

# REPRESENTATIONS OF ORNAMENTS INSPIRED BY ROMANIAN ARCHITECTURE ON WALLACHIAN MEDIEVAL STOVE TILES FROM THE 15<sup>TH</sup>-17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

Maria-Venera Rădulescu\*

**Keywords:** defensive wall, merlon, battlement, dome, spire, church, recess, arcade, fleuron, disc tiles, convex tiles, fretted tiles, panel tiles, crown tiles, engobe.

**Abstract:** The tile stove, as a monument of interior architecture, has both a heating and a decorative purpose. Its volume can be inspired by military defensive architecture, by the architecture of ecclesiastic monuments or by secular architecture. The stove's decorative aspect is represented by the design of the tiles (shape, iconographical repertoire, the enamel chromatics). Among the medieval tiles discovered on the Wallachian territory, the ones selected for this study are those that have an ornamentation that is representative of the architecture of the era: towers, citadel defensive walls, with merlons and battlements, church silhouettes topped by crosses, domes, arcades, stone walls with windows and recesses. The above mentioned decorative elements are found in disc tiles, convex tiles, fretted tiles, and panel tiles, pieces designed for the crown of the stove or the volumetric register corresponding to the heating chamber.

**Rezumat:** Soba, prin structura sa de monument de arhitectura de interior, are atât rolul de încălzire cât și de decorare a spațiului interior. Volumetria sobei poate fi inspirată din arhitectura militară de apărare, din arhitectura monumentelor eclesiastice sau din arhitectura laică. Aspectul decorativ al sobei se realizează prin modul de concepere a cahlilor (formă, repertoriul iconografic, cromatica smalțurilor). Dintre cahlile medievale descoperite pe teritoriul Țării Românești sunt selectate, în acest studiu, câteva piese a căror ornamentică a fost inspirată din arhitectura epocii: turnuri, ziduri de cetate, cu merloane și crenele, siluete de biserici, surmontate de cruce, cupole, arcade, ziduri de piatră, cu ferestre și ocnițe. Motivele decorative menționate se regăsesc la cahlă-disc, cahlă-convexe, cahlă-traforate și cahlă-placă, piese destinate fie coronamentului sobei, fie registrului volumetric corespunzând camerei de încălzire.

The tile stove was first used, in Central European countries, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Even from its beginnings the stove has an important decorative purpose, apart from its heating one. The tile stove's structure, through its component elements (base, burning chamber, heating chamber, cornice, crown) and also through its type of tiles, as well as their ornamentation, gains style characteristics which are specific to each historical timeframe and differ from one region to another. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries two main types of tile stoves can be remarked, the first shaped as defensive towers, under the influence of the epoch's military architecture, and the second which reference the architecture of Late Gothic cathedrals, through their volume and decoration.<sup>2</sup>

As opposed to the Central European countries, no tile stoves from the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries were found on the territory of Romania. Archaeological research revealed disparate elements belonging to the structure of these heating devices. A graphical reconstruction of such stove is a task rendered difficult by the fact that the real number of tiles that composed it and the dimensions of its base remain unknown. A graphical restoration of several medieval tile stoves discovered on Romanian land was at times attempted. In certain museums, archaeological institutes or private collection storerooms an important number of tiles can be found, which for now can only be displayed as disparate pieces, by observing their technical characteristics, typology, decoration, place of discovery, and chronological framing. Therefore the present study, which analyses the architectural-inspired ornaments found on medieval tiles from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, can seldom refer to any other characteristics of the heating devices that these pieces belonged to.

## The defensive wall with merlons and battlements

The ornamental motif *defensive wall*, inspired by the defensive military architecture of the epoch, is typical of crown tiles. The top side of these pieces mimics the shape of merlons and battlements. In the European environment, the decoration, found in late Gothic tile stoves from the Czech Republic,<sup>3</sup> Tirol,<sup>4</sup> and Germany,<sup>5</sup>

\* The National Museum of Romanian History, Bucharest, e-mail: mariavenera\_radulescu@yahoo.ro.

<sup>1</sup> Franz 1969, pp. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Blümel 1965, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Franz 1969, ils. 89, 90; Richterová 1982, tabs. 62/3, 63/2, 64/1-6, 65/2, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Franz 1969, fig. 104.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, figs. 152, 163.

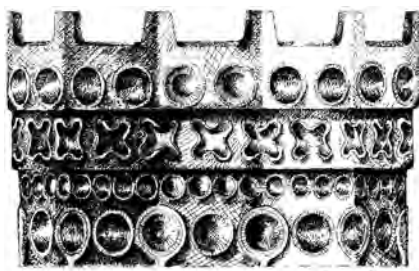


Fig. 1. Tile stove crown, Râmnicu. Vâlcea, 14th-15th centuries (graphical reconstitution, Busuioc, Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu 1979, fig. 10).

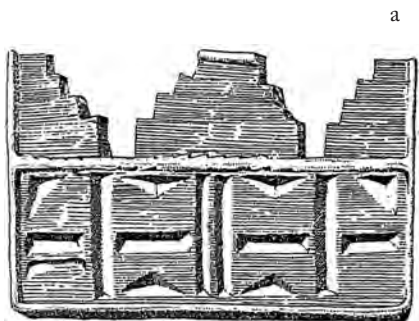


Fig. 2. Plate crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Bucharest, Radu Vodă Monastery (a. Slătineanu 1958, fig. 71).

dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the next century. The hearth preserved in Meral castle in Tirol is mentionable;<sup>6</sup> it has a cylindrical heating chamber, inspired by the architecture of a defensive tower, and a crown similar to a cantilevered terrace, boarded by merlons.

On the territory of Romania, the monumental hearth from the reign of Stephen the Great (1457-1504), discovered in Suceava in the ruins of the Royal House („*casa domniei*”), had a crown designed so as to represent an entire citadel.<sup>7</sup> Numerous small towers, portions of defensive wall, the layered positioning of the towers suggests a fortification with at least two concentric enceintes. The inspiration behind this piece is believed to be the actual Citadel of Suceava during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> In Moldova, stoves with a crown composed by tiles decorated with merlons existed in other areas of the city of Suceava,<sup>9</sup> as well as in Vaslui,<sup>10</sup> Putna,<sup>11</sup> Părhăuți,<sup>12</sup> and Baia.<sup>13</sup> In Transylvania, similar discoveries were found in Cechest, <sup>14</sup> Cristurul Secuiesc,<sup>15</sup> and Zalău.<sup>16</sup>

South of the Carpathian Mountains a first attempt at such ornament was identified in the hearth discovered in the ruins of a medieval house in Râmnicu Vâlcea (end of the 14<sup>th</sup> – first decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century). The crown of the heating device had two successive structural registers which encased pot-tiles, and the superior part was made of clay (like the entire structure of the stove), with a decoration that suggests merlons (Fig. 1).<sup>17</sup> However, regarding their technical execution, these elements cannot be considered tiles.

