

Teodora Artimon

***Peter Rareş and his Visual Concept:  
an Ambitious Sixteenth-Century PR Campaign?***

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Teodora Artimon  
(Romania)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

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Supervisor

I, the undersigned, **Teodora Artimon**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, May 2010

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Signature

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## INTRODUCTION

...*He was a daring man.*  
(G. Ureche on Peter Rareș)

When the seventeenth-century chronicler Grigore Ureche described Peter Rareș (1527–1538; 1541–1546) in the above quote,<sup>1</sup> he was referring to the way the ruler governed Moldavia. However, Rareș was a daring man not simply in the way he governed, but also in the way he promoted himself and his policy. In the following, I will argue for the hypothesis that Peter Rareș conducted a “public relations” (PR) campaign in a medieval context, and I will reconstruct the elements of this campaign. The reason why I became interested in this mixture of such a modern field of study with a traditional one is due to my experience in public relations which made me realize that, in general limits, the actions of the Moldavian ruler are identifiable with the techniques used in today’s public relations campaign.

The most relevant aspect of the campaign is the exterior painting of the northern Moldavian monasteries commissioned by Rareș, which bear the messages of this PR campaign. The monasteries and churches commissioned during the reign of Rareș had all their exterior walls entirely painted with four major scenes, repetitive in all the exteriors, and other additional scenes, meant to fill in the space left blank. There are a number of thirteen relevant edifices which will be addressed in this study.

The campaign that I will present is comprised of several significant elements. Peter Rareș received the throne of Moldavia in 1527, being unanimously elected voivode by the Ruling Council. At this time, the Ottoman offensive was following the Belgrade-Buda-Vienna axis. In consequence, the Porte no longer saw the Romanian principalities as states protecting the empire’s Danubian border, but included them in the “European policy of the Ottomans.”<sup>2</sup> Less than a year later, a number of the boyars in the council started to disagree with his external policy regarding the relations with the Ottoman Empire and his aim of joining the anti-Ottoman league that was being created in the West. This is the point where Rareș stopped communicating with the majority of the members of the council and where the beginning of the public relations campaign may be assumed.

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<sup>1</sup> “...era om...la toate lucrurile îndrăznețu” in Grigore Ureche, *Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei* [The Chronicle of Moldavia], ed. Dan Horia Mazilu (Bucharest: Gramar, 2009), 102.

<sup>2</sup> This meant that Moldavia found itself in permanent insecurity, as an Ottoman offensive was highly possible. See: Tahsin Gemil, *În Fața Impactului Otoman* [Facing the Ottoman Impact] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978), 138.

In order to address the question of the existence of such a campaign, I will use modern terminology and methodology. The formula “public relations campaign,” although modern, grasps the actions conducted by the Moldavian ruler. In basic terms, a modern communication model is formed of three components: message sender, message, and message receiver. This model is applicable in numerous situations, including historical times if each component is defined according to the historical circumstances. In my case study, the *message sender* is identified with Peter Rareș and his team formed of boyars, clergy, and church painters. They generated the message using the techniques of the time: art and faith. The *message* was a political one, matching the contemporary internal and external situations. It was meant to publicize the aims of the voivode, being delivered visually, by using the public space of the church, the most influential medieval communication support. The *message receivers* were first of all the church goers, peasants who would be part of Moldavia’s army; and second, the boyars. Both groups were meant to be convinced of the voivode’s positive reputation and good intentions with the policy of the principality. The characteristics of these three components are rudimentary as compared to modern ones. However, the basic structure of the communication process exists in the Middle Ages and, if further researched, it can be labelled as medieval public relations. This is because what Peter Rareș was doing is generally identifiable with what is commonly known as “public relations:” finding sympathy, defending one’s rights and legitimacy, being able to control challenges, and winning public opinion.

Within the discussion of these components, I will point out the relevant strategies used by the ruler: the choice of placing the messages on the exterior walls of the monasteries and its consequences, the propagation of the *Chronicle* of Macarie, the bishop of Roman, and the possible ways in which it might have influenced the elites, and the potential dissimulation method used in order to distract the boyars from plotting against Rareș. I will discuss whether modern models of information dissemination can be applied to historic cases such as Rareș’s, while in the end, I will assess the success of the campaign, determining whether it achieved its goals or whether it failed.

### **Methodology and terminology**

For the examination of the campaign and the analysis of its outcomes I propose to combine conventional methodology with a rather unconventional one for studies dealing with the Middle Ages. The main data I will use is pictorial. In analysing the relevant exterior mural paintings of the monasteries, I will divide them according to type and importance. I will categorize them in primary scenes which were painted on all monasteries, and in secondary scenes, which do not



appear on all the exteriors studied. After having done this, in order to understand the messages of the iconographic programme I will assess the visual rhetoric, a method used with modern mass media messages that is useful for highlighting the focal points of the programme. This will help me highlight the core of the messages sent through the medieval public relations campaign.

Secondly, for the assessment of the campaign, I will introduce various written sources on church commissions, military actions, and the boyars of Peter Rareș. I will also categorize the information found in these written sources classifying it into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the campaign (the so-called SWOT analysis). Using this method common to marketing practices will help me structure these categories in a logical way and examine them according to this logic.

The reason for applying this methodology is related to the content of the thesis. Generally, a public relations campaign means enhancing reputation and subtly influencing people's behaviour. It aims to give the public a better understanding of the purposes of the campaign's propagator, while presenting him in the best possible light. I will not discuss the public relations campaign in the conventional context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries however, but in the sixteenth-century. The term "public relations" will be closely related to the idea of persuasion, as that was the main purpose of the campaign. It is important to note once more that the term "public relations" here does not refer to public relations in the sense of mass media, but to PR applied to the possibilities and limitations of late medieval Moldavia. The same observation should be made for the terms "strategy" and "campaign" which, although applied to Peter Rareș's Moldavia, are not identical with the modern public relations strategies and campaigns.

### **Sources and secondary literature**

In this research, I will rely on the mural paintings, but I will also use a number of textual sources because I believe that examining both textual and visual sources will support my idea that Rareș reached out to an audience of both elite and non-elite people. Although there is no evidence of such a large-scale campaign in any of the textual sources, the information that can be gathered from certain chronicles stays as argument for my hypothesis. The most important textual primary source is the *Chronicle* of Bishop Macarie, commissioned by Peter Rareș and written during his lifetime, which presents the events of his two reigns and the ruler's period in exile between them. It is significant because, in terms of the communication campaign discussed in this thesis, it was the second means of communication after the mural paintings,

used in a different medium. The chronicle was translated from Slavonic by Ioan Bogdan and was afterwards included and edited in the collective volume *Cronicile Slavo-Române din Secolele XV-XVI* by Petre P. Panaitescu.<sup>3</sup> The other primary sources I found important for my study are also narrative because, as they were the accounts of the reigns of Rareș, any allusion to a campaign of persuasion should be recalled by these chronicles. Narrating the reigns of Rareș with a fair amount of detail, the chronicles will provide the basis for my presentation of Rareș's actions at the head of the Ruling Council of Moldavia and for the deeds of his faithful and unfaithful boyars. The *Chronicle* of Grigore Ureche<sup>4</sup> was written during the first half of the seventeenth-century, the most recent chronicle written after the death of Rareș. The second chronicle is the seventeenth-century *O Samă de Cuvinte* of Ion Neculce<sup>5</sup> which is significant for the dates referring to Rareș's exile in Transylvania and the letters he sent to Sultan Suleyman to regain his throne. These last two chronicles refer specifically to the life of Rareș, while the two others refer to the medieval organization of Moldavia. Dimitrie Cantemir's eighteenth-century description of Moldavia<sup>6</sup> is useful for understanding the governing practices of the Ruling Council, for the presentation of the elite, the boyars, the clergy and their monastic settlements, the taxes to the Ottoman Empire, as well as the military structure in the small host and large host. Similarly, the seventeenth-century chronicler Miron Costin's *History of the Hungarian Kingdom*<sup>7</sup> describes the relationship of the Hungarians both with the Romanian principalities and with the Ottoman Empire during the reign of King János Zapolya. The so-called *Polish Poem*, also written by M. Costin and describing Moldavia and Wallachia,<sup>8</sup> is extremely useful for the detailed explanation of the organization of the Moldavian Ruling Council and the dignities it comprised. Combining the information in the chronicles with that in the iconographic programme and several contemporaneous documents,<sup>9</sup> this thesis will present the hypothesis of the existence of a so-called public relations campaign.

<sup>3</sup> Ioan Bogdan, *Cronica lui Macarie [The Chronicle of Macarie]* in *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI [The Slavic-Romanian Chronicles, Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries]*, ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: Academiei, 1959).

<sup>4</sup> G. Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*.

<sup>5</sup> Ion Neculce, "O Samă de Cuvinte" [A Collection of Words] in *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei precedat de O Samă de Cuvinte [The Chronicle of Moldavia Preceded by A Collection of Words]*, ed. Iorgu Iordan (Bucharest: Stiințifică, 1968).

<sup>6</sup> Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei [Description of Moldavia]*, ed. Constantin Măciucă (Bucharest: Lyceum, 1967).

<sup>7</sup> Miron Costin, "Istoria de Craia Ungureasca" [The History of the Hungarian Kingdom] in *Opere [Works]*, ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: De Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958).

<sup>8</sup> Miron Costin, "Poema Polonă" [The Polish Poem] in *Opere [Works]*, ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: De Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958).

<sup>9</sup> Such as Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și Fragmente cu Privire la Istoria Românilor I [Documents and Fragments Related to Romanian History I]* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1895).

Concerning the literature on the visual sources, the purposes behind the iconographic programme have been discussed by a number of scholars. The Moldavian independence being threatened during the time of the Rareș, historians and mostly art historians, have interpreted the sequence of scenes on the exterior of the monasteries as persuasion for anti-Ottoman sentiment.

One of the first scholars to comment on the Moldavian exteriors was Paul Henry, the most important of his studies being *Les Églises de la Moldavie du Nord des origines à la fin du XVI-e siècles. Architecture et peinture*,<sup>10</sup> written in the 1930s. Henry does not mention any type of political messages that could have been connected with anti-Ottoman feelings. However, like André Grabar<sup>11</sup> and Josef Strzygowski who also do not mention any political messages, he focuses on the origins of the exterior painting and on describing the iconographic programme.

The first scholar to refer to the political messages specifically propagated by Peter Rareș through the exterior mural paintings was Sorin Ulea, writing in the 1960s. In a sequence of three articles<sup>12</sup> he argued extensively for the existence of a complex promotion of anti-Ottoman messages. Although his theory is plausible, he over-interprets the entire iconographic programme. He not only interprets the four major scenes on the exterior as anti-Ottoman, but he explains all the other additional scenes in the same way.<sup>13</sup> The fact that he was writing in a period between the 1960s and the 1980s may have encouraged him to pursue this type of somewhat nationalist interpretation. One may discuss the scientific-atheist propaganda of the communist regime which encouraged such nationalist views instead of traditional religious studies.

After the publication of Ulea's articles, although the accent in Moldavian iconographic studies was not on the anti-Ottoman messages, other art historians have mentioned this theory. Virgil Vătășianu<sup>14</sup> and Vasile Drăguț<sup>15</sup> are the most significant art historians who studied the

<sup>10</sup> For this thesis, I used the Romanian edition: Paul Henry, *Monumentele din Moldova de Nord: de la Origini Până la Sfârșitul Secolului al XVI-lea* [The Monuments of Northern Moldavia: From the Origins to the End of the Sixteenth Century] (Bucharest, Meridiane: 1984) (first published: 1930). See also other studies: Idem, "L'originalité des peintures Bukoviniennes dans l'application des principes byzantins" *Byzantion* 1 (1924), 291-303.

<sup>11</sup> The collective volume: *Roumanie. Églises peintes de Moldavie*, ed. André Grabar (Paris: Collection UNESCO de l'Art Mondial, 1962).

<sup>12</sup> Sorin Ulea, "Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I" [The Origin and the Ideological Meaning of the Moldavian Exterior Painting I] *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Seria Arta Plastică* 10 (1963), 57-93. Idem, "Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești II" [The Origin and the Ideological Meaning of the Moldavian Exterior Painting II] *SCIA.AP* 1 (1972), 37-54. Idem, "La Peinture Extérieure Moldave: Oú, Quand et Comment Est-Elle Apparue" *Revue Romaine d'Histoire* 23 (1984), 285-311.

<sup>13</sup> The additional scenes are secondary scenes in terms of importance and size that usually differ from one monastery to the other and which would thus be difficult to interpret as anti-Ottoman.

<sup>14</sup> Virgil Vătășianu, *Pictura Murală din Nordul Moldovei* [The Mural Painting of Northern Moldavia] (Bucharest, Meridiane: 1974).

Moldavian monasteries and their paintings. Both of them focused on the iconography of the sixteenth-century but also mentioned the anti-Ottoman theory. Others also discussed this possibility, like I. D. Ștefănescu,<sup>16</sup> Vasile Florea, Dan Grigorescu and Marin Mihalache.<sup>17</sup> Drăguț is the most enthusiast about this interpretation and he praises the Moldavian art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but not to the extent Ulea does it. He discusses the anti-Ottoman implications, but he does not present them as the primary type of interpretation.

Therefore, art historians identified and considered such an interpretation of the iconography, although they did not pursue it outside the sphere of traditional art history. My aim in this thesis is not to simply recall the opinions of these scholars, but, using multi-disciplinary sources, to recreate an entire campaign that Peter Rareș, together with his closest boyars, implemented in order to persuade his subjects into uniting against the Ottoman threat.

Both the primary and secondary sources refer to Peter Rareș as an ambitious voivode who fought against Ottoman domination. Alexandru D. Xenopol was the first modern historian to discuss both reigns of Rareș in two different parts of his major history of the Romanians, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiana*<sup>18</sup>. Xenopol, similarly to Nicolae Iorga in the fifth volume of his history of the Romanians<sup>19</sup> and to Constantin Giurescu in his view of the Romanian history,<sup>20</sup> considers that the boyars were the prime reason for the failure of Rareș's anti-Ottoman ambitions. It can thus be implied that, had the boyars not interfered with Rareș's action, his struggle against the empire of Sultan Suleyman the Great could have been a success.

The new wave of historians dealing with the life and policy of Peter Rareș had a more pragmatic opinion though. Ștefan S. Gorovei<sup>21</sup> and Maria Magdalena Szekely<sup>22</sup> are studying

<sup>15</sup> Their most important studies are: Vasile Drăguț, *Pictura Murală din Moldova. Secolele XV-XVI* [The Moldavian Mural Painting. Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries] (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1982), and Virgil Vătășianu, *Pictura Murală din Nordul Moldovei* [The Mural Painting of Northern Moldavia] (Bucharest, Meridiane: 1974).

<sup>16</sup> I. D. Ștefănescu only very briefly mentioned anti-Ottoman messages in his *Arta Feudală în Țările Române. Pictura Murală și Icoanele de la Origini până în Secolul al XIX-lea* [The Feudal Art in the Romanian Principalities. The Mural Painting and Icons from the Origins to the Nineteenth Century] (Timișoara: Mitropoliei banatului, 1981).

<sup>17</sup> They discussed the problematic of anti-Ottoman messages in the collective volume with Vasile Drăguț: See: Vasile Drăguț, Vasile Florea, Dan Grigorescu, and Marin Mihalache, *Pictura Românească în Imagini* [Romanian Painting in Images] (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1970). The focus of this volume is not medieval Moldavia, however, the anti-Ottoman images are well discussed here.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandru D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiana II* [The History of the Romanians from Dacia] (Bucharest: ELF, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Românilor V* [The History of the Romanians V] (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria Românilor II* [The History of the Romanians II] (Bucharest: All, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș* (Bucharest: Militară, 1982). See also: Idem, *Mușatinii* [The Mușatin Dynasty] (Bucharest: Columna, 1976), etc.

<sup>22</sup> Maria Magdalena Szekely, *Sfeticii lui Petru Rareș* [The Counsellors of Petru Rareș] (Iași: Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2002). See also: Eadem, "Un Manifest de Putere la Mănăstirea Probota ?" [A manifest of Power at Probota Monastery?] in *Omagiu Virgil Cândea la 75 de ani* [Homage to Virgil Cândea at 75 Years], ed.

the Moldavian Late Middle Ages, focusing approximately on the period of Stephen the Great and Peter Rareș, his illegitimate son. Both in their individual researches and in those conducted together,<sup>23</sup> they pay attention to the organization of the court, the lives and achievements of the boyars, the succession of the candidates to the Moldavian throne, as well as the church and literary commissions from Stephen the Great to Peter Rareș. In their works they describe in detail the structure of the reign of Rareș. They both see Rareș as a model of a Renaissance prince following the Machiavellian model and describe him as a ruler who did not fit in the medieval environment, a ruler driven by modern views. They contradict the previous views that the boyars were the main reason why the anti-Ottoman aims of Rareș were a failure, arguing that the over-ambitious personality of the voivode was the primary reason for this. These views are important from the point of view of this thesis as they give different insight to Rareș's situation. The same views are held by Virgil Pâslariuc,<sup>24</sup> who specializes in sixteenth-century Moldavia and its nobility. Similarly, Leon Șimanschi examines the reign of Stephen the Great and his legacy in the reign of Peter Rareș, focusing on the latter in the collective volume *Peter Rareș*.<sup>25</sup> This volume unites a number of significant historians interested in Rareș: except for Gorovei and Șimanschi, the other relevant names are those of Constantin Cihodaru, also a researcher of Stephen the Great; Constantin Rezachevici, an authority on Moldavian-Polish relations and the external policy of Peter Rareș; and Tahsin Gemil, who has researched the fall of Rareș in 1538 and its consequences.<sup>26</sup>

The literature on the life and policy of Rareș and the art of his time praise the personality of the ruler which resulted in the novelty of exterior ecclesiastical painting. Using the information in all available sources, and especially relying on the frescoes, my intention is to put together the components of a medieval public relations campaign.

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Paul H. Stahl (Bucharest: Academiei – Roza Vânturilor, 2002); eadem. "Mănăstirea Putna. Loc de Memorie" (Putna Monastery as «Lieu De Memoire») *Studies and Materials of Medium History* 22 (2004): 73-99, etc.

<sup>23</sup> Ș. S. Gorovei and M. M. Szekely, *Princeps Omni Laude Maior. O Istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare* [Princeps Omni Laude Maior. A History of Stephen the Great] (Suceava: Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2005); Ș. S. Gorovei and M. M. Szekely, *Movileștii. Istorie și Spiritualitate Românească* [The Movilești Dynasty. Romanian History and Spirituality] vol. I and II (Suceava: Sfânta Mănăstire Sucevița, 2006), etc.

<sup>24</sup> Virgil Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice dintre Marea Boierime și Domnie în Țara Moldovei în Secolul al XVI-lea* (The Political Relationships Between the Upper Nobility and the Monarchy in the Moldavian Principality During the Sixteenth-Century) (Chișinău: Pontos, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978).

<sup>26</sup> Constantin Cihodaru is relevant for my work with his study on the internal policy of Petru Rareș; Constantin Rezachevici, with his study on the exile and the internal and external policy of the second reign of Rareș; and Tahsin Gemil is important with his work on the Ottoman-Moldavian relations during both reigns of Rareș.

### **Aim of the study**

The purpose of this thesis is to reconstruct the common efforts of Peter Rareș and his loyal boyars which resulted in a medieval public relations campaign. On the basis of the much-admired exterior iconographic programme of Moldavian monastery decoration, I propose to find out how the campaign reached its desired audience and how successful this enterprise was, taking in account that the voivode was dethroned in 1538. The research into the continuity of the campaign in the second reign of Rareș will lead to a deeper understanding of the impact that the dethroning had on it. Without detailed analysis, one might think that the campaign was a success. However, this study will show the strengths that made the campaign possible, and the weaknesses and gaps that led to what will be called, in the end, an almost-successful campaign.

## CHAPTER I

## Mural Paintings - Mural Messages

*In art, nothing is accidental.*  
(Plutarch)

The age of mural paintings in the time of Peter Rareș is an easily definable period with clearly outlined artistic features that characterize the exterior decoration of Moldavian monasteries. Although studies have hypothesized that the oldest extant example of exterior painting can be found at Probota monastery, it is difficult to ascertain that this monastery was the very first one bearing exterior decorations. Scholars such as I. D. Ștefănescu, Virgil Vătășianu, Vasile Drăguț have contemplated on this question and concluded that the decades that preceded the reigns of Stephen the Great and Peter Rareș were decades of artistic experimentation<sup>27</sup> which, however, left little evidence. Therefore, the artistic boom that took place during the fifteenth-century reign of Stephen the Great and afterwards can not be understood in its entire complexity without looking back at what the reigns of the first Moldavian rulers meant for art.<sup>28</sup>

V. Drăguț argues for the beginnings of the Moldavian medieval art as coinciding with the state formation of Moldavia in 1359. However, the first existing evidence of public art dates from the reign of Alexander the Good (1400–1432) at the beginning of the fifteenth-century.<sup>29</sup> –The first influence on painting in Moldavia is known to be due to the expansion of Bulgarian painting in the fourteenth century. After the first echoes of Slavic influence, the coronation of Alexander the Good established some strong artistic and cultural connections between Moldavia and the Byzantine Empire. As the newly formed principality started to become widely receptive to Paleologian art, it embraced Constantinopolitan influences which are visible in vestments, liturgical objects, embroideries, manuscripts and miniatures and icons that arrived to the Moldavian territory.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, tradition attributes the existence of two Byzantine icons to the time of Alexander the Good who is reported to have received them as gifts from the Byzantine emperor: the first one, an icon of Saint Anna, supposedly sent by Manuel II Palaeologus to Ana, the wife of Alexander, and the second one, an icon of Theotokos,

<sup>27</sup> I. D. Ștefănescu, *Arta Feudală în Țările Române*, 173.

<sup>28</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura murală din Moldova*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> The first traces of art dating from the period of Petru I Mușat (1375-1391) were lost as the prime material used for constructions was wood and was consequently destroyed over time.

<sup>30</sup> Adela Văețiși, *Artă de Tradiție Bizantină în România* [The Romanian Art of Byzantine Tradition] (Bucharest: Noi Media Print, 2008), 68.

given by John VIII Palaeologus to Alexander the Good. However, the way in which Moldavian art was developed was not simply by imitation and copying, but it was taking stylistic and figurative elements from Byzantine art and intermingling them with local cultural aspects,<sup>31</sup> tradition and love for lively colours.<sup>32</sup>

The artistic evidence from the time Alexander the Good is only partially preserved and only a few pieces of art and small areas of mural decoration can be seen today. The most significant age in artistic innovations began with the reign of Stephen the Great from the second half of the fifteenth century. Putting an end to political disputes that broke out after the death of Alexander, he reinstated an internal balance thus creating the right opportunity for the development of a new art. The “glorious epoch of Stephen the Great”,<sup>33</sup> as V. Drăguț called it, began in its early years with building and consolidating architectural edifices and peaked in the last decades of Stephen’s reign when he erected and decorated up to thirty churches and monasteries in a period of seventeen years (1487–1504). The interior iconographic programmes of these edifices corresponded to the fundamental principles of Byzantine art: the colours, the drawing patterns, the rhythm, the harmonization between filled and empty spaces conformed to Byzantine tradition.<sup>34</sup> With this development process, Moldavian religious art reached maturity; not only was it capable of creating its own representative iconographical programmes, but it was also an art that, to a certain extent, was inspired by contemporary historical events.<sup>35</sup>

Several scholars have illustrated the capacity of Stephen to make use of painting in his own service. Therefore, Stephen the Great used monastic painting not only to describe religious parables and Biblical episodes, but he also used it for two other reasons which V. Drăguț points out: expressing his royal authority and mobilizing the Moldavians against their most important enemy of the time, the Ottoman Empire.

More than two decades after his father had begun to develop a language of influence through religious scenes, Peter Rareș took it a few steps further: he developed Stephen’s language and took it outside to the exterior walls of monasteries and churches in majestic decoration that should symbolize the feelings and fears of the sixteenth-century Moldavian people.

<sup>31</sup> Such as the example that can be seen in the scene of the Last Judgment of Voroneț monastery where the Old Testament King David is playing a traditional Moldavian string instrument.

<sup>32</sup> P. Henry argues that one of the important factors for the appearance of external painting in Moldavia might be the love of Moldavian peasants for façade polychromy as manifested in the polychromy of the façades of their own houses. See: P. Henry, *Monumentele din Moldova de Nord*, 15.

<sup>33</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura murală din Moldova*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> A. Vaetisi, *Arta de Tradiție Bizantină în România*, 70.

<sup>35</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura murală din Moldova*, 12.



## Visual dialogue

Nathan Knobler affirmed the “necessity of human beings to transform their experiences in visual symbols.”<sup>36</sup> Peter Rareș, his noble and ecclesiastic counsellors, through the elaboration of the northern Moldavian exterior wall paintings, followed the same process. By clothing the monasteries in spiritual scenes relating to the history of Christianity, the ruling elite, besides presenting traditional religious iconography, it also presented a hidden, yet obvious message which was of prime concern to the situation of Moldavia of the time.

From the beginning of his reign, Rareș was determined to continue the anti-Ottoman policy of his father, Stephen the Great. However, some of the boyars in the Ruling Council believed that the anti-Ottoman struggle was useless and that Moldavia should accept Ottoman suzerainty. Thus Rareș found himself faced with a group of opposing boyars, who strongly disagreed with the voivode’s external policy. In order to continue his anti-Ottoman policy, the ruler needed the support of the masses, because in case of a military offensive against the Empire of Sultan Suleyman the Great as Rareș dreamed of,<sup>37</sup> the masses would comprise most of the army (the large host) of the principality. Similarly, if Rareș desired to unite his military capacity with that of the Habsburgs, for example, he also needed the support of the large host and the lower social strata. Therefore, Peter Rareș had to deal with two matters: first of all, he had to convince the lower strata to join his cause and not that of the opposing nobles; and second, he had to reinforce the belief of the ruling elites of his legitimacy and trustworthiness.

The agenda of Rareș was therefore to convince his people of the necessity of adhering to the struggle against the Ottoman threat, by using sacred space as a support. Therefore, the lay eye of church-goers needed to be presented a large picture of the state of affairs in simple terms. Although it would be useful to have accounts of the sermons that were preached during this period that most surely touched upon every-day difficulties and conversion issues related to the Ottoman threat, these accounts do not exist. Therefore, the visible aspect of Rareș’s agenda remains in the exterior mural scenes. Visual representations and art have numerous effects upon people who do not actually create art: the satisfaction of the senses, the stimulation of imagination or the isolation of consciousness and the ability to fantasize in a difficult world.<sup>38</sup> Thus, using the support of religious iconography, the painters of the exterior programmes were creating a path for the viewer to enter a fictional world that was, in fact, the world of their days.

<sup>36</sup> Nathan Knobler, *Dialogul Vizual I* [The Visual Dialogue I] (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1983), 12.

<sup>37</sup> For details on the external policy of Rareș and the policy with the Ottoman Empire, see: Constantin Rezachevici, “Politica Externă” [External Policy] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978), 239-242.

<sup>38</sup> N. Knobler. *Dialogul Vizual II*, 172.

The viewers could clearly distinguish some easily recognisable figures on the walls. They could see the Ottomans with their large turbans going to have their sins weighed in the Last Judgment, they could see a series of scenes of the Virgin Mary watching a besieged Constantinople that was being defended by a Moldavian rider, they could see a succession of military saints wearing their flashing armour and giving the impression of protecting the other saints in almost every corner of the monastery, and so on. Based on the statement of Knobler, besides the visual satisfaction that the lines, shapes, rhythm and colour scheme ensured, these scenes were a collection of images that gave the lay mind an impulse to think further in the future: “Could I be the rider who successfully defends Constantinople/Suceava?” was the question that perhaps came to one’s mind after viewing the exterior paintings, more precisely, the Siege of Constantinople. All the scenes together thus might have offered the viewers an experience that they might not have otherwise had, an experience that could enrich their view of certain issues related to the times they lived in.

