

JOHN HUNYADI BETWEEN BELGRADE AND CETATEA ALBĂ IN THE 1450'

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More than in the better documented case of his son, and as almost a rule for 'eastern' rulers (including the sultans) in the 1400', Hunyadi's 'foreign', but also 'general' contemporary image, is largely an 'Italian product'. In this respect, these lines focus on the events of 1456, when Genoa and the Genoese should have been of great assistance for the *Transylvanian prince* Hunyadi. These matters could help us better determine John Hunyadi's real political credibility and military capacity and why his chances of survival against the Ottomans were deemed as rather small¹.

I. The Walachian Throne and Hungary's Anti-Ottoman Defense on the Lower Danube

One of the major problems for John Hunyadi throughout the first half of 1456 was his eastern flank (Transylvania and Walachia). According to traditional perspectives, John Hunyadi covered the problem with Saxon aid and with Vlad III the Impaler's support, who, moreover, quickly dethroned Wladislaw II². Nonetheless, the known data also led to the hypothesis that in

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¹ Alexandru Simon, *The Lion in the Winter: John Hunyadi's Career from Kossovopolje to Belgrade (1448-1456)*, in *Between Worlds*, II, *Extincta est Lucerna Orbis: John Hunyadi and his Time* (= *Mélanges d'Histoire Générale*, II, 2), (ed. by Ana Dumitran, Loránd Mádly, Al. Simon), Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 491-522.

² Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova (a. 1324-1881)*, I. *Secolele XIV-XVI*, București, 2001, p. 99-104.

fact Vlad (III) acted ‘on behalf’ of sultan Mehmed II (view pre-dominant in Romanian historiography in the late 1800³).

1. The Hunyadis and the Walachian Loyalty of the House of Dracul in the Mid 1450’

Critobulos, Chalcondylas, Tursun Bey, or Kemal Pasha Zade, all claim that that Vlad III took the throne with Ottoman support⁴. This however may have applied only for his first short reign in 1448. Yet, none of these Late Byzantine and Ottoman chronicles, which devote much space to the Walachian-Ottoman war of 1461-1462, even implied that Vlad III had been hostile to the Porte prior to those years, which would have been the case if he had been enthroned by Hunyadi in 1456⁵.

Basarab IV Țepelus (the Little Impaler), Wladislaw II’s cousin accused the Saxons of Brașov (in late 1479) of sheltering a pro-Ottoman boyar faction which had caused much damage to Christendom, and had helped enthrone Vlad III and kill Wladislaw II⁶ (in 1475, Basarab IV had been the Walachian candidate of both the Saxons and Stephen III of Moldavia, who did not want Vlad III the Impaler back on the throne). Only weeks prior to this letter, Basarab IV had assisted the Ottomans on their unsuccessful Transylvanian campaign. In return, the repertory of charges brought against this faction, covering more than two decades, brought forth by him, perfectly suits Walachian politics.

Vlad III of Walachia in Buda and Transylvania after 1451

Regardless of interpretation, a credible analysis must begin in John Hunyadi’s time. According namely to the various German drafts of the later

³ In particular Constantin A. Stoide, *A doua domnie a lui Vlad Țepeș. Luptele pentru ocuparea tronului și consolidarea domniei (1456-1458)*, in *AIIA Iași*, XXII, 1986, 1, p. 111-130.

⁴ Laonic Chalcocondil, *Expuneri istorice. Historiarum demonstrationes* (ed. by Vasile Grecu), București, 1958, p. 283; Cristobul din Imbros, *Din domnia lui Mahomed al II-lea (1451-1467)* (ed. by V. Grecu), București, 1963, p. 290; Tursun Bey and Kemal Pasha Zade, in *Cronici turcești privind țările române. Extrase, I, Secolul XV-mijlocul secolului XVII* (ed. by Mihail Guboglu, Mustafa Mehmet), București, 1966, p. 67, 198.

⁵ The same applies for Western sources Al. Simon, *Dracula in Hungary: Crusades, Estates and Brides (1462-1476)*, in *Annuario*, X, 2008, forthcoming.

⁶ Ioan Bogdan, *Documente privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și Ungaria în secolele XV și XVI*, București, 1905, no. 121, p. 149-151 (henceforth: *Documente Brașov*).

stories on Dracula, he enthroned Vlad III in 1456, in exchange for numerous promises⁷. Earlier, in April 1456, relations between Wladislaw II and John Hunyadi had been hostile again, though both were disposed to accept king Ladislas V' arbitrage. The king was willing to mediate the conflict for we want to make justice and right to Wladislaw II. Until then, he instructed the Saxons to defend Hunyadi's lands in case Wladislaw would attack⁸.

On July 3, 1456, from Cuvin (Keve), John Hunyadi informed the jurors of the Seven Saxon Seats that he had entrusted their defence to voivode Vlad⁹. Vlad III had first been a ruler of Walachia in 1448 (a voivode's son or brother, without having ruled until then, could also be called voivode¹⁰). Then Wladislaw II had joined Hunyadi on his Serbian campaign, which allowed the Ottomans to enthrone Vlad III. In spite of the defeat of Kossovopolje, Vlad still soon lost his throne¹¹.

The only known direct documentary evidence on Vlad (the future Impaler) afterwards comes from February 1452, Following the Ottoman-Hungarian 'peace' of November 1451, confirmed in April 1452 (which guaranteed Wladislaw II' Walachian rule), John Hunyadi ordered that Vlad III should be expelled to Moldavia, where he had come from, probably only months earlier¹². It is nonetheless uncertain whether Vlad III, as other contenders, was actually expelled from Transylvania.

Bonfini¹³ stated that *Wlada Montanae Valachiae princeps* attended the talks of Buda on the anti-Ottoman defense of the realm (summer 1455), while Thuróczy¹⁴, wrote that John Hunyadi brought back Vlad III and introduced him at court, seemingly at the time of the formal reconciliation between Hunyadi

⁷ The main examples can be found in Matei Cazacu, *Dracula [suivi du "Capitaine Vampire" une nouvelle roumaine par Marie Nizet (1879)]*, Paris, 2004, p. 369, 439.

