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**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS FOR FOUNDING NEW
MONASTERIES AND SKETES IN THE 18th CENTURY MOLDAVIA****

The foundational act as a multi-layered phenomenon in the Christian European society developed in accordance with the cultural environment it manifested itself in. In the Romanian area, in particular, the role of founders and foundations was entirely special, as the medieval inheritance (of Byzantine origin¹) continued to show itself over time, albeit tortuously, in keeping with the new social, political and economic realities faced by communities². The monasteries had always enjoyed a privileged position which included taxation, the rulers' piety having an impact at this level, as well. Apart from the princes' donations, many monasteries received various gifts from boyars, merchants or craftsmen, with the latter's request to be mentioned in the altar since the service was held daily in monasteries, which included the mention of both living and departed souls. The monastic geography of the eighteenth century changes considerably compared to the seventeenth century³.

Over 200 new monastic establishments were built in eighteenth-century Moldavia and over 100 others were rebuilt, restored or refurbished. The period was not at all favourable to the state's development especially since, after 1711, the rulers chosen by the Porte faced, besides achievements, the failures of an aggressive taxation policy used to raise money for the various official or unofficial taxes making their way one way or another to Istanbul. The political instability also led to different economic crises and the occupation periods brought, together with the foreign armies, new challenges: war, epidemics, death, depopulation and territorial losses. Under these circumstances, the unprecedented phenomenon occurring in a relatively limited area might seem paradoxical.

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¹ Valentin Georgescu, *Bizanțul și instituțiile românești până la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea*, București, 1980, p. 154-179.

² For the Romanian case, see: Gheorghe Cronț, *Dreptul de ctitorie în Țara Românească și Moldova. Constituirea și natura juridică a fundațiilor din Evul Mediu*, in *SMIM*, IV, 1960, p. 77-116; Maria Crăciun, *Semnificațiile ctitoririi în Moldova medievală. O istorie socială a religiei*, in Ovidiu Cristea, Gheorghe Lazăr (eds.), *Național și universal în istoria românilor. Studii oferite prof. dr. Șerban Papacostea cu ocazia împlinirii a 70 de ani*, București, 1998, p. 137-174; Voica Pușcașu, *Actul de ctitorire ca fenomen istoric în Țara Românească și Moldova până la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea*, București, 2001, p. 137-174; Maria Magdalena Székely, *Note despre bisericile Sfânta Vineri și Tăierea Capului Sfântului Ioan Botezătorul din Iași*, in *SMIM*, vol. XIX, 2001, p. 31-38.

³ Ioan-Augustin Guriță, *Some remarks on the monastic foundations in 18th century Moldavia*, in "The Romanian Journal of Modern History", vol. III, no. 2, December 2012, p. 8.

However, besides the purely spiritual reasons underlying a person's, monastic community's or larger group's decision to erect a monastic establishment (monastery, skete or metochion⁴) there were also social and economic reasons.

The founder and his family were the beneficiaries of priority rights: they could write their names in the donation plaque, they could be represented in the donation paintings, they were mentioned during the religious service, they could manage the founded establishment's assets, they could be sheltered by it and, last but not least, they had the right to be buried inside⁵. The foundational act was also a means to underline authority, to emancipate and obtain a perfect social image. In fact, the foundational act and speech had always conveyed the church's complex and profound perception in the mentality of the individual and of the community⁶. The political authority of Moldavian boyars is incontestable starting with the first half of the seventeenth century⁷, while their wealth also resulted in the founding of new churches⁸. Besides the princes, who had the status of great founders, some of the boyars could also boast of the privilege through similar deeds. Thus, the boyars would bolster their social stature through foundational acts, by the founding of family chapels and boyar churches⁹, village or town churches¹⁰, sketes or monasteries, monastery infirmaries or hospitals, all of which triggers of not only personal satisfaction and social prestige, but also of an implicit position of authority in society. The founding of churches was seen as a matter of prestige or the expression of a political option¹¹. Starting with the eighteenth century, a numerical transmutation is clear in the ranks of the boyars under the pressure of legitimacy, both in the case of descendants from local families and that of foreigners that wished to be 'adopted' by the locals. What surprises from a foundational point of view in the eighteenth century is that many of the monastic foundations no longer belong to boyar families. These latter paid more attention to the foundations made by their predecessors as well as those who could provide some prestige on the social ladder, quite fickle and heterogeneous as it was at this time. The foundational act was, thus, a way of gaining legitimacy by association to an illustrious predecessor. If in the first half of the century the remnants of a strong, authoritarian boyar community also make themselves felt on the plane of consolidating foundations, starting with the second half of the century things change. We will notice hierarchs (members, in their turn, of the political elite, descendants or relatives of the grand boyar families of Moldavia¹²), monastery abbots or mere monks who erect churches in remote areas, especially. The economic weakening is also reflected in the money founders spent to build new places of worship, in the construction materials, as the great majority were wood on stone foundations¹³. In many cases, in the nineteenth century

