

# **St Paisius' Community in Dragomirna: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Beauty**

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## **Abstract:**

In 1763 the community led by Pious Paisius, comprising 64 members, received Dragomirna Monastery as their abode for permanent settlement. Under Pious Paisius' guidance, a way of life took root, gained strength and vigour and began to be increasingly sought after, which those who describe it have termed "Paisian spirit". It revealed to all the use and beauty of experiencing Christian teaching and pure prayer in communal life and the reward received even in this world for the effort of seeking holiness.

***Keywords:** Pious Paisius, Dragomirna Monastery, Hesychasm, Monasticism*

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## **The establishment of St Paisius' community in Dragomirna Monastery**

In 1763 the community led by Pious Paisius, comprising 64 members, received Dragomirna Monastery as their abode for permanent settlement. Situated near Suceava, Dragomirna was not very far away from Putna, which acted as the residence of the former Metropolitan Bishop Jacob (1750-1760) who had been removed, three years before, "by faked force" (Iorga 2001: 397), from the Archiepiscopal seat in Iași. Those who had acquiesced to this well-thought-of appointment were Gavriil Callimachi, the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldova and Suceava (1760-1786; he himself was Romanian, a monk from Putna, but he had stood out as a remarkable figure in the Phanar district in Istanbul, where he had Hellenized himself and had managed to hold the seat of the Metropolitan Bishop of Thessaloniki between 1745-1760), his paternal nephew, Grigore Callimachi (during his first reign in Moldova, 1761-

1764) and an influent group from the Princely Board. They were joined, by archiepiscopal order, by Bishop Dosithei Herescu of Rădăuți.

Several texts provide information on events preceding this decision, which not even Paisius himself could initially foresee, and they unanimously indicate the Pious Saint's desire to return from Athos to the Romanian environment, where he had once found what he had vainly sought both in Pecerska Lavra and in other monastic establishments from his native land (Ivan 1997: 1-39; Racoveanu s. a.: 11-53; Bălan 2005: 290-315). The large number of disciples and the modest living conditions are the most well-understood reasons behind the departure of Paisius' community from Athos to the Romanian Principalities (the same reasons were also invoked in 1779 to account for the granting of the great lavra of Neamț as the monastic community's abode, a lavra whose prestige is closely related to Paisius' name). Could there have been other plans as well, that could not be discussed openly at that time, plans which the staretz devoted to the knowledge, defence and experience of saving beauty, could have followed just like others before him, but in the concrete circumstances of his age? It is difficult to reconstitute such an activity today, especially since at the time and in posterity, what was always highlighted was mainly the Hesychast renewal movement's role to freshen up and reinvigorate Christian life in the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a movement that is always connected to the name and ascetic trials of Pious Saint Paisius from Neamț (added to this are references to his inheritance, both in Romania and "especially in Ukraine and in Russia") (Daniel 1997: 12; Cetfericov 1933: *passim*; Ică 2011: 36-37).

The community's establishment in Moldova, more precisely in Dragomirna, took place under special circumstances, after the refusal of the Metropolitan Bishop of Wallachia to offer hospitality to Paisius' community in Căldărușani Monastery, where they would initially have liked to have been welcomed, and after discussions carried out by Paisius himself with church and state authorities from Moldova. He arrived in Iași in the beginning of August 1763, accompanied by his Moldavian disciple Visarion, the rest of the brotherhood waiting for the answer in Vărzărești Monastery (the Bishopric of Buzău).

Could it be that to the approval of their request contributed to the fact that the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldova had once been an

archbishop in Thessaloniki and a person of authority in the Holy Mountain, a capacity in which he could know more about Paisius' community, or personally know the Pious Saint (Crețulescu 1897: 10; Vorobchievici 1925: 12-13), who was already highly esteemed among Athonite fathers? Could there have been other recommendations, that sensitised the Ruler and the Metropolitan Bishop, both with much political experience gained in diplomatic circles in Constantinople, where Russian propaganda had insinuated itself and was working skilfully and persistently, nourishing hope, encouraging favourable attitudes and diligently presenting Russians as the generous and disinterested protectors of Orthodoxy, as the Tzars wished to be known? Could it be that to this decision also contributed the muted dissatisfactions in the Moldavian Church, especially due to the transfer of Metropolitan Bishop Gavriil from Thessaloniki to Iași (in the Ottoman Empire, bishops were officially confirmed by the sultan and considered, in the then understanding of the term, officers of the Ottoman state), followed by his resignation and Jacob of Putna's withdrawal to his first Monastery? These dissatisfactions and tensions had to be defused, especially since Putna monks, who had managed to take almost all Bishop's seats in Moldova, had long been cultivating solid connections, but in a quite different register, with pravoslavni Russia.

