

NOTES ON THE CAMPAIGN OF VLADISLAV VARNENCHIK IN NORTHEASTERN BULGARIA IN THE AUTUMN OF 1444

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Keywords: battle of Varna, Northeastern Bulgaria, Vladislav Varnenchik

Cuvinte cheie: bătălia de la Varna, Bulgaria nord-estică, Vladislav Varnenchik

The campaigns of Vladislav Varnenchik from 1443–1444 mark the last stage of the defense of united Christian Europe against the Ottomans. These events have been a subject of research by many scientists. The problem is widely dealt upon both in the Bulgarian and in foreign historiography. The aim of this article is to mark the most controversial moments of the last crusade in the autumn of 1444 in Northeast Bulgaria and to give the author the opportunity to provide his point of view on the base of the historical and archaeological material.

During the autumn of 1443 the long campaign of the Polish-Hungarian king Vladislav Varnenchik and Transylvanian ruler John Hunyadi was organized. On 2nd February 1444 the crusaders were welcomed victoriously in the Hungarian capital – Buda. Several months later the Peace of Hadrianopolis from 12 June of 1444 was concluded. The Serbian despot Georgi Brankovich benefited from the peace the most. The Ottomans promised to give him his lands and sons back, but he himself was forced to pay an annual tax to the Sultan. The Wallachian prince Vlad Dracul also became Murat's vassal, as he had to pay a tax as well. On the first of August the Peace of Hadrianopolis was ratified in Szeged. Just a few days after signing the Peace of Szeged King Vladislav advocated the organisation of a new crusade against the Turks. On 4 August under the pressure of the Pope and his legate Giuliano Cesarini, the Hungarian ruler rejected the concluded agreements with the Ottomans in Edirne and Szeged and marked the beginning of a new military campaign.

The organization of the second march was delayed again, but this time only for a few months. Less soldiers were involved in the new military initiative

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under the flags of the Hungarian king. A piece of information, given to us by Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, about the aid which would be provided by the local population, encouraged the new military campaign. He received assurances from the rulers and the people of Bulgaria, Albania and Byzantium, that they would support the Crusaders. Turotsi has written „And many Christian rulers promised to send to Bulgaria, Albania and Thrace, and to the glorious imperial city of Constantinople weapons and large military assistance. The same also promised the people and the leaders of those countries”.¹ At the same time the papal fleet headed towards the Straits aiming to establish itself in the Hellespont and thus obstructing the passage of the Ottoman army from Asia Minor to Europe. Bonfini provided us with interesting information about the organization of the fleet “With the onset of spring Vladislav and Corvin found it appropriate to remind with their legates all princes to assist the expedition with fleet and they promised help and money, so initially they distinguished themselves with their promises; at first they informed the Emperor of Constantinople, who was with his army in Thrace and Macedonia, to stand there with the auxiliary troops; they also informed the Pope Eugenius, the Venetians, Genoese and other allies to prepare the fleet and send it into the Hellespont; this was done by them”.² The time for the conduct of a new crusade was favorable, as military operations in Asia Minor were renewed and a large part of the Ottoman army was directed against the Beylik of Karaman. There are several opinions in the scientific literature about the numerical strength and ethnicity of the soldiers, who took part in the crusade of Varna. B. Tsvetkova has written “The Crusader army of about 16 000 soldiers and 2 000 wagons (Hungarians, Poles, Czechs and Transylvanians) should follow the earlier targeted mobility plan”.³ Oruch reported that the armies of Ungurus, Cech, Nemchu, Latin, Alamo, Leh, Sas, Bosnia and Evlyak got allied and attacked the Sultan. The army consisted of 16,000 men and 400 artillery cars, guns, zemberetsi.⁴ The unknown author has written “(This) time and his king, and the blighter Iancu attacked and with the army of Ungurus with Sass, Alma Chih, Latin, Bosnia and Eflak gathered seventy or eighty thousand troops and drove off with three – four hundred cannon cars”.⁵ You can find the number of 300 000 soldiers in the Holy Wars of Sultan

¹ Yoan de Turots, *Ungarska hronika*, Latinski izvori za balgarskata istoria V (Sofia, 2001), 116; Bistra Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka na narodite* (Varna, 1979), 297.

² Antonio de Bonfini, *Istoria na ungartsite*, Latinski izvori za balgarskata istoria V (Sofia, 2001), 151.

³ Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 299.

⁴ Oruch bin Adil, “Istoria na osmanskata dinastia,” in *Varna 1444. Sbornik ot izsledvania i dokumenti v chest na 525-ta godishnina ot bitkata kray Varna*, (Sofia, 1969), 391.

⁵ Neizvesten avtor, “Istoria,” in *Varna 1444. Sbornik ot izsledvania i dokumenti v chest na 525-ta godishnina ot bitkata kray Varna* (Sofia, 1969), 436.

Murad Son of Sultan Mehmed Khan.⁶ The above mentioned information from the last source is quite disputable. The number of Crusaders is not the exact one. In an effort to describe the huge number of the Christian army the Ottoman sources increase its number significantly. A decision was taken and the army of King Vladislav headed to a new direction. The aim was through Northern Bulgaria to arrive at Varna (Black Sea coast) and from there to Edirne. This decision was prompted mainly by the participation of Hussite battle wagons which would find it difficult to pass through the mountains. The proposed route facilitated their passage by avoiding the massive mountain ranges. One more reason played a crucial role for choosing this route. This time one of the main leaders of the “long campaign” – Serbian despot George Brankovic didn’t take part in the campaign. After signing the peace in Edirne and its subsequent ratification in Szeged he received what he wanted. Serbia acquired autonomy and his two sons were exempt from Ottoman captivity. These facts made the Serbian ruler renounce the participation in the new anti-Turkish campaign. Thus the passage of the crusader army through the Serbian territory appeared to be unachievable. In chapter XXIII of the “Notes of the Janissary” considerable attention is paid to the negotiations between King Vladislav and despot George Brankovic. They met and the despot implored the king not to take the new campaign. Konstantin Mikhailovich claims that Vladislav almost agreed but the influential John Hunyadi dissuaded him.⁷

The final stage of the war of the European countries with the Ottomans for the liberation of the Balkans started in the autumn of 1444. Around 20th September the crusader army crossed the Danube near the town of Orshova. After having conquered the fortress, it headed to the east. Kladovo and Florentin were conquered after that. After a few days the strong fortress of Vidin was besieged. Behaim states that the city was captured on the seventh day, and the Turkish leaders were killed. The author also states that the Crusaders were supported by the locals.⁸ Based on a number of registers from the XV century, according to which there was unrest in the villages Rupcha, Tsibra and Skomlya, B. Tsvetkova assumes that these movements were the result of the campaign of 1444 and the local residents also took part in the army of Vladislav and

⁶ Maria Kalitsin, *Pisanie za verskite bitki na sultan Murad, sin na Mehmed han* (Sofia, 1992), 82.

⁷ *Zapiski yanyichara*. Vvedenie, prevod i komentar na A. Rogova (Moskva, 1978). About why G. Brankovic does not take part in the second crusade look at: Gavrilko Shkrivanich, “Zashto despot Georgi Brankovich ne e uchastvuval v bitkata pri Varna (1444),” in *Varna, 1444. Sbornik ot izsledvania i dokumenti v chest na 525-ta godishnina ot bitkata kray Varna* (Sofia, 1969), 162–167.

⁸ Hristo Kolarov, “Dva malko izvestni izvora za bitkata na narodite na 10 noemvri 1444g. pri Varna,” *Izvestia na Narodnia muzey-Varna*, VI (XXI) (1970): 180.

