

# ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ



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# NAVIGATING IDENTITIES: EARLY PAN-SLAVIC VIEWS ON DACIA, WALLACHIA, AND MOLDAVIA

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**Abstract:** This study examines early Pan-Slavic views on Dacia, Wallachia, and Moldavia, and their portrayal within a Pan-Slavist framework. Through analyzing primary sources such as the works of Vinko Pribojević, Mauro Robinia, and Juraj Križanić, the study investigates the perception of these regions regarding their demographics, geography, and history. While Pribojević and Orbini initially consider Dacia as an integral part of the Slavia, they do not explicitly classify Wallachia and Moldavia as part of the Slavic realm. Križanić's perspective on Wallachia evolved over time, marginalizing its place within Slavic identity. Geopolitical dynamics, particularly Ottoman suzerainty over Wallachia and Moldavia, influenced this shift, which reflects the complexities of historical narratives and cultural identity in Southeastern Europe.

**Keywords:** Pan-Slavism, Pribojević, Orbini, Križanić, Romania

**Резюме:** В данном исследовании рассматриваются ранние панславистские взгляды на Дакию, Валахию и Молдавию, а также их изображение в рамках панславизма. Анализируя первоисточники, такие как работы Винко Прибоевича, Мауро Орбини и Юрая Крижанича, исследование изучает восприятие этих регионов с точки зрения их демографии, географии и истории. В то время как Прибоевич и Орбини изначально рассматривают Дакию как неотъемлемую часть Славии, они не относят Валахию и Молдавию к славянскому миру. Взгляд Крижанича на Валахию со временем эволюционировал, маргинализируя ее место в славянской идентичности. Геополитическая динамика, в частности османский сюзеренитет над Валахией и Молдавией, повлияла на этот сдвиг, который отражает сложность исторических нарративов и культурной идентичности в Юго-Восточной Европе.

**Ключевые слова:** Панславизм, Прибоевич, Орбини, Крижанич, Румыния

Romania's geographical position at the crossroads of Eastern and Western Europe has shaped its cultural landscape, giving rise to a complex and dynamic synthesis of traditions, languages, and beliefs. This is also evident in the three-phasic ethnogenesis of its people, consisting of the Thracian, the Roman, and, ultimately, the Slavic stage beginning in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD (cf. Fyodorov 1999: 14–74). The centuries-long cultural contact as well as the eventual assimilation of the Slavs left a huge mark on Romanian cultural history, which led to

the assumption that “[d]uring the Middle Ages, the Romanians were a Romance population of Orthodox faith and Slavonic culture” (Pop 2008: 6).

The thus resulting linguistic interplay between Romance and Slavonic has fascinated scholarly research and sparked debates since the beginnings of Slavic studies in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly, the diverse linguistic makeup of Romanian has been a subject of interest: As seen in the correspondence between Kopitar and Dobrovský, the vocabulary of Romanian was already early on described as a blend of Romance, Slavic, Turkic, Greek and Hungarian and therefore Romanian was even suggested to be classified as a Slavic language in its own right (cf. Jagić 1985: 371, 377), aligning with the Dacoslavist and later the Panslavist movement—a notion that has been refuted within the realm of Romanian historical scholarship (cf. Mândra 2014: 63).

The political momentum of Pan-Slavism gained significant pace during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Erickson 1964: 7; Kohn 1956: 10). Yet, its roots can be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century: Early Pan-Slavism arose in response to the escalating threat posed by the Ottoman Empire (cf. Nedeljković 2014: 4), calling both Orthodox and Catholic Slavs to unite based on a shared, oftentimes mythological, heritage. These notions are deeply embedded within the works of early Panslavists, whose writings not solely write about Slavic nations as we understand them today, but also include non-Slavic peoples within their understanding of Slavic nations (cf. Madunić 2010), such as the Goths, Finns, and, in a Romanian context, the Dacians, Wallachians, or Moldavians. Thus, the question arises as to how non-Slavic peoples fit into the narrative of early Panslavism. In this study, I examine how the historical regions encompassing present-day Romania and Moldova concerning their demographics, geography, and history are depicted within a Pan-Slavist framework. For this, the following works will be consulted: *De origine succesibusque slavorum* (1525) by Vinko Pribojević, *Il Regno degli Slavi* (1601) by Mauro Orbini, as well as Juraj Križanić’s *Memorandum* to Francesco Ingoli, Secretary of the Congregatio de Propaganda fide, Rome (1641), his *Gramatično izkazanje ob ruskom jeziku* (1665), as well as his *Politika ili razgovori ob vladateljstvu* (around 1666).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, this study seeks to ascertain whether Dacia and later Wallachia and Moldavia were perceived as integral components of the Slavia or regarded as peripheral entities.

