

## NEGRU-VODĂ AND DRAGOȘ. LEGEND AND HISTORICAL TRUTH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ROMANIAN STATALITY\*

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**Rezumat:** *Articolul se desfășoară sub forma unui studiu comparativ a două personalități, Negru-Vodă și Dragoș, care, potrivit tradiției, au contribuit la desăvârșirea formațiunilor statale românești. În cuprinsul textului am urmărit, în principal, să punem în valoare baza istorică reală pe care pot fi așezate cele două legende, chiar dacă între ele există un decalaj cronologic de aproximativ jumătate de secol. Tocmai din acest motiv analiza propriu-zisă a pornit de la momentele identificate cu claritate la nivel documentar. Astfel, descălecatul lui Negru-Vodă l-am asociat cu reintrarea lui Ugrinus, fostul voievod al Transilvaniei, în posesia moșilor făgărășene, în timp ce momentul venirii lui Dragoș l-am plasat în contextul expediției lansate de coroana maghiară în sudul Moldovei, pentru îndepărtarea forțelor tătarăști.*

*Evaluând o bună parte din contribuțiile bibliografice legate de problema genezei statelor medievale românești, am concluzionat că aparițiile legendelor lui Negru-Vodă și Dragoș în procesul de definitivare a statalității românești au la bază rațiuni asemănătoare, în sensul că primul lor obiectiv este ilustrat de dorința de a umple un gol documentar prezent, pentru o perioadă de câteva decenii, atât la sud cât și la răsărit de Carpați.*

**Résumé :** *L'article se déploie sous la forme d'une étude comparative de deux personnalités, Negru-Voïvode et Dragoș, qui conformément à la tradition, ont conduit à la réalisation des formations d'Etat roumaines. Nous avons suivi le long du texte à mettre en valeur la base historique réelle sur laquelle peuvent siéger les deux légendes, même si entre elles il y a un décalage chronologique d'environ une demie de siècle. Justement à cause de cela, l'analyse proprement-dite est partie des moments identifiés clairement au niveau documentaire. De cette manière, l'arrivée de Negru-Voïvode est associée avec la rentrée d'Ugrinus, l'ancien voievode de la Transylvanie, le propriétaire des domaines de Făgăraș, pendant que le moment de l'arrivée de Dragoș est placé dans le contexte de l'expédition lancée par la couronne hongroise au sud de la Moldavie pour l'écartement des armées tatares.*

*Evaluant une bonne partie des contributions bibliographiques liées du problème de la genèse des Etats médiévaux, nous avons tiré la conclusion que les apparitions des légendes de Negru-Voïvode et Dragoș dans le processus de finalisation des Etats roumains ont à la base des raisons semblables, dans le sens que leur premier objectif est illustré par le désir de remplir un vide documentaire présent pour une période de quelques décennies, au sud, mais aussi, à l'est des Carpates.*

**Keywords:** *Romanian statality, Middle Ages, 14th century, Negru-Vodă, Dragoș, Ugrinus, Moldova, Walachia, Transylvania, Hungary.*

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Among the possible scenarios concerning the reconstitution of the process of appearance of the Romanian extra-Carpathian stality, two legends have emerged, gradually, in the historical writings and in the consciousness of this people: the legend of Negru Vodă and that of Dragoș.

So, the hypothetical Negru Voivode<sup>1</sup>, from the intra-Carpathian area, tends to be attributed more and more the main role in the process of territorial and political unification of the formations existing south of the Carpathians, and the similarity to what will happen east of the Carpathians, close to the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, can be established given the fact that the passage of Dragoș in Moldova took place, according to the legend, just as in the case of Negru Vodă, peacefully, in symbiosis with the most prominent figures of the local society<sup>2</sup>.

The differences between the real historical bases on which the two legends can be set are also sensibly equal. If for Walachia, the moment when Negru set up the state was associated to the time when Ugrinus, the former voivode of Transylvania, took possession of the estates from Făgăraș once again, in the case of the territories situated east of the Carpathians, the coming of Dragoș can be situated in the framework of the anti-Mongolian expedition south of Moldavia, initiated by the Hungarian dynasty<sup>3</sup>.

Let us try to present the details of the two contexts, important for setting up some common points from which we can move on to the determination of these action's weight in the process of creation of the Romanian stality and, why not, even to the determination of that grain of truth which lies, as people say, behind every legend. Before moving on to the analysis itself, we will start by mentioning that in the examination of these legends we wanted to preserve the natural chronological succession in which they are supposed to have occurred, even though in chronicles the coming of Dragoș is mentioned earlier. So, the last decennium of the 13<sup>th</sup> century recorded the sharpening of the internal crisis of the Hungarian kingdom and, at the same time, brought on the stage of the Romanian medieval history an extremely controversial figure: Negru vodă. Seen either as a mere invention, the fruit of an oral tradition transmitted with misrepresentations from one generation to the next, or as a real character, who was attributed Cuman origins, he came to be considered, ever since the first decennia of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by a part of our historiography, one and the same person as Thocomer, the father of Walachia's first voivode<sup>4</sup>.

Between the political tensions in Hungary and the possible passage of this character south of the Carpathians can be established a series of connections, even though they rely, most of them, not on clear mentions from documents, but just on certain connections made between some apparently disparate events. The victory of the royal armies in front of the Cuman uprising in 1282 was followed, according to the information we can find in documents, by the driving away of the cumin detachments towards the extra-Carpathian areas, in a territory that, at least at first sight, was under the control of the Golden Horde, or, more precisely, of prince Nogai, the influential Mongolian leader of the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>.

We cannot know if the driving away of the rebellious Cumans out of the

kingdom was the main reason why Nogai will start a new invasion on Hungary, in 1285<sup>6</sup>. Certainly, however, the action represented the pretext he needed<sup>7</sup>.

We tend to accept the idea that the kingdom's strong internal tensions and the continuous political instability were grasped accurately by a true fighter like Nogai, who is possible to have tried, during the phase that preceded the beginning of the military hostilities, to get close to the most important representatives of the Cuman nobility, who had remained in Hungary<sup>8</sup>.

The effects of the Tartar incursion were not felt so seriously as half a century before, though the hordes advanced up to the heart of the kingdom, besieging Pest town. The combative force of the Hungarian town proved superior by far to the one of 1241-1242 and because of the effective involvement of the Hungarian nobility in the action of driving away the fierce invaders. The successful driving away of the Mongolian detachments created favorable conditions for the consolidation of some strong nobility power cores<sup>9</sup> in the kingdom, which will determine an even closer approach of the sovereign Wladislaw IV to the Cuman forces, situated on the middle course of Tisa<sup>10</sup>. So, it is between the late offering of the diploma to master Gheorghe (1285), and the reprimand of Pope Honorius IV, according to which the Hungarian king denied the Catholic faith and lived by the side of the Cumans, Saracens and other pagan peoples (1287)<sup>11</sup>, that we must look for the explanation of Wladislaw IV's return to the practices of the first years of reign, which had aggravated the kingdom's state of crisis.

Surprisingly, the campaign launched by Nogai on Hungary played a foremost place in the new attitude adopted by the Hungarian king. The influence on the Hungarian sovereign must have come, however, from the Cuman nobility as well, especially that the evidence we can find in documents reveals that, after the year 1280 as well, Wladislaw IV did not give up completely to supporting them<sup>12</sup>.

We must not omit, at the same time, that the Cuman-Tartar relationship remained, throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a special one. Its beginnings need to be looked for in the time of the great Mongolian invasion on Europe, when a part of the Cuman tribes, led by Kuthen, were in Hungary, under the protection of king Béla IV. Following an unfortunate event (the assassination of Kuthen in Pest), the Cumans will no longer give the Hungarian sovereign the attended support in front of the Mongolian hordes, withdrawing towards Bulgaria<sup>13</sup>. It was just the key stone of a true "non-aggression pact" that will continue during the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when prince Nogai will rely on Cuman elements in consolidating his rule over the area of the Lower Danube. Consequently, the Mongolian invasion in Hungary in 1285 may have consolidated the Cuman faction in the kingdom, the Hungarian king himself being part of this triangle of forces, if we admit the idea that, during the last years of his reign, his power was supported mainly by the Cuman tribes.

