantine the Great Emperor and Saint*, esp. 1-125, and esp. figs. 39-46, 78-86, and 92.

¹⁴¹ Walter, *The Iconography of Constantine the Great Emperor and Saint*, 99-101 (for a catalog of Serbian churches that have this image type), 101-102 (for a catalog of Bulgarian churches with murals of Constantine and Helena), 102-103 (for a discussion of a few churches from Kastoria), esp. figs. 39-46, 78-86, and 92.

¹⁴² Walter, *The Iconography of Constantine the Great Emperor and Saint*, 98.

¹⁴³ Out of the rich Moldavian corpus Walter discusses only a portion of the interior murals at Sucevița Monastery (which are, also, poorly reproduced).

reliquary (staurotheke) in Esztergom Cathedral, Hungary, dating from the subsequent century (Fig. 2.20).

This image of Constantine and Helena in the naos at Pătrăuți complements the votive painting on the opposite side of the west wall.¹⁴⁴ To the left of the doorway leading into the pronaos of the church, and wrapping around the south wall of the naos, a votive painting shows full-length images of Stephen and his immediate family members¹⁴⁵ standing before the enthroned Christ (Fig. 2.21). Stephen presents a model of the church at Pătrăuți to Christ with the help of St. Constantine the Great who stands between the two protagonists acting as an intercessor—in essence, a saint who mediates the encounter between Stephen (a mortal) and Christ (the divine).¹⁴⁶ The dedication of the church at Pătrăuți to the Holy Cross explains Constantine’s presence as the intercessory figure in this votive painting. However, the compositional organization of the votive image suggests further layers of meaning. First, the portion of the votive mural that covers the western wall of the naos shows only Constantine standing before the enthroned Christ (Fig. 2.22). The Byzantine emperor extends his right hand toward Stephen (on the adjacent wall) and his left hand toward Christ as a form of address. Christ, in turn, leans his head toward the great emperor, blessing him. As such, compositionally and symbolically, the two murals on either side of the doorway leading into the pronaos emphasize the figure of Constantine and his relationship to Christ and the True Cross, respectively (Fig. 2.23). The unassuming background creates further continuity between the two images interrupted only by the central entryway.

¹⁴⁴ Maria Magdalena Székely has concluded that the votive painting at Pătrăuți was repainted at a later point, likely after Stephen’s death, since the style and execution of the mural does not correspond to those of the rest of the interior murals of the church. Székely, “Ștefan cel Mare și cultul Sfintei Cruci,” 22-23.

¹⁴⁵ The votive painting at Pătrăuți shows Stephen, his third wife Maria Voichița, Bogdan III, and two daughters, Maria and Ana. For a discussion of Stephen’s contemporary portraits, see Voinescu, “Portretele lui Ștefan cel Mare în arta epocii sale,” 463-478. See also Sinigalia, “Ctitori și imagini votive în pictura murală din Moldova la sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea și în prima jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea. O ipoteză,” 59-65.

¹⁴⁶ Votive images of a donor holding an architectural model appear in a variety of media spanning the entire Middle Ages. For a detailed discussion of church models, in the high and later medieval West, see Klinkenberg, *Compressed Meanings: The Donor’s Model in Medieval Art to Around 1300*. In the extant Moldavian votive paintings, the church model is usually depicted in full view of the north façade, with the eastern apse facing toward the patron and the western end directed toward the intercessory saintly figure and Christ. Klinkenberg observes that this orientation of the church model is common to papal portraits in Rome. The opposite orientation, with the eastern apse facing away from the donor, Klinkenberg associates with an imperial tradition rooted in Constantinopolitan representations, such as the mosaic of Justinian from Hagia Sophia (c.1000).

By extension, the rest of the votive painting of Stephen and his family that covers a portion of the south wall of the naos (Fig. 2.24), complements, I would argue, the mural of the *Anastasis* (Fig. 2.25) on the opposite, north wall. The image of the *Anastasis*¹⁴⁷—much more prominent in Orthodox iconography than in western medieval images—shows Christ surrounded by an *aureole* (or *mandorla*) in a mountainous landscape breaking down the gates of hell (“Doors of Death”) to redeem all of mankind. In the foreground, Adam and Eve—symbolic of man’s ancestral sin—rise from the abyss on either side of Christ. Behind Him stand two groups of figures: to His right are three righteous figures from the Old Testament—David, Solomon, and John the Baptist—while the group of people to His left symbolizes those who are still alive and awaiting salvation.

The mural of the *Anastasis* was meant to complement the votive painting on the opposite wall in the naos at Pătrăuți. For one thing, images of the *Anastasis* often show Christ in a white, billowing robe. At Pătrăuți, in contrast, Christ is shown wearing a flowing, golden garment that visually complements the richly embroidered robes of Stephen and his family members on the opposite wall. Moreover, the compositions of the two murals resemble each other as the protagonists in both the votive image and the *Anastasis* mural direct their attention toward the west. Finally, it is not without reason to suggest that the two scenes were to be read together, since they were deliberately placed opposite each other in order to prompt a visual dialogue, and, as I would propose, a symbolic association. As such, just as Christ appears in the image of the *Anastasis* as a figure who will redeem mankind at the end of days, so Stephen (and members of his lineage) is shown in the votive image as a leader who, in the context of Moldavia’s political and military situation, is destined to deliver not just his domain but the entire Christian world from the threat of Ottoman dominance. I am not proposing here that Stephen aspired to be Christ-like. He did not. It was Constantine the Great who served as a model of an ideal Christian leader that the Moldavian prince sought to emulate. There is further evidence to substantiate this.

¹⁴⁷ The *Anastasis* (Greek = resurrection) is the Orthodox image for the Resurrection, depicting Christ’s Descent into Hell. He stands upon its shattered gates of Hell and brings back to life Old Testament figures, including Adam and Eve. The image symbolizes the salvation of mankind. It is the Eastern image of the Orthodox Church and one of the twelve Great Feasts. This moment is addressed in *Ephesians* 4:9, *1 Peter* 3:19, and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

In a military guise, Constantine appears for a third time in the murals at Pătrăuți in the scene of *The Procession* (Figs. 2.26-2.27). The mural of *The Procession* above the entrance to the church covers a large horizontal register of the west wall of the pronaos.¹⁴⁸ In this non-biblical scene, thirteen haloed saints on horseback form a procession in a mountainous landscape that unfolds from left to right. Emperor Constantine and the Archangel Michael—the *Archistrategos* or leader of the heavenly armies—lead the cavalcade made up of eleven mounted soldiers rendered in the guise of various military saints (Fig. 2.28).¹⁴⁹ Although the military saints represented—all martyrs of the early Church—are difficult to identify, certain details of the mural and aspects of the composition allow us to identify at least some of them.¹⁵⁰ Since Sts. Procopius and George are often paired and shown on horseback together—St. Procopius on a darker (sometimes red) horse, and St. George on a white one—it could be that the two youthful figures that ride directly behind Constantine and the Archangel Michael are Sts. George and Procopius (Fig. 2.29).¹⁵¹ St. George turns his head back to look at his companion. Behind Sts. George and Procopius are likely Sts. Mercurius and Demetrios—the two military saints who, as the next chapter will show, often appear in prominent positions in the iconographic cycles of the Moldavian churches (Fig. 2.30).¹⁵²

All the warrior saints in the mural of *The Procession*—in fact all *megalomartyrs* distinguished by being highly venerated among the military saints—march toward the right, in the direction of the large cross (a *crux gemmata* with a *suspendaneum*, or footrest, common in Byzantine iconography) that appears in the sky before them, in the

¹⁴⁸ Below the scene, and so to either side of the doorway, are images of St. Zosima and St. Mary of Egypt.

¹⁴⁹ On the presence and function of the Archangel Michael at Pătrăuți, see Dragnev, “Primul ciclu cunoscut al arhanghelului Mihail din picture murală a Moldovei medieval,” 111-126. On the cult of the Archangel Michael in the Byzantine cultural sphere, see Olar, *Împăratul înaripat: cultul arhanghelului Mihail în lumea bizantină*.

¹⁵⁰ The military saints celebrated in the second half of the fifteenth century did not have a shared history. However, they became a group, associated more closely with one another and with the court, throughout the tenth century. See White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900–1200* (2013), 32. For a list of the military saints painted inside of Byzantine churches, see *The ‘Painter’s Manual’ of Dionysius of Fournā*, 56-59.

¹⁵¹ Both St. George and St. Procopius are characterized in Dionysius of Fournā’s *Painter’s Manual* as “young” and “beardless.” *The ‘Painter’s Manual’ of Dionysius of Fournā*, 56.

¹⁵² Dionysius of Fournā describes St. Mercurius as “a young man with an incipient beard.” St. Demetrios he describes as “a young man with mustaches.” It is possible, however, that the figure next to St. Mercurius, shown with a full beard, to be St. Theodore Stratelates, described in the *Hermeneia* as “a young man with curly hair and a brown rush-like beard.” *The ‘Painter’s Manual’ of Dionysius of Fournā*, 56-57.

upper right corner of the composition (Fig. 2.28). The three-armed cross mirrors exactly the cross that Constantine and his mother Helena hold between them in the mural found on the west wall of the naos at Pătrăuți (Fig. 2.18). As Pilat has concluded, for Stephen this type of cross likely served as the image of the True Cross.¹⁵³ From a historical standpoint, moreover, this cross is symbolic of the sign in which, according to Eusebius, Constantine the Great defeated Maxentius in 312—the event that marked Constantine’s conversion to Christianity and subsequent protection of the Christian faith.

The image of *The Procession* at Pătrăuți is without precedent in Byzantine mural cycles, in large part because of its scale, compositional details, and the directional movement of the figures. Although other extant murals provide some parallels to the Pătrăuți example, none rival it in its expansive form, iconographic details, and symbolic content. For example, in the interior of the Church of St. Constantine in Kritsa, Merabello, Crete, three murals survive dating possibly to the middle of the fourteenth century. Among them is an image showing *The Triumph of Constantine* (Fig. 2.31).¹⁵⁴ Although badly damaged, the mural shows Constantine on a white horse at the head of his troops—soldiers wearing helmets and brandishing lances—returning to Rome after his victory over Maxentius. A similar example dates to c.1500. It survives in the interior of the Church of the Holy Cross of Agiasmati at Platanistasa, Cyprus, and belongs to a ten-scene image cycle related to the True Cross and showing *The Visions of Constantine* (Fig. 2.32).¹⁵⁵ In the image, Constantine and members of his retinue direct their attention toward the heavens to learn of and to follow the sign in which they are to conquer. This mural shows a moment before Constantine’s battle against Maxentius, whereas the painting from Crete celebrates Constantine’s victory in that battle.

By contrast, the image in the pronaos at Pătrăuți displays neither a moment before or after this well-known historical event. As it was never intended to form part of a cycle of images devoted to Constantine the Great and/or the True Cross, the image stands alone. Its designers chose to elaborate on its complex theological and allegorical meanings instead, transforming Constantine’s vision into an emblem, a power symbol of

¹⁵³ Pilat, “Cultul Sfintei Cruci în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 10-11.

¹⁵⁴ This example was discussed in Walter, *The Iconography of Constantine the Great Emperor and Saint*, 113-114, and fig. 104.

¹⁵⁵ This example was discussed in Walter, *The Iconography of Constantine the Great Emperor and Saint*, 61-62, and fig. 56.

perpetual victory through the Holy Cross and the Christian faith.¹⁵⁶ Constantine here is not shown leaving for his battle against Maxentius. Despite the suggested motion, the cavalcade appears more like a parade than an army ready for battle. Moreover, the scene is permeated by a sense of calm and assurance rather than urgency, as if a victory is imminent.¹⁵⁷ The mural, thus, should be understood in a more nuanced framework, carrying an ideological meaning for the period, and more specifically for Moldavia under Stephen's rule. While the image evokes divine assistance in Constantine's conflict, it does so as well, and by extension, in Stephen's struggles.¹⁵⁸ The emperor alongside the Archangel Michael, at the head of the heavenly army, then, could be Constantine the Great, but, as André Grabar has proposed, it could equally well stand for Stephen himself—a new Constantine—leading his men into battle with divine support.¹⁵⁹ Stephen's mortal soldiers, then, tread in the footsteps of the great martyrs of the Church, military saints guided and protected by the divine.¹⁶⁰

What is more, the image of *The Procession* confirms that in addition to Constantine, Stephen held in high regard the military saints (Constantine the Great among them, although not a military saint *per se*), who helped and protected him in battle and whose model he followed. The importance of the military saints to Stephen is confirmed by objects such as the embroidered liturgical standard showing St. George enthroned with the dragon at his feet that he gifted to Zographou Monastery on Mount Athos in 1500 (discussed in Chapter Five, Fig. 5.51), as well as by the many churches he

¹⁵⁶ Grabar, “Les croisades de l’Europe orientale dans l’art,” 22: “Et dans ce sanctuaire consacré à la Sainte-Croix [Pătrăuți] qui inspira les guerres d’Étienne, la procession des saints taxiarques sous le signe de la victoire chrétienne reçoit un sens allégorique évident.” / “And in this church dedicated to the Holy Cross [Pătrăuți], which inspired Stephen’s battles, the procession of the military saints under the sign of Christian victory [the cross] is endowed with an evident allegorical meaning.”

¹⁵⁷ Székely, “Ștefan cel Mare și cultul Sfintei Cruci,” 25.

¹⁵⁸ Grabar, “Les croisades de l’Europe orientale dans l’art,” 20-22.

¹⁵⁹ Grabar, “Les croisades de l’Europe orientale dans l’art,” 22: “Comme naguère l’empereur Constantin marcha contre les païens et les écrasa, de même Étienne de Moldavie, nouveau Constantin, vaincra l’ennemi infidèle, au nom de la croix.” / “Just as before Emperor Constantine marched against the pagans and crushed the, Stephen of Moldavia, a New Constantine, will defeat the infidel enemy, in the name of the cross.”

¹⁶⁰ As Monica White has recently discussed in her book *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900–1200* (2013) the deaths of soldiers and martyrs “for the faith were models for mortal troops, who were expected to follow their example.” In this vein, “the struggles against the enemies of the empire were to be equaled with struggles against the enemies of God, and the empire’s soldiers, by extension, with fighters for Christ.” White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus*, 33. For divine intercession in warfare, see Dennis, “Religious Services in the Byzantine Army,” 107-117.

built and dedicated to military saints—the churches at Bădeuți (Milișăuți) and Voroneț dedicated to St. Procopius and St. George, respectively, are chief cases in point.

The perpetual presence of the divine in Stephen's struggles, implied in the image of *The Procession*, is further accentuated by the meaning of the extensive mural directly above it. Covering the uppermost semicircular portion of the west wall under the supporting arch of the pronaos, I am convinced that the mural showing *The Marriage at Cana* (henceforth *The Marriage*) was designed to complement and stress the function of the image below, showing *The Procession* (Fig. 2.33). The mural of *The Marriage* translates into pictorial language Christ's first miracle—the transformation of water into wine at the Wedding of Cana in Galilee, as described in the *Gospel of John* 2:1-10. According to the biblical account, when the wine ran out at the wedding, Christ asked for the empty jugs to be filled with water that he then miraculously transformed into wine. The mural at Pătrăuți shows Christ on the left seated around a table among other guests (and perhaps even the bride and groom). Christ is actually shown seated on the table, as if on a throne, with his feet resting on a footstool below. He directs His attention toward the right of the composition (His left) where the two servants fill the three large jugs with water. Christ appears again on the right side of the composition ready to perform His miracle through which His divine nature is revealed. The image, however, could also be read from left to right, as such: Christ, at first just a regular guest at the wedding, is given a place of distinction at the main table (as if enthroned) once he performs his miracle. The carefully constructed composition and the repeated figure of Christ that both frames and anchors the narrative lend the image its possible dual reading. The actual moment represented on the left of the composition—whether before or after the miracle occurred—is perhaps more difficult to determine, but the meaning of the image is clear. The powers of Christ's intervention, as well as his divine status, are themes central to the mural.

At Pătrăuți, the juxtaposition of the murals of *The Marriage* and *The Procession* stresses the dialogue intended by the designers of the image cycles between Christ's initial miraculous act at the marriage at Cana and His first miraculous intervention on the battlefield when he assisted Constantine and his troops against Maxentius in the early fourth century. Thus, Christ's first miracle in life is paralleled with His first famous

miracle in the narrative of Orthodox Christian history. Indeed, in the compositional organization of the two images, Christ performing the miracle of the transformation of water into wine is placed directly above the equestrian figures of Constantine the Great, the Archangel Michael, and the True Cross. However, aside from the historical dimensions, the images present alternative temporalities that, I would argue, resonate in the Moldavian context given the region's tumultuous political and military history. As such, I would propose that just as the guests had to wait to receive the "good wine" at the wedding, so perhaps better times for Moldavia were to come. The murals, thus, hold out assurance that through divine intervention, Moldavia and its leaders could succeed in their struggles.

In the context of Moldavia's political and military troubles leading up to 1487, when the church in Pătrăuți was built and soon afterward painted, the mural of *The Procession* celebrated Stephen's victories up to that point against the Ottomans and his successful efforts to protect the Christian faith. On another level, this image could have served as a call to action in all future anti-Ottoman struggles, similar to the requests for support that Stephen had made on a number of occasions toward local and neighboring Christian communities during the initial decades of his reign.¹⁶¹ In this regard, the peace agreement ratified between Stephen and the Porte just the previous year, in 1486, may have been initiated by the Moldavian prince only to serve as a temporary solution to the Ottoman problem in the region. Indeed, as Dumitru Năstase has noted, the church in Pătrăuți and its allegorical mural of *The Procession* would convey that the peace of 1486 was accepted "only in deed" since Stephen considered himself "still at war" with the Ottomans.¹⁶² In his efforts, he continually looked to the divine for support. A particular passage in *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* stresses this same belief. In an entry for the year 6975 (1467), we thus read: "Just as the mighty and the helpless have fallen because they were overcome with power, so we need to realize that wars are not won with support from others, but only from God."¹⁶³ Divine assistance was believed to have

¹⁶¹ Năstase, *Ideea imperială în Țările române*, 7.

¹⁶² Năstase, *Ideea imperială în Țările române*, 7. Cited also in Székely and Gorovei, "Semne și minuni" pentru Ștefan voievod," 73.

¹⁶³ *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 239v: "Како силнии падоша и немоцини прѣподасашѣ са силоѣ, тако да разумѣем тако браниѣ ни от кого възможна, нѣ от Господа Бога силь." Panaitescu, *Cronicile Slavo-Române din sec. XV-XVI*, 8 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 16 (for a Romanian translation).

played a key role in Stephen's confrontations from the beginning of his reign, and perhaps even more so after 1486.

The mural of *The Procession* and its powerful message would have been the last image the faithful saw upon exiting the church at Pătrăuți. This was likely the case for Stephen's armies as well, since Stephen and his men, as other princes had done before and after him, departed for battle from the churches. On the surface of the edifice, still faintly discernible today, are the sword marks left by the army men as they circumambulated the monument and touched it at various points. Such marks also remain visible on the katholikon at Tazlău Monastery—and particularly visible around the exterior of the naos and the eastern-most window of the altar area—the most sacred spaces of the church (Figs. 2.34-2.35). At Probota, on the other hand, although subsequent restorations concealed these marks, earlier photographs of the edifice, that predate the unthoughtful restorations, preserve these indentations (Fig. 2.36). Similar markings on the exterior of the church are found at Humor monastery, especially visible on the south façade (Fig. 2.37). As such, in addition to the interior image of *The Procession* and its important symbolic message of protection under the sign of the cross and through the Christian faith, physical contact with the church itself would have provided Stephen's soldiers with strength and a renewed sense of confidence for the battle ahead.

Finally, the incorporation of the mural of *The Procession* in the cycle of images at Pătrăuți demonstrates that political and military concerns found a prominent and significant place in the religious sphere in Moldavia in the second half of the fifteenth century. This aspect was to reemerge later, in the first decades of the sixteenth century, during the reign of Stephen's illegitimate son Peter Rareș, under whose patronage thirteen of the churches received extensive mural cycles both inside and outside.¹⁶⁴ Among the mainly religious and biblical scenes was incorporated once again an image with contemporary resonances. The mural of *The Siege of Constantinople*, as Chapter Six will show, presents a layered image with multiple historical allusions combined and adapted to address local political and military anxieties in Moldavia at this later moment.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter Three.

Conclusion

Stephen's secular and ecclesiastical patronage during his long and prosperous reign—spanning almost half a century—was a direct reflection of his princely ambitions, as I have argued here. His initial projects—secular in character and taking the form of fortresses and royal courts—reveal his concerns during the first decades of his reign with the much-needed protection of his domain. Once Moldavia was fortified throughout, Stephen began turning his attention toward the building of churches and monasteries.

Within his long reign, the 1470s presented a crucial moment of transformation and renewal for Stephen, who, in his self-fashioning, was redefining his role and aspirations as Moldavia's leader and defender. His princely ideology, molded in part by his own ambitions, was also shaped by Moldavia's often-troubled relations with its Christian neighbors and with the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the fifteenth century—in the wake of which he was aspiring to be a notable Christian leader and protector of the Christian faith. As early as 1466 Stephen began to take an interest in the patronage of the monastic communities on Mount Athos and also initiated construction on his princely mausoleum at Putna Monastery. In 1472 he married Maria of Mangup on the feast day of the Holy Cross, 14 September—a marriage that set in motion an array of cultural, artistic, and ideological transformations for Moldavia and its ruler. The following year, Stephen put an end to the tribute payment, began referring to himself as emperor/tsar, and waged war against Wallachia in an effort to expand Moldavia's territory and create a Christian buffer zone along the western and southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains against the advancing Ottoman armies. A little over a decade later the peace treaty with the Ottomans in 1486 marked the end of a phase in which Stephen fervently fought for the protection of his domain while redefining his princely aspirations. Once Moldavia entered a period of political and military stability in 1487, Stephen directed his attention toward the building of churches throughout his domain, beginning with the churches at Bădeuți (Milișăuți) and Pătrăuți dedicated to St. Procopius and the Holy Cross, respectively.

Like Constantine, Stephen was dubbed “the Great” and became a symbol of Christianity's protection during his own time and in subsequent centuries. The Orthodox Church even canonized him as a saint in 1992, and his feast day is celebrated today on

2 July.¹⁶⁵ Popular songs, passed down from generation to generation, continued to praise the Moldavian ruler as such:

Stephen, Stephen, great leader
Comparable to nothing in this world
Except for the magnificent sun.
When he takes off from Suceava
He puts his chest at the borders [of his land]
Like a defensive wall.
Stephen, Stephen, holy leader
Unequaled on earth...¹⁶⁶

Dimitrie Cantemir, in one of his most important written works, *Descriptio Moldaviae*, written in Latin and published between 1714 and 1716, records Stephen's legacy as follows: "Stephen, named the Great, son of Bogdan II, prince worthy of the greatest praise, and the most fearless protector of his domain against all enemy attackers from whichever corner they may have come."¹⁶⁷ The contemporary Ottoman historian and chronicler Ashik Pasha-Zade (1400-1484) also spoke of Stephen as:

The one who stepped all over the Hungarian people;
[The one] who broke the bow of the Sultan [Mehmed II];
[The one] who frightened the ruler of Wallachia,
And many times attacked his land.
He [Stephen III] stood face to face with Sultan Mehmed II.
His army was destroyed, yet he fought well.
He saved his head from the hands of his enemies.

¹⁶⁵ Vornicescu, *Sfântul voievod Ștefan cel Mare. Cuvânt de preamărire*, 33-37.

¹⁶⁶ *Ștefan cel Mare: 500 de ani de la înscăunare*, 16:

Ștefan, Ștefan, Domn cel Mare
Seamăn pe lume nu are
Decât numai mândrul soare.
Din Suceava când el sare
Pune pieptul la hotare
Ca un zid de apărare.
Ștefan, Ștefan, Domn cel Sfânt
N-are seaman pe pământ...

¹⁶⁷ Cantemir, *Descriptio Moldaviae*, 136: "Stephanus V, cognomine Magnus, filius Bogdani II, princeps omni laude maior, suaeque patriae contra omnium undequaque inimicorum iniurias defensor strenuissimus."

This is the nonbeliever who defeated many armies.

He was daring...¹⁶⁸

Stephen's Christian contemporaries, on the other hand, dubbed him "Christianity's protector," and Pope Sixtus IV in a correspondence rightfully called the Moldavian prince "a true athlete of the Christian faith."¹⁶⁹ Stephen was, indeed, a ruler who appears to have modeled his image, actions, and aspirations after one of Christianity's greatest defenders—Constantine the Great, whose image, verbal and textual, Stephen reinvented at a critical moment in his own context.

As he ascended to Moldavia's throne shortly after the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, and following a long period of great internal unrest in Moldavia, Stephen undertook to link himself to Constantine the Great, whom he saw as the ideal Christian ruler—a protector of the Christian faith, as well as a supporter of Christianity and a builder of churches that brought into balance the religious and political spheres. Stephen, thus, not only dedicated the first monastic church he built to the Holy Cross, but also filled it with images of Constantine carrying various historical, theological, allegorical, and eschatological meanings.

What is more, in his ecclesiastical patronage throughout Moldavia, Stephen seems to have followed the example of Constantine in his capacity as a great builder of churches throughout his domain: Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. These extensive building campaigns scholars have taken as evidence of Constantine's pro-Christian policy and newfound ties with the Christian faith and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹⁷⁰ Stephen, thus, received the privilege of founder (or *ktetor*) of the religious buildings he commissioned—an appellation that designated him as a protector of Orthodoxy, and one that rendered him (in a more expanded sense) as an heir to the Byzantine emperors who first took on this special role. Moreover, as a *ktetor*—and in particular one of monasteries—Stephen enjoyed the following privileges: oversight of the administrative control of the monasteries, the right to receive support in times of need, the inclusion of a dedicatory inscription and a votive painting in the *katholikon*, the right

¹⁶⁸ Guboglu and Mehmet, eds., *Cronici Turcești*, I, 102, 104-105.

¹⁶⁹ See n. 129 above.

¹⁷⁰ Grant, *Constantine the Great: The Man and His Times*, 187-207, esp. 189-199.

to be remembered and commemorated along with family members, and the privilege to be buried inside the church.¹⁷¹ Stephen's followers were granted these privileges as well.

Furthermore, the numerous religious sites (churches, chapel, monasteries) built under Stephen's aegis contributed to the creation of a new sacred landscape in Moldavia at this time (whether intentional or not)—a type of simulacrum of Athos with a sacred infrastructure populated by churches and monasteries. This large concentration of monasteries and sacred sites in Moldavia beginning in the second half of the fifteenth century has led modern scholars to call the region a “Second Mount Athos.”¹⁷² However, it was not just topographically that the sacred landscape of Moldavia was beginning to emulate that of Athos. As the next two chapters demonstrate, the architectural and iconographic vocabularies of the Athonite monasteries also contributed to the distinct visual, architectural, and spatial forms that developed in Moldavian monastic church architecture in particular, beginning under Stephen's patronage and continuing during the reign of Peter Rareș. In the next, third chapter, I will address the architectural rhetoric of the Moldavian churches; Chapter Four then centers on the iconographic programs of the buildings and the structuring of spatial experience formulated through the images and the architectural constructs of the edifices.

¹⁷¹ Muntean, “Organizarea mănăstirilor românești în comparație cu cele bizantine (până la 1600),” 60.

¹⁷² Bulgaria, and in particular the city of Sofia and its environs (Vitosha, Lyulin, Rui Mountain, Plana, Lozen Mountain, and Stara Planina), also received the epithet the “Small Mount Athos” (*Mala Sveta Gora / Sofia Sveta Gora*) during the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1396/1422) because of the ring of monasteries surrounding the area. These monasteries operated under a main lavra and were organized according to the rules of the monastic community on Mount Athos. The earliest monastery in the region was founded during the First Bulgarian Empire (681-1018) and reached its zenith in the fourteenth century. Konstantinov, *Treasures of Bulgaria*, 207-208.

CHAPTER THREE

Architectural Forms and Stylistic Pluralism

Introduction

This chapter examines the distinctive architectural features and spatial solutions of the churches and *katholika* from Moldavia built in the decades following the events of 1453, with a particular focus on the princely commissions of Stephen III (*r.* 1457-1504) and those of his son Peter Rareș (*r.* 1527-1538; 1541-1546). The ecclesiastical monuments of the early sixteenth century built prior to Peter's reign are also investigated here. The architectural features and spatial layouts of Peter's churches (as well as their iconographic programs, discussed in the following chapter), were part of a uniquely regional architectural tradition that was perpetuated and transformed in Moldavia well into the seventeenth century. The final chapter of this dissertation, the Epilogue, will focus on the churches and *katholika* built in the second half of the sixteenth century and the initial decades of the seventeenth century that reinterpreted the architectural models favored by Stephen and his son. Certain architectural forms characteristic of the Moldavian monastic churches of this later period took form initially in select churches built under Stephen's guidance, which were then further developed and transformed under Peter's patronage. The later churches, as will be shown, while introducing many new forms, appropriated numerous architectural elements found in the buildings that preceded them.

The layouts, modes of construction, and features of the churches under consideration here follow and also reinterpret Byzantine, Slavic, western Gothic, and even Islamic church building traditions, with various aspects of a local character as well. Scholars such as Gheorghe Balș and Karl A. Romstörfer have also suggested Armenian and Georgian prototypes for certain architectural forms.¹ In the pages that follow, I focus

Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

on distinctive architectural aspects and spatial solutions of the Moldavian churches and consider their emergence and development over time. This approach is intended to highlight the characteristics that make church architecture in Moldavia distinct from that of other regions, while addressing those building traditions that left their most distinctive marks on the Moldavian corpus.

I will consider these architectural developments in the context of the cross-cultural contacts that extended between Moldavia and its neighbors during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.² Moreover, I set in dialogue the architecture of the monastic churches with that of contemporary parish churches and churches that were not princely foundations (including those built by the nobility, or boyars).³ It will become clear from the discussion that it was in the monastic sphere that the kinds of architectural innovations first occurred that were subsequently employed—with lesser degrees of complexity—in other types of ecclesiastical monuments in the region. Readers are reminded that all of the churches, *katholika*, and chapels discussed in this chapter are included, in chronological order and with additional information on each building, in the catalog (Appendix 4) at the end of the dissertation.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Gheorghe Balș, Ion D. Ștefănescu, and Paul Henry published in Romanian and French a series of separate major studies on the religious architecture of Moldavia from the second half of the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries.⁴ These publications generally took the form of chronological catalogs with

¹ See, for example, Balș, *Influences arméniennes et géorgiennes sur l'architecture roumaine*; Romstörfer, *Die moldauisch-byzantinische Baukunst*, 10; Bănățeanu, "Aspecte ale influenței artei armeano-georgiene asupra artei religioase românești," 705-706.

² See also the section on "Moldavia at the Crossroads" from Chapter One.

³ The boyars (Russian) represent the highest rank of the Moldavian (and Wallachian) aristocracy, consisting of the higher echelons among the retinues of princes and lower princely nobility. Boyars were free men. They served as masters of villages, participated in the leadership of the state, and had privileges offered by the rulers of Moldavia. See Nedeloiu, "Neamț County Boyars," 31-48; Giurescu, "Caracteristici ale feudalismului românesc," 395-402.

The parliament of Moldavia and Wallachia was known as the *divan*, in which the *logothete* was responsible for overseeing the royal chancellery and drawing up golden bulls; the keeper of the royal seals; the *logofetel* was the subordinate to the *logothete* in the *divan*. The *vornic* was a *divan* official responsible for overseeing the Royal Court, enjoying thus extensive judicial authority. The *hetman* was a commander.

⁴ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*; idem, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea. 1527-1582*; idem, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacurile al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea*; Ștefănescu, *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie*; Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du nord*.

black and white photographs, plans and elevations, as well as layouts of various monastic complexes. Primarily formal and archaeological in nature, these pioneering studies did not yet engage with the full range of historical contexts that contributed to the making and shaping of the buildings under scrutiny. Balș, in particular, entirely divorced the architecture of the buildings from the image cycles that cover the walls of the churches both inside and outside. I will attempt to discuss relations between architecture and images in subsequent chapters, having here defined certain typical features of Moldavian ecclesiastical architecture. In these chapters (Chapters Four, Five, and Six), I try to build on the numerous architectural and iconographic studies by Balș, Ștefănescu, and Henry, among others, so as to present the material in a new framework, using alternative interpretative strategies.

In the present chapter, rather than adopting a strict chronological format and treat individual churches as a series, I organize my treatment in part typologically, in part thematically, highlighting particular architectural innovations and transformations that occurred in the Moldavian corpus between the mid fifteenth and the mid sixteenth century. My approach, however, does not disregard entirely the chronological dimension. My analysis focuses on the formal and structural features, as well as the spatial articulations, of the churches and *katholika* under consideration as I seek to highlight the stylistic developments that took place in church architecture in Moldavia in the century after the events of 1453.

The type of monastic church characteristic of Moldavian ecclesiastical architecture predominant during the sixteenth century, especially during the reign of Peter Rareș, developed gradually, with certain forms taking architectonic shape in Moldavia as early as the last decades of the fourteenth century, soon after the foundation of the principality in 1359. What makes the architecture of this period very unique is its sheer stylistic pluralism. I focus in particular on architectural features that are Slavic-Byzantine in origin (e.g. the triconch plan and its variants), those that have roots in the western Gothic building tradition (such as window and door framings and tracery configurations), as well as forms that could be characterized as Moldavian in conception (e.g. vaulting designs). The presence and evolution in the Moldavian cultural sphere of particular features adapted from distinct building traditions are considered in light of cross-cultural

interactions and exchanges between Moldavia and other regions, and in the context of princely patronage. External factors certainly contributed to the distinctive character of the Moldavian churches, and so looking at monuments from outside of Moldavia, from regions with which the principality came into contact throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could yield new insights into the development of the Moldavian type of ecclesiastical church that reached a distinctive stage of development during Peter's reign.

The next sections of this chapter address the key architectural and spatial features, as well as the developments that took place in church architecture in Moldavia between the second half of the fifteenth to the first half of the sixteenth centuries. As part of this discussion, I engage also with the notion of stylistic pluralism and the issues posed by buildings that display an eclectic visual rhetoric. For all the ecclesiastical monuments discussed in this chapter in particular, I provide in parentheses the year of their completion, unless the church was built over the span of many years, as well as the catalog number.

The Architecture of the Moldavian Katholika in Context

The Moldavian monastic churches at the core of this project were all built out of local stone and sometimes brick. Although some are larger in scale than others, they all follow a similar layout best characterized by the Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery (Figs. 3.1-3.2; Cat.no.34). The katholikon at Probota consists of a closed barrel-vaulted exonarthex at the west end that opens through a small doorway into a double-domed rectangular pronaos with four large windows, two on each side. This space, in turn, leads through another small entryway into the so-called burial chamber (*gropniță*), also covered by a barrel vault. This room, with a smaller window on each of the north and south walls, gives access through another small entrance to the naos of the church where the liturgical ceremonies were celebrated. The naos comprises a central rectangular space with two lateral semicircular apses, extending to the north and south. Each apse is covered by a semicircular dome and each has one central window opening of the same dimensions as the windows found in the burial chamber. The side apses are often semicircular on the interior and five-sided on the exterior.

To the east end extends the altar area (chancel or bema), semicircular on the interior and eight-sided on the exterior. This space is separated from the naos by a series of thick arches and a large carved and gilded iconostasis with painted icons in multiple registers. Immediately beyond the iconostasis, to either side of the apse, two smaller rooms, known as *pastophoria*, each illuminated by a single small window, stand to the north and south; they respectively are the prothesis, where the holy vessels are stored and the offerings are prepared for the liturgical celebrations, and the diakonikon,⁵ where the liturgical vestments are kept. The interior of the church thus consists of a longitudinal progression of spaces of different dimensions and serving diverse functions that grow progressively darker as one approaches the altar area.

The layout of the Moldavian churches adapts an earlier Byzantine church plan known as the triconch, which is defined as a centralized structure with small side apses extending on three sides of the central, main space that is square, circular, or oblong in shape. The specific triconch plan characteristic of the Moldavian churches has precedents in churches from Constantinople, Thessaloniki, and especially in the katholika of the great monasteries on Mount Athos. The architect and historian Paul Mylonas (1915-2005) was the first to suggest that this plan developed initially in the Athonite monuments, and in particular in the katholikon of the Great Lavra Monastery on the Holy Mount, founded in 963 (Fig. 3.3).⁶ This monastic church was initially rectangular in shape and had three apses extending only toward the east end. In the late tenth century, however, the naos area received a north and south apse. According to Mylonas—though the idea has been challenged—the plan was developed in order to facilitate the antiphonal singing of the two choirs of monks that assembled in these spaces for liturgical duty. This is visualized, for example, in an eighteenth-century drawing by the Ukrainian monk and pilgrim Vasilli Grigorovich Barskij that shows a service in the interior of the Great Lavra

⁵ The *diakonikon* (Greek = place used by the deacons; storage room) serves as a functional extension of the church sanctuary, generally located to the south of the bema, serving to store liturgical vestments, sacred texts, and originally the congregational offerings. The altar furniture is not kept here. It is one of the *pastophoria*, also known as *skeuophylakion*.

⁶ Mylonas, “Le plan initial du catholicon de la Grande-Lavra au Mont Athos et la genèse du type du catholicon athonite,” 89-112. His architectural drawings of the religious buildings on Mount Athos are accessible through the website of the Neohellenic Architecture Archives, <<http://www.benaki.gr/eMP-Architecture/eMuseumPlus>> (accessed 12 April 2013). Robert G. Ousterhout supported Mylonas’s argument in his study *Master Builders of Byzantium*, esp. 92-93.

katholikon in which the monks are positioned around the apses (Fig. 3.4).⁷ It seems certain that this type of triconch plan was favored especially in the context of monastic worship primarily and may best be understood, as Robert G. Ousterhout suggests, as a “regional phenomenon” limited to the monastic communities on Mount Athos and to related areas in northern Greece and the Balkan region.⁸ I would add to this that the plan was appropriated as well in the territories north of the Danube River: following the initial transformation of the Great Lavra, and the adoption of the triconch in the katholika of the other nineteen Athonite monasteries, it appeared in Serbian, Wallachian, and Moldavian monastic churches as early as the second half of the fourteenth century.

Scholars have long maintained that Byzantine architectural forms, such as the triconch plan, arrived in Moldavia mediated through regions of the Balkans, notably Serbia, and then migrated further north through Wallachia.⁹ The surviving evidence, however, suggests otherwise. The oldest still extant church built out of stone in Moldavia that preserves a triconch plan is the Church of the Holy Trinity in the northern Moldavian city of Siret. The church was built between 1354 and 1358 by Sas Vodă as a chapel in the

⁷ Ćurčić, however, has problematized this hypothesis by pointing out that the lateral apses of the katholikon at Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos had doors at the center, rather than windows, communicating thus with the exterior. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 654: “Unlike its probable model, the katholikon at Vatopedi, the lateral apses of Hilandar were perforated with doors, permitting communication with the exterior. For this reason, though not for this reason alone, the standard explanation that these spaces had always been intended to accommodate the monastic choir singers needs to be reexamined.” Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 655: “...the builders of the Hilandar katholikon may have come to Mount Athos possibly from Nicaea, where the architectural style prevalent in Constantinople before 1204 may have been preserved during the course of the thirteenth century. Though we possess no documentary proof of such developments, there are many other indicators to suggest that the Komnenian characteristics of Constantinopolitan architecture may have reached Mount Athos via Nicaea, and hence found their way to Thessaloniki. Similarities, but also differences, between certain architectural characteristics of churches in the capital, that of Hilandar, and also of certain churches in Thessaloniki during the first decades of the fourteenth century, point to Nicaea as a common yet unexplored source with different branches stemming from it independently.”

⁸ Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, 18.

⁹ According to Balș, Athonite builders did not come to Moldavia directly. Rather, Serbian monks who traveled to regions north of the Danube River brought architectural knowledge with them. Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 12. Alexandru Elian likewise claimed that Byzantine architectural elements in Moldavia were mediated through Serbia first and then through Wallachia. Elian, “Moldova și Bizanțul în secolul al XV-lea,” 174. See also Balș, “Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines,” 277-294; Sinigalia, “L’église de l’Ascension du monastère du Neamț et le problème de l’espace funéraire en Moldavie aux XVe—XVIe siècles,” 23; Teodoru, “Contribuții la studiul originii și evoluției planului triconc în Moldova,” 31-33; Theodorescu, “Despre planul triconc în arhitectura medievală timpurie a sud-estului European,” 211-225.

royal court in Siret (Figs. 3.5-3.6; Cat. no.1).¹⁰ In the Balkan region, the triconch plan of this type appeared only slightly later, with one of the earliest masonry examples identified as the Church of the Ascension at Ravanica Monastery, built around 1375 by Prince Lazar (*r.* 1373-1389) (Fig. 3.7).¹¹ In Wallachia, on the other hand, the first church to adopt the triconch plan is the katholikon at Vodița Monastery, built by monk Nicodim and his team around 1374;¹² this was followed by the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Tismana Monastery, consecrated on 15 August 1378, and the Church of the Trinity at Cozia Monastery, consecrated on 18 May 1388 (Figs. 3.8-3.9).¹³ Despite the lack of documentary evidence, the surviving monuments suggest a more direct point of contact between Moldavia and the Byzantine world that would have contributed to the adoption and transformation of the triconch plan in the Moldavian context, without necessarily there being a mediation of artistic and architectural forms through the Balkan peninsula. This may not have been the case for Wallachia, where the first iteration of the triconch plan is preserved in a monument built slightly later than the church at Ravanica Monastery (c.1375).

Moreover, the Moldavian adaptations of the triconch plan in all of the monastic churches built beginning with Stephen III's reign, and from that period onward, are the product of a number of historical circumstances. The main "symbolic convergences," as Dan Ioan Mureșan aptly explains, stand between "the dedication of the church in which [Stephen's] royal anointment took place [the Holy Trinity in Siret], and the celebration of the day in which Stephen was anointed to Moldavia's throne [12 April 1457], on the one hand, and the crucial impact the layout of this church had over Moldavian architecture,

¹⁰ The Church of St. John from Siret follows a similar plan as the Church of the Holy Trinity in the same city. However, while Petre Constantinescu maintains that the church is contemporary with the Church of the Holy Trinity, Gheorghe Balș claims that the church dates to the eighteenth century. See Constantinescu, *Narthexul în artele bizantine, sud slave și române*, 226-227; Balș, *Începuturile arhitecturii bisericești din Moldova*, 5.

¹¹ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 674.

¹² The church was commissioned by Vladislav I, who was prince of Wallachia from 16 November 1364 to c.1377.

¹³ Cozia Monastery was to serve as the prototype for Wallachian religious, and in particular monastic, architecture for the next four centuries. On Cozia Monastery see Lăzărescu, "Data zidirii Coziei," 107-136; idem, "Despre mănăstirea Cozia și varianta de triconc căreia îi aparține biserica ei," 167-193; Cincheza-Buculei, "Le Ménologe de Cozia, Revue," 11-24.

on the other hand.”¹⁴ Mureșan argues that it was precisely in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Siret—a city documented as early as 1340 (before the foundation of the principality) and the former capital of Moldavia with its prestigious royal court—that Stephen was anointed to Moldavia’s throne.¹⁵ The choice of site thus served as a “gesture of huge symbolic significance” for the historical moment, and also for the formulation of a Moldavian cultural and artistic identity in the decades that followed (especially through the adaptation of the triconch plan in Moldavian church architecture).

I return now to the triconch layout of the katholikon at Probota Monastery (Figs. 3.1-3.2). Above the central space of the naos of the church rises a slender tower, cylindrical on the inside and octagonal on the outside, with four rectangular windows oriented in the cardinal directions (Fig. 3.10).¹⁶ The circular tower sits on two eight-pointed star bases below, supported in turn by a series of so-called oblique arches (Fig. 3.11).¹⁷ These are comprised of overlapping arches and pendentives set at an angle to the vertical to diminish the span of the vault under the dome, creating an intricate visual scheme at the point of transition from the rectilinear walls below to the circle of the domed tower above.¹⁸ More specifically, two larger and wider transversal arches and two

¹⁴ Mureșan, “Teoctist I și ungerea domnească a lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 349: “Convergența simbolică dintre hramul bisericii mirungerii domnești de la Siret și sărbătoarea zilei în care încoronarea a avut loc, pe de o parte, cât și impactul crucial pe care modelul aceleiași biserici l-a avut asupra întregii arhitecturi moldovenești, pe de altă parte.”

¹⁵ Mureșan, “Teoctist I și ungerea domnească a lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 341.

¹⁶ Unlike the churches found throughout the Byzantine world and in the Balkan Peninsula that had windows on all facets of the tower, the towers of the Moldavian churches only display four windows oriented in the cardinal directions. Rows of taller and smaller niches frame these windows. Early sixteenth-century exterior tower designs also include small buttresses that mirror on a smaller scale the ones found around the main body of the church. The katholikon of the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos displays two towers over the outermost bays of the pronaos that rest on narrow square bases (this is also the case at the Church of H. Aikaterine in Thessalonike). Unlike the Moldavian churches that have only four windows in the towers, the towers of the church at Hilandar have octagonal drums with each face perforated by a single window. The corners of these polygonal drums are also marked by semi-cylindrical colonnades. This motif appears again in Serbian churches with polygonal towers displaying slender colonnades in between the windows that fully merge with the surrounding wall fabric. This is the case, for example, at Church of the Ascension at Ravanica Monastery (c.1375).

¹⁷ On the Moldavian vaulting system and oblique arches, see Nesterov, “Bolta moldovenească: aport original al meșterilor moldoveni la tezaurul arhitectural universal,” 110-119; Vătășianu, “Bolțile moldovenești. Originea și evoluția lor istorică,” 415-431.

¹⁸ A noteworthy aspect of the triconch plan in the Athonite context, highlighted by Balș and Henry, is that it almost always makes use of four large pillars at each of the four corners of the naos, to the north and south of the lateral apses, that support the dome rising above this central space. These four large supporting engaged columns are not found in the Moldavian churches built on a triconch plan (nor in the churches

smaller and narrower ones rising from the side walls of the church support, by means of four pendentives, a cylindrical drum. This, in turn, backs the smaller spherical dome above through another system of four arches placed this time at 45 degree angles relative to the ones below, and four additional smaller pendentives. This tendency to diminish the span of the dome and tower over the pronaos and naos of the church in an effort to lend these features more attenuated proportions, as is evident in later Byzantine churches found also in regions of the Balkans, such as Serbia.¹⁹ As Balș observes, this particular vaulting system has precedents in Armenian ecclesiastical buildings.²⁰ For example, in the Armenian Cathedral of St. James at Jerusalem (twelfth century), the massive central dome rests on a system of angled arches that anticipate those found in the Moldavian buildings (Fig. 3.12). The dazzling dome over the mihrab of the Great Mosque of Córdoba (eleventh century) presents an even earlier Islamic parallel, although one that is much more elaborate in form than the vaulting system found in Moldavia (Fig. 3.13).

This type of vaulting system, recognized to have originated in Islamic architecture, was later introduced in Armenian buildings, and then reinterpreted in the Moldavian context. As such, we can regard Armenia not as a point of origin but as an intermediary, as a point of transmission, of these kinds of Islamic architectural forms into Moldavia.²¹ Following the Ottoman invasions of Armenia between 1357 and 1403, and the fall of the neighboring Armenian kingdom of Cilicia to the Ottoman in 1375, the Black Sea served as an escape route for the fleeing population of these regions, who

from Wallachia, in fact). The dome of the naos, and pronaos in some instances, in the Moldavian churches rests on the exterior walls of the church and spans a smaller diameter because of the tilted arches (and pendentives) used to diminish the span of the space below. In the Serbian context, on the other hand, and in particular in the Serbian churches built on a triconch plan, according to Balș, both modes of dome support are found, although the one that does not employ the corner pillars tends to be more prevalent. This is not the case in the Serbian churches built on a triconch plan between c. 1375 and c. 1450 (of the so-called “Morava School”), which repeatedly employ the four engaged corner pillars in the naos supporting the dome above. Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 187; Balș, “Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines,” 277-278. Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du Nord*, 77.

¹⁹ Ćurčić, “The Role of Late Byzantine Thessalonike in Church Architecture in the Balkans,” 67.

²⁰ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 14, 188-189. Although most of the text looks at monuments from Wallachia, Balș also discusses additional parallels between Moldavian and Armenian architectural forms in his publication *Influences arméniennes et géorgiennes sur l’architecture roumaine*, esp. 16-17.

²¹ Gheorghe Balș has discussed this issue at the First Congress of International Byzantine Studies held in Bucharest in 1924, with a talk titled “Sur une particularité des voûtes moldaves.” His contribution was later published in *Bulletin de la Section historique de l’Académie roumaine* 11 (1924): 9-16.

arrived as far west as Moldavia.²² At Cetatea Albă on the Black Sea, for example, Armenian coins issued at the end of the thirteenth century were found.²³ Given the formal parallels in vault designs in churches from these two regions, it is possible that Armenian architects made their way to Moldavia, or that Moldavian builders learned particular building techniques by coming into direct contact with Armenian monuments. In this regard, the contacts established between these two regions from the second half of the fourteenth century onward, which deserve still further study, may have facilitated these exchanges.

The specific longitudinal arrangement of the various rooms in the Moldavian monastic churches of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, with single entrances leading from one space to the next, echoes the longitudinal nature of Bulgarian churches, as is the case, for example, at the Church of St. Demetrios from Veliko Tarnovo built c.1185 (Fig. 3.14) and the Church of the Holy Virgin of Petrich from Assen's Fortress near Asenovgrad that dates to the twelfth to thirteenth centuries (Fig. 3.15). Churches of a similar plan with a series of aligned single rooms are also found in Armenia, an example being the Church of St. Shoghakat from Vagharshapat, erected in 1694 on the foundations of an earlier thirteenth-century church (Fig. 3.16). The churches from Trebizond in northeastern Turkey share similar characteristics. An example is the Church of Hagia Sophia, built between 1238 and 1263 when Trebizond was the capital of the Empire of Trebizond—the longest surviving of the Byzantine successor states, which withstood the Ottoman advance until 1461 (Fig. 3.17).²⁴

As evident at Probota (Figs. 3.1-3.2), although the particular interior division of the Moldavian churches into multiple rooms is not easily discernible from the exterior of the edifice, certain elements suggest the internal layout of the buildings. For one thing, the shape of the roof suggests the internal spatial separation with sections draping each segment of the building separately, contributing to the particular silhouette of the monument. The exterior buttresses also demarcate the interior division of the church. Two buttresses frame the side apses of the naos on both sides of the church, and a short

²² Redgate, *The Armenians*, 259-262; Payaslian, *The History of Armenia from the Origins to the Present*, 77-100. See also Siruni, *Armenii în viața economică a Țărilor Române*.

²³ Iorga, "Armenii și românii: o paralelă istorică," 199-205.

²⁴ For a recent publication centered on this monument see Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium*.

buttress at the east end, below the central window, supports the apse. The tower, too, displays four smaller and more slender buttresses on the facets that lack windows.²⁵ Moreover, a row of shallow arched niches sunken into the wall located in the upper sections of the exterior extend up to the beginning of the exonarthex,²⁶ while two additional rows of niches, one smaller and the other much taller, wrap around the naos and altar area of the church and define the three polygonal apses. The tower, moreover, features a row of smaller niches around the upper section, while taller sunken arcades are found below. The elements on the tower—in particular the miniature buttresses and the niches—replicate on a smaller scale their larger counterparts located around the main body of the church at Probota and elsewhere.

Having addressed up to this point the distinctive architectural and spatial features of the Moldavian churches, the following sections examine in detail Stephen's ecclesiastical projects and the monuments of the early sixteenth century—those that marked a moment of transition and transformation between Stephen and Peter's commissions. My aim is to highlight the architectural developments that contributed, in my view, to the emergence of the type of monastic church and monastic milieu predominant during Peter's years in power and, as the Epilogue will show, was transformed further during the second half of the sixteenth century and the initial decades of the seventeenth century.

Stephen's Ecclesiastical Projects

The long and prosperous reign of Stephen III witnessed exceptional building campaigns in both the religious and civic spheres.²⁷ As we have seen in the previous

²⁵ Since the towers of the Moldavian churches have only four windows that point in the cardinal directions, these small buttresses are centrally placed on the sides of the tower that lack windows and not at the points of junction of these sides of the polygon, as is the case in the Athonite and Serbian examples where the corners of the polygonal drum of the tower are marked by semi-cylindrical colonnades. From a visual standpoint, therefore, the mini buttresses in the Moldavian towers stand out more prominently because they are not as fully integrated within the surrounding walls.

²⁶ At Probota, the uppermost row of niches is supposed to continue all around the exonarthex. The fact that this top-most row abruptly ends at the beginning of the exonarthex suggests that this may have been the result of the renovations to the exonarthex undertaken during the extensive projects carried out at the monastery between 1994 and 2000.

²⁷ Nicolescu, "Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare," 260. An extensive bibliography of the artistic production during the reign of Stephen III can be found in *Repertoriul*, 447-462. Corina Nicolescu has proposed the division of Stephen's reign into three periods of activity. The first, which lasted from 1457

chapter, between 1457 and 1487 Stephen engaged in an extensive project to fortify his realm at vulnerable locations, initially in anticipation of, and then in response to, the Ottoman campaigns in the region. After three decades of extensive civic and military building projects, Stephen turned his attention toward ecclesiastical architecture and sponsored the widespread building of monasteries, churches, and chapels.²⁸ According to the extant dedicatory inscriptions, Stephen's ecclesiastical commissions were by and large realized within the span of only a few months, usually from around April or May to September or October.²⁹ Given the short period of time mentioned in these inscriptions, it is likely that the churches were not fully completed during this time. We can assume that at least the triconch naos and altar areas were erected so that the liturgical celebrations could begin to unfold while the rest of the church went up.

Stephen's ecclesiastical commissions in the principality of Moldavia that still survive today are:

1. The Church of St. Nicholas, Probota (II) (1464-1465)
2. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary at Putna Monastery (1466-1469) (Cat.no.3)

when he was crowned prince and until about 1476 (with the great defeat at Războieni), preserves objects and monuments that have closer affinities with the artistic and architectural production of Moldavia from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, thus presenting a continuation of earlier artistic traditions. From 1476 to 1487, which marks the second period according to Nicolescu, Stephen was primarily preoccupied with building and rebuilding military and civic sites with the goal of strengthening the principality in the face of the incoming enemies, in particular the Ottomans who posed the biggest threat at this time. Finally, in the period between 1487 and until his death in 1502, which Nicolescu identified as the third stage, Stephen was concerned with religious commissions, building more than two dozen churches that can be securely attributed to him today.

²⁸ See Grigoraş and Caproşu, "Ctitoriile lui Ştefan cel Mare," 523-539.

²⁹ The dates of construction (and completion) for Stephen's churches built between 1487 and 1504: the Church of St. Procopius, Milişăuţi, 8 June-13 September 1487; the Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuţi, begun 13 June 1487; the Church of St. Elijah, Suceava, 1 May-15 October 1488; the Church of St. George, Voroneţ Monastery, 26 May-14 September 1488; the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Vaslui, 27 April-20 September 1490; the Church of St. Nicholas, Iaşi, 1 June 1491-10 August 1493; the Church of St. George, Hârlău, 30 May-28 October 1492; the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Borzeşti, 9 July 1493-12 October 1494; the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Scânteia, 1494; the Church of St. Nicholas, Dorohoi, completed 18 October 1495; the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, Huşi, completed 30 November 1495; the Church of St. Nicholas, Popăuţi Monastery, Botoşani, completed 30 September 1496; the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Războieni Monastery, completed 18 November 1496; the Church of the Birth of the Virgin, Tazlău Monastery, 4 July 1496-8 November 1497; the Church of the Ascension, Neamţ Monastery, 4 July 1486-8 November 1497; the Chapel of St. John the New, Bistriţa Monastery, completed 13 September 1498; the Church of St. John the Baptist, Piatra Neamţ, 15 July 1497-11 November 1498; the Church of the Raising of the True Cross, Volovăţ, 2 April 1500-29 August 1502; the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dobrovăţ Monastery, 27 April 1503-May 1504; the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Reuşeni, begun under Stephen III on 8 September 1503, and completed under the patronage of his son, Bogdan III, on 18 September 1504.

3. The Church of St. George in Baia (after 1467 following Stephen's victory over Matthias Corvinus) (Cat.no.4)
4. The church at Humor Monastery (1472-1473) – now a parish church
5. The Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava (1475-1497 after Stephen's victory of King Albert of Poland)
6. The Church of St. Elijah at St. Elijah Monastery (1479) – now a parish church
7. The Church of the Ascension at Neamț Monastery (1486-1497) (Cat.no.6)
8. The Church of St. Procopius in Milișăuți (1487 after Stephen's victory over Vlad the Monk) (Cat.no.7)
9. The Church of the Holy Cross at Pătrăuți Monastery (1487) (Cat.no.8)
10. The Church of St. Elijah in Suceava (1488) (Cat.no.9)
11. The Church of St. George at Voroneț Monastery (1488) (Cat.no.10)
12. The Church of St. George at Neamț Monastery (1488 after the battle at Războieni)
13. The Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Vaslui (1490) (Cat.no.11)
14. The Church of St. Nicholas in Iași (1491-1493) (Cat.no.12)
15. The Church of St. George in Hârlău (1492) (Cat.no.13)
16. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in Borzești (c.1494) (Cat.no.14)
17. The Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Scânteia (1494 following the victory at Rahova) (Cat.no.16)
18. The Church of St. Nicholas in Dorohoi (1495) (Cat.no.17)
19. The Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in Huși (1495) (Cat.no.18)
20. The Church of St. Nicholas at Popăuți Monastery (1496) (Cat.no.19)
21. The Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel at Războieni Monastery (1496) (Cat.no.20)
22. The Church of St. Parascheva in Cotnari (1496) (Cat.no.21)
23. The Church of the Birth of the Virgin Mary at Tazlău Monastery (1496-1497) (Cat.no.22)
24. The Church of St. John the Baptist in Piatra Neamț (c.1498) (Cat.no.23)
25. The Church of St. Parascheva in Ștefănești (Cat.no.24)
26. The Church of The Annunciation at Bisericiani Monastery (begun in 1498 and finished under Stephen's son, Bogdan)
27. The chapel of St. John the New, in the tower of Bistrița Monastery (1498) (Cat.no.25)
28. The chapel from Hotin Fortress (1459) (Cat.no.26)
29. The Church of the Raising of the True Cross in Volovăț (1500-1502) (Cat.no.27)
30. The Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Dobrovăț Monastery (1503-1504) (Cat.no.29)
31. The Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Reușeni (1503-1504) (Cat.no.30)

Stephen also carried out repair projects at:

32. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in Chiprieni (Căpriana, Basarabia) (repairs after 1471)³⁰
33. The Church of St. George at Zographou Monastery, Mount Athos (1502)

³⁰ Postică, *Mănăstirea Căpriana: de la întemeiere până în zilele noastre*.

Moreover, the religious architectural projects of the great Moldavian prince that no longer survive were found at:

34. The Church of St. Parascheva, Râmnicu Sărat (1474)³¹
35. The chapel at Suceava Fortress
36. The chapel at Neamț Fortress
37. The church in Burdujeni
38. The church in Fântânele, Tecuci
39. The Church of St. Demetrios at Pângărați Monastery (after 1461)
40. The Church of St. John the Baptist in Iași (1472 after Stephen's victory of Radu the Handsome)
41. The Church of St. John in Chilia Fortress (1478)
42. The Church of St. Nicholas in Poiana Siretului (1495)
43. The church from near Roman in the Smeredova Fortress (1483)
44. The Church of St. Nicholas from Șcheia (1486)
45. The church from Cetatea Albă Fortress (1481-1482)

In addition, Stephen commissioned two churches outside of the principality of Moldavia, both located in neighboring Transylvania (addressed in Chapter One):

46. The Church of St. Parascheva, Feleac (before 1488)
47. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Vad (before 1488)

Several of the major developments in church architecture in Moldavia—such as the triconch plan, the particular vaulting system, the subdivision of the roof, the window and door framings, the arched exterior niches around the apse, etc.—are first encountered in the four monastic churches built by Stephen beginning in 1487: the Church of St. Procopius in Bădeuți (Milișăuți) (Figs. 3.18-3.20; Cat.no.7),³² the Church of the Holy Cross at Pătrăuți Monastery (Figs. 3.21-3.22; Cat.no.8), the Church of St. Elijah in Suceava (Figs. 3.23-3.24; Cat.no.9), and the Church of St. George at Voroneț Monastery (Figs. 3.25-3.26; Cat.no.10). Similar in design, these four churches are quite modest in size (in fact they are among the smallest of Stephen's churches).³³ They rise over a

³¹ Lăpedatu, "O biserică a lui Ștefan cel Mare în Țara Românească," 107-109.

³² The church at Bădeuți (Milișăuți) was partially destroyed by the Austrian army in 1917 during WWI.

³³ The length of the churches built by Stephen III, after the plans published in Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*: the Church of St. Procopius, Milișăuți – 22.5 m; the Church of the Holy Cross, Pătrăuți – 16.5 m; the Church of St. Elijah, Suceava – 18 m; the Church of St. George, Voroneț Monastery – 20 m (without the later added exonarthex); the Church of St. John the Baptist, Vaslui – 21.5 m; the Church of St. George, Hârlău – 23.5 m; the Church of St. Nicholas, Iași – 22 m; the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, Borzești – 21.5 m; the Church of St. Nicholas, Dorohoi – 22.5 m; the Church of St. Nicholas, Popăuți

triconch plan with only a square pronaos with the entrance at the center of the west façade,³⁴ a naos with two lateral apses to the north and south, and a semicircular eastern apse. These four churches serve as a benchmark in the history of Moldavian monastic church architecture as they signal the beginning of an expansive period of church building in Moldavia under princely patronage.

The four first churches commissioned by the Moldavian prince share additional features. These include the small-scale windows that illuminate the pronaos, naos, and altar areas, as well as the particular subdivision of the roofs with sections draping each of the interior spaces separately, as encountered later at Probota and at other sixteenth-century Moldavian churches. The silhouette of these churches is further accentuated by the slender tower over the naos that is supported by a series of oblique arches below. These diminish by almost a half the span of the naos, resulting in a gradual leveling of the interior planes and a vertical launch of the entire buildings. In each of the four churches, moreover, rows of niches on the exterior of the tower and around the side apses aid in this effect. At Pătrăuți and Bădeuți (Milișăuți) the towers still sit on square bases. Beginning with the Church of St. Elijah in Suceava, all subsequent Moldavian churches were built with towers over the naos sitting on one or two eight-pointed star bases (often times in addition to the square base).

Other variations exist among these four initial churches that mark the beginning of Stephen's extensive church building projects in Moldavia. The church in Bădeuți (Milișăuți), for example, lacks the prothesis and the diakonikon to either side of the altar, whereas at Suceava and Voroneț these spaces are clearly defined. At the katholikon at Pătrăuți, in contrast, two wall niches, or *proskomidi*, frame the altar. Moreover, except for the church in Pătrăuți, the other three buildings display buttresses on the exterior. In fact, all of Stephen's churches with a tower over the naos have buttresses around the exterior,

Monastery, Botoșani – 22 m; the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Războieni Monastery – 21 m; the Church of St. Parascheva, Cotnari – 22 m; the Church of the Birth of the Virgin, Tazlău Monastery – 21.5 m; the Church of the Ascension, Neamț Monastery – 37.5 m; the Church of St. John the Baptist, Piatra Neamț – 23.5 m; the Church of the Raising of the True Cross, Volovăț – 25.5 m; the church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Dobrovăț Monastery – 29.5 m; the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Reușeni – 26.5 m.

³⁴ The entrance to the church in Bădeuți (Milișăuți) was transferred at a later date to the south wall. The original entrance to the church at Voroneț is now enclosed in the later exonarthex that opens to the outside world along the south façade of the church. The exonarthex at Voroneț was completed in 1547. Baș, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea*, 88.

except for the church in Pătrăuți. Whereas the church in Pătrăuți is the smallest of the four (measuring only 16.5 meters in length) and the simplest in its architectural forms, the church of St. Elijah in Suceava is more architecturally complex, having two sets of buttresses on the exterior to either side of the north and south apses, and a taller and more slender tower over the naos.

The construction of this group of small churches—Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Pătrăuți, Suceava, and Voroneț—was bracketed by two of Stephen’s largest ecclesiastical projects: the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Putna Monastery built between 1466 and 1469 (Fig. 3.27-3.28; Cat.no.3),³⁵ and the Church of the Ascension at Neamț Monastery completed between 1486 and 1497 (Figs. 3.29-3.30; Cat.no.6). These larger *katholika* took longer to complete. The surviving evidence, however, does not reveal the actual dimensions of the original buildings. The church at Putna, together with the Church of St. Nicholas at Probota that Stephen rebuilt between 1464 and 1465, are the only major religious commissions carried out by the Moldavian prince during the first thirty years of his reign, at a time when he had devoted most of his resources toward the building and strengthening of fortresses and royal courts throughout his domain, as Chapter Two highlighted. However, due to damage and later rebuilding projects little can be gleaned from these monuments in their current form to present a more comprehensive picture of the characteristics of Stephen’s religious commissions from this earlier period.³⁶

As Stephen’s isolated religious projects during his first decades on the throne, the *katholika* at Putna and Probota were allocated special roles within Stephen’s grander political and ideological scheme. The monastery at Putna in particular was intended from

³⁵ The church at Putna Monastery was begun on 4 June 1466 and is said to have been completed on 3 September 1469. Regarding the date of completion of the church, however, the chronicle from Putna Monastery attests that construction on the church began on 4 June 1466 and was completed after the Battle of Lipnic on 3 September 1470. See Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 49-50. In 1481 Stephen built the massive fortifications for Putna Monastery along with the large entrance tower. The dedicatory inscription in Church Slavonic found on the entrance tower indicates: “† БЛАГОУ(Ъ)СТИ ВЫ Г(О)СП(О)ДА(А)РЪ ВЪСЕЙ ЗЕМЛИ МОЛДАВСКОЙ ВЕЛИКЫ ІУВ(АННА) СТЕФАН ВОЕВУДА(А), С(Ъ)ЗІ)НЬ ВЕЛИКАГО БОГДАНА ВОЕВОДЫ, СЪЗДА И СЪТВОРИ МОНАСТІРЬ СЪ ВЪ ИМѢ С(КЕ)ТЪБИ БОГОРОДИЦИ, ПРИ АРХИМАНДРИТѢ ІУАСАФѢ К ЛѢ(ТО) ҃҃СЦІ҃ПѢ.” / “The devout prince of the entire country of Moldavia, John Stephen voivode, son of Bogdan voivode, built and made this monastery dedicated to the holy Mother of God in the time of archimandrite [prior] Ioasaf, in the year 6989 [1481].” *Repertoriul*, 49 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

³⁶ The present appearance of the *katholikon* at Putna, with triple apsidal windows, is the result of the rebuilding projects carried out under Vasile Lupu in the early decades of the seventeenth century. The triple apsidal windows were never a feature of Stephen’s churches.

the outset as a princely mausoleum for Stephen and his immediate family line. The church at Probota was first built as a burial for Stephen's mother, Oltea, who died on 4 November 1465.³⁷ Two years later, Stephen's second wife, Evdochia of Kiev, was also buried at Probota. Although the first *katholika* at Putna and Probota no longer survive, archaeological studies have shown that these structures were built over a triconch plan with a burial chamber as a distinct space between the square naos and the rectangular pronaos. These two churches, thus, exhibit the earliest manifestations in the Moldavian context of the second half of the fifteenth century of the tendency to elongate the triconch plan along the longitudinal axis by the addition of the burial chamber as a distinctively delineated space inside the church.³⁸ Stephen's royal commissions at Neamț Monastery (Figs. 3.29-3.30; Cat.no.6) and at Dobrovăț Monastery, erected toward the end of his reign between 1503 and 1504 (Figs. 3.31-3.32; Cat.no.29), likewise incorporated a special burial room in between the naos and the pronaos. Chapter Five addresses the presence and functions of the burial chamber in the Moldavian monastic churches of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries in more detail.

The Church of the Ascension at Neamț (Figs. 3.29-3.30; Cat.no.6), a kind of synthesis of late-fifteenth-century Moldavian ecclesiastical architecture, features all of the characteristics first seen in the churches at Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Pătrăuți, Suceava, and Voroneț, while also introducing a number of new design elements and altering both layout and proportions. First, the *katholikon* is built here significantly larger in scale, measuring 37.5 meters in length (excluding the *exonarthex*), 6.5 meters in width, and 23.3 meters in height in the naos under the tower.³⁹ Because of the addition of the burial chamber and *exonarthex*, Neamț is significantly extended toward the west, so much so that it becomes twice as long as the churches in Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Pătrăuți, Suceava, and Voroneț. The burial chamber at Neamț was originally separated from the naos by a wall with a single central portal. Subsequently, however, this wall was removed in order for the burial room to communicate more openly with the naos of the church—a feature

³⁷ See Chapter Five.

³⁸ The burial chamber at Putna was originally separated from the naos by a solid wall with a single central entryway. In its current form, two large piers mark the threshold between the burial chamber and the naos, allowing for a more open and fluid transition between the two spaces. The *exonarthex* of the church at Putna dates to the mid-seventeenth century, to the reign of Vasile Lupu (*r.* 1634-1653).

³⁹ See n. 33 in this chapter for comparative measurements.

that we see again and again in churches built from the second half of the sixteenth century onward.

The katholikon at Neamț Monastery, moreover, is the first church in Moldavia to feature an exonarthex designed as a separate space to the west of the pronaos and serving as the entrance to the church.⁴⁰ Although this distinct feature did not appear again in any other of Stephen's churches, the exonarthex (both open and closed) became a key architectural component of church buildings beginning in the sixteenth century.⁴¹ Furthermore, the katholikon at Neamț introduces another spatial feature that was later adapted in other Moldavian churches. This is the division of the pronaos by a double arch with large supporting engaged pilasters and with two domes above raised on overlapping arches and pendentives. This particular subdivision of the pronaos, and especially the double dome motif, appears again in both parish and monastic churches, as is the case at the Church of St. George at Baia (Figs. 3.33-3.34; Cat.no. 4), the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Borzești (Figs. 3.35-3.36; Cat.no.14), the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel at Războieni (Figs. 3.37-3.38; Cat.no.20), and at the Church of St. John the Baptist at Piatra Neamț (Figs. 3.39-3.40; Cat.no.23). In these later examples, however, the two pronaos domes are much simpler in their conception, as they rise over the central spaces of the pronaos on a single set of pendentives. Nevertheless, this subdivision of the pronaos into two halves corresponds to the addition of another set of openings in this space along the north and south walls that serve either as windows or as entryways.

