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LITERATES IN A QUASI-ORAL SOCIETY
MOLDAVIAN AND WALLACHIAN
CHANCELLERY SCRIBES
(FOURTEENTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURIES)

During the first centuries of existence of Medieval Romanian Principalities, the use of written culture seems to have been very restricted. Writing was used, if at all, at the level of prince's chancellery, for record keeping and communication, and by the monastic institutions for copying of religious manuscripts. At the other levels of the society the use of writing was sporadic, passive and reactive.

Apparently, the active writing skills hardly went beyond a restricted circle of professional scribes. Most of them seem to have been employed in the state chancellery or monasteries, the only institutions that up to the first quarter of the sixteenth century were actively involved in the producing of documents. In the following lines, I shall give attention to the employee of the prince's chancelleries. I shall try to trace who were the literate clerks who activated in the state chancelleries from the foundation of the Wallachian and Moldavian states up to the end of the sixteenth century. I shall investigate (to the extent the available record would make this possible) their social origins, ages, family relations, and level of education. In addition, I shall look into who were the first producers of regional, urban and village documents when written records began to be used by other strata of the Wallachian and Moldavian society.

The first surviving land charters already suggest that the early literate personnel employed in the princely writing offices were laymen of high social standing. Writing during the early period seems to have been a family enterprise as often kinship relations are attested between employees of the princely offices.

This practice seems at odds with the pattern to be found either in Western Europe or in Byzantium as from Scandinavia to neighboring Poland the ecclesiastical institutions were very active both in promoting as well as producing the early documents as forms of record storage. Conversely, in Wallachia and Moldavia, the church was only indirectly engaged in the producing of early charters as some of the scribes were offspring of highly positioned ecclesiastics. Only later, during the sixteenth century, priests began to play a more active role in the producing of land charters, both as employee in the princely chancelleries or individually at the village level. During the early period, monastic institutions, especially from Wallachia, appear mostly as commissioners of written records as forms of legal proof over land. This might be due to the fact that in the Medieval Romanian Principalities the monastic institutions were apparently dependent on the administrative machinery that the newly founded states had put in place.¹ Only charters issued at the level of princely chancellery had legal value during the early period.

The surviving evidence from Wallachia and Moldavia in regard to the attestation of professional literates is very uneven: while in Moldavia the early data already suggest a pattern of highly positioned and kin related clerks, in Wallachia due to numerous inconsistencies in the practices of the early state chancellery it is hard to unveil the pattern of employment of the early literates. However, when the data become richer, I can notice that the early Moldavian model can as well be traced in the neighboring principality.

The Moldavian evidence

The first surviving names of Moldavian scribes suggest that during the early period the employment in the princely office might have been transmitted from father to son. The skills seem to have been learnt in the office as all fifteenth century Moldavian chancellors are attested as former scribes.

The first signed Moldavian document, extant from 1401, mentions that it was written by Bratei logofăt, (chancellor)² and sealed by Pan Tamash.³ Nineteen years later, Ivașco, son of Bratei (Ivașco Brateevici), is recorded as a scribe in the Moldavian office.⁴ Moreover, the same father-son relation can be pinned between other two early names during the early fifteenth century. Chancellor Isaia, who was in the service of

the Moldavian princes between 1409 and 1420, indicated in 1414 that he was the son of Gârdu.⁵ As a scribe Gârdu is attested in the Moldavian office in 1407,⁶ it is possible that Isaia was his son. According to the extant documents, the two scribes and their fathers were the only clerks recorded as employed in the Moldavian office until 1422, when the number of scribes and chancellors began to expand; by the reign of Stephen the Great (1457-1504) thirty-five other names are mentioned.⁷

As the surviving data gradually build up and enlarge, it unveils more suggestions about the careers of the early literates and practices of the Moldavian state chancellery. One of the earliest most prominent figures that came down to us is Mikhu/Mikhail, scribe and chancellor in the Moldavian office. His family archive, preserved in Poland, provides us with an exceptionally fortunate example for the early period, when family relations, political career, physical property, and whereabouts are possible to trace on the basis of preserved records. An analysis of his life course hints at the status needed to begin a career in the prince's office during the early period and also suggests the practices at work in the Moldavian state chancellery in the fifteenth century. Last but not least, it illustrates to what extent service in the prince's chancellery might augment a man's initial political and economical standing.

Mikhail is attested for the first time as a scribe in 1422, when the Moldavian office seems to have been still run by a restricted number of professional clerks. Only after the first quarter of the fifteenth century, a greater number of scribes began to be attested in the surviving evidence.⁸ It seems that he began his service in the prince's office at an early age⁹ as there is information about him continuously from 1422 until 1470.¹⁰ In 1443, after twenty-one years of service, he became the head of the Moldavian state chancellery.¹¹ I see the length of his service before his appointment as a chancellery head as suggestive for the practices of the early Moldavian chancellery. It seems that skills were learnt in the office and the higher personnel of the chancellery were selected from those inside the office.

Mikhail was the oldest son of a wealthy and highly positioned church hierarch.¹² There are extant five charters received by priest Iuga, father of scribe Mikhail, from 1424 until 1436, confirming his land property. Given the fact that from this period 108 Moldavian charters are surviving, (even if the Mikhail's family archives had better chances of reaching us), the number of endowments received by scribe Mikhail's father points to a high social standing and wealth. However, during his thirty-two years¹³ service

in the Moldavian chancellery, Mikhail' wealth increased constantly. His land estates were much more significant than his father's luga and Mikhail was continuously in the process of acquiring new land properties through frequent purchases and the prince's donations; fourteenth surviving charters testify to his land property.¹⁴ During his service in the Moldavian chancellery, Mikhail seems to become one of the richest and most influential personalities of his time.¹⁵ His position in the state chancellery offered him the social standing that facilitated the endeavor for a political career.¹⁶ Mikhail/Mikhu, was among the first recorded diplomats, who in 1456, when the Moldavians agreed to pay the first tribute to the Ottoman Empire, was sent to Istanbul to try to negotiate the amount to be paid or, if that was impossible, to agree upon the conditions.¹⁷

Mikhail's case is not singular. During the reign of Stephen the Great, another chancellor, Tăutu, made a similar brilliant career. Scribe in 1464¹⁸ and chancellor in 1475,¹⁹ his case is illustrative: his family provided clerks and chancellors to the Moldavian chancellery for three centuries.²⁰ His career is one of the longest known;²¹ chancellor under Stephen the Great and his son, Bogdan served the Moldavian princes for forty-seven years.²² During his long service in the chancellery Tăutu became one of the first state dignitaries, the prince's adviser, and messenger on various diplomatic missions.²³

The status of Moldavian scribes, similar to that of the chancellors, seems to have been highly ranked. They are addressed reverently in the charters as "faithful noblemen," or "prince's noblemen."²⁴ They often received written confirmation of their land estates, such as, for instance, Toader, brother of the priest Luca, who was active at the end of the fifteenth century in the Moldavian chancellery both as issuer²⁵ and recipient of documents. During a period of service of eight years in the state chancellery, he received four charters as a scribe²⁶ and one as chancellor attesting his land domains.²⁷

By the end of the fifteenth century a pattern of kinship relations between the individuals employed as scribes in the Moldavian chancellery becomes apparent. Despite an inconsistent manner of signing their names, it is possible that three brothers, Ion dascal (teacher), Coste, and Toader were writing in the Moldavian chancellery during the same time span.²⁸ Fortunately, they received numerous land endowments,²⁹ where the extensive family was recorded. In a property charter received by scribe Toader alone³⁰ or in a charter of family land partition it is mentioned that scribe Toader, together with his brother, scribe Coste, priest Luca, and

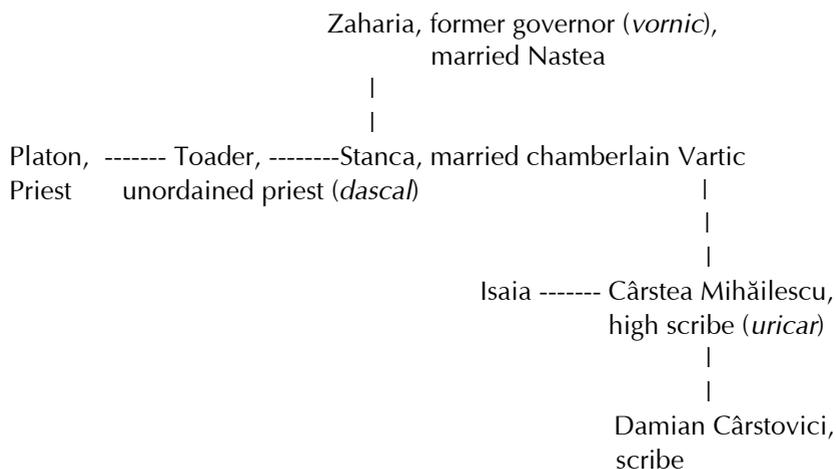
other brothers were grandchildren of pan Negrea,³¹ who is attested as governor during the reign of Alexander the Good.³² The recorded land possessions and the noble status of their grandfather (pan)³³ testify once more to the high social standing and wealth of the Moldavian scribes of the period. Other examples indicate that by the end of the fifteenth century a number of sons of priests were employed as scribes in the Moldavian chancellery.³⁴

The turn of the sixteenth century record some changes in the practices of the Moldavian chancellery. After the reign of Stephen the Great (1457-1504), chancellors cease to be appointed from the pool of scribes.³⁵ I assume that the wider spread of literacy skills allowed noblemen without former training in the chancellery to carry out the functions of the chancellor's role.³⁶ Moreover, from the early sixteenth century onwards, the head of the chancellery was ranked as the highest dignity of the Moldavian state. Consequently, the function of the head of the chancellery began to be bestowed by the princes as recompense for special merits. Thus, from the sixteenth century onward it seems that the categories of scribes and chancellors began to be separated in the Moldavian chancellery.

