

Mehmed II's Return to *Moldovia* in 1476 and the Death of the *King of Dacia*

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ON 16 November 1476, the expenses of the Ragusan envoy to Mehmed II were covered (he received his *wages*) although he did not meet with sultan Mehmed II [...] *quod imperator non erat in Romania, sed in Moldovia* [...].¹ The last time the envoy of Ragusa had missed the sultan was at the end of 1462; the messenger of the Adriatic republic had had to wait until January 1463 to fulfill his mission.² Just like in 1476, Mehmed II had a *Wallachian* failure (dating from the summer of the year) to compensate for (in the south).³ After the battles of August and September 1462, he conquered the Genoese Mytilene (Lesbos).⁴ At the end of 1476 Mehmed seized the fortresses erected by Matthias Corvinus on the Serbian border between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary.⁵

In both cases, the Ragusan messengers' failure to meet with Mehmed, while he had taken departure to the north, revolve around the fate of Vlad III *the Impaler*.⁶ On 24/25 November 1462 Vlad was arrested by Matthias Corvinus under the charge of treason, as he allegedly intended to surrender the king to Mehmed II, along with Transylvania (and the whole of Hungary).⁷ Fourteen years later, in November 1476, with the joint support of Hungarian and Moldavian troops, Vlad reclaimed Wallachia (Târgoviște was occupied before 8 November,⁸ and Bucharest was conquered before 16 November⁹). Nonetheless, Vlad died less than two months later¹⁰ (most likely before 5 January 1477¹¹).

Either in 1476 or 1462,¹² Mehmed II issued a document addressed to the Ragusan administration. The charter was dated *15 November, at the Wallachians* (meaning while on *campaign*), without any other elaboration.

The Czar Mehmed, the Sultan Muratovic [i.e. the son of Murad], speaks: the charter and the law must be known <to all>in Ragusa. I leased the customs [of Ledenice] to Karaman [!] who asked for my great charter, and every man needs to know this. I have left my slave, Karagöz, beside him and I thereby ordered <that> in this town everyone who is my tributary [harćnici in the original text] pay a tax for everything they take out and for everything they bring in through the customs of not more than 4 aspri for 100 aspri, while the Ragusans, for everything they bring and for everything they

take out through the customs, pay a tax of 5 aspri for 100 aspri. Besides, on the grounds of my first law, everyone who—during the absence of Karaman and my slave, Karagöz, or without their knowledge—take out or bring <merchandise> through the customs, and are despoiled, they will have all their goods confiscated for the profit of the Treasury of My Empire. Regarding the lands and places <in question>, <I remind you that> everyone who owns a sandjak, a kadi, a subaşı, as well as their notables and their delegates, are instructed to maintain a strong grip over this situation, to be vigilant and show no frailty, as these goods are mine and not Karaman's. May all be warned <and> listen without question to my writ as their master.// Written on 15 November, at the Wallachians [that is, also according to the editor, in Wallachia].¹³

Unlike Mehmed's order, also written in old Serbian, drafted on 12 October 1476 (according to the note on the verso: *rizevuta adi 25 oktob. 1476 de gran signor contra Dmitar Soimironic*¹⁴) Mehmed II's document issued *at the Wallachians* bears no Ragusan archival mention that would help us date and further contextualize it. In all probability, the document reached Ragusa at the same time as the order issued on 12 October 1476 by the sultan in his *Adrianople camp*.¹⁵ Learning that Mehmed was about to go to war, the Ragusans rapidly sent an envoy to cover their ends.¹⁶ The entry in the register, dated 16 November 1476, ([...] *the Emperor was not in Romania, but in Moldova [...]*)¹⁷ indicates that Ragusa did not expect its envoy to meet the sultan precisely in Adrianople, but neither north of the Lower Danube (in Moldavia!).¹⁸ Mehmed most certainly received the tribute of Ragusa by 17 December 1476, when the sultan sent a firman of confirmation (an *expeditoria del charaz*, according to the Ragusan note on the verso of the charter) *from the camp of Bolvan* (i.e. Bolvan/Aleksinac, east of Kruševac, as Mehmed had turned against Matthias at that time).¹⁹

Regardless of the year that we decide to ascribe to Mehmed's order, written *at the Wallachians* on 15 November, the sultan's return north of the Lower Danube in 1476 (around mid-October), following his withdrawal from Moldavia two months before, is an unquestionable fact, given the statement of expenses issued by Ragusa on 16 November 1476 to its messenger to the sultan, Pasqual(e) Gondola (Gundulić).²⁰ Within this framework of events, the *crusaders*'²¹ victory in Wallachia, under the leadership of Stephen III of Moldavia, of the Judge of the Royal Court, Stephen Báthory, of Vlad III and also of Basarab IV *Țepeluș* and of the Serbian despot, Vuk Branković,²² was in fact a triumph over the sultan himself. Both Târgoviște (conquered before 8 November) and Bucharest (fallen by 16 November) were taken when Mehmed—unreachable by the messenger of Ragusa in early November²³—was back in Wallachia. Notwithstanding this, neither Matthias (who disseminated the *Transalpine* victory of his captains²⁴), nor Stephen (who pointed out the fact that he had supported Vlad's²⁵ return to the throne of Wallachia) presented this indisputable victory in Wallachia as a defeat of Mehmed himself, as a Christian success unparalleled since the "miracle of Belgrade,"²⁶ accomplished by John Hunyadi, the father of Matthias and the predecessor of Stephen, the *athlete* of Christendom.²⁷ Due to the fact that Stephen had failed to defeat Mehmed II during the summer (unable, like Matthias, to lead Mehmed into his trap,²⁸ in Moldavia), Pope Sixtus IV was asked to remove Stephen from his dignity of *athlete*. Only the desperate

intervention of Venice managed to circumvent such a disaster, in late November 1476, when the sultan Mehmed II²⁹ was defeated.

