

The Image of Saint Paisius Velichkovsky and the Exhumation of His Relics (I)

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Abstract

This paper presents in the first part, after a brief context of the personal life of Saint Paisius Velichkovsky from Neamț, his face transposed by posterity in engravings, portraits and icons, drawing attention on the perpetuation of an image different from his original appearance, while proposing, a new transposing of it into a special icon painted on the basis of this approach, and in the second part, the exhumation of the precious relics of the saint, the causes of depreciation of his bones, traditions from Neamț related to the grave and the exhumation in light of the historical reality, the restoration of the tomb, as well as putting the relics in a reliquary for veneration.

Keywords:

Saint Paisius Velichkovsky, Monastery Neamț, engravings, portraits, icons, grave exhumation, holy relics, traditions, historical reality, worship.

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The monumental princely church of Neamț Monastery, founded by Saint Stephen the Great and consecrated in 1497, conserves under the floor of the porch, narthex and of the burial chamber, numerous tombs, some of the most important in the history of the Church and the nation.

The tradition of exhumation of the dead after a certain time, which was maintained in this lavra for a long time, allowed to be buried in the porch during the

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eighteenth and nineteenth centuries¹ many of the abbots and bishops from here. In the narthex – necropolis of the most important monastic personalities from before 1497 – were buried, until the eighteenth century, several bishops and abbots from Neamț and some officials, most of them retaining their names either inscribed on tombstones, remaining starting from 1883 under the existing pavement, or on the vertical walls of the church².

It is known that in the burial chamber, dedicated to the main founders, in the northern part of the room, was reburied Stephen II of Moldavia, deceased in 1447, to whom Stephen the Great put the present tombstone, and on the southern side, Saint Paisius Velichkovsky, who, more than any other founder, through his hesychast current of Panorthodox importance, became also spiritual founder, sealing the golden age of Romanian Orthodoxy from the late eighteenth century.

Although he was called “the only useful wanderer that came from across the Prut”³, towards this holy person, because he was of a different ethnicity and had the grave in the most exposed position from Neamț princely church, was created a controversial atmosphere during the Enlightenment and the communist periods, fueled by our country’s political relations with Russia. This situation influenced even the monastic environments during the previous atheist regime, regarding the grave of abbot Paisius, to which the monks still fulfilled an ordinance of veneration become tradition in the monastery. The influence consisted in shaping an enigmatic atmosphere around the grave that it would be empty, that the holy relics were stolen by the Russians, for which reason it should not be given too much importance. Although it was a fanciful mentality, it was acquired also by some credulous personalities, apolitical, of Romanian medieval culture. From the moment of the exhumation of the Unknown Saint, this mentality would take on new shades, perpetuated until the investigation of the grave and the exhumation of the Saint Paisius.

Therefore, being entrusted to draft the present text regarding this moment, in which we were directly involved, and given that the topic has not been subject to

¹ Between 1835-1901 were exhumed the remains of 547 inhumed who lived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were moved to the crypt of the monastery (Narcis Crețulescu, *Numele răposașilor a căror oseminte se găsește în gropnița Mănăstirii Neamț (The Name of the Deceased Whose Bones Are Found in the Crypt of Neamț Monastery)*, Rom. ms. 139, BMN, 100 file (= BMN, Rom. ms. 139), see a summary of Archimandrite Nestor Vornicescu, “The Manuscripts of the High Priest Narcis Crețulescu from the Library of Monastery Neamț”, in *Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava*, no. 7-8/1968, pp. 434-435; Narcis Crețulescu, *Inscripțiile Sfintelor Mănăstiri Neamțu și Secu cu a schiturilor sale dimprejur (Inscriptions of the Holy Monasteries of Neamț and Secu with Their Surrounding Hermitages)*, 1906, Rom. ms. 171, BMN (= BMN, Rom. ms. 171), ff. 236-256.

² BMN, Rom. ms. 171, ff. 254-258; deac. Ioan Ivan, fr. Scarlat Porcescu, *Mănăstirea Neamț (Neamț Monastery)*, Iași, 1981, pp. 56-66.

³ Nicolae Iorga, *Viața călugărească și munca pentru cultură (The Monastic Life and the Work for Culture)*, Neamț Monastery, 1925, p. 39.

any other approaches, we intend to present in the first part, the particular context of the psychosomatic life of Saint Paisius and his face described by his apprentices, as well as the way it was transposed into engravings, paintings and icons, and in the second, the exhumation, the conservation status of the archaeological material, possible causes of depreciation of the holy relics, the tradition of exhumation in Neamț Monastery – with a critical analysis of the information, the restoration of the tomb and the placing of the holy relics into the reliquary.

As documents, we will use sources of history and spirituality on the life of abbot Paisius, both the autobiography⁴ and the biographies written by his contemporary disciples, and those of the followers that did not know the saint directly.

Into the first category fall the biographies of the schemamonk Mitrofan⁵, who lived into the congregation from Monastery Dragomirna, the one of monk Vitalie⁶, author of a shorter text, yet comprehensive regarding the information, the one of schemamonk Isaac the Teacher⁷ († 1817), one of the most learned scholars of the era of Paisius, that of the hierodeacon Gregory the Teacher⁸ († 1832), tonsured into the congregation of Paisius from Neamț Monastery, subsequently being elected Metropolitan of Ungrovlahia, and that of the schemamonk Plato⁹. To these, are added the

⁴ < Abbot Paisius >, “Autobiografia” in: Blessed Paisius from Neamț Velichkovsky, *Autobiografia și Viețile unui stareț urmate de Așezăminte și alte texte (Autobiography and Lives of an Abbot followed by Establishments and Other Texts)*, ed. a III-a 3rd edition augmented, introductory study by Elia Citterio, edited and presented by deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis Publishing, Sibiu, 2015 (= Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*), pp. 105-221.

⁵ < Mitrofan the Schemamonk >, “Life of Blessed Abbot Paisius”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)* (= *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*), pp. 223-334.

⁶ < Vitalie the Monk >, “Showing on Short, for the Blessed Archimandrite Paisius, Who Was Abbot of the Holy Monasteries Neamț and Secu”, typed by archimandrite. Ciprian Zaharia, in: *Contribuția românească la personalitatea, opera și amintirea starețului Paisie Velichkovski (Romanian Contribution to the Personality, Work and Memory of Abbot Paisius Velichkovsky) (1722-1794)*, Bistrița Monastery, 1985, pp. 143-154 and edited in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile* (= *Viața lui Vitalie (Life of Vitalie)*), pp. 343-353.

⁷ Dan Zamfirescu, “Isaac the Teacher, Unpublished Biography of Abbot Paisius the Great”, in *Drăgan Foundation Magazine*, Rome, no. 3-4/1987 (= *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*), pp. 457-554.

⁸ Hierodeacon Grigore the Teacher, *Povestire din parte a vieții Prea Cuviosului Părintelui nostru Paisius (Stories from the Life of Our Blessed Father Paisius)*, non-paged paper and placed probably at the last moment between the pages 295-296 from *Adunare a cuvintelor celor pentru ascultare (Assembly of Words for Obedience)*, (in Cyrillic), Neamț Monastery, 1817, re-edited by deac. Ioan I. Ică jr., in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, pp. 359-377 (= *Viața lui Grigorie (Life of Grigorie)*).

⁹ Plato the Schemamonk, *Viața preacuviosului părintelui nostru starețului Paisius (Life of Our Blessed Father Abbot Paisius)*, Neamț Monastery, 1836, re-edited under the title *Viața și nevoițele fericitului Părintelui nostru Paisius, starețul sfințelor monastiri ale Moldovei Neamțul și Secul (The Life and Struggles of Our Blessed Father Paisius, Abbot of the Holy Monasteries of Moldavia, Neamț and Secu)*, written in the new style by Gheorghe Racoveanu, Râmnicul Vâlcea, 1935.

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text of hieroschemamonk Nicolae¹⁰ and Ioan Diakovski¹¹, two other scholars-disciples from the congregation of Paisius from the Lavra in Neamț.

In the second category were placed the biographies of the spiritual father Andronic Popovici († 1893)¹² – considered “the last Moldovan chronicler from the nineteenth century”, who, in his monumental work *History of the Monasteries Neamț and Secu*, written in four variants remained mostly unpublished, places in its center the figure of the abbot Paisius¹³ – the one from the manuscript 154 from the Library of Monastery Neamț, whose authorship is not sufficiently clarified¹⁴ and that of the bishop Narcis Crețulescu¹⁵.

¹⁰ It is about the text of the Rom. ms. 1860, BAR, highlighted for the first time by fr. PhD. Paul Mihail, “On the Participation of Bishop Veniamin Costachi at the Funeral of Abbot Paisius from Neamț”, in *Romanian Orthodox Church*, no. 3-4, 1987, pp. 109-116, but without uncover the author accomplished by Valentina Pelin during its republishing and titled: < Nicolae the Hieroschemamonk >, “Chronicle of the Days before and after Falling Asleep in the Lord of the Abbot Paisius (October 4-December 13, 1994)”, in: Sfântul Paisius from Neamț, *Cuvinte și scrieri duhovnicești (Words and Spiritual Writings)*, II, Kishinev, 1999, pp. 242-258, re-edited also by deac. Ioan I. Ică jr., in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)* (= *Cronica lui Nicolae (Chronicle of Nicolae)*), pp. 381-396.

¹¹ It is about two texts: < Ioan Diakovski the Hieroschemamonk >, “Mourning at the Tomb of Abbot Paisius, from all Spiritual Sons”, translated into Romanian by hieromonk Chiriac, father confessor in 1836 and *idem*, “The Service on Blessed Saint Paisius”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, pp. 409-412 and 415-448.

¹² ANNȚ, Neamț-Secu Monastery, file 1/1840: Registry, ff. 1-16. According to this document from 1840, Andronic was a monk at Secu Monastery, as son of the Moldavian priest Neculai from village Lungani, Cărligătura county, ordered in the monastery in 1831, ordained in 1838 by abbot Neonil, in Neamț Monastery and had Neofit as father confessor (ff. 7^v-8^r).

¹³ < Andronic the Hieroschemamonk >, *Istoria Mănăstirilor Neamțul și Secul (History of the Monasteries Neamț and Secu)*, III, 1872, ANRM, fond 2119, inv. 3, file 64, 39 pages; IV, 1874, fond 2119, inv. 3, file 70, 241 pages; V, 1879-1880, fond 2119, inv. 3, file 82, 432 pages (= *Viața lui Andronic (Life of Andronic)*).

