

## **The relationship between Holy Mountain Athos and Moldovan Noul-Neamt Monastery in the second part of the XIXth century**

### Introduction

The Noul-Neamt monastery was created by the monastic brotherhood of Neamt, with a single purpose, to preserve the monastic rule and traditions of Saint Paisie Velicicovschi. This mission was inspired and determined at the foundation of the new monastery as presented at the St. Petersburg Synod in 1863. It is stipulated in the Article 2 of the Synod states: "The rule or internal order of the monastery, that is, the typical ordinances, the customs of the refectory, the obedience and others, will be the same as in the Lavra Neamț and Secu (in Moldova) established by Saint Paissius Velicicovschi, exactly like the rules of Mount Athos"<sup>1</sup>. This indication to the rules of Mount Athos shows us that the life in the monasteries of Paissian tradition was wholeheartedly aligned with the traditions preserved and practiced on the Holy Mountain. Paissian community life was inspired and informed by not only careful study of the Philocalaic writings, but also, the sound practices observed at some Athonite cells and hermitages.

The ordinances of the Holy Mountain were already incorporated and implemented during the early nineteenth century when the Founding Fathers of the Noul-Neamț monastery, Thathers Theofan Cristea and Andronic Popovici made pilgrimages to those sites. Father Theofan visited the Holy Mountain in 1833-1834 and probably in the mid-1860s. The Father Andronic had visited in 1859. The third abbot of the Noul-Neamț monastery, Father Herman (Ieremcioi), also passed through the Holy Mountain and stayed on Mount Athos for several years, from 1860 to 1864. We see then that thanks to the abbots of the Noul-Neamț, the entire monastic community was able to experience and greatly benefit from the fruit of the Holy Mountain's traditions.

So in the XIX century Athos was under Ottoman rule, but it had wide autonomy. The Ottoman Sultans confirmed and strengthened the privileges given to the Holy Mountain by the Byzantine emperors and maintained this status until 1912. After the First World War several types of external governance of the Holy Mountain were proposed. Eventually, Mount Athos gained the status of autonomy within the Greek state and this remains the situation to this day.

---

<sup>1</sup> ANRM (Arhiva Națională a Republicii Moldova. Translation: National Archives Agency of Republic of Moldova) F. (Fond) 2119 Inv. (Inventory) 1. D. (Dosar. Translation: File) 32 F. (Fila. Translation: Sheet, page) 5-6.

The Holy Mountain has had close relations with the Romanian lands, as early as the nineteenth century, which is well before the founding of the present-day states<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, these relationships were introduced in the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, according to official statistics, there were 32 Romanian Athonic centres with a number of 628 Romanian monks living in the two Romanian hermitages (skites), Lacu and Prodromu, respectively, as well as in 24 cells (small communities) and 26 kalivas (isolated huts). Undoubtedly, this number is incomplete, seeing as many Romanian monks also lived together with Greeks, Russians, Bulgarians, Serbians in their respective monasteries and hermitages (skites)<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, how did the relations of the Romanian, Russian and Greek Athonite monks, together with the other communities and fraternities in the country, especially with the brotherhood of Noul-Neamţ monastery manifest themselves? What were the points of collaboration? What matters were discussed between the abbots and brothers of the Holy Mountain and Noul-Neamţ monastery?

In this presentation we will be to highlighting some documentation preserved in the archive of the Noul-Neamţ monastery. They are vivid and testify to the connection between the Noul-Neamţ brotherhood with those on the Holy Mountain in the second half of the nineteenth century.

### **The brothers from the Holy Mountain at Noul-Neamţ monastery**

---

<sup>2</sup> We know that the Gospel was preached from the very beginning on Moldovan-Roumainian lands by St. ap. Andrew and that in the 10th century the neighbouring country, that is, Kievan Rus, became Christian country. Furthermore, it is widely known that many people contemplating spiritual matters left Russia and went to Holy Mountain. The path passed through the present Republic of Moldova and Romania. At that time these lands had no established state. From this period, the 11th-12th centuries, Slavic monasteries began to be founded on the Holy Mountain: Hilindar, Ksilurgu, the Monastery of Thesalonikita and others. We know that some monastic settlements had already been founded in our countries, more precisely in Arges County (in the South of present-day Romania), in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is confirmed in the article "The life of Church and the monasticism of Byzantine Rite on the territory of Romania until 1300" in the book *Romanian Orthodox monasticism, Volume I, history of Romanian Orthodox monasticism from the beginning to the present*. Bucharest, 2014, Pp. 347-379. The same information can be found in the book of Ioan Moldoveanu, exactly in his study "The contributions to the history of the relations between the Romanian countries and Mount Athos (1650-1863)": the celebration of the 1040th anniversary of the founding of Mount Athos (1963-2003). Ed: Semne, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. univ. dr. Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu: *Românii de la Muntele Athos între religie și dictat*, (The Romans at Mount Athos between religion and dictate,) (studiu, 2008). <https://sfantulmunteathos.wordpress.com/2014/11/27/romanii-de-la-muntele-athos-intre-religie-si-dictat-prof-univ-dr-adina-berciu-draghicescu-studiu-2008/>

