Beyond the Walls: The Easter Processional on the Exterior Frescos of Moldavian Monastery Churches

Mollie Elizabeth McVey

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

Part of the Art Practice Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/1822

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
BEYOND THE WALLS:
THE EASTER PROCESSIONAL IN THE EXTERIOR FRESCOS OF
MOLDAVIAN MONASTERY CHURCHES

by

Mollie McVey

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Visual Arts
Brigham Young University

August 2009
of a thesis submitted by

Mollie McVey

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date ____________________________  Mark J. Johnson, Chair

Date ____________________________  Heather Belnap Jensen

Date ____________________________  Charlotte Stanford
As chair of the candidate’s graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Mollie McVey in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date

Mark J. Johnson
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Date

Heather Belnap Jensen
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

Date

Rory Scanlon
Associate Dean, College of Fine Arts and Communications
ABSTRACT

BEYOND THE WALLS: THE EASTER PROCESSIONAL ON THE EXTERIOR FRESCOS OF THE MOLDAVIAN MONASTERY CHURCHES

Mollie McVey

Department of Visual Arts

Master of Arts

During the sixteenth century, the princes of Moldavia, a region of modern Romania, built many churches and monasteries. These churches followed the typical Byzantine style by placing detailed frescos on the interior walls, but some of the Moldavian churches took that tradition even further and expanded the frescos to the façade. This thesis argues that these exterior images were used to enhance the Easter processions that occurred around the churches. While most scholars explain this phenomenon as propaganda or a cry for help against the Ottoman Empire, a new interpretation is offered here. It discusses how the exterior scenes on the churches depict different sections of the Orthodox Lenten Services that occur during the ten weeks prior to Easter, the most important feast day in the Orthodox calendar. Four of these painted monasteries, Voroneț, built in 1488 and painted in 1547, Humor, built in 1530 and painted in 1534, Moldovița, built in 1532 and painted in 1537, and Sucevița, built in 1582 and painted in 1595, are analyzed to show the link between these feast days and the
frescos. The paper connects Moldavia to the Byzantine Empire, showing a long tradition of supporting the Orthodox faith. The history of different religious processions performed throughout the Orthodox year during the Byzantine Empire are discussed in conjunction with their survival in Moldavia after the Empire fell. The study concludes that the exterior frescos on the Moldavian churches enhanced the Orthodox processionals that took place during Easter week.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank first and foremost my advisor, Dr. Mark J. Johnson, for all his patience, help, support, and accessibility throughout the researching and writing phases of my thesis. Mostly, I would like to thank him for instilling in me a deep love and appreciation for Byzantine Art. I am grateful to both Martha Peacock and Heather Jensen, who encouraged me and were enthusiastic from the very beginning in my research on the Painted Monasteries of Romania. I also appreciate the Art History and Curatorial Studies faculty for rewarding me with the grant that allowed me to travel to Romania to research and visit these unique churches.

Finally, I would like to express my love and extreme gratitude to my family and friends who gave me moral support and comfort throughout this whole process. First, I would like to thank Jeff Dickamore, Elliott Wise, and Stefan Vizante who helped me translate and understand some of the different sources I needed. Second, I express my appreciation to Pat Johnson who traveled with me to Romania as my camera woman and dared the dangerous roads of Romania. Lastly, I thank my parents because without their love, support, and constant encouragement, none of this would have been possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of figures ........................................................................................................... ix
Text ......................................................................................................................... 1
Figures ..................................................................................................................... 45
Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 61
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Voroneț Monastery, Romania, built 1488, exterior frescoed 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 2 - Humor Monastery, Romania, built 1530, exterior frescoed 1534 (photo: Razvan Theodorescu)

Figure 3 - Moldovița Monastery, Romania, built 1532, exterior frescoed 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 4 - Sucevița Monastery, Romania, built 1582, exterior frescoed 1595 (photo: author)

Figure 5 - Map of Romania at the end of the Sixteenth Century (map: Kurt Treptow)

Figure 6 - Voroneț Monastery, detail of the Damned Souls, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 7 - Diagram of the North Wall of Voroneț Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 8 - Diagram of the North Wall of Humor Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 9 - Diagram of the North Wall of Moldovița Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 10 - Diagram of the North Wall of Sucevița Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 11 - Diagram of the South Wall of Voroneț Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 12 - Diagram of the South Wall of Humor Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 13 - Diagram of the South Wall of Moldovița Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 14 - Diagram of the North Wall of Sucevița Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 15 - Voroneț Monastery, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: Maria Ana Musicescu)

Figure 16 - Voroneț Monastery, Detail of the Deesis Image, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: author)
Figure 17 - Voroneț Monastery, Detail of Mary in Paradise, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 18 - Moldovița Monastery, The Genesis Scene (Seen on the top) and the Last Judgment (Seen through the porch), 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 19 - Sucevița Monastery, The Genesis Scene, 1595 (photo: author)

Figure 20 - Hagia Sophia at Trebizond, Detail of the Genesis Scene, 1238-63 (photo: Anthony Eastmond)

Figure 21 - Sucevița Monastery, Detail of The Prayer of All Saints, 1595 (photo: author)

Figure 22 - Moldovița Monastery, The Prayer of All Saints, 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 23 - Moldovița Monastery, The Tree of Jesse, 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 24 - Voroneț Monastery, The Tree of Jesse, 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 25 - Voroneț Monastery, Detail of the Tree of Jesse, 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 26 - Sucevița Monastery, John’s Ladder, 1595 (photo: author)

Figure 27 - Moldovița Monastery, The Akathistos Hymn Cycle, 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 28 - Moldovița Monastery, Detail of The Siege of Constantinople, 1537 (photo: Alan Ogden)

Figure 29 - Hodegetria Icon replica, Humor Monastery, 16th Century (photo: author)

Figure 30 - Modern Easter Processional, Humor Monastery (postcard from Humor Monastery)

Figure 31 - Epitaphios, Dobrovăț Monastery, commissioned by Ștefan cel Mare, 1506 (photo: The National Museum of Art of Romania)

Figure 32 - Drawing of the Procession of Holy Saturday Fresco on Dobrovăț Monastery (diagram: J.D. Ștefănescu)

Figure 33 - Dobrovăț Monastery, The Procession of Holy Saturday, 16th Century (photo: J. D. Ștefănescu)
During the last quarter of the fifteenth century and well into the middle of the sixteenth century, Romanian princes and voivodes, military leaders over a certain area of land, built a large number of Orthodox monasteries and churches. The most famous of these sanctuaries dot the countryside of the northern territory of Romania known as Moldavia. A group of these Moldavian buildings have been christened the “Painted Monasteries of Romania” because they not only follow the Byzantine style of covering the interior walls with icon-like images but also have exterior walls covered in the same manner. Scholars have developed several theories about the purpose of these exterior frescos. Some believe that they were meant to help the peasants of the time learn about the liturgy of the church; others argue that some of the images were a form of propaganda to help unite the country against the ever present threat of the Ottoman Empire. Although the layout of the exterior frescos differs slightly, overall, the programs are very similar, and the majority of the images are linked to the assorted feast day liturgies of the Orthodox faith. An examination of the frescos and their connection to the feast days leads to the conclusion that they were placed on the façade for more than just educational and political purposes. Indeed, the frescos served the religious function of enhancing the Orthodox ritual of processions. During many of the Orthodox feasts, particularly the Easter celebration, processions occurred and still do occur around the monastery churches symbolizing different types of journeys and events. The placement of these images and their iconographical connection to the holiday liturgies demonstrates that the outside frescos helped heighten the faithful Orthodox participants’ whether it is a monk or a peasant experience during a sixteenth-century procession.
This paper will discuss four topics that will help explore how the exterior images enhance festival processional, especially that of Easter. First, the history of the monasteries and the individual images will be explained. Second, other Byzantine churches and their connection to Easter rituals will be discussed to show a tradition found throughout the Byzantine Empire. Third, Romania’s ties to Byzantium will be laid out to demonstrate how they carried on the great legacy. Lastly, the tradition of Orthodox processions will be investigated so that this Byzantine custom can also be understood. After the interweaving of these events is explored, the processional around the painted churches of Moldavia will be described according to the perspective of a devoted sixteenth-century attendant.

The painted churches of Romania are not the only ones in the Byzantine sphere to have exterior frescos, but theirs are the most complete and best preserved. Due to their incredible conservation, the most famous monasteries in Moldavia are: Voroneţ, built in 1488 and exterior painted in 1547 (Figure 1); Humor, built in 1530 and painted in 1534 (Figure 2); Moldoviţa, built in 1532 and painted in 1537 (Figure 3); and Suceviţa, built in 1582 and painted in 1595 (Figure 4).

At the time of the monasteries’ construction, Romania was split into three different territories (Figure 5): Transylvania to the west, which was ruled by the Hungarian Empire, Wallachia to the south, which was ruled by the infamous Vlad Dracula and his family, and Moldavia to the north. Moldavia was governed by two of its most legendary princes during this accomplished era: Ştefan cel Mare (Stephan the Great)

---

1 Panagia Koubelidiki and Mavriotissa in Kastoria and St. George in Kurbinovo all have fragments of exterior frescos but they are in poor condition. The dating of their paintings is debatable. Ann Wharton Epstein, “Middle Byzantine Churches of Kastoria: Dates and Implications,” The Art Bulletin 62, no. 2 (June 1980), 190-207, states that the frescos on Mavriotissa were painted in the thirteenth century making it along with other churches the precursors to the Romanian monasteries.
(1457 to 1504) and his son Petru Rareş (1527 to 1538 and 1541 to 1546). Ştefan cel Mare is credited with building forty-four churches and monasteries out of which thirty-two have been identified, one of them being Voroneţ. Romanian tradition also states that Ştefan cel Mare first introduced the practice of painting the exterior walls when he built his most famous monastery, Putna. Ion Neculce, who wrote a chronicle about Moldavia in the seventeenth century, describes the outside walls of Putna: “And this is how they did the monasteries so beautiful . . . All covered in gold leaf, more gold than paint on the inside and outside and covered with lead.” Despite this quote, some scholars still say that the iconographical style and layout of the exterior frescos were developed in the time of Petru Rareş’ reign. He rebuilt some monasteries and expanded the artistic design on their outside walls. Rareş also commissioned the painting of twelve of his own monasteries and churches. Some of these buildings were later destroyed, and even though they were rebuilt, their exterior was never repainted. His style and tradition of painting the façade continued with Pătrăuţi and Suceviţa, which were painted after his death.

