

CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN WALLACHIA AND TRANSYLVANIA IN THE AGE OF MATEI BASARAB AND RÁKÓCZY PRINCES

Abstract: In this article we aim to highlight the efforts made by Prince Matei Basarab to constantly support the spiritual life of the Romanians in Transylvania. The Wallachian ruler and the Wallachian Church were astutely and efficiently involved in the cultural work of the prelates in Transylvania and in their attempts to withstand, with mere minor concessions, the Calvinist propaganda and to exploit the cultural facilities it offered for the benefit of their own faith. Promoting such a cultural program, Matei Basarab avoided worsening his relations with the Transylvanian Principality on account of his cultural relations with the Romanians in Transylvania and achieved the very opposite: taking advantage of his political alliance with Princes George I Rákóczy and George II Rákóczy, he was able to successfully support the ethnic and religious identity of the Romanians across the Carpathians.

Keywords: Matei Basarab, George I Rákóczy, George II Rákóczy, cultural Slavonism, printing and distribution of Romanian books in Transylvania

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The main reason underlying the close political connections between Wallachia and Transylvania during the era of Matei Basarab and Princes George I Rákóczy and George II Rákóczy was the necessity of building a common defence in the face of the Ottoman danger. Behind this strategic political-military motivation there was a deeper reality: the Romanian ethnic identity of the majority population living on both sides of the Carpathians.

The people of that time were aware of this, thanks to two elements that claimed their attention: on one hand, the ethnic solidarities of the epoch,² which foreshadowed, in a specifically medieval form, the future modern national consciousness, and on the other hand, the sense of a community of faith, which was contingent on the first element. What can also not be disputed is the fact that Michael the Brave's rule in Transylvania activated such ethnic or religious solidarities.

It is within this context that the cultural and religious relations established between Wallachia, led by Matei Basarab, and Transylvania, ruled by the Rákóczy Princes, ought to be assessed. At the level of the facts, it may be ascertained that the Wallachian ruler initiated numerous actions which could be integrated into a large-scale political undertaking of providing spiritual support to the Romanians in Transylvania. Matei Basarab's initiatives were deployed through the Orthodox

¹ PhD museum curator, National Museum of Transylvanian History, e-mail: mitu_meli@yahoo.com.

² See Eugen Stănescu, "Premisele medievale ale conștiinței naționale românești. Român-românesc în textele românești din veacurile XV-XVII," in *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, XVII, 1964, no. 5, pp. 967-1000; for the theoretical aspects, see Dionisie Petcu, *Conceptul de etnic*, București, 1980.

Church in Transylvania, represented by the Metropolitanate of Alba Iulia, which was practically the only channel through which the Wallachian voivode could contact the Transylvanian Romanians in an institutionalised form; during the years of his exile, Matei Basarab had established other contacts with the milieu of the knezes in Hațeg, mentioned by the ruler in subsequent documents,³ and with the soldiers recruited in the Banatian districts, whom he kept in his service even after he took over the reign.⁴

In addition, the policy of protecting and supporting the Transylvanian Orthodox Church represented a tradition of the rulers and of the Church in Wallachia, as these institutions had exercised this role through foundations, donations of money and vestments, through the sanctification of priests and higher prelates, or through donations of printed books and manuscripts, etc.⁵ Michael the Brave, for example, had excelled in this role, exempting the Romanian priests in Transylvania from corvée duty during his Transylvanian rule and building a Metropolitan Church at Alba Iulia in 1597.⁶

Matei Basarab marked a particularly fruitful moment in this tradition. The support that he granted to the Romanian Church in Transylvania can be determined primarily in material terms. Every year the Wallachian voivode sent the metropolitans in Bălgrad a traditional benefaction of 6,000 denarii, which was cashed in by all of the three high prelates in Alba Iulia during his reign: Ghenadie II, Ilie Iorest and Simion Ștefan.⁷ The second substantial donation in money was destined for the church in Șcheii Brașovului, designed, of course, to maintain the spiritual life of the Romanian community here, grouped around the church and the school. In 1602, Nicolae Pătrașcu had donated the village Micșenești in Ilfov to the Church from Șchei. In exchange for this estate, Matei Basarab established an annual donation of 150 ducats for the church in Brașov.⁸

