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# SAINT JOHN'S REVELATION IN THE PAINTING FROM SUCEVIȚA MONASTERY

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## Abstract

The message from Revelation, expressed in the outer painting of Sucevița monastery, deals with an iconographic subject unusual in the Orthodox space, in an original interpretation, different by the Byzantine explanation. The painter, who read the Scripture, really lives the eschatological tension, meditating at the history's course which has finality in eternity. Images with angels, people, stars, mountains and horses are ordered in the southern porch with the aim of underlining the cosmic and ecclesiastic dimension of the Revelation. These images are stimulating us to go beyond the agitated physical world in order to find the inner silence, in God.

*Keywords:* Old Testament, angel, Sucevita monastery, porch, celestial throne

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## 1. Introduction

The Revelation's text written by Saint John represents for artists a trying stone, being expressed mainly on the facades sculpture of the Western churches or in the medieval manuscripts of the Christian world [1]. We also mention the illustrations of the monk Beatus de Liebana (around 8<sup>th</sup> century, Spain), which goes over the strictly symbolic representations (Alpha and Omega, the Lamb, the book with seven seals, etc.) by the elaborated pictorial compositions.

Also in the space of Roman-Catholic Church developed the engraving art, by the famous Bible from Koln (1478-1479), the Bible from Nuremberg (1483) and the Bible from Strasbourg (1485) [2]. At the end of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, Albrecht Durer illustrates John's Revelation with 14 engravings included on the verso of the text page. The challenge addressed to Durer was to point, in images sculpted as negative and then printed, what was expressing the canonical text of Revelation. The illustrated Bible from Wittenberg (1522) has popularised Durer's engravings, penetrating the Orthodox space by the middle of XVII<sup>th</sup> century, maybe by the Dutch Bible of Jan Visscher from 1650. Another vein, which exploits the Revelation imagistic penetrates by the Athonite way from the monasteries Dionisiu, Dochiaru, Filoteou and Xenofont, but only in the churches' porch or in the dining rooms of the monasteries [3], having as model

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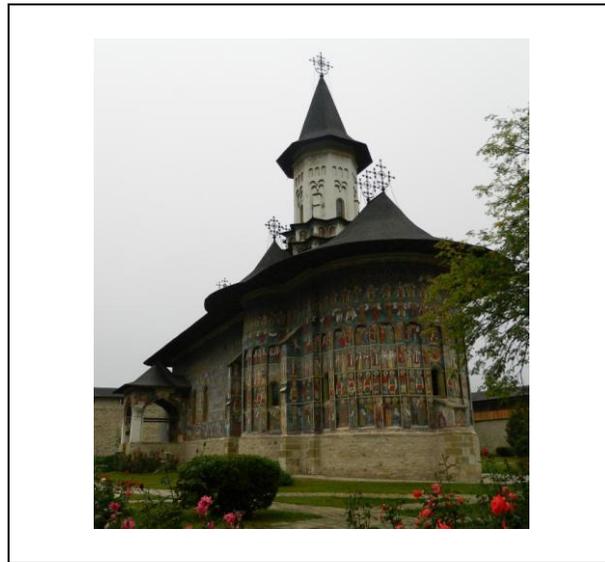
the Ottheinrich Bible (written in 1432 and illuminated with the renaissance thematic miniatures of Matthias Gerung - 1532). The miniatures treated mostly the sequences from the beginning of each chapter, being framed by the biblical text. Thus, we have 12, 18 or 24 miniatures, according to the payment received by the artist. The pictures from Athos monasteries stress on the holiness of personages, reducing the number of scenes according to the space of the mural painting and avoiding the historical contextualization specific to the Western art. Erwin Panofsky considers that already existed manuscripts with representations of the two witnesses, of the grapes crushing in the anger wine-press, of the Lamb's wedding or of the angels pouring the anger cups [4].

