

ECCLESIASTIC EDIFICES OF THE PÂRȘCOVEANU BOYARS

CIOAREC Ileana *

Abstract. *In this article I wanted to introduce religious foundations Pârșoveni boyars. Pârșoveni boyars built the church in Pârșoveni (Olt) and in Craiova and Bucharest and Mănăilești hermitage. All these worshipping places are built by the Pârșcoveanu boyars, demonstrating their quality of great founders.*

Keywords: *ecclesiastic edifices, boyars, church, Pârșcoveanu.*

In the Middle Ages, the founders named the persons who through initiated actions, brought their concrete contribution either to the building of a worshipping place, or to assuring the surviving conditions for such an edifice¹.

According to the role the founders had, they could be divided in several categories:

a) the actual or the initial founders, also known as “great founders” represented all the persons who imagined and put into practice the building and the endowing of a worshipping place. The members of the founder’s family had the same quality as the one who effectively participated to the accomplishment of the action;

b) the secondary or “the new founders” were considered all those who contributed to the complete endowing with movables or real goods of an already existent place, to the restoration, repairing, transformation of the initial edifices or to the building of a new ones, inside the same place, to the painting or repainting of it.

All these categories of founders had the right to be mentioned in written evidences (diptyches, registers, documents), epigraphically (grave stones, inscriptions) and ichnographically (votive or funerary paintings) and to benefit by special chapel or commemoration services. They had the obligation to watch over the proper carrying on of the life regarding the founded location and of the material goods with which it had been endowed².

To such a constructive spirit, the great Pârșcoveanu boyars responded; they originated from Pârșcoveni, in the former Romanați County, today Olt County, attested at the beginning of the 18th century. The first important character of this family is the *postelnic* (seneschal) Trufanda. Regarding his origin, several hypotheses had been presented. Some specialists consider that he could have been of Greek origin and would have arrived into the country during the fourth reign of Radu Mihnea (August 1620 – August 1623). Others, insist on the Romanian origin of his, mentioning that being at

*3rd deg. Scientific Researcher “C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor” Institute for Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities, Craiova, Romanian Academy, ileanacioarec@yahoo.com.

¹ Maria Voica Pușcașu, *Actul de ctitorire ca fenomen istoric în Țara Românească și Moldova până la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea*, Bucharest, Editura Vremea, 2001, p. 191.

² *Ibidem*, p. 191-194.

Constantinople, he returned together with Radu Mihnea to Bucharest, when the last one obtained the throne of Wallachia from Constantinople. P. V. Năsturel denies all the opinions expressed by the other specialists, sustaining that Trufanda had already been in the country, before 1620.

The members of this family of boyars built many churches, both in the counties from Oltenia and in Bucharest.

The building of the church from Pârșcoveni, under the patronage of “St. Nicholas”, was begun by Iordache, the son of the *stolnic* (High Steward) Trufanda and by his wife Ancuța, during 1634 – 1635 and it was ended in 1760 by the *medelnicer* (a boyar in charge with pouring water) Ștefan Pârșcoveanu and ended the next year, when the worshiping place was endowed by the founder with two church bells, on which it was written: “Ștefan Pârșcoveanu *vel logofăt* (the great chancellor Ștefan Pârșcoveanu)”. The small church had a rectangular shape.

The worshiping place also sheltered the portraits of the founders displayed in this way: on the eastern wall, there were painted the boyar Ioniță Becescu and his lady Maria. After them, there was the *vel stolnic* (Greatest Steward) Iordache, having on his left his lady Anca. With the backside towards Ancuța and with the hands reaching his husband, there was lady Stanca, the second wife of Ștefan, *vornic* (the Minister of Justice). On the wall facing the door, in front of lady Stanca, there was lady Ilinca Obedeanu, with the hand on the right shoulder of his husband, *medelnicer* Ștefan, who held the church in his hand. On the other side of them, there was Ștefan Pârșcoveanu, the counsellor, having lady Joița next to him.

On the northern wall, there was painted lady Stanca, wife of *medelnicer* Preda. Near Preda there was Anca, wife of Constantin Armașul. Near him, there was a child, Constantin³.