The fact that the king got close to the Cuman nobility naturally determined the appearance of a new wave of privileges granted to them, and it is among them that we should look for the reason why the nobleman Ugrinus was deprived of the estates from Făgăraș and Negru vodă, Thocomer or another character of Cuman origin may have been given those estates making up the small intracarpethian area.

In analyzing this moment, it seems to us useful to follow the evolution of the political career of the noble Ugrinus, descendent, on paternal side, from the powerful Csák family. The ascension of the Hungarian nobleman practically begins during the last years of the reign of king Béla IV, when he receives his first significant function, that of ban of Severin (1268)<sup>14</sup>. His disappearance, for about a decennium, from the functions held is justifiable in the context of the disputes for power between Béla IV and his son, Stephen. The installation of the latter's leadership, over Transylvania may have resulted in the appearance of a breakup in the dominions exerted until then by the kingdom in the eastern areas. Consequently, being certainly not among the favorites of the new king Stephen V, Ugrinus will not be able to reenter in possession of the previous privileges except after his disappearance. Stephen V's unexpected death came in Ugrinus' support and, in just a few years, he won the trust of the young sovereign Wladislaw IV, who reappoints him ban of Severin (1274), and then appoints him voivode of Transylvania (1275) and great treasurer of the kingdom (1279)<sup>15</sup>.

The absence of the nobleman Ugrinus from the documents of the time, after 1279, can be interpreted as evidence of the appearance of some disagreements between him and his sovereign. More correctly would be to see, however, in this situation an attempt of reinstauration of the royal power over Transylvania, which had already been dominated for a few years by the members of the Csák family, in which framework the much-disputed devastation of the Episcopal Cathedral of Alba-Iulia, in 1277, by the revolted Saxons of Transylvania, was just an answer given by a social category discontent with the way how Transylvania was being governed.

The period would coincide as well with the beginning of the tensions occurred in the kingdom, between the papacy and the Hungarian noblemen, on the one hand, and the member of the dynastic family Wladislaw IV, on the other hand, linked to the presence of the Cumans inside the kingdom<sup>16</sup>.

The motive of the conflict, which caused the strong division in Hungary's political life, was represented by the very option of king Wladislaw IV to support, by all means, the noblemen of Cuman origin. Situated in the opposite camp, Ugrinus was no more in the position of benefiting of the royal position, among others because of the obvious ascension of the Aba clan, the main competitor of the Csáki party.

The documents do not mention when Ugrinus was deprived of the estates of Făgăraș and Sâmbăta and, especially, if Wladislaw IV appointed as governor of this territory one of his privileged. There is, however, just one piece of evidence in support of the hypothesis according to which during the last but one decennium of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Ugrinus no longer exerted his control over Făgăraș. In the letter of the Archbishop of Strigoni, of 1288<sup>17</sup>, to the high clergymen and to all the Hungarian, Transylvanian Saxon, Szeckler and Romanian noblemen from Sibiu County and Bârsa County we can grasp the lack of all mention concerning the Land of Făgăraș, which can be explained, from our viewpoint, only if we admit that at that time there was no more royal high official there anymore.

The death of Wladislaw IV accelerated the recovery of the estates lost by the nobleman Ugrinus. Being one of the privileged of the new king, the Venetian

Andrew III, Ugrinus will hurry to regain the possession of his intracarpethian territories<sup>18</sup>. The victory of the Hungarian nobleman is carried out even in the context of the general congregation of the social classes of Transylvania<sup>19</sup>, in 1290, though the actual diploma granting the return of the property is given a year later<sup>20</sup>.

In front of a relative continuity in documents, there remain a series of questions that prevent the exact reconstitution of the image and break the connections that can be established concerning the events that occurred during the period that followed immediately afterwards in the area south of the Carpathians.

First, we cannot identify, for sure, if the Land of Făgăraș was controlled and administered for a while, after Ugrinus was deprived of it, by some character appointed in this function by king Wladislaw IV himself. For this very reason, the installation of a voivode of Romanian origin, Negru-Vodă, during the last but one decennium of the 13<sup>th</sup> century as head of the Land of Făgăraș needs to be analyzed, in our opinion, with maximum reticence. We consider that the return of Ugrinus as possessor of his estate, in case Făgăraș had been under the control of a Romanian voivode, should have been very difficult to achieve, taking into account that at the assembly from Alba-Iulia the presence of the Romanians was not at all just honorary<sup>21</sup> and consequently some opposition from their part should have existed.

Secondly, the hypothesis of the appointment in Făgăraș of a person of Cuman origin seems acceptable, considering the political situation in Hungary, when Ugrinus was probably being deprived of his possessions. In the same circumstances, however, it remains essential to clarify as well the reason of the absence of the “adverse party” from the action of regranteeing the property to the Hungarian nobleman. Starting from the reasons mentioned above, it becomes almost impossible to explain how a character not at all unimportant, a protégé of the deceased king, from the intracarpethian area, is not mentioned, not even allusively, in the so-called trial, especially as the reasons for his absence (the much-discussed visit to Muntenia) were significant. His passage in the territories south of the Carpathians, in Cumania, is not signaled in any document, though the event could not have passed so easily unnoticed, if we consider that this area continued to be seen by the kingdom as being under its subordination.

The total lack of information concerning the person who was leading Făgăraș, for a period of time hard to be determined exactly, throws a question mark right on the idea of its real existence. In this context, we can make a parallel with the situation from Maramureș, where, in the act granting the property of Balk and of his brothers, in 1365 – is mentioned as well Bogdan’s action of non-submission, east of the Carpathians, which led to his being deprived of his estates.

Though the political stability of the kingdom of Hungary was obvious during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in our opinion, this fact does not represent a sufficiently convincing element. The piece of evidence that during a troubled political hypostasis as troubled as that of 1290, in the year 1285, is recorded the uprising of voievode Litovoi, who had annexed several territories south of the Carpathians, subordinated to the kingdom, constitutes a credible enough argument.

The connections related to the passage of the respective character in

Muntenia and the explanation, in this way, of his absence from Alba-Iulia are, from our viewpoint, somehow forced, as long as we do not have at least one document to illustrate the fact that the estates of Făgăraș and Sâmbăta were dominated, during the last years of Wladislaw IV's reign, by one of his protégés, be he of Cuman origin or not. That is why, the consequence deduced from the arguments presented would be that the coming of Negru Vodă, according to the legend, in 1290, "in the days of Andreiaș the king", is still far from being proven, though the appearance of some external forces, which came, at some time, south of the Carpathians, and who will play the role of merger element for the local formations remains just as credible<sup>22</sup>.

Starting from a close logic, some historians supported the idea that Negru Vodă and Basarab would be one and the same person<sup>23</sup>. The nickname of Basarab<sup>24</sup> was to be received only as a consequence of the subordination of the Turanic populations, present in the area south of the Carpathians (obviously, it is especially about Cumans and Pechenegs). The entire demonstration is overshadowed, in our opinion, by the emission of that document, on November 26, 1332, in which Basarab's father, Thocomerius („... Basarab, filium Thocomerri...”) is mentioned<sup>25</sup>.

