



## THE POLITICAL AND CONFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE IN ALEXANDER THE GOOD'S MOLDAVIA: THE HUSSITES

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The age of the Hussites was anything but an age of tolerance. Starting with the bull *Inter Cunctos* issued by Pope Martin V on 22 February 1418<sup>1</sup> and ending with the death of Wenceslas IV in 1419, an age of continuous warfare descended on Central Europe.<sup>2</sup> Five devastating crusades, interminable discussions of doctrine between various Hussite factions, counter-crusades in neighbouring lands, and the emergence of the first enduring Reformation: these are the highlights of history in the Bohemian lands in the first half of the fifteenth century.

Still, the Hussites found ways to spread their teachings and to move to more hospitable lands.<sup>3</sup> The only place in the first half of the fifteenth century where there were no persecutions directed against them was Moldavia, a small principality in Eastern Europe bordered by the Black Sea, the Nistru River, and the Carpathian Mountains. The place of the Hussites in the Moldavian political and confessional landscape in the first half of the fifteenth century is the subject of this article.

I chose this topic because of the uniqueness of the Moldavian case within the political and confessional framework of the time. A country with an Orthodox ruler, a country with an Orthodox Church that had just defined its status, a country where the Catholic presence went back to a time before the Mongol invasion, with established bishoprics and Mendicant houses became a

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Fudge ed., *The Crusade against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418–1437. Sources and documents for the Hussite Crusades* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 45–49 (hereafter: Fudge, *The Crusade*).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed overview see František Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, vol. 2 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2002), 1071–1108, 1188–1233; (hereafter: Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*) see also Thomas A. Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride. The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998) (hereafter: Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride*); František Kavka, “Bemerkungen zur Rolle des Hussitentums in Sigismunds europäischer Politik.” In *Sigismund von Luxemburg. Kaiser und König in Mitteleuropa 1387–1437*, ed. Josef Macek, Ernő Marosi, Ferdinand Seibt (Warendorf: Fahllbusch Verlag, 1994), 89–93 (hereafter: *Sigismund von Luxemburg. Kaiser und König in Mitteleuropa*).

<sup>3</sup> See Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, vol. 3, 1913–1966.



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second home for religious émigrés from Central Europe.<sup>4</sup> One question arose immediately: How did the policy of the *voivode* influence the presence of Hussites in its lands? To answer this question one must know the major lines of the foreign policy and the confessional policy of Alexander the Good.

### The Foreign Policy of Alexander the Good

The rule of Alexander the Good began on 23 April 1400.<sup>5</sup> He was the son of Roman I (1391–1394) and Anastasia, and he was born sometime between 1375 and 1380.<sup>6</sup> His reign proved to be one of the longest and most stable in the history of the Moldavian principality.

Alexander the Good tried to secure his throne and the integrity of Moldavia through several alliances during his 32 years as *voivode*. Moldavia had connections with Constantinople, the Polish kingdom, the Lithuanian dukes, the *voivodes* of Wallachia, the Hungarian kingdom, the Tartars and the Ottomans.<sup>7</sup> The policy of the *voivode* was influenced by the general state of international relations in the region (the fall of the Golden Horde, the Polish-Lithuanian union, the fight for the mouth of the Vistula River, the rivalry for the mouth of the Danube, the Ottoman expansion into the area, and the Hussite wars).<sup>8</sup> His

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<sup>4</sup> Claudia Dobre, “The Mendicants’ Mission in an Orthodox Land: A Case Study of Moldavia in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 9 (2003): 225–248.

<sup>5</sup> Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate* (The founding of Moldavia. Controversial problems) (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru-Ioan Cuza,” 1997), 293–299, (hereafter: Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*); Constantin Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun* (Alexander the Good) (Iași: Editura Junimea, 1984), 58–61 (hereafter: Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*).

<sup>6</sup> Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Mușatinii* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1976), 38 (hereafter: Gorovei, *Mușatinii*).

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed overview of the policy of Alexander the Good see Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 224–271.

<sup>8</sup> For a general account of the situation see Șerban Papacostea, “Relațiile internaționale în răsăritul și sud-estul Europei în sec. XIV–XV” (The international relations in the East and Southeastern Europe in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries) *Revista de Istorie* 34, (1981/5): 899–918 (hereafter Papacostea, “Relațiile internaționale”); on the general lines of the policy of Sigismund of Luxembourg in south-eastern Europe see Sabine Wefers, *Das Politische System Kaiser Sigmunds* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989); Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001) 231–243 (hereafter: Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*); also Pál Engel, “Ungarn und die Türkengefahr zur Zeit Sigmunds (1387–1437)”, in *Das Zeitalter König*



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country continued to seek an alliance with Poland as his predecessors had,<sup>9</sup> and, accordingly, Alexander recognized the Polish king, Wladislaw Jagiello as his suzerain. Also, there is a possibility that he gained his throne with help from the Lithuanian Duke Witold.<sup>10</sup>

One of the most important points in the relations between Moldavia and Poland was the repayment of money that Peter I Mușat had loaned to Wladislaw Jagiello.<sup>11</sup> The Polish king had pledged the region of Pocuția, on the north-western border of Moldavia. Nevertheless, Moldavia was in need of Polish help due to the continuous interest of Sigismund of Luxembourg in the principality, which he treated as an usurped possession until 1412 at least.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in 1402 Alexander the Good promised his allegiance to the king of Poland, Wladislaw.<sup>13</sup> The official oath was delivered at Kameniec, 1 August 1404,<sup>14</sup> and then renewed in 1407.<sup>15</sup> The principality provided military help both to the Poles and the Lithuanians several times. In 1406, Moldavian troops

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*Sigmunds in Ungarn und im Deutschen Reich*, ed. Tilmann Schmidt and Péter Gunst (Debrecen: Debrecen University Press, 2000), 55–71; (hereafter *Das Zeitalter König Sigmunds*); for the Polish interests see Oscar Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou and the Rise of East Central Europe* (Highland Lakes, NJ: Columbia University Press) 261–292 (hereafter: Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou*).

