

## **The Ottoman Dracula: *Kazıklı Voyvoda* and the Construction of the Rebel and Evil in the Ottoman Empire**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper attempts to pave the way for an alternative method and perspective of interpretation. The portrayal of political and military figures in official Ottoman writings can reveal insights into political thought, ideology, and propaganda. In our case, these narratives precisely illustrate how the Sultan justified his campaign against Vlad the Impaler. Such information cannot be provided by European chronicles, for instance.

Moreover, Ottoman chronicles provide insights into diplomatic relations and the exchange of ideas. On another level, concerning mental and social history, they reflect the expectations, fears, prejudices, or ideals of their audience. The authors of these texts did not create their works in isolation from contemporary political or cultural environment. Thus, they are voices of their era, encapsulating and mirroring its expectations. Their writing was crafted for consumption and success. Without this recognition, they risked obscurity, much like the poet Ma'ali, who lamented in his dedication to the Sultan within his versed chronicle literarily about his "starvation".

**Key words:** *Kazıklı voyvoda*, Vlad the Impaler, Wallachia, Ottomans, historiography, literary works

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## Introduction

Oriental historical literature presents a unique challenge for European understanding and contemporary scholarship. These works, steeped in literary flair, often exhibit a bombastic style with a penchant for hyperbole. More than medieval European historiography, they aim to captivate the reader (or listener) with the author's emphasis on the purported singularity of the recounted historical events. For instance, an invading army in Wallachia is described as the largest ever seen (a direct assertion) or likened to boundless black clouds (a hyperbolic expression guiding the reader to the same conclusion).

The crafting of such narratives involves sophisticated literary strategies and techniques that can sometimes overshadow the historical content, or even sacrifice it for stylistic effect. It was common for copyists to alter their sources, not merely reproducing but editing and interpreting them according to their literary preferences or aesthetic judgment. This tendency becomes more pronounced in later authors and compilers, who take the historical fabric and the dramatic structure of their sources, yet rework them into a form reflecting their personal style. Often, they might even modify the text's substance by rearranging, omitting, or adding specific scenes or details.

These issues have led many Romanian historians to give little credit to the Ottoman chronicles.<sup>1</sup> For methodologies prioritising positivism or factual history, these sources are deemed less reliable than Byzantine or Western European ones. However, modern historiographical approaches, employing refined methodologies, can effectively utilise Ottoman chronicles. We must acknowledge that historical sources are not universally applicable for all types of historiographical discourse and

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<sup>1</sup> For ways of interpreting Ottoman narrative sources and on the problematics, cf. the following discussions: Barbu T. Cămpina, "Victoria oștii lui Țepeș asupra Sultanului Mehmed al II-lea (cu prilejul împlinirii a 500 de ani)," *Studii. Revista de istorie*, 15, 3 (1962), 533-555, here 536-537; Nicolae Stoicescu, *Vlad Țepeș* (București, 1976), 92, 100 and 112-113; Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș Dracula. Între legendă și adevăr istoric* (București, 2015) (3rd edition), 121 and 193-195; Matei Cazacu, *Dracula* (Leiden-Boston, 2017), 32; Albert Weber, *Vlad der Pfähler Drăculea (1431-1476). Biographie und Legendenbildung im Spiegel der Wissensgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, 2023), 98-99 [in preparation]. For other recent discussions of Ottoman sources on Vlad the Impaler, cf. Alexandru Simon, *In the World of Vlad. The Lives and Times of a Warlord* (Berlin, 2021), 17-19; Jan Niklas Meier, *Der Woiwode als Monster: Vlad III. bei Michel Beheim und in der "Geschicht dracole waide"* (Baden-Baden, 2021), 149-152.

cannot answer every question. Often, the nature of our sources dictates the kind of history that can be written with their support.

This paper attempts to pave the way for an alternative method and perspective of interpretation. The portrayal of political and military figures in official Ottoman writings can reveal insights into political thought, ideology, and propaganda. In our case, these narratives precisely illustrate how the Sultan justified his campaign against Vlad the Impaler. Such information cannot be provided by European chronicles, for instance.

Moreover, Ottoman chronicles provide insights into diplomatic relations and the exchange of ideas. On another level, concerning mental and social history, they reflect the expectations, fears, prejudices, or ideals of their audience. The authors of these texts did not create their works in isolation from contemporary political or cultural environment. Thus, they are voices of their era, encapsulating and mirroring its expectations. Their writing was crafted for consumption and success. Without this recognition, they risked obscurity, much like the poet Ma'ali, who lamented in his dedication to the Sultan within his versed chronicle literarily about his "starvation".

It is therefore essential to know how and why these sources tell what they tell. The present paper seeks to lay the foundation for further scholarly inquiry into this area.

### Authors

This paper delves into a comprehensive series of Ottoman authors spanning from the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the early-18<sup>th</sup> century. It encompasses the early ones (Enveri, the anonymous authors, 'Aşık Paşa-zade, Dursun Beğ), their direct compilers (Mehmed Neşri), but also the major 'classics' (İdris Bitlisi, Kemal Paşa-zade, Hoca Sa'adeddin Efendi). The genres of these sources vary, including panegyrics (as seen in works by Enveri, Dursun Beğ, Ma'ali, Kıvami), *Tevarih-i Al-i 'Osman* ("Histories of the House of Osman": Anonymous Chronicles, Pseudo-Ruhi Çelebi, 'Aşık Paşa-zade, Kemal Paşa-zade, Rüstem Paşa, Solak-zade) and universal chronicles (Hoca Sa'adeddin Efendi, Mustafa 'Ali, Münecim-başı). Being predominantly sultano-centric, these texts primarily emanate from the sultan's power circle, serving as direct instruments of his ideology. Apart from some anonymous chronicles, which are still waiting to be extensively analysed, we have only two exceptions: Enveri (whose work *Cihan-numa* is dedicated to the great vizier Mahmud Paşa) and 'Aşık Paşa-zade (a well-

respected octogenarian dervish who writes a history of the Ottoman House to outline the alleged key contribution of his fellow dervishes, while putting blame on foreign bureaucrats for any misconduct).