Several inhabitants of the Holy Mountain settled at the Noul-Neamț in the second half of the nineteenth century. Having begun their monastic lives at the Holy Mountain, they decided to come to Noul-Neamț under the obedience (oversight) of Fathers Theofan and Andronic. Thus, hierodeacon Calistrat (Galactionoviciu) from the Romanian schit of Prodrom sent several letters to the Noul-Neamț monastery. A letter was sent on July 20, 1868 to Father Theofan<sup>4</sup> and two additional letters in 1873 to Father Andronic, in which he recounts his conclusions and the request to receive him in the Noul-Neamț monastery<sup>5</sup>. Earlier, the novice Gheorghii Ieremcioi came back from the Holy Mountain to Noul-Neamț. Indeed, he became Archimandrite Herman, and the third Abbot of the monastery. Abbot Herman spent three years in the Hermitage of the Saint Prophet Elijah on Athos and one year in Jerusalem as a novice of Bishop Cyril (Naumov), the head of the Russian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

In 1882, there were 47 monks resident in the Noul-Neamț monastery<sup>6</sup>. Among them 15 Romanians, one Bulgarian and one Greek, Archimandrite Samuel Descopulo. There is no mention of where he received the tonsure in monasticism, but we have substantial evidence that Father Samuel had close ties with the brothers from Mount Athos. In his spiritual testimony from 1882 and from 1885 Father Samuel writes: "1. I do not have money and property, everything that can be found after my death, everything I leave to the Noul-Neamț monastery, because they received me very well and here I found my peace (98 roubles 70 kopecks, 2 bronze crosses for the Archimandrite, a gold watch and a medal<sup>7</sup>). He wrote also, that 2. The executor of my will I call my spiritual father, Abbot Theofan, and all the fathers who are in this monastery. There were all my wealth... I ask the holy fathers to bury me as a simple monk without any ceremonies. I ask forgiveness from all..."<sup>8</sup>. Before his death Archimandrite Samuel confessed and received the Holy Gifts brought to him by Father hieromonk Joasaph. He died on 10 June 1885, aged 74, and on 12 June was buried in the monastic cemetery. The funeral service was led by Abbot Andronic, hieromonks Arcadii, Silvestru, Gherman and Nicanor together with the brotherhood<sup>9</sup>.

There are also other monks who started their monastic life on the Holy Mountain, but who came to Noul-Neamț, as well as those who submitted monastic vows in Noul-Neamț, but then went onto the Holy Mountain.

---

<sup>4</sup> ANRM. F. 2119. Inv. 1. D. 26. F. 92.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem. F. 76-79.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem. D. 31. F. 829 (verso).

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem. D. 112. F. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem. F. 18 (verso).

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem. D. 80. F. 12 (v) – 13.

## **The brothers from Noul-Neamț monastery at the Holy Mountain**

It should be noted that there were several brothers from Noul-Neamț who made pilgrimages to the Holy Mountain. The time brothers spent on Mount Athos varied, but some even finished their lives in the garden of the Mother of God. Between 1883 and 1914 there were 16 monks who made pilgrimages to this holy place. As mentioned above, among the brothers who stayed several years at the Holy Mountain was the monk Climent (Platonov). He stayed on the Holy Mountain from 1883 to 1888. Upon his return to Bessarabia, he joined the brotherhood at Noul-Neamț monastery, but we read that for health reasons: " the climate, the water of the Dniester and the air", he requested to be moved to another monastery<sup>10</sup>. His request was fulfilled and on March 16, 1889, he was transferred to the Curchi monastery<sup>11</sup>.

We learn about another monk, brother Tarasii, who wrote through the doctor of the monastery, Damian Obiezdnicov, a request to the Abbot of the monastery, Archimandrite Andronic, to reside on the Holy Mountain for one year, commencing May 25, 1886<sup>12</sup>.

On July 27, 1887, the abbot of the monastery, Archimandrite Andronicus, also addressed to the Archbishop of Chișinău, Sergius, on behalf of the monk Isaachie (Carpovici), a desire to visit the Holy Mountain. In his letter, the Abbot, states that from his spiritual experience, this journey will not benefit the brother and that he is not set against this pilgrimage. However, should the monk Isaachie choose to depart, he should fund the journey himself and upon return from his pilgrimage, find another monastery to live<sup>13</sup>.

On June 10, 1890, Hieromonk Ghelasius (Adam), lodged a request with Archimandrite Andronicus, to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain for one year and the Abbot responded positively by informing the diocesan administration<sup>14</sup>.

