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VLAD THE IMPALER, TÂRGOVIȘTE AND THE FORTRESS OF BUCHAREST. A HYPOTHESIS

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ЕДНА ХИПОТЕЗА ЗА ВЛАД ЦЕПЕШ, ТЪРГОВИЩЕ И КРЕПОСТТА БУКУРЕЩ

Радю КАРЧИУМАРУ

Abstract: *Vlad the Impaler has received special attention from historians. However, some aspects of his reign have not yet been scientifically exhausted. The specific moment of leaving the princely court of Târgoviște in favour of Bucharest remains one of the most obvious examples. In the present study, we will focus on this issue, trying to demonstrate that the move of the residence to Bucharest occurred much earlier than we thought and is not directly related to the fight against the Ottoman Empire.*

Keywords: *Vlad the Impaler; Târgoviște; Easter; Bucharest; archaeological excavations; princely court.*

Vlad the Impaler has received special attention in specialised literature, whether one refers to the moments he occupied the throne or the stages of his peregrinations throughout the Ottoman Empire, Moldavia, Transylvania [among them **Florescu, R., Mc Nally, R. T.** 1992, p. 39; **Denize, E.** 1995, pp. 371–387; **Andreescu, Ș.** 1998, pp. 30–61; **Cazacu, M.** 2008, pp. 22–48]. In terms of the place where he established his main residence, in 1456–1462, some aspects are far from being clarified. However, historiographically, there is certainty regarding the action of consolidating the princely court of Târgoviște, which resulted in the construction or restoration of the famous tower referred to over centuries as the Chindia Tower [among them **Moiescu, C.** 1970, p. 14; **Gioglovan, R.** 1974, p. 107; **Sinigalia, T.** 2000, p. 65].

Vladislav II, who had returned to the throne after Vlad's ephemeral reign in the autumn of 1448, was bound to Târgoviște, the preferred seat for a military intervention in Transylvania, given the worsening relations with John Hunyadi [**Pascu, Ș., Cihodaru, C., Gündisch, K. G., Mioc, D., Pervain, V.** 1977, p. 449, 451; **Câmpeanu, L.** 2020, pp. 34–35].

From the residence on the Ialomița River, Vladislav II issued most of his charters, including that which acknowledged some possessions of Dealu Monastery [**Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 178–179], a place of worship that was to become his burial place, decorated later, courtesy of the

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Craiovești boyars, with a pyramid-shaped slab [Gheorghe, A., Weber, A., Anca, A. Ș., Lazăr, G. 2019, p. 239].

It seems clear that Vlad the Impaler resumed an existing situation, as here, at Târgoviște, the voivodes of the previous two decades had settled down, beginning with Alexander I Aldea [Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, p. 140], and documents indicate that both the first and second rules began at this residence. The gesture should be regarded, with the natural nuances, against a political background defined by the killing of Vladislav II at Târgșor or in the environs of Ploiești, the defeat suffered by the Turks outside the fortress of Belgrade, and the danger of a military campaign against Wallachia, launched by the Sultan Mehmed II.

The new prince would assume the leadership of the country from the position of protégé of Hungary, and his choosing Târgoviște emphasised his desire to remain under the influence of the kingdom, for the city was located at a considerable distance from the Turkish rule established in the Danube area. In addition, one should not disregard the plan, discussed in specialised literature [Șimanschi, L. 1981, p. 619], which aimed to remove both extra-Carpathian countries from the control of the Turkish power, which is why Vlad the Impaler would choose Târgoviște to prepare the military incursion of the pretender Stephen in Moldavia.

A later document, issued on 12 January 1460 in the City of Suceava, recounts the meeting between the main adviser of Prince Peter Aaron, logothete Miheu, and Stephen, which took place in Wallachia and which seems to have been formal, but not on the best of terms: "And about none of the words that ought to be no longer mentioned, which were mentioned when we met in the Country of the Basarabs" [Șimanschi, L. 1976, p. 127]. One should think that the delegation led by the logothete Miheu, who was heading to the camp of Yeni Derbend, south of the Danube [Șimanschi, L., Agache, D., 2003, p. 205; Gorovei, Ș. S., Székely, M. M., 2005, p. 15], to deliver Moldavia's tribute to Mehmed II, could have stopped at Târgoviște and been received by the incumbent prince, alongside the son of Bogdan II. Whatever the logothete Miheu negotiated in Wallachia remains difficult to ascertain; he might have been looking for guarantees that Vlad the Impaler would not support Stephen or, why not, he may have even requested the surrender of the aspirant to the throne of Moldavia.

