THE PROBLEM OF SECULARIZATION OF CHURCH PROPERTY DURING THE YEARS 1822- 1859

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Abstract:In the period prior to Decree no. 1251 of December 1863, the problem of secularization of church property in the two Romanian Principalities was debated in the early years of the earthly rulers, during the Russian occupation of 1828-1834, but especially under the Organic Regulations. The state pursued not only the secularization of dedicated and not dedicated monasteries, but also those of metropolitan church and eparchy. If the dedicated monasteries found a temporary protection in the policy of the Russian Empire, interested in the territories inhabited by the Greeks, the fortunes of the two metropolises, of the eparchies and of the earthly monasteries were severely affected by the abuses of the political power. Establishing of some special departments for the administration of ecclesiastical incomes and the assault launched since 1859 anticipated the passage of church property into state property.

Keywords: Church, State, secularization, property, laws

Introduction

The practice of the monasteries from Wallachia and Moldavia to be devoted is old, and its true meaning has been distorted over time. Since the 14th -16th centuries, in the long epoch of the feudal relations, some of the founders used to place their monasteries either under the "guarantee" of the great establishments of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem or Antioch, or under the great monasteries of Mount Athos or other regions[1]. In return for securing their spiritual, cultural and social purposes – regardless of the political system in the Romanian Lands – monasteries, now turned into succursal monasteries, transferred a small share of incomes to these establishments. Since the 17th century conflicts with the political power in the Principalities have emerged as the establishments have changed the meaning of the "devotion" with that of "donation"[2] that will make them with absolute rights over these places and over their income.

After a long suspension caused by the Phanariot regime in the Principalities, the conflict grew[3] in the early years of the earthly reigns, during the Russian occupation of 1828-1834, but

[1] About the significant aids of the Romanians to these Holy Places, see: Grigoire Bengesco, *Memorandum sur les Églises des monastères, les biens conventuels et spécialement sur les monastères dédiés de la Principauté de Valachie*, Imprimerie „C. A. Rosetti", Bucharest, 1858, 87 pp.; Steven Runciman, *Marea Biserică în captivitate*, traducere de Miahai Silviu Chiri, Editura Sophia, București, 2013, 486 pp.

[2] Although the Holy Places had the duty to protect the Dedicated Romanian Monasteries, they saw them only as sources of increasing income.

[3] The economic crisis in the Danubian Principalities, which continues after the Phanariot reigns, has its origins in the Middle Ages. Besides the custom of buying the reign and the financial obligations to the Suzerain Power, Wallachia and Moldavia had long been war theaters in the Russo-Austro-Turkish conflicts, foreign armies were stationed temporarily in these territories. When the circumstances were favorable, there was rudimentary management of the income earned by secular or ecclesiastical institutions. The weakening of the Byzantine „symphony" created an economic gap between the State and the Church, but the Orthodox Church from the Principalities remained - in the spirit of traditional-national conservatism - the largest land and income owner. In the absence of initiatives from secular power, the Church had to expand its attributions in education, philanthropy, or even politics. A consistent study on this subject: Pr. Lect. Dr. Adrian Ignat, *Biserica creștină și provocările economice*, vol II, Editura Universitară, București, 2013, 348 pp.

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especially under the Organic Regulations. To pay off debts[4] – and in the spirit of modern legislation - the state pursued not only the secularization of dedicated monasteries but also of those not dedicated. If the first category of fortune found protection in the policy of the Russian Empire, interested in the territories inhabited by the Greeks, the fortunes of the two metropolises, of the eparchies and of the earthly monasteries were severely affected by the abuses of the political power[5].

Controversies and conflicts about the secularization of dedicated monasteries

A first objective achieved by the Romanian political class after Tudor Vladimirescu's revolution was the Porte's decision for gradual removal of the Greek from the high offices, as well as from the ecclesiastical functions[6]. As the monks of the dedicated monasteries took active part in the revolt of Alexandru Ipsilanti, using the obtained income to arm the insurgents, the Porte ordered their expulsion from the Principalities. In order to manage the property and pay off the country's debts, a committee composed of boyars and chaired by the Metropolitan was appointed[7].