¹⁴ It was first assigned to the archimandrites Augustin Brahă and Gherasim Miron and written between 1852-1856, according to a note (cf. Deac. prof. Ioan Ivan, “Introduction” in: *Life of Blessed Paisius from Neamț*, edition nurtured by author from the manuscript no. 154 from the Library of Monastery Neamț, Trinitas Publishing, Iași, 1997, pp. X-XII), then to Andronic, drafted and written around 1858 (cf. Valentina Pelin, “The Contribution of Romanian Scholars to the Translations of the School of Paisius”, in: *Romanians in the Hesychastic Revival*, Trinitas Publishing, Iași, 1997, p. 109, n. 27; Fr. Dorimedont Bădărău, “Andronic the Father Confessor – The Last Chronicler of the Nineteenth Century: Life, Personality and Historical Work” in: *Istoria Sfintelor Mănăstiri Neamț și Secu a arhimandritului Andronic Popovici (History of the Monasteries Neamț and Secu of Archimandrite Andronic Popovici)*, I, Cetatea Doamnei Publishing, Piatra Neamț, 2015, pp. 5-51) and, more recently, to Augustin Brahă, as author, and Andronic, as copyist, drafted “before March 20, 1858” (Petronel Zahariuc, “Introduction”, in: *Hieromonk Andronic, Journey to Mount Athos (1858-1859)*, Publishing House of “Al. I. Cuza” University, Iași, 2015 (= *Viața lui Augustin și Andronic (Life of Augustin and Andronic)*), pp. 22-25, n. 76).

¹⁵ Narcis Crețulescu, *Istoria Sfintei Mănăstiri Neamțu și Secul pe timpul cuviosului stareț Paisius (History of the Monasteries Neamț and Secu during the Blessed Abbot Paisius), 1763-1794*,

I. The Context of the Personal Life of Saint Paisius

I.1. Biographical Data

Born on December 21, 1722 in the city of Poltava in Ukraine, into a family of archpriests, the future abbot Paisius receives the baptismal name of Peter, and at the age of four remains fatherless. First he learned after *the Psalter, the Horologion* and patristic texts, then he goes to the Academy of Petru Movilă in Kiev, but after four years of attending classes, he abandons them, traveling at several monasteries and hermitages to find an adviser and to enter into monasticism; he receives the tonsure into rassaphore at the Monastery Medvedonski on August 16, 1741, being named Plato, but being attracted by “the blessed Romanian language” and the reputation of the monasteries from the Romanian Principalities “[...] for the beauty and fertility of our land, for the spirit of brotherly Christian hospitality of our voivodes and hierarchs”¹⁶ then, he would leave his homeland forever.

Therefore, after nearly 20 years spent in his native country (1722-1742), being penetrated by a great spiritual desire to find the most skilled mentors, gets to enter during 1742-1746, the dweller in the hermitages of the coasts of Buzău and Vrancea: Dălhăuți, Trăisteni and Cârnu, and from there he will go to Moldova and then to worship the miraculous icon of Our Lady from Neamț Monastery, which he was worthy to hold in his hands three times¹⁷ during its removal in for procession, perhaps at the feast of the monastery. At the Poiana Mărului Hermitage was and developed under the guidance of the famous hesychast abbot Vasile, a real panorthodox high living hesychastic center with a Scriptorium of patristic works translated and copied in Romanian and Slavonic. But due to his fear lest

t. III, BAR, Rom. ms. 5693, typed by de Gabriela Dumitrescu for the paper of Archimandrite Ciprian Zaharia, *op.cit.*, ff. 184-274 (= *Viața lui Narcis (Life of Narcis)*), ff. 102-126. The author wrote, in his turn, the life of abbot Paisius as a reworking of the one written by Andronic the father confessor, with documented records from the monastery elderly parents, who did not meet abbot Paisius, but accumulated resentments, developing a different image than that of the contemporary disciples. Being a work drawn from an obvious subjective perspective, we will use it only where the information or lack of it ask it.

¹⁶ Nichifor Crainic, *Sfințenia – împlinire a umanului (curs de teologie mistică) (Holiness – Fulfillment of the Human. Mystical Theology Course)*, (1935-1936), edition nurtured by hierodeacon Teodosie Paraschiv, Trinitas Publishing, Iași, 1993 (= Nichifor Crainic, *Curs de teologie mistică (Mystical Theology Course)*), p. 147.

¹⁷ < Abbot Paisius >, “Letter to Constantin Moruzi Prince of Moldavia”, in: Saint Paisius from Neamț, *Cuvinte și scrisori duhovnicești (Spiritual Words and Letters)*, II, edition nurtured by Valentina Pelin, Kishinev, 1999 (= Paisius from Neamț, *Cuvinte și scrisori (Words and Letters)*), p. 185.

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this spiritual abbot to make him a priest¹⁸, although he was under the age of 24 years, Plato goes to Athos, where he remained during the years 1746-1763¹⁹.

For two years he lives in a small community of Greeks and Slavs monks, in the cell Kyparis, which belonged to Pantocrator Monastery, then, another two and a half years alone in a hut, living in a severe asceticism and in an unusual poverty. Here, in 1750, when he was 28 years old, was found by the monk Vasile from Poiana Mărului, who would tonsure him into monasticism, changing his name from Plato into Paisius. Then, for his hesychastic asceticism and knowledge of Romanian²⁰, joined together as brother the young ascetic monk Visarion came from Moldova, and, shortly afterwards, twelve other Romanian and five Slavic, situation which forced him to buy the cell *Saint Constantine*, where he first set the rule of serving in Romanian and Slavic²¹. Here he is ordained deacon, hieromonk and confessor by Bishop Grigorie Rașca²². However, due to the multiplication of the disciples, with the approval of the Pantocrator Monastery, in 1757 begins to build the *Hermitage Saint Elijah*. From here, following an invitation, on April 15, 1762 he took over the leadership of Monastery Simonopetra²³, becoming abbot, accompanied by 35 monks, but because of the very large debts that the monastery had to the Turks, after three months, he returned to the hermitage²⁴ where he had left half of his congregation. In this context of instability, to which was added also the rivalry between the Greeks and the Slavs from Athos, Paisius decides to return in the Romanian Principalities²⁵.

¹⁸ Cf. < Abbot Paisius >, “Autobiography” in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, pp. 201-203.

¹⁹ More precise: July 4, 1746-April 3, 1763 (cf. *Viața lui Isaac*, f. 154, ed. 1987, p. 550, ed. 2015, p. 333).

²⁰ Cf. *Viața lui Grigorie (Life of Grigorie)*, ed. 1817, f. 4^v, ed. 2015, p. 223.

²¹ Cf. *Viața lui Grigorie (Life of Grigorie)*, ed. 1817, f. 7^v, ed. 2015, p. 237-238.

²² Cf. *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 106, ed. 1987, p. 505, ed. 2015, p. 236, that is in 1758 (f. 154, ed. 1987, p. 550, ed. 2015, p. 333).

²³ Regarding this moment, in *Codex A'*, (f. 68) of this monastery was recorded: “Father confessor Paisius came on April 15 1762; a Serbian (sic!) with his monks, almost 35 monks, who used to live at the Hermitage *Elijah the Prophet*, hermitage of the Pantocrator Monastery; He came to our monastery to live here forever and to guard it, to manage it as ruler of all: and because he could not remain, he left it and fled to Bogdania; and, them leaving, it was closed and taken over by Megali Mesi” (Hieromonk Theologos from Simonopetra, *Sfântul Paisius și ucenicii lui în Sfântul Munte și în Mănăstirea Simonopetra (Saint Paisius and his Followers in the Holy Mountain and in the Monastery Simonopetra)*, translated by hieromonk Nathanael Neacșu, Doxologia Publishing, Iași, 2014, pp. 29-33).

²⁴ Cf. *Viața lui Grigorie (Life of Grigorie)*, ed. 1817, f. 8^v; *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, ed. 2015, pp. 242-243.

²⁵ Cf. *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, ed. 2015, p. 244; *Viața lui Grigorie (Life of Grigorie)*, ed. 1817, f. 8^v, ed. 2015, p. 244; fr. PhD. Paul Mihail, “The Service of Paisius from Neamț

Accompanied by 64 monks, embarked in two ships, he leaves the Athos on April 3, 1763²⁶, passes through Constantinople and gets to Galați, then the Hermitage Vărzărești for a halt, and in September 1763 receives from the Metropolitan of Moldova, Gavriil Callimachi (1760-1786) and from the prince Grigorie Callimachi (1761-1764, 1767-1769), Monastery Dragomirna, where he remained twelve years (1763-1775)²⁷. Here he would receive during the Great Lent of the year 1765²⁸ the Great Scheme from the hands of hieroschemamonk Alexie²⁹, the disciple of the abbot Vasile from Poiana Mărului, and he would lead a community of 350 monks and brothers, under a Settlement³⁰, which he draws basing it on *the Holy Scripture* and the writings of the Holy Fathers.

But because of the Russo-Turkish conflict (1768-1774), concluded - among other things - with the passing of northern Moldova under Austrian rule, and not accepting to live under a heterodox dominion, abbot Paisius took over Secu Monastery on October 14, 1775, at the invitation of egumen Eftimie Cananău and of the former abbot Nifon³¹, being accompanied by 200 monks³². In this monastery, he would remain almost four years (1775-1779)³³, living in peace, tranquility and spiritual joy. But from here he was forced to leave because of the multiplication of the number of monks, of the tight place and, especially, of the decision of Prince Constantin Moruzi, who, not giving him the support to build new cells, he forced him to receive Neamț Monastery as a place for its large congregation. Being in great distress and illness due to this decision taken against his will, but having no alternative and being encouraged by his disciples, on the eve of the feast of the Assumption 1779, he would take the lead of both monasteries, Neamț and Secu, for a period of fifteen years (1779-1794)³⁴, in which he will continue and will

(according to the manuscript from the Mount Athos, at the Hermitage Saint Elijah, together with his portrait)" in *Romanian Orthodox Church*, no. 1-3, 1992 (= Paul Mihail, *The Service*), p. 134.

²⁶ Cf. *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 154, ed. 1987, p. 550, ed. 2015, p. 333.

²⁷ More precise: September 3, 1763-September 1, 1775 (cf. *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 154, ed. 1987, p. 550, ed. 2015, p. 333).

²⁸ We agree with the argument of Valentina Pelin regarding this year (cf. Paisius from Neamț, *Cuvinte și scrisori (Words and Letters)*, I, ed. 1998, pp. 19-20, n 2).

²⁹ *Viața lui Isaac*, ff. 110^v-111^r, ed. 1987, p. 509, ed. 2015, p. 246, *Viața lui Platon (Life of Plato)*, ed. 1836, f. 28^v.

³⁰ < Abbot Paisius >, "The Establishment of Paisius from Dragomirna (1763)", in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, pp. 459-483.

³¹ Cf. *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 120^v, ed. 1987, p. 519, ed. 2015, p. 263.

³² Cf. *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, ed. 2015, p. 263.

³³ More precise: October 14, 1775-August 14, 1779, that is three years and nine months (cf. *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 154, ed. 1987, p. 550, ed. 2015, p. 333).

³⁴ More precise: August 14, 1779-November 15, 1794, that is fifteen years and three months.

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lead to apogee the great current of hesychastic renewal from the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1790, would be ordained archimandrite by Archbishop Ambrozie of Poltava³⁵ and would remain at Neamț Monastery until the day of his passing to eternal life - November 15, 1794.

