

New Europe College  
*Ștefan Odobleja* Program  
Yearbook 2011-2012



---

ELENA BEDREAG  
ȘTEFAN BOSOMITU  
ELENA FIREA  
ANDREI IOAN LAZĂR  
FLORIN LEONTE  
ZAHARIA-SEBASTIAN MATEIESCU  
CORNEL MICU  
COSMIN UNGUREANU

---

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

Copyright – New Europe College  
ISSN 1584-0298

New Europe College  
Str. Plantelor 21  
023971 Bucharest  
Romania

[www.nec.ro](http://www.nec.ro); e-mail: [nec@nec.ro](mailto:nec@nec.ro)  
Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10, Fax (+4) 021. 327.07.74



## **ELENA FIREA**

Born in 1979, in Rădăuți

Ph.D. Candidate at “Babeș-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of History  
Dissertation: *Religion and Politics in the Ecclesiastical Discourse in Moldavia  
(fifteenth to sixteenth centuries)*

Editorial assistant of *Colloquia. Journal of Central European Studies*,  
published by Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca and  
The Institute of Central European Studies

Research mobility to Central European University, Budapest (2007, 2006)  
and Università degli Studi di Pisa (2007)

Participation in a High Educational Support Program (2005-2008)

Papers delivered at several colloquia and conferences in Romania and Croatia

Published articles on various aspects of Moldavian medieval history:  
cult of saints, religious and cultural history, post-Byzantine religious art and  
spirituality, representations of power in the Middle Ages



# HAGIOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES OF ST. JOHN THE NEW IN 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY MOLDAVIA. THE ILLUSTRATED CYCLE FROM THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ROMAN

**Abstract:** An indicator of the strengthening veneration St. John the New enjoyed in sixteenth century Moldavia was the inclusion of extensive iconographical cycles illustrating his martyrdom in the pictorial decoration of several churches patronized either by the local dynasty or the high clergy. One of them was the Episcopal Church in Roman, which received its fresco decoration shortly after the middle of the sixteenth century, presumably under the direct supervision of bishop Macarie – an outstanding learned cleric and most intriguing figure of his time.

The present study focuses on the comparative analysis of the iconographical cycle dedicated to St. John the New there, in relation to other textual and visual narratives created in his honor, with the purpose to investigate the reception of his cult, two centuries after its adoption in Moldavia. The selection of the scenes from Roman, the particular details of their illustration, as well as the ideological implications they were invested with are discussed mostly in comparison with St. John's fifteenth century hagiographical construct of sanctity, transmitted through the text of the *Passio* and the decoration of the silver reliquary which hosts his relics in Suceava. The study starts from the assumption that a comparative analysis of these hagiographical narratives, in their chronological succession and within the specific context of their production, may be able to highlight, almost like archeological layers, the subsequent phases in the promotion and reception of the cult of St. John the New.

The preliminary outcomes of such an investigation suggest that, alike its textual and visual prototypes, the discussed pictorial cycle share the same primary concern for revealing and promoting St. John's status as a martyr for the Orthodox faith. Strongly outlining his unambiguous affiliation to this typology of sanctity conferred the best confirmation of St. John's saintliness and implicitly of the holiness of his relics preserved in Suceava. However, while the fifteenth century hagiographical narratives, both textual and pictorial, focus rather on constructing an authenticated profile of sanctity, the sixteenth century illustrated cycle seems much more receptive for conveying local implications and additional messages when accounting the same story, which are suggestive

for the evolution of St. John's cult. Enlarged selections of scenes and specific iconographical details or variations in displaying them were the main visual strategies employed in order to attach new meanings to the promotion and reception of the cult. Such innovations distinguish the narrative cycle from Roman from other elaborations of the theme, at least from two points of view.

The first one refers to an obvious clerical touch in reinterpreting the written *Passio*, by emphasizing the prominent role of the Church in the institutionalization and administration of the cult. Explainable in part through the episcopal commission and audience of these frescoes, this feature could also point out to an increased ecclesiastical appropriation of the cult towards the middle of the sixteenth century.

The second specific characteristic of the same pictorial cycle concerns a pronounced polemical tone in referring to other religious denomination and especially to the Catholic one. In visual terms, St. John's martyrdom is obviously constructed in explicit opposition not only to paganism, but also to Catholicism, thus alluding to contemporary realities of the time and showing Macarie's intransigent attitude toward confessional others. Invested with such polemic overtones, the saint's ultimate triumphal sacrifice symbolically corresponds to the victory of the Orthodox faith against its oppressors and internal competitors. In the complicated context of mid sixteenth century, St. John the New was thus promoted not only as an Orthodox neo-martyr, but also as a saint of the Moldavian Church, while the story of his martyrdom was loaded with local implications reflecting the specific confessional challenges this Church was facing at the time.

**Key words:** St. John the New, cult of saints, hagiographical narratives, iconographical cycles, Episcopal Church from Roman.

In the year 1415, the principality of Moldavia 'imported' from Crimea an Orthodox neo-martyr, St. John the New, whose relics were translated to the capital of Suceava and solemnly deposited in the metropolitan church. Shortly after the event and in close connection to it, a hagiographical narration of St. John's martyrdom,<sup>1</sup> including also the account of the relics' arrival at Suceava, was written in the local clerical milieu.<sup>2</sup> According to the text, during the relics' ceremonial reception, the prince Alexander the Good (1400-1432) – the instigator of their translation – prostrated before the chest, publicly venerated the holy body and proclaimed the saint as divine protector of his country.<sup>3</sup> Meant to symbolically authenticate the holiness of the newly acquired relics, in order to foster their veneration

at the new destination, the solemn *adventus* and the writing of the *Passio* marked the starting point for the local cult dedicated to St. John the New - the one eventually responsible for his inclusion in the Orthodox pantheon of saints<sup>4</sup>.

Since no reliable evidence regarding his veneration prior to the emblematical moment from 1415 has survived,<sup>5</sup> one can argue that the whole hagiographical construct around this quasi-anonymous neo-martyr brought from the fringes of the Empire was a Moldavian development, centered on the presence of the saint's mortal remains / *moschi*<sup>6</sup> at Suceava. Its subsequent evolution suggests the deliberate establishment of an official cult, promoted from top to down, through the combined efforts of the local political and ecclesiastical authorities. Among the common indicators of a cult, the ensuing circulation of the hagiographical text in monastic manuscripts,<sup>7</sup> the existence of a liturgical office in the saint's honor,<sup>8</sup> the commissioning of decorated reliquaries to host the relics,<sup>9</sup> as well as the few church dedications in his name<sup>10</sup> point out to the gradual development of the new veneration in the liturgical and devotional practices of the Moldavians, throughout the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries. Roughly from the same period date the first iconographical representations of St. John in monumental painting, either as intercessory saint<sup>11</sup> or in iconic full-length portraits, associated with military saints.<sup>12</sup>

Corresponding to the progressive strengthening of the cult in the second half of the sixteenth century, elaborate narrative cycles illustrating his martyrdom were included in the decoration of several churches patronized either by the ruling dynasty or the high clergy.<sup>13</sup> Visual expression of his complete assimilation among the traditional saints, the extensive monumental narratives dedicated to St. John might be considered as a final phase in the formation and public promotion of his cult.<sup>14</sup> Albeit heavily relying on the fifteenth century hagiographical text, the mural cycles do not merely illustrate but rather reinterpret it, thus creating relatively independent variants of the story, invested with new meanings in accordance to the contemporary expectations of their audience.<sup>15</sup> Together with the *Passio* and the decoration of the silver reliquary which hosts St. John's relics at Suceava,<sup>16</sup> the latter constitute the hagiographical narratives<sup>17</sup> referring to St. John the New in the epoch under scrutiny - the subject matter of the present study. However, while both the written account and the monumental cycles contributed decisively to the promotion of the saint, they are chronologically separated by more than

a century. Consequently, text and frescoes reflect different stages in the development of the cult and, presumably, different ideological implications attached to it.

Concerned with the emergence, promotion and subsequent reception of St. John's veneration, the purpose of this research is to comparatively scrutinize these hagiographic narratives in order to investigate whether and to what extent did the initial construct of sanctity change during the first two centuries of its existence. Given its inherent limits, the analysis will nevertheless concentrate mostly on a somehow privileged case-study, namely the frescoes illustrating St. John's martyrdom in the outer narthex of the Episcopal Church in Roman. Why privileged? Besides the fact that they form the most elaborated such pictorial cycle that has survived (in quite good condition, one might add) in Moldavian medieval art, they are better documented than others. The specific circumstances under which took place the construction and decoration of the edifice render very plausible the identification of the iconographer with bishop Macarie, who was running the episcopal seat from Roman since 1531.<sup>18</sup> Outstanding learned cleric and an intriguing figure of his time,<sup>19</sup> Macarie was also an experienced creator of church iconographical programs at the time when these frescoes were painted,<sup>20</sup> which further supports the hypothesis of his direct implication in the endeavor. Finally, the cycle from Roman seems particularly suited for a comparative analysis, since besides the common literary prototype, it was preceded by other iconographical accounts of St. John's martyrdom<sup>21</sup> which could have counted as possible visual sources or analogies.

Therefore, by juxtaposing the analysis of the written source to the exploration of the visual evidence, within the particular contexts of their production, the present study will examine which traits from the original hagiographical construct were preferred in the second half of the sixteenth century. Which episodes from the earlier narratives were included in the pictorial sequence from Roman and which were, in turn, its iconographical innovations? What does such a selection suggest concerning the evolution of St. John's cult? Finally, are there any indicators of a different promotion or reception of the saint a hundred years after his adoption in Moldavia?