All these presumptions are worthy of consideration, yet the weight of each cannot be established with certainty, in the absence of clear information, whose mentioning in writing could not be done without risks. What remains certain is the decision taken on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1763, which approved the welcoming of Paisius' community in Moldova, its settlement in Dragomirna and the transfer of the Monastery's goods to the new owners (accompanied by their exemption from paying any tax). We should mention that Dragomirna Monastery was then one of the richest real estates in Moldova [1], that it was inhabited by monks and that the 1763 decision seemed not to observe the will of the founder, Metropolitan Bishop Anastasie Crimca, which stipulated that his Monastery (to which was granted, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1626, an *Establishment* comprising norms considered valid in all Monasteries in the country - its text in *Documenta Romaniae Historica...*: 144-153;

Urechia 1887-1888: 259-263; Puiu 1929: 2-6) should never be dedicated to anyone (Bishop Melchisedec 1883: 308).

When he remembered the events of the year 1763, Staretz Paisius thanked the Ruler, the Metropolitan Bishop and the country's boyars, who "resembling God through their mercy, granted us, for our eternal life, the most beautiful Dragomirna Monastery, founded by the blessed into memory Most Holy Archbishop and Metropolitan Bishop of Suceava, Kir Anastasie Crimca". This fact was considered "God's providence for our communal life," Metropolitan Bishop Gavriil's act of mercy and "a great miracle" (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 117).

Yet the settling of the new monastic community and the departure of the Dragomirna monks did not occur without certain resentment, the echoes of which were registered until the next century (the same thing would happen later when Paisius' community was transferred to the great lavra of Neamț). Thus, written records mention that after "Paisius arrived in Dragomirna he drove away, when winter was drawing near, all old monks who had been in Dragomirna before" and he appointed "his disciples for all jobs"; the monks "chased away by the Russians left in the autumn, in October and November – back then, in the winter, there were frosty times too – and they spread about to wherever they could, some in Râșca, others in Secu, others in Old Agapia on the Hill, others elsewhere" (Crețulescu 1897: 11). The Gorovei Skete and estate belonged, in the old times, to Dragomirna Monastery. A bishop and a scholar, Narcis Crețulescu was originally from these places and he knew many of the Gorovei monks, about whom he even wrote later. An uncle of his, Ioasaf Apostoliu, was the egoumenos of Secu Monastery, and Narcis himself was staretz in Neamț between 1902 and 1909).

Bishop Narcis Crețulescu (1835-1913), who had been familiar with Gorovei Monastery (once a skete of Dragomirna) since his childhood, and who moved to Neamț Monastery in 1850, found it worthy to describe the passage of Paisius' community from Dragomirna to Secu and then to Neamț, in such terms:

around 1763 there comes from the Holy Mountain staretz Paisius Velicovschie, of a saint name, a scholar and a pious man, beautiful titles that were looked for at the time in our Moldova as well, and by Russian monks, who would turn themselves into spies of foreign emissaries. All-Pious Paisius' monks were mostly Russian; they moved to Dragomirna Monastery and [...] drove away the

monks that had been there earlier [...]. In 1775 staretz Paisius and his Russians moved to Secu [...] and then they drove away egoumenos Eftimie Cananău and the monks; the Secu monks moved in Râșca Monastery in the winter [...]. In 1779 Paisius moved with the Russians from Secu to Neamțu Monastery [...], and he moved the Neamț monks with their egoumenos, Varlaam Dingă, to Râșca. Dingă was a wise and cautious man; he understood that Paisius was moved from one place to another, not only for his pious life but even more for the Russians' wind, and that many Russians, under monastic vestments, the most pious precisely, were the true spies of Russia. At the time such transfers were ceaseless in all Monasteries, everywhere. This age was rightly called *by elders (our emphasis)* "the monastic rebellion", born out of "political rebellion" (Narcis Crețulescu 1901: 84).