I.2. Health Problems of Abbot Paisius

Resembling many saints of the Church, abbot Paisius he had a flickering nature even from his youth, timid and sickly, which he subjected, in due course, and a specific hesychastic asceticism, fulfilling the words of Saint Apostle Paul: “*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection* (I Corinthians 9:27) [...] *for when I am weak, then am I strong*” (II Corinthians 12:10), because “*He said unto me: [...] for My strength is made perfect in weakness*” (II Corinthians 12:9). This Pauline paradox, fulfilled by Abbot Paisius and become a symbol of his person, was highlighted by Nichifor Crainic as follows: “This man, strangely weak and pale, as if he would have never had blood in him, weak and sickly since he was young, having on the right side the body a wound from top to bottom, had an energy of fantastic proportions”³⁶.

About the period of his youth, when he was a student in Kiev, himself confesses, being dissatisfied with the scholastic character of the education from the Kievan Academy and of the Ukrainian monastic and spiritual level from those times, ceased to attend the classes and was more concerned with how he could escape from there. Being caught and interrogated by the Academy Rector, Silvestru Kuleabț (1740-1745), he recalls in his biography, which he leaves to his disciples before his death, also about some personal weaknesses: “I, who I was very shy by my nature, more so in before such a person [...] I do not know how I dared to answer him, saying that the first reason for which I ceased to learn the foreign doctrine [of the ancient classics] was my unshaken intention to make myself monk [...]”³⁷. Then, after showing the three reasons for the abandonment of the school, as well as the rector’s intention to change his decision, describing also his stubbornness, which led the rector to threaten him with the beating, continues: “But I, knowing my bodily infirmity and also fearing that the beating might shake what little health I had, I thought, however, although I did not want, to obey his will, especially when the compulsion was not supposed to be long-lasting”³⁸.

³⁵ Cf. *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 154, ed. 1987, p. 550, ed. 2015, p. 333.

³⁶ Nichifor Crainic, *Curs de teologie mistică (Mystical Theology Course)*, p. 149.

³⁷ < Abbot Paisius >, “Autobiografia”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, p. 126.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 128.

Not long after this confrontation, he decides to leave with his friend Demetrius at the monastery, but he is stopped by an illness with fever. Now it appears more clearly from the exculpation which friend did before him, because he had disappointed him and had not kept his word in relation to the preparations for departure: “When I arrived in Kiev, he said, on our advice, leaving you sick at home, I stayed there a few days not knowing what to do [...] and so I lost my courage, thinking that you might be sick for a long time, that you might not be able to come soon to me, at Kiev [...]”³⁹.

After the painful separation from this friend, he leaves from Kiev to Chernihiv, on a boat on the rivers Dnieper and Desna, facing this perilous journey with difficulty, occasion with which stand out other limits of his fragile nature, about which he remembers: “Going upstream, we had to row continuously. My companions were incomparably stronger than me and could easily deal with this work. But I, by nature weak in body and not being forced to work from my birth, I was toiling now beyond my powers and from so much effort my whole body hurt, especially my hands and feet, as if I had been cruelly beaten”⁴⁰.

His fragile health and bodily resistance would increase afterwards because of the hard work which was ordained to in the noviciate period that followed. Reaching the Liubetskii Monastery, he was sent from the first day to the food chamber of the monastery, situation about which he remembers: “I proceeded, therefore, earnestly to this obedience, although it was beyond my power, for all the day and not just once, but several times, I used to raise from the borscht a heavy stone with which it was pressed and then I used to put it back, thing made him with great toil, beyond my power. Because of this the little health I had, was much weakened. But I did not dare to talk about this with the abbot, but gratefully I endured this toil, praying the Lord to strengthen me”⁴¹.

Being forced to leave the Monastery of Liubetskii because of the harshness of the new abbot, travels on foot unusually long for him, fact because of which the left foot and its ankle inflate, and even more, arrived with great difficulty to Hermitage Rjišteva, placed on the banks of the Dnieper River, lower than Kiev, suffered from stomach upset more than a month, vomiting everything he ate⁴².

The following period spent in Romanian hermitages mentioned, entering a monastic authentic communion, he is correctly perceived and understood, so we do not find out anything about his disease or susceptibility natively inherited. But from here, for the reason already mentioned, he would go to Athos, having as companion

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

⁴² *Cf. ibidem*, pp. 153-154.

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the monk Trifon, together with whom, because of lack of experience, was to face the greatest trouble of their lives, which the rassaphore Plato passed, thanks to divine help, but his mentor died. They had passed the difficulties of the sea journey from Galați to Constantinople, from here until the Great Lavra, where they arrived on the eve of the Feast of Saint Athanasius, founder of the monastery, that is, July 4, 1746. They remained at the Vigil of the feast of the monastery, and then left on foot to Pantocrator Monastery, distance which involved eight hours of walking. During this exhausting journey on a heat specific to the middle of the summer, the travelers sweat a lot and did not change their clothes, “[...] they drank cold water, not knowing to beware of it, and they spent the night in the woods in their sweaty clothes. Thus, after a day and a night, fell ill with a deadly and incurable disease. Being in great need because of the illness, they barely reached their brethren near the Pantocrator Monastery. These [...] when they learned that they had fallen ill in the Holy Mountain, they began to bitterly cry their close death. And what did they not do in their desire to heal them! They lit a fire to warm them, and they anointed and rubbed them with alcohol [...] but they could neither heal at all [Plato] nor the monk Trifon, but, (for this one) calling a father confessor, they gave him the Holy Eucharist, and on the third day he died. What did these loving parents not do afterwards for our blessed father? They cooked a good meal and forced him to eat and drink wine that he did never drink; when he drank the wine, his stomach was revolted because of the drink which he was not accustomed to, and he threw. Again they forced him to drink wine, though he refused, and vomited again; and vomiting, the venom came out of him completely. And so by God’s mercy after a few days he was recovered”⁴³.

The next testimonies recorded about the illness of the abbot Paisius are from the last part of his life, which was troubled by the political instability in Moldavia. In the correspondence with the Prince of Moldavia Constantin Moruzi (1777-1782) and the Metropolitan Gavriil Calimachi (1776-1786), triggered by their determination that abbot Paisius move from Monastery Secu to Neamț, in one of his letters, he asked the prince “[...] not to trouble his old age and to take pity on his illness [...]”⁴⁴. So at the age of 57 years he considered himself old and sick. But receiving an answer through the spiritual father Irinarh that the decision remained unchanged and that he is commanded to obey and go to Monastery Neamț, unacceptable situation for him, because herein there was a community led by an abbot, he fell into a state of great distress “[...] because he could neither eat nor drink nor sleep; after these, the oldest from the father confessors and monks gathered, went

⁴³ *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, pp. 227-228.

⁴⁴ <Abbot Paisius>, “Letter to Constantin Moruzi, Prince of Moldavia”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Cuvinte și scrisori (Words and Letters)*, p. 232.

unto him, and finding him sick, they began in tears to ask him [...] to leave this kind of abomination without measure and strengthen himself with food and they spoke unto him: what use will be for us? If your holiness will die prematurely we remain poor? [...] and he [...] sighed hard, and they wept bitterly!⁴⁵

On the existence of these diseases also in his old age, he would refer again six years later, when, receiving from the Athos, through his apprentice the schemamonk Mitrofan, the text manuscript of *The Book of Saint Isaac of Syria* to be translated from Greek into Slavonic, shows in its preface that thinking and “[...] pondering, on the one hand, to my old age and the last and the last of all bodily infirmity, then again even to the size of the book, and the hardship of this, surpassing my measure and not knowing my end in this life, I postponed this thought for a few months”⁴⁶. He would, however, begin the translation in the Lent of the Nativity of the year 1786, which is completed the following year, according to his own testimony: “[...] despising the various sufferings inside and outside my sinner body [...] I finished this translation [...] in 1787”⁴⁷.

During the same year, Neamț Monastery had become full with people because of the Turks who entered Târgu Neamț and headed for the monastery. Everyone here “were half scared to death”, and the fathers, according to a note of the monk Vitalie “[...] were all in great bitterness and fear and gathered in the cell of their father [...]” Paisius. “Then, the pious father, as he was held by the weakness of the old age and illness, bravely, as of a fire being forced, came down from the bed and immediately began to arrange himself; and dressing up with all the religious clothes and encouraging us with many useful words, said to us in tears [...]: to me it goes first to bow my neck under the sword of foes and to be for you strengthening example, as the one who was and am your abbot. And saying this, he bravely went out of his cell, with some of us, walking in front of his holiness, ready to die, and so coming to the monastery gate the crucifier of good things, here we encounter such good news that the Turks went back”⁴⁸.

However, abbot Paisius had assumed for a long time his illness and weakness, considering them as permitted by God. Having the gift of clairvoyance, God revealed

⁴⁵ *Viața lui Augustin și Andronic (Life of Augustin and Andronic)*, f. 123, p. 52; *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, p. 275.

⁴⁶ < Abbot Paisius >, “Preface to Isaac of Syria”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Cuvinte și scrisori (Words and Letters)*, I, p. 99-105.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 104; Serghie Cetfericov, *Paisius starețul Mănăstirii Neamțului din Moldova. Viața, învățătura și influența lui asupra Bisericii Ortodoxe (Paisius Abbot of Neamt Monastery from Moldavia. Life, Teachings and Influence on the Orthodox Church)*, translated by Nicodim Patriarch of Romania, Neamț Monastery, 1940, (= Cetfericov, *Paisius the Abbot*), pp. 280-289.

⁴⁸ Ilie Corfus, “Some notes on the Church of Moldavia”, in *Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava*, no. 1-2, 1974, pp. 120-121; *Viața lui Vitalie (Life of Vitalie)*, f. 151, ed. 2015, pp. 349-350.

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to him those related to his health, because “[...] often when sick – father Honorius, doctor of the monastery – investigated him and gave him comfort every way, giving him also [...] medicines. The abbot often said to him: «Brother Honorius, do not get upset for me, that this disease that I have is not unto death. When I’ll be sick to death, I’ll tell you and then you’ll bother in vain, as this life border would have arrived»”⁴⁹.

I.3. Dormition and the Funeral

For his upcoming removal from this life, abbot Paisius was praying to God that by His will, to comfort the congregation of the monastery around the time of his separation by his spiritual children. Through the unexpected visit of the Bishop Veniamin Costachi from Huși (1792-1803), arrived empowerment from the Metropolitan Iacob Stamati (1792-1803) to perform several services at certain parishes around and ordinations at the monastery, if necessary, abbot Paisius was convinced that it was God’s answer to his prayers. In relation to this moment, his biographer Isaac the Teacher notes: “And so the merciful God, listening to his prayers, fulfilled his will this way: put in the loving heart of God kir Veniamin, the Bishop from Huși, great wish and zeal to come to see the blessed [...]. And he came here at the monastery in 1794, October 5. Who, as an angel sent by God, was received with great joy by the blessed together with all the monks and after many other spiritual words that both shared, he showed the written blessing he had from the Reverend Metropolitan kir Iacov, to perform ordinations”⁵⁰.