In the attempt to offer at least tentative answers to these research questions, the available evidence will be examined through a comparative approach, which will combine the hermeneutics of the text with the

analysis of the visual material within the framework of the iconographical method.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, special attention will be given to the pictorial narratives dedicated to St. John the New. Examined in previous historiography almost exclusively from a perspective confined to art history, more often than not rather descriptive<sup>23</sup> or concerned mostly to establish chronologies and identify iconographical models,<sup>24</sup> the cycles illustrating St. John's martyrdom were only obliquely considered in connection with the evolution of his cult.<sup>25</sup> When their political<sup>26</sup> or religious<sup>27</sup> implications were discussed, the visual narratives were treated *in corpore* and not separately, in their sequential production. Trusting their potential in reflecting the evolution of St. John's cult, the present study will focus on the analysis of the illustrated cycles as main source in exploring the process of inventing (intended in medieval terms)<sup>28</sup> and promoting the new saint. Since the investigation will concentrate mostly on the one from Roman, references to the text or to earlier such representations will be made in order to correlate the respective narratives, to identify the mechanisms of rendering in visual terms a rather stereotypical hagiographical account, but most importantly to offer a better insight into the question of selection, of inclusion or exclusion of scenes and their meaning.

In order to highlight the specificity of these frescoes and the messages they were invested with, one should first scrutinize the available evidence for such a comparative approach. Which were the hagiographical narratives referring to St. John the New before the interval 1552-1562, when the cycle from Roman was painted,<sup>29</sup> and what image of sanctity did they transmit? In a chronological sequence, the first would be the fifteenth century text of the *Passio*. Written by a cleric affiliated to the Moldavian metropolitan seat, probably shortly after the relics' translation to Suceava, the text belongs to the hagiographical genre of late martyrdom accounts.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it typically narrates only the passion and not St. John's life, ending with the account of his relics' arrival to the Moldavian capital – the key moment in the inauguration of their veneration here. The almost complete absence of biographical or historical details is not unusual, given that a saint's life is not a biography in the modern sense of the word, but a narration primarily meant to record and to transmit the idea of holiness.<sup>31</sup> In other words, it is a constructed image of sanctity, meant to generate among the faithful the honor due to the saint and an emotional response, by making use of certain familiar narrative paths or *topoi*.<sup>32</sup> To better outline which was the profile of holiness it promoted, the textual account will be discussed here in parallel to another early narrative referring to St.

John's martyrdom, namely the decoration of the silver reliquary from St. George church in Suceava. Although the controversial artifact was very differently dated by art historians,<sup>33</sup> the most influential opinion attributes it to the reign of Alexander the Good<sup>34</sup> - the commissioner and organizer of the *translatio* from 1415. If the hypothesis is correct, then the passion cycle engraved on these silver panels becomes the earliest visual narrative referring to St. John the New's martyrdom and possible prototype for the later elaborations of the theme.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, since it would mean that they are more or less contemporaneous, both the written *Passio* and the iconography of the reliquary may be thus considered as components of the same, initial hagiographical effort promoting St. John the New and his veneration in Moldavia. The succinct presentation of their narrative core will be accompanied by comparative references to the illustrated cycle from the Episcopal Church from Roman, for better highlighting the latter's selection of scenes.

Already from its title, the *Passio* refers to St. John as a great martyr, the most direct and uncontested category of sanctity throughout the history of the church.<sup>36</sup> The scarce information alluding to his social status before the martyrdom vaguely individualize him as a Christian merchant from Trebizond, who sailed on business on the Black Sea and found his death in the name of the Orthodox faith at Cetatea Albă/Belgorod (most probably Vospro-Kertch, in Crimea), around the year 1330.<sup>37</sup> On the ship, he distinguished himself as a role model of Christian virtues and behavior, which brought unto him the hatred of the envious "Latin" (i.e. Catholic) captain. The latter cunningly plotted St. John's death, by telling the pagan ruler of Cetatea Albă that he intended to abjure Christianity and convert to his pagan faith. This brings forth a first formal interrogation of the saint - the starting point of his ensuing martyrdom and also the opening scene of the pictorial narrative from the silver reliquary<sup>38</sup> and of the majority of the monumental cycles. The idea of the Latin's deceitful instigation is conveyed in iconographical terms by his inclusion in the composition. In accordance with the hagiographic scenario of late medieval and modern neo-martyrdoms, the text dwells at length on the following disputations between John the New and the pagan inquisitor, the perfect opportunity for the saint to refuse conversion, to publicly confess his credo and to assert the superiority of his faith, despite typical threats of torture and ultimate death. The passage is visually rendered by a repetitive succession of interrogatory scenes, when the saint is first undressed<sup>39</sup> - a symbolic detail announcing the ensuing passion and alluding to the Christological

model – and then threatened by the raising of the staffs.<sup>40</sup> The partial suppression of the eastern wall of the outer narthex led to the loss of the opening scenes from the narrative cycle dedicated to St. John the New at Roman. Nevertheless, two fragmentarily preserved compositions that precede the one where the saint is brought in front of the pagan ruler, in the presence of the Latin instigator and a menacing crowd (Fig. 1) indicates a strong concern of the visual narrative for rendering the formal interrogation theme – a crucial hagiographical *topos* in all martyrdom accounts. After a first round of flagellation,<sup>41</sup> (Fig. 2) the text mentions the imprisonment of the saint, represented as an independent episode on the silver reliquary<sup>42</sup> and in all monumental cycles, except the one from Roman. Here the scene was replaced by an unprecedented one, namely *St. John's prayer* (Fig. 3), which shall be discussed later. A consecutive formal interrogation,<sup>43</sup> when a renewed offer to convert is accompanied by enticements of healing the wounded body, is refused again by John, who accepts death as a promise of eternal salvation – another necessary *topos* in all martyrs' lives. A second round of cruel flagellation,<sup>44</sup> visually emphasized and dramatized by the active participation of the enraged pagan ruler, precedes the humiliating torture of carrying the saint's body on the streets, tied to a horse's tail.<sup>45</sup> The hagiographer assigns to the Jews the final torments of the martyr – another transparent reference to Christ's passion, but also a possible allusion to local urban realities in fifteenth century Moldavia. On the silver reliquary, as well as in the frescoes from Roman (Fig. 4), the incrimination of the Jews is clearly expressed by their active participation in the final torture scene, where they are individualized from the previous tormentors of the saint through a distinct costume. Finally, the death moment is explicitly referred to in both textual and pictorial narratives: a Jew decapitates St. John – typical death by sword for the vast majority of martyrs.<sup>46</sup> The text also mentions an ultimate sign of contempt, when the dead body is abandoned on the street, under the interdiction of being touched. Absent from other illustrated hagiographies dedicated to St. John, the last passage might be the source for one of the most intriguing scenes in the cycle from Roman - *St. John's ascension to heaven* (Fig. 5) - an *unicum* in the iconography dedicated to the saint, which shall be discussed at length later on.

Albeit it is a necessary element in all pictorial accounts of martyrdoms, the death scene never concludes them, but is usually followed by miracles or other episodes connected to the relics.<sup>47</sup> In John the New's case, closely following the hagiographical text, the silver reliquary<sup>48</sup> and all the visual

narratives (including the one from Roman) depict next the miraculous mourning of the dead body, carried through by three angels holding candles and censing the earthly remains of the saint (Fig. 6). The *topos* of the fiery column symbolically connecting them to the heaven is one of the most common indicators that certify the sanctity of the holy body<sup>49</sup> and, hence of the *moschi* kept in the metropolitan church in Suceava. This first miracle connected to the relics has also a punitive dimension, when a Jew who witnesses the whole scene attempts to launch an arrow against the divine creatures and is immediately petrified in the gesture of bending the bow. He will be freed only after he relates the miraculous happening, thus publicly affirming the martyr's holiness. In the narrative sequence from Roman (Fig. 7), the episode is represented in an almost identical composition to the one from the silver reliquary,<sup>50</sup> which most probably functioned as its visual prototype. Frightened, the pagan ruler orders the disposal of the body, permitting the proper burial of the saint in a Christian cemetery. Obviously inspired from the iconography of the reliquary,<sup>51</sup> the image from Roman schematically illustrates a funerary ceremony (Fig. 8), which takes place nearby a central planned architectural structure - perhaps a visual allusion to an *Anastasis* *rotonda* typically associated with martyrs' tombs.

The second miracle related by the hagiographical text is also connected to the relics, this time conferring them an active role in the story. It refers to their refusal to be taken away, when the Catholic who denounced St. John in the first place attempts to steal the holy body. Consequently, the saint shows himself in a vision to the Orthodox priest of the city, warns him about the thief's intentions and finally hinders the misappropriation of the relics. Defying logic, the pictorial narrative from the silver reliquary interrupts at this point<sup>52</sup>, which clearly indicates that it is only fragmentarily preserved. However, the cycle from Roman continues the illustration of the hagiographical account, conflating into three distinct episodes the stealing of the relics motif: *The attempt to steal the relics and the warning of the priest* (Fig. 9), *The sending of priests to save the relics* and, respectively, *The finding of the body untouched*.<sup>53</sup> (Fig. 10) The innovative iconographical formula clearly puts an additional emphasis on the role of the Orthodox clergy in protecting and administrating St. John's relics. The text indicates that, in order to receive the proper honor, the latter were then solemnly reburied behind the altar of the Christian church in Belgorod, where they remained for more than seventy years, working miracles and emanating sweet odor – frequent hagiographical *topoi* referring to the most visible

signs of holiness at a saint's tomb. The moment is illustrated at Roman in another funerary scene (Fig. 11), in which the topographical detail is clearly distinguishable by the presence of an altar table with a Gospel book on top of it, depicted inside an architectural structure.

