



THE SHADOW OF A PRINCE IN HISTORY

- The true Romanian story of Vlad the Impaler Dracula (1431-1476) -

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- PREFACE -

The subject of "*Dracula*" is one of the most fascinating and interesting in the world being always presented as a fictional character that during the day lives a normal life, while in the midnight transfigures in a cruel vampire, attacking people, sucking their blood and transfiguring them to their turn, in evil persons. Even the real character that lived in the XV century and inspired the creation of the fictional *Dracula* - the Walachian Prince Vlad Țepeș (or *Vlad the Impaler*) - is also often shown as a cruel despot that led his people with a heavy hand, punishing with very rough methods everyone who breaks the laws! In these summary descriptions, his harshness terrible frightened both his people and the country's enemies, spreading his fame in the world. The most presented describes of Prince Vlad Țepeș are those of his cruel deeds, his so-called pleasure to torture people, the use of most horrible torture methods of that Age, in order to get right the society, or to horrify the enemies that dared to invade his country. I think every time the people read this type of description of the legendary character, wonder themselves: *Was Vlad Țepeș really like this?* Of course, some of these things are true, some are exaggerated and there is a seed of truth in everything. However, I hope that until the end of this book you will find the answer to this question and to others more!

The character of Dracula was during the time treated in so many books, movies, articles, etc, that it seems everything was told about him. Many writers, journalists, fictional researchers, film producers, more or less known, have chosen the fictional character Dracula as the subject for their work. *So that, why another book of Dracula to be written?* Well, first of all, the book you are holding now is not about the character of Dracula anymore! There is nothing fictional in this book, nothing about the bloody sucker vampires, or mysterious counts; nothing of all these! This book is a historically documented description of the real life and facts of Prince Vlad Țepeș (*Vlad the Impaler*), that ruled Walachia (the region of Southern Romania, today) for three times in the XV century. Vlad Țepeș is simply treated as he truly historically was: the ruler of Walachia, with his decisions and deeds, the man with all his goods and bads, with his fulfillments and failures. Everything written - as I like to believe - in an opened and friendly manner, easy to read and understand, accessible to every reader. The main reason, for which I have chosen to write this book was that despite of his popularity, many people in the world have in my opinion a wrong imagine of the Walachian Prince Vlad Țepeș! Moreover, most of them know almost nothing about his real life, excepting his custom of impaling. There are many English books or Internet sites that refer to his character, but weak of them treat his deeds according to the historical facts!

Or use to present them distorted! I also think there are many important details of Vlad Țepeș's life unknown to the large readers, and it is pity to not be brought to the light, as they are representative for the importance of this ruler in the Romanian history! For example, I bet that less of Dracula passionates, know there is a strong connection between Vlad Țepeș and the birth of the capital of Romania, Bucharest city! Or which is the real Vlad Țepeș's castle and where is it? There are important things that happened during to the prince' reign but in this case, they are hidden behind the imagine of just an *impaler*! It is unfair to concern Vlad Țepeș only from this point of view, we should look at him correctly and to have an overall imagine of his personality and his historical special part.

In this book I tried to simply approach the real life of the Romanian Prince Vlad Țepeș, his true deeds, reigns, tumultuous life, and the importance of his personality in the Romanian history. You must know that Vlad Țepeș is one of the Romanian rulers that successfully fought against the main threat for the existence of Romanian provinces (Walachia, Transylvania, Moldavia) during the centuries: *the Ottoman Empire*. Since the end of XIII century until the beginning of XX century (1922), the Ottoman Empire represented a great administrative and military force in the world. It developed its domination from Middle Orient, Elbrus, and Northern Africa until the Southeastern Europe, in Balkans. As it had a numerous and well-trained army, the Ottoman Empire was guided during its entire existence by the policy of continuous expansion, often threatening Europe by the invasion. In the XV century, the Ottoman Empire developed such a strong military force, thus in May 1453 the Sultan Mahomed II, succeeded to conquer the fortress of Constantinople after few weeks of besiege, generating the fall of the great *Byzantine Empire*, another important administrative and military structure of the world's history. This resounding success, made the Sultan to fully hope to the conquest of Europe, thinking the way to the heart of the Old Continent is now opened. In fact, this was the most greatly desired dream of the Ottoman Sultans ever: to conquer the entire Europe and to subdue the symbol of Christianity, Vatican Fortress! This meant that the entire world should bow to them and nothing should hinder from the world domination for many years! Nevertheless, for conquering Europe, the Ottomans needed to solve or better, to avoid the problems in the most sensible region: the Balkans, in South-Eastern Europe. For fulfilling their dream of touching Center Europe, they had to pass few countries as Bulgaria, Serbia, Moldavia, Walachia, Transylvania and Hungaria. In this respect, they often tried to put as the leaders of these countries, kings or princes to be subdued to the Ottoman Empire for two important reasons: first, these little and subdued countries had to pay their annual tribute to the Sultan, as he need this for sustaining the wars of expansion. Second, they strongly needed quiet in this part of the continent and nobody to oppose them, to their march towards the