The existence of two Cuman names, Basarab and Thocomer, eliminates any doubt about the Cuman origin of the first voivode of Walachia<sup>26</sup> and, at the same time, denies the hypothesis that Basarab would be just a nickname received by a Romanian voivode following the submission of this Turanian population from outside the Carpathian area. It is equally worth mentioning a reality, somehow neglected in historiography, namely that between the Cumans and the extracarpathanian population, the Vlachs, the documents signal no conflicts or incidents. Starting from such a reasoning, we can resort, in support our demonstration, to the case of the Cuman assault against the Russian principalities, for the invasion of the Byzantine Empire by these migratory populations and, more recently for the conflicts in the Kingdom of Hungary. If in the case of the examples quoted we are dealing with states that had reached a certain level of development, which wanted to impose strict rules in the relation with the Cuman population, it is hard to accept that at least the kingdoms and principalities south of the Carpathians lacked the necessary military force to oppose the Cumans elements remained in the area.

As long as towards the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century there were, south of the Carpathians (according to the diploma of the Johannite knights order), political formations capable of giving an effective military support to the colonists for securing the area, we are obliged to admit at least reticently the possibility of subordination of the elements of Cuman origin remained in this area.

Returning to Negru Vodă, we need to add the fact that we do not find his name, as it was believed for a long time, just in the Walachian chronicles of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as it is also present in a series of documents emitted by some Walachian rulers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The best known remain the two documents kept from Mircea Ciobanul, which confirm first of all some boyards' dominion over the village of Hiristestți and then the plots of land of some simple peasants<sup>27</sup>. In both of these cases, the documents suggest that the possessors of the land benefited of documents offered by Negru Voivode himself, which means that he represented, at some

moment, the only authority in the area south of the Carpathians.

In their turn, the above-mentioned documents are followed by two more documents from the period of Alexandru Mircea voivode, to Tismana monastery, in which it is mentioned that the villages belonging to the holy monastery had been granted by Negru Vodă<sup>28</sup>.

Negru-Vodă's existence, seen in the light of such documents, can be interpreted as a piece of evidence of his presence both in the area on the left side of Olt River and in the area from the right side of Olt. The elements on which this hypothesis relies continue, however, to be surrounded by uncertainty, and that because in the case of the documents mentioned, we notice that the mentions concerning Negru-Vodă send back to some 14<sup>th</sup> century documents that were lost. Maybe just for this reason, there is a possibility that the information may have reached us under an erroneous or denatured form in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the legitimating of power and the idea of continuity were so much needed on the level of the leading class.

Consequently, it remains a touchstone for our historiography to prove the fact that the "enigmatic" voievode held a main role in the process of unification of the areas south of the Carpathians. Just as in the case of the Moldavia of Dragoș, Negru Vodă may have acted under the authority of another power<sup>29</sup>, hypothesis which would explain why the true unifier is considered to be Basarab. The similarity with the area east of the Carpathians could continue, in the sense that power was taken there, just as in this case, by a force that represented better the interests of the local formations, being accepted for different reasons by the rest of the population as well.

Under the present conditions, the idea that Negru Vodă would be one and the same person as Thocomer continues to present serious deficiencies, as, from our viewpoint, there is no coherent argumentation to prove such a theory. The documents mentioned above, as well as the chronicles of Muntenia, present a voievode who benefited of an uncontested political authority, which could not have been overseen by the most important neighboring state, the Hungarian kingdom, not even on the background of the deepening of its internal crisis. Concerning our topic, the Hungarian Chancellery mentions Thocomer, but in a late document, in correlation with his son, without attributing him any political function. It is hard to admit the hypothesis that the Hungarian Chancellery may have known nothing about the role played by Basarab's father concerning the creation of the state south of the Carpathians. For such a reason, without denying, in any way, the existence of Thocomer, we consider that between him and Negru Vodă can be established no connection, based on the documents available to the Romanian research so far.

The fact that a family of Cumin origin, represented by Thocomer and Basarab, could have taken over the power from the hands of a local voivode, whom we will call hypothetically Negru Vodă, represents another viable theory which needs to be taken into account and, as much as possible, submitted to an ampler analysis<sup>30</sup>.

Starting from such an idea, we will insert, as conclusion, an opinion formulated, in a moment of geniality, by our great historian Nicolae Iorga: „Basarab is not a founder, but a continuator, and, finally, a liberator as well”<sup>31</sup>.

Basarab cannot be justly considered unequivocally a founder, because in the

area south of the Carpathians we notice an uninterrupted process of evolution of the internal factors and to this process he actually contributed only in the final act, the acknowledgement of his supremacy on both sides of Olt river<sup>32</sup>.

Basarab is, however, a continuator, as long as he will finalize a process of territorial and political unification, begun since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and, finally, a liberator, as he had freed a large area of the land comprised between the Southern Carpathians and the Danube from under an authority that remains unknown in documents but who, in our opinion, may have been Tartar.

So, we could conclude that the process of the completion of the state of Muntenia was marked by two eponym heroes: Negru Vodă and Basarab. Actually, they represent the last dualism that preceded the appearance of the unitary state of Walachia. It is here that the legend ends<sup>33</sup>. In the case of the process of creation of the medieval state of Moldova we encounter, as well, another tradition, whose understanding is essential in the identification of the stages that occurred in the process of the formation of the state east of the Carpathians<sup>34</sup>.

Even though, the two legends are situated at about one century from each other, we consider that, between the setting up of Negru Vodă's state and that of Dragoș there is no fundamental difference, as we have mentioned<sup>35</sup>. Here, just as in the case of the state situated south of the Carpathians, the scarcity of the documents made room for a legend, which cannot however be attributed precisely to a chronological moment or incontestably associated to a certain political action. The legend of the hunting or the legend of the state set up by Dragoș presents a nobleman from Maramureș who, during a hunting party, following a bison, will penetrate in the area east of the Carpathians, where he will reign for several years.

The very succinct description, even by comparison to the legend of Negru Vodă, headed the Romanian research to wards new directions of approach, during the last period, by including the controversial character from Maramureș in the framework of some larger external politics coordinates<sup>36</sup>. This basis being built, it was supposed that the passage of Dragoș in Moldavia occurred in the context of the transformation of the relation of force between the two powers of the area: the Hungarian Kingdom and the Khanate of the Golden Horde<sup>37</sup>. So, it was established that Dragoș set up his reign following the campaign launched by Hungary in the south of Moldavia, against the Tartars, somewhere around 1345-1347, he himself being either a direct participant to the military confrontation that took place on the other side of the Carpathians or a representative of the Hungarian kingdom, sent here after the liberation of this territory.

Two arguments make it difficult to validate this theory. First, the fact that the Hungarian documents and chronicles of those times (of which the most important remains the biography written by the archdeacon Ioan de Târnave) do not mention the presence in the Hungarian expedition of a nobleman from Maramureș, named Dragoș, who, after the occupation of southern Moldavia may have left there the leadership of an important military structure. Second, we were not able to identify Dragoș exactly among the Romanian noblemen from Maramureș, a situation that hinders, so far, the reconstruction, even partially, of the events that took place east of the Carpathians,

under the aegis of this character after 1345<sup>38</sup>.

The natural conclusion we could draw following the analysis of the few existing sources would be that we are not dealing with a nobleman from Maramureș who may have acted in Moldavia immediately after the anti-Mongolian expedition of the Hungarian kingdom. Actually, if we refer strictly to the documents of the time, we remark just one certain presence, in the area east of the Carpathians, of a feudal man from Maramureș bearing this name. It is about Dragoș of Giulești, a subject of the Hungarian dynasty, who led the repression of a revolt of the local population from the Moldavian area, in the year 1359<sup>39</sup>. It is exactly the year provided by most of the chronicles, which mention Dragoș and which are written in the near period of the actual events<sup>40</sup>. Might Dragoș of Giulești be the “true” Dragoș<sup>41</sup>, the one considered by all the chronicles as the first who set up the state of Moldovei? Then the entire story built around this character, based on his leading role in the construction of the Moldavian state, should be reconsidered and set up on other coordinates.