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<sup>1</sup> Much has been written on the works of these authors, as their work has been influential to many after; cf. for example Adinolfi 2015. For an overview on the lives and individual works of these early Pan-slavists, cf. Schmaus 1953 (on Pribojević), Brogi Bercoff 1977–1979 (on Orbini), and Golub 1987 (on Križanić).

### Nation & language

The prevalence of Pan-Romanism and Pan-Germanism during Humanist Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century gave way to the emergence of early Slavic historiographies that investigated the roots of Slavic identity and culture, as to strike a counterbalance to these European movements (cf. Samardžić 1968: cxvii). However, to justify the rich cultural heritage of Slavdom, early Slavic historiographers resorted to, as Brogi Bercoff asserts, “une interprétation unilatérale des événements qui souvent, et consciemment, étaient ‘adaptés’ aux propres fins idéologiques et politiques ou, simplement et banalement, à l’intérêt personnel” (1983: 93). Accordingly, Pribojević validates the ancient origins of Slavs by tracing their origins back to Japhet’s last son Thyre, the mythological ancestor of the Illyrians and Thracians, all Slavs in their own right, confirming the autochthony of the Slavic population to the Balkanic peninsula (cf. DOSS: 57–58); amongst these Slavs, Pribojević also lists Gets and Dacians as part of the Slavia: “Gethiae etiam, [...] simul cum Dacis [...] unius idiomatis ad inuicem communionem usurpant” (DOSS: 57).<sup>2</sup> While disagreeing with Pribojević on the Illyrian providence of the Slavs by tracing back their origins to Scandinavia (cf. RDS: 6), Orbini too lists Dacians repeatedly amongst the various Slavic nations, calling them “veri Slauī” (RDS: 135; cf. also RDS 103, 175). While both Pribojević and Orbini glorify the past, Križanić focused on the contemporary situation of the Slavic nations (cf. Golub, Bracewell 1986: 440); other than listing Dacians as a linguistic example in *Gramatično Izkazanje*, see “*Dačānin*”, “*Dāk*”, and “*Dâče*” ([8–9]<sup>3</sup> 61 [italics in the original]), neither Dacians nor Gets are mentioned in relation to Slavic heritage.

When dealing with the notion of language in Dacia, Pribojević and Orbini both consider the Dacian language a Slavic language; however, neither of them ever refer to different dialects or languages in their works, but, in fact, claim that there is a single Slavic language that is spoken across:

Ruscia, Cassubia, Prussia, Masouia, Vandalia, Moscouia, Polonia, Slesia, Morauia, Bohemia, Pannonia, Carniola, Hystria, Lyburnia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosna, Rascia, Dardania, Seruia, Myssia et Bulgaria, quae olim Macedonia dicebatur. Quibus si Thraciam Gethasque ac Dacos necnon et Phryges, qui [...] Thracium genus sunt uno eodemque cum his omnibus prouintiis sermon utuntur[.] (DOSS: 60)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> “Also the Gets, [...] together with the Dacians, [...] make use of a single language for mutual communication”.

<sup>3</sup> The editions consulted for GR and POL also list the original page numbers; therefore, from hereon, the original page numbers will also be listed in square brackets.

<sup>4</sup> “Ruthenia, Kashubia, Prussia, Masovia, Vandalia, Muscovy, Poland, Silesia, Moravia, Bohemia, Pannonia, Carniola, Istria, Liburnia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Raška, Dardania, Serbia, Myssia, and Bulgaria, which was

This is repeated in Orbini, who claims that “Traci, & gli Illirij[...] ebbero il medesimo parlare, che i Daci, & Gothi” (RDS: 146).

