

**PATRYK KOZIEL**

Henryk Sienkiewicz High School in Koluszki

## **STEPHEN IV OF MOLDAVIA: AN UNKNOWN PAGE IN THE HISTORY OF POLISH-MOLDAVIAN RELATIONS IN THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

Studies of Polish-Moldavian relations are undoubtedly in short supply in Polish historiography. Characteristically, from the onset of its relations with Poland during the reign of Casimir the Great, Moldavia played an important role as a Polish window on the Black Sea basin. Poland's bilateral relations with Moldavia tightened towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century following the homage of Petru II of Moldavia, paid in 1387. The Polish-Moldavian relations in the 15<sup>th</sup> century have been researched more thoroughly than those maintained in the subsequent century, largely thanks to the efforts of the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century historians<sup>1</sup>. A number of studies and handbooks also mention the reign of Bogdan III the One-Eyed and the Polish-Moldavian war of 1509-1510. On the other hand, the reign of Bogdan III's son, Stephen IV of Moldavia, has by and large remained unsurveyed, prompting the author of this study to outline the Polish-Moldavian relations between 1517 and 1527.

A familiar foe, Bogdan III the One-Eyed was succeeded by his son, Stephen IV, born to the hospodar and his concubine, Stanca. In the literature on the subject, Stephen IV is also referred to as "Stephen the Young" or Ștefăniță (rom. "Little Stephen")<sup>2</sup>. Polish historiography includes virtually no detailed accounts of his reign. A short mention of selected aspects of Stephen IV's relations with Poland is made by Aleksander Jabłonowski<sup>3</sup>. Laconic references to the Polish-Moldavian relations under Stephen IV are also encountered in Zdzisław Spieralski's publications<sup>4</sup>. A more detailed analysis of chronicles and epistolary

<sup>1</sup> A. Czołowski, *Początki Moldawii i wyprawa Kazimierza Wielkiego r. 1359*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", vol. 4, Lwów 1890, p. 258-285; A. Morgenbesser, *Przyczynek do dziejów Moldawii od założenia państwa aż do wygaśnięcia dynastii Dragosza*, Lwów 1892; A. Borzemski, *Sprawa pokucka za Aleksandra*, "Przegląd Powszechny", vol. 24, Kraków 1889, p. 169-186, 361-380; A. Prochaska, *Sprawy wołoskie w wieku XV*, "Przewodnik Naukowy i Literacki", Lwów 1888, p. 787-796, 901-912, 1006-1016, 1057-1073; A. Czołowski, *Sprawy wołoskie w Polsce do 1412 roku*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", vol. 5, Lwów 1891, p. 569-598; A. Lewicki, *Król Jan Olbracht o kłose bukowińskiej r. 1497*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", vol. 7, Lwów 1893, p. 1-15; I. Czamańska, *Moldawia i Wołoszczyzna wobec Polski, Węgier i Turcji w XIV i XV wieku*, Poznań 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Cognomens vary depending on the source: *Poselstwa i podróże polskie do Turcji*, J.I. Kraszewski, Kraków 1860; J. Demel, *Historia Rumunii*, Warszawa 1986.

<sup>3</sup> A. Jabłonowski, *Sprawy wołoskie za Jagiellonów. Akta i listy*, Warszawa 1878, p. C-CX.

<sup>4</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Awantury moldawskie*, Warszawa 1967, p. 74-76; Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska 1531 roku*, Warszawa 1962, p. 85-91.

literature<sup>5</sup> demonstrates the intensity and extent of the Polish-Moldavian relations in the period, tempting one to investigate the various facets of the reign and policies of the colorful hospodar Stephen IV.

### Regency period

Stephen IV the Young took the throne in April 1517. According to a Serbian chronicle, he was only nine years old at the time<sup>6</sup>, and as such he was not allowed to rule himself. Hence, prior to Bogdan III's passing, a regency council was appointed, headed by the Portar of Suceava<sup>7</sup>, Luca Arbore. Arbore was known among the Polish gentry as the commander of the heroic defense of Suceava during Jan Olbracht's Moldavian raid in 1497. In 1503, Arbore travelled to Poland as Stephen the Great's envoy, in an attempt to regulate the tense relations between the two countries. Arbore was elected regent not so much thanks to his high political position but rather thanks to his high moral stature among the Moldavian boyars<sup>8</sup>.

The news of Stephen's enthronement reached Krakow via the Starost of Kamieniec Podolski, Stanisław Lanckoroński. Piotr Tomicki also mentioned the fact to Grand Crown Hetman Mikołaj Firlej, notifying him that Stephen had taken the Moldavian throne with the blessing of his boyars. Moreover, Tomicki recounted that Petru Rareș, who was staying in Malbork at the time, asked King Sigismund I the Old for permission to travel to Moldavia. Claiming to be supported by the Moldavian boyars, Rareș promised the king he would quickly cease power. The monarch turned down the request on account of his obligations towards Hungary<sup>9</sup>. Still, the aforementioned sources clearly indicate that an intervention in Moldavia was seriously considered as an option by Poland. However, as the Kingdom was entangled in a war with Moscow, at the same time trying to maintain the fragile peace with the Teuronic Order, the King was opposed to interfering with Moldavia. At the same time, the Moldavian Regent made overtures of friendship, promising to send an envoy to negotiate a Polish-Moldavian alliance<sup>10</sup>. To strengthen Arbore's conviction, Sigismund sent a letter to Suceava, encouraging the young hospodar to maintain friendly relations with Poland, offering to resolve their border disputes, and confirming the inclusion of Moldavia in the Polish-Tatar alliance<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 1-8, T. Działyński, Poznań 1852-1860; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese de Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki*, vol. 2, parts.1-4, vol. 11, vol. 15, par. 1, București 1890-1911; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor urmare la colecțiunea lui Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki*, supl.1, vol. 1, supl. 2, 1.1, I. Bogdan et al., București 1886-1895; *Acta et epistole relationum Transylvaniae et Hungariaeque cum Moldavia et Valachia*, A. Veress, vol. 1, Kolozsvár 1914.