### **Pious Paisius' spiritual guidance: the establishment of cenobitic life in Dragomirna**

After the settling of Paisius' community in Dragomirna, Metropolitan Gavriil Callimachi "ordered" Pious Paisius "in full love" to present "in writing [...] the community's rules and establishment". In the same year, 1763, the 18-point text on the *Establishment of Cenobitic Life in Dragomirna* was handed in by the Staretz. In the letter addressed to the Archbishop of Iași, Paisius wrote that "from what he heard" Dragomirna Monastery "was built with the same purposes in mind ... so that everything in it would be communal, according to the *Gospel*, and not with any special way of living". Wishing this rule to be observed "like the one of our father and founder", he "diligently" searched through the few documents that were left, but "that establishment I did not find" (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 119-120).

However we should note that when he asked for the procedure to elect the egoumenos so as to be recognised by the Metropolitan Bishop and Bishops, Paisius wrote:

it seems to me that the pious founder of this holy Monastery (Dragomirna), establishing cenobitic life in it, ordered and reinforced it with severe anathemas that an egoumenos from another Monastery should not be appointed in this holy abode; this is why we are asking your Holinesses to end or set aside his humble request to us and the commandment set by our blessed founder [...] (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 119-135).

Therefore the Pious Saint knew about the *Will* of the founder. In 1775, when he moved to Secu Monastery, he was faced with the same

problem, which he tried to solve in 1778, when Metropolitan Bishop Gavriil Callimachi asked that after his death, the egoumenos should be appointed from among the members of his community. As far as the anathema set by the old *Establishment* was concerned (the one drawn in 1626 by Metropolitan Bishop Anastasie - outside the borders of Moldova, see vol. *Hesychasm and Monastic Life in Maniava Skete from Pocutia* 2004: *passim*), which “causes no little trouble [...] to the synod, fearing and becoming greatly concerned lest they should remain under that anathema.” He considered all such fears groundless as such anathemas are cast only on heretics and in the case at hand “a repentance canon is sufficient for those who have wronged” (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 226-227 and note 2: 220-223).

Pious Paisius' *Establishment* essentially follows the rules of the one from 1626, obedience, poverty and purity undergirding monastic life. From its outset it asserts the importance of *community life*: “so that no brother would have any special gain set aside [...], not even the smallest thing, nor should anyone call anything his own”. It argues that “among brothers living in a community, this leads to genuine love for God and for one's neighbour, meekness, humility, peace, harmony and the absolute renunciation to one's will” and that it is only within a community that there could be “one heart and a single soul”. The egoumenos' duty is to look after the brothers in all that is necessary to them “as a father looks after his spiritual sons” (points 1-9) (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010:121-128). The document then lists the rules for welcoming brothers into the community, for the organization and functioning of the infirmary, trades, and houses to receive foreigners (points 10-17). It asks for the cessation of women and children's entry into the Monastery, “except for the need [...] in times of war and rebellion”. In the last point, the 18<sup>th</sup>, Pious Paisius asks the country's bishops and the spiritual synod to “reinforce it [...] that the Monastery should never be dedicated to any other place, “just like – he writes – “about this I also found the horrible anathema cast by the blessed of memory founder of this Holy Monastery, for this would lead to the accomplished dissipation of communal life” (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 136). And it is added: “And as the Monastery is not dedicated to any place, by Christ's grace, one can find it in the brothers' communal life unscattered and unflinchingly so.”

Hence we understand that neither the Metropolitan Bishop, the Bishops, nor the Ruler and the boyars nor Paisius himself and his disciples, considered that by granting Dragomirna Monastery to the new community, Metropolitan Bishop Anastasie Crimca's *Will* could somehow fail to be observed. The latter, drawn on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1610, stipulated that

none among the Rulers, founders, or boyars from our nation should ever dare dedicate our Monastery to the Holy Mountain or to Jerusalem, or set it under the authority of a patriarch or metropolitan Bishop, or change the monks from the Moldavian Country, or appoint an egoumenos for them from a foreign Monastery. But they should allow the above-mentioned Monastery to enjoy peace in everything and remain secure for the ages to come. And whoever would break our decree and rule, may he be anathema and thrice cursed, anathema maranatha, from the Lord Our God and from all Saints. Amen (Bishop Melchisedec 1883: 308).