### Goals

The primary aim of this study is two-pronged. The first one is methodological and revolves around systematisation. Regrettably, quite many Romanian specialists in Medieval Studies have developed a tendency to indiscriminately amalgamate Ottoman sources from vastly different centuries in their positivist analyses. Without a thorough understanding of the genealogy of the sources utilised, this approach proves highly risky. For example, Mehmed Neşri does not confirm information provided by ‘Aşık Paşa-zade, for the simple reason that the latter is the main (and in most instances the unique) source for the former. In the case of the chapter on *Kazıklı voyvoda*, Neşri copies his predecessor without any alteration in content. In conclusion, when two Ottoman sources narrate the same event in identical terms, it should prompt suspicions of a direct connection rather than the misleading notion of multiple sources corroborating a fact. Systematising the representation of *Kazıklı voyvoda* in Ottoman sources necessitates an initial exploration of the transmission chains and the genealogy of historical texts. This study will explore mutual influences, subsequent syntheses, the structuring of accounts on Vlad the Impaler, and the personalisation of these accounts by various Ottoman authors.

The second objective is to decode the narratives on Vlad the Impaler alias *Kazıklı voyvoda*, and to contextualise his image within the Ottoman political-ideological framework and in contrast to other “rebels”. This will also involve a comparative analysis with so-called “late Byzantine” narrative sources like Laonikos Chalkokondyles and Kritovoulos Imbrostēs. For being penned in the Ottoman Empire at least a decade after the fall of Constantinople, they should be better called “post-Byzantine” in reference to their Hellenistic-Byzantine rhetorical and stylistic traditions. Notwithstanding this historiographical lineage, both authors inadvertently reflect the Ottoman viewpoint and can, to some extent, be classified as Ottoman authors.

The first author under consideration, Chalkokondyles,<sup>2</sup> operates outside the Ottoman power circles and does not overtly aim to mirror their

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<sup>2</sup> Chalkokondyles, in Adrian Gheorghe and Albert Weber (eds.), *Corpus Draculianum: Dokumente und Chroniken zum walachischen Fürsten Vlad dem Pfähler 1448-1650*, vol. 3: *Die Überlieferung aus dem Osmanischen Reich* (Wiesbaden 2013), 9-13.

viewpoints, nor does he engage in direct opposition to them, unlike the post-Byzantine author Doukas, known for his vehement anti-Ottoman rhetoric. Chalkokondyles' work, marked by stylistic and rhetorical sophistication, strives to present recent events with minimal emotional bias, meticulously evaluating his sources. Nevertheless, he is not immune to the influences of Ottoman discourses. His perspective predominantly reflects a Christian and Greek standpoint, indicative of his immediate environment. Yet, on a broader scale, his narrative is a part of the diverse religious and cultural mosaic of Mehmed II's era, a time when Christians held significant positions at the Ottoman court.

In contrast, the second post-Byzantine author, Kritovoulos,<sup>3</sup> offers a distinctly different work: a panegyric honouring Sultan Mehmed II. His narrative spotlights the accommodating Greeks who readily adapted to the new political landscape, portraying the Sultan within the historical cycles of Christian leaders, while showing the same allegiance to the Sultan as they previously did to the Byzantine *basileus*. The survival of Kritovoulos's work in just a single, incomplete manuscript suggests that Sultan Mehmed II, or his officials, were not particularly impressed by the work, nor did they encourage its distribution among Greek subjects. Nonetheless, Kritovoulos, having been a part of the Ottoman administrative apparatus, unambiguously echoes Ottoman perspectives. This disparity presents an opportunity to conduct an analysis from two distinct rhetorical standpoints: the Islamic-Persian-Ottoman and the Christian-Byzantine.

### Analysis of material

Despite undeniable differences between European and Byzantine narrative sources and the Islamic ones, it is important not to oversimplify the latter as a homogenous group under the label of 'Ottoman chronicles'. These works exhibit significant diversity in terms of genre, origin, and orientation.

As previously noted, the array of Ottoman literature extends beyond just chronicles or histories (*tevarih*, sg. *tarih*). One cannot expect the same chronological precision and attention to historical detail in a panegyric or an epic, which were popular genres among the Ottomans, as found in European and Byzantine chronicles. The historiographical content in many Ottoman chronicles often serves to construct a rhetorical framework for literary compositions with aims beyond mere historical

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<sup>3</sup> Kritovoulos, in *ibid.*, 43-45.

recording.<sup>4</sup> In the Persian-Ottoman context, works frequently blend hagiographic and historiographic elements against vivid background stuffed with hyperboles and allegories.

This is not to suggest an absence of interest in preserving historical memory. Quite on the contrary. For instance, calendars and almanacs (*takvim*) were created annually at the Ottoman court, meticulously documenting the year's events and updating information from almanacs of the previous years.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, due to their lack of literary appeal and the resulting scarcity of copies, few of these works have survived, particularly none referencing Vlad the Impaler. They bear resemblance to the Southeastern European monastery annals (Rom. *letopiseț*) and the so-called 'Byzantine minor chronicles'.<sup>6</sup> Although largely lost, many *takvims* indirectly served as sources for the earliest works in the *tevarih* genre, as seen in certain manuscripts of Oruc, Pseudo-Ruhi Çelebi, and various anonymous Ottoman chronicles. Thus, we are fortunate to find passages with strong factual overtones intermingled between chapters stuffed with literary ballast. Sometimes anonymous copyists compiled such courtly almanacs one after another, adapting them for new purposes and embedding them within a literary framework to appeal to broader audiences.

The Ottoman narrative sources on Vlad the Impaler need to be divided into three evolutionary periods: 1) the early period of contemporary sources (or primary sources, as we have called them in *Corpus Draculianum* III), 2) the period of the classics (or secondary sources) and 3) the period of the epigones (or tertiary sources).<sup>7</sup>

The diversity that we have been talking about may be observed particularly in the first evolutionary phase. It includes eyewitness accounts from participants in the 1462 campaign and narratives based on court almanacs. This is not to say that there were no attempts at writing sophisticated texts laden with literary ballast: some less accomplished

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<sup>4</sup> Adrian Gheorghe, "Entertaining the Crowds. Early Ottoman Historiography Between Orality and Bestseller," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae*, 72, 1 (2019), 81-91.

