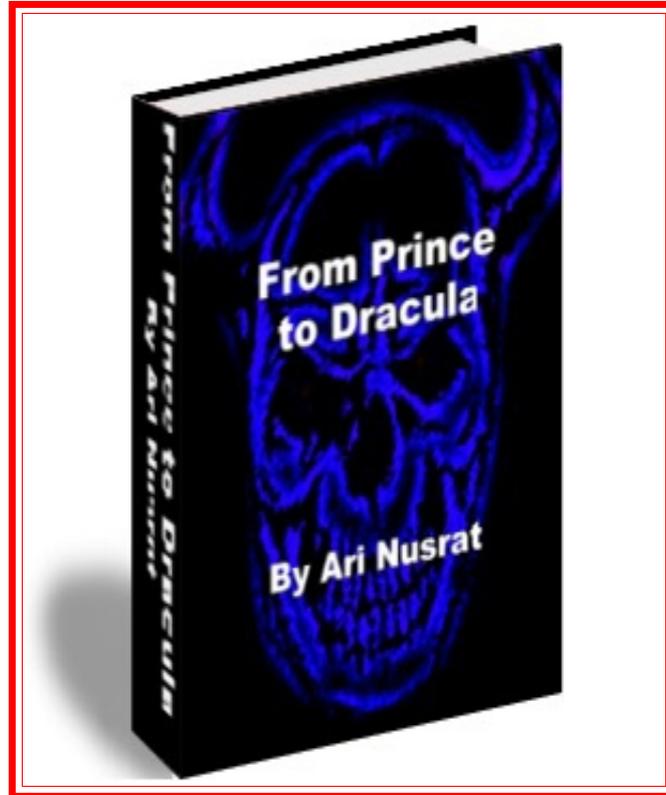


From Prince to Dracula

Revised edition



Is Dracula real? asked by a kid and since then I am trying to tell them no it is not true. I can not do it alone I need you to join me and convey the facts. Do not you think it is time to correct the history which was distorted by Bram Stoker and the time?. Decide yourself was Vlad III Tepes a great Warrior or a blood sucker "Dracula" ?

(Ari Nusrat)

From Prince to Dracula

Introduction



One day I was searching on internet to collect information on Dracula. I actually wanted to know who Dracula actually was. When, where and how did he spend his life ? After a long and tiring visit of various websites, I got stuck with one website titled: www.wirkkala.us/vladhist.html. I started to read and soon found what I was looking for. I continued reading and was unable to leave the computer even for a second because the matter on that website was very well written and well paragraphed.

I sent an e-mail to the web master of the site Mr. Matt Wirkkala. I was very happy as I got a very polite answer. After exchanging few e-mails, I got the contact of Mr. Ray Porter, the actual writer of the text. I did not face any problem in getting Mr. Porter's permission to use the matter in an e-book for offline reading. I have used the text from the original title of Porter Ray's essay "The Historical Dracula: Vlad III Tepes, 1431-1476",

Therefore, I am thankful to Mr. Matt Wirkkala and Mr. Ray Porter for the cooperation extended by them. Without their cooperation publishing of this e-book wouldn't have been possible.

I am sure most of you have heard of Dracula. With the name of Dracula, your mind brings before you the image of a flying bat-man, a man with two long pointed teeth, an old deserted cemetery and a black wooden coffin box. But certain questions still arise : Who really was Dracula? Where was he born? Was Dracula really a blood sucker? What was his real personality? These were the questions which I had in my mind while I was collecting information on Dracula. But now I have found the truth. Dracula was not a blood sucker. According to my research he was a great warrior and a hero of Romania who fought bravely during Turkish invasion on Europe. He fought with great courage against the Turks.

He is sometimes regarded as a cruel. What he did to his people may be called crimes against humanity. If you really want to know the facts about Dracula, then read my e-book titled FROM PRINCE TO DRACULA. You will come to know how the facts about his personal character were twisted and how a Prince or a great warrior was turned into 'Dracula' .

Ari Nusrat
creative11@sirius.ocn.ne.jp

From Prince to Dracula

“THE HISTORICAL DRACULA VLAD III TEPES, 1431-1476” by Ray Porter

I. Historical Background



Most of the members of this list are probably aware of the fact that when Bram Stoker penned his immortal classic, *Dracula*, he based his vampire villain on an actual historical figure. Stoker's model was Vlad III Dracula (call Tepes, pronounced tse-pesh); a fifteenth century voivode or prince of Wallachia of the princely House of Basarab. Wallachia is a province of Romania bordered to the north by Transylvania and Moldavia, to the east by the Black Sea and to the south by Bulgaria. Wallachia first emerged as a political entity during the late thirteenth century from the weltering confusion left behind in the Balkans as the East Roman Empire slowly crumbled. The first prince of Wallachia was Basarab the Great (1310-1352), an ancestor of Dracula. Despite the splintering of the family into two rival clans some member of the House of Basarab continued to govern Wallachia from that time until well after the Ottomans reduced the principality to the status of a client state. Dracula was the last prince of Wallachia to retain any real measure of independence.

