

Some Thoughts on the Dyptich of Two Churches from Iasi from the 17th century: St. John Chrysostomos (Zlataust) and the White Church (The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple or Stratenia)

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Abstract:

The analysis of the texts of dyptichs from two churches in Iași dating from the second half of the 17th century, St. John Chrysostomos (Zlataust) and the White Church (whose feast day is the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple or Stratenia), both (re)built by the princely family, during Gheorghe Duca's third rule in Moldavia (1678-1683), confirms and gives a more refined expression of data on the members of the princely family and of the significance of their initiative, and it contributes to the more precise picture of the features of an age of grand Romanian cultural projects.

Keywords: *Church, dyptich, Zlataust, the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, Iași, Duca*

In the second half of the 17th century two churches from Iași were renovated: St. John Chrysostomos (Zlataust) and the White Church (dedicated to the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple or Stratenia), which are less known, judging by the sources of the time. This article is an investigation into the effort of the founders and the church's significance, based on a thorough investigation of the various sources of the epoch; in addition, we shall focus on other aspects as well in our attempt to decipher the meaning of the contents of the founding dyptichs of the two churches in Iași.

I. St. John Chrysostomos (Zlataust) Church

In the northern part of Iași, not far from the political, administrative and ecclesiastic centre of the city, there stands an old church, majestically, preserved to this day since past times, surrounded by other buildings it

bears no resemblance with, architectonically speaking, an old church; its dimensions may now seem modest to the visitor, yet a closer look at proportions, at how walls were imbedded and the interior was divided into parts, generously allows beholders and pilgrims both the possibility of understanding great projects, and the proof of its ancient founders' steadfast goodness. It also creates a living impression of a fortunate encounter between cult and culture, grace, art and prayer. The church's patron saint is St. John Chrysostomos (or Zlataust, as he was once called), and the historical events throughout time brought its fame and uniqueness to this day in the complicated history of the city of Iași.

Founders and Foundation: What Do the Chronicle, Church Inscription and Documentary Testimonies Record?

The reconstruction of the history of the first decades of "St. John Chrysostomos Church of Beilic" (Iorga 1908: 131) would later win the entire area the name of "St. John of Beilic" mahalla (Stoicescu 1974: 519 – the document dates from the 6th of September 1801); however, it provided no certitude, as expected, in the absence of new comprehensive archaeological investigations or documentary information. Scarce information collected from various sources has attested the existence of the church since the second half of the 17th century and the change of its initial status as a church into a monastery, towards the end of Voivode Gheorghe Duca's last reign in Moldova (1678-1683).

In the epoch it was known that the first founder of the church had been Voivode Ștefan Tomșa. There was much hesitation as to the identification of the Zlataust founder from among the two Moldavian rulers by the same name; the former, with a short-lived reign between 1563-1564, and his son, who ended up ruling twice on the throne of Iași, between 1611 and 1616, and between 1621 and 1623 (Bejenaru 1926; Iacob 2010; this latter ruler also founded Solca monastery). Latest research considers the second variant to be more plausible (Chelcu 2007: 27-33; Rădvan 2015: 203-238). In the index of the second volume of *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* (2000: 714), it was noted that the quality of founder was awarded to Ștefan Tomșa II; N. Grigoraș (1963: 281) and Dan Bădărău, Ioan Caproșu (2007: 129) opt for placing the building of St. John

Chrysostomos church during Ștefan Tomșa I's short reign (an opinion which was subsequently taken over by others, as well).

The first documentary mention of "voivode Ștefan Tomșa's church having St. John Chrysostomos as patron saint" and where "father Ionașco, the archpriest" served, dates from the 15th of May 1666 (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* II 2000: 117, doc. 128; "father Ionașco from St. John Chrysostomos church" is, yet, mentioned earlier, as well, in the document drafted on the 25th of December 1663, during Eustratie Dabija's reign (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* II 2000: 61, doc. 59). The place chosen by the founder was not located far from the ruler's residence on Tărbujenească or Trapezănească Street (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City*, II 2000: 325, doc. 421, of the 20th of October 1674; "Ștefan Vodă Tomșa's bridge" is also mentioned in the document of the 12th of March 1657 as given by Gheorghe Ștefan to Ștefan Boul (the Bull), great overseer of the Lower Land after "having bought it entirely from Voivode Ștefan"; see *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* I 1999: 485-486, doc. 426; the latest owner was married to Ruxandra, Ștefan Tomșa II's daughter (Chelcu 2007: 5) and the land he possessed was located at the town's periphery, towards "Cacaina" (the place where the town's trash was dumped and which also gave name to the water stream that crossed it); the document from the 15th of May 1688 mentions the place "above the bridge of the late Voivode Ștefan, where the church whose patron saint is St. John Chrysostomos was located" (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* II 2000: 567, doc. 647). The church served the faithful of the mahalla ("uliceni" or "people"; *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* II 2000: 567, doc. 647) which witnessed the rise of a spiritual life around it, bearing resemblance to the other churches from Iași during the time. With this status, of mahalla church, sometimes enjoying the special attention of the authorities, the church from Iași had been and would still be mentioned in known documents.

