

Relations between Stephen the Great and Transylvania

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The relations between Stephen the Great's Moldavia and Transylvania have to be, undoubtedly, integrated into the general foreign policy promoted by the Moldavian prince¹, in particular towards Hungary. The Voivodate of Transylvania was a country (province) of the Hungarian Kingdom. But such a political, economical, historical integration, although necessary, fails to fully reveal the complexity and intensity of late 15th century Moldavian-Transylvanian relations. Thus, other aspects must be taken into account.

First of all, Transylvania was not just Moldavia's western neighbor, but, as a country, had an ethnic and demographic Romanian majority. Second, in spite of the fact that it was a province of Hungary and was ruled by an elite, in general, of non-Romanian descent, Transylvania had preserved a certain autonomy. It was viewed as a *regnum* different from the *regnum Hungariae*. It was a voivodate, like Walachia and Moldavia, who, by rejecting the Hungarian overhand in the 1300', had kept a Romanian character also on the political level. In the third place, the Moldavian dynasty (the Muşats), Stephen's family, had its distant origins on Transylvania's northern border, more precisely in Maramureş ((Maramosch, Máramaros). After some two decades of resistance against Louis I of Anjou (Nagy Lajos), the Great, voivode Bogdan, with his followers had left for Moldavia (1363-1364), another Romanian land (a *Valachia* according to contemporary sources).

Finally, before conquering the throne, Stephen had lived, probably in the time span 17th of October 1451 – 11th of August 1456, in Walachia (from where his mother was) and in Transylvania (the land of his ancestors on his father's side²), in Hungary, where another Romanian, John (Ioan/ Iancu, János) Hunyadi (*Johannes Olah*), a former voivode of Transylvania, who had reached the highest political and military dignities and a considerable wealth. From this Transylvanian Romanian, who had become a Catholic and Christendom's great general, Europe's savior, Stephen III learned to fully accept the greatest political challenge of his lifetime, the anti-Ottoman resistance. Matthias' father, Iancu, and Stephen III were the only Romanians upon whom the Papacy bestowed the titles of *athletes of the Christian faith*, *athletes of Christ* (*athletae Christi*).

In light of these remarks, it is easier to understand why Stephen III's Transylvanian relations had a special character and were more consistent than in other political cases. Further on, other motifs that could have strengthened the peculiar relations will be revealed.

Aside from origin and genesis, the relations between Transylvania and Stephen had other particularities that must be stressed out. Despite the oscillations that characterized his relations to other states, in spite of the initially tense relations between Buda (Ofen) and Suceava (1457 till around 1470), his Transylvanian connections remained strong. On the

¹ Şerban Papacostea, 'Relațiile internaționale ale Moldovei în vremea lui Ștefan cel Mare' [Moldavia's Foreign Relations in Stephen the Great's Time], *RdI*, XXXV (1982), 5-6, pp. 607-638.

² Nicolae Grigoraş, *Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare* [Stephen the Great's Moldavia] (Iasi 1982), p. 28.

other hand, once again in comparison to other foreign relations, the relations between Stephen and Transylvania are the most dense in content, covering almost every domain, from the political, economic and military ones to the ethnic, religious and dynastic ones.

Stephen showed great attention to the commerce with Transylvania, although the main international trade line going through Moldavia was from north to south, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Three aspects played a major role in this political respect: first, the Moldavian-Transylvanian commercial tradition from the time of Alexander I *cel Bun* (the Good/ the Right/ the Just), that Stephen invoked, then, the economic complementarity between Moldavia and Transylvania and last, but not the least, the fall of Byzantium that led to the so-called Ottoman closing of the Straights.

Shortly after the fall of Byzantium, Moldavia became a tribute paying state of the Porte. Moldavia formally preserved the function of the trade route (*the Moldavian route*) passing through it. This did not last for long. Between 1461 and 1484, the Ottomans took Trapezunt and the northern coast of Asia Minor, Caffa, Chilia, Cetatea Albă (Akkerman). The Black Sea became an "Ottoman Lake", systematically exploited on the economic level.

Still, Stephen III was able to impose and to maintain a compulsory status of middlemen between Poland and the Ottoman Empire for the Moldavian merchants. Nevertheless, this transit (to a certain degree) commerce failed to provide the country's necessities. Thus, the relations to Transylvania, in particular with Braşov (Kronstadt, Brassó), Bistriţa (Bistriz, Besztrece) and Sibiu (Szeben, Hermannstadt), although collateral, developed and expanded. Stephen III the Great took drastic measures against Polish and Ottoman merchants, intended to restrict their trade in Moldavia and to protect the interests of the local Moldavian merchants. He had a completely different attitude towards Braşov³.

From his first year of rule (1457), the young Stephen III invited the merchants of Braşov to come and trade in Moldavia. On the 13th of March 1458, he renewed *to all the inhabitants of Braşov and all the merchants and the whole Bârsa Land* Alexander I's privilege for *they should come at their own good will to our country with their merchandise [...] and to have the permission and the liberty to travel through My Lordship's entire country, to cities and towns, to sell their goods*. In a letter of 1460, addressed to his counterpart of Vaslui, the judge of Braşov proved the mutual character of these relations. He stated that there was *agreement and peace with Lord Stephen Voivode*, so that neither the Moldavians, in Transylvania, nor the inhabitants of Braşov, in Moldavia, were to be obstructed in selling and purchasing merchandise. Moreover, in 1464, Matthias Corvinus himself ordered the captains in the Szekler Seats not to obstruct in any way the merchandise from passing through their territory, from and to Moldavia⁴.

