

**INTER REGULAM DOCTRINAE ET ACCEPTATIONEM.
SOME REFLECTIONS REGARDING THE CHURCH'S
FIDELITY TO THE PRINCE IN THE SECOND HALF
OF THE 16TH CENTURY MOLDAVIA***

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Abstract: *The second half of the 16th century was, for Moldavia, one of the difficult periods, from many perspectives, both politically and religiously. The instability of the reigns also had an effect on ecclesiastical life, with Orthodox hierarchs taking positions in relation to what was happening in the life of the state. Their responsibility was not confined to what might be called “Church affairs”, but, as members of the elite and linked by office to public life, they had to choose what to do under difficult conditions caused by various factors such as changes of princes, attempts at usurpation, plots, wars, religious propaganda, exile, etc. In this study, several cases are analysed in which high prelates showed their fidelity to a prince, to a dynasty or to the Church they served, focusing on the way in which the churchmen made their choices during key-moments in the history of Moldavia in the second half of the 16th century.*

Cuvinte cheie: *Biserica Ortodoxă, Moldova, Creștinism, secolul al XV-lea, mitropoliți.*

Rezumat: *Inter regulam doctrinae et acceptationem. Câteva reflecții privitoare la fidelitatea Bisericii față de domn în Moldova celei de-a doua jumătăți a secolului al XV-lea. Cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea a fost, pentru Moldova, una dintre perioadele dificile, din mai multe puncte de vedere, atât în plan politic, cât și religios. Instabilitatea domniilor a avut efecte și în planul vieții bisericești, ierarhii ortodocși luând poziții în raport cu cele ce se petreceau în viața statului. Responsabilitatea lor nu s-a limitat doar la ceea*

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ce s-ar putea numi „afacerile bisericești”, ci, fiind membri ai elitei și legați prin funcții de viața publică, au fost nevoiți să aleagă ce trebuie împlinit, în condiții dificile, cauzate de diverși factori, precum schimbările de domni, încercările de uzurpare, comploturile, războaiele, propaganda religioasă, exilul etc. În cadrul acestui studiu, sunt analizate câteva cazuri, în care marii prelați și-au manifestat fidelitatea față de un domn, de o dinastie sau de Biserica pe care o slujeau, insistându-se asupra modului în care „oamenii Bisericii” au ales ce trebuie făcut, în momentele cheie ale istoriei Moldovei celei de-a doua jumătăți a veacului al XVI-lea.

The second half of the 16th century was one of the tensest periods for Moldavia, both politically and ecclesiastically. The frequent changes of princes, usurpations, the struggle of pretenders for the throne often led to crisis situations. In this study, I will focus on this period, from the beginning of the first reign of Alexandru Lăpușneanu until the installation of Mihai Viteazul (the Brave) in Moldavia, a period in which, beyond the political, social, military and economic factors, the religious one also played a predominant role. I will not dwell on the persecution of certain religious minorities¹ or even of the majority, but the focus will be on the role of the churchmen in supporting the institution of the reign or of those who temporarily held control of it.

The Church was a legitimising factor, placing the sovereign in the sacred habitat of the governance of the people. On the other hand, the Orthodoxy of the prince was part of the political discourse assumed by him, in consonance and continuity with Orthodox principles of everywhere. For, as is well known, all princes, to a greater or lesser extent, built and endowed churches and monasteries, patronized great Orthodox foundations at home and abroad, were supporters of Eastern Christianity, and acted in the Christian paradigm of the rule of state and people. Therefore, the “persecution” against “heretics” was also the intervention of the reign in defence of one of the main institutions of the state, namely the Church. As has already been said, “it was natural that the lordship should lean on the Church and support it in turn, the medieval state being inconceivable without the close collaboration of these two factors”².

Or the so-called “heterodox” attempts and experiments brought new challenges, new difficulties, to which the Orthodox state and the

¹ See: Maria Crăciun, *Protestantism și Ortodoxie în Moldova secolului al XVI-lea*, Cluj-Napoca, 1996, 56 sqq; 71 sqq.; 84-98.

² Șerban Papacostea, *Moldova în epoca Reformei. Contribuții la istoria societății moldovenești în veacul al XVI-lea*, *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, 11/4, 1958, 71.

Church had to find solutions. One issue that should be further explored is the instruction of the clergy, who had to respond concretely to these challenges. One of the princes who understood this, in the context of the period, was Alexandru Lăpușneanu³, who manifested the desire for the necessity that priests should know the Holy Scriptures, in order to be “support of the Christian faith”⁴. The Orthodox zeal of Lăpușneanu is part of the reaction against the Reformation, as pointed out by Șerban Papacostea⁵, and how the „persecuted” before the arrival of Despot vodă regarded the latter as a liberator. Alexandru Lăpușneanu used the bishopric as a support for his reign, the role of the hierarchs in the Moldavian state being that of “first political factor”⁶. Some conclusions were reached from this information, such as that an unwritten custom was established that each prince had his own metropolitan, “as the political exponent of the dynasty”⁷, or that Lăpușneanu made the bishops instruments of struggle against the all-powerfulness of the nobility⁸. It is very obvious that they were not just that. The hierarchs often played into the interests of the factions to which they belonged. Whether we are talking about Gheorghe II, of Grigorie, Anastasie, Teofan, Nicanor, etc., we will see in many cases seemingly paradoxical attitudes in relation to their sacramental responsibilities, which was, theoretically, framed and conditioned by the canons, as far as they were known at the time. But before the canons there were other sins: greed, lying, treason, plotting, complicity in plotting, usurpation, murder and the such like. The arrival of Lăpușneanu brought with it, after his installation on the throne of Moldavia, the “defection” of metropolitan Gheorghe, which occurred either in 1552⁹ or the following year¹⁰.