The prestige and importance of St. John Chrysostomos church can be noticed from the act of the 20th of August 1676 through which St.

Metropolitan Dosoftei strengthens the rights of the undertakers' guild (their situation had been researched the previous year, along with Patriarch Dositheos Notaras of Jerusalem). The document reads that the guild

was hard-working (it was necessary-*our note*) to bury the dead, the poor and the foreigners who died there, in Iași, on the streets and under the fences, amidst garbage, as they were all collected, taken care of and buried properly. All by themselves they raised the board on which lay their bones and carried the dead on their shoulders to the holy church and, due to the generosity of merciful believers and with their own means, they paid for covering the bodies in cloth and paid the priests for the burial after they dug the graves with their own hands. This is also true when it comes to the corpses of those who passed away here in Iași, their doomed death-place for their fault, and with God's will, their corpses are watched for two days and on the third day they are buried (...); his beatitude, the patriarch (...) praised and blessed these hardworking undertakers,

and to their status,

his Beatitude neither added nor did he remove a thing", but it remained "as it has always been, since the ages of ages (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City II 2000: 414-415, doc. 457*).

The document mentions the existence of a starost (head) of undertakers at St. John Chrysostomos, whose competence is said to have extended (together with the undertaker from *Precista /the Mother of God/ church*) "from the holy Golia monastery down" (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City II 2000: 416, doc. 457*). On the 15th of July 1679 there is a mention of "Vasilie the shoe maker", the head of the undertakers from "Lower St John Chrysostomos" church and of his wife, Aftenia, who bought from Gheorghie, the fur coat maker and his wife, Anița, a house on "Ulița Fierbinte (the Hot Street), between Rango's and Dima's house, the seğmens' captain" (among the witnesses there are "priests Neculai and Gligorașco from Lower St. John Chrysostomos"; *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City II 2000: 194-195, doc. 225*; the names of the two heads of the undertakers, Pavăl and Neculai Cara, are also mentioned).

It was also noticed that, as in the case of other churches from Iași, St. John Chrysostomos was fortified and some of the elements have been preserved to this day (Dumitru Năstase 1957: 86); however, it is difficult

to assess properly the initiator of the initiative in question and its end; in the document from the 2nd of April 1703, Constantin Duca, son of Gheorghe Duca, writes that St. John Chrysostomos Church “was built from scratch by his departed father” (*Documente privitoare la istoria oraşului Iaşi/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* III 2000: 470-471, doc. 517; *Documente româneşti din arhiva mănăstirii Xiropotam, Catalog/ Romanian Documents from the Archive of Xeropotamou Monastery, Catalogue* I 2005: 112, doc. 204).

Additional information on the modest aspect of the first church and the initiative to build a more solid one out of stone, as well as the church’s turning into a monastery, followed by its embellishment and consecration, according to the ruler’s implicit plans, can be found in Nicolae Costin’s *Letopiseţ (Chronicle)* when the author makes reference to Gheorghe Duca. The latter was a Roumeliot Greek who had come to Moldavia during the reign of Vasile Lupu, his great benefactor whom he tried to imitate. He got married to Anastasia, daughter from the second marriage (with Dumitru Buhuş, great treasurer of Vasile Lupu) of lady Ecaterina or Dafina, Voivode Eustratie Dabija’s wife, and had learned the secrets of politics during the hard years that followed his protector’s loss of reign. In Moldavia, he would be voivode thrice (between 1665-1666, 1668-1672 and 1678-1683), in Wallachia once, between 1674-1678, and in 1681, he was appointed hetman of Ukraine by the Turks.

When he refers to the important events during the last reign in Gheorghe Duca’s Moldavia, in the paragraph that precedes the depiction of the Moldavians’ mobilization to take part in the Turkish campaign against the Austrians and the siege of Vienna in 1683, the chronicler writes down the following:

During this year, 7190 (1682 – *our note*), Voivode Duca raised St. John Chrysostomos monastery of Iaşi, on a place where there used to lie a small church, built on high stone grounds by Voivode Ştefan Tomşa; and after he endowed it with farm land, he dedicated it to the Rum, to Andriano Monastery, from Arghirocastro, as first, Hlincea monastery had been theirs, and Voivode Duca took it and gave it to his monastery, Cetăţuia for the estates around it (Costin 1872: 24).

Nicolae Costin was married to Ileana, Gheorghe Duca’s daughter (their wedding must have taken place in Iaşi, around April-May 1693; Neculce 1982: 351), therefore he was certainly familiar with the relatives

from his wife's side. When he was writing his *Letopiseț /Chronicle* (he started drafting the text after 1697 or 1700, and he died in September 1712; Petre f. a.: 266-267; Panaitescu 1935-1936: 261-262), the Voivode's highly experienced brother-in-law, who was not necessarily a supporter of the ruler's initiatives, was definitely aware of the arrangements in the ecclesiastic policy of the Duca family (as he was married to Ileana, Gheorghe Duca's daughter – Stoicescu 1971: 391; Atanasiu 2015: 338). Thus, in a convincing manner, he concisely explained what was probably familiar to the ones involved in the church administration of the time, namely Gheorghe Duca's ingenious way to endow his main foundation that guarded the capital from the hill nearby, Cetățuia (which should have become the family necropolis), built between 1669 and 1672 and dedicated to the Holy Sepulchre (Stoicescu 1974: 441-444), with the properties of the Hlincea Monastery (founded around 1587 by Maria, daughter of Petru Șchiopul and her husband, Zotu Tzigara - Grigoraș 1977; Stoicescu 1974: 453-455); this monastery was located in the immediate vicinity of Cetățuia, yet dedicated to Andriano (for its connections with the Romanian principalities, see the most comprehensive study authored by Lidia Cotovanu, 2009: 219-360 – with a rich bibliography).

