

ZOOMORPHIC SHIELDS AND MOTIFS FROM THE COLȚEA CHURCH IN BUCHAREST

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Abstract: *Our study aims to highlight coats of arms, blazons, and zoomorphic motifs engraved or carved at the Colțea Church in the capital of Romania, Bucharest. For the preparation of the present study we have researched the church building, a funerary stone and some objects inside the church. Regarding the actual description of the different types of heraldic distinctive signs, vegetal, floral or zoomorphic ornaments, we have complied with the heraldic norms and recommendations of the former International Sigilography Committee, a body created in 1959 by the decision of the International Archives Council. We have taken into account the interest that these heraldic testimonies and animal ornaments can present for specialists, teachers, students, pupils, but also for pilgrims and tourists. We have considered that heraldic vestige resources used by ancestors, can serve both to a better understanding of historical phenomena as well as to distinguish the symbols by which they expressed their thoughts and aspirations. Our study is a call for the detection, preservation, research and placing in the scientific circuit of other testimonies of this kind as well, which have remained unknown so far.*

Keywords: *coat of arms, blazons, zoomorphic motifs, heraldry, churches.*

INTRODUCTION

Colțea Church (Ionașcu, 1941)(fig. 1), built to honour the Holy Three Hierarchs and St. Paraschiva (Stoica et al., 2000), located on the main boulevard on the North-South axis of the Romanian capital, Bucharest, near the University Square (Stoica et al., 2005), was erected at the end of the 17th century by the great captain of the ruler (the so- called "spatar"/ "spatharios") of Mihai Cantacuzino (1650-1716) (Dumitrescu, 1899; Găleşescu, 1906; Florescu, 1935; Ilies, 1969; Caselli, 1994; Stoica et al., 2000) on the same place of a previous old wooden church which had been founded by Colțea Doicescu, the clerk responsible with supplying the ruler's court with grains and cereals and collection of the taxes in cereals - the so- called "clucer"/"cliucear" (Ionescu, 1938; Ionașcu, 1946; Georgescu et al., 1966; Colfescu, 2006. It is a major tourist attraction today. At this institution, tourists can discover sculpture, painting,

architecture, coats of arms, logos, funeral stones and other material traces related to this objective worthy visiting. In our study we have insisted on the description, reproduction and symbolism of the zoomorphic motifs and elements of coats of arms and blazons which, reflect the historical epoch in which they were conceived, and that can help to highlight the artistic activity of the founders (sponsors) and engraving craftsmen.

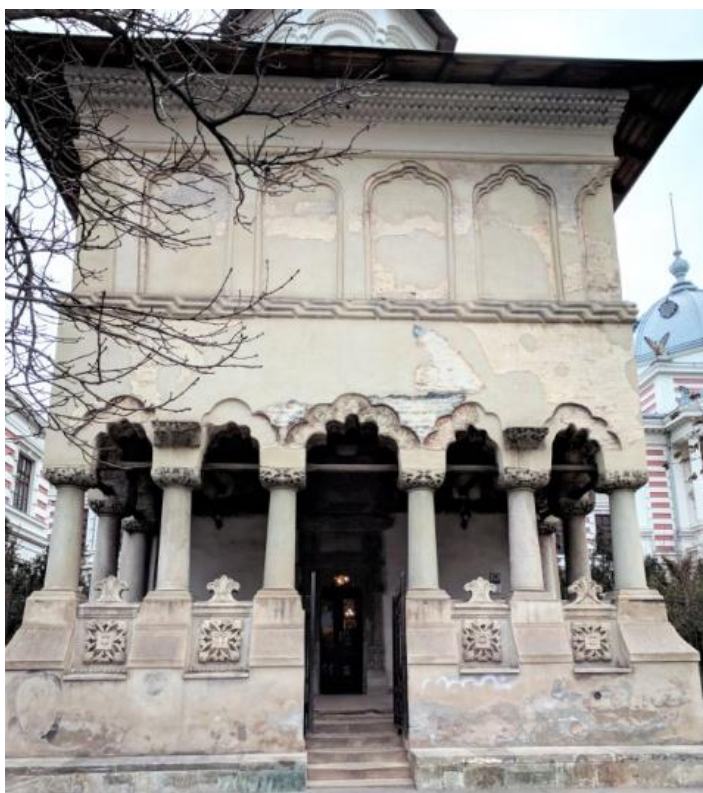


Fig. 1. Colțea Church in Bucharest (front view).

