

From the Life and Activity of a Tireless Scholar Monk, Vartolomei Măzăreanu

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Abstract:

One of the cultivated personalities from the XVIIIth century Moldavia was the Archimandrite of Putna, Vartolomei Măzăreanu. Ever since his childhood, he entered in the Monastery of Putna and received education at the school which was operating next to the monastic settlement. As he was leading a clean life, inclined to prayer and study, the Metropolitan of that time, Iacov Putneanul, recommended Măzăreanu, between 1757 and 1763, to take care of the Monastery of Putna as its abbot. Metropolitan Iacov Putneanul established a superior spiritual school at Putna meant to meet the spiritual needs of the time, and the organization of this school was in Vartolomei Măzăreanu's responsibility, who, by some sources, followed the model of the Theological Academy from Kiev. During this period of time, Archimandrite V. Măzăreanu took care of the school of that place, both of its construction and the good course of its activity. It is notorious that he also consolidated the library of the theological school from the monastery, which consisted mainly of valuable manuscripts of the old copyists. In this way, there were preserved, until today, holy books, beautifully adorned, tied and maintained with appreciation.

Keywords: *archimandrite, monastery, scholar monk, religious work, abbot, moral teaching, spiritual school*

Introduction

Numbered among the scholars who were formed during the XVIIIth century, many of them having a wide understanding of the sense of history and a true openness to the new challenges of the cultural European space – Leon Gheuca and Iacov Stamati or abbot Paisie Velicikovski, around who concentrated a rich translation activity in Moldavia, but also Chesarie of Râmnic, Naum Râmniceanu and Nicodim Greceanu in Țara Românească, culminating with the activity of the Transylvanian scholars – Vartolomei Măzăreanu, Archimandrite of Putna, is particularly remarkable for his rich

activity as a translator and a copyist, his work being important through its continuity and richness.

From the life and activity of the scholar monk Vartolomei Măzăreanu [I opted for the Vartolomei graph, not Vartolomeu, respectively Măzăreanu, not Măzăreanul or Mazereanu (the last one being used by N. A. Ursu, in his studies, based on the argument that: „so he wrote his name this scholar consistently. In the area North of Moldova where he originated from, it is pronounced *mazere* and not *mazăre*”). In conclusion, I kept the variant Vartolomei Măzăreanu, met in *Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, also found in *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, by Mircea Păcurariu, in *Dicționarul teologilor români* etc.], some important specific moments captured our attention. We know that he came into this world around year 1710, his exact birth date being unknown. His family, originating from around Câmpulung Moldovenesc, counts several clerics: his grandfather was monk Ioanichie, his parents, hieromonk Ghenadie and Sanda; his brothers, Toader and Nicolae, attended the school from Putna and became parish priests; he also had two sisters, Maria and nun Elena.

The disciple of hieromonk Antonie

As he entered into the Monastery of Putna as a child, he received education at the school next to the monastic establishment. He was the disciple of hieromonk Antonie, about who the linguist from Iași, N.A. Ursu, specifies in the chapter *New Information Regarding the Life and Activity of Archimandrite Vartolomei Mazereanu* (Ursu 2002: 79), referring to his nomination on the 16th of August 1755 as Archimandrite of Putna Monastery:

It is not true that Vartolomei Măzereanu was the disciple of the future Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul, as some literary or church historians say. Iacob and Vartolomei were made monks and ordained deacons in the same year (1733), *both of them being disciples of hieromonk Antonie from Putna* [...]. It is mentioned several times in his manuscripts that Vartolomei was the disciple of Metropolitan Antonie. In the book of cattle and hive of Putna Monastery, written by himself in April 1762 (manuscript existing in the library of Putna Monastery), Archimandrite Vartolomei records the valuable information that all the disciples of Antonie were Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul, Metropolitan Gavriil Calimah and Bishop Dositei Herescu.

It is known about the hieromonk Antonie that he would later become Bishop of Rădăuți and Metropolitan of Moldova (1730-1739), and later on he would emigrate to Russia. This is the one who shares with the young monk Vartolomei Măzăreanu the secrets of Slavic language, the theological and profane sciences. Years later, more precisely after he was ordained a hieromonk in 1743, Vartolomei went to Belgorod (a city North of Varkov) to join Metropolitan Anthony, his former abbot, who was now old. He stays away from his country for several years, and is always very active, becoming an abbot at the Monastery Volnovesky from the diocese of Belgorod, on the 1st of October 1748.

We find these data in a document deposited at the State Archives of Suceava under Doc. III/62, from which we can read the following information about Vartolomei Măzăreanu, I would say valuable for the Romanian cultural history, regarding the second half of the XVIIIth century:

And in the year 1754, at our request, for the purpose of translating the books from the Slovenian language into the Moldavian language, the Holy one of entire Rósie, the Synod, redeemed him and gave him order to come to us in Moldavia and, after arriving, he translated several books with which he made no little use to his country Moldavia.

