

# THE SOCIAL STATUS OF ROMANIAN ORTHODOX NOBLEMEN IN LATE-MEDIEVAL TRANSYLVANIA ACCORDING TO DONOR PORTRAITS AND CHURCH INSCRIPTIONS<sup>1</sup>

DRAGOȘ GH. NĂSTĂSOIU

The *Voivodat* of Transylvania and its neighboring counties belonging to the Hungarian Kingdom represented throughout the Middle Ages a border area, where several ethnic groups (Hungarians, *Vlachs*/Romanians, Saxons, and Szeklers) coexisted and where two cultures (Latin and Byzantine-Slavic) and confessions (Catholic and Orthodox) met.<sup>2</sup> Even though they were formally integrated to the administrative structure of the *Voivodat* of Transylvania and Hungarian Kingdom, the territories where a compact *Vlach*/Romanian<sup>3</sup> population lived enjoyed a certain administrative, juridical, religious, and cultural autonomy, which gave individuality to these *districta Valachorum*. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, Romanian Orthodox noblemen (*voievozi* and *cnezi*) were owners or rulers of several villages, where a variant of the customary law (*lex Olachorum* or *ius Valachicum*) was applied in addition to Hungarian laws.<sup>4</sup> The prevalence of these settlements' agricultural economic life led to the establishing of a special regime

<sup>1</sup> A shorter version of this paper was read at the International Medieval Conference "Town and Country in the Byzantine World: Social and Economic Perspectives", American Research Center in Sofia (ARCS), 7–8 May 2015, Sofia, Bulgaria. This study would not have been possible without: the nine-month ARCS Pre-doctoral Fellowship (September 2014 – May 2015), which allowed me to carry on a significant part of my research; Anna Adashinskaya, whose competent advice and great knowledge of Old Church Slavonic and Byzantine Art offered me permanent guidance; and Pavel Murdzhev, who invited me to present a part of my results at the conference he organized. I am extremely grateful to all of them.

<sup>2</sup> For the region's multi-ethnic and bi-confessional character in the Middle Ages, see Pop 2003 and Pop 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The exonym "Vlach" was used during the Middle Ages for designating different Romance-speaking peoples, including the inhabitants of Transylvania. As there are no self-referential medieval sources produced by this people, but one can find various external testimonies stressing the Latin character of its language and the speakers' awareness of it (Papacostea 1988, 222–230; Balard 1980), I shall refer to this Romance-speaking people in Transylvania as "Romanians", a conventional term having nothing to do with present-day Romanian national identity.

<sup>4</sup> Pascu 1989, 134–148; Magina 2013.

of taxation, the *quingagesima ovium*.<sup>5</sup> Their organization into *cnezate* and *voievodate* had as basis the possession of land, the former being hereditary and the latter, in fact an office granted either by a magnate or the king, coming with administrative, juridical, and military prerogatives.<sup>6</sup> Following a period of persecution by the Angevin rulers and their Catholic proselytism in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when being a schismatic meant an inferior social standing and decay from former rights as *iniusti possessores*,<sup>7</sup> Romanian Orthodox noblemen registered a more fruitful period in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was now that Kings Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387–1437) and Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) were faced with the Ottomans' advance and, subsequently, needed to resort also to the military help Romanians could provide them with. Starting with the end of 14<sup>th</sup> and throughout the following century, Romanian Orthodox noblemen received royal charters confirming their land possessions, their services to the king were rewarded with privileges and offices, and their military help was highly valued and praised.<sup>8</sup> King Sigismund's religious tolerance and zeal for the Church Union created a favorable context not only for the development of Romanian Orthodox noblemen's spiritual life, but also for the improvement of their social, economic, and political standing.<sup>9</sup>

In this historical context, Romanian Orthodox noblemen founded churches on their estates, building, decorating, and endowing them according to their modest means. They served either as court chapels, parish churches, monasteries, or

<sup>5</sup> This tax in kind which Romanians owed directly to the king counted one sheep with lamb for every fifty sheep Romanians owned: Păclișanu 1920; Doboși 1937; Pop 1982–1983.

<sup>6</sup> Drăgan 2000, 119–123; Pop 1997 a. For the distinctiveness of Romanian institutions of *cnezat* and *voievodat* from other East-Central and Eastern European cases, see Bogdan 1901–1902; Bogdan 1903–1904. It is this distinctiveness which determined the keeping here of Romanian names and spelling, as not to be confused with medieval institutions elsewhere in the Byzantine-Slavic world, which are called similarly but are in fact different realities. For *cnezat* in Transylvania, see also Pop 1988; for *voievodat* in Hațeg, see Pop 1983.

<sup>7</sup> For measures against Romanians and their noble status' conditioning by the belonging to Catholic confession, see especially: Pop 1997 b; Magina 2008. It is the merit of Holban 1981, 245–254 and Papacostea 1988, 85–89, for having put King Louis the Great's anti-Romanian measures against the background of the general political context in Hungary created by Wallachia's and Moldavia's emergence as states on the South and East of the Carpathians.

<sup>8</sup> Romanians' social-economic status under King Sigismund has been studied especially in connection to Banat, an area in the South-West of Transylvania which was inhabited in majority by Romanians and was greatly exposed to the Ottoman threat: Boldea 1995; Boldea 2008 a; Boldea 2008 b; Popa-Gorjanu 2000. For the same matter under Matthias Corvinus, when one can see the greatest number of royal land donations addressed to Romanians, see: Pop 1991; Costea 1997; Popa-Gorjanu 2002; Boldea 2010. One should not fail to mention the pioneering work on Romanian Orthodox nobility in Transylvania of Radu Popa; for his studies, see *infra*.

<sup>9</sup> For Sigismund's involvement as German Emperor and Hungarian King in the preparations leading to the Ferrara-Florence Council (1438–1439), see Kondor 2009. For the council's consequences in Transylvania and Romanians' flourishing during this period, see the studies in Rusu 1999, 77–123.

sometimes even fulfilled all three functions simultaneously.<sup>10</sup> These churches are preserved today only in the *terrae* of Hațeg and Zarand (South-Western Transylvania)<sup>11</sup> and were built generally in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century. Their construction and decoration spanned sometimes on long periods of time, attesting both the precarious means of their founders, as well as the low availability of craftsmen and painters in the area. These churches' typology and level of craftsmanship qualifies them as pastiches of Western ecclesiastical architecture and, despite their unusual appearance for Orthodox churches,<sup>12</sup> they are indicators of their founders' inconspicuous Byzantine-Slavic culture.<sup>13</sup> In what follows, by using the evidence of donor portraits and church inscriptions in Old Slavonic found in these Orthodox churches, that is, the only type of source coming directly from Romanian Orthodox noblemen, I shall examine the economic and social aspects behind church patronage in late-medieval Transylvania.<sup>14</sup> On one hand, I shall seek into the reasons that made patrons (either members of one or several noble families, or simply members of a certain community) to join their efforts in church building and decorating, a difficult undertaking which spanned sometimes over several generations. On the other hand, religious patronage illustrated often complex social relationships between actors, as well as the particular position of Romanian Orthodox noblemen within the social and political hierarchy of the Catholic Kingdom of Hungary, revealing both these noblemen's real and aspired social status.

The preserved examples indicate that it was usually the nobleman and main landowner of a village, who undertook the building and decorating of a church. A series of exceptions reflecting the patrimonial relationships inside a family or

<sup>10</sup> As shown by Rusu 1997 a, 144–146, the term “court chapel”, which was used first by Popa 1972 a, but was taken over by other scholars, cannot be separated in fact, both functionally and typologically, from the parish churches existing in the medieval *Terra* of Hațeg. For some of these parish churches' monastic function, see Rusu 1997 a, 94–100.

<sup>11</sup> Religious foundations assignable to Orthodox Romanians are encountered elsewhere in Transylvania, but they are preserved only as archaeological evidence and were not included here for obvious reasons. For such examples in Maramureș and Banat, see Popa 1970, *passim*, and Țeicu 2007, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> For these churches' architectural features, see Năstăsoiu forthcoming. The architectural description there is based on the material published in: Rusu 1997 a, *passim*; Rusu, Pascu Hurezan, 2001, *passim* and especially 36–53; Vătășianu 1929; Greceanu 1971; Popa 1988, 225–247.

<sup>13</sup> For Romanians' cultural specificity, see: Panaitescu 1994, 13–29; Pop 2004; Pop 2008. For Byzantine-Slavic cultural synthesis, see: Obolensky 1971, *passim*; Obolensky 2007; Picchio 2003, *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> For using donor portraits and church inscriptions as evidence for historical sciences, see especially the studies by Kalopissi-Verti 1996; Kalopissi-Verti 2003 a; Kalopissi-Verti 2003 b; Kalopissi-Verti 2004; for the author's other studies, see *infra*. For other authors relying on the same type of evidence in their studies, see: Stylianou 1960; Tomeković-Reggiani 1981; Etzeoglu 1982; Stylianou 1982; Paskaleva-Kabadaieva 1982; Bernardini 1992; Semoglou 2001. Throughout this article, I shall refer also to various studies published in two collections: Spieser, Yota 2012, and Theis *et alii* 2014.

village can be added to this model, however. In the case of the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Crișcior, built and decorated in the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>15</sup> it is *jupan* Bălea who is depicted holding the model of the church together with his wife, *jupanița* Vișe (Fig. 1). On the neighboring, southern wall, their children<sup>16</sup> witness the act of the religious foundation by the head of the family, the only one called *ktetor* (founder) by the accompanying inscriptions.<sup>17</sup> The main dedicatory inscription is no longer preserved and one cannot be sure when was the church built and decorated. However, the nobleman *Bolya*, the son of *Boar de Keresztur*, is attested by written sources on 25 August 1404, when he received as *nova donatio* from King Sigismund of Luxemburg several properties in the district of White Criș, the donation coming as a reward for his loyalty and services brought to the kingdom and crown.<sup>18</sup> The church was probably decorated soon after this moment, as a confirmation of Bălea's newly-acquired status, but before 1414–1415, when his death is attested.<sup>19</sup> A man holding alone the model of the church while being assisted by his wife is depicted also in the votive composition in the church in Leșnic (Fig. 2). The scene's fragmentary state and poorly-preserved inscriptions, however, do not allow one to ascertain the identity of the founder.<sup>20</sup> His depiction as unique *ktetor* indicates that he was probably the main (but not the only, as we shall see) landowner in the village at the time the

<sup>15</sup> A 1773 description of the frescoes and accompanying inscriptions, made by some descendants of the noble family in Crișcior, mentions the year 1411, a detail which is no longer preserved. Dragomir 1929, 238–243, rejects this dating on the basis of invalid arguments, which I cannot address here. The 1411 dating is accepted in Tugearu 1985 a and Porumb 1998, 91–93. For a detailed account of the frescoes' iconography and a dating to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (given as such), see Cincheza-Buculei 1978. Regarding the churches in Crișcior and Ribița, I shall not refer further to Trifescu 2010, as this scholarly work augments only the corpus of previous literature on the topic, bringing in fact nothing significant or new.

<sup>16</sup> The votive composition is incompletely preserved: except for the little boy *Stephanus* (depicted below the church's model) and the two older sons *Ladislau* and *Csuka* (!) (depicted on the nave's southern wall), the 1773 Latin description mentions also two daughters, *Szor* and *Filka*, but their representations are no longer extant, Dragomir 1929, 239–240. For the daughters' position within the fragmentarily-preserved votive composition, following their brothers on the southern wall, see Cincheza-Buculei 1978, 35–38; for a different opinion, see Dragomir 1929, 240.

<sup>17</sup> See Catalogue I.I.A–E.

<sup>18</sup> For this and other documents preserved only as 19th-century copies, see Dragomir 1929, 240–246, who considers them fakes made by Count József Kemény, well-known for his forgeries of documents connected to medieval Transylvania (Mályusz 1988). The 1404 charter, however, might contain authentic information, King Sigismund having made the same day several other donations addressed to Romanian Orthodox noblemen in the area (Mályusz 1988, 212, n. 58). For the document's text, see Hurmuzaki, Densușianu 1890, 433–434 (doc. no. CCCLVII). The information offered by these Crișcior-related copies should be reexamined critically and not dismissed *in corpore* as forgeries, because the information they offer is often confirmed by the evidence coming from the votive composition itself and archaeological research. For this last aspect, see Lazăr *et alii* 1988–1991. See also Gündisch 1977, 237.

<sup>19</sup> Kemény 1854, 128–129; see also Dragomir 1929, 242–245.

<sup>20</sup> See Catalogue IV.I.A. The surviving letters in the *ktetor*'s name rule out the identity of Dobre the Romanian, as previously suggested, Drăguț 1963; Cincheza-Buculei 1974.

frescoes were painted, namely, sometime during the period between late 14<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> Although both husband and wife are depicted in the votive compositions in Crișcior and Leșnic, there are reasons to believe that only the men played an active role in the religious foundation, their wives being depicted as a consequence of their matrimonial association. Although both spouses are holding the model of the church in Crișcior, it is only *jupan* Bălea who is called *ktetor* in the inscriptions, while in Leșnic, only the man touches the model of the church, his wife following him piously.

Other examples reflect also the division of patrimony between the members of a noble family. In these cases, donor portraits and church inscriptions indicate clearly the hierarchical relationship between male heirs which is established by age and social status. They imply also the common source of the inherited property, which determined heirs to combine their efforts and participate together in a religious foundation. This form of joint *ktetorship* is illustrated, on one hand, by the fragmentary inscription of Saint Nicholas Church in Hălmagiu (Fig. 3). It credits *jupan* Moga and his brother with the renewal of some works,<sup>22</sup> probably the painting of the sanctuary and triumphal arch, because the edifice was built in a unitary stage.<sup>23</sup> The frescoes' provincial Gothic style ascribes the mural decoration of the sanctuary to the late-14<sup>th</sup> or early-15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>24</sup> while the partially-preserved inscription attests the presence in Hălmagiu during this period of Moga noble family, which is otherwise not associated in the written sources with the settlement before 1420s.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, the votive composition in Saint Nicholas Church in Ribița, painted probably in the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>26</sup> depicts the brothers

<sup>21</sup> Presently, the medieval frescoes in the church's nave are hardly visible under a thick layer of smoke and, until their cleaning and restoration will be undertaken, their dating remains hypothetical. For the church's murals, see the studies in the previous note and Mocanu 1985. The frescoes' dating after 1395 proposed by Cincheza-Buculei 1974, and revolving around the donation of Leșnic in 1394 and the battle of Ghindăoani in 1395 should certainly be revisited.

<sup>22</sup> See Catalogue III.1.A.

<sup>23</sup> Căpățînă 1976, 80, and Rusu, Pascu Hurezan 2001, 98.

<sup>24</sup> The sanctuary's mural decoration is the work of a painter/workshop trained in a Central-European artistic milieu, as indicated by his/its provincial, late-Gothic style deriving from the Friul School and encountered in a series of Catholic churches in medieval Hungary at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. For stylistic analogies, see Prioteasa 2011, 149 and figs. 7.56–61; see also Năstăsoiu forthcoming, n. 29–30. For a dating to the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, see Mardare 1980, 109; for a dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century's first half, see Cincheza-Buculei 1984, 21–22.

<sup>25</sup> Rusu 1993, 91, 96–7; Eskenasy 1975, 25–26.

<sup>26</sup> The partially-preserved dedicatory inscription in Ribița no longer contains the year, its absence generating a series of hypotheses for the frescoes' date: 1404 – Nemes 1868, 63–64; 1417 – Dragomir 1929, 249–256; and 1414 – Rusu 1991. The frescoes' uncovering and restoration initiated in 1995, Cincheza-Buculei 1995, but not completed yet, revealed another partially-preserved inscription in the sanctuary, which contained initially a year (now lost), misread as 1407 in Popa 1995, 24 and fig. 6. Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014 corrected its reading, reconstructed the inscription, and proposed hypothetically the year 1393 for the frescoes in the sanctuary. Only the restoration's much-awaited completion can now shed light on the matter. See also Tugearu 1985 b.

Vladislavu and Miclăușu offering their religious foundation to the church's patron saint (Fig. 4). They are assisted passively in this act by their wives and children.<sup>27</sup> The hierarchical perspective showing the kneeling founders,<sup>28</sup> as well as the fact that only the older brother touches the church's model and is called *ketor* by the inscription next to his head,<sup>29</sup> indicate not only the person who had the main role in the religious foundation, but clarifies also the hierarchical relationship between the two brothers. They were probably equal heirs of their father's property, but it was Vladislavu as older son who enjoyed the status of new family head after 1404, when the brothers managed to recover their family's properties, which were previously lost by their father for his *nota infidelitatis* toward the king.<sup>30</sup> The hierarchical relationship between two brothers is made manifest in Hălmașiu by the order of names in the inscription, while in Ribița, it is expressed both visually and textually by the hierarchical perspective and accompanying inscriptions, respectively. One cannot determine whether the brothers had or not different degrees of financial involvement in the religious foundation, but the evidence in Hălmașiu and Ribița, which reflects clearly the hierarchy effective within a family, might be indicative also of this kind of relationship.

Another interesting example which reveals a complex patrimonial relationship, as well as the phenomenon of religious foundation as a type of family enterprise, is that of the dedicatory inscription of the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul ("Serfs' Church") in Sălașu de Sus. The inscription, which was carved in stone sometime during the 1519–1536 period,<sup>31</sup> not only offers information on the church's building stages – an initial wooden church replaced by a stone one –,<sup>32</sup> but sheds light also on the relationships between the members of a family's various generations,<sup>33</sup> which acted as *ketors* for one religious foundation in a sort of collective, but nonetheless family undertaking. Nine persons belonging to three

<sup>27</sup> See Catalogue VI.I.A–H. The representation of Miclăușu's wife was greatly destroyed by one of the pillars built after 1868 for supporting the new vault *a vela* (all six pillars were removed during the 1994–6 period, Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014). The creation of new windows on the nave's southern wall destroyed a portion of the lower register's decoration, between the votive composition and the representation of Abraham's Bosom. It is not excluded that the *ketors'* scene continued here with other figures, probably some of the founders' children, an 1868 description of the inscriptions and church *ketors* mentioning other names, too; these are now missing from the votive composition and dedicatory inscription, Nemes 1868. 63–64. Today, only little Ana, Vladislavu's daughter, is visible below the model of the church.