The isolation of the Revelation imagistic is due, on one side, to the iconographic rule strictly delimited in the church interior until then, but also to the necessity of remembering the existence of a canonical book into a space who did not price it sufficiently by lecture or image but by liturgical service. By the interpretation of Byzantine painting of Dionysius from Furna, conceived by the mid XVIII century, the Athonite cycle of the Revelation representations in the Church painting becomes a model for the Orthodox space.

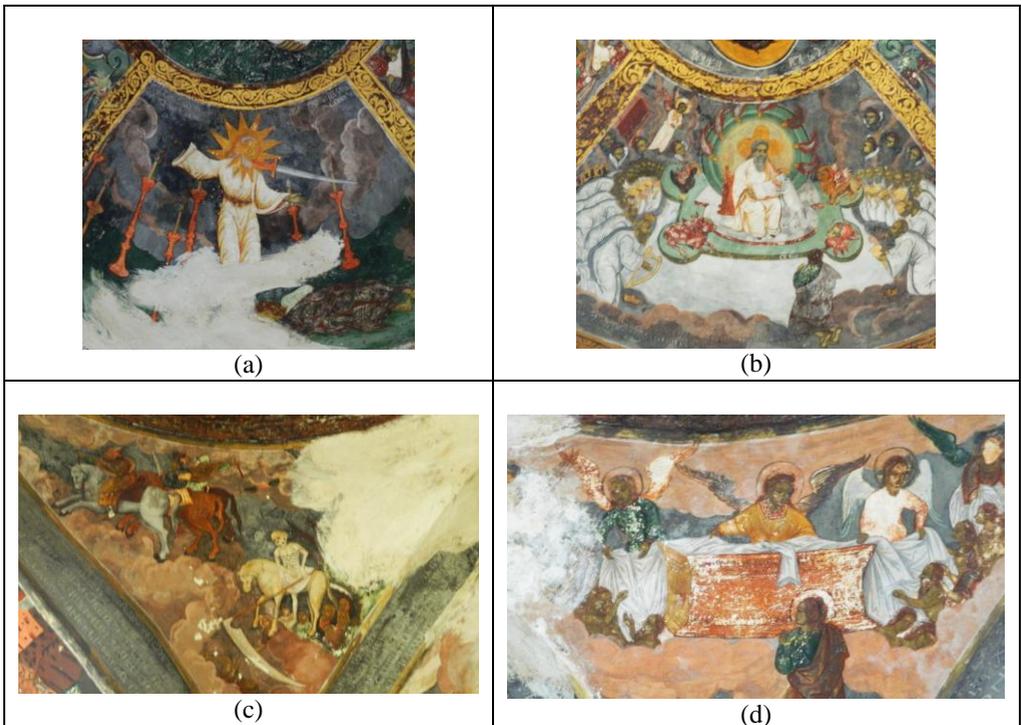
## **2. Sucevița monastery in time and space**

Build and attested since 1585 by the metropolitan Gheorghe Movilă, as his family necropolis, the monastery Sucevița was adorned with two porches, with interior and exterior painting, and defence wall by the prince Ieremia Movilă, after 1595. Combining elements of Byzantine and Gothic architecture, Sucevița monastery keeps, at large dimensions, the trilobate plane with the closed porch (Figure 1), continuing the Moldavian architectural line founded by Stephen the Great. The painting, achieved as fresco in interior and exterior, was made by two Moldavian painters, Ioan Zugravul and his brother Sofronie, and is kept in its original form [5]. The painting inside the church is compartmented in scenes similar to the miniatures from that epoch books, and the exterior presents on the green background ample scenes from the Byzantine iconographic tradition.

The painting of the apocalyptic scene from the southern porch, with an evident naive tint, was made after the exterior painting of the church. Harmonising the information of the architectural restaurateur [6] with those of the painting restaurateur, we conclude that the porch was added to the church building before the external painting, under the influence of Wallachian architecture, being painted the last one as sample element in order to finalise the western facade, which has no traces of painting. From some stratigraphic samplings (between 1989 and 2000) performed at the junction of eastern side of this with the southern side of the church, resulted that the painting of the porch passes under the external painting from 1600 [7].



