FROM VLAD ȚEPEȘ – WALLACHIAN RULER – TO DRACULA
CONCLUSIVE DOCUMENTS REGARDING HIS NAME AND “FAME”

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Abstract: The success of the Dracula novel and its later film adaptations stem from the fact that the real Vlad Țepeș was, himself, a remarkable character. This study documents sources that show a clear path between the real, historic character and the fictional hero. The method employed is empiric, namely consulting and translating old documents, and thus establishing connections between reality and fiction which later became legend. The novelty of the results derives from the documents analysed for the study: original documents, written in Latin or Slavonic, on sealed parchments, belonging to the Romanian National Archives. This study may represent an early form of understanding the relationship between the cultural-historical components and their possibilities for their tourist capitalization, as well as a pleading for a larger set of criteria used to analyse the evolution of cultural tourism.

Keywords: reality, documents, image, historic person, fictional character, cultural tourism

Introduction

Interest and research on legendary figures is omnipresent in specialized studies. People need myths, legends, and stories to incite their imagination and sometimes, their creativity (Reijnders 2010: 42; Teodorescu 2012: 26). Dracula appeared in an adequate physical-geographical space, which has amplified his qualities (Reijnders 2011: 233; Chihaiță 1964: 133; Plate 2006: 116). When creating such characters, authors usually start their work by using real historical facts. Those facts, or glimpses of truths need to be uncovered (Teodorescu 2009: 83; Reijnders 2010: 41; Dinca 2015: 28). In their desire to affirm themselves as literary name, authors start with a real figure in mind, and transform him or her into an even more interesting character, thus creating a legend. Bram Stoker is such an author and count Dracula a character of such uniqueness. The search for historic facts started with historic documents that explain the character’s “concerns”, “bloodlust”, physique, and lifestyle, all placed into a convincing geographic framework (Lee 2012: 55, Peptenatu 2012: 227; Pintilii 2011: 325). All these details were completed with traditions, customs, and local beliefs (Esteban, 2016), as characters need to relate with the place in which they were created (Walker and Wright 1997: 70; Plate 2006: 117).
Methodology

The analysis used an empirical method, based on the study of 15th and 16th century documents. These documents belong to the Romanian National Archive. And, because they are mostly written in Slavonic they required translating. The translation and interpretation of these documents had to be done with extreme accuracy and responsibility so not to diminish or distort the information they contain. The texts are very old and thus have a large number of words that no longer exist in the usual lexicon, archaisms that needed great attention in order to faithfully present their meaning at the moment of their use. Beside the above-mentioned documents, a series of chronicles and Latin writings that mention the same events and persons (Hurmuzaki and Bogdan) were studied. The authors examined coins minted in that time period and analysed armorial insignia as part of the methodology, in order to establish the role Vlad Țepeș had in the history of the country which created the conditions for him to, today become appealing as a character because of the legends he generated.

This method, apparently simple, is highly demanding and carries an immense responsibility. Selecting and translating the documents and deciding which texts best relate to the subject of the research are included as research methods at all time.

