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Bosnia in Anti-Ottoman  
Crusading in the  
Mid-1470s: Crusader  
Curiosities from  
Italian Archives**

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Preliminary communication

## **The Pontic King of Bosnia in Anti-Ottoman Crusading in the Mid-1470s: Crusader Curiosities from Italian Archives**

The paper focuses on a selection of documents from Italian archives that have not been included in the standard reference source collections from the past two centuries. The documents reveal certain “curiosities” such as the identity/identities of the king of Bosnia in the mid-1470s or papal appeals to support a Greek rite Christian lord against the Ottoman Turks. The newly found or re-found information allows new insights into the complex connections that shaped the growing area of contact between Free Christendom and the Ottoman Empire. The same information also indicates the limitations—recent or not—of different “over-reaching” interpretations of partially known documentary evidence.

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### **KEYWORDS:**

Kingdom of Bosnia, Kingdom of Hungary, Ottoman Empire, Crimean Peninsula, Adriatic Sea, crusading

The early 1470s witnessed major Ottoman successes—the conquest of Negroponte (1470) and Mehmed II's victory over Usun Hassan (1473)—that drastically reduced the chances of success for anti-Ottoman crusading, and in particular for Venice in its war with the Porte (1463–1479). The subsequent defeat, in early 1475, of the European (Rumelian) host of the sultan in Moldavia, otherwise rather unknown for its crusader or anti-Ottoman commitment, was therefore viewed with some amazement and raised altogether far-fetched hopes (largely brought to an end by Mehmed II's campaign against Stephen III of Moldavia in the summer of 1476). This Moldavian (Wallachian) incident has attracted scholarly attention—and rightfully, one might add—since the early 1900s, which has continued well into the new millennium. The focus has been on either the relationship between the Orthodox Stephen III of Moldavia and Pope Sixtus IV, the Wallachian position between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdoms of Hungary and of Poland, or the true extent and duration of Venice's involvement in Stephen III's anti-Ottoman crusader style decisions.<sup>1</sup>

These analyses, mostly printed before World War I, often relied on a selection of published sources based on selected material in western archives and libraries.<sup>2</sup> Several contemporary records, reports, letters, or charters that could have been relevant for the topics at hand were basically excluded from the very beginning. This paper will focus on some of these lacunae and on several sources that have undeservedly escaped scholarly attention. Considering these, in fact, unwanted or at least delayed novelties, this paper will avoid pre-established methodological Procrustean frames or readily awaited conclusions. The sources will be commented on and analyzed in relation to the information already available (abundant in its own right), in an attempt to also avoid perilous theorizing before one has the late medieval/Renaissance facts. The apparent puzzle might consequently become more comprehensible, as was the case recently with Stephen III's the more familiar Wallachian contemporary, Vlad III the Impaler (also known as Vlad Dracula).<sup>3</sup>

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### The Royal Coronation in Rome of “Duke Stephen Voivode”

In April 1475, Geronimo Zorzi, a Venetian envoy, met with Mara Branković, the sultan's favorite stepmother, while on his way to the court of Mehmed II. During their meeting, Mara tried to actively bring an end to the Venetian–Ottoman War that had begun in 1463, which she had previously attempted to do via talks on

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview (with references to previous studies), see for instance Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Benjamin Weber, *Lutter contre les Turcs: les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2013); Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman–Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2018). Older and also more recent Romanian literature includes Liviu Pilat, Ovidiu Cristea, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> For this issue and its lasting impact, see: Antonin Kalous, *The Legation of Angelo Pecchinoli at the Court of the King of Hungary (1488–1490)* (Budapest–Rome: Gondolat, 2021), in particular Appendix, no. 24, 97–98.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Weber, Adrian Gheorghe, and Christof Paulus, eds., *Corpus Draculianum: Dokumente und Chroniken zum walachischen Fürsten Vlad dem Pfähler 1448–1650* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 1/II; Gabriele Annas and Christof Paulus, *Geschichte und Geschichten: Studien zu den , Deutschen Berichten' über Vlad III. Drăculea* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020).

Mount Athos.<sup>4</sup> According to her, the Turks had never suffered a greater defeat than the recent one in Valachia, and there had never been a better time for negotiations between La Serenissima and the High Porte.<sup>5</sup> The advice was taken and a truce was concluded between the warring empires.<sup>6</sup> Later, as many others did elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> Giovanni Maria Filelfo,<sup>8</sup> the son of the significantly more famous humanist Francesco Filelfo,<sup>9</sup> convincingly argued in his treatise *Amyris*, which at first favored the Ottoman Empire and then abruptly turned against it,<sup>10</sup> that this truce had allowed the Ottomans to take the Genoese colony of Caffa in the Crimea in early June 1475, and to subsequently attack Stephen of Moldavia, who had defeated them at Vaslui in January of that same year.<sup>11</sup> The consequences of the battle's aftermath for the Italians is once more<sup>12</sup> worth closer inspection.<sup>13</sup>

On March 11, 1475, Giampietro Arrivabene, the future bishop of Urbino and a former student of the humanist Francesco Filelfo,<sup>14</sup> wrote from Rome to Ludovico III (il Turco) Gonzaga.<sup>15</sup> Arrivabene was the margrave of Mantua's ambassador to the Roman Curia.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, he was secretary to Ludovico's son, Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga.<sup>17</sup> In spring 1462, Francesco had been among the first to learn of the 21,660 victims of Vlad III the Impaler, a relative of King Matthias I by marriage.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his Time*, ed. William C. Hickmann (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1978), 221–32, 249–53.

<sup>5</sup> [Domenico Malipiero,] *Annali veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500 del Senatore Domenico Malipiero ordinati e abbreviati dal senatore Francesco Longo*, ed. Agostino Sagredo (Florence: Giovanni Pietro Vieusseux, 1843), 112 (Malipiero). The report sent by Zorzi reached the Laguna before May 9, 1475.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and Levant (1204–1571)* (Philadelphia, PA: The American Philosophical Society, 1978), 2: 114, 127, 161–62, 319–26.

<sup>7</sup> For the (anti-Venetian) Italian trend (Ottoman matters included), see also Giustiniano Degli Azzi, "Un frammento inedito della Cronaca di Benedetto Dei," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 110, no. 1 (1952): 99–113, at 111–13.

<sup>8</sup> Still valuable Guillaume Favre, "Vie de Jean-Marius Philelfe," in *Mélanges d'histoire littéraire*, ed. Jacques Adert (Geneva: Ramboz et Schuchardt, 1856), 1: 9–221, at 176–218, esp. 177–78.

<sup>9</sup> *Francesco Filelfo: Man of Letter*, ed. Jeroen De Keyser (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> *Amyris. De vita et gestis Mahometi Turcorum imperatoris*, ed. Aldo Manetti (Bologna: Pàtron, 1978), 196–97, 202.

<sup>11</sup> See already Andrei Pippidi, "1475: atacul otoman asupra Cetății Albe," *Analele Putnei*, 7, no. 1, (2011): 29–36.

<sup>12</sup> Ovidiu Cristea, "The Aftermath of a Victory: An Episode of Stephen the Great's Diplomacy after the Battle of Vaslui (January 10, 1475)," *Banatica*, 28, no. 2, (2018): 453–63.

<sup>13</sup> Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, "Regii Bosniei și ai Valahiei la Jubileul de la Roma (1475)," *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 35 (2015–2020): 9–28.

