

## SCULPTED COATS OF ARMS AT THE PALACE IN MOGOȘOAIA

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**Abstract:** *The study aims at highlighting the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia, the heraldic coat of arms of Moldova and the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family, carved in stone at the Palace located in Mogoșoaia, Ilfov County. Regarding the description of these coats of arms, we complied the rules of heraldic science. In developing this study, we have taken into account the interest there may present these heraldic compositions for pupils, students, teachers, but also for tourists which will cross the threshold of this edifice. Our study is a call for detection, restoration (on a case-by-case basis), analysis and commissioning into the scientific circuit of other heraldic springs of this kind as well, which are still unknown to the general public.*

**Keywords:** *Mogoșoaia Palace, coats of arms, Brâncoveanu, the Cantacuzino family, heraldry.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Palace from Mogoșoaia (fig. 1) is a great tourist attraction, where tourists can contemplate the construction, exhibits, gardens and surrounding annexes or they can enrich knowledge. Located at about 15 km from Bucharest, the Mogoșoaia Palace was built for Ștefan, the second son of Constantin Brâncoveanu, a fact that results from the marble inscription placed above the door of the east gazebo, dated September 20, 1702, when the beautiful place was finished and inaugurated (Drăghiceanu, 1909; Drăghiceanu, 1926; Brătulescu et al., 1935; Stoicescu, 1961; Georgescu et al., 1966; Drăguț et al., 1971; Drăguț, 2000; Popescu, 2004; Colfescu, 2006; Theodorescu, 2006; Berindei, 2014; Ion, 2014; Negrău, 2014; Șerbănescu, 2014). At this objective, tourists can discover architecture, sculpture, painting, coats of arms and possibly may investigate or contemplate other material traces as well.

I have described and reproduced the heraldic compositions with the coat of arms of Wallachia, with the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family, with the coat of arms of Moldavia which is carved in this building and which, due to reflecting with much fidelity the historical epoch in which they were created, can contribute to the highlighting of the artistic works of

the stonemasons; they can all be, in particular, a rich source for sculpture masterpieces specific for that period.

The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia includes a bird with a cross in its beak (Popescu-Vîlcea, 1964; Popescu, 2004), accompanied, in this case, by the sun and the crescent (Szemkovics et al., 2020 a). The coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family (Popescu-Vîlcea, 1964; Popescu, 2004; Szemkovics et al., 2006; Szemkovics et al., 2020 a; Szemkovics et al., 2020 b) depicts the bicephalous eagle (with two heads), crowned, holding in its claws the insignia of power. The heraldic coat of arms of Moldavia comprises a bull's head with a star between its horns (Szemkovics et al., 2006; Szemkovics et al., 2020 a; Szemkovics et al., 2020 b).

This presentation is part of the series of events designed to highlight the Mogoșoaia Palace, but also to praise Constantin Brâncoveanu, the ruler of the country of Wallachia (1688-1714), especially since, seven years ago, by Romania Government Decision no. 1167/2013, the year 2014 was declared the “Year of Brâncoveanu”.



**Fig. 1.** Palace of Mogoșoaia (eastern view).

## METHODOLOGY

Regarding the method used in this study, we have gone through four steps:

1. Identification of the Mogoșoaia Palace where heraldic compositions from Constantin Brâncoveanu's time, are carved;
2. Visiting this edifice and investigation of the sculpted heraldic vestiges;

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

4. Making these testimonies of the past known to the public concerned, through visits, specialized works or studies, as well as by promoting, for tourism purposes, the institution holding these vestiges, as well as the coats of arms.

## RESULTS

A. Above the inscription of September 20, 1702, positioned on the east pavilion, there was, carved in stone, the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia (fig. 2): square shield, made of acanthus leaves (symbol of mastery and overcoming the vicissitudes of life), loaded with the heraldic bird, rendered in full and front-view positioned, with contoured body (oriented to the heraldic left), with wings wide open and the flight downwards, standing with the feet on the top of a mountain coming out of the sole (the top of the shield), with its head turned to the right side, holding in his beak a Latin cross which is flanked by a sun on the right side, while by a crescent at the left side. The inscription in Romanian characters was engraved all around it with Cyrillic characters yet: IO - C / B - V (IO CONSTANTIN BASARAB VOIEVOD). The shield is stamped by a royal crown finished with a cruciferous globe.



**Fig. 2.** The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia on the inscription of the palace, inscription dated September 20, 1702.

**B.** On the railing of the loggia from the west (Popescu-Vîlcea, 1964; Drăguț, 2000; Popescu, 2004; Theodorescu, 2006; Ion, 2014; Șerbănescu, 2014; Șerbănescu, 2015), consisting of six columns of stone supporting five braced arches (fig. 4), in the central part, in a rectangular frame, there is, executed by perforation, the coat of arms of Wallachia, with the heraldic bird, flanked by stars, similar to the previous one, but surrounded of acanthus bushes with leaves and flowers (fig. 3). The railing is also adorned with two dolphins and two masks seated, one each, to the left and right of the bird.