In order to understand the life of Vlad Dracula it is first necessary to understand something about the nature of Wallachian society and politics. The throne of Wallachia was hereditary but not by the law of primogeniture; the boyars or great nobles had the right to elect the voivode from among the various eligible members of the royal family. As with most elective monarchies during the Middle Ages the power of the central government tended to be dissipated among the nobility as various members of the ruling family vied for the throne. Wallachian politics also tended to be very bloody. Assassination was a common means of eliminating rivals and many of the voivodes ended their lives violently and prematurely. By the late fifteenth century the House of Basarab had split into two rival clans; the descendants of Prince Dan and those of Prince Mircea the Old (Dracula's grandfather). These two branches of the royal house were bitter rivals. Both Dracula and his father, Vlad II Dracul, murdered rivals from the Danesti upon reaching the throne.

The second ascendant fact of fifteenth century Wallachian political life was the influence of powerful neighbors. In 1453 Constantinople and the last vestiges of the Byzantine or East Roman Empire which had blocked Islam's access to Europe for nearly one thousand years succumbed to the armed might of the Ottoman Turks under Sultan Mohammed the Conqueror. Long before the fall of the Imperial City the Ottomans had penetrated deep into the Balkans. Dracula's grandfather, Mircea the Old, was forced to pay tribute to the sultan early in the fifteenth century. The Hungarian Kingdom to the north and west of Wallachia reached the zenith of its power during the fifteenth century and assumed Constantinople's ancient mantle as defender of Christendom. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the princes of Wallachia attempted to maintain a precarious independence by constantly shifting allegiances between these powerful neighbors.

Dracula ruled as Prince of Wallachia on three separate occasions. He first claimed the throne with Turkish support in 1448. On this occasion he ruled for only two months (November-October) before being driven out by a Danesti claimant supported by Hungary. Dracula dwelt in exile for several years before returning to Wallachia to kill the Danesti prince, Vladislav II, and reclaim the Wallachian throne with Hungarian support. Dracula's second regnal period stretched from 1456 to 1462. It was during this time that Dracula carried out his most famous military exploits against the Turks and also committed his most gruesome atrocities.



From Prince to Dracula

In 1462 Dracula fled to Transylvania to seek the aid of the King of Hungary when a Turkish army overwhelmed Wallachia. Instead of receiving the assistance he expected Dracula was imprisoned by the Hungarian king. He remained a prisoner of Matthias Corvinus of Hungary for several years. For most of the period of Dracula's incarceration his brother, Radu the Handsome, ruled Wallachia as a puppet of the Ottoman sultan. When Radu died (ca. 1474-1475) the sultan appointed Basarab the Old, a member of the Danesti clan, as prince.

Eventually, Dracula regained the favor and support of the Hungarian king. In 1476 he once again invaded Wallachia. His small force consisted of loyal Wallachians, a contingent of Moldavians sent by his cousin, Prince Stephen the Great of Moldavia, and a contingent of Transylvanians under their prince, Stephen Bathory. The allies succeeded in driving Basarab out of the country and reclaiming the throne for Dracula (November 1476). However, after Dracula was once again in control, Stephen Bathory returned to Transylvania taking most of Dracula's army with him. The Turks soon counterattacked with overwhelming force. Dracula was killed fighting the Turks near Bucharest in December of 1476. His head was sent to Constantinople where the Sultan had it displayed on a stake to prove that the terrible Impaler was really dead.

From Prince to Dracula

II. What's in a name?



There has been considerable debate among scholars concerning the meaning of the name "Dracula". The name is clearly related to Dracula's father's sobriquet "Dracul". Drac in Romanian means devil and "ul" is the definitive article. Therefore, "Dracul" literally means "the devil". The "-ulea" ending in Romanian indicates "the son of".

Under this interpretation Dracula becomes Vlad III, the son of the devil. The experts who support this interpretation usually claim that Vlad II earned his devilish nickname by his clever and wily political maneuvering.

The second interpretation of the name is more widely accepted. In 1431 Vlad II was invested with the Order of the Dragon by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg. The Order of the Dragon was a knightly order dedicated to fighting the Turk. Its emblem was a dragon, wings extended, hanging on a cross. From 1431 onward Vlad II wore the emblem of the order. His coinage bore the dragon symbol. The dragon was the symbol of the devil and, consequently, the alternate meaning of 'drac' was dragon. Under this interpretation Vlad II Dracul becomes Vlad II, the Dragon and his son, Vlad III Dracula, becomes Vlad III, the Son of the Dragon.

There is some confusion in the secondary sources concerning Dracula's exact title. In most of the sources he is referred to as Vlad III. However, many sources refer to him as Vlad IV or Vlad V. I am somewhat at a loss to explain this confusion. The lists of Wallachian princes that I have seen would seem to make the correct title Vlad III. The only conclusion I have been able to reach is that there is some confusion in the sources between the various Wallachian voivodes named Vlad and those named Vladislav. This argument gains credence when one realizes that Dracula occasionally signed his name as "Vladislaus". I would welcome an explanation from anyone capable of resolving this problem.