<sup>14</sup> Alessandro Luzio, Rodolfo Renier, "I Filelfo e l'umanesimo alla corte dei Gonzaga," *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, 16 (1890): 119–27. Filelfo affectionately named Arrivabene *Eutyches*, the happy / blissful one, a name typical for Roman *liberti*, freed slaves. Filelfo also called Arrivabene *humanissimus* (*Francisci Philelfi Epistolarum Familiarum Libri XXXVII* (Venice: de Gregorijs, 1502), f. 195).

<sup>15</sup> Isabella Lazzarini, "Ludovico III Gonzaga, marchese di Mantova," *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, 66 (2006), *sub voce*.

<sup>16</sup> David S. Chambers, "Giovanni Pietro Arrivabene (1439–1504): Humanistic Secretary and Bishop," *Aevum*, 58, no. 3 (1984), 3: 397–438.

<sup>17</sup> Isabella Lazzarini, "Francesco Gonzaga," *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, 57 (2002), *sub voce*.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandru Simon, "The Pope, the Hunyadis, and the Wallachians: The Curious Case of Pius II," *Banatica*, 30, no. 2 (2020): 59–108.

Arrivabene's missive<sup>19</sup> was a professional synthesis, based on a wide network of informants, of the Adriatic imbroglio connecting the Balkan peninsula to the Italian peninsula.<sup>20</sup> He began by informing his lord of the death of the mistress of Giovanni della Rovere, prefect of Rome and nephew of Pope Sixtus IV.<sup>21</sup> The deceased was the illegitimate daughter (previously unknown) of Ferdinand of Aragon, who ruled over the papal fief of Naples.<sup>22</sup> Plans had been made in the papal circle to wed Giovanni<sup>23</sup> to one of the unmarried daughters of Giovanni Francesco Marzano, Ferdinand's brother-in-law and prince of Rossano (imprisoned by Ferdinand).<sup>24</sup> Two of the daughters of Marzano and Ferdinand's sister, Eleonora Diana, had married in Italy: Maria had wed Antonio Todeschini-Piccolomini, duke of Amalfi and nephew of Pope Pius II,<sup>25</sup> and Camilla had wed the lord of Pesaro, Costanzo Sforza, a first cousin of Galeazzo Maria.<sup>26</sup> In May 1474, a third daughter, Margareta, had wed Vlatko Kosača, joint duke of St. Sava (Herzegovina) and brother of the refugee Queen Catherine, who was the widow of Tomaš, the late king of Bosnia.<sup>27</sup>

In his report, Arrivabene quickly jumped from one topic to the next (he did not recall Francesca<sup>28</sup> among Marzano's married daughters). After reviewing these matrimonial arrangements, he informed Ludovico, who had been mediating between Catherine, Margareta, Vlatko, and Mehmed since 1470, that the man he referred to as "Duke Stephen Voivode" would be arriving in Rome in four days' time when he would be crowned king of Bosnia. This was a reference to Pope Sixtus IV's

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix, no. I. The original can be found in the Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua (ASMa), Archivio Gonzaga (A.G.), E. Affari esteri, XXV. Roma, busta 834. 1404-1499, not numbered; no. 458, by stamped archival order. I prefer to use "not numbered" because the documents are seldom placed in chronological order in such busta.

<sup>20</sup> Norman Housley, "Christendom's Bulwark: Croatian Identity and the Response to the Ottoman Advance, Fifteenth to Sixteenth Centuries," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 24 (2014): 149-64; Luka Špoljarić, "Nicholas of Modruš and his *De Bellis Gothorum*: Politics and National History in the Fifteenth-Century Adriatic," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 92, no. 2 (2019), 457-91, at 476-81.

<sup>21</sup> *La quercia dai frutti d'oro. Giovanni Della Rovere (1457-1501) e le origini del potere roveresco*, eds. Marinella Bonvini Mazzanti, Gilberto Piccinini (Ancona: Deputazione di storia patria per le Marche, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Ernesto Pontieri, *Per la storia del regno di Ferrante I d'Aragona re di Napoli* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1969<sup>2</sup>), 1-58.

<sup>23</sup> He had been engaged since the summer of 1474 to eleven-year-old Giovanna, daughter of the duke of Urbino, Federico de Montefeltro, (Benedetta Borello, "Giovanna di Montefeltro," *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, 76 (2012), *sub voce*).

<sup>24</sup> Patrizia Sardina, "Marino Marzano," *Dizionario Bibliografico degli Italiani*, 71 (2008), *sub voce*; Luka Špoljarić, "Zov partenopejskih princeza: Kosače i Frankapani u bračnim pregovorima s napuljskim kraljem Ferranteom," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, 52, no. 3 (2020): 121-88, especially Appendix, nos 1.1-6, pp. 159-65.

<sup>25</sup> Maria, Antonio's wife since 1461, was believed to be the daughter of Ferdinand and of his mistress Diana Guardato (Ilaria Puglia, *I Piccolomini d'Aragona duchi di Amalfi (1461-1610). Storia di un patrimonio nobiliare* (Naples: Editoriale Scientifica, 2005), 19-24). This hypothesis must be refuted.

<sup>26</sup> The wedding was celebrated two months after Arrivabene's report (*A Renaissance Wedding: The Celebrations at Pesaro for the Marriage of Costanzo Sforza and Camilla Marzano D'Aragona, May 26-30, 1475*, eds. Jane Bridgeman, Alan Griffiths (London-Turnhout: Brepols, 2013)).

<sup>27</sup> Szabolcs de Vajay, "Un ambassadeur bien choisi: Bernardinus de Frangipanus et sa mission à Naples, en 1476," in *The Man of Many Devices, Who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honour of János M. Bak*, eds. Balázs Nagy and Márcell Sebök (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 1999), 550-57.

<sup>28</sup> Lajos Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1914), 170, 181. According to others, Margareta married Vladislav, Vlatko's brother. This hypothesis too must be refuted now.

address on April 9, 1476, in which he had mentioned the “dilectum filium nobilem virum Stephanum Wayvode Ducem Moldaviae.” At the time, Stephen had been involved in a full-scale diplomatic conflict with Matthias in Rome.<sup>29</sup>

“Duke” Stephen had been named king by Matthias, the de jure suzerain of Bosnia<sup>30</sup> from December 1463 (King Stephen Tomašević, Catherine’s adopted stepson, had been beheaded by Mehmed).<sup>31</sup> At the time of Arrivabene’s report and after Sixtus had interceded, Ferdinand accepted Matthias as his son-in-law (September 1474),<sup>32</sup> thus closing the Adriatic gap between the two kings. However, Sigismund Tomašević, son of Stephen Tomaš and Catherine, had recently converted to Islam and become Isak Beg Kraljević.<sup>33</sup> A new king of Bosnia was needed.

### Bosnia and Wallachia in the Corsia Sistina

Rome expected to see Sixtus crown “Duke Stephen Voivode,” Matthias’s choice for king of Bosnia.<sup>34</sup> According to Arrivabene, Stephen, who already ruled over a “beautiful country” (obviously different from Bosnia), should have felt honored.<sup>35</sup> Arrivabene therefore concluded his report by promising the margrave of Mantua that he would write more about the future king after he arrived in Rome, when Arrivabene hoped to be better informed about the voivode’s “deeds” (an eloquent clue that he was alluding to the victor at Vaslui). Last but not least, Arrivabene, Filelfo’s disciple, wrote to Ludovico III that the carpioni (a delicious fish from Mantua’s Lake Garda) had arrived.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Augustin Theiner, *Vetera monumenta historica Hungarum sacram illustrantia*, (Rome; Typis Vaticanis, 1859), 2: no. 636, pp. 452–53 (VMHH).

