

## COATS OF ARMS AND ZOOMORPHIC AND MYTHOLOGICAL MOTIFS IN THE MOGOSOIA PALACE, ROMANIA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18509/GBP210351s>  
UDC: 338.483.12:930.85(498)

**Laurentiu-Stefan Szemkovics<sup>1</sup>**

**Camelia Teodorescu<sup>2</sup>**

**Andrei Ducman<sup>2</sup>**

**Cristian Cazacu<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> National Central Historical Archives, Bucharest, **Romania**

<sup>2</sup> University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, Department of Human and Economic Geography; Bucharest, Romania CAIMT (Research Center for Integrated Analysis and Territorial Management), University of Bucharest, **Romania**

### ABSTRACT

The study aims to highlight coats of arms (except for the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia), zoomorphic and mythological elements carved or engraved in stone, printed on leather, painted on paintings or documents at the Brancoveanu Palace in Mogosoia, Ilfov County. Regarding the actual description of the different coats of arms and ornaments, we have taken into account the normatives and principles of the heraldic science. In elaborating this study, we have considered the interest that these heraldic compositions, animal and mythological ornaments could arise in specialists, teachers, students, pupils, but also for tourists who may visit this building. We have considered that such testimonies used by the forerunners, symbols through which they expressed their thoughts and aspirations, could serve to a better understanding of some historical phenomena. Our study is a call for the detection, restoration (on a case-by-case basis), analysis and introduction within the scientific circuit of many more similar artifacts, which are still unknown to the general public.

**Keywords:** palace, Mogosoia, coats of arms, animal ornaments, heraldry

### INTRODUCTION

The Brancovenesc palace from Mogoșoaia (fig. 1) constitutes a great tourist attraction, where tourists can contemplate the construction, the exhibits or they can enrich their knowledge and level of culture. Located at about 15 km from Bucharest, the building was built by Constantin Brancoveanu, the ruler of Wallachia, for Stefan, his second son, and was completed, according to the marble inscription above the door of the east gazebo, on September 20, 1702 [1], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [17]. At the palace, tourists can discover the architecture, the painting, the sculpture, the coats of arms, family seals, the garden and they can possibly analyze other material traces that refer to this impressive objective.

I have described and reproduced the heraldic coat of arms of Moldova, the coats of arms of the Cantacuzins and of Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul, the dolphins, lions, mascarons and other heraldic compositions (without the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia) which are preserved in this palace and which, due to the fact that they faithfully reflect the period in which they were created, can contribute to highlighting the artistic activity of the craftsmen involved such as sculptors, engravers, heraldic painters and can be a rich source

of documenting regarding the painting and sculpture from the Middle Ages and the modern era.

This presentation is part of the series of events meant to praise Constantin Brancoveanu, especially since, a few years ago, by the Romanian Government Decision no. 1,167 / 2013, the year 2014 was declared the “Year of Brancoveanu”, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the martyrdom of the family of Brâncoveanu.



**Figure 1.** The Palace from Mogosoaia (eastern side).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Regarding the method used to develop this study, we have gone through the following steps: 1. Identification of the Brancovenesc Palace from Mogosoaia where there are heraldic compositions of Moldova, of the Cantacuzino family, of the Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul and others; 2. Visiting this edifice, researching and photographing the heraldic artifacts, the animal and mythological ornaments, no matter if they were reproduced on stone, leather, paper or any other material; 3. Analysis of the different versions of coats of arms existing in the palace, taking into account the heraldic normatives and principles; 4. Notifying the interested public about these testimonies of the past, by various visits, events, works or specialized studies, as well as by promoting, for tourism purposes, the coats of arms, family seals, zoomorphic ornaments and the representative signs of the institution that owns them.

## **RESULTS**

A. On the ground floor of the building there is a fireplace that has, at both upper corners, carved in stone, a double composition (fig. 2) that includes the heraldic coat of arms of Moldova [13], [15] in the central part, namely: oval shield, loaded with a bull's head, rendered frontview positioned, with a six-pointed star between its horns (fig. 3).

The same heraldic composition (fig. 5) appears on a stone column (fig. 4) located in the palace garden, in the northern part, close to the building.



**Figure 2.** and **Figure 3.** The chimney with the heraldic coat of arms of Moldova (in the central part).



**Figure 4.** and **Figure 5.** The stone columns and heraldic coat of arms of Moldova (in the central part).

B. The frame at the entrance door located on the eastern side, close to the base of the access stairs to the gazebo (fig. 6), has at both upper corners, carved in stone, a double composition that includes the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family [10]: oval shield, with laurel leaf border, on which there appear brooching, in the four cardinal points, four cross-shaped flowers, loaded with the bicephalous eagle, rendered frontview positioned, with open wings, having an open crown above the heads, with five fleurons and holding in the right claw the scepter ending in a lily flower, while in the left it holds the sword (fig. 7).