In Bucharest, in the area of the Monastery of Radu Vodă,<sup>18</sup> a crown plate tile measuring 15×21.3×1.4 cm and dating from the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries was discovered, which has a superior register that mimics a series of merlons with stepped sides. The inferior register, hewn with a spatula in cassettes (diamantine bossage), suggests the stone wall of a citadel. The piece is unglazed, but has a light brick red engobe (Fig. 2). Also in Bucharest, archaeological research in the year 2004 revealed, on 9-12 Calea Victoriei, close to the Dâmbovița River,<sup>19</sup> in the area of the foundations of churches from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, fragments of crown tiles, unglazed, adorned on their superior side with merlons with eaves; on each merlon a patriarchal cross is represented. In its inferior register, a composition with two figures, one pedestrian the other equestrian,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 104.

<sup>7</sup> Popa, Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu 1979, pp. 90-91, figs. 76, 90-93.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 135.

<sup>9</sup> Batariuc 1999a, pp. 130-132, 135-136, figs. 5/2-4, figs. 7/1-10, figs. 8/1-4, 6, fig. 9/2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 9/1, 5, fig. 10/4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 8/5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 5/1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 5/5.

<sup>14</sup> Benkö, Ughy 1984, fig. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Marcu-Istrate 2004, Pl. 39 B/4.

<sup>16</sup> Musca 1992, pp. 175-178, Pl. 1, 2, pp. 375-379.

<sup>17</sup> Busuioc, Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu 1979, p. 279, figs. 10, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Slătineanu 1958, fig. 71; *Bucureștii de odinioară* 1959, Pl. LIX/2; Rădulescu 2010, fig. 2 b.

<sup>19</sup> Mănucu-Adameșteanu 2005, pp. 303-307

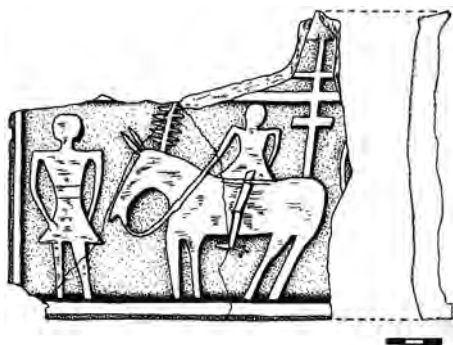


Fig. 3. Plate crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Bucharest, Historical Centre (graphical reconstitution).

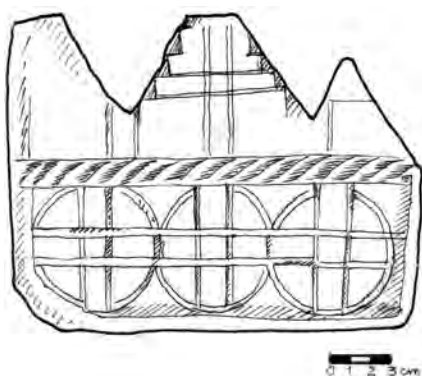


Fig. 4. Plate crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Cărnău Monastery (Marcu, Lupu 1994, fig. 16).



Fig. 6. Fretted crown tile, 16th century. Târgșoru Vechi (Rădulescu 2013, Pl. IV/6).



Fig. 5. Fretted crown tile, 16th century. Cătălui-Căscioarele Monastery (a. Cantacuzino, Trohani 1979).

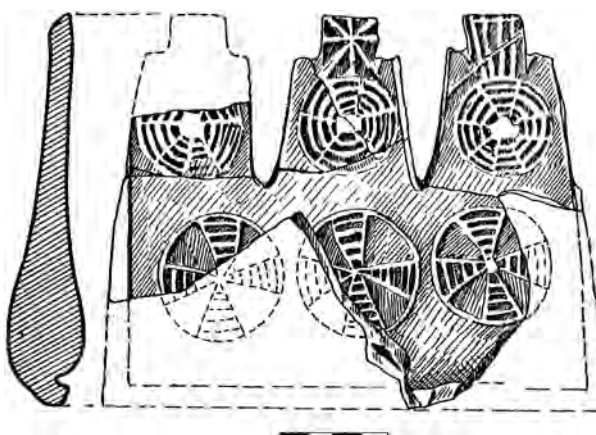


Fig. 7. Plate crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Orașul de Floci (Chițescu et alii 1979).



seems to suggest a scene of pilgrimage (Fig. 3).<sup>20</sup> Although the plastic realisation is naive, the iconography (the pilgrimage scene) is unique among the known tiles and is interesting for its social content, anchored in the mentality of the times.

The crown plate tile which originates from the Monastery of Cârnău in Buzău County is 16×21.6 cm, unglazed, with a crenelated top. The piece dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> The central stepped merlon is decorated with a Latin cross and the inferior register with a series of circumscribed crosses.<sup>22</sup> The registers are divided by a horizontal torsade (Fig. 4).

A crown tile fragment 8×10×1.5-1.7 cm in size, datable to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, decorated with merlons, was discovered at Tutana Monastery in Argeş County.<sup>23</sup>

Archaeological research at the former Monastery of Cătălui, Căscioarele,<sup>24</sup> Călăraşi County, revealed a fragmentary crown tile measuring 18×18 cm, decorated on its superior register with a defensive wall with merlons. At the centre of its inferior register a fretted element represents a mill, with two church spires with crosses on their tops at each side (Fig. 5).<sup>25</sup> The tile was probably a decorative element of a stove from the church of the former monastery. The constructive shape of the tile in Cătălui, as well as the decoration of the merlons, are similar to those on the tile fragments discovered in Târgşoru Vechi (Fig. 6)<sup>26</sup> and Buda Monastery.<sup>27</sup>