<sup>5</sup> Osman Turan (ed.), *İstanbul'un Fethinden Önce Yazılmış Tarihî Takvimler* (Ankara, 1954); Victor Louis Ménage, "The 'Annals of Murad II'," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39, 3 (1976), 570-584.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Schreiner (ed.), *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 3 vol. (Wien, 1975); *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 77.

<sup>7</sup> *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, IX-XII.

(Dursun Beğ's work in Ottoman),<sup>8</sup> others more successful (Ma'ali's work in Persian).<sup>9</sup> Dursun and Ma'ali tried to appeal the refined tastes of the Ottoman elite. They are therefore among the very first Ottoman historiographers to employ rhymed prose (*inşa*; Pers. *enşa*, Ar. *sağ*). On the other hand, authors like 'Aşık Paşa-zade opted for a simpler style, closer to the Turkish language spoken in bazaars and public spaces, where his work, passages from it or the oral material on which it was based were recited.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, he was particularly successful, while other authors failed to get beyond the Sultan's personal library.

In the subsequent phase, the most frequently copied authors, like 'Aşık Paşa-zade, or those with significant influence at court, such as Dursun, were perceived. By merging these two narrative lines, the 'classics' and hence the initial canonisation of tradition emerged. After them, no innovations with historical content appear; only literary ones. The latter sometimes create pitfalls, as we shall see below. Theoretically, it is still possible that these 'classics' may have interpolated some sources that are now lost. However, these interpolations have undergone a strong process of literary reshaping, for this is precisely what makes these authors outstanding and the reason for their canonisation: they are the first Ottoman authors to write at the highest level of literary sophistication. Their sophistication was so profound that they became primary sources for later authors, superseding the 15<sup>th</sup>-century chronicles.

Leading this generation were two early-16<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries: İdris Bitlisi, who wrote in Persian,<sup>11</sup> and Kemal Paşa-zade,

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<sup>8</sup> Halil İnalçık and Rhoads Murphy (eds.), *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Tursun Beg* (Minneapolis, Chicago), 1978 (facsimiles with summarised English translation) and Mertol Tulum (ed.), *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth* (Istanbul, 1977). On Dursun, cf. Halil İnalçık, "Tursun Beg, Historian of Mehmed the Conqueror's Time," *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 69 (1977), 87-110; Kenan Inan, "A Summary and Analysis of the *Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth* (History of the Father of Conquest) of Tursun Bey", University of Manchester, 1993 (unpublished PhD thesis); *idem*, "On the Sources of Tursun Bey's *Tarih-i Ebü'l Feth*", Eugenia Kermeli and Oktay Özel (eds.), *The Ottoman Empire. Myths, Realities and 'Black Holes'. Contributions in honour of Colin Imber* (Istanbul, 2006), 75-108; *idem*, "The Effects of Ornamented Prose Style on Ottoman Historiography: The *Tarih-i Ebü'l-feth* [History of the Father of Conquest] by Tursun Bey", James S. Amelang and Siegfried Beer (eds.), *Public Power in Europe: Studies in Historical Transformations* (Pisa, 2006), 125-142.

<sup>9</sup> Refet Yalçın Balata, "*Hünkâr-nâma (Tevârîh-i Âl-i 'Osmân)*, Mîr Seyyid 'Ali b. Muzaffer-i Ma'âli", İstanbul, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1992 (unpublished PhD thesis).

<sup>10</sup> Halil İnalçık, "How to Read 'Ashik Pasha-Zade's History", Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (eds.), *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage* (Istanbul, 1994), 139-156.

<sup>11</sup> İdris Bitlisi, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 185-188. A complete edition of his work is still awaited. On the author, cf. Törehan M. Serdar, *Mevlana Hakimüddin İdris-i Bitlisi* (Istanbul, 2008).

the author of a highly influential chronicle in the Ottoman language<sup>12</sup>. From among other contemporaries, only Mehmed Neşri<sup>13</sup> exerted some later influence, albeit not as extensively as the aforementioned authors. Neşri essentially reworked ‘Aşık Paşa-zade’s chronicle, augmenting it with interpolations from manuscripts predating the reign<sup>14</sup>

The third-phase authors, whom I have termed epigones, are the least interesting to historians focused on factual history. In terms of content, they may not contribute much new information, but in terms of development and literary quality, particularly in the cases of Sa‘adeddin and Mustafa ‘Ali, they often surpass their sources, namely Kemal Paşa-zade and İdris Bitlisi. For the historians of literature, this phase represents the zenith of the classical Ottoman historiography. These authors also lay the final brick in the canonisation of the historical tradition on *Kazıklı voyvoda*, yet without providing new historical insights.

The earliest account of Vlad the Impaler in Ottoman sources comes from Enveri’s “Book of the Vizier” (*Düstur-name*), a work of the *mesnevi* genre composed in 7640 verses.<sup>15</sup> Written a few years after the Wallachian campaign in the summer of 1462, it was dedicated to the grand vizier Mahmud Paşa. The account, which is very simple, focuses on events, despite some panegyric glosses. Although not mentioned by name, we can easily identify the Wallachian ruler by the context. The omission of his name is surprising to say the least given Enveri’s status as an eyewitness who even wrote a work dedicated exclusively to this campaign. Parts of this now-lost work called *Teferrüç-name* (“Book of Delights”) can be found in *Düstur-name*, in verses where the author suddenly begins to narrate in the first person, as an eyewitness of the Vlads second night attack, in the