<sup>9</sup> The first time a Moldavian voivode swore allegiance to a Polish king was in 1387 (Peter I Mușat to Wladislaw Jagiello) see Mihai Costăchescu, ed., *Documente moldovenesti înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, vol. 2 (Iași: Viața Românească, 1931–1932) 599 (hereafter: Costăchescu, *Documente*); Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 163 and Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou*, 175.

<sup>10</sup> Veniamin Ciobanu, *Țările Române și Polonia. Secolele XIV – XVI* (The Romanian Principalities and Poland. Fourteenth to sixteenth centuries) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1985), 27 (hereafter: Ciobanu, *Țările Române și Polonia*); Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 66; see also the document which established the Armenian bishopric of Suceava, where Witold is mentioned as “the great Knjaz (*eneaz*) Vitovt,” *Documenta Romaniae Historica, A. Moldova*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1975), 21 (hereafter: DRH A).

<sup>11</sup> See O. Iliescu, “Le prêt accordé en 1388 par Pierre Mușat à Ladislas Jagellon,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 12, No. 1 (1973): 123–138.

<sup>12</sup> F. Constantiniu and Șerban. Papacostea, “Tratatul de la Lublau (15 Martie 1412) și situația internațională a Moldovei la începutul secolului al XV-lea” (The treaty of Lublau, 15 March 1412, and the international situation of Moldavia at the beginning of the fifteenth century), *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 17, No. 5 (1964): 1132–1133 (hereafter: Constantiniu and Papacostea, “Tratatul de la Lublau”).

<sup>13</sup> Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Costăchescu, *Documente*, 625–626. Witold also swore allegiance to Wladislaw in the same year; see Veniamin Ciobanu, *Țările Române și Polonia*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 243.



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helped Witold in his war against the Muscovites.<sup>16</sup> Also, after the Polish kingdom began preparing for war with the Teutonic order in 1409, Alexander the Good was faithful to his duties as an ally and sent troops. Moldavian and also Bohemian contingents both fought in the battle which took place at Grünwald in July 1410.<sup>17</sup> This battle also represented the beginning of the end for the Teutonic Order and its supremacy on the Vistula.<sup>18</sup>

After the peace of Toruń (1411), cracks appeared in the alliance between Witold and Wladislav, the former wanting to transform Lithuania into a separate kingdom. Sigismund of Luxembourg was very interested in weakening the Polish crown<sup>19</sup> and demanded the principality of Moldavia for himself. A defensive treaty against Sigismund was signed between Moldavia and Poland in 1411 in Roman.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Alexander once again fulfilled his duties as vassal to the Polish king, sending military help during the conflict with the Teutonic Order in 1411, 1412, and 1414.<sup>21</sup>

In the treaty of Lublau, directed against the Ottomans and dated 15 March 1412, Sigismund recognized the suzerainty of Poland over Moldavia for the first time (*de jure*).<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, a secret clause was introduced, stipulating that Moldavia would be divided between the two kingdoms if the principality did not help Sigismund in his struggle against the Ottomans.<sup>23</sup> This was part of the oriental policy that the emperor was trying to develop in Southeastern Europe with the help of the Genoese cities on the Black Sea.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> N. Grigoraș, *Țara Românească a Moldovei până la Ștefan cel Mare (1359–1457)* (The Romanian principality of Moldavia up to Stephen the Great, 1359–1457) (Iași: Editura Junimea, 1978), 90 (hereafter: Grigoraș, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*).

<sup>17</sup> Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, vol. 1, 269; Mihail Dan, *Cehi, români și slovaci în veacurile XIII–XVI* (Czechs, Romanians and Slovaks from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century) (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Progresul, 1944); 135–136 (hereafter: Dan, *Cehi, români și slovaci*).

<sup>18</sup> Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou*, 280–282; Papacostea, “Relațiile internaționale,” 905–906.

<sup>19</sup> Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou*, 282–283.

<sup>20</sup> Costăchescu, *Documente*, 637–639.

<sup>21</sup> Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 42.

<sup>22</sup> Constantiniu and Papacostea, “Tratatul de la Lublau,” 1133, Ciobanu, *Țările Române și Polonia*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Jörg K. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund: Herrscher an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit 1368–1437* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1996), 348 (hereafter: Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*).

<sup>24</sup> Zsigmond P. Pach, “Die Verkehrsrouten des Levantehandels nach Siebenbürgen und Ungarn in der Zeit Sigismunds,” in *Sigismund von Luxemburg, Kaiser und König in Mitteleuropa*, 192–199; Constantiniu and Papacostea, “Tratatul de la Lublau,” 1136–1137.