<sup>6</sup> G. Ureche, *Letopiseșul țării Moldovei, de când s-au descălecat țara și de cursul anilor și de viața domnilor carea scrie de la Dragoș vodă până la Aron vodă*, <[http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Letopise%C8%9Bul\\_%C8%9B%C4%83r%C3%A2i\\_Moldovei\\_de\\_c%C3%A2nd\\_s-au\\_desc%C4%83lecat\\_%C8%9Bara](http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Letopise%C8%9Bul_%C8%9B%C4%83r%C3%A2i_Moldovei_de_c%C3%A2nd_s-au_desc%C4%83lecat_%C8%9Bara)>; date of access 09 XII 2016 r>, (hereinafter: G. Ureche, op.cit., [online]), pt. 103-104, [online]; *Cronica lui Macarie*, w: *Vechile cronice moldovenesci pana la Urechia*, wyd. I. Bogdan, București 1891, p. 200.

<sup>7</sup> The Portar of Suceava was one of the offices in Moldavia, with a jurisdiction over the capital district. It was traditionally combined with the position of hetman (the second-highest army rank); see M. Costin, *Latopis ziemi moldawskiej i inne utwory historyczne*, trans. I. Czamańska, Poznań 1998, p. 298.

<sup>8</sup> A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria Rominilor din Dacia Traiana*, vol. 2, Iași 1889, p. 519-520.

<sup>9</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, p. 4, no 67, p. 60-61.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 4, no. 186, p. 151.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 4, no. 187, p. 151-152.

Hungary's weakening due to the reign of the juvenile Louis II and the looming Turkish threat swayed the Moldavian boyars into seeking alliance with Poland. Responding to King Sigismund's letter, Moldavia sent its envoy, Luca Cîrja, who was tasked to renew the Polish-Moldavian alliance. In order to negotiate its terms, Poland sent its own envoy, Jerzy Krupski, to Suceava, to present the king's conditions. Sigismund requested that Moldavia send duly authorized envoys to sign the alliance agreement in Krakow; that the two states pledge military assistance in the event of Turkish and Tatar raids; that free trade be established between Poland and Moldavia; that commissioners be appointed to settle the mutual border disputes; and that raiders on both sides of the border be kept in check<sup>12</sup>. Krupski implored the Moldavians not to provoke Sultan Selim I with any inconsiderate moves, as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth strove to steer clear of potential conflicts with Turkey<sup>13</sup>. Krupski's legation resulted in the arrival of Luca Cîrjă in Vilnius, and the signing of the Polish-Moldavian alliance on December 2, 1517<sup>14</sup>. The parties pledged bilateral military assistance, with Poland also abstaining from aiding the hospodar's enemies and guaranteeing him safe haven in Poland in the event of his banishment from Moldavia. The Moldavian party was further obliged to provide its Polish ally with regular notifications on the possible Turkish and Tatar invasion, and to come to Poland's aid in the event of an anti-Turkish crusade. In turn, Sigismund pledged to defend Moldavia from Turkey, and signed the bilateral trade agreement, confirming the course of the border between the countries<sup>15</sup>.

Pursuant to the previous establishments between the parties, the agreement was to be recognized by Stephen and the regency council. The required documents were issued early into 1518<sup>16</sup>. On his part, Sigismund ratified the alliance at the 1518 sejm in Piotrków Trybunalski<sup>17</sup>. In April that same year, Sigismund married the Italian princess Bona Sforza. The wedding was attended by the hospodar's envoy with a retinue of nine horsemen<sup>18</sup>. Having solidified her position at the Polish court over time, Queen Bona exerted an indirect influence on the Polish-Moldavian relations. Unfavorable to the Habsburgs, Bona opted for a lasting peace with Turkey, which would minimize the possibility of a Turkish-Moldavian conflict<sup>19</sup>. Bona was aware that a potential involvement in a conflict with an emerging superpower, in particular given the frail condition of Hungary, the proximity of the Tatar Khanate, and the ongoing conflict with Moscow, was virtually unfeasible. Not only would a conflict with Turkey expose the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to severe losses but it would also put an end to Moldavian sovereignty, while also strengthening the Habsburgs in Hungary, which would consequently become a frontline between and the Archduchy of Austria.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, vol. 4, no. 188, p. 152-153; M. Bielski, *Kronika polska*, K.J. Turowski, vol. 2, Sanok 1856, p. 998.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 85-86.

<sup>14</sup> Piotr Bogdanowicz was the son of Bogdan III the One-Eyed, and brother of Stephen IV the Young. He is listed alongside Stephen in the official historical documents. See M. Marek, *Mushati family*, [online]; A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 521.

<sup>15</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 4, no. 189, p. 153-157.

<sup>16</sup> *Documentele moldovenești de la Ștefăniță Voievod (1517-1527)*, M. Costăchescu, Iași 1943, no. 105, p. 491-501; Regesty: A. Jabłonowski, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> M. Dogiel, *Codex diplomaticus Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae*, vol. 1, Wilno 1758, p. 610-613; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 2, part 3, no. 215, p. 287-292.

<sup>18</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 4, no. 347, p. 309.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the political activity of Queen Bona Sforza, see. M. Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, Wrocław 2004.

July 1518 saw the sessions of the Polish-Moldavian border commission, which did not reach a compromise on all contentious matters. In order to iron out the details, Ruthenian Voivode Otto Chodecki travelled to Suceava, however he did not return with any binding decisions<sup>20</sup>. A month later, between August 14 and August 18, Moldavia was hit by a Tatar raid led by Albu Sultan. Having gathered an army of men in the north of Moldavia, the Hospodar moved towards the enemy, requesting help from Dvornik<sup>21</sup> Petre Cărăbăţ<sup>22</sup>, whom he asked to attack from the South. The swift reaction enabled the Moldavians to take the Tatars by surprise and defeat them at the river of Gorova. A number of Tatars perished while crossing the Dniester, and many more were wounded, including Albu Sultan. The Moldavians also managed to liberate fifteen thousand prisoners taken by the Tatars<sup>23</sup>. The Moldavian forces were aided by three thousand Polish soldiers, summoned by Stephen<sup>24</sup>. Despite the quick Moldavian reaction, the raid cut deep inside the country, reaching as far as Stefaneşti. According to Romanian historiographers, the Tatar raid was inspired by Turkey as retaliation for Stephen's alliance with Poland<sup>25</sup>.

