
T A N G E N C I E S

Documentary Perspectives on Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus

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*It has been hard to speak
and write in Romanian
on Stephen, and in
Hungarian on Matthias.*

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THE YEAR 2004 marked the commemoration of Stephen III the Great of Moldavia, a ruler dubbed “Holy” starting with 1992. Twelve years later he became Saint Stephen the Great of Moldavia. Except for one conference in Szeged, the scientific community has tended to approach him in isolation. The aforementioned Hungarian-Romanian conference, however, cast him alongside Matthias (Matia, Mátyás) I Corvinus. In modern times, no medieval Romanian ruler had ever been paired with a king of Hungary on the occasion of an anniversary. In medieval times, pairing such monarchs was quite common and very much in the nature of European political relations. To some extent, this was the case in Szeged too. The two monarchs came closer together in Szeged than they had been in the victorious moments of early 1475 or in the desperate hours of mid and late 1484.¹

*. . . Alla die de XXIII del presente
facevo breve risposta primo alle/ copie*

che tu mi hay mandato de le nove di Turchi et precipure, quelle contengendo che el figliolo del/ Turco col bassà di Romania et Alibei siano tutti presoni, et el resto del exercito del Turco sta/ tagliato ad pezzi, secundo non haveno havuto similissimo pratico pro lo bene universale de la/ Cristianità, benché dubitamo per questa nova gli li quali se mostrano voluntarosi de fare alle/ provisione contra gli dicti Turchi, non se refredino providemmo quantoque e vero che el Turco/ habia havuto questo conflictio como se e scripto e dal dubitamo che le preparatione maritime/, per luy ordinate, non le mandi fora ad exequire el pensiero suo; pur è da sperare in Dio che pare proveda/ alla giornata meglio per bene de' Cristiani, che noy meritamo perché se esso non providesse/ como fa, le provisioni de' Cristiani, però vogliono . . . (from the instructions sent on February 28, 1475, to Leonardo Botta, Milanese ambassador to Venice from 1470 to 1480, after having received news on the battle of Vaslui; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 361, 1475, fasc. [2], *Febbraio*, our note).

. . . De le novelle vi dano aviso l'altero giorno venne qua la galea de Rodos/ la quale menava il nepote del Summo Pontifico, e andava a la cola/ de Urbino; et qualo nepoto hebbe a dire ch'el Gran Turcho haveva/ ordinato de fare tagliare il grano, per una gran quantità de le/ galee, che diceva per andare in Alexandria, che diceva in altre/ et che diceva che non sapeva de certo. El nostro ambasciatore è ritornato/ dal capitaneo di Bosna del Turcho vicino nostro, lo quale gli haveva dicto che il Gran Turcho faceva gran paregiamento per/ mare et per terre, et haveva ordenato gran numero de galee/ nove et recomenzato le vegie, et che andareno sopra il Signore/ de Moldonia, zoè de Vlachia, per caxare che quelli che foreno/ lassati in risguardo de le città, quelli epse la Signoria sua/ e tutti quelli Turchi che farevo andati in correria tuti fuerono/ presi et amazati, senza essere campato alchuno Turcho; le quale due cittate sono rimaste senza alchuno risguardo.// Etiam come la Maiestà del Re de Ungaria ha fatto pace/ con el Turcho, che dice per anni duy, et che dice per anni tre,/ et che dicto Gran Signor ha ordinato de mandare ambasata/ a la Maiestà del Re de Ungaria con grandissimi doni, zoè/ de' cavalli gamboille et multi; a la quale ambasata andarà/ Inbrachor, zoè el magistro de la stala del Gran Signor./ Hieri fuereno venuti desegni, quelli dixeva che la Maiestà/ del Re de Ungaria sta con la Regina in Posenia, zoè a le confine/ de lo Imperatore de Alamagna, ch'el èuto lo exercito suo/ sottovenire in obsidio de la prefata città de Vienna . . . (from a copy of an unsigned report sent from Ragusa on the 31st of December 1484; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, *Illiria, Polonia, Russia, Slavonia*, cart. 640, [1450–1531], fasc. [4], *Ragusa–Ungheria*, our note).

Thrown together by fate, in the 15th century, but also in the 21st, faithful to hidden interests and rivalries, allies and adversaries, (the future) Saint Stephen III the Great, ruler of Moldavia, and Matthias I Corvinus, king of Hungary, also shared the *Christian* coordinate of their politics, which threw light on but also shadowed their fame. This was the level where, long before their enthronements, their ambitions, symbols, priorities, their beautiful or fortuitous gestures met. This space was expanded a few years later, after the direct confrontation between the two in late December 1467, when the clash of Baia (Bánya) eventually ended in failure for both monarchs.²

The Rulers

AT THE end of the 15th century, Christendom had preserved its medieval character, although in both politics and in culture the features of the Renaissance and the aspects of the Early Modern Age were increasingly present. This description, common for the Atlantic and Italian parts of the European continent, also suits Christendom's *Greek* and *Latin* borderlands. In terms of political/'confessional' acceptance and cultural interference, at least for a while, the Ottoman expansion also came to bridge the already existing gap between Eastern and Western Europe. This was the context which, with their own particular means and well aware of their local tradition, for domestic political reasons Matthias Corvinus of Hungary and Stephen the Great of Moldavia tried to alter in their favor. They tried to profit from the gap, to exploit the feelings of insecurity and also to diminish the consequences of a 'non-anti-Ottoman' political security.³

. . . L'armata del Turcho è intrata in Mare Maggiore alla via de Capha,/ [quindi] per questo anno siamo liberati da' terrore. Esso sta in persona a/ Constantinopoli, et questo anno non ha a moverse, potrà forse mandare/ el suo bassà de Romania cum lo exercito a la via de Moldavia,/ per cerchar de vindicarsi del dampno et iniuria quale el/ dicto bassà have[va] questo zenario in dicti parti di Moldavia, che li/ fuorono tagliati in peze piu de 30^m Turchi, che s'el andarà, prego/ Dio la secunda cavalchata corresponda ala prima . . . (29 May 1475, copied report sent from Ragusa to Milan; document preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, *Turchia–Levante*, cart. 647 [1442–1532], fasc. [1], *Albania*, our note).

The following centuries brought a dramatic increase in the gap between West and East. The remainders of the Kingdom of Hungary were largely driven towards

the southern sphere, while the values and customs of the East and of the Balkans significantly fortified their Wallachian position and thus opened the way for new types of cultural and political syntheses. In light of these developments, still felt in the 1900s in both Hungary and modern Romania, Stephen and Matthias became national symbols of medieval glory. Their misfortunes and successes were judged from a perspective very different at times from the medieval one, even though, particularly in 20th century Romania, the social and political influence of the Orthodox Church seemed far greater—almost of medieval magnitude—than that of the Roman-Catholic Church in Hungary. Stephen's Orthodox sainthood, together with Matthias' Protestant glory, could be seen as evidence of such developments and differences. It is interesting to note that even smaller pieces of evidence on their relation bore the seeds for these otherwise modern interpretative evolutions.⁴

. . . Spectabilis et magnifice fidelis nobis sincere dilecte ex declarati nuntii et familiaris tui, qui per te cum litteris credentialibus ad nos destinatus fuit, intelleximus bonam voluntatem tuam et optimum animum, recuperatis iam, sicut intimas, in maiori parte bonis et hereditatibus, tuis quas tyrannide et servitia Thurcorum imperatoris amiseras, nobis et sacre corone nostre serviendi, teque offerre nos ad servitia, quecumque in illis partibus mandaremus, promptissimum et paratum. Quod a te nos grato animo suscipimus et pro huiusmodi oblatione grates amplissimas dicimus tibi, parati tuam hanc promptitudinem et obsequendi desiderium benivolentia nostra regia et favore prosequi semper gratiose et eo magis, quod tu tanquam zelator fidei et salutis, huiusmodi obsequia non tam nobis quam Christianitatis, imo pro augmento fidei, sponte et non admonitus te suscepturum obtulisti. Scias itaque nos tua obsequia grato animo suscipere et debito gratitudinis officio paratos compensare. Litteras salvi conductus sive securitatis, quo liceat tibi et per hominem tuum, sicut optasti, transmisimus, et missuri sumus brevi ad te proprium hominem nostrum cum informatione latiori, qui mentem nostram erga te et desiderium nostrum super hiis, que nunc a te optamus fieri, tibi clarius explicabit, simul et de castro, quod a nobis petivisti, dicet tibi optimam voluntatem nostram; nos enim parati sumus et in hoc et in aliis tibi complacere, dummodo videamus in experientia oblatum nobis et corone nostre obsequium tuum (from the letter sent by King Matthias Corvinus to Stephen III on August 20, 1482; preserved in the Masarykovy Univerzity knihovny [Library of Masaryk University], Brno Mk 9, *Mikulovsky rukopis* [The Mikulov Manuscript], 9, ff. 276^r–276^v, and on microfilm in the Karl Nehring donation fund of the Hungarian National Archives).

The Romantic Era, as well as medieval biology, played a part in this context. Stephen III had died old. Matthias was still young, by modern and less so by

medieval standards, when he passed away in Vienna. Stephen became an old and wise ruler, while Matthias was reborn into the young king who knew no boundaries, at least no written ones. Nevertheless, these evolutions partially suited Stephen's and Matthias' medieval images, the ways in which they had been perceived by their contemporaries. The same can not be said about many of their depictions produced during the last two or three centuries. In spite of these facts, we should not pass too harsh and hard judgments on the channels through which their medieval legacy was passed on to us. The very term 'legacy' proves how much we are used and accustomed to such channels, while only very few written documents were preserved.⁵

. . . *Beatissime pater, rex Hungariae Mars ipse est, nihil nisi bellum cogitans et sine sermone faciens . . . Hunc regem si Sanctitas vestra videret quanta gravitate, prudentia, suavitate et quo-dam lepore dicendi polleat, diceret inter primarios Italos habendum et latine linguae incubuisse . . . Rex intrepidus est* (some of the positive aspects regarding Matthias presented by Bartolomeo Marraschi, bishop of Castelli and papal legate; copy of the report from the 26th of October 1483, preserved in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Miscellanea, Armadi, II–20, ff. 78 (83)^v–79 (84)^r).

