

ANTI-OTTOMAN CRUELTY AND CHRISTIAN RITE: THE DEEDS OF THE “REPENTING” VLAD III OF WALLACHIA

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Keywords: *Vlad III Dracula, Gabriele Rangoni, Matthias Corvinus, Sixtus IV, Papacy, Hungary, Wallachia, crusading, Church union.*

Abstract: *When Byzantium fell, Western attitude towards Greek rite Christians began to change, whether they were ‘schismatics’ or in union with Rome, following the troublesome enactment of the Council of Florence (1439). The modification, noted for Balkan Christians, crossed the Lower Danube. There laid the mostly Greek rite zones that stayed outside of Ottoman direct authority, even after Mehmed II’s victories in Serbia (1459), in Bosnia (1463) or in the Crimea (1475). These zones formed two (divided) states: Wallachia and Moldavia. The change of attitude towards Greek rite Christians was visible also in the Kingdom of Hungary, the traditional suzerain of Wallachia and Moldavia, and, by definition, Christendom’s anti-Ottoman ‘bulwark’. The realm had been shielded by a series of “buffer states”. These lands had largely collapsed by the early 1470s.*

No ruler of Wallachia or of Moldavia was “blacklisted” in the realm (and by its representatives) as ‘schismatic’ after the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium, as well as after “the miracle of Belgrade”, in 1456. The long and predominantly tolerant reign of Sigismund of Luxemburg had certainly altered the “so-to-say” Angevine rhetoric of the 1300s (that is, the Wallachians, and their lords, were ‘schismatic’ “lowlife” to be crushed). Still, the documentary (at least) change, in favour of Greek rite Wallachians appears dramatic.

In this framework we turn to the controversial figure of Vlad III Dracula of Wallachia. The ‘Germans’ may have been correct: Vlad was the monster of one – single- Christian faith. This may explain why his deeds did not lead to a collapse of the unstable Christian compromise at the Danube borders of the Ottoman Empire. Vlad was a Greek-Latin Golem (officially by calling, not by making), whose death was later lamented by both King Matthias Corvinus and Stephen III of Moldavia, the Greek rite athleta of the Papacy, Vlad’s relatives.

When Byzantium fell, Western attitude towards Greek rite Christians began¹ to change, whether they were ‘schismatics’ or in union with Rome, following the troublesome enactment of the Council of Florence (1439). The modification, noted for Balkan Christians,² crossed the Lower Danube. There laid the mostly³ Greek rite

¹ See Housley 2012, 26-29, 41-43, 102, 108).

² Petkov 1995: 171-192, at 176.

³ We recall two special “minorities” (both worth attention): the Szeklers and the Armenians.

zones that stayed outside of Ottoman direct authority, even after Mehmed II's victories in Serbia (1459), in Bosnia (1463) or in the Crimea (1475).⁴

The alteration was visible in the Kingdom of Hungary. By definition,⁵ Buda was Christendom's anti-Ottoman 'bulwark'.⁶ Its realm had been shielded by a series of "buffer states". These lands had largely collapsed by the early 1470s.⁷

No ruler of Wallachia or of Moldavia was "blacklisted" in the Hungarian realm (and by its representatives) as 'schismatic'⁸ after the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium, as well as after "the miracle of Belgrade", in 1456. Then, even the previously pro-Ottoman voivodes Peter Aaron of Moldavia and Wladislaw II of Wallachia had sided with 'athlete' John Hunyadi. He was betrayed in return by Vlad III the Impaller and by future Stephen III the Great of Moldavia (later, after 1475, John's and Skanderbeg's successor as the 'athlete' of the Papacy).⁹

The long and predominantly tolerant reign of Sigismund of Luxemburg had certainly altered the "so-to-say" Angevine rhetoric of the 1300s (*id est*: the Wallachians, and their lords, were 'schismatic' "lowlife" to be crushed).¹⁰ Still, the documentary (at least) change, in favour of Greek rite Wallachians appears dramatic.¹¹ In the Hungary, there was otherwise no shortage of enraged words to describe the treacherous stands of various voivodes of Wallachia and Moldavia.¹² The voivodes, known also for crusader "double-dealings",¹³ remained pious donors on Mount Athos¹⁴ and even loyal to the – pro-Ottoman – Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, at least nominally.¹⁵

De Dragule crudelitate

These "curiosities", that fitted the Renaissance policy of the Papacy (who saw in the Wallachians the "lost Romans" in the East"),¹⁶ may explain the contents of a letter

⁴ Pilat-Cristea 2017, 160-164; Pálosfálvi 2018, 211-218.

⁵ Preiser-Kapeller 2011, 37-62.

⁶ Srodecki 2015, 231-234.

⁷ Weber 2013.

⁸ For the edited and unedited sources, see the database <http://siebenbuergenurkundenbuch.uni-trier.de/> (the updated *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* collection).

⁹ E.g. Simon 2021, 99-105.

¹⁰ Magina 2008, 283-294.

¹¹ Simon 2021a: 153-168

¹² Cristea 2014, 85-99.

¹³ Coman 2021, 189-221.

¹⁴ Bojović-Năsturel 2003, 149-176.

¹⁵ Simon 2008, 587-600, at 590-591.

¹⁶ For (Pontifical) Wallachian changes: Pop-Simon 2022, 33-54.

that reached Rome in March 1476. It was deemed important enough to be copied for the Sforza in Milan,¹⁷ as well as for the Gonzaga in Mantua.¹⁸

The letter was addressed to Sixtus IV, a peculiar crusader and unionist heir of Saint Peter,¹⁹ by Gabriele Rangoni, the bishop of Eger and former bishop of Transylvania.²⁰ The lengthily report focused on the anti-Ottoman exploits of Matthias Corvinus' captains: 'the magnificent Ladislas, named Dragula' (i.e. Vlad III, *olim* voivode of Wallachia) and of the Serbian despot Vuk Branković.²¹ By the start of spring 1476, their campaign in the Ottoman parts of Serbia and Bosnia had proven to be a complete success, both militarily and financially.²²

Rangoni was however utterly disgusted in particular by Vlad's massacres and the cruelties.²³ Yet, at no point, did he call either Vlad or Vuk²⁴ 'schismatics', nor did he connect their violence to their – undisputed – Greek rite background, though he recalled even the "private" acts of cruelty of *Dragula*, the new husband of Justine Szilágyi, Matthias' maternal cousin.²⁵ In his report, the bishop neither mentioned this matrimonial union (1473/1474), nor noted that the "non-public" mad-deeds of Vlad dated back to the days when he had been married to Matthias' *sister* (1460s), or immediately after her death (previously, since 1453, Vlad's first Hunyadi wife had allegedly been John's *sister*).²⁶

On one hand, Rangoni kept his silence about the family ties that connected Vlad to Matthias. The ties were no secret.²⁷ On the other, the prelate provided a most vivid account of Vlad's violence. That violence was already common knowledge.²⁸ Seemingly, for Rangoni, Vlad and Vlad alone was the problem, a problem that – manifestly – the same bishop tried to isolate from its context.²⁹

¹⁷ Archivio di Stato di Milano, Milan (ASM), Archivio Visconteo-Sforzesco/ Ducale Sforzesco (A.D.S.), Potenze Estere, *Ungheria*, cart. 650. 1452-1489, fasc. 22. 1476, not numbered (nn).

¹⁸ Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua (ASMa), Archivio Gonzaga (A.G.), E. Affari esteri, V. *Ungheria*, busta 533. 1395-1692, nn (an identical copy). On these copies, see most recently Weber et alii 2020, no. 89, pp. 115-123, at 115-116.

¹⁹ Weber 2004, 309-321.

²⁰ E.g. Hlaváček 2010, 107-118.

²¹ For the main edition: Thallóczy-Áldásy 1907, no. 369, pp. 265-268.

²² For the events: Andreescu 1977, 259-272, in particular 262-264.

²³ This was already noticed, yet was also over-emphasized by Iorga 1901, 149-161, at 160-161.

