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THE HUNGARIAN WIVES OF VLAD III THE IMPALER (DRACULA):
THE ROLE, IMPACT AND RECEPTION
OF MEDIEVAL ALLIANCES AND RIVALRIES
(Summary)

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Vlad III the Impaler of Walachia (Dracula) is usually believed to have been married to one close relative of king Matthias Corvinus of Hungary (either a half-sister or a cousin of the monarch). New and old sources reveal however that Vlad III was married in fact twice to a close relative of Matthias (the first time in 1462 and the second time around 1474-1475). These two marriages thus re-open the controversial question of the spread and nature of the late medieval stories on Dracula’s cruelties. Given also the fact that these stories were accepted and developed by the entourage of the king’s arch-enemy, emperor Frederick III of Habsburg, it becomes unlikely that Matthias was the master-mind behind these stories in order to cover up his own anti-Ottoman failures of 1461-1462. In the end, in relation to his most important Christian neighbours, Matthias and Stephen III of Moldavia, Vlad had two fatal flaws that dramatically affected his career and his image: he lost his throne, whereas Matthias and Stephen managed to retain theirs for decades (while their cruelties, in Transylvania in 1467-1468 and in Bohemia in subsequent years, in Matthias’s case, and, for instance, in Walachia in the 1470s and early 1480s, in Stephen III’s case, were by no means less excessive than those of Vlad), and he lacked the diplomatic skills needed to survive on local and regional level.

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