The majority of the scholarship written on the monasteries describes the beauty, uniqueness, and iconographical significance of the images located on the façades, but

---

2 Ştefan cel Mare built Putna in 1466 but his church was destroyed and a new church was rebuilt in 1662. The new church was not painted on the exterior.

3 Translation provided by author - “ Şi aşa au făcut mănăstirea de frumoasă…tot cu aur poleită. Zugrâveată mai mult aur decât zugrâveată şi pre dinlăuntrul şi pre dinafară şi acoperită cu plumb,” in Ion Neculce, Letopiseţul Ţarii Moldovei; precedat de, O samă de cuvinte (Bucureşti: Editura Albatros, 1984), 4. Also found in Adam Sergui, Cititori Muşatine (Cluj: Cărţii de Știinţă, 2001), 42. This idea is disputed by many different scholars in Romania. Many believe that the quote does not show that Ştefan cel Mare painted the monastery but shows that the monastery was at one point painted by someone. It is hard to know if it was painted because the original church was destroyed.

4 Alan Ogden, Revelations of Byzantium: The Monasteries and Painted Churches of Northern Moldavia (Iaşi: The Center of Romanian Studies, 2002), 14-16. Ogden’s book gives a thorough list of the majority of the remaining monasteries and churches through Moldavia.

5 They are Agapia, Arbore, Baia, Bălineşti, Bistriţa (not painted), Dobrovăţ, Humor, Moldoviţa Probota, Râșca, St. Demetrius, St. John the New, and Voroneţ.
their purpose or function has not yet been sufficiently researched. The local nuns and monks in the Moldavian area today believe that in general both the interior and exterior frescos helped the sixteenth-century Moldavian peasant learn Biblical stories and lessons.\textsuperscript{6} The monastery became the main cultural and educational institution at this time, serving as school, library, archive, and printing house. During war, they also acted as fortresses and provided protection for the nearby villages.\textsuperscript{7} It can also be assumed that people of all classes attended services at the closest monastery or church. By going to and seeing the façade of the main church building, the faithful sixteenth-century Orthodox learned the Bible stories and other traditions of their faith. One problem with this belief though is that it ignores the main viewer of these frescos, the sixteenth-century monk or nun. They would have been familiar with the Orthodox theology and would not have needed the exterior frescos to explain these ideas.

Other scholarship on the monasteries states that while the painters depicted religious scenes on the churches, some contemporary political issues were intermixed into the frescos. During the end of the fifteenth century and well into the sixteenth, the Ottoman Empire tried to conquer and control Wallachia and Moldavia. Romania fought the Turks constantly, but at some point both Ștefan cel Mare and Petru Rareș were conquered by and had to pay tribute to the Ottoman Empire. Hatred towards the Turks led the painters of the monasteries to incorporate images of their enemy into many of the exterior frescos.\textsuperscript{8} They portrayed the lost souls in the Last Judgment as Turks, as found

\textsuperscript{6} I heard this claim from the nuns and monks stationed and in charge of the tours at the monasteries when I visited them June 2008.


\textsuperscript{8} Many scholars incorporate the Ottoman Empire influence into their analyses of the Moldavian monasteries: Ștefan Balș, \textit{The Humor Monastery} (Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing House, 1965); Andre
on Voroneţ (Figure 7), and they also illustrated the enemies of the different saints as Turks, which is displayed on the church at Humor in the Life of St. John the New. In the Siege of Constantinople, the ancient capital besieged by the Avars is portrayed as the contemporary city Suceava, the capital of Moldavia, as if it were being attacked by the Ottoman army. Nicolae Stoicescu describes the depiction on Humor even further by stating:

The impression is reinforced thanks to a soldier who comes out the stronghold, bearing the name of Toma written on his head, and who pricks a Turkish commander. He is none else than Toma of Suceava, the author of the painting, who thus promised courageously to act in the fight against the Turks and giving thus an example to his countrymen, who probably looked at it.9 Other scholars expanding on the contemporary political connection, say these images were a prayer asking for divine intervention against the Ottoman Empire. Sorin Ulea argues that “the exterior frescos taken as a whole represent one supreme act of invocation imporing divine aid to save Moldavia, destined to inspire the people with confidence in ultimate victory.”10 Even though Paul Henry, who wrote the book which is now considered the essential source for these Byzantium churches’ scholarship, introduced the preceding arguments, he also was the first scholar to state that the exterior images meant

---

9 Stoicescu, 23.

10 Sorin Ulea, The Origin and Ideological Meaning of Moldavian Exterior Paintings (Bucharest: SCIA, 1963), as paraphrased in Musicescu, 14.
more than a propagandist cry for help. They have a pattern and that pattern is as rigorous
on the outside as it is on the inside. \(^{11}\)

Sorin Dumitrescu wrote the most recent study of the painted monasteries. He
states that if one wants to understand the exterior frescos, then they cannot be separated
from the interior frescos, showing the presence of a program. By studying all the images
on these Moldavian buildings, Dumitrescu believes that the meaning behind Rareş’
layout becomes clear; Rareş commissioned the illustration of the Vision of Saint Niphon
of Constantiana on the exterior walls of the churches. \(^{12}\) He continues to explain that some
of the iconography has been misinterpreted and argues that the Siege of Constantinople is
actually the Fall of Constantinople, and the Procession of the Saints is the Great Celestial
Banquet. Even though most scholars do not accept this interpretation, Dumitrescu
demonstrates that diverse and new explanations of why the monasteries are painted on
the façade should be explored.

Michael Taylor, who studied the image of the Tree of Jesse as portrayed during
the medieval period, connected the Tree found on the four main monasteries of Romania
to that found on the Great Lavra of Mount Athos. Believing that all the exterior frescos
on the painted monasteries are connected to the Lenten services that precede the Easter
celebration, Taylor states, “The Last Judgment, the Councils (the determination of
Orthodoxy), the Heavenly Ladder of St. John Climacus, the Akathistos, and the parable
of the Vine, all of which are shown, are appropriate to the Triodion which governs the

---

\(^{11}\) Henry, 211.

\(^{12}\) Sorin Dumitrescu, *The Ecumenical Tabernacles of Petru Rareş Voivode and Their Celestial
order of service during Lent.”13 I will argue that these frescos not only reflect the Lenten Triodion, but they also were placed on the outside walls to help enhance the Orthodox/Byzantine Easter processional and other processions that occurred during the sixteenth century.

Lent is an Orthodox fast and celebration that lasts for 10 weeks. The first four weeks are considered preparatory; the last two Sundays of these four weeks are the most important and are dedicated to the Last Judgment and the Fall of Adam and Eve. Six weeks or forty days then follow and are known as the Lenten fast. Each one of these six weeks is assigned a special topic and are ordered as follows: Orthodoxy, the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the Holy Cross, St. John of Sinai, St. Mary of Egypt on Sunday with the week being dedicated to Mary the Mother, and lastly the Holy Week starting with Palm Sunday.14

The four Romanian monasteries in this study - - Voroneţ, Humor, Moldoviţa, and Suceviţa - - have individual scenes that are unique to their own layout, but certain images appear on the majority if not all four of these monasteries and the others commissioned by Petru Rareş and his followers: the Last Judgment, the Genesis Scene, the Procession of the Saints or Prayer of All Saints, the Tree of Jesse, the Akathistos Hymn, and the Siege of Constantinople.15 Even though the Ladder of St. John of Sinai only appears on Suceviţa, it still bears significance. Every fresco listed above can be linked to one of the

---


14 Ibid, 13-64. They give a great explanation of every day celebrated in Lent.

15 In my travels of Romania, I noticed that St. John the New, St. Demetrius, Probota, and Baia are similar if not identical to the set up of Moldoviţa and Humor. Agapia and Dobrovăţ were destroyed and rebuilt without frescos. Râşca, Pătrăuţi, and Bălineşti only have fragments left and it is hard to tell what the layout of the paintings was even there. Râşca seems more similar to Suceviţa.
Sundays or weeks during Lent, regardless of the fact that the exact layouts of the façades do not line up in order with the Lent services. Some of these images also relate to other feasts celebrated during the Orthodox year. To show the connection to the feasts, especially that of Lent and Easter, four areas will be discussed with each scene: the placement of that particular image, its history, a description and iconographic analysis of the illustration, and lastly, the scene’s tie to the Lent services and other feast days. The different frescos will be discussed in the order of the Lenten Triodion.

The Last Judgment is in the exact same place for all of the four churches – the west wall. Like most Byzantine churches, Humor, Moldovița, and Sucevița all have porches, and it is the wall within the porch housing the church entrance that contains this image. Voroneț has a porch, but the Last Judgment spreads across the outside wall that encloses the porch, forcing the doors to be on the sides of the building and another image to encompass the inside wall of the porch.

During the medieval period, the Last Judgment’s iconographic popularity rose. Since it portrays the end of the world, Pamela Sheingorn suggests that this scene became popular “in order to intensify fear and consequently motivate penance.” Its meaning comes from the Book of Revelation and a scripture found in Ecclesiastes 3:17, “I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work,” this basically shows that Christ will be both Redeemer and Judge. While in the West, the Last Judgment was placed on the tympanum of many Catholic cathedrals such as St. Lazare in Autun, France (1130), in the East, the Orthodox/Byzantine faith placed the Last Judgment in many different areas on their

---

churches making it hard to know when or where the first illustration was used. Ann Epstein traces a brief history of this scene:

The Last Judgment appears already at the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century in Hagios Stephanos in Kastoria. In the first half of the eleventh century, it is found in the narthex of the Panagia ton Chalkeon in Thessaloniki; later in the same century it occurs in the same general form as in the Mavriotissa, and with many parallel details, in the Byzantinizing decorations of Torcello and Sant 'Angelo in Formis near Capua.\(^{17}\)

The Last Judgment is also depicted at Studenica in Serbia, which was constructed in the twelfth century, and thus demonstrates that this theme spread across the Byzantine-influenced East. That particular image, along with many of the other Eastern Last Judgments, bears similarity to the Romanian style and iconography.