In 1519, the Polish-Moldavian contacts were much more limited. The sole event of notice in the Commonwealth's relations with Hospodar Stephen came on August 7, and involved the signing of the trade agreement and border law sealing the alliance between the two countries, with the final round of negotiations with Moldavia conducted by Otto Chodecki<sup>26</sup>. The border law contained a number of regulations concerning different issues, including meetings between commissioners for border disputes, punishments for assaults and robberies, a ban on seizures of commercial property, and a range of solutions on border courts<sup>27</sup>. Acting as the regent and guardian of Stephen IV, Luca Arbore spared no efforts to tighten Moldavia's relations with Poland, as he saw King Sigismund as a powerful ally. He also understood that Hungary – marred by magnate feuds and threatened by Turkey – was not to be counted on in the face of the sultan's aggressive foreign policy, which posed a threat to Moldavia's autonomy<sup>28</sup>. Granted, Louis II did sign a three-year truce with Selim the Grim, but the non-aggression did not last beyond the Turkish ruler's unexpected death<sup>29</sup>.

In 1520, Petru Rareş once more requested King Sigismund for permission to leave the Malbork Castle. The king's negative reply came via Piotr Tomicki, who sent it to Rareş's

<sup>20</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> The prestigious office of dvornik involved a number of judicial duties. Moldavia had two dvorniks, one appointed for Lower Moldavia (from the Danube to Iaşi), and the other adjudicating in Upper Moldavia (from Iaşi to the border with Poland). Thus, each dvornik had jurisdiction over half of the country. See M. Costin, op. cit., p. 298.

<sup>22</sup> Petre Cărăbăţ (d. after 1523) served as the Dvornik of Moldavia between 1515 and April 1523. A member of the hospodar's council, he fought in the 1518 Tatar campaign. His involvement in the plot against Stephen IV the Young forced him to flee to Wallachia, and then to Turkey. See N. Stoicescu, *Dicţionar al mărilor dregători din Ţara Românească şi Moldavia, sec. XIV-XVII*, Bucureşti 1971, p. 298.

<sup>23</sup> G. Ureche, op. cit., pt. 105, [online]; *Cronica lui Macarie*, p. 200; *Cronica Moldopolona de Nicolae Brzeski 1559-1566*, w: *Cronice inedite atingătoare de istoria românilor*, I. Bogdan, Bucureşti 1895, sp 128; N. Iorga, *Istoria armatei româneşti*, vol. 1, Bucureşti 1970, p. 118-120.

<sup>24</sup> Marcin Bielski mistakenly identifies Bogdan as the Hospodar of Moldavia; one should also be wary of taking the military estimates made by Bielski for granted; M. Bielski, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 1003-1004.

<sup>25</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 522.

<sup>26</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 86-87.

<sup>27</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 5, no. 90, p. 90-93; L. Hubert, *Pamiętniki historyczne*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1861, p. 268-274.

<sup>28</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 522; Z. Spieralski, *Awantury moldawskie*, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 2, pt. 3, no. 223, p. 303-307.

custodian, Stanisław Kościelecki. Sigismund did not trust Rareș, and did not want him to leave the castle<sup>30</sup>. In June, a Moldavian envoy reached Poland, warning the allies of the Turkish moves and a potential threat to Poland. The Moldavian intelligence was corroborated by the Polish spies in Crimea, prompting Sigismund to send a summons to arms, and named the Voivode of Podolia, Marcin Kamieniecki, commander of the mass levy<sup>31</sup>. Acting on behalf of the young hospodar, the regent thus demonstrated his political good will and his intention to maintain close bilateral relations with Poland. In the same grain, Sigismund wrote to Stanisław Lanckoroński, ordering him to restore peace and the rule of law along the border. Those among Stephen's subjects who were found guilty of counterfeiting coins were to be severely punished<sup>32</sup>.

January saw an event that proved momentous to Europe, in particular to Hungary, Moldavia, and Poland. The death of Selim I saw his son, Suleiman the Magnificent, ascend to the throne<sup>33</sup>. Acting on behalf of Louis II, the Hungarian royal council tried to take advantage of the opportunity and refused to extend the truce with Turkey, mutilating the Turkish envoy. This proved to be a costly mistake, as the following year posed an existential threat not only to Hungary but also Moldavia and Poland<sup>34</sup>.

1521 saw the signing of a four-year truce between Poland and the Teutonic Order, ending a war that started in 1519. The truce also enabled Sigismund to turn his attention to the southern front. The diplomatic ignominy committed by Hungarians was about to yield dramatic consequences. However, before Suleiman took punitive action, Sigismund approached Stephen, thanking him for the intelligence shared in 1520, at the same time assuring the young hospodar of his assistance, and requesting him to stay vigilant. In another letter, Sigismund informed Stephen of a messenger sent to Constantinople with a view of securing an official visit from a Polish envoy<sup>35</sup>. In attempting to delegate his envoy to the sultan, the Polish king wished to mediate between the Ottomans and the Hungarians. He eventually abandoned the idea, having learnt of Suleiman's departure for the Danube. Sultan demanded that the Tatar Khan, Mehmed I Giray, engage in guerilla warfare against Poland in order to distract its attention from Hungary, however the khan refused to make a move against Sigismund on account of their alliance, which had yielded him considerable benefits. Another of Suleiman's messengers arrived in Suceava, demanding that the hospodar send reinforce the sultan's army with his troops. The hospodar failed to oblige, blaming his lack of involvement on the Tatar threat, and buying his way out of the Hungarian campaign with an ample sum of money<sup>36</sup>. He did not, however, fail to send a messenger to Krakow, notifying Sigismund of the Turkish expedition and its progress. The king thanked the hospodar for the warning and

<sup>30</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 5, no. 136, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 5, no. 284, p. 272; *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 341-342.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 5, no. 285, p. 273.

<sup>33</sup> Suleiman II the Magnificent was a Turkish Sultan between September 30, 1520 and September 6, 1566; B. Włodarski, *Chronologia polska*, Warszawa 1957, p. 462.

<sup>34</sup> A. Dziubiński, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne polsko-tureckie w latach 1500-1572 w kontekście międzynarodowym*, Wrocław 2005, p. 42-43.

