

## LITERATURE AND VISUAL ARTS HISTORY

### THE MONK, EQUAL TO THE MARTYRS? MOLDAVIAN ICONOGRAPHIC INSTANCES

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**Abstract:**

This paper deals with an aspect of the iconographic selection in Moldavian mural paintings (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries). Instigated by cases which insert monks in the program of the bay linking the apse to the naos, the analysis tries to reveal the strategies of including monastic presences in the naos, to point at several late byzantine parallels and to advance an interpretation for this peculiar option. Its diverse contexts involve also slight changes of meaning, which are addressed as well. The iconographic syntax at stake invites to 'erudite' analysis, but a more flexible exploration, aware of the oral aspect of cultural transmission, might prove just as suitable.

**Key-words:**

Moldavia, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century, iconography, Late Byzantine art, monasticism, Byzantine literature.

The Byzantine iconographic practice in the aftermath of Iconoclasm usually relegated the portraits of saintly monks to the western areas of the churches<sup>1</sup>, especially to the narthex<sup>2</sup>, following, in the latter case, a monastic tradition which cherished their presence in the liturgical space dedicated to evening services and all-night vigils<sup>3</sup> – spurring, as it were, the steadfast ascetic zeal of the monastic community gathered under their scrutiny.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Tomeković, 2011, p. 200

<sup>2</sup> *eadem*, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> R. Taft SJ, 1986.

Nevertheless, several Moldavian post-byzantine monuments display a surprising integration of the ascetic saints in the program of the eastern bay of the naos (fig. 1); placed on the threshold of the sanctuary, the monks join the choir of martyrs – alluding therefore to a possible parallel between martyrdom and ascetic life, a theme which could be traced back to theological writings underpinning the byzantine approach to monastic seclusion. This peculiar iconographic option should be considered, however, in the broader context of the ‘monastic participation’ to the iconography of the naos in general, in search of a comparison with late Byzantine parallels<sup>4</sup> and of an overall taxonomy for such an infrequent selection of the sanctoral displayed in a space governed by the Eucharistic liturgy.



1. St. Nicolas, Bălinești, walls of the eastern bay of the naos. Sts George and Demetrius (N), Sts Anthony, Gelasius and Palladius (S).

One of the most usual strategies for incorporating the saintly monks into the program of the naos allocates their portraits to its western sector, a practice signalled in monasteries from Mount Athos, but also in many churches of the late Byzantine and post-Byzantine intervals; for instance, in Cyprus, at Agiasmati, in 1494, Philip Goul inserts in the western bay of the

<sup>4</sup> Such practice was not alien to Late Byzantine iconography, which frequently disposes monks alongside with the martyrs, sometimes only at the western and eastern extremities of the naos, but otherwise in different other areas of this liturgical space. The first occurrence is traditional (western part of the church), the latter represents a development registered from the 12<sup>th</sup> onwards, while the last option is met in ensembles from the 14 and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries; see S. Tomeković, 2011, pp. 200-203, with abundant examples.

naos, alongside saints Theodore Stratelates and Demetrius, a whole group of monks: Stephen the Younger – the Iconophile confessor –, John Climacus, Euthymius – in the company of two other unidentified monks –, Anthony, Theodosius the Coenobiarch, Arsenius, Sabbas, Cyriacus and Onouphius<sup>5</sup>. On the same island, in the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, at Palaiochoro, a similar strategy brings forth, at the western confines of the naos, the portraits of Athanasius the Athonite, Sabbas, Theodosius the Coenobiarch, Arsenius, Hilarion and Onouphius<sup>6</sup>. These examples are consistent with a practice attested at Moldovița (1537)<sup>7</sup>, where the monks build up



2. Moldovița monastery, northern wall in the western bay of the naos.

a compact group, placed in the company of saints Constantine and Helena (fig. 2); saint Paisius stands on the western wall, grasping his abbot crozier,

<sup>5</sup> A. & J.A. Stylianos, 1997, pl. 125 on p. 216 and no. 43=37 in the list of iconographic themes.

<sup>6</sup> A. & J.A. Stylianos, 1997, pl. 160 on p. 272.