From Prince to Dracula

III. The Life and Times of Vlad III Dracula, called the Impaler (1431-1476)



Dracula was born in 1431 in the Transylvanian city of Sighisoara. At that time Dracula's father, Vlad II Dracul, was living in exile in Transylvania. Vlad Dracul was in Transylvania attempting to gather support for his planned effort to seize the Wallachian throne from the Danesti prince, Alexandru I. The house where Dracula was born is still standing. In 1431 it was located in a prosperous neighborhood surrounded by the homes of Saxon and Magyar merchants and the townhouses of the nobility.

Little is known about the early years of Dracula's life. It is known that he had an elder brother, Mircea, and a younger brother named Radu. His early education was left in the hands of his mother, a Transylvanian noblewoman, and her family. His real education began in 1436 after his father succeeded in claiming the Wallachian throne and killing his Danesti rival. His training was typical of that common to the sons of the nobility throughout Europe. His first tutor in his apprenticeship to knighthood was an elderly boyar whom had fought under the banner of Enguerrand de Courcy at the Battle of Nicolopolis against the Turks. Dracula learned all the skills of war and peace that were deemed necessary for a Christian knight.

The political situation in Wallachia remained unstable after Vlad Dracul seized the throne in 1436. The power of the Turks was growing rapidly as one by one the small states of the Balkans surrendered to the Ottoman onslaught. At the same time the power of Hungary was reaching its zenith and would peak during the time of John Hunyadi, the White Knight of Hungary, and his son King Matthias Corvinus. Any prince of Wallachia had to balance his policies precariously between these two powerful neighbors. The prince of Wallachia was officially a vassal of the King of Hungary. In addition, Vlad Dracul was a member of the Order of the Dragon and sworn to fight the infidel. At the same time the power of the Ottomans seemed unstoppable. Even in the time of Vlad's father, Mircea the Old, Wallachia had been forced to pay tribute to the Sultan. Vlad was forced to renew that tribute and from 1436-1442 attempted to walk a middle course between his powerful neighbors.

In 1442 Vlad attempted to remain neutral when the Turks invaded Transylvania. The Turks were defeated and the vengeful Hungarians under John Hunyadi forced Dracul and his family to flee Wallachia. Hunyadi placed a Danesti, Basarab II, on the Wallachian throne. In 1443 Vlad II regained the Wallachian throne with Turkish support, on the condition that he sign a new treaty with the Sultan that included not only the customary annual tribute but the promise to yearly send contingents of Wallachian boys to join the Sultan's Janissaries. In 1444, to further assure the Sultan of his good faith, Vlad sent his two younger sons to Adrianople as hostages. Dracula remained a hostage in Adrianople until 1448.

In 1444 the King of Hungary, Ladislas Posthumous, broke the peace and launched the Varna campaign under the command of John Hunyadi in an effort to drive the Turks out of Europe. Hunyadi demanded that Vlad II fulfill his oath as a member of the Order of the Dragon and a vassal of Hungary and join the crusade against the Turk. The Pope absolved Dracul of his Turkish oath but the wily politician still attempted to steer a middle course. Rather than join the Christian forces himself he sent his oldest son, Mircea. Perhaps he hoped the sultan would spare his younger sons if he himself did not join the crusade.

The results of the Varna Crusade are well known. The Christian army was utterly destroyed in the Battle of Varna. John Hunyadi managed to escape the battle under conditions that add little glory to the White Knight's reputation. Many, apparently including Mircea and his father, blamed Hunyadi for the debacle. From this moment forth John Hunyadi was bitterly hostile toward Vlad Dracul and his

From Prince to Dracula

eldest son. In 1447 Vlad Dracul was assassinated along with his son Mircea. Mircea was apparently buried alive by the boyars and merchants of Tirgoviste. Hunyadi placed his own candidate, a member of the Danesti clan, on the throne of Wallachia.

On receiving the news of Vlad Dracul's death the Turks released Dracula and supported him as their own candidate for the Wallachian throne. In 1448 Dracula managed to briefly seize the Wallachian throne with Turkish support. Within two months Hunyadi forced Dracula to surrender the throne and flee to his cousin, the Prince of Moldavia, while Hunyadi once again placed Vladislav II on the Wallachian throne.

Dracula remained in exile in Moldavia for three years, until Prince Bogdan of Moldavia was assassinated in 1451. The resulting turmoil in Moldavia forced Dracula to flee to Transylvania and seek the protection of his family enemy, Hunyadi. The timing was propitious; Hunyadi's puppet on the Wallachian throne, Vladislav II, had instituted a pro-Turkish policy and Hunyadi needed a more reliable man in Wallachia. Consequently, Hunyadi accepted the allegiance of his old enemy's son and put him forward as the Hungarian candidate for the throne of Wallachia. Dracula became Hunyadi's vassal and received his father's old Transylvanian duchies of Faragas and Almas. Dracula remained in Transylvania, under Hunyadi's protection, until 1456 waiting for an opportunity to retake Wallachia from his rival.

