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***MOLDAVIA DURING THE REIGNS
OF PRINCE PETER THE LAME***

ABSTRACT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	p. 5
1. Historiographic approaches to Peter the Lamé	p. 7
2. Sources	p. 11
I. Peter the Lamé's family	p. 15
II. Foreign policy during the reigns of Peter the Lamé	p. 32
II.1. Foreign policy during the reign of Prince John	p. 32
II.2. Prince John's deposition	p. 36
II.3. Foreign policy in the first reign (1574-1579)	p. 46
II.4. Foreign policy in the second reign (1582-1591)	p. 65
II.5. Renouncing the throne	p. 100
III. Domestic policy during the reigns of Peter the Lamé	p. 104
III.1. Official princely ranks	p. 114
A. <i>Logofeția</i>	p. 114
B. <i>Diecii</i> and <i>uricarii</i>	p. 126
C. <i>Vornicia</i>	p. 144
D. <i>Pârcălăbia</i>	p. 164
E. The gatekeeper of Suceava	p. 195
F. <i>Postelnicia</i>	p. 202
G. <i>Spătăria</i>	p. 204
H. <i>Vistiernicia</i>	p. 209
I. <i>Păhărnicia</i>	p. 211
J. <i>Stolnicia</i>	p. 213
K. <i>Comis</i>	p. 218
L. Lower officials	p. 219
III.2. The Church during the reigns of Peter the Lamé	p. 246
A. The Monastery of Galata	p. 254
B. The Monastery of Hlincea	p. 258
C. The Monastery of Meletie Balica	p. 259
D. The Monastery of Sucevița	p. 260
IV. Peter the Lamé's exile	p. 262

Conclusions p. 276
**Appendix: The list of the high officials serving during the reigns of Peter the
Lame p. 279**
Abbreviations..... p. 284
References p. 285

Abstract

The interest shown by older or newer historiography for the reigns of Peter the Lamé has had a long course. The year 1574 brought along something new: the appointment as a prince of a member of the Basarabi on the throne of Iași. At the same time, the enthronement of Peter the Lamé marks a diplomatic success for Alexander 2 Mircea. The Wallachian Prince had managed – through the network created at Constantinople – to obtain the reign for his younger brother. Peter the Lamé supported his reigns on the Ottomans. However, the Ottomans' intervention could not have offered such a long reign. Naturally, the reigns of Prince Peter had to lean on the grand boyars of the country. Their core was represented by the members of the Movilă family, not just the Movilă brothers, but their relatives, too. Though the external sources (especially the Polish ones, remind the opposition of the country towards the princely institution), there was no modification among the members of the princely council. They represented the premises of this analysis. If initially, my goal was to reconstruct only the competence of the princely council and the relations of the prince with the grand boyars, I have realised that the evolution of the domestic situation cannot be understood without an assessment of foreign policy. At the same time, the study of the history of the ruling family has enabled me to nuance my account of the reigns of Peter the Lamé.

Hence, I could not have construed theoretically and then draft this thesis without studying the ruling family. My presentation began with the father of the two princes, Mircea (who reigned for a short while and was for two long the pretender to the Wallachian throne). Mircea is not the only son of Mihnea the Bad claiming the throne. Miloș, the son of Mihnea the Bad, had also thought of becoming the ruler. During the reign of Neagoe Basarab, he was in Constantinople, where he sought assistance to accomplish his plans; however, he fell to the sultan's disgrace. The presence of names such as Miloș or Despina in the onomastic heritage of the Mihnești determined the historians to consider that they were relatives of Serbian families who had sought refuge in Wallachia. I have adhered to this idea, too.

The marriage between Mircea and Despina produced several children, among whom three boys: Miloș, Alexander, and Peter. The couple was blessed with several girls: Maria, Sofia, Ruxandra, Despina, and Zamfira. The fate of Alexander the second Mircea and Peter the Lamé is well-known due to their reigns. About Miloș, we know that he lived in Constantinople and had no ruling desires given that he was born with a crippled arm. His son Vlad, on the other hand, was the presumptive heir of Peter the Lamé. He even obtained the

reign of Wallachia to the detriment of his cousin Mihnea. However, his reign was cut short by his untimely death.

Following my presentation of the ruling family, my attention was drawn to Peter the Lame. In 1574, the Moldavian prince was married to Maria Amirali. Prince Peter's wife left very few traces in documents, just like other ruling consorts of her time. She donated to Galata a village called Teișorii (submitted to the region of Botoșani)¹. At Galata, the prince's wife was buried alongside one of their daughters, Despina.