Where could we still integrate the battles led by Dragoș to push the Tartar domination away towards the mouths of the Danube? When could we situate the expansion to the north, which touched the area of Siret? The popular tradition and, tangentially, even some mentions of the chronicles attribute to this supposedly feudal man from Maramureș a different evolution. So, we notice, starting from the existence of those “fields”, of which that of Dragoș has been intensely debated in the specialized works<sup>42</sup>, and continuing with the mentions from the chronicle of Matteo Villani from Florence about that “king of Proslavia” that fights against the Tartars, identified in the person of Dragoș<sup>43</sup>, and ending at the old wooden church of Volovăț (the place of a possible residence of the voivode), where this character, become a legend, is supposed to have been buried<sup>44</sup>, that there are still numerous contradictory aspects in the analysis of an essential moment from the evolution of the area east of the Carpathians.

On a different level, just as significant seems to us a problem that penetrated as well in the tradition. In this case we refer to the function of voivode held by Dragoș in the land east of the Carpathians. The information encountered in chronicles concerning this issue are unanimous. So, the Slavo-Romanian chronicles of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries give him the title of voivode, as well as the Moldavian-German chronicle, the anonymous chronicle of Moldavia (“Ietopisețul anonim al Moldovei”) or the Moldavian-Polish chronicle (“Cu voia lui Dumnezeu, cel dintâi voievod, Dragoș, a venit ca vânător din Țara Ungurească...” / “By the will of God, the first voivode, Dragoș, came as a hunter from the Hungarian Country...”) <sup>45</sup>.

However how was it possible for all these documents to mention Dragoș with the title of voivode? Could it have been the result of the tradition transmitted orally or we are just in front of the fruit of the chroniclers’ imagination, who felt the need to approach Dragoș to the political organization present in the Romanian territories, by associating him with a function that he may have not had, just as well?

We must not forget that Dragoș started, in his “adventure” in the areas east of the Carpathians, from Maramureș, an area which was at the top of the voivodal institution at that time. However, his being appointed in the south of Moldova

occurred on the orders of the Hungarian kingdom, a state that could not permit the development, in the freshly subordinated land, of an institution characteristic to the Romanians, especially as in the neighboring Maramureş Hungary had already initiated a series of measures meant to speed up the process of restraining the voivodal rights and liberties.

So, in the sources of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, we notice a historical contradiction, because it is accepted that Dragoş came from the Hungarian Country (by which we understand a land dominated to a certain extent by the Hungarian Dynasty), who was then appointed as voivode of Moldavia, a function that comprised, even under these circumstances, a certain status of independence.

If we accepted, even only hypothetically, that Dragoş was the first voivode of Moldavia, we think that the institution itself must have been organized according to the model of Maramureş, as long as its first ruler came from the structures of the noblemen from Maramureş. So, as we know that the voivode was chosen following the delegation of the attributes of power by a group of principalities, we consider that, in this case as well, it was normal to apply the natural procedure, which supposed, first of all, a massive support from the elite of the local society, a support about which we have no information so far.

However, there is one more hypothesis that can be neither omitted nor contested with pertinent arguments. Starting from a definition which became classical (valid for the entire extracarpatian area) of the voivodal function, which indicates the fact that it cumulated most of the attributes of high military commander<sup>46</sup>, we can think of a confusion, appeared in the chronicles, between the function held by Dragoş as leader of the frontier principality under military administration from Baia (which included, probably, especially military prerogatives) and the function of voivode, which could not have been obtained but with the agreement of the other local political formations. In the above-mentioned context, it is the very character of the Hungarian leadership that signals the impossibility of a close collaboration of the local population with the Hungarian occupation elements, whose main representative was Dragoş. The political subordination and the attempts of religious pressure (through the recreation of the bishopric of Milcovia in 1347) confirms the reasoning that east of the Carpathians it was just attempted to replace the Tartar domination with one exerted by the Hungarian Dynasty<sup>47</sup>.

The demonstration presented synthetically shows that the voivodal function of Dragoş remains a great question mark for the historical research, being hard to support the idea that the elite of the local society appointed as their leader a character who could not have represented their interests.

Concerning the writings of the Moldavian chroniclers of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, we encounter similar variants concerning the function of Dragoş. The most interesting of them all remains the insertion made by Misail the Monk in the chronicle known as "Letopiseşul Ţării Moldovei" written by Grigore Ureche, where it is signaled the fact that the reign of Dragoş was like a military domination ("a fost domnia ca o căpitănie")<sup>48</sup>; the information led to vivid debates in historiography, bringing forward, first of all, a different perspective on the prerogatives cumulated by

the so-called function of voivode.

Corroborating this mention of the chronicle of Grigore Ureche with another older source, the Moldo-Russian chronicle,<sup>49</sup> where it is shown that Dragoș passed in Moldavia in front of his group of warriors (“drujină”) we can identify, from our viewpoint, the predominantly military role of his function. So, the function of voivode attributed to Dragoș becomes, through the interpretation of these two documents, a simple substitute for a function associated, erroneously, to a character that led, as it seems, a territory in the area east of the Carpathians, not as a voivode, but as military commander, who needed to assure, by the force of arms, the control over the area.

The title of “captain” (“căpitan”) attributed to Dragoș, has a different connotation, if we regard it from the perspective of the period when Misail the monk achieved the interpolation. From this perspective, it does not look like a western frontier principality under military administration, which benefited of a considerable territorial extension, but it looks rather like a garrison, which, for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, grouped the military categories with permanent obligations from a number of villages, having, consequently, a much more limited extension<sup>50</sup>.

Beyond the real implications of this function, in the case of the Moldavian chroniclers we notice the need to ensure a dynastic continuity, which was not broken, but continued through the coming of Bogdan. The desire of the existence of a dynasty east of the Carpathians beginning with Dragoș and continuing with Sas was maybe above that of highlighting the historical truth. This is, in our opinion, one of the reasons why Dragoș appears in most chronicles as the first voivode or ruler of Moldavia, as the founder of a dynasty (“dinastia Dragoșeștilor”).

The information and the chronology inserted in the chronicles can have for a departure point a prototype of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (remained unknown) from which resulted the chronicle from Bistrița (“Letopisețul de la Bistrița”), the Moldavian-German chronicle, and the chronicle from Putna, written, maybe, at the will or with the support of the reigning prince Ștefan cel Mare<sup>51</sup>. Later on, the model may have been easily taken over the Moldavian chroniclers, attracted by the idea of establishing a continuity of the first Moldavian dynasty, appearing immediately after the removal of the tartar domination east of the Carpathians.

In the end of the debate concerning this problem we will synthesize the following aspect. Beyond the hypothetical considerations, the function held by Dragoș, requires, in our opinion, an analysis starting from the objectives of the Hungarian politics east of the Carpathians, open through the anti-Mongolian campaign in the south of Moldavia and closed with the coming of Bogdan. So, the development and the affirmation of some specific institutions in the intra- and extra-Carpathian area, appeared under the protection of the Hungarian Kingdom, remains a hypothesis presenting a series of uncertain points, grouped, in this context, right around the function of voivode exerted by Dragoș, at the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

At the same time, the passage of Dragoș in Moldavia was correlated as well with a much ampler process of Romanian emigration from Transylvania, translated, in the specialized works, by the word “descălecat”. If by “descălecat” we understand the settling of some elements coming from Maramureș (this being the sense to which

we will refer mainly in the present discussion), it cannot be determined, in our opinion, a precise date, existing the possibility that between Maramureș and Moldavia the social and economic communion may have dated even from the first years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, involving as well moments when a transfer of population occurred.

Even though, in the present stage, the Romanian research does not have the necessary support in documents to develop this theory, we consider it extremely important to make a difference between “descălecat de durată” (a long-term settlement) and the “descălecat” (the setting up of a state) which occurred in the case of Dragoș, which supposes just the fact that some noblemen from Maramureș were appointed in some political functions within the frontier principality under military administration created south of Moldavia<sup>52</sup>.