The church erected by Pârșcoveanu boyars is not intact anymore, on its place being built another one in 1906, by the dwellers of the village and by P. Hagiopolu.

In Craiova, Ștefan Pârșcoveanu, along with Ion Botoșanu, *stolnic* Ioan Brăiloiu, Dumitrache Vișoreanu, *logofăt* (chancellor) Radu Pleșoianu and captain Radu Mănescu, built between 1793-1794, the church Brândușa, on the place of another wooden church that was dating from the 16th century. The worshiping place was repaired, as resulting from the inscription from 1855, by *clucereasa* (Lady Steward) Zinca Mănescu and by her son Petre Mănescu. On this opportunity, the church porch was closed, the wall between the nave and the narthex was demolished and the church was being repainted. The inscription from 1855 mentions as builders only the members of the family Mănescu, without mentioning Ștefan Pârșcoveanu, Ion Botoșanu, *stolnic* Ioan Brăiloiu, Dumitrache Vișoreanu and *logofăt* Radu Pleșoianu.

³ P. V. Năsturel, *Biserica din Pârșcoveni-Romanați*, in „RIAF”, XIV, 1913, p. 130-137.

The role of builder played by Ștefan Pârșcoveanu is also mentioned by the census made between 1813-1815, in which it is stated that: “this is made by the deceased Ștefan Pârșcoveanu and *logofăt* Ioan Bocășanu”⁴. Ștefan Pârșcoveanu also appears as a writer in the “Law suits documents”, where it is mentioned that the building was made of bricks “by the deceased Ion Botoșanu and Ștefan Pârșcoveanu, and *logofăt* Radu Pleșoianu, and captain Radu Măinescu”⁵.

Brândușa church is made of thin bricks, arranged as a ship (nave), towards east as a semi-circle and towards west with an open porch, supported by four round polls, made of brick with flourished evidenced capitals. It has no domes and it is the only church from Craiova built in this style. The altar, semi-circular, is separated from the Nave by the catapetasma through a wall, built from the top to the bottom. Inside, the church is paved with wooden boards and in the porch with bricks put on one of their edges. In the exterior side, the worshiping place has a crenellated belt that separates the walls into two parts, formed by blind niches.

According to Nicolae Stoicescu, Ștefan Pârșcoveanu is also the founder of the church from the former village Rovine (Troaca), nowadays a neighbourhood of the city of Craiova. This worshiping place was built in 1785⁶. The edifice erected by Pârșcoveanu boyars, probably a wooden one, lasted only one century, because in 1866, Săndoi family built a brick church, under the patronage of “St. Nicholas”⁷.

To their name is also related the building of Măinești hermitage, under the patronage “Virgin’s Birth” (Vâlcea County) in 1648, by Pahomir, the son of *vel stolnic* Iordache. The initial founder did not get the chance to paint this church, and it was finally painted in 1801, by the hieromonk Dionisie⁸.

This worshiping place received from the founders the villages Studina and Mănăilești.

A part of the **Studina** (without any other specification) villages and Mănăilești were offered in 1659 by the wife of Preda Brâncoveanu to her daughter Ancuța, on the occasion of her marriage with *postelnic* Iordache Pârșcoveanu. From Iordache, a part of these villages were given to the Bistrița monastery, without the *rumâni* (serfs), but with the vineyard and the fish pond⁹. The other parts remained to be possessed by the other two sons of him: Matei and Preda. On the 17th of July

⁴ I. V. Căncea, *Oameni și fapte din trecutul Craiovei*, in „Arhivele Olteniei”, VIII, 1929, no. 45-46, p. 449.

⁵ Idem, *Biserici din Craiova și din împrejurimi*, in „Oltenia”, II, 1941, 9, p. 130; Cezar Avram, Dinică Ciobotea, P. S. Damaschin Coravu Severineanu, *Bisericiile Craiovei*, Craiova, Editura Helios, 1998, p. 81.

