Radu the Great of Wallachia
The Challenges of a Portrait

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F EW CLEAR things are known about the political and ecclesiastic history of Wallachia of the late 15th and early 16th century. It is a difficult period to analyze, because the frequent changes in rule, the jumble of treasons, murders and oath breaking—political weapons that were often used—hinder our attempt to clearly describe that age.[1] Nevertheless, the aforementioned period is dominated by the personality of Prince Radu the Great (who ruled between 1495 and 1508), the son of Vlad the Monk, who is described by the contemporary sources in a very controversial manner. The rule of Vlad the Monk was for a long time considered of lesser importance, and his personality feeble,[2] whilst, about his son, A. D. Xenopol wrote: "Radu IV the Great . . . thus named by the church, for which he had great deference, did not deserve, for any of his qualities, this special name."[3] Compared to his father, Radu the Great enjoyed a little more fame, for a while derived from certain cultural or ecclesial achievements which passed the test of time,[4] and more recently thanks to the fine political ability and the diplomacy with which he knew how to maintain peace in his country.[5]

Should we try to construct this ruler's profile basing ourselves exclusively on historical sources, chronicles, chancellery documents or letters, ecclesiastic monuments or iconographical representations, we will discover a rather controversial personality. We will see, for instance, that the image of the unjust and godless ruler which can be seen in sources like *Viaţa Sfântului Nifon* (Life of Saint Niphon), written by Gavril the Protos, *Letopiseţul cantacuzinesc* (The Cantacuzeinos' Chronicle) and others, is in obvious contrast with the prestige that the prince had, for instance, at Mount Athos. This reality is confirmed even more by the perpetuation of his memory during the reigns of his successors, in the 16th century, who invoked their descent from his dynastic line or claimed his actions, attitudes or decisions as a strategy for legitimating their own rules. Using the aforementioned historical sources we will attempt to outline Radu the Great's portrait which, at first glance, threatens to oscillate between a sinner and changing ruler, a skilled political operator, a just lord, and a faithful benefactor of the church. Out main purpose

is to analyze his historical memory, as it derives from various concurrent sources but, like in a scientific experiment, we will sometimes resort to history as an element of control.

Chronicles... and Letters

IN THE most ancient version of the Wallachian chronicle, *Letopisețul Țării Românești* (The Chronicle of Wallachia) for the years 1292–1664, in the Arabic version of Macarios Zaim, who traveled to Moldavia and Wallachia between 1653 and 1658, Radu the Great is not mentioned at all.[6] The most ancient chronicle in which we find details about this ruler is *Letopisețul cantacuzinesc*.[7] Compiled after 1690, the chronicle describes Radu the Great's reign in considerable detail, taken however from the *Life of Saint Niphon*, a hagiographic source written by Gabriel, the *prôtos* of the community of monks from Athos in 1520 or 1521.[8] The years can be deduced from its content, because there are mentioned two events whose date we know: the consecration of Neagoe Basarab's foundation at Curtea de Argeș on 15 August 1517 and the relocation of the metropolitan see to Târgoviște, in 1520. We are, therefore, dealing with a hagiographic text "hidden" between the pages of a chronicle, a thing which doesn't lack in importance, for the keys of reading these two types of historical sources differ in certain aspects. Aside from them we can also use a Greek version *Viața Sfântului Nifon: O redacțiune grecească inedită* (The life of Saint Niphon: An unedited Greek redaction)—the translation of which was made by Vasile Grecu and was published at Bucharest in 1944.[9] The events described by Gabriel the Protos and inserted in *Letopisețul cantacuzinesc* were resumed, in brief but with very similar conclusions, in *Cronica Bălenilor* (The Băleni chronicle), a text which is part of the ensemble named *Istoriile domnilor Țărîi Rumânești* (The history of Wallachia's rulers), written at the end of the 17th century.[10]

The work narrates facts from the history of the country from the period 1504–1520, including, thus, the rules of Radu the Great, Mihnea the Evil, Vlad the Young and Neagoe Basarab. Briefly, the events seem to have developed thus: Radu the Great, during his annual trip to Constantinople to pay the tribute, asked the sultan about Niphon, the former patriarch of Constantinople who was at the time under some kind of house arrest at Adrianople. With the sultan's agreement, he invited him to Târgoviște to reorganize the church of the country, which he swiftly did: he made a plan to reorganize the church on official canonical bases, he disciplined the clergy, he ordained two bishops. Soon the good relations were broken, as the prince and his boyars refused to accept Niphon's attempts at reformation and, infuriated, the prince banished him from his country. The prince's gesture of anger is accompanied by Niphon's omens: "For fear that you will God's wrath upon you and your country, for I tell you that because of your wrongdoings it will be soon unleashed upon you."[11] The lord changed his attitude and, in order to make peace with the high prelate, suggested a compromise, but Niphon did not accept, considering it a deviation from the right path of the divine law. We also discover that the main raison for Niphon's "annoyance" was the fact that Radu the Great gave his sister, Caplea, a widow after Staico's death, in marriage to Chancellor Bogdan, who had fled from Moldavia, where he had a wife. Nevertheless, the ruler maintained his

position of power and asked the high prelate not to interfere, because the marriage had been approved by other bishops, after Bogdan's divorce. Niphon left Wallachia, not before pronouncing a curse upon the prince and the entire country. The sudden departure of the holy man brought divine retribution: "So, shortly after holy Niphon left the Land of Pannonia, lord Radul was struck by a horrible and terrible illness and many other bad things happened around him."[12] In the pages of the chronicle no curse is mentioned, but we find out that after the death of Radu the Great things went so bad throughout the country, that the saint must have cursed him for his bad deeds. *Cronica Bălenilor* informs laconically: "Whilst leaving Târgoviște he changed his dusty slippers and he cursed the prince (as we found out after his death)."[13]