The Last Judgment scene on the four churches are similar, but Voroneţ portrays the most elaborate one (Figure 15). At the top on the first register, while angels unroll scrolls that contain the Zodiac signs representing time, God the Father looks on from the middle of the scroll. The next register below depicts the most important element; Christ sits enthroned, flanked by Mary and John the Baptist in a Deesis image (Figure 16). A gulf of fire cascades down from Christ dividing the righteous from the wicked. This red stream, which always flows from Christ and goes down and to the right containing a demon waiting at the bottom for the wicked souls, is one of the similarities between the Byzantine images of the Last Judgment and is found at Mavriotissa, Torcello, and Studenica. Below Christ on the next register, Adam and Eve await Him beside His empty throne prepared for the judgment. From the viewer’s standpoint, St. Paul, located just beyond Adam on the left side of the throne, leads the righteous including priests, prophets, and martyrs. To the right of the throne beyond Eve and the gulf of fire stand the

---

damned souls with St. Moses guiding them to the judgment seat. The fourth register from the top shows more saved souls on the left side. In the middle, St. Michael weighs the souls while demons and angels struggle over those being weighed. Across the gulf which is still flowing downward, the resurrection starts to occur; bodies rise up from open graves, and both the sea and animals give back the bodies of those resurrecting. On the bottom register, Mary waits in paradise to welcome the righteous souls whom St. Peter leads to the gates of paradise (Figure 17). On the other side, the gulf of fire ends with the demon. Following the Byzantine style, the figures are elongated with drapery struggling to define their bodies underneath. The exalted souls like Christ and Mary all have the golden halo typical to Byzantine art, while those souls anticipating the judgment are dressed in contemporary clothes and include Orthodox priests, Turks, Jewish rulers, and Tartars.

The Last Judgment corresponds with two different feast days: Easter and Koimesis (Dormition of Mary). During Lent, the third week of the preparation period is dedicated to the Last Judgment and includes vespers on both Saturday and Sunday. While singing the Saturday evening vespers, the congregation hears:

When Thou shalt come, O righteous Judge, to execute just judgment, seated on Thy throne of glory, a river of fire will draw all men amazed before Thy judgement-seat; the powers of heaven will stand beside Thee, and in fear mankind will be judged according to the deeds that each has done. Then spare us, Christ, in Thy compassion, with faith we entreat Thee, and count us worthy of Thy blessings with those that are saved.  

---

18 Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, *The Lenten Triodion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 150. This is an English translation of the Orthodox Lenten services and Hugh Wybrew, *Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter: Liturgical Texts with Commentary* (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), states that this is the best translation for the Lenten services.
These words describe the Last Judgment scene on all the monasteries; Christ descends to his throne in the center and the red fire flows from Him crossing to the viewer’s right. The souls await their judgment with the righteous on the left and the wicked on the right. The service continues with a prayer by those souls awaiting judgment, “O Lord, let me not hear Thee say, ‘Take what is due to thee,’ as Thou doest send me from Thy presence; let me not hear Thee say, ‘Depart from Me into the fire of the accursed,’ but may I hear Thy words of blessing to the righteous.”\textsuperscript{19} As the members and monks prepared for the forty days of fast, they prayed for help themselves that they might be found worthy in their fast and be judged accordingly. The Last Judgment also connects to the ideas of Easter because the whole point of the feast is to celebrate the resurrection of Christ and to remember that the viewer himself will hopefully be able to join Mary in paradise thanks to Christ. This image also relates to the feast day for the Koimesis celebrated on August fifteenth. At this time, the monks and members of the Orthodox faith again celebrated the idea of resurrection and prayed for those who had died so that they too will one day rise from the dead. During the Koimesis, the Last Judgment scene would remind the sixteenth-century viewers that one day the beasts of both the earth and sea will be forced to give up the bodies of those who have died.

The Genesis Scene may seem randomly placed because it has three different locations on the four monasteries. It, however, corresponds to the image that is located near it. On Voroneț, the scene appears on the north wall above the Akathistos Hymn, which will be described later (Figure 7). At Sucevița, the Genesis Scene is on the south wall above John’s Ladder (Figure 14). At Humor and Moldovița, the fresco lies outside

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 159.
the porch wall with the Genesis Scene on the outside and the Last Judgment on the
inside, as if one caused or led to the other (Figure 18).

Throughout Christian art, the Genesis Scene has been illustrated in many different
ways and is based on the first three chapters of Genesis. During the medieval period, this
image was usually used to compare Eve and Mary. Rebecca Garber explains:

Eve and Mary represent the two most common feminine exempla offered to
medieval women: they appear in contemporary sermons, treatises, texts,
romances, sculpture, stained glass windows, altar pieces, manuscript
illuminations. Practically everywhere that medieval Christian men attempted to
define or describe women’s role, one finds references to Eve and Mary as the
negative and positive poles of female exemplarity.20

Eve, “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20), represented a shameful woman who brought
forth hell and the fall of man; in contrast, Mary, the mother of Christ, was praised for
bringing joy, love and purity to the world in the form of her son Jesus Christ, the Savior
of mankind. Thus, a parallel is drawn between Mary, the restorative Eve, and Eve,
mother of mankind. Some of the Romanian monasteries, like at Voroneț and Sucevița,
make this inference by arranging the Genesis Scene above the frescos dedicated to Mary.
Other monasteries, however, placed this image by the Last Judgment showing a relation
between these two scenes that represent the most important weeks during the preparation
period of the Lenten services.

The Sucevița fresco is the best preserved and illustrates the iconographical
explanation of the Genesis Scene (Figure 19). It starts with the separation of night from
day and then skips over the rest of the creation of the world. It moves directly to the
creation of Adam, which does not take place in Eden; paradise or Eden contains a white
background and the background of the creation of Adam is navy. In the next two scenes,

---

20 Rebecca L. R. Garber, Feminine Figurae: Representations of Gender in Religious Texts by
Medieval German Women Writers 1100-1375 (New York: Routledge, 2003), 33.
Adam, having entered Eden, names all the plants and animals. After this image, Christ creates Eve out of Adam's side; this is the only scene in Eden where Adam and Eve are not clothed. They are robed in the next two scenes as they walk around paradise and are tempted by the serpent. In most depictions of the Genesis cycle, Adam and Eve are completely naked until after they eat the fruit and dress themselves by putting on fig leaves. Some monasteries and churches in the Byzantine period, such as Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, are like the Romanian monasteries in that they cloth Adam and Eve showing their righteousness in keeping the commandment to not eat of the fruit from the tree of good and evil (Figure 20). Once Eve partakes of the fruit and convinces Adam to eat it, they lose their robes of righteousness and replace them with fig leaves showing their sin. This symbolizes their fall from righteousness and even more, the downfall of mankind.21

The Sunday of Forgiveness or The Casting Out of Adam in Lent also express this significance of wardrobe when Adam states, “Woe is me! . . . for the serpent and the woman have deprived me of my boldness before God . . . I who was once clothed in the glory of immortality must now . . . wrap myself...in the skins of mortality.”22 The second to last section shows Adam and Eve dressed in their fig leaves hiding from the presence of God, and lastly in the Genesis Scene, Adam and Eve, having sinned, are thrust out of paradise, which brings about the need of a Last Judgment. The figures in this scene, like the Last Judgment, also follow the Byzantine style with elongated figures and little understanding of human anatomy. Also following in this style, Adam and Eve appear identical with their clothes and faces being similar in design, but their names are


22 Mother Mary, 178.
inscribed above their heads to separate them. The garden is also not very detailed having few leaves, but the Garden of Eden mimics paradise in the Last Judgment scene with a white background and few plants, thus representing the relationship between Mary and Eve. Mary sits patiently in her white paradise while Eve sins in hers bringing about mankind’s damnation.

Lent and the Koimesis both can be connected to the Genesis Scene. After the Sunday of the Last Judgment, the Orthodox celebrate the last Sunday in the preparation period. This day is known by three titles: The Sunday of Forgiveness, The Sunday before Lent, and The Casting Out of Adam from Paradise. The Saturday Vesper also describes the illustration seen on the monastery through the voice of Adam:

The Lord my Creator took me as dust from the earth and formed me into a living creature, breathing into me the breath of life and giving me a soul; He honoured me, setting me as ruler upon earth over all things visible, and making me companion of the angels. But Satan the deceiver, using the serpent as his instrument, enticed me by food; he parted me from the glory of God and gave me over to the earth and to the lowest depths of death. But, Master, in compassion call me back again.

Even though Eve is left out of the above quote, the liturgy follows the Genesis Scene exactly. The end of this quote also relates the Last Judgment to the Genesis Scene. On the Last Judgment, Adam stands on the left side of Christ who has called him back again. At Humor and Moldovița, while looking at the Last Judgment and seeing Adam and Eve awaiting Christ, the sixteenth-century viewer saw the image of Adam and Eve being expelled from the Garden of Eden, showing the importance of forgiveness which is the point of the liturgy the day before Lent starts. These portrayals of Adam and Eve reminded that Orthodox viewer of his own carnal state and that he too sins; he needed to ask for forgiveness just like Adam so that Christ can call him up during the Last

---

23 Ibid, 168.
Judgment. This can be seen even further in the explanation of the preparation period, “The two proceeding Sundays, the Last Judgment and Forgiveness, together constitute - - albeit in reverse order - - a recapitulation of the whole range of sacred history, from its beginning-point, Adam in paradise, to its end-point, the Second Coming of Christ, when all time and history are taken up into eternity.”