⁸ *DRH, D, Relațiile între Țările Române, I, 1222-1456*, (ed. Ștefan Pascu, Constantin Cihodaru, Konrad G. Gündisch, Damaschin Mioc, Viorica Pervain), București, 1977, no. 330, p. 450.

⁹ *DRH, D, I*, no. 333, p. 455.

¹⁰ Dan, Wladislaw II's brother and contender to Vlad's throne, *DRH, D, I*, no. 341, p. 461.

¹¹ M. Cazacu, *La Valachie et la bataille de Kossovo*, in *RESEE*, IX, 1971, 1, p. 131-139.

¹² *DRH, D, I*, no. 308, p. 423.

¹³ [Antonio Bonfini] Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades*, (ed. József Fögel, László Juhász, Béla Iványi), III, Leipzig, 1939, p. 37.

¹⁴ [János Thuróczi/ Thuróczy] Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, I, *Textus*, (ed. Erzsebet Galántai, Gyula Kristó) Budapest, 1985, p. 245.

and Ulrich von Cilly (early 1453). Gustav Gündisch¹⁵ redated Vlad's meeting with Ladislas to March 1456. This can be accepted, as well as rejected. In 1453, prior to the fall of Byzantium, John's relations to Wladislaw were good, but, by bringing Vlad to Buda, Hunyadi may have, successfully attempted (for the moment) to put pressure on Wladislaw II, a common political move.

The bad blood between John Hunyadi and the Drăculești (in 1447 John Hunyadi had Vlad II executed), was seemingly left aside for the moment. But, immediately after the tide turned against John Hunyadi's first born son, Ladislas, two days before the latter's execution on the 16th of March, 1457, Vlad III the Impaler reminded the Saxons of how John Hunyadi's trustees John Geréb of Vingárt and Nicholas Vizaknai (of Ocna Sibiu/ Salzburg) the Elder had attempted to kill him, out of love for Wladislaw II of Walachia¹⁶. The safest dating for this event remains the year 1452.

The Sons of Vlad II Dracul and John Hunyadi

By early September, when Vlad wrote to Braşov as ruler of Walachia, Wladislaw II (his last known document dates back to April 1456) had lost his throne¹⁷. According to his tombstone in the Dealu monastery from the 1510', he died on August 20, 6983 [1455]. The year is certainly mistaken. Still, the day and month of his death cannot be automatically regarded as also mistaken¹⁸.

If we accept them, a scenario would be that, after sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror retreated from Belgrade in late July 1456, Vlad III the Impaler took his Transylvanian troops and made his move against the acting ruler Wladislaw II. The latter was eventually defeated and lost his life. Previously, due to Mehmed II's orders, or out of fear of Vlad III, Wladislaw II had not left for Belgrade. No known source records the Walachians as Ottoman 'auxiliaries' there. In general, even at the risk of temporarily losing control over Walachia, the sultan took with him the ruler or at least the main core of his army, like in

¹⁵ *Cu privire la relațiile lui Vlad Țepeș cu Transilvania în anii 1456-1458*, in *Studii*, XVI (1963), 4, p. 682-683.

¹⁶ *Documente Braşov*, no. 259, p. 319.

¹⁷ *DRH*, D, I, no. 339, p. 456.

¹⁸ Alexandru Lapedatu, *Mormintele domnești de la mănăstirea Dealul*, in *CLit.*, XXXVII (1903), p. 433-434.

the case of the Moldavian campaigns of 1476 and of 1484¹⁹.

Vlad III the Impaler's first two letters to Braşov (September 6 and 10, 1456) are a collection of twists and turns in phrasing and a mixture of direct statements and indirect reference. They sound strange for somebody who 'had' late John Hunyadi's and king Ladislas V's full approval for his rule²⁰. Though he feared the Turk, and wanted to work for the defense of his land and of the realm, not directly against the Turk, but only to soften his stand towards Walachia and weaken her burden, Vlad III was already the Porte's vassal. Though, given his meeting with Ladislas V, the task entrusted to 'him' by Hunyadi and his Walachian victory, Vlad had normally proven his loyalty, he still wanted (had) to prove and do his loyalty. No mention was made of the late Hunyadi²¹.

After Ladislas Hunyadi's coup of Belgrade (November 1456), Vlad III the Impaler's relations to the Hunyadis became officially hostile. By mid December, the royal decision had been taken to replace Vlad III with Dan voivode. Ladislas Hunyadi instructed the Saxons to support Dan²². He mentioned the broken promises made by Vlad III the Impaler while *extra regnum suum esset*, but not his father's direct involvement in Vlad's enthronement. In mid March 1457, while accusing John Hunyadi's men of attempted murder, Vlad stated that he owed his throne only to God²³. At any rate, asides from the impact of John Hunyadi's death, ties between Vlad III the Impaler and John Hunyadi's party, as well as to the king, were probably not that strong when Vlad III won the throne.

2. The Walachian Front between Belgrade and Chilia in the Spring and Summer of 1456

In March 1456, according to the Ragusans, the Ottomans were already attacking the remainders of Serbia and were also preparing to

¹⁹ See also Al. Simon, *The Limits of the Moldavian Crusade (1474, 1484)*, in *Annuario*, IX, 2007, p. 244-248.

²⁰ *DRH*, D, I, nos. 338-339, p. 456-460.

²¹ In these matters, see also Al. Simon, *În jurul bătăliei de la Vaslui (1474-1475). Considerații asupra relațiilor dintre Regatul Ungariei, Moldova și Țara Românească*, in *SUBB.Historia*, XLIX, 2004, 2, p. 9-10, 19-20.

²² *DRH*, D, I, no. 341, p. 461.

²³ *Documente Braşov*, no. 259, p. 319.

occupy Walachia²⁴. In April, preparations and clashes along the Danube line intensified. In exchange for his support of the cross, despot Branković was 'freed' by Hunyadi. Rumors arose that many barons taken together with John Hunyadi the cross²⁵.