At Oraşul de Floci (Ialomiţa County), an important urban medieval settlement at the confluence of the Ialomiţa River and the Danube, archaeological research reveals the existence of four cult edifices, seven necropolis, eight workshops and over 250 dwellings, during the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>28</sup> The dwellings had tile stoves with pot tiles, disc tiles, fretted tiles or plate tiles. Among the crown tiles a special category is that of the tiles that are decorated with merlons and recesses on their top, which are dated between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the next century.<sup>29</sup> Such a piece is a plate tile measuring 13×16 cm, unglazed, and decorated with three stepped merlons, with a motif similar to a spider web. Under the merlons, in the register at the bottom of the tile, there is a series of three circumscribed crosses similar to the cross of Malta (Fig. 7).<sup>30</sup> Another plate tile discovered at Oraşul de Floci (16×20×1.5 cm), unglazed, shows the merlons with eaves adorned with stars in circles. In the inferior register there are two mills with twelve blades each. Since it is known that the medieval man was used to operating with symbols, it can be presumed that, in this case, the twelve blades represent the twelve months of the year, always in motion. The decoration gives the composition a feeling of vibration (Fig. 8).<sup>31</sup> In the same archaeological site, the defensive wall decorative element is found on several fretted tiles. One of the pieces (15.7×14×1.2 cm) has a stepped merlon on the left side of its superior register. Under the merlon there is a horizontal torsade.<sup>32</sup> The fretted register represents a circumscribed cross and the openings of two windows with round arches, on two levels.<sup>33</sup> The intricate contour of the windows is remarkable for its attempt to suggest the sculpted stone framing. It is possible that the artisan that created such pieces was inspired by the architecture of a church which existed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Oraşul de Floci (Fig. 9). Other tile fragments with the same decoration have the merlon on the right side. When putting the pieces back in their original position, it seems possible that the intention was to have the merlons on the two ornaments joined so as to create the image of a citadel tower. Also from Oraşul de Floci another fretted tile

<sup>20</sup> Rădulescu 2010a, pp. 151-152, fig. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Marcu, Lupu 1994, pp. 234-235, fig. 16/a, b.

<sup>22</sup> Rădulescu 2010a, p. 153, fig. 4/a.

<sup>23</sup> Cristocă, Opreşcu 1988; Rădulescu 2013, Pl. VIII/1.

<sup>24</sup> Cantacuzino, Trohani 1979, fig. 27/4; Trohani, Damian, Sârbu 1995, fig. 12/1; Rădulescu 2010, fig. 7/a.

<sup>25</sup> Rădulescu 2013, p. 180, Pl. IV/5, VIII/3.

<sup>26</sup> Rădulescu 2010a, figs. 7/b, c.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 7/d. Archaeological excavations conducted by Virg. Drăghiceanu, in 1931. Pieces hosted by the MNAR collection.

<sup>28</sup> Păunescu, Mihai 2000, pp. 85-96.

<sup>29</sup> Chişescu *et alii* 1979, p. 222, fig. 14/ 1-4, 19/2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 14/1-4; Rădulescu 2010, fig. 4 b.

<sup>31</sup> Chişescu *et alii* 1979, fig. 19/2; Rădulescu 2010, fig. 5 a.

<sup>32</sup> The torsade is another decorative motif which can be seen on medieval tiles, inspired by architecture.

<sup>33</sup> M.-V. Rădulescu, in: Chişescu *et alii* 1981, p. 135, fig. 9/2; Rădulescu 2010, pp. 151-163, fig. 5 b.

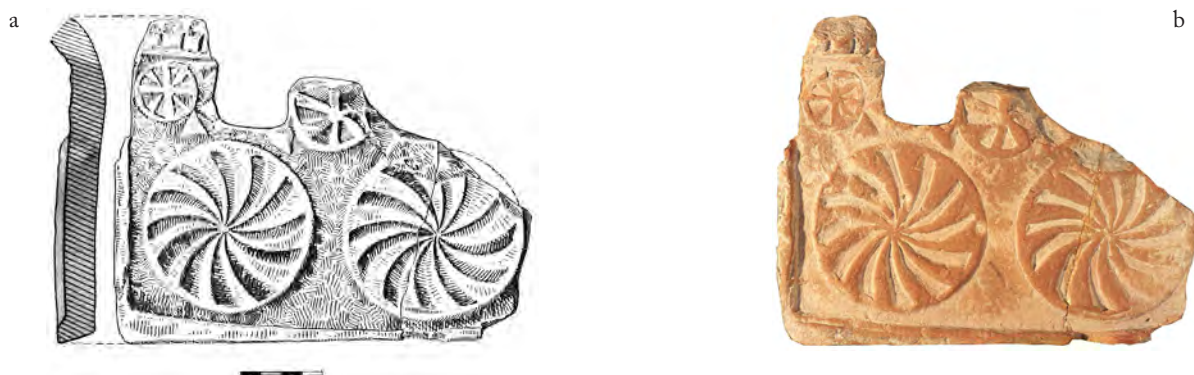


Fig. 8. Plate crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Oraşul de Floci (a. Chişescu *et alii* 1979).



Fig. 9. Fretted crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Oraşul de Floci (a. Rădulescu 1981, fig. 9/2).

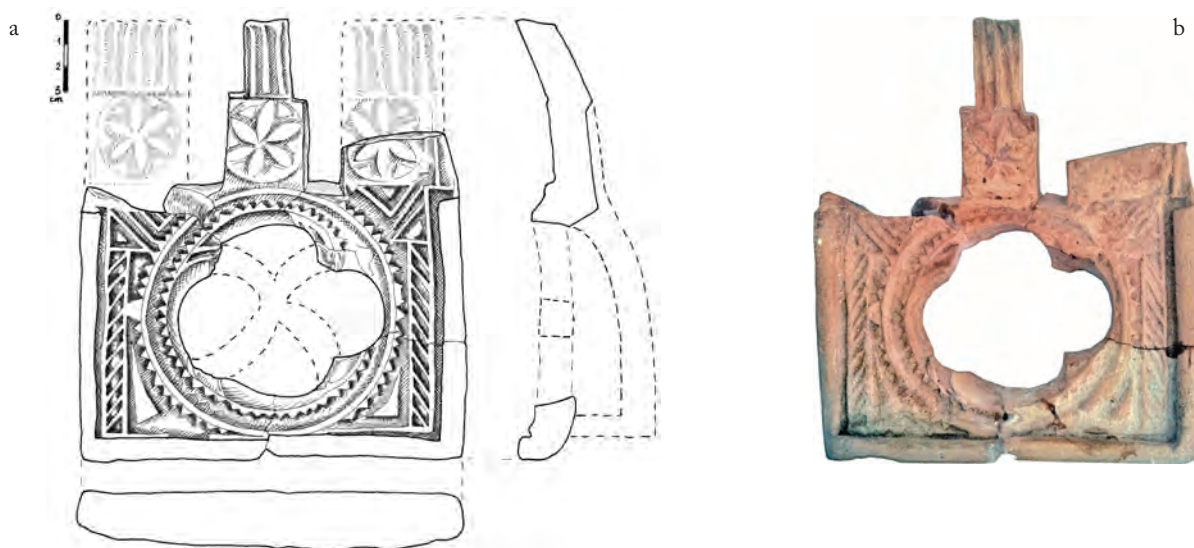


Fig. 10. Fretted crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Oraşul de Floci.



