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**THE SPACE OF POWER  
STATE CONSOLIDATION BY MEANS OF RELIGIOUS  
POLICY IN THE DANUBE PRINCIPALITIES  
IN THE FOURTEENTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURIES**

**Abstract**

This article shows the close link between religious policy, especially that of the confessional option, and the politicization of space in the building processes of territorial states. The study focuses on the two Danube Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which implemented their state building owing to three decisive steps: i) the jurisdictional option in favour of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople; ii) the territorial and social implementation of the Byzantine-Orthodox faith by institutional infrastructure and monastic reform; iii) the Orthodox enculturation of the two Wallachian principalities. The main goal of this chapter is to show how cultural and historical phenomena transform the abstract geographical space into the political space of a state.

**Keywords:** Wallachia, Moldavia, state building, religious policy, confessions, spatial turn, pre-modern and early modern period, South-Eastern Europe

I  
INTRODUCTION

During the period between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries the geopolitical situation of the region between the Carpathians and Lower Danube was most complex. Because of its wealth and proximity to the Black Sea, its dynamic commercial centres, and the prosperous Bulgarian and Serbian territories, this area was highly disputed between different powers of both the Latin and Orthodox faiths, not to speak of the Tatars and – after the fourteenth century – the Ottomans. Multiple powers tried to strengthen their ties and interests in the region: the Hungarian and Polish Crowns, the Bulgarian Empire under the Asen dynasty, the Cumans, the first Wallachian voivodes

– from the very beginning important regional players – as well as the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Papacy via Franciscans and Dominicans, the Golden Horde, and to some extent<sup>1</sup> the Ottoman powers.<sup>2</sup> All of them attempted to integrate – religiously, politically, economically, and culturally – this geographic area into their own state structures, not mainly by military force but by filling it with their own meaningful structures: institutions, religious organisations, culture, and language.

The first princes of Wallachia and Moldavia knew how to handle the confessional<sup>3</sup> (i.e. above all *jurisdictional*) matter efficiently, in order

<sup>1</sup> The Ottomans did not interfere in the internal political affairs of Wallachia and Moldavia as long as they paid their tribute. For more on the relations between the Ottoman power and the tributary autonomous entities north of the Danube, see Mihai Maxim, 'Le statut des Pays Roumains envers la Porte Ottomane aux XVIe–XVIIIe siècles', *Revue roumaine d'histoire*, xxiv, 1–2 (1985), 29–50; Viorel Panaite, 'Power Relations in the Ottoman Empire. Sultans and the Tribute Paying Princes of Wallachia and Moldavia (16th to 18th centuries)', *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, xxxvii–xxxviii (1999–2000), 47–78; Ioana Feodorov, 'Ottoman Authority in the Romanian Principalities as Witnessed by a Christian Arab Traveller of the 17th Century: Paul of Aleppo', *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, 148 (2006), 295–309.

<sup>2</sup> Şerban Papacostea, *Between the Crusade and the Mongol Empire. The Romanians in the 13th century* (Bucharest, 1998); Constantin Rezachevici, *Istoria popoarelor vecine și neamul românesc în Evul Mediu* (București, 1998), esp. 30–6; Şerban Turcuș, *Sfântul Scaun și românii în secolul al XIII-lea* (București, 2001), esp. 284–312; Şerban Papacostea, *La Mer Noire. Carrefour des grandes routes intercontinentales 1204–1453* (București, 2006); Viorel Achim, *Politica sud-estică a regatului ungar sub ultimii arpadieni* (București, 2008); Alexandru Madgearu, *Asăneștii. Istoria politico-militară a statului dinastiei Asan (1185–1280)* (Târgoviște, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> The discussion on the Western Latinitas' confessionalisation is old and well known and does not require special discussion here. The original term of 'confession building' (Ger.: *Konfessionsbildung*), proposed by Ernst W. Zeeden in the 1950s, was taken over in Wolfgang Reinhard's and Heinz Schilling's paradigm of 'confessionalisation' (*Konfessionalisierung*) as a modernization and state building process in the Old Reich, which led also to the raise of national identities in the 18th to 20th century in a so-called 'second confessionalisation'. For more on this, see Ernst W. Zeeden, 'Grundlagen und Wege der Konfessionsbildung im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe', *Historische Zeitschrift*, clxxxv, 1 (1958), 249–99; Ernst W. Zeeden, *Konfessionsbildung. Studien zur Reformation, Gegenreformation und katholischen Reform* (Stuttgart, 1985); Wolfgang Reinhard, 'Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, lxxviii, 8 (1977), 226–51; *idem*, 'Konfession und Konfessionalisierung in Europa', in *idem* (ed.), *Bekennnis und Geschichte. Die Confessio Augustana im historischen Zusammenhang* (München, 1981), 165–89; *idem*, 'Zwang

to defend their autonomy against powerful neighbours. It should be mentioned at the outset that Wallachia (occasionally: Ungro-Vlachia), gained international recognition as an autonomous entity under

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zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, x, 3 (1983), 257–77; Heinz Schilling, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung. Eine Fallstudie über das Verhältnis von religiösem und sozialem Wandel in der Frühneuzeit am Beispiel der Grafschaft Lippe* (Gütersloh, 1981); *idem* (ed.), *Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland – Das Problem der 'Zweiten Reformation'*. *Wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1985* (Gütersloh, 1986); *idem*, 'Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich. Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 246 (1988), 1–45; Hans-Christoph Rublack (ed.), *Die lutherische Konfessionalisierung. Wissenschaftliches Symposium des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1988* (Gütersloh, 1992); Olaf Blaschke, 'Das Zweite Konfessionelle Zeitalter. Ein Deutungsangebot für Katholizismus- und Sozialhistoriker', in Johannes Horstmann *et al.* (eds.), *Konfession, Milieu, Moderne. Konzeptionelle Positionen und Kontroversen zur Geschichte von Katholizismus und Kirche im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Schwerte, 2001), 27–78; Olaf Blaschke (ed.), *Konfessionen im Konflikt. Deutschland zwischen 1800 und 1970. Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter* (Göttingen, 2002); Heinz-Gerhard Haupt *et al.* (eds.), *Nation und Religion in Europa. Mehrkonfessionelle Gesellschaften im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005). Meanwhile, recent researchers propose more integrative and dynamic concepts than 'confessionalisation' – which is viewed as somehow essentialist and rigid – such as 'confessional culture' (Ger.: *Konfessionskultur*). For more on this, see: Thomas Kaufmann, *Konfession und Kultur. Lutherischer Protestantismus in der zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 2006); Peter Walter and Günther Wassilowsky (eds.), *Das Konzil von Trient und die katholische Konfessionskultur (1563–2013)* (Münster, 2016). This is also an important discussion for the history of the Danubian Principalities and the East- and South-East Europe, if the concept of 'confession' also applies for the Orthodox Churches and Cultures. There have been theoretical attempts to put this conceptual question in the East-Slavic context of Carpathian Ukraine and in Russia, or in the ex-Yugoslavian area, by Alfons Brüning, Stefan Plaggenborg, and others. See: Alfons Brüning, 'Confessio Orthodoxa und europäischer Konfessionalismus – einige Anhaltspunkte zur Verhältnisbestimmung', in Robert O. Crummey, Holm Sundhausen and Ricarda Vulpius (eds.), *Russische und ukrainische Geschichte vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 2002), 207–21; Stefan Plaggenborg, 'Konfessionalisierung in Osteuropa im 17. Jahrhundert – zur Reichweite eines Forschungskonzepts', *Bohemia*, xlv, 1 (2003), 3–28; Klaus Buchenau, *Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Jugoslawien 1945–1991. Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich* (Wiesbaden, 2004); Alfons Brüning, *Unio non est unitas – Polen-Litauens Weg im konfessionellen Zeitalter (1569–1648)* (Wiesbaden, 2008); Klaus Buchenau, *Auf russische Spuren. Orthodoxe Antiwestler in Serbien 1850–1945* (Wiesbaden, 2011); Gregory L. Freeze, 'Confessions in Imperial Russia: Analytical Overview of Historiography', *Bylye Gody*, xxxix, 1 (2016), 261–81. However, the first systematic attempt to finally elucidate the application of the terms 'confession', 'confessionalism', and

