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HISTORICAL-CULTURAL REFERENCES ABOUT THE GREEK- ROMANIAN SCHOOL OF THE NEAMȚ MONASTERY**

Abstract: The range of the 19th-century priests who activated at the Neamț Monastery includes the archimandrite Neonil Buzilă. The account of his contribution to the actions of the ecclesiastical, cultural, and political life conducted within the premises of this place of worship has been published in scientific volumes. The paper features the outcomes of the cultural irradiation of Neonil's School, reified in the training of specialised monks, translations, and typographer masters who disseminated their teachings and literacy. He was also a visionary as he predicted the role of education and culture in spiritual evolution. This study aims to bring new data regarding learning in the Neamț area.

Keywords: Neonil Buzilă; the Neamț Monastery; greek-romanian school

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Since the 15th century, enlightened monks taught at the Neamț Monastery a considerable number of pastoral teaching staff, clerks for the princely chancery or future metropolitans of the country. The contents of the monachal learning focused on consolidating notions of reading, calligraphy, printing, Slavonic grammar study, painting, sculptures, and the creation of fine gold and silver items. From the second half of the 18th century, the cultural activity of the monastic community flourished under the rule of Abbot Paisie Velicicovschi. An enlightened spirit of the time, he focused even in his will on the constitution of a school to train priests¹.

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** “DECIDE – Development through entrepreneurial education and innovative doctoral and postdoctoral education and research”, Project Code POCU/380/6/13/125031, a project co-funded by the Social European Fund through the Operational Programme Human Capital 2014-2020”.

¹ D. L. Stăhiescu, „Vechile școli din Județul Neamț. Contribuții la un istoric al școlilor din ținutul Neamțului,” in *Anuarul Liceului “Petru-Rareș” pe anul școlar 1932-1933*, Piatra Neamț: 1934, 92.

The historical study related to the foundation and functioning of the monachal theological seminary at the Neamț Monastery was penned by Ioan Ivan². The paper titled *La o sută de ani 1855-1955 [A Hundred Years Later 1855-1955]* reflects the construction and function of the Monachal School of Abbot Neonil in the period primarily. The researcher also mentions in this context that this cultural establishment was designed to host the school, typography, and infirmary attached to the monastery.

The monograph of Archimandrite Dionisie Udișteanu (*Seminarul Monahal Neamțu [The Neamț Monachal Seminary]*, Editura Mușatinii, Suceava, 2005) includes several aspects related to the reorganisation of education in 1843-1848³. The author mentions valuable insight into requests reports or letters addressed to representatives of the Moldavian Metropolis, to Prince Mihail Sturdza, based on which one may reconstruct the steps covered in the founding process of the seminary. The author provides spectacular information through the unpublished documents studied in the archives, abounding in details related to the recruitment of monks and the challenges faced.

Among the recent contributions valuing the philanthropical work of Abbot Neonil Buzilă, it is worth noting *Arhimandritul Neonil Buzilă, stareț ctitor de locașuri sfinte, filantropice și culturale [Archimandrite Neonil Buzilă, Abbot and Founder of Places of Worship, Philanthropical and Cultural]*, written by Archimandrite Mihail Daniliuc (2016) – the hegumen of the Vovidenia Skete. He offers precious information regarding the typographical activity, the construction of numerous churches, hospitals, and education establishments with funds from the Neamț Monastery, and the difficulties to overcome during his time as an abbot⁴. The author includes Abbot Neonil's endeavours to maintain unity within the monachal community and the efforts to reorganise the clergy schools in Neamț.

In 2017, the current abbot of the Neamț Monastery – Archimandrite Benedict Sauciuc – dedicated an impressive monograph to it, called *Mănăstirea Neamț vatră de spiritualitate și cultură românească [The Neamț Monastery – a Hearth of Romanian Spirituality and Culture]*⁵, featuring a brief history of the establishment and the activities of the monachal life until the Communist period.

² Ioan Ivan, „La o sută de ani 1855-1955,” *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, year XXXII, No. 1-2 (1956).