³ Alexandru Găină, *Biserica Ortodoxă din Moldova în timpul domniilor lui Alexandru Vodă Lăpușneanu (1552-1561; 1564-1568)*, ST, s. II, XXVIII/7-10, 1976, 659.

⁴ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, A. Moldova, vol. VI (1546-1570), întocmit de Ioan Caproșu, București, 2008, 189-190, no. 105 (further, it will be quoted: DRH).

⁵ Șerban Papacostea, *op. cit.*, 72.

⁶ Ilie Minea, Aron Vodă și vremea sa, I, *Cercetări istorice*, 8-9, 1932-1933, 113.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 114.

⁸ C. A. Stoide, *Frământări în societatea moldovenească la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea*, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Iași*, XI, 1974, 76; Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 66.

⁹ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Note și îndreptări pentru istoria Mitropoliei Moldovei*, I, *MMS*, LVI/1-2, 1980, 79.

¹⁰ Alexandru Găină, *op. cit.*, 659.

What is certain is that he took the see in a rather turbulent period, respectively after the retirement of metropolitan Grigorie Roșca¹¹ and at the time of the removal from the episcopal see of bishop Macarie¹². It was thought for a while that metropolitan Gheorghe left immediately after the installation of Alexandru¹³, but it has been shown that this happened a little later¹⁴. If the arrival of the new prince was considered “from God” (the chronicler Eftimie, referring to Lăpușneanu, called him “Alexandru voivode the Good and the New [...] the one appointed by God”¹⁵) as in Byzantium, when even usurpation could receive the approval or patronage of the Divinity, then why should flight, sabotage and attempted usurpation be allowed? This case, as well as others that I will mention, are eloquent of how hierarchs related to certain rulers, especially in the context of this period, when so many pretenders attempted to occupy the throne of this principality. Metropolitan Gheorghe’s departure and his intention to support another political faction show that these hierarchs were involved in political matters, being themselves implied in networks of interest for various reasons. One may wonder whether in these actions they believed they were fully serving God alone or Him and the “Caesar” of this world... The Apostle Paul had made this very clear in one of his epistles: „Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisted the power, resisted the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Romans XIII, 1-2). The chronicler Eftimie clearly recorded his position, as a monk: “and Alexandru the God-ordained prince arrived at Hârlău, where he was raised to the throne with

¹¹ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ediția a III-a, Iași, 2008, 414.

¹² *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI*, publicate de Ioan Bogdan, ediție revăzută și completată de P. P. Panaitescu, București, 1959, 123

¹³ See: Matei V. Corugă, *Gheorghe al II-lea și Grigorie de la Neamț, doi mitropoliți necunoscuți ai Moldovei, din secolul al XVI-lea*, BOR, LXXXIX/11-12, 1971, 1230-1243.

¹⁴ Iulian Ciubotaru, *Îndreptări și completări cu privire la situația Bisericii din Moldova în prima domnie a lui Alexandru Lăpușneanu*, *Revista Arhivelor*, LXXXIX/1, 2012, 61-69; idem, *Observații cu privire la obârșia mitropolitului Gheorghe al II-lea al Moldovei*, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”*, LI, 2014, Supliment: *Istoriografia românească actuală: vechi întrebări, noi răspunsuri*, ed. de Andi Mihalache, 13-21; Iustin Taban, *Ieșirea din scaun a Mitropoliților Moldovei în secolele XVI-XVII. Contribuții și îndreptări*, Iași, 2020, 79 sqq.

¹⁵ *Cronicile slavo-române*, 123.

worthiness by the public council and then anointed”¹⁶. Nor did he mention the “desertion” of metropolitan Gheorghe, seen in a recent work as “one of the most spectacular acts of power of the 16th century involving a metropolitan”¹⁷. His escape was similar to that of the Movilă family in early 1582, when they very easily managed to get out of the country. Thus, in Gheorghe's place, came Grigorie, who also consecrated the Slatina monastery, the new royal foundation and necropolis¹⁸. Further, Lăpușneanu's collaboration with the diocesan hierarchs was one of relative concord¹⁹, which is why it was concluded that he governed the state through the Church or with the collaboration of the high clergy²⁰. Sometimes, in the work of the princes, the chroniclers also saw the hindrances placed by the devil, showing that what they were trying to accomplish was for the good of the Church and the glory of God²¹. To the same extent, the reference to the prince is found in the chronicles of the nobility, compared to those written by representatives of the clergy or the monastic community. What is certain is that Lăpușneanu relied on the protection and support of the Church, not only internally²², but especially with regard to the entire Orthodox world²³, his relations with the Church also being evidenced by his links with the Orthodox patriarchs of the time²⁴.

However, in 1553²⁵, the former metropolitan Gheorghe ran away to Poland, together with the boyar Simeon Negrilă, both representatives of the group that supported Constantine, brother of Iliaș, the former prince who had switched to the Islamic religion. Apart from

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Iustin Taban, *op. cit.*, 106.

¹⁸ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 160.

¹⁹ On the politico-religious context of Lăpușneanu's accession to the throne and his relationship with the Church, see: Gheorghe Pungă, *Țara Moldovei în vremea lui Alexandru Lăpușneanu*, Iași, 1994, 175 sqq.

