

FROM DRACULIA'S "AGENT" TO THE ATHLETA OF THE PAPACY

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Cuvinte cheie: Mehmed al II-lea, Matia Corvin, Uzun Hassan, Ludovico al III-lea *il Turco* Gonzaga, Ștefan al III-lea al Moldovei, Vlad al III-lea al Țării Românești, Raguza, Venetia, Cetatea Albă, *Vlachia Maior*

In early March 1475, after initial reluctances,¹ the news of the major defeat suffered in *Valachia* by the Ottomans was confirmed in the Italian Peninsula.² The secretary of the cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, Giampietro Arrivabene³, even wrote to Francesco's father, Ludovico III *il Turco*, margrave of Mantua, that the victor, *duca Stephano vaivoda*, appointed king of Bosnia by the king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, was to be crowned king in Rome by Pope Sixtus IV.⁴ Arrivabene confused, possibly voluntarily⁵, Stephen III of Moldavia, who

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¹ Ovidiu Cristea, "The Aftermath of a Victory: An Episode of Stephen the Great's Diplomacy after the Battle of Vaslui (10 January 1475)," *Banatica*, 28/II (2018): 453–463.

² I.-A. Pop, "The Romanians from Moldavia at the Jubilee in Rome (1475)," *Il Mar Nero*, 9–10 (2019–2020): 163–170.

³ David S. Chambers, "Giovanni Pietro Arrivabene (1439–1504): Humanistic Secretary and Bishop," *Aevum*, 58, no. 3 (1984): 397–438.

⁴ Al. Simon, "Duca Stephano vaivoda intitulato re <de Bosna>dal Re de Hungaria și <Nicolaus>Bosnia et Valachiae Rex:despre identitatea regală a valahilor," in *Sub semnul împlinirii și al datoriei. Studia in honorem Dorina N. Rusu*, eds. Ioan Bolovan, I.-A. Pop, Victor Spinei (Bucharest; Editura Academiei Române, 2021), 147–174.

⁵ He thought little of the aged Nicholas, as revealed by the reports sent afterwards to Ludovico, and voluntarily omitted, alike the report from March 11 on Stephen, from the otherwise semi-final study of Florio Banfi, "Romei Ungheresi del Jubileo del 1475. Niccolo Ujlaki re di Bosnia in

had defeated the Ottoman army at Vaslui in January 1475, with Nicholas Újlaki (Iločki), former (co-) voivode of Transylvania, appointed indeed in autumn 1471 king of Bosnia (and crowned, in Buda, not in Jajce) by Matthias.⁶ He was travelling to the Jubilee in Rome, officially as pilgrim in spring 1475.⁷

Nevertheless, the rumour recorded in Rome by Arrivabene opens two topics: the – Roman – rise of Stephen III of Moldavia and the Papal reception of the Greek rite ruler of Moldavia.⁸ Both issues, especially perhaps the latter, are contingent on Stephen's position and connections in the Black Sea are, as eloquently underlined in the Papal bulla *Redemptor Nostre*, issued in January 1476, for *athleta* Stephen and his main harbour Moncastro (Cetate Albă).⁹ This Pontic dependency is further emphasized by the encyclical sent by Pope Sixtus IV on July 1, 1475¹⁰, before word spread about the Ottoman conquest of Genoese Caffa in the Crimea (June 6, 1475), Mehmed's answer to Vaslui (Stephen himself thus rapidly sent news about the fall of Caffa).¹¹

Christendom's Hope on the Western Shores of the Black Sea

The encyclical was preserved only in the copy sent to margrave of Mantua¹², Ludovico III.¹³ Sixtus IV asked the margrave to support Stephen III. The pope had been informed by the new doge of Venice Pietro Mocenigo¹⁴ of the great threat faced by Stephen's Moldavia. The same doge had used Stephen's victory of

un affresco nell' Ospedale di Santo Spirito dell' urbe," *Archivio di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti della Società Italo-Ungherese* Mattia Corvino, 3, no. 2 (1941): 499–512.

⁶ Davor Salihović, An Interesting Episode: *Nicholas of Ilok's Kingship in Bosnia, 1471–1477* [MA thesis] (Budapest: CEU, 2016), 59–60

⁷ Tamás Fedele, "Bosnia ... rex ... apostolorum limina visit: die Romwallfahrt des Nicolaus Újlaki im Jahre 1475," *Ungarn-Jahrbuch*, 31 (2011–2013 [2014]): 99–118

⁸ Al. Simon, *Pământurile crucii: români și cruceada târzie* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2012), 191.

⁹ I.-A. Pop, "Atletul Ștefan și românii ca protagonisti la Marea Neagră în epistole semnate de papa Sixt al IV-lea și de umanistul Francesco Filelfo (1475–1476)," in *Spre pământul făgăduinței*, între Balcani și Bugeac. Omagiu Doamnei Profesoare Elena Siupiur la împlinirea vîrstei de 80 de ani, eds. Daniel Cain, Aneta Mihaylova, Roumiana L. Stantcheva, Andrei Timotin (Brăila: Istros, 2020), 17–34.

¹⁰ Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and Levant (1204–1571)* II. *The Fifteenth Century* (Philadelphia, PA: The American Philosophical Society, 1978), 320 (note 23).

¹¹ Al. Simon, "The Western Impact of Eastern Events: The Crusader Consequences of the Fall of Caffa," *Istros*, 18 (2011): 383–396.

¹² See Appendix II.

¹³ Isabella Lazzarini, "Ludovico III Gonzaga, marchese di Mantova," *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, 66 (2006), *sub voce*.

¹⁴ Coriolano Cippico, *The Deeds of Commander Pietro Mocenigo*, ed. Kiril Petkov (New York: Ithaca Press, 2016).

Vaslui to conclude a truce with Mehmed II,¹⁵ which allowed the sultan to take Caffa. The pope made no mention of such a Venetian-Ottoman arrangement.