Hieromonk Gideon in 1899 asked for the blessing of the Abbot, Archimandrite Herman, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Mount Athos for a 9-month term<sup>15</sup>. In his letter to Archbishop of Chisinau, the Abbot gives confirms his approval and requests permission for the Hieromonk to proceed. On October 8, 1899, a positive response is

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem. D. 115. F. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem. F. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem. D. 100. F. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem. F. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem. F. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem. F. 231.

forthcoming from the bishop and from the diocesan consistory together with the travel certificate (passport)<sup>16</sup>.

There were also several pilgrimage groups, who journeyed together from Noul-Neamt to the Holy Mountain. On October 28, 1901, we learn that the monk Sergius (Stan Munteanu) and the novice Justin Stavila, made a request to the Abbot of the monastery to travel to the Holy Mountain for a period of three months. Their request is accepted and forwarded to Archbishop James, in order to arrange all travel documentation<sup>17</sup>. On November 13, 1902, two other inhabitants of the monastery asked for the blessing to go to the Holy Mountain for one year. They were Hieromonk Achepsim (Sporita) and Monk Theofan (Ionaşco)<sup>18</sup>. On October 8, 1906, hieromonk David, monks Gherontie Godorot and Modest, were also granted the blessing of the bishop and the diocesan consistory to go to the Holy Mountain for one year<sup>19</sup>. On March 3, 1913, The Monk Gherasim asked for the blessing to go to the Holy Mountain for three months. Already on March 9, the Abbot, Archimandrite Gherman, wrote to Archbishop Seraphim (Chichagov) with the request to allow two monks (Gherasim and Nicodemus) from the monastery to go on pilgrimage<sup>20</sup>.

There were also brothers who along with the trip to the Holy Mountain wanted to make trips to the Holy Land, to the city of Jerusalem. For example, in November of 1910, the monk Tikhon (Pojata) asked for the blessing to go to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to the Holy Mountain, and we see that on November 15 of the same year travel documents were handed to him<sup>21</sup>.

Again, on June 7, 1914, hieromonk Chrysant and hierodeacon Amphilochi asked for the blessing to go to the Jerusalem in Palestine, as well as to the Holy Mount Athos<sup>22</sup>.

From the monastery archive, we also learn that some brothers regularly undertook pilgrimages to the Holy Mountain and on their return shared their experiences with those who did not have the opportunity.

### **Correspondence between the Holy Mountain and Noul-Neamţ monastery**

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem. F. 231 (v) – 232.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem. F. 247 - 248.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem. F. 253-254.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem. F. 277 - 278.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem. F. 308 – 309 (v), 312.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem. F. 293 – 294.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem. F. 319 – 319 (v).

The correspondence with the brothers on the Holy Mountain was intense and included several aspects: pastoral, moral, economic and cultural. Regretfully, not all the letters were preserved as some were lost early on and others written in Greek have not been studied for the purpose of this article. Herewith, we present a few letters from the monastery archive. Chronologically they are dated between 1866-1875, that is, from the period of Father Theofan tenure as Abbot of Noul-Neamț. In fact, most of the correspondence is addressed to Father Theofan, but some are also addressed to Father Andronic. Altogether, we see correspondence with individual brothers from several monasteries on the Holy Mountain, notably, St. Panteleimon, the Hermitages of St. Prophet Elijah and St. ap. Andrew, as well as with brothers from the Romanian Hermitages.

### **Correspondence with the brothers of St. Panteleimon Monastery**

Most of the letters were preserved from the Russian Monastery of St. Great Martyr Panteleimon from Father Macarius Sushchin, Abbot of Rusecon between 1875-1889 (14 letters in total). We will present them here in chronological order. Additionally, there were also other brothers who sent letters and parcels to the Noul-Neamț Monastery.

The first letter found from the Holy Mountain in the archive is dated November 1, 1866. The Rusecon Monk, Gregory, describes in detail the contents of the parcel couriered to the Father Theofan. In the parcel were his personal belongings: 1. An icon of the Mother of God, 2. Miscellaneous books, 3. Paintings, prayer beads, oils, caviar and others possessions. The letter ends with a request to remember him in prayer<sup>23</sup>. On April 5, 1867, Hieromonk Macarius from the St. Panteleimon, wrote a letter to Father Theofan, wishing him a joyful Easter. Likewise, in this letter Father Macarius confesses his great joy when he learned of Fr. Theophanes' visit to Constantinople. He also sent greetings from the Abbot of the monastery, Fr. Jerome, as well as the Hieroshidiacon Hilarion, who, we read: "remembers you, thanks you for your visit and attests to your deep respect, asking prayers for them. As for the life of the Saints of the Holy Martyrs Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius, known from the Patericon of Mount Athos, which you have with you, and the translation of the liturgical texts into Slavonic, is still not known and when they will be completed"<sup>24</sup>. For some further background to this letter: the Noul-Neamț monastery was given parts of the relics of Saints Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius and so Father Theofan sought the service of these saints in Slavonic or Romanian.