On 8 December 1476, when ‘at least’ the news of Mehmed II’s return north of the Danube must have reached him, Matthias wrote to Pope Sixtus IV, heralding the victory in Wallachia and emphasizing the fact that it had been attained *prior to the intervention of the Moldavian voivode*,³⁰ disregarding any reference to the presence of the Sultan in Wallachia during the latest battles between the crusaders and the Ottoman troops.³¹ At that time, Matthias had not yet lost his Serbian fortresses to Mehmed II, and Vlad III, whose importance is emphasized in the letter to the pope, was still alive.³² Normally, unlike in the case of Stephen, though,³³ who could be held responsible for the disappearance of Vlad (to whom he had given a personal guard)³⁴, Matthias had no reason—especially not in December 1476, on the eve of his marriage to Beatrice of Aragon (a matrimonial agreement arranged by Sixtus IV himself)³⁵—to overlook Mehmed II’s return to the battlefield and his subsequent defeat, especially if this had occurred before Stephen’s arrival.³⁶ Irrespective of the circumstances, after his defeat in Wallachia, Mehmed II travelled unhindered toward the south-west, where he eliminated the Hungarian outposts, precisely at the time when Vlad died in unclear circumstances.³⁷

Like in the autumn of 1462, the Danubian events from the autumn of 1476 were ‘unusual’.³⁸ In 1462 it was claimed that Vlad intended to surrender Matthias (who was in Transylvania) to Mehmed, and with the aid of Stephen, who had just pledged allegiance to Matthias in order to help him regain the Holy Crown of Hungary from the grasp of Frederick III of Habsburg (just a month earlier, Stephen had joined forces with Mehmed II to defeat Vlad).³⁹ These were, essentially, two sides of the same strange family affair. Both in 1462 and in 1476 Vlad was married to a close relative of Matthias,⁴⁰ whose son, John Corvinus was the alleged descendant of Mircea the Elder.⁴¹ In 1479, Matthias claimed that the king and the sultans shared blood ties (as Mehmed’s ancestors also included *Wallachians*⁴²) and Mehmed II and his sons, Bayezid II and Djem consented. Stephen and Vlad were more or less close cousins,⁴³ and last but not least, Matthias’s name featured in the “diptychs” of Putna along with Stephen’s blood kin and in-laws.⁴⁴

Consequently, it is worth highlighting the manner in which, about four years after Vlad’s death, Martino Segno, Bishop of Novo Brdo,⁴⁵ described the Danubian events from the winter of 1476-1477,⁴⁶ setting them against the backdrop of the Transalpine operations of 1473-1474.⁴⁷ The description of the prelate was part of an anti-Ottoman treatise addressed to pope Sixtus IV and to Matthias Corvinus, whose father-in-law, Ferdinand of Aragon, had just lost Otranto to the Ottoman fleet (1480), which was most likely backed up by the Porte’s new ally, Venice.⁴⁸

[According to Segono, the sequence of events unfolded as follows: Suleiman Pasha, of Rumelia, attempted to conquer Scutari. He failed and had to withdraw (this happened in 1474).⁴⁹] [...] *Dopo queste cose, Maometto [Mehmed II], udita la morte del re de Dacia [depending on the date: Radu III the Handsome⁵⁰/ Vlad III the Impaler⁵¹], subito con l’essercito passò il Danubio acciò facesse surrogare di quella nazione uno della famiglia Bassaranban [Basarab III Laiotă (both in the case of the death of Radu and of the death of Vlad)]⁵²] e la ingiuria da loro poco prima ricevuta vendicasse. Ma havendo Dacia Maggiore quietata*

et apparecchiandosi per ire alla Minore [Dacia Minore/ Moldavia⁵³], <Mehmed> fu chiamato dai Samandrini [by the inhabitants of Smederevo⁵⁴] i quali teme-vano della venuta del re d'Ungheria [of Matthias Corvinus]⁵⁵ [in all likelihood, Matthias' return took place during the winter of 1475-1476, when, with Vuk Branković and Vlad acting as his captains, he conquered Sabač, while the captains of the king appalled the Christians with their cruelty.] [...].⁵⁶

[In order to shed light on some of the challenges of this intricate timeline, a closer look at some of the events that preceded Segono's text on the *Dacian* intervention of Mehmed II will prove most useful.]

