

*Space distribution in late medieval and pre-modern towns
in the Romanian Principalities*

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Researchers interested in urban space evolution in the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia are faced with several difficulties. There are scarcely any valuable, in-depth works on this field, and good monographs are hard to find. Urban history, in general, was not a topic of interest before the Second World War. Not even after 1947, research into the past history of towns was not a priority, since origin and urban evolution were rapidly subsumed to the paradigm of materialist-scientific views of the time. A change becomes noticeable after 1989, but it is by no means drastic.

Conflicting information in sources on towns in this region have determined scholars to rally under two major lines of interpretation when considering the emergence and the organization of urban centers (with influence on urban space distribution): 1. towns created as predominantly commercial centers with the contribution of elements of foreign origin; 2. towns arising as the medieval Romanian society reached a new stage in its development, the “division of labour”, namely the separation of crafts and agriculture. Advocates of the former point of view were particularly vocal before the Second World War, when the vast majority of scholars claimed that towns in the Romanian medieval Principalities were simply the result of economic and political influences from Central Europe. It was assumed that the vector for these influences were foreign colonists, who settled south and east of the Carpathian Mountains. The emergence of towns would have occurred before or at the same time as the very rise of the Romanian Principalities. After the Second World War, Marxist interpretations were introduced, under the new political circumstances of the Soviet occupation and the dawn of a political regime approved and controlled by the Soviet Union. The idea that medieval towns had a foreign origin was unacceptable to the ever-growing nationalist bias of the Romanian Communists. Therefore, some historians embraced the new thesis of a specifically Romanian social evolution. They shifted the emphasis to the social division of labor, stressing the importance of crafts in towns, the class struggle, with the urban phenomenon being seen as a native one, subjected to only a few influences from abroad. As a consequence, the research of urban space had a similar fate. It was believed that towns south

and east of the Carpathians developed as a whole, but gradually and randomly, with no specific layout in mind.¹

Historical sources are partly at fault for this situation. The dawn of the Principalities is scarcely documented. For the 14th-15th centuries, when the Romanian Principalities were urbanized, we have no more than several tens of documents to shed some light on this vast process. The 17th-18th centuries are more generous in this respect, but urban archives were at that time badly damaged, not only by different calamities (earthquakes, floods, fires), but also by the endless wars fought in the area by the Ottoman Empire, Austria or Russia. Even so, town outlines survived, and streets generally kept their original routes in the Middle Ages, since inhabitants preferred to rebuild on the old plot each time. A very useful source when researching the topography of towns are the maps of the Principalities and the town plans drafted by the Austrians or the Russians, during their temporary occupation of these areas. For towns, the 1769-1770 plans of Iași and Bucharest are the first known of their kind, and they were followed by others, increasingly detailed. The other towns did not enjoy the same thorough treatment, and this situation only improves from the next century on (the 1818 plan for Roman, 1853 for Suceava, 1855 for Siret etc.). Archaeological excavations could provide valuable information, as they did for many Western towns, but Wallachia and Moldavia had only few thorough archaeological initiatives. Excavations were performed mostly in large towns, where the old residences of the ruler and the churches within them were studied: Bucharest, Târgoviște, Câmpulung, Floci (for Wallachia), Iași, Suceava, Baia, Siret, Bacău, Troțuș and Adjud (for Moldova). Historical centres in towns were the secondary target of archaeologists, and were researched only during restoration work or, as it was more often the case, they were brought along by the massive demolitions of the Communist regime in the 1980s.²

The first solid research into the topography of Wallachian and Moldavian towns in the Middle Ages began in the 70s-80s and involved architects, rather than historians. The true breakthroughs in the field are owed to Eugenia Greceanu, who dealt with three towns that were to be affected by the “modernization” work undertaken by Communist authorities: Pitești in Wallachia, Roman and Botoșani in Moldavia.³ Teodor Octavian Gheorghiu joined

¹ See our own considerations on this subject in the Introduction to *At Europe's Borders: Medieval Towns in the Romanian Principalities*, Leiden, Boston, 2010, pp. 15-22.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-14.