However, the artist could not capture the entire experience just through the act of painting. The painter or the commissioner could only create or order an object of art which made the public respond. The public was therefore expected to actively participate in the process of communicating the message. Thus the artist/commissioner and the viewers engaged in what Knobler called a “visual dialogue.”<sup>39</sup> The visual dialogue between Peter Rareș and his public rested on each one’s experience. The ruler of Moldavia brought forward images of historical experiences fused together with images that reflected on the traditional every-day life and on the Moldavian landscape. The historical experiences are given by scenes such as the Last Judgment and the Akathistos Hymn, where the Moldavian-Ottoman clashes were evoked and recalled. The successful reign of Stephen the Great was still present in the common memory, therefore images such as the doomed Ottomans and Tartars going towards the mouth of Hell and the triumph of the Christians over the Ottoman-attacked Constantinople could have easily echoed the victories of Stephen the Great and inspired the viewers with courage and positive attitude towards possible future conflicts.

Furthermore, as elsewhere in European Late Medieval art, every-day life and environment is also present in the exterior murals. All the monasteries that are studied here display, to a greater or lesser extent, images which help historians see the traditional life in medieval Moldavia. These are images such as Eve, who spins her spindle just like a good housekeeper (fig. 1.1, grid 1), Adam ploughing his land like an ordinary peasant (fig 1.1, grid

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<sup>39</sup> N. Knobler, *Dialogul Vizual II*, 172.

2), women mourning in a traditional way over a dead man (fig. 1.2), angels in the Last Judgment playing Moldavian horns (fig. 1.3 and 1.4), or other images such as Elijah sitting in a cart typical for sixteenth-century Moldavia or the servants of the master in the parable of the Prodigal Son who are dancing together in a *horă*, a traditional Romanian round dance.<sup>40</sup> By combining these two elements, one historical and the other traditional, the commissioner together with the artist created the best environment for the creation of empathy. While the traditional elements found their way naturally into these depictions without being introduced on purpose like the scenes of historical awareness about the enemies of Moldavia, they were the binding material between the transmitter of the message and the receiver. They created a familiar environment, known and understood by each peasant, where everybody would feel comfortable. On this basis, the historical scenes introduced could thus have a powerful effect. It is also important that the ruler's presence was manifested within these calm representations of Moldavia – the landscape, the natural environment, everyday activities. The significance of the fusion between the religious space and the political space thus becomes evident: the rulership, the church and the country are beautifully presented, allowing to make parallels between them.

On the other side of the visual dialogue was the experience of the viewers. I have already mentioned the living memory of Stephen the Great which must still have existed during the reign of Peter Rareș. The people who admired the late ruler could easily grasp the message of Rareș who was trying to go in the footsteps of his father and was portraying this in his mural campaign (i.e. through interior votive scenes and several scenes depicting his dynasty). In addition, some people were conscious of the precarious situation of the Moldavian principality and could therefore have deeper insight into the mural paintings displayed by Peter Rareș and understand the more profound aspects of his message. The intellectual and emotional characteristics of the viewers were thus the decisive elements in the reception of Rareș's message. However, even if the viewers had no knowledge at all of the imminent events awaiting Moldavia or the past encounters of the principality with the Ottoman Empire, they could still get a glimpse in the picture sketched by the ruler. The Last Judgment distinctly presented the enemies of Moldavia, while the soldiers in Moldavian dress at the Siege of Constantinople were an intelligible call for war.

The visual dialogue present in the monasteries of northern Moldavia thus should have been an interactive dialogue between the commissioners and the viewers. Although the way the

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<sup>40</sup> *Biserica Voroneț* [The Voronet Monastery] (Iași: Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei, 1985), 13.

images were received by the viewers cannot be known, the messages intended to reach them can be discerned, revealing part of that visual dialogue.

### *Votive scenes and exteriors*

As I pointed out above, when commissioning the decoration of the interior of his foundations, Stephen the Great not only had a religious-educational purpose, but also wanted to express his authority. The best manifestation of this intention is the series of votive scenes that were depicted in every naos of Stephen's churches and monasteries.<sup>41</sup> The votive paintings, portraying the local rulers in "attitudes inherited from Byzantine images of power"<sup>42</sup> show Stephen the Great and the members of his family not in a humble manner but in full dignity, stressed by their sumptuous clothes, jewellery and crowns; the accent is on the sovereignty of Stephen, strongly highlighting the personality and the social rank of the ruler.<sup>43</sup> V. Drăguț characterizes these representations as not at all conventional, which succeeded in expressing the ruler's will to maintain the independence of his principality.

Peter Rareș continued the tradition of votive scenes as incorporated in the interior iconographical programmes. The scene, showing the founder together with his family offering the model of the church or monastery to a seated Christ in glory, is always present on the southern side of the western wall of the naos.<sup>44</sup> At Humor (fig. 1.5) and Moldovița monasteries, the votive scenes catch the eye: on the right side and seated on the throne, Christ holds the Bible in His left hand while with His right hand He blesses Peter Rareș who presents Him with the model of the monastery. The devotional act is mediated by the Holy Virgin.<sup>45</sup> Rareș is dressed in ceremonial clothing, wears a crown on his head and a brocade mantle with broad sleeves, everything embroidered in gold. Under his collar and his sleeves a red tunic can be seen which here has the role of giving a colourful accent to the composition.<sup>46</sup> The hair of the voivode springs from his crown in large curls while a discrete moustache is visible underneath his straight nose (fig. 2.5 and 2.6). In an analysis of the Humor votive scene, it is pointed out

<sup>41</sup> The votive scene tradition in Moldavia is indeed older than the time of Stephen the Great, however, as little evidence of mural painting remains from the pre-Stephen the Great age, these votive scenes are the best examples to be pointed out as the first such scenes in Moldavia. Until recently, a fragment of a votive scene dating from the reign of Alexander the Good still existed, but today is virtually inexistent. See: I. D. Ștefănescu, *Arta feudală în țările române*, 173.

<sup>42</sup> Vlad Bedroș, "The Painted Churches of Northern Moldavia" *EAHN NEWSLETTER* 3 (2008), 29.

<sup>43</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura murală din Moldova.*, 12-15.

<sup>44</sup> See the Byzantine *Erminia* of Dionysios of Fourni, ed. Constantin Săndulescu-Verna. (Timișoara: Mitropoliei Banatului, 1979), a painter's manual describing post-Byzantine painting technique that stood at the basis of the Orthodox-Romanian iconographical programs.

<sup>45</sup> The act is not always mediated by the Holy Virgin. It may sometimes be mediated by other saints who are relevant to the monastery, such as a patron saint.

<sup>46</sup> V. Drăguț, *Humor*, 18.

that the face of Peter Rareș has all the characteristics of authenticity, not merely an effigy, but a portrait in the real sense of the word. The expression of the face seems alive and energetic, denoting an aura of triumph.<sup>47</sup> This brings me back to the continuity between Stephen the Great and his son; Rareș also depicted himself in the same glorious manner as the ruler of a small country willing to withstand the force of a great empire. Furthermore, the ruler is presenting himself as a connection between the earthly world and the heavenly one. The dialogue of a high ranking person such as Rareș with God and His representatives<sup>48</sup> must have also contributed to the creation of a comforting feeling for lay people that the ruler and his country are in the hands of God. The ruler, as also happened elsewhere in Christian art, inserted his imagery in the church space. Therefore, he “sold” his message with the help of the church.

Peter Rareș was thus continuing the work of his father. His votive scenes reflected the same aim as those of Stephen, but when it came to an entire vocabulary of artistic persuasion, Rareș did not stop at circulating his political message by isolated scenes such as the Cavalcade of the Holy Cross. He went outside the walls of his churches and monasteries and painted an large message that was incorporated in all the walls of the edifice, from the apses to the narthex.

### *Debates on exteriors*

The reasons for the appearance of the exterior paintings have been quite thoroughly discussed by a number of scholars. The origins of this practice are, and probably will remain, at the level of hypotheses. The early researchers of the exterior paintings of Moldavia reached contradicting conclusions: while Josef Strzygowski pleads for an Iranian origin, Paul Henry argues for a Bulgarian influence<sup>49</sup> and a national factor which is the polychromy of the exterior walls of traditional Moldavian houses,<sup>50</sup> as mentioned above. Contradicting Henry, André Grabar claims a Serbian origin and demonstrates his thesis by invoking the similarity between the painted porches of Moldavia and those of sixteenth-century Serbia.<sup>51</sup> However, Sorin Ulea

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>48</sup> Sabina Manuela Cismaș. “Power and Salvation: Donor Representations in Moldavia (Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)” MA dissertation (Budapest, Central European University: 2008), 33.

<sup>49</sup> P. Henry defended his arguments with examples of Bulgarian churches which have remains of exterior paintings such as Berende, Dragalevti or Bobosevo. See: P. Henry, *Monumentele din Moldova de Nord*, 21.

<sup>50</sup> Corina Nicolescu, in her analysis of medieval houses and royal palaces, also outlines the features of the Moldavian façade decoration in the fifteenth century: the remains of the royal houses of the Bistrița and Putna monasteries revealed enamelled discs and some scarce figural decorations; the remains of the houses at Bălinești and Arbore brought to light enamelled bricks used for the decoration of the exteriors; in the same way, at the royal house of Probota the main façade still retained fragments of painting representing geometrical motifs. See: Corina Nicolescu, *Case, Conace și Palate Vechi Românești* [Old Romanian Houses, Royal Mansions and Palaces] (Bucharest, Meridiane: 1979).

<sup>51</sup> In S. Ulea, “Originea și Semnificatia Ideologica a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenesti” I, 58.

demonstrated that the first exterior painting appeared at a church without a porch,<sup>52</sup> making any Serbian theory out of date. Furthermore, continuing the theory of Gheorghe Balș, who was the first to argue for the exterior paintings as an original Moldavian creation,<sup>53</sup> Virgil Vătășianu also indicated that the exterior murals are of Moldavian origin. Vătășianu pointed out that this kind of painting was a development from the exterior wall decorations that had been employed during the time of Stephen the Great and which included not only simple abstract decorations but also small scale figural scenes.<sup>54</sup> A more recent study, that of Adela Văetiși, argues for both Slavic and Byzantine influence from the point of view of the iconography<sup>55</sup>. Although she does not indicate any foreign influence for the appearance of the exterior paintings, she discusses the fact that the motivation to decorate the exteriors was the wish to take the Biblical teachings outside the walls. She indicates that the clergy understood the complex power of images, which can “translate to the believer the trajectory that he has to undergo on the path of Christian faith.”<sup>56</sup> However, one has to question this unilateral view of the exterior programme.

The exterior programme is a mirror of Biblical teachings and the most obvious aspect of it is religious. The Moldavian exterior iconographic programme is composed of scenes which, most importantly, enhance religious messages and recall Biblical histories. Despite this, a question arises: why does the exterior iconography carry a significant number of non-religious messages? This brings me to the position of Sorin Ulea who has most thoroughly argued for a different type of interpretation of the murals of northern Moldavia, arguing for an anti-Ottoman interpretation. He discusses the fact that from the Celestial Hierarchy to the scene of the Last Judgment, the entire iconographical complex represents an anti-Ottoman movement.<sup>57</sup>

To briefly return to the problem of the sudden development of exterior painting, could it be that Peter Rareș, relying on the theological support of the scenes depicted, explicitly moved painting outside the walls in a grand expression of his ambitions? S. Ulea, V. Drăguț, even V. Vătășianu, and a few others would agree. Furthermore, supposing that Rareș did indeed have such an agenda, what does the placement of each scene denote? Each monastery here, meeting the norm, is oriented towards the east. Therefore, two of the most important scenes are placed

<sup>52</sup> The St. George Church of the Hârlău royal palace built by Stephen the Great in 1492 and painted in the interior and exterior at the order of Petru Rareș in 1530.

<sup>53</sup> See: Gheorghe Balș, *Bisericile și Mănăstirile Moldovenești din Veacul al XVI-lea* [The Sixteenth-Century Moldavian Churches and Monasteries] in *BCMI* III (1928).

<sup>54</sup> See: V. Vătășianu, *Pictura Murală din Nordul Moldovei* [The Mural Painting of Northern Moldavia] (Bucharest, Meridiane: 1974).

<sup>55</sup> See: A. Văetiși, *Arta de Tradiție Bizantină în România*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, 73.

<sup>57</sup> See the articles “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I,” “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești II” and “La peinture extérieure Moldave: où, quand et comment est-elle apparue.”

under the direct trajectory of the sun during the day: the Celestial Hierarchy is always facing east, while the Last Judgment is usually positioned in on the western wall.<sup>58</sup> Natural light falls differently on each one of them and thus may subtly influence the interpretation of the viewer.<sup>59</sup> Thus while the bright morning Sun lights the scene of the praying hierarchy of saints, the evening twilight sheds a reddish light on the scene of the last day. The variation of light may be connected to the daily liturgical hours when the pious came to pray – from the First Hour to the Ninth Hour to evening Vespers – but it has an even greater significance when it is connected to the great feasts when a large number of Christians were present at mass. One example is the Easter celebration of 1538, a few months before the Ottoman Empire took over Moldavia and Peter Rareș was dethroned. This was a period of increasing tension which culminated on 14 September 1538 when the Ottomans entered the fortress of Suceava.<sup>60</sup> One relevant example is the Last Judgment of Probota monastery situated in the exonarthex of the monastery screened by large gothic windows.<sup>61</sup> At the Vespers celebrated on Easter Sunday,<sup>62</sup> as well as on other evenings, the light of the setting sun enters the eight tall windows to illuminate the Last Judgment scene. The surface of the scene has already been admired by scholars because of its harmony with the “restless” gothic architecture of the porch<sup>63</sup> and because of the impression of light it gives on Last Judgment when one enters the space of the monastery. One could only imagine the effect it had on the participants at the Easter mass in 1538, when, upon the uneasy situation faced by the Moldavians, the Last Judgment scene may have received an aura of animation and turmoil as different shades offered by the gothic window ornaments alternating with lightened reddish areas fell upon the characters that were heading for their last judgment in the scene of the end of days.<sup>64</sup> Whether Peter Rareș had the

<sup>58</sup> The two exceptions are the Arbore and Râșca monasteries, where the Last Judgment is placed on the Southern wall, close to the entrance of the edifice.

<sup>59</sup> Marc Havel discusses the influence of light on painting, stressing that the light variations determine the way a painting is visually interpreted by a viewer and that the acuteness always depends on light. See: Marc Havel, *Tehnica Tabloului* [The Technique of Painting] (Bucharest, Meridiane: 1980).

<sup>60</sup> Dumitru Almaș, *Petru Rareș Voievod* [Voivode Petru Rareș] (Bucharest, Meridiane: 1970), 62.

<sup>61</sup> The large windows of the exonarthex did not allow painting on its exterior, therefore the scene can be found on the interior. However, this example is the most relevant to indicate the impact of the scene on the church-goers precisely because of this feature (the windows amplifying the meaning of the scene).

<sup>62</sup> See the hours of the Easter in Saint Sava, *Tipicul cel Mare al Sfântului Sava cel Sfințit* [The Big Church Formulary of Saint Sava], in the chapter “Duminica Învierii Domnului” [Resurrection Sunday] at <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/carte-935-82827-duminica-invierii-domnului-a-pastelui-100> (accessed on January 23, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura murală din Moldova.*, 26.

<sup>64</sup> This example may be considered subjective as there is no source to attest the effect that I am discussing here. The reason why I offer this example comes from my personal experience when seeing the Last Judgment scene at Probota during sunset. I thus made a parallel between the effects that this Last Judgment had on myself and the (same) effects that it might have had on the sixteenth-century church-goers.

Last Judgment positioned in such a manner on purpose is debatable. The result is, however, provoking and may imply several persuasive reasons of the ruler that will be discussed below.

### *Art and politics*

In this discussion, the exterior iconographic programme will be analysed from a political-persuasive point of view and not from the obvious religious one, which in a typical art historical debate would be the first one to be analysed. From this point of view, the exterior iconography is composed of two categories of scenes: the first category comprises a set of scenes that is principal to the political aim of Rareș and that is repetitive in each of the monasteries, while the second category is a group of diverse scenes which may or may not be interpreted as accompanying the meaning of the first category.

Before detailing each one of the scenes, the political context needs to be clarified. When Peter Rareș took the throne of Moldavia on 20 January 1527, the external and the internal situations of the principality were out of balance. Internally, as discussed before, the political situation was delicate, as some groups of boyars were circulating the idea of abandoning the anti-Ottoman efforts and making a political compromise at the price of losing centralized power.<sup>65</sup> This condition resulted from the critical international situation: Belgrade had fallen to the Ottoman Empire in 1521, and the Hungarian Kingdom in 1526. It was therefore only a matter of time until the Danubian principalities had to face an imminent Ottoman wave, a condition which created internal anxiety. In these circumstances, the objectives of the newly crowned Rareș were to consolidate a social structure favourable to the throne and to stimulate an ideological and cultural-artistic affirmation meant to mobilize as many of the internal energies as possible towards the throne.<sup>66</sup> With these two challenges, Rareș needed to strengthen the capacity for resistance, and to consolidate internal unity. The chronicle of Grigore Ureche emphasizes the voivode's will for internal unity when he characterises the ruler: "like a good shepherd he takes care of his flock, he takes care and watches over everything".<sup>67</sup>

As mentioned above, the oldest exterior is that of Probota (1532) monastery, but Rareș also commissioned those of Humor (1535), which is the best preserved, those of Moldovița (1537), Arbore (1541), Baia (1535–1538), Saint George of Suceava (1534) and Saint George of

<sup>65</sup> Ion Toderășcu, "Înscăunarea" [The Enthroning] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest, Academiei: 1978), 47.

<sup>66</sup> Constantin Cihodaru, "Politica Internă" [The Internal Politics] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest, Academiei: 1978), 57.

<sup>67</sup> "Și ca un păstoriu bun și străjuiește turma sa, așa în toate părțile străjuia și priveghia". See: G. Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, 91.



Hârlău (1530), Coșula (1536–1538), Râșca (1551–1552) and Voroneț (1547).<sup>68</sup> Also, he might have commissioned the painting of the Dobrovăț and Bălinești monasteries, which are yet to be dated.

The first group of mural paintings, which create the core of the exterior entirety, are repeated in an unchanged manner on each of the monasteries. Therefore, the decoration of the three apses always presents the Celestial Hierarchy, or the Grand Prayer as it is also called, which is a scene with a great number of characters arranged on usually six horizontal registers which represent different groups of saints, angels, prophets, apostles, holy fathers or martyrs. On either the northern or the southern façades the scene of the Akathistos Hymn together with the representation of the Siege of Constantinople is represented while on the opposite façade the Tree of Jesse appears;<sup>69</sup> the fourth important theme is the Last Judgment, which is almost always present on the western wall. Besides these four major themes which are without exception always illustrated, there are the so-called secondary themes which are meant to fill in the spaces which were left blank by the primary themes.<sup>70</sup> These are scenes of the Customs of Heaven which details the path of the soul through twenty-four customs before entering Heaven; the Parable of the Prodigal Son; a short cycle from the Genesis picturing the creation of the world, the original sin and its consequences; and other scenes from saints' lives, most importantly of saints like George and Nicholas.

### **Decryption: A visual rhetoric**

S. Ulea was one of the first art historians to see the exteriors of Moldavian monasteries from a social and political point of view.<sup>71</sup> Constructing a system of visual connections between each scene, primary or secondary, he came to argue that in the severe situation of Moldavia, Peter Rareș ordered skilful masters to give his painting a plenty “of amplitude and novelty in concordance with the moment, but also reflecting the desired mentality.”<sup>72</sup> In this second part of the chapter I will build on part of what Ulea has already suggested by going into the details of each relevant scene and pointing out how different particularities were meant to influence

<sup>68</sup> The Râșca and Voroneț monasteries were painted on the exterior after the death of Petru Rareș but under the guidance of the bishops Macarie and Grigorie Roșca who continued the legacy and ideology of the late ruler.

<sup>69</sup> In the case of larger monasteries such as Moldovița or Probota, these two scenes are depicted on the southern wall, while the secondary scenes are represented on the northern one.

<sup>70</sup> See: S. Ulea, “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I,” 69.

<sup>71</sup> Although I am aware of the possible nationalistic point of view of Ulea, I consider his interpretation the most useful for the PR campaign that I am arguing for. Although he wrote under the communist regime when non-religious interpretations were encouraged, he was a pioneer of a theory that was accepted and quoted by art historians writing after 1989.

<sup>72</sup> S. Ulea, “La peinture extérieure Moldave: où, quand et comment est-elle apparue,” 295.

the behaviour of the lay people, if indeed they influenced anyone. The way of doing this will be by applying the theory of visual rhetoric.

Visual rhetoric describes the study of images as a branch of traditional rhetoric. It is a fairly new theoretical development that took off with the work of rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke, who encouraged not only the rhetorical analysis of texts, but also of all other human symbol systems, most importantly images.<sup>73</sup> Visual rhetoric is mostly employed in the advertising industry; however, it has been also used in art historical approaches where it has been related to Erwin Panofsky's theory of iconology. Therefore, although it may seem curious to use a methodology that is applied to modern media, breaking down a message into the elements prescribed by visual rhetoric can be used in the same way on images from any particular era, as all visual forms that carry meaning – from architecture to painting – have a level of organization which is rhetorical.<sup>74</sup>

Peter Rareş was concerned with transmitting a particular message to the masses, which meant that he needed a scheme of elaboration: creating the desired message, finding the most suitable support for it, and making sure that it was being dispersed in the correct way. The initial step, which Linda Scott calls “the invention of an argument,”<sup>75</sup> was finding the most influential tools for the targets of his message, tools which would eventually concretize it in imagery most closely related to the everyday life and understanding of the viewers. The second step was finding the most suitable support, which in the sixteenth century was inevitably the church – moreover, as the choice and placement of visual elements helps to modulate the viewer's experience,<sup>76</sup> it is important to see how Rareş chose the most visible support of all. Not only were the exterior walls of the church the first to be seen when entering the monastic courtyard, but using the entire space of the walls demonstrated a desire to use a space that could not be left out of sight. The last step would be the visual arrangement of the message. This meant that the message had to have a certain tone and invoke a certain state of mind characteristic of the desired outcome. The manner in which an object is presented is in direct contact with the evaluation of the image made by the viewer. This last step implies the creation of elements of delivery which mainly coincide with the rhetorical forms of delivery such as rhyme, metaphor, punning and others. Knowing that these are – and were, in the case of Peter Rareş – the stages needed for the production of visual rhetoric, the next step in this analysis is

<sup>73</sup> Sonja K. Foss, “Theory of Visual Rhetoric” in *Handbook of visual communication: theory, methods, and media*, ed. Kenneth Louis Smith (Routledge: 2005), 141.

<sup>74</sup> Stanley Meltzoff, “On the Rhetoric of Vision” *Leonardo* 3, No. 1 (1970), 27.

<sup>75</sup> Linda M. Scott, “Images in Advertising: The Need for a Theory of Visual Rhetoric.” *The Journal of Consumer Research* 21, No. 2 (1997), 265.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, 266.

to emphasize the roles of the different figurative arguments in order to understand whether Rareș had indeed discovered the most effective way to express his thoughts and whether he had found the best way to alter its expression to suit the situation.<sup>77</sup>

A figurative argument, as I will use it in this analysis, is comprised of the following elements: a figurative mode, a rhetorical operation and a rhetorical figure. The figurative mode may be of two kinds, either a scheme or a trope. The scheme is characterized by excessive order and repetition while the trope is more complex in the sense that it is marked by irregularities. Furthermore, the rhetorical operations derive from the figurative modes and are of four types: repetition, reversal, substitution, and deviation, all of which are subsequently comprised of various rhetorical figures such as antithesis, hyperbole, metonym, metaphor, pun, irony and paradox. The figurative argument is marked by deviation and incongruity,<sup>78</sup> meaning that the familiar is presented in an unfamiliar way. The figurative argument is meant to catch the eye and make the figuration memorable. The level of incongruity is distinct in the two figurative modes, making the scheme less memorable and the trope more complex and deviating<sup>79</sup>.

The Akathistos Hymn (fig. 1.6) is the visual representation of the famous hymn of the Holy Virgin. Its origin is much debated but the Prooemium leads many scholars believe that the hymn was written after the 626 Persian siege of Constantinople when the Constantinopolitan people withstood and repelled the attack.<sup>80</sup> Whatever the origin, it is certain that the Mother of God became a central figure for the Byzantines, who dedicated this twenty-four versed hymn to her, which was later adapted to iconography. It is important to note that the hymn, during the late Byzantine period and afterwards, was identified with victory, being chanted on various relevant occasions.<sup>81</sup> The hymn, although a “warrior chant,”<sup>82</sup> does not include any verse specifically invoking a siege as it appears on the walls of

<sup>77</sup> Studies in visual rhetoric stress the impact of the alteration of a visual object with the purpose of making it deviate from expectation and suggesting this way a different interpretation. See: Edward F. McQuarrie, David G. Mick. “Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising Language” in *The Journal of Consumer Research* 22, No. 4 (1996), 424-438.

<sup>78</sup> E. F. McQuarrie, D. G. Mick. “Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising Language”, 426.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>80</sup> The Prooemium contains the words “Our Lady of Victories,” which was probably added on the occasion of the seventh-century victory over the Persians, as it is most likely that the hymn was originally written before the siege and initially dedicated to the Annunciation. See: Egon Wellesz, “The Akathistos. A Study in Byzantine Hymnography” in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 9 (1956): 141-174.

<sup>81</sup> Engin Akyurek presents the Akathistos Hymn as a victory chant which was also connected to Byzantine rituals related to death. See: Engin Akyurek, “Funeral Ritual in the Parekklesion of the Chora Church” in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography, Everyday Life*, ed. Nevra Necipoglu (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 101.

<sup>82</sup> V. Drăguț, *Humor*, 28.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	The life of the Holy Virgin (scenes of spiritual messages)
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Scheme
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Repetition (of life and miracles)
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	-
MESSAGE: - presentation of the Holy Virgin - accent on the repetitive miracles of Her life - trust in the Holy Virgin as the series of scenes emphasize her incredible life		

(Table 1, Scenes of the life of the Holy Virgin)

the Moldavian monasteries. The verses of the hymn, as depicted in Moldavia, can therefore be described in the following way: a number of twenty nine grids each representing a different scene can be delimited, of which twenty-eight bear a spiritual message and the last one bears a political message.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Siege of Constantinople (scene of political message)
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Trope
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Destabilization
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	Metaphor
MESSAGE: - identification of the Holy Virgin as the protector of Constantinople - metaphoric identification of the Ottoman army - metaphoric identification of Constantinople with Suceava - metaphoric identification of the Moldavian rider - identification of the defeat of the Ottoman army		

(Table 2, Siege of Constantinople)

Supposing that one reads the entire scene of the Hymn from the upper part going downwards, one encounters the repetitive scheme of the twenty-eight spiritual scenes representing the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration of Mary, the Crucifixion and so on. Repetition (table 1) here is effective as it gives redundancy to the message. Having various moments from the life of Mary repeated one after the other twenty-eight times raises the memorability and thus the impact of the message. It is a way to accentuate the power of the saint and a way to introduce the last and most relevant scene for the purpose of political persuasion. Art historians have discussed the problem of the image of the Siege of Constantinople (fig. 1.7) and have insisted on its mobilizing significance. The Siege is a mixture of metaphors which reveal Constantinople as the capital fortress of Moldavia, Suceava

(table 2). Metaphors are characterized not only by one target concept but by several,<sup>83</sup> the “reader” of the image has the freedom to choose his own interpretative concept. A Moldavian could have therefore chosen between a literal interpretation – a battle taking place outside the walls of a given fortress – or a more complex interpretation that could have taken at least two forms: a battle where the Ottomans are being defeated or a battle where the Moldavians defeat the Ottomans. Depending on the viewer’s level of comprehension, one of these messages would be decoded. The most desired decoding would indeed be the last, where the Constantinopolitan rider (fig. 1.8) would be identified, in his typical Moldavian war clothing, as a Moldavian soldier who withstands the fearful Ottoman army.