**Figure 1.** Sucevița Monastery (south-east view, with south open porch).



**Figure 2.** Revelation: (a) 1.12-3.22, the seven Churches; (b) 4-5, throne vision; (c) 6.2-8, the four horsemen; (d) 6.9, the souls under the altar.

After the church construction, in a first stage was decorated the northern porch with a simple painting representing zoomorphic elements ‘imitating the facades of the XVI<sup>th</sup> century facades’, and then would followed the painting of the southern porch with a much different expressing of the images compared with the Byzantine tradition, the anonymous author from a region neighbour to Moldavia being under the expressionist influence from the Germanic zone [7, p. 153].

About the artist that painted this porch we can state that he carefully followed and represented the historical events and the chromatic details of every day life. In the actual stage of the porch, the painting presents the developing of the events narrated in the book of Revelation, starting from cupola (chapters 1 and 4-5), extending the narration on pendants, the arcades of each side and on the four supporting pillars from the wall.

By the terms and concepts borrowed by Saint John from the Old Testament he links systematically each letter on both the *passed* time, the salvation history of the Old and New Testament, and the *future* time, the final eschatological section of the Revelation, which narrates the ending of this history on the basis of some observations common to the seven letters. Thus, Christ presents Himself to each Church in the light of what the entire Scripture discover about Him. Their and our healing comes in the measure in which, starting from Moses and continuing with all prophets, we let the Holy Ghost to explain us, in all scriptures, the truth about Christ. Each epistle makes first Christ portrait, secondly an attention and finally a promise.

### **2.1. Revelation 1.12-3.22: the seven Churches (Figure 2a)**

The One who walks between the gold candlesticks (Exodus 25), speaks to the Church of Ephesus about the life tree (Genesis 2). To the Church of Smyrna, He talks about the second death, rising questions about the first death (Genesis 3). To the Church of Pergamum, He talks about manna (Exodus 16) and Balaam (Numbers 22-24). To the Church of Thyatira He remembers about Isabel (I Kings 16.31-32), about the text from Jeremiah 17.10, where God presents Himself as the One who searches the heart and mind, in order to pay to each one according to his acts, and about Psalm 2, identifying in this way the Man with long coat, that speaks to the Church, with Messiah and God.

Erasing the name from the Book of Life, about which Christ speaks to the Church of Sardis is referring to Exodus 32. In whatever regards David’s key, mentioned in the letter addressed to the Church of Philadelphia, is a reference to Isaiah 22 and the serving of the winners in the Temple of God is a reference to Isaiah 56. The portrait of Christ from the last epistle –the One who is “Amen, the faithful and true witness” – is a reference to Isaiah 65.16 [8]. On the vault of the southern porch, similar to a stylisation from Durer’s engravings and from Ottheinrich Bible, we see the One similar to Man’s Son walking among the candlesticks – symbolizing the seven Churches of Apocalypse – in the hypostasis of Providence with a transfigured face. The light of the candlesticks has different colours symbolising the different degrees of faith to God. Although

frightful as appearance, Christ—the Judge has a loving attitude to people, opening the hands in a gesture of embracing

## **2.2. Revelation 4-5: the Lamb with the Book (Figure 2b)**

Not only the movement through the biblical history, to which urges us the Old Testament allusions from epistles, anticipated the nature of seals, but also the sky's image from chapters 4 and 5, where the entire image is focused on the worship brought firstly to the One sitting on the throne and then (chapter 5) to the Lamb. The fact that John is invited to leave this earthly, material sphere and to climb in God's throne hall, outside time and space, makes the image from chapter 5 extremely complex. The worship from chapter 4 begins with the four living creatures (lion, calf, man and eagle – Ezekiel 10.14) who will call on scene the four riders. The creatures sing the eternal nature of God and His holiness in terms marked by history and time: *God was, is and comes*. John, being in the throne's hall has in front him the entire history panorama, being able to speak at the same time about past, present and future [9].