A new characteristic of the period is that a novel social category, that of parish priests began to be recorded among the employee of the princes' office.³⁷ Only during the sixteenth century, the ordained priests seem to have played a more active role in the producing of documents, both as employees of the princes' office and as private individuals who drafted documents at the village level. Moreover, the pattern of kinship relations between chancellors and scribes was substituted by affiliations between scribes and priests.³⁸ Grămadă considered that the social pool out of which scribes were recruited began to include families of low noblemen and free peasants.³⁹ I, however, notice that highly positioned noblemen families, however, such as the Tăutus⁴⁰ or the family of Dobrul, chancellor under Stephen the Great,⁴¹ provide scribes and chancellors for the state chancelleries up to the seventeenth century. Moreover, blood relation between high state dignitaries and chancellery scribes is consistently recorded in the richer sixteenth century evidence.⁴² For instance, scribe Ionashco is shown to be son of a chamberlain and brother of the wife of a high governor, the second highest office in the Moldavian state.⁴³

For one of the Moldavian scribes belonging to the new scribe category (*uricar*), documents disclose his predecessors for four generations:

Figure 1. Example of a noble family tree illustrating kin relations among scribes in sixteenth-century Moldavia



Cârstea Mihăilescu was the grandson and son of high state dignitaries. After the turn of the sixteenth century, however, due to social, political, and economic instability, the situation of certain noble families as, for instance, that of scribe Mihăilescu began to decline. The financial means of the family seem to have been fairly modest, as Cârstea Mihăilescu shared with his siblings and cousins a single village, inherited from their grandfather. Compared to other family members, however, Cârstea Mihăilescu, employee of the prince's chancellery, seems to have been in a better social and economic position than his kinsmen, as he kept purchasing parts of the commonly held village from his relatives.⁴⁴

Additionally, other records of scribes' wealth and capability of purchasing land estates suggest that their services were well paid. They continued to purchase and receive land estates from the princes they served.⁴⁵ Although sometimes Moldavian scribes are attested as selling their land estates,⁴⁶ usually the extant records point to their position as rich landowners.⁴⁷

Thus, service in the prince's office was an opportunity that brought the employee to a higher social position, wealth, and status. Written culture was restricted and those who could actively participate in its performance

were few. This capacity certainly led to appreciation among their fellows, a rise in social status and, not least, financial benefits.⁴⁸ Consequently, certain influential families tended to monopolize the role and secure leading positions in the chancellery for their young relatives. Moldavian state dignitaries remained equally interested in chancellery service, even if this place was no longer so closed and elite-oriented during the sixteenth century, which testifies once more to the economic and political benefits it provided. Further, during the times of political and social instability it provided the necessary financial means to preserve the status quo, as the case of Uricar Cârstea Mihăilescu suggests.

The Wallachian evidence

The data about Wallachian literates employed in the princely writing office during the early period are scarce. This is due to the small number of documents extant from the fifteenth century, and to the inconsistencies of the writing template practiced in the Wallachian chancellery. Even by the middle of the fifteenth century scribes' names are often omitted. Few Wallachian clerks are attested until the end of the reign of Mircea the Old in 1418. Only during the reign of Vlad Dracul (1437-1444), the names of the Wallachian scribes began to multiply, yet by the end of the reign of Vladislav II (1448-1456), only eleven names come down to us. Many foreign names are attested among them, which indicate that natives and foreign scribes were employed together in the Wallachian office throughout the fifteenth century.⁴⁹

Additionally, there is a confusion in the terms used to describe the functions of scribes and chancellors in the Wallachian office as both of them were called *logofăt* (chancellor) during the early period.⁵⁰ A clause in the charter introducing the chancellor who was endorsing the newly written documents with the prince's seal is not characteristic for Wallachian charters. It was, however, specific for the Moldavian chancellery and is of great help in distinguishing between the chancellor and scribes in the early charters.

In Wallachia, the names of the chancellors can be grasped only from the witnesses' lists that are recorded in the *corroboratio*. Unfortunately, rather often witnesses are not recorded in the early Wallachian charters, especially when they register donations to monastic institutions (an extra indication of a lower standing written documents had yet in Wallachia).⁵¹

As a great majority of early Wallachian charters were issued on behalf of monastic institutions, this constitutes a significant difficulty in tracing the careers of Wallachian employees of the state chancellery. Moreover, in certain cases the witness lists seem to be incomplete, as the names of the chancellors were not recorded among the dignitaries who had witnessed the transaction.⁵² These omissions in the record are difficult to understand since chancellor's presence was mandatory for the juridical validity of the given document.⁵³

Thus, up to the end of the fifteenth century, the Wallachian evidence is sparse. However, when the evidence discloses the names of the scribes or their family relations, they appear as laymen, kinsmen of high state dignitaries. For instance, scribe Ban records that he is son of the Wallachian governor, the second ranked dignitary in Wallachia.⁵⁴ At times, data indicate that the scribes' positions were even coupled with other state dignities.⁵⁵

The data also suggest that during the fifteenth century, Wallachian scribes similar to the Moldavian ones began their service at an early age and remained in the office for a long time, consequently earning the high position of second or first chancellor. For instance, Coica, who is attested as an active Wallachian scribe from 1424 shows up in the witness list as one of the first heads of the chancellery.⁵⁶

The practices in the Wallachian chancellery unfold more consistently only from the reign of Radu the Great (1495-1508) when the documentary evidence multiplies. The data confirm that the fifteenth century model continued to be at work during the sixteenth century: apparently scribes served in the Wallachian chancellery for quite a long time period, and often former scribes made a transition to the post of chancellor.⁵⁷ For instance, Oancea is attested as scribe from 1491⁵⁸ until 1510, when he became chancellor.⁵⁹ However, as chancellor he remained in the Wallachian office only up to 8 January 1512, when the Wallachian Prince Vlad the Young (1510-1512) was removed by Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521).⁶⁰ Other examples also illustrate that the careers of Wallachian chancellors may have been shorter than in Moldavia. Probably this was due to the higher degree of political instability of the sixteenth century Wallachia and to the fact that the office of the chancellor was ranked the third highest in Wallachia. These circumstances might have kept certain influential Wallachian noblemen from a life career in the state chancellery.⁶¹

Further on, kinship relations are attested between professional literates employed in the princely office. One of the earliest examples disclosed

by the data is priest Frâncu, his brother, chancellor Stanciu, and the son of chancellor Stanciu, scribe and later on chancellor, Tudor.⁶²

Unfortunately, in Wallachia, during the fifteenth century little evidence is recorded about the scribes' wealth, as few extant charters record their land possessions.⁶³ Yet, their status seems to have been high, as they are addressed by the princes as *jupan* (nobleman), the highest Wallachian status during the period.⁶⁴ Even after the turn of the sixteenth century, Wallachian scribes were seldom attested as recipients of written charters. Possibly, the high price of written documents was an obstacle for them as for other Wallachian noblemen, as they had to pay the usual taxes to the prince. Yet, when confirmed, land property suggests that scribes possessed considerable land estates. Similar to Moldavia, data show them as wealthy landholders and active purchasers of land estates. Priest Frâncu, similar to the Moldavian priest Iuga a century earlier, was in the prince's service.⁶⁵ Later, he is attested among the first Wallachian laymen who recorded in writing his purchased land estates.⁶⁶ Together with his brother, chancellor Stanciu and his son, Tudor, priest Frâncu seems to have been – unsurprisingly – very record-minded. They secured their estates twice in the prince's office, after a possible preliminary record in the urban chancellery.⁶⁷

The attestation of kinship relations among various members of the Wallachian chancellery shows an increase by the middle of the sixteenth century and was broadly documented especially towards the end of the century. Chancellors' sons were employed as clerks and later as chancellors. Kinship relations within the chancellery clerks are attested not only between fathers and sons,⁶⁸ but also between grandfathers or uncles and their grandchildren and nephews.⁶⁹ Grandfathers or childless uncles would choose a grandson or nephew and grant him their name, estates, and, one assumes, learning. The honored favorites seem to have been eager to point to this relation in their records presumably as support for their privileged position.⁷⁰

For the late period, an indicative Wallachian case is the Coresi family, who provided three generations of clerks to the prince's office during the sixteenth century. Scribe Coresi, son of chancellor Coresi, seems to have had at his turn a son or a nephew employed as a scribe in the prince's office.⁷¹ Coresi began his career as a scribe in 1538⁷² and only in 1575 is attested as the second chancellor,⁷³ which shows that, given the numerous employees of the prince's office in the later period, it took longer to attain a higher position. His income seems to have been

significant, as he actively purchased land during a period of social crisis when small land estates were concentrated into the large properties of high noblemen. In the numerous charters he secured, his family appears as wealthy landowners.⁷⁴ His father was similarly employed as a chancellor and both of them increased their wealth through official income as well as through the registration of private land transactions.⁷⁵

Thus, although with a certain lag, the data indicate that some elements of the early Moldavian pattern can be traced in Wallachia as well. From the turn of the sixteenth century, when Wallachian evidence is richer, I can notice that clerks employed in the state chancery were offspring of high state dignitaries; they often began their service in the office as scribes at an early age and some, after a long period of service, became heads of the Wallachian chancellery. Yet, the service of the Wallachian chancellors is often shorter than in Moldavia. However, I can notice that certain Wallachian families, similar to the Moldavian case, tended to monopolize the realm and pass the functions in the chancellery from generation to generation.