Taken in its entirety, the Akathistos Hymn would therefore have two stages of interpretation: a schematic one which would eventually lead to a tropic one. By its nature, the tropic figure is more complex than the schematic one,<sup>84</sup> inviting elaboration. The viewer must therefore include his own experiences in the interpretation in order to fully understand the content of the scene, he must recall the times he is living in order to comprehend the gravity of the situation predicted by the Siege of Constantinople depiction. Therefore the Hymn is a gradual message which invokes the protective power of the Holy Virgin for the difficult Moldavian situation depicted in the peak of the scene. Moreover, the message is even more intensified by the position of the Siege, which is located at the viewing height of an adult.

The Last Judgment (fig. 1.9) is another major Moldavian theme which is usually depicted on the entire western wall, as at Voroneț. The Last Judgment is first of all a scene of a social-educational programme and a warning for all the people who do not conform to the church order. This scene was meant to make people aware of the consequences of their sins. Cynthia Hahn comments that it was meant as a self-assessment of the person looking at the scene, designed to “allow viewers to judge themselves when they see the Last Judgment.”<sup>85</sup> An example of another possible interpretation of the scene in general is given by Kristin Eldyss Sorensen Zapalac who discusses the Last Judgement depictions present in Late Medieval council chambers and courtrooms. She interprets their presence in these locations as being the visual counterparts of the oaths taken by those elected to serve in a municipal court: “I swear...to keep only God and the Law before my eyes, as I must answer for that before God at

<sup>83</sup> Zoltán Kövecses. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2002), 108.

<sup>84</sup> E. F. McQuarrie, D. G. Mick. “Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising Language”, 429.

<sup>85</sup> Cynthia Hahn, “Vision” in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 56.

the Last Judgment.”<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the anti-Ottoman interpretation of the Moldavian iconography is an additional and specific interpretation of the Last Judgment scene, especially as the Moldavian exterior Last Judgments appear in tumultuous context of the sixteenth-century. The sixteenth-century was dominated by the imperial rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. In this context, where each imperial power was trying to dominate one another,<sup>87</sup> it comes with no surprise that the idea of the Last Judgment gained emphasis. While Sultan Suleyman allied with France because he could profit from France’s rivalry with the Habsburg Empire,<sup>88</sup> the Habsburgs were thinking of putting together an anti-Ottoman league together with Venice.<sup>89</sup> In this context, the development of the idea of the end of days in Europe in connection to the Ottoman expansion is not surprising.

The inspiration of this scene in Moldavia came through the Byzantine iconography of Mount Athos, with which the principality of Peter Rareș was in close contact. The layout of the scene is therefore similar to those of the sixteenth-century monasteries of Athos.<sup>90</sup> The scene is usually represented in the following way: the entire plan is vertically divided by a red river of fire into which doomed people are falling towards the open mouth of the devil. It is therefore divided in four regions: the upper layer of the Celestial Court, the second layer of the weighing of souls of the good and sinful people; both of these layers are above the river of fire. The other two divisions are divided by the river: on the left side is the Heaven and on the right side, is the Earth.

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<sup>86</sup> Kristin Eldyss Sorensen Zapalac, *In His Image and Likeness: Political Iconography and Religious Change in Regensburg, 1500-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 32.

<sup>87</sup> This rivalry between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs is visible also in the iconographic propaganda of the rulers. Such an example of the demonstration of Ottoman power concerns the helmet-crown of Sultan Suleyman designed by a Venetian workshop and seen as a telling attribute of Ottoman sovereignty in the Western world. They were aimed to communicate Ottoman imperial claims to a European audience through a Western discourse of power. Also in the context of art, the desire of sixteenth-century sultans of uniting Constantinople with Rome was visible by their patronage over European artists. See: Gülru Necipoglu, “Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry” *The Art Bulletin* 71 (1989), 401-427.

<sup>88</sup> See more in: V. J. Parry, “The Reign of Sulaiman the Magnificent. 1520-66” in *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730: Chapters from the Cambridge History of Islam and the New Cambridge Modern History*, ed. Vernon J. Parry and M. A. Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 79-103.

<sup>89</sup> A short-lived anti-Ottoman alliance was signed in the spring of 1538 between Venice, Pope Paul III, and Emperor Charles V. See: V. J. Parry, “The Reign of Sulaiman the Magnificent,” 87-89.

<sup>90</sup> S. Ulea, “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I”, 76.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Row 1 (The Celestial Court headed by the Pantocrator)
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Scheme
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Repetition
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	-
MESSAGE: - the Court of Heaven, headed by Christ, awaiting the judgment of souls - repetition denotes uniformity and equality, which implies righteousness and an equality of judgment		

(Table 3, Celestial Court)

The first row is therefore the Celestial Court (table 3) – in its centre Christ Pantocrator sits flanked by Mary and John the Baptist and the groups of saints. The rhetorical operation present here is the repetition of almost identical characters, their similarity being enforced by their golden halos. The repetition reinforces uniformity and the glowing halos seem to shed light on the second register.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Row 2 (Sinners and righteous people going to have their souls weighed)
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Scheme
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Reversal
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	Antithesis
MESSAGE: - distinction good – bad		

(Table 4, Sinner and righteous antithesis)

The second row takes the level of deviation a step further by introducing the rhetorical operation of reversal (table 4). This operation is a method to attract the viewer's eye more than the repetitive operation of the Celestial Court row. The reversal through the antithesis present in this register introduces the contradicting elements of good and evil. As is characteristic of reversal, the two rows of good and evil are similar to mirror images which inversely reflect one another. Although repetition is also involved at this level, it is different from that of the first row: both groups of good and evil are groups that are differentiated within themselves. While the groups of the good are rather conventionally and schematically depicted, the groups of the sinful are true portraits which make them most relevant. These groups clearly outline distinct

features of people of several nationalities: Turks – which comprise the most numerous group – Latins and sometimes Tatars. S. Ulea highlighted that these groups were depicted with the purpose of a special plan; they contrast the group of heretics, who could have easily been included in the category of sinful people, but which are placed in the river of fire where they can barely be seen.<sup>91</sup> The presence of all the “evil” groups has already been explained: Peter Rareș, although a remarkably ambitious person, was not a very good military strategist and often found himself in conflict situations with his Christian neighbours. The Turks were a permanent threat, but the Latins were also situated among the bad people because rulers such as Sigismund I of Poland or János Zapolya often differed politically from Moldavia<sup>92</sup>. The group of Ottomans (fig. 1.11) is a crucial point in understanding the message of the Last Judgment; V. Drăguț and other art historians argue that their accentuation through their clothing and physiognomy transmit the belief in victory and in the fact that eternal punishment is waiting for those who threaten the freedom of Moldavia. Furthermore, the group of the damned becomes the psychological focal point, as the analysis through visual rhetoric will demonstrate.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Heavens and holy people
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Scheme
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Repetition
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	-
MESSAGE: - tranquillity of the Heavens		
- goodness and peacefulness of the Heavens		

(Table 5, Heavens)

The third figural category is Heaven and the people heading towards Heaven (table 5). This depiction on the left side of the river of fire is a figuration entirely characterized by repetition. The repetition is given by what seems to be an immense group of righteous people who are already heading towards the Gates of Heaven – depicted on the lower left corner in a bright white – headed by the Apostle Peter with the key to Heaven in his hand. The people in this large group, especially in the Voroneț version, give the impression of pushing one another in order to reach the Gates (fig. 1.10). This enhances the very significance of repetition; there are multiple instances of almost identical characters, some of whose faces are not even visible except for their halos, which create a unitary block. The simple lines and light colours amplify

<sup>91</sup> S. Ulea, “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I”, 77.

<sup>92</sup> For more on the dissensions between Rareș and Sigismund I and János Zapolya, see: C. Rezachevici. “Politica Externă,” 229-266.



the sensation of perfection and calm that is only to be found in Heaven and strongly contrast with the image offered by the scene on the right side of the river.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Earth on the last day
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Trope
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Substitution
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	Personification
MESSAGE: - Chaotic state of the last days		

(Table 6, Earth)

Table 6 gives the rhetorical analysis of the earthly world during the last days. The scenery illustrates the land and the water. The land is represented by a human figure, who opens the tombs and lets the bodies of the humans out, while animals vomit the remains of the people they have eaten. Water is personified by a woman surrounded by the creatures of the sea, who also gives back the bodies of people taken by the sea. The rhetorical figure used is personification: water and earth are personified, who thus become two allegorical figures that guide the resurrection of the dead. This chaotic scenery captures the attention not only because it stimulates the imagination, but also because of the technical features used by the artist: the scene seems to scream out to the viewer as the drama unfolding in front of his eyes is embodied by vivid colours and irregular lines. The discontinuity of the lines of the hills and the contrast between the earthly brown and the red of the river of fire stress the energy and the fear in which the humanity meets its end.

J. Anthony Blair discusses the communication condition of the medieval Last Judgment scenes as didactic visual arguments. He stresses how, in the context of these types of scenes, the visual argument can communicate much better than oral or written arguments as “no words can convey the horrible fate of the damned as dramatically, forcefully and realistically as do the stone carvings”<sup>93</sup> – referring to the tympanums of Gothic cathedrals that bear this scene. Moreover, he discusses that in order for the visual expression to succeed the power of visual imagery must evoke involuntary reactions. Thus, did the Moldavian Last Judgments evoke the same involuntary responses? Considering that the iconography was similar, the immediate reactions must have also been similar. However, the Moldavian Last Judgments seem to do something more: they centre the attention on the group of the damned. The rhetorical

<sup>93</sup> J. Anthony Blair, “The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments” in *Defining visual rhetorics*, ed. Charles A. Hill and Marguerite H. Helmers (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: 2004), 53.

explanation for this is that the focal point of the entire scene is the left side of the earthly world, which is characterized by the figurative mode of the trope. Except for the second row, which includes the Ottoman group and is also a trope, the other two divisions are schematic figures which are less attractive to the eye. The gradient of deviation is much more complex in the case of the earthly world division,<sup>94</sup> thus this becomes the focal division. However, at the top of this focal point are the already famous groups of the damned, with the accentuated Ottomans which are like a title of the division of the earthly world. Thus, the sixteenth-century person looking at the Last Judgment was meant to be captivated by the asymmetrical lines and personifications of this particular division, which was “titled” with the judgment of the Ottomans. Because the central point is the group of the damned, Peter Rareş seems to have managed to insert his political views and goals.

A third scene of vital importance in the anti-Ottoman campaign is the scene of the Celestial Hierarchy (fig. 1.12). The Celestial Hierarchy is the largest scene of all the others as it entirely covers the surface of all three apses, and its identity is stated in the name The Prayer of All the Saints. This large scene represents a prayer in a series of usually five or six registers, all of which depict different groups of saints or holy people: angels, prophets, apostles, bishops, missionaries, hermits and military saints. The fact that it is a prayer is incontestable: in the middle of the axis of the central apse Christ, flanked by the Holy Virgin and John the Baptist form the classical prayer scene of *Deisis*.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	The four (or five) upper registers
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Scheme
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Repetition
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	-
MESSAGE: - the assembly of all the saints for the purpose of a single prayer		

(Table 7, All saints' prayer)

It is interesting to note that the scene, besides the natural hierarchical divisions, presents another kind of division: the “ordinary” holy characters are separated from the row of military saints. The angels, prophets, martyrs, bishops, and apostles are all heading towards the axis of

<sup>94</sup> The gradient of deviation is measured by the level of the implication of the imagination. Therefore, as the stimulation of imagination becomes more complex, the deviation becomes more intense. For example, in the case of the Last Judgment, the personification implies the action of the imagination much more than the simple repetition of various elements does. While repetition catches the eye with its disturbing multiplications, the personification implies questioning what the personified image stands for, making it more intriguing.

the central apse, where a different image of Christ is present within each register, the middle image usually being the *Deisis* mentioned above. The repetition visible here (table 7) is worth emphasizing. The characters, all in moving with one foot in front of the other, seem to head quietly towards the nucleus of the prayer, represented by the various instances of Christ. This calm procession is marked by the repetitiveness of the figures, whose glowing halos create a similar effect to that in the Last Judgment. Each figure transmits the same message, that of a unified passionate and silent prayer.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→	The last or two lower registers
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→	Trope
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→	Substitution
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→	Metonymy
MESSAGE: - engage of all military saints in a single prayer for military success		

(Table 8, Military saints' prayer)

The political message of the Celestial Hierarchy can be found in the registers that are closest to the eye of the viewer, the lower registers of the military saints (table 8). The repetition is similar to that present in the register above, but the rhetorical interpretation does not stop with the operation of repetition. All the saints bear various accessories which indicate their military affiliation. These representations of specific clothing or spears are indicators of a broader concept, which is war. The attention of the viewer is thus directed towards the concept of war by using rhythmic but alluring substitute concepts. However, not only are the presence of these substitute concepts which initiate the imagination process important, but the actual characters are also important. The presence of Saint John the New, patron saint of Moldavia, is important from this point of view. He is a martyr saint who is even more significant from the perspective of the anti-Ottoman campaign as he was killed at the Cetatea Albă in Moldavia by Muslims after he refused to convert to Islam. John the New is not represented in the register of the martyrs, but in the register of the military saints, right after the first character of the register, Saint George. This placement, as S. Ulea highlights, signifies the fact that John the New is not simply participating in an everyday normal prayer, but he is taking part in a prayer with a warrior character. Moreover, another important image is that of Saint George, who not only is usually depicted on the right side of Christ in the register, but who sometimes replaces the figure of Christ in the central axis, as happens at Voroneț monastery (fig. 1.13). Equally important at Voroneț is the fact that John the New is represented in the most important place,

on the right side of Saint George, while Saint Demetrius is portrayed on the left. In a similar way, the Archangel Michael, leader of the celestial armies, replaces the image of Christ, corresponding to the hermits' register at Humor monastery, thus making the entire group of hermits pray for a military cause.

Saint John the New and the idea of neo-martyrdom should be pointed out here. Neo-martyrdom refers to Balkan Christians who achieved martyrdom through execution for refusing to accept conversion to Islam. There are almost 100 known neo-martyrs,<sup>95</sup> among which John the New can also be found. Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite was, in the eighteenth-century, one of the compilers of the lives of neo-martyrs, the *New Martyrologion*. When asked why God had permitted the appearance of new martyrs, one of Saint Nikodemos' five answers was that because neo-martyrs can thus stand as "personifications of the sort of courage deserving imitation in the deeds of all Christians,"<sup>96</sup> so that they can stand as examples for Christians who have to deal with Islamic conversions. The compilation of the lives of neo-martyrs of Saint Nikodemos also had a similar purpose, to stand as examples. The imagery of Saint John the New on the Moldavian exterior iconography can be interpreted in the same way. Just as the *New Martyrologion* was meant to inspire Orthodox Christians, the mural imagery of the Moldavian neo-martyr can be seen as having the same purpose. Moreover, the scenes representing Saint John the New not only presented him statically, but also presented him in a sequence of representations showing his martyrdom. Visualising the martyrdom, the public execution, can be of particular effect. As Nomikos Michael Vaporis stresses, although the public executions were meant to discourage Christians to refuse conversion, they proved to have the opposite effect,<sup>97</sup> encouraging Christians to stay with their faith and even sacrifice themselves for it. The placement of the execution of Saint John the New on the exterior walls of the Moldavian monasteries can be interpreted as having the same Christian encouraging spirit.

It is also fundamental to see how the significance of the military registers relates to the other registers. The churchgoer sees the representations of the characters in the lower registers not only because they are closer to the eye, but because of the specific rhetorical figure which is more captivating than the one used in the upper registers. The metonymy used with the characters of military saints is supported by the repetition used above and the viewer interprets

<sup>95</sup> Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kisve Bahasi Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670-1730* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 82.

<sup>96</sup> For all the five answers of Saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite, see: Nomikos M. Vaporis, *Witnesses for Christ: Orthodox Christian Neomartyrs of the Ottoman Period, 1437-1860* (New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 15-16.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, 16.

the images correspondingly by connecting the elements that draw on war with the closest concept of war he has in hand: the Ottoman-Moldavian military conflicts. As Marguerite Helmers discusses, looking at an image is always framed by past experiences and learned ideas and “just looking is never innocent, nor is it ever final.”<sup>98</sup>

The last major theme that appears on the Moldavian walls is the Tree of Jesse (fig. 1.14). There are eighteen versions of the Tree in Europe which appear in Italy at the Orvieto Dome and in a number of monasteries in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. The original such scene is unknown but as the iconographical characteristics between the ones mentioned above is so evident, it is certain that they all have a common provenance. The Tree, which represents the genealogy of Christ as descending from Jesse, encompasses two central points: the bottom figure of Jesse and the upper figure of the Virgin; between them appear six Old Testament kings, eighteen New and Old Testament scenes, while the prophets, ancestors and philosophers are separated on the sides. Michael D. Taylor has analysed the origins and connections between the different versions of this genealogy and has concluded that the Moldavian versions are closely linked to the Athonite model.<sup>99</sup> By accepting Taylor’s conclusions, the meaning of the Tree of Jesse into a program of persuasion comes in question. The iconography of the Tree is almost the same as in other foreign regions, with no intrusions that can allude to any political or national persuasive intentions. The original meaning of the scene is a material assertion of the doctrine of the incarnation, demonstrating by its iconography that Christ possessed a full human nature, a human body and soul, and that he was born from his mother, the Virgin Mary. S. Ulea however, has interpreted the scene in the anti-Ottoman approach. His hypothesis is that the Tree of Jesse was introduced into the exterior iconographical programme as a means of completing the message of the Celestial Hierarchy<sup>100</sup> and thus sustaining its military purpose. He suggests this position with no real supporting arguments however. A different interpretation is thus needed: M. Taylor argues that the liturgical role of the Tree is complemented by a dynastic role. Therefore, it is particularly interesting how at the Sopocani and Arilje monasteries the Tree is correlated with dynastic images of Stephen Dragutin’s sons, Uros and Vladislav, and with a dynastic procession. The most relevant development of such correlations is the creation of the genealogical tree of the Nemanjid dynasty (such as the one at Pec) which

<sup>98</sup> Marguerite H. Helmers, “Framing the Fine Arts through Rhetoric” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles A. Hill, Marguerite H. Helmers (Routledge: 2004), 65.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor points out the special features of the Moldavian model in comparison to the Athonite one: particular scenes that appear in Moldavia and do not appear as such in other models are the Annunciation of the Second Coming, an Ascension and the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel next to the kings. See: Michael D. Taylor, “A Historiated Tree of Jesse” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34 (1980-1981): 125-176.

<sup>100</sup> S. Ulea, “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I”, 88.

derived from the Tree of Jesse and which equates the descendants of Stephen Nemanja with those of Jesse, implying thus a divine ordination of their rule.<sup>101</sup> Could it be that the same dynastic implications were suggested with the Moldavian Tree? Peter Rareș, as an illegitimate son, found himself in a delicate situation precisely for this reason. After he was crowned, a series of pretenders to the throne proclaimed themselves the legitimate sons of Stephen the Great. These potential usurpers were grouped in Poland, Transylvania and the Ottoman Empire and were trying to attract the internal opposition of Rareș. The ruler was conscious that once the boyars started to form a conspiracy against him, they would become a real danger to the throne.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the fact that he tried to strengthen his position by making a parallel with the genealogy of Christ is not surprising.

I. FIGURATION	→→→→→→→→→→	The Tree of Jesse
II. FIGURATIVE MODE	→→→→→→→→→→	Trope
III. RHETORICAL OPERATION	→→→→→→→→→→	Destabilization
IV. RHETORICAL FIGURE	→→→→→→→→→→	Metaphor
MESSAGE: - identification of the genealogy of Peter Rareș with that of Christ - message directed towards the boyars		

(Table 9, Tree of Jesse)

Therefore, the entire scene of the Tree of Jesse becomes a metaphor evoking the legitimate and divine succession of Rareș (table 9), where the great number of figures linked to one another by branches of acanthus create an image difficult to ignore. V. Vătășianu also refers to this scene as a social-political message and he implies that this Biblical image was meant to impose respect towards the feudal genealogical system.

These four images are the fundamental ones for a so-called public relations campaign that Peter Rareș might have had in mind. However, usually due to the size of the monasteries' walls, other scenes were also represented on the walls. These scenes had a secondary meaning, completing the meaning of the four primary ones. Three of the secondary themes are almost always present: the Customs of Heavens, the Parable of the Prodigal Son and Genesis. These scenes may be interpreted both as additional scenes to the primary ones reflecting a political message, or they may also be seen as ordinary Biblical illustrations. Although I do not entirely

<sup>101</sup> M. D. Taylor, "A Historiated Tree of Jesse", 164.

<sup>102</sup> The worries of Rareș were materialized with the 1538 conspiracy of the boyars against him. See: Constantin Cihodaru, "Politica Internă" [Internal Policy] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest, Academiei: 1978), 67-73.

agree with interpreting all the secondary scenes as bearing a political message, I will briefly present them and discuss S. Ulea's interpretation on them.<sup>103</sup>

The Customs of Heavens is an original scene which is not be found anywhere else in the Christian world. It represents a traditional Romanian belief that the soul, after the body dies, passes through a number of twenty-one customs before it reaches Heaven.<sup>104</sup> The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a well known scene represented in Moldavia through a few grids which are allusions to Christ as the Good Shepherd to whom the lost and sinful soul returns. The scene of Genesis is also comprised of a few scenes representing Earth and Heaven, the creation of Adam, the creation of Eve, the temptation, the expulsion from Paradise, Adam's deal with the Devil and other scenes, all evidently representing Original Sin.

S. Ulea argues that while the four primary scenes may be considered and taken altogether as what he calls a "grand prayer for the freedom of Moldavia,"<sup>105</sup> the secondary scenes are additional scenes that were needed for the prayer to be received by God. The two illustrations of the Customs of Heavens and the Parable were meant to demonstrate to churchgoers how a good Christian should behave and what he should avoid, while the scenes of Genesis were meant to highlight the Original Sin which was removed by Christ's sacrifice. Knowing these Biblical teachings, Ulea thinks that the Moldavians would know how to keep away from sin, thus making God listen to them and fulfil their greatest prayer, to protect Moldavia. Besides this general interpretation, Ulea also goes into details. Thus, he stresses the intriguing scene of Adam's deal with the Devil. This composition illustrates the heretical belief that Adam, after being expelled from Paradise, had to work his land in order to produce the necessary food. One day however, the Devil came to him and told him that the land was his and in order for Adam to be able to work it, he had to sign a deal through which he sold his soul to the Devil. Adam signed it and thus himself and his descendants fell under the hand of Satan. Interpreting these scenes from the point of view of the Moldavian situation of the time, Ulea says that the landlord was being identified with the Devil, while the peasants were identified with Adam who symbolically had to sell their soul for land. A similar message directed against the boyars was that of the Parable of the Prodigal Son: it could be interpreted that the Parable in

<sup>103</sup> As S. Ulea is the art historian who has most widely investigated the political messages of the secondary scenes of the Moldavian exteriors, I feel like his interpretation is the most proper to be quoted. While there were many others (like V. Vătășianu, G. Balș, V. Drăguț, etc.) who have studied the Moldavian mural paintings, their view on the secondary scenes is usually only drawing on Biblical sources and when they do indeed discuss the possibility of a political interpretation, it is mostly only briefly mentioned.

<sup>104</sup> Every custom represents a human sin that is judged at each custom's stop - like lying, anger, murder, stealing, heresies, and others.

<sup>105</sup> See: S. Ulea, "Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenesti I," 58.

fact said that those who were against the unity of the ruling power from whatever reasons, is a lost soul and a transgressor of the will of Rareș, thus a sinner.

According to this, the secondary scenes were interpreted as also reflecting the internal social policy of Rareș: gaining the support of the masses against the powerful boyars who might become a threat. However, it is difficult to assess in this way the scenes. While Ulea goes into specific details such as the scene of the Deal of Adam with the Devil, one must ask oneself whether such an interpretation is possible. Taking the example of the Deal, it must be stressed that this scene is part of a larger cycle of Genesis, thus being a detail. Therefore, the scene is a small part of a whole cycle which, moreover, is many times represented right under the roof, where its visibility was not evident. Therefore, the sixteenth-century Moldavian, in order to grasp this message, had to detect this one grid from the other grids of the Genesis and give it this specific interpretation. I think thus that Ulea's arguments concerning Genesis, the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Customs of Heaven are not as plausible as he states. I would rather argue for these scenes as additional scenes which have a more spiritual meaning than a political one.

However, a third level of scenes may be identified in the cycles with the lives of various saints. This third level is more plausible to be a level that is supporting the role of the primary scenes as all the saints depicted here are military saints that would normally be included in a political-military message. Thus, at Probota monastery next to the Akathistos Hymn a cycle of twelve different scenes represents the life of Saint George, although the saint has nothing in common with the Hymn and he is not the patron saint of the monastery. A similar cycle with the life of Saint George can be seen on the northern façade of Humor monastery. Moreover, both at Moldovița and Humor three military saints – George, Demetrius and Mercury (fig. 1.15) – are placed on the left side of the Akathistos Hymn, with their swords or spears in their hands slaying their enemies. A similar image that often appears on the exterior walls is that of Moldavia's patron, Saint John the New (fig. 1.16). His image fit into the whole iconographic programme just like it fit in the register of the military saints of the Celestial Hierarchy. As a neo-martyr who refused to convert to Islam, he was one of the most suitable figures to militate against the Ottoman Empire.

Looking at the secondary scenes, it is clear that they are composed of two rhetorical figures: metaphor and metonymy. On one hand, the Customs of Heavens, the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Genesis cycle are all metaphorical statements which stand for sin, although I would not connect the symbol of the sin indicated here with the campaign of Peter



Rareș. On the other hand, all the military saints are figures which indicate the concept of war and which are concretized in metonymy.

## Summing Up

The exciting aspect of the conception of the exterior iconography is that, within general topics known to everyone, Peter Rareș added his own political message. Using the sacred space of the church for his own purposes, he made his messages more accessible to his targeted audience.

The messages displayed on Moldavian church walls came directly from the ruling power through the brush of the commissioned painter. The commissioned painter<sup>106</sup> was given the specified message of an anti-Ottoman prayer and he had to find the proper visual language in order to make the message as clear as possible. The feedback offered by the commissioner was vital to the painter, therefore he had to mould the material in such a way that it mirrored the requested desires. Specific elements needed to be accentuated by colour, by size or by the unexpected and positioned in a visible place with the employment of visual rhetoric. The aim of the painter was to “concentrate on his central theme, mix order with surprise, unity with variety, be clear in form and fine in distinctions, be strong yet supple, and mould the level of presentation to those whom it will reach.”<sup>107</sup>

The commissioned painter had a difficult task, as convincing people to take a stand is a complex process. Although without knowing modern terminology, the sixteenth-century painter exploited the functions of visual rhetoric which made his task easier and which made him reach his viewers more easily. Charles Hill says that the effectiveness of any appeal is greatly affected by how much the appeal supports or conflicts with the beliefs, values and assumptions that the audience members already hold about relevant topics.<sup>108</sup> What else would have been more suitable for a medieval society to support its values and beliefs than the walls of a church? Moreover, Hill argues that people are greatly influenced by the tone in which an argument is expressed. Once more, what could be more suitable than a devotional tone expressed on the solemn walls of the holy monasteries?