Today, Stephen and Matthias seem to be our European forefathers. By their actions, double-dealings, treacheries and alliances, by their politically correct speeches, they are indeed that. These political and cultural elements and aspects do not contradict modern-day European ideology (on the other hand, such a situation could reopen the discussion on the human evolution of the continent since the times of the Romans). In fact, as the known archival documentary material on these rulers increases, the medieval-modern European connection grows stronger, in respect to the deeds of the monarchs. Enemies and allies of the Muslims, whether those Muslims were the Porte's adversaries or the Ottoman sultan himself, both Stephen III and Matthias constantly tried to project an impeccable Christian image of themselves, with a particular and natural emphasis on the tradition (and 'supremacy') of their *Greek* and *Latin* rites, respectively. In Stephen's case, these efforts led to what was perhaps his greatest success in medieval and modern times, his political status as a *Christian* symbol.⁶

. . . *Quae ut Sanctitas sua aperte cognoscat, certa esse debet, duplicatam illam crucem, quae Regni nostri insigne est, Gentem Hungaricam libentius triplicare velle, quam in id consentire, ut beneficia et Praelaturae ad ius Coronae spectantes per Sedem Apostolicam conferantur . . .* (from a presently lost letter sent by king Matthias Corvinus to pope Sixtus IV in late 1480; edited by Imre Kelcz in his *Epistolae Matthiae Corvini Regis Hungariae ad pontifices*,

imperatores, reges, principes, aliosque viros illustres (Košice 1743), pars IV, no. 27, pp. 56–57).

The image Matthias Corvinus has known no such enduring high-profile success if, as in the Moldavian case, we look beyond the otherwise costly artistic and cultural achievements of his reign. Besides, his image in history had a far less constant evolution than that of Stephen. Had it not been for the disaster of Mohács, which nevertheless had a positive effect on his image, ‘King Matthias’ legacy would have had a rather different fate, with both negative and positive repercussions on our perspective of Matthias, ‘the poor rich boy’ from the so-called, if we use a contemporary comparison, *Kennedy family* of medieval Hungary. Still, these aspects provide enough ground to sometimes view his three decades on the throne as a great achievement in comparison to the immediate and enduring profits of Stephen’s reign.⁷

. . . *Exercitus igitur hoc ordine conficiendus/ bellumque quatripartito inferrendum opera precium arbitrantur, quo celerrime maxima/ Europae parte pellendum hostem non dubitant. Polonus namque Serenissimus Rex facile ex-/ pertioribus bello Polonis ac Boemis viginti quinque millium conflabit exercitum,/ sumptoque simul Stephano Servie sive Mundavie Vayvoda cum quinque millibus,/ transacto Dnubio per Bulgariam per hostem invadant. Ungarie vero Serenissimus Rex/ cum viginti quinque millibus ex suis militia aptioribus et experit s per Serviam/ et iuxta Bossinam partier aggrediantur hostem . . .* (the Venetian crusader project presented by Paolo Morosini (Mauroceno) before the papal curia in April–May 1475; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, *Illiria, Polonia, Russia, Slavonia*, cart. 640 [1450–1531], fasc. [2], Ragusa, our note).

. . . *Benché l’non mi occor[rer]à cosa degna da darte aviso, pur per . . . tu non manchi de mia, per questo coriero che viene da Napoli fazo questo breve. Se [h]an[n]o a la . . . aver facto instar al Papa el mandar uno al Vlacho cum Polo Origno [Paolo Ognibene], benché averli mandato qualche risposte per Polo, se algun el non volessero mandar, et per dar materia che de li se fessero qualche cosa, li feci aricordar che’l volessero conceder le decime, le vigesime, e le indulgentie per le varie a l’Ungaro, Polono et Vlacho, azonse del suo paese a tanto che possino far qualche cosa, non li [h]a parso far altro che fermere . . . e dise che’l manderà poi, siché tegno che Polo ingannerà solo cum brevi, né altro haverà facto la sua venuta. Sto a la zornata aspectare quello me serà comandato deli iuste l’ultime mie* (from the damaged Venetian letter sent by an unknown correspondent to Pietro Morosini, on April 1, 1475; Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Miscellanea di carte non appartenenti ad alcun archivio*, b. 21, our note).

Faced with their traditional image and their unquestionable successes, we often tend to overlook what could well be Stephen's and Matthias' greatest achievements: their survival for decades as monarchs. They managed to retain their thrones and even to extend their possessions, not by keeping a low profile in domestic and foreign matters, but by strong military and diplomatic actions that sometimes exceeded their original goals. In the long run, Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus managed to achieve something rather rare. They kept, to their advantage, a balance between East and West, North and South, society and ruler, Church and State. Over the centuries, the medieval costs of this balance turned into modern profits.⁸

Policies and Beliefs

ROME, VENICE and Istanbul were three centers of power that defined and shaped the policies of Stephen and Matthias. Every one of them was home to an ecclesiastical center that aimed to control the entire Christian world, or 'at least' half of it. One of the three—or all of them, as it happened in Stephen III's case in the early 16th century—was occasionally and for varying periods of time Stephen III's and/or Matthias I's ally and/or 'suzerain.' Each center—all three in Matthias' case in the early 1480s—was equally, for different periods of time, in conflict, open or not, with Stephen III and/or Matthias. More than Vienna and Krakow, the enduring sources of lasting political troubles for the Hungarian king and the Moldavian ruler—Rome, Venice, and Istanbul—provide us with the basic equations of Stephen's and Matthias' foreign policies. They were no stranger to Russian (Stephen III) or Middle Eastern affairs (Matthias), and were compelled to live in the political system devised by these three powers, in particular after 1453. This environment left little room for sensibility, even in regard to one's own family (for instance, John Hunyadi had twice 'pawned' Matthias), but, in return, opened great possibilities for a generation of *Realpolitiker*.⁹

... De novo qui è stato lo ambasciatore de' Valachi per fare la pace, et dicto ambasciatore ha dimandato in la pace/ lo Signore de lo Todoro [Theodoro-Mangop, in Gothia, largely the Crimean Peninsula], che era parente del Vlacho, et altri Signori de Gotia, dico li ha facti morire tuti, et ha/ da intendere allo ambasciatore de' Vlachi, dicti esse in prexone et fexe fentizamente andare lo ambasciatore/ de' Vlachi alle prexoni de fora ad parlare con le altre persone, che erano in presone, digando erano essi./ Lo ambasciatore de' Vlachi intendando non erano quelli che cercava, monstrò d'esso niente, et/ firmorno la pace, con darge lo cara-

zo, et diseva dovere dare tuti quelli Turchi, che erano prexonni/ in Vlachia, como lo figliolo de Isach Bassà, et molti altri nominati; et così se ne andorno con la/ pace facta, et cusì andò in compagnia dello ambasciatore de' Vlachi uno ambasciatore de questo/ Signore per li prexonni. Et quando fò in Vlachia davanti a loro Signore si fece infire tuti li Turchi che/ erano in prexon, et el loro ambasciatore si messe tuti da una banda, quelli che voleva, et/ messi da banda. Lo Vlacho li disse tu voi tuti questi? Li disse di si! Alhora, lo Valacho si/ prexe tuti quelli, che lo Turcho domandava, et se li fexe tuti tagliare et impalare, et mandò ad/ dire ad questo Signore ch'el non li voleva più dare carazo. Et così vis[t]o questo Signore tal novo,/ se moveti de Andrinopoli, et va sopra lo Vlacho. Qui se arma de le vele 100 in 150,/ in fuste, et parandarie. Se dice lo Valacho [av]esse cavalli 40^m. Dio li presti victoria . . . Anno Jesuo 1476, a dì 23 Mazo in Pera, have-mo dappoi per alcuni nostri venuti de Adrinopoli, come el Signor Turcho se messe ad camino con el suo esercito verso Belgrado; et doppoi el ritorno del suo ambasciatore que lo haveva mandato al Signore de Vlachia, requizandoli el castello de Licostomo, li prexonni Turchi, luy haveva uno de' soi figlioli, el carazo de anni tre passati, et li requira li puti di Caffà, che l'anno passato fuzireno in Moncastro cum uno navig[li]o, che veniva de Caffà in Pera, alle quale cose el Signore de Vlachia, zoè Steffano Vayvoda, per niente volse assentare, anzi resposte allo ambasciatore non volere dare simile cose per alcuno modo; et in quella fexe alcidere presente dicto ambasciatore tuti li prexonni Turchi, che haveva, la quale cosa/ intesa el dicto Turcho lassò el camino de Ungaria, et prese la via verso Vlachia, et a dì/ 13 del presente cavalchè de Adrinopoli, et ha facto ad Galipoli fuste 60 in circha, le/ quali metterò in ordine cum alcune parandarie, et cum artiglarie, et altri instrumenti bellici, per/ lo luogo de Mocastro et Licostomo, le quali se partirà fra brevi giorni; et è opinione che/ li dicti Vlachi sono ben in ordine, et habbia el subsidio de' Ungari, poi che l'ha tolto la/ impresa, et la andaria de fare contra questo Signore Turcho, Dio summa potentia liches victoria/ la quale tanto desideremo. Io resto con qualche affanno delli dicti Vlachi attexia la grande/ preparatione che fa cosuè contra li dicti; ex in poi Dio tuto po,' el quale se digni de esse/ lo adiutere sempre (copies of the reports recieved in Venice from Pera, reports sent on May 20 and 23, 1476; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, Ungheria, cart. 650, 1452 [1441]–1490, fasc. [3], 1467–1490, our note).