²⁴ Injured Vuk was viewed positively by Rangoni (in comparison to Vlad), meaning, under the circumstances, that he had efficiently served King Matthias, the bishop's secular master.

²⁵ Most recently: Nagy-Szilágyi 2022, 125-164.

²⁶ The second Hunyadi wife of Vlad was still alive in fall 1464 (Gündisch et alii 1981, no. 3389, p. 192; no. 3400, 200).

²⁷ For Vlad's third marriage: Kubinyi 2008, 17-18.

²⁸ For instance: Willcocks 2007, 183-196, mainly at 188-189, 193-194.

²⁹ His words were quite explicit: [...] *But I will not pass under silence the cruelties of Dragula that are all too well-known to the entire world* [...] ([...] *Sed Dragule crudelitatem non*

Only some three years earlier (1472-1473), Nicholas, bishop of Modruš, turned into Matthias' opponent,³⁰ had depicted Vlad as a monster, defining for the degenerate eastern heirs of the Romans: the Wallachians.³¹ A decade before him (1463), Pope Pius II had deplored the fate of the Roman Wallachians. They *had become more barbarous than the barbarians*, ending up under Vlad's rule. Yet, on the eve of his ill-fated Crusade of Ancona,³² Pius had also offered a literally "get-out-of-jail card" to *good-looking* Vlad: Vlad was being *wasted* in prison.³³ Still, neither Nicholas, nor Pius II had labelled Vlad and the Wallachians as *schismatics*.³⁴ Though, unlike the bishop of Modruš and the pope, he made no references to the "larger – Roman (Wallachian) – picture", Rangoni followed in their footsteps when he said nothing about the (real) faith of Vlad *Dragula*.³⁵

I. Church Union and Holy War in the Eastern Borderlands of Christendom

A twofold question emerges. 1. Was the Union of Florence still deemed valid in 1476 in the Kingdom of Hungary and at its outer limits?³⁶ 2. Were massacres justified as long as they served the purposes of Holy War?³⁷ Recent scholarship provides an adaptable positive answer to the first part of the issue:³⁸ depending on contemporary interests (outlined by Sixtus IV himself in the "Greek rite instructions" sent to the Hungarian clergy in early 1477)³⁹ the Florentine union was valid, in Hungary at least until the extinction of the male line of the "half-blood" Hunyadi family (1504-1505), the natural supporters of this Christian compromise.⁴⁰ Recent scholarship also offers a quite negative – less adaptable – response to the second part:⁴¹ in the pre-

pertransibo a qua toti orbi notissimus est [...]). Rangoni's words also sounded almost like a "disclaimer".

³⁰ Špoljarić 2019, 457-491.

³¹ For the text and an analysis, see also Papacostea 1965, 15-24, at 20-21.

³² E.g. O'Brien 2015, 15-17; Housley 2012, 9-11, 120-123.

³³ Simon 2021, 50-51, 151-152.

³⁴ The original texts: *Pii Secundi Pontificis Maximi Commentarii rerum memorabilium que temporibus suis contigerunt*, "ed. Johannes Gobellinus" (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1614), XI.12, pp. 296-297 (edition available online); Mercati 1937, 205-267, at 217-218.

³⁵ On this disputed confessional matter: Simon 2021b, 31-60, at 38-39.

³⁶ Érdühelyi 1897, 28-56, at 48-53; Diaconescu 1997, 29-62, at 50-56.

³⁷ The question is at least as old as crusading (Kedar 1998: 11-31). Yet, a new approach is needed.

³⁸ In particular: Pop 2020, 66-78, 260-261.

³⁹ Theiner 1859, no. 657, p. 454 (henceforth VMHH).

⁴⁰ Rusu 1999, 77-127.

⁴¹ See Annas-Paulus 2020. Die *Geschichten* were a complex junction between contemporary *dispacci* and the later *Flugblätter*, seasoned with humanistic excerpts from Suetonius and the *Historia Augusta*, as well with Christian references to the Roman imperial tyrants Nero or Diocletian. Consequently, these *Geschichten* had coeval traction.

Reformation German environment, the deeds of Vlad III of Wallachia were sadistic crimes, pure and simple.⁴²

The latter point is particularly important. 1. Vlad's and Vuk's actions from early 1476 impacted not only Muslims (Turks above-all), but also Christians (of the Greek rite), and led to – arguably – the first massacre of Srebrenica.⁴³ 2. Vlad and Vuk, both former adversaries of the Hunyadis, had spent time in active Ottoman (Muslim) service⁴⁴ before eventually returning to the Christian side. 3. *Dragula* and Vuk Branković, the *Drachendespot*,⁴⁵ were the offspring of Vlad II *Dracul* (Vlad III's father)⁴⁶ and Stephen Lazarević (Vuk's great-uncle),⁴⁷ members of the Order of the Dragon established by Sigismund of Luxemburg and lords who had never renounced their Greek rite faith.⁴⁸

These details bring to attention “nuances”. They are particularly important in the framework of the German and the Russian *post-mortem* Draculian stories from the late 1480s.⁴⁹ Both the marriage of Vlad to Matthias' ‘sister’ (which took indeed place in early 1462)⁵⁰ and his conversion to Catholicism by Matthias (after the same king had sent Vlad to prison at the end of the same year 1462)⁵¹ were recorded either to redeem Vlad's life⁵² or to further tarnish his career.⁵³

Irrespective of aim (general or particular, in the case of the abovementioned events), the stories were constructed around congenital violence in regions viewed as “blood-lands” by 1476.⁵⁴ There, long after Vlad's death (in winter 1476-1477), conflicts, involving up to 400 men on each side, were not deemed breaches of Ottoman-Hungarian prolonged truces.⁵⁵ Vlad's career (and that of Vuk) in Matthias's service perfectly fitted the picture. Rangoni too admitted this in fact in his letter to Sixtus IV: Vlad was the ‘greatest fear of the Turks’ and this – somehow (the bishop

⁴² “Dracula during the Reformation” could prove a most rewarding modern research topic.

⁴³ In this respect: Simon 2018, 517-540, at 521.

⁴⁴ E.g. Stoicescu 1976, 33; Mitrović 2003, 19-33. Vlad too spent (as a hostage however) some six years in the Ottoman Empire (from 1442 to 1448).

⁴⁵ See also Unrest 1957, p. 68 (on August 1476).

⁴⁶ Minea 1919.

⁴⁷ Popović 2010, 103-106. Vuk was the son of Grgur, the blinded – by the Ottomans – heir of despot George Branković, who had succeeded his maternal uncle, Stephen Lazarević (1427).

⁴⁸ Chihaiia 1993, 64-83; Ivanović 2021, 137-150 (Constantine the Philosopher's “selective memory” of Stephen's rule).

⁴⁹ For the transactions: Cazacu 2017, Appendix, 357-363, 364-369.

⁵⁰ Bianu 1883, 30-47, at no. 1, p. 34; Weber et alii 2020, 204-207.

⁵¹ According to Michael Beheim, Jan Jiskra, John Hunyadi's nemesis, who had just entered the service of Matthias, conducted the arrest of Vlad (Simon 2021, 118, note 12).

⁵² In the German narrative (see Ursprung 2018, 45-60).

⁵³ In the Russian narrative (see also Luria 1964, 5-18, at 14-16).

⁵⁴ Perspectives: Motta 1889, 145-153; Kidwell 1989, 32-37.

⁵⁵ Until the early 1520s: Kubinyi 2011, 365-434, at 375, note 29.

of Eger avoided explicit phrasing)⁵⁶ – justified Matthias’s decision to “un-cage” the ‘magnificent Ladislas, named Dragula’.