The Genesis Scene at Voroneț and Sucevița connects to the feast day dedicated to Mary because this scene is located above the images dedicated to the Holy Virgin emphasizing the idea of Eve and Mary as second Eve. The Akathistos Hymn even mentions the idea of Mary mending the mistake of Eve, “O pure Virgin, living book of Christ, sealed by the Spirit, beholding thee the great Archangel said to thee: ‘Hail, vessel of joy! Through thee shall we be loosed from the curse of our first mother. Hail, Virgin bride of God, restoration of Adam and death of hell . . . hail, for thou hast borne the sweetly-smelled Apple. Hail Maiden unwedded.’” So while the viewer on the day celebrating Mary confronted the Akathistos Hymn and the Genesis Scene, he remembered how Mary also helped correct the fall of Adam and Eve.

Like the Last Judgment, the Procession of the Saints, which is also known as the Prayer of All Saints, is placed in the exact same locations on all four monasteries. It covers all three apses or the east end of the church. The history for the Prayer of All Saints is hard to find, but Symeon the New Theologian (949 to 1022) expressed the idea of the scene when he said, “The saints in each generation, joined to those who have gone before, and filled like them with light, become a golden chain, in which each saint is a

24 Ibid, 47.

separate link, united to the next faith, works, and love. So in the One God they form a single chain which cannot quickly be broken.”

As the title suggests, a procession of individual saints fills the apses of the monasteries. Each saint has his or her own space, which are divided by yellow or red lines and arches (Figure 21 and 22). On several horizontal registers, a different type of heavenly creature or person is illustrated: angels, seraphs, cherubim, prophets, apostles, saints, fathers of the early church, hermits, martyrs, and bishops. All these figures march to the center where the Virgin holds her Child. Another image of the Christ Child or the Lamb resting in a chalice lies below Mary and represents the eucharist. The symbolism between this image and its placement is strong; the important preparation and ceremony of the eucharist occurs on the interior of the center apse while the outside frescos reflect that sacrament with the Christ Child in the chalice.

The Angels, seraphs, and cherubim sit in the top register. The seraphs and cherubim each have a round face with six wings that surround it. Ezekiel described them by saying, “Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings. And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.” Below the cherubim in the next register follow the important saints and prophets while hermits and bishops march along the bottom register. Most of the figures are dressed in imperial style or typical orthodox dress except for the hermits whose plain clothes reflect their humble lifestyle - - they are usually covered in hair. The name inscribed by their head identifies each figure, and the isolation of the

---

26 Ogden, 56.

individuals draws similarities to icons. Philip Sherrard describes such standing figures of martyrs and saints:

These are not portraits of men and women in their ‘fallen’ state. They are portraits of a deified humanity, of men and women who have cleansed the divine image in themselves which had been obscured and troubled by the Fall, and who participate here and now in the new heaven and the new earth. What they represent is the state of being which it is, or should be, the worshipper’s desire to achieve through his initiation into the Christianity mystery.  

These faithful men and women are individuals who helped shape the Orthodox faith therefore becoming examples for the viewers.

The Prayer of All Saints describes the first two weeks of the Lenten Services that are dedicated to the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It is a celebration of the end of Iconoclasm and of all saints who willingly sacrificed for the Orthodox faith. The beginning vesper starts with honoring the old prophets:

The prophets, inspired by Thy Spirit, O Lord, foretold that Thou, whom nothing can contain or grasp, and who hast shone forth in eternity before the morning star from the immaterial and bodiless womb of the Father, wast to become a child . . . At the prayers of these Thy prophets, in Thy compassion count us worthy of Thy light . . . The divinely–inspired prophets preached Thee in word and honoured Thee in works, and they received as their reward life without end.

In the next week’s Sunday vesper, the martyrs are praised, “O martyrs of the Lord, ye hallow every place and heal every ill: and now we entreat you to pray that our souls may be delivered from the snares of the enemy.” Many of the groups shown in the Procession of Saints are honored in the vespers given during the first two weeks of Lent. It also fits that a chain of individual icons celebrating Orthodox saints, prophets, and martyrs would represent the triumph over iconoclasm which banned the use of such

---


29 Mother Mary, 299.

30 Ibid, 333.
icons. Henry himself saw the connection between the Procession of Saints and the triumph of Orthodoxy when he stated, “this order has an absolute logic: it’s rightful for the triumphant Church to occupy the most esteemed place, meaning the apse, the altar walls.”

The Tree of Jesse is found on almost all of the painted monasteries of Romania. Three of the four churches place this scene on the south wall, but at Humor, it lies on the north wall (Figures 8, 11, 13 and 14). The image comes from a scripture found in Isaiah, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”

Scholars debate over when, where, or who created this image, but during the eleventh and twelfth century, the Tree of Jesse appears numerous times in manuscripts, on architecture, and on windows. Tradition states that Abbot Suger created it when he reconstructed his church St. Denis in Paris, but new theories argue that the idea existed before that. Even though many variations exist for the Tree of Jesse in both West and East Europe, they all share the basic frame (Figure 23 and 24). On a surface level, it represents the genealogy of Jesus Christ, showing the great line of kings, prophets, and history that came before Him. The illustration starts with Jesse at the bottom where a tree sprouts usually from his side or navel. The tree encircles individuals creating a chain of

31 Henry, 212. “e just ca Biserica triumfătoare să ocupe locul de cinste, adica absidele, pereții alturului.”

32 Isaiah 11:1.

people who are all linked by that branch of the tree or vine, inspiring its name “The Tree of Jesse.” The central figures are usually the kings that lead up to the King of Kings, Christ, and sometimes Mary also accompanies her Son at the top of the tree like on the Romanian versions. Many different Old Testament or New Testament stories or prophets who testified of Christ emerge on the far side. A few Byzantine versions of the Tree of Jesse end with philosophers on the sides or on a band across the bottom as at the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.

As mentioned above, the Romanian Tree of Jesse frescos are similar to each other but also compare to the other European depictions, especially the one found at the Great Lavra. The blue background makes the individuals and scenes encircled by green leaves stand out more. The set up contains both horizontal and vertical registers with the seven horizontal ones representing the seven columns of the Temple of Divine Wisdom of Solomon found in the book of Proverbs and the fourteen vertical ones symbolizing the sacred number mentioned by Matthew.\(^3^4\) The relatives of Christ intermix with prophets, apostles, kings and scenes from the life of Mary and Christ. Greek philosophers flank the sides making an analogy between the Ancient Greek ideas and the contemporary Christian beliefs. The kings and philosophers wear typical imperial clothing, and the prophets and philosophers carry scrolls of law and ideas. While Christ dying on his cross overlooks at the top (Figure 25), Jesse sleeps at the bottom with the tree sprouting forth from his side. In the Byzantine manner, an inscription identifies each figure.

The Tree of Jesse represents the third week of Lent, known as the Sunday of the Cross or the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. The tree within the fresco symbolizes the living tree that brought Christ life as opposed to the cross which was a

\(^{34}\) Ogden, 64.
dead tree that brought about the death of Christ making the vine in a sense a living
version of the Holy Cross. The Lenten Triodion speaks of the cross and the life found in
the birth and crucifixion of Christ which are both found within the Romanian Tree of
Jesse. The Saturday vesper starts with:

Shine, Cross of the Lord, shine with the light of thy grace upon the hearts of those
that honour thee. With love inspired by God, we embrace thee, O desire of all the
world. Through thee our tears of sorrow have been wiped away; we have been
delivered from the snares of death and have passed over unending joy. Show us
the glory of thy beauty and grant us thy servants the reward of our abstinence, for
we entreat with faith thy rich protection and great mercy . . . Hail! life-giving
Cross, unconquerable trophy of the true faith, door to Paradise . . . 35

As sixteenth-century Orthodox viewers looked at the Tree of Jesse, the cross at the top
and the motif of the tree wrapped around the relatives and prophets of Christ reminded
them of the Holy Cross and the third week of Lent that deals with the life-giving Cross.

Michael Taylor shows that this illustration also ties to Marian holidays:

In particular the Tree of Jesse has been included . . . to honor the Virgin . . . the
Tree may be grouped together with the scenes in the trapeza of the Virgin's early
life and of her parents, the illustrations of the Akathistos hymn, and her image on
the apsidal wall of the chamber, enthroned and in the midst of prophets who hold
images that prefigure her. At the Lavra the Virgin is honored by special
celebrations, and she is especially venerated as an intercessor, as the placement of
her image (the Blachernitissa) and the position of John the Baptist facing the Last
Judgment unmistakably suggests. 36

By linking the Last Judgment, the Akathistos Hymn, and the Tree of Jesse to Mary and
the celebrations of her life, Taylor shows how those scenes were meant to enhance the
festivals held in the honor of Mary, especially that of the Koimesis. Most likely if Lavra,
one of the main monasteries on Mount Athos, connected the images to festival days, then
Romania followed their example and used the fresco for the same practice.

35 Mother Mary, 334-5.

Suceviţa is the only monastery church that possesses the Ladder of St. John or the Heavenly Ladder, and it is located on the south wall (Figure 10 and 26). Many scholars believe that the Heavenly Ladder replaced the Siege of Constantinople, which acted as propaganda against the Ottoman Empire. When Suceviţa was built and its façade painted, the Ottoman Empire controlled Moldavia. On the other churches, the Siege of Constantinople, which ties to the Akathistos Hymn, became an allegory for the Moldavians. The fresco of the ancient battle between the Byzantines and Persians became a contemporary battle between Moldavia and the Turks. The Moldavians hoped to conquer the Turks just as the Byzantines defeated the Persians. As the Ottoman Empire gained more control over Moldavia, the frescos that showed hatred toward the Turks could no longer be used as propaganda. Alan Ogden states that the painters of the Moldavian monasteries had to rearrange the layout on the façade of the churches due to this increase in Ottoman power.\(^{37}\) The Akathistos Hymn lost its battle scene and cry for divine help; the Heavenly Ladder was added to the exterior as another Marian image and cry.\(^{38}\) By adding this scene, the painters also enhanced the Easter procession and other feast day processions through the exterior frescos.