<sup>28</sup> Their importance is revealed visually by the characters' order and decreasing size, Tugearu 1985 b, 133.

<sup>29</sup> See Catalogue VI.I.C and F.

<sup>30</sup> Members of the noble family in Ribița appear in written sources only around mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, Rusu 1991, 7, but the 1868 description (that is, before the building's interior alterations), made by a native of Ribița and descendant of the noble family itself, who used possibly documents from his family's archive. offers this information, Nemes 1868, 64. For a critical examination of this information, see Rusu 1991, 7–8, and Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Rusu et alii 1987–1988; Rusu 1997 a, 292–297; for the inscription, see Catalogue VII.IA.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, lines 2–3, cf. Rusu 1997 a, 293, 295.

<sup>33</sup> For the family's genealogy during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Rusu 1997 a, 294.

generations of the noble family of Sărăcin fulfilled the function of *ktetors* for a modest-size church, their endeavors spanning on more than half a century. Two brothers, Sărăcin I and Ionuș/Ianăș, erected initially a wooden church sometime during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Sărăcin I having died without heirs, it was the sons of Ionuș/Ianăș, i.e. Sărăcin II and Mihaiu, who endeavored to replace the wooden church by a stone edifice. However, Mihaiu's death happening during the 1514–1519 interval determined the redefining of *ktetorial* instances in the dedicatory inscription. On one hand, Sărăcin II, together with his son Fărcașu and his wife Dorca, and on the other hand, Mihaiu's successors, namely, his son Iancul<sup>34</sup> and his wife Anca (of Streisângeorgiu), together with Mrăghită, the mother of Sărăcin II and Mihaiu, assumed the completion of the construction. This happened naturally between the deaths of Mihaiu in 1514–1519 and of Sărăcin II in 1536.<sup>35</sup>

The long interval needed by the nobles of Sărăcin for accomplishing their religious foundation could be indicative of a low economic profile for the Romanian Orthodox noble family, but it definitely stresses the family nature of their religious foundation. The inscription implies the duty of the nobles of Sărăcin as main landowners in the village to fulfill the *ktetorial* function for the church which was probably located on their estate. However, despite the collective appearance of this religious foundation, the inscription makes apparent the division of *ktetorial* duties and rights among the male representatives of a single family's branches: initially, between brothers Sărăcin I and Ionuș/Ianăș, later between brothers Sărăcin II and Mihaiu, and finally, after Mihaiu's death, between Sărăcin II with his family and his late brother's heirs, either son Iancul and wife Anca, or Anca alone. The dedicatory inscription in Sălașu de Sus accounts, therefore, for a *ktetorial* model which seems to reflect the succession practice established among Orthodox Romanians: together with property, each succession party (devisee) inherited additionally the *ktetorial* rights and duties of their predecessor (devisor).

The votive composition in the Church of Saint George in Streisângeorgiu, painted in 1408 and remade faithfully in 1743 (Fig. 5),<sup>36</sup> is illustrative also for another type of patrimonial relationship occurring inside a property, either one village or group of villages, owned by Romanian Orthodox noblemen. *Jupan* Chendreșu is the only one called *ktetor* by the inscriptions,<sup>37</sup> a sign that he was credited with the main role in the religious foundation. He holds the model of the church together with his wife, *jupanița* Nistora, and has Vlaico, his son and successor, on his side. Next to Nistora, however, there is depicted also *jupan* Lațco,

<sup>34</sup> He could also be Sărăcin II's grandson, that is, Fărcașu's son. See the discussion of the word *Унѣкъ* in Catalogue VII.1.A, line 4.

<sup>35</sup> Rusu 1997 a, 295.

<sup>36</sup> Bratu 1985 a, 287, 297; Rusu, Burnichioiu 2008, no page number.

<sup>37</sup> See Catalogue IX.2.A–F. For detailed discussions of the 1408 inscriptions, see also Mihăilă 1978 and Bratu 1985 a, 297–299.

whose mature age makes him an unlikely son of Chendreşu's and more probably a secondary founder of the church.<sup>38</sup> The two noblemen in the votive composition – *Kendres filio Gregorii de Zenthgeorgh* and *Laczk filio Nicolai de Zentgewrgy* – appear together in two documents dated to 25 July 1392<sup>39</sup> and 25 August 1404,<sup>40</sup> respectively. From these charters confirming their *kenezial* possessions on Strei and Sălaş Valleys, one finds out that both noblemen owned additionally undefined parts of Streisângeorgiu, where they both had their residence, and that they were somehow related.<sup>41</sup> The votive composition, which illustrates again the phenomenon of joint *ktetorship*, helps one, therefore, if not to understand in detail the settlement's landownership structure, at least to grasp the ratio of sharing the property between the two noblemen: Chendreşu's greater share was reflected probably in his role as main *ktetor* of the church.

Although the accompanying dedicatory inscription assigns to Chendreşu the role of building and decorating the religious edifice in 1408,<sup>42</sup> he was in fact responsible only for erecting the western tower, some other architectural transformations, and the partial decoration with murals of the interior.<sup>43</sup> Another, earlier dedicatory inscription, painted below the window in the sanctuary's axis, credits *cneaz* Balea, priest Naneş, and painter Theofil with the initiative of the church in the year 1313–1314, that is, almost one century earlier.<sup>44</sup> These ones were not the church founders *stricto sensu* either, the architectural and archaeological research revealing that the building was standing already in 1130–1140 and that the 1313–1314 dedicatory inscription was made on the second layer of plaster, corresponding to the church's second stage of decoration with murals.<sup>45</sup>

Another similar case is that of the already-mentioned church in Hălmagiu, which had its sanctuary and triumphal arch decorated with frescoes by *jupan* Moga and his brother around 1400.<sup>46</sup> Sometime during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, another donor commissioned the decoration with murals of the church's nave and requested his depiction to be included in a votive composition. This is now poorly-preserved (Fig. 6), but the *ktetor*'s outline, the church's model, and Saint Nicholas'

<sup>38</sup> Although the main dedicatory inscription assigns to *jupan* Chendreşu, *jupanişa* Nistora, and his (Chendreşu's) *sons* the church's building and decoration (Catalogue IX.2.F, lines 3–4), Mihăilă 1978, 37, warns that the inscriptions' 1743 repainting distorted some of the words which were effaced at that point. The short inscriptions next to the figures' heads, however, designate only Vlaico as Chendreşu's son, while Laţco is called *jupan*, Catalogue IX.2.A and D. For the relationship between Chendreşu and Laţco, see *infra*.

<sup>39</sup> Lukinich, Galdi 1941, 429–430 (doc. no. 383).

<sup>40</sup> Hurmuzaki, Densuşianu 1890, 428 (doc. no. CCCLI); Mályusz 1956, 399 (doc. no. 3368).

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of these documents and the impossibility to specify the two noblemen's kinship, see Popa 1978, 11–13; see also Popa 1972 b, n. 9 and 11.

<sup>42</sup> See Catalogue IX.2.F, lines 2 and 6–7.

<sup>43</sup> Popa 1978, 21–23; Popescu-Dolj 1978, 46.

<sup>44</sup> See Catalogue IX.1.A.

<sup>45</sup> Popa 1978, 23; Popescu-Dolj 1978, 46; Boldura et alii 1978.

<sup>46</sup> See *supra*, n. 22–4.



benediction of the donation are still visible in the composition.<sup>47</sup> What is intriguing is the fact that the new donor, although he kept the work *jupan* Moga and his brother accomplished in the sanctuary, decided to remove the memory of his predecessor-founders by covering only the triumphal-arch inscription with the newly-commissioned frescoes (Fig. 3).<sup>48</sup> Similarly, *jupan* Chendreșu failed to refer to the work of *cneaz* Balea, priest Naneș, and painter Theofil, claiming full *ketorial* rights over their religious foundation, as the three patrons of 1313–1314 did earlier with their predecessors' work, stating the church's initiation by themselves.<sup>49</sup>

*Cneaz* Balea of Streisângeorgiu is otherwise unattested by written sources,<sup>50</sup> whereas the anonymous *ketor* in Hălmațiu is not attested by something else than his votive composition.<sup>51</sup> One cannot be sure, subsequently, what were the reasons the second donors in Streisângeorgiu and Hălmațiu had for omitting the contribution of their predecessors. These facts, however, reflect the mentality of medieval founders, for whom each new work they undertook for the church, either architectural changes or mural (re)decoration, was understood as a religious foundation in itself.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, their depiction as *ketors* holding the church's model was meant also as a display of their social status and economic strength. Romanian Orthodox noblemen's social and economic status was conferred by their land possessions, which made them able to undertake/sponsor church works. Their religious foundations were usually located in the very center of their power and property, so that land possession and religious foundation were strongly interconnected. It is not surprising, therefore, that their social and economic status expressed by means of donor portraits and dedicatory inscriptions reflected also the changes in social, economic, and even legal status, which occurred at some point. One can only speculate, but the second votive composition in Hălmațiu and the dismissal of the first founders' memory by the new donors could occur as a consequence of change in the landownership structure of the settlement. Although still attested by written sources in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the noble family of Moga is no longer associated with Hălmațiu, an indication that its members changed their residence and another noble family took their place.<sup>53</sup> The

<sup>47</sup> According to Cincheza-Buculei 1984, 16, the founder is accompanied by another, poorly-preserved figure, possibly his wife; next to Saint Nicholas, there is the representation of a standing military saint, whom the scholar identifies hypothetically with Saint George. For this second decoration phase, see *ibidem*, 13–24.

<sup>48</sup> The newer representation on the northern side of the nave's eastern wall is no longer preserved, but its surviving minor traces in the upper side of the lower register attest that it covered the fresco layer corresponding to the inscription mentioning *jupan* Moga and his brother.

<sup>49</sup> The *damnatio memoriae* of the first founders in Hălmațiu and Streisângeorgiu is rather exceptional, the practice of successive *ketorship* presupposing generally in Byzantium and the Byzantine-Slavic world the acknowledging of the first *ketors*' work by the second ones.

<sup>50</sup> Popa 1978, 23.

<sup>51</sup> Cincheza-Buculei 1984, 21.

<sup>52</sup> Popa 1978, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Eskenasy 1975, 28.

second donor in Hălmagiu sought thus to express his new status through the commissioning of a votive composition painted in the old church, which was situated probably on his newly-acquired property.

Except for Balea of Streisângeorgiu, the only one called *кнѣзь* by the 1313–1314 dedicatory inscription,<sup>54</sup> the *ktetors* in the other examples are called *жѣпанъ* / *жѣпанъ*, a term which by the 15<sup>th</sup> century designated both the *cnezi* and *voievozi* and reflected more a social distinction rather than a medieval institution.<sup>55</sup> Whereas the votive compositions in Leşnic and that of the second *ktetors* in Hălmagiu<sup>56</sup> show only the male donor holding the model of the church, which he offers to the patron saint<sup>57</sup> while their wives are following them passively (Figs. 2 and 6),<sup>58</sup> the rest of the preserved examples illustrate the phenomenon of joint *ktetorship*.<sup>59</sup> Motivated both economically and socially, the partners of the religious foundation were either brothers (Ribiţa, the first *ktetors* in Hălmagiu, and the first and second *ktetors* in Sălaşu de Sus),<sup>60</sup> owners of neighboring properties having their residence in the same settlement (the 1408 *ktetors* in Streisângeorgiu), or persons belonging to distinct social categories (the 1313–1314 *ktetors* in Streisângeorgiu).<sup>61</sup> It is not excluded either for spouses to have been involved together in such an enterprise (Crişcior or the 1408 *ktetors* in Streisângeorgiu).<sup>62</sup> According to the *ius Valachicum*, Romanian Orthodox noblewomen inherited in equal share with male heirs their father's property, a patrimonial model which differed essentially from the *quarta puellarum* of Catholic noblewomen in medieval Hungary; these ones could not inherit land and received after their father's death, regardless of the sisters' number, only a quarter of the movable patrimony.<sup>63</sup> Whereas the women in Leşnic, Ribiţa, and possibly Hălmagiu witness passively and piously the act of the religious foundation by their husbands, being included in the votive compositions

<sup>54</sup> See Catalogue IX.1.A, lines 6–7.

<sup>55</sup> Drăgan 2000, 264–266; Năstăsoiu forthcoming, n. 14.

<sup>56</sup> They can be analyzed only visually, no accompanying inscriptions, nor written sources having been preserved on the *ktetors*, see supra, n. 20 and 51.

<sup>57</sup> See supra, n. 20 and 47.

<sup>58</sup> See supra, n. 47.

<sup>59</sup> Primarily, joint *ktetorship* was illustrated iconographically as the joint holding of the church by the two *ktetors*; however, there are cases when the two *ktetors* or, even more so, multiple, associated donors could not be depicted all touching the model of the church and, subsequently, painters had to come up with other iconographic solutions for communicating this idea. For joint *ktetorship*, see Cvetković 2013; Adashinskaya 2014.

<sup>60</sup> See Catalogue VI.1.A, lines 2–3, III.1.A. and VII.1.A, line 1.

<sup>61</sup> For the 1408 *ktetors*, see Popa 1978, 11–13, and supra, n. 38–41; for the 1313–1314 *ktetors*, see Catalogue IX.1.A, lines 6–10, and infra.

<sup>62</sup> The two cases are hypothetical, as the votive compositions show both spouses holding the church's model, but only the husbands are called *ktetor* in the inscriptions, Catalogue I.1.A–E, and IX.2.F, lines 2–3. Anyways, this fact accounts either for the man's initiative of the religious foundation or a greater (financial) part he played in its completion.

<sup>63</sup> Popa 1988, 194–195; Rusu 1993, 92. For *quarta puellarum* or *quartaliticium*, see Rady 2000, 103–107; Pop 2002, 31; Magina 2013, 76.

only because of their family ties with the male founders (Figs. 2, 4, and 6),<sup>64</sup> it is possible for *jupanița* Vișe in Crișcior and *jupanița* Nistora in Streisângeorgiu to have participated with parts of their dowry and inheritance share in the act of their husbands' religious foundations. Their involvement in the pious deed could be suggested by the iconographic detail of the two women touching and holding the model of the church together with their husbands (Figs. 1 and 5).<sup>65</sup> The dedicatory inscription in Sălașu de Sus mentions together with the male representatives of Sărăcin noble family also grandmother Mrăghită, *jupanița* Dorca, and *jupana* Anca, who could have been likewise involved in the completion of the modest-size church in their village.<sup>66</sup> The 1313–1314 dedicatory inscription in Streisângeorgiu, which mentions together a *cneaz*, a priest, and a painter as active participants in the religious foundation,<sup>67</sup> is a peculiar case. The association of the three *ktetors* can be indicative of the low economic profile of Orthodox Romanians in the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the minor social differences between the three founders – the landowner, clergyman, and craftsman –, who had probably a very similar social background.<sup>68</sup>

Except for offering valuable information on the founders' identity and devotional practices, as well as on the type and dating of their *ktetorial* work, the main dedicatory inscriptions of the churches in Ribița and Streisângeorgiu deserve special attention for another extremely-significant, common feature. They both mention that the *ktetors*' religious foundation happened in the days of King Jicmund/Jicmon (Sigismund of Luxemburg, 1387–1437), the inscription in Streisângeorgiu adding also the names of the *Voivodes* of Transylvania Ioaneș and Iacov (John Tamási and James Lack of Szántó, 1403–1409).<sup>69</sup> One should add to these examples also the inscription containing the painter's name in the monastery church in Râmeș. Using the same formula, this one states that the work of painter Mihul of White Criș was done at Archbishop Ghelasie's order in the days of a king whose name is no longer preserved.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>64</sup> The children's inclusion in the votive composition (Crișcior, Ribița, and Streisângeorgiu) is similarly motivated by the kinship with their founder parents, who wanted to stress the line of succession by depicting their heirs.

<sup>65</sup> For such examples, see T. Kambourova, *Le don de l'église – une affaire de couple?*, in Theis et alii 2014, 213–229; certainly, the two Transylvanian examples are hypothetical, other evidence than the visual one missing in these cases.

<sup>66</sup> See Catalogue VII.I.A.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, IX.I.A, lines 6–10.

<sup>68</sup> For Romanian Orthodox priests' descending from local noble families and their involvement in religious patronage, see Rusu 1997 a, 65–66, 68; Rusu 1997 b, 142–143. For painters' status and involvement as patrons in church decoration, see also the cases discussed below.

<sup>69</sup> See Catalogue VI.I.A, line 5, and IX.2.F, lines 9–11.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, V.I.A. Drăguț 1966 a could not read the king's name and year, which were given as Louis and 6885 (1377), respectively, by Tugearu 1985 c, 159, 168. A later dedicatory inscription carved in stone, placed above the church's entrance and written in Romanian but with Cyrillic letters, mentions that the church was first painted in the days of King Matthias, in the year 6895 (1386/1387), an information not coinciding with historical reality, as there is no king named as such in the 14<sup>th</sup>

The formula **ВЪ ДЪНИ** (name) **КРАЛЪ** (or any other title of ruler) appears often in dedicatory inscriptions and charters in Old Church Slavonic and is a relevant detail.<sup>71</sup> The mentioning of the date together with the ruler does not serve only to frame chronologically an event, but it also specifies the political structure under which the respective event took place. On one hand, it implies the acknowledging by the donor of the legitimizing political structure and, on the other hand, the validation by the effective political structure of the event, namely, the church foundation.<sup>72</sup> The reference to the King of Hungary in Ribița, and to the King of Hungary and *Voivodes* of Transylvania in Streisângeorgiu reflects faithfully the time's political order: Vladislavu and Miclăușu of Ribița were noblemen of the kingdom only, while Chendreșu and Lațco of Streisângeorgiu were also noblemen of the *Voivodat* of Transylvania, a political structure subordinated in its turn to the Hungarian Kingdom.<sup>73</sup> Another, unpreserved inscription on the nave's northern

century, Drăguț 1966 a, 43. I leave aside the complex issue generated by this second inscription, the present study being interested more in the painter's manner of dating his work rather than in the date itself. Judging by the marginal position of Mihul's inscription (namely, on the image of Saint Gregory the Great, painted on the intrados of the arcade separating the narthex from the nave, that is, in a transitional place), this should not be judged as the main dedicatory inscription of the church, as it has been done previously: it is rather a secondary, autograph inscription of the painter. For inscriptions mentioning painters' names, see Kalopissi-Verti 1994. For the church's medieval frescoes, see Drăguț 1966 a, 39–47; Tugearu 1985 c; Porumb 1998, 230–233.