II. An Observant Franciscan Bishop of Transylvania

For the prelate, the zealous and trusted disciple of Giovanni da Capestrano and naturally an observant Franciscan,⁵⁷ the –anti-Ottoman and Hunyadi (too)– existence of Vlad was in itself a compromise, as much as he avoided saying that when addressing Sixtus IV, the former minister-general of the Franciscan Order.⁵⁸ Well acquainted with East-Central European affairs and anti-Ottoman (as well as anti-Hussite) crusading since the early 1450s,⁵⁹ Rangoni had been bishop of Transylvania (1472-1475)⁶⁰ at the time of Vlad’s “liberation”, and of the crusader rise of Vlad’s and Matthias’ foe and friend, Greek rite Stephen III of Moldavia, Venice’s favourite.⁶¹ Sixtus had also appointed him legate for the war against the Turks (1474),⁶² amidst the anti-Ottoman attacks conducted in Wallachia by Stephen (attacks reported to enable the return to power of Vlad, Matthias’ favourite).⁶³ Rangoni was familiar with the conflicts and compromises of the multi-ethnic Transylvanian voivodate,⁶⁴ not so much with its “daily facts” (because of his absences from the province), but with its “grander issues” (due to his activity as Papal envoy and as royal diplomat).⁶⁵

Pius had placed Transylvania at the heart of both *Dacia* (the name of the old Roman province),⁶⁶ a kingdom “added” to the disputed Hungarian crown of Matthias

⁵⁶ [...] *Tandem vero superiori anno liberum fecit et ad expeditionem in Turcos destinavit, quibus singulari est terrori* [...]. Previously, Rangoni had stated that Matthias had kept Vlad in prison for 15 years (!).

⁵⁷ See also Pellegrini 2017, 5-26, especially 11-13, 21-22.

⁵⁸ E.g. Goffen 1986, 218-262. Sixtus continued to wear the Franciscan habit underneath his Papal robes.

⁵⁹ Kalous 2016, 75-89.

⁶⁰ He was named bishop of Transylvania on December 16, 1472, nuncio *cum potestatis legati de latere* on August 16, 1474, and bishop of Eger on April, 24, 1475 (Untergehrer 2012, 476-478).

⁶¹ Cristea-Pienaru 2012, 17-36; Housley 2012, 33-34; Pilat-Cristea 2017, 143-149.

⁶² Kalous 2010, 229-230; Untergehrer 2012, 477.

⁶³ Simon 2007, 25-39, here 30-33.

⁶⁴ Kubinyi 1988, 65-73, at 67; Pop 2011, 93-101.

⁶⁵ In this respect, he was quite similar to John Filipec, another of Matthias’ favourites, appointed bishop of Oradea (at Matthias’ request) prior to – noteworthy – March 1476 (Tóth et alii 2016, 51-52). In February 1474, the Ottomans had burnt Oradea as retaliation for the Wallachian campaign of Stephen III.

⁶⁶ Pius II, while still Enea Silvio Piccolomini and bishop of Siena, had brought this land, once part of the Roman Empire, to the attention of Pope Nicholas V in the summer of 1453, when the first news on the fall of Constantinople reached the West (Wolkan 1918, no. 109, 190-191).

(March 1462),⁶⁷ and of Vlad's malice that, as recorded only by the same Pius, made him offer Matthias to Mehmed (November 1462).⁶⁸ Unlike Nicholas of Modruš, Rangoni did not dwell on these matters when portraying Vlad.⁶⁹ For Rangoni's mentor, Capestrano, whose attitude towards Greek rite Christians can be described, at best, as controversial,⁷⁰ Transylvania had been largely a nightmare, even in the "Hunyadi cradle", in the Hațeg Land.⁷¹ Young Matthias' first wife had been the Greek rite Elisabeth of Cilly (Celje) (1455), the grand-daughter of despot George Branković and the first cousin of Vuk.⁷²

It is difficult, if not outright impossible,⁷³ to estimate how difficult it was for Gabriele Rangoni (who otherwise enjoyed and benefited from Matthias' trust)⁷⁴ "to stomach" such border arrangements. In the 1460s, the Latin rite hierarchy in eastern Hungary had opposed unionist bishop Makarios († 1470).⁷⁵ Though supported by Matthias, he died "heirless" in Transylvania, quite hostile (on "Latin rite soil") to the king even after the Hunyadi monarch had annihilated the rebellion of 1467.⁷⁶ Towards Serbia, in the so-called Banat as well as further south, Latin resistance to "Greek adjustments" was still great at the time of cited Rangoni's report, leading to Sixtus IV' intervention in January 1477.⁷⁷ The clashes were largely the result of a void of authority, which, in return, enabled "private arrangements",⁷⁸ needed at the border with the *Turk*, most hostile to Church Union, both prior and after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453.⁷⁹

⁶⁷ Pop 2020a, 41-52. The ignored source had already been published by Ludwig von Pastor in a "variant" of his *Acta inedita* (1904).

⁶⁸ In Pius' *Commentarii* (1614), XI.12, p. 297 (in Weber et alii 2020, I-2, no. 61, 194-200).

⁶⁹ The main question should be: why did Matthias "move" Rangoni to Eger, replacing him in Transylvania with the king's cousin, Ladislav Geréb, immediately after the much celebrated – in Rome too – victory of Stephen over the Ottomans in January 1475 (I Pop 2020b, 163-170). Matthias asked for Rangoni's promotion to cardinal, granted by Sixtus, only in December 1477 (Untergehrer 2012, 478), after the dreams of crusader victory had largely fade away (e.g. I Pop-Simon 2021, 43-61).

⁷⁰ Most recently: Andrić 2016, 202-227, in particular 210-215, 223-225.

⁷¹ Damian 2011, 119-140, 197.

⁷² Erdélyi 2011, 109-127, at 109-110, note 1; Szabó 2020, 159-165.

⁷³ Rangoni was a politician and a Franciscan. Franciscans were not known for their "Greek benevolence". Yet, compromises were possible, like in 1456 (see Andrić 2016, 226).

⁷⁴ Eschenloer 2003, 908.

⁷⁵ On the few documents: Diaconescu 1997, 48-51; Pop 2020, 69-72.

⁷⁶ Chiefly Poland built her hopes on these tensions. Noteworthy enough, these Jagiellonian Transylvanian designs were connected to "Byzantine plans" (Simon 2020, 105-113).

⁷⁷ VMHH, II, no. 657, p. 454. The pope reacted based on the information conveyed to him by Matthias' envoy to Venice and Rome, the Serbian Stephen Jakšić (see the Appendix, no. IV).

⁷⁸ Gastgeber 2009, 317-338.

⁷⁹ Blanchet 2008, 234-246, 378.

Up to a certain point, anti-Ottoman desperation and Greek-Latin tolerance went hand in hand.⁸⁰ In comparison to the 1450s, twenty years after the death of Capestrano (1456), the “atmosphere” seems – however – to have been more relaxed, evidently to the dissatisfaction of so-called Orthodox and Catholic hardliners.⁸¹ Even the attitude of Viennese Thomas Ebendorfer, the author of a most dark portrait of Vlad,⁸² towards Greek rite Christians was benevolent.⁸³

III. The Converted Christian Beast

This draws attention to the “ecumenical” nature of Vlad’s crimes in the so-called *German reports* (*Deutsche Berichte*) on his life, that were quite well-spread since before his death.⁸⁴ Vlad of Wallachia executed *heiden, juden, cristen, ketzen und Walchen*.⁸⁵ Schismatics were not explicitly listed among the victims, though the same *reports* focused at length on the cruel deeds of the voivode during his Danube campaign of early 1462 against the – Christian (i.e. Greek rite Bulgarians) and Muslim – Ottoman subjects of Mehmed II.⁸⁶ Additionally, Vlad had misled his own – Wallachian – people into that war with the *Turk*.⁸⁷

The same reports had made one thing very clear from their very beginning, in “Episode 1” of Vlad’s nefarious career.⁸⁸ Vlad and an unnamed brother had converted to (Latin) Christianity after John Hunyadi, regent of Hungary and Matthias’ father,

⁸⁰ This was made particularly clear by Petkov in his seminal, yet neglected study from 1995.