Historic stages established through research

1. Historic documents and evidence that emphasize the metamorphosis of the name – from Vlad Țepeș to Dracula

Vlad Țepeș was the son of Vlad Dracul – ruler of Wallachia between 1436-1442 and 1443-1447, who bestowed on him a series of remarkable qualities but also the nickname Drăculea or Draculea (translated as son of Dracul). Chroniclers of the time praised the character of Vlad Dracul, son of Mircea cel Bătrân (ruler of Wallachia in 1386-1395 and 1397-1418). A. Bonfin describes Vlad Dracul (Vlad Țepeș’ father) as: “the most righteous and unsubdued man, which in all battles was most valiant and best adviser, because with a reduced army but with great heart and wisdom and the virtue of his soldiers, without foreign help, fought a long war with the Ottomans, a war that all the Christians together would not have endured”. A similar opinion was voiced by Burgundy born chronicler Wavrin, who met Vlad Dracul during a 1445 expedition against the Ottomans, when he said that the Wallachian lord was “famous for his bravery and wisdom”. With such qualities and benefiting sometimes from the help in battle of Iancu de Hunedoara – lord of Severin from 1438, ruler of Transylvania 1441-1456, and king Matias Corvin’s father, Vlad Dracul succeeded in maintaining Wallachia’s independence, a difficult endeavour to achieve at that time as it was under severe threat from the Ottoman Empire (Harczali 1999: 255). Before becoming ruler (1436) Vlad Dracul was,
for a long time, a fugitive (refugee) in Moldavia and Transylvania. In Moldavia he married one of the ruler’s, Alexandru cel Bun (1400-1431), daughters. Vlad Dracul had three sons: Mircea, Vlad, and Radu and two illegitimate children: Vlad (the Monk) and (another) Mircea. All five of them manage to rule Wallachia for a shorter or longer periods of time: Mircea: 1442, Vlad (Țepeș): 1448, 1456-1462 and 1476, Radu (the Beautiful): 1462-1474, Mircea: 1481, and Vlad (the Monk): 1482-1495. Out of all of them the most recognizable will be Vlad Țepeș. There are no reliable documents about the life of he who will become Dracula (Sturdza, 1888). It seems that he was born in 1430 or 1431, while his father was living in Sighişoara, Transylvania. A commemorative plaque marking the house where the future ruler Vlad Dracul lived between 1431 and 1435, sits at the corner between Cositorarilor and Cetăţii streets. Once he became ruler of Wallachia, with the support of Hungary’s king Sigismud of Luxemburg, at the end of 1436, Vlad Dracul (Vlad Țepeș’s father) had to deal with the pressure from an expanding Ottoman Empire. The name Dracul comes from the Order of the Dragon which he received on February 8th 1431, in Nürnberg, town of the imperial government; order which was set up in 1408 by the emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg, and his wife Barbara (Mureșan 2002: 390).

The order was very exclusive: it only received the most important people, especially monarchs and high aristocracy, who would vow to help each other and also protect their widows and orphans if they died. In 1431, the order included, besides Sigismund of Luxemburg; Vladislav Jagello, king of Poland; Vitovd, Great Duke of Lithuania; Alfons the 5th, king of Aragon and Naples; the Serbian despot Ştefan Lazarevici; and others (Mureşan 1998: 90; Gourdon de Genouillac1891: 197; Cremene 1998: 152; Teodorescu 2016: 142). As public symbols, the members of the Order would wear a collar with a golden medallion bearing an engraved dragon, coiled in a circle, with its tail twisted around its neck and with its back torn lengthways. A cross was placed on top of the dragon, representing the victory of the Church. Along the cross the text read „O, quam misericors est Deus” („Oh, the Lord is so merciful”), and on its wide side it read „Pius et Justus” („Faithful and Righteous”). It seems that wearing this collar his entire life ensured that Vlad’s nickname became Vlad Dracul.

Vlad Dracul used the emblem of the Dragon as the symbol of his seal on August 8th 1437 in two monetary issues and as an ornament on the Episcopalian Assumption of the Virgin Mary Church in Curtea de Argeş. On the clock tower of the church, built in 1439 by Vlad Dracul, there was a flagstone where a bas-relief shows a dragon victorious over another fantastic beast. The tower has since disappeared but the image was interpreted as the Romanian, a Christian people, defeating the pagan Ottomans.
In 1517 when the clock tower was rebuilt at the command of Neagoe Basarab, the flagstone with the image of the victorious dragon was kept recessed in the wall (Segovia 2016: 160; Stoian 1989: 24). Once the clock tower was finally destroyed the flagstone was taken out of the wall and, due to its importance as a feudal art object, is now kept at the Curtea de Argeș Municipal Museum.

As another sign of allegiance to the Order of the Dragon, its members wore two cloaks: a green and a red one. The green one, evoking the colour of the dragon, was worn on top and the red one, representing the sacrifice in the fight with the “non-believers” underneath the first one (Cernovodeanu 1976: 1733; Rezachevici 1998: 59; Gascon 2014: 417).