supreme domination in Europe! In the spite of the military force and influence of the Ottoman Empire in Balkans, during the time it have often appeared here, some brave prince rulers, that successfully opposed to the Ottoman army in its attempt of conquering their countries and advancing towards the Center Europe. In the XV century, three princes gained their fame around Europe, by bravery fighting against the Ottomans and foiling their plans of expansion: *Iancu of Hunedoara*, Prince of Transylvania and King of Hungary (1441-1456), *Ștefan cel Mare* (Ștefan The Great), Prince of Moldavia (1457-1504) and our main hero, *Vlad Țepeș*, Prince of Walachia for three times between 1448 and 1476. After the conquest of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, in the moments of full swing for the Ottoman Empire, these three skillful and brave princes successfully fought during their reigns against this military force, for defending the independence and freedom of their countries. In the same time, by their army deeds they also foiled the Ottoman invasion towards Centre Europe, being considered in that age, fiery defenders of Christianity! The bravery and courage of *Iancu of Hunedoara*, *Ștefan cel Mare* and *Vlad Țepeș* was recognized and well appreciated by their contemporaries, the princes of Western countries and to Vatican, by the Pope himself. Aware of the Ottoman danger for the European countries, these three rulers insistently demanded to Vatican and Princes of other countries in Europe to help them in their campaigns against the Ottoman Empire. Excepting *Iancu of Hunedoara*, the others two never received it, thus being obliged to make extraordinary efforts and sometimes concessions, for facing out the force of the Ottomans! This is the main reason for which the personality of *Vlad Țepeș* is so important and representative for the Romanian history and why is considered one of the heroe rulers of this country!

My intention was to approach the subjects of this book from a realistically point of view, describing them according to the historically truth. First, I made some referrals to the main events of founding the Walachia country and to its first rulers, through which we can also find the founder of this country, *Basarab The First*, the glorious grandfather of *Vlad Țepeș*, *Mircea cel Bătrân* (Mircea the Elder) but also his father, *Vlad Dracul*. I summarized their presentation, trying to put in value their personalities, making a point the typical representative and important historical deeds. In the second chapter, dedicated to the main subject of this book, personality, life and deeds of Prince *Vlad Țepeș*, you can find some details about his youth, his first attempts to obtain the throne of Walachia, the main domestic decisions and the main events during his reigns, especially the second (1456-1462), which is the longest and the most representative. I also approached the subject of *Vlad Țepeș*'s relationships with the Transylvanian Saxons merchandisers, with who he had numerous conflicts during his life.

It is a special part of analyzing his life as the merchandisers from Southern Transylvania had a great influence to the courts of Transylvania and Hungary, and finally proved to have an important part for the run of Vlad Țepeș's life! I continued by describing the fights of Walachian prince against the Ottoman Empire and his efforts for keeping the independence and sovereignty of Walachia. Excepting the deeds and events from his life, in the second part of the book you will find the descriptions of all the places and constructions in Romania that are in strong connection with the personality of Prince Vlad Țepeș. There is about *churches, monasteries, fortresses, castles, towns* that he built, consolidated or had things in common during his life. I put all of them together as I never found elsewhere, describing both according to the particularly information and my personal experience in visiting them. All of these buildings and places remained in time as symbols of Vlad Țepeș reigns, as traces of his passing on the Earth. Of course, such an interesting and special character as Prince Vlad Țepeș, could not escape to the attention of the Romanian writers and artists. Starting with the XIX century, he was the subject of more literature and artist creations, so that I have continued the odyssey of Vlad Țepeș personality by revealing some of these works. Finally, I have touched one of the most controversial subjects regarding Prince Vlad Țepeș, the matter of his descendants; I have referred to this subject, starting with the presentation of his sons and grandsons, until his descendants from the XX century and those that even live today!