<sup>106</sup> As previously presented, Not all the painters of the exteriors of the monasteries are known: the painter of Moldovița was supposedly Rareș's court painter Toma of Suceava as an inscription (maybe signature?) indicates on the scene of the Siege of Constantinople; Humor and Baia were painted by Toma of Suceava; Arbore was painted by Dragoș Coman; the painter of Voroneț is sometimes identified with the herald Marcu, but he is usually referred to as an unknown painter; a special case is that of Râșca which was painted a few years after the death of Rareș by a Greek painter, Stamatello Cotronas, commissioned by Rareș's chronicler Macarie; the painters of the other monasteries are only suppositions.

<sup>107</sup> For more on the role of the commissioned painter see: Stanley Meltzoff, “On the Rhetoric of Vision,” *Leonardo* 3, No. 1 (1970): 27-38.

<sup>108</sup> Charles A. Hill, “The Psychology of Rhetorical Images” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles A. Hill, Marguerite H. Helmers (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: 2004), 28.

## CHAPTER II

## A Campaign in Need of a Team

*The first method of estimating the intelligence of a ruler  
is to look at the men he has around him.*

(N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*)

The organisation of the public relations campaign, headed by Peter Rareș, relied on people who orchestrated the political, religious and artistic spheres that together functioned as the basis for the propagation of the specific messages. These people came from the three well defined spheres mentioned above: they were boyars, that is, part of the Ruling Council, clergy, and artists.

Until the second half of the sixteenth-century, when the Ottoman Empire started to have a much stronger influence in the internal affairs of Moldavia, the Moldavian political scene was dominated by the voivode-boyar partnership. Iolanda Țighiliu elaborates on the relationship between the ruler and the boyars arguing that although it was frequently characterized by tense relations, it had a certain “honesty that cannot be denied.”<sup>109</sup> This honesty also characterized the beginning of the relationship between Peter Rareș and his most important boyars. The new ruler came to the throne after he had been chosen by the boyars; he accordingly kept the structure of the Ruling Council almost unchanged, surrounding himself with boyars coming from well-known Moldavian families who were direct descendants of the nobles of Alexander the Good and Stephen the Great. Only four new names appear in the new Ruling Council of Rareș: Mihul, bailiff of Hotin; Danciu, bailiff of Cetatea Nouă; Drăgșan, grand sword-bearer; and Ion, *comis*.<sup>110</sup> Rareș found in some of the boyars good collaborators who remained faithful to him until the end of his second reign,<sup>111</sup> although the relationship with other boyars started to deteriorate rapidly and resulted in an opposing group. In the boyar mentality, the voivode should represent something that Țighiliu defines as a “fatherly image,”<sup>112</sup> a necessary attribute of the ruler being thus a protective attitude towards the nobility. Although the “fatherly image” and the relationship between the two ruling partners changed according to the political situation of

<sup>109</sup> Iolanda Țighiliu, *Societate și Mentalitate în Țara Românească și Moldova. Secolele XV-XVII* [Society and Mentality in Wallachia and Moldavia. Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries] (Bucharest: Paideia, 1997), 159.

<sup>110</sup> For more on the changes in the new Ruling Council and the boyars who were replaced, see: Ion Toderașcu, “Înscăunarea” [The Enthroning] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978), 58.

<sup>111</sup> Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 18.

<sup>112</sup> I. Țighiliu, *Societate și Mentalitate în Țara Românească și Moldova*, 163.

Moldavia and the diverging interests of the ruler and the boyars, Rareș could still rely on those boyars who respected their oath of fidelity to the ruler. The Ruling Council was thus composed of diverse boyars with different mentalities and opinions, which on one hand could have been positive, while on the other hand, it might have been the cause which led some of the boyars to rebel.

### The Ruling Council

The Ruling Council was composed of twelve high officials, “counsellors on secret matters of the state.”<sup>113</sup> one logothete (*logofăt*), one governor (*vornic*), two bailiffs (*pârcălab*) of the Hotin fortress, two bailiffs of the Neamț fortress, two bailiffs of the Cetatea Nouă fortress, one bailiff of Suceava, one grand sword-bearer (*spătar*), one treasurer (*vistiernic*), one seneschal (*postelnic*), one *ceașnic*, one high steward (*stolnic*), one *comis* and a few other officials with no dignity. Each function was represented as following: the logothete held the highest rank in the Moldavian Ruling Council, lead the Council when the ruler or the metropolitan bishop were not present and he was also the “spokesman of the voivode;”<sup>114</sup> the magistrate was the high official who guided the internal affairs of the state, but who also had judicial attributes; the bailiffs were assigned to govern over the different divisions of Moldavia, having mostly military but also administrative and judicial tasks and being the direct representatives of the central power; the grand sword-bearer was the commander of the cavalry; the treasurer was the finance administrator, dealing with the state’s treasury and keeping evidence of income and expenses; the seneschal was the noble who was in charge of organizing of the official meetings and audiences of the voivode; the *ceașnic* was responsible with for ruler’s drinks by administrating the royal vineyards and gathering the taxes on wine and vineyards; the high steward was the royal chef, who also had to deal with the fishery and gardening sectors; and lastly, the job of the *comis* was to take care of the royal stables and horses and to control the supply system.<sup>115</sup>

Generally, the status of boyar was a special category in the feudal system, which was represented by the land owners who carried out various functions,<sup>116</sup> (the most important

<sup>113</sup> D. Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei*, 153.

<sup>114</sup> *Descrierea Țării Moldovei și Țărei Românești de Miron Costin* [Description of Moldavia and Wallachia by Miron Costin] in Miron Costin, *Opere* [Writings], ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: De Stat Pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958), 387.

<sup>115</sup> For a full description of the duties of the members of the Ruling Council, see: D. Cantemir. *Descrierea Moldovei*, 152-164; *Descrierea Țării Moldovei și Țărei Românești de Miron*, 387-389; and *Istorie în Versuri Polone despre Moldova și Țara Românească* [The History of Moldavia and Wallachia in Polish Verses] in M. Costin, *Opere* [Writings], ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: De Stat Pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958), 238-239.

<sup>116</sup> Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 31.

ones were presented above). The work of all the important boyars meant, besides their natural functions, to travel from one place to the other, from one court to the other, to make agreements with foreign diplomats and keep in touch with Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Muslim representatives. Therefore, as M. M. Szekely argues, they were probably simple provincial nobles. Many of them spoke foreign languages and were used to European court protocol; they knew how to speak, dress, eat and act like any other noble person of the time.<sup>117</sup>

The structure of the Ruling Council during the two reigns of Peter Rareș:<sup>118</sup>

<b>Dignities</b>	<b>1527 – 1538</b>	<b>1541 – 1546</b>
Logothetes	Toader Bubuiog	Mateiaș
Governors	Stephen Hrană Nicoară Grozav Efrem Huru	Efrem Huru Nicolae Borcea
Bailiffs of Hotin	Vlad Mihu Toader	Trifan Popescul Nicoara Hâră Ion Sturza Ion Movilă Nicolae Borcea
Bailiffs of Neamț	Costea Cârje Efrem Huru Danciul Huru Ion Liciul	Frățian Danciul Huru Miron
Bailiffs of Cetatea Nouă	Nicoară Grozav Danciul Huru Toader Zbiarea Ion Ignat Crăciun Toader	Sandru Tampa
Bailiffs of Suceava	Onufrie Barbovski Mihu	Peter Vartic
Grand Sword-Bearer	Drăgșan	Iurie Grumaz
Treasurers	Toader Dumșa Glăvan Mateiaș	Toma Dan Ion Movilă
Senechals	Ion Liciul Costea Albotă	Maxim Hâbor
<i>Ceașnic</i>	Manoil Felea Trifan Popescul	Petrașco
High Steward	Toader Zbiarea Toader	Ioan Neagul

<sup>117</sup> M. M. Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 13.

<sup>118</sup> As presented in *Ibidem*, 39.

	Jurj Colun	
<i>Comis</i>	Ion Costea Albotă Ion Gug Simion Draxin	Pintilei Plaxa
Without Dignity	Negrilă Talabă Bratul Hrincoș Spiridon Scripcă Gavril Troțușan	Petre Cărcă Efrem Huru Trifu Hamza

### *Family links*

Toader was the bailiff of the Fortress of Hotin,<sup>119</sup> the only nobleman who was directly linked to Peter Rareș by blood – he was his half-brother through their mother, Maria.<sup>120</sup> Peter Rareș might have had additional blood relatives in his court, but they are not documented. As Szekely emphasizes, several nobles took different actions that might have been connected to their family relationship with the voivode. For instance, this may have been the case with Mișu and Gavril Troțușan's role in the events of 1538 when Rareș was dethroned, suggesting that their claim to the throne might have been based on a blood connection to Rareș.<sup>121</sup> However, the aspects of the 1538 dethroning and the nobles' reasons for supporting it will be discussed below.

Returning to Toader, before 23 April 1530, when he became the bailiff of Hotin along with Bailiff Vlad, he had the dignity of high steward. Being Rareș's brother, he was one of the voivode's most valuable nobles and proof of this is the fact that after the disintegration of Rareș's first reign, he was part of the group of nobles who were persecuted and eventually murdered because of their loyalty to the dethroned ruler. The downfall of the bailiff started with his flight to Poland in 1538. He eventually fell into the hands of Stephen Lăcustă (1538–1540), who replaced Rareș on the throne. Apparently, he consequently received a treatment only inflicted on people who were relatives of rulers: his nose was cut off before he was murdered.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 88.

<sup>120</sup> M. M. Szekely, *Sfeticii lui Petru Rareș*, 166, 176.

<sup>121</sup> Although M. M. Szekely explains the possible blood relations between the voivode and the usurpers of the 1538 events, it remains impossible however to demonstrate this on the documents that have been preserved. See: M. M. Szekely, *Sfeticii lui Petru Rareș*, 166-190.

<sup>122</sup> Toader initially fell into captivity by the sultan and was on his way to Istanbul when he was kidnapped by the people of Lăcustă (probably Mișu and Troțușanu) to be murdered. For more on his punishment for being loyal to Rareș, see: Ș. S. Gorovei, *Domnia lui Alexandru Cornea* [The Rulership of Alexandru Cornea] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Simanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978), 183.

Toader was a pillar of Rareș's armed conflict with Poland. Strategically in charge of the northern Moldavian lands of Hotin which neighboured the Polish territories, he controlled and directed the events going on at the northern border starting with the beginning of the Polish-Moldavian hostilities in 1530.<sup>123</sup> One of the strategies I argue to have had part in the campaign to influence the actions of the boyars was directly linked to these conflicts. Some historians have pointed out that the campaign for the Polish Pocutsia was intended to distract the attention of the boyars from plotting against Rareș.<sup>124</sup> Therefore Toader, bailiff of Hotin, was surely involved in this military strategy and was a tool in the military part of Peter Rareș' campaign of persuasion.

There is no evidence that Toader commissioned churches that could align him with those who were involved in the propaganda circulated through the mural paintings of the Northern Moldavian monasteries. However, what is relevant is that Toader was the boyar who received the largest areas of land that had an important role in the military strategy of his royal brother: the land of Hotin was largely his property. Allowing his brother to control this land, it would have been much easier for Rareș to implement the military campaigns in Pocutsia, and consequently, the dissimulation strategy meant to distract the nobles' attention from current internal issues. This can stand as an argument for the importance of the bailiff among the nobles of Rareș.

While Toader's participation in the campaign of Peter Rareș was strictly military, the role of the voivode's second acknowledged relative, the archbishop Grigorie Roșca (fig. 2.1), was ideological and artistic. Grigorie Roșca, cousin of Peter Rareș,<sup>125</sup> received his religious initiation at the Voroneț Monastery from where he went to the Neamt Monastery. Benefitting from his cousin's aid, in 1530 he directed the construction of the Probota Monastery, where he was father superior for twenty-three years; he became archbishop of Moldavia in 1541. From this new position, he facilitated the development of Voroneț by supplying it with new furniture and embroideries, but most importantly by arranging for the painting of the exterior of the monastery and by supporting literary activity.<sup>126</sup> Archbishop Roșca's literary

<sup>123</sup> M. M. Szekely, *Sfetcicii lui Petru Rareș*, 184-185.

<sup>124</sup> I will present this argument in a following chapter. For more on this hypothesis, see: V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 91.

<sup>125</sup> Archbishop Dosoftei first mentioned Grigorie Roșca as the cousin of Petru Rareș. The same blood link was made between Archbishop Roșca and Toader by M. V. Coruga, thus linking Roșca to Rareș. See: Matei V. Coruga, *Gheorghe al II-lea și Grigorie de la Neamt, Doi Mitropoliți Necunoscuți ai Moldovei din Secolul al XVI-lea* [Gheorghe II and Grigorie of Neamt, Two Unknown Archbishops of Sixteenth Century Moldavia] in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 89 (1997), 1230-1243.

<sup>126</sup> E. Turdeanu called Grigorie Roșca the "grand patron of the literary activity of his time." See: Emil Turdeanu, *Apocryphes slaves et roumains de l'Ancien Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 117.

initiatives are relevant as his copyists translated some of the most meaningful Moldavian Gospel Books, such as the *Tetraevangeliiar* dedicated to the monastery of Voroneț in 1150.<sup>127</sup> His tie with the campaign of Peter Rareș was therefore apparent in his church commissions and aid given to the Probota and Voroneț monasteries, whose exterior decoration was also supervised by him. Because of this, the art historian Peter Comănescu has identified Roșca as the initiator of the exterior painting.<sup>128</sup>

Grigorie Roșca contributed a great deal to the formation of anti-Ottoman opinion and to sustaining the desire for a stable, unconquered Moldavia. Under his control, the Probota monastery flourished: about 100 monks lived at Probota,<sup>129</sup> some of whom were church painters and speakers of different foreign languages, which allowed them to translate and copy texts. Roșca thus seems to have contributed to the creation of a Moldavian artistic school formed of anonymous painters who were monks or disciples of the archbishop.<sup>130</sup> This school was the origin of the interior and exterior paintings of Peter Rareș's necropolis, Probota, where the signs and messages of the campaign can readily be noted. Moreover, it is important to see the continuation of the work of Peter Rareș by Grigore Roșca. Although after the death of Rareș the practice of painting the church exteriors ceased,<sup>131</sup> Archbishop Roșca continued the ruler's artistic expressions by adding a painted porch to the Voroneț monastery. The Last Judgment, commissioned on the northern side by the archbishop is considered the most complex example of such a scene compared to all the other Last Judgements produced in the period of Rareș and in all of Moldavia.<sup>132</sup> Archbishop Roșca was therefore one of the prime propagators of the message of Rareș not only by supporting the commissions of Rareș during his reign but, most importantly, by continuing to commission the same type of painting after the death of the ruler.

### *Church founders*

The most effective way of diffusing messages in medieval Moldavia would have been through the most essential public space: the church. From this point of view, the founders,

<sup>127</sup> Emil Turdeanu, *Études De Littérature Roumaine Et D'écrits Slaves Et Grecs Des Principautés Roumaines* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 224.

<sup>128</sup> As quoted by V. Drăguț, V. Florea. *Pitura Românească în Imagini*, 57-58.

<sup>129</sup> *Mitropolitul Grigorie Roșca al Moldovei și Sucevei* [Archbishop Grigorie Roșca of Moldavia and Suceava], <http://www.sfant.ro/sfinti-romani/mitropolitul-grigorie-Roșca-al-moldovei-si-sucevei-4.html>, accessed on October 18, 2009.

<sup>130</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>131</sup> Voivode Alexandru Lăpușneanu (1552-1561; 1563-1568) is considered to be the next personality to use art extensively. However, although only six years passed between the reigns of the two rulers, the monasteries of Lăpușneanu do not have elaborate exterior painting. See: V. Drăguț. *Pictura Murală din Moldova*.

<sup>132</sup> See: A. Văețiș, *Arta de Tradiție Bizantină în România*, 77-78.

church builders and church painters had a last word to say in shaping the messages of the church's visual programme.

The Moldavian nobles showed a great interest in founding churches and monasteries. Generally, by founding and financing a church, a noble could earn forgiveness for his sins because donations made to the church would save the soul of the giver,<sup>133</sup> Living in sixteenth-century Moldavia not only threatened by Suleyman the Magnificent, but also quarrelling with Polish king Sigismund I and occasionally with Hungarian king Janos Zapolya, it is no surprise that the Moldavians, fearing a tragic end, would support and commission churches.

A founder was not only the person who financed the construction of the church, but could also be a person who added certain elements to an already finished edifice – painting, various architectural units or liturgical objects. Only four of Peter Rareș's nobles are known for sure to have founded churches.<sup>134</sup> Except for these four founders, there are at least eight more<sup>135</sup> who are assumed to have built churches and to have donated objects to churches. I will concentrate on the four nobles who have been attested as founders in church inscriptions and votive scenes: Toader the logothete (founder of Humor Monastery), Mateiaș the logothete (founder of Coșula Monastery and the Church of Horodniceni), Onufrie Barbovski, bailiff of Suceava (founder of the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of Christ in Suceava), and Gavril Troțușan (founder of the Church of Părhăuți).

The name of the great logothete Toader Bubuiog is well known because of his foundation of Humor. The information on his career at the Moldavian court is scarce before the beginning of the reign of Peter Rareș, but certain facts can be reconstructed: he had been in royal service since the days of Stephen the Great, becoming a logothete from 1524 when Ștefaniiță Voivode ruled. After the coronation of Rareș, like most of the boyars of Ștefaniiță, Toader was kept in the Ruling Council and in this position he led a number of diplomatic and military missions, essential to both Rareș's government and his persuasion campaign.

The first act that was entrusted to Toader was a six-month long mission to Istanbul immediately after Rareș's coronation with the goal of the external legitimization of the new voivode.<sup>136</sup> Returning from Istanbul with the sultan's confirmation of Rareș's rulership,

<sup>133</sup> Gerald Handel, *Social Welfare in Western Society* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 50.

<sup>134</sup> See: M. M. Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 486.

<sup>135</sup> This is an estimated number as many of the edifices have been destroyed over time and the names of their founders have consequently been lost. See: M. M. Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 490.

<sup>136</sup> V. Pâslariuc explains how this difficult mission could not have been done by any other than "the most valuable man in the team of Petru Rareș." More on the mission of the logothete to Istanbul in: V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 84.



Toader was assigned to other delegations. In November 1527, he was sent to the Hungarian king Ferdinand of Habsburg with a message of peace and with Peter Rareș's advice to be prudent in his policy with Venice, as the Venetians were inclined towards a treaty with the Ottomans; a few years later in 1535, Toader was again sent on a diplomatic mission to Brașov as a herald to Ferdinand of Habsburg in order to arrange the conditions of a treaty between Moldavia and Transylvania.<sup>137</sup> Toader Bubuiog also took part in the campaign against Pocutia where he was one of the commanders of the army together with Rareș. After the defeat at Obertyn, he was one of the boyars who fell captive to Sigismund but was among the first to be ransomed.<sup>138</sup>

Besides his diplomatic and military actions, probably the most obvious proof of Toader's adherence to the voivode's ideals is the foundation of Humor monastery. The monastery was built in 1527 at the expense of the logothete. The inscription on the southern wall describes his foundation:

With the will of the Father and the help of the Son and Holy Spirit, through the wish of Peter voivode, son of Stephen voivode, this church was built...with the costs and tiredness of the servant of God, the boyar Teodor, great logothete, and his wife Anastasia in the year 7038 (1530) in the month of August 15.<sup>139</sup>

The inscription says that the monastery was built on the wish of Rareș. Upon being enthroned, Rareș expressed the desire to build a new monastery at Humor,<sup>140</sup> therefore, it is not certain whether the monastery was built by the logothete on the order of Rareș or whether the logothete himself decided to build it. What is relevant for the church's connection with the campaign of Rareș is the painting. The painting, strongly echoing the art of the court painter Toma,<sup>141</sup> encompasses scenes that reflect what could be an anti-Ottoman vision of the ruler of Moldavia: the Last Judgment, the Celestial Hierarchy, and the large scene of the Siege of Constantinople, best preserved on the walls of Humor.

As can be seen, Toader Bubuiog, the first man of the state after the ruler, was the nobleman entrusted with most important deeds that would smooth the way for Rareș's campaign. A further argument for the role of Toader in a persuasion campaign can be read in

<sup>137</sup> The diplomatic missions concerning the anti-Ottoman treaties and discussions with Ferdinand of Habsburg are presented by M. M. Szekely. See: M. M. Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 64-65. For the same missions see also: Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 49-50.

<sup>138</sup> Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 98.

<sup>139</sup> V. Drăguț, *Humor*, 9.

<sup>140</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>141</sup> The exterior painting also bears the signature of the painter Toma of Suceava. See: Ibidem, 32. and: V. Drăguț et al, *Pictura Românească în Imagini*, 57.

the words of Macarie at the beginning of his chronicle: “We therefore started ... to drag the chains of words... by following the royal order of the Chosen Peter, terrible for his enemies, the son of Stephen Voivode the Brave, and the order of the great logothete Toader.”<sup>142</sup> As will be discussed below, Peter Rareș could have used the chronicle of Macarie as a tool for making his nobles accept him. The fact that Toader also commissioned it deepens the partnership between him and Rareș.

The logothete Mateiaș started his political career as a treasurer, a dignity he held between March 1534 and February 1535. After the second coronation of Rareș, Mateiaș was made great logothete, from 1541 to 1550, after the death of the voivode.<sup>143</sup>

Mateiaș was a trusted man of Rareș, who remained faithful to him until his second reign. This fact is attested by at least two acts: firstly, during the events surrounding the dethronement in 1538, Rareș asked Mateiaș to take his wife Helen and their children to Bistrita, a safe place in Transylvania.<sup>144</sup> A second fact that attests that Mateiaș was one of the most trusted people of the voivode relates to the events of the logothete’s captivity in the fortress of Făgăraș. In 1541, the sultan ordered Rareș to capture the Ferdinandist ruler of Transylvania, Stephen Mailat.<sup>145</sup> Mailat retreated to the fortress of Făgăraș from where he came out when Rareș, pretending to be his ally, offered to discuss the situation and give Mateiaș as guarantee<sup>146</sup> of his freedom. However, Mailat was taken prisoner and sent to Istanbul while Mateiaș remained in the fortress still ruled by Mailat’s people. Mateiaș was not freed until 1545.<sup>147</sup> Until he was freed, Peter Rareș did not replace him with another logothete although this meant the deterioration of the affairs of the Ruling Council.

Not only was the logothete one of the voivode’s most trusted men, but he was also one of the most knowledgeable ones. Mateiaș, together with his brother Sima transcribed the *Tertraevanghel* of Putna, which he afterwards donated in 1535 to the Dobrovăț monastery, whose painting was commissioned by Rareș between 1527 and 1531.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, he founded two churches. In the autumn of the same 1535, the Coșula monastery was finished. The inscription which acknowledges Mateiaș as the founder of the church reads the

<sup>142</sup> I. Bogdan, *Cronica lui Macarie*, 90.

<sup>143</sup> For the career of Mateiaș, see: M. M. Szekely, *Sfeticii lui Petru Rareș*, 101-102.

<sup>144</sup> Ibidem, 104.

<sup>145</sup> “A royal order came from the Sultan Suleyman to Petru Voivode, to go upon the Hungarians and catch Mailat, the voivode of Transylvania.” See: G. Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, 101.

<sup>146</sup> I. Bogdan, *Cronica lui Macarie*, 117.

<sup>147</sup> For more on the events at Făgăraș, see: C. Rezachevici, “Politica Externă,” 239-242.

<sup>148</sup> *Monumente Istorice Bisericești din Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* [Church Historical Monuments from the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Suceava], ed. Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei (Iași: Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei, 1974), 156-157.

following: “With the will of the Father and the help of the Son and Holy Spirit, the boyar Mateiaș arranged to build this church dedicated to Saint Nicholas.”<sup>149</sup> It was painted in the year 1538 on the inside and outside in the contemporary style of other monasteries but all the sixteenth-century frescoes were lost in the nineteenth-century when the church was repainted in oil-based paint.<sup>150</sup> The second church Mateiaș founded was the church of Horodniceni, whose mural paintings have also been lost and which is still being researched archaeologically.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, the mural scenes cannot be analyzed in either case, but their importance remains the same nevertheless in the sense that their very existence suggests their kinship to Rareș’s visual propaganda programme.

Onufrie Barbovschi held two military dignities: first, he was bailiff of the Fortress of Hotin and then, he was bailiff of Suceava. The chronicles mention that the bailiff of Suceava participated in 1529 in the military campaign in Transylvania together with Grozea, “the first of his boyars.”<sup>152</sup> Peter Rareș “prepared the army and sent Grozea the magistrate and Barbovschi the minister of war, who were his most faithful boyars.”<sup>153</sup> The campaign in Transylvania aimed to conquer the fortress of Ciceu and free the two Moldavian fortresses Bistrița and Ungurașul. Pâslariuc argues that because he was not attested in any documents after 1529, it is most likely that he died from battle injuries in Transylvania.<sup>154</sup>

The connection with the Moldavian cultural spheres can be made through the *Tetraevangheliar* which he had commissioned from Bishop Macarie for his foundation at Suceava and which, according to Szekely, Barbovschi commissioned before his final trip to Transylvania, in order to safeguard him.<sup>155</sup> The Church of the Dormition of the Mother of Christ in Suceava is no longer standing. It was abandoned and, because of its precarious state, it was demolished at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>156</sup> Together with its structure, the mural paintings which would have been evidence of the persuasion campaign of Rareș were lost.

Gavril Troțușan is an exceptional character in this list of founders. He was part of the Ruling Council of Peter Rareș although he did not hold an official position,<sup>157</sup> but he cannot

<sup>149</sup> G. Balș, “Bisericile și Mănăstirile Moldovenești”, 61.

<sup>150</sup> Vasile Drăguț, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Artă Medievală Românească* [Encyclopedic Dictionary of Romanian Medieval Art] (Bucharest: Stiințifică și Enciclopedică, 1976), 108.

<sup>151</sup> Ibidem, 167.

<sup>152</sup> I. Bogdan, *Cronica lui Macarie*, 96.

<sup>153</sup> “...îndată au gătit oaste și au trimis pre Grozea vornicul cel mare și pre Barbovschii hatmanul, carii era mai credincioși din boierii săi.” See: G. Ureche, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei*, 92.

<sup>154</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 90.

<sup>155</sup> See: M. M. Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 302.

<sup>156</sup> Ibidem, 303.

<sup>157</sup> Ibidem, 431.

be included in a list of the supporters of the voivode's campaign. I decided to add him to this list in order to show the differences between him and the trusted members of the council and between his foundation and the other royal and noble foundations.

Trotușan started his career during the rule of Stephen the Great as a grand sword bearer, became the treasurer of Moldavia, and eventually a logothete of Ștefăniță Voivode.<sup>158</sup> He participated in 1523 in the plot to dethrone Ștefăniță Voivode. The rebellion was stopped and Trotușan was imprisoned, excluded from the Ruling Council and deprived of his position. A few years later however he was put out of prison, but was not reinstated in his position. Fifteen years later, in 1538, during the reign of Rareș, Trotușan was again at the centre of a rebellion against the ruler: Trotușan together with Mișu, the bailiff of Suceava, “showed themselves to be truly sly,”<sup>159</sup> led the revolt against Rareș, and allowed the Ottoman army to enter Suceava. Rareș consequently fled to Transylvania and Trotușan earned once more the highest position in the council: he became logothete.<sup>160</sup> This position was his until Rareș returned in 1541 and “found the bailiff Mișu, the logothete Trotușan, Crasnes and Cozma...and then cut their heads off.”<sup>161</sup>

Trotușan's church foundation was that of Părâuți, a stone church representative of the sixteenth-century Moldavian architecture.<sup>162</sup> Its building was finished before the rule of Rareș while Trotușan was logothete for the first time, while the painting was done after 1530 during the reign of Rareș.<sup>163</sup> As mentioned above, the core of the mechanism of the voivode's persuasive campaign lay in the external paintings of the churches mostly founded during his reign. The church of Părâuți, although painted during the reign of Peter Rareș was only painted on the inside, without the specific external painting. Furthermore, the exonarthex is decorated with scenes from the life of Saint Nicholas and not with the Last Judgment scene, like most of the exonarthexes of Peter Rareș's time. Although not decorating the exterior walls could simply be a donor's choice, this choice could also indicate the rebellious feelings of a boyar opposing the decisions of the central power. Could this be a hidden proof of Gavril Trotușan's disobedience towards Peter Rareș?