In exchange for its inclusion in the order, Vlad Dracul promised to help the Franciscan monks in their missionary endeavours in the Lower Danube area.

The chronicler Windeke, biographer of Sigismund of Luxemburg, wrote that, the same day as these festivities, Vlad Dracul was crowned emperor of Wallachia. He also wrote that the Romanian boyars, who came to the ceremony, brought with them the sceptre of the country and handed it to Vlad Dracul.

It is also worth mentioning that the dragon, shown as a two legged reptile, with a long tail and wingless, also appears engraved on Vlad Dracul’ seal in 1437 together with an eagle sitting on it (Figure 1).

At the end of 1447 Iancu of Hunedoara undertook an expedition in Wallachia which ended with the murder of Vlad Dracul and his replacement on the throne with Iancu’s protégé: Vladislav the 2nd (ruler between 1447 and 1456).

Shortly after his coming to the throne Vladislav the 2nd, considering Wallachia’s commercial interest with the Ottoman Empire, made a monetary reform when he assimilated the Romanian ducat with the Turkish akçes, which was a silver forte coin at that time. This decision, implemented probably at the end of 1452, caused discontent in Transylvania and lead to the deterioration of relations with Iancu of Hunedoara. Shortly after that year, the Hungarian
kingdom started their offensive against Vladislav, and threatened to seize two old possessions of Wallachia’s rulers: Amlaş and Făgăraş. In the spring of 1456 Vladislav the 2nd attacked and tried to occupy Făgăraş, which had been, in the meantime, stolen. During the same year, the Ottomans were amassing their armies south of the Danube.

Clear references to a direct connection between Vlad the 2nd (Ţepeş), ruler of Wallachia, and the fictional character “Dracula” have to come from real, historic sources. The documents found at the Romanian National Archives we analysed describe his life and actions at different moments in time, and they name him after his father, which is similar to the name of the character that is, today, known as a legendary figure. The entire methodology follows these documents chronologically in order to understand how the ruler of Wallachia used, in real time, the name “Dracul” or “Dracula”.

1. In a document written in Feldioara on April 2nd 1459, Dan – ruler of Wallachia – tells that while arriving, with the permission of the king, in Bârsa Country, the chancellors of Braşov and representatives of Bârsa Country came to him and complained that Dracul wayvoda (Vlad Ţepeş) bowed to the Ottomans and arrested Braşov’ merchants and envoys, confiscated their goods and impaled them; he also burnt over 300 Wallachian young men and secretly called his own men that were in Braşov into the country. Dan authorized the residents of Braşov to confiscate as compensation the merchandise of Romanian merchants and decided that those goods would never be returned. (Bogdan, 1905: CIV, 324-325; Hurmuzaki, 1911: 50-51);

2. In a document from April 5th 1459, Dan – ruler of Wallachia – observing Drăculea’s (Vlad Ţepeş) marauding and cruelty towards the merchants of Braşov as well as his disobedience and unfaithfulness to the king of Hungary, empowers Braşov’s leaders to confiscate all the goods of the Wallachian tradesmen as compensation for their losses. (Bogdan, 1905: LXXXVI, 101-102);

3. In a document from March 2nd 1460, Dan – ruler of Wallachia – considering the enormous damages, tortures and killings done upon the inhabitants of Braşov and Bârsa Country by lord Dracul Vlad (Ţepeş) decides to confiscate the goods and money of Wallachian people that were deposited in Braşov before hostilities began – as compensation for the citizens that have fed him for an entire year, have supported him and helped him won his country back; he also asks all Wallachian authorities future and present not to take revenge on the people of Braşov and Bârsa Country for these actions. (Bogdan, 1905: CIV, 325-327);

4. In a document from 1460, Dan informs the people of Braşov that the king of Hungary has given him permission to ask for the help of Ardeal, Bârsa, and the Wallachian’s Szeklers in order to banish Drăculea (Vlad Ţepeş); and
as such he asks for help in forms of weapons and clothes. (Bogdan, 1905: LXXXVII, 102-104);