**Fig. 3 and fig. 4.** The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia on the railing of the loggia from the western side of the palace.

**C.** The entrance door, located on the eastern side of the palace, close to the base of the access staircase towards the gazebo, it has a stone frame (fig. 6) adorned at the two upper corners, with a double composition representing the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family (Popescu-Vîlcea, 1964; Popescu, 2004): oval shield, with laurel leaf border, loaded with bicephalous eagle, rendered from front-view, with wide open wings, with an open crown above the heads, with five fleurons and holding in his claws the sword and the sceptre, which has a lily flower at its end. (fig. 5).



**Fig. 5** and **fig. 6**. The coat of arms of the Cantacuzinos in the upper corners of the entrance door frame from the eastern side of the palace.

**D.** The same heraldic composition (fig. 7) appears, with small modifications (bicephalous eagle having a crown with three fleurons above the heads) (Szemkovics et al., 2020 a; Szemkovics et al., 2020 b), at the top of the cellar entrance (fig. 8).



**Fig. 7** and **fig. 8**. The coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family above the entrance to the cellar of the Mogoșoaia Palace.



E. The same two-headed eagle, similar to the previous one, but without being included in the shield and without having the signs of power (sword and scepter) in its claws, appears in the form of a console (Drăghiceanu, 1909; Drăghiceanu, 1926) supporting the heads of the vaulted arches in the rooms on the palace floor (fig. 9).



**Fig. 9.** The bicephalous eagle supporting the ends of the vault arches in certain rooms of the Palace.

F. The same bicephalous eagle appears, with small modifications (Szemkovics et al., 2020 a; Szemkovics et al., 2020 b), in the middle of the upper part of the door frame (fig. 11) at the end of the upstairs staircase, not included in the shield, holding in his right claw the sword, in his left the scepter, flanked by two persons, played in profile, facing each other, sitting on their knees, dressed in long coats up to their ankles, holding with one hand a trumpet in which they blow (fig. 10).



**Fig. 10 and fig. 11.** The coat of arms of Cantacuzino family, on the door frame at the end of the stairs from the floor of the palace.

G. Console with the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia, represented as above, i. e. the crucified bird, accompanied by the two stars, supporting

the ends of the vaulted arches in certain rooms on the floor of the building (those that belonged to the ruler) (fig. 12).



**Fig. 12.** The heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia on certain consoles in the Mogoșoaia Palace.

**H.** On the first floor of the building there is the coat of arms of Wallachia, stone-carved on a wall from the east side, and flanked at the top by two bicephalous eagles (Szemkovics et al., 2020 b); this coat of arms contains: shield, with border in acanthus leaves and baroque ornaments, loaded with bird crossed, rendered fully and from the front, with the body conturned, wings wide open, the right one arranged in a bar (Dictionary, 1982), the left one in the pale (Dictionary, 1982), with the flight downwards, standing with the feet on the top of a tree coming out of the sole, with head turned to the right; the shield is stamped by an open crown, with five fleurons, flanked on the right side by the sword positioned in the band (Dictionary, 1982), on the left by a mace placed in the bar, the handles of the latter entering, partially, inside (fig. 13).



**Fig. 13.** The coat of arms of Wallachia, sculpted on a wall inside the Mogoșoaia Palace.

I. On the ground floor of the building there is a fireplace which has, at the top, at both corners, carved in stone, a double composition (fig. 15) which includes, in the central part, the heraldic coat of arms of Moldavia (Szemkovics et al., 2020 b), namely: oval shield, loaded with a bull's head, rendered from the front, with a six-pointed star between the horns, flanked, near the snout, by the letters: S-T / ?-M. The shield, stamped by an open crown with five fleurons, flanked by the sun on the right and the crescent on the left, is surrounded by four acanthus leaves (fig. 14).



**Fig. 14 and fig. 15.** The heraldic coat of arms of Moldavia depicted on the fireplace on the ground floor of the palace.

J. Culture in all its forms is the one that stands out, especially the construction of historical monuments. For specialists, for tourists, but also for 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 interpret the historical process reflected by each heraldic symbol.

## CONCLUSIONS

Heraldic vestiges reflect a part of the history of social communities. The multitude of information transmitted by these sources have determined a great interest for the study of this type of signs and for the enrichment of knowledge about heraldry. Constantin Brâncoveanu, the founder of the Mogoșoaia Palace, was a prominent figure in the cultural world, and the heraldic compositions created during his reign were closely related to his political position, character, nature, thoughts and hopes.



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