³ Dionisie Udișteanu, *Seminarul Monahal Neamțu* (Suceava: Editura Mușatinii, 2005).

⁴ Daniliuc Mihail, „Arhimandritul Neonil Buzilă, stareț ctitor de locașuri sfinte, filantropice și culturale,” in *Seminarul Teologic Ortodox “Veniamin Costachi” de la Mănăstirea Neamț, studii, memorii, evocări* (Iași: Editura Doxologia, 2016), 79.

⁵ Benedict Sauciuc, *Mănăstirea Neamț vatră de spiritualitate și cultură românească*, Vol. I (Iași: Editura Doxologia, 2017).

The importance of this work resides in the bibliography and productive administrative, social, cultural, and pastoral activity carried out by Abbot Neonil.

This paper is among the attempts to retrieve and highlight the information related to the history of the Greek-Romanian School in the Neamț Monastery during the term of Abbot Neonil. It aims to underline for historians the relevance of the education establishment in what concerns both his activity and the cultural role played by the Neamț Monastery in the life of the local community through the prominent figure of Archimandrite Neonil.

The history of religious education in Neamț in the 19th century is outlined by Neonil's School⁶, from 1843-1848. Tradition acknowledges that the Neamț Monastery represented a genuine Faculty of Letters, where they reunited calligraphers and miniaturists from various categories highlighting the typographical art. As a heritage of the ideas argued by Paisie, Abbot Neonil continues implementing numerous activities meant to reorganise education (*Fig. 1*)⁷.

According to the provisions of the Organic Statute (1832), the candidates for the priesthood had to complete theological courses. The legislative document concerning the clergy, theological learning and the conditions of classes for the young candidates are included in articles 74-80, which provided a budget of Lei 50,000 to 60,000 for the material support of the institution. At the same time, the *Epitropia* [Guardianship] was designated the relevant authority to draft the regulations for education establishments, etc⁸.

In addition, the establishment of 1843 provided for the Neamț and Secu Monastery to constitute an educational institution for ecclesiastical study and teaching, with the monks within the premises as beneficiaries. The members of the old monastic community were against the constitution of an education establishment, and Abbot Neonil faced unrest within the monastery. In a complaint addressed to the prince, Archimandrite Neonil Buzilă argued that the financial status of the monachal school was challenging and that the clergy members were dissatisfied because of the lack of space or the presence of youths who would bring additional worries to the community. To build the seminary and fund the compensation of the teaching staff, Lei 50,000 per year were allocated⁹.

⁶ Neonil Buzilă was the Abbot of the Neamț and Secu Monastery three times: 1834-1835; 1838-1839; 1843-1853. *Apud* Ioanichie Bălan, *Patericul românesc*, Vol. I (Vânători-Neamț, Editura Mănăstirea Sihăstria, 2011), 406-410.

⁷ Daniliuc, „Arhimandritul Neonil Buzilă,” 79.

⁸ Gruia Zamfirescu, „Legislația privind învățământul teologic organizat în Moldova, în perioada regulamentară,” *Studii Teologice* Year X, No. 2 (2014):102-103.

⁹ Radu Rosetti, *Conflictul dintre guvernul Moldovei și Mănăstirea Neamțului*, în *Analele Academiei Române*, second series, Vol. XXXII, No. 8 (București, Institutul de Arte Grafice “Carol Göbl”, 1910), 659.

From 1843, Abbot Neonil carried out construction works for the Greek-Romanian School on the site of the current “Veniamin Costachi” Orthodox Theological Seminary¹⁰. The seminary building only had one level, where the hospital for the monks (1843-1846) and the typographical workshops functioned. The school plan was rectangular, with a relatively spacious porch and a church dedicated to Saint Pantelimon. This construction lasted until the fire of 1938¹¹.

On October 17, 1843, the principal, Neofit Scriban, held a speech – at the inauguration of the school year – about the efforts and challenges of Archimandrite Neonil Buzilă to build this institution for the enlightenment of youths¹². In addition, this catechetical institution was supported by Metropolitan Veniamin Costache¹³. The Neamț establishment was active until 1848; the monks of the monastery and the children born into noble families studied there. The monachal school had three classrooms and three teachers, attended by around 50-60 students¹⁴.