⁴⁰ Both Gheorghe Balș and Nicolae Iorga argued initially that the exonarthex at Neamț Monastery was added much later, and perhaps dated to the reign of Alexander Lăpușneanu (*r.* 1552-1561; 1564-1568). Iorga, *Mănăstirea Neamțului*, 86; Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 103. However, the 1927 archaeological investigations revealed that the construction of the exonarthex is continuous with the rest of the church. Balș, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea*, 152. Indeed, the closed exonarthex with an entrance to the north and south as found at the katholikon at Neamț was unprecedented in Moldavian church architecture until the last two decades of the fifteenth century. Nicolae Constantinescu, one of the archaeologists who carried out the investigations at Putna Monastery between 1955 and 1956, wrongly concluded that the katholikon at Putna was the first church in Moldavia to be built with a closed exonarthex. Constantinescu, *Mănăstire Putna*, 16: "...pridvorul închis a intrat în repertoriul meșterilor moldoveni o data cu biserica de la Putna." / "...the closed exonarthex entered into the repertoire of Moldavian masons with the church at Putna."

⁴¹ Although this hypothesis requires further research and study, I am of the opinion that the closed exonarthex entered in the architectural vocabulary of Moldavian churches only in the first half of the sixteenth century. This would suggest then that the katholikon at Neamț received an exonarthex much later than its completion date of 1497.

A note should be added here about the church in Baia: the church was completely rebuilt in the twentieth century and little evidence survives regarding which parts of the current building, if any, reproduce the original monument. It is possible that the church in Baia did not have originally two domes in the pronaos. The incorporation of this feature in the Moldavian churches, therefore, could be more accurately dated to the last decade of the fifteenth century when Stephen inaugurated a new wave of building projects throughout the principality. These numerous ecclesiastical building campaigns may have come about following the awareness in the Orthodox Christian sphere that the year 7000 (1492) had not in fact brought on the end of the world.

Unlike the monastic churches, the Moldavian parish churches built with Stephen's support toward the end of the fifteenth century display another peculiar feature that appears to have developed in tandem with the double pronaos domes. These structures adapt the triconch plan characteristic of Stephen's earlier ecclesiastical buildings at Putna, Probota, Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Suceava, Voroneț, and Neamț, for example. The churches built by the Moldavian prince in the last decades of his reign present a type of triconch plan in which the north and south apses of the naos are contained within the thickness of the walls. These lateral apses are evident from the interior but do not project visibly on the exterior of the edifice. From the exterior, then, the church appears rectangular with only a semicircular apse, while from the interior the naos reads as a triconch with two semicircular shallow apses extending slightly to the north and south. This inscribed triconch plan is predominant in parish churches, as is the case at the Church of St. George at Baia (Figs. 3.33-3.34; Cat.no. 4), the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Scânteia (Figs. 3.41-3.42; Cat.no. 16), the Church of St. John the Baptist in Piatra Neamț (Figs. 3.39-3.40; Cat.no.23), the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Reușeni (Figs. 3.43-3.44; Cat.no.30), and the Church of St. Parascheva in Ștefănești (Figs. 3.45-3.46; Cat.no.24). The Church of St. Parascheva in Cotnari (Figs. 3.47-3.48; Cat.no.21) could likewise have displayed lateral apses in the naos, but due to later reconstructions the current building does not reproduce exactly the form of the original. Moreover, since the parish church at Baia is an outlier due to its relatively recent reconstruction (twentieth century projects), the contained lateral apses of the triconch are another feature that could be more securely dated to the last decade of the

fifteenth century. Moreover, the more subdued form and structure of the lateral apses in the parish churches may be the result of a lack of need for antiphonal singing in the space of the naos, which was present in the monastic churches.

Non-princely foundations, such as the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Arbore built in 1502 (Figs. 3.49-3.50; Cat.no.28), also incorporate in their plans the inscribed triconch.⁴² The Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit from Dobrovăț Monastery (Figs. 3.31-3.32; Cat.no.29), however, is the only monastic church to display such contained lateral apses in the naos. Since the katholikon at Dobrovăț was built on an older boyar foundation, it is possible that the current church preserves the general features of the old building (without projecting lateral apses in the naos). This may in part explain the presence of contained lateral apses in a Moldavian monastic church from this period.

Stephen's smaller chapels, like the one at Hotin Fortress (Figs. 3.51-3.52; Cat.no.26), were likewise built on a triconch plan with the lateral apses delineated by the thickness of the walls. The small dimensions of the tower at Bistrița Monastery, however, allowed only for a square chapel with a lateral prothesis (Figs. 3.53-3.54; Cat.no.25). Nevertheless, it becomes clear from the examples presented that the triconch plan in its full manifestation was reserved for the most important ecclesiastical architectural commissions, such as the monastic churches, whereas variants of the triconch plan were adapted in other princely commissions, such as the smaller parish churches and chapels, as well as in the churches built by important noblemen in the region.

Although the majority of the churches from Stephen's reign preserve the complex triconch plan, in which the eastern apse adjoins the great arch of the naos through a series of thick arches and/or vaults, a group of three churches from the period between 1493 and 1499 presents a few traits characteristic of the simple triconch plan. The simple triconch, in contrast to the complex variant, lacks the series of arches in between the naos and the

⁴² The church at Reușeni appears to be a direct copy of the church in Arbore, having been completed only two years later. The two churches share a similar plan and both display monumental niches on the west façade, perhaps in lieu of an exonarthex. Although this requires further research, it is reasonable to assume that the same workshop executed both buildings and that the two commissions, one by a nobleman and the other princely, were conceived in dialogue.

altar area, and so the chancel extends right from the naos.⁴³ Churches from Armenia, Georgia, Macedonia, and Serbia employ the simple triconch. Serbian examples include the Church of St. Stephen (also known as Lazarica) in Kruševac, built between 1377 and 1388 (Fig. 3.55), and the Church of the Presentation of the Mother of God at Kalenić Monastery, constructed between 1407 and 1413 (Fig. 3.56).⁴⁴ The simple triconch plan is regionally specific. It does not appear, for instance, in Constantinopolitan churches, or those from Mount Athos, and it is rarely found in Bulgarian religious buildings.⁴⁵ The presence of the complex triconch plan in the majority of Stephen's churches suggests once again that more direct connections extended between Moldavia and Byzantine zones of cultural influence during the second half of the fifteenth century, without regions in the Balkans serving as spheres of mediation of Byzantine artistic and architectural traditions.

The three churches from Stephen's reign that do display large transverse arches to the east and west of the naos that extend on down the north and south walls in the form of engaged columns (features found in Serbian churches) are the churches in Borzești (Figs. 3.35-3.36; Cat.no.14), Războieni (Figs. 3.37-3.38; Cat.no.20), and Piatra Neamț (Figs. 3.39-3.40; Cat.no.23). These three ecclesiastical buildings also lack towers over the naos. Moreover, the large niches sunken into the north and south walls of the naos before the side apses present another Serbian feature—a form characteristic of Serbian churches from c.1375 to c.1450 (of the so-called “Morava School”).⁴⁶ Because of these architectural affinities with Serbian religious monuments, Balș grouped the churches from Borzești, Războieni, and Piatra Neamț in one category and proposed that perhaps builders trained in Serbian workshops were summoned to Stephen's court to work on these Moldavian buildings.⁴⁷ This hypothesis remains to be explored.

⁴³ Balș, “Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines,” 278; idem, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 187-188; Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, 59.

⁴⁴ This is also the case for the majority of the Serbian churches of the so-called “Morava School” built between c.1375 and c.1450.

⁴⁵ Balș, “Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines,” 278.

⁴⁶ Balș, “Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines,” 293-294. According to Balș, the last of the Moldavian churches to employ these large transverse arches in the naos is the Church of St. George from Suceava (1514-1522). The church of the Resurrection from Suceava (1551) makes use of similar arches, but the church seems to be a direct copy of the Church of St. John the Baptist from Piatra Neamț.

⁴⁷ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 198-202.

During the last decade of the fifteenth century, in addition to parish churches, *katholika*, and chapels, Stephen dedicated resources to the building of court chapels throughout Moldavia. In fact, he built a church in all of the major royal courts in his realm, most notably the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Vaslui (Figs. 3.57-3.58; Cat.no.11), the Church of St. Nicholas in Iași (Figs. 3.59-3.60; Cat.no.12), the Church of St. George in Hârlău (Figs. 3.61-3.62; Cat.no.13), the Church of St. Nicholas in Dorohoi (Figs. 3.63-3.64; Cat.no.17), and the Church of St. Nicholas at Popăuți Monastery in Botoșani (Figs. 3.65-3.66; Cat.no.19). Balș grouped these churches together because they were built as part of royal courts and shared a number of features: they were larger in scale than the churches that preceded them, they displayed a tower over the naos, exterior niches, and had a pronaos that was larger in width than the naos of the church.⁴⁸ Balș suggested that the wider pronaos is present in the city churches part of royal courts because of the need to accommodate a larger congregation during religious services.⁴⁹ Dumitru Năstase put forward a different explanation. He observed that the additional, lateral spaces of the pronaos, which measure about 50 to 75 cm to either side of the central space, are consistent with the measurements of tomb stones, whether rectangular or trapezoidal. He concluded, thus, that the enlargement of the pronaos created additional space along the walls of the room intended perhaps to serve a funerary function.⁵⁰ The Church of St. George in Hârlău (Figs. 3.61-3.62; Cat.no.13) lacks the enlarged pronaos, as found at the churches in Vaslui, Iași, Dorohoi, and Botoșani, for example. In line with Năstase's explanation, the enlargement of the pronaos may have been unnecessary here. The niches that surround the four large windows of the pronaos in the church at Hârlău take up a larger portion of the pronaos walls and thus are wide enough to accommodate burials and tomb stones, if that is what these spaces were in fact used for. It is also possible, however, that the distinctive appearance of the pronaos at the Church of St. George in Hârlău is the result of later modifications.

The Church of the Birth of the Virgin at Tazlău Monastery built in 1497

⁴⁸ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 198-202. See also Grigoraș, "Biserica Sf. Nicolae Domnesc din Iași," 215.

⁴⁹ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 199.

⁵⁰ Năstase, "Despre spațiul funerar în arhitectura moldovenească," 203.

(Figs. 3.67-3.68; Cat.no.22)—a katholikon roughly contemporaneous with that at Neamț and also with the churches just discussed built in royal courts throughout Moldavia—is the last of Stephen’s ecclesiastical projects to preserve a version of the enlarged pronaos, although without the actual extension of the interior width of this space. The walls of the pronaos are in fact thicker than those of the rest of the edifice, which results in the pronaos giving the impression that it is a space wider in the interior and thus requiring an extension beyond the parameters of the naos. This, however, is not the case. The interior of the pronaos at Tazlău is of the same width as the naos of the church. This feature is particular only to this church. In all the other examples, by contrast, the walls of the pronaos are of the same dimensions as those of the naos and the outward extension is the result of the physical enlargement of the interior space of the pronaos. The extant evidence suggests then that the expanded pronaos, in various guises, began appearing in church architecture in Moldavia during the last decade of the fifteenth century, and in particular in princely churches built in royal courts, at the same time that the double-domed pronaos and the variant of the triconch plan with contained lateral apses became predominant features of parish churches in the region.

From the numerous still extant religious monuments built in Moldavia during the last decades of Stephen’s rule it becomes evident that this period was perhaps richer than any other in ecclesiastical architectural projects, taking the form of churches, katholika, and chapels. Indeed, the majority of Stephen’s religious projects were completed during the last two decades of his reign, between 1487 and 1504.

Additional extant monuments from Stephen’s reign, four in number to be exact, were commissioned by noblemen:

1. The Church of the Ascension at Lujeni, built by the boyar Theodor Vitold shortly after he acquired the land in 1452 and completed soon after Stephen took the throne in 1457⁵¹
2. The Church of St. Parascheva at Dolheștii Mari (before 1481) (Figs. 3.69-3.70; Cat.no.5)⁵²
3. The Church of St. Nicholas at Bălinești (1499) (Figs. 3.71-3.72; Cat.no.15)
4. The Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist at Arbore (1502) (Figs. 3.49-3.50; Cat.no.28)

⁵¹ For the church in Lujeni, see Balș, *Biserica din Lujeni (I), Introducerea pridvorului în planul bisericilor moldovenești (II)*.

⁵² St. Parascheva in the village of Dolheștii Mari is also regarded as the oldest still extant church in Moldavia built by a nobleman.

These churches built by the nobility in Moldavia during the second half of the fifteenth century, reinterpret the monastic models commissioned in the royal context.⁵³ Although their dimensions are similar to those of churches built under royal patronage,⁵⁴ these churches built by the privileged noblemen lack a tower over the naos and dome(s) in the pronaos.⁵⁵ They thus present certain architectural variations of the princely commissions.⁵⁶

Stephen's rich church building activity becomes even more impressive when viewed in relation to ecclesiastical architecture erected in Moldavia prior to his reign. Only six large royal commissions date from the second half of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century:

1. The Church of St. Nicholas at Rădăuți (1367-1368) (Cat.no.2)
2. The first Church of the Ascension at Neamț Monastery, started by Peter I Mușat and added on by Alexander the Good (Cat.no.6)
3. The Church of St. Nicholas at Poiana, near Probota Monastery, mentioned as early as 2 July 1398
4. The first Church of the Assumption of the Virgin at Bistrița Monastery (1402) (Cat.no.41)
5. The first Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery, built between 1402 and 1410 by Alexander the Good (Cat.no.36)
6. Vișnevăț Monastery, existed during the reign of Alexander the Good and was mentioned in a document of 25 April 1420 and one of 10 February 1429; it was later renamed Căpriană Monastery

All the other religious buildings from this period were commissioned by noblemen. Although few monuments from the decades prior to 1480 survive today—some having been entirely destroyed, others in a state of complete ruin, and others still transformed dramatically as a result of subsequent restorations—this period was not modest in its artistic (especially architectural) output. Surviving documents from the end of the fourteenth century and up until Stephen's reign reveal the presence throughout Moldavia

⁵³ The noblemen or boyars required permission from the prince or voivode to build churches emulating the princely models. See Boldura, "Perspectives on the Restoration of the Bălinești Church," 69.

⁵⁴ The length of the churches built by noblemen during Stephen's reign: the Church of St. Parascheva, Dolheștii Mari – 20 m; the Church of St. Nicholas, Bălinești – 22 m; the Church of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, Arbore – 23 m.

⁵⁵ Stephen also built churches without a tower, but none were *katholika*.

⁵⁶ The circumstances for why this is the case remain to be determined. Stephen's Church of the Raising of the True Cross in Volovăț (Figs. 2.13-2.14; Cat.no.27) is the only princely commission that provides a close parallel in form and construction to the non-princely foundations, in particular to St. Nicholas in Bălinești.

of thirty-four religious buildings taking the form of monasteries and hermitages in particular, mostly commissioned by noblemen.⁵⁷

1. A stone church near Râșca Monastery (before 1365)⁵⁸
2. The monasteries dedicated to St. Demetrios and to the Virgin Mary (1395)⁵⁹
3. The monastery of nuns at Poiana Călugăriții (12 March 1399)⁶⁰
4. The site of the monks at Dumbravă, near Dragomireștii Romanului (8 March 1407)⁶¹
5. The monastery at Bohiotin (6 January 1411)⁶²
6. Humor Monastery (13 April 1415)⁶³
7. Vișnevăț Monastery (25 April 1420)⁶⁴ (10 February 1429)⁶⁵
8. The monastery at Tazlău (9 October 1424)⁶⁶
9. Voitinu Monastery (18 August 1427)⁶⁷
10. St. Nicholas Monastery (6 February 1431)⁶⁸
11. Cârligătura Monastery (25 May 1434)⁶⁹
12. Manasie's Hermitage (13 June 1436)⁷⁰
13. The monastery of Dragomir and Simeon at Călinești (7 February 1437)⁷¹
14. The place "where Costea is monk" (6 July 1438)⁷²
15. Horodnic Monastery (15 July 1439)⁷³
16. The remains of a monks' hermitage between Izvorul Alb, Asău, Hemeniș, and Urmeniș (16 December 1442)⁷⁴
17. The hermitage of Macarie at Neamț fortress (25 August 1443)⁷⁵

⁵⁷ The following list was comprised in part by Corina Nicolescu using a preliminary study by Nicolae Grigoraș, "Primele mănăstiri și biserici moldovenești," 114-130; Nicolescu, "Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare," 261, n. 3. See also Grigoraș and Caproșu, *Biserici și mănăstiri vechi din Moldova*, 63-72 ("Biserici și mănăstiri vechi dispărute, menționate documentar"). Although Nicolescu referenced in her list the 1954 publication of *Documente privind Istoria României, A. Moldova volumul I (1384-1475)*, I am providing here references from the newer editions: *Documenta Romaniae Historica, A Moldova*, Volume I (1384-1448) published in 1975, and Volume II (1449-1486) published in 1976. I have also supplemented Nicolescu's original list. On the topic, see also Petcu, *Mănăstiri și schituri din Moldova, astăzi dispărute (sec. XIV-XIX)*; Sava, *Domeniul mănăstiresc în Țara Moldovei în a doua jumătate a sec. XIV-lea – secolul al XVI-lea*. The dates in parenthesis indicate the date of the account that mentions the church or site.

⁵⁸ Crețulescu, *Istoria sfintei mănăstiri Râșca din Județul Suceava*, 4-6.

⁵⁹ Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, XIV/I, 18.

⁶⁰ *Documente privind Istoria României, A. Moldova volumul I (1384-1475)*, 4.

⁶¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 30-33.

⁶² *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 41-42.

⁶³ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 57-59.

⁶⁴ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 67-68.

⁶⁵ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 124-127.

⁶⁶ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 85-86.

⁶⁷ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 95-96.

⁶⁸ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 150-151.

⁶⁹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 183-184.

⁷⁰ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 211-212.

⁷¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 233-235.

⁷² *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 262-263.

⁷³ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 278-280.

⁷⁴ Grigoraș, "Primele mănăstiri și biserici moldovenești," 121.

⁷⁵ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 342-343.

18. Popa Drăghie's monastery (18 June 1444)⁷⁶
19. Ciunca Stan's monastery (5 April 1445)⁷⁷
20. The estate "where is Călugărița" (15 July 1445)⁷⁸
21. Bozianii Monastery (5 March 1446)⁷⁹
22. The monastery from Boiste "where was the cell of Iosif" (5 June 1446)⁸⁰
23. The monastery on the Cracău River (15 July 1448)⁸¹
24. The monastery on the Bârlad River (15 July 1448)⁸²
25. The monastery at Soci (10 September 1452)⁸³
26. Iațco's monastery (23 February 1453)⁸⁴
27. The monastery of the archbishop Ioil and of his son Giurgiu Grămăticul (18 February 1456)⁸⁵
28. Hangu Monastery (13 February 1458)⁸⁶
29. The monastery at Maluri (14 December 1458)⁸⁷
30. The monastery at Voinești (27 November 1460)⁸⁸
31. St. John Bogoslavul Monastery (15 September 1462)⁸⁹
32. The monastery at Bahlui (15 September 1462)⁹⁰
33. The monastery at Bohotin (15 September 1462)⁹¹
34. Roșiori Monastery (15 September 1462)⁹²

Stephen's religious architectural commissions, therefore, remarkable by their sheer number as well as their distinctive forms and spatial solutions, should be understood not in isolation. Rather, Stephen's projects presented transformations and elaborations of features from monuments that preceded them, presenting thus aspects of synthesis and originality relative to the developments of the previous decades, as well as innovations characteristic of other building traditions. However, Stephen's churches, small in scale and built out of solid stone, diverge from the monuments and building practices that informed in part their layout and features. As Romstörfer and Henry have

⁷⁶ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 351-352.

⁷⁷ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 358-360.

⁷⁸ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 360-362.

⁷⁹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 375-376.

⁸⁰ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 378-379.

⁸¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 397-399.

⁸² *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 397-399.

⁸³ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 22-23.

⁸⁴ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 38-40.

⁸⁵ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 81-83.

⁸⁶ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 98-101.

⁸⁷ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 115-116.

⁸⁸ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 136-137.

⁸⁹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 151-155.

⁹⁰ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 151-155.

⁹¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 151-155.

⁹² *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, II, 151-155.

explained it, Stephen's churches present a reflection of local needs as well as a response to the harsh climate conditions of the region and the insecurities of the time.⁹³ Moreover, considering the large number of royal building projects carried out during Stephen's reign, both secular and ecclesiastical, it is worth questioning whether certain political and/or economic dynamics began taking hold in the second half of the fifteenth century, and in particular during Stephen's rule, that contributed to the increased number of royal commissions at this time. The extensive building projects were the result of changing patronage practices in Moldavia, tied in part to the princely ideologies of the patron—issues that are addressed in Chapter Two. Although not to this same extent, interest in religious building projects in the region continued well into the first half of the seventeenth century, with another period of intense construction and restoration projects during Peter's rule (*r.* 1527-1538; 1541-1546), when the churches became significantly larger in scale, as well as more architecturally and spatially elaborate.

Transitions and Transformations

In the twenty-three years that elapsed between the reigns of Stephen and Peter, just a small number of religious monuments were newly erected in Moldavia, due, in part, to the political instability and Ottoman pressure at the time. The only church built on a triconch plan during the first decades of the sixteenth century was that of St. George at the Monastery of St. John the New in Suceava (Figs. 3.73-3.74; Cat.no.31), begun by Bogdan III "the Blind" in 1514 and completed by Stephen IV in 1522. This *katholikon* was also the only major princely monastic foundation commenced during this period. Unlike the churches that preceded it, and in particular those built under Stephen's patronage in the span of only a few months (or a few years in the case of Putna and Tazlău, for instance), the Church of St. George in Suceava took a relatively long time to complete. This may serve as an indication of a possible disorganization in workshops or patronage practices during this time, although further study is needed to validate or reject this hypothesis. The Church of St. George resembles most closely in its layout and scale the *katholikon* at Neamț (Figs. 3.29-3.30; Cat.no.6), having a closed exonarthex, a double-domed *pronaos*, and a burial chamber. Although the funerary chamber at the

⁹³ Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du Nord*, 77.

Church of St. George may have been designed as a burial site for its founders, it was eventually chosen to house the important relics of St. John the New—a fourteenth-century saint of the Romanian Orthodox Church widely regarded as the protector of Moldavia, whose feast is celebrated on June 2 and 24.⁹⁴

St. George in Suceava is also noteworthy for a series of notable features it introduced to Moldavian monastic church architecture, most importantly the new form and support of the tower surmounting the naos of the building. The towers of the Moldavian royal commissions underwent a number of transformations and modifications during Stephen's reign and then later during the initial decades of the sixteenth century. During the second half of the fifteenth century a cylindrical or polygonal tower rose over the naos of the royal churches either over a square base (as is the case at Pătrăuți, for example) or over a more complex base extrapolated from an eight-pointed star and eight-sided polygon (as found at Tazlău). Beginning with the Church of St. George from Suceava the tower of the monastic churches took on a more slender, eight-faceted shape, and rose over a base derived from two eight-pointed stars—features that appeared later in Peter's churches. These observations suggest that while the tower designs of the Moldavian churches may have been inspired initially, in their modes of construction and various features, by Slavic-Byzantine churches, the later developments that contributed to

⁹⁴ In 1330, St. John the New was preaching in the Ottoman-controlled territory of Akkerman (later known as Cetatea Albă). He was attacked and seized, and later dragged along the streets behind a horse and slashed by a mob of Tatars. Alexander the Good received the relics of St. John the New from the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos (r. 1425-1448) and brought them to Suceava. The relics were initially housed in the Church of St. George in Suceava, also known as Church Mirăuți, built in the second half of the fourteenth century. Between 1402 and 1522 Church Mirăuți served as the Metropolitanate Cathedral of Moldavia. Although the Metropolitanate was transferred from Church Mirăuți to the new Church of St. George at the Monastery of St. John the New in 1522, the relics of St. John the New were not moved to the new location until 1589. In 1686 the relics of St. John the New were taken to Poland by the Metropolitan Bishop Dosoftei (who sought refuge there), and in 1783 they were brought back to Moldavia after the successful negotiations of Metropolitan Iacob of Putna. For more on St. John the New and his relics, see most recently Grigorescu, *Sfântul Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava în viața credincioșilor*; Moldoveanu, *Viața Sfântului Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava*. On the representations of the life and miracles of St. John the New, see Costea, "Despre reprezentarea sfântului Ioan cel Nou în arta medievală," 18-35; eadem, "The Life of Saint Nicholas in Moldavian Murals: From Stephen the Great (1457-1504) to Jeremiah Mivilă (1596-1606)," 25-32; Firea, "An Official Patron Saint of Moldavia? St. John the New and the Dynastic Significance of His Cult in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 111-134; eadem, "O reprezentare necunoscută a Sf. Ioan cel Nou în orfevrăria medievală moldovenească: ferecătura Tetraevangelului fiilor lui Petru Rareș (1543)," 317-336; Nicolescu, "Un nou fragment din racla pictată a Sf. Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava," 377-391.

their more attenuated proportions occurred in a local context, perhaps out of a desire to increase the interior height of the naos.

Almost exactly contemporary with St. George in Suceava is the Church of All Saints at Părhăuți (Figs. 3.75-3.76; Cat.no.32), commissioned in 1522 by the nobleman Gavriil Troțușan, who served as one of Stephen's treasurers. Although distinct in many respects from the princely monastic foundations, Părhăuți, like all other churches built by Moldavian noblemen, derives its principal architectural features from the royal edifices that preceded it. The church has a rectangular layout that consists of a simple two-storied open exonarthex, a square pronaos, a rectangular naos, and a semicircular apse at the east end. Although the church lacks a proper triconch layout, this feature is nevertheless alluded to by the three niches embedded in the thickness of the naos walls. The windows of the church—two in the naos and pronaos, one along each of the north and south walls, and one at the center of the eastern apse—are of the same dimensions throughout. The simple roof covers the entirety of the church, not delineating as elsewhere the various interior spaces. Likewise, the exterior lacks both a tower and buttresses. The silhouette of the church, its exterior appearance devoid of any decoration, as well as its thick walls throughout render the edifice more like a fortress than a church. This form, in part, may be a visual reflection of the troubled times in Moldavia during the initial decades of the sixteenth century. The relative exterior simplicity of the building may have also been conditioned by the more limited financial means of its founder, or may have been the result of a deliberate choice so as to set it apart from the princely churches.

On the interior of this building, moreover, two identical domes supported by oblique arches surmount the central spaces of the naos and pronaos. This vaulting system resembles most closely that found in the naos of the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Arbore, built two decades earlier also by a nobleman. In fact, it was in the church in Arbore, at the turn of the sixteenth century, that this vaulting system predominantly found in the naos was employed also in the pronaos of the church.⁹⁵ Despite the lack of evidence, it is possible that the same workshop executed both

⁹⁵ The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Putna Monastery (Cat.no.3), the Church of the Ascension at Neamț Monastery (Cat.no.6), and St. George in Hârlău (Cat.no.13), also have oblique arches in the dome of the pronaos, but in these examples this was the result of later restorations. The katholikon at Neamț Monastery is the only Moldavian church to have this particular vault design in the burial chamber. However, again, this is due to a later remodeling.

churches, and also the one in Reușeni. One significant feature common to the three churches in Arbore, Reușeni, and Părhăuți supports this hypothesis. At least from a design standpoint, the open exonarthex at the church in Părhăuți, which marks the entrance into the church, is the first of its kind in Moldavian church architecture. It presents, in my view, a further transformation of the monumental western niches found at the churches in Arbore and Reușeni. Unlike the large niches at Arbore and Reușeni, the open exonarthex at Părhăuți consists of two stories with two arched openings each toward the west, and two additional rounded openings in the upper story facing north and south. An internal, narrow spiral staircase in the south-east wall of the exonarthex leads from the lower to the upper level. This type of exonarthex appears again in Peter's church in Baia, to be discussed in the next section of this chapter. In tandem with the katholikon of St. George in Suceava, the church at Părhăuți presents a moment of transition and transformation (in retrospective hindsight) from the ecclesiastical monuments built during Stephen's time and those erected under Peter's supervision.

Peter's Churches

Like his father, Stephen's illegitimate son Peter Rareș (*r.* 1527-1538; 1541-1546) was a prolific patron of religious buildings. During his two reigns he ordered the construction, decoration, and restoration of at least seventeen churches in Moldavia:

1. The Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Dobrovăț Monastery (restored, painted 1527-1531) (Cat.no.29)
2. The first church that no longer survives at Agapia Monastery
3. The Church of St. Demetrios in Hârlău (built and painted 1530-1535) (Cat.no.33)
4. The Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery (1530, painted 1532) (Cat.no.34)
5. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Humor Monastery (1530, painted 1535) (Cat.no.35)
6. The Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery (1532, painted 1532-1537) (Cat.no.36)
7. The Church of All Saints in Părhăuți (pronaos and exonarthex murals 1531-1537) (Cat.no.32)
8. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Baia (1532, painted 1533-1534) (Cat.no.37)
9. The Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava (1534-1535, painted 1536-1538) (Cat.no.38)
10. The Church of St. George at St. John the New Monastery in Suceava (restored, painted on the exterior 1532-1534) (Cat.no.31)

11. The Church of St. George in Hârlău (painted on the exterior) (Cat.no.13)
12. The Church of St. Elijah in Suceava (painted on the exterior between 1530 and 1550s) (Cat.no.9)
13. The Chapel at Hotin Fortress (painted 1527-1538) (Cat.no.26)
14. The Church of St. Nicholas in Bălinești (restored and painted on the exterior 1535-1538) (Cat.no.15)
15. The Church of the Assumption of the Virgin at Bistrița Monastery (1541-1546, painted 1590) (Cat.no.41)
16. The Church of St. Nicholas at Râșca Monastery (1542) (Cat.no.40)
17. The Church of St. George at Voroneț Monastery (1547) (Cat.no.10)

Although not as numerous as those of his father, the churches erected and restored by Peter are nevertheless significant from an architectural standpoint because they enhanced and consolidated select features present in earlier monuments; they also introduced a series of completely new forms to the ever-expanding repertoire of Moldavian ecclesiastical architecture. Peter's very first church was that of St. Demetrios in Hârlău (Figs. 3.77-3.78; Cat.no.33). A parish rather than a monastic church, Hârlău replicates the general layout of the churches in Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Pătrăuți, Suceava, and Voroneț, erected under Stephen some forty years before (between 1487 and 1488). Like these earlier buildings, Hârlău rises over the triconch plan that consists of a pronaos with a rounded dome (with no oblique arches underneath), a naos with two lateral semicircular apses to the north and south, and an altar area semicircular on the interior and polygonal (seven-sided) on the exterior. At the center of the western façade stands the entrance to the church.⁹⁶ Most notably, and in contrast to the majority of the Moldavian churches that concern us here, no solid wall with just a single portal separates the pronaos from the naos. This transformation was undertaken during the eighteenth century when churches were being built with no solid walls at the thresholds between the various spaces inside the building. The two sets of buttresses on the exterior frame the lateral apses of the naos, and a shorter buttress extends below the single central window of the apse. The buttresses to either side of the prothesis to the north and the diakonikon to the south at the church in Hârlău, however, are composite in that two smaller, lateral buttresses support the main

⁹⁶ During the eighteenth century, the west façade was fronted by a large entrance in the form of an open baldachin, not part of the original structure. This was removed during the most recent restoration.

shaft. This type of composite buttress is found only in a few other Moldavian ecclesiastical monuments.⁹⁷

Other features of the Church of St. Demetrios in Hârlău reveal developments on earlier forms. For example, unlike the churches built under Stephen's guidance, the windows of the pronaos in the church in Hârlău—two along each of the north and south walls—are larger in scale than the windows found in the naos and the altar of the church. Also, the tower that rises over the naos is taller and more slender than in previous monuments, and sits on two eight-pointed star bases as opposed to a single base of this type, or a square one. Moreover, the exterior walls of the naos display rows of sunken niches that are more elaborate in form than the ones found on Stephen's churches. Although scholars have pointed out the close architectural parallels between St. Demetrios in Hârlău and the church of St. George from the same village (Figs. 3.61-3.62; Cat.no.13), built by Stephen in 1492, few conclusions can be drawn at this point given the numerous and extensive restorations that the Church of St. George has endured over the years. The larger and more elaborate windows of the pronaos, and the dome raised on a series of oblique arches over the central space of this church, as well as the composite buttresses and the tower bases, appear to me to be the result of later restorations modeled on the features of Peter's Church of St. Demetrios.

The extant evidence suggests that the architectural features of St. Demetrios in Hârlău (Figs. 3.77-3.78; Cat.no.33) replicate and also present an elaboration of some of the features of the churches that came before it. These forms, along with others that will be discussed next, would re-emerge again in the monastic churches rebuilt by Peter, and come to be characteristic of sixteenth-century Moldavian *katholika*. The *katholikon* at Probota Monastery (Figs. 3.1-3.2; Cat.no.34), as well as the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Humor Monastery (Figs. 3.79-3.80; Cat.no.35), and the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery (Figs. 3.81-3.82; Cat.no.36)—the three *katholika* that Peter took great interest in rebuilding during his initial time in office (1527-1538)—illustrate most aptly the architectural syntax of Moldavian monastic churches of this

⁹⁷ The Church of St. George in Hârlău (1492) (Cat.no.33) has similar composite buttresses to either side of the altar area. The Church of the Ascension at Neamț Monastery (1486-1497) (Cat.no.6) also has a similar buttress to the north of the apse. Both of these churches, however, were heavily reconstructed, and therefore it is difficult to determine if this composite buttress is a feature inaugurated at St. Demetrios in Hârlău (1530) or if it is a feature that dates to the reign of Stephen.

period. Based on their shared architectural elements and modes of construction, it is possible that all three were designed and erected by the same team of masons, an issue that requires further consideration.

The katholika at Probota, Humor, and Moldovița are proportioned buildings developed along the longitudinal axis; they consist of a triconch naos extended westward by the addition of the burial chamber, pronaos, and exonarthex. What sets Humor and Moldovița apart from Probota, and all other Moldavian churches from Peter's reign, however, is the large open exonarthex at the west end that lacks a second story, in contrast to structures such as the two-story open exonarthex at Părhăuți (Figs. 3.75-3.76; Cat.no.32). At Humor, a barrel-vaulted open exonarthex frames the arched entryways into the church along the north and south walls. On the west front, three square piers delineate two openings with slightly pointed arches that extend down to the foundation of the church. At Moldovița, the exonarthex is larger and more elaborate than at Humor, comprising four-faceted pillars. The corner piers are rectangular, while the two central ones are square in plan (with two corner projections toward the entryway). In contrast to Humor, three entryways lead here into the exonarthex: one each along the north and south walls, and one at the center of the west front. Because the doorways are shorter in height than those at Humor, the designers were able to open up the porch even further. From the exterior, therefore, this division of the façade gives the impression that the exonarthex was designed on two levels. The open exonarthex as it appears in the katholika at Humor and Moldovița is a feature particular to these two monuments and was developed under Peter's patronage. Since the open exonarthex defines a space that is part of the church building yet communicates with the outside world, it presents thus a point of transition between the natural world outside of the church building and the sacred space found within. The next chapter explores some of the functions of the exonarthex in the Moldavian churches.

Contemporary with the katholikon at Moldovița is the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin, the parish church in the village of Baia (Figs. 3.83-3.84; Cat.no.37). Unlike the monastic structures, this building resembles more closely the churches erected on aristocratic initiative during Stephen's reign, and explored above. For example, the lateral apses of the naos are contained within the thickness of the walls, the semicircular apse is

rounded both inside and outside, and the roof expands continuously across the building. The church also lacks a funerary room and a tower over the naos, most likely due to its status as a parish church. Like the monastic churches at Humor and Moldovița, however, Baia displays an exonarthex on two levels that resembles that of All Saints in Părhăuți (Figs. 3.75-3.76; Cat.no.32), built a decade earlier. Both examples present variations of the open exonarthex found in the monastic context, with a lower and upper story covered by transversal barrel vaults. It becomes clear, then, that the open exonarthex of certain parish churches, like the ones in Părhăuți and Baia for example, were executed on two levels, whereas the open exonarthex of monastic churches as found at Humor and Moldovița was conceived as a single open space that communicated freely with the natural world outside the church building. This observation suggests, moreover, that it was particularly in the monastic context that architectural innovations, such as the large single-story open exonarthex with tall arched openings, occurred during the sixteenth century, and that these developments were not readily adopted for parish churches commissioned in the royal context or otherwise. Some of the reasons for this are tied to the development of the exterior mural cycles and are addressed in the next chapter.

Toward the end of his first period of rule, in 1535, Peter built the Church of St. Demetrios near his princely court in Suceava (Figs. 3.85-3.86; Cat.no.38); its architectural repertoire is similar to that of St. Demetrios in Hârlău, and, to a lesser extent, to those of the *katholika* at Probota and Moldovița.⁹⁸ St. Demetrios in Suceava has roughly the same dimensions as St. Nicholas at Probota.⁹⁹ It comprises a closed barrel-vaulted exonarthex with tall and narrow windows on all sides, a *pronaos* with two large windows on each side and an elaborate dome above raised on two sets of oblique arches, a complex *triconch* naos with windows of smaller dimensions than those found in the *pronaos*, and a tall slender tower above, as well as a semicircular apse at the east end, rounded on the interior and polygonal on the exterior. Since the Church of St. Demetrios

⁹⁸ One very distinctive feature of St. Demetrios in Suceava is worth mentioning here—the carving found above the dedicatory inscription placed to the right of the entryway on the south façade. In this unique relief sculpture, two putti frame the emblem of Moldavia—a composition that resembles that by the Italian sculptor Mino da Fiesole (Andrea Bregno) for the railing of the stairway in the Sistine Chapel in Rome (before 1475) that shows the coat of arms of Pope Sixtus IV.

⁹⁹ As outlined in the Catalog, the *katholikon* at Probota measures 36.2 meters in length on the exterior, 9.5 meters in width, and 21.0 meters in height under the dome in the naos. The Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava measures 35.1 meters in length, 10.0 meters in width, and 21.5 meters in height under the dome.

was not a katholikon, but intended as the chapel of Peter's princely court in the city of Suceava, the church lacks a burial chamber between the pronaos and naos, similar to the Church of St. Demetrios in Hârlău. Both churches dedicated to St. Demetrios, moreover, have similar slender octagonal towers raised on two eight-pointed star bases. Although analogous in many respects also to the katholikon at Probota, St. Demetrios in Suceava exhibits only a barrel-vaulted exonarthex, as opposed to the more intricate vaulting system found in the exonarthex at Probota, as well as fewer windows along the west façade. Also, at Probota, two domes cover the space of the pronaos, whereas at the Church of St. Demetrios a single dome rises over the space of the pronaos on an intricate system of oblique arches that emulates that found in the pronaos of the monastic church at Moldovița (Figs. 3.81-3.82; Cat.no.36). More elaborate designs were thus reserved for monastic churches. As such, the intricate architectural vocabulary of the monastic model was not suited for other types of churches, which suggests that the monasteries were regarded, at least by the princely patron, as the most significant religious establishments in the principality.

Peter's boyars, like Stephen's most important noblemen, were granted permission to build churches in their courts and monasteries near their villages. One noteworthy commission is the katholikon of St. Nicholas at Coșula Monastery, begun in 1535 under the patronage of Peter's treasurer Mateiaș (Figs. 3.87-3.88; Cat.no.39), at the same time when St. Demetrios in Suceava was going up (Figs. 3.85-3.86; Cat.no.38). The katholikon at Coșula displays all the features characteristic of Stephen's churches built on the triconch plan with a tower over the naos, and it is most similar to Stephen's initial projects at Bădeuți (Milișăuți), Pătrăuți, St. Elijah in Suceava, and Voroneț.¹⁰⁰ What the katholikon in Coșula reveals is that by Peter's reign, Moldavian boyars were allowed to build churches in a style that followed that of princely architectural models. This appears not to have been the case during Stephen's reign. The churches discussed above at Dolheștii Mari (Figs. 3.69-3.70; Cat.no.5), Bălinești (Figs. 3.71-3.72; Cat.no.15), and Arbore (Figs. 3.49-3.50; Cat.no.28) display different architectural features from Stephen's numerous commissions.

¹⁰⁰ At Coșula, later restorations replaced the solid wall between the pronaos and naos with an arcade and also enlarged the windows, which may or may not have been the same size throughout the building.

Chapter Six will show that in contrast to the stability characteristic of Stephen's lengthy rule, the reign of Peter was throughout fraught with political, social, and economic turmoil—a fact that may provide a partial explanation for the comparatively small number of churches erected under the latter prince's aegis. Most of Peter's building projects, and the most significant ones, were undertaken during his first period of rule (1527-1538). It was also at this time that select churches were adorned with extensive image cycles both inside and outside (see the following chapter). Only one significant monument survives from Peter's second reign (1541-1546), namely: the Church of St. Nicholas at Râșca Monastery (Figs. 3.89-3.90; Cat.no.40), built in 1542 on the site of a fourteenth-century wooden predecessor. The katholikon at Râșca, at least the east half of the building, appears to follow the plan of the original church in that it is built on the triconch layout without a burial room and so consisting only of a square domed pronaos, a naos with lateral apses, and a semicircular chancel. It appears that Peter's project sought to emulate the plan of the original structure at the expense of incorporating into the new building elements that appeared in church architecture in Moldavia during his initial reign. Although little is known about the circumstances of this project, Peter's decision appears to have been deliberate. Between 7 July 1611 and 30 September 1618, the nobleman Costea Băcioc (the future father-in-law of Vasile Lupu) oversaw the construction of the massive closed exonarthex at the west end of the church,¹⁰¹ that almost doubled the length of the building. As a result of this early seventeenth-century addition, however, the church displays today a peculiar exterior appearance.

During his second reign, Peter also engaged in extensive restoration projects at Bistrița Monastery (1541-1546). These included the rebuilding of the fortification walls around the complex, but also entailed work on the entrance tower, the Chapel of St. Nicholas, the princely dwellings, and the building to the south-west of the monastery that functioned as a monastic school (and now serves as a museum). The extent to which Peter's reconstruction campaign may have also affected the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin at this monastery (Figs. 3.91-3.92; Cat.no.41) is, however, uncertain. This edifice was likewise rebuilt on the site of an earlier church, founded in 1402 by

¹⁰¹ According to the dedicatory inscription written in Church Slavonic above the entrance to the church.

Alexander the Good. The katholikon at Bistrița was in fact fully rebuilt by Alexander Lăpușneanu (*r.* 1552-1561), Peter's son-in-law and follower to the Moldavian throne. From an architectural standpoint, the church that Alexander built at Bistrița resembles most closely Peter's mausoleum, the katholikon at Probota, which likely served as a model.

The major religious monuments that survive from Peter's double reign, especially from his first period of rule, reveal the particular developments that occurred, especially in the monastic sphere, in church architecture in Moldavia around the third decade of the sixteenth century that consolidated and further developed architectural forms first introduced in Stephen's churches. The great interest that Peter took in rebuilding the monastic churches at Probota, Humor, and Moldovița, which resemble in part, but also elaborate on, Stephen's grand commission at Neamț, was paralleled by his church building projects in the cities, in Hârlău and Suceava, for example, that reinterpreted the monastic model. These city churches and their architectural forms highlight the distinctive characteristics of the katholika from this period, which are representative of Moldavian monastic church architecture as it crystalized at this moment, driven by certain princely aspirations (investigated further in Chapter Six).

Although the triconch plan appeared initially in Moldavian church architecture in the second half of the fourteenth century,¹⁰² it underwent certain transformations only during the second half of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth century. In the later churches it was no longer a triconch plan *per se*, now being elongated toward the west by the addition of various other rooms. In essence, it was transformed into a so-called elongated triconch plan with the addition of the burial chamber and the exonarthex, which extended the church significantly toward the west, as is the case in all

¹⁰² The triconch plan is preserved in the extant masonry church in Siret (Figs. 3.5-3.6; Cat.no.1), and it was later adopted and disseminated during the reign of Alexander the Good (*r.* 1400-1432). It is possible that princely foundations such as the first church at Bistrița Monastery built in 1402, the initial church at Moldovița Monastery built between 1402 and 1410 (about 500 meters from where the current church of the monastery now stands), the earlier wooden church at Putna Monastery that dated to the reign of Alexander the Good, the small wooden church at Tazlău Monastery built in 1424, and the Church of St. Demetrios at Pângărați Monastery constructed in 1432 during the first reign of Prince Iliăș (*r.* 1432-1433) were built on a triconch plan. These earlier monuments no longer survive, primarily because they were erected out of more perishable materials, primarily wood. Nevertheless, it is possible that these earlier buildings were constructed on the triconch plan. For the later masonry churches that replaced the wooden structures and followed closely their layout, the triconch plan came to serve as a distinguishing feature. Nicolescu, "Arta in epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare," 291.

monastic churches that survive from the turn of the sixteenth century onward.¹⁰³ Moreover, the elongation of the triconch by the addition of the burial chamber and the open or closed exonarthex toward the west of the church is a distinguishing feature of Peter's churches. Other architectural and spatial forms characteristic of Peter's ecclesiastical projects are: the shift of the entrance to the churches along the north and/or south walls, through the exonarthex, as opposed to the entrance placed at the center of the west façade; the larger windows of the exonarthex and pronaos in comparison to the smaller windows often found in the burial chamber, naos, and chancel of the churches; the more elaborate articulation of the pronaos with double windows along the north and south walls and dome(s) raised on elaborate systems of oblique arches, similar to the support of the naos dome; multiple and more elaborate niches on the exterior of the edifice; and larger and more sanctified spaces for the prothesis and the diakonikon extending to either side of the threshold in between the naos and chancel.

Western Gothic Forms

Whereas some of the features of the Moldavian monastic churches present unmistakable links to Byzantine and Slavic architectural traditions, others follow Gothic models predominant in church architecture from parts of central Europe.¹⁰⁴ Although little information survives about the masons who worked on the Moldavian churches, certain masons were certainly trained in Transylvanian workshops that generally followed east-central European Gothic building practices and designs. One figure in particular, Ioan Zidarul (John the Mason) from Bistrița, was summoned to Peter's court to work on his ecclesiastical projects, especially the Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava,

¹⁰³ This is true beginning with the Church of the Ascension at Neamț, the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Dobrovăț, the Church of St. George at the Monastery of St. John the New in Suceava, and all of the monastic foundations built and rebuilt under Peter's guidance: the Church of St. Nicholas at Probota, the Church of the Dormition at Humor, the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița, and the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin at Bistrița.

¹⁰⁴ On the topic, see especially Balș, "Influence de l'art gothique sur l'architecture roumaine," 9-13; Fabini, "Le chiese-castello della Transilvania ed i monasteri fortificati Ortodossi della Moldavia in Romania," 7-22; Voitec-Dordea, *Reflexe gotice în arhitectura Moldovei*; Drăguț, *Arta gotică în România*; Năstăsoiu, *Gothic Art in Romania*, 30-49.

begun in 1534.¹⁰⁵ Masons trained in similar circumstances likely worked under Stephen's patronage during the second half of the fifteenth century since Stephen's churches likewise display markedly Gothic features. Workshop practices in Moldavia at this time is a topic that deserves still further study, and the monuments themselves can serve as the primary source material necessary for such investigations.

In this section, I focus in particular on architectural features: the buttresses, the window and door framings and tracery configurations, the brackets and rib vaults, and the rows of niches found on the exterior of the churches. First, the large three-tier buttresses characteristic of Peter's churches, such as those found at the *katholikon* at Moldovița (Fig. 3.93)—unknown in churches of the Slavic-Byzantine type—have precedents in Gothic churches. The large three-tier buttresses around the exterior of the nave and choir of the Church of St. Michael in Sopron, Hungary, begun in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, offer a good comparison (Fig. 3.94).¹⁰⁶ By contrast, the majority of Stephen's churches lacked buttresses around the exterior, and the few that did display them had two-tier buttresses as opposed to three-tier ones.¹⁰⁷ This is the case, for instance, at the Church of the Birth of the Virgin at Tazlău (Fig. 3.95). Both at Tazlău and at Moldovița, the lateral exterior buttresses—two on each side of the lateral apses of the naos (excluding here the short buttress that sits below the eastern window in both examples)—extend more than two-thirds up the exterior walls of the building, up to the frieze of hanging arches in the upper-most sections that wraps around the exterior.¹⁰⁸ Stephen's other churches with buttresses present even shorter variants, with the two-tier buttresses extending only about halfway up the building. This is evident, for example, at St. John the Baptist in Piatra Neamț (Fig. 3.96).

¹⁰⁵ On the figure of Ioan Zidarul (John the Mason), see Lăpedatu, "Ioan Zidarul lui Petru-Vodă Rareș," 83-86; Ilovan, "Casa 'Ioan Zidarul' din Bistrița," 190-196; Orășanu, "Une maison patricienne de Bistriza au XVIe siècle 'La maison de Ion Zidaru,'" 57-69.

¹⁰⁶ The earliest mention of this parish church dates to 1278. For more on the Church of St. Michael from Sopron, see Lövei, "Medieval Architecture in Hungary: ca. 895-ca. 1470," 11-44.

¹⁰⁷ The churches from Stephen's reign that now display large three-tier buttresses on the exterior, as is the case at Neamț and Putna, for example, are likely to have taken on these new forms as a result of later building campaigns. The appearance of Stephen's original church at Putna is unknown, and archaeological investigations have revealed that the *katholikon* at Neamț displayed half buttresses (1498).

¹⁰⁸ The large buttresses at Tazlău, however, are composed of two segments, whereas the ones at Moldovița display three sections—characteristic of Peter's churches.

Moreover, the Moldavian churches of the later sixteenth century (to be addressed in the Epilogue), such as the Church of the Ascension at Galata Monastery built between 1582 and 1584 (Fig. 3.97), likewise display buttresses around the exterior that are significantly shorter, extending only about halfway up the building, and presenting a distinct sectional configuration. Therefore, it becomes evident that it is only in select churches built under Peter's patronage—and in particular in his princely mausoleum at Probota, in the katholikon at Moldovița, and in the churches of St. George and St. Demetrios at Suceava (Fig. 3.98)—that we encounter three-tier large buttresses around the exterior of the edifices. Given the thickness of the walls of these Moldavian churches, however, the question arises as to whether the buttresses needed to be as tall and as thick as they are in Peter's buildings. In my opinion, these Gothic buttresses carry both structural and symbolic functions, the latter of which I will return to later on in this section.

A distinctive feature of the exterior of the Moldavian churches from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that likewise presents a solution derived from Gothic architecture, is the form of the roofs.¹⁰⁹ The subdivisions of the roofs with steep slopes and large, smooth eaves following up the undulating line of the apses, find a visual parallel in the Saxon churches of Transylvania, such as the Church of the Virgin Mary at Biertan (Birthälm), that carries partitioned roofs with individual sections covering the chancel and the nave separately (Fig. 3.99). The Moldavian church roofs have been reconstructed beginning at the end of the nineteenth century based, in part, on the images of the monuments that remain in the votive paintings often found in the naos of the churches. In the new reconstructions, however, the form of the original roofs may have been preserved, but their original appearance was not. The few scholars who have considered the original form and appearance of the Moldavian church roofs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries revealed that these were covered either with shingles (first proposed by Balș),¹¹⁰ or lead,¹¹¹ or perhaps even colored ceramic materials.¹¹² Paraschiva-Victoria

¹⁰⁹ For a study on the materials used to construct church roofs in Moldavia and Wallachia from the fourteenth and until the nineteenth century, see Cilieni, *Învelișurile vechilor noastre biserici*. Most recently, on the form of the roofs, see Batariuc, "Acoperișul bisericilor din Moldova. Secolele XV-XVI," 35-50.

¹¹⁰ Balș, "Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare," 191-194.

¹¹¹ Batariuc, "Acoperișul bisericilor din Moldova. Secolele XV-XVI," 43.

¹¹² Batariuc, "Acoperișul bisericilor din Moldova. Secolele XV-XVI," 40-41.

Batariuc concludes that the majority of the Moldavian roofs from this period were covered with differently colored tiles,¹¹³ which would have given these buildings a very distinct appearance. The reconstruction of the roof of the Church of St. George at the Monastery of St. John the New in Suceava, completed between 1904 and 1910, furnishes an idea of how many Moldavian church roofs initially looked like (Fig. 3.100). These polychrome tiled roof designs were characteristic of central European churches. The Church of Our Lady (also known Matthias Church) at Buda, rebuilt entirely in the second half of the fourteenth century (and rebuilt very substantially in the nineteenth century), was covered with such richly colored and ornately patterned roof tiles, as was St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna (Fig. 3.101).

The most distinctive features of the Moldavian churches from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries drawn from Gothic models, however, are the door and window framings and the window tracery, as well as the brackets and rib vaults present in a number of the churches from Stephen's reign. The types of Gothic portals found on the Moldavian churches can be placed in two broad categories: the *Spitzbogenportal*-type and the *Schulterbogenportal*-type.¹¹⁴ The west portals leading into the pronaos of the churches, always found at the center of the west wall, are adorned with concentric and receding pointed arches that provide a sense of guidance and direction for the faithful into the sacred space of the church. This is the case at churches built under Stephen's patronage, as seen at Pătrăuți (Fig. 3.102), as well as those built under Peter's financial support, as evident for instance at Moldovița (Fig. 3.103).¹¹⁵ At Moldovița, moreover, as in other contemporary churches, the arch is additionally contained within a richly profiled rectangular frame. These types of Gothic portal frames with uninterrupted profiles and a tympanum above the main entrance were predominant in Gothic buildings found throughout western and east-central Europe. An elevation drawing of a portal of this type from southern Germany, dating to 1446, survives in the Graphic Collection of the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna and provides a point of comparison with the

¹¹³ Batariuc, "Acoperișul bisericilor din Moldova. Secolele XV-XVI," 42.

¹¹⁴ Balș, "Influence de l'art gotique sur l'architecture roumaine," 10.

¹¹⁵ Although scholars believe that the current church at Putna follows the plan of Stephen's church, the later addition of the exonarthex added a space that shifted the emphasis away from the main Gothic portal at the center of the western wall of the pronaos, and toward the new entryways along the north and south façade of the exonarthex. I have observed the same to be true of the katholikon at Voroneț Monastery. In both instances, the main *Spitzbogenportal* is found inside the closed exonarthex.

Moldavian renditions (Fig. 3.104).¹¹⁶ However, the drawing differs slightly in that the portal lacks a tall socle and cylinder bases, and the tympanum is supported here by small brackets. Nevertheless, architectural drawings of Gothic features circulated in medieval lodges of stone masons and architects, informing practices of building construction across Europe. The architectural lodge of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, led by the architects Hanns Puchsbaum and Lorenz Spenning, served as the leading lodge for much of the fifteenth century. Spenning was among the professional architects present at the 1459 Regensburg Congress (*Regensburger Bauhüttentagung*) that was intended to regulate practices and rules governing building construction among all affiliated lodges.

On the church interiors, the thresholds between the different spaces are marked by narrow portals characteristic in shape of the *Kragsturzbogenportal*, yet framed by interlocking rectilinear elements (particularly visible in the upper corners) that render the entryways more akin to the famous Gothic *Schulterbogenportal*. This type of doorway is found inside all of Stephen's churches, including *katholika* such as that of Pătrăuți (Fig. 3.105), royal chapels like Piatra Neamț (Fig. 3.106),¹¹⁷ and parish churches, for instance that of Borzești (Fig. 3.107). The churches built by noblemen during Stephen's time, like the church in Arbore (Fig. 3.108), likewise display this type of Gothic doorframe on the inside. These Moldavian door framings, moreover, have close parallels in churches from Transylvania, such as the famous Black Church in Brașov (especially the south portal) (Fig. 3.109),¹¹⁸ and the west portal of the Church of the Virgin at Biertan (BIRTHÄLM) (Fig. 3.110).¹¹⁹ It appears that the *Schulterbogenportal* was favored for main entrances in the Transylvanian churches, whereas in the Moldavian examples they are always found at the thresholds between the various spaces inside the churches. Given the strong economic contacts that Stephen fostered with the communities in Brașov during his long reign, it is very likely that masons trained in Gothic workshops there traveled to Moldavia to work on Stephen's commissions.

¹¹⁶ Böker, *Architektur der Gotik*, 307, fig. 16.996.

¹¹⁷ The original portal that stood at the threshold between the *pronaos* and *naos* at the church in Piatra Neamț was removed and placed outside, to the north of the building. At the turn of the nineteenth century the interior space was changed drastically when the solid wall separating the *pronaos* and *naos* was replaced with an arched opening.

¹¹⁸ Fabini, "Restaurarea bisericii Negre din Brașov," 75-80.

¹¹⁹ Similar Gothic portals are found at the Transylvanian churches at Dârlos, Malancrav, and the Franciscan cloister in Cluj-Napoca, for example.

By the early decades of the sixteenth century, and in particular during Peter's reign, the churches retained the main *Spitzbogenportal* for the main threshold leading into the pronaos (although by this point with the addition of the exonarthex this entryway was no longer considered the main west portal; the entrance to the churches was either through the north or south walls of the exonarthex). On the interior, however, the *Schulterbogenportal* characteristic of Stephen's ecclesiastical projects was replaced by simpler forms: a round arched portal in an elaborate rectilinear frame (Fig. 3.111), while at Humor, a less elaborate *Schulterbogenportal* leading into the burial chamber, and a rectilinear, rather classicizing doorway leading into the naos was chosen (Fig. 3.112). The latter form was employed again at Moldovița at both interior thresholds (between the pronaos and burial room, and between the burial room and the naos) (Fig. 3.113). This suggests, on the one hand, that Peter may not have been as concerned with the Gothic portal type for the interior of his churches. On the other hand, it is possible that by the early decades of the sixteenth century certain Gothic workshop practices in Moldavia, that have already passed through almost two generations from Stephen's time, were not as crisply retained.

The window frames and the tracery in the upper sections likewise have prototypes in the western Gothic tradition. At the katholikon at Moldovița, as elsewhere, two types of window designs are encountered (Fig. 3.114). Smaller arched openings surrounded by rectangular frames and overlapping horizontal and vertical bowtells are found in the burial chamber, naos, and the altar area (Fig. 3.115). The pronaos, by contrast, displays larger windows with arched frames containing two lancets with trefoil cusps supporting a quatrefoil oculus (Fig. 3.116). Although Balș characterized the tracery of these windows as Rayonnant or Flamboyant, it is, in fact, exemplary of much earlier Gothic forms.¹²⁰ Gothic structures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries throughout Europe generally feature wider windows and more complex configurations. The simple tracery of the pronaos windows of the Moldavian churches resembles much simpler forms, often incorporated by this later date in more developed window designs, as seen, for example, in the drawing of the Gothic tracery windows attributed to Laurenz Spenning (from

¹²⁰ Balș, "Influence de l'art gotique sur l'architecture roumaine," 10.

c.1465), and also housed in Vienna's Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Fig. 3.117).¹²¹

The closest parallels, however, can be drawn between the Moldavian window tracery of the early sixteenth century and that found on Transylvanian churches two centuries earlier. The very tall and narrow windows of the apse of the Black Church in Braşov, completed during the last two decades of the fourteenth century, display tracery designs almost identical to those found on the early-sixteenth-century Moldavian churches (Fig. 3.118).¹²²

The other two significant Gothic features characteristic of the Moldavian churches assume the form of brackets and rib vaults, but are found in only a few examples, which suggests that particular workshops may have been employed. For instance, at the Church of the Holy Cross in Pătrăuţi, large brackets in the four corners of the pronaos adjoin the large arches that support the pendentives and dome above (Fig. 3.119). Although rib vaults are similarly scarce in Moldavian architecture from this period, one prominent example showing a four-pointed star vault with liernes and tiercerons appears in the bell tower that marks the entrance of the Church of St. Nicholas at Bălineşti (Fig. 3.120). Rib vaults of this type are unprecedented in church architecture from this region and do not appear in such a form in any other contemporary Moldavian structure. Sinigalia suggests Silesia and Poland as possible sources of influence for the Gothic rib vault configuration at Bălineşti, since stone and brick ribs of this type are characteristic of churches from those regions.¹²³ An example, in this regard, is the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the Cathedral on the Wawel in Kraków, built by King Casimir III the Great (r. 1333-1370) and painted in 1470; that displays elaborate rib vaults of a design similar to that encountered in the tower at Bălineşti (Fig. 3.121).¹²⁴

In Moldavia, the prominent Gothic features of the churches, such as the large buttresses against the exterior walls, and the window and door framings and tracery, appear all together for the first time at the Church of St. Nicholas in Rădăuţi (Figs. 3.122-

¹²¹ Böker, *Architektur der Gotik*, 316, fig. 17.004.

¹²² At the Black Church in Braşov, some of the oculi in the upper sections of the windows incorporate trefoils, while others are quatrefoils, displaying thus some variation not visible in the Moldavian corpus.

¹²³ Sinigalia, "Arta din Moldova din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea până la începutul secolului al XVI-lea în context european. Observații preliminare," 20-21.

¹²⁴ Rozycka-Bryzek, "Bizantinsko-ruskie malowidla ścienne w Kaplicy Swietokrzyskiej na Wawelu," 175-293, with a summary written in French.

3.123; Cat.no.2)—the oldest masonry religious monument built in Moldavia that preserves elements of two distinct architectural traditions. This church dates to c.1368, to a period when Moldavia was gradually affirming its religious independence from its neighbors, in particular Poland and Hungary, although it continued to maintain political, economic, and cultural ties with these kingdoms and their sprawling lands. Whereas the church in Rădăuți displays affinities with east-central European Gothic architecture, the division of the interior space is modeled on that of Byzantine churches. The interior is divided into a closed exonarthex (added only in 1559 by Alexander Lăpușneanu), a pronaos, a naos, and a semicircular apse. The church, thus, presents a surprising combination of Byzantine church architecture in regards to its layout and division of the interior spaces, and Gothic architecture from which it models the method of construction and various architectural and aesthetic elements. In essence, St. Nicholas in Rădăuți looks like an early Christian basilica, yet it is adapted to the needs and requirements of the Orthodox rite, presenting, for instance, a thick transversal wall in between the naos and the pronaos, and an interior that is dimly lit and richly painted.

The mode of construction of the church in Rădăuți, using quarried stone, which was also the case for the Church of the Holy Trinity in Siret (Figs. 3.5-3.6; Cat.no.1), emulates the building techniques found in Gothic structures. Moldavia's neighbor to the west, the region of Transylvania, at this time under Hungarian suzerainty, had numerous churches built in a similar fashion. Saxon colonies scattered throughout Transylvania at this time, in which churches were built following Gothic models, existed also in Moldavia in the cities of Rădăuți, Baia, Chilia, and Siret.¹²⁵ Moreover, the Catholic presence, in the context of which monuments of a Gothic type first appeared, was strongly felt in Moldavia during the second half of the fourteenth century. In 1370, a Roman episcopate was established in the city of Siret.¹²⁶ The village of Baia is home to the remains of a Catholic cathedral built sometime in the thirteenth century and partially

¹²⁵ Drăguț, "Introducere. I. Arhitectura religioasă, pictură murală," *Monumente istorice bisericesti din Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, 10.

¹²⁶ Auner, "Episcopia de Siret (1371-1388)," 226-245.

rebuilt in 1410 under Alexander the Good (Figs. 3.124-3.125).¹²⁷ In Chilia, a Franciscan monastery was constructed sometime between 1334 and 1390.¹²⁸

The two oldest still extant churches erected in stone in Moldavia, the churches of the Holy Trinity in Siret (Figs. 3.5-3.6; Cat.no.1) and of St. Nicholas in Rădăuți (Figs. 3.122-3.123; Cat.no.2), preserve elements of two distinct architectural traditions. On the one hand, the triconch plan found in the church in Siret (the earliest masonry triconch in Moldavia), and the division of both buildings into a pronaos, naos, and altar area, follows Byzantine church building traditions. On the other hand, the building technique and various structural and aesthetic elements such as the buttresses, door framings, and window tracery configurations, as found for instance at Siret and Rădăuți, have roots in Gothic building traditions. Corina Nicolescu argues that these disparate elements came together in the churches that date to Stephen's reign.¹²⁹ Vasile Drăguț puts forward a similar arguments:

Indeed, while recognizing the importance of what was borrowed from Slavic-Byzantine and Gothic art, we would need to acknowledge the originality of local adaptations, the local spirit of spatial organizations, the human dimensions of the architecture, and the character of the decorations—all qualities that define the monuments from Stephen the Great's time as accomplishments of the general Romanian artistic genius, having evident affinities with what was produced locally.¹³⁰

What I argue, instead, is that while specific monuments built under Stephen's patronage made use of and even transformed certain of these mainly Gothic and Slavic-Byzantine

¹²⁷ Grigoraș and Caproșu, *Biserici și mănăstiri vechi din Moldova*, 58-62. The Catholic cathedral from Baia was the largest Catholic building in Moldavia at the time. Alexander the Good's wife, Margareta, was a Catholic of Polish descent and perhaps she contributed to the cathedral's rebuilding campaign. The village of Baia was also home to a Franciscan church and also a Dominican church built sometime in the thirteenth century and mentioned in a document from 1337. During the fourteenth century, two Catholic churches existed in Baia.

¹²⁸ Andreescu, "Așezări franciscane la Dunăre și Marea Neagră în sec. XIII-XIV," 154-161.

¹²⁹ Nicolescu, "Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare," 285.

¹³⁰ Drăguț, "Introducere. I. Arhitectura religioasă, pictură murală," *Monumente istorice bisericesti din Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, 12. "Într-adevăr, recunoscând importanța împrumuturilor din arta bizantino-balcanică și din arta gotică, va trebui să avem, în primul rând, în vedere originalitatea prelucrărilor locale, spiritul autohton al organizărilor spațiale, măsura umana a dimensiunilor arhitectonice, caracterul tectonic al decorației, calități care fac necesar considerarea monumentelor epocii lui Ștefan cel Mare ca opere reprezentative pentru geniul artistic românesc în general, corespondențele lor cu realizările artei populare fiind mai mult decât evidente."

elements discussed so far, church architecture in Moldavia, monastic architecture specifically, did not reach its apogee until the first half of the sixteenth century during the reign of Peter Rareș. Therefore, to understand better Peter's architectural commissions and the ways in which church architecture crystalized during this period, the monuments must be studied in light of the developments that occurred in church (and secular) architecture during the previous century and in particular during Stephen's reign.

The Gothic forms employed on the Moldavian churches of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries find an intriguing parallel in the ways in which classical elements were introduced to enhance the exteriors of Muscovite churches of the same period. For example, Tsar Ivan III (*r.* 1462-1505) summoned in 1474 the Bolognese military architect Aristotele Fioravanti to come and work on the walls of the Kremlin. While in Moscow,¹³¹ Fioravanti also contributed to the design of the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin (1474-1479) (Fig. 3.126)—hailed as the first work of the Renaissance in Moscow. For inspiration, Fioravanti studied the Cathedral of the Dormition in Vladimir (c.1160-c.1180) (Fig. 3.127), which Ivan III asked him to do so that his own cathedral could rival one of the greatest. Italian forms in Moscow, however, functioned in an alien idiom. The painting tradition, on the other hand, was not affected at all by Italian conventions, and architecturally Italian forms were articulated only as part of the exterior decoration in the Cathedral of the Dormition.

¹³¹ The name of Moscow first appeared in documents in 1147. The town began as a stronghold against the Tartars. The city grew around the thirteenth-century Kremlin and by the fifteenth century construction on a monumental scale was commenced. Moscow is also said to have been built on seven hills, as was Rome and Constantinople. Given the strong religious ties of this city to Constantinople, following the fall of the city to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, a continuation of Byzantine traditions (religious, cultural, political) in this region with a focus on Moscow as the new 'Third Rome' emerged as the natural consequence, given the strong continuation between the two centers based on faith. With the reign of Tsar Ivan III, who ruled in the second half of the fifteenth century, the ties became stronger still. His marriage to Zoe Palaiologina, the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor in 1472 prompted a 'cultural invasion' in the city. Ivan III not only adopted the imperial symbols of rulership of the Byzantine emperors, but he enacted, as scholars have argued, a 'translatio imperii' with his aim to transform Moscow into the 'Third Rome', claiming that the city was indeed the rightful follower of Constantinople. John Meyendorff, however, in his study *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, argued against the 'Third Rome Theory', as he called it. According to Meyendorff, the evidence does not suggest such a desire on the part of Ivan III, despite the strong connections between Byzantium and Moscow during his reign. When this notion of 'Moscow as the Third Rome' does appear in the writings, in particular in the writings of one monk in the sixteenth century, he refers to the region of Muscovy as the rightful heir to the Byzantine Empire, and not to the city of Moscow itself. Meyendorff emphasizes that this issue has been exaggerated in recent scholarship, and we should be weary of this 'Third Rome Theory' discussed in relation to the city of Moscow in the fifteenth century.

By the early decades of the sixteenth century, another wave of north Italians made their way to Moscow and this time not from Bologna or Milan, but from Venice. Alesio Novi is one such Venetian architect who came to Moscow to work on the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, also in the Kremlin (c.1505-1509) (Fig. 3.128). The cathedral follows the Byzantine/Vladimirian plan established in the eleventh century, but it is much more rectangular and elongated in shape. The interior continues to be decorated with the traditional Byzantine scheme, but the exterior presents many more Italianate and particularly Venetian/Byzantine features. For example, it has the lateral sides divided into five rounded arches with a prominent cornice running about mid-way up the building, and engaged fluted columns and capitals of the classical orders. The upper sections of the rounded arches of the façade display scallop-shell lunettes reminiscent of the ones present on Venetian buildings, such as those of San Marco. This visual eclecticism developed alongside local traditions, but the element of the local (with deep roots in Byzantine forms) remained strong. In both the Moldavian and the Muscovite churches, appropriate foreign elements—Gothic and Classical forms, respectively—appear in decorative elements that do not affect the primary function of the religious edifice.

Indeed, the interior spaces of medieval Orthodox *katholika* (Muscovite, Moldavian, and from the Balkans) had to be properly designed for Orthodox monastic use, creating the religiously appropriate environment for liturgical celebrations. Therefore, the architectural forms and spatial solutions with roots in various church building traditions and adapted in the Moldavian monastic churches in particular, did not take away from the prescribed form and function of the religious buildings. Rather, the Gothic forms supplemented visually the predominantly Byzantine structure, form, and functions of the churches. These western forms may have been adapted for practical and/or symbolic reasons, and also in response to certain desires on the part of the patron and his council, as well as the community at large.