Russian occupation of 1828 brought back the Greek monks to the two countries despite the energetic protests of the boyars and the high clergy. The Organic Regulations established that a part of the property income of the dedicated monasteries was returned to the state, which it was used in charity or in public utility. Instead, the monasteries were exempt from the tax paid so far. The monks protested and turned the debate into a matter of property, claiming that these properties were stolen, that's why they refused to obey the Regulation[8]. General Pavel Kiseleff appointed a commission of analysis composed of the Russian counselor, Nicolae Mavros and Barbu Ştirbei. The Commission didn't encounter any difficulty in showing the absurdity of the alleged dissatisfaction, and the conclusion of the report showed that the ground rent was obligatory[9]. The Russian General joined immediately to the commission's project and, with all the Greeks' opposition, the dedicated monasteries' debts were paid. Further, the Greek monks undertook to obey several measures: renting properties for three years, without prepayment, giving up subordination and foreign protection, taking care of the integrity of forests, etc[10], but Russian diplomats from Constantinople forced monks in 1834 to manage the monastery's income for another 10 years without the

[4] For the situation of the debts accumulated by the Romanian Principalities during the 16th-18th centuries, see: Bogdan Murgescu, *Ţările Române între Imperiul Otoman şi Europa creştină*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, 2012, pp. 81- 150 (partea a II-a: Economie, finanţe, război).

[5] As a consequence, on 17th/29th December 1863 was adopted and published „The Law on the Secularization of Church Estates" and the entire fortune of the Church passed into the state property.

[6] Gheorghe PLATON, „Restaurarea domniilor naţionale (1821-1828)", în *Istoria românilor,* vol. VII, tom I, *Constituirea României Moderne,* Bucureşti, 2015, p. 57.

[7] At the same time, a decision of the Assembly showed that the return of the Greeks would continue to affect the extinction of the country's debts for a period of five years. See: A. UBICINI, M. CHOPIN, *L'Univers ou histoire et description de tous les peuples.* Partea a II-a: *Provinces d'origine roumaine,* Imprimeurs de L'Institut de France, 1856, p. 178.

[8] A. UBICINI, M. CHOPIN, *L'Univers ou histoire...,* II, p. 178.

[9] The text of the report circulated as a booklet by Ion Ghica. See: A. UBICINI, M. CHOPIN, *L'Univers ou histoire...,* II, p. 178. In 1833 Barbu Ştirbei was appointed as *the Logophete of the Church Affairs*, and on 16th November 1834 he read in a plenary session of the Assembly his report about clergy and schools. This report showed the situation of education and churches in the country at the beginning of the Russian occupation. The monasteries and churches were in ruins; the not-dedicated monasteries were poorly cared, in many monasteries dedicated to Holy Places there were not celebrated the church services because there was not a priest, there were not church coverings and no liturgical vestments. Under these circumstances, Barbu Ştirbei removed from the ministry those priests ordained without studies by Greek bishops from Bulgaria, and put them to the contribution with other peasants. Also, in each village the archpriests, landowner sand the village jurors had the obligation to establish no more than two priests for each church. Theological schools (Seminaries) were set up and many churches and monasteries began to be repaired. At the same time, city magistrates (mayors) were responsible for the income report issued by the epitropia of churches. The properties could only be leased out in the presence of them and of *the Logophete of the Church Affairs*. See: Nicolae IORGA, *Viaţa şi domnia lui Barbu Ştirbei,* Tipografia „Neamul Românesc", Vălenii de Munte, 1910, p. 27.

[10] Nicolae IORGA, *Viaţa şi domnia lui Barbu Ştirbei,* p. 27.

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obligation of taxes and contributions[11]. So the debates regarding the problem of monastic properties were also heard outside the Romanian space, in the diplomatic circles of the Great Powers. Russia, unpredictably, makes much prominent the role of protector of Orthodoxy and Holy Places situated between the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire and beyond[12]. On March 22nd 1835, the ruler of Moldavia, Mihail Sturdza, assured the general consul of Russia in the Pricipalities, Minciaky, that "he had not taken and he will not take any action regarding the dedicated monasteries"[13].