In addition to these amounts that were sent regularly, there were many more occasional donations made to some Romanian communities in Transylvania, ensuring the material support for their cultural and religious life. Vestments, books or objects of worship indispensable for daily religious life were sent from Wallachia to Transylvania (by the voivode, the church or various boyars), as was the case of the religious objects donated to the church in Galda de Sus⁹ or to the church in Comana, equipped with all the necessary liturgical garments, divine service objects and religious books by Matei Basarab.¹⁰

In 1653 the Wallachian voivode founded a church in Transylvania, in the

³ See *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, B, vol. XXIV, București, 1974, p. 371.

⁴ Nicolae Stoicescu, *Matei Basarab*, București, 1988, p. 25.

⁵ Mircea Păcurariu, *Legăturile bisericii ortodoxe din Transilvania cu Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XVI-XVIII*, Sibiu, 1968, passim.

⁶ Mircea Păcurariu, "Mitropolitul Simion Ștefan, slujitor al bisericii și al poporului român," in *Noul Testament*, Alba Iulia, 1988, p. 57.

⁷ Ștefan Meteș, *Istoria bisericii și a vieții religioase a românilor din Transilvania și Ungaria*, I, Sibiu, 1935, p. 354.

⁸ Păcurariu, *Legăturile ...*, p. 150.

⁹ Meteș, *op.cit.*, p. 355.

¹⁰ Păcurariu, *Legăturile ...*, p. 155.

village of Porcești.¹¹ Beyond its spiritual message, this foundation was important also for the dissemination of various architectural and artistic forms from Wallachia to Transylvania: this church was built in the style of Wallachian churches, adorned inside and outside with a beautiful mural. Through it the voivode marked his presence cultural in Transylvania, being portrayed in the fresco, together with Lady Elina, holding the church in their hands as patrons of the monastery, while the Wallachian coat-of-arms was carved in stone above the entry.¹²

One could ask the question what was the meaning of this cultural support granted to the Romanians in Transylvania, from the standpoint of ethnic and religious solidarities and of the Calvinization policy the Rákóczy Princes pursued in Transylvania? That there existed feelings of closeness and mutual belonging to a particular community is convincingly attested in a letter sent by the Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril Lukaris to Prince Gabriel Bethlen in September 1629. The Prince had requested the consent of the Patriarch (who was not a stranger to the Protestant ideas) as regards the conversion of the Romanians in Transylvania to Calvinism, and the prelate answered that the main reason why such an undertaking was not possible pertained to the relations that existed between the Transylvanians and their brethren in Wallachia and Moldova, including to the occult support the voivodes of these countries granted Orthodoxy across the Carpathian mountains: “For happily and peacefully carrying out this change of religion, what should first break is the bond of blood and feeling that throbs secretly but with great force, between the Romanians in the land of Transylvania and the inhabitants of Wallachia and Moldova. Surely, the neighbours of said countries will not allow this and will surely raise hindrances, if not with their weapons, then at least with secret exhortations.”¹³

Indeed, the spiritual relations maintained by Matei Basarab with Transylvania belonged to the voivode’s broader cultural program and were meant, more or less consciously, to help the Romanians in Transylvania in their efforts to preserve their own faith and ethnicity. As Cyril Lukaris stated, the idea of the solidarity among the Romanians in the historical provinces of Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova, and that of the anti-Calvinist resistance were promoted through “secret exhortations” by the voivodes of Wallachia and Moldova, even though this support was less obvious at the level of the political relations with the principality.