<sup>30</sup> On the king of Bosnia as a high-ranking dignitary of the Hungarian realm (prior to the 1450s and 1460s), see: Mladen Ančić, “Od zemlje do kraljevstva: mjesto Bosne u strukturi *archiregnuma*,” *Hercegovina*, 26, no. 1 (2015): 9–88. Following the papal coronation of 1461 and the Ottoman conquest of 1463, Buda was no longer the only power that had a say in the matter of the royal Bosnian crown.

<sup>31</sup> See also Veljan Atanasovski, *Pad Hercegovine* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga. Istorijski institut, 1979), 101–06.

<sup>32</sup> For an overview, see: Péter E. Kovács, “Magyarország és Nápoly politikai kapcsolatai a Mátyás korában,” in *Tanulmányok Szakály Ferenc emlékére*, eds. Pál Fodor, Géza Pálffy, and István György Toth (Budapest: MTA Társadalomkutató Központ, 2002), 229–47. The wedding was celebrated in December 1476.

<sup>33</sup> Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “Some Notes on Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, his Family, and his Books,” *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 40 (2013): 315–26.

<sup>34</sup> Arrivabene was in fact quite disappointed when he saw the real, once glorious, king of Bosnia. On March 24, 1475, he wrote to Ludovico III: “*Illustrissimo signore mio. Non intendo che questo Re de Bosna habbia cerchato qui altro se non absolutione e Jobileo. Era barone e molto potente nel realme de Hungaria. E fece gran fatti fin al tempo che fu morto lor Cardinale di Cesarini* [in 1444, at the battle of Varna]. *Strecto e caro compagno de Zohanne Vaiuoda* [John Hunyadi]. *In questo ultimo, ex auctoritate Regis Hungarie, fatto Re de Bosna, dela qual par che molto valorosamente se ne habia, vendicato una gran parte di mande Turchi. Dominica matina al officio de le olive* [Palm Sunday (19 March 1475)] *se andoe á palatio in quella barra portata da doi cavalli. Puo á piedi de la scala lo tuolsero fuora in una pelle grande e li dentro lo portarono suso che non si puo lo poustro signore aiutare ne de mane ne de piedi per le gotte. Haveva in dosso una turca de broccato d’oro. A casa non e sta visitato da cardinali se non da Monsignore de Rhoano* [Guillaume d’Estouteville, archbishop of Rouen] *nomine totius collegii. Heri matina se parti compagno fuori da la porta secundo usanza da cardinali. Altro non habiamo de novo. Me raccomando á la gratia de Vestra Serenità. Rome, XXIII<sup>o</sup> Martii 1475* (ASMA, A.G. E. Affari esteri, XXV. Roma, busta 834, not numbered/ no. 463 by stamped archival order).

<sup>35</sup> The original text (from March 11, 1475) read: [...] *E par mi che costui habia un bel stato sera honorato come Re* [...].

<sup>36</sup> Al. Luzio, R. Renier, *Mantova e Urbino: Isabellad’Este ed Elisabetta Gonzaga nelle relazioni famigliari e nelle vicende politiche* (Turin-Rome: L. Roux, 1893), 57.

In fact, Stephen was not on the road to Rome to be crowned king of Bosnia. Nicholas of Ilok (Újlaki), the former joint voivode of Transylvania and a protector, ally, and later adversary of John Hunyadi, was traveling to Rome, officially as a pilgrim.<sup>37</sup> Four years earlier, in September 1471, Matthias had named Nicholas king of Bosnia,<sup>38</sup> successfully detaching him from a new regional anti-Hunyadi conspiracy,<sup>39</sup> which Stephen of Moldavia had halted from the east when his envoys met with Matthias in his native city of Cluj in May 1471, before Újlaki's appointment.<sup>40</sup> Yet, similar to the Kingdom of Naples,<sup>41</sup> the Kingdom of Bosnia was a peculiar item within the Patrimonium Sancti Petri.<sup>42</sup> Papal approval of royal rule over Bosnia was naturally mandatory.<sup>43</sup>

In the fall of 1477, Nicholas of Ilok died,<sup>44</sup> but his Bosnian crown did not pass to his son Lawrence (In the end, Matthias kept it for his own illegitimate son John).<sup>45</sup> Nicholas was then depicted in a fresco in the Corsia Sistina in Rome as *Bossinae quoque Rex ac Valachiae*.<sup>46</sup> In spite of his old age, he had come ad limina Apostolorum.

<sup>37</sup> Tamás Fedeles, "Bosniae... rex... apostolorum limina visit: die Romwallfahrt des Nicolaus Újlaki im Jahre 1475," *Ungarn-Jahrbuch*, 31 (2011-2013 [2014]), 99-118, at 114. Contrary to common opinion, Újlaki left Rome not on Easter Sunday (March 26, 1475) but instead three days earlier, on Maundy Thursday (March 23) according to Arrivabene.

<sup>38</sup> A coronation did apparently take place in May 1472, in Buda, not in Jajce, Bosnia's capital (Davor Salihović, *An Interesting Episode: Nicholas of Ilok's Kingship in Bosnia, 1471-1477* [MA thesis] (Budapest: CEU, 2016), 59-60).

<sup>39</sup> András Kubinyi, "Zur Frage des bosnischen Königtums von N. Újlaki," *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 8 (1958): 373-84.

<sup>40</sup> Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor, XV-1. Acte și scrisori din arhivele orașelor ardelenne Bistrița, Brașov, Sibiu, 1358-1600*, ed. Nicolae Iorga (Bucharest: Socec: 1911), no. 133, p. 77 (August 1471); Ioan Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, (Bucharest: Socec, 1913), 2: no. 139, p. 313 (July 1471); *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, VI. 1458-1473, eds. Gustav Gündisch, Herta Gündisch, Gernot Nussbächer, and Konrad Gündisch (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1981), nos. 3867-3870, pp. 496-99 (May 1471).

<sup>41</sup> Girolamo Arnaldi, *Le origini dello Stato della Chiesa* (Turin: UTET Libreria, 1987), 105-09.

<sup>42</sup> Emir O. Filipović, "The Key to the Gate of Christendom? The Strategic Importance of Bosnia in the Struggle against the Ottomans," in *The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century: Converging and Competing Cultures*, ed. N. Housley (New York: Routledge, 2017), 151-68.

<sup>43</sup> In early 1489, in the context of the conflict between Pope Innocent VIII and Matthias over Ancona, the papal legate, Angelo Pecchinoli, gently reminded the Hunyadi monarch of two incidents in the past: "...Subdidi exempla de corona, quam felicis recordationis Pius II regi Bosne donasset, quod sue maiestati fuisset gravissimum, subdidi et illius vaivode Moldaviensis, qui auxilia Venetorum contempto rege suo petiisset..." (Kalous, *Pecchinoli*, Appendix, no. 24, 97-98).

<sup>44</sup> Ede Reiszig, "Az Újlaki-család (II)," *Turul*, 56 (1942): 56-65. He died prior to Stephen's new Wallachian campaign of November 1477, which was meant, as in 1473-1474, to relieve Ottoman pressure from besieged Venetian Scutari in Albania (Alexandru Simon, "The Costs and Benefits of Anti-Ottoman Warfare: Documents on the Case of Moldavia. 1475-1477," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 48, nos. 1-2, (2009): 37-53).

<sup>45</sup> See also Tamás Fedeles, "Miklós király és Lőrinc herceg. Az utolsó két Újlaki vázlatos pályaképe," in *Személyiség és történelem. A történelmi személyiség*, eds. József Vonyó, Enikő Csukovits, and György Gyarmati (Budapest-Pécs: Magyar Történelmi Társulat-Kronosz, 2017), 135-68, at 148-51, 164.