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Sometime between 1415 and 1419, Alexander the Good married Ringala, the sister of the Lithuanian Duke Witold and cousin of the Polish king.<sup>25</sup> The marriage did not last long, however, as can be seen from the letter sent to Pope Martin V by Bishop John of Ryza on 1 July 1420. There he asks the pope to permit their divorce because they were relatives and because Ringala had not managed to convert Alexander from his Orthodox beliefs.<sup>26</sup> The marriage had been contracted in order to strengthen relations between Poland and Moldavia. On 13 December 1421, Alexander, already remarried, gave his former wife the town of Siret and its dependencies together with an annual pension of 600 gold coins for as long as she lived.<sup>27</sup> By 1422, however, Witold was preparing to attack Moldavia because the *voivode* had divorced his sister.<sup>28</sup> The Lithuanian duke also criticized the taking of the citadel of Chilia on the Danube by Alexander, which happened during the same period.<sup>29</sup> Still, the alliance continued even after the divorce of the *voivode*, who in 1422 again came to the aid of the Polish king in his war against the Teutonic Order.<sup>30</sup> Probably trying to re-establish good relations with the Lithuanians, in 1425 Alexander decided to marry his son, Iliș, heir to the throne after his death, to Marinca, the daughter of a Lithuanian knjaz, Andrew Oligmandovici.<sup>31</sup>

The alliance against the Ottomans did not work properly. After the death of Mircea the Old in 1418, Wallachia was plundered several times by the

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<sup>25</sup> C. Rezachevici, "Ringala-Ana. Un episod dinastic în relațiile moldo-polono-lituanieni din vremea lui Alexandru cel Bun" (Ringala-Ana. A dynastic episode in the Moldavian-Polish-Lithuanian relations in the time of Alexander the Good), *Revista de istorie* 14, (1982/8), 918 (hereafter: Rezachevici, "Ringala-Ana").

<sup>26</sup> Item cum dudum devotissima filia Sanctitatis Vestrae Ringola ducissa minoris Wallachiae Christiana corde gerens firmiter, quod Alesandrum ducem Graecorum et Gentilium ritui inhaerentem ab illorum revocare posset errorum deviis, eundem tertio affinitatis gradu sibi coniunctum matrimonialiter, carnali etiam secuta copula, sociaverit, excommunicationis sententiam incurrando, et praefatum ducem ab erroribus huiusmodi ad verae fidei agnitionem reducere, ut sperabat, non possit, supplicat Sanctitati Vestrae praefatus episcopus Muldaviensis...inter ipsos ducem et ducissam auctoritate apostolica divortium celebrandi... *Vatican Archives*, vol. 138 A, f. 193, quoted by Radu Rosetti, "Despre unguri și episcopiiile catolice din Moldova" (On the Hungarians and the Catholic bishoprics in Moldavia), *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* 2, Vol. 27 (1904–1905), 306 (hereafter: Rosetti, "Despre unguri și episcopiiile catolice").

<sup>27</sup> DRH A, 69.

<sup>28</sup> Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Grigoraș, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*, 105.

<sup>30</sup> Rezachevici, "Ringala-Ana," 921.

<sup>31</sup> Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 46.



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Ottomans<sup>32</sup> making Alexander strengthen the border with his southern neighbour.<sup>33</sup> The expedition planned by Sigismund in 1426 never took place. The Moldavian and Polish troops waited at Brăila for some months for the arrival of the emperor's army,<sup>34</sup> which in the meantime had been operating in southern Transylvania.<sup>35</sup> Alexander continued to fulfill his duties as vassal by sending 800 Moldavians to fight with Polish troops in Mazovia in 1427.<sup>36</sup>

Sigismund did not give up his ambitions, so at the meeting in Luck with the Polish king in 1429, he asked that the secret clause of the Lublau treaty be applied,<sup>37</sup> accusing Alexander of divorcing Ringala and not helping in the crusade against the Ottomans in 1426.<sup>38</sup> He was strongly backed by Witold.<sup>39</sup> Wladislav opposed any interference by either Sigismund or Witold, especially because the former wanted to obtain control of Chilia where he was planning to bring Teutonic knights.<sup>40</sup> Another ruler was also interested in Chilia. This was the *voivode* of Wallachia, Dan II, who with Turkish help, attacked the citadel but was repelled.<sup>41</sup>

A great change in Alexander's attitude towards his suzerain took place after the death of Witold in 1430 when Wladislav named as his successor Sigismund, the brother of Witold. A Lithuanian faction revolted, demanding that the brother of the king himself, namely Swidrigiello, should be their new ruler.<sup>42</sup> Alexander made an alliance with Swidrigiello.<sup>43</sup>

This change in the policy of the *voivode* is difficult to understand, especially after thirty years of continuous alliance with Poland. Ciobanu suggests that the *voivode* thought that a powerful Lithuanian state would help counterbalance the expansionism of Poland and Hungary.<sup>44</sup> Grigoraş thinks that this change in

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<sup>32</sup> Elemér Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn 1387–1437* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), 141–142.

<sup>33</sup> Grigoraş, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*, 103.

<sup>34</sup> Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, 236–237.

<sup>36</sup> Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 265.

<sup>37</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 348.

<sup>38</sup> Ciobanu, *Țările Române și Polonia*, 41.

<sup>39</sup> Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, 349; Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> Grigoraş, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*, 112.

<sup>41</sup> Grigoraş, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*, 113.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed genealogical table see Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 136–137.

<sup>43</sup> Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 268.

<sup>44</sup> Ciobanu, *Țările Române și Polonia*, 44–45.



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political policy should be blamed on the diverging plans of the Polish king and his lack of support during the Wallachian-Ottoman attack on Chilia.<sup>45</sup> It is possible to link this change in attitude to the increased importance that the *voivode* attributed to the Polish king. The title of *autocrator* appeared on a stole produced during his reign; the *voivode* is wearing vestments similar to those used by the contemporary Byzantine emperor, suggesting the desire of the prince to rid himself of any external influence in his territory.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, in 1431, messengers from Swidrigiello could be found in Moldavia.<sup>47</sup> Also allied with Swidrigiello were some Bohemians.<sup>48</sup> This time, in comparison with the attitude of Witold, Alexander was: *fidelis noster waywoda Moldaviae*.<sup>49</sup> In order to help his new allies, Lithuania and the Teutonic order, he invaded Galicia, occupying Pocuția and reaching Halich and Lviv.<sup>50</sup> The death of the *voivode* on 1 January 1432 meant an end to the period of stability in Moldavia and the beginning of a period of civil war that only ended in 1457.<sup>51</sup>

### The Voivode's Religious Policy

The major lines of the foreign policy adopted by the *voivode* were connected to his religious policy to a certain extent. Fifteenth-century Moldavia was a country with diverse nationalities and confessions. Alexander's religious policy concerned no less than four Christian confessions present in his principality: Orthodox, Catholic, Monophysite, and Hussite. One can retrace the different ways in which the *voivode* dealt with each.