The main way in which Matei Basarab became involved in the cultural and religious life of the Romanians in Transylvania, implicitly supporting them against Calvinization attempts, was that of printing and distributing books. The first aspect of this cultural policy was represented by the promotion of Slavonism. As noted in the bibliography of the issue, by A. D. Xenopol, P. P. Panaitescu sau Virgil Căndea,¹⁴

¹¹ Păcurariu, *Legăturile ...*, p. 142.

¹² For the description of the church, see Andrei Gâlea, “O ctitorie a lui Matei Basarab: biserica din comuna Porcești, județul Sibiu,” in *Omagiu N. Bălan*, Sibiu, 1946, pp. 423-425.

¹³ Published by Ioan Lupaș, *Documente istorice transilvane*, I, Cluj, 1940, pp. 177-179; commented on by Păcurariu, *Mitropolitul Simion Ștefan ...*, p. 57.

¹⁴ A.D.Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, vol. IV, Iași, 1891, pp. 77-84; P. P. Panaitescu, *Începuturile și biruința scrisului în limba română*, București, 1965, p. 194; Virgil Căndea, *Rațiunea dominantă*, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, pp. 33-77.

cultural Slavonism – an important trend in the age of Matei Basarab, primarily given the efforts of Udriște Năsturel – represented, in fact, primarily a reaction. It was a defensive reaction against the threat posed by the Greek-Levantine offensive that was targeted at preserving the tradition and autochthonous fund of Romanian culture and the rejection of the restrictions imposed by a foreign cultural paradigm. In addition, despite Xenopol's definition, Slavonism was not the dominant trend of the period, but just one of its characteristics (the period of Matei Basarab's reign could just as well be considered as an era of intense use of the written Romanian language, both in culture and in quotidian use).¹⁵

From the perspective of the relations with the Romanians in Transylvania, we may state that the promotion of Slavonism was also a reaction, this time against the Protestant danger, given the fact that Calvinist proselytizing advocated the use of the believers' mother tongue in church and culture, which represented a particularly valuable and effective weapon for accomplishing its aims. It is from this standpoint that we should probably understand the intentions underlying the distribution of printed Slavonic books in Transylvania. At the same time, we can notice that similar motivations were valid in the case of the books destined for the peoples south of the Danube, which were also assisted, through the Slavonic culture, in their effort to maintain the purity of their traditions and to withstand the Ottoman threat. In the preamble to the *Psalter* printed in Slavonic in 1637 and 1638, Matei Basarab addressed himself both to "the right believing and devout nation of our homeland" and to "the other nations related to us through faith and having the same famous Slavonic dialect as a language and particularly to the Bulgarians, the Serbs, the Hungaro-Wallachians and the Moldo-Wallachians and the others."¹⁶

On the other hand, the Wallachian printing houses also printed Romanian-language books destined for the Romanians in Transylvania, such as, for example the *Pravila* of Govora or *Îndreptarea legii* [*Nomocanon*]. The idea of using the vernacular language in culture had made great progress by that time and was supported by many scholars in Wallachia, the most distinguished of whom were Metropolitans Teofil and Ștefan. According to Nicolae Iorga, the idea of promoting the Romanian language in the books they printed had come to them from the model of the Transylvanian achievements¹⁷ (even though things could well have happened the other way around, the initiatives being practically concurrent). In this context, the important Romanian books printed in Transylvania during this period could be seen, to some extent, as the result of the aforementioned influence, of a broadly favourable climate in that period, and not just as simple effects of the Calvinist propaganda. The interpretation according to which the volumes printed in Romanian in the printing house from Alba Iulia responded to the needs of spiritual life in Transylvania and pertained to a generalized trend of promoting the vernacular language in quotidian

¹⁵ Cădea, "Noul Testament în limba română ca act de spiritualitate și cultură," in *Noul Testament*, Alba Iulia, pp. 48-50.

¹⁶ Ioan Bianu, Nerva Hodoș, *Bibliografia românească veche*, vol. I. (1508-1716), București, 1903, p.105.