They had several children, but only Maria reached adulthood: "They had both boys and girls. When he came to Constantinople (1579), they all died except for a girl."² In 1587, the princess married the Greek Zotu Țigara.

With Irina Botezata (who died during the Austrian exile), the prince had another son called Ștefan. Peter the Lame had great plans for him: to appoint him as the prince after his death and thus instate his own dynasty in Moldavia. However, those plans were halted when Prince Peter renounced the throne. The young prince died in Tirol at the tender age of 18. Maria, Zotu Țigara and the nephew Gheorghe hetman left for Venice, leaving the prince alone. In 1592, the three were summoned to take care of their father and "I asked them to care for my son, to take care of him after my death, and I appointed them as trustees in all matters."³ The expectations of the old prince did not come to fruition, though. Furthermore, following his demise, his successors settled the inheritance in court. After the death of young Ștefan, the matter of the inheritance was also taken before a court. Another aspect on which I focused is the relationship between the prince and the members of his family during the exile years. The first to leave Prince Peter were the members of his family, as I have shown above.

Following the first chapter, I have divided the thesis into two major coordinates: foreign policy and domestic policy. I structured the chapter dedicated to foreign policy based on several essential coordinates for the period considered here, primarily the Polish-Ottoman and Austro-Ottoman relations. Moldavia's status in 1570-90 cannot be understood and analysed without assessing the evolution of the relations between the nobiliary republic and the Ottoman Empire. Though the Ottomans believed Moldavia to be theirs and the country was part of the "Islam house," the Muslim law was not enforced in Moldavia. The suzerainty of the Porte spread increasingly in the country in that timeframe. Any damage to the relations

¹ P. Mihail, *Documente inedite ale cancelariei moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea (din arhivele metocului Sf. Mormânt din Constantinopol)*, extras din *RdI*, XVII, 1964, p. 345, doc. nr. 9.

² Hurmuzaki-Iorga, *Documente*, XIV/1, p. 85, doc. No. CXLVIII.

³ *DRH*, A., vol. IX (1593-1598), volume edited by Petronel Zahariuc, București, 2014, p. 100, doc. No. 79.

within this space had direct repercussions on Moldavia (peaceful and war times alike influenced this realm),

To get a better insight into the foreign policy carried out by Peter the Lamé, I divided the chapter into subchapters (different in size). The starting point was represented by the reign of Prince John brought by the Ottomans as the Moldavian ruler, worried by the fact that Bogdan Lăpuşneanu had become too close to the Poles. From this perspective, the reign of Prince John had to confer stability upon Moldavia and avoid siding with the Poles. Concerning the last, the new reign was a cause of worry, perhaps because the Polish diplomacy saw Prince John as the man of the Turks. Hence, the Moldo-Polish relations in 1572-1574 were marked by mutual distrust. The Moldavian prince was concerned by the presence of Bogdan Lăpuşneanu and his brother in the Polish territories and especially their support from some of the noblemen. Furthermore, Peter (called the Cossack) was allowed to return to Poland from Constantinople along with the Polish emissaries in the autumn of 1572. “With our princely consent,” Peter accompanied the Polish emissaries to the Republic. Furthermore, upon their arrival in Moldavia, “I command you (...) to let them (...) pass without any hindrance through your vilayet and allow them to reach their country safe and sound.”

There was also the issue of the vacant Polish throne following the death of Sigismund II Augustus. The first of three, the Polish interregnum drew the attention of the Great Powers to Poland. The candidates with supported either by the Ottomans or the Austrians and the appointment of one of them meant that Poland would adhere either to Ottoman or Austrian diplomacy. In this context, Prince John acted in agreement with Ottoman diplomacy. The Ottomans firmly recommended to the Polish senators reunited to elect the new king to make sure that their choice would not be against the Porte. In the same direction, the Moldavian prince was ready to “raise along with my entire country against all enemy of this Crown.”⁴ For Prince John, the situation of the neighbouring kingdom appeared favourable to the reignition of old conflicts with the Poles. First of all, the precious objects belonging to the former Prince Ştefan Tomşa were left in Poland. There was also the issue of Pokuttya. To force a favourable resolution, Prince John chose to stop the merchandise bought by the late Sigismund Augustus from Constantinople in the city of Hotin. I have shown that the prince’s attempts to reopen the issue of Pokuttya were mere statements (because the senators reunited to elect the king decided to postpone the resolution of Moldavian requests). The prince also

⁴ Ilie Corfus, *Documente privitoare la istoria României culese din Arhivele polone. Secolul al XVI-lea*, Bucureşti, 1979, p. 324, doc. nr. 162.

failed to get the matter of Ștefan Tomșa's assets solved. As a vassal of the Porte, he had to coordinate his moves with those of the suzerain power, thus providing support to the new king, namely Henry of Valois. Though a solution was found to the Polish dynastic crisis, the Moldavian boyars exiled in Poland continued their actions and tried to get Bogdan Lăpușeanu back on the throne. The boyars' complaints, the refusal to pay a higher tribute to the Porte, and perhaps the negotiations carried out with the Austrians led to the prince's deposition in the spring of 1574.

