

VICINA ȘI MITROPOLIA ȚĂRII ROMÂNEȘTI

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Mots-clef: métropole Patriarcat Oecuménique, princes de Valachie, Césaro-papisme, chorévêques.

Cuvinte cheie: mitropolie, patriarhia oecumenică, principii Tarii Românești, cezaro-papism, choraepiscopi.

Résumé: L'évolution de la Valachie s'est produite dans une région géographique hantée par les peuples migrants entre les III^e et XIII^e siècles. En conséquence, les domaines politiques et urbains se sont développés plus lentement que dans le reste de l'Europe. Dans ces conditions, au XIII^e siècle à côté des princes roumains ont apparu des chorévêques. Également au XIII^e siècle l'Empire Byzantin restauré a créé un évêché dans le prospère port Vicina. Cet évêché va devenir à la fin du XIII^e siècle métropole. D'après les registres du Patriarcat Oecuménique et les écrits du diacre Giorgios Pachymeres résulte que le métropolitain Lucas de Vicina avait, vers le début du XIV^e siècle, dans son obédience religieuse les habitants du Danube. Vitalien Laurent a montré qu'il s'agit probablement de la première mention des Roumains comme unité politique, ethnique et autonome. Les documents écrits attestent la connexion entre la Valachie et l'Empire byzantin. C'était une relation naturelle soumise à l'institution de Césaro-papisme. L'existence d'un métropolitain à côté des princes valaques a été possible quand ont été accomplies les exigences des canons 5 et 6 du Concile de Serdica (343). Conformément aux canons, le siège d'un évêque ne pouvait fonctionner que dans une ville qui pouvait assurer son existence et dans une église métropolitaine somptueuse. À cette fin, les princes roumains Basarab I (1310-1352) et son fils Nicolas-Alexandre (1352-1364) ont fini de bâtir en 1352 l'Église Princière Saint-Nicolas à Curtea de Argeș. À l'avis de Charles Diehl cette église était le plus grand édifice orthodoxe au XIV^e siècle de l'Europe de Sud-Est. Dans cette situation très probablement en 1353 le métropolitain Hyacinth de Vicina était venu à la cour des princes roumains. C'est seulement en 1359 que le Patriarcat Oecuménique décidait de déplacer le trône métropolitain de Vicina à Curtea de Argeș. Les documents du Patriarcat Oecuménique sont clairs. Ce n'était pas un fondement, mais un déplacement de la métropole. Il a été fait de cette manière parce que

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l'autorité métropolitaine de Vicina s'étendait déjà sur le territoire roumain.

En conclusion, on peut affirmer que la métropole de Valachie à été créée avant 1359 elle peut être datée du début du XIV^e siècle. La métropole de Valachie n'était pas le résultat d'une nouvelle fondation, mais d'un transfert d'une ancienne métropole de l'Empire byzantin. Donc, on ne peut pas parler d'une fondation, un terme qui ne figure pas dans documents du Patriarcat Oecuménique, mais d'une relocalisation.

Rezumat: *Evoluția Țării Românești s-a făcut într-o zonă geografică bântuită de neamurile migratoare între secolele al III-lea și al XIII-lea. Ca urmare, viața politică și cea urbană s-au dezvoltat mai lent ca în restul Europei. În acele condiții, alături de principii români din Țara Românească au apărut, în secolul al XIII-lea, choraepiscopi. Tot în secolul al XIII-lea Imperiul Bizantin restaurat a creat în înfloritorul port Vicina o episcopie. Aceasta va deveni de la finele secolului XIII mitropolie. Din registrele Patriarhiei Oecumenice și din opera diaconului Giorgios Pachymeres rezultă că la începutul secolului al XIV-lea mitropolitul Luca din Vicina păstora și asupra locuitorilor de pe malul Dunării. Vitalien Laurent a arătat că este prima mențiune probabilă a românilor ca unitate etnică și politică autonomă. Astfel este atestată în documentele scrise legătura între Țara Românească și Imperiul Bizantin. Era o relație firească în virtutea instituției cezaro-papismului. Existența unui mitropolit lângă domnii Țării Românești s-a putut realiza când au fost îndeplinite cerințele canoanelor 5 și 6 ale Sinodului de la Serdica (343). Ele cereau ca sediul unui arhiepiscop să fie într-un oraș care putea să-i asigure viața, iar biserica mitropolitană să fie fastuoasă. În acest scop, domnii români Basarab I (1310-1352) și fiul său Nicolae Alexandru (1352-1364) au terminat în anul 1352 Biserica Sf. Nicolae din Curtea de Argeș. După opinia lui Charles Diehl era cea mai mare construcție ortodoxă din secolul al XIV-lea, din sud-estul Europei. În acea situație, în anul 1353 a venit la curtea domnilor români mitropolitul Hyacinth din Vicina. Abia la anul 1359 Patriarhia Oecumenică a decis să mute tronul mitropolitan din Vicina la Curtea de Argeș. Actele Patriarhiei Oecumenice sunt clare. Nu a fost o întemeiere, ci o mutare a mitropoliei. S-a procedat astfel, deoarece autoritatea mitropoliei din Vicina se întindea demult asupra teritoriului Țării Românești.*

În concluzie, se poate susține că mitropolia Țării Românești este anterioară anului 1359. Ea poate fi datată la începutul secolului al XIV-lea. Mitropolia Țării Românești nu a fost rodul întemeierii unei instituții noi, ci al unei translații a unei mai vechi mitropolii a Imperiului Bizantin. Deci nu se poate vorbi de o întemeiere, termen care nu apare în actele Patriarhiei Oecumenice, ci de o translatăre a mitropoliei.

The title I have chosen and announced on this occasion is in line with some earlier concerns regarding the beginnings of Romanian Christianity, the emergence of Wallachia as an independent state and, finally, the relationship between the throne and the altar¹.

Naturally, the discussion should begin with the penetration, preaching and acceptance of Christianity by the Romanised population on the Lower Danube. The new belief spread easily in Scythia Minor, later named *præfectura oræ maritimæ*², as its inhabitants spoke vernacular Latin, therefore they understood

¹ Cf. (CIOBANU) VERGATTI 1977, p. 239-332; idem, 1980, p. 121-132; 1985, p. 157-176; VERGATTI 2003, p. 22-40; 2009₁, p. 451-457; 2009₂, p. 25-36; 2009₃, p. 225-243.

² For the administrative organisation and names designating Dobrudja in Antiquity,

without any effort the sermons of Apostles Andrew and Philip³, who had come here after the first synod of Jerusalem (49-50 A.D.⁴). Following the paths crossed by the apostles it shows, undeniably⁵, clearly, that they travelled across the territory inhabited by the Romanised population of future Dobrudja⁶.

It was Emperor Trajan (98-117)⁷ who spread Christianity from Scythia Minor and the empire as far as the newly-conquered province of Dacia (101-102; 105-106).

