

The Education in Moldova. The Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery School [1]

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Abstract:

The establishment of the Vasilian Academy was part of the responses of the Moldavian ruler, Vasile Lupu, to the cultural challenges launched by the Ottoman politics and both by the Catholic and Protestant doctrinal influence. The threat of losing one’s ethnic identity aroused the consciousness of the Moldovan intellectuals during the seventeenth century.

Following the Kiev model, the strategic academic organization managed to bring together the same aspirations of the ruler and the metropolitans of the same nation, Varlaam of Moldova and Peter of Kiev. The purpose of establishing a cultural center in Iași (1640) was fulfilled as expected, most of the Moldavian intellectuals who influenced the country’s history being the product of the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery School. They were faithful keepers of the identity of language, faith and nation.

Like a bow over time, the homage of 381 years since the establishment of this impressive school in Moldova is not a recall of a successful initiative, but whose end occurred irretrievably sometime in history. On the contrary, Vasile Lupu’s school opened the perspective of cultural capitalization, being considered one of the founders of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași nowadays. Cultural initiatives end with strengthening the national identity and

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the need to share the intellectual spirit from generation to generation.

Keywords:

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Introduction

Starting with 1860, October 26 is the anniversary of the founding of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași. The Orthodox Church had a key role in the development of education in the Romanian Lands. The first types of education were established, hosted and supported by the Church, with the support of the rulers, most of them founders of the Romanian culture.

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași is the symbolic beneficiary of the old *Vasilian Academy*, established by Vasile Lupu (1634-1653) the Voivode of Moldavia within the *Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery* in 1640. The *Vasilian Academy* is the foundation and beginning of a new cultural era in Moldova, marked by the higher education and the development of the Romanian language.

The chosen topic refers to the development of education within the *Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery*, this year paying homage to the 381st anniversary of its establishment.

The seventeenth century reawakens the consciousness of the Romanian rulers to stop the expansion of the Ottoman power towards the Central Europe, implementing a political and cultural program of a special refinement. The conversion of the Byzantine essence in the Romanian Lands was made by two voivodes who left us a rich heritage from a spiritual, cultural and political point of view. The rulers Matei Basarab (1632-1654) in Wallachia and Vasile Lupu in Moldova stood out. Mihai Eminescu characterized the 17th century as “the most national era in our history” (Eminescu 1941, vol. I, 225), the merit being of the two voivodes, through the eminent scholars at the royal courts.

Politically, diplomatic actions with the great powers took place, thus reducing the number of wars, giving us peace time for opening to culture

and art. Culture evolved on several levels in the two Principalities: the establishment of schools, Romanian teaching, printing cult books in the same language spoken by the people, enriching the vocabulary of the Romanian language (here the Church had a key role), influencing architecture by adding new architectural elements, or building holy places. All these define and highlight the cultural era of the seventeenth century, ranking the Romanian Lands among the most developed states of Europe.

Vasile Lupu, ruler of Moldavia (1634-1653)

Vasile Lupu was characterized by chronicler Miron Costin (1633-1691) as “a man proud of his high stature who loves splendor and brilliance, but also the Orthodox culture and faith” (Giurescu 2007, vol. III, 46). Born “from the Albanian nation, and prospering a little in his jobs, he became a great governor in Moldova” (Drăghici 2017, 140). He is the one who establishes a high school and erects places of worship that arouse admiration.

“Vasile Lupu becomes voivode of Moldavia in 1634” (Giurescu 2000, 192) and, together with the Saint Metropolitan Varlaam (1632-1653), understood that a people can only rise and remain in history through culture and the intellectual elites worthy of preserving and carrying on the Romanian spiritual and cultural heritage. In order to achieve these ideals, it was necessary to create cultural and educational institutions on the Romanian land. The extensive cultural programs will bear fruit by building education in all its versions, “by reactivating the printing press, with the help of Saint Metropolitan of Kiev Petru Movilă (1596-1647)” (Păcurariu 1996, 196), as a means of spreading the Romanian writings. Also, the royal and ecclesiastical chancelleries gave up the use of the Slavonic language, replacing it with the Romanian language, thus serving the need of the people for

the fulfillment of the work of the Church and the clergy in the Principality. There is no doubt that since the previous centuries the pastoral, catechetical and educational activity has been carried out in the dioceses by employing the Romanian language] (Giurescu 2012, vol. V, 874).