³ E. Greceanu, “La structure urbaine médiévale de la ville de Roman”, in *RRH*, XV (1976), no. 1, pp. 39–56; *Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani*, Bucharest, 1981 and *Ansamblul urban medieval Pitești*, Bucharest 1982.

her in her efforts, and briefly stopped on towns such as Buzău, Câmpulung or Suceava.⁴ Ultimately, Emil Ioan Emandi was the one who analyzed in detail the outlines and the development of Suceava.⁵ Their research has shown that, to a certain extent, town outlines in Moldavia and Wallachia follow principles encountered in settlements created by German colonists throughout Europe. Their theories were at that point disregarded. More recent interpretations, including our own, go against the widespread opinion that urban space in this area was distributed randomly.

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The state of sources and historiography as a whole today makes any research into the urban space start almost from nothing. In this paper, I will try to get rid of the previous perspectives, which were often burdened by the ideological weight of their time, in order to bring insights as true as possible to the specifics of the 14th-19th centuries. First of all, the research I have performed has indicated three different stages in the historical development of towns, with features that have influenced the layout of urban space. The first stage is the emergence and evolution of towns in the Moldavian and Wallachian principalities of the 13th-15th centuries, where Central-European influences brought by German and Hungarian settlers were obvious. In this case, we are dealing with settlements that had emerged as part of an organized process of colonization, promoted and overseen by the local princes. The natural outcome of this process was a better regulated urban area: settlements with streets that followed a straight line, central marketplaces, and well laid-out neighbourhoods for the communities that made up the town's population.

The urban area had the same landmarks as towns in the rest of Europe: the plot, as its basic unit; the street, as a means to communicate and to facilitate exchanges; the marketplace, as the main location for trade, but also for various events; the church, as a spiritual hub, with each community having its own church; most towns also included a seat for the prince (a palace, a small fortress, a tower), the true symbol of his rule over the town; we should also add here the town hall, difficult to prove with the existing sources. Only in Moldavia, several late 17th century documents mention "the seat of the mayor (*șoltuz*)", where people gather for trials or to decide matters that are important for the community (in Șcheia, Trotuș, Baia,

⁴ T.O. Gheorghiu, R. Radoslav, "Spațiul central al orașului medieval românesc extracarpatic din secolele XIV–XVI, spațiu al coeziunii sociale. Elemente pentru un studiu comparatist european", in *HU*, I (1993), no. 2, pp. 153–174; T. O. Gheorghiu, "Suceava medievală – geneză și evoluție până în prima parte a secolului al XVI-lea. Elemente morfo-structurale", in *HU*, XII (2004), no. 1-2.

⁵ E. I. Emandi, *Habitatul urban și cultura spațiului. Studiu de geografie istorică. Suceava în secolele XIV-XX*, Iași, 1996,

Roman, Cotnari or Vaslui, to name only a few).⁶ Even though its main meaning was that of a “seat where trials are held”, it could also stand for the mayor’s house or a separate building, which served as town hall.⁷ The urban area in these towns was laid out in such a way as would create a more manageable and efficient unit, and which would facilitate the main pursuit of the townspeople: trading. Several case studies are particularly revealing in this respect.

Several towns stand out due to their specific planning, that groups together parallel streets running alongside the central marketplace. The parallel outline of streets and the existence of a regular marketplace in the centre contradict the widespread assumption of Romanian historians, who believe that most towns grew spontaneously by themselves. Towns without a deliberate outline grew over time, without any specific order, along the roads that entered the settlement and converged into one central point, where both the marketplace and the seat of local authority existed (the ruler’s residence). Instead, parallel streets developed as part of a planned evolution, since this type of development only partly relied on the course of older roads. These streets followed a straight line, indicating that they did not evolve by themselves, but following a precise indication of the plots that bordered them.

In Suceava, archaeological excavations indicate a substantial growth of the inhabited space for the end of the 14th century, which is apparently owed to the arrival of a group of foreigners. On a timeline, their arrival coincides with this town becoming a capital for the country under Petru I, who also built two strongholds near the town. Modern outlines confirm the existence of the marketplace, later broken down into two sub-markets. The initial outline and surface for initial marketplace were of around 20 hectares, while the town had around 100 hectares in the Middle Ages, data that brings Suceava closer to similar towns in the Polish and German areas.⁸ The marketplace also relied on the Saxons settling in at the end of the 14th century, on the north-east side, and of the Armenians, on the north-west. The relatively regulated features of the area, as well as the two parallel streets that developed at its end indicate a certain parcellation of the land. Later outlines confirm a high density in plots, which were rectangular in shape. As with other towns, the narrow side of the plot, facing the

⁶ *Documente Hurmuzaki* (from now on *DH*), vol. XV, partea 1, p. 293, no. 535; *Documente privitoare la istoria României* (from now on *DIR*), veacul XVI, series A, vol. III, p. 378, no. 469; IV, p. 238, no. 292; XVII, A, V, p. 64, no. 80; G. Ghibănescu, *Surete și izvoade*, vol. 16, Iași, 1926, p. 71, no. 103; vol. 21, Iași, 1929, p. 109, no. 82; vol. 24, Iași, 1926, p. 133, no. 119.

