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THE GENESIS OF THE MEDIEVAL STATE ON THE ROMANIAN TERRITORY: MOLDAVIA

The crucial issues concerning the foundation of the medieval state of Moldavia have been interpreted in various ways, creating a genuine web of opinions at historiographical level. Written documents and archaeological studies have broadened the area of research and led to interpretations which are, actually, unique ways of approach in analyzing the Romanian political entities that evolved into state forms.

A general study of the genesis of the Moldavian state should reach several defining aspects. What we are referring to is the transformation process of the Romanian Voivodeship of Maramureş into a county, which influenced nobleman Bogdan's unifying action in Moldavia; the external circumstances which triggered the offensive of the great Christian states against the Mongolian forces concentrated here after the large invasion of the 13th century; the first campaign of the Hungarian Kingdom to free southern Moldavia of the Tartar domination; the consolidation of Hungarian positions east of the Carpathians and, finally, the politico-military action led by a former voivode of Maramureş, Bogdan, which removed the Hungarian control in Moldavia, leading to the formation of states. All this shall be dealt with in the lines to come.

The emergence of the second Romanian medieval state shall be examined starting from a brief analysis of a neighbouring politically organized territory, namely the Voivodeship of Maramureş. The contribution of Romanian feudality in the area to the achievement of the extra-Carpathian Romanian statehood is essential as nobles Dragoş and Bogdan came from this land to set up a new political nucleus: Moldavia. Although studying the evolution and transformations undergone by the nobiliary society of Maramureş is still facing difficulties caused mainly by the lack of data in the written sources, the identification of the local Romanian nobiliary class, made up of knezes, and the relationship with the Hungarian royalty offered significant advantages in establishing some sort of phasing, a pertinent chronology

regarding this historical sequence of particular importance to the entire process of making the Moldavian state.

Thus, the political evolution of Maramureș was characterized by fluctuations resulted from the emergence of authority of the Hungarian Kingdom, interested in turning this Romanian entity into its own administrative-territorial unit: county. Documentary evidence of the first counts of Maramureș dates from the beginning of the 14th century, and, ever since the latter part of the 13th century, we encounter several Maramureș settlements which depended, administratively and territorially, on the Hungarian county of Ugocsa ruled, in those times, by the Pok family. In 1270, King Steven V of Hungary would give the Oaș Country to this noble family, an important moment which marked the obvious closeness between the institution of the county and the county of Maramureș¹. Three decades later, in a document dated 4 October 1303, Nicholas Pok would appear bearing the title of count of Ugocsa and Maramureș².

It is now that we can discuss not about a royal county, but a nobiliary one, resulted from the long Hungarian dynastic crisis. Usurpations of the royal domain and numerous donations made by kings such as Stephen V or Ladislau IV facilitated the quick consolidation of the nobiliary property, in general, and of the nobility, as status, in particular. 16 years later, in an act dated 9 February 1319, the same Nicholas Pok appeared as being a count of Maramureș only. Documentary evidence (rather poor, though) would suggest that the representative of the royal power, the count, did not actually live in Maramureș, but had, in the area, his own representative, namely the castellan of Visc, as mentioned in the documents of the time³. He symbolized the link between the count and the knezes of Maramureș, representing the interests of the so-called «royal guests» who had settled in late 13th century in the Maramureș parts, in areas uninhabited by local elements⁴.

The Hungarian Crown's first step towards helping the royal guests was taken in 1300, as revealed by a document issued by the last Arpadian dynast, Andrew III. We find therein that the citadel of Visc passed under the authority of the district of Maramureș from that of the county of Ugocsa in order to better serve the needs of «our guests» (*hospitum nostrum*)⁵. As regards the evolution of the county institution during the reigns of Charles Robert of Anjou and Louis I of Anjou, we should notice the importance of the Maramureș counts' presence, which, in fact, points to the stages of the relations between the local institution of voivodship and royal authority. Documentary attestation of these counts throughout the 14th century may be interpreted as the Angevine Crown's persistence to overlap the county, representing the feudal order, over the voivodship, the embodiment of Maramureș autonomy.

The basic element of the process was bringing several Maramureș noblemen under juridical dependence on the Hungarian royalty, by strengthening the control over the land. One of the earliest examples mentioned in documents is the apportionment of property to the Maramureș

¹ The apportionment of Oaș Country to the noble Pok family should be associated with the power struggle between King Bela IV and his son Stephen. It is a well-known fact that Stephen V granted gifts in the intra-Carpathian Romanian area to important members of the nobiliary party supporting his arrival to the Hungarian throne (*Sălăgean T.* Transilvania în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIII-lea. Afirmarea regimului congregațional. Ed. a 2-a. Cluj-Napoca, 2007. P. 112).

² Documente privind istoria României. Veacul XIV. Transilvania. Vol. I (1301–1320). București, 1953. P. 32.

³ *Popa R.* Țara Maramureșului în veacul al XIV-lea. Ed. a II-a. București, 1997. P. 196.

⁴ *Ibid.* P. 180.

⁵ *Mihaly de Apșa I.* Diplome maramureșene din secolul XIV și XV. Sighet, 1900. P. 4.

knez Stanislau on 22 September 1326⁶, when king Charles Robert of Anjou granted him the land of Strâmtura. The same document also mentioned, for the first time, the term «district of Maramureș» (*In Districtu Maramorisiensi*), which highlights the status of this territory in relation to the Hungarian state. The lack of intensity of the process of transformation into a royal county emphasizes the idea that the reign of the first Angevine king of Hungary was to witness the political ascension of the great local families of knezes who would control, in turn, the voivodeship of Maramureș.

With the coming of Louis I of Anjou to the throne of Hungary, the Crown would take direct measures meant to change the social-political status of the Maramureș feudality. The most significant actions of the Hungarian sovereign were aimed at the Romanian nobility of Transylvania and, especially, the social category of the knezes. The Angevine dynast refused to acknowledge the quality of noblemen of the knezes who hadn't been confirmed by a royal act, and, thus, ultimately, the acknowledgment of the rule over land, by title of property, and of the status of nobility was to depend on the decision of the royal court⁷. Consequently, the local feudality became, in just a few years, legally dependent on the Hungarian state.