In 1844, at the end of the grace period of 10 years for the dedicated monasteries, Russia again made proposals to transform the monks and the workers established on the properties of these settlements into subjects of the Orthodox Tsar. In diplomatic circles – especially in the Principalities – the proposal was rejected, but the monks had to ask for Russian assistance again, and through Titoff's vigorous intervention in Constantinople, the victory was on the part of the monks, under the exclusive condition of paying an annual contribution of 700.000 piaster (233.000 francs) for both Principalities[14].

Year 1848 found the monastic properties in the same condition, and the program of the revolution was destined to solve the problem of Greek monks. But after the suppression of the revolution only demands and provisions of the firman of 1822 were respected[15].

However, after signing the Convention from Balta Liman (1849) there were several attempts by the earthly rulers to impose a change in the regime of dedicated monasteries and to make their obligation to the state respected (the obligation to pay a share of the income to the state)[16]. After Russians left the country, the ruler Barbu Dimitrie Ştirbei proposed to delete the debts accumulated during the military occupation, by paying the debts by the dedicated and not dedicated monasteries. As for the first, in December 1855 they offered two options: to pay the share or to leave the protection of the Organic Regulation. His plan was to deposit a quarter of the monasteries' income into the Treasury of state[17], but that did not happen because before the Congress of Paris the Wallachian ruler asked the representative of Ottoman Empire to intervene for the extinction of debts to Russia[18]. The problem of dedicated monasteries was at least in Moldavia, in 1855 when Mr. Grigore Alexandru Ghica asked again for the arbitration of the Porte. On 22nd July 1855 the Administrative Council and the General Divan of Iasi, taking into account the difficult financial situation resulting from the Russian- Turkish war, considered it necessary to preserve the annual contribution of the monasteries dedicated to holy places[19]. Moreover, the income of these monasteries would be divided for three destinations: the first part would be transferred to the tax

[11] *Dicționar de istorie economică și istoria gândirii economice*, Editura All Beck, București, 2005, pp. 132-133.
[12] Constanța Vintilă Ghițulescu, *Evgheniți, ciocoi, mojici. Despre obrazele primei modernități românești 1750-1860,* Editura Humanitas, București, 2015, p. 165.
[13] Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Documente (1822-1838),* volumul V. Supliment I, adunate și coordonate de D. A. Sturdza și C. Colescu Vartic, Stabilimentul Socec, București, 1894, p. 195.
[14] A. UBICINI, M. CHOPIN, *L'Univers ou histoire...,* II, p. 178.
[15] The monasteries remained important sources of income, but by paying the annual contribution, the Greeks were no longer the exclusive beneficiaries. Documents of that time also confirm the observance of the provisions of Ipsilanti and Caragea, which prohibited monks from giving up property to change, rent or sell it. See: Nicolae BALCESCU, *Question economique des Principautés Danubiennes*, Librairie Charpentier, Paris, 1850, pp. 7 și 78; A. UBICINI, M. CHOPIN, *L'Univers ou histoire...,* II, p. 179.
[16] Nicolae Isar, *Din istoria generației de la 1848. Revoluție – exil – destin istoric*, Editura Universitară, București, 2006, p. 18.
[17] In 1850, this quarter meant 1,260,000 for not-dedicated monasteries and 1,440,000 for dedicated monasteries. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem and that of Alexandria agreed to rent of some properties, but they did not accept the receipt of that income by the state. See: Angela Ramona Dumitru, *Organizarea și funcționarea instituțiilor statului în Țara Românească în perioada 1849-1856*, Editura Aius, Craiova, 2014, pp. 170 și 303 (Anexa: „Calculul pregătitor al subvenției pe care mănăstirile grecești ar trebui să o plătească în Valahia, 23 aprilie 1851").
[18] Nicolae Iorga, *Viața și domnia lui Barbu Dimitrie Știrbei*, pp. 122-123.
[19] A. UBICINI, M. CHOPIN, *L'Univers ou histoire...,* II, p. 179.

