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# THE BEGINNINGS OF SCHOOL INSTITUTION IN THE NORTH OF MOLDOVA A DIFFERENT KIND OF RENAISSANCE

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(Received 18 January 2017, revised 16 February 2017)

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## **Abstract**

In the Romanian principalities, the emergence and assertion of a humanist thinking current occurs later than in the West. The cause of this situation of cultural delay is related to the late appearance of cities, the formation of a bourgeois class and the persistence of still strong feudal structures. Another cause consists in the pressure from an environment of Byzantine culture, allowing borrowings from West - in art, in literature, in the court habits, and so on – but only with strict observance of tradition and without doctrinal deviating. The numerous armed confrontations in the area, imposed by the expansion of some eastern populations with barbaric beliefs, direct the attention on issues placed away from art and culture. In medieval times the Church was the main factor of culture. Alphabetization was quite low in all Romanian provinces. In the XV<sup>th</sup> century, the few scholars from the Romanian Principalities hadn't the power of imposing the cultural movement existing in the West, the nobles didn't support in any way the arts. The leaders of medieval era were facing numerous wars triggered by the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the barbarian invasions. Perfect strategists, they didn't have the opportunity to study in western schools, to establish a direct contact with arts, but they were able to support the building of religious monuments, encouraging an own style of architecture and the respect for the arts that were developing in the monastic places. Thus appear here, guarded defensive walls, the first voivodal schools and the first libraries, are copied books, is painting and singing. All that we leave behind us are the stories. The mural paintings of the churches and monasteries of XIV<sup>th</sup> - XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries from Moldavia are a part of the story about the ancestral faith on this land.

*Keywords:* Renaissance, school, humanism, theological academy, painting

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## **1. Introduction**

Renaissance began in Italy, in the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, as a cultural movement and quenched in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, after was spread, non-uniformly, throughout Europe, the major impact being recorded after the invention of printing. In the period before the emergence of this cultural and scientific movement, the feudal society had a rigid hierarchical structure, imposed by the Catholic Church and

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was dominated by an agrarian economy. During the Renaissance, a decisive role was played by the culture people and artists inclined to Greco-Roman classicism. Thus defined as a cultural movement based on the ancient Greek philosophy, Renaissance debuted from the need to develop techniques for more natural expressing of reality in painting and was completed with an unprecedented educational reform until then. Renaissance promoted the humanistic social and philosophical conception, being particularly concerned about human being, campaigned for equal rights and promoted the idea of confidence in the value of human thought.

In the XV<sup>th</sup> century, Europe was submerged, for more than a thousand years, into the intellectual darkness imposed by the papacy. The first universities were already formed and, even in the monastic communities, had appeared in society people dissatisfied with the explanations given by the Bible, that were not meant to explain the *Nature* in a satisfactory manner. Explanations concerning the humanity, genesis, life and Planet were spread out, incomplete, baseless. Was needed another kind of reasoning, that leads to the World understanding, was necessary to redefine the concepts of nature in logical terms, was needed the logical demonstration of these laws and a new paradigm that underpin the thinking [1].

In this context appears Leonardo DaVinci, a curious person eager to understand and define rules in perfect synchronicity with reality. He tries to reach the core of *Beauty*, understands that without maths will never succeed, but realize that mathematical descriptions of nature are not fundamental truths about the world but models, tools, concepts and, therefore, is needed of *experiment* to obtain the *certainty*. It is the moment when *Modern science* emerged. Numerous studies and research promoted by Leonardo, most made secretly (such as the dissections), will be based on quantitative and also qualitative methods of analysis. Some historians have evoked a possible poor *mathematical apparatus* of the great scientist but, only after half a millennium, humanity has come to understand the importance of the qualitative methods without which one can not go on in researching the *living* and particularly the *social*. Thus, a simple and natural phenomenon can have as base a complexity of constituent elements difficult to understand. *Simplicity* is what we see behind a complex network of interactions of a complexity far beyond our comprehension. What followed in Science is well known. Some people continued to assert that the *laws of nature* are only in our minds, but how could a lawless Universe develop organized structures such as our brains?

