

Corina Popa, Oliviu Boldura

Maria-Magdalena Drobotă, Anca Dină

ARBORE

history, art, restauration

Summary

Argument	6
PART I: HISTORY AND ART	14
The History of the Arbore Family	16
The History of the Village	19
Court and Church	20
The Architecture	24
The Funerary Monument. The Votive and the Funerary Painting	35
The Painting	40
The Iconography of the Interior Painting	44
The Chancel	44
The Nave	58
The Low Dome of the Pantocrator	58
The Great Feasts	71
Scenes from the Lives of the Virgin, John the Baptist, and Jesus' Childhood	78
The Narthex	86
The Exterior Painting	102
The chancel apse	104
Southern facade	107
The western facade	115
The Style of the Painting	130
Dating the Painting	142

Part II: CONSERVATION OF THE MURAL PAINTINGS AND INTERVENTIONS	148
Technological Aspects of Mural Painting	148
Chromatic Changes of the Mural Painting	166
The Methodology of Conservation-Restoration Interventions	
Between Deterioration Causes, Effect and Specific Treatments	174
Paintings Deterioration as a Result of Infiltration Humidity	177
Capillarity Humidity Effect	180
Structural Deteriorations, The Impact on Mural Painting	181
Deterioration of the original painting by historical interventions and overpainting	184
Painting Deterioration Due to Paint Layer Erosion and Conservation Interventions	194
Painting deterioration due to accumulations, deposits and conservation interventions	198
Mortars Applied in Time and Their Effect on the Original Painting	219
Paint layer deteriorations and restoration of its stability	230
Support Layer Deterioration and Specific Interventions	234
Deteriorations Produced by the Presence of Sulfates and Nitrates	241
The Aesthetical Approach in Regard to the Original	244
Aspects Regarding the Monument's Monitoring	262
Arbore Restoration. The Experience	264
Bibliography	268

Libris .RO

Respect pentru oameni si carti



Libris.RO

Respect pentru oameni și cărți



History and Art

The Arbore commune is situated approximately 40 kilometres north-northwest of Suceava. From the European Road E85 connecting Suceava to Rădăuți two more monuments, characteristic of Moldavian medieval art, can be reached: the Dragomirna church and monastery, founded by bishop Anastasie Crimca (1606–1609) and the Pătrăuți church, the first church founded by Stephen the Great, hosting an exquisite Byzantine-style painting programme. At Milișăuți the road forks to Solca. Seven kilometres away from this crossing there is the old Arbore village. Dominated by soft sloped hills and patches of forest, the whole scenery is projected against the Moldavian Subcarpathians, which border the area to the west.

During Stephen the Great's reign, Moldavia was divided in the Upper Land – nowadays Bukovina – and the Lower Land, its southern half. For centuries, the princely residences were located only in the northern part of the region: the first capital city was Siret, during Stephen's reign the princely residence was established at Suceava, close to the majestic fortress of Suceava, and in the sixteenth century the

princely court moved to Iași. The two metropolitan sees of Moldavia were also located in this region, at Suceava and Roman, and the new bishopric, founded in 1480 at Stephen's initiative, had its see in the northern part as well, at Rădăuți. In their turn, monasteries were built in the centre, in the Neamț county, but most of them were erected in the northern part of the country, in Bukovina. This geographic distribution also matches the settlement density in hill regions in the centre and north of the country, a fact accountable for by the danger of Turkish attacks, increasingly frequent and menacing.

While the princely courts were built in the main administrative and urban centres of Moldavia, the few boyars' courts are in the north, in the villages belonging to high-rank boyars: the one in Dolhești Mari, close to Fălticeni, residence of hetman Șendrea, prince Stephen the Great's brother-in-law; the one in Bălinești, not far from Siret, logothete Ioan Tăutu's court; or the one in Arbore, in the vicinity of Rădăuți, hetman Luca Arbore's residence.