The functioning of the system was largely dictated by the events of the Late Crusades. The crusade, the *crux transmarina* turned *cismarina*, had failed to save Byzantium or to halt the Ottoman expansion. Had Smederevo, large parts of Bosnia and, most importantly, the Moldavian harbors not fallen into Ottoman hands, one could have argued that Matthias and Stephen did manage to stop

the Turks without suffering any major losses. In fact, all of these losses were suffered by Matthias' vassals. It could thus be said the king suffered no direct loss. However, his actions of 1484 or his Bosnian campaigns of 1463–1464, regardless of their dominantly short-term goals, indicate the opposite. Still, it was the Orthodox Stephen who seemed to have been more intensely involved in the Late Crusades than the Catholic King Matthias. The best proof of this are perhaps Stephen's actions and their consequences during the last years of the pontificate of Sixtus IV, for it was in the context of the pope's last crusading call that Stephen lost his precious harbours. These years also witnessed the beginnings of the influential 'Djem crisis.'¹⁰

. . . Delle cose del Turco: aviso la Vostra Excellentia noviter essere venuto di Constantinopoli/ uno nepuote del conte camerlengo, che referisse essere partito da Constantinopoli trenta giorni fa, et lo Grande Turco essere levato da dicta città per andare ad campersi contra/ lo Signor di Valachia, et questo per che era stato tre anni che non haveva pagato lo censo de/ certe castelle che tene, censuario nomine da sua Signoria, et havendogli mandato ad offerire/ di pagarli di presente, lo ha recusato, con dire che vole le castelle, et ch'el prefato Signor di Valachia dagli risposto che le castelle non sono sue, ma sono del serenissimo Re di Ungaria. Questo/ medesimo etiam se afferma per lettere de' Ragusei del primo del presente, per le quale refferiscono/ esse Gran Turco havere misso nel Mar Maggiore centocinquanta velle per volere debellare/ questo Signor di Valachia, dicendo che questa armata l'haveva instructa ad effecto di/ mandarla parte in Puglia ad instantia di Venetiani, et parte contra Rodiani, perché gli era significato suo fratello essere morto. Et che essendoli persuaso da uno grande/ maestro suo assistente de drizare questa armata contra lo Signor di Valachia, haveva/ mutata sententia et sequito il suo consiglio facilitando questa impresa, et persuadendoli . . . puoi poteria venire alla impresa di qua. Narrando apresso/ . . . Re di Ungaria havere mandati li soi ambasciatori per/ . . . pace et havere nominato in essi capituli per adherente lo dicto Signore/ . . . , non haverli voluto consentire né accettare la pace; parendoci/ [vergo]gnosa cosa havere facto tante apparato contra esso Signore per ritrarsi puoi/ . . . , et per questo lo prefato Re di Ungaria li haveva mandato/ . . . uno valoroso capitaneo con grande copia di gente per aiutarlo. Et che esso/ . . . sera munito et fortificato talmente che non temeva lo advento suo/ . . . evasi anchora in dicte lettere che la gente d'arme del prefato Signore Gran Turco/ era malcontenta da la sua Signoria et che universalmente desideravano lo fratello/, confortaria essi Ragusei la sua Maiestà di havere esso fratello nelle mano/ per secureza dello stato suo et di tutta la Christianità, significandoli ch'el/ prefato Signor Gran Turco haveva preso gran sdigno ad emulatione che Venetiani/ havessero preso Galipoli, et intrati

in questo reame . . . (information from Ragusa which reached Milan via Naples, through the report sent by Branda Castiglioni on 9 July 1484; the damaged document can be found in the Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, *Napoli*, cart. 244, *Giugno–Dicembre 1484*, fasc. 2, *Luglio*, our note).

In a significant way, it was this crisis that shaped the *Christian* image of Matthias, maybe even more than his previous crusading or ‘ecumenical’ deeds. It best revealed the difference in political size and shape between Matthias and Stephen, forced to indirectly suffer (1483–1484) or benefit (1489–1492, mostly) from the talks and the plans regarding Djem. Still, it has to be said that the ‘Djem crisis’ was not an accident of fate. On the Muslim to Christian (mainly Latin), *Latin to Latin*, and *Greek to Latin* level, the ‘Djem crisis’ was the result of ongoing developments, at least three decades old. It was no accident that, for instance, King Matthias’ most important *Greek* decisions were taken and enforced in the 1480s. The ties between the different, apparently distinct, levels of late medieval politics had grown stronger in East-Central Europe. The first mention of an ‘official’ Orthodox Transylvanian Archbishopric, the sending of relics from Istanbul to Buda, the Mamluk embassy to Buda led by the Orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem, and Moldavia’s presence as Rome’s only *Greek* crusading force occurred in the space of less than two years (1488–1490) and provide a vivid picture of *Christendom’s* borderland. Here, the son of *athleta* Hunyadi, building on his message (sent in 1479 to the Reichstag of Nuremberg) whereby Mehmed II had Wallachians amongst his relatives, created the image of the ruler that by right of blood had the right to take down the Porte.¹¹

. . . Poscebam tunc quod ipsemet frater turchi ad me sua manu ad hic scripsisset tum quod mater sua per suos oratores hoc idem a me postulasset, tum etiam quia ille mihi iure sanguinis est coniunctus, nam soros avie mee casu a turchis rapta nupsit avo sitiis turchi, ex qua postea isti nati sunt (from Matthias’ statement made in front of papal legate Angelo Pecchinoli, according to the report sent by the latter to Pope Innocent VIII on 30 January 1489; copy found in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (Venice), Cod. Lat. X–175 (= 3622), f. 133^r).

This picture is in no way less eclectic than that offered by the Italian Peninsula. The relation between Venice and Buda was rightfully called a *strana alleanza*. It was not the only one of this kind. Inside and outside of Christendom, each alliance and each relation could have been defined as strange in those days. It seems that the negotiations between Buda and Istanbul, in the first place, or

between Suceava and Istanbul, were at least as frequent as the fighting or as the calls for crusader subsidies from Rome and Venice. This kind of a situation could be also seen a sign of civilization, of a common civilization, and less as a clash of civilizations, even though, in spite of their efforts, Matthias and especially Stephen were regarded as rulers of less civilized, sometimes *barbaric* and yet vigorous countries, mingling moral stamina with shady dealings.¹²

[Lodovico il Moro wrote] che ne pare comprendere che/ horamay l'Ungaro, Uson Cassano, Tartaro et tucte natione barbare habbino comenzato/ a dare del naso in questi denari italiani, et ad quelli ocellano con omne loro intento, onde che/ forse gustandoli gli potriano parere si dolci che volontera sequiriano la rubrica . . . (from the instructions sent to Leonardo Botta, on May 24, 1476; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, Venezia, cart. 362, Gennaio–Settembre 1476, fasc. 5, Maggio, our note). [after news of Matthias' death reached him, Lodovico wrote to his brother, cardinal Ascanio Sforza] l'uno delli meriti del Re Mathia, quale tanto che è visuto, è stato/ validissimo propugnacolo per el nome de Christo et de innumerabile et excellentissime victorie ha/ decorato la fede catolica . . . (April 25; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, Ungheria, cart. 650, 1452–1490, fasc. [3], 1467–1490, our note). . . . Preterea dicta Signoria ha de presenti ricevuto littere de Valachia per le quali, secondo ho dal/ medesimo loco, è advisata ch'el Valacho Steffano Vayvoda fè grana asay/ de questo Dominio, con dire che da esso non ha potuto havere subsidio, né adiumento/ alcuno nelle fatiche sue, como con li era stato promesso. Et che per tuto mazo non serà/ facta provisione al facto suo, esso pigliarà partito col Turco, della quale/ nova dicta Signoria ha preso qualche assomno, parendolli che quando el prenominato/ Valacho se accordasse col Turco, esso Turco potrià sicuramente voltare li periferi soy/ in Albania et deinde in Dalmatia. Et perhò dicta Signoria ha spaciato cavallari et scripto/ littere al dicto Steffano Vayvoda molto amorevole et plene de offerte asay . . . Item, per molte altre littere de persone priva[te] de Levante, se intende el dicto Turco essere/ molto indignato et incrudelito verso Genuesi et la casone de tale indignatione afferiscono/ essere perché una nave genuese, chiamata la Nigrone, più di sono caricho in Caffà/ robe de Turchi de valuta circha ducentomilla ducati, et alcuni puti che erano/ mandati al dicto Turcho. Et post[a] alle vele per venire ad Constantinopoli, mutato/ consilio, parve al patrone d'essa che le richeze et il tempo li fusse molto comodo ad/ fare uno bono guadagno. Et così presi et morti tuti li Turchi [che] erano sopra dicta/ nave, se adrizò alla volta del Danubio et andò con tute queste facultà ad trovare il/ Vayvoda Steffano, et con esso divise la roba a suo modo. Per la quale violenta/ animosità scriveno el Turco indignato havere facto incarcer-

are tuti li Genuesi/ erano in Pera, in Metelino et nelli altri lochi circumstanti, et toltoli tute le loro/ facultà, et havere deliberato vedere il firie di Syo [Chios]. Che se queste cosa fusseno della/ natura se scrivero veramente Genuesi seriano in una miserissima exterminatione./ Et etiam sono alcune altre lettere che dicono esso Turcho eodem modo haver facto/ incarcerare tuti li Franchi, videlicet tuti li Cristiani, erano in Pera et in quelli lochi/ circumstanti. Tamen queste ultime novelle non se hanno de lochi ben auctentii . . . (from the reports sent by Leonardo Botta from Venice to Milan on March 13 and May 11, 1477; documents from Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco. Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 364, 1477, fasc. [3], *Marzo*; [5], *Maggio*, our note).

