

THREE INITIATIVES TO RECOVER THE NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HISTORY DURING THE REIGN OF ALECSANDRU IOAN CUZA¹

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Abstract. The new social context after the 1859 Union of the Principalities saw an increase in the interest to recover the national history and the Romanian cultural heritage. Alongside the private attempts made by some passionate collectors (General Nicolae Mavros, Ban Mihalache Ghica, Major D. Papazoglu, etc.) the Wallachian and Moldavian Governments initiated several actions in an attempt to recover the national patrimony. The movement was all the more legitimate due to the criminal carelessness of the Greek hegumens in the dedicated monasteries in obedience to the Greek Church whose main preoccupation was to acquire huge incomes from renting the estates while letting the monuments and the national cultural values fall into decay. This study, which relies on historical archives, presents three such unknown initiatives: one of the Moldavian governments and two others carried out by the Wallachian governments.

1. In 1860, in Moldova, Vasile Alexandrescu-Urechia, director of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction urged the protopopes and the school teachers in the county seats to identify in churches and monasteries the old religious books that were valuable for the history of Romanian literature so that the state could purchase them and store them safely in the Public Library.

2. In Wallachia, we can see a similar concern for the salvation of the Romanian cultural heritage. Here, in may 1863, Christian Tell, the Minister of Cults, granted 2880 lei to Cezar Boliac, to embark on an “*archeological journey*” that was to last two months, starting from “*Zimnicea downwards and to the Bessarabian region that had been returned to Moldavia.*” In the same year in September, Christian Tell’s successor, Al. Odobescu, delegated Grigore Bengescu to make a similar journey to the monasteries in the counties of Dolj, Romanați, Gorj and Mehedinți which had not been visited in the summer of 1860 when a similar research had taken place.

3. In order to recover the heroic moments in the national history, minister Barbu Vlădoianu organised a painting contest with a prize of 300 golden coins to evoke the battle of Teișani, from September 1602, between the boyar Stroe Buzescu and the Tatar Khan’s nephew. Since no participants entered the first stage of the contest on 12th February 1860, the Ministry organised another contest on 2nd May 1860, where they also invited painters from Moldavia to take part.

Keywords: 1859, Union of the Principalities Wallachian and Moldavian, V.A.Urechia, archeological journey, Al. Odobescu, Cezar Boliac, battle of Teișani, September 1602, Stroe Buzescu, Tatar Khan’s nephew.

¹ 1. Collecting the old religious books from the churches and monasteries in Moldova (1860); 2. commissioning a painting of the battle of Teișani between Stroe Buzescu and the Tatar Khan’s nephew (1861); 3. Cezar Boliac’s and Grigore Bengescu’s journeys to the historical monuments in Wallachia (1863)

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