The price of written documents

Up to the end of the sixteenth century, neither in Moldavia nor in Wallachia information about the official cost to be paid for the drafting of documents can be traced. The only indication about a possible cost of a charter is that of a good horse given by the commissioner as a gift to the prince. The fact that even in countries with a more mature tradition of writing, such as Poland or Hungary, the official taxes were established only at the turn of the sixteenth century⁷⁶ suggest that in Moldavia and Wallachia they might have not existed during the period. A Moldavian narrative source confirms that official taxes were established only under the second reign of Constantin Mavrocordat (1741-1743).⁷⁷

The price to be paid for the redaction of certain documents began to be mentioned sporadically only during the sixteenth century. Moreover, the data disclose only the cost of private charters, the demand for which increased in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁷⁸ Sparse as it is, the evidence suggests that the price to be paid for the drafting of documents remained high even in the second half of the sixteenth century, when the producing of documents moved down from the state central office to urban, regional and even village level. For instance, chancellor Coresi

received a Gipsy slave as a payment for writing a charter for the two laymen Radu and Moşul.⁷⁹ Another example from the same period indicates that a “strip or a belt of land” was purchased for 250 aspers, and fifty aspers were paid for the record.⁸⁰ In Moldavia likewise a certain layman Andreica had to pay in 1585 forty zloti (gold coins) for two charters and fourteen zloty for a transaction confirmation note,⁸¹ while during the same period part of a village could be purchased for a hundred zloty.⁸²

In addition, I shall notice that according to the surviving evidence, until the middle of the fifteenth century in Moldavia and up to the middle of the sixteenth century in Wallachia, no other group of Moldavian or Wallachian noblemen received so many written donations as chancellors. One may assume that for chancellery clerks and especially for chancellors written documents were more accessible.

An interesting case is that of Harvat, head of the chancellery under Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521), who received eight (extant) charters confirming his previous land estates and new purchases. All of them were received during his service in the prince’s chancellery, almost a charter per year, while no charter is attested from the former period of six years when he held other state dignities.⁸³ This is one of the highest numbers of charters received by a Wallachian individual for the period,⁸⁴ and a significant number in itself, as from the reign of Neagoe Basarab survive only fifty-five charters commissioned on behalf of noblemen. This may suggest that prices of written documents were expensive even for the highest dignitaries. Possibly chancellors were exempt from the payment of at least some taxes, as two out of six original charters issued for Harvat mention that the prince “had forgiven the payment of the horse,” which presumably constituted part of the tax.⁸⁵ Consequently, the employees in the prince’s office had not only the financial means to enlarge their land estates but also a preferential status in securing these estates in written form.

Scribes of the Latin, German, Hungarian, and Polish documents who were active in the Moldavian and Wallachian state chancelleries

Most documents produced in Moldavia and Wallachia were written in Slavonic, the official state language of the Medieval Romanian Principalities. However, the Wallachian and especially the Moldavian principality had the capacity to meet the regional language conventions

and produce foreign documents in Latin and German, or after the first quarter of the sixteenth century in Polish or Hungarian. Unfortunately, little more is known about the producers of these documents besides their names. Among the few insights are their places of origins or ethnic background. The particularities of the written documents next to the names of certain scribes, when attested, suggest that most of them might have been of foreign origins coming to Wallachia and Moldavia either from Transylvania or from Poland.⁸⁶ However, in certain cases native Moldavians scribes were able to produce documents in Polish.⁸⁷

One of the Wallachian letters indicates that it might have been a practice to request scribes for the drafting of documents in Latin from Transylvania. For instance, Wallachian prince Radu Paisie (1534-1545) asked from the administration of Sibiu for “a well trained and learned scribe since the previous one got sick and I do not have any other left.”⁸⁸ The letter does not mention whether the prince needed a scribe trained in Latin or Slavonic languages, but it is well known that at the time of Radu Paisie’s reign several scribes of Slavonic documents were active in the Wallachian chancellery. Therefore, one might assume that the requested scribe was envisaged for the Latin documents.

After the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the surviving evidence allows to draw some conclusions about the possible practices of employment of foreign scribes. It seems that foreign scribes were enjoying the same status and following the same pattern of service as the local ones. They seem to remain in the princely service for a quite long period and were acting as first proto-diplomats.⁸⁹ Their position appears as high. For instance, Radu Paisie promised in his letter of request to the Sibiu administration that he would treat the scribe with honor and pay him accordingly.⁹⁰

Unfortunately, after Bogdan (Lăpușneanu)’s reign, the information is even more laconic; the surviving letters ceased to mention regularly even the names of the scribes who remained in the Moldavian chancellery for several decades.⁹¹

Local sphere: The producers of the documents issued at the regional and urban level

The social changes experienced in both principalities led to a continuous demand for written documents. I can see that from the sixteenth

century onwards, charters attesting land ownership began to be constantly disseminated throughout society. In the second half of the sixteenth century, offices able to issue written documents multiplied. Furthermore, land charters began to be issued at regional, urban, and village levels.

The data suggest that during the first period some writing offices as for instance the regional one were dependent on the professional literates that activated in the state central chancellery. This fact is endorsed by the names of the scribes as well as by the lay out of the documents and formulas employed. Unfortunately, most of the documents bear no information about the scribes. Even when recorded, most of the names of the local producers have only a single attestation, which suggests that either local documents had a lesser chance of preservation or that scribal activity at the local level was inconsistent and probably occasional. Only in rare cases do urban, regional or village records allow drawing some tentative conclusions.

One of such exceptions is the urban office of Bucharest, which permits some tentative conclusions about professional scribes employed in the urban offices. The number of documents as well as the presence of several scribes at a time indicates that there was a busy and continuous activity going on in the urban office of the Wallachian capital in the last decades of the sixteenth century. The laconic information about the scribes still suggests that the regular practices employed in the central chancellery were translated locally. Kinship relations between scribes and priests, as well as between different scribes are attested.⁹² For instance, Eftimie, one the scribes of the Bucharest urban office, whose activity is better documented, is mentioned in a Greek contemporary note as being a son of Priest Grozav.⁹³ Similar to employee in the princely chancellery, urban scribes seem to remain in the office for a long period.⁹⁴ Eftimie remained in the Wallachian urban chancellery from 1563 to 1571.⁹⁵ Another scribe, Dimitrie, is attested from 1577 until 1580,⁹⁶ while early in 1580 Dimitrie the Old began to be recorded.⁹⁷ Dumitrie the Old continued his service in the Bucharest chancellery at least until February 1590.⁹⁸ Besides these two, eight other names of producers of documents were recorded in the Bucharest urban office in the last two decades of the century,⁹⁹ among them a priest and three chancellors. The rather numerous staff indicates that writing activities were continuous at the urban level, at least in certain areas.

The fact that the surviving charters were written in Slavonic indicate that professional scribes were hired in the Bucharest urban office. However,

the lay out of the surviving documents slightly differs from the documents produced in the state chancellery, which might suggest that urban scribes might not have been dependent on the tradition employed in the state chancellery.¹⁰⁰ Instead, they might have been trained in the monasteries, as the lay out of the urban documents is similar to charters produced by monastic institutions.

Conversely, the early Wallachian regional scribes seem to have been directly dependent on the state chancellery, as certain clerks who provided writing services for Craiovesti noblemen during the early sixteenth century are attested among the chancellery's scribes.¹⁰¹

Producers of the documents at the village level

The scribes who did the writing at the village level are obscure and their names and status are seldom mentioned. Only occasionally, I can trace a continuous activity of village priests as scribes at the local/village level. One of them was the Moldavian priest Andonie from Childești, who recorded land transactions for Governor Bantaș from 1586 until 1596.¹⁰² Priest Andonie seems to have carried out regular scribal activities, as he always is recorded as the producer of documents despite the fact that other literate persons and priests are attested among the witnesses.¹⁰³ Moreover, he traveled from his village Childești to another village, Drăgușeni, to record a land conveyance, despite the fact that a local priest, Lupu, was attested among the witnesses.¹⁰⁴ It seems that literate persons were not available in every village and village priests were not always able to write.¹⁰⁵ The same situation is recorded in Wallachia: priest Pătru from Șura ("Pătru ot Șura") traveled to another village, Balboși, to record a transaction at the house of another priest, Stoia from Balboși ("Stoia ot Balboși").¹⁰⁶ As the record suggests, literate priests were not available regularly at the village level in either Moldavia or Wallachia. This conclusion is endorsed by narratives from the eighteenth century, which allude to a great distress of old parish priests at the decision taken by the Reformist prince Constantin Mavrocordat in 1714, to bestow a tax exemption only on literate priests.¹⁰⁷

Besides parish priests, among local producers of written documents there were monks,¹⁰⁸ church servants,¹⁰⁹ and possibly teachers.¹¹⁰ Alike, young relatives of court dignitaries sporadically acted as scribes for documents produced for their fellows.¹¹¹ They might have recorded their

personal transactions, those of their servants¹¹² or fellow noblemen.¹¹³ By the end of the sixteenth century, in Moldavia, even some families of small land holders had literate members capable of recording their land transactions in the vernacular.¹¹⁴

Almost half of the forty-two surviving Moldavian documents produced at the village level by the end of the sixteenth century, however, seem to have been written by professional scribes. Some of them were attested among the chancellery's scribes from the period;¹¹⁵ for instance, a scribe Ionașco was active in the Moldavian chancellery in the last decades of the sixteenth century. During the same period, a local document was signed by the scribe Ionașco, who mentioned that he is from the village of Galbeni.¹¹⁶ The document is preserved in a copy which makes it impossible to apply any paleographic analyses; it is possible, however, that in a local document the professional scribe had indulged in a less rigorous style and indicated his place of residence.¹¹⁷ He also indicated that he registered the land transaction in the house of priest Luciul from Galbeni village. In Wallachia likewise, the scribes of the local documents as for instance, Ivașco from Loviște¹¹⁸ or Stănilă,¹¹⁹ were active scribes of the state chancellery during the same period. It is known that Moldavian and Wallachian noblemen had their residences in the countryside; presumably, active or former professional scribes provided for their recording needs.

