

The Hungarian Crown and the Vlachs in the Ottoman Empire

Alexandru SIMON

Romanian Academy, Center for Transylvanian Studies
Cluj-Napoca, Romania

According to the data at hand, after the fall of Constantinople, the first attempt to include Walachia (usually named *Walachia Maior/Valachia Alta*) and Moldavia (often referred to as *Walachia Minor/Valachia Bassa*) in an Ottoman-Hungarian peace treaty was made only in late 1466. The formula was provided by Venice. Just three years after the start of the war between her and the Porte, she was eager to reach an arrangement with Mehmed II. In order to avoid further political and military problems, the settlement had to include the republic's unstable ally, Matthias Corvinus. Venice's attempt failed. Matthias and Mehmed had their own designs. Moreover, Walachia's and Moldavia's presence in the treaty was not so much the result of Venice's desire to convince Matthias to accept the settlement, but a consequence of the arrangements (broken less than a year later) concluded by the king of Hungary with the rulers of the two Walachias, Stephen III and Radu III, in view of the regional anti-Ottoman expedition(s) prepared for the next year¹.

¹ Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Venice (ASVe), Senato Secreti (S.S.), *Deliberazioni*, reg. 23, 1466-1468, c. 12^r (25th of October, 1466; edited in Iván Nagy, Albert B. Nagy, *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek. Mátyás király korából 1458-1490* [Memoirs of Hungarian Diplomacy. The Age of King Matthias. 1458-1490] (= *Monumenta Hungariae Historica*, IV, 1-4), II, [1466-1480] (Budapest, 1876), no. 23, p. 41; according to Venice's 'proposed draft' *recomandati nominandi in sufferentiis nomine Serenissime Regis Hungarie sunt isti, videlicet: Dominus Scanderbegus, Ragusini, Filii Ducis Stefani* [Stephen Košarca]; *Uterque Vajvoda utriusque Valachie* [Walachia and Moldavia] *et alii siqui sunt qui nunc tam de iure quam de facto pertinent ad Coronam* [i.e. of Hungary]). In spite of Francisc Pall's note on the importance of

Until 1484, the idea to include both Walachias as Buda's protégés (*re-commandati*) in an Ottoman-Hungarian treaty (that would have sealed the Ottoman-Hungarian *condominium* north of the Lower Danube) was apparently abandoned. The crusader consequences of the year 1467 (the Hungarian rebellion supported by the Porte and Moldavia virtually sealed Skanderbeg's downfall and the collapse of the planned Hungarian-German anti-Ottoman campaign), the events and talks of the 1470s were hardly favorable. In (1483-)1484, the attempt to include the Walachias, namely Moldavia (and the harbors under her control), in an Ottoman-Hungarian truce led to one of the greatest anti-Ottoman disasters occurred after 1453 (the Moldavian triumph of Bayezid II who thus saved his throne). From the end of 1488 (after the Ottoman-Moldavian peace of 1486) until Matthias' death in spring 1490, however, the inclusion of the Walachias seems to have worked. In spite of later attempts, the potential inclusion re-became possible only in 1503 and only in the formula desired by Bayezid (nonetheless still hostile to this idea)².

this source ('Les relations entre la Hongrie et Skanderbeg', *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen* (Bucharest), X (1933), 4-6, pp. 135-139), the matter has been neglected. For the crusader and Walachian context of the late 1460s: Al. Simon, 'Brancho's Son and the Walachians a Milanese Perspective on the Battle of Baia' (I), *Historical Yearbook* (Bucharest), VII (2009), pp. 187-200. For Ottoman-Walachian relations after 1453: Mihail Guboglu, 'Le tribut payé par les Principautés Roumaines à la Porte jusqu'au début du XVI^e siècle d'après les sources turques', *Revue des Études Islamiques* (Paris), XXXVII (1969), 1, pp. 41-80 (here pp. 68-79).