¹⁷ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, VI, București, 1938, p. 92.

and cultural contexts was also emphasized by Virgil Căndea, on the occasion of re-editing the *New Testament* of Bălgrad.¹⁸

The two codes of laws (predominantly religious) printed during the reign of Matei Basarab, namely the *Pravila* of Govora and *Straightening law*, had a wide circulation also in Transylvania. According to his cultural program, the Wallachian voivode had a special edition of the *Pravila* printed for Transylvania, under the patronage of the Transylvanian Metropolitan, Ghenadie II.¹⁹ While the edition for Wallachia featured the name of “Teofil, out of the mercy of God Archbishop and Metropolitan of entire Wallachia,” his name was replaced in the edition printed for Transylvania with “Ghenadie, out of the mercy of God Archbishop and Metropolitan of entire Transylvania.”²⁰ This attests in a particularly convincing manner the existing relations between the churches of the two countries, as well as the coordination of their cultural actions.

The books printed in the Wallachian press spread throughout Transylvania, as attested by the copies found in Bungard (Sibiu County), Chişineu Criş and Lipova (Arad County), Beiuş, Pietroasa, Borod and Seghişte (Bihor County), or Bonţan (Caraş-Severin County).²¹ A more intense circulation is attested for *Îndreptarea legii*, of which there are at least 72 known copies discovered in Transylvania, eight in Bihor, seven in Banat, seven in Arad County, six in Sibiu County, etc.²² On one of these copies there is an extremely relevant note for the degree of awareness, at that time, of the importance of this cultural program and of the existing ethnic solidarity: “I, Deacon Udrişte/ from Wallachia/ hereby write to you, Father Teodor, and let this be known and never forgotten that I am giving you this book so that you may take it to our brothers in Transylvania, this book in the Romanian language.”²³ Things stood the same with a copy located in Turnu Roşu, about which we learn from another note on the book that it was given to the village by Ioan Zilot, from the voivodal camera of Wallachia, “in the days of the most merciful Lord Matei Basarab Voivode and his Lady, Elina.”²⁴

Especially useful for the close links between the two provinces was another book of the time, *Cazania* [*Homiliary*], which addressed, through the content of its teachings, broader categories of readers. From an edition printed in Govora in 1642, there are eight known copies found in Transylvania (in Bihor, Covasna, Braşov, Sălaj, etc.), and from the edition printed at Dealu Monastery in 1644, there are 10 other copies that circulated among the Romanians in Transylvania.²⁵ On one of these copies of *Cazania*, a literate inhabitant of the village Purcăreţ, called Dan Bogdan, noted that the teachings in it “can be learned from it as if from a flowing fountain of life.”²⁶

The importance of the circulation of these books for the strengthening of ethnic

¹⁸ Căndea, *Noul Testament*, pp. 41-56.

¹⁹ Păcurariu, *Legăturile ...*, p. 15.

²⁰ See Bianu, Hodoş, *op.cit.*, pp. 108-114.

²¹ Florian Dudaş, *Vechi cărţi româneşti călătore*, Bucureşti, 1987, p. 162.

²² Dudaş, *op.cit.*, p. 163; Stoicescu, *op.cit.*, p. 91 mentions 35 copies.

²³ Dudaş, *op.cit.*, p. 163; Stoicescu, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

²⁴ Dudaş, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

²⁵ Dudaş, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

²⁶ Dudaş, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

solidarities, for the common cultural life of the Romanians in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova was highlighted in suggestive terms by Nicolae Iorga: “Crossing the borders, they drew all the Romanians together through their cultural life. Through them, more so than through the old manuscripts that were circulated and copied, to a little extent..., the common literary life of all the Romanians was founded. Through them something invaluable for any people was founded, because it included what was to give shape and form to the thought and feeling of the coming generations: literary language.”²⁷