<sup>46</sup> This was the original inscription dictated by or written under the supervision of Bartolomeo Sacchi Platina, who was closely connected to the House of Gonzaga (Vincenzo Forcella, *Iscrizioni delle chiese e d'altri edifici di Roma*, VI (Rome: Tipografia delle Scienze Matematiche e Fisiche, 1875), 380; cf. already Florio Banfi, "Romei Ungheresi del Jubileo del 1475. Niccolò Ujlaki re di Bosnia in un affresco nell'Ospedale di Santo Spirito dell'urbe," *Archivio di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti della Società Italo-Ungherese* Mattia Corvino, 3, no. 2 (1941): 499-512, at 509, 512, notes 25-26).

The painting was completed at a time when relations between Sixtus and Matthias,<sup>47</sup> and between Matthias and Stephen,<sup>48</sup> were very strained (1479–1480).<sup>49</sup>

After Queen Catherine also died (1478),<sup>50</sup> the image and the inscription in the Corsia Sistina sent a message.<sup>51</sup> Both the thrones of Bosnia and of Wallachia (though Nicholas had been king only of the former) were vacant, and it was Sixtus IV, not Matthias, who had the final say.<sup>52</sup> According to Arrivabene, this had already been the case in spring 1475.<sup>53</sup> The battle of Vaslui had, in fact, only been the means to an end.

### Christendom's Hope on the Western Shores of the Black Sea

The rumor Giampietro Arrivabene recorded in Rome raises two issues: (1) the Roman rise of Stephen III of Moldavia, and (2) the papal reception of the Orthodox ruler of Moldavia.<sup>54</sup> Both issues, and perhaps especially the latter, were contingent on Stephen's position and Black Sea connections, as was eloquently emphasized in the papal bull Redemptor Noster issued on January 13, 1476, for the athlete Stephen and his main Moncastro harbor (Cetatea Albă).<sup>55</sup> This Pontic dependency was further emphasized by an encyclical Sixtus IV sent on July 1, 1475.<sup>56</sup> The encyclical predated news of the Ottoman conquest of the Genoese colony of Caffa in the Crimea on June 6, 1475. This was Mehmed's answer to Vaslui. Stephen himself thus rapidly sent news of Caffa's fall.<sup>57</sup>

Sixtus IV's encyclical has only survived through a copy sent to the

<sup>47</sup> E.g. [Imre Kelcz.] *Epistolae Matthiae Corvini Regis Hungariae ad pontifices, imperatores, reges, principes, aliosque viros illustres* (Košice: Typis Academicis Societatis Jesu, 1743), pars IV, no. 27, 55.

<sup>48</sup> According to Queen Beatrice herself (Iván Nagy, Albert Nyáry, *Magyar diplomacziak emlékek. Mátyás király korából 1458–1490* (=Monumenta Hungariae Historica, IV, 1–4), II. [1466–1480] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1876), nos. 288–289, 436–40 (MDE)).

<sup>49</sup> Eunice Howe, *Art and Culture at the Sistine Court* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2005), 93; Carla Keyvanian, *Hospitals and Urbanism in Rome, 1200–1500* (Boston–Leiden: Brill, 2015), 351, 354, notes 21, 26.

<sup>50</sup> See also Emir O. Filipović, "Was Bosnian Queen Catherine a Member of the Third Order of St. Francis?," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, 57, nos. 1–2 (2015): 165–82, at 165–69.

<sup>51</sup> Alexandru Simon, "Duca Stephano vaivoda intitulato re <de Bosna> dal Re de Hungaria și <Nicolaus>Bosniae et Valachiae Rex: despre identitatea regală a valahilor," in *Sub semnul împlinirii și al datoriei. Studia in honorem Dorina N. Rusu*, eds. Ioan Bolovan, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Victor Spinei (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2021), 147–74.

<sup>52</sup> The Bosnian problem had already emerged during the time of Pius II (Dubravko Lovrenović, *Na klizištu povijesti (sveta kruna ugarska i sveta kruna bosanska), 1387–1463* (Zagreb–Sarajevo: Synopsis, 2006), 341–50). Another issue "had arisen" at the same time, in 1461–1462 (Ioan-Aurel Pop, "Matthias Corvinus, *Re de Ungaria, de Dacia* etc., in 1462," *Transylvanian Review*, 29, suppl. 1 (2020): 41–52).

<sup>53</sup> Banfi deliberately omitted his report from March 11 in "Romei Ungheresi". Note 20 (p. 512) read: *Archivio di Stato di Mantova, lettera di I. P. Arrivabeni, in data del 24 marzo 1475, ove è detto che il Re della Bosnia era venuto a Roma solo a motivo del Giubileo*. The note corresponded to the text (p. 504): *Per soddisfare all' indulgenza del Giubileo, come attesta l'agente romano dei duchi di Mantova<sup>20</sup> egli [Niccolò] vi rimase tutto il mese di marzo<à Roma>*.

<sup>54</sup> See Ioan-Aurel Pop and Alexandru Simon, "From *Dracul*'s Agent to the *Athleta* of the Papacy," *Banatica*, 31, no. 2 (2021): 65–80.

<sup>55</sup> Text: VMHH, II, no. 636, 453–54. Context: Ioan-Aurel Pop, "Atletul Ștefan și românii ca protagoniști la Marea Neagră în epistole semnate de papa Sixt al IV-lea și de umanistul Francesco Filelfo (1475–1476)," in *Spre pământul făgăduinței*, între Balcani și Bugeac. Omagiu Doamnei Profesoare Elena Siupur la împlinirea vârstei de 80 de ani, eds. Daniel Cain, Aneta Mihaylova, Roumiana L. Stantcheva, and Andrei Timotin (Brăila: Istros, 2020), 17–34.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix, no. II. Cf. already Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 2: 320 (note 23).

<sup>57</sup> Alexandru Simon, "The Western Impact of Eastern Events: The Crusader Consequences of the Fall of Caffa," *Istros*, 18 (2011): 383–96.



margrave of Mantua Ludovico III. In it, Sixtus asks the margrave to support Stephen III. The pope had been informed by Pietro Mocenigo, the new doge of Venice,<sup>58</sup> of the great threat faced by Stephen's Moldavia. The same doge had used Stephen's victory at Vaslui to conclude a truce with Mehmed II,<sup>59</sup> which had allowed the sultan to take Caffa. Pope Sixtus IV, however, made no mention here of any Venetian–Ottoman arrangement.

Mehmed II was planning to attack Moldavia from the Black Sea, so Sixtus asked Ludovico III to aid Stephen III not only through prayer but also by his deeds.<sup>60</sup> And following his conquest of Caffa, Mehmed did attack Moldavia at Cetatea Albă.<sup>61</sup> Ludovico was a Catholic prince and therefore had to act accordingly.<sup>62</sup> Stephen was the bulwark on the Ottoman road to Europe.<sup>63</sup> In the words of the pope: "...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 suffer..."<sup>64</sup>

Sixtus did not use the verb *relinquere* (abandon); he used *destituere* (leave destitute) to emphasize what could happen to Christendom if Stephen was forsaken.<sup>65</sup> The same verb was employed in November 1476 by La Serenissima, the voivode's main protector,<sup>66</sup> when it successfully implored the pope not to abandon Stephen as *athleta*, following his (and King Matthias's) failure to defeat Mehmed in Moldavia that summer.<sup>67</sup> Skanderbeg too had experienced the same

<sup>58</sup> Coriolano Cippico, *The Deeds of Commander Pietro Mocenigo*, ed. Kiril Petkov (New York: Ithaca Press, 2016). It should be noted that Mocenigo was a seasoned military commander, rather than the usual Venetian politician.