⁷ Ș. S. Gorovei, „La începuturile orașului Bacău”, in *Carpica*, 18-19 (1986-1987), p. 267.

⁸ Emandi, *Habitatul urban*, pp. 299-300.

street, had the houses aligned contiguously.⁹ This judicious land use is backed up by archaeological research, which located the cellars beneath the medieval houses.¹⁰

The town of Roman makes for another interesting case study. The settlement was most likely founded by prince Roman I¹¹, who brought settlers and introduced a new legal status. The town's outline displays no less than four parallel streets stemming from the main marketplace which separated the settlement and the stronghold.¹²

A group of colonists also came to Iași, which would later become the most important town and last capital of Moldavia. They settled not far from the residence of the prince, on one side of the Main Street (*Ulița Mare*), where they built their own church.¹³ On one side of the adjacent Old Street, the Armenian group took residence, with their own church.¹⁴ The Germans and the Armenians were placed in the central area, on the lands that were free or had been released around 1400.¹⁵ The marketplace developed east of the palace (the so-called Lower Market, *Târgul de Jos*).¹⁶ It was here that the Russian Street is certified,¹⁷ so the Ruthenians, Germans, and Armenians settled as near the palace as possible, suggesting a conscious outline. The fact that three of the streets here are parallel also indicates a rigorous plan being put into practice ever since the colonists settled in. This parallel location was certainly accompanied by an orderly distribution of plots, that we can only assume; future redistributions and the purchases made by the grand boyars and the monasteries changed the status of these plots between the 17th and the 18th centuries.

The planning in some towns took this model one step further, and included the main church for the community in the central marketplace. Baia, the first capital of Moldavia, is one of the few medieval Moldavian towns where ample archaeological research was undertaken, which was not only aimed at churches of times past, but also ancient dwellings

⁹ Emandi, *Habitatul urban*, pp. 263-268; *Atlas istoric al orașelor din România*, series A, *Moldova*, fasc. 1, *Suceava. Suceava. Städtegeschichteatlas Rumäniens*, Reihe A, *Moldau*, 1. *Suceava*, ed. M. D. Matei, Bucharest, 2005, maps V-VII.

¹⁰ G. Diaconu, "Observații cu privire la urmele vechiului târg al Sucevei în vremea marilor asedii otomane și polone din veacul al XV-lea", in *SMIM*, I (1956), pp. 267-274; M. D. Matei, E. I. Emandi, *Cetatea de scaun și curtea domnească din Suceava*, Bucharest, 1988, pp. 158-162.

¹¹ Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, ed. P. P. Panaitescu, Bucharest, 1958, p. 66; Miron Costin, *Poema polonă*, in *Opere*, ed. P. P. Panaitescu, Bucharest, 1958, p. 235.

¹² *Călători străini despre țările române*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1970, p. 139.

¹³ *DIR*, XVII, IV, p. 434, doc. 563; *Călători străini*, vol. II, p. 524; vol. III, p. 639; vol. V, p. 178; Marco Bandini, *Codex. Vizitarea generală a tuturor bisericilor catolice de rit roman din Provincia Moldova, 1646-1648*, ed. T. Diaconescu, Iași, 2006, p. 256.

¹⁴ *DIR*, XVII, II, p. 339, doc. 452; *Călători străini*, vol. II, pp. 523-524; vol. V, pp. 178-179; D. Bădărău, I. Caproșu, *Iași vechilor zidiri*, Iași, 2007, pp. 45-48.

¹⁵ S. Cheptea, "Din nou despre începuturile Iașilor", in *HU*, V (1997), no. 2, pp. 160-162.

¹⁶ *DIR*, XVII, A, IV, p. 419, doc. 541; Bădărău, Caproșu, *Iași*, pp. 37-39.