At the beginning of his reign, Alexander the Good was very much interested in resolving the conflict with the patriarchy in Constantinople that had already lasted for more than a decade. He also wished to have Josef recognized as metropolitan of Moldavia, which took place in 1402. In 1386, the diocese of Moldavia was mentioned as one of the ecclesiastical Byzantine prov-

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<sup>45</sup> Grigoraș, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*, 115.

<sup>46</sup> Nicolae Iorga, "Patrahirul lui Alexandru cel Bun: cel dintâiu chip de domn român" (The Stole of Alexander the Good: the first image of a Romanian ruler), *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* 2, Vol. 35 (1912–1913): 343.

<sup>47</sup> Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 268.

<sup>48</sup> Dan, *Ceți, români și slovaci*, 140.

<sup>49</sup> Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki and Nicolae Densușianu, ed. *Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor* (Documents regarding the history of Romanians), vol. 1, part 1 (Bucharest: Socec, 1887), 594–595 (hereafter: Hurmuzaki, *Documente*).

<sup>50</sup> Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Grigoraș, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*, 125.



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inces. The conflict between the principality and the patriarchy of Constantinople arose soon after, when the metropolitan of Halich in Galicia<sup>52</sup> ordained two bishops, the above-mentioned Josef<sup>53</sup> and Meletie.<sup>54</sup> At this time, the bishopric of Asprocastron was subordinated to the metropolitan of Halich. Future steps, which could be taken only with the approval of Constantinople, included the transformation of the ecclesiastical province of Moldavia from a bishopric into a metropolitan and the transfer of Josef to the new seat.<sup>55</sup> The patriarch of Constantinople, Anthony, reacted to this by sending another candidate named Teodosie.<sup>56</sup> Neither he, nor the other candidates sent by the Patriarchy to Moldavia, were accepted.

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<sup>52</sup> The patriarch of Constantinople was first informed that the patriarch of Ohrid had ordained them; due to the bad relations between the two seats of ecclesiastical power, the situation of the Moldavian bishops only worsened.

<sup>53</sup> Concerning Josef, it should also be mentioned that he was considered the bishop of Asprocastron (Cetatea Albă) before becoming bishop and metropolitan of Moldavia. See Răzvan Theodorescu, *Bizanț, Balcani, Occident la începuturile culturii medievale românești (secolele X–XIV)* (Byzantium, Balkans, Occident at the beginning of Romanian medieval culture, tenth to fourteenth centuries) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1974), 186 (hereafter: Theodorescu, *Bizanț, Balcani, Occident la începuturile culturii medievale românești*). This idea is based on the fact that the name of the city is present in the patriarchal letter of 1401 referring to the validity of Josef's election. The presence of Josef as bishop in Asprocastron must be explained by the fact that after the city became part of the Moldavian principality Josef became bishop of the entire country. Another argument would be the moving of the relics of St. John the New from Asprocastron to Suceava in 1414–1415 as a transfer of importance between the two ecclesiastical centres, the old and the new. On the integration of Asprocastron (Cetatea Albă) in the principality see Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 200–210.

<sup>54</sup> The need to ordain two bishops is also interesting. One of the possible explanations is connected with the fact that the principality was still divided into a Lower and Upper Country. Thus, Josef was meant to be the bishop of the recently acquired and so-called Parathalassia (the parts close to the sea), while Meletie was the bishop of the older parts of the principality; see Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 186.

<sup>55</sup> Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 188.

<sup>56</sup> Up to this point, the situation resembled that in neighbouring Wallachia, where some forty years earlier the *voivode* brought the bishop of Vicina to his residence city, also close to the Black Sea. One can see that the attitude of the patriarch of Constantinople was positive and accepting. When almost the same situation occurred in the Moldavian principality, the patriarchate refused to recognise it. The bishops were members of the ruling family, they were not ordained by the patriarch. Furthermore, there were problems with the metropolitan of Halich, who was supported by the Polish king against another candidate from Constantinople. See also Ștefan Andreescu, "Mitropolia



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In the summer of 1401, a delegation composed of boyars and ieromonks from Moldavia was present in Constantinople to try to settle the dispute. The delegation presented the Patriarch several letters and was also interrogated over the person of Josef, his origin and ordination. Two patriarchal letters were sent to Alexander the Good.<sup>57</sup> Both presented the situation of the Church in Moldavia.<sup>58</sup> The Patriarch decided to send two envoys to check the validity of the ordination of Josef. These two envoys included an ieromonk, Gregory<sup>59</sup>, and a deacon, Manuel Arhon. After their mission was completed the Moldavian plea for Josef to be recognized as hierarch was voted on in Constantinople. This happened in 1402, when the canonical situation of Josef was finally resolved.<sup>60</sup> The last mention of Metropolitan Josef was in a document issued by Alexander the Good on 16 September 1408.<sup>61</sup> He continued his policy of strengthening the Orthodox Church in his country by assuming the status of the first among the patrons of his realm, as the *basileus* and other Orthodox rulers did.<sup>62</sup> A number of documents state the donations the *voivode* made to the metropolitan as well as to various churches and monasteries. Compared to other confessions in the principality, his preference for the Orthodox Church was reflected in the sheer number of donations. I have grouped the donations into six categories of beneficiaries. There are also several types of donations: to the Metropolitan seat: a

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de Halici și episcopia de Asprokastron. Câteva observații” (The Metropolitan seat of Halich and the bishopric of Asprokastron. A few remarks), in *Perspective medievale* (Medieval perspectives) (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 2002), 11–23.