<sup>59</sup> *Malpiero*, 112.

<sup>60</sup> For the papal Pontic anti-Ottoman *topoi*, see for instance Edgar Artner, *Magyarország mint a nyugati keresztény művelődés védőbástyája. A Vatikáni Levéltárnak azok az okiratai, melyek őseinknek a Keletről Európát fenyegető veszedelmek ellen kifejtett erőfeszítéseire vonatkoznak (cca. 1214–1606)*, ed. Szovag Kornel (Budapest: Gondolat, 2004), no. 101, 111–12 ("the Hungarians and the Wallachians of the Black Sea" who fought against the Turks).

<sup>61</sup> See for example Pippidi, "1475: atacul otoman," 29–36.

<sup>62</sup> See also Elisabeth Swain, "Faith in the Family: The Practice of Religion by the Gonzagas," *Journal of Family History*, 8 (1983): 177–89.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Srodecki, "Porta della Christianita. Das Motiv der Glaubensverteidigung in den Donaufürstentümern unter Vlad III. und Stephan III.," in *Vlad der Pfähler-Dracula: Tyrann oder Volkstribun?*, eds. Thomas M. Bonn, Rayk Einax, Stefan Rohdewald (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 21–35.

<sup>64</sup> The original sentence read: "...*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 lacessitus Christianorum auxilij se destitutum senserit, et loco ceserit, quod Deus avertat, quantis periculis Ungari et Germanorum populi/ devotissimi et reliqua Christianitas subiacerent...*"

<sup>65</sup> Pilat-Cristea, *The Ottoman Threat*, 164.

<sup>66</sup> Alexandru Simon, "Să nu ucizi o pasăre cântătoare: soarta unui fortissimus rei Christiane athleta în ochii Venetiei," in *Pe urmele trecutului. Profesorului Nicolae Edroiu la 70 de ani*, eds. Susana Andea, Ioan-Aurel Pop and Alexandru Simon (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2009), 159–69.

<sup>67</sup> "...*Sed sicut ante oppressionem efficaciter memorasse et quesivisse meminimus, non est Magnificus Vayvoda fortissimus rei Christiane athleta destituendus, sed hortandus confirmandus...*" (last edited in Ioan-Aurel Pop and Alexandru Simon, *Re de Dacia: un proiect de la sfârșitul Evului Mediu* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2018), 154–55).

threat of losing his title of *athleta* following Mehmed's Albanian campaign of 1466.<sup>68</sup> Apparently long before he was first recorded as an *athleta* (on January 13, 1476), Stephen was viewed as an *athleta* by the papacy, and particularly on the Italian peninsula after his victory on January 10, 1475.<sup>69</sup>

In the encyclical sent on July 1, 1475, Sixtus made no distinction between Stephen, the doge of Venice, and the margrave of Mantua, and referred to all of them as *dilectus*, meaning "beloved" (*carissimus*, meaning "most beloved," was reserved for kings and the emperor).<sup>70</sup> Before he was probably officially named *athleta* (after repelling Mehmed's attack on Cetatea Albă),<sup>71</sup> the voivode was a member of the community under the authority of the pope and was entitled to support from that community.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Sixtus did not mention Matthias, Stephen's suzerain,<sup>73</sup> thus emphasizing the personal relationship between the Holy See and Stephen shortly after Rome had received the spoils from Vaslui sent by the voivode.<sup>74</sup> Stephen had basically come out of nowhere<sup>75</sup> and risen to be the hope of the Cross in 1475, the Year of the Jubilee.

### Crusade and Plague

In the autumn of 1475, the plague began ravaging Rome. Bologna in the west<sup>76</sup> and Cetatea Albă in the east (by the bull *Redemptor Noster* of January 1476<sup>77</sup>), were turned into alternative Jubilee pilgrimage sites. In Bologna, the pilgrims were required to visit the churches of Saints Peter, Petronius, Anton, and Francis.<sup>78</sup> In Stephen's Cetatea Albă on the shores of the Black Sea, their

<sup>68</sup> Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini, *Lettere (1444-1479)*, ed. Paolo Cherubini (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1997), 2: no. 208, p. 875.

<sup>69</sup> The "King of Bosnia and Wallachia" painted in the Roman *Corsia Sistina* is also relevant here (Simon, "Duca Stephano vaivoda intitulato re," 170-74).

<sup>70</sup> Alexandru Simon, "The Walls of *Christendom's Gate*. Hungary's Mathias Corvinus and Moldavia's Stephen the Great Politics in the Late 1400s," *Quaderni della Casa Romana*, 3 (2004): 205-24, at 216-18.

<sup>71</sup> For the Pontic events of July-September/December 1475, see also Maria-Magdalena Székely and Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina, o prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei* (Putna: Mușatinii, 2006), 49-57.

<sup>72</sup> For an overview of the sources: Ioan-Aurel Pop and Alexandru Simon, "Ungaria et Valachia: promisiunile *valahe* ale Republicii Sfântului Marcu din anii 1470," *Revista Istorică*, NS, 25, nos. 1-2 (2015)[2016]: 5-65, at 8-9.

<sup>73</sup> After Caffa fell to the Ottomans, however, Stephen again swore allegiance to Matthias through the Treaty of Iași (July 12, 1475), less than two weeks after Sixtus's message (*Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, no. 146, 334-35).

<sup>74</sup> Pop, "The Romanians from Moldavia," 168-69; Pop, "Atletul Ștefan și românii," 27-28.

<sup>75</sup> Alexandru Simon, "Crusading between the Adriatic and the Black Sea: Matthias Corvinus and the Ottoman Empire after the Fall of Negroponete," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest*, 42, no. 2 (2010): 59-75.

<sup>76</sup> Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, IV. [1464-1484] (London: Routledge, 1906<sup>3</sup>), 283-84, 288-89, chiefly 284, note [1]. The transfer to Bologna was usually dated to 1475, but according to Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga the transfer was accomplished shortly before May 6, 1476.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Oskar Halecki, *From Florence to Brest (1439-1596)* (= *Sacrum Poloniae Millenium*, 5) (Rome: Via delle Botteghe Oscure, 1958<sup>1</sup>), 102.

<sup>78</sup> E.g. Antonio di Paolo Masini, *Bologna Perlustrata*, (Bologna: L'erede di Vittorio Benacci, 1666), 2: 92.

destinations were two cathedrals (duas ecclesias cathedrales),<sup>79</sup> which were quite the uncanonical Christian rarity.<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, pilgrims listened to the papal call and came to Moldavia and Cetatea Albă. They even found the country in good order on the eve of Mehmed II's campaign of July–August 1476.<sup>81</sup> By mid-August 1476, Stephen's Moldavia had paid its dues as a crusading land.<sup>82</sup> This was the message that Venice's envoy in Moldavia, Emmanuele Gerardo, almost involuntarily conveyed to La Serenissima from Brețcu on the Transylvanian border on August 19.<sup>83</sup>

At that time, because of the plague, Sixtus IV had already left Rome and taken up residence in Foligno, in Umbria.<sup>84</sup> He learned of both the sultan's forced retreat from Moldavia and of Stephen and Matthias's failure to trap and to defeat the conqueror.<sup>85</sup> The question then was what to do with the 200,000 ducats of crusader levy already agreed upon by most of the Italian states.<sup>86</sup>

Giampietro Arrivabene in Foligno was again quick to report to the margrave of Mantua, foremost because Sixtus IV, who was more preoccupied by the purity of the air, had entrusted this most delicate matter to Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga.<sup>87</sup> Foligno witnessed heated discussions between the ambassadors summoned to Sixtus's new residence,<sup>88</sup> chiefly between those of Naples and of Venice. Ferdinand of Aragon, the king of Naples, wanted the entire subsidy to be sent to his future son-in-law Matthias of Hungary.<sup>89</sup> The Republic of Venice demanded the disputed sum for its eastern favorite, Stephen of Moldavia.<sup>90</sup> In

<sup>79</sup> VMHH, II, no. 636, 453–54.