Royal policy success in Maramureș was brought about by several factors, of which we should mention the social and juridical transformations the Romanian feudality was subject to and the lack of cohesion of the internal forces which finally led to accepting the Hungarian suzerainty. The effects of the transformations suffered, successively, by the nobles of Maramureș paved the way for the disintegration of the voivodeship. At the same time, however, Hungary's actions greatly influenced the constant policy carried out by the former Maramureș voivode Bogdan after 1343, ended with the overthrow of the Hungarian rule east of the Carpathians and the emergence of the second Romanian medieval state.

As for external circumstances, the central and East European situation to be exact, it should be noted that the idea of restricting the area of Tartar domination prevailed in the first part of the 14th century⁸. The Mongolian hordes' devastating raids into Central Europe had direct implications for the great Catholic kingdoms in the area. The coalition between Hungary and Poland was strictly required, ever since the first decades of the 14th century, but the internal crises and weakening of central authority made a military intervention on a large scale virtually impossible. Towards the end of the 13th century, the Tartars had imposed their suzerainty on other important states and areas in Eastern Europe. Being more or less dependent, Lithuania, the Principality of Halych, the Romanian territory south and east of the Carpathian chain, Bulgaria and even a part of Serbia fully experienced the Mongolian domination.

The dynastic crisis of early 14th century, the power struggles between the two pretenders to the throne of Hungary, Charles Robert of Anjou and Otto of Bavaria, spread over the course of a decade, allowed the achievement of the first Romanian medieval state: Wallachia. Strained relations between the Hungarian kingdom and the Wallachian state, concluded with the battle

⁶ Ibid. P. 6; see also *Pascu Ș. Cnezi-cnezate, voievozi, crainici-crâinicii din Maramureș // Maramureș-Vatră de istorie milenară. II. Cluj-Napoca, 1997. P. 43.*

⁷ *Papacostea Ș. Geneza statului în evul mediu românesc. Cluj Napoca, 1988. P. 85.* The knezes who were confirmed by a royal act were assimilated, without restrictions, with the nobility, while those who did not receive such confirmation were reduced to the modest condition of village judges.

⁸ For a deeper understanding of the issue, we recommend: *Ablay M. Din istoria tătarilor. București, 1997; Ciocâltan V. Mongolii și Marea Neagră în secolele XIII–XIV. București, 1998; Engel P. The Realm of St. Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526. Londra, 2001; Vásáry I. Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365, Cambridge, 2005; Papacostea Ș. La Mer Noire carrefour des grandes routes intercontinentales 1204–1453. București, 2006.*

of 9–12 November 1330, a military disaster for Hungary, seriously altered the goals of foreign policy which the great Catholic state had intended⁹. Hungary's defensive attitude blocked the anti-Tartar actions that both Poland and Papacy looked forward to. The last decade of Charles Robert of Anjou's reign meant mere «image games», as revealed by the correspondence with the papacy around the year 1338¹⁰.

Since the beginning, the new king of Hungary, Louis I, understood the necessity to launch an attack against the Tartar forces concentrated south of Moldavia whose raids were a constant threat for the eastern border of the kingdom. The Hungarian campaign on Moldavian land was prefigured by an expedition to Transylvania, in 1343, prompted by a revolt of the Saxons against the excessive taxation promoted by the Hungarian kingdom. It was now that a political agreement with Wallachia, mentioned in the late Wallachian chronicles¹¹, was to be concluded resulting in Hungary's acknowledging the new political entity, which had emerged south of the Carpathians, and the latter's adopting a position of neutrality towards the expedition against the Tartars in Moldavian territories.

The successes that Hungarian Crown obtained in collaboration with the Polish one against the Mongolian rule, during 1345–1347, meant not only that the Mongolian barrier had been broken in the Lower Danube area but also that Tartar domination in southeastern Europe had weakened. The Golden Horde felt, to the fullest, the beginning of the fall, amplified definitely by the outbreak of the plague which affected the capital on the Volga and was going to expand later in the entire Crimea. After removing the Mongolian pressure, King Louis I instated a second phase of his reign, aiming at expanding towards the central European area. The new directions pursued in terms of foreign relations would consolidate Hungary's status of great power, turning the second Angevine dynast into one of the most important sovereigns of Europe. The initiation of military conflicts in both central and western part of the old continent, successful indeed, would allow Hungary to reach the largest territorial expansion up to that moment¹².

The major policy undertaken in Europe proved beneficial for the development of the territory east of the Carpathians into state entities. Neglecting aspects related to the consolidation of the rule over the Moldavian land, Louis I was to be forced to face, in 1359, the first opposing actions initiated by the local population. These were signs that they were willing to free themselves of the Hungarian control, which the Angevine sovereign could not thwart with his own military manpower but with the assistance of several troops of noblemen from Maramureş sent to quell the conflict.

Let us return for a moment to the first phase of the foundation process of the Moldavian state. It should be mentioned that the reasons to launch a Hungarian expedition east of the Carpathians seem now to have been entirely identified. The official motive, as determined by strategic-military reasons, was securing the eastern borders of the Hungarian kingdom

⁹ For more information on the Hungarian campaign in Wallachia, see also *Lăzărescu E. C. Despre lupta din 1330 a lui Basarab voievod cu Carol Robert // Revista istorică. 1935. Vol. XXI. P. 241–246; Iosipescu S. Românii din Carpații Meridionali la Dunărea de Jos de la invazia mongolă (1241–1243) până la consolidarea domniei a toată Țara Românească. Războiul victorios purtat la 1330 împotriva cotozirii ungare // Constituirea statelor feudale românești. București, 1980. P. 41–95; Holban M. Din cronică relațiilor româno-ungare în secolele XIII–XIV. București, 1981.*

¹⁰ *Documente privind istoria României. Veacul XIV. Transilvania. Vol. III (1331–1340). București, 1954. P. 499.*

¹¹ *Istoria Țării Românești (1290–1690). Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc / Ed. by C. Grecescu and D. Simionescu. București, 1960. P. 198.*

¹² Of the main actions, let us mention the campaign against the kingdom of Naples (1347), the war with Venice (1358) and the military expeditions in Serbia (1359).

against the Mongolian incursions. Efficient defence of Transylvania could have been provided by controlling the eastern versant of the Carpathians and, therefore, subordinating the entire territory stretching between the Siret river and the mountains — with the valleys of the Suceava, Moldova, Bistrița and Trotuș — this should be viewed as the main goal pursued by the Hungarian state¹³.