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authorities, the second part would be sent to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the third part would be available to the Holy Places[20].

After the Convention from Balta-Liman, especially after the end of the Crimean War the interference of the state in church affairs intensified as a result of the vassal relations with the Ottoman Empire and the diplomatic and economic interests of the guarantee powers[21]. During the European debates the subject of dedicated monasteries was a primordial concern. For example, a European Commission since 1856 drew up a report stating the sad situation of monastic and church buildings, the failure to pay debts to the state, to the cultural and philanthropic institutions. Russia, as the "protector" of the Eastern Orthodoxy intervened again in favor of dedicated monasteries[22]. At the Conference of Paris (1858), the seven guarantors drew up the "Protocol XIII"[23] according to which the settlements of Greek clergy and the Romanian state were to reach an agreement in 12 months. Otherwise, arbitrary intervention of a guaranteed power would take place, but due to misunderstandings between Great Powers, the problem was solved only after Alexandru Ioan Cuza's firm statements and the sanctioning of the secularization law of December 1863[24].

Property of non dedicated monasteries, of the two Metropolises and of the Bishops. Debates in the Principality of Moldavia

If the problem could not be solved by administering the property of dedicated monasteries, the state wanted to get control on the property of non dedicated monasteries. In Moldavia, this offensive encounters resistance of the Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi. Mihail Sturdza tried – and finally managed – to impose himself in front of the hierarch, being helped by his relatives. Thus, the ruler proposed to grant the decoration "Saint Vladimir", 3rd class, to Nicolae Canta, treasurer and nephew of the hierarch, because without his help "he would never have obtained such a result"[25]. It was obvious that he could not oppose the new legislation in Organic Regulation, the Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi elaborated in April 1835 a law project: "Law governing the administration of the property of not dedicated, indigenous monasteries"[26]. The Metropolitan demanded from the very first lines of the project that – after a period of 7 years in which the other debts were paid – the income of the not dedicated monasteries should be reserved for the support of theological schools (seminaries) and charitable homes[27].

The ruler of Moldavia, Mihail Sturdza, accepted initially the proposals, however, as the Metropolitan had not mentioned anything about the church scholar, about the fortunes of Metropolitan Church and the Eparchial Centers, the project represented only a first step in trying to

[20] It should be noted that the Divan of Iasi did not consider necessary to take a radical measure by which he would have succeeded in reducing any debt of the country, even if Russia's reaction would not be delayed. See: A. UBICINI, M. CHOPIN, *L'Univers ou histoire...*, nota 1, p. 179.

[21] The problem of dedicated monasteries has always been a subterfuge of the Great Powers through which the political life of the Principalities could be ruled, but now the Romanian authorities reacted - without a result - to foreign interference, considering church issues aspects of internal politics. See: Bogdan Moșneagu, „Biserica Ortodoxă Română și Modernitatea",în: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie„George Barițiu" din Cluj-Napoca – Series Historica*,tom XLVII (2008), p. 119. pp. 107-122.

[22] Nicolae Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii contemporane. I. Istoria Bisericii din România,* Tipografia „Bukarester Togbaltt", 1905, pp. 19-20.

[23] Affaires étrangères. *Conférence de Paris. 1858,* Imprimerie Impériale, Paris, 1858, pp. 61-63. Barbara Jelavich, *Russia and the Formation of the Romanian National State 1821-1878,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 136.

[24] Sorin Liviu Damean, „De la Cuza-Vodă la principele Carol I (1859-1877)", în: *Istorie și societate.* vol II, coord. Stela Cheptea, Marusia Cârstea, Horia Dumitrescu, Editura Mica Valahie, București, 2011, pp. 123-124.

[25] „Mihail Sturdza către Timkowsky, 15 martie 1835", in: Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Documente (1822-1838),* volumul V. Supliment I, pp. 191-192.

[26] Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Documente (1822-1838),* volumul V. Supliment I, pp. 224-227.

[27] Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Documente (1822-1838),* volumul V. Supliment I, p. 225, art. 13.