The aid received by the future prince, though presented from different angles [Papacostea, Ș. 2001, p. 124], remains undisputed, being recorded as such by the chroniclers: "then came Prince Stephen... who came with a small force, with the Wallachians, with the low countries, about 6 thousand men in all..." [Panaitescu, P.P. 1959, p. 28].

Returning to Vlad the Impaler and his connection with the city and princely seat of Târgoviște, the first document, dated 6 September 1456, reveals the difficult situation in which the new voivode found himself. On 11 August 1456, his protector, John Hunyadi, would meet his end. On 22 August, Vlad would kill Vladislav II, the protégé of the Ottoman Porte, taking over power without the support of the boyars. The document addressed to the city of Brașov reflects this situation and indirectly confirms that he could not reside anywhere else but in the city of Târgoviște, so long as he was looking for a retreat to Transylvania in case of danger: "...for fear of the Turks or should we be banished by our enemies, we might happen to reach these parts of Hungary, and in such a case, they are to take us and our people and look out for us with love..." [Pascu, Ș., Cihodaru, C., Gündisch, K. G., Mioc, D., Pervain, V. 1977, pp. 457–458].

The next epistle brings forth another outlook that prefigured the abandonment of the residence in the upcoming period. The document known to have been issued a few days later (10 September 1456): "Datum in Tergouistia, feria sextaproxima post festum Nativitatis Marie..." [Pascu, Ș., Cihodaru, C., Gündisch, K. G., Mioc, D., Pervain, V. 1977, p. 459], renders the prince's resignation upon receiving the Turkish message to which he refers, which tried to impose: "...great burdens, almost impossible to bear, and to constrain us to act in many matters against our true faith and against you..." [Pascu, Ș., Cihodaru, C., Gündisch, K. G., Mioc, D., Pervain, V. 1977, p. 459].

At times, the efforts take on the appearance of desperation, as Vlad committed to detaining the Turkish envoy at Târgoviște, given the fact that 200, 100, or at least 50 chosen soldiers from Transylvania were to be promptly sent, which would have represented a forceful statement meant to

weaken the Turkish claims [**Cristea, O.** 2014, p. 103]. We have no evidence that this aid materialised, and this prompted the historian Ștefan Andreescu to support the idea of Wallachia's submission in the final months of 1456 [**Andreescu, Ș.** 1998, p. 68]. Under these circumstances, one wonders if Vlad the Impaler was forced, along with the acceptance of suzerainty, to draw nearer to the borders of the empire, which triggered the transformation of Bucharest into a princely residence. Only archaeology can confirm these claims, although research has been greatly hampered by the urban changes of modern and contemporary times.

Archaeological surveys have identified the river boulder walls of the citadel that Vlad the Impaler had built by 1459, which overlapped the rectangular brick foundations of an older 14th century fortress [**Sandu-Cuculea, V.** 2009, p. 125]. As regards the latter, the archaeological excavations conducted in 1967 revealed walls only 0.75 m thick in the lower part of the foundation, illustrating the modest nature of the fortress. Quadrilateral and slightly trapezoidal in shape, lying over an area of only 160 sq. m, it is dated to the second half of the 14th century [**Panait, I. P., Ștefănescu, A.** 1973, p. 17] based on the massive, charred oak beams and the ceramic material, being the only brick fortification in Wallachia, as all the other military buildings were made of stone during the mentioned period [**Adameșteanu Gh. M., Măgureanu, A., Panait, I. P., Boroneanț, A., Gavrilă, E., Popescu, R. I., Rădulescu, V., Toderăș, M., Velter, A. M., Boglárka, T., István, B.** 2007, p. 164].