Field investigations have revealed, in certain parts of the Moldavian area, the presence of settlements fortified by embankments, with palisades and ditches, which had played an important role ever since the last migratory wave, though they are attested especially in the north of Moldavia, being, probably, future centres of local political entities displaying early characteristics of a state¹⁴. One of the clarifying examples is the fortified settlement of Bâta Doamnei¹⁵, equally considered the fortified centre of a local settlement and, also, a possible Hungarian bastion meant for surveillance before the Mongolian raids in Transylvania¹⁶.

Another desideratum whose importance should not be minimised and which channelled the Hungarian Crown towards launching a military action was the expansion of Catholicism. In an area inhabited mostly by Orthodox schismatics, implementing the western rite was but a natural cause, considering the traditional religious component of the Hungarian policy, inaugurated, since the foundation of the state, in close relation with the institution of papacy¹⁷.

The annexation of southern Moldavia brought Hungary closer to another desideratum of its foreign policy, namely the exit to the Black Sea. Even though it cannot be proved by documents, the direction pursued by the Hungarian Crown, during the decades to come, prompts us to assume that reaching the maritime area represented a major achievement of Hungarian policy, in the extra-Carpathian space. While the intention of the Hungarian power to expand northward, around the area of the Siret, after the formation of the politico-military nucleus of Baia, does not confirm the desire to immediately accomplish this objective, we believe that it should not be overlooked in the present discussion. The rich Italian commerce conducted at the mouths of the Danube was not indifferent to a great power on the rise, as was Hungary. At the same time, the conquest of southern Moldavia coincided with a period of maximum strain in the Pontic basin between the two states holding commercial supremacy: Venice and Genoa. The new war opposing the two thalassocracies in the Black Sea (1350–1355) finally ended in favour of Genoa which gained control over the entire Pontic coast, thus giving a significant boost to the trade conducted between the mouths of

¹³ *Giurescu C. C.* Istoria românilor. Vol. I. București, 2000. P. 310.

¹⁴ *Teodor D. Gh.* Contribuțiile cercetărilor arheologice la cunoașterea istoriei spațiului carpato-nistriean în secolele II–XIV // Spațiul nord-est carpatic în mileniul întunecat / Coordinated by V. Spinei. Iași, 1997. P. 227.

¹⁵ The fortification with palisade on the Bâta Doamnei height, which overlaps the Dacian fortification, suggests, by the composition of the material found, i.e. swords, spears, lances, halberd, mace, stirrups, horseshoes, the existence of a military camp and not the centre of a local pre-state political entity (cf. *Andronic A.* Fortificațiile medievale din Moldova // Memoria Antiquitatis. 1970. Vol. II. P. 405; *Nițu A., Zamoșteanu M.* Sondajele de la Piatra Neamț // Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice. 1959. Vol. VI. P. 365–366; *Mătasă C., Zamoșteanu I., Zamoșteanu M.* Săpăturile de la Piatra Neamț // Memoria Antiquitatis. 1960. Vol. VII. P. 347).

¹⁶ We shall mention, in this case, the discovery of the dinar dating from the period of Bela IV revealed by the archaeological researches carried out inside the fortification of Bâta Doamnei (*Oberlander-Târnoveanu E.* Societatea, economie și politică-populațiile de pe teritoriul Moldovei și lumea sud-est europeană în secolele IV–XIV în lumina descoperirilor monetare // Suceava. Anuarul Muzeului Național al Bucovinei. Suceava, 2001. P. 353).

¹⁷ For more information on the attempts of Papacy and the Hungarian Kingdom to consolidate Catholicism in Moldavia, see *Moisescu Gh. I.* Catolicismul în Moldova până la sfârșitul veacului al XIV-lea. București, 1942. P. 33–36.

the Danube and central Europe, along the continental track whose final segment crossed the extra-Carpathian Romanian space¹⁸.

Accounts on the conquest of the south of Moldavia do not mention several just as important aspects in analysing the establishment of the second extra-Carpathian Romanian state, such as the stage of development of the local Moldavian population in mid-14th century¹⁹. Archaeological researches in settlements in some parts of Moldavia revealed, for the period mentioned, that they were organized in villages. Logically, they could group, depending on the needs of the moment, into unions of villages, having economic, military and political characteristics. However, it is difficult to prove if these territorial-political entities could have played an important role in the geographical areas that weren't naturally defended, especially since the Mongolian domination east of the Carpathians did not become effective but in some parts, presumably those in the south, east and centre. In contrast, the heavily forested and mountainous northern areas were real barriers against invaders. In such places, the liberties people enjoyed were certainly larger since the inhabitants depended on the Asian rulers at most in terms of payment of certain economic obligations.

At the same time, we believe that Mongolian domination was not constant during 1242–1345. In a first stage, Tartar forces secured their rule in Bugeac, then penetrated deeper and deeper into the extra-Carpathian space. Undoubtedly, at the peak of the Mongol Khanate (which coincides with Uzbek's reign, 1312-1342), the presence of Asian tribes south of Moldavia is proved by the pressure exerted on the eastern borders of the Hungarian kingdom. Failed plans of the two catholic states, Hungary and Poland, aiming to restrict Tartar power, are clear evidence that the fierce migrants had strengthened their redoubtable force in south-eastern Europe.

Advanced assumptions lead to the belief that, during the first decades of the 14th century, Mongol domination deepened in the territories east of the Carpathians causing discontent of the local population and thus more or less eased the Hungarian Crown's plans. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to decide if the Tartars interfered in the domestic issues of the east-Carpathian society, considering that local communities did not have, economically and politically speaking, the necessary force to secure a minimum opposition. Even if people enjoyed the freedom of political organisation, there were still restrictions meant to prevent the emergence of local power centres.