¹⁷ *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași* (from now on *Documente Iași*), ed. I. Caproșu and P. Zahariuc, vol. I, Iași, 1999, p. 244, doc. 179.

and their inventory. An analysis of the discovered dwellings led researchers to claim that we might argue for a systematic topographic outline of inhabited space. The parcellation of land is rigorous, but archaeologists had a hard time identifying a date when this parcellation occurred.¹⁸ A group of German settlers took up residence here after an older pre-urban settlement was set on fire, after this territory came into the hands of the troops dispatched by the Hungarian king in mid 14th century.¹⁹ The role that these settlers played is also highlighted by the fact that, when princes address the local population, they refer to them using the phrase "the Saxons in Baia".²⁰ These Catholic settlers chose to erect their church in the central marketplace, an uncommon feature for towns of a predominantly Eastern Orthodox faith (as was the case of the Romanian principalities). Along with the marketplace, in Baia there were traces of stone-paved roads and houses with tiled stoves, specific at that time to princely residences or towns in Central Europe.²¹

In Siret, the second capital of Moldavia, excavations indicate a pre-urban settlement in mid 14th century, where craftsmen's workshops were already active (ovens for the purpose of firing iron ore were discovered).²² One indication regarding the urbanization of the settlement is the fact that mendicant monks settled here, both Franciscans and Dominicans. The Franciscans were the first, and their church (Holy Virgin) became the see of a Catholic bishopric, in 1371.²³ The Dominicans arrived somewhat later, before 1378²⁴, and gained the support of Petru I's mother, Margaret, who helped them build the church of St John the Baptist²⁵. This saint became the patron saint of the town, and his image was made a part of the seal emblem, suggesting that it was this church that became the main spiritual, and spatial landmark in the community. Evidence to this was the fact that this church was placed in the middle of the marketplace.

Similar situations also feature in Wallachia, but on a lower scale. In the latter group, the main church belonged to the prince and was located in his court. Câmpulung bears some similarities to towns in Moldavia. There are clear signs that urbanization was promoted by

¹⁸ E. Neamțu, V. Neamțu, S. Cheptea, *Orașul medieval Baia în secolele XIV-XVII*, vol. 2, Iași, 1984, pp. 40-42, 46-47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, Iași, 1980, p. 22; vol. 2, p. 16.

²⁰ *Documenta Romaniae Historica* (from now on *DRH*), series A, vol. II, p. 34, no. 26; p. 57, no. 41.

²¹ E. Neamțu, V. Neamțu, S. Cheptea, *Orașul medieval Baia*, vol. 1, pp. 36-37; 128-139; vol. 2, pp. 45-46.

²² M. D. Matei, "Câteva considerații pe marginea începuturilor orașului Siret, în lumina celor mai recente descoperiri arheologice", in *RMMMIA*, XVII (1986), no. 2, pp. 21-23; V. Spinei, E. Gherman, "Șantierul arheologic Siret (1993)", in *AM*, 18 (1995), p. 232.

²³ *DH*, vol. I, part 2, p. 160, no. 124; p. 168, no. 131.

²⁴ I.C. Filitti, *Din arhivele Vaticanului*, I, Bucharest, 1913, p. 9, no. IV.

²⁵ *Atlas istoric al orașelor din România*, series A, Moldova, fasc. 2, *Siret*, ed. D.D. Iacob, Bucharest, 2010, map IV; S. Reli, *Orașul Siret în vremuri de demult*, Cernăuți, 1927, p. 6, 105-108.

the German colonists arriving here and settling near the marketplace, with a towering Catholic church on its side.²⁶ The prince's seat remained south of the marketplace, while the Romanian population lived on the outskirts (the location of Orthodox churches is also evidence to this). As in Siret's case, there are signs of urbanization ever since the 14th century, as indicated by the presence of a mendicant (Dominican) monastery.²⁷

Târgoviște completed the road to town status in the 14th century. Three components contributed in its urbanization: one small stronghold, a suburb inhabited by the locals, and another suburb where a group of Saxon colonists settled.²⁸ Close to this stronghold, the medieval town grew out of two nuclei: an older local settlement, south-west of the stronghold, whose inhabitants grouped around the future St Nicholas-Geartoglu and Stelea Veche churches; a more recent colonist settlement, north-west, with the Catholic church of St Mary as its main church. Settlers occupied a territory previously inhabited by the locals, which we can only surmise the latter had to give over and remain south-west of the fortification.²⁹ The privileged town grew out of the second settlement, since it was here that the outside group settled, receiving a more distinct status. Apart from this division into neighbourhoods, the town layout does not contain any elements similar to the above-mentioned Moldavian towns or these elements did not last into modern times. Only in the Catholic church area, fragments of a frequent, rigorous parcellation survived until modern times; they may have been related to the older marketplace present here.³⁰ No systematic archaeological research was undertaken in this part of town during Communism, and the published works are not entirely revealing.