## 2. Study about Renaissance in the Romanian Principalities

In the Romanian principalities, Renaissance was manifested in the XV<sup>th</sup> - XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries, by *Transylvanian humanism*, and later, in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century in Moldavia and Romanian country, by great scholars who studied at the Polish school. A major influence remains in Transylvania, where the local religion and nobles had closer relations with the western culture. Remained here, until our

period, bourgeois houses, churches, gates and windows decorations, spread in the whole area inside the Carpathian mountains' arch [*Renasterea – Istoria unei epoci (Renaissance – The history of an epoch)*, December 2016, <https://istoriiregasite.wordpress.com/>].

In the Romanian principalities, the emergence and assertion of a humanist thinking current occurs therefore (excepting some sporadic cases) later than in the West. The cause of this situation of cultural delay is related to the late appearance of cities, the formation of a bourgeois class, the persistence of still strong feudal structures. Another cause consists in the pressure from an environment of Byzantine culture, allowing borrowings from West - in art, in literature, in the court habits, and so on – but only with strict observance of tradition and without doctrinal deviating. The numerous armed confrontations in the area, imposed by the expansion of some eastern populations with barbaric beliefs, direct the attention on issues placed away from art and culture.

In medieval times the Church was the main factor of culture. Alphabetization was quite low in all Romanian provinces. In the XV<sup>th</sup> century, the few scholars from the Romanian Principalities hadn't the power of imposing the cultural movement existing in the West; the nobles didn't support in any way the arts.

The representatives of the frail Romanian humanism are the chroniclers who support in their works basic ideas of Romanian culture: the Latin origin of Romanian people and language, the continuity of this nation on the Romanian territory, the unity of all Romanians from the Romanian provinces, the civilizing role of the prints, the educational force of history, the belief in truth, the desire to save the people from ignorance. The specifics of Romanian humanism develops through the activity of the scholars Varlaam, Simion Ștefan, Udriște Năstrurel, Dosoftei, then of the great chroniclers Grigore Ureche and Miron Costin, followed by personalities such as Ion Neculce and Dimitrie Cantemir, the latter being the most important Romanian humanist. They determined the occurrence of a specific Romanian humanism, but wherein there are also found the characteristics and attributes of the European general humanism [[https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria\\_educatiei\\_En\\_Romnia](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria_educatiei_En_Romnia), January 2017].

Chronicles performed the first written image of our history. The emergence and development of chroniclers' writing is expressed by a deep necessity. Romanian countries had gone a long way in time and had a history risking to remain forgotten in the mists of time. The initial intention of chroniclers was to recover the past. Grigore Ureche confesses that he wrote “not to drown, for all countries, the years that have passed and not to know what was worked, to sow for the mute and foolish beasts and cattles” and Miron Costin “not to forget the things and the country's timeline” [[https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria\\_educatiei\\_En\\_Romnia](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria_educatiei_En_Romnia), January 2017].

The leaders of medieval era were facing numerous wars triggered by the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the barbarian invasions. Perfect strategists, they didn't have the opportunity to study in western schools, to establish a direct contact with arts, but they were able to support the building of

religious monuments, encouraging an own style of architecture and the respect for the arts that were developing in the monastic places. Thus appear here, guarded defensive walls, the first voivodal schools and the first libraries, are copied books, is painting and singing. School worked firstly around monasteries and churches. Thus began the translations of books, the printing, and the school as we have it in the modern times. The first Romanian printings were the Orthodox monasteries.

The first printing house dates back to 1508, at the Dealu Monastery, the year of publishing a Missal at the initiative of the voivod Radu the Great.

In the XV<sup>th</sup> century it is attested the school attached to the Church from the Schei of Brasov, then that one at the Church Saint George the Old in Bucharest and also those attached to bishops. In order to be understood by the people, to whom was addressing, in Church, the Slavonic language had to associate itself to the language spoken by the community, so that the education became necessarily mixed, namely Slavo-Romanian. The textbooks used were religious texts (Horologions, Psalters, etc.), while the teachers were recruited from among priests, singers and manuscripts copyists [<http://crispedia.ro/biserica-si-scoala-evul-mediu-si-la-incepturile-modernitatii/>, January 2017].