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem. D. 26. F. 105.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem. F. 122-122 (v).

For this reason, he contacted Father Macarius, requesting the text of the service. Father Macarie's negative response motivated him to make own translation into Slavonic. Finally, we see a beautiful collaboration on the translation of the printing and promulgation of several books. The printing of these books was done either at the Holy Mountain or at Saint Petersburg. This is how the Slavonic text of The Life and Ministry of Saints Euphemius, Ignatius and Achachius were compiled printed in 1871<sup>25</sup>. Similarly, the works of the Holy Fathers such as Saint Simeon The New Theologian, Saint Macarius the Great, Saint Isaac the Syrian and others were also prepared for publication.

On August 21, 1868, Father Macarius thanked Father Theofan for the manuscript in Slavonic with the service of the Sts Euphemius, Ignatius and Achachius writing: "The text was translated in your monastery from Greek into Slavonic... The effort to glorify the Holy Martyrs has greatly comforted us, for they will pray to you before the Lord. We have not yet been able to verify and compare your translation with the original, but with God's help, we will endeavour to do so as soon as possible and send you the manuscript with our notes"<sup>26</sup>. In this letter, Father Macarius also justifies his break in communication, explaining that all the brothers were involved in the reception of Bishop Alexander who was visiting from Russia. This was the reason for the work on the manuscript coming to a standstill. Likewise in this letter he informs Father Theofan that at the monastery of Zograf "after the many requests and petitions of the Brethren, your well-known Father Hilarion, has been chosen as Abbot. All our council, Father Igumen Gerasim, confessors Jerome, Hilarion and Gregory thank you for the good memories and sends you their sincerest regards"<sup>27</sup>.

On May 26, 1869, Father Macarius again replies to Father Theofan, explaining why he was behind schedule in checking the service of the Holy Martyrs Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius: "the person who began the work of reviewing the manuscript, developed an ailment with his eyes and therefore went to Russia for treatment, but with the help of the Lord another translator was found who finished the work. If it is God's will, I will send it to you by mail or with your Monk Narchis. The text of the service transcribed from the draft. I am also including the book St. Simeon The New Theologian, in Greek, which is very rare"<sup>28</sup>. Father Macarius explains that the Book of Saint Simeon is quite rare and comes from his personal repository. A month earlier,

---

<sup>25</sup> Служба святым преподомноученоком Еввимию, Игнатию и Аккакию. С-Петербург. Тип. А. Траншеля, 1871. The service of Sainte Martyrs Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius. St. Petersburg, 1871.

<sup>26</sup> ANRM. F. 2119. Inv. 1. D. 26. F. 124.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem. F. 124 (v).

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem. F. 125-126.

on April 4, 1869, a brother from the Iviron monastery wrote to Father Theofan in response to his request for the supply books from the Holy Mountain: "I ask you to write to me whenever you need books or something else here, and I am ready to serve you faithfully"<sup>29</sup>. On June 18, 1869, Father Macarius in his letter confirms that the corrected text of the Holy Martyrs office has been sent with the monk Narchis. He also laments the lack of hospitality shown to Father Narchis, due to his inability to speak Russian. He asked for forgiveness for any inconveniences<sup>30</sup>. On July 27, of that year, on the day of the Holy Great Martyr Panteleimon, Father Theofan wrote a congratulatory letter to Father Macarius, thanking him for the hospitality shown to Father Narchis, for reviewing the service of Sts. Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius, as well as the book of St. Simeon The New Theologian. He also assured him that "the brothers of our monastery with special love will welcome the brothers from the Holy Mountain to us"<sup>31</sup>. From the following letter sent by Father Theophanes to Father Macarius on November 10, 1869, we learn that there was a brother, the monk Venedict, from the Noul-Neamt monastery. For this monk Father Theofan transmitted two Austrian gold coins through a brother from Saint Panteleimon monastery<sup>32</sup>. So we see that the brothers from the Noul-Neamt as well as those from the Holy Mountain were in constant contact with each other, making mutual visits.

On November 14, 1869, Father Macarius sent a letter of confirmation and among other things requested the brothers from the Noul-Neamt to translate The Book of St. Simeon The New Theologian into Russian, writing that: "If you intend to translate from Greek into Russian St. Simeon for the benefit of the monks, I ask you to share with us this great gift, at least some texts of this Saint"<sup>33</sup>. In the following letter dated January 11, 1870, Father Macarius expresses joy that the manuscript of the Ministry of Saints Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius was sent to St. Petersburg for editing and reminds Father Theofan that "you promise to send us if not a published version of Simeon The New Theologian then at least one handwritten in Slavonic. With this gift you will please not only me, but all our brotherhood"<sup>34</sup>. On January 27, 1871 another letter is posted by Father Macarius. In this letter, he laments that either: "the government, or perhaps the Saint Synod, does not allow all the works of the Holy Fathers to be translated from Greek into Russian, but patience overcomes all, and if not we, then our

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem. F. 130.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem. F. 131-131 (v).