On the staying of the bishop Veniamin at the monastery, between October 4-25, Hieroschemamonk Nicolae⁵¹ filled in his *Chronicle*, for each day what service and ordinations were done, showing the name, the obedience, and the place where each was blessed. From this contemporary chronicle the biographer would summarize later: “By the will of the blessed they began performing the Liturgy and doing ordinations beginning with October 7 and until October 25 he ordained, from the synod of the Monasteries Neamț and Secu, those appointed by the blessed together with the spiritual fathers, worthy to be ordained: thirteen hieromonks and eleven hierodeacons”⁵².

In an atmosphere of spiritual joy, comfort and satisfaction, reflected in the ordinations mentioned as fruit and crowning of an authentic monastic life, ended his earthly life labors abbot Paisius.

⁴⁹ *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, p. 330.

⁵⁰ *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 152, ed. 1987, p. 548, ed. 2015, p. 329.

⁵¹ *Cronica lui Nicolae (Chronicle of Nicolae)*, ff. 17-21, ed. 2015, pp. 382-383.

⁵² *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 152, ed. 1987, p. 548, ed. 2015, p. 329; *Cronica lui Nicolae (Chronicle of Nicolae)*, f. 23, ed. 2015, p. 383.

After the departure of Bishop Veniamin, the abbot, only four days enjoyed his spiritual children, seeing them doing liturgical practice at the Holy Altar, keeping vigil in their cells at night, following each of them his obedience in his hesychast-philokalic school from there, fulfilling the household of the monastery, giving them the latest counseling and answers to their various questions.

In the last days of his life, the abbot Paisius no longer translated, only proofed, no longer received people, to be more quiet, as had sign from God that soon would arrive the last moment of his life.

On Monday, October 30, 1794, he got sick, reason for which he remained confined without anyone to see him, apart from his cell servants: Martirie and Onorie. Then he recovered for just four days, from Thursday to Sunday⁵³. That day, “[...] being a little better, he wanted to listen the Divine Liturgy. And entering the church he sat down; and hereinbefore the starting of the religious songs he entered the Altar and ate the Holy Eucharist, and after the Dismissal, he could hardly come up to his cell, being held by those who served him; and from then another three days being sick, Father Honorius came also [...] with his medicines to see if they are able to do something good. But the abbot told him: «Beloved, take your holy medicines back, because now even if you brought me all the medicines of the world, they would do nothing»⁵⁴.

The moments lived at the head of abbot Paisius, from the last day of his life – Wednesday, November 15, 1794 – and those that followed, were reported by his disciples, either as their personal desire, as in the case of the monk Vitalie⁵⁵, or from the orders received from the fathers of the monastery to write their father’s life, from documents and as far as they remembered at that moment, as in the case

⁵³ *Cronica lui Nicolae (Chronicle of Nicolae)*, f. 24, ed. 2015, p. 383.

⁵⁴ *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 153-153^v, ed. 1987, pp. 549-550, ed. 2015, p. 333.

⁵⁵ This recorded the moment of passing away of his father at the end *The Menaion for February*, Râmnic, 1780, from BMN, inv. 4496 (see the text *Viața lui Vitalie (Life of Vitalie)*, f. 151, ed. 2015, pp. 343-352) and in Rom. ms. 2173, BAR (Romanian Academy Library), at f. 296: “The moving from this life to his holiness father hieroschemamonk Paisius, archimandrite and abbot of the holy Monasteries Neamț and Secu from Moldavia, was in the year 1794, November 15, on Wednesday, at 11, being of 73 (sic) without a month and from almost 50 years being abbot and hegumen” (Gabriel Ștrempel, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești (Romanian Manuscripts Catalogue)*, II, Bucharest 1983, p. 200).

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of the schemamonk Isaac the Teacher⁵⁶, the hierodeacon Grigore the Teacher⁵⁷ and the schemamonk Plato. But the most precious document written at the time, which describes in detail daily how the events were conducted, is the text of the hieroschemamonk Nicolae, which – for its remarkable importance, objectivity and the realistic pathos lived by the congregation of Paisius – we quote below:

“November 6, Monday, he is again in a bad condition. And he was sick on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, [and] Tuesday. And on Wednesday he spoke nothing but only searched with the eyes beautifully. And during Vespers he began to choke in the neck and breathe rarely. And immediately they called spiritual fathers, and began father Ștefan⁵⁸ to read the tenet for requiescat. And I did not know anything, oh, villain, about these, but, when I got out of Vespers, I saw lots of parents at the window of the blessed father and in the yard also, and some were crying, and it seemed to me the whole thing with doubt. And later sitting a little longer at the window, I

⁵⁶ He does not miss the moment of the Communion with the Holy Eucharist, from the last day, and the presence – at the time when abbot Paisius died – besides the two spiritual fathers, the servants from the cell, Martirie and Onorie: “[...] on Wednesday, approaching the end, he took again the Holy Eucharist; and they called on two spiritual fathers, Sofronie for Slavonic language and Sylvester for the Moldavian [...] being present also the servants from his cell, Martirie and Onorie; and through them he received peace and blessing, and then he died as if he were asleep, giving his soul to God in 1794, on the same day Wednesday at the eleventh hour of the day, November 15, living from his birth 72 years” (*Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 153^v, ed. 1987, p. 550, ed. 2015, p. 333).

⁵⁷ Realizing the required synthesis, which eventually did not satisfy everyone, the future Metropolitan of Wallachia summarizes: “[...] now reaching a good old age, because he passed over 72 years [...] getting sick a couple of days, in 1794, November 15, he passed away to another Life, and better yet, according to the word of the Lord, from death to life (John 5:24) [...] And he was buried in the church with the biggest grievance, on the right side, near the middle door. And the number of the priests from the synod was almost double than in the Holy Monastery Dragomirna” (*Viața lui Grigorie (Life of Grigorie)*, ed. 2015, pp. 376-377). And in Rom. ms. 152, BMN, the spiritual father Climent the hieromonk, the author of the translation of *Everghetinos*, finished in 1794, on f. 242 of the first volume, notes the following: “[...] he reposed in the Lord in the year 1794 from Christ, in the month of November, 15 days. And he was buried by his sons with sorrow and great reverence in the church, that is in the memorial, on the right, from the entrance, leaving after him almost four hundred disciples” (Valentina Pelin, “The contribution of Romanian Scholars to the Translations of the School of Paisius”, in: *Romanians during the Hesychastic Renewal*, Trinitas Publishing, Iași, 1997, p. 118).

⁵⁸ About the father hierodeacon Ștefan the Teacher see: Valentina Pelin, *op.cit.*, pp. 110-112 and N. A. Ursu, “The School of Romanian Translators from the Congregation of the Abbot Paisius from Monasteries Dragomirna, Secu and Neamț”, in: *Românii în reinnoirea isihastă (Romanians during the Hesychastic Renewal)*, pp. 74-78.

heard the fathers crying inside and the bells striking because someone was out from the back and had gone to the bells.

O, Alas for me! For anyone was aside to look, could not tell with human language what grievance has started at that hour, what wailing what sorrow between the fathers as it was as if the world seemed to ruin. And as many parents had gathered, it seemed that the clouds brought them. And shrouding the honorable body, but better to say holy and glorified holy, of the blessed father, leaving his right hand unveiled on the chest, and dressing the fathers priests and deacons, went out with the usual hymn that is sung to the dead. And only a lot weeping and wailing [was] that what hymn will be, because when someone starts to cry is grievance. And putting the holy (venerable) relics on the mortuary bed, the priests went to the church singing and the others with bitter grievance shedding tears. And putting the mortuary bed in the center of the church, with the biggest grievance everyone took the blessing.

November 15, died our blessed father Hieroschemamonk Paisius, Archimandrite and abbot of the holy Monasteries Neamț and Secu. And cooling off around mortuary bed fathers, the priests began to read the Gospel unceasingly until the time of Matins. And after Matins also they read from the Gospel until the watches and after the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, they began again to read from the Gospel until the Vespers. And so, four days were held the holy (venerable) relics in the church, because they waited for response from the Metropolitan.

And the day after dying on Thursday they began to dig the hole in the memorial, on the right, with great sorrow and sighing and building it with bricks, it was as a gilded candlestick, waiting to lay the lighted torch in it.

And on the third day, on Friday, they made a coffin and clothed and adorned it, because it was to lay in it the pearl or better to say the priceless diamond. On Friday to Saturday night, at the seventh watch of the night, the priests and deacons dressed up and began to thurify the holy (venerable) relics, and we put them in the coffin with tears and sighing, and reading the Gospel unceasingly.

And on Saturday, after the Divine Liturgy, 30 priests and 13 deacons got dressed, and holding lighted candles in their hands, raised the mortuary bed with relics and went out, because in the church was not possible to fit the crowd of parents and foreigners and so they begun the lamentation, as usually, with lights lit at all the synod of fathers and laymen also”⁵⁹.

After the evangelical text Isaac the Teacher read to the grieving congregation, composed of the congregation of the monastery and faithful gathered, a

⁵⁹ *Cronica lui Nicolae (Chronicle of Nicolae)*, ff. 25-31, ed. 2015, pp. 383-385.

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*Word*⁶⁰ from the council of the monastery, and then the ordinance of the Lamentations ended, through the usual “forgiveness and blessing” from their father. But being crowd of parents and numerous people even in the monastery where was performed the service of the Lamentations, those present failed to wait for everyone to give the abbot Paisius “the latter kiss”, because it was toward evening and “the weather was on the point of raining”. And then “[...] the priests raising the hearse and pulling the bells, and the cantors singing, and the other council crying – continues father Nicolae – so we entered the church to the grave and only the priests went in memorial, and closed the door for crowding of the fathers and of the outsiders. And putting the holy (the venerable) relics in the tomb, the fathers paved the tomb with bricks.”⁶¹

Therefore, on Saturday, November 18, 1794, on the fourth day from his death, the abbot Paisius was buried, and the envoys of the monastery to the Metropolitan, fathers Sava and Leontie, being late, returned accompanying Bishop Veniamin, only late Sunday night “[...] and His Holiness was very sad because he did not get to bury the father”. But, on Monday, November 20, the Bishop serving the Holy Liturgy and the memorial in synod, he read the absolutions on his knees over the grave.⁶²

Bishop Veniamin remained at the monastery until December 15, to comfort the congregation and meet all appropriate at such times: he served the Vigil and the Holy Liturgy of the feast of the Entrance of the Holy Virgin in the Church, and after the Gospel reading, the same father Isaac the Teacher read an *Word of Welcome*⁶³. After the Holy Liturgy, they went in procession with the icon of the feast to have lunch, and at Vespers was celebrated the ordinance of Paraklesis of the Theotokos. On Friday, December 9, the bishop sought the fathers of the monasteries Secu and Sihăstria, and on Saturday he returned to Neamț, where, the spiritual fathers of the monastery, after talking with him, chose father Sofronie as successor of abbot Paisius.