After the Moldavian-Hungarian political crisis which culminated with king Matthias Corvinus' defeat at Baia (Banya), in December 1467, the mutually advantageous economic relations were resumed. In 1472, Stephen reassured the merchants of Braşov that they

³ Ş. Papacostea, 'Începuturile politicii comerciale a Țării Româneşti şi Moldovei (secolele XIV-XVI). Drum şi stat' [The Beginnings of Walachia and Moldavia's Commercial Politics (14th-16th Centuries). Road and State], *SMIM*, X (1983), pp. 35, 47-48.

⁴ *Humuzaki*, XV-1, pp. 55, 59-60; *Documentele Ştefan*, II, pp. 259-260; Ştefan Pascu, 'Relațiile economice dintre Moldova şi Transilvania în timpul lui Ştefan cel Mare' [The Economic Relations between Moldavia and Transylvania in the Time of Stephen the Great], in *Ştefan cel Mare. Studii* [Stephen the Great: Studies] (Bucharest 1956), pp. 203-217; Ion Toderaşcu, *Unitatea românească medievală* [The Medieval Romanian Unity], I (Bucharest 1988), pp. 109-110.

were free to trade without any obstacle or damage east of the Carpathians. Likewise, in 1473, Matthias called the Moldavians to trade in Transylvania, where they were to enjoy free passage and commercial advantages. About the same (1473 or 1474), Stephen III the Great restated the trade freedom and princely protection of the merchants of Hungary that were allowed to trade, in times of peace as well as in times of war⁵.

Following these mutual guarantees, the political treaty between king Matthias and Stephen (12th of July 1475) had an economic clause, referring to the safety and stability of the trade between the two states. A document issued by king Wladislaw (Władysław, Ulászló) II Jagiello (1493) reveals that the trade was intense and had a strong tradition also by the way of the city of Bistrița⁶. These examples show that the commercial relations between Moldavia and Transylvania (Hungary in general) in the time of Stephen the Great were constant, particularly intense and mutually advantageous.

Still, several clues indicate that the Transylvanians enjoyed, in Moldavia, a slight commercial advantage that led to some shy protectionist measures on the side of the Moldavian rulers. But, because in Moldavia, other than in Walachia, the Transylvanian merchants lacked, yet, the means and possibilities to install a real commercial monopoly, stronger measures were not needed. Such decisions were necessary only in the case of the Polish, from Lwów (Lemberg), and Ottoman merchants. Only in the mid 1500' did Alexander III Lăpușeanu instate border fairies in western Moldavia in order to counteract Brașov *Stoppelrecht* (deposit rights) and thus restore the balance.

The political relations between Moldavia and Hungary, regardless of their nature, stimulating or restraining on the commercial level, were constant and sometimes winding. For Stephen III, who regarded Moldavia as a *gate to Christendom*, the anti-Ottoman political and military collaboration with Walachia and Transylvania was a key to political success. Stephen's conflicts with some Walachian rulers, personal rivalries aside, were fueled by the Ottoman allegiance of those rulers who thus endangered Moldavia and Transylvania's welfare. Stephen's attempts to install anti-Ottoman rulers in Walachia were meant to protect Moldavia, but also Transylvania and Hungary, in general.

After the long anti-Ottoman effort, under Hunyadi's partonage (1441-1456), Hungary underwent a major crisis. The realm, whose active forces seemed weakened, faced major uncertainties, in Transylvania also, even after Matthias rose to the throne. Plus, there were enough reasons for feuds between him and Stephen. Those reasons quickly surfaced.

Stephen III did not seem willing anymore to tolerate that one of Moldavia's major harbors, Chilia on the Danube Mounds, was under Hungarian control, since Peter II had *donated* it to Hunyadi (1448). On the other hand, Matthias knew that Stephen supported Frederic (Friedrich) III's claims to the Hungarian throne. Besides, Matthias kept calling Moldavia *Our Moldavian land*, a clear sign that he was, in his turn, unwilling to give up the Hungarian suzerainty over Moldavia⁷. The issue was still of concern, even though it seemed rather obsolete, since in 1387 Peter I had "chosen" the Polish suzerainty of Wladislaw I (II). Poland's overhand was "lighter" than that intended by Buda.

⁵ Hurmuzaki, XV-1, pp. 59-60, 80; *Documente Ștefan*, II, pp. 316-317; Ioan Drăgan ('Un român ardelean în solie la Ștefan cel Mare la 1475' [A Transylvanian Romanian Envoy to Stephen the Great in 1475], *AI/AI*, XXIV² (1987), p. 361) has proven that Stephen's trade privilege for the merchants of Hungary, usually dated on the 10th of June 1475, was issued some 1-2 years earlier.

⁶ *Documente Ștefan*, II, p. 333; Pascu, 'Relațiile economice', p. 211.

⁷ Ș. Papacostea, *Stephen the Great, Prince of Moldavia (1457-1504)* (Bucharest 1981¹), pp. 28-32 (and pp. 30-32 of the 1990 revised edition, *Ștefan cel Mare, domn al Moldovei (1457-1504)*).

