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### Chronology and Numismatic Inferences of the first *Muşatin* Stone Fortresses

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**Abstract**: The paper aims at reviving and bringing into a new focus the highly complex issues raised by the chronology of the first *Muşatin* stone fortresses (the Şcheia, Suceava and Neamţ fortresses). While a throughout analysis of the context these fortresses were raised reveals determining factors and conjectural political consequences, some details, brought into light both by archaeological researches undertaken on these fortifications and some related logical connections, raise significant doubts on the chronological succession of the first Moldavian monetary emissions. The paper starts from the excursus published in our study on the genesis of outer Carpathian medieval towns, later unfolded in a presentation at the national symposium *The Monument – tradition and future*, in Iaşi.

Keywords: Moldavia, Suceava, Şcheia, Neamţ, Peter the Ist, fortresses.

Our paper aims at reviving the particulary complex topic of the first *Muşatin* stone fortresses, for both historians as well as all those interested in the Moldavia's historical beginnings.

At first view, such an attempt might appear superfluous, given its rather unfruitful reccurence in specialized studies; nevertheless, a throughout analysis of all available written and archaeolgical sources on the matter offers several solid insights capable of settling, perhaps for good, the controversies surrounding the chronology of the succesive building of Scheia, Suceava, and Neamt fortresses, under the rule of Peter the Ist (1375-1391). Moreover, archaeological derived data seriously question the chronology of the first Moldavian monetary emissions' succession, namely the silver grossi conclusively attributed to Peter the Ist; through their clear stratigraphical context, they turned out to be an essential element in dating the above mentioned fortresses.

Older and newer studies inspired by the historical vision of the renowned scholar N. Iorga (1928) have repeatedly stated that the monetary

emission constitutes, first of all, an economic fact issued from necessities which, in Moldavia's case, would be linked to the opening of the international commercial road from Lvov to the Black Sea, through Cetatea Albă. As Şt. S. Gorovei, the relentless researcher of the eastern Carpathian medieval state' beginnings, put it, "I think the link between the first Moldavian monetary emission and the opening of the Moldavian commercial road is worth remembering" (Şt. S. Gorovei, 2014a, p. 208).

Moreover, any specialist had to admit that, according to the medieval practice, monetary emission represented a sovereign right, exceptionally granted to politically high-ranked vassals. In the outer Carpathians medieval context, such were the solidly documented cases of rulers Dan the II<sup>nd</sup> and Vlad Dracul, to whom Sigismund of Luxembourg, acting under the late crusade's constraints, *volens nolens* granted such rights as meaningful and bounding privileges (A. Veress, 1931).

Linking the aforementioned, otherwise

unavoidable practice with the particular case of the Muşatin Moldavia, Şt. S. Gorovei (2014a) heatedly and repeatedly argued that Peter the I<sup>st</sup> benefited from this fundamental right, which was essential to the full development of his country, only after becoming a vassal for the Polish crown and King Vladislav Jagiello, in the fall of 1387.

We fully accept both the ideea of Peter the Ist receiving the monetary emission right from a sovereign political power, as well as its strict necessity, given the opening of the commercial road from Poland to the Dniestr, on a route controlled by the Moldavian state. As far as the chronology goes, all those circumstances characterized the first years of Peter the Ist rule, whose dominion over Cetatea Albă was established since the final stage of his uncle's (Latcu) reign (1367-1375). Without going over details of an already published demonstration (D. Căprăroiu, 2013; D. Căprăroiu, 2014a; D. Căprăroiu, 2014b), we will only state that written documents of the time, inadequately interpreted and correlated by previous researchers, put forward several conclusions, briefly presented in the following.

Over the last years of his reign, Laţcu faced the dominant tendencies of Louis of Anjou in Moldavia, coupled with an ineffective protection from the Pope (Ş. Papacostea, 1999a), which compelled him to renounce his previously established allegiance to the Catholic Church (C. Auner, 1913) and to return to the Orthodox faith, as proven through his burial in the Rădăuți necropolis (L. Bătrâna, A. Bătrâna, 2012). As Ş. Papacostea (1999a, p. 129) stated, "Laţcu's action during those years was part of the orthodox reaction started in Bizanţ, and supported, among other important political figures, by Vlaicu of Valachia.".

Given this political context, the following document, largely ignored by researchers, holds a special significance. On October the 13th, 1374, the royal Hungarian magistrate Jacob of Scepus decides to delay a trial, due to the fact that one of the suitors enrolled "in the army set against the Moldavians"/"eo quod idem unacum domino Ladizlao duce Oppuliensi ad exercitum contra Maldvanenses habitum esset profecturus" (ap. Ş. Papacostea, 1999a, The p.128). military was certainly due to Latcu's intervention advancement - at the same time as Vladislav Vlaicu entered the Milcov Archbishopy territories (Ş. Papacostea, 1999a; S. Iosipescu, 2003) – in south-eastern Moldavia, which put an end to the Angevine Kingdom's control in the area, taking over Cetatea Albă, supposedly through a condominium with the presumptive Genovese colony already in place (Şt. Andreescu, 2000). Although documentary information clearly reflects this course of events, most researchers missed their accurate interpretation.