The second subchapter analysed the causes of Peter the Lamé's appointment as the ruler and the Ottoman-Wallachian campaign against Prince John. Among the underlying causes of Peter the Lamé's appointment, it is worth noting the great amounts given in Constantinople to both the grand vizier and the sultan. The Venetians and Genoans – monitoring the evolution of things in the Ottoman capital – gave away various sums that Peter the Lamé handed over to the Porte in exchange for the reign. In a Genoan report of July 4, 1574, the amounts of 10,000 additional ducats to the Moldavian tribute and 50,000 ducats for the sultan were mentioned.⁵ What was supposed to be an exchange of reigns became more challenging to solve than the Turks would have expected. The first victory obtained on April 14 showed that the situation was getting complicated in the Romanian Principalities. The campaign initiated by Prince John against the Ottomans had surprised the prince of Wallachia and his brother. Moreover, the Court of Iași also comprised Vintilă, a pretender to the throne of Bucharest. The first victories enabled Prince John to appoint Vintilă as the ruler, which would have turned Wallachia into an ally for the Moldavian prince. However, the new reign proved ephemeral (i.e., only four days). Furthermore, the Wallachian boyars remained loyal to Alexander 2 Mircea. The great *vornic* [magistrate] Ivașcu and Albul Goleșcu *mare clucer* [Lord Steward] risked “their heads for my reign.” Facing such a situation, the Ottomans sent additional troops in support of the Wallachians. In their turn, the Christians within the Ottoman Empire monitored closely all the events occurring in Moldavia. Rumour had it even that the Turks had sent 20,000 people to Moldavia, but even the Transylvanian Prince had trouble believing it.⁶ Only after June 10-11, 1574, the victory against Prince John became definitive. In the subsequent days, the news reached Constantinople, the court of Ștefan Bathory, or Vienna. The only thing left to do was to catch the “rebel” and send him to Constantinople. The end of the conflict unfolded in the spring of 1574 led to the enthronement of Peter the Lamé but left the country vulnerable to robberies by the Tatars. There was also

⁵ Hurmuzaki-Iorga, *Documente*, XI, București, 1900, p. 88, doc. No. CXXXVII.

⁶ *Idem*, II/1, București, 1893, p. 708, doc. No. DCLXXX.

the unsolved issue of the former prince's wealth, which was in Poland with his family. The new prince had to pay the obligations to the Porte.

The core of this chapter revolved around the foreign policy of the first and second reigns. My analysis relied on three essential elements with relevant influences on Moldavia. The first of them is represented by the relations between the new prince and the Ottoman Empire. Peter the Lamé was quick to obey all the orders from Selim II. Right after his enthronement, the new prince sent a tribute to the Ottomans. Other obligations were added: 10,000 florins promised by his predecessor or the materials necessary to reconstruct the cities destroyed in the war. One cannot forget the gifts for the high Ottoman officials. Mehmet Pasha received as a gift 6,000 ducats from the part of Peter the Lamé. They were not limited to the years of the first reign. During the second reign, the prince sent sable hides to Constantinople as a sign of attaining a protocolar obligation.

Secondly, the relations of Moldavia with Poland played a relevant role in this chapter. The starting point was the Moldavian prince's desire to continue and maintain the old relations with the nobiliary Republic, mostly given that the latter and the Ottoman Empire got along well. Whereas the Turks asked and ordered the Poles to send Huru, the *pârcălab* [master] of Hotin, Prince John's wife and the wives of seven other boyars loyal to the former prince, Peter the Lamé showed more lenience. Hence, Lupu Huru returned to Moldavia alongside her daughter as early as 1575. However, the challenges in the relations with the Polish king were related to the Cossacks and their bounty raids in the Moldavian and Ottoman territories. From the perspective of the Ottomans, the Cossacks were Polish subjects. Thus, the king was responsible for any activity that they attempted against the Turks. The two reigns also included raids by the Cossacks dictated mostly by the bounty obtained. Such raids happened again and again, generally on an annual basis. The only way to stop them was for Peter the Lamé to give gifts or even persuade some of the Cossacks to join the ranks of princely servants. However, raids persisted to overturn Peter the Lamé's reign.