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<sup>12</sup> Şerafettin Turan (ed.), *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VII. Defter (Tenkidli Transkripsiyon)* (Ankara, 1991); Kemal Paşa-zade, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 223-224. On autor and work, cf. Victor Louis Ménage, “An Autograph of Kemalpaşazade’s *Tevârih-i Âl-i Othman*, Book VII,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 23 (1960), 250-264; Yekta Saraç, *Şeyhülislam Kemal Paşazade. Hayatı, Şahsiyeti, Eserleri ve Bazı Şiirleri* (Istanbul, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Mehmed Neşri, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 265-267. On author, cf. Paul Wittek, “Zum Quellenproblem der ältesten osmanischen Chroniken (mit Auszügen aus Nesri),” *Mitteilungen Osmanischer Geschichte*, 1, 77-150; Victor Louis Ménage, *Neshri’s History of the Ottomans* (London, 1964).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *An Early Ottoman History. The Oxford Anonymous Chronicle (Bodleian Library, Ms Marsh 313)*, ed. by Dimitris J. Kastritsis (Liverpool, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Adrian Gheorghe, “Mental Frames and Textual Strategies in Mid-14th Century Byzantine-Turkish Sources on the Beginnings of the Anatolian Turks in Europe,” *Südost-Forschungen*, 80 (2021), 1-18, here 5-6; Enveri, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 87-88.

area of Buzău (*Bozu*).<sup>16</sup> Enveri's portrayal of the voivode lacks a clear identity. Strong anachronisms (e.g. the campaign against Wallachia in 1462 precedes the Battle of Kosovo, 1448) suggest a possible conflation of two historical figures: Vlad II Dracul (*Dirakula voyvoda*) and his son Vlad III the Impaler (*Dirakulaoğlu voyvoda*).

The versions of Oruc, who was more of a copyist than a proper author,<sup>17</sup> were written around the same time as Enveri's work. Oruc's greatest merit is the interpolation of some *takvims* mentioned above. While recycling the information from *takvims* of the previous years, the chronology was simply adapted, since no absolute dating was used, but one relative to the year of the reigning sultan. This might explain the incorrect dating of the campaign against Vlad (865 H., instead of 866 H.), a mistake also found in many anonymous chronicles.

Oruc is the earliest Ottoman source to mention the name *Drakulaoğlu Kazıklı*. The striking differences between the Oxford, Cambridge, and Paris manuscripts of Oruc's *tevarih* suggest the involvement of various anonymous authors.<sup>18</sup> The Oxford and Cambridge manuscripts narrate dryly, in the style of annals, and without offering any explanation of the reasons for the campaign against *Kazıklı*. The Oxford manuscript, however, adds an unrolling of the battles between his throne successors, most likely sourced from a *takvim*. The same details can be found in the Paris manuscript that gives by far the most detailed and interesting account. Clearly using common sources with 'Aşık Paşa-zade, yet also being aware of the charges brought against Vlad the Impaler at the Ottoman court, this manuscript is the only one to indicate the reason for the campaign against him: his tyrannical outbursts and the murder on the Sultan's men. Yet, the most interesting detail, which delights fur sure military historians, refers to the military events following Hamza Beğ's execution and Vlad's simultaneous attacks across six Danube fords.<sup>19</sup> These details correlate with Vlad's famous letter dated February 11, 1462, written

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<sup>16</sup> Adrian Gheorghe, "Understanding the Ottoman Campaign in Wallachia in the Summer of 1462. Numbers, Limits, Manoeuvres and Meanings," Thomas M. Bohn, Rayk Einax and Stefan Rohdewald (eds.), *Vlad der Pfähler – Dracula. Tyrann oder Volkstribun?* (Wiesbaden, 2017), 159-188, here 179.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Louis Ménage, "On the Recensions of Uruj's 'History of the Ottomans,'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 39, 3 (1967), 314-322; Oruc, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 141-147.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXI.

<sup>19</sup> Oruc, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 153.

in Bucharest (*Uywar*, “New Town” in Hungarian) to king Matthias Corvinus of Hungary.<sup>20</sup>

Comprising over 40 manuscripts and manuscript fragments, written (or compiled) between the reign of Murad II (1421–1451) and the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the so-called “anonymous chronicles”<sup>21</sup> may give the false impression of a common affiliation.

Preliminary assessments reveal five distinct representations of events within these chronicles. One of these versions is also the only Ottoman source that mentions the first reign of Vlad the Impaler. In fact, none of these chronicles seems to know that *Kazıklı* ruled three times (autumn 1448, 1456–1462, and autumn 1476). Consequently, this version dates the beginning of his reign to 1448. Other variants are close to the Oruc’s Cambridge manuscript, others to ‘Aşık Paşa-zade’s chronicle. Two anonymous manuscripts in this series provide novel information about the reason for the Ottoman armed reaction and the infamous night attack(s) in July 1462. The findings of this research, after thorough verification, will be published in a dedicated study, complete with critical editions and translations. It is worth noting that distinguishing between Vlad the Impaler and Vlad Dracul is often a real challenge.

The foundational figures of the classical tradition on *Kazıklı voyvoda* are two contemporaneous but vastly different authors: Dursun Beğ, a secretary and protégé of the former grand vizier Mahmud Paşa and a participant in the campaign against Vlad, and a representative of the dervish circle ‘Aşık Paşa-zade. The former wrote a panegyric dedicated to Mehmed II (*Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth* - “History of the Conquering Father”), adding also information on the early reign of Bayezid II. The second is the most famous 15<sup>th</sup>-century chronicler, who writes the first detailed history of the Ottoman House (*Tarih-i Al-i ‘Osman*) up to the early years of Bayezid II. Both authors penned their works about two decades after Vlad the Impaler’s death.

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<sup>20</sup> Adrian Gheorghe, Albert Weber, Alexandru Şt. Anca and Ginel Lazăr (eds.), *Corpus Draculianum. Documentele și cronicile privitoare la viața și domnia lui Vlad Țepeș Drăculea (1437-1650)*, vol. 1: *Documentele de cancelarie și corespondența*, tom 1: *Documentele valahe* (București-Brăila) 2019, no. 23, p. 103-130, especially 116.

<sup>21</sup> Victor Louis Ménage, “The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography,” Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), 168-179 and Murat Cem Mengüç, “A Study of 15th-Century Ottoman Historiography”, University of Cambridge, 2008 (unpublished PhD thesis). So far the only edition is that of Friedrich Giese (ed.), *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken: Tevarih-i Ali ‘Osmân*, 2 vol. (Breslau, 1922 and 1925).