Neofit Scriban¹⁵ – a man of vast culture and a reformer of religious education – coordinated the activity of seminary students in 1843-1846¹⁶. Abbot

¹⁰ Historian Nicolae Iorga mentioned that the theological establishment attached to the Neamț Monastery functioned as “the Greek-Romanian School”. *Apud* I. Chiru-Nanov, „În preajma Ceahlăului,” *Noua revistă română*, XI, No. 9, December 25 (1911):139.

¹¹ Ivan, „La o sută de ani 1855-1955,” 52-53.

¹² Partenie Apetrei, „Arhimandritul Neonil,” *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, Year LII, No. 7-8 (1976): 558.

¹³ Vasile Miron, „Contribuția mănăstirilor la dezvoltarea culturii și spiritualității ortodoxe românești,” *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year V, January-April (2014): 196.

¹⁴ Ioan Ivan, Scarlat Porcescu, *Mănăstirea Neamț* (Iași, Tipografia Centrului Mitropolitan, 1981): 134.

¹⁵ He was a prominent figure of the 19th-century clergy, an illustrious teacher at the Monachal Seminary of the Neamț Monastery, where he corrected the Pidalion book printed in 1844. Neofit Scriban was born in Burdujeni, the current Suceava County in 1808. He attended the courses of the Todireni Monastery school in town, where he studied reading, writing, arithmetic, religion, ecclesiastical hymns, and Greek. In 1827, he was tonsured a monk at the Gorovei Monastery by Archimandrite Macarie Jora. In 1833, he became a hieromonk at the Three Hierarchs Monastery in Iași. He attended the courses of the “Vasiliană” School at the Three Hierarchs Monastery and at “Academia Mihăileană” in Iași. In 1838, he became a preacher at the Metropolis and a religious education teacher at the Public School of the Three Hierarchs in Iași. Neofit Scriban – a creator of the national education movement – taught at the National School of Fălticeni (1842-1843), was a principal at the Public School of the Three Hierarchs in Iași (1846-1848), a chief priest of the “Sfântul Vasile” Church in Iași, a teacher and principal of the Socola Seminary. On August 12, 1843, Abbot Neonil appoints him as a teacher of Religious Education and Greek at the Monachal School of the Neamț Monastery (1843-1846). In this period, he focused on translating the Pidalion (1844) written by Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi. During his stay at the monastery, he wrote patriotic poems; the same interval was marked by personal milestones. In 1862, Metropolitan Sofronie Miculescu anointed him as an archimandrite. *Apud*

Neonil Buzilă asked the illustrious teacher to use only Greek as the teaching language for the young trainees to translate the religious books¹⁷. The school was initiated to crystallise theological study, to learn the Cult Hymns, History, Greek, Russian, Psalm Music, and Biblical Teachings¹⁸.

Abbot Neonil had an establishment built in 1843, subjected to internal rules; they included various provisions to select future candidates who wished to become monks¹⁹. The youths were selected from among those who loved studying or those who held a state position. Up to that point, the candidates came from rural areas and among artisans, with full support from the budget of the monastery. Paragraph 28 stated that those who would not become literate would work on the field of the monastery's estates, where they would acquire various skills in different areas of activity: distillery, vinification processes, leather and word processing, etc²⁰.

Anaphora No. 154 of June 9, 1846, made by the Metropolitan and confirmed by Prince Mihail Sturdza, stated the following syllabus for the theological seminary: the four-year lower courses and the three-year higher courses²¹.

	Year I	Year II	Year III	Year IV
Lower courses	Subjects: Catechism and Holy History of the Old Testament. Reading and Analysis of the Ecclesiastical Rituals in the Gospels and the Mass. Grammar. Calligraphy. Arithmetic. Ecclesiastical Hymns.	Learning the Sacraments and the Gospel Teachings. History. Geography. Arithmetic. Ecclesiastical Hymns. Translating the Acts and Books of the Holy Disciples.	Dogmatic Teachings in Petru Movilă's Book. Ecclesiastical History. Ecclesiastical Hymns. Ecclesiastical Rite Analysis.	Brief Teachings on the Priests' Obligations. Ecclesiastical Readings. Household Medicine. Advanced Course in Essay and Rhetoric Skills. Latin Grammar. Exercises in Ecclesiastical Hymns. The Greek

Mircea Păcurariu, *Arhieriei Neofit și Filaret Scriban*, in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, Year XXXV, No. 1-2 (1959): 87-91.