In late May, clashes intensified, proving Ottoman superiority and bringing George Branković close to catastrophe. One report that reached the Italian Peninsula spoke of disaster and fear²⁶:

[...] *El Turcho era venuto verso le parte de Valachia e del/ despoto de Rassia cum grande zente. El quale despoto credio havesse cum desordine/ cum alchune zente circha persone VIII^m ando per assaltarli, ma trovo li Turchi bene/ in ordine et hebe la pegore. Ne rimaso prexi et morti la piu parte d'essi VIII^m./ Poy el prefato Turcho sente ch'el Papa, la Maesta del Re d'Aragona et ducha de Burgogna andavano/ overo mandavano alchuna possanza verso Constantinopoli, delibero de ritornare indireto/ per provedere a dicta citta de Constantinopoli. Et cossi ritorno cum una parte de sua/ zente piu utile. Li altri sono restati ad damni del prefato despoto e de Valachi./ El Brancho [Hunyadi] sta la vicino ad guarda del Danubio; aspetta grande exercito de/ Ungari, quali non porano metersi insieme fine non sia facto el raccolto [...]* (18th of June 1456).

The Walachians too had fought the Ottomans (probably in Oltenia) and faced defeat. Due to the dates of this report and of Hunyadi's letter from Cuvin, their leader was Wladislaw II and not Vlad III.

Serbians, Walachians and Saxons on the Eve of the Battle of Belgrade

Due to the Ottoman peril of spring, Wladislaw II of Walachia like Serbian despot George Branković, had come to an arrangement with John Hunyadi,

²⁴ See József Gelich, Lajos Thallóczy, *Diplomatarium relationum reipublicae ragusane cum regno Hungariae. Ragusa és Magyarország összeköttetéseinek oklevéltára*, Budapest, 1887, no. 340, p. 589 (henceforth: *Ragusa*).

²⁵ *Codex Diplomaticus Partium Regno Hungariae Adnexarum. Magyarország Mellék tartományainak Oklevéltára* (=Monumenta Hungariae Historica, I, 31, 33, 36, 40), II, *A Magyarország és Szerbia közti összeköttetések oklevéltára. 1198-1526*, (ed. L. Thallóczy, Antal Aldásy), Budapest, 1907, no. 265, p. 199 (henceforth *CDH*, II, *Szerbia*).

²⁶ Archivio di Stato di Milano (ASM), Archivio Ducale Sforzesco (A.D.S.), Potenze estere, *Venezia*, cart. 343, 1456, fasc. 6, Giugno, nn (18th of June 1456; a copy from cart. 650, *Ungheria*, fasc. 1, nn, was edited, with a mistakes, in *CDH*, II, *Szerbia*, no. 269, p. 203).

who needed their support, as much as they needed his. Fearing reconciliation between Hunyadi and Wladislaw, the Porte did not rely anymore (it had been difficult in the first place²⁷) on Wladislaw and planned to settle matters in Walachia²⁸.

Immediately after John Hunyadi's intervention in Walachia and the peace with Wladislaw II (October 1455), the Ottomans had entered Walachia (November) and attacked Saam in southern Hungary²⁹. They were aided by several Walachians. Also informed by Ragusa (who did not mention Wladislaw II's involvement), Hunyadi placed responsibility for these events on Wladislaw II in his letter to Braşov (late December), but still asked the city to inquiry on what had actually happened. Wladislaw II's responsibility was probably minimal (otherwise, in April 1456, the royal position towards him would have been different), but Hunyadi's attitude led to renewed tensions³⁰.

In spite of his efforts, Wladislaw II of Walachia was no match for the Ottoman military power. After the clashes of May 1456, despot George Branković was forced into retreat, into a form of benevolent neutrality towards the crusaders, due to his losses³¹, silence set in on the Walachian-Ottoman front for the entire duration of the battle. Hunyadi had to refocus on Transylvania's defense.

John Hunyadi chose Vlad voivode for it. The latter was no ruler of Walachia (otherwise, he would have been named as such). Vlad's task (entrusted to him prior to July 3) was to defend southern Transylvania, not Walachia. This had not been task previously, although John Hunyadi's words (*ecce enim commissimus Vlad wayuode, ut pro defensione vestra semper inviliget et intendat*) could indicate that Vlad was already in Transylvania. If he had been with John Hunyadi until then, John Hunyadi would have probably mentioned that he was dispatching Vlad to the defense of the Saxons, which, now that Vlad's men defended them, had to quickly send troops to Belgrade³².

²⁷ See also Dumitru Năstase, *Domnul Țării Românești Vladislav II și asediul din 1453 al Constantinopolului*, in *RI*, X 1998, 1-2, p. 85-98.

²⁸ *Raguza*, nos. 334-337, p. 528-586; no. 340, p. 589, no. 342, p. 592 (September 1455-April 1456).

²⁹ *Raguza*, nos. 334-337, p. 528-586; *DRH*, D, I, nos. 328-329, p. 447-449.

³⁰ *DRH*, D, I, no. 330, p. 450.

³¹ *CDH*, II, *Szerbia*, nos. 270-271, p. 203-204; no. 272, p. 204-206; nos. 729-733, p. 463-471.

³² *DRH*, D, I, no. 330, p. 450.

Anti-Ottoman Defense and the Last Two Walachian Rulers in John Hunyadi's Lifetime

Based on the sources at hand, it is impossible to determine whether Vlad voivode was Vlad III or his step-brother, the future Vlad IV Călugărul (the Monk). Likewise, it is difficult to determine if the Saxons actually sent troops to John Hunyadi (their Ottoman deals suggest the opposite). It is equally difficult to determine whether Wladislaw II of Walachia had stopped resisting the Ottomans prior to July 3. Regardless of options, given the fact that Vlad III the Impaler dethroned a ruler who fought the Turk, the main problem is the date of Wladislaw II's death: August 20 or late June/ July³³.