Hunyadi.⁹ After the successes in Northwest Bulgaria the Crusaders advanced to the “main city” in Bulgaria-Nikopol. Along the way the fortress of Oryahovo was conquered. Nikopol was besieged for several days. Behaim has written about that:

*“Inside there were many Orthodox
and also a lot of Turks.
The Orthodox jumped out the walls
and went to the Hungarians.
Then on the fifth day the city
was captured and burned down immediately
and completely destroyed.”*¹⁰

There is no doubt that the Bulgarians from Nikopol joined the crusader army. Callimachus claims that the Crusaders started to loot all around.¹¹ Here another important event took place. The Wallachian leader Vlad Dracul arrived in the camp of the Polish-Hungarian king. He demonstrated his support by providing 4000 horsemen, led by his son, who joined the army. This ruler was famous for his great courage and wisdom. He advised the Crusaders to return to their lands and collect a larger army and then to attack the Sultan. Probably under the pressure of Cardinal Cesarini his words were not accepted willingly by the commanders of the march.¹²

The Ottoman sources give a slightly different information about the siege of Nikopol. Oruch has written “... and they came to Nikboli, which they attacked, but could not conquer. They passed it. As they moved on, the bey of the Sandzak Nikboli Firouz Oghlu Mehmed Bey with his army and with the available akincis came and attacked the rearguard of their troops, killed many of the infidels, captured a lot of equestrian infidels in armor (knights) and

⁹ Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 300–301.

¹⁰ Kolarov, “Dva malko izvestni izvora,” 181.

¹¹ Hristo Kolarov, “Hronikata na Kalimah – vazhen izvor za Varnenskata bitka ot 1444g.,” *Izvestia na Narodnia muzey – Varna*, IX (XXIV) (1973): 244.

¹² The description of the events surrounding the Nikopol and the meeting of Vlad Dracul with the crusader camp are transmitted detailed in Callimachus look at: Kolarov, “Hronikata na Kalimah,” 244–246. A. Palatsio wrote that the crusader army was not conquered the strongholds through which it passes – Orsova, Vidin and Nikopol. The author reports that the Crusaders plundered and burnt all the houses outside the cities look at: Milko Mirchev, “Andreas de Palatsio. Pismo za porazhenieto pri Varna, izprateno do kardinal Lyudovik,” *Izvestia na varnenskoto arheologicheskoto druzhestvo*, XV (1964): 88; Dlugosz also didn't wrote that the fortresses were conquered by the crusaders look at: *The Annals of Jan Dlugosz* (Chichester-West Sussex, 1997), 493–494.

sent them to Sultan Mehmed".¹³ Almost the same was written by the Unknown Author.¹⁴ These sources have tried to impute the victory to the Ottoman army not to the Crusaders, but these claims can not be found in the works of the western chronicists. On one hand that can not be taken as a guarantee for truthfulness, but on the other hand it can not reject these claims either.

The route of the crusader army in northeastern Bulgaria after Nikopol is one of the most controversial moments during the campaign. One more time the different opinions on the problem are due to the controversial and laconic data that sources can give us. The dispute is mainly over the identification of the fortress "Rachautsch", mentioned by Michael Behaim.¹⁵ Another controversial aspect is the location of the old Roman road lined with many Roman buildings, Greek and Latin inscriptions, arches and columns, cities and palaces, described in the letter of Andreas De Palatsio to Louis Cardinal in Rome and Gregory of Sanok.¹⁶ The first, who identified the fortress Rahauch mentioned by Behaim with Oryahovitsa (Gorna Oryahovitsa) is Konstantin Irechek.¹⁷ Karel and Herman Shkorpil claim that after Nikopol the Christian army headed to Nikyup (former ancient city of Nikopolis ad Istrum) and then through Popovo to Shumen and Novi Pazar.¹⁸ Such an opinion was shared by the Polish scientist Jan Dabrowski as well.¹⁹ George Balashev, citing a letter from Andreas De Palatsio, also supports the position of Shkorpil brothers.²⁰ Milko Mirchev claims that after Nikopol Vladislav's troops headed southeast, along the old Roman road passing through Oryahovitsa and Novi Pazar.²¹ Alexander Kuzev made a special research on the route of the Vladislav's army and convincingly defended the existing opinion that the crusader army after Nikopol passed through Oryahovitsa to Shumen.²² According to Kuzev "the name "Rahauch", found as Rahauvidze in Behaim's work is a Turkish form of

¹³ Oruch, "Istoria," 391.

¹⁴ Neizvesten avtor, 436. It is noteworthy that both Ottoman sources that transmit about the events around Nikopol, put the city after Shumen. This shows the inaccuracies in their geographical orientation.

¹⁵ Kolarov, "Dva malko izvestni izvora," 181.

¹⁶ Mirchev, "Andreas de Palatsio," 88–90.

¹⁷ Konstantin Irechek, *Patuvania po Bulgaria* (Plovdiv, 1899), 857.

¹⁸ Herman i Karel Shkorpil, "Pohodat na Vladislav prez Bulgaria v 1444g. i bitkata pri Varna," *Izvestia na Varnenskoto arheologicheskoto druzhestvo* (1908): 50.

¹⁹ Jan Dabrowski, *Wladislaw I Jaggielonszyk na Wegrech (1440–1444)* (Warszawa, 1922), 174–180.

²⁰ Georgi Balashev, *Pohodite na polsko-madzgarskia kral Vladislav III Yagelo prez 1443–1444 g. protiv turtsite i bitkata pri Varna* (Sofia, 1935), 15.

²¹ Milko Mirchev, *Vladislav Varnenchik* (Varna, 1955), 5.

²² Aleksandar Kuzev, "Marshrutat na Vladislav III Yagelo do Varna," *Izvestia na Narodnia muzey-Varna*, IX (XXIV) (1973): 139–152.

the Bulgarian name Rahovitsa or Rahovets, present-day Gorna Oryahovitsa”.²³ The author opposes the opinion of Atanas Ishirkov that the distance between Nikopol and Oryahovitsa is very long to be covered in one day, stating that the source of Behaim, Hans Mergest was 16 years in captivity, which undoubtedly led to some inaccuracies.²⁴ Based on the Holy Wars of Sultan Murad Son of Sultan Mehmed Khan, Tsveta Raichevski provides us with the following route: Nikopol Osam-Tarnovo, Shumen Kosovo. The author is convinced that after Nikopol the Crusaders headed southeast, they might have encamped near Gorna Oryahovitsa, from where they sent two detachments to attack Tarnovo.²⁵

Historiography shares yet another opinion. The German military historian D. Kohler suggests that after Nikopol the army of Vladislav continued its march along the river and then headed toward Novi Pazar along an old Roman road.²⁶ The Austrian military historian G. Kupelwieser identifies Rahauch with Razgrad and thinks that it was exactly the place where the crusader troops had passed by.²⁷ Atanas Ishirkov also supports this theory, but identifies Rahauch with Oryahovo on the Danube River because he shares the opinion that Oryahovitsa can not be reached for one day from Nikopol. According to the author, the fortress is not mentioned in the sources, but probably it was conquered by the Crusaders. Ishirkov claims that the army reached Novi Pazar from Nikopol for six days, going along the Roman road, separated from Danube before Ruse and then along the valley of the river Beli Lom to Razgrad, Pliska and Novi Pazar. The author identifies precisely with Pliska the mentioned ruins from Palazzio.²⁸ Stefan Nedev justifies the identification of the ruins with Pliska by Ishirkov with the fact that then the ancient Abritus was not discovered yet, but “Atanas Ishirkov was on the right track – he felt the rightness of his thesis, but he didn’t have a rigid support to lean on, and that is why he equated the ruins of Aboba with those mentioned from Palacio”.²⁹ Therefore Stefan Nedev agrees with the expressed opinion of Ishirkov, but according to him the ruins mentioned in the

²³ Ibid., 144.

²⁴ Ibid., 145.