² Magyar Országos Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives], Budapest, (Q section) Diplomatikai Levéltár [Diplomatic Archive], [no.] 39328 (4th of November 1503; the Ottoman confirmation of the peace treaty); Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Urkundenabteilung, Allgemeine Urkundenreihe. 1503 (20th of August; the Hungarian version of the treaty was edited for instance in Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* [Documents concerning the History of the Romanians], II-1, 1451-1575 editor Nicolae Densusianu (Bucharest, 1890), no. 24, pp. 20-23); Mihai Maxim, 'Stephen the Great and the Great Porte: New Turkish Documents', *Transylvanian Review* (Cluj-Napoca), XIV (2005), 1, pp. 19-23; Al. Simon, 'The Contested Sultan: The Backgrounds of Bayezid II's Moldavian Campaign of 1484', *Eurasian Studies* (Cambridge-Rome), VII (2009), pp. 119-142 (see here also Idem, 'The Costs and

One of the attempts to include the Walachians (the probably most important royal attempt was made at the end of 1497, after the 'Polish crusade' in Moldavia), pertaining to the time span bordered by Matthias' death and the *General Peace* of Buda in 1503 (which conventionally marks the acceptance of the Ottoman Empire as Christendom's political partner), is particularly intriguing. This attempt apparently did not even involve the two Walachias (Moldavia and Walachia), but only *certain Walachians*. At least, this was the message sent from Venice to Milan in the autumn of 1492, after several months of contradictory news on Ottoman-Hungarian arrangements or confrontations, months further marked by Venice's increasing Ottoman fears.

Se diche anchora chel debe essere seguita la pace o tregua per 4 anni tra el Serenissimo/ Re d'Ungaria [Wladislaw II Jagiello] et <et> Turco [Bayezid II], alcuni dicendo che questa cosa de differiva de firmarse/ tanto tempo perche el Re d'Ungaria voleva se li includesse entro el Serenissimo Re/ di Napoli [Ferdinand of Aragon] et Signori Ragusei, et certi Valachi. Et el Signor Turco non voleva quello sij/ seguito, et con quali capitoli. Per quanto posso intendere, questa Signoria non li ha/ anchora per chiaro (Venice, 23rd of Octobe, 1492; report sent by Taddeus, vicecamerarius, to Milan).

Obviously (and rather naturally) the attempted Hungarian-Ottoman settlement failed. With or without the *Valachi*, its fate would have probably been the same. A more lasting arrangement was concluded only in mid 1495. As far as it is known, the laater arrangement, viewed by the Hungarian elite, as a great relief, did not include any Walachians or Walachia and Moldavia³.

Benefits of Anti-Ottoman Warfare: The Case of Moldavia (1475-1477)', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* (Bucharest), XLVIII (2009), 1-2, pp. 37-53).

³ In these matters: Archivio di Stato di Milano, Milan (ASM), Archivio Ducale Sforzesco/ Archivio Visconteo Sforzesco (A.D.S.), Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 379, 1492, fasc. 10, *Ottobre*, nn (23rd of October; the report containing the quoted fragment); Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, Codici Italiani, classa VII, *Storia ecclesiastica e civile veneziana* VII-999 (=8002), ff. 40 (59)^v-41 (60)^v (25th of July 1495; report on the recently concluded Ottoman-Hungarian truce); Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Könyvtár [The Library of the Loránd Eötvös University], Buda-pest, Codices, *Kaprinai*, A, LI, no. 47, pp. 108-120 [late 1497-early 1498; Wladislaw II's instructions for his envoys sent to Istanbul after his borther's, John Albert of Poland, failure to subdue Moldavia, we-

At any rate, the recipients of the information from Venice, the ducal authorities of Milan, were familiar with Venice's 'Walachian (namely Moldavian) affairs', in particular since the 1470s. It is hard to believe that an experienced diplomatic system (probably the only one to match, as network and structure, the Venetian system) could have viewed/labeled the rulers of Moldavia and Walachia as *certain Walachians*. Furthermore, only a week before the report in question was sent to Venice, Milan had been informed that Venice was about to finance Stephen III of Moldavia, once again, after the late 1470s, her *captain*. Frightened by the expulsion of her bailo from Istanbul and the increasingly aggressive policy of the still contested sultan Bayezid II, Venice was ready to react, not so much in view of a war, but in order to calm down the sultan. As for Vlad IV of Walachia, at least since 1489-1490, since he, Mara Branković's surprising Athonite heir (1487) and Vlad III Dracula's half brother, had agreed to aid the Bosnian favorites of Venice and emperor Frederick III, the ruler was no stranger to the peninsula⁴.