I was able to identify two situations menacing the reigns of Peter the Lamé. The first moment occurred during the autumn of 1577 when the Cossacks did not only pillage the region, but they brought along a candidate to the throne – Ioan Potcoavă, the self-proclaimed brother of Prince John. The attack of the Cossacks took the prince by surprise; he was defeated, and he went to Bucharest, from where he asked the Ottomans for assistance. The Turks sent 500 janissaries to Wallachia, but they proved to be insufficient for securing a victory. Hence, another 1,000 janissaries went to Moldavia to reinstate Peter the Lamé to the throne. As late as 1578, Ioan Potcoavă and the Cossacks lost, and the reign of Peter the Lamé

was restored. Though the Poles were aware of the Cossacks' intentions, they were not stopped, mostly given that Ștefan Bathory was busy fighting in Gdansk for the recognition of his reign; the Cossacks took advantage of the situation.

The second moment dates from 1583, at the beginning of the second reign. In the summer of that year, the Cossacks robbed the Polish, Moldavian, and Ottoman territories. The raids overlapped the siege of Tighina, the seizing of the Ottoman cannons, and the killing of Turks in their conflicts with the Cossacks. Peter the Lamé even lost his reign for three days and he went to great lengths to regain it.

The issue of the Cossacks did not impair and tense only the Moldo-Polish relations. They also make the sultan angry with both the Moldavians and the Poles. In the lack of measures to stop the Cossacks, Murad III blamed it all on the Moldavian and Polish princes. Both of them had to keep the peace in agreement with the treaty between the Poles and the Ottomans, and all Cossack incursion was considered a breach of the treaty. The Sultan even threatened war against the Poles and the transformation of Moldavia into a *raya*.

Besides those issues, there was the matter of the Polish interregnums. Just as in the case of Henry of Valois, the candidate of the Porte won. In this complex equation, I have shown that the Moldavian prince followed the policy of the Porte. The "almost tearful" supplications to elect the pro-Ottoman candidate expressed not only Peter the Lamé's fears, but the worries and concerns of the Poles.

I ended this chapter with the renouncement; he renounced the throne in the summer of 1591. The prince's decision came due to the increase in requests by the Ottomans concerning Moldavia (as per the chronicler). Perhaps Peter the Lamé was too worried that his young successor, Ștefan, would become a Turk just like his nephew Mihnea.

The third chapter of the work focused on the domestic policy of Peter the Lamé's 15-year reign. After various general observations about the situation in Moldavia, I featured the competence of the princely council. The lower or higher princely officials played a significant role in this chapter. I analysed them starting with the members of the princely council, from the great *logofăt* to the *comis*. I used charts to analyse the members of the princely council. Concerning the position of *logofăt* [chancellor], I chose to include the second or even third chancellors, as well as the *uricari* or foreign language *pisari*. Hence, I obtained an overview of the princely chancellery. The changes among the great *logofeți*, the great *vornici* or hetmans were scarce. Throughout the 15 years of his reign, there were three great *logofeți*: Ioan Golăi, Gheorghe *logofăt*, and Luca Stroici, the son-in-law of Gheorghe *logofăt*. Concerning the *vornici*, I found only five boyars who occupied this position: Bilăi

and Cozma Murgu during the first reign; Ieremia Movilă, Vartic, and Condrea Bucium during the second reign. Other longstanding officials within the councils of Peter the Lamé were Meletie Balica, Andrei hetman, Gheorghe Lozonschi the *pârcălab* of Hotin, and Simion Movilă. It may be stated that Peter the Lamé relied on the boyars of the house of Movileni: Ieremia and Simion Movilă, Meletie Balica hetman married to the sister of the Movilă brothers; Andrei hetman, the brother-in-law of Simion Movilă; Gheorghe Lozonschi, the father of Princess Elisabeta Movilă. The council also comprised two metropolitans: Teofan and Gheorghe Movilă. Peter the Lamé was joined in exile by the members of the extended Movilești family.

In the case of other official positions, the prince made far more frequent changes. I remind here the great number of *pârcălabi*, some of them mentioned only once or a couple of times. Several names (i.e., Condrea Bucium, Gheorghe Lozonschi, or the Vartic brothers) remained in their positions for a long while. The prince leaned on them in the seemingly endless battles with the Cossacks. I presented the high official ranks, and I even discussed various lower officials. I have applied the same methodology as for the high officials.