Another reason for conflict was the Transylvanian shelter given to Stephen's uncle and former ruler of Moldavia, Peter Aron (1462), who aimed of regaining the throne. On several occasion, Stephen rode into eastern Transylvania in order to capture him. A major act of hostility towards Hungary was considered his failed attempt of 1462 to recapture Chilia. He eventually seized Chilia in 1465. Finally, Bonfini accused Stephen of protecting Matthias' enemies fled to Moldavia and of supporting the Transylvanian rebellion of 1467.

All these led to Matthias' Moldavian campaign (November-December 1467). Heavily wounded, defeated in the battle of Baia (14th-15th of December) and humiliated, he had to retreat. One of the pretenders to the Moldavian throne (*Berindei*) that Matthias had brought with him seems to have died in battle. The other one, Peter Aron, was still alive⁸.

After his hastily return, Matthias ordered the barbaric execution of some rebels that he had previously thought to forgive. As already decided by the Diet in spring 1467, the Romanian lands (districts) Amlaş, Făgăraş, Rodna were to remain at his disposal in order to be still donated to dethroned rulers of Walachia and Moldavia and thus maintain the royal pressure on the acting rulers. Matthias imposed an exceptional tax of 400000 gold florins on the Transylvanians in view of a new new Moldavian campaign. Skared by his rage and harsh decisions, some Transylvanians fled to Moldavia and Poland⁹.

The new royal campaign in Moldavia did not take place. But, because Peter Aron was still sheltered in the eastern parts of Transylvania, in April 1468, Stephen and 1800 riders tried to capture him but failed. Two more raids took place in 1469, when Matthias was involved in the battle for the Bohemian crown. Probably after the second raid, Peter Aron was captured and executed by the Moldavian ruler¹⁰.

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From the perspective of Moldavia's long war with the Ottoman Empire (1473-1486), Stephen's relations to Hungary, to Transylvania, were of great importance. As early as 1470, he made massive acquisitions of weapons in Braşov. On collision course with the Porte, Moldavia strenghted her regional status and became more and more active on the European level, seizing to be a mere object of conflict between Poland and Hungary¹¹.

Under these circumstances, even without sealing a treaty with Matthias, Stephen kept and diversified his Transylvanian connections. Probably prior to 1473, he had anti-Ottoman negotiations with the vice-voievode of Transylvania, Balázs Magyar, and Bistriţa. Alongside some 40000 Moldavians, 6800 Transylvanians (5000 of them were Szeklers) contributed to Stephen's victory of Vaslui (10th of January 1475) over the Ottoman army¹².

Besides, the authoritarian politics, the heavy fiscality promoted by Matthias and some of the Transylvanian voivodes caused unrest amongst the Szeklers. Stephen III supported them and sometimes encouraged their resistance. Długosz wrote that, from

⁸ Idem, 'Un épisode de la rivalité polono-hongroise au XVe siècle: la campagne de Matthias Corvin en Moldavie (1467) à la lumière d'une source inédite', *RRH*, VIII (1969), 6, pp. 967-979; Konrad G. Gündisch, 'Participarea saşilor la răzvrătirea din anul 1467 a transilvănenilor împotriva lui Matei Corvin' [The Saxon Involvement in 1467 Transylvanian Rebellion against Matthias Corvinus], *SUBBH*, XVII (1972), 2, pp. 21-30; I.-A. Pop, 'Valoarea mărturiilor documentare despre expediția întreprinsă de regele Matei Corvin la 1467 în Moldova' [The Value of the Documentary Evidences on King Matthias Corvinus' Moldavian Campaign of 1467], *RdI*, XXXIV (1981), 1, pp. 131-139.

⁹ *Hurmuzaki*, II-2, p. 179; Grigoraş, *Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare*, pp. 82-87.

¹⁰ Papacostea, *Stephen the Great*, p. 21; Grigoraş, *Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 88.

¹¹ *Documente Ștefan*, II, pp. 328-329; Papacostea, *Stephen the Great*, p. 40.

¹² Grigoraş, *Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare*, pp. 107-108.

1474 on, the Szeklers had sworn allegiance to Stephen, that the *Land of the Szeklers* had become part of Moldavia and that they gave a tenth of their men to Stephen for his ottoman fights. It was also said that they even paid the census to Stephen. In 1492, the Szeklers once again rebelled against the Transylvanian voivode and threatened the new king of Hungary that they would leave Transylvania for Moldavia and Walachia¹³.



The popes Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII

Stephen III maintained good relations with the Saxons from Bistrița, Sibiu and especially Brașov. The prosperous commerce assuring weapons and different artifacts to Moldavia and a safe and advantageous eastern market to the Transylvanian cities was a reassuring economic background for politic relations. Thus, for instance, the city of Brașov seems to have been constantly loyal to Stephen III the Great of Moldavia.

On June 5, 1476, Stephen announced Brașov that he was in camp with his entire army. Stephen III expected from them, *his friends*, news on the Ottoman moves. The intense correspondence (e.g. June 11, 1467, January 1477, April 20, 26, 1479, July 9, 1480) shows that they mutually and periodically informed each other on the Ottoman moves and aims, that they had spies in various places, especially in Walachia and in *Turcia*, that they had a great deal of respect for one another, that they made common plans¹⁴.