Sixtus IV asked Ludovico III to aid Stephen III not only through prayers, but also through his deeds, as Mehmed II planned to attack Moldavia from the Black Sea.¹⁶ And Mehmed did attack Moldavia at Cetatea Albă.¹⁷ Ludovico was a *Catholic prince* and had to act accordingly.¹⁸ Stephen was the bulwark on the Ottoman road to Europe.¹⁹ According to the pope, "[...] if Our beloved son, the noble man Stephen Voivode, who recently inflicted a major massacre and loss to the Turks through his victory, felt that he was abandoned by the Christians and deprived of aids, and would start to back down, God forbid!, how great peril the Hungarians and the most faithful German people, and the rest of Christendom, would suffer [...]"²⁰

Sixtus did not use the verb (to) *abandon* (*relinquere*), but (to) *destitute* (*desituere*) in order to underline what could happen to Christendom if Stephen was forsaken.²¹ The same verb was employed in November 1476 by the *Serenissima*, Stephen's main protector.²² She successfully implored the pope not to destitute

¹⁵ [Domenico Malipiero,] *Annali veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500 del Senatore Domenico Malipiero ordinati e abbreviati dal senatore Francesco Longo*, ed. Agostino Sagredo (Florence: Giovanni Pietro Viesseux, 1843), 112.

¹⁶ For the Papal Pontic anti-Ottoman *topoi*, see for instance Edgar Artner, *Magyarország mint a nyugati kereszteny művelődés védőbástyája. A Vatikáni Levéltárnak azok az okiratai, melyek őseinknek a Keletről Európát fenyegető veszedelmek ellen kifejtett erőfeszítéseire vonatkoznak (cca. 1214–1606)*, ed. Szovag Kornel (Budapest: Gondolat, 2004), no. 101, pp. 111–112 ("the Hungarians and the Wallachians of the Black Sea" who fought against the Turks).

¹⁷ E.g. Andrei Pippidi, "1475: atacul otoman asupra Cetății Albe," *Analele Putnei*, 7, no. 1 (2011): 29–36.

¹⁸ See also Elisabeth Swain, "Faith in the Family: The Practice of Religion by the Gonzagas," *Journal of Family History*, 8 (1983): 177–189.

¹⁹ Paul Srodecki, "Porta della Christianita. Das Motiv der Glaubensverteidigung in den Donaufürstentümern unter Vlad III. und Stephan III.," in *Vlad der Pfähler-Dracula: Tyrann oder Volkstribun?*, eds. Thomas M. Bonn, Rayk Einax, Stefan Rohdewald (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 21–35.

²⁰ The original sentence read: [...] *Cogitare et ante oculos tuos ponere velis quod si dilectus filius, nobilis vir Stephanus Vayvoda, qui nuper victoria potitus stragem/ et iacturam maximam Turchis intulit, ab eisdem bello laccensus Christianorum auxilijs se destitutum senserit, et loco ceserit, quod Deus avertat, quantis periculis Ungari et Germanorum populi/ devotissimi et reliqua Christianitas subiacerent [...].*

²¹ Liviu Pilat, O. Cristea, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017), 164.

²² Al. Simon, "Să nu ucizi o pasăre căntătoare: soarta unui fortissimus rei Christiane athleta în ochii Venetiei," in *Pe urmele trecutului. Profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani*, eds. Susana Andea, I.-A. Pop, Alexandru Simon (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2009), 159–169.

Stephen as *athleta*, following his (and King Matthias') failure to defeat Mehmed in Moldavia that summer.²³ Skanderbeg too had experienced the same threat, of losing his office of *athleta*, following Mehmed's Albanian campaign of 1466.²⁴ Apparently long before he was first recorded as *athleta* (in January 1476), Stephen was viewed as *athleta* by the Papacy, in the immediate – Italian foremost – aftermath of his victory from January 1475.²⁵

In the encyclical sent on July 1, 1475, for Sixtus, Stephen was by no means different from the doge of Venice or the margrave of Mantua, each one of them being styled *dilectus/ beloved (carissimus/ most beloved)* was reserved for kings and the emperor).²⁶ Already before – probably – he was officially named (i.e. appointed) *athleta* (after he repelled Mehmed's attack on Cetatea Albă)²⁷, the voivode was a member of the community under the authority of the pope and was entitled to support from that community.²⁸ Moreover, Sixtus did not mention Matthias, Stephen's suzerain²⁹, therefore emphasizing – shortly after Rome had received the spoils from Vaslui sent by the voivode – the personal relation between the Holy See and the ruler of Moldavia.³⁰

The latter had basically come “out of nowhere” and risen as the hope of the Cross precisely in the Year of the Jubilee 1475.³¹ Not even a year before his triumph of Vaslui, the situation had been quite different. The correspondence

²³ [...] Sed sicut ante opressionem efficaciter memorasse et quesivisse meminimus, non est *Magnificus Vayvoda fortissimus rei Christiane athletadestituendus, sed hortandus confirmandus* [...] (last edited in I.-A. Pop, Al. Simon, *Re de Dacia: un proiect de la sfârșitul Evului Mediu* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2018), 154–155).

²⁴ Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere (1444–1479)*, ed. Paolo Cherubini, II. *Pontificato di Paolo II* (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1997), no. 208, p. 875.

²⁵ This should redraw our attention to that ‘King of Bosnia and Wallachia’ painted in the Roman *Corsia Sistina* (Simon, “Duca Stephano vaivoda intitulato re,” 170–174).

²⁶ Al. Simon, “The Walls of Christendom’s Gate. Hungary’s Mathias Corvinus and Moldavia’s Stephen the Great Politics in the Late 1400s,” *Quaderni della Casa Romena*, 3 (2004): 205–224, at 216–218.

²⁷ For the Pontic events of July-September/December 1475, see also Maria-Magdalena Székely, Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina, o prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei* (Putna: Mușatinii, 2006), 49–57.

²⁸ For an overview of the sources: I.-A. Pop, Al. Simon, “*Ungaria et Valachia: promisiunile valahe ale Republicii Sfântului Marcu din anii 1470*,” *Revista Istorica*, NS, 25, nos. 1–2 (2015 [2016]): 5–65, at 8–9.

²⁹ Following the Ottoman conquest of Caffa, Stephen swore however (again) allegiance to Matthias through the treaty of Iași, on July 12, 1475, less than two weeks after Sixtus’ message (Gheorghe Pungă, Alexandru Florin Platon, “Vasalitatea medievală: ipostaze europene și românești,” *Cercetări Iсторice*, NS, 17, no. 2 (1998): 11–46, at 30).