Dursun Beğ offers a notably lengthy and detailed account, though less analytical. His chapter on the Wallachian voivode notably reproduces and partly expands upon the “letter of conquest” (*fetih-name*) of Wallachia, which was recently discovered by the *Corpus Draculianum* team. Tasked with crafting such a crucial piece of propaganda as the letters of conquest, it is unsurprising that Dursun’s narrative aligns with the sultano-centric, official court perspective. Despite notable efforts, Dursun’s writing in the *inşa* style is burdened with excessive allegories and hyperbole.<sup>22</sup> Intriguingly, the name of the Wallachian rebel is mentioned only in the chapter title and at the chapter’s conclusion. Otherwise, Dursun consistently avoids his name and replaces it with various derogatory terms.

Dursun’s account is particularly significant for its deeply negative portrayal of *Kazıklı*. He frames his depiction from two perspectives: *Kazıklı*’s status as a *kâfir* (infidel) and as a rebel. Dursun infuses his narrative with diabolical and tyrannical overtones, exaggerating to justify the Ottoman intervention in Wallachia, similar to his approach in the letter of conquest sent to Karaman ruler Damad İbrahim Beğ, likely in early August 1462, immediately following the campaign. Central to Dursun’s argument is the theme of *Kazıklı*’s ingratitude towards the sultan, who had been instrumental in establishing his power. By failing to show gratitude to his benefactor, the infidel, according to Dursun, loses his sense of reason and descends into tyranny.

Dursun theorises about all this at length in the introduction (*mukaddime*) to his work. What follows thereafter is in fact a historicisation, i.e. an exemplification with historical events of this theoretical part. Moreover, Dursun’s work has many and precise overtones of the very popular genre called ‘mirror of princes’ (Pers. *nasihat-name*; Arabic. *mir‘at’l-muluk*).<sup>23</sup> The author takes great efforts in placing precisely not only the Sultan’s role in the world, but also the expected conduct of other rulers towards him. Central to this worldview is the concept of gratitude (*şükr*), which the Sultan rewards through justice (*‘adalet*) and generosity, his defining attributes alongside wisdom (*hikmet*), honesty (*‘iffet*) and courage (*şeca‘at*).<sup>24</sup> It should come therefore as no surprise that the rebel voivode is equipped with the opposite of these values. However, the letter of conquest

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<sup>22</sup> Dursun Beğ, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 115-118.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 116. On mirrors of princes, cf. Linda Darling, “Mirrors for Princes in Europe and the Middle East. A Case of Historiographical Incommensurability,” Albrecht Classen (ed.), *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World* (Berlin-Boston, 2013), 223-242.

<sup>24</sup> Dursun Beğ, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 116.

addressed to Damad İbrahim Beğ proves that these ideas did not spontaneously emerge during the writing of Dursun's *tarih*, even though its drafting process went through several stages. Dursun's ideological approach is contemporary with the narrated events and served as incentive for the Ottoman intervention in Wallachia. His account accurately mirrors the court ideology of Sultan Mehmed II.

‘Aşık Paşa-zade, on the other hand, seeks to explain political events by identifying concrete causes that necessitated the Sultan's intervention in Wallachia. His account is considerably shorter, free from elaborate literary claims and complex allegories. ‘Aşık Paşa-zade does not mention any action by *Kazıklı* during the Ottoman siege of Trapezunt, although in principle the (hidden) rebel could have taken advantage of the Sultan's preoccupation. The Wallachian ruler even sends his messengers to congratulate the Sultan on his new conquest but avoids a personal appearance when summoned. Here, ‘Aşık Paşa-zade skips a causal element, omitting the mission of Hamza and Yunus Beğ to Wallachia, focusing only on the voivode's violent reaction. This omission subtly underscores the negative character of the Wallachian rebel. If the Ottoman author had mentioned the plan to capture the voivode, his reaction would have been justified, at least in part. By excluding any rationale for the voivode's violent response, ‘Aşık Paşa-zade accentuates his irrationality and propensity for violence. Rather than explicitly labelling these as defining traits of the rebel (and tyrant), as Dursun did, ‘Aşık Paşa-zade implies that the Sultan had no alternative but to intervene to restore order and well-being to his subjects affected by *Kazıklı*'s actions.

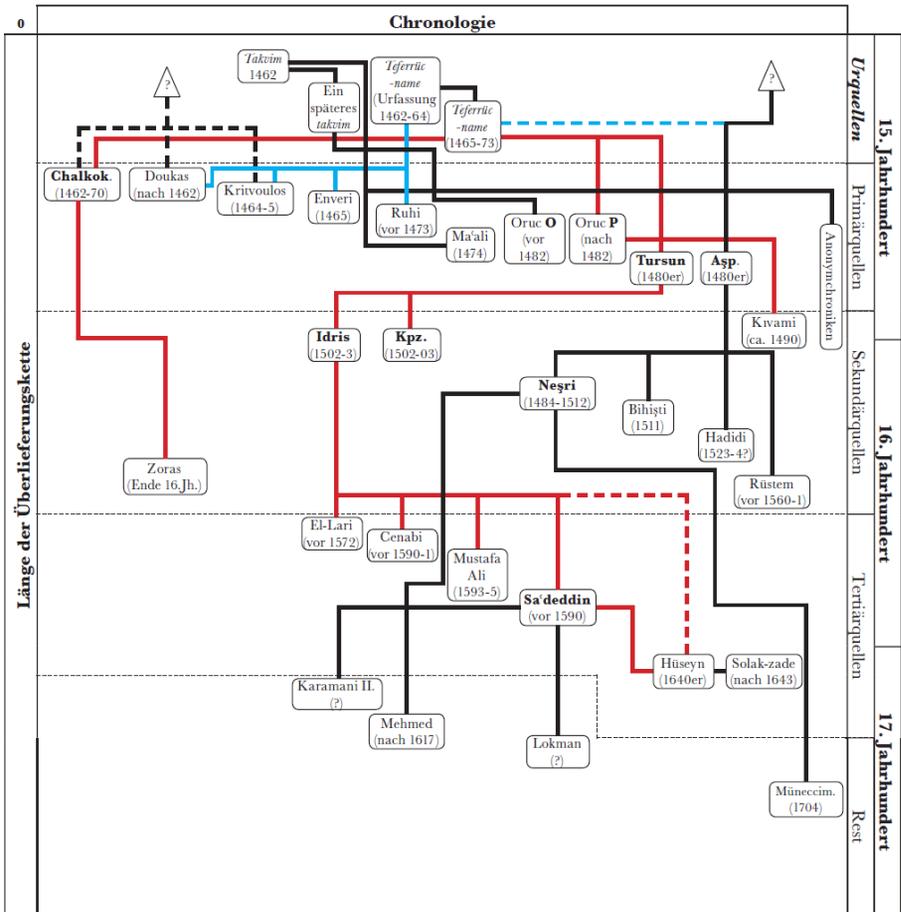
The early-16<sup>th</sup> century gives the first two great Ottoman ‘classics’: İdris Bitlisi and Kemal Paşa-zade.<sup>25</sup> They wrote histories (*tevarih*) of the Ottoman House (*Al-i ‘Osman*) in the *inşa* style (rhymed prose), achieving a level of literary sophistication previously unseen in the Ottoman historiography. From a genealogical point of view, these two authors unite the versions of Dursun Beğ and ‘Aşık Paşa-zade, thus giving the longest narration of the events of 1462.