Regarding Wallachians or Moldavians, the authors seem to differ in opinion: While Pribojević repeatedly mentions Wallachians in *De origine succesibusque slavorum*, he does not list them among the Slavic nations of his time; to Orbini, who adapted many of Pribojević’s ideas<sup>5</sup>, Moldavians and Wallachians are the product of the Roman assimilation of the autochthonous Dacian Slavs that “habitarono quei luoghi insieme co’Romani. Onde ancor al presente di ciò resta la memoria nella Dacia; Imperoche nella Moldavia, & Valachia, ch’è l’antica Dacia” (RDS: 103). In his *Memorandum*, Križanić even lists Moldavians and Wallachians amongst other Slavic nations:

Esortarlo poi a far guerra contro i Turchi, communi nemici de’ Christiani. Et in ciò apportate che le profetie non si confanno più con altro che con lui che habbia da espugnare gl’ Ottomani; e che ciò sarà più facile a lui, che a qualsivoglia altro Prencipe, poiche i Greci lo favoriranno col far ribellione a Turchi, essendo egli del loro rito. Et i Bulgari, i Serbiani, i Bosnesi, Vallachi e Bogdanesi [Moldavians, P.O.] faranno l’ istesso volontieri per amor d’ un Prencipe di commune loro lingua e nazione[.] (MEM: 91)

This however could be attributed not so much to nation or language, but more to Moldavians and Wallachians being part of an Orthodox unity with Moscow as their leader (cf. Tamborra 1955: 1783).

In his later works, Križanić’s opinion seems to have changed: In his *Gramatično Izkazanje*, while not listing Wallachians among Slavic peoples (“въ našem naródu: rékši Rúsjani, Léhi, Čéhi, Bolgári, Sérbl̋ani, i Hervāti” ([2°] 47–48), he mentions them repeatedly as linguistic examples (cf. GR: [20] 66, [23] 68, [30] 70). Even though he does not count them as Slavs, the proximity of these linguistic examples to other examples containing the names of Slavic nations is striking (e.g. “*Bolgárin, Sérbin, ili Sérbl̋in, Hervatín, Gréčín, Vlášin*” (GR [8] 61) [italics in the original]), indicating that Wallachian culture was nevertheless closely tied to the Slavia and the Orthodox realm.

In *Politika* however, Križanić seems to view all things non-Slavic a lot more critically: Again, he does not mention Wallachians or Moldavians amongst other Slavic nations (“dúmaju

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once called Macedonia. If to these we add Thrace, Getae, Dacians, as well as Phrygians, who [...] belong to the Thracian race, they all use the same language in common with all these provinces”.

<sup>5</sup> Although Orbini does not mention Pribojević among his sources consulted for RDS at all, there are striking similarities that led scholars to believe that Orbini heavily plagiarized from DOSS (cf. Brogi Bercoff 1975–1976).

[...] ob okáianom stânu wsagó naróda naszego Slowênskogo: w' kóem [...] szesteró lyûdstwo se szcitaét: Rúsi, Léchi, Czéchi. Bolgári, Sérbi, i Cherwâti” (POL: [100] 123)), but lists them among non-European nations instead (“wsákiy gôd bismo ie mógli prodát Kalmíkom, Buchârom, Dawúrom, Pêrsom, Tûrkóm, Wolószanom, i inim” (POL: [36] 48)); it seems as if in his later works Križanić moved away from an Orthodox unity (which includes Wallachians and Moldavians), to a more pronounced ethnic Slavic collective with Moscow, again, as the leader (“A w' inoródnikech nîmaiut sepoczítat Léchi, Czéchi, Sérbi, Bolgári, Cherwatí” (POL: [213] 269)); thus, since Wallachia and Moldavia were vassal states of the Ottoman Empire (cf. Pitcher 1972: 129–135) and also, somewhat, involved in their military campaigns (cf. Cristea 2013), it is only natural that his view on their ‘right’ to be counted among the Slavs changed too.

In terms of languages spoken in Wallachia and Moldavia, Orbini contests that in the follow-up regions of Dacia, people speak a language “che pare sia fatta, e composta di molte altre” (RDS: 135); while not mentioning the Romance character of the language of these regions, he does mention the presence of German and that “la l[in]gua, che hora si troua [in] Dacia hà molti vocabuli de gli Slauí” (ibid.). Furthermore, as for the language of power, he acknowledges that “nella Moldauia, & Valachia, ch'è l'antica Dacia, nelle pubbliche scritture, & negli vffitij diuini, altra lingua, ne carattere non si adopra, eccetto quella de gli Slauí” (RDS: 103).<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, he mentions that the written varieties of Wallachian and Moldavian Slavonic differ from one another: “Li Moldauí s'accostano più alla proprietà del parlare de'Russi, ò Moscouiti, & li Valachi imitano più li Rassiani” (ibid.).<sup>7</sup> Križanić, apart from the aforementioned ambiguous call for unity in his *Memorandum*, does not mention Wallachian or Moldavian amongst the Slavic languages: “I takówi sut wsíje nászije iazícznije otméni: Rúskaia, Lészkaia, Czéskaia, Bolgárskaia, Sérbskaia, i Cherwâtskaia” (POL: [91] 113).

