

# THE COAT OF ARMS OF CONSTANTIN BRÂNCOVEANU AND THE HERALDIC COMPOSITIONS EXISTING AT HUREZI MONASTERY

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**Abstract:** *Our study aims at highlighting the coat of arms of Constantin Brâncoveanu and the painted, engraved, sculpted, woven coats of arms from Hurezi Monastery located in Vâlcea County, Romania. The church of the monastery houses the coffin with relics of the martyred ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu, as well as the ruler's tomb, unused, however, because he was buried at the church of St. Gheorghe- the New in Bucharest. The monastery was an important cultural centre, where the ruler established the library, now still known as the name of "Constantin Brâncoveanu's Library" and which currently comprises several volumes and documents. By using heraldic science, I have described these heraldic compositions, explaining also the meaning of the components. At the elaboration of the study, I have had careful regard to the interest which the coats of arms of this monastery may trigger for specialists, for historians, for pupils, for students, for pilgrims, as well as for tourists. These heraldic springs can serve to better understand historical phenomena. Also, through this study we want the heraldry to be restored to the important place it deserves among all the auxiliary disciplines of history.*

**Keywords:** *blazon, Constantin Brâncoveanu, coats of arms, Hurezi monastery, heraldry.*

## INTRODUCTION

Hurezi Monastery, built by the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu (Bunescu et al., 1932) in 1693 (Șerbănescu, 1989; Popescu, 2004; Popescu, 2014; Szemkovics, 2017), included in 1995 in the UNESCO patrimony, is today a great tourist attraction. Hurezi Monastery, built by the craftsmen Manea- the bricklayer, Istrate- the carpenter and Vucașin Caragea- the stonemason (Cristea, 1987), is considered today the largest ensemble of medieval architecture in Brancoveanu which was preserved in Wallachia (Drăguț, 1976). The ensemble consists of the church itself of the monastery (founded by Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu), dedicated to the "Holy Emperors Constantin and Elena", located in the centre, from the sick church, dedicated to the Assumption of the Mother Of the Lord" (founded by Mrs. Marica, the ruler's wife), from the hermitage "Saint Stephen"

(founded by Stephen, one of the four sons of the ruler) and from the hermitage of the “Holy Apostles Peter and Paul” (founded by Ioan Arhimandritul, abbot of the monastery) (Popescu, 2014; Tascovici, 2014; Szemkovics et al., 2020).

At this monastery tourists can discover architecture, sculpture, painting, religious art, coats of arms, emblems, but also other material traces that refer to the tourism objective.

I have insisted on the description, reproduction and symbolism of the coat of arms and coats of arms that can contribute to the highlighting of the artistic activity of the sponsor or of the issuer. Heraldry compositions from this sanctuary is a rich source for painting, engraving and sculpture from the era in which they were created.

The current presentation is part of the series of events meant to highlight the Monastery Hurezi, as well as to praise the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu, especially since in August 2021 we will commemorate 307 years since the martyrdom of the Brâncoveni.

## METHODOLOGY

Regarding the method performed in this study, we went through the following stages:

1. Identification of the Hurezi Monastery where such heraldic compositions are located.
2. Visiting this building and researching the heraldic remains and whether they have been reproduced, or not, on the board, scraper, stoves, chairs, tetrapods or any other material;
3. Analysing the coats of arms and noble emblems in accordance with heraldic norms;
4. Bringing these testimonies of the past to the attention of the interested public, through various events, papers or specialized studies, visits, as well as by promoting, for the purpose of tourism, heraldic testimonies and the holding institution.

## RESULTS

**A.** In the library of the Hurezi Monastery, to the right of the stove, there is a painting in which there is located the coat of arms of Brâncoveanu (fig. 1), represented a little differently from the coat of arms conferred by the emperor Leopold I (fig. 2), on May 19, 1688 (Foras, 1889; Drăghiceanu,

1915; Iorga, 1937; Căzan, 1991; Căzan Neagu, 2004; Teodorescu, 2014; Szemkovics, 2014). The heraldic composition is formed by six shields, of modern French type (rectangular, with sole in brace), equipped with thin, golden borders, arranged as follows: at the bottom, in the larger blue, damask, shield, on the background of which, on a green plain, there stands a soldier dressed as an old Roman, armed and with a helmet on his head, riding a white horse, holding the bridle, or halter, in his left hand, while holding in his right hand a sword that is depicted with a head of the Turkish stuck in it.