İdris Bitlisi and Kemal Paşa-zade build the bridge between proto-Ottoman and late Ottoman historiography. By making themselves literary models, most late Ottoman authors use no other sources. This indicates once again that literary quality, rather than informational accuracy or

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<sup>25</sup> Ménage, “The Beginnings,” and Halil İncalcık, “The Rise of Ottoman Historiography,” Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), 152-167.

proximity to events, is what ensures an author's longevity. Later authors only reshape the compositions of these 'classics' and milestones. Interestingly, by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 'Aşık Paşa-zade is primarily known through his most important compiler, Mehmed Neşri.



**Fig. 1:** The Genealogy of the Ottoman authors writing about *Kazıklı voyvoda* (after *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. III, p. XLI)

As Ottoman literature evolves, becoming increasingly elaborate, the early-16<sup>th</sup>-century 'classics' are acknowledged only indirectly. New figures emerge as models for future generations. A prime example is Hoca Sa'adeddin Efendi (d. 1599), *Şeyhü'l-İslam* and the most prolific intellectual

of his time.<sup>26</sup> Through Kemal Paşa-zade, the narrative on *Kazıklı voyvoda* was later adopted by Mehmed bin Mehmed, Koca Hüseyin and Solak-zade, and through İdris Bitlisi, by Sa'adeddin and Mustafa 'Ali (see Fig. 1).<sup>27</sup>

Summing up, the transmission chains of *Kazıklı voyvoda's* representation among Ottoman authors can be divided quantitatively into two distinct versions: a longer, often highly sophisticated literary version, and a shorter, summary version with less literary ambitions.

The long version follows this chain: Dursun Beğ - İdris Bitlisi - Kemal Paşa-zade - Hoca Sa'adeddin Efendi - Mustafa 'Ali - Koca Hüseyin.

The short version: 'Aşık Paşa-zade - Kıvami - Neşri - Hadidi - Pseudo-Ruhi Çelebi - Mehmed bin Mehmed - Solak-zade - Müneccim-başı.

The later short versions are largely summaries of older chroniclers, while the authors of the longer versions maintain a commitment to details. Summarisation is achieved in two ways: 1) by condensing the original material, stripping away most stylistic flourishes to retain only the essence (e.g., Mehmed bin Mehmed and Solak-zade summarising Kemal Paşa-zade), and 2) by excising paragraphs deemed irrelevant, typically lyrical insertions (as seen in Mehmed Neşri's approach). In longer versions, authors either 1) stylistically revise the copied fragment (like Kemal Paşa-zade) or 2) assimilate information, process it, and later reproduce it (as done by Koca Hüseyin).

### ***Kazıklı voyvoda* in Context: Demonisation or Standard Representation?**

A kind of 'demonisation' of *Kazıklı voyvoda* is apparent only in the longer version, following the tradition of Dursun Beğ. 'Aşık Paşa-zade's negative remarks are limited to reflections on events he mentions, and comprise just two *beyts* (pairs of verses), likely serving as stylistic embellishments without precise ideological intent. Later authors who follow his account mostly disregard these passages.

The followers of Dursun Beğ and 'Aşık Paşa-zade do not display any explicit intention to develop the negative representation of *Kazıklı*

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<sup>26</sup> Klaus Schwarz and Gerd Winkelhane, *Hoğa Sa'adeddin, Staatsmann und Gelehrter (gest. 1599), und seine Stiftung aus dem Jahre 1614*, Bamberg, 1986.

<sup>27</sup> Mehmed bin Mehmed, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 329-330; Koca Hüseyin, in *ibid.*, 335; Solak-zade, in *ibid.*, 343-344; Mustafa 'Ali, in *ibid.*, 321-324.

*voivoda*. The variations are circumstantial, dependent on each author's literary intentions or preferences. This tradition culminates with İdris Bitlisi and Kemal Paşa-zade, who preserve the core information but envelop it in sophisticated literary styling.

However, when placed within the rhetorical and ideological context of the era, this tradition's vigour diminishes. *Kazıklı voivoda* is undeniably depicted negatively, but this is expected since he is an infidel and a rebel. This portrayal is consistent across authors and is expressed either directly (through insults like 'accursed', 'impure', 'wicked', 'unfaithful', 'unfaithful dog', 'dark-souled', etc.) or indirectly (through biased narrative). Yet, these techniques are standard in depicting historical figures of similar status, such as Wallachian voivode Mircea the Elder (1386–1418) or Moldavian voivode Stephen the Great (1456–1504). In the case of the Hungarian governor János Hunyádi aka Iancu de Hunedoara (*Yanko voivoda*) (d. 1456), Ottoman authors exhibit even greater aggression, as he had a much deeper and longer-lasting negative impact on the Ottoman Empire and was therefore perceived as a much greater threat.