In the first analysis, Radu the Great's portrait is that of a sinful prince. If we were to make a list with the main characteristics of an "evil" ruler, Radu the Great would probably check most of them: unstable, oath breaker, malicious, sinner, unjust, eventually cursed. No matter how many times we reread the text, things do not change but, on the contrary, we sink even deeper in the thicket of the narrative.

Having got to this point, we should remember that, whilst reading a medieval source, if we wish to understand at least a part of what is going on and "what is represented" in those pages, the modern criteria of understanding reality are not useful and, even more, they are not doing us any favors. In most of the cases, these texts serve the purposes of those who ordered their writing in the first place. Our silent partner here is Prince Neagoe Basarab, so the paper is meant to serve his purposes. The writer is Gabriel the Protos, who had a thorough ecclesiastic training,[14] a reality which is reflected in the language he used, in the interpretation strategy, and in the perspective from which he presented his subject. The *Life of Saint Niphon* must be read according to the social and political context in which it was created. Its purpose was not the narration of some facts from the past exactly as they happened, but to present them so that they would build a positive image of Neagoe Basarab.

After studying the subject more thoroughly, we could present the aforementioned events thus: once arrived in Constantinople, Radu the Great asked the sultan to release the former Patriarch of Constantinople, Niphon, who was under house arrest at Adrianople.[15] He had been unseated and imprisoned because he had pretended to be a relative and the heir of Patriarch Symeon, his predecessor, who had a huge fortune, and he had supported this assertion with the oath of three false witnesses.[16] With the sultan's agreement, Niphon came to Wallachia, at Radu the Great's invitation, with the precise mission of reorganizing the Wallachian church according to official canons accepted by the Patriarchy of Constantinople. Niphon accomplished these objectives—he constructed a program to reorganize the church, he ordained two bishops,[17] probably having their seats at Râmnic Noul Severin and Buzău, a moment when the ruler must have considered his mission completed. We think this must be the cause of the misunderstanding between the prince and the former high prelate, who would have wanted to continue his reforms and who couldn't have returned to Mount Athos without the sultan's permission. According to the chronicle, the reason behind the misunderstandings was the marriage between Chancellor Bogdan and the prince's sister, Caplea: "You married your sister to Bogdan, against the law, for he had a rightful wife whom he left with no raison

at all and took your sister, he being a fornicator and your sister a slut."[18] We do not think that the prince would have approved an illegitimate marriage between Lady Caplea and boyar Bogdan, the prince himself saying that "As for Bogdan's marriage you should not interfere, because he had received benediction from other holy bishops."[19] The episode has to do rather with the political conflict between the family of the Craioveşti boyars, who desired to increase its authority and enjoyed Niphon's support, and the family of the Buzău boyars, led by Bogdan from Popeşti, whose marriage to Radu the Great's sister strengthened the connections between the prince and the boyars from this part of the country.[20] For many years, until his death, Caplea had been the wife of Staico from Bucov, great chancellor since the days of Vlad the Monk, up until 1505. The inscription in the Dragomireşti church, their foundation, attests that it was built "initially by Staico the chancellor from Bucov and his Lady Caplea, in the year 1461–1462,"[21] wherefrom we conclude that at that date they were already married and that, in 1505, at the moment of the second marriage, Caplea had an advanced age. The marriage between the widow Caplea and Bogdan from Popeşti must have taken place in the summer of 1505, after a minimum period of mourning. These dates determine us also to place the departure of Niphon from Wallachia in the summer of 1505 at the earliest, after the aforementioned marriage.