The city's letter of April 26, 1479 is a classic example of *Christian* anti-Ottoman solidarity, upheld by Stephen's great prestige. The city informed Stephen that she was in great danger because of the *cruel Turks* and that only he could defend Transylvania¹⁵:

....it seems as if You were chosen and sent by God to rule and to protect Transylvania. With great desire and love we ask Your Highness to get near to these parts and to protect them from the above mentioned too cruel Turks [Stephen had a similar perspective. On July 9, 1480, he wrote to the city council]: *Your Lordship* [!] *should well research with Your spies* <the area> *and if Your Lordship should see that those enemy leave, either against You, or against Us, be ready to rise together...*

Seemingly, many Transylvanians put their hopes in the Moldavian ruler rather than in the king of Hungary, who neglected these regions in favour of his western political goals.

¹³ *Długosz* (1711-1712), col. 515; Ioan Sabău, 'Relațiile politice dintre Moldova și Transilvania în timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare' [The Political Relations between Moldavia and Transylvania in the Time of Stephen the Great], in *Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 229.

¹⁴ Toderășcu, *Unitatea românească*, p. 167.

¹⁵ *Documente Ștefan*, II, pp. 354-355, 357; Toderășcu, *Unitatea românească*, p. 167.

On the other hand, Moldavia too understood to carry the anti-Ottoman fight and defence together with Transylvania. The Transylvanian help would have been more than welcome for Stephen in the summer of 1476, when Mehmed II invaded Moldavia. But help came only after the major Ottoman-Moldavian clash. Only on August 16, 1476, did the Transylvanian army, led by future voivode Stephen (István) Báthory, near the Moldavian border. From there, Báthory sent some of his men in support to Stephen III, at his request¹⁶.

It seems that, alongside other factors, the march of the Transylvanian troops lead to the sultan's retreat. His campaign had failed and Stephen kept his throne. Afterwards, in accordance to the agreement concluded between Matthias and Stephen, the Transylvanian army, with former ruler Vlad III *Țepeș* (the Impaler) at royal court judge Stephen Báthory's side, joined forces with Stephen in Walachia and enthroned Vlad (November 1476)¹⁷.

Stephen III the Great of Moldavia had good relations to Stephen Báthory, while he was voivode of Transylvania (1479-1493). Stephen Báthory proved to be an anti-Ottoman fighter and an authoritarian leader, revealing tendencies to strengthen the autonomy of his Transylvanian Voivodate in the relation to Buda, in particular after the events of 1490.

Even closer were Stephen III's relations with Transylvanian voivode Bartholomew (Bartolomeu, Bertalan) Dragffy (1493-1499), a descendent of the old Romanian family of the *Drăgoșești* from Maramureș, who had ruled in Moldavia before Bogdan I, Stephen's ancestor. Apparently, Stephen III's son, Alexander married Bartholomew's daughter. In 1497, when the Poles invaded Moldavia, 12000 men led by Bartholomew Dragffy came to Stephen's aid. Dragffy even tried to settle the conflict between Moldavia and Poland¹⁸.

Stephen's relations to Transylvanian were far more reaching than the official contacts allow us to see. They went beyond the levels of the political-military administration and the elite (the privileged Estates) of the neighboring country. Transylvania was the only province of the realm led by a voivode, like it was the case for Walachia and Moldavia. Although, he was no ruler from God's grace, unlike the rulers of Walachia and Moldavia, the voivode of Transylvania also incarnated an old Romanian-Slavic institution, transformed by the Hungarian conquest. Moldavian soldiers and envoys on their frequent travels to Brașov, Bistrița, Sibiu, Buda or the Maramureș must have convinced themselves of the Romanian Orthodox majority that inhabited the province and defined it ethnically.

Moldavian officials learned more of these Transylvanian Romanians in 1475 when amongst the royal envoys sent to seal the treaty with Stephen III was the Romanian Michael (Mihail) of Peșteana. Like in the relations to Walachia, Matthias was wise enough to use Romanians from Transylvania. Besides, Sibiu, Brașov and Bistrița did the same¹⁹.

This envoy sent to Stephen III descended from an important Romanian family of *knezi*, who had been ennobled, from the Land of Hațeg (Hátszeg, Hotzing), in south-western Transylvania. His ancestors had been *knezi*-jurors in the Romanian assembly of Hațeg, mentioned since 1360²⁰. Lifted by his Romanian kinsman Iancu to high dignities,

¹⁶ Manole Neagoe, Olimpia Guțu, Mihail Guboglu, Radu Constantinescu, C. Vlad, *Războieni. Cincisute de ani de la campania din 1476* [Războieni. 500 Years since the Campaign of 1476] (Bucharest 1977), pp. 94-96, 189.

¹⁷ Grigoraș, *Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare*, p. 180.

¹⁸ Sabău, 'Relațiile economice', p. 228; Papacostea, 'Relațiile internaționale', p. 635.

¹⁹ Drăgan, 'Un român transilvănean', *passim*.

²⁰ I.-A. Pop, 'Mărturii documentare privind adunările cneziale ca instituții românești din Transilvania în veacurile XIV-XV' [Documentary Evidences on the Assemblies of Knezi as Romanian Institutions in Transylvania in the 14th-15th Centuries], *RdI*, XXXIV (1981), 11, pp. 2100-2104; Idem, *Instituții medievale românești din Transilvania* [The Romanian Medieval Institutions] (Cluj-Napoca 1991), pp. 60-62, 65.

such as count of Maramureş, Michael faithfully served Matthias, remaining profoundly attached to the Hunyadis. He was probably the main architect, on the Hungarian side, of the treaty of 1475 meant to assure anti-Ottoman collaboration and mutual trading advantages.