[...] *Havuta questa vittoria [against Usun Hassan (1473)⁵⁷] se ne ritornò Maometto in Constantinopoli e per tre anni se astenne dal guerreggiare. Infratanto Soliman bassà nella Romania mandato oltre al Danubio fu da i Daci tra le paludi e tra le strettezze delle selve così valorosamente combattuto, che perso l'essercito appena egli con pochi si salvò [this is a clear reference to the battle of Vaslui of 10 January 1475⁵⁸] [...].⁵⁹ [Segono continued with a description of the fall of Caffa⁶⁰ that took place l'istesso anno.⁶¹ Further on, quasi ancoa nell'istesso tempo, Segono presented Suleiman's departure for Scutari, the defeat of the Ottoman army by the *Dacians*, followed by the death of the *King of Dacia*, who had brought Mehmed across the Danube, where la ingiuria da loro poco prima ricevuta vendicasse.⁶² This wording can only refer to the battle of Vaslui and—from the point of view of the chronological order of events—it can only be traced to the winter of 1475-1476 (a span of time when Basarab III was the uninterrupted ruler of Wallachia).⁶³ However, although Segono made no reference to Mehmed's campaign in Moldavia during the summer of 1476 (a catastrophe for the crusaders and particularly for Matthias and Stephen),⁶⁴ he continued his account of the two *Dacias* not by covering the Hungarian campaign of Sabač of the winter of 1475-1476,⁶⁵ but with a review of Mehmed's ravage of the (wooden) forts erected by Matthias on the Sava and the Morava,⁶⁶ which took place during in the winter of Vlad III's death (1476-1477). The following quote is taken from the beginning of the fragment in discussion. [...] *Il quale [Matia] havea già fatto edificare due rocche alla foce del fiume Moravia, le quali assalite da i Turchi furono valorosamente difese dagli Ungheri [...].⁶⁷**

[What happened in *Dacia* and when it happened is difficult to tell. In 1476, Mehmed returned north of the Danube alone, after he was forced to retreat during the summer,⁶⁸ right before Stephen III and Stephen Báthory succeeded in imposing Vlad III *Țepeș* and Basarab IV *Țepeș*.⁶⁹ Stephen and Matthias “forgot” about the sultan's return and about his defeat in November 1476, although they desperately needed a victory (especially Stephen).⁷⁰]

[Eventually, in order to have a better grasp of Segono's construction, of the way in which he sequenced the events (and, obviously, of the degree of reality that we can attach to the prelate's accounts), it is worth resorting to his account of Mehmed II's campaign in Wallachia (1462): [...] *Ma non molto dopo questa vittoria [the victory of Mehmed*

in Lesbos (Mytilene),⁷¹ in the spring of 1462, according to Segono, but which was, in fact, subsequent to Mehmed's campaign in Wallachia] *seguitò un grave et atroce eccidio nell'essercito turchesco, imperoché combattendosi in Dacia, dove haveva Maometto transferitta la guerra, Draula [!], con sei mila cavalli, e con una buona squadra di fanti, assaltando nel silenzio della notte il campo turchesco, pose quello in tanto terrore et spavento che, se non se acclamava et gridava per tutto l'essercito <il> consiglio di Maimuti Bassà [Mahmud Angelović⁷²] per trombetti che ciaschuno a piedi davanti al suo padiglione combattesse, tutti per l'errore della notte si sarebbero l'un l'altro occisi. La maggior parte nondimeno per le mani dei Daci fu prostrata e morta e l'altra sopra veloci cavalli si salvò [...]*.⁷³ [Segono then proceeded with Mehmed's campaign in Bosnia (1463) without mentioning that Vlad had lost his throne and his freedom at the end of 1462.⁷⁴ We may infer that Segono overlooked the failures of the *Dacians* (he most certainly omitted the battles in Moldavia during the summer of 1476), and, additionally, he did not seem to make any connection between Vlad's nickname and the devil.⁷⁵]

Drafted at a time when the Geto (Dacian)-Scythian (Hunnic) *imbroglio* was already commonplace in the anti-Ottoman⁷⁶ writings, owing particularly to *De bellis Gothorum* (1473–1474) written by Bishop Nicholas de Modruš († 1480),⁷⁷ the enemy of Matthias Corvinus⁷⁸ in the Balkans, and author of a famous portrait of Vlad⁷⁹ depicted as a serial killer, Segono's treaty drew an almost bright image of *Draula*, the ruler and even the king of the *Dacians*.⁸⁰ Holder of the Diocese of Novo Brno, a nest of Serbian unrest for Mehmed and his stepmother Mara Branković,⁸¹ Segono overtly disregarded the *stories* about Vlad's acts of cruelty and the reports on the massacres he perpetrated during his Lower Danube offensive in early 1462⁸² (a campaign that made him postpone the marriage to a *relative* of Matthias, or more precisely to his sister, according to the German subjects of Frederick III⁸³). All in all, this was a case of misrepresentation, an informational tangle and an image battle (developed long before modern writings emerged) that left little room for unambiguity. Mehmed's return north of the Danube in 1462 and then in 1476, during the autumn, after his respective Wallachian summer campaigns⁸⁴ are among the only certainties we can identify. On each occasion, Mehmed's return revolved around the figure of Vlad III.⁸⁵ Both were overlooked by Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III, the secular suzerain of the Crusade and the *athlete* of Christendom in 1476.⁸⁶

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Notes

1. Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku, Dubrovnik (DAD), Acta Consiliorum (A.C.), *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, reg. 23. 1476-1478, f. 61^v. See also the photocopy.
2. Data also from the "account books" of the Republic: DAD, A.C., *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, reg. 17. 1461-1463, ff. 143^r, 171^r, 172^v, 173^v-174^r (12 October 1462, 13, 18, 20, 22 January 1463).
3. The correct phrasing would be: in 1462 and 1476, both warring parties failed to win.
4. Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time*, ed. William C. Hickmann (Princeton, 1978), 210-213. Starting with October, there are no traces of Mehmed's movements.