The College of the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery

The school at the *Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery* is the cultural, spiritual and national achievement of Vasile Lupu's rule and of Saint Metropolitan Varlaam's pastorate; it is part of the cultural renewal area in Moldova in the seventeenth-century. It is impossible to talk about the beginnings of the Moldovan education, without highlighting the *Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery*, the key foundation of Voivode Vasile Lupu and the host of the higher school. This stunning architectural masterpiece was built between 1635 and 1639, and it represents a combination of styles that amazes to this day. The inscription at the entrance mentions that the church was consecrated on May 6, 1639 (Bădărău and Caproșu 2007, 170). Frequent travelers visited the Romanian Lands, leaving us precious impressions about the architectural monuments. The Syrian Paul of Aleppo (1627-1669) visited Iași in 1653, noting about the church of the Three Hierarchs that it is

entirely made of stone, and on the outside it is all carved with an artistic mastery that amazes the mind, that it is not even a finger not to be covered with sculptures, everyone says in one voice that neither in Moldova, Wallachia, nor in the Cossacks, is there any church comparable to this, neither in adornment nor in beauty, for it marvels the minds of those who visits it (Theodorescu and Oprea 2002, 51).

The College of the Three Hierarchs was "the first institution with elements of higher education in Moldova" (Păcurariu 1994, vol. II, 27), inaugurated "in 1640 and operating in the cells of the monastery founded by Vasile Lupu" (Grigoraș 1968, 24). The founding and development of education in the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery was done at the urging and with the spiritual and cultural support of St. Metropolitan Varlaam of Moldavia (1632-1653),

one of the most distinguished Romanian scholars of the first half of the seventeenth century, who wanted to set up a school with three or four hundred students, as well as a printing house where to print Romanian works in Moldova (Grigoraș 1968, 23).

The scholar metropolitan is supposed to have been "born in 1580, in a family of yeoman named Moțoc, from Baloteștii Putnei, in the

surroundings of Vrancea” (Vicovan 2002, vol. I, 203). The latest research carried out by the Archimandrite Dionisie Udișteanu brings to light, with solid arguments, the idea that the village where the metropolitan was born

can only be Borcești, around Târgu Neamț, an old village, now extinct, which was located between Brusturi, Răucești and Oglinzi and by no means a village from the land and water of Putna] (Udișteanu 2006, 12-16).

Expert in Greek and Latin, he became a monk at Secu Monastery, and later, due to his worthy, the abbot of the monastery. In addition to household activities, Varlaam increases his scholarly interests by translating into Romanian a “Gospel book, a Psalter and the well-known work of St. John Climacus, *The Ladder*” (*Leasvița*), in 1618” (Udișteanu 2006, 12-16). In 1632 he was elected the Metropolitan of Moldavia (Udișteanu 2006, 204), undertaking a fruitful scholarly and spiritual activity, together with the Voivode Vasile Lupu.

The setting up of the *Vasilian* College followed the pattern of the Kiev Academy, founded by the Saint Metropolitan Petru Movilă of Kiev (1596-1647) [Petru Movilă was born in Suceava, on December 21, 1596, being the son of Simeon Movilă, former viceroy of Hotin and of Marghita Melania, daughter of the Hâra boyars, originally from Suceava. Petru was the nephew of the Metropolitan Gheorghe Movilă (1588-1591) of Moldavia and of the contemporary voivode Ieremia Movilă. Its origins explain the support he offered to Moldova for the establishment of the Vasilian school].

The Lord repeatedly asked the one whose cultural activity he served as a model. Completed as early as 1639 The cells of the Three Hierarchs were waiting for the teachers who could only come from Kiev: the director was called to be the abbot of the monastery as well, quite special compared to the one who trained more modest scholars in their schools in Neamț, Bisericani or elsewhere] (Iorga 1928, 26).

Opened in 1640 the college of the Three Hierarchs was opened for a short period, facing the lack of space for courses in 1641. The Voivode Vasile Lupu takes care of its set up.