**Figure 6.** and **Figure 7.** The coat of arms of the Cantacuzins in the upper corners of the entrance door frame from the eastern side.

The same heraldic composition (fig. 9) appears, with small modifications [13], [14], [15], at the top of the cellar entrance (with a crown with three fleurons above the heads) (fig. 8); again, at the upper part of the door frame (fig. 10), as well as at the end of the staircase upstairs (not included in the shield, holding the sword in the right claw, while the scepter in the left claw, having two male characters as supports, both rendered in profile, facing each other, in squatting position, with hair up to the shoulders, with a long coat up to the ankles, holding with one hand a trumpet which he was blowing, keeping the other arm next to the body) (fig. 11); in the form of a console [5], [6] supporting the ends of the vault arches in certain rooms in the palace (fig. 12), upstairs (not included in the shield) (fig. 13); the middle of the western part of the Elchingen Villa (fig. 14), located in the eastern corner of the palace courtyard, on the left side of the entrance (fig. 15), built during

the second half of the 19th century by Nicolae Bibescu, the owner at that time of the Mogoșoaia estate (not included in the shield and without a crown above the heads).



**Figure 8.** and **Figure 9.** The entrance to the cellar of the Mogoșoaia Palace, having above the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family.

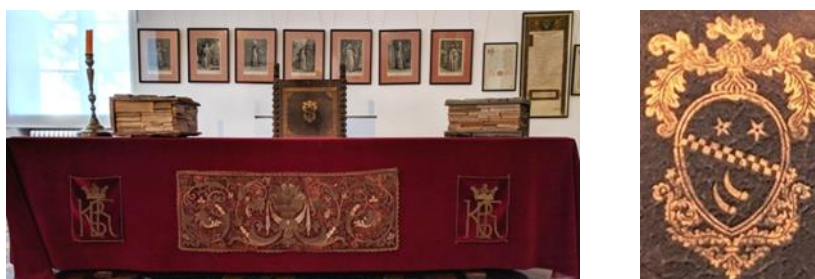


**Figure 10.** and **Figure 11.** The door frame at the end of the stairs located upstairs the palace and the coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family.



**Figure 12.** and **Figure 13.** The representative coat of arms of the Cantacuzino family sustaining the ends of the vault arches in certain chambers of the palace.

C. On the seatback of a chair (fig. 16) in an upstairs chamber, there appear the following heraldic composition, imprinted with golden colour on leather support (fig. 17): a 15th century almond-shaped Italian type shield (buckler), with thin border, crossed over by a band of battlements, bearing two knurl wheels at the upper part, while two fangs at the lower part; the shield, sitted on vegetal ornaments, is being sealed by a head helmet with grids



**Figure 16.** and **Figure 17.** The chair covered in leather and the representative coat of arms imprinted on its seat back



D. On a wall upstairs there is suspended the copy of the hierarchical deed of the Metropolitan Antim dated July 20, 1715 (fig. 18), written in Romanian, in Cyrillic characters. In the document, the high prelate mentions how he built the Monastery of All Saints in Bucharest, which should be in his opinion the example to follow as established by a settlement with 32 heads [2], [11], [12], [16], [18]. The frontispiece of the solemn document (fig. 19), of rectangular shape, on a gold background, comprises, in the middle, an oval shield, with a golden border, with a green plain, over which there broches the silver building of the Antim Monastery, with the roof and the golden crosses, surmounted by a golden cruciferous globe that has a laurel wreath above it, which is made of the same metal, held with one hand each by two angels, with haloes, wings and golden clothes, with the other hand each holding a green palm-tree branch (symbol of regeneration and immortality) [3] leaning on the shoulder, rendered in kneeling position on a purple cloud. The blue sky is dotted with golden stars with six rays each. At the top of the shield, on a golden background, there is Jesus, coming out of the clouds, which are also purple; Jesus appeared flanked, near the head, by the letters: IS - HS (rendered in Cyrillic characters and written in red). The shield is included in a golden oval garland, adorned on the edges with golden baroque motifs; the background between the garland and the shield is black, loaded with golden acanthus leaves and eight other smaller, round shields, with a thin golden border, comprising at the top the attributes of the dignity of a metropolitan - on a red background, a green plain, over which there broches the cross and the crutch, both placed in a jumper, both tied, towards the extremities, by the cords (ribbons) on the flanks of the prelate's hat that surmount the miter. The other seven shields include elements that are each accompanied by the seven capital letters, gilded, which make up the name of Antim, written with Greek characters: ANΘIMOC. So the shields are loaded as follows: the one on the top left - red, with a golden eagle (symbolizing courage, value, flight to heights); the one on the top right side - red, with a golden bat (signifying revival, kindness); the one on the left - red, with a golden jackal (symbolizing justice); the one on the right - red, with a golden hawk (meaning warrior spirit, noble and just) [4]; the one on the bottom left - red, with a golden bee (symbol of diligence, effort, hard work and order) [4]; the one on the bottom right - red, with a golden snake (symbol of penetration, knowledge, immortality, fecundity and prophecy) [4]; the one below includes the emblem of the Metropolitan Antim: on a red background, a golden snail, positioned in a pale, on a green plain, flanked by two green palm-tree branches protruding from its shell, having between the horns a star of the same metal.