Tartar domination of Moldavia and development of domestic entities remain current issues in Romanian historiography, especially if we consider that, as far as the area stretching east of the Carpathians is concerned, there is no source as important and revealing as the Diploma of the Joannites which carries vital data for determining the degree of evolution of the Romanian society²⁰. The importance of this region, as Mongolian base, is undeniable since Louis

¹⁸ *Papacostea Ș.* Desăvârșirea emancipării politice a Țării Românești și a Moldovei (1330–1392) // *Evul Mediu Românesc*. București, 2001. P. 17.

¹⁹ In the present stage of the research, we do not have concrete elements to prove the existence, in the first half of the 14th century, on the territory of Moldavia, of voivodships. The only analogies can be found in certain foreign sources which mention several political leaders who exerted their influence on some parts east of the Carpathians. Such evolution can be accepted rather for the north of Moldavia which, following the middle of the 13th century, did not effectively come under the Mongolian sphere of influence.

²⁰ This is the reason why local Moldavian entities have been searched in chronicles and accounts of foreign travellers, though not convincing as regards the existence of economically and politically stable structures, resembling in organisation the voivodships south of the Carpathians, led by Litovoi and Seneslau (see the document of June 1247 published in *Documenta Romaniae Historica. Țara Românească*. Vol. I. București, 1966. P. 3–7).

I, the new king of Hungary, starting with the very first year of his reign, focused all efforts on eliminating this power pole. The exact chronological moment of liberation of southern Moldavia could not be established, attempts being made to identify it by corroborating the operations unfolded east of the Carpathians with other objectives of Hungarian foreign policy. Sources and chronicles of the time do not bring additional information regarding the combats or battles fought on Moldavian land, but one single decisive confrontation (which occurred on 2 February 1345) that could not have led, automatically, to the annexation of south of Moldavia to the Hungarian kingdom. Therefore, to establish the most precise date possible, three moments, which could generally coincide with the complete liberation of the area, have been forwarded: King Louis I's campaign in Italy (February 1347), reestablishment of the Cumans' episcopacy (29 March 1347) and dissolution of autonomy of the Principality of Halych by Poland (1349)²¹.

The purpose of the Hungarian campaign in Moldavia was to set up a politico-military structure having the centre at Baia, an urban-like settlement which had emerged in the 13th century and which could even have represented, for the first half of the 14th century, the capital of a local political entity (kenazate or voivodeship)²². Late chronicle tradition attributes this Hungarian structure to a nobleman from Maramureş named Dragoş. The first important issue related to Dragoş's becoming the head of the military march of Baia was to exactly identify him in the political development of the Maramureş voivodeship before 1345, which was extremely necessary to «streamline» the events that make up this stage in the foundation of the medieval state of Moldavia.

Assumptions made in time have failed to trenchantly solve the issue of Dragoş's origins, mainly that of his quick political ascension from knez to leader of a border military march. One of the most encountered assumptions places Dragoş among the gentry of Maramureş, being identified as Dragoş of Bedeu, a knez mentioned in a 1336 document alongside his brother Drag. The assumption is questionable because of the act issued on 29 November 1355, in which Drag appears as having the title of royal count («...cum, Comite Drag olaco de Bedeuhaza, homine ejusdem Domini Regis...»). Drag's evident political ascension raises questions about that of his brother, the hypothetical beneficiary of an equally important dignity, that of royal deputy, in a newly conquered territory. As a consequence, though the family of Bedeu knezes owes their rise to the close relationship with the royal policy, this sole detail only is insufficient to confirm the assumption according to which Dragoş of Bedeu was one and the same person as the future ruler of the military march established in south Moldavia²³.

Another theory meant to determine Dragoş's roots is based on elements of toponymy and sources of popular tradition. It attempts to demonstrate the kinship between Dragoş and one of the central families of Maramureş, namely the Codrea family. Following the arrange-

²¹ A theory advanced by *Gorovei Şt. S.* *Îndreptări cronologice la istoria Moldovei în veacul al XIV-lea* // Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol. Iaşi, 1973. Vol. 10. P. 105 and *Papacostea Ş.* *Triumful luptei pentru neatârnamare: întemeierea Moldovei şi consolidarea statelor feudale româneşti* // *Constituirea statelor feudale româneşti*. Bucureşti, 1980. P. 175–176.

²² *Neamţu V.* *Istoria oraşului medieval Baia (Civitas Moldaviensis)*. Iaşi, 1997. P. 14; *Spinei V.* *Generalităţi privind geneza oraşelor medievale din Moldova* // *Universa Valachica. Români în contextul politic internaţional de la începutul mileniului al II-lea*. Chişinău, 2006. P. 636–637.

²³ See also the researches of *Marius Diaconescu (Diaconescu M.)* *Dragoş, «descălecătorul» Moldovei, între legendă şi realitate* // *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania*. Satu Mare, 1997. P. 86), that practically led to the elimination of this assumption that had been intensely mentioned in the Romanian historiography.

ment of events occurred after 1345, it was concluded that Dragoș started the expansion towards the north, with the Siret area as central point. Once liberated, the space was populated by Maramureș people who set up several villages (Badeuți — Bedeu, Teseuți — Teceu, Tărăsăuți — Taras, Volovăț — Olhoviți), whose names can be found in a similar form all grouped in the Câmpulung kenazate, ruled by the Codrea family²⁴. These considerations are valuable as regards toponymy, however there is still no documented evidence to support this point of view.

The last assumption regarding Dragoș's social origin refers to the connection with another powerful Maramureș kenazate, ruled by the Giulești family, who owed their entire political rise to the unconditional support given to the Hungarian regality, in the first half of the 14th century. This theory relies on the act of 20 March 1360 by which nobleman Dragoș of Giulești is granted a number of properties in Maramureș following his contribution to restoring «the Country of Moldavia»²⁵. The information revealed in the 1360 document remains, in the current stage, the most thorough regarding a person, Dragoș, who could have been the main political leader of southern Moldavia. Since the lack of documented evidence is becoming increasingly thwarting for historical research, identifying Dragoș, based on this sole act, remains a viable undertaking.