Apart from these aspects (material donations and book distribution), Wallachia maintained, during the reign of Matei Basarab, institutionalized, direct relations (“official,” to use a modern term) with the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania. This was as natural as possible, given that the Metropolitanate of Alba Iulia was subordinated to that of Wallachia. Transylvanian Metropolitans were ordained, according to tradition, by the Metropolitan of Wallachia. Ghenadie did so in 1627 and Ilie Iorest – in 1640.²⁸ What is significant is the fact that Iorest had come from Moldova and had been appointed as metropolitan at the insistence of Vasile Lupu.²⁹ However, he did not break the tradition and went to the Wallachians for confirmation, as the custom dictated. As for Simion Ștefan, vehemently accused in the historiography (especially by N. Iorga) that he was a docile instrument in the hands of Rákóczy and his Calvinizing tendencies,³⁰ we have no information about his possible ordination in Târgoviște. Conducted at the end of the 20th century, Virgil Cândea’s researches rehabilitated the figure of the prelate under discussion, suggesting that like his predecessors, he was confirmed at Târgoviște.³¹ Otherwise, his pastorate would have been uncanonical and, under such circumstances, it would not have been possible for him to effectively exercise his authority over the Transylvanian believers or for the relations established with Matei Basarab to be maintained.

As for Ghenadie, there is direct knowledge of several contacts that the metropolitan had with the Church in Wallachia. For instance, in 1639, the envoys sent by Matei Basarab to Rákóczy’s court were led by Metropolitan Teofil, this occasioning a meeting between the leaders of the two Romanian Churches.³² On this occasion, important cultural issues were discussed, whose effect was seen later. Ghenadie needed a *pravila* that contained the norms of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, primarily to counteract the influence of Calvinism, and secondly because the copies of Coresi’s edition had been exhausted or were insufficient.³³ In response to these extremely important needs for the life of the Romanian community in Transylvania, the *Pravila* of Govora appeared one year later, in a special edition for the

²⁷ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria literaturii religioase a românilor până la 1688*, București, 1904 (in *Studii și documente cu privire la istoria românilor*, vol. VII, part. 3), p. 84.

²⁸ Nicolae Iorga, *Sate și preoți din Ardeal*, București, 1902, pp. 45-60.

²⁹ Lupaș, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-2016; cf. Păcurariu, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

³⁰ Iorga, *Istoria literaturii religioase ...*, p. 57.

³¹ Cândea, *Noul Testament ...*, pp. 54-55.

³² Păcurariu, *Legăturile ...*, p. 15.

³³ Păcurariu, *Legăturile ...*, p. 15.

Transylvanians. This example reveals as clearly as possible the collaboration between Wallachia and the Romanians in Transylvania, at the institutional level of the two churches, as well as the fact that the Wallachian milieu felt responsible for the fate of the Romanians across the mountains and helped them in their efforts to preserve their own ethnicity and faith.

This collaboration materialized also through the support Wallachia granted to the Romanian printing press in Alba Iulia. Although it was owned by Prince Rákóczy, its activity was supported, to some extent, by the Wallachians. Their contribution was in two main areas: firstly through the craftsmen who learned the art of printing in Wallachia or who came from there; secondly through the Romanian translations of sacred books made by scholars from Wallachia. Thus, the reopening of the Romanian printing press in Alba Iulia was due to the efforts of the printing craftsman Dobre, who came from Wallachia and started to produce Romanian language books here.³⁴ His first printed text was a composite volume, comprising a *Paraclis al Precestei* [*Paraklesis to the Holy Theotokos*], evening and morning prayers, a *Păscălie* [*Paschalion*], as well as a text that was forbidden by the Orthodox Church, *Gromovnicul* (book of astrological predictions).³⁵

The content of this volume shows that it was intended for a broad audience: the texts written in the Romanian language were indispensable to the clergy and were distributed to the faithful to guide their conduct in daily life. The prayers had to be printed in Romanian because Slavonic was not known to the people or even to a part of the priests. *Păscălia* was absolutely necessary for calculating the dates of the holidays, while writings such as *Gromovnicul*, comprising oracular literature, were highly valued in the popular culture of the time.