<sup>7</sup> Year mentioned in the inscription above the eastern porch in the narthex; E. A. Kozak, 1903, p. 188, n. 2.

while four other monks – the second is Theodosius and the fourth, Anthony – are depicted on the northern wall of the western bay, holding wrapped scrolls. Prior to this iconographic instance, Paisius alone – as a *pars pro toto*, seemingly – joined the same saints Constantine and Helena on the western wall of the naos at Humor (1535)<sup>8</sup>, with an opened roll which shows one of the most popular exhortations attributed to anchorites:

*‘These three things God requires of all [the baptized: right faith in the heart, truth on the tongue, temperance in the body]’<sup>9</sup>.*

Another display of monks in the western bay of the naos takes place at Pătrăuți (before 1496)<sup>10</sup>; in this case their insertion is prompted by the depiction of the Dormition of the Virgin in



3. Holy Cross, Pătrăuți, western bay of the naos.

<sup>8</sup> Date advanced by S. Ullea, due to an inscription that he read within the funeral portrait of *hegoumene* Paisius, on the southern outer wall, next to the apse; S. Ullea, 1959, p. 67, n. 4. This dating was questioned by A. Efremov, who drew attention to the fact that the portrait does not belong to the original layer of fresco; A. Efremov, 1973, pp. 78-79.

<sup>9</sup> B. Ward SLG, 1984, p. 45 (St. Gregory the Theologian). For the epigraphic issues related to the depictions of the saintly monks in Moldavian wall paintings, a recent contribution belongs to C. Ciobanu; this quoting from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, in C. Ciobanu, 2014, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> T. Sinigalia, 2004, p. 42-47 and *eadem*, 2004a, pp. 63-64; *conf.* M.A. Muzicescu, 1964, p. 368, n. 2.



the lunette, the intrados of the large western arch being consequently dedicated to several saintly monks (fig. 3), some of whom were worshipped chiefly as authors of liturgical hymns in praise of the *Theotokos* (in spite of the poor preservation of the paintings, one could still read the names of Romanos and Cosmas, but also the epithet ‘the Damascene’, pointing at the prolific hymnographer John of Damascus; unfortunately, none of their depicted open scrolls is legible). Such an iconographic option is in keeping with a late byzantine tradition, registered for instance in the church of saints Joachim and Anna (the *King’s Church*) at Studenica, and in other late byzantine monuments from the Balkans (Bačkovó, Bojana, but also later 14<sup>th</sup> century monuments in the areas of Thessaloniki and Veria)<sup>11</sup>. It does not fully account, however, for the displaying of the whole group of eight monks on this western arch; the presence of saints Sabbas and Isidoros (whose names are still readable) confirms that this insertion of saintly monks is only prompted by the association with the Dormition, extending however beyond the restrictive selection of hymnographers.

In fact, a yet more surprising integration of the saintly monks in the programme of the uppermost areas of the naos, under the pendentives, is met at Arbore (1541?)<sup>12</sup>, on the northern and southern arches. The eastern section of the northern intrados displays two hermits – the western counterpart of the intrados is, unfortunately, completely lost – while the eastern and western segments of the southern intrados depict *stylites* and *dendrites* (fig. 4). Their addition could be linked to the iconography of the archivolt, dedicated to categories of saints (from east to south, west and north, are depicted bishops, martyrs, holy women and monks respectively); within this *All-Saints* reference, the placing of columns and trees – used by the *stylites* and *dendrites* in their ascetic exercises – on the intrados of the southern arch echoes the byzantine practice of metonymic association of

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<sup>11</sup> G. Babić, 1987, pp. 166-167 and n. 143; A. Grabar, 1928, pp. 79-80.

<sup>12</sup> The date of the wall paintings in Arbore is still a debated issue; for several scholars, who argue in favour of a dating before 1511, the iconographic peculiarities displayed in this ensemble point at the interval of Stephen the Great’s reign; I.I. Solcanu, 1975, pp. 35-55, and T. Sinigalia, 2004a, pp. 70-72. On the other hand, a closer look at the cycle of the patron saint painted in the narthex might reinforce the traditional dating, in 1541, or at least after 1523; C. Costea, 2004-2005, pp. 3-6.

pillars from the architectural structure of the sacred space with depictions of these severe hermits<sup>13</sup> as ‘pillars of faith’.

The presence of the saintly monks in the iconography of the naos extends towards the eastern areas at Dorohoi (1522-1525)<sup>14</sup>, where saints Euthymius and Stephen the Younger partake to the choir of martyrs in the western half of the northern apse, while three more monks (among whom only Anthony could be ascertained by his name inscription) stand on the northern wall of the eastern bay, in front of the sanctuary, opposite to another ascetic model, saint John the Baptist, turned towards a theophany of the blessing Christ.



4. Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Arbore, western segment of the southern arch of the naos.

<sup>13</sup> RBK, VI, s.v. *Mönche ü Nonnen*, p. 550.

<sup>14</sup> S. Ullea, 1964, pp. 69-79.

Until a much needed cleansing of the frescoes, one could not advance any hypothesis concerning the identity of the other saint associated with the Prodrome, on the southern wall. The large, opened scroll that he grasps might suggest, while waiting for the restorer's intervention, that yet another prophet stands in front of the three eremites. A similar paralleling, on the threshold of the apse, of saintly monks with ascetic *exempla* taken from the Bible is noticed even earlier at Popăuți (1496)<sup>15</sup>, where two unidentified monks, on the northern wall, are mirrored by Elijah and Elisha (**fig. 5**); most significantly, the rolls displayed by the prophets address the issue of spiritual filiation and its charismatic strength (a rather monastic concern). 'And Elijah said: Elisha, you stay here, the Lord is only sending me to the Jordan' (2 Kings, 2: 6); Elisha has the spiritual clairvoyance to disobey this command, and this will grant him the fulfilment of a bold request: 'And Elisha said: Let me inherit a double share of your spirit' (2 Kings, 2: 9). The Moldavian milieu was



5. St. Nicolas, Popăuți, southern wall of the eastern bay of the naos.

<sup>15</sup> S. Ullea, 1964a, p. 445.

familiar with the relevance of Elijah as an archetype for monastic contemplation – fostering, on the same grounds, his association with John the Baptist –, aspect epitomized most clearly by the unexpected program of the diaconicon in Neamț monastery, which harbours an abbreviated cycle of his life<sup>16</sup>. Within the same logic of a parallel drawn between saintly monks and biblical models of ascetic contemplation, one must count the iconography from the unusually large eastern bay of the naos at Baia (1535–1538?)<sup>17</sup>, where John the Baptist joins a group of monks; one of them is Pachomius, whose presence invited the painter to substitute his iconic portrait with the narrative depiction of his vision, in which an angel prescribes the monastic frock as salvific device.

As one could already perceive from the aforementioned occurrences, the saintly monks, sometimes accompanied by biblical models of ascetic life, are given place in areas of the naos, usually set aside for martyrs. This practice is most visible at St. George in Hârlău (1530?)<sup>18</sup>, where three monks – of whom only saint Stephen the Younger can be identified, due to the icon of Christ that he grasps – are painted in the western half of the northern apse, while saints Anthony and Euthymius share the northern wall of the bay in front of the iconostasis. Placed across from them, saints George and Demetrius sit on an elongated bench, crowned by angels descending from a central glory, a halo which encloses a third angel that blesses the two seated martyrs. This most obvious pairing of saintly monks and martyrs was already advanced at Bălinești (after 1500)<sup>19</sup>, where the same great martyrs, in the same triumphal rendering, are greeted, from the opposite wall of the eastern bay, by saints Anthony, Gelasius and Palladius (fig. 1).

At Bălinești, however, the crossing between martyrs and monks is more complex and systematic, as all the openings that pierce the walls show portrayals of eremites, interrupting the succession of martyrs ranged on the lower register around the naos: the southern window displays Daniel the

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<sup>16</sup> V. Bedros, 2008, pp. 117-125.

<sup>17</sup> Dating advanced by S. Ullea, 1966, p. 228; the same author suggested an even more restrictive time frame, 1535-1537; S. Ullea, 1972, p. 41, n. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Based on a stylistic evaluation, Ullea places the wall paintings from Hârlău later than Dobrovăț but earlier than Proboța; S. Ullea, 1984, no. 4, pp. 286 and 299.

<sup>19</sup> C. Popa, 1981, pp. 35-37 (proposes the time frame 1500-1511) and C. Costea, 1992, p. 278, n. 5 (opts in favour of the earliest limit, on iconographic grounds); cf. S. Ullea, 1964a, p. 425, who argued for the dating of the wall painting in 1493.



Dendrite and Joannicius, the northern one – Sabbas of Serbia and Arsenius, while the passage to the narthex (fig. 6) is reserved to the severely ascetic saints Onouphius and Mark the Anchorite (?), associated with the martyrdom of saint Ignatius (in the lunette) and a large Mandyllion<sup>20</sup> (in the axis of the large embrasure). It is worth mentioning that this pairing of the Mandyllion with iconic depictions of monks also stamps the entry in the naos at Părhăuți (approx. 1522?)<sup>21</sup>, where the selection brings forth saints Theodotus and Gelasius, and at Moldovița, where saints Agathon and Anastasius face another image consistent with the iconography of thresholds, the Communion of Saint Mary of Egypt, depicted across from them, on the other jamb.