⁸¹ We recall in this context the policies of Mara Branković, George’s daughter, Murad II’s widow and Mehmed II’s trusted advisor. She arranged peace talks between Venice and the Porte, in 1475-1476 too, that did not involve Matthias or other “mid-way operatives” (e.g. Popović 2018, 774-783). Mara was also on “non-speaking” terms with her family in Hungary (Čuk 1977, 103-116). Her Athonite heirs were in the end Wallachians.

⁸² Ebendorfer 2003, 917-924.

⁸³ This was already noticed by Petkov 1995, 182.

⁸⁴ Annas-Paulus 2020, 102-104 (already in the years 1463-1468), 118-119. The *German reports* are – basically – defined by the absence of any reference (except one) to Vlad’s imprisonment by Matthias or to Vlad’s subsequent “rehabilitation”, as well as death (Annas-Paulus 2020, 193-218; for the edition of all preserved variants).

⁸⁵ Annas-Paulus 2020, 203 [= Episode 17]. The heretics (Hussites?) and the Wallachians (an ethnical name for schismatics?) placed among Vlad III’s victims may suggest that the listing had a chiefly rhetorical value. A closer look into the tactics employed by Matthias’ troops during his “Bohemian Crusade” (in 1468 or 1469) might prove relevant.

⁸⁶ According to the *German reports*, his campaign along the Lower Danube was slaughter. This took precedence over the – completely omitted – anti-Ottoman nature of Vlad’s attack.

⁸⁷ Annas-Paulus 2020, 209-210 [= Episode 25]. This accusation should be regarded in connection to the problematic reception of anti-Ottoman crusading in the Holy Roman-German Empire (Wolf 1999).

⁸⁸ Annas-Paulus 2020, 193 [= Episode 1]. [...] *Item der alt guebrantor* [John Hunyadi], *der hat den alten Dracol* [Vlad II Dracul] *lassen to^eten. Und der Dracol* [Vlad III the Impaller] *und sin bru^oder* [Radu III the Handsome/ Vlad IV the Monk?!], *die haben abtretten von irem globen und verheissen und geschworn, der cristen globen zu^e beschirmen un<d> zu^e halten* [...].

had executed their father, Vlad II *Dracul* (1447).⁸⁹ Historically speaking, this was impossible because at that time, *Dragula* was still in the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁰ His conversion predated his crimes and his rule and was not a redemption of sins (or a fall into the abyss, in the Russian *tales*) that came after his imprisonment (the punishment for his wrongdoings). Whatever crimes Vlad committed, he did so a Christian, even if a convert.

Three apparently divergent images emphasize the importance of the story. 1. Vlad ruled as a pious Greek rite ktetor and donor both in Wallachia and on Mount Athos (1456-1462).⁹¹ 2. After Lazar, the son of George Branković and Vuk's paternal uncle, was seriously considered as king of Hungary at the death of Albert of Habsburg (1439-1440),⁹² with Vuk began the new Branković line of – Greek rite – barons of Hungary.⁹³ 3. For Observant Franciscans, the validity of the Greek rite baptism was mitigated – to put it mildly⁹⁴ – even in a unionist frame, as in 1455 and the dispute between Giovanni da Capestrano and George Branković;⁹⁵ and, as late as 1476, Matthias had to halt Franciscan excesses in the Banat, at the old Serbian-Hungarian border⁹⁶. In sum, each story could be “flipped”: a Greek rite Christian could seat on the throne of Hungary and a Greek rite Christian could be subject to militant Latin rite persecution.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ On the (real) Wallachian events: Pall 1963, 1049-1072.

⁹⁰ He returned north of the Lower Danube only a year later (see also Cazacu 1971, 131-139).

⁹¹ The timing of the gestures was very precise (Simon 2021b, 35-39): in (1) 1457, after the beheading of Matthias' brother, Ladislas, the sworn enemy of Vlad, in (2) 1458, after Vlad's reconciliation with Matthias, the recently elected king of Hungary, and in (3) 1461, in Wallachia (where he apparently made amends for deposing and executing Wladislaw II in 1456) and on Athos (for the Philotheou Monastery, deemed *Albanian*, while Skanderbeg was on his Italian *condotta* in Naples' and Rome's service). “Likewise” John Hunyadi (following in the footsteps of Sigismund of Luxemburg and chiefly in 1444, before crossing the Danube and entering the road that led to Varna) and Matthias took care of Greek rite monasteries in Western Wallachia (*Oltenia*), the latter even on the eve of the planned (certainly according to rumours on the Bosphorus) – but postponed until 1476 – Wallachian return of Vlad (1473).

⁹² Cf. Pálosfálvi 2018, 85, note 40. Under Albert's – eventual – successor, Wladislaw III Jagiello of Poland, Church union played a key role in the attempted “reform” of the realm and in the anti-Ottoman combats that brought Christian fame to John Hunyadi (see Jefferson 2012, 55-68, 168-190, 263-271, 295-305; not flawless).

⁹³ In spite of the fact that Vuk died heirless (Ćirković 2004, 116).

⁹⁴ For an overview: Magina 2008, 285-289; Damian 2011, 184-193.

⁹⁵ This story Matthias knew all too well because it had stood at the core of his marriage to Elisabeth of Cilly (Andrić 2016, 207-208, with focus on John Hunyadi's misdoings).

⁹⁶ King Matthias' action led to Sixtus IV's cited intervention in early 1477 (VMHH, II, no. 657, p. 454; also in de Hurmuzaki 1891, no. 219, 244-245 (henceforth *Hurmuzaki*)).

⁹⁷ The same applied to Vlad's “post-prison conversion” in *German* and *Russian tales* on him.

In Vlad III's case (and possibly in that of Vuk as well), this may have meant that, at some point either in the early 1450s (when Vlad reconciled with John Hunyadi)⁹⁸ or in the early 1470s (when the former voivode was returned to the main stage),⁹⁹ the son of a member of the Order of the Dragon agreed to be re-baptized, that is to be properly baptized according to Latin rite rules.¹⁰⁰ But, according to "appendixes" of the Union of Florentine, changing rites was forbidden, and both 'Latins' (e.g. Pope Nicholas V)¹⁰¹ and 'Greeks' (e.g. Stephen III of Moldavia)¹⁰² reacted against it. At any rate, Vlad was on slippery ground in Wallachia, in particular after his main nemesis, his own brother, Radu III, wed *Maria Despina*,¹⁰³ most likely a niece of the

⁹⁸ The dating fluctuates between 1451/1452 and 1453/1454 (see Cazacu 2017, 72-77; new researches are needed). Nevertheless, according to the document discovered and analyzed by Nagy and Szilágyi in their previously cited study, it was in those years (prior to 1456) that Vlad would have wed John Hunyadi's (older) sister. This matrimony "coincided" thus with the two marriages of 1454 (early) and 1455 (August) between Matthias and Elisabeth (see the unique document in Erdélyi 2011, 109-110, note 1).

⁹⁹ In early 1477, Venice learnt that the Turks [...] *sono etiam corsi nella Valachia Maggiore, et di novo le hanno riacquistata tutta et hanno tagliato ad pezzi Dracula, capitaneo del dicto Re, con circa quattro mille persone, et similiter hanno morto Bozarab, Signore della dicta Valachia* [...] (Nagy-Nyáry 1876, no. 234, p. 339; henceforth MDE). This would indicate a joint-rule (between Vlad III and Basarab IV) motivated not only by local (between boyars) or "foreign" (between Matthias and Stephen) rivalries, but also by Vlad's re-baptism, which rendered him unfit for a Greek rite throne (thus, only Basarab was named lord of Wallachia, while Vlad was just Matthias' captain). However, neither Matthias' documents, nor Vlad's deeds issued in Wallachia in late 1476 reveal a ruler of Wallachia other than Vlad. In return, it is possible that the authority over the lands between the Lower Danube and the Carpathians was partitioned as suggested by the lines in Rangoni's cited report from March 1476: [...] *Tandem cum aque excreverint quemadmodum prius conceperat in Regnum Transalpinum cum Moldavis et ipsius Vualachie Maioris exercitu convenire intendit* [...].