<sup>158</sup> Ibidem, 430-432.

<sup>159</sup> “...cum s-au și arătat mai apoi adevărat că au fost vicleni.” See: G. Ureche, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei* 99.

<sup>160</sup> For how Trotușan became logothete, see: V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 109-110.

<sup>161</sup> “Au aflatu și pe Mihul hatmanul și pre Trotușanul logofătul și pre Crasneș și pre Cozma...mai apoi le-au tăiat și capetile.” See: G. Ureche, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei*, 99.

<sup>162</sup> V. Drăguț, *Dictionar Enciclopedic de Arta Medievala Romaneasca*, 225.

<sup>163</sup> Ibidem.

### *Other loyal boyars*

Analysing the structure of the Ruling Council as it was during the first reign of Rareș and as it was after he was dethroned, Pâslariuc demonstrated that out of 16 members of the council, nine remained in the council of Stephen Lăcustă.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, seven people either died, or were not wanted in the new council because they were loyal to Peter Rareș. The situation of Rareș's brother was presented above: he was murdered, supposedly by Troțușan and Mișu. Toader Bubuiog is known to have remained in Moldavia where he died in January 1539 and was buried at his foundation at Humor.<sup>165</sup> Mateiaș sent his family to Transylvania but he remained in Moldavia at his domains in Horodniceni, without collaborating with the new voivode.<sup>166</sup> The Bailiff Danciul Huru is another example of a refusal to collaborate with the new council, while the fates of Bailiff Ion Liciul, Seneschal Costea Albotă, *Comis* Simion Draxin and Colun are unknown.<sup>167</sup> Having no information on the last four boyars, Danciul Huru can be presented together with Hâră, who was not part of the Ruling Council in the first reign of Rareș, but who was awarded the dignity of bailiff of Hotin in his second reign because of his loyal acts.

Danciul Huru, the brother of the magistrate Efrem Huru, held a high dignity for 25 years, from the first reign of Peter Rareș to the reigns of Rareș's sons, Iliăș and Ștefan.<sup>168</sup> The only period when he was not part of the Ruling Council was the period of three years when Rareș was not voivode. He was not a church founder and he was best known for his military affairs. The most successful military campaign in which he participated was that in Transylvania in 1529 where he joined the army of Barbovschi, as the chronicle of Ureche describes. The chronicle describes the success of the military commanders and the way they "victoriously returned to their lord, Peter voivode."<sup>169</sup>

The boyar which, by his actions, proved himself to be the most faithful noble of Rareș was Nicoara Hâră. During the first reign of Rareș he was the keeper of the voivode's royal rooms, a *cămăraș*.<sup>170</sup> He became known because he revealed to Rareș the boycott of the boyars and the small host.<sup>171</sup> Ureche recalls how Hâră told the ruler that "the country is

<sup>164</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 111.

<sup>165</sup> Ș. S. Gorovei, "Ștefan Lăcustă" in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978), 166.

<sup>166</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 112.

<sup>167</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>168</sup> See: M. M. Szekeley, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 251-255.

<sup>169</sup> "...s-au întorsu cu izbândă la domnu său, Pătru vodă." See: G. Ureche, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei*, 92.

<sup>170</sup> Macarie, in his chronicle, calls him "the guardian of the royal bedroom." See: I. Bogdan, *Cronica lui Macarie*, 99.

<sup>171</sup> The Moldavian army was formed of two military divisions. The first one was the small host, or small army, which was the permanent army of the voivode comprised of boyars and their personal armies. The second army was the large one, also called "large host," which was only called to war at great danger, when a large number of

discussing to abandon him.”<sup>172</sup> Therefore, because of Hâră, Rareș could retreat to Transylvania at the very last moment, together with his room-keeper. Szekely argues that during Rareș’s entire stay in Transylvania, Hâră stood by him<sup>173</sup> and only returned to Moldavia together with the voivode in 1541, when he became the bailiff of Hotin. During the stay in Transylvania, he received a letter from Stephen Lăcustă calling him back to Moldavia and saying that he had been forgiven for the mistake of helping Rareș.<sup>174</sup> He refused to return, remaining loyal to Rareș. I would argue that the reason for calling him back was in fact to punish him. It is known that the brother of Rareș was captured and killed by members of Lăcustă’s new council, therefore it may be that the same fate was meant for Hâră, who disobeyed the rebellious boyars.

During the second reign of Rareș, Hâră remained bailiff of Hotin until his death in 1545 when he was buried at the royal burial site, inside Probota monastery. Pâslariuc, praising the loyalty of the bailiff to Rareș, concluded that he was buried at Probota “as if Rareș wanted to have him close even in the after-world.”<sup>175</sup> Although this hypothesis is plausible, another reason for the burial at Probota could be that he was a donor to the monastery, and thus had the right to be buried there. Hâră is also supposed to have been the founder of the church of Zăhărești,<sup>176</sup> although there is no inscription to demonstrate this. The mother of the bailiff is buried in the church, thus making it more plausible that he founded the church. Although the painting was completely destroyed in time, the fact that he might have founded the church aligns him with the other loyal church founders of Rareș who respected the canons of exterior painting.

## Clerics

As noted above when discussing the personality of Archbishop Grigorie Roșca, the importance of the clerical network in the campaign was vital. The entire campaign was manifested in the space of the church, the space of the clerics and the space of the mural paintings. As S. Ulea argued, the murals were the “supreme prayers” that the voivode and his people wanted to direct towards God for the salvation of Moldavia.<sup>177</sup>

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soldiers was needed. This large host was mainly comprised of free peasants. More details on these two armies and their function will be presented in a following chapter.

<sup>172</sup> “...țara să vorovește să-l părăsească.” See: G. Ureche, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei*, 96.

<sup>173</sup> M. M. Szekely, *Sfeticii lui Petru Rareș*, 201.

<sup>174</sup> See: I. Bogdan, *Cronica lui Macarie*, 99 and Ș. S. Gorovei, “Stefan Lăcustă,” 165-166.

<sup>175</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 121.

<sup>176</sup> V. Drăguț, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Artă Medievală Românească*, 321.

<sup>177</sup> See S. Ulea, “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I,” 57-93 and Idem, “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești II,” 37-54.

Besides being the official chronicler of Rareș, Bishop Macarie (fig. 2.2) played a role in the construction of both the Episcopal Church of Roman and in the Monastery of Râșca, as an advisor on the conception of these edifices. Regaining the throne in 1541, Rareș offered funds to the bishop to build a new church on the remains of the foundation of Bogdan III. Therefore, the church was built at Râșca and finished in 1542. The painting of the church was done after the death of Rareș and during the reign of his son Stephen Rareș and under the careful guidance of bishop Macarie.<sup>178</sup> Finished in 1554, Macarie thus continued the legacy of Rareș. However, Macarie did not choose the court painter of Rareș, Toma, but decided for Stamatelos Kotronas,<sup>179</sup> a Greek who could more easily mirror the hesychast beliefs of the bishop.

Mihail Bălan explains the ideology of Macarie in the post-1541 environment, an environment of a defeated country that was tributary to the sultan. This atmosphere was “full of fear for a direct Ottoman domination and some of the Moldavians started to lose their faith in a military campaign against this threat, resulting in a fatalistic state of mind.”<sup>180</sup> In this psychological climate, Macarie promoted the non-combative Orthodox doctrine of hesychasm. Hesychasm envisioned a strong inclination towards a pious life and repentance in order to gain true happiness in the after-life. For the propagation of this current, Macarie needed an iconographical symbol. Therefore, besides the Last Judgment scene which echoed these beliefs, Macarie had the Ladder of Virtues (fig. 2.3) painted on the southern façade of the church. The scene of the ladder transposed the principles of the ascetic lifestyle written in the seventh century by the hermit John Climacus or Climax.<sup>181</sup> The spiritual guidance of Climacus had a noticeable impact in the case of Moldavia, the fate of the ladder having a different outcome here.<sup>182</sup> As V. Drăguț explains, the Ladder of Virtues replaced the old theme of the Customs of Heaven.<sup>183</sup> At the top of the ladder, the face of Christ in heaven is visible. On the ladder, as monks go up one by one they are threatened by devils who want to drag them down the ladder. At the bottom, a long line of monks are going towards the ladder headed by Macarie wearing bishop’s dress, who is being welcomed next to the ladder by John Climacus.

<sup>178</sup> Mihail Bălan, *Mănăstirea Râșca* [Râșca Monastery] (Bucharest: ASA, 2009), 7.

<sup>179</sup> V. Drăguț, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Artă Medievală Românească*, 261.

<sup>180</sup> M. Bălan, *Mănăstirea Râșca*, 19.

<sup>181</sup> Ibidem, 20.

<sup>182</sup> John Duffy, “Embellishing the Steps: Elements of Presentation and Style in “The Heavenly Ladder” of John Climacus” in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), 2.

<sup>183</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura Murală din Moldova*, 36.

Looking at the aid he gave to monastic settlements, Macarie, similarly to Grigorie Roșca, supported the campaign of Rareș during the latter's life. Furthermore, he also continued spreading through spiritual messages the anti-Ottoman ideology of the ruler after his death.

## Painters

Although there is scarce information about the painters who worked on the exterior walls of the monasteries commissioned by Rareș and his boyars, a few names are well known. While the artistic reputation of painters such as Toma of Suceava is recognized, quite a large number of painters remain anonymous. These sixteenth-century painters are considered by art historians to have developed a “profoundly innovative presentation”<sup>184</sup> of the painting. V. Drăguț discusses the painting that developed during the reign of Rareș characterizing it as a new and widely accessible iconographical programme<sup>185</sup> meant to communicate the message of the central power.

Although the painters of the first exterior paintings at Hârlău, Dobrovăț and Probota are unknown, the painter Toma of Suceava fills in this gap, as he is considered to have continued the programme initiated by these anonymous painters. Toma is considered one of the most important Romanian medieval artists, a member of the court of Rareș as he calls himself: “painter from Suceava, courtier of the glorious and great Moldavian ruler, Peter voivode.”<sup>186</sup> A painting school was presumably founded at Suceava, probably under the direct guidance of Toma,<sup>187</sup> which carried out the work at Humor, Moldovița and probably Baia and Saint George of Suceava. The work at Humor is certain to have been done by him and his school because of an inscription in capital letters visible on the Siege of Constantinople scene which simply reads: TOMA.<sup>188</sup> It is interesting to note that the inscription is visible next to the image of the Moldavian rider facing the Ottoman army (fig. 2.4), metaphorically making Toma a prime player in the anti-Ottoman campaign. Therefore, one can assume that he did both the exterior and the interior paintings at Humor. He used mainly a warm colour scale including a great deal of red, but also a lot of green to draw the fine lines and figures of the compositions. His painting is characterized by this warmth of the colours, but also by dynamic scenes – such as the Siege of Constantinople which is full of

<sup>184</sup> V. Drăguț, V. Florea. *Pictura Românească în Imagini*, 51.

<sup>185</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>186</sup> V. Drăguț, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Artă Medievală Românească*, 303.

<sup>187</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura Murală din Moldova*, 29.

<sup>188</sup> Unfortunately, the “signature” of Toma is not visible anymore.



movement (fig. 2.5) – and the glitter of the vestments of the figures – the finest example of this being the votive scenes where the voivode, his wife and his children are all adorned with shiny clothes and ornaments and the image of Constantine and his mother Helen, who similarly wear such ornamented vestments (fig. 2.6). Moreover, V. Drăguț describes that a particularity of the compositions of Toma is painting in a much freer and more delicate manner than previous painters.<sup>189</sup> The author of the painting of Moldovița is still unknown, but he was undoubtedly a member of Toma's workshop.<sup>190</sup> The painting of Moldovița bears many similarities to that of Humor, although the larger size of the walls allowed the painter to develop the programme further, creating more complex compositions. The painting of Baia and Saint George of Suceava also bear stylistical similarities to both Humor and Moldovița, as well as to the Church of Saint Demetrius of Suceava, although the exterior painting of these last three edifices has almost entirely been lost.

A second artist listed among the most significant painters of the sixteenth-century is Dragoș Coman, the painter of Arbore monastery. Dragoș, son of the priest Coman of Iasi,<sup>191</sup> was called by the niece of the bailiff Arbore in 1541 to decorate the interior and exterior of the monastery commissioned by the bailiff. As the mural painting had “consummated its great artistic experiences”<sup>192</sup> during the first reign of Rareș, the art of Coman was different from that of his predecessors. The interior painting was largely related to the tradition of the Byzantine *Erminia*, although the exterior was rather different from previous painted exteriors. First of all, although the exteriors have deteriorated, the different colour scale can be noted which is composed of a great deal of blue and cold colours. Secondly, Coman changed the iconographic succession of the scenes on the exterior. The Akathistos Hymn is still kept on the southern wall, but the Last Judgment was moved from the western wall to the southern wall, next to the hymn. On the western wall, a representation of what Drăguț calls “an unexpected agglomeration of miniatures,”<sup>193</sup> (fig. 2.7) can be seen composed of 85 grids representing scenes such as the lives of saints George and Demetrius, Genesis, the Customs of Heaven. An important representation can be seen in the Siege of Constantinople, where the scene does no longer depict the Moldavians and the Ottomans, but the original event which inspired the Akathistos Hymn, the siege of Constantinople by the Persian Chosroe in 626. An inscription on the scene indicates this shift (fig. 2.8):

<sup>189</sup> V. Drăguț et al, *Pictura Românească în Imagini*, 59.

<sup>190</sup> Ibidem, 63.

<sup>191</sup> V. Drăguț, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Artă Medievală Românească*, 132.

<sup>192</sup> V. Drăguț et al, *Pictura Românească în Imagini*, 67.

<sup>193</sup> Ibidem, 69.

The emperor Chosroe went against Constantinople with the Persian armies, Scythians and Lebanese, in the days of the Emperor Heraclius. The Virgin Mary with her prayers made a rain of thunders and fire fall upon the invaders.<sup>194</sup>

This new view of representing the Siege of Constantinople may signal the beginning of the end of Rareș's campaign. Having Moldavia under Ottoman power during the second reign of Rareș, it may be that the painter did not want to defame the Ottoman Empire. However, whether he believed in its message or not, he kept the lines of the iconographical programme initiated at the court of Rareș.

The names of two other painters are known. The first one is Stamatelos Kotronas who painted the Râșca monastery in 1554<sup>195</sup> supervised by Bishop Macarie. It is still a question why Macarie chose a Greek painter for his monastery, but the most common answer is the close connection between Mount Athos and Romanian orthodoxy. It is known that the Moldavian voivodes donated and financed several monasteries on Mount Athos,<sup>196</sup> thus choosing a Greek painter does not seem surprising. The second painter whose name is sometimes mentioned in connection with Voroneț Monastery is Marcu. Although the painter at Voroneț is anonymous, he is sometimes referred to as the Herald Marcu. There is no further information on his connection to the monastery.

### Summing Up

Three groups of people were presented above, the majority of whom were connected to the church. The boyars of the Ruling Council commissioned monasteries, the clerics supervised but also commissioned the construction and the painting of religious edifices, while the painters did the most visible act: they painted. The presentation of these groups of people was significant for arguing that there existed a common effort to create and disseminate the discussed messages. These groups came from mainly two spheres: political sphere and religious sphere. It is important to note how they used each other's sphere: Rareș used the religious space for his own political purposes, while the clergy gained privileges from the ruler by supporting him. Rareș thus had a powerful ally in the church through which he propagated the messages of his campaign with the help of his "team" of nobles, clerics and painters.

<sup>194</sup> Translation in: I. D. Ștefănescu, *Arta Feudală în Țările Române*, 199.

<sup>195</sup> M. Bălan, *Mănăstirea Râșca*, 18.

<sup>196</sup> See: V. Drăguț, *Pictura Murală din Moldova*, 36.

## CHAPTER III

### The Public

*The Public is merely a multiplied “me.”*  
(Mark Twain)

The public was the third component of the campaign of Peter Rareș, a component without whose help the strategic planning of the ruler would have been useless. The sixteenth-century public of the Moldavian ruler was comprised of two social categories: the boyars, that is the upper and lower nobility, and the free peasants.

Each of these two target groups had something to offer to Rareș if they were open to the ruler's policy and ambitions. In ideal conditions, the targeted boyars – members of the Ruling Council and of important Moldavian families – would stop militating for subjugation to the Ottoman Empire; while, on the other side, none of the peasants, members of the large host, would join the cause of the rebellious boyars. Therefore, the aspiration of Peter Rareș was to make sure that his calculated efforts would convince both boyars and peasants to act for his political goals.

Before entering into any details of the mediation between Rareș and his target groups, a clarification of the communication channels is needed. It is needless to say that public communication as known today was problematic in the Middle Ages. S. Menache estimates that communication in the Middle Ages was rather scarce.<sup>197</sup> The same situation occurred in sixteenth-century Moldavia where, although in the age of the Renaissance,<sup>198</sup> the ordinary Moldavian would not have had a great interaction possibility. I support this statement with the fact that the population density of Moldavia in the sixteenth-century is regarded as having been the lowest in Europe from the sixth to the nineteenth-century. During the reign of Stephen the Great an estimated 400.000 people lived in Moldavia, thus the population density was always

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<sup>197</sup> The author gives an insight to the development of the communication in Western Europe. See: Sophie Menache, *The Vox Dei: Communication in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 9.

<sup>198</sup> Although the sixteenth-century principality was not as developed from a communication point of view as other states that were touched by the Renaissance and humanism, Moldavia had some important monastic centres (such as the Putna and Neamț monasteries) which, due to their strong inter-connections, were the propagators of literacy and culture. See: Emil Turdeanu, “Centres of Literary Activity in Moldavia, 1504-1552” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 34 (1955): 99-122 and Marcu Beza, “The Roumanian Chroniclers” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 9 (1930): 124-132.

among the lowest in Europe, being comparable to about a quarter of the Italian population<sup>199</sup>, and thus making communication difficult.

Considering this, it is worth categorizing the public's access to information. First of all, the peasants would have had a rather minimal access to any type of information except the spoken world, while the boyars would have been much easier informed. Menache discusses the political practice of the elite, highlighting that the faster the elite received the information, the faster it was transmitted to the lower classes in the way they desired.<sup>200</sup> Thus, the boyars of the Ruling Council together with Rareș would have been aware of the advantage of being the first ones to obtain information. A brief example showing the consequences of lack of first-hand information may be illustrated by the events that led to the dethroning of Peter Rareș. On the eve of the events of 1538, the boyar Hâră had only just informed Rareș about the Ruling Council's conspiracy when the Ottoman army was already close to the fortress of Suceava. Accordingly, Rareș had no time to reorganize his army and notify his soldiers and he was forced to flee.

When information did reach the ruler and the elite, however, they could manipulate it. The importance of public opinion started to grow systematically which encouraged the development of communication channels, according to the means available at the time.<sup>201</sup> In the Moldavian context of Peter Rareș, the most important mean of communication with the mass public was the church and the exterior wall paintings. Bearing certain symbols that were easily recognisable to the Moldavian peasant, the wall-sized scenes could have influenced and manipulated public opinion. Moreover, although there is no information on the sermons held during the reign of Rareș, it is easy to assume that these would have helped people understand the meaning and specific messages of the iconography. Also a mean of influencing public opinion, it may be supposed that the sermons touched on the themes of Ottoman Empire, Islam and resisting conversion. The iconography and sermons would thus be dependent on each other for the clear transmission of the messages: the story of John the New or that of the siege of Constantinople for example would have had a stronger impact on the public if accompanied by the visual counterparts of these histories.

Continuing with the second category of public and its access to information, it has already been shown that the boyars had faster and greater access to news and documents.

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<sup>199</sup> This comparison was made between Italy and all the Romanian principalities collectively. See: Nicolae Manolescu, "Cum Trăiau Românii în Evul Mediu" [How Romanians Lived in the Middle Ages] *Romania Literara* 19 (2000) on [http://www.romlit.ro/cum\\_traiu\\_romnii\\_n\\_evul\\_mediu](http://www.romlit.ro/cum_traiu_romnii_n_evul_mediu), accessed on April 13, 2010.

<sup>200</sup> S. Menache, *The Vox Dei*, 11.

<sup>201</sup> Ibidem.

Moreover, the boyars, information gate-keepers, were the ones to pass the information on to peasants and lower strata, using the suitable means (in this case, the most important were the mural paintings): “their purpose was both to manipulate large masses of people, which emerged as a new social category from the eleventh century onward, and to receive and transmit information as an integral part of their rule.”<sup>202</sup> Therefore, as the boyars had enough access to information and as they were the ones dispersing it, it seems apparent that they were much more difficult to manipulate. Consequently, Rareș used a particular tactic for their manipulation.

### **The permanent image of Stephen the Great**

Having seen the two categories of publics, it is necessary to highlight two elements that strongly connected them. The first was the very anti-Ottoman purpose of the campaign, while the second, less obvious, was the perpetuation of the image of Stephen the Great.

I argue that the image of Stephen the Great was present throughout all of Rareș’s strategies of influencing his different publics. This happened because Peter Rareș needed to emphasize his power and control and the most effective way was by pointing out to the power of his father and dynasty. As Eugen Denize asserts, the first and foremost aim of Stephen was to deal with the principality’s external issues, that is, with the anti-Ottoman struggle.<sup>203</sup> During his almost half-century reign, he worked to meet a goal which was eventually called an “orthodox crusade”<sup>204</sup> by some scholars. Peter Rareș, taking the throne of Moldavia, tried to identify himself with his father and, most importantly, with his power and deeds which were perceived as most heroic, as the chronicle of Grigore Ureche recalled: “After his death, until this day they call him Saint Stephen voivode, not because of his soul, which is in the hands of God, although he was a sinful man, but because of his brave deeds which nobody, not before him nor after him, could equal.”<sup>205</sup>

In his relationship both with the boyars and with the peasants, as an illegitimate son, Peter Rareș emphasized the continuity between himself and his father both politically and visually.<sup>206</sup> Internally, he was preoccupied with protecting the lay masses and those social

<sup>202</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>203</sup> Eugen Denize, “Stephen the Great and the Battles Against the Turks. A New Approach” *Studies and Materials of Medium History* 19 (2001): 115.

<sup>204</sup> See: M. M. Szekely and Ș. S. Gorovei, *Princeps Omni Laude Maior. O Istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare* [Princeps Omni Laude Maior. A History of Stephen the Great] (Suceava: Mușatinii, 2005).

<sup>205</sup> “Ce după moartea lui, până astăzi îi zicu sveti Ștefan voda, nu pentru sufletu, ce ieste în mana lui Dumnezeu, ca el încă au fostu om cu pacate, ci pentru lucrurile lui cele vitejesti, carile nimenea din domni, nici mai înainte, nici după aceea l-au ajunsu” in G. Ureche, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei*, 66.

<sup>206</sup> C. Cihodaru stresses how, at the beginning of his reign, Petru Rareș tried to show sufficient similarities between himself and his father in order to better secure his throne. He uses the word “sufficient” because he argues that the political realities of Stephen the Great could not have been fully applied to those of Rareș because of feudal

layers which supported the economic, political, and military initiatives of the throne.<sup>207</sup> Also internally, when organising his Ruling Council, he did not make many changes in its structure, keeping all the boyars or family members of the boyars who had been part of the council during Stephen's reign. Externally, the "crusading" spirit of his father was the most obvious constant in his anti-Ottoman policy. Last but not least, Rareș is attested to have been the most important person to continue the art of Stephen the Great. Thus by keeping the boyars of his father and protecting the lower classes in order to make them part of his political enterprises and, important from the point of view of persuasion, by allowing people to visually experience the ambitious similarities between himself and Stephen,<sup>208</sup> I believe that Rareș symbolically used the image of Stephen the Great as something similar to a totem.<sup>209</sup> Hypothesising that Rareș used such an image, the purpose for doing this becomes clear: a good name, such as that of Stephen, would spontaneously evoke desirable and positive associations to most people. Using a name, or just implying a name that could be associated with uniqueness and, most importantly, with reliability, would have been an adequate starting point for a campaign meant to attract people to a common mission.

I think it is essential to point out the possibility of the usage of such a totem before discussing the publics because the power of such an image relies solely on relationships and representations. If Peter Rareș used the image of his father to make people like him and trust him as historians point out,<sup>210</sup> then he did it exclusively through a system of mental associations propagated by his relations with the boyars on the scale of upper class nobles and he did it by representations, on the scale of lower classes.

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divergences. Thus, Rareș used all the available "tools" he had to make these similarities visible. See: Constantin Cihodaru, "Politica Internă" [Internal Policy] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978): 57-85.

<sup>207</sup> Ibidem, 66.

<sup>208</sup> Regarding the visual associations, as presented in the chapter *Mural paintings. Mural messages*, I argue that the anti-Ottoman beliefs and accomplishments of Stephen the Great are paralleled in the ones of Petru Rareș. People seeing a scene like the Siege of Constantinople could have recalled the clashes with the Ottoman army that took place during the reign of Stephen. Of course, the people who could recall such events would most likely have served or been relatives of the ones who had served in the large host. A similar example of visual association is the way Rareș chose to commission his monasteries and their paintings. He either commissioned the painting of monasteries built by his father, or he commissioned an entirely new monastery next to the remains of monasteries commissioned by Stephen. The most eloquent example is the location of the royal burial site of Rareș's family, Probota. He built this monastery next to the remains of an old monastery in which Stephen the Great was interested at the beginning of his reign and which was partially commissioned by him. B.-P. Maleon highlights this very continuity that Rareș tried to establish between himself and his father. See: Bogdan-Petru Maleon, "The Probota Monastery Between the Ecclesiastic Hierarchy and the Reign. The Significance of Some Privileges during the 15th and 16th Centuries" in *Studies and Materials of Medium History* 14 (2006): 131-150.

<sup>209</sup> A synonym for "totem" in this context would be "brand." Thus, in today's terms, if a similar situation occurred, one would argue for this image as a "brand."

<sup>210</sup> See: *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi; D. Almaș. *Petru Rareș Voievod*; R. Constantinescu. *Moldova și Transilvania în Vremea lui Petru Rareș* [Moldavia and Transylvania during Petru Rareș] (Bucharest: 1978); M. M. Szekeley, *Sfetcnicii lui Petru Rareș*.

## Boyars and Internal Pressure

Coming to the throne in 1527, the initial program of Rareș was to concentrate all the important people of Moldavia around himself. The most important political group that held power at the time of Rareș's coronation was managed by the new ruler's step-brother, Logothete Toader, who proved to be a promising and faithful character for the start of a new rulership. This was one of the reasons why Rareș only made minimal changes in the existing Ruling Council, along with the fact that the important families who had been members of the Council favoured him. Internally, Rareș's preoccupation was to maintain a social structure that would be convenient for the system of alliances of the reigning power and to "stimulate an ideological and cultural artistic affirmation meant to mobilize in the favour of the crown all the internal energies."<sup>211</sup>

The boyars of Rareș were a compact group, members of well-known Moldavian families who were legitimized by their aristocratic continuity. They were a group that had similar interests and desires, who could, on one hand, support their voivode, but on the other hand, dethrone him and offer the throne to a member of their own group. They were, as M. M. Szekely states, "ready to risk their lives for saving Moldavia because that would mean, in fact, saving their people, their wealth, their way of living."<sup>212</sup> Although it is impossible to determine which acts and decisions were clearly those of Rareș and which were those of the nobles of the Ruling Council, one fact, already argued in the historiography, is clear: the two rulerships of Peter Rareș would not have been the same without these men.<sup>213</sup>

### *Internal Pressure*

For a very short period<sup>214</sup> at the beginning of Rareș's reign, there was no internal pressure from the Ruling Council. They were the ones who unanimously chose the voivode as a result of the fact that he was the son of Stephen the Great. Therefore, the relationship between the Council and the ruler was characterized by normality in the sense that Rareș was ready to accept the advices of the twelve boyars'. However, the situation changed as Rareș got involved in the conflict between János Zapolya and Ferdinand of Habsburg for the Hungarian crown. As the Moldavian voivode was attached to the company of Zapolya, he decided to enter Transylvania in February 1528 and suppress the Szeklers who not only were rebelling against Zapolya but

<sup>211</sup> C. Cihodaru, "Politica Interna," 57.