The question that remains is why the Moldavian churches from the fourteenth to early seventeenth centuries integrate Gothic forms. A pragmatic explanation is offered by workshop practices in the region during the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century. It is clear that Moldavia fostered close ties with Transylvania, especially during Stephen and Peter's reigns. Stone cutters from among

Transylvanian Saxons, especially from the town of Bistrița, were summoned by Peter to work on his architectural projects.¹³² This was probably also the case during Stephen's reign. As discussed in Chapter One, Stephen built two churches in Transylvania, with support from both local and Moldavian masons and artists.¹³³ The Gothic forms that persisted unchanged over more than a century employed in the Moldavian churches stood out less prominently against the predominantly Orthodox/Byzantine structure of the buildings and their extensive image cycles.¹³⁴ Another hypothesis, however, points to the symbolic purchase of the Gothic elements, an idea that deserves further consideration elsewhere. Certainly, the variety of Gothic features on the Orthodox Moldavian churches might be interpreted as a symbolic alignment of Moldavia with the Christian world of western Europe for which the Gothic signaled the Christian form *par excellence*.

Stylistic Pluralism

From architectural and iconographic standpoints, as the next chapter will also reveal, the Moldavian corpus of ecclesiastical monuments from the late-fifteenth- to the mid-sixteenth-centuries displays an eclectic array of features with roots in various church building traditions, as well as aspects of a local character. On the one hand, the layout of the churches and the nature of their interior spaces, dimly lit and with extensive image cycles entirely covering the walls, have affinities with Slavic-Byzantine church architecture and building traditions of the Palaiologan period in particular. Some of the other features of the buildings, on the other hand, such as the thick walls, the large buttresses set against the exterior, the curvilinear late Gothic tracery of the windows, and the receding pointed arches and overlapping rectilinear forms present in the door frames, follow central European Gothic models. The particular vaulting systems of the naos, and sometimes the pronaos, have prototypes in Armenian adaptations of Islamic examples. Characteristics such as the elongation of the church toward the west by the addition of the burial chamber in between the naos and pronaos, and the exonarthex at the west end, took form locally in the initial decades of the sixteenth century in response to certain needs

¹³² Nicolescu, *Mănăstirea Moldovița*, 11.

¹³³ See Chapter One, esp. Fig. 1.19-1.22.

¹³⁴ Baș and Nicolescu, *Mănăstirea Moldovița*, 15: "The builder's preoccupation [with] the outside decoration of the church appears minor compared to that of the fresco painter."

and aspirations. The domes and towers raised on the Moldavian types of oblique arches that diminish the span of the vault under the dome also developed at this time as a result of particular aesthetic and spiritual desires. The stylistic plurality of the Moldavian corpus, however, is not an isolated phenomenon.

Throughout the medieval and early modern periods other Eastern European regions stood at the intersection of various cultural and spiritual spheres, resulting in the appropriation and translation of select elements from distinct artistic and architectural traditions alongside local developments. This is evident in the compound visual and architectural vocabularies of select *katholika* built under princely patronage in Serbia and Bulgaria, for example—two other eastern zones of generative creativity in which the artistic and architectural output reflected contemporary dynamics of cultural contacts and the delicate dialogue between the visual and the political dimensions of princely patronage in the ecclesiastical sphere at key historical moments.

At the beginning of his reign, sometime between 1166 and 1168, the Serbian Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja (*r.* 1166-1196) built the Church of St. Nicholas at Kuršumlija, on the Toplica River (Figs. 3.129-3.130).¹³⁵ To use the words of Slobodan Ćurčić, this Orthodox monastic church consists of “a curious blend between Byzantine and Romanesque architectural features that graphically reveals the position of Serbia as a land between the eastern and western cultural spheres.”¹³⁶ Indeed, the Romanesque barrel vaulted portico flanked by large square towers attached to a rectangular exonarthex at the west end of the church opens, through a narrow entryway, into a structure that follows Byzantine, and more specifically Constantinopolitan, church building traditions characteristic of the Komnenian era.¹³⁷ Beyond the Romanesque façade, the west end of the church comprises an oblong pronaos, or narthex, that leads through a large semicircular arch into the square domed naos. This space, in turn, terminates in a tripartite sanctuary at the east end of the church.¹³⁸ The *katholikon* at Kuršumlija may

¹³⁵ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 492-493; Mihaljević, “Change in Byzantine Architecture,” in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration*, eds. Mark J. Johnson *et al.*, 102-104; Stevović, “Historical and Artistic Time in the Architecture of Medieval Serbia: 12th Century,” 149-151.

¹³⁶ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 493.

¹³⁷ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 493.

¹³⁸ To the south of the naos extends a funerary room with a monumental floor tomb. The *parekklesion* to the north of the pronaos dates to the fourteenth century, to the reign of Tsar Stefan Uroš II Milutin (*r.* 1282-1321).

have been constructed in two phases, with the twin tower façade and exonarthex built out of brick and stone postdating the main liturgical space of the church at the east end that here was built entirely out of recessed brick. It is possible that Stefan Nemanja paid for both phases of construction, or else he might have initiated the construction of the façade on the preexisting Church of St. Nicholas that could have been the commission of the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-1180).¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the architecturally eclectic final form of the church was likely celebrated as it was adapted in another contemporaneous katholikon.

The Serbian prince initiated another ecclesiastical building project during the first years of his reign, comparable in planning to the church at Kuršumljija, that suggests that the earlier example was not conceived independently from other developments. Scholars credit Stefan Nemanja with the construction of the monastic church of St. George at Djurdjevi Stupovi near Novi Pazar, Serbia, which was completed between c.1166 and c.1170 (Fig. 3.131).¹⁴⁰ This building, extensively damaged during WWI, shares significant formal characteristics and spatial aspects with the church at Kuršumljija, in particular the narthex framed by two large square towers, the domed rectangular naos extended with enclosed porches on its lateral flanks, and the tripartite sanctuary at the east end. Although the two monastic churches are analogous in formal architectural forms, suggesting that Kuršumljija likely served as a model in the planning process of the Church of St. George, the latter demonstrates much more compact planning and arrangement than the Church of St. Nicholas, due in part to the constraints of the monastic milieu for which it was designed and in which it was erected. The katholikon at Djurdjevi Stupovi, however, reveals that the Church of St. Nicholas was not an isolated example in the Serbian cultural sphere of the second half of the twelfth century. Its features and blending of various architectural traditions were adapted in other contexts.

The eclectic visual vocabularies of the churches at Kuršumljija and Djurdjevi Stupovi—bringing together Byzantine church buildings traditions and Romanesque architectural forms western in conception—suggest that at least in the second half of the twelfth century artistic and cultural links extended between Serbia and Byzantine centers

¹³⁹ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 492.

¹⁴⁰ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 493-495; Stevović, “Historical and Artistic Time in the Architecture of Medieval Serbia: 12th Century,” 152-155.

such as Constantinople, as well as regions in the western cultural sphere, such as Norman Sicily (Cefalù), Apulia (Bari), and perhaps even Hungary (Buda).¹⁴¹ The churches retain the spatial scheme required for Orthodox monastic churches, but incorporate features and construction methods characteristic of western Romanesque ecclesiastical buildings, evident in monuments such as the Cathedral of St. Tryphon from Kotor, for example. It is possible, that builders trained in western workshops were summoned to the court of the Grand Prince Stefan Nemanja to work on his new projects,¹⁴² perhaps not due to lack of “highly trained builders” in Serbia at this time,¹⁴³ but rather as a result of Serbia’s outreach and contacts with its closer and more distant neighbors that contributed to new visual and architectural forms taking shape in a new milieu. Moreover, scholars who have considered the visual analogies between the two churches have suggested that “the Romanesque elements stood for Nemanja’s turning away from Byzantium at a moment when, contrary to the decree of Constantinople, he won the title of highest authority over Serbian lands.”¹⁴⁴ Others, however, have pointed to symbolic meanings behind the massive towers of both monastic churches, visualizing the topography of the land and the ideologies of the patron.¹⁴⁵

Ecclesiastical monuments, and in particular monastic churches, deriving their visual rhetoric from distinct architectural traditions—such as the example presented by the Serbian churches discussed above—also survive in other regions of Eastern Europe. The Serbian examples date to the Nemanjić Dynasty (late-twelfth to mid-fourteenth centuries), but later monuments from Serbia and neighboring regions are similarly eclectic with respect to their sources. The same is true of *katholika* built during the

¹⁴¹ Jovan Nešković has considered the impact from Apulia. See Nešković, *Djurdjevi Stupovi u Starom Rasu*. See, also, Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 495: “Geographically and historically closer connections, such as those with Hungary, remain to be examined more thoroughly. The only certainty is that the builders of St. George were brought in from the Western cultural sphere...”

¹⁴² For example, the mastermind behind the *katholikon* of Christ Pantokrator from Dečani Monastery, built between 1327 and 1335, was Fra Vita (Vitus), a Franciscan monk and architect from Kotor.

¹⁴³ A view advanced by Slobodan Ćurčić in his study *Architecture in the Balkans*, esp. 495.

¹⁴⁴ Stevović, “Historical and Artistic Time in the Architecture of Medieval Serbia: 12th Century,” 155 and n. 38.

¹⁴⁵ Stevović, “Historical and Artistic Time in the Architecture of Medieval Serbia: 12th Century,” 155.

Second Bulgarian Empire (1186-early fifteenth century),¹⁴⁶ as is the case with the Church of the Forty Martyrs in Veliko Tarnovo (Figs. 3.132-3.133), built by Tsar Ivan Asen II (r. 1218-1241) to serve as his royal mausoleum and to mark his victory at the Battle of Klokotnitsa in 1230 over Theodore of Epiros, ruler of Thessaloniki.¹⁴⁷ The katholikon of the Forty Martyrs, and the fortified monastic complex that surrounded it, became one of the most important and emblematic monasteries in Tarnovo—the capital city of the Second Bulgarian Empire, settled along the steep banks of the Yantra River. The city served as a cultural and political center, and also as the seat of the Patriarchate (established in 1235). Like other monuments from Tarnovo, the Church of the Forty Martyrs—“the Bulgarian national shrine *par excellence*”¹⁴⁸—“displays at once idiosyncrasies of local style, as well as affinities with developments in other regional centers.”¹⁴⁹

As originally planned, the first church built by Tsar Asen II took the form of a three-aisled basilica with the nave and each of the aisles terminating at the east end in semicircular apses.¹⁵⁰ An iconostasis set between the two eastern-most interior piers of the church separated the naos from the altar area. In the decades following its completion, the church was expanded toward the west by an oblong narthex that contained the tomb of Tsar Asen II. During the fourteenth century, the church was further expanded toward the west, and laterally to the north and south. It received a large exonarthex (the north side of which marked the new entrance into the church), as well as arcaded lateral porticoes along the north and south walls, shorter in height than the rest of the church. The visually impressive west façade—displaying overlapping rounded arched niches and possibly even a bell tower rising over the central axis, “as a crowning section of a large pediment”¹⁵¹—was designed so as to amplify visually the basilica-type structure of the

¹⁴⁶ I am particularly interested in churches built under the auspices of Bulgarian princes, and so generally after 1186, as opposed to those erected under direct Byzantine patronage that occurred soon after the fall of the First Bulgarian Empire in 1014. See Nickel, *Medieval Architecture in Eastern Europe*, 44-64.

¹⁴⁷ Ćurčić, “Function and Form,” 58-59; idem, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 478. Archaeological investigations were carried out at this site in the 1970s. See also Totev, “The Forty Holy Martyrs’ Tsar’s Church,” 30-44.

¹⁴⁸ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 478.

¹⁴⁹ Ćurčić, “Function and Form,” 59.

¹⁵⁰ The lateral aisles were used primarily for burials, as was customary with such spaces in Byzantium.

¹⁵¹ Ćurčić, “Function and Form,” 59. Georges Bošković has looked at the links between Bulgaria and Serbia with regard to the use of belfries, and has proposed western sources for their developments.

church.¹⁵² Because the west façade was also incorporated into the fortification wall of the monastery, it was not entirely aligned with the rest of the building.

The basilica form of the Church of the Forty Martyrs was coupled with Byzantine building techniques. Indeed, alternating bands of multiple courses of brick and stone make up the façade and exonarthex of the *katholikon*—a construction technique widely employed in Bulgarian church architecture of the fourteenth century and derived from Constantinopolitan building traditions.¹⁵³ The stylistic diversity of the church of the Forty Martyrs may have emerged as a desire on the part of its original founder and then later patrons to mark in a visually striking manner a monastic church that carried great religious prestige for its founder, later patrons, and the Bulgarian state. As Slobodan Ćurčić writes:

Complex arrangements in which conventional church cores were enveloped by narthexes, subsidiary chapels, belfries, and other features, often resulting in picturesque, asymmetrical agglomerations, appear in Bulgaria only on an exceptional basis. The Church of the Forty Martyrs in Tarnovo in its final medieval form, for example, can be invoked as one of these exceptions.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, but exceptions of this nature are telling, and reveal ways in which Bulgaria was redefining itself at this moment. The visual eclecticism evident in the Church of the Forty Martyrs emerged out of the patron's aspirations, yet also served as a reflection of a more politically dynamic stance of Bulgaria toward the cultural spheres of the East and the West during the early decades of the thirteenth century, at a moment when the Second Bulgarian Empire was emerging as a dominant power in the Balkans.

Whereas in Serbian and Bulgarian monastic churches the western architectural and stylistic forms appear mainly on and around the western facades of the buildings and are evident in the general exterior shapes of the monuments, the monastic churches

Bošković, "Note sur les analogies entre l'architecture serbe et l'architecture bulgare au Moyen-Age," 57-74; Ćurčić, "Architecture in the Byzantine Sphere of Influence around the Middle of the Fourteenth Century," 64, n. 67.

¹⁵² For a hypothetical reconstruction of the exonarthex, see Bojadžiev, "L'église des Quarante Martyrs à Tarnovo," 143-158.

¹⁵³ Ćurčić, "Architecture in the Byzantine Sphere of Influence around the Middle of the Fourteenth Century," 65.

¹⁵⁴ Ćurčić, "Function and Form," 60.

constructed north of the Danube River display western architectural and decorative forms alongside Byzantine and local developments of a different visual valence. The *katholika* built from the fourteenth and through the sixteenth centuries in the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia likewise reveal affinities with both western and Byzantine church building traditions, but differ in their eclectic conception from the Serbian and Bulgarian architectural examples. The more direct contacts that extended between Wallachia and Moldavia and neighboring regions such as Transylvania, Hungary, and Poland, may explain the diverse architectural idioms of ecclesiastical and secular monuments from these regions that incorporate western architectural forms alongside Byzantine and local building traditions with various results.

The monastic churches discussed in this chapter are eclectic in form: they do not present a synthesis of artistic and architectural elements drawn from distinct ecclesiastical building traditions. The culture and overall character of Moldavia, which contributed to its particular artistic production, has been characterized by the Romanian historian Emil Turdeanu as “the result of a complex and extensive synthesis of elements pertaining to the Orthodox traditions of Byzantium, Mount Athos, Bulgaria and Serbia, and of Catholic and Protestant elements received via Ragusa (today Dubrovnik, Croatia), Venice, Hungary, Bohemia and Poland, blended together into an original unity.”¹⁵⁵ I would argue, however, that what we are dealing with in the monastic churches from this region built in the century following the collapse of Byzantium is not so much a synthesis *per se* of these distinct artistic traditions, but rather an adaptation and translation of select elements in order to fulfill certain needs. Distinct, indeed, from the cultures of western Europe and those of the Slavic-Byzantine world, in which the artistic production evolved in a more “homogeneous” fashion and in relation to trends and principles closer to their own, Moldavia, and the rest of the Romanian lands around the Carpathian Mountains,

¹⁵⁵ Turdeanu, *Oameni și cărți de altădată*, I, 170: “Cultura românească în forma slavă a fost rezultatul unei sinteze ample și de lungă durată, în care elementele împrumutate din tradiția ortodoxă a Bizanțului, a Muntelui Athos, a Bulgariei, a Serbiei s-au întâlnit cu elemente ale civilizației catolice și reformante primite prin Ragusa, Veneția, Ungaria, Boemia și Polonia și au fuzionat într-o unitate originală.” / “Romanian culture in its Slavic form was the result of an extensive synthesis, and one that was long-lasting, in which elements borrowed from the Orthodox tradition of Byzantium, Mount Athos, Bulgaria, and Serbia, came together with elements of the Catholic and the Reformation spheres received through Ragusa, Venice, Hungary, Bohemia, and Poland, and merged into an original form.”

continually found themselves “at the junction, at the point of collision of very different civilizations.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the artistic and architectural production of these regions is unprecedented in its *modes* of synthesis and translation of different elements, as well as in the affinities it shares with quite distant and distinct cultures.

The eclecticism evident in the Moldavian ecclesiastical architecture of the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries, however, presents a challenge to conventional notions of a purely regional style. This visual eclecticism, then, is not a direct synthesis nor a form of hybridity, since a hybrid, in the most straightforward definition, implies two purities that are mingled, and this is not the case with these examples. In a more nuanced sense, on the other hand, as Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann explains, a hybrid is “the sign of an attempt to reconcile forms of cultural exchange, with attendant aspects of both assimilation and resistance.”¹⁵⁷ In this regard, the phenomenon of cultural contact and translation is a give and take, with elements and meanings accepted, rejected, and transformed dependent upon the new context(s) and the motivations of the patrons, the artists, and the larger communities. Thus, examination of the Moldavian corpus as the product of its particular historical moment and in light of cultural interactions, rather than as if existing in isolation, could yield new and exciting insights. In fact, the architectural plurality of east European ecclesiastical monuments should be approached from a scholarly standpoint precisely with these considerations in mind.

Although it is important to consider the aspects of Moldavian monastic church architecture from this period and their affinities with earlier Byzantine, Slavic, and Gothic traditions, among others, the element of the local should not be forgotten.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 11: “...țările noastre, spre deosebire de cele apusene unde artele au evoluat într-un mediu mai omogen și în relație cu regiuni de tendință și principii apropiate de ale lor, țările noastre se găsesc la confluența, la punctul de ciocnire al unor civilizații foarte diferite.” / “...our regions [Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia], unlike western European regions where the arts developed in a more homogeneous fashion and *vis-à-vis* regions with similar [artistic] principles and tendencies, our [Romanian] territories are at the junction, at the point of collision of very different civilization.”

¹⁵⁷ Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City*, 114.

¹⁵⁸ Corina Nicolescu discusses the element of the “local” in relation to the artistic production of Moldavia at the turn of the sixteenth century, during the last third of Stephen III’s reign. Nicolescu, “Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 362: “Procesul de evoluție a artei moldovenești. . . avea să ducă la rezultate noi în ultima treime a domniei lui Ștefan cel Mare. De-abia atunci atinge maximul de dezvoltare în arhitectură, pictură și broderie adevăratul stil moldovenesc, stil ale cărui caractere sunt atât de indisolubil legate de spiritul local. . . . Mai presus de toate, noul proces artistic și cultural se caracterizează prin puterea sa de sinteză, prin îmbinarea dintre vechi și nou, dintre autohton și străin, dintre tradiția

Syntheses and translations between old and new, domestic and foreign, aristocratic and popular traditions all come into play in the development of what we may refer to as a Moldavian type of monastic architecture that prevailed in the century following the conquest of Constantinople—a type of monument that presents a particular kind of response to the crisis of 1453 and to the emergence of the Ottoman Empire as a dominant force in southeastern Europe, the eastern Mediterranean, and the western Black Sea regions at this time. However, although the Moldavian monastic churches display stylistic diversity and also unity across the corpus, the definition of “the corpus” eludes classification into types of “schools.” Therefore, I would not venture to call this type of religious architecture part of some abstract concept of a “Moldavian School” of architecture at this moment, as scholars have done in the past.¹⁵⁹ This would be problematic and narrow from a methodological standpoint, and also tied to nationalist political sentiments and ambitions.

I would propose, then, that we consider the Moldavian corpus as the product of its particular historical moment and its developments in light of cultural interactions. Political, military, economic, and/or cultural contacts certainly extended between Moldavia and its neighbors during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which would have contributed to the transfer of ideas and artistic forms between regions. The Moldavian cultural plurality, primarily facilitated through objects and people traveling

aristocratică și inspirația populară.” / “The process of development of Moldavian art...would lead to new results during the last third of Stephen the Great’s rule. Only then does the true Moldavian style achieve the most impressive development in architecture, painting, and embroidery—a style that carries a character inextricably linked to the local spirit...[...] Above all, the new artistic and cultural process is characterized by its power of synthesis, by bringing together the old and the new, the local and the foreign, and the aristocratic tradition and the folk/popular inspiration.”

¹⁵⁹ Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du nord*, esp. Chapter 2 “Pătrăuți et les origines de l’école architecturale Moldave du XVe siècle;” idem, “Les principes de l’architecture religieuse serbe et l’école moldave,” 295-302. The concept of a “Moldavian School” would be just as problematic as the one Gabriel Millet coined in relation to fresco painting in Macedonia—“The Macedonian school”. This concept paralleled his definition of Byzantine architecture in Greece, which he termed “l’école grecque.” Millet, *Recherches sur l’iconographie de l’évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles, d’après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, 625-690. “The Macedonian school,” open to influences from the “Orient and Italy,” is contrasted here to the more conservative “Cretan school.” Slobodan Ćurčić takes up this issue in regard to Serbian architecture in his article “The Role of Late Byzantine Thessalonike in Church Architecture in the Balkans,” 65-84. Millet coined a similar concept for the ecclesiastical architecture of Serbia from c.1375 and c.1450, which he dubbed “The Morava School” (“L’École de Morava”) because of a particular stylistic unity that he observed among the monuments from this period. Millet, *L’ancien art serbe: les églises*, esp. Chapter 3 “L’école de Morava.” See also Ristić, *Moravska arhitektura*, and a recent critical reassessment of the problem by Jelena Trkulja in her dissertation “Aesthetics and Symbolism of Late Byzantine Church Façades, 1204-1453.”

from disparate places, resembles the eclecticism embraced in the artistic sphere in regions such as Moscow,¹⁶⁰ Venice,¹⁶¹ Cyprus,¹⁶² and Crete,¹⁶³ for example, as well as more under-studied regions like Georgia and Armenia¹⁶⁴—prominent centers that, too, forged certain connections with the Byzantine world and with the cultures of western Europe at various moments throughout their histories. The specific ways in which the Moldavian corpus might compare to those from other regions that present similar cultural pluralities is an interesting topic that certainly deserves further study. The approaches of scholars such as Michele Bacci,¹⁶⁵ Holger Klein,¹⁶⁶ Thomas Dale,¹⁶⁷ Maria Georgopoulou,¹⁶⁸ and Michalis Olympios,¹⁶⁹ among others, who have critically considered the compound visual character of Venetian, Cretan, and Cypriot art and architecture after the Fourth Crusade in particular, in an effort to encourage a rethinking of notions of style, iconography, eclecticism, and function, serve as models for future investigations of the Moldavian corpus and that of other Eastern European centers.

¹⁶⁰ For a more recent study on the developments of Russian architecture during the fifteenth century relative to the Byzantine and western architectural traditions, see Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West*, esp. 73-122.

¹⁶¹ For more recent studies on the topic, see Maguire and Nelson, eds. *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, esp. the essay by Thomas E.A. Dale, “Cultural Hybridity in Medieval Venice: Reinventing the East at San Marco after the Fourth Crusade,” 151-192.

¹⁶² Bacci, “Some Remarks on the Appropriation, Use, and Survival of Gothic Forms on Cyprus,” 145-168.

¹⁶³ See, for example, the collection of essays *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, edited by Lymberopoulou and Duits. This volume “discusses aspects of the cultural and artistic interaction between the Byzantine east and western Europe, from the 1204 sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders to the flourishing of fifteenth and sixteenth century post-Byzantine artistic production of Venetian-ruled Crete, where the artists adapted to the demands of a bi-ethnic Byzantine/western society.” *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Der Nersessian, *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire*; Mathews and Wieck, eds., *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Art, Religion, and Society*; Abrahamian and Nancy Sweezy, eds., *Armenian Folk Arts, Culture, and Identity*; Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art*.

¹⁶⁵ Bacci, “Veneto-Byzantine “Hybrids”: Towards a Reassessment,” 73-106; idem, “Some Thoughts on Greco-Venetian Artistic Interactions in the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries,” 203-227.

¹⁶⁶ Klein, “Zwischen maniera greca und maniera italiana. Das Regensburger Gnadensbild und seine künstlerischen Vorbilder,” 93-110; idem, “Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West,” 283-314; idem, “Refashioning Byzantium in Venice, ca. 1200-1400,” 193-225.

¹⁶⁷ Dale, “Cultural Hybridity in Medieval Venice,” 151-192.

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, Georgopoulou, “Late Medieval Crete and Venice,” 479-496.

¹⁶⁹ See, most recently, Olympios, “Traacherous Taxonomy: Art in Venetian Crete around 1500 and the ‘Cretan Renaissance’,” 417-437.

Conclusion

The Romanian historian Gheorghe Balș famously characterized the churches of Moldavia from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as “Byzantine churches built with Gothic hands [i.e. by masons trained in Gothic workshops] and following principles that were in part Gothic.”¹⁷⁰ In my view, however, and as I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter, these religious buildings should not be characterized as Byzantine churches built according to Gothic principles. They are churches that follow in their layout and spatial solutions Byzantine church building traditions as found throughout the Byzantine world and as transmitted through direct and intermediary regions such as Mount Athos, Serbia, and Armenia, for example. Moreover, the Moldavian churches reinvent their Byzantine prototypes. They also reinterpret certain characteristics of Gothic buildings, in particular in their modes of construction, proportions, and specific features. These churches were also built in response to local needs and concerns, and thus the element of the local should not be excluded from the equation.

The aims of this architectural chapter were manifold. First, it provided an overview of the architectural features and spatial solutions of the Moldavian churches built in the century after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, with a particular focus on the churches built during the reigns of two of Moldavia’s most illustrious rulers: Stephen III and Peter Rareș. Certain churches erected under Stephen’s patronage introduced new forms that were later further developed and consolidated during Peter’s reign, especially in the monastic churches. The general features of the type of Moldavian monastic church that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, using as an example the Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery (Figs. 3.1-3.2; Cat.no.34) are characteristic of Moldavian church architecture as it developed by the first half of the sixteenth century.

Second, the chapter called attention to elements drawn from other regions and incorporated into Moldavian religious buildings: elements derived from Byzantine, Serbian, Bulgarian, and even Gothic traditions. These borrowings attest to the cross-

¹⁷⁰ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 14: “...sa putut caracteriza biserica moldovenească ca fiind un plan bizantin executat cu mâini gotice și după principii în parte gotice.”

cultural contacts that extended between Moldavia and its neighbors during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, due to the lack of documentary evidence about the builders and artists who worked on these buildings, it is difficult to assess precisely the agents of transmission of certain forms from one region to another. Therefore, the examples drawn from other building traditions and that are set in dialogue with the Moldavian corpus throughout the chapter are intended to stress the parallels between the architecture of the Moldavian churches and that of other regions with which Moldavia established contacts. These sources and avenues of inquiry into the eclectic visual character of the Moldavian material, however, require still further study.

The painted and fortified monastic churches commissioned by Peter, in particular, present an unprecedented articulation of architectural and iconographic features of both eastern- and western-inspired aesthetic and symbolic conventions set alongside local developments, found nowhere else in Europe or the Slavic-Byzantine world at this particular historical juncture. These sixteenth-century buildings did not develop in isolation, however, as I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter. Rather, they should be understood in the context, and as a continuation, of the developments and transformations (both architectural and iconographic) that occurred during Stephen's prosperous reign, and the rule of his immediate followers. Up to this point I have discussed the changes in church architecture in Moldavia from the fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. The next chapter addresses the iconography and functions of the extensive image cycles that cover the interior and exterior walls of the churches built under Peter's patronage. As I will show, these murals were designed in dialogue with the architecture of the churches in order to structure the spatial and spiritual experiences of the faithful in dynamic ways.

CHAPTER FOUR

Iconographic Programs and the Structuring of Spatial Experience

Introduction

Under the patronage of Prince Peter Rareș (*r.* 1527-1538; 1541-1546), a number of select churches and katholika in Moldavia took on new visual forms. Most striking of these are the hundreds of brightly colored murals painted on the exterior of more than a dozen ecclesiastical buildings:¹

1. The Church of St. Demetrios in Hârlău (1530-1535) (Cat.no.33)
2. The Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery (1530, painted 1532) (Cat.no.34)
3. The Church of St. George at the Monastery of St. John the New in Suceava (restored, painted 1532-1534) (Cat.no.31)
4. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Humor Monastery (1530, painted 1535-1538) (Cat.no.35)
5. The Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery (1532, painted 1532-1537) (Cat.no.36)
6. The Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Baia (1532, painted 1533-1534) (Cat.no.37)
7. The Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava (1534-1535, painted 1536-1538) (Cat.no.38)
8. The Church of St. George in Hârlău (painted on the exterior) (Cat.no.13)
9. The Church of St. Nicholas in Coșula (1535, painted 1537-1538)
10. The Church of St. Elijah in Suceava (painted on the exterior between 1530 and 1550s) (Cat.no.9)
11. The Church of St. George at Voroneț Monastery (painted 1547) (Cat.no.10)
12. The Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Arbore (restored, painted on the exterior by 1541) (Cat.no.28)
13. The Church of St. Nicholas at Râșca Monastery (1542, but left unpainted at Peter's death) (Cat.no.40)

Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

¹ A number of the churches are so badly damaged that their exterior (and sometime even interior) murals no longer survive. This is the case at Hârlău and Coșula. The murals on the churches from Suceava (St. Demetrios, St. Elijah, and St. George), and those found at Baia, are badly deteriorated. Therefore, the arguments put forth in this chapter are based primarily on the better preserved image programs found at Probota, Humor, and Moldovița, and later at Voroneț, Arbore, and Râșca.

The first ten churches were executed during Peter's first reign (1527-1538) and they stand at the core of the discussion that follows. The churches at Voroneț, Arbore, and Râșca were completed during Peter's second reign (1541-1546) and present a number of variations in their mural programs.² This chapter engages with the mural cycles in a thematic fashion, addressing the various themes and their variations. For detailed descriptions of each image cycle, the reader should consult the catalog (Appendix 4) at the end of this dissertation.

Scholars have put forth a variety of explanations to account for the presence of such extensive image cycles on the exteriors of the Moldavian churches from Peter's reign.³ Some have pointed to influences from Iran, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Trebizond,⁴ whereas Sorin Ulea, Paul Henry, Vasile Drăguț, and Irineu Crăciunaș Suceveanul identified this development as a uniquely Moldavian phenomenon.⁵ André Grabar connected the exterior frescoes with churches that also incorporate an exonarthex in their

² The exterior walls of the katholikon at Voroneț received paintings after Peter's death, under the patronage of Grigore Roșca, and possibly executed by a certain Marko (whose inscription remains painted on the exterior of the church). The murals of the katholikon at Râșca were carried out by the Greek monk Stamatelos Kotronas from Zante, Greece. At Arbore, a team of local artists completed the interior and exterior murals, including Dragoș Coman, son of Priest Coman from Iași. Paul Philippot affirmed that Dragoș Coman was the most significant sixteenth-century painter of the Orthodox world. He writes: "Hier erstreckte sich die Wandmalerei auf die Außenseiten der Kirchen, um von dort aus besser zum Volk sprechen zu können: dies führte im 16. Jahrhundert zu einem ungewöhnlichen Reichtum an Fresken mit tiefblauem Hintergrund in den Klöstern von Voroneț, Moldovița, Humor, Sucevița und in der Kirche von Arbore. Der Meister dieser letzten Wandmalereien, Dragoș Coman, den man einen byzantinischen Pisanello nennen könnte, ist wahrscheinlich der größte orthodoxe Maler des 16. Jahrhunderts." Philippot, *Die Wandmalerei: Entwicklung, Technik, Eigenart*, 60.

³ For a historiographic overview, see Platon, "Un secol de cercetare a picturii murale medieval din Moldova," 82-103.

⁴ David Talbot Rice and Sorin Ulea maintained that sources from Trebizond informed the final appearance of the Moldavian churches. See Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Painting at Trebizond*, 175-176; Ulea, "Originea și semnificația ideologică a picturii exterioare moldovenești (I)," esp. 59; idem, "Originea și semnificația ideologică a picturii exterioare moldovenești (II)," 37-53; idem, "L'origine et la signification idéologique de la peinture extérieure moldave," 29-71; idem, "La peinture extérieure moldave: Où, quand et comment est-elle apparue?" 285-312; Ștefănescu pointed to Bulgarian influences in *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie* (1929), 150.

⁵ Henry, "De l'originalité des peintures bukoviniennes dans l'application des principes byzantins," 293; "Idée originale, féconde, ouvrant des possibilités nouvelles à l'artiste..." Drăguț, "Un capitol unic al artei universale: bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova," 675-678; idem, "De nouveau sur les peintures murales extérieures de Moldavie," 49-84. Suceveanul, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova, I," 406-444, esp. 424: "...pictura exterioară bisericească din Moldova constituie fără îndoială tot ce poate fi mai interesant și original din vechea școală moldovenească de pictură. Mai mult, ea constituie apogeul artei medieval românești și prin aceasta ea devine una din cele mai originale pagini din istoria picturii creștine și a artei mondiale în general." See also Suceveanul, "Vechea pictură bisericească din Moldova (veac XV-XVII)," 468-502; idem, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova, II," 150-170; idem, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova, III," 480-520; idem, "Temele iconografice reprezentate în pictura exterioară din Moldova. Noțiuni introductive," 631-644.

plan, explaining that the murals of the interior of the exonarthex came to extend also on the exterior of the buildings.⁶ Mollie Elizabeth McVey, Michael D. Taylor, Ștefana Pop-Curseu, and Martine de Rougemont have posited a liturgical function for the exterior murals in that their primary purpose was to create on the outside of the building a visually-rich space akin to the interior that could not accommodate all of the faithful during particular celebrations.⁷ Recently, Constantin I. Ciobanu proposed that the vast exterior murals ought to be best understood as “imagini de ansamblu” (impressions or overviews) of the painted walls of the churches, intended thus to awe and overwhelm the faithful.⁸ In my opinion, the images on the exterior of the Moldavian edifices sanctify space, within and without the buildings.

What is clear is that the cohesive and extensive image cycles found on the interior and exterior of these churches, emulating Byzantine stylistic and iconographic patterns, were carefully conceived in dialogue with the distinctive architecture of the buildings and their interior image programs. To understand better the placement, design, and execution of these image cycles, I will make use of the *Hermeneia*, or *Painter’s Manual* written by Dionysius of Fournà (c.1670-after 1744) on Mount Athos. Although this text was composed about two centuries after the execution of the Moldavian murals under consideration here, it represents a long tradition of church decoration in the Byzantine cultural sphere, and especially a tradition that persisted on Mount Athos with little variation. In addition to offering analysis of the iconographic programs of the interior and

⁶ Grabar, “L’origine des façades peintes des églises moldaves,” 365-382. Grabar identifies this phenomenon as “une nouvelle conception de la façade qui s’introduit en Moldavie, dès le milieu du xvi^e siècle.” (368) He also concludes that “La généralisation du *pridvor* [exonarthex], dans les églises moldaves, coïncide *grosso modo* avec l’apparition des peintures extérieures.” (371) Similar churches with painted exonarthexes both inside and outside survive in parts of Greece, Mount Athos, and Bulgaria. See Grabar, “L’origine des façades peintes des églises moldaves,” 373-382; Suceveanul, 412.

⁷ McVey, “Beyond the Walls: The Easter Processional in the Exterior Frescos of Moldavian Monastery Churches”; Taylor, “Three Local Motifs in Moldavian Trees of Jesse, with an Excursus on the Liturgical Basis of the Exterior Mural Programs,” 267-275; Pop-Curseu and de Rougemont, “La théâtralité de la peinture murale post-byzantine: XVe-XVIIe siècles.”

⁸ Ciobanu, “Pictura exterioară din Moldova secolului al XVI-lea și cea din Oltenia și Muntenia de la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea și din prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea (sursele literare ale profețiilor Împereptilor Antichității și ale Sibilelor),” 13: “...funcția principală a acestor fresce constă în formarea unei *imagini de ansamblu* a pereților zugrăviți. Mai mult decât atât, faptul că pictura exterioară moldavă nu este un fenomen de împrumut ci s-a constituit și dezvoltat în arealul nord-carpatic-bucovinean este [a]probat și de evoluția istorică a acestei picturi, de înnoirile de tehnologie (necesare unor fresce expuse intemperiilor), de particularitățile arhitectonice ale locașurilor moldave din secolul al XVI-lea, interiorul cărora, fiind lipsit de nave laterale, nu permitea prezentarea penară a programului iconografic ortodox, constituit la acea epocă.”

exterior murals of Peter's ecclesiastical commissions, this chapter will call attention to some of the agents of cultural contacts and the modes of artistic translations that so markedly contributed to the unprecedented visual forms of this imagery. It will also look at the princely aspirations in the context of which these innovations took shape, and at the ways in which the exterior murals function in dialogue with the interior image cycles and the architecture of the churches to structure the spatial experiences of the faithful. Local and traveling artists executed the murals, and extant working drawings demonstrate the transfer of particular image types from distant regions such as Mount Athos, signaling a mode of image transfer and also a direct contact between Moldavia and a territory in which Byzantine artistic traditions continued even after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Judging from the extant sources, Stephen's monastic churches, beginning with the second church at Putna Monastery, rebuilt in 1487-1488 after a fire that consumed the monastery in the night between 14 and 15 April 1484, displayed exterior paintings. However, the extent to which murals covered the exterior of this building remains unknown. We can still get a sense of the splendor of this church from a description by the chronicler Ion Neculce (1672-1745), which was based on oral accounts from older members of his family:

And the monastery was made so beautiful, covered in gold, the painting more gold than paint, on the inside and on the outside, and covered with lead. And the monks say that the small and great candlesticks, and the chandelier, and the candelabrum [in the naos] were made from silver.⁹

Although scholars have used this account to argue that murals on the exterior walls of churches from Moldavia appeared as early as the penultimate decade of the fifteenth century, the sources are ambiguous. It is not even from Neculce's account whether the exterior images at Putna were figurative.

It is very possible, however, that exterior murals existed during Stephen's time in the form of niche paintings, like the figures of saints and angels that still survive on the

⁹ Neculce, *Opere*, 163: "Și așa au fost făcută mănăstirea de frumoasă, tot cu aur poleită, zugrăveala mai mult aur decât zugrăveală, și pre dinlăuntru și pre denafară, și acoperită cu plumbu. Și zicu călugării să fie fost făcut și sfeșnicile cele mari și cele mici și policandru și hora tot prisne de argint..."

exterior faces of the Church of St. Nicholas in Bălinești (Fig. 4.1). Based on the surviving evidence, I work under the assumption that although modest exterior mural cycles likely existed during the later decades of the fifteenth century, produced under Stephen's patronage, the practice of covering the entire exterior of the churches with paintings is a phenomenon characteristic of Peter's patronage and developed in the context of his princely ambitions.

When Peter took the throne on 20 January 1527, he initially concerned himself with political and military matters, such as the alliance that he forged in 1528 between John Zápolya, the Transylvanian prince who became the king of Hungary in 1526, supported by the Hungarians, and Francis I, King of France, against their common enemy, the Habsburgs. The failed Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529 appears to have corresponded with new hopes and ambitions entertained by Europe's Christian leaders, including Peter (as Chapter Six explores in more detail), with various political, military, cultural, and artistic ramifications. I argue that the exterior murals here under scrutiny must partially be understood within the context of these new princely initiatives. With these projects, Peter not only continued and enhanced his father's ecclesiastical agenda, but also left his own mark on the Moldavian corpus.

The new visual rhetoric of these buildings, and *katholika* in particular, was the result of careful planning on the part of the patron and his advisors. As a contemporary Russian messenger who spent five months at Peter's court in Suceava recounts, the Moldavian prince demonstrated "a learned philosophical wisdom" since he was "a learned philosopher himself, and a wise master," being advised "by many other wise philosophers and masters."¹⁰ To the rich account of this particular messenger I will return in Chapter Six. One of Peter's primary advisors was Grigore Roșca, the monk from Voroneț Monastery who became abbot of Probota Monastery (1523-1546) and then later rose to the rank of Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia (1546-1551).¹¹ His full-length

¹⁰ Bezviconi, *Călători Ruși în Moldova și Muntenia*, 30: "Am fost la Suceava la Petru voevodul voloh, cinci luni, robul Ivauet, fiul lui Semeon Peresvetov, și am văzut marea lui înțelepciune, și acele cuvinte le spunea din înțelepciunea filosofică învățată, fiindcă, doamne, însuși voevodul Petru a fost filosof învățat și doctor înțelept, și la el slujeau mulți oameni filosofi înțelepți și doctori."

¹¹ According to Roșca's follower, Metropolitan Dosoftei, who referred to him as "the cousin of Peter Rareș." Székely, *Sfeticii lui Petru Rareș*, 172. Roșca was also a disciple of Daniil Sihastru and worked in the shadow of Metropolitan Teoctis I, Stephen's advisor. Mândrescu, "Grigorie Roșca: contribuții privind

portrait on the left, alongside that of Daniel Sihastru (or Daniel the Hermit), adorns the exterior south wall of the katholikon at Voroneț, to the left of the entrance (Fig. 4.2).

Scholars agree that Roșca played a major role in advising Peter to build a new princely mausoleum at Probota Monastery, just as Stephen had done before at Putna Monastery (a topic to which I return in Chapter Five). In fact, in the summer of 1529 the last princely burial took place at Putna—that of Peter’s first wife, Maria (d. 28 June 1529). By 1530, the new sumptuous katholikon at Probota was raised and Peter’s dynastic lineage was given its own mausoleum. To mark the importance of its rank, it was initially the monastic church at Probota that received extensive image cycles both inside and outside upon its completion. A passage in a letter dated 19 September 1562 suggests that Grigore Roșca may somehow have been involved in the conception of these mural cycles:

I [Grigore Roșca] raised the holy church [Probota] with all its beautiful decorations in the meadow; this is the first service that I rendered there [at Probota Monastery]. Second, I also strove with great exertion and skillfulness to see to it that Peter voivode, his wife, Princess Elina, and their children be interred there, on the monastic grounds...¹²

Working Techniques and Underpainting

The process of the conception and execution of the exterior paintings following the completion of the buildings, however, merits a detailed discussion here. Over the

participarea sa la realizarea programului de construcții din epoca domniilor lui Petru Rareș și Alexandru Lăpușneanu,” 527-530, esp. 528.

¹² The letter from 19 September 1562 that Grigore Roșca wrote to the community at Probota Monastery, where he was abbot for about twenty-three years, reveals his involvement in the building and decoration of the katholikon: “I, Grigorie, a former Metropolitan of Suceava, throwing myself on the wet ground, bow down in all humility and with fraternal love before our brethren, the charitable and beloved abbots, and greet with all my heart the entire cherished monastic community and all the brothers of Probota Monastery, those who have lived and served over there since ancient times, ever since the monastery was raised, priests and deacons, old monks and young monks alike, as well as simple novices—all those who are under the holy protection of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworkers. My beloved brothers...let me tell you that I lived and served there as abbot for 23 years. I meditated the return to the throne of Peter voivode and of his wife, Princess Elina...and as you can see for yourselves I raised the holy church with all its beautiful decorations in the meadow; this is the first service that I rendered there. Second, I also strove with great exertion and skillfulness to see to it that Peter voivode, his wife, Princess Elina, and their children be interred there, on the monastic grounds...” The letter was translated by Reverend Father Constantin Cojocaru and published partially in Dumitrescu, *The Ecumenical Tabernacles of Petru Rareș Voivode and Their Celestial Model*, 441.

centuries, the deterioration suffered by the churches built under Stephen's and then Peter's patronage has revealed certain aspects of the painting process and the under-layers of paint. Close inspection of the interior and exterior walls of the churches give access to peculiar layers of underpainting. These under-layers show painted stonework and brick bonds in certain areas. Easy to dismiss as actual brick or stone, the passages reveal themselves to be painted layer that emulate a geometric pattern akin to layered brick or ashlar set in simpler running or stack bonds. In most instances, alternating colors of deep red and blue define the individual rectangular sections that are further outlined by a white border (Fig. 4.3). In other cases, the faux-brick bonds are painted the same color throughout and only delineated in white (Fig. 4.4). A number of Romanian scholars, among them Tereza Sinigalia, as well as conservators, have noticed this under-layer and have referred to it as "preparatory" or as an "intermediary decoration" executed before the final layer of figurative painting that the churches received (in most cases about five years after completion).¹³

This particular painted under-layer seems to have come into use in Moldavian churches built beginning in the last decades of the fifteenth century. The earliest extant church in which this under-layer of brick designs is found on the interior is St. Nicholas in Bălinești. The designs were painted in 1493 and cover the barrel vault of the naos and pronaos; similar brick imitations are also visible on the exterior, though these are dated later, to 1535-1538. Comparable in date and patterning are the false bricks on the interior window embrasures of the burial chamber at Neamț, which were executed around 1497 (Fig. 4.4). We also encounter painted bricks on the interior of the chapel at the fortress of Hotin,¹⁴ and around the exterior exonarthex arches in the church at Baia (Fig. 4.5). On the exterior of the churches, moreover, such painted stonework and brickwork is visible on the south wall of the katholikon at Moldovița. The top damaged fresco layer unveils another layer of paint underneath that emulates stone, below which another layer was executed to resemble brickwork (Figs. 4.6-4.8). Judging from the surviving evidence, it

¹³ Sinigalia, "Parametrul pictat geometric," 43-49; Solomonea, "Le concept de la *première décoration* de l'église Saint Nicolas de Popăuți-Botoșani: la reconstitution de l'image antérieure à la réalisation de la peinture murale," 45-52.

¹⁴ As described, for instance, in *Repertoriul*, 207.

appears that such painted stone and brick designs were reserved for structural sections of the buildings, such as arches, buttresses, consoles, etc.

Around the apse of the church at Humor Monastery, a similar under-layer reveals alternating bands of brickwork and ashlar (Figs. 4.9-4.11). Similar plastered and painted exteriors are found on several churches decorated during Peter's reign, for instance: at St. George (Fig. 4.12) and at St. Demetrios (Fig. 4.13), both in Suceava. In my opinion, the alternating bands of painted brick and ashlar were intended to emulate the Byzantine *cloisonné* building technique in which rows of ashlar were separated by three courses of thin bricks; two similar bricks separate two adjoining ashlar stones. This manner of building originated during the Middle Byzantine period and was particularly common in Constantinopolitan churches dating from the eleventh century and later. By the fourteenth century this construction method was still employed, as we can see on the central dome of the Parekklesion of the Theotokos Pammakaristos Church / Fethiye Camii (Fig. 4.14). We likewise encounter this feature on two of the domes of the katholikon of the Chora Monastery / Kariye Camii (Fig. 4.15), and the towers of the katholika on Mount Athos.¹⁵ Further afield, this particular construction technique was employed in Byzantine Macedonia and in several provinces belonging and controlled by Serbia during the fourteenth century.¹⁶

Although the mode of construction of the Moldavian churches using mainly blocks of quarried ashlar partially imitates the building techniques found in Gothic civic and religious structures, the painted stone and brick exteriors give the impression that the churches were actually constructed following Byzantine building techniques. The upper parts of the exterior of St. Nicholas at Bălinești, particularly visible in the upper sections protected by the eaves of the church, display rows of brown, yellow, and green enameled ceramic discs¹⁷ framed by painted brick motifs (Fig. 4.16). A similar decoration with

¹⁵ Ćurčić, "The Role of Late Byzantine Thessalonike in Church Architecture in the Balkans," 70, n. 17.

¹⁶ Ćurčić, "Architecture in the Age of Insecurity," 35, and n. 29: "Equally important is that the technique, which continues in Ottoman use after 1500, reappears also in Christian churches built under Ottoman rule, particularly during the prosperous sixteenth century. The foregoing remarks were intended merely to suggest an area where much research still awaits to be done on monuments, and, where possible, in various archives."

¹⁷ The ceramic roundels, characteristic of the exterior decoration of Stephen's churches, appeared on Moldavian ecclesiastical buildings as early as the second half of the fourteenth century. The Church of the Holy Trinity in Siret still preserves such ceramic disks on its exterior (Cat.no.1). These decorative elements

alternating red and blue painted bricks survives on what remains of the exterior of St. Demetrios in Suceava, especially in the upper sections of the altar area (Fig. 4.3). These painted ashlar and brick exteriors suggest a different type of solid architectonic structure to the churches, quite different from the actual masonry building materials (ashlar and rubble) used to raise the edifices.

Slobodan Ćurčić has identified a similar phenomenon in Middle Byzantine churches from Kastoria and Cyprus, whose exterior walls were plastered and decorated with a layer of brick and stone patterns before being covered by another layer with figural imagery.¹⁸ The west façade of St. George at Kurbinovo, completed in 1191 (Fig. 4.17), and the exterior east wall of Hagios Nikolas Kasnitsē in Kastoria, built during the second half of the twelfth century, present instances comparable in conception with the Moldavian material.¹⁹ Little is known, however, about the extent of the exterior paintings on these Middle Byzantine churches. Ćurčić suggests that they “may have been routinely plastered and painted externally, presenting very different impressions from those upon which modern perceptions of their aesthetics have been based.”²⁰ During the fourteenth century, moreover, a similar technique was used on Serbian churches, as is evident from the katholikon of St. Stephen at the monastery of Banjska in Kosovo, built between 1312 and 1316 (Fig. 4.18), and from the south wall of the Church of St. Nicholas at Banja Monastery, completed in 1329 (Fig. 4.19).²¹ In these examples, however, the particular guise selected for the painted exteriors was the colored checker pattern—a western Romanesque motif first applied to the exterior walls of the church in Banjska. For Ćurčić, “[t]his curious blending of ideas and formal expressions” remains “difficult to understand and explain.”²² The builders, he adds, “must have had at their disposal a Byzantine plan...[and] must have been familiar with the plastering and painting of building

usually show animals and sirens. See Baș, “Rotocoalele de smalt moldovenești,” 44; Batariuc, “Decorul ceramic al monumentelor din Moldova medievală (secolele XIV-XVII),” 3-17.

¹⁸ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 382-383; idem, *Middle Byzantine Architecture on Cyprus*, 21-22.

¹⁹ Other Macedonian examples that show similar formulae include the Church of St. Mary located in the Lešok Monastery complex about 11 kilometers northeast of Tetovo near the village of Lešok (Leshok), built sometime in the eleventh century, the Church of St. Demetrios at Markov Monastery, Sušica, constructed in the fourteenth century.

²⁰ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 383.

²¹ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 657-659.

²² Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 659.

façades.”²³ The final appearance, however, was western, whereas the formal features of the churches and their plastered exteriors were of a Byzantine conception. The same proves true of the Moldavian churches that display similarly painted exterior walls.

Not all Moldavian churches from this period, however, exhibit plastered façades painted with stone and brick elements. Some of the churches were actually constructed from brick and ashlar, prominent cases in point being the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Borzești (Fig. 4.20) and the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Războieni (Fig. 4.21), but also St. John the Baptist in Piatra Neamț (Fig. 4.22)—all dating to the last decade of the fifteenth century. Although Balș has rightly grouped these three churches in the same category based on the architectural affinities they share with Serbian churches, I would also add that their method of construction using actual bricks differs from the fifteenth and sixteenth century Moldavian building practices, and could thus serve as another piece of evidence in favor of an external (possibly Serbian) workshop being responsible for their execution.²⁴

I would conclude, therefore, that although not all of Stephen’s churches have the painted ashlar and brick layers on their exteriors, with some churches built out of actual bricks and stone blocks, by Peter’s time this painted layer of brick and stone bonds was applied to all of those churches that also received exterior figurative image cycles. Although little is known about this procedure and its functional and/or aesthetic underpinnings, the presence of the plastered underlayers reveal, nevertheless, the processes by which the Moldavian churches received their interior and exterior murals. Perhaps the brick and stone layers were applied to the churches after their completion and before the execution of the figural murals so as to suggest a more finished look for the building while the mural cycles were being conceived and executed.²⁵ This may explain, in part, why the exterior of the miniature church models held by patrons in the votive paintings found on the west wall of the naos in all of the Moldavian churches from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries display a peculiar stone and brick exterior rather than

²³ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 659.

²⁴ See Chapter Three, n. 47.

²⁵ Sinigalia, “Parametrul pictat geometric,” 47.

brightly colored murals (Fig. 4.23).²⁶ Indeed, not one of these church models is adorned with bright colors or figural motifs. The execution of the mural cycles, then, began at least one to two years after the church was built, so as to allow enough time for the structure to settle. The interior murals were executed before the exterior ones. As such, it is possible that the painted brick and stone fresco layers were completed soon after the building project came to an end, and intended as “intermediary” layers, so as to offer the building a more finished appearance. This hypothesis would suggest, moreover, that the painted figural murals cannot be dated based on the building dates for the edifice noted in the surviving dedicatory inscriptions, and thus should be dated two to five years later.

These observations indicate that the image cycles might have been intended right from the outset to take primacy over the simulated masonry and brick structure of the church. As long as the church was of a solid masonry construction, the actual material details of its construction were not as relevant as the smooth surfaces prepared both inside and outside for the application of images.

The *Hermeneia* or *Painter’s Manual* of Dionysius of Fournā (c.1670-after 1744) provides important information about the preparation and execution of mural paintings. Although postdating the wall painting here under consideration by well over a century, the techniques described in the treatise are essentially those used by Byzantine and post-Byzantine masters of the high and later medieval periods. To paint scenes on a wall, the *Hermeneia* specifies that the artist must first:

...choose some good lime which is thick like tallow and does not contain unburnt lumps [...] put it into a big mortar and when you have got some fine chaff...mix it in with the lime with a mattock... Leave it to ferment for two to three days and then you can plaster with it. [On this plastered surface] ...it is necessary first to paint the upper parts and then the lower. For this you first get ready a ladder and then take some water in a capacious vessel and splashing with a spoon, wet the wall. [...] If it is a

²⁶ During the restoration projects carried out at sites such as Moldovița and Probota, for example, the church models in the votive paintings were not fully restored. The images of the churches appear blurry and lack detail in contrast to the rest of the composition. Only the votive mural in the Church of the Holy Cross at Pătrăuți Monastery preserves the exterior details of the church model held by Stephen III.

stone wall only wet it once or twice and apply less plaster [than you would on a brick wall], as the stone is colder and the plaster will not dry as fast. In the winter put on a layer of plaster later in the day and the final layer early the next day; in the summer, do it as you are ready to. When you have applied the final layer evenly and well with the plasterer's trowel leave it to become firm and then draw on it.²⁷

The manual then describes how to execute the underdrawing for a mural painting:

...first level the surface and then attach pieces of wood to the legs of a pair of metal compasses, to make them as long as you want, and tie a brush to one end so that you can mark with color the proportions of the figures and describe their haloes. When you have marked the proportions of the figure take some ochre and draw first with a watery solution; [...] inscribe the haloes and polish the background well and at once apply the black. Then polish the garments and do the underpainting; see that you quickly complete it within an hour of smoothing it out, for if you are slow it will form a skin and will not take in the colors, which afterwards will flake off [...] Likewise polish the face and mark it with the trowel or with a stone or a bone that you have specially kept as a knife. With this score the draperies and then put underpaint on the face and paint in the flesh color...²⁸

Dionysius of Fournà clearly explains in this account the mural technique of fresco painting, in which pigments are laid on freshly-laid, damp lime plaster.

Once the plaster is set and the figures and forms sketched, then begins the application of paint.²⁹ Certain sections of the murals, such as the haloes of the saints, were rendered in relief, and then painted, as is evident on the east wall of the pronaos at Arbore (Fig. 4.24) and the west façade of the katholikon at Humor (Fig. 4.25). Other

²⁷ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 12, 14. For a discussion of Byzantine wall painting methods, see Winfield, "Middle and Later Byzantine Wall Painting Methods: A Comparative Study," 61-139.

²⁸ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 14.

²⁹ Although not all colors were equally suited for application on wall surfaces. Dionysius of Fournà reveals that "white lead as used for icon-painting, verdigris, lazouri, and arsenic" should not be used on walls. "All other colors will work." *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 15.

portions received gold leaf prior to the application of paint.³⁰ This can be seen around the former main entrance portal at the Church of St. George at Voroneț Monastery, which now serves as the entrance into the pronaos from the exonarthex (Fig. 4.26). The relief frames around the *Deësis* at Voroneț likewise carry gold leaf that glistens in the sun (Fig. 4.27). Perhaps the chronicler Ion Neculce was not far from the truth when he mentioned that the second church at Putna displayed murals that were “more gold than paint.”³¹ Clearly a lot of the gold leaf has worn off or else has been scrapped off over the years, but the fascinating query that remains is the actual extent of the gold leaf on the murals of the churches. Did all the red framing elements of the individual scenes in the vast Moldavian image cycles originally carry gold leaf? If so, then the original appearance of these murals and the walls they decorated would have been much different from the way they appear today, with each of the scenes strictly delineated by thick red bands. The gold leaf on the framing elements of the images would have redirected attention back to the image rather than its framing device, as evident in the current state of the murals.

Dionysius of Fournas’s *Hermeneia* is not only concerned with painting techniques, but also treats the various image types suited to the walls of Orthodox churches. The *Painter’s Manual*, however, does not consider the ways in which the image cycles should relate to one another, nor where exactly they should appear within the church building. As the next section shows, the iconographic cycles depicted on the interior and exterior walls of the Moldavian churches also follow the prescribed image programs outlined in the manual. My aim for the remainder of this chapter is to examine the extensive image cycles that first appeared on the interior of the Moldavian churches and then, during Peter’s reign, also on their outside. I also address particular attitudes toward sacred space, and especially the formulations of the monastic sacred space for early sixteenth-century Moldavians and the functions of images in the structuring of specific kinds of spatial experiences. I first survey the iconographic programs of the interior mural cycles and then turn to the themes found on the exterior of the churches. As I will show, both

³⁰ On the application of gold leaf on mural images, see *The ‘Painter’s Manual’ of Dionysius of Fournas*, 15.

³¹ Neculce, *Opere*, 163 (see n. 9 above).

interior and exterior programs communicated with one another spatially, liturgically, and semantically. The cycles here under discussion also reveal significant dynastic and military concerns that Chapters Five and Six will investigate in more detail.

The Interior and Exterior Mural Cycles

In the Moldavian mural cycles, depictions of Christological, Mariological, and hagiographical stories were interspersed with monumental images of historical and apocalyptic scenes, as well as full length depictions of saints, prophets, martyrs, and angels. The murals decorating the chancels of the churches here under investigation will be considered in a separate section later on in this chapter; their imagery will take us to some of the core tenets of Orthodox Eucharistic theology and attendant issues of the structuring of sacred space. In the discussion that precedes this later part I will follow a trajectory that moves from the interior spaces of the naos, burial chamber, pronaos, and exonarthex, to the exterior walls, using the example of the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery: this church displays one of the best-preserved image cycles dating to Peter's first reign (1527-1538). In my examinations of the content and meanings of the image cycles I will relate the scenes found at Moldovița, and at other Moldavian sites, with the programs recommended in the *Painter's Manual*.

The interior walls of the naos of the katholikon at Moldovița are decorated with scenes from the *Life of Christ*, including the *Passion of Christ* according to the Four Gospels,³² and with scenes from the *Feasts of the Mother of God*.³³ The narratives are depicted in horizontal registers that wrap around the interior of the naos. They show key moments from the life and Passion of Christ, important events from the *Life of the Virgin*, but also incorporate single figures of angels, prophets, and the Evangelists, as well as full-length representations and bust-medallions of saints (Figs. 4.28-4.29). At Moldovița and elsewhere, the *Crucifixion*³⁴ appears in the semicircular dome of the north apse

³² On the question of "How the principal feasts and the other works and miracles of Christ are represented, according to the holy Gospel," see *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournna*, 32-40.

³³ Described in Dionysius of Fournna's *Hermeneia* as "How the principal feasts and the other works and miracles of Christ are represented, according to the Holy Gospels." *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournna*, 32-40. And also "How the Feasts of the Mother of God are represented." *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournna*, 50-52.

³⁴ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournna*, 38.

(Fig. 4.30) and complements the *Descent of the Holy Spirit*³⁵ in the opposite, south apse (Fig. 4.31). Individual moments from the life and Passion of Christ are shown in the registers below. On the west wall can be seen the scenes of Christ before Pilate,³⁶ the *Crowning of Thorns*, and the *Casting of Lots for Christ's Garments* (Fig. 4.32). A sequence of saints within medallions³⁷ separates these episodes from the Passion from a large *Dormition of the Virgin* that takes up the remaining semicircular space of the wall (Fig. 4.33).³⁸ The theme of the *Dormition* on the west wall of the naos is once again repeated on the *pyle* (or curtain for the Royal Doors of the iconostasis) (Fig. 2.7).³⁹ This structuring of sacred space through visual dialogues among similar iconographic themes echoes the relationship between the image of the Mandylion above the entryway into the pronaos (Fig. 4.34), and an image of the same type painted on the lower drum of the tower, in the direction of the iconostasis (Fig. 4.35).⁴⁰

To return to the naos at Moldovița: located below the Passion cycle, level with the beholder's eye, is a series of full-length figures of military saints, also known as "the great and holy martyrs" of the early Church, who here symbolically protect and literally "hold up" the building which they adorn. They are donned in the guise of Roman soldiers, holding shield and lances (Figs. 4.36-4.37).⁴¹ Sts. George and Demetrios are covered by the lateral icons of the iconostasis. The military saints that are visible, to the left of the chancel and wrapping around the north wall of the naos are: St. Theodore, St. Procopius, St. Gordius, St. Menas, St. Nicetas, St. John the Younger, and St. Mercurius. Each figure is identified by a *titulus* in Church Slavonic in the upper sections of the register. Although the particular choice of saints remains a topic of investigation, it appears that at Moldovița lesser known military saints are represented among, and framed

³⁵ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 40.

³⁶ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 38.

³⁷ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 85: "Below the third zone, around the whole of the church and the sanctuary, paint half-length figures of saints in circles; put bishops in the *bema* [chancel], and outside it the ranks of the martyrs, with saints and poets to the west..."

³⁸ "On the west wall, above the entrance door of the church [the pronaos], paint the Dormition of the Virgin and the other feasts of the Mother of God." *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 85. See also Walsh, "Images of Hope: Representations of the Death of the Virgin, East and West," 1-44.

³⁹ The *Annunciation* is also often found on these liturgical textiles. One example is the rich embroidery showing the *Annunciation* in the collection at Putna Monastery, measuring 137 x 124 cm and executed at the request of Stephen III.

⁴⁰ See Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 68-77.

⁴¹ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 85. For a list of the holy martyrs and their characteristics, see *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 56-59.

by, those most celebrated in sixteenth-century Moldavia, namely, Sts. Theodore, Procopius, and Mercurius.

In the same register as the military saints, on the west wall of the naos, is a votive painting that shows the patron of the church and members of his immediate family⁴² presenting a model of the church to Christ enthroned via the intercessory role of the saint to which the church is dedicated, here the Virgin Annunciate (Fig. 4.38). At the katholikon of St. Nicholas at Probota we find St. Nicholas of Myra performing the same role (Fig. 4.39), and the same holds true for St. Elijah in Suceava (Fig. 4.40). At Moldovița, Christ sits enthroned on a large gilded and bejeweled majestic seat that finds visual parallels with Peter's carved and gilded throne that used to sit in the naos of the katholikon at Moldovița and is now in the monastery's museum nearby (Fig. 4.41). The votive paintings in the naos of the churches here under discussion are without exception located to the left of the entrance into the burial chamber or pronaos. Depending on how many family members are represented, they either take up the lower register of the west wall or else extend along the length of the south wall. Complementing the votive painting, on the opposite, right wall of the entrance into the burial chamber or pronaos, Sts. Constantine and Helena are shown holding between them the True Cross (Fig. 4.42). At Moldovița, Sts. Constantine and Helena are accompanied by St. Paisie who gestures toward them.⁴³ Here, a contemporary, a local saint, was included in the image cycles.

At Moldovița, as elsewhere, the dome of the naos shows Christ Pantokrator, or All-Powerful ruler and judge of all, surrounded by other heavenly figures, rendered in a manner similar to the description of Dionysius of Fournas in his *Painter's Manual* (Fig. 4.43). To decorate a church dome in this manner, Dionysius advises his readers to

...make a circle of various colors...in the middle of it paint Christ blessing, holding the Gospels on his breast, and inscribe it with the title: "Jesus Christ the Pantokrator." Around the circle paint a crowd of Cherubim and Thrones, and write the inscription: "See how that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me." [...] Below the Pantokrator paint

⁴² The votive mural at Moldovița shows Peter Rareș, his wife Helena, and two of their sons, Iliăș and Stephen.

⁴³ St. Paisie was first a hieromonk and then abbot of Humor Monastery. He is mentioned in the dedicatory inscription at Humor. See Kozak, *Die Inschriften aus der Bukovina*, 29, no. 1.

the other choirs of angels all around, and in the middle of them, in the east, the Virgin with her hands raised on either side... Opposite to her, in the west, paint the Forerunner, with the Prophets below them... Below, on the curve of the pendentives, paint the four Evangelists, and between them at the top of the archivolts, paint on the eastern end the Holy Mandelion [Mandyliion] and on the opposite side the Holy Keramion...⁴⁴

Whereas the Moldavian murals correlate quite directly with the descriptions of the scenes found in the *Painter's Manual*, the Holy Keramion is the one image that is excluded from these programs—a fact that deserves further investigation.⁴⁵

The dome of the pronaos at Moldovița, and of all other Moldavian churches with a domed pronaos, complements the main dome of the naos and shows the Virgin Oranta,⁴⁶ also known as the Panagia Blachernitissa⁴⁷ (Fig. 4.44). This image usually assumed the form of a clypeus in which the Virgin, flanked by two angels, raises her arms in an orans pose, symbolic of the Annunciation at the moment of conception. At the center of her breast, in a circular aureole, the Christ Child is depicted extending His hands in a gesture of blessing. The four pendentives display figures of the four famous Byzantine hymnographers—John of Damascus (NW corner), Cosmas of Maiuma (NE corner), Joseph the Hymnographer (SW corner), and Theophanes the Branded (SW corner); each writer is bent over a table laden with parchment scrolls.⁴⁸ Below the dome and pendentives, the semicircular lunettes of the pronaos are decorated with the

⁴⁴ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 84.

⁴⁵ For a discussion about the relationship between the Mandyliion and the Keramion icon, see Lidov, "The Miracle of Reproduction: The Mandyliion and Keramion as a Paradigm of the Sacred Space," 17-41. For a discussion of image dialogues, see Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*.

⁴⁶ The *Orans / Orant* pose is a posture of prayer of Early Christian origin in which the figure is depicted frontally, with raised outstretched arms. In the Middle Byzantine art it is used in the image of the Virgin Blachernitissa. The earliest still extant mural of the Virgin Orans in the dome of a Moldavian pronaos survives from Voroneț Monastery, painted under Stephen's patronage soon after its completion in 1487. On the decoration of this dome in Byzantine churches, see *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 84.

⁴⁷ The *Virgin Blachernitissa* is a type of image of the Virgin that was named after the Church of Our Lady in the district of the Blachernes in Constantinople. The Virgin is portrayed in the ancient posture of the orans without the Christ Child. She is also referred to as the "Impregnable Wall" because she contributed to the failure of the Rus' siege in 860.

⁴⁸ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 61.

Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils (Figs. 4.45-4.46).⁴⁹ At Moldovița, the *Seven Ecumenical Councils* are arranged as follows: E – The First Council, 318 Nicaea; NE – The Second Council, 362 Constantinople; SE – The Third Council, 404 Ephesus; SW – The Fourth Council, 425 Chalcedon; NW – The Fifth Council, 527 Constantinople; WN – The Sixth Council, 656 Constantinople; WS – The Seventh Council, 787 Nicaea.

The exonarthex, pronaos, and burial chamber of the Moldavian katholika serve as additions to the triconch liturgical space of the church (hence the elongated triconch plan).⁵⁰ As such, these spaces encourage a state of meditation and preparation before the faithful cross into the naos. The single, central entryways leading from one space to the next guide and control the physical progression through the church. But how is this state of meditation and preparation further guided visually? For one thing, the extensive image cycles deployed in multiple registers along the interior walls of the pronaos and burial chamber display scenes from the *Menologium* (i.e. annual)—the texts describing the religious feasts and martyrdom of Orthodox saints corresponding to each day of the year (Fig. 4.47).⁵¹ At Moldovița, the individual scenes from the *Menologium* begin in the upper NE corner of the pronaos with the celebration of St. Simeon Stylite the Elder on September 1—the beginning of the Orthodox liturgical year. Each register shows saints celebrated in a particular month, with each first day of the month marked by a crescent moon. Thus, the images of the *Menologium* wrap clockwise around the space of the pronaos and also the burial chamber from top to bottom and in a temporally relevant framework.

These individual scenes from the *Menologium* predominantly show—on narrow, stage-like settings set before fortified walls (or could be read as taking place outside of a city wall)⁵²—full length figures of the confessors, or how each of the saints celebrated in the Orthodox Church died, either through decapitation, burning, or other forms of

⁴⁹ For an iconographic description of the *Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils*, see *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 64. For a historical account, see Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*.

⁵⁰ Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean*, 15.

⁵¹ The *Menologion* (Greek) is an anthology of the lives and martyrdoms of the saints, according to their feast days in each month of the Orthodox liturgical calendar. The individual scenes of the *Menologium*, for each day of the year, are described in *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournà*, 71-81. See also Mijović, “Les ménologes en Roumanie et en Serbie médiévale,” 579-585.

⁵² On the practice of extra-mural executions, see Frugoni, *A Distant City*, chapter 1, 11-12.

gruesome torture (Fig. 4.48). On one level, the visual manifestations of the death of these saintly figures, all witnesses to the faith and athletes of Christ, demonstrate the triumph of these individuals over death, making explicit in the Orthodox context that death served only as a mere passage from a historical time on earth to an eventual eternal one in the kingdom of God. Each saint thus exemplifies this temporal transition, as Ecaterina Cincheza-Buculei suggests.⁵³ On another level, the representations of death in the cycle of the *Menologium* could be explained in the context of Moldavia's own political, military, and religious struggles for freedom from both Ottoman dominance and Protestant reformist ideas during the first decades of the sixteenth century (see Chapter Six). In this regard, the images can in part be read as a call to action and as a reminder of those individuals past and present who have relinquished their lives in the service of the Christian faith. Like other scenes in the expansive mural cycles devised under Peter's patronage, the representations of the *Menologium* could be read as presenting an apt visual response to contemporary struggles and anxieties.