⁴ For *metochion's* meaning, see Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală cu noțiuni de artă bisericească, arhitectură și pictură creștină*, ed. II, București, 1993, p. 381.

⁵ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁶ Doru Radosav, *Sentimentul religios la români. O perspectivă istorică (sec. XVII-XX)*, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p. 202.

⁷ Răzvan Theodorescu, *Despre câțiva oameni noi ctitori medievali*, in *SCIA*, nr. 24, 1997, p. 74-75.

⁸ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁹ Voica Pușcașu, *op. cit.*, p. 297-299.

¹⁰ N. Stoicescu, *Cum se construiau bisericile în Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XVIII – prima jumătate a secolului XIX*, in *SCIA*, XV, 1968, I, p. 75-87; idem, *Cum se zugrăveau bisericile în secolul al XVIII-lea și prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, in *MO*, XIX, 5-6, 1967, p. 406-413.

¹¹ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

¹² Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Originea socială a înaltului cler monahal*, in *ArhGen*, II (VII), 3-4, 1995, p. 183-191.

¹³ Constantin C. Giurescu, *Târguri sau orașe și cetăți moldovene. Din secolul al X-lea până la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea*, ed. II, București, 1997, p. 105-106.

stone churches would be erected on the sites of wooden churches. Those who dedicated a great part of their fortune to achieve lasting constructions were great boyars who set out to spend large sums from their own fortunes. An interesting example on the founder's view of construction material is the one made by a Moldavian great sword-bearer (*spatharius*), Ilie Ianache (founder of the monastery Răchitoasa) who would build a new stone church on the site of the one built by his father at the end of the seventeenth century, 'where first and foremost our father set foot and made a wooden church [...]. Now, after our father, with God's blessing, we wrought further: one for the fire, one for the living: for wood lasts lesser, stone lasts longer'¹⁴. There are also records of a few wattle and daub churches¹⁵. Some of the wooden churches belonging to a few dissolved small monastic communities were transferred in places where the parish communities were in need of a church¹⁶.

One notices, however, a 'founder's conscience' significantly represented by a few wills and documents of the age. The concern towards the result of such a sacrifice is shown in various of the founders' actions to keep the building in as good a condition as possible for the longest time possible¹⁷. Many, however, would build churches 'out of pride', while others would take the habit in the sketes they founded, which is why Grigorie Ghica III forbade the building of churches without the Metropolitan's approval and blessing¹⁸, since the latter were erected 'for the pride of one or another'¹⁹. In other cases, so as to not leave their families without the necessary food resources, some founders stipulated that their properties be managed by the founded skete after the deaths of their wives²⁰.

If in the previous centuries, especially in the seventeenth, there was a monastic wave of migration towards cities (an essentially paradoxical phenomenon, bearing in mind the requirements and tradition of the Church) from now on the 'recovery' of the values of authentic monasticism through a migration to the hidden places, the deserted forests or mountains, difficultly accessible places inductive to asceticism, fasting and prayer²¹. Furthermore, the chosen places had to offer those who would live there a

¹⁴ Episcopul Melchisedec, *Notițe istorice și arheologice adunate de pe la 48 mănăstiri și biserici antice din Moldova*, București, 1885, p. 197-199.

¹⁵ "Anuarul Administrației Casei Bisericii pe 1909", București, 1909, p. 421; N. Stoicescu, *Repertoriul bibliografic al localităților și monumentelor medievale din Moldova*, București, 1974, p. 183; Pr. Th. Atanasie, *Memoriu de starea bisericilor și a parohiilor ortodoxe din județul Bacău*, în BOR, nr. XIV, 1890, p. 369-370; Alexandru Antohi, *Monografia parohiei și comunei Lucăcești, jud. Bacău*, Lucăcești, 1939, p. 58; Ioana Cristache-Panait, Titu Elian, *Bisericele de lemn din Moldova*, în MMS, XLV, 5-6, 1969; Angela Paveliuc-Olaru, *Biserici de lemn din ținuturile Botoșanilor*, în MMS, LVII, 4-6, 1981, p. 334-343, p. 491.