<sup>212</sup> M. M. Szekely, *Sfetcii lui Petru Rareș*, 487.

<sup>213</sup> As usually was the medieval case, and as Szekely also argues, the boyars held a significant power. They were the ones who helped to enthrone him, while they were also the ones who dethroned him.

<sup>214</sup> For about one year, from his coronation in January 1527 to this event in February 1528.

had supposedly also murdered several Moldavian merchants in Braşov.<sup>215</sup> However, before making the final decision to cross the Carpathians, Rareş consulted the Ruling Council. V. Pâslariuc argues that this was the last consultation between Rareş and the boyars because, after the success of the military campaign in Transylvania, he stopped asking the council for advice.<sup>216</sup> However, while he stopped taking advice from the Ruling Council as such – he still had his loyal nobles whom he trusted and helped in various situations.<sup>217</sup> However, as campaigns in Poland's Pucutsia started and as the boyars grew more and more reluctant to subscribe to the voivode's external policy, Rareş started to make changes in the Ruling Council when it disagreed with him.<sup>218</sup>

This was the start of the internal pressure felt within Moldavia's Ruling Council. Tension was growing rapidly when Peter Rareş, ruling in an authoritarian way and not taking advices from his counsellors any longer, created dissensions. I argue that the start of the internal tensions was also the starting point of the public relations campaign of Rareş. Besides his authoritarian rule, he needed a strategy to keep the upper class with the Ruling Council and the lower class together.

Creating the strategy for such a campaign necessarily implies dealing with two dimensions: an external one and an internal one. The external dimension has to do with the most obvious aspect of a campaign: producing a strategic plan, creating a correct and positive image and making the desired messages known to the public. The external dimension thus has to do with the mass public, which in the case of Rareş, were mainly the lower classes eligible for the large host; the internal dimension is identifiable with the boyars, the subject of this subchapter.

The internal dimension is what gets the entire engine of communication started. It is the team behind a campaign and their internal communication which produces a successful

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<sup>215</sup> In fact, the real reason for entering Transylvania, was Rareş's goal to make his authority visible and thus to make more probable the re-annexation of Moldavian lost territories in Transylvania. In fact, after the successful repress of the Szeklers, Rareş managed to regain these territories. See: Nicolae Grigoras, "Precursor al lui Mihai Viteazul" [A Forerunner of Michael the Brave] in *Petru Rareş*, ed. Leon Şimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978), 87.

<sup>216</sup> Romanian historiography portrays Rareş as an impulsive man living by his own rules. Pâslariuc makes the same affirmations about Petru Rareş, almost characterizing him as blinded by his initial military successes. See: V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 86-87.

<sup>217</sup> One example of Rareş helping his trusted boyars are the events of the battles of Gwozdziec and Obertyn in August 1531 when his army is defeated and practically all the Moldavian commanders are taken prisoners. The ruler redeemed all of them and although he suspected them of fleeing the battle field intentionally, he forgave them and reinstalled them in old positions. See: V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 91-92.

<sup>218</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 89.



campaign.<sup>219</sup> Peter Rareș's strategy could have been structured on the information that was circulating within his team, formed by the Ruling Council and a few other courtiers and boyars, each having his own specified field of action.<sup>220</sup> Each member of the team would have had his own role and would have had to know the steps in Rareș's program so that each one of them would be an efficient actor. Therefore, the success of the campaign would lie in the way that the ruler disseminated his ideas and plans and in the way he made his noblemen aware of the fact that what they were doing together was a crucial action. The most significant thing Rareș could do was to inform his team about his policy and projects, so that it could further on inform and persuade the larger publics. This would have been the framework for the internal action of Peter Rareș, but due to the internal disagreements, it could not have been done this way. The internal action was rather focused generally on the boyars by the ruler presenting them a good image of himself in the chronicle he commissioned. On the other hand, Rareș would have collaborated with some of the boyars in the council, whom he considered trustworthy, like the Logothete Toader Bubuioș or Efreim Huru, one of the boyars most loyal to Rareș. These people would have been the ones transmitting the message of Rareș and helping him to keep the throne by commissioning churches with exterior painting as in the case of Bubuioș,<sup>221</sup> or by supporting the voivode in his policy and actions – like Huru did when he allowed Peter Rareș to re-enter Moldavia in 1541 with the order from Suleyman the Magnificent to take back the throne, although at the time Huru was the governor of the current ruler, Alexandru Cornea.<sup>222</sup>

Analysing the campaign from a general point of view, it is difficult to say whether it was successful or not. On one hand it was successful because Rareș won the peasants and the lesser boyars over to his side with his constant care for these classes, but on the other hand it was disastrous as the outcome of his campaign led to his dethroning. A simple explanation for this result may be bad internal communication and lack of trust.<sup>223</sup> His explosive personality<sup>224</sup> together with the internal political situation made his “public relations” team suffer because of

<sup>219</sup> For more on the internal dimension, see: Bernard Dagenais, *Profesia de Relationist* [The PR Profession] (Iasi: Polirom, 2002).

<sup>220</sup> As shown in the chapter presenting the boyars' biographies, the most important part of their action (from a campaign's point of view) was commissioning monasteries. Therefore, although some members of the ruling elite were dealing either with administrative or military issues, the most crucial actors were the donors.

<sup>221</sup> Toader Bubuioș commissioned one of the best preserved Moldavian monasteries, that of Humor. See: M. M. Szekeley, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 74-80.

<sup>222</sup> Ibidem, 143.

<sup>223</sup> As pointed out above, one way Rareș demonstrated that people can trust in him was by paralleling himself to the image of his trustworthy father. However, although winning the lower classes over was not difficult from this point of view (as he gave them privileges), his relationship with the boyars was not based on trust, which led to an unsuccessful end.

<sup>224</sup> Leon Șimanschi, “Personalitatea Domnului” [The Personality of the Voivode] in *Petru Rareș*, ed. Leon Șimanschi (Bucharest: Academiei, 1978), 320.

a lack of common decision making. A telling example of the consequences of Rareș's lack of trust is the right of *dominium eminens*.<sup>225</sup> The diverging interests and opinions that appeared among the boyars pushed the ruler to continue his predecessor's policy which implied counteracting the tendencies of the upper nobility to own large territories. In this context, he decided on the right of *dominium eminens* which meant that any change in the feudal system of property had to be sanctioned by the ruler of Moldavia.<sup>226</sup> It seems that Peter Rareș made a mistake in the internal situation. Instead of creating common ground where he could solicit the comments and suggestions of his team, Rareș adopted an authoritarian way of thinking which impinged on the boyars' initiative and led some of them to rebel.

#### *An Internal Action: The Chronicle of Macarie*

One of the most important men of the court who played an essential role in shaping the internal action of the campaign was Macarie, the bishop who may be called Rareș's "right hand." Macarie (d. 1558), a monk who was culturally and spiritually formed in the eminent environment of the Neamț Monastery, subsequently became the father superior of the same monastery. Going on to be father superior of the Bistrița Monastery, he reached the peak of his career when he was anointed bishop of Roman on the 23 April 1531. Bishop Macarie became a transcriber of Slavonic manuscripts – such as the Liov manuscript from Saint Onufrei Monastery.<sup>227</sup> He was also the author of several original texts that have been lost through the centuries, but most importantly he was the royal chronicler assigned to write the history of Peter Rareș's times.

Peter Rareș was a ruler ready to learn both from the past and from the current environment. In Moldavia, a literary genre had begun just before the time of Stephen the Great when chronicles started to be written; the so-called *Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia* and the two versions of the *Putna Chronicle* already praised the ruling figure of Rareș's father. Moreover, Slavic texts were translated resulting in the Moldavian-German chronicle, the Polish-Moldavian and Russian-Moldavian chronicles.<sup>228</sup> Looking outside the Moldavian

<sup>225</sup> C. Cihodaru, "Politica Internă," 68.

<sup>226</sup> The *dominium eminens* act referred to the property of the individuals which was subject to the power of the ruler, who prescribed the conditions on which the individuals were to hold and enjoy their possessions, always limiting the rights of the owners of land. See: Otto Friedrich von Gierke and Frederic William Maitland, *Political Theories of the Middle Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 178.

<sup>227</sup> For more information on the life and ideology of Bishop Macarie, see: E. Turdeanu, *Etudes de Littérature des Principautés Roumaines*, 161-209; and S. Ulea, "O Surprinzătoare Personalitate a Evului Mediu Românesc: Cronicarul Macarie" [A Surprising Personality of the Romanian Middle Ages: the Chronicler Macarie] in *SCIA* 32 (1985), 14-48.

<sup>228</sup> See: Ștefan Ciobanu, *Istoria Literaturii Române Vechi* [The History of the Old Romanian Literature] (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1989).

borders, chronicle writing was not an innovation. The principal Polish historians of the sixteenth century such as Matthias of Miechow and his *Chronica Polonorum usque ad annum 1504* or Martin Kromer, the author of *De Origine et Rebus Gestis Polonorum*, could have presented examples of chronicle writing. Therefore, the new chronicle current in Moldavia plus the external influences might have been one of the reasons why the chronicle of Rareș was commissioned.

The Hungarian chronicle of Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) appears to be the closest in style to the chronicle of Macarie, suggesting that it might have been a text that enlivened the Moldavian one. Although in a different way, Corvinus, just like Rareș, had to prove his legitimacy as a royal figure. Being a “Renaissance prince in grand style”<sup>229</sup> and well aware of the uses of Humanism in creating the prestige of his monarchy, Corvinus surrounded himself with humanists. In this context, he commissioned the immense *Rerum Ungaricorum Decades* by Antonio Bonfini, a history of Hungary which glorifies himself and his ancestors. Bonfini, following the fashion of the time, composed humanist speeches for his characters and invented a genealogy which presented the Hunyadi family as descendants of the Romans.<sup>230</sup> Maybe following the model of King Matthias,<sup>231</sup> Rareș also created a unique genealogy for himself when he paralleled his own genealogy with that of Christ on the mural paintings in northern Moldavia, but, more importantly in the context of literature, he set himself as the most prominent personage in the chronicle, similar to the example of the Hungarian king.

Peter Rareș commissioned an ample work to glorify himself and his reign. The author was the esteemed bishop Macarie, the “highly chosen philosopher, our father and teacher of Moldavia”<sup>232</sup> as his follower, Bishop Eftimie, called him. The chronicle contains the history of Moldavia from the death of Stephen the Great to the beginning of the reign of Stephen Rareș, in the second half of the sixteenth century. It was written in two distinct stages: the first part, written by the bishop when he was a simple father superior tells the history until the coronation of Peter Rareș; the second part, written on the order of the new ruler starts with 1527.<sup>233</sup> The

<sup>229</sup> Jean W. Sedlar, *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, 1000-1500* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 452.

<sup>230</sup> Ibidem, 453.

<sup>231</sup> The model of the *Rerum Ungaricorum Decades* would have been the easiest to copy for chronological and geographical reasons and thus it may be viewed as the most notable influence from the content point of view. However, from the stylistic point of view, the Chronicle of Macarie is thought to have been written under Byzantine influence and under the influence of the Chronicle of Manasses, bearing figures of speech similar to the Byzantine tradition as it was learned by Macarie.

<sup>232</sup> Cited in Paul Simionescu, *Petru Rareș* (Bucharest: Romanian Enciclopedic, 1970), 170.

<sup>233</sup> S. Ciobanu, *Istoria Literaturii Romane Vechi*, 65.

two parts are essentially different – the first one is written in a simple style arranged chronologically, but the second one is written from an entirely new view:

We therefore started...to drag the chains of words until the ages of our reign, not because we wanted to demonstrate a high rhetorical wisdom, but by following the royal order of the Chosen Peter, terrible for his enemies, the son of Stephen Voivode the Brave and of the great logothete Theodor; because they have ordered to me, the smallest of all father superiors, the pious Macarie, so that the deeds that happened during past ages and rulerships be not forgotten in the grave of oblivion and they be written in the chronicle...<sup>234</sup>

From the very beginning of the second part of the chronicle the strong official character is highlighted with the words “by following the royal order of the Chosen Peter.” Macarie’s text is, as the usual trend in chronicles at the time, not entirely unbiased. The chronicler uses a rhetorical style with poetic figure, also using religious and moralizing tropes to glorify the ruler.

From the point of view of an internal strategy of so-called medieval public relations, Peter Rareș used the Chronicle to propagate a great self-image. The people who had access to the chronicle were his boyars, therefore also his team for his campaign who needed to know the power, possibilities and ambitions of their leader; the people who needed to know that they could trust the ideas of an illegitimate ruler. By doing this, he commissioned a description of a ruler with Herculean spiritual and physical power. The chronicle begins by drawing the character of Rareș as a ruler legitimised by his outstanding genealogy:

In the same year and month Peter the Great was chosen to rule and at the same time he was adorned with the royal garland... And he was one of the children of the ever mentioned Stephen, hidden beneath the light, but raised on the throne with glory, sainted and following the rite of blessing with holy oil.<sup>235</sup>

The striking characteristics of Rareș are underlined when it comes to describing his military and strategic skills. The history of Rareș’ tumultuous battles is praised, although in reality Rareș was a weak strategist, who made crucial mistakes<sup>236</sup> – like the one at the battle of Obertyn in 1531. The stories telling of the victorious and often bloody battlefield actions were aimed to stress the courage of a ruler who himself entered the dust of war and who could be trusted beyond doubt. Such is the extract regarding the battle of January 1528, when

<sup>234</sup> I. Bogdan, “Cronica lui Macarie”, 90.

<sup>235</sup> Ibidem, 95.

<sup>236</sup> M. M. Szekely argues that Rareș was an unskilled military strategist who, because of this, lost a number of battles and men. See: M. M. Szekely, *Sfetcicii lui Petru Rareș*, 10-11.

Rareș entered Transylvania with the purpose of subduing the Szeklers who had rebelled against Janos Zapolya:

Being winter, Peter Voivode first conducted a war against the Hungarian speaking Szeklers, and he divided his army in two divisions and he passed the mountains by two separate ways and they reached their borders and fighting with their generals in one place and the other and everywhere the Szeklers were defeated and with their arms they tore down one of their fortresses and they cut the ones who were inside with their blades. And coming back from there, Peter Voivode subdued them.<sup>237</sup>

The production of the chronicle was apparently motivated by promotion reasons, like all the chronicles of the time. With this particular chronicle, Rareș's purpose was to create a positive and trustworthy image of himself and of his system of rule. Although writing this chronicle was a means of influencing his noble public, Peter Rareș had another crucial strategy for his campaign: dissimulation.

#### *A Dissimulation: Pocutsia*

Finding himself in an uneasy situation and seeing the boyars' tension gradually rising, Peter Rareș had to find another form of persuasion to influence them. The aim of this new strategy was to distract the attention of the boyars from the internal pressure. The way he did this was by attracting the nobility to military campaigns directed towards Polish lands.

The campaigns for Pocutsia can be identified as Rareș' new strategy. Pocutsia, a Galician territory encompassing 13 towns and a few hundred villages,<sup>238</sup> had long been a land that created quarrels between Moldavia and Poland. At the end of the fourteenth century Peter I Musat received Pocutsia as a guarantee from Poland for the loan he gave to Vladislav Jagiello.<sup>239</sup> Because the loan was never fully returned, this strip of land started to be a reason for disputes between the two states. Although in 1499 Bogdan III of Moldavia signed a peace treaty with Poland regarding Pocutsia, the statute of the region was still not clarified. The peace treaty was renewed by Stephen the Young in 1518 and by Peter Rareș in 1527, although the Polish part supposedly never respected the terms of the treaty<sup>240</sup> which eventually led to Rareș's attack. Rareș's insistence on taking the land back ended in war. Grigore Ureche described the events: "And the war took place in twelve locations...and they fought for a long time, with many deaths on each side, but the Moldavians being more

<sup>237</sup> I. Bogdan, "Cronica lui Macarie", 96.

<sup>238</sup> Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 79.

<sup>239</sup> Ion Toderașcu, *Istoria Medievală a Românilor (sec. VIII-XVI)* [The Medieval History of the Romanians (Eighth-Sixteenth Centuries)] (Iași: Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2004-2005), 41.

<sup>240</sup> See more in: I. Toderașcu, *Istoria Medievală a Românilor*.

wounded, they could no longer endure and they turned back”<sup>241</sup> (my translation). The campaigns in Pocutsia therefore ended in defeat. Although the first campaign in 1530 and the second one in 1531 succeeded in occupying the desired land, the military operations eventually failed at Obertyn on 22 August 1531.

It is important to note the number of significant boyars who were involved in these battles:

- Vlad, porter of Hotin Fortress, and Toma Barnovschi, the head of Cernăuți, were entrusted in 1531 with leading the army of 6000 men which was supposed to reconquer the fortress of Gwozdziec, taken by the Polish army. The outcome of this battle was a disaster, ending in 2000 victims from the Moldavian army and making Rareș think that the two military commanders were plotting against him.<sup>242</sup>
- Toader Bubuig, logothete, was one of the military commanders on the battle-field of Obertyn besides Rareș. He was captured after the defeat, but was ransomed by Rareș shortly afterwards, in the winter of 1531.<sup>243</sup>
- Mihiu, porter of Suceava at the time of the clashes in Pocutsia, was ordered by the ruler to surround the Polish camp at Obertyn with an army of 10000 men on 21 August. Although Mihiu was pre-cautious with attacking, Rareș arrived at the battle field in the night of 21 to 22 and ordered the unfortunate attack.<sup>244</sup>
- Trifan Popescul, *ceașnic*, gave the signal for retreat during the battle of Obertyn and was followed by the large mass of the army. He was also captured. Because he was the one to signal the retreat, it has been argued by several historians that he took part in a supposed betrayal set by the boyars.<sup>245</sup>
- Efreim Huru, governor, fought at Obertyn and was taken captive.<sup>246</sup> Danciu Huru, his brother and second porter of the fortress of Cetatea Nouă and later of Neamț, is also supposed to have taken part at Obertyn.<sup>247</sup>

<sup>241</sup> “Si in 12 locuri au avut razboiu...si multa vreme batandu-sa, cu multa moarte dintru amandoao partile, moldovenii mai cu multe rane incrunțati, n-au mai putut suferi, ci le-au datu cale si s-au intorsu inapoi” in G. Ureche, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei*, 93-94.

<sup>242</sup> For more information on Vlad and Toma Barnovschi and the battle at Gwozdziec, see: M. M. Szekely, *Sfetcnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 150-153 and Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 91-94.

<sup>243</sup> See more: M. M. Szekely, *Sfetcnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 58-69.

<sup>244</sup> See more: Ibidem, 157-161.

<sup>245</sup> See more: Ibidem, 190-193.

<sup>246</sup> See more: Ibidem, 140.

<sup>247</sup> See more: Ibidem, 254.

- The high steward Jurj Colun was also attested to have taken part in the battle of Obertyn, but there is almost no information on him.<sup>248</sup>

These are the boyars who are attested to have taken part in the military actions in Pocutsia. The theory of the boyars plotting against Rareș was considered viable until recently, when Ș. Gorovei, V. Pâslariuc, M. M. Szekely and others argued for the hypothesis that the defeat of Pocutsia was a result of series of events, mainly military.<sup>249</sup> Because of the impact of this defeat, the campaign for Pocutsia has been seen in historiography as the beginning of the end of Rareș's first reign. There have been several discussions on this subject, but the most important for this thesis are those which discussed the actions of the boyars in the events. V. Pâslariuc elaborates on the hypothesis of Stefan Ciobanu. Ciobanu argued that by occupying Pocutsia, the ruler would have improved the relationship with the nobility because "occupying an economically prosperous region would have relieved the obligations of the principality towards the Ottoman Porte a great deal."<sup>250</sup> However, Pâslariuc further debates this subject saying that although these obligations were high, they had little effect on the boyars' economic capacities. This leads the historian to a conclusion of great importance for the hypothesis of this thesis, which was also touched upon by Ciobanu: "What seems closer to the truth was the desire of Rareș to keep the nobility alert so that it would not have any time to plot against him either inside or outside the principality."<sup>251</sup>

This theory, highlighted by both Ciobanu and Pâslariuc, confirms the possibility of a campaign directed to influence the internal mechanism of the ruling system. An inconvenient group of people, whose role would be to support the ruler's goals, if not sufficiently persuaded, would have had negative influence to the entire public relations campaign. Distracting their attention from possible intrigues, although not the most proper method, would have been the most effective action that Rareș could have taken. However, not only did Rareș have to distract the boyars' attention, he also had to convince them to campaign against the Ottoman Empire. How effective were these strategies? The answer to this question will be evaluated in the final chapter, but for now it is important to note the authoritarian attitude of Rareș towards the boyars. Whether or not he created a good image of himself with the help of his chronicle and whether he managed to distract the boyar's attention to a sufficient degree, it is certain that the ruler tried to dominate them, making sure that they stood by him without betraying him.

<sup>248</sup> See: Ibidem, 387-388 and V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 91.

<sup>249</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 91.

<sup>250</sup> Ibidem, 90.

<sup>251</sup> Ibidem.

*King Matthias and Peter Rareș: a Parallel*

A parenthesis should be made here by returning to the reign and government of the Hungarian king, which could have served as an example for the Moldavian voivode. First of all, the circumstances of both coronations were similar. King Matthias was elected by the royal council at a time when the memory of his heroic father, János Hunyadi, was still very present. The council, similarly to that of Moldavia, did not want a foreign king on the Hungarian throne.<sup>252</sup> As mentioned before, Matthias also had to prove his legitimacy, although in different circumstances. His descendants were presented in Bonfini's *Rerum Ungaricorum Decades* where his genealogy was praised as originating from the ancient Romans. Kovács refers to it as to a "mixed up story,"<sup>253</sup> which enhances the idea of the medieval commissioned chronicle. While Bonfini's work might have been an inspiration for Rareș, some other aspects of Matthias' reign are relevant. The Moldavian voivode, as seen above, conducted a military campaign in Pocutsia not only for the purpose of regaining the once Moldavian territory, but also for keeping his nobles busy so that they would not plot against him. A similar discouraging action directed towards nobles was done by Matthias. In 1467, after Matthias enforced several financial reforms, the nobles of Transylvania revolted. The revolt was led by the Transylvanian voivode himself,<sup>254</sup> therefore Matthias judged that the situation posed a great danger. He set for Transylvania immediately and suppressed the revolt. However, although the rebellion was put under control, it still portrayed the king in a bad light, thus Matthias decided to balance this with a victorious military action. He consequently set for Moldavia. Although he was defeated, the royal propagandists<sup>255</sup> praised a victory. The acclamation of Matthias' military success was meant to discourage any other rebellions in other Hungarian provinces.

The analogy between the actions of the two rulers may be telling. The closeness between Moldavia and the Hungarian Kingdom enabled easy information exchange between them. Therefore, it is no surprise that Rareș could have been aware of Matthias' chronicle and his way of governing. Matthias was reigning at the same time when Stephen the Great did, so his deeds should have been known to Rareș. This short comparison was meant to show that the actions of the Moldavian voivode could have had a basis in the governing style

<sup>252</sup> For more on the coronation circumstances of King Matthias, see: Macek Josef, "Corvin Mátyás és Pódebrad György" [Matthias Corvinus and György Pódebrad] in *Hunyadi Mátyás*, ed. Gyula Rázsó and László V. Molnár (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1990), 206 and Péter E. Kovács, "A Hunyadi-család" [The Hunyadi Family] in *Hunyadi Mátyás*, ed. Gyula Rázsó and László V. Molnár (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 1990), 39.

<sup>253</sup> P. E. Kovács, "A Hunyadi-család," 29.

<sup>254</sup> For more on the reforms that led to the revolt, and the outcomes of the revolt, see: András Kubinyi, *Matthias Rex* (Budapest: Balassi, 2008), 73-95.

<sup>255</sup> Such as Janus Pannonius, see: Ibidem, 84.



of King Matthias. Furthermore, this comparison can strengthen my argument that military actions can be used with the purpose of discouraging the nobility and distracting their attention.

### **The peasants and the Large Host**

The Moldavian host during the time of Peter Rareș was organized the same way it was during the reign of Stephen the Great: the small host was the permanent one, while the large one was only called together in case of imminent danger to the principality. A. Pessiacov was one of the first historians to verbalize this division. He highlighted an “active army”<sup>256</sup> – the small host – and an “army sitting at home”<sup>257</sup> – the large host – which was mainly comprised of peasantry.

The small host, consisting of about 10000 to 12000 men,<sup>258</sup> had the role of protecting the voivode and his domains, and, most importantly, it had to face any kind of unexpected attacks coming from outside the Moldavian borders. It was composed of the court of the voivode and of the individual courts of the boyars.<sup>259</sup> The boyars’ courts were centres of military power which not only played the role of controlling the activity of the peasants on the boyars’ domains, but also participated in the military campaigns initiated by the ruler.<sup>260</sup> Being the core of the military strength of Moldavia, the ruler thus needed to win the boyars’ support so that they would not react against him and so that they would employ their personal armies to meet the aims of the voivode. However, the large mass of the army, the large host, was comprised of free peasants who, although obliged to join the army in case of danger,<sup>261</sup> could still join the cause of the boyars who were militating for Ottoman suzerainty.

In this competitive environment, Peter Rareș needed to “survive;” he needed to defend and maintain his protective image for the mass public. For this purpose, political communication gained priority. Direct communication with the ruler’s subjects was difficult

<sup>256</sup> Nicolae Stoicescu, *Curteni și Slujitori. Contribuții la Istoria Armatei Române* [Courtiers and Servants. Contributions to the History of the Romanian Army] (Bucharest: Militară, 1968), 6.

<sup>257</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>258</sup> *Arta Militară a Oștilor Române în Secolele XIV-XVI* [The Military Art of the Romanian Army in the Fourteenth-Sixteenth Centuries] on [http://www.armyacademy.ro/e-learning/working/capitol\\_2.html](http://www.armyacademy.ro/e-learning/working/capitol_2.html), accessed on 20 April 2010. N. Iorga however noted that during the battles for Obertyn, the Moldavian small host was comprised of only 6000 people. See: Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Românilor* [The History of the Romanians] IV (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1996), 262.

<sup>259</sup> Ion Cupșa, *Arta Militară a Moldovenilor în a Doua Jumătate a Secolului al XV-lea* [The Military Art of the Moldavians in the Second Half of the Fifth Century] (Bucharest: Militara, 1959), 9, 22.

<sup>260</sup> Ibidem, 9.