²⁰ Nicolae Grigoraș, *Boierii lui Alexandru Vodă Lăpușneanu, Cercetări istorice*, XIII-XVI, 1940, 383; Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 66.

²¹ On these aspects, see: Petre S. Năsturel, *Diavolul și zavistia la vechii croniciari români*, *Buletinul Bibliotecii Române din Freiburg*, serie nouă, XIV (XVIII), 1987-1988, 153-169.

²² Alexandru Găină, *op. cit.*, 654-657.

²³ Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în Țările Române în secolele XVI-XVIII*, București, 1983, 167-169.

²⁴ Ioan Ivan, *Patriarhi ortodocși în Moldova, Teologie și Viață*, III (LXIX)/8-10, 1993, 126.

²⁵ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *op. cit.*, 79.

the well-known episode²⁶, in December of that year Alexandru sent a message to Poland; the document states that both Negrilă and the fugitive metropolitan “are not friends of Christian sovereigns”²⁷, and that their manoeuvres were disregarded because they were against the reigning prince, who was defending his throne. What choice did he have? None! That is why a delegation, including bishop Macarie of Roman, went to Istanbul to settle part of the problem of the pretenders²⁸. In the end, those who had plotted against him were caught²⁹.

Even bishop Macarie was initially hostile to the new prince³⁰ but in time, seeing how things were settling down, he got close to him and became one of the influential figures in princely decisions³¹. The death of this bishop and of Gheorghe of Rădăuți, both of whom had been “ordained by God” in their dioceses, placed the prince in a special situation, that of a vacuum in the nomination of hierarchs for the remaining hierarchical vacancies³². But he wanted to respect the prescriptions and to provide canonical legitimacy to the newly elected. That is why, in the elections of bishops in 1557-1558, in which we can see the extent to which the Byzantine tradition was taken on board, the Prince of Moldavia convoked four bishops to elect two titulars for the vacant diocesan sees of Roman and Rădăuți³³. Thus, the one who had fully assumed the appointment of hierarchs was the prince in collaboration with other bishops. But the new metropolitan had also been co-opted into a boyar group.

In the context of Lăpușeanu’s negotiations with Ferdinand of Habsburg, in order to be able to counteract the support that Despot enjoyed, an attempt to poison the prince took place, of which some of

²⁶ Gheorghe Pungă, *op. cit.*, 101-103.

²⁷ Th. Holban, *Documente externe (1552-1561)*, *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, 1965, 3, 673, no. 3.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor* culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, vol. VIII (1376-1650), București, 1894, 68, no. LXXXIX (further, it will be quoted: *Documente Hurmuzaki*).

³⁰ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 66; Sorin Ulea, *O surprinzătoare personalitate a Evului Mediu românesc: cronicarul Macarie*, *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei*, XXXII, 1985, 26.

³¹ Gheorghe Pungă, *op. cit.*, 184.

³² N. Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor*, vol. I, București, 1928, 109-110.

³³ Idem, *O alegere de episcopi moldoveni în 1557-58*, Cluj, 1907, 6.

those close to him were not unaware. In the spring of 1560, the boyars, together with the metropolitan of Moldavia and the other bishops, as recorded, asked Ferdinand of Habsburg for help in supporting Despot as prince: „His causis moti et compulsi, de quaerendo vero et legitimo principum terrae nostrae haerede, ac regni successore consilium inter nos cepimus: et reperimua multorum Sanctorum metropolitaram atque episcoporum et aliorum illustrium virorum fide dignis testimoniis, Serenissimum Dominum Iacobum Heraclidem, Despotam, Sami Insulae et Doridis Dominum”³⁴. Therefore, it was a collective project in which the role of the Church's hierarchy was particularly important in order to establish power connections. The same period also marks the time of the missions of the boyars, in which a request was made for the prince of Moldavia. This participation of a hierarchy, *i. e.* the metropolitan, is extremely interesting; it can be seen here that the prince has been abandoned by at least part of the high clergy, whose members signed Lăpușneanu's oath to the Polish king in June 1561³⁵, where he is called “the highest of all the prayers of God and bishops of our principality”³⁶. The chronicles also point out that after he had expelled Alexandru Lăpușneanu, he summoned to Iași all the hierarchs of the country, headed by the metropolitan, together with all the boyars, and the prayer of installation as prince of Moldavia was read upon his head³⁷. The detail the chronicler provides indicates that Despot became a different man, being “christened” with his new theophoric name, Ion³⁸ (John). In this whole process of usurpation, the accomplices of the usurper were even some churchmen, the loyalty of the metropolitan and of the hierarchs to Lăpușneanu being relative and temporary, depending on the interests of the group and on the attitudes of the prince. Although he had received the grace of rulership through the prayers of the high Orthodox prelates of the principality (metropolitan Grigorie was the one who read him the prayer of consecration³⁹), as is well known, Despot was totally hostile to the Orthodox

³⁴ *Documente Hurmuzaki*, II-1 (1451-1575), București, 1891, 385-386, no. CCCLVII.

³⁵ Th. Holban, *op. cit.*, 674, no. 7.

³⁶ Ilie Corfus, *Documente privitoare la istoria României culese din arhivele polone. Secolul al XVI-lea*, București, 1979, 166-178, no. 84.