<sup>57</sup> *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae. Scriptores et acta Imperii byzantini saeculorum IV–XV*, vol. 4 (Bucharest, 1982), 268–277; quoted in Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 176.

<sup>58</sup> From the letters, discussed by Mircea M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church), Vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1992) (hereafter: Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*), 279, it seems that Josef was a native of Moldavia, related to the ruling dynasty. He was present in Moldavia before 1392–1393, when Jeremiah, the metropolitan of Tarnovo, was nominated for that seat. The letters also reveal that the metropolitan of Halich ordained Josef.

<sup>59</sup> Identified by some with Gregory Tamblac, future Metropolitan of Kiev; Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 43.

<sup>60</sup> The voting in the synod was very close, with two votes in favour of Josef and two for Jeremiah. The Patriarch cast the deciding vote; Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, 282.

<sup>61</sup> DRH. A 23, 34.

<sup>62</sup> Flavius Solomon, *Politică și confesiune la început de ev mediu moldovenesc* (Politics and confession in the beginning of the Moldavian Middle Age) (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2004), 155 (hereafter: Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*).



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place called the Clearing of the Bishop,<sup>63</sup> three villages in 1403;<sup>64</sup> to the Bishopric of Rădăuți: a village will pass to the bishopric after the death of the *voivode's* mother-in-law (the document was issued in 1413);<sup>65</sup> to monasteries: Moldovița (two mills, Tartar serfs in 1402),<sup>66</sup> Pobrata (two villages in 1404),<sup>67</sup> the Clearing of Siret (fishponds, a field for a vineyard in 1409),<sup>68</sup> Neamț (a fishpond in 1409),<sup>69</sup> Moldovița (the customs on the Moldovița River in 1409),<sup>70</sup> Bistrița (two villages, an annual income in different products in 1411),<sup>71</sup> in Poiana (Tartar serfs in 1411),<sup>72</sup> Humor (a village and land in 1415),<sup>73</sup> Moldovița (two villages in 1421),<sup>74</sup> Neamț (a village and land in 1422),<sup>75</sup> Neamț (two villages in 1427),<sup>76</sup> Moldovița (31 dwellings of Gypsies and 12 of Tartars in 1428),<sup>77</sup> Neamț (a fishpond and an apiary in 1429),<sup>78</sup> Bistrița (the income from a custom station, four apiaries in 1431);<sup>79</sup> to parish churches: St. Paraschiva in Roman (villages with a mill, and a crossing place on the Moldova River in 1408),<sup>80</sup> to painters of a church: gifts in 1414;<sup>81</sup> to priests: a village to the priest Nan in 1424,<sup>82</sup> a village and land to the sons of Protopope Simion in 1427,<sup>83</sup> two villages to the priest Iuga in 1431.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> DRH A, 22–23.

<sup>64</sup> DRH A, 24–25.

<sup>65</sup> DRH A, 49–50.

<sup>66</sup> DRH A, 23.

<sup>67</sup> DRH A, 27–28.

<sup>68</sup> DRH A, 36–37.

<sup>69</sup> DRH A, 38.

<sup>70</sup> DRH A, 38–40.

<sup>71</sup> DRH A, 41–42.

<sup>72</sup> DRH A, 44–45.

<sup>73</sup> DRH A, 57–59.

<sup>74</sup> DRH A, 66.

<sup>75</sup> DRH A, 73–75.

<sup>76</sup> DRH A, 98–99.

<sup>77</sup> DRH A, 109–110.

<sup>78</sup> DRH A 138–139.

<sup>79</sup> DRH A, 150–151.

<sup>80</sup> DRH A, 32–34.

<sup>81</sup> DRH A, 55–57.

<sup>82</sup> DRH A, 81–83.

<sup>83</sup> DRH A, 99–100.

<sup>84</sup> DRH A, 151–152.



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His policy towards the Catholic Church has to be considered in the framework of his alliance with the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom.<sup>85</sup> The role of the missionary in this game of religious allegiances was played by the women.<sup>86</sup> The *voivode* had two Catholic wives. The first was called Margareta and she is supposed to have been the founder of the Franciscan house in Siret.<sup>87</sup> She is thought to have been from the family of a *voivode* of Transylvania.<sup>88</sup> He also founded a Catholic church at Baia, in the first half of his reign, whose dedication mentions that Margareta was buried under the baptismal font.

*Anno 1410. Hoc templum in Honorem B. M. V. dedicatum, ab illmo Principe Alexandro Woyda Aedificatum est, una cum monasterio Moldavicem, cujus pia memoriae conjux Margareta sub fonte baptismatis sepulta est. Requiescat in vitae aeternae resurrectionem. Amen.*<sup>89</sup>

This church was entrusted to the Franciscans, who probably came there from Siret, where the Dominicans were located.<sup>90</sup> Another church was probably built at Bacău.<sup>91</sup> As I have already mentioned, in 1413, King Wladislaw II of Poland asked Pope John XXIII to have a Catholic bishopric founded in *Civitas Moldaviensis* (Baia) under the jurisdiction of the Polish bishop of Lviv. The pope issued a bull on 7 August 1413 asking the bishop of Kameniec to check and see if the situation in the region demanded establishment of a new bishopric, also recommending that John of Ryza be ordained bishop of this new diocese.<sup>92</sup> Thus, a new bishopric was founded in Moldavia, probably in 1414. The church built a few years earlier there was transformed into a cathedral.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>85</sup> A more detailed overview in Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*, 169–177.