It is possible that, during the negotiations of 1475, in accordance with the medieval feudal rule of the vassalic contract, Stephen was promised two Transylvanian estates, Ciceu (Csicsó), Cetatea de Baltă (Kükülővár). But he only took effective possession over these domains after the political balance of the region suffered certain changes.

Faithful to the Ottoman Pontic and Danubian political principles, Bayezid II succeeded in conquering the Moldavian harbours of Chilia and Cetatea Albă, in summer 1484. Under these grave circumstances, lacking support from Matthias, on his way to Vienna, Stephen turned to Poland. Poland seemed more affected and concerned by the loss of the harbors.

Stephen III swore an oath of allegiance to Casimir (Kazimierz) IV (1485). He repelled several Ottoman attacks. The Porte tried to enthrone Peter *Hroiót Hronoda*, probably a son of Peter Aron. But the constant Ottoman pressure forced him to enter peace talks and seal a treaty, in parallel to the Ottoman-Polish talks initiated in 1486. Thus, both Hungary and Moldavia were interested in a new collaboration that took the form of a treaty in 1489²¹.

In the time when this treaty was sealed, in order to keep Moldavia as Hungary's eastern *guard* and out of the Ottoman political sphere, although Stephen was not inclined to accept such an inclusion, an older agreement regarding the Transylvanian estates became reality. Stephen, as the Walachian rulers, became a Hungarian feudal lord.

The estate of the fortress of Ciceu, in northern Transylvania, on the Great Someş (Nagy Samos), not too far from the royal city of Cluj (Klausenburg, Kolozsvár), had at that time some 55 villages, inhabited almost entirely by Romanians. In 1500, Stephen and his associated ruler, his son Bogdan, by means of Peter, castellan of Ciceu, bought from the Bánffys (Bánfis) some 6 more villages and in 1502 another one. The estate of Cetatea de Baltă, in central Transylvania, between the two Târnava-s (Küküllő-s), an estate with its economic center in the town of Târnăveni (Sankt Martin/ Marteskirch, Dicsőszentmárton), consisted of approximately 40 settlements, inhabited also mostly by Romanians. Further more, the Moldavian cote of arms, placed on glazed tiles or carved into stone, was discovered in Târnăveni, Bazna (Baassen, Bázna) and Boian (Bonnesdorf, Alsóbajom)²².

The exact circumstances and date of the donation are not yet known. A document from 1528 states that Ciceu was given to Stephen so that he *would not turn from the Crown after the loss of Chilia and Cetatea Albă*. A letter²³, sent by king Ferdinand I of Habsburg to Stephen V *Lăcustă* (the Lizard), Stephen the Great's grandson, reads: *the*

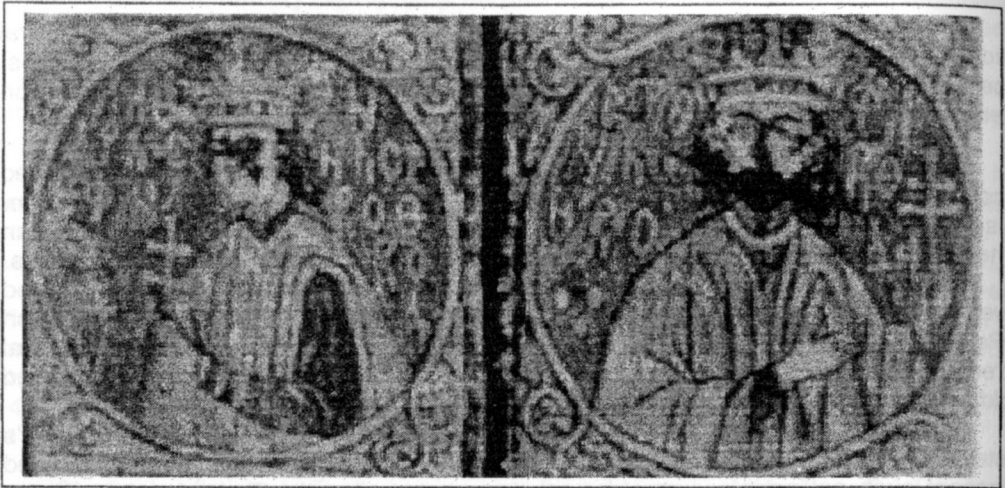
²¹ Ștefan Sorin Gorovei, 'Pacea moldo-otomană din 1486. Observații pe marginea unor texte', in *RdI*, XXXV (1982), 7, pp. 807-821 [a French version with an Addenda: 'La paix moldo-ottomane de 1486 (Quelques observations en marge de textes)', *RRH*, XXI (1982), 3-4, pp. 405-421]; for the bibliography on the issue: Papacostea, 'Relațiile internaționale ale Moldovei', pp. 630-631; Toderășcu, *Unitatea medievală*, p. 156.

²² Francisc [Ferenc] Kiss, 'Posesiuni moldovenești în Transilvania (secolele XV-XVI)' [Moldavian Possessions in Transylvania (14th-16th Century)], *SAI*, XXX-XXXI (1975), pp. 13-24; Radu Constantinescu, *Moldova și Transilvania în vremea lui Petru Rareș (1527-1546)* [Moldavia and Transylvania in the Time of Peter Rareș (1527-1546)] (Bucharest 1978), p. 11, 12-14, 19-21; Toderășcu, *Unitatea medievală*, pp. 145-146.