Finally, the *Passio* ends with the account of the *translatio reliquarum* to Suceava, which is also the last and most elaborate composition of the discussed monumental cycle. (Fig. 12) Abundant in conventional *topoi*, the hagiographical text confines to the political authority the initiative and the active role in the institutionalization of the new cult,<sup>54</sup> describing the pious veneration of the holy body by the prince himself and the public invocation of the saint as divine protector of the country. However, the involvement of metropolitan Joseph in the endeavor is also mentioned. The scarce historical references concerning St. John's local reception consist only in mentioning a ceremonial greeting of the relics by the political and ecclesiastical hierarchy and the key information about their solemn deposition in the metropolitan church from Suceava. With one notable exception,<sup>55</sup> all Moldavian visual representations of the theme reiterate the same conventional iconographic formula that depicts the official reception of the relics outside the city walls.<sup>56</sup> The visual focus lies on holy body and the priests who carry it, who form a stationary frieze situated in the center of the image, while the lay and clerical corteges are symmetrically placed on the sides. At Roman, Alexander the Good, accompanied by members of his family and numerous dignitaries, is not represented while venerating the relics (as described in the text), but in the gesture of welcoming them to his capital. Although the *Passio* specifies that the prince and the hierarchs greeted together the procession carrying the relics, the frescoes represent separately the political and ecclesiastic authorities, confining to the clerics the leading role in bringing them to and fostering their veneration at the new destination.

At the end of this compressed comparative survey, a first remark concerns the uncontested authority of the text and of the iconography of the silver reliquary on the pictorial cycle dedicated to St. John the New in the episcopal church from Roman. For better deciphering the larger implications of these initial hagiographic narratives and their impact on later visual representations of the theme, a brief overview of the political and religious context of their production becomes necessary.<sup>57</sup> In the first decades of the fifteenth century, when both the *Passio* and the silver reliquary were produced, the relatively young principality of Moldavia reached the peak of its state consolidation so far. By this time it had

already achieved a certain political autonomy in relation to the powerful neighboring kingdoms of Hungary and Poland, as well as a stronger territorial and institutional consolidation. The official recognition of the Moldavian Orthodox metropolitan seat by the Patriarchy of Constantinople<sup>58</sup> concluded the state foundation process, conferring higher political prestige to the principality and, finally, assimilating it to the Byzantine Commonwealth. However, one should keep in mind that St. John's *translatio* to Suceava occurred after the canonical reconciliation with the Ecumenical Patriarchy, which had ended a long conflict concerning the right to denominate the metropolitan,<sup>59</sup> by temporarily accepting a local hierarch on the seat and thus strengthening the position of the Moldavian Church. Under such circumstances, the transfer and the installation at Suceava of the first holy relics purchased by the principality, in collaboration with the local ecclesiastical hierarchy and possibly in spite of the Patriarchy's control over relics, were rich in political and ideological implications. It consolidated the spiritual and political prestige of the princely institution<sup>60</sup>, but at the same time it also legitimized the autonomous claims of the Moldavian Church. Playing the role of a local canonization,<sup>61</sup> the event from 1415 and its reflection in the ensuing text of the *Passio* became a symbol of the strength of the metropolitan seat of Suceava and by extension of the Moldavian Orthodox Church at the time. Non-coincidentally, the relics were deposited in the metropolitan church, which became their exclusive caretaker and main beneficiary.

Coming back to the exploration of the early hagiographic narratives dedicated to St. John and the profile of sanctity they promoted, one notices their nucleus is centered on the standard scheme of interrogations - tortures - death, basic elements of all martyrdom accounts, without which they would lose credibility and fail to reveal the character's saintliness.<sup>62</sup> A very effective strategy in this respect was precisely to adjust the individual case according to authenticated hagiographical types and patterns, which explains the accentuated conformation of St. John's story to neo-martyrial typology. Even the preference for a martyr, when it came to officially acquire the first relics for the Moldavian capital becomes suggestive from this perspective, given that martyrdom ultimate sacrifice conferred unambiguous sanctity that need not be further demonstrated. The fact might have proven especially suitable in John's case, since he was a barely known saint at the time, and his relics lacked a prestigious, validating provenance. From this point of view, one remarks that the conventional and repetitive iconography of the silver reliquary, deprived of any local

nuances or ideological implications,<sup>63</sup> eloquently emphasizes exactly St. John's affiliation to the category of holy martyrs.<sup>64</sup> Typically for the medieval world, the decoration of the reliquary proclaimed St. John's sanctity and thus worked as an authentication of the relics kept inside, in order to foster their veneration at the new destination.<sup>65</sup>

While the interrupted visual narrative from the silver reliquary does not allow further interpretations in this direction, the written account clearly manifests a strong interest for the relics. The fact should not be surprising, given that St. John's Moldavian cult was centered precisely on their presence and veneration at Suceava. Although miracles connected to saints' earthly remains are quite common in hagiographical texts, it is significant that the only two miraculous events extendedly described in St. John's *Passio* refer exclusively to his relics. If the first one typically proclaims the holiness of the body immediately after death, proving that John had indeed died as a martyr,<sup>66</sup> the second miracle reveals the relics' active power, in their refusal to be taken away by the unworthy. By contrast, their final transfer to Moldavia and their deposition in the metropolitan church seems to have pleased the saint, thus receiving a symbolical divine sanction, meant to consolidate the prestige of the institution that hosted them. Moreover, the meaningful juxtaposition of the Orthodox priest, as privileged beneficiary of the vision, to the Catholic captain who unsuccessfully attempts to steal the body (a juxtaposition very eloquently displayed in visual terms, see Fig. 9) implies that the saint chooses the rightful beneficiaries of his relics, equating with an indirect statement of faith in favor of the Orthodoxy. It has already been argued that the text refers from the very beginning to religious alterity and competition,<sup>67</sup> by introducing the premises of St. John's martyrdom and its initial instigator in the person of an envious Catholic opposing a righteous Orthodox. Furthermore, all the negative characters in the story are confessional others.<sup>68</sup> The detail is not without significance when related to the multi-confessional society of fifteenth century Moldavia<sup>69</sup> and to the special circumstances of the writing, dominated by Orthodox responses to the council of Ferrara-Florence.<sup>70</sup> The promotion of a martyrdom in the name of Orthodoxy, constructed in explicit opposition to Catholic faith, takes the role of an official statement for the position of the local Moldavian Church in the question of religious competition.

Such implications of the initial hagiographical construct are not only present, but heavily emphasized in the pictorial narrative from Roman. While the authoritative iconography of the silver reliquary might have

functioned as its visual prototype,<sup>71</sup> both the selection and the special treatment of scenes suggest an independent and slightly different reading of the hagiographical text by the iconographer from Roman. That the later worked as its main literary source and reservoir of themes is proven by the Slavonic inscriptions which accompany the seventeen episodes and which are obviously inspired from the *Passio*.<sup>72</sup> Compared to other visual explorations of the text, the Roman cycle displays several innovative compositions, besides the core iconographical scheme present on the silver reliquary. Together with other secondary iconographical details, the selection is suggestive for tracing down the specific features of this pictorial narrative and the messages it was invested with.

As it has already been pointed out, the first of these innovations refers to the theme of *St. John's prayer* (Fig. 3), introduced immediately after the first flagellation scene, instead of the typical imprisonment one. Depicted standing, in a rather iconic posture, the saint raises his eyes and hands in a praying gesture, while Jesus Christ blesses him from a heavenly mandorla. Unprecedented among the discussed pictorial cycles, the composition illustrates almost *ad litteram* a short passage from the hagiographical account, which mentions the acceptance of the martyrdom by St. John, who "raising the soul's eyes to the sky" praises God after the first torments of the flesh. Having a strong devotional character, the representation suggests more a vision than a simple prayer, while its separate setting in between two narrative episodes confers it visual importance. Prayer and divine contemplation are thus emphasized in the hagiographic narrative from Roman, which should not be surprising given Macarie's well-known monastic and hesychast preferences.<sup>73</sup> The collateral detail of John stepping over the feet of the soldiers who had just beaten him implies that, through faith and prayer, the saint rises above his torturers and the sufferings of the flesh.

