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THE SPREAD OF BYZANTINE HESYCHASM IN THE ROMANIAN COUNTRIES IN THE XIVTH-XVTH CENTURIES *

***Abstract:** The flowering of Hesychast spirituality in the Byzantine Empire in the 13th and 14th centuries influenced, over time, the development of the spiritual life of the Orthodox peoples in the Balkans and the north of the Danube. From the 14th century onwards, hesychastic spirituality began to penetrate to the left of the Danube, first in Wallachia, and then spread to other Romanian provinces. The present study aims to highlight the main ways of penetrating hesychastic spirituality in Romanian countries, to follow its spread and development in these places and to highlight its role and importance in the evolution and development of church and cultural life of Romanians.*

***Keywords:** hesychasm, hermit, monasticism, monastery, culture, Romanian Countries.*

The information about the church life in the Romanian space in the XIV-XV centuries and about the church connections with Constantinople, “the only source of legitimation in the ecclesiastical order”¹ are, as Prof. Alexandru Elian also observes, quite poor and “are not always clear

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1. Alexandru ELIAN, *Bizanțul, Biserica și cultura românească, studii și articole de istorie*, Ed. Trinitas, Iași, 2003, p. 66.

and complete”². The Byzantine sources of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries do not provide much such information on this issue. The main source that could have provided news in this regard, the records of the acts of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, provides information only on major issues regarding church life in Romanian countries, such as the establishment of the Ungro-Wallachia metropolis or the dispute over the canonical election of Metropolitan Teoctist of Moldova. In these conditions, the attempt to present the evolution of the penetration of the hesychastic spirituality in the Romanian space is even more difficult, being necessary the corroboration of the different sources in order to have a more correct image on it.

***Byzantine hesychasm
in the Balkan Orthodox space***

The religious and cultural life of the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries developed largely on the basis of the Byzantine heritage of the time, as well as the influences of Byzantine culture and spirituality of that time.

The extent to which, in a certain historical period, the religious life and culture of these peoples were influenced by the Byzantine ones depended on the existence or not of political, ecclesiastical or cultural relations, their intensity and in general on the political circumstances of the time.

Byzantium’s political and ecclesiastical relations with its Serbian and Bulgarian neighbours in the Palaeologus era were not very conducive to such influences. However, from the second half of the 14th century onwards, with the flowering of Hesychast life in Athos and the victory of Palamite theology, we can speak of the spread of Hesychast spirituality and theology among Slavic and Wallachian Orthodox.

The first to take Hesychast spirituality beyond the borders of the Empire was St. Gregory of Sinai, who in 1335 settled in Paroria, in the mountains on the Bulgarian border with Byzantium, where he founded a monastery.

2. A. ELIAN, *Bizanțul, Biserica...*, p. 141.

After the death of Gregory of Sinai, his closest disciples set up new monasteries, which they conducted according to the rule of their spiritual father. St. Theodosius of Trnovo, his direct disciple, founded the Kelifarevo monastery near Trnovo in 1350³. The monastery soon became an important hesychastic centre that attracted monks from neighbouring countries. Patriarch Kallistos, a hagiographer of the life of St. Theodosius, wrote that „it did not sit well in the mountainous land called Kelifarevo that the rumour spread everywhere, not only to the Bulgarians, but also to the Serbs and Hungarians and Romanians and to all who live around Mesembria”⁴. Like his teacher, St. Theodosius was concerned with making Hesychast spirituality known to all Christians, and so he intertwined contemplative life with translating into Middle Bulgarian Slavonic and copying hesychastic works, a particularly effective means of spreading hesychasm if we consider that Slavonic was used in worship by both Slavs and Romanians. Theodosius translated the *Texts* of St. Gregory of Sinai into Middle Bulgarian, and his disciple, the hieromonk Dionysius, *The Pearls* of St. John Chrysostom⁵. In 1346 the monk Visarion copied a *Patericon* “of hesychastic character”, which was later discovered in the Krk monastery in Dalmatia⁶, and in 1364, in Trnovo, a certain monk Theodosius, other than Saint Theodosius of Trnovo, translated or corrected with an original Greek *The Ladder* of St. John Climacus⁷.