²³ *Actae*, pp. 172, 304; I.-A. Pop, 'Cu privire la domnia lui Ștefan Lăcustă' [On Stephen the Lizard's Reign], *AllAC*, XXVII (1985-1986), pp. 79-98; Toderășcu, *Unitatea medievală*, p. 145.

fortresses of Ciceu and Cetatea de Baltă, in the Transylvanian parts, were donated in compensation for the loss of Chilia and Cetatea Albă (1540). It was an official explanation.

Wladislaw II confirmed Matthias donation in 1492. In 1500, the same king issued a new deed of confirmation just for Ciceu. He showed that, given his military virtues, Stephen must be kept as an ally. Otherwise, the whole of Christendom would suffer a grief loss²⁴.



Stephen III the Great and Alexander (*Alexăndru*), his first heir

These testimonies help us establish some clearer landmarks. The estates were donated in order to strengthen the new treaty of 1489 (the treaty of 1475 was not valid anymore after the oath of Colomeea). They had to stimulate, once more, Stephen III the Great's allegiance to the Christian cause and to compensate, to some extent, the loss of the harbors. The donation took certainly place after 1484 (the loss of the harbors) and 1486 (the start of the Ottoman peace talks), probably around late 1488-early 1489, when the new treaty, very necessary in light of Poland's hegemonical plans, was sealed.

Besides these general political implications, Stephen III's possession of over 100 Transylvanian settlements has also a major Romanian ethnic significance. The presence of Moldavia's cote of arms was more than a symbol. It marked the fact that in those regions, where the Romanians were the ethnic majority, the political administration was also Romanian. In other words, the ruler of Moldavia was of the same ethnic origin and had the same confession as most of his subjects. This was a rather uncommon fact in Transylvania. Thus, medieval Moldavia's political patronage became also a spiritual one.

On the Ciceu estate, the churches of Vad (Rév/ Révkolostor), Ciceu and Mihăiești (Mihályfalva), are attributed to Stephen III. The first one, built with stone from the ruins of the roman castrum of Cășeu (Alsókosály), was influenced by both the local wooden architecture and the gothic one. In Feleac (Fellek), near Cluj, Stephen III's material aid helped built a gothic hall church on the place of an older wooden one. The churches of Vad and Feleac housed two orthodox bishoprics, two ecclesiastical centers, the first one focused on north-eastern Transylvania, the other one on the central areas²⁵.

²⁴ Toderășcu, *Unitatea medievală*, p. 145.

²⁵ Marius Porumb, *Bisericile din Feleac și Vad. Două ctitorii moldovenești din Transilvania* [The Churches of Feleac and Vad. Two Moldavian Foundations in Transylvania] (Bucharest

Of the bishops of Feleac, an old Romanian settlement with freedoms guaranteed by means of royal privileges, two were probably contemporary to Stephen III of Moldavia, Daniel (Daniil), mentioned in 1488 as archbishop, and, perhaps, Mark (Marcu), in the early 1500' (he was named *the Greek/ Orthodox*). When in 1498, Stephen's grand-treasurer Isac silverplated a *Gospel* for Feleac, the local institution was called a *metropoly*.

The Moldavian ruler probably donated the villages of Vad and Suarăș (Szóvárós) to the Vad bishopric. Both dioceses depended on the Metropoly of Moldavia, in Suceava, from where part of the bishops were sent and anointed. Especially the bishops of Vad, still in part unknown, were the Transylvanian political supporters of the Moldavian rulers²⁶.

Bogdan III, Stephen IV (Ștefăniță) and Peter IV Rareș (1504-1546) continued this policy. They defended and endowed the churches and expanded and reorganized the estates. For instance, in the early 1530', some 200 Transylvanian settlements, largely Romanian, with specific institutions, came under the Moldavian authority of Peter Rareș.

Stephen III the Great inaugurated a Moldavian policy towards Transylvania that the other Romanian state, called by Stephen himself, *l'altra Valachia*, had started in the mid 1300'. This institutional patronage, protectorate, of Walachia and Moldavia helped fortify the medieval national conscience of the Romanians. By his political and spiritual actions, Stephen the Great prolonged the Romanian state authority into Transylvania, where the Romanians had no more a state in their own name²⁷.

Antonio Bonfini, Beatrice of Aragon's secretary, delivered a undeniable prove of the Romanian national conscience and solidarity, based on the preservation of the common language of Latin origin. Sometime after 1486, he wrote that Transylvania was belted by the two Valachias. The three had once formed Dacia colonized by Trajan. He also stated that the Romanians are the descendents of those Romans, who have kept there ground inspite of the Barbarians. They still speak Romanian (Latin) and they *do not want to give it upon, they fight so strongly against <any attempt to change their language>, that you see them fighting not so much for the preservation of their lives, but of the language*. This was also proof that their language was in danger²⁸.

Stephen the Great brought his contribution to this Romanian resistance, to this process of identification through their language of Latin origin. This process was already revealed by Șerban Papacostea for the 14th century²⁹. Therefore it is not surprising that

1968), *passim*; Virgil Vătășianu, 'Considerațiuni privind evoluția arhitecturii eclesiastice pe teritoriul Arhiepiscopiei Vadului, Feleacului și Clujului' [Remarks on the Evolution of the Ecclesiastical Architecture on the Territory of the Archbishopric of Vad, Feleac and Cluj], in *Monumente istorice și de artă religioasă din Arhiepiscopia Vadului, Feleacului și Clujului* [Historic and Religious Art Monuments from the Archbishopric of Vad, Feleac and Cluj] (Cluj-Napoca 1982), p. 39.