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The second stage includes towns erected in the Late Middle Ages, i.e. the latter half of the 16th century and the end of the 18th century. Much fewer than their predecessors, they are fundamentally different in that there is no rigorous distribution of space. Most of these

²⁶ P. Binder, "Din nou despre *comes Laurentius de Longo Campo*", in *SCIA*, series *Artă plastică*, XXII (1975), no. 1, p. 185; E. Lăzărescu, "Despre piatra de mormânt a comitelui Laurențiu și câteva probleme arheologice și istorice în legătură cu ea", in *SCIA*, IV (1957), no. 1-2, pp. 125-126; *Atlas istoric al orașelor din România*, series B, Țara Românească, fasc. 2, *Câmpulung*, ed. D. D. Iacob, Bucharest, 2008, map VII.

²⁷ V. Drăghiceanu, "Despre mănăstirea Câmpulung", in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 82 (1964), no. 3-4, pp. 322-329; P. Chihaia, "Monumente gotice în Câmpulung-Muscel", in Chihaia, *Artă medievală*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 282-283; A. Ciocîltan, "*Prope Turcos et inter Scismaticos*. Conventurile ordinelor mendicante din Țara Românească (secolele XIV-XVI)", in *HU*, XVII (2009), pp. 8-11.

²⁸ N. Constantinescu, C. Moisescu, *Curtea domnească din Târgoviște*, Bucharest, 1969, pp. 17-19.

²⁹ P. Diaconescu, "Cercetări arheologice la curtea domnească din Târgoviște", in *Valachica. Studii și cercetări de istorie*, XV (1997), p. 69, note 7; *Atlas istoric al orașelor din România*, series B, Țara Românească, fasc. 1, *Târgoviște*, ed. G. I. Cantacuzino, Bucharest, 2006, pp. II, VII, map V.

³⁰ *Atlas istoric. Târgoviște*, map V; C. Moisescu, "Originea și structura urbană a orașului Târgoviște", in *RMMMIA*, XLII (1973), p. 14.

new towns emerged particularly in Wallachia, in the lowlands, in Bucharest, Craiova or Ploiești; only a few in Moldavia, Galați or Focșani. Foreigners did not avoid these towns either, but they did not settle in an organized fashion, like in the older towns. These are no longer colonists arriving from Central Europe, but from the Levant area, especially Greeks or Vlachs, accustomed to other urban models and to other ways of organizing urban space. Whereas Latin or German terms (*forum, Markt*), and Old Slavonic (*târg*, which is still in use), had been employed in reference to the old marketplaces, the new ones were also referred to using an Eastern (Persian) term, *bazar* (most common in Wallachia).³¹ The outskirts borrowed a Turkish term for themselves: *mahala*.³² As Eastern, and especially Ottoman, influence grew stronger, new kinds of buildings (some with a significant land footprint) emerged in the towns, meant to accommodate travellers of all walks of life, and to secure customs duty and facilitate trade: inns (*han*) and caravanserais (*carvasara*). The first to appear were in Wallachia, spreading ever further in the 17th-18th centuries, while their Moldavian counterparts were built in the same period, as we will see below.

In new towns, where urban topography is concerned, the main landmarks remain the same: the marketplace, on the one hand (in all towns), and the prince's seat, on the other (in big towns like Bucharest). The difference lies in the fact that there is no longer a regular pattern, and the central marketplace spreads over a wide area, which covers several streets. The outline of these towns developed over time, being an „organic” one, typical to settlements which grow gradually, without any specific order. This outline took into account the local landscape and the main roads, which converge in a central point. Therefore, a regular organization of urban space in all towns cannot be accounted for.

There is yet another feature that makes this period stand out: a much better usage of the underground space. Ever since the emergence of Medieval towns, houses had cellars, which were necessary for the long-term storage of food, but these cellars were repurposed in the 16th century, and began to play an increasingly commercial part. Documents of the time indicate a significant increase in the individual sale of cellars, which were used as a place to sell wine. It was also in this time that many taverns were located underground. But even these cellars needed their own storage rooms, so these underground spaces become layered, even into three, like the ones discovered in Suceava, Roman, Buzău or the one discovered recently

³¹ *DRH*, B, V, p. 291, doc. 266; *DIR*, XVII, B, I, p. 132, no. 137.