Hungarian suzerainty in 1330. Moldavia was constituted by the ruling elites from the province Maramureş in 1359, and was arduously disputed between the Hungarian and Polish Crowns.<sup>4</sup>

The goal of this article is to show how fundamental the confessional option was in the pre-modern and early modern processes of power exertion, and especially in the territorial implementation of power. The confession was in this case perhaps the most efficient instrument for integrating subjects and ruling classes into one political body, i.e. in the territorial display of authority, as was typical for the early modern period.<sup>5</sup> In the following pages, I describe the development of the state-building process in the Danube Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. The period focused on extends in Wallachia from the establishment of the Metropolitan See in 1359, during Nicholas Alexander's reign (1352–64), until Neagoe Basarab's rule (1512–21). By this time, the process of confessional implementation in Wallachia was complete and irreversible. The same phenomenon also determines the choice of Moldavia: The Metropolitan See was founded in 1386 under Constantinople's jurisdiction during Prince Peter II Muşat's<sup>6</sup>

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'confessionalisation' to the Orthodox traditions in Europe was the 2015 conference in Mainz, Germany, entitled *Orthodoxa Confessio? Konfessionsbildung, Konfessionalisierung und ihre Folgen in der östlichen Christenheit Europas (13.–20. Jahrhundert)*.

<sup>4</sup> Flavius Solomon, *Politică și confesiune la început de ev mediu moldovenesc* (Iași, 2004), 103–21; Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei. Problemele controversate* (Iași, 2014); Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania* (Cambridge, 2014), 22–61.

<sup>5</sup> The display of power in the Late Middle Ages was grounded on personal union (*Personenverband*) between ruler and subjects, linked by strong symbolic bonds such as religious issues, clan, vassality, honour, enfeoffment, patronage, reciprocal aid, and counsel. The early modern territorial display of power (Ger.: *Territorialherrschaft*) does not totally replace the medieval characteristics, but systematizes and objectifies them, thus binding them to a specific territory. This kind of political authority thus articulated itself due to the control of a territory strictly delimited by borders, which formed its own administrative unity. The blurred medieval relations of vassality and of (symbolic) loyalty were now objectified in purely bureaucratic juridical, administrative, and taxation bonds. This does not mean, however, that the Middle Ages did not know territorial displays of power, but rather that the priority was placed on personal bonds, not on territorial and administrative ones (see: Ernst Schubert, *Fürstliche Herrschaft und Territorium im späten Mittelalter* [München, 1996]; Andreas Würzler, 'Seigneurie territoriale' 2013, *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F9927.php> [Accessed: 1 Dec. 2017]).

<sup>6</sup> Most of the researchers consider this Peter to be the first of his name in the Moldavian princely nomenclature. However, to the contrary, I follow here Constantin Rezachevici, who shows that Moldavia was ruled from the end of 1367

reign (1375–91). It was originally a purely jurisdictional issue, which initiated a whole process of confessional implementation, which lasted until Stephen the Great's reign (1457–1504).

The main thesis of this article is that the Orthodox faith in Wallachia and Moldavia was not necessarily a natural evolution from bottom to top, i.e. from the broad anonymous masses of Orthodox believers, who imposed their faith on the aristocratic elites and on the princely houses – as the Romanian national historiography tries to argue.<sup>7</sup> It was merely a political option of the Wallachian princes in order to build, consolidate, defend and extend their authority in the early modern territorial display of power. The 'Orthodox faith'<sup>8</sup> might have been predominant in the area, but this was, as I see it, not a major aim of the voivodes, who rationally and pragmatically shaped their (religious) policies. There were of course favourable conditions, like the common faith of the ruling class and the majority of their subjects, and the common language and common culture, which the princes took into account in their decisions. This is why we cannot speak about a top-down process either, but rather a conjunction of factors and pragmatic policies.

I identify, therefore, three historical phases. The beginning period of religious and confessional ambiguity of the first princes, who oscillated in their religious policy between the Latin and Orthodox spheres of influence, which ended with the political decision to adopt Constantinople's jurisdiction. The second phase consisted of the economic and institutional consolidation of Orthodox infrastructures, based on a close network of monastic centres acting simultaneously as centres of political power. The third period, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, concluded the whole process and made it irreversible, as is shown by the dogmatic literature produced in defence of the Orthodox faith against the Latins, by moral reforms in the Orthodox spirit led by Greek hierarchs, and by the confessionally based display of law.

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until July 1368 by a Peter, son of Ștefan voivode (who died in 1368), and grandson of Bogdan I (1363–67). See Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova a. 1324–1881*, i (București, 2001), 431–43.

<sup>7</sup> Simion Mehedinți, *Creștinismul românesc. Adaos la caracterizarea etnografică a poporului român* (București, 2006); Emilian Popescu, *Creștinismul – sufletul neamului românesc. Lucrările simpozionului național Sfântul Andrei – Apostolul românilor* (Făgăraș, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> A very ambiguous concept in the sources of the fourteenth century, as will be shown below.