This chapter also includes aspects related to the Church of that period. Peter the Lamé supported the places of worship; during his reigns, the monasteries on Mount Athos or in Jerusalem benefitted from great funds from his part. He also made donations to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In the country, the prince confirmed the donations of his predecessors and endowed monasteries such as Putna, Bistrița, or Sucevița. Following the model of previous princes, he founded Galata, which would serve as a princely necropolis. Princess Maria and a young daughter of the reigning couple were buried there.

The last chapter analysed the period of the princely exile. On the one hand, these years were marked by the relations between Prince Peter and the Austrian authorities. Initially, the Moldavian “court” only had permission to cross the Austrian territory, without any right to settle in the Empire. Sigismund III Vasa wrote to Rudolf II about the horrendous situation of the Moldavian prince, whose country was facing grave dangers, and who had to escape them. Far from Moldavia, in his correspondence with the Austrians, Peter the Lamé invoked the Turkish tyranny as the reason he had fled. His Christianity became the argument used for harbouring the prince and his people in the Empire. Their road was supposed to end in Venice, Italy (probably), where most of the Greeks lived. The long road covered took a toll on the prince. Upon invoking old age and great illness, Peter the Lamé hoped to persuade the Austrians to let him live in Tirol. At least for the moment, Italy was no longer considered the residence of the Moldavian court. Finally, on July 6, 1592, following a long and arduous

journey, Peter the Lamé arrived in Innsbruck. In the meanwhile, Rudolf II allowed the Moldavians that had formed the suit of the former prince to settle in his territories.

The arrival of these foreigners was a great surprise among the locals, who were little accustomed to the luxurious Eastern style. Eighteen rich and elegant carriages had arrived in Innsbruck, where they rejoiced in a warm welcome from Archduke Ferdinand.

The prince's stay in the Austrian territories did not lack misunderstandings. They monitored closely each move made by the former prince, his family, and even his servants. Though they had left Tirol secretly, the Austrians learned about the departure of several Moldavian boyars. Given that the Archduke had no knowledge of their departure to Venice and that the emperor had not consented to it, the order was to stop the boyars at the border. The Austrians did not arrest the boyars only because Prince Peter pleaded in their favour.

At the same time, the exile years were also marked by attempts made by Andrei hetman, Nicula Hrisoverghi, and Iane Cantacuzino (with the knowledge of the Patriarch of Constantinople) to regain the throne for Peter the Lamé. All their efforts were hindered by the prince's hesitations. Though they had obtained the sultan's pardon and the goodwill of Sinan Pasha, Peter the Lamé hesitated to enter the Ottoman Empire. The letters sent by Iane Cantacuzino or Ieremia II failed to convince the prince to head to Constantinople. The Austrians and the Ottomans were in full conflict, and the vigilance of the former was higher than ever. Thus, the "plots" of his friends in Constantinople never bore fruition.

All this while, Prince Peter tried to manage his wealth and his son's inheritance. He drafted up several wills, he kept records of the expenditures and the outstanding debts to his servants following his demise. He had several conflicts with his daughter Maria and his son-in-law Zotu, which were also featured in the first part of this work.

The reigns of Peter the Lamé represented challenging years for Moldavia. The danger of war avoided Moldavia, but the raids of the Tatars and the Cossacks were a common event. The robberies of the latter made the lives of people very difficult. The foreign relations impaired the domestic situation in Moldavia. When the Polish throne was vacant, the Great Powers became involved in the disputes surrounding the election of a new ruler. Peter the Lamé reminded their neighbours to elect a pro-Ottoman ruler; in all his actions, the prince sought to avoid getting the Turks mad.

In his relations with the boyars, I did not identify any plot against the prince. It is worth noting here Bălțatul *logofăt*, the brother-in-law of Bogdan Lăpușneanu, who supported Ioan Potcoavă. Nevertheless, the last did not enjoy the support of the grand boyars. The other pretenders brought by the Cossacks also failed to obtain the support of the great officials

within the princely council. The two brothers, Simion and Gligorie, who were fugitives in Poland and brought as a replacement of the prince a certain Petru, were not officials of the council or even lower officials. Unfortunately, I did not identify their lineage or potential relations with other boyars of the time.

It may be stated that through witty policy, Peter the Lamé managed to obtain the support of the grand Moldavian boyars. It is also worth noting that for the Movilești, for instance, the reigns of Peter the Lamé meant a revival of their political careers. Ioan Stroici *logofăt* had lost his head because of treason during the reign of Alexandru Lăpușneanu. Many of them had Prince Peter to thank for their ascension.

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