In our understanding, the “descălecat” that occurred in the case of Dragoș should not be understood in a strict sense, namely that the Romanians from Maramureș founded the medieval state of Moldavia. The coming of Dragoș or of other noblemen from Maramureș created, first of all, a certain favorable framework for the union of all the local political factors (understanding by this the structures of the type of principality east of the Carpathians) after the removal of the domination of the Golden Horde<sup>53</sup>. Situating the facts and the events on such a line, we consider that the action of Bogdan, a few decennia later, needs to be seen as well as a “descălecat”, especially because it relied on the political pressure exerted by the Angevin dynasty on a part of the Romanian feudal society from within the Carpathians.

We think that the term of “descălecat”, referring clearly to the coming of Dragoș in Moldavia, cannot have another meaning (leaving aside the meaning already illustrated in our historiography: of setting up a state, of conquering a state or of setting up colonies in a state) but that of becoming the owner of a certain land<sup>54</sup>.

However, under the mask of a legend that seduces our imagination (that of the hunting of the bison), but not built on the analysis of the historical events<sup>55</sup>, the Moldavian chroniclers tried to attribute to Dragoș, in a way that is not justified from the viewpoint of the historical reality, the role of founder of the Moldavian Country<sup>56</sup>. Later on, this tradition of the “descălecat” became attractive as well for a part of the modern historiography<sup>57</sup> which took over, amplified and nuanced the chronicler’s texts, getting even to a differentiation between the two processes of formation of the Romanian statality, seen strictly through the sieve of the legend.

For this reason, we cannot agree with a theory which tries to highlight that the appearance of Walachia was the fruit of a gradual evolution of the formations mentioned in the diploma of the Johannite Knights issued on June 2, 1247, while the creation of the state of Moldavia needs to be seen just as the result of a “descălecat” carried out by a part of the feudality from Maramureș. So, the setting up of Moldavia, analyzed through the prism of the emigration of the less rich nobles from Maramureș is unacceptable, from our viewpoint, as long as these small detachments of nobles passed east of the Carpathians as a segment of the Hungarian army. Starting from this reason, we consider that there was no merger of interests between the noblemen of Maramureș led by Dragoș, in the south of Moldavia, and the local society. The purposes and the hopes of the two parties were totally opposite and they remained so

until the military action of Bogdan, which comes to prove that only a collaboration on all the levels with the elite of the Moldavian society can lead to the appearance of a country, of a state, of a durable edifice capable to resist, later on, to the political pressure coming from the outside.

Moreover, the successive coming of two voivodes, namely Dragoș and Sas, was not able to change the evolution of the population east of the Carpathians essentially, politically, socially and economically, was not able to destroy certain local structures mentioned indirectly by some documents of the time as well<sup>58</sup>.

So, the passage of Dragoș in Moldavia must not be presented at all as a “descălecat”, as a transfer of population. It has, first of all, a military support, and then a political reason, integrated in the plan of the Angevin dynasty to transform Maramureș from principality into royal comitat, a process achieved by attracting the less rich nobles of the area on the side of the Hungarian state. However, even in the presence of some sufficiently convincing arguments, based or not on documents, we found ourselves obliged to notice that the “descălecat” of Dragoș has already passed, irremediably, in the domain of tradition. One of the multiple explanations of this state of fact could be that the action itself left deep marks in the conscience of this people, who has always known to interweave the tradition transmitted orally with the historical truth.

As final considerations concerning this extremely complex issue, we consider that two ideas can be essential. First, the evolution towards state forms can be appreciated as a process that involved a significant part of the extracarpatic Romanian society, both in the 13<sup>th</sup> and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and, for this reason it cannot be analyzed based on a single external action. Closely related to this evolution, we can establish that the acceleration of the process of state genesis occurred as well on the background of the gradual suppression of the local autonomies in the intracarpatian area (a direct consequence of the measures promoted by the Hungarian dynasty) which led to the appearance of some centers of power which saw themselves forced to transfer their area of influence in the territories south and east of the Carpathians. So, the problem of the “descălecat” of Dragoș in the Moldavian area remains, in the present stage, even after the important steps made in the specialized studies, hard to clarify and debate, especially of the gaps that exist in the sources that could have brought more light concerning the identification of the events included in this historical period. From this perspective, we consider that the analogies between the two setting up processes, that of Walachia and that of Moldavia, become necessary and obligatory, as long as the lack of documents imposed in both cases, the appearance of legend able to fill in, in a way, this hiatus<sup>59</sup>.

So, if concerning the state of Walachia, the absence of any mention in the last two decennia of the 13<sup>th</sup> century led to the appearance of the legend of Negru Vodă, in the case of Moldavia as well, the lack of precise data about Dragoș allowed for the birth of the legend of hunting, which came to fill in, why not, the gap represented by the lack of information regarding this character’s activity as leader of the formation south of Moldavia, in the function of representative of the Hungarian dynasty. For this reason, under the circumstances of such a succinct presentation, we

remark the fact that one of the most important stages in the process of the appearance of Moldavia as a state benefits of two stories. The first of them relies, in the emission of the hypotheses and of the demonstrations, only on documents, which are too poor in information to lead to the clarification of all the problems, while the second tries to nuance and diversify the whole set, by including the elements of tradition and by their eventual correlation with toponymic, hydronymic data that can be, in many cases, deceiving, leading to conclusions that are only partially accepted by the Romanian historiography. Paradoxically, the merger of the two directions remains a fact rarely encountered in the Romanian research, which continues to be dominated either by an extremely critical spirit or by superficiality in the determination of the succession of the events, resulted from the use of arguments that cannot always be verified from a historical viewpoint.

Based on everything we have stated in the present pages, we can support convincingly the idea that, in both of these processes of appearance of the state, the Romanian historiography had to have recourse, not just once, to reasoning based on simple suppositions, especially as there were no similarities with other actions or events reminded by the historical sources.

To conclude, as a corollary of the entire discussion, we appreciate that the process of appearance of the two Romanian states has not been and probably will not be exhausted as a topic. The combination between legend and truth can only give birth to scenarios, verisimilar or not, and probably this very aspect continues to arouse the interest of the specialists, who see themselves obliged to take into account a considerable number of hypotheses and theories, trying, in their turn, to recompose a historical process lying at the basis of the Romanian Middle Ages.

#### NOTES:

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<sup>1</sup> We will designate him using this term because, so far, his existence is only proved by late chronicles and works, appeared a few centuries after the events actually took place. We are referring here to the information provided by Paul d'Alep in 1656 (*Călători străini despre țările române* / Foreign Writers about the Romanian Countries, VI, București, 1976, p. 170-171) who depict Negru-Vodă as prince of Transylvania who freed the territories south of the Carpathians from the Tartar domination with the consent of the Hungarian king, to the mentions from the works of Miron Costin, written at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which mention the liberation of Walachia from the Tartars by Negru-Vodă, but contain a series of chronological inadequacies (Miron Costin, *Opere*, București, 1958, p. 207, 228, 273), to the work *Viața preacuviosului părinte Nicodim* / The life of Father Nicodemus, edited at the monastery of Tismana during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which advances the idea that Negru-Vodă freed the counties east of Olt from the Tartars (Ela Cosma, *Ideea de întemeiere în cultura populară românească* / The Idea of Setting up a State in the Romanian Popular Culture, Cluj-Napoca, 2000, p. 514). To all of these, we will also add a legend gathered from the area of Cetățeni-Muscel which mentions a Negru-Vodă who did not come from the Hungarian Country, but, on the contrary, found refuge here in front of a Tartar invasion. As a confirmation of these turbulent events, in the area of the confluence of today's counties Dâmbovița and Argeș we find the tradition according to which, in front

of one of the numerous Mongolian raids, the course of Dambovită river was dammed with bison skins. The Tartars who were coming from south were so drowned, and in the settlement where their advance was stopped appeared the village Tătărani which continues to exist today (V. N., Purnichi, *Așezarea de la Cetățeni-Muscel în epoca veche și medie* The Settlement from Cetățeni-Muscel during the Old and Middle Age, Câmpulung Muscel, 2008, p. 42).