Because the newly established school did not fit inside the Three Hierarchs monastery, although it started to operate here, Vasile Lupu built a special place on Ulița Ciobotărească in 1641. The school operated for almost 15 years. Among the students of this school the great scholars Nicolae Milescu and Metropolitan Dosoftei are supposed to have been taught here (Grigoraș 1968, 24).

For the better management of the college, the Saint Metropolitan Petru Movilă will send four professors, led by the former rector of the Kiev Academy, the Archimandrite Sofronie Pociățki (1640). The teachers from Iași had a higher humanistic training, acquired at the schools in Poland or at the College in Kiev. Some historians, who have dealt with the research of this cultural establishment, consider that the Romanian chancellor Eustatie was among the teachers (Păcurariu 1994, vol. II, 27).

The theological controversies of the seventeenth century were the central topic of discussions in Iași as well. The voivode will replace the Kiev teachers of his College with Greek teachers, led by the famous theologian and philosopher Meletie Sirigul. He will also provide the material resources necessary for the educational process. Thus, the income of the villages Răchiteni, Tălmășeni, Iugani will be donated to the College. The Greek teachers will later be replaced with Ukrainian teachers by the Voivode Gheorghe Ștefan (1653-1658), appreciating that “effective things remained from their teaching” (Caproșu and Zahariuc 1999-2000, 477).

Called the “seven liberal arts” the following subjects were taught at the Vasilian College: Grammar, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Dialectic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music, as well as Theology, Philosophy and Law. Classical Greek, Latin, as well as Slavonic and Romanian were also taught. The missionary Marco Bandini [Marco Bandini (1593-1650) was a Roman Catholic archbishop of Bosnian origin, fulfilling the function of apostolic administrator of the Catholic faithful in Moldova, within the Diocese of Bacău. He accomplished his mission in Moldova during the rule of Vasile Lupu, being an educational expert in Iași] left us a broad description of Vasile Lupu’s Moldova. He informs us that the Lord “tried hard and at great expense to introduce the Latin studies, but all his attempts were in vain” (Giurescu 2007, vol. III, 81).

There are several famous personalities who taught at the College of the *Holy Three Hierarchs* Monastery, about whom we do not have many

biographical data; they remained in the history of the Romanian education by training several intellectuals capable of influencing the Romanian culture and church life.

Archimandrite Sofronie Pociățchi (1640), rector of the Kyiv-Mogila Academy, brought to Moldavia by Vasile Lupu in 1640, on the recommendation of Saint Petru Movilă, became the first abbot of the *Holy Three Hierarchs* Monastery and the first rector of the *Vasilian* College. The printing house was brought to Iași from Kiev and installed in the cells of the Three Hierarchs by the Ukrainian rector (Vicovan 2002, vol. I, 24).

The Greek monk Benedict of Vatopedi, who had taught in Kiev, then in Moscow on the recommendation of Vasile Lupu and set up a printing house in the Russian capital city, was brought to the College in 1650, where he taught Greek at the college and dealt with the correspondence of Greek letters to the Tsar. The Athonite monk performed tasks and political missions of the Moldovan voivode at Kiev (Iorga 1928, 27).

The Romanian professor Eustatie the Chancellor, famous for his magnificent translation of Herodotus into Romanian and for his theoretical knowledge on Vasile Lupu's legislation (Iorga 1928, 27), taught at the Vasilian School.

The school lasted a long time, being converted into an Academy at the beginning of the 19th century. The Greek scholars Theodor from Trapezus [a native Greek, originally from the city of Trapezus, a Greek language teacher at the Vasilian College, died in Iași in 1695, being buried at Saint Sava Monastery], Jeremias Cacavelas [originally from the island of Crete, studying in Lipsca, professor at the Vasilian College and private teacher of the voivode Constantin Cantemir's children (1685-1693), Antiochus and Dimitrie] and Paisie Ligaridis [originally from the island of Chios, studying in Italy, recorded as a great teacher at the school in Iași in 1655. He left for Plestina where he became a monk, being elected the Metropolitan of Gaza in 1656] are among the later professors of the Academy in Iași.

Nicolae Milescu (1636-1708) [The governor Nicolae Milescu, born in 1636, Milesti (Moldova), died in 1708, Moscow, Russia. He was an author of literature and history, scholar, translator, traveler, geographer and

Romanian diplomat who worked both in Moldova and in Russia], a graduate of the Iași College and the Patriarchal School of Constantinople, a profound Greek and Latin scholar, contributed substantially to the entire translation of the Bible into Romanian in 1688. Settled in Moscow, he became a teacher of Greek and had a rich correspondence with the Western political world and the diplomats of the Ottoman Gate (Iorga 1928, 28).