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legislate a personal program for the reorganization of the property of not dedicated monasteries[28]. One of the ruler's goals was to pay the country's debts, so his interference with the church's work (which possesses property and incomes) needed a clearer law. As a result, a new law of the same year stipulated the administration of not dedicated monasteries by a central secular authority[29], and in 1836 the ruler announced the baron Ruckman that "a project on the income of the Metropolitan and Episcopate had already been completed, which would provide a yearly income of ½ million to charity homes"[30].

The energetic opposition of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi postponed the application of the legislative program made by the ruler. In 1839 he wrote to the same diplomat Ruckman that the two bishops paid their debts, but the Metropolitan increased them. Therefore, he urged him to intervene urgently beside the hierarch[31], but the problem could be solved only after the hierarch had quit the metropolitan seat[32]. Only two years after resignation, the National Common Assembly voted "the Law on Regularization of Metropolitan and Episcopal Property"[33].

From this moment the fate of ecclesiastical wealth revenue was decided by the state, through the High Chancellor of the Church Affairs, who would oversee the application of the law. As a result, Article 8 of the "Law" stipulated that "all the incomes of Metropolitan church, as well as of the Bishops would enter into a crate where they would be granted according to the provisions above […]; that crate would be deposited in the Metropolitan church, having two keys, one of which will be guarded by the Metropolitan and one by the head of the Department of Church Property"[34], also called governor of the Church Property (later called Minister of Religious Affairs). "Legislations for the characteristics of the governor of the Church Property"[35], voted by the National Common Assembly and strengthened through the decree of 21st March 1844, organized a complete Department with the necessary staff and their salaries[36].

For the Church these salaries represented a significant part of the property income confiscated without right and without justification"[37]. In the year of Alexandru Ioan Cuza's election as ruler of

[28] Constanța Vintilă Ghițulescu, *Evgheniți...*, p. 165.
[29] Ioan C. FILITTI, *Domniile române sub Regulamentul Organic (1834-1848)*, Librăriile Socec & C. Sfetea, București, 1915, p. 517. Faced with an almost fulfilled fact, the Metropolitan accepted the project by which the budget was approved annually by the ruler, the monasteries were leased - in the presence of a delegate of the ruler - for three years, and the debts of the monasteries were to be paid in seven years. See: *Analele Parlamentare ale României*, Tomul V, Partea a II-a. *Adunarea obștească a Moldovei (1834-1835)*, Imprimeria Statului, București, 1895, Anexa nr. 41, p. 795.
[30] Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Documente (1822-1838), volumul V. Supliment I, pp. 515-516. It was the legal way that state control extended to the fortunes of the metropolitan church and the diocesan eparchies, according to the model of Russia, where the Church was politically controlled by the state. See: Frédéric DAMÉ, Histoire de la Roumanie contemporaine(1822-1900), Editeur Felix Alcan, Paris, 1900, p. 51; Nicolae ISAR, Biserică-Stat-Societate (1821-1914), p. 23.
[31] To solve this problem, Sturdza proposed that the Metropolitan be informed, then a commission should be appionted to assess the incomes of the Metropolitan Church, and in the case of rejection of the measures, these revenues would be seized for the payment of debts. See: Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor (1827-1849)*, volumul VI. Supliment I, adunate și coordonate de D. A. Sturdza și C. Colescu Vartic, Stabilimentul Socec, București, 1895, pp. 31-33.
[32] Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi resigns on January 18th, 1842. See the resignation text: Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor (1827-1849)*, volumul VI. Supliment I, pp. 362-263.
[33] See the text of the legislative act in: *Manualul administrativ al Principatului Moldovei, cuprinzătoriu legilor și si dispozițiunilor introduse în țară de la anul 1832 până la 1855*, editat de o comisie numită din ordinul domnitorului Grigore A. Ghica, volumul II, Tipografia Buciumul Român, Iași, 1856, pp. 261-264.
[34] *Manualul administrativ al Principatului Moldovei...*, p. 263.
[35] *Manualul administrativ al Principatului Moldovei...*, p. 265-268.
[36] For example, according to the payment list the minister would receive monthly 2000 lei, his immediate subordinate - the director of this department - 1000 lei, and one of the lowest jobs 60 lei, the annual expenses for all salaries reaching 93 120 lei . See: *Manualul administrativ al Principatului Moldovei...*, pp. 268.
[37] Nicolae IORGA, *Istoria Bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor,* vol. II, Editura Saeculum, București, 2012, p. 281.