The disciples of St. Theodosius, in turn, contributed to the spread of Hesychast spirituality, especially through writings. This is the case of St. Euthymius, elected patriarch of Trnovo in 1375, the closest disciple of St. Theodosius, who even set up a literary school for Bulgarian, Serbian and Russian writers⁸. He wrote a number of biographies of local saints

3. David BALFOUR, “Saint Gregory of Sinai’s Life Story and Spiritual Profile”, in: *Theologia*, Athens, 1982, pp. 58-59.

4. Dimitri BOLENSKY, *The Bizantine Commonwealth*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, New York, U.S.A. 1982, p. 391.

5. Emil TURDEANU, *La litterature bulgare du XIV-e siecle et sa diffusion dans les Pays Roumains*, Paris, 1947, p. 37.

6. E. TURDEANU, *La litterature bulgare du XIV-e siecle...*, p. 45.

7. E. TURDEANU, *La litterature bulgare du XIV-e siecle...*, pp. 43-45.

8. Francis DVORNIK, *Slavii în istoria și civilizația europeană*, trad. de Diana Stanciu, Ed. All Educational, București, 2001, p. 152.

and corresponded with other hierarchs, including Metropolitan Antim of Ungro-Wallachia⁹.

Under the influence of Hesychastic spirituality during this period, the writings of Saint Simeon the New Theologian and Nikitas Stithatos were also translated into Bulgaria¹⁰.

In Serbia, hesychasm seems to have spread more slowly and “somewhat isolated”, according to Obolensky, given the silence of the sources on the issue¹¹. The one who took hesychasm to the monasteries in Serbia was St. Roman (Romylos) of Vidin, a direct disciple of St. Gregory of Sinai at Paroria, and St. Theodosius of Kelifarevo, along with several other disciples of the two¹².

Another Hesychastic monk who was active in Serbia for a time was St. Nicodemus of Tismana, a Serb of origin who founded two monasteries in the land of Cladova, Vratna and Monastiriča¹³.

Although there is not much information about literary activity in Serbian monasteries, given the tradition of St. Simeon and St. Euthymius in Bulgaria, it is very likely that hesychastic writings were translated or copied in Serbia as well. What is certain is that in 1371 the monk Joasaph translated the works of St. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite into Serbian¹⁴, and a disciple of St. Euthymius, Constantine the Philosopher, after the Turkish conquest of Bulgaria, took refuge in Serbia, promoting literary activity there¹⁵.

After the occupation of Bulgaria and Serbia by the Turks, “literary activity in both countries came to an abrupt end”¹⁶.

The evocation of the way in which hesychastic spirituality spread in Bulgaria and Serbia is not unimportant for our study, the two neighbouring countries representing intermediate ways through

9. E. TURDEANU, *La litterature bulgare du XIV-e siecle...*, p. 119.

10. F. DVORNIK, *Slavii...*, p. 151.

11. D. OBOLENSKY, *The Bizantine Commonwealth*, p. 391.

12. D. BALFOUR, “Saint Gregory of Sinai’s Life Story...”, p. 59; D.OBOLENSKY, *The Bizantine Commonwealth*, p. 392.

13. E. TURDEANU, “Vechi schimburi culturale între români și iugoslavi”, în: *Convorbiri Literare*, III, 1939, pp. 142-146.

14. F. DVORNIK, *Slavii...*, p. 151.

15. F. DVORNIK, *Slavii...*, p. 152.

16. F. DVORNIK, *Slavii...*, p. 154.

which hesychasm penetrated the north of the Danube, in Wallachia in particular.

Byzantine hesychasm in the Romanian Lands

The penetration of hesychastic spirituality in the Romanian Lands began in the 14th century, being favoured, especially in Ungro-Wallachia, both by the political situation and by a strong monastic tradition, whose roots go back in time to the IV-V centuries in Dobrogea, in the XI-XII centuries in Banat and Transylvania and in the XII-XIII centuries in Wallachia, in Câmpulung¹⁷.

The existence of monasticism in Wallachia before the middle of the 14th century is supported by the synodal act of the Constantinople Patriarchate, issued at the founding of the Metropolitan Church of Ungro-Wallachia, which ordered as Metropolitan Iachint "all the clergy of this country and all the others who are part of the ecclesiastical order, be they monks or myrrhs, to obey him and submit to him in all that is required, as a lawful shepherd and their father and teacher [...]"¹⁸.