¹⁰⁰ In May 1455, when the conflict between George Branković and Giovanni da Capestrano was approaching its climax, Ladislas Hunyadi, Matthias' elder brother, and Elisabeth of Cilly petitioned Pope Callixtus III to annul the marriage between Elisabeth and Matthias because the marriage had not been consummated (Erdélyi 2011, 109-110, note 1). Callixtus refused. Aside, from the quite shocking family story, the petition makes it clear that the marriage between Matthias and Elisabeth had not infringed any Latin rules. The question of Elisabeth's baptisms (Greek and Latin rite) should be reviewed. This would have a direct impact upon Vlad's "conversion".

¹⁰¹ [Odorico Rinaldi,] *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi desinit Cardinalis Baronibus auctore Odorico Raynaldo accedunt*, XVIII (Rome, 1693), *Ad annum 1449*, no. 10, p. 359 (reprinted in [Cesare Baronio,] *Caesaris S.R.E. Card. Baronii Annales ecclesiastici*, ed. A. Theiner, XVIII. *1424-1453* (Bar-le-Duc, 1874), *Ad annum 1449* [again (!)], no. 10, 523). The message sent to the Dominicans (not the Franciscans) was remarked and translated by Setton 1978, 105).

¹⁰² Bogdan 1913, nos. 176, 180, 411, 451.

¹⁰³ Apparently, the marriage was celebrated in Wallachia after Vlad lost the throne to Radu and was also "imprisoned" by King Matthias (for the wedding invitation sent by Radu to the

influential anti-unionist Sultana Mara Branković, George's daughter and Mehmed II's respected step-mother.¹⁰⁴

Hunyadi *Dracula* between Christian Compromise and Christian Rivalry

In the 1480s, in his Western conflict with Emperor Frederick III, Matthias, who had already started – successfully – claiming that he was related to the Ottoman sultans,¹⁰⁵ used without any hesitations the Serbian “crew”, that – much to the horror of Franciscan Rangoni – had fought at the side of late Vlad (1475-1476).¹⁰⁶ The “comments” regarding the faith of these soldiers were scarce and did not have an impact upon the contested Hunyadi monarch.¹⁰⁷ To say the very least, special rules apparently applied for these warriors of Greek rite,¹⁰⁸ even after Matthias was no longer crusading against the High Porte, his ally in fact after 1484/1486.¹⁰⁹ It would be perilous to expand the compromise(s) that were valid in the cases of these men to other “social strata” or “professions”.¹¹⁰ In a world still built on fear, it would be however unwise to discard or even to minimize the “tolerant union” that – most evidently – was operational through the very useful force of these men.¹¹¹

At the time of Rangoni's report from March 1476, East and West, largely due to the efforts of Venice, the strange ally of Matthias at war with the Porte since 1463,¹¹²

elite of the Transylvanian Saxon city of Sibiu, see Gündisch et alii 1981, VI, no. 3290, 123-124).

¹⁰⁴ On her, see also Iorga 1920, 121; Schmitt 2009, 44-45, 51-52.

¹⁰⁵ Simon 2011, 15-22.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. Wolf 2005, 151-152. Some of Matthias soldiers were also dressed-up as Turks to inspire supplementary fear.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Unrest 1957, 128 ([...] *darunder Retzen und recht Turckhen warn, die des kunigs waren* [...] mid-1482); Stauber 1991, 17-54, at 37 (M was supported by [...] *am maysten Ungern, Pechaim, Walachen, Ratzsen und Hussaren* [...] *und villeicht Turken und ungelaubig* [...]; late 1485). Seemingly, for the Greek rite Christians had not been “taken” from the body of the Latin rite Church, they were viewed – the closer one came in particular to German-speaking parts – as a lesser problem than (chiefly) the Hussite ‘heretics’.

¹⁰⁸ The issue seemingly long predated Vlad III's rule, who himself was the son of knight of the Order of the Dragon (Windecke 1893, 294). Vlad II's illegitimate father, Mircea I (never accused of being a schismatic), apparently had his own order of knights in the 1390s into which he inducted a Moravian nobleman, who was fighting the Turks in Wallachia (see Rohlik 2007: 155-174, at 166). According to Jan Dugosz, Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian or Wallachian knights competed in the joust organized in Buda, in the honour of King Wladislaw II Jagiello of Poland, in 1412 (after the foundation of the Order of the Dragon) by Sigismund of Luxemburg (Przedziecki 1878, 141).

¹⁰⁹ Salihović 2019: 93-120; Pálosfálvi 2018, 278, 280-284.

¹¹⁰ An interesting example: Marek 2016, 65-76.

¹¹¹ To this picture, we should add the proven – since the days of the Council of Basel – need for Eastern (Greek rite) support during Western (Latin rite) conflicts (see in this respect two reference works: Gill 1959, 83-84; Stieber 1978, 200-202).

¹¹² See Pop-Simon 2015, 5-66 (with additional data).

had witnessed over the past three years the crusader rise – “under their own banner” – of the admittedly Greek rite Wallachians.¹¹³ As Rangoni too wrote to Sixtus IV in early spring 1476, the heavy anti-Ottoman fighting was to be carried in the lands of those Wallachians.¹¹⁴ Still, he said nothing about the main figure among the Wallachians, a figure that was not Vlad, but Stephen of Moldavia. Appointed ‘athlete of the Christian faith’ by Sixtus prior to Matthias’ much celebrated conquest of Šabac (February 15, 1476),¹¹⁵ Stephen was set to embark on a conflict over crusader subsidies and monarchic rewards with Vlad’s Hunyadi protector (this dispute ultimately ruined the chances of vanquishing Mehmed II that summer).¹¹⁶

Until 1472-1473,¹¹⁷ except for some “incidents” in the mid-1460s¹¹⁸ Stephen had been primarily associated with the anti-unionist pro-Ottoman Greek-rite camp and had proven to be a largely loyal Ottoman vassal.¹¹⁹ Then, Stephen removed the Moldavian hierarchs from his princely council,¹²⁰ and started constantly attacking pro-Ottoman Wallachia, until the Albanian army of the sultan lifted the siege of Venetian Scutari and moved against Stephen.¹²¹ The result was a complete triumph for him (according to the statement made by Mara Brankovic in front of the Venetian envoy sent afterwards to the Porte, the Turks had never suffered a greater defeat¹²²). Sixtus IV embraced him and called for Christian support for Stephen, more than “a new Skanderbeg”.¹²³

According to the Papal encyclical from July 1, 1475 (preserved only in the copy sent to Ludovico III il *Turco* Gonzaga, margrave of Mantua), ‘[...] if Our beloved son, the noble man Stephen Voivode, who recently inflicted a major massacre and loss to the Turks through his victory, felt that he was abandoned by the Christians and deprived of aids, and would start to back down, God forbid!, how great peril the Hungarians and the most faithful German people, and the rest of Christendom, would

¹¹³ For an overview, Housley 2012, 33-34; Pilat-Cristea 2017, 143-144.

¹¹⁴ See also the discussion on (the) Wallachia(s) in the notes on the letter, in Appendix, no. III.

¹¹⁵ On the siege, see the lengthily presentation in Pálosfálvi 2018, 243-253.

¹¹⁶ Simon 2004, 205-224.

¹¹⁷ Until roughly Vlad’s “release from prison” and Stephen’s Crimean marriage to Mary of Theodoro in autumn 1472 (on the context, see also Pilat-Cristea 2017, 143-149).

¹¹⁸ They led to Matthias’ Moldavian campaign of 1467. He had been betrayed by Stephen, involved in the Hungarian plot that had prevented the king from aiding Skanderbeg, re-attacked by Mehmed (Simon 2012, 75-94).

¹¹⁹ Berindei 1986, 47-72. In August 1473, his men even joined Mehmed’s army in Asia Minor on the eventually victorious campaign against Usun Hassan, Christendom’s main anti-Ottoman hope until then (see Simon 2016, 53-68, at 58).