Father Dobre printed other important works, such as the *Gospel* (a re-edition of Coresi's text) in 1641 and *Catehismul calvinesc* [*The Calvinistic Catechism*] in 1640; the latter was a text of Protestant propaganda edited through the efforts of the Calvinist Superintendent,³⁶ which led, however, Metropolitan Varlaam and Udriște Năsturel to react against it. In the foreword to the *Evangelhia cu învățătură* [*Gospel with Teachings*], Metropolitan Ghenadie revealed the role that the Wallachian printer played in the publication of these works, emphasizing the fact that the printing presses and the books printed in Wallachia served as a model and as an exhortation for a similar, vitally important activity to be carried out in Transylvania: "I was profoundly aggrieved in my heart, wishing printing presses were brought over to print here/the Gospel/in this country of His Highness the King. Which is why the teacher Father Dobre came from Wallachia and printed here in Transylvania and, seeing this, my heart truly melted at the sight of those printed works and I appealed to His Highness Racoți Gheorghie to have these books printed here, in the land of His Highness and His Highness allowed me to print them."³⁷

At the same time, there were Transylvanians who were sent by the

³⁴ Sextil Pușcariu, *Istoria literaturii române. Epoca veche*, București, 1987, p. 87.

³⁵ Pușcariu, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

³⁶ Pușcariu, *op.cit.*, p. 87; N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii ...*, p. 58.

³⁷ Bîanu, Hodoș, *op.cit.*, pp. 116-118.

Metropolitanate to Wallachia, to learn the craft of printing there. Along with Father Dobre, they played an important role in the publication of Romanian books in Transylvania in the mid-17th century, which culminated with the *New Testament* from Bălgrad (Alba Iulia), in 1648, and with the translation of the *Psalter* in 1651. One of them was Nicula Ardeleanul, “publisher of books at the voivodal printing presses,” who was working in the typography from Govora in 1639.³⁸ He learned the craft there, contributed to the printing of the *Pravila*, after which he probably went back to Transylvania, publishing Romanian books in Alba Iulia, after the model of those in Wallachia. Another was the learned monk Daniil Andreeanul, who had come from the western parts of Transylvania and had also crossed the border to Wallachia, working in the typography from Dealu, where he translated *Îndreptarea legii*. The activity of Daniil, in keeping with the cultural policy of the two Churches, was not constrained by the frontier of the Carpathians, since he was one of the translators of the *New Testament* in Transylvania, as Bishop in the Land of Făgăraș, in 1662, and as Bishop of Strehaia, in Oltenia, in 1672-1679.³⁹

Another example of these craftsmen and scholars who maintained the cultural links between the two provinces is that of the hieromonk Silvestru, former abbot in Govora.⁴⁰ Probably at the request of Metropolitan Simion Ștefan, he came to Transylvania, where he began to translate the *New Testament*, as shown in the second foreword of this work: “The compilation of this Testament was begun by the hieromonk Selivestru.”⁴¹ After his death, the translation was continued by other authors (including the erudite metropolitan, according to some historians).⁴² Lexical research reveals that these authors were both Transylvanians and Wallachians, this work representing the result of the collaboration between the scholars of the two countries.⁴³ This probably explains the role it played in the dissemination of a unitary literary language, in keeping with the desideratum expressed in the second foreword, ascribed to Simion Ștefan.⁴⁴

All these elements of the cultural ties between Wallachia and Transylvania in the age of Matei Basarab and the Rákóczy Princes lead us to wonder: what was the attitude of the Wallachian ruler toward the Transylvanian princes in light of these cultural relations and to what extent did they influence the political relations between the two countries?

According to a more simplistic view, long accredited in historiography,⁴⁵ the

³⁸ Stoicescu, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

³⁹ Păcurariu, *Mitropolitul Simion Ștefan ...*, p. 64.

