

Propaganda and Matrimony: Dracula between Hunyadi and Habsburg

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He left behind rumors, several regrets, an already dark legend, a few possessions in the Hungarian realm, legitimate and illegitimate children, and a widow.

IN EARLY March 1462, the Venetian envoy in Hungary, Pietro Tomasso, informed the republic that Matthias Corvinus had given a close relative in marriage to Vlad III the Impaler. The wedding had taken place soon after the end of Vlad's anti-Ottoman winter campaign. According to contemporary sources, Matthias' relative married to Vlad was either the daughter of John Hunyadi (the executioner of Vlad III's father, Vlad II of Wallachia, in 1447, betrayed on the eve of the 'miracle of Belgrade' by Vlad III, formally reconciled with Matthias' father in 1453), or the king's first cousin. For Vlad, the marriage to Matthias' relative should have represented a supplementary guarantee of the royal support against the Turk, in military, political and matrimonial terms (his brother and contender to the throne, Radu, Mehmed II's favorite, was married to Mary, a niece of the influential Mara Branković, Murad II's respected widow and Mehmed's youth protector).

According to the report sent to Doge Pasquale Malipiero (March 4) by Tomasso, who accompanied the king throughout that year, to Transylvania

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as well, where Vlad was arrested in the last days of November, “Et in verità Serenissimo Principe, se mai fo necessario [i.e. to aid Matthias against the Turk], è hora, et è da tegnir che s’el Turco [Mehmed II] etiam havea altro obiecto che questo anno far contra questo regno [Hungary], mutera proposito per vendicar la crudelità fata per ditto Valacho [Vlad], che hora è homo del ditto Signor Re et ha tolto una sua [of Matthias] parente per moglie.” The wedding did not take the Venetians by surprise. They viewed it as perfectly normal, mainly because they had been the ones to record in 1458 that Matthias, “de progenie humile, de casa de Valaccia,” had risen to the Hungarian throne.

The financial difficulties, the Austrian interests or the domestic obstacles faced by Matthias, Mehmed II’s ability or the (re)mobilization of the boyars hostile to Vlad, much weakened by his warring, transformed the sultan’s Wallachian summer campaign of 1462 from a major failure into a triumph. In November, Vlad, who had taken refuge in southeastern Transylvania, was charged with treason and taken into custody by Matthias, who had arrived with great delay at his Wallachian border (Vlad had allegedly planned to hand over the king to the sultan, in the ‘manner in which’ Matthias had handed over his uncle, an ambitious intriguer and a former associate of Vlad, Michael Szilágyi, to Mehmed in 1460). In spite of the rumors and the propaganda rapidly built around them (and, at a time when few ‘dirty monarchic stories’ remained secret, accepted also by Matthias main rival, Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg, Hunyadi’s former adversary turned ally in the 1450s), Vlad did not go straight to prison. He was taken into a sort of ‘preventive custody’ by the king’s men. A former ‘reluctant guest’ of Murad II (1442–1448) and Hunyadi (1451–1456), Vlad was presently in the hands of Matthias, in whose brother’s (Ladislas) dramatic downfall of the spring 1457 Vlad had played a part, opening the way for Matthias’ near-death traumatic captivity of 1457–1458 that altered Matthias’ character for good.¹

Still, the king ‘retired’ Vlad only in winter 1464–1465. His attempts to re-enthroned Vlad (during the royal anti-Ottoman campaigns in Bosnia in 1463 and 1464) had failed (most likely) due to the domestic opposition to Vlad. Moreover, Matthias had found another (temporary) Wallachian regional supporter in Stephen III of Moldavia, the son of Bogdan II, Hunyadi’s most loyal Wallachian ruler (sheltered by the governor after his father’s assassination in 1451, Stephen abandoned Hunyadi in 1456, together with Vlad, who, after he helped enthrone Stephen in 1457, quite soon became, alongside Matthias, one of the main enemies of the new ruler of Moldavia). In early 1465 Stephen III retook Kilia, the harbor at the Danube Mouths, from where the Hungarian garrison had recently been expelled (previously, Vlad had sought the support of Caffa, the Genoese metropolis in the Crimea, hoping that her power would protect his interests at the eastern Danubian frontier of Wallachia, now ruled by his brother