How and when the construction disappeared may be related to this discussion. Archaeological considerations point to the violent nature of the destruction, which occurred sometime between the late-14th and mid-15th centuries [**Adameșteanu Gh. M., Măgureanu, A., Panait, I. P., Boroneanț, A., Gavrilă, E., Popescu, R. I., Rădulescu, V., Toderăș, M., Velter, A. M., Boglárka, T., István, B.** 2007, p. 164].

Considering the proximity of Bucharest to the Turkish forces deployed by the Danube, the ruination of the fortress may be associated with several episodes throughout this half-century.

It is certain that, when Vlad the Impaler began the construction of the new edifice, the walls of the former structure were no longer in use, which has been archaeologically confirmed. More specifically, only the western wall was reused in the new construction, whereas the rest of the sides were completely neglected; the defensive ditch had been gradually clogged, therefore, in the part corresponding to the underground level of the fortress erected by Vlad, the presence of waste river boulders deposited during the works has been identified [**Panait, I. P., Ștefănescu, A.** 1973, p. 21].

The moment of destruction has been most often connected with the power struggles between Dan II and Radu Prasnaglava [**Majuru, A.** 2002, p. 29], with no documentary evidence to support this assumption. Another circumstance might be marked by John Hunyadi's interventions in Wallachia, aimed at imposing a new voivode loyal to the kingdom. It is possible that Vlad Dracul and his son Mircea were aware of the importance of the city. Consequently, Vlad Dracul may have fled from Târgoviște thinking he would reach the fortress on the Dâmbovița, where he hoped to withstand while awaiting the Turkish forces.

The aspects regarding the beginnings of the princely court built here by Vlad the Impaler remain extremely important. There are two documents that record it. The one dated 13 June 1458 is a letter from Vlad to the people of Brașov, written by the Dâmbovița River: "Datum iuxta fluviumaque Domboviche..." [**Bogdan, I.** 1905, p. 320], first discussed by Petre Ș. Năsturel, who concludes that it has to mean: "...more or less, the beginning of the construction of the fortress..." [**Năsturel P. Ș.** 1964, p. 143]. Acknowledging that in the early summer of 1458, Vlad the Impaler sent a document from his still-under-construction residence shifts the elevation plan back by at least one year to 1457, relating it to an event further analysed, which could have marked the prince's definitive departure from Târgoviște.

The second document, much more eloquent, dated 20 September 1459 and sent from 'the fortress of Bucharest', officially marks the emergence of a new princely residence of the Basarabs. The use of the term fortress should not deter one from accepting the status of main residence [**Chircă, H.** 1959, p. 7], as proved by the documents during the reign of Radu cel Frumos 'the Fair', a prince who is sure to have lived here, in which there are references to the 'fortress of Bucharest' [**Panaiteșcu,**

P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 208, 209, 213, 215, 218, 222, 225, 226, 227, 230, 234, 236], the ‘city of Bucharest’ [**Panaïtescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 215, 228, 229, 242] or the ‘princely seat of Bucharest’ [**Panaïtescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 220, 240]. Things are clearer under his successor, Laiotă Basarab, who issued documents from Târgoviște [**Panaïtescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 151] and documents from the princely seat of Bucharest [**Panaïtescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 246, 253].

Vlad the Impaler built a courtyard spread over an area of roughly 918 sq. m [**Constantin, G.** 2017, p. 105], with a rectangular house made of river boulders and mortar, with walls about 0.70 m and much elevated basements, a ground floor with rooms on all four sides and an inner courtyard about 110 sq. m [**Panaït, I. P., Ștefănescu, A.** 1973, p. 23]. It was thus larger than the mansion attributed to Mircea the Elder (approximately 256 sq. m) from Târgoviște and roughly equal to Petru Cercel’s Palace from the second half of the 16th century, about 928 sq. m [**Adameșteanu Gh. M., Măgureanu, A., Panaït, I. P., Boroneanț, A., Gavrilă, E., Popescu, R. I., Rădulescu, V., Toderăș, M., Velter, A. M., Boglárka, T., István, B.** 2007, p. 164].