In 1453 the Christian world was shocked by the final fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans. The East Roman Empire which had existed since the time of Constantine the Great and which for a thousand years had shielded the rest of Christendom from Islam was no more. Hunyadi immediately began planning another campaign against the Turks. In 1456 Hunyadi invaded Turkish Serbia while Dracula simultaneously invaded Wallachia. In the Battle of Belgrade, Hunyadi routed the Ottoman host of Sultan Mohammed, forcing the Turks to withdraw to Constantinople. Hunyadi planned to push the war into Turkey but disease ravaged his forces in the weeks following the battle, claiming Hunyadi himself on August 11, 1456. Meanwhile, Dracula succeeded in killing Vladislav II and taking the Wallachian throne, but Hunyadi's death made his long term tenure questionable. For a time at least, Dracula was forced to attempt to placate the Turks while he solidified his own position.

Dracula's main reign stretched from 1456 to 1462. His capital was the city of Tirgoviste while his castle was raised some distance away in the mountains near the Arges River. Most of the atrocities associated with Dracula's name took place in these years. It was also during this time that he launched his own campaign against the Turks. This campaign was relatively successful at first. His skill as a warrior and his well-known cruelty made him a much feared enemy. However, he received little support from his titular overlord, Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary (the son of John Hunyadi) and Wallachia's resources were too limited to achieve any lasting success against the conqueror of Constantinople.

The Turks finally succeeded in forcing Dracula to flee to Transylvania in 1462. Reportedly, his first wife committed suicide by leaping from the towers of Dracula's castle into the waters of the Arges River rather than surrender to the Turks. Dracula escaped across the mountains into Transylvania and appealed to Matthias Corvinus for aid. Instead the King had Dracula arrested and imprisoned in a royal tower near Buda. Dracula remained a prisoner for twelve years.

Apparently his imprisonment was none too onerous. He was able to gradually win his way back into the graces of Hungary's monarch; so much so that he was able to meet and marry a member of the royal family (some of the sources claim Dracula's second wife was actually the sister of Matthias Corvinus). The openly pro-Turkish policy of Dracula's brother, Radu the Handsome, who was prince of Wallachia during Dracula's captivity probably was a factor in Dracula's rehabilitation. During his captivity Dracula also renounced the Orthodox faith and adopted Catholicism. It is interesting to note that the Russian narrative, normally very favorable to Dracula, indicates that even in captivity he could

From Prince to Dracula

not give up his favorite past-time; he often captured birds and mice which he proceeded to torture and mutilate -- some were beheaded or tarred-and-feathered and released, most were impaled on tiny spears.

The exact length of Dracula's period of captivity is open to some debate. The Russian pamphlets indicate that he was a prisoner from 1462 until 1474. However, during that period Dracula managed to marry a member of the Hungarian royal family and have two sons who were about ten years old when he reconquered Wallachia in 1476. McNally and Florescu place Dracula's actual period of confinement at about four years from 1462 until 1466. It is unlikely that a prisoner would be allowed to marry into the royal family. Diplomatic correspondence from Buda during the period in question also seems to support the claim that Dracula's actual period of confinement was relatively short.

Apparently in years between his release and 1474, when he began preparations for the reconquest of Wallachia, Dracula resided with his new wife in a house in the Hungarian capital. One anecdote from that period tells how a Hungarian captain followed a thief into Dracula's house. When Dracula discovered the intruders he killed the Hungarian officer rather than the thief. When questioned about his actions by the king Dracula answered that a gentlemen does not enter the presence of a great ruler without an introduction -- had the captain followed proper protocol he would not have incurred the wrath of the prince.

In 1476 Dracula was again ready to make another bid for power. Dracula and Prince Stephen Bathory of Transylvania invaded Wallachia with a mixed force of Transylvanians, a few dissatisfied Wallachian boyars and a contingent of Moldavians sent by Dracula's cousin, Prince Stephen the Great of Moldavia. Dracula's brother, Radu the Handsome, had died a couple of years earlier and been replaced on the Wallachian throne by another Turkish candidate, Basarab the Old, a member of the Danesti clan. At the approach of Dracula's army Basarab and his coherents fled, some to the protection of the Turks, others to the shelter of the mountains. After placing Dracula on the throne Stephen Bathory and the bulk of Dracula's forces returned to Transylvania, leaving Dracula's tactical position very weak. Dracula had little time to gather support before a large Turkish army entered Wallachia determined to return Basarab to the throne. Dracula's cruelties over the years had alienated the boyars who felt they had a better chance of surviving under Prince Basarab. Apparently, even the peasants, tired of the depredations of the Impaler, abandoned him to his fate. Dracula was forced to march to meet the Turks with the small forces at his disposal, somewhat less than four thousand men.

Dracula was killed in battle against the Turks near the small town of Bucharest in December of 1476. Some reports indicated that he was assassinated by disloyal Wallachian boyars just as he was about to sweep the Turks from the field. Other accounts have Dracula falling in defeat, surrounded by the bodies of his loyal Moldavian bodyguard (the troops loaned by Prince Stephen of Moldavia remained with Dracula after Stephen Bathory returned to Transylvania). Still other reports claim that Dracula, at the moment of victory, was accidentally struck down by one of his own men. Dracula's body was decapitated by the Turks and his head sent to Constantinople where the sultan had it displayed on a stake as proof that the Impaler was dead. He was reportedly buried at Snagov, an island monastery located near Bucharest.