and Mehmed's favorite, Radu III). Until these changes, Vlad was not separated from his wife (her name remains unknown). In the years following his Wallachian failures, royal representatives still 'threatened' the Transylvanian Saxons with *Dracula voivode* and his wife (some her possessions apparently bordered on the territories of the Saxons, Vlad the Impaler's main adversaries in Hungary).

Francis (Ferenc) of Kezi, castellan of Hunedoara, asked the city of Sibiu not to forget to pay the debt of the late Jakob Soor and reminded the city that "sed quia vestris amicis bene manifestum foret sumus per dictum dominum nostrum regem penes in consortem Drakale vayvodae constituti." The debt of Soor, whose possessions had been granted by King Matthias to Vlad III's wife, came from John Hunyadi, thus strengthening the idea of direct blood tie between her and Matthias' father. "Recordamur quomodo tempore illo quo dominus noster rex partibus in illis Transilvanis fuerat constitutus [i.e. in the autumn of 1462] nos quaedam debita nostra puta florenos auri sexingentos et sexaginta tres a Jacobo Sor vestro condam concive, quibus idem nobis mediante literis condam domini nostri gubernatoris Johannis de Hunyad ac propria manu scriptarum suarum debitoria obligatur coram vestris amicitiiis et iuratis pro quiquidem Jacobo quaedam astutia decogitata finxit ad deliberationem septem sedem Saxonicalium domini nostri regis tandem prorogasse neque vos hiis auditis" (Lipova, 6 July 1464). Three months later, Stephen of Idrifaia, appointed administrator of the Amlaş estate together with Michael Zekel of Sântioana (captain of Bistrița and count of Sibiu), by Matthias (on 1 May, less than two days after Matthias' long-awaited coronation with the Holy Crown of Hungary) in order to end the disputes with the Transylvanian authorities over the Amlaş estate, allowed the inhabitants of the seat of Ocna Sibiului to graze their pigs in the forests of the estate, but not before reminding them who was still master of the disputed estate. "Ad quod vestris respondemus amicitiiis, quod nos certitudinis veritatem comperimus ab illo, qui eandem Omlas cum pertinentiis a magnifico Wlad vaivoda tenuit, ut tam ipsi de sede Zeredahel et alii vicini eandem Omlas circumiacentes licentia mediante sub pactatione iuxta voluntatem officialis easdem silvas usi fuissent" (Deleni, 8 October 1464). Then, although Matthias seemingly wanted to avoid this outcome, the estate was taken from Vlad, viewed as the cause of all problems related to the estate (the former duchy of Amlaş granted as fief by the Hungarian kings to the rulers of Wallachia since the 1360s, and then, although only for a while, taken from them, like the other duchy, Făgăraș, by Hunyadi in the 1450s). In spring 1467, Matthias had to force the Hungarian Diet into accepting direct royal administration over the estates of Amlaş, Făgăraș and Rodna so that they could be granted to the rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia who had lost their thrones in the war against the Turk.

Matthias's decision played an important role in the genesis of the Transylvanian rebellion, ignited that same summer.