The Metropolitan Dosoftei of Moldavia (1671-1686) can be considered the key graduate figure at the College of Three Hierarchs. Also nicknamed the metropolitan poet, he had a significant contribution to the introduction of the Romanian language in the church cult. He stood out as:

translator into Romanian of the worship books in Moldova, the first Romanian scholar who copied documents and inscriptions, one of the first scholars and translators of patristic and post-patristic literature in our country who contributed to the Romanian literary language creation (Păcurariu 2002, 158).

There are few documents about the structure of Vasile Lupu's school, but the fruits and influence of the *Vasilian* education are fundamental and felt to this day. The College of Three Hierarchs "continued to exist even after the removal of Voivode Vasile Lupu in 1653" (Iorga 1928, 28), having different names, locations and ranks.

The resumption of the teaching tradition at the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery during the 19th century

The Moldavian Church enjoyed the pastorate of the great Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi in the 19th century (1803-1842) [The Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi was born in the village of Roșiești-Vaslui (1768), he studied at the Greek school at the Holy Three Hierarchs Monastery in Iași, appointed bishop of Huși in 1792, bishop of Roman in 1796, Metropolitan of Moldavia in 1803, theologian, scholar, reformer of the Romanian education, founder, deputy lord (caimacam), in 1807 and 1821. He retired from his chair in 1842 at Slatina monastery. He died in 1846], for almost forty years. This period remained in history both by the development of the national education, the establishment of a large

number of schools for all social classes, sending people to study abroad, and by separating from the Greek element, all these steps being taken by the Metropolitan Veniamin.

The discussions about the location of the school, which was originally intended to be at Golia Monastery, were thwarted by Gheorghe Asachi by presenting

the document stating that Vasile Lupu's school was supported by the income of three estates: Tămășanii, Agiudenii and Iuganii, asking, together with their return, so that the Academy can be established at the Three Hierarchs] (Iorga 1928, 188).

The *Three Hierarchs* Monastery is restored as the host of the Moldovan education during the nineteenth century. This time the exclusively Romanian subjects are decided to be taught. The founding fathers of this project are the Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi of Moldova, Professor Gheorghe Asachi [Of Armenian origin, Gheorghe Asachi was born in Herța (Moldova, today's Ukraine) in 1788, poet, prose writer, Romanian playwright, author of various works, forerunner of the 1848s generation, close and contributor of the Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, one of the founders of Academia Mihăileană, died in Iași in 1869] and the Voivode Ioniță Sandu Sturza (1822-1828).

Seeing the decline of education in the national language of Moldova Gheorghe Asachi and Veniamin Costachi asked the lord Ioniță Sandu Sturza to open a school at the Three Hierarchs in 1824 (Grigoraș 1968, 24-25).

The elementary school courses established in 1824 "were taking place over two years, to which a Lancasterian system [Lancasterian system: a pedagogical system founded in England (late 18th century), where subjects were taught with the help of more advanced students] and then a four-year gymnasium" (Grigoraș 1968, 25) were added. On April 4, 1828, despite the Greek monks who opposed vehemently, the Voivode Sturza decided that a number of buildings inside the monastery be made available to the school. The seal of the school of the Three Hierarchs had the following inscription: "A 1828. Sigiliul gimnaziei basiliene urzite la 1644" ["A 1828. The seal of the Basilian gymnasium hatched in 1644"]. The school was also given the Gothic Hall, repaired after the fire of 1827. The following inscription record was placed on the building intended for

the school: „Gimnazia Vasiliană a învățăturilor afierosită de fericitul domn Vasile voievod la 1644. Epitropia școlilor naționale 1828” [“the Vasilian Gymnasium of teachings displayed by the blessed voivode Vasile in 1644. The epitropy of national schools 1828”] (Grigoraș 1968, 25).

The following subjects: Grammar, Calligraphy, Catechism, Arithmetic and a few beginnings of sciences were taught in Romanian within the two-year school (*The Normal School*) (Iorga 1928, 188).