Another innovative choice in the discussed selection of scenes consists of introducing the theme of the saints' ascension to heaven, after the death episode. It has been argued that although strictly necessary in all illustrations of martyrs' lives, the representation of the ultimate sacrifice - the consummation of the martyrdom - is usually a quiet, almost anticlimactic episode of these narratives.<sup>74</sup> It is the same in most of the cycles dedicated to St. John the New, where the decapitation itself is just a secondary episode within a more elaborate torture scene. On the contrary, the ascension theme from Roman (Fig. 5) puts an additional emphasis on the death motif, showing saint's immediate ascension to

the celestial home and thus offering the most explicit visual confirmation of his holiness. While the decapitated body occupies the fore ground, the upper part of the composition shows two angels carrying the saint's soul to heaven. In contrast to the sympathetic crowd from the high left corner, the right middle part displays a very interesting selection of characters. (Fig. 13) The white horse from the last torment scene and the Jewish executioner are clearly discernable next to a building which seems to resemble a church, but definitely not a typical Moldavian one. Most surprisingly, two Franciscan monks are witnessing and apparently discussing the whole scene from inside the edifice. Who are they and why their presence there? Their association with the *arma mortis*, that is with the main agents of the saint's death (the horse and the Jew with the sword), suggests their implication in the undertaking. The hagiographic text does not mention such an implication, but a recent contribution to the understanding of the historical context of St. John's martyrdom in Crimea has pointed out the existence of a strong Catholic community in Vospro-Kertch at that time.<sup>75</sup> If this could partly explain the inclusion of the negative Latin character in the text of the *Passio*, it certainly does not imply that the Catholics from Kertch actually played any role in the historical event. Why are they represented at Roman then? Could the learned Macarie have been so well-informed concerning the historical circumstances of St. John's martyrdom as to include such specific details, or is it rather a reflection of contemporary realities of his epoch? It is known that the middle of the sixteenth century was marked by confessional challenges and religious conflicts in Moldavia<sup>76</sup> and that Macarie was directly involved in the persecutions against confessional minorities which took place during the reign of Iliăş Rareş (1551-1552) and the first reign of Alexandru Lăpuşneanu (1552-1561).<sup>77</sup> Moreover, recent historiography has shown that these persecutions were aimed also against the Catholics from Moldavia<sup>78</sup>. Since they coincide roughly with the period when the frescoes from Roman were painted, one can argue that the inclusion of the Franciscans among St. John's executioners, meant to cast a bad light on the local Catholic hierarchy,<sup>79</sup> is another indicator for Macarie's intransigent opposition towards confessional others in the complicated context of mid-sixteenth century Moldavia. While the idea of religious confrontation (and even the damnation of the Jews, following the Christological model) is a necessary *topos* in all martyrdom accounts, the explicit opposition toward the Catholic faith seems to be a specific feature of St. John's *Passio*. It was already present in his earlier hagiographical narratives under the

form of the repeated negative apparitions of the Latin contra-hero, but in the pictorial cycle from Roman the explicit incrimination of the Catholics is additionally emphasized through the discussed iconographical detail. In the outer narthex of his cathedral, Macarie wanted to make sure that the religious message of the original story, namely the superiority of the Orthodox faith when confronted to other confessions, and mostly to the Catholic one, was transmitted in a more polemical tone. It was part of a larger effort to strengthen the position of Orthodoxy, even at the price of open conflict with local religious others, in a time of increasing political and confessional pressure for the Moldavian principality.<sup>80</sup>

A representation of this triumphant Moldavian Church was finally comprised in *The translation of St. John the New's relics to Suceava* scene, the last and most elaborate sequence of the pictorial cycle from Roman. (Fig. 12) Paradigmatic image of the inauguration of St. John's cult in Moldavia, the composition illustrates not only the historical event from 1415, but also an ongoing liturgical ceremonial<sup>81</sup>, as indicated by the ritual objects and gestures depicted, including also the suggestion of bells ringing – a necessary prerequisite in such occasions. Led by metropolitan Joseph and the local hierarchs, the clerics are confined the leading role in the procession, since they are the ones who ritually manipulate the relics, bring them to the city gates and symbolically hand them to the prince. As an anecdotic detail, one notices that among the priests and deacons actually carrying the coffin, a highly individualized hierarch is depicted in a close, privileged proximity to the holy body. Given that the old figure behind him, wearing the episcopal liturgical vestment, is most probably archbishop Joseph, it is not excluded that the central character carrying the bier is bishop Macarie himself, the iconographer and commissioner of the frescoes from Roman.

It has already been mentioned that, compared to the hagiographical text, the representation of the *Bringing of the relics* episode switches the accent from emphasizing the monarch's implication in the officialization of the new cult, to a more conventional iconographic formula, which in turn balances, in visual terms, the role of the Church in the undertaking. That it was indeed an emblematical image of the official institutionalization of St. John's veneration in Moldova is suggested not only by the liturgical character of the represented moment, but also by the strong concern for topographical and architectural details, meant to geographically localize the saint's earthly remains - the core of his local devotion. Especially the rendering of the city of Suceava (in the right part of the image), with its

houses outside the city walls, its fortified citadel and its Moldavian church steeples, was remarked in previous historiography for its unexpected realism.<sup>82</sup> Such accuracy does not reflect only a particular artistic preference, but has deeper implications once related to other topographical suggestions of the composition. The less elaborate architectural setting from the left corner (undoubtedly Belgorod, now deprived of the saint's holy body), the empty space in between and finally the joyous city receiving the relics convey the idea of their journey to Moldova and implicitly of the inherent sacralization of their new destination, through their miraculous power<sup>83</sup>. Suggestively, the first city, where the martyrdom took place and which now lost the relics, is depicted without any churches. On the contrary, Moldavia's capital becomes the worthy depository and beneficiary of the holy body, whose presence legitimizes the city and its political and ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, if St. John's *translatio* to Suceava was indeed acknowledged as the equivalent of a local canonization and since the right to canonize saints was an attribute of ecclesiastical autocephaly,<sup>85</sup> its elaborate visual representation could indicate the intention of portraying a powerful and autonomous Moldavian Church.

At the end of this comparative survey, several preliminary conclusions can be tentatively formulated. Confronted to its textual and visual prototypes, the pictorial cycle dedicated to St. John the New in the episcopal church from Roman share the same primary concern for revealing and promoting his status as a martyr for the Orthodox faith. Outlining his unambiguous affiliation to the martyrial typology conferred the best confirmation of St. John's sanctity and implicitly of the holiness of his relics from Suceava. However, while the fifteenth century hagiographical narratives, both textual and pictorial, focus rather on constructing an authenticated profile of sanctity, the sixteenth century illustrated cycle seems much more receptive for conveying local implications and additional messages when accounting the same story, which are suggestive for the evolution of St. John's cult. Enlarged selections of scenes and specific iconographical details or variations in displaying them were the main visual strategies employed in order to attach new meanings to the promotion and reception of the cult. In the particular case from Roman, these innovations distinguish it from the established formula of St. John's pictorial narratives from at least two points of view. The first one refers to an obvious clerical touch in reinterpreting the written *Passio*, by emphasizing the prominent role of the Church in the institutionalization and administration of the cult.

Explainable in part through the episcopal commission and audience of these frescoes, it was only natural that the local high clergy be represented as main promoter of St. John's veneration in Moldavia, but at the same time it could also suggest an increased ecclesiastical appropriation of the cult towards the middle of the sixteenth century.

The second specific feature of the same pictorial cycle concerns a pronounced polemical tone in referring to other religious denomination and especially to the Catholic one. St. John's martyrdom in the name of the Orthodox faith, is constructed in explicit opposition not only to paganism, but also to Catholicism, thus alluding to contemporary realities of the time and showing Macarie's intransigent attitude toward confessional others. Invested with such polemic overtones, the saint's ultimate triumphal sacrifice symbolically corresponds to the victory of the Orthodoxy against its oppressors and its superiority over internal competitors. In the complicated context of mid sixteenth century, St. John the New was thus promoted not only as an Orthodox neo-martyr, but also as a saint of the Moldavian Church, while the story of his martyrdom was loaded with local implications reflecting the specific confessional challenges this Church was facing at the time.

(All the illustrations belong to the author of this paper.)