re edited by I[ovan]. Šišić, 'Rukovet spomenika o hercegu Ivanisu Korvinu i o borbama Hrvata s Turcima (1473-1496)' [Documents on the Fights between Croatia and the Turks in the Time of Duke John Corvinus. 1473-1496], *Starine* (Zagreb), XXXVIII (1937), no. 200, pp. 102-109]. For further contemporary sources: Lajos de Thallóczy, *Frammenti relativi alla storia dei paesi situati all'Adria* (offprint *Archeografo Triestino*, 3rd series, VII, 1) (Trieste, 1913), p. 55; [Domenico Malipiero], *Annali veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500 del Senatore Domenico Malipiero ordinati e abbreviati dal senatore Francesco Longo* (= *Archivio Storico Italiano*, VII), edited by Agostino Sagredo (Florence, 1843), pp. 142-145.

⁴ For instance: *Codice Aragonese o sia lettere regie, ordinamenti ed altri atti go-vernativi de' sovrani aragonesi in Napoli riguardanti l'amministrazione interna del reame e le relazioni all'estero*, edited by Francesco Thrincherà, II-1, [1491-1493] (Naples, 1868), no. 147, p. 129; Viaceslav Makusev, *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium vicinorumque populorum e tabularis et bibliothecis italicis derompta*, I-2, *Genua, Mantua, Mediolanum, Panormus et Taurinum* (Belgrade, 1882), no. 18, p. 50; no. 15, p. 137 (17th of October 1492; the original document on Stephen III of Moldavia returning to Venice's paid service as her captain can be found in ASM, A.D.S., Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 379, fasc. 10, nn); Ștefan Ștefănescu, 'Éléments nobiliaires balkaniques établis en Valachie à la fin du XV^e siècle', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, IV (1965), 5, pp. 891-896 (pp. 894-895); Al. Simon, 'Anti-Ottoman Warfare and Crusader Propaganda in 1474: New Evidences from the Archives of Milan', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XLVI (2007), 1-4, pp. 25-39.

In effect, it seems that Wladislaw deemed it necessary to include these W(a)lach(ians), and not Stephen III or Vlad IV, in his projected treaty with Bayezid II. This would be the message contained by the news that reached Milan and that had left apparently even the Venetians wonders. Yet, because of the peculiar mention, *certain Walachians*, which could not have 'lasted' in this formula in a report written in an environment well informed on the political life north of the Danube, the message seems to be more the result of a real royal intention, than the product of a confuse information. The absence of the Walachias and the presence of Ragusa, another traditional protégé of Buda (a status consequently contested by the Porte) on 'Wladislaw II's list' enables two (divergent) explanations: either the Walachians were regarded as *ab ovo* involved parties in an Ottoman-Hungarian treaty (less likely given the earlier and the later disputes over them) or their inclusion in such a treaty was, from the very beginning, out of the question because of the categorical opposition of the High Porte (more probable)⁵.

In mid 1492 Stephen III had prevented an Ottoman-Tartar attack, from the east, on Hungary. In April that year, Wladislaw had confirmed Matthias' donation by which Stephen became one of Hungary's great landowners. In October 1492, the king had no reason to willingly leave the Moldavian ruler out of his treaty with Bayezid II. On the other hand, by his demands to include Naples and Ragusa and the *Valachi* in treaty, the king obviously pushed the limits of his relation with Bayezid II. The potential reasons for the king's 'excessive demands' were at least threefold. He nee-