<sup>71</sup> Agrigoroaei 2012, 114–115 pointed out first to the formula's relevance, but used comparative material in Latin. Contrary to the author's statement, *ibidem*, n. 35, such Byzantine-Slavic material does exist for the period under concern. I give here only several examples of dedicatory inscriptions in churches, although the formula occurs more often in manuscripts and charters: **Сн храмъ светне богородице създа Давнижвѣ и Богоемъ з вратомъ си съ Храномъ, Дробнаковъ Чубкъ. въ дѣни цара Стефана** (my underlining) **в лет(о) ѳ•ѕ•Ѡ•Ѡ• сът. ѕ•Ѡ•** – 1355, inscription on the ruins of the church in Vaganeș, Stojanovič 1902, vol. I, 39, and Tomović 1974, 63; **Сы же монастырь наче се задати лѣто ѳ•ѕ•Ѡ•Ѡ•Ѡ•, въ дѣни благовернаго цара Стефана и христороубнаго краля Влакашина, и сръши се въ дѣни благовернаго и христороубнаго краля Марка.** – 1371–94, inscription in Saint Demetrius Monastery in Suva Reka, Stojanovič 1902, 58; [...] **ни храмъ сы въ дѣни благовернаго княза Стефана, въ лѣт(о) ѳ•ѕ•Ѡ•Ѡ•Ѡ•.** – 1399, inscription in Saint Stephen Church in Lipovac (Aleksinac), *ibidem*, 60; or ... **въ ц(а)р(с)т)внѣ писахъ въ л(ѣ)т(о) [...] тисѣцино нѣ[...] сътъно и Ѡ•Ѡ• и въ д(ѣ)нь ц(а)ра [...] сѣлтан(а)...** – 1412, church inscription excavated in Shumen, Tomović 1974, 101.

<sup>72</sup> For ways of dating a *kaetorial* work in inscriptions, including a discussion of the cases when the ruler's name is included, see Marković 2012. For Byzantine cases, see: Kalopissi-Verti 1992, 25; Foskolou 2006; Marković 2011, 133. For the ruler's mentioning in Orthodox churches under foreign rule, either Orthodox, Catholic, or Ottoman, see especially the last example in the previous note and also Tsougarakis 1998; Spatharakis 2001, 74; Drakopoulou 2013, 122–123, and N. Karamouna, N. Peker, B. Tolga Uyar, *Female Donors in Thirteenth-century Wall Paintings in Cappadocia: An Overview*, in Theis et alii 2014, 239–241.

<sup>73</sup> Ribița was subordinated administratively to the royal *castrum* of Șiria, which belonged to Zarand County, one of the Hungarian Kingdom's border counties, Prodan 1960; Bulboacă 2013, 24, 31–32. Streisângeorgiu was located in the District of Hațeg, an administrative division of Hunedoara County, one of the seven Transylvanian counties. Popa 1972 a, 54.

wall, recorded in 1868<sup>74</sup> and located probably in the proximity of the representation of the holy kings of Hungary,<sup>75</sup> mentioned also that the church in Ribița was built in 1404 under the shepherding of Pope Gregory and Anastasius. The former name was probably that of the twelfth pontiff named as such (1406–1415),<sup>76</sup> while the latter referred possibly to the Metropolitan of Severin Athanasius (1389–1403/1405).<sup>77</sup> The fact that the two pastors' reigning and governing years do not coincide poses indeed a series of problems for the church's dating,<sup>78</sup> but the mentioning of an ecclesiastical authority in the context of church inscriptions is possible, being encountered sometimes in the Byzantine and Byzantine-Slavic world.<sup>79</sup> According to my knowledge, however, the reference to a double ecclesiastical authority, both Catholic and Orthodox, is a unique occurrence.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Nemes 1868, 64.

<sup>75</sup> Rusu 1991, 7.

<sup>76</sup> The reigns of Popes Gregory XI (1370–1378) and Gregory XIII (1572–1585) do not correspond to the church's possible date of building and decoration.

<sup>77</sup> For the Metropolitan of Severin Athanasius, see: Șerbănescu 1970, 1212–1215; Păcurariu 1980, 255; Trapp, Gastgeber 2001, no. 389; Preiser-Kapeller 2008, 345, 481. It is highly uncertain that Athanasius was later the Metropolitan of Mytilene (until 1412), as suggested by Laurent 1945, 177–179, because the hierarch disappeared from public life after December 1403 or August 1405, probably as a consequence of his and other metropolitans' failure to depose the Patriarch of Constantinople Matthew I. For this episode, see Dennis 1967, 100–106; Kapsalis 1994, 52–93; Leonte 2012, 30–37.

<sup>78</sup> The actual date is unimportant for the present discussion, which is concerned with the mentioning in church inscriptions of the ecclesiastical authority. The date's criticism in Rusu 1991, 7–8, should be reconsidered in the light of new information, Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014.

<sup>79</sup> For Byzantine material, see: the inscriptions dating the foundation through the emperor's, patriarch's, and creation years in the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Skripou (873/4), Oikonomidēs 1994; the dedicatory inscription referring to the Patriarch of Constantinople in Omorpe Ekklesia in Aegina (1289), Kalopissi-Verti 1992, 25, 85; the dedicatory inscription mentioning the emperor, his wife, and the Archbishop of Ohrid in the Church of the Holy Virgin Peribleptos in Ohrid (1294–1295), Marković 2011, 133; the inscription recorded in early-20<sup>th</sup> century as existing above the entrance to the church of Theotokos Chrysopege in Ainos/Enez (1424), which mentioned the emperor and his wife, the bishop, and ecumenical patriarch, Mamaloukos, Perrakis 2011, 509–510. For Byzantine-Slavic material, see: the two inscriptions in Staro Nagoričino mentioning the ruler and the monastery's abbot (1312/1313 – exterior, above the church's entrance; and 1318 – interior of the church), Stojanović 1902, 19, 21, and Marković 2012, 29 and fig. 7. The mentioning of the Patriarch of Nicea Germanos in the Church of Panagia tou Mpyrone, Neochoraki in Epiros (1238), Kalopissi-Verti 1992, 25, 49–50, and of the patriarch and emperor in the Holy Savior Church in Veria (1315), Gounaris 1991, 10, are special cases, since the patriarchs themselves participated to the consecration of these churches.

<sup>80</sup> The mentioning together of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, the King of Jerusalem Amalric I, and the Latin Bishop of Jerusalem Raoul in the bilingual dedicatory inscriptions of the Church of Nativity in Jerusalem, is the closest example I could find; however, this case is not analogous to Ribița, since the mentioned secular and religious authorities were directly involved in sponsoring the church's complete redecoration in 1167–1169, Folda 1997, 389; Kühnel 2001, 359; Bacci 2015, 39–40, 51–52. For an interpretation of the case in Ribița as the acknowledging of a double ecclesiastical authority, Catholic and Orthodox, see Rusu 1991, 8.

Except for the king's name, the partially-preserved dedicatory inscription in Ribița mentions also a charter for one's sons, family, and properties,<sup>81</sup> and displays a striking difference between the upper half with tall, elegant letters and the lower half with small, crowded, almost cursive letters. This dissimilarity might indicate that the dedicatory inscription was at some later point remade.<sup>82</sup> From indirect, but reliable 19th-century sources, which supplement one's knowledge on the founders of the church, one finds out that the brothers Mátyás, Vratisláv/Vladislavu, and Miklós/Miclăușu *de Ribice*, together with daughters Anna/Ana and Johanka/Stanc(a)(?), built the church in 1404, being grateful that King Sigismund returned to them *nova donatione mediante* the family properties (five villages), which were lost by their father Vratisláv for his *nota infidelitatis* toward the king.<sup>83</sup> Another partially-preserved inscription painted on the sanctuary's northern wall could indicate, however, an earlier dating for the mural decoration of the sanctuary at least, if not for the whole church: 1393.<sup>84</sup>

It is possible, therefore, that the main dedicatory inscription in the votive composition was only updated in 1404, or soon after, so that it reflected the new social and legal status of the noblemen in Ribița, who regained the king's favor and recovered their family's lost properties.<sup>85</sup> The mentioning of an event taking place in the days of King Sigismund is followed after only one line by the detail of a charter for one's sons, offspring, and property.<sup>86</sup> The event in question might refer in fact not to the finishing of the church's construction and/or decoration, which is specified at length throughout the three final, fragmentary lines, where the accomplishing of a certain thing is repeated obstinately,<sup>87</sup> but to the recovering in 1404 of the family land possessions, which happened as customarily by means of a royal charter. This has not survived for the noblemen in Ribița, only the dedicatory inscription alluding now to it. Similar documents, however, still exist for the noblemen in Crișcior and Streisângeorgiu, as well as for other Romanian Orthodox noblemen in the area, all having received on 25 August 1404 the royal (re)confirmation of their land possessions.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>81</sup> See Catalogue, VI.1.A, line 6.

<sup>82</sup> Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014; until the votive composition's cleaning and restoration will be completed, the above statement is hypothetical.

<sup>83</sup> Nemes 1868, 64; see also supra, n. 27 and 30.

<sup>84</sup> Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014; see Catalogue VI.2.A.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*. Only the completion of the frescoes' restoration can clarify the church's stages of decoration and confirm or not these statements. I want to stress once again their hypothetical character.

<sup>86</sup> See Catalogue, VI.1.A, lines 5–6.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, lines 7–9.

<sup>88</sup> For the confirmation of the land possessions of the noblemen of Crișcior and Streisângeorgiu, both documents issued on 25 August 1404, see n. 18 and 40. The same day, King Sigismund of Luxemburg issued a series of other documents (confirmations of possession, orders of putting in possession, and tax exemptions), which concern other Romanian Orthodox noblemen in the area; for these documents, see Rusu, Pop, Drăgan 1989, 40–51.

King Sigismund's gesture towards Orthodox Romanians came after the defeat of the Transylvanian noblemen who, in their quality of *familiares*, followed the *Voivodes* of Transylvania Nicholas Csáki and Nicholas Marcali (1402–1403) and rebelled against the king, supporting the claims to the Hungarian crown of King Ladislas of Naples.<sup>89</sup> Having overcome any adversity by the spring of 1404, King Sigismund rewarded generously those who took his side in the conflict (among them, there were probably also the noblemen of Crișcior and Streisângeorgiu) and pardoned magnanimously those who surrendered within the required interval, restoring them to their previous state (probably Vladislavu and Miclăușu of Ribița).<sup>90</sup> The mentioning of the king and charter in the dedicatory inscription in Ribița can be understood equally as the two brothers' way of expressing their gratitude to the king, of remembering the overcoming of a difficult moment in their existence, and of making sure that their land possessions will not be at risk again. Whether donor portraits and church inscriptions could fulfill or not in the Middle Ages a legal function is open to debate, but indirect evidence suggests that they did so in a later period. The church inscriptions of the church in Crișcior were copied in 1773 by some alleged descendants of the Kristyóri family. In so doing, they used them as evidence in a legal dispute concerning their right of property over the village of Crișcior and, subsequently, derived their genealogy from *jupan* Bălea, who was fashioned as *Bela Vajvoda de Kristor*.<sup>91</sup>

The complex social and political context suggested by these churches' dedicatory inscriptions and donor portraits is confirmed also by an iconographic particularity of the frescoes in the Orthodox churches in Crișcior and Ribița. Here, one can notice the presence in the proximity of the donors' compositions of representations of military saints on horse and the three Catholic holy kings of Hungary.<sup>92</sup> In Crișcior, the holy kings follow the representation of the *ktetor*'s sons on the southern wall of the nave (Fig. 7), while in Ribița, they are facing the votive composition on the nave's northern wall (Fig. 8). Whereas the military saints' representation was interpreted as a consequence of Romanian Orthodox noblemen's significant military role they had to play in the king's efforts to oppose the Ottoman's advance,<sup>93</sup> the depiction of the Catholic royal saints of Hungary in

<sup>89</sup> For the events' chronology and development, see Engel 2005, 206–208.

<sup>90</sup> For King Sigismund's measures following the 1401–1403 events and his attempt to gain the support of townsmen and lower nobility, including Orthodox Romanians, see Gündisch 1976; Gündisch 1977.

<sup>91</sup> The document is published partially in Dragomir 1929, 238–239, and Réthy 1890, 146, n. 3; see also n. 15–6. Whether the continuation of a medieval practice or only modern contrivance, I hope that further research will shed light on the legal character of dedicatory inscriptions.

<sup>92</sup> Tugearu 1985 a, 78–79, noticed first the connection in Crișcior between the votive composition, Hungary's holy kings, and Saint Helena in the Finding of the Holy Cross scene. For the connection between the *ktetors* and military saints on horse in Crișcior and Ribița, see Cincheza-Buculei 1981, 31. For putting in relation all four scenes, see Prioteasa 2009, 42; Prioteasa 2011, 64, 85, 194–196. See also Agrigoroaei 2012, 123–128. I have recently dealt with the same topic: Năstăsoiu 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Cincheza-Buculei 1981, Prioteasa 2011, 58–64.

the Orthodox churches in Crișcior and Ribița was understood as an expression of the Orthodox founders' loyalty towards the Hungarian royal power.<sup>94</sup> The holy kings' representation was extremely popular among the kingdom's Catholic noblemen, who expressed in this way their political allegiance either to the king or kingdom.<sup>95</sup>

It is possible, therefore, that the founders in Crișcior and Ribița, who had their properties in the County of Zarand, were noblemen of the Kingdom of Hungary,<sup>96</sup> and owed to the king their military assistance whenever this was needed, to have emulated the devotional patterns of Catholic nobility which was placed in a more favorable position.<sup>97</sup> The depiction of Hungary's holy kings was not necessarily a consequence of Romanian Orthodox noblemen's devotional practice (although this cannot be completely excluded judging by their naming practices),<sup>98</sup> the frescoes' donors intending it rather as a reflection of their social and political status.<sup>99</sup> The hybridity of their Orthodoxy which was professed under Latin/Catholic rule was a consequence of the social and political reality of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom. Romanian Orthodox noblemen sought to be integrated into the kingdom's social and political hierarchy/structure and understood the central royal power as a legitimizing source for their local authority.<sup>100</sup>

Consequently, donor portraits and church inscriptions register not only the pious deed of a religious foundation by a noble family, sometimes clarifying the relationship between actors, but they can also offer additional information which can shed light on the political and social structure in which they took place. This way, they receive a range of additional meaning: economic (building, decorating, and endowing a church required a significant financial effort), social and political (the noble *ketors* were integrated to a social-political structure, the authority of which validated and legitimized their actions), or even legal (the reference to a charter in the dedicatory inscription reinforcing and confirming the *ketors*' juridical status).

These noblemen depicted in votive compositions accompanied by lengthy dedicatory inscriptions were indeed the main sponsors of the works of building or decorating a religious edifice, but they were not the only ones acting as church

<sup>94</sup> For the Catholic royal saints' presence in Transylvanian Orthodox churches, see: Dragomir 1929, 233–236; Drăguț 1970, 39; Tugearu 1985 a, 78–80; Tugearu 1985 b, 134; Marosi 1987, 230, 232, 245; Rusu 1991, 8; Rusu 1999, 137; Szakács 2006, 326–329; Terdik 2007; Prioteasa 2009; Năstăsoiu 2009, 50–55 Năstăsoiu 2015; Năstăsoiu forthcoming, n. 40–4. The authors' different emphasis makes opinions seem rather divergent and the Orthodox commissioners' motivation for depicting the Catholic saints in their churches is, depending on the scholar's focus, variously explained.

<sup>95</sup> For the *sancti reges Hungariae* iconography in Catholic churches, see especially: Poszler 2000; Gogăltan 2002–2003; Kerny 2007; Năstăsoiu 2009; Năstăsoiu 2010.

<sup>96</sup> See supra, n. 73.

<sup>97</sup> Szakács 2006, 326–329; Năstăsoiu 2015.

<sup>98</sup> Năstăsoiu 2010 a, 50–55; Năstăsoiu 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Năstăsoiu 2015.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*.



donors. A series of other representations of lay persons depicted as supplicants are attested in the mural decoration of these churches. They are represented without a gift, in prayer posture, and asking a saint to intercede for the forgiveness of their sins and salvation. The holy intercessor is present either in the same composition in the proximity of the supplicant's image, or only alluded to in the accompanying inscription. These representations are in the majority of cases contemporaneous with the main votive compositions. For such depictions to appear, it was necessary for the supplicant to have previously made a donation to the church, which was not as substantial as that of the main founders, but it was a form of funding the construction or decoration works, either by the supplicant himself/herself or by somebody else on behalf of a deceased relative depicted as supplicant. Whereas the donation is made manifest in the donors' votive compositions through the presence in the image of the actual gift, that is, the model of the church, the supplicants' offering is only implied by the presence of the donated image itself. Both situations, however, have as finality the obtaining of the forgiveness of sins and salvation.<sup>101</sup> Due to the loss of accompanying inscriptions, the majority of portrayed supplicants remains anonymous. Their presence in church decoration, however, is indicative not only of the devotional practices of a certain community, but also of its members' economic means and need for recognition of their status as important members of a social group by means of pious deeds.<sup>102</sup>

In Hălmaşiu, on the eastern side of the lower register of the nave's northern wall, corresponding to the church's second stage of mural decoration (second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>103</sup> there is the representation of two supplicants kneeling next to the Enthroned Virgin with Child (Fig. 9). The presentation gesture of the Holy

<sup>101</sup> For the distinction between donor and supplicant, see Linda Safran, *Deconstructing Donors in Medieval Southern Italy*, in Theis et alii 2014, 135–151; for the distinction's arbitrary character, see N. Patterson Ševčenko, *The Portrait of Theodore Metochites at Chora*, in Spieser, Yota 2012, 189. For representations of models of churches, see: Marinković 2007; Marinković 2011; Marinković 2013. For images of donation in other media than mural painting, see Patterson Ševčenko 1993–1994, with bibliography.