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem. F. 132 – 132 (v).

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem. F. 133 – 133 (v).

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem. F. 135-136.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem. F. 145 (v).



descendants will have a result”<sup>35</sup>. In the autumn of 1871 on October 13, Father Macarius sent another letter to the Noul-Neamț community. In it he confirmed that the receipt of 25 copies with the service of the Holy Martyrs, but requests that an additional 200 copies be sent to him. He also shares about the fire of Filotheiu monastery and the death of Father Paissius, Abbot of the Hermitage of Saint prophet Elijah, who reposed on September 6, 1871<sup>36</sup>. In his reply of December 14 of the same year, Father Theofan laments the destruction that has engulfed the monastery of the New-Neamț. On November 16, vandals started a fire at the monastery and the iconostasis that came from the workshop of the iconographer Verkhovtsev was totally consumed by the fire. This incident greatly troubled the abbot, who became seriously ill. He also writes that he ordered the 200 copies of books from the printing press, but that they will be sent to Mount Athos in two lines of one hundred books each<sup>37</sup>. Father Macarius does not delay to please Father Theofan and in order to encourage him, he proposes to give the rest of books to his brother Vasile Sushchin, based in St. Petersburg. He also consoles him in his grief after the loss of the iconostasis of Mr. Verkhovtsev<sup>38</sup>. On October 8, 1872, Abbot Theofan upon receipt of this letter, sent the second batch of 100 books of Saints Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius, along with 100 of their icons, via hieromonk Veniamin, who undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain and in Palestine. In return, Father Theofan asks Father Macarius to give 100 roubles to the hieromonk and promised to repay the money via monk Michael from Odessa. He also informs him that: "I have the desire to publish the Life and Ministry of the Saints Euphemius, Ignatius and Achachius in one book. If you share this desire, please send a formal request from your monastery and I will pass this to the Holy Synod in order to simplify the procedure of publications”<sup>39</sup>. On December 31, 1872, Father Theofan writes to Father Macarius expressing concern about his silence and requests his confirmation of receipt of his letter. He also writes that Fr. Andronic Popovici has given permission for the monk Damian (resident for several years in Chitcani) to receive the Holy Mysteries, if the current confessor allows him<sup>40</sup>.

On February 17, 1873 Father Macarius replies that his delay with an update, was due to the fact that he first had to contact Father Arsenius, the representative of St. Panteleimon monastery in Moscow. Father Arsenius was in charge of printing books for the St. Panteleimon community. He also asks him to forward detailed and relevant information to Father Arsenius

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem. F. 149 (v).

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem. F. 155-156 (v).

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem. F. 158 – 158 (v).

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem. F. 159-160.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem. F. 161-162 (v).

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem. F. 164.

so he can stay informed and expedite the work. In this letter he adds that Father Veniamin's busy schedule did not allow him to make his pilgrimage on time and when he will return from Palestine he will pass through the Holy Mountain again. The permission of Father Andronic for the monk Damian was transmitted and "the spiritual father of the monastery will react according to the regulations of the Holy Fathers" - writes Father Macarius<sup>41</sup>. On 26 February, Father Theofan sent another letter to Archimandrite Macarius. He asks him to take from the igumen of the Moldavian Hermitage, hieromonk Damian, his books and to forward them to Odessa<sup>42</sup>.

Located at the monastery of St. Panteleimon, hierodiaton Calistrat wrote several letters to Father Theofan. In one of these letters, dated April 18, 1873, he testifies about the greatness of Archimandrite Macarius and mentions his gratitude to Father Theofan. We can deduce that Father Theofan most likely asked him to source rare writings (texts), because he had little success leading him to explain that: " I tried to the best of my ability, to fulfil your desire, and to source more the books. Fr. Archimandrite Macarius is an instrument of God's mercy and kindness. He is a good friend of Your Holiness, more than a brother. He helped me a lot, giving me five German gold pieces. I received them with great pleasure, and leaving I cried with joy... I have sent to you one book, from our collection. Keep this book, as the most ancient treasure of the Holy Mountain, mentioning us in your prayers. Calistrat Hierodeicon Galactionoviciu. The glorious monastery of Russicon"<sup>43</sup>. We understand, that Father Theofan sent money through Father Macarius for the Hierodiaton Calistrate. In turn, he he continued to look for books and sent them to the Noul-Neamț monastery. The book mentioned in this letter is the same book, which Father Macarius speaks of in the letter dated of April 28. It is an anthology of musical notations in Romanian and Slavonic languages.