Fig. 1. *St. John the New in front of the pagan ruler*

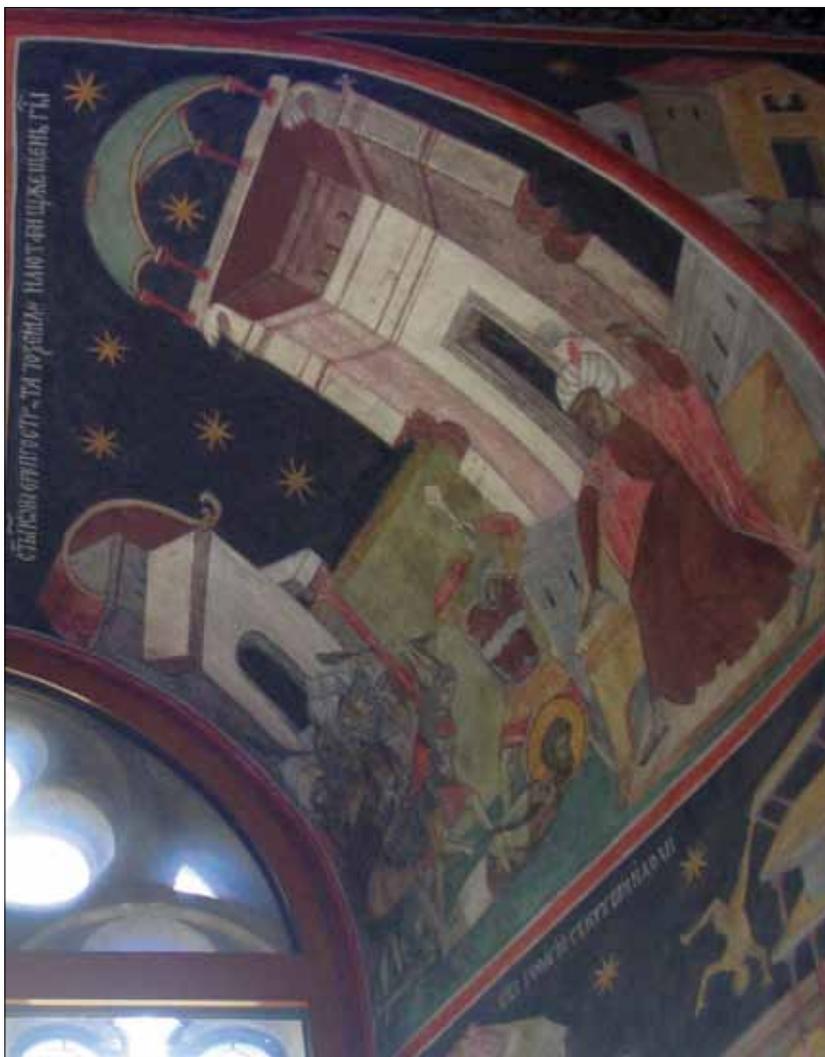


Fig. 2. *The flagellation of St. John*



Fig. 3. *St. John's prayer*



Fig. 4. *The torment and beheading of St. John the New*

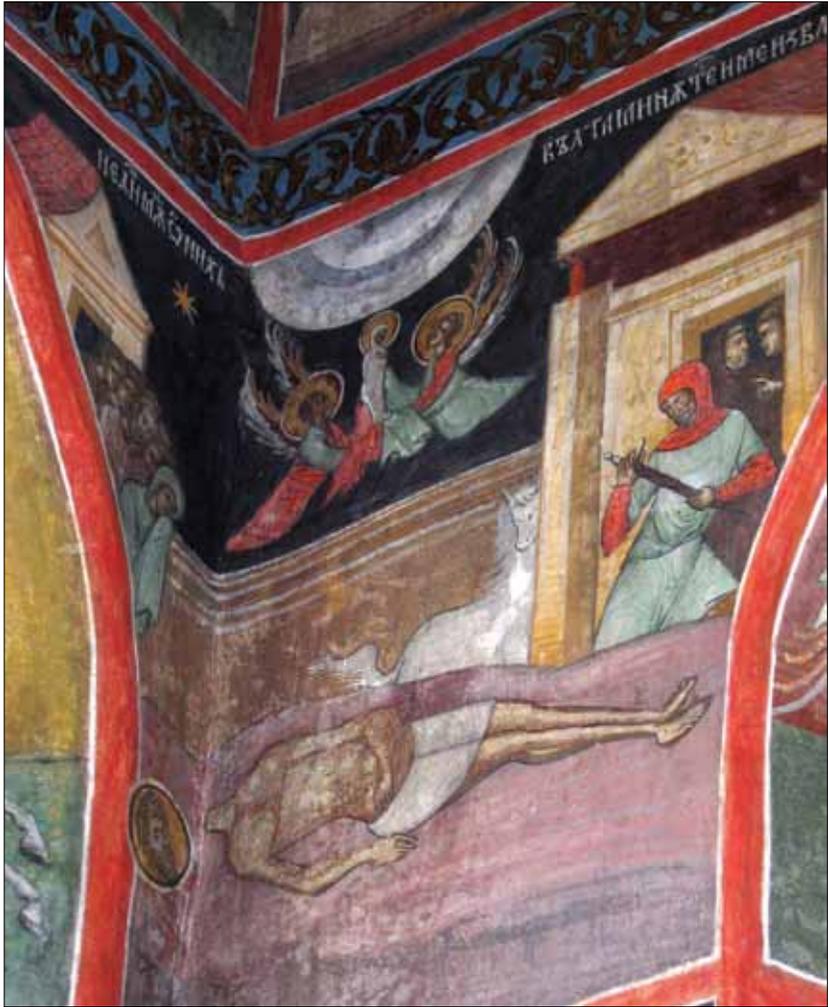


Fig. 5. *St. John's ascension to heaven*



Fig. 6. *Angels censing the St. John's remains and the petrified Jew*



Fig. 7. *The confession of the petrified Jew*







Fig. 10. *The sending of priests to save the relics and The finding of the body untouched*

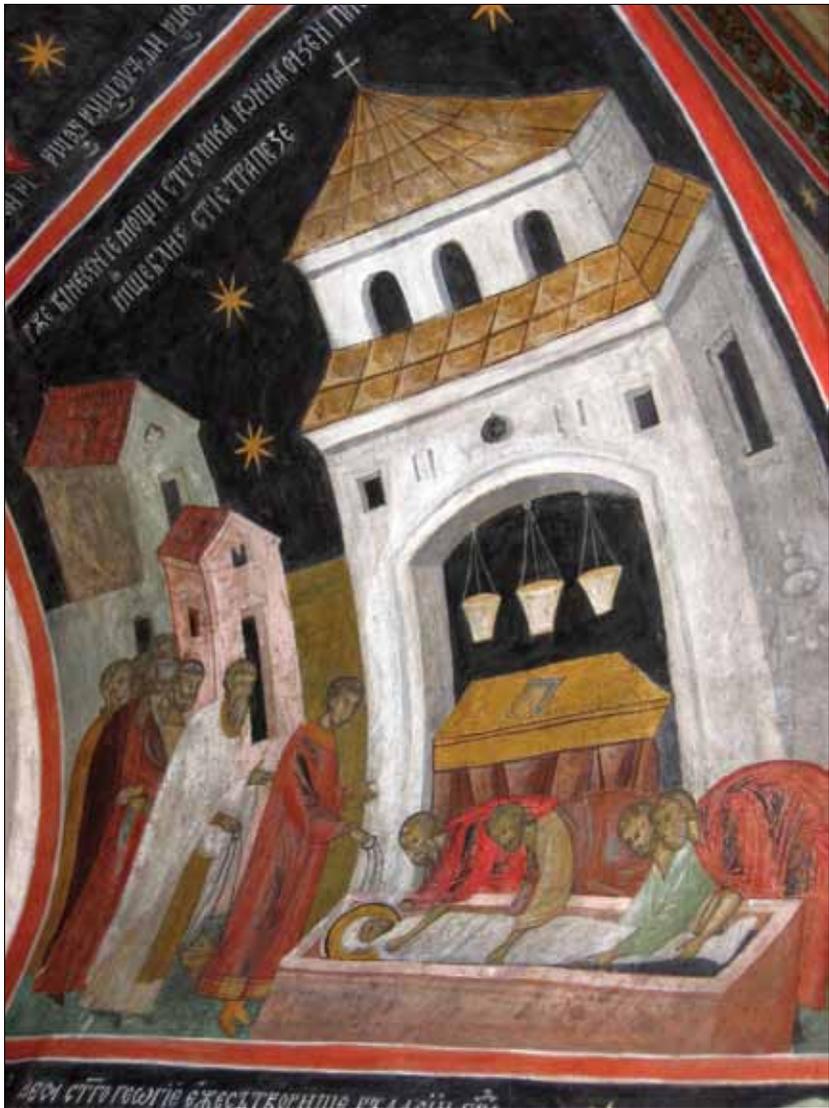


Fig. 11. *The second burial of the Saint John the New*



Fig. 12. *The translation of St. John the New's relics to Suceava*



Fig. 13. *St. John's ascension to heaven, detail*

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> „Pătimirea sfântului și slăvitului mucenic Ioan cel Nou, care a fost chinuit la Cetatea Albă, scrisă de Grigore călugărul și prezviterul din marea biserică a Moldovlahiei”, translated and edited by Bishop Melchisedec, in *Revista pentru Istorie, Arheologie și Filologie*, II, Bucharest, 1884, vol. III, p. 165-174.
- <sup>2</sup> For a critical overview of the historiographic debate concerning the year of this *translatio* and the paternity of the hagiographical text, see Ștefan S. Gorovei, „Mucenicia Sfântului Ioan cel Nou. Noi puncte de vedere”, in Ionel Câdea, P. Cernovodeanu, Gh. Lazăr (eds.), *Închinare lui Petre Ș. Năsturel la 80 ani*, Brăila, 2003, p. 555-572.
- <sup>3</sup> „Svoeia drăjavî” in the hagiographical text, translated with ‘protector saint of the country’ by Ștefan S. Gorovei; Idem, *op. cit.*, p. 557.
- <sup>4</sup> Albeit venerated in Moldavia since the fifteenth century, St. John the New was officially canonized by the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church only in the year 1950.
- <sup>5</sup> As intriguing as they might be, the two scattered pieces of information mentioned by Matei Cazacu in relation to the veneration of an unspecified St. John in Crimea are far from enough to prove the existence of a cult dedicated to St. John the New there, prior to the relics’ transfer to Moldavia. See Matei Cazacu, “Saint Jean le Nouveau, son martyre, ses reliques et leur translation à Suceava”, in Petre Guran, Bernard Flusin (eds.), *L’Empereur hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine*, New Europe College, București, 2001, p. 138-139 and note 6 on page 139.
- <sup>6</sup> For a discussion of terminological aspects pertaining the mortal remains of the saints in the Orthodox tradition, Elka Bakalova, “Relics and the roots of the cult of saints”, in A.M. Lidov (ed.), *Eastern Christian Relics*, Progress-Tradition, Moscow, 2003, p. 19-39 (in Russian language, with an English abstract at p. 38-39)
- <sup>7</sup> The earliest copy was preserved in a *Sbornik* written in 1439 by the famous calligrapher Gavril Uric, at Neamț monastery; see Petre P. Panaitescu, *Manuscrisele slave din Biblioteca Academiei R.P.R.*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1959, ms. 146, p. 245-247. A later version, included in a *Sbornik* copied in 1474 at Putna monastery attests the circulation of the hagiographical text; see Paulin Popescu, “Manuscrise slavone din Mînăstirea Putna (II)”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 80, 1962, nr. 7-8, p. 696-697.
- <sup>8</sup> Emil Turdeanu, “Manuscrisele slave din timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare”, in Idem, *Oameni și cărți de altădată*, edited by Ștefan S. Gorovei and Maria Magdalena Szekély, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 1997, p. 40-41. Although the earliest preserved local version of a liturgical office dedicated to the saint is no earlier than 1534, there are strong reasons to believe that such a text was written much earlier, probably contemporaneous with the hagiographical text; see A.A. Turilov, at [www.praven.ru/text/471404.html](http://www.praven.ru/text/471404.html), under the voice *St. John*

*the New* (I am very grateful to my colleague Ilya Kharin for indicating and translating to me this material); the same hypothesis at R. Pava, "Cartea de cântece a lui Eustatie de la Putna", in *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, 5, 1962, p. 345. A liturgical hymn dedicated to St. John the New was later included in a manuscript from 1511; see *Ibidem*, p. 342-345.