The shield is covered with a helmet, placed in front position, equipped with six bars, gold edge and necklace, adorned with a royal golden tiara, with three fleurons, inlaid with precious stones. From the top of the helmet there flow some lambrequins, the margin and the collar or necklace, all golden in the right side, and blue- coloured in the left side, adorned with a royal tiara, golden as well, with three fleurons, which are inlaid the gold ring, adorned with a royal tiara, gold, with three fleurons, inlaid with precious stones. From the top of the helmet there come up some lambrequins, golden and blue on the right side, while silver and red on the left side, which adorn both edges of the shield (the coat of arms of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu). Above this shield there is another shield, similar to the first one, but of smaller size, golden, loaded with the black bicephalous eagles, wearing a shield on each one's chest and stomach; this shield is red, loaded with a silver band; it is also stamped by the imperial crown (the coat of arms of Austria). On the right flank, at the top, there appears a split shield, having four silver fascias, on its right side, on a red background, while a Lorena cross appears on the left side, on a red background as well; this Lorena cross sticks out of an open crown, with three fleurons, situated on the top of a mountain, all golden (the national coat of arms of Hungary).

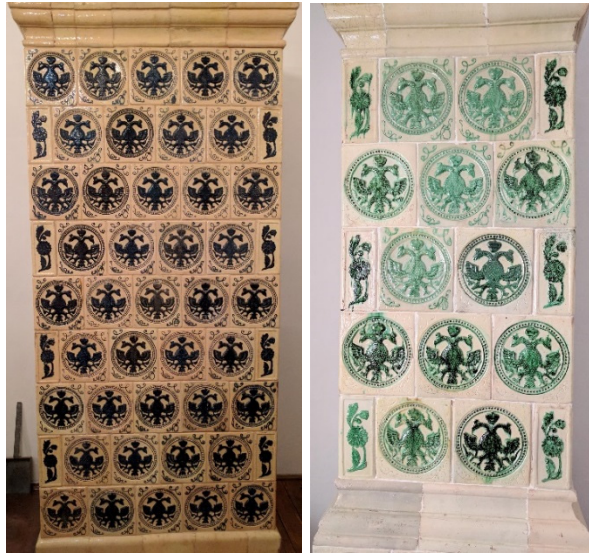
On the same flank, but at the bottom, there appears a blue shield, loaded with three crowned leopard heads, positioned 2: 1 (the coat of arms of Dalmatia). On the left flank, at the top, there appears a red shield, loaded with a rampant silver lion, with the tail passed between the legs (the Bohemian coat of arms!). On the same flank, but at the bottom, there appears another coat of arms (the coat of arms of Croatia). design, situated on five columns and seven rows, alternating red with silver All shields are placed under a red flag with golden fringes, cords and tassels, lined with ermine and fastened, at the top, under a closed crown, ending in a cruciferous globe. The flag or pavilion is, as well, inscribed in a round medallion with a golden border, in which it is written, at the bottom, in red

(the first letter ) and blue capital letters, as follows: BRÂNCOVANU. On the outside, on the sides, on a red background, golden floral and vegetable motifs.



**Fig. 1 and fig. 2.** Constantin Brâncoveanu's coat of arms on a painting existing at the Hurezi Monastery Library Hurezi and the same coat of arms conferred on the ruler, on May 19, 1688, by Emperor Leopold I.

**B.** On the terracotta stove in the small refectory (Cristea, 1987) (fig. 3), in black and on the stove in the Library of the Hurezi Monastery (fig. 4), in green, the following heraldic composition appears multiplied: round shield, with pearl border, loaded with the bicephalous eagle, fully rendered from the front, with its wings open and flying upwards, with crowned heads and another larger crown above them, holding two swords in its claws.



**Fig. 3 and fig. 4.** The bicephalous eagle on the stoves in the small refectory and in the Monastery Library Hurezi.

**C.** The same coat of arms appears woven from place to place, with small differences and on the purple carpet from the large church of the monastery: the bicephalous eagle, rendered in full and from front view position, with wings wide open and flying downwards, with an open crown above the heads, with three fleurons, all in silver (fig. 5).



**Fig. 5.** The bicephalous eagle on the carpet in the large church of the Hurezi Monastery.



**D.** At the large church of the Hurezi Monastery (fig. 6) (Theodorescu, 2006), dedicated to “Saints Emperors Constantine and Helen”, on the left side of the narthex there appears, worked in Brancoveanu style, a helmet or casket, made of gilded silver, with relics of St. Martyr Constantin Brâncoveanu (fig. 7).

On the inside of the lid of the squeegee (fig. 10) mentioned above, there are decorations with acanthus ornaments and with three oval medallions, in the central one appearing the bust of the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu, guarded, on the left (fig. 8) and on the right (fig. 9), in two variants, by the coat of arms of Wallachia: two in- cruciate birds, rendered with wings wide open, flying downwards, with the bodies towards the exterior and with the heads oriented frontwards and in the direction of the ruler.