As far as he and his community were concerned, a community which was made up of brothers from several ethnic groups, especially Romanians, Slavs and Greeks, Paisius wrote that "just as we observed, according to our strength, the establishments of the Holy Fathers in the Holy Mountain of Athos, we are equally observing them here in our community, by the grace of God, as much as we can" (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 131).

If we compare the *Establishments* of Dragomirna from the years 1626 and 1763 we will notice that, apart from specific differences, they feature numerous resemblances, going so far as to have almost identical wordings both in canonical and spiritual motivation and in the practical way of organising communal life. What is noteworthy (and the comparison could give a better imagine of Dragomirna's spiritual life), is the difference between the solutions foreseen to ensure spiritual care, or the various ways in which the *Establishments* provided for the preservation, exercise and insurance of unity and continuity in heading the monastic community.

In the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the synod of Dragomirna, the ruler of the Monastery had to be confirmed every year by all members of the community. Thus, the *Establishment* from 1626 stipulated that the egoumenos should be elected "with the blessing of the merciful God and by the will of the synod", therefore without other interferences. He was

also required “to be a Priest”, to have proven his spiritual qualities, to account to the synod for the incurred expenses, to always consult with the staretzs and, what is very important and significant, to be yearly confirmed by the synod:

the ministry as an egoumenos is to be held for a full year and when the year is completed, he should humbly present himself in front of the synod. So if they judged that they had matched the soul’s arrangement with the habits of the holy Monastery, let them pray and beseech him to retain his ministry for another year; but if he had spent the year recklessly and wasting what had been gained, they should find another and ask him to be the egoumenos.

As for the staretzs who help the egoumenos, they too are elected *and* it is noted that a staretz

if he does not pursue justice and follow the rules of the holy Monastery, but rather his own will, spending on food and drinking parties and dubious gatherings, such a man should be taken away his staretz’s office, as if he were an ewe infected with scabby mouth (*Documenta Romaniae Historica...*: 144-147).

More than a century later the situation changed in Dragomirna. The egoumenos had to demonstrate the same parental love, equal for all brotherhood, and his worthiness did not have to be confirmed periodically by all. What is more, everybody’s obedience to him had to be accomplished, and overcoming special situations no longer depended on stipulations in the set of rules but rather on the egoumenos’ wisdom, skilfulness and spiritual strength. Obviously, the egoumenos “knows that he will be accountable (...) to Christ”, not to someone else, and this is why

his duty is to apply himself to the study of the *Holy Gospel* and the teachings of the God-bearing Fathers and apart from the Scriptures and Fathers’ teachings, no teaching or commandments should they give to the brothers, nor establish anything as a rule [...], fearing and shuddering at the thought of imagining anything from inside themselves (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 123).

Texts on Pious Saint Paisius’ life and ascetic trails describe numerous such situations, so that one could describe most of them as persuasive and captivating accounts of spiritual “art”, whose power of seduction equally edifies and shapes one’s personality. Although the tone of humility and discretion prevails (and references to the unity that must be preserved between the community and its ruler are never absent), the



emphasis, well grounded in Patristics, falls on the role of the one who rules, as the community needs to be “well guided, like a good ship steered by a skilful helmsman” (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 134).

In the later Dragomirna *Establishment*, the issue of dismissing or withdrawing the egoumenos was not raised; Pious Paisius asks Metropolitan Bishop Gavriil Callimachi and the members of his Synod to enforce the rule of succession after the death of an egoumenos. The new egoumenos had to belong to the community, to be elected by the “entire synod and upon the advice of the dying Bishop and with the blessing of the Most Holy Metropolitan Bishop”; he had to be a priest (or even among monks, as a marginal note mentions), “to overwhelm the others in spiritual understanding and in his mastery of the Holy Scriptures and of the establishments of community life, and just as much in obedience to and in the renunciation of his own will and intentions, in love, meekness and humility, as well as in other virtues”. He is also asked to know Greek, Slavonic and Romanian well, or at least Romanian and Slavonic, because the community also included speakers of these languages.