In regard to the question of ‘political honesty’ concerning Stephen’s and Matthias’ reigns, it is politically correct to say that the question remains open, in particular in terms of their *Christian* policies. The medieval world, be it in connection to a question only discussed in Rome, Venice or Istanbul, did not reach a consensus in regard to that question. Thus, it is highly unlikely that a consensus could be established five centuries later. Sometimes, in these matters, it may be best to think in Peter (Péter) Váradi’s words of the 1490s: *we are all subject to temptation and we all have our demons and devils*. The future Saint Stephen and the pious Matthias probably did that, not only when the Turks seemed to be their main concern.¹³

Transylvanian Connections

IN THE space of three days, in mid December 1467, Stephen’s and Matthias’ downfall seemingly became imminent. Initially, Matthias had no apparent way out of the Moldavian trap. Then, Stephen fell into the hands of the king’s soldiers. In the end, it was rumored that the injured king would not survive his Moldavian campaign. The only thing certain after the battle of Baia (Bánya) appeared to be the fact that there would never be peace between the two. The bloodshed and the interests involved in the clash had been so great that it was very hard to imagine a peaceful outcome. The conflicting reports on the result of the battle made this outcome even more impossible. Until the summer of 1471, commerce and politics were to prove that nothing was impossible in the relation between Hungary and Moldavia. As in the case of Hungarian-Ottoman relations in general, Transylvania played a crucial role in this respect.¹⁴

Essendo ribellati alcuni populi a la/ Corona chiamati Seculi, lo prefato Re [Matthias] andò in quel paese con V^m cavalli et altrettanti a piede, et essendo

lo Brancho [Hunyadi] suo patre originario de' dicti Seculi, credeva debelare facilmente con poca gente. Et a la prima sachezò alcune terre et abruzò. Vedendosi malmenati, [the Szeklers] domandano aiuto a soy vicini chiamati Valachia, quali antichamente furo[no] Romani et segon [d]o la lor parlare latina et romana fine in questo tempo, et sono valentissimi a cavallo, et parte d'essi anchora che siano ultra lo Danubio dano tributo al Turcho, li altri più lontani dal Danubio/ verso Polana [Polonia] vivano hodie[rnamen-te] so[tto] le sue lege quasi in libertà, et si [h]an[n]o alcuno Vayvoda [Stephen III of Moldavia in this case] per signore li dano poca cossa de tributo (from the report sent from Venice by Fidelfo Guitor to Milan, on 18 February 1468; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Potenze Estere, Venezia, cart. 354, 1468, fasc. 2, Febbraio, our note).

Apart from Stephen's and Matthias' political need to avoid a regional *Christian* isolation without becoming Casimir IV's and Frederick III's loyal vassals, the main reason for the restoration of political relations between Buda and Suceava was the Transylvanian-Moldavian commerce. The Moldavian harbors on the Danube and the Dniestr had long been a major destination for the Transylvanian merchants, if not their most important one in the southeast. On the other hand, Transylvania was Moldavia's traditional alternative to Poland in terms of trade, an alternative of major importance at a time when Stephen sought to detach himself from Krakow. But he also aimed at a 'better Ottoman deal,' at least. Therefore, for Ottoman-related and also for feudal reasons, Stephen's Transylvanian estates were another reason why good relations had to be maintained between Buda and Suceava. Such estates had been the object of talks prior to the battle of Baia. Nevertheless, Stephen received the written deeds to the Transylvanian domains from Matthias only in the king's last year of rule and took actual possession of the estates in the first years of the rule of his successor, Ladislaus II.¹⁵

It took more than twenty years for a Moldavian ruler to receive estates from the king, and it took the ruler another decade to actually secure his possession of them. These facts constitute perhaps the best proof for the peculiar and difficult nature of the Transylvanian connections established between Hungary and Moldavia long before the rules of Matthias and Stephen III. Moldavia had risen and had been acknowledged as a state, first by the papacy (as a duchy) and later by Byzantium, against the will of the Hungarian Crown. This long-lasting opposition had a significant influence on the later relations between Buda and Suceava, made more difficult by the fact that Matthias Corvinus viewed Stephen III and others as 'Hunyadi creatures.' Stephen, the former Transylvanian refugee, the son of Bogdan II, probably the only ruler of Moldavia—or of Wallachia, for that matter—enthroned by Hunyadi who remained always loyal to him, had a difficult time in changing these structural aspects of the Hungarian-

Moldavian relation after abandoning the Hunyadi camp. It easily fits Stephen's later image and also explains why, almost like in Matthias' case, Venice reluctantly agreed to finance him even when she was at peace with the Porte.¹⁶

. . . Un mio amico, quale ha hogi parlato con uno Paduano, quale de recenti vene da Venetia, mi ha facto intendere havere retracto da epso Paduano come la Illustrissima Signoria de Venetia ha conducto novamente per suo Capitaneo il Signore Stephano Vaivoda de Mundavia [Moldavia], homo sagacissimo et pallidissimo in lo mestere del' arme, cum stipendio de LXX milia overo LXXX milia ducati, et questo dice havere havuto da persona de grande auctorità in Venetia . . . (from the report sent from Venice to Milan on October 17, 1492; Archivio di Stato di Milano, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Venezia, cart. 382, 1492, fasc. [10], Ottobre, our note).

The most important changes came after Matthias' death, for they were conditioned by the power relations between the two states. As a Hungarian magnate, Stephen was one of the most influential political figures in the realm, with allies and foes of his own. This increased his 'Habsburg value' and allowed him to preserve (and expand) his Transylvanian and Moldavian possessions. Although it had been the various negotiations (and treaties of 1475, 1480, 1481 or 1489) and conflicts with Matthias that had laid the ground for this evolution, such Transylvanian achievements would have been largely impossible under Matthias' rule. The ever present Ottoman issue had brought Transylvania and Moldavia—two voivodates of the Crown, in Buda's view—closer together at the regional level, in defense of the kingdom. However, the other parties involved in this matter (e.g. the Transylvanian Saxons, the voivodes of Transylvania, the rulers of Wallachia) were often detrimental to an anti-Ottoman political alliance. In return, the complex Hungarian and regional political system allowed Stephen, together with his ally Maximilian I of Habsburg, to thwart the Jagiellonian grand design of 1497, both on the domestic Hungarian level and on the pro-(and anti-) Ottoman level.¹⁷

. . . Cum accessisset Petrus More ad regem Romanorum, voluit rex, ut legationem publicam diceret in publico, et adhibuit secum ad audientiam Georgium ducem [George the Elder of Saxony], Fredericum ducem [Frederick the Wise of Saxony], Iohannem ducem [John the Constant of Saxony] et Gasparem/ Maag [probably Gaspar of Mech], consiliarium suum iam mortuum, coram quibus nuntius mandata waywode exposuit, que in publico dici commiserat/ dominus suus waywoda et dixit, qualiter waywoda Moldavie intimasset regem Polonie, dum fingit velle/ ire contra Turcos, proditorie venisse se ipsum, et per hoc quod fecit tantam cladem in Christianitate editam, quanta vix unquam fuit edita

vel in ipso Constantinopolitano excidio, et quia duo fratres essent rex Hungarie/ et rex Polonie scire daret serenissimo Romanorum regi, quia se ipsis duobus fratribus waywoda nunquam amplius consideret,/ unde et rogaret idem waywoda Romanorum regem, ut dignaretur eum in tutelam suam unacum regno suo suscipere/ et in casu necessitatis non dereliquerentur. Ad hec statim rex Romanorum respondit presentibus ducibus prefatis,/ qualiter uterque dictorum regum stricta sanguinis affinitate sibi iunctus esset et ideo waywoda/ nil deberet curare, quoniam ipse vellet omnino materiam dissensionis componere inter ipsos reges et waywodam./ Ne dubitet, inquit, waywoda quicquam de nobis, <quod> nos illum nichilominus in omnem eventum non deseremus,/ sed cum his illustrissimis ducibus et cum aliis <serenissimis> principibus preparabimus nos contra Turcos; adhortabimur,/ autem ad hoc idem faciendum et regem Hu<ngarie;> missuri autem propediem sumus oratorem nostrum pro hac causa/ ad ambas regias maiestates. His d<ictis . . . audientia> est solute . . . Multitudo regnicolarum Hungarie nimis est perturbata et/ confusa, videns illam inordinationem et pessimam dispositionem regni, qua universum regnum Hungarie laborat temporibus moderni regis; aulici et militis, qui temporibus prioris regis/ erant optime provisi et tenebantur in honore, huius moderni regis temporibus omnes negliguntur/ et fame moriuntur. Neque habent servicium aliquod vel honorem, castraque finitima/ sunt penitus neglecta et pessime provissa, ita ut in omnibus illis homines ad custodiam deputati/ fame moriantur. Ego vero grandem dispositionem et maximum iuramentum habeo cum rege/ Hungarie et regnum Hungarie finaliter est meum; meam itaque compositionem cum ipso rege/ Hungarorum palam infringere non possumus, nec tam arctissimam fidem, salvo honore meo/ violare mihi licet sine notabili et rationabili causa, sed ex quo video tam notabile et/ evidens periculum regni Hungarie nec solum illius regni, sed et meum et totius Christianitatis/ periculum, necesse est mihi ac conservando regno Hungarie et evitando illius periculo providere (excerpts from the messages exchanged by Stephen III and Maximilian I, from the report on the Hungarian events of 1497, drafted by a trustee of Thomas (Tamás) Bakócz, archbishop of Esztergom, in early 1498; document in the Státny Ústredný Archív [The <Slovakian> State Archives], Bratislava (Pressburg, Pozsony) [Section] L, Rody i panstavá [Families and domains], I. Rody [Families], Erdődy Ústredný Archív/Erdődi család levéltára [Archive of the Erdődy family], Galgóci Hitbizományi Archív/ Galgóci Hitbizományi levéltár [Archive of the Galgóci–Hitbizomány family], Oklevelek [Documents and letters], no. 108).