³² Which replaced an Greek origin term, *enorie*, that connected the neighbourhood with its church (*DIR*, XVI, B, V, p. 476, no. 493; XVII, B, II, p. 220, no. 204).

in Iași.³³ Whereas the town above ground was largely made of wood (except for the prince's palace, the churches and monasteries, and some of the houses of the grand boyars; even the streets were paved with wood planks), the town below the surface was made of stone.

Above ground urban space no longer received the same attention. The outskirts do not display the same features as the centre, not even in towns with settlers, one reason for this being the fact that they settled specifically in the centre, while the locals or other groups (the Gypsies) were relegated to the edges of town. In the outskirts, this development was random, and was conditioned predominantly by the limits of the land, rather than by the specifics of the property or the identity of its owner etc. It was only in the 16th century that sources indicate a certain polarization in towns. For instance, it was in this period that the first few Orthodox monasteries emerge in towns, and the number of boyars increases.

The emerging Orthodox monasteries were an important factor that modified urban space. Until then, they had been erected away from towns, but, once they come nearer and then obtain a solid foothold within these towns, monasteries prove to be elements that alter the urban makeup. First of all, they required more space, not only for the church, but also for the cells, gardens and so on. Secondly, the monks needed sources of income. In the countryside, they used to work the land or collect the taxes [tithes] from the peasants; however, in towns, the same land was used for commercial purposes, by establishing trading booths, renting, etc. In towns, the monasteries were interested in gaining a more consistent income, which would allow them or the monasteries at Mount Athos or Jerusalem (who administers a lot of them) to function. The towns of Iași and Bucharest, the capitals of the principalities, are illustrative in this respect, due to the large number of monasteries erected here in the 16th -18th centuries.

There are certain monasteries that, thanks to the generosity of their founders or other benefactors, end up owning vast tracts of land on the town domain, as well as plots, houses, trading booths, watermills, and vineyards, thus becoming true economic forces which rivalled any other guild of the time. There is one such case in Bucharest: the Radu Vodă monastery, dependent on Iviron (on Mount Athos).³⁴ The document attesting to the possessions of the monastery issued by prince Matei Basarab in 1649 is an inventory of what the monks owned in the town: at least 18 shops, including the land and the buildings associated with them (stone cellars, houses or stables are mentioned in some cases), the land around the monastery,

³³ Diaconu, "Observații", p. 267-274; V. Ursachi, *Muzeul de Istorie din Roman. 50 de ani*, Roman, 2007, pp. 3-4, 238.

³⁴ *DIR*, XVII, B, II, 150, no. 147; G. Nandriș, *Documente românești în limba slavă din mănăstirile Muntelui Athos, 1372-1658*, Bucharest, 1937, p. 190.

two river fords and nine watermills around Bucharest, plus villages and vineyards near the capital, along with numerous tracts of land in the country.³⁵ This process of amassing wealth continued well into the 18th century. In Iași, the St. John Chrysostomos monastery was gifted in 1761 by prince Ioan Teodor Calimah with a huge tract of land located on the Southern and Eastern border of the town, which had practically become enclosed in monastery-owned land.³⁶ All this property put together allowed the monasteries to own a significant part of the town's area, and they were often tax-exempt.³⁷

The lands gifted by various benefactors were completed by the monasteries with land and buildings purchased using their own income. The Holy Trinity monastery bought 13 shops in Bucharest with no less than 100,000 asprons; some were even located on Main Street (*Ulița Mare*).³⁸ Shortly after being founded, the St. Sava monastery in Iași was granted the right to have a caravanserai (*carvasara*) to lodge merchants (it was still functioning in 1603), which was tax-exempt and did not fall under the authority of the town or the prince's officials.³⁹ The Golia monastery also had its own caravanserai, a good testimony to the ever-active involvement of the monasteries in income-producing activities.⁴⁰ South of the Carpathians, monastery inns served the same purpose as Moldavian caravanserais. In Wallachia, the monasteries owned two types of inns (*han*), some located in the buildings that surrounded the churches (which were repurposed as they were rented by merchants),⁴¹ and others further from these, but also owned by monks.⁴² The monastery inns in Bucharest rise to their true prominence in the 18th century, but there are hints that some were active even in the previous century (the one belonging to St. George the New, Șerban Vodă – the Cotroceni monastery).⁴³

By obtaining or purchasing lands, houses or shops, the town monasteries were competing with the town dwellers, but not only economically. The accumulation of shops and

³⁵ *DRH*, B, XXXIV, pp. 177-196, no. 209.