### Geography & history

It is not only the notions of ancestry or confession that place Romanians at the intersection between the Latin and Slavic realm, but also the geographical location of their settlements: Surrounded by three Slavic nations to the East, North, South and West, and

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<sup>6</sup> While the language of the church and administration had been Old Church Slavonic since presumably the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the process of replacing it with the Romanian vernacular had already started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Georgescu 1991: 66–67).

<sup>7</sup> Orbini is partly right: The Wallachian Church Slavonic of his time was indeed “generally patterned on the Serbian chancellery tradition” and “[t]he morphology was formally based on the Štokavian”, albeit previously “Bulgarian based” (Knoll 2021: 264); for Moldavian Church Slavonic, he mistakes Russian, or Moscovite, influence with Middle Ruthenian (cf. Knoll 2022: 591; Tsaralunga, Gavrysh 2021: 112; for Middle Ruthenian cf. Moser 2005).

enclosed by Black Sea, the Prute and, most notably, the Danube, Romania's geographical position can be seen as a grand contributor to its unique history and cultural identity.

The Danube holds particular significance for both South Slavic and Romanian civilizations as a hub for trade and as a source for Romanian nation-making (cf. Ardeleanu 2020: 228–266). Considering its historical importance it is therefore no surprise that the Danube is mentioned numerous times throughout the early Pan-Slavist treatises, especially by Mauro Orbini in *Il Regno degli Slavi*: In relation to the Dacians, Orbini mentions the Danube as the place of permanent settlement of the 'Slavic' Dacians: "Li Daci, che per origine furono veri Slaui, uscirono ancor essi di Sc[an]dinavia [...] & separate da gli altri, scacciarono li Verli, che habitauano la riu del Danubio, & in quei luoghi [...] fermaronsi per sempre" (RDS: 135). Following the line of Dacian Slavic continuity for Wallachia, he repeatedly mentions Wallachia as a Danube-situated border region between Eastern Slavdom and Bulgaria, or later with the Ottoman Empire:

[V]ed[en]do il Despot, fuggì à Cost[an]tinopoli [...] e intr[an]do nel Danubio, passò la Valachia, per venire nella sua prouincia. (RDS: 322)

Vuladislauo parte inanimato per le lettere di Scanderbego, parte menato del suo destino [...] passata la Valachia, & superato il Danubio, [...] era peruenuto à Varna[.] (RDS: 332)

All' hora Iasen in compagnia del suo fratello, & d'alcuni Baroni, passando il Danubio riccorsero all' aiuto de' Valachi vicini. (RDS: 445)

[P]assando dopoi di là dal Danubio, penetrarono nelle parti di Valachia. (RDS: 472).

In contrast, Križanić mentions the Danube without connecting it to the Wallachians. Instead, he regularly refers to the "Zadunâici" (GR: [2<sup>o</sup>] 48), 'Transdanubian' Slavs when talking about Serbs, Croats and Bulgarians, suggesting a directional movement from East to West, that is, from Moscow towards the West: "[W]sí nášzego róda lyûdi, za Dunáem i pred Dunáem" (POL: [195] 248).

While Pribojević and Križanić do not mention specific places within Moldavia or Wallachia, Orbini lists places and regions that he deems essential for his historiography on South Slavic history: "[N]uoue colonie de Tedeschi, che habitano li sette Castelli<sup>8</sup>, e da loro

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<sup>8</sup> See also "[w] Sedomgrádskey Wugórskey zemlyé" (POL: [55] 66).

chiamati Seinbenburgesi” (RDS: 135), “Transsilvania” (RDS: 138) “Chraglieuo, città di Valachia” (RDS: 279), “[a] Iasen successe Dobre, il quale diede nome di Dobrucia al paese, ch’è di quà dal Danubio” (RDS: 407) and “Costantia città molto celebre nel territorio Rodopeo” (RDS: 457). As seen by the last reference, Orbini’s geography is sometimes off, as Constanța is not located in the geographical region of the Rhodope Mountains; also, Orbini mistakes the extent of the Wallachian reign: “[L]o mandò in quelle parti di Vlachia, che risp[on]deuano alla Morea, & Negroponte” (RDS: 271), which corresponds to the Byzantine name for the modern-day Peloponnese peninsula (Morea) and the Venetian name for the island of Evia (Negroponte).<sup>9</sup>