On April 28, 1873, Father Macarius confirms that the money for the fathers from the Moldavian-Rumanian Hermitage and for Father Veniamin was transmitted. He confirms that he received from hierodiaton Calistrat from Prodromu Hermitage a book with of musical notation in Moldavian and Slavic languages and forwarded it on to the Noul-Neamț monastery. "The Abbot of the Moldavian Hermitage, Father Damian, did not send me the expected books, even though we saw him, he did not remember me, and Father Calistrat said that he would not give these books"<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem. F. 171.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem. F. 165-166.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem. F. 168.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem. F. 167-167 (v).

After an interval of almost 10 years, we again find in the archive a letters from Father Macarius from St. Panteleimon monastery, dated September 9, 1881. In this letter, Father Macarius writes that Fathers Jerome and Hilarion weaken every day, that the brothers of the monastery are sick from Typhoid, particularly from the end of August and beginning September, but with the help of God they recovered. Father Macarius adds that “The book of St. Isaac of Syria has been forwarded. Don’t worry about remuneration”. He thanked Father Theophanes for the gifts and wrote that he was glad that the Noul-Neamt monastery “is reaching a state of flowering”<sup>45</sup>. We can see from these letters how painstakingly the books were gathered in Noul-Neamț monastery. It is important to notice that the same obstacles Father Paissius Velecikovski endured the same trials when he collected the books with the greatest effort from the monasteries of the Holy Mountain.

On March 10, 1882, Father Macarius wrote another letter to Father Theofan. In this letter he wishes him a good Lenten period and joyful Easter. Also, he laments that the previous letter had "travelled on water" for a very long time. Father Macarius expressed his joy that the books have arrived and made the promise, that he will also transmit the book of St. Macarius the Great of Egypt, mentioning: "If I find, I will add the oeuvres books of St. Isaac the Syrian. Let's not discuss the price of books, it is better to have a spiritual communication. We have received the books with the rules of pious Father Paissius and we are grateful to you... We are very glad that you are at the watch and rule of your monastery and that the Brotherhood is united in Christ, and by energetic care you enrich them spiritually and intelligently as a true shepherd of the speaking sheep. I ask that from all Orthodox countries your brotherhood be blessed, and that this blessing may remain henceforth and forever upon the monastery and those who live in it<sup>46</sup>. In these words, which seem at first glance a panegyric to Father Theofan, in fact, is nothing more than an encouragement of the father. He was going through very difficult times in his life and such a blessing from the brothers of Holy Mountain especial from the abbot of the monastery of Saint Panteleimon restored him and gave him powers to resist and maintain the monastery.

Other letters from the monastery of St. Panteleimon are more recent and will be researched in other works.

### **The correspondence with brotherhood from the skit of St. Elijah**

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem. F. 183-184.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem. F. 190-191.

We see intense correspondence between the Abbots from Noul-Neamț and the brothers of the St. Elijah Hermitage. There are 6 letters from this Hermitage. We also understand that several brothers of this Hermitage were originally from Bessarabia. Others, preserving the memory of Starets Paissius, had a special attitude towards communities and fraternities organized according to the rules of the Starets. On February 20, 1868, the Abbot of the Hermitage of St. Prophet Elijah, archimandrite Paissius the Bulgarian or Paissius the Second<sup>47</sup>, a native from Bessarabia, sent Father Theofan a letter. In it he thanks Father Theofan for the hospitality granted to a brother of the Hermitage, more specifically to the monk Isaiah, who is with the mission of the community in Odessa. "He, the monk Isaiah, needs to live as little time as possible within the walls of the monastery for rest and peace of mind"<sup>48</sup> - Father Paissius writes. In the same letter he sends greetings to Father Hesychius and enquires about the place of living of monk Ignatius<sup>49</sup>. We did not locate Father Theofan's answer, but we understand that the correspondence with Father Paissius was intense and the fathers from the Hermitage of St. Elijah were welcome at the Noul-Neamț monastery, as well as those from the Noul-Neamț at the upper named Hermitage. It should be noted that the correspondence was also made through the monk Isaiah, who often came to the Noul-Neamț and shared the news from the Holy Mountain. He also actively participated in the life of the Noul-Neamț monastery choir. For example, he was looking through his acquaintances a choir conductor for the monastic choir<sup>50</sup>. In Lent, 1871, Father Theofan writes to the abbot of St. Elijah hermitage a letter informing him that at St. Petersburg he edited the service of Saints Euphymius, Ignatius and Acachius and that he sent two copies to his Hermitage<sup>51</sup>.

On January 9, the monks Elijah and Amphilochius<sup>52</sup>, probably the brothers of St. Elijah Hermitage, originally from the Noul-Neamț, wrote to Father Theofan explaining that as of yet they have been unable to fulfil his request to source the book of "Dobrotoliubie". They write that they could hardly leave the monastery of St. Panteleimon to go to the Hermitage. "The winter is so hard, that nobody can't walk or ride". They promise that they will do everything to find the book and pass it on to the Noul-Neamț. "We don't have any big news, but everything

---

<sup>47</sup> <https://afonit.info/biblioteka/podvizhniki-afona/afonskij-starets-paisij-ii-igumen-ilinskogo-skita-rabotavshij-na-tyazhkikh-poslushaniyakh-naravne-s-bratiej-den-pamyati-17-sentyabrya>

<sup>48</sup> ANRM F. 2119 Inv. 1. D. 26. F. 120

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem. F. 120 (v).