¹²⁰ In October 1473, as already noticed by Ursu 1925, 425).

¹²¹ Matthias (too) was paid by Venice for his contribution to the Ottoman retreat (Predelli 1901, no. XVI-73, p. 215). He received 40,000 ducats on October 31, 1474.

¹²² Sagredo 1843, 112.

¹²³ This was abundantly made clear by his subsequent – crusader – disputes with Matthias.

suffer [...]'.¹²⁴ The pope's concerns had been fuelled by – naturally – the doge of Venice, Pietro Mocenigo. Sixtus IV did not fail to mention that. In return, he said nothing about Matthias', Stephen's "crusader superior" and suzerain.¹²⁵ With Vlad back on the front, Matthias was in fact caught – before even facing Mehmed – between "a madman" and "a challenger", both of the Greek rite. In this respect, Rangoni did an admirable job of advocating the case of his king.

When calling-out for support for Stephen III, Sixtus IV did not mention that the ruler was a Greek rite Christian. The voivode was his son, like the lords of Italian Venice or Mantua. No other nuances were inserted in the Papal call. In November 1474, less than a year earlier, Stephen had acknowledged Sixtus' authority.¹²⁶ For Sixtus, that was enough. Seemingly, the Florentine union had served its purpose. Sixtus made this clear at the start of 1477, after a year of crusader failures. His Hungarian "instructions" on the Greek rite Christians mentioned neither the schism nor the union. Tolerance was advised so that all Christians should one day be Catholics.¹²⁷ In respect, the 'Germans' were correct: voivode Vlad III of Wallachia was the monster of one – single- Christian faith.

This may explain why his deeds did not lead to a collapse of the unstable Christian compromise at the Danube borders of the Ottoman Empire. Vlad III was a Greek-Latin *Golem* (officially by calling, not by making), whose death was later lamented by both King Matthias and Stephen III. German and Russian words then tailored Vlad's "conversion" to suit the extremes, Latin and Greek.

Appendix

I. Rome, September 6, 1448

Pope Nicholas V to the inquisitor and to the provincial of the Dominican Province of Greece¹²⁸

([Cesare Baronio,] *Caesaris S.R.E. Card. Baronii Annales ecclesiastici*, ed. Augustin Theiner, XVIII. 1424-1453 (Bar-le-Duc, 1874), *Ad annum 1449* (!), no. 10, p. 523)¹²⁹

Dilectis filiis haereticae pravitatis inquisitori et provinciali provinciae Graeciae Ordinis Praedicatorum, salutem.// Pervenit ad aures nostras, quod in locis, quae

¹²⁴ ASMa, A.G., E. Affari esteri, XXV. *Roma*, busta 834. 1404-1499, nn (in the Appendix, no. II).

¹²⁵ In the context, see also Bogdan 1913, II, nos. 144-146, 324-336.

¹²⁶ Iorga 1914-1915, 1-76, in the Appendix, no. 11, 33.

¹²⁷ VMHH, II, no. 657, p. 454. The message ended: [...] *ut sic presentes et futuri ad amplectendum ritum catholicum alliciantur et incitentur* [...]. There should not have been any doubt about that.

¹²⁸ Possibly: Tomasso de Gubbio, from Genoese Caffa (in Crimea), and/ or Simon, from Venetian Candia on Crete (Delacroix-Besnier 1997, 448-449; Setton 1978, 105, note 92).

¹²⁹ Unfortunately, none of the editions indicate the signature of the much neglected message.

Catholicis in Graecia subjecta sunt, multi Catholici unionis praetextu ad Graecos imprudenter transcunt ritus. Mirati admodum sumus, mirarique non desinimus nescientes quid sit, quod eos a consuetudine ac ritibus, in quibus nati nutritique sunt, in alienigenarum ritus transposuit. Nam etsi laudabiles Orientalis Ecclesiae ritus sint, non licet tamen Ecclesiarum ritus permiscere, neque id nunquam sacrosancta Synodus Florentina permisit. Quas ob res nos quibus, quamvis immeritis, hujusmodi rerum omnium cura divinitus imposita est, cupientes citius ne malum longius serpat, huic rei providere, vobis et utriusque vestrum sub virtute sanctae obedientiae districte mandamus, ut auctoritate Apostolica in omnibus locis praedictis, cum ea ex officio vestro visitabitur, permixtionem rituum omnino prohibeatis, invocato ad hoc, si opus fuerit auxilio brachii saecularis.¹³⁰ Datum Romae apud Sanctum Potentianam in anno etc. MCDXLVIII, VIII idus Septembris. Pontificatus nostri anno secundo.

II. Rome, July 1 1475

Pope Sixtus IV to Ludovico III *il Turco* Gonzaga, margrave of Mantua
(Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, E. Affari esteri, XXV.
Roma, busta 834. 1404-1499, not numbered)¹³¹

Dilecte fili, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem!// Novissime litteris dilecti filij nobilis viri Petri Mocenigo, ducis Venetiarum,¹³² accepimus inmanem illum Turchum Christiani nominis hostem acerrimum classem validam et instructissimam retinere, quam sicut signis et aliquorum relatione habetur per Mare Maius¹³³ versus partes Moldaviae, pro iniurijs ulciscendis cladis ibidem susceptae convertere intendit. Ea denuntiatio nos merito commovit ad commiserationem calamitatis Christiane et ad hec ipsa pericula consideranda. Primum igitur quod ad nostrum pastorale attinet officium supplices Deum oravimus et per alias personas Deo acceptas preces effundi fecimus, ut ipse qui prepotens est, pro sui nominis gloria decertantibus assistat animos Catholicorum regum et principum ac fidelium populorum uniat, ut hic

¹³⁰ In 1500, amidst major political tensions, Wladislaw II Jagiello of Hungary confiscated the lands of the nobles of Porecha in the Banat, for they had abandoned ‘the religion of the Christian faith’ and joined ‘the reprehensible schismatic sect of the Wallachians or of the Serbians’ (*Hurmuzaki*, II-2, no. 376, 448). The reasons behind the (costly) decision of the nobles remain unknown.

¹³¹ The document (Setton 1978, 320, note 23) was first published in Pop-Simon 2021a, 65-80, in the Appendix, no. 2, pp. 77-78). No other copies of the letter are known to us.

¹³² As suggested by Mara Branković too in April 1475 (Malipiero, *Annali Veneti*, 112), Pietro Mocenigo, doge of Venice, a seasoned soldier (Cippico 2016, XIX-XXIII), used Stephen III’s anti-Ottoman victory of Vaslui (January 1475) to conclude a six-month truce with the sultan. This allowed Mehmed to take Genoese Caffa in the Crimea (June 1475) and to besiege Stephen III’s Pontic and Danubian harbours (Simon 2011a, 383-396). The fall of Caffa also led to the treaty of Iași-Buda (August 1475). Stephen re-acknowledged Matthias as his suzerain. Then, by spring 1476, in front of Sixtus IV, he refused to admit that king was his lord and master.

