

GRIGORE URECHE
(1590-1647)

LIFE

G.U. was born sometime between 998/1590 and 1003/1595 and died in 1057/1647. He was the son of the rich *boyar* (nobleman) Nistor of the powerful Movila family of Moldavia. His father was an adherent of the pro-Polish faction in Moldavia and was granted Polish citizenship. In 1020/1611, after he moved to Poland, G.U. joined him and spent several years studying Liberal Arts at the Jesuit College of Lwow, now in western Ukraine. In addition to his studies in history and geography, G.U. learned Latin and, probably, ancient Greek during his stay in Lwow.

After the completion of his education G.U. returned to Moldavia in 1035/1626 during the reign of Miron Barnovschi (executed in Istanbul on 14 Zilhicce 1042/22 June 1633), who, like G.U., was a member of the Movila family. On 11 Rabi I 1037/20 December 1627 he was elected *logofat al treilea* (Third Logofat, or Chief of the Lord's Chancellery), an office usually assigned to prominent men of letters. Later, under the rule of the pro-Ottoman prince Radu Alexandru Iliaş (deposed on Ramadan 1042/April 1633), G.U. was appointed *mare spatâr* (High Sword Bearer) from 1040/1631 to 1042/1633, but then fell out of favor with the *voivoda* (prince) and his name was placed on a list of nobles slated for decapitation. With his life in danger, G.U. organized a plot with several other *boyars* to overthrow Iliaş. He eventually travelled to the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul to protest against Iliaş and petitioned for his formal dismissal. This appeal proved successful, and when Iliaş was dismissed, the new Moldavian *voivoda*, Vasile Lupu (Shawwal 1043/April 1634-Ramadan 1063/July 1653) granted G.U. the honorific title of *mare vornic al Țării de Jos* (Great Vornic of the Lower Land). G.U. died on 26 Muharram 1057/3 March 1647 and was buried in Bistrița Monastery in Romania.

WORKS

① *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*

G.U.'s most important historical work is an unfinished chronicle entitled *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei de când s-au descalecat Țara și de cursul anilor și de viața domnilor carea scrie de la Dragoș Voda până la Aron Voda* (*The Chronicle of the Moldavian Land from the Period of its Foundation and during the Years and the Lives of the Lords from Dragoș Voda to Aron Voda*), which was probably composed during the 1640s. G.U. emphasized the cultural unity and common origin of all Romanians and wrote his chronicle in his mother tongue. As such, he is generally considered to be the founder of historical writing in Romanian.

The chronicle starts from the foundation of the Moldavian State (in 760/1359, according to G.U.) by the semi-legendary hero Dragoș Voda and continues until 1002/

1594, the reign of Aron Voda *cel Cumplit* (Aron the Terrible), who ruled between 999/1591 and 1003/1595 with interruptions.

The original manuscript of this chronicle is no longer extant, but there are several copies which include various notes and interpolations. Among the most interesting interpolations are those of Simion Dascalul (d. ?), consisting of full-text pages of commentary on events such as the fighting of the Hungarian King Ladislaus IV the Cuman against the Tatars in Moldavia in the 13th century and the arrival of the Romanians in Moldavia; the Moldavian revolt against Despot Voda in 970-971/1563-1564 and the life of this *voyvoda*; the rule of Petru Cazacul (Petru the “Cossack”) between Dhulqada 1000-Muharram 1001/August-October 1592. These interpolations aroused the indignation of the notorious Romanian historian Miron Costin (d. 1102/1691), who considered Dascalul’s opinions about the origins of the Romanians unacceptable. Other, less important, interpolations were made by Misail Calugarul (d. ?), which included notes on the arrival of the Romanians in Moldavia from Maramureş; the life and honorific titles of Alexandru cel Bun (Alexandru the Good) (802-835/1400-1432) and Axinte Uricariul (d. ?); the foundation of the Moldavian village of Roman; the Serbian Church; the name “Boğdan” given by the Ottomans to the Moldavians; the presumptive date of Süleymān I’s (926 -974/1520-1566) doom; and Murād III’s (982-1003/1574-1595) campaign against the Safavids.