As indicated by late medieval art, in particular between 1490 and 1504, the Transylvanian-mediated political, ecclesiastical or commercial relation between Buda and Suceava presented great possibilities and challenges long before Stephen

III became a magnate of the Hungarian realm. Matthias was keenly aware of these facts and tried to make the most of them. Stephen III tried the same and was more successful, but mainly after the face of the Kingdom of Hungary changed for good following the events of April 1490.¹⁸

Society and Change

WHEN MATTHIAS was enthroned, he was the richest man in Hungary, due to his father's fortune. His son John was also the greatest magnate of the realm when he lost the throne. Matthias descended from the Wallachian and Hungarian lower and middle nobility. John was his illegitimate son. No real royal blood ran through their veins. From a royal dynastic point of view, Matthias was the most illegitimate king ever to bear St. Stephen's crown. His rise, as well his son's downfall, were the product of the same society that underwent major changes in the 15th century but kept intact its traditions and its rules. Apart from the foreign political conditions and interferences, it was the society of the Hungarian Kingdom that allowed Matthias to become king, while still a captive in Prague, and also brought his 'line' to an abrupt end, even though several important personal and collective oaths had been received by the late king in support of his son's highly disputed and controversial succession.¹⁹

In Moldavia, which still lacks a real social history of the Middle Ages, social conditions resembled those in Hungary, but in the eastern fashion. Civil war and dynastic strife had shaped the tormented political face of a country where, following these unrests, the Orthodox Church had gained more and more authority. In the historical version of the Moldavian past most favorable to him, Stephen was the illegitimate son of Bogdan II, the illegitimate son of Alexander I. With the probable exception of his predecessor, Peter III Aron, he was the most illegitimate ruler of Moldavia, until Stephen III's illegitimate son, Peter IV Rareș rose to the throne, more than two decades after his father's death. Under 'normal circumstances,' neither Stephen III nor Matthias should have sat on the thrones in Suceava and in Buda, respectively. These factors tremendously increased the medieval impact of these three reigns. They also had a direct, so to say, impact on their mutual efforts to promote or restrain political foul play in their relation.²⁰

... Quod hactenus Eliam oratorem vestrum ad vos non remisimus, id cause fuit, quod remittere noluimus, donec eum cum aliqua certitudine et sine debito possemus ad fidelitatem vestram remittere. Expectavimus enim intelligere nova quedam, quibus cognitis sciremus fidelitatem vestram de omnibus reddere cer-

tiorem. Et ob hoc eum nos crebro pro sua expeditione sollicitantem retinuimus et cogemur adhuc paucos dies retinere. Verum ne fidelitas vestra hanc moram illius negligentie ascriberet, duximus de hoc eandem avisandum, ut sciret non eius negligentia sed nostra voluntate et rei ipsius necessitate suam expeditionem retardare. Diu tamen non retradabimus, sed paucis diebus eum expediemus, misurique sumus cum eo hominem nostrum ad fidelitatem vestram qui de omnibus occurrentibus eam fideliter avizabunt, et cum tali responso et expeditione eum remitemus, quo et nostris rebus et etiam utilitati vestre ac rebus christianis et saluti publice plurimum conducat. Rogamus itaque fidelitatem vestram ut non egre ferat hanc tarditatem suam, quam de fecit voluntate nostra; is enim moram hanc suam, meliori rerum expeditione compensabit . . . (from the letter sent by king Matthias to Stephen III, after August 20, 1482; copy found in the Masarykovy Univerzity knihovny [The Library of the Masaryk University], Brno Mk 9, *Mikulovsky rukopis* [The Mikulov manuscript], 9, f. 277^v).

The legends of Matthias depict him as the just king of the poor and the needy, the ruler who encouraged and supported commoners and small nobles. If we take into account the staging of his Hungarian *lit(s) de justice*, the number of collective privileges granted by him to cities, towns and rural (mostly noble) communities, this image is rather accurate. But Matthias was also, and maybe dominantly, a ruler of the magnates, for he needed strong supporters of modest yet noble descent, indebted to him for their social rise and wealth. Eventually, their loyalty proved to be more than questionable, given the names involved in the events of 1467, 1471 or 1490. Still, the effects of his decisions—or at least their memory—were quite enduring. Thus, in 1505, both Krakow and Vienna thought of using the Wallachians against the *Schythian* ‘nationalist party’ who *despised* these Wallachians. By 1490, like most of the *true Hungarians*, the Wallachian nobles had abandoned John Corvinus and largely taken Ladislaus II’s side. One *Wallachian*, however, had formally professed loyalty towards John in order to gain advantages in return for his support, not so much from John, but from his main rivals Frederick III and Ladislaus III. His name was Stephen III and he did that in the name of feudal loyalty and not in that of ethnicity.²¹

. . . Igitur serenissime et invictissime/ Princeps et Domine noster gratiose, V<estram> S<erenitatem> summopere rogamus, quatenus eadem V<estra> S<erenitas>/ noluerit imputare eoque nos cum illustri Principe Domino Iohanne filio Mathie Regis/ condam Hungarie sumus adunati et tenemus stamusque super hoc, ut posset elegi in regis/ Hungarie, videlicet in loco patris sui predecessoris statui, certum est enim, quod nos et filii nostri/ cum serenissimo Mathia

pie memorie Rege Hungarie iuramentum fecissemus scilicet ob/sequium fidelem ad presentis vite nostre terminum fideliter servare et tenere./ Igitur scire velit V<estra> S<erenitas>, quod nos non voluntarie hanc nostram fideiussionem vellemus frangere/ ideoque et Vestram Serenitatem affectuose tanquam Dominum nostrum graciosum rogamus,/ utinam et V<estra> S<erenitas> suo benigno intentu velit ad eundem predictum Iohannem filium regis etc./ inspicere eundemque in loco patris sui predecessoris pro rege Hungarie statuere. Sine/ omni dubio <et> firmiter credimus, dum voluntatis V<estre> S<erenitatis> affuerit, ipsum in regem elegendum./ Extunc sine gravis vexacione et impedimento possit elegi et statui pro novo rege/ Hungarie. Demumque quicquid idem nuncius nomine Ladislaus V<estre> S<erenitati> a nobis/ dixerit rogamus V<estram> S<erenitatem>, ut ipsi fidem creditivam eodem V<estra> S<erenitas> velit adhibere/ non minus quam secum V<estre> S<erenitati> propria in persona loqueremur . . . (letter sent from Hârlău by Stephen III of to Frederick III of Habsburg on July 25, 1490; Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Reichshofkanzlei, Fridericiana, Karton 7, 1488–1490, fasc. 8–2, 1490, f. 88^r).

Still, Stephen has been viewed as a ‘nationalist.’ Matthias I too could have been viewed as a ‘national(istic) king,’ even though his Hungarian contemporaries were horrified by the *foreigners* around him. His nationalism was however different than that of the *Schythians* of 1505. He used Hungary (*Hungaria*), increasingly present in medieval ideology and a keyword during his rule, as a melting pot. The product should have been complete loyalty towards Matthias. Forced by domestic and foreign developments (the ravages of the Ottoman expansion), Matthias strengthened the social, political and ecclesiastical position of the different ethnic communities in the realm, some of which, the Serbian one for instance, he had also expanded by forced immigration. Like in Transylvania after 1467, the communities (Saxon, Hungarian, Szekler and Wallachian) were supposed to communicate only through him, not on their own. Interestingly enough, after the disputed Diet of Rákos, the latter *community* posed some of the greatest challenges for the Hungarian survival of the Jagiellonians, at least in theory.²²

. . . In Regno exnunc gubernatorem constituunt, et pro statu suo tributa magna communia decernunt, pro M. R^{ia}, ut feliciter et in tranquillo statu regnet, alia sed forsán maiora. Rex tulit modeste iniqua decreta se forsán versus Bohemiam accingit. Gubernator fit natus olim Stephani natu maior [John Szapolyai], contra quem Maximillianus vires et animum excitat. Walachi statu indigno Hungarorum perpensio sunt solliciti, ut se adument nobis, forsán enim estate futura Maximilliani supplex Hungaro[s] cinget et presertim gubernatorem ingenu-

um, con[tra quem i]lla M^{ns} Romanorum plebeum esse velit. Nobis cum Tartaris labor est, etenim Radomiense decretum non erat executum, egritudine obstante domini. Sic iterum pro cezare deliberandum . . . (letter sent by Jan Łaski, the future archbishop of Gniezno, to Lucas Watzenrode, bishop of Warmia (Ermland), on 9 November 1505; document edited in *Acta Alexandri Regis Poloniae, magni ducis Lithuaniae, etc. (1501–1506)* [= *Monumenta Medii aevi res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, XIX], edited by Fryderik Papée (Krakow 1927), no. 305, pp. 514–515; in the 1920, the original document was in the Archive of the Bishopric of Frauenburg, Ms. 65, ff. 89^r–89^v).

In the end, in personal terms, Matthias lost in the battle with tradition, a battle that he had never fought as openly as his father, who had been compelled, in return, to act—more than his son—as a *true* magnate, which added to the many grounds for tensions amongst the eventually victorious crusaders of Belgrade. It may well be that his greatest lasting domestic successes were on the level of urban settlements, which for a while he seems to have been forced to keep away from the Hungarian political process. Stephen of Moldavia, who only nearly lost the battle with tradition, a battle he had fought rather prudently, seems to have been a supporter of cities and towns, for they were basically the main means by which he was able to expand his feudal princely domain, quite small, at least, in comparison to his financial means. Their choices were a reflection of their time.²³

Coexistence

PLACING STEPHEN the Great and Matthias Corvinus' side by side, or rather face to face, is unquestionably a challenge, mainly in terms of the Romanian historical writing. Used to the image of Matthias as the traitor of his (Romanian) people and of his father's (Romanian) legacy, as the one who 'stole' Stephen III's well-deserved crusader subsidies as he was 'obsessed' by the defeat suffered in 1467, an image shaped in the early 1900s and still used even in more 'relaxed' approaches, Romanian scholars are faced with a delicate task when writing on Matthias. Due to the events of 1467, writing on Stephen III has been no easy task for Hungarian scholars, who, like their Romanian colleagues in Matthias' case, seem to have kept their distance from Stephen III, also throughout the last decades. In fact, the sources, even only those related to the events of 1490, urged for a different approach.²⁴

. . . Item dem Wetrischt wene und andern gepornen Hungern zusagen, wie sy got dem allmächtigen loblicher tun mögen dann die römisch kunigliche maiestät zu Kunig zu Hungern zunemen, zu sambt seinen kuniglichen gnaden gerechtikeit nach gemelter ursachen angesehen als sein kunigliche maiestät kunig zu Hungern sey, so beleibe dabey Merhern Slesien und Lausity so sey die Molda auch wiederzubringen, so werde zwischen dem romischen und hungerischen reichen ein ewiger fride . . . Item ob sy nu ein kunig von Polan zu Kunig von Hungern annemen des die ro. Ku. Mt. inen doch nicht zugetrawet, auch wider pillicheit beschee, so wurde an mittel die lannde Merhern, Slesien und Lausity widerumb zu der krone von Beheim komen und die Moldaw so zu der crone von Hungern gehort und der kunig von Polan yetzo innhat ney Polan bleiben so wurde auch zwischen dem romischen reiche, und dem kunigreich Hungern kein fride noch enigkeit erwachsen . . . (from Maximilian of Habsburg's instructions for his enovys sent to negotiate with the Hungarian barons and prelates, in July–August 1490; Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Reichshofkanzlei, *Maximiliana*, Karton 1, 1477–1492, fasc. 6, 1490, ff. 10^v–11^r).