⁴⁰ For his activity, see I. Cristache-Panait, “Rolul lui Matei Basarab în cultura românilor din Transilvania,” in *Matei Basarab și Bucureștii*, București, 1983, p. 66.

⁴¹ Bianu, Hodoș, *op.cit.*, p. 106; the re-edited text in *Noul Testament ...*, cited ed., p. 115.

⁴² Meteș, *op.cit.*

⁴³ Florica Dimitrescu, “Importanța lingvistică a Noului Testament de la Bălgrad,” in *Noul Testament...*, pp. 77-96.

⁴⁴ *Noul Testament ...*, pp. 115-116.

⁴⁵ The assessment belongs, above all, to Nicoale Iorga, having been launched in *Istoria literaturii religioase ...*, p. CLXXI-CLXXIII, partially taken over by Nicolae Cartojan, *Istoria literaturii române vechi*, București, 1980, p. 184. For a more lenient view, see Pușcariu, *op.cit.*, pp. 86-88.

politics of Calvinization led by the Rákóczy Princes were seen exclusively in terms of their negative effects. In this context, the cultural work of some Transylvanian metropolitans such as Simion Ștefan, Ghenadie or even Ilie Iorest (consisting, above all, in the printing of works in the Romanian language) was seen almost exclusively as an outgrowth of this dangerous, nefarious Calvinist influence on the Romanians. Moreover, these prelates, Simion Ștefan in particular, were regarded as leaders that lacked authority and acted as docile instruments in the hands of Calvinizing tendencies (as with all the higher clerics of those times in Transylvania, says Iorga about Ilie Iorest, “his situation was ambiguous, of suspect Orthodoxy and diffident heresy”).⁴⁶ In the face of such dangerous attitudes toward Romanian Orthodoxy, as was the printing of the Calvinist Catechisms, the reaction of the circles in Wallachia and Moldova would have been, thus, one of determined rejection and stark condemnation of these practices. A clear expression of this reaction would be the answer formulated by Metropolitan Varlaam to the Calvinist *Catechism*, in 1647, or the promotion (in the manner of Udriște Năsturel) of a purist-Slavonic trend, aimed at preserving the tradition.

However, if we continued to accept that interpretation entirely, we would not be able to understand how the cultural collaboration between the two Churches was possible, why Matei Basarab accepted to support the printing of religious books in the Romanian language, which were regarded, at the same time, by Rákóczy or the Calvinist Superintendent, as means of Protestant propaganda. We may notice, however, a particular conjunction of these cultural initiatives: the typography or the metropolitan court of Bălgrad housed all the subsidies, typefaces, craftsmen, translations provided and sponsored by both Matei Basarab and the Rákóczy Princes: those contributions were not mutually exclusive. When in 1640 Matei Basarab nominated Meletie Macedoneanul, the abbot from Govora, for the metropolitan seat, his initiative was warmly embraced and strongly supported before the Prince precisely by the Calvinist Superintendent, Geleji Katona István, the promoter of the trends of Calvinizing the Romanians in Transylvania.⁴⁷

Defending his proposal in the letters he addressed to the Prince, Geleji showed that he considered this candidate to be appropriate because Meletie had printed before (in Govora) books in the Romanian language and was eager to continue this activity in Transylvania. Another reason was that it was preferable to have a scholar at the head of the Church in Transylvania, as this could contribute to the eradication of superstitions and the conservatism it was dominated by.⁴⁸

These reasons explain, in our opinion, the fortunate coincidence of such Wallachian and Rákóczyan initiatives. The printing of books in the Romanian language and the raising of the cultural level of the Transylvanian Church represented the common points of the princely⁴⁹ and voivodal religious-cultural programs

⁴⁶ Iorga, *Sate și preoți* ..., p. 54.

⁴⁷ Four such letters were published by Lupaș, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-206, 210, 212, 213.

⁴⁸ Lupaș, *op.cit.*, p. 205.