An element that is extremely valuable to our discussion is the observation of the archaeologists who carried out excavations in 1967–1973, according to whom, despite the extensive surveys conducted around the building, the existence of a defensive ditch or of other fortification works could not be identified, which does not completely rule out their presence in certain parts of the Princely Court [**Panaït, I. P., Ștefănescu, A.** 1973, p. 24].

Clearly, the absence of fortifications reinforces the idea that it was intended as a princely residence rather than a fortress for refuge/defence as had been the previous construction. As the archaeologist Adrian Andrei Rusu observes, based on what has been published so far, the building can hardly qualify as a Fortified Princely Court. In my opinion it is the correct form of translation, stressing that this is the first princely residence that does not have a church in its immediate vicinity. Therefore, the archaeological data, however disparate they may appear, contradict the idea of a fortified residence or fortress, a term present in the 18 documents issued by Radu the Fair.

But what could have caused this somewhat sudden relocation from Târgoviște, from a consolidated court, to Bucharest, to a residence which, according to research, could hardly rise to this status? Without entirely dismissing hypotheses such as the preparation of the actions on the Danube or counteracting the claimants to the throne supported by Brașov or Sibiu [**Simionescu, P., Cernovodeanu, P.** 1976, pp. 11–12], we believe that the episode that occurred during the Easter celebration of 1457, recounted in *Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, brings to the fore a personal reason for this gesture.

The demonstration should start with the document issued on 16 April 1457 in Târgoviște, which seems to point out that Vlad the Impaler no longer lived here, especially since in the next few hours he was to wreak havoc upon the lords of the city. The text surprises through the manner in which he refers to his father: “the son of the old Vlad Voivode” [**Panaïtescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 199], which appears only in this document and never in the future documents issued during the rule of his brother, Radu the Fair, which mention “the son of the great Vlad Voivode” [**Panaïtescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 207, 209, 211, 214, 217, 219, 221, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 230, 231, 232, 234, 235, 239]. This may suggest the deep bond with his father, whose life had been ended with the contribution of the boyars of Târgoviște. The appeal to Divinity, analysed in comparison with a similar document issued on 5 March 1458 for Tismana Monastery [**Panaïtescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 198–200], takes on a broader form than that of spiritual punishments present in such Wallachian chancellery papers, but this may have been due to the influence of Eastern symbolism.

Without considering the document to be a deviation from the typical chancellery paper, there are ideas that raise the question of whether the charter, beyond granting properties to Cozia, could have also represented a subtle warning to the townspeople and boyars of Târgoviște who had ousted Vlad Dracul from the throne.

Just one day after the issuance of the charter, on the very day of the Ascension of Jesus Christ, the fierce rivalry between Vlad the Impaler and the townspeople of Târgoviște reached a climax. The event, recorded by a later source, *Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, depicts the moment when Vlad the

Impaler chose to punish the Târgoviște supporters of the House of Dănești: “There was another thing he did to the people of Târgoviște after he found out that the boyars had buried one of his brothers alive; in search for the truth, he had looked in the grave and found his brother face down. On Easter Day, when everyone was feasting and the young ones were dancing, he took them by surprise. He had the old people impaled and carried through the city, and the young ones with their wives, their lads and maidens, were taken to Poienari dressed in their festive clothes, where they worked on the castle until their arrays were all worn out and they remained without a stitch on.” [Grecescu, C., Simionescu, D. 1960, p. 205].

Although historiography suggests that there was a conflict between the prince and the rulers of the city, mayor and councillors [Stoicescu, N. 1976, pp. 49–50], the chronicle clearly refers to the boyars of Târgoviște, which entitles us to believe that a nucleus of power, probably consolidated during Vladislav II and not supporting the new prince, continued to exist here. Identifying the group of boyars remains a difficult endeavour; their collaboration with the townspeople might have been advanced, although the manner of expression in the chronicle is quite unclear, implying that the prince had proved the plot to murder his brother some time before actually inflicting the punishment, hence the element of surprise: “he took them all by surprise”.