In the north, the pious archimandrite Filotei Dascalul, worker of prayer, confessor, teacher of Romanian language and good calligrapher, was one of the most erudite psalm readers of the spiritual school from the Putna Monastery (XVI<sup>th</sup> - XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries), making it a real theological academy. He received his rich theological knowledge (dogmas, morals), patristics (asceticism and writings of the Holy Fathers), catechetical and even philosophical (the rhetoric, the Philokalia) both in Putna Monastery [2] and also at the Holy Mountain Athos, where he stayed several years. "Refusing to ascend to the priesthood stair, he remained into the lowliness of monastic life until the end of his life. But, through his wisdom and experience, he enlightened and built up spiritually many people, reason for that he was called by all *The all-enlightened* and *The all-holy* and *The chosen by God* and *our teacher*. His name was known up to Pecersca, in Athos and even at the Patriarchate of Constantinople and all they were conquered by his asceticism and lowliness." [3]

The archimandrite Ioanichie Balan stated: "so, taking under his direction the school of Putna Monastery, he increased so much its fame in a short time, that there was no other more famous in the country of Moldavia. Because dozens of monks of Putna, Moldovita, Humor, Suceava and many young people came to learn from the archimandrite Filotei, to be priests in the villages. Besides, the psalm reader and servant of Christ, helped by another skilful psalm reader, Anthony the protopsaltis (1589), laboured himself so much with his disciples, so that many of them have learned the Greek and Slavonic languages. Others learned the art of prayer of Jesus, and others became famous protopsalters in monasteries, skilled calligraphers, writers and religious books adorners." [3, p. 24]

In Moldavia, during his short reigning of only two years (1561-1563), Jacob Eraclide Despot founded a 'Latin Schola' in Cotnari (the town with the largest number of inhabitants after Suceava), founded a humanistic library at the princely court (in the manner that one of Matthias Corvinus in Buda, or of the emperor Maximilian in Vienna), endowing it with a special building, and designed the founding of an academy after the model of Italy of that time. This was conceived as a group of scholars, a meeting of erudites, men of letters and philosophers. 'Latin Schola' of Cotnari (secondary school and theoretical elementary school, middle school – with teaching in Latin, of course) was also a college with boarding school, where children, in number of 150-200 (sons of small landowners and yeomen), were trained, educated, fed and clothed with the expense of the personal treasury of Ruler.

In 1634 is founded in Iasi, by the ruler Vasile Lupu, the Vasilian Academy, with teaching in Slavonic and Latin, organized following the model of the Movila Academy from Kiev (created by the metropolitan Peter Movila), from where were sent him magistrates, secretaries for the rulers' chancelleries, procelnics (clerks in the ruler's chancellery) [[https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria\\_educatiei\\_En\\_Romnia](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria_educatiei_En_Romnia)].

The first, chronologically, and the most important humanist centre in Transylvania was that one from Oradea where, starting with the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic episcopal seat was occupied by a bishop of Italian origin. Only in the first half of the XV<sup>th</sup> century succeeded here no less than five Italian bishops, who have always maintained contacts with the intellectual milieus from their original homeland, they brought to their court artists and erudite Italian humanists. The development of towns and of the cultural milieu, the Catholicism (the religion of the ruling class), as well as the more intense contacts, on the one hand with the Italian world (whose representatives were present with positions at the Catholic episcopal courts) and, on the other hand, with that German (through the Saxons) favoured the receiving of the *humanist trend* starting right from the XV<sup>th</sup> century.

A similar role in spreading the Humanism in Transylvania (this time cultivated not by the Catholic milieu, but by those reformed, Lutheran) was played by the schools of Saxons, headed by the famous gymnasium in Brasov, led by the renowned humanist Johannes Honterus, followed by the schools from Sibiu, Orastie, Bistrita and Medias. Honterus (1498-1549) set up a printing house in which were published 37 books (texts by Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and works by Luther), in Latin, Greek and German. By his work *Rudimenta cosmographica* (printed in 1530 in Cracow), Honterus introduced in the study of Geography, of Mathematics and Astronomy. But the greatest Transylvanian humanist was Nicolaus Olahus (1493-1568). Olahus organized the education of all grades, especially the higher education, for which have been created textbooks following his indications. Moreover, he set up a printing house in Tyrnavia.