²⁶ M. Porumb, *Pictura românească din Transilvania. Die rumänische Malerei in Siebenbürgen*, I (sec. XIV-XVII/ 14.-17. Jh.) (Cluj-Napoca 1981), pp. 44-47; Șt. Pascu, 'Istoricul Arhiepiscopiei Vadului, Feleacului și Clujului' [The History of the Archbishopric of Vad, Feleac and Cluj], in *Monumente istorice și de artă religioasă*, pp. 16-17; Toderășcu, *Unitatea medievală*, p. 149.

²⁷ Ș. Papacostea, *Geneza statului în Evul Mediu românesc* [The Genesis of the State in the Romanian Middle Ages] (Cluj-Napoca 1988), p. 147; Toderășcu, *Unitatea medievală*, p. 150

²⁸ See Bonfini (1936-1941), III, pp. 216-217, 243; I. Drăgan, 'Românii din Transilvania în lupta antiotomană din a doua jumătate a veacului al XV-lea' [The Romanians of Transylvania in the Anti-Ottoman Fight in the Second Half of the 15th Century], *AIAC*, XXVII (1985-1986), pp. 67-77.

²⁹ Ș. Papacostea, 'Țările Române în lumea europeană a veacului XV' [The Romanian Countries in the European World of the 15th Century], *MI*, XIV (1981), 4, pp. 54-55; I.-A. Pop, 'Confesiune și

Stephen III of Moldavia entered the conscience of the Transylvanian Romanians as a hero, as a defender of his people and, last but definitely not least, of Christendom

We find the example in the *Chronicon Dubnicense* [The Chronicle of Dubnic] whose original part was, apparently, written by a Romanian from Bartholomew Dragffy's entourage. Unlike other contemporary writings, the chronicle paid homage to Dragffy and Paul (Pál, Pavel) Kinizsi (Chinezú), probably also of Romanian descent, and exercised a strong critique on king Matthias. He had led the country to a *cryworthy misfortune*, by his rivalries with Christian princes, by his disinterest in the anti-Ottoman fight, by massive taxation. In return, on Stephen III, after the victory of Vaslui, the chronicle wrote³⁰:

[Stephen] fought manly the Turks, in the middle of his country, like a good protector of his fatherland and people, ready to do die for his subjects, [in this] heavy confrontation [of three days and three nights], helped also by God's mercy he defeated and almost completely destroyed the Turks.

Other praises follow due to the important prisoners and booty taken. The joy and satisfaction perfectly coincide with a report sent to king Matthias Corvinus from Turda (Tórda, Thorenburg) on January 24, 1475. Since the news of Stephen III of Moldavia's victory (on the 10th of January), *the whole of Transylvania lives its days in triumph*³¹.

The Moldavian-Hungarian competition for transmitting the news on the victory is particularly significant for the relations at the time, for the value and impact of that unique victory. The Transylvanian enthusiasm of 1475 strongly contradicts the spirit and the events of 1484, when very few responded to the king's call for aid in favor of Stephen³². In fact, such refusals to obey king Matthias' orders came at Stephen of Moldavia's expense.

The chronicle stands for a point of view characteristic for Transylvania. The anti-Ottoman effort is understood in a manner different from the royal Hungarian one, but similar to the one portrayed in the Moldavian chronicles. The fact that Transylvania, Walachia and Moldavia understood this fight as a real and massive military effort is also revealed by a Florentine intelligence report from Buda, dating from 1475/1476 or from 1479. Under king Matthias' great anti-Ottoman command were 112000 men, from Hungary (14000; 12.5%), Transylvania (28000; 25%), Moldavia (32000; 28.6%) and Walachia (38000; 33.9%)³³.

Even if figures are relative, we have to say that more than 90% of this army was supplied the three parts of former Dacia, in particular by Moldavia and Transylvania, who, after Vlad III's fall of 1462 had to carry most of the fighting. In this difficult defence of Christendom, Stephen's role was crucial. Regardless of Matthias' royal pride, the Romanian Transylvanian memory, as revealed by the Chronicle of Dubnic, recorded that fact.

In 1492, two years after Matthias' death, Stephen was highly praised, by Bonfini too, for his actions that had stopped the Ottomans from attacking Transylvania from the

națiune medievală: solidarități românești în secolele XIV-XVI' [Confession and Medieval Nation: Romanian Solidarities in the 14th-16th Centuries], *AIAC*, XXVIII (1987-1988), pp. 179-181.

³⁰ *Chronicon*, pp. 201-203; see Ioan Lupaș, '*Chronicon Dubnicense* despre Ștefan cel Mare' [The Chronicle of Dubnic on Stephen the Great], *AIINC*, V (1928-1930), pp. 344-347, 352-353; Ioan Hațegan, 'Pavel Chinezú – un conducător al luptei antiotomane' [Paul (Pál) Kinizsi: A Leader of the Anti-Ottoman Fight], *Rdi*, XXXII (1979), 10, pp. 1889-1913.