II  
ROME OR CONSTANTINOPLE?  
AMBIGUOUS RELIGIOSITY  
AND JURISDICTIONAL STRUGGLE

At the level of the common people, in the late medieval era (from the thirteenth to the beginning of the fourteenth century), in the regions south and east of the Carpathians we encounter a highly ambiguous religious and confessional landscape.<sup>9</sup> Although the Latin sources always terminologically differentiate between *orthodoxa fides* (of the Latin Church) and the *schismatici* of the Byzantine rite,<sup>10</sup> we should note that the common man possessed little knowledge of all the dogmas and practices which led, after the Great Schism of the year 1054, to the Byzantine Imperial Church's separation from the Roman Papacy. On the other hand, we have the question of canonical jurisdiction, i.e. whether a particular ecclesiastical organization belongs to the jurisdictional sphere of Rome or Constantinople. This was the crucial issue, not the theological speculations or liturgical aspects.

Mention of the area between the Lower Danube, the Carpathians and the Dniester appear up ever more frequently in the sources after the sack of Constantinople by the Latin crusaders in 1204. This indicates an entangled religious and political situation in this region. The ambiguous confessional situation in this area, as referred to above, offered local rulers the possibility to follow a most pragmatic policy of oscillation between Rome and Constantinople in order to gain power and political privileges against their international or even local rivals. From the ecclesiastic and religious point of view, the whole region was under the influence of the bishoprics on the Danube's right shore: Vidin, Durostorum (Rom.: Siliștra), Carsium (Hârșova), Axiopolis (Cernavodă), Dinogetia (Garvăn), Noviodunum (Isaccea), Vicina, as well as under the influence of the East Slavic Metropolis of

<sup>9</sup> For more on the concept 'confessional ambiguity' (*konfessionelle Ambiguität*), see: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Einleitung', in Andreas Pietsch and Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (eds.), *Konfessionelle Ambiguität. Uneindeutigkeit und Verstellung als religiöse Praxis in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Gütersloh, 2013), 9–26.

<sup>10</sup> *Documenta Romaniae Historica, D: Relațiile între Țările Române, I: (1222–1456)*, ed. by Academia Republicii Socialiste România (București, 1977) [hereinafter: *Documenta, D, I*], doc. nos. 9, 10, or 32. See Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Din mâinile valahilor schismatici. Români și puterea în regatul Ungariei medievale (secolele XIII–XIV)* (București, 2011), 274.

Kiev and the Halych bishopric. All of them belonged to Ecumenical Patriarchate's ecclesiastic jurisdiction.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, we can presume a predominance of the Byzantine rite in the territories North of the Danube, a fact also shown by the numerous *schismatici* mentioned by Hospitaller or Teutonic sources,<sup>12</sup> who were most probably under the pastoral care of itinerant bishops (chorbishops). Those *schismatici* – as the papal-Latin sources call them – troubled the missionaries sent here by the Roman Curia and were a stubborn obstacle for the Hungarian Kingdom's territorial expansion policies, which used Latin religious propaganda in order to integrate the regions south and east of the Carpathian Mountains into its political system.<sup>13</sup> To this end, the Hungarian kings created, in cooperation with the papal administration, missionary footholds in the Banate of Severin (Lat.: *terra Ceurin*) or in Transylvania, from which the Franciscans and Dominicans started their missions towards the Balkans and Cumania Magna.<sup>14</sup> The strong Latin pressure in Moldavia, during the reign of the Hungarian King Louis I of Anjou (who was, from 1370 until his death in 1382 also Polish King) and his daughter, Jadwiga (1384–99), manifested itself in the foundation of two Latin bishoprics and in the conversion of two Moldavian Princes to the Roman Church, as we will see below.

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<sup>11</sup> Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*, 99–102; Emilian Popescu, 'Configurația religioasă la Dunărea de Jos în ajunul și după cruciada a IV-a', in *idem* and Mihai O. Cățoi (eds.), *Istorie bisericească, misiune creștină și viață culturală. Creștinismul românesc și organizarea bisericească în secolele XIII–XIV. Știri și interpretări noi* (Galați, 2010), 139–65, here: 144–6, 151, 153.

<sup>12</sup> Harald Zimmermann, *Der Deutsche Orden im Siebenbürgen. Eine diplomatische Untersuchung* (Köln, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Claudia F. Dobre, *Mendicants in Moldavia: Mission in an Orthodox Land (Thirteenth to Fifteenth Century)* (Daun, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Maria Holban, *Din cronică relațiilor româno-ungare în secolele XIII–XIV* (București, 1981), 55–60, 65–6. With respect to Cumania Magna, see Victor Spinei, *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the tenth to the mid-thirteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 2009); István Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars. Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365* (Cambridge, 2005); Tasin Gemil, 'Cumano-tătarii și începuturile statelor medievale românești', in Ioan Bolovan and Ovidiu Ghitta (eds.), *Istoria ca datorie. Omagiu academicianului Ioan-Aurel Pop la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 353–64.

III  
THE CONFESSIONAL AMALGAMATION  
AND AMBIGUITY OF THE REGION,<sup>15</sup>  
AS REVEALED BY TWO LATIN SOURCES

On November 14, 1234, Pope Gregory IX wrote to King Andrew II (1205–35) from Perugia, complaining about the religious situation in the territories east of the Carpathian Mountains, where the Latin Church had just established a new bishopric for the newly Christianized Cumans.<sup>16</sup> The Pope wrote that in the aforementioned bishopric of the Cumans lived a people called ‘Wallachians’ (*Walat[h]i*), who committed many injuries to the true faith, although they called themselves Christians. They had their own rite, the ‘Greek’ one (*Graecorum ritus*), and did not take into consideration the Latin bishop for liturgical services. Moreover, they had their own ‘false bishops’ (*pseudoepiscopi*), who provided them with pastoral care. To make matters even worse, the Latin believers in the area, the Hungarian, German and Cuman subjects of the Hungarian Crown, who theoretically were of Latin faith (*orthodoxi*), despised the Latin bishop and passed over to the *schismatici*. They were adopting the customs, religious practices and the liturgical services of the *schismatici* with their ‘false bishops’, so that they mingled and formed all together one single people (*populus unus facti*).<sup>17</sup>

This papal document reveals a religious situation ethnically dominated by strong ‘Wallachian’ elements and religiously by their Byzantine

<sup>15</sup> For more on the phenomena of confessional amalgamation in regions with Latin or Orthodox majorities, see Turcuș, *Sfântul Scaun*, 159–62; Mihai O. Cățoi, ‘Ofensivă catolică și rezistență schismatică la Dunărea de Jos în prima jumătate a secolului al XIII-lea’, in Popescu and Cățoi (eds.), *Istorie bisericească*, 166–213, 189–90; Pop, *Din mâinile valahilor schismatici*, 280.