¹⁶ Benedict Sauciuc, „Seminarul Monahal de la Mănăstirea Neamț,” in *Seminarul Teologic Ortodox “Veniamin Costachi” de la Mănăstirea Neamț- studii, memorii, evocări* (Iași, 2016), 62-63.

¹⁷ Radu Rosetti, „Conflictul dintre guvernul Moldovei și Mănăstirea Neamțului,” *Analele Academiei Române*, second series, vol. XXXII, No. 8, Institutul de Arte Grafice “Carol Göbl” (București, 1910): 658.

¹⁸ Viorel Romus Laiu, „Școala teologică de la Mănăstirea Neamț între 1945-1990,” *Analele Liceului “Vasile Conta” Târgu-Neamț*, Vol. II, No. 1 (2020): 260.

¹⁹ Apetrei Partenie, „Viața și activitatea Arhimandritului Neonil Buzilă, Starețul Mănăstirii Neamț,” in *Dincolo de poarta luminii-Arhimandritul Partenie Apetrei* (Editura Trinitas, 2009), 269.

²⁰ *Acte oficiale atingătoare de starea de acum a Monastirilor Neamțul și Secul* (Iași, 1858), 19-20.

²¹ Zamfirescu, „Legislația privind învățământul teologic organizat în Moldova,” 106-107.

				Language.
Higher courses	Reading and Teaching the Books of the Holy Fathers in Their Relation to the Biblical Text. Biblical and Ecclesiastical History. The Greek Language and Grammar. Profane History Course. Geography. Explaining the Prophets.	Profane Ecclesiastical History and Insight into the Dogmatic Theology according to Pure Orthodox Sources. Moral Theology. Rhetoric, Logic and Psychology Principles. Course of Philosophy History and Homeland History. Creative Skills and Languages Acquired.	Pastoral Theology Course. Canon Law Teachings. Greek and Latin Translations. Ecclesiastical Readings. Speech Drafting and Delivery	

Tab. 1. Syllabus of the Greek-Romanian Seminary in the Neamț Monastery.

The seminary students attended advanced studies of the Breviary, Psalms, Lives of Saints, and various religious books in initiating reading. In the early 19th century, educational establishments faced the challenge of modernising and generalising the Latin alphabet in school manuals. The Romanian Principalities had no manual of reference to facilitate reading and writing²².

Neonil's School stopped functioning in 1848 when Abbot Naftanail was in charge²³. At the same time, the events after 1848 led to the restructuring of theological education through two metropolitan anaphoras and a regulation for teaching clergy. There was a request to constitute a public institution at the Neamț Monastery with two teaching styles: section I only for monks; section II ascribed to all seminary graduates across the country. As the seminary was founded, the metropolitan requested to stop the anointment of deacons or priests without study documents from the religious school teachers. The anaphora drafted by the bishop provided several measures regarding the manner of teaching the courses, and it

²² Vasile Miron, „Contribuția mănăstirilor la dezvoltarea culturii și spiritualității ortodoxe românești,” 196-197.

²³ Ivan, *La o sută de ani (1855-1955)*, 54.

requested the mandatory presence of youths in the seminary of Neamț. This was the path of protohierarchs, preachers or monks who wished to dedicate their lives to God²⁴.

The dogmatic teaching was preserved by Neofit and Filaret Scriban's contributions and the recommendation of Metropolitan Sofronie Miculescu. These efforts to reorganise the educational activity materialised through the initiative of founding a seminary in Neamț. Abbot Dionisie Romano received the blessing from the metropolitan to advance the reorganisation plan of the monachal theological education. Hence, the Theological Seminary in the Neamț Monastery was constituted again on March 2, 1855, through the princely document issued by Grigore Alexandru Ghica and *vornic* [magistrate] Dimitrie Ralet, Minister of the Cults and Public Teachings²⁵.