³⁷ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 163.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

faith, as he was one of the supporters of the new confessional current that was changing the religious aspect of Europe⁴⁰, following the evidence of the political strength represented by the Protestant movement⁴¹ (which he would renounce before his death⁴²). Besides, he was distrustful about the metropolitan, whom he considered “one of Alexandru’s men”⁴³. He was afraid of the possible danger posed by the presence in the circles of power of a hierarch whom he suspected of loyalty to Lăpușneanu. However, metropolitan Grigorie and bishop Eftimie of Rădăuți were “always at his side”⁴⁴ („hi enim semper sibi lateri haerent”⁴⁵). Could they also have been the two bishops (*vladicae sacerdotes*) with whom the boyars suspected of possible treason stood, mentioned in Johann Sommer’s account⁴⁶, and who were supposed to have done to Despot what they did to Alexandru Lăpușneanu? This association is very possible. A part of the clergy became hostile to Iacob Heraclides, whom they probably perceived as not having the purest thoughts and as being a stranger to the Orthodox faith, and wanted to remove him from his throne⁴⁷. Despot’s biographer, the future bishop Antonio Maria Graziani, pointed out that the first calls for rebellion came from the priests of the churches in Moldavia. He also provides a particularly important piece of information, less often discussed, namely the fact that the priests had not given up fighting for their faith, urging the boyars to defend the Orthodoxy of the ancestor: „sic alienatis omnium animis, cum sacerdotes, omnibus injuriis expositis sacrorum causam non deserent, sed monendo horandoque nobiles ad tuendam quam majoribus acceperant religionis fidem accederent”⁴⁸. Mathias Miles records that “the country’s boyars, together with the

⁴⁰ H. Petri, *Relațiunile lui Jakobus Basilicus Heraclides cu capii Reformățiunii*, AARMSI, s. III, t. VIII, 1927-1928, 1-62; Daniel Benga, *Marii reformatori luterani și Biserica Ortodoxă. Contribuții la tipologia relațiilor luterano-ortodoxe din secolul al XVI-lea*, București, 2003, 143-156.

⁴¹ Șerban Papacostea, *op. cit.*, 72.

⁴² Antonius Maria Gratianus, *Viața lui Despot vodă*, ediție bilingvă. Introducere, schițe biografice, text latin stabilit, traducere, note, comentarii, indice: Traian Diaconescu, Iași, 1998, 148.

⁴³ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. II, îngrijit de Maria Holban, M. M. Alexandrescu Dersca-Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu, București, 1970, 141.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 163.

⁴⁵ *Documente Hurmuzaki*, II-1, 423-428, no. CCCXCIV.

⁴⁶ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, II, 265.

⁴⁷ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 169.

⁴⁸ Antonius Maria Gratianus, *op. cit.*, 148.

bishops, seeing that the heretic⁴⁹ Despot intended to marry a Polish woman, founding a dynasty foreign to the law of the land, decided to remove him”⁵⁰, a fact also recorded by Graziani⁵¹. If Miles records are accurate, and we should not fully doubt it, the episode on Easter Day, when the prince was to dine with the nobles and high clergy, shows that the fidelity of some churchmen had its limits. The poisoned communion that the Prince of Moldavia was to receive, as the final part of a diverted plot, is evidence that Despot had not fully renounced the princes' custom of taking communion on the great religious feasts⁵². The poisoned communion was offered by the “great hierarch” personally, that is, by the metropolitan of the country; he constituted himself as a party to a plot against the sovereign (no doubt legitimate, given that God had permitted his installation). And if Despot was going to ritually receive the Orthodox Eucharist, what made him: a protestant heretic or a false Orthodox Christian? He had also participated, along with the hierarchs of the principality, in various public solemnities on the occasion of Orthodox holidays, such as Easter, Epiphany, etc. However, his habit of mocking the Orthodox Church of Moldavia and its ministers is criticized by his contemporaries: „In his paratos aculeos et maledicta in sacerdotes contorquens, inscitiam, ignavian, mores, totam denique vitam eorum criminibus exagitare, per illorum turpitudinem sacris religionique odium struens”⁵³. It is well known that apostasy has the immediate effect of falling from grace, and the anointed prince who abandoned the orthodoxy of the faith symbolically dethroned himself; it was a form of self-destruction. It is also interesting that Despot, when he surrendered, asked to be sent to a monastery, where he wanted to serve God⁵⁴. It should be noted from this episode that, as Ilie Minea pointed out, the Moldavian sources reported that the bishops were the ones who, together with the boyars, decided to remove the voivode from the throne⁵⁵. Maria Crăciun believes that a part of the clergy was favourable to Despot, which is partially supported,

⁴⁹ When opening the history of Despot vodă's reign, in the title, Grigore Ureche still calls him „a heretic” (Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 161).

⁵⁰ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 86.

⁵¹ Antonius Maria Gratianus, *op. cit.*, 154-155.

⁵² Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 86.

⁵³ Antonius Maria Gratianus, *op. cit.*, 146-147.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 192-193.

⁵⁵ Ilie Minea, *Letopisețele moldovenești scrise slavonește, Cercetări istorice*, I, 1925, 301.