²⁵ Tsveta Raychevska, “Kraŕstonosniyat pohod ot 1444 godina spored osmanskata hronika “Pisanie za verskite bitki na sultan Murad han””, *Izvestia na Narodnia muzey-Varna*, XL (LV) (2004): 20–32.

²⁶ G. Kohler, *Die Schlachten von Nicopoli und Varna* (Breslau, 1882), 42–43.

²⁷ G. Kupelwieser, *Die Kämpfe Ungarns mit den Osmanen bis zur Schlacht bei Mohacs 1526, Zweite umg. Auflage* (Wien und Leipzig, 1899), 87–88.

²⁸ Atanas Ishirkov, *Pohodite na kral Vladislav III v Bulgaria v 1443 i 1444 g.* (Sofia, 1923), 25–51.

²⁹ Stefan Nedev, “Patishtata na Vladislav III i Murad II kam Varna prez 1444 godina,” in *Varna 1444. Sbornik ot izsledvania i dokumenti v chest na 525-ta godishnina ot bitkata kray Varna* (Sofia, 1969): 211.

letter of Palazzio were remnants of Abritus (present-day Razgrad). According to the author, “in an effort to reach the beach faster Vladislav and Hunyadi made a fundamental assessment of both routes and chose the left, i.e. north, as a shorter one (Nikopol-Razgrad-N. Pazar is about 250 km and Nikopol-Nikyup-peak Fiseka-N. Pazar is about 300 km) and also the safer one (lying farther from the Balkan passages and from their strongholds”.³⁰ Bistra Tsvetkova thinks that the crusader army passed through some of the ancient or medieval centers near Razgrad: Abritus or Cherven.³¹

The shared opinions are quite controversial. Different interpretations have been made based on various sources. The first route is also supported by the opinion of Ivan Bachvarov who combines the sources data with archaeological finds from the fortress and concludes that Rahauch in Behaim’s work is precisely Ryahovets.³²

Based on numismatic data the author of this study also supports the first thesis. The coins of Sigismund I Luxembourg and Vladislav Varnenchik (i.e. coins, which can be connected with the crusade) mark the march of Vladislavov’s army in northeast Bulgaria. In my opinion after Nikopol the crusaders passed through Gorna Oryahovitsa- Shumen-Provadia and arrived at Varna. Exactly this route should be equated with the old Roman road, mentioned in the letter of Palacio.³³

Another controversial moment from the march is the identification of the river, mentioned in the sources, where Turkish ships were hidden. Palazzio claims that after the departure of Nikopol and the moving on along the fertile Thracian land, filled with old buildings the crusaders came to a river. “...Crossing some unknown river we came across 28 new galeati, which the Turkish emperor had been hiding and which had to be promptly brought to the Danube, so that he could more easily destroy the Kingdom of Hungary and Slavonia under the guise of a peace treaty with the despot and the voyvoda Jan Hunyadi, the current Commander. Our lord gave an order these galeati to be destroyed and burned”.³⁴ Callimachus even provides us with the name of the river – Panisus.³⁵ According to the information given by Callimachus, it can be

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 302.

³² Ivan Bachvarov, *Moneti ot Ryahovets* (Veliko Tarnovo, 1994), 59.

³³ Nevyan Mitev, “Marshrutat na krastonosnata armia na Vladislav Varnenchik v Severoiztochna Bulgaria (po numizmatichni dannii)”, *Zhurnal za istoricheski i arheologicheski izsledvania*, (2013–2): 154–159; Nevyan Mitev, “Monetite na Vladislav Varnenchik (1434–1444) ot Severoiztochna Bulgaria”, *Numizmatika, sfragistika i epigrafika* 10 (2014): 201–208.

³⁴ Mirchev, “Andreas de Palatsio,” 88.

³⁵ Kolarov, “Hronikata na Kalimah,” 246.

assumed that the name of the river is Kamchia, but the location given by the two sources, definitely associate it with the territory lying somewhere before reaching Shumen. Different opinions have been expressed based on these facts. M. Mirchev suggests that it is the river Yantra.³⁶ B. Tsvetkova also considers that the river is Yantra.³⁷ A. Kuzev believes that this is either the river Iskar, Vit or Osam.³⁸ Based on the Holy Wars of Sultan Murad Son of Sultan Mehmed Khan, Tsveta Raichevska considers that the river mentioned in the sources is Osam.³⁹

The crusader army camped around Shumen. Some of the scientists believe that the camp was located near Novi Pazar, after the army of Hunyadi and Vladislav had managed to defeat the Ottoman troops near the fortress of the village of Stan. Probably exactly from here King Vladislav sent a warning letter to the garrisons in several fortresses. The letter regarded Shumen, Madara, Petrich, Varna, Kavarna, Galata and several other fortresses which were called for the withdrawal of the Turkish garrisons to Anatolia. If this had not been done, the Crusaders would have killed them all.⁴⁰ After a three-day siege the crusader army managed to capture the Shumen Fortress. During the fight the knight Jan Tarnowski, who was wounded twice, became famous.⁴¹ The crusaders lost many of their soldiers. In the Holy Wars of Sultan Murad Son of Sultan Mehmed Khan, it is an exaggeration that the crusader army that besieged the fortress, numbered 30000 people, and after being captured, King Vladislav complained about the loss of many of his soldiers.⁴² Behaim reports that the Christians didn't have any mercy and killed everyone. The Turks began to jump from the tower of the castle.⁴³ Later the Crusaders continued their way to Varna. After that the strongholds Madara and Venchan were captured and the army reached Tashhisar – Ovech. Here again, many Turks were killed. It is interesting to be mentioned that the focus here was on the greed of the crusaders that plundered lots of clothes and treasures and the horses had problems with their movement. This was rebuked by King Vladislav, who ordered everything to be burned.⁴⁴ You can find a different version in the Holy Wars of Sultan Murad Son of Sultan Mehmed Khan. According to the author, the population of Madara ran away to Provadia and the crusader army failed to

³⁶ Mirchev, "Andreas de Palatsio," bel. 20.

³⁷ Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 302.

³⁸ Kuzev, "Marshrutat", 144.

³⁹ Raychevska, "Krastonosniyat", 25.

⁴⁰ Mirchev, "Andreas de Palatsio," 89.

⁴¹ Kolarov, "Hronikata na Kalimah," 247.

⁴² Kalitsin, *Pisanie*, 101.

⁴³ Kolarov, "Dva malko izvestni izvora," 182.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

enter the fortress of Ovech. The Christians barely managed to survive in the battle around the castle.⁴⁵ The authenticity of this source for these events is quite debatable and differs from all other sources! The author talks about the capture of Shumen, and further Petrich, but he mentioned that the Christians were defeated near Provadia and passed by the fortress. The events regarding the fortress of Ovech are not reliable. The army continued its way to the east and on 7th November reached the fortress of Petrich. In the battle of Petrich another Polish knight – Leszek Bobzhitsk, who first climbed the walls of the fortress, stood out.⁴⁶ The capture of Petrich Kale was extremely difficult. The fortress was surrounded by a trench and its defense system was composed of three walls. Ultimately the fortress fell. Then the Crusaders continued, capturing the fortress of Mihalich. On 9th September the army established a camp near the city of Varna. Meanwhile, Cardinal Cesarini received a notice about the crossing of the Straits by the Ottoman army. Nowadays in the Bulgarian historiography dominates the view that the letter of Kondolmieri was received by the Christian army in the fortress of Ovech (present-day Provadia). Defenders of this statement are Georgi Dimitrov⁴⁷, Herman and Karel Shkorpil⁴⁸, Atanas Ishirkov⁴⁹, George Balashev⁵⁰, Bistra Tsvetkova⁵¹, Carol Oleynik⁵², Miechislav Bielski⁵³ and others. There is yet another opinion whose supporters are J. Zinkeisen⁵⁴ and St. Nedev.⁵⁵ They consider that the fortress, where the notice about the passage of the Ottoman troops from the Asian part of the Empire and the union with those of the European part was received is Petrich Kale (present-day the village of Razdelna).