From Prince to Dracula

IV. Atrocities



More than anything else the historical Dracula is known for his inhuman cruelty . Impalement was Dracula's preferred method of torture and execution. Impalement was and is one of the most gruesome ways of dying imaginable. Dracula usually had a horse attached to each of the victim's legs and a sharpened stake was gradually forced into the body. The end of the stake was usually oiled and care was taken that the stake not be too sharp; else the victim might die too rapidly from shock. Normally the stake was inserted into the body through the buttocks and was often forced through the body until it emerged from the mouth. However, there were many instances where victims were impaled through other bodily orifices or through the abdomen or chest. Infants were sometimes impaled on the stake forced through their mothers' chests. The records indicate that victims were sometimes impaled so that they hung upside down on the stake.

Death by impalement was slow and painful. Victims sometimes endured for hours or days. Dracula often had the stakes arranged in various geometric pattern when he impaled large numbers of victims. The most common pattern was a ring of concentric circles in the outskirts of the city that was his target. The height of the spear indicated the rank of the victim. The decaying corpses were often left up for months. It was once reported that an invading Turkish army turned back in fright when it encountered thousands of rotting corpses impaled on the banks of the Danube. In 1461 Mohammed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, a man not noted for his squeamishness, returned to Constantinople after being sickened by the sight of twenty thousand impaled corpses rotting outside of Dracula's capital of Tirgoviste. The warrior sultan turned command of the campaign against Dracula over to subordinates and returned to Constantinople.

Thousands were often impaled at a single time. Ten thousand were impaled in the Transylvanian city of Sibiu (where Dracula had once lived) in 1460. In 1459, on St. Bartholomew's Day, Dracula had thirty thousand of the merchants and boyars of the Transylvanian city of Brasov impaled. One of the most famous woodcuts of the period shows Dracula feasting amongst a forest of stakes and their grisly burdens outside Brasov while a nearby executioner cuts apart other victims.

Impalement was Dracula's favorite but by no means his only method of torture. The list of tortures employed by this cruel prince reads like an inventory of hell's tools: nails in heads, cutting off of limbs, blinding, strangulation, burning, cutting off of noses and ears, mutilation of sexual organs (especially in the case of women), scalping, skinning, exposure to the elements or to wild animals and boiling alive.

No one was immune to Dracula's attentions. His victims included women and children, peasants and great lords, ambassadors from foreign powers and merchants. However, the vast majority of his victims came from the merchants and boyars of Transylvania and his own Wallachia. Many have attempted to justify Dracula's actions on the basis nascent nationalism and political necessity. Many of the merchants in Transylvania and Wallachia were Saxons who were seen as parasites, preying upon the Romanian natives of Wallachia, while the boyars had proven their disloyalty time and time again. Dracula's own father and older brother were murdered by unfaithful boyars. However, many of Dracula's victims were Wallachians and few deny that he derived a perverted pleasure from his actions.

Dracula began his reign of terror almost as soon as he came to power. His first significant act of cruelty may have been motivated by a desire of revenge as well as a need to solidify his power. Early in his main reign he gave a feast for his boyars and their families to celebrate Easter. Dracula was well aware that many of these same nobles were part of the conspiracy that led to his father's assassination and the burying alive of his elder brother, Mircea. Many had also played a role in the overthrow of numerous Wallachian princes. During the feast Dracula asked his noble guests how

From Prince to Dracula

many princes had ruled during their life times. All of the nobles present had outlived several princes. One answered that at least thirty princes had held the throne during his life. None had seen less than seven reigns. Dracula immediately had all the assembled nobles arrested. The older boyars and their families were impaled on the spot. The younger and healthier nobles and their families were marched north from Tirgoviste to the ruins of a castle in the mountains above the Arges River. Dracula was determined to rebuild this ancient fortress as his own stronghold and refuge. The enslaved boyars and their families were forced to labor for months rebuilding the old castle with materials from another nearby ruin. According to the reports they labored until the clothes fell off their bodies and then were forced to continue working naked. Very few of the old gentry survived the ordeal of building Castle Dracula.

Throughout his reign Dracula systematically eradicated the old boyar class of Wallachia. The old boyars had repeatedly undermined the power of the prince during previous reigns and had been responsible for the violent overthrow of several princes. Apparently Dracula was determined that his own power be on a modern and thoroughly secure footing. In the place of the executed boyars Dracula promoted new men from among the free peasantry and the middle class; men who would be loyal only to their prince. Many of Dracula's acts of cruelty can be interpreted as efforts to strengthen and modernize the central government at the expense of feudal powers of the nobility and great towns.

Dracula was also constantly on guard against the adherents of the Danesti clan and rival claimants to the throne. Some of his raids into Transylvania may have been efforts to capture would-be princes of the Danesti. Several members of the Danesti clan died at Dracula's hands. Vladislav II was murdered soon after Dracula came to power in 1456. Another Danesti prince was captured during one of Dracula's forays into Transylvania. Thousands of the citizens of the town that had sheltered his rival were impaled by Dracula. The captured Danesti prince was forced to read his own funeral oration while kneeling before an open grave before his execution.