The success of the two apostles, unmediated or through followers and descendants in their mission of spreading Christianity among the Romanised population, joined by those who had come from the empire, is proven both by written and archaeological sources. The existence of some martyrs from among the local population⁸, as well as that of several Palaeochristian inscriptions⁹ and the results of archaeological excavations evince the rapid, constant dissemination of Christianity, over a wide region, among the inhabitants of the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic area¹⁰.

Here I should remark that the Palaeochristian and Christian objects excavated by archaeologists were small-sized, easy to hide by the owners, hard to discover by persecuting authorities¹¹. Naturally, they belonged to common people, who could not spend much money. The inscriptions mostly belonged to ordinary people, not necessarily rich or very rich¹².

A first conclusion can be drawn here: Christianity with the Proto-Romanians and then Romanians was, at first, apostolic and popular.

I believe that this feature – of popular Christianity that passed from Proto-Romanians to Romanians-, gave authenticity to the faith. Furthermore, the large number of ordinary believers allowed and required the Christian church to move on to a superior form of organisation, namely episcopacies¹³.

As regards the neighboring populations – Bulgarians, Serbs, Hungarians,

see RĂDULESCU, BITOLEANU 1979, p. 94-97, 123-125; SLAVOVA 1998, p. 99-106 (here p. 103, 104).

³ Cf. POPESCU 1994, p. 80-88; idem, 2001, p. 386-398; idem, 2009, p. 9-27 (here p. 14).

⁴ For this first synod, see DU BUIT 2000, p. 283-288; DURĂ 2003, p. 61-84.

⁵ There are a number of opponents of apostolic and popular Christianity with the Proto-Romanian and, later, the Romanian population. Among these, we can mention Nelu Zugravu. The author denies the apostolic character of the Romanian Christianity for it allegedly relies on legends and ballads emerged from the fantasy of some anonymous bards (Cf. ZUGRAVU 1997, p. 144, 160; 2009, p. 18-64).

⁶ Cf. POPESCU 2009, p. 14 and foll.; PĂCURARIU, 1980, p. 54-61.

⁷ Cf. PĂCURARIU 1980, p. 12-13; Christianity was disseminated and imposed, in the future province of Dacia, through merchants, travellers, who had come "ex toto orbo imperio", and through soldiers and imperial authorities, after the conquest (cf. NĂSTUREL 1984, p. 219-221).

⁸ See, especially, BAUMANN 2004. It would seem that the four martyrs whose traces were discovered at Niculițel were victims of the great anti-Christian persecution ordered by Augustus Diocletian during 305-306.

⁹ Cf. POPESCU 1976, *passim*; BARNEA 1979.

¹⁰ See also GUDEA, GHIURCO 1988.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Cf. POPESCU 1976.

¹³ Cf. NĂSTUREL 1984, p. 220, 229-234.

Russians – Christianity penetrated later, being taken over by the heads of society – monarchs, aristocrats – and was then imposed on the common people¹⁴. The process was opposite to that of the Romanians where Christianity started from the common people to the leaders of society. This is a situation which explains the long-lasting resistance for centuries in the harsh life conditions on the Lower Danube. We should not forget that the Romanian lands faced all evils, when the great waves of migrants crossed this area on their way to Western Europe¹⁵. The dwellers of the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic space benefited from the existence of large forests covering the Romanian Plain¹⁶. It is here that the oppressed, huge part of the population from the former province of Dacia, found refuge and started to practise Christianity as Hesychasm¹⁷. Monks and eremites built small places of worship, made of wood; some of them were also built in caves and sheltered places¹⁸. Having a propensity for the use of wooden constructions, the population in these parts did not leave monumental material evidence, except a few establishments¹⁹.

Later, when the waves of migrants had tempered, the former Roman provinces underwent a process of local political organisation. According to the tradition and ideology of the medieval world, a crowned head would always be attended by a hierarch of appropriate rank. As all written sources revealed, the dwellers of the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic area were Christian suffragans of the Christian Church of Orthodox denomination, an orientation towards the Oecumenical Patriarchate and the Byzantine Empire²⁰, the successor and legitimate representative of a universal power, was but natural.

Moving across times, we reach the 13th century, when we encounter the first Romanian political entities on the territory of future Wallachia.

Following the assassination of Ioannitsa Kaloyan (1197-1207) in Thessaloniki (1207), a monarch whose title of “emperor” had been acknowledged by Pope Innocent III²¹, his empire divided. He was followed to leadership by a number of successors²². One of these was Esclas, mentioned by Henri de Valenciennes²³. This

¹⁴ Cf. ZEILLER 1918; VAILLANT, LASCARIS 1933, p. 5-15; OSTROGORSKI 1969, p. 256, 30; POPOVICI 1996.

¹⁵ Cf. MICHELET 1853, p. 2.

¹⁶ Cf. GIURESCU 1976, p. 29-39; COTEȚ 1976.

¹⁷ Cf. PĂCURARIU 1980, p. 181-182 and foll.; BECK 2012, p. 107-113, 197-202, 363-370.

¹⁸ For wood architecture in Eastern Europe, see FÆNSEN, IVANOV 1981, p. 52-65; for churches and monasteries in the central part of the future Wallachia, see GLIGORE 2012.

¹⁹ For example, the small place of worship of Densuș (Cf. VĂȚĂȘIANU 1930, p. 33-43; RUSU 2008, *passim*) or the recent discovery of a Christian church from the 9th century, in Alba-Iulia.

²⁰ NĂSTUREL 1984, p. 219-234.

²¹ Cf. *Gesta Innocentii papae III*, in: J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Paris, 1890, CCXIV, coll. 413-417; VERGATTI (CIOBANU) 1985, p. 157-176.

²² Among these, the best known was Boril, cf. VERGATTI (CIOBANU) 1985, p. 159 and foll.).

²³ J. LOGNON, *Introduction* to Henri de Valenciennes, *La Chronique*, published by J. Lognon, Paris, 1928, p. 53, note 1; Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri à la suite de Geoffroy de Villehardouin “La conquête de Constantinople”*, published by Natallis de Wailly, Paris, 1882, p. 336-338.

Esclas, ruler of the city of Tsepina and some parts of Banat, married a natural daughter of the second emperor of the Latin Empire, Henri de Hainaut (1205-1216)²⁴. Nevertheless, Escals did not renounce his Orthodox beliefs²⁵.

The same belief in the Orthodox denomination of the Romanian population neighbouring the areas dominated by Esclas is evinced by two letters of Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241). The first one, of 1228, is addressed to king of Hungary Andrew II (1205-1235)²⁶. The second one, dated 14 November 1234²⁷, addressed to prince Bela²⁸, the future king of Hungary Bela IV (1235-1270), was a remonstrance to the family of Arpadian monarchs for not having taken measures against the "schismatics pseudo-bishops" (in fact, the Orthodox bishops) across the Carpathians²⁹. The latter would draw the Hungarians and the Teutons (Transylvanian Saxons) who stopped obeying the "right believers", the Catholic bishops³⁰.