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<sup>20</sup> On the issue of this image frequently used in the iconography of passages and its interpretation in such a context, see L. Hadermann-Misguich, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> A recent exposition of the problematic dating of this ensemble in C. Ciobanu, 2012, pp. 121-126.

The most unanticipated shift between martyrs and monks is met in the naos of Saint Nicholas at Rădăuți (before 1500?)<sup>22</sup>, whose walls are in fact fully occupied by the latter category.



6. St. Nicolas, Bălinești, the doorway to the narthex.

Only a Deësis of imperial type and the votive portrait, facing each other in the eastern and western ends of the southern ‘aisle’ of this atypical basilica-like naos, join the copious choir of monks surrounding the liturgical space, as guardians overseeing the tombs of Stephen the Great’s ancestors. However, only the cleansing of the original wall painting – scarcely discernible, under the 19<sup>th</sup> century overpainting, doubled by a thick layer of dust and smoke – could ascertain the total absence of martyrs; their depictions might show up upon the massive pillars dividing the ‘aisles’. As regarding the monks, on iconographic basis, one could recognize saints Barlaam and Josaphat (crowned), Gerasimus (with the lion), Stephen the Younger (clutching his cherished icon of Christ), Euphrosynus the Cook

<sup>22</sup> The chancel iconography in this monument is consistent with the selection noticed in ensembles painted during the reign of Stephen the Great; one could agree that the wall paintings were undertaken in the interval 1479-1482, when the voivode ordered tombstones to be installed upon the graves of his ancestors; S. Ullea, 1965, p. 349 and V. Drăguț, 1982, p. 184. The outcome of a recent archaeological campaign carried within the monument was also published, but the issue of the painting’s chronology was not scrutinized on this occasion; L. & A. Bătrâna, 2012.

(holding the precious branch of apples from Paradise) and Pachomius (receiving from God's angel instructions regarding the monastic attire). Surprisingly enough, voivode Stephen is shown in the votive portrait with an opened scroll which addresses to Christ a prayer of intercession: "Most merciful Lord, receive the payer of thy sinful servant [...] receive [...] these gifts that I most eagerly offer thee"<sup>23</sup>; such iconography is unparalleled in the votive iconography of the interval – if we leave aside the only and equally outstanding exception of the funeral portrait of the voivode's brother-in-law, Șendrea, at Dolheștii Mari<sup>24</sup>.

The association of the ruler's portrait with an abundant selection of saintly monks might be indicative of an inspiration drawn from Serbian models. First of all, the only known occurrence of a votive depiction in which the donor addresses a prayer of intercession, in late Byzantine tradition, is the portrait of Stefan Lazarević at Resava (before 1418)<sup>25</sup>; the presence of Saint Sabbas of Serbia – whose cult is closely linked to the political theology developed under Nemanja dynasty<sup>26</sup> – among the monks represented in the naos at Bălinești could only be conducive to such a hypothesis. More significantly however, both Resava and Ravanica (towards 1387) display the votive portraits in the western bay of the naos, surrounded by monks – option which was interpreted as a marker of a hesychast influence<sup>27</sup> – and such choice could foreshadow the unusual iconography in the naos of Saint Nicholas at Rădăuți.

Leaving aside the issue of mapping the plausible transmission path conveying to the Moldavian iconographic repertoire the practice of blending together the monks with the martyrs, this iconographic peculiarity points at an equally striking spiritual background, which perhaps stimulated the gathering perceived in the visual realm. One of the most influential

<sup>23</sup> I must express my gratitude to Mrs. Anna Adashinskaya, who kindly confirmed the translation I proposed for this peculiar inscription (of which several lines are almost illegible); Mrs. Adashinskaya intends to examine this inscription personally and to compare it with the similar cases (Șendrea at Dolheștii Mari and Stefan Lazarević at Resava).

<sup>24</sup> On the issue of the compressed iconographic program which develops around this votive and/or funeral portrait, with a survey of the opinions expressed in previous scholarship (which did not paid much attention to the scroll grasped by Șendrea), see Buculei, 2002, p. 86, n. 18.

<sup>25</sup> B. Todić, 1995, pp. 100-103.