As for the so-called "cursing" of the prince, opinions are divided. In the *Life of Saint Niphon*, as taken up in the *Cantacuzeinos' Chronicle*, there is no mention whatsoever of any defrocking procedure, before or after Niphon's departure. The *Băleni's Chronicle* mentions briefly that "Whilst leaving Târgovişte he changed his dusty slippers and he cursed the prince (as we found out after his death)"[22]—therefore not while Radu the Great was alive. In the Greek edition of the *Life*, written in 1518 by the Greek hagiographer Justinos Dekadios, there is no mention of a conflict between Radu the Great and Niphon who, on the contrary, after fulfilling his mission returned to the Ottoman Empire bearing gifts from the prince.[23] In the edition that Vasile Grecu translated there is no mention about any excommunication or defrocking of Radu the Great but, on the other hand, we read about the condemnation, according to the church procedures, of Lady Caplea and of boyar Bogdan.[24] What about Radu the Great? If he really was defrocked, even though the sources or the hagiographical writing, not other letters or documents, do not mention this explicitly, then it seems that this fact left him completely indifferent until his death. Which is hard to believe. As a matter of fact, an anonymous Greek chronicle mentioned that Niphon's departure from Wallachia took place in a completely different context. According to a Greek source from the 16th century, Sultan Bayezid II ordered the deposition of Patriarch Joachim because he had raised a church near Chrysokeramos without his agreement. Apparently, after the deposition, Bayezid II called Niphon back from Wallachia, but he rejected the proposal, choosing to retire to the Dionysiou monastery at Mount Athos, in order to avoid a retaliation and, perhaps, not to endanger Radu the Great's connections with the Porte.[25]

"The story" of the anonymous Greek chronicle doesn't tell us anything about a conflict between Niphon and Wallachia, but it rather suggests one between Niphon and the circles of power in Istanbul. Consequently, the adjectives suggested by the hagiographic source, which places Radu the Great on the list of the "evil lords," do not convince us.

Another argument in this regard is a fragment from the writing of the German historian Johannes Leunclavius, *Historia Musulmanae Turcorum, de monumentis ipsorum excriptae, libri XVIII* (1591) concerning an episode from the history of the Turks, from 1511, when the fight for throne of the Sultan Bayezid II escalated.[26] When the janissaries asked the sultan to abdicate, because he was old and he could no longer lead the army, Bayezid answered by giving the example of Radu the Great,

> *the ruler of Wallachia who, even though not of the Muslim faith and with his strength greatly weakened, acted with great wisdom and, even though for seven years he was placed in a carriage and carried from one place to another, nevertheless ruled Wallachia to the great satisfaction of his subjects. They, with all their changing and erratic character, did not forsake their ruler for his weakness and the illness of his legs (podogra), for he was good, just, wise and suited to rule because of his great superiority of soul.*[27]

The characteristics listed in the fragment of the German historian show Radu the Great in a completely different light. Even if we do not know what Turkish source Leunclavius used, it was definitely not a fabrication: Radu the Great did suffer of podogra in the last part of his life, which didn't stop him from travelling every year to Constantinople in order to pay his tribute and to play a very active role, with a smooth diplomacy, in the networks of power of those times.[28]

That he knew how to maintain the good relations with the Ottoman Empire, from the very beginning of his rule, comes from his own confession. In a letter sent to the rulers of Braşov (Kronstadt) in September 1497, the prince assured them:

> *Your lordships know that I took an oath before you; as long as I am alive, you must not worry that the Turks will cross any part of your country, from Severin up to Brăila, to pillage the country of my Lord and his Highness the King.*[29]

Radu the Great also appears in the Moldavian chronicle, regarding an episode occurred after the arrival in Wallachia of Maxim Branković, a Serbian monk from the family of the Branković despots.[30] About this metropolitan we know that he was sent as an emissary by Radu the Great to Vladislas II of Hungary and to the Saxons from Transylvania, but the most significant episode is the one in which, in October 1507, he mediated a reconciliation between Radu the Great and Bogdan III of Moldavia. According to *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei* (The Chronicle of the Country of Moldavia), Radu the Great "entered the country and he plundered and burned the country of Putna and that side of Siretiu, causing a lot of pillaging and murder."[31] Bogdan fought back, says the chronicle, first of all because of the "abomination and despoliation worked by prince Radu," and second because he had to defend "his father's brave" name.[32] Arriving near the boundary between Moldavia and Wallachia, Bogdan III was stopped by the monk Maxim Branković, an emissary who was sent by the Wallachian prince according to some sources, and by the Hungarian king according to others. Nevertheless they all agree that Maxim was a messenger of the divine will, a "son of the light," [33] a fact that demonstrates that Radu the Great was not an "anathematized" lord, he was still a legitimate prince from the di-

vine perspective, otherwise he wouldn't have deserved the help he got for restoring the peace. The monk's speech, based on two irrefutable arguments ("you are both Christians and relatives"), highlights the fact that fighting, no matter the reason, remained evil. It is an interpretation that underlines the superiority of the man of the church compared to the representatives of the temporal power, who were more vulnerable to sin.[34] Only a man who was beyond any suspicion of bias could attenuate the tensions and find a path to reconciliation, thus explaining the selection, as a mediator accepted by both sides, of a man of the church who was also the member of an illustrious family. The commitment of Radu and hid boyars to respect the peace and understanding was sealed by an oath on the Holy Bible: "And there Prince Radu and all his boyars took an oath on the holy Bible to maintain eternal peace and the boundary along the old line."[35] Maxim's errand is also mentioned in the *Băleni's Chronicle*, his opportune intervention leading to the reconciliation of the two primces.[36]

Bearing all these in mind, if we return to the text of the *Life of Saint Niphon*, we should draw some conclusions. The presentation, in contrast, of the two princes, Radu the Great who, because of his sins, brought evil upon his country, and Neagoe Basarab, a savior prince who takes all the necessary steps to regain the divine grace, is meant to increase the prestige of the latter. This writing is an excellent example of using the past as a device for princely legitimation, it is a political statement through which Neagoe Basarab builds his reputation by confronting a redoubtable adversary from the past, a past that he rewrote with a subjective hand. Still, the use of this weapon had a drawback: the strategy for de-legitimizing Radu the Great speaks, inadvertently, about his high political and spiritual prestige.