<sup>2</sup> For Walachia, there is the chronicle of Cantacuzino (“Ietopisețul cantacuzinesc”), which refers to the controversial moment of the creation of the state by Negru Vodă: „Iar când au fost cursul anilor de la Adam 6798, fiind în Țara Ungurească un voievod ce l-a chemat Radu Negru voievod, mare herțeg pre Amlaș și pre Făgăraș, rădicat-s-au de acolo cu toată casa lui și cu mulțime de noroade: rumâni, papistași, sași, de tot feliu de oameni, pogorându-se pre apa Dâmboviții, început-au face țară noao. Întâi au făcut orașul ce-i zic Câmpul Lung... De acolo au descălecat la Argeș și iar au făcut oraș mare și și-au pus scaunul de domnie... Iar noroadele ce pogorâse cu dânsul... s-au întins în jos, preste tot locul, de au făcut orașă și sate până în marginea Dunării și până în Olt. Atunce și Basarabești cu toată boierimea ce era mai nainte preste Olt, s-au sculat de au venit la Radu vodă, închinându-se... De atunce s-au numit de-i zic Țara Rumânească...” / “And in the year 6798 since Adam, being in the Hungarian Country a voivode called Radu Negru voivode, great “herțeg” for Amlaș and Făgăraș, he rose from there with a lot of people – Romanians, Chatolics, Transylvanian Saxons and all kind of men, and settling in the area of Dâmbovița River, they set up a new country. First they built the town called Câmpul Lung... From there they left for Argeș and set up their residence there... And the populations that had come with him spread up everywhere, building towns and villages up to the border of Danube and Olt River. Then even the Basarab family and all the boyars who had been living on the other side of Olt rose and came to Radu vodă to pay homage to him... Eversince it has been called Walachia...” (*Istoria Țării Românești (1290-1690)*. *Ietopisețul Cantacuzinesc*, critical edition prepared for publication by C. Grecescu and D. Simionescu, București, 1960, p. 2; see as well *Cronicari munteni / Walachian Chroniclers*, vol. I, edition prepared for publication by M. Gregorian and E. Stănescu, București, 1961, p. 83-84), and for Moldavia the works of the great Moldavian Chronicles, among which the most outstanding remarks concerning the above-mentioned problem belong to Grigore Ureche “...cându au răsipit tătarii dintr-aceste locuri... mai apoi, după multă vreme... păstorii din munți unguerești pogorându după vânat au nemerit la apa Moldovei... între acei păstori ce au nemeritu locul acesta, fost-au și Dragoș, carile au venitu de la Maramoroș... pre carile cu toții... l-au pus domnu...” / “...when the Tartars were sent away from these areas... long afterwards, the shepherds from the Hungarian Mountains coming to hunt got to the water of Moldova... among those shepherds who came to these places was Dragoș, who came from Maramureș... whom they all... chose to be their prince...” (*Marii Cronicari ai Moldovei*, ed. Academiei Române, București, 2003, p. 6-8).

<sup>3</sup> *DIR, C, Veacul XIII / The 13<sup>th</sup> Century*, II, p. 369. In the text of the document is recorded the demand of master Ugrinus, concerning the return of the estates Făgăraș and Sâmbăta, taken away from him unjustly, but there is no mention of the person who had possessed them previously. At the same time, the Hungatian expedition in the south of Moldavia is also mentioned in the Chronicle of Ioan de Târnave, without mentioning however that the area freed from the Tartars was then led by a noble from Maramureș called Dragoș.

<sup>4</sup> The mysterious voivode arose the interest of the Romanian historiography very early. Out of the vast bibliography on this topic we will select a few works grouping several viewpoints

on the origin and evolution of this character: C. Kogălniceanu, *Cercetări critice cu privire la istoria românilor* / Critical Researches on the History of the Romanians, fascic. I, București, 1908, p. 4 (which rejects totally the hypothesis of the existence of Negru Vodă seeing Basarab I as the only founder); I. C. Filitti, *Despre Negru-Vodă* / On Negru-Vodă, in AARMSI, S. III, t. IV, 1924, p. 4, 6, 34, 35, 36 (where the main idea is that Negru-Vodă was the creation of the ruler Matei Basarab introduced on the occasion of the rebuilding of the church from Câmpulung); O. Popa, *Ugrinus 1291*, Brașov, 1935, p. 7, 12 (the author expresses the doubt that the estates from Făgăraș and Sâmbăta had Negru-Vodă as their owner, Ugrinus pretending to have this right based on false documents); D. Stănescu, *Radu Negru*, București, 1925, p. 6 (admits his existence and considers that he has the main merit concerning the setting up of Walachia); N. Argeș, “*Radu Negru Basarabă*”, București, 1925, p. 41, 49 (advances the hypothesis that Thocomer is one and the same person as Negru Vodă, as he became prince in 1290. However he does not support his statements with documents, but with simple personal considerations). Recently has appeared the study signed by D. Căprăroiu, *Asupra începuturilor orașului Câmpulung* / On the Beginnings of Câmpulung Town, in HU, tom. XVI, 2008/1-2, p. 57-58, where we find ample and original arguments meant to confirm that the founder of Walachia is none else but the character recorded by the tradition, known as Negru Vodă.

- <sup>5</sup> The connections between Nogai and the Cuman population are obvious. The most quoted example is that of the Cuman boyar Gheorghe Terter, imposed as leader of Bulgaria, after the removal of tsar Ivaillo, in 1280. In the same sense, we can note the extremely pertinent remark of R. Theodorescu (*Bizanț, Balcani, Occident la începuturile culturii medievale românești (secolele X-XIV)* / Byzantium, Balkans, Occident at the Beginning of the Romanian Medieval Culture (10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century), București, 1974, p. 59), according to whom, the Cumans’ sedentarization process was much more profound by comparison to that of the other Turanian migrators. It is this very fact that determined their very strong involvement in the political evolution of diverse territories or states.
- <sup>6</sup> P. P. Panaitescu, *Introducere la istoria culturii românești* / Introduction in the History of the Romanian Culture, București, 1969, p. 306. The historian introduced for the first time the idea that behind the Cuman revolt was Nogai himself.
- <sup>7</sup> T. Sălăgean, *Transilvania și invazia mongolă din 1285* / Transylvania and the Mongolian invasion of 1285, in the tome *România în Europa medievală (între Orientul bizantin și Occidentul latin). Studii în onoarea profesorului Victor Spinei* / The Romanians in Medieval Europe (between the Byzantine East and the Latin West), Brăila, 2008, p. 272, 273. King Wladislaw IV is considered the only one guilty for the launching of the new Mongolian invasion, as he inflamed Nogai by imprudently following the Cuman detachments “*ultra alpes*”.
- <sup>8</sup> Idem, *Un voievod al Transilvaniei: Ladislau Kan 1294-1315* / A voivode of Transylvania: Wladislaw Khan 1294-1315, Cluj-Napoca, 2007 p. 17. The Cuman contingents, driven away out of the mountains, were those that convinced Nogai to begin an ample action against a kingdom that at first sight did not seem to show a great capacity of resistance.
- <sup>9</sup> We can even talk about the appearance of some quasi-independent regions in relation to Hungary, led by local barons, who will have the capacity to oppose, after the death of Wladislaw IV, even the Papacy, which intended to impose Charles of Anjou as king to the detriment of Andrew III. Practically, the kingdom got broken into two parts. In the center of the country governed the barons and the prelates who held even the diets without the participation of the king (details concerning this moment can be found in P. Engel, *Regatul*

