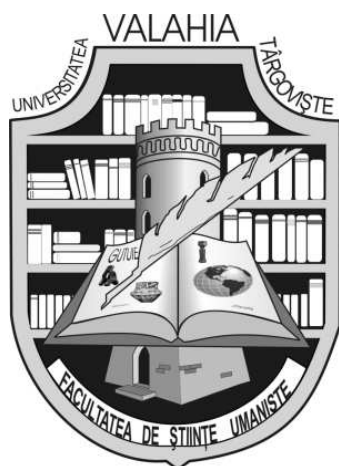


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# ANNALES



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## **A candidate to the Walachian throne. Vlad Țepeș and his exile in Moldavia (1449-1452)**

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**Key words:** candidate, voivode, times of wandering, assassinate, alliance treaty.

**Abstract:** *A candidate to the Walachian throne. Vlad Țepeș and his exile in Moldavia (1449-1452).* The exile of the young Wallachian Prince was of great interests for the Romanian and foreign historiographers for more than a century. Because of the rapid sequence of events, these times seem to transcend the our purely historical narrative and appear to belong to a chivalry romance. Vlad Țepeș' refuge in Moldavia is a very significant moment in history; it is also the time when he became an opponent of the Ottoman Empire. Just like in other states, towards the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, intrigues, conspiracies and political biases were part of the political scene of the Moldavian State. As Prince Vlad managed to successfully overcome all the obstacles that he encountered, he became once again one of the candidates to the throne of Wallachia. This time he was supported by Iancu de Hunedoara, the powerful ruler of Transylvania.

The young Vlad, son of the late ruler Vlad Dracul, one of the supporters of the Christian fight, had become, maybe without wishing it, a close friend of the empire during the almost six years spent both at the court of the sultan Murad II and in Minor Asia (R. Florescu, R. T. McNally, 1992). The international situation is favourable to the young prince, who becomes the ruler of Walachia in the autumn of 1448. The historical documents remind that prince Vlad was endowed with money, ornaments and horses and sent to Walachia with honours to rule, after having agreed to come every year to the High Porte to bring his tribute and to be submitted to the empire\*.

Surprisingly, the Ottoman Empire was passively accepting his removal, just two months later. The specialized literature brings forward the idea that Vladislav II reoccupied the throne being helped by an army of Moldavia, led by Peter II. The argument in this sense was found in a paragraph of the Byzantine historian Laonic Chalcocondil, in which it is mentioned that a messenger was sent to the Moldavian voivode by

means of whom a peace and a matrimonial alliance was concluded, and the Moldavian Voivode received help in his war against Vlad Dracul (L. Chalcocondil, 1958).

We do not eliminate the hypothesis that Vladislav II may have represented the Turkish interests in the area much better, compared to the Hungary defeated on the battlefield of the Christian suffering, at Kossovopolje. It is in this framework that the letter sent by the young voivode Vlad to the citizens of Brașov, in which he announced that he will make peace with Iancu of Hunedoara after his return from the anti-Ottoman campaign. It sheds a new light on the philo-Ottoman politics of Vlad Țepeș during his short reign (C. Șerban, 1976)

Defeated, Vlad set out to Adrianople to recover his throne. Without definite evidence, the historians support, with certain justified reserves, this series of events (Ș. Andreescu, 1998). At shelter in the Imperial Court, the wandering voivode was going to wait for a new timely moment to acquire power. Yet, the former ruler no longer represented, in the imperial capital, not

even a reserve solution. Supplementary explanations concerning this fact have been impossible to find. The lack of a reaction from the Ottoman power consolidates the idea of a momentary understanding with the new voivode of Walachia, Vladislav II. Information in this sense can be seized from the writing of the chronicler Laonic Chalcocondil who mentions that the new Walachian voievode has decided that – given the uncertain political situation – he should send emissaries to the sultan and should reconnect with the empire (L. Chalcocondil, 1958).

Vlad's choice to turn to a state engaged in the anti-Ottoman fight can only be interpreted in one way. His life must have been seriously endangered since he rapidly left the capital of the Ottoman Empire. In this context, the issue of an eventual assassination should not be considered reticently. The voivode Vladislav II's desire to get rid of the young candidate who had already occupied the throne before and had benefited of the imperial favours is perfectly explicable in the spirit of the times.