If the separation between Vlad and his wife ever took place, it came after 1465. After that date, Vlad was useful to the king only as a 'scarecrow,' for instance during the Hungarian-Ottoman negotiations from the spring of 1468. Then Matthias left on his 'Bohemian crusade,' attacking his former father-in-law, the *heretic king* of Bohemia, George Podiebrad (Matthias' first wife, the very young Katherine, had died in childbirth in the spring of 1464, a month before Matthias' coronation and only months after the conclusion of the treaty of Wiener Neustadt–Sopron between Matthias and Frederick that conditioned Matthias's dynastic survival on the existence of a legitimate male heir). Vlad was left aside until Matthias's new conflict with Frederick III (triggered by the emperor's refusal of 1470 to give Matthias a daughter in marriage and to acknowledge him as king of Bohemia), the money given by Venice, in dire need for anti-Ottoman support, to the king of Hungary, the Ottoman raid on Oradea and Stephen III of Moldavia's Wallachian campaigns compelled John Hunyadi's son to resume his confrontation with Mehmed II (1473–1474).²

Reactivated, Vlad was first used as a captain in the Hungarian-Ottoman clashes on the Serbian and Bosnian frontiers of the Holy Crown and in particular during the siege of Šabac in early 1476 (when the cruelty of Vlad and Vuk Branković shocked even the papal legate). Unwanted initially by both Stephen III and the Saxons as ruler of Wallachia in the place of Basarab III Laiotă, Vlad drew closer to the throne after the confrontations between the Hungarian and Moldavian allies and Mehmed II in the summer of 1476. At the end of the year, Vlad returned to the throne (though it was still claimed that, in fact, Vlad's new Wallachian power masked a *condominium* between him, as royal captain and governor of Wallachia, and Basarab IV Țepeluș, the actual ruler). Vlad's third and last Wallachian reign ended before mid January 1477. He lost his life to his Ottoman and Wallachian enemies. He left behind rumors, several regrets, an already dark legend, a few possessions in the Hungarian realm, legitimate and illegitimate children, and a widow. The identity of the latter is known to us from a transaction dated 1489. She was Justine Pongrácz, the king's first cousin (her father, Oswald, and Matthias' mother, Elisabeth Szilágyi, were brothers) and a true 'service bride' (mainly for 'second rank' problems) for the king (she was married to Ladislav Pongrácz of Szentmiklós, Vlad III, Paul Suki and John Erdélyi, and survived all of them).

Jacob Roszály, castellan of the episcopal fortress of Pécs, sold to George of Gyula (Gyulai), for 200 gold florins, the house of Vlad III the Impaler in the center of the town of Pécs. The castellan and captain of the *banderia* of the hu-

manist bishop of Pécs, Sigismund Ernuszt, had received the house following the prelate's intercession with King Matthias Corvinus. The house had been confiscated from Vlad's former servant and familiar, Denis, executed for his crimes (Denis had been granted the house, already called the House of Dracula, from Vlad's widow, lady Justine Pongrácz, who had meanwhile died in the mid 1480s). We do not know how fortunate the new owners of the house were. Like Denis, Jacob Roszály also died by the sword, in the battle of Csontmező (July 1490), where Paul Kinizsi's troops crushed the soldiers of late King Matthias's illegitimate son, John Corvinus, also supported by the bishop of Pécs and by his *banderia*.