The portrayal of Vlad the Impaler often seems to be an intersection between the most dangerous enemy of the day and the great warrior. However, it is crucial to avoid the trap, into which older Romanian historians have fallen, namely to believe as they did that certain Ottoman chroniclers genuinely recognised the voivode's military prowess.<sup>28</sup> The fact that such 'acknowledgments' predominantly appear in the most outspoken authors, i.e. those following Dursun Beğ's discourse, should give us much to think about. In reality, this suggests a rhetorical tactic rather than genuine admiration. In these accounts, *Kazıklı voivoda's* power and effectiveness are exaggerated to not only accentuate the Sultan's positive qualities (who supposedly bestowed upon the Wallachian the greatest possible gifts) but also to underscore the recklessness of the disgruntled rebel. *Kazıklı's* valour and strength are portrayed as products of the Sultan's making and political support. Elsewhere, this bravery is employed rhetorically to demonstrate the rebel's destructive efficiency and to magnify the significance of the Sultan's victory, implying that the Sultan defeated one of the era's greatest warriors. Thus, the Ottoman authors use

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<sup>28</sup> Examples: Kivami, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 229 (the author actually wants to communicate exactly the opposite of what seems to be meant), İdris Bitlisi, 195, 197 and 213, Kemal Paşa-zade, 229 and 255. Stoicescu claims, however, that the Ottoman authors would have hidden Vlad's merits; cf. Stoicescu, *Vlad Țepeș*, 112-113.

*Kazıklı voyvoda* as a rhetorical device to emphasise the unmatched military leadership of the Sultan.

This ideology is evident not only through Muslim Ottoman authors but also in the works of Christian Ottoman writers. While Chalkokondyles appears to be influenced by the narratives circulating in Ottoman territories where he resided, Kritovoulos actively engages in this rhetoric. Being more analytical than many of his Muslim counterparts, Kritovoulos does not emphatically link *Drakoulis's* actions to his negative character but presents him as a rebel from the outset. What follows represents Kritovoulos's intention to historicise this statement, i.e. to substantiate it through a selection of events. Kritovoulos emphasises the ingratitude of the Wallachian towards the Sultan, who offered him (and his brother *Rhados*) protection, hospitality, and ascension to power. Cunning is the defining trait of *Drakoulis*, as evidenced by his invasion of Ottoman territory and the subsequent massacre of the Sultan's envoys. The description of the Sultan's campaign in Wallachia reveals reliance on exclusively Ottoman sources, mirroring the Muslim authors' accounts with minor originalities. He highlights the extensive destruction and plunder resulting from the voivode's irrational acts, which led to the near ruin of his own country and power. The only specific military event Kritovoulos details is famous night attack conducted by Vlad the Impaler in person. *Drakoulis* draws this negative depiction from his status as a rebel against Ottoman rule exclusively.

Kritovoulos, influenced by the Hellenistic and Byzantine historiographic tradition, adopts a fact-based narrative approach while rhetorically manipulating events. For instance, he describes the Ottomans sending envoys to *Drakoulis* after his invasions south of the Danube. However, this chronology is not only absurd but also contradicts other sources, which indicate the opposite. The Ottomans initially sent envoys to bring him (dead or alive) to the Porte, which eventually ignited his violent reaction. He killed the envoys and the commanders of the troops sent to capture him, and subsequently developed the military operations into the Ottoman territories. If Kritovoulos had presented the events in their actual sequence, it might have implicitly justified *Drakoulis's* actions. However, this would conflict with the Byzantine rhetorical concept of a rebel as utterly irrational. Thus, in Kritovoulos's account, *Drakoulis* had to act as an

irrational fool, while the Sultan is portrayed as pursuing legal and peaceful means until the very end.<sup>29</sup>

The accounts of Chalkokondyles and Doukas confirm the existence of a common source material for the post-Byzantine and Ottoman chronicles. Like Dursun Beğ, Chalkokondyles explicitly attributes the Wallachian ruler's power to the Sultan's support. These sources are similar both rhetorically and in certain historical details, such as the alleged 20,000 victims of Vlad's punishments. Their main episodes largely align with Ottoman narratives but are told from a Christian perspective. Chalkokondyles, writing not far from the events, confirms that the aggressive portrayal of *Kazıklı voyvoda* was not an invention of Dursun Beğ, who completed his work two decades later, but a standardised representation of the Wallachian voivode around 1462/3.<sup>30</sup> However, Kritovoulos's omission of the voivode's explicit tyranny suggests limited circulation of this representation and his detachment from the central Ottoman political circles, unlike Dursun Beğ. Kritovoulos, clearly pro-Ottoman and writing at least a decade before Dursun, would not have omitted such piquant details unless unaware of them.

The same goes with Enveri, who was one of men closed to the grand vizier, a participant to the campaign and author of a work dedicated exclusively to these events. It is obvious that they caught his very special interest. However, his focus was not the rebel but his protector, Mahmud Paşa. Enveri uses the events to highlight Mahmud's deeds. Most likely, it was this the incentive that motivated him to write *Tefferüc-name*, and not the Wallachian rebel, whose name he even does not deem necessary to mention in his second work.

Dursun Beğ is an extraordinary case, but his special interest for *Kazıklı's* tyrannical deeds emerged from his specific role in drafting the letter of conquest of Wallachia. Later, he simply recycled such texts, for he surely wrote more than one in 1462. As essential part of the Ottoman propaganda machinery, these texts required a high level of rhetorical and ideological sophistication, a skill Dursun, serving as chief secretary (*divan kitabı*), honed over two decades until eventually completing his panegyric.

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<sup>29</sup> Corpus Draculianum, vol. 3, 48/49.

<sup>30</sup> The German and Russian Tales of Vlad the Impaler recount in a very similar way various episodes of the voivode's violent measures against the elite; cf. Gabriele Annas and Christof Paulus, *Geschichte und Geschichten. Studien zu den Deutschen Berichten über Vlad III. Drăculea* (Wiesbaden, 2020), 48-52; Petre P. Panaitescu (ed.), *Viața lui Vlad Țepeș: cronici slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan* (București, 1959), 197-214.