<sup>86</sup> For the missionary strategies of the Mendicant orders see Claudia Dobre, “The Mendicants’ Mission in an Orthodox Land: A Case Study of Moldavia (Thirteenth to Fifteenth century),” MA thesis (Budapest: Central European University, 2002); Claudine Delacroix-Besnier, *Les dominicains et la chrétienté greque aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1997).

<sup>87</sup> Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 40.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 40

<sup>89</sup> *Codex Bandinus*, ed. V. A. Urechia, *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* 2, Vol. 16 (1895): 91.

<sup>90</sup> Theodorescu, *Bișanț, Balcani, Occident la începuturile culturii medievale românești*, 186.

<sup>91</sup> Petru Malciuc Herkulan, *Presenza minoritica nei territori della Moldavia nell’ epoca medievale (sec. XII–XV)* (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1999), 95 (hereafter: Malciuc Herkulan, *Presenza minoritica*).

<sup>92</sup> Conrad Eubel, *Römische Quartalschrift* (1903): 189, cited as such in Rosetti, “Despre unghi și episcopiile catolice,” 302, footnote 3.

<sup>93</sup> Malciuc Herkulan, *Presenza minoritica*, 95.



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I have already mentioned that Alexander the Good had been married to Ringala, his second Catholic wife, the sister of the Lithuanian Duke Witold and cousin of the Polish king.<sup>94</sup> It seems that she also tried to convert her husband but failed as he would not renounce his “errors.” With the help of Bishop John of Ryza, Ringala obtained a divorce in 1420–1421.<sup>95</sup> Cihodaru has suggested that this interference of the Catholic clergy affected the attitude of the *voivode* towards them and can be seen as one motive for him allowing Hussites into the country.<sup>96</sup>

Moldavia was represented by Gregory Tamblac, metropolitan of Kiev, at the Council in Constance.<sup>97</sup> He was accompanied by lay people: two boyars (Georgeo Samusinis and Stanislaus Rotampan)<sup>98</sup> and delegates from some of the cities in Moldavia (Suceava, Târgu-Neamț, Roman, Iași, Baia, Orhei, maybe Galați).<sup>99</sup> It is most probable that the delegates were sent there for political reasons;<sup>100</sup> however, they were still able to participate in resolving the Hussite problem.

Another group that was received by the *voivode* comprised the Monophysite Armenians in Moldova. In 1401, Alexander the Good established a new bishopric in Moldavia for the Armenians there with its centre in Suceava with Ohanes as bishop:

*By the mery of God, we, Olecsandro (Alexander) voivode, lord of the Country/Land of Moldavia, with our brother Bogdan. We make known, by this our letter, to all of our good nobles (pans) who will see this letter or who will hear it that this true Ohanes, Armenian bishop, came to us, to our throne in Moldavia, and was presented to us with rightful letters from the Ecumenical Patriarch Anthony of Constantinople, because we had not yet met his Armenian*

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<sup>94</sup> Rezachevici, “Ringala-Ana,” 918–919.

<sup>95</sup> See the quotation in Note 26.

<sup>96</sup> Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 191, 256.

<sup>97</sup> For the sources for the Council see John Hine Mundy and Kennerly M. Woody ed. *The Council of Constance. The Unification of the Church* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

<sup>98</sup> Stanislav Rotompan is mentioned in the documents issued by the chancellery of the *voivode* between 1402–1414. DRH A. 2, 4, 8–11, 13, 17–19, 22–25, 27–35. Another interpretation says that they may have been Giurgiu and Stan of Șomuz: Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun*, 254.

<sup>99</sup> Constantin I Karadja, “Delegații din țara noastră la Conciliul din Constanța (în Baden) în anul 1415 (Delegations from our country to the Council in Constance, in Baden, in the year 1415), *Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* 3, Vol. 7 (1927): 63, 69–70.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.



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*patriarch, in order to be promoted to this bishopric, with the help of our lord, the great Knjaz (cneaz) Vítovt. He also swore to our lordship to receive and to organize all the church affairs. This is why we gave the Armenian churches and their priests to Ohanes the Armenian bishop; everywhere in our country he will have power over the Armenians by his right as a bishop; we gave him residence in Suceava, our city. Those of the Armenians who will honor him, it will be as if you were honoring us, in our country, in Moldavia; that one who does not obey him we shall chastise him by his hand. And to this is my faith, of the above-written Olecsandro voivode, and the faith of the brother of my grace, Bogdan, and the faith of all of the Moldavian boyars, both lesser and great. And it was written in Suceava, under our seal, in the year 6909 [1401] July, 30, by the hand of Bratei (translation by the author).<sup>101</sup>*

Ohanes Nasredinian, (Ohabes or Hovannes), who had the same name as the Armenian bishop who held the seat of Lviv in the same period, was in charge of organizing a bishopric for Armenians in Moldavia.<sup>102</sup> Due to the fact that there were no links at that time between the Moldavian *voivode* and the Armenian Patriarchy in Cilicia, (formerly in Ecimiadzin), and because the Armenian patriarch was on good terms with the ecumenical patriarchate, one can understand why the Ecumenical Patriarch intervened and asked the Moldavian *voivode* to permit a new bishopric to be established.<sup>103</sup> The bishopric of Suceava remained subordinate to the bishopric in Lviv, while having Suceava and the Country of the Wallachians under its jurisdiction.<sup>104</sup>

The Hussites began coming to Moldavia in the 1420s and continued to do so over the following decades. Furthermore, after the death of Wenceslas IV in 1419, the Hussite parties in Bohemia met at Čáslav. The later meeting, held in 1421, recognised the precarious international position of Bohemia.<sup>105</sup> The country was reluctant to accept Sigismund as heir to the throne because of his

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<sup>101</sup> DRH A, 21–22.