¹³³ Black Sea. For Papal Pontic anti-Ottoman *topoi*: Artner 2004, no. 101, 111-112.

truculentissimus hostis Christianorum viribus repellatur, tue vere excellentie significandum duximus et copiam litterarum memorati ducis presentibus introcludi fecimus, ut plane intelligas quanto in discrimine non solum Moldavie partes, verum etiam omnium Christianorum versentur, velis itaque prout Catholicum principem debet de aliquo subsidio cogitare et illis partibus bello laborantibus, prout expedire videris ope tua succurrere. Nos vero considerantes quod ad tantam belli molem sustinendam nostre et ecclesie facultates nullomodo sufficerent, concurrentibus auxilijs Christianorum presidia exhibere, iuxta vires nostras pollicemur, neque aliquo pacto unacum alijs huic Dei et fidei cause deerimus. Cogitare et ante oculos tuos ponere velis quod si dilectus filius, nobilis vir Stephanus Vayvoda, qui nuper victoria potitus stragem et iacturam maximam Turchis intulit, ab eisdem bello lacesitus Christianorum auxilijs se destitutum senserit, et loco ceserit, quod Deus avertat, quantis periculis Ungari¹³⁴ et Germanorum populi¹³⁵ devotissimi et reliqua Christianitas subiacerent. Quare eandem excellentiam tuam, per viscera misericordie Dei nostri et pro ipsius Dei et Christiani nominis reverentia, hortamur in Domino ac de precamur, ut iuxta vires tuas aliquam subventionem facere velis, prout tue conscientie visum fuerit. In quo Deo in primis gratissimum obsequium prestabis eritque anime tue ad modum salutare et ad gloriam ac laudem tui nominis cedit. Datum Rome, apud Sanctumpetrum, sub annulo piscatoris, die prima Iulij, MCCCCLXXV, pontificatus nostri, anno quarto.// Marcellus.¹³⁶

<Verso:>*Dilecto filio nobili viro Ludovico de Gonzaga, marchioni Mantue.*¹³⁷

III. Buda, March 7, 1476

Gabriele Rangoni, bishop of Eger, to Pope Sixtus IV

(identic copies: Archivio di Stato di Milano, Milan, Archivio Visconteo-Sforzesco/ Ducale Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Ungheria, cart. 650. 1452-1489, fasc. 22. 1476, not numbered Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, E. Affari esteri, V. Ungheria, busta 533. 1395-1692, not numbered)¹³⁸

¹³⁴ The pope did not name Matthias, officially Stephen's suzerain. The absence of the lord of the *German people*, Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg, Matthias' nemesis, was thus natural.

¹³⁵ In this Western context, see the (in)famous Giovanni Mario Filelfo, Manetti 1978, 196-197, 202 (1475-1476).

¹³⁶ Secretary Marcello de' Rustici (Lee 1978, 59).

¹³⁷ Lazzarini 2006, *sub voce*. Earlier in March, Ludovico had been informed by Giampietro Arrivabene, Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga's secretary, that *duca Stephano vaivoda*, appointed king of Bosnia by Matthias was to be crowned king in Rome by Pope Sixtus IV (A. Simon, "Duca Stephano vaivoda intitolato re <de Bosna>dal Re de Hungaria și <Nicolaus>Bosniae et Valachiae Rex: despre identitatea regală a valahilor," in Bolovan et alii 2021, 147-174); Stephen thus – erroneously – "became" the third or even fourth king of Bosnia at that time).

¹³⁸ For various editions, based on the Milanese copy, see Weber et alii 2020, I, no. 89, 116.

Beatissime pater et clementissime domine. Post pedum oscula Beatorum. Obtenta feliciter munitissima arce Sabacz¹³⁹ significaveram sanctitati vestrae regiam maiestatem decrevisse mittere ad devastandam civitatem Sebernicze¹⁴⁰ argentifodinis famosam, et omnem circumcirca regionem, quod sine ducibus illustri Boch, despoto Rascie, magnifico Ladislao, Dragula dicto, et quibusdam aliis capitaneis effecit. Hi nanque traiecto clam Savo subito incurso omnia iuxta vota et mandata regia complevere, quemadmodum hesterno die a nuntio dicti despoti non vulgari letissimis animis accepimus; quomodo vero deus illi incursioni faverit vestre sanctitati perstringam. Cum pervenissent ipsi duces cum exercitu suo prope dictam civitatem nihil villarum aut oppidorum in via vastantes noctuque habitatam terram per montes et silvas transeuntes, premissi sunt quinquaginta et centum equites viri delecti in habitu Turchorum qui iussu ducum paulo ante diluculum exteriora civitatis suburbia nihil hostilitatis intentantes ingressi sunt; erat ille dies fori multusque hominum vicinorum locorum conventus, dum vero quisque, ut moris est, rebus venalibus intendit, premissique milites veluti Turci se se ceteris comiscunt, et nihil suspicionis habetur, impetu facto despotes cum aliis in oppidum irruunt, supra quingentos capiunt, reliquos usque ad internitionem occidunt; erat enim oppidum VII centum domorum, ubi preda magna facta est: centum viginti septem milia asperorum, quinque salme argenti, hec cesaris erant, merces multe, panni serici et omnis generis, cum esset emporium regionis, reperta sunt, et ut ille nuntius rettulit argenti massas, quas in civium domibus inveniebant, milites securibus inter se se dividebant. Demum facta preda et cum capturis remissa, oppidum igne consumunt. Inde autem eodem animo contra oppidum Cuzelath¹⁴¹ dictum quod tribus miliaribus hungaricis distabat festinantes tripartitis aciebus incedebant; habuerunt hominum tantum quinque millia, cumque ad silvam quandam vicinam loco pervenissent, iamque cives illi vicine vastationis territi occurrissent, et arbores pro obstruendis viis, ne equites pertransirent starent, hoc singulari dolo circumventi sunt; dimissi namque sunt quadringenti qui pedes cum illis manus consererent et potius occuparent quam impugnarent; erant illi duo millia, interea festinant cum exercitu duces et remotioribus locis silvam pertranseunt, a tergo hostibus veniunt, omnes nullo evadente concidunt, cadavera in grandem accervum comportantes, multosque palis affigentes, ut eorum horrido spectaculo Turci si quando supervenirent in terrorem verterentur; his peractis contra Savonich¹⁴² properant. Savonite autem sicut et Cuzalite silvam intermediam hostium furore percepto succidere et vias obstruere ceperant. Sed superveniente exercitu in fugam conversi ad locum tutum confugerunt, ibi despotes sagitta est in pede vulneratus, de cuius tamen salute bene speratur. Tunc demum reverti nostri ceperunt nihil villarum nihil domorum intactum relinquentes,

¹³⁹ Šabac (see also Fine 1995, 181-196, here at 190-191).

¹⁴⁰ Srebrenica (see also MDE, II, no. 237, 345; Rangoni to Sixtus from Šabac, on February 15).

¹⁴¹ Kušlat (see

http://old.kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=50&lang=4&action=view&id=2551).

¹⁴² Zvornik (http://old.kons.gov.ba/main.php?id_struct=50&lang=4&action=view&id=2551).

omnia ferro et igne consumpserunt. Aiunt beatissime pater qui regionem noverunt si centum miliaribus Turciam versus irruissent, non potuisse Turcis graviora damna intulisse. Sed Dragule crudelitatem non pertransibo a qua toti orbi notissimus est. Nam manibus suis membratim captos Turcos dividens ad palos frustas figebat, inquires: cum hec Turci venientes viderint, territi terga nobis dabunt et fugient; hic est ille qui silvas impalatorum hominum fecit. Asserunt primi huius regni eum ultra centum millia hominum cum waivodatui Transalpino¹⁴³ preesset, palis et aliis horrende mortis suppliciis occidisse, ob quam rem maiestas regia ipsum XV annis in artissimo carcere tenuit, sed, nec ibi ferritatis oblitus, mures capiebat, et membratim divisos parvis ligneis claviculis, prout homines palis consuevit, affigebat. Tandem vero superiori anno liberum fecit et ad expeditionem in Turcos destinavit, quibus singulari est terrori. Addit nuntius iussu Basse Alibek¹⁴⁴ tenere se in Montibus Nigris.¹⁴⁵ Ipsum vero post ubi subvenire Sabocz nequivit regressum ad consulendum cesarem. Ex his clare intelligitur quanti comodi obtentio Sabocz esse iam ceperit, ex qua non solum incursiones Turcorum prohibite sunt, sed contra eos incursiones parate, quantequae utilitatis rei publice Christiane sit allatura, cum ex illo loco quicquid in regno Bozne et vicinis regionibus Turcus possidet turbari maxime possit. Verum etiam considerandum puto quam gravi animo hec turcus sit laturus, et quo apparatu in vindictam nisi ei potenter obvium fuerit exiturus; regia maiestas dispositis qui Sabacz rehedificent, et magis quam prius muniant, quique pontes super Savo et Danubio componant, data aliquali respiratione militibus qui sub Sabacz fuerunt, huc velocissime concessit percepto obitu regentis Castrum Budensem¹⁴⁶, in cuius manu omnis regius thesaurus erat; sed et thesaurarius vir magnus et potens hesterno die cum magna exequiarum pompa et honore presentie regie sepultus est. His ordinatis et quibusdam aliis occurrentibus negotiis ad prosequendum que cepit paucis post diebus convolabit. Nam et pontes ipsi iam parari ceperunt, exercitus quoque non longe a Bello Grado¹⁴⁷ existit. Spero in Dei bonitate quod Serviam maxima in parte prius quam Turchus occurrere possit devastabit. Tandem cum aque excreverint quemadmodum prius conceperat in regnum Transalpinum cum Moldavis et ipsius Vualachie maioris¹⁴⁸ exercitu convenire intendit. Si autem has tantas

¹⁴³ ‘The Transalpine voivodate’, the traditional Hungarian designation for Wallachia proper since the Angevines. This “official name” was also used by the voivodes in their Latin charters.