<sup>26</sup> On this issue, a recent contribution was brought by A. Adashinskaya, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> D. Simić-Lazar, 2000, pp. 153-154.

monastic authors during the last centuries of Byzantium, Saint Gregory of Sinai<sup>28</sup>, made a point of the fact that the spiritual exercises carried throughout a contemplative life involve a combat within the 'stadium of the mind', fought by the divine grace against the diabolical delusion; divine grace

*'wishes, with the aid of our deliberate choice, gradually to lessen the latter [i.e. the diabolical delusion's] influence altogether in the course of the struggle, so that having 'fought the good fight' according to the rules in the stadium of the mind, we may be crowned victors and be veritable martyrs, who have defeated not the Greeks [i.e. the pagan persecutors] but Satan himself'*<sup>29</sup>.

Throughout the same interval, Saint Symeon of Thessalonika addresses the same issue, boldly calling those carrying an ascetic life 'living martyrs' and describing the challenges of their monastic seclusion with a terminology borrowed from the literature concerning martyrdom<sup>30</sup>.

This motif is in fact even older, being attested, for instance, in works by Peter of Damascus (*floruit* mid-twelve century), who declares that:

*'the Fathers, instead of physical martyrdom, suffered martyrdom in their consciences, dying deliberate death instead of bodily death, that the mind might conquer the desires of the flesh and reign in our Lord Jesus Christ'*<sup>31</sup>.

The motif is even more poignantly expressed by Symeon Metaphrastes in his *Paraphrase in the one hundred and fifty chapters of the Fifty Discourses of Saint Makarios the Egyptian*:

*'just as the martyrs were submitted to many tortures and displayed constancy unto death, thus meriting crowns and glory, and the more numerous and severe their torments were, the greater their glory and their boldness towards God; so likewise souls on which various sufferings have been inflicted either visibly by men or spiritually by evil thoughts or brought on by bodily diseases, if they bear them patiently to the end, will be awarded the same crowns as the martyrs and achieve the same boldness as they. For the martyrdom which the latter suffered through the oppression of men, they would have suffered from the spirits of evil'*<sup>32</sup>.

The assimilation of the ascetic life with martyrdom harks back, as a matter of fact, to the earliest Christian literature, which already nurtured the

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<sup>28</sup> For Gregory of Sinai, see K. Ware, 1972, pp. 3-22 and A. Strezova, 2014, pp. 13-19.

<sup>29</sup> *Apud* D. Balfour, 1983, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> D. Balfour, 1981, pp. 171-184.

<sup>31</sup> *Logoi synoptikoi pneumatikes gnoseos* 24, in: *Philokalia*, p. 168.

<sup>32</sup> *Philokalia*, p. 225; PG 34, 948 B-C.



idea of a ‘martyrdom of conscience’; the etymology itself invites to such an approach, given the homonymy *martyr*–*witness*<sup>33</sup>.

The Moldavian theological milieu might have been cognizant of the literary tradition of linking together ascetic seclusion and martyrdom, through a direct contact with works written by Gregory of Sinai; a Moldavian manuscript from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, preserved nowadays in the Synodal Library from Bucharest, contains, for instance, a section from one of his lengthier treatises<sup>34</sup>; in this division, dedicated to the virtues, paragraph 98 could be relevant to the issue at stake in this study. Addressing the question of the senses, St. Gregory discriminates between the bodily senses, aimed at experiencing the material world, and the spiritual faculties, which make possible its intellectual assessment; both function in a similar manner and should work in harmony, guided by a common rule provisioned by reason and spirit:

*‘the senses, on the one hand, do scrutinise unmistakably the sensitive aspects, and the same is done as well, on the other hand, by the spiritual faculties in respect to matters of the intellect; this happens especially when they are not under some diabolic assailment, which would turn them one against the other, rebelling henceforth against the rule imposed by mind and spirit.’*<sup>35</sup>

The motif of the ‘good fight’ which takes place in the ‘stadium of the mind’, seen as a spiritual confrontation between divine grace and devilish influence, could be hereafter counted among the ideas which were familiar to Moldavian theologians. This theme is also the backbone for the process

<sup>33</sup>D. Balfour, 1983, pp. 31-34.

