SUBBTO 68, no. 1 (2023): 9-13

Introduction

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Christianity is, by definition, a religion whose existence in the form we know today absolutely depends on mobility.

In sociological theories, mobility is regarded as a summative term for processes and aspects of movement: in this sense, one speaks of spatial, temporal, social, cultural, or generational movement processes in both synchronic and diachronic perspectivation. On the one hand, these are aspects of physically moving in space, but there is as well a complex social mobility, which is described as "social change and shifting of social system coordinates."[1] Together with the so-called *mobilities turn*, mobility is becoming a broad category of interdisciplinary scholarship. A distinction is made between diverse "mobilities", which, however, usually interlock and are difficult to research independently of each other.

Central to the forms of mobility is religion, in our case, Christianity. Not only that, Christianity, with its universal claim, was and is directly and essentially in its overall history, a religion of circulation, transfer, mobility, and even movability. Rather, mobility – at least in pre-modern and early modern times – is, among other things, a religious form, a part of the religious existence; let us think, for example, of pilgrimages, missionary work, crusades, of scholarly mobility, or of the monastic one. Mobility, the movement of people, goods, and ideas, forms the communicational interchangeable environment of all human forms of association. Wherever groups of people exist, there is also mobility and communication.

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[1] Wolfgang Bonß and Sven Kesselring, "Mobilität und Moderne. Zur gesellschaftstheoretischen Verortung des Mobilitätsbegriffs" In: *Erziehung zur Mobilität. Jugendliche in der automobilen Gesellschaft*, ed. by Claus J. Tully (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 39–66, on p. 40.

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In this sense, mobility becomes a political issue. This also means that mobility is not only the central characteristic of modernity – how historians of the early-modern, modern, and contemporary history allude –but forms a basic constant of humanity and society of all times, as the extensive scholarship on mobility in the Middle Ages, for instance, impressively points out.[2]

As mobility studies suggest, it should be thought of together with the dynamics of *belonging* and identity. The balancing and exchange function of different mobility flows gives rise to forms of solidarity and a sense of belonging to particular communities and their individuals.[3] Konrad Petrovszky, for example, pointed out that it was precisely through different forms of mobility (of clerics, of endowments, of goods, of practices, etc.) that an identity construction of belonging to Orthodoxy emerged in the "Ottoman Orthodox space of communication", which manifested itself in strong (mostly discursive and liturgical-practical) demarcation, especially from the Latins, from the Protestants, and, of course, from the "infidels" and Jews.[4]

The Orthodox area of Southeastern Europe between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries cannot be thought of without Ottoman rule. The Ottoman rule is not an *acciden*t between the "Byzantine" and "post-Byzantine" eras, as different national histories of Southeast Europe suggest, but a constitutive momentum on its own of the transregional communication space addressed in this volume. The integration policy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople of a trans-regional all-encompassing "Orthodoxy" had particularly strong gains to make from the Ottoman conquest of Southeast Europe, in that the Ottomans strengthened the administrative-centralising role of the Patriarchate for Christians in its jurisdiction. Thus, centrifugal tendencies of autocephaly and autonomy, like those in Bulgaria, Serbia, Kyiv, or Moldavia, were resolutely combated.[5]

However, this area of jurisdiction extended, for example, as far as Moscow, far beyond the political borders of the Ottoman Empire, which offered favourable premises for the emergence of a trans-regional or, better, trans-imperial communication space of integrated Orthodox cultures. We speak, therefore, of global relational spaces of communication, or specifically in our case of a trans-imperial *Orthodox Commonwealth*.[6] Through the mobility of different collective or individual actors, far-reaching trans-imperial relationships emerged as dynamics of networking and interconnectedness of a religious, institutional, practical, economical, and cultural nature.

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[2] Michael Borgolte, ed., *Europa im Geflecht der Welt. Mittelalterliche Migrationen in globalen Bezügen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

[3] Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, *Zugehörigkeit in der mobilen Welt* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

[4] Konrad Petrovszky, *Geschichte schreiben im osmanischen Südosteuropa. Eine Kulturgeschichte orthodoxer Historiographie des 16 und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014). See also Georges E. Demacopoulos, Aristotle Papanicolaou, eds., *Orthodox Constructions of the West* (New York: Fordham UP, 2013).

[5] Petrovszky, *Geschichte*, 25–29.

Such communication spaces were *polycentric* in nature. Their polycentricity consisted in the interaction of institutional, theological-spiritual, political and economic centres (the patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople, Mount Athos, Bulgaria, Serbia, the Danubian Principalities, the Kievan Rus, or the Moscow Grand Duchy). Unfortunately, scholarship on polycentric orders or polycentric rule is still in its infancy. We now know that power and rule were exercised not only from the centre of Constantinople, for example, but as a result of a close network of various centres throughout the Byzantine Empire.[7] Even after the collapse of Byzantium, such centres still organised and structured the Orthodox world inside and outside Ottoman rule.

The objective of this volume is unpretentious. Showing the complexity, variety, and subtility of multiple forms of mobility and movements is a genuine exercise of fascination. We dive into the confessional life of Orthodoxy enlivened by fears, hopes, and desires. The contributions are individual recordings that together paint a larger picture of connectivity, communication, and exchange within and beyond Orthodoxy across a broad temporal spectrum from the sixteenth to the Russo-Japanese War at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Alice Isabella Sullivan offers a study on the interwoven endowments of two of the most generous philanthropists for the whole Orthodox Commonwealth from Mount Athos, to Constantinople, to the monasteries of the southern Slavs and further to Jerusalem and Mount Sinai – Neagoe Basarab of Wallachia and Petru Rares of Moldavia. Revealed is a complex web of matrimonial, spiritual, and ideological aspects of the rule and Orthodox identity articulated by ever-shifting connections, relationships, and political interests within the Orthodox world.