The episode which had occurred a decade before, is difficult to interpret. John Hunyadi had started a quick expedition to replace the prince, but Vlad Dracul had somehow managed to leave the residence from Târgoviște, closely followed by the Transylvanian voivode's troops [Câmpeanu, L. 2020, p. 26]. The participation of the people of Târgoviște is not excluded. Based on a document issued on 3 April 1534 by Vlad Vintilă of Slatina [Mioc, D. 1975, p. 289], Ilie Minea considers that the prince was captured and murdered in Bâlteni – Snagov [Minea, I. 1928, p. 273], although, in terms of the proximity to the Princely Court of Târgoviște, we should consider the village of Bâlteni – Dâmbovița [Rezachevici, C. 2001, p. 97], located somewhere halfway between Târgoviște and Bucharest.

The success of the action was also confirmed by the document issued by John Hunyadi on 4 December 1447, where he is referred to as a transalpine voivode *in civitate nostra* Tergouisthya [Pascu, Ș., Cihodaru, C., Gündisch, K. G., Mioc, D., Pervain, V. 1977, p. 395]. The term *our city* may point to the close connection with the people of Târgoviște, loyal supporters of the House of Dănești and of the alliance with Hungary.

Establishing the date of the event on Easter Day has been regarded differently in historiography; two dates have been advanced, 17 April 1457 [Andreescu, Ș. 1998, pp. 92–93] and 25 March 1459 [Cazacu, M. 2008, pp. 165–170, 385, 401]. Placing the event in 1459 starts from a German story about a feast organised by the voivode to which he invited all the country's boyars. As the historian Matei Cazacu remarks, the context seems to be different if we compare the Letopisețul Țării and the writing of the minnesinger Michael Beheim, who draws on the German account. It is possible that these are two distinct moments, but, at the same time, they are so similar, one that regarded the punishment of the boyars and townspeople guilty of murdering Vlad the Impaler's brother and father and one that also occurred on Easter Day at the Princely Court of Târgoviște, during which several boyars accused of treason were impaled. Such a development reinforces the idea that Târgoviște was a place of revenge, of settling the score between the voivode and the boyars.

In terms of the time elapsed since enthronement, it seems hard to accept that Vlad the Impaler waited more than three years to punish those responsible for the deaths of his family members. Therefore, we have found it useful to search for the boyars who, in one way or another, survived the princely wrath, the members of the Council of Vlad Dracul, Vladislav II or those reported in 1456–1457 and re-emerged after 1462. Some of them appear to have settled down in the residence at Târgoviște during the rule of Vladislav II, which seems plausible in light of the recent archaeological finds. It may be the case of Dimitrie, a great *spătar* in the Council of Vlad Dracul [Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 151, 153, 156], and that of Vladislav II [Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 179, 183, 193, 195, 196, 197], who was absent during Vlad the Impaler's reign and did not return in office until November 1463 [Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, p. 208]; Dragomir al lui Manea,

present in Vladislav II's Council [**Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 197], who re-emerged as a *vornic* in 1463 [**Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 208]; Manea al lui Udriște, who appeared as a *vornic* in the Council of Vlad Dracul and then, only once, without a title, in the document dated 16 April 1456 [**Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 197]; Stance or Stanciul, a *vornic* under Vladislav II [**Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 185], who disappeared after 15 April 1456 [**Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 197]; and finally, the well-known example of Mihail, a clerk from Ruși, the honest boyar of Vlad Dracul sent as an envoy to Brașov [**Bogdan, I.** 1905, p. 82], who became a logothete under Vladislav II [**Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 177], fled to Transylvania in early 1456, and was renegaded by Vlad the Impaler in a letter sent to the councillors of Brașov [**Bogdan, I.** 1905, p. 90].