After the confirmation of the new abbot by the Metropolitan Iacob Stamati, by country’s counsel and by Prince Constantin Moruzi, on December 13, serving the Divine Liturgy in the assembly, immediately after the Dismissal of the Matins, ordained into schemamonk the monk Sofronie, and at the kinonikón, while the

⁶⁰ < Isaac the Teacher >, “Word at the Burial of Our Father the Blessed Paisius, Archimandrite and Abbot of the Holy Monasteries Neamț and Secu”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, ed. 2015, pp. 385-392.

⁶¹ *Cronica lui Nicolae (Chronicle of Nicolae)*, ff. 61^v-62, ed. 2015, pp. 392-393.

⁶² Cf. *ibidem*, f. 63, ed. 2015, p. 393.

⁶³ < Isaac the Teacher >, “Welcome Word to His Eminence Kyr Veniamin Bishop of Huși”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, ed. 2015, pp. 394-396.

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ministers receive the Holy Eucharist, in the presence of the entire synod of the monastery, father Pafnutie “[...] read the letters sent from Iași, from the Reverend Metropolitan, [...] from the country’s counsel and the decree from the great prince Mihail Constantin Moruzi [...]. In which they decided that the council of the holy monasteries Neamț and Secu to be unshakable as they were strengthened in the times of father Paisius”⁶⁴. Also were read now: the *Letter of abbot Paisius and Establishment of the Community Life from Secu*⁶⁵, sent by the monastery, the latter being reinforced by the Metropolitan Gavriil Calimachi in 1778, which proves that the congregation of Paisius from Neamț was conducted after this settlement, found in the cell of abbot Paisius⁶⁶, on November 20, by bishop Veniamin and the third chancellor of the prince. The next day, December 14, the bishop served again the Holy Liturgy “[...] and ordained the hieroschemamonk Sofronie archimandrite and they confirmed him to rule both monasteries Neamț and Secu as they were given also to abbot Paisius”⁶⁷.

After fulfilling the Moldavian monastic tradition for such moments, by respecting its specific rites, now recorded for the first time with its details, bishop Veniamin parted from the fathers and brothers from the congregation of Paisius from Neamț on December 15, returning to his eparchy, and they remained with the living image of their holy abbot in their hearts, while having a tangible material consolation, his tomb, located in the place of the maximum communion of the community: the great church of the monastery.

II. The Image of Abbot Paisius

II.1. Spiritual Portrait

The disciples-biographers of the abbot Paisius described in great detail the spiritual image of their father, each as he perceived it and how the facts of his life were noticed which, as with any saint, remain mostly unknown, being hidden out of humbleness.

Created in God’s image, man, whether he wants it or not, is completely in an infinite longing, immortality, after the Creator as his prototype. Man will never be able to erase completely from himself the characteristics of the image of God,

⁶⁴ *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 155, ed. 1987, p. 551, ed. 2015, p. 335-336.

⁶⁵ < Abbot Paisius >, “Paisius’ Establishment from Secu (1778)”, in: Paisius from Neamț, *Autobiografia și Viețile (Autobiography and Lives)*, ed. 2015, pp. 485-494.

⁶⁶ *Cronica lui Nicolae (Chronicle of Nicolae)*, f. 64^v, ed. 2015, p. 393.

⁶⁷ *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 155, ed. 1987, p. 551, ed. 2015, p. 336.

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because this is the essence of the essence of the human being, as ontological and theological gift⁶⁸.

In the case of abbot Paisius, the image of God in its manifestation of nostalgia, of thirst and longing for the divine infinity of life, of knowledge and perfection marked the whole life of as a monk consecrated and completely sacrificed to God. With the goal of union with God, the abbot Paisius was found in a permanent action and sacrifice: walks as a pilgrim across the seas in search of an adviser, learns new languages and deepens the dead ones, transcribe books, directs some, translates others, the majority with ascetic and mystic content, of which do not lack the literary monuments of universal hesychastic spirituality. These writings of the neptic Fathers corresponded to the mystical nature of his soul, therefore he loved them greatly until the end of his life. Because of the patristic teachings, he used to sleep only three hours a night, he would supervise the school of translators and copyists, he would make up personal anthologies and treaties and would maintain and extensive correspondence with other Orthodox countries. Using these writings and helped by God's grace, abbot Paisius becomes a practitioner of Jesus' prayer and, at the same time, an one of it teacher, through study and contemplation: "study not for the mere satisfaction of the theological curiosity, be it as legitimate, but of deep preparation of the intellect for contemplation"⁶⁹.

Without realizing it, the Holy Spirit carried him and formed him as a true teacher and adviser of the monks, from the simplest to the most learned and enlightened, some of them occupying the highest steps in the Church hierarchy. Thus, he created a spiritual movement that swept all Orthodoxy, a great monastic reform of universal value for the modern Orthodoxy, beginning with the second half of the eighteenth century: "[...] he lifted the monastic spirit from to the usual level of psalm reading to the height of sublime contemplation"⁷⁰, thus creating a great era of religious renewal through the reform of monasticism and the radiance of the theological culture, resulting from the translation of the Holy Fathers which he initiated. He revives the Jesus Prayer at Athos, makes it familiar in the Romanian monasticism and generalizes it in Orthodox Russia, by introducing it as a higher rule of daily prayer for each monk⁷¹.

He practiced Jesus prayer himself in its highest form, ie in the contemplative form. About this fact, one of the disciples confesses that he surprised him on

⁶⁸ Cf. Sf. Iustin Popovici, *Abisurile gândirii și simțirii umane – studii teologice (Abysses of Human Thought and Feeling – Theological Studies)*, translated by fr. PhD. Gabriel Mândrilă and Laura Mândrilă, Sophia/Metafraze Publishing, Bucharest, 2013, pp. 111-112.

⁶⁹ Nichifor Crainic, *Curs de teologie mistică (Mystical Theology Course)*, p. 146.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibidem*.

three occasions caught up into contemplation. Once when he was at the Monastery Dragomirna, one day after Vespers, he found him in his cell with the door slightly ajar, lying down and the disciple, not receiving answer to his prayer of blessing, he came in and asked again the blessing in higher voice, but the abbot did not answer: “Staying there – says Mitrofan – I looked at him, and his face was like of fire. I waited a little stunned, and I said again with a louder voice the prayer, but I received no response. I was amazed at the sight of him, because I had never seen his face like this before. Since his face was pale by nature, I understood that the love of the prayer lit from his heart filled his face with grace. I stayed a little more, after that I came out without saying anything to anyone about it”⁷².

This main charisma of the contemplative prayer, in the case of abbot Paisius, is a crowning so happy, and so rarely seen of other charismas or divine gifts received, which condition each other, such as: clairvoyance charisma, of wisdom and understanding, of fear of God, love of God, of the long-suffering and gentleness, of the innocence, of the deepest humility, of tears “[...] and finally the basis of all these gifts and as a result of abiding fulfillment of God’s commandments, of the abiding preservation of the purity of heart and of the relentless inner prayer, the gift of grace of the Holy Spirit, thanks to which the divine teaching flowed like a spring, which softened the souls and dried up the cunning passions”⁷³.

The soul of the abbot Paisius, so thirsty for God, was watered with some of these charismas at the time of his ordination into hieromonk by Bishop Grigorie Rașca, because this testifies to one of the disciples of the holy abbot: “You know, my son, blessed this man, blessed are also his parents who bore him, blessed will be also those who will listen to him. Because when I ordained him and when I put my hands on his head, the moment when we say «the divine gift» and the others, I felt an untold fragrance, and somehow my hands were in an unspeakable way sanctified from putting them on his head”⁷⁴.

With all the effort to conceal these gifts, they emerged by the will of God, in times when their disclosure could no longer affect him. His disciples-biographers, even during his lifetime, but even more after his passing into eternity, adorned his spiritual image, rightfully, with appellations and phrases that can never fully describe the beauty of his soul, because the most part of man’s life, especially of the saints, who hide it from humbleness, remains unknown.

Referring to his external image, willy nilly reflecting the inner one, the schemamonk Mitrofan confessed: “We all would have been capable of to stay before

⁷² *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, ed. 2015, pp. 316-317.

⁷³ Cetfericov, *Paisius starețul (Paisius the Abbot)*, p. 348.

⁷⁴ *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 106, ed. 1987, p. 505, ed. 2015, p. 236.

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him every day, so that we may delight by the sight of his face and of the great sweetness of his words”; “his face shone like that of an angel of God, his view was cozy, the word humble and lacking in boldness. [...] When speaking of theology, his heart was overflowing with love, his face shone with joy and tears flowed from his eyes in strengthening the truth. When we sat before his face, our eyes never got tired of watching him, we wanted insatiable to look at him; and the ears never hindered with annoyance and boredom hearing him, because as I have already said in the joy of our hearts we forgot about ourselves”⁷⁵.

Regarding the gift of clairvoyance the same biographer of the saint showed that: “[...] although the blessed was always in his cell, not going anywhere except for the church, he knew the state of all brothers, even of those that he never saw”⁷⁶. It foresaw what was happening with some people in his community, but also with others outside the monastery, such as the assassination by Turks in 1777, of Prince Grigorie III Ghica⁷⁷, because he opposed the concession of the northern Moldavia to Austrians: “Our father did not lack the gift of clairvoyance – testifies Isaac the Teacher – because he often said that he sees in his sleep on the head of the blessed Prince Grigorie Ghica a sword hanging only a hair, whom was immediately beheaded by the Turkish Emperor, after whom the blessed cried a lot”⁷⁸.

His many charismas received from God were often described by phrases that reveal the holiness of abbot Paisius, by both Romanian biographies, who that are more synthetic, and by the Slavs, in more detailed texts, but both emphasize the same spiritual profile.

Among those in the first category, the monk Vitalie, who, without having known other descriptions of the life of his abbot, with objectivity and brevity specifies the Latin dictum *non multa, sed multum*, emphasizes: “He was the man of God and also great and holy, as he was in the days before: because he was full of spiritual love, of faith, of zeal for the divine, of mercy toward all, with humbleness and with tears he was always; and almost always with the spring of teaching; in short, with all good things of the earlier venerable fathers. [...] If you looked at him, still you could not get enough of his pious face. In short, all his honest and pious faces, living icon, and both the spiritual and the outside faces”⁷⁹.

In turn, the schemamonk Mitrofan, more analytical in his Slavonic description, said:

⁷⁵ *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, ed. 2015, pp. 253-254, 315.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 318.

⁷⁷ Prince of Moldavia between: 1764-1767; 1774-1777.

⁷⁸ *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 143, ed. 1987, p. 540, ed. 2015, p. 318.

⁷⁹ *Viața lui Vitalie (Life of Vitalie)*, f. 116, ed. 2015, p. 348.

“This happy man was as a child devoid of malice in his soul: truly dispassionately and holy, [...] above all human praise [...]”; “[...] in him was no malice, but a childlike simplicity, although his mind was divine and not childish”; “[...] was wholly divine and full of grace. His mind was forever united with God in love, which was testified by his tears”; “[...] from the mouth of our holy father came out a source of the flowing honey of divine teaching [...]”⁸⁰; “[...] which enjoyed and healed the souls and withered the passions. In him was a divine understanding, which correctly understood and strongly defended the orthodox dogmas, the holy canons of the Ecumenical Councils, Church traditions and teachings of the Church teachers, our venerable Fathers, and respected those as the apple of his eye”⁸¹; “[...] Nobody can paint the sharpness of his mind and his memory strengthened by grace. He could understand very quickly the highest dogmatic matters and once he read something that thing forever remained in his memory”⁸².