given his collaboration with the bishops⁵⁶. In 1564, he was called, by Lăpușneanu, when he returned to the throne of Moldavia, a godless man, an atheist⁵⁷. And so, the chronicler Grigore Ureche saw him: “he mimicked piety and Orthodoxy, but secretly he was a heretic”⁵⁸. But we know that he also understood that what he had done to gain power was a repudiation of faith and he regretted that he had made a mockery of the “divine religion”, cursing the new sects, even before the last moment of his life, taking communion⁵⁹. Thus, the boyars and members of the clergy were a group dissatisfied with the duplicitous policy of the prince, as Graziani pointed out, with the prince’s attitude towards Orthodoxy, the traditional confession of the majority, and especially with the affinities he showed towards foreign elements (whether of nation, language or religion). But this could only be a pretext, for, as John Bel-sius pointed out: “as far as the boyars are concerned, we are in doubt, for they do not show themselves openly, and have never been faithful to any of their princes”⁶⁰, long with them, hierarchs can also be included, because in the same text it says that “the names of the dignitaries I did not find out, but there are three metropolitans whom I call *vlădici* [bishops]”⁶¹, next to the prince being always Grigorie the metropolitan of Moldavia and Eftimie bishop from Rădăuți⁶². This detail of the constant presence of the hierarchs alongside the prince is very important; it ensured a relative stability. These princes used the episcopate to support the establishment of the principedom in a political and religious context characterised by instability⁶³. The responsibility of solving the problem of a “evil” prince, especially through his “heresy”, was the responsibility of the elite, which is why the chronicler Ureche is more direct: the boyars and bishops have conspired to remove him from his reign⁶⁴. Then, in all other important moments of Lăpușneanu’s reign, bishops and boyars are mentioned as his advisors. The gesture of Lăpușneanu to remove Grigorie from the throne was caused by the fact that he had anointed Despot as his prince, putting in his place

⁵⁶ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 86-87.

⁵⁷ Ilie Corfus, *op. cit.*, 235-238, no. 124.

⁵⁸ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 163.

⁵⁹ Antonius Maria Gratianus, *op. cit.*, 184-189.

⁶⁰ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, II, 132.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² *Ibidem*, 173.

⁶³ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 65.

⁶⁴ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 169.

Macarie's disciple, Teofan⁶⁵. He and the other hierarchs were also entrusted with the care of his son and successor, Bogdan⁶⁶, who, young and restless, was not clever enough to know the hidden plans and thoughts of the boyars. The duplicitous politics of the boyars combined with Bogdan's 'inexperience' drove him to bad decisions. In fact, they were not stable enough too in their decisions and did not know how to manage a situation of crisis. The boyars were plotting against him and wanted to bring in the pretender Ion, whom the Porte was supporting. In the context of his removal from the throne in 1571-1572, he fled to Hotin⁶⁷, to be closer to the Poles, "leaving the princely towns, because he suspected the boyars would kill him, as was their habit"⁶⁸. So, he was known to some of the boyars. However, seeing the delays of the Porte, they decided to bring him back to Iași. They got together and, with the metropolitan at their head, set off for Hotin, where, the Armenian chronicle of Kamienec relates: „they swore three times that they would not plot for his life”⁶⁹. The arrival of metropolitan Teofan, not only to reinforce the oath, probably gave more confidence to the young prince, especially since this prelate had also served the Church of Moldavia in the time of his father's rule, and even fled the country after Bogdan's dethroning, which saved his life, according to the chronicle testimonies. Teofan's loyalty to the dynasty of Lăpușneanu was shown when Ion vodă came, whom he refused to legitimize, fleeing to the mountains out of fear⁷⁰. He was linked to the organized movement against the new rule, and would go on to become a leader of an opposition in the homeland and then abroad. The very fall of the son of Alexandru Lăpușneanu was attributed by the chronicler Azarie to his distancing himself from the good advice of the hierarchs and from that of the counsellors who had good thoughts⁷¹. It should be added that the princely pretenders of this period also usually had ecclesiastical

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, 179.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 180-181.

⁶⁷ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, București, 1976, 114.

⁶⁸ In connection with this, I have an article prepared to be published soon, based on the communication held at the symposium dedicated to the Days of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, in October 2021.

⁶⁹ H. Dj. Siruni, *Mărturii armenesti despre România*, extrase din *Cronica armenilor din Camenița*, partea I-a (1430-1611), *AARMSI*, s. III, t. XVII, 1935-1936, mem. 14, p. 278.

⁷⁰ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 185.

⁷¹ *Cronicile slavo-române*, 148.

personalities who supported their plans and projects. In 1565, Bogdan⁷² was accompanied by a bishop (perhaps a Calvinist⁷³), and Stefan Mâzgă by a monk called Eftimie⁷⁴. On the other hand, Ion vodă, who was said to be a „heretic”⁷⁵, took revenge on all those who had been loyal to Lăpușneanu, mainly clerics⁷⁶.

Teofan was one of the members of the group that supported the return of the traveller Bogdan Lăpușneanu; the executions ordered by the prince were targeted on those suspected to be part of the conspiracy. It was not for nothing that he wanted to retrieve him from his prisoner, who had fled “through the mountains of his terror”⁷⁷, seeking at all costs to bring him back, probably to get rid of one of the most important members of this party. His departure from the country also provoked his dismissal, because in the letter sent to the mayor of Bistrița, asking him to help with the capture of the hierarch, Ion vodă mentions him as a simple monk and “former metropolitan”⁷⁸ (accusing both him and those who accompanied him of having taken a part of his wealth⁷⁹). It can be seen here that in the absence of a consistent boyar dissent, the strongest opposition became the clerical one, represented by the legitimate hierarchs. A metropolitan could ensure, to a certain extent, the continuity of a regime and a natural transition from one prince to another. However, the association of hierarchs with the dynastic idea and with fidelity to the prince who was considered legitimate and not imposed, is why the attitude of hierarchs was considered to be a protest against the policy of the sultan’s appointments of the princes... Ilie Minea was the first to point out that this steadfastness and solidarity of the hierarchs towards the members of the reigning family (of the dynasty) was articulated as a discourse against the appointment of princes by the Muslims leaders of the Ottoman Empire⁸⁰. However, in my opinion, this is partially supported, especially since

⁷² *Documente Hurmuzaki*, XV, *Acte și scrisori din arhivele orașelor ardelenne (Bistrița, Brașov, Sibiu)*, publicate după copiile Academiei Române, partea I (1358-1600), București, 1911, 646-647, no. MCXCIX.