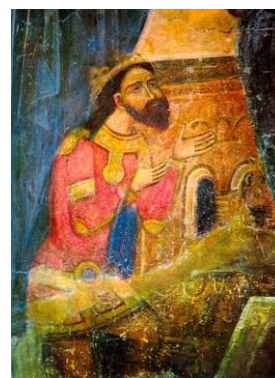
Anyway, I hope that the rich information gathered in this book are enough interesting to raise your interest, they will give you more answers and will clarify some doubts you may have about Vlad Țepeș. I only tried to reveal to the reader the real side of the historical personality of Prince Vlad Țepeș, his deeds as they happened and all the things that remained over centuries as his heritage for the Romanian people. In the work of nine month for creating this book, I made researches to the *National Romanian Library* from Bucharest, and specific Internet sites, using the most trustful romanian authors and serious historical sources in order to present you everything according to the historical truth. I tried to approach all the respects regarding the life of Prince Vlad Țepeș, joining also the pictures in order to strengthen every topic I referred. As never it has been told everything about the personality of Vlad Țepeș I do not pretend I did it in the present book. However, as everything has a value in the world, in my opinion the value of this book is the *consistency* of the information included! Even there are still many things to tell about Prince Vlad Țepeș, I believe that after you will finish reading this book you will be satisfied of the things discovered. I also hope you to have a nice reading and in the end, to be content that you have in mind the correct imagine of the Walachian Prince Vlad Tepes, as he deserves over centuries.

- Chapter I: WALACHIA – THE BEGINNING AND FIRST RULERS -

1.1 The foundation of the country; Princes *Basarab I* and *Mircea The Elder*.

We are in the XIII century in *Walachia*, a small country in Balkans, South Eastern Europe. Situated to the north of Danube, south-eastern of Transylvania, south of Moldavia, and most important, between two great forces who will dispute for centuries the supremacy in region (Hungaria and Ottoman Empire), *Walachia* was always in the wind's blow, a territory very disputed due to its strategic position but also for the wealth of its land. In the XII century, Walachia was referred in different bysantine, bulgarian, hungarian sources - but also later in the western ones - as the region where existed more little feudal countries called „*cnezat*“, lead by rulers called „*cneaz*“. The first little states appeared around Danube and Carpathians quite late, being surrounded by some powerful feudal states, which intended to enlarge their frontiers over them. The Mongols subdued these little countries for almost one century, and later the Poles and their rivals, the Hungarians continuously threatened the walachian „*cnezats*“. Because of this permanent instability and subdue, the feudal countries from the future territory of Walachia, could not unify in order to form a centralized state and to become a powerful country. At the end of XIII century, the economical developement of *cnezats* and the favourable external policy situation, led to the happy situation to build up the future country of Walachia, by unifying all these little feudal countries, under the leadership of one prince ruler. Taking advantage of the decline of Mongolian power and the internal political crisis from Hungary - as in 1301 ended the dynasty of Arpadians, starting the domestically struggles for the royal throne – the Walachian Prince *Basarab the First*, unified all the scattered *cnezats* between southern Carpathians and Danube River, in one single country¹.

Basarab is the first attested ruler of the entire Walachia, becoming the prince ruler of the country for 42 years, between 1310 and 1352. The first reference made regarding his reign, could be found in a hungarian chronicle that mentions in 1324 that Basarab was already „*great ruler in Romanian Country*“. He established the court residence to *Curtea de Argeş*, where he even built a church and a great monastery, that both can be admired even today. Thus, *Curtea de Argeş* it is considered the first capital of Walachia in history!



Basarab I- Picture to the Monastery of Curtea de Argeş

¹ Petru Demetru Popescu, « *Basarab I* », Bucharest, 1975

Meanwhile in Hungary, Prince *Carol Robert* that belonged to the noble french family *D'Anjou* that lead Neapole, finally won the domestical struggles for the royal throne, becoming the king of the country. Even if Walachia were than an unitary state, it continued to be subdued to Hungary, paying to this country the annual tribute of cereals, domestic animals and coins. However, at the beginning of 1330, Prince Basarab the First faced out the Hungarian King Carol Robert D'Anjou, refusing to continue of paying the owed tribute. Meanwhile, a Hungarian boyar that governed the region of *Severin* (South-Western Walachia), appealed the intervention of the King Carol Robert D'Anjou in Walachia,



**Walachia's
emblem**

claiming a lands dispute. Than, the Hungarian Prince thought that these are the best reasons to attack and conquer Walachia and started a military campaign against it. The hungarian army were numerous and strong, the knights wore ring armors, as Walachia had not a regularly army, this being composed from the peasants, the most part of it. Founding about the intention of Carol Robert D'Anjou and fearing of Hungarian army's force, Basarab presented him few peace proposals.

In the spite of his advicers, the Hungarian King did not accept them, contrariwise having an arrogant attitude, by claiming that "*Basarab is the shepherd of my sheep and I will take him out from his lair*" (chronicle *Chronicon Pictum*). Seeing there is no other way to avoid the Hungarian inroad in Walachia, Prince Basarab the First prepared for battle, by attracting the enemy in a desired place.