G.U. made use of the majority of Moldavian annals and chronicles available at the time, the most representative among them being the *Moldavian Chronicle* written by the *logofat* Eustratie. His copious use of major Polish chronicles is another important cultural contribution of G.U. in that it connects his chronicle, the first such work by a Moldavian author, to the larger western European historical tradition. The most representative Polish chronicles G.U. consulted are *Kronika polska* [Chronicle of Poland] attributed to Marcin Bielski and his son Joachim (Krakow, 1567), the monumental *De origine et rebus gestis polonorum* in thirty books by Marcin Kromer (Basilea, 1555), and *Cronica polonorum* by Maciej Miechowita (Krakow, 1521). G.U. utilized the famous *Atlas sive cosmographicae meditationem* (Duisburg, 1595) by the pioneering Dutch cartographer Gerardus Mercator (Gerhard Kremer) (d. 1003/1594) as well as the well-known edited volume of texts collected by Ioannis Pistorius (d. 1017/1608). However, Alessandro Guagnini’s *Sarmatica Europae descriptio* (Krakow, 1578) was probably not used directly by G.U. but was instead interpolated into his text by Simion Dascalul.¹ G.U. appears to have utilized the oral memories of the elderly Romanian people as a source for his chronicle, especially the personal recollections of his father Nistor, as well as the oral traditions preserved in Moldavian.

In spite of the Catholic scholastic education he received while in Poland, G.U.’s work is strongly pervaded by Greek-Orthodox Christian ideas. The historical events described by G.U., therefore, follow a “divine scheme,” in which the Ottomans are described in almost apocalyptic terms as an irredeemable evil for the Moldavian territories, a satanic blight whose unfitness for rule is manifested by their adherence to

HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

Islam. The Moldavians, according to G.U.'s Orthodox vision, have therefore no choice but to fight to liberate themselves from Ottoman rule.

It is within such a scheme that G.U. sets the principal protagonist of his chronicle, the Romanian *voyvoda* Stefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great-Büyük İstefan), who, during his lengthy tenure as Moldavian commander (861-909/1457-1504), took back former holdings of the Moldavians from the Hungarians (e.g. Chilia (Kila/Kili) and Cetatea Alba (Aqkirman/Bielgorod) in 869/1465) and gained several victories against the Turkish, Tatar, Polish and Hungarian armies while defending Moldavian territory. G.U., however, goes beyond the simple relation of Stephen's accomplishments and instead depicts him as a Christian hero charged with the divine mission of completely destroying the Ottomans, whom he alternately refers to as "infidels" or "pagans."

G.U. wrote about the relationship between Alexandru *cel Bun* and Poland; the protracted fight for his succession until the long rule of Stephen the Great (861-909/1457-1504); the relationship between Stephen Voda and Mehmed II (848-850/1444-1446 and 855-886/1451-81); the destruction of a powerful Tatar army; an unreliable history about the origin of the Tatars and a map of the Crimean Khanate. As for the origin of the Turks, G.U. gives the precious information that the Jews called them *Togarma*, with a clear relationship to the legends of the biblical genealogy of the Khazars, and that the Turks called themselves *Busurman*, which was a denomination used in medieval times, especially in the 10th century, to define the Muslims in Eastern Europe.

G.U.'s chronicle is filled with interesting and unusually accurate notes about the Ottomans and their relations with the Moldo-Wallachians, as well as various political and ethnographic descriptions of the Tatar and Dobrogea (Dobruca) peoples and their traditional warfare. In addition, despite the strong anti-Turkish and anti-Tatar tone of the entire chronicle, G.U. does not hesitate to describe openly the desire of the Moldavian and Wallachian peasants oppressed by their landlords to escape to areas under direct Ottoman administration and seek protection from Turkish authorities. G.U. even emphasizes a decidedly unorthodox implementation of the *devşirme* with regard to these fugitives: the peasants' voluntary offering of their sons for the *devşirme* levy, and consequently, their apostasy from Christianity and career in the service of the Ottoman army and bureaucracy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Manuscripts:*² (1) Bucharest, Arhive Statului Bucureşti [State Archives of Bucharest], MS inv. no. 30914 (L⁶). Copyist unknown (1803, Țara Romaneasca). (2) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii României, MS Lat. 115 (L^d). Copied by Ion Budai-Deleanu, 1795-1804, Lwow. (3) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii României, MS Rum., cod. 59 (L²). Copied by Radu Lupescu, 1720-30, Țara Romaneasca. (4) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii României, MS Rum., cod. 103 (M³). Copyist unknown, 18th cen., Moldavia. (5) Bucharest, Biblioteca Acade-

HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

miei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 115 (F¹). Copied by Gligoraș, 1726, Moldavia. (6) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 120 (F²). Copied by Ioan Pavel, 1746, Moldavia. (7) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 169 (M¹). Copyist unknown, end of the 17th cen., Moldavia. (8) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 174 (A¹). Copied by Constantin Vladulovici, 1724, Țara Romaneasca. (9) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 240 (F⁷). Copied by Antohi Sion, 1803, Moldavia. (10) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 268 (L⁴). Copied by Radu Lupescu, 1720-30, Țara Romaneasca. (11) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 338 (F⁵). Copied by Stefan Sîrce, 1784, Moldavia. (12) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 354 (F³). Copied by Gligoraș, beg. 18th cen., Moldavia. (13) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 400 (F⁴). Copied by Iordache Ilschi, 1784, Moldavia. (14) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 440 (M⁴). Copyist unknown, end of the 18th–beg. 19th cen., probably Țara Romaneasca. (15) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 1445 (L¹). Copyist unknown, beg. 18th cen., Țara Romaneasca. (16) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 2506 (M²). Copied by Radu Lupescu, ca. 1730, Țara Romaneasca. (17) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 2601 (L⁵). Copyist unknown, 18th cen., Țara Romaneasca. (18) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 3039 (L³). Copyist unknown, beg. 18th cen., Țara Romaneasca. (19) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 3439 (L⁷). Copied by Ierom Ghelasie, 1830, Țara Romaneasca. (20) Bucharest, Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Romaniei, MS Rum., cod. 4456 (F⁶). Copyist unknown, 2nd half of 18th cen., Moldavia. (21) Bucharest, MS. Biblioteca Prof. Gh Cardaș (L⁰¹). Copied by Grigore Crețiu, 1900-1915, Romania. (22) Iași, Biblioteca Centrala Universitații din Iași [Central Library of the Iași University], ms. V-3 (A²). Copied by Radu Lupescu, 1725, Țara Romaneasca. (23) Iași, Muzeul Literaturii Române [Romanian Museum of Literature], no catalogue number (L⁰). Two unknown copyists, 1660-1670, Moldavia.

Editions: M. Kogalniceanu. *Notiție biografică a cronicarilor Moldaviei*, in *Letopisețile Țării Moldaviei*, vol. 1 (Iași, 1852). Constantin Giurascu (ed.). *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei până la Aron Voda (1359-1595)* întocmit după Grigore Ureche vornicul, Istratie Logofatul și alții, de Simion Descalul (with preface by I. Bogdan) (Bucharest, 1916). P.P. Panaitescu. *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* (Bucharest, 1955). *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, text stabilit, studiu introductiv, note și glosare de Liviu Onu (Bucharest, 1967). Axinte Uricariul. *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei (1711-1715)*. Ediție îngrijită de Andrei Eșanu și Valentina Eșanu (Chișinău, 1999).

Translations: *Chronique de Moldavie depuis le milieu du XIV^e siècle jusqu'à l'an 1594*. Texte roumain avec traduction française, notes historiques, tableaux généalo-

HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

giques, glossaire et table par Emile Picot (Paris, 1878) [French]. Mehmet Ali Ekrem. *Romen Kaynak ve Eserlerinde Türk Tarihi I: Kronikler*, (Ankara, 1993), 3-22 [Turkish; limited to the facts relating to the Turks].