- Sfântului Ștefan. Istoria Ungariei medievale 895-1526* / The Kingdom of Saint Stephen in the History of Medieval Hungary, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, p. 135).
- <sup>10</sup> We will notice T. Sălăgean's opinion in *Transilvania în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIII-lea. Afirmarea regimului congregațional* / Transylvania during the Second Half of the 13th Century. The Appearance of the Congregational Regime, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 223, 224, who suggests a possible communion of interests between the Rumanians and the Cumans inside the Carpathian bow during the last years of Wladislaw IV's life. The fact that the Hungarian sovereign lived towards the end of his reign mainly in regions where the Romanian population represents the majority, makes us see the Romanians along with the Cumans, under the protection of the royal privileges.
- <sup>11</sup> *Hurmuzaki/Densușianu*, I/1, p. 463-464.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 468.
- <sup>13</sup> G. Popa-Lisseanu, *Izvoarele istoriei românilor* / Sources of the Romanians' History, vol. V, București, 1935, p. 74, 75. Rogerius the monk narrates the events, mentioning that there was even a rumour according to which the Cumans and the Tartars plundered the kingdom of Hungary. So the entire people began to cry out against Kuthen: "death, death, he is the reason of the destruction of Hungary..."
- <sup>14</sup> *DIR, C, II*, p. 101 („We Ugrin... ban of Severin with the approval of Bela, by God's mercy, the illustrious king of Hungary...”).
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 172, 173, 175, 179, 203.
- <sup>16</sup> We should not forget either that Wladislaw IV led the country for a long time under the regency of his mother, Elisabeth, who was Cuman. The influences of these years bore on the first years after he came of age, determining his hostile attitude in front of the Hungarian nobles and the Pope's representative, Filip Fermo, handed over to the Cumans soon after his coming to Hungary (for details see P. Engel, op. cit., p. 133, 134, 135).
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 296, 297.
- <sup>18</sup> We consider that the Hungarian noble was in the camp that supported the "Venitian" Andrew III, though the Papacy will appoint Charles of Anjou as king of Hungary, from the first moment, by virtue of the rights of his mother, Mary of Hungary, daughter of the former king Stephen V. In this way we can explain the fact that the latter was so rapidly appropriated the two intracarpethian domains.
- <sup>19</sup> T. Sălăgean, *Un voievod al Transilvaniei: Ladislau Kan 1294-1315.*, p. 42. The only formula by means of which the new king Andrew III had the possibility to introduce his own men in a Transylvanian congregation faithful to the memory of Wladislaw IV remained by exerting his royal right of donation. From our viewpoint as well, it is inside this equation that should be judged the appropriation of the noble Ugrinus.
- <sup>20</sup> *DIR, C, veacul XIII, II*, p. 369. In the text of the appropriation document itself, issued on March 1291, is mentioned the assembly held some time ago in Alba-Iulia ("We, Andrew... King of Hungary, let you know... that when we held a meeting in Alba Iulia together with all the noblemen, the Saxons, the Szeclers and the Romanians of Transylvania...").
- <sup>21</sup> A. Lukács, *Țara Făgărașului în Evul Mediu (secolele XIII-XVI)* / The Land of Făgăraș during the Middle Ages, București, 1999 p. 166. The author highlights the fact that the Romanians' presence was not limited to simply assisting in a judge's chair.
- <sup>22</sup> We have in view the crucial correlations of the historian Șerban Papacostea (*Întemeiere și descălecat în tradiția istorică a constituirii Țării Românești* / The setting up of the State in the Historical Tradition concerning the Appearance of Walachia, in SMIM, XIX, 2001, p. 64) concerning this so-called transfer of ownership and the future relationships between

the Hungarian kingdom and Walachia. According to the author, the introduction of the commercial privilege of 1358, for the road of Brăila (where Câmpulungul was the headquarters of the central customs house of the country, which happened not by chance) and the acknowledgement by Hungary of the princely dominion over the Land of Făgăraș and of Amlaș can have a direct relation with the annihilation of the autonomy of the Land of Făgăraș and even with the fact that the princely residence was moved from Făgăraș to Câmpulung.

- <sup>23</sup> N. Stoicescu, „Descălecat” sau întemeiere? *O veche preocupare a istoriografiei românești. Legendă și adevăr istoric* / „Descălecat” or „întemeiere”? An Old Preoccupation of the Romanian Historiography, in vol. *Constituirea statelor feudale românești / The Appearance of the Romanian Feudal States*, București, 1980, p. 163. The study remains one of the most ample and best informed analyses dedicated to this problem, even though a part of the conclusions presented here remain a subject for debate.
- <sup>24</sup> In translation from Cuman, Basarab would mean „ruling father”.
- <sup>25</sup> *DRH, D, I*, p. 49.
- <sup>26</sup> In our historiography was highlighted, tangentially or not, the preponderance of the names, toponyms and even archeological discoveries of Cuman origin in the entire south-Carpathian area, but especially in the area of Walachia. They represent an extra argument in support of this theory. In this sense we have a series of works such as: N. Drăganu, *Românii în veacurile IX-XIV pe baza toponimiei și a onomasticii* / The Romanians in the 9th-14th Century Based on their Toponymy and Onomastics, București, 1933, p. 521; P. Diaconu, *Les coumans au Bas-Danube aux XI et XIII siècles*, București, 1978, p. 37; N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor* / The History of the Romanians, ed. a II-a, vol. III, București, 1993, p. 134, 135; V. Spinei, *Marile migrații din estul și sud-estul Europei* / The Great Migrations in the East and South-East of Europe, Iași 1999, p. 311, 312; P.P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* / Mircea the Great, București, 2000, p. 141, 142; Adrian Ioniță, *Spațiul dintre Carpații Meridionali și Dunărea inferioară în secolele IX-XIII* / The area between the Eastern Carpathians and the Lower Danube in the 9th-13th Century, București, 2005, p. 113, 114.
- <sup>27</sup> *DRH, B, Țara Românească / Walachia, IV*, p. 327-328; *DRH, B, Țara Românească / Walachia, V*, p. 128.
- <sup>28</sup> *DIR, sec. XVI, III*, p. 303; *DIR, sec. XVI, IV*, p. 221.
- <sup>29</sup> We tend to support, without having at our disposal documents to fully justify this hypothesis that the activity carried out by Negru Vodă south of the Carpathians was under the influence of the Mongolian power. The reasons of our theory spring out especially from the fact that the Tartar force was concentrated in the Lower Danube area, from where it had the possibility to exert its dominion over the extracarpethian territory, in general, and especially over Cumania. A collaboration with the fierce nomads might be able to explain easily even the rapidity with which a voivode, be he even Negru-Vodă, imposed himself in front of the other local formations.
- <sup>30</sup> T. Sălăgean (*op.cit.*, p. 121, 124) brought in discussion a new hypothesis concerning this stage of the process of the creation of the state, considering that the existence of the funeral stone of Laurențiu - administrative ruler of a comitat - in Câmpulung can be related to a domination of the Transylvanian ruler, Wladislaw Kan, in the area, with an eventual creation by him of a military district on the border along the southern slope of the Carpathians. Later on, the leaders of this political formation replaced a local voivode whose headquarters were in Argeș, setting themselves in his place, under some circumstances that cannot be reconstituted. One of the arguments brought in support of these statements is related to the

fact that the son of Nogai, Caka, is sheltered by the Transylvanian voivode, Wladislaw Kan, obtaining on this occasion a consolidation of his dominion over the curvature area of the Carpathians, maybe even in the region of Câmpulung.