Another complicated matter, with deep implications on the process of founding the medieval state of Moldavia, refers to the position held by Dragoș in the territory east of the Carpathians. Taking into account that Dragoș's installation occurred after the arrival of the Hungarian armies, we have to consider that the office occupied should be included in the Hungarian hierarchy. The events confirm tangentially the military nature of the position held by Dragoș. If we should accept, even hypothetically, that Dragoș was the first voivode of Moldavia, then we might believe that the institution itself could not have been organised but on the pattern of Maramureș, so long as its first leader had his roots in the Maramureș nobiliary structures.

In this particular case, it is precisely the nature of the Hungarian ruling that emphasises the impossibility of a close collaboration of the local population with the Hungarian occupation whose main representative was Dragoș. Political subordination and religious pressures (reestablishment of the episcopate of Milcovia in 1347) confirm the fact that east of the Carpathians there were attempts to only replace a Tartar domination with a new one exerted by the Hungarian Crown. Therefore, the voivodal office held by Dragoș becomes impossible to prove, as it is hard to accept that local society's leaders would have acknowledged the appointment, as ruler, of someone who could not represent their interests.

With the Moldavian chroniclers of the 16th-17th centuries, we encounter similar versions regarding the position held by Dragoș. Of these, the most interesting is Misail the Monk's insertion in «Letopisețul Țării Moldovei» written by Grigore Ureche revealing that Dragoș's rule was like a captaincy («*a fost domnia ca o căpitănie*»²⁶); the information raised heated debate in historiography as it launched a different perspective on the prerogatives of the office of voivode. Corroborating this mention of Grigore Ureche's chronicle with another older source,

²⁴ Gorovei Șt. S. Dragoș și Bogdan, întemeietorii Moldovei. Probleme ale formării statului feudal Moldova, București, 1973. P. 77. For a more recent bibliography, see Gorovei Șt. S. Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate, Iași, 1997.

²⁵ Mihaly de Apșa I. Diplome maramureșene din secolul XIV și XV. P. 38–39.

²⁶ Ureche G. Letopisețul Țării Moldovei. București, 1978. P. 72.

the Moldo-Russian chronicle²⁷, according to which Dragoș crossed into Moldavia at the head of his *druzhina* (a term which designates a group of warriors), we can identify the vital military role of his position. Thus, the dignity of voivode attributed to Dragoș becomes, by interpreting the two sources, a mere substitution of an office associated, erroneously, with a person who seemingly ruled over a territory east of the Carpathians not as a voivode but as a military commander who was supposed to secure, by force of arms, the control of the area.

The title of «captain», attributed to Dragoș, has a different connotation if considered from the perspective of the time in which Misail the Monk inserted his interpolation. From this angle, it does not resemble a western military march, which had large territorial extension, but rather a military unit that, in the 17th century, grouped military categories with permanent obligations from a number of villages, thus having a much smaller extension²⁸. For this reason, the position of voivode, considered in relation with the time of Misail the Monk's insertion, cannot apply as it did not incorporate the local political structures and entities existing on that territory.

Beyond the real implications entailed by such a dignity, we notice, with the Moldavian chroniclers, the need to secure some sort of dynastic continuity, which had not been broken, but continued by Bogdan's arrival. The desire to have a dynasty east of the Carpathians, that should start with Dragoș and continue with Sas, was beyond the attempt to emphasize the historical truth. This could be one of the reasons Dragoș was mentioned in most of the chronicle as the first voivode or prince of Moldavia. Data and chronology we encounter in annals (*Letopisețe*) and chronicles may have as a starting point a prototype (which remains unknown) dating from the 15th century, out of which grew *Letopisețul de la Bistrița*, the Moldo-German chronicle, *Letopisețul de la Putna* written at the wish or under the care of prince Stephen the Great²⁹. Later on, this model was to be easily adopted by chroniclers, drawn by the idea of establishing some continuity of the first Moldavian dynasty which should emerge after the removal of Tartar domination east of the Carpathians.

Dragoș's disappearance from the political scene remains as shrouded in mystery as the issue of his emergence and ascension. Considering that Dragoș was one of the characters who distinguished himself in the confrontations against the Mongolians, it is but natural to believe that he died in one of these battles. Taking into account that Hungary's offensive against the Mongol forces ended around 1357, we may assume that Dragoș's disappearance occurred some time close to this date. Even if most of the Moldavian chronicles indicate that after his death power was assumed by his son, Sas, this development still raises questions³⁰. Judging from a strictly political viewpoint, the existence of a dynasty under Hungary's suzerainty is difficult to prove. The emergence of some succession in the newly-freed territories east of the Carpathians would have hardly been accepted by the Hungarian royalty, considering that, in the previous century, in the extra-Carpathian Romanian space, there had been strains with

²⁷ *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI*, published by Ioan Bogdan, revised and enlarged edition of P. P. Panaitescu. București, 1959. P. 159.

²⁸ *Rezachevici C. Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, a. 1324–1881. I. Sec. XIV–XVI*. București, 2001. P. 415–416.

²⁹ *Sacerdoșeanu A. Succesiunea domnilor Moldovei până la Alexandru cel Bun. Pe baza documentelor din secolul al XIV-lea și a cronicilor românești din secolul al XV-lea și al XVI-lea, scrise în limba slavonă // Romanoslavica*. 1965. Vol. XI. P. 222.

³⁰ Sas appears in documents in relation with his sons and not with Dragoș, which raises questions regarding the kinship between the two (*Mihaly de Apșa I. Diplome maramureșene din secolul XIV și XV*. P. 56, 57, 68).

the local institutions of the kenazate-voivodeship type. Therefore, the establishment of a centre of power which could develop at dynastic level was a dangerous demarche capable of deviating, at any moment, the objectives laid down by the Hungarian Crown in these territories.

Sas's appearance on the political scene of the territory east of the Carpathians should be placed somewhere between 1357-1360, since the anti Mongolian offensive led by the Hungarian kingdom was in regress. Leader of a political entity in pre-state Moldavia, Sas was supposed to coordinate a process of territorial extension, integrating or annihilating existing local structures.

Archaeological research does not directly point to the fact that the Hungarian Crown's policy of territorial expansion had, as «terminus» point, the Siret area. Siret, as urban centre, flourished in mid-14th century and the role it had been granted, that of advanced pawn of Catholicism in Moldavia, could not have been ensured but by foreign elements³¹. If we were to analyse Siret as the new centre of Hungarian rule east of the Carpathians, we couldn't but start from hypothetical considerations³². Excavations in the area did not reveal the existence of a princely court or a political and military centre from which Dragoș's or Sas's power could propagate³³.