The new school organisation functioned according to the three educational cycles: regular, middle school, and theological. The princely foundation act provided a syllabus based on three learning sections and the regulatory provisions for didactic activities. In addition, the order stated several regulations concerning the scientific part, led by the metropolitan and the Ministry of Cults and Public Teachings. This *epitropie* [guardianship] dealt with the functioning and unfolding of the didactic activity, ensuring the acquisition of teaching materials, introducing optional courses and enriching the book collection within the library²⁶.

Lectures were held in Romanian, aiming to implement a new department of Modern Languages studies (French, Latin). The theological subject was under the strict authority of the metropolitan. At the same time, the other fields for primary or middle school were monitored by both the bishop and the Department of Public Instruction. According to the document, the seminary's management had to draft an annual report regarding the number of students for the proper building administration. The exams took place in the presence of delegates from the part of the Ministry of Cults and the Moldavian Metropolis. The selection of didactic staff for primary or middle school was in charge of the same authority, but the Bishopric monitored the Faculty of Theology²⁷.

In addition, the *epitropie* [guardianship] made a space available for a printing house anchored to enrich the collection of Romanian and foreign books. The Seminary of Neamț benefitted from a boarding house that hosted 50 students

²⁴ Gruia Zamfirescu, „Legislația privind învățământul teologic organizat în Moldova,” 103-106.

²⁵ V. Alexandrescu Urechia, *Anuarulu Generale alū Instrucțiunei Publice din România pe anulū scolarū 1863-4* (București, Imprimeria Statului, 1866), 276.

²⁶ Dumitru Stăhiescu, „Vechile școli din Județul Neamț,” 91-92.

²⁷ Dumitru Stăhiescu, „Vechile școli din Județul Neamț,” 92-93.

from the monastery, graduates of public schools, scholarship recipients, etc²⁸. The boarding house was organised according to the provisions of the school establishment and following the model of the Iași Seminary. The income of the Neamț Monastery fully funded the educational complex and the youth shelter. The funds of the old monastic community ensured spots for students from the outside who wished to carry out their academic activities free of charge. The graduates who aspired to continue their studies in the theological field benefitted from a spot in the seminary's boarding house²⁹.

On August 1, 1855, in the presence of Abbot Dionisie Romano³⁰, the boarding house building began near the school. Among the didactic staff members who worked within the seminary, it is worth noting D. Kami; D. Boronți; D. Hriscoscoaleu; G. Cătănescul; hierodeacon N. Popescu and Iosif Patriciu³¹. Other Transylvanian teachers to underline here are Archimandrite and teacher Ghenadie Popescu (1855-1859) and arch-hierarch Emilian Antal³².

The Monachal Seminary in the Neamț Monastery did not last any longer because – in 1864, thus after the school year 1863-1864 – a hospice for the mentally ill was inaugurated (*Fig. 2*). This hospice was active in 1864-1906³³, under the administration of the Health Directorate until April 23, 1906, when around 40 patients from the Neamț Monastery were transferred to the Hospital of Socola, Iași³⁴.

The effect of secularisation reified in the limitation of educational activity; only some chambers were still active in the Neamț Monastery. The seminary students continued to be trained on the premises of “Lord’s Ascension” Church,

²⁸ Sauciuc, *Mănăstirea Neamț*, 209.

²⁹ V. Alexandrescu Urechia, *Anuarulu Generale al ă Instrucțiunei Publice din România*, 276.