When he had to consult with someone else on how to organize a monastic community, the Pious Saint wrote to Sofronie of Ardeal from the Robaia skete of Argeș Monastery, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1766. He mentioned that first they must have a “very skilful advisor [...] having the gift of fair and true judgment”, with high virtues and “freed” from passions such as

anger [...], love of money, love of vanity, gluttony and others, being, as much as it can be humanly possible, perfect before God in his acts, words and understanding”. A disciple must be “in his hand like a tool in the master’s hand, like clay in the potter’s hand and the sheep in the shepherd’s hand, doing nothing without blessing and without informing him [...], and he should not trust his own mind more than his father, in anything, and briefly, he should be like the dead, before death, having no will and intentions of his own.

In order for the community to be “made up, with such an advisor”, he also recommended that there should be “not a Skete, but a Monastery”, exempt from paying tax, “not subjected and self-ruling”, with the approval of “local government and bishops”, and women were not to be allowed inside the Monastery” (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 160-161).

We should also point out that everywhere he went to organise monastic life in Moldova, Pious Saint Paisius considered that all monks belonged to one and the same community. For instance, after he settled in Secu Monastery, he wrote to his disciples who had stayed behind, in Dragomirna, under Father Narcis' guidance, that it was

my duty [...] to teach you as well and guide you through advice, according to God, towards all good things, just like the brothers here. Because even though you have been separated in your abode among these two Monasteries [Dragomirna and Secu], nevertheless the synod is only one and the relation of love unto God is the same, as if we were all living together, undivided (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010: 135).

In 1779, when he passed from Secu to Neamț, the community also remained united, which seems to have matched the intention of the then ruler of Moldavia, Constantin Moruzi, who had ordered this transfer to be completed (*Viața Cuviosului Paisie de la Neamț* 1997: 50-55). The latter, in his response to the letter through which the Pious Saint refused to go to the ordered place, wrote to him himself:

Do your obedience, go to Neamțu, judging nothing, and this Monastery was given to your community not only for its establishment, but also so that its ordinance would be in the other Monasteries as well, in the same way, to raise a like-wise zeal towards communal life (*Viața Cuviosului Paisie de la Neamț* 1997: 52).

Bishop Narcis Crețulescu wrote that the Pious Saint thought of Râșca Monastery as well, but this led to no success [2]. He also insists on mentioning the sale of many of Dragomirna's properties, especially after 1775, when it was decided that Paisius' community would withdraw to Secu [3] under the difficult circumstances after the annexation of Northern Moldavia by Austria, with Russia's approval. Together with the Neamț Monastery, its numerous other Sketes also joined Paisius' community, but not without quite a few problems. The most important Skete was Pocrov where, from the first half of the century, such an intense, balanced and fresh life of spiritual renewal had developed, along the line of Hesychast tradition and in close connection with Kiev and the Caves' Lavra, due to the spiritual searches and ascetic toils of St. Pachomios of Gledin (†1724), a Romanian from Transylvania and a disciple, for a while, of St. Dimitrios of Rostov, former starets and restorer of Neamț Monastery, a Bishop of Roman and founder of Pocrov.

This movement eventually entered under the spiritual guidance of Pious Saint Paisius, who confessed that: "I have not joined Pocrov onto Neamț, but Neamț on Pocrov, that all current ordinance and establishment of Neamț are from Pocrov" (Bobulescu 1943: 5; Voicescu 1972: 596-611; Voicescu 1972: 819-832; Dosoței 2007: 17; Crăciunaș 1959: 627-635).

During the same troubled times, Putna Monastery, the Monastery where the former Metropolitan Bishop Jacob had become a monk, managed to preserve its status, on the grounds of the former decision of the "community's synod", that it should never be dedicated, remaining "still free and alone, mastering over the ordinance of the old founders" (Păcurariu 1966: 500-501).

The face of Pious Saint Paisius Velicicovski, a careful and capable shepherd, endowed with the grace and art of pastoral care and spiritual guidance, transpires through all the writings that have been preserved from him and about him. He impresses through his modesty and the accuracy of the image synthetically and suggestively drawn by an anonymous author, as if by a single energetic pen mark, immediately after the Father crossed the threshold towards eternity: he was "one month before turning 73 years old and for almost 50 years he had been an egoumenos and a staretz" (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010, 2<sup>nd</sup> vol: 91).