The recognition of Wallachia’s geography by Orbini shows the significant role that Wallachia and thus also Wallachian history play in the context of Southeastern European and South Slavic history. Orbini finds it imperative to include not only historical events, such as the Hungarian Occupation of Vidin between 1365 and 1369 (cf. RDS: 471–472) or the Battle of Rovine in 1395 (cf. RDS: 279), but also important figures, such as the Wallachian voivodes Vladislav I (cf. RDS: 471) or Mircea Cel Bătrân (cf. RDS: 279). Furthermore, Orbini repeatedly mentions Wallachians in a belligerent setting, in which Wallachian armies were either in direct confrontation with other nations or used as mercenaries: “[F]acendosi venire in aiuto ancora venti mila Valachi” (462), “poiche haueua fatto massa di dodici mila Bulgari, e tre mila Valachi” (RDS: 467) and “fece l’essercito di otto mila Bulgari, e due mila Valachi” (RDS: 469).

Križanić portrays both Wallachians and Moldavians in a non-hostile light, depicting them as trade partners with Moscow. In *Memorandum* they are shown as buyers of icons: “[I] Moscoviti [...] habbiano [...] molti pittori boni, che esprimendo al vivo le imagini de’ Santi, le vendono poi in varii paesi de’ Vallachi, Moldavi” (MEM: 77); in addition, in *Politika* he emphasizes that the town of Putyvl’ (North-East Ukraine) should be established as a future trading post for trading with Ukrainians and Wallachians: “[N]a Putíwoly k’ Czerkasom

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<sup>9</sup> At the time of completion of *Il Regno degli Slavi* in 1601, Morea and Negroponte had already fallen under Ottoman rule (cf. Pitcher 1972: 85) and had become the sanjaks Mora and Eğriboz of the Eyalet of Rumeli (cf. *ibid.* 137 and map XXVI). When referring to Rumelia, Orbini, as per Venetian tradition (cf. Wolff 1948), ubiquitously uses the term *Romania*, see “Seleuria [Silivri] città di Romania” (RDS: 322) or “tutta la Romania fin’ à Salonicchio” (RDS: 270). It is therefore strange that Orbini mistakes *Romania* for *Vlachia*, since he even mentions “Napoli di Romania” (RDS: 271), modern-day Nafplio on the Peloponnese peninsula, on the same page as Morea and Negroponte. While this could be a mere geographical slip, as it is the case with his placing of Constanța in the Rhodopes, the coincidence of Orbini mistaking the Wallachian exonym with its endonym is intriguing. Chronologically, Orbini could have already known about the Wallachians calling themselves *românii* from 16th century Italian authors (cf. Pop 2000: 47–49).



[Ukrainians, P.O.] i k' Wolószanom” (POL: [13] 25) and “[m]óglo bi se naredít iednó torgowísce [...] w' Putiwlyu dlya Ukrańcew i Wolószanow” (POL: [15–16] 28).

### **Centre or periphery? Conclusion**

Based on the examples provided, it is evident that all authors examined felt compelled to mention Dacia, and later Wallachia and Moldavia within their historical accounts, grammars, and political treatises. Firstly, Pribojević and Orbini view Dacia as a significant component of the establishment of the Slavia: To Pribojević, Dacia—within its geographical ramifications—lies at the core of his Balkan-centered ethnogenesis of the Slavic people. To Orbini, Dacia has continually been inhabited by Slavs since their descent from Scandinavia; he even suggests a direct genetic link between Dacians and the Wallachians and Moldavians of his day. However, Orbini also emphasizes their distinctiveness, especially in term of language and historical events. This distinctiveness is then continued in Križanić, who does initially count Wallachians and Moldavians as part of an Orthodox Christian alliance against the Turks, but later, by focusing on a more pronounced ethnic Slavic collective, he marginalizes their place within the Slavia.

This analysis shows that the view on Dacia, Wallachia, and Moldavia, from an early Pan-Slavist perspective, shifted over time. While Dacia can undoubtedly be placed at the center of the Slavia, the views on Wallachia and Moldavia slowly moved towards the periphery over time, which can be attributed to the Ottoman suzerainty over named regions, since early Pan-Slavism felt rather strongly about Ottoman rule.

In conclusion, the evolving perspectives on Dacia, Wallachia, and Moldavia within an early Pan-Slavist discourse not only reflect shifts in geopolitical dynamics, but also the complexities of historical narratives and cultural identity in Southeastern Europe.

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