<sup>102</sup> Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 177–178.

<sup>103</sup> Zareh Baronian, “575 de ani de la înființarea Episcopiei armene din Moldova” (575 years since the establishment of the Armenian bishopric in Moldavia), *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 94, (1976/7–8): 754.

<sup>104</sup> Șerban Papacostea, “Hrisovul lui Alexandru cel Bun pentru Episcopia Armeană din Suceava (30 Iulie 1401)” (The Document of Alexander the Good for the Armenian Bishopric in Suceava, 30 July 1401), *Revista istorică română*, (1934/4): 50.

<sup>105</sup> Frederick G. Heymann, “The national assembly of Čáslav,” *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*, (1954/8): 32–55.



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attitude towards Jan Hus and the reform in Czech lands.<sup>106</sup> Thus, negotiations started with Wladislaw Jagiello who was offered the Bohemian crown but declined it.<sup>107</sup> His cousin Witold was not as interested in the religious problems of the Bohemian lands. He was far more interested in being crowned, weakening the Samogitians,<sup>108</sup> and gaining a new ally against the Teutonic Order.<sup>109</sup> For this reason he accepted the Czech proposal.<sup>110</sup> His nephew, Sigismund Korybut, was regent in Bohemia between 1422 and 1427. Due to his negotiations with Pope Martin V, the Lithuanian claimant was arrested and expelled from Bohemia, a fact that further strengthened the position of Sigismund of Luxembourg.<sup>111</sup> Bohemia appeared to have lost a good ally.<sup>112</sup> Relations with Poland, however, continued to be ambiguous, with the Polish king issuing anti-Hussite edicts in 1424 and also organizing public debates involving Hussites and Catholics.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, Hussites were a constant presence in fifteenth century Poland (including Silesia, one of the target areas for Hussite military campaigns and proselytizing).<sup>114</sup>

Up to 1430, Alexander the Good had been on good terms with the Polish king, and one of his most steadfast allies. The alliance of these two rulers prob-

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<sup>106</sup> Tilmann Schmidt, "König Sigmund und Johannes Hus," in *Das Zeitalter König Sigmunds* 158–159.

<sup>107</sup> In the following years the Polish king tried to act as mediator between Hussites, the papacy and Sigismund; see Pawel Kras, "Polish-Czech Relations in the Hussite Period – Religious Aspects," in *The Bohemian Reformation and religious practice: Papers from the fourth International Symposium on the Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice under the auspices of The Philosophical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic held at Vila Lana, Prague 26–28 June 2000*, ed. Zdeněk V. David and David R. Holeton (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2002), 183. (hereafter: Kras, "Polish-Czech Relations in the Hussite Period").

<sup>108</sup> Giedrė Mickūnaitė, *Grand Duke Vytautas: Establishing Vytautas the Great*, Ph.D. diss. (Budapest: CEU, 2002), 80.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>110</sup> Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride*, 101.

<sup>111</sup> F. M. Bartoš, *The Hussite Revolution 1424–1437* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 13–24 (hereafter: Bartoš, *The Hussite Revolution 1424–1437*); Fudge *The Crusade*, 213.

<sup>112</sup> Fudge, *The Crusade*, 215.

<sup>113</sup> Pawel Kras, "Polish-Czech Relations in the Hussite Period," 183.

<sup>114</sup> Pawel Kras, "Hussites in fifteenth century Poland," in *Geist, Gesellschaft, Kirche im 13.–16. Jahrhundert: Internationales Kolloquium Prag 5.–10. Oktober 1998*, ed. František Šmahel (Prague: Colloquia Mediaevalia Pragensia I, 1999), 180–181 (hereafter: Kras, "Hussites in fifteenth century Poland").



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ably favoured the movement of Hussites from Bohemia and Moravia to Moldavia via Poland. Surprisingly, the change in the policy of the *voivode* towards Wladislav did not imply a change in his attitude regarding the Hussites. Furthermore, the information available shows that the Hussites became a significant problem for the Catholic clergy in Moldavia. The new ally of Alexander, Duke Swidrigiello, had also allied himself with the Hussites<sup>115</sup> and the voivode continued his policy of tolerance towards them. He dealt with the Hussites differently from the ambiguous approach of the Polish kings.<sup>116</sup>

From the three documents (the letter of John of Ryza, the Catholic bishop of Baia, to Zbigniew Oleśnicki, the Catholic bishop of Cracow, 5 March 1431;<sup>117</sup> the letter of Wladislav Jagiello to Alexander the Good, May 1431;<sup>118</sup> and the letter of Bishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki to the Cardinal Julian Cesarini, January 1432)<sup>119</sup> concerned with the Hussite presence in the principality during the reign of Alexander the Good, an interesting picture can be assembled.

The activity of the Hussites in Moldavia seems to have been complex. John of Ryza complains to the bishop of Cracow that he was involved in a dispute, probably theological, with Jacob, leader of the Hussites, who is also said to have earned a bachelor's degree in medicine: *a magistro Hermanno baccalario in medicinis percepimus*.<sup>120</sup> The discourse of Jacob contains general accusations regarding the pope and the Catholic clergy, which, can also be found in the doctorinal program of the Hussites in Moldavia (the so-called *Reprobationes 38 articulorum*). The Hussite even recounts the well-known story of a woman pope who gave birth during a procession: *ex quo Agnes meretrix papa fuisset et puerum gignisse*.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Dan, *Cebii, români și slovaci*, 140.

<sup>116</sup> Not only Wladislas led an ever changing policy towards the Hussites as Solomon, *Politică și confesiune*, 177, suggests, but this was a constant characteristic of the Poles, due to their strong ties with the papacy.