### **The spiritual beauty of Hesychast life in Dragomirna community**

Under Pious Paisius' guidance, a way of life took root, gained strength and vigour and was increasingly sought after, which those who describe it have termed "Paisian spirit". It revealed to all the use and beauty of experiencing Christian teaching and pure prayer, in communal life and the reward received even in this world for the effort of seeking holiness. On the importance of communal life, the Pious Saint wrote in Dragomirna, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1766, that

no other type of life brings man such a quick advancement as communal life in blessed obedience, if it is lived in good understanding; it soon delivers him from all the passions of the soul and of the body, through the humility that emerges from blessed obedience, and brings him to his original, pre-fall status, so that man could truly be in God's Image and Likeness, as he was made in his original creation. And it makes God's grace, that which is received during Holy Baptism, shine in man more than the other spiritual gifts that, through God's grace and true humility, the truly obedient monk becomes worthy of partaking, so that many

times even alone, with his spiritual senses, he can feel it in ways that cannot be told (Sfântul Paisie de la Neamț 2010, 2<sup>nd</sup> vol.: 147).

In Dragomirna, where Paisius' community had come to count 350 members, just like in all Paisius' communities, there was a life of pure prayer, obedience and piety, in which frequent confession and communion were recommended, combined with scholarly activities. A school of translators was formed around the staretz, which reset patristic texts, ritual and sermon books in an optimal version for circulation (Ursu 1997: 39-82). Remarkable scholars such as Macarie, Ilarion, Chesarios were active or were trained in this school, as well as skilful spiritual fathers who, in their turn, established monastic communities, such as Pious Saint Gheorghe of Cernica, who offered himself as an example to his disciples, when he wrote that he spent 24 years "under the guidance of the righteous elder, kir Paisius, my staretz, the cenobitic monk" (*Izvoare privitoare la istoria monahismului românesc...*: 123).

### Conclusions

These remarks on Pious Paisius' ministry and the spiritual beauty of Hesychastic life in the Dragomirna community are written to highlight the specificity of Paisius' rules, which were inspired and in their turn, influenced Orthodox monastic life so profoundly, and with a lasting influence that is fresh even today.

What he, Paisius, brought to Romanian monasticism – as it was justly remarked – is not the preoccupation for the Jesus' prayer, for it had always been maintained among the thousands of Hesychasts from the mountains of the Romanian Principalities, but its introduction in cenobitic life, thus effecting the renewal of Hesychast spirituality in it and thus, the renewal of cenobitic life" (Dumitru Stăniloae 1979: 581).

### Notes:

[1] After 1775, when Dragomirna's property ownership titles were registered, 32 estates were recorded (Vorobchievici 1925: 55).

[2] About the connection between staretz Paisius and Râșca, the Bishop wrote that:

at about the same time and also with hidden thoughts, our all pious staretz Paisie Velicovschie from the holy Neamțu-Secu Monastery was also in holy Râșca Monastery. Similarly, there had also been [...] Sofronie Rusu, who was the staretz after Paisie. Similarly [...] Silvestru Ungureanu [...], whom the Russians would call the genuine Moldavian, who was the staretz after Ioan Rusu [...]. These great pious men, the best among the monastic clerics and many more like them, or lower than them, visited Râșca Monastery when it was rich, with fortunes that had not yet been secularised; they visited it being tempted by its riches and fortune. Fortunately they were too many and they could not easily share it because of others; they all went back, the same way they came (Crețulescu 1901: pp. 86-89).

### [3] Then

Miftodie Rusu, the Monastery's administrator, sold much of Dragomirna's and Gorovei Skete's endowment to private individuals, especially before his departure from Dragomirna. This is when houses, small shops, vineyards, cattle, grains, estates, empty plots of land and everything that he could sell was sold. [...]. Miftodie Rusu, the administrator, sought to sell even Goroveiu Skete, with all its riches; he sold most of the older fortune. But St. John worked miracles through the new founders and he delivered the Skete from this great danger. Goroveiu escaped, but it was mostly impoverished (Crețulescu 1897: 11-12)

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