On his return to the country, he will bring several books among which a big *Octoih*, in two volumes (printed in Moscow in 1708), in which he makes the following script: “This Osmoglasnic from Moscow I gave to the holy monastery Putna, to my eternal remembrance and my parents, hieromonk Ghenadii, Sanda, 1777, September 1st”.

Vartolomei Măzăreanu take care of the monastery Putna as its abbot

As he was leading a clean life, inclined to prayer and study, metropolitan Iacov recommends him to take care of the monastery Putna as its abbot. We find these information in the same document from the State Archives of Suceava that we mentioned before, which in fact represents the act of appointing Vartolomei Măzăreanu as an archimandrite of Putna monastery on August 15, 1755, by the then Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul. As it marks an important moment in his spiritual life and activity, we allow to reveal its content:

So, seeing that this devout, as in the hierodeacon, as well as in hieromonk and in abbot, spent an honest and without blame life, we reasoned that he is worthy to be archimandrite and caregiver of that holy Putna monastery. And in this year 1755,

August day 15, this abbot, Vartolomei, named above, with the gift and power of the Most Holy and life working Spirit, was made archimandrite of that mentioned great monastery Putna and we allowed and authorized him to be caregiver of that holy monastery Putna, as for the ordinance and norm of the holy church and for the guidance of the souls of all the brethren who live there, so for all the other inside and outside things, moving and motionless, as it is fit for an archimandrite. Being notified of all these, you, honored synodal hieromonks, hierodeacons and all servants who live in that holy monastery Putna, receive your named Archimandrite Vartolomei with honor and obey him to all the works of the holy monastery, fulfilling the command of God, who said through the mouth of the blessed apostle Paul: "Brothers, listen to your lords and obey them, that they watch for your souls, that they do not thirst to do these things". The Venerable archimandrite Vartolomei is also obliged to have honor and mercy for those brothers who obey the holy monastery without complaint and scandal, as it is fit for them, in such a manner that, seeing this, all others to strive to do all the obedience, and, for the hostile and disobedient brothers, to gently straighten them, and for those who do evil deeds, make a synod to blame them for their guilt.

He activated intermittently in this function between 1757 and 1763, in June 1757 being sent by Metropolitan Iacov to Kiev at the head of a delegation of the Moldavian Metropolitan Church. Here he visited the famous lavra Pecerska, from where he brought on his return to the country Russian icons and books that he proposed to translate (Iorga, vol. II, 1928a: 597 – writes that Măzăreanu brought 86 de icons, 2 banners, vestments and Russian and Slavonic books for him to read and translate). Given his culture, he is named honorary member of the Kiev Theological Academy.

In a document from 1778 (The document is at the State Archives in Bucharest. Fond *Documente istorice*, CXX/2), a school certificate, issued by archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu to his former student Ioan, the future bishop Isaia Băloșescu, this is called "a member of the Theological Academy of Kiev and a director of the royal, episcopal and monastery schools of Moldova". From here, however, "it does not follow that he did the studies at the Kiev Academy, since the graduates of this school did not have the title of member, «part» of her" (Lăudat 1966: 543). From the same document we learn about the existence of a Greek scholar „ieromonk Ilarion, a member of the philosophers of Patmos and a teacher of chant of the Moldavian schools", and also about what a young man like Ioan Băloșescu could learn in that school of Putna:

From his five-year nature to his age of twelve years and he learned from us and our school heads the Ceaslov, the Psalter, the Octoich, the Catechisis in Moldavian and

Russian, the Composition of letters in Moldavian, the Psaltic by the Greek song, Grammar, the Geography translated by Bishop Amphilochius after Buffer, The Rhetoric, The Stone of the Scandal on the separation of the Eastern Church from that of the West, The Epistle of Archbishop Eugenie, The History of Church after Eusvie and other historians from the beginning of Christianity to the ninth century and to the Synod of Florence and the shortened Theology Platonesca, all well, some with purpose and understanding.

As a historian (and university professor well-known from the XIXth century), V.A. Urechia makes the following comments, in the monographic study: *Arhimandritul Vartolomei Măzăreanu (1720-1780)* (Urechia 1889: 26-27), on the above document which is at the State Archives in Bucharest, Fond *Documente istorice*, CXX/2:

It remains to say that Archimandrite Măzăreanu was one of the apostles of the education among the Romanians [...]. Thus, in 1778 he is entitled «*the guide of royal, episcopal and monastery schools of Moldavia*» [...]. This title of supreme school inspector is a whole revelation for the history of Romanian schools and their classification [...]. Here I want to show that Măzăreanu was not only a „director” or a school inspector, but that in 1778 he held – and even for many years – a school in the monastery Putna, together with the hieromonk Ilarion, „*a member of the Patmos philosophers and a teacher of Psaltichia in the schools of Moldova*”.