The battle that followed took place in a narrow valley called *Posada*, lasting 3 days between 9th and 12th November, 1330. At the end, Prince Basarab strongly crushed the Hungarian army, the Prince Carol Robert D'Anjou succeeding to escape alive, only by disguising himself! This inroad of the Hungarian army in Walachia was told in details, together with pictures and graves in a Hungarian chronicle named "*Chronicon Pictum*". The victory from Posada signed in fact, the birth certificate of the country of Walachia, Basarab I being the first prince in history who obtained the independence of the country, that he called *Țara Românească* (The Romanian Country). You have to know this is the name for this region from present southern Romania, which forever remained and always used in the Romanian history! There were also other names used during the time for this territory. In the latin documents



**Posada Battle, Nov.1330
Picture- Chronicon Pictum**

from that time, Walachia were knew as *Transalpina*, meaning „the country over the Transilvanian mountains”, - the name given by the western europeans for *Meridional*

Carpathians mountains. The other names for this country were also *Walachia* - called like this especially by the Germans or Hungarians, and *Muntenia* (The Mountain Country) - called like this by the Moldavians. Therefore, today the Romanians still use to call this region, *The Romanian Country* or *Mountain Country*, but never call it *Walachia*; this is the name used only by the foreigners! However, as this book is addressed especially to the English readers, I will continue to call it simply, "*Walachia*". Coming back to the XIII century, the first ruler of Walachia, Prince Basarab I – named also, "*Basarab The Founder*" – reorganized the administration and the country's army, establishing in the same time good relationships with the neighbours, Bulgarians and Serbians. He died in 1352, after 42 years of prosperous government, being buried inside the Monastery of Curtea de Argeş. Basarab the First has a very important part in the Romanian history, as he is the first ruler prince that obtained the independence of Walachia, being also considered the founder of this country.

In 23 of September 1386, came to the throne of Walachia the Prince **Mircea cel Bătrân** (Mircea the Elder) - the grand father of Vlad Țepeș - one of the most important ruler princes in the Romanian history! He successfully ruled Walachia for 32 years, until 31st of January, 1418. His name "*the Elder*" does not mean he was an old man, but in administration's language, meant that he was the first prince with this name who ruled the country; in Walachia did not exist that times the practice to count the princes, as in Western Europe. Mircea cel Bătrân took the leading of the country in a full process of its development, grace of the wise policy of his ancestors; he continued the reforms,



Mircea the Elder, picture to Cozia Monastery

consolidating the administration, economy, army and religion. He established strong external alliances with Sigismund of Luxembourg, King of Hungary and Petru Muşat, Prince of Moldavia, in order to increase the chances of keeping the country's independence. The three common interests were that of defending the region against Ottoman Empire's expansion. Due to he sustained the other Christian nations in their anti-ottoman policy, Mircea the Elder has been quickly seen by the Ottomans, as enemy. Thus, at the beginning of 1395, the Ottoman sultan

Baiazid Ildirim (Baiazid "the Lightning") came with the army of approximately 40.000 soldiers to cross the Danube in Walachia, in order to hunt away Mircea the Elder. Because he had a small army of only 12.000 soldiers, Mircea thought that a battle in wide field would have been a real suicide for his army and chose to use the tactics of harassing the Ottoman army during its road, weakening its strength. In the same time, he tried to lead the enemy to a place where he could have more success.

Finally, he succeeded to attract the Ottoman army in a wooden and boggy place named *Rovine*, where in 17th of May 1395, took place one of the greatest battles in the Romanian history! After a long and bloody battle, Mircea the Elder succeeded to defeat the Ottomans, obliging them to retreat over the Danube, with serious damages. This great victory over such a force as the Ottoman Empire brought him the fame to all the other kings from Europe! Later, in 1396 he participated to the anti-ottoman crusade organized by a part of European kings, ruled by Sigismund de Luxembourg, King of Hungary. Because of some strategically errors of western European rulers, the crusade had stranded in the fight in 25 September 1396, by being defeated by the Ottomans to Nicopole (at present, in Bulgaria). During his reign, Mircea the Elder waged more struggles in 1397 and 1400 against the ottomans in purpose to keep Walachia's independence. Moreover, Mircea the Elder has even been involved in the domestical struggles from the Ottoman Empire against Mahomed the First, supporting in turn more pretenders to throne as Mustafa Celebi (who became sultan for a short period), Musa Celebi and Bedr Ed Din. The German historian Leunclavius (1533-1593) had written about Mircea the Elder: "*the prince among Christians, the bravest and the most skilful*"². During his times, Walachia knew a prosperous age, great economical development, good administration and army organization. He also had given a great care of religion, building more churches and monasteries, the most famous being the *Cozia Monastery*, built by the edge of Olt river. In fact, right in this monastery, he was buried after his death in 31 of January 1418. After the death of Mircea the Elder, an age of confusion and instability had begun in Walachia: there were many struggles for government, disunions between the boyars, intrigues followed by all their bad consequences as treasons, crimes, etc.