The languages of the documents vary. Usually those commissioned by noblemen are well written. The first distinction between the professional scribes and parish priests is that professional scribes used the Slavonic language for local documents and not Romanian, used mainly by the parish priests. The professional scribes usually employed the formulas of the prince's chancellery and their documents point to a good knowledge of their craft. Conversely, Romanian documents written by the parish priests often suggest unsettled written practices. There are significant differences between private documents written in the assured hand of a professional scribe and those written by the local priest. Besides the vernacular language and finger print employed for the vernacular documents, both their lay out and content are crude, which testifies to the insufficient writing skills of the local priests. For instance, the governor's scribe wrote in a nice script, in accurate lines, well positioned on the page, while the document written by the Wallachian priest Pătru of Șura in fluctuating orthography presents an untrained mastery of writing and style suggesting a novice.¹²⁰ Sporadically, parish priests, similar to the practice of the time, mentioned that they had written the documents *manu propria*.¹²¹ The language of

the vernacular documents testifies to a transition period as many Slavonic formulas and linking words are employed in the Romanian documents. This suggests that village priests received only basic training in Slavonic and afterwards turned to the more accessible vernacular language.

The parish priests' documents, similar to the early documents produced in the state chancellery, are less stereotyped. Priest Andonie from Childești recorded, for instance, that he heard and saw personally the transaction of an impoverished chamberlain's family, who sold their estates out of distress and poverty¹²² to a family member, governor Bantas.¹²³ As a rule, parish priests seldom wrote documents on behalf of noblemen. It might be that this was one of the cases when a low-priced service was needed. Consequently, it may have been the case that, despite professional scribes existing at the village level,¹²⁴ the services of parish priests were requested as more affordable.

The functioning of chancery scribes as first proto-diplomats

Moldavian and Wallachian chancellors and scribes alike distinguished themselves abroad, as the first recorded proto-diplomats. The function of the Latin scribes similar to those drafting documents in Slavonic seems to have been coupled with diplomatic missions. The abundant attestation of the chancellery's personnel as foreign emissaries suggests that this was one of their regular functions.¹²⁵ In the frequent Moldavian and Wallachian missions exchanged either with Poland or Lithuania, Hungary or Transylvanian urban administrations, foreign and native scribes as well as chancellors are recorded as messengers of the Moldavian and Wallachian princes, carriers of oral information or, later, of written letters.¹²⁶ For instance, Iohannes Salanchy, "secretarium nostrum" accomplished many missions to Sibiu under Petru Rares in 1525 as surviving letters of credence -that he presumably carried with him- suggest.¹²⁷ In Wallachia alike chancellor Tatul is repeatedly attested as envoy to the Brașov administration and to the Hungarian king.¹²⁸ Like scribe Nanul, he delivered the "truthful words of the Wallachian prince Radu Paisie."¹²⁹

In certain cases, the scribes sent to Brașov as envoys of the Moldavian or Wallachian princes are recorded as producers of documents during the period of their diplomatic missions; there are many examples. For instance, Scribe Oprea, active in the Wallachian chancery during the period, carried Basarab the Young's letters to the Brașov administration as well as to the

Transylvanian prince.¹³⁰ In Moldavia alike, scribe and chancellor Vulpas, active in the state chancellery during the reign of Stephen the Great, is attested as Stephen's envoy to Braşov.¹³¹

Sometimes it is uncertain, as in most of the cases only Christian names of the proto-diplomats were employed whether the Slavonic or Latin scribes were those employed as messengers.¹³² What is clear, however, is that both native and foreign scribes, as certainly chancellors have combined service in the chancellery with diplomatic missions. They continued to do so in the later period and remained among the most active conveyors of diplomatic missions up to the end of the sixteenth century and beyond.

The education of the early literates

There are no attested schools during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in either Wallachia or Moldavia. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements influenced the only attested, highly sporadic, sixteenth century Moldavian schools.¹³³ Consequently, it is not clear whether literacy skills were learned at home, in the family, from mother, or rather, father to son, or whether they were taught in monasteries. The direct evidence about schooling in the monasteries is attested only during the seventeenth century; for earlier periods only unsubstantiated information is available. However, it seems reasonable to assume that such practices might have grown out of an older tradition. Further on, several attestations of *dascăl* (teacher) in the Moldavian chancellery suggest that private teachers might have been available for the offspring of noblemen.¹³⁴ Their names indicate that they were laymen and I assume that, at least, some children were trained by professional literates at home. Next to it, the kin relations between various literates indicate that the craft was also thought in the families.

It seems that the custom of sending children abroad for education, learning of foreign languages or the acquisition of various crafts was also practiced in Wallachia and Moldavia.¹³⁵ One of the earliest surviving Moldavian examples about supposedly basic education abroad is recorded in 1582. It is a letter of grievance of a Moldavian layman, Petru Walachus from Jassy, whose son, sent to Lviv "for education," died there. Unfortunately, little direct evidence is preserved from the researched period. As most of the fostering of children seems to have been based on

private and oral agreements, there is no record about children traveling or being placed for fostering children. Documents seem to have been resorted to only in hostile or exceptional situations.

Again, neither direct, nor indirect evidence allows us to grasp any specific information about the training of chancellery staff. It seems, nonetheless, that the level of their education during this period was low. At least the mastery of the Slavonic language by native scribes, a foreign language for them, seems to have been only superficial. For them scribal activities were rather a craft. The usage of certain pre-existing formulas in the text, sometimes even arbitrary, testifies to their partial knowledge and improper training.

However, cultural relations with the neighboring cultures with a better-established tradition of writing, led to the introducing of new Western practices in the Moldavian and Wallachian chancelleries. For instance, after the middle of the sixteenth century, princes and chancellors sporadically began to use signatures *manu propria* in the charters they endorsed.¹³⁶ Chancellors next to princes began to be mentioned as the first lay individuals with intellectual inclinations. They are attested as library owners and writers of chronicles. A chronicle written by a Wallachian chancellor, for instance, was used in 1597 by Baltazar Walter for his work about the deeds of Mikhail the Brave.¹³⁷ The author declared in the dedication to the German noblemen that: *Walachico sermone a Dn. Cancellario conceptum, atque ab ipso Waiwoda approbatum contextum, in aula Targowistea obtinebam*.¹³⁸ Although the name of the Wallachian chancellor is uncertain, it testifies to the literary preoccupations of at least some chancellery employee.¹³⁹

Similarly in Moldavia, literary activities of chancellors may be presumed by the end of the sixteenth century. Luca Stroici/Stroicz,¹⁴⁰ who acted as chancellor under six princes, seem to have made the transition between the previous period with a restricted written culture and the seventeenth century, which may be considered a period of cultural renaissance in the medieval Romanian Principalities. There are opinions that he was one of the first Moldavian laymen who owned a private library.¹⁴¹ The request of the Polish chancellor, Jan Zamoyski for a "a kronike woloska"¹⁴² (addressed to an unknown Moldavian chancellor in 1597, when Stoici acted as Moldavian chancellor) suggest as well that chancellor Stoici might have had intellectual preoccupations. He might have indeed possessed in his library a Wallachian chronicle or even, as

the general opinion in the Romanian historiography claim, might have written one.

What is clear however, chancellor Stoici was among the first Moldavians for whom the perception of the writing of letters have changed. His correspondence suggest that he was among the first Moldavians for whom the activity of engaging in a written correspondence was not restricted to official and political business but might have included private and even leisure preoccupation.¹⁴³

Thus, even these sparse and scattered evidence suggest at least certain Moldavian and Wallachian chancellors might have been among the first laymen of their times with literary activities. Later, from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, the number of chancellors and scribes attested as intellectuals of their times, authors of important works, and library owners multiplied.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

The early literates, in contrast to the Catholic Europe or to Byzantium, seem to have been laymen, apparently of high social standing, usually sons of high state dignitaries. While monastic figures only occasionally show up in the Wallachian evidence, sons of high ecclesiastical figures are attested among the early native scribes. The Orthodox Church -as an institution- had largely an indirect role in the producing of documents for record storage (pragmatic documents) during the early period.