¹⁶ See, for some examples, Virgil Vătășianu, *Bisericele de lemn din Moldova*, în vol. *Închinare lui N. Iorga*, Cluj, 1931; Ioana Cristache-Panait, Titu Elian, *op. cit.*, p. 334-343; D. Constantinescu, *Știri despre vechi biserici de lemn. Biserica Sfântul Dumitru din Ionășeni*, în MMS, XLIV, 9-10, 1968, p. 558; Mircea Pahomi, *Biserici și schituri ortodoxe românești din ținutul Cernăuți*, Suceava, 2008, p. 188; N. Stoicescu, *Repertoriul*, p. 801; *Botoșanii în 1932. Schiță monografică*, Botoșani, 1932, p. 49; D. Mihăilescu, *Urme ale Schitului Oneaga*, în MMS, LXII, 4, 1986, p. 116; Artur Gorovei, *Rugăciune asupra vrăjmașilor*, în "Șezătoarea", XXXI, 1924, p. 150-151.

¹⁷ Episcopul Melchisedec, *op. cit.*, p. 299; idem, *Cronica Hușilor și a Episcopiei cu aseminea numire dupre documentele Episcopiei și alte documente ale țării*, București, 1869, p. 290; idem, *Cronica Romanului și a Episcopiei de Roman, compusă dupre documente naționali-române și străine editate și inedite*, vol. I, București, 1874, p. 322-352.

¹⁸ Theodor Codrescu, *Uricarul*, I, ed. II, Iași, 1871, p. 75.

¹⁹ N. Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor*, vol. II, București, 1930, p. 153.

²⁰ Episcopul Melchisedec, *Notițe istorice*, p. 297-299. An interesting example is that of the Almaș skete, erected by the donations of Ecaterina Cantacuzino in 1715 (Constantin Bobulescu, *Sihăstria Secului și Sihla*, Piatra Neamț, 1942, p. 12; idem, *Schituri și sihăstria de pe Valea Troșului*, București, 1946, p. 16-17).

²¹ Ioan-Augustin Guriță, *op. cit.*, p. 6-8.

source of water²² and the possibility of getting food. Besides the wooden church they built, eremites would also erect a cell or dig a pit-house or find shelter in a cave if necessary. There are many examples of remote sketes in Moldavia, places in which monks desiring to live a sheltered life would go to pray far from contact with the world. The number of monks was quite small, only a few sketes had more than ten inhabitants; large monasteries had metochions in which they would send monastic personnel for economic business; so that the latter would not lose contact with Church life they would also need an altar for prayer.

There are cases in which the founder would offer the monastic establishment an allotment for a garden, orchards and on which the appurtances could be built. An establishment (set of rules) would be drawn to regulate that skete or metochion (secular priests were forbidden, the inhabitants had to be outsiders), but the accomplishment of the founder's wishes did not happen. In these small sketes some of the founders would become monks, as well, benefiting from the status of monk or nun and continuing to manage their estates while exempted from paying certain taxes. The 'recovery' of certain values specific to Eastern monasticism also had a great influence on some family chapels belonging to boyar households; as some specialists show 'the possibility of the movement for maintaining the Athonite monastic tradition within the monasteries, sketes and metochions in our country, from where it might have been passed through imitation to the laymen predisposed to this atmosphere'²³.

The social solidarities of a certain region would coalesce at the foundation of a monastic place of worship. There are records of cases where several people would gather to contribute, through work or money or allotments of land, to its construction. Some family foundations were not without trouble, especially since not all members wished to contribute to the foundation since this entailed the renouncement of their part of the inheritance. The cases in which monastic buildings were founded on the estates of minor boyars are also interesting: there were many tiny sketes built on some of the free peasants' estates, too²⁴. Others would give land, orchards, vineyards etc., and then subordinate them to the bishoprics (as are, for example, the cases of the sketes Căpătan²⁵, Cărligați²⁶, Crețești²⁷, Dobrovtor²⁸, Fedeleșeni²⁹, Hlăpești³⁰, Lipova³¹, Orgoești³²,

²² Alin Pop, *Sihăștrii*, Alexandria, 2002, p. 15 sqq.; for example, see: *Istoria Sihăștriei Putnei*, edited by Teodor Bălan, Cernăuți, 1936, p. 9.