Dracula's atrocities against the people of Wallachia were usually attempts to enforce his own moral code upon his country. He appears to have been particularly concerned with female chastity. Maidens who lost their virginity, adulterous wives and unchaste widows were all targets of Dracula's cruelty. Such women often had their sexual organs cut out or their breasts cut off. One report tells of the execution of an unfaithful wife. Dracula had the woman's breasts cut off then she was skinned and impaled in a square in Tirgoviste with her skin lying on a nearby table. Dracula also insisted that his people be honest and hard working. Merchants who cheated their customers were likely to find themselves mounted on a stake beside common thieves.

From Prince to Dracula

V. Anecdotal Evidence



Much of the information we have about Vlad III comes from pamphlets published after his death in Germany and Russia. The German pamphlets appeared shortly after Dracula's death and, at least initially, may have been politically inspired. At that time Matthias Corvinus of Hungary was seeking to bolster his own reputation in the Holy Roman Empire and may have intended the early pamphlets as justification of his less than vigorous support of his vassal. The pamphlets were also a form of mass entertainment in a society where the printing press was just coming into widespread use. Much like the subject matter of the supermarket tabloids of today, the cruel life of the Wallachian tyrant was easily sensationalized. The pamphlets were reprinted numerous times over the thirty or so years following Dracula's death - strong proof of their popularity.

The German pamphlets painted Dracula as an inhuman monster who terrorized the land and butchered innocents with sadistic glee. The Russian pamphlets took a somewhat different view. The princes of Moscow were at that time just beginning to build the basis of what would become the autocracy of the czars. They were also having considerable trouble with disloyal, often treasonous boyars. In Russia, Dracula was presented as a cruel but just prince whose actions were directed toward the greater good of his people. Despite the differences in interpretation the pamphlets, regardless of their land of origin, agree remarkably well as to specifics. The level of agreement between the various pamphlets has led most historians to conclude that at least the broad outlines of the events covered actually occurred.

Romanian verbal tradition provides another important source for the life of Vlad Dracula. Legends and tales concerning the Impaler have remained a part of folklore among the Romanian peasantry. These tales have been passed down from generation to generation for five hundred years. Through constant retelling they have become somewhat garbled and confused and they are gradually being forgotten by the younger generations. However, they still provide valuable information about Dracula and his relationship with his own people. Many of the tales contained in the pamphlets are also found in the verbal tradition, though with a somewhat different emphasis. Among the Romanian peasantry Dracula is remembered as a just prince who defended his people from foreigners, whether those foreigners be Turkish invaders or German merchants. He is also remembered as somewhat of a champion of the common man against the oppression of the boyars. Dracula's fierce insistence on honesty is a central part of the verbal tradition. Many of the anecdotes contained in the pamphlets and in the verbal tradition demonstrate the prince's efforts to eliminate crime and dishonesty from his domain. However, despite the more positive interpretation, the Romanian verbal tradition also remembers Dracula as an exceptionally cruel and often capricious ruler.

There are several events that are common to all the pamphlets, regardless of their nation of origin. Many of these events are also found in the Romanian verbal tradition. Specific details may vary among the different versions of these anecdotes but the general course of events usually agrees to a remarkable extent. For example, in some versions the foreign ambassadors received by Dracula at Tirgoviste are Florentine, in others they are Turkish. The nature of their offense against the Prince also varies from version to version. However, all versions agree that Dracula, in response to some real or imagined insult, had their hats nailed to their heads. Some of the sources view Dracula's actions as justified, others view his acts as crimes of wanton and senseless cruelty. There are about nine anecdotes that are almost universal in the Dracula literature.

(1) The Golden Cup Dracula was known throughout his land for his fierce insistence on honesty and order. Thieves seldom dared practice their trade within Dracula's domain -- they knew that the stake awaited any who were caught. Dracula was so confident in the effectiveness of his law that he placed

From Prince to Dracula

a golden cup on display in the central square of Tirgoviste. The cup was never stolen and remained entirely unmolested throughout Dracula's reign.

(2) The Foreign Merchant A merchant from a foreign land once visited Dracula's capital of Tirgoviste. Aware of the reputation of Dracula's land for honesty, he left a treasure-laden cart unguarded in the street over night. Returning to his wagon in the morning, the merchant was shocked to find 160 golden ducats missing. When the merchant complained of his loss to the prince, Dracula assured the him that his money would be returned and invited him to remain in the palace that night. Dracula then issued a proclamation to the city -- find the thief and return the money or the city will be destroyed. During the night he ordered that 160 ducats plus one extra be taken from his own treasury and placed in the merchant's cart. On returning to his cart in the morning and counting his money the merchant discovered the extra ducat. The merchant returned to Dracula and reported that his money had indeed been returned plus an extra ducat. Meanwhile the thief had been captured and turned over to the prince's guards along with the stolen money. Dracula ordered the thief impaled and informed the merchant that if he had not reported the extra ducat he would have been impaled alongside the thief.