METHODOLOGY

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

1. Identification of the Colțea Church in Bucharest where there are such heraldic compositions and animal motifs;
2. Visiting the church and researching these vestiges reproduced on the bannister, door, the door frame, the capitals of the columns, a funerary stone and some objects in its enclosure;

3. Analysis of the coats of arms, blazons, seals/ emblems, on a case-by-case basis, of the inscriptions containing them, in accordance with the heraldic norms, with the recommendations of the former International Sigilography Committee and by means of epigraphy - due to the inscription on a funerary stone (Dictionary, 1982);

4. Bringing these testimonies of the past to the knowledge of tourists, pilgrims and interested public, through various manifestations, visits, specialized studies, as well as by promoting, for tourist purposes, the heraldic ecclesiastical testimonies and the Colțea Church.

RESULTS

A. The porch of the church is open, while its arches, in five lobes, rest on ten stone columns (Ilieș, 1969; Stoica et al., 2000; Stoica et al., 2005, Colfescu, 2006), six on the western front, while the others- in pairs (of which one is connected to the east wall) on the north facade and south facade. The capitals of the porch columns, made by the Dalmatian and Venetian stone craftsmen brought by the Cantacuzino family (Golescu, 1943), are adorned with acanthus leaves and flowers and are loaded with the following elements (positioned to the left or to the right), with a symbolic purpose: two of them are adorned with an *eagle* (Golescu, 1943; Ilieș, 1969) (that signifies determination, value, courage, high vaults), rendered from the profile (fig. 2); one with a *goat* (Golescu, 1943; Ilieș, 1969) (symbolizing hard work or struggle and care) touching a flower with four petals with its muzzle (fig. 3); two with a *lion* (Golescu, 1943; Ilieș, 1969) sleeping (that symbolizes generosity), with the tail passed between the legs (fig. 4); two with a *masked figure* (that used, originally, to cast away evil spirits from the dwelling area) flanked by two *dragons* (symbolizing finesse and prudence) backside attached (back to back), with the heads placed in the fascia (horizontally), mouths open and tongues out (fig. 5); one with a *sheep* (Ilieș, 1969) (it means innate patience born out of right reasons reasons) touching a flower with the muzzle (fig. 6); two with a *pelican* (Golescu, 1943; Ilieș, 1969) (signifying the benefits offered by a prince for his subjects) rendered out of profile, with the flight extended and who is just tearing its own chest with the beak in order to feed its three chicks in a nest (fig. 7). Between the bases of the columns, on the bannisters there are carved in stone, in 12 rectangular shields, adorned on the outside with acanthus leaves: an acanthus flower with petals arranged in a rectangle, with the round pistil (in a single shield) (fig. 8), spiraled (in two shields) (fig. 9) and with a cross engraved in the

incision on its middle (in five shields) (fig. 10); the bicephalous eagle, with open wings, crowned with an open crown with six fleurons (in four shields) (fig. 11). The painting in the porch of the church, altered by a subsequent restoration, has been made by the painter Pârvu Mutu (Stoica et al., 2000; Stoica et al., 2005), one of the most important Romanian craftsmen of those times (Ilieș, 1969).



Fig. 2, fig. 3 and fig. 4.

The aquila, the goat and the lion on the capitals of some columns from the Colțea Church.



Fig. 5, fig 6. and fig. 7.

The masked figure, the sheep and the pelican on the capitals of the columns from the Colțea Church.



Fig. 8, fig 9. and fig. 10.

Coat of arms with flowers of acanthus on the bannister of the porch of the Colțea Church.



Fig. 11. The coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family on the railings of the porch of the Colțea Church.

B. The wooden door of the church, carved in Brancovan style (Stoicescu, 1961), is divided into six panels and is engraved with floral, vegetable motifs (Stoica et al., 2000; Stoica et al., 2005) and with two rampant lions, with the tails between the legs (fig. 12-13). Saint Carol Borromeu (1538-1584), at the Fourth Synod that was presided by himself, gave instructions that at the entrance to the church building there should be sitted lions to represent the pontifical vigilance and, at the same time, to inspire fear and respect to the the believers (Dumitrescu, 1899; Golescu, 1943). In the heraldry of the Romanian Country, the figure of the lion appears from the fifteenth century, on the objects and documents of the chancery of the rulers (Cernovodeanu, 1977). The power of the lion and the supremacy over the other animals determined its inclusion in the heraldic register (Pastoureau, 2008). In the religious sphere, zoomorphic motifs are elements of the divine world, reminiscences or memories of the lost paradise (Damian, 2014).