The church in Arbore dates from the most flourishing artistic period in

Moldavian history – the reigns of Stephen the Great (1457–1504), and of his son Petru Rareș (1527–1541). This period followed the fall of the Byzantine Empire in the hands of the Turks in 1453, and saw the Ottomans forcing their way into the Balkans.

Moldavia stands out politically through its fight against the Ottoman Empire and succeeds in maintaining

its internal political autonomy. Given these circumstances, Moldavia sees the development of a defensive system through the erection of fortresses, as well as a complex, aulic artistic synthesis between Byzantine and Gothic art, the crystallization of a Moldavian school of architecture.

The marriages of the two princes to princesses from the Byzantine-Ortho-



Arbore church.
Historical image,
approx. 1960.

dox world contributed to the integration of Moldavian art into the cultural and artistic world of Byzantine tradition. Stephen had married Eudokia of Kyiv, then the Byzantine princess Mary of Mangup (a Byzantine province in the northern basin of the Black Sea). As for Petru Rareș, his wife was Helen, descendent of the Nemanjić Serbian kings.

Moldavia's political relationships with Poland, Hungary and Transylvania left an imprint on the arts, as well. Thus, the architecture of fortresses and princely residences, besides that of churches, reveals an original synthesis between Byzantine and the Gothic morphology.

Moldavian manuscript illumination and mural painting continues the Byzantine-Balkan Paleologian tradition in refined forms, as seen in the manuscripts of the Putna School, as well as in embroideries – epitaphs, liturgical embroideries and tomb veils such as that of Mary of Mangup, nowadays in Putna.

The most characteristic field of Moldavian art, on a par with church architecture, is the mural painting decorating the churches founded by Stephen, such as the ones in Pătrăuți, Voroneț, Popăuți-Botoșani and Dobrovăț. Not only does Petru Rareș, Stephen the Great's son, continue his father's politics in regard to the Turks and the Balkan states, but he also continues his father's artistic and cultur-

al work, by erecting monasteries at Probota, Humor, and Moldovița. This prince, together with the scholars of his time, such as the bishop of Roman, chronicler Macarie, are at the origin of an exceptional early sixteenth-century post-Byzantine phenomenon, the exterior painting. Extremely valuable for their artistic and cultural significance, the monuments with exterior wall painting of Probota, Moldovița, Humor, Voroneț, Arbore, Sucevița, St. George church in Suceava, Pătrăuți, have been included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The church in Arbore is among them, displaying many iconographic distinctive features, as well as hallmarks of a highly-refined craftsmanship, the work of a team of artists of exceptional cultural and artistic level.

The restoration of the interior mural painting in the Arbore church has been recently completed. The painted decoration, seriously damaged with the lapse of time, was barely visible, so much that it was thought to be have disappeared for the most part. Paul Henry noted this in the 30's, and in 1969 V. Drăguț painstakingly identified a few scenes and lamented the almost complete loss of this mural programme. The recovery of these paintings as a result of the recent restoration increases the value of the monument, which now offers the opportunity to study and admire, besides the well-known exterior painting, the

mural decoration inside the church, carried out during the same time and by the same painters.

The name of the settlement was given by the master of the place, hetman Luca Arbore, son to the burgrave of the Neamț citadel, Cârstea Arbore, who probably died in 1479, since he is not mentioned in documents after this date. His son pursued a military career as well. Gatekeeper of Suceava in 1486, Luca Arbore fights by Stephen's side, excelling in defending Suceava during the Polish assault of 1497 and, consequently, he is one of the signatories, in 1499, of the peace treaty of Suceava between Stephen and king Albert of Poland.¹