The professional clerks in the two medieval Romanian principalities were noblemen with significant wealth and status. Reading and writing seem to have been taught in the family, as suggested by the recurrence of this craft among certain families holding chancellery positions across generations, in an almost dynastic tradition. Careers in the chancellery seem to have been lengthy; scribes began they service at an early age, skills seem to have been learnt in the office, and these characteristics mark the chancellery of fifteen century as a somehow autonomous, isolated environment: only former scribes were skilled enough to qualify for the dignity of the chancellor. Only after the turn of the sixteenth century in Moldavia, social pool out of which scribes were recruited has been expanded. The dignity of the chancellor, especially in Moldavia, was no longer acquired by former scribes but bestowed by the princes for special merits. The opening of the chancery is an extra indication about further

dissemination of writing in the sixteenth century Moldavia compared to Wallachia.

The service in the prince' chancellery led to an augmentation of political career as well as increased wealth. Written culture was restricted and persons who could actively participate in its performance were perceived as possessing a distinguishing and highly specialized skill. This capacity certainly led to a rise in social status and, not least, financial benefits. Consequently, the high nobility, and the ecclesiastical leaders tended to monopolize the realm and secure leading positions in the chancellery for their young relatives. The social standing related to practices of written culture is attested not only by the individual careers it made possible, but also by the diachronic development of family policies. Moldavian and Wallachian state dignitaries alike remained equally interested in chancellery service, even when this place was no longer so closed and elite-oriented (sixteenth century Moldavia.) As employment in the prince's chancellery appears to have been a lucrative endeavor, it provided the necessary financial means to preserve the status quo, during the times of political and social instability, as the case of Uricar Cârstea Mihăilescu suggests.

As written culture spread further and written records of landed estates became a necessary legal proof to be provided during judicial processes, local gentry was keen to record in writing any land conveyance. The increased need for written records next to the usage of vernacular as a language of record opened the craft of literate producers for parish priests, sometimes even at village level. Most probably the prices charged by local priests were lower than those of the professional scribes. The new economics of writing facilitated the access to documents for lower social categories and led to the further dissemination of written culture.

NOTES

- ¹ I am grateful to Dr. Michael Clanchy for this observation.
- ² In the Danubian principalities the title *logofăt* (from the Byzantine *logothetos*) was used for the head of the chancellery.
- ³ Despite certain opinions that there was no confusion between the position of scribe and that of the chancellor in Moldavia, one can notice that during the early period certain scribes were called chancellors in the documents. Chancellor Bratei for instance indicated in a document from 1401 that he had written it with his own hand (DRH A, vol. 1, no. 21). Stoicescu also mentions in a footnote that the position of scribes was similar to that of the chancellor in Moldavia; see Nicolae Stoicescu, *Sfatul domnesc și marii dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova (sec. XIV-XVII)* (Princely counsel and the high state dignitaries from Wallachia and Moldavia (14-17 centuries), 183, note 219, henceforth Stoicescu, *Sfatul*. Only by mid-fifteenth century clear distinctions in the formulary of the charters were made between scribes, who wrote the charters, and chancellors, who sealed them.
- ⁴ *Documenta Romaniae Historica A Moldova* (Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1980), edited by Constantin Cihodaru, Ioan Caproșu et al, Vol.1 no. 64 (1419); Henceforth DRH A.
- ⁵ Ibidem, no. 52.
- ⁶ Ibidem, no. 29.
- ⁷ See DRH A, vol 1.
- ⁸ DRH A, vol. 1, no. 76.
- ⁹ DRH A, vol. 1, no. 76.
- ¹⁰ DRH A, vol. 2, no. 169.
- ¹¹ DRH A, vol. 1, no. 242.
- ¹² In some charters he owned ten villages and additional free land to found new villages (see DRH A, vol.1, no. 56, no. 102, no. 128, no. 129, no. 165). In 1439 he received a new confirmation of his land estates together with his son, Mikhail (DRH, A, vol.1, no.196). In the last charter (1439) he is attested with a higher ecclesiastical rank *protopop*. For Scribe Mikhail see also Mihai Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenenești înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, (Moldavian documents preceding the reign of Stephan the Great) (Jassy, Viața Românească, 1932), vol. 2, 501-5, henceforth Costăchescu, *Documente înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*.
- ¹³ In the last year and a half of Mikhail's presence in Moldavia there is a document extant attesting him as chancellor of the Moldavian chancellery. The last document sealed by him is in Jan. 1454. See DRH A, vol. 2, no. 39. In the last reign of Petru Aron a certain Petru is listed as the Moldavian chancellor.
- ¹⁴ DRH A, vol. 1, no. 165, no. 175, no. 196, no. 225, no. 228, no. 234, no. 250, no. 254, no. 269, no. 279, no. 286; DRH A, vol. 2, no. 21, no. 33, no.48.

- ¹⁵ More than fifty villages are recorded in his possession. See for instance DRH A, vol. 1, no. 250, no. 254, no. 260, no. 279, no. 286. See also Costăchescu, *Documente înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, vol. 2, 505-6.
- ¹⁶ DRH, A, vol. 2, no. 58 (1456). In Poland he seems to have enjoyed high social standing, as in 1456 Cazimir himself wrote a generous *salvus conductus* offering security throughout the Polish kingdom for him and his brothers, (Costachescu, *Documente înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, Vol.1, no. 806) as well as liberty for his commercial activities, see Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, (Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1900), vol. 2, no. 111. He received several estates, customs, and money donations from Polish noblemen in case he would be forced to quit Moldova. Mikhail indeed took refuge in Poland after Stephen the Great (1457-1504) became Moldavian prince. Nonetheless, Stephen invited him back in the first year of his reign and continued to invite him for thirteen years to come (DRH A, vol. 2, no. 66, no. 89, no. 138, no. 169). One of the letters written by Stephen was at the request of the Polish king, Cazimir, another fact which points to the significance of Mikhail's position (DRH A, vol. 2, no. 136).
- ¹⁷ DRH A, vol. 2, no. 58 (1456).
- ¹⁸ DRH A, vol. 2, no. 119 (1464). Another Tăutu is attested in 1430 in a cartulary from the eighteenth century (see DRH A, vol. 1, no. 146). This is the only attestation until 1464 and it is unclear whether this is the same family branch.
- ¹⁹ DRH A, vol. 2, no. 201.
- ²⁰ One of his sons, Toader, is attested as chancellor of the Moldavian office in the later record (see DIR A, vol. 3, no. 436 (1587). Another of his sons, Dragotă Tăutul, appears as scribe in 1497, while his sons at their turn served as scribes in the Moldavian chancellery during the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century another descendents of Tăutul family are attested by the data. In 1621 Mihail Tăutu, who wrote a document for Vasile Lupu (220) and who presumably acted as a scribe in 1673 became chancellor. For the presence of the Tăutu family in the Moldavian chancellery during the seventeenth century see also Grămadă "Cancelaria domnească în Moldova," 176, 215 and Nicolae Iorga, "Contribuții la istoria bisericii. noastre II, Bălinești.", *Anuarul Academiei Romane* 2, No. 34 (1902).
- ²¹ Tăutu remained in the service of the Moldavian chancellery until 1511.
- ²² Usually new princes changed the acting heads of the chancellery since this was an important position in which to keep the dignitary of a former prince and possible opponent. In this case Bogdan kept his father's dignitary. Grămadă considered that the career of a scribe was short, undertaken as a step to a permanent position among the state dignitaries, see Nicolae Grămadă "Cancelaria domnească în Moldova pînă la Constantin Mavrocordat" (The Moldavian chancellery up to Constantin Mavrocordat) *Codrul Cosminului* 9 (1935): 129-231; henceforth Grămadă "Cancelaria

domnească în Moldova.” However, the surviving data indicate that this is specific only after the turn of the sixteenth century, while previously scribes remained in the prince’s chancellery for a long period and advanced to the career of the head of the chancellery when possible;

- 23 For his diplomatic activities see Ștefan Gorovei “Activitatea diplomatică a marelui logofăt Ioan Tăutu” (The diplomatic activity of chancellor Tautu), *Suceava Anuarul Muzeului Județean* 5 (1978): 237-53; see also Emil Turdeanu, *Études des littérature roumaine et d’écrits slaves et grecs des Principautés Roumaines*, 136.
- 24 During the fifteenth century Moldavian noblemen were called *pan*, under Polish influence; See for instance DRH A, vol. 2, no. 123.
- 25 DRH A, vol. 3, no.3, 10, 24, 25, 74-77, no. 130, no. 134, no. 204, no. 247, no. 293, no. 295 and passim.
- 26 DRH A, vol.3, no. 179 (1495), no. 192 (1495), no. 196 (undated charter, the modern editors dated it after 1495), no. 263 (1502).
- 27 Ibidem, no.263 (1503).
- 28 Ion dascăl (teacher) is attested first in DRH A, vol. 2, no. 199 (1475), no. 206; then his brother Coste, who indicated that he is a brother of Ion dascăl (ibidem no. 249(1483), no. 251, no. 252, 253) and then the most intriguing Toader, brother of Ion dascăl (ibidem, no. 259 (1484)), who signs in various ways, as Toader, Ion’s daskal brother (no.259, 1484), *Toader diac* (scribe) (no. 51, 1489), *Toader grămătic* (scribe) (no.32, 1488) and simply Toader in most of the cases (no. 1, 1487). Probably the same Toader is confirming his land estates as *Toader pisar* (scribe) (no. 179, 1495), *Toader boier*, *pisar* (nobleman, scribe) (no. 196, 1496), *Toader boier*, *credincios pan* (faithful nobleman) (no. 263, 1502), Toader chancellor and his brother, priest Luchii (no.286, 1503). In a single case, in a document from 1492 preserved in a copy (the date is uncertain), Toader, a scribe, signed as “Toader Popović” (son of priest) (DRH A, vol. 3, no.114). It is uncertain whether Toader, son of a priest, is the same person as Toader, “brother of Ion dascal.” The relatively close time span may suggest that he is the same person, although it is a question why from his first document in 1484 and until around 1492 he never mentions that he was son of a priest. In the prosopographical analyses by Maria Magdalena Szekely on the sixteenth century Moldavian nobility, it is also indicated that the three scribes employed in the Moldavian chancellery of Prince Petru Rareș were brothers. However, she does not mention the scribe who signed as *Toader Popović*; probably she did not consider him the same person as Toader, brother of Priest Luchii. See Maria Magdalena Szekely, *Sfetcii lui Petru Rareș* (Counselors of Petru Rareș) (Iassy: Editura Unirestității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2002), 42-4.
- 29 See, for instance, the charters received by the above-mentioned Toader. DRH A, vol. 3, no.179, 196, 197, 263, 286.
- 30 DRH A, vol. 3, no.179.