⁷³ Gheorghe Pungă, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ Ilie Corfus, *op. cit.*, 325.

⁷⁶ C. A. Stoide, *op. cit.*, p. 68 *sqq.*; Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁷⁷ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 185.

⁷⁸ Stoica Nicolaescu, *Documente slavo-române*, București, 1905, 198.

⁷⁹ *Documente Hurmuzaki*, XV-1, 722, no. MCCCXXV (note 19).

⁸⁰ Ilie Minea, *Aron Vodă și vremea sa*, 115.

Teofan will return in the time of Petru Șchiopul („the Lamé”) to lead the metropolis for a short time⁸¹. John vodă had an unacceptable policy for the administration of the Church, especially since he had started a real “persecution” against the monks and some clerics, among whom the most famous is that of the discussed bishop Gheorghe, burned alive, being accused of heavy sins⁸². At that time, Anastasie, “the metropolitan of Ion vodă”⁸³, had compromised himself by a passive attitude towards the actions of the prince and benevolent towards Potcoavă Crețul, the ephemeral prince at the end of 1577⁸⁴. There are several opinions about Anastasie, especially since there is no direct evidence of his pastorate for this period⁸⁵. It is possible that he was “metropolitan Abraham of Suceava”, mentioned in a report of 22 December 1572⁸⁶, as has been assumed in a recent study⁸⁷. A difficult opinion to accept was formulated in 2016 by Iustin Taban, who admitted that Ion Vodă, the new prince, ruled Moldavia without a metropolitan bishop⁸⁸. The collaboration between the two was a positive one, as far as we can see from the few documents that have survived through the ages. He either retired or was forced to resign in 1577, and the faithful metropolitan Teofan was reinstated in his position⁸⁹. Anastasie would later represent the Moldavian party against Petru Șchiopul, whom he called “a stranger and a foreigner” in 1589⁹⁰, and raged against the Turks, Greeks, Hungarians and Vlachs who benefited from his rule.

Teofan was to leave again⁹¹, when Iancu Sasul (John the Saxon; of Lutheran confession) ascended the throne of Moldavia, this time

⁸¹ Mircea Păcurariu, *Contributii la istoria Mitropoliei Moldovei in secolul al XVI-lea*, MMS, LI/3-4, 1975, 239 sqq.

⁸² *Cronicile slavo-române*, 149.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 141. Before becoming metropolitan, he was bishop of Roman.

⁸⁴ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 193-197.

⁸⁵ Petronel Zahariuc, *Contribuții la istoria Mitropoliei Moldovei și a Catedralei Mitropolitane din Iași de la mijlocul secolului al XVI-lea până la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea*, in idem, Daniel Isai (coord.), *Istoria Catedralei și a ansamblului mitropolitan din Iași*, Iași, 2021, 20.

⁸⁶ *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor* culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, II-1, 650-651, no. DCXXVII.

⁸⁷ Petronel Zahariuc, *op. cit.*, 20, note 10.

⁸⁸ Iustin Taban, *Mitropolitul Anastasie al Moldovei și statutul său privilegiat în anii de retragere la Putna (1578-1588)*, *Analele Putnei*, XII/1, 2016, 205-206.

⁸⁹ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Note și îndreptări*, 80.

⁹⁰ Ilie Minea, *Letopisețele*, 286.

⁹¹ *Documente Hurmuzaki*, III-1 (1576-1599), București, 1890, 75-79, no. LXII.

accompanied by bishop Gheorghe of Rădăuți; the voivode named them, in a document of January 1582, as “former metropolitan” and “former bishop”⁹², a sign of their exclusion from the possibility of return and proof of the fact that the prince dispossessed them. They had fled because of the great cruelty of the new ruler. Ureche’s chronicle recorded that some of the boyars, especially members of the Movilă family, had fled from Moldavia because of the “filthy and ungodly things” and the wickedness promoted by Iancu Sasul⁹³. In an inscription on a Holy Gospel, Teofan confesses that he fled out of fear⁹⁴.

For the metropolitan see, the “solution of emergency” was the one who was to hold this position on several occasions, Nicanor, bishop of Roman⁹⁵. The return of Teofan at the same time as that of Petru Șchiopul⁹⁶, but also his resignation and retreat to Mount Athos, to the monastery assisted by the family of Alexandru Lăpușneanu (Dochiariou), shows, once again, his association with a clear political and ecclesiastical direction that he followed throughout his activity⁹⁷. In this context, Petru Șchiopul promoted to the dignity of metropolitan one of the members of the new boyar group of influence, bishop Gheorghe Movilă⁹⁸, who, out of the same loyalty to the one who appointed him, like Teofan, attached to Lăpușneanu’s family, will anoint in Suceava the minor Ștefan, son of Petru Șchiopul⁹⁹. Although the prince had left several boyars to ensure the lieutenancy of the reign, the metropolitan did not leave him alone.

When he came to the throne, another controversial (also from a religious point of view) prince, Aron vodă appointed his own metropo-

⁹² DRH, A. Moldova, VII (1571-1584), întocmit de Ioan Caproșu, București, 2012, 506-511, no. 421.

⁹³ Grigore Ureche, *op. cit.*, 199-200.

⁹⁴ Ștefan Gr. Berechet, *Documente slave de prin arhivele ruse*, București, 1920, 9-10.