II.2. The Physical Portrait

If the spiritual image of abbot Paisius was portrayed by all his disciples biographers, without exception, highlighting in their texts in a fairly nuanced form his main charismas, its exterior appearance which, spiritually, is the mirror of the soul and does not have the same importance, never interested them in the same way. On it stopped however first of all, some people outside the monastery, who, not being used to see him daily and hearing of the fame of the abbot, wanted to see him. It is the case of the Ban Constantin Caragea who, arriving in 1780 to the feast of the Monastery Neamț, left us one of the best descriptions: “Then for the first time I saw with my own eyes the virtue incarnate, without passions and completely without hypocrisy; his image so pleasant, his face too white, without a little blood, his beard was white and bright as pure gold, but his clothing exceedingly clean and the bed coverings of his chamber all from mantles. He had a sweet voice and without any concealment and really anyone could see a man without body”⁸³.

Among the disciples biographers, the only one who describes his physical portrait is the schemamonk Isaac the Teacher. He supplementing the schemamonk

⁸⁰ *Viața lui Mitrofan (Life of Mitrofan)*, ed. 2015, pp. 255, 300, 303, 309, 315, 316.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 308-309.

⁸² *Ibidem*, pp. 306-307.

⁸³ *Efemeridele scrise cu mâna sa de banul Constantin Caragea 1777-1811 (Ephemerides written with His Hand by the Ban Constantin Caragea 1777-1811)*, in: “Greek writings and documents on the history of Romanians from the years 1592-1837”, collected and published in volume XIII from *Hurmuzaki Documents* by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, translated by G. Murnu and C. Litzica, Bucharest, 1914 (= *Hurmuzaki*, XIII, supl. I), p. 98.

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Mitrofan, who insisted on the soul of their abbot, shows: “So he was embellished with all the natural: his stature was not very high, his face was white and bright, as from the angel of God, and dry because of the abstinence. His gaze smooth and gentle. His beard a little rare and white, big eyes, eyebrows long and curved, following the line of the eyes, and white. The nose was not too big. The mouth, not too big. Long hair and white. His face was adorned as of the patriarch Jacob, whereas everyone who saw him was impressed by him as any other saint. Because he was gentle and quiet, his speech smooth and rare, with a loud, powerful voice, humble word and lacking audacity”⁸⁴.

II.2.1. His Portrait in Engravings

The first attempts to represent the portrait of the abbot Paisius were made by monks in Neamț, presumably as woodcuts. The oldest (fig. 1) is attributed to the monk Ghervasie, the most famous engraver of the Monastery Neamț, who worked in the important twenty-seven year period from 1817 to 1844⁸⁵. He did his work, by digging it pear-tree wood, to decorate the Romanian edition of the paper *The Life of Abbot Paisius*, drawn up by hierodeacon Grigorie the Teacher and published in 1817 at Neamț Monastery, in the volume entitled *Gathering the Words for Obedience*. The title page of this book was adorned on the front with a portal engraving⁸⁶, adorned with images representative for the monks from Neamț: The Holy Trinity in the axis of the semi-circular portal from the top, framed in a medallion worn by two winged angels, followed by Moldavia’s patron saints, to the left towards the shelf-back, Saint John the New from Suceava and Saint Paraskeva of the Balkans, on the right, Saint Great Martyr George and Saint Great Martyr Barbara, and at the base of the portal, in the middle, the scene of the Ascension of the Lord⁸⁷, having on the right the Princely Church and on the left the

⁸⁴ *Viața lui Isaac (Life of Isaac)*, f. 153, ed. 1987, p. 549, ed. 2015, p. 330-331.

⁸⁵ “His art is dynamic. His drawing, dense. The cut, rough. Boldness, wide movement, devoid of unnecessary and sweet” (Gh. Racoveanu, *Gravura în lemn la mănăstirea Neamțul (Wood engraving at Neamț Monastery)*, Bucharest, 1940, p. 18).

⁸⁶ In the empty space of the portal is framed the title: *Assembly of the words for obedience from many saints and divine parents for the benefit of those who want to take care of their salvation. And the life of our blessed father abbot Paisius, with some references of his holiness, now first printed, with the blessing of His Holiness Metropolitan of Moldavia Kir Veniamin, by the zeal of the blessed Abbot and Archimandrite of the Holy Monasteries Neamț and Secu Kir Silvestru, in the holy Monastery Neamț, in the year 1817, by hieromonk Gherontie, typographer.*

⁸⁷ At the basis of this scene can be observed also the name of the author of this engraving: monk Gherv(asi)e).

monastery bell tower⁸⁸. This engraving, together with the one of abbot Paisius⁸⁹, placed at the beginning of the text on his life, represents the first important works of Ghervasie. The face of the abbot made here after twenty years after his death, was described as being very decorative, with plenty of tonal variation, hard-featured and well-studied components⁹⁰.

The second engraving depicting the abbot Paisius (fig. 2) was executed by the monk Theodosius “[...] the most productive engraver from Neamț – shows Gheorghe Racoveanu – and one of the most hardworking from those who lived on our land. But he would never reach the creative power of Ghervasie. [...] His art does not have the dynamism of Ghervasie’s art [...] but stands under the sign of minuteness, zeal, propriety and discretion”⁹¹. In his long and fruitful activity of over thirty years (1825-1856), he gets to engrave the image of the abbot after eleven years of experience, but, nonetheless, his work is limited to be – shows the same author – a “free copy after the one in 1817 and weaker than the original”⁹². She was commissioned to illustrate the editions of the Romanian and Slavic-Russian of the book *Life of Abbot Paisius*, prepared by the schemamonk Plato and published in 1836 at Neamț Monastery, from the commandment of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi.

Against this latter description, we appreciate, however, given the scriptic portrait left by the contemporaries, that Theodosius – through his copy – also has some obvious contributions, namely: he shortened the culion which was too high, he changed the expressiveness of the face by a more pronounced arching of the eyebrows; he shaped the eye sockets through dark circles and shadows; he emphasized the asceticism of the face through wrinkles and shadows, but insufficiently; he shortened, as required, the beard, but without reducing its density; he replaced the static form of the left hand, with which he held komboskini through an elegant artistic movement; he brought out more clearly the komboskini, but did not

⁸⁸ On the reverse of the title page, is engraved Saint Basil the Great, work signed by the protoiereus Mihail.

⁸⁹ This is printed on the reverse of the last page *Assembly of the words for obedience* (p. 295), followed by the title:

Story of a part of the life of our blessed father Paisius, study unnumbered and placed probably at the last moment between the pages 295-296.

⁹⁰ Cf. Gh. Racoveanu, *op.cit.*, p. 25. The work, although it is unsigned, was rightly attributed to monk Ghervasie, given the way of the digging, so similar to the other two mentioned engravings and especially of the year of dating from them, compared with the concluding inscription at the base of the portrait of Paisius: “Our Bl(e)ss(ed) Fa(ther) Paisius Abb(ot) of the H(oly) M(onasteries) N(eamț) and S(ecu): 1817”.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 25.

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solve the unnatural shape of the right hand, which holds the crosier and, finally, he brought out into sharper focus the portrait by giving more light to the background, on which he suggested the sky with clouds and a few symbolic light rays.

Under the apple blossoms at the bottom corners, made in the spaces achieved through the switching from the oval form of the medallion to the rectangular one, can be observed written in very small Cyrillic letters, on the left, the name of the author: *Theodosius*, and on the right, the year: 1836. Under the demarcation line of the medallion it is copied an identitary text of the representation of the abbot, close to being identical to the original engraving from 1817, in terms of writing style, the size of the Cyrillic letters and the abbreviations made.

These two works were reproduced by many authors, who wanted to adorn with them the editions of the writings of abbot Paisius or their various works: monographs, studies and articles. Moreover, they were also the source of inspiration for some of the portraits of abbot Paisius, painted even from the first half of the nineteenth century.

On the Slavic branch was perpetuated another image of abbot Paisius, transposed into the oldest Russian engraving, reported by Paul Mihail⁹³, who adorned for the first time the writings of abbot Paisius from the reprint edition of P. N. Batiuşkov, Moscow, 1842 (fig. 3).

II.2.2. His Portrait Painted: First Representations in Paintings and Icons

It is possible that the first paintings with representations of Paisius to have appeared before the engravings of Neamţ Monastery, in the monastic communities formed by abbot Paisius. Since most of them are not dated, we found it necessary to present them with their pictures in chronological order of the priorship of the saint to capture the evolution over time of his face. Generally, these numerous paintings transpose a face with a similar physiognomy, but capturing different ages.

Therefore, at the Hermitage *Saint Elijah* from the Athos there is a picture of the abbot (fig. 4), representing his face from the age of about 40 years, being one of the most expressive and accurate transposition according to written sources. Overall, it transmits both sensitive and intelligent image of his nature and details of the physical appearance: big eyes framed by arched eyebrows, nose of medium sized and slightly upturned, medium sized beard and rare, small mouth, with tight lips, rich hair, covering the shoulders, with a straight culion on the head, clad by the kalimavkion, and the hands semi-crossed over the chest holding the komboskini. This face is impressive even at first sight and may have been done for his disciples left at the Hermitage Saint Elias, in his lifetime, when he was at the Monastery Drago-

⁹³ Paul Mihail, *Slujba (The Service)*, p. 140.

mirna. Besides the esthetic aspects, a detail draws particular attention, namely the crooked fingers of the hands, with bumps on their wrists. This detail would be an additional argument to posit the idea that the painting was executed by someone who knew very well the appearance of the abbot at that age or even it was made it in the very Dragomirna Monastery, while abbot Paisius was here.

Another painting is kept at the Monastery Dragomirna (fig. 5)⁹⁴ and – according to the details – was conducted by the same painter, probably while at the Metropolitan, which we will present at the right moment, differing from it just by replaying the age of about 53, which he had when he left for the Monastery Secu.

Referring to the paintings from the communities of Paisius from Neamț, the hierarch Narcis Crețulescu, in 1890, wrote: “Paisius’ followers made many and various different portraits (images), but of all there are three deserving attention, namely: 1. – the one from the houses from the Hermitage Vovidenia, which, according to the testimony of elders is the most truthful, made on oilcloth, with oil paints, he is old, hunched, dry, weak; 2. – the one from the great church from his grave, which although it appears more truthful than that from Vovidenia, it is not identical, on the contrary it is of later date; [the] 3rd – a portrait made by the abbot Dometian, which at one point was taken to the abbotship, then it was taken to the Moldovan Metropolitan, and then disappeared and some believe that it was taken by the Russians in their country. Apart from these three portraits it is one in the abbotship of Secu Monastery [...]”⁹⁵.