<sup>102</sup> I excluded from this discussion the representation below the western tribune in Sântămăria Orlea, which shows two female donors kneeling and being blessed by God's hand, because of the representation's bad state of preservation, seemingly Western iconography, and uncertain dating. The two donors are shown in upright posture and having their hands joined in prayer. According to Bratu 1985 b. 230–232, the character on the right side holds a small, cylindrical object. As shown by Agrigoroaei 2014, it is not certain that the donors' scene was executed between 1447 (the moment when the Romanian Orthodox noble family of Câdea received from John Hunyadi the settlement previously owned by Catholics) and 1484 (the year given by a graffito on the scene's lower side); another graffito on *Pauper Paulus'* representation below the western tribune offers an earlier date (1430s), pointing out to the frescoes' dating to a period when Sântămăria Orlea was still in the possession of Catholics. It is, therefore, more cautious for art historians to wait the frescoes' cleaning and restoration before making any stylistic judgment and pronounce themselves on the contemporaneousness of all four scenes below the western tribune in Sântămăria Orlea; for a similar recommendation, see also Burnichioiu 2009, 308.

<sup>103</sup> See supra, n. 46–7 and 51.

Mother of Christ recommends her as intercessor next to her Son, who blesses the two praying figures. The fresco is badly preserved and the inscriptions lost, so one cannot know anything about the supplicants' identity, probably two young women, judging by the flowers which adorn the long hair falling down their backs.<sup>104</sup> They were probably the daughters of the anonymous, church-holding donor appearing on the same wall (Fig. 6), the girls' exclusion from the contemporaneous, main votive composition and their depiction in a distinct scene indicating their particular position within the *ktetor's* family at the time the two votive images were painted.<sup>105</sup> The depiction's place above two tombs, one of them belonging to a child holding in his/her hand a silver coin issued during Matthias Corvinus' reign (1458–1490),<sup>106</sup> indicates that the fresco and tomb are coeval and suggests that the image fulfilled the function of funerary portrait for the two female supplicants, being commissioned by the same donors appearing in the main votive composition for the purpose of their daughters' salvation.<sup>107</sup> An unidentifiable lay figure is also the beardless man, who is depicted on the draperies' register on the southern wall of the nave in Leşnic (Fig. 10).<sup>108</sup> Represented in a red-brown costume, he stands and holds two uncertain, poorly-preserved objects, possibly a sword and axe.<sup>109</sup> The few remaining traces of an inscription on the right side of his head<sup>110</sup> and his peculiar attributes are not enough evidence to identify this lay character, nor to establish a certain connection between this figure and those of the donors painted on the opposite wall in the contemporaneous votive composition.<sup>111</sup> However, judging by his position below the Last Judgment scene, it is possible that this image, too, was commissioned during the same decoration phase with the nave's other murals by some family members as a donation and prayer for the salvation of the soul of a deceased relative, depicted here as an atypical supplicant (?).<sup>112</sup>

<sup>104</sup> For this representation, see Cincheza-Buculei 1984, 13, 19–21; Prioteasa 2011, 52–53.

<sup>105</sup> The donors' and supplicants' compositions are painted on the same lower register of the nave's northern wall, but are separated by two scenes from the Life of Saint Nicholas, the church's patron, Cincheza-Buculei 1984, 20–21; Prioteasa 2011, 53.

<sup>106</sup> Căpăţină 1976, 80 and fig. 4; see also Prioteasa 2011, 53.

<sup>107</sup> For iconographic analogies, see the examples in Cincheza-Buculei 1984, 20. See also Thierry 1992; Semoglou 1995; Papamastorakis 1996–1997.

<sup>108</sup> For this representation, see Mocanu 1985, 103–105, 110; Prioteasa 2011, 45.

<sup>109</sup> Mocanu 1985, 110.

<sup>110</sup> See Catalogue IV.2.A.

<sup>111</sup> Mocanu 1985, 105.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*. The previously-established connection between the layman and the above scene belonging to the Resurrection of the Dead, which depicts two men carrying one a dead animal and another a man killed by an arrow, remains hypothetical as long as the layman's figure is the only fragment of decoration currently visible on the southern wall's lowermost register. The inscription accompanying the Resurrection of the Dead, which generated interpretations suggesting the layman's death during a battle either against Turks or fellow Romanians in Moldavia, is yet another, difficult-to-prove hypothesis with no real ground. For these interpretations, see Drăguţ 1963, 431; Drăguţ 1970, 28–29; Cincheza-Buculei 1974, 53–57; Mocanu 1985, 102–103. Agrigoroaei 2015 has the undisputable merit of showing that there is no basis for assigning to Dobre the Romanian the role of

Another interesting case is that of the church in Strei, which was decorated with frescoes sometime during the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century by a workshop gathering probably three painters, all trained in a Western milieu and displaying stylistic features revealing Romanesque-Gothic, *Trecento*, and Byzantine elements.<sup>113</sup> This Catholic workshop, the painters of which tried to adapt their skill and craft to the requirements of their Orthodox commissioners, achieved with modest means a particular iconographic program, which puts together Western and Byzantine themes and motifs.<sup>114</sup> The painters scattered inside the church a high number of donor or supplicant figures. On the lower register of the sanctuary's southern wall, there is the standing figure of a beardless man dressed in a red-brown costume of Western type, composed of hood, tunic, and tight pants,<sup>115</sup> who raises his hands in prayer (Fig. 11). He stands next to the representation of Saint Nicholas, who is placed in the proximity of a model of an imaginary, two-tower Romanesque church, a motif repeated next to the majority of hierarchs on the sanctuary's lower register and interpreted as a way of underlining the holy bishops' status as heads of the Church.<sup>116</sup> Because the partially-preserved inscription above the supplicant's head mentions that a certain Grozie of Master Ivaniș painted the church,<sup>117</sup> this figure has been interpreted either as the commissioner of the frescoes or their painter. Consequently, the other supplicant images existing in the church were understood as depicting either members of the donor's family or the other artists and craftsmen working in the church.<sup>118</sup>

On the upper register of the triumphal arch's northern side, between the standing figures of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, but turning toward the former, there is the kneeling figure of a bearded man (Fig. 12). He has a similar costume with that of Grozie (blue hood and tunic) and is depicted in an upright posture with hands raised in prayer in front of his chest.<sup>119</sup> Because his prayer is

*ketor* for the church's building or decoration. However, the author's identification of the layman as a figure of Death is arguable, being based on much later and incongruous iconographic examples. Moreover, the reconstruction of the accompanying inscription as the Romanian word *мoрте* (death) is based on a single letter surely readable in the inscription (o), a fact which represents too weak an evidence to build a hypothesis and support a word reconstruction. I am grateful to the author for allowing me to read his manuscript and express my opinion on it.

<sup>113</sup> Various dates have been proposed for the church's murals: first quarter of the 13th century – Ștefănescu 1932, 223; soon after the church's building, around 1300 – Rusu, Burnichioiu 2008, no page number; mid-14<sup>th</sup> century – Cincheza-Buculei 1981, 5; Porumb 1981, vol. 1, 12, 25–26, Porumb 1998, 385, Burnichioiu 2009, 319–24; at the turn of the third and fourth quarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> century – Drăguț 1965; Drăguț 1970, 18–23; Drăguț 1973; Drăguț 1979, 204; simply 14<sup>th</sup> century – Cincheza-Buculei 1975; Popescu, Tugearu 1985; and first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century – Vătășianu 2001, 407.

<sup>114</sup> Prioteasa 2003.

<sup>115</sup> Prioteasa 2011, 29–30.

<sup>116</sup> Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 238; Prioteasa 2003, 192; Burnichioiu 2009, 321.

<sup>117</sup> See Catalogue VIII.I.A.

<sup>118</sup> For overviews of the numerous opinions on the matter, see Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 239–241; Burnichioiu 2009, 321–323; Prioteasa 2011, 29–34.

<sup>119</sup> The figure has been variously interpreted: the frescoes' donor, possibly *cneaz* Petru, appearing in written sources starting with 1377, Drăguț 1973, 20, 25–26; the main painter of the

directed toward Archangel Michael, who is usually represented weighing the souls of the dead and leading them to Heaven, the image was interpreted as a funerary portrait of the supplicant, this one being already dead when the frescoes were painted.<sup>120</sup> Oriented toward the sanctuary, another small figure is painted next to a niche with unknown function and below the representations of Saints Catherine and Sreda on the southern side of the nave's eastern wall (Fig. 13). It has its left hand bent in front of its chest, while its right hand is raised up to the shoulder's level. The figure's bad state of preservation, however, does not allow one to ascertain neither its gender, nor whether it held or not an object in its right hand, as previously suggested.<sup>121</sup> On the upper side of the eastern jamb of the southern door, there is the badly-preserved figure of either a woman or young man, who faces the interior of the church (Fig. 14).<sup>122</sup> The character is dressed in a long, red-brown vestment, has uncovered head, and stands with hands joined in prayer. Below this supplicant, turning the opposite direction, that is, toward the exterior of the church, there is a smaller, poorly-preserved figure of uncertain gender (Fig. 14). This has one arm bent in front of its chest and holds with the other hand an object, which was interpreted as a tool; however, judging by its long shaft and ochre, round-shaped top, it could be equally a burning candle, indicating that the person was already dead at the time of his/her portrayal.<sup>123</sup>

A standing figure of a beardless layman was depicted by a different painter on the right side of the decorative frame surrounding the joint depiction of the Martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and Saint Nicholas' Investiture as Bishop (Fig. 15). This double scene is placed on the lower register of the nave's southern wall. The supplicant's red-brown tunic long to his knees contrasts with the martyrs' naked bodies and his marginal position on the decorative frame assigns to the figure a special place in the economy of the two scenes. Moreover, his posture similar to that of the Byzantine prayer gesture with separated hands

church, Cincheza-Buculei 1975, 58–60, 62; or the church's second painter, Master Ivaniș, mentioned in Grozie's inscription, Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 245–246, 271. All these identifications have in fact no solid ground and can be considered merely hypothetical.

<sup>120</sup> Popescu, Tugearu, 245–246. For Archangel Michael's psychopomp quality, see: Johnson 2005; Hannah 1999, 46–47; Leontakianakou 2009.

<sup>121</sup> Cincheza-Buculei 1975, 56, where the figure is interpreted as the church's stonemason; see also Drăguț 1973, 20; Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 278.

<sup>122</sup> For the figure's female gender, see Drăguț 1973, 21; for its male gender, see Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 278; for its identification as one of the church's painters and, subsequently, a man, see Cincheza-Buculei 1975, 58.

<sup>123</sup> For the object's interpretation as a chisel, see *ibidem*. When she conducted her research (1975), the scholar saw in the figure's right hand another object, which she interpreted as a wooden hammer (no longer discernible), making her to assume that the figure represented one of the church's masons. However, for Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 278, the light-ochre spot on the figure's left shoulder could be equally a costume accessory. For depictions of deceased persons holding burning candles, see the examples in Kalotina (1332), Kirin, Gerov 1993–1994, 56–57, and figs. 7 and 14, and Velučé (around 1375), Cvetković 2011, 38, 44. In these two cases, the candle-holding figures are two boys, a detail which could suggest an explanation for the smaller size of the figure in Strei.

bent in front of the chest<sup>124</sup> recommends the figure as yet another lay supplicant depicted inside the church.<sup>125</sup> Setting aside another uncertain lay figure which is now poorly preserved and, therefore, difficult to analyze,<sup>126</sup> the church in Strei displays a surprisingly high number of supplicant or donor representations.

The form *є писалъ* above Grozie's head is equivocal, two interpretations being possible. First, it can be taken literally as referring to the church's painter Grozie, the son of a certain Master Ivaniș who, as suggested by the frescoes' style, painted the church together with two other painters, Grozie being possibly their master as the oldest and most experienced among them. Additionally, he fulfilled the role of donor for part of the decoration, such a situation being encountered sometimes in the Byzantine and Byzantine-Slavic world.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, this situation is supported by the evidence of the 1313–1314 dedicatory inscription in Streisângeorgiu, which assigns to painter Theofil the role of one of the church's founders or donors of mural painting.<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, as suggested by the inscription in Hălmagiu, which states that *jupan* Moga and his brother renewed *with their hand* something, possibly the church's mural decoration,<sup>129</sup> the form *є писалъ* can equally designate one of the murals' commissioners, possibly the main one. He could be indeed the son of a certain Master Ivaniș and could participate together with the other portrayed supplicants to the joint initiative of decorating the church with murals. Whether painter or not, Grozie<sup>130</sup> is one of the six or seven supplicants,<sup>131</sup> who joined simultaneously their efforts sometime in the first half of

<sup>124</sup> The Byzantine prayer gesture has the supplicant's hands separated, while the Western one has the hands joined, Kalopissi-Verti 2012, 124–125.

<sup>125</sup> The figure's distinct treatment as compared to the two scenes' other figures was noticed also by Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 250–251; Burnichioiu 2009, 322, but completely overlooked by Prioteasa 2011, 29–34, who makes no reference to it.

<sup>126</sup> Cincheza-Buculei 1975, 63–64 and fig. 10, mentions another smaller, richly-dressed lay figure standing next to a blessing female saint. She assumes that this representation, painted on the northern wall of the space below the church's western tower, is that of the *ketor* offering the model of the church to the Holy Virgin, and that the other lay figures present in the church are portraits of artists. However, the church's model and the saint's identity were assumed on unknown basis, as there is no evidence in the poorly-preserved image to support these claims. For critical examinations of the votive-composition hypothesis surrounding this almost-illegible representation, see Burnichioiu 2009, 323, and Prioteasa 2011, 32.

<sup>127</sup> For painters acting also as (secondary) donors of mural decoration in provincial monuments commissioned by individuals not ranking very high in the social hierarchy or in cases of collective patronage, see the examples in Kalopissi-Verti 1994, 145–148; Kalopissi-Verti 2012, 179.

<sup>128</sup> See Catalogue IX.1.A.

<sup>129</sup> See supra n. 22–5 and catalogue III.1.A. It is hard to believe that the two *jupani* literally painted with their hand the church's sanctuary, the inscription referring rather to the murals' commissioners; an observation made also by Cincheza-Buculei 1984, 21–22.

<sup>130</sup> The name Grozie appears also in a 1545 grafitto in the church, Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 260, 278, making more likely for the portrayed figure to be a local and one of the frescoes' donors, rather than one of the Catholic painters, who came probably from somewhere else.

<sup>131</sup> The decoration of the nave's northern wall is almost completely lost and it is possible for other supplicant or donor portraits to have been depicted on this wall, too; opinion present also in Prioteasa 2011, 32.

the 14<sup>th</sup> century. By means of their pious donations, the church was then completely decorated with frescoes and they were subsequently entitled to have their supplicatory image depicted inside the church.<sup>132</sup>

The relatively high number of supplicants suggests a collective undertaking by the members of the Orthodox community in Strei,<sup>133</sup> the landowners of which appear in written sources only in the 1370s,<sup>134</sup> that is, some considerable time after the church's building and decoration. The frescoes' poor artistic quality and high number of supplicant portraits seem to suggest a low economic profile for the Orthodox donors in Strei, who were compelled by their limited financial means to commission their church's mural decoration to any available workshop appearing at some point in the area.<sup>135</sup>

The interaction of the Orthodox commissioners with the itinerant Catholic workshop lead to the emergence of a series of iconographic peculiarities, such as the coexistence of the supplicants' Orthodox and Catholic prayer postures or Grozie's depiction next to the figure of the church-holding Saint Nicholas, an image which is reminiscent of Orthodox votive compositions.<sup>136</sup> Not excluding the possibility of a major *ktetor* commissioning the church's mural decoration together with several other, minor donors, whether related or not,<sup>137</sup> the situation in Strei is similar with that of Panagia Phorbiotissa or Panagia tis Asinou in Nikitari, Cyprus. Here, only in the church's narthex, one can count 14 representations of donors executed between late-13th century and 1332/1333 (ten of them belong to this precise date only), that is, in a period when the island was under Latin rule. The donors' small figures are depicted in either Byzantine or Western supplicatory postures and they are placed either next to a saint or isolated on intermediary wall

<sup>132</sup> If one accepts the hypothesis that the supplicant next to Archangel Michael and the candle-holding personage were already dead when the frescoes were painted, then their images were commissioned by their relatives on the deceased ones' behalf.

<sup>133</sup> For the phenomenon of collective church patronage emerging as a consequence of the historical and socioeconomic conditions of late-medieval agrarian communities, see Kalopissi-Verti 2007; eadem, *Collective Patterns of Patronage in the Late Byzantine Village: The Evidence of Church Inscriptions*, in Spieser, Yota 2012, 125–140; Kalopissi-Verti 2012, 178–179.

<sup>134</sup> Lukinich, Galdi 1941, 271–273 (doc. no. 233–234); see also Popa 1972 b; Drăguț 1973, 25–26.

<sup>135</sup> For the painters' origin, see Drăguț 1973, 21–26; Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 256–260; Burnichioiu 2009, 323–324.

<sup>136</sup> Judging by Saint Nicholas' occurrence several times in the mural decoration, one may assume that he was the church's patron saint, Burnichioiu 2009, 323. In this case, the juxtaposition of the praying Grozie and church-holding Saint Nicholas recalls remotely Orthodox votive compositions, which a Catholic painter could have interpreted in this peculiar way.

<sup>137</sup> For Drăguț 1973, 20, the numerous supplicants in the church were self-understood as members of the *ktetor*'s family. However, there is no basis for such an assumption, because the church was the only religious edifice of the medieval settlement, it was located outside the noble family's residence, and the community's cemetery developed around it – all these facts indicate a parochial function for the church, Burnichioiu 2009, 320; for its function as court chapel, cf. Popa 1988, 234.

surfaces, similarly to the small figures in Strei.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, both examples are the cultural product of Orthodox living under and being influenced by Catholics, and attest not only the model of collective religious patronage, but also a similar way of pictorial thinking, which acknowledges the contribution of multiple patrons by integrating their portraits to church decoration in marginal or transitional wall surfaces.<sup>139</sup>

Acting as minor donors and sponsors of church decoration were also those persons attested only by supplicatory inscriptions on images of saints. In the majority of cases, these inscriptions are contemporary with the votive compositions featuring the main donors, a fact which reveals that the mural-painting decoration of a church was usually a complex phenomenon involving multiple donors with different sponsorship ratios. However, this type of inscriptions does not offer much information, because it contains usually a concise and standard formula, which accounts that a particular image was intended as a prayer (МОЛЕНИЕ) of a certain person to a certain saint. Additionally, it implies also a donation to the church: for that devotional image and its accompanying inscription to occur, a certain person or group of persons, indicated as servant(s) of God (РАБЪ / РАБЪІ БОЖИИ), had to make previously a donation to the church and commission that particular image. This common devotional practice is attested by the examples in the churches in Leșnic, Ribița, or Densuș. The humble invocation of a saint or directly of God does not offer usually more information than the supplicant's name, his/her special veneration for a particular saint, and his/her hope for salvation and forgiveness of sins.