<sup>80</sup> Alexandru Simon, "Catedralele Cetății Albe, Armenopolis-ul Moldovei," in *Orașele și spațiile lor sacre*, ed. Maria-Emilia Țiplic (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2022), 115–38. Such situations can be encountered semi-officially at the inner borders of the Latin rite world, in Bergamo or in Dublin. Yet, in both cases, the designation cathedral did not cover two distinct Episcopal seats/ bishoprics and Archbishoprics.

<sup>81</sup> Sebald Rieter Junior's text was recently translated again and annotated by Alexandru Ciocîlтан in *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, suppl. II, ed. Ștefan Andreescu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2016), 433–36.

<sup>82</sup> E.g. *Acta et epistolae relationum Transylvaniae Hungariaeque cum Moldavia et Valachia* (= *Fontes Rerum Transylvanicarum*, 4, 6), ed. Endre Veress, (Budapest: Stephaneum, 1914), 1: no. 19, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup> See Appendix, no. III, as well as Alexandru Simon, "Cruciada din Moldova într-un raport venețian din 1476: note asupra unui document," in *Istoria ca datorie: omagiu academicianului Ioan-Aurel Pop*, eds. I. Bolovan, Ovidiu Ghitta (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2015), 375–84.

<sup>84</sup> He was housed in the Palazzo Trinci (Flavio di Bernardo, *Un vescovo umanista alla corte pontificia: Giannantonio Campano (1429–1477)* (= *Miscellanea Historiae Pontificae*, 39) (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1975), 337–38).

<sup>85</sup> Alexandru Simon, "Valahii de la Marea Neagră și valahii din Ungaria în cruciada anului 1476," *Revista Istorică*, NS, 22, nos. 3–4 (2012): 269–90, at 285–86.

<sup>86</sup> This was almost the value the Neapolitan princess Beatrice of Aragon's dowry (estimated at 170,000 ducats in May 1476), who then wed Matthias in December 1476 (MDE, II, no. 214, p. 310).

<sup>87</sup> See Appendix no. IV, and Ioan-Aurel Pop and Alexandru Simon, "Crusading in the Time of the Plague: The Arbitrage of Foligno (September 1476)," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 60, nos. 1–4 (2021): 43–61.

<sup>88</sup> Unwilling to renounce its Ottoman commitments (F. Babinger, "Lorenzo de' Medici e la corte ottomana," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 121, no. 2 (1963): 305–61), Florence was ready to contribute only 15,000 ducats to the crusader fund.

<sup>89</sup> E.g. Lajos Thallóczy, *Frammenti relativi alla storia dei paesi situati all'Adria* (offprint *Archaeografo Triestino*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, VII, 1) (Trieste, 1913), 36–38.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. already [Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol,] "Un nou document privitor la Ștefan cel Mare," *Arhiva*, 18, nos. 7 Thallóczy 8 (1907): 364.

the end, both Matthias (il Hungaro) and Stephen (il Valacho) emerged from this intricate affair empty-handed (in November 1476, Venice barely saved Stephen from being deposed as the papacy's athlete).<sup>91</sup> This then only allowed pro-Ottoman Poland to present her own candidacy for the most generous crusader subsidy.<sup>92</sup>

This also led to a clash in May 1477 between Venice's requests and Stephen's demands.<sup>93</sup> It ended with the republic reminding the voivode that, in the summer of 1475 and in the autumn of 1476, both it and Sixtus IV had turned a blind eye to Stephen's lucrative Christian slave trade, valued by La Serenissima at precisely 200,000 ducats (in June 1475, Stephen had seized the sultan's personal booty taken after the Ottoman conquest of Caffa).<sup>94</sup> As for Matthias, he publicly entered into talks with Mehmed.<sup>95</sup> He then allowed the Ottomans to raid Venice's Italian lands in October 1477.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, Stephen was preparing a campaign in Wallachia. Venice had called for that campaign in May that same year during its disputes with the voivode. His attack on Wallachia was intended to diminish the Ottoman pressure focused again on the republic's besieged Albanian city of Scutari.<sup>97</sup>

Curiously enough, the crusader dreams largely come to an end in December 1476 with the death of Vlad III the Impaler, whose retaking of Wallachia that year Matthias and Stephen each took sole credit for.<sup>98</sup> Stephen had launched a campaign against the Ottomans, and in January 1474, Ragusa informed Venice that he was using this campaign to return Vlad III to power. Vlad III had been in a sort of captivity or exile in Hungary and was now also related to Matthias by marriage.<sup>99</sup> By then Stephen had officially acknowledged the authority of Sixtus (November 1474).<sup>100</sup> He rose to be the greatest anti-Ottoman victor since John Hunyadi. Still, something was missing from the picture, as indicated by the curiosities collected here.

<sup>91</sup> Alexandru Simon, "Pellegrini ed atleti del Signore ai confini della cristianità: Skanderbeg, Stefano III di Moldavia e le loro relazioni con Roma e Venezia," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome-Moyen Age*, 125, no. 1 (2013): 71-92.

<sup>92</sup> See for instance *Fontes rerum poloniarum e tabulario reipublicae venetae*, ed. August Cieszkowski, (Poznan: Typis officinae Dziennik Poznański, 1890), 1/II: nos. 69-76, pp. 157-78.

<sup>93</sup> Simon, "The Costs and Benefits," 37-53.

<sup>94</sup> E.g. Krzysztof Baczkowski, "Nieznane listy Baltazara z Piscii do papieża Sykstusa IV z lat 1476-1478 ze zbiorów weneckich," *Prace Historyczne*, 89 (1989): 239-51, Appendix, no. 1, 242-48 (September 16, 1476).

<sup>95</sup> E.g. *Politische Korrespondenz Breslaus im Zeitalter des Königs Matthias Corvinus (=Scriptores Rerum Silesicarum, 13-14)*, eds. Berthold Kronthal and Heinrich Wendt, (Breslau: Josef Max & comp., 1893), no. 274, p. 218 (July 31, 1477).

<sup>96</sup> Fabio Cusin, *Il Confine orientale d'Italia nella politica europea del XIV e XV secolo*, II (Milan: A. Giuffrè Editore, 1937), 201-02.

<sup>97</sup> See also [Jan Długosz,] *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae (=Jan Długosii Senioris Canonici Cracoviensis Opera omnia, XI-XIV)*, ed. Alexander Przezdziecki, IV (Krakow: s.n, 1887), 650-51.

<sup>98</sup> For instance: Ștefan Andreescu, "L'action de Vlad Țepeș dans le sud-est de l'Europe en 1476," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 15, no. 2 (1977): 259-72, at 270.

<sup>99</sup> Pop, "Atletul Ștefan și românii", Appendix, no. 2, pp. 30-31.

<sup>100</sup> Nicolae Iorga, "Veneția în Marea Neagră. III. Originea legăturilor cu Ștefan cel Mare și mediul politic al dezvoltării lor," *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, 37 (1914-1915): 1-76, in the Appendix, no. 11, p. 33.

