

STOVE TILES ORNAMENTED WITH LESS KNOWN DECORATIVE MOTIFS: THE LION, THE DRAGON AND THE KNIGHT*

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Many years ago, through extensive field researches and small surveys, important archaeological evidence of medieval life was found in a rural settlement in the former region Neamț². The findings place is called "Dolhești" and still keeps alive the memory of the village bearing the same name whereof the first known documents from April 12, 1436 speak³. By the ruling act issued on that date, the rulers of Moldova, Iliaș and Stephen were reinforcing to Baico "to his right and faithful services his inheritance namely the villages: Dolhești, where his house was, and Negreștii, and Almășelul and Horăe<țe>știi and Roșcanii, and on the Almași, down

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² Archaeological excavations conducted during the years 1978-1979 and 1982 by Rodica Popovici (Institute of Archaeology-Iași) in collaboration with Lucia Minodora Măță and Dina Pop (Neamț Museum Complex). See also R. Popovici, D. Pop, *Săpăturile arheologice din așezarea rurală medievală de la Negrești-Neamț*, in *MCA*, Tulcea, 1980, p. 588-590. The drawings were done by Mrs. Waltraude Delibaș and Mr. Romeo Ionescu within the Institute of Archaeology-Iași.

³ *DRH. A. Moldova, I (1384-1448)*, vol. published by C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu and L. Șimanschi, București, 1975, p. 202; see also M. Costăchescu, *Documentele moldovenesti înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, vol. I, Iași, 1931, p. 427.

Dolhești, Dobrenii”⁴. The preservation of Dolhești toponym and the mention of the village ”down Dolhești”, in conjunction with field investigations located the old medieval precincts in the area within the present village Negrești from Dobreni commune, Neamț county⁵.

Although they were not undertaken on the proper scale, the archaeological researches conducted in ”Dolhești” allowed unveiling of dwellings and household annexes dating from the 14th-15th and 16th-17th centuries⁶. Among these, relevant to our subject are the stove tiles discovered on an outdoor hearth, which, however, were not *in situ*, but came from a destroyed dwelling. That dwelling has been near the household annex, only 30 m away from it⁷.

From the destroyed dwelling also comes a rich ceramic inventory consisting of common household tableware and numerous vessels of kaolin, coated or not with enamel. There have also been found: Ottoman luxury pottery of Iznik type, small glass containers in a fragmentary state, window pane mesh and a knife with bone handle, plated with silver and engravings of the same metal. Uncommonly discovered in rural areas, these findings complete the picture on the material possibilities of those that have owned and used them.

The coins, in turn, fulfil and strengthen the dating elements for a chronological frame as closer to the truth. Chronologically, the five coins were discovered as follows: a denarius from Mathias I (1458-1490), perforated, an incuse akçe, perforated, issued during the reign of Murad III, later to the years 1584-1586, and another one dated in the 17th century, presenting no accurate determination, a szelag from Sigismund III Waza

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ R. Popovici, D. Pop, *op. cit.*, p. 589-590.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ In the preliminary report we were considering that the hearth belonged to dwelling no. I, but further researches showed that it was nothing but a mere household annex. In fact, the tiles discovered on the hearth came from dwelling no. II. Some pottery fragments of kaolin and two damaged bricks, about 2 cm thick, which came from the stove base, were also found beside the intact tiles. For the older interpretations, see *Ibidem*.

(1587-1632), issued in 1586 and another one in 1623, a schilling from Kristina (1632-1654) from 1638⁸.

Taking all these types of findings into consideration we believe that the dwelling was in use between late 16th century and early part of next century. Also, the intact stove tiles found in the outdoor hearth belonged to this dwelling and not to the household annex. More than that, these tiles are those which offer us completely the pictures once illustrated (Pl. 1/1-2; 2/1-2) and therefore these images will be the subject of our presentation.

The five intact tiles are made of a paste with a lot of sand and limestone granules in composition, with decorative motifs printed in wood patterns. The objects are heavily smoked on the back and have fingerprints from pressing the clay into moulds. The burning process is oxidizing, the tiles presenting a reddish-yellow colour.

All pieces are unglazed, without mounting foot, easily ranging in size from 19.4 cm x 25.5 cm⁹, a fact that proves the use of different patterns. The stove plates are characterised by full front and narrow frame. Taking into account the typological features, according to the Moldavian tiles classification they belong to the IX A type¹⁰.

Three tiles have the central representation of a knight wearing a short tunic, which falls above the knee over the tight pants lying on the foot. The tunic is caught at the waist with a belt of metal plates, carefully represented, and forms folds following the line of arms. On the head, the knight wears a triangular helmet with a well individualized plume. In his left hand, he holds the horse's reins for trotting, and in his right hand, ready to attack, a curved blade sword; the sword's handle and guard are bent and its blade presents a median groove. The knight's equipment is filled by spurs with short stem and rosette with five spines. The horse's body is

⁸ A first identification of coins was done by our colleague Viorel M. Butnariu, whom we thank on this occasion. Regarding the technical date on coins, see L. Munteanu, R. Popovici, *Descoperiri monetare din așezarea rurală de la Negrești "Dolhești", jud. Neamț (secolele XV-XVII)*, in *ArhMold*, XXXV, 2012, p. 169-179.

⁹ The stove tiles in question are in the Museum of History collection in Piatra Neamț, the inv. no. 22-24F and 136F. Another piece, preserved in fragments, and coming from dwelling no. II is at the Museum of Ethnography in Târgu Neamț, the inv. no. 1084.