Iconographic Representations

THE ICONOGRAPHIC representation of the *Life of Saint Niphon* can be found at Dea-lu Monastery, with an old dynastic tradition, Radu the Great's necropolis. The prince didn't get to supervise the painting of the church, which was accomplished by Neagoe Basarab. On this occasion, he associated himself, as a second founder, to the prestige of the first founding. The attention is immediately drawn by a painting, placed right over Radu the Great's tomb, in which the main character is Neagoe, Niphon and the prince himself falling on the second plane. The message of this painting confirms the description made by Gabriel the Protos in his writing: Radu the Great was a sinful, cursed lord, forgiven only because of the prayers and the intercession of Neagoe Basarab with Saint Niphon. This iconographic image immortalized until today, even better than Gabriel the Protos' text, the hagiographic memory.

So far, the portrait is not that encouraging. Things change if we analyze other iconographic representations, such as the portrait in fresco from Argeş Monastery, copied after the one existing, at that time, at Govora,[37] or the icon at the Vatopedi Monastery, which found shelter inside the Church of St. Demetrius in Bitolia. It seems that it was made at the monastery and was dated 28 November 1502, representing, in a deisis-type composition, the Mother of God on the throne, with baby Jesus in her arms, flanked

to the right by St. John the Baptist and to the left by Radu the Great, offering benefi-cences. According to the author of the study that made this picture public for the first time,[38] the Wallachian prince is painted according to the model of the Byzantine imperial iconography, in which the emperors were represented giving beneficences to the Holy Virgin and to Jesus Christ. The iconographic construction, in obvious contrast with the one we described above, reveals a prince with a strong preoccupation for strengthen-ing the relation with the Church, a fundamental piece in the ideology of the medieval monarchy that was based on the belief in the lord's divine investiture. Equal in size to Saint John the Baptist, the representation of Radu the Great is placed slightly behind the throne, offering three scrolls with beneficences bearing the princely seal. It is the portrait of a robust middle-aged man, with a short beard and mustache, his long hair falling on his shoulders, with a high forehead and piercing eyes. On his head he wears a gold open crown, adorned with precious stones and pearls, quite like those worn by the European kings from the same period of time. Moreover, on his robe the prince had golden double headed eagles, included in quadrilobes. It is the image of a noble, pious ruler, well aware of his power. A very similar representation was discovered at Lapusnja Monastery, which was made in 1510, therefore two years after his death. These icono-graphic representations, which change quite seriously the image suggested by the early Wallachian chronicles, illustrate his very rich activity as a founder even before becoming ruler of Wallachia, as his father's associate to the throne, and until his death, when some foundations remained unfinished.

No wonder that in the historical memory he remained "Prince Radu the Great," and the oldest mention of this surname seems to appear in the *Cantacuzeinos' Chronicle*.[39] The mention is in a part of an older section of the chronicle, most likely written during the reign of Radu from Afumați, a part in which the rulers are described briefly and without too many details. As far as Radu the Great was concerned, at his reign the narra-tion abruptly stops: "Prince Radu the Great, he built the monastery at Dealu and reigned for 15 years." From this point onwards the text of the *Life of Saint Niphon* was inserted, in which the surname "the Great" ceases to appear. How is our prince remembered by the memory of the charters?

Nomen est Omen

MIRCEA THE Ancient, Radu Praznaglava (the Fool), Vlad the Devil, Radu the Beautiful, Vlad the Impaler, Vlad the Monk, Vlad the Younger, Radu from Afumați, Mircea the Shepherd are only some of a long list of names under which we know the rulers of Wallachia. In the first chancellery documents, kept for Wallachia from the middle of the 14th century, when the chancellery started to be better organized, the Wallachian lords referred to themselves in a simple manner: "Io Neculai Alixandru vaivode, son of the old, late Io Basarab vaivode,"[40] Prince Nicolae Alexandru, of course; "Io Dan vaivode," son of "Radul vaivode, our father,"[41] namely Dan I, son of Radu I, brother of Mircea, who would become "the Elder." With the passing of time, the references to the rulers who made the first donations become complicated. For instance,

while strengthening the older donations of the monasteries of Tismana and Vodiţa, Vlad the Devil referred to his ancestors thus:

> *Tismana, which the saintly late father of my father Mircea vaivode, Radul vaivode, had raised from the foundations, and the saintly late brother of my father, Dan vaivode, endowed with many things...*[42]

Actually, few rulers get to choose their names—most of them gain them after death, according to certain features that remained alive in the memory of the descendants.