**Figure 18.** and **Figure 19.** The hierarchical deed the “hrisov” of the Metropolitan Antim and the heraldic composition in the frontispiece

The snail indicates periodic regeneration, death and rebirth, the theme of eternal return. The gastropod also signifies fertility, movement within permanence, the return of spring

after winter, faith, humility [3], [4]. The garland has, as supporters, two golden modillions, on a green background, and as tenants, two melusines (symbolizing traditional knowledge and culture) are holding the modillions with both hands [12].

E. In a room upstairs, in a painting (fig. 20), there is painted the coat of arms of the Metropolitan Antim [16]: shield, with a thin golden border, with baroque ornaments on the flanks and on the upper edge, with two small concavities on the flanks and with the red tip in brace, loaded with a silver snail, positioned in the pale, with the shell on a green plain and having a gold star with six rays between the two tentacles. The shield has on the flanks two palm-tree branches that cross below. The shield is surmounted by the miter that has above the prelate's hat the corded cords of which are wrapped, in the middle of them, around the cross and the crutch that protrude from the upper edge. Around, the initial golden letters: A - I / M - U (Antim Ivireanul / Metropolitan of Ungrowlachia) (fig. 21).



**Figure 20.** and **Figure 21.** The coat of arms of Antim Ivireanul painted in a painting

F. On the railing of the loggia in the western side [7], [8], [10], [17] consisting of six stone columns (two employees) that support five arches in a brace (fig. 23), there are, apart from the heraldic coat of arms of Wallachia, on the flanks, between columns 1-2 and 5-6, executed by piercing, two dolphins (fig. 22), and between columns 2-3 and 4-5, also executed by perforation, two mascarons (fig. 24).



**Figure 22.** **Figure 23.** and **Figure 24.** Western loggia adorned on the railing with dolphins and mascarons.

G. At the base of the stone columns of the frame at the entrance door (fig. 6) located on the eastern side, close to the base of the access staircase to the gazebo, there are two lions [17] (fig. 25). Two other lions (fig. 26) [13], are placed on a pedestal at the base of the stairs from the lake. A lion, similar to the previous ones (fig. 27), appears sculpted at the base of the stone column [17] (fig. 4) located in the palace garden, in the northern part, close to the building. A lion, shown as sleeping (fig. 28), is placed on a pedestal placed on the western side of the cuhnia (kitchen) located in the eastern corner of the palace courtyard, on the right side of the entrance. A lion, similar to the one above, is placed on

the western side of the Elchingen Villa (fig. 14) located in the eastern corner of the palace courtyard, on the left side of the entrance.



Figure 25., Figure 26., Figure 27. and Figure 28. Lions sculpted at the Palace of Mogosoia

H. On the northern side of the palace there is a monumental gate (fig. 29) whose pediment is a statuary group, damaged in some places, rendering the goddess Minerva in the center [8] (fig. 30).



Figure 29. and Figure 30. Gate with a pediment decorated with a group of statues with the goddess Minerva in the center.

I. Culture in all its forms is the one that stands out, especially in the construction of historical monuments. They are points of attraction, transmitting today, on a case-by-case basis, evidence of the progress of culture expressed in architecture, painting, sculpture, heraldry and other auxiliary sciences of history. According to those presented above, in this case, the Brancovenesc Palace from Mogosoia is attractive; it has, among others, coats of arms, emblems, representative family signs or seals that, through the symbolism of the components, individualize those by whose order they were created, or their owners.