**Fig. 6.** The large church of the Hurezi Monastery (front view).



**Fig. 7.** The coffin with relics of the martyred voivode Constantin Brâncoveanu.



**Fig. 8, fig. 9 and fig. 10.** The heraldic bird of Wallachia, in two hypostases, on the inside of the cap of at the reliquary with relics of Constantin Brâncoveanu.

E. In the lower register of a tetrapod (fig. 12) located on the left side of the scraper mentioned above, there is, surrounded by vines with bunches of grapes, another heraldic composition: round shield, loaded with the bicephalous eagle, rendered in whole and front, with open wings and flying downwards, having an open crown above the heads (fig. 11).



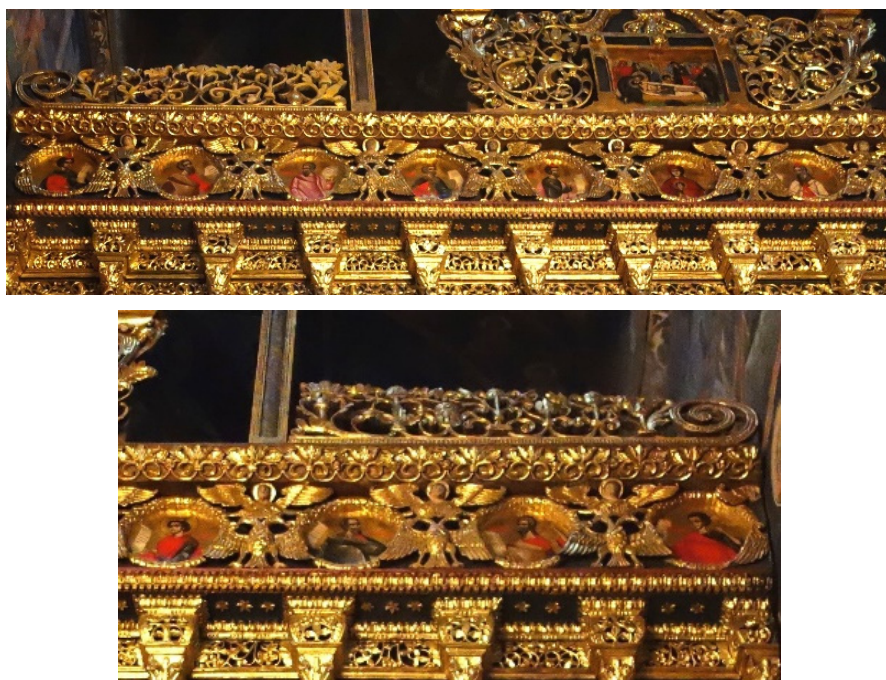
**Fig. 11 and fig. 12.** The bicephalous eagle on a tetrapod from the large church of the Hurezi Monastery.

F. On the back of the seat for the high prelates (fig. 14), located in front of the iconostasis, there is sculpted a bicephalous eagle, similar to the previous one, but without being included in the shield (fig. 13).



**Fig. 13 and fig. 14.** The bicephalous eagle on the back of the chair in the big church of Hurezi Monastery.

G. In the upper register of the iconostasis are engraved ten bicephalous eagles, gilded, similar to the previous ones, flanked by ten round medallions and from whose open crowns emerge ten cherubs (symbol of wisdom and intelligence) (fig. 15 and fig. 16).



**Fig. 15 and fig. 16.** The bicephalous eagle on the iconostasis of the great Church of the Hurezi Monastery.



**H.** In the Museum of the Hurezi Monastery, on the back of a chair (fig. 18), there is, surrounded by vegetal and floral motifs, the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family: the bicephalous eagle, crowned with a royal crown, finished with a Latin cross (fig. 17).



**Fig. 17 and fig. 18.** The coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family on the back of a chair in the Museum of the Hurezi Monastery.

**I.** Culture in all its forms is the one that stands out, especially in the construction of religious establishments from the medieval and modern periods. Between them and the Hurezi Monastery is a source of attraction, transmitting today, evidence of the progress of culture expressed in architecture, painting, sculpture, engraving, heraldry and which, especially through the symbolism of the elements of heraldic compositions, individualize their owners and show them attributions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Heraldic sources are a distinct part of the universal cultural heritage. The demonstration of the scientific character of the activity of identifying the symbols used and the multitude of information transmitted by these heraldic sources determined an increased interest for the research of this type of signs.

When elaborating this study, we took into account the interest that these coats of arms and blazons can present for specialists, teachers, students, pupils, pilgrims, but also for tourists. We considered that in the stage of modernization of the instructive-educational process, heraldic sources can serve to better understand historical phenomena, especially on the signs used by forerunners, but also to decipher the symbols by which ancestors expressed their thoughts and aspirations.

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