²³ Constantin Bobulescu, *O viață trăită, viața de paraclise*, in "Revista Societății Istorico-Arheologice Bisericești", Chișinău, XXII, 1932, p. 4-5.

²⁴ Aurel Sava, *Contribuții la istoria Bisericii vrâncene*, in "Milcovia", II, 1931, p. 30; Constantin N. Tomescu, *Știri catagrafice din Biserica Moldovei în 1809*, in *AB*, III, 1931, p. 79; Constantin Bobulescu, *Schitul Cotumba*, in *BOR*, LXV, 1-3, 1947, p. 78; Episcopul Melchisedec, *Cronica Hușilor*, p. 290; Mircea Pahomi, *op. cit.*, p. 187-188.

²⁵ Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoricul Podgoriei Odobeștilor din cele mai vechi timpuri până la 1918*, cu 124 de documente inedite (1626-1864) și 3 reproduceri, București, 1969, p. 306-307.

²⁶ Episcopul Melchisedec, *Cronica Hușilor*, p. 319; Veniamin Pocitan, *Metoacele episcopiei Hușilor*, p. 109-110.

²⁷ Veniamin Pocitan, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

²⁸ Marcu-Marian Petcu, *Mănăstiri și schituri din Moldova, astăzi dispărute (sec. XIV-XIX)*, București, 2010, p. 365.

²⁹ Pr. Al. Cristea, *Episcopia Romanului*, București, 1901, *Anexe*, p. II.

³⁰ C. Voicescu, *Schitul Pocrov și importanța lui pentru viața și cultura bisericească din Moldova în sec. XVIII*, in *BOR*, XC, 1972, 7-8, p. 827.

³¹ Macarie Ciolan, *Un vechi așezământ de cultură, civilizație și artă veche românească. Mănăstirea Secu*, in *MMS*, LXI, 1-3, 1985, p. 189.

³² *Documente ale fostelor schituri Orgoeștii, Bogdănița, Pârveștii, Cârțibașii și Mânzații din județul Tutova*, Huși, 1929, p. III.

Poglețu³³), but many of these tiny sketes which later became metochions did not endure, some dissolving in about one century from foundation, others becoming parish churches³⁴. As to their estates, they became the property of the bishopric³⁵. Very many of the monastic establishments open at this time – not only those founded in the interval – are listed as metochions or sketes also depending on the big monasteries³⁶, not only on the superior institutions of the Church (The Metropolis of Moldavia and the bishoprics of Roman, Huși³⁷ and Rădăuți). Some founders, having reached their old age and lacking the financial capital to support it, would subordinate it to another monastery³⁸ of the bishopric so that they would continue to be managed and not close. Some *nachalnicks* (managers) would act in the same way when in a position to no longer support the settlement due to the death or carelessness of the founders or their descendants³⁹. The fathers superior (abbots) or administrators of a monastic settlement were the ones that took over the founder's rights in case none of those whose obligation it was to maintain, to repair or to rebuild an establishment would or no one would contribute to the list of founders. The latter would try to collect the funds or would persuade the wealthy to help the holy places would not dissolve. The first founders were never forgotten, being mentioned before all others added along the way, in the natural order of things.

It was in the interest of the bishoprics and great monasteries to own metochions and it was very pragmatic. Besides the fact that estates and the agricultural production were more easily managed, these appurtenances, located in several parts of the country, served to fill the holes in the treasury, with the expectance of tax exemption but also donations from certain founders or local benefactors.

³³ D. Hrițcu, *Schitul Sucmezeu din ținutul Putnei, metoh al Schitului celui Mare din Galiția*, in *MMS*, LVII, 10-12, 1981, p. 775-776.