- ³¹ See DRH A, vol. 3, no.127.
- ³² Székely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rares*, 48.
- ³³ The status of *pan*, borrowed from Polish nobility, was given to the most important noblemen of the country as well as to prince's relatives. See Stoicescu, *Sfatul*, 28.
- ³⁴ DRH A, vol. 3, no.108; no. 230 ("Ion Popović Ion [son] of priest); *Pisal Alexa Popovici ot Iasi* (Written by Alexa, son of a priest from Iassy) DRH A, vol. 2, no. 108.
- ³⁵ Up to the end of the reign of Stephen the Great all chancellors are attested as former scribes.
- ³⁶ Especially in the early sixteenth century, I note a continuation between the function of treasurer and that of chancellor, as both functions required the knowledge of active written skills. Isac, who became chancellor in 1513, replacing the famous chancellor Tăutu, was previously employed as treasurer, see DIR A/XVI, 1, no. 80. See also the case of Gavriil Totrușan, who replaced chancellor Isac in 1516 (DIR A/XVI, 1, no. 101) and is attested as chancellor until 1523, March 15 (DIR A/XVI, 1, no.192), and then from 1537 to 1540 (DIR A XVI, 1, no.356, no. 364). Similarly Mateiaș (chancellor from 1541 to 1548), was previously employed as high treasurer. For details of the career of Mateiaș see Székely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rares*, 82. Later, the better documented figure of Luca/Lupu Stroici was also previously employed as treasurer. See also Nicolae Stoicescu, "Lista marilor dregători ai Moldovei sec XIV-XVII" (The list of high dignitaries from Moldavia: XIV- XVII centuries), *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A.D. Xenopol"* 8 (1971): 402.
- ³⁷ DIR A Vol. 2, no.184, no. 208, no. 210; DIR A, vol. 3, no. 495. Often they do not even indicate their Christian names, mentioning just that the document "was written by a priest."
- ³⁸ See for instance the very active scribe of the Moldavian chancellery in the third decade of the sixteenth century Cârstea Mihăilescu (DIR A Vol. 3 no. 22, no. 23, no. 27, no. 29, no. 31 (1573) and *passim* and his possible son Damian Cârstovici DIR A Vol. 3 no. 331 (1585).
- ³⁹ Grămadă, *Cancelaria Moldovei*, 180.
- ⁴⁰ Szekely considers that during the sixteenth century there was a general practice among Moldavian noblemen to preserve the dignities within the same families, see Szekely, *Sfetnicii*, 39. See also Virgil Pâslariuc, *Raporturile politice dintre marea boierime și domnie în Țara Moldovei în secolul al XVI- lea* (The political relations between grand noblemen and principedom in Moldavia during the sixteenth century) (Chishinau: Pontos, 2005), 26.
- ⁴¹ Chancellor Dobrul had a son; Ivanco [son] of Dobrul, is attested as a scribe during the reign of Bogdan (1504-1517). Later he was attested as chancellor: DIR A/XVI, vol.1, no. 25; The grandson of chancellor Dubrul, Toader Ivanco, is attested as a high ranking scribe (*uricar*) during the seventeenth century. See DIR A/XVII, vol. 3, no. 308; see also Szekely, *Sfetnicii lui Petru Rares*, 88.

- ⁴² DIR A, vol. 3, no. 380 (1586), no. 398 (1586), no. 468 (1588), no. 545 (1590).
- ⁴³ DIR A, vol. 3, no. 389 (1586); possibly the same scribe, Ionașco was very active in the Moldavian chancellery between 1579 and 1595.; this is uncertain, however, since he did not record any further details in the numerous charters he signed. See DIR A, vol. 3, no. 148 (1579), no. 188, no. 194, no. 224, no. 522 et passim. See also DIR A, vol. 4, no. 156 (1595).
- ⁴⁴ DIR A Vol. 3, no. 44 (1574), no. 76 (1575), no. 262 (1583). Additionally, he had numerous disputes with neighboring villages, and together with his father, Chamberlain Vartic, had struggled to secure his land estates (DIR A, vol. 3, no. 161 (1579-82), no. 178 (1580).
- ⁴⁵ Ibidem, no. 410.
- ⁴⁶ Ibidem, no. 398, no. 545.
- ⁴⁷ Ibidem, no. 67, no. 380, no.409, no. 468.
- ⁴⁸ John Oxenham, *Literacy. Writing, Reading and Social Organisation* (London: Routledge, 1980), 66.
- ⁴⁹ See *Documente Romaniae Historica B Țara Românească* (Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1996), vol. 1, edited by Petru P. Panaitescu, Damaschin Mioc et al. Henceforth DRH B. See for instance Calcio (DRH B, vol. 1, no. 72 (1431), no. 94 (1441), no.110 (1453)), Coica (DRH B, vol. 1, no. 64 (1429-30), no. 86, 87, 88 (1439)); Latzco (DRH B, vol. 1, no. 127, no. 128 (1465)), no. 131 (1468)).
- ⁵⁰ See also I.-R. Mircea, "Mari logofeți din Țara Românească (sec. XIV -XVI)" (High chancellors from Wallachia), *Hrisovul* 1 (1941): 117.
- ⁵¹ See, for instance, DRH B, vol. 2, no. 28, no. 49, no. 56; no. 97, no. 98.
- ⁵² See, for instance, DRH B, vol. 2, no.122, 123, 124.
- ⁵³ See ibidem.. See also Stoicescu, *Sfatul*, 179-180. The Moldavian chancellery often stopped its activity during the periods when the chancellors were absent, usually sent on various diplomatic missions. Only after the second half of the sixteenth century a new type of document with a temporary juridical validity was instituted that could be drawn in the absence of the chancellor. See Gheorghe Punga, "De ce lipsesc uricele pentru unele perioade din cancelaria Tarii Moldovei?" (Why are charters not attested during certain periods by the chancellery of Moldavia?), *Studii de istorie medievala si stiinte auxiliare* 1 (1999), 12.
- ⁵⁴ DRH B, vol. 1, no. 248, no. 281. See also DRH B, vol. 4, no.22.
- ⁵⁵ See DRH B, vol. 1, no. 232, no. 242; DRH B, vol. 2, no. 49.
- ⁵⁶ DRH B, vol.1, no. 63 (undated).
- ⁵⁷ Stoicescu also mentions that in Wallachia there was a transition from the function of scribe to that of chancellor. He considers that in this way lower noblemen could ascend the social scale and attain the function of chancellor. Conversely, Iorga was of the opinion that scribes did not belong to the class of noblemen, Iorga, "Cat de veche e școala la români?" 36, 37.

- ⁵⁸ DRH B, vol. 1, no. 227.
- ⁵⁹ DRH B, vol. 2, no. 78.
- ⁶⁰ DRH B, vol. 2, no. 93.
- ⁶¹ After Staico, in 1505, March 26, Bogdan became chancellor of the Wallachian office (DRH B, vol. 1, no. 32) after holding the dignity of high *stolnic*. From 1508, Radu the Great was replaced by Mihnea the Bad and Theodor (a former scribe) is mentioned as chancellor (DRH B, vol. 2, no. 54). In 1510 he returned with the new prince, Vlad the Young (ibidem, no. 68 (1510, April 24)) to move from his office as chancellor to the higher one of governor (ibidem, , no. 78). Ivan Iogofat is attested only on March 15, 1512 (ibidem, no. 99) since first charters of Neagoe attesting donations to monasteries do not record any lists of witnesses.
- ⁶² Frâncu himself seems to have been in the prince's service in 1512 as agent of the princely authority or (*ispravnic*) (DRH B, vol. 2, no. 115), where he is attested as Priest Frâncu from Costești. The head of the chancellery, Stanciu, secured his first charter in 1510. He mentions Priest Frâncu as his brother, which helps to show the family relations between various literate individuals (ibidem, no. 78). Stanciu received another four charters confirming his estates (ibidem, no.146, no. 157, no. 161, no. 162). In the first charter, he secured his land estates for him and his brother while in the last two charters (Sept. 1, 1517 and Oct. 29, 1517) he donated all his estates to a monastery not mentioning his brother. Tudor, Priest Frâncu's son, Chancellor Stanciu's nephew, is first attested as scribe in 1504. As early as 1505 a Tudor who describes himself as writer and chancellor is attested (ibidem, no. 40). He is mentioned among witnesses in 1509 as head of the chancellery (ibidem, no. 65) and continued to be mentioned until 1510, when was replaced by Oancea (ibidem, no. 81).
- ⁶³ Only two charters are extant written on behalf of scribes up to the sixteenth century; see DRH B, vol. 1, no. 208, no. 244.
- ⁶⁴ Up to the end of the fifteenth century, the status of *jupan* was given only to the highest noblemen and high state dignitaries. See Stoicescu, *Sfatul*, 27. It is of Serbian origin, see George Mihailă, *Studii de lexicologie și istorie a lingvisticii românești* (Studies about lexicology and history of Romanian linguistics) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1973), 8.
- ⁶⁵ DRH B, vol. 2, no. 115. In 1512 he witnessed a land exchange among the highest state dignitaries; and was appointed by the prince to guarantee its proper accomplishment.
- ⁶⁶ Ibidem, no. 35 (1505).
- ⁶⁷ Ibidem, no. 35, no. 42. The charter secured in the prince's office did not clearly specify that it was based on a record produced in the urban chancellery. It only states that the money was paid in front of the urban administrators of Râmnic. Knowing the later practice, however, probably

the transaction was made in Râmnic and a local charter was secured there, which afterwards was confirmed in the prince's office.