The Heavenly Ladder comes from a well-known idea in Byzantine culture. St. John of Sinai (525-606), a well-known and praised theologian of Christianity, wrote *The Ladder of Paradise* which describes a journey through Earth to Heaven. St. John taught that, “moral perfection is reached through a series of spiritual exercises, expressed as the

\(^{37}\) Ogden, 74.

\(^{38}\) Marian Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976). 286. In this book, Warner explains how Mary is described as The Heavenly Ladder in the Akathistos Hymn. She then goes on to quote the hymn showing the parallel between the two objects.
scaling of thirty rungs of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven,”\(^{39}\) and he called all to ascend this ladder to Heaven. The Orthodox Church especially during the Byzantine Empire referred to St. John and used his teaching in their liturgy and art.

Sucevița perfectly depicts this accession into Heaven. The right hand corner has angels flanking the righteous helping them climb the ladder towards Heaven. Demons try to grab and pull the climbers off as they ascend and then feed the fallen to the sea monsters at the bottom. Thirty steps, each labeled, lead to an opening where an angel waits to let the righteous into the gates of paradise. The blue background makes the angels’ bright colors stand out while the darkness of the demons forms a stark contrast.

The Lenten Service does not explain the teachings of St. John of Sinai, but it thanks him for the teachings he gave to the Orthodox faith and for his great example of spiritual discipline. Some monasteries today require the monks to read St. John of Sinai’s book during Lent showing his importance during the Easter celebrations.\(^{40}\) The Saturday vesper and matins celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent are dedicated to honoring St. John of Sinai and state:

O holy father John, truly hast thou ever carried on thy lips the praises of the lord, and with great wisdom hast thou studied the words of Holy Scripture that teach us how to practise the ascetic life. So hast thou gained the riches of grace, and thou hast become blessed, overthrowing all the purposes of the ungodly. Most glorious father John, with the fountain of thy tears thou hast cleansed thy soul, and by keeping vigils through the night thou hast gained God’s mercy . . . For all who follow the ascetic and monastic way, thou are in truth a lawgiver like Moses, a meek and gentle ruler like David; and we bless thee, father.\(^{41}\)

\(^{39}\) Ogden, 86.

\(^{40}\) Wybrew, 63.

\(^{41}\) Mother Mary, 352 and 366.
Even though the church does have an icon-like portrait of St. John of Sinai in the Heavenly Ladder, by placing his teachings on the exterior wall, the Moldavians commemorate him like the Lenten services do. The Ladder of St. John of Sinai also helps honor Mary on her dedicated holidays through its connection to the Akathistos Hymn.

The Akathistos Hymn Cycle is on all four monasteries. Humor, Moldovița and Sucevița place the cycle on south wall while Voroneț has it on the north wall (Figure 7, 12, 13 and 14). As previously mentioned, the location of the Akathistos Hymn was determined by how much control the Ottoman Empire had in Moldavia at that time due to its propagandist value with the Siege of Constantinople.

The Akathistos Hymn and its illustration describe Mary as both mother and victor of the Byzantine Empire and city of Constantinople. Scholars debate over the history of the actual hymn, but one thing is known, it is the oldest performed Marian hymn used in the Eastern Orthodox Church and is still sung today. Some scholars say the hymn came about in the end of the fifth century, and others say it was written in 626 to honor the victory of the Byzantine Empire over the Avars and Persians. Some even combine the two ideas, saying that the hymn started in the fifth century and then verses were added onto it once Mary saved Constantinople in 626. During the Byzantine Empire, the church held a procession every Tuesday honoring the victory over the Avar siege showing that the Byzantines believed the hymn commemorated the battle. In Constantinople during the late thirteenth century, the Akathistos Hymn inspired a cycle

---


of pictures so that by the fourteenth and well into the sixteenth century the images were as recognizable as the hymn. The Moldavian artists must have likewise believed that it was also about the battle in 626 because this fresco is always located next to the Siege of Constantinople which depicts that victory.

Humor’s church contains the most detailed Akathistos cycle that still survives in Moldavia (Figure 27). It has twenty-four scenes that imitate the hymn’s twenty-four stanzas. The top tier and the first six stanzas in the hymn correlate and deal with the Annunciation, the Visitation to Elisabeth, and the Convincing of Joseph. The next tier splits into two. The first half of the tier, like stanzas seven through twelve, describes the Nativity scenes and the Presentation at the Temple. In the second half of the second tier and tiers three and four, Mary holds her Child showing her and Christ’s dual role as victor. In some pictures, Mary stands alone while in others she presents the Christ child to saints and other righteous people. This fresco shows the importance of Mary as intercessor in the Orthodox faith. Mary appears the same in almost all the images; her elongated body is emphasized by the shawl covering her hair.

Throughout the Byzantine period, people performed the Akathistos Hymn during many different processions. One such cortege occurred every Tuesday when priests marched the famous Hodegetria Icon through the streets of Constantinople, singing the hymn. Monks supposedly performed the hymn during the Friday night processions that honored the resurrection of the dead. The Markov monastery, built in 1390 near Skopje, contains a fresco of one of these processions, which is located after the Akathistos Cycle depiction showing a correlation between this picture and processions. The hymn’s main use occurs on the eve of the Saturday of the fifth week of Lent when the Orthodox
members sing the song. Pentcheva describes it as “a day intended to commemorate the Virgin Mary’s victory over barbarians and to offer thanks to her for her unfailing protection of Constantinople.” The vesper quotes many lines from the hymn that hails Mary in her many roles. It says:

Hail, Mother who hast borne for the faithful the sacrificial Victim without blemish; hail, Ewe that hast brought forth the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of all the world. Hail, mercy-seat, our fervent intercessor. Hail, radiant dawn who alone bearest Christ the Sun; hail, dwelling-place of the Light. Thou hast dispersed the gloom and utterly destroyed the demons of the darkness. Hail, only gate through which the Word alone has passed. By thy birthgiving, Lady, thou hast broken the bars and gates of Hell. Hail, Bride of God, divine entry of the saved.

The frescos of the Akathistos Cycle also portray the many roles of Mary, which not only show an Easter connection but also link these images to the Koismeis of Mary celebrated in August.

The placement of both the Siege of Constantinople and the Akathistos Hymn always correspond to each other (Figure 28). The Siege is located on two of the four monasteries with Moldovita possessing the best illustration; Voroneț and Sucevița were painted during the Ottoman Empire’s strongest hold on Moldavia, and therefore could not use this battle on their façades. The Siege of Constantinople depicts the battle that caused the creation of the Akathistos Hymn, but as mentioned above, at times it allegorically represents the Moldavian battle with the Turks. People march around Constantinople/Moldavian city carrying the Hodegetria icon around with the Veil of Veronica. While this procession occurs, a battle wages outside between contemporary Moldavians and Turks that emulates the Avars and the Byzantines. It hopes to show that

44 Ibid., 67.

45 Mother Mary, 428.
Mary will bring earthly salvation to the Moldavians like she did to Constantinople during the Avar siege. This fresco demonstrates the importance of Mary in both ancient processions and the contemporary ones, as the scene itself mimics the processions that would occur around the Moldavian monasteries during feast days.

The Romanian monastery churches that have now been described and linked to Easter are not the only Byzantine sphere churches to use their walls to enrich the festivals of the Orthodox faith. Throughout the Byzantine Empire, churches and monasteries used different types of art to celebrate the feast days. The church of Hagia Sophia at Trebizond (1238-63) is an example of another church that connects Lent with the façade of a church. Its south porch contains a Genesis frieze that starts with the creation of Eve, shows the temptation and expulsion, and then ends with Cain killing Abel omitting their sacrifices made to God. Two inscriptions rest above the frieze. The right comes from Genesis 2:8: “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.” Found in the Lenten Triodion, the left inscription reads, “Adam sat before Paradise and, lamenting his nakedness, he wept.” Eastmond explains that Byzantines did not commonly put inscriptions on their façades, making this one extremely special. Both of these verses were used in the Lenten services, one on the first Thursday of Lent and the other on the Saturday Vespers before the Sunday of Forgiveness (The Casting Out of Adam). Eastmond also states, “Only during this one week of the year would the full significance of the frieze and its inscriptions become apparent as the meaning of the images and texts were brought to life by the service.”

Just as at Trebizond, the Romanian monasteries use art to illustrate and enhance the...
Lenten services on the façade. The artists did not write the words, but they express the ideas in iconographical forms, and during the feast days, the true meaning of the frescos could be seen.

The Mavriotissa Monastery near Kastoria also couples the art work on the walls to both Lent and the Marian festivals. Epstein draws this connection when she states, “These three paintings do not occur in a narrative sequence, but rather 'hieratically' - - the Feast scene of Good Friday is centered between the secondary themes for Vespers and Nocturn of the Thursday of Holy Week. Thus the west wall, like the east one, presents a self-contained programmatic unit focusing on the Passion of Christ and the complementary Death of the Virgin.”

The fresco layout not only emphasizes the Lenten serves but also stresses that of the Koimesis celebrated on August fifteenth. The south exterior wall contains a Tree of Jesse fresco which as explained previously expresses the ideas of Lent and Koimesis. This shows the importance of linking both interior and exterior frescos to feast days. Like those at the Romanian monasteries, Mavriotissa does not inscribe the meaning above the pictures, but the images can be iconographically married to the Orthodox feast days and are laid out in a manner that enhances this joining of ideas.

Once one sees how the Romanian monasteries carried on a tradition of connecting walls to Lenten liturgy and to other feast days, it is easier to see how those frescos enriched the Orthodox processions. Before understanding the exact processions that occurred during the sixteenth century, an explanation of how Romania adopted the Byzantium customs must first be explored, and this imitation can be seen in two distinct ways: imperialism and monasticism.