Fig. 11. Fretted crown tile, 16th century. Vadul Anei.

overlap a register decorated with an interlace that resembles grain (Fig. 11). The olive glazed pieces used to embellish, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the tile stove of a rich countryside dwelling.<sup>34</sup>

A fragment of crown plate tile dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century was discovered at the citadel of Tabla Buții<sup>35</sup> (Prahova County). It is possible that in this case the ornament was inspired by the defensive wall of the citadel.

The defensive wall ornamentation was used at decorating the crown tiles only until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It needs to be stressed that some of the merlons on the analysed plates have the cross as ornament.

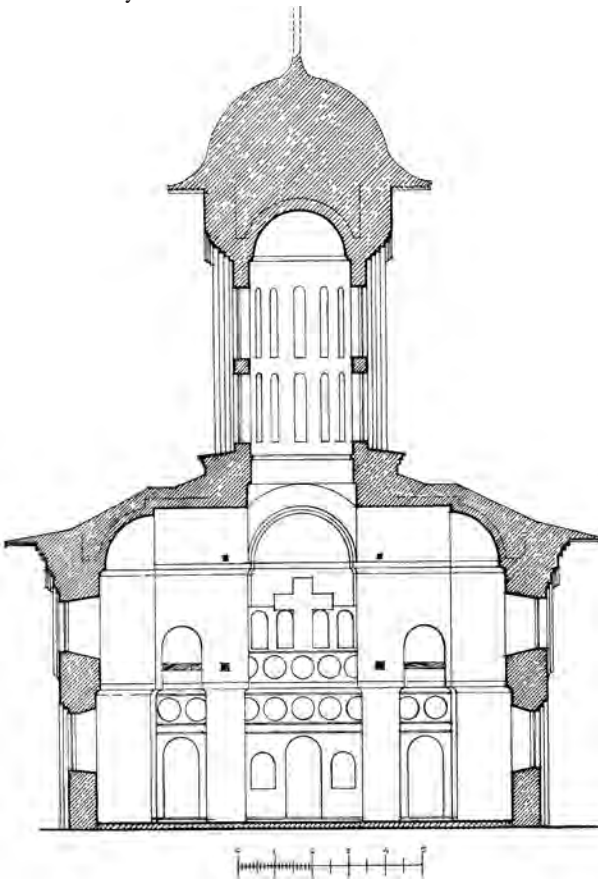


Fig. 12. Church of the Snagov Monastery. Transversal cross section through the nave. Surveyed by V. Moisescu (Ghika-Budești 1927, fig. 103).

measuring 18×16×1.5-2 cm was found, unglazed and fixed with a niche system. The piece has each of its merlons decorated with a rosette. The inferior fretted register, nowadays destroyed, is supposed to represent a mill (Fig. 10).

From Vadul Anei (Ilfov County) a number of crown tile fragments were found, adorned on their superior side with fretted trapezoidal merlons which overlap a register decorated with an interlace that resembles grain (Fig. 11). The olive glazed pieces used to embellish, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the tile stove of a rich countryside dwelling.<sup>34</sup>

Associating the symbol of the Christian faith with elements of defensive military architecture, which form a defensive wall with embrasures, can be understood as the reflection of a collective mentality specific to the medieval society south of the Carpathians, where the fight for territorial defence and Christian faith were a dominant of the day-to-day life.

### **Tower – Spire – Dome**

The towers, spires and domes inspired the decoration of the tiles more than once, but the plastic interpretation of the architectural element is often so simplified that the model is hardly recognisable.

Among the decoration of the crowns of the tile stoves a special category is that of the convex tiles, which are modelled on a potter's wheel. The body of these pieces is cylindrical, with a bulb-shaped top. In Wallachia two such pieces are known, one discovered at Snagov Monastery, the other at Târgoviște. At Snagov Monastery (Fig. 12), in a pit near the walls of the altar, specimens of pot tiles and cup-shaped tiles were found, pieces that, at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century or in the first decades of the next century were part of a tile stove installed in the first church.<sup>36</sup> Among these pieces, the convex tile<sup>37</sup> adorned the crown of the hearth. The tubular piece, which is 18 cm high, has a convex, bulb-shaped top which is decorated and placed in the centre and has a small 2 cm high ornament which suggests a flower bud (Fig. 13). Another crown convex tile was

<sup>34</sup> Rădulescu 2010a, p. 154, fig. 6/b. The recuperated fragments form a frieze 37 cm long.

<sup>35</sup> The novel piece is showcased in the MJIA Exhibition in Prahova county, Ploiești.

<sup>36</sup> Rosetti 1935, figs. 29-35.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 35 (the piece is published upside down).



discovered in Târgoviște, among the ruins of a medieval dwelling (L31) which was destroyed by a fire at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> The artisans that created these tiles were inspired by the general volume of church spires.<sup>39</sup> They only adopted the svelte, vertical shape of a dome-topped architectural structure that stood over the church wall. Adapted to a cylindrical shape because of the material they were made of (clay), the convex tiles decorated, like small towers, either the crown or certain areas of the tile stove.

Convex crown tiles discovered in Wallachia share some analogies with pieces found in Transylvania and Moldavia. For Transylvania, a piece discovered in Arad is worthy of mention<sup>40</sup> and another in Bodrog<sup>41</sup> (Arad County). In Moldavia, convex crown tiles were used during the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries in stoves found in Baia<sup>42</sup> (Suceava County), Bacău<sup>43</sup> (Bacău County), Suceava,<sup>44</sup> Roman<sup>45</sup> (Neamț County), Pătrăuți Monastery<sup>46</sup> and Todirești<sup>47</sup> (Suceava County). These stoves are of various shapes, sizes and have different ornamentation. In Central European countries, convex tiles were used in building heating devices starting from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>48</sup>

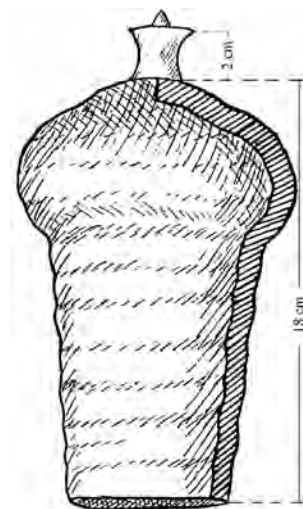


Fig. 13. Convex crown tile, 14th-15th centuries. Snagov Monastery (Rosetti 1935, figs. 35, 9/2).