In number, the copies listed by Narcis Crețulescu exist today, but it is unknown if they are the ones referred to by the author. Currently, at the Hermitage Vovidenia there is no picture and no one remembers that it even existed⁹⁶, but in the museum of Neamț Monastery two portraits are displayed and into the chamber of garments are stored two others.

It is possible that the portrait of the Monastery Secu (fig. 6)⁹⁷ to have belonged to archimandrite Timotheus, a disciple of the abbot Paisius, former abbot of Slatina Monastery and returned at old age at Secu. He, with great piety to his abbot prayed before this image, which was in his cell in Slatina, for which reason the saint made a miracle, and rescued him at some point, through this por-

⁹⁴ At the base of the painting is written in capital Slavonic letters:

“ () ” = Of the Monasteries

Neamț and Secu, Abbot Paisius.

⁹⁵ *Viața lui Narcis (Life of Narcis)*, f. 135^r-135^v, ed. dactgf. 1984, p. 240.

⁹⁶ In 1855 there was in the hegumen house (cf. ANNȚ, Neamț-Secu Monastery, dos. 6/1855, f. 7^v).

⁹⁷ It is identified by the name written in Cyrillic on the both sides of the front part: “B(lessed) Paisius”.

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trait, from the danger of being killed⁹⁸. As representation, it reproduces the exact movement of the hands from Theodosius engraving from 1836, and the image is rendered beard shorter, closer to his real appearance as a monk, as described by Isaac the Teacher.

The first portrait from the museum of Neamț Monastery (fig. 7), exhibited in the last room, comes from the head of the tomb in the church and is painted in oil on canvas, having as model the engraving of the monk Ghervasie from 1817⁹⁹. After this there were made in time several copies, of which are stored in the present: one in the Hermitage *Saint Elijah* from Athos, and another in the room of garments from Neamț Monastery, originally located, probably in the abbotship of the monastery, and another one in Noul Neamț Monastery from Bessarabia. In order to achieve the latter, the confessor Andronicus present at Neamț Monastery on February 3, 1877, asked the hieromonk Isihie Donici, his disciple from here to commission it to a painter. Without mentioning his name, the copy executed “exactly in size, color and physiognomy” with the portrait from the church, was completed and also transported to Noul Neamț Monastery by the recalled apprentice on November 21, 1878, where it was placed in a gilded frame and protected with glass, and exposed in the abbotship of the monastery¹⁰⁰.

It is to remember concerning the painting came from the church the fact that in addition to the copies mentioned at one point, the image of the abbot was retouched and edited, decorating some texts from Neamț, from the first part of the twentieth century, among which is included the work from 1942 of Constantin Tomescu (fig. 8)¹⁰¹. This image, published in this form and signed by Marvan F., remained the reference until the restoration of the original.

⁹⁸ *Viața lui Andronic (Life of Andronic)*, IV, ff. 229^r-229^v. When the aggressor opened the door of the cell of archim. Timotheus, intending to kill him, saw in this picture Saint Paisius alive and with a face that frightened him, and an unseen force drew him out, tumbling him on the stairway from the floor of the building (*cf. ibidem*).

⁹⁹ At the base of the painting can be read in Cyrillic: “Bless(ed) father our abbot Starețul Paisius. He died in 1794, on November 15”.

¹⁰⁰ Andronic achim., *Istoria Mănăstirii Noul Neamț (The History of Noul Neamț Monastery)*, I, 1881, ANRM, fond 2119, inv. 3, file 84, (464 file), f. 450^r; Narcis Crețulescu, *Istoria Sfintei Mănăstiri Noul Neamț din Basarabia de la 1858 până la 1880 (The History of the Holy Monastery Noul Neamț from Bessarabia from 1858 to 1880)*, written by the father confessor Andronic and copied by bishop Narcis Crețulescu at Neamț Monastery in 1889, t. V, Rom. ms. 164, BMN, pp. 271-272; Archid. prof. Ioan Ivan, “The Image-portrait of Blessed Saint Paisius from Neamț († 1794)”, in: *Întru lumina lui Veniamin Costachi (In the light of Veniamin Costachi)*, no. 46-48/1995 (= Ioan Ivan, *The Image-portrait*), p. 1.

¹⁰¹ *Cf. C. Tomescu, op. cit.*, between pages 31 and 32.

The second from the museum (fig. 9) – exhibited in the lobby between the first and the second room, it is the only provided with protective glass – is not painted “on oilcloth”, but on thick skin of animal and it can be the one from the Hermitage *Vovidenie*, described by Narcis Crețulescu. Indeed, it is one of the most accurate representations being made on the line of inspiration of the engraving from Neamț and of the painting from the tomb. The author, without giving importance to clothing, renders exactly the physiognomy of the abbot from the last decade of his life, as seen for instance by Constantin Caragea having a very pale carnation and a beard of the same hue¹⁰².

The second portrait from the room of garments (fig. 10), small in size, originally found in the cell of a monk from Neamț, is a modest work that depicts the abbot with a book and the komboskini in his hands, having a naive face¹⁰³. This was made known by its exposure for a while in the Museum of “Saint Paisius”¹⁰⁴, opened in 1997, but that was later reorganized.

The one from the Metropolitan Church (fig. 11), which is currently exhibited in the great lobby on the first floor of the Metropolitan palace, with the moniker in Slavonic, is less known, being inspired by the same engraving from 1817 and can be identified with that made by abbot Dometian (1823-1834), remembered by Narcis Crețulescu. We believe it was made by the same painter, with the one at the Monastery Dragomirna, and represents overall the best realistic transposition of the face of abbot Paisius during his old age, differing from the other paintings from Neamț through the gesture of holding the komboskini with both hands in a symmetrical movement, thereby eliminating the crosier from his right hand.

Regarding the dating of these paintings was clear that four of them were made in the first half of the nineteenth century, and not in the second, as stated¹⁰⁵, because they existed in 1843, when they were recorded in a census of property, one of which was exposed in the old abbacy, painted “on oilcloth”¹⁰⁶, another one in the new abbacy¹⁰⁷, another, in “the upper chamber” of the monastery, ie in the chancellery¹⁰⁸ and another one, also painted “on oilcloth”, abbotship of the

¹⁰² At the top of the picture it is written in Cyrillic: “Our blessed father abbot Paisius”.

¹⁰³ At the base of the painting was written in Cyrillic: “Abbot Pais(ius)”.

¹⁰⁴ *Viața lui Augustin și Andronic (Life of Augustin and Andronic)*, ed. 1997, fig. 21-24 (unnumbered images and pages from the end of the book).

¹⁰⁵ Paul Mihail, *Slujba (The Service)*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁶ *Condica averilor bisericesti și iconomicești a sfintelor monastiri Neamțul și Secul, anul 1843 (The Register of the Religious and Economic Assets of the Holy Monasteries Neamț and Secu, year 1843)*, Rom. ms. 180, BMN (= BMN, Rom. ms. 180), f. 91^r.

¹⁰⁷ BMN, Rom. ms. 180, f. 91^r.

¹⁰⁸ BMN, Rom. ms. 180, f. 93^r.

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Hermitage Vovidenia¹⁰⁹. About the one from the tomb – according to the pilgrim hieromonk Partenie from Tomsk – it existed in 1837, when he described the Monastery Neamț. This, referring to the tomb of the abbot Paisius, showed: “We arrived on Saturday night, we went to the service and I knelt at the tomb of the great abbot Paisius, who is buried in the great church and above him burns a candle¹¹⁰. [...] His portrait is placed on the wall. He is not honored as a saint, but the brothers honor him as their abbot and as a founder of a high skilled monastic life”¹¹¹.

Regarding the authorship of the paintings from Neamț, precisely because they were not signed and dated, constitutes evidence that they were made by monks-painters from the congregation from Neamț, at least the oldest, which existed in 1843. Of these painters, it may be – most likely – “[...] the monk Caesarius the Painter, dead on September 22, 1849, who painted the large church iconostasis [...]”¹¹², between 1829-1830, followed by the schemamonk Agapie Râșcanul, painter and psalm reader, dead on December 3, 1865¹¹³.

The paintings of abbot Paisius did not lack from any other monastic center in the country. Some of them are preserved today in the Monasteries Cernica, Căldărușani and Cheia. The one from Căldărușani (61x47.5cm), painted on canvas (fig. 12) and currently exhibited in the monastery museum, falls within the first half of the nineteenth century along with those already mentioned from Neamț and it is dated by the author, who reveals his name in a note made over the left shoulder of the abbot. Trying to show also where it was made with a more discreet color of ocher yellow, the painter noted: “In the Holy Monast(ery) Căldaruș(ani),

¹⁰⁹ BMN, Rom. ms. 180, f. 107^r. Along with the portrait of abbot Paisius, in the old abbacy and chancellery, were exposed in 1843 the one of Metropolitan Veniamin and of the family of the Emperor of Russia, in the new abbacy, the one of Mihail Sturza, Prince of Moldavia (f. 91^r, 93^v), and at the Hermitage Pocrov, two, an older one and a newer one, of founder Pahomie, Bishop of Roman (f. 28^r). Until 1857, the portrait of Metropolitan Veniamin would be exposed also in the chapel of the *Assumption of the Virgin Mary*, his establishment, and also in the Church *Saint George*, near the one of the Metropolitan Iacob Stamate (cf. Andronic the father confessor, *Catagrafie pentru toate odoarele bisericii mari și a celorlalte biserici din Sfânta Monastire Neamțului și a ecleziarhiei*, 1857 (*Census for all vessels in the great church and of the other churches in the Holy Neamț Monastery and of the diocese*, 1857), October 8, Rom. ms. 167, BMN (= BMN, Rom. ms. 167), ff. 22^v-23^r), done in February 11, 1797 (cf. Nicolae Iorga, *Mănăstirea Neamț (Neamț Monastery)*, ed. 1925, p. 65).

¹¹⁰ Gheorghe Bezviconi, *Călători ruși în Moldova și Muntenia (Russians Travelers to Moldavia and Muntenia)*, Bucharest, 1947, p. 344.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 347.

¹¹² Bishop Narcis Crețulescu, “Inscriptions from the Holy Monastery Neamț” in *Arhiva (Archive)*, 11-12/1908, p. 446; Archimandrite Nestor Vornicescu, “Manuscripts of the Bishop Narcis Crețulescu from the Library of Monastery Neamț”, in *Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava*, no. 7-8/1968, p. 434.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

Gheorghe Diaconu

Ghelasie hiero(monk), Zos(?) 1836 Novem(ber) 18⁷. This portrait¹¹⁴ is similar from several respects to that of the Metropolitan, with the difference that has a different mimicry, a little longer beard and the komboskini only passed over the hollow of the right hand and pressed to his chest, gesture that would indicate the diligence of the prayer to connect his heart and mind¹¹⁵.