At the beginning of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century there was one primary school in almost each Saxon commune. In 1541 was founded the first Saxon gymnasium, and in 1722 was introduced the compulsory education for the Saxon nation. Gradually, an increasing number of schools of middle level have appeared, and for higher levels of education the young people went to the universities from Poland, Italy, Constantinople, Vienna, Paris and Prague. Vasile Oltean stated that: “the school, by its special status, has institutionalized didactically the education offered till then exclusively in family or through the Church. Operating under the aegis of the *primaeval* voievodal Church Saint Nicholas, the school from Schei intertwines its destiny, in the medieval times, with this one, in the sense that the church servants are concerned about the smooth running of the school, working as teachers or organizers of it. As such, the documents of that period reveal the school activity in connection with that of the Church and its servants, most of them valuable scholars.” [4]

Modern education begins to appear in Transylvania and Banat, schools have appeared in large cities (such as Cluj or Timisoara). In Bucovina, the Theological high school, which later became the University of Chernivtsi, was formed following the Austrian rules, the Emperor building for it an imposing building.

### **3. Case studies about Humanism as an original expression through the mural painting**

Strongly influenced by the biblical word, by the Orthodox specificity, the first schools attached to the monastic halidoms have an organized character, cherish the human being and its creations, praise the knowledge, culture, education, learning, respect for the moral life and for the knowledge and interpretation of nature and history, for the social and political issues, being the first that affirm outrightly the Latin origin of Romanian people. The iconostases become complex works that overlap elements of architecture, sculpture and painting, the wooden or stone churches are painted both inside and outside. The ancient philosophers are not even considered heathens, but they are placed in friezes alongside the Holy fathers of the Orthodox faith. The major events in the history of that period are evoked together with episodes of the Old and New Testament in frescoes using a complex technique that includes preparing the substrate, the pigments and the elements of perspective difficult to equal nowadays.

Science and spirituality are not incompatible. Universe is *structured* by mind in terms of features and based on these features we determine our place in the chariot of society. Our perception systems generate figments of reality full of symbol. Icon becomes a result of human mind in attempting to express visually and artistically the absolute of the spiritual context. Wherever we would be, we would feel the spiritual satisfaction that we are placed into an universe that suits us. Understanding the Universe gives us spiritual balance. Religion was the first that structured and imposed the basic rules of behaviour in human communities

(long before the legislative system) and was the first that tried to explain the genesis and evolution of the world in which we live (long before the emergence of contemporary sciences). Of course, at a global scale, there is an evolution given by *metakalakrata* or *metakalamegalo*, identified by periods of stagnation or regression that come to stabilize and emphasize the prosperity epochs of thinking, art and culture [5].

But Science and art can and affect us as people. Romanticism in excess can affect the mind, and also exaggerated reductionism can affect the soul. It requires a permanent balance to remain rational beings. The *rational man* is a dynamic system that converges towards a goal; it evolves towards an attractor that can then be considered as a possible target [6]. This is the context of developing the art in the XIV<sup>th</sup> - XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries in the feudal Moldova.

The icon is the expression of the cognitive synthesis resulted from the deep understanding of the spiritual message and of the life of the characters represented. The existence of several characters into an iconographic composition increases the semantic space. Consciousness and deep understanding of the Holy Book's messages determines an impressive ability to detect features that implodes the informational chaos in patterns specific to the Herminie of the Orthodox painting. The icon, as result of this cerebral event, refined through the filter of intelligence and penetration of the Christian mysteries, makes that a huge amount of data structured partially to converge towards natural features [5].

Over the years the laws and faith have continually evolved and refined constraints. The discovery of constraints generates in the Man the freedom to become a balanced person, in a better relationship with nature and Universe. In iconography the analogies can identify identical features but resulted from different structures. The iconographic study must be based on a solid understanding of Christianity. Only by understanding the dynamics of a system one can identify the attractors and then can describe them plastically. Only by understanding the dynamics of a system we can identify the attractors and then we can describe them plastically. The information is specific to machinery, the meaning and awareness only to the human being [6].

The occidental Renaissance had as starting point the need to develop techniques of natural expressing in painting, and in Moldavia of that period the iconographic art involved development and evolution, with emphasis on shapes and qualitative attributes. Based on the rules settled by the Greek and Athonite painters, the Moldavian fine art of the XV<sup>th</sup> century includes site specific elements and manifests itself through an understanding of how the geography of spaces of the possible generates new patterns and dynamics in perfect synchronism with Herminie. Thus appears an iconographic style that was to perpetuate until nowadays and which completes the Moldavian architectural style. This specific style is imposed to the local artists or those who came from Greece and is the result of a mental analysis primordially descriptive that manifests itself as a new theory placed between quantitative and qualitative.