<sup>16</sup> Achim, *Politica sud-estică*, 56–60.

<sup>17</sup> “In Cumanorum episcopatu, sicut accepimus, quidam populi, qui Walati vocantur, existunt, qui etsi censeantur nomine christiano, sub una tamen fide varios ritus habentes et mores, illa committunt, que huic sunt nomini inimica. Nam Romanam ecclesiam contempnentes, non a venerabili fratre nostro ..., episcopo Cumanorum, qui loci diocesanus existit, sed a quibusdam pseudoepiscopis, Grecorum ritum tenentibus, universa recipiunt ecclesiastica sacramenta, et nonnulli de regno Ungarie, tam Ungari, quam Theutonici et alii orthodoxi morandi causa cum ipsis transeunt ad eosdem et sic cum eis, quia populus unus facti cum eisdem Walathis eo contempto, premissa recipiunt sacramenta, in grave orthodoxorum scandalum et derogationem non modicam fidei christiane”, *Documenta*, D, i, no. 9, p. 20.

faith. It seems that the religious structures of these people were pretty well developed, and that the Orthodox bishops outnumbered the Latin hierarchy in the region. One may say they covered the region better, so that they could promptly provide the needed pastoral care for the inhabitants of the land, even for the non-Orthodox, i.e. the Latin Christians. In light of our considerations here, it is relevant to bear in mind that in fact the Latin believers participated in the liturgical life of the *schismatici* without regard to their own 'orthodox' bishop. Therefore, we here encounter an exemplary illustration of religious ambiguity and pragmatism, caused of course by the fact that the sole Latin bishop could not provide liturgical care with the same efficiency, as did the 'false bishops of Greek rite'. Most likely, the liturgical services themselves were not that different, so the common illiterate and theologically uneducated people could not spot any troubling differences between them. It is interesting that the Pope did not discuss in his letter the liturgical and dogmatic differences between *orthodoxi* and *schismatici*. Instead, what was troubling for him was that the Latin bishop had problems with imposing his jurisdiction over the *pseudoepiscopi*.<sup>18</sup> On the practical and dogmatic level, the everyday life of the common people was thus religiously ambiguous and unconcerned with theological subtleties. However, at the political, ecclesiastical, and jurisdictional level there was an acute problem, which urgently needed to be solved.

In the subsequent part of his letter, Pope Gregory IX continued on to propose a solution of the problem: the Bishop of Cumania should choose a *vicarius*, a Latin bishop suitable for that *natio*, who could exercise the necessary authority over the *schismatici* to bring them back to the Roman Mother Church. Thus, the Pope realized that the actual Latin bishop was not suitable for the mission in those territories, because he did not speak the language of the *Walati*. On the other hand, the Latin subjects, Germans, Hungarians, Cumans etc. did, since they inhabited the same area as the *schismatici*. They lived all together and this coexistence promoted fluid confessional lines. One may conclude that at that time the Wallachians could not be sufficiently controlled by the Latin authorities not just because they had a better Church

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the *pseudoepiscopi* in Gregory IX's letter, see Daniel Barbu, *Byzance, Rome et les Roumains. Essais sur la production politique de la foi au Moyen Age* (Bucarest, 1998), 95–100.

organization, but also because the Latins did not speak their language and could not preach the Catholic faith properly. This was an older problem, which the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in the Danubo-Carpathian basin often complained about: their mission was inefficient because they had to proclaim the Word of God in a foreign language – Latin and Hungarian – or using translators, who did not really ease their task.

A second document shows that the *schismatici* in the Danubo-Carpathian-basin also crossed confessional boundaries for pragmatic reasons, and when in need – lacking their own hierarchy – made use of the pastoral offices offered by the Dominicans. On May 16, 1237, Gregory IX sent a letter from Viterbo to the Dominicans of Severin. He granted them special dispensation to take care of the liturgical needs of the *schismatici* in the region – who lacked their own bishop. They could consecrate the altar clothes, the priest garb, and the cemeteries<sup>19</sup>. Furthermore, the Dominicans were allowed to lift the ban of the excommunicated *schismatici*, both lay and clergy<sup>20</sup>.

All these were *stricto sensu* episcopal attributes, but now the monks were allowed to fulfil them. For the pope, this constituted a sign that all the *schismatici* in the region had now been converted to the Roman Church's *orthodoxa fides*. In the eyes of the Pope, their appeal for a replacement for their lacking bishop with Latin monks constituted, in a state of emergency, an authentic conversion, which shows that for him the jurisdictional matter was preeminent, not the dogmatic and practical (liturgical, iconic, customary) aspects. Reading between the lines, the letter says in effect: "It is good that they do not have their own schismatic bishop, so you shall be their bishops, which means that through you the Roman jurisdiction extends upon them and their

<sup>19</sup> "devotioni vostre in eisdem partibus, in quibus episcoporum copiam non habetis, benedicendi pallas altaris et sacerdotales vestes, ac cimiteria auctoritate presentium vobis concedimus facultatem", *Documente privind istoria României. Veacul XI, XII și XIII. C. Transilvania*, ed. by Academia Republicii Populare Române (București, 1951), nos. 252 and 253, p. 301.

<sup>20</sup> "presentium vobis auctoritate concedimus, ut ... sive clerici vel laici ex aliquo casu sententiam excommunicationis incurrerint, ipsis absolutionis beneficium, si humiliter illud postulandum duxerint, iuxta formam ecclesie impendatis, idem circa fideles si qui forsan ibidem reperti fuerint facientes"; Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki and Nicolae Densușianu (eds.), *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor 1.1* (București, 1887), nos. 115 and 116, pp. 153–4. See Cățoi, 'Ofensivă catolică', 192, n. 97.

region". Nevertheless, the Pope was wrong. The whole situation was, as I see it, an example of the Byzantine and Latin Churches' common liturgical practice in the region. The people were not aware of the practical and liturgical differences, just as they had no interest in the jurisdictional dispute of the ecclesiastical and political elites.