⁵ E.g. Momčilo Spremić, 'I tributi veneziani nel Levante nel XV secolo', *Studi Veneziani* (Venice), XIII (1971), pp. 221-252 (pp. 247-248); Ferenc Szakály, 'Phases of Turko-Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács. 1365-1526', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest), XXXIII (1979), pp. 65-112 (pp. 97-99, 101-102); Naghi Pienaru, 'Confruntare și diplomație la Dunăre. Tratatetele de pace otomano-ungare încheiate de Bayezid II și Matia Corvin' [Confrontation and Diplomacy on the Danube: The Ottoman-Hungarian Peace Treaties concluded between Bayezid II and Matthias Corvinnus], *Revista Istorică* [Historical Review] (Bucharest), XIV, NS (2003), 3-4, pp. 175-194 (pp. 175-181). For the eastern and south-eastern quality of Milanese information, see in this context: Oliver Jens Schmitt, 'Skanderbegs letzte Jahre. West-östliches Wechselspiel von Diplomatie und Krieg im Zeitalter der osmanischen Eroberung Albanies (1464-1468)', *Südost-Forschungen* (Munich), LXIV-LXV (2004-2005), pp. 56-123 (especially pp. 60-62).

ded Naples' goodwill to be freed for good from his controversial marriage to Beatrice, Matthias' widow and the daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon. Mamluk Egypt once again pressured Bayezid. A war between the Porte and Venice was furthermore, by no means, out of the question. The threat posed by Djem, Bayezid's brother and rival, had not vanished. In the Balkans, in particular in the areas of Montenegro and Albania, the number of rebellious anti-Ottoman centers continued to rise (benefitting from Venice's growing support)⁶.

Under the circumstances, the *Valachi* have to be searched south of the Danube. To what extent, Wladislaw, not the weak king he was deemed to be, actually planned to taken them into his protection, or was only pressuring the Porte through them (and thus risking to compromise the talks), is hard to determine. Maybe he wanted more in fact. Otherwise his claim would have been ridiculous and futile from the start. Regardless of interpretation, his claim opens a largely neglected chapter: that of the Balkan Vlachs, related by language and (chiefly Byzantine, Bulgarian, Hungarian and then Ottoman) history to the Walachians north of the Danube. Several facts draw the borders of this chapter: the stand of the Vlachs during the (West) Balkan campaigns of the two Hunyadis, the Latin connection between the Danubie branches of these descendants of the Romans (as noted, for example, by the Milanese duchy in reference to the events of 1467) or Mehmed II's massive colonization of Vlachs for the defense of Smederevo, near Bel-

⁶ ASVe, S.S., *Deliberazioni*, reg. 34, 1489-1493, c. 118^{r-v} (4th of April 1492); Vladimir Lamansky, *Secrets d'État de Venise. Documents, extraits, notices et études servant à éclaircir les rapports de la Seigneurie avec les Grecs, les Slaves et la Porte Ottomane* (Sankt Petersburg, 1884), nos. VII [11-12], pp. 246-249; Louis Thuasne, *Djem Sultan, fils de Mahommed II, frère de Bayezid II (1459-1495) d'après les documents originaux en grand partie inédites. Étuds sur la question d'Orient à la fin du XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1890), pp. 219-224; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)* (= *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, CXIV, CXXVII, CLXI, CLXII), II, *The Fifteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 422-425; Mi-chael J. Mc Gann, 'A Call to Arms: Michael Marullus to Charles VIII', *Byzantinische Forschungen* (Amsterdam), XVI, 1991, pp. 351-360; Al. Simon, 'Antonio Bonfini's *Valachorum regulus*: Matthias Corvinus, Transylvania and Stephen the Great', in *Between Worlds*, I, *Stephen the Great, Matthias Corvinus and their Time* (= *Mélanges d'Histoire Générale*, NS, I, 1), edited by László Koszta, Ovidiu Mureşan, Al. Simon (Cluj-Napoca, 2007), pp. 207-224 (in particular pp. 208-211 in this respect).

grade (1475-1476). From this perspective, we must return to the context of 1492⁷.

In 1491-1492 Bayezid II (re-)attempted to win (by treason) the disputed city of Belgrade. After 1483 (yet apparently 'less' in 1491-1492), the Hungarian captains of Belgrade had generally been members of the Ciula family, Walachians from Transylvania. Hence, given also the Vlach militaries in the Ottoman vicinity of Belgrade, one has to ask whether or not those *Valachi* protected by Wladislaw II were to remain in the empire (where they still enjoyed a non-neglectable autonomy) or had to be settled within the realm's borders. It is obviously a delicate question due to modern Romanian-Hungarian disputes over the 'northern route' of the Vlachs after the (Walachian-)Bulgarian Tsarate rejected Roman papal authority in the 1230s. At