It has been hard to speak and write in Romanian on Stephen, and in Hungarian on Matthias. ‘Sacred monsters’ are always difficult to deal with. Comparing the two of them is like comparing two fairytales that have shaped the childhood of two rival nations. Modern interpretations—not fictions, but mere personal (social) perspectives—take thus the center stage, instead of historic information. Analyzing their medieval deeds, let alone comparing them, becomes an exercise in both medieval and modern normality. The concept of the *bellum iustum et pium* lives on, long after the end of Matthias’ and Stephen’s campaigns and regardless of their targets. Strictly in medieval terms, we could relate this situation to their involvement in the Late Crusades, and mainly to their ideology. However, as in the case of Matthias’ and Stephen’s repeated Ottoman talks, there is still a lot to be said. In this respect, the opinion of the often distant—not to say double-dealing in crusader matters—Polish royal authorities is of great value, although it has been both underrated and overrated.²⁵

. . . Tum postea [after the battle of Belgrade, in which the Poles had not participated for they were fighting the heathen on their own] Serenissim Rege Mathia moderno in ipsa Hungaria regnante et Marino de Frageno in Polonia/ cruciatam predicante, mult milia Polonorum in subsidium regni Hungarie devenerunt. Sed dum hec/ fiunt, dumque soli cum Trartaris bellamus, dum allis contra Turcos presidia damus/. In os tandem utrique hostes christiane religionis diversi sunt. Nam Turcus unitus cum Tartaris ante annum/ preteritum, valida qualem nunquam ante hac habuit congregate potencia/, Moldaviam intravit, prefectum

illius Serenissimi nostril Regis subditum vi oppressit. Castra et oppida illius/ potiora Lucostonium et Albumcastrum possedit. Per quorum adeptione, portam sibi/ diutius clausam primum in oras regni nostril, tandem in alia cristianorum dominia aperuit. Anno tandem/ preterito ultra quam octuaginta milia hominum Moldaviam vastaturam immisit. Qui per illustrissimos/ principes Albertum et Allexandrum Serenissimi Regis nostri natos usque post Danubium/ pulsati sunt. Quod Turcus amare ferens rursus exercitum fortem in Moldaviam misit, ignominam/, sibi lluc illatam vindicaturus. Qui tandem deo protitio per gentes Serenissim/i Regis nostril ibidem locatas et prefectum Moldavie victim sunt interfecti plures, pauci fuge evasere/ presidio . . . (from the speech delivered by Jan of Targowk in front of Innocent VIII; record of May–June 1486, edited by Jerzy Zathej, in his ‘Zapomniane polonicum drukowane w Rzymie w r. 1486 (Jana Targowickiego łacińska mowa do papieża Innocentego VIII [Jan of Targowk’s mission to Pope Innocent VIII], in *Mediaevalia. W 50 Rocznicę pracy naukowej Jana Dąbrowskiego* (Festschrift in honor of Jan Dąbrowski on the 50th anniversary of his professorship), edited by Józef Garbacik, Roman Grodecki, Henryk Łomiański, Tadeusz Manteuffel, Krystyna Pieradzka, and Marian Henryk Serejski (Warsaw, 1960), 301–318).

A major work devoted to the historiography of Matthias’ and Stephen’s reigns is yet to be written. The task would be overwhelming. An essay devoted to the sources on their rules could seem a more reasonable task. Yet, no such studies have been published. It may be harder to write on the sources, on which their histories were and could be based, than on the books that have influenced us. In fact, Stephen and Matthias were very careful in protecting their sources. Like in the case of Matthias’ letter to Sixtus IV from the spring of 1481, where, unlike other ‘crusaders,’ he called for prudence in face of the Ottomans and made use, in this respect, of the message Stephen had sent him, they sometimes revealed their sources, but only in order to give what seemed a maximum of credibility to their statements. Nowadays, Stephen III’s place is taken not by medieval sources, but by modern figures. Politically speaking, they seem to have a greater influence than Matthias’ letter once had on the pope.²⁰

In a few months time, it will be Matthias’ turn to become the object of anniversaries. Whether or not Stephen will once again be placed face to face with him, at least on one occasion, is still a mystery. It is interesting to note that they were often paired, to very different ends, by one of the time’s major powers, Rome, Venice or Istanbul. Their alliance, however, functioned only when it was the result of their own priorities. This was the case in 1471, when they basically had no one else to turn to. This was also the case some 15 years later, when the regional political context seemed to repeat itself. For two great cru-

saders it was immaterial that neither of these (early steps towards) alliances had an immediate anti-Ottoman aim. Like anniversaries, their actions were pragmatic matters and called for great attention, for, even when the ties between Matthias and Stephen III seemed to have grown stronger, the Habsburg chancery, otherwise very afraid of ridicule, had a different approach to the matter.²⁷

[Documents issued by the Habsburg chancery of Vienna on] VI Novembris 1473 Item litera passus pro patriarcha Anthioceno [Lodovico Severi]/ Item missiva ad consules et massarios in Caffa ad habendum eundem patriarcham recom-misum, ut possit ire per certas eorum secure/ Item ad idem principi Megerili [Mengli Ghiray], domino Tartarorum/ Item ad idem ad principem Assemebegk [Uzun Hassan], Persarum domino/ Item ad idem ad archiepiscopum de Magno Novagarda [Feofil, archbishop of Novgorod] / Item ad idem ad Vanoida [Stephen of Moldavia], in Walachia capitaneo/ Item ad idem ad Aleca, capitaneo de Plotzko [Plock, in Masovia]/ Item ad idem ad Martinum Gostoldo, capitaneo in Thino [Knin, in Croatia]/ Item ad idem ad Kazimiro [Casimir IV], rege Polonie; dominus ad voluntatem domini imperatoris dedit omnes predictas literas gratis patriarche predicto quia pauper fuit (original document from the records in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Handschriftensammlung, Hs. W. 529, f. 261^r).

It is not easy to imagine Hungary's and Moldavia's fate without Matthias or Stephen. It is safe to say that Mohács would have come sooner without Matthias, even though his policies exhausted the realm. It is equally safe to say that without Stephen Moldavia could have divided between the neighboring powers, although Stephen pushed the country to its limits. What Hungary and Moldavia would have been without Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III, respectively, is a question that remains open, as in medieval days.²⁸



Notes

1. For the proceedings of the Szeged conference (October 2004): *Between Worlds*, vol. 1, *Stephen the Great, Matthias Corvinus and their Time* (= *Mélanges d'Histoire Générale*, new ser., general ed. Ioan-Aurel Pop, 1, 1), eds. László Koszta, Ovidiu Mureşan, and Al. Simon (Cluj-Napoca, 2007). Because this paper is largely a selection of newfound evidence on the two monarchs, the quotations were limited to an adequate minimum, thus emphasizing collective studies and syntheses (in par-

- ticular those written in international languages over the last years). Consequently, we apologize for any inconvenience thus caused and for the probably too frequent references to our own studies.
2. The best recent study on the battle of Baia belongs to Emanuel C. Antoche, “L’expédition du roi de Hongrie, Mathias Corvin en Moldavie (1467): Qui remporta finalement la bataille de Baia (14/15 décembre 1467)?” *Revue Internationale d’Histoire Militaire* (Paris) 83 (2003): 133–165; to which one should add some of the new sources, relevant in particular for the non-military aspects and in matters of political propaganda and disinformation, found mainly in Milan, one of which is quoted below. In this respect, Șerban Papacostea’s analysis remains valid until the present day (“Un épisode de la rivalité polono-hongroise au XV^e siècle: l’expédition de Matia Corvin en Moldavie (1467) à la lumière d’une nouvelle source,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* (Bucharest) 8, 6 (1969): 967–979).
 3. *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, eds. Norman Housely (New York, 2004); *Le Patriarcat œcuménique de Constantinople aux XIV^e–XVI^e siècles: rupture et continuité. Actes du Colloque international de Rome, 5–7 décembre 2005* [eds. Paolo Odorico and Dan Ioan Mureșan] (= *Dossiers byzantins*, 7) (Paris, 2007). The several studies collected in these volumes provide relevant clues as to the main recent interpretative trends and documentary discoveries in these fields. For Italian (–Levantine-Balkan) aspects: Daniela Frigo, ed., *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, 2000), as well as the recently printed volume C. Luca and Gianluca Masi, eds., *L’Europa Centro-Orientale e la Penisola italiana: quattro secoli di rapporti e influssi intercorsi tra Stati e civiltà (1300–1700)* (Brăila–Venice, 2007).
 4. For Matthias (and Stephen, in this case): Lajos Elekes, *Nagy István moldvai vajda politikája és Mátyás király* (Budapest, 1937); Imre Lukinich, ed., *Mátyás Király Emlékkönyv születésének ötszázéves fordulójára 1440–1940*, 2 vols. (Budapest, 1940); Gyula Rázsó and László V. Molnár, eds., *Hunyadi Mátyás: Emlékkönyv Mátyás király halálának 500. évfordulójára* (Budapest, 1990).
 5. E. g. Domokos Varga, *Hungary in Greatness and Decline: The 14th and 15th Centuries* (Budapest, 1982); Ș. Papacostea, “Politica externă a lui Ștefan cel Mare: opțiunea polonă (1459–1472),” *Studii și materiale de istorie medie* (Bucharest–Brăila) 25 (2007): 13–28. For a broader, more comparative, framework, see László Péter’s recent study, “The Holy Crown of Hungary, Visible and Invisible,” *The Slavonic and East-European Review* (London) 81, 3 (2003): 421–510.
 6. For new perspectives and research topics: Iulian-Mihai Damian, “La Depositeria della Crociata (1463–1490) e i sussidi dei pontefici romani a Mattia Corvino”; D. I. Mureșan, “La place de Girolamo Lando, patricien vénitien et titulaire du Patriarcat de Constantinople (1474–1497), dans la politique orientale de l’Église de Rome,” *Annuario dell’Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica* (Venice) 8 (2006): 135–152, 153–258. In comparison: Oliver Jens Schmitt, “Skanderbegs letzte Jahre. West-östliches Wechselspiel von Diplomatie und Krieg im Zeitalter der osmanischen Eroberung Albaniens (1464–1468),” *Süd-Ost Forschungen* (Munich–Re-