⁹⁵ Mircea Păcurariu, *Contribuții*, 241.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 197.

⁹⁷ N. Iorga, *Bizanț după Bizanț*, București, 1972, 132; Mircea Păcurariu, *Contribuții*, 242.

⁹⁸ S. Reli, *Doi Episcopi ai Rădăuților apoi mitropoliți ai Moldovei din sec. al XVI-lea, foști pribegi prin țările apusene*, *Candela*, XL/10-12, 1929, 431-443; Ioan Dură, *Figuri de ierarhi moldoveni: Mitropolitul Gheorghe Movilă*, *BOR*, LXXXIX/1-2, 1971, 187-203.

⁹⁹ N. Iorga, *Oameni și fapte din trecutul românesc. O familie domnească în exil*, București, 1905, 23. He was also anointed by the ecumenical patriarch (D. Russo, *Studii istorice greco-române*, vol. I, București, 1939, p. 74).

litan, firstly Nicanor, then Mitrofan, who had been brought from Roman, and the prince Ștefan Răzvan appointed Mardarie from Rădăuți, who, when Ieremia Movilă came to the throne, was removed and went into exile¹⁰⁰. Very interesting is the account of the chronicler Mustafa Selaniki, who records that the ten boyars who had agreed to be pledged to Ieremia Movilă in 1595 included the metropolitan¹⁰¹.

These power struggles marked the last quarter of the 16th century. Princes changed metropolitans and bishops as they pleased, as if imitating situations similar to those in the Ottoman Empire. It seems that this ecclesiastical policy of the princes also brought with it the beginnings of changes in the confessional structure. The attention of the princes was aimed at securing a longer and more stable reign, and the churchmen played quite an important role. Princes in this troubled period chose their subjects according to loyalty and the extension of legitimacy. But this was not entirely possible, mainly because the righteous hierarchy had its representative men standing by and always ready to support and back the prince, they considered legitimate in his struggle to gain and rule over Moldavia. That is why, on the return of Ieremia Movilă, his brother received the title of archbishop, which he would keep for almost five years, in a special political and religious context.

Ieremia Movilă's pro-Catholic policy has been interpreted as a contextual and emergency one, whereby the hierarch supported his brother, seeking support in Poland¹⁰². In any case, the end of the 16th century for Moldavia, from a religious point of view, was to some extent affected by specific tensions, with hardly any support for possible heresy, in the case of the prince and the metropolitan¹⁰³, even if the metropolitan and bishops Agathon and Ghedeon were favourable to Catholicism¹⁰⁴. The role of the prince in the development of a project to change the status of the Moldavian Metropolis in the last three years

¹⁰⁰ Mircea Păcurariu, *Contribuții*, 249.

¹⁰¹ *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române. Extrase*, vol. I (sec. XV-mijlocul sec. XVII), volum întocmit de Mihail Guboglu și Mustafa Mehmet, București, 1966, 375.

¹⁰² Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii*, I, 418.

¹⁰³ See Liviu Pilat, *Între Roma și Constantinopol. Biserica și puterea în vremea lui Ieremia Movilă*, in *Studii privind relațiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun și Patriarhia Ecumenică (secolele XIV-XVI)*, Iași, 2012, 261 sqq.

¹⁰⁴ *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, III, îngrijit de Maria Holban, M. M. Alexandrescu Dersca-Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu, București, 1971, 278 (report of Stanislaw Warsezewicki).

of the century mentioned is relevant for understanding how the discourse of power was articulated in the context of the acceptance by the Ottoman Empire of the hereditary rule of the Movilă family after the renewal of the treaty with Poland¹⁰⁵.

Perhaps one of the most important moments of solidarity of the hierarchs towards a prince occurs when Ieremia Movilă loses the battle of Bacău and Mihai Viteazul declares himself prince of Moldavia. Metropolitan Gheorghe and the bishops of Roman and Rădăuți take the path of wandering with their former prince. Ioan, bishop of the newly founded diocese of Huși, returns home. It may be said that the metropolitan left because of his blood alliance with Ieremia Movilă; but I believe that, with the solidarity of the other two hierarchs in the country, this was an action in support of their legitimate prince, to whom they swore allegiance and obedience.

Even though he lured them by promising them security, the new and temporary prince of Moldavia found himself in the position of having to find a solution, because he was aware that a new ecclesiastical hierarchy was needed, so he decided to choose some hierarchs for the vacant seats. Above all two things must be respected. The fact that Mihai Viteazul (the Brave) sent for bishops, considering them to be the rightful hierarchs of the Moldavian diocese, shows that the new ruler wanted to count on their support in the new political context, but their refusal led him to another decision, in order to avoid too many vacancies in the episcopal sees, namely the convocation of a synod to ensure canonicity. The synod was composed of metropolitans and bishops from the Orthodox Churches, together with Dionysius Rally, a close friend of Mihai Viteazul¹⁰⁶. The Synod has declared the hierarchs of Ieremia Movilă deposed from the throne¹⁰⁷, as those who have consolidated and strengthened by oath their thought and plan to banish and annihilate Mihai and his throne and his homeland by war. And the second element is that of the oath taken by the new hierarchs¹⁰⁸ which, in

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, 278.

¹⁰⁶ Andrei Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării-Românești*, vol. V, *Acte și scrisori (1596-1599)*, București, 1932, 159-161, no. 97.

¹⁰⁷ For the most recent problematisation of this issue see: Iustin Taban, *Ieșirea din scaun*, 159 sqq.