⁶ Nicolae Stoicescu, *Bibliografia localităților și monumentelor feudale din România, 1-Țara Românească (Muntenia, Oltenia și Dobrogea)*, vol I, Craiova, Editura Mitropolia Olteniei, 1970, p. 662.

⁷ Cezar Avram, Dinică Ciobotea, P. S. Damaschin Coravu Severineanu, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

⁸ Protosinghel Theofil S. Niculescu, *Sfintele monastiri și schituri din România, ctitorite de vlădicim călugări și preoți, boieri, negustori și săteni*, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Editura Mănăstirea Vodița, 2002, p. 193-194.

⁹ SJAN Dolj County, Manuscripts Collection, Bistrița Monastery, vol. II, f. 163.

1691, Matei and Preda, the sons of *stolnic* Iordache Pârșcoveanu, confirmed that their brother Pahonie (Papa) gave to the Mănăilești hermitage, his part of Studina and Mănăilești, with the vineyard, fish pond and mill, the *rumâni* and three small villages of gypsies¹⁰.

The church under the patronage of “St. John the New”, was built in 1756 by the head of the *boiangii* (dyers) Ioniță Croitorul, helped by the tailors and dyers guilds, on the place of an older wooden one, erected at the end of the 17th century. The worshiping place was dedicated in 1766, from the will of Grigorie Metropolitan, who was named Metohija of the Metropolitan Church in the same year, on the 12th of August. It was repaired in 1790, by *vornic* Ștefan Pârșcoveanu, the place being near his properties, on the area Podul Șerban Vodă. The church had been named for a short period of time “of Pârșcoveanu”.

The church Saint John the New has the shape of a rectangular nave (28.5 x 12.5 metres), with two domes. One apse from the altar is connected to the main body of the nave, through two pseudo-niches. In the nave, four columns sustain the arches that uphold a dome with twelve sides and a square basis.

The pronaos is covered with a flattened spherical calotte. An exornathex, which is now closed (wider than the pronaos), has above it the trellis-work mast, over which the octagonal bell-tower is built, on a square, tall basis. An added porch precedes the entrance into the church. It is not very tall, it has three central arches and a lateral one, all in the centre and supported by pedestal columns.

The facades of the church are divided by a twisted belt, in two illegal registers, embellished with simple niches, rounded in the superior side. The inferior register is higher, being pierced by windows. The superior register has the height of a frieze that surrounds the church. The bases of the domes are also ornamented with a register of simple niches.

On the basis of the tower-bell, in a wide, shallow panel, with a semi-circular edge, is placed the icon-mosaic that depicts the Baptizing of Lord Jesus.

All these worshiping places are built by the Pârșcoveanu boyars, demonstrating their quality of great founders.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 168.

Bibliography

- Avram, Cezar, Ciobotea, Dinică, Damaschin Coravu Severineanu, P. S., *Bisericile Craiovei*, Craiova, Editura Helios, 1998.
- Câncea, I. V., *Oameni și fapte din trecutul Craiovei*, in „Arhivele Olteniei”, VIII, 1929, no. 45-46.
- Câncea, I. V., *Biserici din Craiova și din împrejurimi*, in „Oltenia”, II, 1941.
- Năsturel, P. V., *Biserica din Pârșcoveni-Romanați*, in „RIAF”, XIV, 1913.
- Niculescu, Protosinghel Theofil S., *Sfintele monastiri și schituri din România, ctitorite de vlădicim călugări și preoți, boieri, negustori și săteni*, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Editura Mănăstirea Vodița, 2002.
- Pușcașu, Maria Voica, *Actul de ctitorire ca fenomen istoric în Țara Românească și Moldova până la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea*, Bucharest, Editura Vremea, 2001.
- Stoicescu, Nicolae, *Bibliografia localităților și monumentelor feudale din România, I-Țara Românească (Muntenia, Oltenia și Dobrogea)*, vol I, Craiova, Editura Mitropolia Olteniei, 1970.
- SJAN Dolj County, Manuscripts Collection, Bistrița Monastery, vol. II.



Brândușa Church.



The Church under the Patronage of “St. John the New”.