Nos capitulum ecclesie Quinqueecclesiensis memorie commendamus, quod egregius Iacobus Kwn dictus de Rosaal [Jacob Roszály], castellanus castris Quinqueecclesiensis, coram nobis personaliter constitutus, libere confessus extitit in hunc modum: quomodo ipse quandam domum suam lapideam, Drakwlyahaza vocatam, in civitate Quinqueecclesiensi fundatam, qui ab orientali fundus Benedicti Zabo [Benedict Szabó], meridionali et occidentali vie plaustrales communes, aquilonari vero plagis domus rectoratus altaris Sancte Katherine virginis in ecclesia parochiali Sancti Bartholomei apostoli in dicta civitate Quinqueecclesiensi fundata, constructi contigue vicinari asseruntur, quam quidem domum sive fundum generosa domina Iustina, relicta condam Dragwlyha waywode, cuidam Dionisio [Denis] famulo suo ob serviciorum suorum merita, in perpetuum contulisse perhibetur, sed postmodum eodem Dionisio in crimine latrocinii deprehenso et ob id iussu regie maiestatis per iudicem et iuratos cives huius civitatis Quinqueecclesiensis, uti idem Iacobus Kwn retulit, laqueo mortis iuridice condempnato eandem domum sive/aut fundum idem serenissimus dominus Mathias rex etc. [Matthias] ac reverendus dominus Sigismundus, episcopus huius ecclesie nostre Quinqueecclesiensis [Sigismund Ernuszt, bishop of Pécs], dicto Iacobo Kwn pro fidelibus serviciis suis per notam dicti commissis criminis manifestam sub certis libertatibus et privilegiis contulisset perhenniter possidendam egregiis Georgio de Gywla [George of Gyula/Gyulai] ac Iohanni [John], Gregorio [Gregor] et Michaeli [Michael] filiis eiusdem ipsorumque heredibus et posteritatibus universis pro ducentis florenis auri puri iam plene persolutis et perceptis dedisset et vendidisset iure perpetuo et irrevocabiliter tenendam, possidendam pariter et habendam, simul cum cunctis suis libertatibus et privilegiis, aliis etiam utilitatibus et pertinentiis ad eandem de iure spectantibus et pertinere debentibus, quibus scilicet hactenus dictus Iacobus Kwn tenuisset et possedisset, et signanter una sessione deserta penes dictum fundum curie a parte meridionali habitam, nullum ius nullamve iuris et dominii proprietatem in eadem sibi ipsi reservando, sed totum et omne ius ac omnem iuris et dominii proprietatem, si quod et quam memoratus Iacobus Kwn in eadem domo qualitercumque imposterum habere speraret, in prefatos

Georgium, Iohannem, Gregorium et Michaellem de Gywla ac eorum heredes transferens pleno iure, harum nostrarum vigore et testimonio litterarum mediante.

Datum feria quinta proxima post festum nativitatis gloriosissime Virginis Marie, anno Domini Millesimo Quadringentesimo Octogesimo Nono. (Pécs, 10 September 1489)

No children were born out of Vlad's marriage to Justine (celebrated probably in 1474–1475, as Justine's first husband had died around 1470), nor from Justine's three other marriages (this was probably the reason why Matthias gave the approximately thirty years-old Justine in marriage to Vlad, while he made ready to marry young Beatrice of Aragon, the daughter of the ruthless king of Naples, the controversial Ferdinand, the bastard son of Alphonse V, one of Hunyadi's temporary Italian allies; however, the highly ambitious Beatrice soon proved to be as infertile as the new wife of the former and future ruler of Wallachia).³

It mattered more (in those days at least) that the marriage was another attempt (initiated again from the north) to reconcile the rival branches of the Basarab dynasty, the Dans (to which Hunyadi was connected on his father's side, though less than he or his son would have wanted) and the Draculs (represented at that time by mainly Vlad III, Radu III the Fair and the future Vlad IV the Monk, the sons of Vlad II, Hunyadi's victim). Even more important was the fact that, through his marriages with first cousins (one might have been more than that) of Matthias, Vlad became (and as far we know, remained) the only medieval Wallachian ruler twice connected through close matrimonial alliances to a king (the second time after the stories on his abuses and cruelties had spread). From this point of view, the stories on Vlad's abuses and cruelties, accepted as such by the adversaries of his royal protector and guardian (which Matthias himself had helped spread by bragging about Vlad's bloody exploits against the Turks on the eve of the Hunyadi-Dracul marriage of 1462), must be perceived differently and not in the sense of a defamation campaign coordinated by Matthias (whose character could have accommodated this alternative, too). If there was a true anti-Dracula propaganda campaign, the mastermind behind it was not Matthias but his nemesis, Frederick III (who never failed to capitalize on Matthias' mistakes), perhaps 'accompanied' in the east by Stephen III of Moldavia (who rose in Vlad III's Danubian 'place').