<sup>261</sup> The Polish chronicler Długosz describes how, during the time of Stephen the Great, every peasant had to be ready to join the army and always have weapons suitable for war: if Stephen “found a peasant not having arrows, bows or sword, he ruthlessly condemned him to have his head cut off” in I. Cupșa, *Arta Militară a Moldovenilor*, 27-28.

because of the limitations of the feudal system. However, medieval political communication developed as rulers started to be aware of the fact that a communication system was the most suitable means to strengthen their status as kings, and to encourage the public opinion to favour their policy.<sup>262</sup> Giving the examples of France and England, S. Menache describes the state of communication in Western Europe. She explains how the king, becoming the promoter of a communication system, subordinated the royal administration to it. Thus, the king's officers were integrated into this system, supplying information and propagandizing the royal policy throughout the countryside.<sup>263</sup> The Moldavian situation should be seen as similar. The courts of the boyars with high dignities should be taken as the most relevant examples. Such is the court of Efrem Huru, governor under Peter Rareș during both his reigns. He owned a number of settlements in the Covurlui and Putna regions both in southern and northern Moldavia: the village of Rumanii, a quarter of the village of Zmeilani, the villages of Joldești, Băraști, Lărgășani, Dăncești, Ocini, Scândureni, Hrănăești and Bălănești are the settlements known to have belonged to Huru.<sup>264</sup> Peter Rareș had two ways of informing and persuading his subjects: by means of his boyars who owned territories where they could accordingly disperse information more easily and by visual means, discussed in previous chapter. The visual means can be seen as an alternative solution for the process sharing of information because the boyars, as seen above, did not all agree with the views of Rareș.

Peter Rareș needed to make sure that the other layers of society would join the large host in the name of his cause. The boyars and their armies represented only a small part of the large army. Out of about 30 000 to 40 000 men<sup>265</sup>, only 6000 to 12000<sup>266</sup> were members of the nobility or of the nobility's army. The rest of them were recruited from two groups of the nineteen Moldavian provinces:<sup>267</sup> peasants and townsmen.

On one side, peasants formed the largest part of the infantry and the light cavalry. Dressed in their everyday clothes, the weapons they used were also the ones they used regularly while hunting: they all had bows and arrows and some of them had rudimentary

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<sup>262</sup> S. Menache, *The Vox Dei*, 150.

<sup>263</sup> Ibidem, 150-151.

<sup>264</sup> M. M. Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rareș*, 144-145, 483.

<sup>265</sup> Ș. S. Gorovei argued for a number of 30000 Moldavians fighting at Pocutsia. See: Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 91.

<sup>266</sup> N. Iorga estimated that about 6000 men were part of the small host at the battles for Pocutsia. See: N. Iorga, *Istoria Românilor*, 262.

<sup>267</sup> D. Cantemir showed that from each province a number of about 1000 soldiers were recruited. See: D. Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei*, 166.

shields.<sup>268</sup> For face to face fights they also had spears, axes, sickles or scythes,<sup>269</sup> all instruments to be found in the household. The townsmen, on the other side, were usually part of the artillery and infantry and they mainly participated in actions intended to defend fortresses.<sup>270</sup>

Those roughly 20 000 to 30 000 peasants and townsmen who were part of the large host were to be persuaded in the way shown in the chapter on the mural paintings commissioned by Peter Rareș. Returning to the theme of that chapter, it is necessary to add some more information. To persuade, in the case of Peter Rareș, meant to make these 20 000-30 000 men believe in a possible victory and to make them desire it – all this, disregarding the rebellious boyars' opinion. Generally, in order to persuade a group of people with the help of images, one needs to put forward three simple values that determine trust: durability, competence and uniqueness. Each of these values is characterised by different dimensions.<sup>271</sup>

Durability is characterized by the dimensions of experience and aspirations. The experience dimension is marked by the origin and biography of the emitting source which legitimizes its competences. Peter Rareș used some of the exterior painting with the purpose of this legitimization. The votive images of his father<sup>272</sup> are the most obvious, images which evoked the recent past and successful policy of Stephen the Great. The second image relevant for experience was the Tree of Jesse which is in fact the genealogy of Christ suggestively paralleled by Rareș with his own genealogy. With this, Rareș legitimized himself as the heir of Stephen and as a person whose genealogy could be compared with that of Christ. The second dimension of durability is aspiration. This implies demonstrating the performances that have been and will be achieved. The Siege of Constantinople is relevant for this dimension because this scene comprises both past and present: on one hand, it evoked the past military achievements of his forerunners and on the other hand, it illustrated Rareș's aim of defeating the Ottoman army.

The second value is competence which is characterized by the dimensions of quality and creativity. The quality dimension describes the most outstanding and known achievements. The scene that fits in this category is once more the Siege of Constantinople. As discussed above, this scene illustrates not only the desire of the ruler, but also stimulates

<sup>268</sup> I. Cupșa, *Arta Militară a Moldovenilor*, 22-24.

<sup>269</sup> Ibidem, 31.

<sup>270</sup> Ibidem, 24.

<sup>271</sup> For more on the trust values and their dimensions, see: Alain Joannes, *Comunicarea prin Imagini* [Communication through Images] (Iasi: Polirom, 2009), 23-30.

<sup>272</sup> As Petru Rareș decorated some of the monasteries commissioned by Stephen the Great, the votive image of his father was present in the naos, representing him as the commissioner of the building.

the imagination to recall past fortunate events in the Moldavian history. The creativity dimension underlines technological superiority over rivals, and also reveals some future solutions to present issues. Moldavian technological superiority over the Ottomans was improbable, thus a different type of superiority is depicted on the Moldavian walls: the presence of the saints represents additional help, as shown in the scene of the Celestial Hierarchy. Although the Moldavians were not technologically superior, they could benefit from the help of the saints. Also related to the help of the divine is the Last Judgment, which represents the revealing of future solutions, where the punishment of the Ottomans is highlighted in contrast to the Moldavians.

The last value is that of uniqueness, determined by the dimensions of clarity and vision. The clarity dimension is meant to demonstrate the team of workers behind the campaign. The votive scenes are relevant for this example. On one hand, there are the votive scenes of Rareș and his family, and on the other hand are the votive scenes of the boyars who have commissioned some of the monasteries.<sup>273</sup> Moreover, there is the Tree of Jesse which, from the clarity dimension point of view, is meant to reinforce the divine-like origin of the head of the campaign. The second dimension refers to vision. Vision is meant to show the solutions and perspectives which are the aims of the campaign. In the case of Rareș, this dimension is represented by the Last Judgment, which describes the ultimate perspective, and also by the Siege of Constantinople which describes the present solution, the defeat of the Ottoman attack.

### **Summing Up: Political space as religious space**

In this chapter, I have presented the publics and the tactics that were used to influence their opinions and behaviours. The means used to manipulate the boyars were more aggressive if one considers the dissimulation strategy used for Pocutsia. The mural painting approach, on the other side, was less aggressive, but just as dynamic. Furthermore, the exterior painting was a means of communication that may be called “universal” as it was expressed in a language understood by both the upper noble and the average peasant. From this point of view, it is vital to emphasize how Rareș used the monastic environment in order to highlight his political messages. The fact that the ruler of Moldavia intertwined the religious space with the political space is the essential point of a so-called public relations strategy: as the traditional practice

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<sup>273</sup> Such as the famous votive scene of Toader Bubuiog and his family in the Humor monastery or that of Arbore in the Arbore monastery. Although boyar commissions, the votive scene of Petru Rareș was always depicted in the naos, while the votive scenes of the boyars were represented in the pronaos.

supposed that secular power offered a series of privileges to monasteries and clergymen,<sup>274</sup> the church aided in return the ruling power by offering its space to the messages propagated it. Had these two spaces not met, there could be no discussion on a campaign to persuade the subjects of the voivode.

The first observation concerning the development of the political space within sacred space is connected to both the votive scenes and to the burial chambers existing inside the monasteries. In the example of the Probota monastery, destined to be a royal burial place for Peter Rareș and his family,<sup>275</sup> the votive scene (fig. 3.1) can be found on the western wall of the naos. West to the naos, the burial chamber contains the tombs of Peter Rareș and his wife Elena (fig. 3.2), as well as the tombs of their followers. Because the meaning of Moldavian votive scenes and of those of Peter Rareș has been discussed above, the placement of the tombs inside Moldavian church space will be touched upon before discussing the exterior painting. The presence of a room with a special funerary function in the plan of Moldavian churches is explained by Maria Crăciun as a practice highlighting both dynastic and spiritual concerns.<sup>276</sup> The ruling elite of Moldavia<sup>277</sup> introduced secular space into religious space, demonstrating the importance of the founder as he was buried very close to the sanctuary, where the liturgy took place. Although it was not a novel practice that the founders of the church/monastery were buried inside it, it is be interesting to see the relationship between political space and church space in the case of illegitimate rulers such as Peter Rareș. Rareș, the illegitimate son of Stephen the Great, designated Probota as his royal necropolis. The symbolism of such an act can point to the wish of the ruler to highlight the link with his past and dynastic tradition. Therefore, in searching for legitimacy, such a dynastic message was associated with the

<sup>274</sup> B.-P. Maleon, "The Probota Monastery between the Ecclesiastic Hierarchy and the Reign", 131-150.

<sup>275</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura Murală din Moldova*, 25.

<sup>276</sup> Crăciun discusses in her article the well-defined Moldavian space of royal church burial taking in consideration the relationship between the laity and the divinity. She discusses both the religious reasons for such a burial – the need of closeness to the divinity – and the various social factors – such as the closeness to the Catholic Church. See: Maria Crăciun, "Apud Ecclesia: Church Burial and the Development of Funerary Rooms in Moldavia" in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Will Coster, Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 146.

<sup>277</sup> The funerary room appeared only in monasteries and churches of royal commission. These were the monasteries of the dynastic descension of Peter Rareș. See more: Vlad Bedros, "Rolul Ideologiei Politice în Apariția și Fixarea Tipului de Necropolă Voievodală în Moldova în Secolele al XV-lea și al XVI-lea" [The Role of the Political Ideology in the Appearance and Development of the Royal Necropolis in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Moldavia] *Studia Patzinaka* 1 (2005), 64-65.

religious one,<sup>278</sup> strengthening the ruler's political authority who was thus legitimizing himself by relying on the sacred.<sup>279</sup>

Moving to the exterior space of the church, the same problem of legitimacy is visible. As presented before, the Tree of Jesse can be seen as a parallel between the dynastic genealogy and thus the continuity of Rareș with the divine genealogy of Christ. This way, Peter Rareș used the exterior walls of the monasteries for political purposes. Because the sacred space was perceived to be full of potential, a place where nothing was accidental,<sup>280</sup> it was also the most suitable space for the political reinforcement of the ruler. The ruler could use the sacred space knowing that the message presented within this space would be identified with the holy power of Christ. Therefore, by this, the voivode would offer more authenticity to his mural arguments. However, the Tree of Jesse was not the only scene which contained political messages. While the Tree was meant to strengthen his authority among those people who could offer alternatives to the throne – the upper nobility and the Ruling Council – the other three relevant scenes were rather a mirror of his external policy.

Therefore, the sacred-profane bipolarity emphasized by E. Durkheim<sup>281</sup> becomes evident with the mural paintings of the exterior walls. Contextualizing to the Moldavian situation, the profane sphere can be identified with the political sphere. Although the accent inevitably falls on the religious sphere, both the interior and the exterior of the monasteries are a combination of political/profane representations with religious representations. While on the interior, the political space is signalled only by votive scenes and funerary chambers, on the exterior a large amount of political scenes are easily recognizable.

Fragments of the Akathistos Hymn, the Last Judgment and the Celestial Hierarchy are indicators of the political desires of the ruler. Therefore, the political realm is experienced from within the religious one. As Will Coster and Andrew Spicer pointed out, it would be a mistake to interpret the meaning of sacred space according to the one-dimensional formula of religion messages.<sup>282</sup> Therefore, it would be incorrect to assume that the exterior paintings of Moldavia had only one meaning, a religious one. The usage of sacred space for the demonstration of

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<sup>278</sup> See: Ibidem, 153-154.

<sup>279</sup> B.-P. Maleon discusses the church and secular power which were both legitimizing themselves by their connections to the transcendental. See: B.-P. Maleon, "The Probota Monastery between the Ecclesiastic Hierarchy and the Reign," 131.

<sup>280</sup> Derek A. Rivard, *Blessing the World. Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 46.

<sup>281</sup> Discussing religious behaviour, Emile Durkheim observed the division into sacred and profane spheres in all religions. See also: Will Coster and Andrew Spicer. "Introduction: the Dimensions of Sacred Space in Reformation Europe" in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11.

<sup>282</sup> Ibidem, 15.

royal power transforms it into a medium of power. At this point, it is important to recall the division of the exterior space into sacred and political. The division, according to the visual rhetoric analysis, is a clearly demarcated one. Because the religious space is the support for the political space, the traditional religious messages are more abundant. However, the less abundant political space and its corresponding scenes have a privileged location: close to the eye of the viewer. The Siege of Constantinople and the military saints of the Celestial Hierarchy are situated precisely at the level of the adult eye. G. Jaritz argued that the closeness and distance between a representation and its viewer should be seen as a function of connection.<sup>283</sup> In the Moldavian context – specifically referring to the Siege of Constantinople and the enemies represented in the Last Judgment – this connection brings together the viewer with his environment and political situation that he can easily recognise and identify with. The enemies presented in the Last Judgment, which have been identified as the focal point of the scene with the help of visual rhetoric, are not situated at the level of the eye. However, the tight level of closeness is given by the highly visible position of the enemies. Positioned at the top of the scene, their visibility is apparent. Having the Siege of Constantinople, the enemies, and the military saints so close to the viewing sight leads to recognition and surprise which thus intensifies the perception of the scene.<sup>284</sup> Referring to the representations of negative figures and scenes, Jaritz further discusses the importance of their visibility. Therefore, the emotion that is given by negative perceived images – such as the Ottomans in the Last Judgment and the clash between the Moldavians and the Ottomans within the Akathistos Hymn – can lead to concrete reactions.<sup>285</sup> These concrete reactions can be identified in the case of the subjects of Rareș with fear and the desire to protect their lands and families, which would consequently lead to the desire to fight against the Ottoman domination.

The political sphere is thus represented by well constructed scenes meant to act upon the feelings of the viewers. The fact that the political message was integrated in religious scenes of such magnitude reflects the impact that they probably had on the viewer. The religious art works that the average Moldavian came in contact with were icons. I. D. Ștefănescu has dated the creation of the first Moldavian icons to the fifteenth century.<sup>286</sup> The Moldavian icons represented mainly the Crucifixion, but also the Deisis scene, the Virgin Mary,

<sup>283</sup> Gerhard Jaritz, “Nahe und Distanz als Gebrauchsfunktion spätmittelalterlicher religiöser Bilder,” in *Frommigkeit im Mittelalter, politisch-soziale Kontexte, visuelle Praxis körperliche Ausdrucksformen*, ed. Klaus Schreiner (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002), 331.

<sup>284</sup> Discussing everyday representations within religious frescoes, G. Jaritz shows that the visibility of these representations intensifies the experience of the viewer and his perception of the profane scene. See: Ibidem, 333-334.

<sup>285</sup> For more on the reactions to such perceptions, see: Ibidem, 334.

<sup>286</sup> I. D. Ștefănescu, *Arta Feudala in Tarile Romane*, 236.

Christ Pantocrator.<sup>287</sup> Therefore, besides the interior iconography of churches and monasteries which was traditionally entirely painted, the small-scale icons were the religious objects that the average people usually came in contact with. The difference between the scales of icons and those of the exterior mural paintings, which were large scale icons, shows an important discrepancy which must have had impact on the viewers. The reaction resulting from seeing a small icon and then a wall-sized one should have been amazement. A similar situation that reflects the impact that such large scale representations have on their viewers is the now lost *History of Gideon* tapestry of Philip the Good (1419–1467). The 5.6 meters high and 98 meters long tapestry has been interpreted as a propagandistic means of communication used by Philip the Good.<sup>288</sup> J. C. Smith argues that the tapestry was meant to communicate a ducal allegory that associated Philip with a biblical hero. Similarly, what Peter Rareș did was also a royal allegory which was meant on one side to associate him with the figure of Christ – with the Tree of Jesse – and on the other side to associate him with the figure of a trustworthy military commander capable to fight against the Ottoman army.

This royal allegory was obvious in the focal points of the exterior mural paintings, which were representative for the political sphere. The fact that the scenes which bore political messages were so close to the eye and highlighted by their position, made the viewer lose some of the significance of the religious message as he would concentrate on the closeness to the representation.<sup>289</sup> The combination of the political space and the religious space thus becomes clear, as well as the impact of the political sphere. The two spaces were in fact aiding each other to construct both their political and religious messages, the closeness of some scenes compared to the distance of others being the expressions the communication of importance, power, and hierarchy.<sup>290</sup>

<sup>287</sup> For more information on icons in sixteenth-century Moldavia and their representations, see: Ibidem, 236-240.

<sup>288</sup> Similarly to Rareș's ambition to liberate Moldavia from Ottoman domination, Philip's lifelong ambition was to liberate the Holy Lands from Moslem control. Therefore, he commissioned the *History of Gideon* which was hung for example over banquet halls and the entire façade of the Hotel D'Artois so that his Golden Fleece knights could see it. J. C. Smith argues that the communication of the analogy between Gideon saving the people of Israel and Philip wanting to be a second Gideon was quite clear for those seeing the tapestry. The message was that Philip the Good and the Golden Fleece were the elite warriors who were to go to war against the enemies of the Christian church. See: Jeffrey C. Smith, "Portable Propaganda – Tapestries as Princely Metaphors at the Courts of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold," *Art Journal* 48 (1989): 123-129.

<sup>289</sup> See: G. Jaritz, "Nahe und Distanz," 331.

<sup>290</sup> For more on the significance of closeness and distance of mural representations, see: Ibidem, 332-333.



## CHAPTER IV

### The Effectiveness of the Strategy

*However beautiful the strategy,  
you should occasionally look at the results.*  
(Winston Churchill)

The three major elements of the campaign have been shown. It has been shown that the people who conceive the strategic message are responsible for distributing the information and adapting it to the targeted group. The conceivers, headed by Peter Rareș, aimed at gaining certain advantages from the campaign. First of all, Rareș needed to “survive,” thus he had to legitimize his claim to the throne. Second, he had to prosper and achieve a positive image in the eyes of his publics, which he did quite easily – if the rebelling boyars are not taken into account – by using the image and political strategy of his father. Third, and most importantly, he had to win enough power in order to repress the boyar opposition and to prepare his principality for an anti-Ottoman action. In order to achieve these purposes, Rareș and his counsellors needed their goals to match those of the public. Therefore, they needed a public and a communication plan. In order to conduct a public relations plan, one has to create a strategy to occupy the public space according to the environment, the social reality, and the people’s expectations.<sup>291</sup> In general terms, the actions of Peter Rareș are identifiable with this definition of the public relations campaign. Rareș used the public space for his own goals and he adapted the messages to the social reality and the people’s understandings. According to this, the two reigns of Rareș will be compared and evaluated, as well as the overall success of the campaign.

### Two reigns, two campaigns?

The definition presented above is most obviously valid for the first reign of Rareș, between 1527 and 1538. When the new ruler earned the throne, he was energetic and animated by his ambitions, as the chronicle of Ureche notes: “Because after he received the power he did not linger at all.”<sup>292</sup> His major aim that would be present in his thoughts all throughout his reigns, after legitimizing himself and continuing the internal policy of Stephen the Great,<sup>293</sup> was to keep Moldavia independent from the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the aim of Rareș was to be

<sup>291</sup> Bernard Dagenais, *Campania de Relații Publice* [The Public Relations Campaign] (Iași: Polirom, 2003), 28.

<sup>292</sup> “Că nimica după ce au dobândit domniia n-au zăbovit.” See: G. Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, 91.

<sup>293</sup> Internally, Rareș was preoccupied to consolidate his reign by supporting the peasants and small nobility. See: C. Cihodaru, “Politica Internă,” 57-85.

ready at all times for a military action against the Ottomans. However, his plan was threatened by some of the boyars who felt that any struggle against the Ottoman Empire would be useless and that the principality should be subdued to the Empire without any military actions. It was because of this reason that the so-called PR campaign of the first reign of Rareș emerged. As presented in the previous chapters, the tactic of the voivode was divide in two: on one side, he used the Chronicle of Macarie and dissimulation methods to distract and influence the nobles' opinions, while on the other side Rareș clothed the exterior walls of the monasteries commissioned by himself and his boyars to present the situation in his terms to the lower layers of the society who would form his large host. The iconographic programme used on the exterior painting was almost identical in all the monasteries it was applied to. In order to understand and assess the differences between the campaign of the first reign and the second reign of Rareș, it is necessary to divide the churches and monasteries founded at the time. In the table below, the churches and monasteries are divided according to the date of the exterior painting.

<b>First reign</b>	<b>Second reign</b>	<b>After the death of Peter Rareș</b>	<b>Date unknown</b>
Saint George of Hârlău (1530)	Arbore (1541)	Voroneț (1547)	Dobrovăț
Probota (1532)		Râșca (1551–1552)	Bălinești
Saint George of Suceava (1532–1534)		Sucevița (1595–1596)	
Humor (1535)			
Moldovița (1537)			
Baia (1535–1538)			
Coșula (1536–1538)			

Based on this table, it is easy to infer that during the second reign (1541–1546), the campaign of persuasion started to lose its relevance. All the monasteries and churches painted in the first reign comprise the same four major scenes that have been connected to an anti-Ottoman campaign. It is known that one of the most illustrative scenes of this iconographical programme is the Siege of Constantinople from the Akathistos Hymn cycle. However, the Siege is not only significant from this point of view, but it is also the key scene in understanding the shift produced within the campaigns of the two reigns. It is needless to point at the various stylistical differences of the paintings which are inevitably visible from one monument to the other. Therefore, I will focus on the meaning behind the Siege of Constantinople. Arbore is the only monastery that was decorated on the exterior during the second reign at the will of the niece of the boyar Luca Arbore. As highlighted in a preceding

chapter, the Siege of Constantinople of Arbore is unique in the exterior iconography as it follows the historical events that led to the composition of the Akathistos Hymn: the scene represents the siege of 626 by the Persians, as a Slavonic inscription above the city of Constantinople clearly indicates. Because the Siege does not represent the Moldavians fighting the Ottoman armies anymore, the scene, together with the entire cycle of the Akathistos Hymn should be seen as neutral from a political point of view. The representation thus loses its militating message and stops being the central depiction of the mural-campaign. The next chronologically painted monastery is Voroneț, decorated after the death of Rareș whose exterior murals contain all the typical scenes, except for the Akathistos Hymn with the meaningful Siege of Constantinople. A similar but more conclusive phenomenon is visible at Rasca monastery, painted four years later, where not only the Akathistos Hymn disappears, but also the Celestial Hierarchy and the Tree of Jesse. Thus at Râșca, the only reminder of an anti-Ottoman struggle is the Last Judgment where the Ottoman representatives can still be seen, but where the Last Judgment is balanced by the less violent Hesychast scene<sup>294</sup> of the Ladder of Virtues.

Therefore, a significant fall of the campaign is obvious, a deterioration which takes place in a few abrupt steps: after being the fundamental representation of the Moldavian anti-Ottoman sentiments, the Siege of Constantinople received its original meaning before being completely erased from the iconographical programme. However, almost half a century after the disappearance of the Siege of Constantinople, an intriguing resurrection of the exterior mural programme took place. The Sucevița monastery, founded by Ieremia and Simion Movilă,<sup>295</sup> future voivodes of Moldavia, bears an exterior iconography which mirrors that of the age of Peter Rareș. Sucevița is considered the “testament”<sup>296</sup> of the sixteenth century church architecture and exterior iconographic programme, being the very last one of this type. The exterior painting of the monastery incorporates the four typical scenes from the period of Rareș: the Akathistos Hymn, the Last Judgment, the Celestial Hierarchy, and the Tree of Jesse. Although the iconography is similar, the same “anomaly” can be noticed in the Akathistos Hymn. Therefore, the Siege of Constantinople is still not represented, but is replaced with the scene of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos and a martyrdom (fig. 4.1). Similarly, within the Celestial Hierarchy, although the row of the military saints exists, the image of the martyr Saint John the New, which has been interpreted by S. Ulea as the essential figure in the

<sup>294</sup> For the Hesychast echoes of the Ladder of Virtues, see: M. Bălan, *Mănăstirea Râșca*, 19-20 and J. Duffy, “Embellishing the Steps,” 1-17.

<sup>295</sup> V. Drăguț, *Dicționar Enciclopedic de Artă Medievală Românească*, 288.

<sup>296</sup> Ibidem, 289.

Hierarchy for understanding its meaning,<sup>297</sup> does not appear. Moreover, the lowest row, that of the hermits, is no longer headed by a military saint but by Saint John the Baptist, therefore the representation should no longer be interpreted as a symbol for the hermits praying for a military cause<sup>298</sup> (fig. 4.2). The importance of the Ladder of Virtues should also be pointed out as it gains the same priority as the other four scenes mentioned. Furthermore, the Ladder of Virtues of Sucevița (fig. 4.3) is thought of as the most elaborate representation of such kind in Romanian mural painting,<sup>299</sup> thus it can easily be seen as an alternative to the Last Judgment which at Sucevița is not as amplified as the Ladder<sup>300</sup> in other monasteries (fig. 4.4).

Therefore, considering the observations above and the fact that Sucevița was build and decorated some fifty years after the death of Rareș, it cannot be included in the set of monasteries which bear anti-Ottoman messages. I would rather argue that the exterior painting of Sucevița was an attempt to revive the practice of the exterior iconographical programmes, although without paying any special attention to the messages propagated by Rareș, especially as the principality was already under Ottoman domination.

The fact that Moldavia fell under strong Ottoman suzerainty after 1538 could also be the reason why the exterior painting campaign lost its power and purpose. A strong indicator of this hypothesis is particularly the scene of the Siege of Constantinople, where the Ottoman armies were no longer shown as defeated. Although the other scene that explicitly presented Ottomans, the Last Judgement, was preserved unchanged until the decoration of the last monastery with exterior painting, the explanation for this continuity could be simple: the Last Judgment, although it accentuated the features of the Ottomans,<sup>301</sup> also presented the other enemies of Moldavia, such as the Latins/Christians and the Tatars.

Based on the discontinuity of the exterior painting programme between the two reigns of Rareș, one could argue that the second reign lacked the campaign initiated in the first one. However, further clarifications are needed in order to affirm this.

After Suleyman the Great entered Moldavia in 1538 and, as Theodoros Spandouginos recalls, “the Christians ran away and hid at the arching of the mountain so they could go find

<sup>297</sup> See: S. Ulea, “Originea și Semnificația Ideologică a Picturii Exterioare Moldovenești I”: 57-93.

<sup>298</sup> Such as at Humor, where the row is headed by the archangel Michael and has been interpreted as a symbol for a military prayer. See: Ibidem.

<sup>299</sup> V. Drăguț, *Pictura Murală din Moldova*, 39.

<sup>300</sup> At Sucevița, the Last Judgment is not represented on the entire porch. The porch also bears Old Testament scenes, and a cycle from the life of Saint John the New.

<sup>301</sup> V. Drăguț highlights the accentuated features of the Ottomans, giving the example of Voronet: “A psychological centre of the composition is formed by the group of the Turks, their typology being admirably described, clothed with great pomp, with large turbans. The inscription, carefully written, specifies that it is the Turks that are being presented...” See: V. Drăguț et al, *Pictura Românească în Imagini*, 71-72.

king Zuane [Zapolya],”<sup>302</sup> Peter Rareș remained in Transylvania for more than two years. In 1541, after he had started in 1540 to send letters to the sultan asking for forgiveness,<sup>303</sup> and after he had promised a bigger annual tax,<sup>304</sup> the Sultan allowed Rareș to return to the throne in Suceava. Having killed the voivode Alexandru Cornea, Rareș started his second reign with no internal or external pressure as “there was nobody to stand in his way.”<sup>305</sup>

Internally, as presented previously, he strengthened the Ruling Council with people he could trust. Except for the logothete Mateiaș, Danciu Huru, Efrem Huru and two other boyars who were members of his first council, all the others were changed. During the second reign, a number of 22 members of the council have been enumerated by C. Rezachevici, of which only very few came from families which had had contact with the previous Ruling Council.<sup>306</sup> Thus sixteen counsellors of Rareș came from unknown families and the lower nobility.<sup>307</sup> It thus becomes clear that after the experience of the dethroning, Rareș gathered around himself only those people whom he knew were faithful to him. Instead of trying to come to terms with an opposing Ruling Council and instead of finding various means either to communicate with it or to distract its attention, Rareș preferred this time to construct his own Council from the beginning.