In the end, what piece of information can sources give us? In his letter about the defeat at Varna, which Andreas De Palatsio sent to Cardinal Ludwig, the author mentioned that the crusader army captured with great difficulty the strongholds of Shumen and Petrich and meanwhile Cardinal Cesarini had

⁴⁵ Kalitsin, *Pisanie*, 102.

⁴⁶ Kolarov, "Dva malko izvestni izvora," 184.

⁴⁷ Georgi Dimitrov, "Srazhenieto pri Varna va 1444g.," *Izvestia na Varnenskoto arheologicheskoto druzhestvo* (1908): 11.

⁴⁸ Shkorpil, "Pohodat na Vladislava preza Bulgaria," 51.

⁴⁹ Atanas Ishirkov, *Pohodite na Vladislava* (Sofia, 1923), 47.

⁵⁰ Balashev, *Pohodite na polsko-madzgarskia kral Vladislav III Yagelo*, 16.

⁵¹ Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 304.

⁵² Karol Oleynik, "Bitkata pri Varna," in *Varna 1444. Deystvitelnost i traditsia* (Varna, 2005), 26.

⁵³ Miechislav Bielski, *Vladislav III Varnenchik na Balkanite (1443–1444)* (Veliko Tarnovo, 2006), 54.

⁵⁴ J. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte des Osmanisch en Reiches in Europa*, (Gotha, 1840), 683.

⁵⁵ Nedev, "Patishtata na Vladislav III i Murad II kam Varna," 223.

received a letter, informing him that the Turks had already been transferred from Asia to Europe. It is interesting that Palazzio, immediately after mentioning it, added: "...and we left the burnt down fortress of Petrich ...".⁵⁶

In the chronicle of Philip Callimachus is described that during the attack against the strongholds of Petrich and Shumen many knights became famous, among which were Jan Tarnowski and Leszek Bobzhitski. Meanwhile, the king received a letter from Cardinal Francisk informing him that the army of Sultan Murad II had passed to the European coast.⁵⁷

Antonio de Bonfini claims that immediately after the victory at Petrich, the Crusaders received a letter in which was said that Murad had crossed the Straits and united his army with his European one.⁵⁸

The piece of information concerning the letter is even more interesting in the poem of Michael Behaim. According to Behaim after the Crusaders captured the fortress of Mihalich and headed towards Varna, the king received the news that the Sultan had gone against him, i.e. Vladislav became aware of the passage of the Ottoman troops almost having reached Varna.⁵⁹ This information does not coincide with the data from the other sources. This can be explained by the fact that the poem of Behaim relies on the narration of the participant at the battle of Varna – Hans Mogest. However, he was 16 years in Ottoman captivity and there is no doubt that some of his memories had faded.

Although there are few sources mentioning the arrival of the letter of Kondolmieri into the Christian camp, they are clear and unambiguous. Andreas De Palatsi⁶⁰ and Antonio de Bonfini mention that after they had taken the fortress of Petrich, the Crusaders received the letter. Callimachus mentions that it took place during the siege of Shumen and Petrich (does not specify where exactly). The statement of Behaim, as already mentioned, can not be considered credible. The interesting thing here is that Ovech (Provadia) is not mentioned at all, i.e the prevailing opinion is that the Vladislav's army received the notice about the passage of the Murad's troops through the Straits in Petrich Kale.

Another controversial moment in the route of the crusader army in northeastern Bulgaria is the capture of the strongholds Kavarna, Kaliakra and Makropolis (present-day Evksinograd). According to A. Kuzev these

⁵⁶ Mirchev, "Andreas de Palatsio," 89.

⁵⁷ Kolarov, "Hronikata na Kalimah," 247.

⁵⁸ Bonfini, *Istoria na ungartsite*, 155.

⁵⁹ Kolarov, "Dva malko izvestni izvora," 186.

⁶⁰ Most of the proponents of the theory that the letter was received in Ovech are based on the information of Palatsi, who, however, never actually connects the receipt of such letter with Ovech.

stronghold were given voluntarily by their inhabitants to the Crusaders.⁶¹ V. Gyuzelev believes that the Hungarians entered Kaliakra and destroyed its walls.⁶² B. Tsvetkova assumes that the strongholds Varna, Makropolis, Kaliakra, Galata, Kavarna and other surrendered voluntarily.⁶³ S. Nedev also claims that the Christian population in those fortresses voluntarily gave the keys of the gates to the Crusaders.⁶⁴ D. Angelov and B. Cholpanov share the same opinion.⁶⁵ Shanko Apostolov expresses a slightly different opinion. According to him, it is impossible for the crusader army after the capture of the fortress of Mikhalich on 8th November to conquer Kaliakra and Kavarna and then to move back to Varna in a day. Apostolov thinks that the voluntary surrender of the fortresses should also be put into doubt because they did not follow the route of the crusader army.⁶⁶ Thus he supports the view of the Polish scientists Jan Dabrowski and Wincenty Swoboda.⁶⁷ Until now the researchers have analyzed only the sources, which clearly need to be addressed here before any attempt to clarify the issue can be made. After the Battle of Petrich Kale Callimachus presents the events in the following way “After about ten-day march the crusade army came to Kavarna and then occupied it, because the Turkish garrison who were there, learning about recent accidents in Pezehium had preferred not to wait the arrival of the King. In this way the Christians invaded and conquered with their army Makropolis, Kalakrium, Galata, Varna and many other sea towns abandoned by the enemy”.⁶⁸ Laonikos Chalkokondyles claims that the crusader army headed towards the field of the Moesian (the Bulgarian) Dobrotitca and towards Kaliakra and Varna”. After Varna voluntarily surrendered “Kaliakra the Paeonic (the Hungarians) stormed and destroyed the wall”.⁶⁹ According to Andreas De Palatsi, on 9th November Varna and Galata opened their doors to the King, because the Turks had run away. The same was done by the inhabitants of Kavarna and several other fortresses on the same day.⁷⁰

⁶¹ Kuzev, “Marshrutat,” 150.

⁶² Vasil Gyuzelev, “Srednovekovnata krepost Kaliakra prez XIII- sredata na XV vek,” *Izvestia na Narodnia muzey-Varna*, IX (XIV, (1973): 130–132.

⁶³ Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 305.

⁶⁴ Nedev, “Marshrutat,” 224.

⁶⁵ Dimitar Angelov, Boris Cholpanov. *Balgarska voenna istoria prez Srednovekovnieto (X–XV vek)* (Sofia, 1994), 276–277.

⁶⁶ Shanko Apostolov, “Prevzemani li sa Kavarna i Kaliakra prez 1444?,” *Izvestia na Narodnia muzey-Varna*, XLII (LVII) (2006): 81–83.

⁶⁷ Dabrowski, *Wladislaw*, 178–180; Wincenty Swoboda, *Warna 1444*, (Krakow, 1994), 47.

⁶⁸ Kolarov, “Hronikata na Kalimah,” 247.

⁶⁹ Laonici Chalcocandilae, *Historiarum demonstrationes*, ed. E. Darco II, 1, (Budapestini, 1923), 98; Gyuzelev, “Srednovekovnata krepost Kaliakra,” 131.

⁷⁰ Mirchev, “Andreas de Palatsio,” 90.