<sup>35</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 5, no. 412, 424, p. 386-387, 394.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 6, no. 204, p. 226-232.

requested his aid in the event of a Turkish attack. He also shared the Moldavian intelligence with the Hungarian monarch<sup>37</sup>.

The Turkish army quickly approached Belgrade, which surrendered on August 29, clearing the path for Hungary. Louis II's relief came too late, as the stronghold had capitulated as a result of treachery<sup>38</sup>. With the Turkish success rendering the threat of invasion much more immediate, the Moldavian regent Luca Arbor had no choice but to strictly adhere to the provisions of his alliance with Poland.

Adding to the anxiety among the Moldavian boyars and their young hospodar were the events that transpired towards the end of 1521 in Wallachia, whose hospodar Neagoe Basarab died on September 15, initiating a period of nationwide chaos. Among the several challengers for the Wallachian throne, only Theodosius and Vlad-Dragomir Călugărul (The Monk) managed to briefly secure their power<sup>39</sup>. Keeping an eye on the situation was Hungary, which faced the threat of imminent Ottoman expansion<sup>40</sup>. Also meddling with the Wallachian power struggle were the Turks, who ravaged the country on their way back from Belgrade. Suleiman even considered annexing Wallachia and turning it into a regular Turkish *sandžak*. The sultan strove to claim the Wallachian throne for a Turkish candidate (Mehmed), who temporarily seized power over in Wallachia and launched a bloody crackdown on the opposing boyars, triggering a mass flight of the boyars to Moldavia and Transilvania<sup>41</sup>. It was only once Hospodar Radu V of Afumați<sup>42</sup> took the throne that a relative stability was reinstated in Wallachia. Fearing that Moldavia would soon follow suit, Regent Arbore and Hospodar Stephen (who was about to reach his legal capacity) sent another envoy to Poland.

### Independent reign of Stephen the Young

Stephen IV the Young began his independent reign over Moldavia in 1522. Nonetheless, in the first years following his ascension to the throne, the young hospodar heeded the advice of his old sage Luca Arbore. Stephen's ruthless and impulsive character manifested itself soon after he took the throne<sup>43</sup>. It was precisely for this reason that his two boyars, Isaac and Birlan, fled to Poland to seek refuge with Sigismund, after they learned that Stephen suspected they had plotted against him with Petru Rareș. Stephen petitioned Sigismund to relinquish the fugitives and expressed his dissatisfaction with the Polish side violating the provisions of the alliance<sup>44</sup>. In turn, Sigismund thanked Stephen for notifying him of the threat, and assured the young ruler Poland would come to his aid if needed, while also informing Stephen that he had learned of the boyars' presence in Poland not long before he

<sup>37</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 2, pt. 3, no. 251-254, p. 357-359.

<sup>38</sup> *Kronika od r. 1507 do 1541 spisana*, w: *Biblioteka starożytna pisarzy polskich*, wyd. K. Wójcicki, vol. 6, Warszawa 1854, p. 16-17; M. Bielski, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 1021; Z. Spieralski, *Awantury moldawskie*, p. 74-75.

<sup>39</sup> C. Rezachevici, op. cit., p. 147-152.

<sup>40</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 15, pt. 1, no. 464, p. 254.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 15, pt. 1, no. 455, p. 255; G. Ureche, op. cit., pt. 106, [online]; A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 523-524.

<sup>42</sup> Radu V of Afumați served as the Hospodar of Wallachia from January to April and from June to August 1522, from October 1522 to April 1523, and from January 1524 to January 1529; see C. Rezachevici, op. cit., p. 152-159, 165-166, 168-174.

<sup>43</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Awantury moldawskie*, p. 74-75.

<sup>44</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 522-523.

received the hospodar's envoy. Sigismund promised to write to the Starost of Kamieniec Podolski, Stanisław Lanckoroński, forbidding him to shelter the fugitives<sup>45</sup>. It seems clear that the king did not want to jeopardize the Polish-Moldavian relations in light of the events of 1521, and with the Lithuanian-Moscovite war still flickering in the north-east. Interestingly enough, in February 1522 Stephen issued similar demands in relation to another group of fugitives seeking shelter in the Transylvanian Bistrița<sup>46</sup>. The young hospodar evidently sought to quash any opposition from the boyars who resisted his policies.

Much as they annoyed Stephen, the escaping boyars could not have been the pretext for renegeing the Polish-Moldavian alliance. At the turn of February and March, 1522, Sigismund hosted the Tatar envoy Eliya Mirza, who arrived in Krakow to seal the alliance with the khan<sup>47</sup>. Having secured the eastern borderlands, the king sent Otton Chodecki to Moldavia. The Ruthenian Voivode was to assure Stephen of Polish friendliness and remind the hospodar of the potential ramifications of a Turkish and Tatar invasion of either of the two countries. Chodecki was also to notify Stephen of Sigismund's legations to Louis II, the pope, and the rest of the Christian sovereigns, delegated to procure subsidies for a war with Turkey. Sigismund requested Stephen to prepare his army to stave off a potential Ottoman attack<sup>48</sup>. The hospodar replied by sending his own legation, which reached the Polish king in Vilnius. Referencing Otton Chodecki's visit to Suceava, the Moldavian envoys plead Sigismund to appeal to rulers across Europe to organize an anti-Turkish coalition. Visibly anxious, they recounted the aforementioned developments in Wallachia, fearing that Moldavia would share its fate. They also urged the monarch to make preparations for an invasion in Ruthenia and Podolia, and to negotiate a swift peace treaty with Moscow<sup>49</sup>.

Aware of Hungary's weakness, Turkey's potential, and the threats embedded in another conflict, Sigismund preferred to abstain from unambiguous assurances, which may have antagonized the young hospodar. In a letter to Primate Łaski, Sigismund confessed he thought Stephen had lost hope to receive aid from Poland, and began to perceive it as a foe rather than friend<sup>50</sup>. It was likely at that time that Łaski suggested a marriage between Stephen IV and Sigismund's daughter Katarzyna, born out of wedlock<sup>51</sup>. The idea behind it was to bring Moldavia and Poland closer to each other, and rebuild their mutual trust. Łaski had likely conducted initial talks on the matter by the time he mentioned it to the king. Offended by the Primate's lawlessness, Sigismund adamantly refused to entertain the idea, fearing that it could further disestablish the already tense relations<sup>52</sup>. Indeed, Stephen was deeply indignant with the treatment received from the Polish king, which eventually led to

<sup>45</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 19, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese ...*, vol. 15, pt. 1, no. 470, p. 257.