So, the presence of Vlad Țepeș in the area ruled by the Ottoman power was becoming impossible. With any sacrifice, the countries leading the anti-Ottoman fight had to be convinced that the submission to the Turkish power, in the year 1448, had represented a momentary option and not a political credo.

Only the memory of his father could have justified, initially, in a certain way, the choice made. The reception of Vlad Dracul in the Dragon's Order, in 1431, was no ordinary thing. The defense of Christianity and the anti-Ottoman crusade was at the root of this military-religious society (C. Rezachevici, 1998). Even though in many of the events in which he was later on involved, as the Turkish invasion of Transylvania in 1438 (V. Ciocâltan, 1976), he acted against the norms imposed by this distinction, the title received by the former Walachian sovereign at Nurnberg in the presence of the great sovereign, Sigismund of Luxemburg, symbolized a moment whose solemnity could not have been wiped away easily. The victory won in front of Giurgiu and of the fortified city of Turnu, along with the voivode Iancu of Hunedoara, attenuated some of the proportions of the Christian disaster from Varna (November 10, 1444) and of the controversial image of his reign.

Returning to the chain of events, we can notice that the handiest decision for Vlad Țepeș

was Moldova which, under Bogdan II, acquired a firm anti-Ottoman direction in its external politics. The treaty concluded with Hungary, mentioned in a letter sent from the town of Roman by the reigning prince Bogdan II, at the beginning of 1450, confirms this political direction\*\*.

The stage of the presence of the former ruler in Moldova remains, however, one of the most mysterious during the epoch of his pilgrimages of about eight years (1448-1456). The chronology of the events appears unclear, because of the lack of documentary information able to clarify the political situations in which the young Draculea certainly may have got involved.

Admitting that Vlad Țepeș avoided the Ottoman Empire and headed directly towards Moldova, some imagine that he may have ended up here even before the ephemeral reign of Alexander II. At present there are two hypotheses formulated concerning the origin of the character in control of the Moldavian state during the brief lapse of time under analysis.

The documents highlight that the last act bearing the seal of Petru II dates from October 10, 1448\*\*\*. Until the first months of 1449, it is considered that the country of Moldova was led by a certain Ciubăr, seen either as a member of the family of Alexandru cel Bun (Alexander the Good) (N. Iorga, 1904) or as a Hungarian commander of the Csupor lineage, sent by the Transylvanian ruler to assure Moldova's defense (C. Rezachevici, 2001). Whichever thesis we may accept, it is clear that the party governing at the time was faithful to the Christian alliance formed around Hungary.

At least beginning with February 1449\*\*\*\*, the throne of Moldavia was occupied by the minor Alexander the Young under the protectorate of Poland and of an internal boyar party. Young Alexander, a child aged around 11, did not have the capacity to control the country's affairs, which were in the hands of the same boyars of the divan of Petru II (C. Hriban, 2005). It is with their help that Vlad Țepeș must have obtained the permission to stay in Moldova.

We do not know the arguments that were important when this decision was made: the fact that the former Walachian ruler had been a vassal of the Empire or the very change of his political option. The boyars of the Princely Divan had also participated, most of them, to the vassal's homage expressed by Petru II to Poland in August 1448. So, it is natural to think that he was

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received and accepted as a former protégé of the Ottoman power with which the Polish Kingdom was maintaining peaceful relations at the time.

At the same time, we do not have any piece of evidence demonstrating that at the respective date, the Hungarian Kingdom was interested in any way in supporting him. The good relations with the Walachian ruler Vladislav II and the preparation of a candidate for the Moldavian throne (Bogdan, nephew or son of Alexander the Good) situated Vlad Țepeș rather among the undesirable characters.