¹⁰⁸ I. Lupaș, *Fragment din jurământul arhieresc făcut de Anastasie Crimca în calitate de episcop al Rădăuților, la 19 iunie 1600, lui Mihai Viteazul și fiului său Nicolae Pătrașcu*, *MMS*, XXXVII/1-2, 1961, 96-99.

addition to promising to keep the sacred laws of the Holy Church, also stated: "I obey the most holy prince Mihai, and his by God crowned son Nicolae, and I will never be insubordinate or disobedient to them, but with all my heart and soul I will love them for all my life"¹⁰⁹. Mihai vodă had legitimized his entry and the assumption of the reign of Moldavia through the new bishops Filotei in Roman, Anastasie (Crimca) nominated and consecrated for Rădăuți¹¹⁰. On his return to Moldavia, Ieremia Movilă brought back his brother Gheorghe as metropolitan, along with bishops Agafton and Teodosie, both of whom regained their rightful ecclesiastical sees, the latter even becoming metropolitan¹¹¹. A very turbulent half-century was coming to an end in regard to the situation of ecclesiastical administration.

It can therefore be seen that the period of the second half of the 16th century was marked not only by political instability, but also by ecclesiastical one, caused by the first. These successions to the Moldavian throne, accompanied by those of the metropolitans, led Ilie Minea to note that this period is one in which one can "speak of a kind of Caesaropapism in Moldavian history"¹¹². These particular cases help to support the assumptions regarding the "freedom" of the Metropolis of Moldavia in relation to higher ecclesiastical authorities; hierarchs who left their dioceses returned after having dealt with political issues for shorter or longer periods of time. We note that the decision of the prince was the one that was important and respected from the institutional perspective.

The narrative sources are relevant by putting them together, by eliminating some existing antitheses, because it has even discussed the duality of the image under which we know the personality of some of the rulers: tyrant and bloodshed in the chronicle of the nobles, pious founder and defender of the Church in the clerical literature. Hierarchs, as administrators of a charismatic power, had a political influence manifested inertially, by tradition, sometimes with tendencies of domination, which we also find in the Byzantine world, in certain isolated

¹⁰⁹ Stoica Nicolaescu, *Documente de la Mihai Vodă Viteazul*, București, 1916, 11-14.

¹¹⁰ Scarlat Porcescu, *Organizarea Bisericii din Moldova pe vremea domniei lui Mihai Viteazul*, MMS, LI/5-8, 1975, 415-430.

¹¹¹ Ioan-Augustin Guriță, *Defensores legitimae potestatis. Orthodox hierarchs, supporters of the Princely Power in medieval Moldavia*, C&C, 10/1, 2015, 203.

¹¹² Ilie Minea, *Aron Vodă și vremea sa*, 114.

cases. The hierarchs of this period often resorted, as we have already said, together with the nobles, to certain artifices by which to control the sovereign to a certain extent, to dictate his political direction, so that the privileges of the group could be protected. In other cases, some princes collaborated with the episcopate precisely in order to fight against the boyar opposition. The loyalty of some hierarchs to certain principles, to the tradition they were supposed to defend, to the Orthodoxy of the faith and, of course, to a prince or dynasty, led to active involvement in the life of the state, with risks, but also with the rewards of maintaining an assumed direction.

We can ask whether the attitudes shown by certain hierarchs towards certain princes were personal actions, institutional decisions or part of a group plan? The decline in the prestige of the prince in relation to the nobility¹¹³ may constitute the paradigm for an interpretation.

On the other hand, this weakening of the reigning institution could be noticed by the political men of the time, especially as those fighting for control of the state were well aware of power relations, and if one group was plotting against another, uncertainty was certainly a factor of political and social tension. The reaction of the high clergy, and I am referring in particular to the metropolitans, who in Moldavia had a power increased by historical tradition and by their relationship with the monarchy, was also contextual. God worked through the hands of a legitimate high priest, and what he accomplished constituted the will of the Almighty. Now, in the eyes of the people, such support was needed by any of those who reached the throne of Moldavia by different means and by different routes. It could be observed that those who distanced themselves from the politics or the person of a prince were forced to withdraw from the life of the state, either by permanent isolation in a monastery or by self-exile, outside the borders of the state. The Church's loyalty to the legitimate prince was shown by the hierarch who did not abandon him or by the one who was placed by the new prince in the dignity of pastor. This is why, in the 16th century, the presence of hierarchs in various state and diplomatic missions intensified, which clearly indicates their importance for the political projects of the princes in question. Thus, bishops became a support for the lordship, along with the other elements, but this was the

¹¹³ Maria Crăciun, *op. cit.*, 45.

constant, the institution had its perennality, regardless of the people who led it, so the princes, in the absence of the fugitive hierarchy, raised to the metropolitan dignity the one they trusted, to obtain and preserve stability. Another essential aspect for understanding the political role of bishops is that of kinship ties, as they also entered the sphere of power through family ties; most of the hierarchs and abbots of the great monasteries had genealogical roots in important noble families of the time. Family solidarity was confused with duty to the lord and the Church, which is why, not infrequently, these representatives of the high clergy and politicians alike took decisions that were apparently paradoxical, but perfectly explicable in the structure of power relations of divine origin. The reactions of the hierarchs of Moldavia in the second half of the 16th century were based on the interests of the moment, on their membership of a political group, on their loyalty and faith in a "dynasty" and, no doubt, on the orthodoxy of the faith of the sovereign, who was not to abandon the clear direction the Church was pursuing: the unwavering preservation of the faith, even in a difficult political and religious context.