<sup>47</sup> D. Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania: international diplomacy on the European periphery (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century): a study of peace treaties followed by annotated documents*, Boston 2011, doc. no. 21, p. 663-664.

<sup>48</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 45, p. 53-54.

<sup>49</sup> A. Jabłonowski, op. cit., p. 113-116.

<sup>50</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 59, p. 78.

<sup>51</sup> Katarzyna (b. ca. 1503, d. 1548) was the daughter of Sigismund and Katarzyna Telniczanka. After around 1522, she married Georges Count de Montfort; Z. Wdowiszewski, *Genealogia Jagiellonów i Domu Wazów w Polsce*, Kraków 2005, p. 194-196.

<sup>52</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 106, p. 118-119.

dire consequences<sup>53</sup>. It is difficult to determine the specific time at which the talks on the above issues were conducted, since the aforementioned letters bear no dates; nonetheless, as per Romanian historiography, one could infer they took place in mid-1522.

Perturbed by the developments in Wallachia, which struggled for survival as an independent principality, Luca Arbore sent another legation to the Polish king, with the view of tightening the crumbling alliance. Heading the legation was the experienced Moldavian diplomat, Luca Cîrjă. An extensive record of the legation, written in Ruthenian, vividly demonstrates the complexity of the situation in Central and Eastern Europe in mid-1522. Cîrjă mentioned the capture of Belgrade, reminding Sigismund that, despite numerous words of caution from the hospodar, Louis II failed to make timely preparations to stave off the invasion. He also revisited how Stephen kept the terms of the alliance in 1521, when ordered by the sultan to attack Transilvania, which he refused, citing the Tatar threat as the official cause, and paying the Ottoman ruler off with coin. The envoy then recounted the events in Wallachia, where the Turkish representative Mehmed attempted to seize power, fighting with Hospodar Radu V. Moreover, Cîrjă relayed news of the ongoing siege of Rhodes by the Ottoman armies, and concluded that its capture would enable the sultan to attack Hungary from the sea. As a ruler of the mighty Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Sigismund was summoned to defend Christian states (including Moldavia) from a Turkish invasion. Last but not least, Cîrjă also mentioned that, back in 1521, an Ottoman messenger inquired with the hospodar about granting the Turks safe passage through Moldavia on their way to attack Poland. The request was likely calculated as a means to strike fear in Moldavians and Poles alike<sup>54</sup>. According to most Polish historiographers, Cîrjă's legation took place in 1523<sup>55</sup>, however bearing in mind that the account mentions the siege of Rhodes<sup>56</sup>, Cîrjă's visit must have occurred in the second half of 1522, rather than 1523.

The king's response was unambiguously positive. Sigismund thanked the hospodar for his stance on the Turkish invasion of Hungary, and assured him of his aid in the event of a Turkish attack. Sigismund mentioned the letters he had sent to the pope and other European rulers, calling for the establishment of an anti-Turkish coalition. He also pled with Stephen to uphold the alliance with Poland to the benefit of both states<sup>57</sup>. Sending Cîrjă to Poland was the idea of Luca Arbore, who had Moldavia's future in mind. Conversely, Stephen – insulted by Sigismund's refusal to marry his daughter off to the hospodar – refused to heed the advice of his advisors. In spite of finding favor with the Polish king, Stephen was furious with both the regent and Cîrjă for negotiating with Sigismund behind his back. The arguments of the potential benefits resulting from tightening the Polish-Moldavian alliance seemed to have fallen on deaf ears<sup>58</sup>.

The cruel reign of Stephen IV fed the resistance of his boyars, resulting in a plot of his opponents, hatched in September 1522. The conspirers sought to take the hospodar's life, but he managed to overcome the plot. German Perkulab Costia, Visternik Costia, and Logofet

<sup>53</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 523.

<sup>54</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 204, p. 226-232; A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 523-527.

<sup>55</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 88-89.

<sup>56</sup> The siege of Rhodes extended from June 24 through December 21, 1522; see A. Dziubiński, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 205, p. 232-233; *Documentele moldovenești...*, no. 112, p. 553-557.

<sup>58</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 527.



Ivanko were killed, while the rest sought refuge in Hungary<sup>59</sup>. The unsuccessful coup may have been the root cause of Stephen's bloody crackdown on his boyars in the subsequent year.

Sigismund's attempt to appease the situation fell flat due to the flight of another member of the hospodar's council to Poland. In March 1523, Postelnic<sup>60</sup> Cosma Șerpe<sup>61</sup> fled Suceava. A highly influential figure, Șerpe was one of Stephen's closest collaborators. Sheltering him in Poland was bound to exacerbate the relations with the impulsive and unpredictable hospodar. Upon learning the disconcerting news from Suceava, the king decided to mediate, and sent a letter in which he interceded on Șerpe's behalf, in an attempt to restore internal peace in Moldavia<sup>62</sup>. Unfortunately, the matter had got out of hand by that time, with the hospodar sentencing Luca Arbore and his sons to death by beheading in April 1523. The execution took place at the hospodar's court in Hârlau. Stephen then proceeded to crack down on the boyars and concentrate all of Moldavia's power in his hands<sup>63</sup>. Stephen's conflict with the former regent stemmed from their different visions of state policies. Arbore advocated a prudent foreign policy based on cooperation with Poland, which would guarantee Moldavia's wide-ranging autonomy. Conversely, the impetuous Stephen was unable to fully grasp the circumstances in which Moldavia found itself at the time. One-time allegations of Arbore's sympathy towards Petru Rareș have been refuted by Romanian historians<sup>64</sup>. Another case in point for Stephen's ruthlessness is Otton Chodecki's letter to the citizens of Bistrița, in which the envoy referenced the fugitive boyars who had left Moldavia for fear of being persecuted<sup>65</sup>. (Traditionally hostile to the hospodars, the Chodecki family supported the Moldavian boyars). Launching his campaign against the internal opposition, Stephen simultaneously made efforts to procure funds for securing the borders from outside interventions.