In those times, normally the ruler prince had unlimited jurisdiction, but in fact he had to take in consideration the boyars opinions too, regarding both domestic and external policy. The boyars were wealthy landowners that formed country's administration, but they were not paid for this. Their main income came from the taxes levied to the paisants and simply people. According to the succession system existed that age in Walachia, normally the throne was inherited hereditary, but not by the law of primogeniture. The boyars had the right to elect the prince from the various eligible members of the royal family. For many years, the sons of Mircea the Elder have disputed the throne of the country against the descendants of his brother, Dan, called *Danesti*. Therefore, more princes passed to the throne of Walachia for 18 years but for short periods and with no important fulfillments.

² Constantin C. Giurescu, "*The History of Romanians*"- Volume II, Part I, Bucharest, 1943

Meanwhile, the country has severely declined both economical and military and it was soon subdued by the ottomans, which regularly robbed it, pretended the annually tribute, and often used it for their inroads in Transylvania.

1.2 Prince Vlad Dracul (1390-1447). One of Mircea the Elder's sons, Vlad, has drawn back after his father death, to the court of Sigismund de Luxemburg, Emperor of Germany and King of Hungary; Sigismund appreciated so much Mircea the Elder that in 8th of February 1431, at Nuremberg Cathedral, received his son Vlad, among *Dragon Order's Knights*! In those times, only five kings in Europe were members of this order, so that keeping the Dragon's Order (*Ordo Draconis*- in latin), were a great honour! This Order was symbolized by a golden medallion representing a coiled dragon with a cross above, whom were written in horizontal: "*Justus et pius*" (Fair and faithful), and in vertical: "*O, quam misericors este Deus*" (O, how merciful is God!)³. It is interesting to notice that Vlad have not been a ruler yet, when he received the Order, a rare thing in that time!

Vlad lived for a while (1431-1435) in *Sighisoara*, a beautiful town in Transylvania, waiting for the right moment to come his rights as Prince of Walachia. Sigismund of Luxemburg approved Vlad to create here a mint, making coins that have been used in both Transylvania and Walachia. The mint allowed him to gather enough money, ensuring the support on the way to the Walachia's throne. As the ruler of Walachia in that time, Alexandru Aldea - one of the Mircea the Elder's sons - was extremely subdued to turks, a group of boyars went in 1436 to the King of Hungary, Sigismund of Luxemburg, asking him to change Aldea with Vlad, the other son of Mircea the Elder.



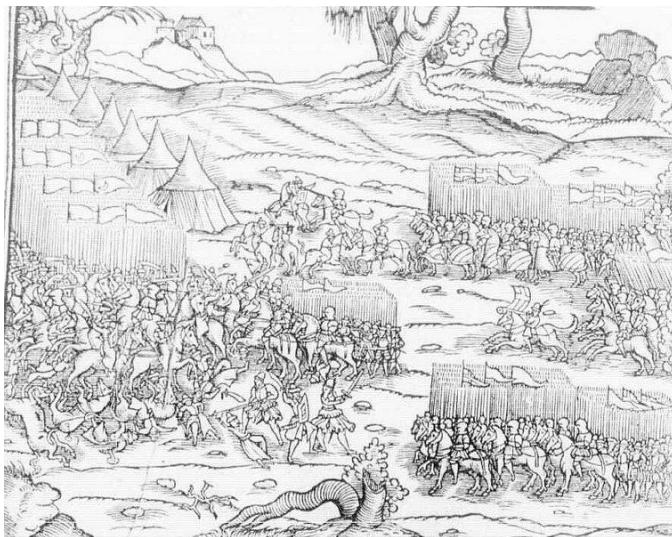
Vlad Dracul, Prince of Walachia (1437-1447), fresco

Thereby, in April 1437, being supported by the Hungarian King, Vlad fulfilled his dream and came to the throne of Walachia, occupied sometime by his glorious father. According to the time's custom, because of his membership in the *Order of Dragons*, his nickname became Vlad Dragonul. But as the word "*dragon*" is phonetically very close to the Romanian word "*drac*", (meaning "*devil*"), it was easier for Romanian people to call him simple, *Vlad Dracul* instead of Vlad Dragonul. The suffix "*ul*" is in Romanian grammar the masculine singular of the Definite Article, so that, as a forced appliance to the English language, "*Dracul*" means "*The Drac*". Vlad were a very calm and quiet person and did not

