

The Relations of Vassalage between Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary, and Mircea the Old, Voivode of Wallachia*

Marius Diaconescu

1. Introduction

A distinctive feature of the Middle Ages was the relations between suzerains and vassals. The contract of vassalage lay at the very foundation of the relations established among people of different ranks and social status, as well as between communities, political entities, etc. Thus, relations between lesser and bigger states were established on the basis of a similar contract of vassalage in which the state was identified to the suzerain. The relation of subordination between political entities, with all its inherent attributes, i.e. tribute, homage, etc, characterized not only Western medieval ages¹ but also the Byzantine² Middle Ages. The relations of the Romanian countries, Wallachia and Moldavia, with the powerful neighboring states – Hungary, Poland and the Ottoman Empire – followed the same pattern of vassalage.

In the evolution of the relations between Wallachia and the Hungarian kingdom, the period representing Mircea the Old's reign (1386-1418) and more than half of Sigismund of Luxemburg's (1387-1437) constitutes a turning point which undoubtedly was determined by the international context.

What was this political context in the region of the Lower Danube at the boundary of the XIVth and the XVth centuries? In the Balkans, the Ottoman State was in full ascent. One by one, most of the states situated south of the Danube had been occupied and had no other alternative than to pay their tax or to lose their autonomy. Sultan Bâyezîd I, who had been enthroned immediately after Murâd I's death in the battle on the Plane of Kossovo, carried on his predecessor's aggressive and expansionist politics. His ambitions aimed at bringing under domination not only the Christians at the mouth of the Danube but also the Muslim principalities in Anatolia. His defeat at Ankara in 1402 by Timur Lenk started a period of about ten years of lesser Ottoman pressure on the Christian states, which was also due to the struggle for succession among the Sultan's heirs. Initially, after Mehmed I conquered the power in 1413, his authority inside the Empire grew more centralized; at the same time, negotiations of peace with the Christians were taking place. However, the Christians' involvement in the struggle for succession was sanctioned by the Sultan immediately after the state of domestic affairs of the Empire had become stable.

* This study is the second part in a series on the relations between Wallachia and Hungary in the Middle Ages. First part: M. Diaconescu, *The Political Relations between Wallachia and the Hungarian Kingdom during the Reign of the Anjou Kings, in Mediaevalia Transilvanica*, tom II, 1998, no. 1, pp. 5-42:

¹ F. L. Ganhof, *Histoire des relations internationales*, I, *Le Moyen Âge*, Paris, 1953, pp. 49, 135, 285.
² L. Bréhier, *Le Monde byzantin*. II. *Les institutions de l'empire byzantin (L'évolution de l'humanité, no. 32 bis)*, Paris, 1949, pp. 286-300.

The Christian coalition of the southern Slaves formed in 1389 had been defeated at plain of Kossovo. Moreover, while the Bulgarian tzarholds were being gradually transformed in pashaliks, the Serbian State led by Steven Lazarević started paying tribute, and the Despot submitted to the Sultan. Until Bâyezîd I's death, the Serbian troops had participated in most of the Ottoman campaigns against the Christians and, by virtue of the contract of vassalage, at those against the Anatolian states. After 1402, the Despot chose to submit to Sigismund of Luxemburg, king of Hungary.

During the eighth decade of the XIVth century, Hungarian political scene witnessed the struggle for the throne and the existence of several political factions³. In spite of the king's victory, in the following years his royal authority was to be often contested by different factions of the aristocracy. In the first stage, culminating in the Crusade of Nicople in 1396, Sigismund used an offensive strategy in his conflict with the Ottomans; in addition to this, he had maintained his Angevine claims of suzerainty over the states situated to the south of the border. As a consequence of the Crusaders' defeat at Nicople, which allowed the Turks to settle on the Danube line, the global strategy had to be changed. In spite of his repeated attempts at organizing anti-Ottoman crusades, Sigismund's strategy became gradually defensive. His aim was to create a protective line of buffer states between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the expansionist mentality of the Hungarian kings came to be enriched with new strategic imperatives, namely to safeguard the southern borders of the kingdom. This system of buffer states – in which Wallachia, Serbia and Bosnia were included – would no longer be valid by the year 1420 when the Ottomans started their offensive on a larger scale.

This is the historical background against which Wallachia, a Romanian state situated between the Danube and the Southern Carpathians, developed. Mircea the Old's reign (1386-1418) and that of Sigismund of Luxemburg almost overlapped. The Romanian voivode's natural diplomatic skills made him adapt his policy to the changeable context: he now signed treaties with the Polish king against the Hungarian one, now paid homage to Sigismund. Finally, his intervention in the struggle for succession and his subsequent homage rendered to the sultan allowed him to survive in the particular political and military context of the Lower Danube. According to his political outlook, external affairs had to be mapped out on a North–South axis, towards Hungary and the Ottoman Empire respectively. Under the increasing Turkish pressure, the initially conflictual relationship between Sigismund and Mircea the Old gradually grew less strained. In the end, the Wallachian voivode acknowledged Sigismund's suzerainty by pledging fidelity on several occasions. Wallachia led by Mircea became a model of buffer state and a serious partner in the creation of Sigismund's defensive strategy.

³ For Sigismund of Luxemburg's reign see: Elemer Mályusz, *Zsigmond király uralma Magyarországon 1387-1437*, Budapest, 1984, passim (hereafter referred to as: *Zsigmond király*); the German edition: *Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn 1387-1437*, Budapest, 1990. Jorg K. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund. Herrscher an der Schwelle zur Neuzeit 1368-1437* (hereafter referred to as: *Kaiser Sigismund*), München, 1996, passim.

However, under the influence of the current political or military context their relations developed in a rather sinusoidal manner.

Historians have presented the relations between Mircea the Old and Sigismund of Luxemburg in different manners. Greater attention has been paid by Romanian historiographers who have approached the issue from various perspectives. In order to illustrate the different types of approach, we shall list in chronological order some of the most significant interpretations due to Romanian historians.

About a century ago, in his history of the Romanian people, A. D. Xenopol wrote about "*Sigismund's scheming against Wallachia*" as well as about "*proposals of alliance on the part of the Hungarians*" against the Turks, and denied the existence of the homage⁴.

In a historical synthesis concerning the relations between the Romanian Principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia) and Hungary during the Middle Ages, Grigore C. Conduratu develops a special chapter dedicated to Mircea the Old⁵. His historical speech bases upon the requests vowed by Sigismund on behalf of the Wallachian principality and of his proposal for an "alliance". He restrains himself at the supposition of the vassality relationship that was achieved under the Ottoman pressure.

In Dimitrie Onciul's view there had been only a "*nominal suzerainty*", rather limited as far as Sigismund was concerned and accepted by the Romanian voivode only for the sake of his properties in Transylvania. His obligations were rather those of a "*friendly ally*". The historian stated that the Hungarian claims were actually more substantial than Mircea was ever willing to admit⁶.

Although, in his turn, Nicolae Iorga denied the existence of vassalage, he recognized the existence of certain claims made by Sigismund during the first years of his reign⁷. In another text the reputed historian mentioned only the Wallachian-Hungarian partnership against the Turks in contrast with the Anjou period which he criticized on grounds of the Hungarian policy of invasion and expansion⁸. In a study on Romanian political trends, Nicolae Iorga considered Mircea to be Sigismund's "*equal ally*" against the Turks but nonetheless accepted – in very vague terms – a partial and conditioned dependence for the following period. In the end, because of the anti-Ottoman campaigns, this was to become general and absolute⁹.

⁴ A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, II, București, 1986, ed. by N. Stoicescu and M. Simionescu, pp. 81-82, 88.

⁵ Gr. C. Conduratu, *Relațiunile Țării Românești și Moldovei cu Ungaria până la anul 1526*, București, 1898, pp. 93-120.

⁶ D. Onciul, *Titlul lui Mircea cel Bătrân și posesiunile lui*, in idem, *Scrieri istorice*, II, ed. by A. Sacerdoțeanu, București, 1968, pp. 106-123.

⁷ N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, III, *Ctitorii*, ed. by V. Spinei, București, 1993, pp. 248 et passim.

⁸ Idem, *Carpații în luptele dintre români și unguri*, in idem, *Studii asupra Evului mediu românesc*, ed. by Ș. Papacostea, București, 1984, pp. 172-173.

⁹ Idem, *Originea și sensul direcțiilor politice în trecutul țărilor noastre*, in idem, *Studii asupra Evului Mediu românesc*, pp. 85-86.

In 1919, in the only monographic work on Romanian-Hungarian relations during Sigismund's rule, Ilie Minea accused the Hungarian royal house for its claims of suzerainty and overstated the Wallachian rulers' role in stopping the Turks from advancing towards the Danube line. Thus, his view echoed the particular militant tone of contemporary historiography and considered the Romanian-Hungarian relationship to be one of partnership and collaboration¹⁰.

In an analysis of trade relations between Wallachia and Transylvania, Ștefan Meteș stated that the alliance between Sigismund and Mircea against the Turks was concluded "*as a friend, not as a vassal*"¹¹.

Ioan D. Condurachi, an historian of the jurisprudence, has debated in 1923 upon the effects of the Hungarian and Polish suzerainty concerning the Romanian Principalities¹². He utterly showed, as a conclusion, that this so-called suzerainty was in fact a peculiar one that he used to call "an unequal alliance". This special kind of alliance is compared to the classic model of the Roman *cum populis foederatis et liberis* treaties.

Victor Motogna accused Sigismund of "*exaggerated claims*" and stated that the Hungarian king was willing to impose "*the pledge of fidelity on humiliating terms*" for Mircea¹³.

In 1938, P. P. Panaitescu wrote the first study dedicated exclusively to the issue of Hungarian suzerainty and Mircea the Old¹⁴. In his effort to establish some essential features of the subject, the historian considered that (at least as far as the acknowledged sources were concerned) there had been no payment of tribute and the Wallachian army did not participate in Hungarian military campaigns "*in remote countries*". He admitted, nevertheless, the fact that commercial privileges granted to Brașov merchants trading in Wallachia were due to suzerainty. Furthermore, he claimed that the Hungarians protected a commercial road used by both parties and gave Romanian voivodes permission to control a part of Transylvania. As a conclusion to his analysis of Mircea's foreign policy, the historian stated that Hungarian suzerainty was merely a "*framework of Medieval political theory in which he (the Wallachian voivode) could move quite at ease.*" A few years later he developed these ideas in a monography on Mircea the Old¹⁵.

During the first years of communist rule, the relations between Romania and Hungary would be approached cautiously due to "brotherly" friendship between two states of the socialist block. In his treatise of Romanian history published in the late fifties, Barbu Cămpina and Damaschin Mioc mentioned only "*generally good*" relations because of both parties' common interest in fighting off

¹⁰ I. Minea, *Principatele Române și politica orientală a împăratului Sigismund – note istorice*, București, 1919, passim.

¹¹ Șt. Meteș, *Relațiile comerciale ale Țării Românești cu Ardealul până în veacul al XVIII-lea*, Sighișoara, 1921, p. 42.

¹² I. D. Condurachi, *Suzeranitatea Ungaro-Polonă și efectele ei asupra suveranității Principatelor Române până la 1500*, Cernăuți, 1923, passim (23 pp.).

¹³ V. Motogna, *Politica externă a lui Mircea cel Bătrân*, Gherla, 1924, pp. 6, 8.

¹⁴ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân și suzeranitatea ungurească*, in *AARMSI*, s. III, t. XX, 1938, pp. 61-81.

¹⁵ Idem, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, București, 1944, pp. 185-345.

the Turks¹⁶. In the line of the same ideological doctrine, Iosif Pataki referred to "cordial" or "friendly" relations¹⁷.

Barbu Cămpina approached the subject from a materialist-dialectic perspective; therefore, in spite of his biased opinion, he only mentioned relations of "close alliance" between Mircea the Old and Sigismund¹⁸.

Similarly, in his study on Mircea the Old's foreign policy, Dinu C. Giurescu mentioned the "good relations" between the two rulers even if he previously admitted their tensioned nature¹⁹.

Mrs. Viorica Pervain's analysis of the Wallachian-Hungarian relations at the end of the XIVth century²⁰ focused only on the military campaigns against the Turks viewed in the light of a "political-military cooperation".

Ștefan Ștefănescu was foretelling early in the years 'seventy' the changing direction in the historian's way of seeing the facts and the historical events. In his opinion²¹, it was Sigismund the king who, given the Ottoman danger, made the proposal of concluding an alliance to the Wallachian voivode (?!).

During the Ceaușescu era, the political prescriptions would change radically, especially during the '80 years. As a consequence of the historians' exacerbated patriotic feeling, the interpretations were distorted not only by censorship but also by the authors' own convictions, being so exaggerated that they bordered the ridicule. In this respect we may quote A. Diță's contribution (opinion resumed in other studies as well) from the volume dedicated to the 600th anniversary of the Wallachian voivode's coming to the throne. The author referred to the document of March 7th of Brașov, claiming that Mircea the Old "*obliged Sigismund of Luxemburg to sign a treaty of alliance, ... from which all formulations which might have indicated a status of vassalage had been deliberately purged. Still, a very vague allusion entitles us to believe that, on tactical grounds, the Romanian voivode had also accepted a purely formal suzerainty, in order to appease the king's selfpride*"²² [sic!].

N. Constantinescu, author of a digest monographic work on Mircea the Old, used rather ambiguous terms, denying the existence of the vassalage; moreover, he accused Sigismund of expansionist intentions and that "in his

¹⁶ *Istoria României*, II, [1962], București, p. 366.

¹⁷ I. Pataki, *Ceva despre relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria la sfârșitul veacului al XIV-lea*, in *SMIM*, II, 1957, pp. 421-428.

¹⁸ B. Cămpina, *Lupta Țării Românești împotriva expansiunii otomane (1335-1415)*, in idem, *Scrieri istorice*, I, București, 1973, pp. 262 et passim.

¹⁹ Dinu C. Giurescu, *Politica externă a Țării Românești sub Mircea cel Bătrân*, in V. Căndea, Dinu C. Giurescu, M. Malița, *Pagini din trecutul diplomației românești*, București, 1966, pp. 62 et passim.

²⁰ Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria la sfârșitul veacului al XIV-lea* (hereafter referred to as: *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria*), in *AIIA*, Cluj-Napoca, XVIII, 1975, pp. 89-115.

²¹ Șt. Ștefănescu, *Țara Românească de la Basarab I "Întemeietorul" pînă la Mihai Viteazul*, București, 1970, pp. 49-52.

²² A. Diță, *17 mai 1395, o dată importantă în istoria universală – victoria românească de la Rovine*, in vol. *Marele Mircea Voievod*, ed. by I. Pătroiu, București, 1987, p. 302.

*political and military strategy, the king... secretly considered Wallachia as a vassal country*²³ [sic!].