We do not propose a complete analysis of the names of the Wallachian princes, but merely an exercise, which is to see how and when their surnames were gained, thus reflecting the manner in which they remained in the memory of the descendants and with the conviction that that they keep in themselves fragments of the social memory.

From the end of the 15th century, in the chancellery documents in which were reassesed older beneficences and for which were analyzed the documents issued by the previous rulers, a more precise usage of their name became necessary, to avoid confusions.

In a document issued by Radu the Great for Tismana monastery, on 31 October 1499, Mircea the Elder still appears as "our grandfather,"[43] or "the saintly deceased ancestor of our lordship, the great Io Mircea voiavode."[44] Prince Mircea, Mihnea the Evil's son, is the one who for the first time associated the name of Mircea with the surname "Elder"—"from the days of our great-grandfather, voiavode Mircea the elder,"[45] although, for many years still, he continued to appear in documents as such, or as "Io Mircea the great voiavode."[46] Starting with 1519 he was already named "Mircea voiavode the Elder."[47] His father Radu, as many other voiavodes, also appears in documents, more than 100 years after his death, as "Radu voiavode the Elder,"[48] in other words "from ancient times," but eventually named only Mircea "the Elder."

During Mihnea the Evil's reign the number of reassessed cases increased, a process which included a analysis of the old chancellery documents. While analyzing a case in which were involved the abbot and the monks of Tismana monastery and the sons of a man named Răsipă, the monks

> *brought the documents from the ancient rulers starting with Vladislav voiavode, who ruled before Mircea voiavode, and the document from our great-grandfather Mircea voiavode and the documents from all the other princes at a time and the document given by our father, Vlad voiavode . . . And we also searched the document of our uncle, voiavode Vlad the Monk.*[49]

Therefore, the exact mentioning of the previous rulers becomes a little more complicated and they gradually got surnames.

As we have already mentioned, we only wish to underline how, in a very interesting manner, the princes' surname seem to indicate the strongest memory preserved, sometimes even after decades, by their successors: the order, the place or manner of their death, or other unusual attributes.

Vlad the Devil, thus named by the Turks even during his lifetime, for a long period of time mentioned in documents only according to his bloodline, appears for the first time as "the old voiavode Vlad the Devil" in 1517, in a document given by Neagoe Basarab to Govora monastery. Perhaps his son was also known, at that time, as the Evil, while the boyars from their family were known, in 1526, as "Drăculești" ("Devils").[50] Vlad the Impaler appears in the documents issued by his son, Mihnea (the Evil) in a simple formula, "Io Mihnea voiavode . . . son of Vlad the great voiavode."[51] In the documents issued by Mircea the Shepherd, Vlad appears with the surname Impaler: "Because this aforementioned land was lost by the ancestors of the Rățăi long before voiavode Vlad the Impaler."[52] Even sooner than this date, his brother, Radu, is named in 1535 by Vlad Vintilă from Slatina "voiavode Radu the Beautiful."

Vlad the Monk is mentioned for the first time with this surname in the documents issued by his son, Radu the Great,[53] but this choice is not so hard to explain, because he was a monk, known under the name Pahomie. The fact that he spent his entire youth in a monastery, being defrocked a lot later, remained a defining feature, which didn't apply in other cases, such as that of Radu Paisie.

Radu, Vlad the Monk's son, appears for the first time with this surname in the very documents issued by Neagoe Basarab who, in a charter from 3 June 1517, made reference to "the days of voiavode Radu the Good."[54] Vlad Vintilă underlined this feature even more, in a document destined to Govora monastery: "voiavode Radu the Good, the son of the Monk," and the name is used many times from that moment on.[55]

There are princes remembered by posterity after the manner of their death. Vlad the Drowned appears as such in the days of Vlad Vintilă ("the late voiavode Vlad the Drowned"), a name that reminds us of a not so honorable death, because it seems that in the summer of 1532 "he got drunk and he drowned along with his horse in a river" (Dâmbovița).[56]

Our approach is nevertheless centered upon Radu the Great's memory and, from the analysis above, we should remember that during the entire 16th century he is remembered as "Radu the Good." The first one who uses this surname is Neagoe Basarab himself and we must underline the irony of this situation: in the chancellery documents Radu is "the Good," while in the hagiographic memory, kept by the *Life of Saint Niphon*, Radu is "the Bad."

WHAT DO all these apparently disparate pieces of information tell us? From the perspective of the sources, there seem to have existed parallel historical memories, apparently contradictory, and, should we continue their study, using the accurate interpretative key, the personality of Radu the Great and the political landscape from the late 15th and early 16th century will become all the more clear and interesting. From the perspective of political history, the different categories of sources suggest that the Ottoman hegemony determined the inclusion of the Wallachian political elite in a wider network of power and that after the mid–15th century, after a period of severe political crisis, the boyar families began to participate on a constant basis in the political life of Wallachia, creating networks of power that often interfered with that of

the ruler. Eventually, far from the image that we began with, of a *voiavode* overwhelmed by illness, obedient to the Turks and more preoccupied with the fate of the church than with the fate of his country, Radu the Great emerges as an important player in the political game which unfolded in this part of Europe.