First, there are the dates in the Patriarchy letters from 1401, confirming the ordaining of Iosif as "archbishop of Moldovlahia" by the Halici metropolitan "kir Antonie", on the Asprokastron episcopal seat, "in Moldovlahia and not elsewhere" (FHDR, 1982, p. 273-275). Actually, Antonie ruled over the Ruthenian orthodox metropolitan church between 1371-1375; afterwards, the church was liquidated and he was forced to leave the residence, due to the founding of a Catholic archbishopy in Halici (St. Andreescu, 1998). Thus, Iosif's ordaining at Asprokastron/Cetatea Albă, "in Moldovlahia and not elsewhere" could have taken place only during this timeframe; the documents thus eliminate any doubts on the whereabouts and the disputed appurtenance of the episcopal seat (V. Spinei, 1992; St. Andreescu, 1998; L. Pilat, 2012).

Secondly, the Pope's correspondence of October the 13<sup>th</sup> 1374 with the archbishops of Strigoniu and Calocea, as well as with Louis of Anjou, brought up the acclaimed mass converting of Romanians (multitudinis nacionis Wlachorum) at the Hungarian borders, neighbouring the Mongols, in a region lacking an archbishopy or even a simple church. The Pope decides to appoint the Franciscan Anton of Spoleto - "which is told to speak the language of the aforementioned people" as archbishop "to rule the aforementioned crowd" (DRH, 2002, p. 492-496). Through a combination of these dates and the ones from the Pope's letter of September the 16th, 1371, regarding the assignement of the "venerable brother Nicholas" as archbishop of Milcov, who was "ready to proceed shortly towards his said church" (DRH, 2002, p. 76-77), we can infer that the Romanians located at the Mongol borders in 1374 cannot be located inside the limits of the Milcov archbishopy, which was fully organized by then (DRH, 2002, p. 554); rather, they were to be found beyond the Siret, in south-eastern Moldavia. Starting with the fall of 1374, all information on Anton de Spoleto or on the success of the Catholic mission among those

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Romanians disappear altogether, which can be easily viewed as a consequence of Laţcu's extended rule towards the Dniestr, which, in turn, enabled Iosif's ordaining as archbishop at Cetatea Albă, as well as the military action of Ladislau of Oppeln, documented in a trivial juristic prorogation act.

Given the considerable political pressure Louis the Great exerted on Moldavia ever since the final stage of Laţcu's reign, Peter the I<sup>st</sup> manifested his obedience to the king through accepting the Catholic influence, via the Galician way, not only in his own, surely conjectural, conversion, but in that of his mother, *Lady Margareta* (Ş. Papacostea, 1965; *Călători*, 1968, p. 69), under the religious authority of the Dominican **Fratres Peregrinantes** Society, between 1376 and 1377 (Gh. Moisescu, 1942; C. Auner, 1913).

Lady Margareta's conversion to the Catholic faith under the authority of the Fratres vicariate, **Peregrinantes's** general while seemingly insignificant, has a special meaning. Unlike Latcu, whose adherence to the Catholic faith was meant to gain the Pope's protection against the Angevine aggression, Peter and Margareta faced increasing challenges. For one, the Apostolic Seat didn't manifest, over the years, the capacity and the availability of providing the necessary support; furthermore, Louis the Great acted towards strengthening the Angevine domination in the Galician region, creating the circumstances of Moldavia's permanent retrieval.

One of the king's versatile measures was to bring under his influence the general vicariate of the **Fratres Peregrinantes**, the new Eastern Europe spiritual authority endorsed by the Pope. Respected and supported by Ladislau of Oppeln, the king's delegate in Ruthenia, the Dominican missionaries sustained the king's plans of permanently subsuming the Galician region to the Hungarian Kingdom (Gh. Moisescu, 1942; P. Engel, 2006).

Thus, unable to avoid manifesting obedience towards the Angevine, Peter the I<sup>st</sup> chose prudence, awaiting a favorable outcome. Moreover, on the long run, accepting the vassalage would have ensured a series of advantages – among others, the possibility of keeping the previously conquered territories, the right to monetary emissions, and the well-known heraldic hatchment, the divided shield with lilies, part of the *Muşatin*'s dynastic coat of arms (D. Cernovodeanu, 2005).