General Bibliography: G.I. Sbiera. *Grigoriu Urechie, Contribuiri pentru o biografie a lui* (Bucharest, 1881). Stefan Oraşanu. *Cronicari moldoveni din secolul al XVII-lea* (Bucharest, 1899). L. Tanoviceanu. *Contribuţiuni la biografiile unora dintre cronicarii moldoveni* (Bucharest, 1904-05). C. Giurescu. *Nouii contributiuni la studiul cronicilor moldovene* (Bucharest, Göbl, 1908). C. Giurescu. *Introducere la Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei pina la Aron Voda (1359-1595), intocmit de Grigore Ureche Vornicu şi Simion Dascalul*, editura Scrisul Romanese (Craiova, n.d. [after 1916]), editia a III-a, p. III-LXXXII. N. Iorga. "Grigore Ureche." *Istoria literaturii româneşti*, vol. 1, editia a II-a (Bucharest, 1925), 285-313. P.P. Panaitescu. *Influenţa polona in opera şi personalitatea cronicarilor Grigore Ureche şi Miron Costin* (Bucharest, 1925). M. Costachescu. *Despre neamul de boieri Ureche* (Iaşi, 1928). Ilie Minea. *Din istoria culturii româneşti, Lecţii tinute la Universitatea din Iaşi*, vol. 1: *Cultura romanesca in prima jumătate a secolului XVII. Locul cronicii lui Ureche in istoria culturii româneşti* (Iaşi, 1935). G. Calinescu. "Grigore Ureche." *Istoria Literaturii romane de la origini pina in prezent* (Bucharest, 1941), 20-22. N. Cartoian. "Grigore Ureche." *Istoria Literaturii române vechi*, vol. 2 (1942), 144-153. Al. Rosetti. "Observatii asupra limbii cronicii lui Grigore Ureche - Simion Dascalul." *Studii lingvistice* (Bucharest, 1955), 17-32. Al. Andriescu. "Contributia marilor cronicari moldoveni şi munteni la dezvoltarea limbii literare." *Studii şi cercetari ştiinţifice*, serie noua, vol. 3, sect. 3, fasc. 1-2 (Iaşi, 1957), 97-141. R. Constantinescu. "Umanismul lui Grigore Ureche." *Scrieri alese* (Bucharest, 1957), 102-110. C. Giurescu. *Grigore Ureche Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei*, editie îngrijita, studiu introductiv, indice şi glosar de P.P. Panaitescu, editia a II-a, revazuta (Bucharest, 1958). Review in: *Limba romana*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei R.P.R., anul IX, 4 (1960), 76-86. Al. Rosetti and Boris Cazacu. "Limba cronicii lui Grigore Ureche." *Istoria limbii romane literare* (Bucharest, 1961), 216-230. D.I. Laudat. "Grigorie Ureche." *Istoria Literaturii romane vechi*, Part. 1 (Bucharest, 1962), 214-236. C.I. Chitimta. "Grigore Ureche." *Istoria literaturii romane*, 1 (1964), 379-392. N. Stoicescu. *Dicţionar al marilor dregatori din Tara Romaneasca şi Moldava, sec. XIV-XVII* (Bucharest, 1971), 453. Liviu Onu. *Critica textuala şi editarea literaturii române vechi. Cu aplicaţii la cronicarilor moldoveni* (Bucharest, 1973). Frederick Kellogg. *A History of Romanian Historical Writing* (Bakersfield, 1990). M. Tanasosu. "Grigore Ureche." In Zaci M., M. Papahagi, Aurel Sasu (eds.). *Dicţionarul Esenţial al scriitorilor romani* (Bucharest, 2000), 857-860.

HISTORIANS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

C. Kafadar H. Karateke C. Fleischer

¹ P.P. Panaitescu, *Influența polona în opera și personalitatea cronicarilor Grigore Ureche și Miron Costin* (Bucharest, 1925), 26-29.

² With the exception of Ion Budai-Deleanu's Latin version of the work (no. 1), which is written in italic Latin characters, all copies are written in Romanian with italic Cyrillic characters.

Giuseppe COSSUTO

January 2006