If Wladislaw II of Walachia had lost his throne soon after his last known charter of April, Vlad III would have been the one fighting the Ottomans in May. This should have left several marks on his and the High Porte's politics, which it did not. It is rather unlikely that the fighting between Vlad III (House of Dracul) and Wladislaw II (House of Dan) went on for months. In such a case, given the traditional fiefs of the Houses (Oltenia for the Dănești, Muntenia for the Dănești³⁴), Wladislaw II would have retreated to Oltenia, but he was beheaded in Târgșor in Muntenia, in Western Walachia, near the Transylvanian border³⁵. Given the fights of May and the subsequent 'Walachian silence' during the siege of Belgrade (late July), we date the end of his rule to late June/ early July.

As for the date of his death, we cannot rule out the possibility of his survival after August 1456³⁶. Neither Vlad III the Impaler, in March 1457, nor Michael Szilágyi, at that time governor (regent) of Hungary, in March 1458, in their references to Wladislaw II, mentioned him as deceased (*condam*). It is thus not impossible that, in case he was still alive, Wladislaw II attempted to retake the throne during the Walachian rebellion against Vlad III in the second

³³ For these perspectives, see namely I. Bogdan, *Vlad Țepeș și narațiunile germane și rusești asupra lui*, București 1905, p. 12; Ilie Minea, *Din trecutul stăpânirii românești asupra Ardealului. Pierderea Amlașului și Făgărașului*, București, 1914, p. 47.

³⁴ A. D. Xenopol, *Lupta dintre Drăculești și Dănești*, in *AARMSI*, 2, series, XXX, 1907, p. 183-272.

³⁵ *Istoria Țării Românești 1290-1690. Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, (ed. Constantin Grecescu, Dan Simionescu), București, 1960, p. 4.

³⁶ *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, VI, 1458-1473, (ed. Gustav Gündisch, Hertha Gündisch, Gernot Nussbächer), București, 1981; no. 3116, p. 10; *Documente Brașov*, no. 259, p. 319.

half of 1458. The rebellion failed and he was beheaded on August 20, 1458³⁷. The hypothesis should be viewed with caution for it contradicts Basarab IV's letter of 1479 and it does not provide a solid answer as to why king Ladislas V and Ladislas Hunyadi used Dan (not Wladislaw) against Vlad in late 1456³⁸.

At any rate, it remains quite difficult to determine the identity of Vlad voivode from John Hunyadi's message to the Saxons from Cuvin and subsequently if Vlad III directly came with Ottoman support or if he only broke his oath to John Hunyadi, attacked Wladislaw II from behind and aided Mehmed II. It is still safer to presume that *Vlad voivode* was Vlad III and that he acted from behind against the anti-Ottoman line as soon as John Hunyadi entrusted the 'defense of the Transylvanian Saxons' to him. In 1462, he married the first of his two wives, closely related to the late Hunyadi³⁹.

II. Political Challenges and Options on the Moldavian and Genoese Shores of the Black Sea

During the events of 1457 and 1458 too, prior and after Ladislas Hunyadi's death, the Hunyadi party could not rely on any support from Walachia or from Moldavia, though in theory, both countries (since Stephen III took the Moldavian throne in April 1457) were ruled by men who had 'promised' (and sworn) much to John Hunyadi. Earlier Walalachian responses to John Hunyadi had often been negative. In Moldavia, which until 1448, held both major gateways to the Black Sea (Chilia and Cetatea Albă), he was seemingly even less popular⁴⁰. The rulers tried as much as possible to avoid close ties to him. The magnate and actual ruler of Podolia, Di(e)dri(c)h Buczacki had a greater influence over Suceava than John Hunyadi⁴¹. In fact, Bogdan II, after initial hesitations, was the most loyal to Hunyadi of all these late medieval rulers. Bogdan II's rule was both unstable and short.

³⁷ C.A. Stoide, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

³⁸ *Documente Braşov*, no. 121, p. 149; *DRH*, D, I, no. 341, p. 461.

³⁹ Al. Simon, *The Limits of the Moldavian Crusade...*, p. 238.

⁴⁰ Idem, *Porturile Moldovei. Ştefan II, Iancu de Hunedoara şi Murad II în documente italice (1444-1446)* in *ASUI*, LII-LIII, 2006-2007, p. 7-25.

⁴¹ See Sorin Iftimi, *La politique de Jean Hunyadi en Moldavie*, in *Between Worlds*, II, p. 369-380.

1. John Hunyadi's Danubian and Pontic Interests and the Moldavian Question after 1448

In August 1451, king Casimir IV of Poland requested 50.000 Turkish aspers a year (asides probably Moldavia's normal Polish *census*) for the recognition of Bogdan II's perhaps (potentially) life-long rule⁴². The sum stood for some 1.500 ducats, 75% of the tribute the Moldavian ruler (by then back in control over Cetatea Albă) had to pay to the sultan after 1455⁴³. The Ottoman impact on Poland and Moldavia was in fact great prior to 1453. Both in 1450 and in 1451, Polish financial demands from Bogdan II had been calculated in aspers⁴⁴. A incident can therefore be of interest.

The value of the goods lost by the Senarega family following the Moldavian 'conquest' of Ilice (at the Dniepr Mounds) in spring 1455, was estimated at 10.000 Venetian ducats or 14.000 Turkish aspers. This leads to a ratio of 1:1.4, more than 20 times below the usual exchange rate, a rather unlikely situation. On the other hand, the natural possibility arises that, in Moldavia, as well as in the Crimean Peninsula, exchange rates were more favorable for the asper, offering an important advantage to the increasingly stronger northern position of Ottoman trade and politics⁴⁵.

John Hunyadi, Bogdan II and the Question of Elias I's and Stephen II's Heritage

Five years earlier, Bogdan II however had no major access to Pontic trade. Since 1450, the (Moldavian) castellan of Cetatea Albă militarily supported Alexander II's claims. Due to the strong position of the local

⁴² [Jan Długosz], *Jan Długosii Senioris Canonici Cracoviensis Opera omnia*, (ed. Alexander Przezdziecki), XIII-XIV, *Historiae Polonicae libri XII*, Krakow, 1883-1887, p. 91, 100; (henceforth: *Długosz* 1887).

