
	<p>Списание ЕПОХИ Издание на Историческия факултет на ВТУ „Св. св. Кирил и Методий“</p> <p>Journal EPOCHI [EPOCHS] Edition of the Department of History of “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo</p>		<p>Том / Volume XXXI (2023). Книжка / Issue 1</p>
---	---	--	---

DOI: 10.54664/VPMT6924

THE BEGINNING OF THE WALLACHIAN CHANCERY AND THE SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE: PRINCELY CHARTERS AND THEIR DIPLOMATIC FORMULAE FROM *SANCTIO* AND *DISPOSITIO*

Liviu Marius ILIE*

Abstract: *During the reign of Mircea the Elder (ca. 1386–1418), the Wallachian chancery had an important activity, with many charters from that period reaching modern times; the diplomatic formulae used in composing these documents can explain various cultural and political issues regarding medieval Wallachia. The succession to the throne was a main concern for Mircea; at the end of the charters, very often in *sanctio* and rarely in *dispositio*, scribes added different fragments that mentioned the possible successors to the throne (sons, relatives, or pretenders from other families). The evolution of these diplomatic formulae is more explicit by considering the beneficiaries of the charters, especially the monasteries of Tismana and Cozia. Moreover, an analogy with the Bulgarian chancery can reveal interesting conclusions.*

Keywords: *diplomatics; Wallachia; charter; throne succession; sanction; Mircea the Elder (Mircea cel Bătrân).*

“Un acte est un discours, divisé en plusieurs parties. Ces parties ne sont pas une création *a posteriori* des diplomatistes modernes. Déjà les diplomatistes médiévaux, certains d’entre eux du moins, avaient recours à ces divisions. Chacune de ces parties a une fonction bien précise: l’auteur est présenté, l’action juridique est expliquée, les moyens de validation sont annoncés... Puisque les actes ont été construits en fonction d’un tel schéma, il faut reconstituer celui-ci, en démontant la charte par parties, pour mieux en comprendre la construction et donc le sens.” [Guyotjeannin, O., Pycke, J., Tock, B.-M. 2006, p. 71]. The French text above describes the intricate process of constructing and deconstructing a medieval document. On the one hand, the medieval scribe has carefully put together the predetermined parts or divisions of the document; on the other hand, the modern diplomatist “dismantles the charter in parts for better understanding the construction and the sense.” These parts of the document became real diplomatic paradigms and were copied from one chancery to another, in various contexts of the medieval world. To solve the whole puzzle, it is important to understand the meaning of each component; accordingly, for a proper understanding of a medieval charter, it is important to distinguish between and explain each of its diplomatic parts.

The aim of this article is to determine how *sanctio* and *dispositio* – two diplomatic parts of the medieval charter – were reflected in the succession to the throne of Wallachia in the late 14th and

* Liviu Marius Ilie – PhD, Lecturer of the University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania; @lvmilie2@gmail.com

early 15th centuries, mainly during the reign of Mircea the Elder (Mircea cel Bătrân). For this period, a particular difficulty in analyzing the princely documents of Wallachia is that many of them lack a date; however, the framing of *sanctio* and *dispositio* is more visible by considering the beneficiaries of these charters.

The oldest surviving Slavonic charter of the Wallachian chancery was issued by Prince Vladislav I; the next document reaching modern times dates from the reign of Dan I, Vladislav's nephew [Panaiteșcu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 17–22]. The situation changed when Dan's brother, Mircea the Elder, ascended the Wallachian throne; he ruled for more than three decades (ca. 1386–1418) [Panaiteșcu, P. P. 2000, p. 54; Rezachevici C. 2001, pp. 79–81; Pippidi, A. 2013, pp. 47–48], and his chancery produced an important number of documents for both monastic foundations and lay persons.

During the reign of Mircea the Elder, the Wallachian chancery established the diplomatic formulae regarding throne succession for the next century. It is very important to analyze the princely documents of Wallachia, because they represented the ruler's wish; they were written in his name and read in front of him; sometimes, the prince ordered different changes in the text, such as the exclusion of some passages. For the exclusion of different fragments from the text, a relevant document was issued by Radu the Great at the end of the 15th century, on 19 July 1498 [Panaiteșcu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 463–465]. Therefore, the political aspects of the charters, such as the succession to the throne, were well known to the Wallachian princes, and they reflected their personal choice for the future.

During Mircea's rule, two main diplomatic formulae were created by the Wallachian chancery which became a standard in the 15th century. Although they are distinctly placed in the document, a charter issued by Vlad the Devil on 8 September 1439 combines them in the same place [Archiva Istorică a României 1864, p. 85]. The first diplomatic text is “during the life of my lordship and during the life of my son/sons” [Ilie L. M. 2018]; the second one is described in this paper.