## Between the Adriatic and the Black Sea

These curiosities, a safe designation coined by the often-slippery paths of scholarship, and to a certain extent by politics,<sup>101</sup> covered a vast Ottoman front extending from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. On the Christian side, this front had in common not only the kings of Hungary, of Croatia, etc. but also the voivode of Moldavia, which was surprising, even by medieval standards. Some additional western Balkan and eastern Adriatic observations might be useful for further research.

The Bosnian connection may have developed quite naturally in the Moldavian (Wallachian) case. According to information Ragusa had gathered in Constantinople and conveyed to Venice in the winter of 1473–1474, Mehmed II was planning to send Süleyman Pasha, a Bosnian, to attack Stephen III. Stephen had launched a campaign in Wallachia to restore Vlad III, who had recently married a cousin of Matthias Corvinus.<sup>102</sup> Even though it came at the cost of a violent, retaliatory Ottoman attack on Oradea (February 1474), the Moldavian campaign waged by Stephen, Matthias's new protégé and Venice's new favorite,<sup>103</sup> also served as a prelude to the matrimonial negotiations between Buda and Naples, known in the Italian peninsula around mid-March 1474.<sup>104</sup> The agreement reached between Matthias and Ferdinand of Aragon largely foiled the anti-Hunyadi designs for the eastern Adriatic that had been fostered in Naples, in Herzegovina, or in the Balkan diaspora in the Italian peninsula through strategic marriages and around the largely defunct kingdom of Bosnia.<sup>105</sup> Granting the royal crown of Bosnia to Stephen III of Moldavia, who had defeated the Ottoman army led by Süleyman Pasha on behalf of Matthias, was almost a natural thought under such circumstances in March 1475.

The Bosnian connection draws attention to two of the main actors in events that occurred simultaneously in the region around the Black Sea: Pope Sixtus IV, who was Ferdinand's Italian suzerain and Matthias's uneasy patron, and the Republic of Venice, which was largely distrustful of both Ferdinand and Matthias and inclined to support Stephen in Rome as well. The papacy and the Republic of Saint Mark were bound together, often unwillingly, in the ongoing conflict with the Porte. They often had conflicting interests, but these were what tied together East and West. The sources included in the appendix are relevant in this respect, and because of Stephen's Orthodox faith, they emphasize the

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<sup>101</sup> Here it is worth recalling the omission of both of the reports sent by Arrivabene on March 11, 1475 by Florio Banfi [Flóris László Holik (Barabás)], and the year his study "Romei Ungheresi" was published (1941). The topic predated World War I (William Miller, "Balkan Exiles in Rome [1912]," in William Miller, *Essays on the Latin East* (Cambridge: University Press, 1921), 497–515, at 511). A separate analysis, based on the available documents, seems necessary.

<sup>102</sup> See also Alexandru Simon, *In the World of Vlad: The Lives and Times of a Warlord* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2021), 191–216.

<sup>103</sup> Several uncertainties still exist concerning the dates of the establishment of anti-Ottoman cooperation between Matthias and Stephen (who also had a history of bitter conflict) and between Venice and Stephen.

<sup>104</sup> Elisabetta Scarton, "Tra dualità et tradimenti: La politica (matrimoniale) di Ferrante d'Aragona nei primi anni Settanta del Quattrocentoletta attraverso i dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli," *eHumanista*, 38 (2018): 186–200, at 189. Word of the Hungarian–Neapolitan matrimonial talks was sent from Naples to Milan on March 19, 1474.

<sup>105</sup> Chiefly: Špoljarić, "Nicholas of Modruš" (2019), passim; Špoljarić, "Zov partenopejskih princeza" (2020), passim.

very thin and debatable line during the late 15th century that separated the Schismatics from the so-called true Christians still under the authority of the pope.<sup>106</sup> This line was basically non-existent in 1476 when, in the middle of an anti-Ottoman crusade, the Italian powers pitched the Hungarian (Hungaro) against the Wallachian (Valacho). These Renaissance disputes revolving around functional states indicate how easy it was, in a time of crisis, to “build back better” in various ways and even to expand states such as Bosnia, which had succumbed to Mehmed II and others.

## Appendix

### I. Rome, March 11, 1475

(Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, E. Affari esteri, XXV. Roma, busta 834. 1404-1499, not numbered)

Illustrissime Signore mio, questi di e venuta la nova de la morte de la figliola del re moglisse del prefecto.<sup>107</sup> Ragionano/-mo de darli una figliola del principe de Rossano. Doe ne sono gia maritate. Una al duca d'Amalfi e / l'altra al signore de Pesaro. Fra quatro di se aspecta qui lo Re de Bosna, el qual dicono essere un duca/ Stephano vaivoda intitolato re dal Re de Hungaria, al qual dicono spectar de far lo Re de Bosna/ perche quello regno vacava essendosi fatto Turco lo figliolo de la Regina qui. E par mi che costui habia un/ bel stato sera honorato come Re. Quando ne sia qui, parlavo piu informatamente de fatti suoi. Me raccomando/ a la gratia de la Vestra Signoria. Roma, XI Martii 1475. Heri sera arrivavano li carpioni.  
<Written below, by the same hand> Illu[ustrissime]. D[ominationis] V[est]re] Servitor Io[annes]. P[etrus] Arrivabenus.

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<Written on the verso, by the same hand> Illustri Principi et Excellentissimo Domino, domino meo/ singularissimo L[udovico], Domino Marchioni Mantue,/ ... ducali Locumtenenti Generali etc.

### II. Rome, July 1, 1475

(Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, E. Affari esteri, XXV. Roma, busta 834. 1404-1499, not numbered)

Dilecte filii, salutem et apostolicam benedictionem!// Novissime litteris dilecti filij nobilis viri Petri Mocenigo, ducis Venetiarum, accepimus inmanem illum Turchum Christiani nominis hostem acerrimum/ classem validam et instructissimam retinere, quam sicut signis et aliquorum relatione habetur per Mare Maius versus partes Moldavie, pro iniurijs ulciscendis cladis ibidem sus/cepte convertere intendit. Ea denuntiatio nos merito commovit ad commiserationem calamitatis Christiane et ad hec ipsa pericula consideranda. Primum igitur quod ad nostrum pasto/rale 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 truculentissimus hostis Christianorum viribus repellatur,

<sup>106</sup> See the neglected study by Kiril Petkov, “From Schismatic to Fellow Christians: East Central European Religious Attitudes towards the Orthodox Balkans (1354-1572),” *Mediaevistik*, 8 (1995): 171-92, at 176.

<sup>107</sup> *Moglisse* meaning mistress or “test wife” because her former “husband,” the recently appointed prefect of Rome, Giovanni della Rovere, was engaged to Giovanna de Montefeltrio.

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 ali/quo 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 lacessitus Christianorum auxilijs se destitutum senserit, et loco ceserit, quod Deus avertat, quantis periculis Ungari et Germanorum populi/ 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 cedet. Datum Rome, apud Sanctumpetrum, sub annulo piscatoris, die prima Iulij, MCCCCLXXV, pontificatus nostri, anno quarto.// Marcellus.<sup>108</sup>

<Written on the verso, by the same hand> Dilecto filio nobili viro Ludovico de Gonzaga, marchioni Mantue.