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Notes

1. For a detailed image of late 15ᵗʰ and early 16ᵗʰ century Wallachia we mention a couple of studies: Dan Pleşia, "Neagoe Basarab: Originea, familia şi o scurtă privire asupra politicii Ţării Româneşti la începutul veacului al XVI-lea (I)," *Valachica* (Târgovişte) 1 (1969): 45–60; id., "Neagoe Basarab: Originea, familia şi o scurtă privire asupra politicii Ţării Româneşti la începutul veacului al XVI-lea (II)," *Valachica* 2 (1970): 113–141; Mustafa A. Mehmet, "Două documente turceşti despre Neagoe Basarab," *Studii: Revistă de istorie* (Bucharest) 21, 5 (1968): 921–930; Nicolae Stoicescu, "Legăturile de rudenie dintre domni şi marea boierime şi importanţa lor pentru istoria politică a Ţării Româneşti şi Moldovei (sec. XV–începutul secolului al XVIII-lea)," *Danubius* (Galaţi) 5 (1971): 115–137; Manole Neagoe, "Despre politica externă a lui Neagoe Basarab," *Studii: Revistă de istorie* 19, 4 (1966): 745–764; Ion Rizea, "Les Boyards Craioveşti, protecteurs du monachisme athonite post-byzantin," *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, vol. 5, edited by Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei Române, 2006), 423–458; Marcel Sturdza-Săuceşti and Nicolae Nistor, "Sigiliile boierilor din sfatul lui Radu cel Mare de la Convenţia cu Sibiul din 1507," *Revista Arhivelor* (Bucharest) 10, 1 (1967): 73–90.
2. Alexandru Lapedatu, "Vlad Vodă Călugărul, 1482–1496: Monografie istorică," in Alexandru Lapedatu, *Scrieri istorice*, edited by Camil Mureşanu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei Române, 2008), 155–203.
3. A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, 4ᵗʰ edition, vol. 2, *De la întemeierea ţărilor române până la moartea lui Petru Rareş, 1546*, text established by Nicolae Stoicescu and Maria Simionescu, notes, commentaries, foreword, index and illustrations by Nicolae Stoicescu (Bucharest: Ed. Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1986), 382.
4. Alexandru Lapedatu, "Politica lui Radul cel Mare, 1495–1508," in *Scrieri istorice*, 204–220; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii româneşti şi a vieţii religioase a românilor*, 2ⁿᵈ edition, rev. and enl., vol. 1 (Bucharest: Ed. Ministeriului de Culte, 1929), 117–130; id., *Istoria românilor*, vol. 4, *Cavalerii* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2014).
5. Even if Radu the Great is the main character of few studies, such as Liviu Pilat and Ovidiu Cristea, "Le Moine, la guerre et la paix: un épisode de la rivalité moldo-valaque au début du XVIᵉ siècle," *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe* (Iaşi) 1 (2009): 121–140, the period to which we refer can be better understood due to some new publications. See Liviu Pilat, "Mitropolitul Maxim Brancovici şi legăturile Moldovei cu Biserica sârbă," in *Studii privind relaţiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun şi Patriarhia Ecumenică (secolele XIV–XVI)* (Iaşi: Ed. Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 2012), 247–260; Marian Coman, *Putere şi teritoriu: Ţara Românească medievală (secolele XIV–XVI)* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2013); Ovidiu Cristea, *Puterea cuvintelor: Ştiri şi război*

în sec. XV–XVI (Târgovişte: Cetatea de Scaun, 2014). For Radu's involvement in the Ottoman-Hungarian-Venetian negotiations for the conclusion of the peace of 1503 see Alexandru Simon, *Pământurile Crucii: Românii şi cruciada târzie* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2012), especially pp. 230–235.

6. Virgil Cândea, "Letopiseţul Ţării Româneşti (1292–1664) în versiunea arabă a lui Macarie Zaim," *Studii: Revistă de istorie* 23, 4 (1970): 677.

7. *Letopiseţul cantacuzinesc*, in *Cronicari munteni*, texts selected, introduction, notes, commentaries and glossary by Dan Horia Mazilu (Bucharest: Ed. Fundaţiei Naţionale pentru Ştiinţă şi Artă; Univers Enciclopedic, 2004).

8. Petre Ş. Năsturel, "Recherches sur les rédactions gréco-roumaines de la 'Vie de Saint Niphon II, Patriarche de Constantinople,'" *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 5, 1–2 (1967): 45. We already made an analysis of the chronicle fragment which presents Radu the Great's reign in the study "Sine ira et studio? Trecutul ca armă a prezentului: un caz din zorii secolului al XVI-lea," in *Povestiri întretăiate: Istoria în cheie minoră*, edited by Ovidiu Cristea (Târgovişte: Cetatea de Scaun, 2016), 171–195, so here I will only mention some of the conclusions.

9. *Viaţa Sfântului Nifon: O redacţiune grecească inedită editată, tradusă şi însoţită cu o introducere de Vasile Grecu* (Bucharest: n.p., 1944).

10. *Cronicari munteni*, XV.