Through a subtle and firm administrative decision and ecclesiastic diplomacy, the latter is offered, as implicit compensation, the renewed church from the Beilic mahalla of Iași (regarding these ruler's decisions, it was written that “when the church was raised ... there was an artifice for the benefit of Duca Voivode's most important foundation”, Cetățuia monastery; Chelcu 2007: 6). Perhaps this is why the building of the latter was carried out very quickly. It was also noticed (a fact well known to the contemporaries, too) that the ruler did not finish granting the monastery the necessary revenues for support, which would lead to most unfortunate consequences in the following decades. As it was, the wealth of the new monastic settlement never proved to be enough and shortly there would be claims and misunderstanding, rivalry and envy, hence the resentment, disputes or trials; under the present legal terms, there were cases of perjury, counterfeit and conspiracy to counterfeit.

The minute research of the documents and facts regarding the people involved showed that the fight for wealth lasted for “more than

twenty years (...)” and it “incurred several dozen trials at various courts and during a series of rulers” (Zahariuc 2008: 57; *Documente românești din arhiva mănăstirii Xiropotam, Catalog/ Romanian Documents from the Archive of Xeropotamou Monastery, Catalogue I* 2005: 125, doc. 237; 126-127; doc. 241; 127-128, doc. 242; 132, doc. 251; 132-133; doc. 253). Other data which may contribute to a better understanding of what we could call the 1682 rebuilding act of the church are to be found in the document from the 22nd of October 1683. Herein, another reason for the legitimate interest shown by the voivode’s family in the church of Iași can be clearly distinguished, as well as the initiatives already put into practice. Thus, “Voivode Ștefan Radu”, Gheorghe Duca’s son-in-law spoke to “whoever needed to know” about the intention to offer to the church the property passed on to him, as heir of the founder, on the premises where the church was located in town (“a place here in the town of Iași where the church of my ancestor, Voivode Ștefan Tomșa, was raised”).

In other words, as follower of the first founder and member of the present ruler’s family, he exerts his duty to support the ancestor’s church; through this approach, seen and accepted by everybody, he claimed both his legitimate succession to the inheritance of the former ruler whose name he bore. He had the document to prove that the initiative was his, not someone else’s, not to mention that he had already convinced his father-in-law of the need to cover “all the costs”: “so, being my land, I did not let the efforts of my ancestors fall to ruin, as I was in the country, too”; on the contrary, “I asked my father, his highness Voivode Duca (Gheorghe – *our note*), to build a church on this place and he raised St. John Chrysostomos’s church at his highness’ expense” (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City II* 2000: 525, doc. 589).

The beyzade Ștefan Radu was the son of Radu Leon, who had ruled Wallachia between 1664 and 1669, and he was considered to be related to the former ruler of Moldavia, Ștefan Tomșa, although some deem this kinship uncertain (Radu Leon’s years of reign witnessed the first painting of the current Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest). Nowadays it is accepted that Ștefan was “Radu Leon’s son, Leon Tomșa’s grandson and Ștefan Tomșa’s great-grandson” (Zahariuc 2008: 58). In almost two years’ time, when Gheorghe Duca was no longer ruling and alive, only

he, the 1683 “witness”, has the quality of church founder mentioned as “built *from scratch by the beyzade Ștefan (our highlight), voivode Radu’s son, voivode Duca’s son-in-law*” (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City II* 2000: 541, doc. 614).

On the matter, Ștefan Radu, son of Radu Leon of Wallachia, and the circumstances of his joining Gheorghe Duca’s family, many things were known in the epoch. For a while he had been engaged to the woman who would later become his wife, Lady Ecaterina or Catrina, yet the girl’s parents did not want him anymore after some time. Nicolae Costin tells us why and his opinion was definitely the family’s, as well:

voivode Radu’s son got ill and it affected his mind but then he got well; however, he either had not recovered completely from insanity or he had always been mad, it was difficult to tell, certainly his way of walking was not that of a wise man (Costin 1872: 21; about Ștefăniță the beyzade, Chesarie Daponte also knows that “Voivode Duca knew him as ill-behaved and a drunkard”, hence the search for another fiancé by Voivode Duca for “his daughter”; Erbiceanu 2003: 24).