In the end, in relation to his most important Christian neighbors, Matthias Corvinus of Hungary and Stephen III the Great of Moldavia, Vlad III the Impaler of Wallachia had two fatal flaws that dramatically affected his career and image: Vlad III lost his throne, whereas Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III managed to keep theirs for decades (while their cruelties, in Transylvania in 1467–1468 and in Bohemia in subsequent years, in king Matthias's case, and,

for instance, in Wallachia in the 1470s and early 1480s, in Stephen III's case, were by no means less excessive than Vlad's), and he lacked the diplomatic skills needed to survive on the local and regional level.⁴



Notes

1. For Vlad's wife of 1462: Ion BIANU, "Ștefan cel Mare: Câteva documente din arhivul de stat de la Milano," *Columna lui Traian* (Bucharest) 4, 1–2 (1883): 30–47 (no. 1, pp. 34–35; unfortunately we could not identify the report in the Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 349, 1462). Because the Hunyadi genealogy still contains several gaps, as well as histories, some created and instrumentalized already by Matthias (Al. Simon, "La parentèle ottomane des Hunyadis," in *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit: Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinopel* (= *Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, CDX), eds. Christian Gastgeber, Ekaterini Mitsiou, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Mihailo Popović, Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, and Al. Simon (Vienna, 2011), 25–32), while the future palatine of Hungary, Emeric Szapolyai, was apparently Hunyadi's illegitimate son (Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary 895–1526* (London, 2001), 308–310), we cannot rule out the possibility that this wife was one of John's illegitimate daughters (or the daughter of John's half or illegitimate sisters). She was probably Vlad's first bride, as Mihnea I the Vile was most likely an illegitimate son of Vlad, who nonetheless spent most of his life in Hungary (Alexandru Lapedatu, "Mihnea cel Rău și ungurii, 1508–1510," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională* (Cluj) 1 (1921–1922): 46–76). As to "Vlad's betrayal," the dating of a charter issued by Mehmed in Wallachia on November 15 could be decisive (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, p. 232). If the charter dates from 1476 (as indicated also by its last editor), this would mean the victory achieved by Stephen III of Moldavia, Stephen Báthory (royal court judge) and Vlad in Wallachia in late 1476 was in fact a victory over the sultan (a Christian rarity throughout the medieval and early modern ages). If the document dates from 1462 (in this case too, there is no supplementary dating evidence that might truly favor one or another dating), this would indicate that the sultan had returned to Wallachia (he had retreated south of the Danube in September at the latest) in view of a major prize (Matthias had come east with only a few thousand men). Ten days later, Vlad was arrested by the experienced Jan Jiskra, one of Hunyadi's main adversaries, who had recently entered Matthias's service (Al. Simon, "Dracula Rising: Crusader Honor and Treason at the Ottoman Border," forthcoming). Finally, given this episode and Vlad's Hungarian survival, it is possible that he knew the truth (had evidence) of the capture of Szilágyi, to whom he had been rather closely connected after Matthias, or indeed his entourage,