¹⁰ P. V. Batariuc, *Căle din Moldova medievală. Secolele XIV-XVII*, Suceava, 1999, p. 168-169, fig. 1/28.

covered with a rectangular saddle, with higher bow in front, over the rich embroidered blanket on the horse's hindquarters. Other parts of the harness, as bridles, reins and stirrup straps are well illustrated, with great precision. The action takes place in a landscape whose background is represented by a wide Gothic arch, surmounted by two ogival arches, separated by mullions. The portal is extended in a cruciform finial, suggesting a church. Two other simple unornamented crosses are symmetrically arranged on the arch. Placed on the arch and ogives, the so-called "wolf teeth" decoration fulfils the strongly schematised architectural embellishment (Pl. 1/1; 2/1).

The other two intact stove tiles, a third one preserved in fragments and several other fragments share as main character a rampant lion with canine head and slender body, partially covered with scales, imagining an armour; the tail has a vegetable look, ending in a branch of fern strongly stylized. The slender body, caught at the waist with a belt of metal plates, similar to the knight's one described above and the mane rendered by ridges, plus the incised lines of the upper limb suggest and reinforce the idea of the armour. Under the lion there are two different sized animal representations, similar to the dragon depicted on the well-known tiles preserving the image of St. George while killing the monster. The smaller dragon's body is also covered with chain loops. Under the lion's body, between its paws, a trefoil cross separates the image of this dramatic battle scene by a very realistic artistic achievement following an oblique line. By the cross' support - the sign of victory, and by the lion's power, both evil animals are defeated and subjected (Pl. 1/2; 2/1; 4/1, 4).

From the dwelling were recovered only fragmentary tiles preserving partial images of the lion (Pl. 4/1) and the dragon (Pl. 4/4). Unlike the intact pieces, the fragment illustrating the dragon reveals the body of a bigger monster covered with scales (Pl. 4/4), which proves the use of different patterns and, at the same time, the existence of a variant on the same subject.

Although this last representation is unique up to now, stove tiles with images sharing the same issue were the subject of other discoveries too, but their fragmentary state did not offer us the possibility to reconstruct the whole scene. Thus, two fragmentary plates of stove tiles

preserving the motif of the rampant lion come from the princely Court of Piatra Neamț: one is simply, realistic illustrated, while the other one is covered with scales and ridged mane¹¹ (Pl. 4/2-3). Also here the tile fragments are unglazed and their dimensions prove the use of patterns of the same size.

From the same princely Court of Piatra Neamț comes a tile fragment illustrating a knight dressed in a coat of mail, holding the horse's reins in the right hand and a faceted mace in the left hand¹². Similar to the findings from Negrești "Dolhești", arches adorned with crosses and the "wolf teeth" motif appear in the scene's background, but illustrated in a different manner (Pl. 4/5). It is possible that both pieces have been associated within the same stove content.

The tiles in question were dated by the author of discoveries in the 15th century, during the reign of Stephen the Great and at a time immediately after, according to the existing analogies at the moment of publishing¹³. But certain technical details, such as the pasta with sifted sand, the "wolf teeth" motif, certain elements' schematization inside the composition lead to a later chronological frame, in the same time with those from Negrești "Dolhești". The reason for which they were much earlier dated was undoubtedly the absence of chronological markers during archaeological excavations, the fragmentary state of the tiles discovered, also heavily burned, the state of research since then¹⁴. At the same time, one needs to emphasize that the images of rampant lions on the medieval tiles from Moldova are well marked by numerous discoveries, both in urban and rural environments, particularly in the 15th century and to a lesser extent in the next century¹⁵. The rampant lion is featured in two different situations, either placed centrally on the object's surface, with its body turned to the

¹¹ E. Neamțu, *Date istorice și arheologice cu privire la Curtea Domnească din Piatra Neamț*, in *Mem.Antiq*, I, 1969, p. 234, fig. 4/2-3, 5/1.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 234, fig. 5/2.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 234, 238.

¹⁴ The fragmentary stove tile with lion illustrated in fig. 4/2 was accidentally found in 1959 and has the inv. no. Piatra Neamț 1877. The lion's body is rendered without scales and its size is identical to those of the pieces from Negrești "Dolhești".

¹⁵ P. V. Batariuc, S. Haimovici, *Elemente animaliere pe cable descoperite în Moldova*, in *ArhMold*, XXVI, 2003, p. 157, 161, fig. 8/1-5.

right or left, or in battle with a small monstrous animal, armed with a lance or unarmed¹⁶ (Pl. 4/6). The discoveries from Negrești “Dolhești” are partly similar with the latter examples.

On the tiles mentioned above, illustrating a knight, other dates were stated too. They were chronologically framed either in the 15th century¹⁷, or in the following century, which seems much closer to the truth, according to the scene's schematization¹⁸.

Inside the stove from Negrești “Dolhești” were also found pot-tiles (Pl. 3/3), plate-tiles with a short mounting foot, decorated with a big central rosette and smaller ones on the sides (Pl. 3/4-5). On several fragments were printed rosettes with *entrelacs* on the inside and “wolf teeth” on the outside, with beautiful tulip buds in the corners (Pl. 3/2). All the tiles were placed on the stove body under the rectangular plates illustrating the knight, the lion and the dragons, above which followed the pieces ending in ridges, as part of the canopy (Pl. 3/1). Therefore, the discovery of these fragmentary tiles will only shade the chronology of pieces.

¹⁶ Regarding the rich literature on the representation of rampant lion on the medieval Moldavian tiles see especially P. V. Batariuc, *Elemente heraldice pe cable descoperite în Moldova (secolele XV-XVI)*, în *ArhGen*, 2 (7), 1995, 1-2, p. 326-327, fig. 12/1-2; P. V. Batariuc, S. Haimovici, *op. cit.*, p. 157, fig. 8/1-5; M. Nicorescu, *Noi descoperiri de ceramică ornamentală din secolele XV-XVI de la Suceava*, în *ArhMold*, IV, 1966, p. 323, fig. 5/2; Al. Andronic, E. Neamțu, M. Dinu, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Curtea domnească din Iași*, în *ArhMold*, V, 1967, p. 237, fig. 43/4; N. N. Pușcașu, V. M. Pușcașu, *Mărturii de civilizație și urbanizare medievală descoperite în vatra istorică a Iașilor*, în *RMMMLA*, XIV, 1983, 2, p. 44, fig. 14 and 15; Idem, *Biserica „Sf. Sava” din Iași. Monografie arheologică*, Iași, 2005, p. 106, fig. 44; P. V. Batariuc, *Catalogul colecției Romstorfer. Ceramica monumentală*, Suceava, 2008, p. 110, fig. 184a and 184b.