5. John V.A. Fine, "A Tale of Three Fortresses. Controversies Surrounding the Turkish Conquest of Smederevo, of an Unnamed Fortress at the Junction of the Sava and Bosna, and of Bobovac," in *Peace and War in Byzantium. Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, S.J.*, eds. Timothy S. Miller, John Nesbitt (Washington, DC, 1995), 181-196.
6. Nicolae Stoicescu, *Vlad Țepeș* (Bucharest, 1976); Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș (Dracula). Între legendă și adevărul istoric* (Bucharest, 1976¹); Matei Cazacu, *Dracula* (Paris, 2004).
7. Ioan Bogdan, *Vlad Țepeș și narațiunile germane și rusești asupra lui: Studiu critic, cu cinc portrete* (Bucharest, 1896), 29-30 (like Nicolae Iorga initially, Bogdan did not doubt the authenticity of Vlad's treason, though the 'evidence' was rather doubtful); M. Cazacu, *Dracula* (Leiden-Boston, 2017), 164-165 (the English translation of the letter allegedly sent by Vlad to Mehmed).
8. I. Bogdan, *Documente privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și Țara Ungurească în secolele XV și XVI, I. 1413-1508* (Bucharest, 1905), no. 75, 97-98.
9. Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, XV-1, *Acte și scrisori din arhivele orașelor ardelenne Bistrița, Brașov, Sibiu, 1358-1600*, ed. N. Iorga, Bucharest, 1911 (*Hurmuzaki*), no. 198,95. On December 4, 1476, Giustiniano Cavitello reported to the duke of Milan that Bucharest had fallen after a 15-day siege (N. Iorga, *Acte și fragmente privitoare la istoria românilor*; III. [1399-1499] (Bucharest, 1899), 58-59).
10. For the main sources: Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova (a. 1324-1881)*, I. *Secolele XIV-XVI* (Bucharest, 2001), 117-118.
11. *Hurmuzaki* XV-1, no. 169,96. By that time, Stephen III was inquiring in Brașov about the fate of Vlad (*our brother Ladislas*), whom he had left under the protection of 200 Moldavian soldiers.
12. Al. Simon, *Țimânturile crucii: românii și cruciada târzie* (Cluj-Napoca, 2012), 117-118.
13. *Stare srpske poveljei pisma*, I-2. *Dubrovnih i susedi negovi*, ed. Ljubomir Stojanović (Belgrade, 1934), no. 845,263. Translated into French by Bojko Bojović, *Raguse (Dubrovnik) et l'Empire Ottoman (1430-1520). Les actes impériaux ottomans en vieux serbe de Murad II à Selim I^{er}* (Paris, 1998), no. 29, 231-232.
14. *Stare srpske povelje*, I-2; no. 845,256; Bojović, *Raguse*, no. 28,230. This charter alone became known to Romanian historiography in recent years (Nagy Pienaru, "Un document otoman necunoscut," in *Revista Istorică* (Bucharest), NS, 13 (2002), 1-2, 229-241).
15. *Turski spomenici*, ed. Gligorije Elezović, I-1. *1384-1520* (Belgrade, 1940), no. 45.171-173 (issued on October 12, according to Bojović, *Raguse*, 233, note 117).
16. DAD, A.C., *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, reg. 23, ff. 56^r-57^v (26, 29, 31 October 1476).
17. DAD, A.C., *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, reg. 23, ff. 58^r, 60^r, 61^{r-v} (2, 14, 16 November, 1476).
18. Due to the sources, known largely since the early 1900s, it is evident that in November 1476 Mehmed could not have been in Moldavia, confused with Wallachia by Ragusa, because of sultan's summer campaign against Stephen.
19. *Turski spomenici*, I-1, no. 46, 173-174 (and note 6 for Mehmed's location).
20. For this famous family of Ragusan patricians: Lovro Kunkević, "The City Whose Ships Sail on Every Wind: Representations of Diplomacy in the Literature of the Early Modern Dubrovnik," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World, c. 1410-1800*, eds. Tracey Sowerby, Jan Hennings (New York, 2017), 65-79 (see also Id., "Civic and Ethnic Discourses of Identity in a City-state Context: The Case of Renaissance Ragusa," in *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe*, eds. Balázs Trencsényi, Márton Zászkaliczky (Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 2010), 149-177). The family became known in Romanian historiography also because of the chronicle of Giovanni di Mauro Gondola (*Cronice ulterioare di Ragusa*, in *Chronica Ragusina Junii Resti (ab origine urbis usque ad annum 1451) item Ioannis Gundulai 1451-1484 (=Monumenta spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, 25, Scriptores, 2), ed. Speratus Nastilis (Zagreb, 1893), 371). According

to this chronicle, the *voivode of Wallachia*, along with all those still loyal to him, had accompanied Matthias to Bosnia in late 1463, retaking Jajce from the Ottomans. As Radu III *the Handsome* was loyal to Mehmed II, this voivode was 'logically' identified with Peter III Aaron, the former ruler of Moldavia, who had taken refuge in Hungary (cf. Victor Eskenazy, "O precizare asupra politicii externe a Țării Românești în vremea lui Radu cel Frumos," *Revista de Istorie* (Bucharest), 30 (1977), 11, 1665-1667), even though at that time (1) Vlad III was free to correspond with Genoese Caffa in the Crimea (Archivio di Stato di Genova, Genoa, Banco di San Giorgio, Sala 34, *Caffae-Masaria*, reg. 590/1243. 1463, c. 171^r; March 1, 1463; the record was 'entered', under the year 1462, in *Acte și fragmente*, III, 42), while (2) Matthias' administrators threatened the Transylvanian Saxons with the wife of *Dracula voivode*, also referred to as *the magnificent Vlad voivode* (*Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, VI. 1458-1473, eds. Gustav Gündisch, Herta Gündisch, Gernot Nussbächer, Konrad Gündisch (Bucharest, 1981, no. 3389,192; no. 3400,200), as (3) the wife of Vlad was a *close relative* of Matthias (Ion Bianu, "Ștefan cel Mare. Cateva documente din arhivul de stat de la Milano," *Columna lui Traian* (Bucharest), 4 (1883), 1-2, 30-47, at no. 1,34). In connection to the Bosnian events of 1463-1464, we recall that Matthias' spearhead was Emeric Szapolyai. According to Emeric's son, John, voivode of Transylvania and later king of Hungary, he, John Szapolyai, was related to Voica, the wife of Mihnea I *the Evil*, probably the first-born son of Vlad III (*Hurmuzaki*, XV-1, no. 390, 216).