³⁰ Dionisie Romano was born at Sălișteța Sibiului in 1806. In 1820, he went to Moldavia, where he was tonsured a monk at the Neamț Monastery at the age of 17. In 1855-1856, he became the abbot of the Neamț Monastery and director of the “Veniamin Costachi” Seminary Neamț. His career comprises several positions: Buzău bishop lieutenant, eparchy bishop in Huși (1865) and Buzău (1865-1873). Dionisie Romano published numerous valuable works in the ecclesiastical field. It is worth noting some of his writings: “Abecedar românesc spre întrebuițarea tinerilor începători (1834)”; “Imnuri în proză pentru copiii care încep a ceti (1869)”. He founded the first ecclesiastical journal in Walachia – “Vestitorul bisericesc” in the period 1839-1840. In 1832, the brilliant scholar founded the first public school and the first library in Buzău. *Apud* Ioan Ivan, „Monahi transilvăneni viețuitori în mănăstirile din Moldova,” *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, No. 9-12, year LIV (1978): 732.

³¹ Dumitru Stăhiescu, „Vechile școli din Județul Neamț,” 93.

³² Ioan Ivan, „Monahi transilvăneni,” 733.

³³ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria învățământului românesc* (București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1971), 167.

³⁴ D. Constantinescu, Aurelian Grigorescu, Valentin Grigorescu, Sorin Miron, *Din trecutul istoric al spitalului din Tg. Neamț și al ospiciului de alienați din Mănăstirea Neamț* (Bacău, Editura I. P., 1972), 77-78.

where they studied notions of Rite, Ecclesiastical Hymns, etc³⁵. Facing such significant challenges, the educational process occurred in acute conditions: they had no firewood, clothes, or proper diet³⁶. Hence, we note that – in 1863-1864 – the number of students dropped dramatically³⁷.

Numerous princely acts to resume new didactic activities addressed to the monastery's abbot, the prince, and the public education commission. All the endeavours conducted by the Commission of the Department of Public Instruction ended in the refusal from the ecclesiastical authorities³⁸.

On October 15, 1925, there was a project to constitute a monachal seminary. The persons actively involved were Nicodim Munteanu, Arch-hierarch Valerie Moglan, Daniil Ciubotaru, the Abbot of the Neamț Monastery, and Bishop Visarion Puiu (*Fig. 3*). The first person to run it was Metropolitan Nicodim Munteanu until Archimandrite Laurențiu Busuioc returned from his studies. On October 14, 1938, a fire turned the seminary's building into a pile of debris. To highlight this relevant cultural building in Neamț, reconstruction works began in 1939, with support from Metropolitan Nicodim Munteanu and at the expense of the Neamț Monastery (*Fig. 13*).

By erecting the new building, theological studies were set to 4-5 years, attended by people aged 15-25. This stage is the first step to the legislative framework of the educational field and the restructuring of theological education in particular. Consequently, the school in the Neamț Monastery materialised this plan by creating a higher education establishment. A considerable contribution belongs to the attribution of ranks (requesting the graduation of the education cycle for each hierarchical level). If the young people failed to show proof of having completed their theological studies, they could not be anointed and follow this path³⁹. Firmly anchored in the life and activity of the Romanian nation, the Neamț Monastery was a veritable element in the cultivation and formation of mindset among the young generation.

Conclusions

The monks in the Neamț Monastery – at the initiative of Abbot Neonil Buzilă and the group of advisors to the princely edifice – collected money and materials to erect important centres of cultural dissemination. It is worth noting that

³⁵ Sauciuc, *Mănăstirea Neamț*, 210.

³⁶ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria învățământului românesc*, 167, 151.

³⁷ V. Alexandrescu Urechia, *Anuarulu Generale ală Instrucțiunei Publice din România*, 155.

³⁸ V. Alexandrescu Urechia, *Istoria școalelor de la 1800-1864*, 133.

³⁹ Mihai Tucan Rumano, *Scurt popas la Mănăstirea Neamțului*, Radio conference held on November 16, 1942 (Editura Mănăstirea Neamț, 1942), 14.

the last building endeavours of the archimandrite are related to the first Public School in Târgu Neamț and the Greek-Romanian School, fully integrated into the public area, thus becoming a space for youth enlightenment.

To outline the bigger picture of Romanian education, I identified in the bibliography various aspects of the monachal school built by Abbot Nenil. He contributed to the creation of the Romanian intellectual elite. My endeavour was meant to underline several particularities of monachal education in the second half of the 19th century when Abbot Nenil Buzilă was in charge.