As results from the text of the papal epistles, especially the second one, it is possible, according to the mentality of the time, that those Orthodox bishops and archbishops should have had connections with the Byzantium and the Oecumenical Patriarchate of the former Byzantine Empire. Very likely, they attended the crowned heads of the Carpatho-Danubian area. The existence of some political leaders is shown by foreign sources at dates close to the pontifical letters. Thus, the Persian historian Resid od-Din recounted that in 1241 or 1242 a leader of the "ulacuți" (Olachs)³¹, a certain Mishelav³² defeated the Tartars³³.

A similar piece of information is also found with the French chronicler Philippe Mouskée. He mentions in his rhymed chronicle that in 1241 or 1242 "*des bonnes nouvelles*" arrived as "*le roi de Blaquie*" had defeated the Tartars³⁴. On 2 June 1247, King Bela IV of Hungary granted a diploma to Rembald, magister of the Order of Hospitallers. This document mentions voivodes Seneslau and Litovoi and knezes Ioan and Farcaș³⁵.

The same document stipulated that no taxes should be charged from the existing churches or those to be built³⁶. These paragraphs of the Diploma prove

²⁴ *Ibidem*; VERGATTI 2012, p. 206-207.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Documente privind istoria românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* (a.k.a. Hurmuzaki-Densușianu, *Documente*), vol. I/1: 1199-1345, București, 1887, p. 108-109.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 132-133; *Documenta Romaniae Historica. D. Relații între țările române*, volume I (1222-1456), București, 1977, p. 20-21, doc. 9. See PAPACOSTEA 1998, p. 99-100; TURCUȘ 2001, p. 159-166.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Cf. ROSETTI 1905, p. 247-332; FERENȚ 1931, *passim*.

³⁰ Hurmuzaki-Densușianu, *Documente*, I/1, p. 132-133; *Documenta Romaniae Historica. D.*, Vol. I, p. 20-21, doc. 9.

³¹ This term designated the Romanians, according to the researcher Aurel Decei (DECEI 1978, p. 194, 195, 196 and foll.)

³² According to Aurel Decei, by a linguistic calculus, it might become Seneslau (*ibidem*).

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ Cf. VERGATTI (CIOBANU) 1976, p. 255, n. 58; VERGATTI 2012, p. 206-207.

³⁵ Cf. *Documenta Romaniae Historica, B. Țara Românească*, vol. I (1247-1500), 1966, p. 7-8.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

that the church represented a force on the territory of the future Wallachia. It should be taken into consideration.

It might be possible, due to researches of historical geography³⁷, to locate the four local political leaders. The voivode with the largest autonomy, Seneslau³⁸, might have had his residence at Curtea de Argeș. Archaeological excavations seem to confirm this assumption³⁹. Beneath the current St. Nicholas Princely Church, vestiges of another small church⁴⁰, a chapel from the 13th century, with the Greek-cross plan⁴¹, were discovered. Such plan was used especially for the churches that held services of Aulic rank, as Christians could be better organised spatially.

To specify the *ab initio* purpose and character of the small church of Curtea de Argeș, the plan was not taken into account. Although opinions regarding the purpose of the small church have so far been divergent⁴², as has been the dating the monument⁴³, I believe that, based on the plan, closeness to the voivodal residence, wall premises and access road (a path covered with gravel), one may assert that this place for worship might have served the local voivode.

The dimensions of the 13th-century church were so small⁴⁴ that could only house about 50 people. This supported the assumption that it was a place of worship for the court⁴⁵. I think that Argeș I church was in fact for all members of the urban community of Curtea de Argeș. Here, people would find solace and shelter in case of danger, even if the church was separated from the court and the urban community by a wall enclosure⁴⁶.

This small church, conventionally called Argeș I, disappeared around 1340⁴⁷. The circumstances of its dismantlement are not clear⁴⁸. In its place a monumental church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, was erected. The new church, named, generically, St. Nicholas Princely Church, of large size⁴⁹, was considered by

³⁷ CONEA 1935, *passim*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ DRĂGHICEANU 1923, p. 9-76.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*; SACERDOȚEANU 1935, p. 49-57; Grigore Ionescu emphasises the importance of these plans (cf. IONESCU 1940, p. 13-14); N. Constantinescu brings nothing new regarding the two churches of Curtea de Argeș, but only repeats what his predecessors wrote (CONSTANTINESCU 1984, *passim*); actually, the same author, N. Constantinescu, makes a mistake when dating the churches of Curtea de Argeș, which Ioan Mureșan proves by discussing the results of archaeological excavations (Cf. MUREȘAN 2010, p. 352).

⁴² Cf. CONSTANTINESCU 1984, p. 84-92, 103-106, 144-148; CHIHAIA 1998, p. 41-42. Undoubtedly, Pavel Chihaia is right when establishing the character of the church where services of aulic rank were held.

⁴³ Cf. MUREȘAN 2010, p. 352 (discusses the dating of the monument, highlighting N. Constantinescu's errors).

⁴⁴ On the average, sizes are 14 x 8 m; the small church overlaps approx. 2/3 of the nave of the Princely St. Nicholas Church built by order of Basarab I (IONESCU 1940, p. 13-14).

⁴⁵ Cf. CONSTANTINESCU 1984, p. 144; contrary to CHIHAIA 1998, p. 41-42.

⁴⁶ CHIHAIA 1984, p. 43-44

⁴⁷ CHIHAIA 1984, p. 42; MUREȘAN 2010, p. 353, n. 60.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ The rectangle inscribed was 14.55 m x 23.50 m, height up to the roof top over 23 m, the nave is 11.80 x 12.40 m (cf. IONESCU 1963, p. 128; DIEHL 1925, p. 438); the proportions

Charles Diehl as the most important Orthodox ecclesiastical construction of the 14th century in South-Eastern Europe⁵⁰. This church also had a plan in **inscribed** Greek-cross⁵¹. It is a further indication that this impressive ecclesiastical place, built roughly during 1340-1351 (1352)⁵² was meant to house a bishop and a Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia⁵³.

St. Nicholas Princely Church is likely to have successfully aimed, through magnificence, to strengthen the fame and prestige of Basarab princes in Europe.

We may draw a temporal parallel between the evolution of Curtea de Argeș church and that of the Orthodox church of high rank of Vicina. In the Danubian port of Vicina, the Orthodox church of superior rank, an episcopacy, also appeared in the first half of the 13th century. We have placed it in the first half of the 13th century, a wide period of time, because the first mention of an Orthodox church of high rank in the Vicina port can be found in a *Notitia episcopatum*, imprecisely dated⁵⁴.