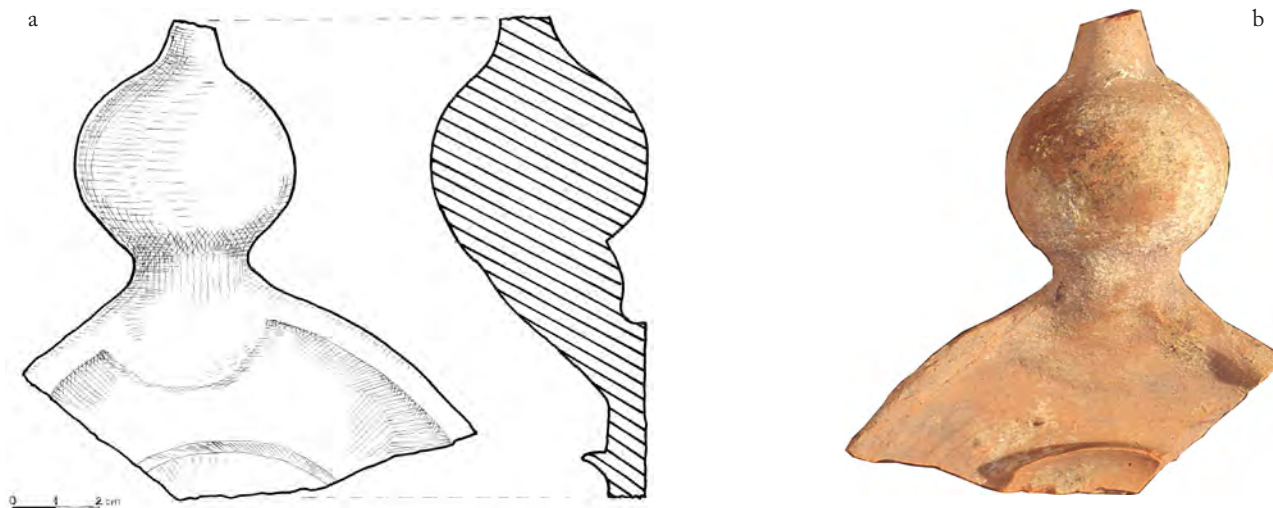


Fig. 14. Disc crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Târgșoru Vechi (Rădulescu 2013, Pl. I/3; VII/2).

<sup>38</sup> Ionescu 1983, p. 70, fig. 8/a; Rădulescu 2013, Pl. II, fig. 2.

<sup>39</sup> The spire usually is cylindrical on the inside of the church, and prismatic on the outside.

<sup>40</sup> Marcu Istrate 2004, Pl. 8 B/3, p. 179.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, Pl. 12 A/1.

<sup>42</sup> Neamțu *et alii* 1984, fig. 106/ 1-6, p. 237, 239; Batariuc 1999a, fig. 3/1, 5, fig. 4/ 1-5.

<sup>43</sup> Batariuc 1999, p. 129, figs. 3/2, 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 128, figs. 3/6, 7, fig. 4/6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 129.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 129.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. 3/4.

<sup>48</sup> Birtașevici 1970, figs. 85, 86; Richterová 1982, figs. 1, 2; Hoššo 1982, pp. 499-508, fig. 5; Boldizsár 1988, fig. 19.

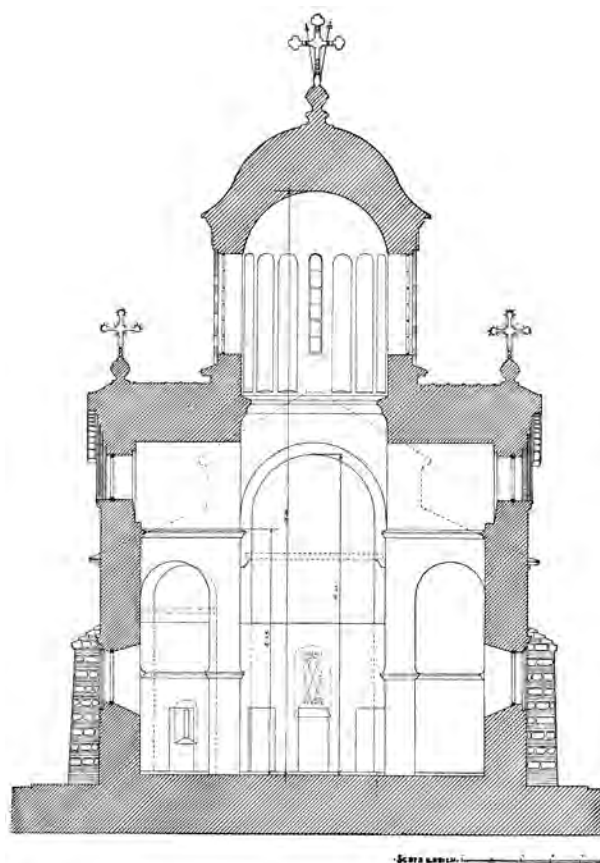


Fig. 15. The Royal Church of „Sfântul Nicolae”, Curtea de Argeș, 14th century. Cross section (Ghika-Budești 1927, fig. 41).

In the composition of stoves these pieces can be used either for decorating the crown or the registers on the sides of the tile stove.<sup>49</sup>

The semi-circular shape of the dome can be found, in a stylised manner, in some disc crown tiles, discovered at Târgșoru Vechi (Prahova County), a medieval town with a prosperous economical life during the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. One of these pieces, which is unglazed, has a small spherical decorative prominence on its circumference (Fig. 14).<sup>50</sup> The ornament seems to be inspired by the shape of the stone base that usually supports the cross, above the spire or the dome of the church (Fig. 15). This architectural element, however small, attracted the attention of the architect Ghika-Budești that, speaking about the influence of Athos Mountain on Wallachian architecture, mentioned: „The crosses are made of iron, with gilded discs. They are encased in a stone, which forms the keystone of the dome over the spire. These stones are sculpted in variously decorated shapes. The ones in Târgoviște,<sup>51</sup> which were found outside in a corner and partially destroyed by the weather, were protected through the mediation of the Commission of Historical Monuments.”<sup>52</sup> The tile artisans from Târgșoru Vechi were familiar with this architectural element that was frequent in town churches in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The craftsmen borrow, from the ecclesiastical architecture, geometrical shapes that they interpret and adapt to the decorative pieces destined for the hearth crowns.

An innovative type of representation is the one on a tile plate found during the restoration works from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the Monastery of Curtea de Argeș.<sup>53</sup> An equestrian soldier is represented in the front plane and in the background the silhouette of a church that is „defended” by the rider. From the architecture of this edifice the most evident are two towers with high, piercing roofs by crosses in the top. On the facade of the towers there are contours of windows placed on two or three levels (Fig. 16). The piece dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century - therefore it is supposed that the edifice represented on the tile was modelled after a local church in Curtea de Argeș. The composition suggests that the church and the Christian faith are defended by the soldier's bravery.

A decorative element that was widely used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which is also represented on the plate tiles, is that of the citadel or castle with defending walls and watchtowers, which lay on the chalice of a flower. The tower architecture features piercing roofs, cantilevered terraces, windows, gates. Such multi-coloured glazed pieces decorated the tile stoves of the palace in Târgoviște, during the reign of Matei Basarab (1632-1654). The decorative motif, created by artisans from Brașov, as the G-K that was preserved on pieces discovered in

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> In other pieces this prominence inscribes a conical shape.