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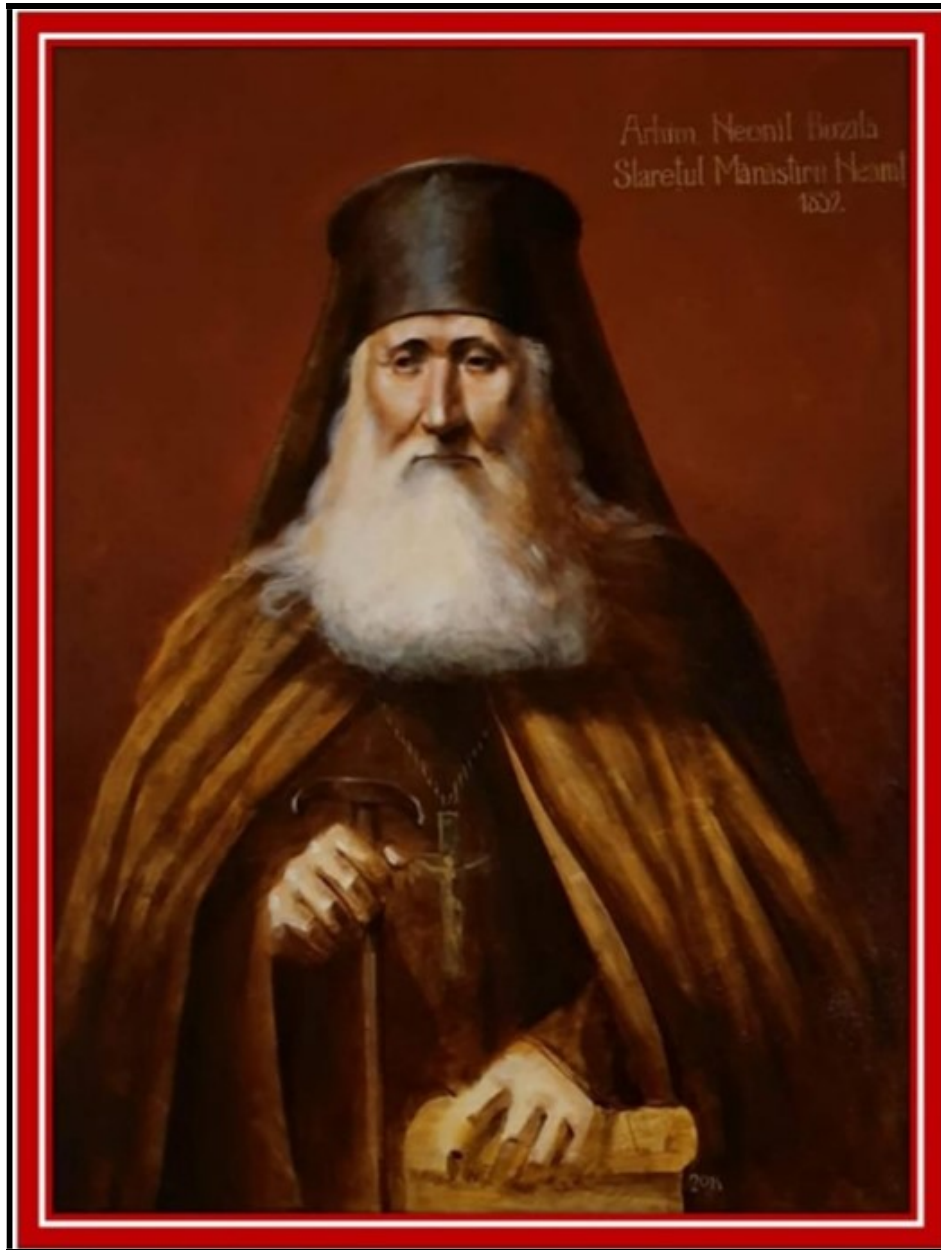