- broke up with Szilágyi, then regent of Hungary, in mid 1458 quite soon after young Matthias's enthronement.
2. For Vlad in Hungary (1463–1468), for instance: Archivio di Stato di Genova (Genoa), Banco di San Giorgio, Sala 34, *Caffae-Massaria*, reg. 590/1243, 1463, c. 171^r (1 March 1463; “arrived” under 1462 in Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria românilor*, vol. 3 [1399-1499] (Bucharest, 1899), 42); [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*, XXV, Scriptores, II), ed. Speratus Nastilis (Zagreb, 1893), 371 (the chronicle clearly mentions the voivode of Wallachia who accompanied, together with those still loyal to him, Matthias in Bosnia, but, as Radu III was loyal to the sultan, this voivode was “logically” identified with Peter III Aron, former ruler of Moldavia, by Victor Eskenazy, “O precizare asupra politicii externe a Țării Românești în vremea lui Radu cel Frumos,” *Revista de istorie* (Bucharest) 30, 11 (1977): 1665–1667; it is probably not without interest that, in 1463–1464, Matthias's Bosnian spearhead was Emeric Szapolyai, and that Voica, Mihnea's wife, was related to the Szapolyai family, according to John Szapolyai, the future king of Hungary; Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, vol. 15/1, *Acte și scrisori din arhivele orașelor ardelene (Bistrița, Brașov, Sibiu)*, ed. N. Iorga (Bucharest, 1911), no. 390, p. 216); Al. Simon, “Valahii la Baia: Regatul Ungariei, Domnia Moldovei și Imperiul Otoman la 1467,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol* (Iași) 47 (2009): 127–150 (in 1466–1467, however, in view of his planned anti-Ottoman campaign, also given his recent Wallachian experiences, Matthias seemingly focused on winning over Radu). Vlad and his wife in 1464: *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 6, 1458–1473, eds. Gustav Gündisch, Herta Gündisch, Gernot Nussbächer, and Konrad Gündisch (Bucharest, 1981), no. 3389, p. 192; no. 3400, p. 200 (documents in the Romanian National Archives, Sibiu County Branch, Archiv der Stadt Hermannstadt, Coll. Post, V, no. 1162; Urkunden, II, no. 236). The royal appointment of the administrators of the estate on 1 March 1464 (Magyar Országos Levéltár (Budapest) (MOL), Diplomataikai Levéltár, [no.] 29294) that might have clarified the Amlaş issue was poorly preserved and cannot support solid interpretations.
 3. For the last years of Vlad's life: Ștefan Andreescu, “L'Action de Vlad Țepeș dans le sud-est de l'Europe en 1476,” *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* (Bucharest) 15, 2 (1977): 259–272; Al. Simon, “Să nu ucizi o pasăre cântătoare: soarta unui *fortissimus rei Christiane athleta* în ochii Veneției,” in *Pe urmele trecutului: Profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani*, eds. Susana Andea, Ioan-Aurel Pop, and Alexandru Simon (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), 159–169 (161–162). For the deed issued by the chapter of Pécs for Vlad's house (acquired probably during the build-up for the royal winter campaign of 1475–1476, as Pécs was located near the southern border of the Hungary proper): Státny Ústredný Archív (Bratislava), [Section] L, Rody i panstava, I. Rody (L–I), *Révay spoločný archív rodu*, fund *Gyulay*, 10. 25 (10 September 1489; copy in MOL, (U section) Diplomataikai Fényképgyűjtemény, [no.] 260135]. The document was identified by András Kubinyi (*Mátyás Király* (Budapest, 2001), 14–15; English