³⁰ Pop, “The Romanians from Moldavia,” 168–169; idem, “Atletul Ștefan și românii,” 27–28

³¹ Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, IV. [1464–1484] (London: Routledge, 1906³), 283–284, 288–289.

between the Republics of Saint James (Ragusa) and of Saint Mark (Venice), who "shared" custody over the Adriatic Sea, is indicative in this respect.³²

The Moldavian Return of Dracula to Vlachia Maior

Roughly a week before Ali Mihaloğlu, *bey of Vidin and Smederevo*³³, raided Oradea (February 7–8, 1474), the royal link between Hungary proper and the Voivodate of Transylvania³⁴, Ragusa, wrote to Venetian doge, Nicolò Marcello.³⁵ The Commune of Ragusa, equally vassal to Sultan Mehmed II and to King Matthias Corvinus³⁶, informed her Adriatic neighbour, about the most recent developments in Constantinople, as well as both at the Porte's Asian and European borders (January 31, 1474).³⁷ From the latest news on Usun Hassan, still viewed by some as Christendom's main anti-Ottoman hope (in spite of the crippling losses he had suffered in August 1473)³⁸, Ragusa moved on, in her message to Venice (earlier Usun's main supporter), to the combats in *Vlachia Maior* (Wallachia proper), recently occupied by Stephen of Moldavia (November 8–30, 1473).³⁹

The information had likewise been provided by the Ragusan envoys to the Porte. They had just returned to the Adriatic shores, after departing from Constantinople (Istanbul) on December 28, 1473.⁴⁰ With the *Serenissima* waging

³² Al. Simon, "Between the Adriatic and the Black Sea: Matthias Corvinus and the Ottoman Empire after the Fall of Negroponte," *Radovi Zavoda za Hrvatsku Povijest*, 42, no. 2 (2010): 59–75.

³³ E.g. Marija Kiprovská, "The Mihaloğlu Family: Gazi Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices," *Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 32 (2008): 193–222.

³⁴ Aurel Decei, "Incursiunea (Akîn) a lui Mihaloglu Ali Beg asupra Orăzii în anul 1474, pe temeiul istoriei lui Ibn Kemal," in *Sub semnul lui Clio. Omagiu Acad. Prof. Ștefan Pascu*, ed. Nicolae Edroiu (Cluj: Universitatea Babes-Bolyai, 1974), 296–301.

³⁵ Giuseppe Gullino, "Nicolò Marcello," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 69 (2007), *sub voce*.

³⁶ Marianna D. Birnbaum, "Renaissance Contancts between Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and the Kingdom of Hungary," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 13, no. 1 (1986): 35–44. Ragusa was also the cible of lasting Neapolitan ambitions, spearheaded at that time by Ferdinand of Aragon, the father-in-law to be of Matthias (after autumn 1474).

³⁷ Letter published, with errors, by József Gelich and Lajos Thallóczy in *Diplomatarium relationum reipublicae ragusanae cum regno Hungariae* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1887), no. 385, 631.

³⁸ John E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999²), 116.

³⁹ For the, official at least, chronology of Stephen's first major (anti-Ottoman) campaign in Wallachia: Șt. S. Gorovei, M.-M. Székely, *Princeps omni laude maior: o istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Putna: Mușatinii, 2005), 100–101.

⁴⁰ The letter sent to the doge contained no reference to the itinerary of the returning envoys, but a month (December 28, 1473–January 31, 1474, minus a day or two) seems rather excessive for a journey between Constantinople and Ragusa (see in comparison Bariša Krekić, "Il servizio

an increasingly desperate war against Sultan Mehmed⁴¹, the task of conveying Ottoman inside information was very delicate for tribute paying Ragusa.⁴²

According to the Ragusan sources, Stephen was paving the Wallachian way for Vlad III, the former lord of Transalpine Wallachia. Matthias' friend, foe and tool, Vlad had recently remarried into the Hunyadi family.⁴³ His new wife was Justine Szilágyi, Matthias' first degree maternal cousin.⁴⁴ Vlad *Draculia* was to – *rursus*⁴⁵ – occupy *Vlachia Maior* due to the efforts of Stephen, who, during Mehmed's famed Wallachian campaign of 1462, had attacked Vlad from the rear.⁴⁶

di corrieri di Ragusa a Costantinopoli e Salonicchi nella metà del secolo XIV," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta*, 21, no. 1 (1952): 113–119). Unless other (natural or Ottoman) events delayed the envoys, we can presume that either they spent time collecting additional information on their return journey or (also) that the Commune of Ragusa informed the Venetian doge only after supplementary verification of the data.

⁴¹ On the first Ragusan pairing (so-to-say) of Usun Hassan, Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III during the Venetian-Ottoman war of 1463–1479, see Al. Simon, "Istorie e novelle de Levante din primăvara anului 1468: Uzun Hassan, Morea și cei 30 000 de morți de la Baia," *Revista Iстorică*, NS, 29, nos. 3–4 (2018 [2020]): 343–352.

⁴² Hence also the "post-script", appended immediately after the news on Radu, Stephen and Vlad: [...] 'These are those <news> that our envoys were able to gather, <and> we do not know how much they [i.e. the news] are grounded in truth, <but> because of our good faith and sincerity <and> due to our binding duty, we convey the information we have received to Your Excellency, who does not lack all that [i.e. all the means] necessary to verify all that <data> revealed by scribes and envoys, and we do not doubt that these and others [i.e. reports] will be thoroughly verified <by Your Excellency>' [...] (for the original: Appendix, no. I).

⁴³ Al. Simon, "Soțile ungare ale lui Vlad III Tepeș: rolul, impactul și receptarea unor alianțe și rivalități medievale," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol*, 48 (2011): 5–12.

⁴⁴ T. Fedele, "Drakwlyahza," in Fons, skepsis, lex. Ünnepi tanulmányok a 70 esztendős Makk Ferenc tiszteletére, eds. Tibor Almási, Éva Révész, György Szabados (Szeged: SZTE, 2010), 107–114.