<sup>34</sup>Synodal Library, ms II 280, f. 360<sup>r</sup>, incip: Начало добродѣтелемъ и бытїе бл<a>го прѣ(д)ложенїе е(с)<тъ> рекше желанїе добра(га), *conf.* Migne, PG 150, 1264 C: πγ’ Αρχή τῶν ἀρετῶν καὶ γένεσις, ἡ ἀγαθὴ πρόθεσις, εἴτ’ οὖν ἡ ἔφεσις τοῦ καλοῦ / 1263 C: 83 Ut initium et origo virtutum est bona voluntas, scilicet virtutum desiderium. See Ion Radu Mircea, 2005, s.v. Grégoire de Sinaï. The text included in this Moldavian manuscript comes from the *Greatly beneficial chapters, in an acrostic arrangement* (Κεφαλαία δι’ ἀκροστιχίδος, πᾶν ὠφέλιμα), PG 150, 1240-1300.

<sup>35</sup> PG 150, 1272 B: Ἡ’ [...] Αἱ μὲν γὰρ αἰσθήσεις τὰ αἰσθητὰ, αἱ δὲ [i.e. αἱ ψυχικὰς δυνάμεις] τὰ νοητὰ τρανῶς ἐποπτεύουσιν · ὅτε μάλιστα οὐκ ἔστι μάχη τις σατανικὴ ἐν αὐταῖς, τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοῦς καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ἀντιτασσομένη / 1271 B: 98 [...] Et sensus quidem sensibilia animæ vero potentiæ spiritualia clare percipiunt, *præcipue quando nullus est in eis Satanae impetus legi mentis et spiritus repugnans* (italics mine). I must express my gratitude to Prof. Theodora Antonopoulou, (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) who kindly accepted to verify the translation of this passage.

of assimilating the monks with the martyrs, an idea which does so frequently inform iconographic selections operated in local monuments. A most telling occurrence of such practice is the selection from the doorway leading to the naos, in the church of Saint Nicolas at Bălinești (fig. 6): while being inflicted martyrdom in the *Colosseum*, Saint Ignatius confidently gazes at the *Mandylion*, gloriously displayed on the spandrel up above – a rendering which seems to echo the saint's bold claim:

*'I am God's wheat, and I am being ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I might prove to be pure bread [of Christ]'*<sup>36</sup>.

The jambs of the passage show two anchorites, whose strenuous spiritual exercises are thus assimilated to the martyr's torment, under the sign of a common confession of faith. Such a suggestion is made manifest through their gathering under the protecting veil of the *Mandylion* – a sign of their shared triumph.

A most significant aspect of this meeting between text and image, in the cases brought to light by this analysis, consists of the fact that several visual renderings engage with a set of issues shared with the written tradition in a manner which escapes the overall ancillary linking of the image to its literary source(s). The parallel drawn between the saintly monks and the martyrs seems to point generally at the 'good fight', an idea which could have been familiar to the restrictive, elitist milieu of those cognizant of the theological works invoked earlier, but could have been dispersed as well, as a leitmotif of the monastic folklore, within lower strata of society.

To bring this analysis to an end, it is crucial to take the aforementioned iconographic options as symptoms of a monastic milieu which was aware of the late Byzantine tradition. According to this tradition, the monk could be cast in the privileged role of a most active intercessor – a view which gains in relevance due to a specifically Serbian development. The surprising case of the naos iconography at Rădăuți fully advocates in favour of such a conclusion, suggesting that the monk was seen as the appropriate spiritual model for the ruler; one must stress, in fact, that the large majority of selections evoked in this survey (and the most spectacular, in any case) belong to iconographic programs displayed in public churches or in private chapels owned by the voivode or by high-ranking members of

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<sup>36</sup> *Romans*, 4: 1-2; the formula 'of Christ' or 'of God' is frequently added in copies, though it is absent in the oldest preserved manuscript.

the aristocracy. Those in charge of the secular power were therefore prompted to emulate Josaphat, the prince who cautiously observes the spiritual advice offered by his master, the eremite Barlaam. As a matter of fact, the ‘New Josaphat’ as an ideal model for the Christian ruler<sup>37</sup> stands indeed at the core of yet another significant – and contemporary – product of the Slavo-Romanian heritage, *The Admonitions of Neagoe Basarab to his son, Theodosius*<sup>38</sup>. On the other hand, the idea of ‘spiritual torment’ inflicted by the ‘good fight’ against demonic temptation represents an alternative ground upon which the perception of ‘monks as martyrs’ might have dwelled just as well.

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<sup>37</sup> V. Djurić, 1985, pp. 99-109.

<sup>38</sup> See, most recently, P. Guran, 2012, p. 341.

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