Undoubtedly the sources speak of entry of the crusader forces in the above mentioned strongholds. However, the arguments given by Apostolov, are quite convincing. Considering the geographical uncertainty of the sources, his view seems more plausible. The archaeological data from the fortress of Makropolis (Kastritsi) is also in support of this opinion. The above mentioned data date it back to the very beginning of the XV century, the last coin emissions found here are from the time of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I and voyvoda Mircho I of Wallachia.⁷¹ The fortress Makropolis probably did not exist at the time of the second crusade against the Turks in the autumn of 1444. Based on these data we can conclude that the crusader army didn't succeed in capturing the fortresses Kavarna, Kaliakra, Makropolis and Galata. The same were left by the Turkish garrisons and expected the knights not having the slightest intention to resist. The ambush, organized by the Ottoman army to the Crusaders near Varna, interrupted these plans.

It is even more difficult to clarify the way in which the Ottomans crossed the Straits. In his letter to the Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria Visconti from 13th December 1444 Piccolomini wrote about the bribes received by the commanders of the navy, but he personally did not believe in that.⁷² According to him, the fleet returned back due to lack of supplies. Of course, this statement of Piccolomini most likely does not correspond to the historical reality because, as we can see in most of the other historical sources, the events are presented otherwise. Only "dy venediger" (Venetians) are blamed in the poem of Michael Behaim.⁷³ They took a gold coin for each soldier to go through the Straits.⁷⁴ In his "Chronicle of Ragusa" the Senator from Dubrovnik Gvino Resti accuses the Genoese of committing treason, because for a gold coin for a man and two for a horse they were ready to help the enemy go through the Straits.⁷⁵ This statement coincides with the one of Behaim, who talks about the Venetians instead of the Genoese. In his "History of the Hungarians" Antonio Bonfini claims that in the spring of 1444 the fleet, which had to defend the Straits in the next campaign, was informed by Vladislav Varnenchik and Janos Hunyadi. Both received a promise from the Byzantine emperor John

⁷¹ Reportedly Dr. Igor Lazarenko, head of "Archaeology" at the Museum of Varna. Take advantage of this opportunity to thank him for the information!

⁷² Kolarov, "Dva malko izvestni izvora," 175; "Pismo na Eneas Silvius Pikolomini do hertsoga na Milano Filipo Maria Viskonti ot 13 dekemvri 1444g.," in *Izvori za srednovekovnata istoria na Bulgaria (VII-XV v.) v avstriyskite rakopisni sbirki i arhivi* (Sofia, 2000), 135–138.

⁷³ Kolarov, "Dva malko izvestni izvora," 192.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Sp. Nodilo, *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, in *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium* vol. 25 (Zagrebiae, 1893), 291.

VIII Palaiologos (1425–1448), the Venetians, the Genoese, the papal fleet and other allies that would take part in the anti-Ottoman campaign.⁷⁶ Further Bonfini reports that in a letter of Cardinal Francis was mentioned that Murad succeeded in reaching the European coast by bribes.⁷⁷ In his letter addressed to the bishop of Passau Leonard Whiting from 28th October 1445, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini claims that there were rumours that Murad's troops went through the Bosphorus on Genoese ships. He himself did not believe in these rumours.⁷⁸ In a second letter the future Pope Pius II (1458–1464) expressed the same view that there were rumours about the betrayal of the Genoese, but he did not believe in them. According to Serban Kokostea the Genoese from Pera⁷⁹ transferred the Ottoman troops in Europe.⁸⁰ The author refers to the information of Valerian de Wavren.⁸¹ So far the reviewed sources unequivocally confirm that if there was any betrayal it was committed either by the Genoese or by the Venetians. There are other sources that give a somewhat different light on the matter. The monk Paraspondilos Zotikos who witnessed the battle of Varna, mentioned that the Turkish troops of Murad were transferred from Asia Minor to the Balkan Peninsula on vessels of the Byzantine emperor.⁸² Such an opinion is expressed in a Greek source where the Byzantine-Turkish and the Balkans relations from the late XIV and the beginning of the XV century are discussed. Here it is mentioned the Byzantine emperor did that due to his fear from the Sultan.⁸³ In his letter about the defeat at Varna sent to Cardinal Ludwig, Andreas De Palatsi, a participant in the memorable battle of the nations claims that Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini received a letter from Francesco Kondolmieri, Cardinal of the Venetians and papal legate of the fleet in which was mentioned that the Turks had gone through the Straits secretly at night on small boats nearby the Gallipoli lighthouse. The fleet could not stop

⁷⁶ Bonfini, *Istoria na ungartsite*, 151.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 155.

⁷⁸ “Iz pismo na Eney Silvij Pikolomini do episkopa na Pasau Leonard Layming ot 28 oktomvri 1445 g.,” in *Izvori za srednovekovnata istoria na Bulgaria (VII–XV v.) v avstriyskite rakopisni sbirki i arhivi* (Sofia, 2000), 150.

⁷⁹ Neighborhood of Constantinople.

⁸⁰ Shandor Papakostea, “Genua, Venetsia i krastonosniyat pohod pri Varna,” in *Varna 1444. Deystvitelnost i traditsia*, (Varna 2005), 45–54.

⁸¹ “Wavrin, de W.,” ed. N. Iorga, *Buletinul Comisiei istorice a Romaniei*, VI (1927): 85–90.

⁸² G. Moravcsik, “Ελληνικόν ποίημα περ τῆς μάχης τῆς Βάρνας,” in *Magyar Görög Tanulmányok I.* (Budapest, 1935); G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica I*, 356–366; Georgi Dimitrov, “Srazhenieto pri Varna va 1444g.,” *Izvestia na Varnenskoto arheologicheskoto druzhestvo* (1908): 8–46; Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 29.

⁸³ Β. Κοσμά, Ὁ ἀνέκδοτος κώδικας 161 τῆς Χίου γιὰ τὴ σύνοδο τῆς Φλορεντίας τὴν ἀλωση τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης τὸ 1430 καὶ τὴ μάχη τῆς Βάρνας (Αθήναι, 1975), 26; Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 29.

them.⁸⁴ In another letter from the Genoese patrician Batista Frankie to Ottavio Ubaldini, political adviser to the Duke of Urbino Federico di Montefeltro, the author defends the Genoese against the verbal attacks that it was their fault that the Ottoman troops managed to go to Europe and subsequently the Christians were defeated at Varna. Ubaldini points out the contribution of Genoa to the anti-Turkish actions of Europe.⁸⁵ In his chronicle Philip Callimachus reports that the Venetians, the Duke of Burgundy and the papal fleet were in charge of defending the Straits.⁸⁶ Later, when the letter of Cardinal Francis was received, the author reported that Murad either by fraud or by bribery managed to pass through the small gorge of the Hellespont to the south of Gallipoli.⁸⁷ Fulstin claims “The Turks passed on smaller ships, led by the Venetians and Genoese, who had been bribed.”⁸⁸ According to Wavren, the commander of the Burgundian ships in the fleet, the main reason for the successful crossing of the Straits by the Ottomans was the inability of the Christian fleet to protect such a large perimeter – about 100 km. only with 19 galleys.⁸⁹ The Byzantine author from the XV century Duke gives the information that a Christian fleet of 25 triremes had been sent, which managed to established itself opposite Gallipoli and several more ships were sent to the Bosphorus. In this way the Crusaders tried to stop the crossing of the Straits by Murad and his Asian troops. Later the same author says that Murad found a place that was not guarded by triremes and crossed the Straits there.⁹⁰ Peter Ranzan in his “Summary of the Hungarian history” says that by order of Pope Eugene IV the Venetians had to prepare and equip a fleet of 24 triremes⁹¹ which had to be established in the Straits so that they could prevent the crossing of the Hellespont by the Ottomans. The author blames the fleet commander who was late to arrive at the Straits for the failure which followed.⁹² You can find a different opinion shared in this source

⁸⁴ Mirchev, “Andreas de Palatsio,” 89.

⁸⁵ L. Tocci, “Ottaviano Ubaldini della Carda e una inedita testimonianza sulla battaglia di Varna (1444),” in *Melanges E. Tisserant. VII. Studi e testi*, 237 (Vaticana, 1964), 97–130; Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 37–38.