On the dado below the scenes of the *Menologium* are arranged the full-length figures of the *Holy Martyrs* and the *Pious Women* (Figs. 4.49-4.50). Most important among these representations are the figures of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel that flank the portal to the burial chamber further east: the Archangel Michael on the left (Fig. 4.49)⁵⁴ and the Archangel Gabriel on the right (Fig. 4.50).⁵⁵ Above the portal cornice can be seen the *Annunciation* (Fig. 4.51) that visualizes the dedication of the katholikon at Moldovița, and also complements the image of the Virgin Orans, which, as we have seen,

⁵³ Cincheza-Buculei, "Programul iconografic al gropnițelor Moldovenești," 88.

⁵⁴ The Archangel Michael is described in this position in the *Painter's Manual*. He is shown in armor and with a sword in his hand. Sometimes he also carries a scroll with the following inscription: "I am the general of God, bearing the sword; those who enter here with fear I shall watch, defend, fight for and shelter; but those who enter with an impure heart I shall strike down harshly with my sword." *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 85.

⁵⁵ The Archangel Gabriel appears in the guise of a deacon. Sometimes he also carries a scroll that displays the following words: "I shall write down the state of those who entering, holding this truthful pen in my hand; I shall watch over those to whom I consent, but those to whom I do not I shall swiftly destroy." *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 85. On the presence and importance of the archangels in Moldavia during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Bedros, "Cultul arhanghelilor," 96-129. In addition to icons showing the archangels Michael and Gabriel, mural cycles from the sixteenth century also display miracles associated with the archangels. These are found in the burial chamber at Humor, in the exonarthex at Moldovița, and in the exonarthex at Sucevița. Bedros, "Cultul arhanghelilor," 111-114. See also, Dragnev, "Primul ciclu cunoscut al arhanghelului Mihail din picture murală a Moldovei medievale," 111-126.

appears in the surmounting dome and then again above the next doorway between the burial chamber and the naos (Fig. 4.52).

Whereas the walls of the pronaos and burial chamber at Moldovița are almost exclusively dedicated to the saints of the *Menologium*, other churches feature additional image cycles in these spaces, on the interior and/or exterior walls. Hagiographical stories entered the repertoire of images in the Moldavian mural cycles during Stephen's reign. For example, the *Life of St. George*⁵⁶ appears on the interior wall of the pronaos of the katholikon at Voroneț and also in the interior of the naos of the Church of St. George in Hârlău. At Probota, this cycle appears on the exterior of the south wall and at Humor on the exterior north wall. A similar cycle is found on the west façade of the church in Arbore. The *Life of St. John the Baptist* is painted on the interior of the naos at Voroneț and the interior of the pronaos at the church dedicated to the saint in Arbore. The *Life of St. Elijah*⁵⁷ covers the interior walls of the pronaos of the Church of St. Elijah in Suceava. The katholikon at Voroneț also displays a number of hagiographical cycles on the exterior walls: the *Life of St. John the New* (south wall) and the *Life of St. Anthony*⁵⁸ (north wall). The latter is also found on the north wall of the church at Probota (although very badly damaged), and the exterior apse of the katholikon at Râșca. The *Life of St. Nicholas*⁵⁹ is visible on the exterior south walls of the churches at Probota, Humor, and Voroneț, and on the west exterior wall at Arbore, as well as in the interior of the pronaos of the Church of St. Nicholas from Bălinești, and the interior exonarthex of the Church of All Saints in Părhăuți. The *Life of St. Demetrios* and the *Life of St. Parascheva* appear on the west façade of the church in Arbore. In contrast to the organization and the presentation of treatment and choice of images in Dionysius of Fournas's *Hermeneia*, the Moldavian murals include prominent representations of the lives and miracles of locally venerated saints, such as St. Elijah, St. John the New, and St. John the Baptist.⁶⁰ This suggests that the iconographic programs were carefully designed so as to reflect local

⁵⁶ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 68.

⁵⁷ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 23-24.

⁵⁸ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 69.

⁵⁹ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 67.

⁶⁰ Certain saints were more prominent and more celebrated in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Moldavia, and thus the representations of their *Vitae* received places of distinction among the mural cycles of the churches. The relics of St. John the New, for example, were in Moldavia by this time, and St. Elijah was regarded as the protector of harvest and of the Orthodox faith.

needs as well. Moreover, the surviving evidence suggests that during Stephen's reign the images of the life of the dedicatory saint were exclusively relegated to the pronaos, in Peter's churches such *vitae* moved to the exterior of the building.⁶¹

Several other major themes appear painted on the exterior of the Moldavian churches dating to the first half of the sixteenth century, among them the *Tree of Jesse*, the *Akathistos Hymn*, the *Last Judgment*, the *Genesis Cycle*, and the so-called *Prayer of All Saints* (Fig. 4.53). For example, the murals of the *Tree of Jesse* are found in the Moldavian corpus only on the exterior of the burial chamber beginning during Peter's first reign. No church built under Stephen's patronage displays this image type. At Probota (Fig. 4.54) and Moldovița (Fig. 4.55), the monumental scene of the *Tree of Jesse* takes up the relevant portion of the south wall, while at Humor it occupies the opposite, northern face of the burial chamber (Fig. 4.56).⁶² At the Church of St. George at the Monastery of St. John the New in Suceava, the mural of the *Tree of Jesse* appears on the south wall of the pronaos (Fig. 4.57). At the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Baia, completed toward the end of Peter's first reign, the mural takes up the south wall of the naos (Fig. 4.58). Shortly thereafter it was painted on the south wall of the pronaos at the Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava (Fig. 4.59). In the churches that received exterior murals during Peter's second reign, such as Voroneț, the mural of the *Tree of Jesse* appears also on the south wall but on the wall of the pronaos since (and perhaps because) the katholikon lacks a burial room (Fig. 4.60). In all extant instances, the murals are executed in bright colors against a blue backdrop and the individual figures and scenes are framed by calyxes and tendrils—a motif also found in miniatures of the period. The visual rhetoric of this image type is in fact indebted to earlier genealogical diagrams dating to the twelfth century. One apt example is the famous Guelph family tree in the necrology from Weingarten Abbey (Fulda, Hessische Landesbibliothek, MS. D11, fol. 13v) (Fig. 4.61).⁶³ The iconography of the *Tree of Jesse* murals, to which I will return in

⁶¹ For example, the church at Voroneț Monastery, dedicated to St. George, has the cycle of the saint painted in the pronaos. Likewise, St. Nicholas at Bălinești has the cycle of the saint's life on the inside of the pronaos. The same is the case with the cycle of St. Elijah at the Church of St. Elijah in Suceava. However, at the church at Probota Monastery, dedicated to St. Nicholas, the life of the saint appears on the south façade, to the left of the entryway.

⁶² At Humor, the mural of the *Tree of Jesse* on the north façade is very faded, and is the only occurrence in a place other than the south façade.

⁶³ Morganstern, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship in France, the Low Countries, and England*, 150-151.

Chapter Five, is described in Dionysius of Fournas's *Painter's Manual*,⁶⁴ yet it is locally adapted during the first half of the sixteenth century in the Moldavian context in order to express certain functions.

Although with a long pedigree in the medieval West, the imagery of the *Tree of Jesse* found no visual iterations in the Byzantine cultural sphere until the Palaiologan period.⁶⁵ The image traces the genealogy of Christ, and in particular his human lineage, through Jesse, his son David (who became the king of the Israelites), the kings of the Old Testament, and then finally through the Virgin. The Moldavian renditions of this image type also display narrative vignettes of prophetic moments from the Old Testament, and full length depictions of ancient Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle; these are arranged either in two columns on either side of the *Tree*⁶⁶ or at the bottom in a separate register.⁶⁷ The texts of these philosophers contain allusions to the coming of Christ, which explains, in part, their inclusion in this image.⁶⁸ The Moldavian representations of *Tree of Jesse*—images that are both genealogical and prophetic in content—are indeed especially elaborate in that they display an unprecedented iconographic vocabulary in both the Latin and the Greek ecclesiastical domains. These images were intended to highlight first and foremost the notion of lineage—that of Christ in the case of the painted

⁶⁴ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 31.

⁶⁵ For the early iconography of this image type, see Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*. On the topic, see also Williams, "The Earliest Dated Tree of Jesse Image," 17-23; Milanović, "The Tree of Jesse in the Byzantine Mural Painting of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," 48-60; Taylor, "Three Local Motifs in Moldavian Trees of Jesse," 267-275; idem, "A Historiated Tree of Jesse," 125-176; idem, "Art. Tree of Jesse," 181-182; idem, "The Prophetic Scenes in the Tree of Jesse at Orvieto," 403-417; Coomaraswamy, "The Tree of Jesse and Indian Parallels or Sources," 216-220; eadem, "The Tree of Jesse and Oriental Parallels," 18-19; Nasta, "Sources orientales dans l'iconographie sud-est européenne: L'arbre de Jesse," 899-909. See also the recent collection of essays edited by Saloni and Worm, *The Tree: Symbol, Allegory and Mnemonic Device in Medieval Art and Thought*.

⁶⁶ At the katholikon at Humor Monastery, at the Church of St. George in Suceava, at the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Baia, at the Church of St. Demetrius in Suceava, and at the katholikon at Voroneț Monastery.

⁶⁷ This is the case only at Probota, where the mural dates to the first half of the sixteenth century.

⁶⁸ For a very detailed consideration of the literary sources that explain the inclusion of the ancient Greek philosophers in the Moldavian murals, and the meanings of the texts they carry on their individual scrolls, see Ciobanu, *Stihia Profeticului*, 125-309 (Part II: "Sursele literare ale 'profețiilor' Înțelepților Antichității din picture murală a Moldovei"). For an examination of the Greek Philosophers at Voroneț, and careful transcriptions and Romanian translations of texts present on their scrolls, see Ciobanu, "Profețiile înțelepților antichității de la biserica sfântul Gheorghe a mănăstirii Voroneț," 11-32. See also *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 31 (for the inscriptions they often carry); Augustin, "Filosofii păgâni și creștinismul," 119-128; Isar, "L'iconicité du texte dans l'image post-byzantine moldave: une lecture hésychaste," 92-112.

representation, and that of the prince in regard to the space of the burial chamber that extends beyond this painted exterior.

The Moldavian iconographic cycles, like the *Tree of Jesse* images, were likely produced using working drawings, also known as anthivola. One of the largest known anthivolon, discovered by monk Symeon of Dionysios Monastery on Mount Athos, shows the vertical and horizontal arrangement of individual scenes that make up the *Tree of Jesse* image (Figs. 4.62-4.63).⁶⁹ This anthivolon, folded in eight sections, is hastily sketched and includes exhaustive inscriptions, particularly on the scrolls of the figures. It may have served as a design for a major work or perhaps an effort to transfer the composition from one location to another.⁷⁰ Similar anthivola survive, executed often in red or black and carrying at times abbreviated verbal indications of the colors to be used, that reveal the working methods of Byzantine artists for monumental paintings as well as icons (Figs. 4.64-4.67).⁷¹ For panel paintings, systematic pricking was employed on anthivola in order to achieve a careful copy of the original.⁷² Dionysius of Fournas explains another method through which an imprinted cartoon can be achieved:

...put some black color into a scallop shell with some garlic juice... and mix them; then go over the forms of the whole figure of the saint that you are copying, whether it is on oiled paper, on panel, on a wall... Then you mix red color with garlic juice and go over the whites [highlights] of the face and clothes... Then wet a sheet of paper the same size as the

⁶⁹ For more on anthivola and the execution and functions of working drawings in Byzantium, see Katselaki, *Anthivola - The Holy Cartoons from the Chioniades at the Cathedral of Saint Alexander Nevski in Sofia*; Bouras, "Working Drawings of Painters in Greece after the Fall of Constantinople," in *From Byzantium to El Greco: Greek Frescoes and Icons*, 54-56, plates 72 and 73 on p. 143, 144, 198-199 with Supplement to the Catalog.

⁷⁰ This anthivolon possibly came from the now-lost archive of working drawings used by artists who lived and painted at Dionysios Monastery.

⁷¹ The Byzantine Museum in Athens has over 3,000 working drawings; the Benaki Museum of Athens houses two painters' portfolios. One consists of 188 sketches, some of which were used for wall paintings. They are arranged by subject following largely the layout of Fournas's *Manual*. The other portfolio consists of about 308 sheets with cartoons arranged by subject (largely unpublished); the Mihalaris Collection, London has over 150 drawings. Bouras, "Working Drawings of Painters in Greece after the Fall of Constantinople," in *From Byzantium to El Greco: Greek Frescoes and Icons*, 54-56.

⁷² Bouras, "Working Drawings of Painters in Greece after the Fall of Constantinople," in *From Byzantium to El Greco: Greek Frescoes and Icons*, 56: "The systematic use of pricked cartoons most probably began in the fifteenth century, when there was a substantial production of icons, resulting in the division of labor in painters' workshops. These developments coincide with the standardization of iconography that may be observed around the year 1500."

prototype... place it on the archetype and press it down carefully with your hand... You will thus have made a printed copy in every way identical to the prototype.⁷³

It is clear that the transmission images from and to disparate regions would have been achieved through such working drawings that ensured the transfer of ideas among artists and successive generations of painters. Anthivola such as these attest to the collective process of art making in the later Byzantine period and in the centuries that followed the events of 1453.⁷⁴ It is likely that the compositions of at least some of the Moldavian murals were created with the help of such drawings.

In addition to the *Tree of Jesse* mural, at Moldovița, the *Akathistos Hymn* takes up the entire south wall of the pronaos (Fig. 4.68).⁷⁵ It is found in a similar location at the katholika of Humor (Fig. 4.69) and Probota (Fig. 4.70). The *Akathistos* image was also used to adorn the south wall of the building, facing in the direction of the exonarthex, for instance at St. Demetrios in Suceava (Fig. 4.71), at the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Baia (Fig. 4.72), and at St. George in Suceava (Fig. 4.73). In a similar location, but more to the left of the entrance to the church, this cycle is found at Arbore (Fig. 4.74). The katholikon at Voroneț displays this image cycle on the exterior north wall of the pronaos (Fig. 4.75). The cycle is also found on the interior of churches, and more specifically in the pronaos of the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Dobrovăț and the Church of All Saints at Părhăuți—both instances that predate the representation of the stanzas of the *Hymn* on the exterior of the Moldavian churches.

The *Akathistos Hymn*—the oldest performed hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary sung in the Eastern Orthodox Church—is often represented in twenty-four scenes that stand for its twenty-four stanzas.⁷⁶ It is a hymn that is both Mariological and

⁷³ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 5.

⁷⁴ This technique, however, was not only relegated to the eastern cultural sphere. Western artists such as Rogier van der Weyden, Hans Memling, Joos van Cleve, and Paris Bordone also used pricked cartoons in their practices.

⁷⁵ The *Akathistos Hymn* (Greek = not sitting) is a poetic hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary written in 24 stanzas that is sung while the congregation is standing on the fifth Saturday of Easter Lent. The initial letters of the stanzas are arranged according to the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet. It is one of a handful of Byzantine hymns to have received pictorial form in Orthodox icons and monumental painting.

⁷⁶ For an iconographic description of the *Akathistos Hymn*, see *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 51-52.

Christological in content.⁷⁷ It celebrates the important events in the life of the Virgin, praising her role in the Incarnation, Redemption, and their mysteries. Although the hymn's author and date of creation are not recorded, scholars have advanced a number of arguments. The hymnographer Romanos the Melodist (491-518, d. 556) has been proposed,⁷⁸ as has the Deacon George of Pisidia, the seventh-century poet and librarian at Hagia Sophia, whom Migne regards as the author in his *Patrologia Graeca*.⁷⁹ If the hymn dated to the seventh century then it might have been composed by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Sergius (610-638), as is recorded in a thirteenth century manuscript.⁸⁰ Others have hypothesized that the author of the *Akathistos Hymn* was identical with Germanus I (715-730), Patriarch of Constantinople, who sent a copy of the hymn to Pope Gregory II, with an introduction that summarized the events of the Arab siege of Constantinople in 717/718.⁸¹ Others still have identified Photius, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (858-867; 877-886), who preached before and during the aftermath of the Rus' siege of the Byzantine capital in 860.⁸²

The pictorial cycles of the *Akathistos Hymn*, common throughout the Slavic-Byzantine cultural spheres,⁸³ was in fact also celebrated in the Orthodox monastic

⁷⁷ Out of the twenty-four *oikoi*, one is addressed to Mary (24), eight to Christ (8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22), and three are without object (2, 4, 6). Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin in the Akathistos Hymn*, 31, n. 4. Significant studies on the illustration of the *Akathistos Hymn* are: Tafrafi, "Iconografia Imnului Acatist," 49-84, 127-140, 153-173; Henry, "Quelques notes sur la représentation de l'Hymne Acathiste," 33-49; Velmans, "Une illustration inédite de l'Acathiste (Escorial, Cod. 19)," 131-165; eadem, "Création et structure du cycle iconographique de l'Acathiste," 469-473; Babić, "L' iconographie constantinopolitaine de l'Acathiste de la Vierge à Cozia (Valachie)," 173-189; Spatharakis, *The Pictorial Cycles of the Akathistos Hymn for the Virgin*; Costea, "Sub semnul *Miresei Nenuñite*," 99-108; Toniolo, *Acatistul Maicii Domnului explicat*; Ciobanu, "L'iconographie de l'Hymne Acathiste," 3-24; idem, "La symétrie 'dissimulée' dans l'ordonnance des illustrations aux strophes de la deuxième moitié de l'Hymne Acathiste," 123-137; Crăciun, *Reprezentarea imnului Acatist în iconografia moldovă din secolul al XVI-lea*; Suceveanu, "Acatistul Maicii Domnului în pictura exterioară din Moldova," 297-340.

⁷⁸ Romanos is mentioned in a marginalia dating probably to the sixteenth century that was added to a thirteenth-century manuscript (Cod. Thessalonicensis Blataion 41, folio 193r). See Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin in the Akathistos Hymn*, 27.

⁷⁹ See Migne, *PG*, 92, col. 1335.

⁸⁰ See Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin in the Akathistos Hymn*, 27.

⁸¹ See Speck, *Artabasdos*, 169-171. On the Latin version of the *Akathistos Hymn*, see Huglo, "L'ancienne version latine de l'hymne acathiste," 33-34; Meersseman, *Der Hymnos Akathistos im Abendland*, 45.

⁸² See *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, 82-95 (first homily), 95-110 (second homily).

⁸³ For earlier iterations of the *Akathistos Hymn*, as well as the meanings and functions of this image cycle in the Slavic-Byzantine cultural sphere, see the forthcoming dissertation of Nicole Paxton Sullo, "The Art of Memory in Byzantium during the Later Middle Ages" (Yale University, 2018). For the two extant icons showing the *Akathistos*, see Spatharakis, *The Pictorial Cycles of the Akathistos Hymn for the Virgin*,

milieux of the first half of the sixteenth century, including in Moldavia, and represented not only in mural cycles and icons, but also in embroideries.⁸⁴ For example, the cycle survives embroidered on a sixteenth-century *epitrachelion* now in the collection of Stavronikita Monastery on Mount Athos (Fig. 4.76). It measures 280 cm in length (including the fringes), and 11.5 cm in width. The first twelve oikoi (characterized as ‘historical’) illustrate events from the Annunciation to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The other corresponding twelve troparia celebrate the Virgin as a source of light (venerated by the people, the saints, the virgins, the clerics, and the hymn-writers), and Christ and his Incarnation (which brought about mankind’s salvation). The first oikos is placed horizontally around the neck, with the rest arranged to either side on the front of the *epitrachelion*. The name of the patron, Archpriest Dorotheos, appears mentioned in the twenty-third panel, at the bottom.

Among the numerous factors that contributed to the prominent placement of the *Akathistos Hymn* on the exterior of the Moldavian monastic churches, especially those that served as royal funerary monuments, one deserves particular attention. In Chapter Six I will demonstrate in more detail that the representation of the *Akathistos* acquired a distinct historical dimension during the later part of the Palaiologan period, and in particular after the fall of the Byzantine Empire. This representation of the Hymn came to incorporate an image of *The Siege of Constantinople*. This image type appears in the Moldavian context on all of the churches that display the *Akathistos* cycle, and always in the lowest register, below the illustrations of the stanzas of the Hymn. The image of *The Siege* was conceived in relation to the representation of the *Akathistos*, but, as Chapter Six will show, it took on additional visual and historical meanings. The murals of *The Siege* survive (in various stages of preservation) on the exterior of eight Moldavia churches, namely at Probota (Fig. 4.77), St. George in Suceava (Fig. 4.78), Humor

92-106; and the entry by Acheimastou-Potamianou in *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, 99-100, cat.no.99; Smirnova, *Zhivopis' Velikogo Novgoroda: XV vek*, 345-353, no. 80. The Skopelos icon measures 75 x 47.5 cm, the Russian icon 161.3 x 97.5 cm.

⁸⁴ In his study *The Pictorial Cycles of the Akathistos Hymn for the Virgin*, Ioannis Spatharakis examines twenty-two cycles found in murals, manuscripts, and icons, completed before the fall of Constantinople in 1453; most of these date to the Palaiologan period. In Moldavia and elsewhere, this tradition continued well into the sixteenth century.

(Fig. 4.79), Moldovița (Fig. 4.80), St. Demetrios in Suceava (Fig. 4.81), Baia (Fig. 4.82), and Arbore (Fig. 4.83).⁸⁵ Since the *Akathistos Hymn* also adorns the north wall at Voroneț, it is reasonable to assume that the image of *The Siege* was originally painted there as well (Fig. 4.84).⁸⁶ As Chapter Six shows, the combination of *Akathistos* and *The Siege* imagery can be understood as a visual commentary on contemporary struggles and anxieties. The murals of *The Siege*, furthermore, allow insight into conceptions of history and cultural memory in early sixteenth-century Moldavia.

At Moldovița, to the left of the *Akathistos* cycle on the southwestern face of the exonarthex, the four military saints—from bottom to top) St. Nestor, St. Mercurius, St. Demetrios, and St. George—all on horseback, vanquish their respective adversaries (Fig. 4.85). These figures symbolize the victory of Christianity against its enemies. Each of the martyr saints sits astride a rearing mount facing eastward, ready to strike or already striking his foe. On one level, this repetitive superimposition of almost identical-looking images and implied eastward movement could suggest that it is only through the Church that one can attain Salvation. In a more expanded context, and in relation to contemporary concerns about the advancing Ottoman armies and their campaigns in Moldavia, the military saints directing their attention toward the east, toward the main entrance to the monastic complex, could be read as a call to action to defeat beyond the walls of the monasteries Moldavia's enemies. Unlike the frontal representations of the military saints in the naos of the church, these types of military saints in action, were a subject popular for icon painting as well.

The opposite, north face of Moldovița's exonarthex is decorated with an image commonly referred to as the *Heavenly Customs* (Fig. 4.86).⁸⁷ This mural shows a high tower reaching up to Heaven, with twenty-four platforms that correspond to the twenty-four challenges that the soul has to overcome before reaching the celestial top. The souls ascending the ladder of the tower structure are approached by angels or targeted by demons. The representations of the *Heavenly Customs* relate to images of the *Last Judgment*, and together they serve as a reminder that all mortals have to undertake a

⁸⁵ It was also painted on the following churches, but the murals no longer survive: St. George in Hârlău, and St. Nicholas in Bălinești and Coșula.

⁸⁶ The mural of *The Siege* is no longer extant at St. George in Hârlău (1530).

⁸⁷ Romanian: *Vămile Văzduhului*.

strenuous climb (i.e. undergo certain challenges) and await judgment before reaching the gates of Heaven. Similar compositions embellish the north face of Humor (Fig. 4.87), and Voroneț (Fig. 4.88),⁸⁸ as well as the left section of the west façade of the church at Arbore (Fig. 4.89).⁸⁹ The entirety of the composition is best preserved at Voroneț, but the most detailed portion of the rendition survives on the north wall at Moldovița. I will address in the Epilogue the development of this image type during the second half of the sixteenth century, and its visual iterations in the *Ladder of St. John Climacus*.

In the churches that received their exterior murals during Peter's first reign, the image type that appears repeatedly on their western sides is that of the *Last Judgment*.⁹⁰ The best preserved example survives on the west front of Voroneț (Fig. 4.90). The mural is divided into five horizontal registers with the figures in each section oriented toward the central axis. Along the central composition, God the Father appears at the top among the zodiac signs, which groups of angels roll up from either side, as if a piece of parchment, suggestive of the end of the time. The middle three registers show Christ enthroned above the *Hetoimasia*⁹¹ with a Bible and the Holy Spirit on the throne of the Second Coming, and Adam and Eve kneeling to either side of it. The *Hetoimasia* is often represented in conjunction with other instruments of the Passion, such as the Cross, and became a motif central to the Byzantine iconography of the *Last Judgment*. Below this image, on the central axis, the hand of God holds a scale weighing the souls of the living and the dead that come before judgment: on the left, St. Paul escorts the saved, while on the right Moses brings forward the nonbelievers, among them Turks and Jews. In Byzantium, the sinners remain separated into discrete groups according to the nature of

⁸⁸ Here placed on the north side of the large buttress rising on the NW corner of the building.

⁸⁹ Given the consistencies throughout the Moldavian mural programs, it is likely that St. Nicholas at Probota and St. George in Suceava also carried on their exterior the image of the *Heavenly Customs*, as did several other buildings, including the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Baia, St. Elijah in Suceava, and St. Demetrios in Hârlău. The exterior murals, however, no longer survive at these sites.

⁹⁰ See Dumitrescu, "Les représentations moldaves du jugement dernier dans la première moitié du XVI^e siècle," 337-372; Himka, *Last Judgment Iconography in the Carpathians*; Kocój, "The Damned of the Last Judgment or What the Romanians Paint in the Orthodox Icons—Historical and Contemporary Cultural Contexts," 86-108.

⁹¹ The *Hetoimasia* (ἑτοιμασία; Greek = preparation of the throne) is the throne prepared in readiness for Christ's Second Coming. The image symbolically refers to the vision of the end of time in which Christ as Judge will be seated on the throne that was prepared for him. The throne often displays a Gospel Book or a scroll and the Instruments of the Passion. It is rarely found in western art but occurs frequently in Orthodox art and Early Christian art. During the late Byzantine period, the throne is occasionally replaced by an altar. See Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 38-39.

their sins, and still have potential for redemption. In the west, by contrast, a more unified version of the damned was preferred, and the image of Hell as a dark, vast, chaotic inferno became a prominent feature of *Last Judgment* compositions. The lowest register of the composition shows on the left, or to Christ's right, the peaceful and orderly Kingdom of Heaven, whereas on the right is a representation of Hell in a fiery realm, shown against a red backdrop, and the moment of the resurrection of the dead throughout the earth prior to judgment.

In the churches built with an exonarthex, whether opened or closed, this monumental mural takes up the entire eastern wall of the exonarthex—the wall with the main entrance leading into the pronaos of the church. This is found, for example, in the exonarthexes at Probota (Fig. 4.91), Humor (Fig. 4.92), and Moldovița (Fig. 4.93). In these cases, the narrow space of the exonarthex renders the mural of the *Last Judgment* even more monumental and much more immediate to those entering the church. There is not much distance that the viewer can place between himself or herself and the demons emerging from the hellmouth on the lower right of the composition.⁹² Moreover, whereas at Probota and Humor the images of the *Last Judgment* cover only the east wall of the exonarthex, at Moldovița the image extends along the lateral walls creating a spatial image that immerses and implicates those before it.

In other Moldavian churches the murals of the *Last Judgment* take up the entire west front. This is the case at Pătrăuți (Fig. 4.94), the Church of the Dormition in Baia (Fig. 4.95), Voroneț (Fig. 4.90), St. George in Suceava (Fig. 4.96), and Coșula (Fig. 4.97). At Pătrăuți, the mural once again extends across the exterior of the wall leading into the pronaos. The same is the case at Baia and Coșula. Although both of the latter edifices have an exonarthex, Baia's is two-storied; thus the interior space would not have been spatially suited for a monumental image of the *Last Judgment*. The image, then, was relegated in both cases to the exterior of the building, but still on the façade leading into the church. However, at the katholika of Voroneț and the Monastery of St. John the New, the mural of the *Last Judgment* appears on the exterior west wall of the

⁹² On this iconographic type, see Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell*; Sheingorn, "Who can open the doors of his face? The Iconography of Hell Mouth," 1-19. See now also Hundt and Smith, "A Teratological Source of Hellhead," 33-40. For other scholarly considerations of hell and its representation, see Davidson and Seiler, eds., *The Iconography of Hell*.

exonarthex, thus shifting the emphasis away from the threshold into the main body of the church, and the physical passage through the image of the *Last Judgment* that it entailed. I would propose, then, that the latter two examples were not executed, in fact, under Peter's patronage, but rather under that of one of his followers. Therefore, they date to sometime after 1546.

At Arbore (Fig. 4.98) and Râșca (Fig. 4.99), moreover, the murals of the *Last Judgment* were not even painted on walls facing west. In both instances the painting are found on the south sides of the churches, in proximity to the east end. Perhaps the intentions behind the original conception that took shape under Peter's patronage, and the way this image type was supposed to function within the large visual and architectural programs of these buildings, were lost to those who commissioned the exterior murals of the churches at Arbore and Râșca, and even those at Voroneț and the Church of St. George in Suceava. The same could be said about the presence of this imagery on the west façade of St. Demetrios in Suceava and St. Nicholas in Bălinești, of which only small traces remain today.

Owing to their liminal location, the images of the *Deësis* could be seen to serve a similar function in relation to the large murals of the *Last Judgment*, for they too have the function of encouraging a certain kind of spiritual mindset for the faithful upon stepping into the church.⁹³ For example, the mural of the *Deësis* above the south entrance of St. Nicholas at Rădăuți (Fig. 4.100) could have been intended to encourage all those who stepped inside the church to participate in prayer and direct their prayer to Christ. A similar image of the *Deësis* appears above the south entrance to the katholikon at Voroneț (Fig. 4.101), and also in the exonarthex of the Church of All Saints in Părhăuți (a rare image type for this location in the exonarthex) (Fig. 4.102). Images of the *Deësis* had three primary functions: first, to visualize divine glory; second, to allude to a liturgical time and the importance of prayer for man's salvation; and third, to anticipate eschatological time, especially in conjunction with images of the *Last Judgment*. When the *Deësis* appeared above the entrance into the church, its primary meaning may have

⁹³ See especially Cutler, "Under the Sign of the Deësis," 145-154.

been spiritual and eschatological, whereas when encountered in the burial chamber (as Chapter Five will show), its principal function could have been liturgical.⁹⁴

The *Genesis Cycle* is the last major image program encountered on the west façade of Peter's churches, as evident, for example, at the katholika with an open exonarthex at Moldovița (Fig. 4.103) and Humor (Fig. 4.104).⁹⁵ Moldovița preserves the most extensive rendition of this image series. The imagery is likely to have also adorned the exterior of Probota, but here the original exonarthex has been substantially reconstructed.⁹⁶ At Arbore, the *Genesis Cycle* appears in the upper sections of the west façade (Fig. 4.105), right under the eaves of the roof, while at Voroneț it is found in the upper portions of the north wall (Fig. 4.106). The cycle at Voroneț is the best preserved, and displays in eleven scenes the narrative of creation from the creation of Adam to the sacrifice of Cain and Abel and the lamenting of Abel by his parents. The scenes prior to the expulsion from Paradise are depicted against a white background indicative of a heavenly realm, or, alternatively, a prelapsarian world, whereas the events after the expulsion are represented as taking place in a landscape.⁹⁷ The scenes incorporated in the *Genesis Cycle* address Original Sin, making Redemption necessary.

In contrast to the rest of the church, on the exterior of the naos an iconic mode of representation replaces the narrative one largely characteristic of the interior and exterior murals (Fig. 4.107). Around the triconch east end at Moldovița, five registers display figures arranged in a hierarchical fashion beginning with monks and hermits at the bottom, followed by martyrs, apostles, prophets, and angels—an image type that scholars generally refer to as the *Prayer of All Saints*.⁹⁸ Although represented full-length, these figures are not frontal. Rather, they all direct their attention toward the east as if partaking in a procession around the building that culminates at the axis of the altar window where

⁹⁴ Walter, "Two Notes on the Deësis," 311-316; idem, "Further Notes on the Deësis" 177. See also Negrău, *Cultul suveranului sud-est European și cazul Țării Românești*, 66.

⁹⁵ Dionysius of Fournia describes how the scenes from the *Genesis Cycle* should be represented in his section on "How the wonders of the Old Law are represented." See *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournia*, 18-31, esp. 18-19.

⁹⁶ Hence, also, the lack on niches in the upper sections of the exonarthex at Probota.

⁹⁷ See Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean*, 62-63.

⁹⁸ In Romanian studies, the *Prayer of All Saints* has also been referred to and interpreted as *Cinul*, *Rugăciunea tuturor sfinților*, *Marea Deisis*, *Marea Procesiune*, *Biserica Triumfătoare*, *Marele Praznic Ceresc*, and *Ospăț al Veacurilor*. See, Ciobanu, "'Cinul' din pictura exterioară a Moldovei medievale și 'iconostasul înalt' rus," 129-132.

Eucharistic imagery abounds, such as the Eucharistic Christ in a chalice on the short buttress below the window, the *Amnos*⁹⁹ or the Lamb of God symbolic of Christ's sacrifice above the window,¹⁰⁰ and above that an image of the Virgin enthroned among angels with Christ on her lap (Fig. 4.108). These figural murals on the exterior of the most sacred space of the church find a visual parallel in the iconostasis—the large structure that stands at the threshold between the naos and the altar area.¹⁰¹ On this prominent wall of icons, particularly in the central sections, rows of apostles and prophets direct their attention toward the central axis, dominated again by images of Christ and the Virgin (Annunciation, Trinity, etc.). Thus, the images of the iconostasis and those of the exterior of the naos hierarchically define and visually frame along a directional axis the most sacred and mysterious spaces of the church, structuring in dynamic ways the experiences of the faithful.

Eucharistic Theology and Its Visual Manifestations

Throughout the Middle Ages, the precise manner of Christ's presence in the consecrated species prompted philosophical and theological debates about the substance of the Eucharistic Christ. The discussions that developed around the Eucharist were essentially rooted in the distinct interpretations of Christ's actions and words spoken at the Last Supper. According to the Gospel accounts and St. Paul, Christ, at this event, took bread and wine, blessed them, and gave them to His disciples saying that they were His body and His blood (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:15-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The Prologue to St. John's Gospel also speaks of the Word that was made flesh (John 1:14). From these writings developed the key question of the mode of the Eucharistic presence: of whether the Eucharistic species remained substantially bread and wine at the moment of consecration, being mere symbols of the body of Christ, or whether they took on the substance of His flesh and blood. And when exactly this moment of transubstantiation occurred also entered the discussion.

⁹⁹ The *Amnos* (Greek = lamb) is the epithet for Christ, referring to Him as the sacrificial lamb. It also denotes the central, stamped portion of the Eucharistic bread that becomes the body of Christ. It is depicted as His human body on the paten.

¹⁰⁰ On this image type, see Bedros, "The Lamb of God in Moldavian Mural Decoration," 53-72.

¹⁰¹ For a detailed discussion, see especially Ciobanu, "'Cinul' din pictura exterioară a Moldovei medievale și 'iconostasul înalt' rus," 129-134.

The great Eucharistic theological debate of the first half of the fifth century (began in fact in 428) between Nestorius, the Archbishop of Constantinople, and Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria—which resulted in one of the great schisms of Christian history¹⁰²—centered precisely on the nature of Christ and the issue of His presence in the Eucharist, whether symbolic or real.¹⁰³ Nestorius favored a conceptual interpretation, arguing that the bread acted as a symbol of Christ’s body, which was perceived as His body, philosophically speaking, through the eyes of the faithful. Cyril, on the other hand, concerned with the life-giving nature of the Eucharist, argued for a real and substantial transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.¹⁰⁴ These debates continued well into the fourteenth century with some theologians and thinkers proposing a figurative interpretation of Eucharistic presence (*in figura*), while others favoring a more realistic understanding (*in veritate*).¹⁰⁵

Eucharistic symbolism played a central role in the Christian cultures particularly of the late medieval period. Regarding the nature of the Eucharist, however, divergent lines of thought emerged between the Latin Roman and the Greek Orthodox spheres during this time.¹⁰⁶ In the west, a more literal interpretation of the Eucharist prevailed, while in the east a more spiritual understanding was favored. Images from the western and eastern cultural spheres were also modified accordingly in both content and form primarily in the context of the liturgy (which centered on Christ’s death and re-enactment), employing distinct visual vocabularies to reveal the respective beliefs. Eucharistic images sought to echo existing and new attitudes toward religious experience and present in a visual way what ultimately remained unseen. Against the backdrop of the

¹⁰² Today referred to as the Nestorian Schism. See the discussion of “Christology in the Fifth Century” in Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 13-28.

¹⁰³ Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, “The Single Person of Hypostasis of Christ from Faith and Experience,” <http://holytrinitymission.org/books/english/fathers_florovsky_2.htm> (accessed 15 September 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, “Nestorius and the Denial of the Ontological Unity of Christ,” <http://holytrinitymission.org/books/english/fathers_florovsky_2.htm> (accessed 15 September 2016).

¹⁰⁵ In the West, a comparable debate took place at the Abbey at Corbie. This debate opposed Ratramnus of Corbie (d. 868) and the Benedictine abbot Paschasius Radbertus (d. 859) on the question of figurative (*in figura*) or actual (*in veritate*) interpretations of the Eucharistic presence. A second Eucharistic controversy unfolded slightly later between Berengar of Tours (d. 1088), who opposed the *in veritate* argument, and the Archbishop of Canterbury Lanfranc of Le Bec (d. 1089), who argued for a full transformation of the Eucharistic bread into the body and blood of Christ.

¹⁰⁶ All of these discussions were rooted in much earlier debates, such as the famous Nestorian Controversy.

theological and liturgical premises of the debates about the Eucharist in the Latin and Greek ecclesiastical domains, I consider next the artistic strategies employed in the Orthodox milieu to convey the Eucharistic mysteries through visual means.

In contrast to Orthodox practices, images in the west employed both literal and more symbolic visual strategies to make perceptible Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. For one thing, representations of the Mass of Pope Gregory—a particular image type that appeared in the west no later than c.1400 and was widespread by the second half of the fifteenth century—presented complex explorations of “seeing the Eucharist elements and seeing through them to spiritual presence.”¹⁰⁷ According to the late medieval version of the legend, Pope Gregory saw firsthand a vision of Christ as the Man of Sorrows¹⁰⁸ appear on the altar before him at the exact moment of consecration of the host. Images of the Mass of Pope Gregory depict the Pope at an altar covered with all the necessary accoutrements for the celebration of the Eucharist: the chalice and the paten, the elevation candle (lit at the moment of the consecration), the missal, and the white linen cloth of the corporal. The moment represented precisely that of the transformation of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ at the moment of the elevation of the host. It is here visualized by the figure of a living Man of Sorrows on the altar table who displays His wounds to those before Him (Figs. 4.109-4.110). In some examples, His presence is made even more explicit by the blood that trickles from his side wound into the chalice below.

In the west, the Eucharistic transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is made even more concrete by allegorical images such as *Mystic Winepress* or *Christ in the Winepress* (popular in the late Middle Ages, although with origins in the twelfth century). These images types appear in virtually every medium and show Christ as the Man of Sorrows in the vat of a winepress with blood flowing from his wounds, and from there, often into a Eucharistic chalice placed in front of the press (Fig. 4.111).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 105.

¹⁰⁸ The Man of Sorrows is the image of Christ that stands outside of biblical narrative and subsumes in itself the totality of the Passion.

¹⁰⁹ See, especially, Timmermann, “A View of the Eucharist on the Eve of the Protestant Reformation,” 365-398. Like the image showing *Christ in the Winepress*, images of the so-called *Mystic Mill* (although not as popular), presented an allegory of the incarnation of the logos. In these images, for example, grains

These allegorical Eucharistic representations, and the story of Pope Gregory's vision with its numerous subsequent visual renditions, were intended to dispel doubts about the miraculous transformation of the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ during the celebration of the Mass.¹¹⁰ In the case of the Gregorian images, however, the moment of consecration and the role of the celebrant/priest also took center stage. In a winged altarpiece from the Cistercian monastery of Ihlow, now in St. Lambert's Church in Aurich, the Mass of Pope Gregory unfolds on the central exterior panels (Fig. 4.112). The Pope's vision of Christ as the Man of Sorrows who here hovers in mid-air and displays the wounds of the Crucifixion, appears in the upper right panel of the altarpiece. In this instance, the image of the Man of Sorrows is juxtaposed with an image of the Holy Face that is held by an angel in the opposite, upper left panel (Fig. 4.113). What is more, when the altarpiece is opened to reveal the carved and gilded Crucifixion scene within, the images that decorate the backs of these upper panels represent two instances of "visual manifestations," as Carolyn Walker Bynum identifies them.¹¹¹ Behind the Man of Sorrows is the New Testament scene of the *Ecce Homo* that represents the moment when the scourged and tortured Christ is presented before Pilate and the rest of the people. Behind the image of the Holy Face is the scene of *Noli me tangere*, which depicts Mary Magdalene recognizing and approaching Christ after the Resurrection while he utters the words: "do not touch me." The *Ecce Homo* scene, thus, "invites seeing", while the *Noli me tangere* is a scene that "warns against touch" or contact but one in which divine presence and vision are central.¹¹² The embedded messages of these two paintings relate to the exterior images of the Holy Face and the Man of Sorrows, and, in relation to the central scene of the Mass of Pope Gregory below,

(synonymous with the Word of God) are poured by angels into the mill and transformed into white hosts that fall into the chalice below (often held by the four kneeling Church Fathers). In some instances, the Christ Child that rises from the chalice stresses the substance of the hosts, that in fact they are the substantial presence of the flesh and blood of Christ.

¹¹⁰ This is the traditional interpretation of the Mass of St. Gregory. Carolyn Walker Bynum has problematized this reading of the Gregorymass image, arguing instead that compositionally and iconographically the image does not evoke mere presence, but rather implies a "seeing through" to the Divine. Bynum, "Seeing and Seeing Beyond," 208-240, 227: "...the Mass of St. Gregory—both in its physical positioning and structure and in its iconographical complexity—reflects not so much 'Schaufrommigkeit' as the problematic nature of seeing, not so much doubt about Christ's sacrificial presence on the altar as exploration of exactly how he was to be encountered there, not so much seeing as seeing beyond."

¹¹¹ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 67.

¹¹² Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 67.

bring to the forefront the notions of divine presence and of seeing and seeing through to the divine. Indeed, the iconography of this altarpiece, and others like it, demonstrates “the doctrine of real presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Eucharist,” and affirms “the phenomenon of visionary experience.”¹¹³ Moreover, it asserts the necessity of the priest for the effective performance of the Eucharistic celebrations. This brings up the issue of the special powers attributed to the priesthood since it was believed (and still is today) that the celebrant’s spoken words at the moment of consecration, namely, “this is my body” and “this is my blood,” effect the miracle of transubstantiation.

In the Orthodox rite, by contrast, the central moment of the Eucharistic prayer (the Epiclesis) addresses the Holy Spirit, who, in turn, as a response to the supplication of the priest and the people to come down “upon us and upon these gifts,” activates the divine mystery or the miracle of transformation of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.¹¹⁴ This requires a deeper spiritual engagement with the mysteries of the Eucharist. Therefore, unlike the open altar before which the consecration of the host unfolds in the west, in the east a large multi-tier wall of icons—the iconostasis—marks the threshold between the naos and the chancel and visually conceals the altar from the faithful. I will return to the form and functions of this monumental wall of icons in the next section.

First, however, it is useful to introduce a particular image type that presents in quite literal ways the “real” transformation of the Eucharistic species into the body and blood of Christ, visualizing explicitly what the faithful needed to see or grasp spiritually during the celebrations of the Divine Liturgy. This is the image of the *Melismos* found painted on the walls of the chancel in Orthodox churches, which was visible only to the

¹¹³ Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 66.

¹¹⁴ The consecratory Epiclesis of *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostomos* reads: “Again we offer unto Thee this reasonable and bloodless worship, and we ask Thee, and pray Thee, and supplicate Thee: Send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here offered. And make this bread the precious Body of Thy Christ. (Amen) And that which is in this cup, the precious Blood of Thy Christ. (Amen) Making the change by the Holy Spirit. (Amen, Amen, Amen) That these gifts may be to those who partake for the purification of soul, for remission of sins, for the communion of the Holy Spirit, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven; for boldness towards Thee, and not for judgment or condemnation.” The Epiclesis, however, is not the very moment when this transformation is effected. The entire anaphora is a continuous Anamnesis (or a process of remembrance), during which the miracle happens. There is an issue of temporality at play. In contrast to the moment of transubstantiation in the west that occurs at the utterance of the words of the officiating priest, in the Orthodox Church the transformation of the Eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ transpires over a longer period of time and is a work of the Trinity.

celebrant and concealed from view of the congregation assembled in the naos. Images of the *Melismos* show the Christ Child reclining in a chalice on the altar, often covered by a red liturgical cloth, in place of the consecrated bread (Fig. 4.114).¹¹⁵ In some iterations, the body of the Christ Child is contained both within the paten and the chalice, as evident in the earlier murals at Studenica Monastery in Serbia (Fig. 4.115). This image type presents a clear affirmation that the Eucharistic bread and wine are the real body and blood of Christ. Images of the *Melismos* became popular toward the end of the twelfth century, with the earliest extant representation found above the altar in the Church of St. George from Kurbinovo, Macedonia, painted in 1191.

The *Melismos* refers to the point in the Divine Liturgy when the priest breaks the bread into four pieces while saying:

The Lamb of God is broken and distributed;
Broken but not divided.
He is forever eaten yet is never consumed,
But he sanctifies those who partake of Him.¹¹⁶

That the Christ Child, then, is represented whole in the paten is significant. His unbroken body attests visually to the renewing and life-giving nature of the Eucharist.

There exists, however, one perplexing and little-known image of the *Melismos* (or better yet a variation of this image type) in one of the Moldavian churches that I have found no precedents for to date. The mural is located inside the chancel of the Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery. In the painting, an altar table covered by an embroidered red cloth displays a gold chalice and paten, as well as a richly decorated liturgical book (Fig. 4.116). To either side of the altar stand two angels holding gold censers, recalling the activities of the Divine Liturgy. At first glance there is nothing particularly unusual about this scene, which is often found in the chancel of Orthodox churches. A closer look, however, reveals a peculiar, and somewhat disturbing, detail. The paten on the altar, instead of containing, as was usually the norm, a miniature Christ Child, exposes instead two severed forearms. The rest of the body is found nearby. To

¹¹⁵ See Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 40-47.

¹¹⁶ Following the fraction of the sacred bread, the priest says these words in a low voice. *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostomos*, <<http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/liturgy/liturgy.html>> (accessed 22 September 2016).

either side of this central niche stand 14 bishops and 2 deacons who contemplate Christ's sacrifice. Among them, and immediately to the left of the painting in question, is St. John Chrysostom¹¹⁷ who holds in his right hand a knife and in his left hand a child-like figure of the adult Christ with his forearms cut off (Fig. 4.117).¹¹⁸

This particular image, which visually and quite literally highlights the idea of liturgical sacrifice, poses problems from a theological standpoint because in the Eucharist Christ is believed to be whole and not divided, in reference to the *Melismos* prayer.¹¹⁹ For this reason the canonical depiction of the diskos on the altar usually presents the whole figure of Christ and not just parts of his body. However, the representation of St. John Chrysostom as a priest physically breaking (i.e. severing) the body of Christ may serve as a direct reference to the priest breaking the Eucharistic bread during the Divine Liturgy so that all may partake in communion.¹²⁰

The Eucharist raised doctrinal problems in various circumstances throughout the Middle Ages and the spiritual phenomenon of the transformation of the species into the divine, and the moment at which this occurred, were interpreted differently in Latin and

¹¹⁷ Originally, for the Orthodox Church services, the liturgy of St. Basil from the fourth century was used. In the fifth century, St. John Chrysostom composed another liturgy that differed from St. Basil's in its length (being shorter), in the prayers called the Anaphora, and in some of the songs sung during the liturgy. In the murals, then, it is St. John Chrysostom that appears prominently, and not St. Basil.

¹¹⁸ An initial consideration of this peculiar image type has been undertaken recently in Ciobanu, *Stihia Profeticului*, 335-341 ("O redacție iconografică rară descoperită în pictură murală a altarului bisericii Sfântul Nicolae a mănăstirii Probota"). I have uncovered similar representations of the Eucharistic Christ in Cretan churches. For example, a mural fragment from the bema conch of the Church of St. Photini at Kaloni, Pediada, Crete, shows the Christ Child cut up in the chalice. The mural is dated to the late thirteenth century and is preserved in the Historical Museum of Iraklion, Crete. See the entry by M. Borboudakis in *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, 53, cat.no.49.

¹¹⁹ St. Nicholas Cabasilas explains that in the Eucharist, the Lamb of God, who "is broken and distributed, but not divided, ever eaten but not consumed," is the sanctification of those who partake of Him. On this particular Eucharistic theology, see Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 18, 81-82.

¹²⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles to the Corinthians 24.1-2*, in Migne, *PG*, 61:199-201: "The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? The Apostle did not say 'a participation', because he wanted to signify something more than this. For when we communicate it is not merely a matter of sharing and partaking, but of being united. In the same way as a body was united with Christ, so we are united with him by this bread. But why did he add, which we break? This we can see is done at the Eucharist, but it was not so on the Cross; rather the contrary, for Scripture says: Not a bone of his shall be broken. But although he did not suffer this on the Cross, he suffers it now in his offering on your behalf; he allows himself to be broken so that all may be filled. Paul used the phrase: a communion in the body; but there is a difference between communicants and the body we receive in communion, and so he set about removing even this distinction, small as it might seem. For after he had spoken of a communion in the body, he still sought to define his meaning more accurately, and therefore added, Because there is one bread, we although many are one body."

Greek Christendom. This contributed to a distinction of how the Eucharist was envisioned from a theological and pictorial standpoint in the east and the west particularly during the later Middle Ages when artists in collaboration with their advisors developed new types Eucharistic images in an effort to make that which was invisible perceptible to the physical eye. Whereas in the western cultural sphere numerous allegorical images sought to bridge the gap between the senses and the intellect (i.e. the spiritual eye) used to grasp the miracle of transubstantiation, in the Orthodox realm the orchestration of the liturgy denied the faithful physical and visual access to the celebrations of the Eucharist. This in turn necessitated a more prolonged spiritual engagement with the divine and the mysteries of the Eucharist. In this spiritual orchestration, the monumental iconostasis played a central role.

The Iconostasis and Its Functions

The iconostasis, the visually prominent screen of icons within the performance space of the liturgy in Orthodox churches, marks the threshold between the naos where the congregation assembles, and the sanctuary where the clergy celebrate the mysteries of the Eucharist (Fig. 4.118).¹²¹ This screen, made out of wood, is decorated throughout with gilded carvings and icons in multiple registers. The surviving examples that date from the fifteenth century onward are also very large in scale, spanning the entire width and sometimes height of the sanctuary area, physically dividing it from the naos and visually concealing the high altar within and the space around it from the faithful gathered in the naos of the church. Monumental in scale and rich in decoration, the iconostasis looms over those gathered before it and overwhelms their senses.¹²²

¹²¹ This Orthodox liturgy was understood as a reenactment of the events from Christ's life, from the Annunciation to the Ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This notion arguably originated with Dionysius the Areopagite and was subsequently developed by Maximus the Confessor into the exegesis of the liturgy. See Dupont, "Le dynamisme de l'action liturgique," 363-388; Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, 189-192; idem, "A New Look at the Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier," 203-228.

¹²² The iconostasis evolved from the low chancel screen made up of squat pillars that originally separated the altar area from the rest of the church in early Christian churches. Constructed out of marble or wood, this chancel screen eventually increased in size and height, and, by the fifth century, evolved into what came to be known as a *templon*. This columnar screen now served as a more prominent marker of the most sacred area of the church that was reserved especially for the clergy and the liturgy of the divine mystery entrusted to them. Although the presence of the *templon* at the threshold to the sanctuary restricted physical access to the altar area, the activities performed by the clergy inside this sacred space were still

A precise geographical location and time period for when the iconostasis reached the large and expanded form of an opaque screen adorned with icons and elaborate decorations remains unknown. In his seminal study *Likeness and Presence*, Hans Belting located the origins of the monumental iconostasis in fifteenth-century Venice, from where, he suggested, it traveled to the East.¹²³ However, since the temporal parameters of his study did not extend into the fifteenth century, Belting did not discuss the iconostasis in its new “period of development.”¹²⁴ Nevertheless, a number of other scholars agree with Belting that the monumental icon screen dates to the second half of the fifteenth century, particularly to the period after the fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.¹²⁵ Others, however, situate the emergence of the large scale iconostasis in the period around the tenth century, after the great Byzantine Iconoclasm (730-843).¹²⁶ What the surviving evidence suggests is that the iconostasis developed from the *templon*, to which additional rows of icons were added on top of the architrave. By the second half of the fifteenth century, this wall of icons achieved large proportions and presented to the faithful an elaborately decorated surface with a relatively consistent iconographic program.

In its large form and so lavishly carved, gilded, and adorned with numerous icons in multiple registers, the iconostasis functioned differently from the *templon* before it. In addition to marking the threshold between the naos and the chancel of the church, this

visually accessible to the faithful through the openings between the columns. By the ninth century, however, these open spaces were closed off with curtains initially, and then with icons, and the central entryway received doors—all of which gradually concealed the altar area in its entirety. Also around this time the architrave above the columns began to receive frieze-like or medallion decorations, and began gradually to increase in height. On the evolution of the *templon* into the iconostasis and its iconography, see Grabar, “Deux notes sur l’histoire de l’iconostase d’après des monuments de Yougoslavie,” 13-22; Walter, “The Origin of the Iconostasis,” 251-267; idem, “A New Look at the Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier,” 203-228; Chatzidakis, “L’évolution de l’icône aux 11^e-13^e siècles et la transformation du templon,” 331-366; Mango, “On the History of the Templon and the Martyrion of St. Artemios at Constantinople,” 40-43; Epstein, “The Middle Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier: Templon or Iconostasis?” 1-28; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 233-249; Spieser, “Le développement du templon et les images de Douze Fêtes,” 131-164; Lidov, ed., *The Iconostasis: Origins—Evolution—Symbolism*; Carr, “Images: Expressions of Faith and Power,” 143-152.

¹²³ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 249.

¹²⁴ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 249.

¹²⁵ Ouspensky, “The Problem of the Iconostasis,” 186; Lazarev, “Trois fragments d’épistyles peintes et le templon byzantine,” 117-143; Walter, “The Origin of the Iconostasis,” 266; idem, “A New Look at the Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier,” 213; Epstein, “The Middle Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier: Templon or Iconostasis?” 1-28.

¹²⁶ Chatzidakis, “L’évolution de l’icône aux 11^e-13^e siècles et la transformation du templon,” 169; Weitzmann, *The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons*, I, 102.

wall of icons now also completely concealed the altar area and the activities of the liturgy that took place there. And while the clergy were able to enter and exit the sanctuary through the iconostasis doors during the liturgy, the faithful were progressively denied both access to and visibility of this most sacred area of the church, being excluded physically and from direct view of the mysteries enacted in this space. So, then, what did the iconostasis offer as an alternative to the faithful? And how did this richly decorated conspicuous marker of separation function within the performance space of the Divine Liturgy?

In order to consider the different functions of the iconostasis within the performance space of the Orthodox liturgy, I take up here as a case study the iconostasis of the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery (Fig. 4.118). Although the original frame and some of the icons survive *in situ*, others were replaced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the iconostasis underwent a number of restorations.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, the iconographic program is consistent with that of other monumental iconostases from this period found in Orthodox churches in the Balkans and the Carpathian Mountain regions, as well as in Muscovy. The bottom tier of the iconostasis has a central elaborately carved and gilded double doorway, known as the Royal Doors, that gives access to the sacred space beyond. As a result of the eighteenth-century alterations, the Royal Doors from the iconostasis at Moldovița are carved and gilded, but in their original form they would have showed the *Annunciation*, as the surviving contemporary examples in the National Museum of Art in Bucharest (Fig. 4.119) and Văratec Monastery (Fig. 4.120) demonstrate.

To either side of the Royal Doors at Moldovița the so-called *Despotic Icons* sit on display—to the left the icon of the Theotokos (or Virgin Mary) enthroned with the Christ Child in her lap, and to the right an icon of Christ. Although the original *Despotic Icons* from Moldovița no longer survive, having been replaced with panels bearing similar

¹²⁷ An inscription on the back of the cross at the top of the iconostasis reads: “Сѣа распѣѣа сътвори себѣ памѣ(т) Боу(л) ви(с)тѣ(р)никъ въ д(ь)ни благоу(с)тивѣго г(осподѣ)на ѿв(анна) Іереміа Могѣла воєво(дѣ), в л(ѣ)тѣ 7110, м(ѣ)с(ѣ)ца ю(ніѣ) 19.” / “This crucifix was made by treasurer Boul, for his commemoration, in the days of the devout prince John Ieremia Movilă voivode, in the year 7110 [1602], the month of June 19.” This suggests that the iconostasis was already in place by this time, and it is possible that this crucifix was commissioned to replace an earlier one. Nicolescu, *Moldovița*, 26; Sabados, “L’iconostase de Moldovița,” 27-43, esp. 27-28, 28 (for the Church Slavonic transcription with some errors and a French translation).

subjects,¹²⁸ the two principal icons from the iconostasis at Humor do (Figs. 4.121-4.122). These two examples provide a glimpse into the format and iconography of these prominent icons on the Moldavian iconostases. In addition to the icons of the Hodegetria and Christ, others would have adorned the lowest register. The icon of St. Michael also survives from the iconostasis at Humor, and resembles in its composition the former two examples (Fig. 4.123).

At Moldovița, to the left and right of the *Despotic Icons* are two angels, each holding a Eucharist-like wafer in one hand and pointing toward it with the other, in a gesture of presentation (Fig. 4.124). The wafer held by the angel on the left displays the inscriptions IC, while the one held by the angel on the right has the inscriptions XC. These stand for the first and last letters of the name “Jesus Christ” in Greek and they appear again and again in representations of Christ from the Orthodox East.¹²⁹ That these inscriptions mark the circular wafers held by the two angels on the iconostasis at Moldovița is significant because, at least on one level, they identify the wafers with the Eucharist and consequently with the body of Christ.

The second tier of the iconostasis displays the *Twelve Great Feasts* or the *Dodekaorton* of the liturgical year in small roundels flanking a scene of the *Crucifixion* at the center (Fig. 4.125).¹³⁰ The third tier has the *Apostolika* or the twelve apostles to either side of a larger central scene of the *Deësis* in which Christ is enthroned at the center with the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist standing to his right and left, respectively. The fourth tier displays a large scene of the Trinity at the center with three icons of Old

¹²⁸ These icons were replaced around the end of the eighteenth century. Sabados, “L’iconostase de Moldovița,” 30.

¹²⁹ The letters IC represent the Greek characters Iota (I) and Sigma (Σ), which are the first and last letters of the name Jesus (IHΣOYΣ). The letters XC represent the Greek characters Chi (X) and Sigma (Σ), which are the first and last letters of the name Christ (XPIΣTOΣ). The characters IC XC are often accompanied by the letters NIKA, which are taken from the Greek form of In Hoc Signo Vincas, meaning 'to be victorious' or 'to conquer'. One such example is the icon of the Crucifixion that dates from the second half of the thirteenth century now in the Icon Gallery of the Church of St. Clemence in Ohrid, Macedonia, where at the top of Christ’s cross the inscription IC and IX is clearly legible. Another example is the twelfth century mosaic of the *Deësis* in the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople where again, to the left and right of Christ’s head, the same letters are found.

¹³⁰ The Twelve Great Feasts of the liturgical year include: Nativity of the Theotokos (8 September), Elevation of the Holy Cross (14 September), Presentation of the Theotokos (21 November), Nativity of Christ (25 December), Epiphany (6 January), Presentation of Christ at the Temple (2 February), Annunciation (25 March), Entry into Jerusalem (the Sunday before Pascha), Ascension of Christ (forty days after Pascha), Pentecost (fifty days after Pascha), Transfiguration (6 August), Dormition of the Theotokos (15 August). See Sabados, “L’iconostase de Moldovița,” 32-33.

Testament prophets holding scrolls to either side. The fifth and last tier has at the center the icon of the Virgin Orans, symbolic of the Annunciation at the moment of conception and of the Virgin's intercessory role. Six seraphim—six-winged celestial beings, or angels, literally referred to as the “burning ones”—frame the icon of the Virgin and Christ Child on both sides.

The organization and iconography of the iconostasis at Moldovița finds visual parallels in surviving sections of iconostases from Mount Athos, such as the portions showing scenes from Christ's *Passion* from Iviron Monastery (Fig. 4.126) and those with similar themes and feasts from Pantokrator Monastery (Fig. 4.127). The latter example presents the richest and most complete cycle, containing thirty-one scenes in total. In both Athonite cases, moreover, each scene occupies a separate compartment defined by a carved relief arch resting on colonnades taking the form of stylized palm trunks, topped with Corinthian-style capitals. A row of smaller arches decorates the inner curves of the main arches, and rosettes in the center of three acanthus leaves fill the spandrels. In the Moldavian examples, by contrast, the feasts appear in roundels below the rows of apostles and prophets. On later iconostases, from the late sixteenth century onward, the figures of the apostles and prophets no longer appear standing in their separate medallions to either side of the *Deësis* or *Trinity*. Rather, they are shown seated, as an image from Văratec Monastery shows (Fig. 4.128). I will return momentarily to the standing figures represented on the sixteenth-century iconostases, as found at Moldovița.

Finally, the iconostasis is surmounted by a crucifix with the four symbols of the Evangelists adorning its terminals (Fig. 4.129). Full-length representations of the Virgin Mary and the Evangelist John, both painted on individual panels, frame the cross on either side. Similar crosses, characteristic of Palaiologan works and often also showing the Hetoimasia or Prepared Throne for Christ's Second Coming at the top, were placed either at the vertex of the iconostasis or behind the high altar in the chancel. An exemplary crucifix of this type, completed c.1360-1380, survives at the Pantokrator Monastery on Mount Athos (Fig. 4.130).

Because the iconostasis designated the separation of the naos and the sanctuary, it also marked the liminal boundary between what is visible and what is invisible; between a symbolic earthly realm present in the naos and a more sacred space beyond, in the altar

area. The division of the sacred space and the particular role played by the iconostasis was articulated in the first half of the fifteenth century by Symeon, archbishop of Thessalonike (1416/17-1429), who gives a rich theological interpretation of this furnishing in his *Interpretations (Hermeneia) of the Christian Temple and Its Rituals*.¹³¹ In one passage in particular, he explains the relationship between the nave and sanctuary of the church and Christ's human and divine natures, as well as the nature of the human body and soul. He writes:

The church is double on account of its division into the space of the sanctuary and that which is outside the sanctuary, and thus it images Christ himself, who is likewise double, being at once God and man, both invisible and visible. And the church likewise images man, who is compounded of [visible] body and [invisible] soul. But the church supremely images the mystery of the Trinity, which is unapproachable in its essence, but known through its providential activity and powers.¹³²

Access to the naos was thus thought to signify the visible human nature of Christ, while his invisible nature was articulated by the restriction of the sanctuary area from view. In the passage cited above, Symeon also suggests that the space of the sanctuary had to be restricted from the public precisely because of the mysteries that took place within it, at the altar, during the liturgy, which were meant to be contemplated and understood only spiritually by the faithful.

The Russian Orthodox priest and theologian Pavel Alexandrovich Florensky (1882-1937) likewise articulates the significance of the sacred space of the sanctuary in his book *Iconostasis* (1922).¹³³ Writing more than four centuries after Symeon, Florensky describes the altar as “the place of the invisible, the area set apart from this world, separate, withdrawn, dedicated.”¹³⁴ The altar in its wholeness is, Florensky continues, “heaven as sensible, as mind-apprehendable...as one with [in the phrase from the Divine

¹³¹ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *Interpretations (Hermeneia) of the Christian Temple and Its Rituals*, in Migne, *PG*, 155. See also Constans, “Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen,” 163-184.

¹³² Symeon of Thessaloniki, 704A, trans. in Constans, “Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen,” 167.

¹³³ Florensky, *Iconostasis*.

¹³⁴ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 59.

Liturgy] ‘the most heavenly and spiritual altar’.”¹³⁵ At their different times, both Symeon and Florensky distinguish between a vision that is actual and concrete and a spiritual seeing aided by prayer and contemplation of the divine. The iconostasis plays a role in conditioning both modes of seeing. It conceals what is most sacred and intended only for spiritual contemplation, and, at the same time, provides a richly decorated surface that reveals “the meaning of the relationship which exist[ed] between the sanctuary and the naos, between the temporal and the eternal.”¹³⁶ As such, the iconostasis does not “conceal from the believer some sharp mystery,” but rather, as Florensky describes its function, “[it] point[ed] out to the half-blind the Mysteries of the altar, open[ing] for them an entrance into a world closed to them.”¹³⁷

The iconostasis, in fact, did not just separate the naos and the sanctuary of the church but it also brought these two spaces together and mediated between them. In other words, the opaque wall of icons marked a porous zone and functioned more like a threshold than a barrier *per se*. The threshold, as Mircea Eliade characterizes it, is “the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds—and at the same time the paradoxical place where these two worlds communicated, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible.”¹³⁸ I would say this is true of the iconostasis as well since the visible space before it and the invisible one beyond were brought together and “activated” during the performance of the Divine Liturgy, which both separated and mediated between these two different spheres.

During the Divine Liturgy, the clergy entered the sanctuary area through the Royal Doors of the iconostasis twice: first during what is referred to as the “Little Entrance” that initiated the liturgy and symbolized Christ’s Incarnation and Baptism, and second during the “Great Entrance” when the bishop celebrated the gifts of the Eucharist at the altar. This second entrance symbolized Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.¹³⁹ The celebration of the Eucharist in the most sacred space of the church, at the altar behind the iconostasis, concealed the ceremony and the gifts from the faithful

¹³⁵ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 59.

¹³⁶ Ouspensky, “The Problem of the Iconostasis,” 208.

¹³⁷ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 62.

¹³⁸ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 25.

¹³⁹ *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostomos*,
<<http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/liturgy/liturgy.html>> (accessed 21 September 2016).

gathered in the naos. These, in turn, were revealed only gradually, when the bishop emerged from behind the wall of icons with the consecrated gifts. Symeon of Thessalonike describes and explains this process in the early fifteenth century. After the bishop enters the sanctuary for the second time, “the doors are closed,” Symeon writes, for the sublime things cannot be contemplated by the lower members, neither are the mysteries understood by all, for at that moment Jesus is veiled from the many, and disclosed only gradually. Afterwards, the doors are opened, analogous to the contemplation of the more advanced and perfect... and Christ unites and is united to all, but in a manner relative to the capacity of each, for all do not immediately participate in him, for some do so purely, and without veils.¹⁴⁰

The performance space of the liturgy thus engaged with, and “activated,” both the spaces before and beyond the iconostasis and associated the crossing of the threshold with the transformative nature of the liturgy. The iconostasis, in turn, separated the intelligible from the material, articulated the liminal state between the visible and the invisible, and attested to the idea that Christ is both human and divine, at once on earth and in heaven. This monumental wall of icons, in effect, functioned as a “symbolic boundary” between the knowable and that which lay beyond comprehension; between that which was to be contemplated visually and that which was to be contemplated spiritually—in essence, between the sensible and the intelligible.

What is more, at the same time that the iconostasis concealed and protected the high altar and the mysteries set forth in the Eucharist, it also displayed to the faithful a monumental gilded surface replete with icons and elaborate carvings.¹⁴¹ This large and richly decorated surface of the iconostasis with its gilded carvings and the numerous icons displayed in multiple registers would have appealed visually to the faithful upon entering the naos of the church.¹⁴² The icons, especially, would have appeared more immediate. Although it is difficult to reconstruct entirely the actual sensorially rich experiences of viewing the icons during the liturgy in the candle-lit and scent-filled space

¹⁴⁰ Symeon, 296BC, trans. in Constans, “Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen,” 169.

¹⁴¹ The iconostasis at Moldovița, and others like it found in Eastern Orthodox churches from this region, are not decorated on the side facing the altar.

¹⁴² For a more detailed discussion, see the introduction to Gerstel, ed., *Thresholds of the Sacred*, 1-6.

of the naos, the iconostasis, aflicker with the light of dozens of lamps and candles, is likely to have induced the faithful to acknowledge both the physicality of the threshold and the proximity of the divine. In the second half the nineteenth century, the Greek author Georgios Vizyenos (1849-1896) describes a childhood memory of an iconostasis as follows:

Whenever the flame of a candle flickered, it seemed to me that the Saint on the icon...had begun to come to life and was stirring, trying to wrench free of the wood and come down to the pavement, dressed in his broad, red robes, with the halo around his head, and with those staring eyes on his pale and impassive face.¹⁴³

Florensky also comments on the incense that filled the Orthodox church during the Divine Liturgy. Incense, he wrote, “is a landmark which, because it is sensorially comprehensible, reveals the invisible world.”¹⁴⁴ Although these two sources are from significantly later periods than the large iconostasis considered here, the experience of the icon described by Georgios and the significance of the incense outlined by Florensky are noteworthy because the faithful of the sixteenth century most likely experienced the icons on the iconostasis under similar dimly-lit and scent-filled conditions. They, too, would have had some form of visions of the divine. In fact, scholars like Otto Demus,¹⁴⁵ Robert Nelson,¹⁴⁶ and most recently Bissera Pentcheva,¹⁴⁷ have explored the phenomenological experience of Byzantine icons, their materiality, the sensory experience they evoked, and their performative qualities. Demus, for example, in his study of aesthetics in Byzantine mosaics introduced the notion of “three dimensional space icons” where the space of the image extended before it, in a kind of reverse perspective, and encompassed the beholder.¹⁴⁸ Pentcheva also focused on the interactive space between the icon and the believer, arguing that the significance of the icon emerged from the interaction of subject

¹⁴³ Vizyēnos, *My Mother's Sin and Other Stories*, 7.

¹⁴⁴ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 60.

¹⁴⁵ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*.

¹⁴⁶ Nelson, “The Discourse on Icons, Then and Now,” 145-157.

¹⁴⁷ Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*.