¹⁷ M. Ispir, *Considerații asupra decorației în arhitectura civilă din Moldova. I. Epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare*, în *SCLA*, XXIX, 1982, p. 11, note 21.

¹⁸ H. Klusch, *Zauber alter Kacheln aus Rumänien*, Honterus Druckerei, Sibiu, 1999, p. 38, 89, fig. 29, with its partially wrong location: Negrești Domnești. The stove tile was then hosted by the Museum of Glass and Pottery from Bucharest, inv. no. 799/136F. In the present, the object belongs to the collection of the Museum of History from Piatra Neamț, inv. nr. 136F; P. V. Batariuc, *Cable din secolul al XV-lea decorate cu scene inspirate din viața cavalerescă*, în *Suceava*, XIII-XIV, 1986-1987, p. 149.

Until recently, the tiles from Negrești “Dolhești” and Piatra Neamț, the princely Court had no correspondence among the findings from neighbouring areas, but the recent resumption of research has enabled the decryption of images to a great extent similar to those taken into consideration. We refer here to the reconsideration of some images on the tiles from Transylvania, from Vințu de Jos and Făgăraș (Pl. 5/1-2)¹⁹.

The restoration of several fragments allowed a full reconstitution of the scene illustrated on the tiles from Vințu de Jos. It depicts a dragon in bipedal position, raised on its hind legs and represented with bat wings and a long, wound up tail; with the front legs the dragon outlines defence gestures. Dressed in armour, the knight is surprised the moment he thrusts the spear into the mouth of the monster; the lion lies at his feet, in position to attack (Pl. 5/1)²⁰.

Much smaller, the tile from Făgăraș fortress is also fragmentary preserved, but, in essence, its image is the same (Pl. 5/2). The knight is set on foot, in armour, with his visor raised, thrusting the spear into the dragon's wide open mouth. On the bottom of the tile, at the knight's feet, one can see a part of the lion's head and mane. This piece was regarded as an achievement far more awkward to the one discovered at Vințu de Jos, actually a less successful copy²¹.

Both pieces were placed chronologically in the 16th century, indicating that they could belong to the second half of it²². Moreover, a correction of the chronological frame was needed as the first dating placed the tile from Făgăraș in the 15th century²³. The tiles from Vințu de Jos are,

¹⁹ A. A. Rusu, *Cable din Transilvania (III). Trei motive decorative medievale*, in *AMN*, 39-40/2, 2002-2003, p. 107-109; Idem, *Cable din Transilvania (III). Trei motive decorative medievale*, in *Investigări ale culturii materiale medievale din Transilvania*, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 159-163.

²⁰ Idem, *Gotic și Renaștere la Vințu de Jos. Documente de cultură materială din Transilvania secolelor XIII–XVI*, Cluj-Napoca-Satu Mare, 1998, p. 55; D. Marcu Istrate, *Cable din Transilvania și Banat de la începuturi până la 1700*, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 139, pl. 157/66.

²¹ D. Marcu Istrate, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ V. M. Pușcașu, *Plăci ceramice decorative descoperite la Cetatea Făgărașului în anii 1966-1973*, in *AMM*, II, 1980, p. 224-225, fig. 1, dated in the 15th century on p. 228-229.

however, those who contributed to a more accurate dating. They belonged to the refurbishments ordered in Cardinal Martinuzzi's castle, refurbishments that could not be made but before 1551 (the year of the Cardinal's assassination in the same locality)²⁴.

The tile fragments discovered in Alba Iulia have been hypothetically associated to the same series²⁵ (Pl. 5/4).

The scene itself was considered to represent "the hunt of a fantastic animal by a knight helped by a lion"²⁶. About the image from Vințu de Jos one already advanced the idea that it could be a Christian allegory²⁷.

Another discovery from Târgoviște, Muntenia province, added to those from Transylvania. From the initial image, the fragmentary tile, characterised by the same rectangular shape, with a narrow frame, retains almost entirely only the figure of the knight, wearing a short tunic, in rich folds, caught at the waist with a belt of metal plates, similar to that of the rider from Negrești "Dolhești". On the head, the knight wears a hat without brim and in the right hand, leaning on the shoulder, a mace; the left hand is pointed to an animal sitting in bipedal position, with the upper limbs reached out to the knight²⁸ (Pl. 5/3). The dating of this piece in the first half of the 15th century is undoubtedly too early. As outlined on another occasion, it may belong to "a generation back to those from Transylvania"²⁹. But the image is apparently similar. It could be rather associated to the well-known representations of the dragon tamed by a knight or a lady, with noble features, such as reflected by the miniatures' images³⁰. Sometimes, holy, sacred characters represented near these terrifying animals which are tamed and become subjected, enter this series.

²⁴ A. A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, 2002-2003, p. 107-108.

²⁵ Idem, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 160-161, fig. 1c, note 10.

²⁶ D. Marcu Istrate, *op. cit.*, p. 220, 286.

²⁷ A. A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 55.

²⁸ Gh. I. Cantacuzino, P. Diaconescu, G. Mihăescu, *Date arheologice asupra unor vestigii medievale din zona centrală a orașului Târgoviște*, in *RMMMLA*, XV, 1984, 2, p. 37, fig. 14. Photographically represented, the tile was found in a dwelling with basement dated in the first half of the 15th century, but early ruined in the beginning of the next century.