³ Neagu Djuvara, "*From Vlad Ţepeş to the vampire Dracula*"- Bucharest, 2003

emphasize by cruelty deeds, thus there were no reasons for the people to call him "devil". Therefore, his nickname has nothing in common with the real sense of the Romanian word "drac" but it was a popular chosen as a phonetically alternative to the word "dragon". Unfortunately, at his coming to the reign, he found the country in a very unhappy situation at that time: already subdued by the ottomans, paying the annually tribute in money, domestic animals (cows, sheep and horses) and children for the "ieniceri" corps of Ottoman Turkish army. The "ieniceri" (janissaries) corps was created based on Christian children of 10-12 years, received as tribute, kidnapped from the countries subdued to Ottoman Empire, or attacked during its campaigns (Walachia, Moldavia, Transylvania, Serbia, Rumelia (now, Bulgaria), Hungary). These children had have grown in the Ottoman Empire in Muslim religion and was military trained, so that at the age of 20 years they were ready to be incorporated in the janissaries corps of the army. The janissaries' corps was famous in Balkans as one of the most terrible corps of Ottoman army, its soldiers being very rough and fanatics! Paradoxical, during the Ottoman military campaigns, these soldiers often participated to the inroads even against their origin countries!

Coming back to the situation of Walachia, Vlad Dracul as a new ruler had to decide if continued to subdue the country to Ottomans or opposed. According to the Byzantine chronicler *Dukas*, Vlad Dracul together with 300 persons (boyars and soldiers) had gone to Bursa town, Ottoman Empire. Here, he executed a peace treaty in which he ensured *Murat the Second*, that he will not participate to military campaigns against him, will continue to pay the tribute to Ottoman Empire and will ensure free road for Ottoman army though Walachia, for its inroads against Hungary and Transylvania. This pact satisfied the Sultan who did not need any disorders in this region, as he planned to conquer Hungary and further Europe. However, considering later the country's interests, Vlad Dracul changed his minds and passed to the Christians armies' side. In 1444, he aborted the peace treaty and sent an army of 4.000 soldiers led by his son of 16 years Mircea, for supporting the Christian Crusade, started against Ottomans by the King Vladislav of Hungary and Poland, together with Iancu of Hunedoara, the ruler of Transylvania (Romanian, as origins). In 10th of November 1444, a great battle took place in Varna (Bulgaria) where the Sultan Murat the Second succeeded a better strategically position, by occupying the hills



Battle of Varna 1444- Polish chronicle from 1564

around the town. After the first struggle led by Iancu of Hunedoara, the Christians resisted to the strong attacks of the Ottomans but soon, eager of glory and fame, the King Vladislav ignored the advices of Iancu of Hunedoara to wait for the enemy's attacks and started himself a rashly attack. The result was catastrophic for the crusaders: the Ottoman army, more numerous and using the field's strategy not only rejected the attacks but also succeeded to defeat the Christian army. During the battle, King Vladislav dropped down the horse and has been recognized by a janissary soldier, who beheaded him. The janissary raised victorious king's head in the lance's spike; when the Christian soldiers saw that, began to panic themselves and to drop out in mess. Thus, the Ottoman Empire obtained a great victory and this Christian Crusade, that expected to be revenge for the defeat to Nicopole in 1356, had finished in a bad defeat.⁴ Vlad Dracul had participated alongside Iancu of Hunedoara to more campaigns against Ottomans in the next two years. Meanwhile Iancu of Hunedoara became King of Hungary, a very brave and wise military ruler, who signified for many years, the Christian fight against Ottoman's expansion in Europe. During his reign, Iancu of Hunedoara succeeded many victories over Sultan's army and has been soon considered in Europe a symbol of anti-Ottoman struggle; his victories assured for many years the quietness in the other European countries, frightened by the possible Ottoman's invasion. Even if Vlad Dracul has supported Iancu of Hunedoara in many battles, the Walachia's prince never gained his trust but more, in 1446 he fell in disgrace, suspected of establishing secret relationships with the Ottoman Turks!

At the beginning of 1447, Iancu of Hunedoara decided to hunt away Vlad Dracul from the throne of Walachia, thus in November 1447 he came with the army and a new ruler for Walachia, Vladislav II. There took place a fight but the army of Vlad Dracul did not resist to the Transylvanians and has been soon defeated. Betrayed by a part of the boyars, the walachian prince was caught together with his son Mircea, in the Balteni village and killed: Vlad Dracul has been beheaded and his son Mircea was buried alive! Even he had not the greatness of his father Mircea the Elder, Vlad Dracul had some attributes that brought him respect and recognition from his contemporaries. *Walerand de Vavrin*, a French duke, who participated in 1445 alongside Vlad Dracul to a military campaign in the South Danube, has spoken about him as "*very famous by bravery and wisdom*". The Hungarian chronicle Bonifinius speaking about his army, said: "*15.000 horsemen, of the most redoubtable soldiers in the world!*"⁵

⁴ Neagu Djuvara, "*From Vlad Țepeș to the vampire Dracula*"- Bucharest, 2003

⁵ Constantin C. Giurescu, "*The History of Romanians*"- Volume II, Part I, Bucharest, 1943

Chapter II - VLAD ȚEPEȘ (1431-1476)

(Fragment)

2.2 Vlad Țepeș and the merchants from Southern Transilvania. In all the analysis of Vlad Țepeș's reign, is allocated a special attention to the matter of his relationships with the transilvanian merchants that, excepting few short periods was very conflicting. In fact, the influence and connections of these merchants to the Hungarian court together with their tricks to lay the things, will have later a big influence in the running of Vlad Țepeș's life, and to the stories that will be told later about him.