The presence of 24 old men worshipping God, underlining His diligence of Creator and Universe support, recalls the interpenetration of eternal with human's history. The complex scene from the vault of southern porch of the monastery has as original elements the trilobate halo of the One who sits on the throne, the identification of John with the Byzantine abbreviation, the worship of quadrupeds on the front legs on a lower step of the height of sky throne. We can associate, at a careful sight, the place of the four creatures with the monastery towers and the throne place with the shape of Suceviței church, looked from east.

## **2.3. Revelation 6.2-8: the four riders (Figure 2c)**

Some authors separate the first riders from the other three, while other authors consider it part of the same homogeneous group. For some, the white horse and its rider has a positive connotation, while others see in him a curse bringer as the other three riders. Those who interpret the break of the first seal having direct negative significations on spiritual plane, see in horse's colour and in coronet, a mask by which is tried to mislead those looking at him.

The next three seals have something in common: the negative connotation of the three riders. Their arrival on the history scene brings the curse on Earth. The sword brings cuttings among men and thus, the peace is taken away from Earth. The balance signalise an economical recession after which the man arrives to earn difficult each day's bread, succeeding to buy only a measure of wheat with a dinar. The fourth rider is called on scene a sum of the two previous riders functions, leading to death. The limits imposed to the fourth rider ("They were given power over a fourth of the Earth") certifies that his activity is controlled by the supreme authority – from the Sky Throne and the Lamb who

breaks the seals – which takes care that life on Earth can continue, without being vanquished by death.

On the north-west pendant of the porch, the painter oriented the riders in only one direction, leaving the yellow horse, whose rider uses the scythe behind the others. This detail demonstrates the originality of the text interpretation, and of the miniature representation from Ottheinrich Bible [<http://mdz12.bib-bvb.de/~zimelien/bsb00032718/#/24/>, accessed on 5.05.2013].

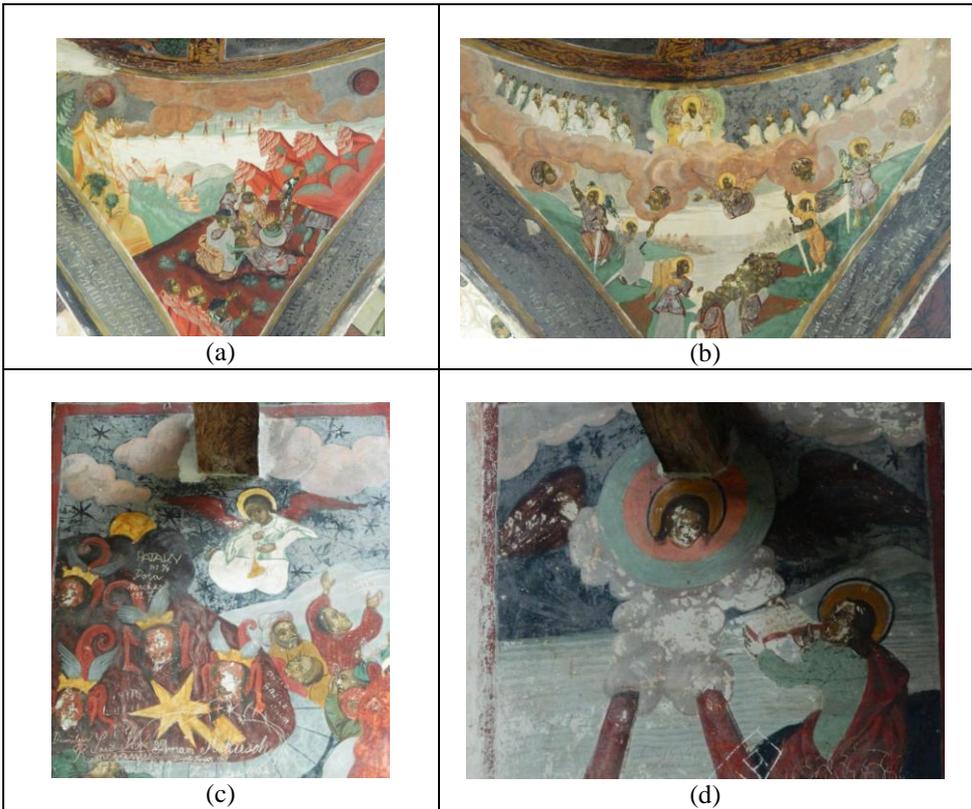
#### **2.4. Revelation 6.9: souls under the altar (Figure 2d)**