- gensburg) 64-65 (2004–2005): 56–123. As to the Venetian project of 1475, it was misdated, under 1462, by Jovan Radonić in *Durađ Kastriot Skenderbeg i Arbanija XV veku (istoriska iratba)* (= *Spomenik*, 95) (Belgrade, 1942), no. 226, p. 128.
7. Al. Simon, *Ștefan cel Mare și Matia Corvin: O coexistență medievală* (Cluj-Napoca, 2007), 454 (n. 35). See also the information in Andrei Pippidi's, "Lettres inédites de Leonardo III Tocco," *Revue des études Sud-Est européennes* (Bucharest) 32, 1–2 (1994): 69–70, and the studies in the remarkable *Fight against the Turk in Central-Europe in the First Half of the 16th Century*, edited by István Zombori (Budapest, 2004), in particular those authored by Pál Fodor, András Kubinyi, Sándor Papp, and Vladimir Seges.
 8. For an overview: Karl Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III und das Reich: Zum Hunyadisich-Habsburgischen Gegensatz im Donauraum* (Munich, 1975), 41–45. A most eloquent analysis of these late medieval questions has been made by Ferenc Szakály, "Mecenatismo regio e finanze pubbliche in Ungheria sotto Mattia Corvino," *Rivista di Studi Ungheresi* (Rome) 4 (1989): 19–35. In terms of historiography, see Edgár Artner's selection of documents: Kornél Szovák, ed., *Magyarország mint a nyugati keresztény művelődés védőbástyája: A Vatikáni Levéltárnak azok az okiratai, melyek őseinknek a Keletről Európát fenyegető veszedelmek ellen kifejtett erőfeszítéseire vonatkoznak (cca. 1214–1606)* (Budapest–Rome, 2004); the data was gathered in the 1930s.
 9. These crusader political aspects were largely influenced, on the continental and regional level, by John Hunyadi, on which see Stéphane Yerasimos, "Enquête sur un héros: Yanko bin Madyan, le fondateur mythique de Constantinople," in *Mélanges offerts à Louis Bazin par ses disciples, collègues et amis*, eds. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Rémy Dor (Paris, 1992), 213–217; *Between Worlds*, vol. 2, *Lucerna orbis: John Hunyadi and his Time* (= *Mélanges d'Histoire Générale*, new ser., 1, 2), eds. Ana Dumitran, Loránd Mádly, and Al. Simon (Cluj-Napoca, 2007). On the other hand, the documents quoted below are also eloquent on the editorial level, for the publishing mistakes and rather inappropriate ways by which such medieval sources were gathered and printed in the 1800s and the early 1900s. For such editorial and historiographical peculiar matters, see in particular Gian Giacomo Musso, "Russia e Genovesi del Levante nel Quattrocento," in id., *La cultura genovese nell'età dell'Umanesimo* (Genoa, 1985), 197, n. 17.
 10. See the works of scholars which have lost little of their value throughout the decades: Oskar Halecki, "Sixte IV et la chrétienté orientale," in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, 2/1, *Orient Chrétien* (Vatican City, 1964), 241–264; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571*, vol. 2, *The Fifteenth Century* (= *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, 127) (Philadelphia, 1978), 281–285; F. Szakály, "Phases of Turko-Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács, 1365–1526," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest) 33 (1979): 88–94.
 11. Though partially edited under Nicolae Iorga's name in *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle*, vol. 5, *1476–1500* (Bucharest, 1915), no. 73, p. 54, the king's message for the Reichstag, sent immediately after the highly pro-

- filed anti-Ottoman victory of his captains, at Câmpul Pâinii (Kenyérmező) failed to draw attention, though Matthias Corvinus' involvement in the Djem crisis has been a major topic of interest for remarkable scholars since the late 1800s. See Nicolas Vatin, *Sultan Djem: Un prince ottoman dans l'Europe du XV^e siècle d'après deux sources contemporaines: Vâkicât-i Sultân Cem/Euvres de Guillaume Carousin* (Ankara, 1997); P. Fodor, "The View of the Turk in Hungary: The Apocalyptic Tradition and the Red Apple in Ottoman-Hungarian Context," in *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople: Actes de la Table Ronde de Istanbul, 13–14 avril 1996*, eds. Benjamin Lellouche and St. Yerasimos (Montreal-Paris, 1998), 99–131. For the Greek-Latin legacy of Matthias and its political and ecclesiastical context, see also Al. Simon, "La place chrétienne de la foi des Roumains de Transylvanie en 1574," *Annuario dell'Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica* 5–6 (2004–2005): 389–403; I.-M. Damian, "Iancu de Hunedoara, Ioan de Capestrano și Biserica transilvană de rit răsăritean: Noi mărturii despre mitropolitul Ioan 'de Caffa'," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A. D. Xenopol"* (Iași) 43–44 (2006–2007): 1–14.
12. In these matters, see the already classic studies of Ș. Papacostea, "Venise et les Pays Roumains au Moyen Age," in *Venezia e il Levante fino al secolo XV*, 1/2, ed. Agostino Pertusi, *Storia-Diritto-Economia* (Florence, 1973), 602–605, and of Gyula Rázsó, "Una strana alleanza: Alcuni pensieri sulla storia militare e politica dell'alleanza contro i turchi (1440–1464)," in *Venezia e Ungheria nel Rinascimento*, ed. Vittore Branca (Florence, 1973), 95–101 (in particular). As to both documents quoted below, though they were printed more than a century ago (Iván Nagy and Albert B. Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziái emlékek: Mátyás király korából, 1458–1490* (= *Monumenta Hungariae Historica* 4, 1–4), vol. 4, [1488–1490, 1458–1490] (Budapest, 1878), no. 129, p. 182; Emilio Motta, "Un ambasciatore tartaro a Venezia, 1476," *Ateneo Veneto* (Venice) 19 (1889): 145–153), were nevertheless neglected by the historians, which is rather unexplainable in the case of the Milanese document from late April 1490.
 13. For the archbishop's statement: Carol Wagner, ed., *Petri de Warda epistolae cum nonnullis Wladislai II. regis Hungariae litteris Petri causa scriptis* (Bratislava-Košice, 1776), no. 66, pp. 129–130. In comparison: Ivan Biliarsky, "Une page des relations magyaro-ottomanes vers la fin du XV^e siècle," *Turcica: Revue d'études turques* (Paris) 32 (2000): 291–305; Mihai Maxim, "Stephen the Great and the Sublime Porte: New Turkish Documents," *Transylvanian Review* (Cluj-Napoca) 14, 1 (2005): 19–21.
 14. The report from early 1468, together with other documents from the Milanese State Archive, will be printed in I.-A. Pop and Al. Simon, eds., *The Wallachians and the Later Crusades: Documents from the Milanese Archives* (Cluj-Napoca–Bucharest, 2008). In this respect, we would like to stress out a few documentary aspects. Only from the years 1474–1476 more than 200 unknown documents regarding Moldavia, Wallachia and the Ottomans were preserved, almost 5 times more than the documents dating from the entire 15th century already edited in Romania. The ratio is almost twice as great as in the case of Venetian libraries and archives (see the first volume in the series *Documenti veneziani riguardanti i romeni e l'Europa Centro-*

Orientalne nei secolii XVI–XVIII, eds. C. Luca, I.-A. Pop, and Florina Ciure (Bucharest), forthcoming). This indicates how much there is still to be found in these archives and libraries. In respect to Matthias, it can only be said that K. Nehring was rather modest in his estimates regarding only the amount of unedited sources on the king, still preserved in various Italian archives and libraries (see, for instance, his “Die Bestände italienischer Archive zur ungarischen Geschichte,” *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* (Mainz–Munich) 2 (1970): 155, n. 4.

