

HERALDIC COMPOSITIONS ON SOME OBJECTS FROM BRÂNCOVEANU'S PALACE FROM POTLOGI, ROMANIA

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***Abstract:** The study aims to bring to light the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia and the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family printed on a panel, cast in metal, in the St. Catherine's Liturgy, stamped on a medal, painted on the frontispiece of a document, carved on tiles or patterns for them from Brâncoveanu's Palace from Potlogi, Dâmbovița County, Romania. As for the description of these coats of arms, we have complied with the rules of heraldic science. In developing this study, we took into account the interest that these coats of arms can present (sculptures, paintings, engravings, objects or prints) for teachers, students, but also for tourists who will cross the threshold of this building. We considered that in the instructive-educational process, the heraldic vestiges can help to better understand some historical phenomena, and, in this case, the coats of arms used during the time of Constantin Brâncoveanu, the ruler of Wallachia (1688-1714).*

***Keywords:** heraldic science, palace, Potlogi, coats of arms, document, tourists*

INTRODUCTION

Today, cultural objectives are major tourist attractions, where tourists can enrich their knowledge and level of culture. Located in Dâmbovița County, Romania, the Potlogi Palace (fig. 1) was built for Constantin, the eldest son of the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu, which results from the inscription placed above the main door, in 1698 (7206), when the beautiful building was fully constructed (Drăghiceanu, 1926; Drăguț et al., 1971; Șerbănescu, 1989; Drăguț, 2000; Theodorescu, 2006; Ion, 2014; Popescu, 2004; Șerbănescu, 2015; Tascovici, 2014). At this objective, tourists can discover the architecture, documents, painting, sculpture, coats of arms and, possibly, they can research other material traces that refer to the objective to be visited.

I have described and explained the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia (Szemkovics, 2014) and the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family (Szemkovics et al., 2020) which are preserved on various objects in this palace and which may help to highlight the artistic activity of stonemasons, engravers, weavers, heraldic painters and they can be, in particular, a rich source for painting, engraving and sculpture from the Middle Ages and the contemporary era.

The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia is in the form of a bird, holding a cross in its beak, accompanied by the sun and the crescent. The bird has a hybrid appearance between two species, sometimes closer to the eagle, sometimes closer to the raven (Brătianu, 1931; Mănescu, 1983).

The coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family is in the form of a bicephalous eagle, with crowned heads and a crown above the heads (Szemkovics et al., 2020).

This presentation is part of the series of events meant to praise Constantin Brâncoveanu, the ruler of Wallachia (1688-1714), especially since it is 308 years since the martyrdom of Brâncoveni, in August 2022.



Fig. 1. Potlogi Palace (front view).

METHODOLOGY

Regarding the method used for this study, we went through the following steps:

1. Documentation to identify the Palace of Constantin Brâncoveanu from Potlogi, Dâmbovița County, where there are coats of arms related to the subject of the study;

2. Visiting this palace and analyzing heraldic compositions, whether they were reproduced on stone, metal, books, documents, paintings or any other material;

3. Examining the different variants of coats of arms of Wallachia and the Cantacuzino family in the palace, taking into account the heraldic norms;

4. Bringing these testimonies of the past to the attention of the interested public, through various events, works or specialized studies, as well as by promoting, for tourism purposes, the coats of arms and the palace that owns them.

RESULTS

A. In the lower right corner of a panel (fig. 3) in the lobby at the entrance to the building is the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia executed by printing: round shield, with silver border, with black edge filled with red pearls, adorned, on the outside, with acanthus leaves, in whose field, sprinkled with stars, the eagle, rendered entirely in front, with the body contoured (Dicționar, 1982), wings open and positioned, the right in the bar, the left in the pale, sitting with its feet on the upper petal of an acanthus flower (pinning, at the bottom, on the border), with its head turned to the right wing, holding in its beak a Latin cross flanked to the right by a sun with 16 rays and to the left by the crescent sun, all gold (fig. 2) (Szemkovic, 2014; Szemkovic, 2018).



Fig. 2-3. The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia on the sign in the lobby at the entrance to the Potlogi Palace.

B. At the end of the hall, after entering the palace, sits the bust of the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu (fig. 5), cast in bronze, with a mustache and beard, wearing a sable hat adorned with an overcoat beaten with precious stones. The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia appears in the middle of the chest: the bird, rendered in its entirety and in front, with open wings, standing with its feet on a tree trunk, with its head turned towards the right wing and holding in its beak a Latin cross positioned vertically (fig. 4).



Fig. 4-5. The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia on the bust of the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu located in the Potlogi Palace.

C. On one of the pages of the St. Catherine Liturgy, written in Greek, printed in Targoviste, in 1710 (fig. 7) and displayed in a palace window, is the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia: oval shield, with border adorned with baroque leaves and elements, loaded with black bird, holding the cross of the same color in its beak and standing with its feet on top of a tree coming out of a mountain, with three peaks, at the bottom; the bird is accompanied, above, to the right by the sun with sixteen rays and to the left by the crescent. The shield, stamped with an open crown, with three fleurons, flanked by sword and mace, placed obliquely and whose handles penetrate inside, has as supporters (objects and plants that support the shield) and as lieutenants (human characters that support the shield), at the top, near the sword and mace, two unrolled deeds, with the lower parts superimposed by two acanthus leaves, with the upper parts twisted inwards

and on which stand, obliquely placed outwards, two cherubim (symbol of wisdom and intelligence) and on the flanks two attached characters (sitting back to back), represented with one hand leaning against the shield and each blowing in a trumpet, twisted in the middle, with the funnel up and held with the other hand; at the bottom of the shield is another cherub, which partially broaches on the border, flanked by two piles of fruits and vegetables (fig. 6). All around, the initial letters that make up the title of the ruler.