¹⁴⁴ Ali Mihaloglu, bey of Vidin and Smederevo, who had raided Oradea in February 1474 (on this Serbian “renegade”, see already Zirojević 1971, 9-27; Decei 1974, 296-301).

¹⁴⁵ Montenegro or more likely the Crna Gora (the Black Mountain), just north-east of Mostar.

¹⁴⁶ John Ernuzst/ Hampó († after March 2-prior to March 7, 1476), a Viennese converted Jew and Matthias’ trustee, who was also ban of Slavonia at that time (Kubinyi 2008, 78).

¹⁴⁷ Belgrade. Rangoni did not use the Latinized Hungarian name *Nandoralba* (Nándorfehérvár).

¹⁴⁸ Rangoni too distinguished between the ‘Transalpine land’ or ‘kingdom’ (Wallachia proper, based on the union between Western Wallachia/ Oltenia and Eastern Wallachia/ Muntenia) and ‘Greater Wallachia’, which most likely designated the parts east of the river Olt. This may

impensas diu sufferre possit non est opus ut amplius repplicem: si quid acturi sunt quibus attinet, moras tollant, quia nocuit semper differre paratis. Comendo me humiliter pedibus beatissimis vestre sanctitatis quam Altissimus conservare dignetur in evum pro felici Regimine Ecclesie Sue Sancte. Bude, VIIa Martii MCCCCLXXVI.// Eiusdem Vestre Sanctitatis humillima creatura Gabriel, episcopus Agriensis.

IV. Rome, January 28, 1477

Pope Sixtus IV to the bishops, the prelates and the clergymen in the Kingdom of Hungary and elsewhere

(Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City, Registra Vaticana, [no.] 667, f. 182^r)¹⁴⁹

Sixtus Episcopus etc. Universis et singulis Episcopis, prelati et ordinariis in Regno Hungarie et alibi constitutis salutem etc. Relatione dilecti filii nobilis viri Stephani Iakeyta Carissimi in Christo filii nostri Mathie Ungarie et Bohemie Regis Illustris oratoris,¹⁵⁰ percepimus, quod in ea parte Hungarie, que Servie est contermina, multi christiani ritu Greco baptizati inter catholicos habitant, illisque sunt permixti, quos ipsi catholici evitare, et ut male baptizatos apud populum in predicationibus asserere solent. Quo fit, ut iidem christiani affligantur plerumque et scandalum in suis conscientiis patiantur, id quod potius reipublice christiane obsit, quam fidei orthodoxe commodum vel emolumentum importet.¹⁵¹ Nos ergo paterno affectu considerantes, quod hii, qui christianam fidem sectantur, potius sunt humanitate et mansuetudine ab erroribus, si quibus imbuti sunt, revocandi, quam acerbè affligendi aut reiiciendi, quodque sancte recordationis Romani pontifices predecessores nostri alias super hoc providerunt,¹⁵² duximus pro cura pastoralis officii huic rei provide occurrendum, ut quo isti humanius habiti et tractati fuerint, eo libentius, qui teterrimo dominatu Turchorum premuntur, et sub eorum ritu sunt baptizati, ad alios transeant christianos. Quocirca vobis tenore presentium iniungimus, et apostolica auctoritate mandamus, quatenus huiusmodi christianos in vestris diocesibus constitutos non

explain apparent division of power between Vlad III and Basarab IV at the end of that year (for the Wallachian divisions in the 1470s and 1480s: A Simon 2021c, 153-168).

¹⁴⁹ Editions: VMHH, II, no. 657, 454 (republished in *Hurmuzaki*, II-2, no. 219, 244-245).

¹⁵⁰ The envoy was the Serbian nobleman Stephen Jakšić, spelled also *Jakchita* (Fraknoi 1898, 74, note 4), the brother of Matthias' better known diplomat Dmítar. The brothers, first of all men of arms, had settled in the Hungarian county of Cenad (1464). They fought for Matthias from Serbia and Bosnia to Bohemia and Transylvania (Krstić 2017, 129-163, at 145-148). Matthias' choice of Stephen Jakšić as his Italian envoy in autumn 1476 (together with Michael Szántai, canon of Buda) was not accidental and was of impact (it was not without reason that Sixtus did not mention Szántai in the message to his "superiors").

¹⁵¹ In particular, at the border with Serbia, tensions were otherwise high between *Latins* and *Greeks*. Hence, Sixtus emphasized that this was only a compromise to ease to full conversion (see also A Simon 2023, 277-292).

¹⁵² The pope turned to precedents: to the unspecified decisions of his unnamed predecessors.

permittatis clam vel palam a predicatoribus,¹⁵³ vel aliis quibuscumque prefata occasione vexari, sed eos benigne, mansueteque tolerantes, in vestris cimiteriis et ecclesiis, dum ad hoc fueritis requisiti, humari sepeliri que permittatis, deficienteque ritus eorum sacerdote, in confessionibus audiri, absolvique facere in forma Romane ecclesie debeat, nec sacramentum baptismatis ritu Romano, dum requisiti fueritis, denegetis, ut sic presentes et futuri ad amplectendum ritum catholicum alliciantur et incitentur.¹⁵⁴ Datum Rome apud sanctum Petrum. Anno Incarnationis dominice millesimo quadringentesimo septuagesimo sexto. Quinto Kalendas Februarii. Pontificatus nostri Anno Sexto.

¹⁵³ Sixtus IV alluded to the Franciscans the only *preachers* active in those Serbian parts of the Hungarian realm (Magina 2008, 283-294). The message was evidently not well received by local Franciscans. Within a year, they apparently secured from Matthias (1478) the confirmation of the “anti-schismatic” rights granted to them by Sigismund of Luxemburg (1428), based on Louis I of Anjou’s harsh decisions (1366). The authenticity of the documents, especially Matthias’ confirmation, is however questionable (see also Pop 2020, 265).

¹⁵⁴ In essence, Sixtus IV allowed *the commingling of rites* (to use Nicholas V’ words) in the hope that those from today, as well as from tomorrow, will be drawn and incited to embrace the Catholic rite. The problem seems to have been more widespread and the Greek rite population far too numerous. In 1479, Matthias had to entrust the Greek rite Christians spread from the Banat – across Transylvania – to Maramureş to the metropolite of Belgrade (de Apşa 1900, no. 313, 536). The problem was sorted only in the 1480s, when the *Archbishopric of Severin and Transylvania*, was established, “for the” Wallachians, and the Bishopric of Mukachevo (Munkács) was “revived”, “for the” Ruthenians (Rus 2010, 63-70). These royal solutions proved superior to the one attempted with the *uniata* Makarios (a refuge from Halych, settled in the Hunedoara area in the 1460s). Rangoni’s stand in these matters, as Latin bishop of Transylvania (1472-1475), is open only to speculations.

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