¹⁴⁸ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*.

and object where the numerous appearances on the surface of the icon animated the image and in turn stirred the soul of the devout.¹⁴⁹

The proximity of the icons on the iconostasis to the most sacred area of the church also rendered them more potent. Because icons are said to resemble their respective prototypes in form and essence, they are “declarative and indicative of something hidden”—of a kind of mingling of spirit and matter.¹⁵⁰ They are, as such, mediators that provide “a way for the believer to comprehend God and his teachings and a medium through which God and the believer interact,” as Robert Nelson has explained it.¹⁵¹ The icons present on the iconostasis, thus, facilitated the contemplation of the faithful and brought them in turn closer to the divine by creating a more intimate relationship between the two. Take, for example, the two *Despotic Icons* on the iconostasis at Humor: that of the Virgin enthroned with the Christ Child from the left of the Royal Doors (Fig. 4.121), and that of Christ to the right of the entrance into the altar (Fig. 4.122). These two icons engaged the faithful more immediately because of their large scale, rich decorations, and centrality within the iconostasis. The visual dialogue in the formal elements of these two icons—especially in the scale and frontality of the main central figures, and the similar throne and heavenly settings with extensive gold leaf, clouds, and angels—suggests a connection between them. In fact, what is highlighted by these two icons, and this is true of the iconography of the iconostasis screen at large, is the central role of the Virgin Mary as intercessor and of Christ as the Redeemer of Christians. These theological beliefs are registered again in different guises along the central axis of the iconostasis in the scene of the Crucifixion above the Royal Doors, the scene of the *Deësis* above it, the representation of the Trinity followed by the image of the Virgin Orans, then in the Christ on crucifix at the top of the iconostasis, and, finally, in the culmination of the vertical axis in the image of Christ as Pantokrator in the dome above (Fig. 4.131).

Similar theological parallels are drawn along the primary vertical axis around the eastern window in the exterior decorations of the church at Moldovița (Fig. 4.132). Right below the window of the sanctuary is an image of the Christ Child lying in a chalice

¹⁴⁹ Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon*; idem, “Moving Eyes: Surface and Shadow in the Byzantine Mixed-Media Relief Icon,” 223-234; idem, “The Performative Icon,” 631-655.

¹⁵⁰ See John of Damascus, *De imagine Oratio* III, in Migne, *PG*, 94, 1337, trans. in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453*, 171.

¹⁵¹ Nelson, “The Discourse on Icons,” 149.

covered by the red liturgical cloth called the *aër*¹⁵² and with two Eucharist-like wafers emerging from his body. In this instance, the Eucharist on the altar inside the sanctuary is visualized in the exterior decorations in this particular image of the Christ Child lying in the chalice. Above the window is the Lamb of God standing before a red cloth, an image that obviously symbolizes the sacrificial Christ. The theological significance of this image appears on the iconostasis twice: once in the medallion above the Royal Doors that depicts Christ's Crucifixion, and once in the large crucifix atop the iconostasis. Although both of these images represent the crucified Christ, one presents the moment of Christ's suffering, while the other, the one at the top of the iconostasis, presents the moment of his triumph. Finally, above the image of the Lamb of God on the exterior is an image of the Virgin Mary enthroned with the Christ Child and surrounded by angels. This representation of the Virgin speaks of the miraculous Incarnation that enabled the divine God to be present in the world, and also of the significant role of the Virgin as intercessor co-redemptrix. A parallel can be drawn here between this image on the exterior and the large icon of the Virgin on the iconostasis and the *Deësis* scene on the third tier of the iconostasis.

All of these images articulate the significant role of the Virgin as both mother of God and intercessor. I would conclude, then, that what is represented along the vertical axis both on the iconostasis inside the church and in the exterior decorations are different images of Christ and the Virgin Mary that signal their divine presence and redemptive roles within Christianity.

The surrounding images of these central axes, both in the interior on the iconostasis and on the exterior around the apses, are also of significance, since all of the saintly and heavenly figures are standing and oriented toward the center. On the exterior, this is evident in all of the figures painted around the apse of the church that give the impression to be partaking in a kind of procession toward the central axis along the eastern window. This finds a visual parallel on the iconostasis, particularly in the third and fourth tiers. The third tier shows at the center a *Deësis* where Christ is enthroned in the middle of the composition and receives prayers from the Virgin who stands to his

¹⁵² An *aër* is a richly embroidered liturgical cloth used to cover the chalice and the paten on the altar during the Divine Liturgy.

right and from Saint John who stands to his left. But it is not just the Virgin and Saint John who direct their prayers to Christ. The apostles to either side of this scene do so as well. Their participation is signaled by the visual unity of this tier where all the apostles are oriented toward the central scene—all petitioning to Christ on behalf of the faithful—thus serving as a constant reminder of the purpose of prayer in salvation and in intercession.¹⁵³ In this instance, this scene should not be interpreted as a traditional *Deësis*, but rather as the *Great Intercession*. This expanded composition is echoed in the fourth tier of the iconostasis, where the prophets on either side of the central *Trinity* are equally facing the center, directing their gestures toward God the Father, Christ, and the dove of the Holy Spirit.

This formal unity between the icons on the iconostasis stresses the intercessory role of these figures between the earthly and the heavenly spheres not only physically, but also in temporal terms—physically, because the icons and the screen to which they were affixed mark the boundary between the naos and the altar area; and temporally, because the icons juxtapose holy figures from rather different periods of ecclesiastical history, suggesting “an alternate frame of reference where all saints flourish simultaneously and on the same sacred place,” coexisting, and in turn signifying all that is divine.¹⁵⁴ This same idea is conveyed by icons that represent the church’s calendar year, or *Menologium*, as found painted in the interior of the pronaos and burial chamber at Moldovița.

Like the *Menologium* icon, moreover, the iconostasis presents a wall of holy figures from different time periods that belong both to an earthly realm and a heavenly one. They also mediate between the two. In a way their function resembles that of the iconostasis itself—the monumental screen that both separates and mediates between the space of the naos and that of the sanctuary. The icons, however, also present to the faithful a site for contemplation of the divine. Indeed, the saints in the icons that surround the altar as, as Florensky phrases it, “a manifest appearance of heavenly witnesses...who proclaim that which is from the other side of the mortal flesh.”¹⁵⁵ As such, they are the

¹⁵³ For a similar discussion, see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 248.

¹⁵⁴ This argument was made in reference to smaller iconostases, but it is certainly applicable to monumental ones as well. See Gerstel, *Thresholds of the Sacred*, 3.

¹⁵⁵ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 62.

“living stones” that “make up the living wall of the iconostasis, for they dwell simultaneously in two worlds, combining within themselves the life here and the life there.”¹⁵⁶

As we have seen, the monumental iconostasis at the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery, and others like it, function on many different levels within the performance space of the church and of the Orthodox liturgy. These solid gilded walls of icons enhance the splendor of the church interior in their prominence and immediacy. They also present a site metaphorically positioned between two realms: an earthly realm denoted by the naos of the church, and the heavenly realm of the sanctuary area. As such, they serve as “the wall that separates two worlds,” delineating the boundary between what is visible and what is invisible.¹⁵⁷ And while they function as solid and opaque barriers that protect and conceal from the faithful the altar and the activities performed there, they are also permeable, both physically and spiritually. Physically, they separate the space of the naos from the altar. But they also mediate between these two spaces during the performance of the liturgy when the clergy access the altar area through the Royal Doors. Spiritually, iconostases provide particularly through their imagery a vision of ‘the divine’ that serves as a substitute for the mysteries of the liturgy performed at the altar (Fig. 4.133).¹⁵⁸ As such, they offer the faithful a focal point for prayer and devotion and a visual means through which to access the divine.

Conclusion

Upon entering the heavily fortified monastic complex at Moldovița (Figs. 4.134-4.136), in order to arrive at the main entrance to the Church of the Annunciation—the *katholikon* of the monastery and also its most central feature—one has to undertake a short walk along the south wall of the church, against the backdrop of the monumental and brightly colored murals of the *Tree of Jesse* and the *Akathistos Hymn* on the building’s exterior (Fig. 4.53). According to the carved dedicatory inscription on the south wall, to the left of the entrance leading to the open exonarthex, the church at Moldovița was built “with the Father’s will, the Son’s help, and the Holy Spirit’s

¹⁵⁶ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 62.

¹⁵⁷ Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 62.

¹⁵⁸ Walter, “A New Look at the Byzantine Sanctuary Barrier,” 206.

blessing” by Peter Rareș voivode—“the believer and worshipper of Christ...through God’s grace prince of the land of Moldavia...[and] son of the old Stephen voivode”—in the year 7040 (1532), and painted in 7045 (1537). The inscription above the door leading from the exonarthex into the pronaos confirms this information.¹⁵⁹

The west façade displays scenes from Genesis interspersed, as revealed through the narrow arched openings, with moments from the *Last Judgment* painted on the entire eastern wall of the exonarthex. On one level, the juxtaposition of scenes from *Genesis* and the *Last Judgment* would have prompted a scriptural awareness of what came at the beginning and what will be at the end of times (Fig. 4.103). On another level, this visual dialogue conflated temporalities on a single plane, stressing existence in time and serving as an appropriate marker for the beginning of the path to Salvation, through the church proper. As such, the open exonarthex, as evident at Moldovița, provided a space of transition between the natural world and the sacred space of the church that, in turn, was further inflected visually, spatially, and spiritually.

Once inside the open exonarthex, the viewer enters the pronaos through a narrow Spitzbogenportal at the center of the eastern wall that leads through the expansive and awe-inspiring mural of the *Last Judgment* painted there (Fig. 4.137). The entryway, with a receding pointed arch with concentric embrasures framed by a rectangular border, marks the threshold into the domed rectangular pronaos of the church. Illuminated by two tall and narrow windows on each of the north and south walls, the space of the pronaos overwhelms, yet also delights, the viewer with the variety and color of its murals that cover the walls. These bright images—showing scenes from the *Menologium* alongside full-length depictions of saints, martyrs, and representations of the Seven Ecumenical Councils—set the tone for the kind of spiritual experience encouraged and structured by the dynamic dialogue between the images and the architecture of the church.

Before reaching the triconch naos and altar area of the katholikon at Moldovița, where the mysteries of the Eucharist were and continue to be celebrated, one has to transverse the space of the burial chamber. Central, narrow shoulder-arch portals facing

¹⁵⁹ The inscription on the door between the exonarthex and the pronaos reads: “Написах сиа храм съ(и) повелѣниемъ гена Іо(ан)на Петро Воеводи, г(о)сп(о)дд(а)рь земли Молдавской, и съвършися в л(ѣ)то 7045, м(ѣ)с(ѣ)ца септе(м)в(р)ѣа 11.” / “This church was commissioned by Prince John Peter Voivode, prince of the land of Moldavia, and was completed in the year 7045 [1537], the month of September 11.” Iorga, *Inscriptii*, II, 13 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

one another—and consisting of variations on the late Gothic *Schulterbogenportal*—mediate access to the burial room. One thus has to traverse the space of the burial chamber, acknowledging its physical presence and that of the deceased buried there, before arriving in the larger and more brightly lit subsequent space of the naos. In contrast to the framing rooms of the naos and the pronaos that exhibit a vertical emphasis culminating in the painted domes above, the burial chamber is covered only by a barrel vault. The unassuming structure of this room encourages a moment of pause and contemplation conveying the viewer into the more sacred and elaborate space of the naos. At Moldovița, moreover, the vault of the burial chamber is lower in comparison to the height of the pronaos and naos, and the room is dimly lit by a single small window on the south wall. The burial chamber at Humor Monastery presents us with a similar architectural and spatial scenario. These formal characteristics of the burial chamber, at least in their early-sixteenth-century iterations, distinguish the funerary room from the adjacent spaces of the pronaos and naos, and emphasize the more intimate and contemplative character of this monastic commemorative chamber. Virgil Vătășianu and Maria Ana Musicescu stressed, in their respective studies, that the spatial separation inside the Moldavian churches, requiring the faithful to recollect mentally and reconstruct the experience in the previous space and the overall experience inside the church; the spatial separation inside the churches, creates a “mystical tension.”¹⁶⁰ This encourages a moment of recollection leading up to the naos and its impressive domed central space.¹⁶¹ Most recently, Gabriel Herea concluded thus that the burial room and the pronaos and

¹⁶⁰ Vătășianu, *Studii de artă veche românească și universală*, 78; Musicescu, *Mănăstirea Sucevița*, 43-44.

¹⁶¹ This experience was further emphasized spatially by the elevation of the chancel, and sometimes even the naos of the church, a few steps above the pronaos and burial chamber. The churches in Pătrăuți and Suceava have the altar area set a step above the floor of the naos, while the church at Voroneț has the entire naos and altar area on the same ground level but a step above the floor of the pronaos. This particular elevation of the sacred spaces located closest to the altar appears in the later churches from Stephen's reign as well, and becomes characteristic of the layout of the monastic churches from the first half of the sixteenth century. In some examples, however, as is the case at Volovăț and St. Demetrios in Suceava, the naos is set, respectively, two steps and one step below the pronaos and chancel. The gradual increase of the floor level as one approaches the altar area as a result of the presence of the steps and the elevation of the interior spaces is interrupted in the churches in Volovăț and Suceava by the descent into the space of the naos. This produces a different effect that accentuates the elevation of the naos and its slender tower above.

exonarthex that precede it serve as additions to the liturgical space of the church.¹⁶² The viewer was thus mentally primed for his or her eventual passage into the naos.

In the same way, exiting the church was also progressive, with murals engulfing the entryways and controlling access spatially and visually. Whereas upon entering the church the faithful encountered the *Last Judgment*, upon leaving the naos they had to progress through a burial room—both experiences serving as reminders of the end of time and salvation through the church proper.

The Moldavian church interiors here under consideration are comprised of a longitudinal progression of spaces of different dimensions that serve a range of functions. These spaces also grow progressively darker as the faithful approach the naos and altar areas (Fig. 4.138). While devoid of much natural light, these elaborately and extensively painted rooms would have been animated by the flickering light of candles, the burning incense, and the singing from the choirs of monks and nuns assembled there. Within the church, moreover, the directional axis to the naos and altar areas required the passage through progressively-darker spaces in which hundreds of images, some of which conflating historical moments with contemporary celebrations—covered the walls in their entirety. The pronaos and burial chamber, displaying images from the *Menologium* that marked the passing of a full liturgical year, signaled a passage through time—a temporal dimension.¹⁶³ That these two para-liturgical spaces of the church served as spaces of preparation is further underscored, as Herea explains, by the classical meander pattern that he identifies as a labyrinth found, for instance, at Humor Monastery (Fig. 4.139).¹⁶⁴ This motif begins in the exonarthex at Humor, continues along the walls of the pronaos and burial chamber, and ends abruptly at the entrance into the naos (Fig. 4.140).¹⁶⁵ As

¹⁶² Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean*, 15: “Celelalte încăperi ale bisericii, fie este vorba doar de pronaos...sau este vorba de pridvor, pronaos și gropniță...sunt construcții anexă spațiului liturgic.” / “The rest of the rooms of the church, be it the pronaos...or the exonarthex, pronaos, and burial chamber...serve as additions to the space dedicated to the liturgy [naos/altar].” On the “preparatory” function of these spaces, see Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean*, 22-28.

¹⁶³ At Probota, the first six months of the *Menologium* (September-February) appear in the burial chamber, and the last six months of the liturgical year (March-August) in the pronaos. In the pronaos, March, May and June begin on the east wall and continue on the south wall, while April, June and August start on the west wall and continue on the north wall (3 registers). Thus, the order is reversed; time is fashioned from the naos westward.

¹⁶⁴ Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean*, esp. 22-28.

¹⁶⁵ I observed that the zig-zag register is present at Probota only in the burial chamber. Here, it was perhaps intended to encourage a circumambulation of the graves found in this space.

such, this visual element signals the physical and spiritual passage from the spaces that symbolize the “lived” or “seen” world toward the naos and the altar that indicate the “unseen” or the “divine” sphere. This “journey,” so to speak, is further physically accentuated by the lowered barrel-vaulted ceiling of the burial chamber that not only lends the room an unassuming structure, but also stresses an awareness of death, encouraging thus a moment of pause and contemplation before entering the more sacred, and more visually and architecturally elaborate naos of the church.

Through the distinctive architecture, the particular choice and placement of the image cycles, their iconographies, and the conflation of temporalities within individual images and among groups of scenes, the Moldavian monastic churches of the early sixteenth century in particular, continually stimulated the faithful. As they progressed from the outside to the inside of the church, along a carefully structured and defined horizontal axis leading toward the altar, and along a vertical axis once within the naos, the faithful were encouraged to approach the east end of the church and stand under the great Pantokrator in the dome in the right spiritual mindset for the celebrations of the Divine Liturgy (Fig. 4.141).

CHAPTER FIVE

Dynastic Concerns and Memoria

Introduction

The tomb of Bogdan I, the great-grandfather of Stephen III, is found in the naos of St. Nicholas at Rădăuți (Cat.no.2). It is the oldest known funerary monument in a church in the regions immediately east of the Carpathian Mountains (Fig. 5.1).¹ Its dedicatory inscription reads:

Through God's grace, John Stephen voivode, prince of the land of Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode, embellished this grave of his great-grandfather, the old Bogdan voivode, in the year 6988 [1480], month of January 27...²

Dating to the reign of Peter I Mușat (r. 1367-1368), the church at Rădăuți is the earliest extant Moldavian ecclesiastical edifice constructed from durable materials.³ Because of its early tomb monuments, the building is also generally regarded as the first Moldavian princely mausoleum. A letter from 6 July 1413, written in Suceava by Prince Alexander the Good, already affirms that the church at Rădăuți had been serving as the burial site of his

Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

¹ For the most recent and comprehensive study on the monastic church at Rădăuți, see Bătrâna and Bătrâna, *Biserica "Sfântul Nicolae" din Rădăuți*, 301. For an overview of the interior iconographic program, see Bătrâna and Bătrâna, *Biserica "Sfântul Nicolae" din Rădăuți*, 309-355.

² The original inscription in Church Slavonic on the tomb of Bogdan I reads: "† М(и)л(о)стѣжъ в(о)жїежъ Іу(ан)на Стефанъ воевода, г(о)сп(о)д(а)ръ земли Молдавской, с(ъ)нъ Богдана воеводы, украси съ гробъ съ своемуу прѣдѣдоу, старомуу Богдануу воеводѣ, в лѣт(о) ꙗꙋлїи, м(ѣ)с(е)ца ген(арїе) ꙗꙋлїа." *Repertoriul*, 251 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

³ Both Virgil Vătășianu and Gheorghe Balș attribute the church to the reign of Bogdan I. See Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*, I, 301-302; Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 158-160. Paul Henry, on the other hand, claims the monument dates to the reign of Alexander the Good. See Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du Nord*, 39-44. However, based on recent archaeological excavations carried out in the naos of the church that uncovered an earlier wooden structure in which Bogdan I was buried, the present monument was dating to the reign of Peter I Mușat. See Bătrâna and Bătrâna, "Contribuția cercetărilor arheologice la cunoașterea arhitecturii ecleziastice din Moldova în secolele XIV-XV," 146-147; idem, *Biserica "Sfântul Nicolae" din Rădăuți*.

ancestors.⁴ Indeed, from the foundation of the principality in 1359 onward, the first Moldavian princes descended from the Mușat family line were buried in the side aisles of the naos, in spaces defined by a series of short transversal vaults that form deep niches along the walls (Fig. 5.2).⁵ As such, the central aisle of the church functioned as the naos *per se*, used for the elaborate celebrations of the Eucharist, while the side aisles served, in part, as monumental funerary niches.⁶ These types of *arcosolia*, however, are not unique to this particular building.⁷ In fact, they are predominant in the architecture of middle and late Slavic-Byzantine churches. In a number of Serbian churches from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, for example, the burials of significant individuals took place in arched funerary recesses flanking the lateral apses of the naos, located toward the west. The fourteenth-century tomb of Archbishop Daniel II in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Peć (built by 1266) is a prominent case in point (Fig. 5.3).

Between December 1479 and May 1480, Stephen III commissioned six large gravestones with carved dedicatory inscriptions, similar to the one cited above, for the tombs

⁴ The Romanian Academy Library, MS.no.5231, fols. 119-120. The document survives in a German translation completed toward the end of the eighteenth century. *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 49-50. Alexander the Good gave his mother in law, Anastasia, the village of Coțmanul Mare with all the smaller villages that belong to it, mentioning that, after her death, these were to be given in the care of the “episcopate of Rădăuți, of St. Nicholas...where our ancestors are buried ...” / “...des Radauczer Bissthums dem heiligen Nicolao...in dem unsere Voreltern begraben liegen...”

⁵ For the burials inside the Church of St. Nicholas at Rădăuți Monastery, see Cat.no.1. The funerary inscription on the tomb of Roman I reads: “† М(И)Л(О)СТІЖ В(О)ЖІЕЖ ВЛ(А)ГОУЪСТИВЫИ Г(О)СПОД(И)НЬ НАШ, ІВ(АННА) СТЕФАН ВОЕВОД(А) ГОСПОДАР ВЪСЕИ ЗЕМЛИ МОЛДАВСКОИ, СЪЗІНЬ БОГДАНА ВОЕВОДЫ, ГОСПОД(А)РА ЗЕМЛИ МОЛДАВСКОИ ОУКРАСИ ГРОВЬ СЪ СКОЕМОУ ПРѢДЪДОУ, ІВ(АННА) РОМАНОУ ВОЕВОДЪ, ГОСПОДАРОУ ЗЕМЛИ МОЛДАВСКОИ, В ЛѢТ(О) ҃СЦП҃З, М(Ъ)С(Е)ЦА ДЕКЕМВРІА) ҃І.” / “Through God’s grace, our devout prince, John Stephen, prince of the land of Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode, embellished this grave of his ancestor, John Roman voivode, prince of Moldavia, in the year 6987 [1479], month of December 15.” *Repertoriul*, 249 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation). The funerary inscription on the tomb of Bogdan, the brother of Alexander the Good, reads: “† ВЛ(А)ГОУЪСТИВЫИ И Х(РИ)С(Т)ОЛЮБИВЫИ ІВ(АННА) СТЕФАН ВОЕВОДА, Г(О)СП(О)Д(А)РЪ ЗЕМЛИ МОЛДАВСКОИ, СЪЗІНЬ БОГДАНА ВОЕВОДЫ, ОУВРАСИ ГРОВЬ СЪ ДЪДОУ СВОЕМОУ, ІВ(АННА) БОГДАНОУ ВОЕВОДЪ, БР[А]ТА АЛЕ҃АНДРА ВОЕВОДЫ, В ЛѢТ(О) ҃СЦП҃И М(Ъ)С(Е)ЦА ГЕН(А)РІЕ) ҃КЕ Д(Ь)НЬ, ВЪ ВЪУНАА ЕМОУ П(А)МАТ.” / “The devout and lover of Christ John Stephen voivode, prince of the land of Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode, embellished the grave of his grandfather, John Bogdan voivode, son of Alexander voivode, in the year 6988 [1480], month of January 25, so that he may be remembered forever.” *Repertoriul*, 250 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

⁶ Năstase, “Despre spațiul funerar în arhitectura moldovenească,” 202.

⁷ An *arcosolium* (Latin = arch-throne; place of state) is an arched recess intended as a place of entombment, often above ground in a church. It was hewn out of a rock in the early Christian period and then inserted into the wall of the church in the middle and late Byzantine periods.

on to the eternal dwellings in the year 7000...”—a deliberate and meaningful choice of date that scholars up to this point have overlooked.¹¹ It appears, thus, that Stephen sought out these projects—these noble deeds—in an effort to embellish and prominently mark the tombs of his ancestors, while ensuring his own remembrance—since his name appears carved on all of the gravestones—as well as his salvation at the end of days.¹²

I propose that within a consideration of these issues—dynastic lineage, remembrance, and salvation—the development of the burial chamber (*gropniță*)¹³ as a distinctive, central, and multi-layered space in the Moldavian *katholika* of the late-fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century should be examined. Whereas at the turn of the fifteenth century burials for significant individuals took place in the naos and/or pronaos, and then in the burial room in the form it assumed initially in the *katholikon* at Bistrița (see below), under Stephen’s patronage the burial chamber became part of the main structure of monastic churches—always built as an independent, clearly delineated space in between the pronaos to the west and the more sacred space of the naos to the east. Despite its central location, the burial chamber presented a more intimate and unassuming space than those that preceded or followed it. This special mortuary room served as a resting place and was calibrated for the purposes of dynastic *memoria* of both the living and the dead, in particular members of the ruling class and monastic officials who had the privilege to be buried there. Perhaps formulated as a solution to a desire on the part of the princely patron to be buried closer to the most sacred area of the church, the naos, yet in a space distinctly delineated from that of the pronaos, the burial chamber was to become by the end of the fifteenth century one of the

¹¹ The funerary inscription on Stephen’s grave reads: “† Бл(а)гоу(ь)стивыи г(о)сп(о)д(и)нь, Іу(а)нна Стефан воевода, б(о)ж(е)ю м(и)л(о)ст(и)ю г(о)сп(о)д(а)р земли Молдавской, с(ы)нь Богдана воевод(ы), ктитор и създатель с(в)ет(ь)и шит(ь)ли с(е)и, иже зде лежит. И прѣставис(а) къ вѣч(ь)ным шит(ь)лем, в л(ѣ)тѣ 7000... м(ѣ)с(ѣ)ца... и г(о)сп(о)д(о)дствова лѣт(а)...” / “The devout prince, John Stephen voivode, through God’s grace prince of the land of Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode, founder and builder of this holy establishment, lies here. He passed on to the eternal dwellings in the year 7000... month... and he ruled for...” *Repertoriul*, 267-268 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

¹² The inscriptions on all of the gravestones commissioned by Stephen signal that he was the donor: “Іу(а)нна Стефан воевода, б(о)ж(е)ю м(и)л(о)ст(и)ю г(о)сп(о)д(а)р земли Молдавской, с(ы)нь Богдана воевод(ы), оукраси с(ы)и гробъ...” / “John Stephen voivode, through God’s grace prince of the land of Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode, embellished this tomb...”

¹³ The term *gropniță* to denote the burial chamber is derived from the term for grave: *гробъ* in Church Slavonic; *groapă* in Romanian; *Grab* in German. The Church Slavonic version appears repeatedly in the dedicatory inscriptions sculpted on the gravestones.

most peculiar and distinctive architectural features of Moldavian princely monastic foundations.

The burial chamber not only took shape at a critical moment in Moldavia's history, but it also developed into a space closely tied to princely concerns and aspirations. As will be shown, on the one hand, the burial room functioned as a site that mediated the complex dimensions between the secular and the sacred. As such, it reinforced, yet also problematized, the sanctity of an interior space which in the words of Philippe Ariès “was no more incompatible with the proximity of the dead than it was with the familiar presence of the living.”¹⁴ On the other hand, the burial room served as a unique space in which multifaceted social, spiritual, dynastic, and eschatological concerns were negotiated between the patron, the monastic community, and the laity.

The study of the Moldavian variant of the burial chamber has so far been exclusively undertaken by Romanian scholars. A number of studies published in the last century have looked at the *gropniță* from various standpoints—architectural and social, as well as dynastic and eschatological. These scholarly investigations, which serve as the foundation for my own examinations of the topic, have elucidated various aspects about the form and functions of these special funerary spaces. What is still lacking, however, is a fuller account that considers the complex interplay between the tombs and their architectural and iconographic settings within the broader historical circumstances that stimulated the formulation of such a distinct monastic funerary space. The overarching questions guiding the discussion that follows are: How do the monastic churches reflect and also reinforce the complex identities of their patrons? How are issues of dynastic lineage and remembrance incorporated into, and reflected by, the fabric of the churches and in particular the space of the burial chamber? And to what extent does the burial chamber blur or perhaps challenge our common assumptions about what constitutes the secular and what constitutes the sacred?

The next pages, thus, consider the implications of the presence of the burial chamber in such a prominent position in the Moldavian monastic churches from the late fifteenth century onward that contributed to a transformation of the monastic church building into a space that is both secular and religious. This chapter, moreover, examines the emergence of the burial chamber during the reign of Alexander the Good in the early decades of the

¹⁴ Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 51.

fifteenth century, the development of this funerary space in the context of the spiritual and dynastic ambitions of Stephen III—who took the throne of Moldavia at a critical moment in the principality’s history and that of the Orthodox Christian people—and the further modifications of this sacred burial space during the reign of Peter Rareș, under whose aegis these burial rooms were given extensive image cycles with particular iconographies both inside and outside.

I will also examine how a consideration of the princely gifts and donations to Moldavian monasteries as well to the monastic communities on Mount Athos might contribute to our understanding of how Moldavia’s princes participated in a culture of gift-giving that was intended, in part, to ensure divine protection, remembrance, and a righteous path to Salvation. The extensive building campaigns of churches and monasteries throughout Moldavia in this context can be interpreted at once as an act of piety and as one of selfless generosity in praise of the divine and for the sake of the common faithful—acts that are powerfully visualized in the many votive paintings regularly found in the naos of the churches, considered in Chapters Two and Four.

The culture of gift-giving has been studied extensively, especially from sociological and anthropological standpoints. The seminal study of the French sociologist Marcel Mauss, “*Essai sur le don*” (1924), has informed a variety of scholarly inquiries on the subject by historian and social scientists alike, and remains to this day fundamental to interpretations of gift-giving and gift exchange.¹⁵ According to Mauss, a gift or donation implies, in essence, a transaction of reciprocal obligations. The person or group to whom the gift is offered has to accept it and present something in exchange. In the case of the Moldavian princes, their endowments were meant to assure their perpetual remembrance as well as salvation, and were closely interwoven with their choice of monastic burial. Memorial practices and investigations of *memoria* in the Middle Ages have been spearheaded by the Münster-Freiburg School, and especially by the work of Otto Gerhard Oexle, Karl Schmid, and

¹⁵ Mauss, “*Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l’échange dans les sociétés archaïques,*” 30-186. For an overview of recent scholarship on the topic of gift and gift exchange, as well as the fruitful considerations of the study of gift-giving with attention to historical context, see Bijsterveld, *Do ut des: Gift Giving, Memoria, and Conflict Management in the Medieval Low Countries*, esp. Chapter 1, 17-83.

Joachim Wollasch, who have looked at the operation of memory, the liturgical functions of the commemoration of the dead, and the legal dimensions of these activities.¹⁶

The visual and spatial manifestations of dynastic and spiritual concerns and issues of remembrance in the architecture and image cycles of Moldavia's monastic churches will become evident from the discussion that follows as these sites served to perpetuate a certain image of Moldavia's rulers, their princely and dynastic identities, as well as their aspirations in this life and the next.

The Moldavian *gropniță*

In its funerary architecture, Moldavia stood apart from Slavic-Byzantine practice. It was not the custom in Byzantine and Slavic churches for burials to take place in special funerary rooms incorporated into the main fabric of the church. Rather, tombs were placed in the pronaos or in lateral funerary chapels adjacent to the church building or within the compound of monastic foundations.¹⁷ Likewise, in the rock-cut Byzantine churches of Cappadocia, the funerary spaces, often barrel-vaulted and lined with niches along the walls, were designed as distinct rooms adjacent to the church building and often extending from the north wall of the nave. These expanded *arcosolia* can be seen, for example, at Karabaş Kilise or Black Head Church (c.1061) (Fig. 5.6), Yılanlı Kilise or Snake Church in Ihlara, Aksaray (ninth century), and in the funerary chapel behind Yaprakhisar in the district of Güzelyurt, Aksaray Province (eleventh century).¹⁸ In the majority of the Serbian churches, the burial

¹⁶ The most noteworthy and relevant studies in this regard were published by the German historian and expert on *memoria*, Otto Gerhard Oexle. See his "Memoria und Memorialbild," 384-440; idem, "Die Gegenwart der Lebenden und der Toten: Gedanken über Memoria," 74-107; idem, ed., *Memoria als Kultur*. See also Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. Other scholars, whose work on *memoria*, techniques of remembering, and patterns of memorialization employed in the Middle Ages have provided a backdrop for my own investigations of the topic, include Philippe Ariès, Frances Yates, Mary J. Carruthers, and Patrick J. Geary. See especially Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*; idem, *Images of Man and Death*; Yates, *The Art of Memory*; Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; eadem, *The Craft of Thought*; Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*.

¹⁷ Examples of such funerary spaces in Constantinople include: the *parekklesion* of the Chora Monastery / Kariye Camii (1077-1081), the central chapel of the Pantokrator Monastery / Zeyrek Camii (1118-1124), and the *parekklesion* of the Church of the Theotokos Pammakaristos / Fethiye Camii (c.1070). See Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 357-358, 369 (Kariye Camii); 361-364, 369, 403, 433-434, 662, 732 (for Zeyrek Camii); 368-369, 498 (for Fethiye Camii). On funerary spaces in Byzantine churches, see Ousterhout, *The Architecture of Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, 110-114; idem, *A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia*, 67.

¹⁸ Ousterhout, *A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia*, 166. With regard to the double-nave churches of Cappadocia, moreover, scholars have suggested that one of the naves was likely used for the church proper while the other may have served a funerary function. See Cuneo, "The Architecture," 84-102, esp. 94-95;

chambers project from the side of the building as components. For example, at St. Nicholas (Sv. Nikola) at Kuršumlija, the first ecclesiastical building founded under Stefan Nemanja (r. 1166-1196) and erected between c.1166 and 1168, the roughly square burial chamber was attached to the south wall of the naos (Fig. 5.7).¹⁹ In this larger framework, then, I seek to situate the Moldavian variant of the burial room—designed as a separate room and incorporated into the main fabric of monastic churches—as well as its development and functions.

Several Romanian scholars, including Dumitru Năstase, have claimed that the Moldavian burial chamber first appeared as a distinctive space at the center of the church structure, located between the naos and the pronaos, in the monastic commissions of Stephen III. Archeological investigations have shown that the first *gropniță* appeared in fact much earlier.²⁰ Excavations carried out between 1969 and 1977 determined that the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin at Bistrița Monastery, founded by Alexander the Good in 1402, already had this feature between the pronaos and the naos (Fig. 5.8).²¹ What remains unclear, however, and what scholars have not called into question so far, is the nature of the point of access between the burial chamber and the naos—whether the passageway was marked by a central narrow portal or a larger arch of the kind found in Serbian buildings and in the Moldavian churches of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

This is also a central issue when considering the structural and architectural affinities of the Moldavian variant of the burial chamber with Serbian monastic funerary rooms. The Serbian example certainly appears to have informed the Moldavian development of the burial chamber at the turn of the fifteenth century.²² This occurred at a time when the principality was fostering stronger spiritual ties with the Serbian Orthodox Church.²³ In the Serbian case,

Ötügen, “Zweischiffige Kirchen in Kappadokien und in den angrenzenden Gebieten” 543-552; Teteriatnikov, *The Liturgical Planning of Byzantine Churches in Cappadocia*, 177.

¹⁹ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 492-494.

²⁰ Năstase, “Despre spațiul funerar în arhitectura moldovenească,” 144.

²¹ Bătrâna and Bătrâna, “Contribuția cercetărilor arheologice la cunoașterea arhitecturii ecleziastice din Moldova în secolele XIV-XV,” 159. For the burials in the church at Bistrița Monastery, see Cat.no.41.

²² Although Sinigalia has noted that the solution of the funerary space that first appeared in Serbian monasteries served as a model for the Moldavian variant, her study does not examine carefully the formal architectural features of these spaces in these two traditions. Sinigalia, “L’*église de l’Ascension du monastère du Neamț*,” 27.

²³ In fact, Alexander the Good took the throne of the principality with the help of Mircea the Old, whose advisors originated at Tismana Monastery—an Orthodox monastery in Transylvania built by St. Nicodim (1310-1406) who served as a monk at Hilandar Monastery and founded also the monasteries at Vratna and

the funerary space at the center of the church building first appeared at Studenica Monastery in the Church of Bogorodica (Mother of God) built by Stefan Nemanja (*r.* 1166-1196) toward the end of his reign (begun 1183-1186) (Fig. 5.9).²⁴ This major ecclesiastical foundation commissioned by this ruler was intended to serve as his royal mausoleum, guarding the relics of the founder of a new dynasty and, since Stefan was canonized soon after his death and henceforth venerated as St. Symeon, of the first national saint of Serbia.²⁵ The naos of the katholikon at Studenica was extended eastward by an oblong bay, connected to the naos by a large arch supported by massive spurs projecting from the north and south walls of the building. This extension served as the burial room for Stefan's mortal remains, contained in a tomb in its southwest corner. This arrangement at Studenica was to serve as a model for subsequent Serbian monasteries. The Church of the Ascension (Vaznesenje) at Mileševa Monastery, commissioned before 1234 by the second son of Stefan Prvovenčani, Vladislav, before he became king, also has a narrow western bay separated from the naos by a large arch (Fig. 5.10).²⁶ The sarcophagus of King Vladislav was installed here on the south side of the burial space.

Although separated by over two hundred years, the monastic churches at Studenica and Bistrița invite comparisons especially with regard to the design of their burial chambers. Aside from the analogous placement of this funerary space at the center of the building, it is difficult to determine, given the lack of surviving evidence in the Moldavian case, whether or not the Moldavian variant of the burial room was a direct copy of its Serbian precedents. In other words, the Moldavian burial chamber may certainly have drawn its inspiration from the Serbian models, though it remains unclear whether the Moldavian burial chamber was designed from the outset as an enclosed space on all sides or whether it presented an arched opening at the threshold with the naos, as in Serbia.

Manastirita in Serbia. By 1401, the Serbian influence in Moldavia diminished as Iosif came to be appointed as Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia by the Patriarchate in Constantinople. Moldavian contacts with the Balkan region reemerged during the second half of the fifteenth century. Metropolitan Teoctist I, a Bulgarian probably from Mount Athos, established strong ties between Moldavia and the Patriarchate at Peć during his tenure that lasted from 1453 to 1478.

²⁴ On Studenica Monastery, see, most recently: Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 496-498; Popović, *Studenica: osam vekova slikarstva* [*Studenica: Eight Centuries of Wall Paintings*]; Erdeljan, "Studenica: An Identity in Marble," 93-100; eadem, "Studenica: A New Perspective?" 33-44.

²⁵ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 487.

²⁶ Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 502-503.

What is certain is that by the second half of the fifteenth century—especially during the reign of Stephen III—the Moldavian variant of the burial chamber acquired its distinctive form, with its barrel-vaulted space with single narrow entryways to and from the pronaos and naos of the church. The Church of St. Nicholas that Stephen reconstructed at Probota between 1464 and 1465,²⁷ where his mother Oltea (d. 4 November 1465)²⁸ and his first wife Evdochia of Kiev (d. 4 September 1467)²⁹ were to be buried, is the first monastic church built by the prince to exhibit such a distinct funerary space.³⁰ Stephen’s mausoleum at the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Putna Monastery was also built with a burial chamber a few years alter.³¹ The katholikon, in its current form, dates to the middle of the seventeenth century—having been rebuilt by Vasile Lupu (*r.* 1634-1653), Gheorghe Ștefan (*r.* April-May 1653; July 1653-1658), and Eustratie Dabija (*r.* 1661-1665)—and thus differs significantly from Stephen’s original church. How the edifice originally looked like is subject to an ongoing debate. In his 1926 major study of Stephen’s ecclesiastical commissions, Gheorghe Balș concluded that the later alterations made it almost impossible to reconstruct the initial design of Stephen’s church.³² A decade later, in 1937, Grigore Ionescu suggested that the original church may have been typologically related to the first Moldavian mausoleum, the katholikon at Rădăuți, for which Stephen commissioned the ancestral tombstones in the nave discussed at the beginning of this chapter.³³ More than thirty years later, Sorin Ulea built on this hypothesis and stressed that the original church at Putna was

²⁷ See Bătrâna and Bătrâna, “O primă ctitorie și necropolă voievodală datorată lui Ștefan cel Mare: Mănăstirea Probota,” 205-229, esp. 221-222; idem, “Date noi cu privire la prima ctitorie datorată lui Ștefan cel Mare: Mănăstirea Probota,” 586-599.

²⁸ The funerary inscription of Maria Oltea’s tomb reads: “† СЪ ЕСТЬ ГРОБЪ РАВЪИ БО(О)ЖІА ВЛАТЪ, МА(Д)Т(Е)РЕ Г(О)С(ПО)Д(И)НА ІУ(АННА) СТЕ[Ф]АНА ВОЕВОДЫ, ИЖЕ И ПРѢСТАВИ СЈЕ В ЛѢТО ҃СЦОГ НОЕМВРІА ҃.” / “This is the grave of God’s servant Oltea, the mother of prince John Stephen voivode, who died in the year 6973 [1465], November 4.” *Repertoriul*, 246 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

²⁹ The tomb of Evdochia of Kiev is inscribed: “† СЫ ГРОБЪ СЪТВОРИ [... ИЖЕ И] ПРѢСТАКИ СЯ КЪ ВѢУНИИ ВБИТЪЛИ, В ЛѢТО ҃СЦОЕ СЕП(ТЕМВРІА) ҃ Д(Ь)НИ.” / “This tomb was made by... [who] passed to the eternal dwelling in the year 6975 [1467], September 4.” *Repertoriul*, 247 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation); Iorga, *Inscripții*, I, 60.

³⁰ For the plan of the initial churches at Probota Monastery see especially Bătrâna, “O primă ctitorie și necropolă voievodală datorată lui Ștefan cel Mare: Mănăstirea Probota,” Fig. 3 on 211, and Fig. 9 on 222.

³¹ Pușcașu, “Informare asupra săpăturilor de cercetare arheologică efectuate la Mănăstirea Putna, în anii 1969-1970,” 49-56; idem, and Pușcașu, “Bisericile Putnei: cercetări arheologice din anii 1969-1970,” 177-198. For the burials in the church at Putna Monastery, see Cat.no.3.

³² Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 149.

³³ Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii românești*, 241-242.

similar in form to that at Rădăuți, but much larger in scale.³⁴ The archaeological investigations carried out at Putna between 1969 and 1970 unearthed evidence that Stephen's original church there was in fact built with a special burial room at its center, separating the pronaos from the naos.³⁵ Built two decades after the church at Putna, Stephen's Church of the Ascension at Neamț also included a burial chamber.³⁶ These three monastic foundations—Probotă, Putna, and Neamț—served as princely mausolea for Stephen and members of his immediate family, as well as final resting places for Moldavia's Metropolitans and important bishops who were buried in the pronaos of the churches.

It is important to note that all three princely edifices with burial rooms were constructed prior to the year 1492, feared by the Eastern Orthodox Christians as the year in which the world was going to come to an end. About a decade before this anticipated event, Stephen also commissioned the tombstones for the graves of his ancestors at Rădăuți and Bistrița, as discussed in the introductory pages of this chapter. Dynastic concerns regarding his princely lineage and issues centered on remembrance on Stephen's part and with regard to the memory of his ancestors certainly stood at the root of these significant commissions. It is possible that these matters also served as a catalyst for the particular development of the burial room as a distinctive space in the monastic churches.

Stephen's final ecclesiastical commission in 1503, the church dedicated to the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Dobrovăț Monastery was similarly built with a central burial chamber. However, the first burials at Dobrovăț were all in the pronaos, and it was not until 1513 that the first tomb appeared in the burial chamber, namely that of Bogdan II's wife

³⁴ Ulea, "Prima biserică a mănăstirii Putna," 35-63, esp. 41.

³⁵ Pușcașu, "Informare asupra săpăturilor de cercetare arheologică efectuate la Mănăstirea Putna, în anii 1969-1970," 49-56; *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 128: "...rezultatele cercetărilor arheologice efectuate la interiorul și exteriorul bisericii au demonstrat că biserica inițială a avut un plan triconc, cuprinzând în alcătuirea sa—ca încăperi distincte, despărțite prin ziduri pline cu o grosime de circa 200 cm—altar, naos, gropniță, pronaos și exonartex, însumând o lungime interioară de 33.80 m. Existența încăperii distincte a gropniței este atestată de prezența zidului despărțitor între naosul inițial și încăperea mormintelor, acest tronson de zid sprijinind astăzi coloanele masive cu bază pătrată aflate în naosul bisericii actuale." / "...the archaeological investigations carried out on the interior and exterior of the church determined that the initial edifice had a triconch plan, consisting of distinct rooms separated by solid walls of circa 200 cm—altar, naos, burial chamber, pronaos, and exonarthex—of a total interior length of 33.80 m. The existence of the burial chamber as a distinct space is attested to by the presence of the solid dividing wall between the initial naos and the burial room, which serves today to support the massive colonnades with square bases in the naos of the current church."

³⁶ Sinigalia, "L'église de l'Ascension du monastère du Neamț," 19, 29. For the burials in the church at Neamț Monastery, see Cat.no.6.

Nastasia, who died on 14 October of that same year.³⁷ The evidence suggests that by the end of the fifteenth century the burial chamber was already a well-established architectural feature of Moldavian monastic church architecture intended first and foremost for the tombs of members of the ruling dynasty. This feature was to acquire a more distinctive character and more explicit functions in the early decades of the century that followed.

When Stephen's illegitimate son Peter Rareș ascended the throne in 1527, he designated the new Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery, which he completed in 1530, as his princely mausoleum.³⁸ This move was contested by the community of monks at Putna and generated a great disturbance.³⁹ Although not altogether popular, Peter's move established a new funerary foundation for his own family line, just as his father had done before him at Putna.⁴⁰ In so doing, Peter elevated the status of Probota to one comparable to that of Putna. Stephen may have first thought of Probota as his family mausoleum right from the outset, especially since his mother Oltea and his first wife Evdochia had both been buried there in the older church (1465, 1467).⁴¹ These important burials may have also rendered Probota as a significant monastic site for Peter as well, whose own mother raised him on her own and enabled his ascent to the throne. According to legend, after the death of Stephen the Young, the last legitimate son of Stephen III, the Moldavian boyars gathered to mourn the death of their prince and discuss who the next leader of Moldavia should be. At that time, Peter's mother came to them with a charter from Stephen that excused her of her taxes and

³⁷ Drăguț, *Dobrovăț*, 43-44. For the burials in the church at Dobrovăț Monastery, see Cat.no.29.

³⁸ For who is buried in the church at Probota Monastery, see Cat.no.34. The funerary inscription on Peter's gravestone reads: "[сын гробъ естъ] ХТВОЛЮБЫАГО РАВО БЖЮ... [ИВАН]А Петра Боевода, сын стараго Стефана Боевода, нж[е] прѣстави са къ се[бѣ] вѣнчѣли и къ вѣчнѣмъ вѣнчѣли; вѣчна наметъ." / "This is the grave of the devout servant of God... John Peter Voivode, son of the old Stephen Voivode, who passed on to the eternal dwelling; his eternal remembrance." Iorga, *Inscriptiï*, I, 56-57 (for a transcription of the Church Slavonic and a Romanian translation).

³⁹ See *Holy Putna Monastery*, 55 (my translation of Ștefan S. Gorovei's contribution to the volume), and n. 66 citing *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, VI, 557.

⁴⁰ See the discussion in Crăciun, "Burial and Piety in Comparative Perspective," 119. It appears, however, that Peter may not have had these intentions at the very beginning of his reign. On 9 March 1529 he issued a third great privilege for Putna Monastery, confirming the privileges of 1503 and 1520, and even buried his wife Maria there, in the pronos, in the summer of 1529. Maria's burial, however, was the last princely burial at Putna Monastery. The document survives only in a German copy after the original, and subsequent Russian and Romanian translations. *Moldova în epoca feudalismului*, II, 262-266, nr. 83. See also *Holy Putna Monastery*, 55 (my translation of Ștefan S. Gorovei's contribution to the volume).

⁴¹ Bătrâna and Bătrâna, "O primă ctitorie și necropolă voievodală datorată lui Ștefan cel Mare: Mănăstirea Probota," 205-229.

acknowledged Peter Rareș as his son. On the basis of this document the boyars unanimously elected Peter to the throne of the principality.⁴²

In addition to Probota, Peter's other churches with funerary rooms include the *katholika* at Humor and Moldovița. By the 1530s, it became well established that all of the monastic foundations where a member of the ruling elite was to be buried had to have a funerary chamber at the center of the church building. And, in fact, the three princely monasteries constructed during the second half of the sixteenth century—i.e. the Church of the Transfiguration at Slatina, founded by Alexander Lăpușneanu between 1553 and 1561; the Church of the Resurrection at Sucevița, built by the Movilă brothers between 1581 and 1583; and the Church of the Ascension at Galata, rebuilt by Peter the Lamé between 1582 and 1584—continued this tradition, all including a burial room at the center of the church structure in between the naos and the pronaos. The surviving evidence thus indicates that the burial chamber appears only in Moldavian monastic foundations of significant princely figures, with long reigns, descendent from the same family (the Mușat dynasty), and who manifested strong tendencies for the centralization of power in the principality.⁴³

In Moldavia, the burial chamber as a separate room came to be associated with princely monastic foundations, and with churches built on a triconch plan.⁴⁴ The burial chamber did not appear from the beginning in all of the churches built on a triconch plan, however. There are examples of ecclesiastical monuments from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as the Church of the Holy Trinity in Siret, and the early monastic churches at Humor and Moldovița, that were built on a triconch plan but lacked the burial chamber.⁴⁵ Thus, this special funerary room became a distinctive feature of monastic churches built on a

⁴² See Chapter One, n. 9.

⁴³ The Romanian historian Vlad Bedros has also arrived at these conclusions in one of his more recent studies on the ideological functions of the burial chamber. Bedros, "Rolul ideologiei politice în apariția și fixarea tipului de necropolă voievodală în Moldova în secolele al XV-lea și al XVI-lea," 62-75: "...gropnița apare numai în cadrul unor biserici de mănăstire, ctitorii domnești, datorate unei serii de domnitori prestigioși, cu domnii îndelungate, descendenți cu toții din aceeași familie, pe o linie coerentă, fără complicații colaterale, și care au manifestat puternice tendințe de centralizare a puterii."

⁴⁴ See Teodoru, "Contribuții la studiul originii și evoluției planului triconch în Moldova," 33.

⁴⁵ Virgil Vătășianu noted the presence of a chamber in between the pronaos and the naos in the first masonry church at Moldovița, which he identified as the first burial chamber. Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*, 310. This observation was later problematized when the archeological investigations carried out in 1962 determined that the room to the east of the pronaos was in fact the original naos of the church. Cantacuzino, "Vechea mănăstire a Moldoviței în lumina cercetărilor arheologice," 79-84.

triconch plan only during the first half of the sixteenth century. By this time, all monastic churches built on a triconch plan included a funerary room in between the pronaos and naos.

At this juncture, a few general observations are in order about the particular features of the Moldavian burial chamber as it developed from the second half of the fifteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century. From the archaeological investigations carried out toward the end of the 1960s it is clear that at the *katholika* at Putna and Neamț the interior of the burial chamber was equal in height to the adjoining pronaoses. The current ceiling design at Putna features two domes, whereas the one of Neamț displays a single dome of the same design as the double dome makeup of the ceiling in the pronaos. It is possible that these dome designs are the result of later restorations and that the original burial rooms at these two sites were barrel vaulted. At Dobrovăț, Stephen's last ecclesiastical commission, the burial chamber rises to the height of the pronaos, but its barrel vault is set perpendicular to the directional axis of the building and is interrupted by a small dome rising above its central section.

Peter's monastic churches present additional variations. The burial chamber at Probota is rectangular in shape with a barrel vault reaching the same height as the pronaos of the church—a design repeated in the rebuilding of Bistrița Monastery. This scheme was probably copied from the earlier monastic churches at Probota and Bistrița. At the monasteries of Humor and Moldovița, as noted at the beginning of this section, the ceiling of the burial room is lowered, contributing to a more intimate experience of this funerary space. At Humor and Moldovița, moreover, above the burial chamber, accessible through a narrow spiral staircase in the north-west corner of the room, half carved into the thickness of the wall, is a secret room (*tainiță* or *bașcă*) in which the sumptuous treasures of the monastery were kept and/or hidden in times of danger.⁴⁶ The church at Moldovița offers a peculiarity. Although it was a princely foundation, no princely burials were found in the funerary room.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ This secret chamber found at Humor and Moldovița resembles the hidden or blind chamber above the main apse of Asturian churches, a feature that was to become characteristic of this kind of architecture. Some scholars have proposed that this chamber was placed there “for the sake of proportion,” but perhaps it had other functions as well. Arbeiter and Noack-Haley, “The Kingdom of Asturias,” 114. Similar rooms above the pronaos of the church are found in religious monuments from the region of Trebizond, for example. In the church of Hagia Sophia from Trebizond (1238-1263) a space identified as a chapel was built above the narthex of the church.

⁴⁷ Crăciun, “*Apud ecclesia*,” 155; Balș, *Bisericile și mănăstirile Moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea*, 37. For the burials in the church at Moldovița Monastery, see Cat.no.36.

It was not until the seventeenth century when Bishop Ephrem from Rădăuți Monastery was buried there that the burial chamber at Moldovița fulfilled one of its initial functions (Fig. 5.11).

These architectural and spatial transformations in Moldavia's monastic churches of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suggest that by the third decade of the sixteenth century, when the monastic churches at Humor and Moldovița were built with a burial room, the functions of these special mortuary spaces achieved multi-layered dimensions. The distinctive architectural features and the interior and exterior mural cycles of these funerary rooms further articulated their functions.

Burials *apud ecclesiam*

Built under Emperor Constantine the Great, the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople served as the burial place of Byzantine emperors and the patriarchs of Constantinople until the fall of the city. This was an exceptional form of practice. As early as 561, following the first Council of Braga, in a town in the Roman province of Gallaecia, the practice of burials inside churches (*apud ecclesiam*) was forbidden: this was in part out of the respect for the relics of the saints often found in the naos and altar area of the churches.⁴⁸ As Vasileios Marinis has recently demonstrated, Byzantine imperial and ecclesiastical regulations would regularly forbid burials inside churches.⁴⁹ The ninth-century *Basilika*, a collection of imperial laws, clearly stated that “nobody should bury the dead in a holy church.”⁵⁰ The practice of church burial continued to be frowned upon throughout the Middle Ages. As late as 1583, the Council of Bordeaux, animated by the spirit of the Counter-Reformation and responding to the fact that many churches at the time were literally bursting at the seams with graves, declared that “*in ecclesiis vero nulli deinceps sepeliantur /* henceforth let no one be buried in churches.”⁵¹ To be buried inside a church was regarded as

⁴⁸ The first Council of Braga in 561 forbade tombs within cities and in the inner area of churches, as well as the use of burial services for those who died as a result of suicide. Burials around the church (*de foris circa murum basilicae*) and in the exonarthex were permissible. See Canon XVIII: *De corporibus defunctorum* in Vives et al., eds., *Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romans*, 65-77, esp. 75 (for canon XVIII in the original Latin and a Spanish translation).

⁴⁹ Marinis, “Tombs and Burials in the Monastery *tu Libos* in Constantinople,” 147-166, esp. 150 (for an overview of the legislation); idem, *Architecture and Ritual in the Churches of Constantinople*, 60-63.

⁵⁰ *Basilika*: 5.I.2 in *Basilicorum Libri LX*. Cited in Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, 60.

⁵¹ Richard, *Analyse des conciles généraux et particuliers*, 741.

a particular honor—one reserved for the most distinguished individuals and benefactors who had often dedicated their lives to the Church.⁵² Canonical regulations were in fact not always observed, and numerous exceptions were made from the sixth to the seventeenth centuries. In the Roman Catholic sphere in particular, significant high-status individuals such as reigning monarchs and other wealthy patrons including members of the clergy, were often buried inside churches and monasteries. For these individuals, proximity to the altar was of outmost importance and so their graves were placed either in the choir or in specially constructed chantry chapels marked by significant stone or marble monuments carrying dedicatory inscriptions and often elaborate effigies with recumbent or praying figures.⁵³ The royal tombs in Westminster Abbey and those in the cathedral on the Wawel, in Kraków, present some of the most remarkable examples of such burials *apud ecclesiam*. In fact, every major medieval church contains the graves and monuments of some notable individuals.

Prior to 1359, the year when Moldavia achieved its independence, the principality was a vassal state of Hungary, and then of Poland, and so the influence and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church were performed in this Orthodox region. This was due in part to the ambitious missionary work of the Franciscans and the Dominicans on the eastern frontiers of Christendom.⁵⁴ In this regard, perhaps it is no surprise that the earliest extant Moldavian document to mention burial in a church is linked to a Catholic, Princess Marghita, mother of Peter II (*r.* 1375-1391). This source, a letter written by the Moldavian prince in Horlăceni on 1 May 1384, reveals that his mother endowed the church of the Mendicant Brothers in Siret because she wished to be buried there:

⁵² The Council of Rouen in 1581 outlined who qualified for internment within the church: “1. Those who have dedicated their lives to God, especially men [nuns only in cases of necessity], because their bodies have been chosen as temples of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; 2. Those who have received honors and dignities in the church [ordained clergymen] or in the world [the rich and powerful], because they are the ministers of God and the instrument of the Holy Spirit; 3. Those who by their nobility, their actions, and their merits have distinguished themselves in the service of God and of the common good.” Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum* 34, col. 648. Cited in Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 47.

⁵³ Philippe Ariès has addressed the place of burial and its accoutrements during the medieval and early modern period in western Europe in a number of studies including *The Hour of Our Death* and *Images of Man and Death*.

⁵⁴ On the missionary work of the Franciscans and the Dominicans in east-central Europe, see Klaniczay, “The Mendicant Orders in East-Central Europe and the Integration of Cultures,” 245-260, and ns. 78-88 for further bibliography. On the evangelization of Moldavia by the mendicants see Malciuc, *Presenza minoritica nei territori della Moldavia nell'epoca medievale (sec. XIII-XV)*; and, most recently, Dobre, *Mendicants in Moldavia*. On the work of the later Franciscan Observants, see de Cevins, *Les franciscains observants hongrois de l'expansion à la débâcle*, esp. 32-39.

...Princess Marghita, our beloved and honorable mother requested—in reverence for God and his blessed mother, Mary, and the blessed John the Baptist—a church for the preaching monks [Mendicants] to be built in the city of Siret, for the salvation of her soul and ours, and those of our ancestors. Our mother chose to be buried there once God calls her from this world and into his glory...⁵⁵

It is unknown where exactly in the Mendicant church in Siret the tomb of Princess Marghita was located. Given her prominent social position as the mother of a Moldavian prince, it is likely that her tomb was placed along one of the walls of the naos, close to the altar of the church—similar perhaps to the tombs in the katholikon at Rădăuți.

In Moldavia, the practice of burials *apud ecclesiam* continued throughout the second half of the fourteenth century. Although in an Orthodox context rather than a Roman Catholic one, the presence of princely tombs in the naos of the church at Rădăuți could be explained in this fluid, multi-confessional environment that was shaping Moldavia in these formative decades.

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, the religious atmosphere in the principality was shifting and the Orthodox faith and its rituals were becoming more predominant. This phase coincides with the appointment of Bishop Iosif I of Cetatea Albă as the Metropolitan of Moldavia on 26 July 1401 by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Matthew I (1397-1410). At the same time, the Moldavian See was also moved from Cetatea Albă to Suceava, the capital of the principality. As the Moldavian Orthodox Church was then establishing stronger ties with the Patriarchate in Constantinople, religious practices were also shifting and changing. The naos of the Moldavian Orthodox churches became no longer acceptable as a site for burials. The Orthodox canonical framework, from as early as the fourth century, in fact, stipulated that the naos was not to come in contact with the dead, thus

⁵⁵ The Romanian Academy Library, MS.no.5231, fols. 2-4: “Nos, Petrus waivoda, dei gratia dux Terre Moldavie, attendentes et considerantes, qualiter illustris et nobilissima domina Margarita, mater nostra dilecta et honorabilis, in civitate Cerethensi—ob reverentiam Dei et beatae Mariae, matris eius, ac beati Iohannis Baptistae—ecclesiam et locum religiosorum fratrum predicatorum construi et hedificare fecit, pro salute animae sue et nostrae ac parentum nostrorum, in qua ecclesia predicta domina, mater nostra, suam sepulturam elegit, postquam de isto mundo Deus eam ad suam gloriam vocabit...” The letter survives in a Latin translation of the original, probably written in Church Slavonic, that dates to the end of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century and is now in the archives of the Dominican church and monastery in Lwów/Lviv, Ukraine, VI, 197. *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, I, 1-2 (for the Latin transcription and a Romanian translation).

prohibiting burials in this sacred space. As it occurred in other regions, Moldavian church burials were thus relegated to the pronaos and to the outside areas, around the perimeter of the churches, and most often closest to the naos and altar.

Presenting a solution to these new regulations, the princely foundations built initially under the patronage of Alexander the Good, and then under the supervisions of Stephen and later his son Peter, introduced and then subsequently developed the funerary chamber as an independent room at the center of the church building. This space was part of the church proper yet clearly delineated from the symbolic and liturgical spaces that framed it, at least as it evolved by the second half of the fifteenth century. As such, this distinct funerary room inserted between the pronaos and the naos both adhered to new church regulations and presented a more sacred space for burial and veneration, closer to the altar than the pronaos of the church.⁵⁶

By the third decade of the sixteenth century, the spatial solutions and functions of the burial chamber were to undergo a number of transformations, culminating in the particular enclosed form this special funerary room assumed in the *katholika* at Humor and Moldovița.⁵⁷ The burial chamber as a distinct space in the princely monastic foundations not only contributed to the elongation of the church building toward the west, but also served a multitude of functions. But before we turn to these functions, the tombs themselves deserve our attention because in their imagery, inscriptions, and placement, these grave markers and their accoutrements contribute to our understanding of the practice and meanings of church burial in Moldavia at this moment.

The Graves and Their Props

In the burial chamber of the Church of St. Nicholas at Probotă, the graves of Peter Rareș, his second wife Elena (Jelena Branković, c.1502-1552), and their son Stephen line the

⁵⁶ Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du Nord*, 119-120; Crăciun, “*Apud ecclesia*,” 151.

⁵⁷ The burial chamber as a separate room came to be closely connected with princely and in particular monastic foundations, as well as with churches built on a triconch plan. Teodoru, “Contribuții la studiul originii și evoluției planului triconch în Moldova,” 33. The burial chamber did not appear from the beginning in all churches built on a triconch plan. There are many examples of monuments from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as the Church of the Holy Trinity in Siret, and the first churches of the monasteries of Humor and Moldovița, that were built on a triconch plan but lacked the burial chamber.

central corridor leading to the naos (Fig. 5.12).⁵⁸ The graves are marked by rectangular stone slabs with geometric and floral designs and surrounding carved dedicatory inscriptions. Consciously, it seems, these texts were designed in such a way as to encourage a physical (and/or mental) circumambulation of the grave while reading them. By contrast, the earlier Moldavian burials, dating to the late fifteenth century, did not lend themselves to such an interaction because of their placement in *arcosolia* alongside the interior walls of the church, usually in the pronaos or underneath elaborate carved baldachins. This is true, for example, at Humor where additional niches were inserted into the walls of the burial chamber for the tombs of Chancellor Toader Bubuioag and his wife Anastasia—the second founders of the church (Fig. 5.13). Similarly, access was controlled at the grave of Bishop Ephrem of Rădăuți, in the burial chamber at Moldovița (Fig. 5.11), and the tombs of Stephen III and Maria of Mangup at Putna where tombs were surmounted by vaulted canopies that highlighted their location (Fig. 5.14).

The gravestones of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries are relatively formulaic in their decorative and epigraphic schemes. The slabs were carved out of marble, limestone, or sandstone, and likely produced by local artists. Following a tradition with deep roots in Byzantine practices, the graves of significant Moldavian individuals would also have been covered by lavish embroideries—known as tomb covers (гробникъ).⁵⁹ Stephen’s tomb cover, for instance, was completed shortly after his death on 2 July 1504 at the request of his son, Bogdan III (Fig. 5.15).⁶⁰ Embroidered on burgundy velvet with gold and silver thread, the cover, now in the collection of Putna Monastery, has the same format and dimensions as the gravestone underneath it, and it shows stylized vegetal and flowering motifs in recurring patterns. A relatively narrow red silk border with golden edges frames the central section and carries the dedicatory inscription in Church Slavonic, embroidered in gold thread.⁶¹ Bogdan

⁵⁸ Following the Christian tradition of burial orientation, it is likely that the deceased were buried in the Moldavian churches with their heads toward the west and their feet toward the altar.

⁵⁹ According to the fourth-century Roman soldier Ammianus Marcellinus, the tomb of Emperor Diocletian in his mausoleum at Split was covered by a *velamen purpureum*, or a purple pall. Ammianus Marcellinus XVI.8.4, 235. Another example is presented by Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo who describes the tomb of an empress in the Church of St. George of Mangana in Constantinople as having for a cover a “pall of silk.” Mango, ed., *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 220.

⁶⁰ Stephen’s tomb cover was produced sometime between 1504 and 1517, under the patronage of his son, Bogdan. *Holy Putna Monastery*, 313.

⁶¹ The inscription in Church Slavonic on Stephen’s tomb cover reads: “† ІУ(АННА) БОГДАНЬ ВОЕВОДА, Б(О)ЖІЕЮ М(И)Л(О)СТІЮ Г(О)СП(О)Д(А)РЬ ЗЕМЛИ МЛДАВСКОН, ОУКРАСИ И ПОКРЫ ПУКРОВОМ СИМ ГРВБЬ Ш(Т)ЦА СВОЕГО, ІУ(АННА)

III also commissioned the grave cover for his mother's tomb, Maria Voichița, Stephen's third wife (Fig. 5.16). Similar in composition to Stephen's grave cover, Maria Voichița's embroidery, preserved today also at Putna, was executed on Italian velvet with gold and red silk thread. The framing inscription reveals that it was completed on 30 January 1513, about two years after Maria's death on 26 February 1511.⁶² This indicates that the covering was deemed an important accessory, not immediately endowed, but an appropriate mark of reverence.

Although few in number, the extant Moldavian tomb covers, except for one, display non-figural designs. The single tomb cover that deserves special mention for its iconography is the embroidery for the grave of Maria of Mangup (Maria Asanina Palaiologina), Stephen's second wife, now found in the monastic collection at Putna (Fig. 5.17).⁶³ This features a richly worked funerary portrait of the Moldavian princess. Stephen himself commissioned the grave cover for her tomb that occupies a space in the burial chamber (now naos) of the church at Putna Monastery opposite Stephen's burial site, and under a baldachin similarly elaborate to his. The cloth shows Maria full length and in a recumbent pose, like a *gisant*, with her arms folded across her chest and her hands gently clasped.⁶⁴ Her oval face with its small mouth, long thin nose, and arched eyebrows provide a glimpse of her countenance. Her hair, parted down the middle, is partly concealed by her elaborate headdress, the Byzantine *propoloma*, in this case finely worked with precious stones and pearl hangings, reminiscent of the crown worn by Empress Theodora (c.500-548) in the famous mosaics in the apse at San Vitale in Ravenna and characteristic of Byzantine regalia. Jewels also adorn her ears, neck, and fingers. A blue-green *granatza* of a Perso-Assyrian origin—a sumptuously brocaded dress and caftan-like mantle with red lining and long sleeves reaching to the

Стефана воеводи, господовакшаго въ Молдавскон земан мѣзъ лѣт(ъ) и три мѣс(е)ци иже и прѣстави са къ вѣчнѣи вѣтѣли в лѣт(ъ)тѣхъ 7311, мѣс(е)ца юл(ѣ)а кѣ дѣнь, въ дѣнь втѣрника, въ чѣтвертъи час дѣнь.” / “John Bogdan voivode, through God's grace prince of the land of Moldavia, embellished and covered with this tomb cover the grave of his father, John Stephen voivode, he who ruled Moldavia for forty-seven years and three months, and moved to his eternal dwelling in the year 7012 [1504], July 2, on a Tuesday, at 4:00 o'clock.” *Repertoriul*, 310 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

⁶² *Holy Putna Monastery*, 313.

⁶³ On Maria's tomb cover, see Diez, “Moldavian Portrait Textiles,” 377-385, esp. 377; *Repertoriul*, 288-290, figs. 202, 203; Székely, “Mănăstirea Putna: loc de memorie,” 73-99. This object is now in the collection of Putna Monastery.

⁶⁴ On the Byzantine tomb cover and its functions, see Slobodan Ćurčić, “Late Byzantine *Loca Sancta*?” 251-261, esp. 253; Semoglou, “Contribution à l'étude du portrait funéraire dans le monde byzantin (14e-16e siècles),” 4-11, esp. 8; Grabar, “Le thème du ‘gisant’ dans l'art byzantin,” 143-156, esp. 149-154.

ankles—completes Maria’s regal dress. The designs of her mantle mirror those seen on Stephen’s tomb cover (Fig. 5.15). Maria is shown reposing underneath a cusped trefoil arch that delineates her figure and also balances the composition. The presence of the arcature is also suggestive of her royal status. The dedicatory inscription that runs around the perimeter of the embroidery reads:

This is the tomb cover of the maidservant of God, the honorable and devout to Christ, wife of John Stephen voivode, prince of the land of Moldavia, Maria, who passed to the eternal dwellings in the year 6985 [1477], the month of December 19, at five o’clock during the day.⁶⁵

While formulaic, the inscription is unusual in that it is interrupted in the corners by four emblems: in the upper left and lower right are the double-headed eagles, the imperial symbols of Byzantium (Fig. 5.18); the lower left corner shows the famous and wide-spread monogram of the Palaiologan Dynasty (Fig. 5.19),⁶⁶ which appears again in a correct and a reverse position in the decorations of the trefoil arch in the central register of the embroidery (in the correct orientation on the left roundel and in a reverse position in the right roundel) (Fig. 5.20); and the upper right corner shows the initials for Maria’s other family name, Asanina (Fig. 5.21).⁶⁷ Symbolically weighty, these important dynastic emblems represent the earliest known identifiers of this kind on any extant embroidered work in Moldavia. Moreover, the cover presents, as Maria Magdalena Székely has noted, “through its characteristics that emulate western artistic traditions and those specific to Byzantine art,”

⁶⁵ The inscription in Church Slavonic reads: “† СѢ естъ покровъ гроба рабы божиа благоуъствиои и Христлюбивои госпожди Іѡ(анна) Стефана воеводи, господара земли Молдавскои, Марїи, иже и прѣстави са къ вѣчнымъ житїемъ в лѣт(о) ѣсѣцѣ, мѣс(ѣ)ца дек(е)врїа ѡ въ пат(ь)к, час ѣ д(ь)не.” *Repertoriul*, 290 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation). Maria of Mangup’s tombstone displays a similar inscription: “† В лѣт(о) ѣсѣцѣ мѣс(ѣ)ц[а] дек(емврїа) ѡ, прѣстави са бл(а)гоуъстиваа раба б(о)жиа Марїа госпож[а] бл(а)гоуъстиваго Іѡанна Стефана воеводи г(о)сп(о)[да]рѣ земли Мо[л]давскои, с(з)нь Богдана воеводи.” / “In the year 6985 [1477], month of December 19, died the devout maidservant of God Maria, the wife of the devout Ioan Stephen voivode, prince of Moldavia, son of Bogdan voivode.” *Repertoriul*, 247 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

⁶⁶ This same monogram appears on the vestments of members of the Palaiologan Dynasty. See, for example, the frescoes and tombs in Kariye Djami in Istanbul, discussed in Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, esp. 284-292.