Metropolitan Tit Simedrea believed that the Ecumenical Patriarchate was aware of the existence of monastic life in Wallachia either from letters by Prince Nicolae Alexandru requesting the establishment of the Metropolitan, or directly from Patriarch Kallistos who, during his apprenticeship at the Paroria, was aware of the existence of Romanian monks or even knew them, if we accept the hypothesis that among the disciples of St. Gregory of Sinai were also Romanian monks in the Paroria, and concluded that the mention of "hieromonks in the patriarchal act has a real basis and is not just a formulation of the patriarchal chancellery"¹⁹.

17. Mitr. Serafim JOANTĂ, *Isihasmul, tradiție și cultură românească*, traducere de Iuliana Iordăchescu, Ed. Anastasia, București, 1994, pp. 38-40; Pr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe, București, 1992, p. 303.

18. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, publicate de Haralambie Mihăescu, Radu Lăzărescu, Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, Tudor Teoteoi, Ed. Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1982, p. 201.

19. Tit SIMEDREA, "Viața mănăstirească în Țara Românească înainte de anul 1370", în: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXXX(1962), nr. 7-8, p. 680.

Metropolitan Simeonia even sought to prove the existence at the Paroria, among the disciples of St. Gregory of Sinai, of the Romanian monks. He first noted the argument of P. A. Syrku, who had tried to prove the direct connection between the monks of Wallachian origin and St. Gregory of Sinai. Syrku based his hypothesis on a note from *Hludov Sbornik*, written in Slavonic in 1345, in which it is written: "These texts were written by Fudulu when I was at the Paroria with brothers", corroborated with the statement from the life of Saint Gregory of Sinai that in Paroria "there were many disciples of many nations". Starting from the Romanian resonance and spelling of the name Fudulu from this note and from the expression "from several nations", Syrku concluded that this Fudulu was of Romanian origin and that other Wallachian monks were also with him in Paroria. This opinion has been accepted by some historians, while others have rejected it on the grounds that the name Fudulu is of Turkish origin and could not enter the Romanian language so early. Syrku's counter-argument was that this name could enter the Romanian language not only through the Turkish branch, but also through that of the Turkish peoples – Pechenegs, Udi, Cumans – with whom the Romanian people were in contact²⁰. Syrku's opinion is supported by the large number of anthroponyms and toponyms of Cumanian origin in Romanian, which must have entered the language, mostly by 1241, the year of the great Mongol invasion that displaced the Cumans from southern Moldavia²¹.

Emil Turdeanu had the opposite opinion, stating that "the centre of scholars established at Paroria was not researched by any Romanian disciple, although it was believed by some scholars that a certain Fudulu, mentioned in the note of a manuscript, as working at Paroria a translation in Bulgarian, would have come from Wallachia"²². He asserted that "Balkan texts at the time speak of another Fudulus, a heretic who could not be considered Romanian", who was convicted as a varlaamite at the Constantinople Synod in 1368, a fact mentioned

20. T. SIMEDREA, "Viața mănăstirească...", pp. 677-678.

21. Neagu DJUVARA, *Thocomerius-Negru Vodă, un voivod de origine cumână la începuturile Țării Românești*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2007, pp. 55-82.

22. E. TUDEANU, "Opera patriarhului Eftimie al Târnovei (1375-1393) în literatura slavo-română", în: *Convorbiri Literare*, II, 1946, p. 8.

in the life of Patriarch Efthymios written by Gregory Tsamblak. The conclusion of the Romanian researcher is that even if this name designates one and the same person whose life has undergone a radical change – it is hard to believe that that Fudulu who in 1345 made a translation into Slavonic at Paroria, as a disciple of the father of the 14th century hesychastic rebirth, Gregory of Sinai, became in 1368 Barlaamite from Hesychast, so many years since the condemnation of Barlaamism in so many synods – and if he designates two distinct persons of the same name – this is the most plausible hypothesis – “we have no a reason to look for a homeland in the north of the Danube, claiming that it had a name that, until this era, was just as possible, if not more common, in Bulgarian than in Romanian”²³.