In the same anniversary year (1986), Ioan A. Pop delimitates himself from the usual historical speech that characterizes the historical studies concerning the reign of Mircea. Although in an earlier study, he acknowledged only the Hungarian suzerainty as being "*reduced to minor obligations*"²⁴, in another study he utterly considers the existence of the vassality relationship (without details)²⁵. This was a first tentative step in order to restore historical truth, to rid it of the harmful political influence.

In his recent survey of Romanian history, Șerbanus Papacostea mentioned these relations with unduly haste. He referred first to an initial stage characterized by confrontations and then to a later one in which, under the Ottoman pressure, Mircea concluded an alliance with Hungary "*in which the Romanian Voivode's rule on Amlaș and Făgăraș was recognized in his title of feudal lord, ... and in the Banat of Severin*"²⁶.

As we can see from this brief presentation, Romanian historians have had a twofold outlook on the matter, either denying the pledge of fidelity or attributing a character of partnership and collaboration to the relations between Wallachia and Hungary, between the two rulers respectively. The rare exceptions – P. P. Panaitescu and I. A. Pop, especially – diminished the importance of the homage even though both authors acknowledged it as a norm of the medieval society. Throughout the years Romanian historiographers have approached the relationship between Sigismund and Mircea from very different perspectives, tributary not only to their more general historiographical outlook, but also to the authors' own "patriotic" view which often mirrored their bias against the Hungarians. As a rule we can say that the evolution of a certain feeling of enmity between the two peoples has influenced the interpretation of Hungarian – Romanian relations in the past two centuries

As far as Hungarian historiography is concerned, historians have made only tangential remarks in works dealing either partially or generally with the Turk-Hungarian warfare. Because the Turks have been considered to attack mainly along the Serbian front, the attention given to the role played by the Romanians in the anti-Ottoman campaigns has been significantly diminished as compared to that professed in the neighbouring country.

Therefore, when they referred to the nature of the relations between Mircea the Old and Sigismund, Hungarian historians claimed the existence of the homage,

²³ N. Constantinescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, București, 1981, pp. 89-90.

²⁴ I. A. Pop, *Stăpânirile lui Mircea în Transilvania* (hereafter referred to as: *Stăpânirile lui Mircea*), în *RI*, tom 39, 1986, no. 7, pp. 685 et passim.

²⁵ Idem, *Autoritatea domnească și întinderea teritorială a Țării Românești în timpul lui Mircea cel Bătrân (1386-1418)* (hereafter referred to as: *Autoritatea domnească*), in *Studia Universitatis "Babeș-Bolyai"*, Historia, 2, 1986, p. 3.

²⁶ M. Bărbulescu, D. Deletant, K. Hitchins, Ș. Papacostea, P. Teodor, *Istoria României*, București, 1998, pp. 184-185.

without further nuancing the matter²⁷. Somebody usually emphasized the military alliance against the Turks and the role of Wallachia in the Hungarian military strategy²⁸.

The relations between Mircea and Sigismund were accidentally mentioned in some general surveys on Sigismund of Luxemburg. For example, Joseph Aschbach considered Mircea to be the Hungarian king's ally and vassal²⁹. He maintained that after the disastrous defeat of the Crusaders at Nicople, Mircea pledged fealty to the sultan and that in the following period he oscillated among the three powers, i.e. Hungary, Poland and Turkey, trying to maintain certain independence³⁰. In his recent monography on Sigismund of Luxemburg, Jorg K Hoensch described the dispute between the Hungarian and the Polish kings over the suzerainty on Wallachia and the Romanian voivode's pledge of fidelity in the context of increasing Turkish threat³¹.

We will mention two other opinions coming from historians of the crusades and of the Ottoman Empire. In Aziz S. Atiya's view, Mircea was the Hungarian king's vassal³². Halil Inalcik, a reputed expert in Turkish history, used the term vassalage for the relations established by Balkan states with the Ottoman Empire; however, he was quite cautious in defining the relations between Mircea and Sigismund, naming the former "the Hungarian-protected Prince of Wallachia"³³.

Roughly speaking, Hungarian and Western historians who have mentioned accidentally the relations between Mircea the Old and Sigismund of Luxemburg have committed a series of chronological inadvertencies and have generalized situations which were particular only to a certain context.

In the present study we shall attempt to evaluate first the relations between the Wallachian voivode and the Hungarian king from the perspective of the role played by Wallachia in the overall Hungarian anti-Ottoman strategy. Secondly, we intend to bring forth those aspects, both theoretical and practical, that could validate a historiographical interpretation of a suzerain-to-vassal relationship. We have used mainly documentary and narrative sources and we shall not quote from the vast bibliography of the subject those works, which exalted the nationalism and brought no original contribution to the field of study.

²⁷ B. Hóman, Gy. Szekfű, *Magyar történet*, II, Budapest, 1942, p. 341; E. Mályusz, *Zsigmond király* (see note 3), p. 112; P. Engel, *Magyarország és a török veszély Zsigmond korában (1387-1437)*, (hereafter referred to as: *Magyarország és a török veszély*), in *Századok*, 128, no. 2, 1994, pp. 274-278.

²⁸ Gy. Rázsó, *A Zsigmond-kori Magyarország és a török veszély (1393-1437)*, in *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, XX, 1973, 3, pp. 412 et passim; F. Szakály, *Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács (1365-1526)*, in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, tomus XXXIII, fasc. I, Budapest, 1979, pp. 74-84, names Mircea "Sigismund's faithful ally".

²⁹ J. Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmund's*, I, Hamburg, 1838, pp. 96, 116.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

³¹ J. K. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund*, pp. 76, 80.

³² A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*, London, 1938, p. 451.

³³ H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300-1600*, translated by N. Itzkowitz and C. Imber, London, 1973, p. 15.

2. *Mircea the Old and the Anti-Ottoman Strategy of Sigismund of Luxemburg.*

As it has been mentioned, the relations between Mircea and Sigismund developed in time on several coordinates such as: the intensity of Ottoman pressures on the Lower Danube, the domestic situation in Hungary and the relations between the king of Hungary with the Polish king. There was a moment when king Sigismund's ambitions of suzerain, inherited from his Angevine ancestors, went in parallel with the strategy required by the threatening Ottoman expansion. This new perspective brought about both a new approach of the Hungarian-Romanian relations and a reevaluation of the suzerain's position towards the Wallachian voivode. Therefore, this context was to diminish greatly the classical features of vassalage.

Mircea the Old had the advantage of at least two things which made it possible for him to keep a certain distance from the Hungarian king and then to conduct his own foreign policy on a considerably large scale: one was the internal political crisis in Hungary³⁴ and the other the already two decades old policy of independence led by Wallachia³⁵. So, this legacy and the favourable military and political foreign context, helped the Romanian voivode succeed in renewing Wallachian external affairs.

The first contacts between the Wallachian prince and the Hungarian king are supposed to have taken place as early as 1389. The king was present close to the Wallachian borders before and after the spring campaign in Serbia. Thus, in late February and in April, respectively, Sigismund was in the Timișoara region³⁶ where he would come back in December 1389-January 1390³⁷, after another campaign in Serbia³⁸. The diplomatic steps taken by the Romanian voivode towards Wladislaw Jagello, King of Poland in the autumn of 1389 must be correlated to the moments in which Sigismund was present at the Wallachian borders. The king had been there before and after the military campaigns in Serbia. It is thus obvious that the particular context made it opportune to exchange messages with the Hungarian king; although there is no certain evidence concerning these messages, their existence is highly probable. We believe that, as a perpetuation of the Angevine tradition, these messages were meant to bring Mircea under the domination of the Hungarian crown.

In 1389-1390, in order to resist Sigismund's pressures, Mircea signed a treaty of alliance with Wladislaw Jagello, King of Poland and enemy of the

³⁴ E. Mályusz, *Zsigmond király* (see note 3), pp. 27-35.

³⁵ See M. Diaconescu, *The Political Relations between Wallachia and the Hungarian Kingdom during the Reign of the Anjou Kings*, in *Mediaevalia Transilvanica*, tom II, 1998, no. 1, pp. 25-35.

³⁶ J. K. Hoensch (ed.), *Itinerar König und Kaiser Sigismunds von Luxemburg (1386-1437)* (hereafter referred to as: *Itinerar*), Fahlbusch Verlag, Warendorf, p. 53; P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok (1324-82; 1387-1437)* (hereafter referred to as: *Királyitineráriumok*), kézirat (mss.), Budapest, 1995, p. 55.

³⁷ J. K. Hoensch, (ed.), *Itinerar*, p. 54; P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok*, p. 56.

³⁸ P. Engel, *A török-magyar háborúk első évei 1389-1392* (hereafter referred to as: *A török-magyar háborúk*), in *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 111, 1998, no. 3, pp. 562-565.

Hungarian king. Thus, in December 1389 the treaty was negotiated and concluded by two Romanian boyards sent to Poland through the agency of the voivode of Moldavia³⁹. According to it, the allies were obliged to support each other against Sigismund or any of his subjects or vassals. Concerning other enemies, both parties were free to assist each other on friendly terms, without a firm engagement. Moldavia was to mediate the exchange of letters containing the treaty signed and sealed⁴⁰. The document, sealed and signed by Mircea, was delivered on January 20th, 1390⁴¹.

Nevertheless, at the end of the period spent by Sigismund in Timișoara or soon after, an amelioration of the relation between the two princes is noticeable. In March 1390, the Wallachian and Polish delegations met once again at Suceava, the capital of Moldavia, and negotiated an additional clause to the treaty. It stipulated that, in case of a conflict with Sigismund, the Wallachian voivode was to be consulted beforehand; similarly, in case of a peace treaty between Mircea and Sigismund, it was the Polish king who was to be consulted⁴². In other words, if at first the treaty was openly directed against Sigismund, the additional clause showed the improvement of the relations between Hungary and Wallachia. The Wallachian-Polish treaty of alliance would be reconfirmed in 1391 but without the additional clauses⁴³.

The negotiations, which are supposed to have existed between the Romanian voivode and Sigismund, were held in parallel with the Wallachian-Polish ones. Duplicity was one of Mircea the Old's diplomatic skills. The main goal of the Wallachian-Polish treaty (treaties) was mutual assistance in case of aggression from Sigismund's part. The treaty was equitable and there is no evidence that Mircea had become the Polish king's vassal⁴⁴. The language used in the documents is eloquent in this respect: "*unione et confederacione inuiolabilis amicitie*". Wladislaw Jagello granted Mircea the Old a sovereign status because he needed foreign support against Sigismund who, during the first years of his reign, had laid claim to the Polish crown considering it a rightful inheritance from Louis I. It was the second time during late XIVth century that a Romanian voivode entered into alliance with another power against Hungary. The first time it was Vladislav-Vlaicu who concluded an alliance with the Turks (1374-1377), leaving

³⁹ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 232, claims that, due to the status of vassalage held by the Moldavian voivode, different from Mircea's, the mention concerning a Moldavian envoy at the preliminary negotiations indicates the fact that Moldavia was included in an alliance against Sigismund.

⁴⁰ E. Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor* (hereafter referred to as: *Documente*), I/2, București, 1890, pp. 315-316.

⁴¹ *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, seria D, Relațiile dintre Țările Române (hereafter referred to as: *DRH*, D), I, București, 1977, p. 122.

⁴² Hurmuzaki, *Documente* (see note 40), I/2, pp. 323-324.

⁴³ *DRH*, D, I, pp. 125-127.

⁴⁴ I. Minea, *op. cit.* (see note 10), p. 42-43; P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 232. But J. K. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund* (see note 3), p. 76, claims that Mircea became the Polish king's vassal.

off the Hungarian sphere of influence⁴⁵. Now, Mircea resorted again to this political manoeuvre, the Polish king being a sort of ideal ally – at least theoretically – against the Hungarian claims of suzerainty. Consequently, this alliance was concluded under Sigismund's pressures who had inherited the suzerainty claims over Wallachia together with his crown⁴⁶.

The Wallachian voivode's diplomatic duplicity was meant to safeguard to a certain extent the northern borders. At the same time, taking advantage of the declining situation of the South-Danubian states, Mircea initiated territorial expansion on his own to the south of the Danube. It is very possible that strategical reasons might have laid behind the invasion of the state led by Dobrotici and of the region surrounding Siliștra, in 1388. That same year the sultan had started a campaign in order to bring under control the Christian states situated to the south of Danube, which not long before had rebelled against him⁴⁷. Mircea's enterprise set the relations between the Ottoman Empire and Wallachia on a permanent basis.

The participation of Wallachian soldiers at the battle of the plain of Kosovo in 1389, together with the Christian coalition, has been an extremely debated historiographical issue⁴⁸. Serbian documents should have but did not mention the Romanian participation along with the other participants. The political reasons, which motivated the decision of non-involvement, are impossible to judge solely on the basis of conjectures⁴⁹. However, Wallachia had to bear the direct consequences of the Christians' defeat. Hence the campaign led by Firuz bey, which took place some time during the first half of the year 1390⁵⁰ and was part of a series of Turkish plundering incursions meant to intimidate both the members of the Christian alliance and other potential enemies. The pressures and threat exerted by the Ottomans at the defense line of the Romanian south borders brought about an improvement of the relations between the Romanian voivode and Sigismund. Mircea's incursion to the south of the Danube against the 'Akinjis' (irregular cavalry) in Karinovasi – a diversionist enterprise carried out most probably at the

⁴⁵ M. Diaconescu, *op. cit.* (see note 35), pp. 32-35.

⁴⁶ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 232, stated that Mircea felt threatened by Sigismund because he had occupied the Transylvanian lands of Amlaș and Făgăraș. The historian does not take into account the claims of suzerainty inherited by Sigismund from his Angevine ancestors.

⁴⁷ T. Gemil, *Români și otomanii în secolele XIV-XVI* (hereafter referred to as: *Români și otomanii*), București, 1991, pp. 65-67.

⁴⁸ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 219, on analysing Serbian sources, claims that there was no such contingent in the battle. N. Șerbănescu, N. Stoicescu, *Mircea cel Mare (1386-1418). 600 de ani de la urcarea pe tronul Țării Românești*, București, 1987, p. 275. etc. T. Gemil, *Români și otomanii* (see note 47), p. 68, claims the contrary. For references and sources dealing with this issue see: V. Motogna, *op. cit.* (see note 13), p. 34; Anca Iancu, *Știri despre români în izvoarele istoriografice sârbești (secolele XV-XVII)*, in *Studii istorice sud-est europene*, I, ed. by E. Stănescu, București, 1974, p. 16-17; T. Gemil, *Raporturile româno-otomane în vremea lui Mircea cel Mare* (hereafter referred to as: *Raporturile româno-otomane*), in vol. *Marele Mircea Voievod*, ed. by E. Pătroi, București, 1987, pp. 335-336.

⁴⁹ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 219, claims that Mircea refused to participate at the Christian coalition so as not to irritate Sigismund.

⁵⁰ T. Gemil, *Români și otomanii* (see note 47), pp. 70-71.

request of certain sultan's enemies from Anatolia⁵¹ – took place in parallel with a similar campaign led by the Hungarian king⁵². As a consequence, the Bulgarian tzar from Târnovo pledged fidelity to the Hungarian king. The Christian military campaign made the sultan delay his plans for Anatolia and focus his attention on strategic aims in the Balkans. In 1393 he conquered and dissolved the Bulgarian tzarate of Târnovo and seized the fortresses situated south of the Danube.