The church was assumed, on logical and historical grounds, to have been founded and consecrated during the rule of the Nicene basileus John III Doukas Vatatzes (1221-1254)⁵⁵. It was then that those

of other churches built in the same epoch are all inferior to the Princely Church of Curtea de Argeș: Budrum-djami, Killisse-Djami, The Virgin Pammakaristos of Constantinople, Kazandjilar-Djami (Theotocos) and Yacoub-Pasha-Djami (St. Catherine) of Thessaloniki; only the present Zeyrek Camii, former Church of the Pantokrator in Constantinople, which goes back further than the 14th century, has a nave of 16x16 m (*ibidem*).

⁵⁰ DIEHL 1925, p. 438.

⁵¹ Cf. IONESCU 1940, p. 24; IONESCU 1963, p. 128. Attention should be drawn on N. Constantinescu and his works because he does not know how to use the church plan when defining the monument. N. Constantinescu only takes over the plan without being able to define its importance.

⁵² The so called *sgraffito* („*The Great Basarab Voyvoda died in 6860 (1351/1352) in Campulung*”) carved into the church nave wall is very important for the date of completion of the monument; see DRĂGHICEANU 1923, p. 9-76; IONESCU 1940, p. 18; LĂZĂRESCU 1968, p. 151-152; CHIHAIA 1998, p. 43 and foll. (Pavel Chihaiia also discusses the opinions of other authors regarding the dating of St. Nicholas Princely Church of Curtea de Argeș). N. Constantinescu considers that the monument was erected after 1360 and the *sgraffito* represented an act of remembering (CONSTANTINESCU 1984, p. 148), but he does not support his assertion with pertinent arguments.

⁵³ LĂZĂRESCU 1968, p. 151-152; CHIHAIA 1998, p. 43; VERGATTI 2009₂, p. 25-36.

⁵⁴ GELZER 1901, p. 592, 594; the name of Vicina could be number 152 on the list of episcopacies (cf. BRĂTIANU 1935, p. 36). The list of episcopacies, archiepiscopacies and metropolitan churches might have been compiled during the rule of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1260-1282); however, the text refers to the situation of ecclesiastical places especially in the latter part of the 13th century. Possibly, this list emphasises the resurgence inside the Byzantine Orthodox Church during basileus John III Doukas Vatatzes (1221-1254). One such view was expressed by Vitalien Laurent (LAURENT 1932), p. 318, N. 3; 1936, p. 115, N. 2. In his turn, J. Darrouzès also published a glosse in 1299 of the codex Vat. gr. no. 1455, f. 223v, in DARROUZÈS 1981, p. 386, assuming that the episcopacy of Vicina might have been created during Patriarch Germanos II of Constantinople (1222-1240). Connections with the Oecumenical Patriarchate in the first half of the 13th century may be proved and supported by the discovery in Dobrudja of a seal belonging to Germanos II (cf. MITREA 1968, p. 253-261).

⁵⁵ Cf. IORGA 1908, p. 34; LAURENT 1939, p. 91-103.

“*chorepiscopi*”⁵⁶ (country bishops), bishops of an inferior rank, might have been sent from Vicina to Curtea de Argeș. It was an older practice of the church⁵⁷ that had not been abandoned.

The two places of worship of Curtea de Argeș and Vicina allowed the Romanian voivodes to have direct connections, through clerics, with the Byzantine basileis. It was a way of expression of the Caesaro-papistical institution. Through the Orthodox Church, nominal authority of basileis exercised on several territories that had once belonged *de facto* and *de jure* to the Byzantine empire⁵⁸.

I wanted to make these comments because there is no solid documentary evidence to show an orientation of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards the self-proclaimed, ‘rebel’ patriarchates of Tarnovo, Peč or Ohrid⁵⁹. Those who came up with this assumption – Zlatarski, Jireček⁶⁰ and Mutafcević⁶¹ – and their epigones did it for political reasons, dictated by their chancelleries that, unfortunately, have been taken and used to date⁶².

The basileis and hierarchs chose the see of the new episcopacy at the Danube port of Vicina, for it was a prosperous town⁶³, and connections on sea were easier⁶⁴. Under these circumstances, connections with the Byzantine Empire church could very easily be tied through Vicina.

The foundation of the episcopacy towards the 13th century at Vicina was part of a wider action of the Orthodox Church⁶⁵. It was followed by a response of the Catholic clergy. The latter, who were engaged in a missionary and proselytical process⁶⁶, could not neglect the Danubian port of Vicina. There, in 1280, the Franciscan brother Moses of the Order of Friars Minor had a monastery built for the Genoese community in town and not only⁶⁷. It is a further discrete but clear and convincing indication of the purchase power of the urban community in that port.

⁵⁶ The reference to country episcopacies is found in the works of the Serdica synod (cf. HESS 2002, p. 146 and foll.). These country bishops were present with the Romanians, as well, one of them apparently bearing the name of Ursus (cf. PĂCURARIU 1980, p. 181-182).

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ See DAGRON 1996, *passim*, as well as the review of this volume, written by Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Revue des Études Byzantines* 56 (1998), p. 289-291.

⁵⁹ PĂCURARIU 1980, p. 183 and foll.

⁶⁰ JIREČEK 1876, p. 211 and foll.

⁶¹ MUTAFCEVIĆ 1932, p. 190 and foll.

⁶² Cf. VERGATTI 2001, p. 76-90.

⁶³ Cf. BRĂȚIANU 1935, *passim*.

⁶⁴ AHRWEILER 1966, *passim*; ATANASIU-CROITORU 2008, *passim*.

⁶⁵ John III Doukas Vatatzes caused a small revolution in the life of the Orthodox Church of the empire, which led to its revitalisation (cf. SPANOS, ZARRAS 2010, p. 63-78, here p. 73).

⁶⁶ Cf. GÉNICOT 1968, p. 100 and foll. The great promoter of the Catholic proselytism and missionary work was Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), through the orders of the “mendicants”: the Franciscan and Dominican Orders. These two orders also worked on the territory of the future Romanian countries, where they are attested in documents. They were not successful among the Romanians.

⁶⁷ Cf. ANDREESCU 1932-1933, p. 151-163.

The Byzantine Empire led by basileus Michael VIII Palaiologos (1260-1281)⁶⁸ reacted. During the rule of this basileus, or immediately after him, the Orthodox church of Vicina rose to the rank of archiepiscopacy and, soon after that, to that of metropolitanate⁶⁹. Then, its leader was a certain Theodor. He was mentioned in two documents of the synods dated 1285⁷⁰ and 1292⁷¹.

Research carried out in Greece by Denise Papachryssanthou, more than four decades ago, revealed that *the title of archpriest followed by the name of residence designated, exclusively, a metropolitan*. These cases know no exception⁷². It was the case of Theodor and his successors, as well, who complied with the conditions mentioned by Denise Papachryssanthou.

As yet, I have not found documentary references to allow me to specify how many years Theodor occupied the metropolitan see of Vicina.