²⁹ A. A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 161-162.

³⁰ The photo rather weak and especially the dragon's artistic drawing (?) leave room for doubts.

Returning to the tiles discovered at Făgăraș și Vințu de Jos, the works' composition clearly shows that the topic treated doesn't imply an ordinary hunting. As highlighted in a first approach to the subject, these decorative motifs are an illustration of the theme generically called "the knight with the lion, fighting the dragon"³¹. The same theme appears on the tiles from Negrești "Dolhești", but it differs from the Transylvanian ones by treating the subject on two levels – side by side and frontal. The pieces should be analysed together and not separately, as scenes with knight in gothic ambience and lion attacked by two terrifying animals, because the tiles were intentionally placed side by side and frontal, at the top of the stove, under the ridged plates³². Only this set of plates, side by side and frontal, allows the correct decoding of the theme depicted on the tiles from Negrești "Dolhești".

A few years ago, the topic was closely discussed in an interdisciplinary study, based on archaeological, iconographic and literary sources. Then, the best explanations were offered upon the decorative motifs of the paving bricks found in the Cistercian monastery from Pilis (Hungary) and dated in the 13th century³³ (Pl. 6/1-2). By collating all available information, one made the connection between the paving bricks decorated with the fighting between the dragon-lion and the knight and the Angevin stove tile discovered inside the walled city of Buda, sharing the same subject³⁴ (Pl. 6/3).

The first scene illustrated on the bricks from Pilis presents the battle between the knight and the dragon, with the lion standing behind his saviour. The lion is rampant, with open mouth and threatening claws. The knight is set on foot, thrusting the sword in the monster's wide open mouth; the monster is not biped. A beautiful representation appears on the

³¹ A. A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 162.

³² Many years ago an observation was made in this sense by professor Zdeněk Smetánka. The same suggestion was offered by A. A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 163.

³³ O. Réthely, *The Lion, the Dragon, and the Knight: an interdisciplinary Investigation of the medieval Motif*, in *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, 7, 2001, p. 9-37.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 12, n. 10; see A. A. Rusu, *op. cit.*, 2002-2003, p. 108-109, on the stove tile from the walled city of Buda, which "develops the motif on an horizontal rectangle"; A. Vég, in *Pannonia Regia*, Budapesta, 1995, p. 308-309, V-30.

knight's shield - the lion with which he identifies, an image known from some illuminated manuscripts. The lion helps identify his hero with the "knight-lion" (Pl. 6/1)³⁵.

The second scene shows the dramatic battle between the knight and the dragon, this time involving also the lion. Other three smaller monsters, likely the descendants, appear to support the dragon, all being concentrated in the fight with the lion. This last representation is important in explaining the image from Negrești "Dolhești", where the dragon, of larger size, is helped by a second, smaller one, both in battle with the lion (Pl. 6/2)³⁶. The chosen mode of treatment reflects the increasing risk that the knight takes in his fight against the great dragon, which is helped by his descendants.

If inside the Cistercian abbey of Pilis, the source of inspiration is undoubtedly French, Chrétien de Troyes - Chevalier au Lion, one cannot make consistent judgements on the tiles from Transylvania and Moldova as important links and information are missing.

Other information comes from relatively close areas where such explanations were given for the discoveries of tiles sharing the same subject. In this regard, a recently published finding has revealed a remarkable renaissance tile, glazed in various colours and shades, from Velké Meziříčí, in Slovakia. Of uncertain origin, the stove tile is dated to the middle of the 16th century. Here, the knight is dressed in trendy clothes, with many adorned cuts, and a cap with small brim and a very rich plume. The dragon has a long dangerous tail, ended with a loop pointed against the lion, as well as its huge teeth, suggesting the flames³⁷ (Pl. 5/5). Although the knight is set on foot, together with the lion, crushing the evil force, the subject's manner of interpretation is very close to how the tiles from Negrești

³⁵ O. Réthelyi, *op. cit.*, p. 13, 19; I. Holl, *Funde aus dem Zisterziens Kloster von Pilis. Varia Archaeologica Hungarica*, 11, Budapesta, 2000, p. 160-161, fig. 100/1, 101/1. Even since the end of the 12th century, Chrétien de Troyes and his successors invest king Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (Yvain also among them) with the coat of arms; regarding the literary coats of arms see M. Pastoureau, *Figures de l'héraldique. Découvertes*, Paris, 1996, p. 87.

³⁶ I. Holl, *op. cit.*, p. 101, fig. 100/2.

³⁷ Č. Pavlík, *Draci na kachlích gotiky a renesance aneb kouzelný svět fantazie*, in *Archaeologia Historica*, 35, 2010, 1-2, p. 290-291, fig. 8.

“Dolhești” were treated. The battle between the lion and the dragon seems very similar, almost the same as that illustrated on the tiles presented here. In both thematic representations are taken models known from the fight between the lion and the dragon, illustrated together with the knight on the same tile, as proved by the discovery from Velké Mezirici, or on different pieces, but frontally, as in Negrești ”Dolhești”. In both cases, the similarity doesn't seem to be random and it might reflect the use of patterns and the concept's transpose as such.

As regards the subject depicted on the tile found in Velké Mezirici it was assumed that it would have been inspired by the legend of Prince Bruncvík, the Czech hero of the 13th and 14th centuries, who had witnessed a fight between a dragon and a lion. It is supposed that the legend of the famous battle would have reached here by German way and had been based on the French theme Yvain le Chevalier au Lion³⁸.

The third of the five novels written by Chrétien de Troyes, Yvain le Chevalier au Lion was considered a masterpiece in its time (c. 1177). It amazed by novelty and the courage to associate various motifs and symbols. It attracted a large audience in the Middle Ages and later, in the Renaissance, from England to German States and from Sicily to Scandinavia³⁹. Written in Troyes, on the court of the wise countess Marie de Champagne (the first daughter of Eleonora of Aquitaine and Louis the 2nd of France) and patron of the author, the novel was a real success and remained so for several centuries.