⁶⁷ The Russian scholar A. V. Soloviev deciphered the monogram for ‘Asanina’ in 1937. Gabriel Millet arrived at the same conclusion a decade later in *Broderies religieuses de style byzantin*, 79. For a more recent and detailed discussion, see Gorovei, “Maria Asanina Paleologhina, Doamna Moldovlahiei, I,” 18-20.

“an expression of the medieval conception about the perpetuation of the monarchic institution.”⁶⁸

Indeed, in its iconographic composition, the tomb cover of Maria of Mangup engages with a long tradition of medieval aristocratic funerary portraits in western Europe.⁶⁹ Incised in stone or carved in various degrees of relief, these grave markers show the deceased in frontal and full-length pose, often richly dressed, and framed within an architectural structure reminiscent of a church or baldachin. A dedicatory inscription running around the perimeter of the slab and/or coat of arms identifies in part the individual(s) represented. A comparable example is the grave stone of the French architect Hugues Libergier (1229-1263), now in Reims Cathedral, in which the sitter is surrounded by the tools of his profession and holds in his right hand a model of a church (likely St. Nicaise at Reims, which he built and where the slab was originally located) (Fig. 5.22). Recalling the composition of Maria’s funerary portrait, a Gothic trefoil canopy frames Hugues and a dedicatory inscription surrounds his figure.⁷⁰ More than two hundred years later, a similar format was chosen for the grave stone of a magistrate, now preserved in the Musée de Beaux-Arts in Arras, France (Fig. 5.23).

A veil of mystery still shrouds the actual display of these burial covers as well as their functions. These embroideries were certainly designed for particular tombs because, as I have already noted, their measurements often match exactly the dimensions of their respective gravestones.⁷¹ It is possible that they were placed on top of the tombs during certain celebrations and/or on special feast days. What is peculiar, however, is the direction of the text of the surrounding dedicatory inscriptions in each of the grave covers. In Stephen’s embroidery the text begins in the upper left corner and then moves clockwise around the object, with the letters facing toward the center. On Maria of Mangup’s grave cover the text

⁶⁸ Székely, “Mănăstirea Putna: loc de memorie,” 79: ...”un lucru este sigur: broderia de la Putna reprezintă—prin caracteristicile sale care țin de arta occidentală, ca și prin acelea specifice artei bizantine—o expresie a concepției medievale despre eternitatea instituției monarhice.”

⁶⁹ On the western medieval funerary portrait, see Bauch, *Das mittelalterliche Grabbild: Figürliche Grabmäler des 11. bis. 15. Jahrhunderts in Europa*. For other important studies on western medieval tombs, see Körner, *Grabmonumente des Mittelalters* (with bibliography); Morganstern, *Gothic Tombs of Kinship in France, the Low Countries, and England* (with bibliography); del Alamo and Pendergast, eds., *Memory and the Medieval Tomb*.

⁷⁰ The inscription on the gravestone of Hugues Libergier reads: “CI GIT MAISTRE HVES LIBERGIER / S QVI COMENSA CESTE EGLISE AN LAN DE LINCARNATION M CC & XX I X LE MAR / DI DE PAQVES & TRESPASSA LAN DE / LINCARNATION M CC LXIII LE SAMEDI APRES PAQVES POVR DEV PIEZ POR L[...].” Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles de Champagne-Ardenne, <http://www.cathedrale-reims.culture.fr/HTML/III-13_51_01176_NUCA.html> (accessed 15 October 2015).

⁷¹ This is especially true of the covers for the burials of Stephen III and Maria of Mangup.

begins in the upper right corner and continues around her image in a counterclockwise fashion, with the letters facing away from the center. In the case of Maria's cover, the inscription would have been easily read if the embroidery had been placed over the gravestone and the edges with the inscriptions draped around the tomb. The covering for the tomb of Maria Voichița presents an example similar to that of Stephen's grave embroidery. Although some of the functions of these grave markers are lost to us today, it is clear that these sumptuous objects and the tombs they were designed for functioned in the economy of salvation, and also that of remembrance.

Social and Symbolic Explanations

Romanian scholars have explained the presence of the burial chamber in Moldavian churches in a number of ways. Tereza Sinigalia and Ecaterina Cincheza-Buculei, for example, have suggested that the form of the chamber may be a product of outside influences particularly from Serbia.⁷² The funerary spaces found at the center of Serbian churches, where the tombs were placed in niches flanking the lateral apses of the naos toward the west, with stone sarcophagi placed on top of the crypts, served as a model that was reinvented in the Moldavian milieu.⁷³ Whereas Sinigalia and Cincheza-Buculei were concerned with the form of the burial chamber, Gheorghe Balș focused attention on its meanings. He saw the Moldavian funerary space as a monumental baldachin placed above tombs.⁷⁴ He suggested that the distinctive barrel vaulted design of the funerary room, developed on the model of the church, acting like a baldachin or ciborium above the graves, was intended to demonstrate the protective role of the Church over the deceased.⁷⁵ As such, the form of the burial room expressed “the old idea of heaven as a cosmic tent”—similar to Roman domes and apsidal vaults—adopted and transformed “from the Hellenistic East.”⁷⁶

⁷² Sinigalia, “L'égglise de l'Ascension du monastère du Neamț,” 19-32; eadem, “Programul iconografic al spațiului funerar din Biserica Sf. Ioan Botezatorul din Satul Arbore,” 27-34; Cincheza-Buculei, “Programul iconografic al gropnițelor Moldovenești,” 85-93.

⁷³ Sinigalia, “L'égglise de l'Ascension du monastère du Neamț,” 22; Cincheza-Buculei, “Programul iconografic al gropnițelor Moldovenești,” 86.

⁷⁴ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 241-244; idem, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea*, 268-270.

⁷⁵ The classic study on canopies and baldachins, their development and symbolism, remains Smith, *Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages*, esp. 107-129, 188-193.

⁷⁶ Smith, *Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages*, 190.

The entire church at Războieni, then, served from the outset as a mausoleum and, by extension, as a site of commemoration for those who perished during the battle of 1476. Local legend has it that the church was actually built on the site at which the bodies of the fallen were communally buried after the battle. The church itself was a kind of a battle memorial, a kind of thinking that may have contributed to the development of the burial chamber.

The surviving evidence suggests that non-princely ecclesiastical commissions from the second half of the fifteenth century may too have served as initial points of reference for the development and function of the burial chamber. In contrast to the princely foundations, the churches built by noblemen during this period lacked the burial chamber and thus their tombs were placed in the pronaos either along the side walls, or in side niches that served a funerary function, similar to the side aisles in the naos of the katholikon at Rădăuți (Fig. 5.2).⁷⁸ For example, the nobleman Șendrea, who married Stephen III's sister Maria and served as a guard at Suceava Fortress, built in the Church of St. Parascheva in the village Dolheștii Mari (before 1481) large niches inside both the north and south walls of the pronaos intended to serve a funerary function (Fig. 5.25).⁷⁹ These grand wall niches with single narrow windows at the center, framed and protected the tombs below. The niche on the south wall, closest to the entrance to the church, is the only one that still preserves its murals—the peculiar iconography of which was addressed at the end of Chapter Four.

In other cases, the tombs of aristocratic individuals were erected in the pronaos, along the walls, beneath large, elaborately carved baldachins that delineated the burial site. Such is the case at the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in the village of Arbore, built in 1502 by Luca Arbore—an important nobleman in Stephen's court appointed as the chief

⁷⁸ Apetrei, *Reședințele boierești din Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XIV-XVI*, 133-208.

⁷⁹ The iconography of this funerary niche is peculiar, and unique in Moldavia. The murals display round medallions with the prophets around the arch converging at the keystone where is painted an image of the *Hetoimasia* (the throne prepared for Christ's Second Coming) with the dove of the Holy Spirit perched on a Bible. Below are images of God the Father between two faded medallions, and Christ between two medallions with images of the Virgin and St. John the Baptist. Above the window, between two angels, is the image of the *Melismos*. Around the arch are the four Evangelists, then below them the Apostles Peter and Paul followed by two bishops each, and then figures of the martyrs. Under the window is a large votive painting with Christ seated on the left, the Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas acting as intercessors, and members of the Șendrea family, including Nicolae Șendrea, his wife Maria, a young girl, and a smaller child. The garments and headgear suggest a dating to the first half of the sixteenth century, when the church also constructed. At Dolheștii Mari, a synthesis of the mural cycles usually found on the interior and exterior walls of the Moldavian churches from Peter's reign appears here in a single niche.

magistrate⁸⁰ at Suceava Fortress (Fig. 5.26). The design of the baldachin (кивѡт) over Luca's tomb shows an ogee arch with trefoil cusps framing a central oculus with Flamboyant tracery elements.⁸¹ The family's coat of arms stand to either side of the dedicatory inscription carved in the upper portion of the monument.⁸² The Gothic design of Luca's tomb is in conversation with western European examples from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A comparison can be drawn, for instance, between Luca's *Wandnischengrab* and the tomb of a priest found in the early- to mid-fourteenth-century parish church of Welwick, East Yorkshire, even if no direct connection is posited (Fig. 5.27). The Moldavian nobility, despite their social and political prominence, seem to have been restricted by convention from building burial chambers in their churches, and therefore, as Maria Crăciun has noted, "had to find other means of highlighting their status, even in their own foundation."⁸³ Prominent wall niches and baldachins were the alternative.

Dumitru Năstase has investigated the design solutions arrived at in Moldavian church architecture, tracing the form of the burial chamber from its origins to the middle of the sixteenth century. He concluded that the burial room was added as a result of structural and technical concerns, the primary purpose being to enlarge the pronaos so that it could accommodate more graves.⁸⁴ I disagree with this assessment for a number of reasons. First, the exonarthex to the west of the pronaos could have easily served this purpose. Second, the surviving evidence does not support this explanation because certain burial chambers, as is the case at Moldovița, only received their graves many years after having been completed. This suggests, in part, that by the time of Peter's rule in the initial decades of the sixteenth century, the burial chamber had become an integral component of Moldavian monastic churches, built regardless of whether burials were imminent. It is important to note that the addition of the burial chamber, in addition to the pronaos and exonarthex, considerably elongates the Moldavian monastic church toward the west. This elongation, which has

⁸⁰ Romanian: *pârcălab*; Church Slavonic: прѣкалаб; Turkish: *emin*. The term likely entered the Romanian language through the Hungarian word *porkoláb*.

⁸¹ Balș, *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 244.

⁸² The inscription in Church Slavonic on Luca Arbore's tomb reads: "† СЪИ КИВѡТЪ СЪТЪВѢРИ СЕБѢ ПАН ЛОУКА АРБОУРЕ ПРѣКАЛАБ СОУАВСКІИ, СЪИДНЬ СТАРОГО АРБОУРА, ПРѣКАЛАБА НЕМЕЦКОГО, В Л(Ѣ)ТО ҃҆ЗДІИ АП(Р)ИЛІА) ҃҆ЗД." / "This shrine/tomb was made by Luca Arbore, the chief magistrate of Suceava, son of the old Arbore, chief magistrate at Neamț, in the year 7011 [1503], April 29." *Repertoriul*, 270 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

⁸³ Crăciun, "*Apud ecclesia*," 155.

⁸⁴ Năstase, "Despre spațiul funerar în arhitectura moldovenească," 201-208.

neither Byzantine nor Gothic prototypes, is manifested in all of the monastic churches from the first half of the sixteenth century onward. Looking for prototypes for this kind of elongation of the church building in the context of the development of the burial chamber, Năstase points to civic and military structures that appeared in Moldavia prior to Stephen's extensive ecclesiastical building campaign beginning in 1487. He draws parallels between the layouts of Neamț Fortress and the royal house at Probota Monastery, on the one hand, and the longitudinal arrangement of the monastic churches, on the other hand (Fig. 5.28). The suggestion is that the architects who worked on the fortresses and royal courts, who Năstase presumes are the same that built the churches, adopted a longitudinal arrangement for the ecclesiastical buildings, comparable to the layout they had used in their civic projects. The evidence for this assumption is lacking.

The elongation of the monastic churches of Moldavia has neither direct Byzantine nor Gothic religious architectural prototypes. Dumitru Năstase suggests that this longitudinal character has secular architectural prototypes as evident in the layout of the fortresses and royal houses found throughout Moldavia during this period.⁸⁵ Given the political troubles in the fifteenth century, especially after 1453, fortresses were built all over Moldavia to protect the region, as was discussed in Chapter Two. Royal houses, on the other hand, were built as part of monasteries that were princely commissions.⁸⁶ The side walls of Neamț Fortress and Suceava Fortress, for example, rebuilt by Stephen between 1476 and 1479, have sequences of single rooms (Fig. 5.28). Although longitudinally aligned, these rooms are not separated by single entryways. Rather, their doorways lead only to the central area of the fortress. The first level of the Royal House at Probota Monastery, built in 1530, presents a contemporary example of a building with single rooms arranged longitudinally, that may have served as a model. More closely resembling the layout of the churches than the residential tract at Neamț, the rooms in the Royal House at Probota display small entryways leading from one space to the next. Perhaps there existed similar principles or ideas behind these particular arrangements of the spaces and designs found in both the religious and the secular contexts at

⁸⁵ Năstase, "Despre spațiul funerar în arhitectura moldovenească," 205-207.

⁸⁶ Nicolescu, "Locuințe domnești în cuprinsul mănăstirilor în veacurile XV-XVII," 63-82; eadem, *Case, conace, și palate vechi românești*. Remains of royal houses were found in the monastic compounds at Putna and Voroneț. Alexander the Good had a royal house at Bistrița Monastery, Peter Rareș had one at Probota Monastery, and Alexander Lăpușneanu had one at Slatina Monastery and Pângărați Monastery, just to name a few examples.

this time. Or perhaps the monastic churches were far more complex royal enterprises than the rest of the religious monuments built during this period.

Virgil Vătășianu and Grigore Ionescu regard the burial chamber as a solution to a desire to enlarge the interior space of the church, either to accommodate more faithful, or contain more graves, or both.⁸⁷ However, both suggest that this created a spatial discontinuity with negative aesthetic consequences: the presence of the burial room in such a prominent location contributed to a lack of coherence in the interior spaces. Also dissatisfied with the spatial disposition of the Moldavian monastic church interior, Corina Nicolescu and Ion D. Ștefănescu advanced a socio-political explanation for the development of the funerary room. They discuss the burial chamber in the context of social and political hierarchies, suggesting that the room may have been meant to separate the naos, a space reserved for the princes and the clergy, from the pronaos, where the noblemen and the courtiers gathered.⁸⁸ These interpretations, of course, rest on the assumption that the Moldavian church interior, designed for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, ought ideally to be a continuous and homogenous space. However, the architectural vocabulary of these churches, and the mural cycles that cover their interior and exterior walls, suggest the spatial construct was developed to serve as variety of function.

Although these symbolic, structural, and socio-political explanations for the emergence of this distinct monastic funerary space in Moldavia during the second half of the fifteenth century have a place in the scholarly discourse, other factors—religious, eschatological, and dynastic—should be considered as well. These issues stand at the core of Maria Crăciun’s studies of the emergence and functions of the Moldavian burial chamber.⁸⁹ Whereas scholars before her have studied this space mainly in structural and social terms, Crăciun has argued that the emergence of the funerary room stem “from a new definition of sacred space in the context of the multi-confessional environment of late medieval and early modern Moldavia.”⁹⁰ The burial chamber presented, as such, a special funerary space that

⁸⁷ Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*, I, 310; Ionescu, *Arhitectura pe teritoriul României de-a lungul veacurilor*, 230; idem, *Istoria arhitecturii în România*, I, 253.

⁸⁸ Nicolescu, “Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 339-341; Ștefănescu, *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie*, 33.

⁸⁹ Crăciun, “*Apud ecclesia*,” 144-167.

⁹⁰ Crăciun, “*Apud ecclesia*,” 144.

stressed both dynastic and spiritual messages.⁹¹ I argue that these functions take on new valences during the reign of Peter Rareș when the burial chambers begin to receive extensive mural cycles both inside and outside. The iconography of these murals has so far not been considered in relation to the burial chamber and its possible functions. We will see in the following that whereas the exterior murals focus on genealogical and dynastic matters, the interior image cycles center on spiritual concerns.

Spiritual and Eschatological Dimensions

The image cycles on the interior and exterior walls of Moldavian burial chambers from the third decade of the sixteenth century, I argue, enhance the various functions of the spaces they decorate and reflect the spiritual and dynastic concerns of the patron. Although the mural cycles exhibit slight variations from one church to the next, as shown in Chapter Four, certain thematic and iconographic strands remain consistent throughout the corpus. This section looks at the cycles of three monastic burial chambers, namely those of St. Nicholas at Probota, Peter's mausoleum founded in 1530 and painted two years later; the church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Humor, established the same year as Probota and painted entirely by 1535; and the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița, begun in 1532 and painted both inside and outside by 1537. I will first consider the exterior murals and then those adorning the interior of the mortuary room.

The single exterior mural on the wall of the burial chamber that the *katholika* at Probota, Humor, and Moldovița share is the monumental scene of the *Tree of Jesse*. This image traces the human genealogy of Christ through Jesse, his son David (who became the king of the Israelites), the kings of the Old Testament, and then finally through the Virgin. When placed on the exterior wall of the burial chamber, this particular iconography links the genealogy of Christ in the painted representation to the lineage of the prince and members of his immediate family whose remains were laid to rest in a space of perpetual remembrance on the other side of the painted exterior. That the *Tree of Jesse* iconography came to be deployed in Moldavia especially during the initial years of Peter's reign is significant, in part because it appears to have been closely interwoven with Peter's deep concerns with his own princely lineage.

⁹¹ Crăciun, "*Apud ecclesia*," 146.

This is further revealed in one particular votive painting. Whereas Moldavian votive images usually depict the patron with members of his immediate family presenting a model of his church to Christ via the intercession of a holy figure, the votive painting in the naos of the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Dobrovăț was informed by a different idea (Fig. 5.29). This image was created with Peter's support shortly after he took the throne, as the inscription in the upper left corner of the mural indicates.⁹² The painting shows three of the monastery's primary patrons, Peter Rareș (on the right), his father Stephen III (on the left), and one of Stephen's legitimate sons, Bogdan III (in the center), all wearing richly embroidered attire and jewel-encrusted golden crowns.⁹³ These are representations of the historical individuals to the extent that each figure represents a *particular* likeness, but not an *individualized* one. This *particular* likeness, defined by Georges Didi-Huberman as every aspect of the work that makes up the singularity of its realism, is distinct from the *individual* likeness which characterizes the referent of the representation, and which, in the case of Stephen III and Bogdan III in this mural in particular, is absent.⁹⁴ Perhaps Peter's portrait was drawn from life, but the circumstances of its execution remain elusive. What is noteworthy about this votive portrait is that it does not show Peter along with his wife, for instance, but rather present him as Stephen's descendent, and although an illegitimate son, he is depicted on par with Stephen's legitimate heir, Bogdan III.

Peter leads the majestic trio in the votive mural at Dobrovăț, holding the model of the church before the enthroned Christ. In contrast to other Moldavian votive images, the intercessory figure was omitted here, thus rendering more direct the interaction between the earthly ruler and Christ.⁹⁵ In other Slavic-Orthodox regions of the Balkans and in Russia, for example, going back even a few centuries, votive paintings seldom included intercessory

⁹² The inscription in Church Slavonic on the west wall of the naos of the church at Dobrovăț, in the upper left corner of the votive painting, reads: "† Бл(а)гоуѣствѣи и х(ри)ст(у)любовивѣи Іу(ан)на Петръ Воевод(а), в(о)жѣи м(и)л(о)стѣиу г(о)сп(о)д(а)рѣ земли Молдавской, с(ы)нѣ стар(а)го Стефана Воеводи, исписах и оукраша сѣи храмъ въ имѣ сѣшестѣѣа Св(ѣ)т(а)го Духа въ монастырѣи въ Добровѣца, 733-, м(ѣ)с(ѣ)ца-." / "The devout and lover of Christ John Peter Voivode, through God's grace prince of the land of Moldavia, son of the old Stephen Voivode, inscribed and embellished this church dedicated to the Descent of the Holy Spirit, in the monastery at Dobrovăț, in the year 703..., month..." Iorga, *Inscriptii*, II, 206 (for the Church Slavonic transcription in abbreviated form, and a Romanian translation). Although it is illegible today, the date could have ranged from 7035 (1527) to 7039 (1531), thus marking the initial years of Peter's rule in Moldavia.

⁹³ For a discussion of Peter's votive portraits, at Dobrovăț and elsewhere in Moldavia, see Firea, "Conceptie dinastică în tablourile votive ale lui Petru Rareș," 143-161.

⁹⁴ Didi-Huberman, "The Portrait, the Individual and the Singular," 165.

⁹⁵ The absence of an intercessory figure in the votive painting at Dobrovăț may be explained, in part, by the fact that the church was dedicated to the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

figures in the interaction between the donor and Christ.⁹⁶ A prominent case in point adorns the Church of the Savior near Novgorod; completed around 1246, the painting shows Prince Iaroslav Vsevolodovic presenting a church model to Christ, who sits on a lavish throne before him (Fig. 5.30).⁹⁷ As Christine Peters has observed, in a Moldavian context the preference for “the saintly mediatory figure commending the donor to Christ enthroned suggests a greater emphasis on the cult of the saints and on Christ as person and sacrament...”⁹⁸

Whereas the exterior murals on the south sides of both Probota and Moldovița are well preserved, those on the opposite north walls are badly deteriorated; their iconographic programs are therefore difficult to read and assess. What remains of their upper sections are a few scenes that respectively appear to belong to a cycle of the *Life of the Virgin* (Moldovița) (Fig. 5.31) and the *Life of St. Anthony* (Probota) (Fig. 5.32).⁹⁹ The monastic church at Humor presents a variant. The mural of the *Tree of Jesse* appears here on the north wall, while the south side displays the *Life of St. Nicholas* in twenty scenes arranged in four registers (Fig. 5.33).¹⁰⁰ Below this sequence, two additional narrow zones contain episodes from the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Fig. 5.34).¹⁰¹ The same theme initially also adorned the south wall of the katholikon at Probota, past the first buttress of the naos (Fig. 5.35). The moral of this cycle, forgiveness in a familial context, is heightened and expanded at Probota and Humor where the figure of the forgiving father is replaced with the image of Christ.¹⁰²

At Probota, the interior murals of the burial chamber display martyrdom stories from the lives of the Orthodox saints as presented in the first six months of the *Menologium*, from September to February (Fig. 5.36). The remaining months are depicted in the pronaos of the

⁹⁶ Peters, “The Relationship Between the Human and the Divine,” 40-41.

⁹⁷ Lazarev, *Mosaïques et fresques de l'ancienne Russie (XIe-XVIIe siècles)*, 120, 139.

⁹⁸ Peters, “The Relationship Between the Human and the Divine,” 41.

⁹⁹ Described in Dionysius of Fournas's *Hermeneia* as “The Miracles of Saint Anthony.” *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 69-70.

¹⁰⁰ Described in Dionysius of Fournas's *Hermeneia* as “The Miracles of Saint Nicholas.” *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 67.

¹⁰¹ Described in Dionysius of Fournas's *Hermeneia* as “The Parable of the Prodigal Son.” *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 43.

¹⁰² The representation of the father in the guise of Christ appears to be a convention. Dionysius of Fournas describes the iconography of the scene as such: “Christ is shown again outside the church embracing the prodigal son and kissing him. Christ is shown yet again on the other side calling the elder son to him and saying to him on a cross: ‘Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine.’” *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournas*, 43.

church. A thicker band of ornamentation marks the division between the cycle of the *Menologium* and the murals in the lower registers of this room where, set at about eye level, a row of saints and martyrs are shown full length standing under individual arches and holding scrolls (Fig. 5.37). This register in turn sits on top of a narrow zig-zag band that encircles the room; a simulated curtain is painted below it. This zig-zag pattern is unique to the burial chamber of Probota.

Very similar iconographic schemes are found inside the burial chambers at Moldovița and Humor. However, a few additions that will be addressed below deserve mention here. One is the prominent display of the mural of the *Deësis* in the burial chamber at Moldovița, on the east wall, to the right of the doorway leading into the naos (Fig. 5.38). This scene appears also at Dobrovăț, here also on the east wall of the burial room, though now directly above the entrance to the naos (Fig. 5.39). Another distinction is the presence of the monastic cross, found in prominent locations in the burial rooms at Probota and Moldovița (Fig. 5.40). And the last are the votive murals in the burial chamber at Humor, designed in tandem with the graves of the individuals buried there. The tombs of the Moldavian noblemen, such as Șendrea (Fig. 5.41), Luca Arbore (Fig. 5.42), Toader Bubiog (Fig. 5.43), and his wife Anastasia (Fig. 5.44) all have votive murals, similar in kind, showing the patron surrounded by his immediate family members and presenting a church model to Christ through the mediation of a saint. This rapport between the site of burial and the donor image suggests that the votive paintings in the naos of the Moldavian churches, especially those with a burial chamber, should be understood, in part, in conjunction with the mortuary spaces found at these sites and that extend directly to the west of the naos. At Probota in particular, the majority of the portraits in the votive painting are those of the individuals buried in the funerary chamber—Peter Rareș, his wife, and children. As such, the votive painting in the naos at Probota would have reminded the faithful, upon crossing the threshold into the space of the burial chamber, of the founder and his burial—the significant individual under whose patronage the monastic establishment was built and whom they were to keep in their thoughts and prayers.

The earliest iteration of the *Menologium* is found in the burial room at Dobrovăț;¹⁰³ it was painted at Peter's request soon after he took the throne in 1527, perhaps as a deliberate act of embellishing his father's last ecclesiastical foundation. Soon after, it was painted inside the burial rooms at Probotă and Moldovița. These images provide visual renditions of the death of these saintly figures and demonstrate that these individuals triumphed over death, making explicit in the Orthodox context that death served only as a mere passage from a historical time on earth to an eventual eternal one in the kingdom of God. On another level, the Orthodox saints shown in the scene of the *Menologium* function as intercessors between man and God, and thus complement the imagery of the imperial *Deësis*.¹⁰⁴ These murals of the *Deësis* survive, for example, on the east wall of the burial chambers at Dobrovăț (Fig. 5.39) and Moldovița (Fig. 5.38), on the south wall in the burial chamber at Humor (Fig. 5.13), and on the north wall of the naos of St. Elijah in Suceava (Fig. 5.45).¹⁰⁵ At Moldovița, Christ dressed in priestly and imperial garb—wearing the *sticharion*,¹⁰⁶ *omophorion*,¹⁰⁷ and imperial crown—sits on a throne and receives the petitions offered by the Virgin and St. John the Baptist who stand on either side of him (Fig. 5.38). Whereas St. John is depicted barefoot, with his traditional camel skin garb and an outer garment, Mary is shown as an empress, wearing a white veil and a Moldavian crown. The Virgin appears in a similar guise in the mural of the *Deësis* at St. Elijah in Suceava, completed between 1522 and 1526—an observation that suggests that this particular iconography predates Peter's patronage

¹⁰³ It has been proposed that monk Macarie should be credited with the iconographic program of the burial chamber at Dobrovăț and Neamț. See Cincheza-Buculei, "Programul iconografic al gropnițelor Moldovenești," 88, n. 37. On the murals of the *Menologium* at Dobrovăț, see eadem, "Menologul de la Dobrovăț (1529)," 7-32; eadem, "Le programme iconographique des peintures murales de la chambre des tombeaux de l'église du monastère de Dobrovăț," 21-58.

¹⁰⁴ Cincheza-Buculei, "Programul iconografic al gropnițelor Moldovenești," 87. On the theme of the *Deësis* in Moldavia and Wallachia, see Pillat, "Quelques notes sur la thème de la Deësis et son emplacement dans la peinture murale roumaine du Moyen Âge," 517-529; Sabados, "Iconografia temei Deësis în pictura de lemn din Moldova secolului XVI," 26-40; Guran, "Les implications theologico-politiques de l'image de la *Deësis* à Voroneț," 39-67; Negrău, "Deësis in the Romanian Painting of the 14th-18th Centuries," 64-81; eadem, *Cultura suveranului sud-est European și cazul Țării Românești*, 190-211. A noteworthy recent study on the theme of the *Deësis* in western medieval art is Gilsdorf, "Deësis Deconstructed: Imagining Intercession in the Medieval West," 131-174.

¹⁰⁵ The mural of the *Deësis* was also painted above the entryway into the naos at the Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava. Unfortunately, this mural no longer survives because the wall was destroyed in order to create a more open transition between the pronaos and the naos. In addition to the Virgin and St. John the Baptist, St. George and St. Demetrios were also represented as standing before Christ.

¹⁰⁶ A *sticharion* is a long robe with sleeves worn by the Orthodox clergy. An undergarment for priests and bishops, it is worn as outer garment, usually plain white for deacons.

¹⁰⁷ The *omophorion* (Greek) is a long white stole decorated with crosses worn by Orthodox bishops over the phelonion.

(Fig. 5.45). At Dobrovăț, moreover, two angels frame the composition in the *Deësis* mural; they stand behind the Virgin and St. John, and join in prayer for man's salvation (Fig. 5.39). If considered in conjunction with the iconography of the *Menologium* in the burial chamber, the images of the *Deësis* at Dobrovăț and Moldovița are invested with an additional layer of meaning as the Virgin, St. John, and the holy figures that flank them can now be seen to be accompanied in their intercessory prayers by the legions of saints depicted in the *Menologium*. As Tereza Sinigalia has noted, the presence of the *Menologium* in the burial chamber stresses the participation of all the saints on behalf of those deceased.¹⁰⁸

This point is underscored by the partially-damaged inscription below the image of the *Deësis* in the burial chamber at Dobrovăț (Fig. 5.39):

O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, you who made the sky and the earth with all their beauty, save us with this word of thy command. He who sits on the cherubim to the right of the Father, we shall glorify him in three phases: he who first built... He later came incarnated in the pure Virgin Mary for our salvation. God, bless the... [Christ] and the pure Virgin and all your saints... God, the patrons of this church... with all your saints who have always had your favor, forgive them and have mercy on them.¹⁰⁹

This text, a prayer in fact, calls upon Christ, the Virgin, and all the saints to pray for the patrons of the church and “forgive them and have mercy on them.” This prayer would have been read or even recited by the faithful prior to crossing into the naos of the church for the celebrations of the Eucharist.

The images of the *Deësis* at Dobrovăț and at Moldovița—given their prominent location around the entrance to the naos—would have been the last images the faithful saw before leaving the burial room and crossing the threshold into the naos; its “afterimage” might have incited one or the other viewer to say a prayer for both the living and the dead. During the celebrations of the Divine Liturgy, moreover, at the moment of the mention of

¹⁰⁸ Sinigalia, “L’Église de l’Ascension du monastère du Neamț,” 30.

¹⁰⁹ “ВЛ(Д)КО Ги Іу Хе Бе на(ш), сътворивъзи небо и земля съ възсѣхъ лѣпотѣхъ и(х), сп(с)еніимъ вѣи(м) славу(м) повелѣніа твоего. Съданъ на херувимѣхъ(х) въ деснѣхъ родителѣхъ слави(м) въ тріе(х) съставѣхъ(х), създавъи пръвѣе... послѣ(д)нѣ времена пріше(д) възплъти са в(т) прѣ(с)тѣя и пр(с)нодвы м(д)рѣжъ наше(г) рад(і) сп(с)еніа. Ги, бл(с)ви въ хв... прѣ(с)том(оу) образоу твоем(оу) и прѣ(с)тѣ мѣри твоєи и възсѣ(м) стѣи(м) твоєи(м)... Ги, ктитори храма сего... [в]сѣми стѣи твоими, и(ж) в(т) вѣка оугож(д)ши(х) тебѣ, прости и помлоуи.” Cincheza-Buculei, “Menologul de la Dobrovăț (1529),” 7 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 7-8 (for a Romanian translation), and n. 3.

those alive and dead, the faithful were all called into communion with the saints to pray to God for the souls of the living and the dead. In addition to personal prayer and that carried out during the Eucharistic services, prayers for the dead were also incorporated into commemorative monastic rites for the founder and his family. In Byzantine religious practices, such prayers were “believed to increase the likelihood of the soul’s favorable judgment” at the end of days.¹¹⁰ Theodora Synadene, the foundress of the nunnery of the Virgin of Sure Hope in Constantinople (1327-1335), made this point explicit in her charter for the monastery: “[May] the commemoration of the departed be celebrated, as I have instructed, with all zeal and diligence. Thus may the Lord look mercifully and graciously on the souls of those who are commemorated, and give them rest in a bright place...”¹¹¹

In addition to the *Menologium* scenes and the images of the *Deësis*, the double-arm crosses of Cavalry raised on a stepped pedestal above the skull of Adam and flanked by the instruments of the Passion (the lance that pierced Christ’s side, and the reed with the sponge full of vinegar) also feature prominently in the burial rooms, particularly at Probota and Moldovița. At Probota, this monastic cross is painted in red against a white backdrop to the right of the doorway leading out of the burial chamber into the pronaos of the church (Fig. 5.46). At Moldovița, it is found in a small rounded niche in the south wall of the burial chamber, to the right of the central window (Fig. 5.40). The Church Slavonic tetragrams around this cross present select abbreviations of the Greek phrases that praise the God and the Cross, and are derived from the monastic Analabos (ἀνάλαβος).¹¹²

These type of crosses with tetragrams—especially IC XC NI KA or IC XC NI KA = Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς νικᾷ / Jesus Christ conquers—are found in manuscripts,¹¹³ icons and

¹¹⁰ Brooks, “Art and Death in Medieval Byzantium,” <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dbyz/hd_dbyz.htm> (accessed 15 October 2015).

¹¹¹ Brooks, “Art and Death in Medieval Byzantium,” <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dbyz/hd_dbyz.htm> (accessed 15 October 2015).

¹¹² The Analabos is “the distinctive garment of a monk or a nun Tonsured into the highest grade of Orthodox monasticism, the Great *Schema*, is adorned with the instruments of the Passion of Christ. It takes its name from the Greek ἀναλαμβάνω (“to take up”), serving as a constant reminder to the one who wears it that he or she must “take up his cross daily” (St. Luke 9:23).” See Hieromonk Gregory, “A Brief Explanation of the Symbolism of the *Analabos*,” 27-30. For one of the most thorough general studies on the iconography of these crosses, see Frolow, “IC XC NI KA,” 98-113; Walter, “IC XC NI KA: The Apotropaic Function of the Victorious Cross,” 139-166; Rhoby, “Secret Messages? Byzantine Greek Tetragrams and Their Display,” <<http://art-hist.edel.univ-poitiers.fr/index.php?id=72>> (accessed 24 January 2016).

¹¹³ For a list of examples, see Walter, “IC XC NI KA: The Apotropaic Function of the Victorious Cross,” 148-151.

reliquaries,¹¹⁴ as well as in sepulchral monuments where they functioned primarily as “the all-powerful protector against evil.”¹¹⁵ This iconography is also characteristic of the visual vocabulary of the *antimension* (ἀντιμῆνσιον)—one of the most important altar furnishings in the Orthodox Christian tradition and central to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.¹¹⁶ A square or rectangular piece of linen or silk decorated with Eucharistic imagery and scriptural passages related to Christ, the *antimension*, originated as early as the fourth century. In the eighth and ninth centuries regulations emerged for altar coverings in connection with those for liturgical vestments. In the Syrian tradition, the cloth support was replaced by a wooden tablet (*tablitho*). The earliest iconography of this type of liturgical object is illustrated by the sixteenth-century *antimension* in the sacristy of Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos that resembles the schematic textual and visual formulas present in the Moldavian painted examples (Fig. 5.47). Antimensia such as this example from Athos would have been placed on the altar and unfolded during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

The cross in conjunction with the instruments of the Passion was also used to denote the Hetoimasia, or the Throne of the Second Coming—a motif central to the iconography of the *Last Judgment*, as it appears, for example, on the west façade of St. George at Voroneț, discussed in Chapter Four (Fig. 5.48; Fig. 4.90). This motif, however, is much older, appearing already in mosaic form on the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome (432-440), and much earlier in Assyrian relief sculptures and Buddhist art, for example.

The kinds of crosses accompanied by symbols of the Passion and Eucharistic inscriptions, as found for instance in the burial chambers at Probotă and Moldovița, emphasized the protection of the divine and humanity’s eventual salvation. These crosses, thus, served in part a role similar to that of the large crosses that embellished the ceilings of

¹¹⁴ For a brief discussion and a few examples, see Walter, “IC XC NI KA: The Apotropaic Function of the Victorious Cross,” 152-153.

¹¹⁵ Walter, “IC XC NI KA: The Apotropaic Function of the Victorious Cross,” 166, 153-162 (for the presence of this motif in sepulchral monuments and in churches), 162-163 (for a list of the various inscriptions). See also Mareș, “Criptogramele Crucii într-o versiune slavonă sud-est transilvăneană din secolul al XVI-lea,” 171-182.

¹¹⁶ On the antimension, see Raes, “Antimension, Tablit, Tabot,” 59-70; Izzo, *The Antimension in the Liturgical and Canonical Tradition of the Byzantine and Latin Churches*; Kasinec and Struminskyj, *Byzantine-Ruthenian Antimensia in the Episcopal and Heritage Institute Libraries of the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Passaic*; Yurchyshyn-Smith, “Development of Byzantine Iconographic Tradition in Ukrainian Antimensia of the 17th Century,” 320-324; Karapli and Papastavrou, “Autels portatifs (*Altaria portatilia*) - *Antimensia*,” 221-231.

Cappadocian tombs.¹¹⁷ This message of divine protection was also visualized by the Hand of God holding the souls of the Righteous, as for example in the burial chamber at Probotā, Humor, and Moldovița (Fig. 5.49).¹¹⁸ The cross, thus, called to mind the realities of the Eucharistic celebrations and of rebirth, carrying both theological and symbolic meanings. These meanings were interwoven, at Probotā and Moldovița in particular, with the actual site of burial.

A similar cross, although without the Instruments of the Passion present nearby, appears on the rectangular embroidered cover for the grave of Stephen's third wife, Maria Despina (d. 11 May 1500), preserved today in the collection of Putna Monastery (Fig. 5.50).¹¹⁹ Made from blueish-green velvet and embroidered with gold and silk thread, the cover displays in the central panel framed by foliate designs a cross raised on a two-step pedestal with the central arm straight, and the other two—the *titulus* and the *suppedaneum*—rendered obliquely.¹²⁰ The oblique *titulus* is uncommon and perhaps signals in this case that the cover marked an actual place of burial. The register above the central straight arm contains the initials for Christ Nika or conqueror (ΙC ΧC ΝΙΚΑ), while the lower register frames the initials Φ Χ Φ Π (Φως Χριστου Φαινει Πασι / The light of Christ illuminates all).¹²¹ In this instance, the monastic cross may have been chosen as an appropriate symbol

¹¹⁷ Robert Ousterhout in his volume *A Byzantine Settlement in Cappadocia* argues that the majority of the Cappadocian churches served a main funerary function.

¹¹⁸ This image, moreover, alluded to the Second Coming when those saved will be welcomed into the Kingdom of God. At Humor, the inscription accompanying this image clearly identifies the image as showing “the souls of the Righteous in the Hand of God.” Cincheza-Buculei, “Programul iconografic al gropnițelor Moldovenesti,” 88.

¹¹⁹ The location of Maria Despina's tomb is unknown. She was the wife of Wallachia's prince Radu the Handsome. Following the attack on Wallachia on 24 November 1473, Stephen captured Maria Despina along with her daughter, Maria Voichița, and brought them to Moldavia. Five years later, in 1478, Stephen took Maria Voichița as his third wife. See Gorovei, “Maria Despina, doamna lui Radu cel Frumos,” 145-152.

¹²⁰ The top oblique arm perhaps signals that this is a burial. The lower arm is often depicted slanted because “according to one tradition, at the moment when “Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the spirit” (Mark 15:37), He allowed a violent death spasm to convulse His legs, dislodging His footrest in such a manner that one end pointed upwards, indicating that the soul of the penitent thief, Saint Dismas, “the one on His right hand” (Mark 15:27), would be “carried up into Heaven” (Luke 24:51), while the other end, pointed downwards, indicated that the soul of the impenitent thief, Gestas, “the other on His left” (Mark 15:27), would “be thrust down to Hell” (Luke 10:15), showing that all of us, “the evil and...the good. ...the just and...the unjust” (Matthew 5:45), “are weighed in the balance” (Ecclesiasticus 21:25) of the Cross of Christ.” Hieromonk Gregory, “A Brief Explanation of the Symbolism of the *Analabos*,” 29.

¹²¹ *Sfânta Mănăstire Putna*, 275. The inscription in Church Slavonic below the cross reads: “† СЪИ ГРѢБНИКЪ МАРІЖ Г(О)СП(О)ЖДА Г(О)СП(О)Д(И)НА РАДОУЛА ВОЕВОДИ.” / “This tomb cover belongs to Maria, the wife of Prince Radu voivode.” *Repertoriul*, 331 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

for the tomb cover of Maria Despina since she retreated to a monastery later in life and is said to have been buried in the garb of nuns.

The places of burial—with the inscribed gravestones and sometimes elaborately embroidered grave covers—acted as a reminder for the faithful to pray for those deceased and participate in their commemoration. The architectural and visual vocabularies of the burial chambers in the Moldavian monastic churches of the early sixteenth century demonstrate, moreover, that these spaces were closely associated with both the authority and anxieties of the princes. Since the funerary room was as close a tomb could have been placed to the spiritually and symbolically significant area of the naos, this special burial space served a number of significant functions. It signaled, first, the spiritual privilege of the founder but also highlighted his spiritual and dynastic concerns. Second, the burial room offered protection for the body and the soul of the deceased¹²² and presented to the faithful a reminder of their temporal existence on earth, as well as of their eventual eternal existence in the afterlife (or the eternal dwellings).¹²³ For the nuns and monks in particular, this space provided “a constant, physical reminder of death and the futility of life, thus abetting their penitential exercises.”¹²⁴ As such, the burial chamber was a site tied to “thoughts about death,” as Gabriel Herea has concluded, and the idea that death in life signifies a rebirth in heaven.¹²⁵ The particular architectural makeup and spatial solutions of the Moldavian variant of the burial chamber, moreover, suggest that this room served as a site of spiritual preparation for the Eucharistic ceremonies that unfolded beyond its walls, commanding the faithful to exhibit a proper spiritual behavior upon crossing the threshold into the naos of the church.

¹²² Sharon E. J. Gerstel has argued that entombment inside of a monastic church offered protection, especially from tomb robbers. See Gerstel, “The Chora Parekklesion, the Hope for a Peaceful Afterlife, and Monastic Devotional Practices,” 129-145, esp. 136-143.

¹²³ The “eternal dwellings” are repeatedly noted in the dedicatory inscriptions on the graves stones in particular, signaling that the deceased moved from this world to the eternal dwellings in the kingdom of God.

¹²⁴ Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual*, 63; Gerstel, “The Chora Parekklesion,” 143-145.

¹²⁵ Herea, *Pelerinaj în spațiul sacru Bucovinean*, 21: “Rolul simbolic al gropniței trebuie să fie legat de “gândul de moarte,” atât de exploatat în scrierile părinților bisericii; de comuniunea cu cei adormiți, comuniune ce se petrece în timpul Liturghiei (gropnița făcând parte din partea anexă a bisericii, parte pregătitoare pentru Liturghie); dar și de sensul misterului creștin, care constă în moartea și învierea alături de Hristos.” / “The symbolic function of the burial chamber needs to be tied to “thoughts about death,” also at the core of the writings of the Church Fathers; communion with the deceased—a communion that unfolds during the celebration of the Liturgy (the burial chamber being part of the extension to the church proper [the naos] and serving a preparatory role); but also [a communion] with the Christian mysteries through which death signals a rebirth alongside Christ.”

Burial in the church was a privilege offering physical and spiritual protection for the bodies of rulers and nobles and also presenting special sites of commemoration for the deceased. The Moldavian variant of the burial chamber, so prominently incorporated into the plans of monastic churches from the late fifteenth century onward, also presented sites of physical, spiritual, temporal, and symbolic mediation between the secular and the sacred—the boundary of which always remained somewhat imprecise or blurred. The central space of the burial chamber, as such, functioned as a stage for complex mediation between the laity and the divine. Moreover, it established legitimacy by forging links with the past and family traditions for the prominent individuals buried there, serving as a “symbolic expression,” as Maria Crăciun has articulated, “of the new status of the family, accompanied by an emphasis on links with a glorious past and with prestigious ancestors.”¹²⁶ In essence, the burial chamber became a space tied to multifaceted dynastic concerns and part of a construct of legitimacy that transformed the entire church building into a family mausoleum.

Offerings and Memoria

Proclaiming dynastic legitimacy was only one aspect of the function of these chambers. Perhaps most importantly, they transformed the church into a site of perpetual remembrance through prayer and commemoration of the deceased buried there and of the patron—a concern manifested in other domains as well. The site of burial reminded the faithful of the patron and his immediate family buried there, while also helping the clergy remember their spiritual obligations to the living and the dead. As such, the Moldavian funerary room presented a site for perpetual remembrance (both on a personal level, and remembering the dead to God through prayer). I turn next to the issue of *memoria*—preserving memory especially through liturgical commemoration—since it was evidently of utmost concern to Moldavia’s rulers beginning with Stephen III and continuing through the reign of his illegitimate son, Peter Rareș. The concern with *memoria* found a visual manifestation in the physical presence of the burial chamber at the center of the church structure and by means of certain aspects of its iconographic program, as well as in the physical display of the gifts and donations from our protagonists to other monasteries, local

¹²⁶ Crăciun, “*Apud ecclesia*,” 154.

and more distant, for example, in an effort to ensure their perpetual remembrance through prayer, as well as eventual salvation.

A number of significant Moldavian monasteries became the privileged recipients of such lavish gifts during the reigns of Stephen and Peter. In addition to *Tetraevangelia* and other richly illuminated manuscripts that often carried in their dedicatory inscriptions mentions that they were gifted for the donor's remembrance and that of his wife, parents, and children, liturgical objects and embroideries were likewise gifted for the donor's commemoration. One noteworthy example is the embroidered flag (or liturgical standard) showing St. George crowned and enthroned with a three-headed dragon at his feet (National Museum of History, Bucharest, Nr.inv.75062) (Fig. 5.51).¹²⁷ Two angels hold the crown over his head and a sword and a shield, respectively, symbolic of St. George's epithet "bearer of victory."¹²⁸ Completed in 1500 at Stephen's request, the flag measures 123.8 cm by 94.2 cm, and it was embroidered with silver and golden thread on red silk, as well as embellished with precious stones (now lost). In the central panel, the inscription in Greek (with errors) identifies the protagonist as "St. George of Cappadocia." Along the perimeter runs an inscription in Church Slavonic that identifies Stephen as the patron and the primary purposes of his lavish commission. The inscription begins in the upper left corner of the embroidery and has its letters facing toward the central composition. It reads:

O great martyr and bearer of victory, George, who in case of need or misfortune is a prompt protector and ardent helper, and brings inexpressible joy to the afflicted, receive from us also this prayer, that of your humble servant, Ioan Stephen voivode, through God's grace prince of the land of Moldavia, protect him in this life and in the future, through the prayers of the people who honor you, as we glorify you forever, amen. This was made in 7008 [1500], the forty-third year of [Stephen's] reign.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ St. George appears in a similar guise on the silver binding of the Four Gospels gifted by Alexander Lăpușneanu to Xenophontos Monastery on 23 April 1554.

¹²⁸ The iconography of this object, particularly in the gestures of the angels and the centrality of St. George, adapts an earlier composition found, for example, in the illuminated portrait of Basil II (*r.* 956-1025) in his Psalter now in the Marcian Library, Venice (Cod.Marc.Gr.17, fol. 3r).

¹²⁹ “† СѢ, страсотръпче и побѣдоносче великїи Гевургіе, їже въ бѣдах и въ напастех скорїи прѣдстателю и топлїи помощниче и скръзвѣцим радости неизгла(гола)ннаа, прїими ѿт насъ и се моленїе смѣренаго своего раба г(оспо)д(и)на Іуана Стефана воеводи, б(о)жїею м(и)л(ос)тїю г(ос)л(ода)рѣ земли Млвдавскон, съхрани его неврѣднимъ въ съ вѣкъ и въ бжджци м(о)л(и)твами четьцихъ та, іако да прославѣмъ та въ вѣкы, аминь. Сътвори с(а) в лѣтѣхъ 7008, а

The commemorative prayer for Stephen’s wellbeing in this life and beyond is directed, according to the inscription, to St. George and requested of those who honor and pray to him (i.e. the monks or nuns in particular, but also the laity). What is more, the inscription appears to have been carefully conceived in relation to the iconography of the standard. The identification of Stephen as patron and prince of the land of Moldavia through God’s grace—“...СМѢРЕНАГО СВОЕГО РАБА Г(ОСПО)Д(И)НА ІВАНА СТЕФАНА ВОЕВОДЫ, В(О)ЖІЕЮ М(И)Л(ОС)ТИЮ Г(ОС)ПОДА)РЪ ЗЕМЛИ МВЛДАВСКОИ...” / “...your humble servant, John Stephen voivode, through God’s grace prince of the land of Moldavia...”—runs along the entire lower edge of the embroidery, at the feet of St. George, signaling a supplicatory gesture on the part of the great Moldavian prince. Although this impressive embroidered work became part of the extraordinary collection of liturgical objects and manuscripts at Zographou Monastery on Mount Athos, the fact that the Athonite monastery is not mentioned in the lengthy dedicatory inscription that runs around the perimeter of the embroidery has prompted scholars to suggest that perhaps the flag was initially gifted to a Moldavian monastery and arrived at Zographou only at a later date.¹³⁰

Although princely endowments to local monasteries occurred often, most numerous are the gifts and donations from the Moldavian princes to the monastic communities on Mount Athos. Moldavian aid to the Orthodox monastic communities on the Holy Mount came soon after the events of 1453, as Stephen III in particular sought through his aid to Athos—the only pure and still-remaining symbol of Orthodox Christianity after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople—to nurture and “renew” symbolically the former glory of the Byzantine Empire.¹³¹ His efforts, by extension, rendered Moldavia as a region an heir to Byzantine Orthodoxy.¹³² The Venetian historian Marino Sanudo (1466-1536) even stressed that Athos was “a place in which all that is good and Christian flourishes, and it is a place

Г(ОС)ПОД(СТ)ВА СВОЕГО ЛѢТА МѢ.” *Repertoriul*, 302-303 (for the Church Slavonic transcription, with errors, and a Romanian translation).

¹³⁰ Oberländer-Târnoveanu, “Stindardul liturgic al lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 50. The embroidery was in the collection of Zographou Monastery until 1917 when it was removed and preserved in a bank in Paris until 1919. From 1919 and until 1972 it was part of the collection of the National Military Museum in Bucharest, and subsequently moved to the National History Museum there. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, “Stindardul liturgic al lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 49.

¹³¹ Iorga, *Istoria lui Ștefan cel Mare pentru poporul roman*, 8; Năstase, “Ștefan cel Mare Împărat,” 65-102.

¹³² Panaitescu, “Ștefan cel Mare. O încercare de caracterizare,” 12-31, esp. 26.

favored by Carabogdan [Stephen III].”¹³³ Centuries later, Archimandrite Efrem, abbot at Vatopedi Monastery on Athos, stated at the University in Bucharest during his visit in 2000: “We, from the Holy Mountain, are forever grateful to the Romanian Orthodox Church! We do not forget that the Romanian princes, emulating [the deeds of] the Byzantine emperors, are the founders of the majority of the Athonite monasteries!”¹³⁴

Significant contacts between Moldavia and Mount Athos developed during the second half of the fifteenth century, and under the direction of Stephen III in particular.¹³⁵ Inscriptions on surviving Athonite buildings attest to these contacts, as is the case, for example, with the inscriptions found on the tower of Zographou Monastery (1475), at the sea port of Vatopedi Monastery (1472-1496), at Grigoriou Monastery rebuilt by Stephen entirely (1500) following the work of his son Alexander who died in 1496, and the building projects at St. Paul Monastery (1500-1501). The *arsana* at Vatopedi Monastery preserves, for example, the only relief sculpture celebrating Stephen’s patronage, completed in 1472 (Fig. 5.52).¹³⁶ Precious objects were also gifted to particular monasteries on the Holy Mount, such as the miracle-working icon of the *Virgin Pantanassa*, given by Maria of Mangup to Grigoriou Monastery sometime before her death in 1477 (Fig. 5.53),¹³⁷ the flags and icons

¹³³ Barozzi, ed., *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, IV, 311: “Poi scorendo al Monte Santo [Athos], dove è castelli 40, *solum* l'horo è signori, lochi fructiferi di ogni bene e christianissimi e favorite dil Carabodan.” See also Denize, “Ștefan cel Mare în I Diarii lui Marino Sanudo,” 137-152.

¹³⁴ Efrem, *Cuvânt din Sfântul Munte: omiliile arhimadritului Efrem, Egumenul Mănăstirii Vatopedi, în România*, 149-150, cited in Mischevca, “Ștefan cel Mare și Sfântul Munte Athos,” 66, n. 6: “Noi, cei din Sfântul Munte, suntem datori în vecii vecilor Bisericii Ortodoxe Române! Nu uităm că domnitorii români, după împărății bizantini, sunt ctitorii celor mai multe mănăstiri aghiorite!”

¹³⁵ Elian, “Moldova și Bizanțul în secolul al XV-lea,” 163: “Ajutoarele românești la muntele Athos, care constitue aspectul principal al legăturilor noastre cu Athosul, încep pentru Moldova în mod cert abia o data cu Ștefan cel Mare.” / “The Romanian support of Mount Athos, which constitutes our [the Romanian’s] primary link with Athos, began certainly for Moldavia during the reign of Stephen the Great.”

¹³⁶ The 94 x 91 cm marble panel incorporated into the fabric of the wall shows Stephen presenting a model of a church to the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child in her arms. The emblem of Moldavia, showing the frontal bullhead, hovers in between the figures and directly below the church model. At the top of the relief, the inscription in Greek reads: “† Ὁ εὐσεβέστατος [αὐθέντης] Ἰωάννης Στ(έ)φανος / [βοε]βόδας / ἔτους ζδ´ οἴγουμένου Κύριλου οἰερομονάχου.” / “The most-devout John Stephen voivode,” and at the bottom: “the year 7004 [1496], during the time of Abbot Cyril.” Millet et al, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de l’Athos*, 42 (no.139) (for the Greek transcription); Xyngopoulos, “Un édifice du voivode Etienne le Grand au Mont Athos,” 106 (for the Greek transcription after Millet et al, and a French translation). The year 7004 is provided according to the Byzantine calendar, corresponding to the year 1496.

¹³⁷ The icon is found on the first column on the left in the naos of the katholikon at Grigoriou Monastery, facing south. Many miracles are associated with it, most notably the miracle of the fire from 1762 that burned that entire monastery except for this icon. The icon carries the following dedicatory inscription written in Greek in gold letters: “Δεήσεις τῆς εὐσεβεστάτης κυρᾶ(ς) Μαρίας Ἀσανήνας Παλεολογήνας κυρᾶ(ς) τῆς Μολδοβλαχίας.” / “The prayer of the most-devout princess Maria Asanina Palaiologina, princess of Moldovlahia.” I thank Brad Hostetler for his valuable assistance with this Greek transcription. Gorovei, “Maria

showing St. George donated to Zographou Monastery by Stephen, and numerous liturgical objects such as the chalice gifted by Stephen's son Bogdan III to Protaton Monastery sometime between 1504 and 1517 (Fig. 5.54). These deluxe items were not all produced in Moldavia, however. Liturgical vessels, such as the Gothic chalice gifted to Protaton in the initial decades of the sixteenth century by Bogdan III, are likely to have originated in a Transylvanian workshop, or even further afield. A six-lobed foot decorated around the edges with a composite openwork motif of scrolling vines and quatrefoils inscribed within circles supports the inscribed bell-shaped cup and the stem on which it sits. The stem consists of two cylindrical sections decorated with openwork quatrefoils inscribed within circles above and below the knop or nodus. The quatrefoils designs, the hexalobed foot with the fret-work motif around its edges, and the hatching between the letters of the inscription encircling the exterior of the cup are all Gothic features characteristic of liturgical vessels produced in Transylvanian and Hungarian workshops from the mid-fifteenth century onward.¹³⁸

The surviving evidence suggests that Moldavia, under Stephen's rule, favored Zographou Monastery in part because of its dedication to St. George whom Stephen revered.¹³⁹ The Moldavian patronage of Zographou was so extensive that Monk Isaiah from Hilandar Monastery wrote in 1489 that Zographou was actually "built by Stephen of Moldavia."¹⁴⁰ The first monetary donation from Moldavia to Athos is documented in a *chrysobull*¹⁴¹ dated 10 May 1466 sent from Stephen's court in Suceava to Zographou.¹⁴² With this document Stephen promised an annual donation of 100 Hungarian ducats to the monastery in exchange for eternal remembrance through prayer for himself, his wife, and their children Alexander and Elena. Princely donations such as these were made annually, on a particular feast day, such as that of the monastery's patron saint. This support functioned as a testament to Stephen's piety and devotion to the Orthodox faith and its continuation.

Asanina Paleologhina, Doamna Moldovlahiei, I," 12 and n. 15 (for the Greek transcription and a Romanian translation); repr. in Székely and Gorovei, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina*, 72; Millet et al, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de l'Athos*, 175 (no.511).

¹³⁸ On the topic, see Wetter, *Objekt, Überlieferung und Narrativ*.

¹³⁹ Giurescu, *Istoria Românilor*, II, 70; Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains*, 180-202, esp. 183-188.

¹⁴⁰ Bodogae and Șindrilaru, *Ajutoarele românești la mănăstirile din Sfântul Munte Athos*, 218; Zubco, *Biserica în Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XIV-XVII: Relațiile cu Muntele Athos*, 116.

¹⁴¹ A *chrysobull*, also known as a golden bull, is a Byzantine imperial document bearing the monarch's golden seal (*bullā*), frequently used in granting privileges.

¹⁴² See Chapter Two, n. 87.

Another donation from Stephen to Zographou Monastery came on 13 September 1471, as the document written in Suceava reveals, intended for the restoration of a number of monastic buildings.¹⁴³ Between 1474 and 1495 Stephen financially supported the rebuilding of the monastic dwellings and fortificatory walls at Zographou, as well as the restoration of its refectory.¹⁴⁴ The dedicatory inscription from 7 July 1495 attests to Stephen's patronage of this monastery.¹⁴⁵ Between 1500 and 1501 the Moldavian prince renewed Zographou's system of water supply, building a well, and in the following year he paid for the restoration of the Church of St. George.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the two restoration projects and the monetary donations, Stephen also gifted to, and received from, Zographou a great number of significant liturgical objects such as richly decorated crosses, embroideries, and icons, as well as lavish manuscripts. In 1463, for instance, he requested a copy of *The Acts of the Apostles* to be copied for Zographou. This is the first book copied at Stephen's request.¹⁴⁷ In 1495 he purchased a *Tetraevangelion* from Zographou to gift to the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin from Borzești so that, according to the dedicatory inscription, "he and his family can be remembered through prayer as long as the church stands."¹⁴⁸ On 23 April 1502 Stephen gifted Zographou the lavishly illuminated *Tetraevangelion* copied by Monk Filip, and now in the collection of the National Library in Vienna (Cod.slav.7) (Fig. 5.55).¹⁴⁹ The lengthy and ornate dedicatory inscription on fol. 245r explicitly states that the manuscript was gifted in exchange for prayer for the patron (Stephen), his wife Maria, and their son Bogdan (Fig. 5.56):

John Stephen voivode, through God's grace prince of the land of Moldavia,
son of Bogdan voivode, and pious to the words of Christ for whose love he

¹⁴³ *Documente privind Istoria României, A. Moldova volumul II (1449-1486)*, 261-262 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation); Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, I, 161-163; Beza, *Urme Românești în răsăritul ortodox*, 36. Additional references in Căndea, *Mărturii*, II, 633.

¹⁴⁴ For additional notes and references, see Căndea, *Mărturii*, II, 631.

¹⁴⁵ Marinescu and Mertzimekis, "Ștefan cel Mare și mănăstirea Zografou de la Muntele Athos," 181 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 182 (for a Romanian translation), and fig. 5.

¹⁴⁶ In the exonarthex of the Church of St. George there is a votive painting showing Stephen III, Alexander Lăpușeanu, and Antioh Cantemir—three of the major donors of the monastery. For additional references, see Căndea, *Mărturii*, II, 632.

¹⁴⁷ *Repertoriul*, 372 (for the Church Slavonic text of the colophon and a Romanian translation); Caproșu and Chiaburu, eds., *Însemnări de pe manuscrise și cărți vechi din Țara Moldovei*, I, 5-6 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 6 (for a Romanian translation).

¹⁴⁸ Fol. 214r: "...ІАКО ДА БЖДЕТ ЕМОУ ПАМАТ НЕПОКОЛЪБИМА ДОНДЕЖЕ СТОИТ СЪ ХРАМ..." *Repertoriul*, 406-408 (for the Church Slavonic transcription of the dedicatory inscription, and a Romanian translation).

¹⁴⁹ *Repertoriul*, 415-420; Beza, *Urme Românești în răsăritul ortodox*, 38.

yearned, zealously requested the writing of this Tetraevangelion. And he covered it and gifted it for his prayer and that of his wife Maria and their son Bogdan, to the Holy Mount, to the church at Zographou Monastery, the house of the holy and glorious martyr and bearer of victory, George. [It was gifted] in the year 7010 [1502] from the formation of the world, and in the forty-sixth year of his reign, the month of April 23; it was written with the hand of the most sinful [humble] of people monk Filip, and forgive its imperfections for all is accomplished through God's will.¹⁵⁰

It appears from the surviving sources that all of the princely gifts, donations, and funded projects were initiated, whether stated explicitly in the dedicatory inscriptions or not, in an effort to garner prayers from the monastic communities for remembrance and spiritual protection of the donors. Indeed, despite the many reasons for donating to a particular monastic site, at the intersection of lay piety and monastic life stood a desire, on the part of the princely patron in particular, to be commemorated and remembered through the monks' and/or nuns' salvific prayer.¹⁵¹

As the cases analyzed above demonstrate, all of the princely donations implied, either explicitly in the dedicatory inscriptions or implicitly through the act of donation, that they were offered in exchange for prayer and remembrance. Therefore, *memoria*—as in memory or remembrance—in both a liturgical and para-liturgical context appears to have been the utmost concern of the donors who were engaging in these acts of gift-giving. Even on his deathbed, Stephen III entrusted to his praised foundation and mausoleum at Putna Monastery

¹⁵⁰ *Tetraevangelion* (Cod.slav.7) fol. 245r: “Іу(анна) Стефанъ воевода, б(о)жією м(н)л(о)стію г(о)сп(о)д(а)рь земли Молдавскои, с(ы)нь Богдана воевд(ы) и Х(ри)с(то)вѣхъ славесь рачителник, егоже ради любви възделѣ и потъцателно даде и исписа сѣ сын Тетроен(а)г(е)ль и шкова и даде его на м(о)лбѣ севѣ и г(о)с(по)жди своен Маріи и с(ы)на нхъ Богдана въ с(в)етои горѣ въ своен же цр(ъ)кви въ монастырь Нзоуграфъ, идеже е(ст) храмъ с(в)т(а)лгв и славнаго великомъченика и побѣдоншца Гевргіа въ лѣтвмъ вт сзеданіа мируу ҃҃҃ а г(о)сподст(в)а его лѣта м̄ и на шестое текжщее м(ѣ)с(е)ца апріліа ҃҃҃; писаже са ржкожъ грѣшнейшаго въ ч(ъ)л(о)вечѣхъ Филиппа монаха и съпрвстевайте аще и не подос[т]аную вт б(о)гда во възѣ по възможномуу.” *Repertoriul*, 416 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

¹⁵¹ For an excellent study on the patterns and meanings of donations by lay and religious individuals to Solovki Monastery, a monastic community founded between 1429 and 1436 on an archipelago in the White Sea, see Spock, “Community Building and Social Identity: Donations to the Solovki Monastery 1460-1645,” 534-565.

the care of two of his most valued objects: “his bow and a chalice....made of jasper, like white marble...so that they may be in his remembrance at the holy monastery.”¹⁵²

Moreover, the presentation of the church model to Christ in the votive paintings most often found on the east walls of the naos, to the left of the entrance into the burial chamber or pronaos of the Moldavian churches, should also be understood in the context *memoria*.¹⁵³ The votive mural in the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița shows Peter Rareș along with members of his immediate family presenting a church model to Christ, here with the Virgin Mary, to whom the church is dedicated, as mediatrix (Fig. 5.57). In this mural, as is the case in all other votive images of this type, the patron visually and symbolically “gifts” the church to Christ so that he, his immediate family, and, by extension, the people of his realm, may receive a favorable judgment at the end of days. As donors, Peter and his family serve as an example to contemporary worshippers to continue to support the church so that they, too, can achieve forgiveness and salvation on account of their donations. But in addition to commemorating the original founders of the church and encouraging financial support from the laity, these votive murals in the naos of the churches enabled the founders, symbolically, to “be present” (at least visually) during the liturgical celebrations.

Indeed, the votive murals highlight a desire on the part of the church founder(s) to be perpetually present, and also to be remembered and commemorated on a small scale by the individuals who gaze upon the mural and are reminded of the founders and their deeds, as well as, on a larger scale, by the monastic and lay communities who regularly participate in the celebrations of the Divine Liturgy. This desire is perhaps most aptly expressed in the extant inscription on the altar of the katholikon at Probota, Peter’s princely mausoleum, that calls for his eternal remembrance and that of family members from his princely line:

Remember, God, the souls of your servants John Stephen voivode and his son John Peter voivode, and his [Stephen’s] mother, Maria, and his wife,

¹⁵² Neculce, *Opere*, 163: “Lăsat-au Ștefan-vodă cel Bun la mănăstirea Putna, după moartea lui, arcul lui și un păhar, ce vorbiță călugării la mănăstire că iaste de iaspis, ce era în chipul marmurii albe și al farfurii(i), ca să fie întru pomenire la sfânta mănăstire.”

¹⁵³ For a more general discussion of Moldavian and Wallachian votive paintings and their functions, see Ștefănescu, “Gift-Giving, *Memoria*, and Art Patronage in the Principalities of Walachia and Moldavia.”

Maria, and his children, and his [Peter's] wife Elena, and his children, and
Maria and Ana [Peter's sisters]...¹⁵⁴

This was probably not so much a reminder to God to remember the princely family, but to succeeding generations of clergymen who were to celebrate Mass at this site long after the memory of the donor and his family as living tangible beings had passed into oblivion.

The desire for commemoration through texts and images stresses the importance on the part of the church founders or patrons to be perpetually present and remembered by the individuals who gaze upon the inscriptions or the images and are reminded of the founders and their deeds, as well as, on a larger scale, by the monastic and lay communities who regularly participate in the Orthodox ritual celebrations carried out at these sites.

Conclusion

As I attempted to demonstrate throughout this chapter, the desire for remembrance and commemoration through individual and communal prayer, as well as in the context of liturgical ceremonies, is manifested in particular aspects of the architecture and mural cycles of the Moldavian monastic churches. To these princely desires we can add a concern, especially on the part of Stephen and Peter, with their princely lineage, as suggested by the votive images and implied in the elaborate renditions of the *Tree of Jesse* murals on the exterior of the burial chambers. It was under Stephen's direction that church burials for members of the princely lineage took on a new spatial and architectural form—at a time when Stephen was also demonstrating great interest in the burials of his ancestors and the ways in which he was to be remembered as the descendant of a certain lineage (the Mușat family line). His heir, Bogdan III, may have had similar concerns since it was under his patronage that the burial covers for the tombs of Stephen and Maria Voichița were executed. Peter, in turn, as Stephen's illegitimate son, was also deeply concerned with his family line and his right to rule. As such, church burials during his reign gained a new architectural and visual vocabulary closely interwoven with Peter's dynastic concerns and his desire to be perpetually remembered. Indeed, the Moldavian princes took great care of the monastic

¹⁵⁴ “Помѣни г(о)с(под)и д(о)ушѣ раб своихъ Іу(анна) Стефанъ Воевод(а) и с(ы)на ег(о) Іу(анна) Петръ Воевода и м(а)т(е)ри ег(о) М(а)риѣ и г(о)сп(о)ждѣ его М(а)риѣ и ч(а)д ихъ и г(о)сп(о)ждѣ ег(о) Елена и ч(а)д ихъ и Маріа и Анна...” Iorga, *Inscriptii*, 57 (for the Church Slavonic transcription with no resolved abbreviations, and a Romanian translation).

churches designated to serve as “the gate through which Moldavia’s princes and their families passed to the Kingdom of Heavens.”¹⁵⁵

Up to this point I have discussed the compound architectural and visual character of the great Moldavian monastic churches. This chapter has considered the ways in which the architecture and image cycles of the Moldavian *katholika*, and in particular those of the burial chamber, were designed to reveal and reflect dynastic and spiritual concerns, as well as function as sites of memory and remembrance for Moldavia’s princes and their families. The next chapter engages with some of the distinctive architectural features of the churches and certain aspects of their mural cycles in the context of Moldavia’s political and military circumstances in the decades following the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, and especially during the initial years of Peter’s rule. The following discussion will revolve around notions of cultural memory and conceptions of history, while also focusing on Moldavia’s relations *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman Porte during the first half of the sixteenth century. Chapter Six has at its core the reign of Peter Rareș and his grand ambitions in the early decades of the sixteenth century, in the context of which the extensive and carefully conceived mural cycles of the Moldavian monastic churches first emerged.

¹⁵⁵ Pilat, *Între Roma și Bizanț*, 375.

CHAPTER SIX

Afterimages of Byzantium

Introduction

During the first decades of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire witnessed great military success and expansion. Under Sultan Selim I, the Ottomans defeated the Mamluks in Egypt and annexed Cilicia, Syria, Jerusalem, and Egypt. His successor, Sultan Suleiman I “the Magnificent” continued the expansion of the empire both east and west, leading victorious campaigns in Europe and seizing in the east the areas of historic Armenia, from Bitlis to Baghdad and Tabriz. Moldavia at this time, especially during the reign of Peter Rareș, enjoyed periods of great achievement, particularly in the cultural and artistic spheres, as well as moments of turmoil, mainly in the political and military domains, as the pages that follow reveal.¹ Peter took the throne of the principality shortly after the Ottoman defeat of Hungary at the Battle of Mohács in 1526, which opened for the Ottomans the path to central Europe. Three years later, the Ottomans were to reach Vienna. The failed Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529 is a significant historical moment that stands at the crux of my arguments developed in this chapter. This military disaster that showed that the Ottomans were vulnerable after all, also kindled in many Christian leaders, Peter among them, a certain hope that the Ottomans could still be defeated on the battlefield, perhaps once and for all.