In 1680, Voivode Duca went to Tsargrad where he would receive the title of Ukraine’s hetman and he was accompanied by his daughter (Ecaterina) and mother-in-law (Lady Ecaterina-Dafina, Voivode Eustratie Dabija’s wife) for the ruler had “great dispute” with the one that was no longer desired as a son-in-law. Finally, thanks to the grand vizier’s intervention and “as commanded”, the wedding had to be officiated in Iași in the autumn of 1680 (Chesarie Daponte writes that the Voivode “was so much troubled by the order that his attendants said he had never suffered from such sorrow before”; Erbiceanu 2003: 25). Ion Neculce, who knew approximately the same things as Nicolae Costin, had taken part in the event and described the “great beautiful wedding” in Iași; many guests were invited (“all boyars from the lowest to the highest in rank”), foreign messengers included, and they all “partied for two weeks listening to a variety of music and enjoying much different dancing”;

they were dancing two dances in the court, two in the street, and all the boyars, their women, the merchants and the rest were dressed up. A great overseer of the court was leading one side of the dance and a counterpart, the other side (...);

the groom and the bride, as children of the ruler, did not dance outside, only the boyars were allowed. It was a marvellous wedding! (Neculce 1982: 262-263).

Nicolae Costin also remarks that “the country’s inhabitants were less cheerful due to the expense incurred by their poor nation” (Costin 1872: 21).

Probably these fortunate circumstances for the ruler’s family led to the offering of a beautiful icon of the Mother of God by Gheorghe Duca, later recorded by the chronicler (Chesarie Daponte, monk for a long time at the Athonite monastery, Xeropotamou, wrote that the icon of “the Holy Virgin – made in Moscow – with the neck only, not the face and hands, covered in silver” could be found “in Iași, at St. John Chrysostomos monastery” and it “belonged to the fortunate Voivode Duca”. Chesarie asked for it, received it and took it to the “fatherly monastery Scopelo”, then he wrote about it on several occasions (Erbiceanu 2003: 164-165). After Gheorghe Duca lost the reign and died (at Lvov, in the spring of 1685, far from his family, among strangers), we find Ștefan Radu in Istanbul along with his mother-in-law and the other relatives. From here he would come to Iași where he would settle down for good, with his other relatives, only during the reign of his brother-in-law, Constantin Duca, one of the most learned young men in his generation (in Dimitrie Cantemir’s *Istoria ieroglifică/ The Hieroglyphic History*, Constantin Duca is Vidra /the Otter/, Cantemir 1997: 42).

Regarding decisions on the ecclesiastic institution, the young ruler, just like his father in the past, turned the Dancu church, “the only one still standing in the centre of Iași, not dedicated to the Holy Land”, into a monastery, then dedicated it to the Xeropotamou Monastery from Mount Athos after “having renewed it and having made offerings to it in the previous months”; Zahariuc 2008: 58 and 61; Costin, 1872: 45-46). He is Voivode Gheorghe Duca’s only son to become a ruler (1693-1695; 1700-1703), wisely crossing the troubled waters of politics, yet without much success in the competition for influence in the country among the strong foreign neighbours and the inner disputes between boyar parties. As in other epochs, the only rule that governed the ambitions of all and which they all consequently accepted, was the absence of rules in the fight to gain power; the only good methods remained those that helped one reach personal aims.

Another wedding in the family of the ruler from Iași provides explanations which are more difficult to understand, yet necessary for a

proper reconstruction of Iași church history under the protection of Saint John Chrysostomos. This wedding takes place in the autumn of 1693, in the first year of Constantin Duca's reign, the son of the former ruler, Gheorghe Duca and of his wife, Anastasia (several months after the marriage of Ileana, the ruler's sister, to Nicolae Costin). The bride of Constantin Duca ("a young man of sixteen to seventeen years of age"), was Maria, daughter of Constantin Brâncoveanu who came to Iași accompanied by her grandmother, Lady Stanca, by her uncle, the seneschal Constantin Cantacuzino and others. The ceremony officiated by "a former patriarch of Tsargrad, namely Jacob" took place at Golia monastery and from there on "they pompously walked in great numbers uptown and downtown to the ruler's court". Then "they celebrated the marriage for three weeks" and partied "to be remembered in the town of Iași" (Neculce 1982: 354).

Information about the two spouses from the autumn of 1693 is provided by the St. John Chrysostomos (Zlataust) church inscription, preserved to this day. The text, carved in stone, shows that the monastery was built by Voivode Gheorghe Duca, his Lady, Anastasia, and "their beloved son, Constantin Voivode with his Lady, Maria" in 7191, having St. John Chrysostomos as patron saint (Iorga 1908: 131). Further on, the text reads differently. N. Iorga asks himself: "was it built in Dechev.?", yet insists on bringing into play the older reading of bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu, "in 30 days" – (Melchisedec 1885: 258; N. Iorga's transcription fails to mention Lady Anastasia Duca, probably out of haste; see C. Bobulescu's transcription in Bădărău, Caproșu 2007: 129).