The conclusion, which should be drawn here, is that the confessional ambiguity of the common people in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was grounded on pragmatism. They made use of the offer at hand, with little regard to whether the officiating priest or bishop was clothed with Roman or Constantinopolitan jurisdiction. In the whole Danubo-Carpathian-region, the confessional boundaries were blurred and coincided with the jurisdictional partitions between Rome and Constantinople, two ecclesiastic and political centres far away, in both the geographical and existential senses, from the people living in the region. The 1247 deed of the Hungarian king Bela IV (1235–70) to the Knights of St. John, who were settled in southern Transylvania for defence, conquest of new territories, and missionary reasons, refers to the *archiepiscopi* and *episcopi* of the Wallachian entities beyond the mountains. These eparchial entities were under the jurisdiction of neither Constantinople nor Rome, and obviously enjoyed a certain degree of ecclesiastic autonomy.<sup>21</sup> A similar case of jurisdictional and confessional ambiguity can be seen in Banat and in the domains of the Hungarian Crown. We encounter there communities of *schismatici* who were not recognized by either the Ecumenical Patriarchate or by the Roman Curia. The Roman or the Constantinople Sees did not canonically accept the ecclesiastical structures (bishops, monks, secular priests) of these communities. However, the people of these regions did not seem very worried about the jurisdictional issue and finally admitted the jurisdiction of the schismatic Serbian Patriarchate in Peć, which declared its autocephaly from Constantinople in 1346.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Documenta*, D, i, no. 10, p. 22. For the Order of St. John's presence in Transylvania see Turcuş, *Sfântul Scaun*, 233–42.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Nicolae Săsăuian, 'Sfântul Nicodim de la Tismana și contemporanii săi. Considerații de istorie culturală în spațiul sud-est european în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea', *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Patriarhul Justinian*, vi (2006), 219–34, here: 231–2; Nicolae Chifăr, 'Contextul politico-religios sud-est european privind întemeierea Mitropoliei Țării Românești', in Popescu and Cățoi (eds.), *Istorie bisericească*, 286–305, here: 293; Pop, *Din mâinile valahilor schismatici*, 302.

Under such religious and geopolitical circumstances, the first princes of Wallachia, Basarab I (ca. 1310–52) and his son, Nicholas Alexander, as well as of Moldavia, Lațcu (1368–75) and Peter II Mușat, decided to take an ambivalent position in religious matters and to oscillate in a calculated manner between Rome and Constantinople, Buda and Cracow.

They married Latin princesses.<sup>23</sup> On February 1, 1327, for instance, Pope John XXII (1316–34) wrote a letter from Avignon to Basarab I, where he warmly regarded the prince of Wallachia as “princeps devotus catholicus, deo et apostolice sedi favorabiliter assistens”.<sup>24</sup> This is a sign that the Wallachian princes had an equivocal relationship with the Roman See and the Latin powers. To give another example, Basarab’s son, Nicholas Alexander, worked intensely to restore friendly relations with the Curia as well as to maintain good neighbourly relations with the Hungarian Kingdom, after these relations had been severely bruised by the devastating attack of Basarab I on King Charles Robert of Anjou’s (1308–42) troops in 1330.<sup>25</sup> So Nicholas Alexander – who at the same time adopted Constantinople’s jurisdiction – tried to soften the blow a little by making wide concessions to Latin missionaries, which caused Pope Clement VI (1342–52) to praise him in a letter dated 7 October 1345 as *nobilis vir*.<sup>26</sup> Analogously, Lațcu of Moldavia founded in 1371 a Latin bishopric in Siret.<sup>27</sup> Lațcu promised at least (but it seems he really did try) to convert to the Latin faith and

<sup>23</sup> Chifăr, ‘Contextul politico-religios’, 291. The confessional adherence of Petru II’s wife is contested. Constantin Rezachevici states that she might have been Orthodox, but this however remains a speculation (*idem, Cronologia critică*, 451).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Documenta*, D, i, no. 17, p. 3. Also Șerban Papacostea, ‘Prima unire românească: Voievodatul de Argeș și Țara Severin’, *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, xxviii (2010), 9–24, here: 14; Matei Cazacu and Dan I. Mureșan, *Ioan Basarab, un domn român la începuturile Țării Românești* (Chișinău, 2013), 31, 180–1.

<sup>25</sup> Holban, *Cronica relațiilor*, 107–25, 141; Chifăr, ‘Contextul politico-religios’, 289. In 1355 Nicholas Alexander formally recognised the Hungarian King’s suzerainty, so that he could obtain in return the *de jure* recognition of his possession over *terra Ceurin* – which *de facto* he already had; Holban, *Cronica relațiilor*, 146.

<sup>26</sup> *Documenta*, D, i, no. 32, p. 60: “Dudum prelato letis in domino relatibus ad nostri apostolatus auditum, quod Olachi Romani commorantes in partibus Ungarie Transsilvanis, Ultralpinis et Sirmiis ille, ... quod ipsorum aliqui iam viam veritatis agnoverunt, per susceptionem fidei catholice ... fermentum scismatis et aliis erroribus, ... excusso a se penitus et abiecto ...”.

<sup>27</sup> Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*, 116–119.

as a proof of this founded the Siret bishopric. From a letter of Pope Gregory IX of January 25, 1372, we know that Lațcu asked what the conditions were to get a papal dispensation for a divorce from his wife, Lady Anna, who refused to leave the Byzantine rite and to convert to the Latin faith. Therefore, it seems that Lațcu's closeness to the Roman Church was rather intense.<sup>28</sup> His successor, Peter II, also adopted the Latin faith for a while. His mother, Margaret Mușata (ca. 1330–94), a Catholic princess, vigorously promoted Latin missionaries in Moldavia until the end of her life.<sup>29</sup>

#### IV RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND POWER CONSOLIDATION

Beginning in 1351, we can witness an intensification of Latin missionary efforts south and east of the Carpathians, coordinated from the Hungarian capital in Buda. This went hand in hand with the increased political pressure of the Hungarian Crown in the Wallachian and Moldavian territories. The Hungarians reinforced old claims of suzerainty and tried to give substance to them via tax collections and territorial demands in both Danubian principalities.<sup>30</sup> Not only the Hungarian Kingdom, but also the Polish Crown entered the political game in the region, with claims of supremacy over Moldavia.<sup>31</sup>

The Wallachian and Moldavian princes had to react. Nicholas Alexander strengthened the close familial and dynastic ties with the Orthodox countries of Bulgaria and Serbia by giving his daughters as wives to, respectively, the Bulgarian Tsar John Stratsimir (1356–96) and the Serbian Despot Steven Uroš V (1355–71), the sons of his own sisters.<sup>32</sup> In the given circumstances, Wallachia's prince Nicholas Alexander wrote to Patriarch Kallistos I of Constantinople (1350–3, 1354–63) to ask him for permission to move the important metropolitan

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<sup>28</sup> Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică*, 444.

<sup>29</sup> Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*, 120.

<sup>30</sup> Holban, *Cronica relațiilor*, 148; Pop, *Din mâinile valahilor schismatici*, 308.