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the Principalities, the Metropolitan Sofronie Miclescu sent to him an Anaphora[38] in response to the establishment of a Commission delegated to take over the administration of the fortunes of several monasteries[39] Metropolitan's report, with a series of charges against the Establishment of the Commission Decree, was well argued, especially because few thought that such a measure could have come – especially "without the knowledge of Moldavian Church and its Chief" – from the new ruler elected to rule the United Principalities[40]. Through the "stray step that the Government of Your Majesty did"[41], "right and justice" were usurped, "the path of iniquity opens, morality is completely ruined, which is the soul of the state and society"[42]. On 10th September 1859, Alexandru Ioan Cuza responded the great hierarch through the Head of Government, Manolache Costache Epureanu: "His Majesty the Ruler […] sent me to tell you that he does not accept this Anaphora, and to throw it to your face, and in future you should limit yourself, for you would step from His Highness as a stupid monk"[43]. Reading these words, the Metropolitan Sofronie answered: "Please show His Highness that I humbly thank; and I will not cease to do my duty"[44].

Debates in Wallachia

In Wallachia things evolved faster. As the metropolitan chair was vacant, the state tried to impose itself as early as 1835 in property administration of not dedicated monasteries, especially because the Episcopal chairs were not occupied[45]. In 1840 a new step was taken to settle the fortunes of the Metropolitan Church and the Bishops on the "Department of Faith"[46].

After the dismissal of Alexandru Ghica from the position as ruler, the National Assembly elected Gheorghe Bibescu (20th December 1842 – 12th June 1848), following the provisions of the Organic Regulation[47]. Subsequent deviations from the Organic Regulation led the new Metropolitan, Neofit to report to the Russian authorities and to General Pavel Kiseleff[48], especially since the new ruler intended to pass the monastic income under the control of the state[49]. With the

[38] The text of the anaphoral (September 10th 1859) and other documents related to the aspect of the problem were copied by archimandrite Varahil Lateş, then printed in: *Documente foarte importante pentru Istoria Bisericii şi a Naţiunii Române*, Imprimeria Adolf Bermann, Iaşi, 1866, 26 pp.
[39] *Documente foarte importante pentru Istoria Bisericii…,* p. 6.
[40] Constanța Vintilă Ghițulescu, *Evgheniți...,* p. 167.
[41] *Documente foarte importante pentru Istoria Bisericii…,* p. 7.
[42] The possessions of the Church were not confiscated from the old owners, but they were obtained through donations and royal_charters which, after natural law and Roman law, meant "absolute property". See: *Documente foarte importante pentru Istoria Bisericii…,* p. 7.
[43] *Documente foarte importante pentru Istoria Bisericii…,* p. 23.
[44] *Documente foarte importante pentru Istoria Bisericii…,* p. 23; The conflict ends when the metropolitan is dismissed and exiled at the Slatina Monastery, where he died on May 18th, 1861. See more data about the conflict in the works: Nicolae IORGA, *Istoria Bisericii românești…,*vol. II, pp. 306-307 și Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, p. 99.
[45] Nicolae IORGA, *Istoria Bisericii românești ...,* vol. II, p. 279.
[46] Nicolae IORGA, *Istoria Bisericii românești ...*, vol. II, p. 280.
[47] Among the clergy, the metropolitan and the bishops were the right members. See: Frédéric DAMÉ, *Histoire de la Roumanie contemporaine(1822-1900),* Editeur Felix Alcan, Paris, 1900, p. 24; Cristian PREDA, *Rumânii fericiți. Vot și putere de la 1831 până în prezent,* Editura Polirom, Iași, 2011, p. 54; Keith HITCHINS, Românii 1774-1866, ediția a III-a, traducere din engleză de George Potra și Delia Răzdolescu, Editura Humanitas, București, 2013, p. 212; Gheorghe ADAMESCU, „Epoca regulamentară din punct de vedere politic şi cultural", în *Literatură şi Artă Română,* II (1899), nr. 5, p. 299.
[48] Gheorghe PLATON, „Domniile regulamentare (1834-1848/1849)", în *Istoria românilor,* vol. VII, tom I, p. 121.
[49] Since 1843 there has been a concern for the application of the Organic Regulation in the case of land renting. See: A. D. XENOPOL, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, volumul XI. *Istoria politică a Țărilor Române (1822-1848)*, ediție revizuită de Maria Constantinescu, Editura Elf, București, 2009, pp. 136-137.

