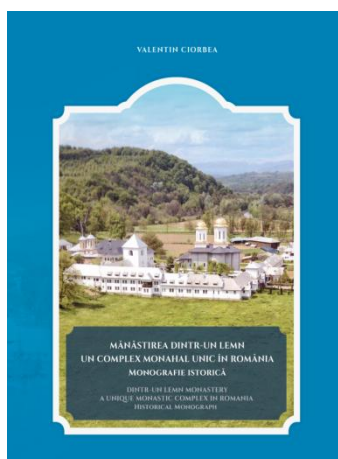


## BOOK REVIEW



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Valentin Ciorbea, *Mănăstirea dintr-un Lemn – un complex monahal unic în România. Monografie istorică/ Dintr-un Lemn Monastery – A Unique Monastic Complex in Romania. Historical Monograph*, (Cuvânt înainte prof. univ. dr. Ion I. Solcanu), Editura Academiei Oamenilor de Știință din România, București, 2020. 444 p.

Under the patronage and authority of some important institutions - the Academy of Romanian Scientists and the Archdiocese of Râmnic - Professor Valentin Ciorbea from “Ovidius” University of Constanța, publishes the monograph of *Dintr-un Lemn Monastery* from Vâlcea. His attachment to this Holy place was mediated, over the decades from his transition to the eternal ones, by the illustrious restorer of 1938-1940, General Paul Teodorescu, when he held the portfolio of the Ministry of Air and Navy. Following the extensive restoration and modernization works carried out, according to the testimony of the founding general “with the free labor of the soldiers and officers of Aeronautics and the Navy” and whose costs amounted to over 900,000 lei in those years, the monastic settlement became, with the patriarch's blessing, those of the hierarch of the place and of the competent central authorities “a place of prayer for aviators and sailors.” The fact was brought to the knowledge of the nuns living in the settlement by the hierarch of the Diocese, IRINEU, the lieutenant archbishop of the Metropolitan Church of Oltenia, Banat and Severin, explaining to the abbess that “As this Holy monastery was restored by the Ministry of Air and Navy, I inform you that we have decided that prayers be made here for the rest of the souls of the dead heroic aviators and sailors, as well as the protection of those alive.” For the pilgrims to remember, the symbols of the Navy and Aviation, **the anchor and the eagle**, were inscribed on the bell tower. In this context, Nifon Criveanu, the Metropolitan of Oltenia, further developed the connection between the monastic settlement, Aviation and the Navy, arranging for the “sick and convalescent of the two arms” to find here a resting place for their physical and spiritual recovery. Also under his Holy blessing and in His presence took place on October 10, 1942 the consecration of “the works of renewal and beautification of this beautiful and historic monastery... General Paul Teodorescu, founder of these works of renewal, and other holy and lay faces being present,” according to the *Golden Book* of the monastery. In fact, part of the last year of

his life the general would spend in the peace and care of the monastery, where he sleeps forever. As a sign of pious gratitude, the abbesses of the settlement would arrange a memorial room in which to keep unique manuscripts, personal objects, various documents and several hundred books. All these were to be discovered by Professor Valentin Ciorbea pushed by the curiosity of the historian who walks in the footsteps of the hero general Paul Teodorescu. To make the most of this treasure, but especially of the centuries-old symbiosis between the Romanian Army and the Romanian Orthodox Church, to which General Paul Teodorescu conferred the consistency of a symbol, this being in the philosophical vision of Nae Ionescu "*more than a sign: it means the essence of reality*" Professor Valentin Ciorbea established here **"General Paul Teodorescu" Research Center for the Cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian Army.**

The aim of the Center is an ambitious one. It has proposed to promote "*programs of research of the relations of the Orthodox Church with the Romanian Army in their multiple aspects: common institutions, legislation, churches and chapels etc., the annual organization of a scientific meeting, the publication of articles, studies, support of volume editing, etc.*" I was glad to see that all this was accomplished to a great extent since, besides them, the Center also set up the annual "*Mission*" journal, now reaching the sixth issue, in which the reader finds interesting articles and studies. All this was possible thanks to the responsibility of the founding director, assumed by Professor Valentin Ciorbea right from the establishment of the Center.

The troubled secular history of the settlement is traced with the researcher's detailed work. The author does not reject tradition and legend, but happily completes them with information provided by the sources: notes of foreign travelers (Paul of Aleppo, the secretary of the patriarch of Antioch, Macarie III, in 1653), memoirs and, above all, documents in the central and local archives, including those housed in the monastery. In this way, the reader goes through the stages of the appearance and evolution of the settlement, from the modest wooden church, built from a single multisectional oak at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, similar in planimetry and dimensions to the wooden church, called of "Dragoș vodă," from Putna, to the construction of the stone one, in 1634-1635, with the dedication of the *Birth of Virgin Mary* by the great governor Preda Brâncoveanu, the nephew of Matei Basarab. The decoration with paintings by Zugravul Radu, the endowment with new annex constructions, the renovations throughout the time, the evolution of the monastery's land area, are all carefully documented. Professor Valentin Ciorbea carries the reader through the troubled history of the settlement, which has gone through the ages, repeatedly, through "**ecstasy and agony.**" **Undoubtedly, the achievement of Professor Valentin Ciorbea is the most complete historical monograph of Dintr-un Lemn Monastery, one of the most important monuments of Romanian medieval art.**

*Professor Ion I. Solcanu*