⁸⁶ Kolarov, “Hronikata na Kalimah,” 245.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁸⁸ Nikola Mirski, “Bitkata pri Varna va 1444g. (sporeda Fulstin),” *Izvestia na Varnenskoto arheologicheskoto druzhestvo* (1910): 86.

⁸⁹ N. Iorga, *La champagne des croises sur la Danube* (Paris, 1927), 43.

⁹⁰ Ducas, *Istoria turco-bizantina (1341–1462)*, ed. V. Grecu, (Bucuresti, 1958), 275–277; Vladimir Angelov, *Balgarite i tehните sasedi na Balkanite vav vizantiyskata istoriopsis ot XV v.*, (Sofia, 2007), 217.

⁹¹ Duke talks about triremes, while Peter Ranzan mentions triers. Probably it's the same vessels.

⁹² Petar Ranzan, *Kratko izlozhenie na Ungarskata istoria*, Latinski izvori za balgarskata istoria, V/1 (Sofia, 2001), 172.

compared to the above mentioned. According to him, the Venetians were not bribed, they were late and because of their sluggishness failed to prevent the unification of the Ottoman troops. How was the crossing of the Straits by Murad's troops described in the Ottoman sources? The Anonymous chronicles and Oruch say that the Straits were seething with French ships, but the Sultan and his army succeeded in reaching the European coast exactly on such French ships.⁹³ Ashakpashazade claims that the Ottomans saw the ships of the infidels and quite laconically reports that the Sultan crossed the ford.⁹⁴ As seen from the reviewed historical sources it can not be said for sure how the Ottoman forces crossed the Straits. The contradictory data given by the sources do not permit the categorical acceptance of one theory. However, two basic statements can be found in most narrative texts. The first one is that Murad's army managed to cross the Hellespont by bribes. It might be the case but then who exactly were the traitors? Venetians, Genoese, Byzantines? This is another question that is quite difficult to be answered. Perhaps the entire Christian fleet was involved? The second statement namely that the small Christian fleet could not cover such a wide area and consequently the Ottomans found a gap and managed to cross the Straits, should not be ignored as well because it seems logical. Collated, both theories can find equivalent pros and cons. Therefore, at least at this stage, the question how the Ottoman army managed to cross the Straits in the autumn of 1444, remains open!

After Murad had crossed the Straits he headed for Edirne where the two armies united. All sources are adamant that the Ottoman army numbered between 60 and 80 thousand soldiers. The Sultan led this huge army to the north. Oruch says „He left Edirne. (He) left Mehmed and Halil Pasha in Edirne. There were servants, the Janissary, the army of the Anadol, the army of Rumeli, ten thousand azebi and ten thousand Christians cherehori...“. Further he says that the army was impressive and numerous.⁹⁵ The Unknown author reports the following: “He left Edirne. He gathered many Janissaries, the army of Rumili, the army of Anatolia, azebi and serahori. Volunteers among Muslims and the communities of the regions (areas) were gathered”.⁹⁶ The Ottoman sources are adamant that a huge army was gathered, including all military structures of the country, as well as volunteers. There are disputes in the scientific literature as for

⁹³ J. v. Hammer, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, II, (Paris, 1835), 310; Bistra Tsvetkova, “Obzor na osnovnite osmanski iztochnitsi ot XV v. za pohodite na Vladislav Varnenchik i Yan Huniadi prez 1443–1444 g.,” in *Varna 1444. Sbornik ot izsledvania i dokumenti v chest na 525-ta godishnina ot bitkata kray Varna* (Sofia, 1969): 187.

⁹⁴ Tsvetkova, “Obzor na osnovnite,” 187.

⁹⁵ Oruch, 391–392.

⁹⁶ Neizvesten avtor, 423.

the route of the Ottoman army in southern Bulgaria and the way in which they crossed the Balkan Mountains. According to A. Ishirkov Murad headed for the besieged fortress of Nikopol so that he could help and probably went through the Shipka Pass. Then he followed the Christian army.⁹⁷ G. Balashev claims that Murad headed north to block the passes of the Balkan Mountains, and thus to prevent the Christian army from passing them.⁹⁸ G. Dimitrov believes that the Ottoman army headed for Turnovo and from there for Nikopol. Along the way it came across the Christian trails and started to follow them to Varna.⁹⁹ H. and K. Shkorpil consider that Murad's army crossed the Balkan Mountains through Ajtos-Provadia pass.¹⁰⁰ In his comprehensive study on the routes of the Christian and the Ottoman armies to Varna, S. Nedev has written about the army of Murad "The most likely route was Edirne – along the valley of the river Tundzha to Yambol – Karnobat – Aitos – Aitos pass – along the valley of river Kamchia to the fortress Petrich and then on the trail of the Christian army".¹⁰¹ According to B. Tsvetkova the route of the Ottoman army from Edirne to Varna was along the valley of Tundzha to Yambol, Karnobat, Aitos the village of Nader and then they crossed the Balkan Mountains. As for the crossing of East Balkan Mountains the author outlines the two possible routes: either along the medieval fortress of Ovchaga – village of Asparuhovo – Dylgopol, or the valley of the river Eleshnitsa, village of Grozdyovo. After that the army was out into the plain southeast of Provadia.¹⁰² During the whole Ottoman period the village of Grozdyovo existed and was known in the Ottoman documents as Kadıköy. From its land originates a wide numismatic material, on the basis of which, we can assume that precisely from here the Ottoman army crossed the East Balkan Mountains. In my opinion there is no way such an important strategic point in the eastern Balkan to be missed by Murad where the Christian army might pass heading for Edirne.¹⁰³ So on 9th November the Ottoman army arrived before the walls of the fortress Varna and found the Crusaders unprepared. Although they had been informed about the crossing of the Bosphorus by the Ottomans, the Christians did not expect that the Turks would find themselves behind them.

In an old Asian tradition the Ottomans lighted torches and began to sing,

⁹⁷ Ishirkov, *Pohodite*, 19.

⁹⁸ Balashev, *Pohodite na polsko-madzgarskia kral Vladislav III Yagelo*, 19.

⁹⁹ Dimitrov, "Srazhenieto," 12.

¹⁰⁰ Shkorpil, "Pohodat na Vladislava preza Bulgaria," 52.

¹⁰¹ Nedev, "Patishtata," 230.

¹⁰² Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 306.

¹⁰³ Nevyan Mitev, "Ranni osmanski moneti ot s. Grozdyovo, obshtina Dolen Chiflik," *Istoriikii* 7 (Shumen, 2014): 87–95.

which aimed to show their number and to inspire awe among the enemy. A council was immediately convened in the Christian camp. The location of the crusader army was unfavourable. To the east was the stronghold of Varna and the Black Sea, where the promised Christian fleet did not expect the Crusaders. To the south was the Beloslav Lake, to the west the Turks and to the north the Frangya Heights. The commanders took a unanimous decision to enter into battle. Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini offered the army to hide behind the Hussite vagenburg and lead the battle that way. The experienced commander Janos Hunyadi opposed, arguing that the best option is open assault against the enemy. In this way the enemy would be surprised and would not be able to respond appropriately. Hunyadi says "To avoid the battle – impossible, to surrender and be enslaved and thus be defeated without a fight and a battle – there is no way. It's better to die with honour and praise of our swords".¹⁰⁴ The young Polish-Hungarian King Vladislav III Jagiello listened to the words of the wise vojvoda and decided to act on his instructions. Hunyadi was appointed for army chief. As for the location of the two armies, and the center of the battlefield, different opinions have been expressed. Here I accept the critical analysis of B. Tsvetkova, which is made based on a number of sources and a thorough research. The crusader army was located in an arch-like line extending from the lake of Beloslav up to the heights of the Frangya plateau. It was composed of three main parts. The left wing was localized along the coast of the lake, somewhere in the Western Industrial Zone and present-day neighborhood "Troshevo" (author's note). It consisted of 5 banners (units), mostly Hungarian soldiers numbering 4000 people. The wing was commanded by Hunyadi's brother-in-law – Michael Szilagi. In the center of the army was the king himself with his personal guards. Behaim claims that the center was composed of two military units, each consisting of 2000 horsemen. According to B. Tsvetkova the number of soldiers in this perimeter was 3500. The commander of the first detachment was Vladislav and the second one was commanded by Stefan Batory. The right wing was deployed behind the center, at the foot of the Frangya hills – near present-day neighbourhood "Vazrazhdane" (author's note). It consisted of 5 banners. Four of the banners were Hungarian and were under the command of the Bosnian Bishop Raphael of Zegev, the Bishop of Eger Simon Rozgoni, the Croatian ban Franco Talotsi and the Bishop of Varadin Ian Dominic. The fifth one was composed of the papal crusaders led by Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini. The military unit of Jan Dominique was pulled slightly back to serve as a spare part. In the right wing there were Poles led by Leshko Bobzhitski. This wing had