Development of architectural space at the end of the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, establishing the Moldavian style and the number of architectural elements in a building, will decisively influence the iconography of mural painting from the XV<sup>th</sup> - XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries, reason for that a survey of the Moldavian architecture is necessary to demonstrate the development of mural painting in terms of technical, of compositional and iconographical scale [7].

Mural painting requires special techniques given by large areas, by the spatial evolution and by the substrate used. Therefore, big differences arise compared to the iconographic painting.

The specifics of this Moldavian style reached maturity in the era of Petru Rares in which the churches are painted both inside and outside according to an iconographic program [7, p. 12-28], for the first time coherent, based on the composition of the original material, its realization, in fact, and its relationship with its substrate, the walling, implicitly with the architecture, inter-relating both with the type of image that it proposes and with the type of walling and architectural statics. "The mural painting, being closely connected to the architectural elements, takes over all the structural deformations and its degradation, stating that an analysis of paintings of northern Moldavia without investigating the architecture and the construction system can lead to dismantling of that aesthetical, historical and technical whole." [7]

The main technical problems of the painting on the wall in fresco technique are: the colour layer faces the phenomenon of loss of adhesion to the substrate and the loss of cohesion between the pigment particles, deteriorations of the type of flaking and small bumps present on the painted surface as a result of the peeling of the colour layer from the substrate or of the phenomenon of the crypto-fluorescence recrystallization, respectively the salts that are in the substrate layer, areas with non-cohesive colour layer. These problems have been technically solved by the painters of that period and this is confirmed by the existence for about 500 years of these frescoes in the conditions in which the microclimate and the bad weather have tried fully to erode them.

To *understand* something means to *simplify* that something, leaving unchanged the message sent. In this way we can admire an extraordinary annual calendar on the wall of a small porch of an Orthodox church or an entire biblical chapter on the west wall of a monastery. To better understand the global context during the period of founding the Moldavian churches and monasteries, it is worth remembering [8]:

- In 1360 the Church Saint Nicholas from Radauti (made using an architecture taken from Maramures area) is sanctified, and the Church Saint John the Baptist from Siret (sanctified in 1370) takes over the architecture of the churches from south of Danube.
- In 1385, when University of Heidelberg was founded, the Church Mirauti from Suceava was sanctified, and will become the first Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and the halidom where will be anointed five important Musatine rulers. It is the moment when Suceava becomes the main Moldavian city and capital after Baia and Siret.

- In 1452 (the birth year of Leonardo DaVinci) in Suceava is built the Church Assumption of the Virgin Mary and in 1469 (the birth year of Vasco de Gamma) the Church of Putna Monastery is sanctified.
- 1488 is the year that marks the sanctification of Voronet Monastery and of the Church Saint Elias near Suceava, which will be painted at the end of the XV<sup>th</sup> century. It is the period in which takes place the journey of Columbus to America as well as the declaration of the Latin origin of the Romanian people by Nicolae Olahus on the other side of Carpathians mountains.
- The first half of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century marks the sanctification of some churches such as Volovat (1502), Arbore (1503), Reuseni (1504), Parhauti and the Monastery Saint John the New (1522), Humor and Probota (1530), Moldova and Baia (1532), Saint Dumitru Suceava (1534), Rasca (1542), ..., as well as the painting of the churches Parhauti (1530), Probota (1532), Moldova (1537), Arbore (1541), Voronet (1547 outside), Rasca (1552), etc.
- At the end of XVI<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, when Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet (1597) and Galileo was making his first telescope for Space (1609), were sanctified the monasteries Sucevita and Dragomirna.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In the North of Moldova, the Church was the main factor of culture in medieval times. The leaders of medieval era were facing numerous wars triggered by the oriental populations and the barbarian invasions. They didn't have the opportunity to study in western schools, to establish a direct contact with arts, but they were able to support the building of religious monuments, encouraging an own style of architecture and the respect for the arts that were developing in the monastic places. Thus appear here the first schools and the first libraries, are copied books, is painting and singing.

Strongly influenced by the biblical word, by the Orthodox specificity, the first schools appearing in the sixteenth century attached to the monastic halidoms. They have an organized character, cherish the Man and its creations, praise the knowledge, culture, education, learning, respect for the moral life, for the knowledge and interpretation of nature and history, and for the social and political issues. They are situated at the confluence of Greek Orthodox and the Polish Catholic cultures.

All that we leave behind us are the stories. The mural painting of the churches and monasteries of XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries from Moldavia is a part of the story about the ancestral faith on this land.

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