Fig. 12 and fig. 13. Lions at the entrance door of the Coltea Church.

C. The portal is an example of Italian Baroque style architecture mixed with local elements (Ionescu, 1938; Stoica et al., 2005). The frame of use, located at the entrance to the church, is in a tri-lobate arch, with the central lobe in the brace from the tip of which there starts a penta-lobate shell (Ilieș, 1969) (which symbolizes the public faith). The four evangelists, accompanied, each, by his attribute. are represented, in relief, on the bases and capitals of the two semi-detached columns (stiking half of the wall, in relief) (Ilieș, 1969; Colfescu, 2006; Teodorescu, 2016). On the spindles of the columns and on the rest of the frame there are acanthus plants with leaves and flowers (fig. 14). In the space above the portal, being reserved for the



Fig. 14. Portal of Colțea Church.

pisan (remained still unwritten) (Ilieș, 1969), there appears a stalk/ blazon or coat of arms carved in excision: a rectangular-horizontal shield, with rounded corners, decorated on the edges with baroque motifs, having in the middle of the edges from upside and downside, a masked figure each (symbolizing continuity in history); the shield surmounted by a bicephalous eagle (Ilieș, 1969; Stoica et al., 2000) (two-headed eagle), rendered entirely and in front view position, with wings opened positioned in the fascia, holding in its claws the sword and the buzzard respectively (the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family), having as supporters (Szemkovics et al., 2006) two griffons (Golescu, 1943) (signifying capacity to overcome obstacles), front-view depicted, with wings and tails between the legs. The bicephalous eagle is positioned in the cornice of the entrance frame (fig. 15).



Fig. 15. The coat of arms / blazon having griffons as supporters and the Cantacuzini's coat of arms from the entrance door to the Colțea Church.

D. The capitals of the four columns that support the wall between the pronaos and the naos (Ilieș, 1969) are decorated with acanthus leaves, with the following sculptures: the eagle holding the lamb in its claws (it symbolizes the simple man, innocence, kindness), with an angel on its flanks (the messenger of God, the guardian who watches over each man in order to keep him away from evil and to incite him to goodness) with his arms clasped onto his chest (fig. 16); a fantastic animal - marined "lion" (with the lower part of the body terminated in a fish tail, like that of the mermaids) (Pastoureau, 2008) (fig. 17).



Fig. 16 and fig. 17. Aquila with the lamb in the claws and the marined "lion" on the capitals of some of the columns inside the Colțea Church.

E. In the church, on the right, there is a white burial marble into the wall, which has in the lower register, right in the middle, a large round shield, consisting of a round golden, laurel leaf lauri (symbol of glory, of victory), caught at the top with a wavy ribbon, also golden, which includes, on 14 rows, the inscription written in Romanian, in golden capital letters:

"TOMB / PRINCIARY FAMILY/ RACOVITS FAMILY / WHERE THE ELECSANDRINA LIES IN HER SLEEP / C. ȘUȚU BORN AS RACOVITA, CHRISTIANISED, DEAD ON 2 (14) APRILIE 1866 IN BUCHAREST / WITH ALL ALL HER BROTHERS AND SISTERS. HER DAD / DUMITRAȘCU RACOVÎȚĂ, HER MOTHER/ BORN AS SMARANDA RACOVÎȚĂ/ YPSILANTI AND HER AUNT LUCSANDRA/ BORN AS VĂCĂREASCA/ ERRECTED BY THE SON OF THE DEFUNCT LADY/LUCSANDRA RACOVITA, GRIGORIE C. SUTU" (Dumitrescu, 1899).

Above this shield there are carved two smaller shields, oval, curved, placed slightly oblique inwards, comprising the united coat of arms, namely: in the right shield there is a head of a golden aurochs/ bison (the so called „zimbru”), with a star with five rays held between its horns (the heraldic coat of arms of Moldova), and in the shield, on the left, there is an eagle, also golden, rendered in full and in front view, with wings open and flying upwards, head turned to the right wing, having above a star with five rays and holding in the beak a Latin cross (the heraldic coat of arms of the Vallahia). The shields are stamped by a princely, closed crown (attribute of sovereignty), finished with a cruciferous globe (symbolizing the world). The large, round shield has two women, depicted in profile, backside leaning onto each other (back to back), sitting on a trapezoidal pedestal, with bare feet, wearing long dresses, with sleeves rolled up to

slightly above elbows, the one on the right, with long hair hanging behind her back up to her shoulders, looking downwards, holding with his right hand a Latin cross, golden, positioned in the band, on the left one oriented to the chest, and the one in the left, having a thick scarf on the head, looking ahead, holding in the right hand a wreath of golden laurel branches, with the palm bridge resting on her right knee, and with her left hand she holds, from the top, a golden anchor (symbolizing hope) placed slightly oblique to the heraldic left (fig. 18).