While in the summer of 1378 (DRH, 2006, p. 469) the full Angevine sovereignty over Moldavia was in place, its acceptance was probably made official by Peter the Ist's participation at the 1377 campaign of Louis of Anjou against the Lithuanians, concluded with the conquest of the Belz and Chelm strongholds (P. Engel, 2006). Our interpretation could thus enlighten an important controversy on the failed Lithuanian military expedition against Moldavia, unfolded in December, 1377, which could have been intended as a punitive action against Hungary's allies (C. Cihodaru, 1968). In this view, the information about the Siret martyrdom of the Franciscans Luca and Valentin by the pagan Lithuanians "ab infidelibus qui arborem adorant" (ap. Gh. Moisescu, 1942, p. 94-95; Ş. Papacostea, 1999b) gains importance; moreover a 1377 monetary treasure was discovered in 1912 at Siret (O. Iliescu, 1970), which could have been buried because of the Lithuanian expedition.

Pointing out the paganism of the Lithuanian attackers helps eliminate the hypothesis that the attack was orchestrated by the Koriatovici brothers, rulers of Podolia, set to avenge the death of their older brother, the famous Iurie, killed by the Moldavians (G. Popovici, 1905; St. S. Gorovei, 1997b). On the contrary, written sources, as well as data derived from the first Moldavian and Podolian monetary emission, indicate that both Peter the Ist and the (by then) fully-Christianized Koriatovici brothers were vassals of the Angevine crown, starting from 1376/1377, up until the death of their sovereign, Louis of Anjou, in 1382. Luckily, the written evidence for the September 29th, 1377 vassalage of the Podolian dukes is still available -Louis of Anjou granted them the Podolian duchy, "duces Podolie...ducatum Podolie receperunt in feudum a corona dicti regni" (ap. Ş. Papacostea, 1999b, p. 66).

The full chronological concordance between Pope Gregory the XI<sup>th</sup>'s letters to both *Lady Margareta* and the duke Alexander Koriatovici is more than significant – the Pontiff allowed their confessors to grant them absolution "in articulo mortis" (ap. Ş. Papacostea, 1999b, p. 67). Additionaly, the throughout analysis of the first Moldavian and Podolian monetary emissions

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revealed astounding analogies between the denomination and the metric standard, both emissions representing local variants of the type used in Ruthenia, during Ladislau of Oppeln's (1372-1377/8) and Louis of Anjou's (1378-1382) reigns (E. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, K. Pârvan, 2007). Furthermore, as a compelling argument for our assertions, both monetary types present a somehow common coat of arms of the two princiary families, based on *the divided shield with lilies*, obviously representing a concession from the Angevine royalty which, in the case of the Koriatovici family can be documentally proven.

Given the historical context and the written data, one could logically link the opening of the Moldavian commercial road, deriving from taking over Cetatea Albă, and the granting by Louis the Great of monetary emission rights to the first Muşatin ruler. Therefore, the considerable advantages involved in this combination of factors must have been compelling reasons for Peter the I<sup>st</sup>'s decision of accepting the Angevine sovereignty.

All these circumstances aside, once the king was dead (1382), the moment seemed right to abandon the Hungarian sovereignty, especially since the kingdom would be plagued with internal power struggles, which led to the lack of a coherent foreign policy for more than a decade (P. Engel, 2006; P. P. Panaitescu, 2000). Peter the Ist would seize the opportunity for political emancipation, initiating the construction of stone fortresses, precisely within this timeframe (M. D. Matei, 2004): Șcheia, Suceava Seat Fortress, Neamt; apart from establishing the backbone of the Moldavian defensive system, he also abandoned the Catholic milieu in Siret, moving the capital to Suceava (M. D. Matei, 1989). On the diplomatic front, the new political options of the Muşatin ruler involved his fealty pledge to King Vladislav Jagello and Queen Hedviga, in 1378 (Documentele moldovenești, 1932, p. 599-601). Thus, the fundamental element of Moldavia's foreign policy would, from then on, be a firm and consistent alliance with its powerful neighbor to the north (S. Papacostea, 1999c).

A view over the documents issued on this occasion allows the highlight of several fundamental aspects, fully validated through archaeological researches, pertaining to the relative chronology of the *Muşatin* stone fortresses, namely those in Suceava.

In the vassalage document signed on September 26th, 1378, in Lemberg, Peter the I<sup>st</sup> clearly stated that "we give homage, along with our people and country, Moldova's strongholds [*Valachie castra*], and all others domains…"; the same wording was used by the Moldavian high nobility in corroborating the vassal's fealty to the new sovereign (*Documentele moldoveneşti*, 1932, p. 601-602), which proved the existence in Moldavia of at least two fortresses at that time. Therefore, we should ask which of the strongholds credited to Peter the I<sup>st</sup> (Şcheia, Suceava Seat Fortress, Neamţ, Ţeţina, Hmielov, or the Roman wooden stronghold) was already in place in the fall of 1387?