⁴⁵ The wording *rursus occupaverit* bares only one analogy (to our knowledge): a matrimonial (nuptial) text ascribed to Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 254–184 BC), the highly influential father of Roman theatre, increasingly popular during the Renaissance (e.g. Richard F. Hardin, "Encountering Plautus in the Renaissance: A Humanist Debate on Comedy," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60, no. 3 (2007): 789–818). For the lines in question (in Friedrich Wilhelm Ehrenfried Rost, *Opuscula Plautina*, ed. Karl Heinrich Adelbert Lipsius, I. *Continens Commenationes Plautinas* (Leipzig: Verlag der Akademie, 1836), 63, part of *De nuptiis servilibus ad Plauti Casin. Prolog v. 67–77 (Nuptiale donum illustri Wenckio datum Die III. Septembris MDCCXIII: Quae res recte vertat!)*: [...] *Te vero ipsum non nisi post repotia huius cibi saporem gustu explorare volumus quem tum demum probabilem videri speramus, cum ventriculum tuum, omni dulcedine equisitissimarum epularum fatigatum, quotidiani cibi desiderium rursus occupaverit. Quid igitur est? Cito, inquis, absolve me, fieri dictis compendium volo [...].* The bridal auspices of the initial wording, re-employed in early 1474, were most likely used, at that time, in close connection to the – therefore apparently – recently arranged marriage between Vlad and Matthias' first degree cousin on his mother's side, Justine Szilágyi (as an innuendo for their wedding).

⁴⁶ O. Cristea, "L'ami de l'ami et ennemi de l'ennemi: la collaboration militaire moldo-ottomane

The Ragusan message is the only extant known source to state that Stephen III *the Great* had won Wallachia from Radu III *the Handsome* for the benefit of Vlad III *the Impaller*.⁴⁷ The rest of the known sources (however chronicles, not documents)⁴⁸ claim that Stephen enthroned Basarab III *Laiotă* as ruler of Wallachia (*Laiotă* was his Wallachian ruler of choice until autumn 1474).⁴⁹ Ragusa's Venetian message bluntly contradicts the known contemporary data on Stephen III's intervention in Wallachia in November 1473 and on the subsequent events, data preserved only in the chronicles of Stephen (chiefly in the *Moldavian-German Chronicle* for the subjects of the House of Habsburg, around 1499–1500)⁵⁰ and in the writings of Jan Długosz (notoriously hostile towards the Hunyadis).⁵¹ Moreover, Stephen III's chronicles never once mentioned Vlad III.⁵²

pendant le règne d'Etienne le Grand," *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe*, 3 (2011): 87–103.

⁴⁷ Ragusa was the vassal of both Istanbul and Buda. The infamous story – Hunyadi as well (if not, above all) – of Vlad was no secret. These two facts, alone, rendered credibility to the news conveyed by the Commune of Ragusa to the Venetian doge. It was and is certainly a documentary (moreover) match for the information in the chronicles below.

⁴⁸ Possibly because they formed the military and political build-up for the disastrous Ottoman campaign in Moldavia (in the winter of 1474–1475), a failure rarely acknowledged in written, even decades later, by the non-Christian subjects of the Porte, the Ottoman chronicles (not to mention the few Ottoman documentary records that have in fact survived from the 1470s) apparently never recalled the conflicts of 1473–1474, although these chronicles frequently recalled the raid on Oradea, in early February 1474 (e.g. *Cronici turcești despre Tările Române. Extrase, I. Secoul al XV-lea-mijlocul secolului al XVII-lea*, eds. Mehmet Guboglu, Mustafa Ali Mehmet (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1966), 61, 95, 127, 206, 244, 294, 321). It is unlikely, though not completely improbable (because of the very nature of Turkish archives and libraries, leaving aside the growingly complex scholarly framework), that this (Ottoman) image will be altered in the foreseeable future.

⁴⁹ For the known (edited) sources on the rulers of Wallachia: Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova (a. 1324–1881)*, I. *Secolele XIV–XVI* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2001), 119–121.

⁵⁰ On this chronicle and its depiction of the events in the 1470s: Pop-Simon, "Ungaria et Valachia," 25, 40, 43.

⁵¹ *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae* (= *Jan Dlugosii Senioris Canonici Cracoviensis Opera omnia*, XI–XIV), ed. Alexander Przezdziecki, IV (Krakow: [s.n.], 1887), 600–601 (hereinafter *Długosz*). Utterly hostile to the Hunyadis (he too blamed John for the crusader disaster at Varna, for which Wladislaw III Jagiello of Poland and Hungary had paid with his life), the influential Polish clergyman and diplomat was more than benevolent towards Matthias in regard to Vlad. Długosz recorded Vlad's arrest (1462) as prelude to the expulsion, in winter 1464–1465, of the Hungarian garrison from Chilia, at the Danube Mounds, by the populace eager to have peace with Mehmed, under Radu. Matthias' decision to arrest the traitorous *Moldaviae superioris* [...] *Principe, Wlado nomine*, had been more than justified (*Długosz*, IV, 408).

⁵² To our knowledge, this aspect was never duly noticed in Romanian historiography, usually

The Wallachian Revival of the Venetian – Hungarian strana alleanza

In the immediate aftermath of Ragusa's official report sent to Venice on January 31, 1474 (unlike the Republic of Saint Mark's own subjects, the Republic of Saint James had informed the Serenissima, already on October 29, 1473, that Usun had lost and Mehmed had won)⁵³, the Eastern reports on the clashes between the Wallachians (led by Stephen) and the Ottomans began to multiply, in the Italian Peninsula as well, in the second half of February 1474.⁵⁴

Then, Venice even spread news about Moldavian victories over the Ottomans.⁵⁵ Stephen himself never took credit for these victories.⁵⁶ This Venetian “fake-news”, probably supported by Matthias (who wanted to balance the negative impact of the Ottoman attack on Oradea)⁵⁷, weighted heavily upon the Italian reception of Stephen's real great victory at Vaslui.⁵⁸

Simultaneously, Venice multiplied her overtures towards Matthias in order to achieve that very detour (retreat) of the Ottoman host from Albania (where it besieged Venetian Scutari)⁵⁹, outlined in the Ragusan message from late January

focused on avoiding any direct or indirect contemporary evidence that – might have – menaced the “brotherly” love between Stephen and Vlad.