---

48 Epstein, 23.
After the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, many wondered who would pick up the imperial reign of the Byzantine Emperor. Ihor Ševčenko described the Romanian desire to do such by saying, “two Orthodox centers, the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia laid claim to protection over the Orthodox establishments under Ottoman sway, and even dreamed of assuming some of the prerogatives of the Byzantine Emperors.”⁴⁹ Ștefan cel Mare, prince of Moldavia and patron of many of the monasteries, was one of the first princes to claim the title of emperor:

The most important prince of Moldavia, accorded globally the title of Moldavstii carie (‘The Moldavian emperors’) in addition to that of voivodes, to the rulers of that country, beginning precisely with Alexander the Good . . . [who] is the prince during whose reign the Ottoman expansion reached the Moldavian border and this symbolic language aims to suggest that by divine will ‘the Moldavian land’ was destined from its ‘beginning to repel the invaders and that its princes are the heirs of all the Orthodox rulers of the states conquered by or submitted to the Turks.⁵⁰

The Moldavians not only saw themselves as the inheritors of the Byzantine Empire, but as Nicolea Iorga stated, other countries influenced by the Byzantine Empire looked to Romania as the next rulers and felt that they alone stood among the Orthodox countries as being able to sacrifice for the faith.⁵¹ The rulers of both Wallachia and Moldavia showed their desire to serve the Orthodox faith by becoming the main supporters of Mount Athos after the fall of Constantinople. They not only paid tribute to the Ottoman Porte in Constantinople, but they sponsored many churches on the Holy Mountain.⁵²

---


Monasticism was a major practice during the Byzantine Empire. St. Saba in Jerusalem was the first main monastic complex in the Byzantine faith and helped set the standards for the future monasteries during the fifth to seventh century. The center then moved to Constantinople and remained there until the eleventh century. By this time Mount Athos had become the center of all Orthodox monasticism and continues that role today. Many countries, such as Russia, Serbia, and Bulgaria, have specific church buildings dedicated to their homeland on the Holy Mountain. Romania does not have a dedicated state church, but their financial support and influence has been greater than any other country since the fall of the Byzantine Empire. During the sixteenth century, Moldavia sponsored the rebuilding of two monasteries, Dionysiou and Gregoriou, on the Holy Mountain and gifted many religious items to the different churches. Also, the similarities in the style of some frescos located at both Mount Athos and Moldavia show that the monastic styles of Mount Athos influenced the painted monasteries of Romania.

Now that the connection between Romania and the Byzantine tradition has been established, one can explore the custom of processions that accompanied the different feast days. During the Byzantine Empire, a procession was a public parade put on by

---


54 Cândea, 250.

different types of groups like clergy, guilds, and political leaders. A lite is a more specific cortege of people and clergy to a designated church on a feast day and is usually tied to the liturgy. Over sixty-eight processionals took place throughout the year in Constantinople, and the patriarch participated in over half while the emperor attended seventeen. The people marched through the streets of the capital as if to show the Orthodox control of the city and many argue that these lites helped develop the liturgy of the church. They usually accompanied saints’ days or events from Byzantine history. The most common type of these religious corteges was dedicated to Mary, but there is also evidence of several different Easter processions. Even though the Empire created and developed many different parades in Constantinople, some of them occurred for centuries before the start of the Empire. Some of the main Orthodox lites started in Jerusalem and centered on the sites dealing with the lives to both Jesus and Mary. These processionals then spread to Constantinople where the church set an example and

---


expected it to spread to the rest of the countries under the influence of the Byzantine Empire, including Romania.\textsuperscript{60}

The details of the processionals dedicated to Mary are well documented. The Byzantine Emperor Maurice (582-602) started the first cortege honoring Mary in Jerusalem and then copied it in Constantinople. The original \textit{lité} started at the Holy Sion or more recently called the Church of the Dormition, which commemorates the death place of Mary. This parade resembled “‘Mary’s leading forth from Zion to Gethsemane,’ making this a commemoration of her funeral and burial, which according to early tradition had traveled this route.”\textsuperscript{61} It took place on August fifteenth which Emperor Maurice set aside as the official feast day for the Koimesis of Mary.\textsuperscript{62} When the custom started in Constantinople, the people not only paraded on August fifteenth but also participated every Friday in the \textit{lité} know as the \textit{Presbeia}. This procession prepared people for Saturday, which was specifically dedicated to the Virgin Mary,\textsuperscript{63} and it also became the main public ceremony according to Pentcheva.\textsuperscript{64}

Only monks participated in another Friday evening procession, called the Eleventh Hour Procession, which commemorated the dead. The monks visited the tombs

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{60} Alexei Lidov, “The Flying Hodegetria. The Miraculous Icon as Bearer,” in \textit{The Miraculous Image; in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance; Papers from a Conference held at the Accademia di Danimarca, 31 May-2 June 2003} (Rome: Analecta Romana Instituti Daniei, 2004), 291. Lidov quotes a contemporary source pertaining to the Tuesday processional, “The Greeks do not eat meat on Tuesdays up to now, as well as always on Tuesdays they carry that Dimitria [the Hodegetria] through Constantinople with a procession and great rejoicing; in honour of the Virgin Mary, icons are carried everywhere in the Greek Empire, in towns, castles, and villages.” This shows how most Constantinople traditions spread to other Orthodox countries.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Stephen Shoemaker, \textit{Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 135.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Pentcheva, \textit{The Icons and Power}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, “Icons in the Liturgy,” \textit{Dumbarton Oaks Papers} 45 (1991), 51.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Pentcheva, \textit{The Icons and Power}, 12.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
of the dead during the eleventh hour, which was known as the preparation time for the second coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead.\textsuperscript{65} The \textit{parakletikos canon} along with the \textit{lite} involved “fervent first-person appeals to the Virgin and other saints to intercede with Christ on behalf of an individual troubled by sin, despair, or fear of death.”\textsuperscript{66} Besides this information, scholars do not known more on this service.

The most famous cortege performed in Constantinople was the Tuesday morning procession of the Hodegetria, the most renowned icon in Constantinople during the Byzantine Empire.\textsuperscript{67} Even though some components changed over time, the main aspect of this procession remained the same. It started early Tuesday morning at the Hodegon monastery. A monk, carrying the Hodegetria Icon on his back, marched with the participants to the main town square. Once some miracles were performed, the icon was then marched to different churches including Hagia Sophia.\textsuperscript{68} Many travelers to Constantinople during the eleventh to fourteenth century wrote about this cortege; one twelfth-century text describes it as following:

One the third day of every week the icon was moved in a circle with angelic power in full view of the crowd, as though snatched up by some kind of whirlwind. And it carried about its bearer with its own circular movement, so that because of its surprising speed it almost seemed to deceive the eyes of the spectators. Meanwhile everyone, according to their tradition, beat their breasts and cried out “Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison” [“Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy”].\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{65} Nancy Ševčenko talks all about this procession in her article “Icons in Liturgy.”

\textsuperscript{66} N. Ševčenko, 52.

\textsuperscript{67} Vassilaki and N. Ševčenko discuss the Tuesday Processions.

\textsuperscript{68} Pentcheva, \textit{The Icons and Power}, Chapter 4 and Lidov, 273-304. Both the chapter and the article discuss this Tuesday procession.

\textsuperscript{69} Lidov, 285.
This Tuesday procession not only honored the old Avar victory but the people of Constantinople used it as a chance to call on Mary, once again asking her to continue as their victor and protector.\textsuperscript{70}

These three processions, the Koimesis, the Tuesday morning, and the Eleventh hour, combined together to form another Imperial cortege that started in the twelfth century at the Pantokrator Monastery.\textsuperscript{71} It began at the church of the Virgin Eleousa or the North chapel of the monastery, and the clergy and laity marched with an icon along a path lit by candles. They then joined the Presbeia from Blachernai, the church of the Virgin, and the two together entered the Heroon of the Pantokrator and paraded to each imperial tomb imitating the eleventh hour \textit{lite} done at the monasteries. There they prayed for the salvation of those who had passed on. Then, the participants with the two icons continued on to the Chalkoprataeia, which was also dedicated to the Virgin, where the two then combined processions ended.\textsuperscript{72}

Serbia possibly held a similar \textit{lite} honoring Mary and the resurrection. Once part of the Byzantine Empire, Serbia gained its independence under Stefan Nemanja (1166 to 1196). Nancy Ševčenko mentions that the icon housed at the Studenica monastery and carried during this Serbian cortege was similar to the icon at the Pantokrator used in the Friday processions. This icon, along with the fact that Studenica was the imperial

\textsuperscript{70} Bissera V. Pentcheva, “The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople,” \textit{Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies} (2002), 23. See this article for more information on the Siege of Constantinople.

\textsuperscript{71} See N. Ševčenko, “Icons in Liturgy” for her explanation of how she comes to the conclusion of this new Pantokrator procession.

monastery of Serbia, alludes to the fact that the monks and rulers probably participated in their own style of the Pantokrator imperial procession.\(^{73}\)

Mount Athos also participated and still participates in processions during the feast days, especially those honoring the Holy Virgin since she is considered the founder of the Holy Mountain.\(^{74}\) The monks celebrate the Koimesis and have a two-week fast that accompanies it. Also the holidays are considered one of the largest social events during the year for Mount Athos. On these days, Orthodox members bring gifts to the different churches, and at the end of the services, the monks carry the gifts around the court while singing psalms.\(^{75}\)

What evidence exists that supports the idea of Marian processions at the Romanian monasteries? Like icons in Constantinople and Serbia, Romania has many replicas of the Hodegetria Icon, and one such sixteenth-century icon is housed at Humor Monastery (Figure 29). An exhibition catalogue from the National Museum of Art of Romania states, “The icon [speaking of the \textit{Annunciation Icon} from Moldavia in the sixteenth century] with the theme \textit{The Annunciation}, although attributed to the sixteenth-century Serbian space, follows a Constantinople model that circulated in the twelfth century,”\(^{76}\) which shows the connection from Constantinople to Serbia to Romania. Also recent accounts from the Moldavian monasteries reinforce the fact that processions took place during the sixteenth century. In 1985, Mother Cassiana, an American nun, traveled to Romania and stayed at one of the monasteries in Moldavia for a year. She shared her

---

\(^{73}\) See N. Ševčenko, “Icons in the Liturgy,” for details.