It is undoubtedly tempting to assume that all of those fortresses were already in place at that time, but the written or archaeological sources only establish the existence of two stone fortresses in Suceava, and maybe of the one in Neamţ. Within the *Costăchescu* collection, the aforementioned document is followed by another, in the form of a letter from Peter the I<sup>st</sup>, in which the ruler stated he had trusted the Warsaw *pan*/duke with the greatest part of the loan of 3000 francs, promised to his sovereign; the letter was signed in *the Suceava fortress*, at **February 10th, 1388** (*Documentele moldoveneşti*, 1932, p. 604).

It wouldn't be too farfetched to assume that if the Suceava fortress was a fully functional edifice in February 1388, in which the ruler resided and from which he sent his correspondence, then it must have been equally functional in September, 1387; otherwise, we would have to accept that the construction was in full speed during the winter of 1387/8, which is rather implausible.

We must underline that the Cyrillic document was written in the very **fortress** (gorod) of Suceava, which is not to be mistaken for the **market town** (miasto) of Suceava, as it was contentiously done by some Romanian researchers. Șt. S. Gorovei (2008) pertinently proved this point, also stating that almost all written sources of the time clearly differentiate between *fortress* and *town;* the two terms were not used lightly, as literary effects or to alternately designate the same reality. Anyway, in the summer of 1388, the same year in which the Suceava fortress was attested,

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another meaningful, yet largely ignored document, mentioned, although slightly distorting, the town of Suceava (*Ciciov*), when listing the towns placed under the Armenian archbishop of Lvov's jurisdiction, the Catholicos Theodoros the II<sup>nd</sup>.

Going back to the plural expression our fortresses, we still have to establish which was the second Musatin fortress mentioned in the document for the fall of 1387. Without a specific written testimony, information comes only from archaeological sources. During excavation campaigns on the Septilici hill, in the north-west part of Suceava, remains of the Muşatin stone fortress of Scheia were uncovered. Since it was only 2 km away from the center of the town and, consequently, from the Seat Fortress, it would be reasonable to assume that it was built before the latter. Luckily, archaeological researches conducted within the fortress (Gh. Diaconu, N. Constantinescu, 1960) offered enough evidence towards this particular chronological sequence, even for those scholars ridden by a defective reasoning.

Without approaching further details, already presented elsewhere (M. D. Matei, 2004), suffice is to say that the architectural elements of the Scheia fortress make it seem more like a failed experiment - an attempt at implementing a quadrangular fortification in a hilly environment. Archaeologists proved that its numerous constructive faults made it unusable, leading to its abandonment while still unfinished (M. D. Matei, 2004). The constructive effort was then aimed towards the Seat Fortress, which benefited from both better strategic planning, as well as increased constructive knowledge, as was the case, several years later, with the almost flawless constructive work employed in building the Neamt fortress (M. D. Matei, 2004).

Closing in on our contribution, we have to recap some archaeological data which question the general chronology of the *Muşatin* monetary emissions, especially the *two lilies* type (K. Pârvan, 1997); numismatists invariably and arbitrarily place the latter *after* 1387. In the construction level of the Şcheia fortress, archaeologists discovered several Muşatin coins, out of which two belonged to this very monetary emission. Their discovery *within the site* makes them a valuable *terminus post quem* dating element: one was found under a

wall's foundation, while the other was found in the temporary settlement nearby the furnaces, underneath the sandstone slab of the first load of furnace I (Gh. Diaconu, N. Constantinescu, 1960).

Thus, placing this monetary release after 1387 proves to be *impossible*, for two reasons: first, the completion of the Scheia fortress precedes the building of the Suceava Seat Fortress, which was already in use in 1387, thus making it unreasoning to assume the walls were erected over an coin not yet emitted; second, even without those dating facts, historical reasoning should have rejected the notion that, after 1387, the ruler would have opted for building a surveillance fortress on the road coming from the protective state of Poland, as opposed to placing it on the road coming from the adverse state of Hungary, the one linking Gura Humorului and Suceava, through the future Vornic Oană's Tulova.

To conclude: all historical data available, from written to archaeological sources, indicate that building up the *Muşatin* stone fortresses over the course of several years could not have begun considerably later than the death of King Louis the Great (1382), whose dissapearing enabled such an endeavor. Taking into account the undisputable succesive chronology of erecting Şcheia, Suceava and Neamţ fortresses, which precedeed the act of fealty to the Polish crown, then, the beginning of the considerable constructive effort is to be found in the 1382/3 timeframe, when the *two-lilies* coins were already in use.

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