The book was immediately translated into German by Hartmann von Aue, in the same 13th century being adapted in several versions, in Welsh (Owein) and Norwegian (Ivens saga), while in the 14th century it

³⁸ *Ibidem*. The author does not exclude other possible identifications. As regards the legend on Prince Bruncvik see W. Baumann, *Die Sage von Heinrich dem Löwen bei den Russen*, in Xenja von Ertzdorff (ed.), *Die Romane von dem Ritter mit dem Löwen*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1993, p. 198-217; J. Kolár, *Der Ritter mit dem . Löwen in der Tschechischen Literatur: die alttschechische Chronik vom fürsten Bruncvík und das Problem ihrer Gesellschaftlichen Funktion*, in Xenja von Ertzdorff (ed.), *Die Romane...*, p. 184-196.

³⁹ W. W. Kibler, G. A. Zinn, L. Earp (eds.), *Medieval France. An Encyclopedia*, New York & London, 2, 2006, p. 413-416; J. Rund, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, the voices ”Yvain: The Knight of the Lion and Yvain and Gawain”, New York, 2006, p. 703-706.

was again translated into Norwegian (Herr Ivan the Knight with the Lion) and then into English (Yvain and Gawain)⁴⁰.

A possible source of inspiration is an ancient Greek legend of Androcles, mentioned by Aulus Gellius in *The Attic Nights* and then by Seneca⁴¹. Androcles, the slave of a Roman consul of the Emperor Tiberius runs away from his master and meets a lion into the desert to which he takes out a spin of its paws. Caught by his master, he is thrown into the arena, doomed to fight with wild beasts, but he is recognized and saved by the lion that once he helped⁴². The grateful lion's motif is taken by Chrétien de Troyes along with other mythical elements, from the legends mentioned by Cicero and Plato, oriental or Celtic motifs⁴³.

The novel's action begins in the court of King Arthur, "the good king of Brittany, whose glory urges us to be brave and ennobled by courtesy", from where Yvain goes in search of adventures, which actually represent the steps of his becoming, the self-assertion and value checking⁴⁴.

In one of his adventures, while wandering through the woods, Yvain saw a lion around which a snake was coiled. Then, the knight wondered which of the two to help and decided to support the "gentle and sincere beast", as the lion was a figure of moral world while the snake was "poisonous and threw flames from his mouth, that is how villain it was". Once he killed the snake, the hero freed the lion that knelt "with the face bathed in tears of humility" and then followed him "wanting to serve him and keep him as a master"⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ M. Stănescu, *Dimensiunea istorică a romanului medieval*, afterword on "Chrétien de Troyes, Yvain – Cavalerul cu Leul", București, f. a, p. 88; A. Scaglione, Courtliness, *Chivalry & Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1992, p. 127; M. E. Gibbs, S. M. Johnson, *Medieval German Literature*, New York London, 1997, p. 132-146; *Lexicon des Mittelalters*, voce "Yvain", vol. IX, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München, 2003, p. 430-432.

⁴¹ *Lexicon des Mittelalters*, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

⁴² M. Stănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 88; Č. Pavlík, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁴³ M. Stănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p.45-46.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

The lion becomes the symbol of the knight's highest ideals, as loyalty, bravery and humility⁴⁶. Starting from the Latin and French bestiaries to Physiologus, the crowned king of animals, the lion, also embodies the warlike virtue and strength. The lion's presence on Yvain's weapons in some miniatures in fresco⁴⁷ or on the paving plates from Pilis proves that the hero changes his status as knight and becomes sovereign. At the same time, the lion is a symbol of Jesus Christ, the tribe of Judah's lion⁴⁸. In fact, this is what explains the presence of the cross on the tiles from Negrești "Dolhești", illustrated under the lion's paws. The lion is also the Savior's hieroglyph when it is represented fighting the snake, the dragon or any disreputable animal⁴⁹. There are so many traditions connected to the lion, from the redoubtable force announcing the death, from the royal nobility and grandeur to the Christ symbolism. Although we are not able to recognize which version inspired the creators of the stove tiles from Negrești "Dolhești", a variant most probably transmitted orally, the discovery itself is very important.

The decorative repertoire of stove tiles in Moldova is now enriched with a new theme – the knight and the lion in battle with the dragon, a theme inspired by the old medieval writings of Chrétien de Troyes, with beginnings that go into the 12th century. This joins other themes once

⁴⁶ Guy de Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane. 1450-1600. Dictionnaire d'un langage perdu*, Geneva, 1958, vol. 2, p. 246-248; M. T. McMunn, *Bestiary Influences in Two Thirteenth Century Romances*, in *Beasts and Birds of the Middle Ages. Bestiary and Its Legacy*, Philadelphia, 1989, p. 139; H. Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism Culture Icons and Meanings Behind Them*, 1992, New York-Oxford, 1992, p. 209-211; J. P. Clébert, *Bestiar Fabulos. Dicționar de simboluri animaliere*, București, 1995, p. 162-168; M. Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, New York, 2007, p. 118-120.

⁴⁷ As regards the frescoes in Rodenegg castle to the south of Tyrol, from Schmalkalden, Thuringia, and other manifestations of this theme in the visual arts, see J. A. Rushing, *Images of Adventure. Yvain in the Visual Arts*, Middle Ages Series, Philadelphia, 1995, p. 30-35, 91-132.