Externally, in contrast to the first reign, Peter Rareș conducted a balanced policy, trying to remain in good relations with all his neighbours. C. Rezachevici characterized his second reign as having two main features: on one side, Rareș obeyed the sultan’s conditions, while on the other he secretly collaborated with the countries interested in an anti-Ottoman league.<sup>308</sup> Thus although “from now on he served the Turks,”<sup>309</sup> Peter Rareș did not give up on struggling against the Ottoman Empire and its suzerainty. N. Iorga described how immediately after regaining the throne in 1541, the voivode tried to re-establish the connection with the Habsburgs, especially after Isabella, the wife of Janos Zapolya, gave up on Transylvania in favour of the Habsburgs.<sup>310</sup> Hoping for a Christian alliance, he wanted to annex also Sigismund

<sup>302</sup> “Li Christianj, sentendo questo, si missono in fuga et si ridusseno alla volta della montagna, per andar poi a trovar Re Zuane.” See: Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și Fragmente cu Privire la Istoria Românilor I* [Documents and Fragments Related to Romanian History I] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1895), 13.

<sup>303</sup> His wife Elena wrote by her own hand many letters the Sultan: “they [Petru Rareș and Elena] wrote a letter in Serbian to the Turkish emperor with a request.” See: I. Neculce, *Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei*, 40.

<sup>304</sup> Instead of 10000 annual ducats, Rareș promised to give 12000 ducats plus an army of 500 riders and his son as a prisoner at the court in Istanbul. See: C. Rezachevici, “Politica Internă,” 209-210.

<sup>305</sup> “Si nu era nimeni sa-i stea impotriva.” See: I. Bogdan, “Cronica lui Macarie”, 102.

<sup>306</sup> C. Rezachevici, “Politica Internă,” 220.

<sup>307</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>308</sup> C. Rezachevici, “Politica Externă,” 230.

<sup>309</sup> “Deci cum au slujit mai pre urmă turcilor.” See: I. Neculce, *Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei*, 41.

<sup>310</sup> N. Iorga, *Istoria Românilor V*, 295-296.

I to the anti-Ottoman league that was being created and lead by Ferdinand I and Joachim II, Prince-Elector of Brandenburg, and thus he sent a letter to the Polish king saying that:

If I saw a Christian king who rose with power and faith against the Turks,  
then I would join him with faith and I would help him with all my strength.  
However, I cannot do anything at the time, because I have no one to run to,  
I have to do what the Turk commands.<sup>311</sup>

The dissensions between Moldavia and Poland did not allow such an alliance to be formed, thus Rareș joined alone the League on the 1 March 1542,<sup>312</sup> promising to inform Joachim II on all the movements of the Ottoman army, to join the army of the League against Suleyman and to catch the sultan, and to give 30000 cattle to maintain the Christian army.<sup>313</sup> However, in 1542, the action of the League proved to be inefficient as the offense against Buda was not successful. Thus, after 1542, the relations with Ferdinand stopped being as tight as during the initiation of the anti-Ottoman League<sup>314</sup> and Rareș's idea of an ample offense against the Ottomans started to fade. From that point onwards, Rareș focused on regaining the fortresses in Transylvania that had belonged to Moldavia before his second reign. The last years of his reign were rather peaceful as he had no more conflicts with the Porte. The only events that disturbed the last two years of his life, 1545–1546, were a number of conflicts between Moldavia and Poland, which led to a more tense relationship between the two states.<sup>315</sup>

Analysing the events of the second reign of Rareș, it is easy to notice that it was more stable than the first one, and that the voivode had learnt from his first experience at the head of Moldavia. The artistic development continued all throughout the second reign, with church vestments and jewels, liturgical embroideries, wooden sculpture and manuscripts being produced.<sup>316</sup> However, the specific anti-Ottoman messages of the church mural paintings were almost invisible during this second period and they stopped once the Voroneț monastery's decoration was finished. The fact that the anti-Ottoman messages ceased to be used can be paralleled with the new political situation of Moldavia. Being under Ottoman suzerainty, the ruler could not risk anymore to have his churches clothed in messages against the sultan and his empire. The second reign was thus characterized not by a campaign of persuasion meant to

<sup>311</sup> For the entire text of the letter and a commentary on it, see: C. Rezachevici, "Politica Externă," 216-217.

<sup>312</sup> A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiana* II, 571.

<sup>313</sup> For details on this treaty and the implications of the promise of Rareș, see: C. Rezachevici, "Politica Externă," 249-251 and A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiana* II, 571-574.

<sup>314</sup> See: C. Rezachevici, "Politica Externă," 264.

<sup>315</sup> For more on the nature of these events, see: Ș.S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 214-216.

<sup>316</sup> See: A. Văețiși, *Arta de Tradiție Bizantină în România*, 68-69.

mobilize the subjects of Moldavia for a struggle for independence, but was a reign which tried to use the most of the opportunities given by the relations with the principality's neighbours and the Ottoman Empire. This included the participation in the Habsburg-initiated anti-Ottoman League, a participation which strongly echoed the ambitions of the voivode, but which could not be seen as anything similar to a public relations campaign.

Concluding, the distinction between the two reigns must be noticed. A primary observation should be that the shift in the political situation changed the entire political strategy of the ruler which did not allow a visible revolt against the empire of Suleyman. Secondly, the result of this situation was reflected on the exterior painting, as the only exterior painting commissioned after 1541 did not bear the most significant scene, the Siege of Constantinople. Therefore, the answer to the question *Two reigns, two campaigns?* is simple: two reigns, one campaign; one campaign and one strategy that was conducted solely during the first reign.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats: SWOT Analysis**

Because this thesis discusses a public relations campaign and the strategy it used, in order to thoroughly analyse its results it is necessary to use corresponding methods. SWOT analysis<sup>317</sup> is a modern methodology applied by twenty-first century organisations for the use of their campaigns. It is a tool for examining an organization and its environment which helps marketers focus on the key issues of their marketing/communication strategies. SWOT is the acronym for the **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses of an organisation or campaign and the **O**pportunities and **T**hreats posed to that organisation or campaign by the external environment. The strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, while the opportunities and threats are external. After identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are connected to the organisation/campaign, they are put in a chart which helps enhance the significance of each of them. Their significance is balanced and analysed without using any mathematically defined parameters. Because of the lack of using any mathematical parameters, it has slight subjective implications and it expresses the perception of the person doing the analysis.

SWOT analysis is one of the most important steps in formulating a strategy, thus it is usually done before the implementation of the strategy in order to help improve the plan.

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<sup>317</sup> For more on the definition, methods, and procedures supposed by a SWOT analysis, see: Ricky W. Griffin, *Fundamentals of Management* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2007), 61-94, and John Stapleton and Michael J. Thomas, *How to Prepare a Marketing Plan: A Guide to Reaching the Consumer Market* (Hampshire: Gower Publishing, 1998), 79-81.

However, the present analysis will inevitably be an overview of a campaign which has already been put into effect and the SWOT analysis will help in this case to assess the success or the failure of Rareș's campaign. This methodology can be applied on the sixteenth-century case study because, as it has been shown throughout the chapters of this work, one can discuss certain elements of a public relations campaign in the medieval context of Moldavia. One might infer that the campaign of Rareș's first reign was a failure because he lost the throne and independence of Moldavia, such an affirmation cannot be made without correctly assessing the strategies used, thus without using SWOT analysis.

*The assessment of SWOT analysis applied to Peter Rareș's Moldavia*

Based on the diagram presented below, the first observation is that the four elements of the analysis are balanced: for the interior factors, there are five strengths and four weaknesses; and for the exterior factors, there are four opportunities and four threats.<sup>318</sup> However, it is not the number of positive and negative factors which determine the result of the analysis, but the influence that each one of the factors had on the evolution of the campaign.

The strengths in the case of Rareș, were those attributes of his team – Ruling Council, clergy, painters – which were helpful in achieving the objective of the campaign. First of all, Rareș had an experienced Ruling Council which was comprised of boyars who had been members of the Council of Rareș's predecessor and who were descendants of the nobles of Stephen the Great. Therefore, they were qualified people who elected Rareș to the throne because of his origin as son of Stephen the Great. Consequently, he had a good reputation but he still had to reinforce it by legitimizing himself. The fact that he had to legitimize himself is the first leak within the positive factors: although the ruler did have a powerful reputation, it was not enough to keep his throne and authority safe,<sup>319</sup> this also interfering with his campaign. This need for legitimization was also one of the generators of the campaign of Rareș: because he needed legitimization, Rareș had the Tree of Jesse painted on the exterior walls which signalled the parallel between the divine genealogy of Christ and the dynastic genealogy of Rareș. Moreover, because of the boyars who started to show their discontent with the policy of Rareș, the ruler, together with the loyal members of his Council, the clergy and several court painters, produced what can be called "innovative ideas:" the chronicle written by

<sup>318</sup> It is important to point out that these factors are simplified elements which mirror the elaborate situation of the campaign of Rareș. Therefore, although there are a variety of other minor elements, these four and five elements are the most significant ones from the point of view of the analysis, the ones which determined the outcome of the campaign.

<sup>319</sup> For other boyars who wanted to gain the throne of Moldavia and the efforts of Rareș to legitimize himself, see: C. Cihodaru, "Politica Internă," 57-85.



Bishop Macarie which praised the deeds of Rareș, the dissimulation with Pocutsia where all the important boyars were involved, and, most importantly, the clothing of the churches and monasteries founded by the voivode and his boyars in mural painting bearing specific anti-Ottoman messages. Moreover, it is also important to mention the financial aspect of the campaign, which was one of its strengths. Although the Ottoman taxes were high, the voivode, together with the boyars and church, had enough financial support in order to commission both the building and the painting of the northern Moldavian monasteries.<sup>320</sup> Therefore these were the strengths possessed by the organisation of Rareș, which were attributes of the individual members of the team and the ruler and of the team as a whole.

INTERNAL			
POSITIVE	STRENGTHH	WEAKNESS	NEGATIVE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People: experienced Ruling Council.</li><li>• Innovative ideas: chronicle, dissimulation, exterior murals.</li><li>• Reputation of ruler inside Ruling Council: positive.</li><li>• Financing: possible.</li><li>• Collaborators: church + painters.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal political situation: opposing boyars.</li><li>• Very low communication with the Ruling Council: advices not accepted.</li><li>• Weak management of Ruling Council.</li><li>• Focus of campaign: too high and elaborate.</li></ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Environment: supporting low classes.</li><li>• Reputation of ruler outside Ruling Council: positive.</li><li>• Law and government: decided by the voivode.</li><li>• Distribution channels: highly accessible and visible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Geographical position: close to Ottoman Empire.</li><li>• External political situation: conflicts with all neighbours + threat from the Ottoman Empire.</li><li>• Finance: increased taxes to the Empire.</li><li>• Loss of key Council members, changes in internal political views.</li></ul>	
	OPPORTUNITY	THREAT	
EXTERNAL			

Opposing the strengths to the weaknesses of the team, the facts that reduced the perspectives of the campaign to reach its goals become evident. The most destructive element

<sup>320</sup> Moreover, Petru Rareș not only founded monasteries and churches in Moldavia, but also donated important financial support to monasteries on Mount Athos, such as Hilandar Monastery, Karakallu Monastery or Protaton Church. See: Ș. S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, 224.

of the internal factors was the personality of the ruler himself:<sup>321</sup> having an impulsive personality, he imposed his points of view on the boyars who started to be “tired of the multiple ambitious projects of Rareș.”<sup>322</sup> Ruling in an autocratic way,<sup>323</sup> he disregarded the advice of the boyars, allowing the situation within the Council to become uneven. The lack of communication presented in the previous chapters denotes a very weak management which is in fact the key for the failure of the voivode’s first reign. Rareș’s overly ambitious personality was also the reason why the focus of the campaign was not proportional with the possibilities of Moldavia: a Moldavian military action against the Ottoman Empire would have had little chance to succeed. Finally, the opposing boyars were the element which eventually caused the dethroning of the voivode and the end of the persuasion campaign. Therefore, the weakness category of the SWOT analysis is governed by the personality of Rareș which caused not only unreachable goals and weak management, but, most importantly, the opposition of the boyars.

The opportunities of the exterior environment were firm, but not exploited enough. His reputation among the lower classes was positive because of two reasons. First of all, he was the son of Stephen the Great, and second, he continued the same policy of aiding the peasants and lower nobility in the detriment of the upper nobility.<sup>324</sup> However, although he had power over the judicial system, he did not use it fully. He decided to disadvantage the upper nobility and thus also the members of his Ruling Council who found in this situation another problem to react against. However, the great opportunity that the external environment had to offer was the communication channel: the usage of the entire space of the exterior walls of churches and monasteries represented an innovative means of communication. Thus the voivode could communicate his message to the supporting lower classes.

Finally, the threats of the exterior environment strongly turned the balance of the campaign. The proximity to the Ottoman Empire was a first cause of tension as the sultan was expanding westwards. Therefore, the external political situation was precarious not only from the point of view of the Ottoman threat, but also from the point of view of the other conflicts that Peter Rareș had started with Janos Zapolya and Sigismund I. From this perspective, it was in 1538 that Rareș made the mistake of acting on two military fields at the same time: he

<sup>321</sup> See: L. Șimanschi, “Personalitatea Domnului,” 318-323.

<sup>322</sup> V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 92.

<sup>323</sup> Between 1535 and 1538, a small number of documents are issued by the Council of Rareș, denoting the dissensions that existed between the ruler and the boyars. Constantin Cihodaru argued that this was a sign that the governing of Rareș became more and more autocratic. See: C. Cihodaru, “Politica Internă,” 82-83.

<sup>324</sup> The *dominum eminens* regulation meant that the ruler’s attention was on the lower nobility, which received the voivode’s protection in exchange for its political and military support.

simultaneously had conflicts with both his Polish and Hungarian neighbours.<sup>325</sup> However, from the point of view of the persuasion campaign, the most alarming threat was that of the boyars who slowly started to oppose the ruler and complot against him, culminating with the events of 1538.

Also the events of 1538 led to an outcome that Peter Rareș had probably not expected. As Pâslariuc presented the events, not only the nobility turned its back on their voivode, but also the peasants and lower layers who comprised the large host. Although without presenting any sources to attest this fact, he argues that the members of the large host, understanding that a direct confrontation with the Ottoman armies would be fatal and wanting to protect their homes, quickly disintegrated their large army.<sup>326</sup>

### Summing Up

With the boyars betraying him and the large host probably abandoning him, Peter Rareș had no other choice than to flee to Transylvania and thus end his campaign together with his first reign. The SWOT analysis has shown that although the number of the positive and negative facts was equal, their importance was not at all equal. Although the strategies used by Rareș in persuading his publics were innovative and could have been effective in other political circumstances, the negative aspects which rivalled with an undisturbed itinerary of the campaign were overwhelming.

Following the ambitions enforced by his strong personality, Peter Rareș underestimated the military capacities of Suleyman the Magnificent and his armies. Believing in an anti-Ottoman league that was only created unsuccessfully during his second reign, he did exactly the opposite of his campaign's aim: he endangered the independence of Moldavia. Therefore, I believe that while there existed a certain amount of success in the enterprises conducted by Rareș, the campaign was a failure. The fact that the boyars betrayed him was only one of the reasons for this failure. Peter Rareș could have not defeated, as he wished, all his neighbouring enemies in the given political situation.

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<sup>325</sup> For more on these conflicts, see: V. Pâslariuc, *Raporturile Politice*, 96.

<sup>326</sup> See: Ibidem, 104.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to reconstruct a hypothetical public relations campaign that the Moldavian voivode Peter Rareș, together with his team of loyal nobles, created with the purpose of keeping the ruler's subjects united against the imminent threat of the Ottoman Empire. A current model of communication, which identifies a message sender, a message, and a message receiver, can be applied to the Middle Ages. This model, which I have called a medieval public relations campaign on analogy to present-day practices, has three significant elements: the team that generated the messages (the sender), the messages themselves, and the targeted public (the receivers or audience).

The methodology that comes with this model of communication helped to emphasize the ambitions of the Moldavian voivode which resulted in this medieval PR campaign. The fact that he ruled twice is proof for his ambition, but also for the unusualness of his rulership. Peter Rareș wanted to walk in the footsteps of his father, Stephen the Great, concerning both the anti-Ottoman policy and the internal governing of the principality. However, the first mark of his ambition to exceed his father can be seen in the fact that he established a new royal necropolis for himself and his family, the Probota monastery. Although he needed to be identified with the heroic figure of Stephen, he wanted to build his own objectives, his own public relations campaign.

The church was the most powerful ally of Peter Rareș, to which all the three groups of people which comprised the voivode's team (boyars, clerics, and painters) were connected in different ways. In the church, the ruler found not only a physical support for his messages, but also an ideological support, as the clerics were important actors in his campaign. Two of the most important clerics of the time of Rareș were Bishop Macarie, who also wrote the chronicle of Rareș's life and rulership, and Archbishop Grigorie Roșca. Both of them not only helped the voivode during his life, but also continued to propagate his messages after his death. The other group, of the boyars, was also connected to the church by their commissions which carried the specific signs of the campaign. Moreover, the important boyars, members of the Ruling Council, were also military commanders. This enabled Rareș to use them for his military offensives in Pocutisia which were apparently meant to distract the attention of the rebellious nobles who were plotting against him. The third group of actors were the painters, who were the actual creators of the messages. The painters, based on feedback from the commissioner, emphasized the message in their paintings by various means: the focal points of the scenes were emphasized either by size, colour or, most importantly, by the unexpected.

The unexpected element of the exterior iconographic programme of the Moldavian monasteries, the central point of the public relations strategy, was the strength of Rareș's campaign. Using the unexpected, the ruler, through the hands of his painters, guided the viewer towards the focal messages of the mural scenes: the Ottoman group heading for hell in the Last Judgment scene, the Moldavian rider standing against the Ottoman army at the Siege of Constantinople, and the series of military saints headed not by Christ but by the archangels, in the Celestial Hierarchy. The commissioned painters together with the commissioners had the task of influencing people's behaviour and attitudes. This complex task was done by using the most expressive "media" support of the Middle Ages, the church. Moreover, the devotional tone in which the messages were expressed was compatible with the sacred space of the monasteries, strengthening the argument of the ruler. The combination of sacred space with political space was therefore a successful formula which was composed of simple images easy to understand by the non-elite, but also by the elite.

The lower strata were the central audience of the public relations campaign. Because some of the boyars were plotting against Rareș, the ruler had to make sure that in the case of a military offense against the Ottoman Empire, the mass of the people would stand by him and not join the cause of the rebelling boyars. The mass of people formed the largest part of the army of Moldavia, therefore the need for their support was obvious. They were targeted by the scenes on the exterior murals of the monasteries, the propagators anticipating that once they saw them, the peasants would link their message with the ambition of keeping Moldavia safe from Ottoman suzerainty. On the other hand, the boyars were also targeted by the ruler. In order not to lose them to the boyar conspiracy, Rareș used not only the chronicle of Macarie, but also the Tree of Jesse image to legitimize and present himself as a trustworthy and brave ruler.

Peter Rareș thus used innovative methods to persuade both the lower and the upper layers of society. However, although his campaign had many opportunities, the ruler did not take advantage of all of them, allowing his personality to dominate the campaign. Following his ambitions, he disregarded the advices of his counsellors and stopped communicating with the Ruling Council. The result was simple: the nobles plotted against Rareș, which made the way of Suleyman the Magnificent towards Suceava much easier.

Therefore, while the concept of a campaign initiated by the voivode of Moldavia was successful, the campaign itself was not. He lost the trust of his nobles, and, as some historians argue, the trust of his entire army which abandoned him, and thus he lost the throne. The consequences of the failure of the first campaign are visible in his second one, where although

there still are signs the propagation of anti-Ottoman messages, a public relations campaign as such was no longer in effect. Peter Rareş was much more discreet and measured in his actions, and although he still wanted to join the Habsburg anti-Ottoman league, he did not show this publicly.

With this thesis, my aim was to demonstrate that a common controlled effort to influence a country's subjects could have taken place in a multi-layered manner. Through this understanding of Peter Rareş's campaign, I wanted to explain the fact that this common effort can be referred to as a public relations. By applying modern methodologies and terminologies to a sixteenth-century context, I tried to demonstrate the interdisciplinary flexibility of this topic. Therefore, the contribution of my work to scholarship is the introduction of these modern methodologies. Using SWOT analysis, for example, proved to be useful in understanding and evaluating a given event in the past – such an analysis could be applied to other historical events, although not necessarily connected to persuasion. Also, applying the concept of visual rhetoric helped me refine my argument and point out the most important aspects of my primary source material. The focal points of the mural scenes were determined based on visual rhetoric. This method, although used in modern media studies, can also be usefully applied to medieval art.

Grasping the reign of Peter Rareş from an unconventional point of view enabled me to give a new perspective on the topic. The important aspect that should be pointed out is that, chosen carefully, other methodologies than the traditional ones can also be brought into the sphere of medieval studies, enabling researchers to see events from a different point of view.

This research could be further on widened, as the rulership of Rareş is composed of a variety of patterns. There are certain elements which in this thesis I could only touch upon. The special geo-political context of the campaign could be stressed. Being surrounded by neighbours who were the grand powers of the time, their view on the ambitions and self-propulsion of Rareş in the international context can be studied. Also in the sphere of neighbouring authorities, other instances of rulers propagating their self-images can be used to strengthen the argument of the existence of medieval public relations. Such is the case of Hungarian King Matthias, who had an elaborate court and who widely propagated his self-image. Moreover, as far as the techniques for influencing the lay people are concerned, more stress could be put on the study of the neomartyrs which were painted on the monasteries' exterior walls, such as John the New.

Concluding, this study on Peter Rareş did not simply recall a campaign, but helped to better understand his personality. While it is difficult to assess whether he was or not a

Renaissance prince, he was certainly a man full of ambitions who pushed them to the limit. He was an energetic man, open to novelty, but also open to risks. He was a pious man, ready to found churches, but also ready to crush any boyar standing against his will. He was a loving man, who sent all of his family away from danger when he lost his throne, but who also sent his elder son in captivity to the sultan in order to regain that same throne.

Maybe these dichotomies of Peter Rareș were the reason for his innovative personality. Accordingly, in a Romanian play, Stephen the Great lovingly anticipated his son's actions:

“Rareș, you are not a good boy...”  
(Barbu Ștefănescu Delavrancea, *Apus de Soare*)

## APPENDIX I: MURAL PAINTINGS



Fig. 1.1: Genesis detail, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 1.2: Customs of Heaven detail, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.3: Last Judgment detail, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 1.4: Last Judgment detail, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.5: Votive scene, Humor Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 1.6: Akathistos Hymn, Moldovița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.7: Siege of Constantinople, Moldovița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 1.8: Siege of Constantinople – “Moldavian” Rider, Moldovița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.9: Last Judgment, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).

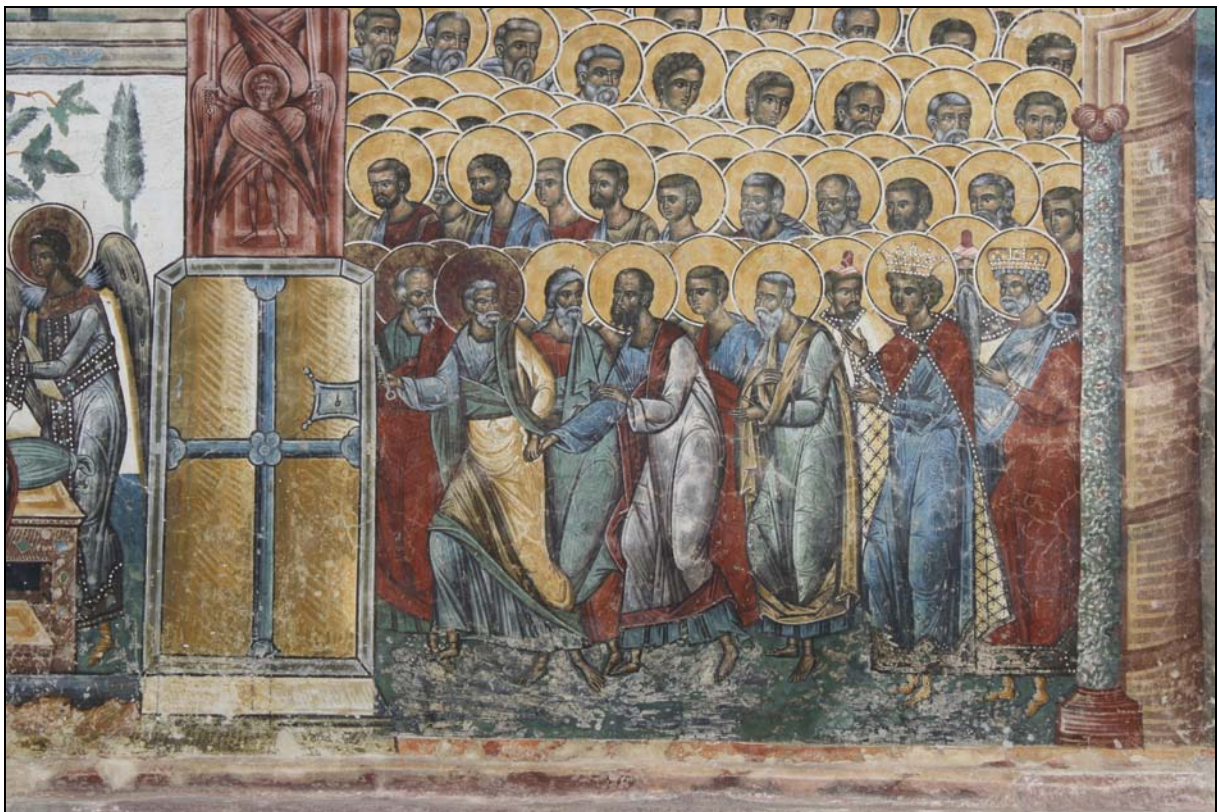


Fig. 1.10: Entrance to Heaven – Halo rhythmicity, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.11: Last Judgment – the sinners' groups, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 1.12: Southern and Central Apses, Moldovița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.13: Celestial Hierarchy Central Apse – St. George in lower centre, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.14: Tree of Jesse, Moldovița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 1.15: Military Saints, Moldovița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 1.16: Scenes of the life of St. John the New, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author)





Fig. 2.1: Archbishop Grigorie Roșca (left) together with the hermit Daniil, Voroneț Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 2.2: Bishop Macarie led to the Ladder of Virtues by John Climacus, Râșca Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 2.3: The Ladder of Virtues, Râșca Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 2.4: The Moldavian rider with whom Toma identified himself, Akathistos Hymn, Humor Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 2.5: Turmoil inside Constantinople, Akathistos Hymn, Humor Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 2.6: Constantine the Great and his mother Helen, Humor Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 2.7: Western wall of Arbore Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 2.8: Inscription on the Siege of Constantinople, Arbore Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 3.1: Votive scene, Probota Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 3.2: The tombs of Peter Rareș and his wife, Elena Brancovici. (Photo taken by the author).





Figure 4.1: Martyrdom replacing the Siege of Constantinople. Akathistos Hymn, Sucevița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



Fig. 4.2: Saint John the Baptist instead of a military saint. Celestial Hierarchy, Sucevița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 4.3: Ladder of Virtues, Sucevița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).





Fig. 4.4: Last Judgment, Sucevița Monastery. (Photo taken by the author).



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