## CONCLUSIONS

Privileged witnesses of the historical currents, as they were defined by the scholarly researcher Yves Metman (between 1969-1980, chairman of the International Sealing Committee), seals and coats of arms reflect, in vivid images, social life in its complexity, bringing to the attention of generations deeds and actions which enrich the knowledge of past social processes. For specialists, historians and tourists, heraldry is not only a simple way to broaden our cultural horizon, but also a means to receive and know the mentality of a lost world, to understand and interpret the historical process reflected by each heraldic symbol.

Constantin Brancoveanu, the founder of the Mogosoia Palace, Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul, the Cantacuzins were prominent personalities in the cultural world, and the heraldic compositions, created in the era in which they lived, were closely related to their position, character, thoughts and aspirations. Enriching or consolidating knowledge about

heraldry remains within the reach of those interested in this interesting auxiliary discipline of history.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Berindei Dan, Epoca și personalitatea domnitorului Constantin Brâncoveanu, Constantin Brâncoveanu și contribuția lui la sporirea patrimoniului cultural, educațional, spiritual și social-filantropic al Țării Românești în contextul european al veacului al XVIII-lea, Romania, pp. 27-36, 2014.
- [2] Boghiu Sofian, Sfântul Antim Ivireanul și Mănăstirea Tuturor Sfinților, Romania, pp. 166-167, 2005.
- [3] Chevaliér Jean & Ghéerbrant Alain, Dicționar de simboluri. Mituri, vise, obiceiuri, gesturi, forme, figuri, culori, numere, Romania, vol. II, III, 1995.
- [4] Clébert Jean-Paul, Bestiar fabulos. Dicționar de simboluri animaliere, Romania, 1995.
- [5] Drăghiceanu Virg., Curțile domnești brâncovenesti. II. Mogoșoaia, Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice, Romania, II, no. 4, pp. 149-164, 1909.
- [6] Drăghiceanu Virgiliu N., Palatele lui Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu din Doicești, Potlogi, Mogoșoaia, Romania, 1926.
- [7] Drăguț Vasile, Arta românească: preistorie, antichitate, ev mediu, renaștere, baroc, Romania, 2000.
- [8] Ion Narcis Dorin, Reședințele brâncovenesti. Istorie, artă și mentalități în Valahia secolelor XVII-XVIII, Spațiul românesc în epoca lui Constantin Brâncoveanu, Romania, pp. 89-113, 2014.
- [9] Negrău Elisabeta, Ctitorii brâncovenesti. Arhitectură și pictură, Ctitorii brâncovenesti. Elemente de artă eclesială medievală (secolele al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea), Romania, pp. 55-152, 2014.
- [10] Popescu Florentin, Ctitorii brâncovenesti, Romania, 2004.
- [11] Sacerdoțeanu Aurelian, Antim Ivireanul arhivist, bibliotecar și topograf, Glasul Bisericii, Romania, XXIII, no. 3-4, pp. 239-243, 1964.
- [12] Szemkovics Laurențiu-Ștefan, Patru documente de la Antim Ivireanul, Sfântul Ierarh Antim Ivireanul - ctitor de cultură și spiritualitate românească, Romania, pp. 192-205, 2018.
- [13] Szemkovics Laurențiu-Ștefan, Teodorescu Camelia, Pop Vasile, Ducman Andrei & Bira Nicoleta, Analysis of the heraldic elements in the building and the documents regarding the Hurezi monastery, Valcea county, Romania (1691-1714), International Scientific Conference GEOBALCANICA, Ohrid, North Macedonia, 12-14 May 2020, pp. 703-711.
- [14] Szemkovics Laurențiu-Ștefan & Teodorescu Camelia, Heraldic representations from the "Stavropoleos Monastery" in Bucharest, Quaestus Multidisciplinary Research Journal, Romania, IX, no. 16, pp. 118-127, 2020.
- [15] Szemkovics Laurențiu-Ștefan & Teodorescu Camelia, Zoomorphic shields and motifs from the Colțea Church in Bucharest, Quaestus Multidisciplinary Research Journal, Romania, IX, no. 16, pp. 128-140, 2020.
- [16] Ștrempele Gabriel, Antim Ivireanul, Romania, 1997.
- [17] Teodorescu Răzvan, Constantin Brâncoveanu între „Casa cărților” și „Ievropa”, Romania, 2006.
- [18] Velculescu Cătălina & Stănculescu Ileana, Animale între numere și flori, Lumea animalelor. Realități, reprezentări, simboluri, Romania, pp. 359-389, 2012.