⁴⁹ For an objective assessment of the consequences of the Calvinizing policies, seen also in light of their positive aspects, see Lidia Demény, in C. Papacostea-Danielopolu, L. Demény, *Carte și tipar în*

dedicated to the Transylvanian Romanians. Of course, they had different motivations (Calvinization, on the one hand, strengthening Orthodoxy, on the other), but the methods they used often coincided, which meant that the relations between Basarab and the Rákóczy Princes were not tense along cultural lines. That explains why in the context of the political relations between Transylvania and Wallachia, these problems did not engender disputes, generally speaking, even though such conflicts would have been bound to happen if we accepted the thesis that Calvinist propaganda provoked an exclusively negative reaction and that the cultural actions of the Transylvanian Church, supervised by the prince and the superintendent, had been received in Wallachia as an attack on Orthodoxy. In fact, as it is clearly evinced by the letters exchanged between the Rákóczy Princes and Basarab, as well as by the texts of the agreements concluded between them, cultural and religious matters were not grounds for dispute: on the contrary, they quite often encouraged rapprochement. Political motivations sometimes influenced cultural relations (and not vice versa), as was the case with the election of the metropolitan in 1640. Rákóczy rejected the candidacy of Meletie Macedoneanul – recommended by Matei (as a representative of his programme of cultural dissemination) and by Geleji (who, without having too many hopes, considered him to be the most suitable for fulfilling the Calvinist agenda) – appointing Ilie Iorest, Lupu's candidate, even though the latter had a firmer anti-Calvinist attitude.⁵⁰ Rákóczy sacrificed his confessional interests in favour of pursuing his political aims, as what he intended, through the appointment of Iorest, was to form closer relations with Lupu – the objective of his foreign policy at that time.

At the same time, while Matei Basarab's connections with the Romanian Church in Transylvania did not affect his overall relations with the principality, at the level of current practice and of his cultural book distribution programme, his direct reactions against Calvinization occurred in the dogmatic sphere. The scholars in Wallachia, foremost among which was Udriște Năsturel, subscribed to Metropolitan Varlaam's *Reply* to the Calvinist *Catechism* and took an anti-Calvinist stand at the ecumenical synod held in Iași.⁵¹ Defending, at the level of principles, traditional Orthodoxy, the cultural and political circles of Wallachia understood that in practice what was needed was a much more flexible policy in relation to the Protestant offensive, which could thus take advantage of various initiatives, such as the promotion of the vernacular language, a conduct that proved to be extremely useful from the standpoint of defending the ancestral faith.

This explanation that we propose with respect to the cultural relations between Transylvania and Matei Basarab's Wallachia is consistent, as a matter of fact, with the historians' late-20th century interpretations regarding the activity of the Transylvanian higher clergy: these interpretations tend to shed a much more

societatea românească și sud-est europeană, București, 1985, p. 69; cf. the opinion of Francisc Păcurariu, *Românii și maghiarii de-a lungul veacurilor*, București, 1988, p. 116.

⁵⁰ For the arguments in favour of the two candidacies, see Lupaș, *op.cit.*, the letters cited in note 47.

⁵¹ Pușcariu, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-81.

advantageous light upon these hierarchs.⁵² The conduct of those prelates took account of the existing balance of forces. The concessions that were made to the Calvinization process were, as far as possible, merely formal, but what the high clerics aimed in fact to accomplish was a policy of preserving Orthodoxy intact, as they cautiously vacillated between the Calvinists' offers and threats and took advantage of those cultural openings. In his relations with the Romanians in Transylvania, Matei Basarab appears to have understood this policy, aligning his cultural programme with those tendencies, in order to assist the Transylvanians as ably and efficiently as possible: as Patriarch Lukaris asserted, "not with their weapons", but with "secret exhortations," through the "the bond of blood and feeling that throbs secretly but with great force."⁵³

⁵² Căndea, *op.cit.*, passim.

⁵³ See note 13.