version: *Matthias Rex* (Budapest, 2008), 39–40; from which the main data on Justine were extracted; Kubinyi however claimed that Justine died only at the end of the century). Based on the citation of the late professor (first in his “Matthias Corvinus: The King and the Man,” in *Between Worlds*, 1, *Stephen the Great, Matthias Corvinus and their Time* (= *Mélanges d’Histoire Générale*, new ser., I, 1), eds. László Koszta, Ovidiu Mureșan, and Al. Simon (Cluj-Napoca, 2007), 21–22), who, however, like most (not only) Hungarian scholars was unaware of Vlad’s marriage of 1462, we have used the source (e.g. in *Ștefan cel Mare și Matia Corvin: O coexistență medievală* (Cluj-Napoca, 2007), 197, 296). The source remained unedited in the Hungarian scientific environment (on one hand, the document did not have a major direct Hungarian impact, on the other, the photocopy in Budapest was of very poor quality and, paradoxically, the original in Bratislava was difficult to access). Upon completing this paper, we learned that in 2010, when Pécs became European Cultural Capital, the source was edited by Tamás Fedeles, “*Drakwlyabza*,” in *Fons, skepsis, lex: Ünnepi tanulmányok a 70 esztendő Makk Ferenc tiszteletére*, eds. Tibor Almási, Éva Révész, and György Szabados (Szeged, 2010), 107–114 (the transcriptions differ only in regard to rather minor aspects concerning endings of words and abbreviations and the exact date, 8 or 10 September). As to the other persons mentioned in the document from 1489, the main data comes from studies on the Hungarian events of later years: A. Kubinyi, “Die Komitaspanschaften im Jahr 1490 und das Problem der Thronfolge von János Corvin,” in András Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus: Die Regierung eines Königreiches in Ostmitteleuropa* (Herne, 1999), 113–137; György Székely, “A rendek válaszüton: a dinasztia váltás harcai 1490–1492 ben,” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* (Budapest) 116, 2 (2003): 427–456; Tibor Neumann, “Békekötés Pozsonyban—országgyűlés Budán: A Jagelló–Habsburg kapcsolatok egy fejezete (1490–1492)” (I–II), *Századok* (Budapest) 164, 2 (2010): 335–372; 165, 2 (2011): 293–347. The marriage between Justine and Vlad was celebrated at approximately the same time with the conclusion of the negotiations for Matthias’s marriage to Ferdinand’s daughter. This coincidence and Ferdinand’s character (if Vlad was said to eat among his impaled victims, Ferdinand was supposed to have stuffed his executed enemies and then had them set at a special table in his palace), the only monarch who, following the intervention of Pope Sixtus IV, agreed to establish a matrimonial connection with the contested Matthias, might be of interest in regard to the nature of the relation between Matthias and Vlad and also in regard to Matthias’s own nature (for Matthias’s Neapolitan marriage and the complications associated with it, see also Szabacs de Vajay, “Un ambassadeur bien choisi: Bernardus de Frangipanus et sa mission à Naples, en 1476,” in *The Man of Many Devices who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak*, eds. Balázs Nagy and Marcell Sebök (Budapest, 1999), 550–557).

4. For the Dans and Draculs in the context of John’s and Matthias’s partial transalpine Wallachian origins, as well as ambitions: Al. Simon, “Antonio Bonfini’s *Valachorum regulus*: Stephen the Great, Transylvania and Matthias Corvinus,” in *Between Worlds*, 1: 205–224. Because Justine had no offspring from any of her marriages and her marriage to Vlad only took place around 1474–1475, the two known legitimate sons