⁴⁸ L. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Le Bestiaire de Christ. La mystérieuse emblématique de Jésus Christ*, Milano, 1975, p. 45; H. Biedermann, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

⁴⁹ L. Charbonneau-Lassay, *op. cit.*, p. 45; H. Biedermann, *Dicționar de simboluri*, vol. I, București, 2002, p. 221-223.

illustrated on the stove tiles used in Moldova, known from fables and fairy stories, satirical stories with animals, with diverse topics as the young man turned into a deer, the Beauty and the beast (a motif widespread in Europe in space and time), the bear hunting his hunter, the monk wolf⁵⁰. Although the sources of inspiration cannot always be accurately known, the presence of these themes on stove tiles reflects their acceptance in Moldova.

Translated by Natalia Midvichi

*CAHLE ORNAMENTATE CU MOTIVE DECORATIVE MAI PUȚIN
CUNOSCUTE: LEUL, DRAGONUL ȘI CAVALERUL
(Rezumat)*

Subiectul acestui articol îl reprezintă cablurile de sobă descoperite într-o așezare rurală medievală de la Negrești "Dolhești", județul Neamț, care au ca motive decorative leul, dragonul și cavalerul. Cele cinci cabluri întregi și câteva fragmentare provin din locuința II, datată la sfârșitul secolului al XVI-lea și în prima parte a celui următor (Pl. 1/1-2; 2/1-2; 4/1, 4). Din aceeași sobă au făcut parte și alte cabluri fragmentare, decorate cu motive geometrice și florale (Pl. 3/2, 4-5).

Trei cabluri păstrate integral au ca reprezentare centrală un cavaler îmbrăcat într-o tunică scurtă, încinsă la mijloc cu o centură din plăcuțe metalice, pe cap purtând un coif triunghiular cu un pană bine individualizat. În mâna stângă, cavalerul ține frâul calului la trap, iar în dreapta, o sabie cu lama curbă, la atac. Echipamentul cavalerului este completat cu pînteni cu tija scurtă și rozeta cu cinci spini. Acțiunea se derulează sub un portal gotic, puternic schematizat (Pl. 1/1; 2/1).

Celelalte două cabluri întregi și câteva piese fragmentare au ca personaj principal un leu rampant, cu trupul acoperit parțial cu solzi, imaginând o

⁵⁰ P. V. Batariuc, *Motive decorative de inspirație literară pe cabluri din secolele XV-XVI descoperite în Moldova*, în *Ars Transilvaniae*, 5, 1995, p. 109-120.

îmbrăcămintele de zale, și coada cu aspect vegetal. Trupul zvelt este încins la mijloc cu o centură din plăcuțe metalice, similară cu cea a cavalerului. Sub leu apar două reprezentări animaliere de dimensiuni diferite, asemănătoare balaurului de pe binecunoscutele cable cu imaginea Sfântului Gheorghe omorând monstrul (Pl. 1/2, 2/2; 4/1,4).

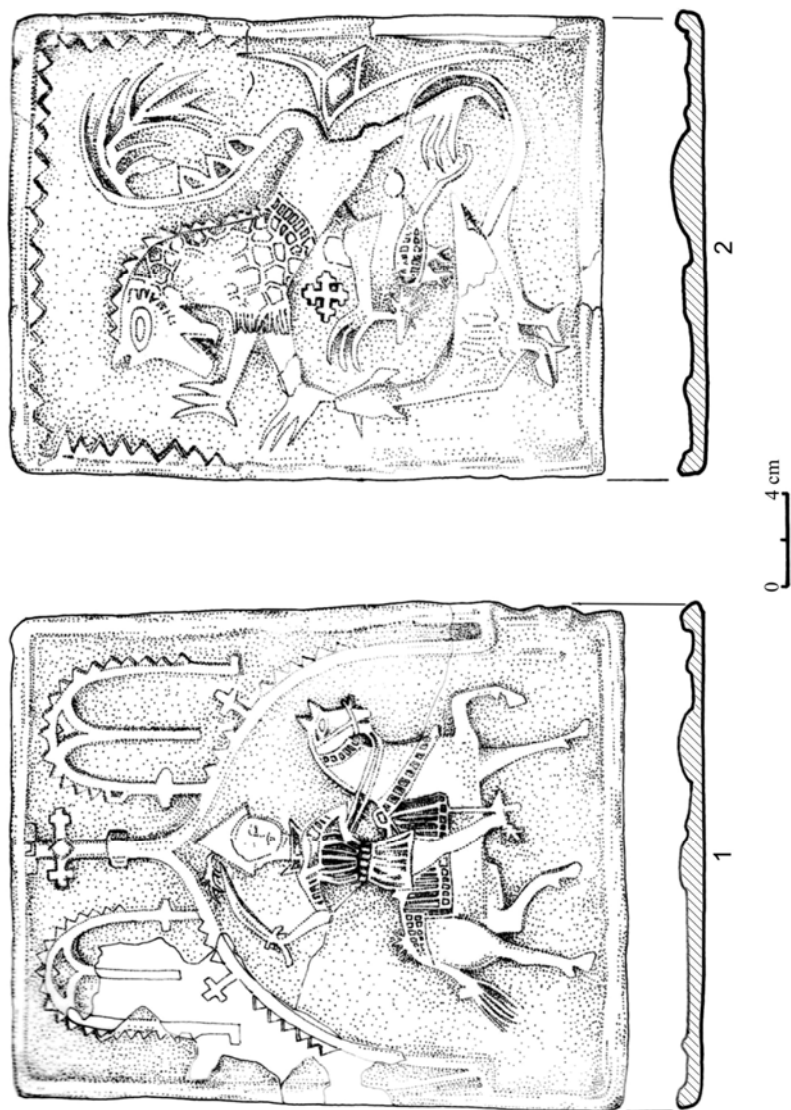
Cable decorate cu motive similare s-au găsit numai în Moldova, la Curtea domnească din Piatra Neamț (Pl. 4/2-3). În Transilvania, cable cu același subiect sunt cunoscute din descoperirile de la cetatea Făgărașului și castelul cardinalului Martinuzzi de la Vințu de Jos. Cablele de la Vințu de Jos au fost puse în legătură cu reamenajările comandate de cardinalul Martinuzzi la castel, reamenajări care nu au putut fi făcute decât înainte de 1551, anul asasinării sale în aceeași localitate (Pl. 5/1-2). Cablele fragmentare de la Alba Iulia au fost asociate ipotetic aceleași serii (Pl. 5/4). O frumoasă ilustrare a temei apare și pe o cablă descoperită în Slovacia, la Velké Meziříčí (Pl. 5/5). Aceeași temă este cunoscută în Ungaria pe o cablă descoperită la Buda (Pl. 6/3) și pe plăci pavimentare din mănăstirea cisterciană de la Pilis (Pl. 6/1-2).