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approval of Russian and Ottoman diplomats he managed to suspend the work of the Assembly[50], ruling the country by itself until 1846. Suspension of the Public Assembly generated other abuses of power from the ruler. Thus, the Metropolitan lost the custody of the Central Fund which included the revenues of the local monasteries, the private treasuries of each of the vacant bishops, the deposits of the dedicated monasteries without a Father Superior and the ecclesiastical estates[51].

In the second part of his reign, Gheorghe Bibescu adopted with the new Public Assembly a series of new laws, a moment of fruitful collaboration between the ruler and the Metropolitan[52]. As early as 1843 the Metropolitan Neofit had made his full contribution to the liberation of the slaves, signing on March 22nd "Law for the abolition of taxpayers under the administration of the Dungeon Division"[53]. In the autumn of the following year, the writer Cezar Boliac published in the magazine "Paper for Mind, Heart and Literature" an article that urges all intellectuals to support the abolition of Gypsy slavery, because "religion, the interest of state and the spirit of advancing people will help us"[54].

At the end of 1846, Gheorghe Bibescu received Pavel Kiseleff's advice and accepted the organization of the elections for a new Public Assembly, in which the majority would be his supporters[55]. Thus, the first adopted law aimed at the Church was the abolition of the slavery of Gypsies belonging to the Metropolitan Church, eparchies, monastic estates, hermitages and all the churches (11th February 1847)[56]. So there were a series of letters from the monasteries to the ruler asking him not to deprive them of their work force and to postpone the practice of the law for one year, the rest of the clergy – headed by the Metropolitan – agreed this natural and necessary measure[57].

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[50] Charles JELAVICH, Barbara JELAVICH, *Formarea statelor naționale balcanice (1804-1920),* traducere de Ioan Crețiu, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, p. 121. Gheorghe PLATON, „Domniile regulamentare (1834-1848/1849)", în *Istoria românilor*, vol. VII, tom I, p. 122.

[51] Shortly, the amounts of the Fund have fallen sharply, and to cover up this embezzlement, the Government announced - without asking - that it would rebuild the churches of four monasteries in the mountains, as well as the church of the Arges bishop, which did not happen. See: Vezi: B. A. (Billecoq Adolphe?), *La Principauté de Valachie sous le hospodar Bibesco,* Imprimeur Wrouters Frères, Bruxelles, 1847, pp. 155 și 158.

[52] At the beginning, Gheorghe Bibescu would have agreed to the „national party" program, by which the Principalities became „a barrage state between Turkey and Russia, an independent christian state". See: Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor.* volumul XVII, *Corespondență diplomatică și Rapoarte consulare franceze (1825-1846),* publicate după originale, copiile Academiei Române și tipărituri de Nerva Hodoș, București, 1913, pp. 1106-1108; Ioan C. FILITTI, *Domniile române sub Regulamentul Organic 1834-1848*, p. 346.

[52] *Analele Parlamentare ale României*, Tomul XII, Partea I. *Adunarea obștească a Țării Românești (1842-1843),* Imprimeria Statului, București, 1900, p. 424.

[53] *Analele Parlamentare ale României*, Tomul XII, Partea I. *Adunarea obștească a Țării Românești (1842-1843),* Imprimeria Statului, București, 1900, p. 424.