21. Al. Simon, "Cruciada din Moldova într-un raport venețian din 1476: note asupra unui document," in *Istoria ca datorie: omagiul academicianului Ioan-Aurel Pop*, eds. Ioan Bolovan, Ovidiu Ghitta (Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 375-384.
22. On the events: Șt. Andreescu, "L'action de Vlad Țepeș dans le sud-est de l'Europe en 1476," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* (Bucharest), 15 (1977), 2, 259-272.
23. For the speed of communication (already in the 1300s): Barisa Krekić, "Il servizio di corrieri di Ragusa a Costantinopoli e Salonicchi nella metà del secolo XIV," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* (Belgrade), 21 (1952), 1, 113-119.
24. See, in this context, the messages (November 1476-January 1477), published in *Actae et epistolae relationum Transylvaniae Hungariaeque cum Moldaviae et Valachia* (= *Fontes Rerum Transylvanicarum*, 4, 6), ed. Endre Veress, I. 1468-1540 (Budapest, 1914), nos. 23-26, 26-30.
25. I. Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II (Bucharest, 1913), no. 154, 342-351. This was first and foremost the case of the speech delivered before the Venetian senate by John Tzemplakon, Stephen III's *uncle* (*barba*).
26. See Al. Simon, "Lasting Conquests and Wishful Recoveries: Crusading in the Black Sea Area after the Fall of Constantinople," *Imago Temporis Medium Aevum* (Lleida), 5 (2012), 301-315; Id., "Pellegrini ed atleti del Signore ai confini della cristianità: Skanderbeg, Stefano III di Moldavia e le loro relazioni con Roma e Venezia," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome-Moyen Age* (Rome), 125 (2013), 1, 71-92.
27. On John's importance for Matthias' and Stephen's careers, see also Benjamin Weber, "La papauté en Hongrie (1453-1481): engagement financier ou militaire," *Transylvanian Review* (Cluj-Napoca), 19 (2009), 3, 21-31; Al. Simon, "How to Finance a Greek Rite Athlete: Rome, Venice and Stephen III of Moldavia (1470s-1490s)," in *Partir en croisade à la fin du Moyen Âge. Financement et logistique*, eds. Daniel Baloup, Bernard Doumerc (Toulouse, 2015), 307-329.
28. The administrative domestic failures of Matthias and Stephen that largely prevented Mehmed's defeat in Moldavia are worthy of a new analysis, as they were most often neglected on the grounds of Mehmed's hasty retreat from Moldavia and the subsequent crusader successes in Wallachia.
29. The Venetian instructions issued on 23 November 1476 for its envoy to Rome, Jacopo de Medio, were last published in Ioan-Aurel Pop, Al. Simon, *Re de Dacia: un proiect de la sfârșitul*

- Evului Mediu* (Cluj-Napoca, 2018), 159-160. Unfortunately, they were omitted from all Romanian editions of sources from Venetian archives, including those signed by Nicolae Iorga (Al. Simon, “*Să nu ucizi o pasăre cântătoare: soarta unui fortissimus rei Christiane athleta în ochii Venetiei*,” in *Pe urmele trecutului. Profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani*, eds. I.-A. Pop, Susana Andea, Al. Simon (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), 159-169).
30. The original Latin text read: *antequam waivoda Moldaviae supervenisset*.
 31. The known royal letter was republished in *Actae et epistolae*, I, no. 25, 28-29.
 32. While he was securing, with Roman support, his marriage to the daughter of the king of Naples, Ferrante of Aragon (another cruel figure), Matthias remarried Vlad to his first cousin, on his mother's side, Jusztina Szilágyi (Al. Simon, “Propaganda and Matrimony: Dracula between the Hunyadis and the Habsburgs,” *Transylvanian Review*, 20 (2011), 4, 80-90).
 33. Leaving aside the information in the *Russian story* on Vlad the Impaler (recorded in the 1480s, at the time of trilateral alliance between Buda, Moscow and Suceava), Stephen's official stance towards Vlad, his enthronement and his rapid demise, is known chiefly from the Venetian speech of John Tzemplakon (May 1477). Venice perceived the speech also as a form of blackmail and responded by revealing Stephen's shady Caffese dealings from the summer of 1475 (on the sources: Pop-Simon, *Re de Dacia*, 161-162).
 34. The 200 soldiers appear more than insufficient as Mehmed himself had recently been defeated. On the other hand, only a year earlier, such an elite Moldavian corps had successfully intervened in the Crimea (see Maria-Magdalena Székely, Ștefan Sorin Gorovei, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina, o prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei* (Putna, 2006), 49-57).
 35. See also Péter E. Kovács, “Magyarország és Nápoly politikai kapcsolatai a Mátyás korában,” in *Tanulmányok Szakály Ferenc Emlékére*, eds. Pál Fodor, Géza Pálffy, István György Toth (Budapest, 2002), 229-247.
 36. Meaning that Matthias could have easily claimed victory over Mehmed, without having to share it.
 37. For the different versions (and legends): Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică*, I, 117-118.
 38. Due to old and more recent documentary uncertainties, this would be the right phrasing.
 39. Ovidiu Cristea, “*The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns*,” in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (= *The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage*, 53), eds. Gábor Kármán, L. Kunčević (Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 2013), 253-274, at 263-264.
 40. Recently Mihai Florin Hasan, “Aspecte ale relațiilor matrimoniale dinastice munteano-maghiare din secolele XIV-XV,” *Revista Bistriței*, 27 (2013), 128-159.
 41. I.-A. Pop, Al. Simon, “*Hungaria, Polonia, Dacia et Croatia: Venetia, Casa de Habsburg și Moldova la sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea*,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol*, 52 (2016), suppl., 43-89, at 74-75, note 163. The subject is worth revisiting. It is known that immediately after Voicu, John's father, received *Hunyad* (Hunedoara) from king Sigismund of Luxemburg, Mircea, previously the possessor of *Hunyad* (usually identified with Bologna), attacked Transylvania.
 42. Al. Simon, “*La parenté ottomane du roi Mathias Corvin*,” in *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit: Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinopel* (= *Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 401), eds. Christian Gastgeber, Ekaterini Mitsiou, I.-A. Pop, Mihailo Popovic, Johannes Preiser Kapeller, Al. Simon (Vienna, 2011), 25-33.
 43. Mark Whelan, Al. Simon, “*A New Source of Moldavian Politics at the End of the Rule of Alexander I the Just*,” *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* (Brăila), 31 (2015), 149-160; Idem, “*The Moldavian Lady and the Elder Lords of the East*,” *Transylvanian Review*, 24 (2015), 3, 113-129.