¹⁰⁴ Georgi Dimitrov, "Srazhenieto pri Varna va 1444g. (spored ochevidetsa Paraspondilos Zotikos i spored Iereksa) sa priturka: Varnenskite cherkvi i grobat na Vladislav," *Izvestia na Varnenskoto arheologicheskoto druzhestvo* (1910), 49–85; Tsvetkova, *Pametna bitka*, 307.

no common command, which, as B. Tsvetkova claims, was the most vulnerable and therefore Hunyadi placed the vagenburg of the Czechs Hussite, led by Hetman Cheika behind it. Behind the main wings as reserve were left the Wallachian horsemen. It is not yet specified where exactly the Bulgarians who had joined the crusader army were located. Presented with the modern infrastructure of the city of Varna, the location of the crusader army is as follows: The left wing was situated in the region of West Industrial Zone and neighbourhood "Troshevo". The center – in the area of neighbourhood "Mladost" around Dom "Mladost" or slightly forward to the chapel on the "Republic" boulevard, the right wing was situated in the region of present-day neighbourhood "Vazrazhdane".

The Ottoman army was located in two lines. The first line was composed of 3 wings. The left wing was formed by the Anatolian sipahis led by Karadza Bay. They were located on the western slope of the Frangya hills. The total number of the left wing was approximately 30 000 people. 10–13 000 of them were hidden in a wooded area, where they hoped to surprise the enemy. The right wing consisted of Roumelian sipahis and was located east of the village of Kadikoy.¹⁰⁵ It consisted of 10 000 people and was under the command of Daud Pasha. In the center was sultan Murad with his personal guards of 10000 janissaries. It is assumed that the mound Murad Tepe, located on the territory of present-day "Park-Museum of Military Friendship – 1444" in the city of Varna was the command post of the Sultan. The Treaty of Szeged was impaled on a spear on the top of Murad Tepe or on the top of the opposite mound – Mesheli Tepe. This act symbolized the violation of the oath taken by King Vladislav.

Contrary to the popular opinion T. Trifonov expresses a slightly different opinion on the location of the armies. Based on the cartographic material he considers the boundaries of the Battle of Varna as follows: to the south – the lake; to the north – the Frangya hills; to the east the garage of "Public Transport", the prison, Dom "Mladost" street "Tihomir", to the west – "Janos Hunyadi" boulevard.¹⁰⁶ According to him, the place of the battle should be shifted to the east, and believes that the centre of the battlefield is not the territory of present-day "Park-Museum of Military Friendship" but northeast of it. The opinion of T.Trifonov can not yet be accepted categorically. Thorough archaeological research in the city of Varna is needed as a proof of this theory. Unfortunately, for the time being, such archaeological research is impossible to be done.

On the day of St. Martin – 10th November, the final battle for the liberation of the Balkans took place. Strong wind started to blow shortly before the

¹⁰⁵ Currently the village does not exist. It was localized in the area of "ELPROM" and "Praktiker".

¹⁰⁶ Trifon Trifonov, "Srazhenieto kray Varna ot 1444g. v svetlinata na topografiyata i toponimiyata na rayona," *10 knigi za Varna–2007* (Varna, 2008), 55–125.

battle. First the akincis attacked the right wing of the Crusaders. The Christians managed to repel them, but made a serious strategic mistake – they began to pursue them. Here the Christians fell in an ambush which forced them to run away. Some of them managed to hide behind the vagenburg, but others were killed. Cardinal Cesarini, Leshko Bobzhitski, the bishops of Eger and Varadin probably found their death here. Seeing that the right wing is almost broken, Hunyadi and the king with the two royal units and the Wallachian cavalry rushed to help it. As a result the Anatolian sipahis were broken and their leader Karadza Bey was killed. The Wallachians even entered the Turkish camp, as their aim was to plunder everything they get their hands on. What followed was a series of raids of the Roumelian sipahis against the left wing. Janos Hunyadi rushed to help it, giving a piece of advice to the king to wait for him so that they could together attack the centre of the Ottoman army.¹⁰⁷ The Transylvanian vojvoda managed to defeat the whole right wing of the Turks and many of the enemies ran away into Thrace. The victories of Hunyadi instilled a confusion in the ranks of the enemy, even Sultan Murad decided to run, but as the Ottoman sources report, his kinsman restrained him. At the same time the young king, advised by his cronies, attacked the square consisting of 10 000 janissaries with 500 horsemen. Although Vladislav managed to kill a lot of enemies, he was killed. The janissary Kodzha Hazar cut off his head and sent it to the Sultan. The news of the death of the King upset the ranks of the Crusaders. The experienced Hunyadi tried to return the order in the army, but without success. The Christians began their retreat. In the scientific literature is adopted the opinion of H. Shkorpil, who drew the following routes based on the found arms and armour. One part of the army retreated through the ridge of the Frangya hills to the valley of the river Batova through the village of Dolishte, the village of Debrene and to the Danube. Another part retreated westwards through Ignatievo, Devnya and so on. In my opinion, part of the Crusaders retreated northeast, to Kavarna, looking for a way to salvation. In this geographical area are found coins of Vladislav Varnenchik and weapons and armor that can be linked to the participants in the crusader army.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ K. Mihajlovic reports false that exactly Hunyadi prompted the king to attack. Look at: *Записки на енычаря* (Moskva, 1978); By the poem of Michael Behaim and the chronicle of Callimachus we learn that it Hunyadi advises Vladislav do not to take attack against the box of the Janissaries, until he returns and together to attack the center of the Ottoman look at: Kolarov, "Dva malko izvestni izvora," 189 and Kolarov, "Hronikata na Kalimah," 252. According to Paraspondilos Zotikos, a royal adviser convinced Vladislav that all the glory will drop over Hunyadi, that prompted the king to take the attack. Look at: Dimitrov, "Srazhenieto pri Varna va 1444g., varnenskite cherkvi i grobata na Vladislava", 67.