Theodor's first known successor was metropolitan Lucas. He was directly or indirectly mentioned as holding the office in 1301, 1302, 1303 and the winter of 1305-1306. He did not appear exclusively in imperial documents or patriarchal records, but also in the pages left by Georgios Pachymeres. He appears to have played some part in mediating the crossing of the Danube by the 16,000 Alans who wanted to come as mercenaries of the Byzantine Empire⁷³. Moreover, he drew attention to himself on account of his wealth. He had an annual income of 800 gold hyperperi. He aroused the envious reprimand of Patriarch Athanasius I⁷⁴. Metropolitan Lucas was also present in synods. He is first mentioned by Georgios Pachymeres. The deacon of St. Sofia mentioned him on 13 February 1303 as member of the synod that recorded the conflict between basileus Andronicus II the Elder (1281-1328) and Patriarch John XII Kosmas⁷⁵. The second mention refers to the synod of winter 1305-1306 and can be found in Patriarch Athanasius I's correspondence. It was then that the adventurous usurper Ioan Drymys was anathematised. The patriarch showed, on the same occasion, that Ioan Drymys had sent envoys to the Amalecites (the Turks), the Italians and "those who live near the Ister" (the Danube) in search of allies⁷⁶.

Vitalien Laurent showed that that could have been the first time the

⁶⁸ For the personality of Michael VIII Palaiologos, see OSTROGORSKI 1969, p. 474 and foll.

⁶⁹ Cf. NĂSTUREL 1971, p. 33-42.

⁷⁰ Theodor was the 35th of the 41 prelates who participated in the synod of summer 1285 to sign for the conviction of John Bekkos (cf. LAURENT 1927, p. 145).

⁷¹ Cf. MOISESCU, LUPȘA, FILIPESCU 1957, p. 142.

⁷² Research has shown that, in documents of the Orthodox church in the 12th-15th centuries, the rank of archpriest hid either a bishop, an archbishop or a metropolitan. When the name of the archpriest was accompanied by the name of the place of ordination, it was definitely always a metropolitan. It was the case of the Vicina metropolitans Theodor and Lucas (cf. PAPACHRYSSANTHOU 1970, p. 405, n. 79).

⁷³ *Fontes Historiæ Daco-Romanæ / Izvoarele istoriei României*, vol. III, *Scriptores byzantini, sæc. XI-XIV / Scriitori bizantini (sec. XI-XIV)*, 1975, p. 450-452. Identification of the metropolitan as Lucas was done by NĂSTUREL 1971, p. 35-36.

⁷⁴ LAURENT 1971, p. 401-403, No. 1613; NĂSTUREL 1971, p. 35-37, 41. *Fontes* IV, p. 140-141.

⁷⁵ *Fontes* III, p. 450-452.

⁷⁶ *Fontes*, IV, p. 142-143.

Romanians were mentioned as political power⁷⁷. The Byzantine author used this vague expression – the inhabitants on the Ister – because he was not aware of realities on the Lower Danube, where the future state Wallachia was to be born. I believe that Vitalien Laurent was right. In no case could those mentioned by Patriarch Athanasius I have been Hungarian, as was assumed⁷⁸. One single counter-argument is sufficient. An Orthodox metropolitan, a suffragan of the Oecumenical Patriarchate, could not have shepherded the Catholic Hungarians. At the same time, they could not have been Bulgarians or Serbs either, for they obeyed their rebel patriarchates that had been anathemysed by the Oecumenical Patriarchate.

I believe that the note regarding what happened in the winter of 1305-1306 is extremely important. It is documentary evidence which proves the existence of a metropolitan and a metropolitan church with authority over the territory of the future Wallachia. It is true, the date is not particularly accurate: the winter of 1305-1306. But it is known that back then Metropolitan Lucas and, explicitly, the Vicina Metropolitanate had expanded their authority over the land of the Romanian Plain.

The former basileus John VI Cantacuzene wrote, in his *Chronicle*, started after his dethronement (November 1354), while being retired at the Monastery of Saint George of Mangana in Constantinople⁷⁹, that in 1323 the prince of Wallachia, Basarab I the Founder, had come with his army of Ungro-Vlachs and Scythians (Tartars) to help his father-in-law, Tsar Michael Shishman of Vidin⁸⁰.

The name Ungro-Vlachs, though older, first appeared in the *Chronicle* written by the former basileus John VI Cantacuzene⁸¹. It is neither the first, nor the last time when a term used in writing took over the name of a people or of a state or geographical entity that had long been in circulation and established it in the daily language of the common people. Naturally, when he was a priest there, the metropolitan of Vicina would ordain the priests⁸². Therefore, this is a further

⁷⁷ Cf. LAURENT 1971, p. 430; MAFFY TALBOT 1975, p. 407-408 (the editor wonders who were those living near the Danube. She is inclined to believe it was the Bulgarians, but does not rule out the possibility that they were Romanians, Hungarians or Serbs).

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ This was the first monastery where basileus John VI Cantacuzene sought refuge after he became a monk known as Ioasaf. It was a large, rich church (cf. JANIN 1969, p. 75-81). He left it for a smaller monastery, Theotokos Nea Peribleptos (Cf. NICOL 1996, p. 140 and foll.). Finally, he withdrew to the despotate led by his son Matthew where he died in 1383 (*ibidem*).

⁸⁰ Cf. *Fontes* III, p. 482-483.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² In May 1359, the document by which Metropolitan Iachint was transferred from Vicina to Curtea de Argeș stipulated that, according to the churchly practice and rite, he would confirm “anagnosts throughout his eparchy and congregation, promoting subdeacons and deacons and ordaining priests, taking, at the same time, in his hand, all rights related to it” (Cf. *Fontes* IV, p. 200-201). The way of expression the archpriests who wrote the synodic document clearly shows that these rights were inherited by the metropolitan from his predecessors, probably *choraepiscopi*. I make this assertion because it results, from the same document, that there were already ordained priests and appointed deacons on the territory of Wallachia.

irrefutable argument, based on documents, which rescinds the assumption that all Romanian Orthodox clerics had relationships of obedience with the rebel patriarchates south of the Danube. Moreover, the connection of northern Dobrudja with Wallachia is proved by documents as far as early 14th century, or probably late 13th, with princes of Wallachia (Thocomerius, Basarab I the Founder, Nicholas Alexander) ruling over the north of Dobrudja as well, where the port of Vicina was located. Written documents, foreign indeed, are clear. The Arab geographer Abu-Fedda wrote that, in 1320, Isaccea (*Saadji*) was in *Alloualaq* (Wallachia)⁸³. Traveller Ibn-Battuta, in his turn, wrote that, in 1330, the towns of Isaccea and Babadag were under the Wallachian rule⁸⁴. Finally, in 1339, the Jewish cartographer Angelino Dulcert or Doluarte⁸⁵ marked Vicina on his portolan as lying on the right bank of the Danube, i.e. in Dobrudja⁸⁶. Off the port, on the opposite bank, Dulcert draw the sign *tamgha*⁸⁷. To people of the time, especially to seafarers, it meant that that place was the border of the Mongol Empire, where customs duties were charged⁸⁸. Another element which speaks for Wallachia ruling over north of Dobrudja is the dissemination of Christianity of Orthodox denomination in that area. My assertion relies on the discovery of St. Athanasie Church from Niculițel, where services have been held uninterruptedly from the 13th century up to the present⁸⁹.