(3) The Two Monks There are several versions of this anecdote. In some the two monks were from a Catholic monastery in Wallachia or wandering Catholic monks from a foreign land. In either case Catholic monks would be viewed as representatives of a foreign power by Dracula. In other versions of the story the monks are from a Romanian Orthodox establishment (the native church of Wallachia). Dracula's motivation also varies considerably among the different versions of the story. All versions of the story agree that two monks visited Dracula in his Palace at Tirgoviste. Curious to see the reaction of the churchmen, Dracula showed them the rows of impaled corpses in the courtyard. When asked their opinions of his actions by the prince, one of the monks responded, "You are appointed by God to punish evil-doers." The other monk had the moral courage to condemn the cruel prince. In the version of the story most common in the German pamphlets, Dracula rewarded the sycophantic monk and impaled the honest monk. In the version found in the Russian pamphlets and in the Romanian verbal tradition Dracula rewarded the honest monk for his integrity and courage and impaled the sycophant for his dishonesty.

(4) The Polish Nobleman Benedict de Boithor, a Polish nobleman in the service of the King of Hungary, visited Dracula at Tirgoviste in September of 1458. At dinner one evening Dracula ordered a golden spear brought and set up directly in front of the royal envoy. Dracula then asked the envoy why he thought this spear had been set up. Benedict replied that he imagined that some boyar had offended the prince and the prince intended to honor him. Dracula then responded that he had, in fact, had the spear set up in honor of his noble, Polish guest. The Pole then responded that had he done anything to deserve death that Dracula should do as he thought best. He further asserted that in that case Dracula would not be responsible for his death, rather he would be responsible for his own death for incurring the displeasure of the prince. Dracula was greatly pleased by this answer and showered the man with gifts while declaring that had he answered in any other manner he would have been immediately impaled.

(5) The Foreign Ambassadors There are at least two versions of this story in the literature. As with the story of the two monks, one version is common in the German pamphlets and views Dracula's actions unfavorably while the other version is common in Eastern Europe and sees Dracula's actions in a much more favorable light. In both versions ambassadors of a foreign power visit Dracula's court at Tirgoviste. When granted an audience with the prince the envoys refused to remove their hats as was the custom when in the presence of the prince in Wallachia. Angered at this sign of disrespect Dracula had the ambassadors' hats nailed to their heads so that they might never remove them. In the German version of the story the envoys are Florentine and refused to remove their hats to demonstrate their superiority. When Dracula asked the ambassadors why they wouldn't remove their hats they responded that such was not their custom and that they wouldn't remove their hats, even for the Holy Roman emperor. Dracula immediately had their hats nailed to their heads so that they might never

From Prince to Dracula

come off and had the ambassadors ejected from his court. In Germany and the West, where the concept of diplomatic immunity was at least given lip service, this was held to be an act of barbarity against the representatives of a friendly power. In the version of the story common in the east, the envoys are Turkish. When ushered into the presence of the prince, the Turks refused to remove their Phrygian caps. When questioned they answered that it was not the custom of their fathers to remove their hats. Dracula then ordered their hats nailed to their heads with three nails so that they might never have to break such an excellent tradition. The envoys were then sent back to the sultan. In the east this was held to be a courageous act of defiance in the face of the power of the Ottoman sultan. It should also be noted that the nailing of hats to the heads of those who displeased a monarch was not an unknown act in Eastern Europe. Apparently this method was occasionally used by the princes of Moscow when faced by unpleasant envoys.

(6) Dracula's Mistress Dracula once had a mistress who lived in a house in the back streets of Tirgoviste. This woman apparently loved the prince to distraction and was always anxious to please him. Dracula was often moody and depressed and the woman made every effort to lighten her lover's burdens. Once, when Dracula was particularly depressed, the woman dared tell him a lie in an effort to cheer him up; she told him that she was with child. Dracula warned the woman not to joke about such matters but she insisted on the truth of her claim despite her knowledge of the prince's feelings about dishonesty. Dracula had the woman examined by the bath matrons to determine the veracity of her claim. When informed that the woman was lying Dracula drew his knife and cut her open from the groin to her breasts while proclaiming his desire for the world to see where he had been. Dracula then left the woman to die in agony.

(7) The Lazy Woman Dracula once noticed a man working in the fields while wearing a too short caftan. The prince stopped and asked the man whether or not he had a wife. When the man answered in the affirmative Dracula had the woman brought before him and asked her how she spent her days. The poor, frightened woman stated that she spent her days washing, baking and sewing. The prince pointed out her husband's short caftan as evidence of her laziness and dishonesty and ordered her impaled despite her husband's protestations that he was well satisfied with his wife. Dracula then ordered another woman to marry the peasant but admonished her to work hard or she would suffer her predecessor's fate.