<sup>31</sup> Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 154–68; Alexandru Pânzar, *Hotarul de nord al Moldovei. De la formare, în secolul al XIV-lea, până la statornicirea lui pe Ceremuș, Colacin și Nistru* (Iași, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> The queens of Bulgaria and Serbia were daughters of Basarab I, and thus the sisters of Nicholas Alexander.

centre of Vicina – under Constantinople’s jurisdiction – to the Wallachian capital city of Curtea de Argeş. By this move, the Metropolis of Ungro-Vlachia was founded in 1359, which immediately enjoyed the official recognition of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which also sent the first Greek hierarchs to Wallachia.<sup>33</sup> The same happened in Moldavia. Notwithstanding his earlier ogling with the Latin Church, Prince Peter II founded a Metropolis in 1386. He put it under Constantinople’s jurisdiction in order to evade, or at least to alleviate, the political pressure of the Hungarian and Polish Crowns, which used the Latin faith, Latin missions, and the Latin Church as political instruments to extend their political power in this region.<sup>34</sup> The following schism with the Constantinople Patriarchate, the so-called ‘Moldavian Schism’ adds nothing to the matter discussed here, because – as the sources show – the Moldavian Metropolitan See was foreseen from the beginning as reserved for Constantinople’s jurisdiction. The rupture between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Moldavian voivodes concerned the question of office holders, not the principle decision in favour of Orthodoxy.<sup>35</sup>

Their choice to adopt Byzantine Orthodoxy might seem to constitute a decisive and definitive step for both principalities, i.e. Wallachia and Moldavia. The reality however was different: the princes kept the ‘Latin trump card’ in their hands, to be played in times of need, especially

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<sup>33</sup> Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller (eds.), *Acta et diplomata Graeca medii aevi. I: Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani 1315–1402*, i (Aalen, 1860), no. 171/1, pp. 383–6 and no. 171/2, pp. 386–8. See also Alexandru Moraru, ‘Întemeierea Mitropoliei Ungrovlahiei (1359) receptată în istoriografia românească’, in Popescu and Căţoi (eds.), *Istorie bisericească*, 306–34, 309–14; Cazacu and Mureşan, *Ioan Basarab*, 31, 180–1, 162–7.

<sup>34</sup> Haralambie Mihăescu et al. (eds.), *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae*, iv: *Scritori și acte bizantine (secolele IV–XV)* (Bucureşti, 1982), nos. 66 and 67, pp. 268–76. See also Vitalien Laurent, ‘Aux origines de l’Eglise de Moldavie. Le métropolitain Jérémie et l’évêque Joseph’, *Revue des études byzantines*, v (1947), 158–70; Nicolae I. Şerbănescu, ‘Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei. Şase sute de ani de la prima menţiune documentară cunoscută a existenței ei (1386 – 1 septembrie – 1986)’, in *idem*, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română de la primele întocmiri creștine pe pământ românesc, la Patriarhat*, ed. by Mihai O. Căţoi (Bucureşti, 2015), 473–96, here: 479–94.

<sup>35</sup> See the report of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the Moldavian Schism in Mihăescu et al. (eds.), *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae*, iv, nos. 66 and 67, pp. 268–77 [Bilingual Greek-Romanian edition]. See also Laurent, ‘Aux origines de l’Eglise de Moldavie’, 163; Şerbănescu, ‘Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei’, 479–94.

after the Ottomans entered the European scene after 1360. In conquering the Balkans, the Ottomans used the common religious Orthodox faith of Bulgarians, Serbians and Greeks, as well as the ecclesiastic networks of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in order to integrate their new territorial possessions. The Danubian princes were most aware of this kind of expansion policy, which is why they did not radically cut their contacts with the Latin bodies. The successor of Nicholas Alexander, Vladislav I (1364–77), whose very influential stepmother Clara was of the Latin faith, in 1369 emphatically supported the rights of the Latin bishop of Oradea (in Transylvania) to visit the Latin congregations in Wallachia.<sup>36</sup> He encouraged the bishop to do everything he could to consolidate these congregations in order to keep their Latin faith and spirit alive. In Moldavia, the new prince Alexander the Good (1400–32) founded, in addition to Lațcu's bishopric of Siret, a second Latin bishopric in Baia.<sup>37</sup>

Wallachia's and Moldavia's decision to opt for Constantinople was from the beginning nothing more than a simple jurisdictional option which – considering their meagre dogmatic knowledge and convictions as well as the fluid practical boundaries – could be revoked anytime or be changed due to external political and military interference. Knowing that, the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia tried in their religious policy to shape a strong Orthodox identity for the social bodies of their countries. The first step was the creation of an efficient institutional infrastructure. They created new bishoprics within their metropolises to enhance the episcopal 'coverage' of the territory, and revived the monkish tradition by a stringent program of founding monastic centres all over their territories.

In Wallachia, two powerful Orthodox monastic centres – in Vodița and Tismana – were established in the disputed territories of the Banat of Severin, which had to compete with Latin missionary centres.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Documenta Romaniae Historica, C: Transilvania*, xiii: (1366–1370), ed. by Academia Republicii Socialiste România (București, 1991), no. 443, pp. 677–8.

<sup>37</sup> Liviu Pilat, 'Întemeierea Episcopiei de Baia și rivalitatea polono-maghiară în primele decenii ale secolului al XV-lea', in *idem, Studii privind relațiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun și Patriarhia Ecumenică (secolele XIV–XVI)* (Iași, 2012), 81–102.

<sup>38</sup> Nicolae Săsăujan, 'Sfântul Nicodim de la Tismana și contemporanii săi. Considerații de istorie culturală în spațiul sud-est european în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIV-lea', *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Patriarhul Justinian*, vi (2006), 219–34, 231–32.

In Moldavia, Prince Alexander the Good founded, immediately after the official recognition of the Moldavian Metropolis by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1401, two Orthodox monastic centres in Neamţ and Bistriţa, in close proximity to the Latin bishoprics of Siret and Baia.<sup>39</sup> These and later similar monasteries in Wallachia and Moldavia enjoyed the princes' full economic support, consisting of rich estates, financial and jewellery donations, permission to collect taxes, tax-exemptions etc.<sup>40</sup> In these first decades of the Orthodox life in Wallachia and Moldavia, it was primarily the privilege of the Prince to found monasteries. The boyars' monastic foundations – although permitted – were endowed by the voivodes with generous estates, only to be bought back later entirely and donated to the voivodal monasteries.<sup>41</sup> These incipient cores of a hesychastic Orthodox monkish culture were brazenly multiplied until broad networks of monasteries covered the Wallachian and Moldavian territories.<sup>42</sup>

The constituency of a strong monastic infrastructure went hand in hand with the moral reform of the low clergy. Two discovered letters from Patriarch Euthymios of Tarnovo (1375–93) to the Wallachian ecclesial authorities confirm this, wherein he clarified some dogmatic aspects against the Bogomil heresy – which seems to have spread not only among the common people but also among the low rural clergy. On this anti-heretical basis, Euthymios proclaimed the urgent necessity to reform the Wallachian clergy in accordance with the high standard of pure orthodox doctrine, morality, and liturgical life.<sup>43</sup> An enhanced volume of liturgical literature can be observed in both Wallachia and Moldavia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The same was true with respect to Orthodox treatises of canonical law. Matthaios Blastares's *Syntagma* (1335) and Tsar Stefan Dušan's

<sup>39</sup> Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*, 155.