The most important episode in the history of the Romanian-Turkish relations during this period is Sultan Bâyezîd I's military campaign in Wallachia and the battle called "of Rovine". The importance of the event is directly proportional to the historiographical controversies on the exact place and date of the event. Currently, the sultan's campaign is dated either in October 1394 or in May 1395⁵³.

The historians who reject the October 1394 version seem to ignore completely the Latin documents!!! According to the Hungarian Chronicle, after having been banished by Vlad (the chronicler mistook Vlad for Dan) with the help

⁵¹ Historians dated Mircea's incursion to the south of the Danube in 1391, 1392 or 1393. T. Gemil, *Raporturile româno-otomane* (see note 48), pp. 340-343, places it in 1392. A. Decei, *Expediția lui Mircea cel Bătrân împotriva acingilor de la Karinovasi (1393)*, in idem, *Relații româno-orientale, culegere de studii*. București, 1978, pp. 140-155, places it in 1393. A recent interpretation of the sources and a new date, 1391, belongs to N. Pienaru, *Relațiile lui Mircea cel Bătrân cu emiratul pontic Candar-ogullari*, in *R.Ist.*, tom 7, 1996, no. 7-8, pp. 483-510.

⁵² The correlation of the two events was suggested by T. Gemil, *Raporturile româno-otomane* (see note 48), pp. 242-243; idem, *Românii și otomanii* (see note 47), pp. 75-76; idem, *Mircea l'Ancien face à la politique impériale de Bayezid I^{er}*, in *RRH*, 1986, no. 1-2, pp. 9-10.

⁵³ The date of sultan's Bâyezîd I campaign has been subject to intense historiographical debate. On the basis of the so-called Serbian early chronicles (the third group), written around the year 1460 and grounded on earlier information, the campaign is dated in the autumn of 1394, and the battle of Rovine on October 10th. There are very many historians who situate the campaign in 1395 and the battle on May 17th. The argument evoked is a document written by the monks of Petra monastery in Constantinople; they engaged to celebrate divine services for memory eternal of Constantine, Empress Helena's father (Fr. Miklosich, I. Muller, *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani*, I, Vindobonae, 1862, pp. 260-262), identified with the sultan's Serbian vassal who had died at Rovine. There is still a *tipikon* from Hilandar (Roman's, they call it) in which there is a later note on Constantin Dragas's death – May 17th 1395 (the year was proposed by F. Miklosich, the document's first editor). Some attained an artificial compromise, claiming that there had been two campaigns, one in the autumn of 1394, and in May 1395, respectively. A different opinion was formulated by T. Gemil who claimed the campaign took place in late summer or early autumn 1395. There follow some other references on the subject: C. Litzica, *Din domnia lui Mircea Vodă, în Convorbiri literare*, XXXV, 1901, p. 366; P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), pp. 241-244 and the notes; A. Diță, *op. cit.* (see note 22), pp. 254-299; T. Gemil, *Românii și otomanii* (see note 47), pp. 77-78; etc. The date of 1395 attributed to Bâyezîd I's campaign entered universal historiography: G. S. Radojičić, *La chronologie de la bataille de Rovine*, in *RHSEE*, V, 1928, pp. 136-139; G. Ostrogorski, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, München 1940, p. 395; M. Al. Purković, *Knez i despot Stefan Lazarević*, Beograd, 1978, pp. 35, 38. H. Inalcik, *op. cit.* (see note 33), p. 16. Recently, N. Constantinescu, *Puncte de vedere asupra datării bătăliei de la Rovine („17 mai 1395”)* (hereafter referred to as: *Puncte de vedere*), in *R.Ist.*, tom I, 1990, no. 7-8, pp. 792-795 has demonstrated the inadvertency of the date of 1395 on the basis of the very same sources. According to his opinion, when the note was written down on the document issued at Petra monastery, the exact date of the dead person was not known and there was only a blank space left for it; according to the same historian, Roman's *tipikon* cannot be considered a valid source for the datation of the battle of Rovine.

of the Turks, Mircea asked Sigismund's support to regain his throne. The king sent a body of troops led by *banus* István Losonci to Wallachia to restore Mircea's rule⁵⁴. The chronicler's chronological error (he dated the event at 1420), is amended by a document in which, on April 6th 1395, king Sigismund ordered magister Gregorius of Beclean to start out immediately together with the army sent to Wallachia under the command of the *ex-banus* and survey the display and equipping of the troops⁵⁵. As for this campaign, there is additional information to be found in the Chronicle of the Abbey of Saint-Dennis⁵⁶. To sum up, the Hungarian campaign of April 1395 took place only as a consequence of the Ottoman military campaign which had succeeded in dethroning Mircea and replacing him with Vlad, a more submissive ruler.

Another argument in favour of the above-mentioned date of the event is the mobilization of the Hungarian army led by the King himself in the summer of 1394 and the subsequent approach of the Wallachian borders⁵⁷. A comprehensive analysis of the chronologically safe sources (we refer here mainly to the Latin ones), proves beyond doubt that both the battle of Rovine and the sultan's campaign in Wallachia took place in the autumn of 1394, not in the spring of 1395. Indeed, the subsequent unfolding of the events makes evident that the Ottoman military campaign in Wallachia took place in the autumn of 1394, and the battle of Rovine on October 10th, as the Serbian chronicles put it .

Bâyezîd I's incursion in Wallachia was not meant to be repressive – it was merely a part of the imperial strategy meant to bring under control the expansionist tendency of some of the conquered territories. Mircea had proved to be a troublesome neighbour; therefore, in 1393, after having conquered and settled along the Danube banks, the Turks wanted to consolidate their position. The Turkish chronicles acknowledged the difficult character and the uncertain outcome of the battle of Rovine, giving way to exaggerated interpretations on the part of certain historiographers⁵⁸. These historians are continually forgetting that winning a battle does not necessarily mean winning the war. It is highly recommendable that proportions should be kept⁵⁹. Subsequent events confirmed beyond any doubt the true winners, i.e. the Turks. With the help of some of the boyards, they installed on

⁵⁴ Johannes de Thuróc, *Chronica Hungarorum*, (ed. Elisabeth Galántai et Julius Kristó), I, Budapest, 1985, §212, pp. 224-225.

⁵⁵ *DRH*, D, I, no. 93, pp. 149-150.

⁵⁶ *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denys, contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 a 1422*, ed. M. L. Bellaguet, in *Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France*, série: Histoire politique, II, Paris, 1840, p. 388, apud V. Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), p. 101, note 62.

⁵⁷ The king stayed in the region of Timișoara from September 12th to October 13th 1394: J. K. Hoensch (ed.), *Itinerar* (see note 36), p. 60; P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok* (see note 36), p. 60.

⁵⁸ N. Constantinescu, *Puncte de vedere* (see note 53), pp. 783-802. In spite of the historian's arguments – to which we subscribe – the date of May 1395 belongs to historiography only: M. Maxim, *Țările Române și Înalta Poartă. Cadrul juridic al relațiilor româno-otomane în evul mediu* (hereafter referred to as: *Țările Române*), București, 1993, p. 211.

⁵⁹ It was mainly during the communist period that historian talked about "a glorious battle", an "unforgettable victory": *Istoria României*, II, p. 368; B. Câmpina, *op. cit.* (see note 18), p. 259; Șt. Ștefănescu, *op. cit.* (see note 21), p. 52; A. Diță, *loc. cit.* (see note 22); etc.

the throne Vlad the "Usurper", as the historians called him⁶⁰. Thus, the new Voivode, and not Mircea, was the first to pay tribute and pledge fidelity to the sultan!

Banned by the Turks supported by some of his boyards, Mircea went to Transylvania, most probably to his domain of the Land of Făgăraș. It is rather probable that meanwhile internal conflicts might have taken place in certain areas of Wallachia⁶¹.

Why is it that the king did not intervene immediately since he was with his army at the borders? The others political reasons had determined him to delay the intervention. He may have hoped that the new voivode would pledge fidelity. Or else we can accept the version according to which, in certain areas of the country, Mircea was trying to resist the new voivode imposed by the Turks. On the other hand, the king's immediate goal seems to have been to subdue Steven (Ștefan I), the Moldavian voivode, a vassal of his enemy, the king of Poland. During the winter of 1394-1395 the king failed to bring to submission the Moldavian voivode⁶².

It was only after this defeat and his return to Brașov, in Transylvania, that the king came to consider Wallachian affairs. Confident in his success, the king underestimated Vlad's position, supported by the Turks and a part of the boyards. He trusted Mircea, ignoring his adversaries' political and military potential. This is the general context in which, after receiving Mircea and his boyards' homage, he concluded an additional document, the so-called treaty of Brașov, dated March 7th 1395⁶³. In this document Mircea accepted certain obligations meant to support Sigismund in the anti-Ottoman campaign. Thus, Sigismund, who was planning an anti-Ottoman crusade to the south of the Danube, set Mircea's participation in the campaign as a condition for his help against his pro-Ottoman enemies in Wallachia!

The underestimation of the military potential of the pro-Ottoman party in Wallachia was further proved by the subsequent evolution of the events. After his Moldavian campaign, the king demobilized the army. Then, having concluded the treaty with Mircea on March 7th, he summoned them back but got refused especially by the Hungarian noblemen. At the beginning of April a small contingent was sent to Wallachia, which comprised only 400 lancers accompanied by two archers each – about 1200 men – led by István Losonci. There might have

⁶⁰ About the Vlad the Usurper was written by O. Iliescu, a numismate: *Vlad I^r, voivode de Valachie: le règne, le sceau et les monnaies*, in *RRH*, 1988, no. 1-2, pp. 73-105. However, the author ignores documentary and narrative Hungarian sources.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 78-79, 84, claims that it was only in May 1395 that Vlad ascended to the throne, following the failure of István Losonci's campaign. On the contrary, this campaign was meant to bring Mircea back on the throne after his defeat by the Turks! It is possible that there was a certain lapse of time between the Turks' victory and Vlad's actual enthronement but Mircea's presence in Transylvania was attested on February 1395 at the latest.

⁶² On the 1395 campaign in Moldavia and the opinions of Romanian historiography see: R. Manolescu, *Campania lui Sigismund de Luxemburg în Moldova (1395)*, in *Analele Universității București*, seria Științe sociale, Istorie, 1966, pp. 59-72.

⁶³ See *infra*.

been several confrontations between Vlad's men, supported by the Turks, and Mircea's, assisted by the Hungarian troops⁶⁴. The final confrontation, which led to the defeat of the Hungarian army and the death of its commanders, probably took place somewhere in the west of Wallachia⁶⁵.

The defeat of his small army upset Sigismund; therefore, in order that his plans for the Crusade should not be endangered, he went himself to Wallachia, accompanied by a considerably larger royal army⁶⁶. On June 21st the King was in Braşov⁶⁷. The royal campaign took place between July and August 1395. Both Vlad's followers and the Turkish army were chased away. The fortress of Turnu (Little Nicople), situated at the Danube, was conquered after a long siege. Here the king left behind a Hungarian garrison under the leadership of Hungarian noblemen⁶⁸. It was a strategic device that ensured the guarding of a place often used for crossing the Danube. Of course that the presence of Hungarian lords in one of Mircea's fortresses offended his authority. But as Mircea was given back his throne with the assistance of the Hungarian King, the claims and the exertion of suzerainty attributes were *de facto*.

The success of this campaign was made easier by the retreat of the main part of the Turkish army, which had fought in May. The withdrawal had also been dictated by some other strategic options of the sultan, a thing which he brought to Sigismund's attention in a letter sent later⁶⁹.

On their way back to Hungary the royal army crossed the mountainous region of Severin and Vlad's followers, probably led by Vlad himself attacked the king⁷⁰. The event is mentioned in documents which were meant to reward the

⁶⁴ B. Cămpina, *op. cit.* (see note 18), pp. 263-266, claims that this contingent was sent to Dobruja and it was only on its way back that the Turks took them by surprise and eventually defeated them. But it is just a fanciful interpretation. A heavy attack beyond the Danube, according to the plan comprised in the document of Marc 7th concluded by Mircea and Sigismund, would have supposed a numerous army!

⁶⁵ It is a probable location, proposed by Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), pp. 101-102.

⁶⁶ See *ibidem*, pp. 104-106.

⁶⁷ P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok* (see note 36), p. 60.

⁶⁸ *DRH, D.*, I, pp. 154-158, 182. *Hazai okmánytár*, VII, Budapest, 1880, p. 438. Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), p. 109, note 100, considers that Mircea's reinstatement refers only to the retrocession of the fortress of Turnu to the Romanian voivode. However, the documents attest that Mircea reoccupied the throne under the protection of the Hungarian garrison and lords from Turnu. Moreover, this was the place where the Turks used to cross the Danube.

⁶⁹ L. Thallóczy, *Mantovai követjárás Budán*, Budapest, 1905, pp. 77, 107-108: „*Tu vadis vulgo dicendo et gloriando te quod me expulisti de campo, quod non fuit verum, quin imo propter quedam importantia maius pondus deliberavi me de campo levare...*”.

⁷⁰ Distorted memories of this event were preserved by collective memory. For example, the chronicler Johannes of Thuróc, probably inspired by a document from 1401 (I. Nagy, *Sopron vármegye története*, Oklevéltár, I, 1156-1411, Sopron, 1889, pp. 544-545; cf. E. Mályusz, *Királyi kancellária és krónikáírás a középkori Magyarországon*, Budapest, 1973, p. 7) related that Sigismund led a campaign in Wallachia against the Turks and the Romanians: Johanness de Thuróc, *Cronica Hungarorum* (see note 54), § 201, pp. 210-211. Mircea is not mentioned at all and the purpose of the campaign is presented in an altered manner.

loyalty of his subjects, proved in the above mentioned circumstances⁷¹. The dimensions of the battle, which took place in late August,⁷² did not exceed those of an ambush organized in a favourable mountainous region.

In the autumn of the same year, the Turks crossed back the Danube and, after reconquering Turnu, advanced into the country and chased Mircea away⁷³. Turkish troops undertook plundering incursions in the regions of Braşov (situated south of Transylvania⁷⁴) and of Timișoara⁷⁵ in order to intimidate and punish. It seems that this time they left behind a more numerous contingent to protect voivode Vlad because Sigismund, even if on guard and close to the borders, did not intervene immediately⁷⁶.

The king's counterattack was delayed because of strategic reasons and the arrival of the winter. This time, he appraised realistically the military potential of the Ottoman and pro-Ottoman troops in the region; furthermore, he became aware that, in order to safeguard the Hungarian southern borders, the maintenance of a vassal in Wallachia was not enough and the Ottomans had to be driven away from the Danube line. The preparations for a Crusade meant to drive away the Turks from Europe were intensified. In that period Mircea withdrew to his possessions in the south of Transylvania, i.e. the Land of Făgăraș.