In Leșnic, on the same wall with the image of the church-holding *kretor* (Fig. 2), but on the upper register and belonging to the same decoration phase, the standing Holy Virgin with Child is depicted in the company of several saints (Fig. 16). On the right side, there are Saints Petka, Peter, and John the Baptist, and on the left side, there is another unidentifiable, female saint.<sup>140</sup> An inscription now almost illegible was squeezed in between the lower sides of the Holy Virgin's and Saint Petka's garments. Its text indicates that the scene was commissioned by a man with partially-preserved name, who was other than the character in the votive composition,<sup>141</sup> and that the donation of the image was intended as a prayer for the salvation of that man's soul, together with the souls of his unnamed wife and son.<sup>142</sup> In Ribița, an inscription accompanying the representation of Saint John the

<sup>138</sup> For the supplicants' portraits, see Kalopissi-Verti 2012, 115–131, 176–190, and figs. 5.1–2, 5.6–10, 5.28–30, 5.34–5, and 5.37–47.

<sup>139</sup> I do not want to suggest a direct influence of one monument upon the other, but rather to stress the similarity of two instances of collective patronage, which occurred roughly the same time in similar historical circumstances.

<sup>140</sup> For this image, see: Drăguț 1963, 427–428; Cincheza-Buculei 1974, 10, 29, 46–7, and fig. 3; Mocanu 1985, 104–105, 112, Burnichioiu 2009, 278, 280; Prioteasa 2011, 47–48.

<sup>141</sup> Mocanu 1985, 104–105; however, the assumption that the man referred to in the inscription was the church's painter has no real basis.

<sup>142</sup> See Catalogue IV.3.A.

Baptist, which is found on the nave's southern wall, in the proximity of the altar and the main founders' votive composition (Fig. 17),<sup>143</sup> attests that the two noblemen of Ribița were indeed the main and most prominent patrons and benefactors of the church, but they were not the only ones. A certain Dobroslavu and his unnamed wife ask for God's forgiveness through the intercession of Saint John,<sup>144</sup> both the painted inscription and image attesting their function as minor sponsors for the mural decoration of the church. Above the image of Saint John the Baptist, another text which is singled out by its surrounding red frame (Fig. 17), seems to indicate yet another dedicatory or votive inscription. Its highly fragmentary state no longer conveys relevant information, but judging by its standard formula referring to the glory of God in eternity,<sup>145</sup> this one, too, could appear as a consequence of the decoration works sponsored either by Vladislavu and Miclăușu, Dobroslavu and his wife, or even by another donor whose identity can no longer be established.

Finally, in the mural decoration of Saint Nicholas Church in Densuș, executed possibly in two distinct stages during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>146</sup> there are again no preserved representations of donors, neither as *ketors*/founders, nor as supplicants. However, three inscriptions accompanying representations of saints and another, self-standing one still survive inside the church, offering valuable information on the patterns of artistic patronage and devotional practices. On the western and southern sides of the nave's north-eastern pillar (Fig. 18), as well as on the northern side of the south-eastern pillar, there is a series of representations with votive character, which are accompanied by *МОЛЕНИЕ*-type of inscriptions. The servant of God Crăstea the son of Mușat (below the Holy Trinity's image), a supplicant with unpreserved name (below Saint Nedelya's depiction), and again Crăstea together with his wife (on Saint Bartholomew's representation) address prayers to the respective saints in order to intercede for their sins and ensure their salvation.<sup>147</sup>

Unattested by written sources, Crăstea the son of Mușat was probably a member of the noble family of Mușina/Mujina/Mușana. They were related to the noble family of Densuș and had their main residence in the neighboring village of Răchitova.<sup>148</sup> As attested by archaeological research and remnants of fresco

<sup>143</sup> Prioteasa 2011, 39, 233; Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014.

<sup>144</sup> See Catalogue VI.3.A.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibidem*, VI.4.A. Until the completion of the murals' uncovering and restoration, which will allow art historians to assess better the painters' manners and the frescoes' technical characteristics, it is more cautious to leave open the question of the church's phases of mural decoration, Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014. For the time being, it is certain that at least two groups of persons acted in various degrees as sponsors of mural decoration for the church in Ribița, either simultaneously or not.

<sup>146</sup> For the church in Densuș and its frescoes, see especially: Drăguț 1966 b; Cincheza-Buculei 1976; Cincheza-Buculei 2009; Rusu 1997 a, 120–121, 192–203; Rusu 2008; Porumb 1998, 104–108; Burnichioiu 2009, 285–95; Prioteasa 2011, 49–51. For the frescoes' date and stages of execution, see the discussion below.

<sup>147</sup> See Catalogue II.1.A–B and II.1.D.

<sup>148</sup> For the noble family in Răchitova, see Popa 1988, 93; Rusu 1997 a, 105, 263–267; Rusu 2008, 122–123, 166–168.



decoration, the family fulfilled there the function of church patrons during the same first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>149</sup> The noble family of Răchitova preserved properties in Densuș and, obviously, did not break up completely with the church in the village, since Crăstea commissioned there at least two votive images. The family's *ktetorial* rights over the church in Densuș extended until after the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the death of *jupan* Andriiaș Mînjina was recorded by a 1566 graffito on Saint Bartholomew's image, one of Crăstea's earlier commissions.<sup>150</sup>

On the western side of the north-western pillar, there is another, longer inscription, which is placed on the pillar's base, below Saint Marina's representation; despite its placement, the inscription seems to have no direct connection with the saint's image, however.<sup>151</sup> Written cursively by a different hand than that which authored the inscription next to the devil-hammering saint, this inscription offers the date of 23 October 6952 (1443). Moreover, it states that it is the prayer of Ianășă for his unnamed *jupanița* and daughter Anca, a prayer which he addresses to Saint Nicholas and Archangel Michael for their help in the day of the terrible Judgment of Christ.<sup>152</sup> Visible immediately when entering the nave, the text was self-understood as the main dedicatory inscription of the church, art historians assigning to Ianășă the role of main *ktetor* of the church and, subsequently, dating the entire mural ensemble to 1443.<sup>153</sup> However, the inscription's untidy and sloppy character, and its belonging to the *МОЛЕНИЕ*-type of text indicate clearly that it cannot be the main dedicatory inscription of the church, despite the presence of the verb (И)ПИСАТИ. This should be understood here in its meaning of "to write" (the prayer-inscription) rather than "to paint" (the interior of the church). Moreover, the position of the 1443 inscription not on Saint Marina's image itself, like the other *МОЛЕНИЕ*-type of inscriptions, but below it, on the base of the pillar, does not support fully the contemporaneousness of the pillar's frescoes and the 1443 inscription, the latter not being in fact of any help in dating the former.<sup>154</sup>

On the upper side of the representation of Saint Nedelya, above the red border surrounding the image and written in black on white background, there is also the signature of the painter who executed probably all the votive images on the nave's pillars (Fig. 19). This painter, the much sinful and unworthy Stefan,<sup>155</sup> might be or not the same personage with the homonymous master of the workshop which executed the frescoes in the sanctuary; this one, too, left his signature, possibly sometime earlier, below the south-eastern window of the sanctuary (Fig. 20).<sup>156</sup>

<sup>149</sup> For the ruins of the church in Răchitova and its fragments of mural decoration, which are kept today in the Art Museum in Cluj-Napoca, see Rusu 1989; Rusu 1997 a, 257–67; Porumb 1989.

<sup>150</sup> Drăguț 1966 b, 243, Breazu 1985, 65–66, 70; Rusu 1997 a, 201–202; Prioteasa 2011, 50.

<sup>151</sup> Burnichioiu 2009, 291–292.

<sup>152</sup> See Catalogue, II.1.E.

<sup>153</sup> Cincheza-Buculei 2009, 94–95.

<sup>154</sup> A similar observation in Burnichioiu 2009, 291–292.

<sup>155</sup> See Catalogue, II.1.C.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*, II.2.A.

The striking stylistic inequality between the murals in the sanctuary and nave, and the obvious paleographical differences between the two signatures (Figs. 19–20) argue in fact only for the names' and not the persons' coincidence. Additionally, this situation suggests two different phases for the church's mural decoration, which was executed during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but in two different periods and at the commission of distinct donors.<sup>157</sup> Whereas Crăstea the son of Mușat is one of the commissioners or even the only donor of the paintings on the nave's pillars, which correspond to the second stage of mural decoration of the church, the earlier commissioner(s) of the frescoes in the sanctuary can no longer be known.

The examination of the evidence offered by donor portraits and church inscriptions identified a series of complex cases of religious patronage functioning during the Late Middle Ages in the Orthodox churches of Transylvania. This image is greatly different than the one traditionally accepted by previous scholarship, which assigned indistinctively the *ktetorial* role to a unique actor, namely, the Romanian Orthodox nobleman who owned the greatest part of estates in and around the settlement which the religious edifice was built on. However, except for the church in Crișcior, which seems to have been built and decorated around 1411 at the initiative of a single founder, *jupan* Bălea,<sup>158</sup> the other examples reveal that

<sup>157</sup> The contemporaneousness of the stylistically-unequal murals in the sanctuary and on the nave's pillars, respectively, as well as the frescoes' authorship assigned to a single workshop composed of painters with different training and skill have been proposed by Cincheza-Buculei 2009, 94–95, and accepted by Rusu 1997 a, and Rusu 2008, 122–123. Based on painter Stefan's double mentioning – once below the sanctuary's window and secondly on the nave's north-eastern pillar –, and on the second inscription's misreading by Ruxandra Lambru, Cincheza-Buculei 2009, 94–95 excludes the possibility that Stefan's double mentioning might refer in fact to two distinct painters working in different periods of time. However, this is more likely since the two signatures reveal significant paleographical differences and are not alike, as the scholar states; for a similar observation, see Burnichioiu 2009, 292. The misreading *єрдѣож* (by the hierodeacon) instead of *рѣкож* (by the hand) does not explain the completely-overlooked Genitive form *стєфана* (of Stefan); cf. catalogue II.1.C and Cincheza-Buculei 2009, 94. The scholar asserts that the church was decorated by a single workshop composed of painters differently trained and lead by the monk Stefan, probably a local, responsible for the sanctuary's complex-iconography frescoes, but coordinating the work of the nave's more provincial painter. She dates thus the entire medieval decoration to 1443, a date offered by the inscription on the nave's north-western pillar, which might refer or not to the decoration on the nave's pillars; for a similar observation, see Burnichioiu 2009, 291–292. For this study's purposes and until further clarification will be possible, I advance the hypothesis that the murals in the sanctuary and nave were executed during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but in distinct phases and by at least two painters, who were called coincidentally Stefan, none of them a hierodeacon. See also Năstăsoiu forthcoming, n. 26–7.

<sup>158</sup> The statement in connection to Crișcior is hypothetical, because the mural decoration of the medieval church did not survive in its entirety: during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sanctuary has been completely rebuilt, the nave was extended to the east, and old openings were walled up and new ones were created, Tugearu 1985 a, 72. Needless to say, all these changes affected greatly the mural decoration. Subsequently, one can no longer know whether evidence pointing out to minor donors existed or not in Crișcior.

the *ktetor*'s role was more often than not played by multiple actors and that religious patronage took frequently the form of joint or associated *ktetorship*. The association of usually two partners for accomplishing a religious foundation was often motivated by their close family ties and joint tenancy of their patrimony. It was the case of brothers Vladislavu and Miclăușu of Ribița, brothers Moga of Hălmagiu, or brothers Sărăcin of Sălașu de Sus, who fulfilled jointly their *ktetorial* function, the latter transmitting their duties from father to son throughout several generations.

This model of religious patronage having the appearance of a family affair could associate theoretically to the *ktetorial* act, by means of family ties, also the male founders' spouses or children, as attested by the votive compositions in Crișcior, Leșnic, Ribița, Streisângeorgiu, and possibly Hălmagiu, and by the dedicatory inscription in Sălașu de Sus. Not all women, however, participated in fact in the religious foundation, the preserved written and visual evidence suggesting such a role only for *jupanița* Vișe in Crișcior, the women in Sălașu de Sus, and *jupanița* Nistora in Streisângeorgiu. In absence of other supporting evidence, these women's effective involvement in the religious foundation should be regarded cautiously, however. Other motivations for joining efforts for the purposes of religious foundation can be identified, too, such as the partners' residence and land ownership in the same settlement – the 1408 (third) foundation of the church in Streisângeorgiu by *jupani* Chendreșu and Lațco – or the founders' common concern for and emotional attachment to the religious foundation – the 1313–1314 (second) foundation of the church in Streisângeorgiu by *cneaz* Balea, priest Naneș, and painter Theofil. Occasionally, a higher number of donors could join their efforts in a *ktetorial* undertaking, participating collectively and in various degrees in the act of the religious foundation. This was probably the case of the mural decoration of the church in Strei, which was executed during the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the expense of several members of the local community which used the religious edifice; Grozie of Master Ivaniș and the other five or six anonymous supplicants were probably some of the more prominent and wealthy members of this community.

Even in the cases when the main role in the religious foundation is assigned by dedicatory inscriptions and votive compositions to a precise *ktetorial* instance, it is not excluded that other persons or groups of persons have participated simultaneously, but in a smaller degree to the sponsoring of the construction or decoration works. In the churches in Leșnic and Ribița, together with the major donors/founders, there are also other persons who commissioned votive images and acted, thus, as minor donors: the man with unpreserved name together with his wife and son, who commissioned the image of the Holy Virgin with saints in Leșnic, and Dobroslavu with his wife, who offered the image of Saint John the Baptist in Ribița. Whereas the main founders, who are represented in votive compositions holding and offering the model of the church to the patron saint of the religious edifice, are sometimes traceable in the time's written sources and belong with certainty to the category of Romanian local noblemen (*jupan* Balea of

Crișcior, *jupan* Moga of Hălmațiu, the noblemen of Sărăcin in Sălașu de Sus, or *jupani* Chendreșu and Lațco of Streisângeorgiu), the minor donors appearing in supplicatory portraits and inscriptions can be known in the most fortunate cases only by their names. They are signaled only by humble and standard formulae which stress more the supplicants' piety rather than their social belonging. Exceptions are the three supplicatory inscriptions in Densuș belonging to the **МОЛЕННЕ**-type. Two of them mention a certain Crăstea the son of Mușat, who can be identified hypothetically with a member, otherwise unattested by written sources, of the noble family in Răchitova, while a third prayer, that of Ianășă, mentions his *jupanița* and daughter Anca, a sign that this otherwise-unknown supplicant had a similar social background with the other donors.

That these minor donors belonged to the same social category as the main ones or that they had a similar social and economic profile is attested also by the example of the local nobleman, priest, and craftsman, who acted together as the 1313–1314 *ktetors* of the church in Streisângeorgiu. Names of priests and painters occur rather frequently in these church inscriptions: priest Dragosin (?) and the painter with unpreserved name in Ribița, priest Naneș and painter Theofil in Streisângeorgiu, painter Mihul of White Criș in Râmeț, the two painters Stefan in Densuș, and possibly painter Grozie of Master Ivaniș in Strei. Their mentioning either in their professional quality or as pious donors of mural painting seem to suggest rather minor social differences among Orthodox Romanians in late-medieval Transylvania.<sup>159</sup>

Besides the social and economic aspects behind religious patronage, one should not overlook the spiritual motivation of these major and minor donors. Their sponsoring of church building and decorating works was made possible by the commissioners' social and economic backing, but they were in fact motivated by their high piety and strong hope that the gesture will ensure the forgiveness of their sins and, ultimately, their salvation. The salvation not only of the founder himself, but also of the members of his family, as the presence of spouses and children in votive compositions (Crișcior, Leșnic, Ribița, Streisângeorgiu, and possibly Hălmațiu) or their often mentioning in church inscriptions (Leșnic, Ribița, and Densuș) clearly attests. The donor's concern for the salvation of the soul of his family members was not limited to those alive, but extended also to the deceased ones, as indicated by the existence of a series of preserved funerary portraits: the second *ktetor*'s daughters in Hălmațiu, the atypical supplicant below the Last Judgment in Leșnic, or the two supplicants in Strei – the one depicted next to Archangel Michael and the one holding a burning candle.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>159</sup> I hope to address in a future study the question of the social status of priests and painters according to the evidence of church inscriptions, assessing simultaneously the role they played in religious patronage during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in Orthodox Transylvania.

<sup>160</sup> Another research direction which I hope to pursue in the future is the examining of pious practices and devotional patterns of Romanian Orthodox noblemen in 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century Transylvania according to the evidence offered by donor/supplicant portraits, church inscriptions, religious iconography, and written sources.