- <sup>9</sup> Two decorated reliquaries have been fragmentarily preserved, namely the silver one – still visible nowadays in St. George church from Suceava – and respectively two panels depicting St. John's martyrdom, from a wooden reliquary. Albeit art historians do not concord in dating the two artifacts, the most influential opinions attribute both pieces to the fifteenth century; see Teodora Voinescu, "Cea mai veche operă de argintărie medievală din Moldova", in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică* 11, 1964, no. 2, p. 265-289; V. Drăghiceanu, "O icoană din sicriul sfântului Ion cel Nou din Suceava", in *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, 8, 1916, fasc. 3, p. 21-24; Corina Nicolescu, "Un nou fragment din racla pictată a Sf. Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava", in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, 44, 1970, no. 7-8, p. 377-390 and, more recently, Constanța Costea, „Despre reprezentările Sf. Ioan cel Nou în arta medievală”, in *Revista Monumentelor Istorice*, 67, 1998, no. 1-2, p. 19-24.
- <sup>10</sup> The pareklesion from Bistrița monastery (1498) and the church from Șipote (1507).
- <sup>11</sup> In the external votive image (1529) of the Bistrița pareklesion or in the (hardly visible nowadays) procession of saints in the *Deesis* composition from Arbore; see Marina Ileana Sabados, "Considerații în legătură cu tabloul votiv de pe fațada turnului-clopotniță de la Mănăstirea Bistrița (Neamț). Inscripția originală", in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 39, 1992, p. 110-114; Sorin Ulea, „Originea și semnificația ideologică a picturii exterioare moldovenesti (I)”, in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 1, 1963, p. 86.
- <sup>12</sup> At Dobrovăț (1529), Humor (1535), Moldovița (1537), Voroneț (1547); see *Ibidem*, p. 84-85; Vasile Drăguț, „De nouveau sur les peintures murales extérieures de Moldavie. Considérations historiques et iconographiques”, in *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 26, 1987, no. 1-2, p. 71-73; Tereza Sinigalia, Ovidiu Boldura, *Monumente medievale din Bucovina*, Art Conservation Support, s.l., 2010, p.190.
- <sup>13</sup> In a chronological sequence, the pictorial cycles dedicated to St. John's martyrdom are: the one from the south-eastern façade of St. George church in Suceava (1534), from the nave of the la Bistrița pareklesion (post 1541), from the southern façade of Voroneț (1547), from the outer-narthex of the episcopal church in Roman (1552-1561) and, finally, the one from the outer-narthex of Sucevița (1596). See Elka Bakalova, „Tzamblovoto *Machenie na sveti Ioan Novi* v rumanskata monumentalna zhivopis ot XVI-XVII vek” [Tamblov's *Passio of St. John the New* in Monumental Romanian Paintings

- of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries], in *Paleobulgarica*, 15, 1991, no. 4, p. 56-77 and Constanța Costea, *op. cit.*, p. 18-35.
- 14 For the role played by illustrated cycles of Byzantine saints' lives in monumental art, in connection to the evolution of their cults, see Elka Bakalova, "La Vie de Sainte Parasceve de Tîrnovo dans l'art balkanique du bas moyen âge", in *Byzantinobulgarica*, 5, 1978, p. 208-209.
- 15 The question of the relation between St. John the New's hagiographical text and the monumental cycles illustrating his martyrdom has been addressed by Elka Bakalova, *Tzambalakovoto...*, p. 60-67 and only obliquely by Constanța Costea, *op. cit.*, p. 24-31. In general, for the relative independence of illustrated saints' vitae in relation to written hagiographical texts, see Barabara Abou-el-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints. Formations and Transformations*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 33- 34; Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "The Vita Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer", in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 53, 1999, p. 150; Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart. Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkley - Los Angeles - London, 2001, p. 45.
- 16 See note 9.
- 17 I make use of the term "hagiographical narratives" as defined by Cynthia Hahn, referring to both textual and pictorial accounts of saint's lives, which create successive and partially independent versions of an original hagiographical story and locate its reception and interpretation in different media; see Eadem, *Portrayed on the Heart...*, p. 29-58.
- 18 This identification was made by Marina Ileana Sabados, *Catedrala Episcopiei Romanului*, Ed. Episcopia Romanului și Hușilor, 1990, p. 100-101.
- 19 See Sorin Ulea, "O surprinzătoare personalitate a evului mediu românesc: cronicarul Macarie", in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 32, 1985, p. 14-48.
- 20 Besides Roman, bishop Macarie is considered to be the author of the iconographical programs from Dobrovăț (1529), from Râșca monastery and from the pronaos and outer narthex of Neamț monastery (1555-1557); see *Ibidem*, p. 14; Marina Ileana Sabados, *op. cit.*, p. 101; Constanța Costea, „Narthexul Dobrovățului. «Dosar arheologic»”, in *Revista Monumentelor Istorice*, 60, 1991, no. 1, p. 10-22; Ecaterina Cincheza-Buculei, „Menologul de la Dobrovăț”, in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 39, 1992, p. 7-27.
- 21 See note 13. Among the illustrated cycles that precede the one from Roman, one should also add the already mentioned decoration of the silver reliquary from Suceava.
- 22 The iconographical method was theorized by Erwin Panofsky in 1955 and successively redefined by its followers or contesters; see Erwin Panofsky, "Iconografia și iconologia: introducere la studiul artei în Renaștere, in *Idem, Artă și semnificație*, translated by Ștefan Stoenescu, Ed. Meridiane,

- București, 1980, p. 57-90; Jan Bialostocki, *O istorie a teoriilor despre artă*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1977, p. 363-400; Brendan Cassidy, "Introduction: Iconography, Texts and Audiences", in Idem (ed.), *Iconography at the Crossroads*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p. 3-16; Peter Burke, "Iconography and Iconology", in Idem, *Eyewitnessing. The Use of Images as Historical Evidence*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 2001, p. 34-45.
- 23 Oreste Luția, "Legenda Sf. Ioan cel Nou dela Suceava în frescurile din Voroneț", in *Codrii Cosminului*, 1, 1924, p. 281-354; for the description of St. John the New's cycle from Roman, see Marina Ileana Sabados, *Catedrala...*, p. 65-67 și fig. 158, p. 307 și 160-168, p. 310-315.
- 24 Teodora Voinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 265-289; Constanța Costea, *Despre reprezentările Sf. Ioan cel Nou...*, p. 18-35.
- 25 Elka Bakalova, *Tzambalakovoto...*, p. 59-60; Teodora Voinescu, *op. cit.*, especially the part concerning the interpretation of the *Bringing of the relics to Suceava* scene, at p. 283-288.
- 26 Sorin Ulea, *Originea și semnificația ideologică...*, p. 86-87.
- 27 Maria Crăciun, "Tolerance and Persecution. Political Authority and Religious Difference in late medieval Moldavia", in *Colloquia. Journal of Central European Studies*, 10-11, 2003-2004, nr. 1-2, p. 26-28.
- 28 For the medieval concept of hagiographical *inventio*, see Thomas E. A. Dale, "Inventing a Sacred Past: Pictorial Narratives of St. Mark the Evangelist in Aquileia and Venice, ca. 1000-1300", in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 48, 1994, p. 53.
- 29 Marina Ileana Sabados proposed the interval 1551-1562 for the painting of the original frescoes from Roman; Eadem, *Catedrala...*, p. 99-103.
- 30 Ioannis Theocharides and Dimitris Loules, "The Neomartyrs in Greek History (1453-1821)", in *Études Balkaniques*, 25, 1989, nr. 3, p. 78-86; F.W. Hasluck, "Neo-Martyrs of the Orthodox Church", in Idem, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, ed. by Margaret M. Hasluck, vol. II, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2000, p. 371-376.
- 31 Cynthia Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
- 32 Ibidem, p. 31-32.
- 33 The different attributions of the piece cover a large chronological interval, ranging from the first half of the fifteenth to the late sixteenth century, or even later. A recent overview of the most important opinions on the subject, with the related bibliography, at Constanța Costea, *Despre reprezentările...*, p. 19-24.
- 34 Teodora Voinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 287-288.
- 35 Ibidem, p. 265-289 and illustrations 5-16 for the most detailed description of the silver reliquary and of its iconography, with good reproductions of all the twelve scenes.
- 36 Liviu Stan, "Despre canonizarea sfinților în Biserica Ortodoxă. Note introductive", in *Ortodoxia*, 2, 1950, p. 264.