⁴³ Documente turcești privind istoria României, I, 1417-1774, (ed. M.A. Mehmed), București, 1976, no. 1, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Franz Babinger, *Zur Frage der osmanischen Goldprägungen im 15. Jahrhundert unter Murâd II. und Mehmed II*, in *SF*, XV, (1956), p. 550-553; Şevket Pamuk, *Money in the Ottoman Empire. 1326-1914*, in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914*, (ed. Halil İnalcık), Cambridge, 1994, p. 951-956; Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, *Notes on the Genoese Coinage at Pera during the First Half of the 15th Century*, in *Etudes Byzantines et Post-Byzantines*, V, 2006, p. 377-385.

⁴⁵ Most of the data on these matters can be found in Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria românilor*, III, [1399-1499] București, 1897, p. 32-36.

Genoese commune, this would have been impossible without her support⁴⁶. The traditionally pro-Hungarian/Latin Lower Country, not only south-eastern Moldavia, may have also not supported Bogdan II. He had to take his illegitimate son, Stephen (his mother's family was influential in the Lower Country), as coruler. Stephen was first recorded as such in Bogdan's treaty with Hunyadi (February 1450), not in his earlier attempt of December 1449 to win Polish goodwill⁴⁷.

Cetatea Albă remained loyal to Alexander II after Bogdan II's fall (mid October 1451), when Peter Aron, the leader of the raid which brought Bogdan's death, immediately claimed the throne for himself and broke his arrangement with Alexander II's camp. By then, the castellan of Neamț too was certainly on Alexander's side⁴⁸, and remained loyal to him until Peter Aron was dethroned (for the first time) within half a year. Alexander II's strong Pontic stands played an important part in Hunyadi's decision to officially accept him as ruler (prior to February 1453) because of John Hunyadi's Byzantine plan (Alexander II also had to marry one of Elisabeth Szilágyi's nieces⁴⁹).

Cetatea Albă's (constant apparently) loyalty to Elias I's son is intriguing. According to the arrangement(s) between Elias and Stephen II (1435-1436), Cetatea Albă (like basically the entire proper Lower Country) remained under Elias' authority. Stephen II had to make due with 'South-Central' Moldavia and Chilia⁵⁰. Still, apparently by 1438, due also to Elias' risky decisions between Venice and Genoa, Rome and Byzantium, Stephen, a favorite of Murad II since 1432, had taken control over Cetatea Albă⁵¹. But, in the mid and late 1440's, in particular after Stephen II's execution, in 1447, who, in 1442, had dethroned Elias I, with the exception of anti-unionist Orthodox centers, the

⁴⁶ Długosz 1887, p. 73-78, 91.

⁴⁷ Mihai Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, II, *Documente interne. Urice (ipsoace), Surete, Regeste, Traduceri. 1438-1456. Documente Externe. Acte de împrumut, de omagiu, tractate, solii, privilegii comerciale, salvconduce, scrisori. 1387-1456*, Iași, 1932, nos. 219-220, p. 746-752.

⁴⁸ Długosz 1887, p. 100-101; C. Rezachevici, op.cit, I, p. 515.

⁴⁹ *Documente moldovenești*, II, nos. 223-224, p. 759-765; Georgios Spharantzes, *Memorii. (1401-1477). În anexă: Pseudo-Phrantzes: Macarie Melissenos, Cronica (1258-1481)*, (ed. by V. Grecu), București, 1966, p. 102-104.

⁵⁰ *Documente moldovenești*, II, nos. 163-166, p. 601-610; no. 192, p. 683.

⁵¹ Al. Simon, *The Walachians between Crusader Crisis and Imperial Gifts (Mid 1400' and Early 1500')*, in *Annuario*, IX, 2007, p. 178-181.

Lower Country (except probably for 1450-1451) and namely Cetatea Albă (south-eastern Moldavia), namely, apparently formed an enduring stronghold for Elias I' branch of the Moldavian dynasty.

The Lower Country's pro-Latin orientation (Stephen tried to counteract also by settling and protecting Hussites, like his father Alexander I before him in the North⁵²) and the Stephen's Genoese conflicts, namely after 1444 (following which he lost Cetatea Albă for at least a year⁵³) played a major role in this geographical distribution of 'allegiances'. To this, it should be added that Stephen II was also a favorite of the conciliarist Polish party and of Casimir IV, already during Wladislaw I (III)'s time⁵⁴. Prior namely to the early 1460', Polish-Genoese relations were often tense, although Pera and Caffa usually avoided to increase hostilities (this further explains why Genoese supported Elias' camp, inspite of its Polish ties⁵⁵). Yet, Poland's pro-Ottoman policy became dominant in the region, namely after Moldavia turned into a Polish-Ottoman *condominium* ('drafted' in 1455-1456 and en-forced namely after 1458/1459-1460) In 1462, due to the pro-Ottoman impact of the Walachian-Moldavian conflict for Chilia and to Tartar threats, Caffa accepted king Casimir IV's *protection*⁵⁶.

Ottoman Targets and Moldavian Interests in the Black Sea Area after the Fall of Byzantium

The changing Genoese tide had already affected Alexander II, the young Moldavian ruler. In the first half of 1454, Alexander II once again lost his throne (it would be interesting to see whether this event coincided with the

⁵² See also Robin Baker, *The Hungarian-speaking Hussites of Moldavia and two English Episodes in their History*, in *Central Europe*, IV, 2006, 1, p. 3-24.

⁵³ [Jean de Wavrin] John de Wavrin, lord of Forestel, *A Collection of Chronicles and Ancient Histories of Great Britain, now Called England*, (ed. W.E.L.C.P. Hardy), V, London, 1891, p. 41-43.

⁵⁴ *Documente moldovenesti*, II, no. 213, p. 727; *Długosz* 1887, p. 154, 295.

⁵⁵ Luigi Tommaso Belgrano, *Documenti riguardanti la colonia di Pera*, in *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria*, XIII, 1877-1884, no. 132, p. 211; *Atte și fragmente*, III, p. 22-23.