Therefore, along with Gheorghe Duca and Lady Anastasia, the 1682 founders might have included Constantin Duca and Lady Maria; however, this could not have been possible since the latter, mentioned as husband and wife, only got married ten years later. Minute research of the sources showed that the inscription could have definitely been made and set where it belonged, on the church wall (certainly its initial position had been above the church wall; later on, at an unknown date, perhaps after the current verandah was added, the inscription was framed in the lateral church wall) in 1693; this could have occurred around the patron saint's feast day, on the 13th of November, when the two might have visited the church; as the groom's mother, Lady Anastasia should have been present

in Iași then, or only after that year; another theory is that the founding act of the church rather corresponds to the year 1682 (Chelcu 2007: 27-33; Rădvan 2015: 203-238), a fact that the compilers of the church inscription text recall quite well. If we were to believe the older reading proposition of the church inscription, they might have well remembered the short time – 30 days – that the construction works lasted, a worthwhile mention (Melchisedec 1885: 258).

The Dyptich

The information collected from the Greek inscription of the church Proskomedea apse is also worth considering due to its seminal importance and significance (it has been lost in time; the names in the dyptich continue to be uttered during the proper moments of the church services); it dates from the year of the (re)construction and mentions the names of rulers and noble relatives, as follows:

Voivode Eustratie Dabija and his Lady, Ecaterina (= Dafina, his wife, is Gheorghe Duca's mother-in-law; she died in 1683, so she could have witnessed the new foundation of her son-in-law; Maria-Magdalena Székely 2015: 25); Voivode Duca (the husband of a daughter from another husband of Dafina), Voivode Constantin, son of Voivode Duca, Voivode Ștefan, son of Voivode Radu (Duca's son-in-law), Lady Ecaterina, daughter of Voivode Duca (wife of Ștefan Leon), Voivode Matei, Voivode Ștefan, sons of Voivode Duca, Lady Elina (= Nicolae Costin's wife), Lady Alexandra (who died young), Lady Maria (who died young), Lady Safta, Lady Anastasia (who died young; Voivode Duca's daughters); – Hristu (Cârstea, Duca's brother), Anastasia (his wife), Dumitru, Iacov (sons?), Lady Maria, Voivode Dabija's daughter (Gheorghe Ruset's wife), Voivode Ștefan, Voivode Duca's son; – Lady Maria, Hristu's daughter (Ștefan Duca's wife); – Elena, Chirco, Țanto, Ion, Pauli, Pațo, Gheorghe, Oriotos, Sauli, Constantin Duca, Ion, Giovaco, Seni, Arseno (= Cârstea's father-in-law), Ghino, Despa, Proco, Nizo, Ion Paciu, Hristo, Grinu, Maria (Iorga 1908: 131-132 – I kept the transcription in the volume; Melchisedec 1885: 259).

II. The White Church dedicated on the Feast Day of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple

Still at that moment, most probably in 1682, the building of the White Church from “foundation”, incurring “great expense and effort” was finished. The “famous holy church” from Iași, whose building was initiated by Gheorghe Duca in the early days of his reign, had fallen into ruin, only to be finished when its shine had reached the climax; the new building would look, as his Lady wrote later, “exactly like the exemplary monasteries in town” (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iași City II* 2000: 509-511, doc. 574, of the 1st of October 1683; on the White Church - Stoicescu 1974: 456-460 and 515-516; Bădărău, Caproșu 2007: 378; Porcescu 1977: 15-20; Bogdan 2004: 186-188, etc.).

Although the ruler is given credit for this new building, Nicolae Costin insists on writing that the church “whose first patron saint was Saint John the Baptist, (...) had been rebuilt more vigorously by Anastasia, Voivode Duca’s Lady” (Costin 1872: 15; “responsible” for the work was “Pătrașcu, in charge of the grain crops storage”). The initiative is noted by the chronicler before the paragraph on the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish conflict and his mention of Gheorghe Duca’s interest in “the Ukraine over the Dniester river”; the date was “7188 or 1679 AD” (Costin 1872: 15). Internal documents mention the fact that it was not before 1683 that the inhabitants of Iași found out about Lady Anastasia who had turned “the White Church into a metropolitan church” (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City II* 2000: 522-523, doc. 587; neither in the *Letopiseț / Chronicle /*, nor in any of the documents before had there been any mention of the *metropolitan church* that year).

Thirteen years later, when other members of the same family, from the younger generations, were running the state, Lady Anastasia recalled more openly, without any clear chronological mentions and with respect to her husband, “who had been the ruler of the Moldavian Principality and Ukraine”, how she “taking help (...) from the merciful and mighty God and His Holy Mother”, “thought in her heart” to raise from the ruins of the White Church of Iași and on the ground of the “cemetery”, “another holy metropolitan cathedral of the country (our highlighting), greater and

more open (...) to celebrate the feast day of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple” (*Documente privitoare la istoria oraşului Iaşi/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* III 2000: 75-78, doc. 97, of 15 June 1695). The reason was that “the old holy metropolitan church in the country and in the town of Iaşi” was “small” and “cramped”. It is hard to assess the truth of this final statement, as the old Saint Nicholas Princely Church had only been renewed and embellished by ruler Antonie Ruset a couple of years before (in its votive painting, he is depicted as founder); the latter turned it then into a metropolitan church and entrusted it to metropolitan Dosoftei, to be used for religious services, according to a document from the 29th of March 1677 (*Documente privitoare la istoria oraşului Iaşi/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* II 2000: 424-426, doc. 468). The ruler shows that “we spent a lot to start from the lower part up, to build the bell tower, and we embellished it with all beauties to be sublime. We built a wall and surrounding cells for the Metropolitan See”.