- 37 A tentative reconstruction of the historical context of St. John's martyrdom in Crimea, at Matei Cazacu, *op. cit.*, p. 152-158. As for the identification of Cetatea Albă with Kertch, see the most recent discussion of the historiographical debate at Ștefan S. Gorovei, *op. cit.*, p. 560, 564.
- 38 Teodora Voinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 272, fig. 5.
- 39 Ibidem, p. 272, fig. 6.
- 40 Ibidem, p. 273, fig. 7.
- 41 Ibidem, p. 273, fig. 8.
- 42 Ibidem, p. 274, fig. 9.
- 43 Ibidem, p. 274, fig. 10.
- 44 Ibidem, p. 275, fig. 11.
- 45 Ibidem, p. 275, fig. 12.
- 46 Cynthia Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
- 47 Ibidem, p. 60-61; Elka Bakalova, *Tzambalakovoto...*, p. 66.
- 48 Teodora Voinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 276, fig. 13.
- 49 F. W. Hasluck, *op. cit.*, p. 374-375.
- 50 Teodora Voinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 277, fig. 14.
- 51 Ibidem, p. 278, fig. 15.
- 52 Ibidem, p. 279, fig. 16.
- 53 Constanța Costea, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
- 54 In general, hagiographical texts referring to *inventio* and *translatio reliquarum* for saints enjoying a central cult in Slavic-Byzantine countries confer to the monarchic power the merit of initializing their official veneration; see Petre Guran, "Invention et translation des reliques – un cérémonial monarchique?", in *Révue des études sud-est européennes*, 36, 1998, nr. 1-4, p. 196-197, 222.
- 55 The *Bringing of relics...* scene from the of Bistrița monastery – a real *unicum* in the Moldavian representations of the theme – comprises three different episodes in the same narrative sequence: the welcoming of the relics, the princely veneration of the holy body and its ceremonial procession through the city; see Constanța Costea, *op. cit.*, p. 31, with a reconstruction of the scene at p. 35.
- 56 In a typology of Byzantine ceremonies of relics' *adventus*, this is the first phase of such public rituals; see Gary Vikan, Kenneth G. Holum „The Trier Ivory, *Adventus* Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen”, în Idem, *Sacred Images and Sacred Power in Byzantium*, Ashgate, Variorum Collected Studies Series, 2003, p. 116-120.
- 57 See also Elena Firea, "An Official Patron Saint of Moldavia? St. John the New and the Dynastic Significance of His Cult in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries", în *Studia Universitatis "Babeș-Bolyai"*, Historia, 56, 2001, nr. 1, p. 111-134.
- 58 The creation of the Moldavian metropolitan seat has been at length dealt with in Romanian historiography. For the most influential opinions on the subject, see Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, 2nd

- edition, București, 1991, p. 273-282; Ștefan S. Gorovei, "La începutul relațiilor moldo-bizantine: contextul întemeierii Mitropoliei Moldovei", in I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu, V. Cristian (eds.), *România în istoria universală*, III, Universitatea "Al.I. Cuza", Iași, 1988, p. 853-880; Șerban Papacostea, "Întemeierea Mitropoliei Moldovei: implicații central și sud-est europene", in *Ibidem*, p. 525-542; Răzvan Theodorescu, "Implicații balcanice ale începuturilor Mitropoliei Moldovei: o ipoteză", in *Ibidem*, p. 543-566.
- 59 For the conflict with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, see also Vitalien Laurent, "Aux origines de l'Eglise de Moldavie. Le métropolitain Jérémie et l'évêque Joseph", in *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 5, 1947, p. 158-170; Scarlat Porcescu, "Iosif, cel dintâi mitropolit cunoscut al Moldovei", in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, 40, 1964, nr. 3-4, p. 128-138 and, recently, a more nuanced interpretation at Liviu Pilat, *Între Roma și Bizanț. Societate și Putere în Moldova (secolele XIV-XVI)*, Ed. Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, 2008, p. 275-293.
- 60 Petre Guran, *op. cit.*, p. 212, 216; Idem, "Aspects et rôles du saint dans les nouveaux états du «Commonweath Byzantin» (XIe-XVe siècles)", in Laurențiu Vlad (ed.), *Pouvoirs et mentalités. À la mémoire du Professeur Alexandru Duțu*, București, Ed. Babel [Studia Politica], 1999, p. 66-67.
- 61 C-tin Cojocaru, "Grigorie monahul și prezviterul Marii Biserici a Moldovlahiei", in Idem, *Pași prin secole de istorie bisericească*, Iași, 2005, p. 82; Constanța Costea, *Despre reprezentările...*, p. 33.
- 62 Cynthia Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
- 63 Teodora Voinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 285.
- 64 Elka Bakalova, *Tzambalakovoto...*, p. 65.
- 65 Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Les reliques et les images", in Edina Bozoky, Anne-Marie Helvetius (eds.), *Les reliques. Objects, cultes, symbols*, Turnhout, Ed. Brepols, 1999, p. 151
- 66 Such miracles were common in all neo-martyrs' lives; see F.W. Hasluck, *op. cit.*, p. 373-374.
- 67 Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- 68 *Ibidem*, p. 27.
- 69 *Ibidem*, p. 7-8.
- 70 C-tin Cojocaru, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- 71 Constanța Costea, *Despre reprezentările...*, p. 30.
- 72 A transcription of the inscriptions from Roman, with references to the hagiographical text, at Elka Bakalova, *Tzambalakovoto...*, p. 76-77. My deepest gratitude goes to my colleague Ilya Kharin, who translated, verified and sometimes completed the fragmentary text of these inscriptions for me.
- 73 Sorin Ulea, *O surprinzătoare personalitate...*, passim and especially p. 15, 40, 43.
- 74 Cynthia Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- 75 Matei Cazacu, *op. cit.*, p. 152-156.

- <sup>76</sup> Șerban Papacostea, "Moldova în epoca Reformei, contribuții la istoria societății moldovene în veacul al XVI-lea", in *Studii*, 11, 1958, nr. 4, p. 55-76; Maria Crăciun, *Protestantism și ortodoxie în Moldova secolului al XVI-lea*, Presa Universitară Clujană, Cluj-Napoca, 1996, p. 56-88; Eadem, *Tolerance and persecution...*, p. 10-14, 20-36.
- <sup>77</sup> Sorin Ulea, *O surprinzătoare personalitate...*, 41-45; Maria Crăciun, *Tolerance and persecution...*, p. 15-18.
- <sup>78</sup> Eadem, *Protestantism...*, p. 60-61; Ștefan Andreescu, "Presiune otomană și reacție ortodoxă în Moldova urmașilor lui Petru vodă Rares", in *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, 27, 2009, p. 45-48.
- <sup>79</sup> One should keep in mind that when the Catholics were represented as a group among the damned in the *Last Judgment* scene from Humor (1535) they were visually individualized as Franciscan monks; see Maria Crăciun, *Tolerance and persecution...*, p. 22.
- <sup>80</sup> See Șt. Andreescu, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
- <sup>81</sup> The idea was suggested also by Elka Bakalova, *Tzamblovakoto...*, p. 69.
- <sup>82</sup> Paraschiva-Victoria Batariuc, "Imagini ale cetății Sucevei în pictura murală din Moldova", in Marius Porumb, Aurel Chiriac (eds.), *Sub zodia Vătășianu. Studii de istoria artei*, Ed. Nereamia Napocae, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 60-62.
- <sup>83</sup> Ivan Billiarsky, "The Cult of Saint Petka and the Constantinopolitan Marial Cult", in Ivan Biliarsky, Radu G. Păun (eds.), *Le cultes des saints souverains et des saints guerriers et l'idéologie du pouvoir en Europe Centrale et Orientale*, New Europe College, București, 2007, p. 86-89.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.
- <sup>85</sup> C-tin Cojocar, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

**SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- ABOU-EL-HAJ, B., *The Medieval Cult of Saints. Formations and Transformations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.
- ANDREESCU, Șt., "Presiune otomană și reacție ortodoxă în Moldova urmașilor lui Petru vodă Raresș", in *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, 27, 2009, p. 25-59.
- BAKALOVA, E., "La Vie de Sainte Parasceve de Tîrnovo dans l'art balkanique du bas moyen age", in *Byzantinobulgarica*, 5, 1978, p. 175-209.
- BAKALOVA, E., "Relics and the roots of the cult of saints", in A.M. Lidov (ed.), *Eastern Christian Relics*, Progress-Tradition, Moscow, 2003, p. 19-44.
- BAKALOVA, E., "Tzamlakovoto Machenie na sveti Ioan Novi v rumanskata monumentalna zhivopis ot XVI-XVII vek", in *Paleobulgarica*, 15, 1991, no. 4, p. 56-77.
- BATARIUC, P. V., "Imagini ale cetății Sucevei în pictura murală din Moldova", in Marius Porumb, Aurel Chiriac (eds.), *Sub zodia Vătășianu. Studii de istoria artei*, Ed. Nereamia Napocae, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 59-65.
- BILIARSKY, I., "The Cult of Saint Petka and the Constantinopolitan Marial Cult", in Ivan Biliarsky, Radu G. Păun (eds.), *Le cultes des saints souverains et des saints guerriers et l'idéologie du pouvoir en Europe Centrale et Orientale*, New Europe College, București, 2007, p. 81-104.
- BURKE, P., *Eyewitnessing. The Use of Images as Historical Evidence*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 2001.
- CASSIDY, B. (ed.), *Iconography at the Crossroads*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.
- CAZACU, M., "Saint Jean le Nouveau, son martyre, ses reliques et leur translation à Suceava", in Petre Guran, Bernard Flusin (eds.), *L'Empereur hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine*, New Europe College, București, 2001, p. 137-158.
- CINCHEZA-BUCULEI, E., "Menologul de la Dobrovăț", in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 39, 1992, p. 7-27.
- COJOCARU, C., "Grigorie monahul și prezviterul Marii Biserici a Moldovlahiei", in Idem, *Pași prin secole de istorie bisericească*, Iași, 2005, p. 66- 83.
- COSTEA, C., "Despre reprezentările Sf. Ioan cel Nou în arta medievală", in *Revista Monumentelor Istorice*, 67, 1998, no. 1-2, p. 19-24.
- COSTEA, C., "Narthexul Dobrovățului. «Dosar arheologic»", in *Revista Monumentelor Istorice*, 60, 1991, no. 1, p. 10-22.
- CRĂCIUN, M., "Tolerance and Persecution. Political Authority and Religious Difference in late medieval Moldavia", in *Colloquia. Journal of Central European Studies*, 10-11, 2003-2004, nr. 1-2, 5-58.
- CRĂCIUN, M., *Protestantism și ortodoxie în Moldova secolului al XVI-lea*, Presa Universitară Clujană, Cluj-Napoca, 1996.

- DALE, T. E. A., "Inventing a Sacred Past: Pictorial Narratives of St. Mark the Evangelist in Aquileia and Venice, ca. 1000-1300", in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 48, 1994, 53-104.
- DRĂGHICEANU, V., "O icoană din sicriul sfântului Ion cel Nou din Suceava", in *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, 8, 1916, fasc. 3, p. 21-24.
- DRĂGUȚ, V., "De nouveau sur les peintures murales extérieures de Moldavie. Considérations historiques et iconographiques", in *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 26, 1987, no. 1-2, p. 49-84.
- FIREA, E., "An Official Patron Saint of Moldavia? St. John the New and the Dynastic Significance of His Cult in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries", în *Studia Universitatis "Babeș-Bolyai"*, Historia, 56, 2001, nr. 1, p. 111-134.
- GOROVEI, Șt. S., "La începutul relațiilor moldo-bizantine: contextul întemeierii Mitropoliei Moldovei", in I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu, V. Cristian (eds.), *România în istoria universală*, III, Universitatea "Al.I. Cuza", Iași, 1988, p. 853-880.
- GOROVEI, Șt. S., "Mucenicia Sfântului Ioan cel Nou. Noi puncte de vedere", in Ionel Căndea, P. Cernovodeanu, Gh. Lazăr (eds.), *Închinare lui Petre Ș. Năsturel la 80 ani*, Brăila, 2003, p. 555-572.
- GOUMA-PETERSON, T., "Narrative Cycles of Saints' Lives in Byzantine Churches from the Tenth to the Mid-Fourteenth Century", in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 30, 1985, p. 31-44.
- GURAN, P., "Aspects et rôle du saint dans les nouveaux états du «Commonweath Byzantin» (XIe-XVe siècles)", in Laurențiu Vlad (ed.), *Pouvoirs et mentalités. À la mémoire du Professeur Alexandru Duțu*, București, Ed. Babel [Studia Politica], 1999, p. 45-69.
- GURAN, P., "Invention et translation des reliques – un cérémonial monarchique?", in *Révue des études sud-est européennes*, 36, 1998, nr. 1-4, p. 195-229.
- HAHN, C., *Portrayed on the Heart. Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkley - Los Angeles - London, 2001.
- HASLUCK, F. W., "Neo-Martyrs of the Orthodox Church", in Idem, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, ed. by Margaret M. Hasluck, vol. II, The Isis Press, Istambul, 2000, p. 371-376.
- LAURENT, V., "Aux origins de l'Eglise de Moldavie. Le métropolitte Jérémie et l'évêque Joseph", in *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 5, 1947, p. 158-170.
- LUȚIA, O., "Legenda Sf. Ioan cel Nou dela Suceava in frescurile din Voroneț", in *Codrii Cosminului*, 1, 1924, p. 281-354.
- MELCHISEDEC, Episcop, "Pătimirea sfântului și slăvitului mucenic Ioan cel Nou, care a fost chinuit la Cetatea Albă, scrisă de Grigore călugărul și prezviterul din marea biserică a Moldovlahiei", in *Revista pentru Istorie, Arheologie și Filologie*, II, Bucharest, 1884, vol. III, p. 165-174.
- MOURIKI, D., "The Cult of Saints in Medieval Cyprus as Attested by Church Decoration and Icon Painting", in „Sweet Land of Cyprus”. Papers Given

- at the Twenty-Fifth Jubilee Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March, 1991, Nicosia, 1993, p. 238-277.
- NĂSTUREL, P. Șt., "Une prétendue oeuvre de Grégoire Tsamblak: «Le martyr de saint Jean le Nouveau»", in *Actes du premier Congrès International des Études Balkaniques et Sud-Est Européennes*, VII, Sofia, 1971, p. 345-351.
- NICOLESCU, C., "Un nou fragment din racla pictată a Sf. Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava", in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, 44, 1970, no. 7-8, p. 377-390.
- PĂCURARIU, M., *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, 2nd edition, București, 1991.
- PANAITESCU, P. P., *Manuscrisele slave din Biblioteca Academiei R.P.R.*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1959.
- PANOFKY, E., "Iconografia și iconologia: introducere la studiul artei în Renaștere, in Idem, *Artă și semnificație*, (translated by Șt. Stoenescu), Ed. Meridiane, București, 1980, p. 57-90.
- PAPACOSTEA, Ș., "Întemeierea Mitropoliei Moldovei: implicații central și sud-est europene", in I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu, V. Cristian (eds.), *România în istoria universală*, III, Universitatea "Al.I. Cuza", Iași, 1988, p. 525-542.
- PAPACOSTEA, Ș., "Moldova în epoca Reformei, contribuții la istoria societății moldovene în veacul al XVI-lea", in *Studii*, 11, 1958, nr. 4, p. 55-76.
- PATTERSON ŠEVČENKO, N., *The Life of Saint Nicholas in Byzantine Art*, Centro Studi Bizantini, Monografie, 1, Torino, 1983.
- PATTERSON ŠEVČENKO, N., "The Vita Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer", in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 53, 1999, p. 149-165.
- PAVA, R., "Cartea de cântece a lui Eustatie de la Putna", in *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, 5, 1962, p. 335-347.
- PILAT, L., *Între Roma și Bizanț. Societate și Putere în Moldova (secolele XIV-XVI)*, Ed. Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, 2008.
- POPESCU, P., "Manuscrise slavone din Mănăstirea Putna (II)", in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 80, 1962, nr. 7-8, p. 688-711.
- PORCESCU, S., "Iosif, cel dintâi mitropolit cunoscut al Moldovei", in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, 40, 1964, nr. 3-4, p. 128-138.
- SABADOS, M. I., "Considerații în legătură cu tabloul votiv de pe fațada turnului-clopotniță de la Mănăstirea Bistrița (Neamț). Inscriptia originală", in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 39, 1992, p. 110-114.
- SABADOS, M. I., *Catedrala Episcopiei Romanului*, Ed. Episcopia Romanului și Hușilor, 1990.
- SCHMITT, J.-C., "Les reliques et les images", in Edina Bozoky, Anne-Marie Helvetius (eds.), *Les reliques. Objects, cultes, symbols*, Turnhout, Ed. Brepols, 1999, p. 145-168.
- SINIGALIA T., BOLDURA O., *Monumente medievale din Bucovina*, Art Conservation Support, s.l., 2010.
- STAN, L., "Despre canonizarea sfinților în Biserica Ortodoxă. Note introductive", in *Ortodoxia*, 2, 1950, p. 261-278.

- THEOCHARIDES I., LOULES D., "The Neomartyrs in Greek History (1453-1821)", in *Études Balkaniques*, 25, 1989, nr. 3, p. 78-86.
- THEODORESCU, R., "Implicații balcanice ale începuturilor Mitropoliei Moldovei: o ipoteză", in I. Agrigoroaiei, Gh. Buzatu, V. Cristian (eds.), *Români în istoria universală*, III, Universitatea "Al.I. Cuza", Iași, 1988, p. 543-566.
- TURDEANU, E., "Manuscrisele slave din timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare", in Idem, *Oameni și cărți de altădată*, edited by Ștefan S. Gorovei and Maria Magdalena Szekély, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 1997.
- ULEA, S., "O surprinzătoare personalitate a evului mediu românesc: cronicarul Macarie", in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 32, 1985, p. 14-48.
- ULEA, S., „Originea și semnificația ideologică a picturii exterioare moldovenești (I)”, in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 1, 1963, p. 57-93.
- VIKAN G., HOLUM K. G., "The Trier Ivory, *Adventus* Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen", în Vikan, G., *Sacred Images and Sacred Power in Byzantium*, Ashgate, Variorum Collected Studies Series, 2003, p. 116-120.
- VOINESCU, T., "Cea mai veche operă de argintărie medievală din Moldova", in *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, 11, 1964, no. 2, p. 265-289.
- WORTLEY, J., *Studies on the Cults of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204*, Ashgate, 2009.