¹⁰⁸ Mitev, "Monetite na Vladislav Varnenchik," 201–208; Veselin Parushev, "Srednovekovni mechove ot Severoiztochna Bulgaria," *Voennohistoricheski sbornik* LXVIII, 2 (1999): 140–144;

Half of the Christian army, i.e. about 10 000 people were killed in the memorable battle of the nations. The Ottomans had many casualties too. The sources are not definite and give different information on the number of the Ottoman casualties, they range between 20 and 30 000. The severed Royal head was preserved in honey and sent to Bursa. It was a symbol of the victory of the Ottomans, which should strengthen the prestige of the Ottoman ruler in the troubled areas of Asia Minor. Many Christians were killed trying to escape, overtaken by Ottoman troops or drowned in the Danube. Some sources mention that during the withdrawal in Wallachia, Janos Hunyadi was held in captivity by Vlad Dracul. He was released shortly after and returned to Hungary, where he was appointed for regent of the minor King Vladislav Posthumous. The prominent commander would lead battles with the Ottomans for many years after the battle of Varna. Two memorable battles with the enemies were waiting for him. One of them he lost – the Battle of Kosovo in 1448. But the other one at Belgrade in 1456, earned him eternal glory. Janos Hunyadi is an epoch in the struggle of South East Europe against the Ottoman invaders. He's the only one who managed to cope with the well greased military machine of the Asians. His victories, his fearlessness and his heroism give rise to respect and awe not only among his people but also among the enemies. Two months after the memorable battle of Belgrade the voyvoda died of plague. Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror sent a letter to Hungary in which he expressed his mourning for such a brave warrior who found his death in this ridiculous way. The man who conquered the capital of the world Constantinople only three years earlier, had his respect for the immortal Hunyadi.

Most probably the last Bulgarian ruler, the son of tsar Ivan Shishman – Fruzhin took part in the crusade of Varna. A charter from 6th September 1444 says that Fruzhin sold his estate Fajdash in Zarand area to the ban of Machva called Vladislav Marotski. The same ban earlier gave him this estate as a present. Properly P. Petrov assumes that the sale of the property was connected with the march of Vladislav Varnenchik in the autumn of 1444 and concludes that the Bulgarian ruler participated in the military campaign.¹⁰⁹ Based on a letter from Janos Hunyadi to Pope Eugenius IV from 1445, in which the Transylvanian leader claimed as one of the reasons for the failure in Varna the unfulfilled promises of the Bulgarian princes and the rulers of Wallachia and Moldova, the Albanians and Byzantium. P. Pavlov and I. Tyutyundzhiev believe that this criti-

Veselin Parushev, "Novi nahodki na orazhie ot krastonosnia pohod prez 1444 g.," *Izvestia na Narodnia muzey – Varna*, XL (LV) (2004): 3.

¹⁰⁹ Petar Petrov, "Fruzhin i pohodat do Varna prez 1444g.," in *Varna 1444. Sbornik ot izsledvania i dokumenti v chest na 525-ta godishnina ot bitkata kray Varna* (Sofia, 1969), 272–283.

cism was directed addressed to Fruzhin.¹¹⁰ Although there are some documents available, the evidence that we have for the participation of Fruzhin and his successors in the march against the Turks in the autumn of 1444 are indirect.

The reasons for the failure of the battle of Varna have been thoroughly analyzed by B. Tsvetkova. The ratio of the strengths of the two armies is unequal. The Ottomans were three times as much as the Christians. The battle took place on a terrain that was well known by the Turks, but almost completely unknown to the Crusaders. The disintegration of the crusader army, the lack of internal oneness and centralization was one more reason for the defeat. Despite all these difficulties Hunyadi managed to break both flanks of the Ottomans and everything seemed predetermined, until the naive mistake of the young king. However, it is not plausible only to blame King Vladislav and his error. In my opinion there are two main reasons for the defeat of the Crusaders at Varna. In the first place one of them is the above mentioned fatal error of the King. However, the second reason is equally important – the crossing of the Straits by 2/3 of the Ottoman army. Until the crossing of the Straits the Ottomans had only about 20 000 army in the Balkans and there is no doubt that it would suffer a crushing defeat by the crusader army, led by the experienced military leader Janos Hunyadi. The betrayal, carried out by the crusader fleet to the Christian world inevitably led to the unification of the two parts of the Ottoman army. Thus it became three times as much as the Crusaders of king Vladislav. Facing this huge army, the military success of the Christians seemed minimal.¹¹¹

The victory of the Ottomans as B. Tsvetkova claims is a Pyrrhic victory. The foundations of the Ottoman authority in the Balkans are shaken, more than half of the Ottoman army was killed in the battle, delaying the attack on central Europe. Konstantin Mikhailovich from Ostrovitsa in his notes claims that the

¹¹⁰ Plamen Pavlov, Ivan Tyutyundzhiev, *Balgarite i osmanskoto zavoevanie (krayat na XIII-sredata na XV v.)* (Veliko Tarnovo, 1995), 128.

¹¹¹ To the battle of Varna and its consequences see also: Dimitrov, "Srazhenieto pri Varna," 7–47; Shkorpil, "Pohodata na Vladislava," 1908, 48–67; Dimitrov, "Srazhenieto pri Varna va 1444 god., varnenskite cherkvi," 49–84; Mirski, "Srazhenieto pri Varna va 1444g.," 85–88; Herman i Karel Shkorpil, *Vladislav Varnenchik 1444–1923* (Varna, 1923); Dabrowski, *Wladislaw*; Oskar Halecki, *The Crusade of Varna. A Discussion of Controversial Problems* (New York, 1943); Petar Hadzhiivanov "Srazhenieto pri Varna na 10 noemvri 1444 godina," in *Varna, 1444. Sbornik ot izsledvania i dokumenti v chest na 525-ta godishnina ot bitkata kray Varna* (Sofia, 1969), 234–263; Teke Zsuzsa, *Hunyadi János és kora* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1980); Swoboda, *Warna 1444*; Karol Oleynik, "Bitkata pri Varna," *Varna, 1444. Deystvitelnost i traditsia*, (Varna, 2005), 23–34; Sasho Popov, "Bitkata kray Varna prez 1444 g.," *Voennoistoricheski sbornik*, 6, (1995): 7–27; Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–1445* (Manchester, 2006); John Jefferson, *The Holy wars of king Wladislas and sultan Murad. The Ottoman-Christian conflict from 1438–1444*, History of Warfare, vol. 76, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012).

Sultan did not want any more such victories. Despite their losses, only a few years later the Ottomans managed to stabilize. They took advantage of the death of Hunyadi and managed to conquer the whole Balkan Peninsula.

As a consequence of the battle of Varna was the sea march of Valerian de Wavre in 1445. He sailed through the Black Sea and entered the Danube. Here he joined his forces with the Wallachians of Vlad Dracul. Hunyadi also sent his soldiers to join the military campaign. Their combined actions paid off. the fortresses Silistra, Tutrakan, Giurgiu and Ruse were gradually taken under their control. The united army besieged Nikopol, but having learnt about a huge Turkish army coming against them, they withdrew.¹¹² Thus the sea campaign ended, held as a consequence of the defeat at Varna in search of the Fallen King.

There are many controversial points about the campaigns of Vladislav Varnenchik from 1443–1444. This is due to the contradictory information given by the sources. Therefore, the careful reading of the sources and their combination with the archaeological data from Northeastern Bulgaria clarify the events from the autumn of 1444.

NOTE PRIVIND CAMPANIA LUI VLADISLAV VARNENCHIK ÎN BULGARIA NORD-ESTICĂ DIN TOAMNA ANULUI 1444

Rezumat

Campania lui Vladislav Varnenchik din 1443–1444 a făcut obiectul cercetării multor oameni de știință. Problematika acestora este larg răspândită în istoriografia europeană. În anii din urmă au fost puse în circuitul științific noi surse și noi cercetări și s-au realizat noi descoperiri de monumente arheologice, inclusiv descoperiri numismatice, în Bulgaria nord-estică. Apariția de noi surse și informații arheologice sugerează că e necesar să se realizeze o nouă perspectivă asupra evenimentelor din toamna anului 1444. Scopul acestui studiu este de a încerca să pună în lumină situațiile cele mai complicate legate de marșul lui Vladislav Varnenchik în Bulgaria nord-estică, în toamna lui 1444.

¹¹² Iorga, *La campagne*, 92; Bistra Tsvetkova, *Frenski patepisi za Balkanite (XV–XVIII v.)* (Sofia, 1975), 67–69.