44. On this and other Wallachian ‘lines of succession,’ see Al. Simon, “*Cmîșorii valabilor din a doua jumătate a secolului al XV-lea*,” *Crisia* (Oradea), 40 (2010), 159-167.
45. First noticed by Andrei Pippidi in his “*Lucruri noi despre Ștefan cel Mare*,” *Analele Putnei*, 1 (2005), 1, 79-92, at 89.
46. Strictly in relation to Vlad’s death, this may be the main particularity of the treatise.
47. See Pop-Simon, *Re de Dacia*, 20-21. The chronology was apparently adapted to serve other needs and purposes.
48. Agostino Pertusi, *Martino Segono di Novo Brdo, vescovo di Dulcigno. Un umanista serbo dalmata del tardo Quattrocento. Vita e opere*, ed. Chiara Faraggiana (Rome 1981), Appendix: *Opusculum reverendi Domini Martini de Segonis natione Catharensis origine autem Serviani ex Novomontio aliter Novobardo dicto Dei gratia episcopi Olchinensis ad Beatissimum Sixtum IV Romanum Pontificem. Tractatus de provisione Hydronti et de ordine militum Turci et eius origine*, 78-146 (*Segono*), at 137.
49. On the events in Albania: O.-J. Schmitt, “*Die venezianischen Jahrbücher des Stefano Magno (ÖNB Codd. 6215-6217) als Quelle zur albanischen und epirotischen Geschichte im späten Mittelalter (1433-1477)*,” in *Südosteuropa von vor-moderner Vielfalt und nationalstaatlicher Vereinheitlichung. Festschrift für Edgar Hösch*, eds. Konrad Clewing, O.J. Schmitt (Munich, 2005), 133-183, especially 174-175).
50. Radu passed away the latest in early 1475 (Constantin A. Stoide, “*Legăturile dintre Moldova și Țara Românească în a doua jumătate a secolului al XV-lea*,” *Studii și Cercetări Științifice. Istorie* (Iași), 7 (1956), 1, 59-73). On the other hand, on October 3, 1474, in Genose Chios it was known that [...] *Lo Signore de Volaquia Alta* [Radu III of Wallachia] *e morto, lo Segno* <re> *de la Velaquia Basa* [Stephen III of Moldavia] *et intrato dentro lo paese et a un Signore* [Basarab III *Laiotă*] *a lo so modo* [...] (for this and other reports: Al. Simon, “*Anti-Ottoman Warfare and Crusader Propaganda in 1474: New Evidences from the Archives of Milan*,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, 46 (2007), 1-4, 25-39).
51. On January 27, 1477, news reached Venice that the Ottomans had taken the bastion built by Matthias. A few days later, on February 1, other news arrived in Venice that the Ottomans [...] *hanno tagliato ad pezzi Dracuglia* [Vlad III] *capitaneo del dicto Re, con circa quatro mille persone, et similiter hanno morto Bozrab* [Basarab IV], *Signore della dicta Valachia* [i.e. *Maggiore*] [...] (Iván Nagy, Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek. Mátyás király korából 1458-1490 (= Monumenta Hungariae Historica, 4, 1-4), II. [1466-1480]* (Budapest, 1876) (MDE), no. 234,340). We see the distinct dignities held by the two fallen figures (in fact, Basarab survived): Vlad was *the captain of the said king*, while Basarab was *the lord of said Wallachia*.
52. The identification is valid irrespective of the dating of the event. We must also note that at Vaslui, Basarab III changed sides and supported Stephen at the end of the battle (*Actae et epistolae*, I, no. 9,10).
53. To our knowledge, this was the first time Moldavia was named *Dacia*, more precisely *Lesser Dacia*. The ‘Dacian transfer’ seems to have occurred via Wallachia proper, usually called *Great Wallachia*, while Moldavia was *Lesser Wallachia*.
54. MDE, II, no. 234,340. The bastion conquered by the Ottomans had been built *per obsidione de Semedro*.
55. It was only a rumour. After he wed Beatrice (22 December 1476), Matthias did not leave Buda until April 22, 1477 (Richard Horváth, *Itineraria regis Matthiae Corvini et reginae Beatricis de Aragonia (1458-1476-1490)* (Budapest, 2011), 105).
56. See the sources analysed by Andreescu, “*L’action de Vlad Țepeș*,” 261-265.
57. *Segono*, 135-136. See O. Cristea. N. Pienaru, “*Țara Românească, Moldova și Bătălia de la Bașkent*,” *Analele Putnei*, 8 (2012), 1, 17-36; Al. Simon, “*Habsburgs, Jagiel-Ionians and Crusading: The Wallachian Case in the 1470s*,” in *The Jagiellonians in Europe: Dynastic Diplomacy and Foreign Relations*, ed. Attila Bányai (Debrecen, 2016), 53-68.