There can only be one conclusion. The prince of Wallachia also had in his possession the lands of northern Dobrudja where the port of Vicina was located⁹⁰. Consequently, I can advance the hypothesis that the princes of Curtea de Argeș were accompanied by a hierarch of corresponding rank, most likely a country "bishop", delegated by the metropolitan of Vicina. Thus, Romanian lords could better defend their people against the offensive of the neighbouring Catholic states, the Kingdoms of Hungary and Poland.

One natural question arises. Why did not the Wallachian princes bring

⁸³ Aboulféda, *Géographie*, translated by E. Reinaud, Paris, 1847, p. 316.

⁸⁴ *Călători străini despre țările române*, vol. I, publ. by M. Holban, București, 1968, p. 4-8.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Sea charts of the early explorers, 13th to 17th century*, publ. by Michel Mollat du Jourdin, Monique de La Roncière, Marie-Madeleine Azard, Isabelle Raynaud-Nguyen, Marie-Antoinette Vannereau, Fribourg, 1984, p. 15; I do not share Raymond Beazley's view according to which Dulcert and Dalorto are two different authors just because some insignificant details on the portolans do not coincide (cf. BEAZLEY 1949, p. 522).

⁸⁶ NØRDENSKJOLD 1897, republished by Burt. Franklin, 1962, p. 33; see Pietro Visconti's maps (1318 and 1320) in *ibidem*, pl. VI, 9; Marino Sanudo's map (*ibidem*, pl. XIII; also reproduced in *Călători străini despre țările române*, vol. I, p. 69); a great similarity to them can be noticed in the portolan created by Perrino Vesconte (1327) – the name "flume(n) de Vicina v(e)l Danubiu(m) vel Danoia" also appears here (GRĂMADĂ 1925, p. 8).

⁸⁷ NØRDENSKJOLD 1897, p. 33.

⁸⁸ Cf. BRĂȚIANU 1935, p. 63.

⁸⁹ Cf. MOISESCU 1979, p.141-144.

⁹⁰ I am inclined to identify Vicina as the present port of Isaccea, which it overlaps. I bring only one argument – the numismatic one. Around the present town of Isaccea were the most numerous coins from late 13th century and early 14th century discovered. There are more coins than those discovered throughout the whole of Dobrudja (also see OBERLÄNDER-TÂRNOVEANU 2003, p. 67-102; CUSTUREA, TALMAȚCHI 2011, p. 231).

metropolitans to their side sooner?

The answer lies in the decisions of the synod of Serdica (343 A.D.). Approximately 170 hierarchs attended the works there. They compiled the 23 canons representing the final document which aimed to discipline the Orthodox clergy. Canons 5 (VI a) and 6 (VI b)⁹¹ specified the method of election of the high hierarchs, the bishops. Canon 5 (VI a), in its Latin version, Latin being the official language, shows that only one bishop should remain in a province and should that bishop fail to fulfil his duties out of negligence, then Christians could appeal to bishops of a neighbouring land (province). Christians should write the bishop, informing him about the people's will to bring another bishop. If the local bishop ignored the request of the citizens, of the law, the people's will would still have to be fulfilled and the appointment would have to be carried out⁹².

There are several differences in the Greek version. The main is the statement according to which a bishop cannot oppose the consecration, the appointment of a new hierarch. Had he tried to oppose or failed to appear at the investiture ceremony, this would have still taken place, even without his consent⁹³.

Canon 6 (VI b) completes the norms of the previous canon relating to the election and appointment of a new hierarch. The Greek version is a short text which forbids the bishops from the neighbouring provinces to appoint bishops in places where there were enough priests. Two exceptions were considered. The first regarded places that had previously had bishops, the second concerned those areas where the population had increased and was worthy of and needed a hierarch. Bishops could not be appointed in smaller towns or villages, i.e. in places with a smaller population, unable to maintain and keep a bishop. The Orthodox priests' prestige could not have allowed for that⁹⁴.

These canons, particularly canon 6 (VI b), must have been discussed when country bishops were replaced⁹⁵. The existence of country bishops seems to have been widespread. Therefore, canon 6 (VI b) was reinforced, being introduced into canon V of the Council of Carthage (390 A.D.)⁹⁶. It has remained in the church canons ever since.

The two canons are the only ones that can explain, by ecclesiastical law, the attitude and position full of pride, magnificence of Greek hierarchs towards the Romanian princes.

It was not justified. The documents written in the 14th century clearly show that the Danubian port of Vicina underwent a somewhat fast process of involution⁹⁷. In 1340, decay was so low that metropolitan Macarie of Vicina was

⁹¹ There is a double numbering, for number 5 shows the version in Latin, the official language of the empire, while the number in brackets indicates the Greek version (cf. HESS 2002, *passim*).

⁹² The text of canon V in Latin in HESS 2002, p. 146 and foll.

⁹³ HESS 2002, p. 146 and foll.

⁹⁴ HESS 2002, p. 154-55.

⁹⁵ HESS 2002, p.155. Most likely, before metropolitan Iachint, there was a chorepiscopus at Curtea de Argeș.

⁹⁶ HESS 2002, p. 156

⁹⁷ In 1317 and 1324, the metropolitans of Vicina, whose names were not given, were called to two synods of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, due to their rank, to solve some

forced to leave the port. His own life could not be ensured. He answered and promised Patriarch John XIV (Aprenos) Kalekas that he would never leave town⁹⁸. He kept his promise. In 1341 and 1343, metropolitan Macarie was to be found as Vicina representative among the participants in the ecumenical synods⁹⁹.

Most likely, he was succeeded by a certain Kirill, mentioned as participant in a 1347 synod¹⁰⁰. It is probably he who was present at another synod, that of September 1348¹⁰¹. I have said 'probably' because in 1348 the Vicina metropolitan who attended the synod was not nominated. It might have been the same Kirill, due to the small temporal distance from the previous synod.

Finally, the last Metropolitan of Vicina was Hyacinth. He probably came to Curtea de Argeș in 1353 or 1354.

This assertion is based on a paragraph written by Hyacinth in a letter dated 1370, addressed to Patriarch Philotheos I Kokkinos. The text says "it shall perhaps seem vain of me that I once prompted the great voivode, over Your Holiness's head, to reconcile and be friends with you. And now, just as I have reached my old age, I suffer for this and am offended by the Holy Church of God as if I were a profaner and scorner of it"¹⁰².