The real break up of the fifth seal by the Lamb occurs somewhere during this history, because under the altar *were already souls* and it followed to be brought even other, bringing forefront the time element. The time indicatives – ‘until’ (v. 10, 11), ‘a little longer’ (v. 11) – suggest the fact that the seal breaking doesn’t correspond to a certain event but to a history that must be defined through a *past, present and future* reality. The souls seen by John under the altar were those who were killed in the past until the seal breaking [10]. The history has to continue in the same secret register “until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been” (v. 11). In the continuation the text from Revelation 5, we observe the superposition of the eternal decision of God’s Son with its fulfilling in history [11], establishing a parallel with those affirmed by Jesus Christ: “I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute. Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary.” (Luke 11.49-51) The iconographic representation from Sucevița is marked by ochre and white in the north east pendant of the southern porch. The apostle is painted looking to the altar (comparing with the painting from Dochiaru Monastery - where he is not represented), different from Ottheinrich Bible – where chapters 6 and 7 are compressed in a miniature with the shape of a clepsydra.

#### **2.5. Revelation 6.12-17: the mountains cover the kings of the Earth (Figure 3a)**

The prophecy from Hosea 10.8, told against the inhabitants of Samaria, who have attracted Israel to idolatry, regards the act of frightful judgement of sinners. These idolatrous asked that the idols to be placed on the heights of Aven in order to help them, or if not, to cover the basement of the sanctuary with a calf as a sign of God’s denial [12]. The pain of those from the judgement time, announced by Christ to the women following Him (Luke 23.30) and reflected in Revelation 6.12-17, will be followed by the loss of ration and the confusion of the Creator with the creature. The words from Hosea describe the crying of relief forms from Israel against those who have left the name of God. The south-

eastern pendant of the southern porch from Sucevița renders this scene, presenting bodies cut by men from the waist.



**Figure 3.** Revelation: (a) 6.12, the mountains and kings; (b) 7.1, wind's angels; (c) 9.1, iron locusts; (d) 10.1, John eat the little book.

### **2.6. Revelation 7.1-3: the wind submitted to the angels (Figure 3b)**

Looking at the above painted image, we expect to see the final, to see how the anger of that who seats on the throne and the anger of the Lamb are throwing down to those trying to hide of it. But, as we will see, to our surprise, John let in suspense the normal developing of the events, moving the focus on another plane. Using this change of planes, John discreetly connects us with a series of texts from the Old Testament, contouring the shape that we will also find in Revelation 6 and 7 (Isaiah 53 and 63, Joel 2, Ezekiel 9-11, Malachi 3, Luke 4 and Acts 2).

From east, appears another angel, having in his hand the seal of living God, ready to fulfil an important mission: *the sealing of God's servants*. He orders to the four angels to do not injure the land or the sea until this mission is not accomplished. In Revelation 7.1-3, parallel with Ezekiel 10.2 and Daniel 7.2, Jesus Christ, because he freely assumed to give His life, postpones the

punishment which God's Judgement Day should bring over the Earth inhabitants, sealing His witnesses. About the expression 'God's Day' we find references in the messianic prophecies from Isaiah 63.1-7, Joel 2.32, Malachi 3.1-2 and Acts 2. On the south-western pendant of the porch the scene has an original element the presence of the Old One, having the book opened by God's Lamb (John 1.29) [13], who doesn't have the cross sign.