Cablele în discuție ne edifică asupra scenelor care au existat odinioară pe fragmentele descoperite la Curtea domnească din Piatra Neamț și corectează, în același timp, încadrarea cronologică a acestora. Repertoriul decorativ al cablelor din Moldova se îmbogățește acum cu o nouă temă - cavalerul și leul în luptă cu dragonul, temă inspirată din vechi scrieri medievale - Yvain Chevalier au Lion de Chrétien de Troyes. Ea se adaugă altor teme ilustrate pe cablele din Moldova, cunoscute din fabule și povești, istorioare satirice cu animale, cu subiecte diverse, ca tânărul transformat în cerb, Frumoasa și bestia, motiv cu o largă răspândire în timp și spațiu, ursul vânându-și vânătorul, lupul predicator etc. Cu toate că nu pot fi cunoscute întotdeauna cu precizie sursele de inspirație, prezența acestor teme pe cable atestă receptarea lor în Moldova.

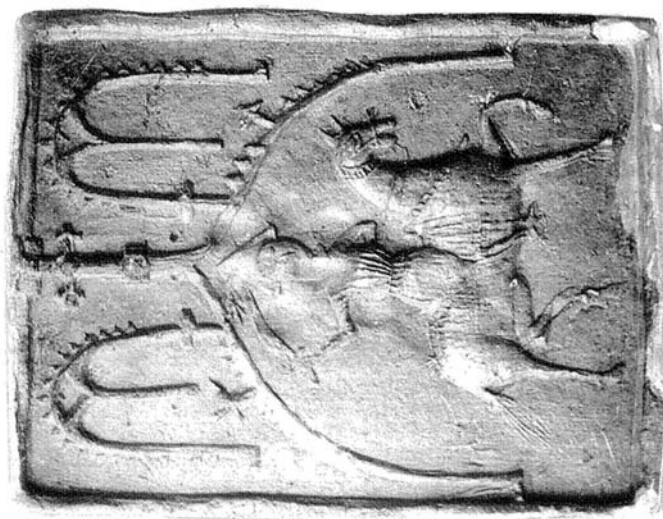
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- Pl. 2. Cable descoperite la Negrești „Dolhești” (1-2).
- Pl. 3. Cable fragmentare descoperite în locuința II de la Negrești „Dolhești” (1-5).
- Pl. 4. Cable descoperite la Negrești „Dolhești”: 1, 4, Piatra Neamț Curtea domnească: 2-3, 5 (după E. Neamțu) și Suceava: 6 (după M. Nicorescu).

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- Pl. 5. Cahle descoperite la Vințu de Jos: 1 (reconstituire grafică după D. Marcu Istrate), Făgăraș: 2 (după V. M. Pușcașu), Târgoviște: 3 (desen după foto Gh. I. Cantacuzino), Alba Iulia: 4 (după D. Marcu Istrate) și Velké Meziříčí: 5 (după Č. Pavlik).
- Pl. 6. Cărămizi pavimentare de la Pilis: 1-2 (după O. Réthelyi) și cahlă descoperită la Buda: 3 (după A. Végh).



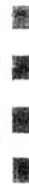
Pl. 1. Stove tiles discovered at Negrești "Dolhești" (1-2)