### III. Brețcu, August 19, 1476

(Archivio di Stato di Milano, Milan, Archivio Ducale Sforzesco, Poteneze Estere, Venezia, cart. 363. 1476, fasc. 8. Agosto, not numbered)

[...] <sup>109</sup>humilamente commendamus. Per l'alligata del XVI de questo [16 august] Vestra Celsitudine<sup>110</sup> [...] per timore de non capitare ne le mano del Turcho [...] et fracassati quelli Turchi Ilm et [?]. Ad hora significo <que>sto exercito potentissimo de la Maiesta Regia<sup>111</sup> era presso Totros [...] stipendiati da esso Illustrissimo Signore<sup>112</sup> fra de paexani suo che trageno [...] in modo che dicono li messi ha mandato questa communita [?] al [...] che uno messo del prefato Illustrissimo Signore Stephano de la Moldavia cha [...] et che cum quelli era partito da Hotino et riduotisi a [...] signor capitaneo Re prefato<sup>113</sup> se mandasse in Moldavia, et questo perche lo [...] cominciato targetare de le suo gente in Bulgaria [...] et lo Signor Bassaraba<sup>114</sup> era andato a li logi suo. Al dicte tal [...] et adviso, con questa celerita, gli estato possibile il suo [...] se havano tempo questi duo Signori de potersi athacar con [...] quello seguira ne daro noticia ad

<sup>108</sup> Marcello de' Rustici, Papal secretary between 1449 and 1481 (Lee, *Sixtus IV*, 59-60). Egmont Lee, *Sixtus IV and Men of Letters* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1978), 59-60.

<sup>109</sup> All [...] markings stand for torn or stained parts in the extremely poorly preserved copy of the report, which, due of its place of issue, can only be ascribed to Emmanuele Gerardo, a known Venetian envoy to Moldavia.

<sup>110</sup> Doge Pietro Mocenigo

<sup>111</sup> Matthias Corvinus

<sup>112</sup> Ștefan III of Moldavia

<sup>113</sup> Stephen Báthory

<sup>114</sup> Pro-Ottoman Basarab III Laiotă/ anti-Ottoman Basarab IV Țepeșuș

Vestra Serenita quale voglio sia [...] ho se levi, et indi ad la malhora sua,<sup>115</sup> che questo exercito [...] ha veduto, anchora el se digi de quod la Maiesta B<eatrice de Aragon>era andata [...] de qui el se levi; tamen, le levato per la fama de questo potere [...] et fanti de le XLM come instruti hoi da bene, mi [...] Burzie, advirixando la Vestra Serenita che questo exercito [...] Cama [?], ovvero a la Maiesta del Re, ma e factio de la borsa [...] piu gente de quelle utile et bone; un Serenissimo Principe [...] solute ad Christiani, et ruina al Turcho regandose [...] del Re de Pollonia cum questo , et questi duo Valachi fra si [...] condictione, che cum lo mezo de la Santita de Nostro Signore et Vestra Serenita [...] <Dom>ino Re, quale de proximo devo compire. Il primo Re po mettere [...] qual se dapeo XLM, il Re de Ungaria altratanti fra stipendiarii [...] Valachi XVM per uno a campo, vede ista Signoria la potentia de questi Signori [...] <[?]>cendosi stagimo uniti, et provisione debita poi el Turcho tegera [?] [...] l'ha da stretto qua, quale con tanta [?], et tanta commodita [...] unde, ne le inscere, et core, che e cossa stupendo, essendo da Moldavia [...] <que>ante piccole VI per mia prima da Moldavia in Constantinopoli VIII <die?> [...] et per questa commodita de esser offexo, dicto Turcho se caveria volentiere [...] ghochii, quelle quante se havesse cavato in damnecia ipso facto la Vallachia Magiore<sup>116</sup> [...] volesse poi, con seguridade del stato suo.<sup>117</sup> lo ho dicto ultra lasser nova et queste pochi [...] elisse et devotissimo servitore de Vestra Signoria, il bene de la quale e de questa inclita pria mia mi [...] recentemente Vestra Signoria faci de hano la cruciata in queste bande, che se semper insito nel coro [...] utile, se havera molte gente, et bone, che haviano ad auxilio, dicta cruciata duci [...] belle, et costoso modo se hava piu gente, et consequenter potrasse pare [?] con molto meno [...] de tuti signori contribuissent ad la spexa de questa guerra. Gratie amicitie Vestre Signorie me comendo [...] Bressbuis, die XVIII<sup>no</sup> augusti 1476.

#### IV. Foligno, September 24, 1476

(Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Mantua, Archivio Gonzaga, E. Affari esteri, XXV. Roma, busta 834. 1404-1499, not numbered)

1476, 24 settembre

Illustrissimo Signor mio, La S[ignoria] V[ostra], per altre mie, hara intieso li rasonamenti havuti de la obligatione del subsidio al Hungaro, per la/ impresa del Turco è la replicatione ne fu fatta à Fiorentini per quello suo mandato etc. Lor de novo hanno rescritto/ che non li pare de venire à questo contracto di 3 anni, per che havendo pur molte suoie mercantie de la, quando el/ Turco sentisse lor essersi convenuti in tal liga à suo preiuditio, li puoria fare gran danno, perho non se extendeno à<sup>118</sup> piu. Et/ in summa, per viam oblationis, senza venire ad altro contracto, offereno pagare liberalmente la rata sua di XV mille ducati/ per uno anno tucto<sup>119</sup>, ma intenda la S[ignoria] V[ostra] che questa rata se intende per che di CC mille ducati,/ quali fu ditto se pagariano, lor offeressero prima/ li XV mille, non agiongendo mo la parte del Papa, del Re è de Venetiani, à li CC mille, quali ne

<sup>115</sup> I.e. of Mehmed II

<sup>116</sup> I.e. Wallachia

<sup>117</sup> I.e. of Moldavia

<sup>118</sup> Written above

<sup>119</sup> Words written, starting with *per*, outside the line, at its margin.



se offereno anche lor. È forse/ etiam pur de<sup>120</sup> lo Duca de Ferrara, el qual ha dicto volere pagare. Lor pagaranno tanto mancho di XV mille, quanto pigliara la/ rata sua per tuto questo che manchasse fin á la summa de tutti CC mille. È stimase che non serrano piu che X o XI mille. È cussi,/ heri, in consistorio, per non perdersi questo puocho, el Papa è li altri ambasciatori presero partito de acceptare questo. Et essi mo/ anche reducta la cosa, che per li altri non se fara piu contracto, ma da ugni canto solum per via oblationis. È restare/ contenti questi ambasciatori che stia in arbitrio de nostro Signore de dispensarli ó al Hungaro ó al Valacho aut alibj á chi li/ parira piu expediente; che è stato impasso de non puocho difficultate, per che'l Re tirava quod darentur Hungaro et Venetiani al Valacho. È per questo, tra li ambasciatori sono state piu volte de male parole. Et papa, el Re è Venetiani fanno vista/ et offereno liberamente la rata sua promessa absolvere<sup>121</sup> per li 3 anni. Qui, gratia de Dio, stamo pur bene. Questi/ di li fu un puocho de suspecto, ma se restiolto in niente. È monsegnore cum tuta la famiglia è sano. À Roma, per quanto se/ sente, va pur diminuendo la peste, ma daltre infirmitate ve ne moreno assai. Comprendo quanto se resani, vi tornaremo/ la verso San Martino. Et interim, se stara qui. El papa ugni di attende á far la terra piu ariosa. È manda/ á terra tuti li porticali. Me raccomando à la S[ignoria] V[ostra], Fulginti, XXIIIJ Septembris 1476.

Illustrissime d[ominationis] V[estre]  
Arrivabenus.

Servitor Ioannes P[etrus]

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<Written on the verso, by the same hand> Illustri Principi et Excellentissimo Domino, domino meo/ singularissimo L[udovico], Domino Marchioni Mantue,/ ... ducali Locumtenenti Generali etc.

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<sup>120</sup> Written above

<sup>121</sup> Misspelled: *absolvre*

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