### **2.7. Revelation 9.1-12: iron locusts (Figure 3c)**

Closer to the visitor eye, on the southern pendants, appear iconographic representations of the star-angel who opens the Deep fountain and of the angel who offers to John the book to swallow. The sound of the fifth trumpet from revelation 9.1 announces the pouring God's anger from the sky. A star falls from the sky with the mission to open the Deep's fountain, in order to call at action the armies of Abaddon or Apollyon, the Destroyer. The harm made on Earth regards only those who have not on the forehead the seal of God, so it can't be the issue of a natural calamity comparable with the previous ones, but about a spiritual act especially directed to those who refused to make peace with God. The authority of Abaddon's soldiers, with men faces, women hair and lions teeth (Revelation 9.7-8), is limited by the action of those fulfilling it and by time ("five months" 9.5) – "they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree", things the locusts feed with, "but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (9.4). The painting from Sucevița, degraded by the visitors passing, redacts the fountain by a figured stone belt, and the locusts by dishevelled joyous women

### **2.8. Revelation 10.1-11: John swallows the book (Figure 3d)**

The angel from chapter 10 has a little book. He puts a leg on the land and one on the sea, announcing that with the last trumpet sound „the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets" (v.7). The angel is not only mighty but he was also "robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars" (v. 1). The angel's position, on land and sea, draws the attention on the universal character of the message for the entire Earth.

The similarity of the texts from Ezekiel 2.1-10 and Revelation 10 is found when a divine being, gives, through a hand, the book that the prophet must eat and which is sweet like honey in his mouth. The scroll of the book was written inside and outside and the prophetic message predicted the close punishment over the people who remained in the country and over the Holy City. The differences between messages are the recipients (Ezekiel to Israel and John "to many peoples, nations, languages and kings" (Revelation 10.11)).



**Figure 4.** Revelation: (a) 11.1, the two witnesses; (b) 12.1, the pregnant women; (c) 13, the war with the beast; (d) 14.1, the Lamb on Mount Zion; (e) 14, the sickle and winepress; (f) 16, the seven bowls of the wrath.

In the painting from Sucevița the book has Greek characters, different from the fragments of Slavonic texts that separate the biblical scenes. The heavenly messenger has the body covered in cloud, and the rainbow is shown by green, red and yellow colours. The amazed apostle starts to swallow the book from the right bottom corner.

### ***2.9. Revelation 11.1-8: measuring the Temple, two witnesses (Figure 4a)***

Chapter 11 is part of the bracket that opens between the sound of the sixth and seventh trumpets. After eating the little book, John receives a reed to measure “the Temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers” (11.1) but is commanded to leave the court unmeasured. There are texts from the Old Testament in which measuring the Temple (Ezekiel 40-43) or the Holy City (Zechariah 2.1-5) makes sense of restore and protective rebuilt offered by God, while other texts (II Kings 21.13-15, Isaiah 34.17) use the measuring image with regard of destroying Jerusalem.

On this issue, the opinions of biblical scholars are not unanimous, but are consistent on the missionary work done in court of the Gentiles (which was not measured) by the two witnesses who are allowed to prophecy 1.260 days. The true worshipers were measured in order to be protected, and the Temple of God to continue to be built. But the outer court and the city were left to be trampled by gentiles. Something had to be accursed, while something had to be preserved and continued. Considering the fact that in the city was also crucified The Lord of the two witnesses, identifying the city with Jerusalem is obvious. Concerning the two witnesses we have a literal interpretation and a allegorical one. For the literal interpretation of the text, there are three versions regarding the identity of them: (1) Moses and Elijah, (2) Enoch and Elijah and (3) two worshipers, generally speaking, that God calls them His witnesses, by the end times [14]. Through the signs they make, they may be associated, not identified, with Moses and Elijah, meaning that they come in the spirit of those two making the signs and wonders that they did. The allegorical interpretation is supported by parallel established between the images of Revelation and those from Zechariah 2.1-4 and 4.2-14, where the identity of the two olive trees, is revealed by the angel: “These branches are the two chosen leaders who stand beside Lord of all the Earth” (Zechariah 4.14). In the context of the Old Testament, the image that the prophet sees as candlestick, jar of oil, pipes, olive trees, receives a symbolic interpretation of the whole, all together symbolizing God’s power and assistance in completing the work of rebuilding the Temple. The two witnesses represent the Church of Christ comprising both Jews and some Gentiles, with empowered witness of God’s spirit. For their testimony the witnesses will be killed, like their God, but will rise and be ascended from the Earth. The text is painted at Sucevița on the inside of west brace of south porch, the witnesses wearing Italian clothes and hats. On the next segment of the brace is painted a purely historical scene, probably Vienna’s siege from the time of Suleiman the Legislator, which

emphasizes the historical contextualization, on the expense of an ecclesiological interpretation.