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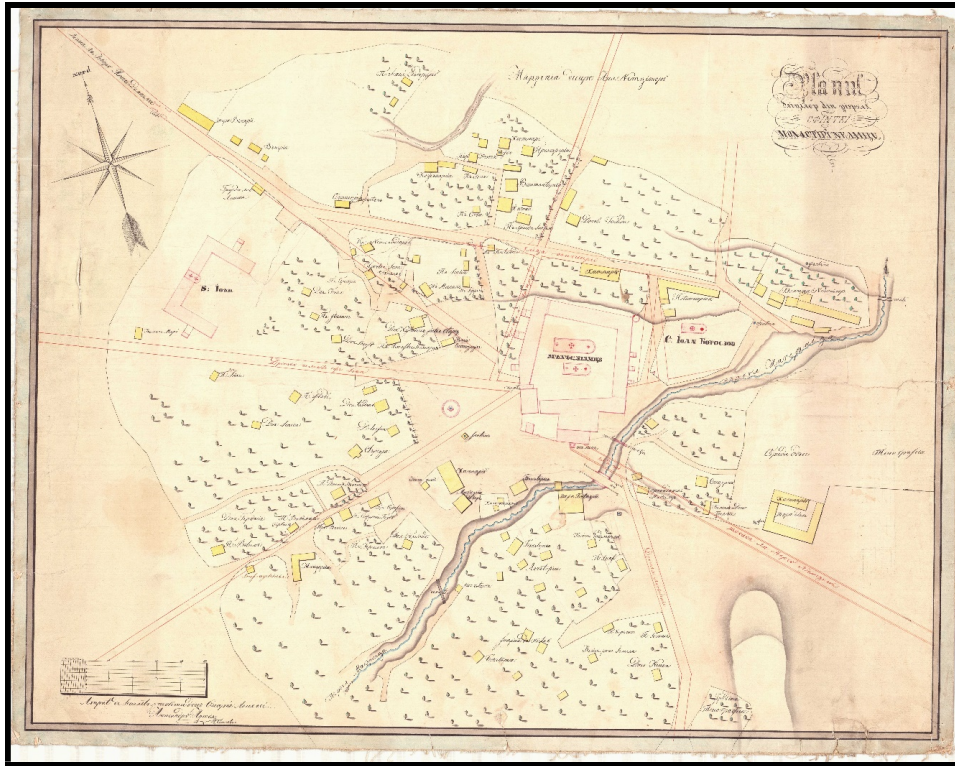


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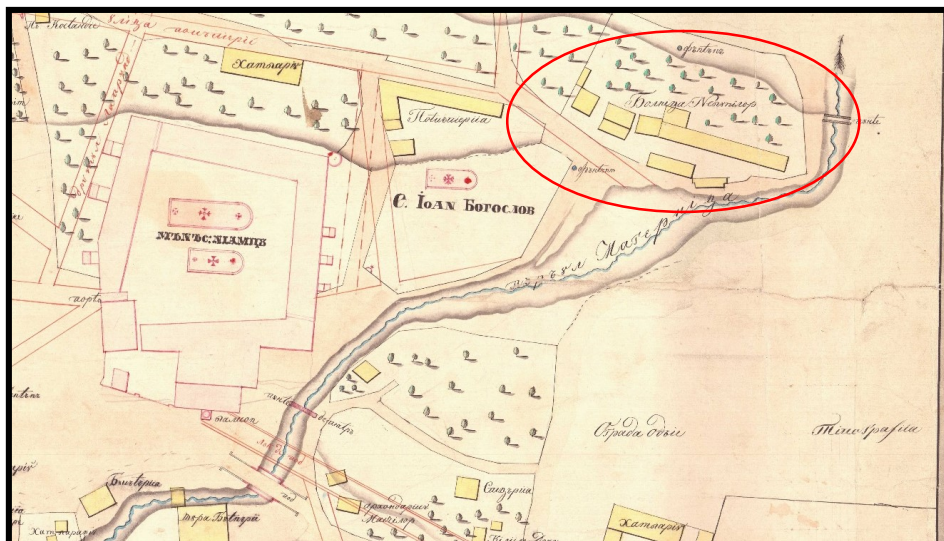




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