In terms of diplomatics, the second formula is very often present in the *sanctio* of the document and sometimes at the end of *dispositio*. This part of the text is linked to a spiritual punishment that the prince who issued the charter addressed to his successors to the Wallachian throne. Because, after his death, he will not be able to impose a sanction on those who disobey his decision; it is God, His Mother, or some of the saints that will do it instead of the prince himself [Bogdan, D. P. 1956, pp. 102–108]. When depicting those men who could be reached by God's wrath for disrespecting the charter, the prince included a list of possible successors to his throne. The throne succession, as it is described in the Wallachian charters, can be better explained by separating the documents related to Tismana and Cozia – the most important monasteries during the reign of Mircea the Elder. The monks carefully preserved the princely charters, because these documents were the strongest proof of their land possessions. When they wanted reconfirmation of their property or when they needed to face a trial, they took the charters issued by the former rulers and went with them to the princely court, as it is described in a document issued by Vlad the Monk on 3 June 1493 [Panaiteșcu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 384–386]. Thus, the scribes of the princely chancery copied various parts of the old documents brought by the monks into the charters they were composing. Among these copied parts, the throne succession texts seem to be different in the documents issued for the Tismana and Cozia monasteries.

The Wallachian charters of Mircea express his official position on the establishment of the two monasteries. For Mircea, Tismana was the foundation of his princely family, raised by his father (Radu I) and finished by his brother (Dan I); although no charter was preserved from the reign of Radu I, both Mircea and Dan mentioned their father as the founder of Tismana. The charters issued by Mircea for Tismana repeated some diplomatic formulae from the document of his brother. It is enough to read the beginning of the documents for Tismana issued by Dan I on 3 October 1385 and by Mircea the Elder on 27 June 1387 to see that *intitulatio* and *narratio* are almost identical [Panaiteșcu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 19–25].

As for the succession text preserved at the end of *dispositio*, the conclusion is the same. The appointment of a monastic community leader was a prerogative of the community itself and no one else could do it, “neither myself Mircea voivode, nor one of those after me”; it is very important

to underline that the scribe of Mircea's chancery copied the text from Dan's charter and obviously replaced the name Dan with Mircea. The context of including this text in the charter is linked to the self-governing policy of the Tismana Monastery, with nobody but the monks being able to elect the leader (**начальник**) [for this last word – **Djamo-Diaconiță, L.** 1971, p. 332; **Biliarsky, I.** 2011, p. 97]. Damian P. Bogdan, an outstanding researcher of Wallachian charters, identified this text as a *nonobstant clause* [**Bogdan, D. P.** 1956, p. 102], which is part of *dispositio* [*clause dérogative* – **Bautier, R.-H.** 1977, p. 94; **Guyotjeannin, O., Pycke, J., Tock, B.-M.** 2006, p. 81]). The first documents of Tismana do not mention anything else about the possible successors to the throne, except this short text (“one of those after me”). Another charter issued by Mircea's chancery for Tismana copied the same diplomatic formula; the document has only one chronological element – the year 6900, – which corresponds to the interval 1 September 1391 – 31 August 1392 [**Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 33–36]. The first conclusion is that, during the first years of Mircea's reign, the text “one of those after me”, taken from the charter issued by Dan I, was copied and re-copied into the documents for Tismana. Two other documents issued for Tismana and preserved as Slavonic originals have the same text in *dipositio*, but a new paragraph is added to *sanctio*. The diplomatic formula of spiritual punishment begins with an enumeration of the persons who could disobey the decision taken by the charter: “even my lordship or one of my sons or some of the princes who will come after me” [**Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 40, 42; 53–54]. It is obvious that a transformation occurred in the diplomatic formulae; while the charters from the beginning of Mircea's reign mentioned only “one of those after me”, these two documents reformulated this fragment into “the princes who will come after me” and added the short text “one of my sons.” Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the sons are mentioned before the other possible princes; the Slavonic term used for ‘prince’ is **госпоаѣ**. Unfortunately, none of the two documents has a date in its original form.