### ***2.10. Revelation 12.1-7: the woman who gives birth (Figure 4b)***

The first six verses from Revelation 12 depict the history of the conflict between the dragon and the woman, the dragon aiming to destroy the promised seed. The complex image - woman, dragon and child (12.1-6) - comes from Heaven and through history, from its beginnings, until the ascension of Christ to Heaven, and even a step further: taking the woman out of the dragon way. The woman was "clothed with the Sun", she has "the Moon under her feet" and on her head he wears "a crown made of twelve stars". The woman who had to give birth to Messiah-Christ as literally stated, is understood by some exegetes as Mary, the Mother of God, but in secret meaning in Church. However, the description is not for Virgin Mary, but is a mystic person, allegorical, a mystical mother, because many traits reported by the author (12.4, 6, 14-16) are expressed by symbol.

Against the woman fights the "great dragon... called the devil, or Satan" (Revelation 12.9), which with his tail pulls the third part of the stars from Heaven and threw them on the Earth. From the west accolade, the painter from Sucevița's porch comes down with the message from Revelation 12 on the on the west outside of south-west pillar, as saving exit for the confused man.

### ***2.11. Revelation 13: the battle with the beast (Figure 4c)***

From the pillar painted with the Church-Woman, we continue the view under the west eaves, where we find the scenes of the fight with the beast and the praise brought by those 144,000 people to the true redeemer Lamb. If in Revelation 11.7 it is remembered the "beast that comes up from the Abyss" and in 12.3-4 we find the description of the dragon, in 13.11 and 16.13 it is remembered the last character from the "hell's trinity", called the "false prophet". The tired dragon calls a beast from the sea and one from hell [15] that will substitute his direct presence. The biblical text recalls "another beast coming out of the Earth...[that] had two horns like a lamb" (Revelation 13.11) which in the painting from Sucevița comes from the sea, with red head and black horns. The beasts from Daniel's prophecy fight against the 'saints of the Greatest', while the porch painting from Sucevița expands the meaning of Jews' words to the crowned heads of many nations.

### ***2.12. Revelation 14.1-4: the Lamb in Zion (Figure 4d)***

The Revelation text melts the image from chapter 5 with that from chapter 11, confirming the heavenly song interpreted only by those who have washed their cloths, by the sacrifice of confessing life, in the Lamb's blood. Because Zion is a terrestrial reality, and the throne in front which the 144,000 are singing

is in the Heaven, at Sucevița, the Lamb is enframed by a eye shaped cloud. John is behind the Lamb, wearing a red coat as symbol of the one who doesn't sing because he didn't sacrificed his life. From this position he sees the three angels in coloured clothes. Neither the angels are singing but they bring the message ordered from up.

### **2.13. Revelation 14.14-20: the sickle, the wrath winepress (Figure 4e)**

In the judgement scene from 14.14-20 appear the Son of Man and three angels. The first angel (14.15) announces the arrival of harvest time. The second angel comes out of the Temple with a sharp sickle in his hand, ready for picking, and the angel from the altar, who has fire control, commanded the harvest. The scene corresponds to that of the Gospels, picking and harvesting being in their task. The presence of the one who seems like the Son of Man, coming on a cloud, seems to be an allusion to Daniel 7.13-14, the harvest representing the mandate received from the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7.9), the seating of His Kingdom (Daniel 7.27), and the harvest from the Heaven's granary alludes to the separation of the wheat from tares (Mathew 13.14-30). The crushing of the grapes in the winepress is reminiscence from Isaiah 63.1-6, as a form of the divine judgement proclamation, which takes place outside the city, prior to the final judgement in Revelation 19-20. The scenes from Sucevița, painted on the south exterior façade of the reminded porch, affiliate the reaper, by the hat, in Germans category, and the weasels of wine processing in the Italian group. Therefore, the European and multi-confessional Christian dimension - in the divine judgement produced by human is obvious.