11. *Letopiseţul cantacuzinesc*, 100–101.

12. Ibid., 104.

13. *Cronica Bălenilor*, in *Cronicari munteni*, 257.

14. Gabriel the Protos was Niphon's pupil, therefore it is only natural to display the characteristics of a clerical education.

15. For the reasons of this deposition see *Emperors, Patriarchs and Sultans of Constantinople 1373–1513: An Anonymous Greek Chronicle of the Sixteenth Century*, edited by Marios Philippides (Brookline, Mass.: Hellenic College Press, 1990), 102–103 who asserted that the patriarch was deposed after the conflict with Skender beg, a descendant of the Amirutzes family from Trapezunt. A second deposition from the patriarchal seat, only one year later, was due to the misunderstandings with some bishops who didn't want him (ibid., 119). For the implication of the Greek elites in the struggle for power over the Great Church, see Tom Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan: Power, Authority and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), especially chapter 5, "Competition and Corruption," 179–213.

16. Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii româneşti şi a vieţii religioase a românilor*, vol. 1 (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia "Neamul Românesc," 1908), 116; Dan Horia Mazilu, *O istorie a blestemului* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2001), 115; Niculae M. Popescu, "Nifon II Patriarhul Constantinopolului," *Analele Academiei Române*, 2nd ser., vol. 36, *Memoriile Secţiunii Istorice* 19 (1914): 731–798; id., *Patriarhii Ţarigradului prin Ţările Româneşti: Veacul XVI* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, S-sor Ion St. Rasidescu, 1914), 150–155; Andronikos Falangas, *Presénces greques dans les Pays roumains (XVIe–XVIIe siècles): Le témoignage des sources narratives roumaines* (Bucharest: Omonia, 2009), 149–187.

17. He himself couldn't have held a metropolitan position, because he risked being accused of trisepiscopate, a sin that was severely punished.

18. *Letopiseţul cantacuzinesc*, 101.

19. Ibid., 101–102.
20. In order to understand the complex process of including the region of Buzău in Wallachia see Coman; Ovidiu Cristea and Marian Coman, "A Late Fifteenth Century Controversy on the Moldavian-Wallachian Frontier: An Incident Analysis," in *Government and Law in Medieval Moldavia, Transylvania and Wallachia*, edited by Martyn Rady and Alexandru Simon (N.p.: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2013), 101–111; Ovidiu Cristea and Marian Coman, "*O scrisoare pierdută*: Ştefan cel Mare şi boierii de margine ai Ţării Româneşti," *Analele Putnei* 9, 1 (2013): 23–52; Marian Coman, "Boierii de margine şi puterea domnească în Ţara Românească medievală: buzoienii şi mehedinţii," in *Aut viam inveniam aut faciam: In Honorem Ştefan Andreescu*, edited by Ovidiu Cristea, Petronel Zahariuc, and Gheorghe Lazăr (Iaşi: Ed. Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 2012), 35–58.
21. Ştefan Andreescu, "O biserică din secolul al XV-lea: Dragomireştii," *Glasul Bisericii* (Bucharest) 28, 1–2 (1969): 149–151.
22. *Cronica Bălenilor*, 257.
23. Falangas, 158; Leandros Vranoussis, "Texte şi documente româneşti inedite din Grecia," *Magazin istoric* (Bucharest) 6, 2 (1972): 6–10, extras by Dan Zamfirescu in *Neagoe Basarab şi Învăţăturile către fiul său Theodosie: Problemele controversate* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1973), annex I, 379–391.
24. *Viaţa Sfântului Nifon*, ed. Vasile Grecu, 91.
25. *Emperors, Patriarchs and Sultans*, 121. See also n. 103, p. 168.
26. Tasin Gemil, *Românii şi otomanii în secolele XIV–XVI*, 2nd edition, rev. (Constanţa: Ovidius University Press, 2008), 230–231.
27. Johannes Leunclavius, *Historia Musulmanae Turcorum, de monumentis ipsorum excriptae, libri XVIII* (Francofurti, 1591), col. 675. *Exemplum sibi sumerent a Palatino Valachiae, Bassara Vaiuoda; qui, licet alienus a religione Musulmanorum, tamen in debilitate virium maxima se quamprudenter gesserit: ac tametsi totis septem anis, instar trunci, quadrigae impositus, hinc inde veheretur; tamen insigni cum satisfactione subditorum, rempublicam Valachorum suorum administrauerit. Volubiles & inconstantes, rerumque nouarum perpetuo cupidos esse regionis illius populorum animos: sed nihilo propterea magis, ob infirmitatem & ae-gritudinem pedum, a principe suo, ceteroqui bono, iusto, sapieti, rebusque gubernandis ingenii prestantia satis idoneo, alienatos fuisse.*
28. See also the Ottoman source which was recently analyzed by Nagy Pienaru who, although he refers mainly to Stephen the Great, also contains references to Radu the Great of Wallachia: Nagy Pienaru, "Călătoria lui Ştefan cel Mare la Istanbul (1498)," *Analele Putnei* 13, 1 (2017): 33–44.
29. I. Bogdan, *Documente privitoare la relaţiile Ţării Româneşti cu Braşovul şi cu Ţara Ungurească în sec. XV şi XVI*, vol. 1, *1413–1508* (Bucharest: Inst. de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, S-sor I. St. Rasidescu, 1905), doc. CLXXX, p. 216. For the correspondence between the Wallachian princes and Braşov and Sibiu, see Ovidiu Cristea, "Ştiri, politică şi război în corespondenţa domnilor munteni cu Braşovul şi Sibiul (sec. XV–XVI)," *Studii şi materiale de istorie medie* (Bucharest) 31 (2013): 105–144; id., *Puterea cuvintelor*; Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, *Sibiu-Hermannstadt: Oriental Trade in Sixteenth Century Transylvania* (Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 104–114.
30. Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii româneşti* (1908), 1: 122–123; Pleşia, "Neagoe Basarab (I)," 46–47.