Luca Arbore remains an important advisor to Stephen's heirs. He stands by his son, Bogdan III (1504–1517) and, after his death, the princely divan entrusts him the tutorship of his young son, Ștefăniță, aged only 11. When young prince Ștefăniță came into power in 1523, his authoritarianism and arbitrary measures trigger the boyars' negative reactions and discontent. Fearing the high boyars' power, the prince accuses several of them of treason and “without judgement or proof” – as Grigore Ureche's chronicle puts it – they are beheaded at Hârlău, in April 1523. Among them

is the gatekeeper of Suceava, Luca Arbore, who had loyally served the country and the court for almost forty years. A few months later Toader and Nichita, two of hetman Arbore's sons, were also killed.²

This act terminated the Arbore family male lineage. The episode is reported in Ureche's chronicle: “That year, in the month of April, prince Stephen beheaded Arburie, the hetman, accusing him of treason, but nobody knows the truth... since fate didn't love a man who had brought up prince Stephen and had such a faith in prince Stephen in his youth, leading the country where so many of his enemies were... And, instead of kindness, he was served with bitterness, for his many efforts being killed without judgement or proof...”³

Hetman Luca Arbore married Iuliana, daughter to equerry Peter. Besides the two sons killed, Luca Arbore had another son, Gliga, who had escaped to Lithuania, and two other sons who had died in their infancy. He also had 6 daughters: Ana, Sofica, Odochia, Mărica, Todosia, Cheldoiaie and Nastasia.⁴

1 Ioan Caproșu, *Biserica Arbure*, Bucharest, 1967, p. 7-8.

2 Ibidem, p. 8.

3 Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, Ed. Minerva, 1981, p. 88.

4 N. Stoicescu, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova, secolele XIV-XVII*, Bucharest, 1971, p. 261.

The History of the Arbore Village

On the 7th of March 1502, Luca Arbore bought the Arbore village from boyars Hărman and Cârstea Horaiț, who had received it from Alexander the Good. The document is issued at Vaslui, stating that 350 Tatar coins were paid and the fact that the two owners handed boyar Arbore the original property documents, bearing the green princely seal. The village was named after its new lord, and the property also included nearby Solca. The property is confirmed by Bogdan III and by Ștefăniță and continued to be owned by the descendants of the family during the sixteenth century.⁵ Ana, the hetman's oldest daughter, inherited the village and the court after the death of Suceava's gatekeeper and of his sons. Ana was married to equestrian Pintilei Plaxa. Since she had no descendants, Ana donated the village, together with Solca and Bogdănești, to Parasca, her sister Odochia's daughter – married to Župan Grigore Udrea –, on condition that "after her death she pray for her soul and give alms for her every year, according to Christian faith."⁶

In 1598, Parasca and her daughter exchange the village for the Stănilești village in the Hotin County, received from metropolitan Gheorghe Movilă, who donates the Arbore village to the Sucevița monastery. Ștefan Tomșa buys the Arbore village back from the Sucevița monastery and donates it to the church he founded at Solca, in 1615.⁷

Court and Church

The village becomes the property of the hetman in 1502, and the following spring he starts erecting the church. According to the dedicatory inscription: "With the will of the Father and the help of the Son and the act of the Holy Spirit, during the reign of the orthodox and adorer of Christ, I Prince Stephen, by the Lord's mercy prince of Moldavia, pan Luca Arbore, burgrave of Suceava, son to old Arbore, burgrave of Neamț, deigned in good will and heart, and, with the help of God and of his Master, started to build this house, in the name of the Beheading of the Venerable Forerunner Saint John the Baptist; the work began in year 7011 (1503), on the 2nd day of the month of April, and they were completed in the same year, on the 29th day of August."⁸

5 I. Caproșu, *op.cit.*, p.8; Dan Dimitrie, *Ctitoria hatmanului Luca Arbore*, in B.C.M.I., 1926, volume 42, p. 38.

6 Maria Magdalena Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru*

Rareș, Iași 2002, p. 402-403 and p. 428.

7 Idem, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

8 G. Balș, *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din secolul al XVI-lea*, B.C.M.I., XXI, 1928, p. 275-276.