(8) The Nobleman with the Keen Sense of Smell On St. Bartholomew's Day in 1459 Dracula caused thirty thousand of the merchants and nobles of the Transylvanian city of Brasov to be impaled. In order that he might better enjoy the results of his orders, the prince commanded that his table be set up and that his boyars join him for a feast amongst the forest of impaled corpses. While dining, Dracula noticed that one of his boyars was holding his nose in an effort to alleviate the terrible smell of clotting blood and emptied bowels. Dracula then ordered the sensitive nobleman impaled on a stake higher than all the rest so that he might be above the stench. In another version of this story the sensitive nobleman is an envoy of the Transylvanian cities of Brasov and Sibiu sent to appeal to the cruel Wallachian to spare those cities. While hearing the nobleman's appeal Dracula walked amongst the stakes and their grisly burdens. Some of the victims still lived. Nearly overcome by the smell of drying blood and human wastes the nobleman asked the prince why he walked amidst the awful stench. Dracula then asked the envoy if he found the stench oppressive. The envoy, seeing an opportunity to ingratiate himself with Dracula, responded that his only concern was for the health and welfare of the prince. Dracula, angered at the nobleman's dishonesty ordered him impaled on the spot on a very high stake so that he might be above the offending odors.

(9) The Burning of the Sick and Poor Dracula was very concerned that all his subjects work and contribute to the common welfare. He once noticed that the poor, vagrants, beggars and cripples had become very numerous in his land. Consequently, issued an invitation to all the poor and sick in Wallachia to come to Tirgoviste for a great feast, claiming that no one should go hungry in his land. As the poor and crippled arrived in the city they were ushered into a great hall where a fabulous feast was



From Prince to Dracula

prepared for them. The prince's guests ate and drank late into the night, when Dracula himself made an appearance. "What else do you desire? Do you want to be without cares, lacking nothing in this world," asked the prince. When they responded positively Dracula ordered the hall boarded up and set on fire. None escaped the flames. Dracula explained his action to the boyars by claiming that he did this, "in order that they represent no further burden to other men so that no one will be poor in my realm."

From Prince to Dracula

VI. Dracula and the Vampire Myth



It is unclear why Bram Stoker chose this fifteenth century Romanian prince as the model for his fictional vampire. Stoker was friends with a Hungarian professor from Buda-Pest and many have suggested that Dracula's name might have been mentioned by this friend. Regardless of how the name came to Stoker's attention the cruel history of the Impaler would have readily loaned itself to Stoker's purposes. The events of Dracula's life were played out in a region of the world that was still basically medieval even in Stoker's time. The Balkans had only recently shaken off the Turkish yoke when Stoker started working on his novel and the superstitions of the Dark Ages were still prevalent. Transylvania had long been a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but it too had endured a long period of Turkish domination and its culture was still largely medieval.

The legend of the vampire was and still is deeply rooted in that region. There have always been vampire-like creatures from ancient times in the mythologies of many cultures. However, the vampire, as he became known in Europe and hence America, largely originated in the Slavic and Greek lands of eastern Europe. A veritable epidemic of vampirism swept through eastern Europe beginning in the late seventeenth century and continuing through the eighteenth century. The number of reported cases of rose dramatically in Hungary and the Balkans. From the Balkans the plague spread westward into Germany, Italy, France, England and Spain. Travelers returning from the Balkans brought with them tales of the undead, igniting an interest in the vampire that has continued to this day. Philosophers in the West began to study the phenomenon. It was during this period that Dom Augustin Calmet wrote his famous treatise on vampirism in Hungary. It was also during this period that authors and playwrights first began to explore the vampire myth. Stoker's novel was merely the culminating work of a long series of works that were inspired by the reports coming from the Balkans and Hungary.

Given the history of the vampire myth in Europe it is perhaps natural that Stoker should place his great vampire in the heart of the region that gave birth to the myth. Once Stoker had determined on a locality, Vlad Dracula would stand out as one of the most notorious rulers of the selected region. He was obscure enough that few would recognize the name and those who did would know him for his acts of brutal cruelty; Dracula was a natural candidate for vampirism. Why Stoker chose to relocate his vampire from Wallachia to the north of Transylvania remains a mystery.

The vampire myth is still wide-spread in eastern Europe. Similarly the name of Dracula is still remembered in the Romanian oral tradition but that is the end of any connection between Dracula and the vampire myth in folklore. Outside of Stoker's novel the name of Dracula was never linked with the myth of the vampire. Despite his inhuman cruelty, in Romania Dracula is remembered as a national hero who resisted the Turkish conquerors and asserted Romanian national sovereignty against the powerful Hungarian kingdom.

By Ray Porter



Stop calling Dracula. I am a great warrior!

From Prince to Dracula

Some comments by kids

I can sleep without
fear. Thanks to you Ari
Hashimoto

Thank you for telling me about
Dracula now I can play more. I am
not afraid anymore.
Watanabe

I can watch Horror Movies
without closing eyes.
Abe



I can go to toilet alone at night. I do not ask
Mom to watch for me.

Kimura

Those teeth of Dracula were not real? really are you sure?
That is great to know. I feel relaxed.

Yamamoto

And finally an interesting question from a Junior school student.

Ito: If Dracula is not real then why did you use horrifying images?

Ari: Just to create interest in a book. If you look at them you will laugh.

Ito: Hahaha yes they are funny.



From Prince to Dracula