⁵⁶ R. A. Vigna, *Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la signoria dell' Ufficio di S. Georgio. MCCCCLIII-MCCC CLXXV* (= *Atti della Società ligure di storia patria*, VI-VII), II-2, (1473-1475, 1453-1475), Genoa, 1876-1879, Appendix, nos. 14-15, p. 468-471; Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, II-2, 1451-1510, București, 1891, nos. 521-523, p. 694-699 (henceforth: *Hurmuzaki*).

expulsion of unionist metropolitan Jochim, probably in March, replaced with anti-unionist Theoctist⁵⁷). Maybe aided by John Hunyadi, who came close to the Moldavian border less than 3 weeks⁵⁸, before Alexander's official return to the Moldavian throne, he reclaimed power in early 1455. He lost it less than two months later. Alexander II fled to Cetatea Albă, where he died (August), virtually a captive of the castellan who joined Peter III Aron's side⁵⁹. The Genoese played along, but, at the same time, the contacts between Caffa and John Hunyadi intensified.

While Alexander II was a fugitive in or near Cetatea Albă, the Moldavians, with the consent of the local Genoese commune, took Illice from the Senarega brothers, in May 1455. Caffa looked for Peter Aron's support. At first, Peter Aron seemed to aid the Senaregas. In fact, he probably successfully negotiated a deal with Cetatea Albă. In early September, only days after Alexander II's death, news came to Caffa that Peter Aron, lord of both (by then) Moldavia [Valachia Inferior] and Cetatea Albă, fortified Illice and did not want to return it⁶⁰. By that time, Peter had offered his allegiance to Mehmed, II who accepted it by early October. Theoctist I stood first in Peter's council since July⁶¹.

Peter III Aron was by no means a weak ruler. He also tried to reform the Moldavian monetary system⁶². The Genoese, albeit their major role in Moldavian trade and, at times, even society⁶³, seemingly approved his plan, as well as his Ottoman dealings or his possession of Illice (they did not just look past them), while endorsing from Caffa to Genoa crusader plans⁶⁴.

⁵⁷ *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti* (= *Monumenta Medii aevi res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, II, XI-XII, XIV), II, 1382-1445, ed. by Anatol Lewicki Krakow, 1891, Appendix, no. 11, p. 479.

⁵⁸ Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest, Antemohacsiana, Q section, Diplomatikai Levéltár, no. 24959 (22nd of January).

⁵⁹ *Cronica de la Putna II*, in *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI publicate de Ioan Bogdan*, (ed. P. P. Panaitescu), București, 1959, p. 61; C. Rezachevici, *op.cit.*, I, p. 528-530.

⁶⁰ *Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri*, I, (1453-1459), Genoa, 1868-1870, no. 120, p. 308; no. 151, p. 366; *Acte și fragmente*, III, p. 32-36.

⁶¹ DRH, A. Moldova, II, 1449-1486, Bucharest 1976), no. 48, p. 68; *Documente turcești*, I, no. 1, p. 2.

⁶² See Aurel Golimas, *Limitele cronologice ale reformei monetare a lui Petru Aron*, in BSNR, LXX-LXXIV, 1976-1980, p. 321-330.

⁶³ Ștefan Andreescu, *A Genoese Scion among the Moldavian Boyars*, in *Annuario*, III, 2001, p. 119-122.

⁶⁴ See already the work of N. Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chilie și Cetății Albe*, București,

Peter moreover, probably at the same time, in October 1455, tried to win the confidence of Casimir IV (endeavor made easy by Mehmed II's acceptance of Peter's offer) and at least Hunyadi's neutrality (who in early September, hesitated whether to attack in Walachia or in Moldavia). Apparently, the ruler succeeded in both respects, for neither Polish nor Hungarian troops attacked him afterwards⁶⁵.

On June 29, 1456, by his oath of allegiance to Casimir IV, Peter Aron took on the obligation of recovering the lands taken from Moldavia (including Chilia) and accepted any potential royal ruling on Cetatea Albă, disputed between him and lady Marena, Elias I' widow⁶⁶. Three weeks earlier, the 'Moldavian Diet' had approved Moldavia's Ottoman tribute-paying vassality. However, both in June and July, during Mehmed II's Belgrade campaign, Peter III Aron did not make any move against Chilia, held by John Hunyadi's troops. Otherwise, as the Ottoman fleet attempted to enter the Danube Mounds⁶⁷, Chilia would have probably fallen. Peter Aron probably awaited the outcome of the Hungarian-Ottoman conflict and of the Walachian crisis. If John Hunyadi was defeated, he could always attack Chilia. If Mehmed II lost, then he could have (and probably would have if Hunyadi had not died) also taken control over Chilia, because of the Walachian course of events in mid 1456.

2. Two Paradoxes North-West of the Black Sea in the Mid and Late 1450'

With basically one great exception (in 1444), the Moldavian-Genoese disputes (1440'-1460') usually irrupted at times when Moldavia took on a pro-Ottoman stand, while the otherwise prudent Genoese, favored the cross (the events of the mid 1450' or of the early and late 1460'). Genoese politics

1899, p. 118-120.

⁶⁵ See also Al. Simon, *Notes on John Hunyadi's Actions and Images*, in *Crisia*, XXXVIII, 2008.

⁶⁶ *Documente moldovenesti*, II, no. 230, p. 779-787. For further analysis, see Șerban Papacostea, *La Moldavie état tributaire de l'empire ottoman au XV^e siècle: le cadre international des rapports établis en 1455-1456*, in *RRH*, XIII, 1974, 3, p. 445-461

⁶⁷ See Raguza, no. 342, p. 592; Al. Simon, *Milanese Perspectives on the Hungarian Events of 1456*, in *Miscellanea Historica et Archaeologica In Honorem Professoris Ionel Cădea*, (ed. Valeriu Sârbu, Cristian Luca), Brăila, 2008, p. 249-260.

appeared more anti-Ottoman than the Moldavian ones, as long as there was no Hungarian-Moldavian entente⁶⁸. This had posed great problems to Hunyadi prior to 1456, for the *dominus* of Cetatea Albă (distinct from the Moldavian ruler, a distinction that may have persisted, under various forms, until the 1470'-1480'), was still viewed in 1458 as one of the four Pontic forces⁶⁹.