The climax was reached in 1359 when a local uprising broke out east of the Carpathians, against the Hungarian domination. The very idea of uprising mentioned in documents confirms the assumption that it was not an action of local leaders only for it equally engaged the common people. The circumstances in which Sas lost control of the pro-Hungarian entity east of the Carpathians are unknown. One of the reasonable and frequently used assumptions supports the idea that his removal took place after the former voivode of Maramureș, Bogdan, had crossed into Moldavia. The battle fought on this occasion led to the removal of royal control and Sas, as a main representative of the Hungarian policy in the east-Carpathian space, was, presumably, actively involved in the clash.

The complete image of the final stage of foundation of the Moldavian state cannot be built only by establishing some chronological reference points regarding Bogdan's coming to Moldavia and the overthrow of Hungarian domination. The politico-administrative transformations that the intra-Carpathian Romanian territories went through were crucial in the future political tensions whose central figure was Bogdan. This county-voivodeship duality, more and more powerful during the first decades of the 14th century, represents the essence of the conflicting state especially since Bogdan, as the highest in rank in Maramureș, could not remain indifferent to the attempts of restricting the rights and liberties in the area he was ruling.

Bogdan's removal as head of the Voivodeship of Maramureș remains (beyond the above-analysed aspects) a moment which continues to group unclear aspects. Bogdan was not just anybody in the hierarchy of Maramureș. In addition to the position of voivode, temporarily filled, he had become, due to his vast possessions, the leader of the most powerful kenazate of

³¹ Matei M. D. Studii de istorie orășenească medievală (Moldova, sec. XIV–XVI). Ed. a II-a. Târgoviște, 2005. P. 39.

³² See Reli S. Orașul Siret în vremuri de demult. Cernăuți, 1927. P. 22, which supports the idea of a wooden and earthen military fortification at Siret, built by Sas on the hill that bares his name.

³³ Chițescu L. Cercetările arheologice de la Siret // Revista muzeelor și monumentelor. Serie muzee. 1975. Vol. XII. Nr. 3. P. 51. Archaeological research carried out on Sasca hill, in the town of Siret, considered by many studies as evidence of Sas's rule over these parts, has not identified the remains of a princely court or fortification (*Spinei V., Asăvoaie C.* Date preliminare privind rezultatele săpăturilor din 1992 de la Siret // Arheologia Moldovei. 1993. Vol. XVI. P. 216). Therefore, the toponym Sasca may come, as other similar ones in Moldavia, from the name of the German population of Transylvania (cf. *Spinei V.* Moldova în secolele XI–XIV. Ed. a II-a. Chișinău, 1993. P. 309).

Maramureș. The first issue is the very method of removing Bogdan as voivode of Maramureș. Loyalty to Hungary, later manifested by some Maramureș formations, entitles us to believe that Bogdan's wish to gain, at any cost, complete political autonomy would have displeased not only the Hungarian royalty but also some local families of knezes. The official reason, also revealed by a Maramureș diploma of 21 October 1343, remains the dispute between voivode Bogdan and the main authority of the kingdom in the area, nobleman Ioan of Kőlcse, castellan of Visc³⁴. Unfortunately, these brief data do not offer a clarifying image of the nature of conflict or what triggered it. Therefore, if we consider things strictly from the viewpoint of the Hungarian kingdom, Bogdan had not fulfilled the obligations that any knez or voivode of the intra-Carpathian space was supposed to have towards the suzerain power and, moreover, he had raised against an authority that was the Hungarian representative in the area.

A different but equally important reason, with deep implications on Hungary's foreign policy, would be launching the Hungarian attack in the area east of the Carpathians ruled by Mongols, an action in which the Voivodeship of Maramureș was to play a significant part. In these political circumstances, Bogdan did not seem to represent, to the new sovereign Louis I of Anjou, a guarantee that such a plan would succeed, since Maramureș should not have been drawn into this action by granting large political autonomy, in contrast with the rest of the intra-Carpathian space, but rather by supporting a dismemberment of the nobiliary class by granting important privileges only to those feudal lords who showed any sign of faith towards the Angevine royalty.

The Hungarian royalty would continue, during the first decades of Louis I's reign, to draw the petty and middle feudality of Maramureș, thus exerting constant pressure on the great families of knezes. Aware of the aim of these demarches undertaken by the Hungarian policy, Bogdan would try, during 1343–1349, to oppose the process of bringing the Maramureș noblemen under strict royal control. He chose to gain over partisans from Maramureș, who were hostile to the king. The action was dangerous and risky considering that the former voivode's military force, essential to achieving a power pole against Hungary, was not sufficiently prepared to guarantee the minimum success.

With meagre resources, the military plan of the Cuhean knez could not have overthrown the «new political order» established after his dismissal. The former voivode's first carefully and thoroughly prepared action focused on the domains of Giulești and Nyres from which he banished knez Giula and his six sons. The document dated 15 September 1349 points to the real cause of the attack, namely the refusal of the Giulești knezes to support Bogdan³⁵. Thus, the former voivode had tried to strike Louis I's most loyal feudal lords and, probably, one of the main supporters of royal policy in the region. Lacking the support of his own family who had embraced the royal policy and surrounded by lords obedient to Hungary, the former voivode was in peril to fall victim to its policy of force. The failure of his latest expedition forced Bogdan to adopt a defensive policy which, under those circumstances, kept him safe from a Hungarian riposte targeted against him. The former Maramureș voivode's change of attitude explains and justifies why Louis I did not prepare an attack against the «rebel» Bogdan which could have led to his very banishment from Maramureș. In the given situation, an assumption to credit the existence of an understanding between the former voivode and the representatives of the royal policy should not be neglected. The last documented mention of

³⁴*Mihaly de Apșa I. Diplome maramureșene din secolul XIV și XV. P. 17.*

³⁵*Ibid. P. 26.*

Bogdan in Maramureş completes and largely confirms a part of such a development. The act dated 14 May 1353³⁶ mentions the Cuhean knez bearing the title of voivode, while the word «unfaithful» used to describe him in the previously issued documents is no longer present.