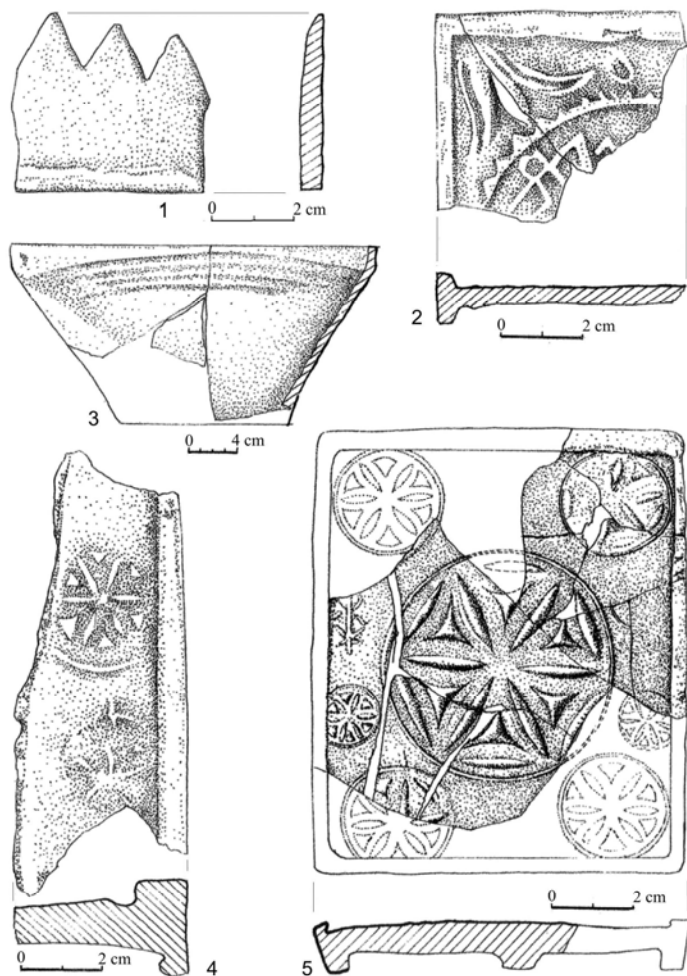
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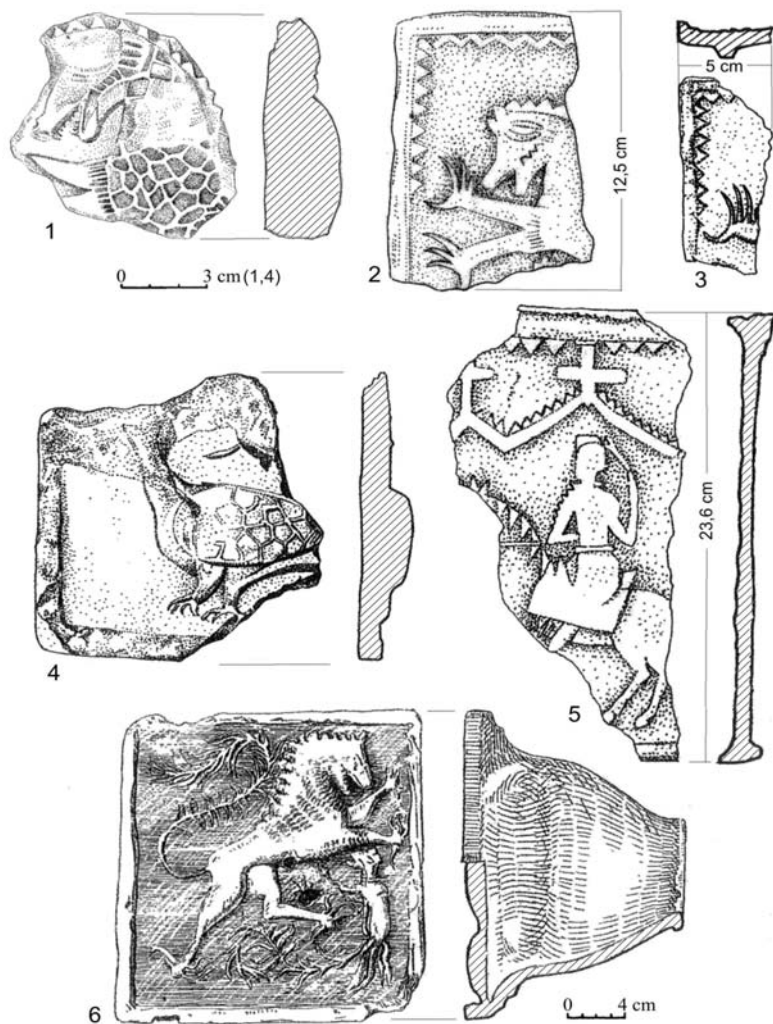
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Pl. 2. Stove tiles discovered at Negrești "Dolhești" (1-2)



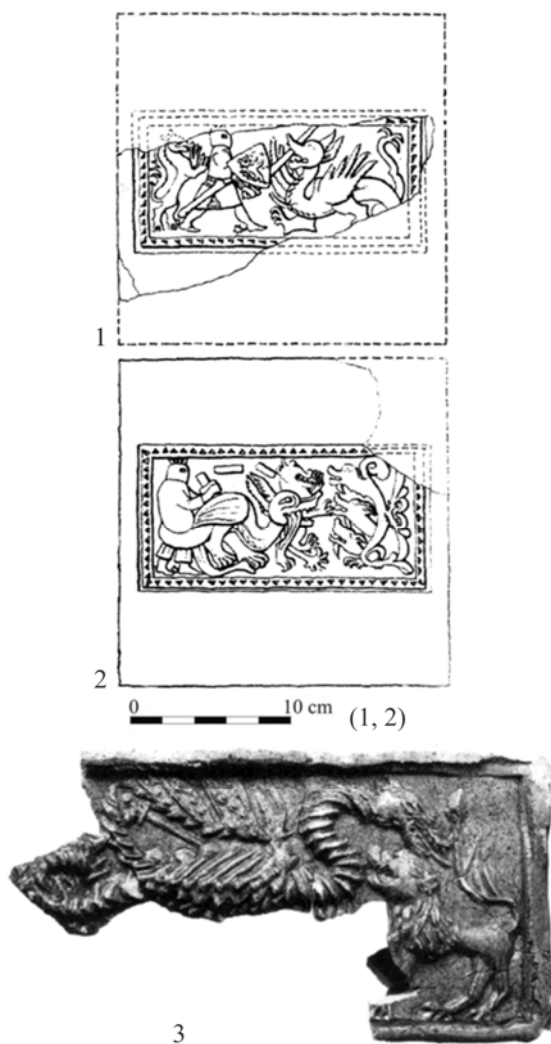
Pl. 3. Fragmentary stove tiles discovered inside the dwelling no. II from
Negrești "Dolhești"



Pl. 4. Stove tiles discovered at Negrești "Dolhești": 1, 4, Piatra Neamț princely Court: 2-3, 5 (by E. Neamțu) and Suceava: 6 (by M. Nicorescu)



Pl. 5. Stove tiles discovered at Vințu de Jos: 1 (graphic reconstitution by D. Marcu Istrate), Făgăraș: 2 (by V. M. Pușcașu), Târgoviște: 3 (drawing after photo by Gh. I. Cantacuzino), Alba Iulia: 4 (by D. Marcu Istrate) and Velké Meziříči: 5 (by Č. Pavlík)



Pl. 6. Paving bricks from Pilis: 1-2 (by R. Orsolya)
and stove tile from Buda: 3 (by A. Végh)