\(^{74}\) Sherrard, 12.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 141

\(^{76}\) \textit{Masterpieces of the Romanian Middle Ages in the National Museum of Art of Romania} (București: Colecție de Artă Alcor Edimpex, 2007), 11.
experiences in the book *Come Follow Me*. Even though she did not stay at one of the painted monasteries, she does mention two *lites* around the church: one on the Feast of Dormition and one to the crypt on the next day. She states:

Matins took place outside the Dormition Church. The special hymns of the Lamentations to the Virgin were sung in the monastery courtyard and a procession around the church in the cool summer air, with the toaca leading the way and the bells resounding throughout the countryside, finally led the faithful back into the church . . . time was transcended that evening through the mystery of prayer as we joined the Apostles at Gethsemane. We stood in the church, wrapped in the love which the Mother of our Lord offers to us . . . one of the priest spoke . . . ‘While we must love God as Father and Creator, we also must fear Him as the righteous Judge; but no one fears the pure and holy Virgin.’ With these words echoing in our ears and hearts . . . [we] processed out of the church and to the crypt . . . Now as we descended the few winding steps into this holy place, we felt the reality of the Resurrection.”

On this one feast day, Sister Cassiana captured the essence of the Friday procession --- honoring Mary and praying for the Resurrection of those deceased. Even though the timing and certain events have changed, it is evident that the ideas of the Friday cortege exist today at the Romanian monasteries and probably existed in an even closer form to the original during the sixteenth century when the monasteries of Moldavia were painted.

Even though most of the details for the Marian cortege are known, the origins, path, time and duration of the Easter processions are debatable. Easter is seen as “pre-eminent among all festivals,” and several types of these parades originally took place during Lent and the Holy Week. Some of them are no longer performed or have combined which leads to the difficulty in tracing the specific practices. The two most common processions were held during the Passion Week --- one on Good Friday

---

celebrating the burial of Christ and one on Saturday night dedicated to the Resurrection.\(^{78}\)

One spectator said of a Russian Easter Procession:

> The roaring of the bells overhead, answered by the 1,600 bells from the illuminated belfries of all the churches of Moscow, the guns bellowing from the slopes of the Kremlin over the river, and the processions in their gorgeous cloth of gold vestments and with crosses, icons, and banners, pouring forth amidst clouds of incense from all the other churches in the Kremlin, and slowly wending their way through the crowd, all combined to produce an effect which none who have witnessed it can ever forget.\(^{79}\)

The Friday cortege celebrating the burial of Christ may no longer happen in certain Orthodox churches,\(^{80}\) but the Saturday night processions are still performed in Romania, and it could be a combination of the two original *lites*. Congregations carrying candles follow the priests around the church three times singing and chanting “Hristos a-inviat” or “Christ resurrected.” The imagery on the outside walls of the painted monasteries of Romania connects to the Easter cortege in many ways and helps one understand that the exterior frescos helped enhance the sixteenth-century Easter processional.

The Lenten period helps bring the meaning of Easter to all the Orthodox members and is kept even today. Some say of Lent that, “Without this waiting, without this expectant preparation, the deeper meaning of the Easter celebration will be lost.”\(^{81}\) Many scholars and theologians compare Lent to a spiritual pilgrimage that each member must take. Alexander Schmemann states, “[Lent] is indeed a school of repentance to which

---

\(^{78}\) Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Publishing, 1964) 304.

\(^{79}\) A. Riley, *Birkbeck and the Russian Church*, 142 quoted in Ware, 308.

\(^{80}\) Mother Mary, 62 and 58 describes the thoughts and ideas behind this processional. They go on to mention that the Easter processional is no longer practiced: “Although at one time the Eastern Church – like the Western Christendom up to the present – used to hold a procession on Palm Sunday, this has now fallen into disuse and there is no mention of it in the existing Triodion.” This procession is still performed in Romania. I myself have participated in this procession.

\(^{81}\) Ibid, 13.
every Christian must go every year in order to deepen his faith, to re-evaluate, and, if possible, to change his life. It is a wonderful pilgrimage to the very sources of Orthodox faith.\textsuperscript{82} This spiritual pilgrimage then was reflected in a physical voyage or procession that at one time even started the Lenten season.\textsuperscript{83} This journey literally went from one church to another, but over time it was shortened to a symbolic march around one church.

Many types of primary documents exist that explain certain aspects of monastic and church practices during Easter, but the origins of the rituals are debatable. Gabriel Bertonière, one of the only scholars to trace the history of Byzantine Easter, examines many different lectionaries and typika and traces the Easter vigil starting with the celebrations in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{84} Bertonière starts his study by explaining how the Typikon and liturgy practices at St. Saba in Jerusalem spread throughout the Byzantine Empire to standardize all liturgical services. The first printing of the typika was in 1545, ten years after the painting of the Romanian monasteries, but the practices taught in the typika were exercised long before that, starting in the eleventh century. By the twelfth century, there is proof of its use on Mount Athos.\textsuperscript{85}

Bertonière draws upon two documents to explain the processionals held on Holy Saturday: the Georgian Lectionary, which dates from the eight century to the tenth century, and the Codex Jerusalem Patriarchate Hagia Stauros 43, which dates to the

\textsuperscript{82} Alexander Schmemann, \textit{Great Lent: Journey to Pascha} (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), forward. Also she Wybrew, \textit{Orthodox Lent, Holy Week, and Easter} for many comparisons of Lent to a pilgrimage.

\textsuperscript{83} Robert F. Taft, \textit{The Byzantine Rite: a Short History} (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 54. The procession would begin at Theotokos in Blachernai and end at Hagia Sophia.

\textsuperscript{84} Gabriel Bertonière, \textit{The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church} (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1972).

\textsuperscript{85} Bertonière, Introduction.
twelfth century. The Georgian Lectionary shows the most evidence of Easter corteges performed during Saturday night vigils. Bertonière first describes a Georgian text from the eighth century that relates the practices from the Easter vigil procession which marched around all three churches located at St. Saba.\footnote{Bertonière, 27.} He then mentions another type of service called \textit{Lucernarium} which includes the lightening of candles.\footnote{For a Catholic explanation of this procession, see Dom B. Capelle, “La Procession du Lumen Christi au Samedi-Saint,” \textit{Revue Benedictine} 44.2 (1932): 105-119.} This specific ceremony changed and over time came to incorporate a procession where the congregation circled a church three times to symbolize the three days Christ spent in the tomb.\footnote{Ibid., 33. This idea is very similar to the Romanian processions that occur today.} \footnote{Ibid., 55.} Hagia Stauros 43, which records the customs of the church Anastasis in Jerusalem in the twelfth century, shows that the \textit{Lucernarium} developed even more. It became a shorter processional that went from the Anastasis to the martyrium. This parade also took place in the fourteenth century in Antioch but instead of going to another church, the congregation probably returned to the same church causing the participants to only circle the church once.\footnote{Ibid., 55.} According to the Georgian Lectionary and Hagia Stauros 43, three different types of Easter processionals were possible in Jerusalem between the eighth and eleventh centuries.

In the twelfth century, another St. Saba Typikon was produced, and it was considerably different from the previous St. Saba information and Georgian Lectionary. Bertonière though is unclear on how the two documents are different. Other manuscripts after the Saba tradition show no evidence of the three processions around the churches, and Bertonière seems shocked that this practice may have been lost or was no longer
practiced by the twelfth century in monasteries. He does explain that the *Lucernarium* may have just been moved to another part of the service, but he makes no mention of a procession.\(^{90}\) According to Bertonière, this Saturday night cortege ended by the twelfth century. He also states that these twelfth-century documents are similar to the printed *Typikon* of St. Saba from the sixteenth.\(^{91}\)

Some may say that this information shows that no processions occurred during the sixteenth century in Romania since they would have followed the same type of services found at Mt Athos, but it is still debatable for one to say that no processions occurred at this time. Bertonière himself seems confused by the fact that the documents from the twelfth century do not contain the *Lucernarium* with a procession -- he later states, “[it] came to be considered the central feature of the entire Vigil.”\(^{92}\) Also, Bertonière does not mention the Friday night procession; he chose to only focus on Saturday night celebrations. He does briefly touch on the Sunday morning celebrations and mentions corteges in Jerusalem, but he does not expand on them.\(^{93}\) Another reason to believe that the parades still occurred during the sixteenth century is that the celebration of Easter today is similar to the one mentioned in the Georgian Lectionary, meaning that the congregation gathers on Saturday night, and at a point during the vigil, they join in a *lkte* that occurs three times around the church (Fig. 30). It could be possible that this practice stopped and then picked up again centuries later, but it is more likely that its use was continuous.

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 285-86.  
\(^{91}\) Ibid., 269.  
\(^{92}\) Ibid., 295.  
\(^{93}\) Ibid., 72-101.
Another theory on the origins of the Easter processions on both Holy Friday and Holy Saturday is that it expanded from the Great Entrance. The Great Entrance is a rite during the Orthodox service and includes a cortege parading from the sanctuary into the naos then back to the sanctuary. Priests carry gifts and the Eucharist covered by the aer which is an embroidered veil depicting the dead Christ. Some scholars believe that the Orthodox church architecture changed during the reign of Justinian II (685 to 695 and 705 to 711) due to the introduction of the Great Entrance procession, which demonstrates the importance of lites to the Orthodox faith. Father Robert Taft describes how this cortege leads to the Good-Friday procession:

This is undoubtedly the origin of the custom, still current at the ordination of a priest, of having the deacon-ordinandus carry the aer on his head, instead of carrying the discos on his head and the aer draped over his left shoulder, which is now the usual practice during the ordinary liturgy. It is also the origin of the Good-Friday burial procession in the Byzantine rite, when at Great Matins the epitaphion with the image of Christ in the tomb is borne like a baldachin above the head of the chief celebrant by the concelebrating priests.