The document is written by the great overseer of the Court, Miron Costin (*Documente privitoare la istoria oraşului Iaşi/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* II 2000: 424-426, doc. 468). However, it was not in the Rusetşti church that Lady Anastasia Duca had seen the metropolitan bishop of the country perform religious services, but in the new “larger and more open holy establishment” where “the mercy of the mighty and graceful God oversaw and helped us finish” (*Documente privitoare la istoria oraşului Iaşi/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* III 2000: 75, doc. 97). In the second reign of Constantin Duca in Moldova (1700-1703), Nicolae Costin, a witness to the events, writes that “the ruler built princely houses for the metropolitan cathedral of Iaşi at the White Church which had been built by his mother, Lady Anastasia” (Costin 1872: 46). Therefore, the name of metropolitan Dosoftei was mentioned in the diptych of the new courtly foundation and it is assumed that the learned hierarch, “fully a monk, humble and kind as a lamb” (Neculce 1982: 77), perhaps served in the new metropolitan church (N. A. Bogdan calls the diptych from St. John Chrysostomos Church “the diptych of Anastasia, Duca-Vodă’s Lady, also known as the diptych of metropolitan Dosoftei” – Bogdan 2004: 188). Furthermore, metropolitan Dosoftei is presumed to have sanctified the two new altars, *St. John Zlataust* and *Stratenia* in 1682. The name of holy metropolitan Dosoftei is mentioned in relation to

the latter in the year above as the hierarch wrote on a copy of the gospel printed in Bucharest that

it was a gift from His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Ungrowallachia, kir Teodosie and I myself offered it to the new Holy Metropolitan Church called the White Church (7191/1683) on the 4th of November” (Vacariu 1970:79).

Back to the events in the autumn of 1693, they were an occasion to renew what had been achieved ten years before, the rebuilding of the two churches in Iași, the White Church or *Stratenia* and St. John Chrysostomos (Zlataust) Church; the members of the princely family still alive, especially Lady Anastasia, would have found their walls still standing as testimonials to previous thoughts and actions in the city of remembrance of good things past.

The Church Dyptich

The dyptich text from the *Presentation of Jesus at the Temple* (*Stratenia*) church bears a striking resemblance to the one in St. John Chrysostomos’s altar of Iași, also raised during that time. The old building of the Duca family had been constructed on the current location of the Metropolitan Cathedral, “Mother of churches” in Moldova (having the *Presentation of Jesus at the Temple* as one of its feast days, as well); the Slavonic inscription in stone is nowadays framed in the inner left wall of the main apse, and the names mentioned in the dyptich are uttered daily in the Holy Altar.

The dyptich reads:

God, have mercy on us, Voivode Eustratie Dabija, Lady Ecaterina, Voivode Duca, Lady Anastasia, Voivode Constantine, son of Voivode Duca, Voivode Ștefan, son of Voivode Duca, Lady Ileana, daughter of Voivode Duca, Lady Alexandra, daughter of Voivode Duca, Lady Maria, daughter of Voivode Duca, Lady Safta, daughter of Voivode Duca, Lady Anastasia, daughter of Voivode Duca; the departed: Crâstea, Nastasia, Dumitru and his sons, Andrei, Iacov, Lady Maria, daughter of Voivode Dabija, her son (?) and his sons; Nicula, Alexandra, Savin, overseer of the Court, Lady Ileana, Miron, Theodora, their sons, Neculai, Anița and their sons, Constantin, Ileana, Mihai Șătrarul, Nastasia, metropolitan Dosoftei; year 7190 AD 1682 – *our ed.* (Iorga 1908: 171-172; Erbiceanu 1888: XLVI-XLVII; genealogical interpretations by Maria-Magdalena Székely 2015: 57).

III. Some Thoughts on the Two Dyptichs

Both dyptichs first mention the names of Eustratie Dabija and lady Ecaterina-Dafina, in-laws of the current ruler of the country, Gheorghe Duca, Lady Anastasia's name and of several family members, alive or dead. The dyptich from Zlataust mentions Ștefan Radu and his wife, Ecaterina, recently married, yet it omits Ștefan Tomșa, though he ought to have been mentioned, at least because the founder's right is passed on, if not in order to honour the family of the until recently unwanted son-in-law, or to record the relation with the old country rulers. If we were to consider that the first mention of the church and its priest occurs in a document from Voivode Dabija (of the 25th of December 1663) and the later conduct of lady Anastasia was to be duly noted as she contributed to the church from the wealth she inherited from her mother's sister, (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* III 2000: 72-73, doc. 92; and III 2000: 212-214, doc. 249), we would understand why it was considered, without direct documentary testimonies, that St. John Chrysostomos church had been (rebuilt) in stone by Voivode Eustratie Dabija and, later, Gheorghe Duca would have "rebuilt" it in only 30 days (Bădărău; Caproșu 2007: 129).