As the sources reveal, one of Peter’s grandest ambitions was the liberation of Constantinople, the once glorious Byzantine imperial capital, from the Ottomans. The eventual deliverance of Constantinople from Ottoman rule was prophesized in the famous *Tale of Constantinople* written sometime in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century

Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

¹ On the life and ambitions of Peter Rareș, see, most notably, Ursu, *Die auswärtige Politik des Peter Rareș*; idem, *Petru Rareș: domn al Moldovei*; Almaș, *Petru Voievod Rareș*; Simionescu, *Petru Rareș: domnul și vremea sa*; Constantinescu, *Moldova și Transilvania în vremea lui Petru Rareș*; Șimanschi, ed., *Petru Rareș*; Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*; Denize, “Moldova lui Petru Rareș între imperiali și otomani,” 235-247; Bara, “The Political and Artistic Program of Prince Petru Rareș of Moldavia.”

by Nestor Iskander, who had witnessed the siege of 1453 with his own eyes.² His account, which provides valuable information about the siege, began circulating in the Slavic-Byzantine world (Moldavia included), after the events of 1453.³ A somewhat later source, written in 1549 by the Russian diplomat Ivaško Peresvetov, who traveled through Moldavia between 1540 and 1541 and spent five months at Peter's court, recounts the sovereign's interest in history and the circumstances of the fall of Constantinople.⁴ According to the Moldavian prince, Peresvetov narrates, "if one desires to have royal wisdom and knowledge about the army and about royal life, then one must read to the end the siege of Constantinople; do not spare anything, and there you will find all the help from God."⁵ It is possible that Peter was referring in this instance precisely to Iskander's *Tale of Constantinople*. Nevertheless, as will become clear from the discussion to follow, the siege of Constantinople in 1453 and those others that took place throughout the long history of the imperial capital, were a topic of interest to the Moldavian prince and his advisors.

In contrast to his father Stephen, however, who, as we have seen in Chapter Two, modeled his leadership on figures of the distant past such as Constantine the Great, Peter looked directly to his father as the ideal ruler. This may have been in part the result of Peter's illegitimate status. Nevertheless, he was the heir to Stephen's throne and this fact carried great implications for how he envisaged his role as Moldavia's leader and

² Hanak and Philippides, trans., *The Tale of Constantinople (of Its Origin and Capture by the Turks in the Year 1453) by Nestor-Iskander*, 94 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 95 (for an English translation): "Пишетъ во: 'Русии же родъ съ прежде создательными всего Измаилта побѣдятъ и Сед(ь)мохолмаго примуть съ прежде законными его, и въ немъ въцарятъ и судръжатъ Сед(ь)мохолмаго Русы, языкъ шестый и пятый, и насадитъ въ немъ зелье и снѣдятъ отъ него мнози въ отмщѣние святымъ.'" / "For it is written: 'The fair [ones] are a race who, with former creations, will vanquish all of the Ishmaelites [Turks] and will inherit the Seven Hills [Constantinople] with its former laws. The fair [ones] will rise to the throne of the Seven Hills [Constantinople] and will hold it firmly. The sixth and fifth nation will plant it in herb that will consume from it much in holy vengeance.'"

³ See, especially, Iorga. "Une source négligée de la prise de Constantinople," 59-128; Grecu, "La chute de Constantinople dans la littérature populaire roumaine," 55-81; Ciobanu, *Stihia Profeticului*, esp. 61-104. Bianu, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești: Biblioteca Academiei Române*, I, 104-107 (no. 44), 109-115 (no. 48), 348-349 (no. 154), and II, 250-252 (no. 505); Hanak, "Some Historiographical Observations on the Sources of Nestor-Iskander's *The Tale of Constantinople*," 35-45; idem, "One Source, Two Renditions: *The Tale of Constantinople* and Its Fall in 1453," 239-250; idem, "*Bucharest ms.no.1385* and *The Tale of Constantinople, 1453: Some Reconsiderations*," 267-310.

⁴ Bezviconi, *Călători Ruși în Moldova și Muntenia*, 18-31 (for a description of the account and a Romanian translation after the original).

⁵ Bezviconi, *Călători Ruși în Moldova și Muntenia*, 21: "...dacă vrei înțelepciune împărătească și să cunoști despre oștire și despre așezămintele vieții împărătești, atunci să citești până la sfârșit luarea Constantinopolului, să nu te cruți pe tine cu nimic, și acolo vei găsi tot ajutorul lui Dumnezeu."

protector. Peter aspired to free Moldavia from the Ottoman control, and leave his mark on the great artistic and cultural tradition, of monumental church building in particular, that his father had undertaken during his expansive rule. This chapter considers one particular visual manifestation of Moldavia's political and military struggles during the first half of the sixteenth century, especially in the context of Peter's aspirations to protect Moldavia and defeat the Ottomans.

As it assumed the role of a "gate of Christianity" under "God's protection," especially in the face of the rapidly advancing Ottoman armies, the principality of Moldavia was remembering and transforming Byzantium's legacy in significant ways.⁶ Striving to escape the Ottoman dominance, Moldavia, under Peter's rule, adapted in its context a certain ideological model, namely, the miraculous deliverances of Constantinople at key moments throughout its history. As I argue here, these historical moments were conflated into one distinctive image type identified as *The Siege of Constantinople* and painted on the exterior walls of several churches in the region. The visual and iconographic vocabularies of these murals, unprecedented in other areas formerly associated with, or previously part of, the Byzantine Empire, expose a conception of history that unfolds as a series of interventions, and present a particular kind of response from the Moldavians especially to the crisis of 1453 and to its reverberations into the century that followed.

Political and Military Conflicts

The Ottomans proved relentless in their military campaigns in the regions of east-central Europe, mainly after their success in 1453. As early as 1456, Sultan Mehmet II, also known as "the Conqueror," attempted to take Belgrade, but was defeated by John Hunyadi (c.1406-1456) and his armies. The city was eventually captured in 1521 by Sultan Suleiman I, under whose rule the Ottoman Empire reached a first zenith. By the first decades of the sixteenth century southeastern Europe was dominated by the Ottomans. The first attempt to conquer Hungary came in 1525 when the Ottomans waged an eventually unsuccessful siege against Buda. They attacked again the following year, and after the Battle of Mohács on 29 August 1526, the Ottomans had control over

⁶ See Chapter Two, esp. ns. 115-118.

Hungary. Three years later they had reached the gates of Vienna. Although the siege of Vienna was unsuccessful, with the Ottomans finally retreating on 15 October 1529 from what had been until then their furthest north-western incursion, their presence in the regions of southeastern Europe continued. Moreover, Suleiman I's grandiose imperial aspirations to reach the walls of Rome and conquer the western Christian world were growing by the minute.⁷ In a way, his ambitions in the west echoed the massive campaigns carried out by Alexander the Great in a brief period of only eleven years (334-323 BCE), which markedly altered the political and cultural face of much of the eastern world.⁸

In the aftermath of the defeat at Mohács, Moldavia lost her important ally Hungary in its fight against the Ottomans, and her military and political relations with the Porte deteriorated. Although most Romanian historians claim, to this day, that the Romanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were never conquered by the Ottoman forces during the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries,⁹ the long reign of Suleiman I marked a turning point in the political and juridical status of these two Orthodox Carpathian regions and their relations to the Porte, particularly because the Sultan claimed suzerainty over Hungary's former vassal states.¹⁰ As the *Anonymous Description of Moldavia* of c.1535 explains, the principality was indeed a vassal state of Hungary (*regno Hungariae addicta*) and its princes were "tied through oath" to the Hungarian kings.¹¹ Moldavia, thus, came under more direct Ottoman control during the initial decades of the sixteenth century.¹² This situation contributed to even greater tensions with the Ottomans, due, in part, to the substantial tributary responsibilities of the principality toward the Porte. Each year, in order to protect Moldavia from a possible

⁷ On Mehmed's ambitions, see Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Times*, 494-508.

⁸ Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Times*, 494.

⁹ See, for example, Panaitescu, "De ce n-au cucerit turcii Țările Române," 99-110; Maxim, *Țările Române și Înalta Poartă*, esp. 111-142.

¹⁰ Panaite, "The Legal and Political Status of Wallachia and Moldavia in Relation to the Ottoman Porte," 9-42. See also, Maxim, *Țările Române și Înalta Poartă*, 111-142; idem, *L'empire ottoman au nord du Danube et l'autonomie des principautés roumaines au XVIe siècle*; idem, *Noi documente turcești privind Țările Române și Înalta Poartă*; Hupchick, *Culture and History in Eastern Europe*, 59; Panaitescu, "De ce n-au cucerit turcii Țările Române," 111-119.

¹¹ A Romanian translation of the *Anonymous Description of Moldavia* is published in Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 194-203, esp. 195 for Moldavia as a Hungarian vassal state. The original Latin text is reproduced in Ilarian, *Tesaur de Monumente istorice pentru România*, III, 125-144, esp. 136.

¹² See, especially, Gemil, *Les relations de la Moldavie avec la Porte ottomane pendant le premier règne de Petru Rares, 1527-1538*.

Ottoman invasion, Peter Rareș was responsible for sending the Sultan 10,000 aspri (or the equivalent of 181 Venetian ducats or 35 kg of gold), precious objects, cloth, as well as “500 of the best and most fierce horses, 300 of the finest hawks, and an unspeakable amount of gold ducats.”¹³ These peace stipulations that occurred on a number of occasions were short-lived, however.

The two major Ottoman attacks against Moldavia—by Mehmed II in 1476 and by Bayezid II in 1484—were supplemented in the early decades of the sixteenth century by a third, carried out in 1538 by Suleiman I. This episode, which marked the beginning of a period of great unrest in Moldavia and resulted in Peter’s exile for a period of three years, will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter. Contemporary sources such as the *Chronicle of Macarie* recount this devastating campaign, and others like it, carried out by the Ottomans in Moldavia in the early decades of the sixteenth century, and also speak of the notable victories of the people of this eastern Carpathian region who believed that their efforts were always guided by the hand of the divine.¹⁴ “Through God’s grace and the prayers of the Virgin and all the saints”¹⁵ is a phrase repeatedly found in contemporary chronicles, on the dedicatory plaques of churches, and in other contexts. This attests, as will be revealed, to the strong religious beliefs of the Moldavians and their hopes for salvation and an eventual divine deliverance from the enemy attacks.

These beliefs were given pictorial expression in the murals of *The Siege of Constantinople* that first appeared on the exterior of the Orthodox monastic churches of Moldavia during the initial years of Peter’s rule. These multifaceted images, as I will show, conflate histories and adapt in the Moldavian context a Byzantine ideal, thus presenting a remarkable dialectic between past, present, and future. The pictorial manipulations of time in the murals of *The Siege* create “a clash of temporalities”—in reference to Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood’s much-read theoretical study

¹³ Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 199. Four original Turkish documents attesting to Moldavia’s tribute payment in 1527, 1528, and 1543 are transcribed, translated into French, and published by Maxim, *Romano-Ottomanica*, 77-80 (Doc. no. 3), 88-93 (Doc. no. 6), 118-122 (Doc. no. 14), 122-124 (Doc. no. 15).

¹⁴ A transcription of the original Church Slavonic and a Romanian translation of the *Chronicle of Macarie* has been initially published by Ion Bogdan and later revised by Panaitescu in *Cronicile Slavo-Române din sec. XV-XVI*, 74-105.

¹⁵ *The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia*, fol. 242v: “Божією милостію и молитвами прѣчистыя Богоматери и всѣхъ свѣтыхъ...” Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 10 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 19 (for a Romanian translation).

Anachronic Renaissance—with a strong historical valences and future messages.¹⁶ The murals, as such, were designed by a group of individuals at a certain moment, reflecting that moment and its anxieties, but also pointing away from it, both to the past and the future, as well as to a moment outside of time, implicit in a perpetual occurrence.¹⁷ Therefore, the murals of *The Siege* are both anachronistic and anachronic, conflating histories in a single pictorial narrative while projecting an ideal through their meanings and messages.

The Murals of *The Siege of Constantinople*

The murals of *The Siege of Constantinople* survive on the south walls of nine churches painted between 1530 and 1541 under the patronage of Peter Rareș.¹⁸ The Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery displays the best preserved example and the most elaborate rendition of this image type in large part because of the monastery's remote location, nestled as it is in the eastern hills of the Carpathian Mountains (Fig. 6.1). The other murals of this subject reveal similar compositions but are in a much poorer state of preservation as a result of ongoing exposure to the elements. Nevertheless, in all extant renditions the painting of *The Siege* is consistently found at about eye level and close to the main entrance to the church and its prominent dedicatory inscription (Fig. 6.2). This location suggests that the image had a crucial message to convey to the faithful entering and leaving the church building, and to those partaking in the ceremonies that unfolded before the painted exterior and/or around the church.

¹⁶ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*. See also Nagel and Wood, "Interventions: Toward a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism," 403-415.

¹⁷ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 9: "The artwork is made or designed by an individual or by a group of individuals at some moment, but it also points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral origin, perhaps, or to a prior artifact, or to an origin outside time, in divinity. At the same time it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event."

¹⁸ The following churches have the mural of *The Siege of Constantinople* painted on their south facades: the Church of St. George in Hârlău (1530), the Church of St. Nicholas at Probota Monastery (1532), the Church of St. George in Suceava (1532-1534), the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Humor Monastery (1535), the Church of St. Demetrios in Suceava (1535-1536), the Church of the Dormition in Baia (1535-1538), the Church of the Annunciation at Moldovița Monastery (1537), and the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in Arbore (1541). The Church of St. George at Voroneț Monastery (1534-1535 or 1547) had the scene painted on the north façade. The parenthetical dates indicate the year(s) of the completion of the exterior murals. For descriptions in Romanian of some of these murals, see Șerbănescu, "Împrejurarea Țarigradului în zugrăveala bisericilor noastre," 438-463, esp. 450-454.

The mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița, and images of the same type found on the exteriors of other churches throughout Moldavia, presents a layered image with multiple historical allusions combined and adapted to address local anxieties. More specifically, the wall painting highlights and conflates narratives of Constantinople's divine deliverances in times of need, presenting in this guise a resolution to Moldavia's own political and military struggles from the second half of the fifteenth century onward. The images of *The Siege*, as such, are indicative of the contemporary circumstances from which they emerged, revealing particular understandings of temporality and conceptions of history in early sixteenth-century Moldavia. At the core of the discussion to follow is the mural of *The Siege* from Moldovița Monastery, completed in 1537, that displays the most elaborate and best-preserved example.

At Moldovița, *The Siege* narrative unfolds in a long, rectangular register punctuated by the two tall and narrow windows of the pronaos. The fortified city of Constantinople—identified in a faint inscription written in Church Slavonic above the city walls (ЗДЕ ЦАРИГРАДЪ = Here is Tzarigrad/Constantinople)—dominates the left side of the composition. Ringed by massive walls, the city is attacked from all sides. The artillery, cavalry, and infantry forces of the enemy are depicted on the right emerging from the hills and steadily advancing toward the city gates (Fig. 6.3). The naval forces attack from the sea, represented on the left (Fig. 6.4). Above this scene, situated on a hill, is another fortified locale: either the district of Pera (or Galata),¹⁹ located on the northern shore of the Golden Horn, opposite Constantinople, or an island in the Bosphorus, as represented, for instance, in the oldest surviving map of Constantinople completed by the Italian monk and traveler Cristoforo Buondelmonti around 1422 (Fig. 6.5). In contrast to this fortified site devoid of any human activity, the larger city at the center of the composition in the mural has cannons protruding from its walls and archers shown standing in the two grand towers ready to defend the city against the approaching enemy. The attackers have not yet reached the city gates but the battle is in full swing with cannons spitting fire and arrows flying across the sky.

¹⁹ The district of Pera is also depicted in a miniature from an untitled manuscript in the British Library: MS. Arundel 93, fol. 155r. This miniature shows a map of the city of Constantinople with Pera represented in the upper section of the page, right above Constantinople. Both Constantinople and Pera are identified here by inscriptions.

At the center of the Byzantine capital churches and stylized hills are represented,²⁰ and a procession is shown making its way around the inner perimeter of the walls (Fig. 6.6). Leading the group, in the foreground, is a cluster of deacons garbed in the traditional *sticharia*²¹ swinging their *thuribles*²² (Fig. 6.7). They are followed by bishops dressed in their ceremonial garments, the *phelonion*²³ with the *omophorion*²⁴ around the neck, traditionally decorated with black crosses (Fig. 6.8). The three elderly priests in the foreground carry the Gospel book and two of the most sacred relics of Constantinople: the Virgin's *maphorion* (or veil, mantle) and a piece of the True Cross. Behind these ecclesiastics walk the emperor dressed in the ceremonial purple *divitision* and members of the imperial court (Fig. 6.9), followed by the empress and her ladies-in-waiting (Fig. 6.10). On the left, figures are clustered around the two holy images most significant in Orthodox Christianity (Fig. 6.11). A man dressed in the standard Byzantine court mantle, the *chlamys*,²⁵ stands before a crowd and displays over the city walls an image of the face of Christ imprinted on a cloth and celebrated as an *acheiropoietos*.²⁶ Next to him, a member of the Orthodox clergy wearing a belted *sticharion* lifts up the icon of the Hodegetria in which the Virgin Mary holds the Christ Child on her left and gestures toward Him as "The One Who Shows the Way."²⁷ To his right, another man

²⁰ Otto F. A. Meinardus pointed out that the architectural features of these churches are similar to those of ecclesiastical structures from Moldavia from the first half of the sixteenth century. He also interpreted the stylized hills as symbolic of the seven hills that Constantinople was built on, just like Rome before it, as the "Second Rome." Meinardus, "Interpretations of the Wall-Paintings of the Siege of Constantinople in the Bucovina," 169-183, esp. 172.

²¹ See Chapter Five, n. 106.

²² A *thurible* is a censer; the metal container for burning incense carried by deacons during the liturgy. The most common form is the cylindrical open cup suspended by chains.

²³ A *phelonion* (Greek) is a priestly vestment or cassock worn by clerics in the Orthodox Church equivalent to the Latin chasuble. It has a bell-shaped cut and is pulled on over the head.

²⁴ See Chapter Five, n. 107.

²⁵ The *chlamys* (pl. *chlamydes*; Greek = mantle) was the standard garment of Byzantine court costume worn fastened at the right shoulder or in the front. It was originally part of military costume and later became an element of courtly culture, deemed to be a distinction for officers and high-ranking civil servants in Byzantium.

²⁶ An *acheiropoietos* is an image not made by human hands that came about through direct contact with the archetype. It is like an "authentic portrait" and an image that can perform miracles. Thunø, *Image and Relic*, 15. Although the term *acheiropoietos* could be used to indicate any image of great veneration and holiness, it is usually employed to refer to the five "portraits" of Christ. See von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 40-60; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 49-57; Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani*, 60-68.

²⁷ The Hodegetria icon, regarded as a true icon of the Virgin and Christ Child and one linked directly to the holy family, is a miracle-working image that served as one of Constantinople's *palladia*. The icon is said to have been painted by St. Luke and it is mentioned in Eastern sources as early as the mid-eighth century. The Hodegetria icon arrived in Constantinople sometime in the fifth century from Jerusalem and

dressed in the *chlamys* holds over the city walls what I have identified as the Virgin's *zônê* (or girdle), another famous relic of the Byzantine capital.²⁸ Only a faint trace of this holy object remains today, however. At an earlier date it may have been richly painted or gilded and, thus, would have stood out more prominently against the light backdrop of the inner city wall.

A number of the processional figures direct their gazes toward the heavens and part their lips in prayer. From the skies above, two semicircular cloud formations cause droplets of rain (or hail) and fire to descend onto the landscape, visibly staining the turbans and weapons of the enemy figures, thus signaling a divine intervention in the struggles (Fig. 6.12). While the cannon fire, the action within the city walls is deemed equally potent. The procession demonstrates knowledge of Byzantine ceremonial through the carefully costumed figures arranged in strict hierarchies that call upon God for protection.

Historical Allusions in the Murals of *The Siege*

The historical event represented in Moldovița's mural of *The Siege* has been a topic of some scholarly debate.²⁹ The Romanian historian Dumitru Năstase has interpreted the image as a representation of the unsuccessful siege of the Byzantine capital by Sultan Bayezid I between 1394 and 1402.³⁰ Other scholars, writing at the turn

was kept in the monastery of the Virgin Hodegon until its destruction by Sultan Mehmed II's janissaries during the siege of 1453. See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 73-77, esp. n. 79 (for bibliography); Pentcheva, "Images and Icons of the Virgin and their Public in Middle Byzantine Constantinople," 81-121; eadem, *Icons and Power*, 109-143; Bacci, "The Legacy of the Hodegetria," 321-324.

²⁸ The Virgin's girdle was also a famous contact relic but one more dubious than the *maphorion* and the rest, although it shared an origin with the Virgin's veil. The girdle arrived in Constantinople from Jerusalem sometime during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II (r. 408-450) and was originally associated with the Chalkoprateia Church in the capital. Emperor Leo I (r. 457-474) transferred it to the Blachernae Church in 458, and during the reign of Emperor Leo VI "The Wise" (r. 886-912) it was moved to the Imperial Palace. Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347-1355) gifted the girdle to the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos where it remains to this day. The Feast Day of this relic on August 31 was officially introduced during the reign of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-1180). See Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokoupolis," 19, esp. ns. 19 and 20.

²⁹ In his published Ph.D. dissertation, Constantin Ion Ciobanu describes the scholarly discussions concerning the mural of *The Siege of Constantinople* depicted on the Moldavian churches. See Ciobanu, *Stihia Profeticului*, 17-22.

³⁰ Năstase, *L'héritage impérial byzantin dans l'art et l'histoire des pays roumains*, 14: "Quant à la scène clé de la peinture extérieure moldave, j'ai abouti à la conclusion qu'elle représente *un siège réel de Constantinople par les Turcs*, en fait le long blocus du sultan Bajazet Ier, auquel la capitale byzantine résista victorieusement pendant plusieurs années vers la fin du XIVe siècle et au début du XVe.

of the twentieth century, have instead proposed the attack of 1453 as that had been the most recent historical contest, and the one with the most severe consequences for the Christian world.³¹ The fact that the enemy figures in the mural at Moldovița are represented distinctly as Turks, with their round beardless faces and white turbans, and that the district of Pera is not under siege, which conforms to contemporary accounts of the battle, have been adduced as visual evidence that the scene may invoke the devastating events of 1453.³² The Venetian physician Nicolò Barbaro, for example, a contemporary who was on board one of the Venetian defensive ships during the 1453 attack, recorded the events and noted that the Genoese from Pera were at peace with the Ottomans and so the district was not attacked at that time.³³ The Genoese Angelo Zacharias also informed the Sultan of the defenders' plans to burn the Turkish boats in the Golden Horn.³⁴ Moreover, the inclusion of fifteenth-century weaponry in the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița, such as the culverin cannons³⁵ and the Turkish spears and

Finalement, Bajazet fut obligé de lever le siège, pour aller se faire vaincre et capturer par Tamerlan, en 1402, à la fameuse bataille d'Angora. C'est ce long investissement, à l'issue l'on ne peut plus miraculeuse, qui détermina un grand retour de ferveur pour l'Hymne Acathiste et, plutôt à Constantinople même, l'illustration mise au jour du second *prooimion* de l'Hymne obtenue en remplaçant les ennemis refoulés auparavant grâce à la Vierge, par les Turcs de Bajazet." / "As for the key scene among the exterior Moldavian murals, I have concluded that it represents a real siege of Constantinople by the Ottomans, in fact, the long blockade of Sultan Bayezid I, which the Byzantine capital resisted successfully for several years in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Finally, Bayezid was forced to lift the siege, to go to be defeated by Tamerlane in 1402 in the famous Battle of Angora. It is this siege, the outcome of which could not have been more miraculous, that triggered a return to a great enthusiasm for the *Akathistos Hymn*, rather than Constantinople itself, and the illustration of the second prooemium of the *Hymn* for replacing the enemies that retreat as a result of the Virgin's grace, with the Ottomans of Bayezid." See also Năstase, "Les débuts de l'Eglise moldave et le siège de Constantinople par Bajazet Ier," 205-213. On Sultan Bayezid I's siege of Constantinople, see, most recently, Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, Chapter 7: "The First Challenge: Bayezid I's Siege of Constantinople (1394-1402), 149-183.

³¹ Wickenhäuser, "Geschichte der Klöster Homor, Sct. Onufri, Horodnik und Petrauz," in *Molda*, 17; Iorga, *Neamul românesc din Bucovina*, 102; Podlacha, *Umanismul picturii murale postbizantine*, 90; Grecu, "Eine Belagerung Konstantinopels," 289; Ștefănescu, *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie*, 109; Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du nord*, 239.

³² For a comprehensive analysis of contemporary accounts of the siege of 1453, which include Byzantine chronicles, and the accounts of Turkish, Armenian, and western writers, as well as Russian eyewitnesses, among others, see Hanak and Philippides, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453*.

³³ Barbaro, *Giornale dell'assedio di Costantinopoli 1453*; Jones, *Nicolò Barbaro: Diary of the Siege of Constantinople*; Hanak and Philippides, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453*, 451-452.

³⁴ Hanak and Philippides, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453*, 451-452.

³⁵ The culverin cannons at Moldovița are painted with scales perhaps as a reference to the Latin word *colubrinus* or "of the nature of a snake," and thus to the mythical serpent that spat fire and smoke. Moreover, the Ottoman contemporary chronicles describe cannons as having "the guise of dragons." Guboglu and Mehmet, eds., *Cronici Turcești*, I, 76. Similar culverin cannons from the second half of the fifteenth century were unearthed during the archaeological investigations carried out in 1999 at Orheiul

halberds, would support this claim (Fig. 6.13). But the question remains whether an evocation of the 1453 conquest of Byzantium would have been an appropriate event to represent on an exterior wall of an Orthodox monastic church. Why would any artist, or any patron, want to allude to the worst defeat in Christian history on a Christian building?³⁶ Another rendition of this image type provides evidence for a re-identification of the scene.

The Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist in the village of Arbore preserves on its south wall the last extant example of *The Siege* in Moldavia (Fig. 6.14). The mural, executed in 1541 along with the rest of the exterior paintings, is the only example completed during Peter Rareș's second reign (*r.* 1527-1538; 1541-1546). It is also the only instance in which an accompanying inscription written in Church Slavonic identifies the historical event. The scene represents the siege of Constantinople in 626, thus showing a victory. The inscription reads:

In the year 6035,³⁷ Emperor Khosroes II [*r.* 590; 591-628] with the Persians, and the Zichs,³⁸ and the Scythians [Avars], and the Libyans [Illyrians],³⁹ and idolaters came upon Constantinople with an army in the days of Emperor Heraclius [*r.* 610-641], and due to prayers, the Saints and the Theotokos became enraged with them. God sent upon them thunder and rain and fire and drowned them all in the sea.⁴⁰

Vechi (now in the Republic of Moldova). See Eagles, *Stephen the Great and Balkan Nationalism*, 155-176; Postică, *Orheiul Vechi*; Bacumenco, *Ținutul Orheiului în secolele XV-XVI*.

³⁶ André Grabar first raised this issue in his article “Un graffiti slave,” 73.

³⁷ The date of 6035 (527) in the inscription is incorrect. The year should have been noted as 6135 in the Byzantine Calendar, which corresponds with the years 626-627 in the Julian Calendar. Vasile Grecu and Paul Henry were the first scholars to identify an error in the mural inscription. Grecu, “Eine Belagerung Konstantinopels,” 288; Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du Nord*, 219.

³⁸ This is likely a reference to the Zich people of Zichia—a territory on the Black Sea to the east of Tmutarakan and to the south of the Kuban River in medieval Kievan Rus'.

³⁹ Ciobanu has argued convincingly that in the inscription at Arbore it is not the Libyans who are mentioned but rather the Illyrians, with reference to the Slavs from Illyria who participated in the siege of Constantinople in 626. See Ciobanu, *Stihia Profeticului*, 59-60 (and notes).

⁴⁰ “В(ъ) л(ѣ)тѣмъ ꙗꙋже прѣде хосро(и) ц(а)рь съ першии и зихы и скиѣи и лѣви(и) и двлопоклвници(и) на ц(а)риград(ъ) съ воинко(и) въ дни иракліа ц(а)рь и м(о)л(и)твами с(ва)тыа и во(горо)дица разгн(ѣ)ва съ на ны(хъ). Б(о)гъ испости на ны(хъ) гро(мъ) и дъжд(ь) и вгнь потопи (и)хъ) въсѣ(хъ) въ мори.” A transcription of the original Church Slavonic text was first published by Grecu in “Eine Belagerung Konstantinopels,” 288 (for the Church Slavonic transcription, with errors, and a German translation). Meinardus, “Interpretations of a Wall-Painting of the Siege of Constantinople in the Bucovina,” 173 (for the English translation).

In 626, the Byzantine capital was attacked from the west by the Avars and the Slavs and from the east by the Persians.⁴¹ The emperor and his troops were away on a military campaign in the East and so the defense of the city was entrusted to patrikios Bonos and patriarch Sergios. Although the enemies greatly outnumbered the Byzantine forces, after a week-long blockade, the attackers abruptly retreated to Pannonia on August 7, ending the siege.

The citizens of Constantinople believed then and in later centuries that divine assistance during this particular attack was procured through the city's miracle-working objects which they had solemnly carried around the city walls. Although the exterior murals at Arbore were badly damaged over the centuries—by severe weather that has caused the pigments to deteriorate and sections of the walls to fall off, and by the hands of their viewers, who have scraped at their surfaces and defaced them with graffiti— aspects of the composition of the image of *The Siege* and select details are still legible. In contrast to Moldovița, at Arbore only the icon of the Hodegetria is shown being carried in procession, and its efficacy is visualized through the rain (or hail) and fire falling from the skies onto the landscape (Fig. 6.15).

It is then possible that the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița similarly evokes a battle from the distant past, such as the Avar and Persian beleaguerment of 626. A reference to this historical event is also found in the *Hermeneia* (or *Painter's Manual*) of Dionysius of Fournā (c.1670-after 1744), which we have consulted on several occasions in earlier chapters. One of its entries describes how artists should reproduce one of the miracles of the Archangel Michael in “saving Constantinople from capture by the Persians,” as the introductory line describes.⁴² When representing this miracle, according to the entry in the *Manual*, the painter should depict “a large and splendid fortified town” with “tents and a crowd of soldiers below; both infantry and cavalry, slaying each other, while some lean ladders against the walls.”⁴³ The Archangel Michael should appear “in

⁴¹ Franjo Barišić provides a full account of the siege of the city of Constantinople in 626 in “Le siège de Constantinople par les Avars et les Slaves en 626,” 371-395; See also van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI. (610-715)*, 12-21; Johnson, “The Siege of Constantinople in 626,” 131-142.

⁴² *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 65.

⁴³ *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fournā*, 65.

the clouds holding a fiery sword and with great light surrounding him.”⁴⁴ The Romanian historian Vasile Grecu has suggested that this miracle of the Archangel, as described in the *Painter’s Manual*, might relate to the murals of *The Siege*.⁴⁵ However, the Archangel is not present in the mural at Moldovița, nor in any of the other extant examples from Moldavia, and details of the composition do not correspond to the description of the scene in the *Manual*.

The mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița could still reference the siege of 626 and its miraculous deliverance since the city is also depicted as being under attack from both sides. The emperor, however, is present in the procession at Moldovița, which is inconsistent with the standard accounts of the 626 siege presented in the three extant contemporary sources, namely, a poem by George Pisidia,⁴⁶ a sermon attributed to Theodore Syncellus,⁴⁷ and an excerpt from the *Chronicon Paschale*.⁴⁸ However, the emperor’s presence makes it clear that this is an imperial capital that is being saved. At Moldovița, moreover, the icon of the Hodegetria is also shown in procession raised over the Theodosian walls, but here it is represented alongside other important holy relics. This superabundance of holy objects may work to undermine an identification of the scene with a single historical episode. The edifying story, then, takes center stage.

The Context of the *Akathistos Hymn*

There is further evidence that historical layering was envisioned at Moldovița. In all extant examples, the mural of *The Siege* is found painted below the elaborate representation of the content of the *Akathistos Hymn*—the oldest performed hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary and sung in the Eastern Orthodox Church (Fig. 6.2).⁴⁹ Although the exact date of its conception is unknown, the dates that scholars have

⁴⁴ *The ‘Painter’s Manual’ of Dionysius of Fournà*, 65.

⁴⁵ Grecu, “Eine Belagerung Konstantinopels,” 284-286.

⁴⁶ Pertusi, ed., *Giorgio di Pisidia. Poemi*, I, 176-200.

⁴⁷ Syncellus, *On the Siege of Constantinople*. An English translation of the text is also available online, <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/theodore_syncellus_01_homily.htm> (accessed 14 January 2015).

⁴⁸ Dindorf, ed., *Chronicon Paschale*, 712-726.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 2. The *Akathistos Hymn* is divided into thirteen parts, alternating *kontakion* and *oikos*. The *kontakion* describes an event from the life of the Virgin whereas the *oikos* is an anaphoric request or praise. A list of editions and translations of the *Akathistos Hymn* can be found in Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 219-220. For the Church Slavonic variants of the Hymn, see especially the published dissertation of Antonina Filonov Gove, completed at Harvard University in 1967, *The Slavic Akathistos Hymn*, 225-275 (for transcriptions of the Greek and Church Slavonic text).

suggested are in part based on interpretations of the introductory lines that were added to the hymn sometime in the seventh or eighth century. A section of this new introduction does not relate directly to the content of the hymn, as the rest does, but rather to the historical circumstances that contributed to its creation.⁵⁰ The second *prooemium* celebrates the role of the Virgin in Constantinople's deliverance either from the Avar and Persian attack of 626, the Arab siege of 717/18, or the siege of the Rus' in 860:

To you, our leader in battle and defender,
O Theotokos, I, your city, delivered from sufferings,
Ascribe hymns of victory and thanksgiving.
Since you are invincible in power,
Free me from all kinds of dangers,
That I may cry to you:
“Hail, bride unwedded.”⁵¹

According to the *Synaxarium*, the people of Constantinople sang the *Akathistos Hymn* while standing⁵² in the Blachernae Church on the night of 7 August 626, in the aftermath of the unsuccessful Avar and Persian attack.⁵³ Based on the subsequently added introduction, the entire *Hymn* came to be identified as a song of praise composed in honor of the Virgin in response to her appearances and miraculous interventions in saving Constantinople during key moments of struggle. The *Akathistos* evolved thus into a war hymn believed to bring divine protection to the Byzantine capital, and, by extension, to the entire empire, formulating “the most influential and lasting example of how the Theotokos offered victory and protection through the powers of her virginal motherhood.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin in the Akathistos Hymn*, 32. See also, Pentcheva, “The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople,” 18; Trypanis, *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica*, 17-39.

⁵¹ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 2 (for the Greek transcription), 3 (for an English translation); Gove, *The Slavic Akathistos Hymn*, 227 (for the Greek and Slavic transcriptions).

⁵² Etymologically, Akathistos means unseated, standing up.

⁵³ *Synaxarion*, in Migne, *PG*, 92, col. 1352B: “The devout people of Constantinople, showing their thanks to the Mother of God, stood the night through and sang this hymn to her who by vigilance and supernatural power had brought about a triumph over their enemies. . . It was named the *Akathistos* because the clergy and the whole people of the city performed it in this way then.” Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 21 (for the English translation), n. 1 (for the Greek transcription).

⁵⁴ Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 66.

Although the *Akathistos Hymn* emerged and circulated initially in the Greek cultural sphere, by the beginning of the tenth century the text was translated into Church Slavonic initially in Bulgarian scriptoria. Antonina Filonov Gove has studied the poetic elements of the Hymn, comparing the Byzantine variants and the Church Slavonic translations.⁵⁵ The theological and dogmatic content of the Hymn, Gove noted, “would have made it of importance in the introduction of the liturgy to the Slavs.”⁵⁶

In addition to the Avar and Persian attack of 626, the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița also references the Arab siege of 717/18, when the Arabs of the Umayyad Caliphate attacked the Byzantine capital both by land and sea. During the empire’s wars against the Arabs the use of so-called Greek Fire played a significant role on the battle front.⁵⁷ The means of fabrication of this “liquid fire which is discharged through tubes”⁵⁸ developed toward the end of the seventh century in Byzantium and used defensively in naval battles, as represented on folio 34 from *Codex Skylitzes Matritensis*, was a well-kept secret (Fig. 6.16). Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (r. 912-959) revealed in his manual *De Administrando Imperio* the legend of how the Byzantines acquired knowledge of this incendiary weapon called Greek Fire and how its secret should not be divulged.⁵⁹ It is known that the Arabs improperly reproduced the original siphon or

⁵⁵ Gove, *The Slavic Akathistos Hymn*.

⁵⁶ Gove, *The Slavic Akathistos Hymn*, 81.

⁵⁷ The earliest surviving evidence of the use of Greek Fire is found in the *Chronicle* of Theophanes from 671-672 [6164]. According to this source, “The aforesaid Constantine [IV, 668-685], on being informed of so great an expedition of God’s enemies against Constantinople [as the Arabs fleet were converging on the capital], built large biremes bearing cauldrons of fire and *Dromones* equipped with siphons [to project liquid fire].” Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, no. 353, AM 6164, 493.

⁵⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 69.

⁵⁹ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 69-71 (for the English translation), 68-70 (for a transcription of the original Greek): “This too was revealed and taught by *God* through an angel to the great and holy Constantine, the first Christian emperor, and concerning this too he received great charges from the same angel, as we are assured by the faithful witness of our fathers and grandfathers, that it should be manufactured among the Christians only and in the city ruled by them [Constantinople], and nowhere else at all, nor should it be sent nor taught to any other nation whatsoever. And so, for the confirmation of this among those who should come after him, this great emperor caused curses to be inscribed on the holy table of the church of God [Hagia Sophia], that he who should dare to give of this fire to another nation should neither be called Christian, nor be held worthy of any rank or office; and if he should be the holder of any such, he should be expelled therefrom and be anathemized and made an example for ever and ever, whether he were emperor, or patriarch, or any other man whatever, either ruler or subject, who should see to transgress this commandment. And he adjured all who had the zeal and fear of God to be prompt to make away with him who attempted to do this...” See also Haldon, “‘Greek Fire’ Revisited: Recent and Current Research,” 290-325; Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, 323-326; Nikolov, “‘Greek Fire’ and the Bulgarians in the Early Middle Ages,” 51-58.

pressurized nozzle used to project the incendiary liquid, deploying the fire instead primarily in offensive operations using catapults and grenades.⁶⁰ In the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița, Arabs are shown catapulting Greek fire from their vessels in precisely this form, thus clearly rendering the scene as an allusion to the early eighth-century Arab attack of Byzantium (Fig. 6.17). This, too, was a siege foiled through divine assistance. According to post-iconoclastic sources, such as the *diegesis ophelimos*⁶¹ and the *lectio Triodii*,⁶² both from around the tenth century, hail descended on the enemies in response to the *litaniai* in which the Hodegetria icon and other important relics were carried by the citizens of Constantinople through the streets of their city.⁶³

There is yet another potential layer of meaning, for the mural at Moldovița incorporates possible references to a miraculous occurrence in the battle against the Rus' in 860. During this siege of Constantinople, the *maphorion* was dipped into the sea by Patriarch Photius and the Rus' attackers who approached the city in their boats "wafting a breath of cruelty, savagery and murder"⁶⁴ suffered great losses.⁶⁵ As Photius phrased the defenders' invocation of the Virgin:

...the time has come to have recourse to the Mother of the Word, our only hope and refuge. Imploring, let us cry out to her: save thy city, as thou knowest how, O Lady! Let us set her up as our intermediary before her Son our God, and make her the witness and surety of our compact, her who conveys our requests and rains down the mercy of her Offspring, and scatters the cloud of enemies, and lights up for us the dawn of salvation.

⁶⁰ For the use of Greek Fire by the Arabs and the Latins, see Jeffreys and Pryor, *The Age of the Dromon*, 607-631.

⁶¹ *Diegesis ophelimos*, in Migne, *PG*, 92, cols. 1354D-1372 and in Migne, *PG*, 102, cols. 1336-1353 (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, n. 1060).

⁶² *Lectio Triodii*, in Migne, *PG*, 92, cols. 1347-1354B (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, n. 1063).

⁶³ *Diegesis ophelimos*, in Migne, *PG*, 92, col. 1365C: "...the Christ-loving people of the city, making a lengthy procession...carrying the all-holy wood of the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the holy icon of the Virgin, walked along the walls, raising their hands to God..." Pentcheva, "The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople," 37 (for the English translation), n. 134 (for the Greek transcription).

⁶⁴ *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, 101.

⁶⁵ The Virgin's veil, for example, was brought to Constantinople during the reign of Leo I (r. 440-461) and was also a relic associated with the Virgin's protective powers. On the Virgin's robe, see Baynes, "The Finding of the Virgin's Robe," 87-95; Cameron, "The Virgin's Robe," 42-56; Mango, "The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople," 61-76; Carr, "Threads of Authority," 59-94.

May we be delivered through her pleading of this present wrath, and be delivered also of the endless condemnation to come...⁶⁶

At this time, the Virgin's *maphorion* was also carried in procession "for the repulse of the besiegers and the protection of the besieged, who offered freely [their] prayers and performed the litany."⁶⁷ Photius continues:

Truly is this most-holy garment the raiment of God's Mother! It embraced the walls, and the foes inexplicably showed their backs; the city put it around itself, and the camp of the enemy was broken up as at a signal; the city bedecked itself with it, and the enemy were deprived of the hopes which bore them on. For immediately as the Virgin's garment went around the walls, the barbarians gave up the siege and broke camp, while we were delivered from impending capture and were granted unexpected salvation.⁶⁸

The Rus' attack of 860 is visualized, in one instance, in the mid-sixteenth-century interior murals of the naos of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Smolensk in the Novodevichiy Convent in Moscow (1524) where Patriarch Photius is shown before the sea with the *maphorion* in his hands (Fig. 6.18).⁶⁹ Here, the fortified city, with its walls set at roughly 45 degrees to the horizontal, divides the pictorial field into three sections, the angles of which converge close to the center of the composition. The city occupies the top register, while the bottom right and left portions show the unsuccessful naval attack with the enemy ships sinking into the tumultuous waters of the harbor. Patriarch Photius, in this example, is depicted full length along the central vertical axis of the composition, standing outside the city walls, with the *maphorion* in his hands, retrieving it from the waters. Directly above the figure of the Patriarch, and within the city walls, the citizens of Constantinople partaking in the procession lift up in celebration three holy objects: the icon of the Hodegetria at the center, framed by an icon of Christ and the True Cross.

⁶⁶ *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, 95.

⁶⁷ *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, 102.

⁶⁸ *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, 102-103.

⁶⁹ The representation of this event, too, was adapted to reflect local aspects. For example, the figures that defend the fortified city were rendered in contemporary Rus' garments and armor. See Ciobanu, *Stihia Profeticului*, 78, and n. 222.

The siege of the Rus' in 860 appears painted, in a similar iconographic vocabulary, on the interior south wall of the refectory of the Athonite monastery of Hilandar (1198), the northern-most monastic site on the Holy Mount (Fig. 6.19).⁷⁰ In contrast to the mural of the same subject from the naos of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Smolensk, Moscow, this version of *The Siege* at Hilandar is more compact, yet simplified in its details, with a triangularly-shaped fortification dominating the composition. The Patriarch in this example leans over the walls of the city to dip the *maphorion* into the sea, and the effectiveness of this relic is, once again, visualized by the capsized ships of the enemy. In this example, the icon of the Hodegetria is also present, taking a central position within the composition, along the central axis, directly above the point of conversion of the two diagonal fortification walls below.

At Moldovița, in contrast to these two examples just presented, the *maphorion* is not shown being dipped into the waters, but, within the context of the historical narrative of the Rus' attack of 860, it is significant that this relic is represented in the hands of the priest and directed toward the naval siege on the left (Figs. 6.6, 6.8). What is more, a contemporary appears to have identified the historical event painted at Moldovița as the ninth-century attack on the Byzantine capital. This is revealed in one of the many later inscriptions on the surface of the mural, and visible, in fact, across the entire wall of the church. Among the scribbles, most of which consist of names and dates, is an inscription in Church Slavonic written along the lower wall of the central fortified city in the mural of *The Siege* (Fig. 6.20). It reads:

They [the Moldavians] paint [here] the glorious victory of Constantinople over the Scythian Khan [Rus' overlord], but why don't they paint their own misfortune and disaster that they suffered from the Saracen / Muslim Emir (leader) when he conquered Constantinople?⁷¹

⁷⁰ For a study of the decoration of Athonite refectories, see the dissertation by Yiannias, "The Wall Paintings in the Trapeza of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos: A Study in Eastern Orthodox Refectory Art."

⁷¹ "Славноу оубо побѣдоу написоуѣют константинопольскоу над каганом скитскимъ. Поутже оубо не пишутъ бѣдоу свою и погыбель ѧ(ж)ѣ пострадаша ꙗ амиръ сарацинскага егда възметъ Константинополь." André Grabar first identified this inscription. Grabar, "Un graffite slave sur la façade d'une église de Bucovine," 93 (for the Church Slavonic transcription with some errors, and a French translation). Ciobanu also discusses this inscription in *Sihia Profeticului*, 100-101. Both Grabar and Ciobanu have interpreted the first part of this text as a reference to the siege of 626. However, in my opinion, the Scythians here refer to the Rus' raiders [Tauroscythians] who attacked Constantinople in 860, and were identified as Scythians

Here, the author writes in the present, suggesting that the inscription was added shortly after the mural's completion. The presence of the *maphorion* in the mural, together with this contemporary observation, suggest another layer of historical allusion to the image, namely, the efficacy of the *maphorion* in saving Constantinople from the Rus' attack of 860.

Similar to the murals of *The Siege* in the Moldavian context, the painting found in the refectory of Hilandar Monastery, which dates to 1621-1622, also appears alongside the *Akathistos Hymn*. A similar rendition is painted on the exterior south wall of the Church of St. Peter (painted c.1360) on the island of Golem Grad in Lake Prespa, now in the Republic of Macedonia (Fig. 6.21).⁷² In this example, the scene of a city under attack precedes the illustration of the *Akathistos Hymn*. Icons of the *Akathistos* likewise show vignettes of a city under attack at the beginning of the cycle.⁷³ Based on this evidence, a number of scholars have suggested that the Moldavian murals of *The Siege* present a single historical event taking the form of an elaborate visual illustration of the preface added to the *Akathistos Hymn*.⁷⁴

As the above analysis has suggested, reading the Moldavian images of *The Siege* simply as illustrations of the seven introductory lines to the *Akathistos Hymn* or as representations of a single historical event seems reductive. At Moldovița in particular, the mural of *The Siege* is much richer in detail and meaning than the second *prooemium* of the introduction to the *Hymn* alone suggests, and some of the details contradict the textual account. Moreover, if this image was intended to serve simply as an illustration of these introductory lines, or the event associated with their creation, it would have made more sense for it to appear then as the first scene in the represented cycle of the

by Patriarch Photius. Although this term was often applied to the Slavs, it could have also signaled more generally a "barbarous" tribe. See *The Homilies of Photius Patriarch of Constantinople*, 89 and n. 43. The Greeks repeatedly, and anachronistically, referred to all non-Turkic people living to the north of the Danube River as Scythians.

⁷² This mural carried Greek inscriptions and was revealed during the archaeological investigations carried out in 1967. A line drawing of this mural was first published in Knežević, "Crkva svetog Petra u Prespi," fig. 6.

⁷³ One such example is the icon of the Annunciation from around the seventeenth century from the iconostasis of the Cathedral of the Annunciation, Kremlin, Moscow. The icon measures 155 x 129 cm.

⁷⁴ Tafrafi, "Le siège de Constantinople dans les fresques des églises de Bukovine," 461; Grabar, "Un graffite slave sur la façade d'une église de Bucovine," 89-101; Ștefănescu, *Iconografia artei byzantine și a picturii feudale românești*, 155; Năstase, *L'héritage impérial byzantin dans l'art et l'histoire des pays roumains*, 14.

Akathistos, as found at the Church of St. Peter from Golem Grad and in the icons of the *Akathistos*, for instance. Rather, in all extant Moldavian examples the mural of *The Siege* is painted below the representations of the stanzas of the *Hymn*, perhaps to be more visible, or perhaps because the images are only tangentially related to the scenes of the *Hymn* above.

In considering Byzantine conventions and the relationship between text and images, however, the mural of *The Siege* cannot be entirely disassociated from the *Akathistos Hymn*. In fact, the sung text of the Hymn and its messages of divine presence and salvation through the Virgin and Christ would have been integral to the understanding of the image of *The Siege* below. The actual ceremonies that unfolded in early-sixteenth century Moldavia around this image type during the celebration of the *Akathistos* on the fifth Saturday of Easter Lent,⁷⁵ or the observance of the Feast of the Virgin on the Tuesday after Easter, and the participants in these events, are still elusive, but the content of the Hymn gives some guidance.

The Celebration of the *Tuesday Rite*

The protective role of the Virgin was also celebrated during the so-called *Tuesday Rite*, reenacted weekly, on Tuesdays, initially in Constantinople beginning with the Middle Byzantine period and then later in other Christian regions in both East and West.⁷⁶ The celebration centered on the miraculous yet very heavy icon of the Hodegetria, which from the later tenth century onward came to be associated with the salvation of Constantinople during the Avar and Persian attack of 626. Although the *concepteurs* of the *Tuesday Rite* are unknown, the sermon attributed to Theodore Syncellus from 627 that celebrated the unsuccessful siege of Byzantium on “the third day of the week [Tuesday]” the previous year could have served as an initial source of inspiration. Constantinople’s Tuesday procession started in the morning in front of the Hodegon Monastery and made its way through the city, ending in a square by Hagia Sophia. According to an eye-witness account, the bearer of the Hodegetria icon, a man

⁷⁵ In the Late Byzantine period there was also an annual imperial commemoration service following the *Akathistos* celebration.

⁷⁶ For recent examinations of the *Tuesday Rite* see Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 129-136; Lidov, “Spatial Icons,” 349-372.

usually dressed in red vestments, placed the icon on his shoulders and carried the image fifty times around the square from one end to the other.⁷⁷ At one point, the heavy icon is said to have elevated the man in the air and spun him around.

The earliest extant representations of the *Tuesday Rite* date to the thirteenth century. One important example is the badly deteriorated mural on the narthex wall of the Blachernitissa Monastery near Arta (mainland Greece), completed between 1282 and 1284. A reconstruction of the mural (Fig. 6.22) shows the culminating, miraculous moment of the procession when the central protagonist stands with arms outstretched, perhaps levitated by the heavy icon above him, while the onlookers gaze in disbelief. Around the same time, the celebration of the Hodegetria came to be included in representations of the *Akathistos Hymn*, as is evident, for example, in the mural illustrating stanza 24 of the *Hymn* in the naos of the church at Markov Monastery, Macedonia, completed sometime in the last decades of the fourteenth century (Fig. 6.23). This is the case as well in the Moldavian renditions of the *Akathistos Hymn*. At the monasteries of Moldovița and Humor the Hodegetria icon is celebrated in the context of the *Akathistos* cycle. The scene with the icon of the Virgin and Child at Moldovița, for example, shows a procession around the city walls in which the clergy and the citizens partake (Fig. 6.24). At the center, a man dressed in red vestments stands on a podium and elevates the Hodegetria icon. Compositionally, the icon appears as if raised over the city walls. The mural at Moldovița gives visual expression to stanza 23, which hails the Virgin as an “impregnable wall of the Kingdom...through whom trophies are raised up... [and] through whom enemies fall.”⁷⁸

The *Tuesday* miracle highlighted the supernatural power of the Virgin and her continuous protective presence in the imperial capital. Alexei Lidov has argued that the *Tuesday Rite* is best understood as a “liturgical and iconic re-enactment of the siege of Constantinople in 626” intended to serve as an ongoing supplication by the city for divine protection and salvation.⁷⁹ Since the Virgin was believed to have played such a significant role in Constantinople’s deliverance in 626, the celebration of the *Tuesday*

⁷⁷ Pero Tafur, a Spanish traveler, wrote this account in 1437 upon witnessing the events of the *Tuesday Rite*. See Tafur, *Travels and Adventures*, 141-142.

⁷⁸ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 19.

⁷⁹ Lidov, “Spatial Icons,” 352.

Rite was also meant to emphasize, visualize, actualize, and transfer the Virgin's presence in time and space and her protective role to any given site in which the performance was recreated. Thus, the focal object of the procession, the Hodegetria icon itself, became a generator of sacred space, transforming the mundane into the sacred through the unfolding of the ritual and its miraculous occurrence.

As Lidov has proposed, moreover, the *Tuesday Rite* offers a revealing example of a Byzantine hierotopy—the creation of sacred spaces through ritual reenactments and the beholder's active participation in the spatial images.⁸⁰ In fact, both the *Tuesday Rite* and the icon of the Hodegetria associated with it become, in their performative contexts, spatial icons that conflate varying temporal dimensions. One such layer of time is suggested by the icon and its time of creation when it was allegedly painted by St. Luke; another is the time of the initial siege of Constantinople in 626; then there is the time of the *Tuesday* performance itself; and, finally, the continued and eternal presence of the divine as a result of the celebration.⁸¹

From the twelfth century onward, this Constantinopolitan ritual centering on its famed *palladium*⁸² was reproduced in other Christian regions such as Greece, Russia, and Italy, and perhaps even in Moldavia, although evidence to support this hypothesis has not yet surfaced. Michele Bacci has identified key centers around the Mediterranean that celebrated the icon of the Hodegetria, such as Thessaloniki.⁸³ In this city, a Hodegetria icon housed in the great Church of St. Sophia was carried in solemn processions on Tuesdays.⁸⁴ In Russia, too, this ritual was recreated, and also embroidered in one example, on an icon showing *The Procession of the Hodegetria Icon in Moscow* from around 1498 (Fig. 6.25).

No evidence survives (that I have been able to find to date) to suggest that divine intervention was sought out through processional ceremonies such as the *Tuesday Rite* in Moldavia in the first decades of the sixteenth century, or before. However, the

⁸⁰ Lidov, "Hierotopy," 32-48.

⁸¹ Lidov, "Spatial Icons," 356.

⁸² A *palladium* (Greek) is an image, a symbol, or a relic considered to act as a protector of the safety and prosperity of the people. Originally associated with the statue of Pallas Athena on the Acropolis, regarded as an image that offered protection.

⁸³ Bacci, "The Legacy of the Hodegetria," 321-336.

⁸⁴ Darrouzès, "Sainte-Sophie de Thessalonique d'après un rituel," 45-78, esp. 59; Pallas, "Le ciborium hexagonal de Saint-Démétrios de Thessalonique," 44-58, esp. 50-51.

prominence given to the *Akathistos Hymn* in the iconographic program of the exterior murals, the presence of an icon of the Hodegetria in the murals of *The Siege* and, in actual form, before the iconostasis in each of the monastic churches, as well as the overall emphasis placed on the role of the Virgin and Christ in salvation suggest that rituals, like the *Tuesday Rite*, were likely reenacted in Moldavia at this time.

Multiple Facets of the Sacred

Whereas post-iconoclastic Byzantine sources document the conviction that the presence of multiple icons and relics in Constantinople helped procure divine assistance during the attacks of 626, 717/18, and 860, accounts closer in time to the siege of 626 only mention the *acheiropoietos* of Christ as the image processed around the walls of the Byzantine capital to elicit divine assistance.⁸⁵ The three already-mentioned seventh-century accounts of this failed attack that survive—the poem by George Pisidia, the sermon attributed to Theodore Syncellus, and the excerpt from the *Chronicon Paschale*—comment on the divine deliverance of Constantinople from the foreign invaders. Although by the seventh century the Virgin had replaced the pagan protector of the Byzantine capital, Tyche (or Anthousa), these sources do not mention an image of the Virgin as Constantinople's *palladium*.⁸⁶ Pisidia and Syncellus speak, rather, of an *acheiropoietos* of Christ as the protective image. The *Chronicon Paschale* mentions no physical image of the Virgin or of Christ, recounting only the apparition of the Virgin and her engagement in combat against the enemy.

Scholars have repeatedly identified the *acheiropoietos* in the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița as the *Mandylion of Edessa*, an image with its own salvific story.⁸⁷ Legend

⁸⁵ Jan van Dieten and Paul Speck have argued that the contemporary sources do not speak of any processions with Marian icons that orchestrated Constantinople's deliverance. See van Dieten, *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI. (610-715)*; Speck, *Zufälliges zum Bellum Avaricum des Georgios Pisides*; idem, "Bilder und Bilderstreit," 56-67. Conversely, Averil Cameron, Anatole Frolov, and Ernst Kitzinger have claimed that the icon of the Virgin carried in procession helped deliver the Byzantine capital from the attack of 626. See Cameron, "The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople," 79-108; Frolov, "La dédicace de Constantinople dans la tradition byzantine," 61-127; Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," 83-150.

⁸⁶ Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokoupolis," 17-25; idem, "The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople," 61-76; Cameron, "The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople," 79-108; Frolov, "La dédicace de Constantinople dans la tradition byzantine," 61-127.

⁸⁷ Herbert L. Kessler recounts the legend of the Image of Edessa and emphasizes that in fourth century documents the Holy Image is referred to as a painting, whereas by the early eighth century it is conceived

has it that King Abgar of Edessa suffered from a skin disease that was cured once a cloth with Christ's image touched his whole body. On this cloth, Christ's features were miraculously imprinted after He wiped his face with it. After King Abgar and his son died, the next king reverted to paganism and wanted to destroy the Mandylyon. The bishop of the city of Edessa, upon learning of the king's intentions, took the image and concealed it behind stones in a niche above the city gate, where it reproduced itself, leaving a miraculous imprint of Christ on the so-called Keramion, or tile that sealed the niche above the gate.⁸⁸ As recounted by the sixth century Syrian scholar Evagrius Scholasticus, the Mandylyon was forgotten until 544 when the Persians under King Khosroes I (r. 531-579) attacked Edessa.⁸⁹ The city's bishop in 544 had a dream that revealed the location of the holy image in the wall of the city. He uncovered it, took it to where the Persians were lighting a fire, and through divine intervention, the flames of the fire consumed the Persian soldiers and brought an end to the attack.⁹⁰ The Mandylyon became Edessa's *palladium* and was still in the city during the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626. Thus it could not have served as one of Byzantium's protectors during the early seventh-century attack. This important relic/icon was brought to Constantinople only in 944 by the general John Kourkouas (service c.914-944) and it was placed in the Church of the Pharos.⁹¹

If the *acheiropoietos* painted in the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița is not the Mandylyon, then the image is likely a representation of the Kamoulianai icon. According

of as a miraculous image made as a result of direct contact with the divine. See Kessler, "Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face," 135 and n. 29-30. Kessler refers in this article to the *Doctrine of Addai* as the earliest source that mentions the legend of the Image of Edessa. Mark Guscini in his recent book, however, presents the earliest account of this legend as that of Eusebius of Caesarea in the early decades of the fourth century. See Guscini, *The Image of Edessa*, 142-145. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, II, 1282-1283.

⁸⁸ The bishop who opened the niche over the city gate of Edessa discovered that "on the piece of tile which had been placed in front of the lamp to protect it, he found that there had been engraved another likeness of the image which has by chance been kept safe at Edessa up to the present time." See Constantine Porphyrogenitos, "Narratio de Imagine Edessena," in Migne, *PG*, 113, cols. 421-454. See also Lidov, "The Miracle of Reproduction," 17-41.

⁸⁹ Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in Migne, *PG*, 86, col. 2748; Runciman, "Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa," 238-252.

⁹⁰ Guscini, *The Image of Edessa*, 1-2. This book also reproduces the original texts and translations for the major documents that recount the legend of the Image of Edessa. See also Cameron, "The Mandylyon and Byzantine Iconoclasm," 33-54; Kessler, "Il Mandylyon," 67-99.

⁹¹ See von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 102-196, 158-249, 29-156; Runciman, "Some Remarks on the Image of Edessa," 238-252; Patlagean, "L'entrée de la Sainte Face d'Edesse à Constantinople en 944," 21-35.

to legend, a woman named Hypatia who lived in the town of Kamoulianai in Cappadocia refused to believe in and venerate Christ because she could not see him. While she was in her garden one day, she saw in the fountain an image of Christ painted on a linen cloth. She lifted it from the water and was struck that the cloth was dry. She then concealed it in her head-veil, and, upon later removing it, she realized that the image had reproduced itself on the cloth of her headdress. Hypatia subsequently converted to Christianity.⁹² The Kamoulianai icon arrived in Constantinople together with the relic of the True Cross in 574 from the city of Apameia in Syria, and became one of the supernatural protectors of the Byzantine capital, serving as one of its *palladia*, especially in Constantinople's rescue from the seventh-century Avar and Persian siege.⁹³

Although from a historical standpoint it may seem essential to identify the *acheiropoiotos* icon in the richly detailed mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița with a particular holy object and its accompanying legend of salvation, it is possible that this exact identification was not something the contemporary audiences, Moldavian or otherwise, would have been particularly concerned with. For them, and in the context of this mural and its message(s), the fact that this *acheiropoiotos* icon was a miraculously manufactured image would have signaled its extraordinary qualities. In this ambiguous guise, the icon of Christ in the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița transcends time and place, conveying its efficacy in any given context.

The icon/relic of Christ⁹⁴ that sums up “the miraculous wedding of [His] spirit and flesh”⁹⁵ is represented only in the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița where it is accompanied by other important Constantinopolitan relics. This accumulation of relics suggests that post-iconoclastic sources were likely used in the planning process of this mural at Moldovița, and perhaps elsewhere in Moldavia.⁹⁶ In fact, a *Triodion* written at

⁹² Zacharias Rhetor, *Ecclesiastical History*, XII.4, 114-115.

⁹³ von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 131-134; Pertusi, ed., *Giorgio di Pisidia. Poemi*, 193; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 53-55; *Diegesis ophelimos*, in Migne, *PG*, 106, cols. 1335-1354.

⁹⁴ The *acheiropoiotos* of Christ is both an icon and a relic. As an image, it is an icon of Christ; as an object it is a contact relic with miraculous powers. As such, it is both an icon and a relic.

⁹⁵ Kessler, “Configuring the Invisible by Copying the Holy Face,” 140.

⁹⁶ Pentcheva has closely examining key textual source from before and after Iconoclasm, more specifically from the seventh through the fourteenth centuries. She has reasoned convincingly that Marian images and multiple processions with Marian icons and relics came to be associated with the protection of the Byzantine capital in the Avar and Persian siege of 626, as well as later accounts, only in the second half

Râmnic in 1782, during the time of bishop Filaret, preserves a Church Slavonic and a Romanian translation of the Greek *diegesis ophelimos*.⁹⁷ Although this is a much later textual source than the murals, it suggests that perhaps similar texts may have circulated in the early sixteenth century in Moldavia as a source of reference and/or as a model for the representations of *The Siege*.

These later accounts also appear to be elaborating upon the contemporary narratives of the 626 attack by including descriptions of multiple processions with holy objects.⁹⁸ In the initial procession, Patriarch Sergios is said to have carried the icon of the Hodegetria,⁹⁹ while in the second one he displayed the *maphorion* and the True Cross, tearfully praying “‘Arise, oh, Lord, and let your enemies disperse, and disintegrate like smoke, and melt like a candle at the face of the fire!’”¹⁰⁰ The Patriarch’s invocation of Psalm 67:2-3¹⁰¹ in this instance was interwoven with the liturgical celebration of Holy Saturday at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, thus formulating a supplicatory prayer to Christ “to rise and trample underfoot the barbarians besieging his ‘City,’ as he had

of the tenth century, thus in the post-iconoclastic period. Pentcheva, “The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople,” 2-41.

⁹⁷ The manuscript is found in the Rare Books Collection of the National Library of the Republic of Moldova. Ciobanu discusses this source extensively in *Stihia Profeticului*, 43-61.

⁹⁸ This is true according to the *diegesis ophelimos* and the *lectio Triodii*, as well as a variant of the *Synaxarium*, dated based on its colophon to the early twelfth century. For the latter, see *Synaxarium*, manuscript Cg = Leipzig, Cod. Gr. R. II. 25, originally from the Monastery of San Giorgio di Tucco in Calabria, dating to 1172. See Mercati, *Per la storia dei manoscritti greci di Genova*, 158-166; Pieralli, “Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae,” 399-470, esp. 463-468. A relevant passage is referenced and translated in Pentcheva, “The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople,” 23, n. 92 (for the original Greek text).

⁹⁹ According to the *diegesis ophelimos*, in Migne, *PG*, 92, col. 1356D: “Sergios, the patriarch, having taken these: the icons of the Theometor in which the Child, the Savior, is depicted held in the arms of his mother, walked around the walls. On the one hand with this act he had procured for the city’s safety, and on the other, [he had procured] for the barbarians and enemies vehement anxiety, destruction, and flight. All these things besetting them [the enemies], a little later brought them to an all-out extermination.” Pentcheva, “The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople,” 24 (for the English translation), n. 97 (for the Greek transcription). The original *Synaxarium* of Constantinople (the Metaphrastian edition, which presents a calendar of fixed feasts) from the late tenth century does not mention any such images used in processions during the Avar siege or on the day that followed, when the victory was celebrated (August 7).

¹⁰⁰ In Migne, *PG*, 92, col. 1357A: “Taking again the *acheiropoietos* image of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the precious *maphorion* of the Panagia and further, the life-bringing wood cross, the patriarch marched along the walls.” Pentcheva, “The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople,” 24 (for the English translation), n. 99 (for the Greek transcription).

¹⁰¹ Psalm 67: 2-3 – “[2] Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and let them that hate him flee from before his face. [3] As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.” / “[2] Exurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici ejus; et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie ejus. [3] Sicut deficit fumus, deficiant; sicut fluit cera a facie ignis, sic pereant peccatores a facie Dei.” Douay-Rheims Bible, <<http://www.drbo.org/x/d?b=drb&bk=21&ch=67&l=2#x>> (accessed 3 October 2014).

trampled on Death during his resurrection.”¹⁰² Like the oral invocations and the icons, the relics, such as the *maphorion*, the True Cross, and the girdle, also safeguarded the city. They, too, served a miraculous function alongside the prayers and the holy images, being interwoven in the rituals.

The mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița thus represents multiple processions suggested by the different historical moments indicated in the image and the grouping of the figures within the rectilinear architecture of the fortified city (Fig. 6.6). One procession seems to center on the Virgin’s girdle, the Hodegetria icon, and the *acheiropoietos* of Christ. These holy relics are directed toward the cavalry and infantry forces of the enemy approaching the city from the right. The other procession, in the foreground, focuses on the *maphorion*, the relic of the True Cross, and the Gospel Book and faces the naval siege unfolding on the left. This multiplicity of processions with holy objects, described in the post-iconoclastic sources and suggested in the Moldavian mural, complicates the temporality of the scene. These clockwise processions, moreover, could have rendered the mural more resonant in the Moldavian context, providing a model for, or reflecting, the local ceremonies that encircled the churches. Although it is impossible to reconstruct this precisely, the particularly central position of the churches within their monastic compounds and the vast exterior paintings would have welcomed a circumambulation of the monuments in the context of certain liturgical ceremonies, such as the Easter celebrations, for example.

Divine presence is one of the key subjects of the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița. The wall painting, through the abundance of represented holy images and relics, suggests the presence of Christ and the Virgin, signaling their more immediate aid in the struggles. For example, the girdle and the *maphorion*, as contact relics of the Virgin, and the icon of the Hodegetria, also considered a *brandeum* by an extended definition since it was believed to have been painted by St. Luke in her presence, serve to suggest the physical presence of the Virgin, while the relic of the True Cross and the *acheiropoietos* image make Christ’s presence more immediate. Divine presence is also alluded to in the only other scene painted below the *Akathistos Hymn* at Moldovița. The mural depicts the Old

¹⁰² Kartsonis, “The Responding Icon,” 66; eadem, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image*, 177. Whether or not similar invocations occurred in Moldavia in the first decades of the sixteenth century during the liturgical celebrations of the Saturday before Easter is still unknown.

Testament story of *The Burning Bush* in which God appeared to Moses and instructed him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Fig. 6.26). In the Eastern Orthodox Church this episode was regarded as a prefiguration of Christ's birth when the Virgin suffered no harm, thus preserving her virginity just like the bush burning without being consumed by the flames. Both of these biblical stories, then, *The Burning Bush* and Christ's Incarnation, refer to instances of divine presence made manifest in the world.

It seems clear, then, that the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița refers to a number of historical moments, in particular the triumphant victories of the imperium during the sieges of Constantinople in 626 by the Avars and the Persians, in 717/18 by the Arabs, and in 860 by the Rus'. In light of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the image seems to hold out assurance that divine aid could still be forthcoming. The inclusion of contemporary artillery presents an anachronism that adds a particular urgency to the event depicted, bringing the relevance of those earlier victories into the present. That the attack is underway in the mural at Moldovița suggests that a defeat *per se*, with reference to the events of 1453, is not depicted here. Divine aid has not yet failed; in fact, it has worked in the context of the naval siege represented on the left since the ships are sinking and the enemy figures are shown being thrown overboard. The mural, thus, on one level, presents an ongoing battle in which divine support is continually sought, lending this image a cyclical character. Then, perhaps, a more fruitful reading of the scene of *The Siege* at Moldovița, and in Moldavia at large, would be as an invocation of stories of salvation through divine intervention, rather than as a depiction of a single historical event. It is certainly more suitable to have a salvation account in this context, rather than a defeat (as in the attack of 1453), considering Moldavia's precarious political and military position in the first half of the sixteenth century when the anti-Ottoman struggles were well underway.¹⁰³

The accumulation and conflation of miraculous stories in Moldovița's mural of *The Siege* presents a multivalent image that reveals ways in which Byzantium's past was

¹⁰³ A few scholars have suggested, indeed, that the scene of *The Siege* at Moldovița was inspired by contemporary events. See, for example, Henry, *Les églises de la Moldavie du nord*, 241; Grabar, "Les croisades de l'Europe Orientale dans l'art," 19-27; Ulea, "L'origine et la signification idéologique de la peinture extérieure moldave," 47; Drăguț, *Humor*, 30-31; idem, "De nouveau sur les peintures murales extérieures de Moldavie," 49-84, esp. 75-76; Vătășianu, *Pictura murală din nordul Moldovei*, 25; Nicolescu, *Mănăstirea Moldovița*, 24.

reinvented in the Moldavian context in the aftermath of the empire's collapse. In this regard, the mural of *The Siege* is comparable to the Pala d'Oro that adorns the main altar of the church of San Marco in Venice—a double-sided jewel-encrusted gold object made of images, relics, and objects stripped from different churches in Constantinople (and especially from the iconostasis on the Pantokrator Monastery there, built c.1120) during the Fourth Crusade (Fig. 6.27).¹⁰⁴ This altarpiece is, in essence, an “icon of icons,” as described by Sylvester Syropoulos (deacon and patriarchal official of Hagia Sophia) in his account of patriarch Joseph II's visit to the Treasury of San Marco.¹⁰⁵ This lavish altarpiece symbolizes Venice's aim after 1204 to claim Byzantium's role as the primary repository of the sacred through an accumulation of relics and sacred objects.¹⁰⁶ This multiplicity of the sacred in early thirteenth-century Venice (in the form of objects) and in early sixteenth-century Moldavia (in the form of miracle accounts) perpetuated Byzantium's heritage following two critical moments in its history, namely, the events of 1204 and 1453, and reinvented the East in particular ways in Venice and Moldavia, generating new meanings within the new contexts.