Until recently, a part of historiography considered that the year of foundation of Moldavia and, implicitly, of Bodan's departure from Maramureş was 1359. The main counterargument can be found in a royal diploma dated 20 March 1360 in which the Hungarian king acknowledged the Maramureş nobleman Dragoş of Giuleşti's possession of several lands in recognition of his loyalty shown in restoring the «country of Moldavia»³⁷. The text does not point to a loss of Hungarian positions east of the Carpathians, only to the reinstatement of royal control over the area with the assistance of some troops of Maramureş noblemen led by Dragoş of Giuleşti. Bogdan's action in Moldavia should be necessarily connected with the removal of his family as rulers of Maramureş. After his dismissal, the highest office in Maramureş had passed to his brother's sons who had unconditionally accepted the royal policy. Nevertheless, the diploma of 24 June 1360 mentions Stephen, Bogdan's nephew, as «our Maramureş voivode». The banishment of the Hungarian domination east of the Carpathians could not but entail, shortly after, changes in the administration of the Voivodeship of Maramureş, for, otherwise, a dangerous political situation might have emerged, namely that in which members of the same family ruled two neighbouring political entities. Based on such an argument, we find, in the act issued on 2 February 1356³⁸, about Stephen's replacement with Balk, Sas's son, which confirms the assumption that Bogdan's action in Moldavia had succeeded by causing natural adjustments in the Maramureş government as well.

The analysis of the two above-mentioned documents prompts us to believe that the foundation of the Moldavian state in 1359 is not a well-supported idea. Even the avouchment of the royal donation made to Dragoş of Giuleşti in 1364³⁹ indirectly confirms that it was only in the 60's of the 14th century that the confrontation for the liberation of the Moldavian space from the Hungarian domination should be placed. If we consider that the Maramureş knez's action in Moldavia took place after 1360, then we should bear in mind two chronological points, judged both in terms of the documentary analysis and of the foreign circumstances⁴⁰. According to the first one, the former voivode's arrival in Moldavia occurred in 1361. Dating is not without some doubts. Thus, if we agree that the assault against Sas and his family occurred over the course of this particular year, how easy can we accept the assumption that King Louis I waited three years to try to recover the Hungarian positions east of the Carpathians? This development remains difficult to prove, especially in terms of the respite given to Bogdan to consolidate his rule and efficiently organize the defence of the territory. The Hungarian king's not being engaged, at the time, in other external conflicts reinforces our belief that the former Maramureş voivode's action should not be placed in 1361. The Angevine royalty was, above all, a military one, and, with both rules, we can speak about a policy of permanent conquests, fights that were intended or provoked by others⁴¹, so that, in this sketched picture, the lack of reaction is almost inexplicable.

³⁶ Ibid. P. 30.

³⁷ Documenta Romaniae Historica. D. Relații între Țările Române. Vol. I. București, 1977. P. 76–77.

³⁸ *Mihály de Apsa I. Diplome maramureșene din secolul XIV și XV.* P. 56.

³⁹ Ibid. P. 53.

⁴⁰ Both assumptions were introduced in the specialized literature by *Gorovei Ș. S. Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate.* P. 91–92.

⁴¹ *Iorga N. Istoria românilor din Ardeal și Ungaria.* București, 2006. P. 101.

Returning to our discussion, it is incomprehensible how King Louis I preferred to keep as voivode of Maramureș, for four more years, the son of Bogdan's brother, which was a huge mistake given that, after achieving the cohesion of the east-Carpathian elements, winning over new forces in Maramureș did not seem such a difficult task especially since, about a decade before, there had been a political and military alliance between knez Bogdan and Stephen, the voivode of Maramureș. Therefore, the attitude of the Hungarian state, that had so long waited to install one of its most loyal lords in eastern Carpathians as prince of Maramureș, was a dangerous approach and, at the same time, a clue which rebuffs the assumption of Bogdan's coming to Moldavia in 1361.

The last assumption we shall deal with in this study concerns the year 1363. This chronological reference point, where we can place the action of the former voivode of Maramureș in Moldavia, proves a complex one in terms of foreign circumstances⁴². This period witnesses an aggravation of the conflict between Louis I and the Roman-German king Charles of Luxemburg, the cessation of military hostilities between the two parties being attested in 1364, by the conclusion of the Brno peace. In 1363, the Tartar power received, in its turn, a heavy blow when the Lithuanians managed to free Podolia after fierce fighting. The great duke of Lithuania, Olgierd, took thus advantage of the severe crisis instituted in the Mongol Khanate after Djonibek's death. Consequently, external conflicts delayed the Hungarian military intervention east of the Carpathians which, probably, occurred only in 1364. Faced with his armies' unsuccess in Moldavia⁴³, the Hungarian king decided to change his political orientation. However, he took the necessary precautions to replace the ruler of the Voivodeship of Maramureș with a view to annihilating, from the start, future complications in the intra-Carpathian space. The 1365 proclamation of war against Wallachia that was no longer willing to respect the vassalage relationship with the kingdom clearly symbolizes a capitulation, if only temporary, of the east-Carpathian positions⁴⁴. Therefore, in 1363, Bogdan penetrated into the territory east of the Carpathians and, following several battles, of which the documents of the time preserve no data, managed to remove the Hungarian domination.