There is also the possibility, ignored so far by researchers, but quite probable if we consider the fact that the Siret area was ruled by the Cumans for almost a century and a half, that this Fudulu mentioned in the note on *Hludov Sbornik* came to Paroria from the north of the Danube but not a Romanian, but a Cuman, descendant of some Cumanians who did not take refuge in Hungary in the face of the great Tatar invasion of 1241, but retreated to the Wallachian voivodeships that were bypassed by Mongol rage, such as Seneslav’s land in the Argeş valley²⁴, being assimilated by the Wallachian natives and converted from the Catholic to the Orthodox faith. If this is the case, this Fudulu was certainly accompanied to the Paroria by a few other brothers from the right bank of the Danube, be they Cumans or Wallachians, who could be considered the first monks in Wallachia who knew hesychasm and then spread in the country of origin. Against this hypothesis, however, it could be objected that this Fudulu could have been just as well descended from the Cumans of Bulgaria or those who passed into the Byzantine Empire and became allies of Emperor John Ducas Vatatzes²⁵.

In order to prove the existence of the Wallachian monks at Paroria, Simedrea added to Syrku’s arguments two others, taken from the *Life of*

23. E. TURDEANU, *La litterature bulgare du XIV...*, pp. 10-11.

24. N. DJUVARA, *Thocomerius-Negru Vodă...*, pp. 35-38.

25. N. DJUVARA, *Thocomerius-Negru Vodă...*, pp. 30-31.

Saint Gregory of Sinai written by his disciple, Theophanes. Describing the activity of his teacher, he wrote that “he taught him the Great City, and all Thrace and Macedonia, and even the whole region inhabited by the Bulgarians and beyond Istru and Serbia”, and elsewhere that “and the kings of the earth, Andronicus, and Alexander, Stepan, and Alexander wrote them, desiring them, wonderful teachings from the epistles. On the other hand, the virtue and dexterity of the pious Gregory of Sinai undoubtedly increase the moral elevation of the monks in those lands and cities”²⁶.

The reference to the region “beyond Istru” can only refer to Wallachia, the only territory in the north of the Danube inhabited by an Orthodox population and which can be located by the expression in question.

In the second quoted text, Metropolitan Titus Simeonia identified the first Alexander with Tsar John Alexander of the Bulgarians, who helped build the Paroria monastery, Stepan with the Serbian Tsar Stefan Dušan, and the second Alexander identified him with Nicolae Alexandru, lord of Wallachia, who was associated to the throne by his father Basarab²⁷. The conclusion that emerges from this text is that even before 1346, the year of the death of Gregory of Sinai, monks lived in Wallachia. It is true that this last argument does not support the existence of the Romanians at Paroria unless we admit that St. Gregory, through letters addressed to Prince Nicolae Alexandru, kept in touch with his former disciples from Paroria, continuing to guide them in hesychastic spirituality.

Another hesychastic centre where it is very possible that the Romanian monks were among the inhabitants was the Kelifarevo monastery, founded by St. Theodosius, the disciple of St. Gregory of Sinai. Both Pavel Chihaia and Emil Turdeanu admit the presence of Romanian monks in this hesychastic centre and the irradiation of spirituality from here in Wallachia through them. Emil Turdeanu quotes in support of this hypothesis from the *Life of Saint Theodosius* written by the patriarch Kallistos of Constantinople, in which the

26. T. SIMEDREA, “Viața mănăstirească...”, p. 679.

27. T. SIMEDREA, “Viața mănăstirească...”, p. 680.

Romanians are mentioned among those who reached the news about the founding of the monastery: “The news flew everywhere, [...] and to the Romanians”²⁸.

If at the beginning the penetration of the hesychastic life in Wallachia probably became sporadic and disorganized, the situation changed after the establishment of the Metropolitan Church of Ungro-Wallachia and the arrival of Saint Nicodemus in this area.

“Chir Iachint”, the first metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, called by the ruler Alexandru Nicolae from the metropolitan seat of Vicina before 1359, could only be a supporter of hesychasm, given both the fact that his predecessors in the Vicina chair had signed the tomes of the synods Constantinople of 1341 and 1347 who approved hesychasm, the tome of 1341 being signed by Macarius of Vicina²⁹, and the one of 1347 by Metropolitan Kiril of Vicina³⁰, as well as the fact that the founding of the metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia and the recognition of Iachint as metropolitan was done by Patriarch Kallistos I, who was hesychast.