³⁴ Episcopul Melchisedec, *Cronica Hușilor*, p. 390-391 (Averești); N. Iorga, *Documente privitoare la familia Callimachi*, vol. I, București, 1902, p. 500 (Bârcu-Goșmani); Marcu-Marian Petcu, *op. cit.*, p. 24 (Aldești); Constantin N. Tomescu, *op. cit.*, p. 175 (Frumoasa-Bălăbănești); idem, *Diferite știri din arhiva Consiliului eparhial Chișinău. Despre prădarea bisericii Sf. Ioan din mahalaua Mărăței din târgul Piatra. 1810*, in *AB*, V, nr. 2, 1933, p. 69-70 (Mărăței); idem, *Diferite știri din arhiva Consiliului Eparhial-Chișinău. Mijlocirile ce se făceau pentru hirotonia unui monah în 1811*, in *AB*, V, nr. 1, 1933, p. 22 (Poiana Pralii).

³⁵ As in the case of the skete from Giurgești, which was metochion of the Monastery of Vatopedi and of the Bishopric of Roman (Constantin N. Tomescu, *Știri catagrafice*, p. 88), or of the skete Golgota, metochion of Esfigmenu Monastery (Veniamin Pocitan, *Schitul de maici Golgota-Vaslui*, in "Buletinul Episcopiei Hușilor", IX, nr. 12, 1933, p. 90-93). See, also, the cases of the metochions of Buzdugan (N. Stoicescu, *Repertoriul*, p. 139), Cârțibași (Iacov Antonovici, *Documente ale fostelor schituri Orgoestii, Bogdănița, Pârveștii, Cârțibașii și Mânzații din județul Tutova*, Huși, 1929, p. 86), Crângul de Sus, Crângul de Jos (*ibidem*, p. 95), Știoboreni (Constantin N. Tomescu, *Știri catagrafice*, p. 87).

³⁶ See, for example, the cases of Chiliile (Florin Marinescu, *Contribuții privitoare la relațiile dintre Țările Române și Mănăstirea Vatoped de la Muntele Athos*, in *In honorem Ioan Caproșu*, volum îngrijit de Lucian Leuștean, Maria Magdalena Székely, Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, Petronel Zahariuc, Iași, 2002, p. 295), Gorovei (Narcis Crețulescu, *Istoria Sf. Mănăstiri Gorovei din județul Dorohoi*, Dorohoi, 1898, p. 5), Herța (N. Iorga, *Documente. Biserica din Herța*, in *RI*, X, 7-9, 1924, p. 199; idem, *Studii și documente cu privire la istoria românilor*, vol. XXII, București, 1913, p. 396) or Lepșa (Aurel Sava, *op. cit.*, p. 30).

³⁷ Veniamin Pocitan, *Metoacele episcopiei Hușilor*, in "Cronica Hușilor", nr. 4, 1934, p. 107, 110; Mircea Păcurariu, *Contribuții la istoria Episcopiei Romanului, Rădăuților și Hușilor în secolul al XVII-lea și începutul secolului al XVIII-lea*, in *MMS*, LV, 1-2, 1979, p. 66; Episcopul Melchisedec, *Cronica Hușilor*, p. 196-197.

³⁸ There are also cases of land exchanges between superior institutions and monasteries (Marcu-Marian Petcu, *op. cit.*, p. 123-124).

³⁹ As happened in the case of the sketes from Valea Neagră and Lepșa (Aurel V. Sava, *op. cit.*, p. 31-32; Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoricul Podgoriei Odobeștilor*, p. 306-307), or Poiana Pralii (Constantin Bobulescu, *Schituri și sihăstirii de pe Valea Troțușului*, p. 27).

Even the leaders of big monasteries who had large properties in wine growing⁴⁰ or agricultural areas decided to build small wooden churches with the intention of using them seasonally, while part of the community would go wheat reaping, grape-picking or harvesting⁴¹. In time, some of the inhabitants of the monastery would gather (they would generally be exempted from taxes by royal decree) and build their houses around the small place of worship. It must be noted that some metochions also catered for the needs of the nearby villages, for a lack of other places of worship. There are records of cases when the local bishop would decide for both a secular priest and a monk to serve at the same altar, each with the specific canonical and economical-administrative restraints and limitations⁴². Some of the money earned from the liturgical rituals (christenings, marriages, funerals) was directed to the big monastery. Great monasteries traded some of the produce from the estates managed by the metochion monks. In exchange, besides the liturgical schedule, the monks would also have other occupations: some were 'copyists, sculptors, engravers, church or icon painters; others were craftsmen, tending to the needs of the monastery and of its other inhabitants, book binders, drapers, tailors, skimmers, cobblers, blacksmiths, carpenters or field hands, bee-keepers'⁴³; others would tend solely to the church, as deacons, choir singers or beadles; others would work in the refectory, cellar, the monastery's customs offices or shops. Only the disabled or old monks were excused from work. Some monasteries had alembics for the making of spirits and even public houses where beverages from their own production were merchandised.