That is why the chapter dedicated to *Kazıklı voyvoda* is so long and has such a precise ideological focus, and this without the author excelling in providing historical content. In this regard, he does not even surpass the much shorter account of 'Aşık Paşa-zade, who neither participated in the campaign nor wrote closer to the events than Dursun. It was therefore very appealing to the next generations to merge the two accounts into one that could excel in both ideological and historical content as well as nevertheless in piquancy, for we need to acknowledge the entertaining value of the image of 'the garden of sorrows', a vivid image first introduced by Dursun Beğ. This image became a central feature in later accounts, its piquancy driving authors to perpetuate the tyrannical image of *Kazıklı voyvoda*, a portrayal that initially never surpassed the year 1462/3 and the official diplomatic channels of the Ottoman Porte.

This situation coincides with the first phase in the circulation of the Dracula Tales in Central Europe. Initially compiled in Latin, most likely at the Hungarian court in Buda, these tales aimed to cast Vlad the Impaler in the most negative light, and thereby justify among the Catholic actors, who were financially supporting Hungary, his arrest by King Matthias Corvinus in October 1462.<sup>31</sup> It was later that they were translated in Vienna and made it one decade later into the oldest known German manuscripts. There is no direct link between these and the much younger German Prints that popularised the Dracula Tales from the Nuremberg edition in 1488 onwards. The incentive was once again the entertaining potential of the brutal anecdotes they were describing. Their brutality, however, far exceeds the relatively modest approach of Dursun Beğ and his followers. What these narratives share is the chronologically limited scope of their initial versions. Dursun Beğ's letter of conquest, the basis for his account of *Kazıklı voyvoda*, and the Latin version of the German Dracula Tales circulated exclusively through diplomatic channels between the second half of 1462 and early 1463. The main proof for the Ottoman part is that no contemporary Ottoman author, whether Muslim (Enveri, Oruc, Ma'ali,

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<sup>31</sup> In addition to the widely-held belief that the Hungarian royal chancellery authored the Dracula Stories, there are three other credible theories. The first alternative suggests that the Transylvanian Saxons may have penned the original text as a propagandistic effort to discredit the voivode, who had inflicted significant economic harm upon them. The second theory posits that an author from a southern German region synthesised various public reports about the voivode into the literary work we recognise today. The final hypothesis proposes that Wallachian nobles could have been the initial authors, drafting public proclamations, a well-documented form of propaganda aimed at the political sphere. This text was subsequently adapted, becoming more literary in nature, and gained popularity in southern Germany. Cf. Albert Weber, *Vlad der Pfähler Drăculea (1431-1476). Genese und Transformation herrschaftsbiographischer Episteme*, Gießen, 2021 (Phd. thesis), 281-285.

Pseudo-Ruhi Çelebi, and some anonymous chroniclers) or Christian (Chalkokondyles, Kritovoulos, and Doukas), replicated accusations in Dursun's terms. Had they been aware of these tales, they likely would have leveraged their sensationalist appeal. Other Ottoman authors like 'Aşık Paşa-zade and many anonymous writers either composed their works long after Dursun's propaganda had ceased to play an active role or were outside the sultano-centric circles of the Empire.

### Ottoman Sources and Central European Dracula Stories

Last but not least, I need to address a situation of pure rhetorical nature that has the potential to create serious confusion and lead to wrong conclusions. I am talking about a fragment from the Ottoman chronicle of Koca Hüseyin, which, despite being written in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, might seem to echo details found only in the German Tales on *Dracula Wayda* and related authors.<sup>32</sup>

Once again, it all begins with Dursun Beğ and his followers, i.e. the longer accounts on *Kazıklı voyvoda*. They describe a garden, allegorically likened to a 'garden of sorrows' and allegedly created by the voivode *Kazıklı* out of cynical sadism around his wooden residence (*ağaç hisar*). Ottoman authors used this pseudo-historical setting to construct allegories, comparing this garden to those familiar to Eastern audiences, with phrases like "the fresh blood... were tulips in bloom" or "the fruit of the trees were skulls" (Kemal Paşa-zade).<sup>33</sup> It is only much later that Koca Hüseyin adds another detail that brings this image of the garden closer to the (in)famous German Dracula Tales by stating that "this [was] the place of torment and dining".<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, there is no evidence to suggest that Koca Hüseyin, known to be the son of the chief librarian of the Gazi Hosrev mosque in Sarajvo, was a renegade from Central Europe or had access to Christian, specifically Central European, sources. Except for Münecim-başı, who wrote a history of the Ottoman House in Arabic in the early-18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica regum Romanorum. Partea 2*, Ed. by Harald Zimmermann (Hannover, 2003), 917-924, here 918; Michel Beheim, "Von ainem wutrich der hies Trakle waida von der Walachei," *Die Gedichte des Michael Beheim*, vol. 1: *Einleitung – Gedichte*, no. 1-147, ed. by Hans Gille and Ingeborg Spriewald (Berlin 1968), no. 99\*, p. 285-316, here 290; Sandra Wolff (ed.), *Die »Konstanzer Chronik« Gebhart Dachers. »By des Byschoffs zyten volgiengen disz nachgeschriben ding vund sachen...«*. *Codex Sangallensis 646: Edition und Kommentar* (Ostfildern, 2008), 654-661, 673, 685-690, here 659.

<sup>33</sup> Kemal Paşa-zade, in *Corpus Draculianum*, vol. 3, 229.

<sup>34</sup> Koca Hüseyin, in *ibid.*, 337.

and had access to Byzantine sources, no other Ottoman authors are known to have actively used Christian sources, let alone central European ones.

As already stated, the tradition about *Kazıklı voyvoda* evolved **exclusively** within a literary context. Not only authors but also many copyists felt entitled to stylistically modify passages and wordings they deemed aesthetically inferior. The most straightforward explanation is that Hüseyin merely reworked the image of 'the garden of sorrows' from his sources, employing a series of allegories and comments that coincidentally brought it closer to images propagated by authors in late medieval and early modern German speaking regions. This alignment appears to be coincidental rather than based on direct influence or shared source material. Nothing more!

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