The chaos that ensued south of the Polish-Moldavian border in 1523 could be easily used by Turkey as a pretext for a military intervention. In view of the Turkish menace, Sigismund sent another legation to Suceava, headed by the Bishop of Kamieniec Podolski, Wawrzyniec Międzyleski<sup>66</sup>, and the Chatelain of Lwów, Jerzy Krupski. The envoys were to relay the king's profound concern with the hospodar's conflict with his boyars, and remind the young ruler that the turmoil could play into the hands of Turkey. They were also tasked with assuring Stephen of Sigismund's favor and call upon the hospodar to make amends with his boyars, and accept the fugitives back into the fold. Sigismund strove to make Moldavia stable and resilient as an ally on the frontline of a potential conflict with Turkey<sup>67</sup>. Apart from delegating his envoys to Stephen, the king sent a letter to Louis II, informing the Hungarian ruler of

<sup>59</sup> *Cronica Moldopolona de Nicolae Brzeski ...*, p. 129.

<sup>60</sup> The postelnic was a high-ranking title in Moldavia, akin to the Polish marshal of the court. The postelnic was the closest to the hospodar among all court officials. He could enter the hospodar's chambers unannounced at any moment; M. Costin, op. cit., p. 298.

<sup>61</sup> G. Ureche, op. cit., pt. 106, [online]; A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 522-523.

<sup>62</sup> A. Jabłonowski, op. cit., p. 116-117.

<sup>63</sup> G. Ureche, op. cit., pt. 107, [online]; *Cronica lui Macarie*, p. 202; N. Stoicescu, op. cit., p. 261.

<sup>64</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 527-529.

<sup>65</sup> *Acta et epistole relationum Transylvaniae...*, vol. 1, no. 99, p. 135-136.

<sup>66</sup> Wawrzyniec Międzyleski, Jastrzębiec coat of arms (b. 1480, d. 1529) was a Polish bishop of the Kamieniec Diocese (since 1518), envoy, and diplomat. A trusted advisor to King Sigismund I and his wife, Queen Bona Sforza, Międzyleski's legations included Rome, Moldavia, Mzaovia, and Lithuania; see K. Baczkowski, *Międzyleski Wawrzyniec*, PSB, vol. 21, Kraków 1976, p. 45-47.

<sup>67</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 242, p. 284-285.

the hospodar's feud with the boyars and its possible consequences, and requesting that he advise caution to Stephen<sup>68</sup>.

Sigismund was also anxious about the expected Ottoman invasion of Hungary, which he thought was aimed at distracting Poland's attention from Moldavia. Stephen IV came under suspicion himself after he arrested Bishop Międzyzyleski, who was staying in Suceava at the time<sup>69</sup>. The Polish side saw the arrest as an attempt to engage Poland in Moldavia at the expense of Hungary. Nonetheless, the actual reasons behind Stephen's decision to arrest Międzyzyleski remain mysterious, as indicated by Sigismund's correspondence on the matter. Meanwhile, the boyars sent their own letters to the king, asking that he assist them in dethroning the cruel hospodar<sup>70</sup>. Indignant about having his envoy imprisoned, Sigismund requested Louis II to intervene between the conflicted parties, stressing that peace in Moldavia is essential for keeping Turkey's ambitions in check. In the subsequent letters to Louis II, the Polish ruler warned about the possibility of losing Moldavia entirely. Such was the monarch's concern that in August 1523 he even considered overthrowing Stephen and transferring power to his junior brother, Petru, before being dissuaded from the decision by the nobles of Little Poland who, fearing a Tatar raid, counseled him to send Postelnic Cosma Șerpe back to Moldavia. Conversely, the postelnic strongly encouraged the king to overthrow the hospodar, promising a wide-ranging support from the Moldavian boyars<sup>71</sup>. Sigismund referenced these debates in his correspondence with his nephew, mentioning the tension caused by Stephen. The king also requested Louis II to apprehend Stephen if he fled to Hungary, in order to prevent the hospodar from engaging in talks with Turkey<sup>72</sup>.

Meanwhile, Stephen – who still kept Międzyzyleski in custody – demanded his postelnic's head in return for releasing the bishop. His demand was virtually unfeasible and only exacerbated his situation<sup>73</sup>. The Polish and Hungarian interventions in Suceava did lead to Międzyzyleski's release in September 1523<sup>74</sup>. In the wake of the strife, the hospodar became unfavorable to Poland, and began plotting against him with the sultan, openly threatening to form an alliance with Turkey if Sigismund refused to extradite Cosma Șerpe<sup>75</sup>.

September 1523 saw another unsuccessful revolt against Stephen, which claimed more victims among the boyars and caused many others to flee Moldavia<sup>76</sup>. Monk Macarie's chronicle mentions that many among the captured were severely punished, while the rest spent the remainder of their lives in exile<sup>77</sup>. In the wake of the rebellion, King Sigismund's and Chancellor Szydłowiecki's plan to dethrone Stephen in favor of his brother Petru went

<sup>68</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 2, pt. 3, no. 304, p. 437-438.

<sup>69</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 275, p. 307.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 6, no. 268, p. 301.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 5, no. 289, 295, p. 318, 323-324.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 6, no. 275-276, 280, p. 307-308, 310-311; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 2, pt. 3, no. 305-306, p. 438-440.

<sup>73</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 2, pt. 3, no. 307, p. 440-441; Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 89.

<sup>74</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 295, p. 323-324.

<sup>75</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 530-531.

<sup>76</sup> Some of the fugitives chose Transilvania as the "natural" destination; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese...*, vol. 15, pt. 1, no. 498, p. 273-274.

<sup>77</sup> G. Ureche, op. cit., pt. 108, [online]; *Cronica lui Macarie*, p. 202.

awry<sup>78</sup>. At the general sejm in Piotrków, Bishop Międzyzleski reported on his Moldavian legation. On the same occasion, Jerzy Krupski cleared his name of conspiracy allegations (he had been accused of assisting Stephen in Międzyzleski's imprisonment). Also present in Piotrków was the Moldavian envoy Tomasz Barnowski, trying his best to bury the hatchet after Międzyzleski's release<sup>79</sup>.