⁷ In general: Silviu Dragomir, *Vlăzii din nordul Peninsulei Balcanice în evul mediu* [The Vlachs in the Northern Balkan Peninsula in the Middle Ages] (Bucharest, 1959), pp. 76-85; Nicoară Beldiceanu, 'Les Valaques de Bosnie à la fin du XV^e siècle et leurs institutions', *Turcica. Revue d'études turques: peuples, langues, culture, états* (Paris); VII (1975), pp. 122-134; Olga Zirojević, 'The Ottoman Military Organization in Yugoslav Countries in the 15th and 16th Centuries', in *Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Papers presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Historical Committee*, edited by Jaroslav Cesar (Prague, 1978), pp. 176-188; Ioan Drăgan, 'Un căpitan român pe frontul antiotoman: Ladislau Ficior de Ciula (?-1492)' [A Romanian Captain on the Anti-Ottoman Front: Ladislau Ficior of Ciula (?-1492)], *Acta Musei Napocensis* (Cluj-Napoca), XXII-XXIII (1985-1986), pp. 261-266; Simon, 'Brancho's Son', Appendix (for yet another report from Venice on the 'Roman Walachians' and their, pro-Ottoman, actions of 1467, in ASM, A.D.S., Potenze Estere, *Venezia*, cart. 354, 1468, fasc. 2, *Febbraio*, nn, 18th of February 1468). For the Walachian-Turkish-Serbian 'blood-ties' connecting the families of John Hunyadi and Mehmed II: Al. Simon, 'La parentéle ot-tomane du roi Mathias Corvin', in *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit. Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinople (=Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, CDLXXXIV)*, edited by Christian Gastgeber, Ekaterini Mitsiou, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Mihailo Popović, Johannes Preiser Kapeller, Al. Simon (Vienna, 2011), pp. 25-33. Such stories were apparently particularly vivid, even in the early 1500s, in the Ottoman-Hungarian-Walachian *triconfinium*, where the Vlachs had been settled in the mid 1470s by the sultan who placed them under the authority of commanders of Serbian origin, as well the area where, on the Hungarian side, the Vlachs of 1492 should have been settled by the king.

any rate, Matthias, whose designated king of Bosnia, Nicholas Ujlaki (1472-1477), had also taken on the title of king of Vlachia, had been very concerned with the fate of Bosnian Vlachs (after his Bosnian campaigns of 1463 and 1464), such as those abducted by *Turks* in 1487. His unwanted heir, Wladislaw II, usually tried to live up to Matthias' standards, perhaps in Vlach matters too⁸.

⁸ For Matthias and the Vlachs, see for instance Borislav Grgin, 'Der Kroatische Klein- und Mitlerer Adel während der Herrschaft des Königs Matthias I. Corvinus (1458-1490)', *East Central Europe. Eine wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* (Budapest), XXIX (2002), 1-2, p. 223-234 (pp. 230-232). For Matthias in defense of the Vlachs, see also Bayezid's letter to the king (January 1487), in Ivan Biliarsky, 'Une page des relations magyaro-ottomanes vers la fin du XV^e siècle', *Turcica*, XXXII (2000), pp. 291-305 (pp. 299-301). See also (*Actes du Congrès International des Études Balkaniques*, I (1966), 3, p. 559) Halil Inalcik's (unanswered) question in relation to the (unpublished) lecture of Nedim Filipović, 'Au sujet des problèmes démographiques en Bosnie et Herzégovine pendant la seconde moitié du XV^e siècle' (in return, see N. Filipović's, 'A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkan and ther Ottoman Rule' in *Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe*, pp. 305-358). For the 'foundations' of the W(a)lach(ian) question in Hungary: Al. Simon, 'Ethnicity and Politics on the Banks of the Danube in the Time of the Árpáds and the Asens', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (Budapest), LI (2011), 2, in print. At any rate, in connection to the report of 1492 (and the possible immigration involved by it), to the Hungarian rise of the Hunyadis, and to the partial survival of the Walachian party in the kingdom after 1490, it should be noted that in the 1400s ethnic hostilities north of the Danube were by far not as high as 'expected' in modern historiography.