⁵³ The neglected document was published in Iván Nagy, Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomaciai emlékek. Mátyás király korából 1458–1490* (= *Monumenta Hungariae Historica*, IV, 1–4), II. [1466–1480] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1876), no. 174, 249–250. Additionally, Mehmed has sent envoys to his Serbian and Bosnian borders to announce his victory so that nobody would rebel against him [...] *Turchi ad confinia omnia in Rassiam et Bosniam nuntios misere, ea ratione, ut nulla rebellio fiat; sed populi et fama et opinione victorie [...]*). Nobody except Stephen of Moldavia. Ragusa's interest in his deeds was therefore fully understandable.

⁵⁴ Little or nothing was known about these events until the early 2000s (A. Pippidi, “Noi izvoare italiene despre Vlad Tepeş și Ștefan cel Mare,” *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 20 (2002): 15–21, at 17–19).

⁵⁵ Al. Simon, “Anti-Ottoman Warfare and Crusader Propaganda in 1474: New Evidences from the Archives of Milan,” *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 46, nos. 1–4 (2007): 25–39, at 30–31.

⁵⁶ This fact only increases the gigantic lacuna represented by Vlad in the chronicles of Stephen.

⁵⁷ According to the *Chronicon Dubnicense* (hostile towards Matthias), the burning of Oradea endangered the Hungarian reign of Matthias because of domestic unrest caused by Ali's bold attack (*Chronicon Dubnicense*, in *Historiae Hungariae Fontes Domestici*, III, ed. M[átyás] Florián (Leipzig [Pécs]: [s.n.], 1884), 1–204, at 198–199). Antonio Bonfini certainly did not waste his Latin words on the topic, therefore suggesting that the Ottoman attack on Oradea did indeed lead to major problems for Matthias.

⁵⁸ E.g. Pop, “The Romanians from Moldavia,” 163–170.

⁵⁹ For the main concern of Venice at that time, see also the sources in O.-J. Schmitt, “Die venezianischen Jahrbücher des Stefano Magno (ÖNB Codd. 6215–6217) als Quelle zur albanischen und epirotischen Geschichte im späten Mittelalter (1433–1477),” in *Südosteuropa von vormoderner Vielfalt und nationalstaatlicher Vereinheitlichung. Festschrift für Edgar Hösch*, eds. Konrad Clewing, O.J. Schmitt (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), 133–183, chiefly 159–163, 174–179.

1474.⁶⁰ This was eventually accomplished by late autumn 1474, at the human and material expenses of Stephen, following a series of renewed Moldavian, as well as Hungarian, campaigns in Wallachia.⁶¹ The major Ottoman army, who was fighting against the Venetians in Albania, was sent against Stephen. He defeated it at Vaslui.

In February 1471, Gregory Heimburg, the former chancellor of the *Heretic King of Bohemia*, George Podiebrad, had branded – not without grounds⁶² – Matthias and his father, John Hunyadi, as traitors of the Cross: [...] *der Ungarische künig ist gut Turck als sein vater was, do er den Turck liesse Constantinople zwingen [...]*.⁶³ A lot had changed by early spring 1474. This included the failure of the Illyrian grand design (centred around Bosnian queen, Catherine, in exile in Rome, and bishop Nicholas of Modruš, who had just authored, in early 1473, an infamous portrait of Vlad⁶⁴), a royal plan that had to drive *unworthy* Matthias out of the (West-) Balkans.⁶⁵

The failure of this plan was initiated by the Wallachian anti-Ottoman combats of November 1473⁶⁶ and completed by the matrimonial arrangement con-

⁶⁰ See Appendix, no. I.

⁶¹ See also Al. Simon, “În jurul bătăliei de la Vaslui (1474–1475). Considerații asupra relațiilor dintre Moldova, Țara Românească și Regatul Ungariei,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș Bolyai. Historia*, 49, no. 2 (2004): 3–26, at 9–10. Out of the promised 40,000 ducats for the retreat of the besieging Ottomans from Scutari, Matthias certainly (and only) received half of the sum (*I libri commemorali della Repubblica di Venezia. Regesti*, [ed. Riccardo Predelli], V. [Registri XIV–XVII] (Venice: Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria, 1901), V, no. XVI–73, p. 215; October 31, 1474) after the strange Moldavian-Hungarian campaign in Wallachia (October 1–5, 1474), when the anti-Ottoman allies had ended-up fighting each other. The matter was resolved after Stephen, though victorious, decided to abandon his candidate for the Wallachian throne, Basarab III Laiotă, who was replaced by the Hungarian favourite, Basarab IV Tepeluș. In exchange, the Hungarian troops (consisting mainly of Transylvanian Szeklers) fought alongside Stephen at the battle of Vaslui in January 1475.

⁶² Francisc Pall, “Byzance à la veille de sa chute et Janco de Hunedoara,” *Byzantinoslavica*, 30, no. 1 (1969): 119–126.

⁶³ Felix Priebatsch, *Politische Correspondenz des Kurfürsten Albrecht Achilles, 1470–1486*. I. 1470–1474 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1894), no. 137, 216.

⁶⁴ In comparison also to the “last king of Bosnia”, see Castilia Manea-Grgin, “Two Ill-Fated Rulers on the Christian-Ottoman Borderline: Wallachian Prince Vlad III Țepeș Dracula and Bosnian King Stephen Tomašević,” in *Vlad der Pfähler-Dracula*, 49–68 (one of the very few consistent “divergent” views of Vlad III and of his “official story”)

⁶⁵ Luka Spoljarić, “Nicholas of Modruš and his *De Bellis Gothorum*: Politics and National History in the Fifteenth-Century Adriatic,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 72, no. 2 (2019): 457–491. Many divergent interpretations of these events have originated precisely in the fact that, at the beginning of 1473 and even in the summer of that year, both Matthias and Stephen were deemed untrustworthy at best by the main voices of anti-Ottoman warfare.

⁶⁶ I.-A. Pop, Al. Simon, “Românii și regale Ștefan la Jubileul de la Roma (martie 1475),” *Analele*

cluded between Ferdinand of Aragon, king of Naples (who favoured the *Illyrian grand-design*)⁶⁷, and Matthias (September 1474).⁶⁸ Less than six weeks after the message on *Vlachia Maior*⁶⁹ was sent from Ragusa to Venice, news from Naples reached Milan that Matthias and Ferdinand were negotiating a matrimonial union.⁷⁰ A complex mechanism, so to say, seems to have been set in motion in the winter of 1473–1474.