58. For the first time *Dacians* was used to designate the soldiers of Stephen. *Segono* (133) had used the same name for Vlad's subjects. Still, several Szeklers were among Stephen's troops at Vaslui, as well as numerous Hungarians, though not as many as Matthias later claimed (see O. Cristea, "Victoria de la Vaslui și acțiunile diplomatice ale lui Ștefan cel Mare: câteva opinii," *Analele Putnei*, 13 (2017), 1, 241-250).
59. *Segono*, 136. Like in the case of the Venetian-Milanese report on the battle of Baia, fought between Matthias and Stephen in December 1467, a report that reasserted the Roman origins of the Wallachians, Stephen was not mentioned, though the report stated Matthias' defeat (Pop-Simon, *Re de Dacia*, 99, note 104). As *Segono* did not mention the anti-Ottoman victory of Matthias' captains at Câmpul Păinii (October 1479), *Segono*'s failure to name Stephen, the victor of Vaslui, must be viewed, at least in part, as a result of the prelate's desire to avoid hurting Matthias' pride, without however omitting Vaslui. *Segono* even listed Vaslui (*Vasilum castrum*) among the main stations on the planned crusader route of 1480-1481, though, as Pertusi already noted, Vaslui lacked the actual strategic value for such an offensive endeavour (*Segono*, text and commentaries, 99, 217-222).
60. For some new evidence: Al. Simon, "The Western Impact of Eastern Events: The Crusader Consequences of the Fall of Caffa," *Istros* (Brăila), 18 (2011), 383-396.
61. *Segono*, 136. When the text was written, less than five years had elapsed since the events.
62. *Segono*, 137. The prelate apparently 'contracted time.'
63. It is worth recalling that Stephen and Mehmed were still negotiating at that time (O. Cristea, "Între Cruciadă și Imperiul Otoman. Relațiile diplomatice ale lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Imperiul Otoman în anii 1475-1476," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 36 (2018), 247-258, at 256).
64. We must recall that subsequently Stephen's demotion as *athlete* was demanded. The same had happened to Skanderbeg after Mehmed's Albanian campaign of 1466. On both occasions, the *athletes* were saved by their Italian protectors (Simon, "Să nu ucizi o pasăre cântătoare," 163-164).
65. In full monarchic conflict with Stephen, Matthias took great pride in this campaign.
66. Mehmed probably feared the Hungarian response after Vlad's death and acted swiftly.
67. *Segono*, 137. See MDE, II, no. 234,340; Fine, "A Tale of Three Fortresses," 189.
68. DAD, A.C., *Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, reg. 23, ff. 58^r, 60^r, 61^{r-v} (2, 9, 14, 16 November 1476).
69. We remind that Vlad was deemed *captain* and Basarab *lord* (MDE, II, no. 234,340).
70. Simon, "Să nu ucizi o pasăre cântătoare," 163; Idem, "Cruciada din Moldova," 377.
71. Babinger, *Mehmed*, 213. Murad II had already politically connected the island to Moldavia (Al. Simon, "Porturile Moldovei. Ștefan II, Iancu de Hunedoara și Murad II în documente italiene (1444-1446)," *Analele Științifice ale Universității Alexandru-Ioan Cuza. Seria Istorie* (Iași), NS, 52-53 (2006-2007) [2008], 7-25).
72. Serbian by descent (the members of his family in Novo Brodo were executed by Mehmed in 1477, not after Mahmud's fall in 1474, but after Vlad's death), Mahmud was listed, alongside Mehmed II and Stephen III, as one of the three recipients of Vlad's alleged pledge to capture Matthias (November 1462). Mehmed II later executed Mahmud because he had also *freed the eflaki*, the name used by the Ottoman Turks for the Wallachians (Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)* (Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 2001), 182-183, 342-343).
73. *Segono*, 133. The passage ended abruptly (in relation to what followed) with this flight.
74. The highly mediated arrest of Vlad was undoubtedly known to *Segono*.
75. *Draula* might support the hypothesis that the nickname derived (also) from the Romanian *Dragul* (Aurel Răduțiu, "Sur le nom de *Drakula*," *Transylvanian Review*, 5 (1996), 1, 101-113).