Fig. 18. Funeral stone of the Racovita family from the Colțea Church.

F. In the Colțea Church there are, among other things, two tetrapods on which there are placed a large icon, dressed in silver, representing the Virgin with the baby Jesus in her arms and, respectively, a beautifully decorated wooden box and the icon of the Holy Great Martir-Woman, Ecaterina of Sinai. On the front of each tetrapod there is engraved, in excision, the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family: shield, with rounded tip, the upper edges trimmed, the upper edge curved, loaded with the bicephalous eagle, crowned with a closed crown finished with a cross, rendered entirely and front- view positioned, wings open and flight down; around the shield, in a rectangular frame, there are plant and floral ornaments (fig. 19 and fig. 20).

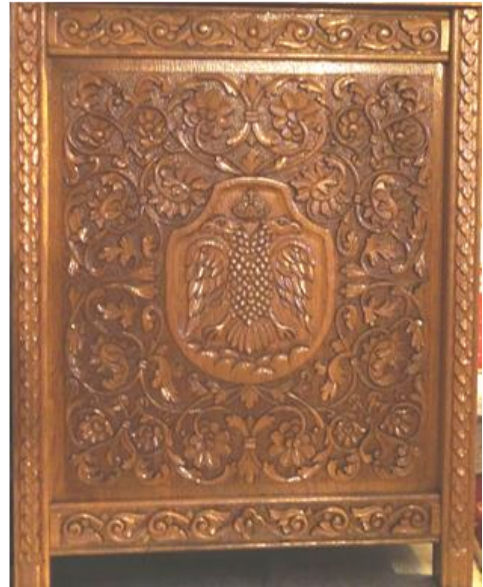


Fig. 19 and fig. 20. The coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family on two tetrapods from the Coltea Church.

G. On the back of a large wooden throne (fig. 21) there is engraved the coat of arms of Romania from 1867, namely: modern, rectangular French shield, with a pointed tip, brimmed, quartered, comprising in the 1st and 4th quarters the eagle, shown from front, with the wings open, with the flight down and with the head turned (turned to the heraldic left), in sectors 2 and 3 the head of the aurochs with a star with six rays just between horns; in the shield right in the heart, a Russian-type shield from 1850, with the upper edge curved, the upper corners trimmed, concavities on the flanks, the soles in the brim, quartered, comprising, represented by heraldic codes, in the 1st and 4th sectors of silver colour, while in 2nd and 3rd sectors of black colour (the coat of arms of the Hohenzollern family). The shield, stamped by a closed crown, finished with a cruciferous globe, has as tenant on the right, a woman, while on the left there is a lionized leopard (symbolizing a penetrating and foreboding genius), standing each on an Arabesque. Below, on a scarf, it is written the Hohenzollern family motto: "NIHIL SINE DEO". The composition is inscribed in a pavilion, equipped with fringes and tassels, trapped at the top under a "crown", from which only the front circle and some fragments of it are preserved (fig. 22).



Fig. 21. The throne with coat of arms of the Colțea Church.



Fig. 22. The coat of arms of Romania from 1867 on the back of a throne from the Colțea Church

H. The culture in all its forms is the one that also stands out at the construction of the Colțea Church, one of the most beautiful examples of architecture in the Romanian Country since the end of the seventeenth century, a monument representative for the time of Constantin Brâncoveanu, by the coats of arms and by the technique and craftsmanship of the rarely encountered decorative processes (Stoica et al., 2000; Stoica et al., 2005; Szemkovics et al. 2018; Teodorescu, 2009; Teodorescu, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

Heraldic vestige sources represent a distinct part of the universal cultural heritage. The elements used and the multitude of information transmitted by these heraldic compositions have led to an increased interest in identifying and researching these signs.

When designing the study, we have taken into account the interest that these blazons, coats of arms and zoomorphic motifs from the Colțea Church can present for specialists, teachers, students, pupils, but also for pilgrims and tourists. In the educational- instructional process from different educational institutions in Romania, the heraldic and epigraphic sources can serve to better understand some historical phenomena.

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