5. In a document written in Arghiș on August 4th 1475, Vlad the 2nd (Tepes) informs the people of Sibiu that his chief magistrate Cristian will arrive to build him a house and that he henceforth names himself Wladislaus Dragulya, vaivoda partium Transalpinarum. (Bogdan, 1905: CIII, 322-323; Hurmuzaki, 1911: 84-85);

6. King Matei Corvin’s order from September 21st 1475 to „Thomas, magister civium civitatis Cibiniensis” details how he should give two hundred florins, on his account „fidelis nostro Drakwlye ducentos florenos pro subsidio” to his faithful servant Dracula from the incomes of Offenbayei. (Hurmuzaki, 1911: 86);

7. In a document from Bălcaciu on October 13th 1475, Vlad Țepeș naming himself „Ladislaus Dragkulya, wayvoda partium transalpinarum”, certifies to the people of Sibiu and Brașov that he received two hundred florins at the order of the king. (Bogdan, 1905: CIV, 323-324; Hurmuzaki, 1911: 86);

8. The reinstatement of Țepeș was decided at the advice of the king of Hungary according to a letter of Ioan Pongratz, ruler of Transylvania, written at Stremț (Dyod) on January 10th 1476 for the Saxons from Brașov, through which they are asked to allow all Romanians, partisans to Țepeș together with their wives and children to go with him except for those who showed his permission to remain „quod Valachos illos, quorum uxores et filii sunt apud vos, ad Ladislaum Drakwlyam pertinentes, omnes post ipsum Drakwlyam dirigatis transeundos, solum modom illos vel illum qui literas ipsius Drakwlya habuerint et illorum uxores et filios ibi reservetis; alií omnes vadant post ipsum Drakwlya, ut servarent domino nostro regi”. (Hurmuzaki, 1911: 86-87);

9. Ștefan Erdely de Șintereag (Somkerek), the vice-ruler of Transylvania writes on July 21st 1476 to the Saxons in Brașov, ordering them to send their contingent to Turda under the command of Ștefan Báthory and Vlad Dracula „quia magnifici Stephanus de Bathor et Ladislaus Drakula una cum exercitibus regis hic ad dictum terminum constituuntur”. (Hurmuzaki, 1911: 92-93);

10. In a document from Cipău in 1476, Vlad, entitling himself Ladislaus Draculya, gives an ultimatum to the (Hungarian) authorities to release his messenger Sebastian, who was seized traveling to Brașov, by August. (Bogdan, 1905: CIV, 324; Hurmuzaki, 1911: 94).

11. Vlad Țepeș’s main political objective was reinforcing the central authority. He expressed this in a letter written in Târgoviște, on September 10th 1456, to the people of Brașov, stating: “think about how when a man or a ruler is powerful and strong he can make peace in any way he wants to; but when he is powerless, another one will come and rule him as he pleases” (considerandum est vobis: quando homo vel dominus est potens et fortis, tunc
pacem potest facere sicut v<lt; cum autem impotens erit, forcior super eum veniet et faciet secum sicut v<lt). (Hurmuzaki 1911: LXXX: 45-46).

Vlad Țepeș minted a trade coin (Figure 2). The coin was a silver ducat approximately round, with a diameter of 15 mm, weighing 0.56 grams. On the obverse, it had Wallachia’s heraldic coat of arms: an eagle profile with its head turned, standing on a helmet adorned with two plumes, and a cross coming out of its wing that intersects the interior circle and enters the legend. Between an internal smooth circle and a pearled external circle, the legend said in Slavonic † IO VLAD VOIVOD († IO VLAD VOIEVOD). On the reverse, there was a medieval triangular French shield with rounded flanks, split in the middle and showing in the first field a crescent moon and a six rays star and in the second field three fasciae (first rank heraldic pieces). Between an internal smooth circle and a pearled external circle, the legend said in Slavonic † IO VLAD VOIVODA G<ospodi>N († IO VLAD VOIEVOD, DOMN).