V.A. Urechia will maintain his point of view also in *Istoria școalelor de la 1800-1864*, (Urechia 1892-1901: 41-42).

In addition to those written above, contradicting V.A. Urechia with scientific arguments (graphical, linguistic and stylistic peculiarities) brought on the document at the State Archives in Bucharest, the linguist from Iași N.A. Ursu notes that this is a false, claiming that:

in the second half of the XVIIIth century, such an academy did not exist at Putna monastery, that Vartolomei Mazereanu was neither a member of the academy from Kiev, nor a school inspector of Moldova, that there was not a Greek teacher of Psaltichia named Ilarion at that time, who studied in the isle of Patmos (Ursu 2002: 96).

Thus, it was found out that the school certificate from the 1st of April 1778 he would have given his former student, Isaia Băloșescu, the future bishop of Bucovina, who supposedly graduated from a theological superior school existing at the time at the monastery Putna, run by Măzăreanu, was a fake committed in the XIXth century. This results both from the analysis of the content and, especially, of the language of the document, which has some particularities of the XIXth century, and from the fact that the

signature of Vartolomei Măzăreanu and that one of Dositei Herescu, the then bishop of Rădăuți, from this document, are imitated. The false was made in unknown circumstances, possibly from a patriotic enthusiasm, in order to prove that, before Bucovina was incorporated into the Habsburg Empire, there was a higher theological school at Putna.

In the opinion argued scientifically of the same linguist from Iași N.A. Ursu, a second document about the so called “spiritual academy” from monastery Putna is also false. It is about a letter, published in 1945 by Petru Rezuș (This was a priest and later a professor at the faculties of theology from Iași, (with premises at Suceava) and from București), through which Vartolomei Măzăreanu would have made an invitation, on the 15th of January 1774, to a monk from the monastery Solca. He proposed this one to come to study “in the hermitage from Putna” where it would have opened

a spiritual Academy, exactly like that one from Kiev in Ukraine, from the holy lavra Pecerska, where we took the trouble to wander with our frail body last year, to which my humility proved to be a guide and a forerunner.

P. Rezuș always stated that he found this letter among many old objects gathered by a hobbyist who allowed him to make a copy of it. To a careful philological analysis of the text, the linguist from Iași found out that, in fact, what P. Rezuș presented was a false, a naive composition with several wrong information, largely an imitation of the school certificate from the 1st of April 1778, mentioned above. The linguistic and style particularities of the letter are foreign to the writing of Vartolomei Măzăreanu, which P. Rezuș appears to have not known enough for really being able to recognize.

The proof that this letter is a false is demonstrated, but its dating from the 15th of January 1774 when, by all probabilities, Măzăreanu was still an abbot at Solca (where he had been named since 1768) and sending a message through the letter to “abbot Artimon of Solca” whom he waited to come „to the Putna of the old Ștefan Voievod cel Mare, until summer” while, as far as we know, Măzăreanu entrusted the abbot of Solca in the first half of year 1774 to Metodie, not to Artimon. There was an abbot of Solca, a hieromonk Artimon, too, but only round 1783-1785.

In the opinion of N.A. Ursu, the real data support the existence at Putna of a primary school at that time, which came to being from the initiative of Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul, through the royal document of

prince Ioan Teodor Calimah from June 25th 1759, for the village children to have the right to study. This school was active in the village, while Putna monastery had only an administrative role. It is registered as the oldest elementary rural school attested documentarily in Moldova, with an uninterrupted functioning until today.

In spite of the fact that the attestation of Vartolomei Măzăreanu as a “director of royal, episcopal and monastery schools in Moldova” gave birth to controversy, we shall meet it again in other papers as authentic (The document from 1778 is reminded, with no challenge, in *Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, p. 558). The fact that he was leading a monastery seminary at Putna is found in several authors, for example Mircea Păcurariu writes that: “Several special schools were set up to prepare the clergy [...] «the spiritual school» from Putna (1774), set up by Archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu helped by Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul” (Păcurariu 1993: 314), and Epifanie Cozărescu states that:

At the time of Iacob Putneanul and Vartolomei Măzăreanul there were two schools: “The little school” where an elementary monastic teaching was carried out for most of the monks in the Putna community and for the children of the villagers in order to learn to read and write and church music. Besides this, there was “The big school” so called “spiritual” founded in 1774. Here there was a higher education. In addition to religious subjects, secular subjects were also taught, such as: history, geography, mathematics, philosophy and rhetoric; also, old Slavonic, Russian and Greek languages. This school was meant to form the future priests, the monastic scholars and the chancellors for the royal offices (Cozărescu 1962: 193).