A different situation can be found in the charters that Mircea the Elder issued for the Cozia Monastery. First of all, while Tismana was regarded as a monastery of his princely family, Cozia was seen as his own foundation; in the oldest charter issued for Cozia on 20 May 1388 and preserved in a Slavonic copy, Mircea mentions that “my lordship desired to raise the monastery from foundation” [**Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 25, 27]. Returning to *sanctio*, the document provided for a similar situation in Tismana – only the monks themselves could choose the successor after the death of the abbot (**игѣменъ** in the preserved text) [for the word **игѣменъ** – **Macovei, T.** 1977, p. 54; **Biliarsky, I.** 2011, p. 76]. As for the persons who were prohibited to influence the successor of the abbot, the charter quotes: “no other prince who God wills to be after me”; the Slavonic word used for ‘prince’ in this context is **господаръ**. Moreover, the text is similar to the one of the last two documents from Tismana – the charter of Cozia adding God's will for the succession of the Wallachian throne. The same fragment is found in a Slavonic document, which was partially preserved as an original; this princely charter was issued for Cozia on 4 September 1389 [**Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, p. 29]. A similar text is found in another document, which Mircea offered to the same monastery on a date that was not added in the preserved original. In this document, a very important remark concerns throne succession; the fragment that describes the possible successors opens with the words: “after the death of my lordship (**по смърти господства ми**)” [**Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 48–49]. This short text became common in the charters issued by the Wallachian chancery [**Coman, M.** 2013, pp. 63–64], and it suggested that the reign of the prince would be as long as his life, with a successor being able to ascend the throne only after his death.

Another document issued by Mircea the Elder for the Cozia Monastery represents a step towards a better understanding of the throne succession; the charter is preserved in a Slavonic copy and contains the following text: “after my death, whoever God wills to be the prince of the Wallachian country, either from our family or from somewhere else” [**Panaitescu, P. P., Mioc, D.** 1966, pp. 43, 45]. The Slavonic word **племѣ** [**Biliarsky, I.** 2011, p. 110] expresses the prince's desire to keep the reign into his family; nonetheless, the reign could go outside of his family as well. An interesting situation concerns the date of this charter; while the day and the month are 8 January, the year is disputable. One of the manuscripts that has preserved the copy of the charter has “indiction 15” as

a chronological element, while another one has “the year 6902”. During Mircea’s rule, indiction 15 corresponds to the years 1392 and 1407; the editors of the last collection of Wallachian charters chose the year 1392 for the chronological correspondence of indiction 15 from the document. The charter dates either from 8 January 1392 (as the first manuscript suggests), or from 8 January 1394 (as the second manuscript proposes), i.e. from the last decade of the 14th century [Panaiteacu, P. P. 1938, pp. 54–59; Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, p. 45].

Three other documents – two Slavonic copies and an original – have the same diplomatic throne succession formula: “after the death of my lordship, whoever God wills to be the prince of the Wallachian country, either from my relatives or any other prince on the throne of my lordship” [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 59, 60–61, 79]. In terms of throne succession, these two charters replace the family from the previous one with the relatives; the use of the word *столаъ* [Biliarsky, I. 2011, p. 139] can be understood as an expression of the princely power. The first two documents do not have a date written by a scribe, while the last one was written on 8 March 1415.

During Mircea the Elder’s rule, the most elaborated diplomatic throne succession formula is the following one: “after the death of my lordship, whoever God wills to be prince of the Wallachian country, either from the fruit of my heart or from my relatives or from another family.” Compared to those described above, this larger text has been preserved in an original Slavonic charter that Mircea issued for his Cozia Monastery [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 64, 65]; unfortunately, as in many other cases from the beginning of the Wallachian chancery, the scribe did not add a date to the document. It is obvious that this extended form used shorter texts from the other charters, such as the words “after the death of my lordship” or God’s will for choosing the throne successors. These possible successors can be divided into three different parts: “from the fruit of my heart”, “from my relatives”, and “from another family.” “The fruit of my heart” might represent the sons of the prince even from the reign of Mircea the Elder; in the same extended form, a later document from 30 June 1441, issued by Vlad the Devil for the Snagov Monastery, mentions “a son from my heart” as a possible successor [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 165–166]. On the other two steps for reaching the Wallachian throne were the relatives and the pretenders from other families. After Mircea’s death, a document issued by Dan voivode on 10 September 1428 added a short text at the end of this larger form: “because of our sins, from another family” [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 116–117]; this text was copied from one document to another during the 15th century. This fragment suggests that the prince should be a moral person, otherwise the throne could go to another family.

This extended diplomatic formula became a standard for the princely Wallachian chancery during the reign of Mircea the Elder. It can be found in two original Slavonic charters issued for the Snagov [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 73–74] and Strugalea monasteries [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 75–76], as well as in various charters issued for lay persons: Ion, Burcea, and Calian [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, p. 32; Pascu, Ș., Cihodaru, C., Gündisch, K. G., Mioc, D., Pervain, V. 1977, p. 119]; the sons of Batea [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 50–51]; Fintea and others [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 57–58]; Vlad, Stănilă, and their relatives [Panaiteacu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966, pp. 81–82]. Of all these documents preserved in original or copy, two have a date added by a medieval scribe: the charter for Strugalea – 11 May 1409, and the charter for Vlad and Stănilă – 10 June 1415.