On the threshold of the crusade, Sigismund did not hesitate to sacrifice his vassal and tried to draw Vlad, installed by the Turks⁷⁷, in the anti-Ottoman project. Vlad responded to Sigismund's diplomatical pressures by rendering homage to the king and queen of Poland. The Polish king, who had claimed the Hungarian crown after Queen Mary's death, recognized Vlad as Voivode of Wallachia and promised to give him the territories situated in the south of Transylvania the moment he regained the Hungarian crown. Vlad acknowledged Hedviga, Queen of Poland, as Louis I's sole heiress who, together with Wladislaw Jagello, were the rightful inheritors of the Hungarian kingdom. He pledged assistance against any enemy. Nevertheless, it seems that his homage was paid not to the sovereigns of Poland but to virtual monarchs of Hungary⁷⁸. This was not an alliance similar to that concluded by Mircea and Wladislaw Jagello in 1389-1391; the agent of this homage was

⁷¹ DRH, D., I, pp. 155, 159, 182. In the document dating from 1408, the king claims that the Romanians who attacked him were led by Mircea. But it was Vlad who led them. Cf. Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), pp. 110-112, and notes.

⁷² On August 24th the king was present in the camp near Severin: P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok* (see note 36), p. 61.

⁷³ DRH, D, I, p. 172-173.

⁷⁴ G. G. Gündisch, *Die Türkeneinfälle in Siebenbürgen bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Breslau/Wroclaw, II, 1937, pp. 393-394; idem, *Siebenbürgen in der Türkenabwehr, 1395-1526*, in *RRH*, 1974, pp. 416-418.

⁷⁵ L. Thallóczy, *op. cit.* (see note 69), pp. 86, 110. Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), pp. 112-113.

⁷⁶ Between September 13th and 21st he was in Sibiu: J.K. Hoensch (ed.), *Itinerar* (see note 369), p. 61. P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok* (see note 36), p. 61.

⁷⁷ In March 1396, an emissary was sent by Sigismund to Vlad: DRH, D, I, p. 153.

⁷⁸ Hurmuzaki, *Documente* (see note 40), I/2, pp. 374-375.

Steven (Ștefan I)⁷⁹, the Moldavian voivode who fought against Sigismund in the winter of 1395.

The year 1396 was dominated by the preparations for and the unfolding of the anti-Ottoman crusade which ended in the disaster of Nicople. The crusade had been initiated by the Hungarian king who had succeeded in summoning Western forces for the great confrontation after several years (1393-1396)⁸⁰ of embassies sent to West European countries. The French, German, Burgundian etc. knights gathered at Budapest; then they joined the Hungarian army at Timișoara in August 1396 and left for Vidin and Nicople passing through Orșova. The Transylvanian troops, which was part of the Hungarian army, led by the voivode and consisting of Transylvanian noblemen⁸¹, headed to the Danube cutting across Wallachia. Mircea accompanied Stibor, Voivode of Transylvania. Assisted by his army and the Turks, Vlad the Usurper tried to prevent them from advancing. The result of the battle was uncertain. In the end, Stibor and Vlad entered a tournament, which was won by the Transylvanian voivode⁸². The victory made it possible for the Transylvanian troops to head for the Danube passing among an army loyal to Vlad but which respected the rules of the contest. This success must have increased the number of Mircea's followers because he reached the place of destination with at least 1000 soldiers⁸³. It is probable that the fortress of Turnu (LittleNicople) got conquered again by Stibor who left there a Hungarian garrison⁸⁴.

The Battle of Nicople from September 25th 1396 ended up disastrously for the crusaders⁸⁵. The subsequent adventures of those who took shelter in Wallachia

⁷⁹ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 260.

⁸⁰ L. Thallóczy, *op. cit.* (see note 69), pp. 22-26. J. K. Hoensch, *Kaiser Sigismund* (see note 3), pp. 81-83.

⁸¹ The Transylvanian army was not composed of a majority of Romanians, as P. P. Panaitescu claims, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 273, but of Hungarian noblemen. The Hungarian feudals were present in a much larger number than the Romanian ones. The nobility structure does not mirror the ethnical structure of Transylvania.

⁸² *DRH*, D, I, p. 162.

⁸³ Mircea's 10,000 soldiers alleged to have participated at the Crusade, a figure proposed by A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*, London, 1938, p. 440, note 7, is exaggerated. Equally, the 8,000 proposed by Gy. Rázsó, *op. cit.*, p. 417. The whole Romanian military potential was hardly bigger than this. Taking into consideration that, at the time, Mircea was not ruling, one could not expect his troops to comprise more than his loyal boyards and some soldiers raised from his properties in Transylvania. An historiographical overall view on the number of participants at the Crusade in: L. Veszprémi, *A Nikápolyi hadjárat értékelése az újabb hadtörténetírásban*, in *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 111, 1998, no. 3, pp. 605-607.

⁸⁴ B. Cămpina's assertion, *op. cit.* (see note 18), p. 269, that Vlad would have tolerated a Hungarian garrison between 1395 and 1397 is wrong. Documents attest beyond all doubt that the fortress was conquered in the autumn of the year 1395.

⁸⁵ This subject has enjoyed much attention from the part of the historiographers. It is interesting to bring forth the discrepancies among opinions and manners of presentation of the role played by each and every member of the crusaders' camp. The historians' bias exaggerated the role played by the combatants from their native countries and understated the others' performance. For instance, on commenting certain sources from that period, Romanian historiography overstates the military capacity of Mircea the Old's army but ignores their withdrawal from the battlefield: A. D. Xenopol, *op. cit.* (see note 4), p. 84, praises Mircea for his strategic retreat and oposed the opinion of those who

are relevant for the state of mind of its inhabitants. Thus, king Sigismund, together with other crusaders, crossed the Danube into Wallachia. He confessed this in later documents: "*we unwillingly went back to our above-mentioned Wallachia, urged by pressing necessity*"⁸⁶. But, instead of going across Wallachia, he was obliged to go down the Danube by ship. At the river mouth of the Prut, he sent the Transylvanian Voivode and some other barons back into the country to see to the kingdom's affairs. This crossing of the eastern regions of Wallachia by Stibor and his men was to be considered as a true act of bravery in the following year when the King rewarded them for their loyalty: "*and he advanced without stopping towards our country Transylvania and prevented the Wallachians and other enemies of our kingdom from any evil plotting...*"⁸⁷ So, instead of crossing Wallachia whose suzerain he was supposed to be, Sigismund preferred a long journey on the sea: the Black Sea, the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. After being the guest of the Byzantine Emperor at Constantinople and after another three-month journey, he finally landed at Ragusa and returned to Hungary.

At that time Wallachia was being ruled by Vlad the Usurper, a ruler who had been enthroned by the Turks and was their loyal subject, as well as an enemy of Sigismund's. So the Romanian army loyal to Vlad opposed to the crossing of Wallachia by the rest of the Hungarian army. Thus, it was not Mircea's fault as he was probably in a similar, not very honourable position. He himself was very likely on the run either on water or somewhere in his own country. He was not even able to ensure protection to his suzerain⁸⁸. The accusation of treason held against Mircea in the historiographical works on the crusades⁸⁹ is unjust; in other words, both the current internal political situation and that at the Romanian borders should have been taken into account by the historians.

accused Mircea of treason; I. Minea, *op. cit.* (see note 10), pp. 73-75 and 78 is even of the opinion that Mircea's army ensured the retreat of the crusaders; a presentation and comments on them are to be found in P. P. Panătescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), pp. 264-269. The Hungarian historiography exaggerates the role played by the Hungarians and accused the Romanians of being the first to cross back the Danube, without mentioning that the two armies withdrew together. It is said that, after the escape of the French army, the Romanians followed in their steps: A. Pór, Gy. Schönher, *Az Anjou ház és örökösei (1301-1439) (A magyar nemzet története, ed. S. Szilágyi, III)*, Budapest, 1895, pp. 430-432. The foreign historians who dealt with the battle of Nicople either ignored the Romanians' role or accused both the Hungarians and the Romanian auxiliary troops of running away from the enemy: Hammer, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches*, I, Pesth, 1834, I, p. 199 and A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade from Nicopolis*, London, 1934, p. 93 and *idem*, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 454-455, stated that Mircea had run away before Sigismund did.

⁸⁶ DRH, D, I, p. 156: „*versus predictas partes nostras Transalpinas terga vertendo, retroflexos gressus invitis nutibus ... urgente adversitate facientibus*”. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 163

⁸⁷ DRH, D, I, p. 163: „*qui abinde regrediens et versus partes nostras Transsiluanas protinus progrediens, ac omnem machinationem perversam Walachis ac aliis regni nostri emulis precludens...*”

⁸⁸ O. Iliescu, *op. cit.* (see note 60), p. 83, claims that an internal conflict followed the defeat of Nicople. We believe that the number of Mircea's followers increased after the Bulgarian Tzarat of Vidin had been transformed in pashalik, but the decisive role seems to have been played by voivode Stibor's intervention somewhere between 1396 and 1397.

⁸⁹ A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade from Nicopolis* (see note 85), pp. 93-94.

Similarly, the crusaders who succeeded in crossing the Danube into Wallachia did not enjoy hospitable greeting either from the part of the Romanians or from the Hungarians. They either paid for every service they got – food, shelter – or they were being robbed⁹⁰.

Stibor, the Transylvanian voivode, mobilized his army soon after his return and, together with Mircea's followers, attacked Wallachia again. Vlad was forced to withdraw and was besieged in his fortress of Dâmbovița. Finally, he surrendered to Stibor who took him and his family to Hungary⁹¹. As a result of this incursion, which took place in the winter of 1396 and 1397⁹², Mircea was given back the crown, this time for good.

We can assume that Stibor and Mircea's victory might as well have been a consequence of the events taking place to the south of the Danube, after Nicople. Bâyezîd I broke up the Bulgarian tzarate of Vidin, tzar Stracimir was banned at Brussa and the Bulgarian feudal lands were given to the timars. The transformation of the Ex-vassal State in pashalik⁹³ caused a greater number of Wallachian boyards, which had previously been hesitant and favourable to a pact with the Turks⁹⁴, to join Mircea's followers.

This moment put an end to the first stage in the evolution of the relations between Wallachia and Hungary during the reign of Sigismund of Luxemburg. To sum up, we can say that during his first years as a ruler, Mircea the Old, Voivode of Wallachia, withstood the Hungarian king's claims of suzerainty. To maintain his own sovereignty, he even chose to conclude political and military alliances with the king of Poland, another element of power in the region and Sigismund's enemy. Then, Ottoman pressure made the Romanian voivode give up the throne and find shelter and help with the Hungarian king. He paid pledged fidelity and promised military help for the future crusade planned by Sigismund. But it was only the fourth Hungarian campaign that succeeded in giving Mircea back his throne and in acknowledging the Hungarian king's suzerainty over Wallachia. Initially, the Hungarian king had wanted only to regain domination over his Anjou possessions wherefrom he derived his claims of suzerainty. In Sigismund's offensive strategy created on the background of increasing Ottoman pressures, Wallachia was meant to become a bridgehead in the future crusade. Yet, the defeat of Nicople determined essential changes in the strategical outlook of the Hungarian king, changes that involved Wallachia as well.

⁹⁰ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 270.

⁹¹ *DRH, D.*, I, pp. 160-169.

⁹² P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 272, is of the opinion that the campaign should be dated December 1396-January 1397.

⁹³ Bâyezîd I initiated the practice of transforming a vassal state into a territory under his direct control. Cf. H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy*, Collected Studies, London, 1978, p. 104.

⁹⁴ B. Câmpina, *op. cit.* (see note 18), pp. 277-279. However, the role played by Stibor in Mircea's return to power, should not be minimised. M. Maxim's assumption, *Țările Române* (see note 58), p. 212, that Mircea concluded a truce with the sultan after Nicople, is invalidated by the subsequent unfolding of the events. Mircea did not exclude this possibility in 1399, but in the previous years he had relied on Sigismund's suport.

The Ottoman victory of Nicople determined as well a temporary improvement of the tense relations between Hungary and Poland. The Orthodox Patriarch from Constantinople pleaded for an agreement in a letter addressed to the Polish king in a moment when there was a serious Ottoman threat against the Byzantine capital⁹⁵. In July 1397 the two kings met at Stara Wies and reached an agreement for a 16-years peace. The Polish king gave up his claims on the Hungarian crown; in his turn, Sigismund promised to mediate the conflict between the Polish and the Teutonic Knights⁹⁶. Wallachia remained in the Hungarian sphere of influence⁹⁷.

On the other hand, new defensive plans were devised in addition to the offensive strategies. During 1397, Sigismund requested the presence of the Teutonic Knights at the southern borders of the kingdom in order to secure them against Turkish incursions. He offered them the Land of Bârsa⁹⁸, a region the Order had previously administered in early XIIIth century. The King was refused because the Knights were engaged in other projects. At the end of 1397, with the occasion of the diet of Timișoara, he laid the bases of a new defensive system against the Ottoman menace. The mobilization of the Hungarian army was reorganized and the obligations of all the landlords were stated clearly; at the same time, a popular army was to come to existence⁹⁹.

So, it was only after the dramatic defeat of Nicople that a radical change in Hungarian foreign policy towards southern regions came to be taken into account. The Ottoman success made it necessary that for the first time the two political systems, Christian and Islamic, should coexist in the Balkans. This time, the new Hungarian political and military strategy would have to become defensive and to give up the traditional offensive into the Balkans (inherited from the Angevine dynasty). The new defensive concept included an increased role played by the vassal states situated between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, after the defeat at Nicople, Sigismund of Luxemburg focused on the creation of a protective chain of buffer neighbouring states, which would hold back the Ottoman incursions¹⁰⁰.

On this background, great attention was given to the relations with the Romanian State situated to the south of the Carpathians. Actually, the Wallachian voivode is the first ruler at the southern Hungarian borders to be integrated into the new system. During the first years after Nicople, the king kept a close eye to the Ottoman plans concerning Wallachia and, even if his noblemen were hardly

⁹⁵ Miklosic-Müller, *Acta patriarchatus*, II, pp. 515-516. P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 273.

⁹⁶ *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár* (hereafter referred to as: *Zs. okl.*), published by E. Mályusz, I, Budapest, 1953, no. 4872, p. 537.

⁹⁷ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 274, claims that on this occasion the two sovereigns partitioned the spheres of influence in this part of Europe.

⁹⁸ L. Pósn, *Zsigmond és a német lovagrend*, in *Hadtörténelmi közlemények*, 111, 1998, no. 3, p. 637.

⁹⁹ N. Knauz, *Az 1397-iki országgyűlés végzése*, in *Magyar Történelmi Tár*, III, Pest, 1857, pp. 216-217; A. Borosy, *A telekkatonaság és a parasztság szerepe a feudális magyar hadszervezetben*, Budapest, 1971, pp. 131 et passim.

¹⁰⁰ P. Engel, *Magyarország és a török veszély* (see note 27), pp. 274-278.

enthusiastic about it, he set preparations for an intervention in case Hungarian authority should be imperiled.