³⁶ *Documente Iași*, VI, p. 295, no. 342.

³⁷ Poland is one similar example: in the same period, more and more areas (*jurydyki*) appeared on the outskirts or even within town, areas which were legally independent from urban authority and depended on nobles or monasteries. Their products competed with those of the townspeople or were not regulated by guilds (J. Miller, *Urban Societies in East-Central Europe, 1500–1700*, Aldershot, 2008, pp. 108-109, 208-209).

³⁸ *DIR*, XVI, B, V, 319, no. 334.

³⁹ *Documente Iași*, vol. I, 83, no. 58; 101, no. 69; also M. Chelcu, C. Chelcu, "Mănăstirea Golia: reper al organizării spațiului urban", in *AIAD*, XLVIII (2011), p. 227.

⁴⁰ *Documente Iași*, vol. I, 421, no. 351; vol. II, 246, no. 274; 345, no. 371; M. Chelcu, C. Chelcu, "Mănăstirea Golia", pp. 232-233.

⁴¹ Anton Maria del Chiaro Fiorentino, *Revoluțiile Valahiei*, ed. S. Cris-Cristian, Iași, 1929, p. 9.

⁴² N. Stoicescu, *Repertoriul bibliografic al monumentelor feudale din București*, Bucharest, 1961, p. 94; on inns in Bucharest, see G. Potra, *Istoricul hanurilor bucureștene*, Bucharest, 1985, pp. 65-111.

⁴³ G. Potra, *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului București (1594-1821)*, Bucharest, 1961, p. 198, no. 113; Stoicescu, *Repertoriu București*, p. 108.

caravanserais impacted urban topography. New marketplaces were added to the older ones, "dispersing" trade on a wider area. In Iași, the original marketplaces located in front of and alongside the palace⁴⁴ were extended by the commercial areas near the St. Sava and St. Parascheva monasteries (*Sfânta Vineri*) and Barnovschi monastery, with the entire area being one large marketplace in the 17th-18th centuries (part of the Lower Market or *Târgul Vechi*), with subdivisions such as *Cizmăria*, *Blănari*, *Schimbători*, and also *Târgul lui Barnovschi*,⁴⁵ based on the pursuits of the merchants or craftsmen located on certain streets in this vast space, i.e. bootmakers (*cizmari*), furriers (*blănari*), and money exchangers (*schimbători de bani*). But the impact that monasteries had on urban topography was also felt due to the footprint of some of these places of worship. Another good example comes from Iași as well: the Three Hierarchs monastery, where prince Vasile Lupu's ambition drove him to create no less than a religious "complex", which entailed a redistribution of the area between the palace and the older Catholic church. Along with its church, monastic cells and surrounding walls, this complex boasted an impressive belfry where a clock was mounted, commercial areas (inn and booths), complete with a school and a bath (the *feredeu*).⁴⁶ The wall separated the territory of monks and that of the townspeople, and delimited an exclusive space, mainly dedicated to spiritual pursuits, but also economic ones, creating a true "town within a town".

Once monasteries began to appear in towns, they begin to have a say also in community matters. Whereas parish priests were, by the nature of their office, more tied to it, priests and monks in the monasteries were well-connected, influential, benefitted from tax exemptions, and had to account for their actions to the founders or their patrons, rather than to the locals. Indirectly, and in the long run, the presence and the increasing role of Orthodox monasteries will contribute to reducing urban autonomy, which will receive a decisive blow in the latter half of the 17th century and in the 18th.

This period also displays a form of social polarization, which influenced the demographics in the urban area as well. The boyars tended to stay on the central streets, taking over more and more plots, which they united to create a single, larger plot for their houses. This did not altogether push away the poor from the area, who had smaller plots, and which were often only rented. Since the plots in the central area had higher prices, the grand merchants and craftsmen were in large numbers here, unlike the outskirts, where they were

⁴⁴ *Documente Iași*, vol. I, 126, no. 93. For a more recent insight, see L. Rădvan, M. Rădvan, "Cu privire la organizarea spațiului urban în Țara Moldovei în evul mediu", in *AȘUI*, LIX (2013), pp. 85-87.