The Mount Athos monasteries or those from other Holy Places also had metochions in the cities, where the people sent to oversee the aid would stay temporarily. The monasteries owned important properties, either in the city or on its outskirts. These were their main sources of income taking into account that town monasteries had more difficulty managing lands that were far away. On the other hand, some of the monasteries were subordinated and the main part of their income would go to the monasteries they were subordinated to, which would facilitate an interest in more easily obtaining material advantages directly from the city⁴⁴. Some of the monasteries had houses, liquor stores, house allotments, cellars and other outhouses that would bring quite significant revenue compared to the social and material circumstances of the others. A foreign traveller's account is relevant to this state of things: 'other monasteries inside and outside town are built by various princes; these monasteries have villages and estates, movable and immovable property; they have plenty of people who work, gypsies, too; they keep many herds of oxen, cattle, horses, as well as bees and others, and then sell and earn money which they readily send to Jerusalem and the Holy Mount in Greece, these monasteries being subordinated to those'⁴⁵. In the case of several metochions, the father superior would visit them for economic purposes, too, to check on the way in

⁴⁰ In the wine-growing areas, where large monasteries had important properties, were built some metochions, with small churches for the monks who were engaged in viticulture. See, for example, the cases of the sketes Horodiștea (Gh. Ungureanu, Gh. Anghel, Const. Botez, *Cronica Cotmarilor*, București, 1971, p. 245; Gh. Ghibănescu, *Revista T. Codrescu*, 3, 1933, p. 40), Zlodica (Gh. Ungureanu, Gh. Anghel, Const. Botez, *op. cit.*, p. 251), or Țifești (Episcopul Melchisedec, *Cronica Romanului*, I, p. 349).

⁴¹ Episcopul Melchisedec, *Cronica Hușilor*, p. 290.

⁴² ASI, Mănăstirea Coșula, VII/18; *ibidem*, Ms. 551, f. 121, no. 8; Ms. 552, f. 57^v-58^r, no. 6.

⁴³ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. II, ed. II, Iași, 2006, p. 193; Ioan-Augustin Guriță, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Dan Bădărău, Ioan Caproșu, *Iași vechilor zidiri până la 1821*, ed. II, Iași, 2007, p. 129.

⁴⁵ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. V, îngrijit de Maria Holban (editor responsabil), M. M. Alexandrescu Dersca-Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu, București, 1973, p. 235-236.

which the estates were managed. On these estates, too, there would appear small sketes dependent on large monasteries, rather household outhouses, but with a special status because they had an altar for prayer.

The local bishop could intervene when there were quarrels as to a skete's properties; such cases exist, when a skete was closed due to estate management differences. Some sketes were founded by monks coming from Transylvania, especially after the union of some communities with the Church of Rome, as well as during the rule of Empress Maria Theresa. The Metropolitan and the diocese bishops would tend to them⁴⁶. Some wanted to build new places of worship in which they could live without bothering the already formed communities.

There are cases in which the social reasons of the foundation of a monastic establishment gains philanthropic or canonical scope. First of all, this is the time when the St. Spyridon hospital of Iași was founded simultaneously with the monastery of the same name. Starting with the second half of the eighteenth century several decrees were given through which precise rules for the proper functioning of the new institution were given. The founders took care of the hospital through donations or by exempting the medical institutions from certain taxes. In order to build the hospital there were significant financial efforts made, 'much expenditure was necessary for those wretched and helpless patients'. The hospital for plague patients was founded in the proximity of a skete placed among the forests skirting the Moldavian capital and two years later the St. Spyridon monastery was named a patriarchal stavropegial monastery⁴⁷. Another case is that of the foundation of a monastic settlement for nuns at Varatic, during the rule of father superior Paisie, due to the existence of a nunnery very close to an abbey⁴⁸. To avoid any potential differences or issues the decision that the nuns move at a greater distance, in a new monastery, was made.