The events corresponding to his last years of rule and especially the ones from the following decade when his son rules, could prove no less than "a foundation's usurpation" (Bădărău; Caproșu 2007: 129). However, beyond this suspicion, things could be understood differently, too. The dyptichs in the two churches of Iași, one in Greek and the other one in Slavonic, were drafted approximately during the same time and by the same authors (Lady Anastasia, probably, had an important say in it as she was known "to be acquainted with her forerunners and relatives well, proving a particular genealogical awareness in the era"; Maria-Magdalena Székely 2015: 57); they mainly shed light on what held the members of the royal family together and what they wanted to show to the world for all to understand that they were together (could this be an interpretation of the "peculiar" way of signing by beyzade Ștefan Radu, the groom from 1682, who used to combine Greek and Slavonic letters when writing his name? (*Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași/ Documents on the History of Iasi City* II 2000: 525 doc. 589; Maria-Magdalena Székely 2015: 59).

They had the same ancestors, the same concern to have their names read during religious services, and were known for their similar piety, desire and effort to look after churches and to protect their servants, as they kept alive the memory of “the forever blessed founders”; they shared the same conscience of continuing their ancestors’ work, hence the legitimacy and all that is related to the founding right. It came as a blessing during those hard times, when the country

knew the poverty of its holy monasteries and churches (...) and the revenues they had received from the deceased rulers in those awful years were taken away by foreign occupants who wanted and obtained the power for themselves. Abbots and monks altogether, and foreigners, unlawfully participated in the taking and caused so much damage that the names of the merciful founding rulers and of other Christian founders were hardly ever read (*Documente privitoare la istoria oraşului Iaşi/ Documents on the History of Iasi City II* 2000: 139-140, doc. 162 – on the 30th of July 1700, Antioh Cantemir empowers metropolitan Sava, along with the representative of the rule, to take proper action so as to capture and punish the culprits).

An appropriate interpretation of the meaning of the founders’ dyptichs from the two churches of Iaşi dating from 1682 should take into account their susceptibility to show the power, unity and glamorous public image of the ruler’s family; likewise, the natural intention of a significant project should be considered, namely the building of a new metropolitan church in Iaşi during the reign of Gheorghe Duca, which would actually be put in practice, in a discrete manner, in the last years of his reign, dominated by serious riots between boyard parties (they were old country families, the Costinescus, then the Cantacuzinos, the Rusaïtos and, similar to the last two families, new people who had won influence, wealth and especially power through debatable means, as their ruling prince had; they tried to legitimate their power convincingly, to keep it, extend and pass it on to the heirs.

The choice of the church’s feast day, which was different from that of the Altar constructed before on that site, seems to be particularly significant to the boyar family and to their contemporaries, witnesses, in “times not under man’s control, but when men was controlled by times” (Costin 1944: 142), disputes for power between noblemen parties (with more or less justified ambitions to reign, yet unscrupulously plotting treason, intrigue, duplicity, treachery, defamation, etc.) which had led to

spectacular rises and dramatic falls (for instance, Antonie Ruset, Gheorghe Duca's predecessor to the throne of Iași, dies tortured in the Istanbul prison).

The first paragraph of "the 2nd of February homily" (*Învățătură la Stretenia Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos/ Teachings on the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple*) in Varlaam's 1643 *Cazanie (Homily Book)*, which was used for church services at the time and undoubtedly, it was researched and known by the princely family members (especially by Lady Anastasia whose knowledge, spirit of initiative and public conduct based on her full understanding of the reign's legitimate authority are recorded by the writings of the time), allows us to better understand the political message transmitted when a new feast day was chosen for the church which, from the beginning was meant to be a "a new Metropolitan church". The rhetorical interrogations afford the understanding of similitudes with the realities back then:

A certain emperor who struggles and fights in a war for a slave of his, only to lose his kingdom for him, will honour his slave who did not thank his emperor for the honour that cost him the kingdom, but rose against him in dispute – what judgement does the slave have? None, for only death seeks to take away one like him" (Holy Hierarch Varlaam, Metropolitan of Moldavia 2011: 352).

We should also mention that those were the years when a great cultural work, both Romanian and Orthodox, was being carried out, paralleled by the effort to promote the neo-Greek trend in difficult circumstances owing to the political disputes and confessional debates of the epoch (Păcurariu 2006: 107-108; Iorga 1969: 32 sqq; P.P. Panaitescu 1946; Grigoraș 1972; Daniel Niță-Danielescu 2018: 337-352; Chiaburu 2005: 268-275). During the years of Gheorghe Duca's third rule in Moldova, the metropolitan printing press in Iași is reorganised almost from ruins, and the Greek printing press from Cetățuia, from the grounds. From the ruins of the former, the Holy Metropolitan Dosoftei publishes, year after year, translations in Romanian of the books necessary to our cult and culture. Between 1679 and 1683, the two editions of the *Liturgikon*, whose dedicating preface by Dosoftei, *Cuvânt împreună către toată seminția românească (Foreword to all Romanian People)* follows the model of metropolitan Varlaam. Herein he addresses

Voivode Ioan Duca, the enlightened into Orthodox veneration and believer in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity in one undivided being, the unique Almighty God, creator of all things seen and unseen, by the mercy of God, Ruler and protector of the entire Principality of Moldavia, grace, mercy, peace, and health to the entire Romanian nation from everywhere, who venerate God properly in this language;

the ruler, who had financed the book's printing, was compared by "the supplicant of your highness, the humble metropolitan Dosoftei" to emperors Constantine and Theodosius and "the other deified" rulers (*Mărturii documentare privitoare la viața și activitatea mitropolitului Dosoftei/ Documentary Testimonies on the Life and Activity of Metropolitan Dosoftei* 2003: 54-55; Dosoftei 1980).