68 See, for instance, DRH B, vol. 11, no. 27 (1595).

69 DRH B, vol. 6, no.10.

70 For one of the most detailed accounts see *ibidem*, no. 130.

71 A scribe who called himself "Little Coresi" signed a document in 1572, when Coresi was already the second chancellor, and it is impossible that he would have signed in this way. In the medieval Romanian Principalities it was customary to name the offspring with the Christian names of family members. See also Szekely, *Sfetnicii*, 84. As it was customary to name one of sons with the father's name, Chancellor Coresi might have named one of his sons or nephews Coresi. Thus, "Little Coresi" might have been a son or nephew of Chancellor Coresi. It is also to be noted that apparently the children who were given their father's or grandfathers' names were later often given the same position in the chancellery (see DRH B, vol. 7, Nn. 90 (1572).

72 DRH B, vol. 4, no. 54; in 1568 he is mentioned as chancellor together with five other chancellors, next to the acting head of the chancellery and the second chancellor (DRH B, vol. 6, no. 100 (1568)). It might be that he still acted as a scribe or the third chancellor.

73 DRH B, vol. 7, no. 232.

74 DRH B, vol. 6, no. 43 (1567). According to the extant record, Coresi received his first charter only after 29 years of service in the prince's chancellery.

75 DRH B, vol.7, no. 232 (1575-6). More literate members might have existed in the Coresi family. Unfortunately it is hard to draw any connections between the family of Coresi, active in the Wallachian chancellery and printer Coresi, who was active in Transylvania (Sibiu (Hermannstadt)) in the second half of the sixteenth century (1560-1581) and who published one of the first known Romanian and Slavonic liturgical books. For more information about Coresi, the printer, see Dan Simonescu, "Un mare editor și tipograf din secolul al XVI-lea: Coresi" (A great editor and printer from the sixteenth century: Coresi), *Studii și cercetări de bibliologie* 11 (1969): 56.

76 In Hungary the amount of the tax was established in 1492, see *Corpus Iuris Hungarici*, I, 548-550. In Poland the exact amount of taxes to be paid for the redaction of various documents was established in 1511 (See Grămadă, *Cancelaria Moldovei*, 155 and note 3). See also Agnieszka Bartoszewicz, "The Litterati Burghers in Polish Late Medieval Towns," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 83 (2001), 17, 19; In Serbia, however, already in the Law Code written in 1349, the payment of chancellors and scribes for document writing is precisely specified.. See *Dushan's Code*, 85, no. 129

77 In his second reign in Moldavia, he established the taxes. See Cogălniceanu, *Cronicile Romaniei* III, 183).

78 See, for instance, DRH B, vol.7, no.128 (1573); DRH B, vol.8, no. 5 (1577).

- ⁷⁹ DIR B, vol.4, no.187. The price of a gipsy slave during the period could range between five hundreds and a thousand aspers. See DIR B, vol.4, no. 215 (1576).
- ⁸⁰ It was part of a village that a certain member of the community inherited after the partition of the common land property; DRH B, vol. 8, no. 97 (1577).
- ⁸¹ DIR A, vol. 3, no. 353. See also DIR A, vol. 2, no. 77.
- ⁸² DIR A, vol. 3, no. 337, DIR A, vol. 2, no.77. Nonetheless, the price recorded might have been particularly high as it generated a new written document to ask for the payment back.
- ⁸³ He is attested as high constable from 1508 to 1509 and as high treasurer between 1510 and 1514. See Nicolae Stoicescu, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova: sec. XIV XVII* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1971), 63.
- ⁸⁴ DRH B, vol. 2, no.121, 144, 167, 171, 172, 179, 204, 206.
- ⁸⁵ Henri Stahl, *Controverse de istorie socială românească* (Controversial issues about the Romanian social history) (Bucharest, 1969), 130; Constantin Giurescu, *Studii de istorie socială* (Studies of social history) (Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1943), 251.
- ⁸⁶ See Gramada, "Cancelaria Moldovei," 26-27.
- ⁸⁷ Lința "Documente în limba polonă," 174-5.
- ⁸⁸ Petre Panaitescu, "Documente slavo-române din Sibiu (1470-1653)" (Slavo-Romanian documents from Sibiu 1470-1653) *Studii și Cercetări* 32 (1938), no.47; Henceforth Panaitescu, "Documente slavo-române din Sibiu."
- ⁸⁹ Stephanus Literatus, the secretary of the Moldavian Prince Rareș, is one of the first attested as fulfilling diverse political and economic missions for the Moldavian prince (Iorga, *Acte și scrisori*, no. 677 (1531, April 8), no. 552 (1528, Febr.14).
- ⁹⁰ Panaitescu, "Documente slavo-române din Sibiu (1470-1653)," no. 47.
- ⁹¹ Lința "Documente în limba polonă," 177.
- ⁹² Scribe Voico mentions that he is the son of Deico. See DRH B, vol. 2, no. 157 (1517, July 14).
- ⁹³ DRH B, vol. 5, no. 266 (1563).
- ⁹⁴ Eftimie is attested between 1563 and 1571 (DRH B, vol. 5, no. 266, DRH B, vol. 7, no. 26).
- ⁹⁵ Zahariuc, Petronel, ed. "Nouă documente din secolul al XVI-lea privitoare la istoria orașului București," (Nine documents from the sixteenth century related to the history of Bucharest) In *Civilizația urbană din spațiul românesc în secolele XVI-XVIII: Studii și documente* (Jassy, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 205-21, edited by Laurențiu Rădvan, no. 1 (1565, March 1) and no. 2 (1565, May 24). Henceforth Zahariuc, *Nouă documente din secolul al XVI-lea*.

- ⁹⁶ (DRH B, vol. 8, no. 73 (1577, May 26), no. 109(1578, Jan. 9), no. 136 (1578, July 5), no. 329 (1580, Nov. 2).
- ⁹⁷ Zahariuc, *Nouă documente din secolul al XVI-lea*, no. 4 (1580, Jan.13), no. 5 (1580, March 16).
- ⁹⁸ DIR B, vol. 5, no. 448 (1590, Feb.16).
- ⁹⁹ Zahariuc, *Nouă documente din secolul al XVI-lea*, no. 6 (1585, Oct.29), Scribe Neag; DIR B, vol. 5, no. 307 (1587, Feb. 6) (The document is signed by Scribe Stan from Săvești); Zahariuc, *Nouă documente din secolul al XVI*, no. 7 (1587, May 29) Scribe Neanciul; DIR B, vol. 5, no. 425 (1589, May 30) Scribe Grama the Old; Ibidem, no. 454 (1590, Apr.14) Scribe Gherghe, who in 1596 is attested as Gherghe the priest, DRH B, vol.11, no. 150); Zahariuc, *Nouă documente din secolul al XVI-lea*, no. 9 (1593, May 14) The scribe signed his name as Chancellor Stanciul; DRH B, vol.11, no. 268 (1597, Dec. 3) The names of the two scribes were Chancellor Ivan and Chancellor Efrem.
- ¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, DRH B, vol. 5, no. 266 (1563, May 13).
- ¹⁰¹ The first two written donations made by Craiovești noblemen were written by Scribe Stepan (DRH B, vol.2, no. 47); the same scribe Stepan is attested writing documents for the Wallachian princes (ibidem, no. 72, no. 81).
- ¹⁰² Gheorghe Chivu, Magdalena Georgescu et al, eds., *Documente și însemnări românești din secolul al XVI-lea* (Romanian documents and notes from the sixteenth century) (Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1979), no. 66, no. 68, no. 83, no. 105. Henceforth Chivu, *Documente și însemnări românești din secolul al XVI-lea*. In the last document (no. 105), the scribe is not recorded, but the fact that all his previous transactions were recorded by Priest Andonie for Governor Bantaș and that the land is from the same village, Drăgușani, indicates that probably Priest Andonie also recorded the land transaction from 1596. Moreover, the style and peculiar formulas employed in the previous charters by Priest Andonie are very similar to this one, which suggests the same scribe. Unfortunately, the original documents are no longer preserved.
- ¹⁰³ See ibidem, no. 83.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibidem, no. 105.
- ¹⁰⁵ DIR A, vol. 3, no. 459. An entire family of free land owners traveled from one village to another to sell their family land estates.
- ¹⁰⁶ Chivu, *Documente și însemnări românești din secolul al XVI-lea*, no. 5.
- ¹⁰⁷ Tatiana Celac, ed., *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* (The Chronicle of the Moldavian country) (Chishinău, Hiperion, 1990), 157; Henceforth Celac, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*.
- ¹⁰⁸ DIR A, vol. 3, no. 471 (1588, March 5).
- ¹⁰⁹ DRH B, vol. 11, no. 75 (1594, July 8).
- ¹¹⁰ The writer of the document signed in vernacular Romanian as *Ion dascăl*, which means teacher. See Chivu, *Documente și însemnări românești din*