<sup>40</sup> *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, B: *Țara Românească*, viii–x, ed. by Academia Română (București, 1996–); Mihai-Ștefan Ceașu and Marius Chelcu (eds.), *Domeniul mănăstirilor din Bucovina în secolele XIV–XVIII* (Iași, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Dan I. Mureșan, 'Philothée I<sup>er</sup> Kokkinos, la métropole de Hongrovalachie et les "empereurs de la terre"', in Popescu and Cățoi (eds.), *Istorie bisericească*, 335–406; *idem*, 'Isihasmul și prima etapă a rezistenței la deciziile conciliului florentin în Moldova', *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Historia*, xlv, 1–2 (1999), 3–57.

<sup>43</sup> Eftimie Patriarh de Târnovo, *Correspondența cu Sfântul Nicodim de la Tismana, Mitropolitul Antim al Ungrovalahiei, Monahul Ciprian, viitorul Mitropolit al Kievului și al întregii Rusii*, ed. by Gheorghică Ciocoi (București, 2010), 13–51.

(1308–55) *Zakonik* from 1349 were introduced into the legal systems of both principalities.<sup>44</sup>

## V

### THE CULTURAL STRENGTHENING OF ORTHODOXY

In 1508, the first liturgical books were printed in the Danubio-Carpathian-area.<sup>45</sup> This completed the rich collection of manuscripts of dogmatic literature circulating under the Slavic denomination of *sbornik* in both Moldavia and Wallachia. A *sbornik* was, following the pattern of Euthymios Zygabenos' *Πανοπλία Δογματική* ('The Armory of Dogmas' or 'Dogmatic Panoply of the Orthodox Faith' written in twelfth century),<sup>46</sup> a collection of dogmatic arguments against heretic and heterodox doctrines. Since the times of Alexander the Good, Moldavia had a renowned princely academy in the capital Suceava.<sup>47</sup> The monastery of Bistrița in Wallachia<sup>48</sup> was a prolific calligraphic centre producing a prodigious collection of manuscripts and housing a rich library,<sup>49</sup> used by the scholar Prince Neagoe Basarab (1512–21), author of an impressive treatise of Orthodox political theology.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the monastery of Neamț in Moldavia was the most prolific

<sup>44</sup> Ioan N. Floca, *Drept canonic orthodox, legislație și administrație bisericească*, i (București, 1990), 115, 130; Victor Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares. The Destiny of a Byzantine Legal Code Among the Orthodox Slavs and Romanians. 14th–17th centuries* (Frankfurt am Main, 2012); Virgil Ciociltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 2012), 276.

<sup>45</sup> Elena Chiaburu, *Carte și tipar în Țara Moldovei* (Iași, 2010), 20.

<sup>46</sup> Antonio Rigo, 'La Panoplie Dogmatique d'Euthyme Zigabène. Les Péres de l'Église, l'empereur et les hérésies du présent', in *idem* and Pavel Ermilov (eds.), *Byzantine Theologians* (Rome, 2009), 19–32; Jakob Wickert, *Die Panoplia Dogmatica Des Euthymios Zygabenos. Untersuchung ihrer Anlage und ihrer Quellen, ihres Inhaltes und ihrer Bedeutung* (Piscataway, NJ, 2010); Nadia Miladinova, *The Panoplia Dogmatike by Euthymios Zygadenos. A study on the first edition published in Greek in 1710* (Leiden, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Ion Nistor, 'Zur Geschichte des Schulwesens in der Bukowina', *Jahresbericht der gr.-or. Ober-Realschule in Czernowitz*, xl (1912), 3–49, here: 5.

<sup>48</sup> Not to be confused with the homonymic monastery in Moldavia.

<sup>49</sup> Ioan Ionescu, 'Neagoe Basarab și ctitoriile sale', *Mitropolia Olteniei*, xxiii, 9–10 (1971), 653–75; Nicolae Stoicescu, 'La politique de Neagoe Basarab et ses Préceptes pour son fils Teodosie', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 9/1, 18–42. Mihai-D. Grigore, *Neagoe Basarab – Princeps Christianus. Christianitas-Semantik im Vergleich mit Erasmus, Luther und Machiavelli (1513–1523)* (Frankfurt am Main, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Grigore, *Neagoe Basarab – Princeps Christianus*.

calligraphic centre for Slavonic Orthodox literature in the fifteenth century, with Moldavian calligraphy even being influential for the creation of the first Cyrillic print fonts.<sup>51</sup>

In this way, Wallachia and Moldavia created, by the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, a dynamic environment for Orthodox scholarship, which enabled an efficient theological opposition to the Latin Church. A theological report from sixteenth century Wallachia, written by the Constantinopolitan scholar Manuel of Corinth and addressed to the Wallachian Prince Neagoe Basarab, accurately lists and extensively comments on the dogmatic differences between the Byzantine Orthodox and Latin faiths. The practical goal of this writing was to offer Prince Basarab concrete guidelines for his political actions towards Rome and Venice.<sup>52</sup> The example of Metropolitan Damian (1437–47) shows the importance of Moldavian Orthodoxy at the international level. Not only was he ranked eighth in the Byzantine delegation to the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–9), he took active part in the dogmatic discussions on the *Filioque*, which shows the level of theological education of the high clergy members in Moldavia.<sup>53</sup>

To summarise, in both Wallachia and Moldavia we can observe a strong confessional enculturation – at least among the influential and political power elites – at all levels: theological, political, institutional, educational, and economic.

## VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The official adoption of the Orthodox confession in the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in the fourteenth century,

<sup>51</sup> Chiaburu, *Carte*, 21.