Southern Transilvania is a beautiful and pitoresque region of wooden hills, situated in the center of present Romania, amazingly combining its quietly hills landscapes with the greatness of craggy and massive Carpathian Mountains, rising the gorgeous Massifs of Făgăraș, Piatra Craiului and Postăvaru. It is important to notice that, even if Transylvania as region is often considered the entire western Romania, geographically Transylvania is only the region inside the Carpathian Mountains arch! That is why after the Romans conquered Dacia (the ancient Romanian country) in the II century, they gave its name: in latin language, *Trans* means "over" and *Silvania* means "the country of forests". Therefore, the name Transylvania means, according to romans, "*the country over the forests*". In the XIII century, this region was colonized by Saxons brought from Prussia (present Germany) in order to defend the South Eastern of Hungary. The most part of them settled here, developing two important towns on the places of some ancient daco-roman settlements.

These towns are **Sibiu** or Hermannstadt (ger.) situated in Amlaș County and **Brașov**, or Kronstadt (ger.) situated in Bârsa County. Due to their strategical positions and to the fact they ensured the commercial and military connection between Walachia, Transilvania and Hungary, these two towns have soon become the most importants in Transylvania of the Middle Age. The transylvanian saxons had succeeded to develop here great commercial centers, so that according to the documents, in 1353 the economical activity in region became very prosperous. The craftsmen from region were organized in „*guilds*”, in 1376 only in Sibiu being known at least 19 guilds, but the most powerful guilds existed in Brașov; these guilds included different craftsmen as goldsmiths, weavers, locksmiths, drapers, coppersmiths, etc. The artisans from Brașov town were well known in Transylvania but also in Walachia and Moldavia for the quality of their merchandises, especially for the arms produced here. In fact, they dominated the commercial life in area,

between XIV and XVI centuries. Even it was obviously part of Transylvania country, Southern Transylvania were entrusted for few times by the transilvanian princes, to the protection of Walachian rulers. They have had done this as a proof of the trust they had put in their southern neighbors, which they often helped to became rulers of Walachia. As soon as Vlad Țepeș took over the administration of Walachia, Iancu of Hunedoara, the King of Hungary and Prince of Transylvania, entrusted him with taking care of the regions from Southern Transylvania including also the two main towns, Sibiu and Brasov. Iancu of Hunedoara even sent a letter to the merchandisers from these towns, advising them to entrust in the new ruler of Wallachia, who will be their protector. In 3rd of July 1456, Vlad Țepeș concluded an agreement with the merchandisers from Brașov in which he promised to defend them against a possible Otoman invasion. As a change, he demanded them to give him shelter in any case of danger. In the same time, he continued to give them the privilege to commercialize their merchandises in Walachia's markets. The relationships between these two parts flew normaly until the autumn of 1456, when the saxons and Hungarians instigated the people from Brașov to sustain a new pretender to Walachia's throne, named Dan. Consequently, in 14th of February 1457 Vlad Țepeș wrote a letter to Brașov's merchandisers, protesting against their double-dealing, and claiming: "*I did not start this enmity....and I will hunt away Dan from Amlaș County*". This protest had had effect, as the merchandisers stopped to plot against him, keeping good commercial relationships with Walachia for one year more.

However, at the end of 1457, beginning of 1458, South Transylvanian people supported again other new pretenders to Walachia's throne who intended to fight and exile Vlad Țepeș. These continous actions of supporting the different pretenders to Walachia's leading, got angry Vlad Țepeș who suddenly started in January-February 1458 a strong campaign of bloody reprisals against the population of Southern Transylvania from Amlaș County, Bârsa County and Făgăraș County. *Matei Corvin*, the son of Iancu of Hunedoara (who died, meanwhile), succesor as King of Hungary and Prince of Transylvania, supported Vlad Țepeș in his campaign. He wrote to the transylvanian saxons merchandisers on 6 March 1458: „...*you are very guilty in this matter...cultivate peace with this prince (Vlad) and his people*”.⁶ Obviously, after all of these, the relationships between Walachia and the saxons of Southern Transylvania essentially got bad and never were the same again. In 1459, Vlad Țepeș decided to change the former prerogatives conferred to them and has forbidden the Transylvanian merchandisers to roam Walachia for selling their goods. He ordered them to sell their goods in Walachia only once per year, in three fairs he