- secolul al XVI-lea*, no. 85 (1592, July 21). For Wallachia see *ibidem*, no. 52 (1582, March 25).
- 111 In Wallachia, a nephew of a chamberlain wrote a document in 1577 for a noblewoman Irina. See DRH B, vol. 8, no. 157 (1577, Dec. 15).
- 112 DIR A, vol. 4, no. 298, no. 244.
- 113 Two documents signed *manu propria* by treasurer (*cămăraș*) Ionașco Bașotă are extant. He wrote the documents for a nobleman whom he called “our father.” Possibly he was in his service. See *Documente privind Istoria Românie (Veacul XVI) A Moldova* (Documents concerning Romanian history (Sixteenth Century A Moldavia), ed. by Ion Ionașcu, L. Lăzărescu Ionescu, Barbu Cămpina et al, (Bucharest, Editura Academiei, 1952), vol. 4, no. 43 (1591-2), *ibidem*, no. 298 (1599); Hencerorth DIR A
- 114 Chivu, *Documente și însemnări românești din secolul al XVI-lea*, no. 104.
- 115 DIR A, vol. 3, no. 306 (1584); DIR A, vol. 4, no. 8, no. 38).
- 116 *Ibidem*, no. 306 (1584, May 4).
- 117 *Ibidem*.
- 118 See, for instance, DRH B, vol. 8, no. 32, no. 94.
- 119 DIR B, vol. 5, no. 316. He also wrote documents in the central chancellery, see DRH B, vol. 8, no. 19, no. 20, no. 218, no. 221, no. 286.
- 120 For the characteristics of the Romanian language of the sixteenth-century documents see the Introduction to Chivu, *Documente și însemnări românești din secolul al XVI-lea*, 158; see also the facsimile no. 5, no. 6, no. 7 of the edited documents.
- 121 Ioan Caproșu, “Documente românești din secolele al XV- lea -al XVII- lea,” (Romanian documents from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries) *Analele Științifice ale Universității Al. Ioan Cuza Istorie* 37 (1991): 171-204, no. 3.
- 122 Chivu, *Documente și însemnări românești din secolul al XVI-lea*, no. 66.
- 123 *Ibidem*, no. 8.
- 124 DIR A1, vol. 3, no. 306. Ionașco, the scribe from Galbeni, attested as scribe in the central chancellery during the period recorded a transaction in the village of Galbeni, in the house of Priest Luciu from Galbeni.
- 125 Based on numerous attestations, Szekely considered even that diplomatic functions might have been their main task, see Szekely, *Sfetnicii*, 447.
- 126 In one of the political missions by the Moldavian Prince Iliăș (1546-1551), the Moldavian Chancellor Theodorus Boloș fulfilled the function of legate. See Iorga, *Acte și scrisori*, no. 869 (1548, July 2). In the multiple foreign relations established by Stephen the Great at the end of the fifteenth century, scribes were often among the messengers of his diplomatic missions sent to Poland, Lithuania, and Moscow. Among them, Scribe Matiaș was sent, together with Governor Giurgea, to the Polish King Alexander. (See Costăchescu, *Documente Ștefan*, vol. 2, no. 173). In 1498, scribe Șandru

- was sent to the high knez of Moscow, and one year later, in 1499, scribe Costea was enumerated among Moldavian ambassadors to the Polish King Alexander. See *Ibidem*, no. 141, 180.
- 127 Iorga, *Acte si scrisori*, no. 520. (1525, Dec. 20).
- 128 Grigore Tocilescu, ed. *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Țara Românească și Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346- 1603* (534 Slavo Romanian documents related to the relations of Wallachia and Moldavia with Transylvania) (Vienna, n. p., 1931), no. 332, 337 (undated); Henceforth Tocilescu, *534 documente*.
- 129 Tocilescu, *534 documente*, no. 338.
- 130 Ioan Bogdan, ed. *Documente și regeste privitoare la Relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și cu Țara Ungurească în sec. XV și XVI* (Documents and regestas concerning the Wallachian relations with Brasov and Hungary during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) (Bucharest, Atelierul Grafic I. V. Socecu, 1902), no.115 (1478-9). Radu the Handsome as well sent one of his scribes, Constantine, to Brașov. See *Ibidem*, no. 82; henceforth Bogdan, *Documente privitoare la Relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și cu Țara Ungurească*.
- 131 Bogdan, *Documente privitoare la Relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și cu Țara Ungurească*, no.87 (1474).
- 132 See for instance "Georgius litteratus (Iorga, *Acte si scrisori*, no. 796) or Gasparus (*Ibidem*, no. 695).
- 133 The first attested school at Cotnari was founded by Despot Voda (1561-1563), a Protestant prince of foreign origin. For more information about this see Maria Crăciun, "Protestantism and Orthodoxy in sixteenth-century Moldavia," in *The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997).; See also Maria Crăciun and Ovidiu Ghitta, eds, *Church and Society in Central and Eastern Europe*. (Cluj Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujană, 1998); Maria Crăciun, Ovidiu Ghitta and Graeme Murdock, ed., *Confessional Identity in East-Central Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Jesuits had founded a Latin school at Jassy (Vlad Georgescu, *The Romanians: A History*, ed. Matei Calinescu (Ohio: Ohio State University, 1984), 61.
- 134 DRH A, vol. 2, no. 199, no. 201. In 1475 Ion *dascăl* (John the teacher) signed his first charters. Later data also suggest that noblemen hired private teachers for their offspring.
- 135 In a narrative from the seventeenth century. See Celac, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei*, 223.
- 136 In Moldavia, it was introduced for the first time by a prince of foreign origins, Despot Vodă (1562-1563). His signatures are in Greek. See DIR A, vol. 2, no. 159, no. 162. In Wallachia Greek was introduced by Mikhnea Turcitul, who was brought up in Constantinople. Nicolae Iorga considered that the usage of signatures began to be employed on documents as a new form of authenticity in consequence of the simplification of the formulary of the documents; however, it seems rather to have been influenced by Western

- notarial practices. See Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria literaturii religioase a românilor până la 1688* (Romanian religious history up to 1688) (Bucharest, Minerva, 1925), 102; Iorga, *Istoria literaturii religioase a românilor*.
- 137 Dan Simonescu, "Cronica lui Baltazar Walter despre Mihai Viteazul în raport cu cronicile interne contemporane" (The Chronicle of Baltazar Walter about Michael the Brave compared to the internal Wallachian chronicals) *Studii și materiale de istorie medie* 3 (1959), 55
- 138 Ibidem.
- 139 The chancellor was identified by Nicolae Iorga as Theodosie Rudeanu, who acted as chancellor under Mihail the Brave. See Iorga, *Istoria literaturii religioase a românilor*, 8.
- 140 He acted as treasurer and then as chancellor from 1580 to 1591 and then from 1595 to 1610.
- 141 Concerning the treasurer and then chancellor Luca Stroici see Gerd Franck, "Un mare ctitor-boier Luca Stroici" (A great nobleman church founder Luca Stroici" In *Confesiune și cultură în Evul Mediu: În Onoarea Ion Toderășcu*, ed. by Bogdan-Petru Maleon and Alexandru-Florin Platon (Jassy, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2004); See also Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, "Luca Stroici, Părintele filologiei latino-române," (Luca Stroici: the father of Latin-Romanian filology) in *Studii de lingvistică și filologie*, ed. Grigore Brâncuși (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1988). B. P. Hașdeu testified that In 1861, at the University of Lemberg, discovered the catalogue of the private library that had belonged to Chancellor Stroici. He described it as being written on four files of parchment, in Slavonic, by the hand of the chancellor himself. Among the authors Hașdeu mentioned the sympathisers of Reformation ideas such as Carion, Camerarius, Melancton; see Hașdeu. "Luca Stroici," 70. However, his affirmation cannot be proved today. See Franck, "Luca Stroici," 306.
- 142 See Irena Sulkowska, "Noi documente privind relațiile româno- polone în perioada 1589 - 1622 (New documents concerning Romanian and Polish relations from the period 1589-1622)," *Studii Revistă de Istorie* 12, No. 6 (1959): No. 2.
- 143 See Ilie Corfus, ed., *Documente privitoare la istoria României cuprinse în arhivele polone. Secolul al XVI-lea* (Documents concerning the history of Romania found in Polish archives: The sixteenth century) (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1979).
- 144 See Ștefan Gorovei, "Nicolae (Milescu) spătarul. Contribuții biografice," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A.D. Xenopol"* 21 (1984): 179-182; idem, "Un cărturar uitat: Logofătul Grigoraș," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A.D. Xenopol"* 23, No. 2 (1986): 681-98.