The Greek Rite Hope of Latin Rite Christendom

Within a year (1474–1475), Stephen III of Moldavia went from a voivode in King Matthias' and *Draculia's* service to Rome's and Venice's favourite.⁷¹ Two events separate and connect these landmarks. The first one is also the best known one: the victory at Vaslui. The second one is the most neglected one: Stephen's acknowledgement of the authority of Pope Sixtus IV.

This took place – through Venetian intermediary – in Suceava, in November 1474.⁷² At that time, the Bosnian lord of Ottoman Rumelia, Süleyman, accompanied until Bulgaria by the Ecumenical Patriarch Simeon I⁷³, was marching

Academiei Române. Memoriile Secției de Științe Iсторice și Arheologie, 5th Series, 35 (2015–2020): 9–28.

⁶⁷ Spoljarić, “Nicholas of Modruš,” 476 (note 72), 477, 481 (notes 76, 88–89).

⁶⁸ Szabolcs de Vajay, “Un ambassadeur bien choisi: Bernardinus de Frangipanus et sa mission à Naples, en 1476,” in *The man of many devices, who wandered full many ways: Festschrift in Honour of János M. Bak*, eds. Balazs Nagy, Márcell Sebők (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1999), 550–557.

⁶⁹ During Matthias' reign (and especially after, during the Habsburg-Jagellonian conflicts over Hungary), *Wallachia Minor* began to designate foremost Oltenia, not Moldavia as before (e.g. *Ausgewählte Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Maximilian I, 1493–1519* (= J[ohannes].F[riedrich] Böhmer, *Regesta Imperii*, XIV), ed. Herman Wiesflecker, II. Österreich, Reich und Europa, 1. 1493–1495, eds. Christa Beer, Manfred Hollegger, Kurt Riedl, H. Wiesflecker, Ingeborg Wiesflecker-Friedhuber (Vienna-Cologne-Weimar: Böhlau, 1989), no. 1481, p. 159 [March-April/ May 1495]). The *Vlachia Inferior* entries in Ragusa's registers are however perhaps more important, certainly for Ragusa's Wallachian perspective (Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku, Dubrovnik, *Acta Consiliorum, Acta Consilii Rogatorum*, [reg.] 24. 1481–1485, ff. 65^v, 75^r, 124^v; March 26, April 20, 1482, January 4, 8, 1483)

⁷⁰ Elisabetta Scarton, “Tra dualicità et tradimenti: La politica (matrimoniale) di Ferrante d'Aragona nei primi anni Settanta del Quattrocentoletta attraverso i dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli,” *Humanista*, 38 (2018): 186–200, at 189 (news on the Hungarian-Neapolitan talks was sent on March 19, 1474).

⁷¹ I.-A. Pop, Al. Simon, “Arbitrajul de la Foligno din 1476: l'Ungaro o il Valacho?,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol*, 57 (2020): 65–80.

⁷² Nicolae Iorga, “Venetia în Marea Neagră. III. Originea legăturilor cu Ștefan cel Mare și mediul politic al dezvoltării lor,” *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Iсторice*, 2nd series, 37 (1914–1915): 1–76, in the Appendix, no. 11, p. 33.

⁷³ Vitalien Laurent, “Les premiers patriarches de Constantinople sous la domination turque (1454–1476),” *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 26 (1968): 229–264, at 258.

towards Moldavia. The Moldavian hierarchs had exited the princely council when Stephen had attacked Wallachia in November 1473.⁷⁴

Stephen then triumphed at Vaslui in January 1475. Within a year, he officially became the *athleta* of the Papacy.⁷⁵ When Mehmed II himself attacked Moldavia in the summer of 1476, the family of Stephen found harbour in Venice.⁷⁶ He had become the West's man in the East.

Ragusa may provide some light on the stealth rise of Stephen. In autumn 1476, Vlad was finally restored to (some) Wallachian power, before losing his life under unclear circumstances⁷⁷, Mehmed returned north of the Lower Danube after his Wallachian summer campaign (alike in 1462, when Vlad committed his alleged treason against Matthias).⁷⁸ According to the Ragusan envoys sent to him, they were unable to encounter the sultan, because he had left for *Moldavia*.⁷⁹

The enthronement of *Dracula*, at precisely the same time, would have therefore been a victory over the sultan himself. Still, neither Matthias, nor Stephen (both in dire need of an anti-Ottoman success, after their trap, set for Mehmed, had failed in July 1476), said a word about Mehmed's return. And then, they were seemingly satisfied with lamenting the death of Vlad.⁸⁰

At that time, deemed a match for Mehmed II as well by the initially pro-Ottoman Giovanni Mario Filelfo, a close associate of the House of Gonzaga⁸¹, Stephen was certainly a match for King Matthias during the Italian negotiations

⁷⁴ Cf. Ioan Ursu, *Ştefan cel Mare* (Bucharest: Socec, 1925), 290.

⁷⁵ Al. Simon, "Pellegrini ed atleti del Signore ai confini della cristianità: Skanderbeg, Stefano III di Moldavia e le loro relazioni con Roma e Venezia," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome-Moyen Age*, 125, no. 1 (2013): 71–92.

⁷⁶ Cf. [A.D. Xenopol,] "Un nou document privitor la Ştefan cel Mare," *Arhiva*, 18, nos. 7–8 (1907): 36.

⁷⁷ Al. Simon, "De Dragule crudelitate: ultima domnie a lui Vlad al III-lea Țepeș pe pământurile Valahiei Mari," *Revista Iсториcă*, NS, 29, nos. 5–6 (2018 [2020]): 517–540.

⁷⁸ *Stare srpske povetje i pisma*, I–2. *Dubrovnik i susedi negovi*, ed. Ljubomir Stojanović (Belgrade: Srpska kraljevska akademija, 1934), no. 845, p. 263 ([...] Written on November 15, at the Wallachians; i.e. on November 15 <1462>). Translated into French by Boško Bojović, *Raguse (Dubrovnik) et l'Empire Ottoman (1430–1520). Les actes impériaux ottomans en vieux serbe de Murad II à Selim I^r* (Paris: De Boccard, 1998), no. 29, pp. 231–232.