Another good example is offered by historian C. Giurescu, who reminds that, with the support of church representatives, between 1750 - 1760, Iacob Putneanul was elected as Metropolitan of Moldova. As a Metropolitan, he set up at Putna a spiritual superior school which corresponded to the clerical needs of the time, and Vartolomei Măzăreanu was entrusted with the responsibility to organize it by the model of the Theological Academy from Kiev where, according to some sources (contested by the linguist N.A. Ursu from Iași, as it could be noticed), he would have made his studies:

Then the luck brought Iacob from Putna on the seat of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova. He spent all his life time savings for the total renewal of Putna. Between 1756- 1760, with royal support from Constantin Racoviță and the rest of Moldavian bishops, they worked at the restauration from foundations both of the church [...] and the reinforcements of the monastery [...] under the surveillance of Iacob. In

such way, Iacov Putneanul became the third founder of Putna. Retreated in the dwelling he founded again, Iacov strived to take it to a higher step, as it had been destined by its first founder, prince Ștefan. In 1765 he set up a school for the clerics, a „spiritual Academy” by the model of that one from Kiev of Petru Movilă and he put it under the guidance and care of his learned disciple who had become an Archimandrite and Abbot at Putna, Vartolomei Măzăreanu. For twenty years, the Putna Academy had played its role abundantly (Giurescu 1966: 6).

Archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu is the one who also consolidated the library of the theological school within the monastery, composed mainly of valuable manuscripts of the old copyists. We know that holy books, nicely adorned, tied and maintained with appreciation were kept until today.

In spite of the fact that N.A. Ursu argues that the school from Măzăreanu’s time was only one, primary, and functioned in the village, not at the monastery, we find that in his *Testament* or *Diata* made in January 1779, Vartolomei Măzăreanu himself specifies, under the title: *Cele ce amu făcutu întâi la mănăstire veche*, that, among his many activities here, (he made the roof of the church, a large orchard, an iconostasis and pews, a fence round the church, cells) he also made “A big school, a little school both under the same roof” he later on looked after.

We notice that, in the course of time, some false documents, tested with scientific arguments, are revealed; however, it cannot be denied that V. Măzăreanu took care of the school of that place, both of its building and also of its good functioning.

Even if the existence of an Academy functioning by the model of the Kiev Academy was contested by some researchers, it cannot be contested that, in the second half of the XVIIIth century, there was a true literary current created round Archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu in the monastery Putna, a fact confirmed by the many translations that were made in this period of time by the psalm reader Evloghie (translated *Viețile sfinților*), hieromonk Natan, deacon Constantin, psalm reader Gheorghe, psalm reader Iordache and others (Dan 1911: 81-83).

Vartolomei Măzăreanu was abbot at Solca also

Another important aspect of the biography of Vartolomei Măzăreanu is that he was an abbot at Solca between 1768-1774. During this time, he travelled to Russia again, to Petersburg (1769-1770), at the head of a

diplomatic delegation made up of six people, at the request of the Russian general Elem, in order to thank empress Ecaterina for having freed the Moldavians from the Turkish oppression. At his return, he brought „necessary church objects [...] a row of silver church pots, a gospel in silver, a silver cross, priestly vestments and 37 religious books printed in Slavonic” (Dan 1911: 5).

At the end of his life

By the end of his life, “coming to the old age and to weakness and sickness”, Archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu wrote his will on the 1st of January 1779, as he felt his death. After this date, there is nothing precise about him. One hypothesis is that: “he died, after his return from the monastery of Humor, where he had travelled in August 1779, between 1780 and 1782 in his beloved dwelling from the monastery Putna, where he had developed the biggest activity of his life” (Dan 1911: 7) and not at all at the monastery Precista from Roman, as it was claimed many times (Urechia, vol. II, 1888: 183-233; Iorga 1928b: 129; Iorga, vol. II, 1932: 175-176; Iorga, vol. II, 1958: 296; Rezuş 1961: 22), because he was confused with a former abbot from here, named Vartolomei Putneanul. The confusion (Cozărescu 1962: 197) was probably made because, after 1775, many monks from Bucovina went beyond “cordun”. Another hypothesis is that Archimandrite Vartolomei Măzăreanu left the Putna monastery after the 1st of January 1779, at an unknown date, but he did not arrive at the monastery Precista from Roman and he settled at the monastery Neamţ, an independent monastic space with an old cultural tradition, more suited to scholastic occupations than monastery Precista. Perhaps here the tombstone or other traces of his end might be sought out.

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