Because the establishment of the Ungro-Wallachia metropolis took place in the immediate aftermath of the victory of Palamism and the first metropolitan came from Vicina, a supportive centre of hesychasm, Răzvan Theodorescu considered that “it was natural from the very beginning the Greek element, present around the first metropolitans from Argeş and Severin, then all the Balkan monks as well as the local ones from Nicodemus’ monasteries would have been mostly convinced Hesychasts and Hesychasts”³¹. Given that St. Nicodemus “is educated in the same hesychastic school of Theodosius of Kelifarevo”³², we must admit, therefore, that the monks of Vodita and Tismana, both those

28. E. TURDEANU, *La littérature bulgare du XIV...*, p. 36.

29. Pr. D. STĂNILOAE, *Viața și învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palama*, Ed. Scripta, București, 1993, p. 99.

30. John MEYENDORFF, “Le Tome synodal de 1347”, în: *Zbornik Radova vizantološkog instituta*, Recueil de travaux de l’institut d’études byzantines, nr. VIII, Belgrad, 1963, p. 226; J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine hesychasm: historical, theological and social problems*, collected studies, variorum reprint, London, 1974, p. 226.

31. Răzvan THEODORESCU, *Bizanț, Balcani, Occident la începuturile culturii medievale românești (sec.X-XIV)*, Ed. Academiei, București, p. 235.

32. R. THEODORESCU, *Bizanț, Balcani...*, p. 235.

who came with him from Serbia and those who Wallachians, they knew and experienced Hesychast spirituality.

Saint Nicodemus maintained ties with Patriarch Eftymios of Trnovo, a hesychast trained at the same hesychastic school in Kelifarevo as he did, with whom he corresponded on dogmatic topics³³. In fact, Metropolitan Antim of Ungro-Wallachia also corresponded with Patriarch Eftymios of Trnovo, with whom he seems to have had older ties, from the time when Eftymios lived in the monasteries of St. Mamas and Studios in Constantinople, around 1363, and Antim, called at that time Daniil Critopulos, was dicheofilax of the Great Church³⁴.

Historians believe that St. Nicodemus took hesychasm to Transylvania as well, during the six years he was exiled there, and his disciples apparently founded the Prislop Monastery³⁵. Regarding the establishment of the Neamțul monastery, historians are unanimous in stating that its foundation was laid by the disciples of Saint Nicodemus³⁶. Serghei Cetfericov states that the founders of this monastery, "Sofronie, Pimen and Silvan [...] came from Tismana, being the disciples of Saint Nicodemus"³⁷.

It is very probable, however, that Hesychast spirituality penetrated into Wallachia significantly even before the arrival of Saint Nicodemus and his disciples at Vodita, in 1370-1371, brought by the "Ungrovlahs" who went to embrace the monastic life on Mount Athos and who returned to the country after a while. In support of this hypothesis are an act of the voivode Ioan Vladislav from 1369³⁸ and two testamentary documents from Hariton, abbot of the Kutlumush monastery in Athos, written in 1370³⁹ the first and in

33. E. TURDEANU, "Opera patriarhului Eftimie al Târnovei...", pp. 122-127; Epifanie NOROCEL, "Sf. Eftimie, ultimul patriarh de Târnovo și legăturile lui cu țările românești", în: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXXXIV(1966), nr. 5-6, pp. 565-570.

34. E. TURDEANU, "Opera patriarhului Eftimie al Târnovei...", pp. 122-127.

35. Mitr. S. JOANTĂ, *Isihasmul, tradiție...*, p. 64; E. TURDEANU, *La litterature bulgare du XIV...*, p. 64.

36. E. TURDEANU, *La litterature bulgare du XIV...*, p. 64.

37. Serghei CETFERICOV, *Paisie, starețul mănăstirii Neamțu din Moldova*, trad. de Nicodim, patriarhul României, Mănăstirea Neamțu, ²1943, p. 279.

38. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, pp. 281-285.

39. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, pp. 285-293.

1371⁴⁰ the second. These documents show that, due to the fact that the Wallachian ruler built at his expense a wall and a defense tower of the monastery, thus becoming a founder, “some of our ungrovlahs also began to walk in this monastery and many went”⁴¹. Among them were “the pious archpriest Melchizedek of the most blessed voivode”⁴² and “the most pious archpriest of Ungro-Wallachia Father Michael, together with his brother the hieromonk Jacob”⁴³, close to the voivode. The number of “ungrovlahs” who went to Kutlumush was so great that “the Roma who toiled and worked in the vineyards, annexes and other fields of this monastery were frightened; and they murmured against my most holy father to their abbot [...]”⁴⁴. Unable to endure the “community life” regime specific to the monastery, some of them, like the archpriest Melchizedek, returned to the country, asking the voivode to persevere with the abbot Hariton to change the regime of “cenobitic” life with “idiorrhhythmic” life, which is what happened. Although the documents do not provide direct evidence of the spread of Hesychast spirituality north of the Danube by the Ungrovlahs monks who went to Athos, we can assume that some of them knew this spirituality and that on their return to the country they spread it in the turn of the monks in the monasteries here.