Țepeș became famous for his asperity and his desire to reinstate justice in Wallachia.

Vlad Țepeș also paid special attention to organizing his army in order to fight for the independence of the country (Minea 1928: 39; Stoicescu 1978:103). At that time Wallachia’s army had two components: in case of great danger the so-called “great host”, made out of all the weapon able inhabitants, would be summoned and, in smaller armed conflicts the so-called “small host” came in, which included servants and courtiers of the ruler or other high boyars.

Fig. 2. Coin minted during the reign of Vlad Țepeș

In order to organize an army that would be available at any moment’ notice Vlad Țepeș decided two things: “he built a personal guard that never left his side”, and he enrolled “a number of hand-picked devoted soldiers and infantrymen that would receive the money and fortunes of those they killed”. In an undated letter, Vlad asks the people of Brașov “lads” (soldiers) to serve him,
announcing that because he did not have any money to pay them he would give them alms and “feed” them the same as his other “servants” (Dogaru 1976: 25).

There are supporting documents for this, one of which is included in the study (Figure 3) and translates as follows:

**1437 (6945), August 23rd, Târgoviște.** Vlad Dracul lord of Wallachia certifies Vlădești village to the boyar Bodin, and exempts him and his sons Mircea and Vlad for as long as they live of services and tributes.

† In the name of the God Almighty, the all faithful and all honourable and Christ Loving, I Vlad and lord by the mercy of God and through the Benevolence of God ruler of all Hungro-Wallachian Country, and duke of Amlaș and Făgăraș. My lordship has deign to offer this hereby true gift of property to my servant boyar Bodin and his sons, so that Vlădești village may be his land not to alienate, and to leave as inheritance and manage without tribute as long as I shall live and as long as his sons Mircea and Vlad shall live, and to keep the earnings from growing sheep, pigs, beehives on these lands and from trading dairy, wines, or hay or woods from their forests and from other tributes, peasant duties, and other works big and small that are done on his lands. Also, no tax-collectors, and none of my other boyars or high officials shall trouble him, because if anybody would harm even a hair on them, that person shall receive from me great harm and wrath as they will prove unfaithful and disobedient to this, my charter.

Even after my death, whomever God chooses to rule over Wallachia, either from my bloodline or the bloodline of my lordship’ relatives, or as payment for our sins from the bloodline of other families, if he will choose to respect and certify this charter may God Almighty solidify his reign, but if he chooses to mock or ruin him may God Almighty mock and ruin his body in this world, and may his soul join Judas and Arie and all others who said, his blood upon them and their children, that which it is and will be forever and ever, Amin.

Witnesses: boyar Voico magistrate, boyar Tudor, boyar Nanul, boyar Stanciul, Mircea’s brother, boyar Nan Pascal, Stanciul Honoi, boyar Pârvu, Dimitrie sword bearer, Coica first treasurer, Semen High Steward, Micle cup-bearer, Badea salesman, Ștefan chancellor.

I, Coica, have written this in Târgoviște, in the 23rd day of August, of the year 6945.

† I Vlad Lord, with the mercy of God, ruler.¹

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2. The influence of historical truth and Romanian mythology in the creation of the fictional character of Dracula

In Romanian mythology there are no vampires. It does contain phantoms of wraiths that do not suck blood, but have the “capacity” to return to the world of the living and take their beloved with them. It seems Stoker used two elements as starting points for his works: the existence of these mythical creatures to which he added, to increase the attractiveness factor of his works, the acts of
cruelty and their uniqueness (impaling) of the lord Vlad Tepes (Ciobanu 1979: 254; Dinca 2015: 26). The historic chronicles contain descriptions that would hardly be accepted by the human mind (Spracklen and Spracklen 2014: 98; Muresan 1998: 91; Herman 2014: 173; Mazilu 2014:43). Reported cases of wraiths on Romanian territories (which are also specific to other European geographical areas) are equally interesting and revolting, but are still present in the rural population’s behaviour and subconscious in terms of dealing with one’s beloved spirit returning from the deaths.