One of the few sources, recently published, which contains references to Bogdan's emergence on the political scene east of the Carpathians, speaks about the coming of the knez from Maramureș to Moldavia with a colony made up of his own kinsfolk, attracted by the

⁴² We may add here the discovery of several coins issued by the king of Bohemia, Charles I, which helped the dating of the Baia fire in 1363 or 1364. The event can be connected with the initiation of Bogdan's action against the Hungarian power centre east of the Carpathians. For further details, see *Neamtu V., Cheptea S. Contacte între centrul și sud-estul Europei reflectate în circulația monetară de la Baia (secolele XIV–XV) // Români în istoria universală. Vol. I. Iași, 1986. P. 22–23.*

⁴³ The relationships between the first voivode of Moldavia, Bogdan, and the Tartar forces could take shape from the moment of his definitive passage east of the Carpathians. The much disputed presence of khan Abdallah in the Odorheiu Vechi area during 1363–1365 might have led to a military agreement directed against the Hungarian kingdom, expected to intervene with forces in the region in order to re-establish its domination (for a more recent bibliography, see *Gorodnenco A. P. Moldova de sud în a doua jumătate a secolului XIV // Tyrageția. S.n. Chișinău, 2008. Vol. II. Nr. 2. P. 83–84.*)

⁴⁴ In 1364, at Cracow, a meeting between Casimir III of Poland, Louis I and the Roman-German Emperor Charles IV had already taken place. It concerned launching a crusade to annihilate the Ottoman danger, but the hidden purpose was to bring, under the Catholic Church authority, the Orthodox villages directly threatened by the Turkish danger. Hungary's mission was to bring Wallachia and Bulgaria under direct control thus creating a barrier against the Turkish offensive (*Istoria românilor*, published under the aegis of the Romanian Academy. Vol. IV. București, 2001. P. 275). Consequently, renouncing the positions held east of the Carpathians was politically and strategically grounded.

beauty and richness of this land⁴⁵. The term «colony» is, in our opinion, erroneously used in this chronicle as it presupposes the existence of a large number of people who accompanied the former voivode east of the Carpathians and managed to impose themselves politically, economically and administratively on the local population. Not many assumptions can be formulated regarding the military potential which Bogdan brought in Moldavia and the fact that this passage left no documentary traces makes us believe it occurred with a small number of people. Since 1353, the lord from Maramureş had only been left (according to the new redistribution of the domain of Cuhea) with seven villages, which was placing him, hierarchically, in the category of the middle nobility of the voivodeship⁴⁶. In conclusion, the army attending on Bogdan in Moldavia numbered between one hundred and two hundred people; he was probably awaited by much more significant military manpower provided by local political forces that were meant to help the former voivode to fulfil his goal: liberation of the space lying east of the Carpathians from the Hungarian domination⁴⁷.

The Drăgoşesti family was unable to offer a long resistance in Moldavia, the Hungarian power centres being quickly annihilated, given that Sas's sons, led by Balç, had fled to Transylvania. Naturally, the military tactics imposed by Bogdan did not take into account a long-lasting conflict which would have allowed the direct intervention of royal armies. The Hungarian counteroffensive started in early 1354 did not have, as mentioned before, the expected success. The military failure can be explained in various ways; however, in our opinion, one of Bogdan's first achievements was to have comprised, in a first stage, the southwest of Moldavia. As for the northern region, liberation of Podolia from the Tartar influence increased the control of the local forces that were protected against any Mongol reactions. Thus, Bogdan's victory against a Hungarian army that was much stronger than that led by Sas or Balç can be explained by a political and military stability achieved through the cohesion of local Moldavian forces. Louis I's giving up a constant two-decade east-Carpathian policy can be justified by the strong communion of internal factors achieved in the extra-Carpathian space.

Therefore, in light of all the things mentioned so far, we strongly believe that, when analysing the process of foundation of the Moldavian state, we are bound to resort both to documentary or archaeological evidence and to arguments which rely on a logical sequence of events. This combination of the two elements, also present in this study, gives rise to scenarios, plausible or not, and it is perhaps this aspect that continues to arouse the interest of specialists, each of them trying to recompose, in their own vision, a historical process which lies at the foundation of the Romanian Middle Ages.

Данные о статье

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Название: Генезис средневекового государства на румынской территории: Молдавия

Summary: С точки зрения исторического анализа, основание Молдавии было процессом, который осуществился к середине XIV века. Стремясь защитить восточные границы Венгерского королевства от

⁴⁵ *Cronica Moldovei de la Cracovia* / Ed. by C. Rezachievici. Bucureşti, 2006. P. 130. Erroneously, in the source mentioned, Bogdan's crossing into Moldavia has rather demographical and not political consequences.

⁴⁶ *Mihaly de Apşa I. Diplome maramureşene din secolul XIV şi XV*. P. 31.

⁴⁷ Pop I.-A. *Din mâinile valahilor schismatici. Românii şi puterea în Regatul Ungariei medievale (secolele XIII–XIV)*. Bucureşti, 2011. P. 231.

татар, король Людовик I инициировал первую военную кампанию, в которой должны были участвовать румыны, проживавшие на соседней территории Марамуреша. Согласно данным хроник, после того как юг Молдавии был освобожден, марамурешский нобиль Драгош был поставлен в качестве главы военной марки в долине реки Молдовы. Сотрудничество между венгерской властью и локальными силами зашло в тупик во время правления Саса, наследника Драгоша. Именно в это время фиксируется первое восстание против военной администрации. Другой представитель марамурешской знати, Богдан, воспользовался этой ситуацией, так как он уже давно находился в конфликте с венгерской королевской властью. С помощью локальных молдавских сил Богдан сумел изгнать Саса с сыновьями, став, таким образом, первым воеводой политически независимой единицы, давшей начало второму средневековому румынскому государству — Молдавии.

Ключевые слова: средневековая Молдавия (Молдова), Марамуреш, воевода Драгош, королевство Венгрия.

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Title: The Genesis of the Medieval State on the Romanian Territory: Moldavia

Summary: In terms of historical analysis, the foundation of Moldavia is a process which occurred towards the middle of the 14th century. As he had an interest in banishing the Tartars from the eastern borders of Hungary, King Louis I started the first military action which may have involved Romanian people living in the neighbouring territory of Maramureș. According to chronicles, once the south of Moldavia had been released, a nobleman from Maramureș, Dragoș, was left here as head of the military march on the valley of the Moldova river. The cooperation between the Hungarian authority and the local forces reached an impasse during the rule of Sas, Dragoș's successor. It is now that the first revolt against the occupation forces is attested. Another nobleman from Maramureș, Bogdan, would take advantage of this situation as he had long been in conflict with the Hungarian royalty. With the assistance of the local Moldavian forces, Bogdan managed to drive away Sas and his sons, thus becoming the first voivode of a politically independent entity which gave birth to the second medieval Romanian state: Moldavia.

Key Words: medieval Moldavia (Moldova), Maramureș, voievode Dragoș, kingdom of Hungary.

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