15. In these questions, the ‘Polish rival perspective’ is of great value: Stanislaw Russocki, “Structures politiques dans l’Europe des Jagellon,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* (Warsaw) 39 (1979): 101–142; Krysztof Baczkowski, “Callimaco e la ambascerie veneziane in Polonia negli anni ‘70 del XV secolo,” in *Viaggio in Italia e viaggio in Polonia*, ed. Danuta Quirini-Poplawska (Krakow, 1994), 43–52.
16. The document cited below was edited in Viaceslav Makusev, *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalum vicinorumque populorum e tabularis et bibliothecis italicis derompta*, vol. 1–2, *Genua, Mantua, Mediolanum, Panormus et Taurinum* (Belgrade, 1882), no. 15, p. 137. For the Italian perspective on such regional *Christian* border ‘affairs’: Ovidiu Cristea, “Matthias Corvin et l’expédition de Bazeyid II contre la Moldavie (1484),” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 42, 1–4 (2003): 81–88.
17. For an analysis of the main questions and an introduction to the sources: Nicolae Edroiu, “Transylvanian Possessions of the Wallachian and Moldavian Princes (14th–16th Centuries): Political-social and Cultural-historical Significance,” in *Ștefan cel Mare la cinci secole de la moartea sa*, eds. Petronel Zahariuc and Silviu Văcaru (Iași, 2003), 185–196; Marius Porumb, *Stephen the Great and Transylvania: Cultural and Artistic Relations* (Cluj, 2004).
18. For a recent overview of these questions and a survey of the preserved sources in Austria, Hungary, Italy and in Slovakia: I.-A. Pop and Al. Simon, “Moldova și celălalt Imperiu: Preliminariile și consecințele conspirației lui Maximilian I de Habsburg și Ștefan cel Mare (1497),” in *Vocația istoriei: Prinos profesorului Șerban Papacostea*, eds. O. Cristea and Gheorghe Lazăr (Brăila, 2008), 331–406.
19. See Erik Fügedi’s works on the social mobility of the Hungarian realm in the 15th century, for instance, his studies collected by János M. Bak (whose *Königtum und Stände in Ungarn im 14.–16. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1973), is still a fundamental study) in *Kings, Bishops, Nobles and Burghers in Medieval Hungary* (London, 1986). For the context, see Ș. Papacostea, “La Moldavie, État tributaire de l’Empire Ottoman au XV^e siècle, le cadre international des rapports établis en 1455–1456”; K. Nehring, “Herrschaftstradition und Herrschaftslegitimität: Zur ungarischen Aussenpolitik in der Zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 13, 3 (1974): 445–461, 463–472.
20. Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, a. 1324–1881*, vol. 1, *Secolele XIV–XVI* (Bucharest, 2001), 537–538; Al. Simon, “Antonio Bonfini’s *Valachorum regulus*: Matthias Corvinus, Transylvania and Stephen the Great,” in *Between Worlds*, 1: 207–226; D. I. Mureșan, “Notes critiques sur l’histoire de l’Église de Moldavie au XV^e siècle,” in *Between Worlds*, 2: 115–143. It should

be stressed out that the ‘age’ of this works does not reflect only our aim to provide the reader with some of the most recent studies on these matters, but also stands for the fact that such aspects were until recently quite rarely taken into account. It is, maybe, also worth noting that, like the previously quoted document from the same register preserved in Brno, this document was edited, after an undated copy, by both Hungarian and Romanian historians of the 18th and 19th centuries, who assumed that the documents dated from 1475, which led to the fact that a major part of the relation between Matthias and Stephen was largely misunderstood, as information and interpretations were concentrated around the much better known mid 1470s.

21. Tibor Klaniczay and József Jankovics, eds., *Matthias Corvinus and Humanism in Central Europe* (Budapest, 1994); Marianne D. Birnbaum, *The Orb and the Pen: Janus Pannonius and Matthias Corvinus and the Buda Court* (Budapest, 1996). The studies collected in the previously mentioned works provided, in international languages, some of the most useful information on Matthias’ image and self-representation. In Stephen’s case, it is quite illuminating that one of the most used studies (because of its language of publication) for such question dates from the 1960s: Eugen Stănescu, “Tendances politiques et états d’esprit au temps d’Etienne le Grand, à la lumière des monuments écrits,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 4, 2 (1965): 233–260. For political aspects: Al. Simon, “The Hungarian Means of the Relations between the Habsburgs and Moldavia at the End of the 15th Century,” *Annuario dell’Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica* 8 (2006): 259–296.
22. On such subjects, unfortunately for the general scientific knowledge, on must revert, also in the cases of recent works, to studies written in local languages: András Kubinyi, “Az 1505-ös rákosi országgyűlés és a szittya ideológia,” *Századok* (Budapest) 140, 2 (2006): 361–374; Al. Simon, “*Valahii* și Dieta de la Rákos (1505): Considerații asupra sfârșitului epocii huniade,” *Apulum* (Alba Iulia) 43 (2006): 99–121.
23. See N. Housley, “Giovanni da Capistrano and the Crusade of 1456,” in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century*, 94–115; I.-M. Damian, “L’esercito crociato nella battaglia di Belgrado (14 e 21/22 luglio 1456): etnia e stato sociale,” *Quaderni della Casa Romena di Venezia* (Venice) 3 (2004): 197–204. For Moldavia: D. I. Mureșan, “Le Mont Athos aux XV^e–XVI^e siècles: Autour de quelques descriptions d’époque,” in *Romanian Principalities and the Holy Places Along the Centuries*, eds. Emanoil Babus, Ioan Moldoveanu, and Andrei Marinescu (Bucharest, 2007), 81–121. For Matthias’ domestic policies, see also the still valuable study of Gábor Adriányi, “Die Kirchenpolitik des Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490),” *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 10 (1979): 83–92.
24. For the Romanian ‘Matthias question’: I.-A. Pop, “Privilèges obtenus par les Roumains à l’époque de Matia Corvin,” *Colloquia: Journal of Central European Studies* (Cluj-Napoca) 1, 1 (1994): 37–48; Ioan Drăgan, *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania, 1440–1514* (Bucharest, 2000); Al. Simon, “Acceptance and Rejection in Medieval Transylvania: Romanians and Hungarians before 1600,” *Transylvanian Review* 14, 1 (2005): 55–68. As to the document cited below, it has been edited some 150 years ago (Friedrich Firnhaber, “Beiträge zur Geschichte Ungarns unter der Regierung der

- Könige Wladislaus II. und Ludwig II (1490–1526),” *Archiv für Kunde Österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* (Vienna) 2, 2 (3) (1849), no. 45, p. 441), but has not received the proper attention called for by the importance of its provisions.
25. See Jörg K. Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus: Diplomat, Feldherr und Mäzen* (Graz–Vienna–Cologne, 1998); András Kubinyi, *Matthias Corvinus: Die Regierung eines Königreichs in Ostmitteleuropa, 1458–1490* (Herne, 1999); Randal Munson, “Stephen the Great: Leadership and Patronage on the Fifteenth Century Ottoman Frontier,” *East European Quarterly* (Boulder) 39, 3 (2005): 269–297; Robin Baker, “The Hungarian-speaking Hussites of Moldavia and two English episodes in their history,” *Central Europe* (London) 4 (2006): 3–24, or the general ‘national politically correct’ perspective of Eugen Denize, *Stephen the Great and his Reign* (Bucharest, 2004).
 26. Matthias’ letter of spring 1481 to Sixtus IV was printed in *Actae et epistolae relationum Transylvaniae Hungariaeque cum Moldavia et Valachia* (= *Fontes Rerum Transylvanicarum*, vol. 4, 6), vol. 1, 1468–1540, ed. Endre Veress (Budapest, 1914), no. 33, p. 37. For the political discourse: Benjamin Weber, “La croisade impossible: Étude sur les relations entre Sixt IV et Mathias Corvin (1471–1484),” in *Hommage à Alain Ducellier. Byzance et ses périphéries (monde grec, balkanique et musulman)*, eds. Bernard Doumerc and Christophe Picard (Toulouse, 2004), 309–321; Al. Simon, “The Use of the *Gate of Christendom*: Hungary’s Matthias Corvinus and Moldavia’s Stephen the Great Politics in the Late 1400,” *Quaderni della Casa Romena di Venezia* 3 (2004): 205–224.
 27. The list cited below was also edited in *Regesten Kaiser Friedrich III. (1440–1493): Nach Archiven und Bibliotheken geordnet* (= J[ohann] F[riedrich] Böhmer, *Regesta Imperii*, vol. 13), general eds. Heinrich Koller, Paul-Joachim Heinig, and Alois Niederstätter, suppl. 2–1, *Das Taxregister der römischen Kanzlei 1471–1475 (Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien, Hs. “weiss 529” und “weiss 920”)*, eds. P.-J. Heinig and Ines Grund (Cologne–Graz–Vienna, 2001), no. 3539, p. 523. For other information on the period: Šime Ljubić, *Dispacci di Luca de Tollentis vescovo di Sebenico e di Lionello Cheregato vescovo di Traù nunzi apostolici in Borgogna e nelle Fiandre 1472–1488* (Zagreb, 1876), no. I–13, p. 46; Al. Simon, “Anti-Ottoman Warfare and Crusader Propaganda in 1474: New Evidences from the Archives of Milan,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 46, 1–4 (2007): 25–9.
 28. Ș. Papacostea, *Stephen the Great, Prince of Moldavia (1457–1504)*, 2nd edition (Bucharest, 1990); A. Kubinyi, *Mátyás Király* (Budapest, 2001). We draw the attention to the very recently published exhibition catalogue *Matthias Corvinus, the King: Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court, 1458–1490*, eds. Péter Farbaky, Enikő Spekner, Katalin Szende, and András Vég (Budapest, 2008).

Abstract

Documentary Perspectives on Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus

Comparative studies and archival researches, carried on in Austrian, Hungarian or Italian archives and libraries over the last years, have proven how false or at least how misleading these considerations were if applied to medieval Romanian history. The new results challenge and even change traditional perspectives or more recent interpretations based, however, on the same “restrictive framework.” The consequences of these recent additions made by French, German, Hungarian, Italian or Romanian scholars reach beyond the limits of traditional Romanian medieval history. This is illustrated by the long-debated relation between King Matthias Corvinus and Stephen the Great of Moldavia. Starting with a joint Hungarian-Romanian conference in Szeged (2004), occasioned by the 500th anniversary of Stephen the Great’s death, new data and perspectives have emerged from the study of their reigns beyond the classical perspectives or sources (which basically represent, in light of recent investigations, less than a quarter of the preserved documentary data in Southern and Central European archives and libraries). On the eve of another anniversary, 550th years since Matthias’ enthronement and 565th years since his birth in the city of Cluj (Klausenburg, Kolozsvár), a review of these questions, as well as a presentation of some of the most relevant newfound sources related to the *Valachorum regulus* and ‘the most *Hungarian* of all kings’ (Matthias Corvinus) and to the *athlete of the Christian faith/seminator malorum* (Stephen the Great) can be useful for future researches and interpretations of the far from exhausted medieval period.

Keywords

crusades, medieval Central and Eastern Europe, Wallachians (Romanians), Hungarians (Magyars), diplomacy, archives