In order to accomplish a mediation mission between the Wallachian prince and Patriarch Philotheos I Kokkinos, Iachint was forced to come to Curtea de Argeș. He was successful there. This action could only have taken place during the first mandate of Patriarch Philotheos I Kokkinos, namely during 1353-1354. It is then that some reconciliation between the Patriarch and the prince of Curtea de Argeș, who had married, the second time, the Catholic Hungarian noble woman Clara of Doboca, might have been considered¹⁰³. Under no circumstances could he, Prince Nicholas Alexander, have been suspected of embracing the Catholic religion. His position in this issue would have prevented him from becoming a prince. The hereditary elective provisions of the *jus vallachicum* are clear: the prince should be a man, of Orthodox denomination (of right belief), of sound mind and body and part of the ruling family¹⁰⁴.

Therefore, the estrangement of relationships between the Patriarchate and the prince was also due to other indefinite causes. They were interpreted as Iachint having been favourable to Catholicism¹⁰⁵.

To remind a Patriarch of Philotheos I Kokkinos' position of an action he

administrative disputes (cf. CIOBANU (VERGATTI) 1977, p. 236). The port-town also suffered because of the predatory attacks of the Tartars and Bulgarians (*ibidem*; BRĂȚIANU 1935, p. 74-86)

⁹⁸ Cf. LAURENT 1946, p. 225-232; *idem*, 1960, p. 145-162, here p. 155 (in this last article, the author modifies the dispatch date of Macarie's letter, establishing that 1340 is the correct one). The letter sent by Metropolitan Macarie of Vicina to the patriarch is reproduced in LAURENT, NĂȘTUREL 1946, table 1.

⁹⁹ Cf. CIOBANU (VERGATTI) 1977, p. 236-237, N. 40, 41.

¹⁰⁰ MEYENDORF 1963, p. 209-227 (here p. 226, line 504).

¹⁰¹ MIKLOSICH, MÜLLER 1860, p. 274, No. CXXIV.

¹⁰² *Fontes* IV, p. 206-207.

¹⁰³ HURMUZAKI/DENSUȘIANU, *Documente*, vol. I/2, p. 158, 159;

¹⁰⁴ See *Instituții feudale din țările române. Dicționar* (coord. O. Sachelarie, N. Stoicescu), București, 1988, p.168-172.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. NĂȘTUREL 1978, p. 302, N. 16.

should be grateful for, although it had happened more than a decade and a half before, showed that Iachint was desperate and he invoked, in his defence, a deed of major importance. Dan Ioan Mureșan believes that, despite the provisions of *ius valachicum*, Nicholas Alexander embraced the Catholic faith before ascending to the throne. He did so in order to marry Clara Doboka and, later, during Philotheos' first patriarchate (1353-1354), Iachint reconverted him to Orthodoxy¹⁰⁶. Personally, I do not believe that Mr. Dan Ioan Mureșan is right. In an earlier article¹⁰⁷ I completely dismantled Daniel Barbu's arguments¹⁰⁸ which underlie Mr. Dan Ioan Mureșan's assumption. Consequently, I can argue that there were other causes which led to the estrangement of relationships between Philotheos I Kokkinos, in his first mandate (1353-1354), and Prince Nicholas Alexander who had just ascended to the throne (1352-1364). It is highly probable that, during his short one-year mandate, Philotheos I Kokkinos should not have had enough time to verify if the modest town of Curtea de Argeș fulfilled all the requirements stipulated in canons 5-6 of the Serdica synod. This might have prompted the Oecumenical Patriarchate not to answer Nicholas Alexander's repeated letters¹⁰⁹. The Romanian Prince certainly felt offended by this. Iachint's intervention was thus needed to appease and re-establish normal relationships with the Oecumenical Patriarchate. In my opinion, it is this episode that Iachint refers to in his epistle addressed, in 1370, to Patriarch Philotheos I Kokkinos. For south-eastern Europe, establishing relationships between the Prince of Wallachia, the most powerful monarch of the age, and the Patriarchate was a significant action. Iachint's mission, successfully accomplished, could not have been forgotten.

Actually, by his action, Hyacinth restored the older connections between Ungro-Wallachia and the Patriarchate, achieved through an episcopacy led by chorepiscopi. This assumption is based on a note of a *Notitia episcopatum* discovered and presented by reverend J. Darrouzès¹¹⁰. In this text there is a marginal note, marked and emphasised by letter N. It represents an addition: alongside the metropolitanates and episcopacies mentioned, there were two more that had to be added: the Metropolitanate of Pegas and that of Ungro-Wallachia¹¹¹. As regards the latter, it is specified that it was created by Patriarch Philotheos as two metropolitanates that had evolved from an episcopacy¹¹². This particular information is of undeniable importance.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. MUREȘAN 2010, p. 346 and N. 38.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. VERGATTI 2008, p. 75-81; the complete dismantlement of Daniel Barbu's arguments is also known by Mr. Neagu Djuvara (cf. DJUVARA 2011, p. 105-110).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. BARBU 1986, *passim*; BARBU 1986, p. 287-300.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *Fontes* IV, p. 196-197 ("...Prince Alexander, urged by a thought of devotion for God and proving much love and obedience and allegiance to God's holy Catholic (=universal, A/N) and apostolic church, asked not once but several times in his letters and begged for our grace..."); *ibidem*, p. 200-201 (...From Your Worship's earlier and latest letters has our grace clearly learnt what Your Worship intended to show and received the news with great joy, praising the obedience, allegiance, inclination, love you cherish for Christ's holy, Catholic and apostolic church...").

¹¹⁰ DARROUZÈS 1981, p. 386.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹² *Ibidem*. Also see the discussion in MUREȘAN 2010, p. 347 and foll.

The most significant information for us is the assertion that the Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia originates from an episcopacy. Nicolae Iorga's intuition is thus confirmed¹¹³. This brings into discussion the existence of country bishops, predecessors of the metropolitanate.

Finally, another part of the information highlighted by reverend J. Darrouzès is that the two metropolitanates might have been founded by Patriarch Philotheos I Kokkinos. An explanation and a clarification arise from here. The late Byzantinist P. Ș. Năsturel showed that only the second metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia, that was led by Daniel Chritopoulos, owed its existence to Philotheos I Kokkinos. The other, earlier, one was due to the translation of the Vicina metropolitanate to Curtea de Argeș, then settled in place of a former episcopacy and was headed by Iachint. This translation process was acknowledged by the documents of May 1359, issued during Patriarch Calist I. The relationships between the two patriarchs, Philotheos I Kokkinos and Calist I, went through a period of deep dissension, hate, for one forcibly replaced the other¹¹⁴. This can explain what was written in the miscellaneous comprising the *Notitia episcopatum*. Knowing Philotheos I Kokkinos' feelings, the author probably wanted to flatter him, completely eliminating Calist I from among those who had contributed to the translation process of the metropolitan see from Vicina to Argeș.