⁷⁹ Al. Simon, "A doua venire a lui Mehmed al II-lea în Moldavia în anul 1476," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol*, 56 (2019): 23–32.

⁸⁰ See also I.-A. Pop, Al. Simon, "Regele Daciei din familia Basarabilor: mărturii despre români și domnii lor din secolul al XV-lea," in *Cel care a trecut făcând bine. Nicolae Edroiu*, eds. Macarie Motogna, Mihai Hasan, Victor Vizauer (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2019² [2020]), 60–64.

⁸¹ Pippidi, "1475," 31–34 (Filelfo Jr. authored one of Stephen's most favourable contemporary portraits).

conducted under the rather absent eyes of Pope Sixtus IV⁸² in September 1476. The fact that some two months later Venice managed to salvage Stephen III's rank and station of *athlete* against major Italian opposition (probably led by Naples) stands testimony that *the Romanian*, the ruler of Moldavia, had won his place among the major figures of crusading, not only because of Italian interests, but also because of his own merits.⁸³

⁸² See also Egmont Lee, *Sixtus IV and Men of Letters* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1978), 156–159.

⁸³ Pop, “Atletul Ștefan și românilor,” 17–34.

APPENDIX

I. Ragusa, January 31, 1474

(Državni arhiv u Dubrovniku, Dubrovnik, Lettere e Commissioni, *Lettere di Levante*, reg. 5. [1403–1576], f. 113^v)

Dominio Venetiarum// Serenissime etc., redierunt die presenti oratores nostri Constantinopoli, unde/ discesserunt die 28 Decembris. Novi nihil refferrunt, nisi quod,/ per quendam summum eorum secte sacerdotem pax inter Ussuncassanum/ et Turcorum imperatorem tractatur, iamque dictus imperator liberatis/ restituerat certiter duo millia ducentos ex hominibus Ussuncassani,/ quos vinctos tenebat, retentis tamen duodecim potentibus/ et alti status hominibus. Rem eo deductam dicunt, ut pax/ inter ipsos stabilita intelligatur, si Ussuncassan quedam oppida/ territorij Carasseris, et quedam oppida territorij Trapezonti,/ dicto Turcorum imperatori resignaverit, et facta dicta resignatione,/ dicti duodecim liberari debent. si autem ipse Ussuncassanus/ dicta oppida resignare recusaverit, nulla inter eos pax/ secutura est. Fertur insuper quod hoc anno, si ipsa pax sequitur,/ ipso personaliter sit ocio operam datus, quodque novum Romanie/ Bassam, qui est quidam Bosnensis natione Sulimanbegh/ eunuchus, ad partes Albanie expediturus. Ad damna/ quoque Moldovie exercitum parabat, propter conceptam indignationem, quod favore Stephani, Moldovie voyvode, Radulus,/ Vlachie Maioris dominus, qui dicto imperatori serviebat, electus/ sit, et Vladislau Draculis quidam ipsam Vlachiam dicto Ste/ phano opitulante rursus occupaverit. Hec sunt que/ oratores nostrj explorare potuerunt, quę quantum veritati/ nitantur ignoramus, nos bona fide et sincere pro debito/ cui astringimur, que nobis nunciantur Celsitudine Vestre signifi/ camus, cui cum non desint omnium que ubique agantur/ scriptores, et nuncij, et hec et alia exploratissime esse non/ dubitamus.// 31 Ianuarii 1474.

II. Rome, July 1 1475

(Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, E. Affari esteri, XXV. Roma, busta 834. 1404–1499, not numbered)

Dilecte fili, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem!// Novissime litteris dilecti filij nobilis viri Petri Mocenigo, ducis Venetiarum, accepimus inmanem illum Turchum Christiani nominis hostem acerrimum/ classem validam et instruc- tissimam retinere, quam sicut signis et aliquorum relatione habetur per Mare Maius versus partes Moldavie, pro iniurijs ulciscendis cladis ibidem sus/cepte convertere intendit. Ea denuntiatio nos merito commovit ad commiserationem

calamitatis Christiane et ad hec ipsa pericula consideranda. Primum igitur quod ad nostrum pasto/rale attinet officium supplices Deum oravimus et per alias personas Deo acceptas preces effundi fecimus, ut ipse qui prepotens est, pro sui nominis gloria decertantibus assistat animos/ Catholicorum regum et principum ac fidelium populorum uniat, ut hic truculentissimus hostis Christianorum viribus repellatur, tue vere excellentie significandum duximus/ et copiam litterarum memorati ducis presentibus introcludi fecimus, ut plane intelligas quanto in discrimine non solum Moldavie partes, verum etiam omnium Christianorum versentur, velis/ itaque prout Catholicum principem debet de aliquo subsidio cogitare et illis partibus bello laborantibus, prout expedire videris ope tua succurrere. Nos vero considerantes quod ad tantam belli molem sustinendam nostre et ecclesie facultates nullomodo sufficerent, concurrentibus auxilijs Christianorum presidia exhibere, iuxta vires nostras pollicemur, neque ali/quo pacto unacum alijs huic Dei et fidei cause deerimus. Cogitare et ante oculos tuos ponere velis quod si dilectus filius, nobilis vir Stephanus Vayvoda, qui nuper victoria potitus stragem/ et iacturam maximam Turchis intulit, ab eisdem bello laceratus Christianorum auxilijs se destitutum senserit, et loco ceserit, quod Deus avertat, quantis periculis Ungari et Germanorum populi/ devotissimi et reliqua Christianitas subiacerent. Quare eandem excellentiam tuam, per viscera misericordie Dei nostri et pro ipsis Dei et Christiani nominis reverentia, hortamur in Domino ac de/precamur, ut iuxta vires tuas aliquam subventionem facere velis, prout tue conscientie visum fuerit. In quo Deo in primis gratissimum obsequium prestabis eritque anime tue ad/ modum salutare et ad gloriam ac laudem tui nominis cedet. Datum Rome, apud Sanctumpetrum, sub annulo piscatoris, die prima Iulij, MCCCCLXXV, pontificatus nostri, anno quarto.// Marcellus⁸⁴.

<Verso:> Dilecto filio nobili viro Ludovico de Gonzaga, marchioni Mantue.