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem. F. 118, 121. (The monk Isaiah shares with father Theophanes, on September 2, 1878, the joy from the the patron saint's day service in the Hermitage of the Holy Prophet Elijah. This service was first time celebrated in Slavonic languages and their abbot, Father Paisius, was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite).

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem. F. 153.

<sup>52</sup> Several spiritual letters remain from Father Amphilochius (September 9, 1878, Ibid. F. 194 -195 (v).) in which he pours out his soul in confession to Father Theophanes, waiting for his advice and guidance. I hope these letters will also be published.

is fine. Father Andrew is cheerful, and Father Tobia is watches for the discipline". Also in this letter Father Elijah asks for the blessing of Father Theofan to go to Jerusalem until peace will be established between the brothers. He also writes that he is working in the monastery's chancellery<sup>53</sup>. From this letter we can presume that in Father Elijah considered himself as the spiritual son of Father Theofan and asked for his blessing for pilgrimage. A few days later, the Noul-Neamț monastery receives a letter from the Abbot of St. Elijah Hermitage (this letter is presented below). According to this letter, we understand that there were indeed disagreements in the Hermitage between the brothers.

On January 24, 1880, the next Abbot of the Hermitage, hieroschemonk Tobia (1879-1887) thanked Father Theofan for the greetings sent upon his election as Abbot, but he explains how he agreed to be chosen and points out that it is more of a burden for him than an honour. He laments that some of the brothers who have resented and upset others, are the ones who begged him to accept the post of Abbot. He asks for prayers from the brothers of the Noul-Neamț monastery, listing by name: " Fathers Andronic, Sevastian, Arcadius, Sylvester, Herman and others brothers in Christ. Pray for me... When our fathers go to Odessa, I will pass through them the parts of the relics of the Saints"<sup>54</sup>.

In this letter he laments that many in the Hermitage have fallen ill, himself included. Additionally, Father Tobie tries to encourage Father Theophanes, who was going through a difficult period writing: "I wish you with all my heart to recover, for this I raise prayers to the Lord, knowing that you must live in this world not for yourself, but for the spiritual good of the your children, because the discernment and love you have serve as a guarantee through the experience that your spiritual sons have"<sup>55</sup>. Also in this letter Father Tobie thanks Father Theofan for editing and sending the "Rules of Abbot Paissius", to the Holy Mountain, he felicitates him for building the walls of the Noul-Neamț monastery guard and he reveals him his difficulties in building the cathedral. From the letter we also learn that the spiritual son of Father Theofan, hierodiaton Anastasius "began to behave modestly and to fulfil all obedience. May God help him"<sup>56</sup>. It should be emphasized here that Athanasius, living in the Holy Mountain, considered himself the spiritual son of Father Theofan and had an active correspondence with him. The letter begins with the mutual greetings from the brothers and especially from Father Hrisanf, "who greatly appreciates you"<sup>57</sup>.

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem. F. 182 -182 (v).

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem. F. 180-181 (v)

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem. F. 185.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem.

On December 4, Father Tobias write again to Father Theofan, outlining his project to draw up a history of St. Elijah Hermitage. For the realization of this project, information is needed that is why Father Tobie asks if in the gloves that are in the monastery of the Noul-Neamț, and especially in the works of Father Platon, the disciple of the Reverend Paissius, there is nothing about the founding of the Hermitage. "Please translate into Russian and forward to us. By this you will help us a lot and this contribution will remain in the memories of our community. In achieving this tusk we ask also to participate your best collaborator, the much esteemed Father Andronic, who is also in charge of the library and as Father Hrisanf told us, he knows in detail the life of Abbot Paissius. However, Father Hrisanf does not know where Father Andronic was inspired from manuscripts or books printed in Moldovan"<sup>58</sup>. Andronic's fame spread more rapidly than his writings.

On March 15, 1882, the Monk Chrysanf, a brother of the St. Elijah hermitage, his representative at the patriarch of Constantinople, wrote to Father Theofan a request that he intercede for the finding of the homologue of the Pantocrator monastery, addressed to the Reverend Paisius Velecichovschi. The Hermitage not having this document was very much stumped by the current leadership of the monastery. What is more, learning of this document will facilitate the construction of the cathedral and will solve a lot of administrative questions<sup>59</sup>. We do not know if Father Theofan found the homologion, but we know that the cathedral of the Hermitage was successfully constructed.

On November 21, 1871, a letter from the abbot of Hermitage of St. Andrew, the hiegumen Theodorite, arrived to Father Theofan, in this letter he thanks him for translating and printing the service of Holy Martyrs Euphemius, Acachius and Ignatius. In the same letter he sends greetings from Father Dorotei<sup>60</sup>.