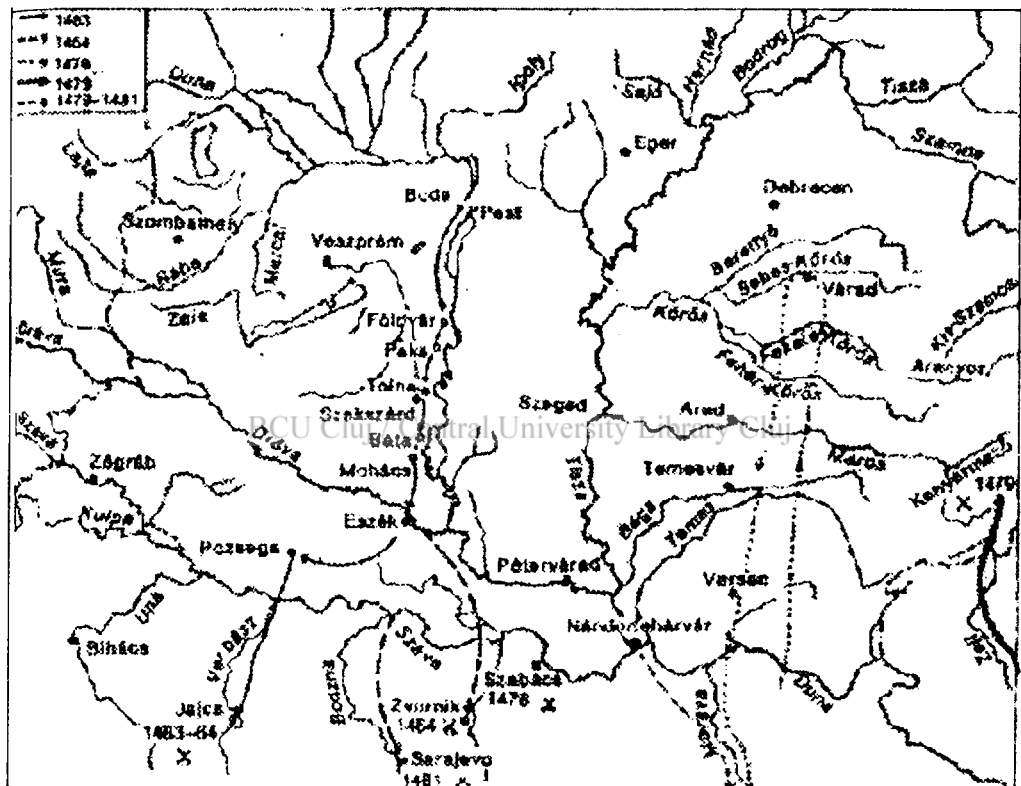
³¹ Lupaș, *Chronicon Dubnicense*, pp. 347-349 (in particular the footnotes on pp. 348-349).

³² Marius Diaconescu, Géza Érszegi, *Documenta quibus Hungariae, Valachiae et Moldaviae relationes melius illustrantur*, *MT*, II (1998), 2, pp. 286-287; Hurmuzaki, XV-1, pp. 123-124.

³³ Mihai Berza, 'Der Kreuzzug gegen die Türken – ein europäisches Problem', *RHSEE*, XIX (1942), 1, pp. 70-72 (in particular footnote 1 on p. 71).

east. As the Hungarian crisis grew, Stephen's fame and Transylvanian value increased. His death seemed to leave the voivodate and the realm defenseless in front of the Turk³⁴.

Aside the political oscillations, the relations between Transylvania and Stephen the Great's Moldavia were tight and continuous. Naturally, by means of the treaties of 1475 and 1489, these relations grew stronger and developed. Throughout Stephen's entire rule, the strong economic connections were upheld and proved to be very active, in particular, by the way of Braşov, the commercial center of Transylvania, Walachia and Moldavia.



The Hungarian anti-Ottoman campaigns under Matthias Corvinus' rule

Using the clear tendencies to strengthen the Transylvania autonomy, Stephen cultivated good relations with the Transylvanian voievodes as well as with the Estates, more and more frequently called *nationes* (the nobles, the Saxons, the Szeklers), who resisted Matthias' authoritarian politics and responded favorably to the anti-Ottoman policy promoted by the Moldavian ruler. Under these circumstances, the royal province of Transylvania, officially catholic, but inhabited by an Orthodox Romanian majority, and Moldavia engaged in the troubled events of the Later Crusades.

³⁴ Bonfini (1936-1941), IV, p. 212; Sanudo, VI, cols. 33, 50; Alexandru Simon, 'Stephen the Great and his Involvement in Transylvania', *TR*, XIII (2004) 2, pp. 35-53.

After John (Iancu) Hunyadi, of Transylvania, and Vlad Țepeș, of Walachia, it was, in the 1470', the turn of another Romanian, of Moldavia, to halt the growingly strong Ottoman attacks after their defeat at Belgrade (Beograd, Nándorfehérvár) in 1456. These efforts, sometimes combined, of Romanians, Hungarians and Poles, gave thus new East-Central European meanings to the medieval idea of Christendom. Still, these, both old and new, meanings could not stop the manifestation of ethnic solidarities.

Therefore, Stephen's politics towards the Transylvanian Romanians, who represented two thirds of the province's population, but had not the right to a elite on their own, was of real support, It opened the way for Moldavia' spiritual, if not political patronage of northern and central Transylvania. After such deeds, stretched throughout his 47 years of rule, Stephen died in Suceava (1504). He was already a legend, not only for the Romanians.

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