Firstly, we might say that many religious establishments are founded at this time on the breadth of the Romanian territory. Furthermore, besides monasteries subordinated before, the so-called 'Phanariote' rulers resort to similar gestures themselves, thereby integrating their mostly short reigns in the tradition of their predecessors. To better preserve their immovable assets and increase their revenues, some of the monastic establishments start building new metochions on the new estates, as well as receiving subordinations of smaller settlements just like the superior institutions of the Church. On the other hand, a reconfiguration of the monastic life is also apparent, a kind of 'reformation' materializing in the 'recovery' of the original values of monasticism, which also had a direct effect on the founders' attitude towards what it meant to create new foundations. It was necessary for the inhabitants of monastic settlements (which included the founders) not to want for the means of subsistence; additionally, supplying them with various estates meant working the land, while tax exemption and the offering

⁴⁶ Ioan Ivan, *Monahi transilvăneni viețuitori în mănăstirile din Moldova*, in *MMS*, LIV, 9-12, 1978, p. 727-738; Ștefan Meteș, *Emigrări românești din Transilvania în secolele XIII-XX*, București, 1977, p. 122.

⁴⁷ *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași*, vol. X, *Acte interne (1796-1800)*, editate de Ioan Caproșu, Iași, 2007, p. 163, nr. 177; p. 174, nr. 190; p. 265-272, nr. 289; Gh. Ghibănescu, *Primele 11 hrisoave de mile ale M-rii și spitalului Sf. Spiridon*, in *IN*, fasc. 9, 1, 1931, p. 156-170.

⁴⁸ *Așezăminte mănăstirești din cuprinsul eparhiei*, in *AB*, III, 4, 1931, p. 58; Scarlat Porcescu, *Mănăstirea Varatic. Vatră de istorie*, in *Mănăstirea Varatic*, Iași, 1986, p. 14; Nazaria Niță, *Ciitori ai evlaviei străbune. Ciitori fondatori ai Mănăstirii Varatic*, Iași, 1994, p. 15 *sqq.*; Episcopul Melchisedec, *Notițe istorice*, p. 48; C. Mătasă, *Călăuza județului Neamț*, București, 1929, p. 130; Evghenie Ungureanu, Zenaida Racliș, *Istoria mănăstirii Văratice*, Mănăstirea Neamț, 1932, p. 62; I. Ivan, *Mănăstirea Varatec la două sute de ani*, in *MMS*, LXI, 10-12, 1985, p. 778.

of great sums of money implied the opening of craftsmen's workshops or the purchase or making of the tools for the manufacture of rough products by those who wanted to commit to monastic life and earn a living from the fruits of their labour. But, being built for different needs, sometimes in a hurry, without large communities and a constant and constant monastic tradition, many of these small sketes disappeared in the nineteenth century, in many cases the traces of their existence have not been preserved today⁴⁹.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS FOR FOUNDING NEW MONASTERIES AND
SKETES IN THE 18th CENTURY MOLDAVIA
(Summary)

Keywords: ecclesiastic history, sketes and monasteries, boyar families, social and economic reasons, tax immunity, donations.

In this paper I will review the economic and social reasons leading to an unprecedented phenomenon in the ecclesiastic history unfolding on Romanian territory. Many sketes and monasteries were founded in Moldavia before 1700, most of them by rulers or by important boyar families. In the eighteenth century, however, over 200 were founded and several other tens were restored, developing a particular ecclesiastic geography as a consequence of major changes and the influence of several factors. In a time characterized by political instability, the phenomenon was unprecedented and was based, besides the obvious spiritual reasons, on economic and social ones. In addition to acquiring the status of founder or benefactor to a place of worship – a particularly important factor in bolstering social prestige – the person investing his fortune in such noble pursuits was implicitly the beneficiary of economic advantages. As to the founders of the period, aside from rulers, they were mostly boyars, hierarchs, monastery abbots, secular priests or mere monks. On the other hand, there was also an interest on the part of eparchies or great monasteries to have sketes or metochions in places where a certain economic production existed (especially in agricultural or wine-growing areas). In addition to the fact that the estates and agricultural production were much more easily managed, prospective shortcomings could be also substituted through these appurtenances placed in different parts of the country, awaiting tax immunity as well as donations from princes and local benefactors.

⁴⁹ Marcu-Marian Petcu, *op. cit.*, p. 9 *sqq.*