At the *Vasilian Gymnasium (The High School)*, a study cycle lasted for four years, the subjects being more complex: Romanian, Latin, Greek, French, Theology, Logic, Rhetoric, Poetry, Mathematics, Ethics, History, Archeology, political and worldly Economics (Iorga 1928, 190).

The patron saint of the *Holy Three Hierarchs* Monastery on January 30, 1830 was celebrated with a high anniversary solemnity in memory of the school founder (Vasile Lupu) in 1640, in the presence of the metropolitan and teachers. At the same time, an account was made about the development of education in Moldova. In 1831, another body of buildings necessary for the students was built. The following inscription was placed on the frontispiece of the new building: The Vasilian Institute dedicated to the Romanian youth 1831 (Grigoraș 1968, 25).

The Preparatory School (1851) [The Preparatory School: is an institution for the training of teachers and educators. The one in Iași was the oldest in the Romanian Lands and worked under several names: The Vasilian Institute, The Pedagogical High School, Vasile Lupu Pedagogical College] at the Three Hierarchs is related to the names of some outstanding personalities of the Romanian culture. Teachers like Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu (1838-1907), Grigorie Cobâlcescu (1831-1892), Vasile Alexandrescu-Urechia (1834-1901), Teodor T. Burada (1839-1923) worked here. Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917) was appointed principle in 1863, and Ion Creangă (1837-1889) was admitted a student of the Gymnasium on January 8, 1864. Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) was part of the examination committee for the first semester of 1874-1875. The institution was then called *Vasile Lupu Normal School* (Grigoraș 1968, 25).

Due to the beginning of the restoration works carried out at the church and the Gothic Hall in 1891, the educational institution of the *Holy*

Three Hierarchs Monastery was moved from its premises. After that, Lecomte du Nouy demolished all the buildings where the school complex had operated, which he would later rebuild with the restoration of the entire monastery complex.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be stated that the *Holy Three Hierarchs* Monastery in Iași, founded by Voivode Vasile Lupu, had the privilege of hosting within its walls the first educational college in Moldova. Set up under the guidance of the (Moldavian) Saint Metropolitan Petru Movilă who, at the request of the voivode, took care to send to Iași a printing house and teachers (from Kiev) for the newly established school, and founded on May 9, 1640 the Kiev Academy was the prototype of this institution.

The purpose of the school was to raise the cultural level of the country and to train young people capable of participating in theological debates with the Catholic and Protestant scholars. The students were recruited from the graduates of the elementary schools in Moldova, who came from the ordinary families, the expenses necessary for schooling being donated by the voivode. The Archimandrite Sofronie Poceatki, who came from Kiev, became the rector of the *Vasilian* College and the first abbot of the *Holy Three Hierarchs* Monastery. The small group of teachers was financially supported by the income of the villages dedicated to the school by Vasile Lupu.

The *Vasilian* institution carried out its activity at the *Three Hierarchs* until the years 1644-1645, when a new location outside the walls of the monastery was completed. The Kievan teachers were replaced in 1646 by the Greek ones. It was only during the rule of Gheorghe Ștefan (1653-1658) that the Ukrainian teachers were brought back.

The school did not cease to exist with the change of location, this being continued under various names, until 1824, when the foundation dedicated to the Holy Three Hierarchs is restored as the host of the Moldavian education. The Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi and Gheorghe Asachi are its promoters. Since the teaching specificity was Romanian, the

structure of the courses was based on Gheorghe Asachi's curriculum: normal school for two years, Vasilian gymnasium (*High school*), Lancaster system and preparatory school.

The actions of the founders and mentors have borne fruit over time through the personalities who graduated from the *Three Hierarchs School*, in its various types, by developing the Romanian and church culture, which continues through Church and School to this day.

Nicolae Iorga's words are eloquent in the interpretation of the voivode Vasile Lupu's charter (Marinescu 2007, vol. I, 563, vol. II, 672) issued with the founding of the school:

First of all, the monastery built by Vasile Lupu had to house a school, as the patron saint chosen for it: the Holy Three Hierarchs (Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom) reveal this. In this case it was rightly said that when he chose the patron saint of his foundation, Vasile Lupu thought of perpetuating the royal name chosen for his rule (Iorga 1913, 5-6).

Notes

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