



Dracula

"alias"

Vlad the
Impaler



Contents

The Legend of "Dracula" 3

The etymology of "Dracul" 4

The nicknames "Dracul" and
"Țepeș" in official Romanian
documents 8

The political sophistication of
nickname "Dracul" 9

The first written accounts
on the actions of the
"Voivode Dracula" 11

"Dracula" in the educated
European literature of the time 23

"Dracula" in the popular
German world 26

"Dracula" in the
"slavonic version" 30

Between legend and truth 32

Between "blood and roses" 33

Stories about Dracula 38

Dracula
in the popular German word 38

The "Dracula" myth 50

European romanticism și cărți

and the medieval legend about

"Dracula" 50

Bram Stoker 51

"Dracula" and the
cinematographic "vampirism" 56

Instead of epilogue 60



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The Legend of "Dracula"

Romanian and foreign historians modern and contemporary tried and for the most part have succeeded to make the proper distinction between Vlad "Țepeș"

(Vlad "the Impaler", Vlad the Impaler henceforth) – the lord of Walachia (1448, 1456-1462, 1476), the fearless fighter against the ottoman danger from the time of Mehmed II (1451-1481), the "Conqueror" of Constantinople (1453) – and the bloodthirsty and ghoulis character *Dracula*, "related" by certain stories from the 15th century or "made-up" by the 19th century post-romantic fiction written by Bram Stoker.

The etymology of "Dracul"

In 1408, the king of Hungary, Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387-1437), has founded the Order of the Dragon, whose mark was a dragon twined

at the feet of the Christian cross. The order was formed to fight against the Christian heresy (especially Hussite movement) but also to organize the crusader fight against the ottoman expansion.

Vlad – Vlad the Impaler's father and candidate for the throne of the Wallachia – became a member of the order in 1431 at Nurnberg in Germany. As a ruler from 1436, Vlad (1436-1442, 1444-1447) in more than one circumstances used the Dragon mark: on two monetary issues, on royal chancellery seals, or carved in stone.

A nickname that corresponds with Vlad's affiliation to the Order of the Dragon must be imposed even before his

ascent to the throne of the Wallachia since an internal document issued in 1436 talks about "Dracula voivode" just enthroned.

We know the fact that in the period between 1431 and 1436, waiting for a convenient occasion, the candidate Vlad had lived for the most part in Transylvania, surely in Sighișoara (*Schässburg*), in the german area, and the german word *drache* is translated "dragon". A document from 1452 issued at Buda by the general governor of the Kingdom of Hungary, Iancu de Hunedoara (Hunyadi János) (1446-1453), in medieval latin – one of the cultural languages of that period next to slavonic (old Slavic language) – mentions

Vlad (the future ruler Vlad the Impaler) son of dead voivode "*Dracw*" (Dracul), and in translation the latin word *draco* means "dragon". We acknowledge the fact that "Dracul" had been used by certain sources of that time to designate Vlad Dracul's descendants, Radu "cel Frumos" (Radu the Handsome), the other Draculea (according to the byzantine historiographer who lived in that period, Laonic Chalcocondil, and according to Antonio Bonfini <1434-1503>, official historiographer of the king of Hungary, Mathias Corvin), Vlad the Impaler calling himself "Drakulya" in 1475.



The nicknames "Dracul" and "Țepeș" in official Romanian documents

Romanian documents – acts of princely chancellery and chronicles – subsequent to



Vlad's reign and his son's reign, to distinguish them, will mention them on the throne of Wallachia institutionalizing their names, "Dracul" for the first and "Țepeș" for the second. In the official documents issued during their reign, these two lords have used the simple title of "Vlad".

The political sophistication of nickname "Dracul"

Concerning the "legendary" side of Vlad the Impaler's personality, the "fables" of an educated and popular literature from the second half of the 15th century call him "Dracula", the nickname of his father.

Those who had the interest to discredit him, the "political refugees" from southern Transylvania (candidates or noblemen), the cities of Kronstadt (Brașov) and Hermannstadt (Sibiu), and Mathias Corvin's entourage, have highlighted his cruel and demonic behavior, emphasizing his name "Dracul".

The nickname belonging to this father was born from the relationship with the dragon's image. In that period, the nickname Dracul was perverted insidiously: by the dissimulation of its initial meaning "dragon" and its romanian transcriptions ("Draculea", "Drăculea", "Dracula" etc.); by highlighting the meaning of the romanian neo-latin homonym

drac (from lat. *drāco*, dragon) which by semantic evolution means "devil" in Romanian language. The association of this nickname "Dracul" and the terror which have inspired his demonic actions served as a politic-diplomatic instrument to his enemies.

The first written accounts on the actions of the "Voivode Dracula"

The appearance of the first written account on the actions of Dracula the Voivode in central and western Europe, has coincided with the campaign of justification launched by the Hungarian king Mathias Corvin (1458-

1590). What has actually happened? Facing the ottoman danger, the Pope Pius II (1458-1464) – known also as a distinguished humanist in the person of Eneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464) – took the initiative to organize a great anti-ottoman crusade at the Christian convention held in Mantova in Italy (June 1459 – January 1460). Eventually a papal bull took the initiative of a three-year war, a few decrees deciding the formation of special funds that would be made available for organizing the anti-ottoman crusade. The difficulty of the war had to be carried by the states from the “first line”: the Venetian aristocratic republic, which saw its mediterranean possessions threatened;

the Kingdom of Hungary, interested in the mastery of the lower Danube and the mouths of the great european river; the Albanians of the great soldier Skanderbeg (Gjergj Kastrioti, supreme commander of the League of Lezhë, 1444-1468), one of the last pieces of resistance in the Balkans.

Vlad the Impaler, ruler of Wallachia and vassal to the king of Hungary, had a foreground role on the “first line of history” (according to the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga), in that his country existed on the full length of lower Danube in direct contact with the enemy which was the object of the crusade, the Ottoman Empire.