Another much debated historiographical issue is whether there was a Turkish campaign against Wallachia in 1397. The issue became confuse because of the information taken from chronicles written after the event (the narratives of *Leunclavius* and *Chalcocondil*) and most historians claim that Vlad the Usurper's banishment brought about Bâyezîd I's retaliation campaign, which is supposed to have been stopped by Mircea in September-October 1397¹⁰¹. Due to the chroniclers' chronological errors¹⁰², the existence of this campaign has been denied. The absence of any mention of the sultan's personal defeat in Serbian and Bulgarian chronicles seems to have induced, understandably, a feeling of mistrust in any attempt of validating the uncertain data on this campaign¹⁰³. The presence of the king and of his royal army in the southern region of Transylvania, at the Romanian borders, in November-December 1397, after the Assembly of Timișoara¹⁰⁴, seems to point at a probable Turkish campaign. Imminent peril was the only thing that could justify the presence of the king in this region. This he mentioned later during early 1399, adding also the measures he had taken personally in order to give his vassal the necessary support¹⁰⁵. The king's letter indicates that, in response to a rumour, he had approached the borders accompanied by an army he had succeeded in mobilizing. Therefore, we can assume that it was no more than a Turkish plundering incursion on the line of the Danube, which determined Mircea to ask the King's, help.

Mircea's diplomatic ability did not exclude the possibility of a duplicitous attitude. He sent an alarm signal to the king, directing his attention to the fact that, if he were not to receive enough support against the Turks, he would pledge fidelity to the sultan. In 1399, when the Romanian voivode announced Bâyezîd I's arrival at Adrianople, accompanied by a powerful army, he asked for urgent help, "otherwise,... he would have to find a remedy contrary to his desire"¹⁰⁶. The king himself emphasized the strategic importance of Wallachia as a buffer state when he drew his barons' attention to the fact that if the Wallachians should pledge fealty to the Turks, Hungary would be in great danger¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰¹ A. D. Xenopol, *op. cit.* (see note 4), III, p. 85; N. Iorga, *Istoria Românilor* (see note 7), III, p. 307; I. Minea, *op. cit.* (see note 10), pp. 76-77; B. Cămpina, *op. cit.* (see note 18), p. 280.

¹⁰² Among the historians who denied the existence of the campaign: I. Bogdan, *Luptele Românilor cu turcii*, București, 1898, pp. 15, 86-87; P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), pp. 274-275.

¹⁰³ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, p. 275. T. Gemil, *Români și otomanii* (see note 47), p. 85, claimed that the incursion was led by Turkish officers and not by the sultan himself.

¹⁰⁴ J. K. Hoensch (ed.), *Itinerar* (see note 36), p. 64; P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok* (see note 36), p. 63. The king was present in the south of Transylvania in Făgăraș and Cârța

¹⁰⁵ DRH, D, I, pp. 172-173: „Similiter, anno proxime preterito, dum fama esset Turkos ipsos ad Volahiam venturos, apropinquimus ad illas partes personaliter, ut Volahys auxilium debitum preberemus...“.

¹⁰⁶ „alioquin, ..., oporteret enim preter mentem suam de remedio cogitare“, DRH, D, I, p. 172.

¹⁰⁷ „quod Olachy, videntes sese nostro auxilio destitutos, in fide non permaneant, ita nec constantes existant, sed Turcorum iugo brevi tempore submittantur, quod si accideret, quod pius deus avertat, non est vobis incognitum in quanto postea periculo et discrimine existeret regnum nostrum.“ DRH, D., I, p. 172.

Mircea's fears became real only in the autumn of 1400, when a Turkish contingent undertook a plundering incursion. According to a Venetian letter, the Turks had actually undertaken this incursion in Hungary and, on their way back, they were attacked and defeated by "a certain Mircio the Wallachian"¹⁰⁸. The Wallachian voivode took back the loot and killed a great number of soldiers, probably some place near the Danube¹⁰⁹.

During the spring of 1402, supported by a Hungarian contingent and the Tartars, Mircea took advantage of Bâyezîd I's presence in Anatolia, and took over Dobrudja¹¹⁰.

This was the last encounter before Bâyezîd I's terrible defeat by Timur Lenk at Ankara, in 1402. Bâyezîd I's prisonership and the subsequent struggle for succession to the throne meant a decrease in the Ottoman pressure and a period of relaxation for the peoples on the Lower Danube.

The Hungarian king's new strategic concept was extended after 1402¹¹¹. Sigismund had no intention of taking advantage of Bâyezîd I's capturing at Ankara. He preferred to consolidate the Hungarian southern borders and bring under his suzerainty the princes of the states situated between his kingdom and the Ottoman Empire. The Serbian despot, Steven Lazarević, had been the sultan's vassal until the latter's defeat at Ankara. Nevertheless, it was in early 1404 at the latest that he accepted King Sigismund's suzerainty. In exchange for his fealty and for yielding *post mortem* a Serbian region and Belgrade, the Serbian despot was given vast domains in Hungary. He became one of the most important barons of the kingdom and would remain in the union with Hungary until his death¹¹². The inclusion of Bosnia in this defensive system was not achieved without difficulties. It took five military campaigns (from 1404 to 1410) to attain this goal¹¹³. On the other hand, Wallachia was an exemplary buffer state after 1397. During the first two decades of the XVth century, Sigismund was to apply his new strategy globally to all the riverside states.

After 1402, the relations between Sigismund and Mircea were to be under the influence of the same elements as in the first stage of his rule: the intensity of the Ottoman pressures, the Hungarian internal crisis and the Hungarian-Polish

¹⁰⁸ N. Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria Românilor* (hereafter referred to as: *Acte și fragmente*), III, București, 1897, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ Turkish chronicles – Leunclavius and Nesri – mentioned only briefly Mircea's defeat by Bâyezîd I: P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 282-283.

¹¹⁰ "Mîlcus autem Vlachus et Ungari et Tartari a partibus occidentalibus veniunt contra dictum Bayasitum et carperunt transitus et itinera parcius Vlahie pro veniendo versus partes et loca Bayasith-bey", N. Iorga, *Documents concernant les Grecs et les affaires d'Orient tirés des registres des notaires de Crète*, Paris, 1937, p. 6, apud Ș. Papacostea, *La Valachie et la crise de structure de l'Empire ottoman (1402-1413)* (hereafter referred to as: *La Valachie*), in *RRH*, 1986, 1-2, p. 25, note 9.

¹¹¹ Hungarian military historians suggestively call this period "the waste of possibilities" ("Eltékozolt lehetőségek"): Gy. Rázsó, *op. cit.* (see note 28), p. 425.

¹¹² P. Engel, *Magyarország és a török veszély* (see note 27), p. 279.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 279-280.

relations. These circumstances determined a certain amount of change in the relations between Mircea and Sigismund¹¹⁴.

Therefore, the internal crisis in Hungary, where king Sigismund's authority was being contested again¹¹⁵, was probably the reason why Mircea directed his attention once again to the alliance with Poland. In the autumn of 1403, he reconfirmed the old agreements with the king of Poland¹¹⁶. However, in spite of his duplicity (undoubtedly meant to remain secret), Sigismund supported Mircea to regain his territories from Dobrudja and those surrounding Silistra in 1404¹¹⁷.

During the first decade of the XVth century Mircea took advantage of the internal crisis in the Ottoman Empire¹¹⁸. His involvement in the struggle for succession must be correlated with a growing reticence in his relations with Sigismund. Mircea was able to stop without difficulty the plundering incursions of the akinjis at the south of the Danube, such as those that occurred about 1406 and 1407 nearby Silistra¹¹⁹. At this time Sigismund was more interested in problems of succession in Central Europe. But, even though his concern in the Ottoman issues had diminished, this did not prevent him from involving in the struggle for succession of Bâyezîd I's heirs. In 1407 he sent a message to sultan Celebi Süleymân¹²⁰. Later, in 1407, he planned several campaigns to the south of the Danube together with his vassals and with the support of the Venetians¹²¹.

Doubtlessly, Mircea the Old played a main part in the Christians' involvement in the Ottoman successional problems. His increased authority over the regions situated on the Lower Danube caused his relations with his Sigismund to grow colder. Further proof is that the king withdrew Mircea's authority over the Banat of Severin. During 1408 and 1409 the Banat was under the administration of Pipo de Ozora¹²². We cannot assign any motif to Sigismund's presence at Orșova, in 1409¹²³. The climax of the alleged conflict between Mircea and Sigismund occurred around 1410. Earlier that spring, Transylvanian troops started a military campaign against the Romanians, "*plunderers of our country*" (*presentis exercitus contra Volahos, depredatores regni*)¹²⁴. Even if the document was rather ambiguous, the campaign could only have been directed against the Romanians inhabiting Wallachia. Could the accusation of plundering refer to a Wallachian expedition

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 279, claims that Mircea remained loyal to Sigismund till the former's death (1418). As compared to the attention paid to the relations with Serbia and Bosnia, the author's approach to the role played by Wallachia in Sigismund's anti-Ottoman policy is extremely succinct.

¹¹⁵ E. Mályusz, *Zsigmond király* (see note 3), pp. 47-54.

¹¹⁶ Hurmuzaki, *Documente* (see note 40), I/2, p. 824.

¹¹⁷ *DRH*, D, I, no. 109, p. 178. *Zs. okl.* (see note 96), II/1, no. 3118, p. 367.

¹¹⁸ On Mircea's involvement see: Ș. Papacostea, *La Valachie* (see note 110), p. 23-33.

¹¹⁹ P. Ș. Năsturel, *Une victoire du voïvode Mircea l'Ancien sur les Turcs devant Silistra (c. 1407-1408)*, in *Studia et acta orientalia*, I, 1957, pp. 239-247.

¹²⁰ E. Mályusz, *Zsigmond király* (see note 3), p. 81.

¹²¹ Ș. Papacostea, *La Valachie* (see note 110), p. 27.

P. Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301-1457*, I, Budapest, 1996, p. 33.

J. K. Hoensch (ed.), *Itinerar* (see note 36), p. 81; P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok* (see note 36), p.

aiming at taking over the Land of Făgăraș which was no longer under the Romanian voivode's authority?! The ambiguous data we have cannot elucidate the evolution of this armed conflict.

The Hungarian military intervention was taking place simultaneously with a campaign to the south of the Danube led by Mircea's son or nephew, Dan, who commanded an army consisting of Wallachian soldiers and of Serbian and Turkish partisans of Celebi Mûsâ¹²⁵. However, it seems that the Hungarian military intervention was actually aimed at resuming the alliance with Poland.

To thwart Sigismund's pressures, Mircea approached once again the Polish king¹²⁶. The renewal of the act of trade privileges for the merchants from Lwow in 1409 had been a first step¹²⁷. On February 6th 1410, the king of Poland reconfirmed the old letters and treaties concluded with the Wallachian voivode, mentioning that the initiative was mutual¹²⁸. So, the Hungarian spring campaign of 1410 took place in this particular context. It is likely that the Hungarian king ordered the Transylvanian voivode to bring Mircea back under his authority. For all that, further development of the events attest the failure of the Hungarian attempt.

In the following year the old Romanian-Polish military alliance against Sigismund would be confirmed on the basis of new diplomas mentioning clearly expressed clauses. One fragment is particularly relevant as to the tensioned situation; it was written in terms quite different from those used in the previous treaties of 1389-139: "*But, in case that the above mentioned King of Hungary rose as enemy against the above-mentioned King Wladislaw etc., then we, as enemies, promise, even more, we take an oath that together with our men, we will stop him at the borders of Hungary by fire or any other means. On the other hand, if the same King of Hungary etc., tried, as an enemy, to subjugate us or our country, then the above mentioned Wladislaw, the King of etc., must and will be obliged to support us by means of his power and the above mentioned courses of action...*"¹²⁹. These terms had been brought in because of the on-going Hungarian-Polish conflict. This time it was the Polish King who needed mostly support against Sigismund. At the same time, Alexander the Good, Voivode of Moldavia was renewing his homage to the Polish king in more favourable terms than before with

¹²⁵ See T. Gemil, *Români și otomanii* (see note 47), p. 93, on the campaign to the south of the Danube.

¹²⁶ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 322, claimed that the first steps had been taken by the Polish king!

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 353.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 354.

¹²⁹ DRH, D., I, pp. 115-116: „*In casu autem, si idem Hungarie rex hostiliter insurgeret, aut sui contra sepefatum dominum Wladizlaum regem etc., extunc, nos, hostiliter, spondemus, ymmo promitimus, nostra cum gente, fines regni Hungarie fortiter constringere, incendio et omne malo. Dum autem, idem rex Hungarie etc., nos aut nostram terram, hostiliter attemptaverit subintrare, extunc pefatus dominus Wladizlaus rex etc., hec omnia super supradicta nobis toto posse atque potencia debeat et teneatur adiuvaré*”. For comparison see the documents form 1390 and 1391: *ibidem*, pp. 122-123, 125-126.

specific mention of Sigismund as enemy¹³⁰. On the other hand, Mircea used the Polish-Hungarian conflict to put distance between him and Sigismund. Furthermore, this period seems to be characterized by the Romanian voivode's independence from Sigismund's claims of suzerainty.

The breach did not, however, last long. An agreement seems to have been reached by means of diplomatical negotiations. The compromise was favoured by the treaty between Sigismund and Wladislaw Jagello at Lublin on March, 15th 1412 as well as by the predictable failure of Mircea's Ottoman policy. Besides, Mircea had paid close attention to the evolution of the Hungarian-Polish relations and the Romanian voivode's interests had been represented by his ambassadors both at the negotiations of Lublin¹³¹ and at the subsequent conference and celebrations in Buda¹³². The King of Poland sacrificed his ally who, in his turn, had to acknowledge once again Sigismund's suzerainty. This is suggested by Mircea's taking into possession of the Bran fortress a little before September 1412¹³³. The Romanian voivode's new pledge of fidelity is further proved by the confirmation of the commercial privileges of the Braşov merchants¹³⁴. Another element that caused Mircea to resume his earlier status was the failure of his Ottoman policy, i.e. the downfall of Celebi Mûsâ, the sultan he had supported¹³⁵.

The new sultan, Celebi Mehmed's policy was initially reconciling aimed at both his direct neighbours and Christian powers in general. At the celebrations occasioned by his enthronement he invited ambassadors from all neighbouring countries – Wallachia included – and announced his peaceful intentions¹³⁶. This were probably measures of precaution against the crusade being planned by Sigismund after the treaty of Lublau in 1412.

Moreover, it was again Mehmed I who initiated negotiations of peace during 1414 and 1415. The sultan send an envoy with a peace proposal to the king of Poland who, at the time, was also the protector of Hungary because Sigismund was occupied with the Council of Konstanz. Wladislaw Jagello asked Sigismund's advice and the latter was favourable to the project, suggesting that, in case a perpetual peace was not possible, they should at least conclude a five-year long armistice¹³⁷. As a result, the Polish envoy's proposal of a six-year armistice to the

¹³⁰ M. Costăchescu, *Documente moldoveneşti înainte de Ştefan cel Mare*, II, Iaşi, 1932, pp. 637-638 and 640.