Except for its associative nature, religious patronage in late-medieval Orthodox Transylvania is characterized also by its cumulative aspect. The construction and decoration works of a religious edifice presupposed significant financial efforts from the side of its founders, these ones not being able often to support them entirely in a single stage. For instance, Saint George Church in Streisângeorgiu was built in the beginning of the 12th century, some *ktetorial* works (probably the church's mural decoration) were undertaken again in 1313–1314 by *cneaz* Balea, priest Naneș, and painter Theofil, and some architectural transformations and partial repainting took place yet again in 1408 through the efforts of *jupani* Chendreșu and Lațco. All these persons – the actual, anonymous founders, the 1313–1314 secondary founders, and the 1408 third founders – were equally the *ktetors* of the church. The medieval church in Streisângeorgiu should be understood, subsequently, in its whole complexity as the result of the actions of at least three groups of *ktetors*, who contributed in various ways and degrees and in distinct periods of time to the religious foundation. This was also the case of the medieval churches in Ribița, Hălmagiu, and Densuș, which received only during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the *ktetorial* contributions of various religious patrons. As indicated only by the evidence of donor portraits and church inscriptions, there were at least two groups of founders for each religious edifice: the 1393 and 1404 *ktetors* in Ribița, who may or not coincide; *jupan* Moga with his brother and the anonymous founder in the votive composition in Hălmagiu, who accomplished their work in different halves of the 15<sup>th</sup> century; and in Densuș, initially the *ktetors* responsible for the sanctuary's decoration and later Crăstea de Mușat, either alone or not, commissioning the votive images on the nave's pillars.<sup>161</sup> The general model of religious patronage attained after the examination of the written and visual evidence has, therefore, two sides: an associative and a cumulative one. Both should be taken into account for a better understanding of these modest, but complex religious foundations of Romanian Orthodox noblemen, who fulfilled their *ktetorial* function under Catholic rule during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Catalogue of Church Inscriptions

### I. Crișcior, Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin:<sup>162</sup>

1. Votive composition, lower register of the western and southern walls of the nave:

A. Next to the church-holding, male figure (left side) on the western wall:

(1) † РАБА (!) Б(О)Ж(И)И • ХТ[ИТ]

(2) ОРЬ • ЖЪПАНЪ БЪЛЪ

<sup>161</sup> I set aside the 1443 supplicatory inscription which may or not refer to the pillars' decoration.

<sup>162</sup> Whenever this is known, the medieval dedication of the church is given; when unknown, the present-day dedication is given in italics.

(3) ж [п]рѣдаеть • ма

(4) настирь • пржс(ва)тѣ

(5) и в(огороди)це:приснод(ѣ)во (!) мар(и)е

= *servant of God jupan Bălea passes the monastery to the Most Holy Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary*<sup>163</sup>

B. Next to the church-holding, female figure (right side) on the western wall:

(1) † раба в(о)жнѣ

(2) жѹпанница

(3) више:•

= *servant of God jupanița Vișe*

C. Next to the southern-wall, male figure on the left side:

юка<sup>164</sup> ктѣтворѣ с(ы)нѣ

= *Iuca, the ktetor's son*

D. Next to the southern-wall, male figure on the right side:

[раба (!) в(о)ж(и)и ласл[...]]<sup>165</sup>/ вьлѣювѣ с(ы)ноу

= [servant] of God Lasl[o/ău], son of Bălea

E. Next to the small figure depicted below the church's model on the western wall.<sup>166</sup>

(1) раба (!) в(о)ж(и)и цѣфа

(2) ноу вьлѣювѣ с(ы)ноу

(3) по[... ]ѣ

(4) вѣ[... ]ѣр

(5) шіа хѣ (?)

= *servant of God Ștefan, son of Bălea [...]*

## II. Densuș, Saint Nicholas Church:

1. Supplicatory inscriptions accompanying various representations of saints and a painter's signature on the nave's pillars:<sup>167</sup>

<sup>163</sup> The inscriptions in Crișcior were read and translated by Anna Adashinskaya, to whom I am deeply grateful.

<sup>164</sup> Dragomir 1929, 244, reads юва and so does Cincheza-Buculei 1978, 37, who completes the name as ю[в]а. Currently, the consonant is destroyed in its upper part, but judging by its preserved lower part, the letter was probably κ: the letter's vertical bar is not connected to its leg. Moreover, the variant юка is phonetically closer to *Csuka*, which was mentioned in the 1773 inscription, see supra n. 16. Tugearu 1985 a, 90, proposes the same reading as the present one.

<sup>165</sup> Dragomir 1929, 244, gives the son's name as ласлѣюу, which was transcribed as ласл[ѣ]у by Cincheza-Buculei 1978, 37. Tugearu 1985 a, 91, reads instead ласло. Currently, the name's last letters are no longer readable, this being the reason why I did not supplement the name in Cyrillic and I gave both variants in the translation.

<sup>166</sup> The inscription was no longer preserved in 1929 and Dragomir 1929, 242, offered the transcription made previously by Ștefan Pascu. By analogy with the other inscriptions, I have changed this transcription in several places – в(о)ж(и)и instead of божи; вьлѣювѣ instead of вьлѣ ювѣ; and с(ы)ноу instead of сыноу. I also corrected Dragomir's mistranslation.

A. On the lower side of the border surrounding the representation of the Holy Trinity, western side of the nave's north-eastern pillar:

† МОЛЕНІЕ РА(БА) Б(О)ЖИѢ КРЪСТѢ МЪШАТОВЪ С(Ы)НЪ  
= *prayer of the servant of God Crăstea, son of Mușat*

B. On the lower side of the border surrounding the representation of Saint Nedelya, southern side of the nave's north-eastern pillar:

† МОЛЕНІЕ РА(БА) Б(О)ЖИѢ [...] КЪ С(ВЕ)ТА Н[Е]ДЕЛЕ  
= *prayer of the servant of God [...] to Saint Nedelya*

C. On the upper side of the representation of Saint Nedelya, above the red border, southern side of the nave's north-eastern pillar:

† ИСПИСАСЕ РЪКОЖ·МНОГОГРѢШНАГО І НЕДУГО СТЕФАНА:—  
= *it was painted by the hand of the much sinful and unworthy Stefan*<sup>168</sup>

D. On the lower side of the representation of Saint Bartholomew, next to the saint's left leg and below his hanging skin, northern side of the nave's south-eastern pillar:

(1) МОЛЕНІЕ Р[А](БА) Б(О)ЖИЖ

(2) КРЪСТѢ И П[О]ДЪРЪ

(3) ЖИЬ [ЕГО] КЪ С(Е)Т(О)[МЪ Т]ОМА (!)<sup>169</sup>

= *prayer of the servant of God Crăstea and of [his] wife to [Saint T]oma*

E. On the base of the north-western pillar of the nave, on its western side, below the representation of Saint Marina:

(1) † В[Ъ] ЛѢ(ТО) СЦѢНВ·М(Ѣ)С(А)ЦА УХ(ТѢБРА) (!)·КГ·ПОПИСАСЕ·С(ВЕ)Т(О)МЪ НИ

(2) КОЛА И АРХ(АНГЕЛ)Ъ МИХ(АН)ЛЪ И ПРОСИХ М(О)Л(К)НИА РАБА Б(О)ЖІА ІАНЪШЖ ЗА ЖЪПА

(3) НИЦЪ И ДЪЩЕРЪ И АНКА КЪ С(ВЕ)Т(О)МЪ НИКОЛ[А] ДА МЪ БЪД(Е) ПОМО

(4) ЦЬ ВЪ Д(Ь)НЬ СГРАШНАГО СЪДА Х(РИСТО)ВА АМИНЪ

= *in the year 6952, month October 23, it was painted/written to Saint Nicholas and Archangel Michael, and [he] asked the prayer of the servant of God Ianășă for jupanița and daughter and (!) Anca to Saint Nicholas; let [it] be help for him in the day of the terrible Judgment of Christ, Amen*<sup>170</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the inscriptions in Densuș are read, transcribed, and translated by the author.

<sup>168</sup> Inscription read and translated by Anna Adashinskaya; see also the discussion of the word рѣкож in p. 157.

<sup>169</sup> The inscription next to the head of the Western-iconography Saint Bartholomew reads С(ВЕ)ТН/ ТОМА, this being the reason why I supplemented in this way the partially-missing name of the saint. Judging by the available space in the last line, Crăstea's wife was probably unnamed in the inscription.

<sup>170</sup> Inscription read and translated by Anna Adashinskaya. The inscription is hardly legible in the middle of lines 2 and 3 and its various parts seem not to connect with each other, being characterized by declensional disagreement. The author of the inscription had a poor knowledge of

## 2. Inscription containing a painter's signature in the sanctuary:

A. On the lower register of the sanctuary, below the south-eastern window, on the upper, right side of the painted candlestick:

писал [л] стѣфан

= *Stefan painted/wrote*

### III. Hălmagiu, Saint Nicholas Church:

1. Partially-preserved dedicatory inscription on the northern side of the eastern wall of the nave:

A. On the upper decorative frame of an unknown, destroyed representation of the lower register and below the upper-register composition of the Last Judgment, on the northern side of the triumphal arch:

ракоа жұпана мого и бра(та) мѹ [... ] новежо (!)

= *by the hand of jupan Moga and of his brother [... ] renewal*<sup>171</sup>

### IV. Leşnic, Saint Nicholas Church:<sup>172</sup>

1. Votive composition, eastern side of the lower register of the nave's northern wall:

A. Above the head of the male figure and the model of the church:

Хититоръ ишде[... ] = *ketor* [... ]<sup>173</sup>

Old Church Slavonic, the present translation being only an attempt at reconstructing its possible meaning. Cf. the reading in Cincheza-Buculei 2009, 93. The major disagreement with the previous reading concerns the beginning of line 2, the abbreviation арѹ мнѹль being typical for арх(ангел)ѹ мнх(ан)лѹ and not for архієпискѹпѹ мнрликийски. Although the second abbreviated word is hardly visible, the distinguishable letters are indeed мнѹль, a fact which excludes the мнрликийски reading, a very rarely encountered designation of Saint Nicholas (there is no superscript ρ in the second word and the letter following л is clearly ѹ and not к). On the one hand, the mentioning of Archangel Michael together with Saint Nicholas as helpers for Ianăşă, his wife and daughter seems to make sense in the context of the Last Judgment day mentioned in the inscription: the former saint was known for his psychopomp quality, while the latter was a very popular saint often invoked for his intercessory power. Moreover, because this inscription is only a supplicatory one and not the main dedicatory inscription of the church, the choice for intercessors was entirely up to the supplicant, reflecting his special veneration for a particular saint and not the church's dedication. On the other hand, it is not excluded either that the supplicant addressed his prayer precisely to Saint Nicholas and Archangel Michael because of their quality of patron saints of the church. The two saints feature in the nave's iconographic program in prominent positions (i.e. flanking the sanctuary's apse on the northern and southern side of the eastern wall of the nave), places which are usually assigned in Byzantine iconography to the church's patron saints.

<sup>171</sup> Inscription read and translated by Anna Adashinskaya.

<sup>172</sup> The church's medieval dedication is unknown. The image of Saints Peter and Paul, which faces the votive composition on the nave's southern wall, was considered as reflecting the church's dedication, Saint Peter's depiction occurring several times inside the church, Cincheza-Buculei 1974. Due to the current state of preservation of the frescoes, which are now almost imperceptible under the thick layer of smoke, making the inscriptions hardly legible, I have followed here the reading published in 1985 in *Repertoriul picturilor*, 45–49, 98–115.



2. Inscription accompanying the representation of a layman on the draperies' register of the southern wall of the nave:

A. On the right side of the head of the layman represented on the draperies' register, on the western side of the nave's southern wall, below the scene of the Resurrection of the Dead belonging to the Last Judgment composition:

[...]рлв[...] (?)<sup>174</sup>

3. Inscription on the representation of the Holy Virgin with Child flanked by saints, upper register of the northern wall of the nave:

A. On the lower side of the scene, in between the vestments of the Holy Virgin and Saint Petka:

(1) мо

(2) лен

(3) к ра(ба)

(4) б(о)жи

(5) [...]і (?)

(6) [...]нше і по

(7) дрѹж

(8) нѣ ег

(9) о н с(ы)н(а) є

(10) го [...]

= *prayer of the servant of God [...] and of his wife and of his son [...]*<sup>175</sup>

## V. Râmeș Monastery, Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin and of the Life-giving Spring:<sup>176</sup>

1. Inscription on the representation of Saint Gregory the Great, southern side of the intrados of the arcade separating the narthex from the nave:

A. On the lower, left side of Saint Gregory the Great's representation:<sup>177</sup>

(1) писахъ многогрѣ

(2) ши рабъ б(о)жій

(3) мнѹѣлъ изѹгра

<sup>173</sup> Mocanu 1985, 114; on p. 99, the author mentions only the group of letters шде as accompanying the word Хпнторѣ.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibidem*, 110; currently, the only letter which is still clearly legible in the inscription is о.

<sup>175</sup> I have followed the readings in Mocanu 1985, 112–113, and Cincheza-Buculei 1974, 46–47 and fig. 3. Concerning the petitioner's name, the former author reads нше, while the latter only the final letter є.

<sup>176</sup> In 1762, the church's dedication was the Birth of the Holy Virgin, Tugearu 1985 c, 149; there is no evidence, however, that this was also its medieval dedication.

<sup>177</sup> Read and translated by Anna Adashinskaya. The inscription in its current state was confronted with the readings available in Drăguț 1966 a, 43, Tugearu 1985 c, 168; Porumb 1998, 231. I have omitted the uncertain and no-longer-readable parts, these not being relevant for the present discussion.

- (4) фъ вѣлокришь  
 (5) цъ повеленіемъ<sup>178</sup>  
 (6) арх[і]єпѣскѣпо(вѣм)  
 (7) геласі[... ]ъ въ  
 (8) д(ь)ни [... ]<sup>179</sup> кра  
 (9) лѣ [... ]ѣ[... ]  
 (10) м(ѣ)с[ѣц]а іюла [... ]<sup>180</sup>

= I, the much sinful servant of God Mihul, the painter of White Cris, wrotelpainted by the order of Archbishop Ghelasie, in the days of King [...], month July [...]

## VI. Ribița, Saint Nicholas Church:

1. Votive composition, lower register of the southern wall of the nave:

A. Main dedicatory inscription surrounded by a frame and placed above the *ktetors'* figures:<sup>181</sup>

(1) † извлє[ни]мъ вца і поспешє[ни]емъ с(ы)на и съврѣше[ни]емъ с(вѣ)таго д(оу)ха...<sup>182</sup>

(2) ...]ре жѣпанѣ владиславѣ и съ жѣпаница его стана и съ с(ы)н[омъ его...]

(3) і съ братомъ его жѣпанѣ миклѣоушѣ и жѣпаница его сора и [...]

(4) н(є)б(є)сн(о)мѣ ц(а)рѣ създашѣ и спісашє манастирѣ с(вѣ)т(о)мѣ николает д[...]

(5) ...и семѣнемъ его до вѣка въ д<ь>нь ст[ра]шн[а]го съда х(ристо)ва въ дни ж(н)к[моу]н(д)а кралѣ...

(6) зн[ата]го ѣрикѣ да бѣдет с(ы)н(о)вє его и семѣ[немъ его и] втечєствоу его [...]

(7) [...]сконча въ свѣота ѣ п(ос)та [...]

(8) [...]стана да съврѣшише а вни по бл(а)годатію с(вѣ)таго д(оу)ха съврѣш[...]

(9) попѣ драгосинѣ в<ь> лѣт(о) зѣкє м(ѣ)с(ѣ)ца юли іє съврѣши с<є> и исписа се рѣк[о]ж [...]

<sup>178</sup> The primary meaning of повелѣник is “order”, cf. Tugearu 1985 c, 168.

<sup>179</sup> Read as лѣд[ѣ]вка, *ibidem*.

<sup>180</sup> The no-longer readable year was given as свнє (6885/1377) in *ibidem*.

<sup>181</sup> The main dedicatory inscription was partially destroyed by one of the pillars of the nave's southern wall and, in its current state, it is hardly legible. I give here the version by Anna Adashinskaya, made after having examined critically the inscription in its current state, the ante-1930 photographs published by Dragomir 1929, figs. 9 and 12, and Dragomir's own transcription, *ibidem*, 252; for a critical treatment of this inscription. see Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014.

<sup>182</sup> The underlined parts can no longer be read and, subsequently, are uncertain.

(1) *By the will of the Father, and the help of the Son, and the accomplish[ment of the Holy Ghost...]*

(2) *[...] jupan Vladislavu, and with his jupanița Stana, and with [his] so[n...]*

(3) *and with his brother jupan Miclăușu, and his jupanița Sora, and [...]*

(4) *to the Heavenly Emperor, have built and have painted the monastery to Saint Nicholas [...]*

(5) *... to his offspring in eternity, in the day of the terrible judgment of Christ, in the days of [King] J(i)c[mund...]*

(6) *[...] of [...]<sup>183</sup>known, to be charter to his sons, and [to his] offspr[ing, and] to his patrimony [...]*

(7) *[...] finished in the sixth Saturday of fasting [...]*

(8) *[...]stana<sup>184</sup> to finish, and they, with the benediction of the Holy Ghost, have finished [...]*

(9) *priest Dragosin, in the year 6925 in the month of July 15, it was finished and it was painted by the hand [...]*

B. On the left side of Saint Nicholas' head:

С(ВЕ)ТІ ННКОЛАЕ

= *Saint Nicholas*<sup>185</sup>

C. Above the model of the church:

(1) ХТНТОРЪ • ЖУПАНЪ • ВЛАДИЛА

(2) ВЪ • ПР(Ъ)ДАЕТ • МАН[А]СТИРЪ С(ВЕ)Т(О)МЪ

(3) НІКОЛАЕ<sup>186</sup>

= *the ktetor jupan Vladislavu passes the monastery to Saint Nicholas*

D. Below the model of the church and on the right side of the small, kneeling figure:

(1) РАБА Б(О)Ж(И)І [... ] АНА

(2) ВЛАДИЛАВА ДЪЦИ<sup>187</sup>

= *servant of God [... ] Ana, daughter of Vladislavu*

E. Above the head of the church-holding, male figure, in between the church's tower and the frame of the main dedicatory inscription:

(1) РА(БЪ) Б(О)Ж(И)І

(2) ЖУПАНЪ

(3) ВЛАДИЛА[А]ВЪ<sup>188</sup>

= *servant of God jupan Vladislavu*

<sup>183</sup> Either "known" as such or a compound word.

<sup>184</sup> Either the female name "Stana" appearing in line 2 or another word ending in -СТАНА.

<sup>185</sup> Inscription uncovered after 1995; the inscriptions VI.I.B–H are read and translated by the author.

<sup>186</sup> The inscription is more easily readable in Dragomir 1929, fig. 9.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibidem*, 250.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibidem*, figs. 9–10.