<sup>52</sup> Mihai-D. Grigore, ‘Zwischen orthodoxer Konformität und politischem Pragmatismus: Die Walachei im 16. Jahrhundert’, in *Religion und Politik. Eine Quellenanthologie zu gesellschaftlichen Konjunkturen in der Neuzeit*, ed. by Leibniz Institute of European History, [http://wiki.ieg-mainz.de/konjunktoren/index.php?title=Zwischen\\_orthodoxer\\_Konformität\\_und\\_politischem\\_Pragmatismus:\\_Die\\_Walachei\\_im\\_16.\\_Jahrhundert](http://wiki.ieg-mainz.de/konjunktoren/index.php?title=Zwischen_orthodoxer_Konformität_und_politischem_Pragmatismus:_Die_Walachei_im_16._Jahrhundert) [Accessed: 8 Nov. 2017]; *idem*, *Neagoe Basarab – Princeps Christianus*, 72–4.

<sup>53</sup> Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum* (București, 1994), 471–6.

which initially was a purely jurisdictional matter, opened up a dynamic process of confessional and political transformation. This ended in the sixteenth century at the stage of a consolidated Orthodox culture, which made any confessional reversal unthinkable.

The spatial spread of power by means of religious policy clearly shows how, in such cases, the category of 'space' is a dimension provided with meaning by human agency and organized by knowledge and desire: "The state and each of its constituent institutions call for spaces – but spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements".<sup>54</sup> In the cases of Wallachia and Moldavia, political space was not an object of external conquest and annexation, despite numerous attempts to make it so. It was a dimension to *fill* from the inside with coherent 'meaningful' structures and to transform from a pure physical geographical setting<sup>55</sup> – between the mountains, the Danube, and the steppe north of the Black Sea – into the cultural category and dimension, which 'space' is. Meaningfulness was, in these discussed cases, the result of institutional structuralisation, territorial implementation, dogmatic-ideological consolidation, and – *nota bene* – of the *freedom* to take advantage of the leeway offered by the confessional ambiguity which marked the early history of these two political entities. In fact, this confessional leeway constituted the foundation to build upon in the next steps of the long process of state building in Wallachia and Moldavia, which strengthened the Orthodox rootedness in the Danubian principalities.

The Romanian scholar Marian Coman, for instance, broadly discusses the territoriality of Wallachia.<sup>56</sup> He postulates that the princely

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<sup>54</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 1991), 85.

<sup>55</sup> Even geographical boundaries are settings of human agency, perception and attribution. Danube for instance was 'used' by Wallachian rulers in some situations as border and defensive *lines*, in other situations on the contrary as contact and transfer zones. The same was true with respect to the Carpathian Mountains. I posit this against Reinhard Koselleck's theory of space as 'Naturvorgegebenheit jeder menschlichen Geschichte' [apud Eric Piltz, 'Trägheit des Raums. Fernand Braudel und die *Spatial Stories* der Geschichtswissenschaft', in Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (eds.), *Spatial Turn. Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bielefeld, 2008), 75–102, here: 78]. This means space as a natural setting of any human historicity, while setting is not a preexistent pre-cultural and neutral matter of fact; on the contrary, it is dependent on human perception and agency and is – in this sense – contingent.

<sup>56</sup> Marian Coman, *Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală* (Iași, 2013).

authority was in the beginning of a social nature and consisted in the direct relations between Princes and local potentates and communities, and not in an objective power exercised over a strictly delimited territory. The geographical and territorial delimitation of the Principality of Wallachia within strict borders was a long and progressive process, which, according to Coman, ended in the mid-sixteenth century. The process started earlier, as we see in the territorial disputes between Basarab I. and the Hungarian Crown over the Banate of Severin or in the attempts to include Dobrudja in the Principality Wallachia in the fourteenth century. However, the point is that the political space (i.e. territory) of the Danube Principalities was the result of long term socio-cultural and religious-political developments.

Such ‘spaces’ are – apart from the schematic delimitations postulated by the ‘spatial turn’ – dimensions of social semantics, to use the expression of Niklas Luhmann.<sup>57</sup> Such spaces of power (*Herrschaftsräume*) emerge in processes of communication and agency. Spaces of power are practices, a practical form of cultural space generation using, in fact, non-spatial entities (as it is abstract physical geography).<sup>58</sup> This is why the borders of such spaces are fluid and extremely permeable, permitting irradiation of spatialized orders into alien dimensions and in turn taking in influences from abroad. This is the case with the Wallachian and Moldavian Orthodoxies. They endangered for instance the Transylvanian voivodship’s political order by ‘exporting’ Orthodox culture into a system where the Orthodox faith was not officially recognized.<sup>59</sup>

Political space emerges as an entangled dimension of human sociability (i.e. communication, agency, and values). This, which I call ‘filling space with meaningfulness’, is the result of complex processes of transfer, motion, and communication, as well as contextual adaptations of ideologies together with their political programmes. ‘Meaningfulness’ is, in this sense, a matter of power and of authority

<sup>57</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik*, I (Frankfurt am Main, 1980).

<sup>58</sup> Georg Simmel, ‘Über räumliche Projektionen sozialer Formen’, in Jörg Dünne and Stephan Günzel (eds.), *Raumtheorie. Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main, 2012), 304–16.

<sup>59</sup> Mihai-D. Grigore, ‘Von Papisten, Schismatikern und Ketzern. Der Donau-Karpaten-Raum als Konfliktfeld konfessioneller Geschichtspolitik im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert’, *Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im Östlichen Europa*, xxiii (2015), 21–31, 29–31.

which organises power, transforming it into space. The case of Wallachia and Moldavia shows that ‘space’ is necessarily a concept of (political) *order*, as Michel Foucault puts in his book *Les Mots et les choses* (1966)<sup>60</sup>. Space always organizes, connects, possesses a finality, and strategically attains this via the use of different instruments. A special role in this regard is played by different individual or collective human agents, who on the one hand manage and shape the order and its economy, and on the other hand are subjected to it.

Where human agency is involved, complex constellations emerge which shape and reshape spaces of power in perpetual motion between multiple possibilities, as put by Foucault, who understands space as a ‘configuration’<sup>61</sup>, when in fact there is, as I put it, a ‘spatial constellation’. Returning to the Wallachian and Moldavian cases, I have shown that both the monastic reform and the Orthodox cultural revival were caused by factors of a nature other than religious. All these processes were spearheaded by the political agency of the princes. Therefore, politics and religion experienced – depending on the momentary constellation of factors – successive phases of intertwining and demerging.

The gradual crystallization of the space called the ‘Danubian Principalities’, with its cultural, religious, and political cornerstones, generated in the *longue durée* a powerful mechanism of identity, integration, and belonging, which culminated after centuries in the modern project of the nation-state of Great Romania. Thus is, however, another field of enquiry.

*proofreading James Hartzell*

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<sup>60</sup> English translation: Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London and New York, 2005).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, 34.

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