It is difficult to unambiguously interpret Stephen's reasoning, as he dangerously toed the line between Poland, Hungary, and Turkey. Despite the hospodar's openly anti-Polish sentiments, he did warn the Hungarians of a possible Turkish attack in 1523<sup>80</sup>. In June 1524, Poland was hit by the first Turkish-Tatar raid that year, with the enemy's detachment ravaging Ruthenia, Podolia, and Volhynia. Upset with the incurred damages, Sigismund called for a mass levy in the event of a repeat raid<sup>81</sup>. Called to come to Poland's help, the Moldavian hospodar defiantly refused the request, arguing he was in need of assistance himself, and did not intend to fall foul of the sultan, especially given that Sigismund did nothing to protect his own land. While Stephen informed the king of a concentration of enemy forces, he scornfully added that it did not fall in Moldavia's jurisdiction to be the guardian of the Polish borders<sup>82</sup>. However, since a Turkish attack on Poland posed an imminent threat to Moldavia, too, Stephen seized the opportunity and fought the withdrawing enemy forces in the Battle of Tărășăuți, decimating the Turks<sup>83</sup>. Back in Poland, rumor still had it that Stephen sought to tighten the Turkish-Moldavian cooperation<sup>84</sup>. Comprised chiefly of the Tatar forces, the repeat raid of Poland in 1523 was much weaker, but once more revealed Poland's inability to defend its borders due to an insufficient military, poor intelligence, and the sluggish mass levy<sup>85</sup>.

In 1524, Stephen put his volatility on display once more, as the hospodar sent his envoys to Sigismund, offering to renew the alliance and put a reign on the border raids. In spite of his earlier refusal, Stephen did intend to maintain agreeable relations with Poland, which he now saw as his only viable support<sup>86</sup>. Stephen's change of heart was also tied to the virtual insignificance of the Hungarians, who despite the pleas from Sigismund's legate, Bishop Andrzej Krzycki, ordered by the king to mobilize the Hungarian nobles for war, seemed too preoccupied with their internal power struggle to make proper preparations for a Turkish invasion. The fiasco of Krzycki's Hungarian mission swayed the king into taking more decisive measures<sup>87</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 6, no. 297, p. 325.

<sup>79</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 89.

<sup>80</sup> *Acta et epistole relationum Transylvaniae...*, vol. 1, no. 95, p. 128.

<sup>81</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 7, no. 21, 23, p. 23-24, 25-26.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 7, no. 59, p. 60; *Documentele moldovenesti...*, no. 115, p. 560-563.

<sup>83</sup> G. Ureche, *op. cit.*, pt. 109, [online]; *Cronica lui Macarie*, p. 202.

<sup>84</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese ...*, vol. 11, no. 4, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> M. Bielski, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 1027-1028.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 1030.

<sup>87</sup> W. Pociecha, *Królowa Bona. Czasy i ludzie Odrodzenia*, vol. 2, Poznań 1949, p. 208-209; J. Szujski, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 199.

Early into 1525, the sejm in Piotrków approved a Polish legation to Constantinople led by Stanisław Odrowąż of Sprowa<sup>88</sup>. The surviving Polish-Ottoman correspondence indicates that Suleiman was more than pleased with the prospect of entertaining a Polish envoy<sup>89</sup>. The list of tasks assigned to Odrowąż included negotiations to extend the Polish-Turkish truce for six more years, clearing the king's name of the allegations leveled by Stephen, regulating the bilateral trade relations, and requesting the sultan to put an end to the Belgorod Tatars' raids of Polish-Lithuanian territory<sup>90</sup>. The attempts to include the Hungarian side in the negotiations fell through, similarly to Stanisław Odrowąż efforts to unite the Hungarian nobles. Given the circumstances, Sigismund was relieved with the news of securing a three-year truce with the Sultan, valid through November 1528. On top of that, Odrowąż convincingly refuted the allegations of Sigismund's plotting against the sultan, disseminated by the Moldavian hospodar<sup>91</sup>.

In the wake of the events of 1523, the Polish-Moldavian contacts loosened significantly, both due to Stephen's provocative behavior, and as a result of Poland's engagement in alliance negotiations with France, and Sigismund's involvement with the newly created Duchy of Prussia. In 1525, Hospodar Stephen did not pose major problems to Poland, having engaged in a risky conflict with the Voivode of Wallachia, Radu V of Afumați. Their controversy was over women, or more precisely over the daughters of the deceased Voivode Neagoe Basarab, with both rulers set to marry the younger of the two, Ruxandra. In Radu's case, the prospects of marrying Basarab's daughter carried tremendous political weight, since it would ascertain his claims to the Wallachian throne<sup>92</sup>. Such was the determination of both hospodars that Stephen invaded Wallachia in February 1526, risking a deadly Turkish retaliation. He did not, however, face Radu in an open battle, retreating upon reaching the city of Târgușor, and signing a peace agreement with the Wallachian voivode, as relayed to Louis II by the Transylvanian Voivode, Jan Zápolya<sup>93</sup>. Eventually, Ruxandra was married off to Radu, with Stephen settling for her elder sister, Stanca<sup>94</sup>.

Suleiman abstained from punishing Stephen solely because he was at the end of preparations for a great expedition against Hungary. In lieu of retaliation, the sultan demanded that the hospodar send reinforcement to aid the Turkish war effort. Similarly to 1521, Stephen refused, and even sent an envoy to Louis II in June, warning him of the Hungarian invasion and offering to fight the Turks together<sup>95</sup>. On the other hand, the outstanding Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga wrote of Jan Zápolya's envoy, Urban Bathyani, and his unsuccessful

<sup>88</sup> Stanisław Odrowąż of Sprowa, Odrowąż coat of arms (d. 1542/43) was a Polish envoy and diplomat, who served as the Chatelan of Żarnów (since 1059), Chatelan of Biecz (since 1526), Voivode of Belz (since 1535), Voivode of Ruthenia (since 1535); see W. Dworzaczek, *Odrowąż Stanisław ze Sprowy*, PSB, vol. 23, Kraków 1978, p. 555-556.