The appointment of Bogdan II as ruler by the end of 1449, with military support from Transylvania\*\*\*\*, did not generate the modification of prince Vlad's situation in the Moldavian state. Brought to power by Iancu of Hunedoara, Bogdan II is constrained, even since the first months of his enthronement, to get in touch with the Polish nobles who could provide military help for young Alexander at any moment. This evolution is confirmed by the letter sent by the Moldavian ruler to the noble Ditrich Buczacski, on December 2, 1449, in which he was asked to no longer give support to young Alexander\*\*. On an eventual pressure from Hungary to chase away Vlad Țepeș, there are no available data.

So, the support given to the former ruler by Bogdan II was justly considered starting from the existence of certain kinship relations. His mother had been the sister of Roman II, the niece of Alexander the Good, and Vlad Țepeș, in his turn, was the nephew of Bogdan II (N. Stoicescu, 1976).

Moreover, the similarities between the two were not missing. Walachia had represented a shelter for the actual Moldavian ruler during the very dangerous years of his youth, even at the court of the ruler Vlad Dracul (N. Iorga, 1904). The return of this possible help remains a probable hypothesis.

The connections established by Bogdan II with the Hungarian Kingdom have rather a formal character. The weakening of the power of the governor Iancu in Hungary is the reason for it. Strong families such as Cilli or Garai now contest the offensive anti-Ottoman politics promoted by Iancu (C. Mureșan, 1968). It was the beginning of the diplomatic negotiations with the Ottoman power, concluded in 1451. The weakening of Iancu of Hunedoara's position was also felt in the relations with the extra-Carpathian

Romanian states, where the rulers had to assure, in order to remain on the throne, a minimum balance in the relations with the other states of the area as well.

From the perspective of Moldova, getting close to Hungary becomes a necessity. It can be grasped in the framework of the two alliance treaties concluded with Iancu of Hunedoara on February 11\*\*\*\*\* and July 5, 1450\*\*\*\*\*, both initiated in the context of certain Polish military actions aiming to reenthroner young Alexander.

The fights to keep the throne of Moldova proved extremely difficult, the Polish candidate managing for a while to occupy the capital from Suceava. Bogdan II will maintain his control over a part of Moldova with the town of Roman, from where he will send his first alliance letter to the voivode of Transylvania. Very probably, the ruler's son, Ștefan III, participated in the military confrontations, especially as the experience during the decisive battle of Crasna (September 6, 1450) will be used, decades later, by him, in two more famous clashes, at Vaslui and Codrul Cosminului (C. Rezachevici, 2001). The good relations with Ștefan during the period of the pilgrimages after the year 1451 can make us think that Vlad Țepeș was an active participant to the then Moldavian-Polish confrontations.

After just one year of peace, the former voivode of Walachia was once again in a very dangerous hypostasis that had not been anticipated by any of the members of the Moldavian ruler's entourage. On the night of October 15 to 16, 1451 Bogdan II fell prey to a plot, being killed in the locality of Răuseni\*\*\*\*\*. The choc must have been all the greater, as the killing was plotted by a relatively little known candidate, Petru, supported by the Polish through the intervention of the former ruler young Alexander with whom he was to share the power.

Vlad Țepeș was, for the first time since his arrival in Moldova, in a real danger. His fidelity to the deceased ruler apparently created an impossible barrage between the new power and his pretensions. The pressure was just as strong for Petru Aron, who, during a 4 months reign (October 1451 - February 1452) did not manage to emit any document and did not obtain the support of either Poland or Hungary to keep the throne.

However, the brutal changes in Moldova gave an impetus to Prince Vlad to leave these places

together with young Ștefan, the target being the south of Transylvania (L. Șimanschi, 2003).

Yet, all the problems in Moldova did not mean anything, compared to the evolution of the relations among the great powers of the area. The conclusion of the treaty from Adrianople, on November 20, 1451, between the Ottoman Empire and Hungary, built a new barrier in the way of Vlad Țepeș's plans, consolidating the position of the Walachian ruler Vladislav II.

When Mehmet II came to power, in February 1451, the Walachian voivode gets close to the Ottoman power, sending rich gifts to the sultan and to the high dignitaries, yet at the same time preserving the relations with Hungary. Thanks to the agile politics meant to maintain the balance between the two forces, the Walachian state obtained important guarantees by signing the 3 year armistice. Walachia was paying the tribute to the Porte, and the two states guaranteed Vladislav II's reign and their non-involvement in his internal problems.