On Holy Friday, the epitaphion, a larger embroidered or painted covering depicting the dead Christ, is marched around representing the death of Christ (Fig. 31). This practice

---

94 For a description of this rite, see Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and other Pre-anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* (Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1975) and J. D. Ştefănescu, *L'Illustration des Liturgies dans l’art de Byzantine et de l’Orient* (Bruxelles: Institut de Philologue et d’Histoire Orientales, 1936). Father Taft believes that some Great Entrances did not occur only inside but on the outside of the church also. For this argument see Taft, *Divine Liturgies*, VIII.


started during the fifteenth or sixteenth century which would be during the time period
when the Romanian monasteries were painted on the exterior walls.\footnote{Mother Mary, 62 dates the start of this procession during the fifteenth and sixteenth century.} One source

describes this part of Holy Friday services as the climax of the Easter feast.\footnote{Ware, 308.} Father Taft
also explains that the epitaphion was carried in the Holy Saturday procession which was
also influenced by the Great Entrance, “The development of the aer is based on the
symbolism of the Great Entrance as the burial procession of Christ, and preceded the
evolution of the ‘Burial of Christ’ procession with the epitaphion at Holy Saturday
matins.”\footnote{Taft, \textit{The Great Entrance}, 217.} This tradition dates to the fourteenth century, and scholars debate over
whether it occurred inside or outside.\footnote{The date and the argument for the inside is found in Taft, \textit{The Great Entrance}, but J. D.
Ştefănescu, \textit{L'art byzantin et L'art Lombard en Transylvanie: Peintures Murales de Valachie et de
Moldavie} (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1938), 108 argues for the outside and Arch-Priest D.
Sokolof, \textit{A Manual of The Orthodox Church’s Divine Services} (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Russian
Orthodox Monastery, 1975), 105 states that today the procession can occur inside or outside.}
One source describes this procession going
around the church with the “tomb” of Christ as a “whole cosmos in the mystery of
Christ’s death and resurrection.”\footnote{John Meyendorff, “Holy Saturday,” \textit{Conference IV: Spiritual Life for Lent and Easter} (10 -11
March 1979): 11.}

Many frescos on the walls of monasteries depict these two processions.

Sometimes the images are confused with the Great Entrance, but with further analysis, it
becomes clear that they illustrate the Holy Friday and Holy Saturday \textit{lites}.\footnote{Taft, \textit{The Great Entrance}, 206.} The most
relevant fresco for the argument of exterior painting enhancing the Easter processionals is
found in Moldavia on the pronaos of Dobrovaţ (Fig. 32 and 33). The scene portrays a
number of angelic priests carrying the epitaphion followed by other priests in a cortege identified as the Holy Saturday service. Dobrovaț was built by Ștefan cel Mare and his son Petru Rareș had the interior and exterior painted in 1527 to 1531. One source states: “It was here, in the meadows of a verdant valley, that Petru Rareș made his first ‘artistic’ decision to have the exterior walls painted.”104 The outside has since lost its exterior frescos. Having this picture of a Holy Saturday procession on the first church painted by order of Rareș, supports the idea that the exterior frescos were meant to enrich these parades, especially the one taking place on the interior fresco of the pronaos. Also the fact that this image is not found in the usual spot of the naos or sanctuary but is placed in the pronaos as if on its way out to participate in a procession, supports the relationship between the walls and the processinals.105 Ștefănescu described this practice as:

   Indeed, the Divine Liturgy, to use the name which we offered it earlier, takes us back to the procession of the Easter vespers, such as is still practiced in Serbia. The procession consists of the Epitaphios carried in the streets, celebrants, bishops dressed in sakkos and a crowned prince followed by his court . . . The cortege of the Epitaphios of the pronaos seems to both take place within and extend beyond the walls of the church.106

As the sixteenth-century congregation walked around the painted monasteries of Romania participating in a cortege on the different feast days, the frescos laid out on the exterior façade would come alive and remind these spectators what they were celebrating.

104 Ogden, 124.

105 Ștefănescu, L’art byzantin et l’art Lombard en Transylvanie, 108. Talks about the different locations of this image.

106 “En effet, la Divine Liturgie, pour lui donner le nom que nous lui avons trouvé d’abord, nous reporte à la procession des vêspers de Pâques, telle qu’elle se pratique encore en Serbie. La procession comporte l’Épitaphios porté dans les rues, des celebrants, des évêques vêtus de saccos et un prince couronné suivi de sa cour . . . Le cortège de l’Épitaphios au pronaos semble se dérouler et se prolonger par delà les murailles de l’église.” Ibid., 108-110.
Once one understands the connection between the Moldavian exterior frescos and corteges, one can start to explore the faithful Orthodox participants’ feelings and experiences. In the sixteenth century during a celebration of Koimesis at Moldovița, the congregation would gather with icons to honor the Virgin and to pray for lost loved ones. While looking at the images found within the Akathistos Hymn displaying the life and calling of Mary, the viewer would remember that if called upon, Mary would protect them against the Turks just like she did during the Siege of Constantinople. The procession occurring around this church is reflected in the Siege of Constantinople as both carry icons of the beloved Mother of Christ, strengthening their cry for her help. Following by that, the Tree of Jesse would show the participant in this great *lite* that Mary and her son stem from all the great prophets and kings of the Old Testament. At this point, the Saints depicted in the Prayer of All Saints would join the faithful congregation as they walked around the holy apse in honor of the woman who brought them the Lamb of God. As the procession came to the entrance of the church, two ideas would enter his mind. First, the Last Judgment would explain to the viewer why he prayed for his loved one; that they might resurrect and enter paradise. Second, the Last Judgment juxtaposed with the Genesis Scene would remind the spectator that he too, if righteous, could join Mary, the second redeeming Eve, in that paradise lost by Adam and Eve yet regained by the Holy Virgin’s son.

In the sixteenth century during the many processions that occurred throughout Lent, Holy Week, and Easter, the participant would be reminded of the preparation or spiritual voyage he experienced during Lent as he took part in a physical journey around the church. At Humor, the procession would start by passing the Akathistos Hymn and
the faithful viewer would remember the fifth week of Lent when he sang the hymn that was laid out in front of him. As the lite turned around the apse, the saints once again joined the congregation in celebration of the resurrection of the Lord as the participant in the procession was reminded of the first two weeks of Lent dedicated to the Triumph of Orthodoxy. The cortege then passed by the tree that spreads across the south wall displaying images of the ancestors and prophets of Christ. This tree sprouted across the Tree of Jesse representing the Cross and the fourth week of Lent. The spectator would end where he began the great fast of Lent as he approached the entrance of the church. The Last Judgment and Fall of Adam would remind him of his spiritual pilgrimage through life as he prepared for his own resurrection and judgment hoping that he may join those on the right hand of Christ.

The painted monasteries of Romania are an example of a lost Byzantine tradition of painting the exterior walls of churches. Many factors contribute to the reasoning for painting the walls, but the layout of those particular images point to a connection with the feast days of the Orthodox faith revered in the Byzantine period. Even though proof of sixteenth-century processions may be hard to find, the fact that they are deeply imbedded into Orthodox practices and history leads to the argument that the custom of covering the exterior walls with pictures came about to enrich the corteges. The religious processions combined with the frescos found on the Moldavian monasteries would have enhanced the celebration of many feast days especially that of the main holiday in the Orthodox faith, Easter, causing the meaning of the scenes to stretch beyond the walls and into the mind and heart of the participant.
Figure 1: Voroneț Monastery, Romania, built 1488, exterior frescoed 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 2: Humor Monastery, Romania, built 1530, exterior frescoed 1534 (photo: Razvan Theodorescu)
Figure 3: Moldoviţa Monastery, Romania, built 1532, exterior frescoed 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 4: Suceviţa Monastery, Romania, built 1582, exterior frescoed 1595 (photo: author)
Figure 5: Map of Romania at the end of the Sixteenth Century (map: Kurt Treptow)

Figure 6: Voroneț Monastery, detail of the Damned Souls, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: author)
Figure 7: Diagram of the North Wall of Voroneț Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 8: Diagram of the North Wall of Humor Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)
Figure 9: Diagram of the North Wall of Moldovița Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 10: Diagram of the North Wall of Sucevița Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)
Figure 11: Diagram of the South Wall of Voroneț Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 12: Diagram of the South Wall of Humor Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)
Figure 13: Diagram of the South Wall of Moldoviţa Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)

Figure 14: Diagram of the North Wall of Suceviţa Monastery (diagram: Alan Ogden)
Figure 15: Voroneț Monastery, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: Maria Ana Musicescu)

Figure 16: Voroneț Monastery, Detail of the Deesis Image, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: author)
Figure 17: Voroneț Monastery, Detail of Mary in Paradise, The Last Judgment, 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 18: Moldoviţa Monastery, The Genesis Scene (Seen on the top) and the Last Judgment (Seen through the porch), 1537 (photo: author)
Figure 19: Sucevița Monastery, The Genesis Scene, 1595 (photo: author)

Figure 20: Hagia Sophia at Trebizond, Detail of the Genesis Scene, 1238-63 (photo: Anthony Eastmond)

Figure 21: Sucevița Monastery, Detail of The Prayer of All Saints, 1595 (photo: author)
Figure 22: Moldovița Monastery, The Prayer of All Saints, 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 23: Moldovița Monastery, The Tree of Jesse, 1537 (photo: author)
Figure 24: Voroneț Monastery, The Tree of Jesse, 1547 (photo: author)

Figure 25: Voroneț Monastery, Detail of the Tree of Jesse, 1547 (photo: author)
Figure 26: Sucevița Monastery, John’s Ladder, 1595 (photo: author)
Figure 27: Moldovița Monastery, The Akathistos Hymn Cycle, 1537 (photo: author)

Figure 28: Moldovița Monastery, Detail of The Siege of Constantinople, 1537 (photo: Alan Ogden)
Figure 29: Hodegetria Icon replica, Humor Monastery, 16th Century (photo: author)

Figure 30: Modern Easter Processional, Humor Monastery (postcard from Humor Monastery)
Figure 31: Epitaphios, Dobrovăț Monastery, commissioned by Ștefan cel Mare, 1506 (photo: The National Museum of Art of Romania)

Figure 32: Drawing of the Procession of Holy Saturday Fresco on Dobrovăț Monastery (diagram: J.D. Ștefănescu)

Figure 33: Dobrovăț Monastery, The Procession of Holy Saturday, 16th Century (photo: J. D. Ștefănescu)
WORKS CITED