Nicholas Melvani takes us on a periplus through Ottoman Constantinople, Istanbul, in the second half of the sixteenth century. He lets us see through the marvelled eyes of Protestant travellers how the holy places of Orthodoxy, at the centre Hagia Sophia, found themselves in the new order, how their function, their architecture, and their perception moved in the eyes of the people. Travelling Protestants and the circulation of people and information between

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[6] Paschalis M. Kitromilides, ed., *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[7] Ralph-Johannes Lilie, “Die ökonomische Bedeutung der byzantinischen Provinzstadt (8.–12. Jahrhundert) im Spiegel der literarischen Quellen”. In: Falko Daim and Jörg Drauschke, eds., *Hinter den Mauern und auf dem offenen Land. Leben im Byzantinischen Reich* (Mainz: RGZM, 2016), 55–62.

Istanbul and the scholar centre of Tubingen in the German Empire resulted, connected with attempts of union between Lutheranism and Orthodoxy in the sixteenth century, in a better perception of Orthodoxy in the West, and opened new ways in its contacts with Western Europe's intellectuals.

Zachary Chitwood accompanies in his paper the Patriarch of Alexandria Sylvester (d. 1590), who came to Mount Athos to restore the venerated "old way" of monachism, the coenobitic life, which fell in desuetude, giving way to all sorts of anomalies risen by idiorrhytmic liberalism: monks moving without hindrance to and from Athos and engaging in the sale of goods to the outside world, including spirits which they drank themselves. Beardless youths and laypersons lived in monasteries; livestock was allowed to pasture on the Holy Mountain, etc. An interesting example of "positive" mobility on the quest to erase the results of "bad" mobility.

Octavian-Adrian Negoiță approaches the activity of an Orthodox reformer in the Ottoman Empire, Pachomios Rousanos (d. 1553), struggling against all forms of Heterodoxy and popular neo-pagan practices creeping into and altering the purity of religion in an insidious movement which endangered, thought Rousanos, the true faith, which in his eyes had to stay "unmoved" since the Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils. Negoiță offers wonderful insights into interreligious dynamics of mobility of religious ideas from old to new, of translating the Holy Scriptures into vernacular – another form of mobility – and the dangers for the soul salvation residing in it.

Taisiya Leber reveals on the example of Father Jov (d. 1621), the founder of the Skete Manja in the Ruthenian Carpathians, the mobility as an existential cross of an ascetic, who never really wanted to leave his monastery on Mount Athos, and in reality was forced by his monkish vote of oboedientia to extensively travel to the Danubian Principalities, Kyiv, Moscow, and Ruthenia, where he revived the ascetic spiritual life by funding monastic centres or reforming old ones (like the Caves Monastery in Kyiv). A life of pilgrimage and unceasing travels in the perpetual desire and dreaming of settling down back in its Athonite monastery: unwished and, at the same time, providential mobility for the Orthodox monasticism in Eastern Europe.

Daniela Dumbravă gives a brief account of the travels of the Moldavian diplomat, scholar, and politician Nicolae Milescu Spathary in the seventeenth century to China. Especially the avatars and the own history of movement of the reports and charts he authored shape a complicated itinerary of reception which spans the Western academic landscape. It is a stimulating study of the transfer of knowledge through times (from the seventeenth through the twentieth century), space (from the Far-East-Asia through Eastern European Muscovy and further to France and Great Britain), and scientific methodology in the evolution of cartography.

Yorgos Tzedopoulos' object of inquiry is the religious and existential sinuous mobility of the converts from Orthodoxy to Islam and *back* to Orthodoxy, an existential periplus which often ended in martyrium. Tzedopoulos draws a fascinating picture of complex interwovenness within the process of conversion and reconversion, which embraces not only religious, and ideological struggles between those who considered forced martyrium a form of suicide and those who pushed it, arguing that this is the only chance for redemption. The political and medial aspects connected with this phenomenon in Ottoman society are plastically and analytically sharp in this paper on a little-known phenomenon of negotiating Orthodox belonging in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Daniel Haas, Eugene Lyutko, and Sebastian Rimestad give us insight into the relationship between Halle Pietism and Russian Orthodoxy in the eighteenth century. Halle Pietists travelled to Russia, where they were well connected in the highest circles of (Orthodox) church, and society. Russian students were as well coming to Halle to study theology in their attempt to become Orthodox priests back in Russia. The paper offers abundant unedited material from the Archives of the Francke Foundations in Halle to sketch the mobility of people, ideas, and books, an important milestone in German-Russian, relationships which were, after Peter the Great, so intensively close.

The volume ends with the inciting history of the Russian war-icon *Theotokos of Port Arthur* (1904) and the unexpected role it played in the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 through 1905. An important part of the story plays, as we shall see, the celestial vision of a Moldavian sailor from the tsarist navy during the Crimean War. This is a stimulating study about popular piety in the tsarist civil society, about piety and icon veneration, as well as politics and practices of justified violence in Russian colonialism in the Far East.

I cannot end this short introduction without expressing thanks to the persons without whom this project would not have been possible. I would like to thank Paul Siladi for inviting me to edit the anthology for the *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai.* I am grateful to both him and Cristian Sonea for accompanying me through the redactional and editorial process. Additionally, I would like to extend special thanks to Hieromonk Isaac from Lupșa Monastery for the exquisite drawings that enhance the aesthetic beauty of this volume.

Mainz, 15 June 2023