Stephen III the Great of Moldavia and Vlad III the Impaler of Walachia became the most famous *Walachian* 'crusaders' (in particular the first one, for the latter had, as revealed also by his 'Hungarian captivity', a peculiar status). In 1456-1457, they turned out to be the most disloyal and most pro-Ottoman of all 'Hunyadi creatures' (king Matthias' politics are eloquent in this respect). Yet, these were matters of survival and Hunyadi too was a versatile and ruthless master of puppets. And, in 1456, the context hardly favored anti-Ottoman stands. But something still seemed different⁷⁰.

Church Union and Crusade in Suceava and Caffa in the Summer of 1456

In early September 1455, Ragusa informed Buda that sultan Mehmed II prepared the Pontic fleet for an attack on Hungarian regional interests via the Danube Mounds. Hunyadi's Walachian expedition of late September - early October that same year prevented the application of the plan and led to a truce between him and Wladislaw II of Walachia and may have led to the secret acceptance of the Church Union by Peter III Aron, who had just acknowledged the suzerainities of Mehmed and Casimir IV. The plan was resumed in March 1456⁷¹. Almost unexpectedly, it failed.

⁶⁸ For the context, see Ș. Papacostea's studies collected in his *La Mer Noire, carrefour des grandes routes intercontinentales*, 1204-1453 București, 2006, and in particular p. 205-350.

⁶⁹ *Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri*, I, no. 377, p. 855.

⁷⁰ For a 'preview': Al. Simon, *Antonio Bonfini's Valachorum regulus: Matthias Corvinus, Transylvania and Stephen the Great*, in *Between Worlds* (=Mélanges d'Histoire Générale, nouvelle série, I, 1-4), I. *Stephen the Great, Matthias Corvinus and their Time*, (ed. by László Koszta, Ovidiu Mureșan, Al. Simon), Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 207-226.

⁷¹ The main data comes from: Luca Wadding, *Annales Minorum seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, (ed. P. Giuseppe Maria Fonseca), XII, 1448-1456, Quaracchi 1932³, p. 259-365; *DRH*, D, I, nos. 327-328, p. 446-448; *Raguza*, nos. 334-337, p. 528-586; no. 340, p. 589, no. 342, p. 592; *Documente turcești*, I, nos. 1-2, p. 1-3; *Documente moldovenești*, II, no. 228, p. 775.

If the Walachians had not aided the Hungarian garrison of Chilia⁷² and if the Moldavians had supported the Ottomans, in spite of the pro-Ottoman decision (early June) of the Moldavian ‘Diet’ presided over by anti-unionist metropolitan Theoctist⁷³, the plan would have most likely worked. At Belgrade, sultan Mehmed II was able to use only his fluvial fleet. Peter III Aron could have profited the most from this. On August 12, 1456, some two weeks after the final clashes of Belgrade, Peter reinvited, *sub nostre katholice fidei honore*, the Saxons of Braşov to trade freely in Moldavia⁷⁴.

Due to the events of 1475, in particular, or of 1484, which led to the temporary, respectively permanent Ottoman conquest of Chilia and Cetatea Albă, with (variable) support from the local population⁷⁵, the Ottoman Pontic-Danubian failure of 1456 would have, at least, been smaller, if the Genoese had supported sultan Mehmed II. Even if they (in particular the real ruler of Genoa, the Bank of San Giorgio) seriously doubted John Hunyadi’s true (Hungarian, as well as anti-Ottoman) power, the Genoese did not support this Ottoman maritime endeavor (Varna was still a vivid memory⁷⁶). Whether this was the product of the Genoese instinct for self-preservation, as Mehmed II’s victory would have been too great to bear its consequences, or the result of a genuine Genoese desire to aid, within the limits of their own safety, the crusaders, it is difficult to determine. The Caffese messages of 1454-1455 favor however namely the second possibility⁷⁷.

In mid 1456, John Hunyadi won where and when few expected him to do so, received aid from apparently rather unlikely supporters and lost where (and maybe also when), in theory, he should have won. When the battle of Belgrade was over, Walachia was under Ottoman control. Peter III Aron drew closer to John Hunyadi, prudently nonetheless. But, if we are to fully trust Franciscan sources who state that he expelled *all* anti-unionists from

⁷² M. Cazacu, Petre Ş. Năsturel, *Une démonstration navale des Ottomans devant Constantinople et la bataille de Chilia (1448)*, in *Between Worlds*, II, p. 323-331.

⁷³ *Documente moldoveneşti*, II, no. 233, p. 797-808.

⁷⁴ DRH, D, I, no. 337, p. 455.

⁷⁵ See Al. Simon, *The Limits of the Moldavian Crusade...*, p. 241-244.

⁷⁶ Idem, *The Captain and the Superba: Relations between John Hunyadi and Genoa (October 1444, September 1455)*, in *Between Worlds*, II, p. 333-364.

⁷⁷ See *Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri*, I, no. 183, p. 434; no. 234, p. 535; no. 241, p. 551.

Moldavia, he was not so prudent⁷⁸. At any rate Theoctist I, very present until then in Peter III Aron's council, disappeared from it at the end of summer 1456. In 1457, he anointed Stephen III ruler of Moldavia. In 1462, Theoctist I influenced Stephen to expel all Franciscans from Moldavia⁷⁹. For Peter Aron too, Hunyadi had died too soon.