The multiplicity of historical events and processions referenced in the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița renders the cityscape ideal; so does the Church Slavonic inscription that identifies the central city as Tzarigrad (Цариградь), the city of the tsar or the emperor. This identification contrasts with that of the contemporary, or later, viewer who recognized the city as Constantinople (Константинополь) in the text he inscribed on the surface of the mural sometime after its completion.¹⁰⁷ Since the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița does not refer to a single historical event, contrary to what its sixteenth-century viewer seems to have understood when looking at the image, the identification of

¹⁰⁴ Klein, “Refashioning Byzantium in Venice,” 194.

¹⁰⁵ Sylvester Syropoulos, *Memoires*, 222.19-224.4. Gill, “The Acta and Memoirs of Syropoulos as History,” 305-355; Laurent, *Les “Mémoires” du Grand Ecclésiastique de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence*; van Dieten, “Sylvester Syropoulos und die Vorgeschichte von Ferrara-Florenz,” 154-179. A translation of the passage in which Syropoulos describes the reactions of the Constantinopolitan delegates upon seeing the Byzantine treasures in San Marco can be found in Klein, “Refashioning Byzantium in Venice,” 194.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Virginia Rodini examines the ways in which Venice aimed to possess the East through an accumulation of objects, thus seeking to claim Byzantium through its possessions. “*Translatio Sancti Marci*: Displaying the Levant in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Venice.”

¹⁰⁷ It is possible that the contemporary observer who identified the painted city as Constantinople was not Moldavian but rather a Slav in origin (possibly from a region north of Moldavia) who was familiar with images of *The Siege* representing the ninth century Rus' attack of the Byzantine capital.

the central city as Tzarigrad is more apt. Although Tzarigrad is how the Slavs referred to Constantinople, after the empire's demise this identification could have been transferable to any geographical and political context. Moldavia, then, in seeking to perpetuate and transform on its soil Byzantium's cultural and artistic legacy while protecting its political and religious identities at this crucial moment appears to have fashioned itself as a new Tzarigrad—not as a “Third Rome,” *per se*, but more as a peripheral region of the Byzantine Empire transformed in the post-1453 world into a center that served as a crucial Christian frontier in the fight against the Ottomans.

The fortified city in the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița, then, could represent Constantinople, but it could equally well stand for the fortified monastery at Moldovița (Fig. 6.28). Moldovița, and in fact all of the other Moldavian monasteries, received massive rectangular fortification walls and towers from the early fifteenth century onward that served to transform these sites of worship into defensive bastions, in essence, fortresses of faith.¹⁰⁸ These fortifications also accentuated the separation of the monastic world contained within the walls of the monastery from the one outside.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the fortifications found throughout Transylvania, which assumed a circular or polygonal format, determined in part by the configuration of the rugged landscape onto which they were built, the Moldavian monasteries, were usually erected on level terrain, which allowed them to adopt a more regular, rectilinear plan with massive curtain walls and corner towers.¹¹⁰

Since the monasteries also served to protect the communities (the monastic one and those from the nearby villages) in times of need, they came to resemble in their defensive, rectilinear forms military establishments, in particular the later-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century fortresses from the region, such as the strongholds at Neamț and

¹⁰⁸ This phrase is also part of the title of Alan Ogden's catalog on the fortified Saxon churches of Transylvania. See Ogden, *Fortresses of Faith*.

¹⁰⁹ The old monastery at Moldovița, for example, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, exhibited a rectangular layout with towers at the corners. Neamț Monastery, prior to the rebuilding carried out during Stephen's reign, also presented a smaller layout that was rectangular with towers placed at the corners, as was the case with Bistrița Monastery, built by Alexander the Good. Putna Monastery was also fortified. Its fortifications, however, resembled those at Suceava Fortress, with towers on each of the corners and additional towers placed at the midpoint of the defensive walls. See Balș and Nicolescu, *Mănăstirea Neamț*, 19; Nicolescu, “Arta în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare,” 280, n. 3.

¹¹⁰ Fabini, “Le chiese-castello della Transilvania ed i monasteri fortificati ortodossi della Moldavia in Romania,” 7-22; See also some of the examples discussed in Rusu, *Castelarea carpatică*.

Suceava in their earlier, fourteenth-century iterations. Moldavia's fortresses and royal courts, however, unlike the monasteries, took on a polygonal contour from the second half of the fifteenth century onward.¹¹¹ However, in contrast to the fortresses and royal courts that were often placed on elevated sites, Moldavia's monasteries were built in the valleys, among hills and mountain peaks, but never on top of a hill. From a military point of view, this placement of the monasteries would have rendered them, in fact, more difficult to defend. Their massive fortification walls and towers, therefore, could have served, and perhaps more readily, a symbolic function.

As such, the fortified city in the mural of *The Siege* could represent one of Moldavia's fortified monasteries, but it could also stand for one of the region's fortresses, such as the one in the capital of Suceava (Fig. 6.29). It is significant that in the painting the emperor and empress are depicted as taking part in the procession within the walls of the city while wearing Moldavian crowns. This royal headgear resembles the crowns worn by Peter and his wife in the votive paintings usually found on the west wall of the naos of the churches commissioned by the prince. This particular detail serves to transport and recreate the Byzantine imperial city on Moldavian soil, linking it, on one level, with Moldavia's own capital. Like Constantinople, Suceava was also a fortified city believed to have been "protected by God" as revealed in an inscription by monk Varlaam written on 24 February 1532 in a *Liturgical Book* dedicated by the Moldavian Metropolitan Theophan to Zographou Monastery on Mount Athos (MS. 1532).¹¹² Moreover, the fortresses, which resemble in their layouts traditional castle designs, served as individual strongholds, and, in an expanded context, fortified the principality as a whole against its enemies. Therefore, in addition to referencing the monasteries,

¹¹¹ See the section "Fortresses and Royal Courts" in Chapter Two.

¹¹² *Liturgical Book* (MS. 1532), fol. 107v (full inscription): "Изволениѣмъ и дадениѣмъ прѣвнѣ(ва)цнѣнаг(о) митрополита в(о)г(о)дѣмъ спасаемаго града Сучавскаго и вѣсен Молдовахїи квр Деофана, съписасѣ сѣа Літургїа в л(ѣ)то хзм роукюю многогрѣшнаго въ чл(овѣ)цѣх и послѣднѣишаго въ иншцѣх Варлаама Деместика. И съврѣшисе писаниѣмъ въ Ізюграфскыи монастыр иже въ С(ва)тѣви Горѣ, м(ѣ)с(а)ца февруарїа) кд д(ѣ)нѣ господствую жцюу Петроу воеводѣ." / "This Liturgy Book was written in the year 7040 [1532] by the order of the Metropolitan Kyr Theophan of the city protected by God, Suceava, and all of Moldovalachia. It was written by the hand of the sinner among men and the last among monks, Varlaam, and completed at the Zographou Monastery on the Holy Mount in the month of February, 24, when Peter was voivode." The manuscript was commissioned by the Metropolitan Theophan and gifted to Zographou Monastery. This manuscript was originally in the collection of the Athonite monastery Zographou, but now it is housed in the Public Library in Saint Petersburg. Caproșu and Chiaburu, eds., *Însemnări de pe manuscrise și cărți vechi din Țara Moldovei*, 49 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and Romanian translation).

fortresses, and royal courts, the fortified city in the mural of *The Siege* could equally have stood for the entire principality of Moldavia, whose secular and monastic fortifications transformed it into a last bastion of not just the Orthodox Church, but of Christianity at large (Fig. 6.30).

Peter's Aspirations

When Peter Rareș ascended to the throne in 1527, he aspired to liberate Moldavia from Ottoman control. While he was of princely birth he was also illegitimate—a circumstance that must have augmented Peter's desire to properly validate his right to rule the principality.¹¹³ As Moldavia's relations with the Ottomans in particular were deteriorating, Peter's initial projects, like his father before him, included the strengthening of Moldavia's fortresses. Among the strongholds that benefited from his program were those of Suceava, Neamț, Roman, and Hotin, which were all reinforced during the first years of Peter's reign. In addition to re-fortifying Moldavia's borders, the young prince also sought to strengthen the principality from within, and right from the outset undertook a number of measures to increase its economic and political stability.

Hungary at this time was dealing with an internal power struggle between John Zápolya (the Transylvanian prince who became the king of Hungary in 1526, supported by the Hungarians) and King Ferdinand I of Habsburg, supported by the Saxons. Pursuing a shrewd policy, Peter sought favor with both rulers. According to the English soldier and diplomat Sir John Wallop (c.1490-1551), who wrote to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1473-1530) on at least two occasions in 1527, Peter supported Zápolya in January of that year,¹¹⁴ but by May he was already siding with Zápolya's opponent,

¹¹³ The dedicatory inscriptions near the entrance to the churches repeatedly state: "John Peter voivode, through God's grace prince of the land of Moldavia, son of the old Stephen voivode." / "Іо(анна) Петръ Боевода, божи милостно господарь земли Молдавской, сынъ старого Стефана Боеводи."

¹¹⁴ In the letter from 12 January 1527 (Augsburg), Sir John Wallop noted that Moldavia and Wallachia will side with John Zápolya: "...The seyng ys her that the Turke hath sent to the Kyng of Hongary to geve hym yerly Trybuet... Hyt is thought her that he wyl agre ther unto by cause the Turke schold take hys part agaynst the kyng of Beem and so they thynk that he wyl doo. What the kyng of Poule intendyth to do, hyt ys nat yeet knowyn, but the contrey of Molda, Balachia and haulfe Croatia wyll take the Waydas parte; wych contreys lyth twyxt Hongary and Turkey..." [B. M. Cott., Vitellius B xxi, folio 30r]. Tappe, *Documents Concerning Rumanian History*, 24 (for a transcription of the original text).

Ferdinand I.¹¹⁵ During these initial years of his rule, Peter embarked on campaigns in Transylvania and in Poland, before turning his attention once more toward the Ottomans. As Moldavia became threatened by imminent Ottoman attacks, Peter concluded on 4 April 1535 an anti-Ottoman agreement with Ferdinand I. This coalition occurred around the same time when the murals of *The Siege* with their explicit messages of divine salvation entered the iconography of the exterior mural programs of Moldavia's monastic churches.

The failed Ottoman siege of Vienna in on 15 October 1529 also instilled a new sense of hope in Europe's Christian leaders, including Peter, that perhaps the westward expansion of the Ottoman armies could be stopped after all. It is noteworthy in this regard that Peter joined the Ottoman forces, at the Porte's request in June, October, and November 1529 to support the troops of John Zápolya in Transylvania. However, when asked in 1536 to do so again, Peter refused—a reaction that triggered, in part, the great Ottoman campaign of 1538 against Moldavia, to be discussed below.¹¹⁶ Moreover, it is significant that the extensive image programs that began appearing on the exterior of Moldavia's churches took form between 1529 and 1538—during a time when Peter displayed a new sense of determination against the Ottomans.

Peter aspired to deliver Moldavia, and perhaps indeed all of Europe from the Ottomans. A report from 31 July 1536 (Cașovia) written to Ferdinand I by his two emissaries to Transylvania, Balthazar Bánffy and Marc Pemfflinger, offers a glimpse into Peter's objectives.¹¹⁷ Peter's words, as recorded in the letter of these two ambassadors, deserve to be related here in their entirety:

¹¹⁵ In the letter from 20 May 1527 (Pressel), Sir John Wallop takes note that that Peter offers support to Ferdinand I: "... Here is an Embassadour from the Waywda of Muldavia, which contrey lieth betwene Pole and Turkye. And, as he hym self tolde me by an interpreter, his Lorde offerithe the King of Beeme all service and pleasure to the uttermoste of his power..." [S. P. 1/42, folio 21v]. Tappe, *Documents Concerning Rumanian History*, 24 (for a transcription of the original text).

¹¹⁶ It is worth highlighting at this juncture that Moldavian participation in external military campaigns occurred only in neighboring territories, such as Hungary, the Habsburg lands, Wallachia, and Poland. The princes never sent troops further afield. Perhaps they could not leave the country out of fear of internal upheavals or invasions. For a brief discussion of this issue, see Cristea, "The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns," 261-263.

¹¹⁷ According to the report, Peter's words were related to Balthazar Bánffy and Marc Pemfflinger by Peter Gerendi, the Hungarian ambassador to Peter's court who had just returned from Moldavia. Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, II/1, 110-112 (for the Latin transcription). Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 375-378 (for a Romanian translation).

I [Peter Rareș] am ready to serve the Roman Catholic ruler [Charles V] and the royal one [Ferdinand I], and all of Christendom, willing to give my head and my rule, not sparing my life nor my fortune. I am prepared to face all dangers to defend Christianity and the common good. I only request support from their Majesties [Charles V, Ferdinand I, and all fellow Christian rulers] so that I can pursue with ease my ambitions without great injury to myself or to this country, Moldavia. My country and I are surrounded by great enemies. If I were to embark on any military campaign they will rise against me, and if I will not have support from elsewhere, and I will be abandoned by their Highnesses, I will perish, together with my country. This situation could pose a danger to my fellow Christian rulers and to all of Christianity, and I would be useless; unless their Highnesses would do as follows: graciously send, beginning this year, 5,000 men with war weapons that destroy walls [cannons]. Their Majesties should not worry, because undoubtedly, whatever happens, I will regain with God's help the whole of Transylvania [from the Turkish control] and will bring not an insignificant blow to Turkish rule. And when your Highnesses will embark on a grand campaign against the Turks, send to me 15,000 men to which I will add 45,000 chosen men from my country, 20,000 from Transylvania, and 25,000 from Wallachia.

“With this support, and with God's help,” the report continues, Peter hoped to arrive at the gates of Constantinople.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, II/1, 112: “Ego inquit Cesaree et Catholice, ac Regie Maiestati, totique christianitatj et capiti ac Regno meo inseruire paratus sum, nec Capitj nec substancie mee parcam, sed omnia pro christianitatis conseruacione et bono Publico subire presto, dummodo Maiestates earum operam et auxilium earum adhibeant quo id commodious et sine lactura mej et istius regni Moldaue intentum meum prosequi possim. Nam Vndique magnis adversarijs ipse et regnum meum septum est. Si expedicionem aliquam fecero isti contra me insurgent, et si non habuero, qui mihi auxilium prestat, et a Maiestatibus suis derelictus fuero: et ego cum Regno peribo. Exinde maiestas earum et tota Chrianitas periclitari poterit, sic nec Maiestatibus suis nec mihi prodero, Sed Maiestates sue faciant hoc, Vt dignentur mittere aduc Anno isto Quinque Milia hominum cum machinis que Muros franqunt. Non dubitent Maiestates earum Quin procul dubio in omnem Rerum Euentnm, deo propicio, et regnum Transsiluanie Maiestatibus suis integrum reddam, et cum hoc dominijs Thurcarum non paruam Jucturam inferam. Vbi Vero Maiestates earum Generalem expedicionem contra Thurcas facere Voluerint, Mittant Quindecim Milia hominum. Quibus addam ex regno meo Quadraginta Milia electorum, Transsilvaniae Vigintj Transalpine vero Vigintj Quinque mila. Cum hijs deo volente usque Constantinopolim proficisci velit...” Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 378 (for a Romanian translation).

First, this account reveals Moldavia's trying political and military situation in these initial decades of the sixteenth century, which bring to mind its difficulties during Stephen's reign (who, too, voiced his concerns to the rulers of western Europe). Despite Peter's ambitions to rise against the Ottomans, he acknowledged his military shortcomings. In fact, any effort to engage in campaigns without external support would have devastating consequences for Moldavia, and by extension, for the entire Christian world. Peter's words here echo those of his father's, Stephen, who in 1475 stressed that if Moldavia were to fall to the Ottoman Turks then the rest of Christianity would be in great danger. The same circumstances seem to have recurred, or rather persisted, for fifty years after that initial request for assistance.

The other fascinating aspect about Peter's ambitions that this account exposes is his desire to attack and defeat the Ottomans not on Moldavian soil, as would be expected, but rather in Constantinople, and thus to transform Constantine's imperial city once more into a Christian capital.¹¹⁹ According to the source cited above, if indeed a grand Christian campaign were to be unleashed against the Ottomans, Peter would be ready to provide the most men to the operation, and would be willing even to lead these troops into battle. Moreover, Moldavia's strategic geographical position would grant the Christian troops easy access to Constantinople. Even the Venetian doctor Matteo Muriano (d. 1530), who was sent to Stephen's court to treat the prince during the last months of his life, drew attention to Moldavia's significant and unique geographical location. In a letter addressed to Doge Leonardo Loredano (1501-1521) and written in Suceava on 7 December 1502, he writes:

From here [Moldavia] one could make it to Constantinople in ten or twenty days, so I graciously remind your Highness that from here one could attack the armies of this insidious Turkish Sultan [Bayezid II]. And from what I hear from trustworthy men and merchants coming from Constantinople, the Turks fear greatly this Prince [Stephen III] and all

¹¹⁹ On Peter's ambitions to reach the gates of Constantinople and defeat the Ottomans there, see Mureșan, "Rêver Byzance. Le dessein du prince Pierre Rareș de Moldavie pour libérer Constantinople," 207-265.

Christians who would consider making their way through this country
[toward the Porte].¹²⁰

Sultan Suleiman I, after learning of Peter's secret correspondence with the Habsburg king, and his subsequent refusal of the Porte's orders the following year, in 1536, to send troops to Transylvania to support John Zápolya,¹²¹ invaded Moldavia in the summer of 1538, commanding a vast army reinforced by Tatar troops led by Sahib Ghirai.¹²² Peter succeeded in defeating the Tatar divisions at Ștefănești, but, betrayed by the boyars, was forced to give up the battle and flee to Transylvania on 28 September 1538, where he remained in exile for almost three years.¹²³ During Peter's absence, the Sultan raised to Moldavia's throne Stephen the Locust (Ștefan Lăcustă) (r. 1538-1540), who was succeeded by Alexander Cornea (r. 1540-1541). One contemporary account describing these events survives from the Italian messenger Iacomo Verganalli from Pisa, who returned from Constantinople to Venice on 18 November 1538 and was at once asked about his travels and experiences.¹²⁴ Verganalli recounts that Moldavia was supposed to be attacked from the east by 50,000 Tatar troops, from the north by 30,000-40,000 Polish cavalry, and from the south by the Ottoman army. The Polish horsemen,

¹²⁰ Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, VIII, 37: "...de qui a Constantinopoli se va in XV o XX zorni perho riverentemente aricordo a la Signoria Vostra che de qui se potria strenzer li fianchi a questo perfido can Turcho et per quanto me referisse molti homini degni et merchadanti che vien da Constantinopoli li Turchi ha gran paura de questo Signor et de li Christiani per la via de questo paese." Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 149 (for a Romanian translation).

¹²¹ This account was described by Balthazar Bánffy and Marc Pemfflinger, Ferdinand I's ambassadors to Peter's court, in a letter from 31 July 1536 to the Habsburg King. Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, II/1, 110-112 (for the Latin transcription); Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 376-378 (for a Romanian translation).

¹²² On the Ottoman campaign of 1538 against Moldavia, see especially Stănescu, "Le coup d'état nobiliaire de 1538 et son rôle dans l'asservissement de la Moldavie par l'Empire Ottoman," 241-264; Bidian, "Moldova în tratativele polono-otomane într-un document din anul 1538," 309-319; Neagoe, "Petru Rareș și Campania din 1538," 390-398; Guboglu, "Campania lui Suleiman Magnificul în Moldova (1538) într-o cronică turco-tătărească," 1-20; Denize, *Țările Române și Veneția*, 195-200; Pop, "O mărturie venețiană contemporană despre evenimentele din anul 1538," 241-252.

¹²³ This Turkish invasion of Moldavia was recounted throughout Europe. The English merchant Edmund Harvel, a resident in Venice, for example, wrote of this Turkish campaign and its aftermath in a number of letters written from Venice and addressed to Thomas Cromwell, an English lawyer and statesman and the first Earl of Essex. The notable letters are dated 25 October 1538 [S. P. 1/138, folio 8v], 15 November 1538 [S. P. 1/139, folio 101], 30 November 1538 [S. P. 1/139, folio 217], and 24 January 1540 [S. P. 1/157, folio 94v]. Excerpts from these documents have been published in Tappe, *Documents Concerning Rumanian History*, 30-31 (for transcriptions of the original texts).

¹²⁴ The account of Iacomo Vernagalli dates to 19 November 1538 and is housed in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, fond Collegio V, Relazioni, busta 4, Constantinopoli. A description in Romanian of the content of the account and a transcription of the original Italian was published by Pop, "O mărturie venețiană contemporană despre evenimentele din anul 1538," 241-252.

however, did not end up contributing to the campaign because of Peter's interventions in the north with support from John Zápolya.

A lengthy inscription on folio 6v of the *Tetraevangelion* from Humor Monastery (MS. 1473), recounts the events and aftermath of 1538 as follows:

In the year 7046 [1538] the Turkish Sultan with all his men, and with support from eastern provinces, the Tatars, and the Wallachians, rose against our poor country, Moldavia, in the days of Peter voivode. The whole country was scared... Just then it happened that Peter voivode lost the throne and crossed over into Hungary... God and the most-pure Virgin showed mercy and he regained his royal crown, returning as the prince of the land of Moldavia and of all Christians. And he returned with the Turks and received the Moldavian scepter, meaning the flags, and arrived safely in his glorified royal court in Suceava...¹²⁵

¹²⁵ *Tetraevangelion* from Humor Monastery (MS. 1473), fol. 6v: “В(ъ) лѣто чѣтыридѣсат и шѣсть над седмыа тысяцѣ быст възнегда оустрѣми са ц(а)рѣ тоурскыи съ възсѣж землежъ вѣсточножъ страножъ и татарскожъ и оугровлахійскожъ на оубоубѣдною Молдавскои Земли въ д(ь)ни г(о)с(по)д(и)на Петра воевода и оустраши с(а) възса земля а мы хоморстїи калугери страха ради прилоучив шаго с(а) земли послали есмо сын Тетроен(ан)г(е)ль въ оугорскои Земли въ Чичевскыи град и възнегда прилоучи с(а) г(о)с(поди)ноу Петроу воеводѣ изыти из г(о)с(по)д(и)на прѣиде въ оугорскои Земли и достиже въ свои град Чичевскїи и обратѣ его с(о) Тетроен(ан)г(е)ла тамо и възпрїят его до сѣбѣ и въ свои рѣцѣ и держал его съ собожъ доколѣ живе въ Чичевскїи град и егда поидѣ въ Тоурскою Земли пакы въззал его [възал] съ собожъ и въ Ц(а)риградѣ и тамо ещѣ держал с(ва)тоѣ Ев(ан)г(е)ліѣ въ свои рѣцѣ и мношѣдшю немногоу врѣмене бывшоу въ Тоурскои Земли оумлс(ъ)ди с(а) Бог(ы) и того Пр(ѣ)с(ъ)стѣпа М(а)т(е)рѣ и дорова его вѣнцемъ цр(ъ)ствїа бити пакы г(о)сп(о)д(а)рѣ Земли Молдавскои и хр(и)стїаномъ и прїидѣ съ тоурскыи възпрїят скиптри Земли Молдавскои сирѣчь стѣгове и доврѣ прїидѣ въ свои прѣславнїи град и настолнїи Сочавскїи и даде пакы с(ва)тыѣ Тетроен(ан)г(е)ла с(ва)томоу монастыроу Хомогоу за свою д(о)ушю и за д(о)ушю родїтелеи своихъ Стефана воевода Стараго и егоуменѣтвоящїюу тогда Паисїю ермонахоу въ тогда врѣмени и ѿт нег(о) посланъ бѣше.” / “In the year seven thousand forty-six [7046/1538], the Turkish Sultan with all his men, and with support from eastern provinces, the Tatars, and the Wallachians, rose against our poor country, Moldavia, in the days of Peter voivode. The whole country was scared and so we, the monks of Humor [Monastery], because of the great fear that engulfed our land, we sent this Tetraevangelion to Ciceu Fortress in Hungary. Just then it happened that Peter voivode lost the throne and crossed over into Hungary arriving at Ciceu where he found this Gospel Book, which he took in his hand [possession]. He kept this book with him for as long as he stayed at Ciceu Fortress, and when he left for Turkey he took it with him and even when he arrived in Tzarigrad [Constantinople] he had this holy Gospel Book in his hands. After some time in the lands of the Turks, God and the most-pure Virgin showed mercy and he regained his royal crown, returning as the prince of Moldavia and of all Christians. And he returned with the Turks and received the Moldavian scepter, meaning the flags, and arrived safely in his glorified royal court in Suceava. He returned [gifted] the Gospel Book to the holy monastery of Humor for the perpetual remembrance of his soul, and that of his father, the old Stephen voivode. At that time the priest was Paisie, and to him the book was sent.” The manuscript dates to sometime after 19 February 1541, the date when Peter began his second reign. It is now in the National Museum of History, Bucharest (inv. 11341). At some earlier date, this manuscript was also part of the collection of Dragomirna Monastery (inv.

The *Chronicle of Macarie*, written at Peter's court by Macarie, Bishop of Roman, also narrates the events of 1538 and equates Peter to a "new Noah" because "he escaped the flood that swallows all [i.e. the Ottomans]" and was successful in regaining the crown.¹²⁶ Indeed, the prince returned to Moldavia's throne in early February 1541 following negotiations with John Zápolya and the Porte. From a political standpoint, Peter's second reign was drastically different from his first. Moldavia now had new obligations toward the Ottomans, which included the payment of an even higher yearly tribute.

Despite these challenges and limitations, Peter sought to resume the fight against the Ottomans when he returned to Moldavia's throne. It is telling that the monk who wrote the inscription in the already-mentioned *Tetraevanghelion* from Humor Monastery (MS. 1473) refers to Peter as the "prince of the land of Moldavia and of all Christians"—a leader of all Christendom, indeed, as he had been esteemed a few years prior, during his first reign, when he experienced the peak of his glory. By 1541, although his ambitions had diminished, a glimpse of hope and his unfaltering drive to rise against the Ottomans and defeat them was still alive. On 1 March 1542, for instance, Peter served as the primary aide to Joachim II Hector, Elector of the Margraviate of Brandenburg (1535-1571) who between September and October 1542 attempted to wrest Buda from Ottoman control. Peter desired to ratify a treaty with the Brandenburg Elector with a common anti-Ottoman action in mind, but the initiative was never realized. Nicholas the Armenian (d. after 1542), an Armenian from Poland who, on his return from Constantinople passed through Moldavia and had a conversation with Peter at his court, related to Matias Lobozky in a letter from 1 June 1542 Peter's frustration and disappointment, yet unwavering hope for eventual deliverance. According to Nicholas, the Moldavian prince avowed:

...and if I saw that any Christian king would rise up with all his power and faith against the Turks, I would then join him with my faith and I would

576/1954), and then at Putna Monastery (inv. 91). Caproșu and Chiaburu, eds., *Însemnări de pe manuscrise și cărți vechi din Țara Moldovei*, 53 (for the Church Slavonic transcription and a Romanian translation).

¹²⁶ *Chronicle of Macarie*, fol. 263r: "потопа въсера(д)ца избѣгъ, новын Ноѣ яви са съвма родоу въ ҃у҃чевѣ градѣ сп(а)саа, и҃же малымъ бѣше прѣдпослааь." / "He [Peter] escaped the flood that swallows all as a new Noah and saved his family in the fortress of Ciceu [in Transylvania] where he had sent them shortly before [his own exile]." Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI*, 85 (for the Church Slavonic transcription), 100 (for a Romanian translation).

help him with all my resources. Now, however, I cannot do this because I have no one to turn to, and so I have to do what the Sultan orders... Nevertheless, I still maintain this determination and unwavering attitude to be on the side of the Christians until my death.¹²⁷

Conclusion

In the mural of *The Siege* at Arbore, then, completed at the beginning of Peter's second reign, it is no surprise that the inscription clearly labels the event represented as the Avar and Persian attack of 626 (Fig. 6.14). Thus identified, the subject of the mural is removed in time from the contemporary military conflict and in this way perhaps rendered less offensive. Although by this point Peter had not yet entirely relinquished his hopes to regain Moldavia's independence, the contemporary circumstances made it more difficult for him to be as ambitious as he had been just two decades earlier.

As such, the individuals who designed the scene of *The Siege of Constantinople* on the south façade of the church at Moldovița Monastery wove together in this particular story of salvation historic truths and authentic experiences in order to adapt its visual vocabulary and meanings to reflect contemporary concerns. The representation of the enemy in the guise of the Ottoman Turks and the inclusion of culverin cannons at the very center of the composition, among other details, add both poignancy and urgency to this image. In addition, the presence of holy images and icons in the image of *The Siege* was likewise relatable in the Moldavian context; *acheiropoietos* images appear painted in prominent locations on the interior walls of the Moldavian churches, and icons of the Hodegetria were often found incorporated into the iconostasis or places before them. One such contemporary example is the early sixteenth-century Hodegetria from Humor Monastery that likely served as a *Despotic Icon* on the iconostasis (Fig. 6.31). And yet the message of salvation through divine intervention takes precedence over the minute details of the narrative content. The message, in other words, is that the Virgin and Christ

¹²⁷ Hurmuzaki, ed., *Documente*, II/1, 224: "Et si viderem quod aliquis Rex Christianus potenter et fideliter insurgeret contra Turcas, tunc fideliter adhererem illi, et omnibus viribus adiuuarem eum. Nunc autem aliter facere non possum, quia non habeo ad quem confugiam, oportet me facere que Turca iubet... Nihilominus ego sum huius firmi animi et propositi vt teneam cum Christianis vsque ad interium capitis mei." Holban, ed., *Călători străini*, I, 387-388 (for a Romanian translation). For a commentary on this text, see Rezachevici, "Politica externă," 216-217.

will intervene and save this Orthodox region from the Ottomans just as they saved Constantinople and the empire at various moments throughout history.

The presence of the divine is certainly emphasized in Moldovița's mural of *The Siege* and in the adjacent image of *The Burning Bush*; both take up the bottom register of the south wall below the representations of the stanzas of the *Akathistos Hymn*. In this context, moreover, it is worth stressing the deliberate arrangement of the illustrated stanzas of the *Hymn* in the register above the scene of *The Siege*, for this was configured in such a way so that the scenes corresponding to stanzas 21, 22, 23, and 24 stand directly above the image of *The Siege* (Fig. 6.32). The verses of these stanzas speak of the Virgin as the one “who like thunder strike[s] down the enemies” (21),¹²⁸ and as that “impregnable wall of the kingdom...through whom enemies fall” (23).¹²⁹ Christ, meanwhile, is hailed in these verses as the “Redeemer” who “came of his own will to dwell among those who were exiled from his grace” (22)—a reference to his divine presence and Second Coming.¹³⁰ The last stanza of the *Hymn* (24) alludes to the celebrations carried out in honor of the Virgin and to her presence, visualized in the mural below by the procession(s) with holy objects within the city walls and the miraculous precipitation descending from the skies above. The last verses of the *Akathistos Hymn* read:

O Mother hymned by all,
you who gave birth to the Word, the holiest of all holies:
accepting this present offering,
deliver from every evil and from the punishment to come
all those who cry to you:
“Alleluia.”¹³¹

This arrangement of the last stanzas of the *Akathistos Hymn* directly above the image of *The Siege* is unique to the church at Moldovița. The south wall of the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin at Humor, painted just a few years earlier, in 1535, displays the

¹²⁸ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 17.

¹²⁹ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 19.

¹³⁰ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 19.

¹³¹ Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 19.

same iconographic themes as Moldovița but, by contrast, does not present the same visual and semantic alignment between the *Hymn* stanzas and the mural of *The Siege* below.¹³²

Images representing cities under siege that are miraculously delivered through divine assistance—as shown in the Moldavian murals of *The Siege* and similar examples found at the monasteries on Mount Athos and in Russia—were mostly relegated to monastic circles where they became part of an iconographic repertoire calibrated in part to respond to the fall of the Byzantine Empire. However, whereas in parts of the Slavic-Byzantine world and in Russia these types of images showing fortified cities under attack visualized a particular historical event and may have been inspired, in most cases, by Photius’s sermon on the Rus’ siege of Constantinople in 860, as represented in the refectory at Hilandar Monastery and at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Smolensk in Moscow, the Moldavian examples present larger and more complex iconographies. As I have shown, the visual complexities of the Moldavian corpus cannot be adduced from a single textual source. The particularly intricate version at Moldovița conflated different historical moments and integrates allusions to the experience of contemporary reality to produce a nuanced image that operates on multiple temporal levels. Ultimately, the mural of *The Siege* at Moldovița, and elsewhere in Moldavia, could be read in an expanded sense as well, as it depicts history as a series of interventions and temporal unfoldings that are inextricably bound up with the contemporary political and military situation in Moldavia in the early decades of the sixteenth century.

¹³² For an examination of the structure and content of images on Gothic ivories, that addresses how images on a plane relate to one another, see Stahl, “Narrative Structure and Content in Some Gothic Ivories of the Life of Christ,” 94-114.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Epilogue

Further Developments in Moldavian Monastic Art and Architecture

The reigns of Stephen III and Peter Rareș witnessed the initiation and realization of extensive building programs in both the secular and ecclesiastical spheres, particularly of church architecture and its mural decoration. This tradition of architectural patronage was continued by the princes who succeeded them, though these later enterprises were never as numerous as those begun under Stephen and Peter. It was not until the last decades of the sixteenth century that another independent monastic church was built in Moldavia under princely patronage: erected between 1581 and 1583 on the site of a fifteenth-century wooden monastery, the Church of the Resurrection at Sucevița (Figs. 7.1-7.2; Cat.no.42), was the project of three brothers belonging to the Movilă family: Ieremia, Simion, and Gheorghe..¹ It was the last ecclesiastical monument in Moldavia constructed and decorated in the fashion popularized by Stephen and further developed under Peter. The katholikon of Sucevița was also the last Moldavian church to receive extensive image cycles on its exterior walls. The murals were completed by a local workshop more than a decade after the building's completion, between 1595 and 1596.² That the mother of the Movilă brothers was a descendent from Peter Rareș's family line may explain why the founders of Sucevița erected a katholikon that emulated the church building and decorating traditions established under their princely predecessors. Sucevița, thus, functioned as an expression of legitimacy and social prestige for the Movilă

Unless otherwise noted, all translations into English are my own.

¹ The Movilă brothers were part of the Moldavian nobility. Ieremia Movilă ruled Moldavia between 1595 and 1600, Simion Movilă occupied the Wallachian throne between 1600 and 3 July 1601, and again from August 1601 until August 1602, and the throne of Moldavia between 1606 and 1607. Gheorghe Movilă served as the Metropolitan of Moldavia between 1588 and 1591, and again from 1595 until his death in 1605. All three brothers were buried in the katholikon at Sucevița.

² The murals were executed by a local workshop under the direction of a certain Ioan Zugravul (John the Painter) and his brother Sofronie from the Crimca school of painting, under the guidance of the Metropolitan Anastasie Crimca (d. 1629). See especially Efremov, "Ioan și Sofronie – zugravii mănăstirii Sucevița," 503-508.

brothers, especially for Ieremia who was to succeed to the Moldavian throne while the monastery and church were going up (r. 1595-1600).³

From an iconographic standpoint, the interior and exterior walls of Sucevița are painted with mural cycles that recall the programs developed under Peter's patronage. The interior of the pronaos shows scenes from the *Menologium* (Fig. 7.3), while the naos, featuring mostly Christological imagery, also sports a votive painting extending at about eye level across the south and west walls (Fig. 7.4).⁴ The mural of Sts. Constantine and Helena that usually appears opposite votive images, on the other side of the doorway along the west wall, is painted at Sucevița on the south wall, initiating as it were the sequence of figures in the votive painting. To the right of the portal leading into the burial chamber is another type of pictorial *ex voto* that shows the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in which participate the Metropolitans of Moldavia, Gheorghe Movilă (1581, 1584) and Teodosie Barbovski (1606-1608), accompanied by Barbovski's father Ioan, also known as Monk Ioanichie (Fig. 7.5).⁵ This image type, although unprecedented among the interior murals of Moldavia's churches, received a place of distinction among the interior paintings at Sucevița.

The exterior of Sucevița received iconographic cycles similar to those first seen in Peter's ecclesiastical projects. The *Prayer of All Saints* extends around the triconch apses of the naos, this time in seven registers displaying from bottom to top monks and hermits, martyrs, bishops, apostles, prophets, angels, and seraphs (Fig. 7.6). The south wall of the burial chamber was once again painted with a monumental image of the *Tree of Jesse* (Fig. 7.7). Here, however, the Greek philosophers are arranged at the bottom in a separate register, as seen at Probotă (all other early-sixteenth century iterations of the *Tree of Jesse* show the philosophers in two columns on either side of the stem and branches of the tree).⁶ It is possible that Peter's princely mausoleum at Probotă served as the primary prototype for the iconographic programs of Sucevița; the dynastic links between Peter Rareș and the Movilă brothers lend support to this scenario.

³ Theodorescu, "Despre câțiva 'oameni noi', ctitori medievali," 67-124, esp. 74 and 90.

⁴ The votive mural at Sucevița shows Ieremia Movilă and his family, his mother Maria (Peter Rareș's daughter), wife Elisabeta-Elisafta, their young sons Constantin and Alexander, and their daughters Chiajna, Ecaterina, Maria, Ana, and Zamfira.

⁵ Ulea, "Portretul unui ctitor uitat al Mănăstirii Sucevița: Teodosie Barbovski, mitropolit al Moldovei," 241-249.

⁶ See Chapter Four, ns. 65-66.

The representation of the *Akathistos Hymn* at Sucevița, here on the exterior south wall of the pronaos, further reinforces this hypothesis (Fig. 7.8). Among the representations of the stanzas of the *Hymn*, located between the tall windows of the pronaos, can be found the scene of the Pokrov, or the Intercession / Protection of the Theotokos or Her Veil, which is encountered throughout the Orthodox Slavic cultural milieu (October 1).⁷ This is an image type not found in Byzantine iconography; instead, it has close parallels in the Latin West, in particular in the representation of the Virgin of Mercy or *Madonna della Misericordia* / *Schutzmantelmadonna*.⁸ The iconography of this icon type is rooted in an early-tenth-century account from the Blachernae Church in Constantinople that housed the Virgin's robe, veil, and belt. As the people of the city gathered for an all-night prayer vigil, a certain Andrew "the Holy Fool" had a vision in which he saw the Virgin Mary among angels and saints standing in the church and holding her veil over the congregation in a gesture of protection. At Probota, this account was given visual form for the first time in a Moldavian mural context, six decades before Sucevița. Here, too, the image was placed between the stanzas of the *Akathistos* and in between the pronaos windows (Fig. 4.70). The same visual scheme may have been initially planned for Humor, but the pronaos of the katholikon there only has a single window on the south wall and so the image stands to the right of it (Fig. 4.69).

At Probota and Humor, the Virgin's intercessory role is visualized as the icon of the Hymn to the Virgin "In Thee Rejoiceth," which forms part of the liturgy of St. Basil the Great.⁹ The icon shows the Virgin and Christ Child enthroned in a mandorla among princely and ecclesiastical figures, holy men and women, saints, and angels, surrounded

⁷ Andrei Bogoliubskii, Grand Prince of Vladimir, established the feast day of the Pokrov in 1160. It was celebrated in the principalities of Novgorod, Vladimir-Suzdal, and Kiev. See Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, 175.

⁸ Italian: *Madonna della Misericordia*, *Madonna del Soccorso*, *Madonna del Manto*; French: *Vierge de la Miséricorde*, *Vierge au Manteau*, *Vierge de Bon Secours*, *Vierge de Consolation*; German: *Schutzmantelmadonna*, *Schutzmantelmaria*, *Misericordiabild*. For the iconography of such image types, see Perdrizet, *La Vierge de Miséricorde*. For a discussion of the sources and traditions out of which these pictorial images emerged, see Belting-Ihm, "Sub matris tutela": *Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte der Schutzmantelmadonna*. Other useful sources include Silvy, "L'origine de la Vierge de Miséricorde," 401-410; Sussmann, "Maria mit dem Schutzmantel," 285-351; Deschamps, "Le Vierge au Manteau dans les peintures murales de la fin du moyen-âge," 175-185; Solway, "A Numismatic Source of the Madonna of Mercy," 359-368; Mohr, *Die Schutzmantelmadonna von Frauenstein*; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 354-358; Vasilaki, ed., *Images of the Mother of God*, esp. 305-320.

⁹ Used on every eighth Sunday matins in accordance with the *Ochtoechos*, or chants according to the eight tones. *Architecture as Icon*, 336.

by celestial motifs and references to Paradise in the white background and the foliage.¹⁰ At Sucevița, this iconography was transformed into the Pokrov, or perhaps modeled on an existing Russian icon of the theme, showing the most elaborate representation of this image type (Fig. 7.8). It depicts the Virgin in an *orans* pose in the middle register, hovering in the central bay of a Russian-style church surmounted by a sequence of five onion domes. Two angels hold the cinnabar veil over her, above which stands Christ with His arms raised in a gesture of blessing and intercession mirroring that pose of the Virgin below. Groups of saintly figures stand on either side of the Mother of God. The lowest register shows the six-century hymnographer Romanos the Melodist in a pulpit, holding a scroll with his hymn to the Virgin, flanked by a number of other saints and surrounded by the congregation. The second figure from the right is St. Andrew “the Holy Fool” who gestures toward the Virgin, indicating his vision to his disciple Epiphanius. His vision of the Virgin’s intercession and protection is visualized in the registers above. The Pokrov at Sucevița, and the other versions of this image type at Probota and Humor, stand outside of the *Akathistos* cycle yet present an encompassing image for the *Akathistos*, stressing the protective and intercessory role of the Virgin Mary.¹¹

Sucevița presents further changes to the program of the exterior murals. For example, the *Genesis Cycle*, which always adorns the west façade of Peter’s churches, is transferred here to the upper sections of the north wall. To the left of it, on the exterior of the burial chamber, we find a new image type, the *Ladder of Paradise (Scala Paradisi)*, also known as the *Ladder of St. John Climacus* (Fig. 7.9) that presents an iconographic transformation and elaboration of the representation of the *Heavenly Customs* discussed in Chapter Four (Figs. 4.86-4.89).¹² The image of the *Scala Paradisi* is based on the

¹⁰ This iconography was common to icons as well. See the icon from Novgorod, c.1530, now in the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. *Architecture as Icon*, 336-337 (for figure).

¹¹ At Sucevița, moreover, the composition and in particular the markedly Russian character of the church building in the icon of the Pokrov suggests, in part, that the iconography was derived from a northern, perhaps Novgorodian, example. See *The Icon Collection in the Tretyakov Gallery*, 48-49; Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, 175-176.

¹² For the text of the *Ladder*, see John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. See, most recently, Dukhanova, “John Climacus’ Ladder, Russian Spirituality and Monastic Revival(s),” 55-75; Duffy, “Embellishing the Steps: Elements of Presentation and Style in ‘The Heavenly Ladder’ of John Climacus,” 1-17.

ascetic text of the *Ladder* written by monk John Climacus c.600.¹³ It is a kind of monastic manual that consists of thirty chapters, or *logoi*, each corresponding to a step on a metaphorical ladder symbolizing man's quest for the highest level of spirituality.¹⁴ Both the text and its visual representations, mostly in icons and manuscripts, were well known in Eastern Orthodox monasticism throughout the medieval period.

The visual iterations of the *Ladder* show monks climbing the allegorical ladder to Heaven, while angels guide their ascent on one side and demons and monsters attempt to drag them down on the other. Some fail and are swallowed by the mouth of hell below, while others succeed and eventually arrive at the gates of Heaven where Christ greets them. At Sucevița, the composition is bifurcated by the ladder that divides the visual field diagonally. Monks are climbing the ladder in an organized fashion from the bottom right corner of the composition. The left half shows those who have failed, descending into a tumultuous hell, while on the right an orderly cluster of angels support those climbing to Heaven. Although the text and the visual iterations of the *Ladder* were a suitable subject for contemplation in the monastic milieu, the reasons for the inclusion of this iconography in the mural program of Sucevița remain to be determined. Perhaps the text of the *Ladder* played a more significant role in the Moldavian monastic sphere of the second half of the sixteenth century than has hitherto been assumed.

It is clear from the decorative program at Sucevița that the Movilă brothers under whose patronage the monastery was constructed celebrated the accomplishments of their predecessors, in particular Stephen III and Peter Rareș, and sought to set in motion a new Byzantine “revival” in Moldavia through their ecclesiastical patronage. Two

¹³ John Climacus (*klimax*, meaning “ladder” in Greek) became a model of spiritual strength and virtue after spending nineteen years on Mount Sinai and then retreated to the desert to lead an ascetic life for four years. He wrote the text of the *Ladder* at the invitation of John, Abbot of Raithu, located at the base of Mount Sinai. For life of John of Climacus and an overview of the primary sources, see Wouters, “The Slavic *Scala Paradisi*,” 14-22.

¹⁴ The thirty chapters of the manual, corresponding to the thirty steps of the ladder are: 1. On renunciation of Life; 2. On Dispassionateness; 3. On Pilgrimage, On Dreams; 4. On Obedience; 5. On Penitence; 6. On Remembrance of Death; 7. On Sorrow; 8. On Placidity and Meekness; 9. On Malice; 10. On Slander; 11. On Talkativeness and Silence; 12. On Falsehood; 13. On Sloth; 14. On Gluttony; 15. On Chastity and Temperance; 16. On Avarice; 17. On Poverty; 18. On Insensibility; 19. On Sleep, Prayer, and Psalm singing; 20. On Wakefulness; 21. On Timidity; 22. On Vainglory; 23. On Pride; On Blasphemy; 24. On Meekness, Simplicity, Guilelessness and Wickedness; 25. On Humility; 26. On Discretion, Brief Summary of all the Previous Steps; 27. On Solitude; 28. On Prayer; 29. On Tranquility; 30. On Faith, Hope, and Charity. For a catalog of Slavic manuscripts of *The Ladder of St. John Climacus*, see Popova, *Die “Leiter zum Paradis” des Johannes Klimakos*; eadem, “Slavianskie rukopisi Lestvitsy Ioanna Sinaiskogo: obzor spiskov,” 223-249.

embroideries that survive in the collection at Sucevița support this argument. One is the grave cover of Ieremia Movilă (d. 1606), and the other the funeral portrait, also on fabric, of his brother, Simion Movilă (d. 1607) (Fig. 7.10).¹⁵ Both embroideries are executed in gold and silver thread on red satin and velvet. They would have been originally placed over the tombstones of the Movilă brothers located in the funerary chamber at Sucevița.

Both textiles show full-length portraits of the brothers elaborately garbed in courtly dress, and surrounded by decorative motifs and textual inscriptions in Church Slavonic. Ieremia is portrayed with his eyes open, facing the viewer, and richly dressed in a brocaded kaftan patterned with repeating peony sprays interwoven with curled serrated leaves. The same pattern appears in Simion's garment. Unlike his brother, however, Simion is shown in a recumbent pose with his eyes closed and hands clasped over his chest. Both funerary portraits recall in their format and execution the burial cover of Maria of Mangup (Fig. 5.17), discussed in Chapter Five, which was likely executed by embroiderers that she had brought to the Moldavian court from Mangup following her marriage with Stephen III in 1472. Aside from Maria's grave cover, the funerary portraits of the Movilă brothers are the only other such Moldavian embroidered textiles known to survive from the sixteenth century.

Although the architects of Sucevița demonstrated indebtedness to Moldavian ecclesiastical architecture and artistic traditions from Stephen and Peter's reigns, the *katholikon* they built also introduces a number of iconographic and architectural changes that would persist in Moldavian church architecture well into the seventeenth century. From an architectural standpoint, Sucevița resembles most closely the *katholika* of Neamț (Figs. 3.29-3.30; Cat.no.6), St. George in Suceava (Figs. 3.73-3.74; Cat.no.31), Probota (Figs. 3.1-3.2; Cat.no.34), and Moldovița (Figs. 3.81-3.82; Cat.no.36), though with some variations. First, the *exonarthex* dome at Sucevița rises over the narrow space below in a similar complex pattern as found in the *exonarthex* dome at Neamț. The double domes in the *pronaos* at Sucevița display simpler schemes than the ones found in the *pronaos* at Neamț, St. John the New, and Probota, rising here over a system of arches and pendentives as opposed to the oblique arches generally found in the earlier examples.

¹⁵ Theodorescu, "Portrete brodate și interferențe stilistice în Moldova epocii lui Ieremie Movilă și a lui Vasile Lupu," 155-167; Diez, "Moldavian Portrait Textiles," 377-385.

Furthermore, the lowered barrel-vaulted burial chamber with a secret room above finds closest parallels in the *katholika* at Moldovița and Humor. From a formal comparison with earlier princely monastic churches, it becomes clear that Sucevița employs and also further develops some of the key features of early-sixteenth-century Moldavian *katholika*.

Three architectural aspects of the church at Sucevița, however, deserve special mention here because of the changes they present in church architecture in the region toward the end of the sixteenth century. The first is the open porches to either side of the exonarthex entryways, which feature ogee arches and accentuate the entrance to the church along the north and south walls (Fig. 7.11). The church in Bălinești (Figs. 3.71-3.72), and the *katholika* of St. John the New Monastery in Suceava (Figs. 3.73-3.74) and Râșca (Figs. 3.89-3.90) display similarly accentuated lateral porches, although here only along one of the sides of the edifice. The second novelty is the triple apsidal windows in the lateral apses of the naos and the chancel.¹⁶ These allow more natural light to penetrate into the most sacred space of the church, altering thus the original character of this space that was meant to be more dimly lit than the rest. Finally, the single octagonal tower at Sucevița rises over the central space of the naos on three bases, as opposed to the two bases found in the monastic churches built up to this point. Two of the tower bases at Sucevița are sixteen-sided, while the lower-most one is square in shape. These accentuate the already attenuated proportions of the tower. The interior spaces of Sucevița, thus, no longer grow progressively darker as one approaches the altar area. The emphasis, instead, is placed on the height of the naos, and the large Christ Pantokrator in the dome.

These distinctive features of Sucevița reoccur in the roughly contemporaneous Church of the Ascension at Galata Monastery, which was rebuilt between 1582 and 1584 following its partial collapse in 1578 (Figs. 7.12-7.13; Cat.no.43). Although it is unclear to what extent the present fabric of Galata resembles in its forms and architectural features the *katholikon* that collapsed, the present building displays select elements inaugurated in the church at Sucevița, such as the triple apsidal windows and the tower elevated on three bases (one square and the other two in the shape of a sixteen-pointed star). Galata, moreover, is the first Moldavian *katholikon* to exhibit a tower over the

¹⁶ Although at Sucevița the windows of the chancel are not identical in form or equally spaced as are those found in the lateral apses of the naos. The point is that they are three in number, as opposed to a single window.

pronaos as well, similar in form yet more slender in proportion than the naos tower. A few other changes are evident at Galata, too. First, the burial room communicates much more openly with the space of the naos, through three archways at the threshold as opposed to a solid wall with a single central entryway as before. Although this scheme imbues the liturgical space inside with a greater sense of continuity, the circumstances that led to these changes and how this new set-up affected the celebrations of the Divine Liturgy remain to be determined. Perhaps the naos was altered to accommodate a larger congregation, or perhaps changes occurred in commemorations of the dead that required the space of the burial chamber to be more continuous with that of the naos. Second, the closed exonarthex, although devoid of the lateral open porches found at Sucevița, is in fact wider and therefore more prominent than the rest of the church. Third, the exterior buttresses that support the structure (nine in total) extend only halfway up the building as opposed to the much taller, three-tier buttresses seen at Sucevița and in the other earlier Moldavian katholika. The final distinctive feature of Galata, found here for the first time, is the prominent median decorative band—a twisted rope motif also characteristic of Wallachian churches—that horizontally divides the exterior of the building in half. The lower section displays a single row of tall niches, while the upper one is delineated by a double row of shorter niches.

Pioneered, so it seems, at Galata, this twisted-rope motif appears again in all subsequent Moldavian katholika, for example at the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Dragomirna Monastery (1609) (Figs. 7.14-7.15; Cat.no.44), and the Church of the Three Hierarchs (1635-1639) in Iași (Figs. 7.16-7.17; Cat.no.45)—the final two edifices to be visited in this study. The proportions of Dragomirna render it unique in Moldavia and in the Orthodox world. The building, completed in 1609, is the tallest and narrowest among all the churches of Eastern Europe built between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, measuring 35 meters in length, 9.6 meters in width, and approximately 27 meters in height in the naos, under the tower. The church follows the triconch plan, yet the lateral apses of the naos are delineated by the thickness of the walls and therefore do not project on the exterior. A polygonal exonarthex at the west end, the first of its kind in Moldavia, marks the entrance into the church. Again, the entrance to the church building is being emphasized architecturally. This space—covered by a

complex net vault comprised of ribs forming trapezoidal shapes (Fig. 7.18)¹⁷—opens through a narrow entryway into the rectangular double-domed pronaos, which leads into the naos. The church lacks a burial chamber. Inside the building, a few steps at the thresholds—between the exonarthex and pronaos, pronaos and naos, and naos and altar—facilitate a progressive ascent as one approaches the altar area (Fig. 7.15). On the exterior, like the church at Galata, the katholikon at Dragomirna displays the twisted-rope motif that wraps around the edifice dividing it into two registers, as well as the short buttresses, and the two rows of blind arcades in the upper sections. Only a single octagonal tower rises here over the central space of the naos, again, supported by three bases, the lowest square in form, while the other two in the shape of twelve-pointed stars. The technological changes that yielded these new tower designs in Moldavian monastic church architecture toward the end of the sixteenth century require further consideration.

The tower at Dragomirna is one of the features for which the church is most celebrated (Fig. 7.19). Its exterior carvings present the first instance in Moldavia of an exterior architectural surface being entirely covered with vegetal and geometric relief sculptures. This elaboration of detail anticipates, in fact, the new phase of architectural decoration that was to take hold in the seventeenth century particularly at the Church of the Three Hierarchs in Iași (Figs. 7.16-7.17; Cat.no.45). The katholikon, commissioned by Vasile Lupu and executed by his court architect Ionașcu (Enache) Ctisi¹⁸ between 1637 and 1639, displays on the exterior similar carved patterns that are here not restricted only to the two towers of the church.¹⁹ Rather, they were extended to cover the entire exterior wall surface, giving the impression of an edifice clothed in a richly embroidered garment—a kind of sophisticated and elaborate *Außenwandbekleidung* (Figs. 7.20-7.22). Over thirty distinctive registers of horizontal bands of sculpted reliefs adorn here every

¹⁷ See Kavalier, *Renaissance Gothic*, 136-140.

¹⁸ Ionașcu (Enache) Ctisi was possibly from Constantinople and served as the court architect of Vasile Lupu. He also rebuilt the katholikon at Agapia Monastery between 1642 and 1644.

¹⁹ From an architectural standpoint, the Church of the Three Hierarchs, on the other hand, shares features with the katholika at Galata and Dragomirna. Like the church at Galata Monastery, the Three Hierarchs displays two towers—one over the naos and one over the pronaos—that accentuate the verticality of the edifice. The two structures also exhibit similar short buttress systems on the exterior. Moreover, in addition to the prominent median string course that encircles the church, visually subdividing the exterior, both of these churches have similar ground plans with three arcades leading from the pronaos into the naos area of the church. Although the original fortifications of the Three Hierarchs Church no longer survive, it is quite possible that they may have resembled the square fortification walls at Dragomirna Monastery and those found at Galata Monastery, as well as elsewhere in Moldavia.

available surface. Scholars have traced the origins of this wide variety of stylized designs both to local buildings and to Armenian, Georgian, Persian, and Turkish models.²⁰

The rich exterior surface patterns of the Three Hierarchs church received praise from contemporary travelers. Their surviving accounts paint a bright picture of this monument, revealing how remarkable this church was at the time it was completed. Making his way through Moldavia in the mid-seventeenth century, Paul of Aleppo (1627-1669) writes: “The entire world agrees that neither in Moldavia, nor in Wallachia, nor anywhere in the East nor the West is there a church that can equal this one in its decorations and beauty, which leave all visitors speechless.”²¹ The Ottoman Turkish traveler Evliya Celebi (1611-1684?) likewise praises this edifice noting during his travels in Moldavia in 1659:

...there is no way of describing [this church] in spoken words, nor in written ones. Being recently built, her stones of marble covered in gold shine so brightly as if they were the pages of an illuminated manuscript... whoever looks at these carvings will be amazed at the way they were sculpted...²²

²⁰ The row of roundels with diverse floral patterns below the twisted-rope-motif string course, and the row of similar roundels above the row of niches, or colonnades, in the upper section of the building, resemble decorative motifs found in traditional folk embroidery and wood and stone carvings from this region. The niches above the cable molding, in turn, are framed by small stacked columns and hold in the center stylized representations of the *Tree of Life*. Similar decorative motifs appear on the so-called Pillars of Acre (*pili acritani*) that stand at the ceremonial entrance to the Basilica of San Marco in Venice. Balș, *Influences arméniennes et géorgiennes sur l'architecture roumaine*, 16; Bănățeanu, “Aspecte ale influenței artei armeano-georgiene asupra artei religioase românești,” 705-706. The exterior surface decoration at the Three Hierarchs Church also recalls the sculpted surface patterns characteristic of Seljuk architecture (eleventh to thirteenth centuries), such as the Momine Khatun Mausoleum in Nakhchivan, and the Kharāghān twin towers, Qazvin province, Iran, 1067. I thank Alicia Walker for this observation.

²¹ *Călători străini*, VI, 50: “Toată lumea spune într-un glas că nici în Moldova, nici în Țara Românească și nici la cazaci nu este vreo biserică comparabilă cu aceasta, nici prin podoabe, nici prin frumusețe, căci ea minunează mintea celor ce o vizitează.” Paul of Aleppo’s writings were originally titled *Rihlat al-Batrak al-Antaki Makarios al-Halabi (The Travels of Patriarch Măcărie from Alep)*. For a list of known copies of Paul’s manuscript, see *Călători străini*, VI, 13-14. A very good Romanian translation of the manuscript can also be found in this publication. Paul’s account is particularly important because unlike the travelers that came before him, and whose accounts are translated and preserved in other volumes of *Călători străini despre țările române*, he did not look at earlier accounts to formulate his own. Therefore, his observations and descriptions are not influenced by those of his predecessors.

²² *Călători străini*, VI, 479 and 480: “Nu poate fi descrisă nici cu graiul, nici cu pană. Fiind clădită de curând, pietrele de marmură strălucitoare lucesc și scânteiază, încât par că ar fi frunzele de pe un pergament iluminat... Îndeosebi infloriturile de pe o piatră sunt astfel încadrate în ornamentele săpate cu discuri de soare, cu împletituri de linii, cu dantele de piatră și cu inscripții ornate, încât cel care le privește rămâne uimit de felul cum meșterul sculptor a cioplit marmora cu dalta sa.”

Whether or not the exterior sculpted decorations of the Three Hierarchs Church were originally covered in gold is uncertain. However, considering that the chronicler Ion Neculce describes the katholikon at Putna as “...covered in gold, the painting more gold than paint...,”²³ and traces of gold survive on the exterior and interior murals of Moldavian churches from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,²⁴ it is possible that the Three Hierarchs Church was also partially (or perhaps even fully) covered in gold leaf. Also uncertain is whether the elaborate exterior sculptures were ever painted, considering how common it was for architectural sculpture to be painted in the west during the medieval and early modern periods. Regardless of the original appearance of this edifice, today only a paler, yet still exquisite, afterimage of its luster remains.

Although no information survives about the carvers who executed the exterior decorations at Three Hierarchs, we know that the interior paintings were carried out between 1641 and 1642 by a group of Russian and local artists. Two Moldavian painters, Nicolae and Ștefan, assisted three artists from Moscow named Isidor Pospeev, Pronca Nikitin, and Deico Iocovlelv; these were likely summoned by the Metropolitan Varlaam of Moldavia who traveled to Moscow on a number of occasions prior to and during Lupu’s reign. The cultural and historic circumstances under which the Three Hierarchs Church was erected and decorated remain to be examined, as do Lupu’s aspirations during his lengthy rule in the context of which his princely mausoleum took form. Although the architectural features of the church fall in line with developments in Moldavian church architecture around the turn of the seventeenth century, the exterior appearance of the edifice is unlike that of any other church that had preceded it. An aniconic sculpted mode of decoration replaced the figural painted exteriors characteristic of Moldavia’s churches from the sixteenth century. Perhaps Lupu wanted to rival his princely mausoleum with those at Putna, Probota, and Sucevița, contributing his own vision to the Moldavian corpus of ecclesiastical monuments.

²³ See Chapter Four, n. 9.

²⁴ See Chapter Four, Figs. 4.24-4.27.

Concluding remarks

In this dissertation, I have examined a group of religious edifices built in the principality of Moldavia from the last decades of the fourteenth century through the initial decades of the seventeenth century, focusing in particular on the churches constructed under the patronage of Stephen III “the Great” and his illegitimate son Peter Rareș in the century following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The monuments investigated include primarily monastic *katholika*, but also parish churches, and royal chapels, all of which integrate and also reinterpret aspects of Byzantine, Slavic, and even western Gothic church building traditions alongside local developments. Since these religious buildings have received little scholarly attention from art historians and architectural historians, having been mostly studied by Romanian historians, archaeologists, and theologians from archaeological and iconographic standpoints, I addressed here, through different interpretive strategies, the compound visual character of the Moldavian churches, the historical circumstances under which they were built, and the cultural connections that extended between Moldavia and its neighbors that resulted in the visual and semantic eclecticism so characteristic of late medieval Moldavian art and architecture. Notions of history, cultural memory, artistic integration, spatio-temporal experiences, cross-cultural rapports and modes of translation have been concerns central to the research presented here.

Cultural contact is a complex phenomenon. Each act of appropriation entails a transfer of meaning and a transformation or translation of a form based on the desires and needs of the patron for the new site. The examination of the Moldavian material challenges traditional notions of *Kunstgeographie*, which Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann in his recent book *Toward a Geography of Art* (2004) has tried to redefine and reinterpret within the context of art history. We cannot speak of a Moldavian artistic production without considering the nature of the cultural interactions and translations that extended between this region and cultures in both the Orthodox and Latin ecclesiastical domains, which shaped significantly the development of late medieval and early modern Moldavian art and architecture.

In my approach, I first addressed Stephen’s patterns of patronage to determine how and when the churches of his initial building campaign took form, and also how they

related architecturally to the churches built in Moldavia before the middle of the fifteenth century. Having considered Stephen's princely aspirations in the context of which the ecclesiastical architecture of Moldavia in its new distinctive forms developed, I traced the changes in church architecture in the region to the mid-sixteenth century. Peter's churches consolidated specific architectural forms in individual buildings, and, during his reign, seventeen of the older churches and newly built ones received extensive image cycles both on the inside and outside. The pictorial cycles of these religious buildings, emulating predominantly Byzantine stylistic and iconographic patterns and continuing specific traditions of church decoration from the Palaiologan period, were carefully calibrated to function in tandem with the architectural layout of the buildings they adorned. The murals were thus meant to enhance the specific purpose of the part of the building onto which they were painted. I concluded that certain themes—in particular the *Akathistos Hymn*, the *Tree of Jesse*, the *Prayer of All Saints*, the *Last Judgment*, the *Genesis Cycle*, and the *Menologium*, as well as scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary—were central to the pictorial programs yet the location of their representation was not always consistent from one church to the next. This suggests that the iconographic programs were open to interpretation and exhibited slight variations. Each program was specifically calibrated for its site, taking into account the structure of the building, its dedication, its functions, and the hopes and expectations of the patron. What remains to be examined are the particular workshop practices that led to the architectural and even iconographic changes across the corpus.

Through their distinctive architecture, the particular choice and placement of the image cycles, their iconographies, and the conflation of temporalities within individual images and among groups of scenes, the Moldavian monastic churches of the early sixteenth-century in particular continually stimulated the faithful. The images in particular welcomed a circumambulation of the buildings in the context of certain liturgical rituals, and, within the church, visually and symbolically structured the passage from the exonarthex to the naos, from west to east. These Moldavian murals cycles, however, deserve still further attention. Little is known about the artists who executed these paintings. A careful stylistic analysis across the group, and in relation to other expansive mural cycles executed in the Slavic-Byzantine cultural spheres of the late-

fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, could provide insight into workshop practices and perhaps even the identity of individual artists.

The Moldavian murals could be studied further in light of the new intellectual frameworks—such as phenomenology, sensory experience, visuality, performativity, aesthetics, and materiality—introduced in recent Byzantine art historical scholarship.²⁵ The work of Robert Nelson and Bissera Pentcheva, for example, has engaged with these new methodologies in an effort to contextualize Byzantine images and define the spatio-temporal experiences of their viewers. Alexei Lidov’s studies could further develop the study of the Moldavian corpus. Lidov has expanded on Otto Demus’s notion of the spatial icon and developed the concept of *hierotopy*—the creation of sacred spaces and the beholder’s active participation in the spatial images—in relation to Byzantine art, which I find applicable in the Moldavian context as well. These studies demonstrate that Byzantine images are not static but change according to shifting ambient conditions, the position and engagement of their beholders, their processes of viewing, and in the context of ritual activities. In turn, the shared space of the images and the beholders is a space characterized by a “tension” and an “air of expectancy,” as Demus has characterized it, awaiting to manifest itself, metaphorically speaking, in the context of religious rituals and performances.²⁶

The various audiences of the Moldavian churches also deserve further consideration. In this study I was most concerned with the realities of the patron, whose desires found a spatial and visual manifestation in the programs of churches, and with those of the monastic communities who lived and interacted with the *katholika* and their mural cycles on a regular basis. The various lay audiences that came to visit the

²⁵ The phenomenological experience on the part of the beholder with regard to Byzantine images was first considered by Robert Nelson in his article “The Discourse on Icons, Then and Now,” 145-157. Bissera V. Pentcheva, more recently, examined the Middle Byzantine mixed media icon focusing on phenomenology, materiality, aesthetics, and context in order to reveal the sensually experienced tactile visuality and performative qualities of these kinds of objects. See Pentcheva’s book *The Sensual Icon*. To this discussion, Alexei Lidov introduced the concept of ‘Hierotopy’, or the structuring and activation of sacred space in the context of ritual performances and through the presence of images and the active participation of the beholder. A number of Lidov’s significant scholarly contributions on the topic are “The Flying Hodegetria,” 291-321; idem, ed., *Hierotopy: Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*; idem, ed., *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces*; idem, *Hierotopy: Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture*; idem, ed., *Spatial icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*.

²⁶ Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration*, 245.

monasteries and parish churches during the celebration of particular feasts are harder to pin down, but certain sources such as traveler accounts could shed light on this issue.

My examinations of the Moldavian material centered on three critical historical moments: the events of 1453, the declared end of the world in 1492 as predicted by the Eastern Orthodox Christians, and the failed Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529 that gave new hope to Christian rulers and their subjects, the Moldavians included, that perhaps the unremitting Ottoman war machine could, after all, be brought to a standstill and perhaps be expelled from Europe. I propose that in the context of these epochal events Stephen and Peter's artistic and architectural patronage should be considered. During Stephen's reign, the Moldavian landscape was transforming into a simulacrum of Athos with a sacred infrastructure populated by dozens of churches and monasteries that demonstrate strong affinities in form, function, and symbolic content with the earlier Byzantine monasteries on the Holy Mount. Although some of Stephen's churches were built prior to 1492, most were erected after this moment, once people realized that the world had not come to an end. Stephen's successors in office contributed their own monastic building projects, and, by the end of the sixteenth century, more than twenty active monasteries could be found throughout Moldavia, transforming the region into a "Second Mount Athos."

In the aftermath of the Ottoman rout before Vienna in 1529, Peter engaged in great ecclesiastical building campaigns throughout Moldavia, in the context of which the distinctive architecture and the expansive interior and (especially) exterior mural cycles on the Moldavian churches took form. With these initiatives, Peter continued and enhanced his father's ecclesiastical projects, and also made his own contributions to the Moldavian corpus and the newly-forming sacred landscape of the region. It is certainly worth examining how these Moldavian churches with their extensive Christological and Mariological image cycles served as a reaction to the Protestant Reformation that was sweeping across parts of Europe in the early decades of the sixteenth century. In the final decades of the sixteenth century the Counter-Reformation was gaining momentum; perhaps what happened in Moldavia was a Counter-Reformation of sorts unfolding at a much earlier date.

In the final two chapters, I addressed the varied dimension of Orthodox monastic spaces and the visual and spatial manifestations of dynastic, spiritual, political, and military concerns on the part of the patrons in the monastic sphere. The sacred and secular were very much interwoven in late-medieval Moldavia as they were throughout the Middle Ages. I first examined the funerary functions of the Moldavian *katholika*, and in particular the development of the burial chamber as a distinctive space situated at the center of the monastic church building. These mortuary rooms demonstrate concerns with princely lineage, as well as a desire for remembrance and commemoration through individual and communal prayer, and collective liturgical ceremonies. Finally, I looked at how a particular image type, *The Siege of Constantinople*, was designed to conflate key historical narratives about Constantinople's seemingly miraculous deliverance during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, articulating a view of history as a series of interventions, and presenting a visual response to military struggles and anxieties in sixteenth-century Moldavia. The Moldavian monasteries served as centers of religious and cultural activity and artistic production, as well as princely mausolea. They also participated in the political and economic life of the region. Therefore, in addition to the dynastic, spiritual, political, and military concerns addressed in this dissertation that found manifestations in the Moldavian monastic sphere of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the economic and financial dimensions of the Moldavian monasteries remain to be investigated.

...the work is silent. It is the scholar alone who speaks in the presence of the work of art, and his entire problem consists in deciding what kind of talking he should do.

--- Giulio Argan (1975)