### **2.14. Revelation 16.1-14: shedding of the seven wrath bowls (Figure 4f)**

The effect of spilling the seven cups is a bad wound that touches all who had the mark of the beast, the water of seas and rivers turned into blood and an intense heat. The plagues poured out in Egypt (Exodus 8.1-10.29) hit the adversaries of God's people, while the witnesses are isolated on a sea of glass (Revelation 15.2-14). The southern façade of the Sucevița's porch identifies a sultan and three Christian kings next to the beast from the throne, as abusive witnesses, gathered for the "war of the great day of God All-Powerful" (Revelation 16.14). The angel of the waters (Revelation 16.5) troubles the water of the seas, rivers and springs, and the air with the Sun heat and hail, in response to the swearing of the beast worshipers.

### **2.15. Revelation 17.1-12: Babylon harlot with the blood of rights (Figure 5a)**

The Babylon harlot's lust is like huge water of Euphrates, but it doesn't consist just in fornication but especially in infidelity to God (Ezekiel 16.8-31, Jeremiah 2.23-25).



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Figure 5.** Revelation: (a) 17, Babylon harlot; (b) 20, the angel with abyss key; (c) 21, the New Jerusalem

The described woman is distinguished by her imperial luxury: gold, precious stones and pearls, through the pride of clothing and through lust. She sits on a scarlet beast, being just a tool of the devil. The angel that responds to the amazing of John, indicates by the “seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17.7) a secret place, symbol of serving the beast. The prostitute adorned with all the vanities on Earth, is totally opposite to the Woman from chapter twelve, clothed with the sun and crowned with twelve stars. Sucevița visitor’s eye finds this fragment from Revelation on the outer eastside. The red of Babylon harlot produces disturbance, compared with the intense red garment that Mother of God wears in the composition from the south part of the Church.

### ***2.16. Revelation 20.1-3: the chained dragon (Figure 5b)***

The angel who comes down from Heaven has a ‘chain’ in a hand and the ‘key of the deep pit’, chain that will bind the devil (Revelation 20.2). He caught and bound the dragon, identified with old snake, devil and Satan, for thousands of years, ranging from the incarnation of Christ until the coming of Antichrist. The south-east pillar of Sucevița’s porch has been damaged, so that the devil bounding can’t be viewed, but just anticipated due to the iconographic program that painter suggests, towards the end of Revelation.

### ***2.17. Revelation 21-22: the New Jerusalem (Figure 5c)***

The beautiful citadel coming from the sky, shown by the angel to John from a high mountain has, in the representation from Sucevița, houses ordered according to the German model, with green roofs – in agreement with the jasper colour – and a fountain’s symbol in the middle. The pure light of the gold, similar with the glass (Revelation 21.18), reflected on the amazed prophet’s face, suggests the Eden’s nostalgia, as meeting place with God. Thus, John ends the travel’s cycle from the Book of Revelation, as an obedient man of the divine message. From here on we enter in the church.

## **3. Conclusions**

Interpreting the sacred text from the Old Testament by the prism of prophecy, Saint John underlines by words-images the moments of the cosmic final. Historical monument of a rare beauty, Sucevița monastery remains unique in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Moldavia by the visualization of Revelation. Even if is not in the ascetic style of the outer painting of the monastery, the southern porch represents an inedited and generous synthesis of the 22 chapters from revelation, by the Slavonic text fragments and the message of images materialized in the biblical formula “Come” (revelation 6.1, 3, 5, 7; 17.1, 21.9; 22.17, 20). The synthesis is confirmed by the similarities and pictorial interpretations, in the key of contemporary history, expressed by the Ottheinrich Bible, from the Athos monasteries Dionisiu, Dochiaru, Filotheou and Xenofont.

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