The portrait from Cernica (fig. 13), smaller (37x31cm) is painted on canvas as an oval shaped medallion with a border dotted with brilliants, delimiting the bust of the abbot from a decorative pattern made of acanthus leaves having as support a rectangular holder. On this support, suggested by the edges of two rows of colored wood countertops – in which is fixed the medallion – and a more massive pedestal the painter wrote in Russian¹¹⁶: “Of the Moldavian-Vlach Monastery Neamț and of the other monasteries, the great abbot, archimandrite and schemamonk Paisius Velichkovsky dead in the year 1794, in the fifteenth day of November and he was buried in Neamț Monastery. Wrote I. Kuloski, 1853”.

The face transposed in this portrait is similar to that from the New Valaam Monastery from Finland (fig. 14), with the same gesture of the hands semi-crossed over his chest and the komboskini only passed over the hollow of his left hand, the same half profile to the left, the same straight culion and untied long hair, covering the two shoulders, except that it is more elevated as a whole and with a better elaborated image of the face.

The portrait from Cheia Monastery (fig. 15) is a copy of that from Căldărușani, done by the disciples of the abbot Gheorghe, who took over the hermitage after the fire from 1832¹¹⁷.

To the Orthodox Christians of Slavic language was perpetuated an image translated into paintings with a beard too long which changes his actual appearance. It is the portrait published in the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, the edition from 1993 (fig. 16), which was the inspiration for other paintings, such as for example that from the New Valaam Monastery from Finland.

The face of the abbot Paisius was also transposed, in addition to engravings and paintings, also in graphical form in Indian ink or writing ink, found in some

¹¹⁴ http://www.manastirea-caldarusani.ro/media/manastirea-caldarusani/foto/318/original/Paisius_velickovski.jpg

¹¹⁵ At the top, the culion is framed by the following text written in Cyrillic: “Paisius archim(andrite) and abbot of the ho(ly) Monast(eries) Neamț and Secu”.

¹¹⁶

1794

15

. 1853.

¹¹⁷ The copy of this portrait, reported by N. Iorga (*Inscripții din Bisericile României (Inscriptions from the Romanian Churches)*, II, Bucharest, 1908, p. 248) exists today in the monastery along with the portraits of Abbot Gheorghe and Archimandrite Dorotei, his disciple, and they were all three made by the same artist and at the same time.

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manuscripts from Neamț. Among them, are included first of all the one of the *Service of the Blessed Paisius*, copied in 1858 by the hierodeacon Calistrat and which was stolen by Andronic from Neamț along with other important manuscripts on his departure from the monastery¹¹⁸. In here, the abbot Paisius is shown standing in the beautiful view of the Hermitage *Saint Elijah*, his establishment from the Athos, dressed in the service clothing, with the robe and kalimavkion, with his hands crossed on his chest, the komboskini passing through the hollow of his left hand, and on the right side the end of a block of cells from the hermitage (fig. 17)¹¹⁹. Also, another representation was made in 1868, also in a manuscript from Neamț, in Indian ink and pencil, by the monk Iustin from Neamț Monastery¹²⁰ (fig. 18).

The first transposition of the physical and spiritual image of the abbot Paisius into an image painted in tempera on wood, which is kept in the Chapel *Assumption of the Virgin Mary* under the bell tower of the Romanian hermitage Prodromou from Athos¹²¹, was made in 1859 “[...] through the care of Andronic Moldovanu from the Hermitage Cutlumuș”¹²².

One hundred and ten years later, that is in 1969, abbot Paisius would appear for the first time represented in a mural painting made by Constantin Călinescu at the Hermitage Vovidenia, dependent on Neamț monastery, and then at other churches in the area.

The official icon presented by the Russian Church in the moment of the proclamation of the canonization in 1988 (fig. 19)¹²³ was made having unfortunately as documentary material the above mentioned Ukrainian painting. This is how it was perpetuated a different image from that presented by the contemporary written sources and the first paintings that show the best image of the saint. Among

¹¹⁸ See the Rom. ms. 66 from BMNN, today at the ANRM, fond 2119 inv. 3, file 66: For its description, see Valentina Obcinicova-Pelin, *Catalogul General al manuscriselor moldovenești păstrate în URSS (General Catalogue of Moldovan Manuscripts Kept in the USSR)*, Știința Publishing, Kishinev, 1989, pp. 243-244.

¹¹⁹ Picture replicate from Valentina Obcinicova-Pelin, *op. cit.*, fig. 43.

¹²⁰ BMN, Rom. ms. 106, the picture is on the front page before the text.

¹²¹ It is about *the icon of the Holy Mount*, unique in itself, as is represented the Athos with all its monasteries and with the saints that lived in each of them, and on the sides are painted, in couples, sixteen Romanian saints, including Saint Paisius from Neamț. For the painting, see Ilie Alexandru Bumbac, *Athos*, Vivaldi Publishing, Bucharest, 2005, p. 16.

¹²² Virgil Căndea, *Mărturii românești peste hotare (Romanian Testimonies Abroad)*, I, Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1991, p. 592. We think the author is Andronic Popovici, from Neamț Monastery who, between September 3, 1858-July 11, 1859, was in the Athos, from where he missed, going to Jerusalem, only between January 28-May 6, 1859 (*cf.* Schiarhim. Andronic, *Aduceri aminte (Remembering)*, Cathisma Publishing, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 109-112, 142); Hieromonk Andronic, *Călătoria la Muntele Athos (Journey to Mount Athos) (1858-1859)*, edited by Petronel Zahariuc, Publishing House of “Al. I. Cuza” University from Iași, 2015, pp. 49-251.

¹²³ <https://doxologia.ro/sfant-sarbatoare/118550/icoane/p/2†3>.

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these icons¹²⁴, all made after the Russian official icon, three worth mentioning. It is about the one painted by Olga Dimov (fig. 20)¹²⁵, the one of father Ilie from Slănic, for *Saint Paisius* Monastery from Arizona (fig. 21)¹²⁶ and the one recently placed in the museum of Neamț Monastery (fig. 22).

The author of the first, although transposing an elevated image and slightly feminine, in lack of good documentation, renders a face that does not resemble entirely the reality and with a beard a little too long. The second one is the most elaborated of all that are known, however, it was painted in the USA for a Serbian community from Arizona, and father Ilie in the absence of documentary material, painted Saint Paisius with a too long beard, surpassing even the one from the official Russian icon. In the case of third icon mentioned, although the author gives the beard the correct size, yet it fails to transpose the specific nuances of the face.

Considering that these observations are relevant, we decided to present, in turn, an icon which reflects both the appearance with details of the face, which distinguishing him and a specific chromatic, which may render symbolically the essence of the life of the saint.

¹²⁴ <http://www.doxologia.ro/sfantul-cuvios-Paisius-de-la-neamt#icoane>.

¹²⁵ <https://doxologia.ro/sfant-sarbatoare/118550/icoane/p/2%203?page=1>.

¹²⁶ <https://doxologia.ro/sfant-sarbatoare/118550/icoane/p/2†3>; <http://stpaisiusmonastery.org/home-unpublished-page/exhortation-of-st-paisius>.



Fig. 1. Gravură pe lemn a monahului Ghervasie, Mănăstirea Neamț, 1817

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Fig. 2. Gravură pe lemn a monahului Teodosie, Mănăstirea Neamț, 1836



Fig. 3. Gravură, Moscova, 1842

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Fig. 4. Portret – pictură în ulei, Schitul Sfântul Ilie, Athos.



Fig. 5. Portret – pictură în ulei, Mănăstirea Dragomirna

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Fig. 6. Portret – pictură în ulei, Mănăstirea Secu



Fig. 7. Portret – pictură în ulei, muzeul Mănăstirii Neamț

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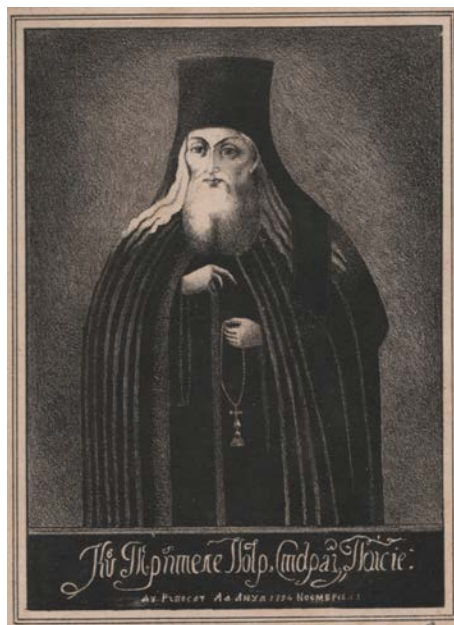


Fig. 8. Portret – litografie F. Marvan



Fig. 9. Portret – pictură în ulei, muzeul Mănăstirii Neamț

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Fig. 10. Portret – pictură în ulei, veșmântăria Mănăstirii Neamț



Fig. 11. Portret – pictură în ulei, palatul mitropolitan Iași

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Fig. 12. Portret – pictură în ulei, muzeul Mănăstirii Căldărușani, 1836

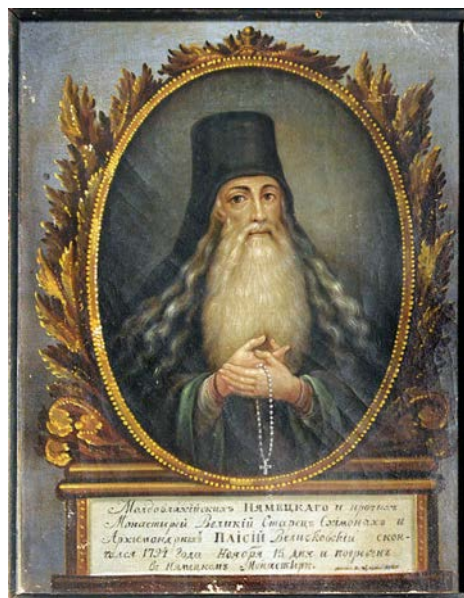


Fig. 13. Portret – pictură în ulei, Mănăstirea Cernica, I. Kuloski, 1853

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Fig. 14. Portret – pictură în ulei, Mănăstirea Noul Valaam, Finlanda



Fig. 15. Portret – pictură în ulei, Mănăstirea Cheia



Fig. 17. Portret – grafică, ms. rom. 66, Mănăstirea Noul Neamț

Fig. 16. Portret – pictură în ulei, Ucraina



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Fig. 18. Portret – grafică, ms. rom. 106, biblioteca Mănăstirii Neamț, 1868



Fig. 19. Icoană – pictură pe lemn, Moscova, 1988

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Fig. 20. Icoană – tempera pe lemn, Olga Dimov

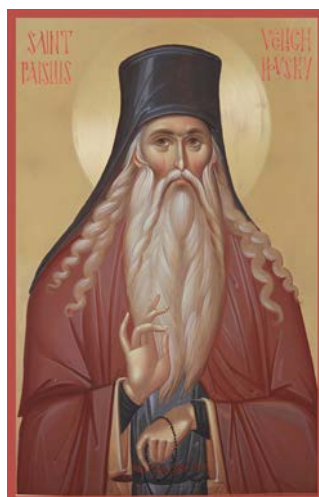


Fig. 21. Icoană – tempera pe lemn, ierom. Ilie, Mănăstirea Slănic – Argeș