And yet from this small number of letters which I have presented here it is clear that the brothers from the Noul-Neamț monastery had a close cooperation with those from the Holy Mountain.

### **Correspondence with the brothers from Moldoromanian hermitages**

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem. F. 188.

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem. F. 196-197 (v).

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem. D. 26. F. 158.

Many letters come from the Moldavian Hermitages, Prodromu and Lacu. The brothers from the Noul-Neamt monastery stopped at these Hermitages, when visiting the Holy Mountain. Here we present two letters.

On July 27, 1868, the monk Nectarie from the moldo-romanian Hermitage addressed Father Theofan with a letter of encouragement, hearing that he was building a new monastery of Neamț. Among other things he writes: " You will receive a great reward from the Merciful God through the prayers of our Most Holy Father Abbot Paissius"<sup>61</sup>. Furthermore we read: "How we wished that we should meet when you came to the Holy Mountain, but perhaps so willed the Heavenly Providence. God grant that we may see each other and together rejoice in the other life, for the resurrection. Please pray for me and remember my unworthiness when you stand before the Holy Altar. Father Athanasius sent you with humility his best wishes"<sup>62</sup>. So, from the letter it is clear that Father Nectarius had great affection for Father Theofan. They probably knew each other from the monastery of Neamț. At the time when Father Theofan was making pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain (about the half-60s) they did not meet. Yet the letter is full of optimism and radiates hope for a new meeting. The letter also shows that Father Theofan had other brothers who knew him in the Holy Mountain, such as Athanasius.

On May 28, 1869, the Fathers Athanasius and the monk Nectarius from the Moldavian Hermitage Prodromu write a new letter to Father Theofan. They explain to him why they cannot pass on the requested books: "Honest and beloved father! For the said books you will know that the book of St. Simeon The New Theologian only one copy is in this house and that it's old handwritten one. As for the Philokalia, we do not have a copy. For this reason, we grieve to let you know that we cannot help you in this ... (unclear word) because the Book of St. Simeon is imprisoned for the one who will take her from the Hermitage and we have only one book. For this thing, Your Holiness, do not be upset... (unclear word), but keeping piety you will not deprive yourself of the desired but"<sup>63</sup>. The letter trembles again with an encouragement: "May God help you in the things that you have begun with the most good success to do also through the help of the Mother of God and through the help of our most pious Father and Abbot Paissius, who always prays to the Merciful God for us his sons"<sup>64</sup>

### **The library of the Noul-Neamt monastery**

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem. D. 26. F. 91.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem. F. 140.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem.

One particular treasure is the monastery library, which since 1962 has been preserved in the National Archives of the Republic of Moldova in Chisinau. Among the manuscripts and books kept at the Noul-Neamț, a special section is dedicated to the Greek books. Many of these books were brought from the Holy Mountain. We will conclude by analysing the catalogue, dated February 23, 1887, which contains a useful resume of the contents of each book in the archive, of which the following books are in Greek:

So, to give one example, Chapter 5 of the catalogue under the title "Works of the Holy Fathers" we see that there are 16 books in Greek of the XVIIIth-XIXth centuries<sup>65</sup>,

Furthermore, in Chapter 6, under the title "Other books with spiritual content" there are 20 books in Greek<sup>66</sup>,

If we turn our attention to Chapter 7, under the title "Historical Books" we can find 40 more books in Greek<sup>67</sup>,

Another interesting example can be found in Chapter 9, under the title "Books of musical notation in Moldovan which are in fact written with Greek characters" there are 35 books<sup>68</sup>. Also in the same chapter are 13 books of musical notation in Greek<sup>69</sup>.

In Chapter 10 it is indicated that there are a total of 33 books with diverse content in Latin, German, French, Greek and Russian languages<sup>70</sup>. So out of the number of 818 books and manuscripts 157 books are in Greek, that is almost a fifth of all books in the monastery's library.

## Conclusions

We conclude that since the beginning of the foundation of the Noul-Neamț monastery there have been close ties with the brothers from the Holy Mountain. Fathers Theofan and Andronic had a rich correspondence with diverse monasteries and hermitages. They had common projects, reaching beautiful achievements and having successes in the translation and printing of books, such as the service and life of Saints Euphemius, Ignatius and Acacius. These examples are also an inspiration to later generations, especially today's. I hope that the interest

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem. D. 110. F. 20 (v) – 22.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem. F. 42 – 42 (v).

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem. F. 57 (v) – 59.

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem. F. 63 (v) – 65.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem. F. 67 (v) – 68.

<sup>70</sup> Ibidem. F. 69 – 70 (v).



in the Holy Mountain will be not only touristic, but also a spiritual motivation to edify the soul, mind and heart.

Hiermonk Joseph (Pavlinciuc Panteleimon)