⁴⁵ *Documente Iași*, vol. I, p. 425, no. 355; p. 437, no. 369.

⁴⁶ See M.M. Székely, Ș. S. Gorovei, "Contribuții la istoria Trei-Ierarhilor", in *AIADIX*, XXX (1993), pp. 437-443, 446-448.

far less common. My recent research into the life of two neighbourhoods of Iași, which had emerged on the land gifted to the St. John Chrysostomos monastery in 1761, reveals some compelling facts. The two neighbourhoods (*mahala*) attracted the lower classes, mostly servants who worked at the palace, modest craftsmen, few merchants, and no boyars. It was here that the Jewish population settled as well, especially after mid-16th century (mostly petty merchants), but also Gypsy slaves (*robi*), who also served for the prince. The plots here were vaster, with small houses and large gardens. The centre displays a trend for the dwellings (with stores or workshops facing the street and the living space in the back) to be aligned contiguously, with an upper floor starting to appear in the 18th century. However, houses on the outskirts are further away from the street, have no upper floor, and are distributed unevenly. One exception was the bridges area which was a more lucrative trading venue: here, the houses are arranged in the same fashion as in the town's centre, aligned contiguously.⁴⁷

In the first part of the paper, I highlighted the important part played by the communities which settled in towns in the initial stage of development: these were often people coming in from abroad. The role of foreigners did not diminish in the second stage of urban development, but their presence has a chiefly economic and social impact in the towns. The Greeks, the Albanians, the Bulgarians or the Russians arriving here were actively involved in the local economy, as they also profited from the lack of cash on the market (starting with the 16th century, the Principalities no longer issued their own coin). Those involved in trade were offered special legal status,⁴⁸ and they were privileged by the princes due to their special connections to the merchants in Constantinople or Lviv, where they would secure loan money. Many Turkish tradesmen and officials also took advantage of this fact, becoming the main usurers in the towns of the Principalities in the 17th-18th centuries, and sometimes abusing their position.⁴⁹ Their large presence led to the appearance of Turkish cemeteries in large towns (even though it was customarily forbidden to bury Muslims on Christian soil),⁵⁰ as well as an inn dedicated to Turks (the *Beilic*).⁵¹ The Serbians and Russians stand out among other foreigners, since they formed their own neighbourhoods on

⁴⁷ L. Rădvan, M. Rădvan, "Locuri și oameni din Iași. Considerații cu privire la începuturile Podului Roș", in *AȘUI*, LX (2014), pp. 321-349.

⁴⁸ The foreign merchants had their own guild (see E. Pavlescu, *Economia breslelor în Moldova*, Bucharest, 1939, pp. 298-331).

⁴⁹ L. Rădvan, "On usury and usurers in Moldavia: the Turkish usurers (latter half of the 17th century–latter half of the 18th century)", in *Istros*, 17 (2011), pp. 193-212.

⁵⁰ The Ottoman Empire respected this principle in the Romanian principalities (for the cemetery in Iași, see *Documente Iași*, vol. IV, p. 61, no. 79; p. 214, no. 295).

⁵¹ *Documente Iași*, VI, p. 148, no. 170.

the outskirts (*Sârbime, Lipovenime*). The Greeks are different in this respect, probably since they came in large numbers and spread throughout the town.

Urban space would gradually enter another phase in its development at the end of the 18th century – the first decades of the 19th century. The princes would oversee the first tentative attempts at bringing order to the towns that had developed by themselves. The streets were levelled and paved with stone (wood planks are no longer used), while houses were built with materials that last longer and are fireproof.

But the topographic modernization took on a new step only after 1834, when the Organic Statute (the first constitution) is adopted in the Principalities. Even so, until the advent of the Communist regime, during 1945-1947, towns had largely kept the original medieval layout.

Abbreviations:

AIADX = Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A.D. Xenopol"

AM = Arheologia Moldovei

AȘUI = Analele științifice ale Universității "Al. I. Cuza" din Iași, new series - Istorie

HU = Historia Urbana

RMMMIA = Revista muzeelor și monumentelor, series Monumente istorice și de artă

RRH = Revue Roumaine d'Histoire

SCIA = Studii și cercetări de istoria artei

SMIM = Studii și materiale de istorie medie