The second rule of Vlad the Impaler has been associated, in specialised literature, with Târgoviște, based on the assumption that the first watchtower or defensive tower of the princely court was built in the mentioned period [**Stoicescu, N., Moisescu, C.** 1976, p. 77]. This hypothesis was disproved by the archaeologist Nicolae Constantinescu, who conducted several excavation campaigns inside the princely court from 1961 to 1986, and who considered, from the very beginning, that the Chindia Tower was raised in the time of Vlad Dracul. His arguments are rather based on historical logic, as other dating elements are absent, and the construction was seen as a result of Vlad Dracul's first-hand knowledge of western castles [**Constantinescu, N., Ionescu, C., Diaconescu, P., Rădulescu, V.** 2009, p. 62].

The tower was built right over the porch of the Church-Chapel of the Princely Court and its construction was also associated with the letter sent by Stephen Báthory to the town officials of Sibiu, on 11 November 1476, in which he reported that the *perfidious* Laiotă Basarab had been cast out and that he had built a fortress at Târgoviște which allowed him to continue his march towards Bucharest [**Hurmuzaki, E.** 1911, p. 95, editor's note-Nicolae Iorga].

The entire context relates this statement to the fortification of the Court, or perhaps of the city, with a palisade or rampart, in the event of a Turkish counteroffensive, rather than to a construction of such magnitude.

A hypothesis that deserves a separate analysis and has been overlooked in historiography regards the last year of the reign of Vlad Călugărul. His reception of the Saxon master Michel at the court, an event documented by Paul Cernovodeanu, was an extremely favourable moment. In 1494, the craftsman sent a letter to the mayor of Sibiu, pointing out that the prince had promised him a considerable reward, so he was to coordinate the works for the construction of a castle or palace in Târgoviște: "I shall come with the voivode to Târgoviște. There, he will build a castle or a palace, and I shall tell him how it should be done" [**Cernovodeanu, P.** 1970, p. 235].

Archaeological arguments, which are only presented in excavation reports, come to refute the attribution of the Tower to Vlad Dracul's times. The research carried out between 2014 and 2018 at the level of the church-chapel, over whose porch the Tower was built, pushed the dating of the place, based on a sample of an earlier wooden structure and on monetary finds, to a wider time span, between 1431 and 1456. The discovery of a solid masonry structure representing the foot of the access stairway, located outside between the tower and the current southern access to the church, has made archaeologists state that the construction may be attributed to the end of the 15th century or the first half of the 16th century, being related to the restoration of the church, seriously damaged at a time and under circumstances that are difficult to specify.

Another aspect that can be invoked is related to the expedition started by Mehmed II in the summer of 1462. One may think that a fortified court, the only one of this kind in Wallachia, could have been a goal of the Sultan's campaign, in which no notable results had been achieved. The Turkish army avoiding the capital would emphasise precisely that Vlad the Impaler did not organise the defence at the level of fortresses and cities and, consequently, the efforts of consolidating the residence on the bank of the Ialomița can hardly be associated with the mentioned time interval [**Guboglu, M., Mehmet, M.** 1966, p. 67; **Rădvan, L.** 2011, p. 258]. If we should relate this moment to a fragment from the work of Laonicus Chalcocondyles, a source regarded with justifiable reluctance,

we might get another answer as well. Here we are told that the sultan was heading straight for: “the city where the Dacians had sheltered their women and children” [**Chalcocondil, L.** 1958, p. 286], in this case, most likely, the new residence by the Dâmbovița River.