DE LA “AGENTUL” LUI DRACULIA LA ATLETUL PAPALITĂȚII

Rezumat

Pe 1 iulie 1475, înainte ca vestea cuceririi otomane a Caffei genoveze din Crimeea (6 iunie 1475) să răspândească, a fost revanșa sultanului Mehmed al II-lea pentru înfrângerea suferită de oștile sale la Vaslui (10 ianuarie 1475), papa Sixt al IV-lea a emis o “enciclică” în sprijinul lui Ștefan al III-lea al Moldovei, învingătorul de la Vaslui. Prin “enciclica”, păstrată în exemplarul de la Mantova destinat marchizului Ludovico al III-lea *il Turco* Gonzaga, Sixt al IV-lea cerea ajutor pentru Ștefan, înștiințat fiind de noul doge al Venetiei, Pietro

⁸⁴ Marcello de' Rustici, Papal secretary between 1449 and 1481 (Lee, *Sixtus IV*, 59–60).

Mocenigo, de marele pericol care amenința Moldova. Același doge se folosise de victoria lui Ștefan de la Vaslui pentru ca să încheie un armistițiu cu sultanul, care i-a permis acestuia din urmă să cucerească Caffa. Dar, despre aceasta, papa nu spunea vreun cuvânt.

Pentru Sixt, Ștefan era la fel de creștin precum dogele Veneției sau marchizul Mantovei, toți trei fiind calificați drept *dilectus* (*carissimus* era rezervat pentru regi). Ștefan, încă nenumit "atlet" de către papă (avea să primească dregătoria spre sfârșitul lui 1475, după ce a respins un nou atac otoman asupra Cetății Albe), stătea în rând cu toți stăpânitorii de rit *latin* care recunoșteau autoritatea urmașului Sfântului Petru și pentru care acesta putea cere, în mod legitim, ajutor. Sixt nu-l pomenea deloc pe Matia Corvin, suzeranul lui Ștefan, ceea ce accentuează – la scurtă vreme de la darurile aduse la Roma de trimișii domnului Moldovei – relația personală dintre Cetatea Eternă și Suceava. Parcă "venit de nicăieri", Ștefan al Moldovei se ridicase drept nădejdea Crucii tocmai în Anul Jubileului 1475. Cu nici un an înaintea victoriei de la Vaslui, situația fusese destul de diferită. O arată un alt mesaj, schimbat între republicile care-și împărțeau Marea Adriatică.

La 31 ianuarie 1474, cu vreo săptămână înaintea atacului lui Ali Mihaloğlu, bei de Vidin și Smederevo, asupra Oradei (7–8 februarie 1474) – legătura regală dintre Ungaria propriu-zisă și Voievodatul Transilvaniei – Comuna Raguzei, deopotrivă vasala lui Mehmed al II-lea și a lui Matia Corvin, i-a scris dogelui Veneției, Nicolò Marcello. De la cele mai proaspete vești despre Uzun Hassan, văzut în continuare de către destui drept principala speranță antiotomană a Creștinătății (în ciuda înfrângerii zdrobitoare suferite în august 1473), Raguza a trecut – în mesajul trimis Veneției (anterior marea susținătoare a lui Uzun) – la luptele din *Vlachia Maior* (*Țara Românească propriu-zisă*), recent ocupată de Ștefan al Moldovei (8–30 noiembrie 1473). *Informațiile românești din ianuarie 1474 au fost furnizate de trimișii raguzani la Constantinopol (Istanbul), reîntorsi de curând pe malurile Adriaticii (ei plecaseră de pe Bosfor pe 28 decembrie 1473). Cum Veneția continua să poarte un război tot mai disperat împotriva lui Mehmed, transmiterea de informații din inima Imperiului Otoman era o întreprindere extrem de delicată pentru Raguza.*

Conform mesajului transmis – cu mai puțin de un an înaintea triumfului antiotoman de la Vaslui al domnului Moldovei – de către Republica Sfântului Iacob (Raguza) Republicii Sfântului Marcu (Veneția), Ștefan îi deschidea de fapt drumul lui Vlad al III-lea Tepeș spre tronul Țării Românești. Mesajul raguzan este unica sursă contemporană păstrată care susține că Ștefan a câștigat Țara Românească de la Radu pentru folosul domnesc al lui Vlad (*Dracula* în mesajul Raguzei). Celealte surse cunoscute (cronici, nu documente) afirmă la unison că Ștefan l-a întronat pe Basarab al III-lea *Laiotă* drept domn al Țării Românești, cel care a și rămas în mod constant alegerea domnească a stăpânitorului Moldovei pentru *cealaltă Valahie* până în toamna lui 1474. Mesajul, circulat la începutul aceluiași an 1474 între cele două puteri adriatice, contrazice cunoșcutele informații asupra intervenției din noiembrie 1473 a lui Ștefan în Țara Românească și asupra evenimentelor care au urmat, informații păstrate doar în cronicile lui Ștefan, în special în *Cronica moldo-germană*, de la 1499–1500, destinată supușilor Casei de Habsburg, și în filele lui Jan Dlugosz, profund ostil Hunedoreștilor. Mai mult, cronicile lui Ștefan nu l-au pomenit vreodată pe Vlad.

Saltul făcut de Ștefan în decurs de un an (1474–1475) pare incredibil: de la un voievod în serviciul lui Matia și al lui Vlad, la favoritul Romei și al Veneției. Două evenimente despart și leagă aceste reperete. Primul este cel mai cunoscut: victoria de la Vaslui. Al doilea este cel mai neglijat: recunoașterea de către Ștefan a autorității papei Sixt al IV-lea. Ea a avut loc,

prin intermedier (venetian), la Suceava, în noiembrie 1474, pe când bosniacul Soliman “al Rumeliei” și oastea sa, însotită până în *Bulgaria* de patriarhul ecumenic de Constantinopol, Simeon I, mărșăluiau spre Moldova, din al cărei sfat domnesc ierarhii ieșiseră când Ștefan atacase Țara Românească în noiembrie 1473. Apoi, Ștefan a triumfat la Vaslui și a devenit oficial, în termen de un an, “atletul” Creștinătății. Iar când Mehmed însuși a venit împotriva sa, în vara anului 1476, familia domnului Moldovei s-a putut adăposti la Veneția. Era impede că Ștefan cel Mare devenise omul din Răsărit al Apusului.