<sup>89</sup> *Acta Tomiciana*, vol. 7, no. 43-44, p. 277-278.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 7, no. 47, p. 279-281.

<sup>91</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese ...*, vol. 2, p. 1, no. 32, p. 29-30; W. Pociecha, *Królowa Bona...*, vol. 2, p. 209-210.

<sup>92</sup> *Acta et epistole relationum Transylvaniae...*, vol. 1, no. 100, p. 136-138; Z. Spieralski, *Awantury moldawskie*, p. 75.

<sup>93</sup> G. Ureche, op. cit., pt. 111, [online]; *Cronica lui Macarie*, p. 202; *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese ...*, vol. 11, no. 5, p. 3-4; N. Iorga, *Istoria armatei...*, vol. 1, p. 127-129.

<sup>94</sup> M. Marek, *Mushati family*, [online]; Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 90-91.

<sup>95</sup> Z. Spieralski, *Kampania obertyńska...*, p. 91.

mission to Moldavia, during which he tried to persuade Stephen to form an alliance with the Wallachian hospodar and field a united army against the Turks. It was Suleiman, however, who secured Radu's allegiance by taking his son hostage and placing him in the Turkish camp<sup>96</sup>. The subsequent initiatives were paralyzed by the swift progress of the Turkish army, which left Constantinople on April 23, 1526, reaching Belgrade on July 9. Six days later, the Turks captured the fortress of Petrovaradin, the last bastion of Hungarian defense. On August 29, the two sides collided in the decisive Battle of Mohacs, in which the clumsily commanded Hungarian army suffered a decisive defeat<sup>97</sup>.

To distract Poland from the conflict and prevent him from coming to Louis II's aid, Tatar detachments raided Ruthenia, inflicting heavy losses. According to a report submitted to Queen Bona by Marshal Piotr Kmita, one of the parties involved in the Tatar preparations for the raid was Hospodar Stephen<sup>98</sup>.

September 1526 saw the death of Stephen's brother Petru<sup>99</sup>. It was likely then that a decision was made to remove the troublesome hospodar, who alienated himself from both the sultan and the Poles. Stephen IV was poisoned by his own wife on January 14, 1527. He was remembered by his contemporaries as a nefarious and ruthless ruler<sup>100</sup>. According to some Romanian historiographers, Stephen's death may have been inspired by Poland<sup>101</sup>, which seems somewhat far-fetched, given Sigismund's involvement in the Hungarian affairs and his genuine concern for Louis II. After all, Stephen the Young did defy the sultan's order to join him in the expedition against Hungary and, in a peculiar way, defended Moldavia's autonomy. Thus, it is hardly likely that exacerbating chaos in the region by plotting against Stephen fell within the Polish *raisons d'être*. Aleksander Jabłonowski maintained that Stephen IV was succeeded by his son Stephen V, who was poisoned by his own wife<sup>102</sup>, however none of the surviving sources corroborates this assumption, which may have resulted from a simple mistake made by Jakubowski. All historical sources indicate that Stephen the Young's successor on the Moldavian throne was Petru was indeed Petru Rareș.

It is difficult to unambiguously assess the impact of Moldavia's internal affairs on the Polish-Moldavian relations at the time. Conflicted with his boyars, the hospodar's political pursuits were somewhat convoluted. It was impossible for Poland and Hungary to step in and resolve Moldavia's internal conflicts due to Turkey's ambitions in the region and Poland's unregulated relations with the Teutonic Order, which absorbed much of Sigismund's attention. Nonetheless, the reign of Stephen the Young was a genuinely intriguing period in the bilateral relations of Poland and Moldavia. Untapped opportunities and lost chances for tightening the collaboration resulted from a series of mistakes made on both sides of the border, and from the intricacies of the international political situation. So strong was the Ottoman Empire at the time, and so imminent the Tatar threat to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that they kept Sigismund's hands tied in the south, where he straddled the line between maintaining

<sup>96</sup> N. Iorga, *Istoria armatei...*, vol. 1, p. 130.

<sup>97</sup> A. Dziubiński, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>98</sup> *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese ...*, vol. 2, pt. 3, no. 375, 385, p. 537-538, 551-552.

<sup>99</sup> G. Ureche, op. cit., pkt. 111, [online]; *Cronica lui Macarie*, p. 202.

<sup>100</sup> Ibidem, pt. 112, [online]; *Cronica Moldopolona de Nicolae Brzeski...*, p. 129.

<sup>101</sup> A.D. Xenopol, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 531-532.

<sup>102</sup> A. Jabłonowski, op. cit., p. CX.

peace with the sultan and defending the Polish influences in Moldavia. Making matters even more difficult was Stephen's unpredictability. Idolizing his father and grandfather, Stephen failed to adjust his policies to the limited capacities of his state at the time. The reality proved to be harsh, as the hospodar left this world in a fashion typical of other rulers who preceded and followed him on the Moldavian throne: he died by assassination.

**Stephen IV of Moldavia: an unknown page in the history of Polish-Moldavian relations in the 16<sup>th</sup> century**  
**Summary**

This article focuses on the Polish-Moldavian relations during the reign of Stephen IV of Moldavia as a largely marginalized theme in Polish historiography. The majority of Polish historical studies make brief mentions of Stephen's reign at best. Stephen's ascension to the Moldavian throne fell during the Turkish expansion in the Balkans, with Moldavia struggling to retain the remnants of its independence. For Poland, the region played a key role as a buffer against the Tatar threat and a commercial gateway to the Black Sea basin. Thus, King Sigismund I the Old strove to maintain his influence in Moldavia, at the same time preventing it from annexation by Turkey. Sigismund's overtures, however, faced a number of obstacles, which are recounted in this article.

**Keywords:** Sigismund the Old, Moldavia, Stephen IV of Moldavia, Ottoman Empire, Hungary

**Note on the Author:** Patryk Kozieł, M.A. (b. 1991) is a historian and geographer, graduate of the Faculty of History of the Jagiellonian University. His principal research interests include the history of Poland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Polish-Moldavian relations at the time, and historical didactics. He currently teaches history, geography, and social studies at the Henryk Sienkiewicz High School in Koluszki.

*Translated by Józef Jaskulski*