¹³¹ Przędziecki, *Zycie domowe Wladislawa Jagello*, Biblioteka Warszawska, 1854, II, pp. 537 and 538, apud P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 325.

¹³² J. Aschbach, *Geschichte Kaiser Sigmunds*, Hamburg, III, p. 441-442 (report from Buda in May 22nd, 1412).

¹³³ *DRH, D, I*, p. 119 (the recent yielding of Bran fortress to Mircea is suggested by the fact that the customs had been moved recently out of Bran at Braşov).

¹³⁴ *DRH, D, I*, pp. 197-201.

¹³⁵ After a first failed attempt in July 1412, Celebi Mehmed succeeded in defeating Celebi Mûsâ in July 1413: T. Gemil, *Românii şi otomanii* (see note 47), p. 94.

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 95-96.

¹³⁷ *Monumenta medii aevii historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, II, *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, W Krakowie, 1876, no. XLVIII, pp. 42-43 (1417 - date established by the editor). Similar document, with the date 1415: *Zs. okl.* (see note 96), V, no. 159, p. 97. See *Monumenta medii*

sultan was received favourably, at least on principle. On his way back, one of the Polish representatives who intended to inform the Hungarian noblemen on the project, was sent to jail by Pipo Spano¹³⁸, count of Timiș whose main attributions were to defend the Hungarian southern borders. Thus, the suspicion concerning possible Polish manoeuvres hostile to Hungary is explainable if we take into consideration that between May and September 1415 the Hungarian troops were engaged in war against the Bosniacs allied with the Turks¹³⁹. Mircea was to be implicated in the ensuing Hungarian-Polish diplomatic dispute. He defended himself against the accusations and asked the Polish King to get information directly from the Hungarians whether he was to blame for the rumour¹⁴⁰. At this moment, Mircea was on peaceful terms with both Christian powers.

While accepting on principle the peace negotiations, Sigismund supported once again a different candidate to the Ottoman throne. Based on Turkish chronicles, historiographers have claimed that Mircea the Old granted his military support to Mustafa, the new pretender to the throne¹⁴¹. It seems that, being directly interested in the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, the Hungarian king secretly sustained Mircea's scheming. Thus, according to a note written overleaf a document, in the spring of 1416 a Transylvanian army led by voivode Miklós Csáki was sent to help Mircea¹⁴² in his attempt to impose Mustafa as a new sultan. Simultaneously, in March 1416, the Wallachian and Turkish troops loyal to Mustafa were at the Danube, ready to attack¹⁴³. Hence, Mircea's action was backed by Hungary with military forces as well. Moreover, the Hungarians' interest and implication in the Ottoman internal political intrigues is explained by the fact that they had been at war with the Turks from Bosnia since February¹⁴⁴. The military campaign carried in favour of the candidate failed definitively at Salonic at the end of that year.

Meanwhile, Mircea's duplicitous nature was tempted again by the Lithuanian King Vitold's envoy who proposed an alliance against Sigismund¹⁴⁵. Just like in the years 1410 and 1411, Mircea was invited to conclude an alliance against the Hungarian king at the very time when he and his suzerain were carrying on important political actions in the Balkans.

aevi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia, tomus VI, *Codicem epistolarem Vitoldi magni ducis Lithuaniae 1376-1430*, W Krakowie, 1882, no. DCLI, pp. 331-333.

¹³⁸ Ioannis Dīvgossi sev Longini, *Historia Polonica*, Francofurti, 1711, liber vndecimis, col. 361-362 (1414).

¹³⁹ *Zs. okl.* (see note 96), V, nos. 580, 625, 636-637, 894, 994, 1006, 1026 etc.

¹⁴⁰ Hurmuzaki, *Documente* (see note 40), I/2, pp. 825-826. For the date: P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 328.

¹⁴¹ T. Gemil, *Românii și otomanii* (see note 47), pp. 96-98.

¹⁴² *Zs. okl.* (see note 96), V, no. 1711, p. 468. A note on back of a document from the judge's office: "...eo, quod Osualdus unacum vayvoda de Chak in subsidium Merche assertitur fore profecturus".

¹⁴³ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 333.

¹⁴⁴ *Zs. okl.* (see note 96), V, nos. 1573, 1768, 1849, 1976, 2031, 2158, 2301 etc.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, V, nos. 2023, p. 545-546. The Hungarian authorities were informed on the matter. Furthermore, it is possible that the other Romanian-Polish agreements and treaties, though secret, could have been known by the Hungarians.

The Sultan would not leave without reply Mircea' implication in the struggle for succession. After Mustafa's defeat at Salonic in December 1416, Celebi Mehmed initiated an extensive campaign against the Wallachian voivode. The Sultan initially wanted to stop the manoeuvres carried out in favour of Mustafa at the Wallachian borders. According to the Venetian Admiral Pietro Loredano's report, in the naval battle of Galipoli (May 29th, 1416) he destroyed the very Turkish fleet which was to go up the Danube to prevent Mustafa's troops from crossing the river. However, the combat continued until the end of the year but soon after that the Sultan went back towards the Danube to punish Mircea. We must situate this campaign during the spring of 1417 because, as it has been said, the Turkish narrative sources corroborate this operation with the Wallachian voivode's intervention in favour of Mustafa and before the expedition to the northwest of Anatolia¹⁴⁶. After conquering Dobrudja, the Turkish army assaulted the fortress of Giurgiu and entered Wallachia. Mircea was forced to submit and, by means of a Turkish refugee from his court, he paid homage to the Sultan. He promised to pay the tax regularly, to send his sons as hostages and support the Sultan in his campaigns¹⁴⁷.

The Turkish success and the submission of the Wallachian voivode brought about prompt Hungarian retort. However, it is interesting to notice that the Hungarian army was no longer sent to support Wallachia. On the contrary, in July 1417, after the success of the Turkish campaign, the Transylvanian army was mobilized against the Romanians from Wallachia ("*presentem mocionem exercitus contra Volahos Transalpinos*")¹⁴⁸. Whatever the effect of this campaign meant to bring Mircea back under Sigismund's suzerainty, it did not last long because the old voivode would die soon, after a three-decade reign.

The increasing Ottoman pressures and the duplicity of the leaders of the states at the Hungarian southern borders gradually destroyed the system of buffer states Sigismund had created after 1400. At first it was Bosnia which was taken away from the Hungarian domination and several military campaigns were carried out in order to recuperate it. Similarly, after Mircea's death and the campaign led by the Sultan in 1419-1420¹⁴⁹, Wallachia went off the Hungarian sphere of influence.

¹⁴⁶ T. Gemil, *României și otomanii* (see note 47), p. 99. N. Pienaru, *Relațiile lui Mircea cel Mare (1386-1418) cu Mehmed I Celebi (1413-1421)*, in *RI*, tom 39, 1986, no. 8, pp. 782-784.

¹⁴⁷ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, pp. 341-344. V. Ciocîltan, *Competiția pentru controlul Dunării inferioare (1412-1420)* (II), in *RI*, tom 35, 1982, no. 11, p. 1197. M. Maxim, *Țările Române* (see note 58), pp. 220-223.

¹⁴⁸ The information on this campaign has not been published yet. We have come across it in a "*litterae prorogatorie*"; the trial was postponed because of the military campaign against the Romanians from Wallachia: The Hungarian National Archives, Budapest, DI. (=Diplomataria=The Diplomatics Archives) 62.792.

¹⁴⁹ Viorica Pervain, *Lupta antiotomană a Țărilor Române în anii 1419-1420*, in *AIIA Cluj-Napoca*, XIX, 1976, pp. 55-78.

3. Sigismund's Suzerainty over Mircea the Old – Theory and Practice

Sigismund of Luxemburg ascended the throne in 1387. The first years of his rule were dedicated to the strengthening of his power and its acknowledgement by different internal factions. He had inherited the throne of Hungary by virtue of his matrimonial contract with Mary, Louis I' daughter. His claims were not restricted to the kingdom only but also to the acknowledgement of his suzerain rights over the rulers from the neighbouring states and even over the crown of Poland. The anterior relations of Louis with the Romanian voivodes were known at the Hungarian royal court. The tradition of inheriting the right of suzerain had been consecrated during the reign of the deceased king. Johannes of Küküllö, the chronicler of the court, had just finished his work in which special chapters were dedicated to the homage paid by the Wallachian voivode¹⁵⁰.

A document on the king's claims on Moldavia, another vassal "inherited" from his Angevine predecessors, but currently disputed with the Polish king, shows the opinion as well as the conception of suzerainty held by the King and his court: "*de recuperacione possessionis realis terre Moldwane vestro auxilio concurrente ad obedienciam eiusdem domini regis [Sigismund – our note] et s(acre) corone regni Hungarie reducende*"¹⁵¹. The king's claims were based on the "rights" the Hungarian crown held over the respective country. The same principle was applied in the case of Wallachia. After he managed to impose himself on the throne of Hungary, Sigismund decided to recuperate the external inheritance as well, a part of which were the rights of suzerainty over Wallachia.

Sigismund of Luxemburg's conception of vassalage is close to that of his predecessor, Louis I⁵². We can find more details on this concept in a document concerning Steven (Ștefan I), the Moldavian voivode. As we have mentioned, there is little difference to be noticed between his conception and that of his predecessors: the vassal voivode had to pay regular tribute to the royal treasury as a formal acknowledgement of Sigismund's suzerainty. The pledge of fealty and the submission were sanctioned in a written deed and the homage was rendered together with the boyards¹⁵³. At least theoretically, the same claims – tribute, homage, and submission – were made to Mircea the Old.

According to the official documents issued by king Sigismund's chancery, the same Angevine denomination was used both for Wallachia and Transylvania, i.e. they were not dealt as separate countries but as parts of the Kingdom: "*ad*

¹⁵⁰ See M. Diaconescu, *op. cit.* (see note 35), pp. 22-26.

¹⁵¹ Quotation from a letter on the Hungarian-Polish negotiations of Bartfa which prepared the Lublau treaty: H. Heimpel, *Aus der Kanzlei Kaiser Sigismunds (über den Cod. Pal. 701 der Vatikanischen Bibliothek)*, in *Archiv für Urkundenforschung*, Berlin-Leipzig, XII, 1931, I, p. 137-138.

¹⁵² See M. Diaconescu, *op. cit.* (see note 35), pp. 25-26.

¹⁵³ *DRH*, D, I, pp. 176-177: "*et annotatus Stephanus waywoda cum suis complicitibus et Olahis universis ad nostra servitia venia prius et gratia de inobedientia et negligentia suis a nostro culmine postulatis, propitiis et obtentis iugiter fideliterque explenda donaque solita nostro fisco regio, in recognitionem domini naturalis temporibus congruis persolvendo humiliter se ipsum inclinavit et subdere studuit effectivè litteris vigorosis iuramentoque exinde prestito, valans se ipsum cum suis complicitibus in omni fidelitati et obedientia propensius obligantes in premissis nostre maiestati*".

partes Transalpinas" (to be compared with: "*per dictas partes Transsiluanas*")¹⁵⁴. This meaning is further confirmed by the fact that sometimes the same chancery emphasized it: "our parts of Wallachia" ("*ad partes nostras Transalpinas*")¹⁵⁵.

The royal official position also results from the title that accompanied Sigismund's name in certain official acts. Mircea was the king's voivode in Wallachia (*vaiuoda nostro Transalpino*). After the summer campaign in 1395, he mentioned that he gave him back his rule (*suo dominio restituto*)¹⁵⁶.

However, there was obviously a certain discrepancy between Sigismund's claims as a suzerain and Mircea's submission. His obedience varied in time according to a few factors such as: the intensity of the Ottoman pressures, the Hungarian internal political crises and the Hungarian-Polish relations.

Firstly, we should take into consideration the question of the homage. There is firm evidence on the pledge of fealty in a deed dating from March 7th 1395¹⁵⁷. Even if at first sight it seems to be a treaty of military alliance concluded on equal terms¹⁵⁸, there are some clues that indicate the submission of the Romanian voivode. For example, there had been a deed acknowledging the vassalage¹⁵⁹ before the above-mentioned one because the present engagement was done "*under the faith and oath taken previously by us and our barons, as it is the custom*" ("*sub fide et iuramento nostris et baronum nostrorum, per nos prius debite prestitis*"). Therefore, sometime before March 7th 1395 – or maybe the very same day – Mircea and his barons had paid homage to Sigismund. Two months before, the same kind of pledge of fealty had been solicited by Sigismund from Steven, Voivode of Moldavia, but the latter swore falsely.

We cannot ignore the possibility of an anterior pledge, either taken personally or by means of envoys. Thus, in the preamble of the mentioned document of March 7th, Mircea stated that ever since they had first met the King had not only shown him exceptional benevolence but had also given his friendly support, especially against the Turks. Let alone the tactful and courteous language, it is most probable that Mircea and Sigismund had already established relations and there is evidence of a pledge of fidelity taken before 1395.

¹⁵⁴ DRH, D, I, no. 74, pp. 120-121; no. 91, pp. 145-146 etc.

¹⁵⁵ DRH, D, I, no. 99, p. 155; no. 101, p. 163 etc.

¹⁵⁶ DRH, D, I, p. 182.

¹⁵⁷ DRH, D, I, pp. 138-142.

¹⁵⁸ At least this is the opinion of Romanian historiographers: A. D. Xenopol, *op. cit.* (see note 4), p. 82, claimed that this document attested the end of the vassalage relations and is evidence for the emancipation of Wallachia! N. Iorga, *Istoria Românilor* (see note 7), III, p. 249, was also of the opinion that Mircea was treated as an ally and not as a vassal! Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), pp. 97-98, although commenting on the document, mentioned only the "*bringing of Wallachia in the Hungarian sphere of influence*", without further detailing the issue. Șt. Ștefănescu, *op. cit.* (see note 21), p. 49, claimed that the Hungarian king had tried to approach the Wallachian voivode because of Mircea's alliance with Poland and of the imminent Ottoman threat [sic!]. On the other hand, the Hungarian historiographers mention that Mircea pledged fidelity at Brașov: B. Hóman, Gy. Szekfű, *Magyar történet*, II, Budapest, 1942, p. 341; J. Horváth, *Magyar diplomácia, magyar diplomaták. Magyar külpolitika századai*, Budapest, 1942, p. 132.

¹⁵⁹ The existence of this pledge of fidelity was emphasised by P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), pp. 195 and 253.

Between 1389 and 1392 several Hungarian-Turkish encounters took place at the borders with Serbia or Bosnia¹⁶⁰. Steven Lazarević, Serbia's Despot, was the Turks' vassal and ally. In 1392 Sultan Bâyezîd I sent a message to the Serbian leader asking him not to submit to the Hungarian King, as the Bulgarian Tzar and others had done, but to remain his vassal¹⁶¹. The message attests that Sigismund had created a defensive system based on the relations of vassalage with the southern states. Thus, if the Bulgarian tzar from Târnovo had paid homage, we think it most probable that Mircea the Old would have done the same. Even if the term "and others" is not clear, we are inclined to believe that it refers to the Romanian voivode. Wallachia was situated between the Bulgarian Tzarate and the Hungarian Kingdom. The anti-Ottoman defensive system created by Sigismund included not only the Bulgarian tzar but also Mircea. The acknowledgement of fealty, presumably by means of envoys, was probably made in or before 1392.