Indirect arguments reappear with the reclamation of the throne for the third time, in the context of the conquest of Bucharest. As shown by the historian Ștefan S. Gorovei, the chronology of the moment is far from being definitive, being restored by aligning the imprecisions in documents [**Gorovei, Ș. S.** 2007, p. 83]. However, whether we refer to the letter of 8 November 1476 [Tocilescu, Gr. G. 1931, p. 97], in which Vlad the Impaler simply informed the officials of Brașov that he had banished Laiotă Basarab, or to the conquest of the fortress of Bucharest, on 16 November, in which the captain of the royal army, Stephen Báthory, pointed out that all country’s boyars had sided with them (“Hiis novitatibus avisare possumus quod, Deo nobis propicio, perfidum Bosorab de regno transalpine expulimus et iam ipsum regnum pro maiori parte apud nos est, quia omne boiarones nobiscum sunt...”) [**Hurmuzaki, E.** 1911, p. 95, editor’s note-Nicolae Iorga], or to the reception of this news on 17 November 1476 by Cristian, the *pârcălab* ‘mayor’ of Târgoviște, who passed it on to the townspeople of Brașov (“Notum facio Vestris Prudenciis Quo-modo castrum Bocorechst lucratus in die Sabathi proximi”) [**Hurmuzaki, E.** 1911, p. 95, editor’s note-Nicolae Iorga], we may notice that the mentioned documents confirm the secondary status of Târgoviște. The reports that Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary, sent from Buda first to Ernest of Saxe on 15 November [Veress, A. 1914, pp. 26–27], and then to the Duke of Milan on 4 December 1476, also refer to Bucharest as the chief citadel of the prince: “castrum quod caput est regni munitissimum” [Veress, A. 1914, pp. 27–28].

The importance of the new princely court is evident from Vlad the Impaler’s decision to defend Bucharest with the 200 Moldavians sent by Stephen the Great [**Bogdan, I.** 1913, p. 345]. It is in this context that the coronation of Vlad the Impaler must have taken place at the residence on the Dâmbovița, an event mentioned by Matthias Corvinus on 8 December 1476 in his report to Pope Sixtus IV: “...Dragula capitaneus meus, vir imprimis Turcis infestissimus et admodum bellicosus, de meavoluntate et dispositione per incolas regni illius Transalpini in vaivoda cum solita solemnitate estas sumptus.” [Veress, A. 1914, pp. 28–29].

It is difficult to accept that such a decision could have been imposed on the prince by Stephen Báthory and especially by Stephen the Great, who had participated in the liberation of Bucharest [**Mihăilă, G., Zamfirescu, D.** 1969, p. 51]. Is it possible that the unfortunate military experience during the reigns of Laiotă Basarab [**Năstase, G. I.** 1925, pp. 122–123; **Panaitelescu, P.P.** 1959, p. 15; **Pippidi, A.** 2002, p. 18] might have entitled the Moldavian voivode to secure Vlad the Impaler’s position, drawing him away from the claimants by the Danube? It becomes obvious that the strong castle from Târgoviște, which Stephen Báthory mentioned, was solid enough to guarantee the ruler both defence and retreat from the Turkish armies to Transylvania, a place not hostile to him. The absence of documentary arguments brings another personal decision into discussion, which, in the context partially known from accounts and official reports, hastened his demise.

In conclusion, although many dots should still be connected for the entire picture to take shape, we may consider that Vlad the Impaler’s departure from Târgoviște has a two-fold meaning: on the one hand, it complied with the military policy of the prince, who wanted a more efficient defence along the Danube, and, on the other hand, it symbolised the voivode’s desire to leave a seat fortress seen as a power centre of the House of Dănești, the other faction within the Basarab Dynasty. The absence of documents issued from Târgoviște after 1457 raises questions, especially considering that Vlad the Impaler released documents from locations that seem far less politically and strategically significant, such as those issued on 5 March 1458 from Tismana Monastery, and on 13 June 1458 and 20 September 1459 from near the Fortress of Bucharest. The open conflict with the boyars and the leaders of Târgoviște on Easter Day in 1457, recorded in the *Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, a chronicle written several centuries after the events, demonstrates the lasting impression of this bloody action and a conflict that seemed unresolved. Vlad the Impaler’s desire, upon being reinstated for the third time in 1476, to remain in the Fortress of Bucharest, where he was apparently crowned, despite Târgoviște being a much safer residence from the military actions of Ottoman-supported

claimants, suggests a continued state of conflict between the ruler and the people of Târgoviște. Finally, archaeological evidence reveals that Vlad the Impaler intended from the outset to transform the small fortress of Bucharest into a true princely residence, giving it the role that Târgoviște had held until then. All the architectural modifications allowed his brother, Radu the Fair, his successor, to reside there throughout his reign.

All the arguments discussed lead us to a single interpretation: Bucharest became the new principal residence of Wallachia as early as 1457–1458 and remained so for several decades.

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