Perhaps the author of *Notitia episcopatum*, for the reason mentioned, attributed the two metropolitanates to Philotheos I Kokkinos, particularly as he wrote about the events occurred in Ungro-Wallachia in some other distant time and place.

I believe that the appointment de jure of Iachint as the first metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia was done when the Greek archpriests saw that the provisions of canons 5 and 6 (VI a and VI b) of the synod of Serdica and of Canon V of the synod of Carthage had been complied with: at Curtea de Argeș the monumental church, St. Nicholas Princely Church, was built.

No other ecclesiastical or laic document mentions the foundation of the Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia. I believe that, based on text analysis, I can affirm that the term 'foundation' was avoided. The best conclusive example is given by the two documents of May 1359 referring to the Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia.

It is worth mentioning that in 1359 metropolitan Iachint did not come to an empty place. Greek archpriests knew that around Argeș and Muscel a garland of monasteries and churches had been erected¹¹⁵.

Here historical and juridical logic steps in. Had a process of establishment of a new metropolitanate occurred, then the earlier one, Vicina, would have had to remain alongside the new one, Curtea de Argeș. Unfortunately for the supporters of the term 'foundation', the town-port of Vicina disappeared and, with it, the metropolitanate. Documents show that it was a translation of a man – the metropolitan – to a territory that belonged to and was controlled by the Prince of

¹¹³ IORGA 1937, p. 137-138.

¹¹⁴ FAILLER 1971, p. 293-302 (here p. 294, 295).

¹¹⁵ GLIGORE 2012, *passim*.

Ungro-Wallachia, Nicholas Alexander. If this thesis is accepted, the issue of a continuity of the existence of the metropolitanate arises. It would be correct to discuss the issue as such for the Metropolitanate is translated (not founded) from Vicina (northern Dobrudja) to Curtea de Argeș.

Researchers are faced with yet another problem: that of the territorial authority of the Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia. To approach this subject is not difficult. Changing the name of the Metropolitanate of Vicina to Ungro-Wallachia was not upsetting. This name represented a modification that was in accordance with the documents of the age, accepted as such¹¹⁶. This was the country and state of the Romanians on the Lower Danube who lived near Hungary.

The documents of the age reveal that Metropolitan Lucas of Vicina shepherded, in winter 1305-1306, those who lived around the Ister, as well¹¹⁷. Under no circumstances, did the Metropolitan and Metropolitanate of Vicina lessen the territorial authority exercised through the church. It was ensured by the rule of Argeș princes over Ungro-Wallachia.

In such conditions, the request of Curtea de Argeș for the appointment of an archiereus of a rank fitting the power of Basarab princes, to replace an unnamed country bishop, was but natural. It was done, but with difficulty. The document by which Iachint was appointed showed that this had happened as a result of several letters sent by Nicholas Alexander¹¹⁸. He asked for the metropolitan throne for Iachint, who had the rank of hypertimos¹¹⁹, and for the right to ordain priests and appoint deacons¹²⁰. In the new context, those words in the letter and the synodic act are of extraordinary importance. They prove that the Orthodox Church of Ungro-Wallachia led by a "chorepiscopus" had long existed and ordination of priests and appointment of deacons had been officiated by the earlier bishops of Curtea de Argeș. They passed this charisma to the Metropolitan Iachint.

It is a further argument against the connection of the Orthodox Church of Ungro-Wallachia with the church of Tarnovo.

Hence, we may conclude that the Metropolitanate of Wallachia, dated by the 1359 documents, was not founded. It was a transfer *de jure*, a translation of a person, an archiereus, who held the position of metropolitan, from Vicina to Curtea de Argeș. Had there been a foundation of a new metropolitanate, the Oecumenical Patriarchate would have found the appropriate term to describe the situation. The situation of Ungro-Wallachia then also pleads for the translation of a person, of Iachint, and explicitly for the translation of the institution he was serving.

The Orthodox Church in the area dominated by the princes of Wallachia did not keep, in 1359, **two** metropolitanates: that of Vicina and that of Curtea de

¹¹⁶ The occurrence in the Chronicle of the former basileus John VI Cantacuzene of the word 'Ungro-Wallachians' denotes that the high political authorities accepted it.

¹¹⁷ The information appears both in Patriarch Athanasios I's correspondence and that of Georgios Pachymeres (cf. *Fontes* IV, p. 142-143).

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Fontes* IV, p. 196-197, 200-201.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Fontes* IV, p. 197.

¹²⁰ *Fontes* IV, p. 196-197, 200-201.

Argeș. This proves that it was merely a translation, as the same number of metropolitanates remained on the lists of the Oecumenical Patriarchate. Naturally, this also indicates a continuity of activity of the metropolitanate for Romanians. Later on, when this need arose, in 1370, a second metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia was to be created¹²¹.

The translation of an archiereus was stipulated in canon I of the synod of Serdica. Therefore, in 1359, the provisions of the Oecumenical Patriarchate written in the canonical law were fully complied with. Another conclusion can be drawn from here. The Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia, through its metropolitan *de facto*, had existed prior to 1359, as Metropolitan Iachint had been there in 1353 at the latest.

Another conclusion is that the Orthodox Church supported the first Basarab princes (Thocomerius, Basarab I the Founder, Nicholas Alexander), who were Romanian and Orthodox¹²², in establishing and maintaining connections with the universal power represented by basileis and patriarchs, a shield against the Catholic offensive. The church was the medium by which Orthodox alliances, initiated by Basarab I and Nicholas Alexander, were accomplished, while clerics closed matrimonial political alliances with their counterparts, princes and tsars of south-eastern Europe. Thus, Romanian princes asserted themselves during the years of sharp decline the Byzantine Empire was going through. The Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia enabled the Romanian princes to involve in helping the Orthodox clergy from the Patriarchate and Mount Athos¹²³.

The close relationship between the Metropolitanate of Vicina and Christians living in the area occupied by Wallachia can be further argued by following a parallel chronology. Towards the 13th century, within the space of the future Wallachia, the first political entities emerged – in Vicina an episcopacy was created. Then, towards 1280-1285, when a certain Litovoi and his brother Barbat and a certain Thocomerius, father of Basarab I, affirmed themselves in the future Wallachia, the Orthodox Church of Vicina was raised to Archiepiscopacy and, soon after that, to Metropolitanate. It would remain so until 1353 or 1354 when Iachint would leave Vicina for Curtea de Argeș. I hope that my working assumption regarding the beginnings *de facto* and *de jure* of the Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia, the pre-existence of the Orthodox Church on the Lower Danube, the use of the term ‘translation’ instead of ‘foundation’ will be positively discussed and accepted.

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¹²¹ NĂȘTUREL 1978, *passim*.

¹²² Cf. VERGATTI 2008, *passim*.

¹²³ Cf. NĂȘTUREL 1986, *passim*.

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