<sup>51</sup> This is a reference to the Old Metropolitan Church in Târgoviște.

<sup>52</sup> Ghika-Budești 1927, cap. VI, p. 137.

<sup>53</sup> Tocilescu f. a., fig. D.



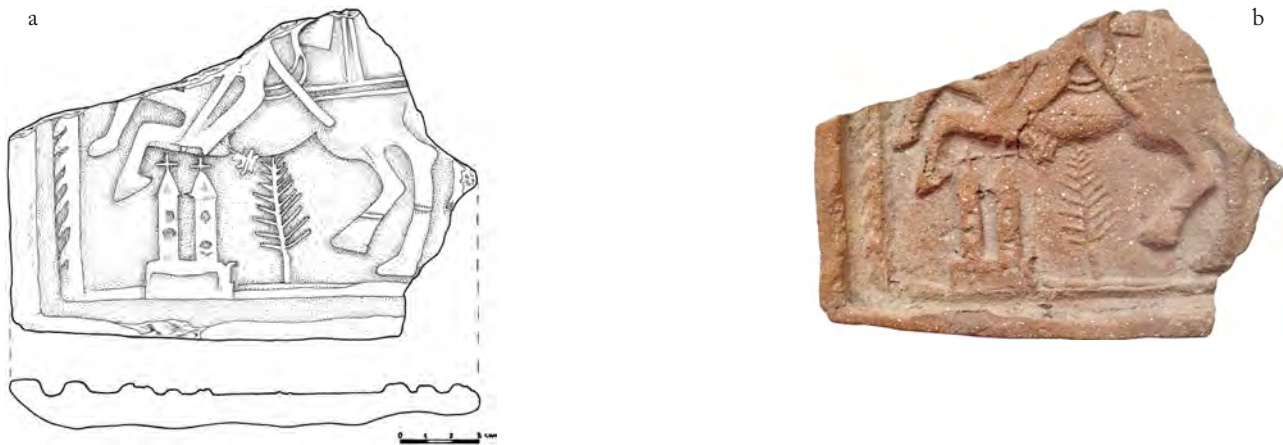


Fig. 16. Plate tile, first half of the 16th century. Curtea de Argeș Monastery.



Fig. 17. Plate tile, 17th century. Târgoviște, Royal Palace. (a. Constantinescu 1964, fig. 8).

Târgoviște reveals (Fig. 17),<sup>54</sup> is further interpreted by other workshops in Transylvania,<sup>55</sup> Moldavia,<sup>56</sup> and Wallachia.<sup>57</sup> Thus more versions of the model were created, in which the number of towers vary between three and seven iterations.

### Arcades – Windows – Recesses

Also inspired by architecture is the decorative motif of the arcades. The tiles that feature such ornament were placed at the top of the stoves. At Măicănești-Străulești, a former medieval village, nowadays a neighbourhood of the capital city of Romania, Bucharest, trapezoidal fretted crown tiles were discovered (Fig. 18),<sup>58</sup> datable to the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The decor sketches a fragment of a building's facade, with

<sup>54</sup> Rădulescu 2003, pp. 54-60.

<sup>55</sup> Marcu Istrate 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Andronic *et alii* 1967, pp. 236-263.

<sup>57</sup> The model, in a different graphical interpretation, is present on the tile plates discovered in Târgoviște, Curtea de Argeș and Retevoiești, Argeș County.

<sup>58</sup> Panait 1968, p. 73, fig. 13/8.

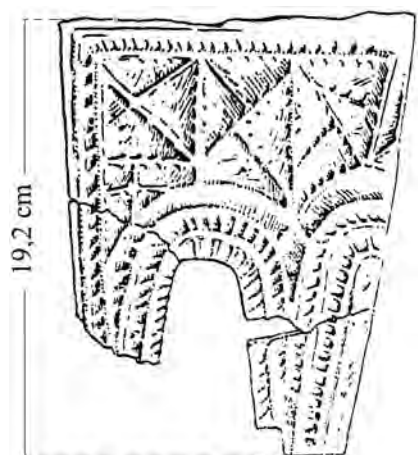


Fig. 18. Fretted crown tile, 15th-16th centuries. Măicănești-Străulești (Panait 1968, fig. 13/8).



Fig. 19. Plate tile, 16th century. Târgșoru Vechi



Fig. 20. Plate tile, 16th century. Bucharest, Radu-Vodă Monastery.

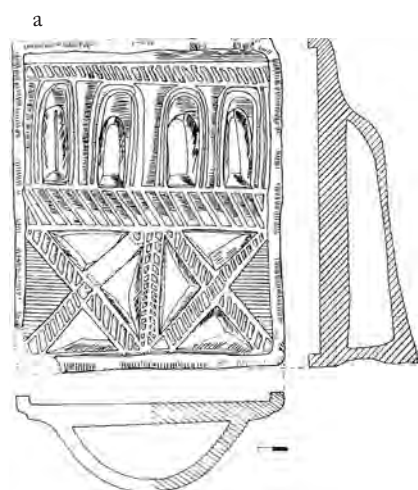


Fig. 21. Fretted tile, 16th century. Cătălui-Căscioarele Monastery (Trohani, Damian, Sârbu 1995).



Fig. 22. Plate tile, 15th-16th centuries. Snagov Monastery.





Fig. 23. Plate tile, 16th century. Bucharest, Historical Centre.

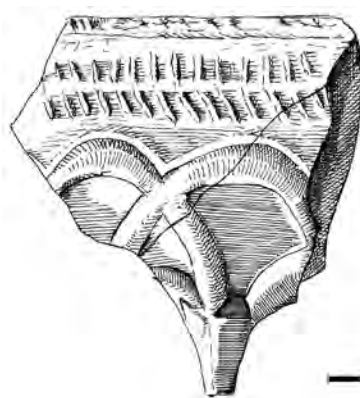
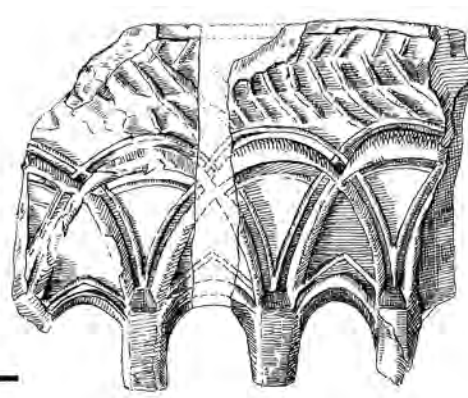


Fig. 24. Fretted tile, 16th century. Cătălui-Căscioarele Monastery (Cantacuzino, Trohani 1979, fig. 27/5).



a

Fig. 25. Plate tile, end of the 16th century. Cerbureni (Rădulescu 2012, figs. 1, 2).