There were two possible moments for this action. One is the period extending from January to April 1391, when the king was present in Transylvania, close to the Wallachian border, at Sibiu (February 17th -26th and March 6th -9th)¹⁶². The second was in early May 1392 when the King was present at Timișoara before the campaign in Serbia. The first period seems more probable. The king's longer stay in Sibiu was motivated by several reasons among which there seems to have been the homage of the Romanian voivode. The acknowledgement of fealty in 1391 is indirectly related by the chronicler Johannes de Thurocz according to whom, during the queens' rule, Wallachia and Moldavia would have left the Hungarian sphere of influence. "*That one, in the fourth year, after having been crowned, renewing his wapens, started the expedition in order to tame those peoples*"¹⁶³.

It is possible that in May 1392 only an exchange of messages had taken place. Thus, we should interpret accordingly a note from Massaria de la Pera's accounts (dated June 17th, 1392) referring to the Romanian voivode's letter "*pro bonis novis Hungarie*"¹⁶⁴.

It is time to refer back to the deed of March 7th, 1395, which was the starting point of our discussion on the homage because a reevaluation of its significance is absolutely necessary. The respective document seems to be an additional act to the homage, meant to stipulate clearly Mircea's military obligations related to Sigismund's offensive anti-Ottoman policy. Romanian historiographers have been using the following terms: "military alliance", "treaty of

¹⁶⁰ P. Engel, *A török-magyar háborúk* (see note 38), pp. 562-575. A chronological table of the battles is to be found at p. 577.

¹⁶¹ *Lebensbeschreibung des Despoten Stefan Lazarević von Konstantin dem Philosophen* in Auszug herausgegeben und übersetzt von M. Braun, Göttingen, 1956, p. 11.

¹⁶² J. K. Hoensch (ed.), *Itinerar* (see note 36), p. 55; P. Engel, *Királyitineráriumok* (see note 36), p. 57.

¹⁶³ Johannes de Thurocz, *Cronica Hungarorum* (see note 54), p. 209, § 200: „*dum res Hungarice femina duce gravi fluctuabant guerra, Moldauani pariter et partes Transalpine reginali dedignato sceptro necdum resipiscentes regi Sigismundo favebant. Ille igitur quarto, postquam coronatus est, anno renovatis armis illos domandi gratia agressus est.*”

¹⁶⁴ N. Iorga, *Acte și fragmente* (see note 108), III, p. 3.

alliance between equal parts", treaty of alliance concluded "on perfectly equal terms"¹⁶⁵ etc. A treaty of alliance is supposed to stipulate mutual obligations – as does, for instance, the treaty between Mircea and the king of Poland concluded between 1389 and 1391, and between 1410 and 1411, respectively. In the deed of March 7th we only find the Wallachian voivode's pledge of aid in case of anti-Ottoman campaigns carried out by Sigismund of Luxemburg! These promises are complementary to the previous homage and therefore, the concept of treaty must be carefully used.

The deed consists of the following clauses¹⁶⁶:

1. The voivode's army is bound to participate in any campaign led by the Hungarian king against the Turks and their allies. The personal presence of the king implied the voivode's personal presence as well.

2. The king's army was to be granted free access across Mircea's domains and food on their own expense both on their way to and back from the campaign.

3. In case the king had to be present in newly conquered territories, the Romanian voivode was bound to accompany him as well.. Otherwise, only his army had to be present.

4. In case of emergency the voivode was bound to do his best to support the royal army in the newly conquered territories. He also promised to provide food to the army at their own expense.

5. Eventually sick, wounded or stray soldiers (no matter the reasons why) were to be guaranteed their lives and possessions.

In the end, all letters referring to this matter exchanged previously by the king and the voivode were globally confirmed. This implied the existence of previous negotiations and agreements that eventually got lost.

As for the king, the only obligation he assumed was to pay for the supplies provided to his army. Indeed, this was not uncommon since a vassal's only financial obligation was the tribute but Wallachia had not been conquered and therefore could not be plundered according to the laws of war. There was no mutual engagement on the part of the king.

As P. P. Panaitescu stated, the king's purpose was to drive away the Turks not only from Wallachia but also from the regions situated to the south of the Danube, "as if in preparation for a crusade"¹⁶⁷. It can be assumed then that this deed was a sort of preparatory stage of the king's crusading plans. Together with the diplomatic letters which he had sent to the European courts in order to ask for support, the above-mentioned deed is a true act of birth of the crusade of Nicople in 1396. In Sigismund's view of an offensive strategy, Wallachia was bound to become a bridgehead for the future crusade. Mircea's presence in this project had

¹⁶⁵ C. C. Giurescu, *Istoria Românilor*, I, București, 1935, p. 457; P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), pp. 252-253; B. Cămpina, *op. cit.* (see note 18), p. 262; N. Stoicescu, in his comments on the edition of A. D. Xenopol's work, *op. cit.* (see note 4), II, p. 110, note 72; Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), pp. 96-97; O. Iliescu, *op. cit.* (see note 60), p. 76; etc.

¹⁶⁶ *DRH*, D, I, no. 87, p.138-142. The record is in The Hungarian National Archives, Dl. 8.043.

¹⁶⁷ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 253.

been facilitated both by the Ottoman pressures on Wallachia and by the voivode's own uncertain status in his country¹⁶⁸.

According to feudal customs, the homage was acknowledged several times. There is information on a new acknowledgement, which took place late in 1406 when the Romanian voivode and the Hungarian king met again¹⁶⁹. On this occasion the vassalage contract was renewed and Mircea paid a new homage to King Sigismund. In the official paper given by the voivode to Tismana monastery there is mention that Mircea was on his way to Severin where he was to meet the king and was accompanied "by all fathers superior of the monasteries and all his boyards"¹⁷⁰. It is known that custom required that, when taking the pledge of fidelity, the voivode had to be accompanied – conditions permitting – by the high estates (the church dignitaries and the nobility). The only reason for the presence of this suite can be the pledge of fidelity. Besides, the meeting is sure to have occasioned the settling of further details of common anti-Ottoman projects. Nevertheless, its main purpose seems to have been the pledge of fealty. On the other hand, the king had obtained recently the acknowledgement of fidelity from Steven Lazarević, the Serbian despot and had initiated military measures against Hervoia, the great voivode of Bosnia¹⁷¹. Thus, the king was putting into practice his defense strategy of protecting Hungarian borders by means of buffer states. This part was to be played by the southern vassal states and the relations between Sigismund and Mircea during the period of crisis the Romanian ruler went through, i.e. 1394-1400 offered a model.

It is very probable that a new homage was paid circa 1412. From 1408 to 1411 Mircea had developed an independent policy directed against Sigismund. During the negotiations that preceded the Lublau agreement of March 12th 1412, between the Hungarian and Polish kings, great attention was paid to the situation of Moldavia, a country which Sigismund had craved for a long time¹⁷². The treaty of Lublau stipulated only clauses referring to Moldavia. As far as Wallachia was concerned, the absence of any mention among Sigismund's claims which met Poland's opposition, indicates the fact that, *de iure et de facto*, Wallachia as well as voivode Mircea was considered vassal by the Hungarian king. Taking into account the voivode's position during previous years, the king might have asked Mircea to renew his homage, at least by means of envoys. Thus, we know that a Wallachian delegation participated in the Conference of Buda, which followed the one of Lublin. Certainly, it is only a supposition with a great degree of probability.

¹⁶⁸ Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), p. 97, claimed that Mircea had a stable position in the country, otherwise Sigismund would have attempted to approach Vlad, as he had done in 1396. We are more inclined to believe that Sigismund chose to trust Mircea rather than Vlad who was pro-Ottoman.

¹⁶⁹ DRH, DRH, B, Țara Românească, I, p. 64.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

¹⁷¹ P. Engel, *Magyarország és a török veszély* (see note 27), pp. 279-280.

¹⁷² F. Constantiniu, Ș. Papacostea, *Tratatul de la Lublau (15 martie 1412) și situația internațională a Moldovei la începutul veacului al XV-lea*, in *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, tom 17, 1964, no. 5, pp. 1132 et passim.

To sum up, it is probable that Mircea acknowledged fealty to his lord at least four times: in 1391, 1395 (a pledge by means of envoys is possible as a first step; it was probably followed, some time before March 7th, 1395, by an homage rendered personally in the company of his barons), in 1406, and 1412. The pledge of 1395 is attested in the deed of March 7th; the one of 1406 can be inferred from the meeting at Severin whereas the homages of 1391 and 1412 are deducible from the context. We need to use these inferences because of the lack of direct information, probably lost along the centuries. A repeated homage paid by one and the same vassal to one and the same suzerain was not a singular practice. The oath would be solicited by the suzerain and be taken by the vassal whenever the political and military conditions made it necessary. Another example is that of Alexander the Good, voivode of Moldavia, who paid homage to the king of Poland several times. In this case, documents referring to the matter have been preserved because the Polish royal archives had a different fate from the Hungarian ones.

A thing we do not know is if and to what degree did the vassal respect his obligation of paying annual tribute. It is quite possible that the king had renounced it, offering it as subsidy for the support of anti-Ottoman campaigns.

The acknowledgement of fidelity to the king of Hungary by the Romanian voivodes had already become traditional in Wallachia. For example the homage paid by Vlad the Usurper to Wladislaw Jagello, the king of Poland. Vlad rendered homage by acknowledging the king's wife, Hedviga, as rightful successor to Louis I and, consequently, the Polish monarchs' claims to the Hungarian crown. This is clearly stated in the homage deed¹⁷³, so Vlad became not so much a vassal of the Polish king as of a virtual king of Hungary¹⁷⁴.

If we further examine mutual responsibilities derived from the relations of vassalage and try to analyze the suzerain's obligations, certain aspects may put in a new light the political evolution at the Lower Danube. The suzerain's main obligation, i.e. to protect and support, became effective in the king's support against the Turks.

Thus, in the preamble of the above-mentioned deed, dated March 7th 1395 and concluded in Braşov, the voivode mentioned, without naming the king, Sigismund's support against the Turks: "*and he supported us especially against those fierce and cunning sons of iniquity, enemies of the name of Christ and bitter foes, the Turks*"¹⁷⁵. In spite of the fact that data on Sigismund's support provided before 1395 is uncertain, we do have plenty of information on military support after this date. According to documents, the king offered his help in 1395 (in the

¹⁷³ Hurmuzaki, *Documente* (see note 40), I/2, pp. 374-375: "... *Et quia predictum Regnum Vngarie ad memoratum dominam Hedvigem Reginam Polonie et heredem dicti Regni Vngarie unicam et superstitem et consequenter ad prefatum dominum Wladislaum Regem conthoralem ipsius iure hereditario esse comperimus devolutum prout hoc ipsum in literis dicti Lodovici Regis et Regnicolarum Vngarie et Polonie Regnorum predictorum super eo confectis intelleximus fuisse et esse condiccionatum, sic quod eciam nos et dominia nostra dictis dominis Wladislaao Regi et Hedvigi Regine et Regno eorum Vngarie in subditos obligamur...*"

¹⁷⁴ The nature of this homage was also noticed by O. Iliescu, *op. cit.* (see note 60), p. 80.

¹⁷⁵ DRH, D, I, no. 87, pp. 138-139: "*et favit precipue contra illos immanens et perfidos iniquitatis filios, Christi nominis inimicos et nostros specialissimos hostes, Turcos*".

campaign led by István Losonci and then by the king himself), during the winter of 1396-1397 (Stibor's campaign against Vlad), in 1397 and 1399 (preparatives of the royal army on hearing rumours about Turkish incursions in Wallachia), in 1404 (the same aims) and in 1416 (in order to support Mustafa). Likewise, *auxilium*, as a vassal obligation, was put into practice on the occasion of the crusade of Nicople, when Mircea and his contingent were treated as auxiliary troops of the Hungarian king. We have already mentioned that the participation in the anti-Ottoman crusade had been also mentioned in the deed of March 7th 1395. There is no doubt that Mircea or any other Romanian contingent was not involved in a direction other than the anti-Ottoman front. Mircea's main part in the system of buffer states created by Sigismund was to defend the frontier with the Turks.

An important issue of the relations of vassalage between the Hungarian kings and the Romanian voivodes is the latter's exertion of authority over some Hungarian territories from Transylvania. Romanian historians have been repeatedly stating that the Hungarian kings' right of suzerainty was a direct consequence of the Romanian rule over those possessions and that it was acknowledged only in relation with the respective matter. Particularly after 1918, Romanian historians considered Mircea a unifier of Romanian territories, antecessor of Michael the Brave who was to unite Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia in 1600. During the communist era, the subject was overstated and the true nature of Mircea's properties in Transylvania was distorted. This type of interpretations has continued after 1989 as well¹⁷⁶.

At first, we have to admit that Mircea's possessions – the Land of Făgăraș, the Amlaș, the Banat of Severin, the fortresses of Bologa and Bran – were included in the Hungarian kingdom. The Wallachian voivode's right of ownership granted at different times had never meant their separation from the jurisdiction of the Hungarian king. They were mere revocable feudal properties assigned to Wallachian voivode on different occasions. This type of ownership is called "pro honore" in Hungarian historiography, in other words the right of possession was entirely up to the king and lasted only as long as the beneficiary performed certain engagements or services in favour of the king¹⁷⁷. The "pro honore" properties could be neither inherited nor subject to any commercial transactions. On the other hand, the temporary owner enjoyed all the advantages of ownership, i.e. the right of collecting taxes, of judging, of donating parts of the domain to his own vassals, etc.

So Mircea was granted only a revocable right of possession on the properties in Transylvania. It should also be mentioned that the Hungarian king's

¹⁷⁶ I. A. Pop, *Stăpânirile lui Mircea* (see note 24), pp. 685-693; idem, *Autoritatea domnească* (see note 25), pp. 4-11, 14. N. Edroiu, *Mircea cel Mare și Transilvania*, in vol. *Marele Mircea Voievod*, ed. by I. Pătroiu, pp. 181-190; idem, *Posesiunile domnilor Țării Românești și Moldovei în Transilvania (secolele XIV-XVI). Semnificații politico-sociale și cultural-istorice*, in vol. *Istoria României. Pagini transilvane*, Cluj-Napoca, 1994, ed. by acad. Dan Berindei, pp. 45-62; etc.