F. Between the heads of the church-holding, male figure and the second male figure, partially above the latter's head:

РА(БЪ) Б(О)Ж(И)І ЖУПАНЪ МИКЛѢШУШ<sup>189</sup>

= *servant of God juran Miclăușu*

G. Above the head of the first female figure:

РАБА Б(О)Ж(И)І [ВЛАДИСАВОВА ЖЕНА СТАНА]<sup>190</sup>

= *servant of God [Vladislavu's wife, Stana]*

H. Above the head of the second female figure:

РАБА Б(О)Ж(И)І МИКЛѢШУШЕВА Ж[ЕНА СОРА]<sup>191</sup>

= *servant of God, Miclăușu's w[ife, Sora]*

2. Inscription on the northern side of the vault of the sanctuary:

A. Partially-preserved inscription surrounded by frame and placed between the representations of two Evangelists seating at their writing desks:

(1) [С(ВѦ)ТА]ГО ВЪЗН[ЕСЕ]НІЕ Г(ОСПОД)А Н(А)Ш(Е)ГО

(2) [І(СОУС)]Ѧ Х(РИСТ)А ЕІ ЛѢТ(А) [...] <sup>192</sup>

= *Ascension of our [Ho]ly Lord [Jesus] Christ 15, the year [...]*

3. Inscription on the representation of Saint John the Baptist, lower register of the nave's southern wall, in the proximity of the altar:

A. Inscription placed between the border of the scene and St. John's folded right arm:

(1) МОЛЕ (!) РАБ(Ъ) Б(О)Ж(И)І

(2) ДОБРОСЛАВОУ

(3) И ПОДРОУЖИѢ

(4) ЕГО Б(ОГ)Ъ ДА

(5) П<р>ОСТИТ(Ъ)<sup>193</sup>

= *servant of God Dobroslavu, and his wife, asks (!) God to forgive*

4. Self-standing inscription on the upper side of the lower register of the nave's southern wall, in the proximity of the altar:

A. Partially-preserved inscription placed above the representation of Saint John the Baptist and surrounded by a red frame:

(1) [...]А • ІК[...]

(2) СЛ[АВА ... БО]ГОУ • ВЪ • ВѢ[ЦЕ...]

= [...] *gl[ory ... to Go]d in eternity [...]*<sup>194</sup>

<sup>189</sup> *Ibidem*, figs. 9–10 and 12.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibidem*, 250 and fig. 12. The inscription's completion was made according to the pattern of VI.1.H and the information offered by VI.1.A, line 2.

<sup>191</sup> Inscription uncovered after 1995 and completed according to the information offered by VI.1.A, line 3.

<sup>192</sup> Adashinskaya, Năstăsoiu 2014.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibidem*.

## VII. Sălașu de Sus, Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (“Serfs’ Church”):

1. Dedicatory inscription carved in stone, western exterior wall of the tower, above the church’s entrance:

A. Main dedicatory inscription:<sup>195</sup>

(1) † почесе сын храм ш(т) сьрчьинь с(и)нь сьрчьиновъ • і иишшш  
с(и)нь съ

(2) рьчьиновъ • и сын храм древено<sup>196</sup> сьвьршисе • съ ныи<sup>197</sup> михаю

(3) син ганышевъ • почесе ѿ камень • михаю ѹмре •

(4) сьрчь(и)нь и с(и)нь его фьркашш и ѹнцьк<sup>198</sup> его ганцьль • и м[ати]  
сьрь

(5) чинова мьргить • и жупаница его дорка • и жупана ми

(6) халева анка • сьвьрши се хра[мь] въ им[а] светимь]

(7) ап(осто)л(ом)ъ петра и павла • в м(ѣса)ца • юль • к̄а • в лѣт(о) [...]

= *This church was started by Sărăcin, the son of Sărăcin, and by Ionișu, the son of Sărăcin. And this church was finished of wood. With us, Mihaiu, the son of Ianăș, started [it] of stone. Mihaiu died. Sărăcin and his son Fărcașu and his grandson/nephew Iancul and the m[other] of Sărăcin, Mrăghită, and his jupanișă Dorca, and jupana of Mihaiu, Anca. This church was finished [by all of them] in the nam[e] of the Holy] Apostles Peter and Paul, in the month of July 21, in the year [...]*

## VIII. Strei, Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin:<sup>199</sup>

1. Inscription on the western side of the southern wall of the sanctuary, on the lower register corresponding to that of the draperies:

A. Above the head of the male supplicant’s figure:

(1) грозие мещера иваниша —

(2) є писаль цркьва (!) б(ог)ѹ д(ѹ)х(ѹ) (?)

<sup>195</sup> Read and translated by Anna Adashinskaya after the inscription’s drawing published in Rusu 1997 a. 293.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Rusu 1997 a. 293, where *древено* / *дрѣвено* is translated as “long ago,” and not “of wood;” the error was due probably to the word’s similarity with *древак* = “before(hand).”

<sup>197</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, where *съ ныи* (“with us”) was probably read *сънь и* (“and this”). Needless to say, this minor difference is extremely significant, as it leads to a quite different scenario for the church’s building stages and corresponding commissioners than those previously presented.

<sup>198</sup> In the inscription, Iancul appears as the “grandson” (*ѹнцьк*) and not the “nephew” (*братоучадъ*) of Sărăcin II. According to the noble family’s genealogy, *ibidem*, 294, Iancul was the son of Mihaiu and, subsequently, Sărăcin II’s nephew. In Romanian, the terms “grandson” and “nephew” coincide (*nepot*), and it is possible for the author of the inscription, having probably Romanian as his native language, to have mixed up the words, writing *ѹнцьк* instead of *братоучадъ*, which is more rarely encountered. Unfortunately, the discussion of the usage of the words *унук*, *непот*, *братанич*, and *сестричич* in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Moldavian charters by Kashtanov 2012, 71–74, was not available to me for comparison; I thank Anna Adashinskaya for pointing me out this title.

<sup>199</sup> The church’s medieval dedication is unknown; see also n. 136.

(3) [...] КИ

= *Grozie of Master Ivaniş painted the church to God, to Spirit (?) [...] <sup>200</sup>*

### IX. Streisângeorgiu, Saint George Church:<sup>201</sup>

1. Inscription on the eastern wall of the sanctuary:

A. Dedicatory inscription surrounded on three sides (left, lower, and right) by a decorative frame and placed below the window in the axis of the sanctuary:

(1) ∴ ВЪ Л[ѢТО]:Ѣ:ТЪСАЩЕ:И:Н:СЪТНО

(2) И:К:И:В:ПОЧИ[Н]ЪМЪ Ц(Ъ)Р(К)ВЕ:П

(3) ОМОЦНА:С(ВЕ)ТАГО:ГЕОРГИ

(4) МА•И МАТЕРЕ БОЖИ:И:Н ВЪСѢ

(5) ХЪ:С(ВЕ)ТЪХЪ:НА ПОМОЦИ

(6) ЕН ВСТАВЕНК ГРѢХОМЪ КИ[Ѣ]ЗОУ

(7) БАЛѢИ<sup>202</sup>:И:ИНАПОМОЦЬ И СПАСЕНІЕ

(8) ∴ НА ВСТАВЕНІЕ ГРѢ

(9) ХОМЪ ПОПОУ НАНЕ

(10) ШОУ ѠЕУФИЛѢ ЗОГРАФѢ

= *In the year 6 thousands and 8 hundreds and 20 and 2, through the initiative of the church, through the help of Saint George, and of the Mother of God, and of All Saints, for the sake of help and forgiveness of sins of cneaz Baleal/Balotă, and for the sake of help and salvation ∴ and for the forgiveness of sins of priest Naneş [and of (?) painter Theofil*

2. Votive composition on the eastern wall of the tower, visible from the interior of the nave (nave's western wall):

A. Above the head of the male figure on the left side:

РА[БЪ] БОЖИ[Н] ЖУПАН ЛАЦКО

= *servant of God jupan Laşco*

B. Both sides of the head of the church-holding, female figure:

(1) РАБА БОЖІЕ / ЖУПАНИЦА

(2) НИСТѠРА

= *servant of God jupanişa Nistora*

<sup>200</sup> Inscription read and translated by Anna Adashinskaya. The inscription's last line, can be read also as [...] ЛИ, Popescu, Tugearu 1985, 241, 270, the first letter being preserved only in its lower side. It is not possible, however, for the second line to contain the group БРА[...] , ibid., the letters БРД[...] being still clearly visible. The inscription's completion and translation in its final part is hypothetical.

<sup>201</sup> The inscriptions are hardly readable today, the church's mural decoration being in urgent need for restoration. The present reading is based on the inscriptions' previous readings by Mircea 1976; Popa 1978, 22–23 and fig. 12; Mihăilă 1978, 33–38; Bratu 1985 a, 290, 293, 297–299.

<sup>202</sup> The name's alternative reading as БАЛОТѢ is given in Bratu 1985 a, 290.

C. Above and on the left side of the head of the church-holding, male figure:

(1) КТІТѠР ЖУПАН КЕНДРЕШУ:—

(2) ПРѢДАЕТЪ МА

(3) НАСТИРЬ

(4) СФ(Е)ТОМУ

(5) ГЕѠРГИЕ

= *the ktetor jupan Chendreşu passes the monastery to Saint George*

D. Above and on the left side of the head of the male figure on the right:

(1) РАБ[Ъ] БОЖІ(Н) ВЛАЙКО С(Ы)НЬ

(2) КЕНДРЕШ

= *servant of God Vlaico, the son of Chendreş*

E. Below the model of the church:

(1) С.АЕДН [С.ЦІЗІ]

(2) ѠВБАѠЛТВИ:[ѠКТѠМЕРІА]

(3) АЕЛКЪ [Б ДНЬ.]<sup>203</sup>

= [6917 October, day 2]

F. In between the figures of the two central, church-holding figures:

(1) † ВЪ ИМѢ Ѡ(Т)ЦА • Н С(Ы)НА • Н С(ВЕ)ТАГО

(2) Д(У)ХА: СЪЗНА ЖУПАН КЕНДРЕШУ

(3) И НЕГОВА ЖУПАНИЦА НИСТѠРА: И С(Ы)НО

(4) ВЕ ЕГО: СЕ(Н) МАНАСТИР С(ВЕ)ТАГО ВЕЛІ

(5) КОМУЧЕНИКА И СТРАСТѠТЕРПЦА ХР(Н)

(6) СТОВА ГЕѠРГИЕ; И СОВЕРШИ СЕ

(7) И НАПИСА СЕ, КОДАМИ (?) Є(С) (?) НА

(8) ЗДРАВИ[Є], ТЕЛЕСНОЕ И ДУШЕВНО[Є]

(9) СП(АС)НІЕ: ВЪ Д(Ь)НИ ЖИКМОНА

(10) КРАЛѢ, И ЗАГОРСКИИ[Х] В[ОЄ]ВОДИ

(11) ИѠАНЕША И ЪКОВА:- В Л(Ѣ)ТО:

(12) СЦІЗІ ѠКТО(МЕРІА): Б Д(Ь)НИ:-

= *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: jupan*

*Chendreşu built, and his jupanişa Nistora: and his sons: this monastery of Holy Great Martyr and Soldier of Christ George: and it was finished and it was painted, [...] for the bodily health and spiritual salvation: in the days of King Jicmon and of the Transylvanian Voivodes Ioaneş and Iacov: in the year: 6917, October: day 2.*

<sup>203</sup> The letters of this inscription have been greatly distorted and its reading is hypothetical; see Popa 1978, 9; Mihăilă 1978, 38, who express their doubts on the variant proposed by Iorga 1926, 172. I give here the transcription and translation as published in Mihăilă 1978, 38.



Fig. 1. Votive composition, 1411 (?), fresco, lower register of the nave's southern and western walls, Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Crișcior.



Fig. 2. Votive composition and drawing with the *ketors*' outline, fresco, late-14<sup>th</sup>–first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, lower register of the nave's northern wall, (Saint Nicholas) Church in Leșnic.



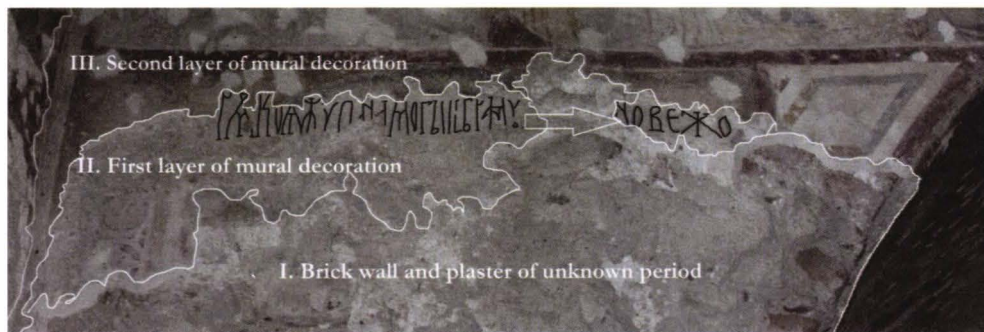


Fig. 3. Overdrawing of the inscription and drawing with the succession of decoration layers, late-14<sup>th</sup> – early-15<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, northern side of the nave's eastern wall (triumphal arch), Saint Nicholas Church in Hălmagiu.



Fig. 4. Votive composition, early-15<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower register of the nave's southern wall, Saint Nicholas Church in Ribița.

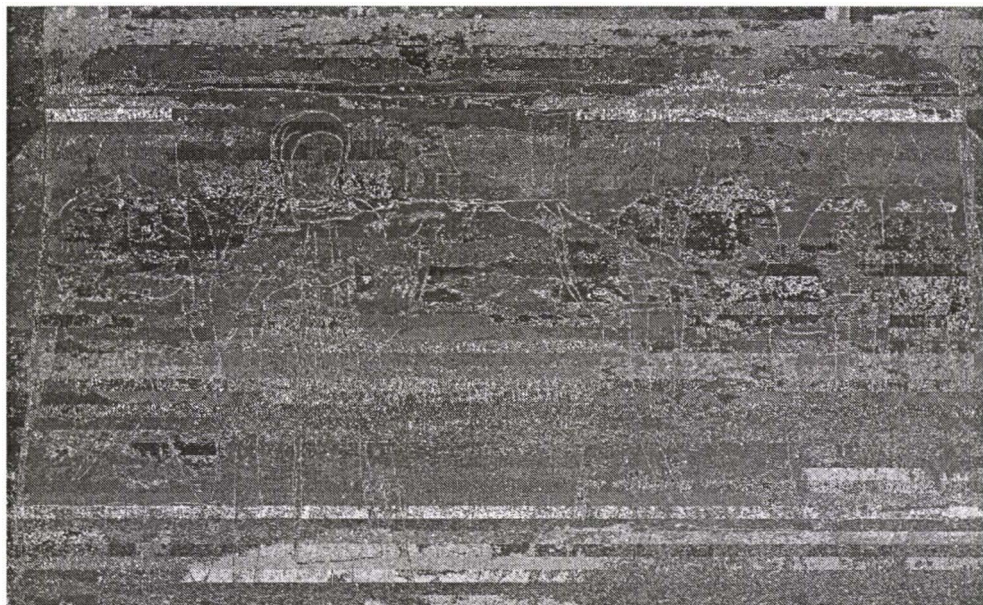


Fig. 5. Votive composition and drawing with the *ketors'* outline, 1743 repainting over the 1408 fresco, western wall of the nave (inner, eastern wall of the western tower), Saint George Church in Streisângeorgiu.

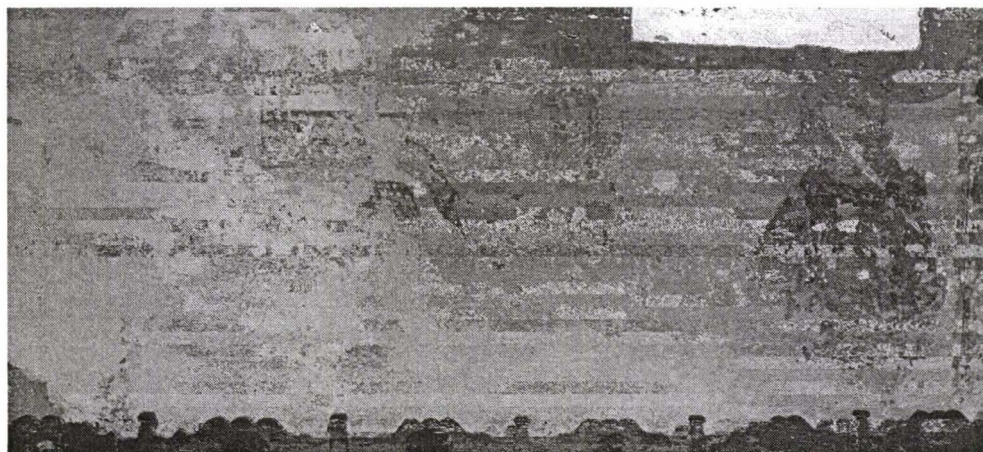


Fig. 6. Votive composition, second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower register of the nave's northern wall, Saint Nicholas Church in Hălmagiu.



Fig. 7. Holy Kings of Hungary and votive composition, 1411 (?), fresco, lower register of the nave's southern and western walls, Church of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in Crișcior.



Fig. 8. Military saints on horse and Holy Kings of Hungary, early-15<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower register of the nave's northern wall, Saint Nicholas Church in Ribîța.



Fig. 9. Enthroned Virgin with Child and two female donors, second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower register of the nave's northern wall, Saint Nicholas Church in Hălmagiu.



Fig. 10. Resurrection of the Dead (up) and layman figure (down), late-14<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, western side of the nave's southern wall, (Saint Nicholas) Church in Leșnic.



Fig. 11. Saint Nicholas and Grozie, first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower register of the sanctuary's southern wall, Church (of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin) in Strei.