<sup>117</sup> *Regesta Historico-Diplomatica Ordinis Sanctae Mariae Theutonicorum 1198–1525* (Göttingen) (hereafter: Ryza-Oleśnicki); cited as such by Șerban Papacostea, "Știri noi cu privire la istoria husitismului în Moldova în timpul lui Alexandru cel Bun" (New information relating to the history of Hussitism in Moldavia in the time of Alexander the Great), *Studii și Cercetări Științifice-Istorie* 13, No. 2 (1962): 257–258.

<sup>118</sup> *Monumenta mediæ ævi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, vol. 12, (Cracow: 1891) (hereafter: Wladislas-Alexander), 254–255.

<sup>119</sup> *Monumenta mediæ ævi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, vol. 12 (Cracow, 1891) (hereafter: Oleśnicki-Cesarini), 290–291.

<sup>120</sup> Ryza-Oleśnicki.

<sup>121</sup> Ryza-Oleśnicki.



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Besides the dispute that took place in the presence of the *voivode*, the Hussites proselytized throughout the country: *sectam Hussitarum publice predicare et docere*.<sup>122</sup> Jacob was accompanied by a Franciscan friar: *habens circa se apostatam de ordine minorum*,<sup>123</sup> *quendam sacerdotem religiosum de ordine Minorum*,<sup>124</sup> *iuncto sibi quodam monache appostata de ordine Minorum*.<sup>125</sup> The *voivode* favoured the preacher Jacob and provided him with a residence in the city of Bacău. There, the Hussites offered the Eucharist as bread and wine, baptizing, and hearing confessions: *communicans sub utraque specie tociens quociens sibi et suis placuerit, baptizando, confessiones audiendo*.<sup>126</sup> Besides activities linked to the spiritual arena, the Hussites in Moldavia also seem to have been able to train the military: *et vadit per campestriam habens maximam sequelam populi et turbarum, docens eos et exercitus ducere*.<sup>127</sup> This information is connected to the interest the *voivode* showed in them since just at that time he was just preparing for the war with the Polish kingdom and Hussites were renowned for their military abilities.<sup>128</sup> However, the *voivode* placed the Hussites under his protection. Anyone trying to impede them was required to pay a fine:

*qui eum vel discipulos suos hussitas calcitraret daret penam domino XX ducatos de Turcia in auro propterque ita animosus factus est quod neminem curat,<sup>129</sup> and: confestum edictum fecit in tota sua terra, ne aliquis eum sub certis penis molestare auderet, sed quod libere viveret et predicaret sectam.*<sup>130</sup>

The actions that Alexander took to protect the Hussites were totally opposed to what the Polish king had suggested. He had asked the *voivode* to arrest the heretics and send them to Poland so that they could be brought to judgement: *prefatum Jacobum cum suis complicitibus comprehensum nobis et regni nostri prelati et maioribus dignemini tradere ut qualis sit inquisitione canonica examinetur et examinatus dignam subeat disciplinam*,<sup>131</sup> a demand which the *voivode* did not comply with since the relations between the two countries were already compromised.

The death of the *voivode* meant the beginning of a quarter of a century of internal turmoil. This period is characterized by a paucity of information

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<sup>122</sup> Oleśnicki-Cesarini.

<sup>123</sup> Ryza-Oleśnicki.

<sup>124</sup> Oleśnicki-Cesarini.

<sup>125</sup> Wladislav-Alexander.

<sup>126</sup> Ryza-Oleśnicki.

<sup>127</sup> Oleśnicki-Cesarini.

<sup>128</sup> Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride*, 102–107.

<sup>129</sup> Ryza-Oleśnicki.

<sup>130</sup> Oleśnicki-Cesarini.

<sup>131</sup> Wladislav-Alexander.



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regarding the religious policy of the *voivodes* towards confessional groups other than the Orthodox Church which continued to receive donations. The relations with Poland and Hungary, which intervened in the struggle between the various pretenders to the throne, were more important. No internal sources exist making mention of the Hussites.<sup>132</sup>

### Conclusions

The foreign policy of Alexander the Good was aimed at strengthening Moldavia and securing his throne. Though his religious policy was linked to his foreign policy, his tolerance was not dependent on the latter alone. Due to the interest shown by Sigismund in the Lower Danube, the *voivode* paid homage to the Polish king and remained his staunch ally for almost thirty years. Still, this did not impede him from becoming involved in alliances with other countries or to intervene in Wallachia, where after the death of Mircea the Old, the situation became unstable. The shift in alliances with Lithuania is a good example.

As a result of his opposition to Sigismund, who fought five crusades against the Bohemians, and of the ambiguous attitude of the king of Poland towards the Hussites, they headed towards Moldavia. The confessional landscape of Moldavia was both intriguing and unique in fifteenth-century Europe. Orthodox, Catholics, Armenians, and Hussites were all given privileges by the same person. Alexander's inclination towards Orthodoxy is obvious at least from the letter of John of Ryza and from the countless donations he made. Still, this did not stop him from accepting and giving rights to all of the confessional groups living in the principality. Alexander and his successors up to Stephen the Great did not consider the Hussites a danger to Moldavia and made use of some of their skills. There were not only political reasons for the acceptance of the Hussites. Both Alexander and his immediate successors changed allies but they did not change their attitude towards the confessional groups in their principality. No repressive actions were taken against them although Alexander was certainly not indifferent towards his religion, as stated in recent research.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> An overview of this period may be found in Grigoraș, *Țara Românească a Moldovei*, 125–199; Gorovei, *Mușatinii*, 49–57.

<sup>133</sup> Malciuc Herkulan, *Prezența minorităților*, 126.