Fig. 26. Plate tile, end of the 16th century. Cerbureni (Rădulescu 2012, fig. 3).

two detached arcades of which one is fretted, suggesting a window and the other is blind and only partially represented. The arcades suggest the presence of a richly sculpted framework, through contours with multiple registers decorated with small horizontal lines. The plate tiles discovered at Târgșoru Vechi (Fig. 19)<sup>59</sup> and Radu Vodă Monastery in Bucharest<sup>60</sup> (Fig. 20) also partially represent building facades, on which windows with round arches are set. A series of four tall windows with semi-circular arches decorate the 16<sup>th</sup> century fretted tiles at the Monastery of Cătălui-Căscioarele<sup>61</sup> (Fig. 21). The shape of the elongated windows is inspired by the facade of an important architectural monument, probably a church.

Some of the unglazed terracotta tiles (17.5×15.5×1 cm) from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century discovered at Snagov Monastery feature the image of an equestrian figure, towards the left, holding a mace. The composition is topped by a highly stylised arcade (Fig. 22).

<sup>59</sup> N. Constantinescu, in: Popescu *et alii* 1959, fig. 12/2-5.

<sup>60</sup> *Bucureștii de odinioară* 1959, Pl. LIX/4.

<sup>61</sup> Cantacuzino, Trohani 1979, fig. 27/2; Trohani *et alii* 1995, figs. 13/1, 15/2.



Other tiles, of which a smaller number exists, are decorated with gothic or even ogee arches (Figs. 23, 24), motifs inspired by Gothic architecture, although frequent in some edifices in Wallachia.

At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century decorated tile plates were produced in the ceramics workshop in Cerbureni (Argeş County), some adorned with the portrait of Prince Petru Cercel (Fig. 25), and others with the portrait of a princess (Fig. 26).<sup>62</sup> The characters are framed by arcades on pillars. The decorative origin of the workmanship of these multi-coloured glazed terracotta tiles can be found in the Central European art of the era. The representation of princely or noble pairs on tiles was fashionable in the Central European Renaissance.<sup>63</sup> A Hungarian workshop made, in 1526, terracotta tiles with the portraits of Ferdinand I Habsburg<sup>64</sup> and Queen Maria of Hungary.<sup>65</sup> The characters, represented with the attributes of their social rank (clothing, jewellery, heraldic shields) are framed in beautifully intricate arcades.

### The Fleuron

The decorative element *fleuron*, inspired by Gothic architecture, was used in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Central European space also for decorating the crown of the tile stoves. In 1505-1518 the hearth of the Wawel Castle in Krakow was made,<sup>66</sup> and around the year 1570 the workshops that were probably located on the banks of the Rhine made the tiles of another stove that will embellish the Castle of Maria Theresa in Vienna.<sup>67</sup> These heating devices have a crown adorned with stylized fleuron.

On the territory of Wallachia the ornament, more or less stylized, sometimes interpreted, is frequent in crown tiles from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>68</sup> It can be found in such stoves as those in Târgovişte, Bucharest and Oraşul de Floci. The decoration of the heating devices follows a certain fashion, which was absorbed by the Romanian urban society, under the influence of the Central European culture, but which will gain extremely profound significations on the Romanian territory.



Fig. 27. Church of the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, 16<sup>th</sup> century.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1517, the church of the Argeş Monastery, which was founded at the order of voivode Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521), was consecrated with great formality. The Patriarch of Constantinople himself was present at the festivities. This monument is impressive both through its architectural structure and the exceptional value of its exterior decoration, made from sculpted stone (Fig. 27).<sup>69</sup> The church, at the time of its building, had a more profound meaning. It was a symbolic monument of Christianity, with an obvious political message which was meant for the larger geographical space of the Balkans. It was a message of unity for Christian believers with the purpose of liberation from the Ottoman reign. The space of the present text doesn't allow for further insisting on this ecclesiastical edifice, with an important role in the development of Romanian religious architecture.

Among the motifs that are frequently used in the exterior ornamentation of the church of Argeş Monastery, a special place is occupied by the fleuron. Its distribution on the ensemble of the monument isn't random. Thus, the spire on the nave, Pantocrator (Fig. 28), as well as the spire on the narthex (Fig. 29), that

<sup>62</sup> Rădulescu 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Franz 1969, figs. 221, 222, 236, 237 (Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, München).

<sup>64</sup> Voit, Holl 1963, fig. 38; Franz 1969, fig. 232.

<sup>65</sup> Voit, Holl 1963, fig. 39; Franz 1969, fig. 233.

<sup>66</sup> Franz 1696, fig. 19.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, il. 260.

<sup>68</sup> In Transylvania, tiles with this decoration were discovered in Cluj, according to Marcu Istrate 2004, Pl. 37/80.

<sup>69</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the church was a voievodal necropolis, and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after its restoration between 1875 and 1886, the church served as a royal necropolis.

raise over the cult chambers, are crowned with fleuron which differ from one spire to another.<sup>70</sup> On the main facade of the church the accent is obviously on the entrance. The round arched arcade under which the opening of the door is found is decorated with fleuron on the soffit of the arch. The base of the edifice, along with the terrace in the front, on which a small baldaquin is set, are boarded by a suite of fleuron (Fig. 30). The round arches that join the columns of the baldaquin are decorated, on the soffit, with fleuron similar to those that decorate the arcade at the entrance of the church.

This fleuron receives a symbolic meaning; it represents an ornament in stone charged with symbols that the entire Romanian population can understand.

The great Orthodox celebrations were occasions of pilgrimage at this cult edifice. The symbolic element of the fleuron was used to decorate, in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the crown tiles of the stoves. The fact that, as far as we know, these fleuron-topped tile stoves have an iconography based on representations of Wallachian soldiers, isn't happenstance. Through their structure and decoration, these heating devices become a means of Christian propaganda, by sending a message. These are stoves that keep alive in the collective memory years of confrontations between the army of Michael the Brave (1593-1601) and the army of the Ottoman Empire, with the purpose of gaining the state's independence. The iconography is maintained in the tile stoves from the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In Bucharest, archaeological research from the year 1953 in the Curtea Veche sector<sup>71</sup> and in the area of Mihai Vodă Monastery<sup>72</sup> reveals fragments of tiles, considered to have „ornaments inspired by Gothic art.”<sup>73</sup> The fragments are crown tiles, decorated with fleuron, datable between the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the next century. Similar pieces were used, in the same historical period, in the stoves of townspeople in Bucharest. The 2010 research on Lipscani Street nr. 32-34, revealed, among other end-of-the-16<sup>th</sup> century fragments, green glazed crown tiles decorated with stylised fleuron (Fig. 31).<sup>74</sup> In the same archaeological context plate tiles decorated with soldiers were found.<sup>75</sup>

From the Royal Palace in Târgoviște in the reign of Petru Cercel (1583-1585), fragments of glazed fretted tiles decorated with fleuron were found (Figs. 32, 33).<sup>76</sup> In order to construct the tile stoves of the palace, the voivode ordered several tiles from the ceramics workshop in Cerbureni, a small commune in the vicinity of Curtea de



Fig. 28. Church of the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, 16th century. Spire on the nave, before its restoration at the end of the 19th century (Szathmari 1874 *apud* Ghika-Budești 1927, fig. 173).