From the perspective of the former ruler, Vlad Țepeș, the situation seemed without solution. Maybe this is why he tried the extreme solution: attacking Walachia and taking over the power. This piece of information can be grasped from a document sent by Iancu to the people of Brașov, on February 6, 1452, by which he was asking that the former ruler should be sent back to Moldova and no military support should be given to him, as he was trying to go against Vladislav II without informing or taking into account Iancu's will\*\*\*\*. Such an action situated Hungary in a delicate position, as long as a claimant started out from Transylvania to acquire the throne of Walachia. Iancu of Hunedoara was seriously endangering the good enacting of the Turkish-Hungarian treaty through his non-involvement in such an action.

The question that remains is what support may Vlad Țepeș had relied on at the beginning of 1452. It must have existed, at least theoretically; otherwise the concern of Hungary's governor appears meaningless.

A hypothesis admitted in this sense was the existence of a boyar party faithful to Vlad Țepeș, since his first reign, who had found shelter, even from the end of the year 1448, in the south of Transylvania (R. Ș. Ciobanu, 1979). The short period during which he occupied the throne makes it hard to admit the coalition of some boyar forces able to give him support after almost half a decennium. Even if we were to accept the

hypothesis, we need to think that such a boyar party had a philo-Ottoman orientation and, in this given context, any military action against Walachia would have been directed directly against the Ottoman Empire.

Eliminating this supposition, the only hypothesis remains the formation of an army in the area of Brașov out of his own resources or by engaging in some debts to the rich urban habitants. Such actions would have been enough to trigger the reaction of the Transylvanian voivode.

While the document of February 6 makes allusions to the return to Moldavia of the Walachian candidate, the following letter sent by Iancu of Hunedoara, on March 30, 1452, sheds even more light on this case\*\*\*\*. By means of it, the Transylvanian voivode announced the people of the town of Brașov that Vlad had returned to Moldavia. His return to Moldavia, regarded from the perspective of these two documents, is, in our opinion, indubitable.

Could a Moldavian state led for the second time by young Alexander still have provided shelter for the Walachian adventurer? The young ruler of Moldavia needed a balanced politics, especially with Transylvania, where the fugitive Petru Aron had taken refuge, and the eventual acceptance of Țepeș may have been made even based on Iancu of Hunedoara's suggestion, in order to exert a supplementary pressure on the ruler of Walachia.

The gap intervened in the Walachian-Hungarian relations marked the beginning of the ascension of Vlad Țepeș. The crisis intervened somewhere in the autumn of 1452 was strictly connected to the monetary reform introduced by Vladislav II by means of which the Romanian ducat was assimilated to the Turkish asper. The first official reaction from Iancu de Hunedoara appeared in October 1452, when he asked the people of Brașov to accept neither the Turkish nor the Romanian coin (N. Stoicescu, 1976). The acme of this conflict will be illustrated by the confiscation of the two Walachian properties in Transylvania, Amlaș and Făgăraș, which had belonged for about a century to the Walachian rulers.

The return of Vlad Țepeș in Transylvania must have occurred in the context of the breakup appeared between Iancu de Hunedoara and the Walachian ruler, so around the end of the summer of 1452.

On September 24, Vladislav II rebuked the

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people of Brașov for sheltering some of his enemies, mentioning the Walachian Cernica, who had caused serious economic damages to him\*\*\*\*\*. The enemies from the above-mentioned document may have been the allies of Țepeș or, why not, may have even acted with the tacit agreement of the Transylvanian voivode.

To conclude, the whole political network the young voivode had got involved in after having left his first reign seemed to finally clarify little by little, although some tense episodes would still exist. The most representative remains the plot from Geoagiu, related by the ruler himself, in a letter sent to the people of the Sibiu Town, in which he had been drawn by two supporters of Vladislav II\*\*\*\*\*.

Prince Vlad arrived in Transylvania under the wing of the great protector of the Christian Europe, Iancu of Hunedoara. It was just a matter of time until the captain of the Hungarian army would send him to rule over Walachia. The sinewy road allowing him to reacquire the power was drawing to an end.

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