Results
The study’s results follow three distinct directions:

a. It shines a light on historical documents relating to the political and economic life of Wallachia; the ruling families and the interactions between them and the noble families from neighbouring territories or other European families;

b. Emphasizes the European connections existing during the centuries that were analysed (15th and 16th);

c. Established connections between the historic character of Vlad Ţepeş and the fictional character of Dracula.

Consulting the documents from the Romanian National Archives is a necessity for any study that wishes to have a solid historic base. Equally, they allow writers to sample information when creating - more or less factual - literary figures, and correctly using real time-periods and real historic character in order to bestow credibility to their works.

The is the oldest existing one at the Romanian National Archives where the name “Ţepeş” is used. It references the first time Lord Vlad receives this appellative because of the punishments he inflicted on his enemies or those who were breaking the law. The harshness of the punishment brought him the renown which history and society imprinted on him as a name.

Conclusion
The amplitude of the Dracula phenomenon unleashed with the work of Stoker in 1897 seems to have created a need to elucidate the beginnings or the events that lead to the creation of the fictional character. The legendary figure was continually pictured in films and series and his phenomenon is, even now, expanding. The study tries to establish the reason why the voivode Vlad was chosen for the role of count Dracula. Was there a real element that acted as a base for the story or not? Establishing a link between reality and Stoker’s influence in creating the character was possible by following each document and covering the content of each chronicle that contains descriptions of his name, the lineage of families with similar names, the chronology of historic events, and the actions he undertook during his lifetime.
Romanian rulers and their family’s origins can be the object and subject of numerous studies. The present study offers a series of clarifications regarding the origins of Lord Vlad Țepeș, by using historic documents (some of them unique). The peculiarities and speculations present in fictional (legend) literature are loosely based on real information. The present study is an attempt to elucidate a connection between reality and fiction.

Fiction tourism is quite new and almost absent in Romania and has a low coverage. It is interesting to notice the fact that many tourism offers use the name of Dracula. These offers intend to lure tourists from around the world to visit the country. Still, Romanian people are not keen about the Dracula culture. Education in general and tourism education in particular can allow those that work for the development of tourism products and offers, to provide something that tourists are looking for. This is how Dracula tourism emerged. Once launched (first in Europe and then it was also taken by the Romanian companies) Dracula tourism started developing this niche tourism. Depending on tourists’ age and nationality there are different approaches. Fiction tourism may become an important part of cultural tourism.

The study aimed to answer a few questions among which: why Dracula.

This question is one history can answer. The order of the Dragon is in a way the base for the answer and the evolution of the name was presented as thoroughly as possible. The multiple forms that the name takes, with a common root of Dracul in a positive representation is explanatory enough. The choice of Vlad Țepeș (the son) and not Vlad Dracul (the father) as Count Dracula (the legendary figure) was determined by the description of his actions, their harshness, severity, and “thirst for blood” in relation to anybody breaking the law, but also those who tried to occupy his territory. These actions allowed for a connection to be made between the historic and the legendary figure.

Another question this study tried to answer was since when and why “Țepeș”.

Many of history’s rulers and monarchs have complex names, mostly made out of their inherited, family name, and an appellative which derived from the way in which they were perceived by their people or those they fought, or collaborated with, by their interests, or by other reasons which are written in different chronicles or documents. The original document no. 122 from the Central National Historic Archives, History Section, in Slavonie written on paper but highly deteriorated (still decipherable in sections that refer exactly to the name of the ruler) brings decipherable in sections that refer exactly to the name of the ruler) brings clarifications regarding the period when Vlad received this nickname, with a negative connotation, which passed the test of time as he will be forever known as Vlad Țepeș. The value of this document is increased by the presence of an attached seal.

The present study is just one step in analysing documents regarding the name, political connections, and administrative actions of the ruler Vlad Țepeș.
It represents an analysis of his descent, the way he was perceived by the population, by the chroniclers of his time, and those who analysed his actions after his death. In the same time, this work is a starting point in examining the historic person and the mythical, ever so current, and controversial, figure: Dracula.

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