A Moldavian Enthronement after the Deaths of John and Ladislav Hunyadi

In spring 1457, the Hungarian situation had turned completely against the Hunyadis. The Ottoman forces had fully regrouped. Stephen III, aided by Vlad III and by his mother's family in the Lower Country, dethroned Peter Aron. An action supported by a (loyal) Ottoman vassal, Vlad (who had, openly most likely, accepted Church Union, while in Transylvania), and tribute payer, against another Ottoman vassal and tribute payer, Peter III Aron (as the anti-unionist Moldavian party had claimed victory after 1453, Peter III Aron had secretly accepted Church Union and attempted to change sides), would have been possible only with Ottoman approval (it would be interesting to see whether the letter sent by Peter III Aron to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, after he lost his Moldavian throne, still exists and is genuine, and if so, to know when it was issued exactly⁸⁰). Peter III Aron's worst fears had become true. Less than two weeks, before he lost the throne, Peter III had asked the brothers Buczaki to urge the king to restore peace between him and the Turks as well⁸¹.

⁷⁸ Dan Ioan Mureșan, *Theoctist I și ungerea domnească a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, in *România în Europa medievală (între Orientul bizantin și Occidentul latin). Studii în onoarea profesorului Victor Spinei* (ed. Dumitru Țicu, Ionel Cădea), Brăila, 2008, p. 303-416.

⁷⁹ *Analecta Monumentorum Hungariae Historicorum Literariorum Maximum Inedita*, (ed. Ferenc Tóldy), Pesta, 1862, no. 11, p. 247; *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, II, Appendix, nos. 11-12, p. 479-480; *Wadding*, XII, p. 365; *DRH*, A, II, no. 66, p. 98; no. 73, p. 106; no. 84, p. 120; no. 89, p. 127.

⁸⁰ According to our knowledge, this most intriguing documentary piece, quoted by Iorga, *Studii istorice*, p. 120, note 3 (following a very rare edition), has not yet been taken into account for an analysis of the age.

⁸¹ *Documente moldovenesti*, II, no. 234, p. 808-814. In these matters Polish-Moldavian, see also Ilona Czamańska, *Moldawia i Wołoszczyzna wobec Polski, Weigieri Turki w XIV i XV wieku*, Poznań, 1996, p. 86-88, 95-101, with further Polish data on the subject.

Except for the mid 1460', Stephen III of Moldavia preserved until the mid 1470' a predominantly pro-Ottoman and anti-Genoese political course⁸². The son of the most loyal to John Hunyadi of the all rulers (due to necessities), Stephen III proved to be the most disloyal of all 'Hunyadi creatures'. Yet Stephen was only in (small or medium) part a real 'creature'. Even if enraged by the outcome of his Moldavian campaign of 1467, king Matthias had to (indirectly) accept that in his letter to the Polish elite, while claiming that John Hunyadi had done as it had pleased him in Walachia and Moldavia (1468)⁸³. Eventually, it was still easier for Thuróczy or Bonfini to portrait Hunyadi's successes.

Whether already prior to Alexander II's acceptance as ruler by John Hunyadi or only after the fall of Elias I's son, Stephen III, the 'most illegitimate' of all Moldavian rulers until then, spent probably time in Transylvania (here he John learnt Hungarian, if he did not know it from the Lower Country, and also probably accepted Church Union as a Hunyadi contender). If Stephen fled to Transylvania (and not to Walachia), immediately after Bogdan II's execution by Peter III Aron and his followers (October 1451), he, like Vlad III (due to the provisions the Ottoman-Hungarian 'peace' of November 1451), was probably expelled from Transylvania, following Alexander II's acceptance as ruler by Hunyadi in winter 1452-1453. It is possible that he returned to Transylvania from Walachia (still, a chronicle, deemed unreliable, apparently places him in the Ottoman Empire in the early 1450'⁸⁴).

At any rate, until his enthronement, Stephen III moves seemed to have been often linked to those of Vlad III the Impaler. In summer 1456, while (already) in Walachia, Stephen met with Moldavian chancellor, Mihul (on Krakow's pay roll until his death in the late 1480', on his way to sultan Mehmed II with Moldavia's tribute⁸⁵. Stephen III and Mihul attempted a

⁸² Al. Simon, *The Arms of the Cross: The Christian Policies of Stephen the Great and Matthias Corvinus*, in *Between Worlds*, I, p. 77-79.

⁸³ Vilmos Fraknói, *Mátyás király levelei. Külügyi Osztály*, I, 1458-1479, Budapest 1893, no. 149, p. 211-212.

⁸⁴ See *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt în contextul epocii sale și al posterității*, Chișinău, 2004, (general-editor Demir Dragnev), p. 141, note 52 (the data comes from chronicle, preserved only in a version/ copy from the 1700').

⁸⁵ For a thorough analysis, see Bogdan-Petru Maleon's study *Stephen the Great and John Hunyadi*, in *Between Worlds*, II, p. 381-387.

scheme which backfired so badly, on probably both of them, that after Stephen III took the throne, Mihul fled to Poland and never returned to Moldavia, in spite of Stephen's repeated calls and promises and even though basically all other fugitives of 1457 had safely returned to Moldavia⁸⁶. Mihul knew that he lived in times when the rise of Christian saints, *Greek* or *Latin*, was quite often not Christian at all.

IOAN DE HUNEDOARA ÎNTRE BELGRAD ȘI CETATEA ALBĂ ÎN ANUL 1450

Rezumat

Iancu de Hunedoara rămâne una dintre cele mai discutate personalități ale Evului Mediu European. În special, ultimii ani ai vieții sale au cunoscut varii interpretări, de la căderea sa administrativă în regatul ungar și eșecurile antiotomane, până la “apoteoza” de la Belgrad. Noi documente din arhivele italiene și surse mai puțin aduse în discuție oferă prilejul unei reanalizării a acestor ultimi ani din cariera lui Iancu de Hunedoara. Implicațiile acestei perioade se întind din zona Banatului și până la Gurile Dunării, urmând traseul politicii, reușitelor și eșecurilor lui Iancu de Hunedoara, precum și urmările acestora pentru perioada imediată următoare, pentru soarta familiei sale și pentru cea a Țărilor Române.

⁸⁶ E.g. *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, [IV] *Index auctorum saeculi XV ad res publicas Poloniae spectantiam*, (edited by A. Lewicki), Krakow, 1888, no. 4485, p. 508; *Hurmuzaki*, II-2, no. 234, p. 264; no. 258, p. 288.