of Vlad III, Mircea (?) and Vlad, were born of Vlad III's first "Hunyadi marriage." Both sons grew up in the "political laboratory" for Wallachian rulers in Budapest and were, in the early 1480s, members of the royal retinue (Vlad), respectively (Mircea) of the retinue of Matthias's trustee, Johann (Jan) Filipecz, bishop of Oradea (for an overall perspective: Ferenc Forgach, *Rerum Hungaricarum sui temporis commentarii libri XXII* (Bratislava-Košice, 1788), 275; Matei Cazacu, *Dracula* (Paris, 2004), 229–237; it is interesting to note that the clearest information on the fate of these sons of Vlad prior to Matthias's death comes from Moldavian and Russian circles, connected to Buda following the alliance concluded between Matthias, Ivan III of Moscow and Stephen III of Moldavia in 1482–1483). Unfortunately, we cannot say anything on their age (very important for determining the fate of Vlad's first wife), more than that they should have been quite young at that time (this would imply that they were born around 1470 and that Vlad was not separated from his first wife until her death), for, aside from the foreign and domestic problems posed by Vlad III, Stephen III and Matthias had to resort to Transalpine Wallachian princely solutions such as Mircea, the son of a *whore*, or to the former monk Vlad (IV). For the classic perspective on Vlad III's "dark legend": Șerban Papacostea, "Cu privire la geneza și răspândirea povestirilor despre faptele lui Vlad Țepeș," *Romanoslavica* (Bucharest) 13 (1966): 159–167. A (major) aspect was however constantly overlooked. Frederick III and his entourage constantly accepted and spread in their turn the "dark legend" (see also Thomas Ebendorf, *Chronica regem Romanorum (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1, new ser., 18)*, ed. Harald Zimmermann, vol. 2 (Hannover, 2003), 925–926). This was highly unnatural and contrary to the interests of the emperor in case the "legend" was the product of the low-born Hungarian impostor of Wallachian origin, whom Frederick III wanted to vanquish (see also Al. Simon, "Refacerea trecutului dorit: ipostaze medievale, moderne și contemporane ale unui monarh," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Barițiu* (Cluj-Napoca) 54 (2011): 75–86). The explanation for this paradox is probably twofold. On one hand, most of what was said about Vlad was true. On the other, the matrimonial ties between Vlad and Matthias and their Wallachian origin composed, on the background of Vlad's actions, a compromising unit for the king (both royal chroniclers, John Thuróczy, a representative of the traditional Hungarian nobility, in 1488, and, in later years, the humanist Antonio Bonfini, brought to Hungary by queen Beatrice, refrained from mentioning the fact that there had been two marriages, and even one seems to have been too much). From this "image issue," Matthias partially escaped because he had arrested Vlad. Matthias's chance was that from the end of 1463 until early 1470 his relations with Frederick III were predominantly excellent (following the treaty of Wiener Neustadt) and that, in the decades to come, Matthias found several supporters among the German opponents of the emperor (Karl Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III. und das Reich: Zum hunyadisch-habsburgischen Gegensatz im Donauraum*, 2nd edition (Munich, 1989)). As for Stephen III, the joint Moldavian-Ottoman siege of Kilia in the summer of 1462, his reluctance in the 1470s towards Vlad and the ways through which the "legend" of Vlad III spread in the Greek rite environment do not indicate a supporter of Vlad. Stephen only accepted him fol-

lowing Matthias's interventions and the lack of better Transalpine alternatives, or for image reasons in the relation with Venice (Al. Simon, "The Costs and Benefits of Anti-Ottoman Warfare: Documents on the Case of Moldavia (1475–1477)," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* (Bucharest) 48 (2009): 37–53). In 1502 (like in the case of Marino Sanudo's "crusader inventories" for his *I Diarii* or le *Vite dei dogi*), perhaps also under the influence of Stephen's "excessive" ability to operate between *Cross* and *Turk*, the overall Venetian attention given to Vlad III's actions of 1461–1462 still exceeded the one granted to Stephen III's celebrated anti-Ottoman victory of Vaslui (January 1475).

Abstract

Propaganda and Matrimony: Dracula between Hunyadi and Habsburg

Vlad III the Impaler of Wallachia (*Dracula*) is usually believed to have been married to a close relative of King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (either a half-sister or a cousin of the monarch). New and older sources reveal however that Vlad III was married in fact twice to a close relative of Matthias Corvinus (the first time in 1462 and the second time around 1474–1475). These two marriages thus re-open the controversial question of the spread and nature of the late medieval stories on Dracula's cruelties. Given also the fact that these stories were accepted and enhanced by the entourage of the king's arch-enemy, Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg, it becomes unlikely that Matthias was the mastermind behind these stories in order to cover up his own anti-Ottoman failures of 1461–1462. In the end, in relation to his most important Christian neighbors, Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III of Moldavia, Vlad had two fatal flaws that dramatically affected his career and his image: he lost his throne, whereas Matthias and Stephen managed to keep theirs for decades (while their cruelties, in Transylvania in 1467–1468 and in Bohemia in subsequent years, in Matthias's case, and, for instance, in Wallachia in the 1470s and early 1480s, in Stephen's case, were by no means less excessive than those of Vlad), and he lacked the diplomatic skills needed to survive on the local and regional level.

Keywords

Vlad III the Impaler (Dracula), Frederick III of Habsburg, Matthias Corvinus, Stephen III of Moldavia, dynastic alliances, crusading