According to his will in which he urged the monks to poverty, writing to them „I urge them and I advise their parents to keep poverty”⁴⁵, it seems that Hariton himself was a hesychast, knowing that the hesychasts preached poverty as an essential condition to gaining the prayer of the heart.

There is also the possibility that Hesychast spirituality was spread in the same way in the Maramures area after 1391, when the monastery of St. Michael of Peri became the stauropegic monastery of the Ecumenical Patriarchate⁴⁶.

40. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, pp. 293-305.

41. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, p. 283.

42. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, p. 301.

43. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, p. 291.

44. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, p. 283.

45. Paul LEMERLE, *Actes des Kutlumus*, Paris, 1988, nr. 36.

46. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romane*, vol. IV, pp. 231-233.

In Moldova, the hesychastic influence was strongly felt only after Alexander the Good restored good relations with Constantinople and penetrated, on the one hand, „through the manuscripts of theological and legal works, hagiographic and homiletical literature due to hesychastic authors, manuscripts brought and copied towards the middle of the 15th century, in the main monastery of the country, Neamț”⁴⁷, and, on the other hand, through the monks who came from Wallachia, as was the case of the disciples of Saint Nicodemus, who also founded Neamț.

The archaeological, linguistic and material evidence from that period preserved until today, objects of art and worship worked in monasteries at that time, which were adorned or inscribed with hesychastic symbols, bear witness to how alive and popular the hesychasm was in the Romanian monastic environment in the 14th-15th centuries.

Among the archaeological evidence are the cave churches, especially those in the Buzău mountains, which date, according to research, from the fourteenth century. They are dedicated to Hesychast influence, being dedicated to the Transfiguration, the Mother of God, St. John the Baptist or St. John the Evangelist, saints especially honoured by Hesychasts⁴⁸.

The hermits living in the spirit of the hesychasm, the creators of the mentioned cells and cave churches, the people used to call them “sihaștri”, a name about which Fr. Staniloae stated that it derives in Romanian from the term hesychast, to which, under the Greek influence of the term ἡσυχαστήριον – place of rest – called in Romanian “sihăstrie” (hermitage), “r” was added after the group “st”⁴⁹.

The category of material evidence includes the epithrachim adorned with the faces of saints in medallions, “the oldest dowry of liturgical embroidery of Tismana”⁵⁰, which features “in two medallions,

47. R. THEODORESCU, *Bizanț, Balcani...*, p. 241.

48. Pavel CHIHAIA, “Date noi despre bisericuțele rupestre din munții Buzăului”, în: *Glasul Bisericii*, XXXIII, 1974, nr. 5-6, p. 509.

49. Pr. D. STĂNILOAE, “Isihaștii și rugăciunea lui Iisus în tradiția ortodoxiei românești”, în: *Filocalia*, 8, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2002, p. 529.

50. R. THEODORESCU, *Bizanț, Balcani...*, p. 238.

with abbreviated, monogrammatic inscriptions, the Greek words for “the light of Christ is shown to all» and «light, life»⁵¹. The word “light”, inscribed twice, can only be of Hesychast influence if we consider the fact that the epitachelion comes from the Tismana monastery.

Hesychasm, “this powerful fourteenth-century spiritual revival movement”, “with profound and late implications for the mentality of clerics, monks, and feudal lords in Eastern European countries, throughout the medieval literature and art of these parts of the world”⁵², also strongly influenced the medieval Romanian culture at the beginning of its development.