31. Grigore Ureche, *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei*, foreword, chronological table, critical references and glossary by Dan Horia Mazilu (Bucharest: 100+1 Gramar, 2002), 82.
32. Ibid., 83.
33. *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV–XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan*, edition rev. and completed by P. P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1959), 91. The episode is mentioned in Ureche, 82, *Cronica lui Macarie*, in *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)*, vol. 1, introduction, edition and notes by G. Mihăilă and Dan Zamfirescu (Bucharest: Ed. Tineretului, 1969), 91, *Cronicile slavo-române* and was undertaken by all the latter chronicles.
34. Pilat and Cristea, 125.
35. *Cronicile slavo-române*, 23.
36. *Cronica Bălenilor*, 257–258. For an analysis of the episode from 1507 see G. Mihăilă, "Viaţa şi slujba lui Maxim Branković: Momentul 1507 în letopiseţele româneşti," in *Între Orient şi Occident: Studii de cultură şi literatură română în secolele al XV-lea–al XVII-lea* (Bucharest: Roza Vânturilor, 1999).
37. Oliviu Boldura et al., *Mărturii: Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului* (Bucharest: Muzeul Naţional de Artă al României, 2012), 82.
38. Mirjana M. Mašnić, "The Icon of the Holy Virgin Vatopedini with a Portrait of Voevoda Ioan Radul," *Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'études byzantines* 40 (2003): 313–321.
39. *Letopiseţul cantacuzinesc*, 98.
40. *Documenta Romaniae Historica* (hereafter cited as DRH), *B. Ţara Românească*, vol. 1 *(1247–1500)*, edited by P. P. Panaitescu and Damaschin Mioc (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1966), doc. 2, p. 11.
41. Ibid., doc. 7, p. 20.
42. Ibid., doc. 89, p. 155.
43. Ibid., doc. 295, p. 483.
44. DRH, *B*, vol. 2 *(1501–1525)*, edited by Ştefan Ştefănescu and Olimpia Diaconescu (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1972), doc. 29, p. 70.
45. Ibid., doc. 64, p. 138.
46. Ibid., doc. 105, p. 212, for instance.
47. Ibid., doc. 183, p. 351.
48. Ibid., doc. 105, p. 214.
49. Ibid., doc. 60, p. 130.
50. DRH, *B*, vol. 3 *(1526–1535)*, edited by Damaschin Mioc (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1975), doc. 17, p. 27.
51. DRH, *B*, 2, doc. 54, 55 etc.
52. DRH, *B*, vol. 4 *(1536–1550)*, edited by Damaschin Mioc (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1981), doc. 290 from 11 May 1550, but also in other places, such as DRH, *B*, vol. 5 *(1551–1565)*, edited by Damaschin Mioc and Marieta Adam Chiper (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1983), doc. 3 etc.
53. DRH, *B*, 2, doc. 9, p. 24.
54. Ibid., doc. 151, p. 293.
55. DRH, *B*, 3, doc. 171; DRH, *B*, 4, doc. 24, 266, 285; DRH, *B*, 5, doc. 3.
56. DRH, *B*, 3, doc. 195; DRH, *B*, 4, doc. 42, 46, 276 etc.

Abstract
Radu the Great of Wallachia: The Challenges of a Portrait

If we try to sketch the portrait of a historical personality such as Radu the Great of Wallachia, it is only natural to turn to historical sources, especially because modern scholars have largely ignored or underrated his reign. An analysis of the medieval texts points to a rather controversial image, which wavers between a bad prince and a good one. The historical memory of Radu the Great's reign was differently preserved in different categories of sources, which circulated in parallel in the same period of time. Thus, the hagiographic memory, owed to the *Life of Saint Niphon*, also included in several Wallachian chronicles, shows the image of a weak, sinful and eventually cursed prince. This portrait is in high contrast with the iconographic sources, or with the one from some foreign narratives sources such as the work of Johannes Leunclavius. The analysis of these documents reveals the portrait of a strong, skillful prince, who played an important role in the relations of power in Southeast Europe. All in all, the contrast between Radu the Great's portraits depended heavily on different strategies of legitimation which, in their turn, were strongly influenced by the struggle for power in Wallachia at the beginning of the 16th century.