According to the dedicatory inscription, the building of the church dedicated to St. John the Baptist was started in April 1503 and completed in the summer of the same year. The very short period elapsed between the buying of the village and the erection of the church shows the boyar's interest in erecting a court as a residence for his family and a church designed to host the family tombs. The stone arcosolium in the church narthex is also dated April 1503, hence the church and the funerary monument were built simultaneously, thus confirming the founder's hurry in arranging his family tomb.

The church was erected in a few months, between the spring and the autumn of the same year. This is not a unique situation! Dedicatory inscriptions of numerous places of worship, small or midsize princely churches, either court chapels or monastery churches, certify that they were built in one summer.

By taking care to ensure a funerary space for his family, hetman Luca Arbore observed the customs of his age. The few churches erected during Stephen's reign as part of boyars' courts (Lujeni, Bălinești, and Dolhești) served as tombs for their founders' families. Being a good Christian, Stephen himself erected two churches at the beginning of his reign, in a time when his main concern was building citadels and princely courts: the first one, Probota monastery, hosting the tombs of his father Bogdan

and his mother Oltea, and the second one, whose church was to serve as a princely necropolis for Stephen and his family, the Putna monastery.

Just like feudal princely residences, the Arbore court must have comprised of the house – a family residence, surrounded by brick and stone defence walls, often including one or several towers.⁹ The church was in the centre of the precinct, serving as a chapel of the court. In the absence of systematic archaeological research, the appearance of the house cannot be retraced. Probably with a lot of changes due to the lapse of time, the house still existed at the end of the nineteenth century, when it was destroyed by a fire and turned into ruins. Archaeological investigations brought to light only ceramic fragments: plates with heraldic and zoomorphic motifs. Despite not being numerous, these materials resemble those found by archaeologists in the royal courts in Suceava and Hârlău. The ceramic tiles, most of them Gothic in style and bearing Gothic motifs, seem to be architectural elements of a stove, some of them being tiles, such as the one dec-

9 Corina Nicolescu, *Arbore*, Bucharest, 1977, p. 5-6. The author underlines that boyars' courts are a lot fewer during Stephen's reign in comparison with the first half of the century, when boyars' courts are documented and confirmed by archaeologists at Bratu, Neteđu, Petești (Bacău), Giulea Dumbrăveni (Suceava). The structure of these relatively simple courts also included military structures.

orated with a deer in front of a Gothic castle, a scene thought to represent St. Hubertus.¹⁰

The rather numerous boyars' courts during the first half of the fifteenth century, i.e. during the reign of Alexander the Good, become much less frequent during Stephen's reign. Within a period of 50 years, while the prince builds or refashions ten of his courts found in villages and towns, only four boyars' courts were erected by high rank boyars from the princely council. The oldest among them are those of hetman Șendrea, the prince's brother-in-law, built in 1480 at Dolheștii mari, and that of knyaz Vitold, at Lujeni. In 1499, high logothete Ioan Tăutu erected the court and church in Bălinești, and the court and church in Arbore were built in 1503. In 1507, Luca Arbore built his second court at Șipote, near Iași, in the village given to him by Stephen in 1476.¹¹

Stephen the Great's authoritative reign, comparable to a centralized monarchy, seems to have involved relative limitations on church founding rights. The prince was the major church founder in the country, a fact implied by the popular legend stating that the prince used to build a church after each battle. The privilege of building courts and churches was granted only to the closest and most important collaborators of the prince.

10 Oprea Petre, *Urme ceramice de la casele hatmanului Luca Arbore*, in SCIA, A.P., 1965, issue no. 2, p. 329-332.

11 Dan Dimitrie, *Ctitoria hatmanului Luca Arbore*, in B.C.M.I., year XIX, volume 42, 1926, I-III, p. 37. Alongside the Șipote village, the prince gave hetman Arbore a house in Iași.