¹⁷⁷ The most important features of the right of possession called "pro honore" are presented by P. Engel, *A Honor (A magyarországi feudális birtokformák kérdéséhez)*, in *Történelmi Szemle*, 81, 1981, no. 1, pp. 11-19; Idem, *Honor, vár, ispánság. Tanulmányok az Anjou-királyság kormányzati rendszeréről*, in *Századok*, 116, 1982, no. 5, pp. 880-920.

suzerainty was not exerted only over the properties in question but on Wallachia as well. The claims of suzerainty had been inherited from the Angevines and went back as far as the XIIIth century. The offering of feudal properties in Transylvania as a kind of supplement was common practice at the time.

Mircea the Old did not maintain his control over these domains during all the years of his rule in Wallachia. His authority depended on the evolution of the relations with the suzerain. He acknowledged the revocable nature of his rights in a document referring to the Land of Făgăraș.

A question almost impossible to solve is the moment when Mircea came into possession of the Lands of Făgăraș and Amlaș, territories situated in the south of Transylvania, at the borders of Wallachia. P. P. Panaitescu claimed that what Mircea did was to cross the mountains and settle his rule over Făgăraș but he admitted that the moment and the circumstances of this action remained uncertain¹⁷⁸. However, the year proposed by the historian, i.e. 1388, was subsequently adopted by Romanian historiographers.

In spite of the internal difficulties Sigismund of Luxemburg had to face during the first years of his rule, the Wallachian voivode could not simply have started a campaign aimed at conquering the territories in the south of Transylvania. First, the high peaks of the Făgăraș Mountains separate Wallachia and Transylvania. In the second place, a Saxon and Hungarian population inhabited the regions along the roads of access guarded by the two fortresses at the border, Bran and Turnu. Moreover, since 1389 the king and the royal army had been present close to the Romanian borders – in the Timișoara region – before and after the campaigns in Serbia. And to conclude, we have to admit that Mircea could have exerted the right of possession over the Transylvanian fiefs only with the Hungarian authorities' agreement. But this agreement could be reached only as a consequence of the pledge of fidelity. The first mention of his authority over the territories situated "beyond the mountains" is made in a document written in late 1389¹⁷⁹. If his prerogatives were real and not formal, the first exchange of messages between the Wallachian voivode and the Hungarian king may have taken place on the occasion of the king's first stay in the region of Timișoara, i.e. during that spring. So it is only as a consequence of these alleged contacts and of at least one promise of homage (as it took longer to prepare the sovereigns' meeting) that Sigismund granted to Mircea the authority over the Transylvanian feuds. We have already mentioned that the relations between the two rulers had certainly improved by the beginning of 1390¹⁸⁰. Indeed, the only acceptable reason for this improvement could have been the acceptance of the Hungarian suzerainty. Still, there must have been a certain delay between the moment of the formal acceptance (following the exchange of envoys) and the actual acknowledgement of vassalage.

¹⁷⁸ P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 190, 192.

¹⁷⁹ *DRH*, B, I, no. 10, p. 28-30.

¹⁸⁰ The king's interest for Wallachia during his stay at Timișoara is further confirmed by the commercial privileges granted to Transylvanian merchants for their trade in the regions situated to the south of the Carpathians: *DRH*, D, I, p. 120-121.

Similar but not identical is the situation of the Banat of Severin, a region situated to the far west of Wallachia. Unfortunately, the exact extent of this geographical area has not been determined yet. Still, it is known that it comprised the territories surrounding the fortresses of Severin, Orșova and Mehadia. Hungarian bans of Severin are attested up to 1393. Romanian historians have claimed that their mission in the Banat was to regain these territories¹⁸¹ and that they ruled effectively only the region of Timișoara¹⁸². The county of Timișoara was a medieval administrative institution in the region, which only in modern times came to be called the Banat!!!

Early in 1390 the king made a donation in favour of a Romanian knezes who lived near the fortress of Mehadia and ordered the *banus* of Severin – who was Hungarian – to investigate the status of the respective property¹⁸³. So, while Mircea had the title of *banus* of Severin, a Hungarian official exerted his authority there! This situation can be interpreted in the sense that at that moment Mircea had not come yet into possession. On the other hand, sharing authority over this not very large territory seems improbable. So, the presence of the Hungarian *banus* of Severin in 1392 could be explained by the fact that there had been several stages of coming into possession: initially, Mircea was promised the territory as a result of the first exchange of envoys in 1389 (in his turn, he sent his promise of paying homage) and he assumed the title of ban; then, from February-March 1391, when he acknowledged his vassalage, to 1392 when he came effectively into possession of the Banat, there is a delay during which Mircea the Old met certain oppositions. The remark noted by Pera in June 1392 on the good relations between the Wallachian voivode and Hungary may refer to an exchange of emissaries that clarified the status of the promised territory. The delay could also be explained by the resistance of the old Hungarian ban¹⁸⁴. Only during the period of Mircea's relative independence (1408-1411) was the Banat to be administered again by a Hungarian ban¹⁸⁵.

At some other time, Mircea the Old was given the domain of the fortress of Bologa (Huedin) in Transylvania. This happened, as it has been seen, in 1398¹⁸⁶. The fortress was meant to serve as a refuge in case the voivode had to face a situation similar to that of 1394-1397, when he had been driven by the Turks¹⁸⁷. At that time, the danger of a new Ottoman incursion seemed imminent, so Mircea would insist on getting Sigismund's support warning him that otherwise he would

¹⁸¹ I. Minea, *op. cit.* (see note 10), p. 16-17; I. A. Pop, *Stăpânirile lui Mircea* (see note 24), p. 686.

¹⁸² P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 193.

¹⁸³ *DRH*, D, I, p. 124.

¹⁸⁴ A similar situation was to happen after circa a century when king Mathia gave the domain and the fortress of Ciceu to Steven the Great but the new beneficiary came into possession only around 1500, after the old ruler had been offered a compensation.

¹⁸⁵ A Hungarian *banus* is attested between 1408 and 1409: P. Engel, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1301-1457*, I, p. 33.

¹⁸⁶ I. Pataki, *op. cit.* (see note 17), pp. 424-425; A. A. Rusu, *Începuturile cetății feudale de la Bologa*, in *Acta Musei Porolissensis*, 1980, IV, p. 413; I. A. Pop, *Stăpânirile lui Mircea* (see note 24), p. 691.

¹⁸⁷ I. A. Pop, *Stăpânirile lui Mircea* (see note 24), p. 692, correlates Mircea's coming into possession of this fortress with his matrimonial relation with a Hungarian noblewoman.

pledge fidelity to the sultan. This donation was taken back from Mircea during the period when his relations with the Hungarian king became colder, i.e. some time between 1408 and 1412.

However, after resuming their traditional relationship in 1412, the Wallachian voivode got another fortress, situated at the border of the two countries, i.e. the fortress of Bran. The date of 1412 set for the coming into possession is further proved by the fact that during the autumn the Voivode of Transylvania moved out the customs to Braşov¹⁸⁸. The relocation of the customs in the autumn of 1412 is a certain sign that the fortress of Bran, the old customs, had been recently donated to Mircea the Old¹⁸⁹. This donation has to be correlated with the resuming of the traditional relations of vassalage, or even to a new homage, paid by means of delegates. The fortress of Bran was to remain under Romanian rule until 1419 (it was also ruled by Mihail, Mircea's successor). The Romanian voivode imposed here new custom taxes, which were annulled only after the fortress returned under the direct administration of the Hungarian king's officials.

The relations of vassalage established between Sigismund of Luxemburg and Mircea the Old had an economic connotation as well. The trade routes connecting the Levant to Transylvania, and Hungary respectively, crossed Wallachia. The merchants from Braşov and Sibiu (two Saxon towns situated in the south of Transylvania) enjoyed a series of commercial privileges granted both by the Hungarian crown and by the Romanian voivodes. After Hungary had lost right of direct access to the sea on the Dalmatian coast in favour of the Venetians, the economic importance of the route to the mouth of the Danube increased considerably. Thus, in 1412, Sigismund initiated an ambitious project, which aimed at resuming the East – West commercial traffic at the mouth of the Danube, across Wallachia and Moldavia¹⁹⁰. In spite of numerous attempts, the subsequent political unfolding of events delayed the actual achievement of this project. The respective relations of vassalage became economically important only after the initiation of this project, i.e. starting from 1412.

An aspect that could not be elucidated is Mircea the Old's marriage to a Hungarian noblewoman. According to some documents dating back 1399-1400, a certain lady, wife of voivode Mircea, owned some properties in Zala county in Hungary¹⁹¹. Because of the ambiguity of the information there are different

¹⁸⁸ DRH, D, I, p. 196.

¹⁸⁹ We find the same date in Ş. Papacostea: *Începuturile politicii comerciale a Țării Româneşti și Moldovei (secolele XV-XVI)*. *Drum și stat*, in SMIM, 1983, X, p. 20, but the historian attached too much importance to the economical relations to the detriment of those of vassalage. Most historians have dated the donation as early as 1395 or 1406, on the occasion of the meetings of the voivode and the king (but ignore or even deny its significance): I. Minea, *op. cit.* (see note 10), p. 85; P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 194-195; *Istoria României*, II, p. 366; Viorica Pervain, *Din relațiile Țării Românești cu Ungaria* (see note 20), p. 97; N. Constantinescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 23), pp. 143-144; I. A. Pop, *Stăpânirile lui Mircea* (see note 24), p. 690; etc.

¹⁹⁰ Ş. Papacostea, *Kilia et la politique orientale de Sigismond de Luxembourg*, in RRH, 1976, no. 3, p. 421-436.

¹⁹¹ I. Nagy, D. Véghely, Gy. Nagy, *Zala vármegye története*, II, Budapest, 1890, p. 298-300; *Zs. okl.*, I, p. 684; I. Pataki, *op. cit.* (see note 17), p. 426, note 5.

identifications based on the neighbouring properties and on the previous owners of the respective lady's properties. Romanian historians considered her a member of the Cilli family¹⁹² or of the Bánffy family¹⁹³. Elemer Mályusz, a Hungarian historian and expert in the matter, considered her a member of the Läckfi family¹⁹⁴. This identification is worth more credit than the others. Accordingly, Mircea's marriage took place before 1397 when this renowned family became disloyal to the king. Viewed in this light, Mircea's matrimonial relation can be considered a diplomatic move – common practice at the time – meant to ensure him better support at Sigismund's court.

4. Conclusions

The relations of vassalage between Sigismund of Luxemburg, king of Hungary and Mircea the Old, voivode of Wallachia are obvious. We can identify some of the classic features of vassalage such as: the homage, which was probably rendered about four times; the vassal's *auxilium*, inscribed in the deed of March 7th 1395 and put into practice on the occasion of the crusade of Nicople; the suzerain's *auxilium*, put into practice for several times in the battles against the Turks; the revocable properties in Hungary given by the king to the Romanian voivode. According to the suzerain, the vassal was bound to pay a tribute as a token of acknowledgement of his suzerainty. Documents do not offer any information on the payment of tribute during this period¹⁹⁵, but it is not impossible that it was paid or kept by Mircea as a financial support for defending the boundaries. As a consequence of his pledge of fealty and of the acknowledgement of vassalage, Mircea was given several revocable domains in Transylvania. Sigismund claimed homage by virtue of his Angevine legacy. Wallachia – represented by its ruler – was vassal to the Hungarian crown, represented by king Sigismund of Luxemburg¹⁹⁶.

Thus, the participation of both suzerain and vassal in the anti-Ottoman campaigns has to be interpreted from this perspective. Mircea preferred the Hungarian suzerainty to the Ottoman, even if there was a moment when he considered this possibility (still, it could have been only a maneuver in order to

¹⁹² P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (see note 15), p. 50.

¹⁹³ I. Pataki, *op. cit.* (see note 17), p. 428. I. A. Pop, *Stăpânirile lui Mircea* (see note 24), p. 692.

¹⁹⁴ E. Mályusz, *Zsigmond király* (see note 3), p. 112.

¹⁹⁵ By way of contrast, there are indisputable data on the fact that, in the following period, the Wallachian voivodes (Mircea's successors) paid tribute to the royal treasury: *DRH*, D, I, pp. 404-406.

¹⁹⁶ The epithet "one and only lord" in the Wallachian sovereigns' denomination (and Mircea's as well) does not express a statal independence but represents one of the diplomatic formulas by which the existence of an associate sovereign is confirmed in the XIVth-XVth centuries; this is done on the purpose of stating the full rights of the ruler versus the limited or yielded rights of the associate ruler. The denomination can be traced back to the titles of the Byzantine emperors and was borrowed by the Bulgarians and Serbians as well: E. Vîrtosu, *Ce înseamnă „domn singur stăpânitor” în titulatura domnească a Țării Românești și a Moldovei?*, in *Analele Universității „C. I. Parhon” București*, seria Științelor sociale, Istorie, 9, 1957, pp. 45-58. In spite of the author's demonstration, the advocates of the full independence of Mircea the Old still use this false argument.

win the king's support). The recollection of the Bulgarian states – which initially were vassals but afterwards were occupied by the sultan – was too vivid in the collective memory to allow Mircea and the Wallachian feudal elite to make any other political choice.

Wallachia was integrated as a buffer state in the global defensive system created by Hungary. This defensive strategy was initiated by Sigismund immediately after the defeat of the crusaders at Nicople and was put into practice after 1402. Mircea the Old and Wallachia set the example during the years 1394-1396. Mircea's interventions in the internal conflicts from the Ottoman Empire granted him fame and notoriety, attested both in Turkish chronicles and Bulgarian lore. But, at least in 1416, the Hungarian king was present behind Mircea's scheming. A Transylvanian army lead by the Voivode of Transylvania joined Mircea's troops in his failed attempt to impose Mustafa.

At the same time, Mircea the Old lead a duplicitous policy meant to ensure his position in case his suzerain's pressures might endanger it. He concluded for several times alliances with the king of Poland, the Hungarian king's enemy on grounds of their dispute over Louis I's legacy. These alliances were obviously defensive because their clauses were to be put into practice – theoretically – only if and when one of the parties were attacked by the Hungarian king. They were supposed to be secret but, taking into consideration the Lithuanian proposals for an anti-Ottoman pact (1415) which came to be known by the Hungarian authorities, we may assume that other such agreements did not remain unknown. Duplicitous policy – common practice of Byzantine diplomacy – secured a balance between Sigismund's pressures, Mircea's status of vassalage and his tendency to gain his independence - or at least autonomy.

We can assume that, in a first stage, Mircea accepted *de facto* the Hungarian's king suzerainty. Then, under Ottoman pressure and after being driven away from his throne, his submission attained the highest degree especially in the period lasting from 1395 to 1402, since Mircea depended on Sigismund's support to regain his power. A less tensed situation at the southern borders because of the Ottoman domestic conflicts allowed Mircea to lead a more independent external policy and, between 1408 and 1412, to even break the bond of vassalage. But, after the treaty of Lublau, which settled the disputes between the kings of Poland and Hungary, Mircea had no other choice but to acknowledge once more Sigismund's suzerainty.

The relations of vassalage established between the Wallachian voivode and the Hungarian king is part of the more common feudal practice of the period. They should be interpreted in the light of the medieval mentality rather than under the influence of the Romanian-Hungarian relations in the past two centuries.

Translated by Cristina Felea.