Fig. 30. Church of the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, 16th century. Spire on the narthex, before its restoration at the end of the 19th century (Szathmari 1874 *apud* Ghika-Budești 1927, fig. 174).

<sup>70</sup> Ghika-Budești 1927, p. 145; Lăzărescu 1967, p. 14, 35. The author remarks that, initially, the two small spires on the narthex lacked this ornament, which was added during the restoration of the monument at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>71</sup> Lăzărescu-Ionescu *et alii* 1954, p. 216, fig. 24/7.

<sup>72</sup> *Bucureștii de odinioară* 1959, Pls. LXXXIX/2-6 (5, 6 – the images of the *fleuron* are published upside down).

<sup>73</sup> Cantacuzino 1959, p. 104.

<sup>74</sup> Rădulescu 2011, pp. 117, 122, fig. 1/2, fig. 2/3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 117-119, 123-129, figs. 1/3, 4, fig. 2/ 1, 2, 4, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Slătineanu 1938, Pl. IX/d (the image is published upside down).

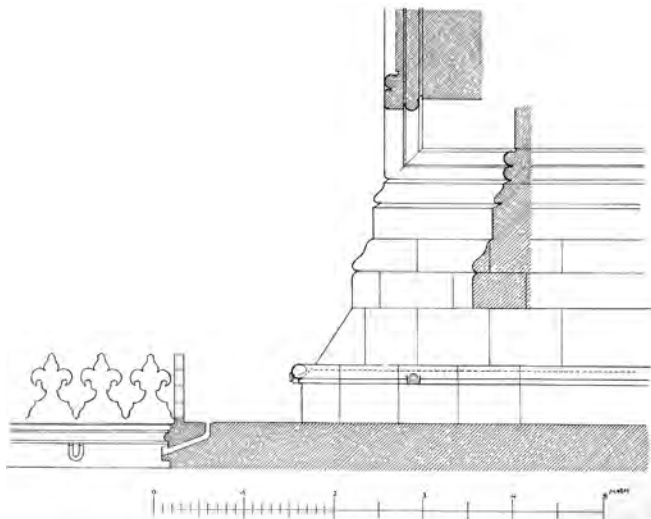


Fig. 30. Church of the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, 16th century. Base detail (Ghika-Budești 1927, fig. 182).



Fig. 31. Plate crown tile, end of the 16th century. Bucharest, Historical Centre (Rădulescu 2011, fig. 1/2).



Fig. 32. Fretted crown tile, end of the 16th century (fragment). Târgoviște, Royal Palace.



Fig. 33. Fretted crown tiles, end of the 16th century (fragments) Târgoviște.





Fig. 33. Dealu Monastery, 16th century.

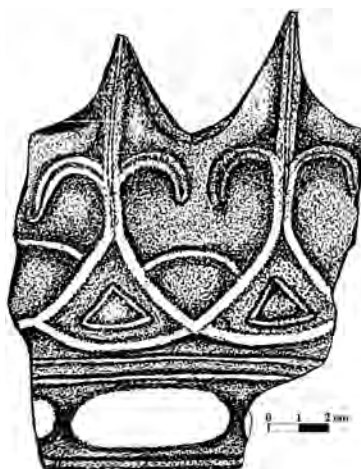


Fig. 35. Fretted crown tile, end of the 16th century. Târgoviște.



Fig. 36. Plate crown tile, end of the 16th century. Orașul de Floci.

Argeș. Himself a founder of cult edifices (the Royal Church – *biserica Domnească* of Târgoviște, Botușari Church in Curtea de Argeș), Petru Cercel understood the importance of the decorative element in the architecture of a church. Near Târgoviște, between 1499 and 1501, voievode Radu the Great (1495-1508) founded the church of the Dealu Monastery (Fig. 34), another jewel of the ecclesiastical Romanian architecture. The church had its spires crowned by multiple fleuron. In this church the father of Petru Cercel, voievode Pătrașcu the Good (1554-1557), was also buried. Thus for the prince the fleuron gains a special significance and this is why he desires to ornate the crowns of the stoves in the royal palace with this decorative motif. The model used for the tiles of the stoves in the Royal Palace was copied by the workshops that made the tiles for the stoves of the citizens' homes from the same city (Fig. 35).<sup>77</sup>

At Orașul de Floci, during archaeological research of the ruins of a medieval house dating from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century – first decades of the next centuries, several fragments of tiles decorated with fleuron were found (Fig. 36).<sup>78</sup> These pieces formed the crown of a hearth that also had plate tiles adorned with equestrian soldiers<sup>79</sup> in its structure, as well as tiles with a concave centre.<sup>80</sup> Similar archaeological discoveries were made in other areas of the site, which suggests that, in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the fleuron was fashionable in decorating the crowns of the stoves. The iconographic programme of these heating devices that transmitted a clear message of fighting for the Christian faith was a consequence of the geographical positioning of the medieval city, close to the Danube and in direct vicinity to the Ottoman Empire.

**Conclusion.** In the volumetry and the decoration of the stoves differently assimilated reflexes of the image repertoire offered by the architecture of the era can be recognized. One consequence of this diversification of architectural decorative interpretations is the note of originality that particularizes each heating device.

<sup>77</sup> Mihăescu 1980-1981, pp. 130, 133, fig. 11/1.

<sup>78</sup> Novelty pieces in the collection of MNIR, inv. no. 163811-163818.

<sup>79</sup> Rădulescu 2010b.

<sup>80</sup> M.-V. Rădulescu, in: L. Chițescu *et alii* 1981, p. 135.

The quality of the artistic representations specific to the tiles – of which some are more refined and some rather modest – directly reflects the financial possibilities of the beneficiary: voivode, ecclesiastical power, citizen, peasant. Therefore, apart from their quality as important documents in which regards the layout of the interior architectural space and thus the images of day-to-day life, the tile stoves can be viewed as noteworthy landmarks in the discovery of the cultural and spiritual level of a historical era.

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