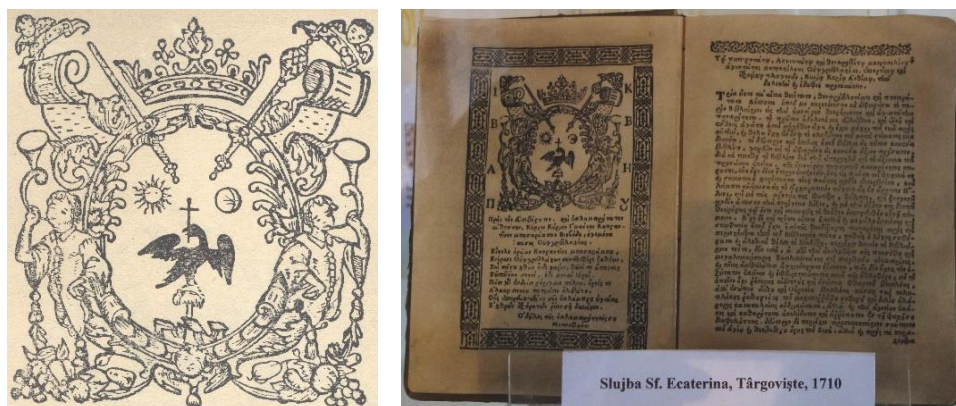


Fig. 6-7. The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia on one of the pages of St. Catherine's Liturgy, printed in Targoviste, in 1710.

D. On the medal, exhibited in the form of photographs in the palace, struck in 1713, on the obverse of which is represented the bust in profile of the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu (fig. 8), appears, on the reverse, the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia: oval shield, loaded with the bird, rendered in its entirety and from the front, with its wings open and flying down, standing with its legs, flanked by 17-13, on top of a mountain protruding from the top, with its head turned to the right wing, holding a cross in its beak, flanked by the sun and the crescent. The shield, stamped with a princely crown, finished with a cruciferous globe, is surrounded by ribbons, floral ornaments and baroque motifs, from the upper extremities of which protrude two griffins attached, with their tongues out (fig. 9). In the exergue, bordered on the outside by a linear circle, the legend in Latin, rendered, in places, with abbreviations: **D: G: VOIVODA † ET † PRINCEPS VALACHIAE † TRANS † ALPINAЕ †** (Amédée, 1889).



Fig. 8-9. The medal won in 1713 by the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu (obverse and reverse).

E. In the frontispiece of the document, displayed in a palace window, given on January 13, 1689, by Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu for the Bistrița Monastery (fig. 11), appears the coat of arms of Wallachia: round shield, consisting of a garland of tulip flowers, interrupted, in the four cardinal points, of four other flowers, sprinkled with red circles in places, loaded with the crucified bird, rendered in full and from the front, with open wings and flying upwards, standing with his feet (the left one flexed at a 90° angle on a terrace slightly sloping to the left, with its head turned to the right wing and flanked, at the top, by the two stars, the sun figured and the crescent, all painted with gold solution (fig. 10). Around it, on two scarves, one semicircular at the top and another wavy at the bottom and side, is written, in Slavonic, the title of the ruler.



Fig. 10-11. The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia painted on the frontispiece of the document of January 13, 1689.

F. On a tile, used in the construction of stoves in the seventeenth century, is in a round shield, with pearl border, bicephalous eagle fully rendered and in front, with open wings, unfolded tail, with heads crowned with closed crowns, having between them another crown similar to the first, but of larger dimensions; at the top are the bunches of vines, on the sides two bunches of grapes, and next to them and below, supporting the bird's feet, two creeping lions, with their tails passed between their legs and their heads facing upwards, towards the wings (fig. 12).



Fig. 12. The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia on a 17th century tile.

G. The Cantacuzino family coat of arms appears on a seventeenth-century tile pattern consisting of two plates (one engraved in the positive and the other in the negative): the bicephalous eagle rendered in its entirety and front, with a rounded body, open wings and flight, downwards, with the tail unfolded and flared towards the flanks, with the ends crowned with open crowns, having between them another crown similar to the first ones, but of larger dimensions, holding in its beaks an acanthus leaf. The bird is inscribed in a rectangular frame, with a border adorned with vegetal motifs (fig. 13).



Fig. 13. The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia engraved on a 17th century tile pattern.

CONCLUSIONS

Heraldic compositions are a distinct part of the universal cultural heritage. These sources reflect a part of the history of social communities. For specialists, for historians, but also for tourists and the general public, heraldry is not only a simple way to broaden our cultural horizon, but also a means to receive and know the mentality of a lost world, to understand and to understand and interpret the historical process mirrored by each heraldic symbol. The identification of the symbols used over time, the multitude of information transmitted by these heraldic sources, have determined a great interest in researching and admiring these compositions.

Constantin Brâncoveanu, the founder of the Potlogi Palace, was a prominent figure in the cultural world, and the heraldic compositions created during his reign, or related to it, were closely related to his thoughts and aspirations.

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