[54] Cezar BOLIAC, „Către scriitorii noștri", în *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură,* 1844, 2 octombrie, nr. 40, pp. 315-316. The Organic Regulation from 1831 divided the Gypsies into three categories: those of the State, of the Church, and of the private people, and the new laws constituted an important stage of a lengthy process. About the institution of slavery in the Romanian Principalities, see: J. A. VAILLANT, *Les romes. Histoire vraiae des a vrais bohémiens,* Editeur E. Dentu, Paris, 1857, pp. 305-353; Viorel ACHIM, *Țiganii în istoria României*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1998, 202 p.; Venera ACHIM, „Statistica țiganilor în Principatele Române în perioada 1830-1860", în *Revista istorică,* XVI (2005), nr. 3-4, pp. 97-122.

[55] Nicolae ISAR, *Istoria modernă a românilor*. Partea I: *1774-1848,* ediția a II-a, revăzută și adăugită, Editura Fundației România de Mâine, București, 2005, p. 130. Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor.* volumul XVII, p. 110.

[56] Arhivele Naționale – Direcția Municipiului București, nr. inv. 299, fond *Mitropolia Ungro-Vlahiei (1818-1895),* dosar 1181/1847, f. 4; Ioan C. FILITTI, *Domniile sub Regulamanetul Organic*, p. 86.

[57] Regarding slaves belonging to individuals, the Revolutionary Government of 1848 set up a „Commission for the Liberation of Slaves" one of those members was archimandrite Iosafat Snagoveanu. Following the intervention of Fuad Pasha's army, the Constantin Cantacuzino kaimakam states that „all the acts freed in the time of the Revolution as regards the servants of the people remain abolished". See: Cornelia BODEA, *1848 la români. O istorie în date și mărturii*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1982, pp. 536-537; George POTRA, *Contribuțiuni la istoricul țiganilor din România,* Editura „Mihai Dascăl Editor", București, 2002, p. 110.

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In April 1847 the tensions between the ruler and the metropolitan reappeared on the basis of the "Law for the arrangement of fortunes and income of Metropolitan Church and Bishops, and for the improvement of the fate of the clergy"[58]. The project also included regulations for the functioning of the four seminars in the country. As it was to be established that the budget needed to be validated every year by the ruler, the hierarch left the meeting, leaving the approval of the law to the Assembly[59]. In the autumn of the same year, following several memoirs to the Russian Empire, Gheorghe Bibescu obtained the approval to abolish the trusteeship of the Holy Sepulchre, the dedicated monasteries being obliged to pay the sum of 1.500.000 lei annually to the state since 1848[60]. The release of 1848 revolution prevented Gheorghe Bibescu from applying all the legislative drafts, and the refusal to follow the revolutionary path suppressed the hopes of those who had seen him as a supporter of political and social emancipation[61].

Conclusions

After the restoration of the earthly reigns, the debates on church property had as their main subject solving the problem of dedicated monasteries' fortunes. So many arguments were sought to pass this property to state property. A series of controversies and conflicts between the state and the church led to the application of similar measures also to the earthly monasteries.

Interferences of the state in the administration of church property in Wallachia and Moldavia would become more and more obvious during the events when Alexandru Ioan Cuza was elected as ruler of Principalities (1859). In the period prior to the Decree of December 1863 there were 64 dedicated monasteries and 127 earthly monasteries, but the entire estate of the Orthodox Church was to be passed into state property, the Church suffering the loss of the main means of subsistence.

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[58] Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Corespondență diplomatică și Rapoarte consulare franceze (1847-1851),* volumul XVIII, publicate după originale, copii ale Academiei Române și tipărituri de Nerva Hodoș, București, 1916, pp. 9-12.

[59] Nicolae IORGA, *Istoria românilor.* volumul IX. *Unificatorii,* Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2015, p. 54; Eudoxiu de HURMUZAKI, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor. Corespondență diplomatică și Rapoarte consulare franceze (1847-1851),* volumul XVIII, pp. 7-12.

[60] The Epitropia of the Holy Sepulchre was founded in 1830 by the Greek monks in order to defend their own interests and to oppose the interventions of the Romanian state.

[61] Gheorghe PLATON, „Domniile regulamentare (1834-1848/1849)", în *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VII, tom I, p. 124.

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