⁶ Ilie Minea, “*Vlad Țepeș and his times*”, Iași 1929

set up at the border with Transylvania. Here, they felt free to sell their goods to Walachian merchandisers who will spread them further in the country. He took this decision for more reasons: first, he considered that the old way of making commerce with the Transylvanians was a beaten one, as the things had changed in Europe last time. In fact, the method of “*border fairs*” commerce was used in most of Western Europe countries in order to protect the indigenous merchandisers. Vlad Țepeș considered also that allowing Transylvanian merchandisers to do business all around Walachia like before, it was against the interests of country’s economy. Taking this decision, he intended to protect the walachian merchandisers, as he had wanted to reorganize the trade in the country. On the other hand, he needed a growing economy in order to prepare the future fights with the Ottomans for Walachia’s independence. Of course, this change was not on Transylvanian merchandisers liking. Some of them ignored the new order of Vlad Țepeș and continued to sell their goods in Walachia; soon, 41 people of them together with their 300 servants - among there were informers, too - were caught and impaled or burned alive!

In March 1460, the transilvanian saxons supported again the pretender Dan that passed the frontier with an army, in his attempt to conquer Walachia, but in the struggle that followed walachian army led by Vlad Țepeș, defeated him. Than, Prince Vlad ordered Dan to dig himself his own tomb; a priest made him the funeral service *alive*; afterward Dan was killed and buried in the place of fight. Because they supported Dan in this attempt of killing Vlad Țepeș, the habitants of Amlaș County and Făgăraș County will have a lot to suffer: in August 1460, Vlad Țepeș has sent an army which as reprisals, has burned more villages from these counties, impaling or beheading the most of the habitants. However, he



Vlad Țepeș and his impaling victims- German engraving

did not do badly to the citizens of Brașov town. In a letter from July 1460, he ensured them to stay quite regarding these reprisals because he will not touch them: ‘*We have to settle accounts only with Amlaș and Făgăraș Counties, our possessions*’, he wrote. Because their commercial interests were seriously affected by Vlad Țepeș’s policy and their tumultuous relationship with him, the Saxons merchandisers from Brașov town did all their best to disparage him. As revenge, they have chosen to spread everywhere they have gone, bad rumors - most of them exaggerated - about his deeds. They were urged by their leaders to tell everybody they met – commercial parteners or unknown people - that “*Vlad Țepeș is a tyrant, a thirsty of blood devil; his only pleasure*

is to impale innocent people; he use to party down to his impaled victims, etc.” In the letters they sent to their Germanrelatives, the Transylvanian saxons often mentioned all these things, more and more insistently. Based on all these exaggerated rumors, has appeared few decades later in Germany, the well-known “*German Stories*” about Vlad Țepeș’s deeds, most of them describing horrible things. For example, the german engraving above suggests that Vlad Țepeș used to “*take the meal down the impaled victims*”. Because there are no other historically proofs to tell about his bloody deeds described in these stories, there exists the opinion that some of them are purposely amplified and it is possible not to be happened in reality. But as the oral communication always makes the stories to be more exaggerated as long as they are told, these so called deeds of Vlad Țepeș had spread all over Europe. Thus, they have constituted the base of appearance after years, of the legends that transformed Vlad Țepeș in the well-known character, *Dracula*. Coming back to the Saxons Transylvanian merchandisers, as you will see, their great influence in region will prove to be decisive for the destiny of Vlad Țepeș, in the later events. Nevertheless, I will tell you about this on the right time!

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- Chapter III: THE TRACES OF VLAD ȚEPEȘ IN ROMANIA –

3.1 Christian buildings, fortresses and towns related to Vlad Țepeș’s life.

During the entire existence of Romanian provinces, there were the custom among the prince rulers to build churches or monasteries in honour of God and as a sign of their reign, of their passing trough the earth. They also used to donate important amounts of money and precious objects to the monasteries from both their country and *Athos Mountain*, in Greece. In all three Romanian provinces (Walachia, Moldavia, Transylvania), could be met numerous fortresses or even towns today, that have been created or rebuilt over centuries by the prince rulers during their reigns. The ruler’s custom to build churches or monasteries as grateful to God for different fulfillments or simply like this, lasted from the most ancient times; the first most important church on Romanian territory, has been built by the prince Basarab I in the first capital of Walachia, *Curtea de Argeș* town. This church is one of the most beautiful in Romania, both by architecture and painting; a monastery was built too by Prince Neagoe Basarab in the same place, in the XVI century. Mircea the Elder, the grand father of Vlad Țepeș has also built some Christian buildings, the most important being *Cozia Monastery* (13th of May 1388). There were also the custom to build a holy building after every victorious battle. In this respect, the most famous with this is the ruler of Moldavia, *Ștefan the Great* who built during his reign, no more than 44 Christian buildings,

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