The beginnings of the Romanian literary culture in the 15th century are closely related to the copying in the Middle-Bulgarian Slavonic translation of the Byzantine writings that fit into the hesychastic current⁵³ and the most important cultural centre in the Romanian Lands in which such writings were copied was Neamțul monastery in Moldova. There he activated the monk Gavriil who copied the writings of St. Gregory of Sinai and his disciple, the patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos of Constantinople, a bundle of six writings from the work of Patriarch Efthymius of Trnovo, apparently lives of saints recorded by him, writings of Gregory Tsamblak, disciple of Saint Euthymius of Trnovo⁵⁴, *The Pearls* of Saint John Chrysostom, translated by the hieromonk Dionysius, disciple of Saint Theodosius of Trnovo, which he inserted in 1443 in a sbornik⁵⁵, as well as *The Ladder* of Saint John Climacus, in 1446⁵⁶.

The originals after which Gavriil copied these writings seem to have been a “number of Slavic sborniks belonging to a vast homiletical and hagiographic collection, originally preserved in the Moldovita monastery and also of Hesychast origin”, a collection which seems to

51. R. THEODORESCU, *Bizanț, Balcani...*, pp. 238-239.

52. R. THEODORESCU, *Bizanț, Balcani...*, p. 235.

53. Alexandru PIRU, *Istoria literaturii române de la început până azi*, Ed. Univers București 1981, p. 7.

54. A. ELIAN, *Bizanțul, Biserica...*, p. 87; E. E. TURDEANU, “Opera patriarhului Eftimie al Târnovei...”, p. 13.

55. E. TURDEANU, “Opera patriarhului Eftimie al Târnovei...”, p. 9.

56. E. TURDEANU, *La littérature bulgare du XIV...*, p. 46.

have been elaborated in the last years of the 14th century at the Studios monastery in Constantinople, which was for a short time (after the fall of Trnovo to the Turks in 1393) a centre of Slavic culture, of Hesychast inspiration”⁵⁷.

The possible way for these writings to enter Moldova, suggested by Prof. Alexandru Elian, is the mission carried out at the beginning of the 15th century at the court of Alexander the Good to restore good relations with the ecumenical patriarchate and the recognition of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova by Gregory Tsamblak he would have brought them directly from Constantinople⁵⁸.

Gregory Tsamblak composed in 1402 *The Life of Saint John the New*, which together with *The Life of Saint Nicodemus of Tismana*, written by his disciples, “are two hagiographic works of pronounced hesychastic character, composed after the model of similar writings of Efthymios, the patriarch of Trnovo”⁵⁹. To these are added other Slavonic translations, such as a eulogy composed by St. Gregory or *Orations* by Joseph Bryennios at the court of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II the Palaeologus⁶⁰.

Conclusions

Regardless of the way in which the hesychastic spirituality penetrated the Romanian countries, through Romanian monks, who knew it either directly from Saint Gregory of Sinai, if we accept the hypothesis of Metropolitan Titus Simeonea that Romanians were also in Paroria, or from his disciples at the Kelifarevo monastery, or through the Greek element present in Wallachia after the founding of the Ungro-Wallachia metropolis, such as Hariton from Kutlumush, or the Balkan one, represented by Saint Nicodemus of Tismana, this spirituality has found a ground since the 14th century conducive to development among our monks. Living in isolation in caves, meadows

57. Al. ELIAN, *Bizanțul, Biserica...*, p. 88.

58. Al. ELIAN, *Bizanțul, Biserica...*, p. 88.

59. Al. PIRU, *Istoria literaturii române de la început...*, p. 7.

60. Al. PIRU, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până la 1830*, Ed. Științifică și enciclopedică, București, 1977, p. 17.

or mountains, they “would have had, even more, consciously or not, hesychastic positions and sympathies”⁶¹, easily receiving hesychastic spirituality because they were familiar with the idiorhythmic way of life that hesychasm demanded.

The favorable conditions for the monastic life in the Romanian lands, the policy of the rulers, the multitude of hermitages and monasteries located in secluded places, ideal for life in hesychia, contributed to the perpetuation of Hesychastic spirituality in these places until the eighteenth century, marked by the spiritual revival initiated by Paisius Velichkovsky, whose main spiritual and cultural fruit was the Dragomirna *Philokalia*. Keeping in its bosom the germs of an authentic hesychastic life, the Romanian Orthodoxy knew in the middle of the twentieth century a new revival of the spiritual life through the hesychastic movement *Rugul aprins* (Burning bush) from the Antim monastery and through the philocal one initiated by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae by publishing the first volumes of the Romanian *Philokalia*.

61. R. THEODORESCU, *Bizanț, Balcani...*, p. 236.