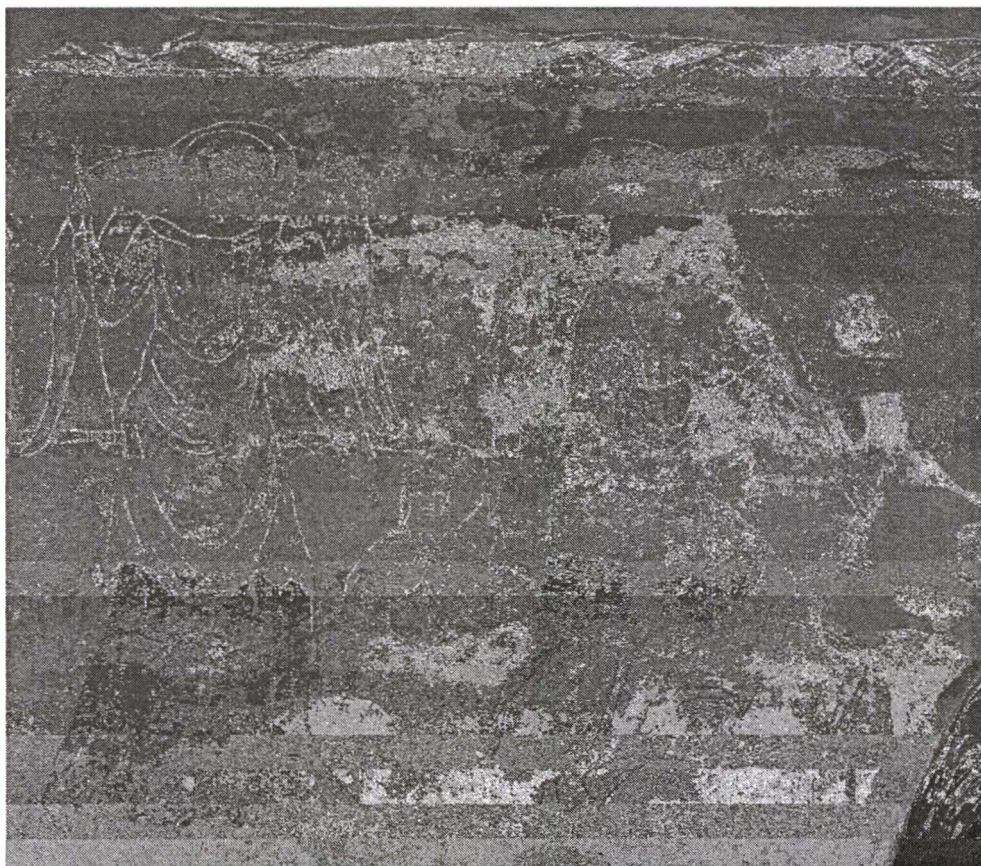


Fig. 12. Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel and a supplicant with drawing of their outline, first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, northern side of the triumphal arch's upper register, Church (of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin) in Strei.

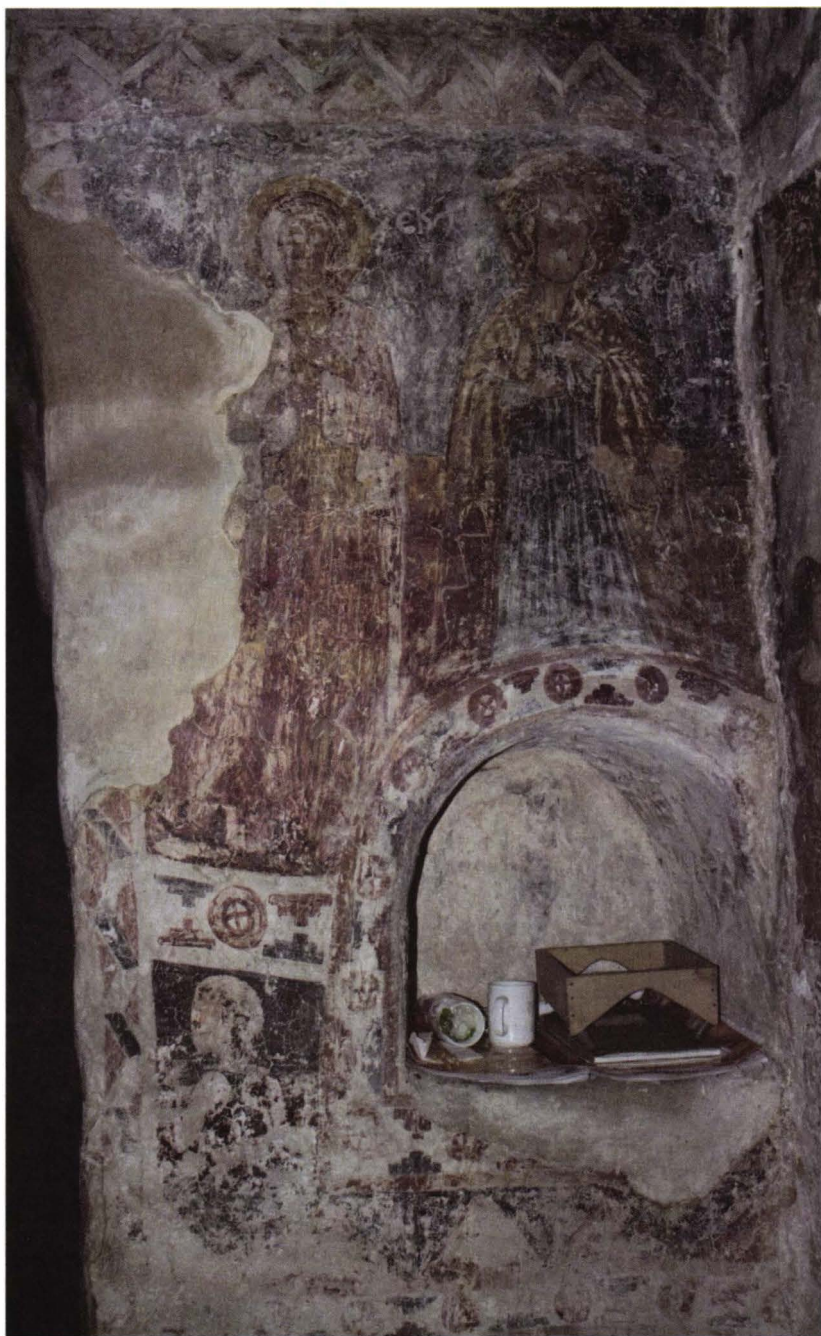


Fig. 13. Saints Catherine and St. Sreda (up) and supplicant (down), first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower registers of the southern side of the triumphal arch, Church (of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin) in Strei.



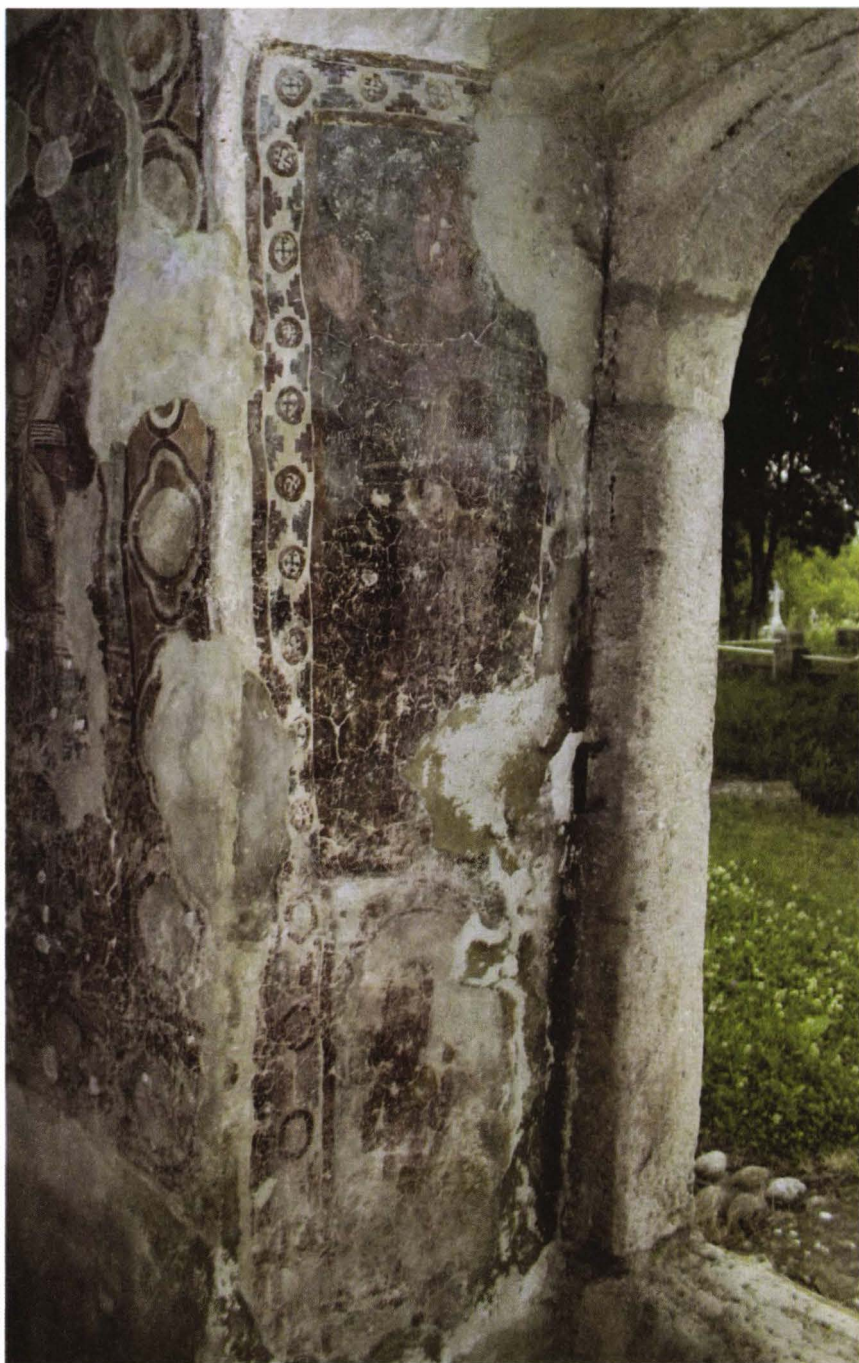


Fig. 14. Two supplicants, first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, eastern jamb of the southern door, Church (of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin) in Strei.

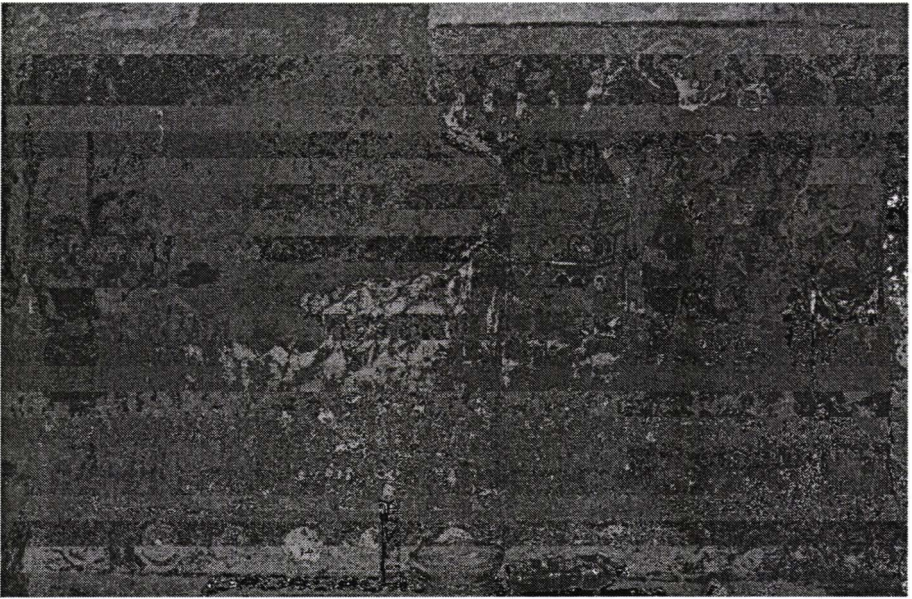


Fig. 15. Male supplicant on the decorative frame of the Martyrdom of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and Saint Nicholas' Investiture as Bishop, first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower register of the nave's southern wall, Church (of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin) in Strei.



Fig. 16. Drawing of the scene of the Holy Virgin with Child flanked by saints, (Saint Nicholas) Church in Leșnic (after Cincheza-Buculei 1974, fig. 3).

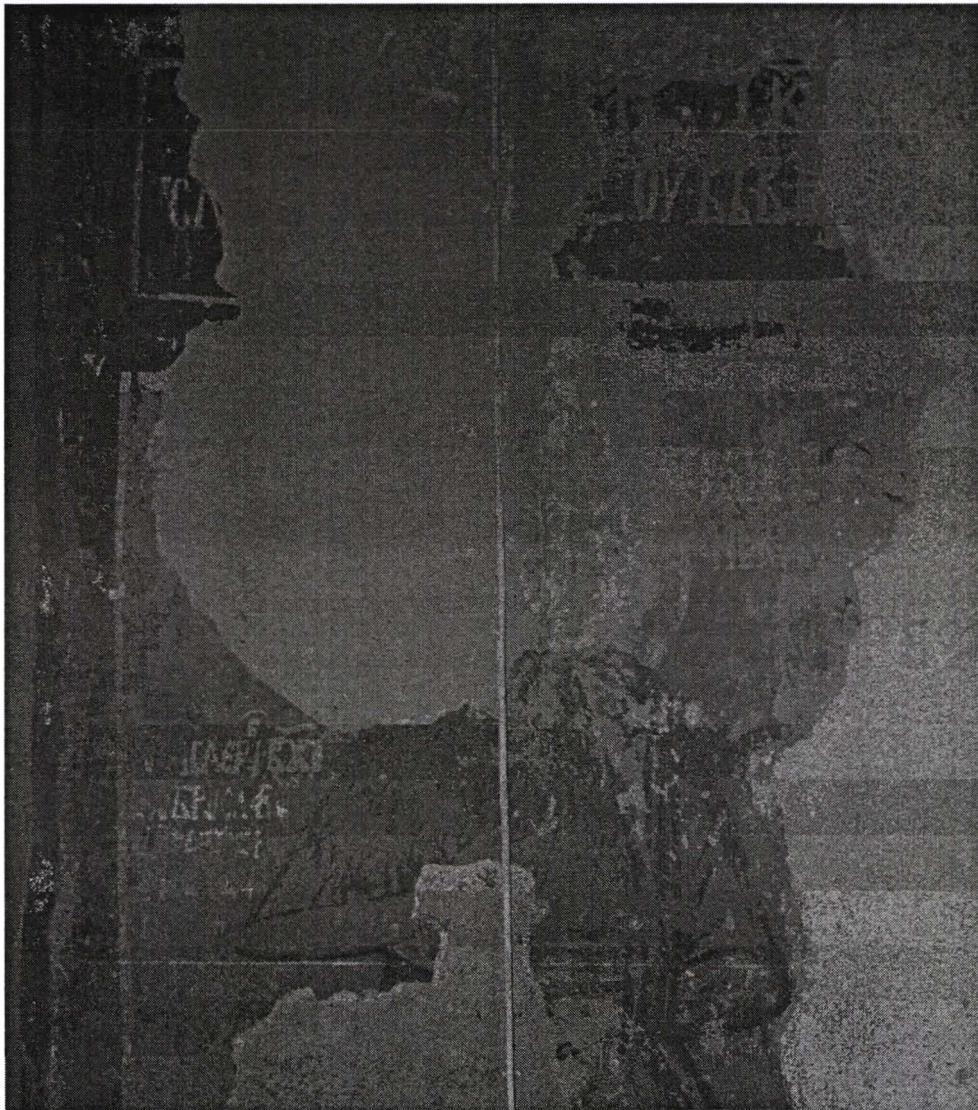


Fig. 17. Detail of Saint John the Baptist and the two accompanying inscriptions, early-15<sup>th</sup> century, fresco, lower register of the nave's southern wall, Saint Nicholas Church in Ribîța.



Fig. 18. Holy Trinity (western side) and Saint Nedelya (southern side), 1443 (?), fresco, north-eastern pillar of the nave, Saint Nicholas Church in Densuș.

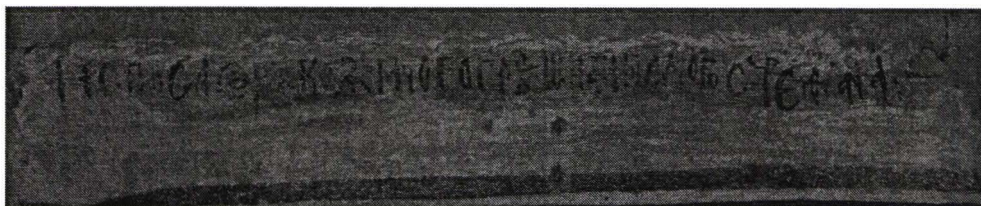


Fig. 19. Detail of the painter's inscription above Saint Nedelya's representation, 1443 (?), southern side of the north-eastern pillar of the nave, Saint Nicholas Church in Densuș.

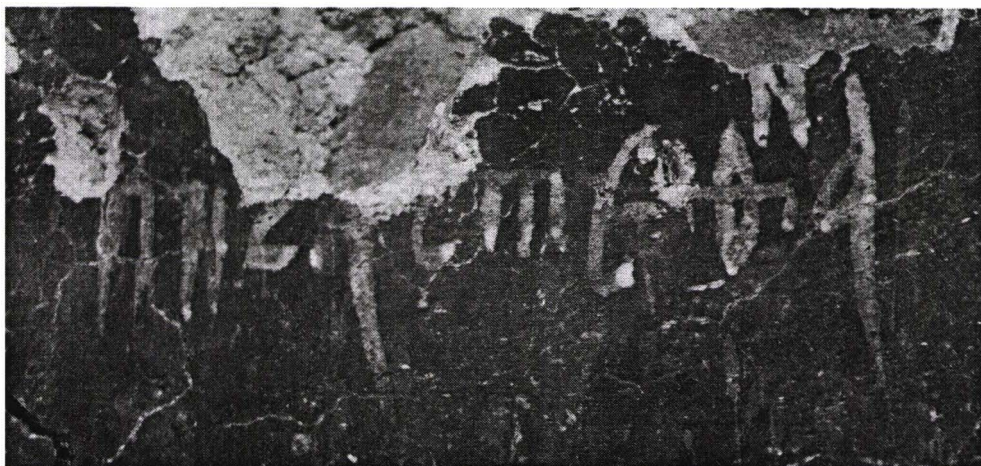


Fig. 20. Detail of the painter's inscription, before 1443, below the sanctuary's window, Saint Nicholas Church in Densuș.

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