<sup>31</sup> N. Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> Șerban Papacostea (*op. cit.*, p. 64-65) observed the lack of a thoroughful research, in the Romanian historiography, of the territorial constitution of Walachia, highlighting the fact that only new and patient analyses will be able to clarify, at least in part, the modalities of this territorial expansion.

<sup>33</sup> A. Sacerdoțeanu, *Argeș- cea mai veche reședință a Țării Românești / Argeș, the Oldest Residence of Walachia*, in Muzeul Pitești. Studii și Comunicări, I, 1968, p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> In the case of the legend of Dragoș, we will try to let ourselves guided as well by the opinion of Mircea Eliade who considered that the attempt to prove the non-historicity of a legendary tradition is just a waste of time (*Voievodul Dragoș și „vânătoarea rituală” / The voivode Dragoș and the “Ritual Hunting”*, in the vol. *De la Zamolxis la Genghis Han*, București, 1980, p. 139).

<sup>35</sup> We consider that the discussion concerning the legend of the coming of Dragoș, just as the presentation of certain comparisons to the legend of Negru Vodă would be an extremely complex problem that cannot be treated comprehensively in the present case. It will be the object of an ampler investigation, in a work that is going to be printed soon, which analyzes the process of the genesis of the medieval state of Moldavia. For this reason, here we will content ourselves with presenting certain opinions with a character of conclusions.

<sup>36</sup> S. Iosipescu, *Drumurile comerciale în Europa centrală și sud-estică / Commercial Roads in Central and south-Eastern Europe*, in AIIAI, XIX, 1982, p. 273. The author draws the attention on the fact that the justification of the Angevine politics beyond the Carpathians, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, continues to take place only invoking strategic reasons, such as that of assuring the kingdom's Transylvanian frontiers. The explanation is given by the historian's interest, which continues to be circumscribed to a certain problem, and to his tendency of simplifying it through isolation. In reality, the extracarpathanian politics of a great power such as Hungary, under the reign of Charles-Robert of Anjou and Lewis I, should be analyzed from all the viewpoints in order to be able to obtain a remarkable result.

<sup>37</sup> The year 1342 represents a crucial year. The death of the Hungarian king Charles-Robert of Anjou and of the khan Uzbek led to the weakening of the pressure exerted until then on the eastern border of Hungary. The new Hungarian king, Lewis I, tried, from the first moment, to take advantage of the favorable context, in order to drive away the Tartars from the south of Moldavia.

<sup>38</sup> The diplomas of Maramureș of the 14th-15th centuries published at the end of the 19th century were not able to clarify the issue of the identification and origin of Dragoș among the Romanian nobility (I. Mihaly de Apșa, *Diplome maramureșene din secolul XIV și XV / Diplomas of Maramureș of the 14th and 15th Centuries*, Sighet, 1900, p. 15, 38-39).

<sup>39</sup> *DRH, D, I, P. 76.*

<sup>40</sup> P.P. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI / The Slav-Romanian Chronicles of the 15th-17th Centuries*, published by I. Bogdan, București, 1959, p. 14, 39, 48, 60.

<sup>41</sup> Here are just a few of the arguments on which the theory presented for debate relies. Dragoș of Giulești is the first Romanian feudal (reminded by the documents) who acts east of the Carpathians under the aegis of the Hungarian kingdom. He represses a revolt of the local Moldavian population but it is not excluded that, under his aegis, some confrontations against the Tartars may have taken place as well. Following the services he did for the

Hungarian dynasty, the noble of Maramureș will be allotted several vilages in Maramureș, but the lack of precise information prevents us from rejecting the idea that his political and military influence may have extended in the east-Carpathian area as well after 1359, taking the form of a frontier principality under military administration, of a royal “căpitănie” mentioned as well by the chronicles a few centuries later.

- <sup>42</sup> T. Crossing the mountains through Oituz, it is supposed that Dragoș stopped in the valley of Bistrița, in an area surrounded by Bistrița, Nechid and Tazlău and which will later become known along the centuries as “câmpul lui Dragoș” / the field of Dragoș (see Șt. S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate*, p. 38-39). At the same time, after just half a century, in 1419, the field of Dragoș “sounded like something extremely old” (which makes us wonder if we might not possibly deal with some older political structure founded by one of the numerous Romanians who, for different reasons, had to leave his homeland (C. Mătasă, *Câmpul lui Dragoș / The field of Dragoș*, București, 1943, p. 26).
- <sup>43</sup> Șt. S. Gorovei, *op. cit.*, p. 93-94.
- <sup>44</sup> Idem, *Biserica de la Volovăț și mormântul lui Dragoș Vodă / The Church of Volovăț and the Tomb of Dragoș-Vodă*, in „MMS”, XLVII, nr. 56, Iași, 1971, p. 374, 383.
- <sup>45</sup> *Cronicile slavo-române...*, p. 15, 177.
- <sup>46</sup> Ș. Papacostea, *Românii în secolul al XIII-lea. Între cruciată și imperiul mongol / The Romanians in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Between the Crusade and the Mongolian Empire*, București, 1993, p. 58.
- <sup>47</sup> V. Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV / Moldavia in the 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Century*, București, 1982, p. 305, 306. The argumentation concerning the problem is rich and well-supported. The Hungarian king tried to unify, in a first stage, in Moldavia, the diplomatic line in order to maintain his dominion over a hostile region inhabited by Romanians. It is only from this perspective that Lewis I could have allowed the existence of a dependent principality, and the appointment in front of it of a Romanian chieftain.
- <sup>48</sup> G. Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei / The Chronicle of Walachia*, București, 1978, p. 72.
- <sup>49</sup> *Cronicile slavo-române...*, p. 159.
- <sup>50</sup> C. Rezachevici, *Cronologia domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova / Chronology of the rulers from Walachia and Moldavia*, vol. I, București, 2001 p. 415-416.
- <sup>51</sup> A. Sacerdoțeanu, *Sucesiunea 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*, in „Romanoslavica”, XI, 1965, p. 222.
- <sup>52</sup> Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate*, p. 31.
- <sup>53</sup> Ștefan Meteș, *Emigrări românești în secolele XIII-XX / Romanian Emigrations in the 13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century*, București, 1977, p. 73.
- <sup>54</sup> P. Ș. Năsturel, “Descălecat” - Mărturia unui cuvânt despre începuturile țărilor române / “Descălecat” – the Testimony of a Word on the Beginnings of the Romanian Principalities, taken from *Buletinul Bibliotecii Române*, vol. XII, 1980/1981, p. 222-224.
- <sup>55</sup> E. Beau de Lomenie, *Naissance de la nation roumaine*, București, 1937, p. 67.
- <sup>56</sup> We can see that the term “descălecat” does not appear as well in the Slavic-Romanian chronicles (P. P. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, p. 14, 39, 48, 160,191), which indicates the possibility that its first mention may have been related to the writings of some chroniclers such as Grigore Ureche or Nicolae Costin.
- <sup>57</sup> See, concerning this matter, a series of writings such as A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor / The History of the Romanians*, Iași, 1889, p. 47, 48 sau Gh. I. Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică*

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*despre întemeierea statelor românești* / The Historical Tradition concerning the Foundation of the Romanian States, București, 1980, p. 138.

- <sup>58</sup> P.P. Panaitescu, *Interpretări românești* / Romanian Interpretations, București, 1994, p. 39. The author discusses the mention of the Romanian army that participated in 1325, in Poland's battle against the Czechs, the mention of the market town of Siret, in 1352, on the occasion of the passage through Bukovina of king Lewis I, and the mention of Alexa Moldavicz, in Lemberg, in 1334-1335.
- <sup>59</sup> In the opinion of the historian D. Onciul (*Opere complete* / Complete Works, București, 1946, p. 136-138), the setting up of the state of Negru Vodă was imaging starting from that Dragoș of without being necessarily based on a historical event.