76. Margaret Meserve, "Italian Humanists and the Problem of the Crusade," in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley (New York, 2004), 13-38; N. Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat. 1453-1505* (Oxford, 2012), 31-33, 40-50; Luka Spoljarić, "Ilyrian Trojans in a Turkish Storm: Croatian Renaissance Lords and the Politics of Dynastic Origin Myths," in *Portraying the Prince in the Renaissance: The Humanist Depiction of Rulers in Historiographical and Biographical Texts*, eds. Patrick Baker, Ronny Kaiser, Maike Priesterjahn, Johannes Helmroth (Berlin, 2016), 121-156.
77. Vilmos Fraknói, "Miklós modrusi püspök élete, munkája és könyvtára," *Magyar Könyvszemle* (Budapest), 5 (1897), 1-23, at 13; Giovanni Mercati, "Notizie varie sopra Niccolò Modrussiese," in Id., *Opere minore*, IV (Vatican City, 1937), 205-267.
78. L. Spoljarić, "Nicholas of Modruš and his *De Bellis Gothorum*: Politics and National History in the Fifteenth-Century Adriatic," *Renaissance Quarterly* (New York-Cambridge), 92 (2019), 457-491.
79. See Șerban Papacostea, "Cu privire la geneza și răspîndirea povestirilor scrise despre faptele lui Vlad Țepeș," *Romanoslavica* (Bucharest), 13 (1966), 159-167.
80. We recall that, around 1471-1472, Vlad, confused with his grandfather Mircea, was named by the supporters of the House of Habsburg *Dracula de Molda et Walachia* (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München, Abendländische Handschriften, Cod. Lat. 14668, ff. 7^r-43^r, at ff. 23^r, 24^r).
81. M. Cazacu, "Les parentés byzantines et ottomanes de l'historien Laonikos Chalkokondyle (c. 1423-c. 1470)," *Turcica* (Paris), 16 (1984), 95-114, at 104-105.
82. Recently confirmed by a Roman report (Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, E. Affari esteri, XXV. Roma, busta 834. 1404-1499, nn; 30 March 1462).
83. See also Andrei Corbea, "Cu privire la corespondența lui Vlad Țepeș cu Matei Corvin," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A.D. Xenopol*, 17 (1980), 669-685.
84. In addition to the aforementioned arguments in favour of the 1462 dating of the charter issued by Mehmed II on 15 November in Wallachia, we draw the attention upon the fact the sultan could have hardly issued such a charter on 15 November 1476, when Bucharest was about to fall or had already fallen (on 16 November the Ottomans had certainly lost Bucharest).
85. See also the information collected in Simon, *Pământurile crucii*, 117-118.
86. In our view, as the logical assumptions of Ștefan Andreescu ("L'action de Vlad Țepeș," 270) and Ștefan Gorovei ("Cronologii controversate în istoria lui Ștefan cel Mare. Observații asupra izvoarelor," *Analele Putnei*, 3 (2007), 2, 75-90, at 85-87) appear to be validated by the sources, any future analysis of the events of 1476 must factor in Vlad's difficult position between Matthias and Stephen. Prior to or at the latest on 8 November, the Hungarian host took Târgoviște. Prior to or at the latest on 16 November, the Moldavian host (with or, more likely, without Hungarian support) conquered Bucharest. This further draws attention upon the 'partnership' between Vlad III, the captain of the king, and Basarab IV, the lord of Great Walachia (MDE, II, no. 234,340). On 15 November 1476, Matthias announced to the duke of Saxony, Ernest of Wettin, only the rise of Vlad as *Transalpinevoivode* (V. Fraknói, *Mátyás király levelei. Kültügyi Osztály, I. 1458-1479* (Budapest, 1893), no. 245,355). Under the circumstances, it is mandatory to view Basarab IV as Stephen III's *prefect* (designation later used by Jan Długosz for Basarab IV). In all likelihood, *Great Wallachia* (<Great> *Dacia* following in Segono's footsteps) was temporarily partitioned between Buda and Suceava.

Abstract

Mehmed II's Return to *Moldovia* in 1476 and the Death of the *King of Dacia*

On 16 November 1476, the travel expenses of Pasqual(e) Gondola (Gundulić), the envoy of Ragusa sent to Mehmed II, were reimbursed even though Gondola had not met the sultan [...] *quod imperator non erat in Romania, sed in Moldovia* [...]. At that time, Moldavian and Hungarian troops were occupying Wallachia, taking Târgoviște (before 8 November) and Bucharest (precisely on 16 November). After the failure of Stephen III of Moldavia and of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary to trap Sultan Mehmed II during the latter's Moldavian summer campaign (July-August 1476), this was a major success. In fact, it was/would have been the first Christian victory over the sultan *in personam* since the "miracle of Belgrade" twenty years earlier. Yet it was never celebrated as such, even though both Stephen and especially Matthias widely circulated news of the anti-Ottoman victories in Wallachia. Especially for Stephen, a victory over the sultan would have been more than needed, because, in the same month of November, several political voices called for his deposition as *the athlete* of Christendom (eventually, in late November-early December, Venice succeeded in convincing pope Sixtus IV to keep Stephen as *athlete*). The paper focuses on these events that marked the beginning of the third and final Wallachian reign of Vlad III *the Impaler (Dracula)*, who then, within less than two months, lost his life (around the beginning of January 1477). Meanwhile, Mehmed II (also) managed to take and destroy king Matthias' newly erected Serbian fortresses. Previously, Mehmed II had returned north of the Danube, after a failed summer campaign, only in November 1462, on the eve of Vlad's imprisonment by Matthias. Vlad was accused by his royal relative that he had plotted to hand over his suzerain to the sultan.

Keywords

Mehmed II, Vlad III the Impaler (Dracula), Stephen III of Moldavia, Matthias Corvinus, Wallachia, Hungary, Ottoman Empire, Ragusa