A comprehensive study on the diplomatic formulae in the “Byzantine Commonwealth” is still needed. However, an analogy with the Bulgarian chancery might be useful; the charter issued by Tsar Ioan Shishman for the Monastery of St. John of Rila on 21 September 1378 has the following text in *sanctio*: “after the death of my tsardom, whoever the Lord God, the Eternal Tsar, wills to place on the throne of my tsardom, be it the most beloved son of my tsardom, or [some] of the brothers and relatives of my tsardom” [Petkov, K. 2008, p. 506]. It is very clear that many parts of the Bulgarian and Wallachian successive formulae from *sanctio* are at least similar.

Mircea the Elder was one of the most important princes of medieval Wallachia. He was not only involved in wars that brought him fame, but he also tried to develop his princely chancery. Until the reign of Vlad the Monk (1481, 1482–1495) [Rezachevici, C. 2001, pp. 125–126, 128–129], it is

Mircea's chancery that provided the largest number of original Slavonic charters that reached modern times [Bogdan, D. P. 1934, p. 3]. The documents issued by his chancery depict an intense activity of the scribes; the diplomatic formulae concerning the succession to the throne were created during his reign and were completed under the princes that followed him. The documents from Tismana and Cozia reveal two different models for writing documents. While the throne succession texts from Tismana remained restricted, the ones from Cozia were more extended and can be found in various Wallachian charters issued by Mircea for both other monasteries and lay persons. In a world where Slavonic culture had few borders, it is very interesting to notice that diplomatics can reveal many similarities between Bulgarian and Wallachian chanceries.

REFERENCES

Sources

Archiva Istorică a României 1864 – Archiva Istorică a României, 24 October 1864, no. 11, 81–88.

Panaiteescu, P. P. 1938 – P. P. Panaiteescu, Documentele Țării Românești. I. Documente interne (1369–1490), București, Fundația Regele Carol I, 1938.

Panaiteescu, P. P., Mioc, D. 1966 – P. P. Panaiteescu, D. Mioc, Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească, I (1247–1500), București, Editura: Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1966.

Pascu, Ș., Cihodaru, C., Gündisch, K. G., Mioc, D., Pervain, V. 1977 – Ștefan Pascu, Constantin Cihodaru, Konrad G. Gündisch, Damaschin Mioc, Viorica Pervain, Documenta Romaniae Historica. D. Relații între țările române, I (1222–1456), București, Editura: Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1977.

Publications

Bautier, R.-H. 1977 – Robert-Henri Bautier, Caractères spécifiques des chartes médiévales. – Informatique et histoire médiévale. Actes du colloque de Rome (20–22 mai 1975), présentés par Lucie Fossier, André Vauchez et Cinzio Violante. Rome, École Française de Rome, 1977, 81–96.

Biliarsky, I. 2011 – I. Biliarsky, Word and Power in Mediaeval Bulgaria. Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011.

Bogdan, D. P. 1934 – D. P. Bogdan, Despre cancelaria slavă a voievodului muntean Mircea cel Bătrân. București, Tipografia: “Viața Literară”, 1934.

Bogdan, D. P. 1956 – D. P. Bogdan, Diplomatica slavo-română. – Documente privind istoria României, Introducere, II. București, Editura: Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1956, 3–224.

Coman, M. 2013 – M. Coman, Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală (secolele XIV–XVI). Iași, Editura: Polirom, 2013.

Djamo-Diaconiță, L. 1971 – L. Djamo-Diaconiță, Limba documentelor slavo-române emise în Țara Românească în sec. XIV și XV, București, Editura: Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1971.

Guyotjeannin, O., Pycke, J., Tock, B.-M. 2006 – O. Guyotjeannin, J. Pycke, B.-M. Tock, Diplomatique médiévale, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006.

Ilie L. M. 2018 – L. M. Ilie, “În viața domniei mele...”: o veche formula de cancelarie a Țării Românești din veacul al XV-lea. – *Revista Istorică*, XXIX (2018), no. 5-6, 475–516.

Macovei, T. 1977 – T. Macovei, Texte paleoslave și slavone. Dicționar slavo-român, Iași, Universitatea “Al. I. Cuza”, 1977.

Panaiteescu, P. P. 2000 – P. P. Panaiteescu, Mircea cel Bătrân (2nd ed.). Edited by Gheorghe Lazăr. București, Editura: Corint, 2000.

Petkov, K. 2008 – K. Petkov, The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh–Fifteenth Century: The Records of a Bygone Culture. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2008.

Pippidi, A. 2013 – A. Pippidi, Despre “Dan voievod”. Rectificări cronologice și genealogice. – Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie, XXXI, 2013, 47–96.

Rezachevici, C. 2001 – C. Rezachevici, Genealogia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova, a. 1324–1881, I. Secolele XIV–XVI, București, Editura: Enciclopedică, 2001.