In 1680, Dosoftei prints *Psaltirea de-nțăles /The Psalter according to One's Understanding* (addressing the ruler in the preface to "receive it as a heavenly offering and to show mercy to his subjects") and *The Euchologion* in Romanian, the next year printed "in his blessed days" at Gheorghe Duca's expense (the text was preceded by the first version of the metropolitan's verses on Moldavian rulers); in 1682 the first of the four volumes from *Viața și petrecerea sfinților /The Lives of Saints* is published (as "commissioned" by the same ruler, now of "Moldavia and Ukraine", one of the prefaces being dedicated to him with thanks for "the good Your Highness has striven to do for Christianity" (*Mărturii documentare privitoare la viața și activitatea mitropolitului Dosoftei/ Documentary Testimonies on the Life and Activity of Metropolitan Dosoftei* 2003: 73; later on, in their second version, Dosoftei would write about the ruler in these terms: "for Duca Voivode, may God look/ upon his soul and grant it rest, for it is good"). All works also have well-argued pleads to introduce Romanian language to the cult.

Reputed in the epoch were also the ruler's strong political ambitions as he was following in the footsteps of Vasile Lupu, "the one with a high and royal nature, more than a noble one" (Costin 1944: 100). The intelligent employment of Gheorghe Duca, who knew when he needed to be useful, in mediating the conflict between Russians and Turks (which started in 1680 as a result of the Ukrainian anarchy) with the attenuation of the Poles' suspicions, won him the fame of "the only one who brought victory in the war" (Papacostea 1983: 55). In 1681, he came back from Istanbul with a new son-in-law (who believed he was the follower of an old ruler) and a renewed reign in Moldavia, along with the title of Ukrainian hetman, hence the chronicler's notes: "he had three emblems

on his seal, the Wallachian, the Moldavian and the Ukrainian one, the sceptre” (Erbiceanu 2003: 25). Posteriority, labelled his action as

a real triumph of balancing politics; the optimal form that allowed the function of buffer state between various imperialistic regimes, along with the fulfilment of an important European function (which, in the 19th century, would win us the title of “Belgium of the Orient”). In the 17th century this function was not granted by any treaty or congress; we created it ourselves as superior political expression of our conservation instinct” (Papacostea 1983: 55-56; see also Iorga 1913: 354-359; Nistor 1997: 151-156; Rezachevici 2003: 189-190).

Naturally, great expenses were incurred to support the ruler’s great ambitions, hence the contemporary view on this last reign as one of excess in which he showed an unprecedented greed that would attract opponents everywhere. Gheorghe Duca’s overwhelming fiscal system, with new regulations and extreme debt collection methods draws on his role model and benefactor, Vasile Lupu, “tormented by high ambitions” (Rezachevici 2003: 289).

Ion Neculce, when he gives an overall image of Gheorghe Duca’s reign, writes that in the Voivode’s house, there was talk about him trying to become a Transylvanian ruler “and got a son of his to be ruler in the Principality of Moldavia, another one in Wallachia and his son-in-law, hetman in Ukraine” (Neculce 1982: 282). The chronicler’s portrait of the ruler left to posterity is very illustrative:

everything about him is haughty. His court, meals and expenses are those of an emperor. And when he goes out to reach the people, he puts on a sad face for his people to fear him. As he *has taken after Voivode Vasile (our highlights)*” (Neculce 1982:264).

Ion Neculce, taking the side of the Cantacuzino family to whom he was related, draws an unfavourable portrait of Voivode Duca:

“he was old, not that tall and with a fat belly. He was dying his beard black. This showed how mindless he was and how little he feared God. And what plans he had in his mind, and what tempted him, and attracted God’s wrath! And so they led Duca Voivode to Poland where he found his death. This was the price of his greed for money”; Lady Anastasia benefited from the same “treatment” (Neculce 1982:285).

Conclusions

The dyptichs of the two churches from Iași, St. John Chrysostomos (Zlataust) and The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple (Stratenia), whose construction and sanctification took place the same year, in 1682, first of all highlight the founding efforts of ruler Gheorghe Duca's family. They also emphasize the kinship within the royal family (at the level of the same generation and at the level of previous ones), as well as elements of political culture and ecclesiastic diplomacy in an epoch of cultural bloom, that was yet politically and economically unstable or, to put it in the words of the chronicler, "the present awful times that are overwhelmed by all dangers of this land" (Costin 1944: 125).

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